

Socialist ORGANISER

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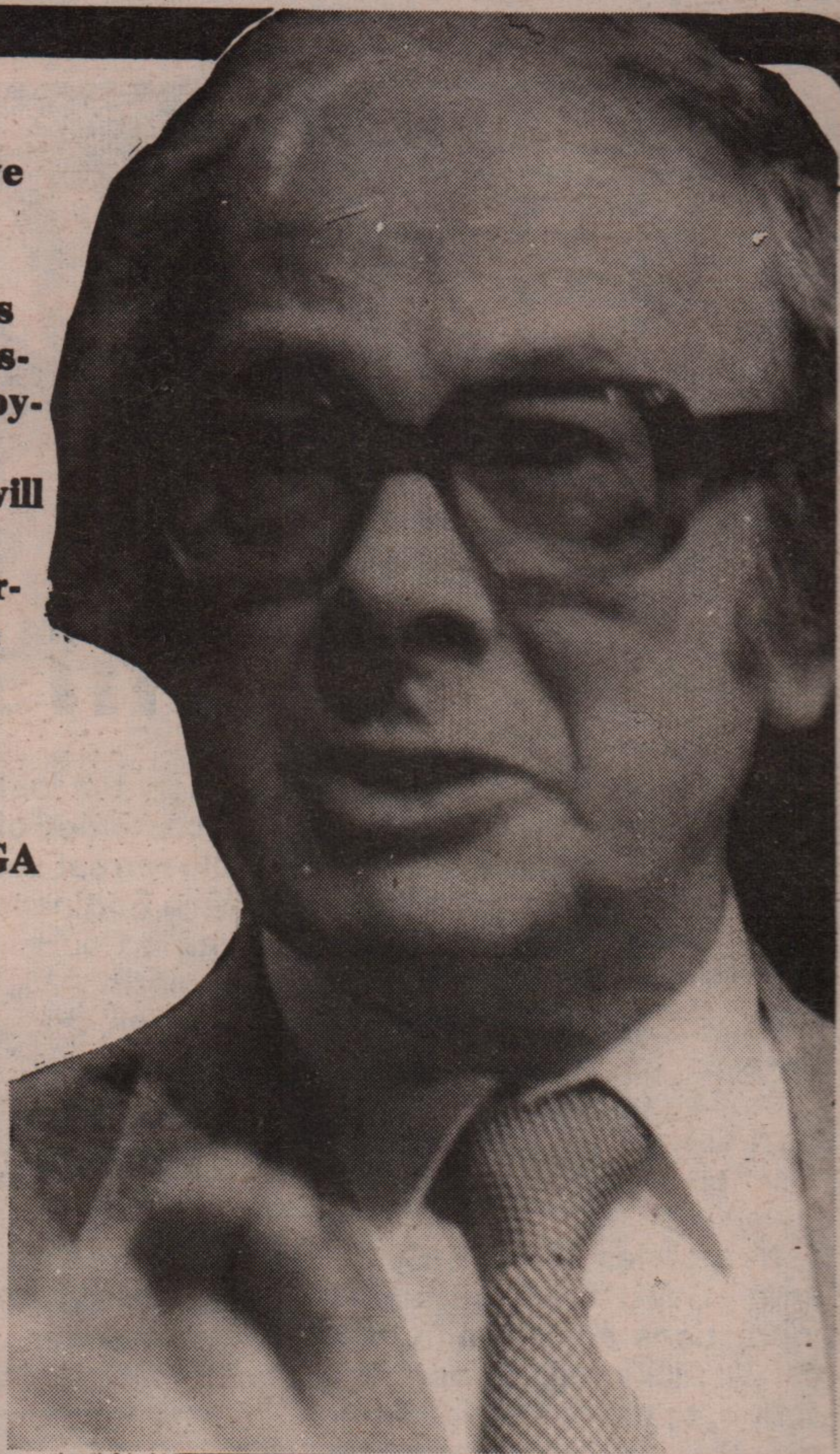
Strike to defend NGA!

HIT BACK FOR OUR UNIONS!

"On principle, we will not pay the fine."

"Our members will fight in opposition to the employment legislation. We hope that it will prove to be the catalyst to encourage support from the whole of the movement to defeat the legislation".

Joe Wade, NGA



JOHN SMITH (UFL)



By Martin Thomas

A small prefab industrial unit on an estate in Warrington is now the centre of a decisive test case for the British labour movement.

The print union NGA is picketing Salim Shah's Messenger Newspapers printworks, demanding a closed shop and reinstatement of six NGA members sacked at the Messenger office in Stockport.

The High Court last Thursday, 17th, fined the NGA £50,000 for refusing to lift the picket — which is in breach of the Tory anti-union laws. The NGA national council on Tuesday 22nd decided unanimously to refuse to pay the fine and to continue the pickets.

The NGA has asked the TUC for support. Civil servants' general secretary Alistair Graham said on TV on Tuesday evening that he expected the TUC to refuse that support.

But whatever the TUC General Council says, the feeling on the picket line is that the fight will go on. The NGA showed its ability to defy TUC surrender

TUC: call 1-day General Strike, prepare for all-out fight!

instructions and go on and win earlier this year in a dispute at the Financial Times.

The next legal step is seizure of the NGA's assets. If the courts do that, the labour movement's response must be all-out strike action.

Anywhere and everywhere that militants have the strength and the influence to organise it, there should be immediate indefinite strikes.

We should demand that the

TUC supports the NGA and calls an immediate one-day general strike if the union's funds are seized, while launching a campaign to prepare for an all-out general strike if the Tories and employers don't back down.

'General strike' may seem a million miles from where the trade union movement is today: but in the class struggle depression and quiet anger can quickly change into action — given leadership.

Shah prints his papers on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, and the NGA is calling for pickets from Tuesday morning to Friday morning.

The factory is on the Winwick Quay Trading Estate in Warrington (Exit 9 off the M62, just after the Burtonwood Service Area).

The issue will be: can the trade unions function as trade unions, or are they to be shackled by the state? Can the courts deprive a trade union of its ability to function just because it tries to pursue an industrial dispute in a militant way?

Agitation to prepare for strike action should start now. NGA leader Joe Wade has talked about bringing out Fleet Street, and that would be a good start.

In the meantime, we need hundreds and thousands on the Warrington picket line.

The picket on the night of Tuesday-Wednesday 22nd-23rd was the biggest night-time picket yet. At 2am, when Shah

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"It's vital that you join us"

On Thursday of last week the High Court made an award against the NGA for £50,000 because the NGA had refused to accept an injunction against picketing.

The union is defying that. They are refusing to pay the fine, and they are going to increase their efforts on the picket line.

It's vitally important that other trade unionists, particularly at rank and file level, join us and support us, sending resolutions through to their trade union executives, asking them to support the stand the NGA is taking.

A victory for the NGA would be a victory for the trade union movement. And it would be a warning to the government that the movement is not going to accept their legislation.

As far as the TUC is concerned, we hope the General Council will support us. But if

RAY WILLIAMS, Secretary of the Liverpool Branch of the NGA, spoke (in a personal capacity) to Socialist Organiser about the dispute with the Messenger Group of newspapers.

not, we believe that we can rely on the rank and file of the trade union movement, and they in turn can show the General Council that they are not prepared for the trade union movement to stand idly by while trade unionists are victimised.

Our branch has thrown itself 100% into the campaign. We have responded to the best of our ability to the leadership that has been given by our NEC.

We have organised mass pickets at Warrington, mainly

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EDITORIAL

How did it come to this?

THE unanimous defiant stance taken by the leadership of the NGA towards the £50,000 fine for contempt of court is the best possible answer to the miserable retreat sounded a week ago by the Executive of the Post Office Engineering Union.

The POEU decision to comply with a Court injunction and call off its "blackening" of the privateering Mercury consortium, was their first decisive step down the slippery slope towards surrender to the Tory privatisation of British Telecom. The NGA decision not to pay the fine, and to fight any further legal moves against the union, could provide the vital focal point for an all-out fight to defeat the Tory anti-union laws.

In a series of High Court actions, the POEU, NUJ, NGA and TGWU Shell strikers have been made the subject of injunctions against almost all forms of action, from 'secondary' picketing through 'secondary' blackening and strike action, to the writing of letters to advertisers urging them not to patronise newspapers in the strike-hit Messenger group.

In his judgement against the NGA last week, Mr Justice, Eastham pointed out that a previous injunction had restrained the NGA from "interfering with the business" of the scab Messenger Group, where six NGA members remain victimised!

"If there are continued breaches of the injunction, the time may well come when this union must be taught to obey the law by having all their assets sequestered."

This brazen, arrogant statement of class justice expresses the essence of the Tebbit and Prior Acts — to paralyse union action and render it ineffective.

Against such attacks by the employers, utilising the judicial machinery of the state and egged on by a brutal government committed to crush the power of the unions, workers have an obvious answer: massive, generalised strike action — a General Strike in solidarity with the NGA and against the legislation and the government that brought it in.

Massive strike action forced the last Tory government to free the five Pentonville dockers jailed under Heath's Industrial Relations Act in 1972; and when the AUEW was threatened with the sequestration of its assets under the same Act in 1974, a call for a national strike brought an anonymous donor to pay the outstanding fine and emergency moves to repeal the Act.

Yet in 1983 the call for an all-out General Strike — no matter how correct and necessary — seems so wildly unrealistic that we have not been able to use it for our front page headline. Why is this? What has happened to the trade union movement?

In the final few months of the last Labour government, TUC leaders agreed to a "Concordat" voluntarily restricting trade union rights. This reactionary policy was not withdrawn even after the election of Thatcher to office in 1979. Far from uniting the workers' movement to fight the Tories, the TUC chiefs focused instead on isolating those sections — such as the steelworkers — who went into struggle. A token Sunday demonstration against the Prior Bill in 1980 was followed by a May 'Day of Action' in which hundreds of thousands of workers ignored TUC pleadings and took unofficial strike action: but that proved to be the end of the TUC's fight, not the beginning.

By 1982 it was the Tebbit Bill that was being pushed through, with TUC leaders still in full retreat. It is significant that in seeking support for the NGA's stand today against the courts, Joe Wade is forced to look back to the decisions of the Special TUC of April 1982 as the last time anything resembling concrete opposition to the Tory laws was adopted as policy.

With this record of surrender of union rights and betrayal of day-to-day struggles on jobs, wages and working conditions complementing the demolition-squad, dole queue policies of the Thatcher government in industry and the public services, massive blows have been struck at the self-confidence and organisation of the working class, making calls for a general strike seem completely far-fetched.

But, as repeated struggles have shown, there remains a reserve of unbroken militancy at rank and file level. The task is to find ways to tap this strength, and create conditions for the all-out general strike action that is needed to defend our unions.

Demands for a one-day General Strike and for preparation for more extended action in defence of the NGA must be placed on the official leaders of every union and the TUC as a whole. Yet we should remember the experience of the early 1970s: then, too, the union bureaucrats tirelessly and fruitlessly sought compromise with Heath, while the real resistance came from the rank and file. Only when hundreds of thousands of dockers, printworkers and engineers were already out on strike did the TUC call a one-day General Strike in defence of the Pentonville 5.

Our demands on the TUC must rest on taking forward the fight for action at rank and file level — through supporting strikes, blackening action and mass picketing, to secure the basis to force a General Strike and to keep control of the action in the hands of the rank and file.

Left "unity" in the post-Kinnock era

Letter from Peter Hain, vice-chair LCC

Dear Comrade Hain,
Thank you for your comments on our reply to the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC) Open Letter.

Your rejection of coalitionism is convincingly scornful. And yet... you don't actually take up the point we made, which was not that the LCC is coalitionist, but that certain layers of the left are, layers which overlap at certain points with the LCC.

You support Neil Kinnock. Some LCC leaders are in Kinnock's entourage. Kinnock chaired a Labour Party Conference fringe meeting at which Eric Hobsbawm advocated such policies. The implication was that Kinnock, and others who have jumped on Kinnock's bandwagon, might be less scornful of coalitionism than your letter is.

Let's hope your attitude to coalitionism is and remains dominant in the LCC.

Unfortunately, you also ignore many of the other points in our reply to your open letter. The question of Stalinism, for example, (which, in turn, is closely tied up with coalitionism).

On this, too, you could probably have cited your own anti-Stalinist opinions. But everybody knows that layers and regions (Scotland, for example) of the LCC are tainted — and on certain questions, deep-dyed — with Stalinism.

And it is no small question, comrade Hain, nor can our raising of it now be dismissed as mere factional expediency or malice.

Perhaps our comments about your 'electoralism' were unjust. You do advocate more than mere electoralism. Yet it is not at all clear to us that you practice what you preach. And, comrade Hain, you can't hope to practice what you preach against narrow electoralism in tandem with Neil Kinnock.

Why did you not respond — if only 'for the record' — to what we said about the LCC's relationship with the new Kinnock leadership? Your comments would have been very interesting, especially some explanation of the LCC's refusal to back the left's candidate for Leader of the Party.

You ignore our central reply to your proposal for 'unity' around Kinnock and the new status quo — that it is a demand on the serious left to disarm and a veiled threat that it will be isolated or expelled if it doesn't.

Let us briefly restate the case. The status quo is not what the serious left has been fighting for.

THANK YOU for reprinting in full the Labour Co-ordinating Committee's 'Open Letter' (November 3).

So far as your response to it is concerned, nobody on the "serious left" could take exception to the broad terms of the platform for activity you suggest, as indeed you appear to take no exception to the LCC's 11-point plan for unity in action, though we would certainly dispute detailed points and particular emphases.

For the record, it is absurd to claim that the LCC is interested only in electoralist campaigning when we have been the major group on Labour's left consistently arguing for extra-parliamentary action and for mass politics, to replace the parliamentarist and resolutionary politics which still dominate the left in the Party. It is equally absurd, not to say malicious, to imply that we might favour some fantasy of a coalition with the Alliance.

In the New Socialist of Spring 1982 I was co-author of an article warning of the dangers of coalitionism and uncompromisingly opposing it. The LCC's pamphlet, 'Re-alignment on the Right', also published in 1982, is the only serious Labour exposé of the ideological threat posed by the Alliance. We have been, in short, one of the few groups on Labour's left who have given serious attention to opposing the Alliance. It may suit the sectarian self-interest now characteristic of Socialist Organiser to pretend otherwise, but you cannot escape these basic facts.

Yours fraternally,
PETER HAIN (vice-chair, LCC)



JOHN HARRIS

There are no rational reasons to believe that a Kinnock Labour government will be much better than those of Wilson and Callaghan. It might even be worse.

It is true that right now a Labour government, even under Denis Healey would be a great step forward and of course all members of the Labour Party will fight to kick the Tories out and put Labour in no matter who leads it. That isn't sufficient. That won't sort out our problems.

You seem to forget that Thatcherism is the product of the repeated failures of Labour in office.

We would not dispute that in electoral terms Kinnock is an advance over Foot or Callaghan, though we feel you exaggerate the political difference between

Kinnock and Foot. You are also right that Kinnock would not have been elected without the Electoral College.

But the decisive measure of Kinnock must be taken not

against the past but against the future. Kinnock has to be measured against what the labour movement needs to do to drag Britain and the labour movement out of decay and disintegration.

To sincerely settle for Kinnock and for what he stands for is to be ensnared by a mirage created 'by the interplay of Labour's wretched past on one side and by the pressure of Thatcherism on the other. It is to brutally scale down the hopes and aspirations of the last four years of discussion and struggle in the Labour Party — and of socialism in general. The vote for Kinnock shows that many have been persuaded to do this.

The LCC is foremost amongst them. Naively sincere or cynically career-serving? We don't know for sure and it doesn't affect the results — that you are now part of the new Establishment. That, in these circumstances, the appeal for unity by the LCC which was the first group to break up the unity of the left in the Rank and File Mobilising Committee — is in fact a ploy by that establishment against the serious left which continues to hope and work for better things than Kinnock is likely to bring.

It is not with malice — factional or otherwise — that we note the shifts and changes of the LCC. The implications of this and other symptoms of left retreat are too serious for the entire left to leave us any room for satisfaction.

But, comrade Hain, it is certainly with a great deal of hypocrisy that the LCC now talk to the left about 'unity'.

Finally, we were surprised that you didn't comment on our point that a number of proposals are OK, if commonplace. Are you prepared to discuss with us a campaign on workplace branches?

Yours fraternally,
The Editors

Witch-hunt: fight on!

SATURDAY'S Labour Against the Witch-hunts AGM will be a scaled down affair compared to the founding meeting a year ago, when over 100 CLPs sent delegates to discuss reisting the witch-hunt then in full flight and dominating the Party.

The general election, defeats at October's conference, and the pressure for unity, have taken their toll.

Clearly there is a hope in the Party that the witch-hunt will just go away. And there has been some shift amongst those who have fought in the last year.

Hammersmith North CLP are still refusing to kick out Militant Editorial Board member Keith Dickenson, but the most recent GC decision was only carried on the chair's casting vote. In Islington South, the issue is postponed pending a discussion with Peter Taaffe and Ted Grant to find out their views.

The conditions to fight are not as favourable as they were a year ago, but the problems should not be exaggerated. The recent defeats and the mood for unity behind Kinnock are not the only factors in the situation.

The major event since the Conference, the expulsion of Tariq Ali for his ideas, has reinforced the wishful thinking of many that a 'new' witch-hunt hasn't started, only the 'tidying-up' of an old one.

And the dithering of Militant itself has had a damaging effect. It is much more difficult to

launch a fight in defence of people who don't appear to know what they want to do.

More importantly, as the Hammersmith vote showed, a solid core still does want to fight and a section of the left is prepared to give them firm support.

Last week's meeting of the Campaign Group of MPs decided, following a delegation from LAW, to issue a clear statement defending the right of CLPs against attacks, and in the meeting there was support for the strategy of defiance.

In this situation, the main issues for the LAW AGM are: rallying support for those Party organisations that are still fighting; publicising the local incidents of the witch-hunt already underway, and which will continue to break out; and patiently explaining why the witch-hunt will continue and its inevitable effects.

This work, particularly in the trade unions, is essential for preparing the resistance that will be needed when the Party establishment relaunches the purge in full earnest.

1984 Trade Union conferences LAW will shortly be circulating model resolutions for the 1984 Conference. The deadline for a number is soon, in the case of ASTMS and NUPE, the December meetings.

Copies available from: LAW, 11 Wilderton Road, London N16.

One overboard in Brent

AMBROZINE NEIL, Labour councillor in Brent, North West London, has applied to join the Tories. This means that Labour's tenuous hold on the Council, on the Mayor's casting vote, has gone.

Neil was for a time a member of the small 'left' group of councillors. The issue which has provoked her departure is the refusal of the Labour Party to support her demand for independent black schools in the borough.

She can't expect much support from the Tories for this, but they will certainly consider her demand that head teachers should have the right to sack teachers they regard as incompetent and for greater discipline in schools and her oft stated desire to close schools within the borough.

Her departure will also undermine the struggle against the cuts on the District Health

Authority. No doubt the Labour councillors who voted against will be replaced.

Ironically, Neil herself was one of them.

With 32 Labour, 31 Tory and three Liberal councillors, the Liberals now hold the balance in Council and have said they will negotiate with both main parties. There will be many in the Labour Group anxious to stitch up a deal with the Liberals to continue in office and to continue what they have seen as their task over the last four years — to cushion the impact of cuts on the borough's population, rather than fight them outright.

The local Labour Party has to ensure that there are no deals made. The Tories and Liberals can be expected to use their new found power to put up council rents, run down services and jobs and introduce privatisation.

POEU: time is running short

By Ricky Houston

CONTINUING resistance by the POEU to privatisation of British Telecom now owes more to decisions by BT management than the union's National Executive.

Following the union conference — which had supported the NEC's decision to abide by a court ruling and accept defeat in the campaign against Mercury — POEU General Secretary last week began moves to wind-up the whole privatisation campaign.

On Tuesday, Stanley and other POEU national officers met BT management.

Exactly what happened at that meeting is not known but it is clear the right wing in the union were planning to wind down the action which had led to more than 2,000 London members being in dispute.

To create the best conditions for this to be done at the NEC meeting scheduled for later in the week, the Industrial Action Strategy Committee, which has a majority who were opposed to this policy, was prevented from meeting.

Though lobbied by a delegation of locked-out union members, the NEC voted 13-10 to instruct half of them back to work from Monday of this week on the basis that their action could not be financially sustained.

Yet it seems BT management were not prepared to accept Stanley's gradual timetable for calling off the action. On Friday they issued stringent conditions for a return to work — that everybody out must go back, that they must sign an undertaking to take no further industrial action, and that they would be subject to a final warning against them for a prolonged period of at least a year.

This rendered the NEC policy inoperable.

Opposition was also developing amongst the rank and file of the union. The London members taking action were incensed at the attempted sell-out and ten London branches called a national meeting for Monday morning. This meeting provided potentially a crucial means of organising a fight back.

A Socialist Organiser leaflet distributed at the meeting called for the following:

*The full wages policy (for

strikers) has to be reversed and a more normal policy of strike pay or hardship allowance adopted which will not limit action and which could be sustained by the trade union movement. Fresh appeals for finance should be made to other unions.

*The ten London branches should continue to meet and liaise to administer this if necessary and to organise the action.

*Today's meeting must not simply demand that today's meeting continues and develops the current action (and no more retreats) but that the current action will continue irrespective of decisions or instructions from the NEC.

*If this leads to further action by BT management, possibly sackings, it should be met by a call for all-out strike action in London and appeals for support to the rest of the country, particularly the major centres. Pickets should be sent from London to ensure that the action is spread.

*Branches should prepare for this situation, form committees to organise picketing and prepare the ground for a national strike.

*Bryan Stanley is now calling the tune in the union and now controls the NEC majority. Effectively the old right wing are back in control. Today's meeting should therefore press for the hard left on the NEC to break with the soft left and align themselves with those who are prepared to fight.

The situation could not be more urgent. Unless action of this kind is taken, and today's meeting may be the last chance to take it, it may be only a matter of time before all resistance to privatisation is wound up."

Fewer than 100 turned up and no propositions were even put. Significant absentees were the ten NEC members who had defied Stanley. The only NEC representative was Tony Young, leading Broad Left member and now the Union's vice-president, but operating with great dexterity as the right wing's main cuckoo in the Broad Left's nest.

Regrettably it seems even now there are some in the Broad Left who retain illusions in Young and have not drawn the conclusion that any worthwhile fight from now on will be as much against the NEC majority as BT.

The time is rapidly running out for another Broad Left organisation.



IF IT comes to the crunch, the Liverpool City Council will call for a local general strike against Tory-imposed cuts.

There were 20,000 demonstrators in Liverpool last Saturday, 19th, to back up this declaration by Councillor Derek

Hatton.

Liverpool NGA Branch Secretary Ray Williams also spoke, appealing for support on the picket lines in Warrington for the Stockport Messenger dispute.

The demonstration was called

jointly by the City Council — which, since the Labour victory in the May election, has been deliberately 'overspending' above Tory limits — the Merseyside County Council, the District Labour Party and the Trades Council.

Labour Party Chair Eric Heffer was there, and called for a combination of extra-Parliamentary and Parliamentary action to defend services. Neil Kinnock pleaded a 'prior commitment'.

Cyprus: call for action

By Jeremy Corbyn MP

THE declaration of independence by the government of Rauf Denktash in Northern Cyprus is a very serious escalation of the 1974 invasion by Turkish troops.

It is very worrying that the division of Cyprus by this means puts back the day of reunification and real independence for

Cyprus, and despite the vague protestations of the British government it is clear that the declaration of UDI could only have taken place with the connivance of the junta in Ankara led by General Evren.

It is very important that there

be rapid action by the Labour Parties in North London and their MPs to argue against the UDI declaration and for the reunification of the island in accordance with the 1960 Treaty and the UN resolutions that have been passed on several occasions.

