

**Break
links
with
Tories**

Socialist ORGANISER

**Recall
the
TUC**

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TRADE UNIONS

BANNED

By Mick Horne and
Stephen Baxter

THE government's announcement, on January 25, that trade unions were to be banned at the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) at Cheltenham, was an unprecedented attack on workers' rights.

By offering a £1000 bribe, the Tories hope to persuade over 5000 members of civil service unions at GCHQ to sell their rights and join tame 'staff associations' — where they will have no power to go on strike, or to have recourse to industrial tribunals.

Those who refuse to take the Judas money will be forced to transfer to other jobs. If they refuse those jobs, they face the sack.

The reasons for the precise timing and form of the Tories' move are unclear. They have chosen to try to ban even individual union membership, rather than just withdrawing union recognition or exploiting the union leaders' evident willingness to sign a no-strike agreement. (A prece-

"We now know that it is only a matter of time before our members in the public and other essential services face the threat of similar action".

Rodney Bickerstaffe, general secretary, NUPE.

dent already exists at the submarine base at Faslane).

But whatever the details, the move is certainly part of the Tories' overall anti-union drive.

As NUPE general secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe has pointed out, the 'national security' argument used against unions in GCHQ can equally well be used against millions of workers in essential services — health, electricity, gas, water...

The Tories have already declared their intention legally to limit industrial action in those services. The GCHQ coup, if it succeeds, will be an important precedent.

Geoffrey Howe has magnanimously proclaimed that the government does not intend to introduce similar measures 'outside the field of security and intelligence...'

But this by no means indicates that the ban will not extend beyond GCHQ. Howe's 'field' could, for example, spread into areas such as the Ministry of Defence and Foreign Office.

Besides, who would believe a Tory promise anyway? Remember the one about 'the National Health Service is safe with us'.

The government announcement was met by protest action from rank and file civil servants across the country.

Spontaneous strikes and walk-outs took place in London, Manchester, Liverpool, Cardiff, Sheffield, Edinburgh, and elsewhere.

In Nottingham, where four out of the five DHSS offices came out on Friday 27th, one strike told SO. "We can't let the government get away with this. If they win this one, where will they ban unions next? Thatcher talks about trade union freedom in Poland, but over here it's a different story!"

Anger is running high at the grass roots. But the union leaderships have been unstinting, deter-

Strike to save workers' rights!

TUC should stop talks with the Tories

mined, and absolutely resolute... in their efforts to stifle any talk of mass strike action, and their professions of patriotism.

Mr Len ('if it goes on strike, denounce it') Murray was at the head of the fight, pledging full support in trying to talk the Tories into changing their minds. Right behind Murray came the leaders of the civil service unions, notably the smarmy Alistair Graham of CPSA, whose eyes are firmly fixed on one day filling Murray's class-collaborationist boots, and John Sheldon of CSU, a union which represents over 1000 radio officers at Cheltenham.

Sheldon declared that to strike would be "to fall into the trap set by Sir Geoffrey Howe".

JOHN HARRIS (I/L)



"The Government over recent months has clamped down on civil servants' activities, including referring in public to the effect of cuts — or even writing in private about them to their MPs. They have been threatened with disciplinary action for writing about cuts in union journals."

Guardian, January 27.

The leaders of the trade union movement will not put up a fight unless they are given an almighty shove from below. Thatcher won't back down because of insipid interviews with Len Murray on 'Weekend World', or because of 'a mass rally with speakers from all political parties' (another idea being floated). Only industrial action will get the government to retreat.

"Even senior civil servants are not immune... They are now being asked for the first time such questions as: Are you a CND supporter? Do you support the Government's policies on nuclear weapons?"

Financial Times, Jan. 27

"An urgent matter of national security... someone in high places in Government service is untrustworthy..."

A government spokesperson giving evidence for the prosecution in the case of Sarah Tisdall, the civil servant hauled into court for leaking a document to the Guardian about the Tories' plans to manipulate the media over the arrival of Cruise.

THE 'Socialist Caucus' group (the 'hard left' within CPSA's Broad Left) is putting out a leaflet calling on branches to flood union National Executives with motions calling for a one-day civil service all-out strike, as the start of a campaign of industrial action.

CPSA has called on members at GCHQ to refuse to sign the Tories' ultimatum. All the civil service unions should make a major public campaign out of this call.

Refusals to sign will probably lead to suspensions and sackings by the Tories' March 1 deadline — and the unions must be ready to respond with strike action both throughout the civil service and at GCHQ itself.

The issue concerns not only civil servants, but all workers. We should demand that the TUC organise not only for a civil service one-day strike, but for a one-day general strike, to defend union rights.

And the TUC's talks with the Tories on new anti-union laws, as well as its collaboration with the Tories on official committees like the NEDC, must be called off.

EDITORIAL

Recall the TUC

THERE IS one standard reply to socialist criticisms of the 'Alternative Economic Strategy'.

We say that the AES - increased public spending, import controls, price controls, etc. - is a reshuffling of capitalism, rather than a socialist alternative. The supporters of the AES reply: "It is not enough to repeat yet again the case for a socialist alternative. We need immediate, realistic proposals".

Now the TUC is taking that argument one step further. Its document on the 1984 Budget, 'Protecting Those in Need', says: "In these circumstances it is not enough to repeat yet again the case for an alternative strategy". And it goes on to make 'immediate', 'realistic' proposals for marginal changes in Tory policy.

The AES was always more like a list of pleas to Whitehall and Westminster than a programme for working class action. Now the TUC, shelving the full AES as something for the misty future, has shifted decisively to the role of humble adviser to the Tory government.

"The TUC believes that the key priority of the Government, if it is not going to change the broad thrust of its strategy, should be to help the least well off..." And if sharks won't stop being sharks, at least they should be kind to the little fishes.

Another TUC document, entitled 'TUC Strategy', was put out to TUC unions for discussion from the January 25 General Council.

None of the General Council's supposed left-wingers is known to have opposed the document, and the Morning Star reported it neutrally. But it contains the same philosophy of retreat, writ large if somewhat cloudily.

It flatly repudiates any oppositional role for trade unions. "Unions are the vehicle for winning the consent of individuals as workers for policies that employers and governments wish to pursue and that need the co-operation of workers if they are to succeed."

"All parties have to be diligent in avoiding unnecessary strikes", it continues. Making the case for collaboration with the Tories, it asserts: "While the role of Labour governments has been a major factor in the achievement of trade union economic and social objectives, the basis of the current TUC involvement in government owes much to Churchill's war-time and subsequent Conservative governments".

These recent TUC documents spell out the political path that the top union leaders have followed since the June 1983 election, through last year's Blackpool TUC congress, the decision to talk to the Tories about new anti-union laws, and the betrayal of the NGA.

The union leaders want to establish themselves in the role of brokers between the Tory government and the working class.

But the Tories won't grant them sufficient capital in the way of concessions to support this role. And, more important, the working class cannot and will not be satisfied with whatever crumbs the TUC leaders gather from the Tory table.

The response from the rank and file should be to tell the TUC to break off its collaboration with the Tories and start fighting them, rather than advising them. We must campaign for a recall TUC congress, to call Len Murray to account and re-launch the fight against the anti-union laws.

An overhaul

WITH this issue we start making changes in Socialist Organiser - larger type on some pages, for example - which we urge readers not to become too alarmed about! Our aim is to transform the appearance of the paper for the better over the next three or four issues. The end product should be a lighter, more readable, more sellable and therefore generally more useful SO.

The common criticism of SO is that it is too 'heavy', has too many words to a page, not enough graphics, and that too many long articles are crammed into too little space. On the whole this criticism is true.

Partly it is a - perhaps avoidable - by-product of our attempt to produce a paper that seriously analyses and discusses the issues of the day. For example, an average 16-page issue will carry twice as much material as and cover a much wider range of issues than the 12-page Socialist Action - and quite a lot more than Socialist Worker, which after its fashion is an excellent paper.

Partly it's the unavoidable result of SO trying to fulfill many of the functions that should properly be done by a magazine. The longer articles on Ireland are the most obvious example, but there are others.

Partly it is the result of the haste with which the paper is produced by an overworked staff, working under pressure in not-so-good conditions.

We can do better! We're working on it. Some readers may have useful ideas and suggestions or constructive criticisms. Please let us have them. And please bear with us while we overhaul the paper during the next three or four weeks.

Beginning in March we will be helping produce a new socialist magazine. Watch SO for details.

LABOUR WORKPLACE BRANCHES

Going to the grass roots

AT a national gathering of Labour Party workplace branches in London last Saturday, 28th, representatives of about 20 branches met to exchange ideas and experiences and to discuss the problems they have encountered so far while working to root the Labour Party in the workplace.

Over the last two years workplace branches have been set up in Timex in Dundee, Cammel Lairds in Liverpool, the Post Office in Coventry, GKN, Dista and in many fire stations, council offices, town halls, etc. There are now over 60 workplace branches.

The big Tory victory in last June's election, the continuing Tory attack on the rights of trade unions to exist and the attempt to break the links between the unions and the Labour Party - these add great urgency to the work of building Labour Party workplace branches.

The leaders of many unions, of the TUC and of the Labour Party have shown themselves to the rank and file to be inadequate in fighting the vicious

Jean Lane reports on a national meeting of Labour Party workplace branches

attacks on the working class. The Labour Party leadership has time and again ignored the policies passed at conference and turned their backs on delegate decisions, for example, on unilateral disarmament and abortion. The TUC leaders continue to talk to the Tories who are out to smash us. They even rattled on the NGA's fight against the anti-union laws.

Many rank and file members of the unions see these inadequacies, betrayals and manoeuvres repeated time after time. They feel powerless and become cynical about

politics altogether.

Workplace branches can help the rank and file organise to fight back and thus help overcome cynicism, disillusionment and defeatism.

A major problem with workplace branches so far has been their isolation one from another and the difficulties they've had in getting help or recognition from the Labour Party. The London meeting was called to help us coordinate nationally and to put pressure on the Labour Party to take us seriously.

Much concern was expressed at the lack of help - and sometimes hindrance - from Labour Party regions in getting their branches off the ground.

But despite this, most of them are healthy branches of the Labour Party which have increased Party membership and spread political debate amongst fellow workers. It is proof that if we had a democratic party with a genuine interest in involving the rank and file, thousands of workplace branches could grow and flourish.

The main problems discussed at the conference were

the lack of agreed uniform procedures and practices for setting up Labour Party workplace branches.

Different regional officers give different interpretation of the rules. One comrade from London said that you could phone up region or the national office with a question six times a day and get six different answers!

Regions were very slow in processing new members' applications. The experience of one branch was that on setting up the branch they had recruited nine new members to the Labour Party, given the applications to the region last September, and were still waiting to hear from them!

A workplace branch in Lucas Aerospace invited their regional office to the first meeting three times but received no answer, and nobody turned up from the region.

Many people felt that the Labour Party leadership were suspicious of the workplace branches and worried by them because they weakened their control of the Party and would put pressure on the unions to become more democratic in forming the policies and voting in the Labour Party.

A resolution was sent to the NEC stating that the provisions for setting up workplace branches were totally inadequate and it was suggested that:

*They should have a panel of speakers who would go round the regions explaining how and why to set up branches.

*That a national register of workplace branches should be available through the regions enabling us to coordinate activity and keep in touch.

*That there should be annual consultation meetings of workplace branches.

*That there should be general literature and information on setting branches up.

*That regional officers should be given the support and resources needed to set up branches.

It was also felt by the conference that branches should have more rights to delegations to GMCs than the rules laid down.

An ad hoc steering committee was set up (to be re-elected at a reconvened meeting in March) which will build up a national register of workplace branches.

We also agreed to design a starter's information pack to help new branches. Regional committees are to be set up which would organise speakers, literature and joint meetings in the regions. Also a national workplace branch newsletter will be produced.

Despite the problems of getting workplace branches recognised as a part of the Labour Party there is a spreading enthusiasm amongst workers to get them set up. Everyone at the conference confirmed that it is very easy to do once you have a handful of people who are interested, and with interesting debate on political issues, films and speakers they are certain to grow.

The need to democratise our labour movement is vital and to do this we must draw people away from the feeling of powerlessness and cynicism they may have from being under attack.

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

Take the minutes as Red

DRAMATIC proof that unions at GCHQ are a hotbed of communist extremism and subversion have come to light in a special investigation.

Reporter Patrick Spilling, disguised as a civil servant, entered a meeting of the local Cheltenham union branch as a mole.

His report is a startling vindication of Premier Margaret Thatcher's determination to keep the trade unions out of crucial areas of public life - like industry, public services, commerce, printing and transport.

It gives the lie to trade union claims that their union branches are in the spirit of the British Constitution.

The meeting took place in the shadowy corners of a public house, aptly called the Red Lion. In the course of the meeting, several "Comrades" left to flip pound notes over the bar and return clutching glasses of drink. It is many years since this reporter bought his own drink but since more than £1 was being offered in return for two pints of English Ale, the transaction was clearly a cover to disguise the large sums being paid to the landlord.

I noted not one of the members said "Bottoms Up" before they drank. One was almost certainly nursing a glass of vodka in the corner.

The real dirt began to emerge when the meeting got under way.

The chairman started as if to read the minutes. He was stopped in his tracks. Casually one woman said from the back of the room, "I propose we take the minutes as Red." Without demur the meeting agreed.

Scarcely had I recovered from what amounted to a clear confession that the previous meeting had been a communist cell than the chairman produced the next bit. From his briefcase he pulled out a stack of papers and nonchalantly began to read.

Every single one was from what he termed "Head Office" - obviously a union cover for the Kremlin. They each contained

instructions on numerous technical points.

The comrades were told they were in arrears - their paymasters were demanding more frequent returns.

They were given a secret instruction about members being 'transferred' in and out of the area - clearly showing that the Kremlin and not the British government determines who has key jobs listening in to secret satellite stations.

No one at the meeting batted an eye lid at these amazing revelations. This union has not just been infiltrated, it seems to be composed 100% of Russian agents.

Many of the instructions were too deeply coded to comprehend. They referred to such obscure practices as being "in benefit" (in favour with the Politburo?) and being "lapsed" (liquidated?)

Blow the lid

The Treasurer's report was next. Clearly this could have blown the lid off the meeting.

However, the treasurer stood up and nonchalantly announced that he had left the bank statements at home - but he thought the figures were much the same as last month. One woman at the front of the meeting said what was obvious to all "Done a bunk with the money, have you?"

Incredibly the meeting did not break up in disorder or physical violence. The comrades laughed off this shattering expose of their corruption as if it were a peccadillo.

Another member mentioned South America and the comrades laughed again. Does this mean that union funds are going to finance subversive guerrilla assassins in El Salvador? Who can say?

After receiving their orders from the Kremlin the comrades fell to discussing local sabotage which showed how determined they were to wreck the fabric of British life quite literally.

One woman claimed that ceil-

ing tiles in her office were made of asbestos and should be replaced. The meeting voted this through enthusiastically.

In any normal union someone would have pointed out what a golden opportunity this would have provided for someone to plant a bug in the replacement ceiling. Did anyone mention that here? Of course not.

A man complained about the canteen saying the food was too stodgy and should be more varied. Nothing could be more central to the Bolsheviks' aim than to hit at the root of the British Constitution, our diet.

No doubt this union would love to change the menu. Russian salad? Caviar? Borshtch? No one pointed out that if they were wallowing in a Siberian prison camp they would be glad of sausage and chips and to hell with the calories.

By now it was growing late. The comrades began to slip away into the cover of darkness.

But the Commissar in charge of the meeting was complaining again. Some operatives, he said, were being forced to spend too long at their listening posts and were going down with migraine.

He said this put more pressure on other staff. And then he came out with the amazing confession which put the seal on the whole evening.

"We are supposed to be doing a sensitive job, carefully for Britain," he said. "In fact, we all know that instead of doing anything carefully we are all Russian. As far as I can see, we are going to be Russian until someone does something about it."

I held my breath. Has the Commissar gone too far. Not a bit. Without comment they noted the report and closed the meeting. I slipped out unseen.

A full transcript of the meeting is being rushed today to Downing Street. Once again we have helped to save the world from communist subversion. The sooner this nest is stamped out the better.

Bloody Sunday-1972

FOR THE first time the Government has banned socialists and Irish nationalists from marching through British cities in memory of the 13 unarmed Irish men shot down in cold blood by British paratroopers on Bloody Sunday, 1972.

Bloody Sunday protest marches have been held every year since 1972, when news and photographs of the carnage in Derry shocked tens of thousands of people into the decision to go out and do something about the British terror in Northern Ireland.

A few small protest strikes occurred in London. On February 5 1972 a vast throng of many thousands converged on Whitehall and widespread clashes with the police broke out. Many of those on that march were non-political Irish working class men and women, stirred into political protest — for the one and only time so far — by Bloody Sunday.

In the Irish Republic a similar march stormed and burned the British Embassy. That too was a unique occurrence. Not even the emotion-charged hunger-strikes of 1981 triggered such a reaction in the South.

What happened on Bloody Sunday?

On January 30 1972 a march was called in Derry to protest at internment without charge or trial. Internment had been introduced six months earlier, in August 1971, exclusively for Catholics.

The Northern Ireland Unionist government at Stormont banned the demonstration. But the organisers decided to defy the ban.

Ian Paisley threatened that civilian Orangemen would themselves stop the banned march. The authorities then promised that they would stop it. They did.

On Sunday January 30 the protesters assembled and the march moved off. Then the paratroopers opened fire, picking people off at

random.

One wounded man was killed with a second shot as he tried to crawl to safety. Another died going to the aid of a friend who had been hit.

13 men died and 30 were wounded by the hail of bullets that the British Army loosed at the crowd of peaceful demonstrators. One of the wounded died soon after.

Only the official British inquiry believed the British army's story that the paratroopers were returning IRA fire. No-one else did.

Precisely what happened is still not known, but the outline is perfectly clear.

Placating the Orangemen required that Britain stop the demonstration, and the paratroopers went at it with a will. But paratroopers make crude and brutal policemen. Somewhere along the line the death sentence on a lottery basis was imposed on those who decided to defy the ban on the demonstration.

British and world reaction blew the Tory government's Northern Ireland policy apart. In March 1972 they suspended the Northern Ireland government at Stormont and imposed direct rule. For the following two years they tried to placate the Six County Catholics, and co-opt them into support of the Six County state by setting up new power-sharing structures. Those in turn were shattered by the Orange general strike of May 1974.

For the past ten years Britain has 'held on', balancing between the communities and, usually, beating down the Catholics to keep the 'balance'.

What the British government has inflicted on the Catholic community over this decade has not been less savage than what the paratroopers did to placate Paisley on January 30 1972. It has only been less spectacularly savage, and therefore less of a liability to the British government, than Bloody Sunday was.



Burned-out British Embassy in Dublin

Bloody Sunday-1984

AFTER 11 successful Bloody Sunday demonstrations since 1973, the 12th in Sheffield should have been no problem. Sheffield has a reputedly left wing City Council and an active (and increasingly successful) Labour Committee on Ireland branch.

Of course the march was in fact banned.

This was at the request of the leader of Sheffield City Council, David Blunkett, who did not bother to consult the Labour Group, or District Labour Party before doing so.

As with his decision to ban the rally from City Council premises earlier in January, he did it first and then sought endorsement from the Labour Group later.

Reacting only to media coverage, and the complaints to the council that it whipped up, he saw only one solution, of going first for a ban on the use of the City Hall, and again, later, for an appeal to a Tory Minister to ban the march.

The nicest word that can be found to describe the behaviour of the spokesperson for the local Sinn Féin (UK) branch, Tony Kelly, is incompetent.

As soon as the Harrods bomb went off, he got himself on radio and television, and making statements to the press, saying that it was necessary and correct but that he regretted civilian casualties.

