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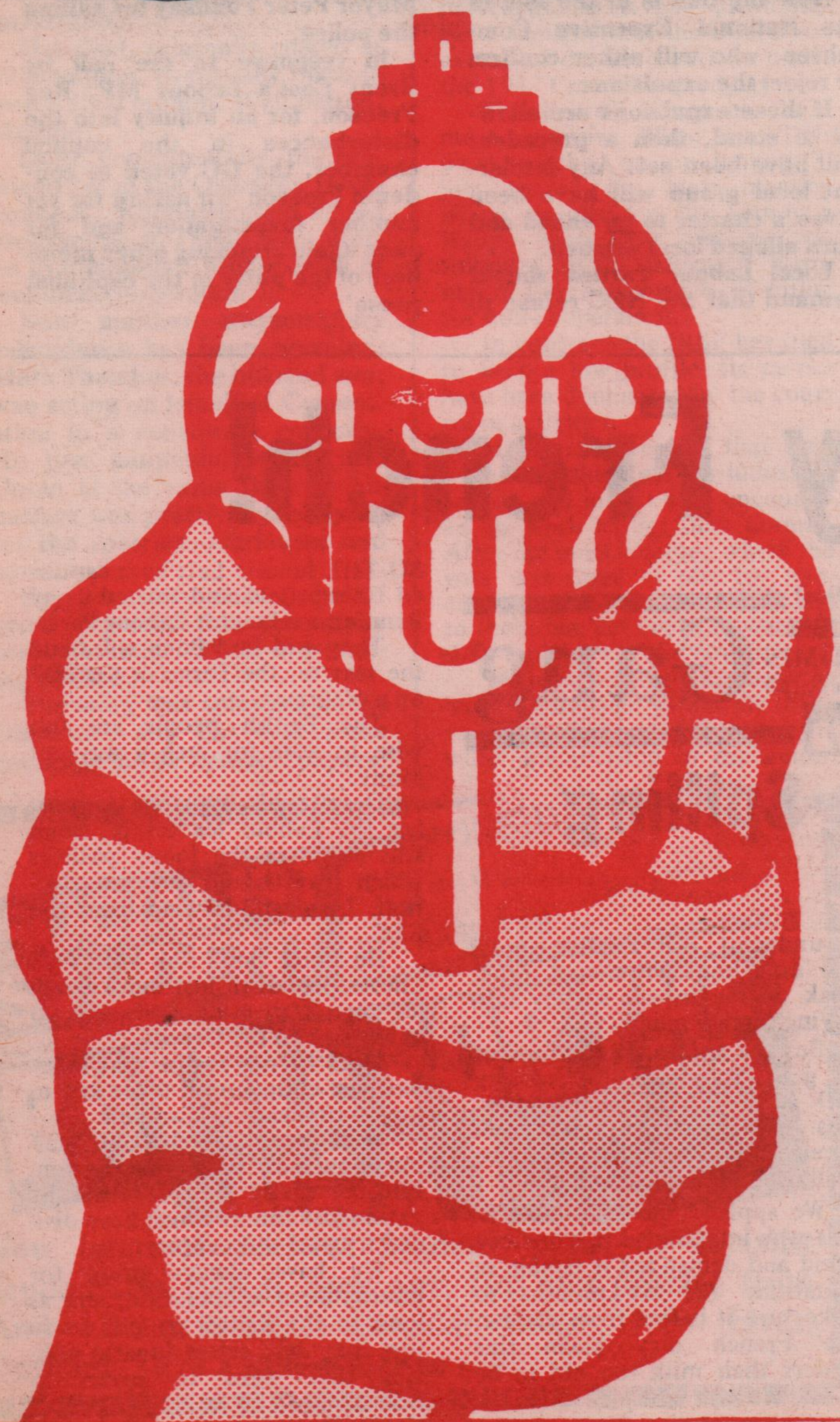
Socialist ORGANISER

Break
links
with
Tories

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Two more print unions in the firing line

TORY LAWS SAY: SCAB OR ELSE!



TWO unions in the printing industry could come into sharp collision with the Tory anti-union laws again this week.

SOGAT 82's leaders buckled under pressure before Christmas, and capitulated to a court injunction obtained by the union-busting 'socialist' millionaire Robert Maxwell. This week they have declared their refusal to comply with a further, more draconian, court ruling, which came into force last Wednesday, 11th.

Judges instructed SOGAT members in other plants of Maxwell's company BPCC to do the work of their striking colleagues at the Park Royal plant, by printing an extended run of the Radio Times. They also reiterated the previous injunction against the trade union boycott of Radio Times distribution in London, since in fact it had never been lifted.

SOGAT 82 has received a court order instructing them to scab on members in dispute at Robert Maxwell's BPCC print works at Park Royal, London.

The union has refused to scab. It has refused to withdraw its instruction to members not to print copies of the Radio Times normally produced at Park Royal.

But the Tory law is: Scab — or else. So if the SOGAT leaders stand firm, they will be hauled up within the next few days for 'contempt of court'.

Before Christmas they buckled under pressure and capitulated to another court injunction connected to the same dispute. But this week they have declared their refusal to comply with the further, more draconian, court ruling

By Alan Gordon

obtained by union-busting 'socialist' millionaire Robert Maxwell, which came into force last Wednesday, 11th.

The judges also reiterated the previous injunction against the trade union boycott of Radio Times distribution in London, since in fact the London members of SOGAT have never lifted it.

The next legal stage is punitive fines or damages, like against the NGA. And the next stage in the struggle is an escalation, if SOGAT takes steps to defend itself against Maxwell and the courts by boycotting the printing and distribution of other publications from BPCC.

Meanwhile, on Saturday 21st, a Special Delegate Meeting of the National Union of Journalists will vote on whether to flout an injunction and reinstate the union's principled stand of defying the anti-union legislation. The vote will be on whether to reimpose an official instruction for strike action against Dimpleby Newspapers in Richmond.

The union's six-person Emergency Committee intervened in the dispute on December 15 by voting four to two to reverse an unanimous decision taken a few days earlier by the full National Executive, and to withdraw official support for the Dimpleby chapel members, pending a ruling by the High Court on the union's appeal against an injunction.

This switch of line, which not climbed down to the courts but also stripped the Richmond strikers of £1000 per week in strike benefit and other support, provoked anger among many NUJ activists. And it caught the

union's right wing unawares.

At the National Executive Committee meetings, right wingers — supported by a number on the Left — had carried a proposal for a Special Delegate Meeting. Some evidently hoped that this might offer an escape route from further confrontation with the courts.

But then the emergency committee called off the official strike. The right wing immediately recognised that the SDM could now provide the basis for the rank and file membership to reinstate the action, and began to campaign for the SDM to be called off.

Last Wednesday, 11th, a recalled NEC meeting voted by a majority of one to proceed with the SDM. There is a good chance that the union policy will at the weekend revert once again to defiance and confrontation.

At the centre of the agenda for the SDM is a declaration of principles tabled by the NEC when it was unanimously for defiance: this policy statement will now certainly be opposed by a number of NEC members who originally voted for it.

Amendments range from right wing appeals to remain 'within the law' through to attempts to toughen up the statement, specifying the need to prepare industrial action by the NUJ and other unions in the event of further legal attacks or sequestration of funds, and condemning the TUC's betrayal of the NGA.

Oxford branch has tabled an amendment which calls on 'the full TUC — or those TUC unions prepared to stand in defence of union rights — to lend the NUJ and NGA unqualified political, financial and industrial support in defence of basic union rights'.

Also from Oxford comes a further resolution, committing the NUJ to campaign for a recall TUC congress, to reverse the General Council's decision on the NGA.

A number of branches, together with the Provincial Newspapers Industrial Council, condemn the lifting of the strike instruction at Richmond, and urge that the NEC should give 'full official support and strike pay to our members on Dimpleby Newspapers immediately following the House of Lords decision, irrespective of what that decision may be'.

Despite the confusion created by the right wing manoeuvres in the last month, the NUJ's conference of rank and file delegates gives the best chance of reversing a damaging decision, and re-launching the struggle against the Tebbit Act which the TUC General Council did its best to scuttle last month.

For SOGAT members, the fate of the battle against Maxwell is in the much less safe hands of general secretary Bill Keys.

There is no doubt, however, that if SOGAT does stand its ground and fight back against this attack, it is in a vastly more powerful position to win than was the NGA against Eddie Shah's largely non-union operation in Warrington. Full-scale SOGAT boycotts of Maxwell's publications, and of any alternative printer to Radio Times, could be a powerful lever to force Maxwell to reopen the Park Royal plant and abandon the use of Thatcher's laws.

Keys sat on the fence throughout the NGA struggle at Warrington, and mobilised no significant solidarity action, thus weakening SOGAT's case for industrial support from other unions now.

But it's not too late for Keys to come out publicly campaigning against the Tebbit Act, and to withdraw from the backroom talks in which he and Len Murray are engaged with the Tory union-buster Tom King.

The NGA leaders may be quietly moving to ditch their dispute with Eddie Shah: but this is not an issue which can be gracefully dropped.

The courts and injunction-wielding employers are coming after the unions more aggressively than ever. The Tory laws will shred union strength unless they are stopped soon.

By this weekend we will know whether SOGAT and the NUJ will take up the Tory gauntlet and fight back.

The fight can and must be resumed to reverse the General Council's decision to scab on the NGA, and for those unions who voted against capitulation to pledge full industrial and political support to SOGAT and the NUJ in any stand they may take against the courts.

EDITORIAL

The Tories' other onslaught

IF THE government tomorrow proposed an across-the-board wage cut, affecting every worker in Britain and their families, but with special penalties for the old, the sick, children, disabled people and all those already on the poverty line, then there would be massive outrage.

If, on top of this, they decreed that workers were no longer guaranteed the right to vote, and the business-class would be given two or more votes, then this outrage would be organised into a concerted movement to drive them from office.

What the Tories are proposing, in their pincer movement on local authorities, does not fall far short of that.

Under the Rates Bill, the government proposes to set maximum levels of spending and rates for individual councils, and also to take reserve powers to limit all councils' rates. Under the existing penalties system, much harsher in 1984-5, councils lose central government funding at a rapid rate if they exceed government spending targets. With the abolition of the Greater London Council and the metropolitan authorities, thousands of jobs will be chopped, and many functions removed from any democratic control.

It all adds up to a phenomenal slashing of working class living standards and a fundamental slicing off of democratic rights.

The major users of local authority services are the poor, the elderly, families with children and other disadvantaged groups. The horrific cuts which will ensue if these proposals become law will fall disproportionately on those already worst-hit.

The abolition of the metropolitan authorities (all Labour-controlled) is part of the same package as anti-union laws. Councils have, to one degree or another, shown their potential as focuses of resistance to the Tory onslaught. The opposition mounted to the Tories' civil defence policy by some Labour councils is an example of why the Tories are so desperate to clip their wings. Local authorities remain one of the areas of trade union organisation still relatively untouched by slumps and industrial decline.

The Tories hope to rule by dividing: ratepayers against council unions, the industrial workforce against public sector workers; the employed against the dependent poor (unemployed, elderly, single parents, disabled and chronically sick people); white collar against manual unions; owner-occupiers against tenants...

The powers that the Tories propose to take upon themselves are so all-embracing that many of their own ranks, especially in local authorities, are alarmed that they too will be slashed by the scythes.

Their proclamations on 'Tory traditions' notwithstanding, their main concern is with their own necks. They do not reject the strategy, merely the form of its implementation. They will make unreliable allies for the labour movement.

Yet much of the energy, especially of Labour councils, has gone into winning such friends and influencing them: Tory businessmen, councillors and Lords are all wooed, while the real heart of the movement, workers, both employed by the authorities and users of their services, are left to draw their own conclusions.

There is no labour movement strategy to counter the Tories' closely worked-out one. In part this is due to the miserable history of Labour councils' opposition to the cuts: all sound and fury, and rate rises in the meantime to stave off the evil day.

Well, the evil day has come. The labour movement is unprepared, but must gear up quickly for action. Industrial action by council workforces must be tied in with mobilisation of tenants and of users of council services. Labour councils must come down from the clouds and throw their hand in with those they employ and those who elected them. They must refuse to push through cutting budgets.

Working class communities must be united around demands which defend their interests as workers, users, rent-and-rate-payers, and not split up as previously.

We should demand cancellation of the councils' debt burden, which can absorb a third of their budget or more. Interest-free loans from central government, and nationalisation without compensation of the banks and financial institutions.

Instead of using the rates system — which can bear most heavily on some of the poorest — to pass on Tory cuts, we should denounce it. Defend existing local democracy: demand increased powers for local authorities to levy whatever taxes they decide on. Put the burden of taxation onto the wealthy.

Public provision of housing and education is starved of resources, while the wealthy waste millions. The labour movement should undertake to bring the whole building industry into public ownership, without compensation and under workers' and community control; to launch a crash house-building and repair programme; to introduce workers and community control of housing and education.

Councillors should stop regarding themselves as town hall dignitaries trying to find the most benevolent and socialist forms of municipal administration with which to bless their constituents. Trade unionists should recognise clearly that they need a political strategy. All should become arms of a single labour movement which declares: We will not tolerate the Tory cuts. We will not implement them or cooperate with them. We will refuse collaboration with the Tories. The Tories are strong only so long as we are weak-willed and divided.

Tories in revolt

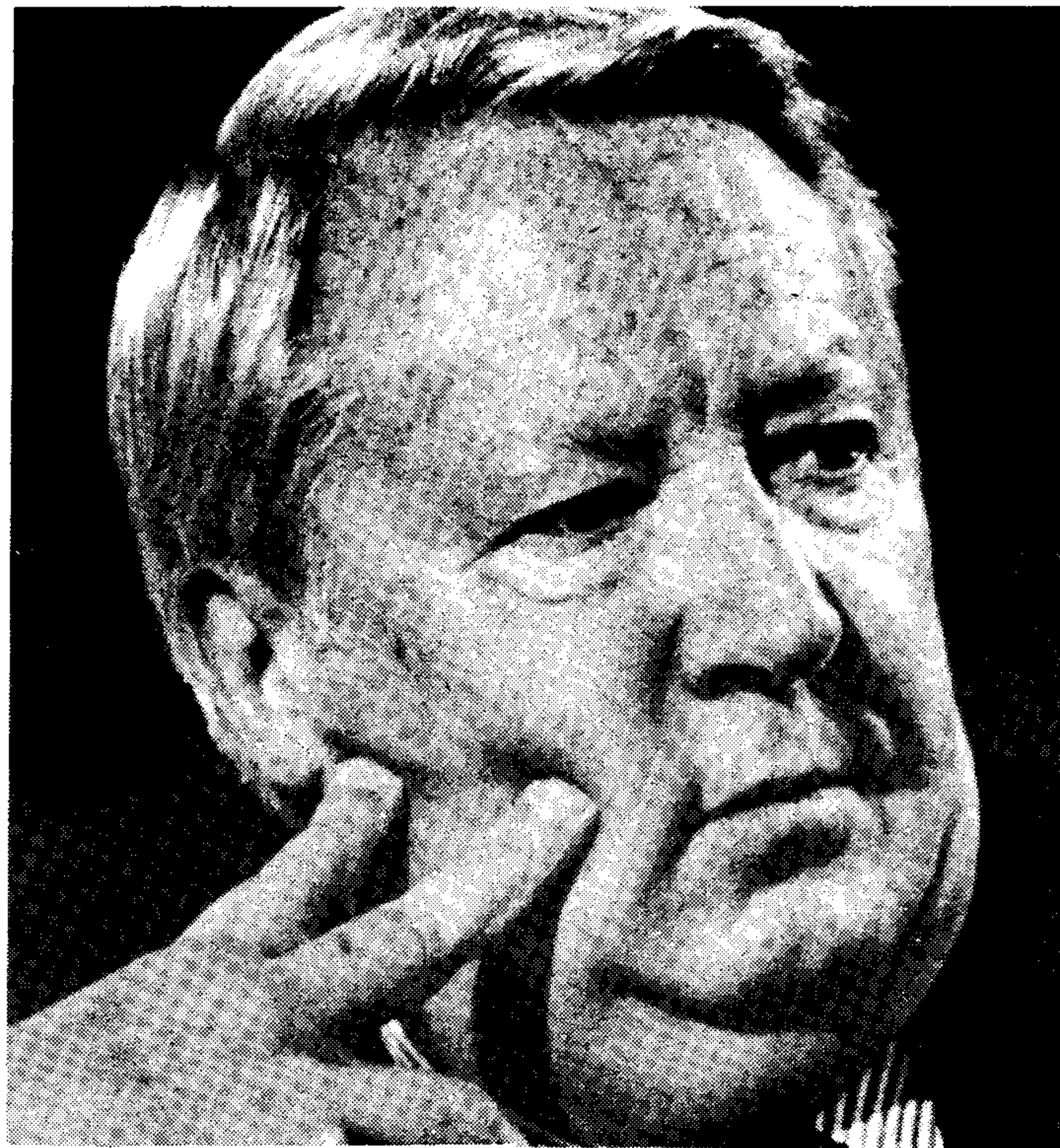
By Alan Clinton (chief whip, Islington Council)

THE LATEST Tory attack on public service provision and local democracy was bludgeoned through the House of Commons on Tuesday 17th with a majority of 100 — well below the normal Tory muster.

The Rates Bill has achieved virtually universal condemnation from local councillors, including Tories who regard it as a threat to whatever perks they have and as aimed at any services they may be able to provide in their communities.

Even before the Commons vote, Tory desperation was shown by Thatcher's refusal to meet Tory local authority leaders in public. The list of Tory supporters of the Bill circulated by Conservative Central Office proved to be largely from council minority groups, who would have little need to deal with the legislation in practice.

The fact that it is Tories who are talking about threats to local democracy should not blind us to the fact that there is some truth in what they say. The care-



Heath — "carefully timed revolt"

fully timed revolt by ex Prime Minister Edward Heath and other Tory has-beens was designed to give them a base among large and disaffected sections

of the Tory Party.

The old-fashioned Tories know that the traditions of capitalist rule are maintained by the diffusion of political authority,

and fear that the Thatcherite policy might in the end be a threat to them all.

Socialists in local government can have no confidence whatever that the Tories will combine to defeat the attack on democracy and services.

It seems possible that the difficult passage of the legislation may bring concessions, perhaps the dropping of the general powers to cap all rates (rather than just to 'cap' the spending of selected councils).

But even then the legislation will still hit all those authorities, like Islington, who have fought to defend the housing and social services. Selective powers will still diminish substantially the power of local authorities to provide services, in precisely those areas where they are willing to provide them.

Only the labour and working class movement can defeat the series of threats now being posed by the Tories to local democracy and services. The Day of Action in defence of the Greater London Council on January 24 should be the first of many such activities. Resistance to the Tory schemes and refusal to cooperate with them by trade unionists and councillors will also play an important role in efforts to defeat them.

In Glasgow

By Ian McCalman

GLASGOW District Council has decided to freeze rents. This is a significant step forward.

It is expected that it will be followed by a decision not to increase rates, thus bringing the council into line with the policy of the District Labour Party.

Delegates to the District Party, and councillors, were influenced by the imminence of the District elections in May. They know that because of the increasing powers being taken by the Tory government this could be the last occasion on which Labour will independently determine the levels of rents and rates.

Over the past four years rents have increased 81% in Glasgow. The new housing benefit scheme will mean that many tenants face rent increases again, of as much as £25 per month. Tenants' organisations had lobbied the council, demanding a rent freeze.

Opponents of the decision argued that it could provoke

Scottish Secretary George Younger to a further cut in the capital allocation, already reduced this year from £72 million to £52 million. Better, they argued, to agree to increase rents by 6½%.

But it is highly unlikely that Younger would be persuaded by Glasgow's 'moderation' not to make further cuts in the capital allocation this year. A campaign beginning now and going through the May elections and beyond can be used to rally support for the council's stand and place in a better position politically to resist any comeback from Younger.

It certainly means that the District Council elections will be of an unprecedented intensity, focusing the energies of Party members, trade unions, and tenants' organisations in a campaign of resistance to the Tory onslaught.

Militants expelled

SIX Militant supporters have been expelled from the Blackburn Labour Party. On the recommendation of the Executive Committee, the GC voted two to one to expel.

The six have been expelled mainly on the say-so of Michael Gregory, who says he is a former supporter of Militant. His melodramatic allegations of a Militant conspiracy in the constituency were circulated by the local Party machine to everyone on the GC.

The accused were denied the same facilities to answer the charges. They were refused the right to circulate a written answer to the charges on which they have been expelled.

Now the ball is at the feet of the National Executive Committee, who will either confirm or reject the expulsions.

If these expulsions are allowed to stand, then a precedent will have been set. Any intolerant local group will have been given a charter to go ahead and burn alleged local witches.

Local Labour Parties should demand that the NEC refuse to

endorse the expulsions, and instead insists on the six being reinstated in Blackburn Labour Party.

Brent

BRENT East Labour Party General Committee has voted by a very large majority to 'support those who disrupted meetings of the local council' recently, and to pay any fines imposed on the four Labour Party members arrested during the protests in the council chamber.

The protests were against a Tory takeover made possible by the defection of former Labour councillor Ambroze Neil.

The GC voted to condemn Mayor Peter Ponds for calling the police.

In response to the call by Brent East's Labour MP, Reg Freeson, for an inquiry into the disturbances in the council chamber, the GC voted to condemn Freeson 'for asking for yet another investigation and for once again attacking other members of the party in the capitalist press'.

Those filthy French!

Daily Mail
Press EXPRESS FINANCIAL TIMES Gang
The Daily Telegraph
THE Sun

By Patrick Spilling

with French habits.

AT THE same time as our British yeomen are being gunned down on the autoroutes of France, our gallant airmen are wasting money saving French fishermen from rough seas.

As an island race, we depend on French invaders perishing off our shores to stay free. We say throw them back!

THE OUTRAGE of filthy French food in our shops continues.

After French apples, now we have to put up with rabid French milk. The apples — called golden delicious but tasting of wood pulp

— undercut real English apples and con housewives and other weak people in our society into buying foreign muck.

But the apples are the food of the gods compared to this filthy VHF milk polluting our fridges. This milk, from French cows through French udders, is to be swallowed by English children.

We applaud the customs officials who impounded this noxious liquid and demanded it remain in quarantine for six months to make sure it is free from disease. The French may claim this renders their milk too old to be of use. We say: tant pis.

SO THE lunatic Left have captured Chesterfield and foisted Tony Benn on a reluctant Labour Party.

They will find Benn will hand the seat to the Tories or the SDP on a plate.

The British people are too wise to vote for such a way-out loony.

Despite his apparent support for the Labour leadership, Benn still espouses the loony policies which lost Labour the last election. Like withdrawing from the EEC.

He must think the voters of Chesterfield have lost more marbles than Neil Kinnock wants to hand back to the Greeks.

Does he not realise that international cooperation is the key to long-term peace in Europe?

Were it not for the EEC, nation would be set against nation. Europe would be prey to the nationalist forces which have divided it twice this century.

We have always stood for international cooperation, and as long as the British people do so too they will reject lunatic policies that want to revert to isolationism.

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

Such a quiet little scandal ...

IT IS an idea deeply rooted in the British nationalist consciousness that while foreigners may bribe and corrupt, abuse, misuse and buy and sell political influence, British democracy stands above such things.

