

Break
links
with
Tories

Socialist ORGANISER

Join the
Labour
Party

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RECALL THE TUC!

Don't leave
the NGA in
the lurch

JOHN SMITH (IFL)

'No recriminations', some TUC leaders are saying.

'No hope', many disgusted trade unionists must be thinking.

But we can't leave the NGA issue there. It is not run-of-the-mill issue. The very existence of the trade union movement as an effective force is at stake.

The NGA faces financial hamstringing — and decimation. No effective defence of the closed shop can be conducted without breaking the Tories' anti-union laws. Any trade union boycott of non-union operations is ruled out if those laws prevail.

And without the closed shop and such boycott, the NGA is a sitting target for the press bosses.

If TUC surrender to the anti-union laws is allowed to become an accomplished fact, then public sector unions will likewise be helpless against privatisation. To resist is illegal!

Council unions will be debarred from fighting the Tories' carve-up of the local authorities. Such a fight would be 'political' action, 'secondary' action. Not allowed!

The National Union of Journalists members bravely continuing the fight against the anti-union T. Bailey Forman print/publishing firm will be left in the lurch.

And why?

Guilty

On Black Wednesday, December 14, 29 union leaders voted to acquiesce in Thatcherism and throw out every vestige of trade union principle.

Many of the guilty did so in violation of decisions of their own union conferences and executives. None of them did so on the basis of consultation.

On both the EPOC and the General Council, Ada Maddocks of NALGO voted against supporting the NGA, in violation of an executive decision of her union.

The amazing justification was that she is elected from the women's section, not a NALGO appointee, and therefore not answerable to her union.

Similarly, John Daly, NALGO's new general secretary, voted against the clear decision of his own executive.

John Morton of the Musicians Union, who voted for the NGA on the Monday changed his tune and voted against it on the Wednesday. What was the difference? He now saw the vote as one of confidence in Len

Murray, and confidence in Murray was more important than the whole NGA!

Step up Les Wood, general secretary of UCATT. He must be well in the running for Reptile of the Year.

UCATT's policy is to oppose the Tebbit law with, if necessary, a general strike. On 14 December, Les Wood voted against opposing the Tebbit law by as much as even sending a letter of support to a union fighting it.

And Bryan Stanley of the POEU?

At the very moment that Stanley was voting to throw the NGA overboard, his executive was voting to congratulate it on its firm stand.

Loopholes

The Wembley TUC Special Conference decision on fighting the anti-union laws was full of loopholes, it is true. Perhaps it was to be predicted that Len Murray and his partners in crime would interpret it as they have done.

But their interpretation — that in principle the TUC might, some day, resist the law, but in practice it will always toe the Tory line — isn't what millions of trade unionists voted for.

The issue cannot be left to rest until the annual TUC Congress in September. By then many other unions could be under the hammer.

We need a special recall TUC Congress, to call Len Murray and the General Council to account.

Even on the basis of unions voting the same way as their representatives did on December 14, such a Special Congress would probably produce a majority to support the NGA.

And if the Congress was prepared for by a fight in each union to bring its leaders to account, then surely it would vote for a fight.

The NGA has called a demonstration on January 28, and says it is calling together the left-wing TUC General Council minority to plan further action.

They could make a good start by having 'Recall the TUC' as a major slogan of the demonstration, and getting the General Council minority members to campaign for this.

Clive Jenkins supports the NGA and condemns Len Murray? Good! Let's see him and Joe Wade going round union branches and trades councils nation-wide, stirring and agitating, pushing the



The Warrington picket line: a crucial test case

message that this is a life-and-death issue for the whole movement.

We should not wait for a recall TUC. Activists in all the pro-NGA unions must press their leaders to pledge industrial action in solidarity if the NGA relaunches its campaign.

Such pledges could give the NGA the confidence to reimpose the mass pickets and call strike action of its own membership. They could turn the tables on union-buster Selim Shah and his

Westminster backers even now.

To concede defeat would not be like giving up on a wage claim. It is not an issue where we can retreat now to come back later. Either we defend our unions now — or tomorrow we will have no effective unions to defend us tomorrow.

All the Tory law allows is house-trained, factory-by-factory, bargaining outfits.

It makes trade union solidarity unlawful. But solidarity is our only strength.

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EDITORIAL

The Labour Party and the NGA

WHAT WOULD a political party which really represented the interests of the working class have done during the NGA dispute?

First of all, it would have recognised that there is no distinction in the real world between industrial matters and political affairs, between the correct sphere of influence of the unions and the political arm of the unions. It would have come out right from the start and said: "The NGA is involved in a political fight. Their fight is our fight. We will strain every sinew to support their struggle and broaden it into a mass movement capable of dislodging the Thatcher government".

A workers' party would have come out and told the world: The anti-union laws were laws made by the boss class to help the boss class. They are laws intended to stop our class using its basic protective mechanisms, the unions, effectively — against the cuts, against unemployment, against wage reductions, against the attempts by Thatcher to put our class back into the 1830s. These laws are laws which must be broken. We shall do all in our power to ensure that they are broken.

A workers' party, declaring its support from day one for the NGA in the fight to defend basic rights won through a century and a half of struggle, would have urged total support by the TUC General Council for the NGA. It would have ruthlessly criticised Murray and his lieutenants. It would have rigorously insisted that they were doing the dirty work for Thatcher and the bosses. It would have called loudly for their removal.

The leaders of the Labour Party did none of these things in the NGA dispute. The NGA and the fight against Thatcher were strengthened not one iota by the performance of these gentlemen throughout the dispute. Their lamentable performance shows just how far our party is from really representing the interests of our class.

Labour should have given total support to the NGA — not, as the poll-paralysed new-fledged electoralists of Socialist Action argued (in no. 38), because the NGA has 120,000 votes in the next General Election, but as a matter of principle. Victory in the dispute would have strengthened our class, and defeat has set it back on its heels.

Lose or win votes by it, the labour movement must defend itself.

And what did we get? We got Labour's shadow employment secretary, John Smith, informing us that the Tory laws, which will break effective independent trade unionism, will have "ultimately to be accepted by those affected by them".

We got Roy Hattersley telling the world, "The general principle on which I stand, and on which the Labour Party stands, is that the law must be respected. Those of us who believe the law to be wrong have to change it rather than break it. Industrial disputes have to be conducted without violence and within the law".

Kinnock, of course, can't keep his trap shut except when it is vital to speak out. All he could do was, like a Harold Wilson understudy, to condemn both the laws... and violence on picket lines.

Kinnock and Hattersley summed up the performance of Labour's leadership in this most vital of disputes. But there were bright points.

The Campaign Group of MPs came out in direct support of the NGA and its struggle. Dennis Skinner laid out the General Council. Eric Heffer correctly commented, "I believe that now is the time for all Party members to spring to the defence of the trade unions and to give every practical support we can, both inside Parliament and in the labour movement as a whole".

We must build on this. At the moment the hard left is on the defensive in the Labour Party, as it is in the unions. One way to set about ensuring that there will be no repetition of the TUC's sordid performance against the NGA is to establish strong workplace branches of the Labour Party, which can help obliterate the distinction between the industrial and political labour movements.

At the same time we must take the still-very-much-alive issue of organising support for the NGA, and the lessons of the betrayals of the TUC and the Labour Party leaders, into the wards and constituencies, to turn them out to support future struggles.

On December 21 the Tories published the Rates Bill. If made law, this will empower central government to set ceilings on the spending of selected councils — or, if it sees fit, to set a general ceiling for all councils' spending. It is only one of several prongs in the Tories' attacks on local services and local democracy. Mary Corbishley reports on the plans for action made by the town hall union NALGO. Martin Thomas reviews a pamphlet detailing the Tories' plans, and Vidya Anand puts a point of view on the campaign in London.



What the Tories plan

Labour Research Department: 'Your Council Under Attack'. 45p plus postage from LRD, 78 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HF.

THIS new Labour Research pamphlet summarises the Tory government's latest moves against local services and local democracy.

Rate-capping: a White Paper, 'Rates', outlines policies to be legislated in summer 1984. The Government will acquire powers to set maximum levels of spending and rates for individual councils, as from April 1985.

The White Paper also proposes to put a statutory duty on councils to consult local business people before fixing their rates. This proposal gives bosses and bankers a trigger for central government action against their local council.

Abolition of the metropolitan authorities: another White Paper, 'Streamlining the Cities', proposes to scrap the Greater London Council and the other metropolitan authorities (West Midlands, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear) as from May 1985.

In 1985-6 these authorities' functions will be run by transitional committees drawn from the district councils. From April 1986 the functions will be either divided up among a miscellany of joint boards and quangos, or transferred to the district councils.

For the first three years, 1985-8, central government will have direct control over the budgets, rates, and staff numbers.

Public transport: the courts have already blocked the GLC's cheap fares, and the government has legislated itself powers to regulate the level of subsidy to local public transport.

With the abolition of the metropolitan authorities and the GLC, the government proposes that public transport in these areas should be run by joint boards or (in London) by a corporation directly under central government.

The LRD pamphlet does not pretend to give a strategy for fighting back, only information. Yet the way it presents the issues — as a conflict between government 'dogma' and 'myths', on the one hand, and all people of good sense, including Tory local councillors and Chambers of Commerce, on the other — could hinder the development of an effective strategy.

GLC councillors, in their campaign against abolition, are looking to win support from businesses, professional associations, etc; to pressurise Tory MPs; and to try to swing the vote in the House of Lords.

They are paying £37,500 a quarter to an ex-Tory SDP professional lobbyist — but dis-

counting any idea of industrial action in the campaign.

There is dogma and myth in government thinking, and there are Tories who oppose the government's plans. But there is also a fundamental class purpose behind the plans: to switch resources away from public services to private enterprise; to bust up the public sector as an area of trade union strength; to eliminate a tier of potential political opposition.

That purpose can be fought effectively only by working-class action.

Popular front is not the way

I HAVE no doubt that there is only one central issue for Londoners, for the London Labour Party and for the Ethnic Minorities who have contributed so much to the rich fabric of society in this great metropolis of ours — and it is simply: the defence of London — the defence of Labour London, of working class London — from one of the worst swingeing attacks in the history of this capital city.

The important achievements which the GLC, and the ILEA, together with the London Labour Boroughs have built up over the years are now being threatened. The Tory plan to dismantle the GLC, their decision to strike at the roots of local government by "rate-capping", their vicious attacks on the National Health Service up and down the country — these represent the greatest threat to the standard of living and condition of life in London.

You will not be surprised to hear me saying that it is the ethnic minorities who will be at the sharp end of these attacks. We know this too well from our experiences in every day life. "We are always the last to be hired and the first to be fired".

The Tory plan to privatise London, to make it a safe haven for speculators and property developers — it is something we will and must resist with all the energy at our disposal.

How do you think the battle is going?

All too slowly. There is a surfeit of committees and great quantities of bumph rushing all round the place. But I have seen little evidence of work on the level that matters — the ground level, the level where people meet in large numbers — in offices, schools, colleges, employment exchanges and shopping centres.

I ask you how can you justify paying £37,000 for three months work to an SDP turn-coat Tory for lobbying Parliament in defence of the GLC?

Time is not on our side. The Ethnic Minorities Working

NALGO votes for a fight

By Mary Corbishley

NALGO members working for the GLC and the Metropolitan Authorities, which the Tories plan to scrap, intend to fight the government on the issue.

The NALGO members concerned voted overwhelmingly — in a ballot whose results were announced at the end of December — that they will not cooperate in the dismantling of the authorities.

The Executive has sent out a letter instructing NALGO members not to cooperate.

NALGO thus gives a lead to all other unions involved directly or indirectly and whose cooperation is essential to the successful Tory reorganisation and centralisation of local government. The message is: Don't go along — stand up to them.

This decision is also a well-deserved slap in the face for all those self-serving local government "lefts" who say that NALGO isn't a "real union". They say this, of course, because NALGO members defend themselves, as trade unionists should, against their employer, even when the boss is a council run by 'leftists' who have themselves ceased to be militants and sunk into the role of mere bureaucratic local

government administrators.

The planned action by NALGO members to frustrate, sabotage and prevent the carrying out of government policy for local government will plainly be illegal under the existing anti-union laws. If NALGO won't defy the law then it can't carry out this policy.

NALGO was a vigorous defender of the NGA — until Black Wednesday, when its four TUC General Council representatives divided two for Murray and two for the NGA and defiance of the law.

Then just before Xmas, the Executive went Murrayite. It passed a resolution that NALGO would continue to support the NGA — provided this did not involve NALGO members in "positive breaches of the law".

But when they oppose the government's plans for local government, NALGO members will themselves come smack up against the law.

They must be prepared to defy it — and if necessary to defy the union's leaders.

Preparation must start now.

How do the ethnic minorities, frankly, see this campaign?

None too clearly, I regret to say. The ethnic papers are not devoting sufficient attention to the campaign — especially the language papers. There has been far too much pussyfooting on racism in our own party. We cannot pretend that it is not a factor. The mistakes of the past and, regrettably, of the present as in Walthamstow — weigh like an Alp on even the present well-meaning gestures and initiatives of our party today.

Are you discontented about the situation today?

Not at all. The period demands leadership from Lion-hearts, and not faint-hearts.

New!

Solidarity betrayed

LESSONS OF THE BASINGSTOKE POST OFFICE WORKERS STRIKE

This new pamphlet tells the story of the victimisation of Socialist Organizer 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.

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK 10p

The nightmare arrives, the fight goes on

New Women's Fightback now out. 10p plus 16p postage from 10b Landseer Road, London N19.

Reg Race reports on exposure of police methods



Self-defence vindicated!

NEWHAM is a 'front line area' in the fight against racism. It was in Newham that the National Front got its highest vote in the last election. Certain parts of Newham have become 'no-go' areas for black people. Asians walking in the road are spat upon. Their houses are petrol-bombed. Many Asians get beaten up.

In Newham, Asian women organise to go shopping together in large groups because of the fear of being alone and the risk of attack. On some estates in the area, many Asians are too scared to go out after dusk and are imprisoned in their homes.

In this atmosphere of fear and violent attacks something was bound to happen.

In the weeks leading up to September 24 last year, Asian school students became the target of racist thugs. Many were beaten up on the way home from school. In the week before the arrests of the Newham 8, Asian school students at Little Ilford School were attacked three times by armed white youths.

Faced with no other choice but to defend themselves, the school students, along with people from colleges, organised themselves to go home together to prevent further attacks.

One of these groups on its way home was accosted by three white men who jumped out of a car and started to shout at them. Thinking that these were the racists they were expecting the Asians defended themselves. The three whites were in fact plain clothes cops. Eight of the youths were arrested by a vanload of uniformed cops who just happened to turn up.

Several months later the eight went on trial, charged with 'conspiracy to assault persons unknown'. It was the same charge that the Bradford 12 had faced before them.

The Bradford 12 had prepared petrol bombs, after rumours of a likely attack by skinheads on the Asian community.

They raised the slogan: 'Self defence is no offence'. They said that the police had failed to protect them and therefore they were forced to prepare to defend themselves.

The Bradford 12 won their case, and four of the Newham 8 defendants won too. They were acquitted of all charges, and that was a significant victory. But four were convicted of causing an affray, and one was also convicted of common assault.

Affray is a serious offence, and can carry a life sentence. The four convicted are expected to be sentenced in the new few weeks, after social workers' reports. An appeal is likely.

FACTS OF THE TRIAL

THE prosecution case was that the defendants "set themselves up as a vigilante group and formed part of a frightening posse out for revenge against some white people against whom they had a grudge".

When three plain clothes officers accosted the group on the streets to arrest an individual in a green turban for possession of a defensive weapon, they were set upon and injured according to the prosecution.

The prosecution counsel, Mr Hart-Liverton, claims that the arrival of the plain clothes police officers on the scene before the uniformed officers was a pure coincidence. They happened to be on an 'anti-burglary' job when a radio message sent to all police cars in the area informed them of a large group of Asian youths congregating around Little Ilford School.

All the officers called denied knowledge of racist attacks in the area (with the exception of the murder of Akhtar Ali Baig in 1980). The defence, in cross-examination sought to establish that there was no vigilante group, but an ad hoc formation of young local Asians who had come together that afternoon to protect themselves from a very real threat of racist attacks.

The defence also sought to establish that the original incident would never have happened but for the intervention of the three plain clothes police officers, who were not known by any of the defendants to be police — a fact explained by the prosecuting barrister as 'rather unfortunate'.

Then three plain-clothes police officers, Sgt Aylott (now with the SPG), PC Furzer, and PC Martin, all gave evidence in turn.

Stopping the car, Martin jumped out and went to arrest a

youth in a green turban who had dropped a hockey stick. Martin says he shouted, 'Police — under arrest', which the defendants have denied.

Martin said that he did not show a warrant card, and agreed in cross-examination that the most sensible action would have been to approach the group and ask them what they were doing. The other two officers said they only got out after they saw Martin being assaulted. The defence disputed this.

Furzer had a truncheon — he said he "just happened to have it on him". He agreed that he had hit Kalbir Khela several times with the truncheon, but believed he had been "fully within his rights to do so". It didn't make any difference that he hit Khela on the head.

All three officers deny using racist abuse, though PC Furzer admitted that when he was approached by two white women who told him to leave Khela alone, he told them to "fuck off".

The next officers to be cross-examined were PC Dick and PC Neville, who escorted the 8 to Forest Gate police station in a transit van. PC Dick agreed that the defendants were sitting on top of each other. Both officers denied that they or anyone else in the transit van had assaulted the defendants or had abused them. Neville denied having called Gurjit Hunjan "Paki filth", and tearing his turban from his head.

Detective Inspector Mucklow was questioned about the police handling of the affair after the arrests. He was unable to explain discrepancies, or why exhibit numbers in statements had been altered. He also could not explain how the same hockey stick dropped by the man in the green turban (whom the police said they had not traced) was said to belong to one of the defendants. (Information from defence committee bulletin

The Met is racist!

SIR David McNee's decision, when he was Commissioner of Police in the Metropolitan Police, to bring in the independent Policy Studies Institute to undertake a piece of major research on the performance of London's police, looks in retrospect like a stunning own goal.

Before publication of the PSI Report, it was the stock in trade of senior Police Officers and successive Home Secretaries to label critics of the Met. as "extremists" whose opinions could not be trusted and whose allegations about the Police stemmed from their own analysis of the Police's relationship with the state rather than any objective view of reality.

This tired argument can now be buried peacefully. The PSI Report indicates that many of the allegations levelled by the left against the Police are true — or at least true of substantial sections of the force. In particular, the Report concludes that:

1. "London Police carry out about 1½ million stops in a year. Some 100,000 offences a year are detected in this way. But stops that do not bring such a result cause hostility to the Police among a substantial proportion of young people, and of young black people in particular."

2. "One-tenth of Londoners think that Police Officers often engage in serious misconduct and more than half of young black people think this. About 20% of people who have been arrested claim that unreasonable threats or unjustified force were used. The researchers considered that excessive force was used in nine of the one hundred arrests they observed."

3. "Racist language is pervasive in the Force."

4. "there is a gap between the formal rules of procedure affecting evidence and the 'working rules' of police officers."

In other parts of the Report, the researchers conclude that women are discriminated against in the Met., that the Police are in fact in breach of the Sex Discrimination Act in respect of the treatment of women Police Officers, and that there are widespread sexist assumptions displayed by the Police about the role of women in society.

They further report that, although arrests at 'major disturbances' provided only a tiny proportion of the total

number of arrests, it was clear that "when certain kinds of circumstances arise, the Police habitually exceed their formal powers... people who are known not to have committed an offence would normally be arrested in like circumstances. We also believe that anyone who is in the area where a major disturbance is taking place is liable to be arrested, regardless of what he is actually doing as an individual".

The Report makes this point with some strength — for one of their own researchers was arrested without good cause when simply observing police operations, simply because he was in the vicinity of a "major disturbance".

The picture that emerges of the Met. is one where racialism, sexism, drunkenness, abuse of powers, wrongful arrest, and considerable personal corruption exist. It is also a closed society. The Police in London clear up only 16% of reported crime, but criticise those who have the audacity to attack their methods. Complaints against the Police are investigated by the Police themselves, and it is clear that only in a tiny handful of cases are the complaints "proved" — because the incident in question happened to be witnessed by a particularly authoritative member of the community.

But these are criticisms about the organisation of the Metropolitan Police, the methods they use, and the collective attitudes displayed by Police Officers. What is much more fundamental is an aspect of the Police's activities which receives scant attention in the PSI Report: the use of the Police to impose anti-working class laws on the labour movement.

These activities are mentioned only in passing; but they are part of the most fundamental role of the Police — maintaining the authority of the state; and ensuring that the political and industrial elite is above the law because it makes the law.

The PSI Report is not objective as such. It is written from the standpoint of concerned technocrats, disturbed by what they find under the unturned stone in the Police's own backyard. The labour movement, however, has additional concerns. Our campaign is to make the Police accountable for their policy as well as their individual actions.