The statements made were linked to the Bloody Sunday Mobilising Committee since Tony Kelly couldn't make up his mind who he was speaking for (he didn't consult the Bloody Sunday Mobilising Committee).

Meanwhile, Ireland suffers.

Joan Maynard MP came out against the ban saying that the talk of an NF march did not justify it. "I am very unhappy that the council should have got itself involved in this kind of ban. It's a ploy to stop people demonstrating on issues relating to Ireland", she said.

Councillor Sheena Clarke told Socialist Organiser that she was dismayed about the ban. "It inhibits what we see as the important task. That is to talk to the people involved in the struggle, over here."

The fault of the LCI rests in not being influential enough, in not having enough authority to have been consulted in this as of right.

Meanwhile, we will have to continue our work, getting Ireland discussed in the movement; reversing the ban on the use of council premises for meetings relating to Ireland; building for a Sheffield labour movement delegation to Ireland; and generally trying to raise the issue of Ireland out of the areas of ignorance, incompetence and sectarian manoeuvre.



Fragmented images

By Gerry Byrne

ONE image remains. Sinister. Simple. A man's hand moves lingeringly over a jigsaw, constructing a picture of a pouting, posing, available woman.

You know he's rich by the well-kept nails, the discreetly expensive ring, the neat shirt-cuff and glimpse of a suited sleeve. The movements suggest power, self-confidence, control. The uncompleted jig-saw woman is faceless, anonymous, anyone of a million boringly repetitious images of vapid, exploited female flesh.

This image, from Channel 4's "Pictures of Women — Sexuality: Whose Pleasure?" could have stood as a metaphor for the whole programme — on pornography: the construction of an image of female sexuality by and for and in the interests of rich and powerful men; and the consequent fragmentation of women's bodies into key signs — breasts, genitals, mouths and inviting eyes.

It was an object lesson on how images work, how much information can be encoded into a few tell-tale signs. If the rest of the programme had followed through the visual argument and analysed how the images of pornography construct its particular picture of women's sexuality, for whom and why, then it would have been a stunning indictment of male power and its effects on women.

It might have provided answers to the questions raised in the inter-cut studio discussion, instead of leaving them hanging. What we got instead was a worthy, often thought-provoking, uneven and ultimately frustrating programme.

The high-points were definitely the visuals and the music. As well as the jig-saw image, they used, very tellingly, a rapid-fire of images, overwritten with key-words, which looked as though it had been borrowed from advertising — though to the opposite effect — drawing comparisons; making conscious what is so often only mental wallpaper; underlining and drawing attention to the uses of imagery.

But there were too few of these bits. The documentary style clips were lumbering and I couldn't detect a very coherent thread. Some were just clichés — a walkabout round Soho showing the profusion of sex-shops, peep shows, etc — so what's new?

Interviews with male "experts" on the big-business aspects of porn — again, big news! What there wasn't was any interviews with the women who work in these places, any glimpse of what it's like from the other side of the cage —

nor indeed was much clue given as why the women we saw on a Reclaim the Night march there had come, why they felt impelled to protest.

The main problem seemed to be a lack of clarity as to whether the programme's intention was analytical or descriptive (and of course they're not incompatible!) At times, it felt as if powerful arguments were being marshalled on why porn was so pernicious; at other points it seemed to retreat into a kind of false objectivity ("This is what these people think, and here's what these other people think").

Why do feminists focus on porn particularly? What about the argument that porn is per se violence against women? Or the vexed problem of causation?

It's certainly possible to argue that porn is the ideological brutalisation of women, that in and of itself it is damaging to women's self-image. It's also quite plausible to see porn increasing the likelihood of violence against women by legitimising it, by creating expectations in men of what women are and should be like sexually, e.g. we like to be raped, beaten, tortured: masochism is a necessary part of our sexuality.

It's certainly true that porn condones the subjugation of women, presents male domination as natural, necessary and satisfying. It would be very strange indeed if the demeaning objectifying view of women it portrays didn't infect the consciousness of the men (and women) exposed to it.

Now which, if any, of these views do the programme-makers hold? Do they disagree among themselves? It was certainly hard to tell from the programme.

Of course, they may not want to put over "propaganda". But that seems a falsely naive view since their technical skill reveals a very sophisticated grasp of how images are constructed to embody arguments even when there is no overt "message".

My frustration with the programme derives from the way it offered tantalising promises of explanation: why is porn so central to feminist agitation at the moment?

Is it, as one of the contributors to the discussion threw out, just a phase (we had beauty contests, Miss World, in the early '70s, advertising in the late '70s and now we've all focussed on porn)?

One very striking sour note to hit me was the treatment (or non-treatment) of racism.

Throughout the programme the images, interviews, presenters were uniformly white. No reference was made at any time to particular



Women: fragmented images, fragmented lives

racist portrayal of black women's sexuality in porn. There was no opportunity to conclude whether black women are bothered by the issue, have a separate view, or are just not interested in white feminists' concerns.

The one black woman in the studio discussion sat silent for most of the time and when she finally spoke was interrupted before she finished ("supportively" but nonetheless differently from all the others who were allowed to go on without having their points "interpreted" for them).

She raised the problem of a coercive consensus. Since our responses to pornographic images are very often ambiguous, where do we stand when we respond differently to the prescribed "right-on" view?

Then an oppressive moralism seems to prevail: the dissenting minority is judged "incorrect". It would have been interesting to discover whether this is a common experience to black women — that their views on sexuality arrived at maybe through different experiences and pressures from white women

are discounted as out of line? Yet another unanswered question.

The Pictures of Women Collective set out to raise feminist concerns round sexuality with a wider audience than just the converted. That the programmes appeared at all is a major success. I can certainly never remember a programme raising these issues in this way before. If it starts people thinking and talking, that will be a major achievement.

Did it succeed in making these issues accessible to "ordinary women"? Apart from being broadcast at 11 p.m., which is out of the control of the makers, there were enough high points, impressive technique and wonderful music to grab the attention.

I can't help feeling though that impact was often sacrificed for fear of going over the top on "propaganda". A harder-hitting programme with a "heavier" message

might paradoxically have made the whole thing more watchable and created a few more converts.

All in all, it was sufficient to determine me to prop my eyelids open again next Monday at 11 p.m. for the next one. Till then, I'm left with the intriguing question which was popped in somewhere in the discussion: can we manage to be as subversive, assertive and threatening in our pleasure as we have been in our anger and displeasure?

Tory racists

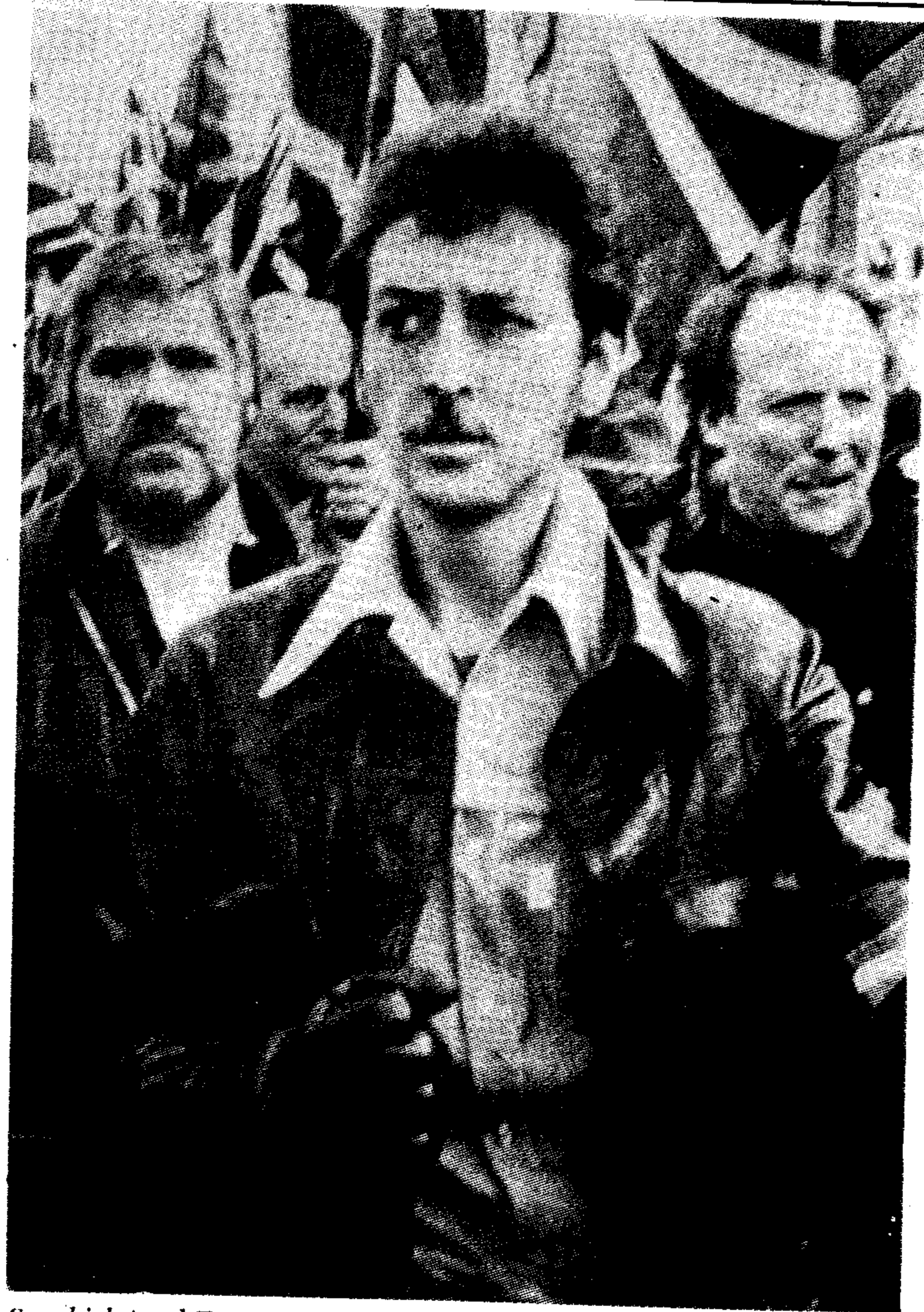
RACISM is rife in the Tory party — and not only at Government level. The further down you go, the worse it gets.

Right-wing pressure groups like Tory Action are working away for a 'compulsory reduction in the number of non-whites in this country'.

Last year's Conservative conference selected as one of only two motions to be discussed an openly racist resolution. A black delegate from Birmingham was all but howled down as he argued against it.

A report just published by the Young Conservatives says that Tory Action, headed by former MI6 deputy director George Young, has connections with at least 24 Tory MPs. Tory Action themselves claim to be on friendly terms with the prime minister.

Fortunes of fascist parties like the British Movement have been fading over the past few years, but links between them and far-right Tory groups, especially Harvey Proctor's WISE (Welsh, Irish, Scottish, English) are developing. In fact, some members of the BM have been sent in to cash in on the Tory Party's developing far right.



So which local Tory party does he belong to?



YTS: stop compulsion!

Jane Ashworth reports on a new campaign to stop the Government forcing youth onto the YTS

SINCE November, the government's Youth Training Scheme (YTS) has been virtually compulsory.

Careers offices have been told to report refusers and "trainees" who leave a scheme to the Department of Employment who will then reduce their benefit.

The Birmingham YTS Action Group has picketed a meeting of the Area Manpower Board (the local supervising body for the scheme), making it clear that they expected the trade union representatives on the Board to be sticking to the TUC's policy of no compulsion and

were lobbying were lobbying the rest of the meeting on this issue.

This type of activity can draw together all the groups and individuals concerned with fighting YTS.

Class Fighter has decided to try and organise a national day of action against compulsion.

We are asking organisations like unemployed groups, YS branches and YTS action groups to sponsor the day and to organise a picket of a Manpower Services Commission office, a careers office or a Job Centre in their own town. There will also be a

picket in central London.

To get maximum publicity we are asking all groups to organise on one day: March 21. There will be a national press release available and groups are encouraged to contact local press and radio.

The day of action has been deliberately chosen for a Wednesday since this is the best day to involve further education students who have more free time on Wednesdays.

Students aged 16 and 17 who are signing on are in danger of losing some of the supplementary benefit if they tell the Department of

Employment that they would rather stay on at college than take a YTS place.

We suggest that meetings are called to discuss the day of action, inviting all groups which have an interest in YTS, including the civil service union CPSA and the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign. The picket should

span a lunch-time to allow trade unionists to attend.

Leaflets will be sent out advertising the pickets and model letters and resolutions will also be available. Please

write to 214 Sickert Court, London N1 for leaflets and to tell us that your organisation is prepared to sponsor the day of action.

Bosses snouts in the trough

PRIVATE training agencies, receiving huge amounts of public money, have been used to effectively 'privatise' the government Youth Training Scheme, taking work away from further education colleges.

Many of these agencies are clearly not fit to be put in charge of the training of young people.

A report drawn up by the college lecturers' union, NATFHE, brilliantly exposes the way in which private training agencies are milking YTS for funds, cutting corners on training, and exploiting trainees.

When YTS was first announced, the plan was that 70% of places should be with "Mode A" schemes — where an employer, local authority or consortium of employers agree with the MSC to arrange a complete programme of work experience, training and education.

The remaining places were to be provided by "Mode B" schemes, where the MSC itself acts as managing agent and contracts out the training programme to voluntary agencies, community programmes, colleges, etc.

However, the recession meant that employers were in no mood to take on large numbers of trainees, and there was a massive shortfall of genuine "employer-led" Mode A schemes. This left a gap that was filled by the private training agencies — commercial outfits who take on trainees for a year-long training "package".

They provide "off-the-job" training only and sub-contract to outside employers who act as sponsors for the nine-months work experience.

In Birmingham and Solihull (the area covered in detail by the NATFHE report) 56% of Mode A places and 42% of all places are with private training agencies.

A Mode A private training agency will receive money in three ways for each trainee taken on: a fee of £100 for acting as the Managing Agent, £550 for supplying the off-the-job training and £1,300 towards the trainee's allowance.

The NATFHE report proves that "no systematic monitoring or audit of these agencies' accounts or training

qualifications is made before they are in receipt of public money."

Of the 30 private training agencies in the Birmingham and Solihull area, a substantial number are breaking the law — "a strange example to be set by agencies teaching Life and Social Skills to the young people they are training," comments NATFHE.

Two of these 30 agencies had serious queries regarding their accounts raised by their auditors. Seven had not filed up to date accounts and were therefore breaking the law. Of the remainder, one had filed incomplete accounts, three were not registered as companies, and seven had been formed within the last two years and so were not required to have filed accounts.

One agency told the Area Manpower Board (the local body of the MSC responsible for approving and overseeing schemes) that it had been training for six times as long as its company records indicated.

Another seriously misled the Board about the number of other towns and cities it had run schemes in when seeking approval. A third agency had become such bad payers of bills that one local further education college was informally advised not to provide any of its off-the-job training.

The report looks in detail at ADM Limited, the largest private training agency in the Birmingham/Solihull area.

On May 24, 1983 the Area Manpower Board approved the first 300 places of a 500 place Youth Training Scheme. With that approval came the potential for ADM to receive £975,000 of public money. The report comments, "this money was granted to provide quality training and the chance of a future to 500 16 year olds, but clearly came at a fortuitous moment for the survival of the company."

Five days before its approval, ADM registered their Annual Return with Companies House. This showed an adverse relationship between assets and liabilities. Furthermore, the salaries of the directors amounted to 9% of the total turnover.

The auditors' report includes the following:

"The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis. In view of the loss that has been sus-

The Tory government claimed that its Youth Training Scheme would give a real chance to 16 to 18 year olds. In practice it is a year of cheap labour for the youth, and a honeypot for unscrupulous bosses.

Jim Denham reports.

tained we are unable to confirm that this is the most appropriate basis."

The report comments:

"In the restrained terminology of accountancy these statements are danger signals which appear to have gone unheeded."

To make a profit out of a funding formula that was never intended even to cover the full cost to employers, the private agencies can only spend about half the amount per trainee that it costs a college. To do this they have to pay their staff considerably less, work them harder and cut corners on training and work experience.

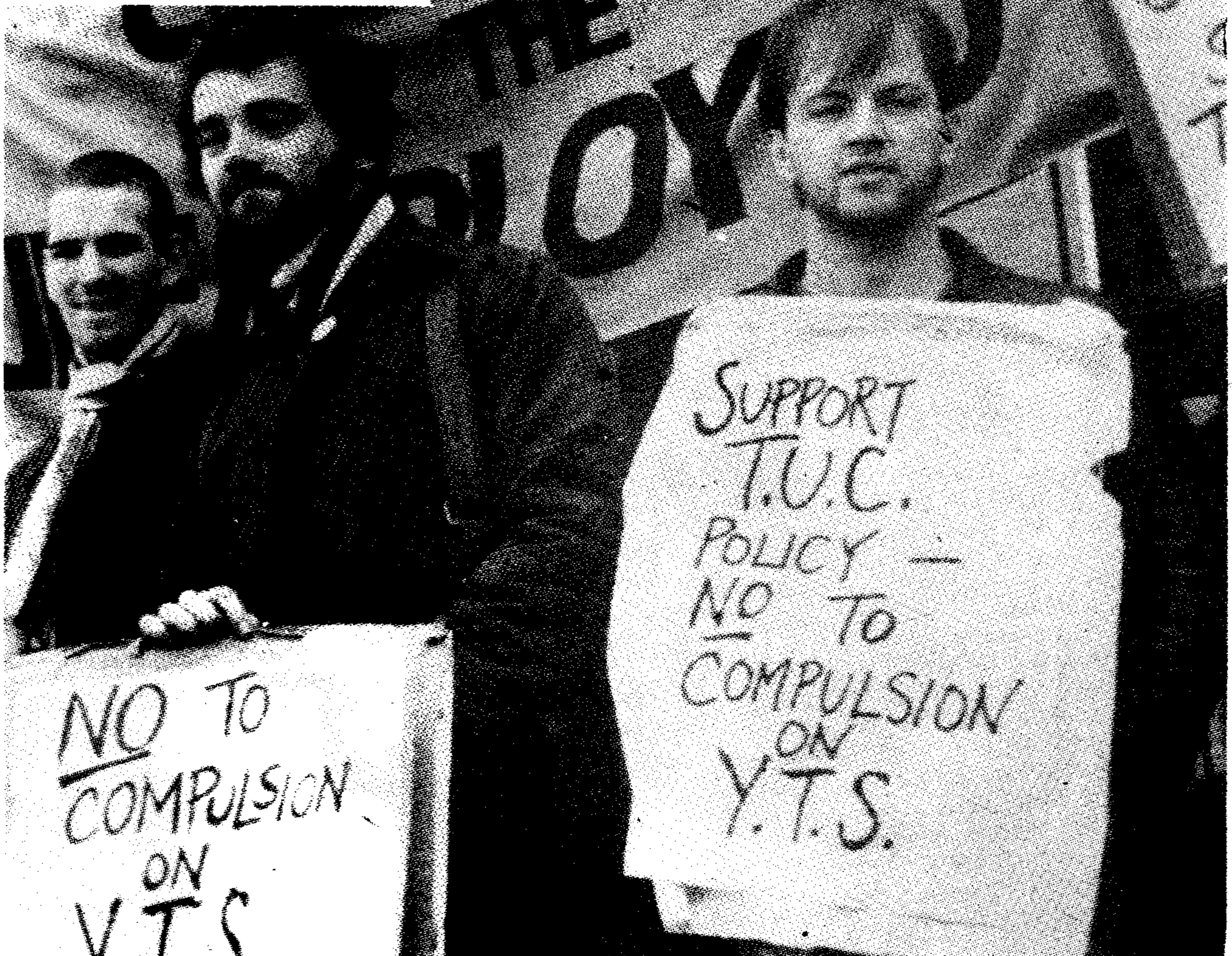
ADM's method of obtaining work experience for their trainees is to send out a "mail shot" to employers ("sponsors"), stressing that "there is no cost to the sponsor for having a trainee on their premises."