The press greets with ill-concealed glee the downfall of presidents, cabinet ministers, princes and potentates. Republics, monarchies, left or right (though preferably left), it matters not, so long as they are foreign.

Even the disgrace of erstwhile political allies can be crowed about — after all they've outlived their usefulness. Politicians may come and go, nationalism is an ever-present theme.

Besides, everyone loves a scandal, and for the 'popular' press it's the breath of life. 'Let us all rejoice in our righteousness and see the unjust cast down. Democracy and decency really do exist'.

It ought to be salutary, therefore, to observe the reaction of the said pillars of decency when the dung-heap is on their own doorstep. What will they say when the dirt starts accumulating around our own pristine prime minister, she of the shopkeeper's morals? Well, now we have the chance.

In 1981 the prime minister, on a tour of the Middle East, used her official influence to gain the building contract for the new university of Oman for a British company, Cementation International Ltd. At the time, she was hailed by the Daily Express as 'super saleswoman'.

The contract was described as 'one of the largest overseas orders to be won by a single building contractor'. There had been no competitive tendering, no budget was fixed, there had been no design competition, and no outside architects had been appointed by the Omani government.

The deal, originally costed at £215 million, eventually became worth £300 million. Well batted, Maggie!

Later, coincidentally, the proposed cut in the Overseas Development Administration's aid programme to Oman was altered to maintain a higher level of technical cooperation.

Now another extraordinary coincidence has been revealed: Mark Thatcher, the beloved son, was acting on behalf of Cementation in a consultant capacity. He just happened to fly into Oman at the same time as his mother was practically lobbying for the contract. Curiouser and curiouseer...

So how have the 'popular' press reported this potentially meaty scandal? With a deafening silence.

The story was splashed in the Observer, and has had some coverage in the 'quality' papers,

By Gerry Byrne

but not a squeak from most of the mass-circulation papers.

This may not be unconnected with another curious coincidence: Trafalgar House, the parent company of Cementation, also owns the Daily Express (who at the time of the deal showed no such reticence) and the Daily Star, a very 'popular' paper not generally keen to pass up the opportunity for muck-raking.

And how have Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition used this golden opportunity to reveal the close connections and unscrupulous dealings of the ruling

class?

By baying about other British firms who may have been cut out of the deal — as if corruption is OK provided it is doing down foreigners.

Hardly a radical break from the prevailing consciousness of Thatcher's class, which is peddled by the popular press.

Mrs Clean herself justifies her actions by claiming that she was 'batting for Britain'.

Batting for Britain, jogging for Jesus, the same people who attempt to criminalise trade unions as 'mafias' can always fall back on such justifications when their own mafias are exposed.

Samuel Johnson had the last word on it 200 years ago:

Patriotism — the last refuge of the scoundrel.

Tax workers revolt

THERE are now 420 Inland Revenue Staff Federation members under suspension in the West Midlands for refusing to work visual display units.

The action is taking place at 14 pilot offices for the COP (computerisation of Pay-As-You-Earn) project, and involves staff in Dudley, Oswestry, Solihull, Stafford, Telford, Walsall, and Wolverhampton.

A court case brought by the IRSF against the Board of Inland Revenue seeking an injunction to prevent further suspensions was adjourned last week and will be heard in full from Wednesday January 18.

The union's case is, briefly, that our members' normal conditions of employment do not include the VDUs.

Behind all this lies the Board's failure to reach a new technology agreement, and in particular to accept a 'no compulsory redundancies' clause.

The court case itself is without precedent, as it had previously been thought that the Board was exempt from such actions under the 1947 Crown Proceedings Act.

The Board's stance has been most aggressive. When the VDUs were switched on, on January 3, just before the mass meeting which decided on the action, a Happy New Year message was followed on the screen by warnings of the consequences of voting for non-cooperation.

In contrast, the IRSF has tried to keep a low profile. Its tactics have been dominated by the court room activities.

Members were told that they were not taking part in industrial action, and in fact were encouraged to work harder than normal! After the mass meeting, where the vote was three to one for non-cooperation, members were left to their own devices as to whether they took part in the boycott.

There was no attempt even to build a campaign within the offices involved, let alone among the wider membership of the union.

By a West Midlands IRSF member

Newsheets, normally plentiful, have been sparse and uninformative, with even members in other West Midlands offices having to rely on the media for news.

IRSF activists must put every possible pressure on general secretary Tony Christopher and the national leadership. We must demand a serious campaign among the membership to build for solidarity action throughout the country.



Thatcher — "Batting for Britain"

Skating around the issues

By Tom Rigby

Greenham and the labour movement. Yet CND conference passed resolutions supporting such action with massive majorities.

The new stress within CND on 'alternative defence', although having the merit of being addressed to probably the most common objection to CND: 'You would leave us defenceless', has

within it a dangerous political dynamic.

First, 'defence' is seen as an idea all on its own, with no reference to what is to be defended or why.

Secondly, formulations like 'moving towards a non-nuclear defence policy' fit in with the fudging now going in the Labour Party on the question of unilateralism.

And thirdly, slogans like 'Nuclear weapons are no defence' are meant to replace CND's basic demands like unilateralism and withdrawal from NATO which are considered 'unpopular'.

So the CND leadership do have an overall perspective for the coming years and intend to shape the campaign actively around it.

CND Council plans action

LAST WEEKEND the new CND council decided on CND campaign themes and actions from now to June.

But the decisions made were often not really decisions to implement the priorities decided at the CND annual conference last month.

First, Council had to decide what type of action to organise for Easter. The conference had bound CND to hold a major demonstration before Easter, and to back Christian CND in a major Easter action.

The debate polarised between advocates of a nationally-backed action at all nuclear bases, versus those proposing a nationally coordinated action at American bases.

The debate also reflected attempts by some to evade the issue of 'Britain out of NATO' and to substitute advocacy of 'non-nuclear defence' without challenging NATO.

Roger Spiller, CND vice-chair and a leader of the right wing, summed up his opposition to demonstrating at all nuclear bases: "We don't need to bring in the British bases. We are not concerned as a campaign with demonstrating against all nuclear weapons all of the time".

In this way certain CND leaders tend to let the British state off the hook and try to remain

Judith Bonner, a newly elected member of the Council of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, reports on its first meeting following CND's December conference

'patriotic' and popular by way of cheap anti-Americanism.

General secretary Bruce Kent proposed a compromise — to demonstration at NATO bases, which was accepted. We also decided that Trident would be a theme of the action, as well as Cruise.

Conference also decided that CND should hold a major demonstration around the Euro-elections in June, but left the details to Council.

Communist Party member Jon Bloomfield proposed that we focus activity at either Greenham or Molesworth base. But such a limited attitude towards a national event around the Euro-elections would in effect just continue the passive position CND held at the General Election last June.

An alternative proposal was for a European-wide co-ordinated demonstration, preferably on June 3, directed against Reagan's war drive.

Political opposition to this came from the same people who wanted only to demonstrate

against US bases here in Britain. One Council member observed that if CND were to hold such a demonstration, "We'd have a hundred and one organisations who would oppose Reagan, groups in the Middle East, whatever..." The argument was that CND should have nothing to do with such issues.

I tried to point out that CND should have quite a lot to do with them. Conference had agreed that 'Britain out of NATO' should be a theme of CND's election work. NATO is heavily involved in the Middle East.

The 'flexible response strategy', whereby nuclear weapons are carried by and can be used by the Rapid Deployment Force, is heavily concerned with the Middle East. The missiles at Comiso, in Sicily, are pointing at the Gulf!

But commitment to not alienating the 'freeze' movement (which argues for nuclear arsenals to be held at their present level, not for them to be scrapped) means that CND leaders don't want to challenge NATO.

In the end Council opted for another action similar to the pre-Easter one. It also voted for national support to the West Midlands CND initiative to call an international demonstration in Coventry in June.

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THE SWP

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!

In the middle of the road?

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy meets over the coming weekend for its three-part Annual General Meeting: January 21 in London, January 28 in Birmingham, and February 4 in Glasgow. John O'Mahony looks at the issues.

THE CHOICE before the left wing of the Labour Party now is this.

Either to continue the fight for a Labour Party which has really broken with its recent past — with the record and politics of Wilson, Healey, Callaghan and Foot.

Or, in response to setbacks like the June election, to run scared and settle for a Labour Party which has 'credibility' in the polls under 'Nice Mr Kinnock'.

It is claimed for the second course that it can bring unity. But it would be unity on the basis of Kinnock's fudging, in essence around right-wing politics. It would mean a Labour Party which remains politically hollow, and therefore carries with its 'unity' and 'credibility' the certainty that the next Labour government will be like the last.

Most of the Left has chosen to run scared, advocating the abandonment of attempts to reform the Labour Party, or even abandoning the attempt to work the reforms decided by Labour Party conference in 1980-1.

The Labour millennium has come, and Kinnock is riding on a cloud of glory towards Downing Street in four years time!

The Labour Coordinating Committee, which was formed to spearhead the Left in 1979, has turned itself into a self-appointed NCO corps for Kinnock and Kinnockism.

The CLPD, whose 1984 AGM takes place over three weekends from January 21 to February 4, occupies an ambiguous and ambivalent position.

On the one hand its leadership is utterly pessimistic and defeatist. They think they view reality with cold-eyed, unsentimental realism (some of them would say, Marxist realism).

In fact they exaggerate and magnify everything negative and regressive in the labour movement now. After their victory over the CLPD left at last year's AGM, they have gone a fair way towards equipping the CLPD with much of the psychology and many of the structures of the 'ultra-left sects' which Vladimir Derer insistently denounces.

On the other hand the leaders of the CLPD are not fools. They fought a long fight for democra-

tic reform, and they know very well that that fight is not finished yet. They know that the gains of 1980-1 can be reversed or co-opted to serve the present Kinnock-faced version of Lab-



Neil Kinnock

our's 'Old Corruption' against which they fought for so long.

They know that we have not gained even our immediate goal in the fight that convulsed the Labour Party after the 1979 election — rank and file control over the next Labour government, so that 'never again' will we have to stomach a Wilson/Callaghan style Labour government disgracing the name of the labour movement.

Unlike the student-broad-left-trained small-souled lads and lasses of the Labour Coordinating Committee, they are not piliated by personal hopes and fantasies about the career prospects which could reward fervent Kinnockism.

The result is that the CLPD leaders stand in the middle of the road. For example, the LCC says: Make peace in the Labour Party under Kinnock and on

Kinnock's terms.

The CLPD executive says: make peace, compromise, retreat. They now have relations of friendly cooperation unknown since the LCC broke from the united-left Rank and File Mobilising Committee in 1981. Yet the agreement is only apparent.

The LCC has settled for the Kinnockite status quo as their ultimate objective — it is the

adorns itself. The consequence of such a course for the future of the Party would be catastrophic.

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 to (the magic formula) 'campaigning'. The various reasons given for this — that the much-needed constitutional reforms have now been achieved, that policies are more important, that Party Unity is possible only if constitutional reforms are given up — these reasons amount to little more than an attempt to justify a virtual capitulation to the status quo.

The CLPD Executive accepts that unity must be the Labour Party's first priority. It recognises the importance of Labour going to the country with a programme of economic reconstruction which will break with the past policies which amounted to little more than managing the capitalist status quo, but CLPD Executive also recognises that a programme embodying a radical alternative economic strategy will remain a dead letter so long as the Party is not in a position to ensure that it is carried out.

Most of this is true and should be central in determining the attitude of socialists right now.

What is lacking is an understanding that the real logic of accepting unity under Kinnock serves, and must serve, the purpose of the LCC. It cannot serve the purpose Vladimir Derer thinks he serves.

It took the bitter experience of the Labour governments of the 1960s and '70s to generate the anger, disillusionment and determination which exploded after the 1979 general election. If a refurbished (Kinnockite) version of the old Wilson-Callaghan Labour Party establishment — armed now with more abundant left phrases and possessing a formally more democratic set of rules — consolidates itself now, then the situation may not 'open' again for a very long time.

Perhaps not until after the bitter experience of another Labour government like those of the past.

Knuckle

It is not necessary for the serious Left to knuckle under to the new Labour status quo in the interests of fighting the Tories. On the contrary: to knuckle under is the worst way of mobilising the labour movement to fight the Tories.

Kinnock and his supporters are as incapable of starting a serious fight against the Tories as they would be of providing a serious governmental alternative to the Tories. Yet the CLPD executive goes along with the LCC's unity propaganda.

Of course we need unity against the Tories and we should, when appropriate, seek it even with Dennis Healey. But more than that, we need a regenerated labour movement able to offer a real alternative to the Tories — and we can't hope to get that in 'unity' with Kin-

"A favourable opportunity has occurred. Seize it and the whole world will belong to the workers. If you let it pass, there may not be a second for a century".

(Gregory Zinoviev, writing to the Industrial Workers of the World [USA] in January 1919)



Campaign for Labour Party Democracy secretary Vladimir Derer

Coordinating Committee.

The logic of their commitment to the goal of a better Labour Party pushes them into disguised polemic with everything the LCC and Kinnock now stand for.

As a result they stagger about in the middle of the road, with their face to the right, where the LCC is now rooted.

The CLPD should return to its proper place — on the left hand side of the road.

SO discusses the councils

DESPITE the bad weather, delegates from 13 local Socialist Organiser groups attended last Saturday's delegate meeting.

It was the first meeting since last October's AGM decided to schedule delegate meetings on a three-monthly basis to ensure better attendance and preparation through the local groups, and it was an improvement on past meetings.

The main discussions dealt with items first introduced at the AGM, especially the Tory attack on local government and Socialist Organiser supporters' council work.

Martin Thomas's paper (serialised in Socialist Organiser last December) provided the focus for the councils discussion. All comrades agreed with his basic analysis, but differences emerged about the conclusions to be drawn about the work of revolutionary socialists on councils.

Yes, Socialist Organiser supporters need to be cautious and aware of the need for a political base and integration into a SO group. But many comrades felt that Martin Thomas's document was too negative and sectarian.

Each area of work still had to be dealt with specifically. Council positions had to be recognised as very important for our work to remove the right wing — and could also be of tremendous help in mobilising local workers against the Tory government.

The meeting agreed at the end to continue the discussion at the next delegate meeting and to circulate papers written by Arthur Bough and Garth Frankland. A meeting for Socialist Organiser councillors will

be organised.

The other discussion was on the Middle East. A slightly amended version of the resolution submitted to the AGM by the Stockport group was agreed unanimously. An addition underlined the importance of working with the Palestine Solidarity Committee, as well as building the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine.

That socialists need a programme to unite Jewish and Arab workers was accepted by everyone. The central problem for such a programme — how? — came up in a discussion about whether we should use the name 'Israel' or talk only about 'occupied Palestine'.

An amendment supporting the latter view fell on a tied vote. It was agreed that discussion should continue in the groups.

The meeting heard reports on the paper and on SO's campaign to recall the TUC. There were also disturbing reports of witch-hunts against SO in both the Union of Communication Workers and Stoke-on-Trent Labour Party.

One of the most important items on the agenda was SO finance. Delegates agreed that an immediate stepping-up of efforts to raise funds for SO was a life-or-death matter for the paper and its activities. The making of T-shirts in Basingstoke was reported as an example of what could be done.

One comrade raised the possibility of increasing the price of Socialist Organiser and/or raising supporters' contributions. It was agreed that any such proposals should be put to local groups first.

The next meeting will be on Saturday April 14, in Nottingham.

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Independent Trade Unions in South Africa



90p

Bob Fine

Published by Socialist Forum for Southern Africa
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Women workers in Sri Lanka



Working in a 'free trade zone'

ONE hundred women workers were interviewed. 80 were from garment factories (31 from large factories, 32 from medium size ones, and 17 from small ones). The other twenty women workers were from non-garment factories.

Of these, 14 were from 'low prestige' factories, so characterised due to the 'dirty' nature of the material processed or used in manufacturing the final product, i.e. cashew and rubber processing.

The other six were from non-garment factories which did not have such associations.

Seventeen women were also interviewed from outside the Free Trade Zone, mainly from garment factories in the southern suburbs of Greater Colombo.

The labour in the FTZ factories included basic assembling or tailoring and at most semi-skilled machine-minding. It did not really take more than a few weeks for a workers to acquire the 'skills'.

In the non-garment factories, other than 'low prestige' ones, 70% of the women workers we interviewed were in a fishing gear factory. Here women workers performed a monotonous and very labour-intensive task of attaching fishing hooks to a fishing line at regular intervals or small steel weights to fishing nets.

The agonising dullness encountered by the women in this work is clear from their words:

"We find this work very tiring; we feel as if our hands are paralysed. We get corns on our hands."

Some of us who handle the cuttings of steel shavings that have to be fixed on to hooks find that our hands and feet are full of blisters and eyes water with dust from the shavings.

We are given petrol to wash dust from our hands, but no soap to wash the petrol away. The nature of the material we handle, the agony of work and its dulling effect, is such that we cannot even take our meals. It is only at the weekends that we enjoy a meal...



Conditions for (mostly Tamil) women workers on the tea plantations in Sri Lanka are even worse than in the Free Trade Zone.

In the other non-garment factories the work was not as labour intensive as in the fishing gear factory. Yet they were basically assembly line or semi-skilled machine-minding jobs. There is hardly a change or rotation of work.

In Sri Lanka, like other Asian countries, there is a social and cultural conditioning that this type of monotonous and repetitive work is fit only for women. This is neatly expressed by the reference to the Free Trade Zone as 'Isthipura'. (Though this can be literally translated as women's town, the subtle connotation is a town of women of easy virtue).

Productivity targets as set by investors had been met in 75% of the women labour force. In the factory that produced fishing gear, the Sri Lankan labour productivity was the best in Asia; in a garment factory which produced knitted gloves, the productivity was 90 pairs per girl per day, compared to 65 in Pakistan.

Although the incomes of the women workers of the Free Trade Zone were better than of those outside the FTZ, the pace of work in the garment factories outside the FTZ as well as other conditions were more relaxed, and stresses less than in the FTZ.

Although major accidents were minimal there were minor accidents, the most frequent being injuries to fingers with machine needles. Many workers

interviewed mentioned as recurring ailments: chest pain; pain in the joints, knees, shoulders and spine; and strain in the eyes.

Many workers at garment factories in the Free Trade Zone suffer from laryngitis, being exposed to tiny textile particles and dust while cutting layers of cloth with a fast guillotine machine.

All the workers interviewed from cashew and rubber processing factories suffer burns on their faces and hands by handling certain commodities. Sometimes materials splashed into their eyes and many developed problems in their eyesight. They

were also very unhappy about the unpleasant odour about them consequent to them handling the raw materials.

83% of workers in the large garment factories complained of their health having deteriorated since joining the FTZ, 82% in the small garments factories, and 100% in non-garments factories. A very high percentage of workers complain of fatigue, especially in large garment factories.

In some factories, workers were allowed to use the toilet only during tea and meal breaks. There have been incidents of high fever and urinary infection, due to stagnation of urine.

Certain young women workers, specially those coming from out-stations, fall easy victims to sexual exploitation by their superiors. The incidence of venereal diseases among the Free Trade Zone workers has also been observed by medical professionals.

In the garment factories outside the FTZ, work conditions appear to have had a less adverse effect on health than in the FTZ. Only 53% complained of health having deteriorated after joining the factory.

72% of the women workers in the Free Trade Zone are below 25 years of age, and 88% are single.

So the labour recruited is that part of the female population whose health conditions are best. Medical examinations appear to have been conducted prior to recruitment to ensure that those who are not in good health are not selected. It also appears that the system ensures that they are retained only as long as they remain in that condition of good health.

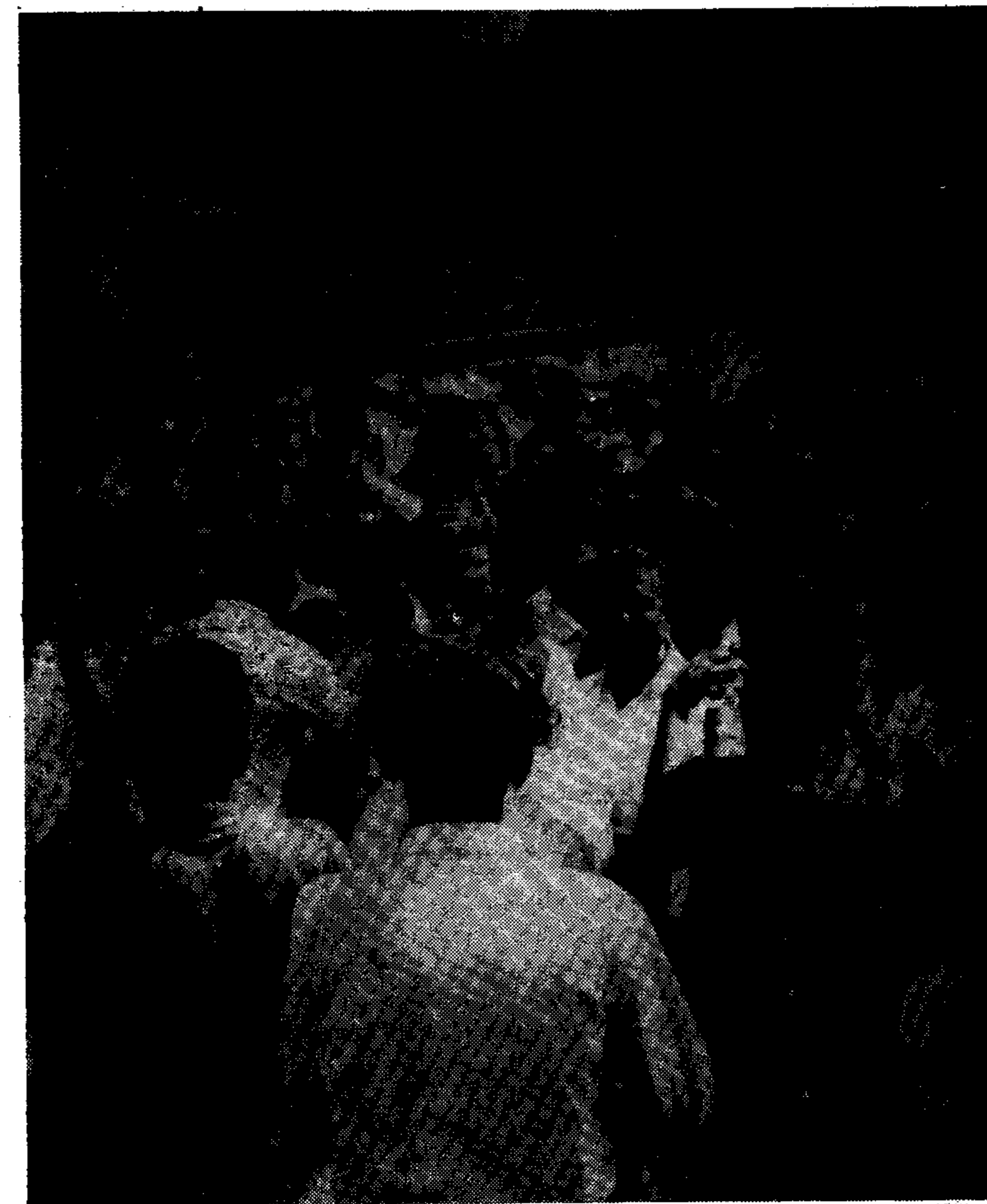
Most women workers looked upon their jobs as something which they would do perhaps for the next five to ten years at most, after which they either hope to cease to work or aspire to some white collar type of job.