In the end, however, it will need a fundamental transformation of society to make the Police behave differently. But even then, under a socialist government, it will be essential to make the Police accountable to the people rather than its bureaucratic controllers.

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INSIDE

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THE SWP PAGE 1

BATTLE FOR THE

NGA!

New issue of Socialist Student, paper of Socialist Students in NOLS, now out, 10p plus postage from Andy Bennet, DSU, Dunelm House, New Elvet, Durham. Take a bulk order to sell!

THINKING ABOUT GREENHAM COMMON

SINCE the arrival of Cruise missiles, the Greenham Common peace camp has been more than ever the vanguard of the fight against nuclear weapons. But how can that vanguard mobilise the power to win? GERRY BYRNE discusses some ideas.

THERE'S something strangely reminiscent in the diverging responses on the left to Greenham Common. In many ways it parallels the way the emerging women's movement was greeted in the late 1960s.

On the one hand, dismissive revo-speak: it's all a bit of a diversion, the real answer is to smash capitalism. The misguided nature of the protest, the divisiveness of women-only organisation is pointed to. And the final rabbit out of the hat is that it all emanates from middle class women — white women, to boot.

On the other hand there is an "instinctive" response from women. What might be called the "spontaneous" position. The issue is overwhelmingly important, the tactics and methods of struggle feel right, let the politics look after themselves.

What the self-styled "revolutionary line" fails to address itself to is that all the truisms about socialism being the only answer count for nothing if they can't be tied to analysis of the forces, struggles and demands which can bring it into existence.

The left really should take to heart the lessons of the many past missed boats before it once again takes a mass movement to task for its irrelevance.

What the "spontaneous" position ignores is that some politics will dominate. There are no political vacuums. The effect on a movement of being dominated by a mish-mash of often un-spelt out and unchallenged ideas — which nevertheless in fact exist and dominate — can be to cripple it or at the very least weaken its effectiveness.

So what are the politics of Greenham? A stress on women's autonomy and on actions rather than words, a linking of militarism with male power, a suspicion of male-dominated, and often even any structured organisation, spontaneity and action now rather than the tedious slog to change structures and formal policies. These positions, prejudices and attitudes are often glued

together with a semi-mystical emphasis on symbolism and a recourse to an idea of some 'essential femaleness'.

Politically, it's a stew, and very often the response has been to spoon out the more digestible elements and leave the rest to those to whose tastes they appeal — a very liberal live-and-let-live policy.

Which is all very well for harmony. But it doesn't do a lot for developing a political strategy. And, like it or not, the central point of these actions is to change the face of the world, for the better and for everyone. That requires clear direction and clear aims.

Confidence

Nevertheless, it's indisputable except perhaps to wooden-headed sectarians, that focusing on actions which are planned, developed and executed by women, has given a massive boost to women's confidence generally. It is highly improbable that so many women, many without previous political involvement, would have acted in such numbers, so audaciously, if it had been men calling the shots. That, in itself, is sufficient justification.

Greenham has reached, and inspired and drawn in huge numbers of women who would not have felt the confidence to act in other set-ups. And once awakened, they have drawn conclusions on an ever-widening scale about the world we live in, the government's priorities, the role of law and order, of the police, of "defence", etc.

One of the conclusions activists have drawn is that male power and male conditioning feed into militarism. Of course, it's not the whole story, it can be oversimplified and misleading — but it's still an important insight, with many implications. Women don't feel safe to walk the streets at night, yet millions are spent on our "defence".

What women fear is not an



How do we get to a situation where it's us taking away the missiles, rather than them taking away the protesters?

outside "enemy" but male power — with the armaments industry as its most monstrous expression — exercised in every area of their lives.

The crumbs of power most men exercise in their personal lives enslave and imprisons them, too.

Along with this, arising out of it, goes a suspicion of those organisations which operate along "male" lines — CND, the Labour Party — and especially their leaders.

There are many reasons to suspect the leadership of CND and the Labour Party. Experience has shown each in their own way to be quite prepared to make deals, to sacrifice the integrity of their movement to get-rich-quick popularity, and indeed to opportunistically jump on the Greenham-band wagon when it suits them and distance themselves when the climate is against them.

But all this rather begs the question: are these organisations worth working in, is it worth fighting to defend their policies, should their leaders be called to order?

One of the problems with shrugging one's shoulders in despair is it leaves the field free for these leaders to fudge and dilute. But the movement has already faced a major set-back with the arrival of cruise — whatever bold proclamations we make about being undefeated. We cannot afford to retreat further nor can we allow support to be dissipated and demoralised. The net result of giving the Kinnocks and Kents a freer rein by absenting ourselves is to weaken, not strengthen, that support.

What then is the solution to this rubik cube of irreconcilable and shifting facets of political

reality? Is there one?

The truth is the sectarians, in a sense are right. The only solution is a massive industrial mobilisation to stop cruise and other missiles, since this government has shown itself impervious to massive expressions of public opposition. The truth is that the real answer is socialism.

Where the SWP and the like fall down is in being incapable of showing where such a movement for industrial action will be built from and where socialism will come from.

Formally, the vast bulk of the labour movement is for unilateral disarmament, many unions have a specific policy to boycott work on the missiles. But this is all words. One spin-off of the Greenham emphasis on spontaneous actions has been to play down the importance of turning the resolutions and conference decisions into action and of organising in the labour movement for that action against those who stand in the way of organising it. The same is true of the Labour Party.

Thousands of women have been touched by Greenham, have watched, have participated and thought through the issues. They must be the link between the mass demonstrations and winning the labour movement to action. Women are already in there fighting for greater control and participation, for a real democracy that doesn't stamp down on spontaneity, for a movement that doesn't kowtow to leaders and figure-heads. Women are developing the experience and the consciousness of how to make the movement amenable to our demands. This must be the issue to test our strength and bring our power to bear to make sure life does continue on this planet.

ANDREW WARD (REPORT)

JOHN HARRIS

Join the Labour Party

Socialist ORGANISER

Scargill gets it right

BREAK LINKS WITH TORIES!

By Harry Stuenkel

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By Harry Stuenkel

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Occupy the shipyards!

60,000 WORKERS employed by British Shipbuilders are due to start an all-out national strike at clocking-off time on Friday January 6.

The strike has been called by the Shipbuilding Negotiating Committee (SNC), with the support of the executive committee of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions. The union leaders did not want the strike, but they were pushed into it by the pressure from the yards to reject British Shipbuilders' 'survival plan'.

The plan includes 9000 redundancies, drastic changes in work practices, and the closure or privatisation of some yards.

The SNC had originally called for workers to accept a £7 increase linked to the 'survival plan'. This £7 would not be part of the basic pay, but instead paid separately — and taken back if the yards did not come up to the bosses' own local 'survival plans'.

There has been massive support for the call for strike action, as individual unions have voted by ballots or mass meetings. In fact, the militancy has been there in the yards throughout the year, but the union leaders have done everything they could to avoid mobilising.

Even now, with the strongest mandate they have ever had from the yards, they are pleading with the employers through the government conciliation service ACAS to come up with some sort of compromise.

They know quite well that any such 'compromise' would come nowhere near our original claim for a substantial wage rise, a 35 hour week and longer holidays.

Contempt

So far management have treated the union Shipbuilding Negotiating Committee with total contempt. In a letter on December 22, Alex Ferry on behalf of SNC asked British Shipbuilders 'to return to the negotiating table with more realistic proposals between now and January 6 1984'. BS replied that they were 'naturally willing to meet the SNC's request for further talks, but the terms of your message make this impossible in two respects.'

'One, any meeting held would be for the purpose of further clarification of the proposals which we have discussed with you at length. No movement of significance in the terms of the document could be considered, in view of the essential nature of its contents for the survival of the industry.'

'Two, British Shipbuilders could not enter talks without the

By Lol Duffy, GMBU shop steward, Cammell Lairds shipyard

threat of a general strike being first removed, and the continuation of normal working being indicated.

'It is particularly disappointing to hear you say that British Shipbuilders' current proposals have been overwhelmingly rejected and will not be introduced in the industry. As we understand it, the Shipbuilding Negotiating Committee has refused to allow employees even to discuss these proposals. The strike threat has already affected customers and damaged work prospects. A strike will be even more harmful.'

'Since the SNC initiated the strike call, it is clear where the responsibility for the damage lies'.

The lay delegates on the SNC have been called down to London for a meeting at 3pm on Wednesday January 4 before the talks at ACAS have even shown any real response from the employers. But there will be a lot of pressure on the delegates to reject any deal in line with the 'survival plan'.

The threatened closure of Scott Lithgow on the Clyde

makes it more likely that the strike will go ahead.

Management and the union leaders — especially the union leaders! — are grasping at straws, hoping that we will back down. There will be an attempt to divide the yards by rewarding some with orders and starving others, and by trying to get yard-by-yard deals going. But it will be hard to split us, because the attack on working practices means an attack on jobs in every yard, even those few with sizeable order books.

If the strike goes ahead, then the lead of the Tyne in deciding to occupy the yards and set up occupation committees has to be followed by all the yards. Once we are out, BS will close the yards they don't want and start selling off the equipment.

If we stay in to occupy, then we can focus attention on the yards, and base our campaigning action in the yards, using the facilities we supposedly own to spread our fight for the right to work, decent pay and living conditions.

About 64% of shipyard workers claim some form of supplementary benefit — so much for the myth of high wages in the yards!

Once the fight starts, it will have to be fought to win — not to compromise.

Cammell Lairds convenors JIMMY MCCARTHY (GMBATU General Section) and TIM COX (UCATT) spoke to Socialist Organiser.

Jimmy McCarthy

IN THE ballot conducted just before Christmas, my members voted two to one in favour of any action needed to support our justified wages, salaries and conditions claim.

It should not be forgotten that since nationalisation in 1977 30,000 jobs have been lost from our industry, and the flexibility and mobility of workers within British Shipbuilders has greatly increased.

I cannot forget the shame I felt when we allowed our members of 65 and over to be tossed on the stones with a pitiful £450 or less, and given the address of the local DHSS office. Some of these people had given a lifetime to the industry and the movement, just to be cast aside.

We have given all there is to give. There is no fat left to trim.

People say there is no work for the yards, but if the government put pressure on British shipowners to build and repair more UK ships in UK yards we would not be in the present situation. The government could

also provide better credit facilities to UK shipowners, similar to our competitors in foreign yards.

The maritime policy that would have been introduced by a Labour government, to take control over shipping, ports and shipbuilding and repair, should now be implemented by the TUC. We have the resources to carry it out.

One thing is obvious. We cannot win on our own. We have to take the fight out into the broad labour movement and demand their support. With such support we can win.

Tim Cox

My members voted overwhelmingly in support of taking any action that the Shipbuilding Negotiating Committee calls to achieve our claim.

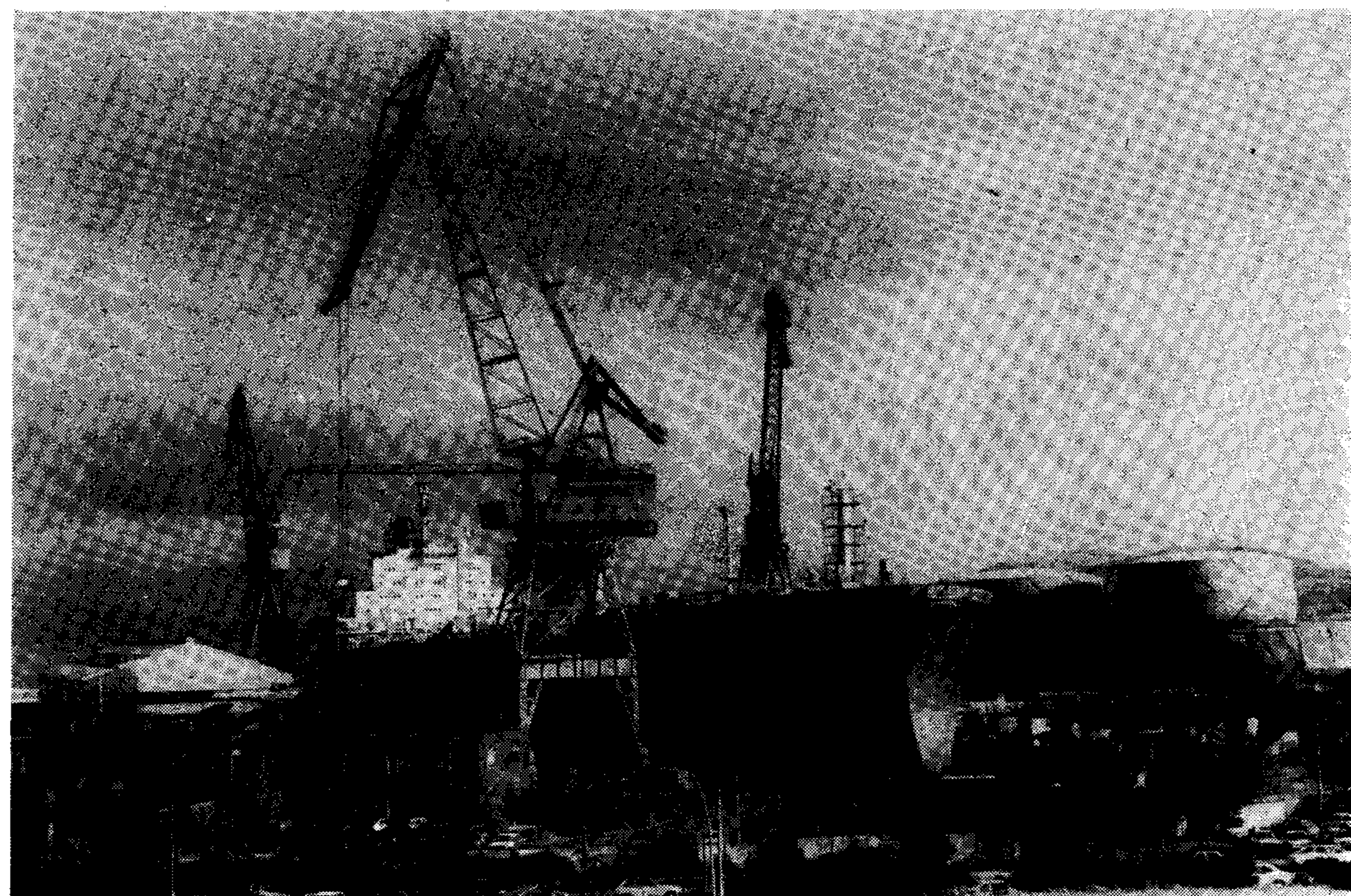
I think we must occupy the yards, to prevent management and others on the staff coming in to carry out their campaign against the unions. Management have from 4.30 every night to sort out their tactics for the next day and plan their scurrilous propaganda. How much easier would it be for them with all day free.

Management claim we have been offered a £7 a week increase plus fringe benefits. We would certainly like to know what those fringe benefits are. Maybe Lairds management sees the loss of 1400 jobs by March as a fringe benefit.

Previous owners before nationalisation, and the government since, have taken profits out of the industry and put nothing back in.

We all hope there will be a settlement, but not at any price. There are many dangerous points in management's proposals, not least of which is subcontracting — which could turn the yards into sub-assembly points.

In Lairds the Confed stewards have been making links with those willing to support us in the fight against redundancies and closure. A sub-committee of the Confed committee has now established close links with the County Council and the employment resource group to work out ways of organising around workers' interests.



A desert on Clydeside?

PORT Glasgow, Gourock and Greenock are now threatened with devastation far exceeding that suffered by any other community in Scotland since the Tories came to power in 1979. The possible fate facing the 100,000 inhabitants of the three towns can be compared only to the blight of Corby after the steelworks there closed.

This bleak future is threatened by Britoil's decision to cancel its order with the Scott Lithgow shipyards for an £88 million drilling rig. If the work is withdrawn, then the yard would close, throwing 4,200 workers onto the dole.

Over 90% of the workforce at the yard, in Port Glasgow, lives within a four mile radius of it, embracing Greenock, Gourock and Port Glasgow itself. Registered male unemployment in that area is already 19%. If the yard closes, it would rise to 40%. Scott Lithgow provides 11% of the employment in the area, and there would be a knock-on effect in addition to the direct job losses.

Within two years the Inverclyde region around the shipyard would become one of the

Stan Crooke reports on the fight against closure at Scott Lithgow

largest and most deprived unemployment blackspots in Western Europe.

But the widespread poverty and misery resulting from closure means nothing to Britoil, British Shipbuilders or, least of all, the Tories.

Britoil's only concern is that the oil rig it has on order from the yard is late. The decision to cancel the contract is designed to teach British Shipbuilders 'a lesson it will not forget in a hurry'.

While thousands of workers will lose their livelihoods as a result of Britoil's educational exercise, Britoil itself will lose next to nothing. It can reclaim the £40 millions downpayment it has already made, and, through the courts, can win an additional £6 million in compensation.

Nor will the management of the nationalised British Shipbuilders be losing any sleep as disaster threatens Inverclyde. In fact, they have not even bothered to take up Britoil's

suggestion of a possible renegotiation of the contract.

The Tories reacted to Britoil's announcement by launching into a fresh attack on the alleged record of the workers at Scott Lithgow (where there has not been a minute lost in strike action during the last nine months).

Thatcher claimed that the workers' record was 'abysmal'. Shipbuilding Minister Norman Lamont blamed the workforce for the delay in completion of the oilrig. And the well-named Industry Minister John Butcher described the yard's support for the national shipbuilding strike as 'an act of mindless folly'.

There is no prospect of saving jobs at the yard by fervent pleading with British Shipbuilders management or the Tories, though this is very much the approach of the labour movement bureaucracy in Scotland.

Nor is it safe to believe that Britoil's announcement is part of some elaborate bluff.

The only prospect of saving the yard and all jobs there lies in labour movement action and labour movement solidarity.

An international fight

BEHIND the confrontation in British Shipbuilders is a major shift in the international division of labour.

In 1926, the UK was still building nearly 40% of world ship tonnage. As late as 1973, Western Europe still held over 40% of the market.

But by then Japan had already taken the lead, building more ships than all Western Europe put together.

Since 1973 Western Europe has faded to a minor position in world shipbuilding, and even Japan has come under pressure from countries like South Korea.

Japan still took 63% of the tonnage of new orders in 1983; but, as the Economist reports: 'In a discreet way, Japanese firms now grumble that they cannot compete, using arguments that echo many a British shipbuilder of the 1960s'.

South Korea had 19% of new orders in 1983, the EEC 5½%, and Brazil 2½%. Other major producers are Taiwan, Spain, Poland and China.

Shipbuilding is one of the small range of manufacturing industries in which Third World producers have gained leading positions — textiles, clothing, and electronics being the others.

Combined with the shift in production to East Asia has been a slump in the whole industry.

Shipbuilding had a boom in the early '70s. With the oil price rises and the stagnation of world trade since then, order books have shrivelled.

World order books totalled 133 million tons dwt in early 1974, but now stand at around 30 million. There is reckoned to be about 40% excess capacity world-wide, and even the Japanese shipbuilding industry has halved its person-hours since 1975.