As most PTAs provide "off-the-job training" only, finding employers to act as sponsors for the nine-month work experience is a major problem at a time of recession.

Often trainees have ended up with exactly the type of sponsor YTS was intended to eliminate — small, non-union workshops and offices which are difficult to monitor and where the problems of job substitution, inadequate training and dangerous conditions are most likely to arise.

Pitman's Training Services are one of the largest PTAs in the country. They are proud of their "international reputation and years of training experience."

The report does not accuse Pitman's of any legal or financial irregularities — they are one of the reputable PTAs. Nonetheless, the trainees who began their YTS with Pitman's in Birmingham in June 1983, were so appalled by their treatment that in October they



Birmingham YTS action group lobby the local Area Manpower Board

submitted a petition, calling for such improvements as "qualified trainers and supervisors", "increase in training equipment, e.g. typewriters", "Pitman's to provide training materials (pens, pads, etc)", "ensured work placements" and "recognition of trainee's representatives".

Pitman's trainees were being sent out on "work experience", only to find themselves being used as "temps", and sent back to the agency after a couple of weeks. Others were not even getting onto a work placement as Pitman's had not reached agreements with enough employers. Within the training centre there were not enough basic facilities like desks and typewriters!

However, Pitman's responded swiftly to the trainees' petition, and met nine of the twelve demands contained in it. They even thanked the young women trainees for their "suggestions"! The explanation for this can only be fear of losing the approval of the Area Manpower Board, combined with the financial cost of losing any trainees, given that the occupancy rate was already less than 100%.

Mark Pitman, boss of Pitman Training Services, told the Times Educational Supplement that to break even required that around 80% of places should be occupied.

As the NATFHE report notes, "it is a strange and unexpected consequence of the rise of the private training agencies that trainees find themselves in a stronger bargaining position than expected. For many of the agencies are already in trouble due to the low take-up rate of YTS. The loss of any of their existing trainees would be a loss of their main or only source of income. Thus, the trainees, who trade unionists feared would be entirely at the mercy of Managing Agents and

sponsors, find that despite their non-employee status they do have some bargaining strength, at least in the private training agencies."

The report is an indictment not just of the PTAs but also of the MSC, who are supposed to monitor the scheme.

A question not raised explicitly by the report is, just what are the union officials on the Area Man-

power Boards doing if they give their approval to these cowboys to take charge of 16 and 17 year old youths? That is a question that rank and file trade unionists, and the trainees themselves might like to take up.

*The Great Training Robbery is available, price 50p, from Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre, 7 Frederick Street, Birmingham B1 3HE.

CLASS FIGHTER

NO CONSCRIPTION ON TO YTS!

Inside

Bloody Sunday

Footloose and skint

YCND

Newham 8

Issue no.17 out now: This month's Class Fighter's full page on the government's Youth Training Scheme includes an interview with John O'Brien, a 'trainee' from Peckham, and coverage of how the government wants to conscript youth onto the schemes.

Grahame Smallwood and Peter Crawshaw write about how their Youth CND group in Scarborough is getting on, and Jimi Somerville of the Bronski Beat talks to us about his experience of the Warrington picket line: "They thought I was a wee boy".

Get together to fight the cuts

ANDREA CAMPBELL is one of the organisers of the Health Fightback 84 conference in Bradford on February 25, and CoHSE branch secretary in Hackney.

She spoke to Socialist Organiser about the conference.

What are you hoping to see come out of the conference?

We are hoping, first of all, to see a lot more understanding of exactly how you can fight against cuts in the health service, and also against privatisation.

Other conferences on this over the past year and a half have attracted a fair number of people, but they've largely been rhetorical.

Trade union and Labour Party leaders have denounced the cuts, but with little or no reference to how you actually fight them.

We're hoping to gather militants from all over the country, and also people who haven't had much previous experience of fighting the cuts but want to know what to do in their area.

We also hope that there will be some way of keeping in touch with people who come to the conference — to keep exchanging experiences



"If you oppose the cuts, and you fight back, you can win."

and to build up some kind of network nationwide of people who are fighting the cuts.

What support have you had for the conference so far?

We've got several MPs sponsoring it. We've had a few shop stewards' committees send in sponsorship since

the leaflet went for printing.

There's been a lot of interest in the conference, specially, so far, from London and the North.

Over the last few months there has been a whole new wave of struggle against health cuts. What do you think are the main lessons from that so far?

One main lesson arises from the occupations at Hayes and Northwood hospitals. If you oppose the cuts, and you fight back, you can win.

The workers there occupied their hospitals, which were scheduled for closure on October 31, and just before Christmas they were granted a reprieve of at least nine months. It was a major victory.

We need to take that out into the hospitals, into the unions, and into the Labour Parties and anywhere else that people are prepared to fight, and say you can fight back.

We've also seen that the only way of fighting the cuts is to link together, and not just at district or borough level but nationally.

The actions of the TUC and the trade union leaders over the last few months have proved that they are not prepared to fight even when the workers are — and so what we've got to do in the health service is organise people to take action and force the leadership to back them.

There was a privatisation conference called by CoHSE in London last Saturday, and our new general secretary David Williams was speaking there.

He said nothing. He didn't even mention Thornton View or Hayes. But then he was interviewed on the radio on Sunday night.

He said that the union leaders weren't going to advocate strike action or industrial action at this time. There had to be a fight back against the cuts, he said — but he had absolutely no proposals as to how that fight back was going to go ahead.

That shows why we need the Bradford conference!

Students victimised

By Denise Fowler

FIVE students at Warwick University have been up before University disciplinary hearings this week for taking part in a demonstration against Keith Joseph on October 31 last year.

The demonstration was a sit-down protest by 400 students. Joseph refused to meet us and tried to leave by the back door. We rushed to the main road and blockaded it to prevent him leaving.

The police arrived and started laying into the students. Despite the violent actions of the police, none of the students present did anything other than defend themselves.

However, the President of the Students Union talked to the local radio and newspaper and condemned "the violence on both sides".

This gave the University the excuse it had been waiting for to have a go at the Student Union. Since the University now has total control of the Student Union's finances (thanks to Rhodes Boyson) and can do just what it wants to the Student Union budget, the University Committee decided to "fine" the Student Union £30,000.

By Christmas the centre-right Student Union Executive Committee was running scared. The students were angry and the Executive were warned about damaging their "special relationship" with the University establishment. They entered into negotiations with the University over the fine while most students were on holiday.

Meanwhile, the University had managed to identify five students who were on the demonstration.

During the time leading up to the hearing the five received no help in their campaign from the Student Union Executive but were instead often misled or misinformed. Finally, on Friday January 20, four days before the disciplinary hearings were due to start, the Student Union Executive announced that it had reached an agreement with the University. This agreement basically said that the University would not fine the Student Union if it would re-write its own constitution to include a commitment that the Student Union would give the University seven days' notice before any demonstration and that no demonstration would be called without a two-thirds majority at the Union General Meeting.

Furthermore, the agreement contained no reference at all to the disciplinary hearings against the five on charges which could have resulted in their expulsion. Nevertheless, the Executive bought it.

The agreement was rejected by a majority of 150 at the Union General Meeting that week, which pledged to continue the campaign against the fine and the disciplinary hearings.

Last Friday, however, by dint of telling the Athletics Union and in particular the Rugby Club that their budgets would be cut if the fine went ahead, the Student Union Executive managed to get the agreement accepted by the UGM. So the Executive abandoned the Warwick 5 to their fate and called off the national demonstration.

Meanwhile the disciplinary hearings have been conducted with a fine disregard for justice. For example, the defendants were told by the

academic registrar that if they called any witness from the demonstration to testify in their defence then those witnesses might be subject to the same disciplinary proceedings.

The cards are stacked against students in the University disciplinary code. The actual panel which decides the verdict and sentence is weighted in favour of the University — three from the Administration and two from the Student Union.

The kangaroo court has been picketed every session by up to 150 students, shouting and banging metal to disrupt the hearings. Three of the five have been acquitted and another fined £20. The remaining two were charged with the same offence, together, and with the same witnesses. One was found not guilty. The

other, Keith Spencer, who throughout his hearing was referred to as the ringleader of a political faction on campus was found guilty.

His sentencing was delayed because it appears one of the lecturers on the panel had an attack of scruples at the frame up. The picket resumed as the hearing resumed and an hour later Keith Spencer came out with a £30 fine. As he said to the picket, "It's not a victory, but it could have been worse." So although the five have got off very lightly, the Union is still bound to the constitutional changes demanded by the University. And the threat of a further fine, at Warwick or any other college, continues so long as Student Unions remain dependent on the authorities for money. A national campaign is needed to demand a return to the previous system of student union funding, where a guaranteed amount per student is paid directly to the Student Union.

Sinn Fein and EEC

Sinn Fein decided at its November Ard Fheis to take any seats it might win in next June's European Parliament elections.

In the following (slightly shortened) article from the Republican paper An Phoblacht (January 26) Damien O'Rourke presents Sinn Fein's view of what it will be doing in the June election.

SINN FEIN will be fielding candidates in all five Irish constituencies at the forthcoming EEC elections. Sinn Fein will contest the election on an all-Ireland basis to maximise its anti-EEC message.

Candidates have been chosen in several constituencies and the names will go before next month's ardchomhairle meeting for ratification. Further names are expected to have been put forward by then.

In the North, Danny Morrison, Sinn Fein's elected representative in Mid-Ulster, was unanimously chosen to continue the dramatic electoral progress of Sinn Fein, which last October won over 40% of the nationalist vote.

In the Connaught/Ulster constituency, two candidates have been chosen: Eddie Fullerton of Donegal and Caoimhghin O Caolain of Monaghan.

In Dublin, last weekend's convention chose John Noonan as the Sinn Fein candidate, a former Northsider he now lives in Tallaght where he has been involved in building a strong Sinn Fein base.

In Munster, the election convention is to reconvene shortly when it is hoped that Richard Behal, who was chosen last weekend as candidate, will confirm that he is in a position to go forward.

The Sinn Fein decision to contest in all five constituencies follows resolutions at last November's Ard Fheis which decided to contest the EEC elections on an attendance basis, but with an "anti-imperialist policy of opposition to the EEC".

The Ard Fheis also decided that any successful EEC candidates would attend the EEC assembly "under the guidance of the ardchomhairle" and "with the declared intention of working for the disbandment of the EEC as a European capitalist power-bloc".

Speaking about Sinn Fein's anti-EEC policies, which it will be putting forward at the elec-



North and South

By Paddy Dollard

tions, the party's president, Gerry Adams MP, said:

"The EEC was formed as imperialism changed. Following the Second World War, in order to preserve their interests, the colonial Western European powers set about forming a political and economic unit.

"Ireland, as ever, went in on the coat-tails of Britain.

"The EEC, we believe, denies Irish national sovereignty, and recognises partition and institutionalises it. It ignores our unique cultural identity and spurns our national language.

"It takes away all of the tools of economic development. The monetary system has a crippling effect on smaller states and the free trade agreement works to the advantage of the big states.

"In agriculture, big farmers have benefited while the small farmers have suffered immeasurably. Irish fishing rights have been opened up to everyone, with resulting massive exploitation and violation of our fishing stock by continental nations.

"The EEC has destroyed local industry, increased unemployment, depleted our fishing stock and seriously damaged our farming community.

"Sinn Fein opposed joining the EEC and pointed out all of these dangers.

"Our present electoral platform will be one of withdrawal from the EEC, anti-imperialist and anti-EEC and will therefore be diametrically opposed to all the other political parties who support membership."

Health Fightback



'Health Fightback 84' conference: at Community Buildings, Bradford University, Great Hordon Rd, Bradford. Saturday February 25, 11am to 5pm.

Workshops on: • Occupations: how and why you should occupy,

- Law: How to get the law on your side,
- Health Authorities and CHCs: how you can use them,
- Nurses: organising nurses in a campaign,
- Publicity/media: how to get your views across,
- Privatisation: how to fight it,
- Campaigns: how to set up an anti-cuts campaign,
- Creeping cuts, ward closures, unfilled vacancies: how to fight them. Also: Thornton View occupation video.

A creche will be available.

Open to all health workers and to delegates from health campaigns, CLPs, and trade union bodies. For credentials send £2.50 to Health Fightback 84, 12 Shiplake House, Calvert Avenue, London E2.

War threat in Chad

THE supposedly Socialist government of Francois Mitterrand in France has made moves which could lead to full-scale war in Chad.

It has sent reinforcements to back up its 3,000 troops in the country, and ordered the troops to extend their zone of control nearly 100 miles north.

Since the troops were sent last August, there has been stalemate in Chad.

The desperately poor former French colony is divided between two warlords, Goukouni Oueddei and Hissene Habre. Currently Goukouni is backed by Libya and Habre by France, though neither represents anything progressive compared with the other in terms of Chadian politics, and indeed in the past the alliances have been reversed.

Palestine conference May 19

ONE of the factors that allowed Yasser Arafat's recent trip to Cairo and the possibility of the PLO being brought into a pro-imperialist Arab alliance is that the labour movement internationally has failed to act in support of the Palestinian people.

The British Labour Party has long been regarded as one of the strongest bedrocks of pro-Israeli Zionist support outside of the state of Israel itself.

But in 1982 the Labour Party switched virtually overnight from slavish support for Israel to condemnation of it and support for the Palestinians and the idea of a democratic, secular state. This was an important step forward. It showed it is possible to challenge the grip of Zionist or pro-Zionist ideas in the labour movement.

The national conference of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign on Saturday January 28 voted overwhelmingly to follow up this victory by making campaigning in the Labour Party and trade unions a major priority.

The conference also supported a resolution which opposed the settling of political differences within the PLO by military means and criticised Arafat's visit to Cairo.

The motion was passed by a majority of about 2-1, but unfortunately discussion on it was crammed into the last ten minutes of the conference.

In fact the conference was not run as well as it might have been. A lot of time was devoted to the secretary and treasurer reading out reports that had already been circulated and thus unnecessarily cutting down the time available for political discussion. And on a couple of occasions, discussion was already underway on a resolution when the chairperson ruled it out of order.

It is also a pity that some of the political resolutions to the conference were not duplicated for circulation, which led to confusion on several occasions.

But the conference made some important decisions. Part of the concentration on labour movement work will be to build the labour movement conference on May 19 at County Hall in London. The conference is being sponsored by the PSC, and the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine and is backed by the PLO. It will focus on the issue of Palestinian workers, generally neglected in solidarity work.

It is important that the PSC and the LMCIP work closely together to make this conference a success.

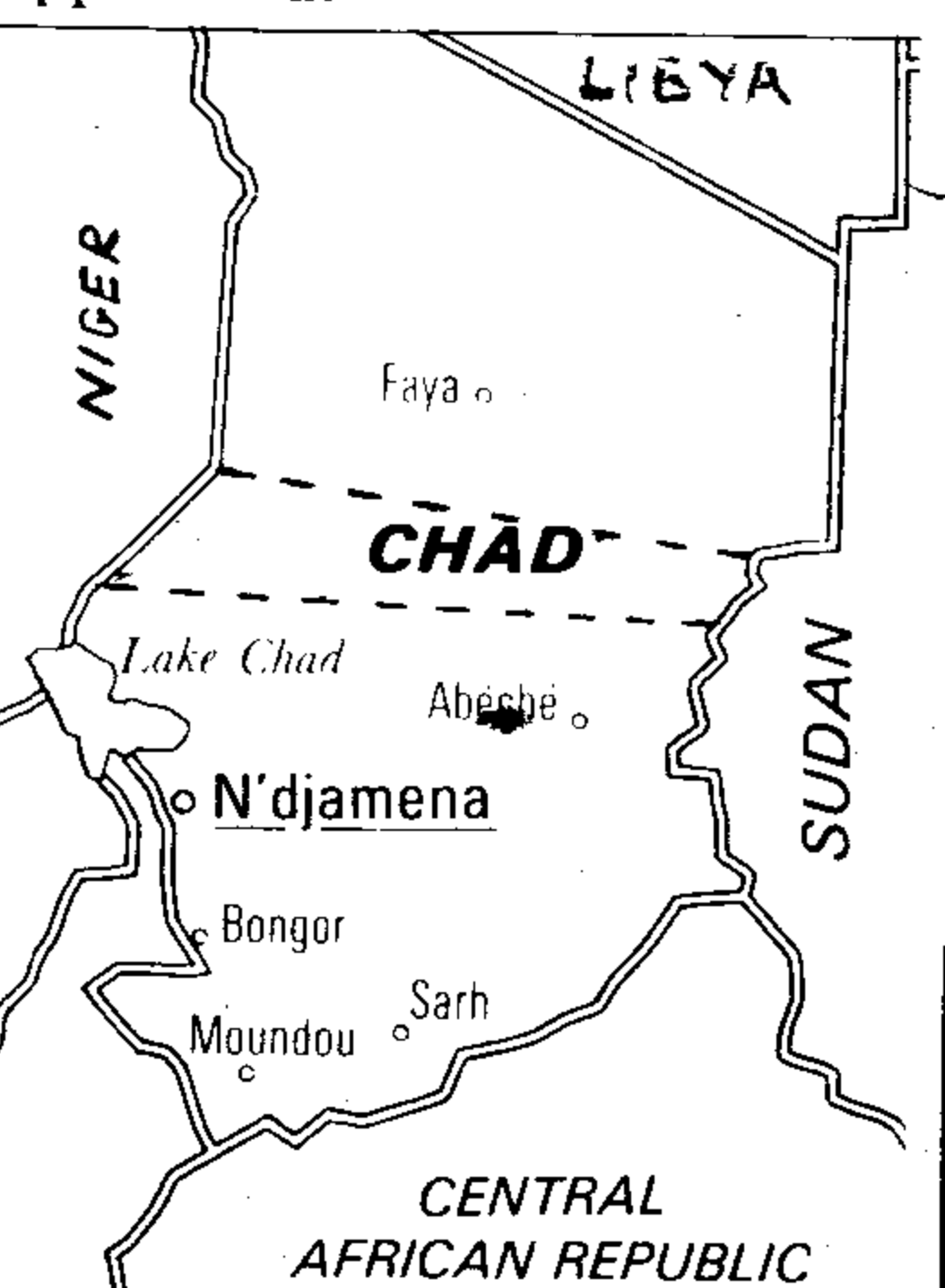
Last summer it looked like an offensive by Libya and Goukouni could topple Habre's government. France, which has maintained a strong influence in Chad as in other ex-colonies, sent in its troops, and got other (French-trained) forces sent in from Zaire.

The situation was 'frozen' with the Habre-France-Zaire alliance controlling the south of the country, and Goukouni-Libya the north.

Attempted negotiations in Addis Ababa early in January collapsed, though African states are unanimous in opposing a partition of Chad.

The borders of Chad are essentially lines drawn on the map by 19th century colonialists, and they include a vast variety of peoples and languages from the Muslim Arabs and Berbers of the (mainly desert) north to the Christian or animist black Africans of the south.

Though historically the northern peoples have usually dominated and enslaved the southerners, the south has been economically more important since French colonial rule. In the first post-colonial years, southerners dominated, but in years of bitter communal strife since then, northerners have gained the upper hand.



Both Goukouni and Habre come out of the northern-based Frolinat movement (Chad National Liberation Front — despite the name, nothing to do with the national independence struggle, but rather with the inter-communal struggles since independence in 1960). Both are allied with southern factions.