Sri Lanka's national characteristics of high literacy, high secondary school attendance, etc. were reflected among these workers. 28% had done the GCE O Level, and nearly 70% of the workers had completed secondary school education.

ACROSS the world, and especially in South East Asia, there are about 350 to 400 'free trade zones'. These zones are areas, usually physically fenced off, near docks and airports, where multinationals can use local cheap labour to produce for export free from taxes, duties, and restrictions on imports, on foreign ownership of enterprise, or on remittance of profits.

They began in the mid-'60s, and boomed in the '70s. Now the Tories plan to set up free trade zones in Britain, and the Stalinist rulers of Hungary plan a FTZ there.

Throughout South East Asia, 70% or more of the workforce in free trade zones are young women, aged 14 to 25. The extract from a letter by free trade zone workers (bottom of page), and report of a survey (left and below), are taken from the Sri Lankan feminist magazine 'Voice of Women'.



Union activists are refused entry into the Free Trade Zone

The Pay

Average monthly wage manufacturing, 1980 (US dollars)

Sri Lanka	35
Indonesia	40
India	55
China	57
Thailand	64
Malaysia	100
Philippines	100
Taiwan	100
South Korea	130
Singapore	165
Hong Kong	240

Unions banned

WHILST there is no legal provision which prohibits the formation of trade unions and similar organisations in Free Trade Zone factories, the Greater Colombo Economic Commission Authority does not conceal the fact that they would not permit the functioning of such organisations within the FTZ.

Trade unions can be prevented:

a) by refusing entry into the Free Trade Zone to any official or activist of a union, and

b) by withdrawing the entry permits of any worker or workers who have joined the trade unions or similar organisations.

All of the 100 women interviewed were categorical in saying that the 'climate' in the FTZ in their opinion just does not even permit the mentioning of the two words, 'trade union'.

In four of the 18 factories studied, there have however been spontaneous, unorganised work stoppages.

The frequency of the female workers seeking medical attention for ailments such as chest pains, pain in the legs, fatigue, etc., is also very high, and is an expression of protest, of an inability to cope with the oppressive working conditions.



Sri Lankan women speak out

WE JOINED this factory for employment, in order to have a means of livelihood and relief for some of our problems.

But on the contrary, the only relief we have gained is the loss of physical energy, day by day.

We are being made to work both day and night, like buffaloes tethered to trees. Not a single moment of the day is there for rest...

The management is only concerned about its own benefit. The more production they export, the greater the increase in their monthly incomes. The poor female workers do not get one cent's increase in their wages, however much the production increases.

The managerial staff draw about Rs 5,000 to 6,000 monthly as salaries. [10 rupees = £1 approximately]. The female

workers are paid at the rate of Rs.20/- per day. Out of this, fines are recovered in case of short production, absence due to petty illness, and also for various other petty things...

The female workers are thus not in a position to have any savings or meet her obligations towards her parents, brothers and sisters. All we have to anticipate in the long run is to possess a debilitated and emaciated body...

body...

The female worker is not granted leave even if she falls ill. A little medicine or a cup of coffee is not available to us, even if we faint while at work.

The female workers here enjoy no facilities at all in the night shift. Only half an hour break for meals is allowed. How are we to work in the same posture for 12 hours?

Many female workers employ-



ed in the Katunayake Free Trade Zone are from villages far away from the FTZ. The suffering they undergo without proper residential facilities is immense.

In many of the boardings each room has two beds and one cot, where two female workers have

to share each bed, and one is made to occupy the cot. These five persons perhaps are employees of five different factories. Their working hours may be in five different times.

So can you imagine whether there is any peace in this boarding house? One returns from work to enjoy rest, but often the boardings are like the devil's workshop...

"THEY ARE LIKE THE DEVIL'S WORKSHOP"

Lech Walesa's manifesto



The August 1980 agreement

POLAND'S Solidarnosc is so far the only independent labour movement which has grown up in a Stalinist state. It is the tip of the great iceberg of vast millions of workers submerged under the Stalinist

police-state systems in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, China, etc. Its discussions and debates are therefore of great importance to the international labour movement.

How Solidarnosc and its leaders saw the world and analysed their own specific oppression; what they proposed to do about it, and what they would put in place of Stalinism — these vital issues were and are being tackled by Solidarnosc militants who have no ready-made answers, operating in conditions where they have felt they had to tailor their ideas to the reality of Poland's domination by the USSR.

That 'self-limitation' was central: Solidarnosc could have smashed Polish Stalinism after August 1980, in the great days of the Gdansk soviet. It was the certainty of a Russian invasion in that event which deflected the Polish workers into trying to coexist with the Polish clients of the USSR who imposed martial law in December 1981.

The following speech was delivered by Lech Walesa in Gdansk, speaking from the base of the monument erected at the shipyard gates in memory of the striking workers shot down by the regime in 1970.

It is a clear statement of a reformist perspective. Overshadowing it is the all-pervading awareness that Poland is not master of its own destiny, and does not possess self-determination.

To us the lesson of the 18 months between the mass strikes of 1980 and martial law in 1981 seems to be that reform of this system is not possible; that any form of independent labour movement is incompatible with Stalinist rule; that an anti-bureaucratic revolution is therefore necessary, and that the anti-bureaucratic workers' revolution in each and every country of Eastern Europe must take as one of its central programmatic goals the overthrow of USSR overlordship in this area.



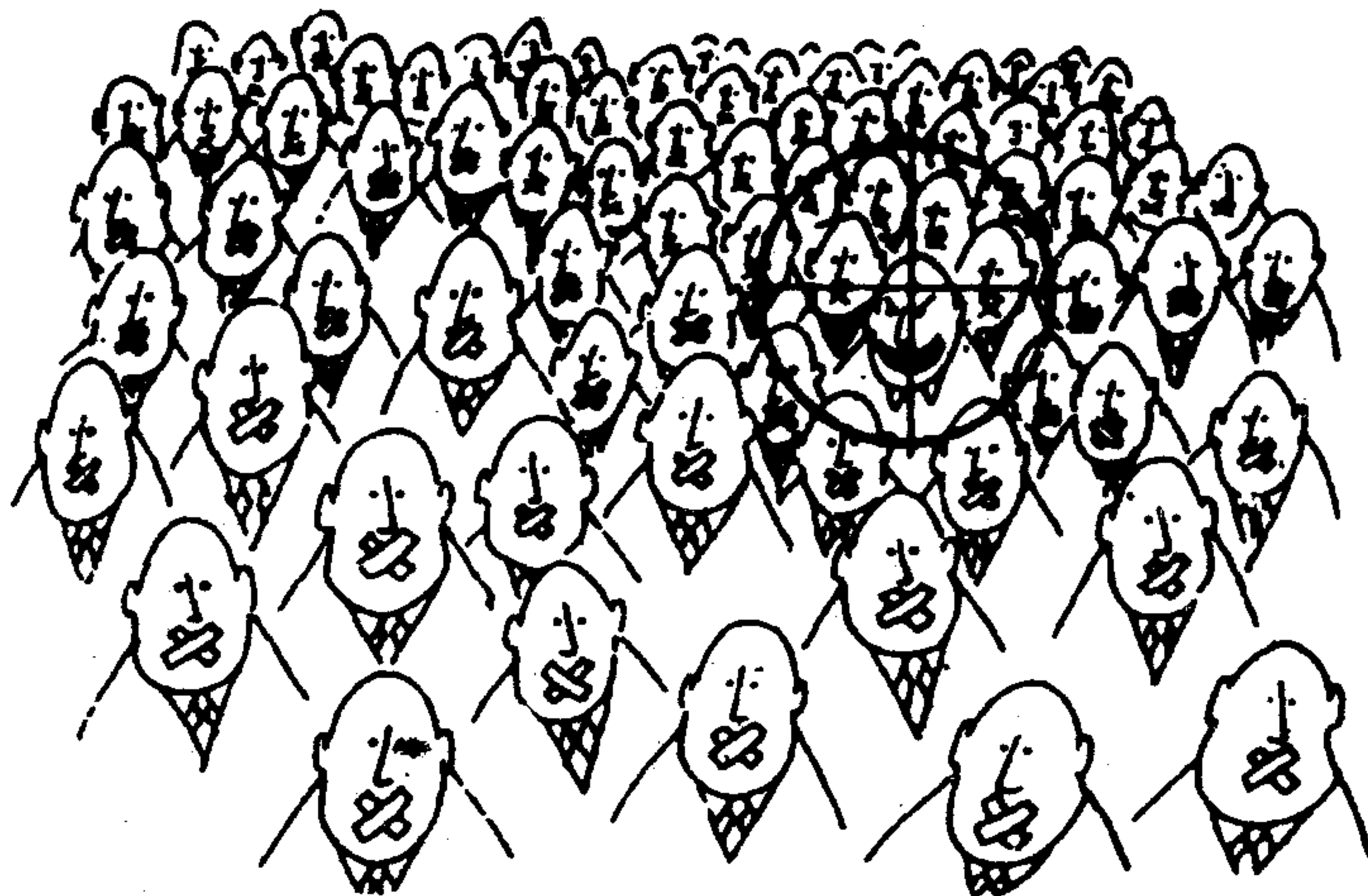
The Polish socialist Edmund Baluka (above, with his wife Francoise and son Mikail) has been on hunger strike, together with eight other prisoners at Barczewo jail, since early December. Baluka is demanding the rights of a political prisoner, refusing to wear prison uniform, and demanding the right to receive a visit from his wife and his son.

The monument dedicated to December 1970 is not only a symbol to the workers' struggle for bread and freedom. It is also a reminder of the need for future work so that workers' efforts are not destroyed. Today, three years after a glimmer of hope — the dedication of the monument — we are forced to state that the existence of our families is endangered. Problems of food and of health have become a part of our daily existence.

The ruling teams have changed during the decades; the way of speaking to the people has also changed. In 1956, they condemned the delinquency of the workers. Today they are asking for forgiveness for the butter (rationed since early November). What will they tell us after they increase food prices (increases of between ten and fifty per cent announced for early 1984)? We will not have much more butter or more bread just because they ask for our forgiveness.

The most disturbing situation is that confronting underprivileged groups; family allowances are diminishing. It is unjust and false to speak of the large income of farmers in order to justify the increase in food prices. This is aimed at splitting the farmers and the workers. Aid to agriculture is still needed for the entire economy, for all of us.

Of course, it is possible to blame everything on Western sanctions. It is clear, however, that their removal will not solve all the economic problems, though it will help the auth-



orities.

At this difficult time for our country, the following aspects must be taken into account so that we do not experience one crisis after another. It is surprising that those who govern our country have learned nothing and that after periods of relative liberalisation, they have now reverted to the old methods of governing.

Name of socialism

The past two years have demonstrated the authorities' capacity to destroy all independent associations and, in contrast, their inability for constructive action. Not a single socio-political problem has been resolved. There have been no improvements in the economy. In politics, only the names have changed. And all of this is taking place in the name of the reconstruction of socialism.

The fundamental question is the following: can socialism be built without the workers and against them?

Today the free trade union movement and all independent movements are being strangled. This is not to say that 'Solidarnosc' has abandoned its ideals. They must be recalled.

First, I would like to speak of the problems of public life. The point of departure for our country's rebirth must be the social accords of August 1980, a great constitution of the workers. These accords embody the essential elements of renewal. Monopolies in the social and economic spheres are blocking our existence, they are causing the poor functioning of the state administration.

The accords of August 1980 were based on realistic principles. They respected the leading role of the party and of the state linked to a broader international political system which cannot be modified given the state's interests. However, the social agreements brought respect for the principle of pluralism in workers' representation. This gave an important weapon to the workers.

Monopoly over labour

But the Party refused to accept this — it defended its interests. It was decided that its monopoly over the labour movement would be re-established by force.

The results are visible to the naked eye, and everyone knows that the re-establishment of trade union pluralism is the most important problem facing our socio-political system.

We cannot agree to the political monopoly of each governing group. Too often have we had to deal with mistakes and deviations. A system of controls must be established. Under normal conditions, the control

mechanism would be assured by the parliamentary system. It is not my role to draw up legislation although a national agreement should lead to a resolution of this problem.

The socio-economic monopoly precludes the implementation of an economic reform. I cannot imagine the economy functioning efficiently without three conditions:

- Separating the administration of the economy from the state and political administration,
- The establishment of strong independent social organisations and trade unions to counterbalance the administration, and
- Finally, competition between enterprises.

With respect to trade unions, we cannot relinquish the August agreements. Indeed, it is a political manoeuvre to claim that they have been implemented.

Opportunity for rebirth

It was not the government, but the striking workers who won the right to form their free and independent trade unions, and they will therefore formulate their programmes of action.

However, the authorities prevented us from doing this, in violation of the August 1980 agreements and of the international conventions, just like the 19th century capitalists did. Trade unions are a social force in all developed countries. 'Solidarnosc' represents an opportunity for the rebirth of our country. Without it, we face many years of political stagnation.

We are not guilt-free. However, Solidarnosc never sought to monopolise trade union activities. We need the branch and autonomous unions (previously official, now banned) as competition, as a means of control.

Agreement with them is still possible. Concrete evidence of this is our joint appeal for trade union pluralism addressed to the Sejm (Parliament) on May 6.

Those who join the new trade unions today, must answer the following questions: do they have the right to belong to monopolistic unions without giving other unions the right to speak out? Do they have the right to benefit from privileges at the expense of their colleagues? Do they have the right to break the front of workers' solidarity?

On this occasion, I would like to express my thanks and my admiration to all of those who remained faithful to the ideals of Solidarnosc, in liberty and in prison.

Workers' self-government is a

complex problem. There are enterprises where self-government functions well and fights for workers' rights; but there are those where workers allow themselves to be manipulated. There are also many enterprises where workers, devoid of hope, do not want to have self-government at all.

However, self-government must have a place in every reformed political system. The workers themselves must decide whether conditions in their enterprises permit the creation of self-government bodies.

We all realised that the fate of our families and of all Poland depends on our work. Our movement always favoured good work. We interrupted work only to ensure that it would be honest and good, and so that its effects would not be destroyed.

Resolution of social conflict and an independent judiciary: experience shows that it is not possible to avert difficult conflicts when the system of power protects its monopoly. If the independence of certain groups is not respected by the authorities, none can play the role of mediator or arbitrator, a role which must be played by the judges.

Independent judiciary

Experience shows that judges are rarely allowed to take on this role, and those who have shown courage have been the victims of repression. We must demand an independent judiciary as well as honest judges, with authority and with legislative guarantees.

When there was insufficient convincing proof to convict our 11 colleagues whose trial was announced with great fanfare, the government proposed a 'humanitarian' gesture — voluntary banishment — by-passing the courts and the law.

We, whom the authorities are trying to place outside the law, must demand respect for the law — even though its hands of iron are aimed at us. The law must mean justice. And for this reason we will demand all possible forms of control over the judiciary and the police.

For an honest dialogue to take place, all sides must have the right of equal access to the media. The sovereignty of citizens is the state's guarantee. The sovereignty of the state is

the citizens' guarantee of their freedom and dignity.

The monument commemorating December 1970 is neither a symbol of vengeance nor of hatred, but rather of an agreement between the rulers and the ruled. The whole of the Solidarnosc movement always struggled peacefully in favour of human rights in Poland.

We remain faithful to dialogue and to agreement and that is the reason why the Nobel Prize, which was awarded to me, was, I believe, awarded to Solidarnosc. And I am therefore entitled to say: Fellow Poles, friends, colleagues, I congratulate you for the Nobel Peace Prize.

These are difficult times. Nobody has ready-made solutions for the future. We must live honestly, link courage with balance and remain faithful to our ideals. In other words, we must maintain our solidarity.

In 1984, the fate of Solidarnosc will depend on the elaboration of four chapters:

- state and party administration.
- self-government,
- trade unions,
- the judicial system.

For the time being, we can only work on small programmes, each one suited to the moment. At the appropriate time, I will speak out in greater detail.

I would like the other topics to be better prepared, for myself and for all of us, for a peaceful victory of Solidarnosc, based not on a takeover of power, nor on a battle with the authorities, but rather on the choice of the best programme. For better preparation and better training will mean an easier victory.

From 'Voice of Solidarnosc', January 12 1984. (30p from 314-320 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP. Phone 01-837 9464).

'The Liberation Struggle of the People of Tamil Eelam: a Photographic Exhibition'. Saturday January 21, 6.30 to 10.30pm, at Hampstead Town Hall, Haverstock Hill, London NW3 (opposite Belsize Park tube station).

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What happened to the Officials?

By Paddy Dollard

THE WORKERS' Party — formerly Official Sinn Féin — is a very important organisation now much neglected by the British left.

The pro-Republican left dismisses it with curses, and the Communist Party treats it as a rival with its sister Communist Party of Ireland.

The Workers Party may deserve the curses, but it does not deserve to be neglected.

It is an increasingly important party in the 26 Counties, and it retains a sizeable core of activists and voters in Northern Ireland. It has two deputies in Dail Éireann (the Dublin parliament). Its vote in Dublin is now respectably close to that of the Labour Party. It is an important and maybe growing force in the trade unions.

And it could scarcely ask for more favourable conditions in which to develop and grow than the present conditions in the 26 Counties. The slump has hit Ireland very severely, creating mass unemployment especially among youth. The small Labour Party is in the increasingly unpopular coalition government which has the responsibility of running Irish capitalism in these conditions.

Important trade unionists already talk publicly about unions disaffiliating from the coalitionist Labour Party.

Not the least of the Workers Party's assets is a core of disciplined and dedicated members who — like the men and women who founded De Valera's Fianna Fáil in the 1920s — carry the discipline and seriousness of former revolutionaries over into constitutional politics.

For all these reasons the Workers Party could become a very big force in Irish politics.

The Workers Party is also of great importance in understanding Republicanism and the discussions now going on in the Provisional organisations.

Those who lead the Workers Party — Tomas MacGiolla, Sean Garland, Cathal Goulding, etc. — tried to turn the Republican movement away from militarism and towards politics in the '60s, influenced by Stalinism and the tradition of populist left-wing Republicanism.

They preached class unity. But their efforts to campaign for civil rights and other immediate demands, and the Paisleyite reaction to them, only prized open the chasm that exists between the communities in the Six Counties.

The decisive divisions that opened up were not along the horizontal lines of class, but along the age-old vertical lines dividing community from community. Communal antagonisms re-emerged in 1969 with a violence unknown for decades.

The horizontal split along class lines which did occur in the Protestant community in the early '70s saw the Protestant workers being led by Protestant-communist bigots like Ian Paisley who used populist demagoguery.

And the Protestant backlash in 1969 threw sections of the Catholic community and of the Republican movement back on their own militant traditions. The IRA split in December 1969 and a year later the Provisionals' offensive started to get under way.

The Official Sinn Féin got drawn into the war in response to British military aggression in areas like the Falls, fighting the first big gun battle with the British Army in the Lower Falls in July 1970.

In 1972 the Official IRA declared a ceasefire, which has held since. The organisation continued its political evolution in conditions where much of Northern Ireland political life has been dominated by the Provisionals' military campaign.

A second bloody split occurred in 1975, with the Irish Republican Socialist Party.

Nearly two decades after their mid-'60s turn to politics, the Workers Party is today a strange political mixture. Partly from alarm at what they see as the logic



North and South

of the Provisionals' campaign, and in face of watershed events like the Orange general strike in mid '74, and partly from hostility towards the Provisionals, it does not now support the Catholic revolt that it helped to trigger.

It tells the Northern Catholics to accept the Six Counties, and preaches the democratic validity of the Six County state.

It denounces Irish nationalism and starkly counterposes to it a rather narrow workerism. It plays the parliamentary game in Dail Éireann, where it supported the short-lived 1982 coalition.

It is 'socialist', with a recognisable Stalinist strain (towards the Stalinist states, for example). But in immediate politics it is explicitly, even extravagantly, reformist and 'responsible'.

Yet to dismiss them as just 'selling out' is to miss some of the essential points about the Workers Party and its evolution. It is not the first Republican group to develop like this. The most important previous travellers on the road were Fianna Fáil and Clann na Poblachta.

Clann na Poblachta was made up of 1930s Republicans, led by former IRA Chief of Staff Sean MacBride (later of Amnesty International). It got 10 seats in the Dail in 1948 and was the nub of a coalition in which the major partner was Fine Gael — Fine Gael which 15 years earlier had been the quasi-fascist Blueshirt movement with which the Republicans traded blows and bullets rather than places in the Free State cabinet.

Reaction against the Provisionals' war has shaped the Workers' Party, and it is bravely explicit about certain things which Fianna Fáil and Clann na Poblachta modestly left implicit, relying on their deeds in government to speak for them.

Nevertheless, the Workers Party too, like Fianna Fáil and Clann na Poblachta before it, embodies the second, hidden, soul of Irish Republicanism. They are the latest ex-physical-force-on-principle revolutionaries to reveal that they are not revolutionaries socially as soon as they abandon sterile abstention from politics and try to use tools other than military hardware.

In fact the Workers Party is still recognisably Republican — and not only because some remnant of the Official IRA still exist (it surfaced briefly last year). Their coats have been turned, but the material is recognisable.

For example, as Stalinist-influenced populists they talked of completing the Irish bourgeois revolution and the Irish national revolution as the necessary first stage of the revolution, and then preparing for the second stage — socialism. Now they denounce the Irish bourgeoisie for not having industrialised the country and pose as the immediate task, the prerequisite for socialism, the 'Irish industrial revolution' — by way of reformist pressure and Parliamentary deals.



Kissinger (on left in right hand picture) says: if stopping 'Marxist-Leninist victory' means death squads, then so be it



Kissinger's message for Salvador people: Better dead than red

By Harry Sloan

Henry Kissinger has come up with the goods yet again. This dependable old warmonger brought the world the genocidal US pattern bombing of Cambodia and Vietnam and the Pinochet junta in Chile (after the destabilisation of the reformist Popular Front government of 1970-3).

Now, after six months deliberation together with a 'bipartisan' commission set up by President Reagan to investigate US policies in Central America, Kissinger has produced a brutally explicit package of proposals for a massive, sustained and regionwide build-up of American military and economic aid to its bloodstained allies.

Kirkland

The commission incorporated leading Democrat Robert Strauss and Lane Kirkland, President of the AFL-CIO union confederation — the USA's Len Murray.

On receiving the final report, Reagan went out of his way to applaud the 'loyal opposition' of Kirkland in particular, and his acceptance of Kissinger's main line of approach.

Kirkland's name — and thus at least in theory the endorsement of most major US trade unions — is therefore attached to the main proposals of the Commission's report. These include:

- * A sixfold increase of \$400 million in military aid to El Salvador in 1984-5 — compared to the \$64.8 million appropriated already for this year. This fits in well with Reagan's stated intention to seek in any event an extra \$176 million between now and September and another \$159 million in 1985.

- * Continued US backing to the murderous gangs of CIA-organised 'Contra' gunmen, currently conducting cross-border raids from bases in Honduras into Nicaragua. Two of the Commis-

ion's members dissented from this recommendation.

- * Increased military aid to the reactionary Honduras regime to enable it to 'build a credible deterrent'.