A suitable wording would be:

"That this . . . Party condemns the declaration of UDI by the Government of Rauf Denktash in the Northern part of Cyprus and affirms its belief that Cyprus should be reunited as soon as possible.

Genuine reunification can only take place when all foreign

troops are removed from Cyprus and the UN resolution is carried out by the Governments who were signatories to the 1960 Treaty.

We further condemn the Government of Turkey for its support and approval of the declaration of UDI and the failure of the British government to take any concerted action on this.

Accordingly the Party agrees to sponsor an urgent public meeting on the situation in Cyprus with speakers from the Greek and Turkish Cypriot Community and the progressive forces in Turkey."

Tories "fine" student union

By Jane Ashworth

A £30,000 fine is hanging over the head of Warwick University Students Union. The University Council, in the wake of a sit-down protest against Sir Keith Joseph, during which he was pelted with eggs and flour, have threatened to withhold the money from the Union if it organises another 'unruly' demonstration.

Since Rhodes Boyson changed the way student unions are funded, making them dependent on negotiations with college managements, student unions have been exposed to this sort of attack. A fine now means a deduction at source. The union doesn't have a choice about whether to pay the fine or not.

The student union is campaigning against the fine. So far, the students are boycotting services which the University runs and the union duplicates. University-run coffee bars are boycotted this week.

'Free speech'

Warwick's management protest they took the decision without government prompting. Joseph supports the action and other Tory front benchers are demanding a restoration of 'free speech in the universities'.

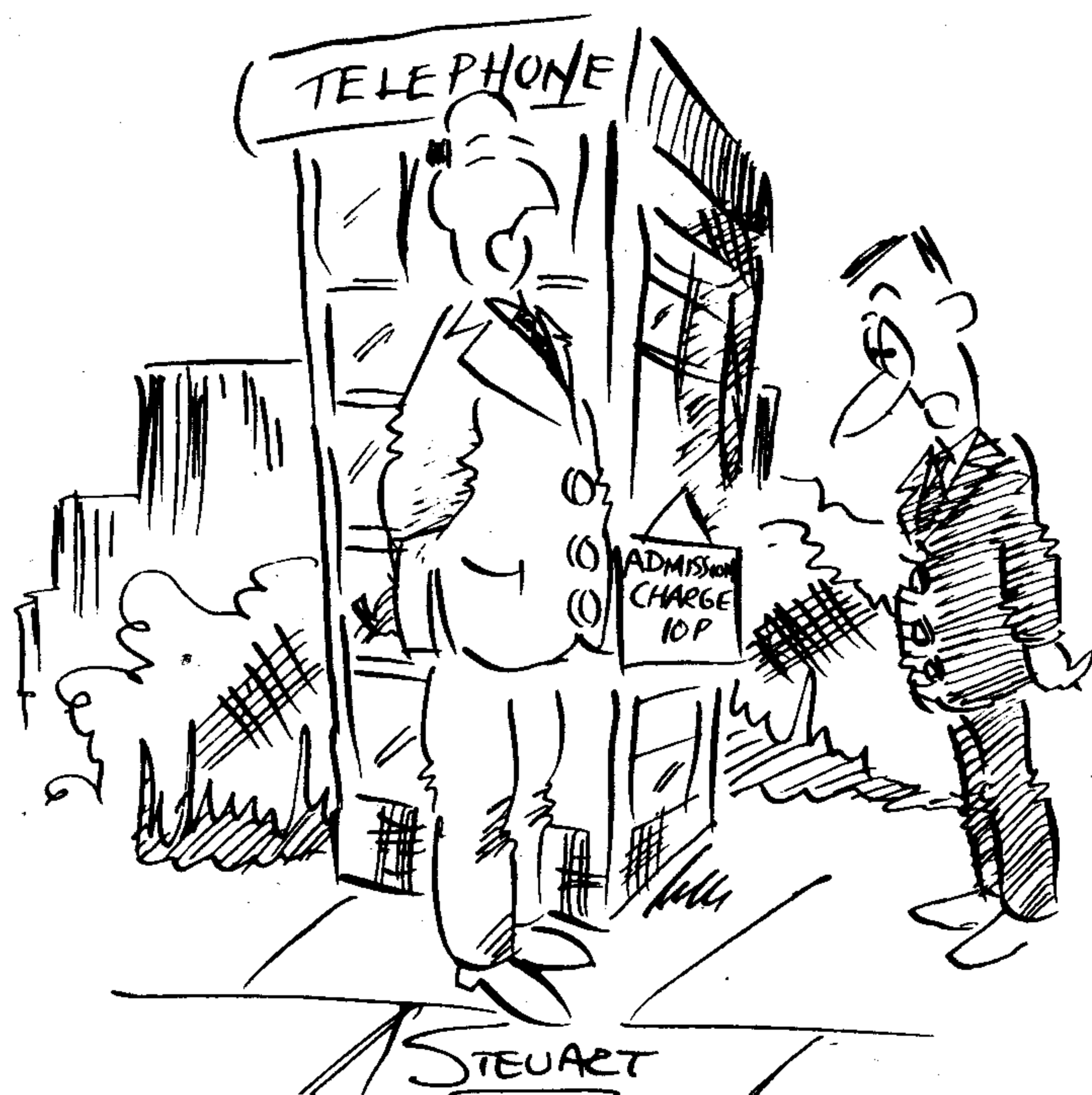
Patrick Jenkin, the Environment Secretary, is campaigning for Manchester University

Students Union to be fined for the heckling which cut short Heseltine's speech and the red paint which splattered him. So far the Bursar of the University has refused, arguing that it would be impossible to prove that student union members were responsible and so any action would be unjust.

The clampdown comes just a month after the Attorney-General circulated all student unions and college authorities with a letter urging college managements to vet student union spending.

Student unions are charities and not allowed to spend their money as they wish. Payments which are outside the prescribed limits are known as ultra vires payments. The law is very vague and there is an enormous grey area. In effect, payments are legal until proved otherwise. The Attorney-General now wants colleges to play the role of the courts and decide themselves what is an illegal payment.

At the same time Leon Brittan is renewing the Public Order Act. Leaks suggest that changes to be made will ban the peace camps and give the police the right to ban sit-downs as they can ban demonstrations.



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Tory kick at disabled

TO THE anger of hundreds of lobbyists and many more of the country's 5.5 million disabled people, Tory MPs turned out last Friday to block a Private Member's Bill to outlaw discrimination against the disabled.

Amid claims from Thatcher's "Minister for the Disabled", Tony Newton, that the Bill — sponsored by Labour MP Bob Wareing — would cost £33 million per year to implement, it was voted down in the Commons by 210 votes to 164.

Newton later refused point blank to offer any pledge of Government legislation to replace the defeated Bill, which would have made discrimination against the disabled illegal, and set up a disablement commission, with 50% of its membership drawn from the disabled.

The problems in employment and in daily life which this Bill is designed to combat have intensified massively under the Tory government's public spending cuts — which have eliminated large numbers of jobs in the public sector suited to

disabled workers.

And in industry, too, the ruthless drive for speed-up and plant closures has destroyed previous protected areas of employment for disabled workers — forcing those who could stand the pace out onto production lines or out onto the street.

The Wareing Bill would not by any means have tackled all of these problems: but it represented an acknowledgement of the needs of the disabled. And the Tories' categorical refusal to spend a puny £33 million on improving the lives of 5.5 million oppressed people is a fair indicator of the government's attitude to those in need of care and support from the state.



LAST week's news of cutbacks in housing benefit affecting tens of thousands of the lowest income families was followed up on Monday by a miserable 3.7% increase in pensions, some 1.3% below the current inflation rate. The increase for a single pensioner is £1.20 a week — while deliberate Tory government policies have jacked up prices of gas and electricity, with particularly severe impact on the elderly.

New Windscale scandal

THE issuing of a High Court injunction against Greenpeace protestors blocking the discharge of nuclear waste into the Irish Sea comes after a fortnight of growing publicity for the hazards of the nuclear power programme.

Demonstrators who carried a consignment of radioactive sludge from the seashore near the Windscale nuclear processing plant, and dumped it in Downing Street, grabbed the headlines when they succeeded in scaring police into blocking off the whole area.

Then, this last weekend, came the admission that nuclear waste had been washed up on the

Cumbria coast. Soon afterwards Windscale workers claimed that the level of radioactivity in the waste was higher than had been officially announced.

According to a Guardian report, the amount actually discharged into the sea could be as much as 14 times the amount acknowledged by the authorities.

Of course the Windscale processing plant does not just deal with the waste from nuclear power stations: it also produces weapons-grade plutonium for British and US warheads and is part of the complex industrial process which backs up the British "deterrent".

Nuclear power stations are in reality bomb factories which produce electricity as a by-product. In the USA, where — unlike Britain — the facts can be investigated, it has been shown that over 98% of nuclear waste originates from military rather than civil projects.

It is high time the labour movement took action to shut down the nuclear energy plants until such time as a workers' inquiry is satisfied that safe answers have been found to the problems of waste disposal, and that the by-products will not be diverted into weapons production.

Day for Gay Rights

"AS a result of the work put into the Nottingham District Labour Party's Equal Opportunities Working Party last year by members and supporters of the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights, the Nottingham City Council now has an Equal Opportunities Policy which commits it to recognising the needs expressed by the gay community in the city.

The first tangible result of the adoption of the Party's Equal Opportunities Policy was a consultative meeting two months ago when 47 lesbians and gay men met the Leader of the Council and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Equal Opportunities Committee. From that meeting two working groups of lesbians and gay men have organised a one-day conference for Saturday 3 December which has been supported by the City Council.

This is one of the few occasions when a local authority outside of London has actively supported the self-organisation of the gay community. Local LCGR members are working actively to publicise the demands of the gay organisations in the city.

The Labour Campaign for Gay Rights has become the most vocal and active of the gay organisations in Nottingham. Members are also preparing to greet the Labour Party's Local Government Conference, being held in the city next spring, with a new Broadsheet outlining the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights' policies relating to local government employment and services. A working party of members was set up to draft the document at last week's quarterly meeting held in Coventry.

Equal Opportunities Day for Lesbians and Gay Men in Nottingham
Saturday 3 December 1983
9.30am — 4.00 pm
International Community Centre, Mansfield Road
Admission free
Creche provided

Where were you on that day?

MILLIONS across the world paid tribute this week to the American President who has done most to represent the hopes and dreams of ordinary people.

Since his firm confident face first graced the White House portraits Americans have learned a new respect for their country.

And it has been a trip down memory lane for Americans who thought pride in your nation was a thing of the past. It is not yet four years since President Ronald Reagan entered the White House. Yet already he will go down in history alongside the great American presidents.

That tragic day when President Reagan was hit by an assassin's bullet lives on as a moment of shock for the whole nation.

Almost incredibly, ask anyone in America or Britain where they were when they first heard that the bullets had struck, and they haven't got a clue. Most have even forgotten altogether that Reagan was shot, and then tragically recovered from his wounds.

Martyrdom

Those few seconds of grainy film have seared into the consciousness of the nation. (Query to editor — check whether he was shot or knifed, I forget now).

But it is not for martyrdom alone that Reagan will be remembered. His decisive military interventions around the world with American advisers changed the map of the world.

Some countries disappeared altogether. Others like Grenada were changed almost beyond recog-

Press Gang

By Patrick Spilling

nition. The chances of a Soviet military base on this tiny island were dramatically reduced when Reagan had it dismantled sod by sod and reassembled half a mile from the Eastern coast of the United States, as a new venue for the US Golf Open.

His plan to invade Vietnam — breathtaking in its vision and ambition — was wrecked by lesser minds in the American administration — and his determination to prevent Nicaragua falling into the hands of a Government backed by foreign people set a model for the rest of the world.

He was a much loved figure and in Cuba in particular his name was often on the lips of the population as they went about their happy-go-lucky ways, piling sand bags, positioning anti-aircraft weapons and practicing their air-raid drill.

As the anniversary draws close the anecdotes about the Reagan administration flourish — his youthful face painted on with powder; his winning habit of forgetting the name of the country; his amazing ability to read his autotune unaided. These all make up the great American legend.

But it is for his more solid political achievements he deserves to be known. There was his largely unsung work in the poorer quarters of American cities teaching citizens to be less dependent on the state and to

rely more on the capabilities of their own hands.

He reshaped the face of American trade unions, sympathetically setting a model in the air traffic controllers union that few others would dare to emulate.

Foreign policy was his forte. Often he would sit with Nancy in his Oval Office, idly spinning a globe and stabbing it suddenly with his finger. "There", he would say. "That's our next base."

He made technology beyond the reach of poorer countries like Britain available in vast quantities and his supplies of Cruise missiles did much to keep Europe on its toes.

Despite some carping critics he did much to break down the Cold War, preferring to transform it into a red hot battle zone fought well away from his own borders.

In the Middle East, in the Far East, in Europe and in the ghettos of America, thousands, nay millions will stop for a moment when the anniversary comes and pause in what they are doing. They will put down a blood soaked bandage or stop chewing the crust of bread they liberated from the dustbin, and they will give thanks for an American President who did so much.

Coming soon, in a major TV production. Reagan — the Day After.

Urgent we learn from the March

This review by Clare Munday of 'Diary of a People's Marcher' is reprinted from Peckham Labour News.

THE DIARY, covering the period May 8 to June 5, was kept by 17-year old Satvinder as an account of this year's People's March for Jobs. An article by Labour Party member Tony Purtil, reprinted from Tribune, appears at the back of the booklet.

The diary describes the day to day progress of the march from Ellesmere Port to London, and there are some good moments: leaving Wolverhampton to the claps and cheers of nurses outside a hospital, and later factory workers, who joined the march; food and entertainment provided by the Indian Workers Association in Walsall; in Leamington Spa a meal in the Sikh Temple.

But these events were overshadowed by disturbing accounts of heavy handed stewarding, infrequent and undemocratic meetings, and above all, constant attempts to silence and even expel marchers.

There was widespread disagreement over which chants and slogans were 'acceptable' to the national organising committee, and there seems to have been a clear intention to keep the march as broadly based and non-party political as possible.

Given the history of the past five years it seems incredible that the connections between monetarism, Thatcherism and unemployment on a massive scale could have been ignored on a march of unemployed people from one end of the country to the other.

Even more incredible, given that a General Election was called during the period of the march, were some of the 'official' chants that stewards tried to impose: 'What do we want — Jobs. When do we want them? — Now'; 'All we are saying is give us a job'; 'We are the Merry marchers' (!).

The mood of the march was gradually subdued by the controls imposed on it:

"May 18 — For a couple of days it has seemed that the march is past the point of being changed. The opportunity, the people and the money is being totally wasted."

"May 31 — When we arrived in Hemel Hempstead I was told that people waiting for us didn't

even know we had arrived until they actually saw us. That's how silent the march was."

Peter Cashman, a Labour Party member expelled from the march on May 15 urged people to raise GMC motions condemning the apolitical nature of the march.

On October 28 the South London Press reported that Harriet Harman had 'slammed' the booklet, and had called for a 'probe' into why it was published.

Actually, she had written to Southwark Council for Voluntary Service, whose Employment Unit had loaned Southwark Unemployed People's Action the money to print it, asking how this fitted into their employment strategy, given their use of public funds.

At the time she had not read the booklet, only seen a flysheet headed, 'How Politics were kept out of the People's March'.

Misrepresentation in the press is nothing new for the labour movement, so perhaps we should not overreact when we see headlines like those of October 28: 'Jobless March 'Fiasco' Book Slammed By MP. But although the journalist later apologised to Harriet for misrepresenting her, and offered her the right of reply, she declined the offer, and also one from Peckham Labour News to put the record straight on her objections.

It seems to me that the labour movement must now, as a matter of urgency, properly examine the issues raised in this diary, and repeated in Tony Purtil's article as well as in several Trades Council motions, about the organisation of the People's March for Jobs.

Or are we trying to keep politics out of the Labour Party too?

Jobs rallies

Joint union rallies organised by the Triple Alliance of the nationalised mining, rail and steel industries have been planned for union leaders to put the case for jobs, proper working conditions and defence of publicly-owned industries, in major cities over the next month.

New technology is a central theme, with a demand that it is used to bring greater safety and better health to workers rather than increased unemployment.

These will be in Cardiff (Wednesday November 23), Birmingham (November 30), Glasgow (December 6), Newcastle-on-Tyne (December 8) and Sheffield (December 14).

Diary of a People's Marcher and "How politics were kept out of the People's March"

50p

50p for a single copy, 40p per copy for 5 or more, and 30p per copy for 20 or more, from Employment Unit, Southwark CVS, 135 Rye Lane, London SE15. Cheques payable to Southwark CVS. Please add an amount for postage.

Take up the Bill for Equal Pay!

By Gerry Byrne

WHEN the government halfheartedly introduced its own amendments to the Equal Pay Act, they were described by one Tory MP as:

"Bastard regulations, born of the Equal Opportunities Commission and sired by the European Court of Justice. It may be the other way round, depending on which of those two organisations is the more butch."

If there were a prize (the golden vomit-bowl?) going for the most concentrated expression of sexual bigotry, this comment would probably be a front-runner, combining as it does hostility to women's rights, lesbians and single parents and their children in one neat metaphor.

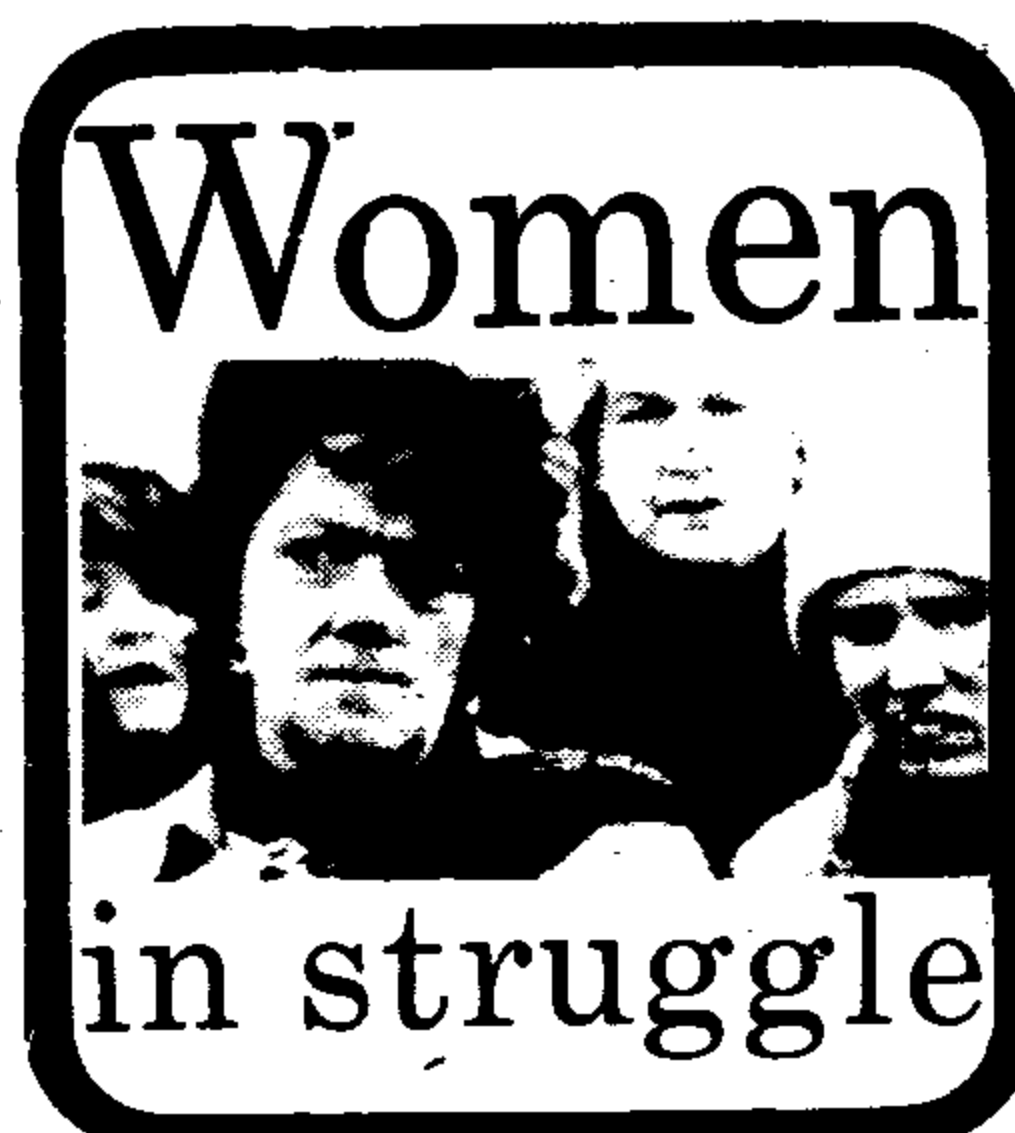
Yes, you may say, but this is just the ignorant prejudice of one neanderthal Tory (with apologies to the neanderthals who probably had far more progressive views than that!). Doesn't it just underline how far equality legislation has now become accepted that this far from progressive government is itself concerned to close the notorious loopholes in the Equal Pay Act?

Well hardly! The government only introduced these changes under pressure from the European Court and then withdrew them after opposition from the Lords.

Not sufficient

And they were hardly far-reaching changes in the first place; they may not have even been sufficient to bring us in line with European regulations. Certainly, they would not have gone very far in tackling the widespread discrimination and prejudice that present legislation cannot touch.

For that, a much more comprehensive and integrated



approach is needed. We can't expect that to come from this government. However, we do now have a chance of organising for such a policy. Jo Richardson, Labour spokesperson on Women's Rights, has drawn up a Private Member's Bill which seeks to fill the loopholes in existing laws and widen their scope.

The Equal Pay Act, for example, made only a small dent in the differential between men's and women's earnings because it didn't deal with sexual segregation at work. When women are ghettoised into low-paid sectors where there aren't men doing comparable work, the Equal Pay Act doesn't apply.

The most exploited and underpaid section of the workforce, part-time and homeworkers, have no recourse to it since the Act only allows for comparisons to be made where jobs are identical. Jo Richardson's Sex Equality Bill proposes to bring these areas into line, by enabling comparisons to be made between part-time and full-time work of equal value.