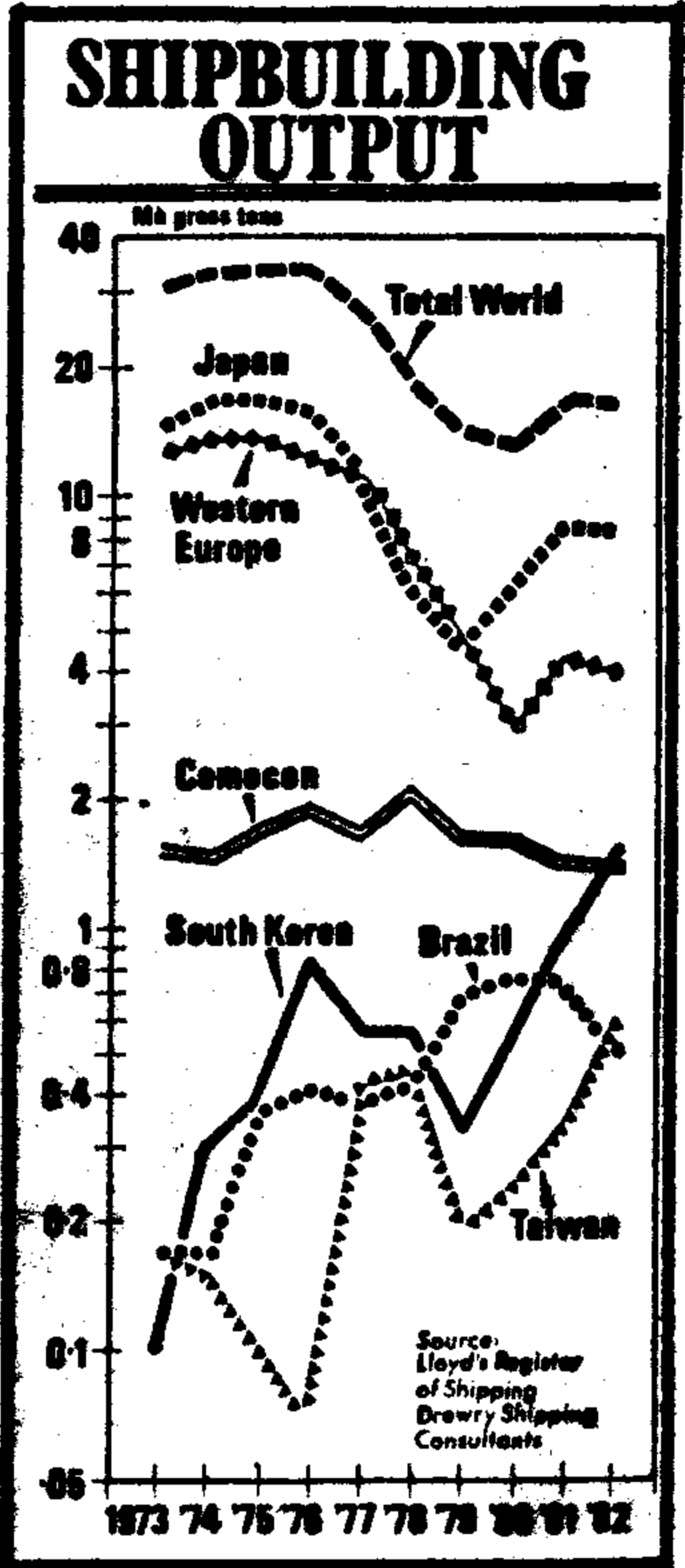
Shipbuilding in Britain developed when Britain was still a leading industrial power. Strengthened by this country's domination of the world market, and later the safe markets provided by Britain's big navy and by the Empire/ex-Empire, trade unions in British shipbuilding were able to gain a strong position — without bothering themselves too much about politics or about internationalism.

Bust down

Now the employers are out to bust down wages and conditions in British shipbuilding to something nearer the level in South Korea or Taiwan, where brutal dictatorships prevent effective trade union organisation.

To demand the British capitalist state protects British shipbuilding against Asian competition is no answer: it can't and it

won't. In shipbuilding, a world industry perhaps more than any other, international workers' solidarity — a united fight to protect and improve conditions for all shipyard workers — is indispensable.



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.



Discussion

Councils can't live with the Tories!

PAULA WATSON of Westminster South CLP continues the discussion on Labour councils, the unions and the government.

THE appalling chaos and confusion on the Left, particularly in London, suggests that the strategy adopted over the last few years has been misguided.

Much of the energy of left activists since 1980 has been directed towards securing the return in local elections of approved left candidates, to gain control of borough and metropolitan councils.

Some success was achieved, particularly in the GLC elections, but so far the results of all this effort have been singularly disappointing. The Labour members of the GLC reneged on most of their manifesto commitments on fares, housing and school meals. Time after time they preferred compromise to confrontation with the Tory government.

Now, we have the unedifying spectacle of ILEA locked in combat with the NUT over compulsory redeployment of teachers and finally, to add a grotesque touch of farce, the absurd invitation to the Queen to open the Thames barrier. So much for all the high republican sentiments expressed at the time of the royal wedding.

Elsewhere in London the scene is similar. Both Lambeth and Southwark councils have recently been in dispute with NALGO residential workers. Brent council is involved in two disputes with its own employees.

Everywhere, when faced by the Tory demands for retrenchment, Labour councils have cut services and put up the rates, in some cases quite substantially. Islington's rates have risen by 30%, Brent's by 20%.

Discreet cuts have been made to balance the budget and some Labour councils have even connived at a measure of privatisation. Next year the government is demanding even more draconian cuts and is backing this up with rate capping, which will come into force in eight months time.

Record

The past record suggests that most Labour councils, after a show of breast-beating and brow-clutching, will eventually acquiesce and we shall be treated yet again to the spectacle of Labour representatives administering Tory policy.

This unhappy picture shows that the strategy of trying to capture local councils for the left was not thought out with sufficient care.

The best generals are those

who can put themselves into the enemy's position and foresee what action he will take. Surely it did not need a political Einstein to anticipate that the Tory government would attempt to discredit Labour-controlled councils by forcing them into a position where, in order to stay in office, they would either have to make cuts or raise rates?

Consequently, the left should have realised that to retain credibility, its councillors would only be able to stay in office for a comparatively short time. As soon as the government, by manipulation of the rate support grant, made the maintenance of services impossible without rate increases, the left councillors should have taken a firm stand on the policy of no cuts, no rate rises and no rent increases.

Where the left was in control, this would have meant either majority opposition or consistently voting against any cuts, leading to an eventual confrontation with the government. Where the left was in a minority on a Labour controlled council, the result would have been a split, with the right joining with the Tories.

If such a policy had been followed a number of useful gains would have been made. The Labour right would have been flushed out and shown up for what it is, a cats-paw for capitalism.

Democratically

The electorate would have learned, first, that socialists, though democratically elected, cannot implement their policies in a capitalist environment and under a capitalist national government, and secondly, that capitalism is incompatible with democracy.

In other words the left should have realised that councils could be used as a platform for their policies and views, but that under present circumstances, with a reactionary government in office, they cannot successfully run local authorities for long, unless they are prepared to compromise to such an extent as to destroy their credibility.

To be fair, many Labour councillors would argue that they hung on to office in the hope that Labour would win the next election and that a Labour government would come to their rescue.

Now that possibility has gone, activists must insist that the time for compromise is over. From this moment on all left councillors must take a firm stand on a policy of non-cooperation with the Tory government.

Let the Tories do their own dirty work, whether this be through government appointed commissioners, Tory minorities or a coalition of Tories and Labour traitors.

Let us make sure that the Association of London Authorities is not used as a talking shop while behind the scenes, the Labour councils quietly surrender. Attempting to stay in office, in the grounds that Labour will be able to administer better services than the Tories, is a policy of non-cooperation with the Tory government.

Confrontation, not compromise, is the only way to defeat the Tory government.

Labour campaign debates

Mark time, or fight the witch-hunt?

By John Bloxam

ON Saturday January 21 the first of three meetings which together add up to the 1983 Annual General Meeting of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy will be held in London.

On the following two Saturdays meetings will be held in Birmingham and Glasgow.

The SDP-style AGM is obviously designed to give the CLPD leadership the possibility of a final mobilisation in Scotland, where the CLPD right wing is strong, if things don't go their way in the previous meetings.

The affairs of the CLPD are still being coloured by the clashes at last year's AGM. The Executive Committee (EC) is haunted by the fear of another major challenge to their positions. But many of last year's Left have given up on the CLPD because of demoralisation or disgust. The EC majority has entrenched itself. Any challenge to them is likely to be confined to particular policy issues.

But this hasn't prevented endless stories about 'takeover bids'.

Vladimir Derer and Victor Schonfield, leading members of the CLPD Executive, went to the AGM of the increasingly right wing Labour Coordinating Committee with an appeal for support against the Left at the CLPD AGM this year, like last. The EC has put out a document which draws out the logic of their own utterly pessimistic and defeatist views (everything has been going downhill since 1979).

But there is, unfortunately, little prospect of a re-run of last year's debates. To judge by the number and content of the AGM resolutions circulated, the defeat of the Left last year and the consolidation of the present leadership has sterilised much of the debate inside CLPD.

Resistance

Three of the 26 policy resolutions submitted want to prioritise resistance to the continuing witch-hunt — and call for an unequivocal stance. The great majority of other resolutions, however, are either statements from the EC, or concern disagreements within the EC majority. Some reflect the tensions in the developing alliance between the CLPD EC and the LCC.

The differences between the LCC and CLPD are expressed in resolutions on the issue of 'One member, one vote', and, in a more oblique way, around what CLPD should be doing now.

The LCC wants a branch balloting system for Labour Party leadership and deputy leadership elections and (sometimes) in the reselection of MPs. They want to dissolve the present Constituency Labour Party delegate structure (which includes affiliated local trade unions) for these important issues.

They also want to restrict CLPD itself to simple propaganda and (apart from supporting



Kinnock — his cheer-leaders hope to put the damper on CLPD

- CLPD AGM:
January 21 at Conway Hall, London;
January 28 at Digbeth Civic Halls, Birmingham;
February 4 at the North British Hotel, Glasgow.

the demands of the Labour Party women's conference) 'to temporarily desist from prosecuting changes in the Party constitution'.

It seems that the LCC has decided not to campaign openly for uncritical acceptance of the present Labour Party leadership. They do not openly attack CLPD's support for Heffer against their hero Kinnock in the leadership elections, nor the CLPD EC's support for annual leadership and deputy leadership elections. Instead they are trying to restrict the CLPD to doing virtually nothing.

Despite their slightly frantic appeal for LCC/Clause 4 voting support, and despite the political logic of their own support for 'unity and don't fight', the CLPD leadership is wary of being marginalised by the LCC. In contrast to the statements they made to the LCC AGM, that the differences between them were so small that 'the two sides can agree to differ, and [the differences] offer no obstacle to continuing to work together', the CLPD EC's statements to its own AGM have an entirely different tone and content.

In a scarcely disguised (and all too accurate) attack on the LCC, they state: 'CLPD faces an uphill struggle. Nearly all its sometime allies have abandoned the efforts to ensure the commitment of future Labour governments to Party policies.'

They argue that the Party should turn its attention solely

accountability... This must not be allowed to happen'.

In this and other statements and resolutions, the CLPD EC goes to great lengths to insist that CLPD has a reason for continuing to exist.

Despite the obstacles, including the format of the AGM, it is not possible that those who were prepared to stand up and fight for left-wing politics in CLPD a year ago have all disappeared. They will provide the basis for the fight at least to commit the CLPD to an unequivocal position on the witch-hunt.

Despite all its present defects, the CLPD remains a substantial and important organisation. Much of the support and influence that the CLPD leadership won in the fight for democratic reforms is still there. Affiliations and new members, for example, show no significant decline over the previous years, and the South Wales NUM has donated £100 to the campaign.

CLPD's size and weight in the Labour Party make it an important prize for Kinnock and his supporters. Conversely, to commit the CLPD to an unequivocal position on the witch-hunt would give a major boost to that campaign. Come to the AGM!



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

Labour Campaign for Gay Rights

It is not an official policy of the Labour Party to support the rights of gay people. This is a campaign to change the Labour Party's official position on gay rights. We are asking you to join the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights. We are asking you to join the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights. We are asking you to join the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights.

Nature brings drought, capitalism brings famine

A catastrophe equivalent to dozens of Hiroshimas is underway in Africa: mass starvation. With drought has come famine. But the misfortunes of nature do not explain why so many will die for lack of food, in a rich world.

MAYBE 150 million people in Africa are currently facing malnutrition or starvation. Several hundreds of thousands, or maybe millions, will die of starvation in the next few months.

The immediate cause is drought and an epidemic which has decimated cattle in many countries.

In 18 of the states hit by drought, food production has been halved in the last two years. The main areas hit are in West Africa, Ethiopia, the outposts of South Africa, Mozambique, Swaziland, and other parts of southern Africa.

100,000 dead

In Mozambique, 100,000 people have already died of starvation in the last six months in one province alone, and in eight of ten provinces half of the population is suffering

from drought. But Ethiopia is worst affected. Three million people there are directly threatened by famine.

It is above all for economic and social reasons that drought has such terrible consequences today. It is the result of the present organisation of African agriculture.

Subsistence agriculture, which is used to allow the population to get through droughts somehow or other, no longer has more than a secondary role.

Most effort for modernisation and rationalisation is put into export products — coffee, cocoa, groundnuts, fruit, vegetables. These crops get the best land and the most modern techniques, but the African people get little benefit. The produce goes directly to the industrialised countries.

The resulting income to the African states goes mostly in prestige projects, bureaucratically-bungled development schemes, military spending, and luxury living for the ruling class.

The short-sighted pursuit of profit and bureaucratic prestige is also decimating the fundamental resources of Africa. In the West African states on the edge of the Sahara, the desert is gaining ground year by year.

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, African subsistence production per head has been declining for 10 years, and is now 11% below the 1969-71 level.

The world slump of 1979-82 compounded the evil. Falling primary product prices cut the revenues of the underdeveloped states, and made them less able to import food.

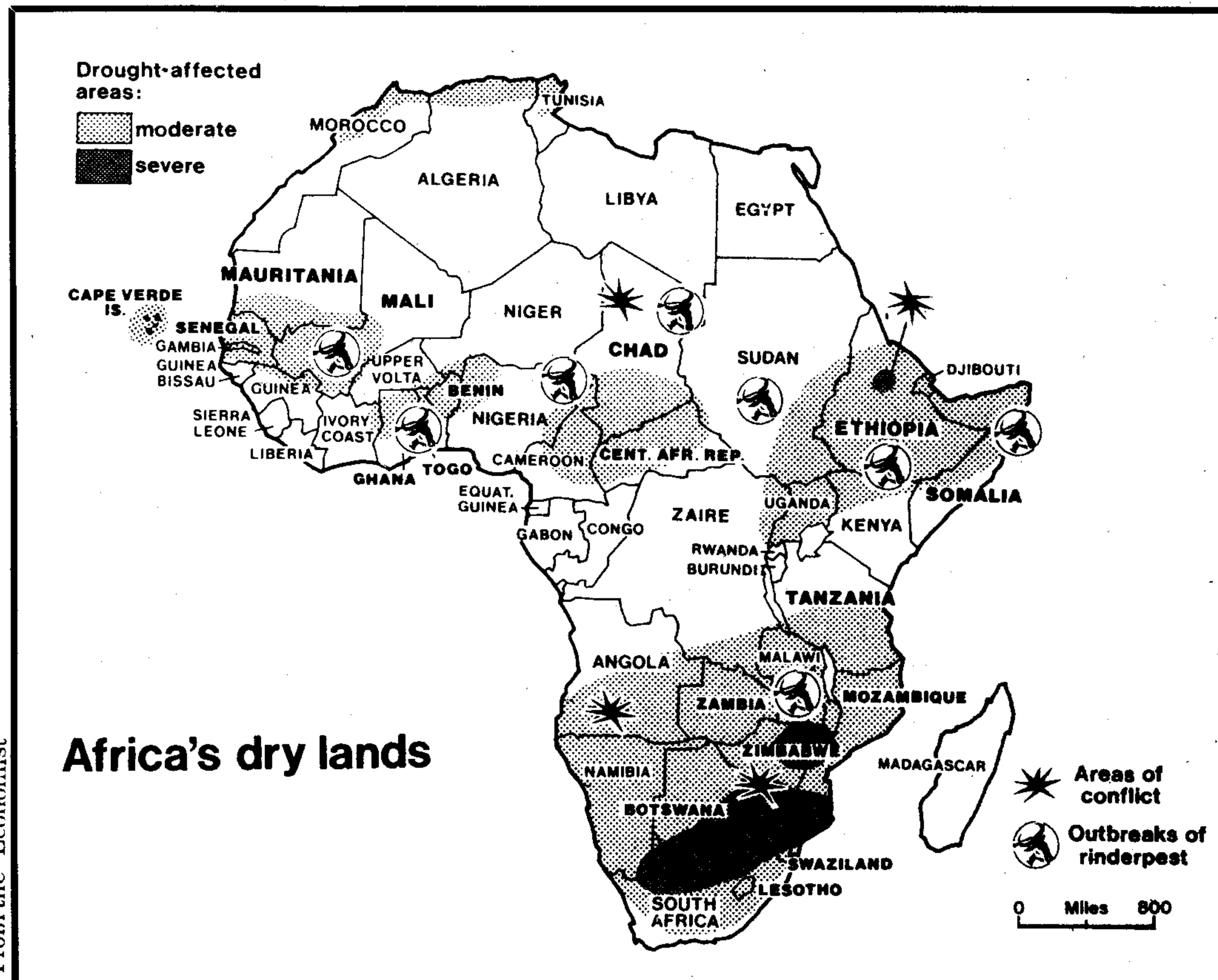
All this happens at a time when the world has never had so much food.

Crop

The EEC currently has a 'grain crisis' — because next year's crop is expected to be so big! According to the US minister of agriculture, 290 million tons of grain are piled up in the stocks of the rich countries, while the food deficit of Africa is only 2.6 million tons for 1983-4.

The millions of deaths which will come in the next few months are not due to a natural catastrophe. The blame lies with the crazy and criminal way of operating which capitalism imposes on society.

(Adapted from the French socialist weekly *Lutte Ouvrière*).



Africa's dry lands

Lebanon: the wound gets deeper

Andrew Hornung reports on the continuing war

THE multi-national force, which describes itself as a 'peace-keeping' contingent, sat tight just before New Year as Israeli gun-boats pounded the shore near the north Lebanese city of Tripoli. The official position was that they did not wish to interfere.

At the same time the US has instructed President Gemayel to extend his army's area of control in Beirut. So far this reactionary has not even been able to establish firm control in the capital!

Now that Syria has succeeded in splitting Fatah, the central component of the Palestine

Liberation Organisation, and establishing a grip on the Fatah fighters in Lebanon, it is possible that sharp divisions between these fighters and Syria will lead to further outbreaks of warfare.

This, then, is the current state of the imperialist solution: Lebanon is as war-torn as ever; the local partners of imperialism and Israel prove unable to fulfil their promises; the stateless and impoverished refugees are worse off than ever and further than ever away from their goals; unity of the forces of the Palestinian left is put numerically into the shade by a developing rightist alliance on a religious basis among the Muslims; pressure grows both in Israel and in the

US for a withdrawal of troops.

Meanwhile the British government continues to back Reagan.

The imperialists have not got their way — neither have their opponents. Thus the wound simply becomes deeper, more infected and harder to cure. The cynics of the US State Department can, however, take grim pleasure in the scene of PLO leader, Yasser Arafat, embracing the Egyptian President and pinning his hopes on the Egyptian plan. He has denounced the plan, the Reagan plan, but his pronouncements have registered another shift to the right within the PLO leadership — not a new shift, but an old drift now consolidated and made official.

Bankers welcome coup

THE coup in Nigeria on Saturday 31st was the fourth act in a drama which started in 1981.

Nigeria depends on oil for 95% of its exports and 80% of its government revenue.

Since 1973, and especially since 1979, the big capitalist economies have done a lot to cut back their consumption of oil and to diversify their sources.

Then came the world slump of 1979-82. Result: stagnation of oil prices, a decline in demand.

The results for Nigeria were disastrous. Oil revenues have slumped to less than half the level of 1981: while they are likely to stabilise now, they are not going to leap back to their previous levels.

Payments for imports are in serious arrears. Practically

every capital project in the country has been halted or seriously cut back. Talks have been going on with the IMF since April last year. Food imports for the rapidly-growing urban population have been cut back, leading to drastic price increases. In many areas government employees have not received wages for months at a time.

Act 2 of the drama was the brutal expulsion of 1½ million migrant workers in January-February 1983 — an attempt by the government to find a scapegoat.

Act 3 was the rigging of the election in August 1983. Opposition voters were baton-charged as they queued outside polling stations. Polling stations in opposition areas were starved of ballot papers. Inflated electorates were invented for pro-government areas. Voting returns were falsified. This was the only way the government party could ensure a victory.

Coup

Act 4 is the coup. A charade of democracy has now been replaced by no democracy at all.

The international bankers are cautiously rejoicing. The Financial Times suggests that the 'would react positively to the coup as it is likely that a military regime will be better able to put Nigeria's house in order... the military government will feel less constrained by domestic politics, and could move ahead more quickly on the economic reforms which the IMF is urging.'

The reaction of the mass of Nigeria's 90 million people is, from all accounts, weary disgust. The rapidly-growing Nigerian working class has not yet found a voice of its own. But it cannot be long before it does.

Slow growth in 1984

SLOW GROWTH is the most likely overall prospect for the world capitalist economy in 1984.

Demand picked up last year, mainly thanks to a revival and massive government 'overspending' in the USA. Profits have also risen sharply, both in the US and in Britain.

The rate of profit in Britain has roughly doubled since 1981. The problem (for the capitalists) is that the increase in the real rate of return is from only 3% to about 6%.