- * A resumption of direct US arms sales to the grisly Guatemalan dictatorship — whose wholesale slaughter of peasants and political opponents caused the ban on arms sales by the Carter administration.

- * A lifting of the 1974 ban on US aid for the training and support of foreign police forces.

- * A dramatic increase in economic aid to the region, both from the USA and from international agencies. The commission suggests a figure of \$24 billion could be reached by 1990, of which the USA should expect to provide up to half, more than doubling present levels of economic aid to the region.

Much publicity has focussed on the cosmetic 'conditions' attached to the proposals for expanded military aid to the regime in El Salvador. A carefully phrased section suggests that military aid should be tied to progress in human rights 'through legislation requiring periodic reports'.

It specifies concern over elections, land reform, a better justice system and a crackdown on the slaughter of civilians by the notorious 'death squads', whose victims in recent years total as many as 30,000.

At the end of last year Reagan rejected the previous notion of compulsory, periodic certification of progress on human rights when he vetoed an aid bill for El Salvador which incorporated provisions for such monitoring.

But the Kissinger proposals need not conflict with Reagan's position. One Republican commission member insisted that:

"The language is ambiguous, and people will be able to read it two ways. I do not think it restores the old certification process [whereby Reagan had

to declare that progress was being made]

Kissinger however went even further and included a personal 'exclusion' notice, declaring (in the language of the royal 'we'):

"We strongly endorse the objectives of the conditionality clause. We are also concerned that the United States extends military assistance to El Salvador above all to serve vital American political and security interests. We hope that both goals can be served simultaneously."

"We wish to record our strong view that neither Congress nor the executive branch interpret conditionality in a manner that leads to a Marxist-Leninist victory in El Salvador, thereby damaging vital American interests and risking a larger war."

In other words, the preservation of the present regime in El Salvador — death squads and all — is preferable in Kissinger's eyes to a left wing victory. Or, in more conventional parlance, 'Better dead than red.'

For all Kissinger's elaborate caution, the Commission's recommendations do not make an increase in military aid conditional on any 'human rights' progress at all.

One view of the Commission argues that the USA should unconditionally pledge the full increase in aid for a two year period — with any subsequent extension being made conditional on human rights progress: the other proposes a regular system of 'reports' on human rights issues — but beginning only after US aid has reached the recommended level, which is described as sufficient to allow the Salvadorean military to carry out 'US-style counter-insurgency'.

Collapse

Warning that the recent stalemate in the guerilla struggle in El Salvador is not a stable situation, and that 'a sudden collapse [of the regime] is not inconceivable', the whole Commission concurs in the need to boost the armed forces by:

- * Increasing the number of soldiers;
- * Increasing their mobility in the air and on the ground;
- * Providing a larger stock of equipment and supplies;
- * Improving medical back-up;
- * Cash incentives to hold on to trained officers.

The argument for this enormous US commitment is couched in the traditional language of imperialism:

"Nicaragua is an indispensable stepping stone for the Cuban and Soviet effort to promote armed insurgency in Central America."

But more important than the fanciful notions of Yuri Andropov's Stalinist police regime promoting 'armed insurgency' in the most sensitive area of the US 'sphere of influence' is the probable impact of a US defeat in El Salvador on other oppressed and exploited countries.

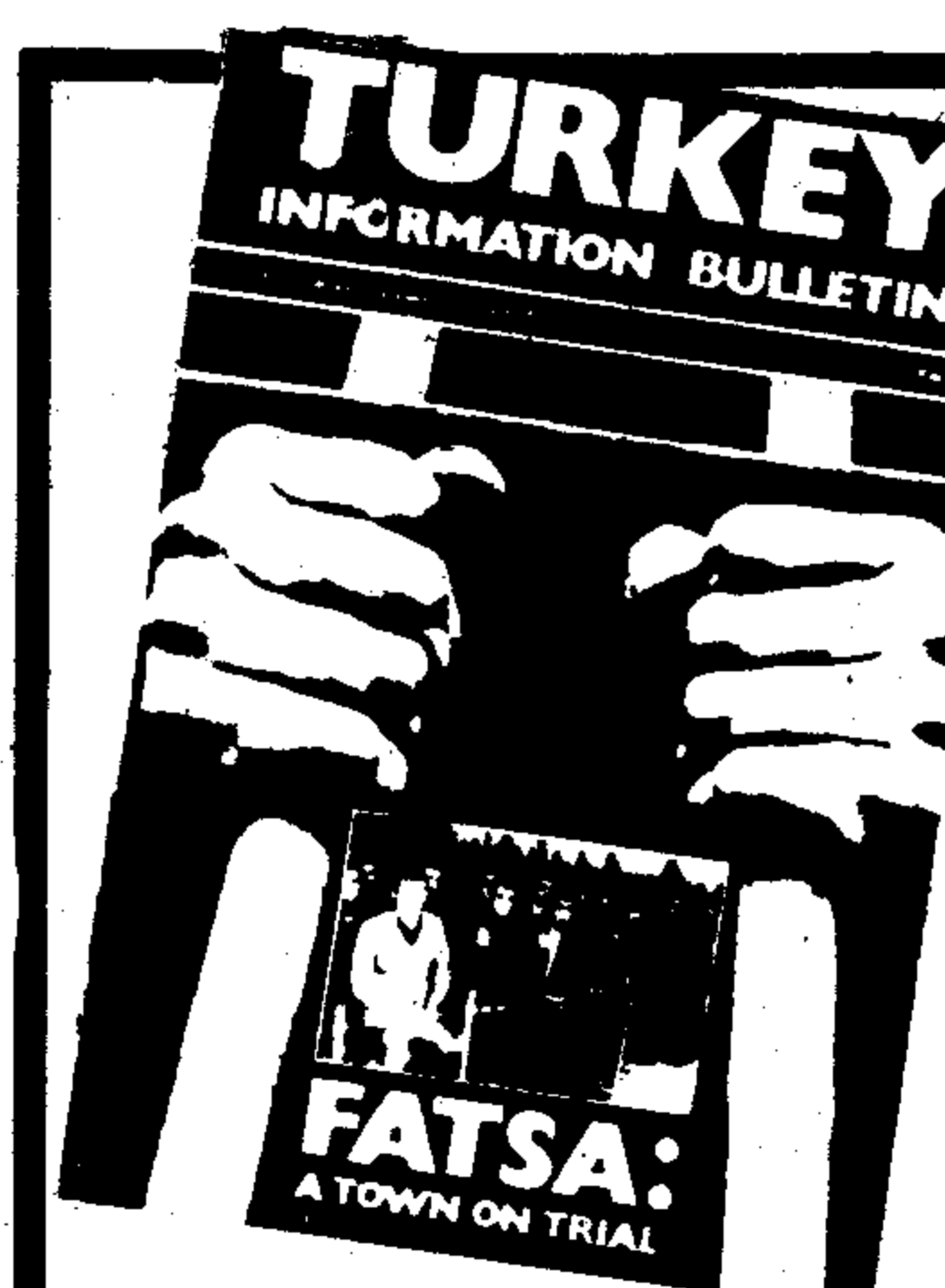
"The triumph of hostile forces in what the Soviets call the 'strategic rear' of the US would be read as a sign of US impotence. It would signify our inability to manage our policy, or exercise our power."

Eroded

US power to "influence events world wide" would be significantly eroded. On this the two 'sides' of the Kissinger Commission, the Democrats and Republicans, were united.

It seems that the most controversial element of the plan, which might bring its defeat in Congress, is the vast additional expenditure involved: ironically Reagan's strongest critics will be not liberals or leading Democratic contenders for the Presidency, but arch-conservatives, determined to curb the enormous US budget deficit.

Reagan is scarcely likely to shed any tears if the economic aid component of the Kissinger package is whittled down: he was keen above all to secure a political endorsement of his general line of approach and ammunition to back up his appeal for extra military aid. Kissinger's report gives him both.



Pamphlet 50p plus postage from Turkey Solidarity Campaign, BM Box 5965, London WC1N 3XX.

STOP THE REVERSAL OF THIS

Crisis for the unions

1984, Margaret Thatcher insists, will be a year of hope and a year of liberty.

Far from losing our way, she declares, we are just getting into our stride.

She certainly has grounds for optimism as far as the state of the trade unions goes. Less than four million working days were lost through strikes in 1983.

Apart from 1976, at the height of Labour incomes policy, this is the lowest figure since 1967, when 2.79 million were lost.

As recently as 1979 the figure was 30 million striker-days. The trend is downwards.

Trade union membership is declining, too. Half a million members dropped out in 1982, bringing overall TUC membership below ten million for the first time since 1971. Four years of Thatcherism have wiped more than two million members out of labour's 1979 army of 12.2 million troops.

Lost 5 per cent

If the TGWU figures, for example, are adjusted for mergers then it has lost around 5 per cent of its members, falling to 1.42 million. In steel and some other industries, union membership has suffered drastically. Even the public sector unions are in trouble now.

The town hall workers' union NALGO claims to have maintained its membership at the 1982 figure of 784,000, but NUPE (council manual workers, health workers, etc.) lost 8,392 members last year, and the CPSA (civil service clerical workers) has lost 5 per cent.

The decline, however, is limited. Even taking into account the fact that these figures are on the optimistic side, half the workforce is still in unions. There has been no 1920s-style exodus of those still in work. There is a drift, not a flood, out of the unions.

The closed shop, too, has seen only a limited decline. Almost five and a half million union members were covered by closed shop arrangements when Thatcher took office. It is still 4.5 million today. This is a tribute to the resilience of the closed shop, for the industries in which it had the firmest roots have

been blitzed by the slump.

The real attack on the closed shop is just beginning. We have seen it ripped up in the water industry and in British Rail.

The introduction of new and tighter laws in November this year will mean employers are only protected against legal action by dismissed workers if they can show that 80% of those covered by the closed shop voted for it in a secret ballot.

In the aftermath of the NGA dispute, many employers will simply suspend closed shops in practice. A further decline in trade union membership can be expected.

The slump and the Tory offensive have also hit shop stewards' organisation. A recent estimate is that the number of shop stewards in certain manufacturing industries has dropped from 130,000 to 80,000. In metal manufacture, shipbuilding, mechanical engineering, and metal goods production, the number of full time stewards has fallen from 4,000 to 2,000.

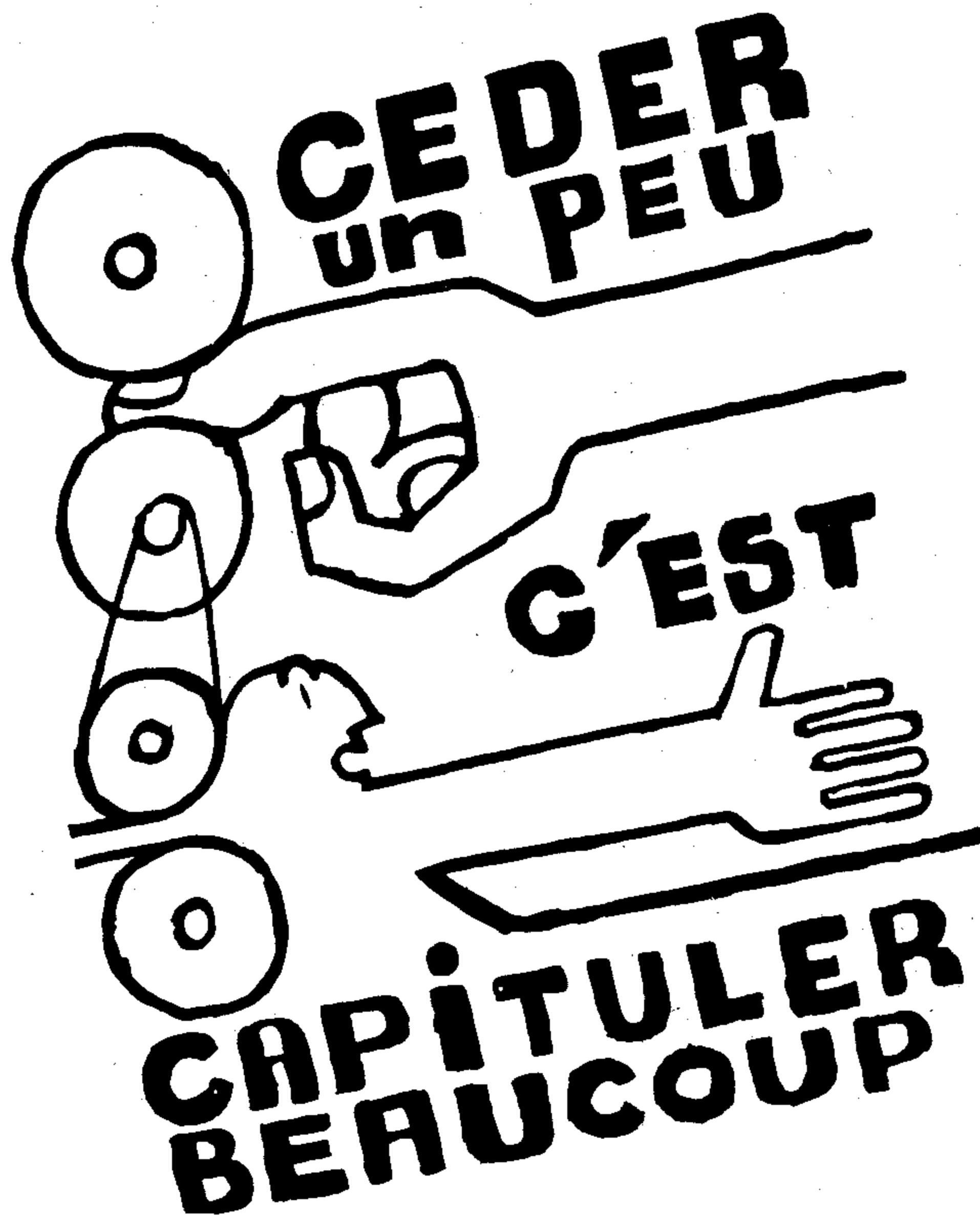
"One large engineering company in the North now holds meetings with stewards at 4pm with no overtime available for the union negotiators if discussions go past clocking-off time. Previously meetings began at 10am and went on all day..."

"One company director said, 'Past custom and practice was for shop stewards to deal only with a relatively senior member of management, which was often a sore point with foremen... Now I ask if the matter has been raised with the foreman, and if the answer is no I show them the door.'" (Financial Times, January 20 1984).

Managers are more and more confident.

On defensive

The Left in the unions is on the defensive. The tide, as 1984 begins, is running strongly not only against the unions but against socialists in the unions. The defeats and sell-outs of the last few years all contributed to the General Election defeat, which in turn gave the right wing the confidence to root out the residues of left policies which embarrassed them in their attempts to collaborate with the Tories.



"Give an inch and they'll take a mile" and hypocrisies of the TUC's declaring the Tories have now turned into capitulation. Now Len Murray openly pretence of fighting the Tories, and in to promote such marginal changes in they could accept without changing the John McIlroy looks at how we got here fight to rearm the labour movement a union collaboration with the Tories.

TUC: policemen leading the long road to

THE 1983 TUC represented, at the level of policy, a sharp turn to the right — the 'new realism'.

Distancing the TUC from the Labour Party; voting down a harder policy on the anti-union legislation; talking to the Tories; agreeing to drop an alternative economic programme in favour of requests for marginal changes in Tory policy, were all carried by sizeable majorities.

These moves were important. The idea that there is an alternative economic programme — no matter how shoddy the actual alternative proposed — reinforces class combativity. The idea that the labour movement is 'a government in exile', no matter how timorous its attitude to a return from exile, provides the Left with a base we can build on.

As long as the movement's policy is not to talk to the Tories, that brands the government as the class enemy and focuses attention on creating an alternative. If the TUC says (however hypocritically) that the Labour Party is our party, and we will have no truck with Thatcher and Tebbit, then it helps to educate workers, and helps socialists in the Labour Party and unions.

Blackpool 1983 was a step back from all that — from everything that the rank and file struggles of the 1970s had imposed on the TUC.

Of course the TUC had always acted as a broker with Capital. But now it was able to declare itself openly. The NGA defeat is simply Blackpool in practice.

The TUC's Fighting Fund against the anti-union laws, of

£1 million, has already evaporated. £420,000 has gone to the NGA — not to help its struggle, but to assist with financial problems caused by sequestration of its assets — and the rest will be swallowed up by expenses associated with the injunctions against the POEU and NUJ.

The Tories and the employers are well trained in reading signals. They knew what Blackpool meant.

But instead of calling in the moderate Methodist and smiling: "Well done, Len, here are some concessions", what did they do?

They put the boot in. In the offices and the factories they felt a surge of renewed confidence.

In another period, they might have made concessions. But today British industry is a declining force in a capitalist world economy crippled by crises. British capitalism's rate of profit is low by international standards. Its products are not competitive. The Tories and the bosses are out to change that the only way they know how — to make Britain a low-wage, low-cost economy.

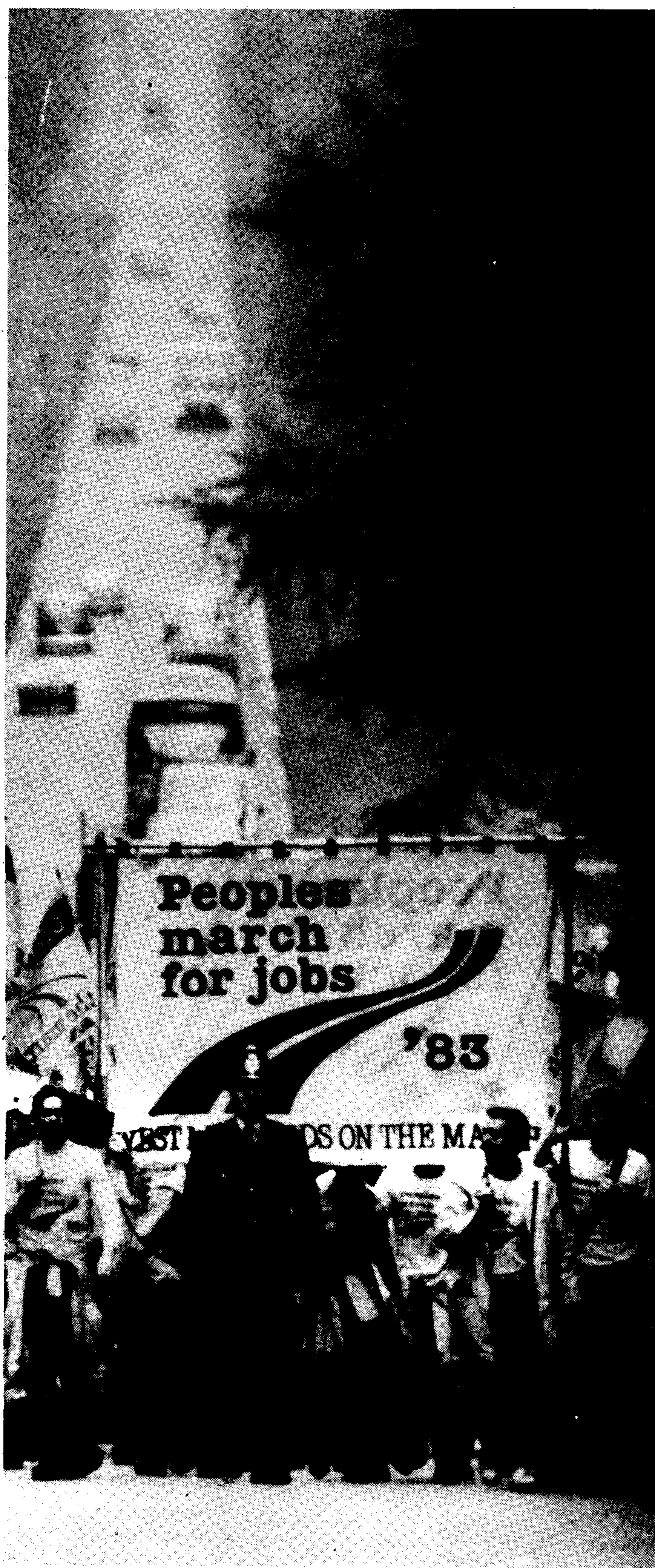
The Trade Union Bill, dealing with the political levy and ballots in union elections and before

Rebut

AS 1984 dawns, the biggest problem for our movement is that its leadership is explicitly prepared to act as police for the enemy.

The fact that they are so blatant has already opened the eyes of thousands of activists. The fact that they cannot deliver on their promise of marginal concessions will arouse many more.

We have to hammer the



"Tories put the boot in"

The figures

Strike-days for all disputes in progress (million)

	All industries and services	All manufacturing industries
1983 (Jan.-Nov.)	3.4	
1982	5.3	
1981	4.3	2.2
1980	12.0	10.9
1979	29.5	22.6
1978	9.4	7.7
1977	10.1	8.1
1976	3.3	2.3
1975	6.0	5.0
1974	14.8	7.5

TREAT YEAR

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strikes, was not dropped. The Tories did offer not to legislate a change from contracting out of the political levy to contracting in. But they knew all along that such a change would raise all sorts of questions about financing of political parties.

They hope that the ballots on whether unions should maintain political funds will do what they want anyway, with less trouble, and lead to many unions disaffiliating from the Labour Party.

So Len Murray got no real concessions. He gave concessions to the Tories.

Instead of the Tories legislating on contracting-in and the TUC fighting them, Len Murray and the Tories together will draw up a voluntary (!) code. The Tories know their man.