At present, there is no protection at all for gay and lesbian workers from dismissal or discrimination. Most cases of unfair dismissal brought to tribunals by homosexual men and lesbians have upheld the

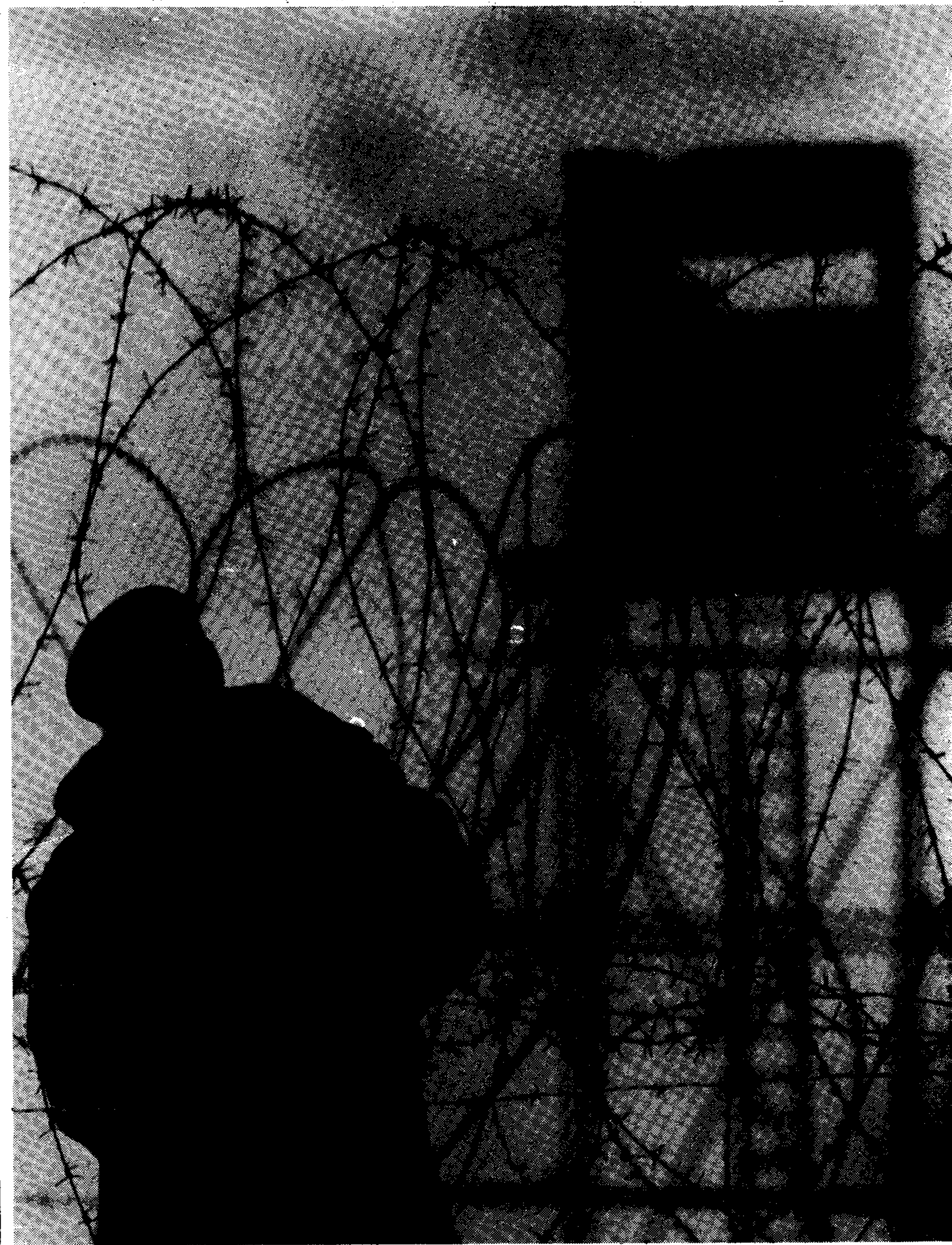
employer's right to discriminate. The Sex Equality Bill will make this unlawful.

One of the sickening ironies of previous (Labour) government-sponsored anti-discrimination legislation is that it didn't apply to those areas the government is most responsible for, taxation, pensions and benefits. The new Bill proposes that discrimination in these areas be outlawed too.

Expectation

Although the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts didn't deliver much in the event, the expectations they raised in the minds of working women laid the basis for a whole series of independent women's struggles round pay and job opportunities. We should use this Bill to similarly raise women's awareness that discrimination and unequal treatment are still rife and make this the start of a campaign to eliminate them.

For December 9, if your MP can be expected to be sympathetic, write/lobby and press her/him to be there to vote for the Bill. Campaigners are advising that if you expect a negative response from her/him then don't bother to remind them to turn up and vote it down!



"Fooled you that time!"

Greenham impact

Once again the latest opinion poll figures indicate the impact of the struggle against Cruise missiles spearheaded by the Greenham women.

As the Greenham struggle has come back into the headlines in the last two months, there has been a marked strengthening of support for the unilateralist position on nuclear weapons. This is particularly the case amongst Labour voters, where according to Marplan there has been a strong increase in unilateralist support to 45% of those questioned.

And Reagan's invasion of Grenada has increased popular distrust of US imperialism among 54% of men and 62% of women.

Further evidence of the impact of the Greenham struggle on opinion is to be found in the combination of repressive moves planned or currently implemented by Tories to break up the existing peace camp and outlaw any further camps.

All this underlines the importance of a maximum turnout at Greenham on the December 11 Day of Action, and supporting action in the trade union and labour movement.

Boycott this women's 'Conference'!

THE anger and resentment at the way the Women's Organisation within the Labour Party is treated with indifference, hostility or cynical knowingness by the Party tops, finally exploded this week-end at the London Region Women's Conference.

The National Women's Conference clashed with the election campaign and was therefore "postponed".

After the Election we were casually informed, without a shred of consultation, that the three-day conference had been cut down to a one-day, non-voting rally on the theme of defence of public services against privatisation — a worthy issue and one that concerns every woman in many aspects of her life. But hardly a substitute for the national policy-forming conference.

Over 200 resolutions had been submitted for the conference — reflecting the importance given to it by women's sections in a situation when election fever made it difficult even to meet to formulate resolutions.

No proposal has come forward as to what will happen to these resolutions, nor any idea of how the priorities of the national Women's Committee will be decided in the absence of a conference.

The general response from women has been a furious frustration. We are angry, but what channels are there to express this when we've lost our national conference?

The other response has been a bitter resignation: what can we do? We'll just have to make the best of it. But this is just what is expected (and exploited) of women. We don't like it but

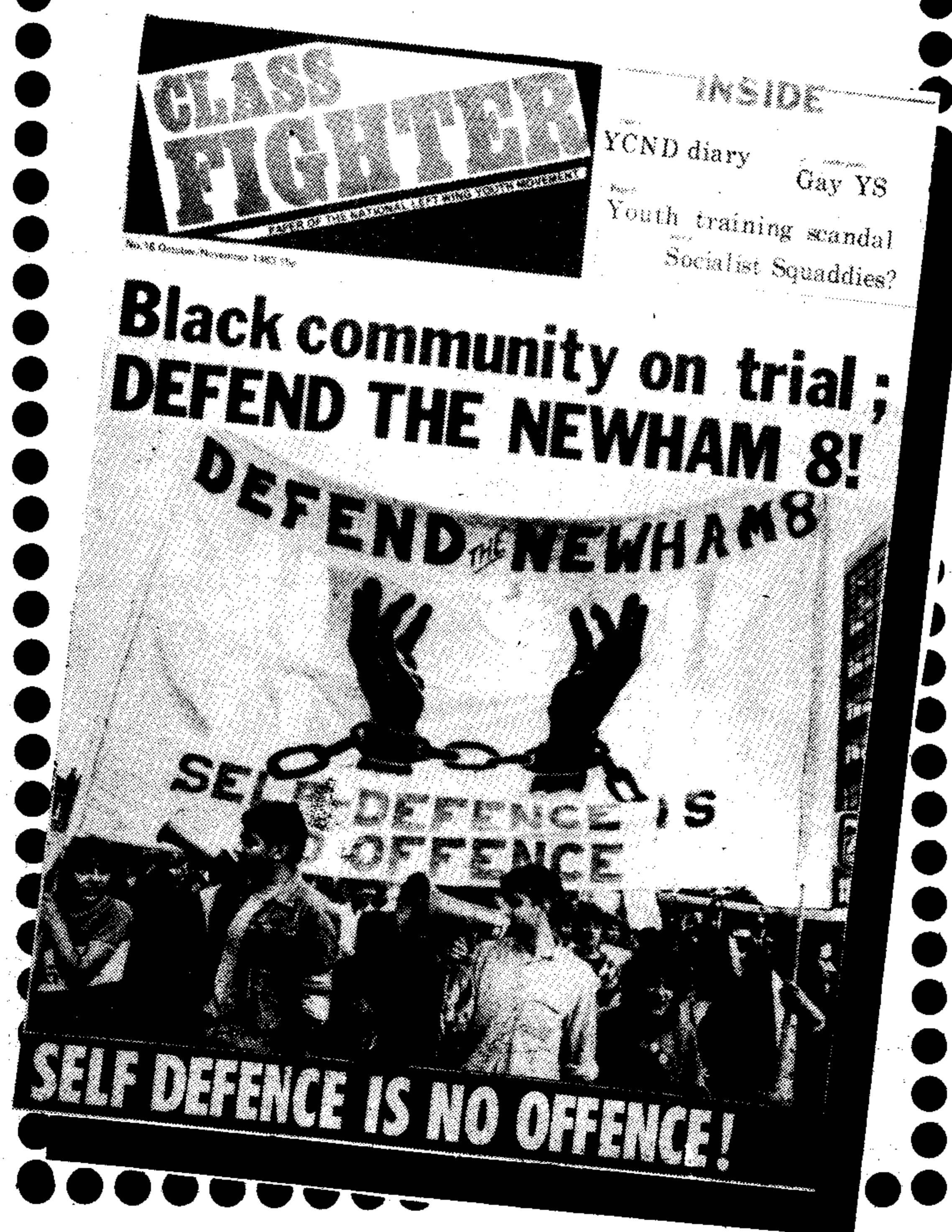
we'll put up with it.

But at the London Region Labour Party Women's Conference, we finally had a chance to express our anger and determination not to put up with it.

Several resolutions had been submitted deploring the cancellation of the Women's Conference. Many saw it as the Party bureaucracy seizing the handy excuse of an election to shut up a troublesome section of the Party.

A resolution was passed calling for a boycott of the one-day "conference" on December 3 and a picket has been called and an alternative event is being organised to inform and involve those from outside London who will turn up to the "conference".

New issue of Class Fighter now out — 12 pages for 15p plus postage from 214 Sickert Court, Essex Road, London N1 2SY.



VOICE OF Solidarnosc

Voice of Solidarnosc is published fortnightly by NSZZ Solidarnosc. Subscription rates are for six months [UK] and £10 for six months [overseas]. Cheques and postal orders payable to NSZZ Solidarnosc should be sent to the NSZZ Solidarnosc Information Office, 314-3 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1R 4DP. Tel: 01-837 9464.

International news

20 years later Behind the Kennedy myth

By Harry Sloan

FEW politicians anywhere in the world command the semi-mystical cross-class adulation of assassinated US President John F. Kennedy. Yet an objective appraisal of his politics shows no reason why socialists should cherish his memory.

Good-looking, filthy rich, and rabidly anti-communist, Kennedy was able to wrap up much of the politics of the preceding Eisenhower and Truman administrations in a new veneer of "liberal" razzamatazz and demagoguery about a "New Frontier" and the "torch" being taken by a new generation.

He scraped home to victory over Richard Nixon in 1960 by the narrowest margin that ever elected a President, having spent liberally from his father's estimated \$200-\$400 million fortune to back his campaign.

Get moving

Kennedy's campaign had focussed on a pledge to "get the country moving again" after the 1958 recession and eight years of cautious book-balancing Republican government under Eisenhower.

But he had also banged the Cold War drum, with incessant allegations that Eisenhower's restrained military spending had allowed the Soviet Union to take the lead in nuclear weaponry, opening up a "missile gap".

The "gap" proved to be a costly and disastrous fiction, for which working people in the USA and on a world scale are still paying — in the form of the arms race.

Kennedy also wrapped himself in "liberal" colours with a vote-catching phone call to Martin Luther King's wife while the civil rights leader was in jail: but once in office, Kennedy himself and his administration did little to oppose legal 'Jim Crow' discrimination against blacks in the South. Only when blacks themselves took to the streets in ever greater numbers during 1963-4 were first Kennedy and then Johnson forced into concessions designed to prevent any political break by black voters from the established two-party line-up.

The administration's initial civil rights bill aimed at taking the black struggle off the streets



Black civil rights leader John Lewis, addressing the Washington March in August 1963: "Listen Mr Kennedy, Listen Mr Congressmen, Listen fellow citizens, the Black masses are on the march for jobs and freedom and we must say to the politicians that there won't be a 'cooling off' period". "I want to know, which side is the federal government on?"

and into the courts was described by black militants as "too little, too late", while Kennedy himself continued to appoint racist judges, and presided over federal government persecution and even FBI murder of black activists across the country.

Kennedy's domestic economic policies were a quaint mixture of traditional Democratic liberalism, with increases in federal spending, together with tax cuts across the board, huge incentives for businesses, and a massive increase in the arms budget, which after two years in office had reached \$56 billion and was soon to soar way above this with the Vietnam war.

Arms race

This vast expenditure was allocated both to nuclear weapons (in the rush to close the fictitious "missile gap") and a big expansion of the "conventional" arms and manpower available.

Former Ford executive Robert MacNamara was brought in as Secretary of Defence, and between them these two men swiftly launched the biggest arms race in history.

By 1967 the stockpile of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles had been increased from 200 under Eisenhower to over 1,000. A new fleet of 41 Polaris submarines was deployed carrying 656 missile launchers. 600 long-range nuclear bombers were in the front line: 40% always on high alert.

On the "conventional" front, Kennedy in 1961 put a \$3.2 billion additional military budget through Congress and extended the armed forces by 300,000 men.

He set up a counter-insurgency force to stamp out revolutionary struggles in Asia or Latin America; later to become notorious as the Green Berets, they were lavishly supplied with the best officers and men, superior equipment and special privi-

leges.

And his stance in opposition to revolution in the Third World took tangible form on the one hand providing tied "aid" through a new "Alliance for Progress" and in support for "reformist", anti-communist regimes; and on the other in the Bay of Pigs fiasco, in which CIA-financed exiles failed in an attempted invasion of Castro's Cuba.

In the aftermath of this humiliating setback Kennedy ordered the CIA to arrange to assassinate Castro — a task which they repeatedly plotted, to little effect.

In the Dominican Republic, Kennedy arranged with rather more success for the CIA to do away with the embarrassingly savage pro-US President Trujillo: but the question of a stable anti-communist successor remained unresolved.

As Kennedy saw things, there were three possibilities, in descending order of preference: "a decent democratic regime, a continuation of the Trujillo regime or a Castro regime. We ought to aim at the first, but we really can't renounce the second until we are sure that we can avoid the third."

Santo Domingo

In 1961, as a prelude to Johnson's later military invasion, Kennedy sent a task force to lie at anchor off Santo Domingo in an effort to shape events to the satisfaction of the US State Department.

Kennedy's belligerent defence of the Western presence in Berlin was another source of conflict in a turbulent first year of office.

Refusing to negotiate any settlement with Kremlin leader Khrushchev, Kennedy bolstered US armed forces in Europe by 40,000 men and made televised speeches insisting that West Berlin could and would be militarily defended at all costs.



Jack and Jackie Kennedy: good-looking and filthy rich.

On August 13, 1961 Khrushchev responded to this by the building of the Berlin Wall which consolidated the division of Germany — a "solution" which suited the Kremlin Stalinists as much and as little as the Western imperialists.

Brinkmanship

But it was in his 1962 naval blockade of Cuba against the siting of Soviet medium-range missiles that Kennedy lent a new dimension to the term "brinkmanship", coined but not implemented by the preceding Eisenhower/Dulles administration.

With the entire world fearing imminent nuclear destruction, Kennedy secured a climbdown by Khrushchev over the missiles: but in turn conceded a pledge not to invade Cuba, and the withdrawal of obsolete US medium-range missiles from Turkey.

Though Kennedy has been posthumously praised up for his involvement in the 1963 Test Ban Treaty, it should not be forgotten that the Kennedy-MacNamara arms build-up gave a long-term and lasting twist to the arms race, inaugurating projects which are today bringing poisonous fruit in the form of Pershing, Cruise, MX and Trident missile systems.

And perhaps Kennedy's most lasting bequest to the American people and the world as a whole was the Vietnam war, which was only in its formative stages but well under way before his assassination.

Advisors

Under Eisenhower, only a few hundred US "advisors" had been bolstering the Diem dictatorship in South Vietnam: by the end of 1962 there were 10,000 and by November 1963 there were 15,000, with a rapidly growing influx of equipment.

The incoming Texan President Johnson was to change little in Kennedy's policies at home and abroad: before long, following the paths laid down by the Boston "liberal" the USA was to be fielding 500,000 troops in a brutal, doomed war for imperialist domination in Asia.

The continuity of these policies was obscured by Kennedy's assassination: and since that time the Kennedy myth has assisted the American ruling class and union bureaucracy to contain and counter any pressures within the US workers' movement for a political break from the twin parties of capitalism and the belated but necessary building of a Labour Party based on the unions and organisations of the oppressed.

US threat hangs over Central America

By Terry Smith

AS THE threat of US military intervention hangs over Cuba, Nicaragua and El Salvador, it is not only leaders of the Castro and Sandinista regimes who have issued stark warnings of the consequences.

Even renegade former Sandinista Eden Pastora (whose 3,000 US-backed "contras" are conducting cross-border raids into Nicaragua from Costa Rica in efforts to topple the regime in Managua) has warned Reagan not to send in the marines.

It "would be a very big mistake", he told a press conference in the USA. "The whole Nicaraguan people would fight back".

"When we talk about an invasion of foreign forces, we're not just talking about the Sandinista forces resisting, we're talking about the force of the whole Nicaraguan people. In Grenada the country was being run by one crazy man, General Hudson Austin, with an army of 100 crazy people who didn't fight. In Nicaragua you have 100 crazy people, but thousands of Nicaraguans who will fight."

Pastora's line is merely a statement of obvious fact: for the USA to invade Nicaragua would be a military operation more on the scale of Vietnam than any repeat of the Grenada invasion.

Even tougher would be any prospect of a US invasion of Cuba, though contingency plans for this are known to exist and a US naval task force is conducting sinister manoeuvres off the Cuban coast.

Cuban Vice President Josel Paul Viera last week warned that US landing would mean that "there would be blood everywhere, in the streets, on the beaches, on the farms, as the people resist the invader."

The 20th anniversary of Kennedy's assassination has drawn attention back to the 1961 Bay of Pigs fiasco in which the USA tried and failed to promote a "pump-priming" invasion by Cuban exiles expecting to trigger an uprising against Castro; now no serious US observer can expect that more than a tiny handful of reactionaries in Cuba would support or tolerate an outright imperialist invasion.

But even in El Salvador, where a US-backed junta remains in power, the success of an American military intervention cannot be guaranteed.

Despite vast transfusions of cash and equipment, and extensive US training of Salvadorean officers, the army itself is facing a major crisis of morale as it confronts a renewed and strengthened offensive from left wing FMLN guerrillas.

One US observer declared candidly that "the initiative has passed to the guerrillas", as State Department chiefs assessed their next moves. Increasingly army units are surrendering to guerrillas without a fight — handing over supplies of US-financed weapons.

The squads that remain united — such as the US-trained "crack" Atlacatl battalion — are scarcely any less of an embarrassment, with their repeated massacres of innocent civilian men, women and children. The most recent of these was the slaughter last week of more than 100 people in the towns of Copapayo, San Nicolas and La Escopeta.

The Reagan administration has declared that it might resort to direct military involvement in El Salvador if there seemed a danger that the FMLN might take the capital. It is plain, however, that such an intervention would be no swift, "surgical" strike but a long-term, open-ended counter-insurgency battle with every danger of spreading onto a regional level engulfing other countries of Central America.

Whether Reagan believes that to bog down US forces in such a struggle would be less of an electoral liability in 1984 than a possible loss of control by the present ruling junta could be the most decisive factor in shaping events.

There is no doubt however that the heavy handed threats of US intervention lent added credence by the Grenada invasion, have already had an impact in holding back the development of any solidarity or more overt military links between Cuba/ USSR and Nicaragua, and between the Sandinistas and the FMLN fighters in El Salvador. Apparently FMLN leaders themselves are beginning to hold back for fear that too many military victories could provoke US involvement.

This in turn strengthens the hand of the reformist politicians who represent the Salvadorean FDR opposition, as they seek out some form of deal with the US imperialists.

In this endeavour, too, the pace of events and the outcome rests at present with the decisions of Reagan and his State Department and Pentagon advisors.

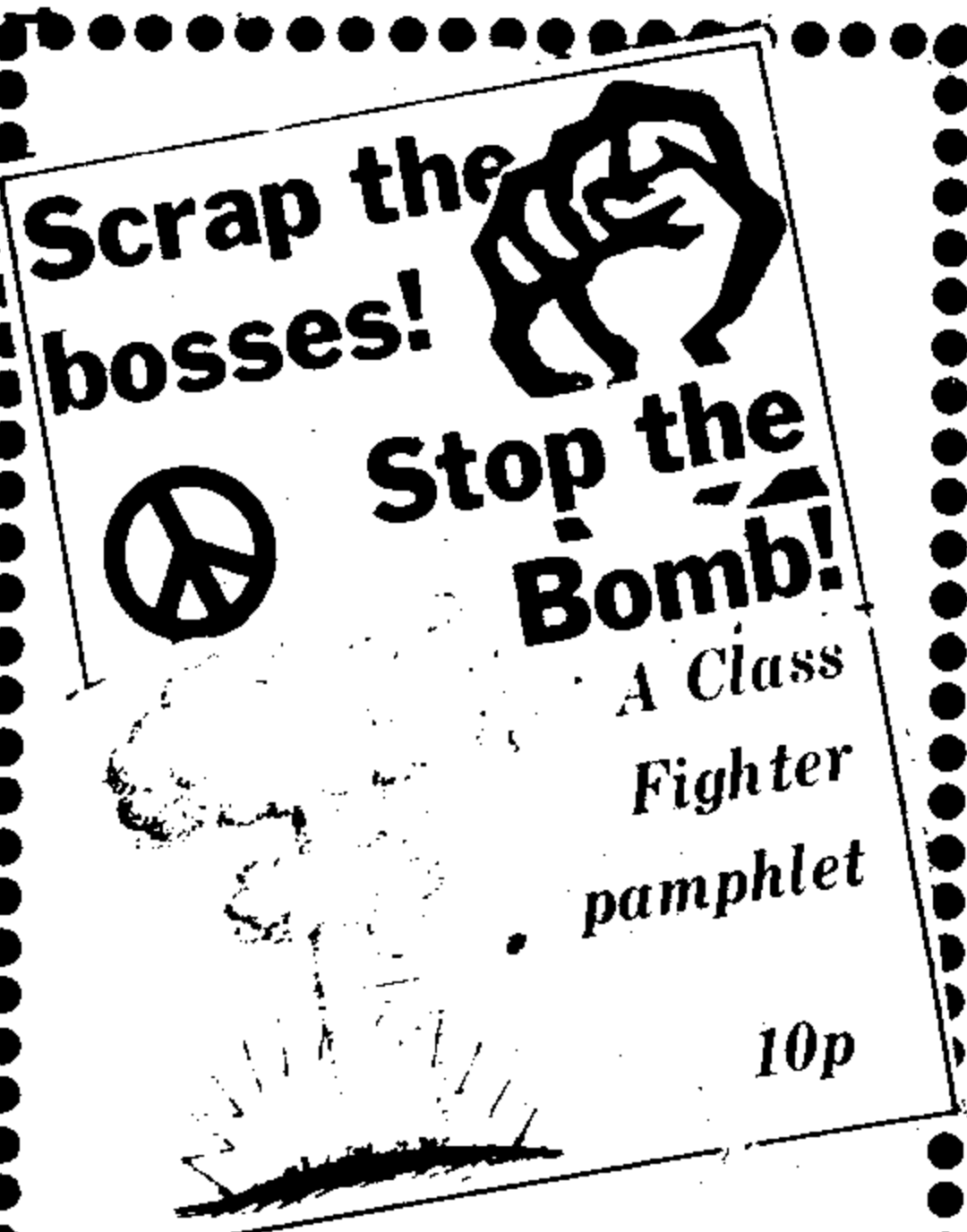
The only way in which this stranglehold can be broken through is working class action in the USA and internationally in solidarity with the struggles of the workers and peasants of Central America and the Caribbean against imperialism, its "contra" armies and death squads and its stooge regimes.

Labour Group for Human Rights in Sri Lanka

PUBLIC MEETING

TQNY BENN
JEREMY CORBYN, MP
Rajes Balsubramaniam
(Labour Group/Tamil Women's League)
John Chowcatt (ASTMS)
Speaker from EELAM
Solidarity Campaign

THURSDAY, Dec 1, 7pm
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International news



North and South

by Paddy Dollard

Sectarian killings in Armagh

THREE men were killed and seven wounded last Sunday when the crowd of men, women and children at a Pentecostal church service at Darkley in Catholic South Armagh was machine-gunned.