The French moves followed the shooting down of a French Jaguar jet by the Goukouni/Libyan forces on January 25. The pilot of the jet was the first acknowledged French casualty since the invasion.

The Libyan government said on Monday 30th that they were 'studying' an appeal from Goukouni for support. Libya still officially denies any involvement in the conflict.

Libya's and France's interests in Chad are not, in the main, directly economic, although there may be important uranium resources in the northern Aozou strip, disputed territory between Chad and Libya.

Libya wants to expand its influence in the region. France wants to prop up the status quo and counter the de-stabilising effect of Libya's policy.

At the same time, however, France has been trying to improve its commercial relations with Libya. It was also announced on Monday 30th that French foreign minister Claude Cheysson would visit Libya soon.

According to some press commentary, differences between France and the US also play a role in the situation. France would like a deal with Libya. The Reagan government, concerned above all with Libya's role as an (unreliable) ally of the USSR, wants to see Libya firmly rebuffed.

Southern Africa Talks follow invasion

THE USA has followed up South Africa's recent military drive into Angola with a diplomatic offensive.

US assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker is in southern Africa trying to put together a deal.

The essence of the US policy is that South African withdrawal from Namibia should be linked with withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola.

But South African rule in Namibia rests on no right but the brute force that maintains it against the resistance of the Namibian people. Cuban troops are in Angola by invitation of the Angolan government.

There is no evidence that the majority of the Angolan people want them withdrawn; and anyway, that is a matter for the Angolans and the Cubans — not for the US and South Africa.

Crocker's deputy Frank Wisner met in Cape Verde on January 20-22 with Angolans and South Africans, and new US/Angolan/South African talks are expected soon.

The US is reported to be offering diplomatic recognition for Angola's MPLA nationalist government as an inducement to push Angola into talks — and to get Angola to bring the Namibian liberation movement SWAPO into line. There is also talk of a coalition government between the MPLA and the South African backed UNITA rebel force as one of the conditions for a settlement,

alongside Namibian independence and Cuban withdrawal from Angola.

South Africa has promised a temporary let-up on its incursions into Angola. Some exchange: a temporary (and formal, at best, given South African involvement with UNITA) recognition of Angolan independence, in return for discussing a package coupling Namibian independence with demands infringing Angola's sovereignty!

The apartheid state has also been pressing its advantage with Mozambique.

Mozambique is hard-hit by drought, famine, and harassment from the South African backed Mozambique Resistance Movement.

There were talks on January 16 at which Mozambique representatives seem to have made concessions in terms of promising action against bases in Mozambique of the black South African anti-apartheid movement, African National Congress.

"A joint statement", reported the Guardian, "emphasised that 'practical ways and means of achieving peace

and security' had been discussed.

"[The delegations] said that methods to prevent either country from being used as a 'springboard' for acts of subversion had been discussed... They had also discussed the practical implementation of an agreement along these lines."

The governments also talked about resuming supplies of cheap labour from Mozambique to South Africa which were a major feature of Portuguese colonial rule in Mozambique.



The first ever national day of action on Guatemala was held on January 31

Facts &



Figures

WAGE rises won through collective bargaining in the US in 1983 were the lowest on record.

The average increase was 2.6 per cent for the first year of the contract, and 2.8 per cent for the remaining period. Wage agreements in the US normally cover about three years.

These were the lowest figures over the whole 16 years that these figures have been collected. The average was reduced by the fact that many workers settled for wage cuts.

460,000 workers in steel, transportation and construction suffered first-year wage cuts averaging 6.7 per cent.

Only three million workers are covered by these figures — for collective bargaining units with 1,000 workers or more. The strength of the US unions has been steadily declining for years.

BRITAIN'S unions, despite recent loss of membership, seem to be holding up better.

Recent figures from various sources — the government, the CBI, and independent researchers — suggest that pay settlements are on average ahead of

inflation, and earnings are ahead of settlements.

One of the government's objectives in the wages arena — has been partially realised, after some years of failure (for the Tories) in this field. Between April 1982 and April 1983 young men's wages rose by 1.8% while adult men's wages went up by 8.3%.

In another field — US-style multi-year deals — there has been less success for the Tories and the bosses. The Financial Times comments: "Once seen as an easy route to pay stability, but less common than expected."

There has been little follow-up to the initial three-year deal at Scottish and Newcastle Breweries.

THE well-off have benefited from the Tories' tax policies.

They pay less in income tax and National Insurance, than they did in 1978-9, while the worse-off pay more.

The Tories' first budget measures created a dramatic shift. A typical worse-off family — a married couple with two children on 75% of average earnings — paid 32% of their income in tax in 1979-80, as against 21% in 1978-9. A better-off family — a married couple with two children on five times average earnings — paid out 41% in 1979-80 as against 50% in 1978-9.

There has been a slight swing back to the previous position since then. In 1983-4 the worse-off family pays out 24% of its income, the better-off family 43%.

Such measures as the cuts in housing and other benefits; rent rises; and increased mortgage relief, have combined with the tax changes to benefit the rich at the expense of the poor.

THE government is due to announce within the next few days its chosen sites for Britain's first freeports, or free trade zones.

Felixstowe, Tilbury, Prestwick (Glasgow), Southampton, Belfast and Liverpool have been mentioned as possibilities in the press.

According to the Financial Times, free trade zones are now said to account for ten per cent of all world trade. The FT, however, thinks that this figure, and the usually given estimate of about 400 FTZs world-wide, may be exaggerated.

It all depends exactly what you define as an FTZ.

Genuine FTZs — fenced-off areas in which companies can operate for the world market free of export/import controls or tariffs — are, however, certainly growing in importance.

About 150,000 workers are employed in FTZs in South Korea, and 70,000 in Taiwan.

Many other South East Asian countries have FTZs, and the northern border zone of Mexico has long been an important FTZ.

Now FTZs are spreading to other Third World areas like the Caribbean, to the Stalinist states, and to the advanced capitalist countries.

Yugoslavia, Romania and China have FTZs, and Hungary is planning one. The US is said to have 83 FTZs. There are several in continental Europe, especially in West Germany, which has a particularly big FTZ in Hamburg.

In Third World countries FTZs usually have not only exemption from trade controls and tariffs, but also exemption from labour protection laws and bans on trade unions. In the advanced capitalist countries the FTZs usually have only exemption from trade controls, tariffs, and maybe some other taxes.

But watch out!

**A QUESTION
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Their George O



GEORGE ORWELL didn't attach any particular importance to the present year. It seemed like a good title for the book, written in 1948. How was he to know that ignorant philistines would take it literally as a prediction? Margaret Thatcher turns her hand to literary criticism and comes to the stunningly profound conclusion. "Orwell got it wrong".

But like it or not this is inevitably Orwell's year. What with the "Big Brother" t-shirts, the TV specials, the articles in the trendy colour supplements, and all the "learned" pieces in the New Statesman, Marxism Today and so on, it's a good bet that Orwell is revolving in his grave at this very moment.

By Jim Denham

One wonders who Orwell would have despised the most — the ignorant Tories who have tried to enlist him as an anti-socialist crusader, the professional liars (mainly Stalinists) on the 'left', who put about the same story

Of course, the Communist Party has long hated Orwell. And with good reason, from their point of view. Almost alone among middle class left-intellectuals of the 1930s, he saw through Stalinism. For all his many faults, that fact alone should weight the balance in his favour for readers of Socialist Organisation.

While more "sophisticated" intellectuals blinded themselves to what was really going on in Russia, and Fabians like Shaw and the Webbs wrote peans of praise to Stalinist totalitarianism, Orwell cut through the then-fashionable crap. The CP has never forgiven him for that.

Thus a trendy Euro-communist like Beatrix Campbell can write a nasty little piece in the New Statesman describing Orwell as "a socialist who was best known for his anti-socialism", and be supported in this scurrilous lying by an old Stalinist, Leslie Moody ("It is not often that I have the pleasure of reading an article with every word of which I agree without reservation. I have to thank Beatrix Campbell on Orwell for this rare privilege"). Never mind our own internal CP feuding — we can all agree about the "anti Soviet" Orwell.

Actually, one of Campbell's charges against Orwell has some truth in it: he was a male chauvinist of a most unpleasant kind. But then, the CP in Orwell's day (the alternatives that Campbell advocates, though she doesn't admit it) wasn't so hot on women's rights, either. And they covered for and lied about the massive and systematic assault on women's rights in the Soviet Union that was part of Stalin's counter-revolution then.

Orwell's attacks on "earnest ladies in sandals" and his obsessive dislike of birth control would certainly have placed him on the wrong side in modern debates on feminism.

But his general dislike of faddists and his tirades against fruit-juice drinkers, nudists, escaped Quakers and so forth (the rant about socialism at the end of "The Road to Wigan Pier", for instance) has a positive side to it. It demonstrates a serious concern to make socialism acceptable and accessible to workers.

Orwell's revulsion against cranks and faddists (and he'd come across plenty of them around the ILP and the "Adelphi" magazine, which he contributed to) is very like the American Trotskyist James P. Cannon's aversion to

"freakish, abnormal, exotic" types with "trick moustaches" and corduroy suits.

It also flows quite logically from Orwell's understanding of the need to make socialism a universal cause — his concern to unify and generalise the struggle in the interest of the working class as a whole. This naturally set him against the special interest groups around the left.

It continues, naturally, to be anathema to the single issue campaigners and pig's trough municipal socialists of today.

Orwell's hostility to the Communist Party's Popular Front and to the Popular-Front 'Broad Left' around the Left Book Club was not at all the same as his hostility to 'socialist faddism'. The goal of the CP and its allies after 1936 was not socialism but a coalition government of Labour, Liberals and 'progressive Tories'.

How ironic that the Stalinists today charge Orwell with having been a 'liberal'.

Alliance

He himself had all sorts of funny ideas about an alliance between the working class and dispossessed 'lower-upper-middle-class gentlefolk' like himself.

But at least his fantasy alliance was to be under uncompromising proletarian leadership and dedicated to socialist revolution, not the maintenance of capitalist bourgeois democracy in the face of fascism which was what the Popular Front aimed for and in Spain, slaughtered working class revolutionaries for.

He clearly denounced the "Popular Front which... will not be genuinely socialist in character, but will be simply a manoeuvre against German and Italian [not English] fascism." (Road to Wigan Pier).

He saw through "the mealy-mouthed Liberal who wants fascism destroyed in order that he may go on drawing his dividends peacefully — the type of humbug who passes resolutions against fascism and communism", i.e. against rats and rat-poison." And he as good as called for a revolutionary party: "In the next few years we shall either get that effective Socialist Party that we need, or we shall not get it. If we do not get it, then Fascism is coming." (The Road to Wigan Pier).

These largely intuitive, undeveloped semi-revolutionary ideas were firmed up by his experience when he put his life on the line as a POUM militia volunteer in Spain in 1937.

The POUM was a politically unstable group of ex-Communist Party people, ex-Trotskyists and others.

But the POUM retained enough socialist principles to find itself (along with the Spanish anarchists) on the



Spanish Republican militiamen on their way to fight the

receiving end of the Comintern's murderous onslaught. Orwell's account of his Spanish experience, 'Homage to Catalonia', is not the kind of worked out, working class socialist analysis presented by Felix Morrow in 'Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain' (the best book on the Spanish civil war). But his conclusions are much the same.

Orwell describes explaining to a rank and file CP member why he would not join their "International Column".

"I had to tell him that after this affair I could not join any Communist-controlled unit. Sooner or later it might mean being used against the Spanish working class. One could not tell when that kind of thing would break out again, and if I had to use my rifle at all in such an affair I would use it on the side of the working class and not against them".



Big Brother Hitler

Between 1937 and September 1939, Orwell advocated a policy against fascism in the 'democratic imperialist' countries like Britain and France, essentially the same as that of the Trotskyists, though more simply arrived at:

"I do not see how one can oppose Fascism, except by working for the overthrow of capitalism, starting, of course, in one's own country. If one collaborates with a capitalist-imperialist government against Fascism, i.e. against a rival imperialism, one is simply letting Fascism in by

the back door."

Then, horrified by the reality of the Nazi threat, he turned "patriotic" — "My Country Right or Left" as he ironically put it. On this again, the Stalinist-influenced left seize hypocritically upon Orwell's shortcomings whilst forgetting their own, much more shameful, record.

After its popular-frontist jingoism between 1935 and 1939, the CP was "pro-Nazi neutral" during the Stalin-Hitler pact of 1939-41. And that "neutrality" actually tended towards a pro-Nazi stance, with R. Palme Dutt (editor of the British CP's magazine 'Labour Monthly' and the leading CP intellectual for many decades) publishing blatant pro-German propaganda. After 1941, when Hitler attacked the East and Russia joined the Allies, the CP returned to its super-patriotic role. Unlike Orwell, they advocated strike-breaking as part of the war effort. In the words of CP General Secretary Harry Pollitt, "it is the class conscious worker who will cross the picket line."

Patriotism

Orwell's patriotism was actually no more than the flip-side of his over-simplistic "revolution or fascism" scenario. Very few people, apart from pacifists (whom Orwell despised) and worked-out, scientific socialists (i.e. Trotskyists) could stand against the "anti-Fascist" urge for national unity. At least Orwell's patriotism retained a revolutionary socialist objective. He could still write:

"Only revolution can save England, that has been obvious for years, but now that revolution has started and may proceed quite quickly if only we can keep Hitler out. Within two years, maybe a year, if only we can hang on, we shall see changes that will surprise the idiots who have no foresight. I dare say the London gutters will have to run with blood. All right, let them, if it

George Orwell, who told the Left unpalatable truths

Orwell and Ours



Francisco Franco's fascist rebellion, 1936

necessary." (The Lion and the Unicorn). The truth is that it was not Orwell's patriotism which infuriated the Stalinists and their fellow-travellers, but his continued advocacy of working class struggle against both the capitalists in the West and the ruling caste of totalitarian Russia. Criticism of the Russian "workers' fatherland" and of good old "Uncle Joe" Stalin was not as popular in the 1940s as it is now. In fact the government propagandists in both Britain and the USA glorified Stalin and most of his work, including his recent slaughter of the Old Bolsheviks in the mid-'30s Moscow Trials.

Animal Farm

Orwell had great difficulty getting "Animal Farm", his parody on the degeneration of



Brother Cain-Stalin

the Russian revolution, published. Gollancz, the publishing house most closely associated with the pro-Moscow left, naturally would not touch it. Neither would Faber and Gwyer or Jonathan Cape.

There is evidence that the Ministry of Information put pressure on publishers to boycott "Animal Farm" in order to avoid any antagonism to a wartime ally. (In the USA, similar pressure held up the publication of Trotsky's book on Stalin, printed in 1941, until 1946.

Animal Farm has been widely portrayed as an anti-Communist diatribe. But even a cursory reading shows such an interpretation to be wide of the mark. Orwell's objective was not to denigrate the revolution but to expose the betrayal of revolutionary ideas by the bureaucrats.

The famous final passage of the book (in which the Stalinist ruling caste are appropriately portrayed as pigs, and the "men" are the capitalists) sums up Orwell's view of the degeneration of the Russian revolution:

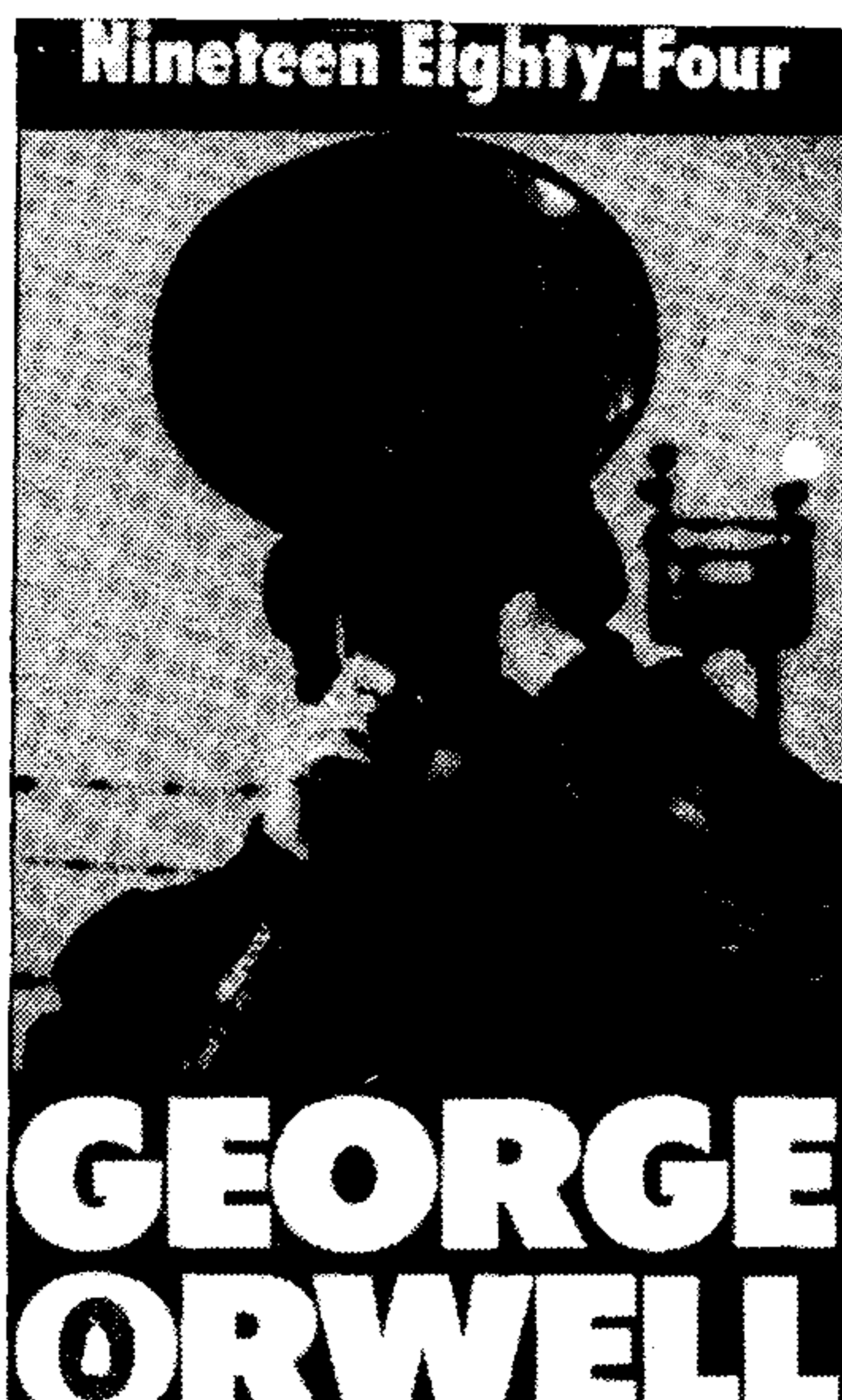
"The creatures outside looked from pig to man and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which."

Totalitarianism

Orwell's increasing fascination with totalitarianism and the workings of dictatorial elites (or 'oligarchies') resulted in "1984", the book that predictably sparked this year's Orwell craze. Here Orwell comes closest to codifying his nightmare vision of a Stalinist-Hitlerite regime ushered in by power-crazed intellectuals.

Underpinning 1984 is a distinct world view, very close to that developed in the early forties by the ex-Trotskyist James Burnham, who quickly went over to reaction and by Max Schachtman, who remained a revolutionary socialist into the '50s.

The similarity is not accidental. Orwell had read Burnham's books and essays, and wrote several articles discussing Burnham's ideas. Orwell's "Oligarchical collectivist" characterisation of both Russia and Nazi Germany clearly coincided with the origi-



The Book of the Year: not yet the year of this book

inal Burnham-Schachtman analysis (usually called bureaucratic collectivism) and the world of 1984 is clearly based upon Burnham's 1941 book "The Managerial Revolution".