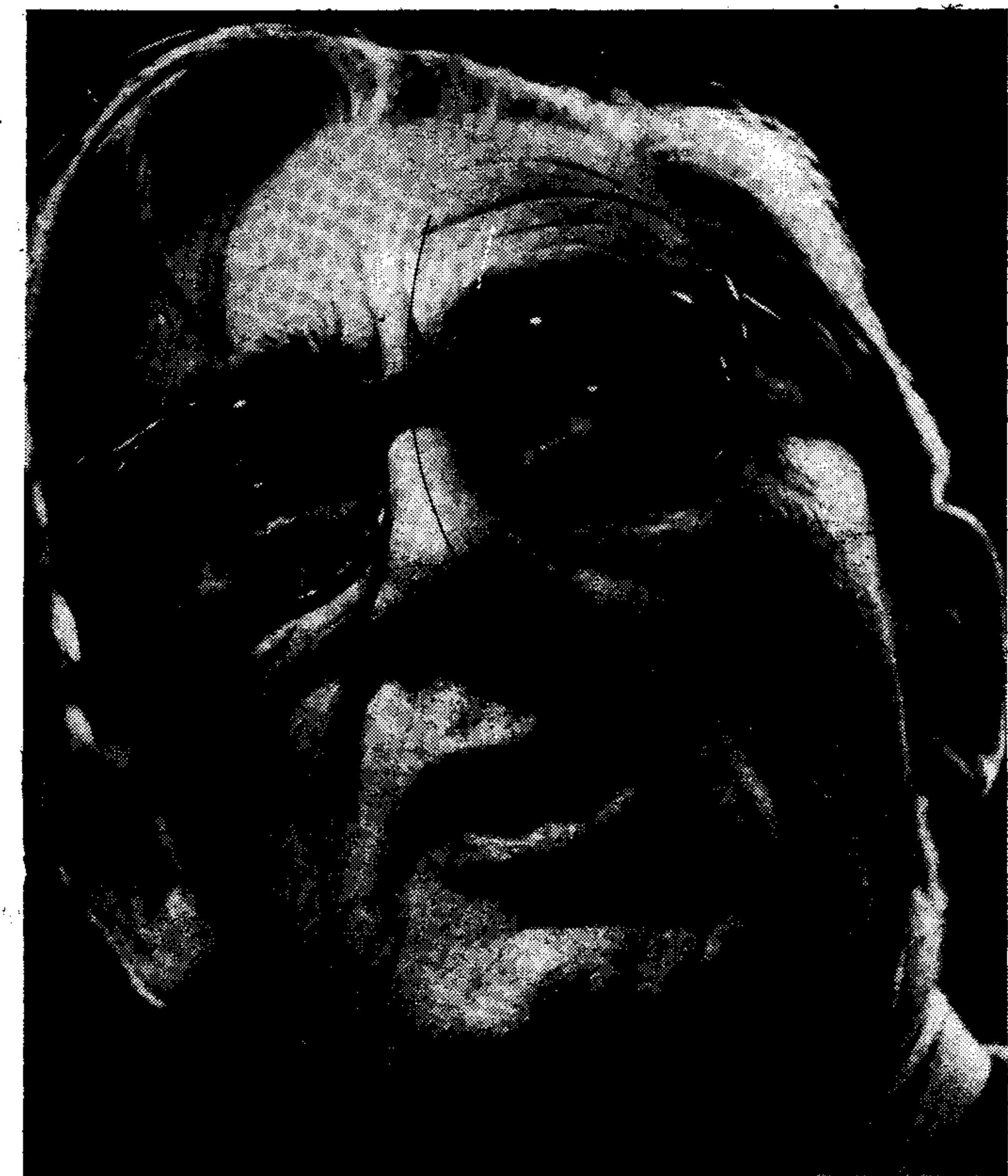
The Financial Times commented: "While the form of the code has not yet been agreed, ministers place more stress on the personal commitment made to the new system than on its precise wording. Mr Murray's desire to forge a new relationship with the government and his evident willingness to deliver on agreements is seen as providing the strongest grounds for preferring the voluntary approach to legislation".

ld the movement

lessons home. But we have to do so in the context of rebuilding on the shop floor.

There is still strength there. In 1983 pay rises kept pace with inflation. Real living standards are still not falling. After four months of the present pay round, settlements are running at double the Tories' 3 per cent.

The attacks on the closed shop, on shop steward organisation, and on the links with the Labour Party, make it possible



Murray: The TUC's loss-leader

THE NEW Len Murray was seen last week introducing the new TUC document, 'Protecting those in need'.

This consists of a number of limited demands: the government should index unemployment benefit and reverse the cuts in housing benefit, for example.

It shows how Murray is de-railling the movement: "... He made clear yesterday that its approach implied accepting that the broad lines of the government's approach could not be changed".

He went on to reinforce his point: "These measures do not make up an alternative programme. They are changes which the government could

make without scrapping the medium-term financial strategy so beloved of the Chancellor".

They are changes that could be made without touching the basic strategy of high unemployment, cuts in the welfare state, and wage reductions.

Murray can now say openly that the TUC's job is not fighting the Tories, but advising the Tories on minor adjustments in their attempts to shackle the unions and drive down the working class.

But if Len Murray can live on the hope of a few gentle breezes amidst a gale of right wing policies, the working class cannot. The new realism simply will not work.

Murray cannot bring it off. There is not the slightest hope in his policies of appeasement and collaboration.

and necessary to reconstruct workplace organisation without the narrow trade-unionist limitations of post-war industrial militancy.

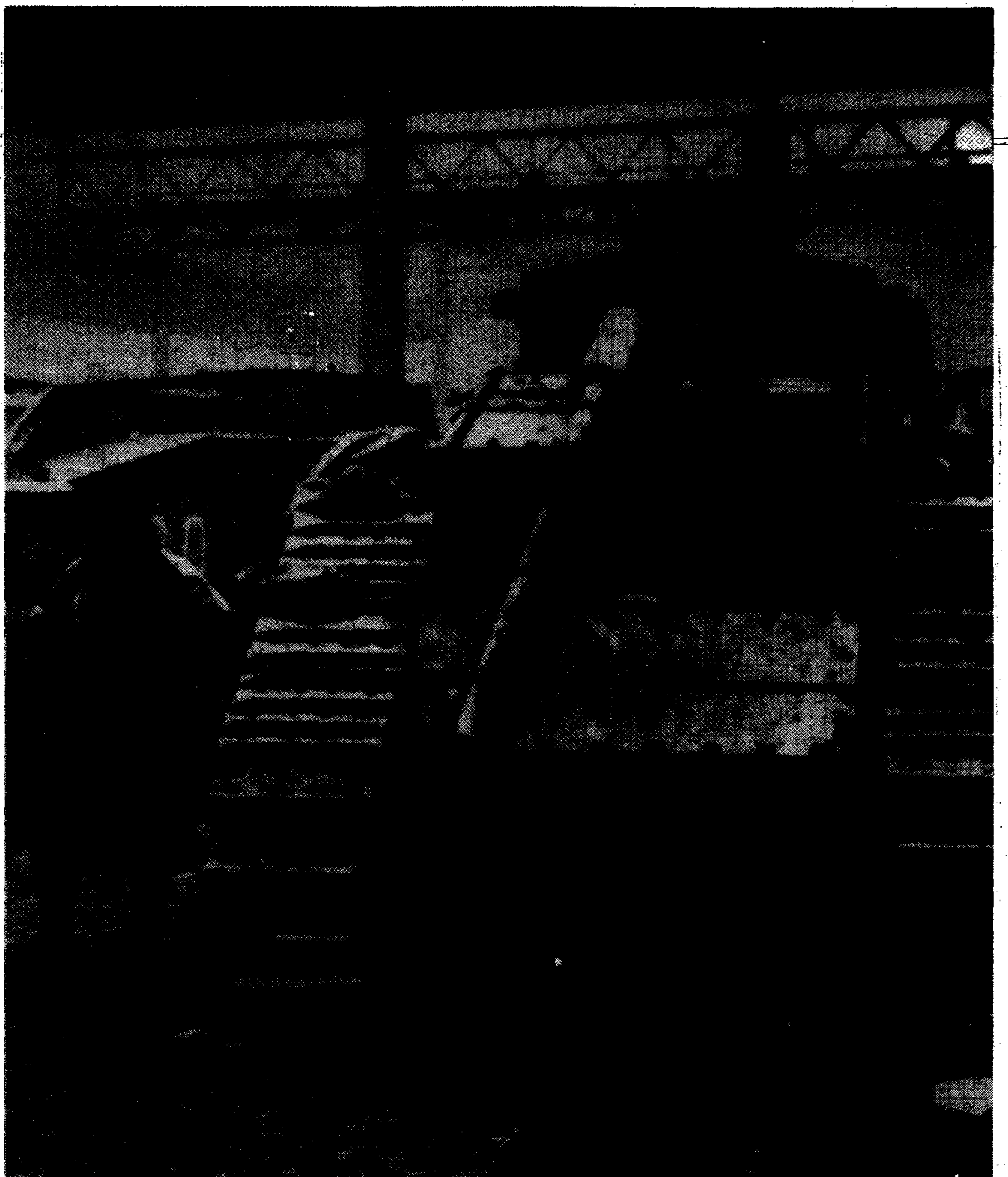
We must rebuild on an explicitly political basis. Workplace Labour Party branches are absolutely essential in this.

The Tories want to transform the unions into a combination of US 'business unions' and Japanese workplace outfits. We want to transform them into

organisations geared up to fight for socialism.

One way or another, the unions must be transformed. They cannot continue in the old way.

Things are tough. But if we keep going, both at the level of the workplace and at the level of the broader labour movement; if we support the big struggles and small struggles, then we can ensure that 1984 will be the year in which we stopped the retreat.



Tanks in the market

How Glasgow fought the state

By Stan Crooke

SIXTY-FIVE years ago this month Glasgow was in the grip of a general strike.

Although the strike began with the limited economic demand for a cut in the working week, it posed — as general strikes do by their very nature — the question of power in society.

Whilst the strike leaders saw the strike purely in terms of a fight for the 40 hour week, the press treated it as a threat to the whole capitalist order. And for once the press was right.

The strike was a continuation of struggles which had rocked Glasgow throughout the war.

In January 1919 the militancy finally fused into an all-out struggle by the Glasgow labour movement. Spontaneous revolt against slum housing, mass unemployment, long hours, and rock-bottom wages, had been given a revolutionary edge by the struggle for national independence in Ireland (which broke into open war that same month, January 1919) and by the overthrow of capitalism in Russia.

On Saturday January 18 500 delegates attended a meeting jointly organised by the Clyde Workers Committee and other labour organisations. They decided to call a general strike from January 27 for the 40 hour week.

In the following week workplace meetings were held throughout Glasgow. In some places the workers need persuasion to wait until January 27.

On the day all the main factories were shut down. A mass meeting of the strikers in St Andrews Hall passed a motion pledging no return to work until a 40 hour week with no loss of pay had been won.

After the meeting, at least 10,000 workers marched through the city centre to a rally in George Square. As the Glasgow Evening Times reported, "A few enthusiasts, who had a red flag in their possession, hoisted it to the top of the flag-pole in front of the Municipal Buildings. The raising of the flag was greeted with loud outbursts of cheering".

The hoisting of the workers' flag over the buildings of the

local authorities was more symbolic than perhaps the 'few enthusiasts' realised. The strike was a challenge to the capitalist authorities, which could result either in utter defeat or the overthrow of bourgeois rule.

Tragically, the strike leaders did not realise this.

Despite that the revolutionary logic asserted itself. Mass pickets challenged the state's monopoly of force.

The bodies responsible for ensuring the implementation of the decisions of the strike's Joint Committee were the 'district committees, consisting of ten members each plus a delegate to the strike's central Information Bureau. Each district committee also had a local speakers' sub-committee of three members, an entertainments sub-committee of three, and a messengers' service of six.

These district committees decided on exemptions from the strike and special permits for transport, organised the marches, stopped the trams... In essence they were soviet — embryos of the form of working class democracy which had overthrown and replaced capitalist rule in Russia.

Unlike the strike leaders, the ruling class realised the revolutionary nature of the general strike and used all the weapons at their disposal against it. The methods they adopted demonstrate the impossibility of a peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

The government did hesitate about sending in the army — because they feared that troops used against the strikers might mutiny. But when the strikers defeated the police in street-fighting on January 31, their hesitation ended.

Thousands of troops, fully equipped, poured into the city. Howitzers were positioned in the City Chambers, the cattle market was transformed into a tank depot, machine guns were posted on the top of hotels and (remembering Easter 1916 in Dublin) the main post office, and

armed troops stood sentry outside power stations and patrolled the streets.

New regulations were introduced to legitimate any violence the army might use, and the Cabinet had a whole series of further anti-strike decrees in preparation.

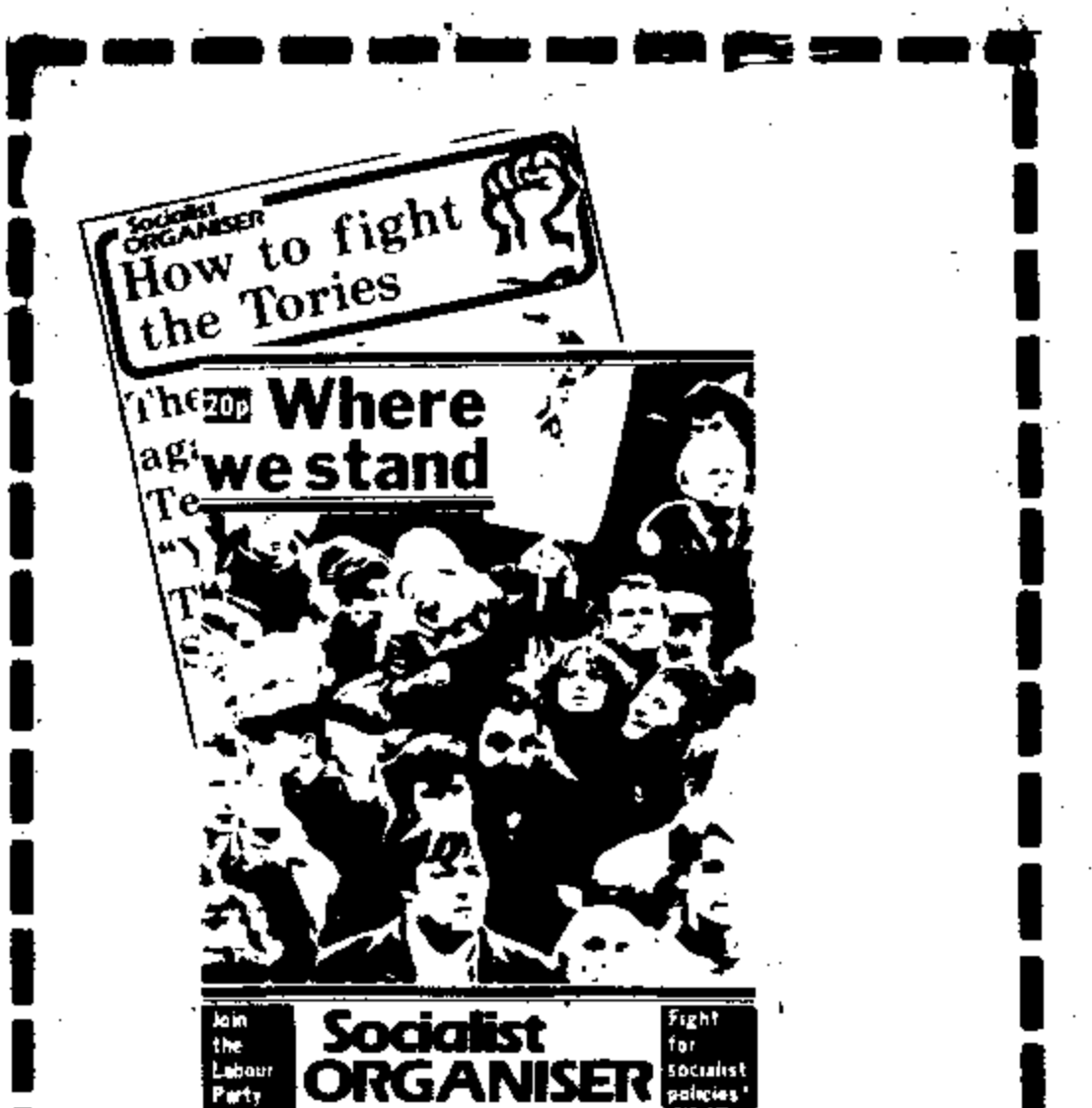
Strike leaders were arrested. The press backed up the government's counter-offensive with a campaign of red-baiting.

The strike organisers did not know how to respond. The strike ended officially on February 11; in the days up to then there had been a gradual return to work, and the only alternative to an overall return-to-work decision would have been to leave the most militant workers isolated and prey to victimisation.

The national leadership of the trade unions played a crucial role in the failure of the strike. Instead of campaigning for support, they had ordered their members to work, and in most cases refused strike pay.

In both its strength and its weakness the strike contains a wealth of lessons for the labour movement of today. "The knowledge we have gained will not be wasted. Be ready!", the Strike Bulletin had told its readers.

And it is up to the revolutionary socialists of today to draw the lessons from struggles like Glasgow 1919, and thereby ensure that they are not wasted chapters in the history of the fight for workers' power.



Two pamphlets for 45p, including postage, from Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.



Newham Eight: "The British State has become more openly oppressive..."

Foretaste of the Police Bill

1. REMAND. Three of us spent between six and nine months in prison on remand, awaiting trial. Cardiff magistrates remanded us week after week on the say-so of the police, making no attempt to inquire into the strength of the allegations against us; one defendant was kept in prison for six months on a charge that was subsequently dropped! During our period of prison custody, two of us lost our jobs. Yet in Britain, unlike other EEC states, we are not automatically entitled to compensation for this scandalous injustice.

In Scotland, the State prosecutor must bring a case to trial within 110 days of arrest and charge; under the English legal system, the State could take more than 400 days to prepare for our show trial.

2. EVIDENCE. The central and essential evidence against three of us was that we had supposedly 'confessed' our part in terrorist activities to police officers in the police station — by word of mouth only, having written and signed nothing. We have always denied making such incriminating remarks.

This use of 'verbals' — unsigned, unsubstantiated police accounts of alleged interviews — has been condemned by every professional legal body for decades. As in some American states and European countries, 'verbals' should not be admissible as evidence in court — unless they can be confirmed by a tape-recording of the interview, or the presence there of a suspect's solicitor.

3. SEARCHES. A major element in the evidence against one defendant was the alleged 'discovery' of a chemical at his house. The defendant has always claimed that this substance was 'planted' in his house by the police.

Police searches in serious cases should take place in the presence of a solicitor. The current system, under which magistrates have scattered search warrants around like confetti, must be reformed.

4. POLICE CUSTODY. Most of our court case boiled down to a single question for the jury: 'Do you believe the police accounts of what was said and done when the defendants were in the police station, or do you tend to agree with the defendants' version of events?'

All of us insist that we were 'verbalised', offered deals, and threatened; two of us maintain that we were physically assaulted; one of us was brutalised into signing a false confession. The jury did not accept the police accounts of supposed interviews, nor did they accept the signed confession as true and voluntary.

In future, there must be safeguards for people in police

This Saturday, January 21, the National Campaign against the Police Bill is calling a demonstration — 11.30am from Brockwell Park, South London. The Bill would seriously restrict the rights of suspects and of citizens, and increase police powers. A foretaste of it has been given by police methods in cases like the Newham Eight — and the four Welsh nationalists acquitted in Cardiff Crown Court last November after a 16 month trial, who tell their story in this article. The four were David Burns, Robert Griffiths, Nicholas Hodges, and Adrian Stone.

custody. Immediate access to a solicitor, and the right of (for example) Police Authority members to inspect police stations unannounced, would be a start.

5. CONSPIRACY. Conspiracy charges are notorious for their use in Britain — especially in Wales — against political and trade union dissidents. They are a substitute for real evidence of criminal activity. They permit the prosecution to introduce all sorts of prejudicial matter into a trial — as was an abundant feature of this trial.

In his summing-up, Judge Farquharson told the jury that if they accepted the Defence case, they the jurors would be agreeing that numerous — and very senior — officers from four different police forces had conspired to fabricate evidence on a massive scale. So who conspired against whom? We let the jury's verdicts answer that question.

6. TRIAL BY JURY. Had we been tried in Northern Ireland, all of us would undoubtedly have been found guilty in a non-jury Diplock Court. As it was, we had the protection of trial by jury. Even then, considering how enormous are the powers and resources of the State, justice is not certain. We were fortunate to have twelve courageous and independent-minded people to weigh up the 'evidence' against us.

But there are moves afoot to

abolish trial-by-jury in at least some cases in Britain. Indeed, during our trial a Lord Justice in the Appeal Court delivered a speech in Cardiff in which he dwelt upon the alleged 'burdens', 'inadequacies' and even 'injustices' of the jury system.

7. AN INQUIRY. Following the verdicts in our case, an internal police inquiry is taking place into our allegations against the police. We have no faith that such an inquiry can be sufficiently impartial in its considerations and ruthless in its conclusions. Our allegations are very serious ones: we would not in all fairness expect any police officer — however honest and forthright — to find 20 fellow officers (up to the rank of Chief Superintendent) guilty of conspiracy, fabrication, forgery, perjury, physical assault, making threats and inducements, etc., etc.

Those are our charges, which we are prepared to argue and substantiate in front of any inquiry, even a one-sided police one. But the truth and justice would be better served by a more independent inquiry, such as one established by the Home Office or the Welsh Council for Civil and Political Liberties.

8. THE MASS MEDIA. Outside Wales, our trial and tribulations have received almost no publicity whatsoever. Despite the recent history of police swoops, mass arrests, frequent Special Branch intimidation and surveil-

lance, protests and pickets outside police stations in Wales, culminating in this disgraceful show trial, these events and the issues raised by them have been ignored by the London-based 'British' newspapers, a television and radio services.

Had this police persecution and show trial occurred in the Soviet Bloc, the publicity throughout Britain would have been enormous. Mrs Thatcher and Mr Reagan would have denounced this hounding of political dissidents, the fabricated evidence, the KGB methods, the political charges, imprisonment without trial and so on. But when it happens here, all we have in the freedom-loving British mass media is... silence.

We were arrested — on this and other occasions — because of our political views and activities. Our political and civil rights have been upheld by a brave jury. We remain what we have always been — Socialists and Welsh patriots.

The British State has become more openly oppressive in its treatment of political dissidents in recent years. The Police and Criminal Evidence Bill should be seen in this context. We urge all people who treasure democratic rights to rally to their defence, to support the political and civil liberties organisations which give priority to this crucial struggle.

At a walking pace

THROUGHOUT the world, "demand for most types of heavy equipment [in 1983] was anything from a third to 60 per cent lower than at the late 1970s peaks...", reports the Financial Times.

Even in America, where the economic upturn has been strongest, "Capital spending in US manufacturing industries... was probably down 8 per cent last year... In the UK, fixed investment in manufacturing industry was probably unchanged from 1982" — when it was 25% below the 1979 level.

Only computer-aided design and manufacturing systems and robots are seeing any sort of sales boom. In machine tools, "the order book is picking up strongly in the US, but from a

very depressed base... In Europe, machine tool builders are still not certain that an improvement in orders is occurring".

In short, the present economic upturn is likely to be shallow and short-lived. Although investment in services is higher than investment in manufacturing, there is no sign of a major development of new enterprise such as would fuel a real boom.

Profits are rising. In Britain, the share of profits in total value added has risen noticeably since 1981, mainly thanks to a big increase in productivity — i.e. fewer workers doing more work. The rate of return on capital has risen, too.

However, increased profits do not automatically mean new ventures. They can just as well be directed into bigger dividends or into reducing the big burden of debt which most com-

panies (in Britain and elsewhere) built up over the 1970s.

Two major factors restricting capitalist expansion are the low level of spending on capital projects by governments, and the high level of interest rates. Both are connected to the 'tight money' policies being pursued by most capitalist governments.

Those policies are not just dogma, though. A relaxation would probably mean some sort of boom. But the governments fear that it would also mean roaring inflation, massive balance-of-payments gaps and swings in currency exchange rates, chaos, and a new slump.

And on recent experience they are right. The big capitalist economies today dare not accelerate above walking pace for fear that as soon as they break into a trot their pulses will start racing and their hearts complaining at the strain.

SCIENCE

By Les Hearn

How we got clean air

THE LONDON smogs I remember from my childhood don't seem to happen these days. Those smogs, mixtures of smoke and fog, were quite exciting to me, but to many they were lethal.

In the great London smog of 1952, some 4000 people, young and old, died.

This was because the tiny droplets of water in the fog trapped the dust and gases of air pollution near ground level, forcing people to breathe more pollution than normal.

Taller factory chimneys helped get rid of some of this air pollution, delivering it to the faster moving layers of air, higher up. So the pollution was carried away to Scotland and Scandinavia to fall as 'acid rain'.