An organisation calling itself the 'Catholic Reaction Force' has claimed responsibility and threatened more sectarian slaughter. Nobody had heard of the Catholic Reaction Force before, and it is probably a name of convenience for some other organisation — probably, according to the best available informed guesses, the Irish National Liberation Army.

This sectarian atrocity has all the marks of a calculated political provocation. The Orangemen don't need much provocation.

Every incident leads them to renewed calls for draconian measures by the British Army against the Catholic community. The Official Unionist Party has now withdrawn from Mr Prior's Northern Ireland Assembly, already boycotted by the Catholic SDLP and by the five elected Sinn Féin representatives).

This leaves the Paisleyite Democratic Unionist Party as the main organisation still in the Assembly, which looks about ready to be interred. The OUP is calling for internment without trial for Republicans.

Darkley is the latest in a long series of spectacular sectarian slaughters in the last decade, many of them in South Armagh. In 1976 ten Protestant workers were taken off a bus and slaughtered there by the local Provisional IRA, in retaliation for the earlier sectarian killing of five Catholics.

Of the 1584 civilians who died

in Northern Ireland between 1971 and June 1983, many have been slaughtered just for being Catholic or Protestant. Far more Catholics have died this way than Protestants. The Protestant backlash against direct rule after 1972 took as one of its weapons indiscriminate sectarian slaughter of Catholics.

The Republican movement has always denounced sectarian attacks, but inevitably the logic of 'tit for tat' and 'fighting fire with fire' has attracted some 'Republicans'. There is also, it must be said, an undergrowth of sectarian feeling in the Catholic community, whatever the Republican politicians may say.

The Provisional Republicans have denounced the sectarian attack, and so has at least part of the INLA's political front, the Irish Republican Socialist Party. But the INLA is an extremely loose and uncoordinated organisation. It is also — according to recent testimony in Belfast courts — heavily infiltrated by state provocateurs.

One interpretation of the attack in Darkley is that it is part of a growing conflict between the INLA and the Provisional IRA. Irish newspapers have carried reports of clashes between the two groups on both sides of the Border, and of kidnapping of IRA supporters by INLA.

The IRA's turn to politics has led it to tone down some of its militarism. Martin McGuinness, abstentionist Sinn Féin assemblyman from Derry, has publicly attacked the INLA for aspects of its mindless militarism.

Many acknowledged INLA actions can only be understood as attempts to stir up sectarian conflict — the attempt to kill Paisley, for example.

The West German Social Democratic Party (SPD), which in government agreed to the siting of Pershing missiles in US bases in West Germany, has voted overwhelmingly to overturn this position. Only 14 out of 400 delegates voted against the motion to oppose deployment.

Estimates vary as to the number of Chileans who joined the massive demonstration in Santiago last Friday: it seems likely that over 500,000 turned out to take this first legal opportunity to protest since the 1973 coup. This follows on continual displays of illegal opposition to the Pinochet regime throughout this year. Pinochet has now stated that legal recognition of certain political parties will be enacted "by 1986".

EDITORIAL comment recently published in the underground Warsaw weekly 'Tygodnik Mazowsze' concerning the present situation in Poland.

A YEAR ago many of us believed that "the spring will be ours" and that it would not be long before we can pressure the authorities to make concessions. However, it gradually became apparent that neither demonstrations nor strikes would bring about the changes we hoped for. The feeling of joyful unity and strength that grew after the passivity among many people. It was believed that, particularly after the unsuccessful actions on 10 November, such feelings would be shared by a large part of society, the more so because the hopes that were pinned on the anticipated lifting of martial law does not even give the appearance of a compromise, but is an open prolongation of military government during a time of peace.

Those who believed that the underground had been crushed by the police and that Solidarnosc would not be reborn have been supported in thinking this way by (official) propaganda. Skillfully exploiting and spreading feelings of defeatism, it demonstrates how the authorities have won the war. In practice it looks more or less like this: Silesia is mining ever more extra tonnes of coal; provincial centres of the PRON (Patriotic Council of National Salvation) vote for social accord; and carp was available at Christmas.

Meanwhile we see on TV how the militia have been capturing those in hiding, confiscating printing presses, breaking down various points of social resistance, while remnants of the underground give themselves up each day at the voivodship (regional) militia stations.

Influenced by TV and the whispered propaganda of the SB (Secret Service), the picture of "full normalisation" is supposed to emerge.

Is this the end of Arafat?

By Terry Smith

AS fighting between PLO loyalists and Syrian-backed rebels reached into the city of Tripoli this week, there is every sign that Syrian President Assad is ignoring Soviet pressure and hell-bent on wiping out Yassir Arafat as PLO leader.

Strong signs that Assad's position is at odds with Soviet policy include the arrival in Damascus of a ministerial team from the 'non-aligned' movement, including a Cuban representative. Cuban foreign policy is complementary to that of the Kremlin, and certainly no Cuban minister would publicly urge a truce in Tripoli without the endorsement of the Moscow leaders.

But the pressure appears to be too little and far too late to save the beleaguered Arafat, as does the wave of increasingly bitter criticism of Assad from the Arab rulers of the Gulf states who have provided the bulk of the PLO's funding.

While Assad is ready to receive and to utilise Soviet armaments, he is determined to use them for his own purposes and nothing else.

Thus Syrian fighters and missiles have remained idle during

Poland: "Don't be discouraged"



Solidarnosc leaders have pledged to fight government plans for increased prices. But a new winter brings in its train a new catalogue of shortages.

Has resistance really faded out completely? Is NSZZ Solidarnosc only a slogan without any real programme of action? Did the authorities manage to strangle all independent initiatives?

The existence of Solidarnosc is undoubtedly less obvious than during the first months of the "state of war". Demonstrations are out of the question, symbolic protest actions in factories are rarely organised, Solidarnosc flags and posters rarely appear and union badges are no longer worn.

At present, the union's activities have little effect and are scarcely noticeable to an outside observer, because they are aimed at building structures and forms of activity which will survive not just for months but for years.

Of course, some of the activists have been leaving, but those who remain are determined to continue the arduous and often unthankful work for the union,

and are prepared to take enormous risks.

Many secret Solidarnosc cells are active, particularly in the large factories and universities. They take care of the victims of repression, collect financial aid, distribute the press and organise a boycott of collaborators. They undertake activities which aim to prove the presence of Solidarnosc in workplaces.

Slogans

The following is a lovely example from the Warsaw Polcolor television factory. On the first anniversary of the "state of war" the factory walls were stamped with the slogan "Remember December", together with the image of Walesa and the Gdansk crosses; a Solidarnosc flag had been hung under the ceiling in one of the production departments, which remained there for two days; leaflets were billposted, underneath people lit candles and lay down flowers; a list of collaborators was hung up.

Despite intensive efforts by the SB they were unable to destroy the regional or inter-factory committees which exist in many places. The members of the TKK (Temporary Co-ordinating Commission) remain free. In several cities Radio Solidarnosc broadcasts its programmes. A widespread, unceasing boycott of the regime's unions is continuing, in the first place this

involves their trade unions. In size they are very small, weak and completely isolated from the workers in those enterprises. It seems very unlikely that they will gain any popularity.

The publication movement is undoubtedly the most important and the most vital part of underground life. Dozens of independent publications appear. They are less numerous today than six months ago. On the other hand, more of them appear regularly and have a higher print run and regular writers and readers. From the very beginning of the war the Wroclaw newspaper 'From Day to Day' has been published, numbering 260 issues already, and the Warsaw Informacja Solidarnosci has had 108 issues printed. Factory newspapers are, for their social circles, important centres of independent activity.

Publishing

The publication movement creates widespread underground structures which are not always linked with Solidarnosc. Every such initiative activates dozens of co-workers. Literary and political circles are also emerging. Apart from the large "prewar" publishers, such as the Independent Publishing House Nowa or the Circle, there are "wartime" publishing houses, for example Warsaw's CDN or the Poznan Publishing House Syzyt. They print material that has no chance of being officially printed — from ambitious publications on modern history to human and war poetry. We only become familiar with some of these independent publications (such as the Karakonsze Publishing Association when PAP (the Polish Press Agency) informs us that they have been liquidated).

It is difficult to estimate the number of people whom the independent press or books actually reaches. By supplying information and influencing the opinion of thousands of people, the independent publishing movement moulds the consciousness of the generation which will decide about the future shape of Poland...

Reprinted from Voice of Solidarnosc no. 74

Hands off BT!

'Stop Privatisation of British Telecom'

Public meeting called by the Islington Labour Parties

Monday December 5, 7.30 at Central Library, Fieldway Crescent, N5. Speakers include Jeremy Corbyn MP, Jock Campbell, and a member of the POEU Executive.

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THE Orange General Strike of May 1974 was the third great watershed in the modern history of Northern Ireland (the first was the Catholic revolt after 1968, and the second was the abolition of Stormont in March 1972).

It was the Protestants, and especially the Protestant working class, who defeated Britain's attempts to remould the political structures of Northern Ireland — at most the Republicans had played the role of detonator to the Protestant bomb which exploded in a General Strike.

After the destruction of Britain's overall strategy by the Orange General Strike, there was stalemate. Essentially, it has continued for ten years, during which the British government has defended the status quo in the Six Counties, leaning heavily against the Catholics to do it.

Northern Ireland was carved out for rule by the Protestant majority. Britain had to abrogate that rule in 1969 and abolish it in 1972.

Majority rule was abolished because it was recognised as inevitably being Protestant sectarian rule.

Then power sharing proved impossible because of the determined opposition of the Protestants. But the unavoidable conclusion, that the whole entity is unviable, has been resisted and rejected by British governments, Labour and Tory alike.

The result has been a long stalemate.

After the General Strike toppled the power sharing Executive, it took the British government a long time to recognise that its whole strategy had been destroyed.

In 1975 they tried having a Constitutional Convention elected to hammer out an agreed power-sharing arrangement. But that experiment merely showed once more that the Protestant and Catholic communities can reach no agreement within the Six County framework.

One of the clearest proofs of this was the fate of William

By John
O'Mahony

Craig, who was cut down as Brian Falkner had been before him.

Craig had been the Six County home secretary responsible for the batoning of the Catholic civil rights marches in October 1968. He had founded the very powerful Protestant Vanguard movement to organise Protestant resistance after the abolition of the Six County Home Rule Parliament at Stormont.

He had made blood-curdling speeches about slaughtering Catholics. He seemed to have great influence. Then in 1975, he advocated a voluntary, temporary 'wartime' power-sharing arrangement with the Catholic constitutional nationalists of the SDLP. (The SDLP was then a great deal less green nationalist than it is now).

He was instantly discredited and isolated, within the Assembly and within Vanguard.

In its final report, the Protestant majority in the Convention recommended the restoration of Protestant majority rule in the Six Counties. Britain decided that it had no option but to continue direct rule.

All this had been entirely predictable.

The Labour government of

The Protestant backlash continued to gather force in the 1970s

Part two of a series

The six county cockpit

1974-79 has many things to answer for. Ireland is somewhere at the top of a long list.

Let us retrace and sum up its record.

In the mid-'60s the Labour government had exerted great pressure for reform on the Six County state. When the sectarian state erupted into incipient civil war in 1969, it sent in the army.

The Labour government sought to have the British army act as a scaffolding to shore up the crumbling Six County edifice while the work of remoulding and reconstructing a political superstructure for it went on.

Senior civil servants were sent in to work in harness with, and in fact to act as commissars over, the Six County government departments.

Now the Marxists could have told the right and left reformists of the Labour Party who put the British army on the streets in Northern Ireland that nothing good could have come of it — and we did. They wouldn't have agreed with us and, by their political nature, probably couldn't have.

But as far as one can judge, they did have the intention, working within the Six County framework and Labour's 1949 Government of Ireland Act, which enshrined the Protestant veto on a united Ireland, to put an end to the decades of Catholic second class citizenship and oppression.

The great crime of the leaders of the Labour Party — within their own standpoint, perspectives and limitations — was their

refusal to learn the lessons of what happened after 1969.

The army, an inevitably crude and brutal tool for police work, antagonised the Catholics. The Protestant backlash continued to gather force in the early 1970s. Then, as we saw last week, the Tories came to power and took control of the situation without Labour's good intentions and tied to their alliance with Orange politicians.

Between Labour's leaving office in June 1970 and its return in March 1974 tremendous events had occurred in Ireland. The Provisional IRA offensive, internment, Bloody Sunday, the Tory government's turn to reform and its abolition of Stormont in 1972, the organisation of the mass UDA and Vanguard, the savage Orange backlash in the form of sectarian murders, the setting up of the power-sharing executive at the end of 1973.

Election

The election which brought Labour back to power simultaneously dealt a massive blow to the power-sharing executive by returning only one of its supporters to Westminster (the present Lord Fitt) out of a possible 12.

A new gale of Orange reaction was gathering as Labour returned to office.

Out of office Harold Wilson had declared himself (in 1971) for movement towards a united Ireland encompassing a 15-year period. In 1972 he had had long discussions in Dublin with the

Provisional IRA leaders.

What did Labour do when it got back in power? It continued on the Tory course. It dawdled and it dithered.

It surrendered to the Orange general strike.

And then, having allowed the power-sharing structure to be smashed, it spent 18 months on the utterly hopeless Constitutional Assembly. It was a government that didn't want, didn't dare, to draw the obvious and necessary radical conclusions — that the Six County entity had failed. So had all the attempts to reform it from Britain, first Labour's, then the Tories', and then again Labour's.

When the Protestant majority demanded majority — sectarian — rule in 1976 and the government declared the Assembly at an end, instead of drawing the necessary conclusions, Labour turned savagely on the Catholic community.

First Northern Ireland secretary Rees, and then his successor Roy Mason, decided that nothing was possible for Britain but to freeze all attempts to find a solution in Northern Ireland (and Ireland). They would just hold the ring. They would let the communities 'sweat it out'. They returned to the policy of beating down the Catholics abandoned by the Tories in early 1972.

Catholics

It was to be war to the death with the IRA — and that meant war on the Catholics, on whose active or passive support the IRA depended. As in 1970-2 it

meant systematically 'searching' — smashing up — tens of thousands of Catholic homes in raids designed as much to intimidate and terrorise the entire Catholic population as to find arms or fugitives. Things go so bad in the black year 1977 that Cardinal O'Fiaich, a constitutional nationalist and no friend of the IRA, protested vehemently on behalf of the Catholic people.

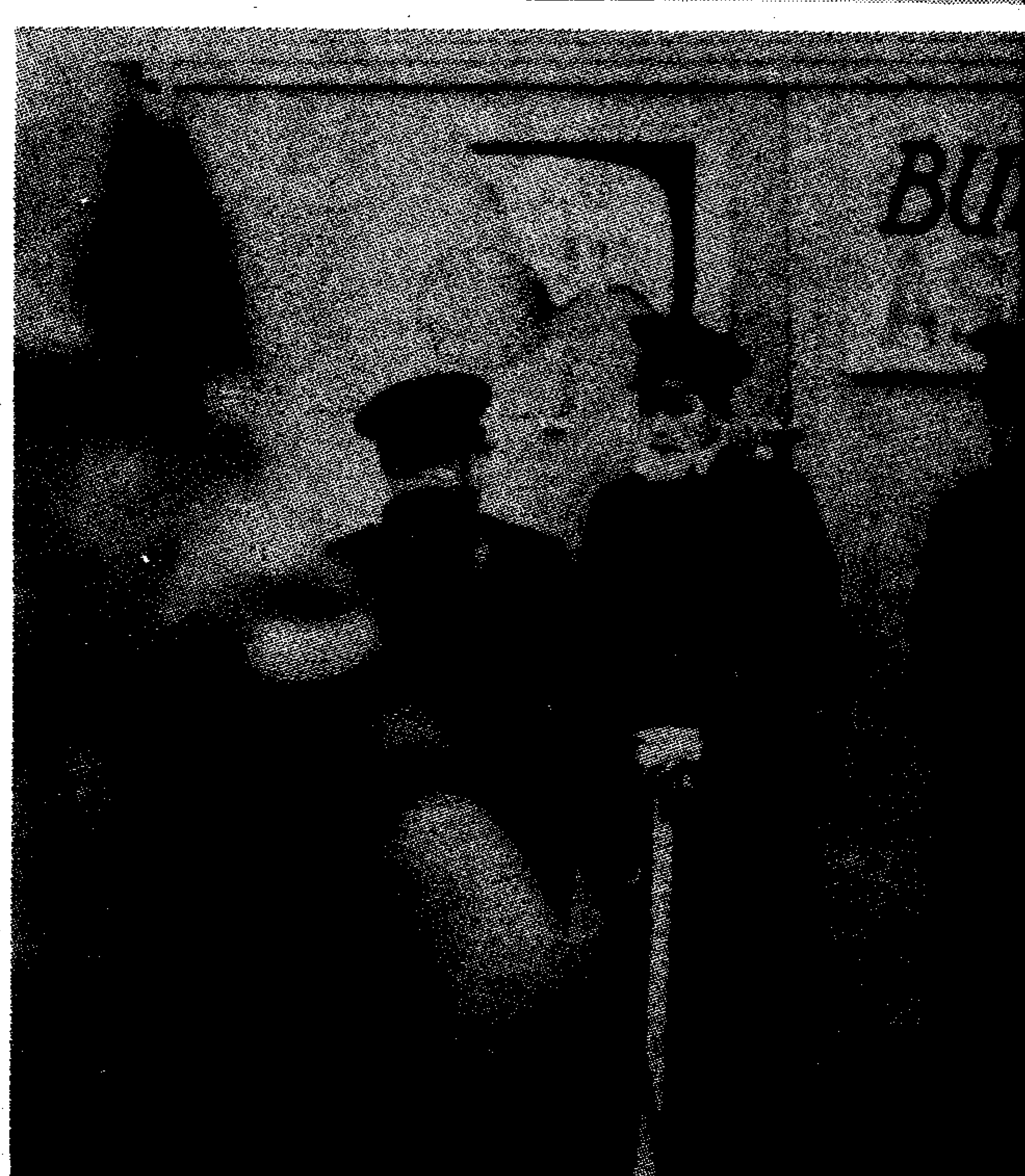
Political rights granted in 1972 — effectively prisoner-of-war status — were taken away from new political prisoners as from 1976, and the five year struggle that ended with the ten dead hunger-strikers in 1981 began.

The political effects of Rees's and Mason's 'sweating-it-out' policy were different in different sectors of the Catholic political spectrum. The policy was supposed to undercut the IRA militarists. In fact it undercut, and may yet be seen to have destroyed, the constitutional nationalists of the SDLP.

Today Mr Prior is visibly anxious to strengthen and preserve the SDLP and stop Sinn Féin, which got 43% of the Catholic vote in last June's elections from driving it to the wall and displacing it or marginalising it as the Catholic party.

A decade ago the SDLP was the very pillar on which the entire British strategy of creating a new Northern Ireland superstructure rested.

It was cobbled together in 1970 by seven members of Stormont, elected under a var-



'B' Specials in 1969

CONFERENCE

IRELAND: PEACE THROUGH DEMOCRACY

Speakers include: Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone and Clive Soley.

Time: Saturday November 26 at 9.30 am.

Place: Edrich Hall, South Bank Polytechnic, Borough Rd., London SE1.

The conference aims to build up support for an end to any British presence in Ireland, an end to the Unionist veto on reunification, and the right of Ireland to maintain its traditional neutrality (i.e. not to be pushed into joining NATO).

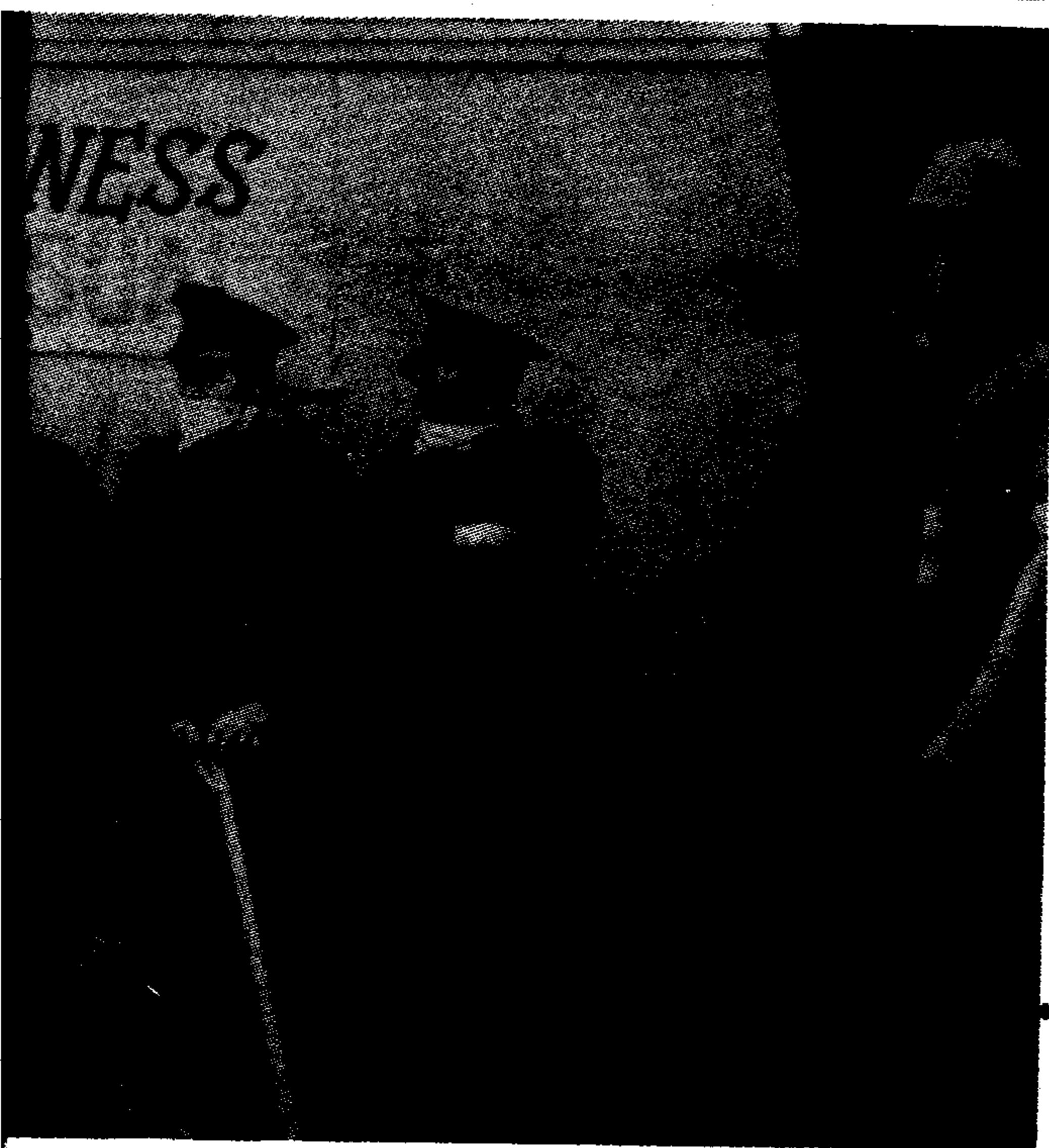
The conference will focus on the situation in the trade unions and the problems of raising the issue of Ireland, particularly where British unions have members in the North.

The conference is open to delegates (£3) and observers (£2). Further information from Box 189, 32 Ivor Place, London NW1.

British troops out



The Provos' last serious advance was in March 1972 when Britain scrapped Stormont



of different labels. One of them, Ivan Cooper, was a Protestant who had been a Derry Labour Party candidate. Fitt was a republican Labour MP and also a Westminster MP. Devlin was an IRA internee and a socialist. Fitt had been in the old constitutional 'Green Tory' Nationalist Party.