Orwell summarised Burnham's theses as follows:

"Capitalism is disappearing, but socialism is not replacing it. What is now arising is a new kind of planned, centralised society which will be neither capitalist nor, in any accepted sense of the word, democratic. The rulers of this new society will be the people who effectively control the means of production: that is, business executives, technicians, bureaucrats and soldiers, lumped together by Burnham under the name of 'managers'.

"These people will eliminate the old capitalist class, crush the working class, and so organise society that all power and economic privilege remain in their own hands. Private property rights will be



A miner in the 1930s took the grime and dirt home with him

abolished, but common ownership will not be established. The new "managerial" societies will not consist of small independent states, but of great super-states grouped around the main industrial centres in Europe, Asia and America. These super-states will fight amongst themselves for possession of the remaining uncaptured portions of the earth, but will probably be unable to conquer one another completely." (James Burnham and the Managerial Revolution, Collected Essays Vol 4).

But the world of the "Managerial Revolution" and 1984 was not necessarily Orwell's view of how things would actually turn out. Indeed, Orwell described 1984 as a satire. Certainly, it was not some kind of "last testament" — it was simply the last book he wrote before his death. All the evidence suggests that while Orwell may have believed Burnham to have been "more right than wrong about the present and immediate past", he did not accept the managerial revolution as an unstoppable process.

He criticised Burnham for "trying to build-up a picture of terrifying, irresistible power" and questioned Burnham's explanation for the motivation of the new class (power for its own sake) in semi-Marxist terms:

"He assumes that the division of society into classes serves the same purpose in all ages. This is practically to ignore the history of hundreds of years."

Noting Burnham's ambivalent attitude to Stalin and Hitler, Orwell detected (correctly) an element of "power-worship". And that, he commented, "blurs politi-

cal judgement because it leads, almost unavoidably, to the belief that present trends will continue."

And that is the important point to remember about Orwell. Despite the undoubted pessimism that pervades his later writings, he remained committed to the possibility of socialist change. And the force he believed could bring about that change was the working class.

Snobbery

A lot of slanderous nonsense has been written about Orwell's attitude to workers. He has been accused of all sorts of middle-class prejudice, of "patronising" workers and even of snobbery. Some of this stems from Orwell's honesty. Unlike most middle class recruits to the socialist cause, he openly admitted his own worries and contradictions, and his inability to transcend his class origins.

It took guts to write: "Here am I, for instance, with a bourgeois upbringing and a working class income. Which class do I belong to? Economically I belong to the working class, but it is almost impossible for me to think of myself as anything but a member of the bourgeoisie." (Road to Wigan Pier).

This frankness about his stance as an outsider looking



Orwell told the truth about Stalinism in Spain.

in upon the working class, laid Orwell open to a lot of misunderstanding. The downright lie (first put about by CP General Secretary Harry Pollitt in response to Orwell's denunciation of the "Popular Front") that Orwell said "the working classes smell" still has credence to this day (actually, what he said was that the middle class was brought up to believe that the working classes 'smell').

Orwell's attitude towards workers was sympathetic and unprejudiced. That he didn't idealise workers or hypocritically pretend to be one of them, was his strength, not his weakness.

True, the workers he describes in Wigan Pier are not on the whole politically aware or active, and he makes no mention of the huge, militant demonstrations against unemployment that had taken place in the very towns he visited, just a year previously.

Similarly Boxer and Clover (the carthorses representing the Russian working class in Animal Farm) are passive, uncomprehending, entirely unaware of their own potential strength, and the "proles" of 1984 have been pacified by gin, pornography and gambling.

But even at his gloomiest (and in 1984 Orwell certainly was at his gloomiest) hope still lay with the "proles" — "strength would turn into consciousness", though it might take a thousand years.

Despite the pessimism of his last years, despite his backwardness on women and gays, despite his "patriotism" and all his other well-publicised faults, Orwell knew which side he was on instinctively, from the guts:

"... when I see an actual flesh and blood worker in conflict with his natural enemy, the policeman, I do not have to ask myself which side I am on."



Orwell recorded the horrors of the 20th century in words, others in images like this, by the Russian artist Vereshchagin

"When I see the worker fighting his natural enemy, the policeman, I do not have to ask myself which side I am on".



Witch-hunts, to organise a public meeting with Peter Tatchell to which 120 came. SO is unlikely to win over large numbers of people out of such activity. But it is tremendously important that we keep the ear of a large number of people, influence their ideas and thereby events, and that we do not isolate ourselves so that we can influence nothing.

What should SO supporters do now?

What are the prospects which face us? Above all the crisis of capitalism remains. The Tories will increasingly attempt to resolve it at the expense of the working class.

Inside the Labour Party there is a clear trend for unity behind Kinnock, whom large sections of the left see as a left winger.

Kinnock's fake leftism has led SO to say that he should put his money where his mouth is. That's the way to do it.

Kinnock's campaign on health cuts could bring into action health and other workers in confrontation with the Tories in a way he does not want. We must attempt to see that that happens. There will undoubtedly be battles over cuts in education and the rest of the public sector as well as other industrial actions.

We should see our job in all these cases not only as fighting for our politics, but of exposing in action the inadequacy of Kinnock and the soft left. Again the Tories' attacks on local government via rate capping and abolition of the Metropolitan Authorities means that we should be giving a lead in fighting the Tories, and exposing the inadequacy of the politics of the local government left and the soft left.

Our tactics must flow from the work that each local group is doing. In a group where SO supporters are well-placed industrial militants, it would be silly to pull them out to go off and become councillors. But in a group like Stoke where there are no militant worker comrades and where all the work has been built up around the Labour Party, standing councillors flows logically from that. Were we to withdraw from that we would simply isolate ourselves.

It goes without saying that whether SO supporters function as industrial militants or as councillors that at all times they should be arguing for SO's politics. Whichever is the case, it is clear that we will be better placed to give a lead to the struggles if we have comrades holding these positions than if we do not.

If, as a result of arguing our politics our comrades face deselection — so be it. In the process we will fight a political battle to expose the politics of those who want to deselect us.

SO groups must use and back up those comrades who are in leading positions to the best advantage during any struggle.

Our councillors should see their role not as administrators, but as socialist militants who orientate with SO's politics to workers' organisations and to tenants, community and other groups.



SO badges 25p each, or £2 for ten.



Ken Livingstone

THERE are a number of separate issues contained in Martin Thomas' article on the left and local government (December Socialist Organiser).

The Local Government Left

I agree with most of what he says about the local government left, though I think that it is artificial to separate the local government left from the broad Labour left. They share the reformist politics which is the key political weakness in the Labour left's approach to local government. It is those politics which have "failed the test of the class struggle."

In turn, this is the reason why we should have SO councillors in a position to expose the deficiency of those politics, and able to act as a beacon around which the serious left in the labour movement can be rallied to fight the Tories. We should not withdraw to shout abuse or advice from the sidelines. We have been right to attack the Socialist League and the SWP for doing that.

It seems to me that conclusions on socialist work in local government do not flow in a straight line from Martin Thomas's just criticisms of the Labour left's strategy for opposing Tory cuts. The left is rightly criticised for failing to mobilise opposition to the cuts and for using rate rises as an alternative to confronting the Tories. But, the important question we should ask ourselves is this? Had they gone for confrontation and failed what would our attitude have been then?

In that situation I think we too would have opted for "doing the best we could within the existing structures." indeed in a strike we often face a situation where, having done all we can, we are forced to recognise defeat, make compromises and 'do the best we can'. Our criticism of the Left should not be for doing the

Two pamphlets summing up the ideas of Socialist Organiser. 'Where We Stand' - 20p plus 16p postage. 'How to fight the Tories' - 10p plus 16p postage. Or the two together for 45p including postage. From Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8



Local government unions will fight to defend local government democracy

Socialists and local government

Let's go up front!

best they can within the existing structures, but for their failure to mount the kind of opposition to the Tories which might have broken those structures.

Bastions and Fortresses

The idea of left wing Labour Authorities acting as bastions of socialism is criticised on the ground that little can be achieved through local government other than gestures. This criticism is wrong for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it overstates the case that nothing can be done. The establishment of Nuclear Free Zones led to the Tories being forced to drop their Hard Rock Civil Defence exercise. It was a weakness of SO that we did not draw attention to the fact that if Labour Authorities and other groups had organised in a similar way to resist the Tories' cuts and government-forced council house sales a similar reversal of Tory policy might have been won.

Martin Thomas says that the GLC's and Ken Livingstone's stance on Ireland is radical Liberalism. But such policies are not radical Liberalism any more than support for the convening

of Constituent Assemblies in certain circumstances would be radical Liberalism — or make us radical Liberals for advocating it, as we might.

Livingstone helped generate discussion on Ireland within the Party. Is that positive or not? If it is then we should recognise it as an advantage that the GLC is seen to be arguing those policies.

Even where the GLC has been politically inadequate, as over Fares Fair, there have been invaluable lessons for the working class. One of the prime objectives of revolutionaries is to demonstrate that bourgeois democracy is a sham. Where we have councillors or MPs, their role at all times is to say to the working class: "These institutions are a sham. Rely on your own strength." The intervention of the Law Lords to stop the GLC's fares reduction was the clearest proof, short of a military coup, that bourgeois democracy is a sham. It would not have happened had it not been for a left local authority adopting the policy in the first place.

The statement that "the preparation for that overthrow (of the profit system) comes principally through the self education of the working class in struggle, not through the enlightening efforts of left wing municipal administrators" is pure economism a la SWP. We do not believe that the working class can self educate itself in struggle, but that we as Marxists have to intervene to draw out the lessons for the working class as we go through the experience with them. Will we be best placed to draw out those lessons, and gain the ear of the class (especially in the public sector) as Labour councillors or

Arthur Bough continues the debate on the left and local government

as sellers of a paper workers will never have heard of, or be the slightest bit interested in?

There is a similar economism in the attack on the Greater London Enterprise Board's failure to create many jobs, which is also in my view overstated.

Finally, the statement quoted by Jan Wallcraft is a sufficient reply to the criticism made: "... when the GLC came under attack, I felt that there was something worth defending..." That she was alienated later was not the result of ideas about the GLC being a bastion of socialism. It was because of the inadequate politics of the GLC left.

Again it is an argument for our being in there with an alternative, not for our abstention from the struggle.

To argue otherwise is to say that the Bolsheviks were wrong to carry through the Revolution, to act as a bastion of the Revolution, from which the Revolution could be spread. It is to argue that they should have waited for the world wide revolution.

SO Councillors

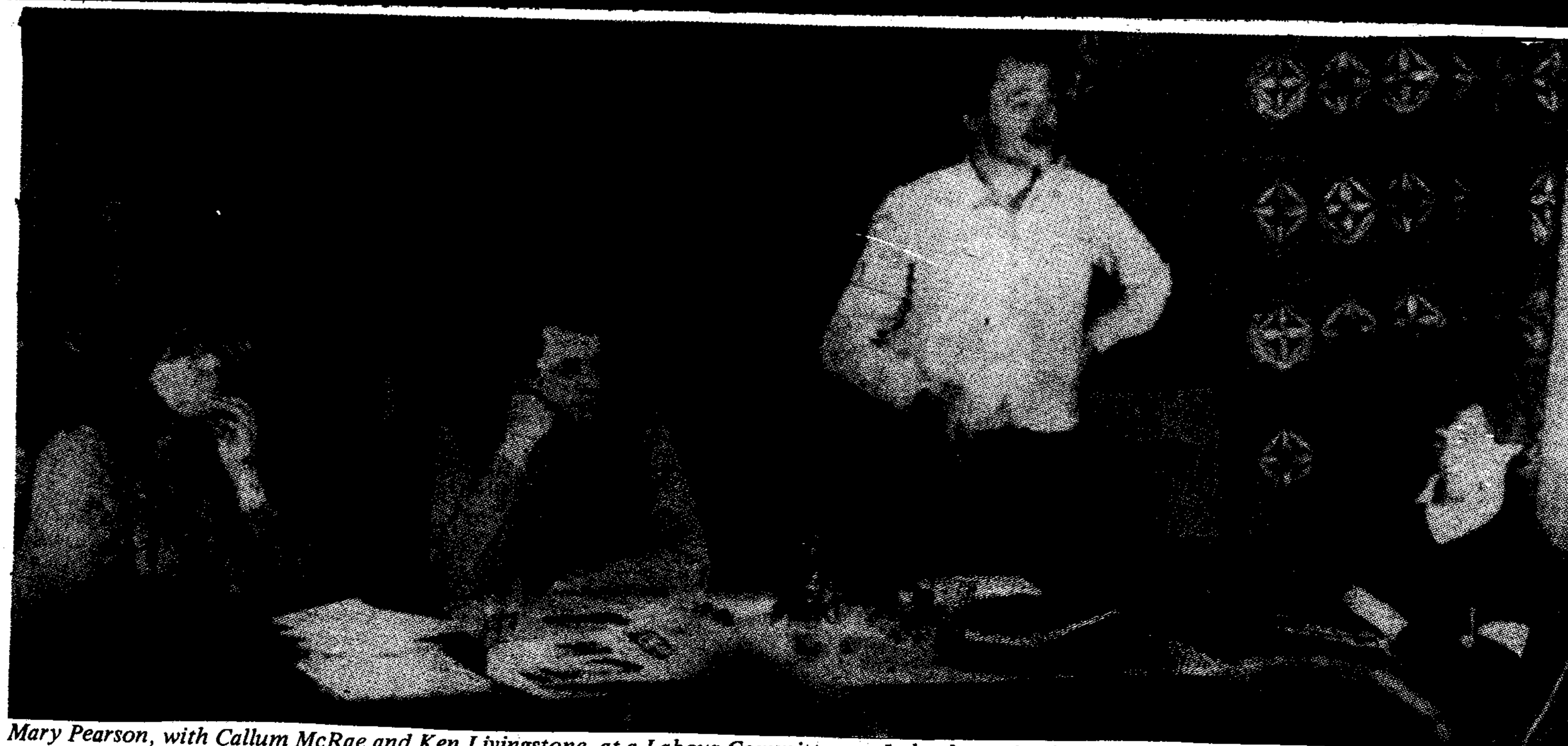
The question really is about how we see the question of building SO. It seems to me that Martin Thomas proposes a complete abandonment of the ideas that have guided us for the last five years. Those ideas were essentially that we should stop talking to ourselves and start talking to the working class or at least to its most advanced sections, represented by the Labour left. We set out to help build a broad left current in which we would argue for our politics. In particular we have tried to be the ones who make initiatives rather than the ones who "offer critical support".

It was this idea that led to the establishment of SO, of Women's Fightback, and of the Rank and File Mobilising Committee and the Mobilising Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions. From none of these campaigns have we made massive numbers of converts to SO's politics. But does that mean that we were wrong to initiate them? Have they not been, especially in the case of the Rank and File Mobilising Committee, an important contribution to the development of the class struggle and given us a credibility in the eyes of the best sections of the Left that we never had before.

What has happened in Stoke as a result of us giving a lead in action, rather than criticising from the back of the hall, is that far fewer people on the left think of us as a bunch of sectarian idiots, and our opponents are far less able to get away with characterising us as such.

We were, for example, able recently via Labour Against the

"Our criticism of the Left should not be for doing the best it can within the existing structures — but for their failure to mount the kind of opposition to the Tories which might have broken those structures".



Mary Pearson, with Callum McRae and Ken Livingstone, at a Labour Committee on Ireland meeting in Edinburgh last September

Police raid Irish activist

SCIENCE

By Les Hearn

Genetic engineering

Lesch-Nyhan syndrome (LNS) is a rare but devastating disease in children which is known to be caused by the absence of a single gene, coding for an enzyme — hypoxanthine phosphoribosyl transferase (HPRT).

When cells in the body die, their chemicals are either recycled or broken down and excreted. HPRT is instrumental in recycling substances called purines which are the building blocks of DNA and RNA.

When DNA and RNA are broken down, the purines are either recycled or turned into urate (uric acid) and excreted in the urine.

But in children lacking HPRT, all the purines are converted into urate. And urate salts and uric acid are very insoluble.

When urate production goes up, the body cannot get rid of it fast enough. Instead, crystals of urates form in the joints and kidneys, eventually causing the painful disease, gout.

Before gout sets in though, more disturbing symptoms appear. By the age of 2 or 3, LNS children become mentally deficient, aggressive and suffer from compulsive self-destructive behaviour — they begin to uncontrollably bite their fingers and lips.

The over-production of urate in LNS sufferers can be treated, but this does not affect the behaviour of their victims. The lack of the HPRT gene obviously has unknown consequences for the chemistry of the brain.

Now it seems treatment may after all be possible, thanks to the advance of genetic engineering.

If genes for HPRT could be inserted into the DNA of LNS sufferers, perhaps these self-destructive behaviours could be cured.

Genetic engineers plan to do this by infecting patients with a particular virus carrying the HPRT gene.

Retroviruses sometimes insert own DNA into that of their hosts. Genetic engineers have already inserted human HPRT genes into retroviruses and infected mouse bone marrow. The genes produced HPRT.

Now, researchers need to find a retrovirus that will infect humans and multiply, inserting the HPRT gene, but not causing any ill-effects.

No-one knows whether LNS is treatable, even by this method — the damage to the sufferers may be irreversible — but at least the chance exists that a devastating disease may be curable.

DIOXIN IN MALAYA

The Americans may have perpetrated an ecological atrocity with the herbicide Agent orange in Vietnam, but they were not the originators of such tactics. That "honour" goes to Britain!

Cabinet papers from 1952 show that the British Army sprayed vast quantities of a herbicide cocktail over Malaya during the war against guerrillas in the 1950s.

The "cocktail", which contained 2,4,5-T, was described by the government as "harmless to human and animal life".

However, 2,4,5-T always contains some 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin or dioxin, as a contaminant.

Dioxin is incredibly poisonous. Tiny quantities can cause chloracne, a disfiguring disease lasting for up to 15 years, as well as cancer, and abnormalities in the unborn.

The herbicide was used on roadsides to kill bushes in which guerrillas could hide, as well as on fields of crops grown by guerrillas. Both people and animals must have been exposed to dioxin, as were British troops (many conscripted under National Service).

Despite precautions, herbicides coated Army vehicles and could not be completely removed.

One effect on the environment must have been to increase soil erosion, as tropical rains quickly wash away unprotected topsoil.

Despite subsequent discoveries of dioxin's harmfulness, no studies have been carried out.

Later, British expertise was passed on to the Americans, with more drastic effect.

On 22 December 1983 at 6.45 am my home was raided by eight plain clothes police officers. They were in possession of a warrant to search for explosives under the Criminal Damage Act. They then "searched for explosives" mainly amongst political papers, books and photographs.

graphs.

Their behaviour showed quite clearly that they did not believe they were searching for explosives.

I believe that I was being raided because of my long-standing involvement in the Troops Out Movement and that the police took the

CLPs conference

1984 brings us all very many challenges. We are already called upon to carefully consider our preparations for a full-scale campaign to win maximum representation for Labour in June's direct elections to the European Assembly. Meanwhile, the Tories are moving swiftly and ruthlessly to cut the Labour Party's trade union connections, which could spell bankruptcy for our Party.

In all our localities attacks

abound on local government democracy and independence, on general welfare provisions, and on the NHS. Meantime, deployment of Cruise at Greenham, and the expansion of the American bases in Britain are imposed on us with a brutal disregard for public preference and national sovereignty.

It is more than ever necessary that CLP activists gather together to exchange experiences and agree practical plans.

Therefore, as agreed at our last meeting in Brighton, we are making preparations for the third in our series of consultations for CLP representatives, to be held in Nottingham on Saturday, 24 March 1984.