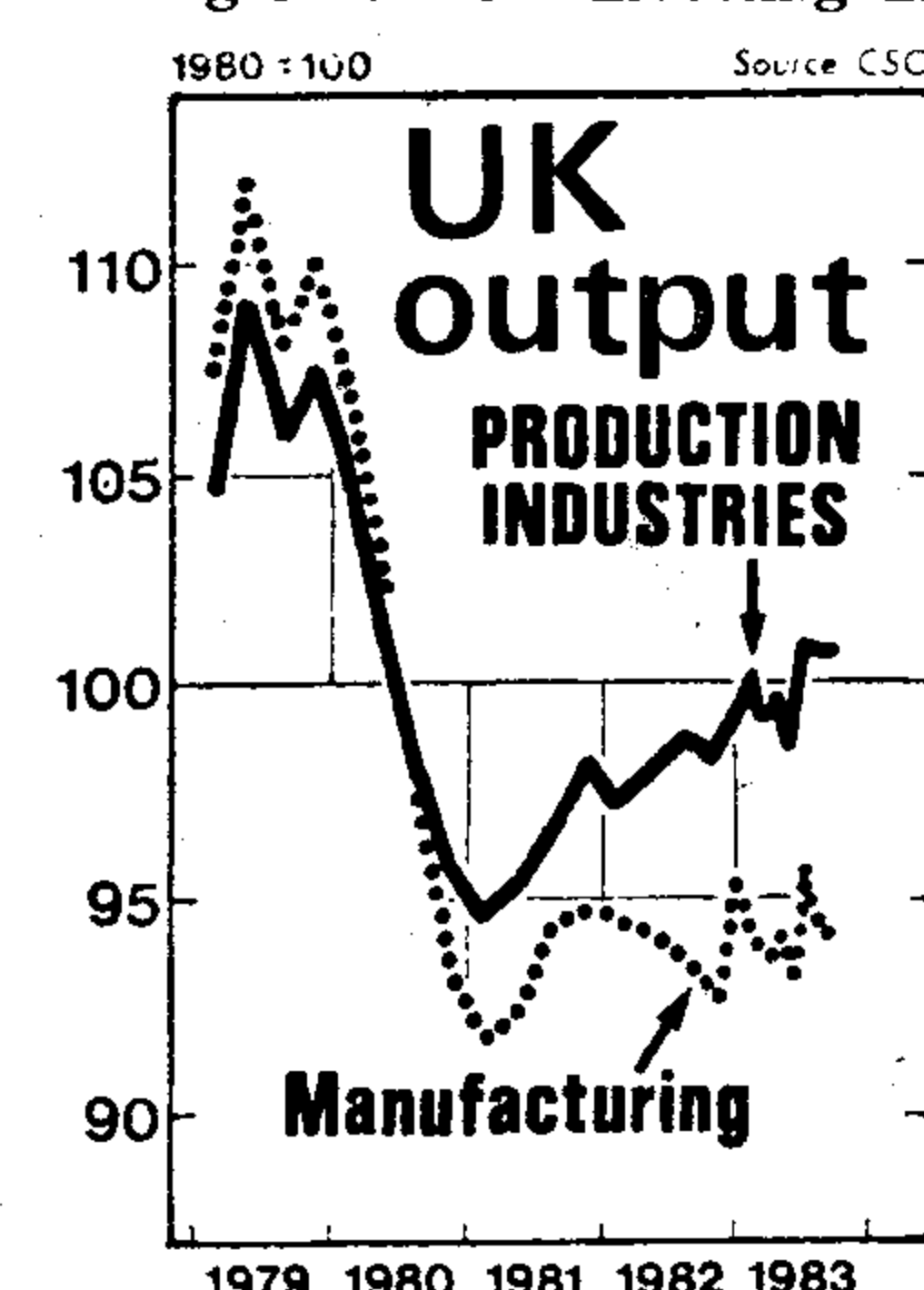
This makes the rate of profit to be gained from investing in

production now marginally higher than the rate of interest to be gained by just lending money out — but only marginally. Industrial investment, therefore, remains at a low level.

This is specially true in Britain where the rate of profit is lower than in other major capitalist countries; but investment is not strong elsewhere. This sets severe limits to the economic upturn.

Moreover, the US cannot sustain its huge trade deficit and government budget deficit for very long. At present the dollar is still strong as against other currencies, but the logic of the situation is for an eventual collapse of the dollar — to be followed by panic policies of 'deflation' in the US and a new world slump.

The terrible economic plight of Third World countries, from industrialised Brazil and Mexico to acutely-underdeveloped Africa, is another factor depressing world trade. So is the stagnation of the oil market, which means that the bonanza which they advanced capitalist countries' producers of machinery and equipment have been enjoying in the oil states will dry up.



EEC THIEVES FALL OUT

By Colin Foster

NEXT stop in the EEC's budget crisis is the summit of EEC governments in March, when the EEC's financial year closes.

On December 15, the EEC Parliament amended the EEC budget to put the rebates due to Britain and to West Germany into the reserves instead of paying them out. In retaliation, Margaret Thatcher has threatened to withhold British payments to EEC funds.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is running out of money, and having to postpone payments. An EEC summit on December 4-6, due to discuss CAP reform, ended without even producing an official communiqué.

CAP is the root of the crisis. Under this policy high prices are maintained for agricultural products within the EEC, these high prices are maintained by tariff walls, and producers are subsidised so that they can export outside the EEC at knock-down prices. (The EEC is the world's biggest agricultural exporter, after the US).

Obviously such a policy is more advantageous to countries like France — with 18% of its exports agricultural products — and Ireland than to Britain or West Germany, with only a 7 or 8% agricultural share in exports. Hence the conflict.

There are extremely powerful motives for the EEC governments to come to an agreement. Every one of the West European

economies is highly dependent on international trade, and every one of them does a large percentage of its exports within Western Europe — from 54% for Britain to 67% for West Germany. A fraying-apart of the EEC would be disastrous for them.

In Britain the crisis has been the occasion for a great deal of

shameful nationalist rhetoric from Labour Party leaders. The issue, however, is not Britain vs. the EEC, but the irrationality of capitalist agriculture.

Socialists should be fighting for a restructuring of agriculture based on the principles of a guaranteed livelihood for the small farmers and farm workers and production for the needs of the hungry of the world, rather than on fat profits for big capitalist farmers and for agribusiness.

Solidarność



WITH

EDMUND BALUKA

THE Leicester and District Trades Council has sent the following letter to the Polish Ambassador:

Dear Sirs,

I have been instructed by delegates representing 36,000 trade unionists in the city of Leicester to demand the release of Edmund Baluka who has recently been jailed for five years on what we regard as trumped-up charges. In reality he has been jailed for legitimate trade union activities which are the right of workers the world over.

Yours faithfully,
B.J. Prangle,
Secretary

Countdown to Black Wednesday

THE TUC's Employment and Organisation Committee (EPOC) met as far back as October 19, when the first injunctions were granted to Shah — to restrain the NGA from writing to advertisers, ask them not to deal with Shah's papers, and to stop the secondary picketing of the Bury and Warrington plants.

EPOC have verbal support but posed the mass picketing. On Monday November 28 the consequence of the NGA's firm stand was clear for all to see.

The initial £50,000 fine, the refusal of the union to pay it, and their refusal to call off the picketing, had been met by the NGA's Fleet Street stoppages had led to thousands of workers being locked out.

It was the hour for leadership. It was the time when a call for a one-day general strike could have taken the tide.

Instead, as injunctions worth a million piled up against a member union, the TUC's inner cabinet promised only financial support so that the union could carry out its legal functions.

At this stage Murray made clear to the NGA leaders that it was it.

They could expect no more from the full General Council meeting on Friday 2nd.

This news, and the witch-hunt generated by the mass picketing led the NGA leaders to taken.

On Friday 2nd they called a week's truce. Just at a crucial point in the struggle they moved their central pressure, return for talks which were most certain to be unproductive.

By this time mass picketing itself was insufficient to win a battle. But the mass picketing provided an essential focus for a possible dynamic for what was required: the extension of the dispute.

You can see why the NGA did it. They knew it could not win a dispute alone. On that same Friday December 2, the General Council took only 20 minutes to offer financial support as long as the dispute kept within the law.

This was, of course, tantamount to no support at all.

Once again, none of the TUC wingers — not Evans, not Jenkins, not Gill, not Sapper, not Herstaffe — opposed this decision or even put it to the vote. They remained silent in an NGA appeal for the TUC to call on affiliates to mobilise for the mass pickets rejected.

It was, said Murray, up to the individual unions, not a matter for the TUC.

Questioned about the dispute could have on the TUC's tentative relations with the government, Mr Murray explained that it had no voice at all and the TUC was to see govern-

BACK THE nga NO TO TORY LAWS!

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Jenkins: will he act to support the NGA?

ment ministers about economic matters, pensions, and the political levy." (Guardian, December 3).

The NGA then compounded its original error in calling off the picket.

"Mr Joe Wade, NGA General Secretary, said after the meeting that he was happy at the decision." (Guardian, December 3).

Tony Dubbins explained that his earlier criticism of the General Council really only applied to Terry Duffy and Alistair Graham.

During the seven day truce Shah failed to negotiate. And worse: before the truce ended he had returned to court and the NGA were fined a further half-a-million pounds.

To give them full credit they again did not cave in. They decided to test the water by calling a one-day national print strike for the following Wednesday, and to take up the fight against Murray at the EPOC meeting on Monday 12th.

The EPOC decision to support the NGA strike, the denunciation of that decision by Murray, and its later reversal (29-21) by the full General Council were dramatic enough.

But in one sense it was all a storm in a teacup.

When the General Council reconvened on December 21, there was only one passing reference to the Messenger dispute. It was this: Moss Evans and Clive Jenkins objected to the minutes of the Black Wednesday meeting. They stressed that they did not (repeat, not) accept that their advocacy of a sympathetic and supportive attitude to the NGA 'at that meeting constituted 'explicit support' as recorded in the minutes.

The only support these two heroes claimed that the left had fought to give the NGA was 'non-explicit' support!

All the NGA and the lefts asked for on December 12 was a message of support. They were not saying that the TUC should encourage members or affiliates to strike on Wednesday December 16 or even take more limited forms of action.

Moss Evans specifically stated that he was not talking about bringing dockers out on strike.

But Murray and the right wing were absolutely determined to avoid giving even implicit support! They wished to avoid any paper statement which gave any kind of support to the strike, even if everybody, right and left wingers, understood that it was a pure token.

They argued that any support could make the TUC an accessory to the NGA's contempt of court. Murray was also concerned that even a mild statement of support could be used by the NGA and that the struggle could snowball and take the TUC "down the path to a general strike."

And so the TUC rejected, not only effective struggle against the Tories, but even a paper declaration of support for a union fighting for its life.

Fight back

John McIlroy writes on:

The TUC, the NGA and the anti-union

THE CLIMBDOWN of the NGA over the Stockport Messenger dispute is a severe setback for the Left and the whole labour movement.

NGA general secretary Joe Wade was absolutely correct when he described the TUC's decision to betray his union as "an appalling capitulation to the government's anti-union legislation".

His deputy Tony Dubbins hit the nail on the head when he pointed out that long-term, "it's going to affect the overall membership of the trade unions, their bargaining strength... In other words you are sowing the seeds for the death of effective trade unionism in this country".

These are not just two more pieces of empty platform rhetoric. The results of the debacle are already on show.

Speeded up

The Guardian reported on December 19: "Government ministers have been sufficiently encouraged by the results of the Messenger dispute to consider speeding up further industrial relations legislation. The options facing Mr King include bringing forward the date by which employers must hold ballots if the closed shop is to retain legal immunity, publishing a consultative document restricting strikes in the essential services, and toughening up the trade union democracy bill".

We can also see the impact on the leadership of the trade unions. The National Union of Journalists has hitherto been one of the few unions determined and hard in its opposition to the Tory laws.

Refused

Like the NGA, it refused to abide by an injunction over the Stockport Messenger dispute. Until now it had refused to abide by the terms of a High Court injunction awarded to David Dimbleby after NUJ members struck over his attempt to transfer printing to the anti-union T. Bailey Forman outfit. As recently as December 10 the NUJ executive unanimously resolved not to comply with the legal order made under the Tabbitt Act, but instead to hold a special conference to discuss the issue in January.

The NUJ had also appealed to the TUC for support.

In the aftermath of the General Council's decision not to support the NGA, the union decided to withdraw its strike instruction to the Dimbleby chapel immediately and appeal to the House of Lords against the injunction.

When Dimbleby went back to the court for proof that the instruction had been properly communicated, we had the sad and unedifying spectacle of NUJ deputy secretary Bob Norris — who until then had been a militant campaigner against the legislation — reading out a legal affidavit stating that no member on the Dimbleby papers would face disciplinary action if they returned to work.

The union, Bob Norris said, was 'distancing' itself from the strikers, who were now completely free agents. It was claiming back the dispute benefit paid to the chapel in advance.

The chapel itself, at the Richmond and Twickenham Times, is standing firm. The NUJ has good legal advance that it will win in the Lords. Nonetheless the union has reversed its initial principled stand. It has taken the first step into the labyrinthine legal web.



The mass pickets: dropped by the NGA

Bob Norris knows as well as I do how the legal snare works. And yet he is now saying what would have stuck in his throat before Black Wednesday: Don't rely on your own independent action. Let seven impartial belted peers of the realm decide whether you or Dimbleby are right.

Perhaps it still sticks in Bob Norris's throat. Nevertheless he has disoriented the union membership.

It is easy to see why it has happened. The NUJ possesses not one tenth of the discipline, muscle and money of the NGA... and look what happened to the NGA. How can the NUJ stand alone? Unions which possess not one twentieth of the principles of the NUJ will have already taken the point.

The NGA put its head above the firing line. It stood up to be counted. In a principled fashion it followed what it saw as TUC policy. It ended up publicly disowned by the leaders of Britain's unions, its assets controlled by the state, fined half a million pounds and with enough outstanding writs to knock its organisation back into the middle of the last century.

The lesson drawn in union offices up and down the country will be: 'We must obey the law, and so must our members'. The response of many of those members will be weary disgust and demoralisation.

If this is not to happen, then we urgently need to examine the lessons of Black Wednesday.

The road ran straight from Blackpool

THE TUC's inbred fear of class confrontation made the ambiguities in the Wembley policy fatal.

The June 9 election result settled any doubt. It was Murray's opportunity. Within weeks he was pushing through talks with the Tory government.

The Blackpool TUC Congress consolidated the turn to the right.

The concessions to the TUC lefts that the Wembley programme represented were withdrawn. The compromise remained on paper. It was finished in practice.

The position now was simply this: The 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts would be accepted in return for the most minor concessions on the political levy. Appeasement was the order of the day. It must be made to work.

In the autumn the post office engineers' executive asked Murray for advice. What would the TUC do if they ignored the injunction awarded to Mercury to stop their boycott on this private-enterprise telecommunications firm being linked in to

British Telecom?

Murray felt bold enough to declare: "Congress has not yet decided that any union obeying an injunction would be contravening Congress policy."

There was no question of the TUC setting out to break or encourage members to break the law.

The bosses stepped up their attack.

In the workplaces there was the determined attempt to push through privatisation in British Telecom; the derisory offer to the miners; the attempts to impose the 'slaves' charter' in shipbuilding; the ripping-up of the water industry closed shop; a score of small stoppages over redeployment, speed-up and victimisation, and withdrawal of union facilities.

And in the courts, the writs involving Shell workers, Mercury, the NUJ, SOGAT, and the NGA.

Legacy

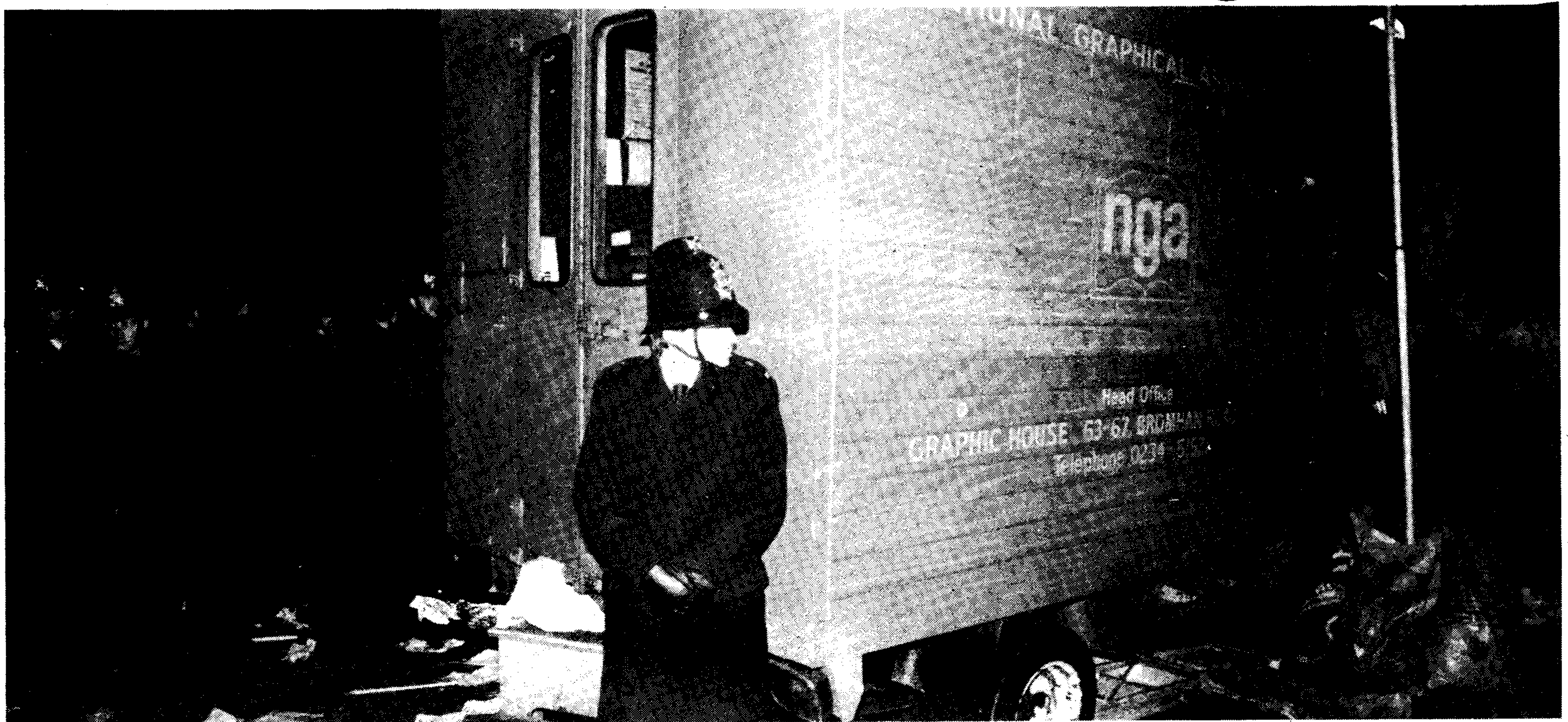
Heath's defeats by the dockers in 1972 and the miners in 1974 gave control of the Tory Party to the Thatcherites. But they also left a legacy of fear of

'Build from the rank and

against betrayal

laws

JOHN HARRIS



The NGA: left in the lurch by the TUC

ORGANISE TO CHANGE THE UNIONS

LEN Murray, of course, has helped sabotage struggles before — from the seamen's strike in 1976 to the ASLEF dispute in 1982.

What was new was his willingness to publicly denounce the decision of a TUC committee. And this from a 'civil servant', a functionary — a man who, unlike most General Council members, has never been elected by anyone.

The first and most obvious lesson of the NGA dispute is that we need new leaders. We need to clear out the old gang.

The second is that we need to deepen the struggle for accountability and union democracy.

And the third is that it will be an uphill fight.

It would be a grave mistake to let the TUC lefts off the hook. Yes, the right have an inbuilt majority. The EPOC decision would not even have happened if four absentees had turned up.

But why was it left to Clive Jenkins alone to denounce Murray? Why did not one left leader launch a fight to bring members out in support of the NGA?

It was difficult, yes: but why did nobody even try? The only direct action came from SOGAT, which instructed its members not to cross NGA picket lines if the one-day strike came off.

What did the lefts do to counter the incessant anti-NGA propaganda on the TV and in the papers by Murray and Graham and Duffy?

The level of their contribution was only slightly caricatured by TGWU representative Larry Smith who argued that the problem was that the judges had incorrectly interpreted the law and that the NGA were in reality doing nothing illegal!

And even now, rather than drawing out the lessons of the debacle, prominent lefts are talking about 'no recriminations'.

A bitter lesson of the dispute is that whilst the lefts are prepared to go an inch further than the right wing, they are not prepared to launch a struggle to defend basic trade union rights.

Where, at the height of the dispute, was Moss Evans? he was walking side by side with his 'opponent' Len Murray into a meeting with the Tories and the employers at the National Economic Development Council.

And the Financial Times reported: "... the left wing general secretary of the TGWU called for more top level contact between unions and employers."

What about the NGA leaders? I think it is wrong to lump Joe Wade and Tony Dubbins together with Len Murray, as the Socialist Workers Party did: "The treachery of Len Murray and the cowardice of Joe Wade and Tony Dubbins have given the Tories a victory they could not have expected." (SW 864).

We think the NGA should have maintained the mass picketing and maintained the national one day strike. That would have provided a far better chance of beating Murray and of

winning the dispute.

We would have preferred an all-out national print strike.

But the NGA leaders — alone, deserted by the TUC, with the union's assets sequestered — cannot be equated with Murray, or even with the feeble TUC 'lefts'.