John Hume, present leader of the SDLP, was a businessman long linked to the Catholic hierarchy and the Southern bourgeoisie.

Moribund

The SDLP was designed to replace the long-moribund Nationalist Party and to condense the energy of the roused Catholic and others, into a reinvigorated and radical constitutional movement of opposition and reform. The left face was (it was said) to bring it a support wider than the old Catholic-Nationalist Party's. As the struggle escalated the SDLP showed itself capable of militant gestures — organising a rates strike, for example. On the eve of internment in 1972 it withdrew from Stormont in protest at the killing of a Catholic by the security forces. It benefited from the political inattention of the Republic, though it seems that a large chunk of the recent Sinn Féin vote came from previously abstentionist Catholic voters. The SDLP soon over the Catholic middle-class and other support of the Nationalist Party, but it was

more than the Nationalist Party — Fitt, Cooper, Devlin, and even Hume came from a different stable than the old Nationalists. They gave the party its social-democratic face, even though the body was essentially made of the same stuff as the Nationalist Party had been.

Whatever our many criticisms of them, Fitt and Devlin were working-class politicians. Fitt, after being elected to Westminster in 1966, had single-handedly made Northern Ireland an issue in the British labour movement. When Rory O'Brady talked at the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis of 'the personal tragedy of Lord Fitt', it was more appropriate than the widespread jeers.

When first the Tories turned to reform, and then in July 1972 all hope of a Provisional/British government deal had been abandoned, the SDLP came into its own. Britain and the Irish middle class, north and south, both needed the SDLP. For the Orange monolith was shattered.

The combined pressure from Britain and from the Catholic revolt between 1969 and 1972 broke it up. The gentlemen farmers and pseudo-aristocrats who had long been Unionism's 'natural leaders' lost the confidence of the Protestant masses. Private armies and big splinter-groups appeared. Old-style Unionist politicians were either forced into line with them or steamrollered flat.

The last hope of Unionism at

Stormont was hardliner Brian Faulkner, who lasted a year as prime minister up to March 1972.

When, in 1973-4, Britain attempted to substitute power-sharing for the Orange sectarian rule for the exercise of which the Six County state had been custom-built, the Unionism it looked to for support was a disintegrating force.

Unionist leaders who accepted Britain's power-sharing policy and stood out against the Orange backlash faced quick repudiation and political oblivion. Faulkner only kept his place in the mid-1973 election to the Assembly by appearing as an opponent of power-sharing, and got his come-uppance when the Orange elections next got the chance to vote, in February 1974.

In these circumstances the policy of restructuring Northern Ireland on a power-sharing basis became dependent on the British government being able to shift its weight decisively onto the SDLP and the Catholics who backed it — as the big majority

did.

In the Assembly during the first five months of 1974 there was a roughly-equal three-way division:

- The Faulkner Unionists, repudiated at the beginning of the year by the Unionist Party. It had support inside the Assembly which the February 1974 Westminster election had shown it no longer had outside it.

- Allied to them was the non-sectarian Liberal-Unionist Alliance Party, an earlier Unionist splinter, and the tiny Unionist Northern Ireland Labour Party.

- A block of anti-power-sharing Orangemen — Paisley, Craig, etc.

- The SDLP was the stable core of the new regime, with Fitt as deputy prime minister. It was the axis on which the 'solution' (power-sharing and Council of Ireland) agreed between the 26 County and British government and the Northern Ireland middle class rested.

The pro-power-sharing Unionists and the SDLP combined to outvote the diehard Orange bloc

in the Assembly, and the latter were reduced to impotent posturings and gestures. But the Faulknerites had little base outside the Assembly. In October 1974, after the General Strike, anti-power-sharing Unionists got 407,778 votes to Faulkner's 20,454.

The Orange general strike shattered this structure beyond mending.

After 1976, when Britain turned back to beating down the Catholics, the SDLP was out of a role. What is the use of a constitutional political party when there is no Six County political system in operation, and the province is governed directly from Westminster? What happens to the perspective of reform and progress by way of power-sharing and an all-Ireland link-up, when Britain has abandoned attempts at reform, and is trying to beat down the Catholics?

The SDLP began to fester and its components to unravel. It began to shrink back from its social democratic pretensions and broad society-wide concerns and dwindle to its narrowest Catholic communal base and identity. It became more and more 'green' and less 'social-democratic'.

From supporting the British presence, it gradually, after internal conflicts, became hostile to it. It came to emphasise the all-Ireland framework as the precondition for progress

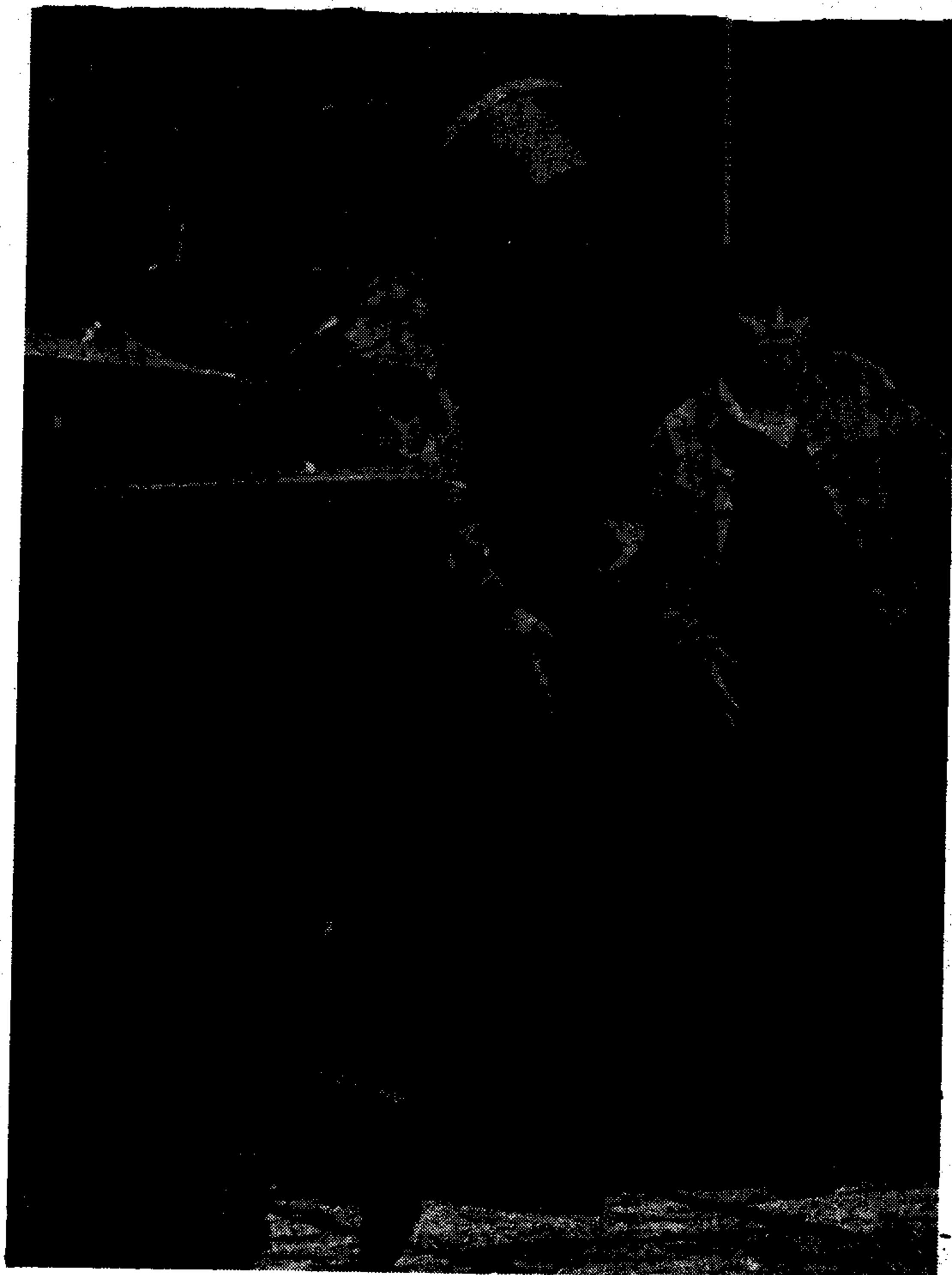
in the North. Fitt, Devlin and Cooper (the representative Protestant from the Derry Labour Party) all broke from it. John Hume, the Catholic businessman, became leader.

If the SDLP did not go into a catastrophic decline much quicker in those conditions, it was because the IRA also was in a bad state.

The Provos' last serious advance in terms of the overall goal of a united Ireland was in March 1972 when Britain scrapped Stormont. Its advances since then have been within the Catholic community, in competition with the SDLP. For 11 years the IRA has been locked into a war of attrition with the British state, which is backed by two-thirds of the Six County population.

The destruction of all constitutional, partial, power-sharing advance by the Protestant general strike of 1974 created the objective conditions for the 'conquest' of the Catholic masses by those whose intransigence on the nationalist side matched that of the Protestants. The Provos have taken so long to mount their present effective challenge to the SDLP (they got 43% of the Catholic vote in the June election) only because of their long-term indifference to politics and because of the anti-political legacy of their origin in the split of 1969-70.

Radicalisation has been equally slow and patchy.



of Ireland now!

Discussion: The crisis facing Labour councils

LOCAL government cuts did not start with the Thatcher government. It was the 1974-9 Labour government which dramatically reversed the expansion of local authority spending and services characteristic of the early '70s.

In 1975-6 local authority spending was 15.5% of national income; by 1978-9 it was down to 12.8%, the same percentage as 1982-3. Big cuts by right-wing Labour councils, and big rate rises by more left-wing ones (like Lambeth), had already started long before the Tories took office in May 1979.

The present Tory government, however, is concerned not only to cut expenditure but also to beat down non-conformist councils. Thus:

1. it has continued and sharpened the Wilson-Callaghan policy of cutting central government money for local councils. In 1975-6, central government grant accounted for 66.5% of local authority spending. By 1978-9 it was down to 60.8%. For 1984-5 it is scheduled to be 52%.

According to the Guardian (21.10.83):

"The severity of this regime is compounded by the way the Government has fixed the spending targets. Low-spending councils were told in August that they could spend 3% more in cash in 1984-5 than their budgets this year. After allowing for inflation, this means that they are being asked for a difficult but achievable squeeze.

"The highest-spending councils have been told, however, that they must spend 6% less in cash next year. After allowing for inflation, this implies a real terms cut of 11 or 12%.

"It is privately admitted in Whitehall that cuts of this magnitude are totally unrealistic in a single year. Mr Jenkin's

AS THE Tory government prepares to force through another round of legislation "capping" the rates of local authorities and attacking the metropolitan councils, the fight against cuts in local government services remains a live issue for the labour movement.

In this first part of a discussion article on the lessons of the struggle so far, MARTIN THOMAS looks at the record of the Labour left in the council chambers.

new penalty system, however, will ensure that councils failing to achieve them will be severely punished."

2. The Tories have specifically targeted 'high-spending', Labour controlled, inner-city authorities. These authorities have suffered disproportionately in the grant cuts. In addition the Government has acquired, and is acquiring, further direct powers to penalise them.

Three sources

Councils have three sources of income: charges (rents, etc.), central government grant, and rates. Rates are a property tax levied on occupiers. Each property has a 'rateable value' corresponding to a notional rent, and estimated every so many years by a central government valuer. The council can then fix a 'rate' of so many pence in the pound on those rateable values.

The Tory scheme means that central government fixes a target level of spending for each authority. For each amount that the authority spends over that target level, the government

withdraws an amount of central government grant equivalent to so many pence on the authority's rates.

To get an idea of the effect, suppose we have an 'overspending' council with a rate of about 150p in the pound. Suppose it wants to take an item of expenditure which would amount to an extra 1% on its spending. If rates cover half of its budget, that means a 2% — or 3p — increase in the rates. But then the council loses the equivalent of a 5p rate (this year) or a 9p rate (next year) in central government grant. So in fact it has to raise the rates by 8p (this year) or 12p (next year). To offset the Tories' demanded 11% real cut, it has to raise rates by 132p (next year).

The GLC is 53% over its target expenditure (1983-4), so it gets no central government grant anyway and cannot be further penalised in this way. Greenwich is 21% over, Southwark 17%, Lambeth 10%, Islington 9%.

The government is now seeking to introduce powers which, as from 1985-6, will enable it directly to instruct individual councils to cut their rates. It has had such powers in Scotland since 1982. In July this year, for example, four authorities, including Lothian region and Glasgow district, were ordered to make rate cuts totalling £19 million.

3. Other Government measures to restrict councils in specific areas include legislation restricting Direct Labour Organisations, and the anti-union laws, which make union-labour-only clauses in council contracts unlawful.

4. The Government plans to abolish the Greater London Council and the metropolitan authorities as from 1985-7. Their functions will be transferred partly to lower-tier councils, and partly to a variety of specialist boards with representatives from these lower-tier councils.

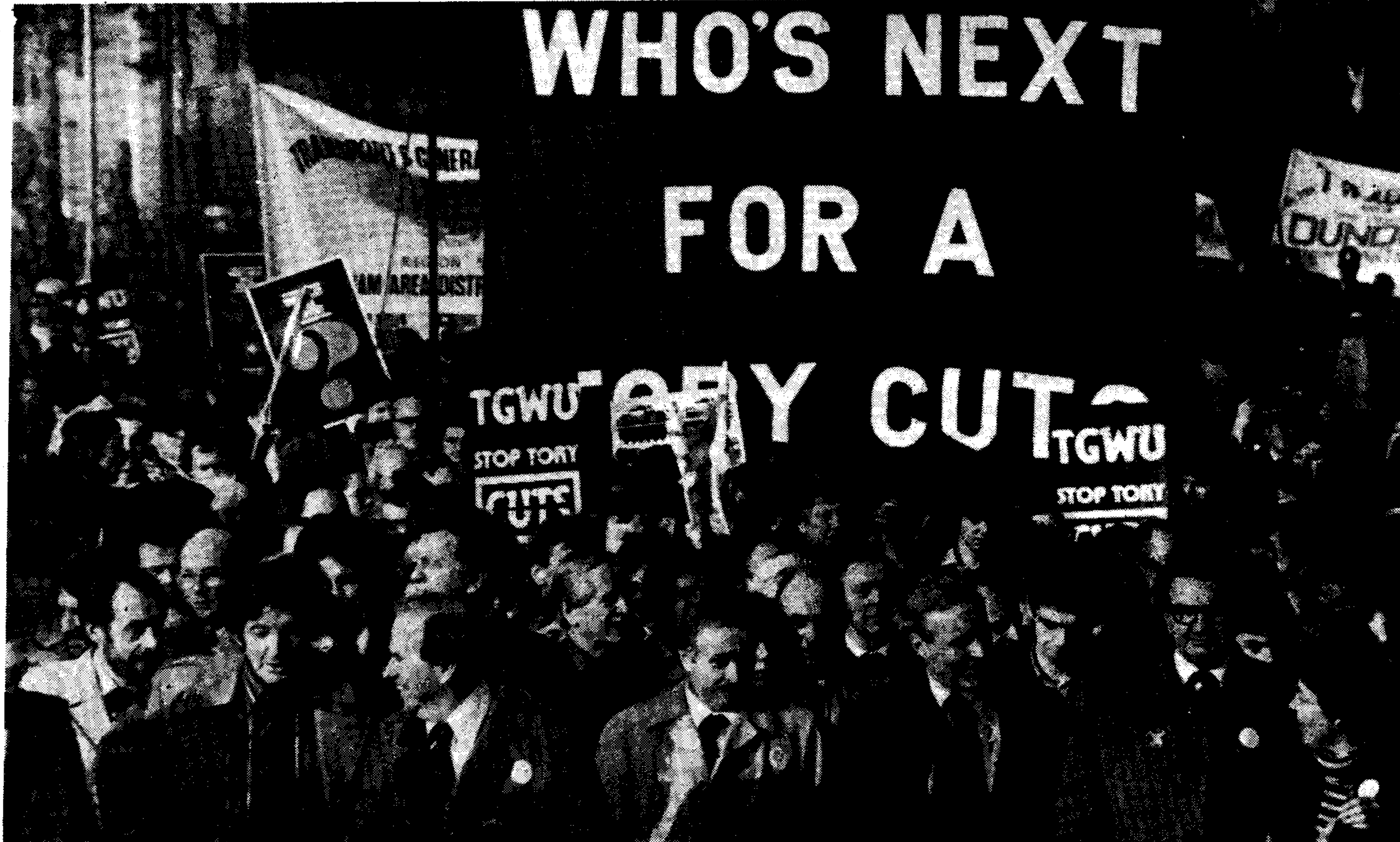
The May 1985 local elections will be cancelled, and for 1985-6, the authorities will be run by a special transitional arrangement. For the first three years central government will have direct control over the budgets, rates, and staff numbers under the new arrangements.

LABOUR AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITY CUTS.

The official Labour Party leadership line on these measures has been predictable: to protest; to talk vaguely about resistance and fighting back; but explicitly to exclude confrontation with central government, and thus to leave Labour councils in the role of humane (or not so humane) administrators of the Tory measures.

The leadership of the TUC and the local authority unions in particular has gone along with

WHO'S NEXT FOR A



Labour marches against the cuts: this early show of opposition was not followed up by action at national or local level.



But Lambeth's leaders turned to rate increases!

this. More interesting has been the record of the Labour left in local government.

The late '70s and early '80s saw a whole stream of Labour leftists displacing right wingers in Labour council seats. Many of these leftists, typified by Ken Livingstone, were markedly to the left of the traditional Tribune Labour Left mould.

This new left, however, has failed the test of the class struggle. That, it seems to me, is the necessary conclusion from a serious examination of the record.

Launched

A convenient starting point is summer 1978, when the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (the initial sponsor of SO) was launched. The SCLV platform included the call to 'freeze rents and rates'. A wide range of Labour leftists signed it without complaint. Some — like Ted Knight in Lambeth — had already levied big rate rises, but if pressed would presumably have replied that these were just a very short-term expedient.

As late as January 1979, Mike Davis, soon to become one of the theorists of the rate-rises strategy, could write in SO:

"Already, some London boroughs are choosing to raise rates in order to maintain services. But . . . socialist councillors' first task is to mount a massive campaign with all working class and community organisations . . . A refusal to pay interest charges, together with a big campaign of agitation, could force the government either to step in with the necessary finance or face serious industrial action from trade unionists."

In June 1979 SO called a 225-strong conference in London on Labour and local government. A document for the con-

ference signed by 35 councillors, including Ted Knight, Val Veness and Ken Livingstone, stated that, "Rate rises can only be a stop-gap measure."

An amendment from Workers Action, proposing instead immediate organisation for a fight against central government was lost by a two-to-one majority. In the next issue of SO Mike Davis theorised the rate-rise line: "We opposed rate rises as the solution. But we also argued that if rate rises were used as a means . . . of buying time to prepare popular resistance, they could be defended . . ."

among those most vocal preaching this line was Ted Knight, leader of Lambeth council, and the most prominent 'local government leftist' of that period. Rate rises, he argued, were the only serious way to fight for a policy of 'no cuts'.

What did he 'buy time' for? A few weeks later, at the beginning of July, he ordered a 4½% package of cuts in Lambeth.

A revolt by the rank and file of the Lambeth Labour Parties forced Knight to revoke these cuts and launch a campaign of agitation. Despite the council's record, this campaign got an excellent response, with demonstrations, days of strike action, and two well-attended national conferences.

Shaky basis

But the political basis of the campaign was shaky from the start. Socialist Organiser in November 1980 commented on the statement drafted for the first national conference:

"The statement hinges the whole cuts fight on a general strike by council workers in January 1981. The unvoiced let-out clause is that if the unions do not meet this arbitrary deadline, then the Labour councils will go

ahead, include cuts and rate rises in next spring's budgets — and claim they have no alternative."

And so it proved. In April 1980 Lambeth went for a 49% rate rise and a £1.60 rent rise. In April 1981, panicking in the face of working class anger against the rate rises, they went for 10% cuts.

This first short cycle of events contained many of the essential elements which were to recur later.

A leftist group 'took power' in the established structures of local government, without a clear perspective, without a prior mass campaign on the basis of that perspective. In Lambeth this feature was especially marked: Knight's 'base' was essentially nothing more than a personal power position within a not-very-left-wing council Labour Group.

Unclear as to their perspectives, the leftists went for rate rises as a way of 'buying time' and in the meantime hoped for another force to launch the desired struggle. When that other force — the industrial 'big battalions' — failed to turn out on schedule, the leftists opted for 'doing the best they could' within the existing structures.

This capitulation had a demoralising effect on the whole Lambeth labour movement and especially the left. Asked in 1981 to speak at a Socialist Organiser day school on the role of Marxist councillors, one of the very few councillors in Lambeth who opposed the rate rises replied bitterly, "The role of Marxist councillors these days seems to be making cuts".

Cynical

In the course of 1979-80, Ted Knight had re-established strong connections with the degenerate 'Marxists' of the Workers Revolutionary Party, who cynically provided a 'theoretical' justification for the capitulations. (This was later extended to the launching of the WRP-connected Labour Herald. At the Labour Party special conference at Wembley in early 1981, Labour Herald sellers could be observed making their support for rate rises their main selling pitch). And as the leftist councillors adapted themselves to the limits of established local government, so in turn other leftists adapted themselves to the limits of the councillors.

In the summer of 1980 a substantial grouping of such leftists hived off from Socialist Organiser to launch London Labour Briefing.

In Lothian, a 'no cuts' declaration by the regional Labour council met a fate similar to Lambeth's. The key role, there, however, was played by the trade union bureaucracy. At the

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The Tories have targeted high-spending, Labour-controlled inner-city councils

crucial moment, a special TUC delegation went up from London to tell the councillors that they must back down. The councillors were helpless, in the end, essentially because their efforts at arousing working class industrial action had been channelled through the local trade union officials, rather than by a direct appeal to the rank and file. When the officials told them to capitulate they were stranded.

Narrow

Here again, the leftist councillors had been guilty of a sort of 'adventurism'. They had 'seized power' without serious political preparation in terms of mass agitation, and without being part of an organised socialist force which spanned both Labour Party and trade unions. They had been bewitched by 'leftist' victories within the narrow confines of Labour Party committee rooms which actually represented very little. And so they did not seize the power. The power seized them.

BASTIONS AND FORTRESSES

A Labour GLC and Inner London Education Authority will resist any cuts and demand that the Tory government provides the necessary finance to maintain and improve all council services. Understanding that the Tory government does not listen to pleas but only responds to pressure, a Labour GLC and ILEA will appeal to the Labour and trade union movement to take action, including industrial action, to support its stand.

Mass opposition to Tory policies led by a Labour GLC could become the focal point of a national campaign against the cuts, for an immediate General



GLC policies "like Labour's Alternative Economic Strategy"?

Election and a Labour Government".

The new GLC Labour leader, Ken Livingstone, was asked by SO: would the Labour GLC be prepared to be the first to take on the Tories instead of hiding behind the claim that only several councils together could mount successful resistance?

"Yes", he replied. "Having set our policies, and having got a solid bloc within the GLC Labour Group that isn't prepared to compromise on them, we have no alternative but to lead."

Intoxicated

But once again the left had allowed itself to be intoxicated by phrases and symbols. Whatever words assiduous left-wingers in the manifesto drafting parties had managed to slip through, the Labour movement in London was not committed to a serious fight. Worse: the left had failed to fight within the movement for a hard commit-

ment, preferring instead to have 'power' on the basis of half a commitment.

Livingstone stressed (SO, 4.4.81) that the GLC policies were "something like the Alternative Economic Strategy. Not in any sense revolutionary — because the Labour Party isn't at that stage".

But this idea of a half-way stage, radical but "not in any sense revolutionary", was as delusory in local government politics as it is in national politics.