But the major factor in abolishing smogs was the 1956 Clean Air Act, which allowed local authorities to declare 'smokeless zones'. Thus the open coal fire, cheery but only 2% efficient, was ushered out and people turned to smokeless fuels such as coke and more efficient grates and stoves.

So it was very interesting to look at the history of government policy on clean air as revealed in Cabinet papers released under the 30 year rule.

In December 1952, smog descended on London and in the worst week, the death rate was nearly triple that of the same week in the previous year. The new Tory government set up a committee under Sir Hugh Beaver to investigate the disaster and make recommendations. Nearly a year later the Cabinet met to discuss the Beaver report and a memorandum from Harold Macmillan, minister of housing and local government.

'Supremac' observed that: "Today everybody expects the government to solve every problem. It is a symptom of the Welfare State..."

"For some reason, 'smog' has captured the imagination of the press and the people... We cannot do much but we can seem to be very busy — and that is half the battle nowadays" (my emphasis).

The Cabinet agreed with him. They discussed various ways of 'seeming to be busy' whilst deciding to do virtually nothing.

They pointed out that fog was a natural phenomenon (though smog wasn't), suggested that old people shouldn't go out in the smog, and claimed to be studying how to extend the use of modern grates and smokeless fuels.

The government continued to drag its feet until 1956, when a popular private member's bill forced them to introduce their own Clean Air Act.

Now survivors of that Cabinet, including Macmillan, claim that Act as one of their finest achievements!

COT DEATH is a puzzling and distressing phenomenon in which apparently healthy babies die for no obvious reason.

Many factors dispose a baby to cot death, including: low birthweight; smoking in pregnancy; temperature, humidity

and ventilation in the bedroom.

Now, some amateur research by a New Zealand horticulturalist, Jim Tyler, suggests that a further factor could help determine whether a child at risk of cot death actually dies.

Tyler observed that urea in a sleeping baby's nappy is broken down by bacteria in the baby's faeces, if present in the same nappy, to form the pungent and poisonous gas ammonia. And during an average sleep quite a lot of ammonia can be produced.

Ammonia has a wide range of dangerous effects including the following:

- Small doses irritate the tissues, causing an awake child to cry;

- Larger doses cause swelling of the lung tissues (making breathing more difficult).

Mice given ammonia experience muscle contraction, rapid breathing and gasping. Continued exposure leads to coma, convulsions and death.

So far, Tyler's theory seems plausible, but is there any evidence to support it?

The strongest evidence is that the amount of ammonia produced in a nappy can be linked with the baby's diet. When babies are switched from breast to bottle milk, they excrete large amounts of urea.

The change in diet also encourages the growth of bacteria in babies' stomachs. This means more bacteria in the faeces and more urea to be decomposed to ammonia.

As further support to the theory, most cot deaths occur between three weeks and one year, when the changeover in diet is likely to occur.

According to an expert in cot deaths, Tyler's theory is an interesting one which would be easy to prove or disprove. Strangely, though, his findings have been rejected by medical journals, and he has been forced to publish them himself.

[Information for both articles from 'New Scientist'].

New!

Solidarity betrayed

LESSONS OF THE BASINGSTOKE POST OFFICE WORKERS STRIKE

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



Russian helicopter shot down in Afghanistan

Peace through a balance of terror?

TONY Richardson jesuitically takes me to task for dealing with Stalinism "as an abstraction".

But, trapped within his own idiosyncratic time warp, in which imperialism has not changed since 1916 and Stalinism not since 1936, Tony Richardson reduces imperialism and Stalinism to frozen categories, with the latter cast as helpless victim of the former.

"The aggressive force on a world scale, are the imperialist powers... despite what appears sometimes to be the case, the aggressive forces are the imperialists," he tells us.

So the Communist Party have been right all along! Denying the right to self-determination to the countries of Eastern Europe, crushing the East Berlin uprising in 1953, destroying the Soviets in Hungary in 1956, invading Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Afghanistan in 1979, banning Solidarnosc in 1982, etc., etc. — these are not the actions of an aggressive force. No, they are merely the Stalinists using "their own methods of defending the nationalised property relations in those countries."

(And let's gloss over — for Tony Richardson certainly does — the domestic history of the Soviet Union. The figures for victims under Stalin's repression given by David Caute are roughly: 12 million dead in prison camps; two million dead in the forced removal of entire nationalities; 1½ million dead through forced collectivisation; plus also the direct victims of the purges. Anything aggressive about all this? Of course not — even if it sometimes appears to be the case...)

"Unilateral nuclear disarmament in Russia," Tony Richardson then warns us, "would lay it open to nuclear attack." (Andropov made a similar statement not that long ago).

But this endorses the arguments of the reactionary Cold Warriors and multilateralists — namely, that the existence of nuclear weapons is not a threat to peace but a guarantee of it. As long as the balance of terror exists, so too does peace!

To support the right of East Germans to be conscientious objectors "means", says Tony Richardson, "disarming East Germany altogether". He can be assured of full support for such sentiments from the unashamedly Stalinist paper "Straight Left", which claims that supporting independent peace movements in East Germany "means campaigning here for the right of people in the German Democratic Republic to refuse to defend socialism". The sentiments expressed are exactly the same.

But my cardinal sin seems to

be that I "even oppose war toys". Childhood obviously just wouldn't be complete without your own model Korean Jumbo jet to shoot down, being able to invade Afghanistan in the comfort of your own bedroom, or genuine imitation guns that don't work to send to Spanish anarchists.

Tony Richardson concludes by denouncing as "reactionary" the demand by the unofficial

(i.e. genuine, though he studiously avoids the word; given his politics, the only Eastern European peace movements he could endorse are the official, fake, Stalinist ones) peace movements for unilateral nuclear disarmament by the Soviet Union.

Such a demand portrays an infinitely more progressive outlook than that of Tony Richardson. It shows that those who advance it recognise that

"the enemy is in the home camp" and steers them in the direction of overthrowing the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Tony Richardson's arguments, on the other hand, excuse the crimes of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the name of a nominal 'anti-imperialism' which subordinates class struggle to power bloc politics.

STAN CROOKE,
Glasgow.

Making the natives restful

When Beatrice Webb was a young woman in the 1870s she had a choice of two careers before her: either an anthropologist in a far flung corner of the Empire, or a sympathetic academic studying the indigenous habitat of the English worker.

In the event she chose the latter, espousing both 'gas and water socialism' and founding the Fabian Society in 1883.

Nowadays the New Fabians of the GLC's Economic Policy Group continue her tradition.

The policy being applied by the Labour Metropolitan councils in Sheffield, London and the West Midlands was the product of an earth-shattering sociological discovery made in the mid-1970s. Academic researchers looking into the Lucas Aerospace company made a stunning and quite shocking discovery.

"Capitalism produces weapons of destruction like tanks and missiles rather than socially useful goods like ambulances and lung machines."

Apparently, and this still has to be fully confirmed, they do this because they can make more money out of guns than out of butter.

Moreover, the intellectual ramifications of this advance in human knowledge are still being felt, particularly around the more backward Labour councils.

Yes, primitive thinkers in the past like Marx and Engels had blindly groped towards these truths with their limited mental apparatuses — but we had to wait till the publication of the Lucas Aerospace Combine Plan revealed. Like Galileo's discovery that the earth revolved around the sun, like Fleming's discovery of penicillin, the advent of the Lucas plan breathed a whole new lease of life into flagging careers and aspirations.

The Plan's solution to society's dilemma was daring in its simplicity. Why not harness the skills and technology that produces bombs to produce hospital equipment instead. Then, we'll have cracked it!

So the GLC set up the Greater London Enterprise Board and the Popular Planning nit to

translate these revelations into reality.

Hence, from the days of municipalising the drains and the dust carts we have moved to the higher plane of the Alternative Workers' Plan. New teams of anthropologists were recruited who would to out into the hinterlands, rather like their forefathers, Radcliffe Brown and the Webbs had done, and interview the natives.

More amazing new insights were culled from these explorations.

No, the working class was not, as had previously been thought, a homogeneous social blob. They were divided into distinct clans and kinship networks — there was the AUEW tribe, the GMBATU clan and the NUPE peoples of South East London.

In collecting information for the Plan, Wendy Wheelwright wrote in the seminal "Custom and culture amongst the AUEW": "I nervously clutched my Sony recorder as I approached their collective watering hole, 'The Duffy Arms'. Unlike the polygamous Dinka tribesmen of the southern Sudan, the AUEW people are monogamous and consume a strange malt and barley liquid which they call 'bitter'."

They celebrate by placing a large forefinger into their proboscis and moving it about and by emitting noxious fumes from their hind-quarters. Even more, they tell each other folklore tales of epic events from the past. Quite fascinating. Apparently cannibals from the Laurence Scott tribe in the north once ate one of their leaders, Ken Cure, by roasting him alive over a brazier on a picket line.

"Absolutely amazing", I said. "Could they not have solved the dispute through bargaining rather than being ghastly to Mr Cure?" I proffered tentatively. "He negotiated with the gaffers without consulting the lads," they said. "Really! That's incredible!" I answered. One could only marvel at the novelty of their ways.

But should the researcher in collecting facts for the Workers' Plan, take sides in the battles

between chiefs and tribespeople? Absolutely not, the GLC ethnographers tell us.

No. They support the perspective of the TUC Education Department called "Tribal Centred Learning". In other words the AUEW learn from NALGO who learn from NUPE and so on.

Our GLC academic always respects the totality of the kinship system he has discovered. Taking his cue from Dr Who's visit to the planet of the Cybermen, our intrepid explorer must not support either Len Murray and the TUC General Council or the NGA Peoples of Stockport and Bedford.

We must all recognise that it is part of an evolving natural world in which every actor has his/her role. To do otherwise would be the equivalent of Charles Darwin advocating support for weaker strains of organisms against stronger strains in "The Origin of Species".

Furthermore, struggle and conflict between different sections of the kinship system is thoroughly bad for everyone concerned, particularly for the researcher, as he may get defined as a left wing trouble-maker and Ken may dock his salary. This is what happened to TUC tutors in the North West who had the temerity and insensitivity to raise politics on shop stewards courses.

It is wrong for people from a higher culture to impose their values on people from an inferior cultural system. This is the Economic Policy Group approach.

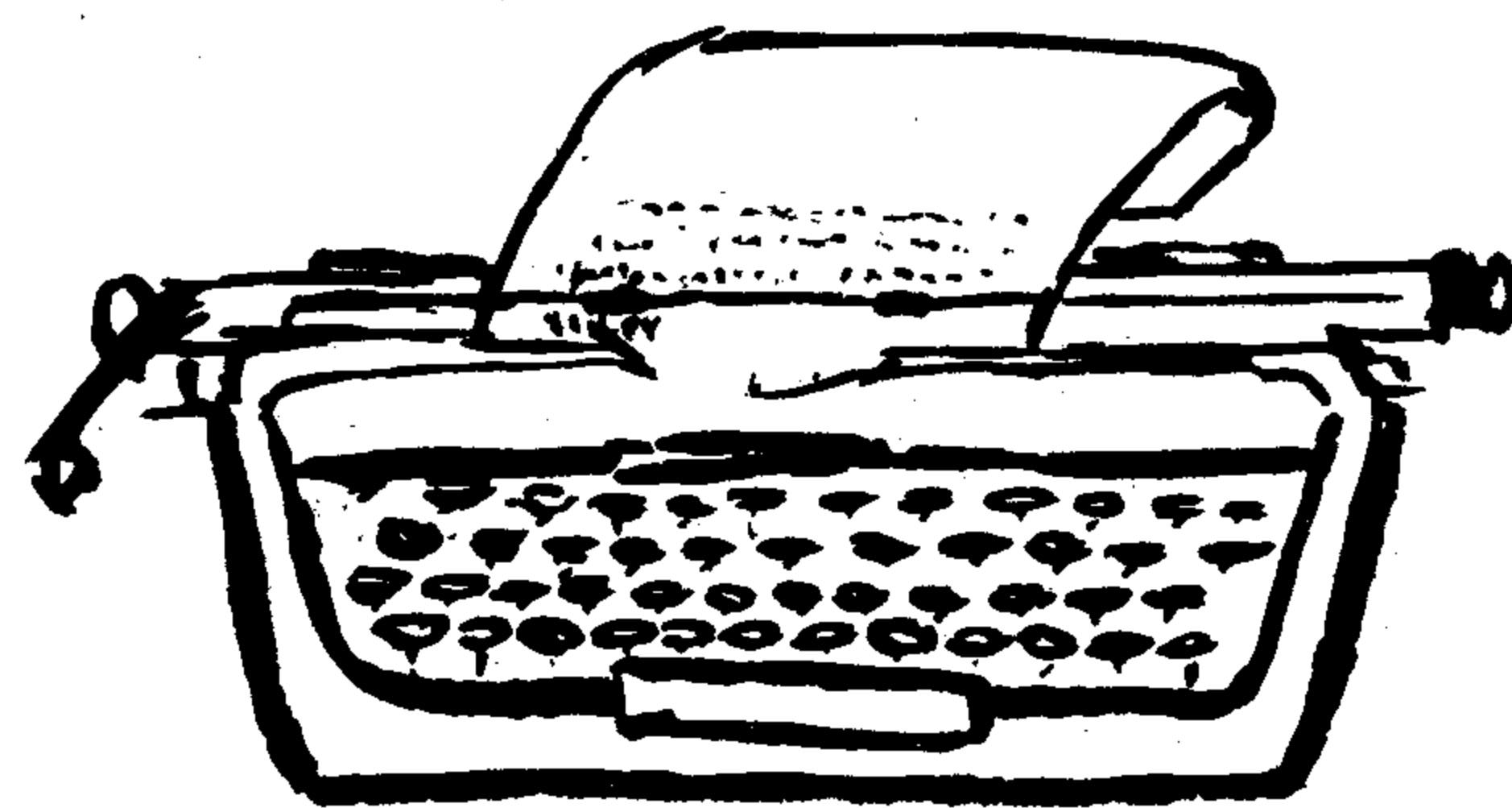
Hence, this is why the EPC Alternative Workers Plan is important. It means they can go beyond conflict.

For example, I hear that the Greater London Enterprise Board are now considering buying the Stockport Messenger Group and they are drawing up a workers plan whereby the printing press would produce socially useful goods, in this case toilet paper under contract to the TUC General Council.

Who said the British middle class was not philanthropic?

NOEL LUTON,
Bournemouth

Writeback



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

Can import curbs be internationalist?

DAVE Edwards' interview in Socialist Organiser last week showed, I think, how insidious the argument for import controls can be.

The Talbot international combine committee, he reported, has decided to press for legislation in each country so that Peugeot-Talbot cannot sell a model there unless it builds it there.

The policy would seem to give Talbot workers in each country the security of a wide range of models being built. It also seems free from the usual objections to import controls. It is not a joint campaign with the bosses. And it seems not to be across international worker unity: on the contrary, it is a coordinated international policy.

The fact that the policy was expressed during the Peugeot strike by Ryton TGWU convention Pat Fox calling for Peugeot 2 production, currently concentrated at Poissy, to be brought in by Ryton, does indicate however that there are problems.

Consider the basic arithmetic. The policy cannot lead to more Talbot cars being sold. Other things being equal, raising Talbot's production cost will reduce sales. So the policy cannot increase the overall amount of work for all Talbot workers. Any extra work Talbot workers in one country has to be at the expense of Talbot workers somewhere else.

A law to forbid imports of foreign-built Talbot cars would certainly cover other makes as probably other products too.

The end result of such import control laws can only be a cutback in world trade, therefore a cutback in production and jobs and also higher prices (since more expensive home-made goods substitute for cheaper imports).

In underdeveloped countries there can be a case for import controls to protect infant industries. But not in Western Europe.

However harmless the import controls demand may look at first, it can only lead eventually to workers in different countries competing with each other for shares of a static or declining total amount of work.

The alternative is not to idealise capitalist free trade, to fight for demands like world sharing with no loss of power to workers' control, and pursue ownership on an international scale.

JOHN LEAGRAVE
Islington

Atlantic war shook the world

THE Argentine military was not simply brought down as a result of Thatcher's victory in the South Atlantic war, as Martin Thomas claims in his "personal view" in SO 161. The military regime was in reality disintegrating before Galtieri invaded the Malvinas islands in 1982.

Nor is Martin Thomas's general view of the war valid. He says "just as a defeat for Thatcher's bloodthirsty buccannery would have massively improved the situation for the British working class, so the defeat of Galtieri's desperate 'mini-imperialism' has benefited the Argentine workers."

The first is very true, the second is not. The South Atlantic war was not a little anachronistic affair between two essentially similar powers — with one simply bigger and more powerful than the other. It was between a major imperialist power and a Third World country dominated economically and politically by imperialism. It was a major world event.

The fact that Britain won strengthened imperialism all over the world. It was a major factor creating the conditions for Reagan to invade Grenada. It has brought the invasion of Nicaragua closer. It has given the green light for increased US intervention in El Salvador, increased imperialist intervention in the Middle East and strengthened the hand of South Africa in Southern Africa.

It cannot therefore be judged on the basis of its conjunctural effects on the British or Argentine working class. Military regimes in Third World countries in Central and Southern America or in Africa are the creatures of imperialism. When imperialism is strengthened, they are strengthened. When imperialism is weakened, they are weakened.

This is not to say that the military are about to take over again in Argentina, but the events must be seen against this background.

ALAN THORNETT

BACK
THE **nga**
NO TO TORY
LAWS!

BADGES 25p or £2 for 10 (16p postage) from 'Mole Badges',
165, Liverpool Rd., London N4

Socialist ORGANISER

Where we stand

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Freeze rent and rates.

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE countryside, declared Lin Piao, will surround the towns. Maoist politics based on that perspective of socialist revolution have declined dramatically since the early '70s, but the idea lives on among some would-be Trotskyists.

In the centre-pages of last week's Socialist Action John Ross restates it. And more: he declares that it is a universal rule that every social system is first overthrown at the 'edges'.

This is not just eccentric historical philosophising. This ridiculous argument is concocted to justify the view of Socialist Action and its international co-thinkers that Central America is the centre of the world socialist revolution today, and that therefore the Cuban government's (very limited) support for the Central American struggles defines it as a proletarian revolutionary force.

The Cuban government's support for the ruling party in Mexico (where there is a much more powerful working class), and its support for the Polish state against Solidarnosc, are minor errors by comparison.

Ross's central argument is that the ruling class is weaker in peripheral states. There is of course a grain of truth in that. Certainly revolutionaries in less developed states need not 'wait' until socialism has triumphed in the advanced countries.

But the reason why the first victorious socialist revolution took place in Russia was not just that the ruling class were

weaker there. It was that a weak ruling class was combined with a relatively strong and concentrated working class, organised by a Marxist party.

Without that strong organised working class, the weakness of the ruling class may well lead to frequent political upheavals. But not every political upheaval is a socialist revolution.

In China, Vietnam, etc. weak capitalist classes were overthrown — but replaced by Stalinist forces, linked to the degenerated USSR, which expropriated capitalism but constructed police states against the working class. In Central America at present bourgeois revolutions are in progress

the greatest advances in recent years, South Africa and Brazil.

In his sweeping panorama of world history, the Stalinist states likewise escape mention — except as successful examples of socialist revolution!

The role of the struggle of Solidarnosc and similar movements in the world prospects for socialism is passed over.

Revolutions, for Ross, happen through the anonymous forces of world history and general crisis beating down the weaker or stronger resistance of ruling classes. If the working class should be able to lend a hand to world history, then that is all to the good. But it is not essential.

The same concept must

Spanish Armada in 1588, had established itself as the greatest sea power of the day.

His argument about ancient slave economy is no less peculiar. It was overthrown, he says, not by forces at its centre, the Mediterranean, but by Germanic invasions.

The relevance is difficult to see: is he envisaging the overthrow of capitalism by invasions from those areas which still have pre-capitalist modes of production, and a new Dark Ages?

In any case, it is misleading: slavery had substantially disintegrated through its internal contradictions in the western centre of the Roman Empire, before the Germanic invasions, whereas the 'peripheral' eastern Empire, which was possibly richer than the west, but where slave production was never really dominant, survived for centuries. Then the new mode of production, feudalism, arose first in the 'centre' — the west.

Behind the bizarre history is a conception which neatly inverts pre-1917 'orthodox' Marxism. The idea then was that socialist revolution in the underdeveloped countries must follow a whole historical 'stage' behind the advanced areas. Ross's idea now is that the biggest, most organised working classes must wait for the Process of World Revolution to make its way through the periphery.

It will reach the more industrialised states in, to use his own words, 'a later phase'.

LEFT PRESS

against the oligarchies and against US domination.

It is possible for the working class to take the lead in these struggles and thus fuse them with a socialist revolution — but no historical inevitability guarantees that.

The working class scarcely features in Ross's whole argument. Cataloguing revolutionary openings in the Third World, he never mentions the two countries where independent working class organisation has made

explain his peculiar assertions about feudalism: 'Feudalism was first overthrown in Holland and England — states which had been on the periphery of the great feudal regions.'

In no way did Holland and England stand to feudalism as El Salvador does to world capitalism today! They were the countries in which the rising class, the bourgeoisie, was strongest. Holland was one of the busiest centres of trade. England, after the defeat of the

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.

ISLINGTON Socialist Organiser day school: 'Rebuilding the movement'. Sunday February 5, 10.30 to 5.30, Thornhill Neighbourhood Project, Caledonian Rd/Copenhagen St. Details: Nik, 278 1341.

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, Edgley. Phone 061-429 6359.

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

Where to find Socialist Organiser

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

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 Chippingham Rd, W9 2AH. Bad access, help available, creche if requested. Time: 6pm. Phone: 286 9692, Tuesday-Thursday. **London Lesbian & Gay Young Socialists** meets on the third Sunday of every month. Phone Martin at 263 9484 for further

information.

Lambeth Lesbian & Gay Action meets at the Tate Library, Brixton Oval.

'THE CAUSE OF Ireland' — showing at the Rio Cinema, Dalston, Thursday February 2, 7.30pm. Entrance £2 (£1 UB40, students, OAPs). Also showing: 'A Free Country'.

LONDON Region Labour Committee on Ireland: AGM. Saturday February 11, County Hall, London SE1. Open to all paid-up supporters of the LCI.

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].



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

Roots of rock'n'roll

MORE than a decade after its first publication and several years after becoming unavailable in British bookshops, Charlie Gillett's treasure store of a book, 'The Sound of the City', has been republished in a revised and updated form.

The present work covers the nearly thirty years between the end of World War Two and the early 1970s, concentrating — because it is the history of rock music — on the period following 1953, when Bill Haley and the Comets socked out their first hit, 'Crazy, Man, Crazy'.

There is a lot to disagree with in Gillett's book — not least the title! — but not so much as to diminish the dazzle of the historical account. It shimmers with thousands of factual details concerning artists, producers, writers, labels as well as shifts in taste, production techniques, commercial organisation, stylistic devices and subcultural values.

Above all, however, it is a book about the music itself. It is written with sociological imagination. But it is neither a sociology of the music industry nor one of those rock sociologies in which the music itself makes only an occasional guest appearance to illustrate a point — and then in discussion about the shape of the lyric, and not of the musical sound or the sensation it produces.

Gillett sometimes fails to set an adequate social backdrop to what he is describing: what he provides, however — and what most social backdrop artists fail to offer — is a breathtakingly knowledgeable survey of the music itself.