Despite the TUC betrayal, moves continue to pursue the dispute. The meetings between left unions and the plans for demonstrations should be fully supported. Anything which can bring together even those who are prepared to go an inch beyond Murray is to be welcomed. Anything which can crack the stranglehold of the right over the movement is to be welcomed vigorously.

Nonetheless, industrial action, and only industrial action, can win this dispute.

We have suffered a defeat. It would be fatal to ignore that. It would also be wrong to underestimate the scale of the defeat.

The Tories and the employers are more confident than ever. The most right wing, do-nothing strands in the trade union leadership are strengthened. Rank and file activists are disgusted and disheartened.

But the defeat must be seen in proportion.

A small minority have learned a great deal in the last few weeks, about the role of the state, about class law, about the TUC leadership. For some, their hatred of the TUC is producing

anger, not demoralisation.

The Dimpleby Newspapers NUJ chapel are maintaining their strike despite the TUC sell-out and despite the NUJ's consequent withdrawal of support.

The loyalty and determination of the ordinary members of the NGA show that leadership can still receive a firm response.

When they started their dispute, the Dimpleby NUJ chapel were sure that they were entering a long battle. They were not sure they could win.

They voted unanimously for industrial action and immediately after the dispute four other members of staff joined the NUJ and the dispute.

That is the sort of spirit we have to build on.

Already wobbling at Wembley

THE measure of Murray's behaviour in dark December can be seen in the bouquets lavishly tossed his way by the gutter press.

"A great day for democracy", crowed the Sun. "We have first to salute Mr Murray. Had not the TUC general secretary taken his lonely courageous stand on Monday night, the NGA print union would have stopped yesterday's paper in defiance of the courts."

Even Employment Minister Tom King found time to congratulate Murray on saving the unions from disaster, and in the Commons on December 15 Mrs Thatcher herself praised Murray's "courageous action" in supporting the use of her laws against a TUC affiliate.

In the midst of this cockcrow of congratulation from Capital, any Judas with a residual ember of class consciousness would have felt a spark of shame.

Not so Murray. For his betrayal was neither sudden nor recent.

Even in its specific form it could be seen coming a long time ago.

In the last weeks a lot has been made of the decisions on fighting the legislation at the TUC Special Conference of Executives at Wembley in early 1982, and how Murray and the General Council have departed from the policy agreed there.

It is true that at the Special Conference the air was filled

with blood-curdling war-whoops that would have terrified John Wayne himself. It is true that Murray was up on the podium spouting:

"If while unions are going about their proper function they run up against laws which threaten their very survival as effective bodies, then nobody should be surprised if union members say, 'we can't live with the law'."

That is the danger which any government courts if it puts ordinary men and women into situations where they are left with no option but to resist an unjust law and to face fearlessly the consequences that flow from doing that."

The TUC Printing Industries Committee, involving unions such as the NGA and NUJ, tried to strengthen the document, realising that they would be among the first in the legal firing line. They were informed by Ken Graham, a full-time Great Russell Street functionary, that this was not allowed.

In reviewing the platform adopted by the Special Conference, we wrote at the time, in Socialist Organiser no.111:

"The plan failed to stop Tebbit reaching the statute book. It will almost certainly fail to stop the Tebbit laws when they are used."

We explained why. Point 5 of the TUC platform — the section that we have all been quoting in the past month, states: "Where the General Council

receive a request to assist a union faced by or experiencing legal action by an employer, and are satisfied that assistance from the movement is justified, they are empowered:

(1) To coordinate action by other affiliated unions in support of the union in difficulties, including if necessary calling for industrial action against the employer concerned or more widely..."

The explanatory rubric comments: "While there is a consequent need for flexibility of tactics, the General Council will stand ready where they are satisfied it is warranted to organise support."

The TUC then added: "That cannot mean, nor would affiliated unions expect (!!!), that a union or a group of its members encountering legal difficulties should automatically receive

support from the TUC irrespective of the circumstances".

"They [the General Council] would need to be satisfied that the union was justified in the action it was taking and would also expect the union to take full account of the views they might express about the form and continuation of the action which had given rise to the legal case."

In Socialist Organiser no.111 we said that the TUC statement was drafted: "... to provide a series of carefully drafted loopholes to protect the General Council... this programme is intended to centralise strategy in the hands of the General Council. Relying on pacifism, dreaming of a future Labour government, TUC control is likely to imprison struggles against Tebbit within the political limitations of the General Council, paralysing their potential."

Support the NGA

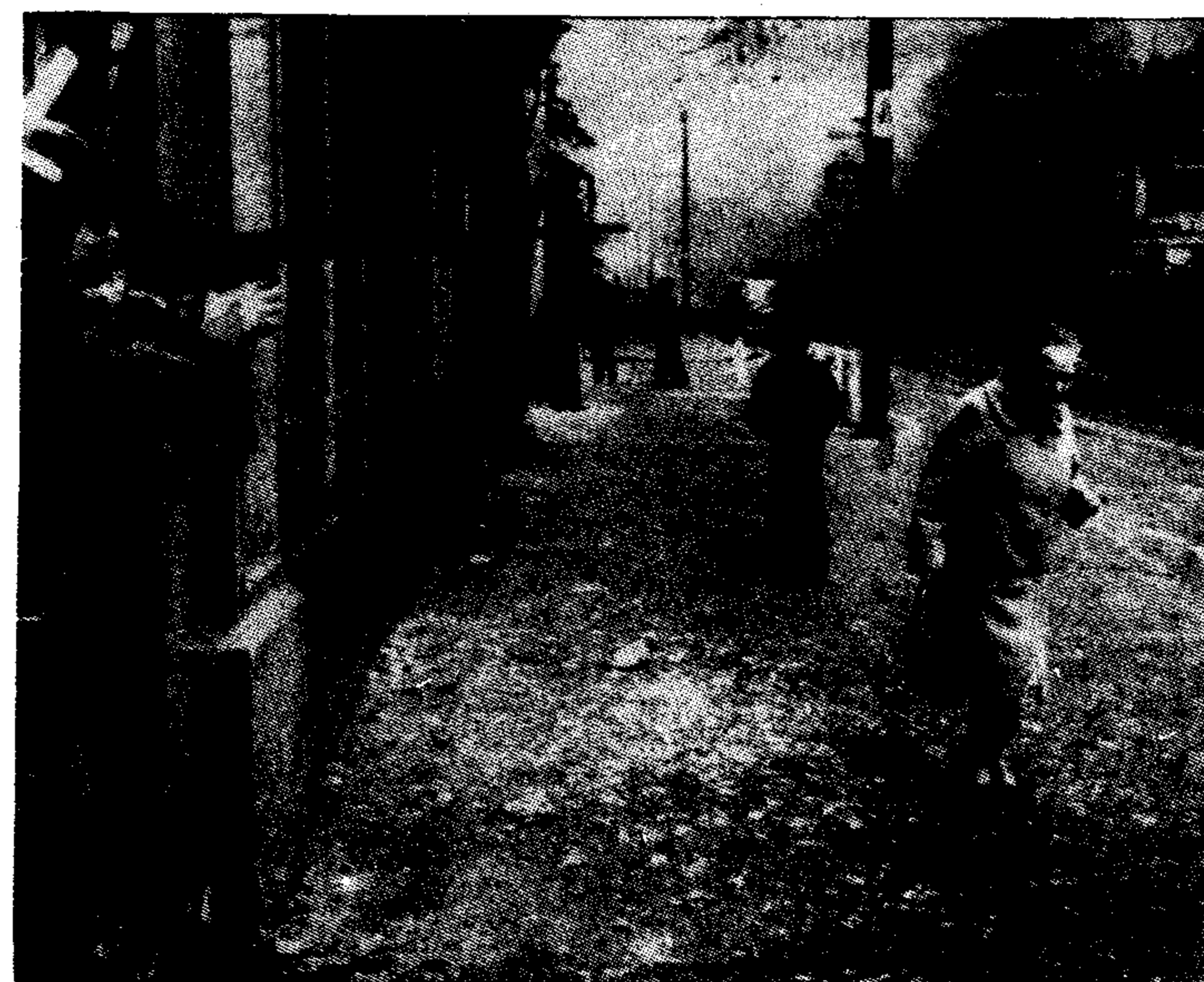
march

Demonstration called by the NGA against Shah

in Warrington January 22

Final part of John O'Mahony's article on the historic 1983 Ard Fheis

Towards socialism...



AT THE 1983 Sinn Féin Ard Fheis, radical republicans won a clear victory for a turn to politics — and this in an organisation that started out as an explicitly right-wing and traditionalist reaction against 'politics' and 'socialism' in the Republican movement, and whose first pronouncements in 1970 had been denunciations of 'extreme socialism'.



Hit by a plastic bullet

It was the political triumph of Northern Republicans who have long been the radical wing of the movement.

In the first two parts of this article we examined the history of Republicanism and the main events in Northern Ireland since 1968. We need, finally, to examine the period immediately leading up to the 1983 Ard Fheis.

After the power-sharing executive collapsed under the blows of the Orange general strike in 1974, the film of events since 1972 began to wind backwards, destroying the hopes of the majority of the Catholics — and of the British government — that a new political superstructure could be established in Northern Ireland on the basis of the sectarian Six County unit.

The IRA had been in the doldrums in late 1973 and early 1974, when the power-sharing executive was being set up and worked.

It was pushed very much to the sidelines during the decisive struggle between the Protestants and the British government (and its Unionist and SDLP agents) in May 1974.

Then the IRA's first response to the wreck of Britain's strategy was a surge of energetic militarism, which included a stepped-up campaign in Britain.

When things slowed down, it became clear that the Republican movement was seriously disoriented. It must have been pretty clear to many in that movement that they had been decisively checkmated by the General Strike.

Launched

For most of 1975 there was an IRA ceasefire in Northern Ireland. This was the year in which Britain's Labour government set up an elected assembly to try to work out an agreed constitution to replace the one that the Protestant workers wrecked in mid 1974.

Sinn Féin was allowed to set up 'incident centres', recognised by the British authorities, through which a considerable amount of contact and collaboration took place.

In early 1976 the constitutional assembly's Protestant majority reported its conclusions to the British government: that majority (that is, Protestant) rule be restored immediately. Britain rejected this. It decided to make an end to the search for political solutions and go about its business the same as before.

The main military goal of the IRA the central immediate goal, for the IRA

was the source of both the military offensive that directly challenged British rule and partition, and indirectly the cause of the Protestant unrest.

Britain launched a new offensive against the IRA. As always, it translated itself into a savage assault on the Catholic community, a sizeable part of which gives active or passive support to the IRA.

Political status was withdrawn for all paramilitaries convicted after April 1976.

During the 1975 ceasefire some observers had not been at all sure that there would ever be a full resumption of the IRA's military offensive. When the offensive was resumed, it lacked some of its old vigour.

The IRA was, by all accounts, in a bad state of morale. Its discipline and organisation had been undermined during the ceasefire. Its survival and revival was partly due to the British offensive, which massively alienated the Catholic population.

The IRA reorganised itself on a tighter cell structure and fought back.

Individuals in the Republican movement may have believed it necessary for them to go political. But the movement didn't decide to do that. Conditions in the North pushed them towards politics, as the tragic five-year struggle in the prison camps built up towards the climax of the 1981 hunger strike.

In response to the Labour government's withdrawal of the 'special status' conceded by the Tories in 1972, Republican prisoners began the 'blanket protest'. They refused to wear prison clothes. When confined to their cells in blankets, they refused to 'slop out'.

Outside, 'Relatives Action Committees' agitated and built up support. Over five years the Catholic mass movement renewed itself, focusing on the prisoners.

By the time Bobby Sands was elected MP, and died on hunger strike — the first of ten — in 1981, the Catholic mass movement was on a scale not seen since 1972. There were even stirrings in the South, for the first time since 1972.

When the hunger strike was over, the Republican leaders had to decide what to do about the fact that their main gains had been political gains, both in terms of community support and of tangible results.

The state of the SDLP made politics — the chance to become the electorally recognised re-

presentative of the Catholic community — irresistible to the Republican leadership. After years of wasting and going to seed in the no-politics wilderness imposed in Northern Ireland by Britain after 1976, the SDLP had been forced by the feeling in the Catholic community into reluctant, tepid support for the hunger strike.

It was pushed into the invidious position of indirectly supporting the Provisionals, thereby conceding a tremendous moral advantage to them.

A new approach rose out of the grave of Bobby Sands MP. 'An armalite in one hand, and a ballot paper in the other', became the self-definition of the radical wing of the Republicans, based in the North. This was the politics that took over the national organisation at November's Ard Fheis.

The radicalisation of Sinn Féin had many complexities. (And it was accompanied by a turn away from any serious notion of conciliating the Protestant workers. But the abandonment of 'federalism' is a big subject in itself, and has already been discussed at some length in SO).

Conviction

The Provisional Sinn Féin and IRA were born in a reaction against a one-sided turn to a variant (quasi-Stalinist) of left-wing politics. Their leaders were of the traditional Republican mould, plebeian but right wing, formed around one-issue politics and possessing an ideology in which nationalism was closely fused with Catholicism.

One reason why the Republicans in the '40s and '50s were so unrelievedly right wing — in contrast to the '20s and '30s, and earlier — was the thinness of its ranks. Scattered over the surface of Irish society, they lacked organic contact, involvement, or concern, as a political movement, with the social problems of either workers or small farmers.

In the North in the '70s it was different. The Catholics of the cities and towns were the specially oppressed, in semi-permanent unemployment, sunk in poverty and often in hopelessness.

In addition, the leaders of the Republican movement and its activists saw their own reflection in movements of the oppressed throughout the world, just as the Catholics of Derry in the late '60s saw themselves as the counterparts of the Blacks in the USA. (They called themselves 'white blacks').

Apart and aside from all questions of political conviction, a movement like the Provisionals in conditions like Northern Ireland has an additional and imperious reason to be radical — it needs to attach as many people as possible to its nationalist cause. Social agitation and becoming involved in community politics has the same recommendations to the Irish-separatist physical-force politician in Belfast as to the parliamentary Liberal politician in Liverpool — it builds support, it makes the politician the champion of the community.

The political faction of the Provisionals initially presented their ideas to the movement as an essential part of the social logistics of fighting a prolonged guerilla war which, they said, might last for 20 years.

The other strand woven into the new approach was the powerful historical tradition of left-wing, mainly populist, Republicanism, which the Northerners inevitably drew on.

In the 1960s James Connolly's writings began to be widely circulated and known for the first time in decades. But the reservoir of left-wing Republic-

presented over many decades by George Gilmore and Paedgar O'Donnell.

The other source of Republican populism is Stalinism. The notion of the two-stage revolution — first complete the 'bourgeois revolution', and only then fight for socialism — was translated into 'Irish' as the idea that national independence had to be 'completed' as a first stage towards socialism.

The native strand of left Republicanism, moving logically towards working-class politics, met up with the Stalinists in the '30s, and had all its nationalist

right who see the change in the Provisionals as the beginning of a journey that leads away from physical force on principle?

That road has already been travelled by the ex-Republican Free Staters in the 20s; by the ex-Republican Fianna Fail in the 30s; and by the ex-Republican Clann na Poblachta in the '40s. In all of these cases, sections of Sinn Féin, stripped of the commitment to physical force on principle, became more or less radical bourgeois parliamentary parties.

On the question of abstentionism, the Ard Fheis was, as we saw in part 1, somewhat self-contradictory. Nevertheless there was a tremendous departure from the bedrock principles of the movement when it decided to take seats (should it win them) in the EEC Parliament.

This makes a bizarre situation. In the Six Counties, a radical organisation might choose as a tactic (on grounds of the artificial nature of the state) what Sinn Féin arrives at from tradition and first principles.

In the 26 Counties, Sinn Féin's abstentionism is utterly absurd. The 26 County parliament has operated for 60 years as a stable bourgeois democracy whose legitimacy is supported by the vast majority of the population. Any move beyond this system is a matter of persuasion and political processes. In practice the Republicans accept this: since the '40s, despite incidents like the recent kidnapping of the millionaire Don Tidy, it has been an article of faith that there is no political basis for war on the 26 County state.

The massive reaction to the killing of one policeman and one soldier in the 26 Counties — there is still talk of banning Sinn Féin — should remind the Republicans why they adopted that policy back in the '40s.

Yet while in practice accepting it has to work within the 26 County framework, Sinn Féin refuses to participate in parliament: it is just 'a stone to trouble the living stream' of political life.

Why? Because the Republican movement is a single-issue movement. Onto the stem of that single issue, radical social politics have been grafted, or have sprouted, at different times over the decades, but abstentionism has remained fundamental. It has been the guarantee against being distracted, the way to ensure that social questions cut channels to the national question and do not displace it.

Meanwhile, Sinn Féin will participate in the much less solidly-established EEC Parliament.

Inevitably, the approach decided by the Ard Fheis will generate pressure to break from abstentionism.

If electoral results are even a part of your objective, then it makes sense not to give yourself the handicap of additionally having to convince people to vote for a non-practising parliamentary representative.

The Ard Fheis's approach has also generated suspicion, even in those (like Rory O'Brady) who are not opposed to using elections selectively and judi-

'Irish workers who really want to fight for a socialist Ireland will have to go beyond the populism of Sinn Féin, and take their stand on working-class Marxist socialism'.



'Saoirse' — 'Freedom' — on the flag

anism is only indirectly linked to Connolly. It has two distinct sources, both post-dating Connolly.

One is a development of Republicanism towards involvement with 'the men of no property' in the aftermath of the defeat of the Republicans and the setting up of the Free State at the beginning of the 1920s. This is a genuine populism, with typical populist lack of clear distinction between workers and farmers who make up 'the people'. Real concern for the people is combined with the hard-headed nationalist belief that nationalism needs them (rather than them needing nationalism).

We must turn to the men of no property, said Wolfe Tone in the 1790s, and his words were deliberately picked up and repeated by the socialist Republican Liam Mellows, writing from Mountjoy jail in 1922 about the deal that the southern Irish bourgeoisie had made with the British Empire to subvert and overthrow the Irish Republic. (Mellows was later shot by the Free State government).

This Republicanism was re-

limits reinforced and strengthened. 'First win the broad common demand for the independent national Republic — and then go for the Workers' Republic' was the slogan of the majority of the left-wing Republican Congress, which included the Stalinists, in 1934.

These ideas gained influence in the '70s because they seemed to offer a reconciliation of socialist and radical goals with an immediate focus on the nationalist war in the Six Counties — begun by the Provisionals in their right-wing phase.

Force

So where is Sinn Féin at after the Ard Fheis? It is where sections of the Republican movement have often been before. Gerry Adams' speech was the measure of it.

Adams made it plain that the organisation under the new leadership will continue the war in the North.

There is no reason to question the sincerity of this declaration. The question is: are those



*Out of their graves
springs a new Sinn Fein*

or populism?

ciously.

They have good reasons for suspicion. The Republicans, even right-wing Republicans, are intransigent revolutionaries. Their revolutionism consists in a stark rejection of existing political and state structures, and the pursuit of other, ideal, alternative structures, which do not exist.

Physical force is the only practical action that is recognised as directly having a bearing on the work of substituting the desired ideal for what exists now. The fetishes of physical force on principle and abstentionism complement and reinforce each other.

And it is a fact, as we have seen, that time after time Republican groups that have abandoned abstentionism have become enmeshed in the existing establishment.

The true explanation for the fate of these ex-abstentionist groups, however, is in their class composition and their social politics, which were petty bourgeois and not revolutionary.

A Marxist working-class organisation can use tactics and techniques in a varied way, working in a bourgeois parliament or through armed street-fighting, and remain all the while true to itself. But once the tactical fetish that separated these ex-Republican groups from the existing order was cleared away, there was nothing solid to maintain their revolutionary stance.

Abstentionist and physical-force-on-principle Irish Republicanism has many things in common with Spanish anarchism. Its fate in relation to government is similar to that of those anarchists who 'denied' politics and the state for decades, and then during the Spanish civil war joined the Popular Front government of the Republic (which repressed rank and file anarchists).

The anarchists denied the state: but the state is necessary. It cannot be abolished at this stage of social development. It must be either the bourgeois state or the workers' state.

The Spanish civil war convinced some of the anarchist leaders that the state was necessary. But then they could only relate to it by betraying themselves. Having no programme capable of dealing with reality, they accepted the existing state and became its prisoners.

For these reasons the 1983 Ard Fheis opened an incipient split in the Republican movement.