At our most recent consultation, held in Brighton on the Sunday of Conference week, over 250 delegates participated. After hearing short reports from members of the constituency section of the NEC, we dwelt on three main issues: fighting the European Assembly elections; building workplace branches to help win the battle on political funds; and, thirdly, defending local democracy.

All these issues are still urgent, and we therefore propose that these workshops be reconvened. Additionally, a fourth workshop might consider Labour organisation, nationally and locally, within the overall framework of campaigning for Labour. We should very much welcome comments about these proposals, and further suggestions for the agenda of our next consultation, and invite comrades to send them quickly in good time for the March meeting.

Each constituency is invited to send up to four delegates. Registration forms have been sent to all CLP secretaries. Copies are available from Tony Simpson, 26 Rockingham Grove, Bingham, Notts. NG13 8RY.

AUDREY WISE
KEN FLEET
TONY SIMPSON

Municipal wimps?

MARTIN Thomas is absolutely correct to point out that the municipalists took power without possessing the most rudimentary idea of what to do with it and what they were facing.

Further, much of Labour's 'new left' is positively 'anti-theory' — that is, hostile to the idea that the experience of the past, codified in Marxist theory, has anything to teach them or should have any part in guiding what socialists do now.

Recently, aspirant future Prime Minister of Pakistan and former Mr Moustache of 1968, Tariq Ali, celebrated the freeing of Benazir Bhutto by opening a bottle of Landwein der Mosel Weinland Kellerei GmbH Halbtrocken 1933 and interviewing Greater London Enterprise Board (GLEB) overlord Ken Livingstone for the mass circulation New Left Review.

What books had influenced Ken's development into the greatest living socialist, inquired the world's greatest living former member of the International Marxist Group?

What tomes did Ken particularly recall from all those long intense evenings down at the British Museum Reading Room? "What a romantic thought," Ken beamed, fondling a newly acquired Great Horned Toad he had named Gerry Healy. "I've never read a book in my life."

"Get away," grinned Tariq, helping himself to a further generous portion of Penning

Rowsell's fancy. "Sure as you'll never be a member of the Labour Party, son," sighed Ken.

"I've never been a theoretician. By the time I reached the stage where I wanted to read more theoretical works, I was already on the council. Since then I've been reading council agendas... Life is a flurry of paper. Many of them I won't have time to read."

Many of the MPs are also fully fledged 'new wimps', more into their pine kitchens, Beaujolais Noveau, nut cutlets and decaffeinated coffee-table feminism than into socialist theory.

In the Sunday Times colour supplement last autumn, Lord Longford's niece, Harriet Harman took time from explaining that every Friday, spouse Jack Dromey did "a big shop" to let us know that "I don't read at all. I'm afraid I never have been bookish, never got the habit of reading. It's a shame."

Even the academics are — in terms of Marxist theory — "know nothings".

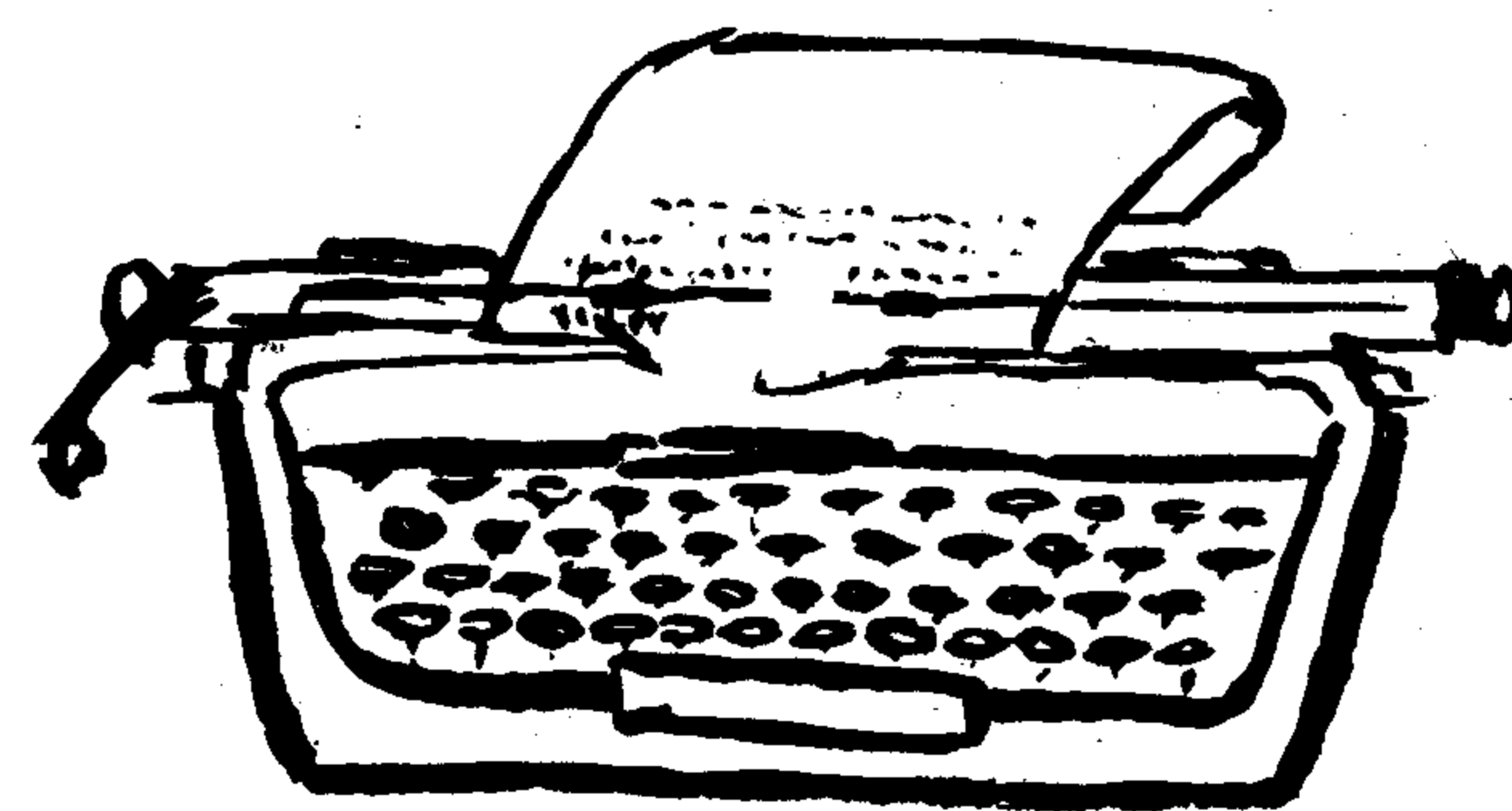
Noel Luton is correct to detect the infiltration of these — frequently ignorant — wimps into union education.

The Municipal Wimps — it's a good name for a pop group. They have certainly more to offer reptile-breeding than socialist strategy.

But on second thoughts: "Life is a flurry of paper"? It's not nearly as good as "Life is a cold lasagna." Be honest, is it?

TONY MONTANA
Liverpool

Writeback



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

opportunity to attempt to update their information. One police officer even stole a petition sheet bearing several names and addresses.

During the search, a friend, Alan O'Dwyer, a former member of Sinn Fein, was arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). He was held for almost 30 hours at Sutton Coldfield police station.

The screaming headlines said he was being held in connection with the Harrods

bombing. The reality was that 99% of the questioning was about people opposing British rule in Ireland and their political activity. His alibis were never checked.

I am making a complaint against the police on the following grounds.

1. Misuse of the warrant — the warrant under the Criminal Damage Act was used to investigate my political papers.

2. A police officer stole a petition sheet bearing a number of names and addresses. I have demanded its immediate return.

3. No senior officer was left at my house following the arrest and this fact used by other officers to withhold information from us, e.g. their names and where they were based.

My sister has also complained about a particular officer's aggressive and abusive behaviour towards her 11 year old daughter after she saw him steal the petition.

Another vital point that is raised by my experience is the role of the magistrates.

Either the police told lies to obtain the warrant or the magistrates merely "rubber stamp" requests for warrants by the police. On what grounds did they issue the warrant?

I believe that the happenings on 22 December were a blatant case of political harassment and an attempt at intimidation.

I am asking Birmingham Trades Council to support my complaint against the police and raise the other issues highlighted in this letter by writing as appropriate to: the Chief Constable, the Home Secretary and the Shadow Home Secretary, your MP, councillors, the Police Committee and the chairman of the Magistrates.

MARY PEARSON
(NUT delegate to Birmingham Trades Council)



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

SOCIALIST STUDENT

BATTLE FOR THE NGA!

INSIDE

NAB CENTRE PAGES

NEWHAM 8 PAGE 4

MID EAST WAR PAGE 3

THE SWP PAGE 7

Paper of Socialist Students in NOLS. 10p plus postage from Andy Bennett, DSU, Dunelm House, New Elvet, Durham.

Socialist ORGANISER

Where we stand

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Freeze rent and rates.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



To join or affiliate, write to Chris Richardson, 21 Devonshire Promenade, Lenton, Nottingham NG7 2DS.

Fairy tales about Russia

'LEFT Press' this week looks at a paper which many Socialist Organiser readers will not know — 'Fighting Worker', a small sheet published in Detroit, USA, by a group called the Revolutionary Workers' League.

It is a paper which should, in justice, make it to the text books of political pathology and sectarian boneheadedness. Supporting Solidarnosc, it responded to martial law in Poland in December 1981 with a front page headline opposing... US invasion of Poland! ('US hands off!')

One can learn many lessons from a study of such a grouping, for its characteristics are frequently to be found in a less developed form in political tendencies for which there is still hope of revival and renewal.

One of the four pages of the latest Fighting Worker is given over to an article on 'Why we defend the Soviet Union'.

The article is worth discussing because its approach is typical of quite a wide section of the Left.

"Most American workers," the article begins, "get a one-sided picture of the Soviet Union from the anti-communist propaganda with which the government and media bombard us."

Against that picture of "dissidents who are jailed" and "lack of democracy" (RWL's scare-quotes), they set their own.

"There is no unemployment in the Soviet Union... every Soviet citizen is assured of housing, and rent is rarely more than \$10 or \$20 a month."

"Health care is available to everyone. Basic groceries... sell for pennies... Education is completely free..."

While capitalism is wasteful, "the Soviet economy does not undergo these constant ups and downs of boom and bust, does not require layoffs to stay on keel, and has been able to transform an impoverished agricultural country into one of the world's most technologically advanced countries in under half a century."

There is, however, a bureaucracy, which arose from the isolation of the workers' revolution in backward Russia. It is "repressive", and it has "impeded" the economic progress.

So the USSR is only halfway to socialism: "the workers of the Soviet Union have already won half the battle, the social revolution, which nationalised and collectivised the economy. Now they need a political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy and re-establish workers' democracy."

Much of this RWL account is simply lies or at best half-truths.

There is unemployment in the USSR. Workers sacked for being rebellious and class-consciousness do not get re-employed. In some East European countries with similar systems to the USSR, like Yugoslavia, unemployment is high even by present-day capitalist standards.

True, the Kremlin bureaucracy officially denies the existence of unemployment — and so, of course, there is no dole.

Rents are low in the USSR. But for the workers housing is low-quality and incredibly cramped — while the bureaucrats have luxury flats and country houses.

By Chris Reynolds

Health care? Minimal provision for the workers, luxury clinics for the bureaucrats... and 'mental hospitals' for rebels and militants.

Official food prices are low — if there is any of what you want left after you have queued for an hour or more. Otherwise you have to pay higher prices on the black market. The bureaucrats have special shops, which carry goods completely unavailable to the workers.

The education system is brutally authoritarian. Access to higher education is dominated by the children of the bureaucracy. They have, in reality, massive educational privileges.



through the democratic, cooperative organisation of production.

In many ways the USSR is much further from socialism than those capitalist societies with strong labour movements and relatively developed welfare services and civil liberties. The working class is enslaved more brutally and totally. The savage, systematic and relentless repression of any stirrings of an independent labour movement in the Stalinist states means that

LEFT PRESS

The USSR is not a basically healthy economy, slightly "impeded" and with a few political distortions. It does suffer crises. Its growth, especially since the 1970s, has not been specially fast in comparison to capitalist economies.

The bureaucratic management of the economy is probably as wasteful as the anarchy of the profit system in the West. The regime in the factories is brutal, close to slave labour: and the workers respond, of course, with sullen, passive resistance, which makes for low productivity.

The distribution of income is at least as unequal as in the West.

Not only the RWL's facts, but their whole approach is wrong. With the same method, they could easily — and with less violence to the facts — write a hymn of praise to social democracy in Scandinavia. Welfare services, labour protection laws, women's rights, civil liberties, high wages... what progress!

The method and criteria are those of socialism from above, in one country. The criteria of working class internationalist socialism are different.

Even if all the RWL's facts were right and workers' material standard of living in the USSR were much higher, that would tell us nothing about how the USSR stands in relation to the fight for a new mode of production.

Socialism is about the working class appropriating all the material and cultural riches of society and moving to the free development of individuality

the workers there are shackled as they have not been shackled anywhere under advanced non-fascist capitalism.

In respect of free speech, free assembly, freedom to organise — in other words, freedom to think and live as a class — the workers in the USSR are infinitely worse off even than workers in PATCO-busting Reagan's USA. For the RWL to tell US workers that this fact must be 'balanced' by low rents in the USSR is to give a completely wrong picture of what socialism is about.

The article is written in 'Easy Stories for Little Readers' style. But not only the facile style, but also the facile content, must repel any critical-minded US worker.

The US worker — like the British — values his or her individual freedoms. And rightly so. S/he is told by the media that those individual freedoms do not exist in the USSR, and that that is socialism.

We have to convince that US worker that the media are right about the barbarity of the Stalinist regime and wrong about that regime being socialism.

But the RWL skates round the issue of individual freedoms in the USSR — 'anti-communist propaganda', they say reproachfully — and relies on a sickly appeal to the US worker to see the 'good side' of the Stalinist states.

The RWL would say that they are continuing Leon Trotsky's policy of "defending the Soviet Union". They interpret 'defend' in the sense of 'justify, apologise

for, reject criticism of'.

Trotsky did speak of 'defending the USSR' — but he meant something diametrically different by it.

In his book 'Revolution Betrayed' he did start by listing the achievements of the USSR in the way of industrialisation between 1917 and 1935. But he examined the official claims critically, and warned: "The progressive role of the Soviet bureaucracy coincides with the period devoted to introducing into the Soviet Union the most important elements of capitalist technique. The rough work of borrowing, imitating, transplanting and grafting..."

With five years' further facts to go on, he wrote in May 1940: "The Moscow trials... revealed that the totalitarian oligarchy has become an absolute obstacle in the path of the country's development. The rising level of the increasingly complex needs of economic life can no longer tolerate bureaucratic strangulation..."

"Semi-starved workers and collective farmers among themselves whisper with hatred about the spendthrift caprices of rabid commissars..."

In his 'Transitional Programme' (1938), he wrote of "... fascist countries, from which Stalin's political apparatus does not differ save in more unbridled savagery..."

A somewhat different tone from the RWL — and that at a time when, unlike now, attempted military conquest of the USSR by capitalist states was an immediate issue.

Trotsky would no more have dreamed of justifying his 'defence of the USSR' by prettifying the condition of the working class under Stalinist rule than Marx of substantiating his argument about the progressive role of capitalism by claims that the workers did very well out of it.

Trotsky's idea was that despite the terrible bureaucratic counter-revolution, certain basic economic relations of nationalised property remained. The totalitarian terror regime prevented the progressive potential of those relations being realised, but still the relations should be defended.

In his later writings he insisted that Marxists must be very clear about what they defended in the USSR — the nationalised property, not the regime 'as a whole' — and how — by class struggle, not by any let-up in criticism of the regime.

Trotskyists after World War 2, with the facts about the Stalinists' rapacity in Eastern Europe and the ten millions in slave-labour camps in the USSR before them, refined Trotsky's argument further. 'Defend the Soviet Union', they argued, was a misleading slogan: 'defend what remains of the conquests of the October 1917 revolution' was better.

They were right. In the name of defending Trotsky's slogan, the RWL are defending politics diametrically opposed to Trotsky's.

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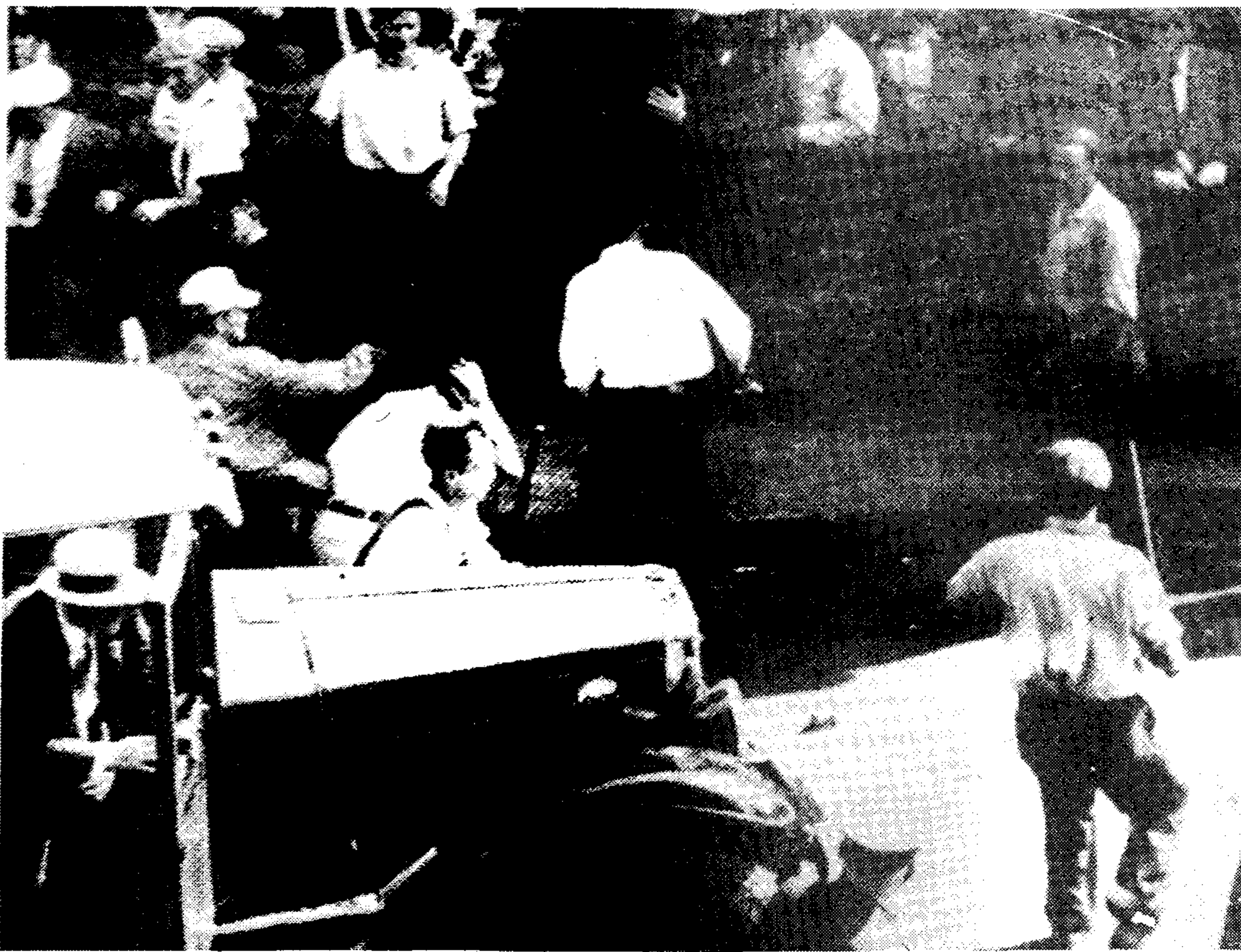
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Militant gangster



Hired thugs menace strikers during the 1934 Teamsters strike in Minneapolis

By Frank Higgins

'Blood Feud' is a semi-fictional account of the destruction of Jimmy Hoffa, long-time leader of the Teamsters Union in America. Hoffa disappeared six or seven years ago and is assumed to have been killed by gangsterdom — perhaps some of the gangsters he'd worked closely with for decades.