We commented in Socialist Organiser:

"Pursued by goggle-eyed Fleet Street reporters who demanded to know whether he was really a Marxist, Livingstone replied that he had never read Marx and preferred to be called a 'radical'..."

"The Labour Left's policies have not just failed for lack of energetic people. They have failed because they are based on no clear theoretical understanding..."

"What is to stop the current Labour programme becoming equally utopian? What is to stop the GLC Labour Left ending up like the Camden Labour Left (of which Ken Livingstone is also part) — who approved cuts for the sake of making a compromise with the Labour Right and thus stopping the Labour Right doing a deal with the Tories?"

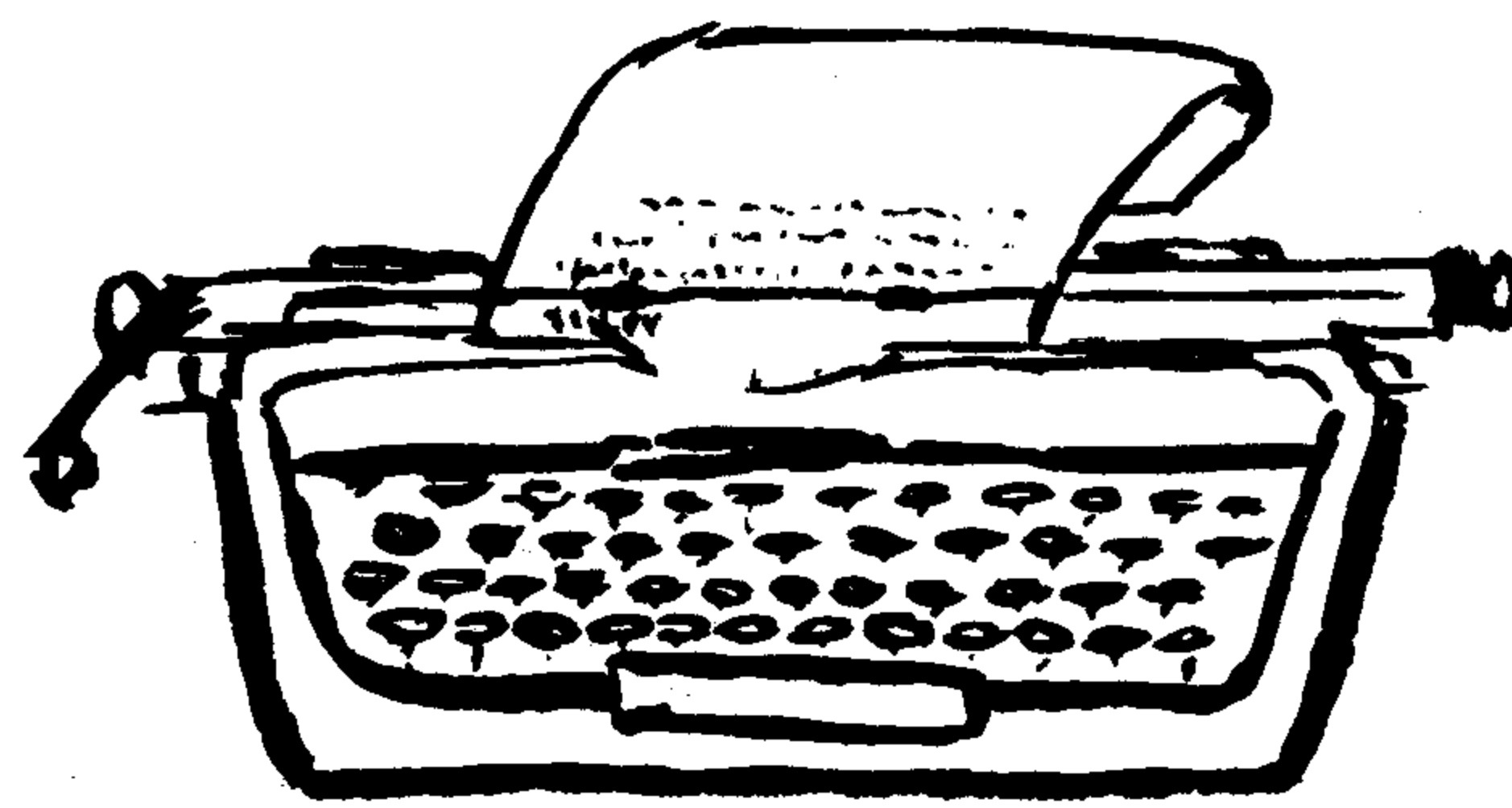
"The Camden council left's compromise... was based on an over-emphasis on 'getting something done' in the council chambers and corridors, at the expense of a broader political view... The same over-emphasis could be fatal for the Labour GLC..."

"The point is that a broad left which focuses on assembling forces for the immediate fight against the right wing, and which plays down theoretical precision, is not enough — at least not on its own."

"We also need an organised left wing which focuses on political and theoretical clarity, which sets out to educate as well as to organise..."

Continued next week

Writeback



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

Ho flipping ho!

So Stanley C. Raptis (SO 155) has seen a "funny" side to the invasion of Grenada! While Grenadian left wingers are rounded up, beaten, tortured and intimidated by thousands of imperialist invaders, and US threats mount against Nicaragua and El Salvador, he sends in the epitome of a sectarian "joke" letter aimed at the tiniest hand-ful on the British left.

The "joke" — for the many who were bemused rather than amused by the letter — consisted in a supposed analogy between the American invasion of Grenada and the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands in Spring 1982. Since many of those who — unlike "Raptis" — defended Argentina against Thatcher's task force argued that the repossession of the Falklands was an "objectively progressive" completion of Argentina's national liberation, Raptis latched on to the incredibly witty idea of suggesting that the invasion of Grenada by the USA was simply part of the "American democratic revolution", and thus "objectively progressive". This, of course, would mean that those who opposed the invasion were reactionaries; and since the opponents included Thatcher,

then Raptis could make a really rib-tickling amalgam between socialist defenders of Grenada's self-determination and Thatcher. Now do you get it?

Ho! Ho! What a laugh! Yes, it should go down really well in Grenada, in Latin America, and elsewhere in the oppressed, exploited countries of the Third World. Perhaps Mr Raptis should be sent on a world tour selling copies of last week's issue and introducing himself to workers as the "humourist".

Equated

It is hard to know what they would laugh at most. Would it be his evident equation of the imperialist USA with the imperialist-dominated Argentina? Or would it be the excess of liberalism of those of us working on Socialist Organiser who allowed such rubbish to see the light of day?

Perhaps the most tragic element in all this is the pathetic spectacle of a grown man in Glasgow allocating precious hours of his life to writing drivel like that letter. In the words of one Radio One DJ, perhaps it is time Raptis — and those who share his classless sense of humour — got some therapy!

HARRY SLOAN

Missiles: men too must play a role

I HAVE no wish to add to the currently fashionable campaign of denigration and ridicule of the Greenham women (a campaign that has its reflection in sections of the left — Socialist Worker and Militant for instance), but I must take issue with some of the ideas put forward by Judith Bonner in her "Women in Struggle" article of November 10.

In places, Judith seems to be repeating some of the positions of the most backward and apolitical sections of the women's movement. Judith continually emphasises that it is "men" who guard Greenham, and refers to "the male bonding systems" (?) breaking down as the police fall out with the army. Surely our objection to these people is that they are servants of the state and the class that is bringing in such dreadful weapons — not that they are men?

When I was at Grenham at Easter I noticed a large number of women police about; presumably there are women military personnel at the base as well. What would Judith say about them and their "bonding systems"? I'm sure she wouldn't regard them as "sisters", or in any way preferable to their male colleagues.

Judith concludes — quite correctly — by calling on Labour Parties and trade unions to sponsor groups of women to go to the camp. But at the end of the day, only mass industrial action — blacking the base — can stop the missiles coming in. That will necessarily involve male workers. We must be supportive and sensitive towards the Greenham women, and respect their right to keep the camp women only.

But that should not lead us to go along with separatism as some kind of principle, or to fall in with the mystical feminism that some (and only some) of the Greenham women subscribe to.

JACKIE McDONOUGH
Birmingham

Argentine government better suited to USA?

IN REPLY to Colin Foster's comments in SO 155. Marxists start from an analysis of the whole struggle worldwide. To focus on the relationship between the working class and the capitalist class in Argentina is to miss out the whole role of imperialism and the differing interactions between the imperialist nations and the workers' states, which in turn interact with the varying natures of the class struggles within the capitalist nations.

The invasion of the Malvinas weakened the military junta, but also helped to bring to power in Argentina a civilian regime much more in tune with the requirements of the US imperialists, i.e. a capitalist state more acceptable to the western powers and amenable to manipulation. This in turn will intensify the class struggle in Argentina, i.e. both the bosses and the workers were and are affected.

But of course the reverberations go well beyond Britain and the Malvinas. The crisis that is described by Colin Foster is now being dealt with differently as can be seen by the invasion of Grenada

The UK invasion of the Malvinas showed the US that it no longer had to pussyfoot around with regard to 'unacceptable' regimes. Instead it could now fight its way in whenever it faced a challenge to imperialist expansion.

It is always the hallmark of reformists to see things chang-

ing gradually. They never recognise something new until it reaches the history books. Defence of the rights of the Argentine working class demands the struggle on a world scale against imperialism.

Yours fraternally,
JOHN LOWERY
Tadcaster

LABOUR PARTY AGAINST THE WITCH-HUNT!

NATIONAL COUNCIL AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

12.00 Saturday November 26

at Camden Town Hall, Euston Road, London NW1

Deadline for resolutions and nominations for a new LAW Secretariat: Friday November 18

AFFILIATE NOW!

LAW is the only campaign against the witch hunt that is based on and controlled by CLPs

Affiliation fees:

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Other LP organisations and individuals	£3

Contact: The Secretary, 11 Wilderton Road, London N16



TROOPS OUT NOW!

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

Socialist ORGANISER

Where we stand

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Freeze rent and rates.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Give a sub for Xmas!

CHRISTMAS is coming and though the geese are getting fat, Socialist Organiser isn't.

We continue to be very badly starved of resources and to operate on a shoestring. There is no solution to the protracted financial crisis — since we are certainly not going to give up the fight for a sane, Marxist, non-sectarian socialist press in Britain — except a long-term effort to transform our finances by increasing sales, subscriptions, and the number of regular sustaining donations.

Christmas, when people give each other presents, is a good time to sell subscriptions to the Organiser. We

are making a special discount subscription available from now until the end of January: £3.50 for three months, £6.50 for six months, and £12 for a year.

Each subscription sold or given as a gift will bring a lump sum to the Organiser, and put someone into assured regular contact with Marxist politics.

We ask regular readers to take out subscriptions for themselves and to consider using subs to the Organiser as Xmas gifts. SO sellers should make a systematic effort to sell a sub to each person who buys the paper, especially to those you don't see regularly or are not sure of seeing.



Next week: an article by Reg Race analysing the recent report by the Policy Studies Institute which has indicted the Metropolitan Police as racist, sexist, brutal, riddled with drunkards, and corrupt.

Two pamphlets summing up the ideas of Socialist Organiser.

'Where We Stand' — 20p plus 15p postage. 'How to fight the Tories' — 10p plus 15p postage. Or the two together, 45p including postage. From Socialist Organiser, 28, Middle Lane, London N8.



Agenda

CLASS FIGHTER conference, 26-7 November in SE London. Details: phone Jane, 263 9484 or see page 3.

CLASS FIGHTER SOCIAL Saturday 26 November, 8pm. Band: Bronski Beat, Admission £1. Camden Tenants Association Hall, Peckham High St., London SE15.

LABOUR Committee on Ireland London area: Irish

folk night, Saturday November 26, 8pm, Hackney Labour and Trades Hall, 96 Dalston Lane, E8. Admission £2 and 50p.

LABOUR Campaign for Gay Rights. Contact: Mike, 659 2938 or Bob 341 0666.

GAY YS. Contact: Martin, 263 9484.

LESBIANS in the Labour Party and Trade Unions. Meeting at 'A Woman's

Place", Victoria Embankment, London WC1. Saturday November 26 at 2pm. Creche available.

STOP Privatisation of BT. Public meeting called by Islington Labour Parties. Monday December 5, 7.30pm. Central Library, Fieldway Crescent, N5. Speakers include Jeremy Corbyn MP, Jock Campbell and POEU Executive member.

HOUNSLOW Socialist Organiser day school. Sunday December 4, 12.00-5.00 at Hanworth Labour Hall. Includes: 'Politics of SO', The Parliamentary Road, The AES, and The Working Class and Revolutionary Politics.

Hounslow. Contact: Chris, 898 6961. Islington. Contact: Nik, 278 1341. Orpington. Contact: Siu Ming, 691 1141. Putney. Contact: Tom, 789 7587. Richmond. Contact: Nick, 876 6715. SE London. Contact: Siu Ming, 691 1141. Southwark Lambeth. Contact: Jeff, 635 8468. Tower Hamlets. Contact: Susan, 377 1328.

SO is sold at the following bookshops: Central Books, Colletts, The Other Bookshop, Bookmarks, Bookplace, [Peckham Rd., SE15] Kilburn Books and Reading Matters [Wood Green Shopping Centre].

London Educationals: State and Revolution; The Russian Revolution; The USSR and Stalinism; Ireland: Why is the left divided? The above are a planned series taking place on Fridays, 6pm at the LSE, East Building, 1st Floor, room E196. Discussions on Imperialism Thursdays, 7pm, at 214, Sickert Court, London N1.

Where to find Socialist Organiser

SCOTLAND

Edinburgh. Contact: Dave, 229-4591. SO is sold at Muirhouse (Sat. 10.30-12.30) and at the First-of-May bookshop, Candlemaker Row.

Glasgow. Contact: Stan Crooke, 34, Garturk St., G42. SO is sold at Rutherglen shopping arcade (Friday lunch-time), Coatbridge shopping arcade (Saturday lunch-time), Maryhill dole (Tuesday morning), and at the West End bookshop.

NORTH WEST

Hyndburn. Contact: Accrington 395753. Liverpool. Contact: 733 6663. SO is sold at News-from-Nowhere, Whitechapel and at Progressive Books, Berry St.

Manchester. Contact: Tony, 273 5691. SO is sold at Grass Roots Books, Newton St., Piccadilly. Rochdale. Contact: c/o 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Stoke. Contact: Paul Barnett, 328198. Stockport. Contact: 40 Fox St, Edgley. SO is sold at Stockport Market, (Saturday, 11.00-12.30).

Wirral. Contact: Lol Duffy, 3 St. James Court, Victoria Rd., New Brighton, Merseyside.

YORKSHIRE AND NORTH EAST. Durham. Contact: Andy, 64088. SO is sold at Community Co-op, New Elvet.

Halifax. Contact: 52156. SO is sold at Hebden Bridge Books. Harrogate. Contact: Mark, 522542. SO is sold at Harrogate Market (Wednesday, Friday, Saturday lunchtimes). Huddersfield. Contact: Alan Brooke, 59 Magdale, Honley, HD7 2LX Hull. Contact: c/o 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Leeds. Contact: Garth, 623322. SO is sold at Books and Corner Books, Woodhouse Lane. Sheffield. Contact: Rob, 589307. SO is sold at Boots in Fargate (Saturday, 12 to 1) and at Independent Bookshop,

Glossop Rd. Sunderland. Contact: c/o Durham. York. Contact: 414118. SO is sold at the University (Friday mornings), Coney St. (Saturday mornings), the dole office (most mornings) and at Community Bookshop.

WALES AND WEST

Bristol. Contact: c/o 28 Middle Lane, London N8. Cardiff. Contact: 492988. Taunton. Contact: c/o 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

MIDLANDS

Birmingham. Contact: Godfrey Webster, 169 Barclay Rd., Bearswood, Smethwick. SO is sold at the Other Bookshop. Coventry. Contact: Keith, 75623. SO is sold at the Wedge Bookshop. Leicester. Contact: Phil, 857908. SO is sold at Blackthorne

Books, High Street. Northampton. Contact: Ross, 713606. Nottingham. Contact: Pete, 585640. SO is sold at the Victoria Centre, (Saturday, 11 to 1) and at Mushroom Bookshop, Heathcote St.

SOUTH

Basingstoke. Contact: c/o 28 Middle Lane, London N8. SO is sold at Good News Bookshop, London Road. Oxford. Contact: c/o 28 Middle Lane, London N8. SO is sold at Tesco's, Cowley Rd., (Fridays 5 to 7), Cornmarket (Saturdays, 11 to 1) and at EOA Books, Cowley Road.

LONDON AREA

Brent [and NW]. Contact: Mick, 624 1931. Camden. Contact: Mike, 267 4806. Hackney. Contact: 348 5941 or 802 0771.



Official badge of the 'Save the Mole' campaign. 25p or £2 for ten, from N. Barstow 165 Liverpool Rd, London N1.

Victor Jara Song cut short by Pinochet

VICTOR Jara is best remembered as the most prominent singer/songwriter of the New Chilean Song Movement — which began with a revival of interest in Chilean folk music and later became synonymous with the cause of Allende's Popular Unity government.

What emerges from this biography of Jara by his widow is a picture of a man of many talents whose whole life was devoted to artistic creation of one sort or another and at the same time, and often through that work, to the struggles of the rural and urban poor of Chile against the imperialist-backed oligarchy.

Born into a peasant family, Victor Jara was fortunate that his mother could read and write and was determined that her children should receive an education despite the enormous sacrifices she had to make for them to do so.

His mother was also a folk-singer so Victor grew up to the sounds of Chilean folk music. When the family were forced to move to Santiago while Victor was still a child, a neighbour taught him to play the guitar.

Two years in a seminary convinced Jara that the religious life was not for him and on completion of his military service Victor began to study mime in 1955, moving on to the Theatre School of the University of Chile to study acting.

It was in his second year that he met his future wife Joan — an English-born dancer who had married the Chilean choreographer and Communist Party member Patricio Bunster while in Europe and was now dancing with the National Ballet and teaching dance at the Theatre School.

In 1957 Victor met Violeta Parra, a pioneer in the study of Chilean folk song and folk lore and a group of singers who formed a group called Cuncumen.

Victor became a regular member of the group which played to working class audiences, demonstrations and rallies.

At the theatre school Jara met a young playwright, Alejandro Sieveking and on graduating, directed one of his plays — *Parécido a la Felicidad* (Something like Happiness). The production was such a success that



IAN SWINDALE reviews 'Victor, An Unfinished Song', by Joan Jara, published by Jonathan Cape.

Jara decided to study theatre direction, enrolling for the course in 1960.

It was during this period that Joan's marriage to Patricio broke up and eventually she and Victor Jara began a relationship.

For the next nine years Jara worked as a member of the regular team of directors of ITUCH (Theatre Institute of the University of Chile), producing plays by Brecht, new material from the US and Britain and new work by Chilean dramatists.

In opposition to the penetration of US pop music into Latin America there was a growing interest in Chilean folk songs, particularly among left-wing young people who identified with FRAP and their presidential candidate in the 1964 election — Salvador Allende.

Violeta Parra's children, Angel and Isobel, set up the Peña de los Parra to which people flocked to hear the authentic folk music of Chile. Jara combined his work in the theatre with singing three nights a week at the Peña and his records began to meet with success in the charts.

The election of Christian Democrat Frei as President in 1964 led to growing illusions amongst sections of the urban and rural poor in the possibility of some reforms being carried out. Jara's writing became less personal and more concerned with the plight of the Chilean masses.

The Peña de los Parra rapidly grew in influence, attracting an international following, and by 1967 Peñas were being established everywhere, particularly in centres of higher education.

In 1966 Jara became the artistic director of Quilapayun, who specialised in the use of indigenous musical instruments and while touring the Peñas with Quilapayun Jara met another group, Inti-Illimani who specialised in the music of the altiplano (the high plateau area of the Andes). Jara was to collaborate with these two groups for the rest of his life. (Quilapayun and Inti-Illimani were in Europe at the time of the military coup).

The Cuban revolution had raised hopes of radical change amongst the masses of Latin America and in 1967 one of Jara's early political songs was dedicated to E. (Ch) G. (which was as much as he dared put on the label of Che Guevara's name). The song brought him criticism from the Communist Party which opposed guerrillism, though Jara's song praised the courage of Guevara rather than guerrilla methods of struggle.

Students

The student revolt of the late 1960s erupted in Chile in 1967. It began, as elsewhere, with demands for university reform but it became quickly politicised as it had in America and Europe. Joan and Victor Jara were both involved in the struggle in their own faculties with Victor and Quilapayun singing to student demonstrations in the face of baton charges, water cannon and tear gas. From now on, hardly a major political event could take place without Victor composing and recording a song about it. So when police fired on a group of peasant squatters at Puerto Montt, killing seven and wounding 60, Jara wrote Preguntas por Puerto Montt (Questions about Puerto Montt) and sang it at a huge demonstration and rally to protest at the killings.

By the end of the 1960s the New Chilean Song Movement was gaining strength, holding its first festival in 1969. The previous year the Young Communists set up their own alternative record company. Quilapayun and Victor Jara featured on the first two albums released.

The campaign for the Presidential Election, due in September 1970, was already getting underway. Committees of Popular Unity sprang up in every office, factory, neighbourhood and university. Every party in Popular Unity had its own wall-painting brigades. Joan Jara put her newly formed Ballet Popular at the service of the election campaign and the leading singers of the New Chilean Song Movement did the same. The second festival of



Jara in Peru, July 1973

New Chilean song in August 1970 was a pro-Allende festival for which Jara collaborated with Ortega to write Venceremos — soon to become the 'hymn' of Popular Unity.

The right wing controlled the media but the masses controlled the streets with huge demonstrations of support for Popular Unity. The largest — on the eve of the election — was 800,000-strong (in a country of 11 million!).

When Allende took office on 3 November a huge festival was mounted in the city centre on 12 open air stages. On one Victor Jara dedicated his songs to Allende who waved across to him from the balcony of the Presidential Palace.

Jara's songs now began to urge the urban and rural poor to seize the opportunities opened up by the election of the Allende and to strengthen support for Popular Unity which was still a minority in Parliament.

He toured Cuba and Latin America as an 'ambassador of Chile'.

During the first lorry owners strike of October 1972, Victor and Joan Jara together with other Popular Unity supporters in the arts faculties helped to keep supplies moving.

By the beginning of 1973 the campaign by the media and right wing political parties against Popular Unity became increasingly serious. The victory of Popular Unity in the parliamentary elections of March 1973 convinced the right wing that only a military coup could now oust Allende.

Fascists

Commander in Chief General Prats was by this time a member of the government and a lot of false hope was pinned on his presence in the government to secure the neutrality of the armed forces.

Throughout 1973 violent attacks by fascists and right wing forces grew daily and Jara had several narrow escapes. The government still refused to arm the masses, although supporters of the National Party drilled openly in the streets outside the 'Red Faculty' and the CIA armed the fascists.

Victor Jara seems to have accepted the argument that to arm the workers was impossible because it would provoke a military coup. But at the same time he would appear to have been sceptical of the CPs

attempted overture to the Christian Democrats in an attempt to avert civil war.

Victor Jara was at the Technical University on 11 September 1973 when Pinochet launched his coup against Allende. On 12 September, having been forced to stay in the Faculty overnight by the curfew, Jara was taken to the Estadio Chile (where he had sung in the Festivals of New Chilean Song). Here he was brutally tortured for several days. Challenged by his torturers to 'sing now if you can, you bastard' he sang a verse of Venceremos before being butted to the ground and taken away to be machine gunned to death.

Personal

As a British subject Joan was able to leave Chile, together with her two children.

Her biography is a very moving and inevitably personal account of Victor Jara's life and her life and work with him. Reading her story it is clear that she also made no small contribution herself to the cultural movement that supported Popular Unity.