Significantly, Martin McGuinness, one of the new leaders,

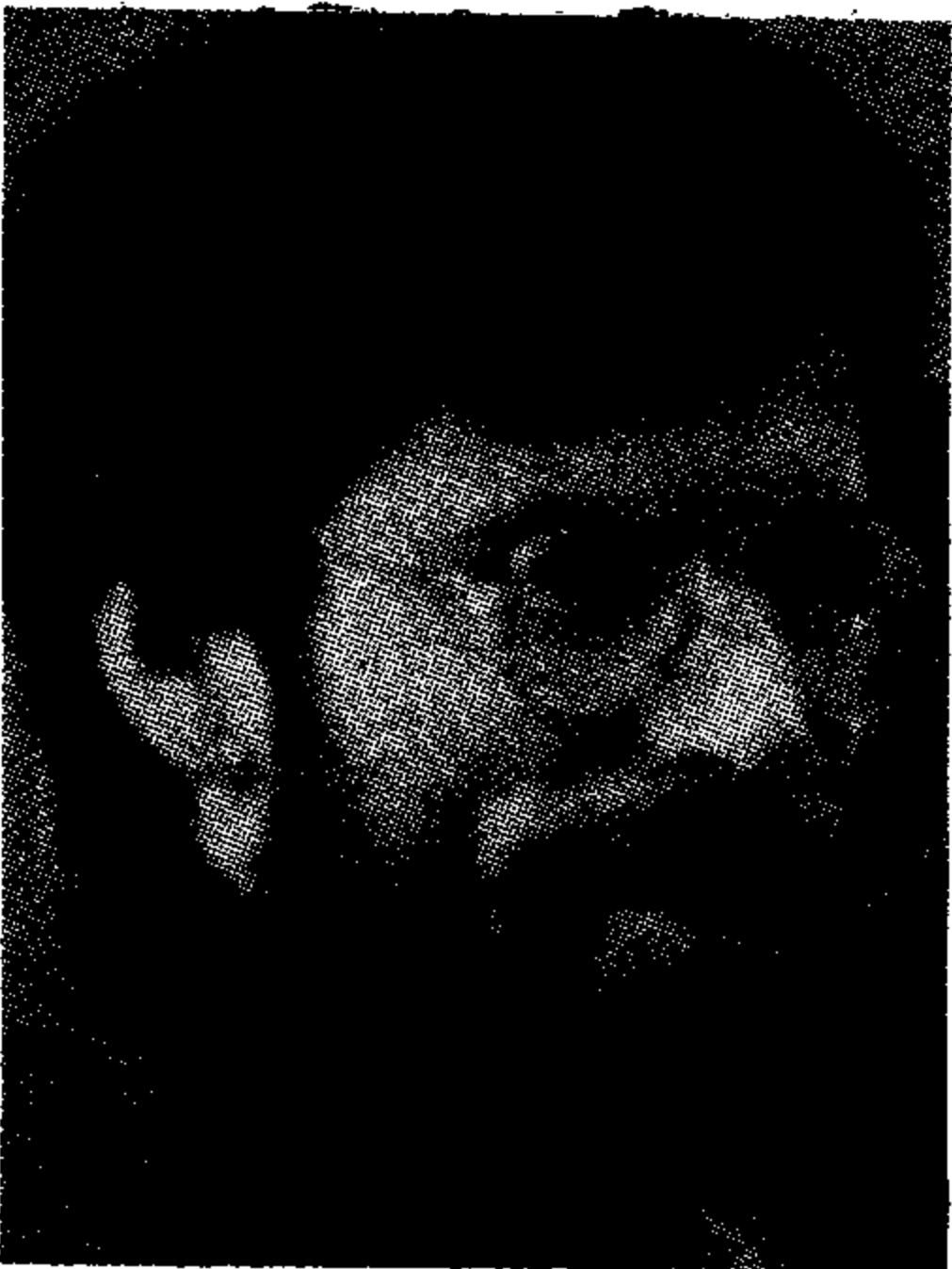
argued for participation in the EEC parliament thus:

"To fight the EEC election on an abstentionist basis would be madness when it provides the best opportunity ever to beat the SDLP".

The way Martin McGuinness argued the case for abandoning abstention from the EEC parliament has more than equal application for the South. Even if there is no intention by Adams and his co-thinkers to manipulate the movement towards abandoning militarism, the combination of armalite and ballot box is an uneasy one.

The effects of the recent London bombings show that clearly. Insufficient evidence is available for a hard assessment. It is possible that the bombings were an expression of the Adams faction's determination to really combine gun and ballot box, and to head off division by doing so. But that is the least probable explanation.

The bombings in London are too pointedly destructive of



Gerry Adams

Adams' work with the Labour Left in Britain. In an interview with the Irish Times, Adams' attitude was subtly conveyed, and it was plain that he saw what happened in London as counterposed to the demands of a 'political' approach, and in no way a fair political/military exchange for it.

Whether they are a deliberate widening of the incipient split which plainly existed at the Ard Fheis, or no more than an inevitable element of incoherence produced by the attempt to bond together conflicting strategies in the present Sinn Fein, the bombings almost certainly represent an increasing divergence between Adams and other currents in the movement.

The final question is how to evaluate the new socialist Sinn Fein.

Sinn Fein defines itself as

based on the 1916 declaration of the Irish Republic and on the 1919 'Democratic Programme' of the Irish parliament, Dail Eireann.

Both of these documents had a certain radical social edge to them in their own time (though they were never anything more than documents). The 1919 document was drafted by the Irish labour leaders, and adapted by Dail Eireann in return for the labour movement subordinating itself to the nationalists during the struggle with Britain for independence.

Vaguely

They are not documents of social radicalism today. They do no more than talk vaguely about the state having social responsibilities, treating 'the children of the nation' equally, and so on. Before the welfare state, that was radical, but today even the Tory party of Margaret Thatcher would at least pay lip-service to such principles.

Despite this, it is indisputable that the Republican movement has moved left, and that most of its members want it to be a left-wing and socialist movement based upon and championing the working class and working farmers.

The Sinn Fein/IRA remains a loose populist party which cannot in its present form function as a serious force for socialism in Ireland. Indeed, because of its attitude to the Protestant workers in Northern Ireland, it is bound, despite good intentions, to work against working-class socialism.

It remains the military leadership and militia of the oppressed Catholics, and for that reason deserves the support of British socialists against the British state in Northern Ireland. But there should be no illusions about its socialist pretensions.

Traditionally populism is, as we have seen, a movement with socialist aspirations but confused ideas. The Social Revolutionaries in Russia, for example, refused to distinguish between workers and peasants. All were 'the people'.

They had neither a stable, coherent class analysis of society, nor, as a consequence, any adequate conception of how socialism was to be brought about. They failed to identify the industrial working class as the force that can bring about socialism.

Such organisations are inevitably the tool of non-working-

class social forces.

How is the Provisional Republican movement populist? Its composition in the North is mainly working class. Despite this, the typical populist confusion about classes is expressed, not so much on the level of confused ideas about the definition of class, but in their attitude to the Protestants.

Since the Protestants include the big majority of the working class in Northern Ireland, an attitude to the Protestants also implies an attitude to the working class, and has decisive implication for the identification and definition of the force that will bring socialism.

The Provisionals' populism is expressed in their always implicit and sometimes explicit Catholic communalism. For there will be no socialist revolution in Ireland without the decisive core of the Protestant working class.

The idea of socialism created by a military elite, no matter how much support it has in the Catholic community and no matter how good the back-up services they create by community politics, is inconsistent with working class politics. Yet this is implied in the Provisionals' nation and their practice of proceeding by way of a military struggle for socialism irrespective of the (Protestant majority of) the working class.

It is this central, immutable commitment to military struggle, on principle, now — provided only that there is sufficient support in the Catholic community to make it practicable — which shapes and moulds what the Provisionals can and cannot do with the Protestant working class.

Coherent

It is derived not from any sort of coherent Marxist or working-class conception of socialism, nor even from the fashionable Third-Worldist and Stalinist stages theories about fighting imperialism first and 'then socialism'. It is rooted in the tradition which is common to Republicans of Left and of Right.

This tradition implies communalism in Northern Ireland, and linked with socialist objectives it is Catholic communalist populism, not socialism. That is what it would be even if it got mass support in the South, and yet still failed to win the Northern Protestant workers (or a large chunk of them).

The Provisionals' populist confusion on the class defini-

tion and identity of the revolutionaries is also expressed by their elevation of the nation and nationalism above class. They have counterposed a narrow concern with nationalism to the sine qua non of socialist advance — working class unity.

It has fallen to the Sinn Fein radicals to spell out the logic implied in the Provisionals' approach to the Northern Ireland situation. Here the traditional Republican fetish of physical force shapes what they do and don't do — and what they could hope to do — in relation to the Protestants. Commitment to socialism has no visible effect on these limitations, and is seen as primarily aimed to help create support for the military struggle.

For all these reasons the politics of Sinn Fein are the opposite of what the Irish working class, North and South, needs. Even a mass growth of Sinn Fein among the Southern working class on these politics would have no possibility of creating a united working class

movement for socialism, North and South.

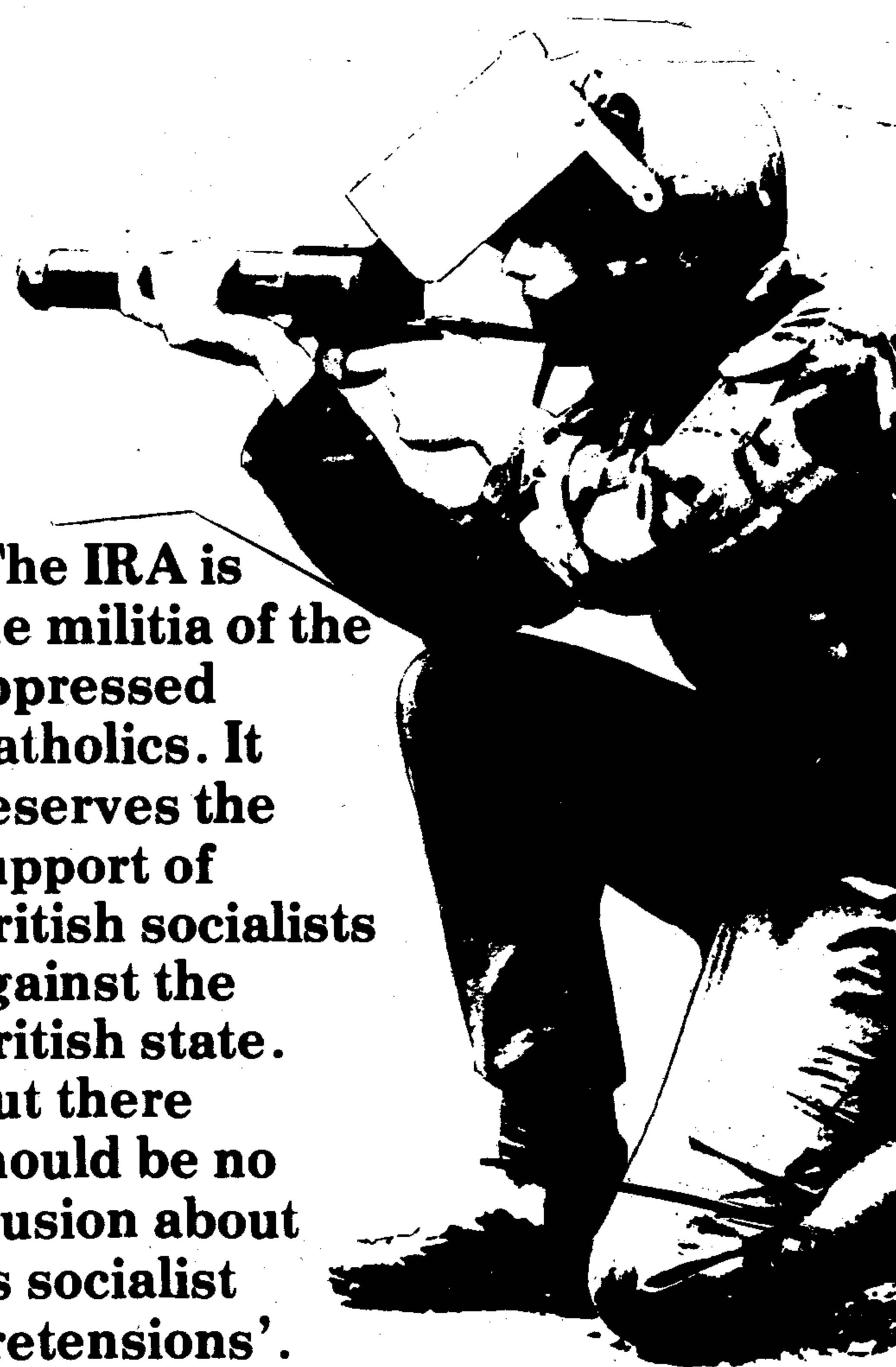
Moreover, the nationalism of Sinn Fein is a mystified and confused nationalism which is used to obscure the actual problems. Central to Ireland and Irish nationalism is the fact that between a quarter and a fifth of the people of Ireland are the main obstacles to Irish unity.

But in Sinn Fein politics, the history of British crimes against Ireland, and the reality of British army control in Northern Ireland now, is used to obscure and muddle this — to present the problem of the Protestants as merely a sub-section of the problem of British occupation.

This means evading the nature of the basic problem which any organisation which wants to forge Irish unity — let alone Irish working class unity — must face and solve.

Irish workers who really want to fight for a socialist Ireland will have to reject and go beyond the populism of Sinn Fein, and take their stand on working-class Marxist socialism.

'The IRA is the militia of the oppressed Catholics. It deserves the support of British socialists against the British state. But there should be no illusion about its socialist pretensions'.



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

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

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

*Against attacks on gays by the state: abolish all laws which discriminate against lesbians and gay men; for the right of the gay community to organise and affirm their status 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 inference 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 need to establish rational, democratic, human control over the economy, to take the decisive control of industry social property, under workers' control. The strength of the labour movement is in the rank and file. Our perspective must be to bring class action to raze the capitalist system to its foundations, and to a working class alternative in its place — rather than having representatives run the system and waiting for crumbs from the tables of bankers and bosses.

Veteran revolutionary dies



PENG SHU-TSE, a founder of Chinese communism and a Trotskyist since 1927, died of a heart attack on November 28.

Born into a peasant family in Hunan province in 1895, P'eng joined the first communist organisation in China in 1920 and studied at the University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow from 1921 to 1924.

During the Chinese revolution of 1925-27, P'eng was a member of the Communist Party's Politburo, and chief editor of the party's main newspaper and its theoretical magazine.

After Stalin's policy of collaboration with Chiang Kai-shek led to the defeat and slaughter of the Chinese workers and peasants in 1927, P'eng, together with the CCP's founder, Ch'en Tu-hsiu, formed a Trotskyist faction in the Chinese Communist Party. They were expelled in 1929.

P'eng was forced into exile by the victory of Mao's peasant



In 1926-7 the Chinese Communist Party was misled by Stalin into blind confidence in the middle-class nationalist Kuomintang — and rewarded with bullets (above).

armies in 1949, because the undemocratic Mao regime repressed the Trotskyist savagely. Symbolically, the new Stalinist regime destroyed the grave-stone marking the burial place of Ch'en Tu-hsiu.

P'eng was for long associated with the Socialist Workers' Party of the USA, and for the last two decades was a member of the 'United Secretariat of the Fourth International'.

He was, however, highly critical of the SWP's and the USFI's uncritical attitude to governments like Cuba.

In a recent document, he wrote: "One can say that the

dictatorship in Cuba is less harsh than that in China or Eastern Europe. True, it is possible that the Cuban bureaucrats are less arbitrary and brutal.

"However, the officials are nominated by the government, they are not elected directly by the worker and peasant masses. Castro is the party. There is no democratic centralism in the Cuban Communist Party, because it is copied from the Soviet Union. What Castro says, goes.

"In this respect the Cuban regime is of no different nature than Mao Zedong's in China.

The only difference is the following: the Cuban regime is younger and more vigilant, the Chinese was more confused and brutal.

"... Disappointed by the Trotskyist movement in Latin America [the SWP] only wants to consider countries like Cuba, Nicaragua and Grenada. It has no vision or overall project for the countries of Latin America. However, it is conceivable that a strong section built by us in Mexico or Argentina, etc., would be more useful than several Nicaraguan revolutions".

Agenda

LABOUR Committee on Ireland day school. Saturday January 28, 10.30 to 5 at County Hall, London SE1. Send £1 for ticket and papers to LCI, Box 42, 136 Kingswood High Road, London E8. Creche should be booked in advance.

MANCHESTER Socialist Organiser day school: 'Questions of Leadership'.

Saturday January 15, 11 to 5 at UMIST Student Union, Barnes Wallis building. Registration £1.50 (75p unwaged) from Tony Dale,

60 Acorn St, Manchester M15 6FQ.

BASINGSTOKE Socialist Organiser day school:

Saturday January 21, 10 to 4.45 at Chute House. Registration £1 (50p unwaged) from 75 Freemantle Close, Basingstoke.

BROAD Left Organising Committee conference: Octagon Centre, Western Bank, Sheffield 10, Saturday March 24, from 10am. Up to 5 delegates per trade union body: credentials £2

from George Williamson, 11 Sutton Place, London E9 6EH.

LONDON Labour Campaign for Gay Rights meets on the second Sunday of every month at 39 Chippendale Rd, W9 2AH. Bad access, help available, creche if requested. Time: 6pm. Phone: 286 9692, Tuesday-Thursday.

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.

London Educationals: State and Revolution; The Russian Revolution; The USSR and Stalinism; Ireland; Why is the Left divided? The above are a series taking place on Fridays, 7pm at the LSE, East Building, first floor, room E196.

Discussions on 'imperialism': Thursdays, 7pm, at 214 Sickert Court, London N1.

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].

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, 63 Dixon Ave, G42. Paper sales: Friday lunchtime, Springburn shopping arcade; Saturday morning, Coatbridge shopping arcade; Tuesday morning, Maryhill unemployment benefit office. Also 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, Edgely. Phone: 61 41 139

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: Dan, 69640. 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 Tectos, Cowley Rd., (Fridays 5 to 7), Cornmarket, (Saturdays, 11 to 1) and at EQA Books, Cowley Road.

LONDON AREA

Brent [and N.Y.] Contact: Mick, 624 1931.
Camden. Contact: Mick, 287 4806.
Hackney. Contact: 348 5941 or 802 0771.

MURRAY MUST GO!

Murray Must Go — from Mole Badges' c/o 28 Middle Lane. 25p each, £2 for 10, plus 16p post.

Bringing black music to Britain

Andrew Hornung looks at the life of Alexis Korner



NEW Year's Day was the last day in the life of Alexis Korner, who, at the age of 55, died of lung cancer in a London hospital.

Alexis Korner's rasping upper class voice introduced millions of British radio listeners and television viewers to American black music — to the blues, to gospel and soul music, to cajun and rhythm and blues.

But while this was the staple of his regular radio show and the area he was best acquainted with, he included in the 58 minutes a week the BBC allotted to the totality of trends that formed the foundation of current popular music a wide range of other sounds: music of the Seychelles, from Tahiti, Hawaii, Ethiopia, black South Africa and the new bands of East and West Africa.

Populariser

His role as a populariser of these musical forms followed his earlier role as the formative influence in the development of British rhythm and blues.

In 1928 Victor Sylvester, the son of the Vicar of Wembley, produced his first edition of his text book of ballroom dancing. The book was produced as part of a campaign by the Imperial Society of Dance Teachers and its explicit aim was to tame jazz.

What this meant was removing its musical forms of all connection with black music, eliminating improvisation, reducing rhythms to the squeak and slide of patent leather dance shoes keeping strict time to the baton, and removing any rawness or other trace of feeling, funk or fever. This music for a glandless generation fell like a pall over the British pop scene

for nearly thirty years.

Alexis Korner never fought a duel with Victor Sylvester. Nor was he alone responsible for bringing black American music to Britain. Chris Barber had begun that process in 1953 when he left Ken Colyer's Band with Monty Sunshine and Terry Donnegan (Lonnie Donegan) and began to tour with such great American artists as Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, Big Bill Broonzy, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Louis Jordan and — in 1957, playing (horror of horrors!) an electric guitar — Muddy Waters.

British r'n'b

Korner who, incidentally, had played with both Barber and Colyer, soon became the small cog that allowed the giant wheel of black American music to turn the big wheel of British rock.

For a few years the music of Barber, Ball and Bilk carried on the trad trend. Juke Box Jury continued to deliver its patronising verdicts with all the raw energy of an umpire replacing the bails, before it had to pull up its own stumps in the late sixties.

Baldry

By this time, Alexis Korner, the son of parents who had settled in Britain in 1940 after spells in France, Switzerland, and North Africa, found himself at the hub of the emerging British rhythm and blues scene.

Actually British r'n'b was very different from American r'n'b, it was Britain's equivalent to Chicago bar blues — the electric blues of Muddy Waters, of

Howlin' Wolf and Sonny Boy Williamson — with an admixture of Louisiana pop blues like Slim Harpo and sundry other blues misfits — John Lee Hooker, Jimmy Reed, Bo Diddley and Chuck Berry — with the last two making the connection with rock and roll.

In 1957 guitarist Korner and harmonica player Cyril Davis formed Blues Incorporated. They played at the Roundhouse pub and later at the Ealing Club. This group was, over the years, a forcing house for many of the greatest names of British rock.