The first destruction of Hoffa was achieved not by gangsters but by the law-enforcement agencies of the

American state. They hounded, pursued, probed and investigated Hoffa for many years, charging corruption,

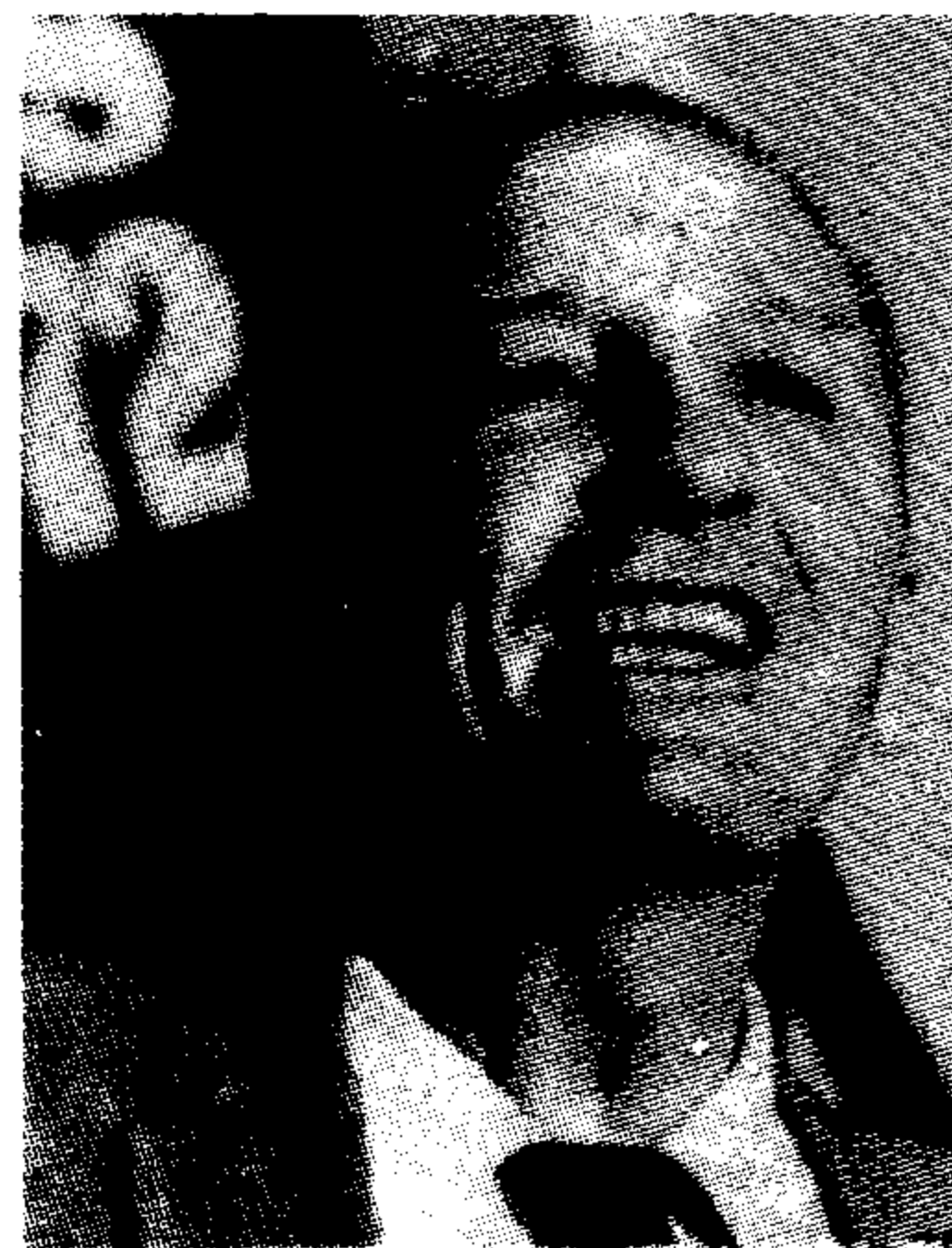
misuse of union funds, underworld connections.

Finally in the '60s, they jailed him. He was released in 1972 as part of a deal between the powerful Teamsters union and President Richard Nixon, though he never regained control of the union. The union's part of the bargain was to

throw its weight behind re-electing Nixon. They kept their bargain.

Officially, the 'hero' of Blood Feud is not Hoffa but Robert Kennedy. The bringing down of Hoffa is reckoned as one of this obnoxious family's great triumphs.

Ambitious Attorney 'Bobby' Kennedy — he had for a while worked full time as lawyer for witch-hunter Joe McCarthy in the early '50s — pursued Hoffa in the mid-'50s as a career-building exercise. As Attorney-General in his brother's administration after 1961, he used the powers of that office in full to pursue his vendetta against Hoffa.



Farrell Dobbs

A powerful scene in part one of Blood Feud showed Hoffa addressing a union meeting. Why, he asks, speaking about himself by name "do they want to get Hoffa?" He answers that they want to put some "weak-livered sell-out merchant" in his place, someone who won't fight for the union members. In another scene he says passionately that he wouldn't be a George Meany (AFL/CIO secretary), he wouldn't turn his back on the union members' interests.

This sort of thing tallies with what I've read about Hoffa. He was a conniving gangster, but — uniquely — a militant gangster, willing to use the union's substantial muscle recklessly to improve wages and conditions. He had, it seems, kept the loyalty of the rank and file of the Teamsters union.

Gangsters who control unions, of course, repress rank and file dissidents with physical violence up to murder. But Hoffa seems genuinely to have had real support too.

Jimmy Hoffa's was one face of the tragedy of the mass American labour movement which mushroomed into existence in the '30s, relying on semi-revolutionary tactics like the sit-in strike, to win the right to exist in the motor plants and in big industry generally. But within a decade it had been tamed.



George Meany

who use their bodies as a means to achieve what they want.

The problem with Beinix's film is that some aspects of this sexism tend to be glorified in the way the photography is shot — for example, the camera panning slowly in huge close up on a wide screen along the dead body of Gerard's sister and later, in a fantasy scene, along the naked body of Kinski with her throat slit. It all left rather a nasty taste in my mouth.

And whereas 'Diva' built not only on style but also on humour, excitement and suspense (although some of that was a little contrived), all but the style is lacking in 'Moon in the Gutter'.

There is no doubt, however, that Beinix is one of the most promising new directors to emerge for some time and I don't doubt that his films will continue to be awaited with interest by film-goers.

If you haven't seen either of his films yet, my advice is to catch up on 'Diva' the next time it's round your way (it really is a joy to watch) and then wait and see if Beinix does better with his next film.



two main suspects — Gerard's own pathetic, down-and-out brother and a rich guy from the other side of the tracks, who spends his nights drinking in the dockland bars. The rich guy's sister, Lorretta (played by Nastassia Kinski) bears a striking resemblance to Gerard's dead sister and he is immediately drawn to her.

Beyond that the film is very short on plot but very big on style. The sets are, if anything, even more over-the-top than those of Diva. The photography is often innovative and at times quite breathtaking, as for example, in the night time sequences filmed in the floodlit docks at Marseilles. But the film doesn't really lead anywhere.

Depardieu slugs, shouts and sulks his way through the overlong film, while Kinski has little more to do than drive around in her sports car looking beautiful.

Indeed, the most disturbing aspect of the film is the way in which women are portrayed.

Clearly a director whose film is peopled with lumpen proletarians can claim the need to portray things as they really are — sexist men, and women



Trade unionists fought Ford's thugs in the 'Battle of the Overpass' at Ford's River Rouge plant, 1937

Hoffa began his trade union life as a militant in the great Trotskyist-led battles fifty years ago to organise the long distance drivers in Minneapolis. Many years later he was still publicly acknowledging that he learned trade union audacity from the Trotskyist Farrell Dobbs (who died last November).

While Dobbs became the trade union secretary and then the national secretary of the SWP, Hoffa made his career as a corrupt union bureaucrat. The state felled him and finally his enemies probably buried him in cement somewhere.

Hoffa the gangster never forget the lessons he learned in the '30s, and he may even have held on to a twisted sort of crude, half-buried class identity.

Watching Hoffa appeal to the union rank and file against the state strangely reminded me of the now rare breed of militant Stalinist, of their relationship to the rank and file

and the rank and file's relationship to them. Not strangely, come to think of it. Though the motives of Stalinists would, of course, be different, and they'd thought they served the good socialism.

The American left has been divided on the attitude to adopt when the state tries to purge gangsters from unions. Dobbs and his party took a 'defend the union from the state, rely on the rank and file to kick out gangsters' position.

Others argued that it was a choice between the labour bound 'gangsters' of the state and the greedy, lawless gangsters who terrorised rank and file at every level. The latter were far worse, using intensive intimidation at every level of the union. The state gangsters worked, more or less, within bourgeois democratic law.

In any event, the US union are still gangster-ridden.

Not quite 'Diva'

By Ian Swindale

Jean-Jacques Beinix delighted the cinema world in 1982 with his debut film 'Diva'. Using a pulp novel storyline, he created a film full of style, strikingly photographed and using some dazzling sets.

Now he is back with his second film, 'The Moon in the Gutter'. And the success of 'Diva' has given him access to a couple of big name stars — Gerard Depardieu and Nastassia Kinski.

Depardieu plays Gerard, a stevedore, whose sister kills herself after being raped. Gerard hunts the low-life dockland haunts in search of his sister's attacker. There are

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Industrial

Clyde: class struggle or collaboration?

IT is now over a month since Britoil cancelled its contract for an oil-rig with the Scott Lithgow shipyards on the lower Clyde, thereby placing in jeopardy the jobs of the 4,500 workers at the yards, plus another 4,000 jobs in the "knock on" effect.

During that time the leadership of both the Scottish TUC and also of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) have singularly failed to take the lead in campaigning for militant and all-out opposition to this latest threat to jobs in the West of Scotland.

The ex-Scott Lithgow shop steward victimised last year for doing the Financial Times crossword puzzle has coined the term which sums up the new "strategy" for defending jobs: "ecclesiastical Yossierism".

This involves making pious appeals for the government to intervene, and wheeling out the local church dignitaries to try to give the affair the appropriate moral standing.

The main forces rallying round the banner of ecclesiastical Yossierism are: the Scottish TUC and the Communist Party (united by a bureaucratic fear of independent working class direct action); the Scottish National Party (which subordinates class contradictions to a notional "national struggle" against "English" rule); the Labour Party right wing (for ever opposed to anything that smacks of class struggle and militancy); and Tory wets (who fear job losses but fear workers fighting back against them even more).

Propelled from different directions and by different motives, these forces now cluster together in a ramshackle alliance, incapable of movement for fear that it would collapse if anything more serious than making another cliché-ridden speech were to be suggested.

The Scottish TUC is to the fore in promoting this holy alliance. Finally granted a meeting with the Prime Minister this week, its delegation will include the Moderator of the Church of Scotland and the Catholic Archbishop of Glasgow.

And the Clyde CSEU is not far behind. Its chairperson, Joe Bishop (appropriately named) has called for a joint campaign of MPs, political parties (i.e. including Tories),

churches and the media to save the yard from closure.

But probably the most enthusiastic of all is the Communist Party. They see a class collaborationist campaign to save Scott Lithgow as the big chance to realise their dream of a Scottish "broad democratic alliance", uniting a variety of conflicting class forces on the basis of emotional condemnation of the evils of unemployment.

Within Scott Lithgow itself, the emphasis is still upon "respectable opposition" to the threatened closure. The "work-on" tactic begun a week last Monday (23 January) involves workers declared to be laid off continuing to turn up at the yard and being given work by the foremen.

"We will not have these men sitting idle," declared convenor Duncan McNeill, "if this doesn't show that we are just honest hard-working people who want the right to work, then I don't know what will."

The Communist Party's Morning Star put a brave face on the work-on, reporting that "thousands of workers defied the heaviest blizzards — and their bosses — to report in for work." But the number who defied the lay-off instructions

was in fact not "thousands" but less than 300.

Moreover, it is becoming increasingly clear that the government's strategy would appear not to be closure of the yard but privatisation of Scott Lithgow, and a drastically reduced workforce accepting new working conditions.

Jim Murray, chairperson of the Shipbuilding Negotiating Council, has already declared the unions' readiness, albeit "reluctant", to accept privatisation; the CSEU has just agreed at national level to the introduction of new working conditions and therefore could hardly oppose further changes at Scott Lithgow; and the union leaderships will be quite prepared to cynically present some jobs being retained at the yard as a "victory" as against the threat of complete closure.

Under the mantle of ecclesiastical Yossierism, the union leadership, both at local and even more so, at national level is thus edging its way towards a "compromise solution".

Industrialists will be able to get their hands on Scott Lithgow. Union leaders will be able to duck out of being thrown to the fore of a real fight to save jobs. But Scott Lithgow workers will only end up with either the loss of their jobs, or jobs in intense working conditions.

The only means to avoid such an outcome is to ditch the notion of the "all-Scottish campaign", and orient instead to an alliance with other workers in British Shipbuilders threatened by job losses, demand that the Clyde CSEU's pledge of strike action to prevent compulsory redundancies is put into action, and build a campaign of opposition on the shop floor instead of in the pulpit.

Time is running out for the workers at Scott Lithgow. Even so, it is still not too late to begin organising for a serious fightback to defend all jobs and prevent privatisation of the yard.

Ford strike called off

INDUSTRIAL action to safeguard 2,000 jobs at the threatened Ford Dagenham foundry received a setback at the weekend when union leaders representing all of Ford UK's 57,900 workforce decided to suspend the national 24-plant strike called for February 13.

The about-face by the union officials came in response to a management decision to meet for further talks on February 22; though Ford has made it clear that the closure of the foundry (to be wound-up by April, 1985) is not negotiable.

Union officials claimed a mandate for their action after a mass meeting on Sunday (29th) at the Dagenham complex where about 7,000 (out of the 19,000 workforce employed there) voted by 3-1 to support the "no action for now" approach.

It seems likely that the other Ford plants around the country — who are voting this week — will end up backing this new position. However it is now almost certain that the closure of the Dagenham foundry is just the first step in Ford's plans over the next two years to turn their operations in Britain into assembly-only work.

All-out strike action — a position which has not been ruled out entirely by the union officials' new line (to be decided upon after the discussions with the company) — is the only possible effective way to safeguard jobs at Ford and must be argued for now and preparations begun now by workers at all of the company's plants.

Industrial digest



Philips Rubber

110 TGWU members are in their fourth week of a strike for an increase in their £48 a week wages at Philips Rubber in Manchester.

They are demanding that their bonus, which takes wages up to about £70, be included in the basic wage rate. This would mean parity with Dunlop.

At the weekly Friday mass meeting on January 27, they voted overwhelmingly to carry on the strike.

Convenor Tommy Watkins said, "Workers realise that the management offer of £7 is a load of rubbish. We are steadfast".

Only 18 clerical and supervisory staff are left working. Engineers inside the factory were laid off last Friday.

Solidarity action must be built on: British Telecom workers have refused to cross the picket line, and local firms including Dunlop have refused to handle goods.

Messages and donations to Tommy Watkins, 16 Barker St, Heywood.

Strike Feb13?

A NATIONAL strike from February 13 has been urged by shop stewards representing drivers from Scotland and the North in the crane hire industry.

A meeting of shop stewards who represent the 2,000 or so AUEW construction section members nationally is due to take place in Sheffield on February 7, where details of the dispute so far — arising from non-agreement of the 1983 national pay claim and the subsequent imposition by employers on November 7 of a 3.5% rise — will be discussed [notably a series of patchily supported one-day strikes], and where the proposal for an indefinite stoppage will be up.

Shop stewards believe that such a course of action, if agreed and made official, would galvanise wavering members up and down the country.

Dog eats dog

A 29.9% increase in compulsory liquidation brought company failures last year to a record 13,421 — 11% higher than in 1982 — according to statistics published by the Department of Trade and Industry.

Liquidations in the manufacturing sector accounted for about one-third of the overall total, with metals and engineering companies being the main victims in this sector, followed by textiles and clothing.

Creditors' voluntary liquidations also rose by 3% compared with 1982, following steep rises in each of the three previous years.

So much for the Tories' claim that the recession is over.

LABOUR AGAINST THE WITCH-HUNT

National Council meeting, Saturday February 11, from 11.30 at County Hall, London SE1 (Island Block Cinema). Creche available.

Tea for Carousel



The strikers turned up on the first day of the Regional Committee meeting to distribute the document and statement. They got a sympathetic response from delegates and cups of tea. Then they were shown the door, because the dispute was not on the agenda that day.

On the second day they again got sympathy and cups of tea. Then they were shown the door again, because the dispute was on the agenda that day.

Having fought for six months to get the TGWU recognised, they were thus denied the right to address its Scottish Regional Committee in order to appeal for support from the union in whose interest they have been standing on a picket line for six months.

Inside the meeting the broadsheet was denounced as a pack of lies and a wholesale attack on the trade union.

The attacks did not go unchallenged. The chairperson of the meeting was one of the signatories to the document, so it was difficult for the full-timers to win a vote to withdraw support from the dispute.

But they did win a vote that the strikers should appear next month before the TGWU Finance and General Purposes Committee — a smaller and more highly bureaucratised committee.

The strikers' fight now is as much against the officials of their own union as it is against Alessandro Saccomando, the owner of the Carousel factory. In order to win their fight, they have to achieve victory on both fronts.

The strikers themselves must call the West of Scotland shop stewards and labour movement conference which the TGWU still refuses to call. As well as appealing for individual union and Labour Party branches to sponsor the conference, the strikers must also demand sponsorship from those who signed the statement of support.

The conference must address itself to the twin tasks of mounting enough pressure on the TGWU bureaucracy to stop it ditching the dispute, and organising the picketing, boycotts and financial support needed to defeat Saccomando.

the picket lines and on organising a boycott of supplies to the factory.

"This document", it stated, however, "is intended to be constructive; our movement can only benefit from identifying mistakes and weaknesses in our work". "Only with the full support of the TGWU, its capacity, its resources, and organisation can this dispute be resolved."

When they heard about the document and the statement of support, TGWU full-timers suddenly appeared on the picket lines for the first time in months. They were there once a day for a whole week and visited the strikers at their homes.

Their purpose was not to strengthen the picketing but to try to get the strikers to dissociate from what one union official described as an "anti-union petition".

They met with no success by the time of the Regional Committee, the four page broadsheet had been completed, and the statement of support had been signed by two MPs, seventeen councillors and 38 office-bearers in the labour movement.

TEA and sympathy — quite literally, that was all that the TGWU Scottish Regional Committee on January 24-25 had to offer the Carousel strikers.

These ten young workers have been on strike for over six months in Glasgow's East End. They want union recognition, re-instatement and better working conditions.

As early as the beginning of January, rumours began to circulate that TGWU officials were getting ready to ditch the dispute, with the Scottish Regional Committee to be the scene of the crime.

The East End Support Committee (EESC — the local committee set up by Labour Party and trade union members to support the strikers) reacted by doing a broadsheet on the dispute and seeking signatures for a statement of support.