Victor Jara was not a Communist out of intellectual conviction alone. His upbringing in peasant family and then as part of the urban poor of Santiago was the driving force behind his political conviction. He took on board the political bankruptcy of Stalinism. But he nevertheless reflected very powerfully through his songs the struggles of the Chilean people against repression and exploitation, poverty, starvation and suffering. He sang, fought and died trying to turn his revolutionary vision into a reality. For that he is and will continue to be remembered by the working people of Chile.

Joan Jara writes in her book: 'I had left the niche covered with a rough-hewn stone which said simply "Victor Jara, 14 September 1973". The date was wrong. At the time there was no way of knowing which day my husband had been murdered. I had left no space for flowers. The usual little troughs in front of the niches look bare and sad when they are empty. I could not know that Victor's grave would never be without flowers, that unknown people would go to any lengths to climb up and tie tins and pots with bits of wire and string in order to leave their offerings, even though in doing so they risked arrest.'

TV review

Geordies in Germany

AUF WIEDERSEHEN, PET (ITV) is probably the final proof that Britain is finally coming to terms with the Common Market. In the gang of Geordie building workers, refugees from Thatcher's dole-queue Britain, on contract work in Germany, it is the anti-German loud-mouth who is the odd man out.

He is both butt and buffoon. The sympathetic people think his attitude odd and foolish — 'someone out of England for the first time who becomes super-patriotic about the country which can't find him a job', as one of them puts it.

When, at the end of the first episode, he explains his hostility to things German with 'Because they bombed my granny', it is a joke on him and anyone inclined to think like him.

After his loudly-expressed contempt for Germany and Germans has led to a pub fight with his German workmates a threat to strike by the same German workers stops him being sacked as a result.

Auf Wiedersehen, Pet is by Ian La Frenais and Dick Clement who wrote The Likely Lads and Porridge. It is extremely well done. The relationships between the gang of English workers, who live in an army barracks-style hut on the building site are realistic and true to life, though played for laughs. It looks a winner.

Trotsky on Stalinism

The classic Marxist analysis of Stalinism is Leon Trotsky's 'Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Going?' Available via Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8: £2.50 plus 50p postage.



LABOUR MOVEMENT CAMPAIGN PALESTINE
NEWSLETTER

New issue now out!
Heffer and Kinnock on the Middle East.
The fight in Fatah.
10p plus postage from LMCfP, 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmleigh Rd., London N16.

SCIENCE

By Les Hearn

RED AND GREEN

NOT only can the socialist and green movements cooperate together very fruitfully, but there is in fact a burning need for them to do so. For over the 200 years of capitalist dominance in the world, and even more so in the last 40 years, there has been an unprecedented assault on all aspects of human and natural ecology.

In the publicity for their conference "Socialism and the Green Movement", SERA and Green CND pointed out that both "reds" and "greens" had a "common interest in convincing people that there is a practical and attractive alternative to our decaying welfare capitalism."

SERA/GCND hoped that people from both movements would come together, discuss mutual interests and resolve differences.

The power of such cooperation can be seen in the success of the National Union of Seamen in stopping the dumping at sea of nuclear waste after a long campaign by Greenpeace. Pressure to redirect industrial production (e.g. in "defence" industries) towards "socially useful products" is another potentially important area of cooperation.

These and other topics were discussed in the conference, held in Coventry two weeks ago. To match the ambitious task set by the organisers was an ambitious programme of workshop discussions. The reality was much more modest.

The attendance was a fairly healthy 100-150, fairly evenly balanced between those who saw themselves as "greens" and "reds". However, all were already convinced of the need for an environmental perspective. There were no "reds" who weren't already "green", but there were quite a few "greens" who weren't "reds", including some Ecology Party members and Young Liberals!

Disturbingly, many "greens" identified socialism with the Labour leadership, nationalisation and economic growth. To this, the "reds" counterposed not the revolutionary critique of capitalism and reformism that Marxists put forward, but various milk-and-water solutions such as popular planning, decentralisation and workers' co-ops.

Few workshop discussions lived up to their promise. They lacked focus (and often speakers).

Too often, the floor was occupied by articulate hobby-horse riders as participants attempted to grapple with topics such as "Technology" or "Health" in

90 minutes. Sexism prevailed (men repeatedly spoke of "man-kind") while one trade unionist spoke patronisingly of the "girls" in my factory") and women who brought this up were themselves criticised.

Sessions on campaigning were more productive. A workshop on Energy discussed the history of the struggle against nuclear waste dumping. After a long struggle by Greenpeace, involving members risking life and limb to stop dumping at sea, the London Dumping convention passed a motion calling for a two-year halt to sea dumping while a scientific review of the available evidence was carried out.

Only a few months later, the UK Atomic Energy Authority chartered the Atlantic Fisher to dump 3,900 tonnes of waste in the Atlantic from 11 July 1983.

However, in June, the National Union of Seamen, the TGWU and ASLEF jointly agreed "not to handle or transport any waste by road, rail or sea scheduled for sea dumping." Within a few days, nine seafarers refused to sign articles on the Atlantic Fisher and sea dumping had stopped.

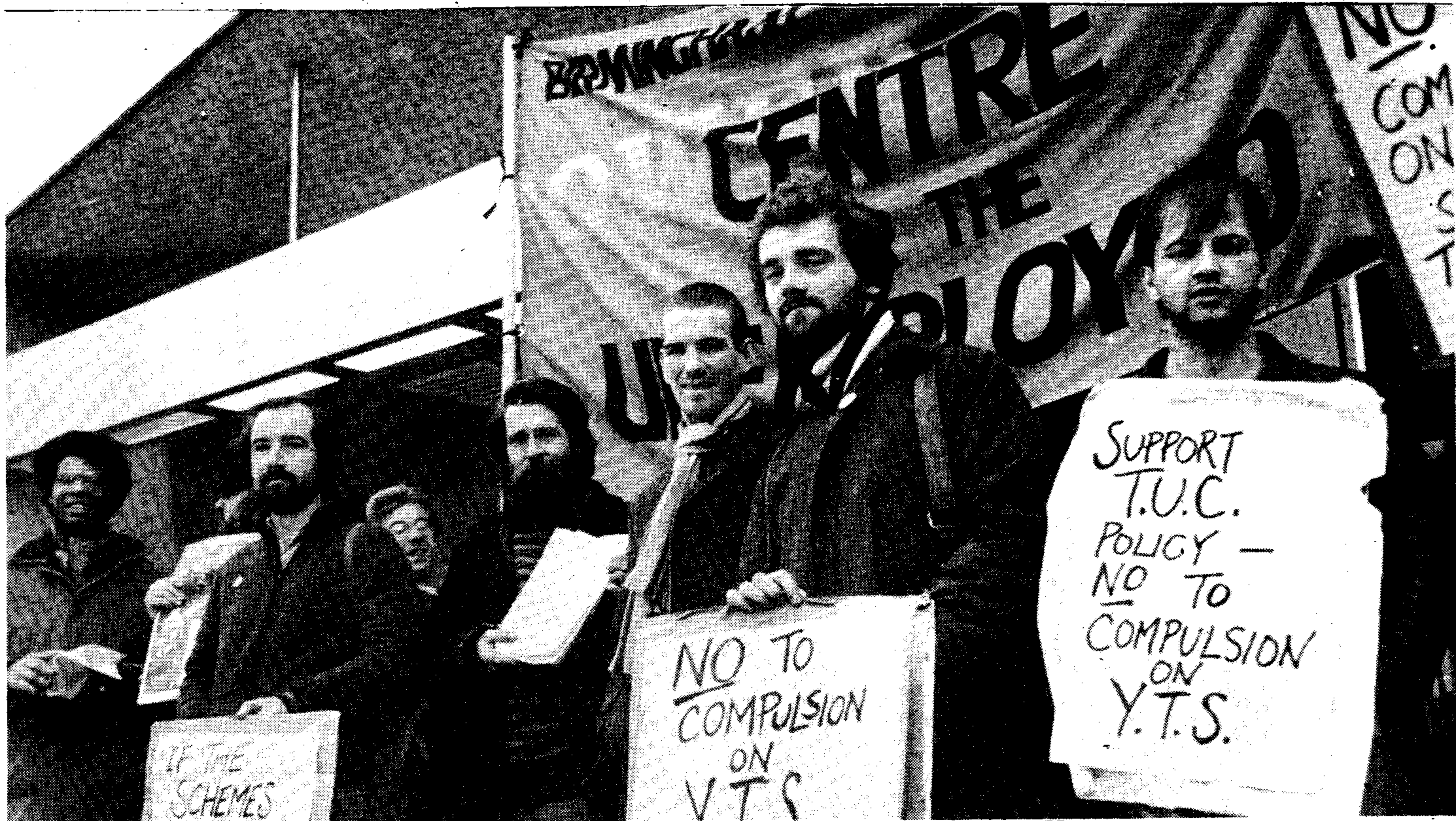
The workshop discussed the need to extend the campaign to cover all transport of nuclear waste for dumping on sea or land, aiming for the cooperation of rail and road unions. It also discussed the need for positive energy policies, something which socialist groups tend to neglect.

The workshop on technology discussed the problem of dampness that afflicts many working class dwellings. Dampness may be caused by rain penetration, rising damp or condensation, all of which are signs of poor design and building techniques, though condensation may also be a symptom of poverty (poverty equals coldness which equals condensation).

The speaker had been engaged in research to see if dehumidifiers could be used to tackle damp. This could then provide jobs as well as tackling a social problem — a "socially useful product". However, he decided that they were more likely to be used to cover up shoddy housing and so were not socially useful.

The final plenary session was a time for pats on the back, with a very disturbing tendency to emphasise joint work in fields outside of the labour movement.

Overall, the conference was testimony to the failure of the revolutionary socialist movement to break out of the confines of socialist activity as defined by reformist labour and trade union leaderships.



The Birmingham YTS Action Group has revealed previously unpublished documents charting the government's plans to force unemployed school leavers onto Youth Training Schemes.

One document is a circular from the MSC calling in the recipient to "discuss the many courses that are on offer". The letter includes the threat that "refusal to attend such an interview may affect any benefit you receive".

The second document is a draft questionnaire from the careers service requiring careers officers to report details of any "job-seeker failing to take the chance of a place on the Youth Training Scheme."

When the YTS was agreed between the government and the TUC it was said that there would be no element of compulsion involved. It is now clear that the government has reneged on this commitment and that a 16-year old who refuses a place or leaves a scheme — perhaps because of poor training, exploitation, or dangerous conditions — will face a cut in benefit of 40% (from £15.80 to £9.48 per week) for 6 weeks.

To highlight this scandal, and to launch a campaign against compulsion on YTS, the Action Group organised a lobby of the Birmingham/Solihull Area Manpower Board (which oversees all local Schemes) last Thursday.

Given that the protest was in support of official TUC policy — against compulsion — many of the trade unionists present were surprised by the reaction of some of the Board's union nominees. Board chair Barry Shuttleworth (NUPE Div. officer) avoided the lobby altogether, while Regional TUC chair Sir David Perris was clearly beside himself with rage. However NATFHE nominee Paul MacNee joined the lobby and promised to move a resolution at the meeting opposing compulsion and cuts in benefits.

Residential workers oppose local deals!

By Anne Crowder

NALGO and NUPE residential workers continue their action this week pressing on their national employers to open negotiations on their claim for a reduction in their working week, for pay enhancements for Bank Holidays, weekends, and shift payments.

There has been excellent coverage given so far to this dispute in Socialist Organiser and many issues have been highlighted that need discussion throughout the labour movement.

But there was one recent article which implied that Socialist Organiser is in favour of pushing for local settlements; many residential workers are against this. There are a number of reasons why.

Firstly, it is impractical to expect that if one or more

authorities settled our claim, then it would mean that we could spread our resources to push authorities which have not yet settled.

Very few workers would strike, ban sleep-ins, or take effective action simply in support of residential workers in other authorities who need to be taking the action for themselves.

No difference

This would mainly be because residential workers have recognised that such solidarity would make no difference to the authority that has not settled, no matter how dramatic their supportive action.

The action needs to be united, from start to finish, to ensure that residential workers in poorly organised union branches or in authorities where those supporting the action have been threatened with suspensions, closures and redundancies know that they are not alone in fighting for this claim for national conditions of service.

Our strength lies in the national action we are undertaking in this dispute. And the branches which have been the strongest are the very branches which are arguing the loudest against local settlements.

They have felt the strength that can win this claim nationally for all residential workers. We need to duplicate this throughout the country, not divide the strongest off to leave the weak to defend themselves.

Also we may see some authorities settling the claim locally, only to find that in the next round of elections these are taken over by less sympathetic politicians who can easily reverse any gains made.

If the offer that was made to the Scottish residential workers is anything to go by, then no realistic local offer has been or is likely to be made.

For example the recognition of shift payments and so on would not be implemented until 1987 and would be supplemented by the fact there would be lower pay increases for the residential workers over the next few years, and a loss of full increment of the pay scale.

Our focus for organisation and agitation must remain on the national dispute and the national claim.

Stickers are not enough

By Nik Barstow
(Islington NALGO)

"WHO are all those people?" "They're your members, they're on strike." "Oh, I suppose I'd better put a sticker on then."

Keith Sonnet, the full-time NALGO official responsible for negotiations on behalf of the residential social workers did, eventually, get ready to face his members.

500 NALGO members, residential workers and other council workers striking to support them, lobbied a meeting of the London Whitley Council on November 10 to demand they acknowledge the claim and open London-wide negotiations.

For over an hour branch after branch assembled outside Camden Town Hall. By the end there were enough to surround the building, but nobody came to talk to them. So, their patience wearing thin, the lobbyists decided to take a direct hand in the negotiating.

As the Tory-dominated borough council employers

were about to start the meeting hundreds of workers invaded the Council chambers. One Labour councillor described the scene 'from the other side of the fence' to SO: "The Tories had just arrived from their group meeting, heard the workers streaming down the corridors, and fled."

Since the employers wouldn't listen, the demonstrators decided to see what their union officials were doing. After all, NALGO's headquarters was only 50 yards down the road. But once inside the NALGO offices, confusion. While Keith Sonnet was scrabbling round for his 'I support the Res Workers' sticker, NALGO members were searching the building for someone to talk to. It wasn't easy!

But it wasn't uncomfortable either — not for the lucky few

who found their way to the 'NEC members only' sitting room: £800-a-throw desks with gold-inlaid, leather tops, a huge colour TV, armchairs that obviously weren't picked up in a job-lot from MFI.

At last, though the officials decided to talk: but talking, at least talking to the members, didn't seem to be their strongest suit. Sonnet, NALGO's Local Government Service Conditions Officer; Paul Marks, his assistant; and Dennis Reed, the Assistant Organising Officer for Local Government all tried to fob off the angry, impatient crowd of 200 NALGO strikers.

"We've tried to escalate the action" . . . "It's up to you to go back and convince your members" . . . "Some members, residential workers included, won't back us up" . . . "It's your delegates who didn't support all-out action" . . . "We're doing our best."

They were answered from all round the room, by activists

from branches all over London and beyond.

The leadership had done nothing to support branches taking action. Ballots before strike action, or even before action like Lambeth NALGO's boycott of any communications with councillors, took the full-timers anything up to four weeks to organise.

The list of complaints went on and on . . . and the excuses of the full-timers got lazier and lazier. By the end it was clear Sonnet and the rest were hardly worth talking to — so he was sent packing to find a phone and find someone from the NEC.

When it was all over the confrontation in NALGO's headquarters proved one thing: it is no use relying on the full-time officials. They might be plastered in stickers but they won't do anything — it is up to the residential workers and the militant branches to start action and link it together around the country.



To join or affiliate, write to Chris Richardson, 21 Devonshire Promenade, Lenton, Nottingham NG7 2DS. £5 for individuals, or for affiliated organisations, per 1,000 members. £2 for low-waged individuals. £1 for unwaged. Add 50p if you want the special issue of Gay Socialist.

Industrial digest

FORD are increasing their offer of 5.5% made last week to its 48,500 hourly paid workers to over 6% (more than twice the Government's unofficial norm of 3%) provided the unions drop some of their other claims.

The unions have been hoping for a similar pay settlement to that achieved by Vauxhall workers after a four-day strike recently of 7.75%, together with improvements in company pension arrangements and moves to a shorter working week.

At talks held on Monday (November 21) Ford made an improved 'final' offer of 7.5%, among the highest in the current pay round, which union leaders rejected; mainly it would seem because it includes no improvements in holidays and pensions. The 56-strong union negotiating team are due to meet again on Thursday to consider the reaction from meetings in the 24 Ford UK plants.

Following a similar agreement made between British Steel and the ISTC, the National Union of Blastfurnacemen representing 3,000 out of British Steel's 74,400 employees reached an outline pay and productivity deal last week, accepting that there will be virtually no 1984 national pay rise, for the third year, and that increased earnings must come from local productivity bargaining.

A mass meeting of Rolls Royce Motor's manual workers at Crewe last week (Thursday 17 November) voted overwhelmingly to reject management's latest offer and to continue their four-week strike.

The latest proposals came after talks in London between the company and national union officials on Wednesday — and after management had warned the workforce by letter to individuals' homes of the dispute leading to permanent damage — sticking to the original 4% 'final' offer (accepted by white-collar staff), but making an additional £1.50 a week across-the-board payment from next January, in exchange for the ending of an already existing output bonus scheme. In addition the company also promised to 'harmonise' shop floor conditions towards those of white-collar staff.

CIVIL SERVANTS in Land Registries throughout the country have entered their second full week of selective strike action. Members of CPSA and SCPS unions are taking industrial action over downgrading of jobs.

So far, management have refused to negotiate. On Friday, further staff were given suspension notices because of their refusal to work the new system.

Fund-raising is going on in all branches and the membership is standing firmly behind the strikers in nearly all workplaces.

At the Nottingham branch where about one-quarter of the strikers — over 100 — are employed, there are increasing demands from rank and file members for escalating the action.

At present, union section officers are telling them to play a waiting game. Whatever the outcome — and we are fighting for victory — funds have to be raised. CPSA are only paying 50% of net wages. Therefore cash is vital to continue the dispute.

Cheques payable to CPSA Land Registry Strike Fund should be sent, c/o Chris Watkinson, 368 Broxtowe Lane, Broxtowe, Nottingham.



Grim faces at a mass meeting of UCATT Direct Labour craft workers in Birmingham last week, as they heard of

plans by the Tory council to axe 300 jobs. The redundancies — 60% of the workforce — have come up as part of the

Tory plans to hive off repair and maintenance work to private contractors.

JOHN HARRIS

Shell pickets bite

As workers at Shell UK's strike-bound Stanlow oil refinery step up their four week industrial action over the company's 4.5% pay increase offer, by extending picketing to all main Shell terminals — including Heathrow and Birmingham airport depots — the 1,750 Shell oil-tanker drivers seem likely to accept their stewards' recommendations to end their five day overtime ban and work to rule.

This decision by Shell tanker drivers follows the acceptance by the 1,550 drivers and depot workers at BP on Friday November 18 of an offer of a 4.5% increase and a consolidation in basic pay of two pay supplements of £2.50 a week.

This, the first breakthrough by oil companies in the autumn pay round, was quickly followed by Shell management altering their offer to the point where it was virtually identical to BP's — 4.5% increase with the consolidation of three supplements of £2.50 a week into basic pay, with the promise of further talks over arrangements concerning drivers' jobs.

This means that refinery workers come under increased pressure to end their dispute over a similar 4.5% offer. Official strikes have halted output at Shell's two main refineries, Stanlow [Cheshire] and

Shellhaven [Essex], which account for three-quarters of Shell's production, worth £4 million a day.

Overtime bans and work-to-rule actions are in force at Teesport [Cleveland] and the Carrington chemicals complex [Manchester]. Secondary picketing by refinery workers has halted deliveries from one-third of the main distribution

centres so far, with continuing promises by drivers not to cross picket lines.

This action is hitting Shell UK hard, and despite settlements by the tanker drivers, perseverance and the stepping up of picketing by refinery workers, though faced with injunctions, will break down management's 'final' offer and refusal to negotiate.

NUM crunch

In an attempt to end the NUM's overtime ban [now in its fourth week], the NCB seem set to put into practice one of the three options presently being considered — the withdrawal of the 5.2% pay offer, a ballot of the mineworkers over the heads of union leaders, or the putting of the 5.2% non-negotiated offer directly into the pay packets of the 192,000 miners.

The decision is likely to be made next week for MacGregor wants the overtime ban to be finished by December 12.

Planned talks between the NCB and the NUM to discuss the possibility of a joint approach to the Government on the industry's future with a new

plan for coal would be unlikely to go ahead if the dispute carries on past this date.

The latter option of the direct increase in the miners' wage-packets seems the most likely, since the balloting of mineworkers to undermine their support for the action decided by their elected delegate conference would be unlikely to work through lack of participation.

However, such a course of action by the NCB still leaves unresolved the major concern in the industry caused by its contraction policies and the still massive threat to jobs posed by future plans.

Calling all unions!

"COWBOY employers treat us like cattle", "Contract cleaners should not be employed, they should be done away with", "Calling all unions — our jobs today — but yours tomorrow!" read some of the placards outside Arnotts stores in Glasgow's city centre last Friday (November 18).

The origins of the dispute date back to November 3, when cleaning staff at Arnotts, the second biggest shop in Glasgow and part of the House of Fraser empire, received a letter thanking them for past services and informing them they were being sacked and replaced by contract cleaners.

There had been no prior consultation with the union. And the letter was only the latest in a series of attacks on cleaning staff at the stores, involving a cut of 30% in its size over the last two years, leaving just ten cleaning staff for the whole store.

Working conditions had also deteriorated, with the antiquated cleaning equipment not being replaced and the cleaning staff being expected to lift heavy

loads, though not part of their job.

Local union officials, from the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW), were unprepared for the announcement and were clearly thrown off balance at a union branch meeting on November 14 where they were confronted by angry cleaners demanding some positive steps from them in defence of their jobs.

But all that came back was half-hearted promises — that they would make a stand, that they would fight, and that something would be done. But no clear-cut plan of action was put forward to the workers.

At a follow-up meeting three days later the union agreed to limited action, but involving only the cleaners not the shop staff. What this meant in practice was revealed the next day (November 17).

The store was "picketed" by both cleaners and shop staff until starting time. Then, apart from one cleaner who was left to picket on her own, the staff, including the shop steward and

the USDAW branch secretary, went into work.

This is no way to win the dispute. The cleaners have shown their readiness to put up a fight. Union officials should be organising the action needed to win that fight, in particular the organising of mass pickets and a ban on overtime and Christmas working.

With Christmas coming up, Arnotts will be extremely sensitive to the embarrassment of pickets outside its entrances. And with both the Scottish TUC's women's conference and the Scottish Labour Party Women's Conference being held this week in the City Halls, just five minutes away from Arnotts, an appeal to the delegates could see hundreds of pickets outside the stores during the conference breaks.

Faced with the loss of Christmas shoppers, Arnotts management could be cracked in a matter of days and forced to withdraw the sackings. The question is whether or not the actions needed to win this dispute will be actually implemented.

Maxwell sacks BPCC strikers

The union-buster with an ASTMS card

By Harry Sloan

ROBERT Maxwell's BPCC printing corporation could face the loss of its lucrative Radio Times contract if he does not take steps to settle a major struggle with SOGAT printers at BPCC's Park Royal works.

Maxwell has issued dismissal notices to the 280 SOGAT members in dispute at the plant, where there have been repeated battles over manning levels and fresh investment.

During this latest clash, SOGAT chapel leaders report that Maxwell sent a team of workmen into the plant with 14lb hammers to smash the ageing printing presses. The present conflict centres on pay rates and manning levels to accompany a new £10 million investment in the plant.

Park Royal electricians — still holding SOGAT membership despite TUC instructions to return to the Press branch of the EETPU — have supported the SOGAT machine minders by cutting off power supplies throughout the plant, paralysing typesetting by NGA members, and backed up by occupation of the main substation.