In 1961, Long John Baldry was playing with Korner as was drummer Charlie Watts. Eric Clapton was sitting in occasionally and Mick Jagger and Keith Richards played with the group when they performed at the Marquee. Korner's band included on saxophone Graham Bond, who later left to found his own group (in which he played mainly organ) with drummer Ginger Baker. When Davis and Korner split, Baldry briefly went with Davis before setting up another group, the Hoochie Coochie Men, with Rod Stewart.

Baldry later teamed up with Brian Auger and Julie Driscoll and, following that, with Reg Dwight (Elton John). It was Korner, too, who schooled John Mayall who, in 1962, formed the Bluesbreakers which had included Jack Bruce and in 1965 formed the Yardbirds with Eric Clapton. Clapton, Bruce (who was briefly also with Manfred Mann) and Baker went on to form Cream.

Blues Incorporated was followed by Alexis Korner's All Stars (which included Art Theman on tenor) and the All

Stars by Snape (with Pete Thorup, Ian Wallace and Stevie Marriott who went on to be the song-writing backbone of The Small Faces).

Despise

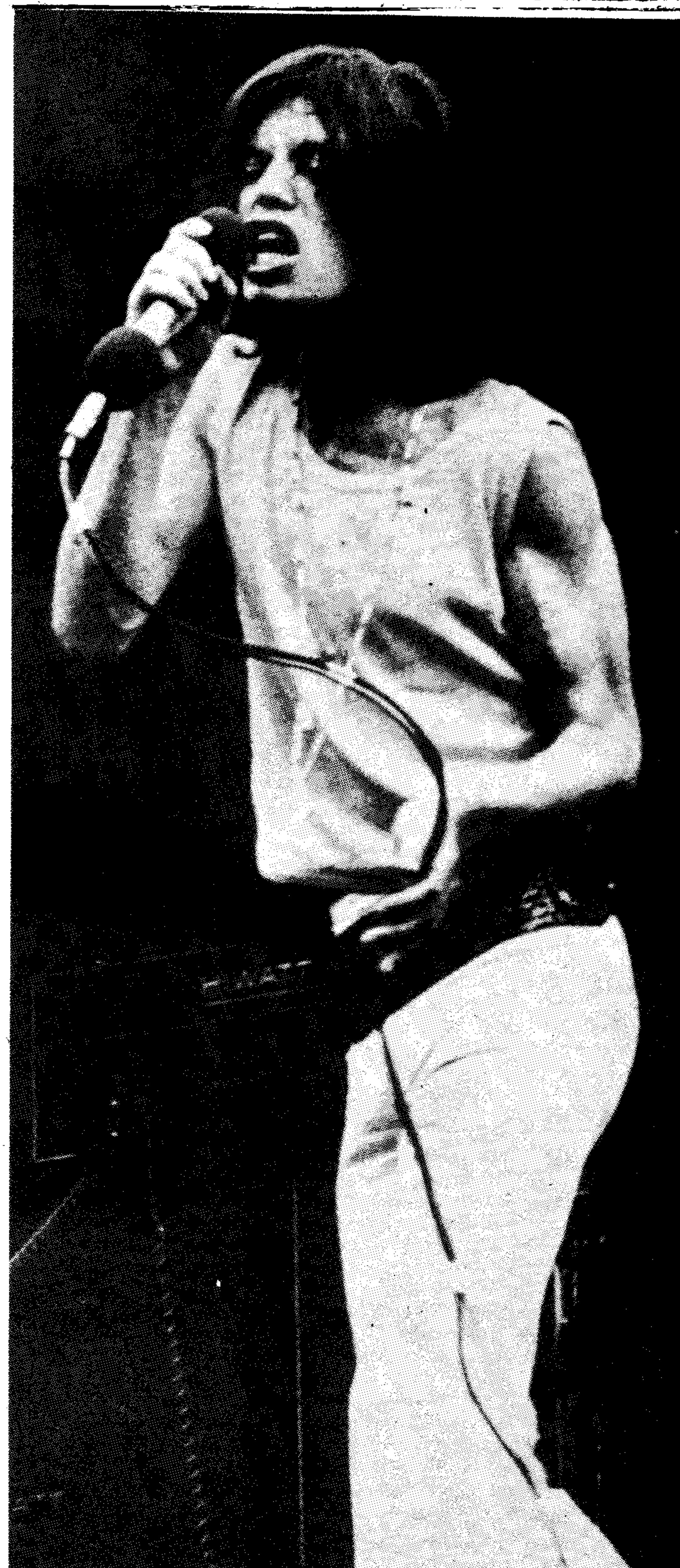
Alexis Korner, unlike the figures central to British jazz at the time, did not despise music as soon as it became commercially successful. He remained an advocate of the music of those who had served an apprenticeship with him, the Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton, Cream and many others.

But — in this respect he resembles John Mayall — while he was an interpreter and champion of black American music, his own performances never had the sexual strut, the sass or soul that his erstwhile apprentices managed to develop.

If Korner did not despise commercially successful music, he also did not suffer from that other deadly disease of blues devotees — like Paul Butterfield — or jazz devotees — like Ken Colyer — whose eyes are fixed firmly on the past.

Soca music

Alexis Korner was one of the first in Britain to champion Soca music, to play hi-life recordings and to play blues-funk. His contribution as a player, organiser, teacher and populariser was perhaps greater than any other single person in the British rock music "industry". No point saying it will not be forgotten: it will be! But even forgotten, it will leave an indelible mark.



Korner was an advocate of the Rolling Stones

No smoking ministers moved on

SCIENCE

By Les Hearn

THE RECENT report of the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) on smoking and health not only updates information on the ill-health of smokers. It also identifies several new areas of concern and issues a strong warning to the Third World not to allow the same fate to befall its people as has befallen the victims of the "cancerette", both smokers and non-smokers, in Britain, birthplace of the cigarette and of smoking diseases.

Breathe smoke

*Passive smoking.

This takes place when a non-smoker has to breathe smoke from other people's cigarettes, e.g. in a smoke-filled room, pub, railway carriage, etc.

Smouldering fags are especially harmful. The tobacco burns less completely, producing more nicotine, carbon monoxide and benzo-a-pyrene that is inhaled by the actual smoker.

The majority of non-smoking city-dwellers have nicotine in their bodies. Benzo-a-pyrene and dimethyl-nitrosamine, both powerful carcinogens, present in smoke-filled pubs and restaurants

Carbon monoxide, a deadly poison in larger

amounts, causes changes in the blood of non-smokers in smoky rooms. Physiological effects have been demonstrated, including impairment of driving skills.

A Japanese study showed an increased rate of lung cancer in non-smoking women with smoking partners, while passive smoking worsens the condition of people with lung or heart disease.

Irritation

Many non-smokers (including me) suffer irritation of eyes and throat and headaches in smoky rooms. Psychological irritation can also be intense. In 1981 an Eastern Airlines pilot in America had to make an emergency landing when passengers rioted when someone started smoking in a non-smoking section.

The report concludes "Non-smokers at work and play, in

transport and public places should have the right to choose not to be so exposed."

Dubious gains

*Low tar cigarettes.

The report believes that halving tar content has contributed to the 15% reduction in death rates from cancer among smokers. However, this may be due to a fall in air pollution over the same period.

On the debit side, it is easier to start smoking on low-tar cigarettes; smokers often find low-tar brands weak in taste and increase their smoking rates to compensate; and carbon monoxide, thought to be responsible for smokers' heart disease, is produced at the same rate as in high-tar brands.

Women at risk

*Women and children.

Deaths of women from lung

cancer have risen by 70% in ten years (due to the rise in smoking in the 1950s). Particularly, the report notes the differing reasons for smoking. Women tend to smoke when under stress, men to combat boredom or fatigue. Women find it more difficult to give up smoking. Women smokers taking a contraceptive pill run a ten times greater risk of death from heart disease than women who do neither. They are more likely to be infertile, take longer to conceive and have earlier menopause. During pregnancy, they have a greater risk of spontaneous abortion, bleeding and abnormalities of the placenta (through which the foetus gets its nourishment). Smokers babies are lighter and more likely to die around birth. By the age of 11, smokers' children are said to be some six months behind others in "intellectual performance". However, it

is not clear whether these ill-effects are the result of smoking or the result of other factors such as stress that may cause smoking as well.

Finally, the sadly believable statistic that over half of boys and 40% of girls have had at least a few puffs of a cigarette by 11 years.

Deaths

*The Third World

While in low-tar Britain, 15-20% of deaths are caused by smoking, the major tobacco companies, far from accepting this, are busy pushing high-tar cigarettes at the Third World.

The highest tar-content in Britain is 19 milligrams (mg) per cigarette while the average in Thailand is 30mg. One Philipines brand produces 71mg! Smoking is catching on fast and lung cancer rates are soaring. Meanwhile, the British government is encouraging the three major tobacco firms based in Britain in their export drive. Rothmans recently got a Queen's Award for Exports.

The Royal College of Physicians is "angered and depressed" by the government's failure to halt this "vast toll of entirely unnecessary disease and early death".

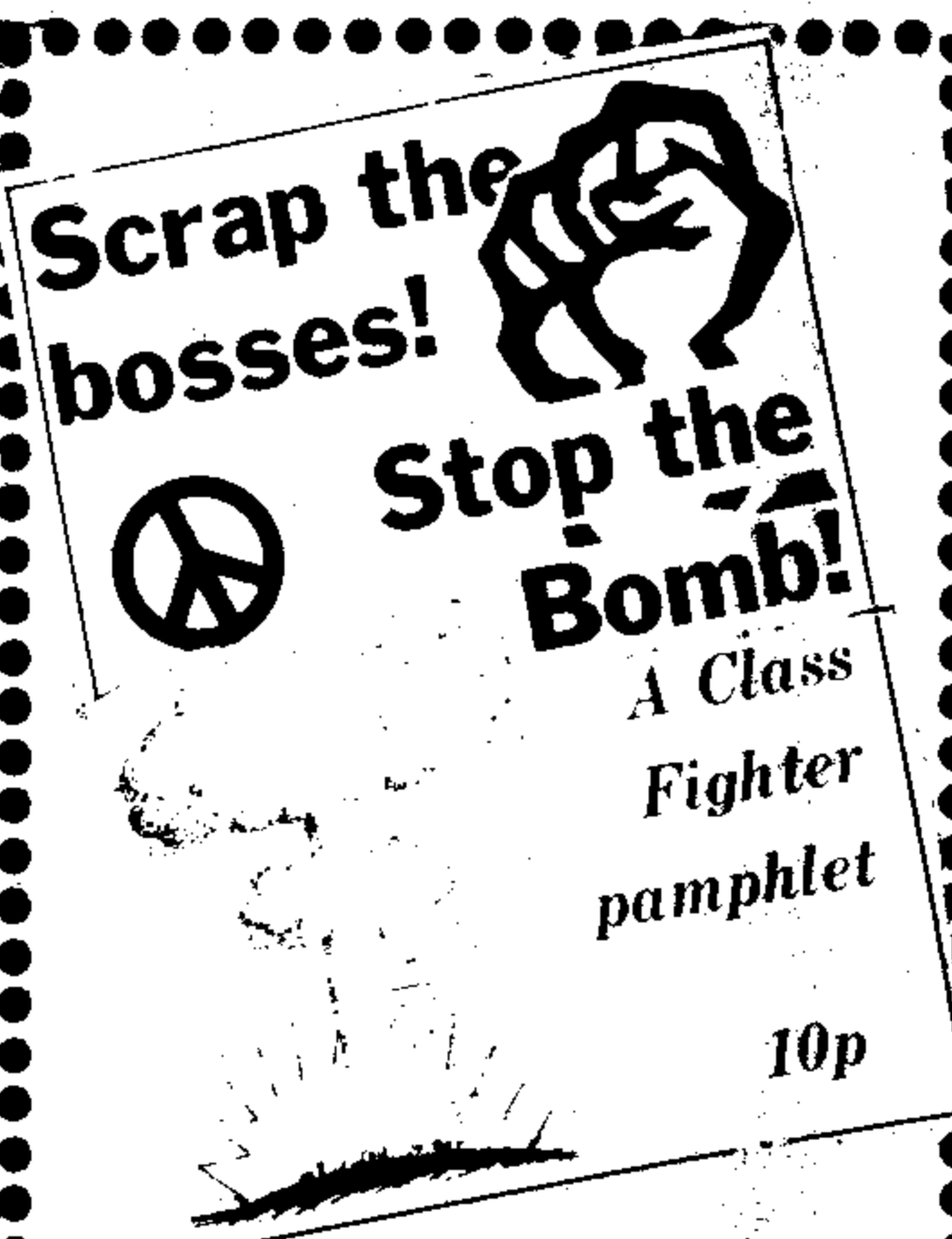
The tobacco industry spends £100 million promoting cancer, much of it by some obscene logic in sponsoring sport. Thus they are able to circumvent the ban on TV advertising, as I found

while watching motor racing recently. As the camera followed the cars round the circuit, the eye was assaulted by a colossal Marlboro ad covering the roof of a low building.

The Royal College of Physicians notes the removal of health ministers who favoured prevention programmes to other government departments, following tough negotiations with tobacco firms over sales promotions.

Indeed, on the day of publication of the report, the health minister met a representative of FOREST, the "smokers' rights" organisation, that just happens to be funded by the tobacco industry!

Info: New Scientist.



10p plus postage from 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Socialism or barbarism!

THE GREAT Polish-German Marxist Rosa Luxemburg was kidnapped and murdered, and her body dumped in a Berlin canal, in January 1919. Her comrades Karl Liebknecht and Leo Jogiches also were murdered by the German counter-revolution, in the aftermath of the Spartacist 'uprising' of January 1919, in which many German workers had perished at the hands of the Social Democratic government and its German Army allies.

After being the model party of international working class socialism for four decades, the German Social Democratic Party ('Social Democracy' was the pre-war name of the Marxist parties) broke dramatically with its past at the beginning of World War 1. It supported the German government. Luxemburg and Liebknecht were leaders of the small minority who remained faithful to socialism, opposing both the war and the traitorous party leaders.

Luxemburg, who had long been a leader of the left wing of the party, was one of the few people in the socialist world who had understood before it collapsed that German Social Democracy was rotten to the core. By contrast, Lenin at first refused to believe that the German 'socialists' had gone over to the government, insisting that the newspapers which reported it were forgeries!

The anti-war left wing created the 'Spartacus League', which agitated against the war. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht spent most of the war in jail, until the revolution released them in November 1918.

Germany's war ended in a revolution which overthrew the Kaiser (Emperor) and set up a German Republic. But it was led by the traitor-socialists, who bore responsibility, with the ruling class, for the mass slaughter of workers in the trenches. They controlled the workers' councils which spread across Germany, and they set the limits to the revolution's development. They created the bourgeois 'Weimar Republic', which soon spawned Hitler's Third Reich.

At the end of the war the revolutionaries were still isolated. The Spartacus League, which declared itself the German Communist Party at the end of 1918, had only a few thousand members. The forces which were to create the mass German Communist Party of the '20s and early '30s did not come until 1921, from the vacillating Independent Social Democrats who had split from the Party's hard right wing during the war.

Against the (internal) opposition of Luxemburg and Liebknecht, the party allowed itself to be drawn into premature armed clashes with the government in early January 1919. Luxemburg and Liebknecht lost their lives in the course of this.

Lenin, who disagreed with Luxemburg on many issues and who had himself been subjected to lacerating criticism by her over two decades (the comment on violence in section 3 is probably a veiled criticism of the Bolsheviks' 'Red Terror'), said this of Rosa Luxemburg in 1922. "She was — and remains for us — an eagle. And not only will communists all over the world cherish her memory, but her biography and her complete works... will serve as useful manuals for training many generations of communists all over the world".

Luxemburg's is a distinct strand within the heritage of revolutionary Marxism which has come down to us. It is an extremely valuable one.

The conception of self-liberating working class socialism is, centrally, what divides Socialist Organiser from sections of the Labour Left like the Labour Coordinating Committee and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy.

For us, the choice which Rosa Luxemburg expressed as the choice between 'Socialism or barbarism' has now become the choice between socialism or nuclear annihilation.

THE class rule of the bourgeoisie is the real criminal responsible for the World War, in Germany as in France, in Russia as in England, in Europe as in America. The capitalists of all nations are the real instigators of the mass murder. International capital is the insatiable god Baal, into whose bloody maw millions upon millions of steaming human sacrifices are thrown.

The World War confronts society with the choice: either continuation of capitalism, new wars, and imminent decline into chaos and anarchy, or abolition of capitalist exploitation.

With the conclusion of world war, the class rule of the bourgeoisie has forfeited its right to existence. It is no longer capable of leading society out of the terrible economic collapse which the imperialist orgy has left in its wake.

Out of all this bloody confusion this yawning abyss, there is no help, no escape, no refuge other than socialism. Only the revolution of the world proletariat can bring order into this chaos, can bring work and bread for all, can end the reciprocal slaughter of the peoples, can restore peace, freedom, true culture to this martyred humanity. Down with the wage system! That is the slogan of the hour! Instead of wage labour and class rule there must be collective labour. The means of production must cease to be the monopoly of a single class; they must become the common property of all. No more exploiters and exploited! Planned production and distribution of the product in the common interest. Abolition not only of the con-

temporary mode of production, mere exploitation and robbery, but equally of contemporary commerce, mere fraud.

In place of the employers and their wage slaves, free working comrades! Labour as nobody's torture, because everybody's duty! A human and honourable life for all who do their social duty. Hunger no longer the curse of labour, but the scourge of idleness!

Only in such a society are national hatred and servitude uprooted. Only when such a society has become a reality will the earth no more be stained by murder. Only then can it be said: This war was the last.

In this hour, socialism is the only salvation for humanity. The words of the 'Communist Manifesto' flare... above the crumbling bastions of capitalist society:

Socialism or barbarism!

The establishment of the socialist order of society is the mightiest task which has ever fallen to a class and to a revolution in the history of the world. This task requires a complete transformation of the state and a complete overthrow of the economic and social foundations of society.

This transformation and this overthrow cannot be decreed by any bureau, committee or parliament. It can be begun and carried out only by the masses of people themselves.

In all previous revolutions a small minority of the people led the revolutionary struggle, gave it aim and direction, and used the mass only as an instrument to carry its interests,



Rosa Luxemburg at a mass meeting in 1918

the interests of the minority, through to victory. The socialist revolution is the first which is in the interests of the great majority and can be brought to victory only by the great majority of the working people themselves.

The mass of the proletariat must do more than stake out clearly the aims and direction of the revolution. It must also personally, by its own activity, bring socialism step by step into life.

The essence of socialist society consists in the fact that the great labouring mass ceases to be a dominated mass, but rather, makes the entire political and economic life its own life and gives that life a conscious, free, and autonomous direction.

From the uppermost summit of the state down to the tiniest parish, the proletarian mass must therefore replace the inherited organs of bourgeois class rule — the assemblies, parliaments and city councils — with its own class organs — with workers' and soldiers' councils.

It must occupy all the posts, supervise all functions, measure all official needs by the standard of its own class interests and the tasks of socialism. Only through constant, vital, reciprocal contact between the masses of the people and their organs, the workers' and soldiers' councils, can the activity of the people fill the state with a socialist spirit.

The economic overturn, likewise, can be accomplished only if the process is carried out by proletarian mass action. The naked decrees of socialisation by the highest revolutionary authorities are by themselves empty phrases.

Only the working class, through its own activity, can make the word flesh. The workers can achieve control over production, and ultimately real power, by means of tenacious struggle with capital, hand-to-hand, in every shop, with direct mass pressure, with strikes and with the creation of its own permanent representative organs.

From dead machines assigned their place in production by capital, the proletarian masses must learn to transform themselves into the free and independent directors of this process. They have to acquire the feeling of responsibility proper to active

Excerpt from Rosa Luxemburg's introduction to the programme of the Spartacus League, 'What Does Spartacus Want?' (1918)

members of the collectivity which alone possesses ownership of all wealth.

They have to develop industriousness without the capitalist whip, the highest productivity without slavedrivers, discipline without the yoke, order without authority. The highest idealism in the interest of the collectivity, the strictest self-discipline, the truest public spirit of the masses are the moral foundations of socialist society, just as stupidity, egotism, and corruption are the moral foundations of capitalist society.

All these socialist civic virtues, together with the knowledge and skills necessary to direct socialist enterprises, can be won by the mass of workers only through their own activity, their own experience.

The socialisation of society can be achieved only through tenacious, tireless struggle by the working mass along its entire front, on all points where labour and capital, people and bourgeois class rule, can see the whites of one another's eyes. The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself.

During the bourgeois revolutions, bloodshed, terror, and political murder were an indispensable weapon in the hand of the rising classes.

The proletarian revolution requires no terror for its aims; it hates and despises killing. It does not need these weapons because it does not combat individuals but institutions, because it does not enter the arena with naive illusions whose disappointment it would seek to revenge. It is not the desperate attempt of a minority to mold the world forcibly according to its ideal, but the action of the great massive millions of the people, destined to fulfill a historic mission and to transform historical necessity into reality.