In a sense, the weaknesses of the book can be said to be in its political naivete. Not only are

Andrew Hornung reviews 'The Sound of the City', by Charlie Gillett (Souvenir Press £6.95).



Big Joe Turner

political events almost totally absent from it, but much of 'The Sound of the City' is informed by a vision of the heroic 'indies' — the independent record labels — as the liberating guerrilla force that almost defeated the regular

army of musical imperialism. There are elements of truth in this view, but it is vastly oversimplified.

The collapse of the smaller record companies during the depression in the 1930s; the near-monopoly over song-writ-

ing and publishing held by the ultra-conservative ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers) until 1941; the domination of the US record industry by six major companies; the control of musical outlets by whites who preserved the racial divisions of American society in their musical output and distribution patterns; the dependence of star-singers on external sources for their material; the failure of the smaller record companies to create a national distribution network until 1945; the largely regional organisation of record marketing, radio broadcasting and juke-box hiring — all these and many lesser factors created a situation where a huge market, white teenagers, and a huge pool of talent existed largely unattended by the major producers.

In this situation, the indies, who were closer to the new talent and closer to the new market — not only geographically but, sometimes spiritually — were able to become the commercial vehicles for the new musical styles.

By 1952 there were over 100 indies challenging the Big Six — Mercury, MGM, Capitol, Victor, Decca and Columbia — for chart places.

These entertainment giants — they were not exclusively record producers — accounted for four-fifths of the Top Ten records in the US charts in 1954 but their share had fallen by 1959, the end of rock'n'roll's big wave, to a mere one-third.

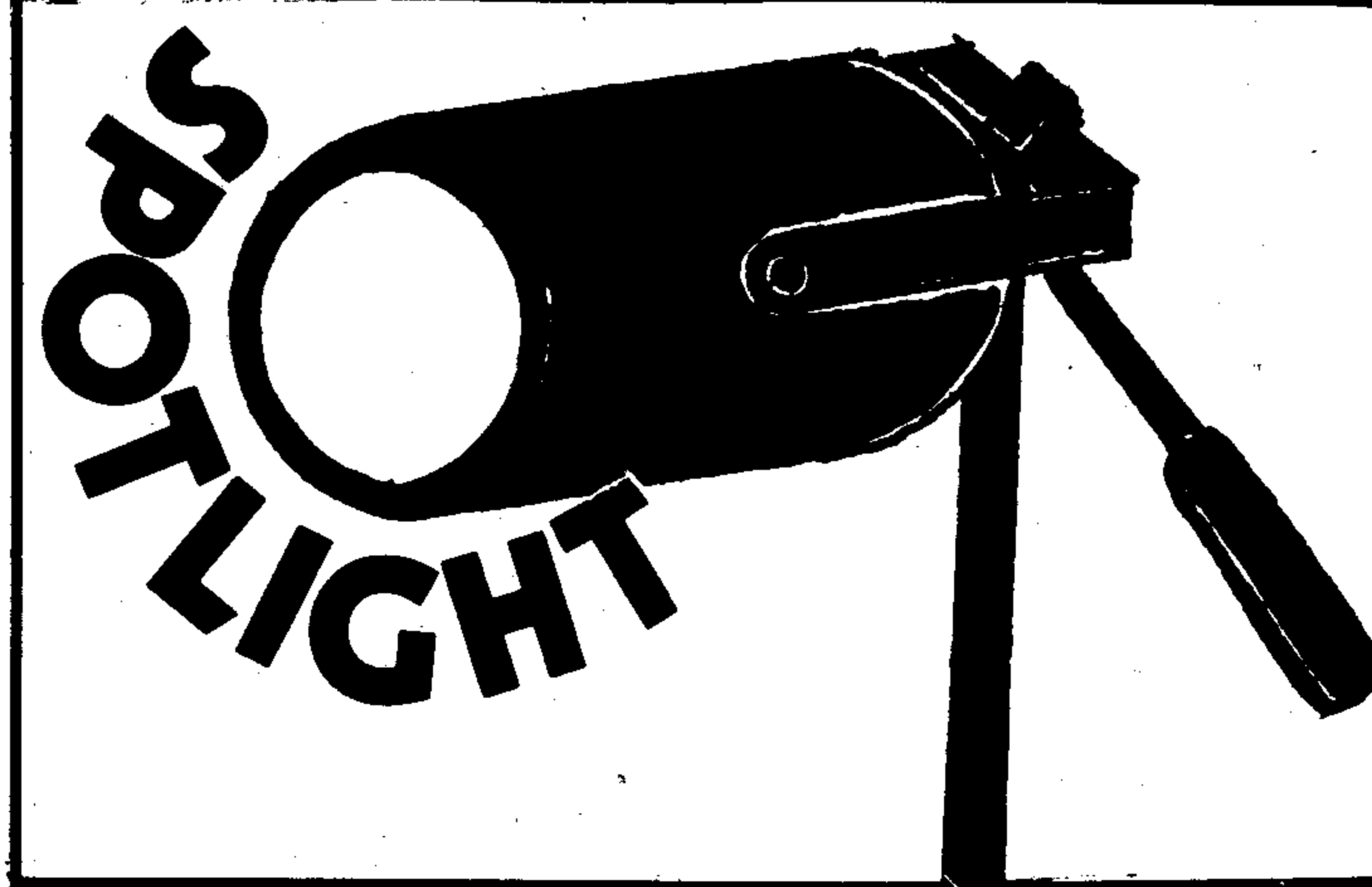
Gillett's view derives from his admiration for the raw musical energy and innovative genius of many of the performers and producers working for the indies: Lloyd Price and Little Richard with Art Rupe for Specialty; Elvis Presley with Sam Phillips for Sun; Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley and scores of blues artists with Leonard Chess and Willie Dixon for the Chess label; Joe Turner and Ray Charles and later a host of great soul singers with Ahmet Ertegun and Jerry Wexler for Atlantic; Fats Domino with Dave Bartholomew for Imperial. In addition there were great nomadic talents who moved from indie label to indie label, like Ike Turner and Johnny Otis, magical producers with a wide range of hits like Bobby Robinson and Bumps Blackwell and single-minded visionaries like James Brown.

Musically there is good reason to admire the indies. There often is a sense of freedom in their music, uncommitted as some of them were to the safe, narrow, commercial formulae of the majors. The indies found and developed talent, whereas the majors often did little more than sign on ready-formed talents and then beat out of them the very qualities that had lifted them out of mediocrity.

But the indies were, after all, not independent of the economic mechanism dominated by the majors: indeed most aspired to the position of the majors.

They were often bloodsucking employers, shameless cheats and even criminal extortionists. Often their willingness to record in the smaller towns of the South resulted from their desire to avoid paying union rates to session musicians. Their preparedness to permit freedom of arrangement to the players was often a way of avoiding paying fees to an arranger.

A second weakness of the book relates to the title: 'The Sound of the City'. In his introduction, Charlie Gillett justifies the title in the following way: 'During the mid-fifties, in



virtually every urban civilisation in the world, adolescents staked out their freedom in the cities, inspired and reassured by the rock and roll beat. Rock and roll was perhaps the first form of popular culture to celebrate without reservation characteristics of city life that had been among the most criticised. In rock and roll, the strident, repetitive sounds of city life were, in effect, reproduced as melody and rhythm."

This sort of naturalistic interpretations seems very weak to me.

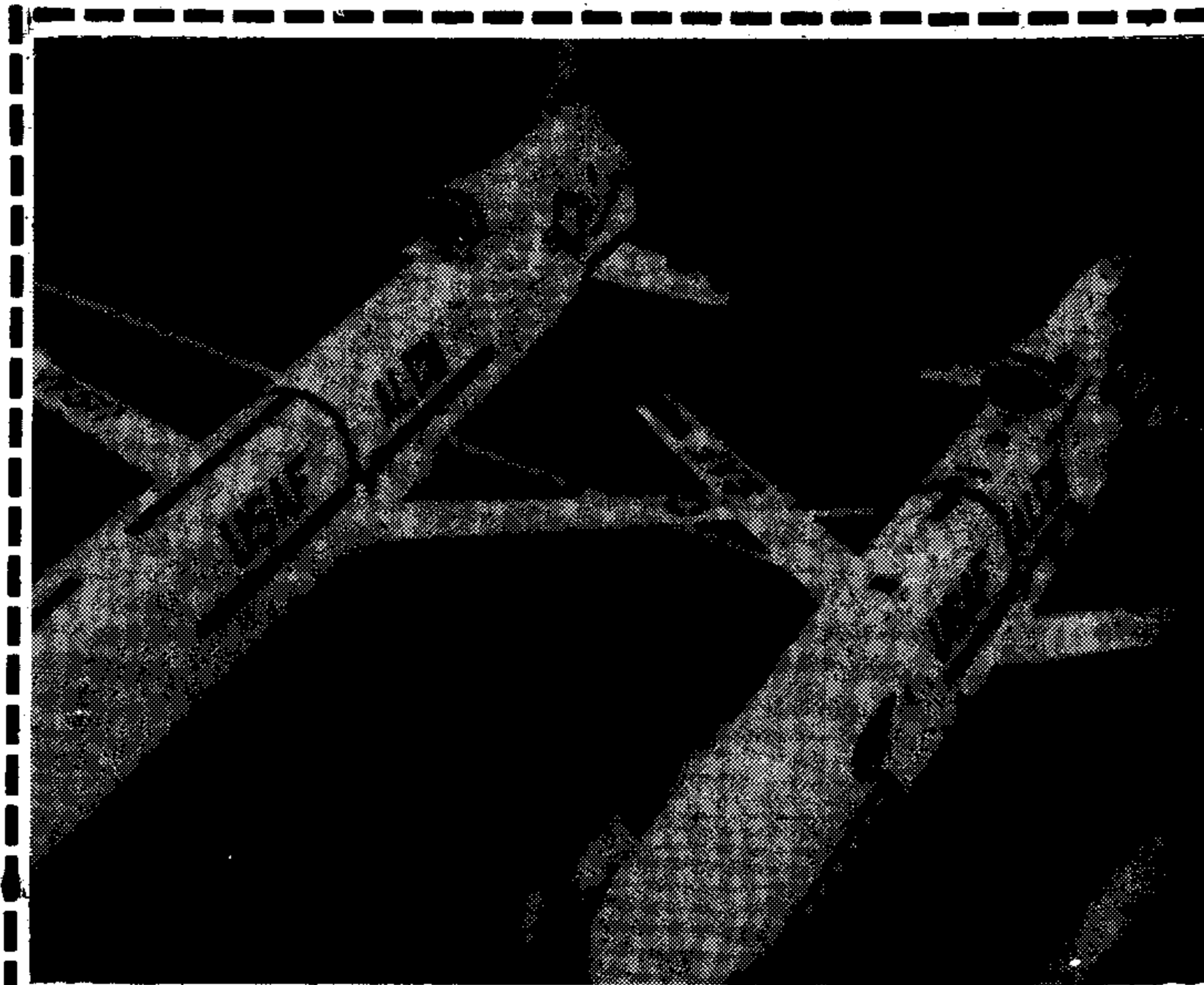
Firstly, it does not explain why rock and roll did not develop with the rise of the modern industrial cities. Secondly, it does not explain why the principal originators of this style

were from the less industrialised areas of America's south.

Thirdly, it does not explain why other styles — like Chicago blues — weren't the absolutely determining point of departure for rock and roll rather than one of several influences.

Fourthly it implies that industrial societies — societies that have generated ideologies of solidarity and collectivism among workers — cannot produce a musical counterpart to socialist ideas.

These weaknesses of analysis, as I see it, are not unimportant. But as 'The Sound of the City' has so much to offer in information and insight, it must remain indispensable reading for anyone attempting to understand the development of popular music and popular culture.



The Day After

"Infantile Insanity — What wisdom do the powerful have on The Day After?". By Jim Tolton.

No Kansas City, Paris, London, New York, Moscow. Silos empty minute man blinding flash to go.

Is anybody there — where anybody where? they panicked in vain, the rain of Summers snow who's to blame?

What's to blame? competition, nationalism's fear, insecurity's exploitation, their fingers on the button the capitalist bureaucracy

I can't see today death rays flash of yesterday, Mummy am I blind I can't see?

I can't play today no time to play like yesterday. Only panics anxiety who's hearts lost

Loves what cost? and friendships known no water just walking slowly while others panic in confusion.

Where are my friends my two daughters love, my comrades in struggle in Kansas, Paris, New York, Moscow?

We wait. Workers, comrades, this is the only world we have, yet we wait and talk of fallouts radiation. We wait and talk in doubt.

We wait in wonder, what goes on above the shelter — the ground. The silence. A dog barks. What nerve. Who's purpose does it serve?

A third of trees a third of grass, they told us wouldn't come to harm: but that flash.

Glowing emotions love in friendships lost, for ever dead cinders the final grey ash.

The President of the US of A

"What can I say."

"Your tragic loss your friendships known, your loved-ones gone, god bless America", bless what — what God?

I begin to doubt the equivocation of the fiend, that lies like truth. Don't shoot there's no food what's your name, what food?

What's going on down there? who are you folks down there? don't shoot.

Slow death, 30 minutes — minute mans away, slow death; a new birth a baby cries a dog still barks — horses hooves,

no food, slow birth slow death; you have no hair too but you look great — I love you too.

P.S.I. house that was — that was my house, where's Barry, Greg and Gary — where's anyone?

Hello — Hello there; we embrace without name known on who's estate.

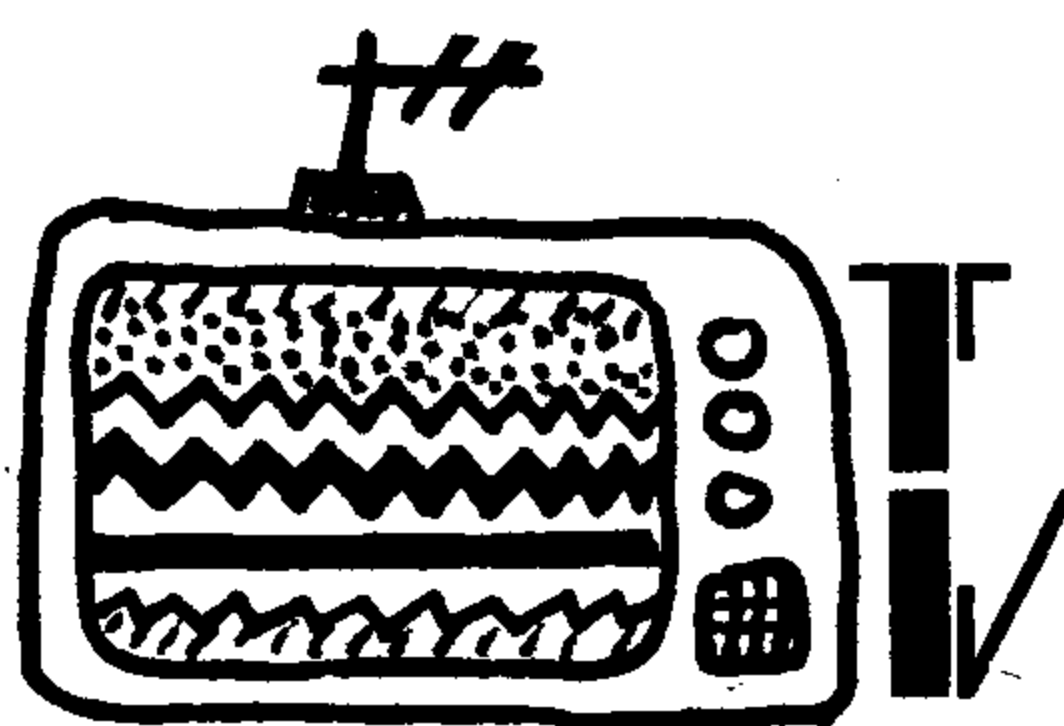
They are to blame, the ruling classes, they are insane their paranoia's to blame.

The people are lame — layed there to rest with trees cinders on grey grass,

desert forms with flat trees in ash without grace.

no nothing — no face the last two embrace.

Hollywood's American



IT'S pretty shameful, I suppose — as much an offence against left wing solidarity as it is a capitulation to celluloid machismo.

Perhaps it's a confession of stark cultural poverty. And it's not something I'm proud of. But the truth is that I like John Wayne.

Not the right-wing friend of arch witch-hunter Senator Joe McCarthy and gung-ho American chauvinist — I was arrested picketing his Vietnam war propaganda movie, 'The Green Berets'. I suppose it's the character I've watched playing himself in dozens of movies over the last 30 years — in marvellous John Ford Westerns like 'She wore a yellow ribbon' and 'The Searchers'; in Ford's picture postcard Ireland as 'The Quiet Man', and in many others until his last movie in 1976, 'The Shootist', shown recently on TV.

Wayne was the subject of the first of Barry Norman's new series on 'The Hollywood Greats'. They grow on you, these Hollywood greats, especially if they get to you young.

TV movies keep the attachments alive and fresh, though it is sometimes eerie to skip from movie to movie and decade to decade accompanying the same actor (Bette Davies recently, for example) from youth to middle

Mick Ackersley reviews Barry Norman's 'The Hollywood Greats' (BBC 1, Mondays 9.55pm)

age and beyond.

Wayne's career spanned five decades, beginning with B-westerns in the '30s. Ford's 'Stagecoach' made him a star in 1939 and he remained 'up there' for four decades, amongst the highest paid and most popular film actors — or, better perhaps, film personalities.

Norman traced the way that the man, a mere actor with no chance to show whether he could be heroic or not, grew indistinguishable from his own screen persona, portraying the great American capitalist virtues of the rugged individual.

He saw himself as the embodiment of 'Americanism', and a guardian of its values.

I had thought otherwise, but Norman — whom Wayne once called a 'pinko liberal' — says he wasn't himself a witch-hunter during the McCarthy period. He did think McCarthy was 'a great American' who had been the victim of a witch-hunt by the pinko liberals!

He starred in a lousy little early '50s movie, 'Big Jim Mac-Claine', which glorified the hunt for Commie agents and spies and obliquely paid its homage to

'Big Joe McCarthy'.

To be fair, 'Big Jim Mac-Claine' and 'The Green Berets' were formula movies. The enemy in either case could have just as well been 'Jap spies' or 'Jap' soldiers in the jungle. Wayne's problem in 1968 was that many Americans were refusing to see Vietnam in the pattern of World War 2 propaganda movies.

Since Wayne's death in 1979, they have put up statues to him in many places in America — to the Wayne of the silver screen, in stylised cowboy gear, personifying 'Americanism'. Before he died Congress struck a special medal and presented it to him, inscribed, 'John Wayne, American'.

Norman showed film of the Congressional Committee which decided to do it hearing a plea from Wayne's 'friend and co-star', Maureen O'Hara — with the red hair and residual Irish accent — who suggested the inscription, her voice breaking in tears as she said it.

Norman's second 'Hollywood Great' was Henry Fonda, and next Monday it's Steve McQueen.

Steve McQueen? That can't be.

The 'Hollywood Greats' were all figures from my childhood. After that the stars get smaller, and become just boring actors. I'm sure of it.

Ford announces foundry closure

FORD announced on Monday January 16 that it plans to close its Thames Foundry plant at Dagenham, Essex. This will involve the loss of 2,000 jobs over a 15-month period ending in April 1985.

This is despite the fact that the workforce has been cooperating with management since 1980 on a radical 'survival plan' that has seen jobs halved from 4000 in 1979 to the present level. The workers have also accepted more flexible working practices.

The closure will leave Ford with only one other iron foundry in Europe — the one at Leamington, Warwickshire, which makes small, specialised, petrol engine components.

Meetings are to be held at all 24 Ford plants, and union officials will recommend blacking of imported engine parts to pressurise management to reconsider their plan.

However, shop stewards from the Dagenham complex are due to meet on Sunday 22nd, and are reported as being likely to discuss pressing for a 24 hour strike as part of a fight to save jobs by industrial action.

The unions also have fears about 1986, when work for a



Ford has also announced the closure of its assembly plant in Ireland.

replacement petrol engine will have to begin. They think that production may be moved to Cologne in West Germany,

which would mean further job losses. About half the 3,500 jobs at the Dagenham engine plant would go.

Law makes scabbing compulsory for SOGAT

THE COURT injunctions against SOGAT and the NUJ revealed something of the scope of the Tory anti-union laws.

The Park Royal (West London) plant which normally prints part of each week's run of the Radio Times is shut over a pay and conditions dispute, and owner Robert Maxwell has threatened to close it permanently. The print union SOGAT told members elsewhere not to print extra to make up for Park Royal, and put a boycott on Radio Times distribution in London.

SOGAT was instructed by the courts before Christmas to lift the boycott. The union executive agreed to comply — but proved unable to browbeat the powerful Central London branch into submission. The boycott remains in force.

Last Wednesday, 11th, Maxwell (an ASTMS member and delegate to the General Committee of Oxford East Labour Party!) went back to the courts to seek a stronger injunction against the union.

The High Court instructed the union to lift the boycott and to allow extra copies of Radio Times to be printed in other plants of Maxwell's BPCC empire.

This amounts to an instruction to union members to scab on their own fellow trade unionists.

Previous injunctions have sought to compel trade unionists to continue doing their own jobs, or to lift picketing or boycott action aimed at halting work by non-union members. But this is the first attempt by the courts to compel trade unionists to do other trade unionists' work.

The ruling against the NUJ at Dimpleby newspapers was no less outrageous. David Dimpleby, the urbane TV 'personality', set out to resolve his conflict with 24 NGA members by sacking them all and diverting the printing of his newspapers to the anti-union T.Bailey Foreman group in Nottingham.

This scab outfit made its name with the NUJ when it sacked 28 journalists on the Nottingham Evening Post for taking part in the NUJ's 1978-9 provincial newspapers pay strike. The union has remained in dispute with the company ever since.

In opposition to Dimpleby's union-busting move, the NUJ instructed its members at Richmond to come out on strike in pursuance of its own national dispute with T.Bailey Foreman, or TBF. Four non-union journalists at Dimpleby Newspapers responded to the strike call by joining the NUJ and walking out with them.

But Dimpleby went to the courts, using the technicality that his printing was being done by a 'separate' company, T.Bailey Foreman printers, which just happens to share the same directors and address as the publishers of the Nottingham Evening Post.

Obediently — though expressing amazement at this application of the law — the judges ruled in Dimpleby's favour. The precedent was set: by skilful use of different companies labels and structures, the employers in the print industry (and presumably elsewhere) can exploit the Tebbitt law even more than they thought.

If Dimpleby successfully cracks the NUJ on this, any and every employer in the print will feel encouraged to look towards non-union printing and smashing the NUJ itself.

The technicalities of the case encouraged naive sections of the union's right wing to pursue a House of Lords appeal. And then, at the very point that the TUC general council was deciding to knife the NGA, the Law Lords came up with a devastating piece of blackmail: they declared that they would only hear the NUJ appeal if the strike instruction were lifted at Richmond.

The NUJ emergency committee, with full powers over disputes between meetings of the NEC, met and with only two votes against voted to capitulate. By withdrawing official support from the Richmond chapel, they in effect overturned the union's long-standing policy of refusing to allow the courts to dictate the conduct of disputes.

They also dealt a potentially lethal blow at the small and isolated Dimpleby chapel, which was suddenly denied strike pay and

other support, and left on its own to uphold the union's national policy of boycotting T. Bailey Foreman.