Alongside the threat to sack the strikers, Maxwell has issued two-week 'protective' notices to 257 more Park Royal workers not in dispute and 152 at his East Kilbride works.

But neither his heavy handed treatment nor the timid approach of SOGAT General Secretary Bill Keys has dented the determination of the strikers or the 'blacking' action in their support by wholesale workers organised in SOGAT, who disrupted distribution of colour supplements for the Sunday Times, Observer and Mail on Sunday, printed by Maxwell subsidiaries. The next embarrassing loss could be the 9.5 million run of the Christmas Radio Times — and even the whole contract.

Maxwell's union-busting tactics however are by no means new or unique in the printing industry. But what does make him unusual is that he sports both a Labour Party and a trade union membership card — despite repeated efforts of rank and file activists in the Oxford Labour Party and ASTMS to kick him out of both.

A high point of such struggles came during the marathon official strike in 1979-80 by journalists at Maxwell's Pergamon Press power base for trade union recognition, following the sacking of an NUJ member in breach of procedure.

Oxford NUJ Branch protested over Maxwell's behaviour to ASTMS General Secretary Clive Jenkins, only to receive a stone-walling response from Assistant General Secretary Muriel Turner assuring the NUJ that 'the dispute with Pergamon Press has nothing to do with this Association, since Mr Maxwell was clearly acting in his capacity as an employer and not as a member of ASTMS.'

This cynical response infuriated ASTMS members in Oxford and the union's No 7 Divisional Council. The Oxford Publishing Branch of ASTMS pointed out that Muriel Turner's letter excluded the union into two categories: "those to whom the rulebook applies, and those to whom it does not."

They also protested that Maxwell's membership of ASTMS

was an embarrassment in relations with other unions.

Letters and resolutions of protest were to no avail: Maxwell was being stubbornly protected by bureaucratic friends at the top of the union, and by the right wing leadership of his own local ASTMS branch.

The fight was also carried through into the Labour Party front. Again the NUJ Branch queried Maxwell's status as a Labour Party member given his brazen hostility to trade unionism. But the right wing leadership of Oxford CLP — which also refused to take any action against Lady Margaret McCarthy, who, as chair of the local Area Health Authority, was ruthlessly following through a programme of cuts and closures against stiff union opposition — rallied around Maxwell, whose wealth, influence and rabid anti-Trotskyism appealed to them in almost equal amounts.

But Maxwell did not repay their favour: during the June 1983 election he was back in the headlines — making heavy criticisms of Oxford's Labour Council in its handling of the possible relocation of Oxford United Football Club, of which Maxwell is chairman.

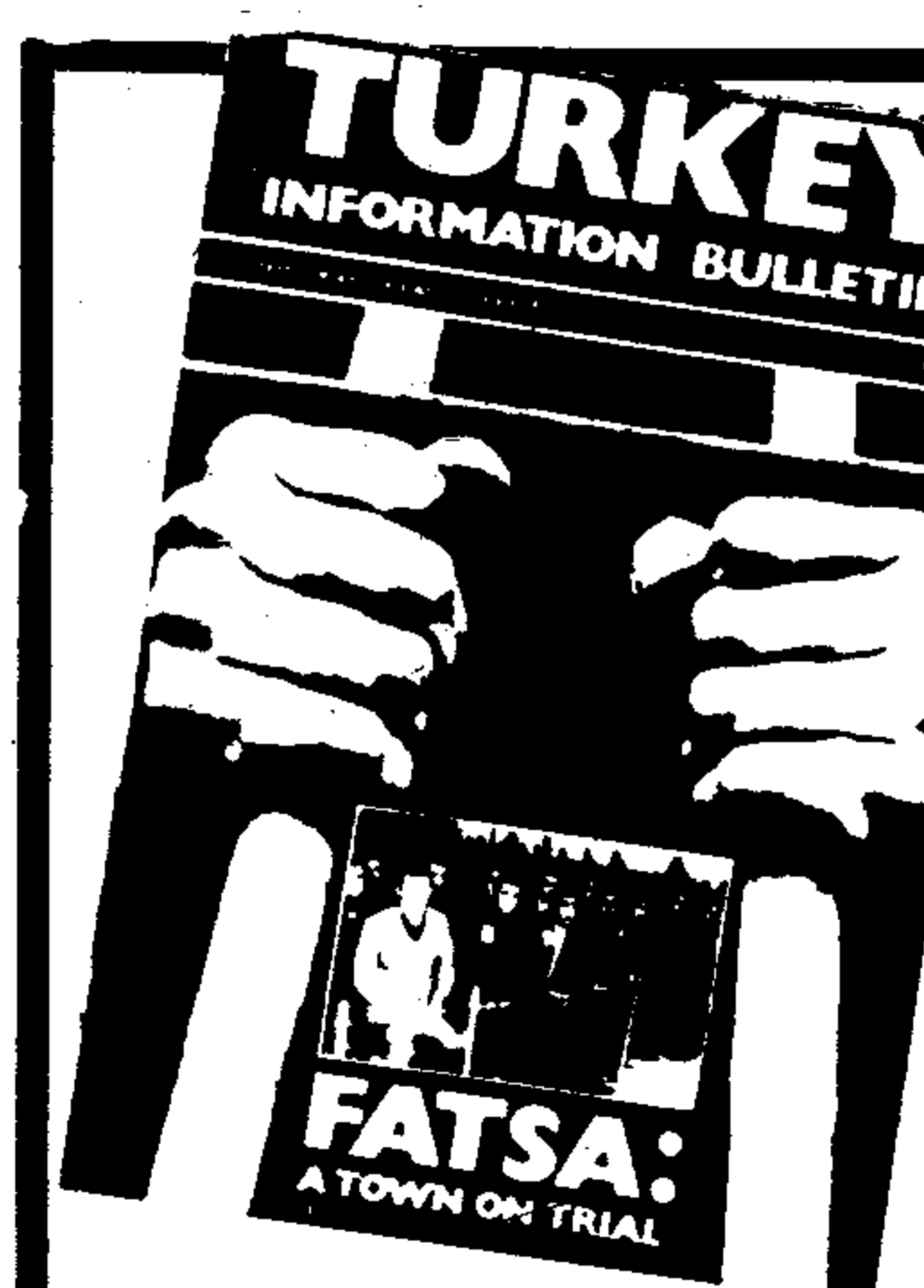
Delight

To the delight of local Tories, Maxwell urged voters to bear in mind the council's record when they went to the polls!

This latest outburst appears to have been somewhat ill-judged. Not only could it do nothing to serve Maxwell's own personal interests, but it came at a time when the traditional right wing stranglehold on the Oxford Labour Party had begun to be broken and boundary changes had created two new CLPs where once the bureaucrats had been able to focus on one.

Since June the rumblings of anger at Maxwell's betrayal have been heard in both CLPs: how appropriate, therefore, that with his behaviour at BPCC he should offer a further reminder of his contemptuous attitude to the labour movement as a whole.

For Labour Party and ASTMS members, now is a good time to try once again to drive this arrogant, opportunist, anti-union millionaire out of the ranks of the labour movement.



New pamphlet, 50p; latest TSC bulletin, 30p, plus postage. From TSC, BM Box 5965, London WC1N 3XX.

Dutch strikers fight on

Report from a special correspondent in Amsterdam

INDUSTRIAL action continued in Holland this week against the government's attempts to cut back by 3½% the incomes of government workers and people on social security.

The government has already conceded half a per cent on the wages of public sector workers but is adamant that no further concessions will be made. It has high hopes that it can win.

The spineless response from the FNZ (the Dutch TUC) is helping ensure that the outcome of this dispute will end in defeat for the Dutch working class.

They accept the principle that cuts have to be made and have as an alternative to the government's plan, their own plan, based on cuts in income of 1-1½% spread across workers both in the public and the private sector, and based on promises by the government of industrial investment.

For the government this is an important battle. Ruud Lubbers, the Dutch prime minister, is trying to hold together a coalition government, and his future depends on winning this struggle.

Collapse

If agreement cannot be reached with the union leaders then it is very likely that the government will collapse. So to remain adamant on the question of the cuts, without giving concessions, is crucial from the government's point of view.

They have to prove that they are able to inflict on the Dutch working class a drop in living standards and prove that they are capable of returning the Dutch economy to a competitive level within the world economy.

Talks last week between union leaders and the government produced little. The government started the talks with the line that the cuts in 1984 would go ahead on January 1 and that the only topic for discussion was cuts for 1985 and 1986, but agreed to the FNZ proposal that 1984/5/6 be discussed together as one package.

The government proposed that cuts in the average working week be discussed with cuts in income, clearly a move aimed at giving the appearance that the government has conceded an important issue by granting a reduction in the working week. This has been welcomed by union leaders.

Both sides are aware that they cannot give very much. The government's future depends on holding firm and the union leaders cannot be seen to sell out too obviously in the face of mass working class pressure.

The government has done its best to try and quell the strike movement. Ferry operators, garbage burners and police have all been taken to court and their action has been declared illegal.

The media has attempted to create divisions between public and private sector workers by saying that public sector workers are very well off in comparison with those in the private sector.

Attempts have also been made to create a divide between "Christian" unions who are not over-keen on strike action, and the "Socialist" unions.

If the government can create the impression of giving concessions, then the weaker, "Christian" unions may be split off from the fight.

But industrial action continues and still has broad support, which in many ways is not surprising, considering that out of 7.2 million incomes in Holland, 3.9 million are affected by the cuts.

Action in the last week has continued from Post Office workers, garbage collectors, fire-fighters, police, teachers, and also from the unemployed.

The Stock Exchange in Amsterdam was occupied and the police were used to evict them.

In The Hague, fire-fighters engaged in a day of action sprayed the streets to a depth of six feet in foam and there have been action days throughout Holland.

Apart from the garbage workers there has been little spontaneous action by workers, most of it being organised at the top by the inter-union national coordinating committee.

If the FNZ leaders' acceptance of cuts in principle is to be defeated, the rank and file will need to organise their actions independently of the trade union bureaucracy.

Socialist ORGANISER

Stockport: the birth of a test case

Continued from front page

attempted to drive out the vans with his papers, there were nearly 1000 pickets there — not just NGA members from all around, but also TGWU and unemployed from Liverpool, students from Manchester, and groups from London SOGAT, NUJ, NUPE, the seamen's union, NALGO, ASTMS, EETPU, and others.

NGA branches round the country are organising coaches.

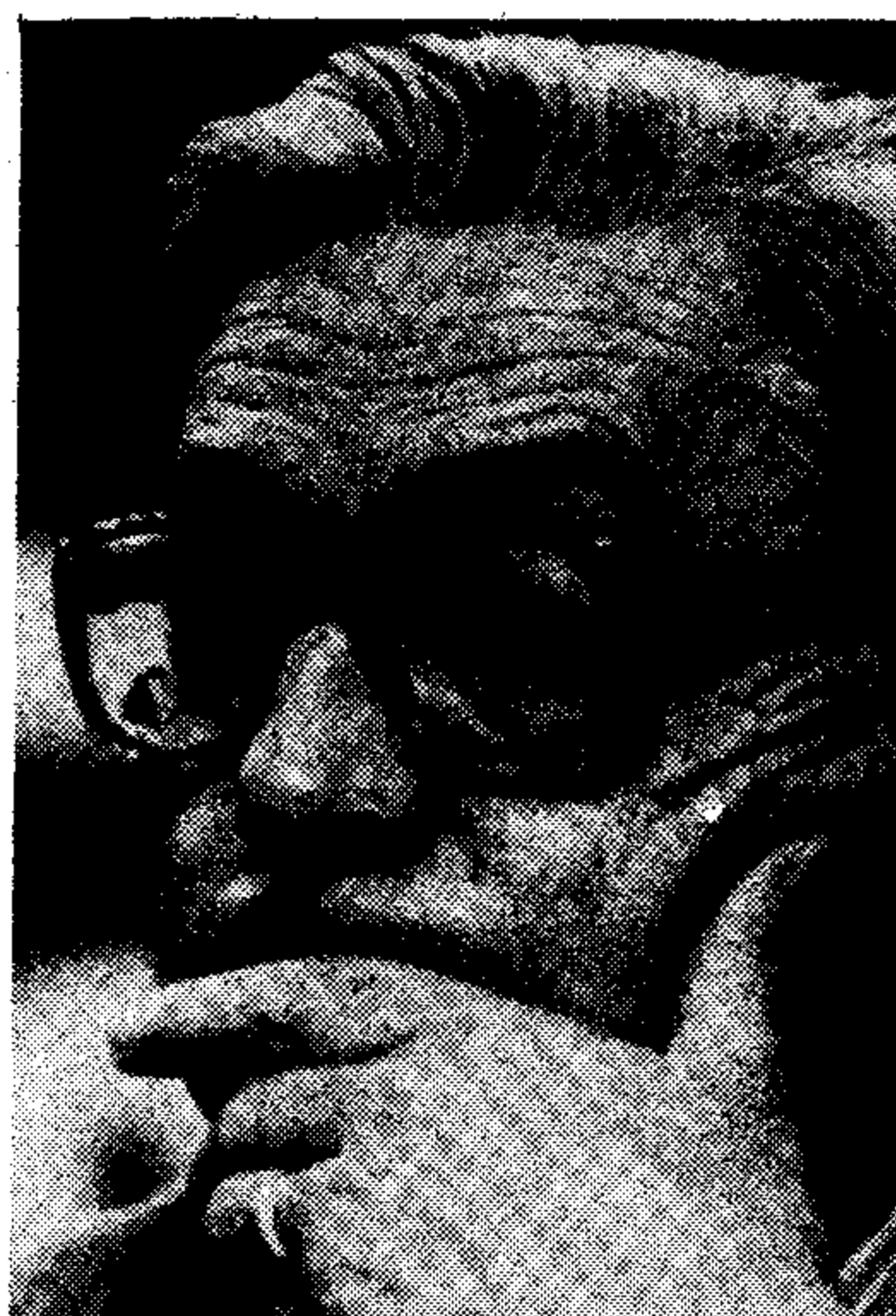
There was also a group from the local ward Labour Party in Warrington — though we're still waiting for the national leaders of the Labour Party, or even of the Labour Left, to come out in support of the NGA on this.

Despite hundreds of police, and a level of violence that left one policeman and two pickets hospitalised, we stopped Shah bringing out his papers at 2am. He got them out only after 6am, when a reduced picket line of 150 or so was easily outnumbered by police.

In the last week there have been many arrests on the picket line.

This struggle could be decisive for the Tories' anti-union laws. So far they, and the employers, have been cautious. Instead of the blockbuster approach of the 1971-2 Industrial Relations Act, the Tories have gone for a series of partial measures, and up until recently employers had not used the 1980

case



TUC's Len Murray

Prior Act or the 1982 Tebbitt Act much.

The Tories' May election victory and the TUC's September decision to talk to the Tories on further anti-union laws — thus implicitly accepting the 1980 and 1982 laws — emboldened employers for an offensive.

The Post Office Engineering Union knuckled under to the court injunction obtained by British Telecom. But the NGA has stood firm.

Shah publishes four free-sheets — the Stockport, Bury,

Altrincham and Warrington Messengers. He had a closed shop agreement with the NGA, but carefully recruited anti-union labour for his new Warrington works.

He has now sacked six NGA members at his Stockport office who took action against the scab printing, and (with the NUJ blacking the work) is running the freesheets as a non-union operation.

In talks at the government arbitration service ACAS, Shah offered (and the NGA leaders accepted) a post-entry closed shop at Warrington. That means that the present scabs would continue, but any new labour would be NGA.

The union refused to settle because Shah would not reinstate the six sacked members. The 'post-entry closed shop' is a dangerous formula, too: it means a non-union operation here and now, and once the NGA has demobilised there's nothing to stop Shah going back on the agreement later.

The central issue now, however, is the right of trade unions to operate as trade unions without being crippled by the law. The Tories and the employers obviously reckon that they won't get a response this time like the mass strike movement that freed the Pentonville Five dockers and crippled the Industrial Relations Act in July 1972. Let's prove them wrong.

Continued from front page

concentrating on getting people up at night. Also, through our links with the trade unions and the unemployed centres on Merseyside, we've been able to get a great deal of support from the unemployed and trade unionists who recognise the importance of getting a victory for the NGA, and the effect that could have on the combativity of the rest of the movement.

It certainly hasn't been a tea party on the picket line, but we refuse to be intimidated by the brutal tactics of the police. We will continue to attempt to prevent the printing of the publications of the Messenger newspaper.

There is a clear danger that the next move by the courts will be, if they consider that we are flouting the law by not paying the fine and continuing the mass picket, a move to the sequestration of the union's funds.

It is therefore vitally important that we do achieve the full support of the trade union movement.

We're asking trade unionists to send resolutions of support to their various NECs and from there to go to the TUC, making it absolutely clear that the rank and file in the movement expect to see the General Council supporting the NGA in their stand.

The TUC has spent four years conducting their campaign 'Hands off our Unions', explaining to everyone the implications of the legislation. Having done that, having informed the trade union movement, we now require that they put all their brave words of rhetoric into practice.

Spread the fight!

Tony Boyie spoke to Socialist Organiser on the picket line on Wednesday, 23rd.

Trade unionists should mobilise as far as possible to get as many pickets onto this line as possible, and cover it 24 hours a day.

But if any funds are sequestered there should be an immediate withdrawal of labour.

Also, resolutions should be banged off to union leaders, saying that they should back the NGA and the Wembley TUC conference decisions.

In Liverpool, I've been stood down from my job as field work for the unemployed, to assist and liaise with Ray Williams of the NGA on this dispute.

Initially our strategy was based on the fact that we knew the labour movement wasn't geared up for this. We mobilised the unemployed from the TGWU 6/612 branch, the unemployed centres, and the NGA unemployed branch. We also contacted people in the trade union movement on Merseyside,

like the port shop stewards committee.

We contacted the TGWU 6/541 commercial transport branch, and got an instruction from them to stop any of their members crossing this picket line.

Mobilise

We've had tremendous support from the unemployed centres on Merseyside.

Now we're trying to mobilise support nationally by contacting Trades Councils throughout Britain, from the Merseyside Anti-Tebbit Committee.

The Merseyside Anti-Tebbit Committee is now hoping to build links nationally.

It was set up by rank and file shop stewards, some trade union officials, and Liverpool Trades Council, to educate the rank and file and fight the trade union legislation. It was also involved in organising the demonstration in Liverpool on November 19.

Its terms of reference have been widened in the last two weeks to bring in the unemployed centres coordinating

committee and community organisations throughout Merseyside.

As far as blacking is concerned — Shah could be buying paper through another company. As far as we know, his last shipment of paper came through Blyth, in Northumberland. We've contacted the Liverpool port shop stewards' committee, and they're contacting the National Port Shop Stewards Committee with a view to blacking any shipments of paper for this company unless they're approved by the NGA.

On this particular picket line my experience of the police is that they have responded violently when there's been a shortage of bodies on the picket line — and when the police have been outnumbered, they've been very polite.

If we can get at least 1000 to fill this square [outside the printworks] 24 hours a day, there is no way Mr Shah is going to get any materials, papers, or scabs in or out of the factory.

It's not the TUC that is going to do that, it's the rank and file. We think we can keep it up.

FUND

£10 from a South London supporter, £10 from an Islington reader, and £2 from John Douglas makes a total of £22 in contributions to our fund this week. Our thanks to these supporters.

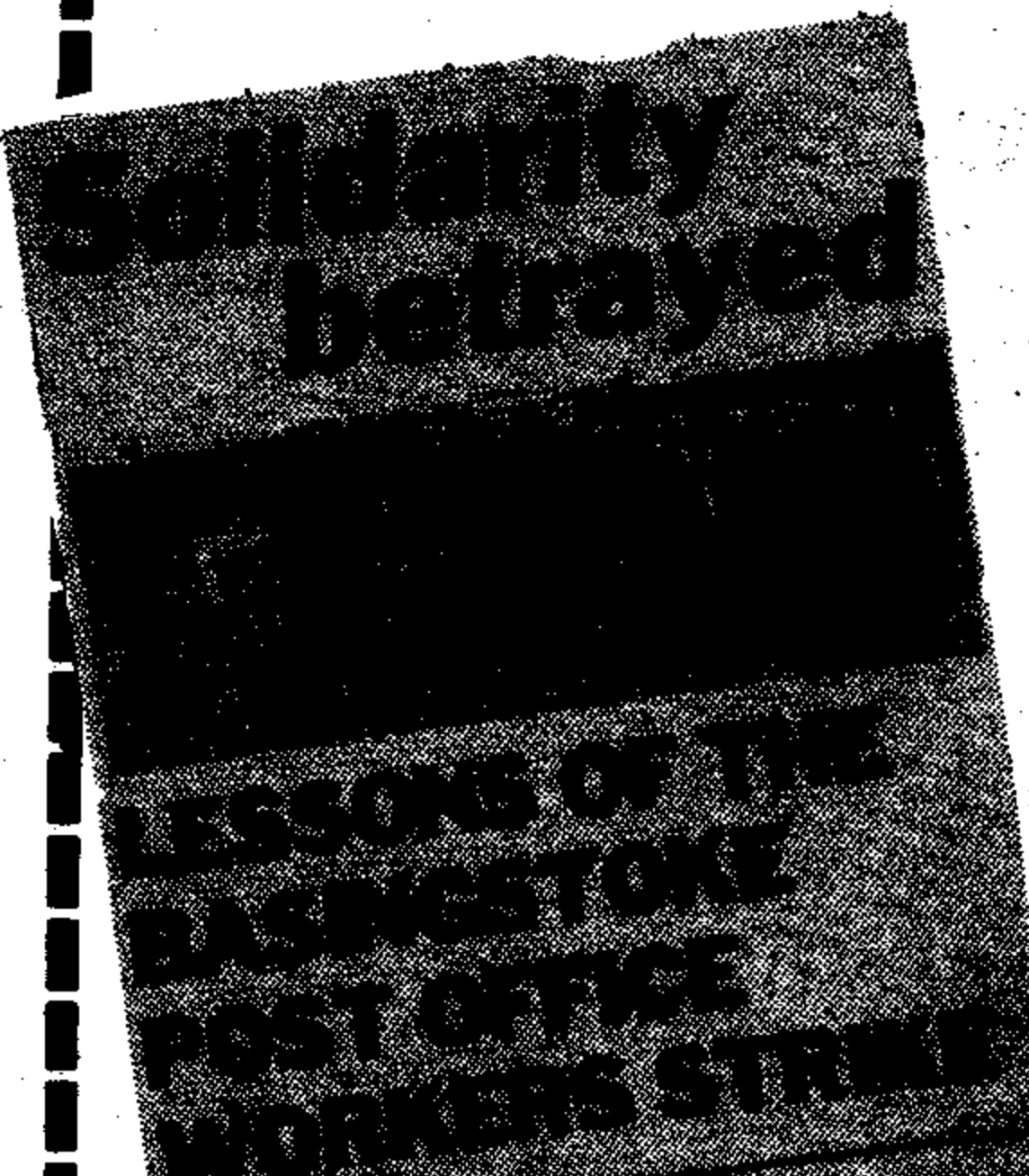
Meanwhile, we hardly know how to spend such a princely sum.

We've reached 12% of our target: and we're a third of the way through the Drive. That 12% has come from 12 groups, while 27 groups have gone a whole month without sending a donation. And only one group has raised over a third of its group target.

We've made the point before: our fund isn't there for adding extras or luxuries. We need to raise £1,000 a month to continue publishing a 16-page weekly Socialist Organiser.

There are many comrades in the supporters' groups who say they support us: and readers who do, too. But unless these words are turned into practical support, they will mean nothing.

Send donations to: 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.



This new pamphlet tells the story of the victimisation of Socialist Organiser supporter Alan Fraser and how the fight to defend him was sold out by the union officials. 25p plus postage from 75 Freemantle Close, Basingstoke.