But the proletarian revolution is at the same time the death knell for all servitude and oppression. That is why all capitalists, Junkers (landlords), petty bourgeois, officers, all

opportunists and parasites of exploitation and class rule rise up to a man to wage mortal combat against the proletarian revolution.

It is sheer insanity to believe that capitalists would good-humouredly obey the socialist verdict of a parliament or of a national assembly, that they would calmly renounce property, profit, the right to exploit.

All ruling classes fought to the end, with tenacious energy, to preserve their privileges. The Roman patricians and the medieval feudal barons alike, the English cavaliers and the American slavedealers, the Walachian boyars and the Lyonnais silk manufacturers — they all shed streams of blood, they all marched over corpses, murder, and arson, instigated civil war and treason, in order to defend their privileges and their power.

The imperialist capitalist class, at last offspring of the caste of exploiters, outdoes all its predecessors in brutality, in open cynicism and treachery. It defends its holiest of holies, its profit and its privilege of exploitation, with tooth and nail, with the methods of cold evil which it demonstrated to the world in the entire history of colonial politics and in the recent World War.

It will mobilise heaven and hell against the proletariat. It will mobilise the peasants against the cities, the backward strata of the working class against the socialist vanguard; it will use officers to instigate atrocities; it will try to paralyse every socialist measure with a thousand methods of passive resistance;... it will turn the country into a smoking heap of rubble rather than voluntarily give up wage slavery.

All this resistance must be broken step by step, with an iron fist and ruthless energy. The violence of the bourgeois counter-revolution must be confronted with the revolutionary violence of the proletariat.

Against the attacks, insinuations and rumours of the bourgeoisie must stand the inflexible clarity of purpose, vigilance, and ever ready activity of the proletarian mass. Against the threatened dangers of the counter-revolution, the arming of the people and disarming of the ruling classes. Against the parliamentary obstructionist manoeuvres of the bourgeoisie,

the active organisation of the mass of workers and soldiers. Against the omnipotence, the thousands means of power of bourgeois society, the concentrated, compact, and fully developed power of the working class. Only a solid front of the entire German proletariat, the south German together with the north German, the urban and the rural, the workers with the soldiers, the living spirited identification of the German Revolution with the International, the extension of the German Revolution into a world revolution of the proletariat can create the granite foundations on which the edifice of the future can be constructed.

The fight for socialism is the mightiest civil war in world history, and the proletarian revolution must procure the necessary tools for this civil war; it must learn to use them — to struggle and to win.

Such arming of the solid mass of labouring people with all political power for the tasks of the revolution — that is the dictatorship of the proletariat and therefore true democracy.

Not where the wage slave sits next to the capitalist, the rural proletarian next to the Junker in fraudulent equality to engage in parliamentary debate over questions of life or death, but where the million-headed proletarian mass seizes the entire power of the state in its calloused fist, like the god Thor his hammer, using it to smash the head of the ruling classes — that alone is democracy, that alone is not a betrayal of the people.

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Residential social workers sold out

Ann Crowder reports on the ending of the residential social workers action and draws out some of the lessons



"To the most militant residential workers this was a sell-out"

PHOTO: ANDREW WIARD, REPORT

THE ACTION taken by residential workers in pursuit of a claim for enhanced payment for unsocial hours working has been suspended.

In a national secret postal ballot, there was a majority against escalation by implementing 9-5 working. Normal working will be resumed in homes for the elderly, children and mentally and physically handicapped by January 9, following a majority vote in favour of suspending all action at a national delegates meeting on December 22.

It was also agreed to accept an ACAS deal, which calls for a national review of residential care. To the most militant residential workers this was a sell-out.

A motion supported by a number of branches, calling for a

continuation of previous action, with further escalation in the future, was defeated at that meeting.

NALGO's National Local Government Committee (NLGC) are going into this with a watered down version of our claim, almost saying they will accept anything.

The employers are a lot clearer about where they stand, nothing will be forthcoming unless considered in the context of the changing face of social service provision and a reduction in local government funding, (i.e. cutbacks, closures, job losses).

NALGO's NLGC did very little to build for the '9-5 working only' ballot. It had done virtually nothing to publicise the claim, nor had it done anything to build support amongst the rest of its

membership in local government.

Although authorisation was given for strike action on December 7 in support of residential workers and whilst there was a good turnout on a 10,000-strong demonstration, it needed more strike action by more local government workers to win the claim.

It was no doubt held back by the fact that NALGO had done nothing to publicise this authorisation, no national leaflet, nor did they do anything to build for future days of action which would have been necessary had we won the '9-5 working only' ballot.

This fight has never been just about our claim. NALGO pays lip service to fighting the Tory government's plans to abolish the Metropolitan Authorities, the GLC and so on. It speaks about the fight against cutbacks, and the improvement of public services, yet it was almost relieved to sell us out and stop industrial action.

Even delegates who were in favour of accepting the ACAS deal (amongst them Militant supporters) were highly critical of the national leadership.

It appeared they wanted this dispute over and done with as soon as possible, and have put their energies into ensuring that, rather than winning our claim which obviously would have been a victory for all local government workers against the Tory employers.

Local victimisations, docking of pay, sackings should have been met by national action, not left to individual branches to take action and become isolated, in many cases with no chance of winning.

No defence

Nationally NALGO have held back decisions on ballots for local escalation of the action. In Nottinghamshire it had held back strike money for strike action that had been authorised.

There was no defence of those who were arrested on December 7, no public statement was issued.

"NALGO militants must fight for the accountability of their so-called leadership. We must stop them from seeing disputes as isolated inconveniences."

The post-mortem of this dispute needs a longer analysis. But a few more points are important to note.

Firstly, secret postal ballots not only hamper but are destructive to action. The programme Sixty Minutes had a severely disabled person urging people to vote 'no' in the ballot. NALGO did nothing to counteract this or build for a 'yes' vote.

The 'no' vote meant a calling off of our action when there was enough militancy amongst residential workers and a growing support amongst local government workers to win our dispute.

We need to campaign against postal ballots being established in unions and to get rid of them at NALGO's next annual conference.

Accountability

Secondly, the role of Labour authorities.

Class collaboration against workers is certainly no way to protect services, jobs, or workers. We need to highlight the accountability of councillors when it comes round to reselection time and take these sell-outs as a clear indication of their class treachery.

NALGO militants must fight for the accountability of its so-called leadership. We must stop them from seeing disputes as isolated inconveniences. Our fight was a fight for all local government workers and local government services, and any fight by other sections will be a fight for us.

Residential workers should use their experiences to win these demands. It needs to be started straight away. Support must be built for the January 24 day of authorised strike action to defend the GLC and the Metropolitan Authorities.

No doubt demoralisation has set in amongst residential workers. We must see it merely as a postponement of the need for industrial action. We must be prepared to fight now for the accountability of the labour movement leadership.

Support for NGA

IN Sheffield on 14 December, what started out as a rally for the rail, steel and coal unions, ended as an attack on the TUC General Council in denying support to the NGA.

News of the vote was public when the meeting started. Calls for an NGA speaker by the 1,000 people present were soft-soaped by the chair. Former ASLEF President Bill Ronsley had this to say: "Today is a black day for trade unionism. We in ASLEF were also let down by the TUC so we know how the NGA members are feeling tonight. But that let-down did not weaken the resolve of ASLEF members. It becomes clearer and clearer that a new kind of leadership is necessary."

"When a Congress is held to decide on a policy, no trade union leadership should be allowed to back down on that policy, and instead talk about not breaking the law."

These comments were met by rapturous applause.

Arthur Scargill also had some pertinent comments. "It's not just our class enemy but collaboration in our own ranks. I believe the TUC decision today represents the biggest sell-out since 1926. Faced with sequestration of their funds, the NGA should strike, not

for a day but permanently." A member of the audience at that shouted out: "How long do you think the (NUM) overtime ban should last?" Scargill replied, "I'll tell you how long it should last - permanently."

At this point Bill Sirs walked in to cries from the crowd of 'Scab' and 'Put up the gallows'.

Bill Sirs said, "We are trying to create unity within the triple alliance. We're fighting a government with a 140 seat majority. That is what you should not forget."

The audience shouted back "We're fighting the TUC!"

A slow handclap started and people began to leave. Sirs did not say anything else.

Jimmy Knapp pledged the support of the NUR. "We must work hard to shake off what has happened today. We need to work for unity. We need to make sure that in future, the Tory government is faced by a union movement, standing shoulder to shoulder. The NUR supports the NGA. We will continue to argue for justice for the NGA despite the decision today."

What was said at this rally gives hope for a much stronger assault on the anti-union laws. If the NGA asks the triple alliance will answer.

Carousel arrests

SIX so-called secondary pickets were arrested at the mass picket of 20 December outside the Carousel factory in Glasgow's East End, scene of the long-running dispute for union recognition, re-instatement and better working conditions.

The arrests occurred when police waded in as pickets stopped a car carrying scabs into the factory. Badly dented, the car managed to get in, whilst the six pickets arrested during the clash were charged with breach of the peace and vandalism.

The mass picket, attended by about 100 trade unionists and unemployed, had been called by the East End Support Committee (consisting of the strikers, local trade unionists and Labour Party members). In the weeks leading up to the picket, strikers visited over 30 workplaces around Glasgow to appeal for support for the picket.

The low turnout for this mass picket is the result of the local TGWU officials' attitude to it: they did not openly oppose it, but they certainly did nothing to help build it. And not a single TGWU full-timer turned up to picket Carousel.

The appeal for support for the mass picket found only a limited response - only one union banner (NALGO) was on the picket line.

The failure of the local TGWU officials to work to mobilise support for the mass picket was only the logical extension of their overall attitude to the dispute: it, as soon as this can be done with the minimum

of recriminations.

The TGWU has already withdrawn the vacant shop used by the strikers as their headquarters, on the grounds that it cost too much (£17 a week) to run.

Another reflection of the scandalous indifference of TGWU officialdom to the fate of this dispute is to be found in the current issue of TGWU Record, the union's monthly newspaper. It carries a mere 27-word article on the strike, which does nothing to enlighten the reader as to the background and development of the strike.

The East End Support Committee is following up its work for the mass picket by calling for a West of Scotland shop stewards conference to be convened by the TGWU.

All trade unionists (not just those in the TGWU) and Labour Party members in the West of Scotland should be moving resolutions in their branches pledging them to support any such conference, convened by the TGWU and/or the Carousel strikers themselves.

If, as is 99% certain, the TGWU fails to call such a conference, the way would then be open for the strikers themselves to immediately call such a conference, knowing that branches which had passed a motion along the above lines would support it.

Donations and copies of any resolutions passed by union or Labour Party branches should be sent to: Carol Rodger, 47 Cuthall Terrace, Parkhead, Glasgow.

Brent goes Tory

AMIDST stormy scenes, Brent Council went Tory on December 15. The meeting had been adjourned from the previous week when a large demonstration occupied the council meeting demanding the resignation of Ambrozie Neil.

Neil had defected to the Tories over a difference on education policy. Her policy included more discipline in schools, and for black private schools.

From the outset, the meeting was heavily paced and members of the public faced great difficulty in gaining admittance.

The demonstration started off peacefully. Carols were sung with anti-Tory lyrics. The meeting hotted up by 9 p.m. when some people went through the security guards into the middle to confront Ambrozie Neil demanding her resignation.

After the disruption was over

the Mayor ordered the hall cleared. Most people refused to leave. Many were dragged out by the police.

Outside, away from the cameras, the police engaged in their more traditional pursuits, especially against black women.

Four Labour Party members were arrested, three of them having earlier been fingered to plain clothes police by a Tory councillor.

Witch-hunt

In the following days the left had to fight off a witch-hunt attempt at the Local Government Committee. One Councillor resigned in protest at the so-called violence of the left.

The first hearing for the four arrested will be at Waltham Magistrates Court, St. Mary's Road, NW10 at 9.45 on January 5. A picket is planned.

Industrial Digest

A THREE week-old strike by post office staff in the Shepherd's Bush area of London ended last month after three weeks.

About sixty members of the Union of Communications Workers walked out at the beginning of the month after management withdrew productivity bonuses because of an unofficial overtime ban.

The strikers went back to work after the union had agreed with management to add to the workers' weekly bonus them selves.

The strike had been made official by the UCW, the first time the union had made any strike official since the 1971 national strike.

THE government has put pressure on the NHS to drop all specification of minimum wage rates for staff employed by companies on cleaning and catering contracts, in an effort to cut the NHS wage bill.

Conflicting reports on the success of a half-day banking strike just before Xmas have emerged from employers and the union involved. The Banking Insurance and Finance Union called the national stoppage over the loss of the traditional half-day given to staff on the last trading day before Xmas.

Employers claimed that only 110 bank branches were affected out of a possible 11,000. BIFU claimed that 2,500 branches were affected, with support from 60-70% of the union's membership.

There are fears that the government is preparing the way for the privatisation of the power industry. The Electrical Power Engineers Association believe that the government's decision to impose a 3% tariff on the industry this year is a clear move to make the industry attractive to private investors.

Socialist ORGANISER

Support the shipyard workers!

THE PLAN put forward by British Shipbuilders to 'save the industry' is a plan to break every bone in the body of shipyard trade unionism.

Tens of thousands would lose their jobs, pay and conditions would worsen for the few survivors, and management would rule with the blackjack of total power.

But the fear, the insecurity and the powerlessness that has infected many sections of the working class in Thatcher's Britain has not demoralised the men and women of the ship yards.

Their militancy has pushed their union leaders into calling a national strike from January 6.

Tyneside workers have decided to occupy their yards. At Cammell Lairds a committee has been set up to organise non-shipyard workers in the fight to save jobs.

These are the key tactics to a successful struggle involving all the strikers and drawing in the wider community and other

sections of workers.

Last September's shipyard strikes and occupations in West Germany succeeded in fuelling the fighting spirit of other heavy industries, above all steel. Solidarity from steel and coal workers who face similar attacks could turn the trade union struggle into a political battle against the Tories.

FUND

Donations over the Christmas/New Year period include: Sally Page (Manchester) £5, Pete Keenlyside (Manchester) £5, J. Wells (Birmingham) £3, Mick Ferris (Nottingham) £1, Cardiff SO £20, Bev Wood (Brackley) £2, Manchester SO (raffle and social) £18.50, Stan Croke £5, John McIlroy £20, Wirral SO (social) £25.32, Alex Simpson (Cambridge) £5, York SO £8, Harrogate SO £5, Jenny Fisher £60, London supporter £80, Rob Dawber £6 — a total of £273.82.

Many thanks to all those, and it's a better total than we've had for several issues.

But that makes only £744.57 so far in our three-month drive to raise £3000 by January 31. £2255.43 in four weeks! It will take a lot of doing.

Most encouraging is the fact that a far greater number of local groups are actually organising fund-raising events — jumble sales, socials, raffles, etc. — and going out to ask readers for donations. A number set plans before Christmas for activities in January — now's the time to make sure that those plans go ahead full speed.

Sheffield has raised 120% of its target, Brent 107%, Tower Hamlets 70%, and Cardiff 54% — but every other group has a long way to go. Chelmsford stands at 33%, Harrogate at 30%, Southwark at 29%, Islington at 26%, Nottingham 16%, Hull 12%, S.E. London 8%, Halifax 8%, and Coventry 1%. Other groups have yet to send any money at all.

Remember: that £3000 isn't for luxuries or extras, it is for basic week-by-week functioning.

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

Left gains at car factory

By Bill Peters

BOB Fryer, who has been the TGWU convenor of the BL Cowley Assembly Plant since 1959, with a three-year break when the right wing were in power from 1974-77, has been defeated in this year's election by a challenge from the left.

The new TGWU convenor is Ivor Braggins, who has been a principled and militant shop steward in the plant for many years.

This election was the first time that Fryer had lost the support of the left in the plant since he was first elected 24 years ago.

Opposing him was not an easy decision for the left to take. Bob Fryer has a long history of struggle and was one of the people responsible for the building of the shop stewards movement in the plant in the 1950s and the early 1960s.

In recent years, however, he has faded seriously and had reached the point where he was no longer able to provide adequate leadership in the face of a ruthless and determined management.

The extent of this was reflected in the unity of the left in opposing Fryer and supporting Ivor Braggins, which was more or less complete.

This gave Braggins a 250 majority in the shop floor ballot held recently. Ivor Braggins polled 745 against Fryer's 495 and Frank Corti, the right wing candidate's 59 in a 40% poll.

Corti's vote reflects the crisis the right wing faced in the election. Their candidate capable of polling the most votes, Jim Barson, was beaten for the shop steward's position in his own section, the paint shop, and was consequently not eligible to stand for convenor.

Frank Corti, who was the unsuccessful right wing candidate in the previous election, had just been found guilty in a TGWU disciplinary hearing, of threatening physical violence to Alan Thornett during a shop stewards meeting at the works, eighteen months ago.

As a result of this it has been recommended to the General Executive Council of the TGWU by the Midlands Regional Committee, that he be banned from holding all offices in the union. This factor undoubtedly reduced

further the small vote he was likely to get.

The low poll (40%), is partly produced by the strict voting procedures in the plant whereby workers have to attend the polling station at a given time and be in possession of their membership card, and partly by the current conditions in the plant.

As a result of the management offensive, and betrayals by the trade union leaders over the last four years, shop floor trade union structures have been seriously broken down and there has been a very serious loss of shop stewards and activists. The South Works, where the Maestro is assembled by a largely new labour force, has been the worst affected. For the past year there have been virtually no shop stewards in that area and trade union influence is very weak, although of course they are all members of the union.

This situation resulted in a high poll in the North Works amongst the older labour force but a tiny percentage poll in the South Works.

This is one of the problems which Bob Fryer had failed to tackle and one to which the new leadership must give a high priority.

It is going to be a difficult period over the next year in the plant. The management offensive continues and will intensify with the introduction of the LM 11 shortly, and after that the new Honda model, the XX.

The result of this ballot and the recent ballot in the Body Plant next door, where left-winger Tony Richardson polled 942 votes against the right wing candidate's 1224 in a ballot controlled by the right wing, who used very unsatisfactory and biased procedures, show that workers are looking for militant leaders.

The new leadership in the Assembly Plant therefore faces the contradictory situation with a labour force willing to fight, as they demonstrated in the so-called hand-washing strike last year, but with trade union structures seriously dismantled.

The new leadership will therefore have to fight management at the same time as it is rebuilding the union. There is no doubt, however, that a leadership under Ivor Braggins offers the best opportunity to tackle this task.

Bloody Sunday

By Rob Dawber

THE annual demonstration to commemorate Bloody Sunday takes place in Sheffield this year.

Bloody Sunday was the day in 1972 when the Second Parachute Regiment of the British Army shot down and killed 14 demonstrators on a protest against internment without charge or trial.

The Bloody Sunday demonstration is also more generally, of course, a protest against the whole of British policy and presence in Ireland.

We knew that as soon as the local media got hold of it, they would try and do the same as was done in Mansfield when the LCI demonstrated there against the then Labour spokesperson on Ireland, Don Concannon.

Mansfield

The population of Mansfield were told instead that bombers were on their way and local builders offered reduced rates for building work after the IRA had been through. Not surprisingly a lot of people, including a large Labour Party contingent, turned out to defend their MP.

Just before Christmas, all of this started here. The occasion to begin it was provided by the Harrods bomb. But a godsend for the media was provided by one local Sinn Féin (Britain) member Tony Kelly who went to the radio and press claiming to speak for the Bloody Sunday Mobilising Committee (of which he is secretary.)

He informed the media that he supported the bombing at Harrods, as an act of war, but of course he regretted civilian casualties.



Amidst the horror of the Harrods bombing, many on the Labour Left seem to have forgotten the basic issues in Ireland. But we must remember Bloody Sunday (above). The root cause of the deaths and suffering is the anti-democratic, British-imposed, British-sustained, partition of Ireland.

The press locally is relatively restrained in its attacks on left issues because of the strength of support for Labour, and has got its circulation figures to worry about.

No such problem with Irish questions, though. The labour movement is as bad here on this question as anywhere. Straight away, City Council leader David Blunkett moved to get the city hall withdrawn as the venue for the rally, stating that he had, "consulted colleagues and decided it was unacceptable to permit the hire of city council premises to organisations that advocated violence and bombing."

He said, "The council did not like to place restrictions on the use of its premises because it could be accused of censorship."

But that is not the case where people are advocating violence and talking about being at war with people in the streets of Sheffield or London."

Of course, the press is now howling for the march itself to be banned.

Blunkett

Even before Tony Kelly's statements, however, Blunkett had tried to get postponed a meeting organised by the Labour Committee on Ireland and the Troops Out Movement on the use of show trials and paid perjurers in Northern Ireland under the title of "British Justice on Trial in Ireland" This nonetheless goes ahead on January 13.