It is a tribute to the tenacity of the strikers that they have held firm despite this top-level betrayal, and that there is still a dispute for the NUJ to take forward after next weekend.

The strikers are in urgent need of financial support, which should be sent to Roger Hailey, 202 Vicarage Farm Road, Heston, Middlesex.

Co-op helps the sharks

By George McLean
(Manchester ASTMS
Broad Left)

YOUR CARING, sharing Co-op and USDAW are working hand in hand to ensure that a handsome dividend is reaped by a non-union private firm, Industrial Contract Cleaners.

ICC's profits will be boosted at the expense of some of the most vulnerable workers.

Cooperative Insurance Services (CIS) own the tallest building in Manchester. They contracted out the cleaning to a subsidiary of Reckitts of mustard fame — until going out to tender a few weeks ago.

The sharks thrashed around and Reckitts lost the contract to ICC, who put in a lower bid.

Does cheaper cleaning for CIS mean better standards for the workers? Of course not. Ninety women cleaners were made redundant, including one — Emily Cupitt — who has worked at CIS for 21½ years. Half a dozen have been offered jobs by ICC — but under much worse conditions.

The cleaners who worked for Reckitts were organised in USDAW. But everything they had won over the years at CIS has come from strong local action, with little concrete help from the USDAW full-time officials.

Their achievements are impressive, especially so for part-time workers. For instance, in 1982 Reckitts said (stop me if you've heard this one): 'We've made no profits, you get no pay rise'.

An immediate one-day strike brought the women 10%, an extra week's holiday... and pay for the day of action! They were now on five weeks holiday a year — ICC give only a fortnight.

Under Reckitts cleaners worked a 15 hour week — now cut by ICC to 12½ hours, with a consequent slashing of pay by up to £8 a week. Their rest breaks have vanished completely — now the workers complain that they don't even have time to talk to each other on the job. That's great for isolating and weakening workers.

The number of women employed by ICC is lower than the number Reckitts employed — so those 'fortunate' enough to remain have to slog harder to earn a crust.

Immediately the redundancies were announced, the women began a picket which lasted only a few hours. Unfortunately the only USDAW group represented on the CIS workplace Joint Trade Union Committee is the catering staff directly employed by CIS. Nevertheless, the USDAW officials did not bring the issue to either the JTUC or to Co-op sponsored MPs. They did not even approach the local Cooperative Union (an administrative Co-op section which may have been able to pressurise CIS into refusing the ICC contract).

What backing was given by the USDAW officials? Step forward Duncan McBride, full-timer and runner-up to Len Murray as Flavour of the Month (i.e. easel 'n' gall). Bro. McBride did step forward — right across his members' picket line, in order to try to recruit the ICC people!

Is this what his members have paid subs for year after year?

The JTUC unions' shop stewards (USDAW, ASTMS, UCATT, and ACTSS) are meeting shortly to plan a campaign to stop the Co-op conniving further with Thatcherite deals involving private sharks. But any socialist principles the Co-op once rested on are crumbling fast.

I hear unofficially that when the USDAW full-timers asked CIS to agree to a closed shop under ICC, the radical cooperators hinted this could not be done unless they complied with Tebbitt's regulations by holding a workplace ballot.

USDAW failed to press the point — well, we can't break the law, can we, boys and girls?

Now the resistance seems to be over... at least, until those self same sharks begin tearing the guts out of the catering department. A sad story — not just as another step down the Tories' yellowspine road to industrial slavery, but as an example of a union disgracefully failing to save its members — its lifeblood — like Emily Cupitt.

Labour right under pressure

By Cllr Garth Frankland

THE parents occupying the Sandal Day Care Nursery and the Langthwaite Grange Nursery are now in their fourth week of defiance of the right-wing Wakefield Council.

At a meeting lobbied by 100 NUPE members last Wednesday 11th, Wakefield District Labour Party voted by two to one to oppose these cuts and called up on the councillors not to cut. But the majority right wing caucus had already met that morning, and reaffirmed their determination to cut and to close the nurseries.

There is now a very sharp division between the Labour group and the District Labour Party. For example, the NUPE

Led by Jack Smart, the 32 Labour councillors have implemented £4 million worth of Tory cuts down to the last job loss.

The Labour group has suspended 11 councillors who voted against the cuts.

lobby was organised by local NUPE official George Mudie, who is also leader of the Leeds council group and Chair of the Regional Labour Party.

In the past Jack Smart has managed to keep an iron grip on the council, on the unions, and on the Labour Party, but now, in the face of the Tory offensive, that grip is slipping.

Smart has been abroad during most of the last fortnight, and the right wing has wobbled all over the place. They issued a court order against two men (one of them a local Labour councillor) involved in the occupation. Then they withdrew the summons just before the court appearance. Now the council has issued a fresh set of writs against the occupiers, and

seems set to carry these through, despite the District Labour Party opposition.

The solid support for the nursery occupation from local trade unionists gives it the possibility of defeating Smart.

Supporting strike action should be called for from the local authority workers, many of whom are facing job losses as a result of the announced cuts.

The nursery occupiers and their supporters in the local labour movement should campaign for the policy of the Wakefield District Labour Party, against closures, to be carried out by the Labour-controlled council.

Thornton View

By Helen Johnston

WORKERS from the Thornton View hospital in Bradford, who have been occupying against threatened closure, lobbied the government on January 16.

The minister concerned, however, was non-committal, and refused to give a definite decision as to whether the government is prepared to defy massive public support in Bradford and close the geriatric hospital.

Meanwhile, the Regional Health Authority is attempting to undermine the occupation by the victimisation of a leading militant shop steward, Betty Elie. She has been disciplined on trumped-up charges.

This follows disciplinary action against another militant shop steward, Josie Patterson, at Westbrook hospital in Bradford.

The occupation committee is organising an open day for women on Sunday January 22, to emphasise the leading role women workers have played in the occupation. A conference is also being organised, on January 25, at Bradford University, to discuss various aspects of the occupation.

Pickets are very urgently needed, both to defend the occupation and to boost the workers' morale. For further details contact Bradford 817575.

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'Labour's Options for Defence': a day school organised by Labour CND. Saturday January 28, from 10am at Sheffield Town Hall. Credentials £2.50 from K. Edwards, Hammersmith CLP, Greenwood House, 446 Uxbridge Rd, London W5

Scott Lithgow needs action, not pleading!

WITH the resumption of work after the New Year break at the threatened Scott Lithgow shipyards on the Lower Clyde, the campaign to keep it open has now started rolling — in the wrong direction.

The immediate threat to Scott Lithgow's future arises from Britoil's decision to cancel its contract for an offshore oil rig. If implemented, this decision would cost the jobs of all 4,500 workers at the yard. But even if Britoil overturns its decision, the yard's future looks bleak, since there is nothing on its order books.

Despite its reputation, the yard does not have a militant tradition. Even now, with the yard's future hanging in the balance, there is little sign of an active opposition emerging. The reaction to the leadership of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions calling off the national shipyard strike due to begin on January 6 was muted.

Perhaps even more serious is the decision of the convenor (Duncan McNeill) and the shop stewards committee at the yard to sign a so-called 'survival plan' involving a major deterioration in working conditions at the yard (e.g. abolition of job demarcation; introduction of three-shift working and thereby effective abolition of overtime). By doing so, they hope that British Shipbuilders will agree to renegotiate the contract with Britoil.

Duncan McNeill is prepared to go even further and has pledged readiness to agree to even more drastic changes if necessary "to improve the yard's competitiveness". As one worker at Scott Lithgow put it: "He must have got a pen for Christmas. He wants to sign everything he can."

The shop stewards committee has failed to draw the workers in the yard into a campaign against

On January 17 British Shipbuilders announced 800 immediate redundancies at Scott Lithgow, with 2200 more to go by March. Union leader Jim Murray's fighting response was: "It seems clear that the closure is inevitable". Stan Crooke reports from Clydeside on the background

closure. There has been no mass meeting since before Christmas, not even to ask for a mandate to agree to the "survival plan".

No bulletins or leaflets have been produced to counter management propaganda. Nor has there been any appeal for support to Cammell Lairds on Merseyside, although the two yards are being played off against each other, since both are engaged in offshore oil-rig work.

And voluntary redundancies are still occurring, without any effective opposition. The yard's future is in grave doubt and there is no sign of effective opposition from the unions. Some workers are, hardly surprisingly, deciding that the lesser evil is to take redundancy.

The campaign now in progress to save the yard involves a variety of figures of some distinction appealing to a variety of other figures of equal distinction to do something to stop the yard being shut down.

The response from all these talks and concessions so far has been nil. Even when the shop stewards agreed to accept the "survival plan", British Shipbuilders still claimed that nothing could be done to renegotiate the Britoil contract. And whilst local Tories and industrialists are scampering around like headless chickens at the thought of Scott Lithgow closing, their English counterparts, clearly made of sterner stuff,

show no signs of remorse.

Up till now, the workers at the yard have been allotted the role of passive spectators both by the shop stewards committee and also by the STUC and national union leaderships.

The latter's strategy is not to mobilise workers but to make as many concessions as possible. If they concede everything, then the yard might just remain open, at least for the time being, and with a reduced workforce having to work under a particularly strict labour discipline.

An alternative outcome can be achieved only by an alternative strategy. This means drawing the workers themselves into the centre of the struggle, winning the propaganda war, and organising for occupation of the yard, keeping the three orders now being worked on at Scott Lithgow as 'hostages' until the yard's future is guaranteed.

And, above all, it means appealing for solidarity action from other yards, linking up the fight for the survival of Scott Lithgow with a national campaign in opposition to the "survival plan" now being negotiated between British Shipbuilders and the Confed leadership at national level.

CORRECTION.

In last week's Socialist Organiser (number 161) an article on the Carousell dispute in Glasgow stated that "the Socialist Workers Party (who) argue that the strike has already been lost and to pressurise the Regional Committee to pay the fines". This is a misprint and should have read: "the Socialist Workers Party argue that... to pressurise the Regional Committee is a waste of time."

Pit scabbing peters out

By Arthur Bough

MINERS in the North Staffordshire coalfield have continued to take action following attempts by winders to break the national overtime ban.

The winders, with the help of large numbers of police, succeeded in breaking the overtime ban at two of the five North Staffs. pits on January 9-10. Mass pickets at the other three pits prevented winders going in.

The winders' branch then called a 24 hour strike as a protest against the picketing. On the same day their branch was disbanded and the members suspended.

The next day there was a return to work, but miners at Wolstanton colliery were sent home because repairs to winding equipment were still being carried out. In the afternoon, miners at Silverdale colliery walked out as one of the scab winders clocked on.

The pit is a drift mine, and miners insisted on walking down the drift rather than using cages operated by the scabs. About 900 miners work at Silverdale.

The next day, January 11, they voted unanimously to continue the strike for another 24 hours.

Pickets at Silverdale on January 12 were met by over 100 police, in an attempt to get members of the colliery overseers' union NACODS into the pit for the afternoon shift. Only two NACODS members went in.

Later that day, the colliery management locked out another 250 miners, members of the NUM Power Group.

At 9pm that night, when only six pickets were on the gate, a car drove at them, and nearly ran over Micky Finney, the union branch secretary at the pit. He managed to jump on the bonnet and was carried about 30 yards before he could jump off.

The branch returned to work

on January 13. Management agreed to allow miners the choice of using the cage or walking down the drift — but the union agreed to a management condition that this should not lead to any loss of production time.

That same day there was the first statement from the Coal Board that the overtime ban was having an effect. Contradicting Coal Board boss Ian MacGregor, a spokesperson at the Stoke-based Western Area of the NCB said that there were shortfalls of phurnacite and homefire.

On January 14, the scab winders announced after an unofficial meeting that they would call off their attempts to break the overtime ban, but the leader of the scabs, former branch secretary Steve Higginson, confirmed that he would be going to a meeting on the 15th in Nottingham with other winders.

On the weekend of the 14th-15th, an underground pump at Holditch colliery packed up. Management approached the NUM to carry out the repair.

It appears (so an NUM member told SO) that an NUM official gave the go-ahead without any consultation. But the craft section, the NUM Power Group, refused to help with the repair. They called a 24 hour strike at the pit on the 16th in protest at NUM members carrying out the job. 700 miners at the pit were sent home.

The situation in the North Staffordshire pits remains tense. It is clear that the overtime ban is beginning to have an effect, as repair work normally done at weekends builds up.

The overtime ban is also demonstrating the inadequacy of miners' basic wages.

It is up to the NUM leadership now to go on the offensive and launch a campaign for one-day strikes in preparation for an all-out strike on pay and jobs.

Industrial digest



A ONE-DAY strike took place on Monday January 16, involving almost all the 19,000 workers employed at the eleven Royal Ordnance Factories. They were protesting against the government's privatisation plans.

More than 500 workers lobbied Parliament as the Ordnance Factories and Military Services Bill was receiving its second reading, which paves the way for the privatisation of arms production.

According to the government's timetable, the factories — at Birtley [Newcastle], Bridgewater, Glascoed [Gwent], Patricroft [Manchester], Bishopston [Glasgow], Chorley, Leeds, Radway Green [Cheshire], Blackburn, Enfield [London], and Nottingham — would begin independent commercial operations in October.

A SERIES of lightning strikes is threatened by the 6,700 British Airways engineering and maintenance staff, who are already operating an overtime ban. They want an improvement on a two-year pay offer, worth 4 per cent this year and 5 per cent in 1985.

So far only two out of the nine bargaining groups — pilots and technical engineering staff — have accepted the offer. The 1750 strong engineering and technical supervisors' sections has voted for rejection.

This means that long-haul flights from Heathrow Airport will be disrupted, and other services interrupted.

The unions claim that pay increases in other airlines are averaging 6.5 per cent. They are against being pushed into a two-year deal in order to prepare British Airways for privatisation.

LONDON Transport engineering and maintenance workers at the Acton rail works in West London voted unanimously to stop work and to join a lobby of Parliament against the government's London Regional Transport Bill this week (Tuesday January 17).

Under the proposed legislation their works [along with other underground and bus plants] faces privatisation, which could lead to closure.

The Tories plan to remove control of all public transport in London from the Greater London Council, and to replace it with the corporate body whose first task would be to split London Transport into two subsidiary companies running bus and tube services respectively. This could lead to profitable services and attractive capital assets being hived off to the private sector.

Sell-out at Land Rover

By Jim Denham

THE LAND Rover pay strike, due to start on Friday 13th, was called off after mass meetings at the 11 plants voted narrowly to accept a marginally 'improved' offer from the company.

Once again, a major pay battle in BL has been effectively sabotaged by the national union officials, who place considerations of commercial viability above the living standards of their members. Instead of preparing for action on the basis of the previous two-to-one vote for a strike, officials like TGWU national automotive officer Grenville Hawley continued negotiations right up to the last minute, desperate to clutch at any straw which might give them an excuse for recommending acceptance.

In fact the 'improved' offer is no real improvement at all — and in some respects Land Rover workers are worse off than they were before.

The claim was for £12 on the basic rate plus £7.50 bonus con-

solidation. The company's first offer amounted to just 3% in 'new money', the rest of it being bonus consolidation. This was rejected at mass meetings, and the company made it clear that they were not prepared to shift their position on new money.

The £2.35 'improvement' was tied to a cut in rest allowance of 40 minutes per week!

Inevitably the wheeling and dealing of the officials sapped militancy and confidence among the workforce, especially as a meeting of senior stewards voted to back up the officials' recommendation.

Even so, the final vote was close: 3,967 to 3,227. The decisive vote was at the second largest plant, the Sherpa factory at Common Lane, Birmingham. They had rejected the offer first time round, but were swung to acceptance at the second meeting.

The largest plant, Solihull, voted to reject, as they had done before.

A strike would have faced immediate problems of the division between Solihull and Common Lane on the one hand, and the nine smaller plants on the other.

The smaller plants face closure under Land Rover's 'rationalisation' plans, and most of them voted against action in the first round of mass meetings.

But firm leadership from the officials and senior stewards, plus delegations going out from Solihull and Common Lane to the small plants, could have overcome this problem.

The sell-out of the pay claim is undoubtedly a setback to the chances of stopping the closures,

but militants at Solihull and Common Lane must argue for solidarity with the threatened plants and refuse to accept transferred work.

Lesbians and gays win out!

LESBIANS and gay men employed by Manchester City Council will now enjoy greater job protection because of a recent Council decision. At its meeting on Wednesday 4 January the Council agreed to include "no discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or disability" to its existing equal opportunities programme which already covers women and ethnic minorities.

The Labour Campaign for Gay Rights has been campaigning locally for this policy for the last two years and the successful amendment was an initiative from local government union NALGO who have an excellent policy on gay rights. The proposal was discussed in detail at December's Personnel Committee, with the Tories opposing the inclusion of both sexual orientation and disability. Audrey Greaves, Liberal Councillor for Levenshulme, opposed including sexual orientation despite the fact that support for this is national Liberal policy.

What miners think

By Paul Cooper

I LIVE in the south end of Stoke, within a mile or so of both Florence and Hem Heath pits, so the day after the successful picket at Hem Heath I sought out a friend of mine, a Power Group member, to ask him what the dispute was about.

His response to my first question, 'What's it all about, Brian?' was quite simply: 'Greed. Just greed.'

He was disgusted at the action taken by the winders against the overtime ban. And from what he said, this was a common feeling among rank and file Power Group members.

The turnout of 150 at Hem Heath, and a similar picket at Florence, on the day the winders intended to break the ban, confirms that. This is in an area not known for militancy.

Brian went on to explain why he thought it was a matter of greed. Winders, it appears, stand to lose the most in cash terms from the overtime ban. But, he said, those who claim to be losing over £50 a week must have been working every waking hour available, including weekends.

Brian went on to emphasise that the overtime ban is linked to rejection of the 5.2% pay offer and of pit closures. The winders' action, therefore, was an attempt to undermine the struggle to get a better standard of living for the majority of workers in the mining industry. And it was being seen as such by rank and file Power Group members.

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Two more print unions in the firing line

TORY LAWS SAY: SCAB OR ELSE!

TWO unions in the printing industry could come into sharp collision with the Tory anti-union laws again this week.

SOGAT 82's leaders buckled under pressure before Christmas, and capitulated to a court injunction obtained by the union-busting 'socialist' millionaire Robert Maxwell. This week they have declared their refusal to comply with a further, more draconian, court ruling, which came into force last Wednesday, 11th.

Judges instructed SOGAT members in other plants of Maxwell's company BPCC to do the work of their striking colleagues at the Park Royal plant, by printing an extended run of the Radio Times. They also reiterated the previous injunction against the trade union boycott of Radio Times distribution in London, since in fact it had never been lifted.

SOGAT 82 has received a court order instructing them to scab on members in dispute at Robert Maxwell's BPCC print works at Park Royal, London.

The union has refused to scab. It has refused to withdraw its instruction to members not to print copies of the Radio Times normally produced at Park Royal.

But the Tory law is: Scab — or else. So if the SOGAT leaders stand firm, they will be hauled up within the next few days for 'contempt of court'.

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By Alan Gordon

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The judges also reiterated the previous injunction against the trade union boycott of Radio Times distribution in London, since in fact the London members of SOGAT have never lifted it.

The next legal stage is punitive fines or damages, like against the NGA. And the next stage in the struggle is an escalation, if SOGAT takes steps to defend itself against Maxwell and the courts by boycotting the printing and distribution of other publications from BPCC.

Meanwhile, on Saturday 21st, a Special Delegate Meeting of the National Union of Journalists will vote on whether to flout an injunction and reinstate the union's principled stand of defying the anti-union legislation. The vote will be on whether to reimpose an official instruction for strike action against Dimpleby Newspapers in Richmond.

The union's six-person Emergency Committee intervened in the dispute on December 15 by voting four to two to *reverse* an unanimous decision taken a few days earlier by the full National Executive, and to withdraw official support for the Dimpleby chapel members, pending a ruling by the High Court on the union's appeal against an injunction.

This switch of line, which not climbed down to the courts but also stripped the Richmond strikers of £1000 per week in strike benefit and other support, provoked anger among many NUJ activists. And it caught the

union's right wing unawares.

At the National Executive Committee meetings, right wingers — supported by a number on the Left — had carried a proposal for a Special Delegate Meeting. Some evidently hoped that this might offer an escape route from further confrontation with the courts.

But then the emergency committee called off the official strike. The right wing immediately recognised that the SDM could now provide the basis for the rank and file membership to reinstate the action, and began to campaign for the SDM to be called off.

Last Wednesday, 11th, a recalled NEC meeting voted by a majority of one to proceed with the SDM. There is a good chance that the union policy will at the weekend revert once again to defiance and confrontation.

At the centre of the agenda for the SDM is a declaration of principles tabled by the NEC when it was unanimously for defiance: this policy statement will now certainly be opposed by a number of NEC members who originally voted for it.

Amendments range from right wing appeals to remain 'within the law' through to attempts to toughen up the statement, specifying the need to prepare industrial action by the NUJ and other unions in the event of further legal attacks or sequestration of funds, and condemning the TUC's betrayal of the NGA.

Oxford branch has tabled an amendment which calls on 'the full TUC — or those TUC unions prepared to stand in defence of union rights — to lend the NUJ and NGA unqualified political, financial and industrial support in defence of basic union rights'.

Also from Oxford comes a further resolution, committing the NUJ to campaign for a recall TUC congress, to reverse the General Council's decision on the NGA.

A number of branches, together with the Provincial Newspapers Industrial Council, condemn the lifting of the strike instruction at Richmond, and urge that the NEC should give 'full official support and strike pay to our members on Dimpleby Newspapers immediately following the House of Lords decision, irrespective of what that decision may be'.

Despite the confusion created by the right wing manoeuvres in the last month, the NUJ's conference of rank and file delegates gives the best chance of reversing a damaging decision, and re-launching the struggle against the Tebbit Act which the TUC General Council did its best to scuttle last month.

For SOGAT members, the fate of the battle against Maxwell is in the much less safe hands of general secretary Bill Keys.

There is no doubt, however, that if SOGAT does stand its ground and fight back against this attack, it is in a vastly more powerful position to win than was the NGA against Eddie Shah's largely non-union operation in Warrington. Full-scale SOGAT boycotts of Maxwell's publications, and of any alternative printer to Radio Times, could be a powerful lever to force Maxwell to reopen the Park Royal plant and abandon the use of Thatcher's laws.

Keys sat on the fence throughout the NGA struggle at Warrington, and mobilised no significant solidarity action, thus weakening SOGAT's case for industrial support from other unions now.

But it's not too late for Keys to come out publicly campaigning against the Tebbit Act, and to withdraw from the backroom talks in which he and Len Murray are engaged with the Tory union-buster Tom King.

The NGA leaders may be quietly moving to ditch their dispute with Eddie Shah; but this is not an issue which can be gracefully dropped.

The courts and injunction-wielding employers are coming after the unions more aggressively than ever. The Tory laws will shred union strength unless they are stopped soon.

By this weekend we will know whether SOGAT and the NUJ will take up the Tory gauntlet and fight back.

The fight can and must be resumed to reverse the General Council's decision to scab on the NGA, and for those unions who voted against capitulation to pledge full industrial and political support to SOGAT and the NUJ in any stand they may take against the courts.