The broadsheet criticised more mildly than it justifiably could have done — the shortcomings of union support for the dispute. The TGWU has been weak in mobilising support for

THE Merseyside Trade Union and Labour Campaign Committee has launched a national appeal for a fund to pay the fines of those arrested at the Warrington picket line.

Sponsors include Moss Evans, Alan Sapper, Ray Buckton, Arthur Scargill, Rodney Bickerstaffe, Bill Keys, Eric Heffer, Terry Fields, Bob Wareing, Bob Parry, Allan Roberts and Eddie Loyden.

Please send donations c/o Paul Davies, TGWU, Transport House, Islington, Liverpool 3.

Problems with work-on

A WORKER at Scott Lithgow commented to Socialist Organiser on the current "work-on":

"There seems to have been a cut in the numbers involved in the work-on, because management has been giving them jobs. I think that some welders were due to be laid off this morning (27 January) but they were put on buffing instead."

"There's a lot of problems with the work-on. For instance, the police could arrest people for trespass, but that might provoke a strike situation. And you're not covered by National Insurance, so if you're killed at work, it could cost the company thousands of pounds."

"A disciplinary committee has been set up, involving a shop steward and three shop-floor members. But it's a lot of nonsense. They're still impressing on people the need to write to Maggie, and to get their kids to do that as well."

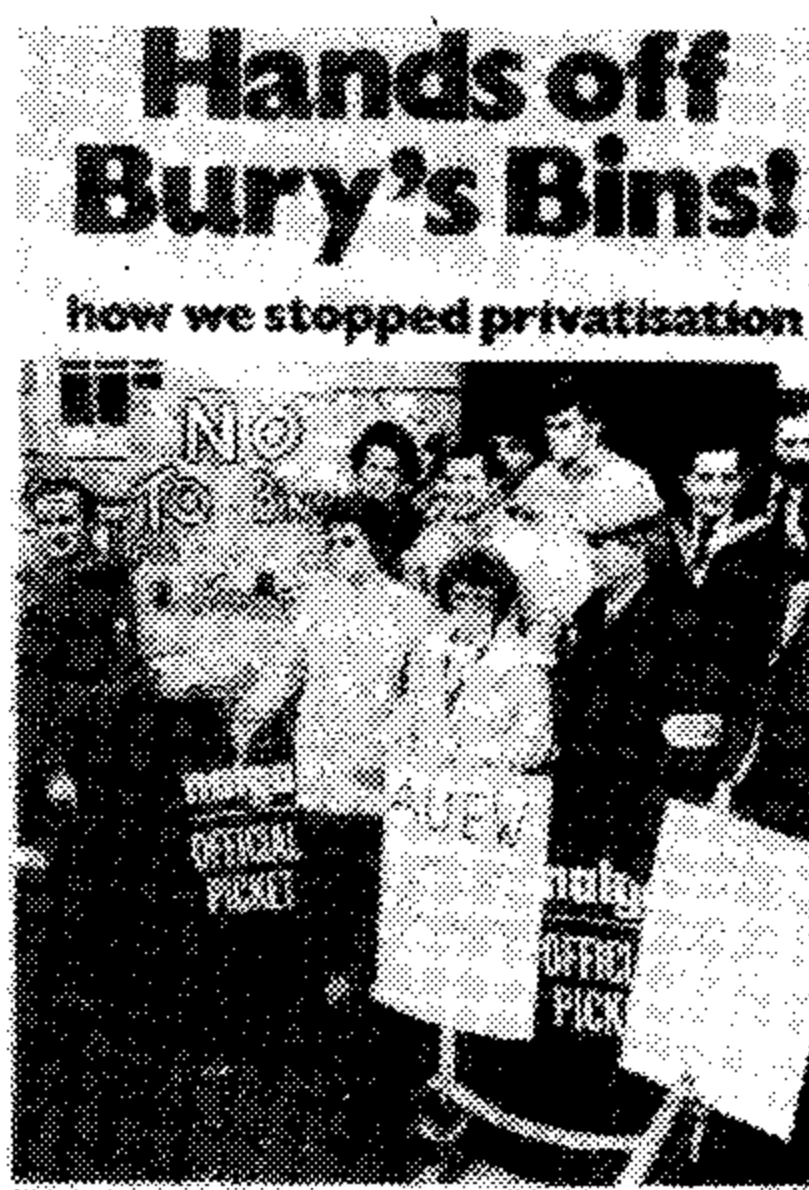
"British Shipbuilders will get the redundancies announced this week for other shipyards. They could get 1,000 volunteers at Govan alone, and then transfer workers to Govan

to make up the numbers at other yards."

The sit-in at Henry Robb (Leith) won't have any impact here. They voted against supporting the national strike because they thought that would redeem them. But it didn't. I don't see them getting support, because of the way the vote went there, though they might win transfers to other yards."

"But it won't make an impact on the situation here. The shop stewards already have their tactics worked out. The Clyde Confed have pledged strike action if there are any compulsory redundancies. But they probably reckon that there will be enough voluntary redundancies, so it would not come to a strike."

"The shop stewards committee has said that it will have men out to other places appealing for financial and moral support. And there will also be workers out leafletting in the town itself. But I don't think that they have started to do that yet. In fact there's a lot of speculation in the yard that it has already been sold off and that it will all be over in a fortnight."



Available from Ian Stephenson, NALGO Branch Secretary, NALGO Office, Town Hall, Bury.

Industrial

Print union under pressure

THE Messenger Newspapers dispute in Warrington and Stockport was not only a major defeat for the working class on anti-union laws, but also specifically a heavy defeat for the NGA.

For years the NGA has been under increasing threat from new technology. Its strength as a union was built up in the days when typesetting was a skilled craft job, done with metal type. Now computer phototypesetting enables the same quality job to be done with little more than basic typing skills.

The most advanced computer techniques permit the whole process from draft article, through sub-editing to typesetting, page-plan and paste-up, to be done on the same equipment or even by the same person.

The employers, obviously, want to use these techniques to reduce their wage bills and break the power of the unions. They would like to see journalists and tele-ad staff putting copy directly into the computer.

This 'direct input' or 'single key stroking' would cut out NGA typesetting jobs.

In the US, many papers have introduced these practices, and as a result the NGA's counterpart, the International Typographical Union, has been decimated. On Fleet Street, Times workers were locked out for months in 1979 over issues including new technology: but so far the NGA has remained relatively intact.

Even a small free-sheet operator like Eddie Shah had a big battle to get his operation non-union, with direct input. But Shah's victory gives a signal for bigger operators to follow.

There are two immediate flashpoints. WB Commercial Graphics in Derby is considering legal action against the NGA because the union has cancelled the agreement it had with the company for direct input.

Magazines

Commercial Graphics typesets and lays out magazines on contract to publishing houses. The magazine journalists type their articles into computer equipment in the magazine offices, and sub-edit it using that equipment's facilities. The finalised copy is then sent on 'floppy disks', or even by phone, computer-to-computer, to Derby, where it becomes input for the computer typesetting equipment there.

NGA members operate the equipment in Derby — but their job is largely confined to setting formats. The NGA is now insisting that the magazine copy be supplied to its members in Derby in typescript form — as an article would normally come from a journalist — and then typeset by them into the Derby equipment.

According to NGA officials, they agreed to direct input at Commercial Graphics because they thought that the company was taking copy from non-union publishers, and thus bringing extra work into the unionised sector. According to the company, the NGA knew all along that they were taking copy from unionised publishers.

Commercial Graphics boss Ian Burns does not seem to have the makings of an Eddie Shah or a George Ward. His first reaction was to say that he would close down the typesetting side of his business, and concentrate instead on the other side — developing and selling computer equipment for typesetting and page-planning.

The other flashpoint is the Portsmouth Evening News. The NGA has national negotiations

By Martin Thomas

on direct input with the Newspaper Society, collectively representing the provincial press.

The Newspaper Society is dead set on direct input. Certain firms — like the Portsmouth and Sunderland group, owners of the Portsmouth Evening News — have pushed harder than the Newspaper Society collectively, and the NGA has given more ground to them.

Portsmouth and Sunderland say that they are prepared to go non-union, and they will have direct input with or without the NGA by the end of this year.

As the second stage of a three phase introduction of direct input, the NGA and the Portsmouth Evening News are discussing proposals to transfer some sub-editing work — normally a National Union of Journalists job — into NGA jobs.

NUJ

The NUJ, predictably, is furious: the scheme simply means shifting some of the squeeze resulting from new technology from the NGA onto the NUJ. NGA members are not too happy with this sort of scheme, either.

On the magazine Motor-cycle Weekly (where, as at Commercial Graphics, the NGA is now taking a harder line), there was a scheme for NUJ members to do direct input, and 'in return' NGA members could do some sub-editing. In practice NGA members did none of the sub-editing, and that clause was merely a figleaf to cover NGA abandonment of control over the typesetting operation.

Fleet Street is likely to be the next stage, after the magazines and the provincial newspapers have blazed the trail.

The NGA's present policy amounts to little more than a head-in-the-sand attempt to slow down technological development as much as possible. Any actual struggle to save jobs, even on that primitive basis, deserves support, just as the Luddites in their day deserved the support of all workers. But the policy offers no more chance of winning in any medium or long term than the Luddites' did.

It promises to lead to a fiasco — not only worsened wages and conditions, but a comprehensive collapse of the union.

The first condition for effective resistance is workers' unity in the print. Craft exclusiveness and jealousy is especially disastrous at a time when the very economic basis of the old crafts is disappearing. Yet, despite lip-service to unity, the NGA tries to poach from the NUJ in Portsmouth and scabs on SOGAT in the Maxwell empire (see last week's Socialist Organiser).

On the basis of workers' unity, a policy can be mapped out to turn new technology to workers' advantage: reduced working hours, work-sharing without loss of pay, workers' control of production, comprehensive training and re-training programmes under trade union control.

The new technology contains many more possibilities than those that the bosses cherish. It could, for example, provide the basis for a much more varied press, less subordinate to the Fleet Street barons. It makes the socialist policy of media open to every shade of working-class opinion and directly accessible to the ordinary worker, much easier.

But to realise those possibilities will require a different policy from the unions — in practice, and not just in words.



Maxwell trying to get the Park Royal SOGAT FoC and Chapel to see it his way

Times

750 SOGAT members at Times Newspapers have been sacked and the Times and Sunday Times are off the streets, as open war erupts once more in Fleet Street.

The two week old dispute was made official on Thursday 26th when management dismissed the 750.

The issue is that Times management broke agreed bargaining arrangements by appointing a picture library manager from SOGAT 82's supervisory section (which has no laid-down negotiating rights with management) rather than, as normal, from the union's clerical section.

The dispute intensified at the weekend when Sunday Times editor Andrew Neil suspended 800 workers without pay and warned them that the future of Times Newspapers was in jeopardy. The dispute has cost the company £1.5 million so far. Talks are due to take place this week.

Uneventful liaison

LAST Saturday's conference of the Communist Party's 'Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions' in London was attended by about 200 delegates. The meeting heard denunciations of the Tories and their plans for further anti-union legislation, but little positive in the way of proposals for action.

The conference was closed early, at 1.30pm, on the pretext of snow in the North, when it seemed that the only people left asking to speak were those who would criticise the platform and call for a more militant policy.

An LCDTU declaration did call for no more talks between unions and government on anti-union laws, for opposition to privatisation, and for a campaign for a 35 hour week.

Although the TUC general council received some condemnation over their sell-out of the NGA dispute, delegates were told to wait until TUC annual congress in September, instead of fighting now for a recall TUC to settle accounts with Murray and the others who scabbed on the NGA.

SOGAT 82 general secretary Bill Keys is a TUC left-winger, and a ready hand at strong speeches against anti-union laws.

But, as the story told by the SOGAT workers at Robert Maxwell's Park Royal plant makes clear (this page), he has been far from leading any fight against Maxwell and the BBC in the dispute over the Radio Times.

Maxwell and the BBC have used the courts repeatedly to try to stop solidarity action with the Park Royal workers in dispute over jobs, wages and conditions

— in particular, action to boycott the distribution of copies of the Radio Times normally printed at Park Royal.

Since Maxwell says he will not reopen Park Royal, the workers there can scarcely hope to win without such solidarity.

But as we go to press, the SOGAT executive is due to meet on Wednesday February 1 to hear a report from negotiations with Maxwell for the liquidation of the dispute.

SOGAT and Maxwell's BPCC stated jointly on Monday 30th:

"Negotiations led by Mr Ted O'Brien, general officer of SOGAT 82, accompanied by the

London branch secretaries, will be resumed tomorrow with a view to restoring distribution of the Radio Times in London".

The carrot being offered by Maxwell is that he will open a new printworks in East London and offer the ex Park Royal workers jobs there.

But Maxwell wants out-of-London wages and conditions for this new works — and he wants to produce a new London evening paper there, undercutting Fleet Street.

Meanwhile, the Park Royal workers are still occupying the plant.

The Park Royal workers' story

AFTER Maxwell took over at Park Royal in 1981, some 25% of the workforce were cut. The seven machines were reduced to four, then five.

An 18 month wage freeze was imposed. A £7.50 wage increase would become due in November 1982.

The April 1983 dispute arose as a direct result of Maxwell failing to honour this agreement and pay the £7.50. Another factor in the dispute was new machines.

In June-July 1981 it had been agreed to look into the photo-gravure or web-offset printing technology available with a view to introducing new plant.

This never took place.

The agreement to settle the April 1983 dispute was far from satisfactory to the London Chapels and Branches, since it involved taking out printing presses, leaving only two at Park Royal, temporarily transferring the bulk of printing to East Kilbride and Leeds, and worsening conditions at Park Royal, all in exchange for a dubious promise to bring in two new web-offset presses.

As deadline after deadline went by, it became clear that Maxwell had no intention of keeping Park Royal as a printing plant, but merely a typesetting and distribution centre.

Negotiations broke down and some Chapels took action to force Maxwell back to the negotiating table. Then on Friday November 11, Maxwell sacked most of the SOGAT Chapels.

On the Sunday we found that Maxwell had brought in a gang with 14 lb sledgehammers to smash up the printing presses. The SOGAT Chapels began an occupation that evening to prevent further vandalism and to campaign for Park Royal to be

maintained as a printing plant.

Along with our electricians' Chapel, we also occupied the electricity sub-station to prevent any typesetting being done and to force Maxwell back to the negotiating table.

The occupation continues, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

DURING November the London Branches began 'blacking' of all Maxwell/BPCC publications, including magazines and colour supplements of national newspapers, to force Maxwell back to the negotiating table.

When the National Executive Committee made the dispute official nationwide, the London Central Branch (at Bill Keys' request) called off the 'blacking' except on the Radio Times and Listener.

Then, some two weeks later, Bill Keys called a special NEC meeting and changed the policy.

The dispute would now be confined to London. The 'blacking' of the Radio Times and the Listener would continue in the Greater London area, and other plants would not print extra copies, but that was all.

We understand that there were some pressures on the NEC from some members in other Maxwell/BPCC plants. Whilst we understand the fears of fellow members in high-unemployment areas like Glasgow and Leeds, we are convinced that they were being given false information as to what the dispute in London was about.

We are equally convinced that a victory for SOGAT at Park Royal can only be to the long-term advantage of our fellow members throughout BPCC and the industry in general.

The London Branches and Chapels were angry at the NEC change of line. A special meet-

ing of all London Branches, including the electricians, was held on Wednesday December 14, attended by over 2,000 members and decided to work to persuade the NEC and our fellow members of the need to fully support us and step up the action against Maxwell/BPCC.

Bradford workers expel bosses

MANAGEMENT at the occupied Thornton View hospital in Bradford have now been completely banned by the workers from entering the occupied hospital.

Previously they had been allowed in at certain times in the week by appointment.

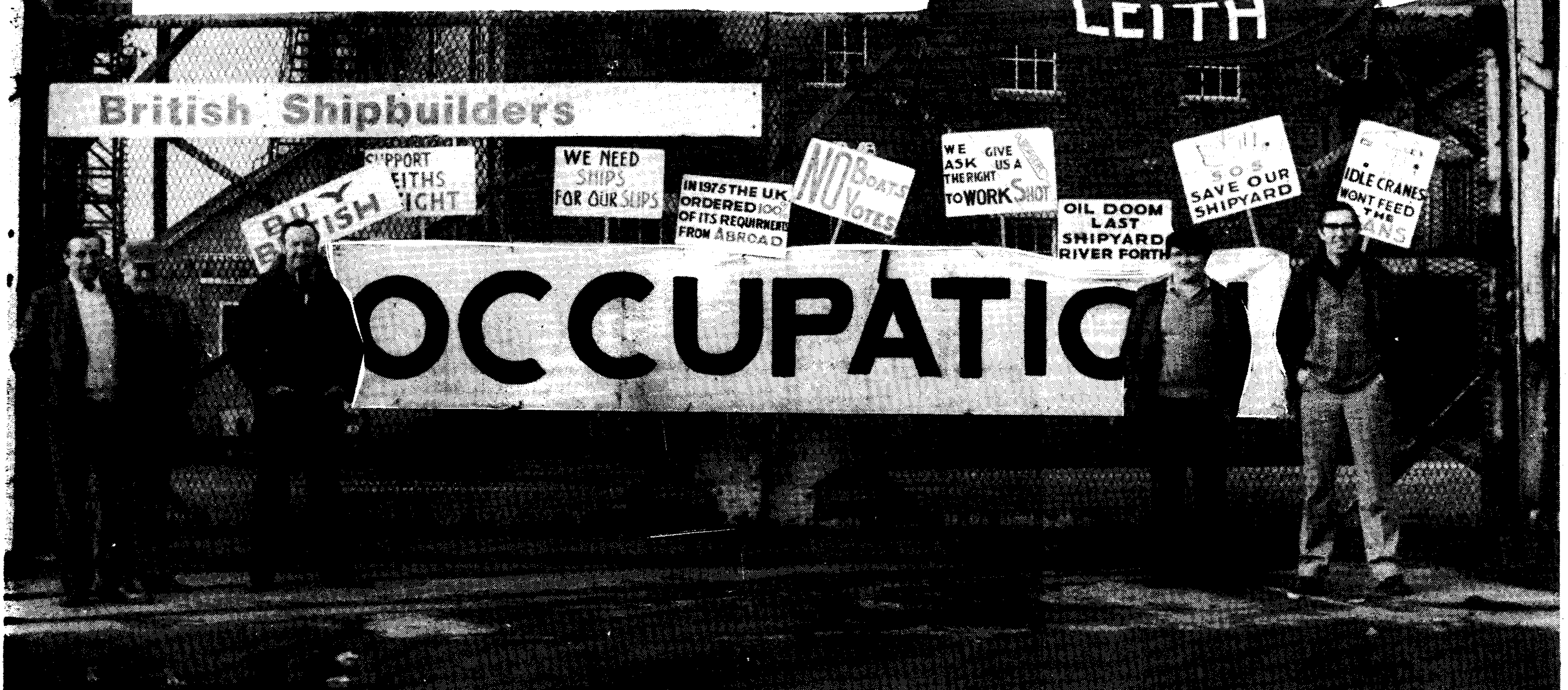
This follows management involvement in bringing charges of fraud against one of the shop stewards. But the workers have asserted again and again that they do not need management in any way. The hospital is being run perfectly well without them.

However, underhand moves were made last week by some of the management. They came into the hospital during a slack period and moved the male patients out of Ward 1 into the female ward. They then announced that Ward 1 was closed due to understaffing.

The following day workers moved the male patients back and reopened Ward 1.

Socialist ORGANISER

RICK MATTHEWS (IFL)



Shipyard fights closure

WORKERS at Henry Robbs shipyard, Leith, occupied their yard last Friday, 27th, to stop it being closed down by British Shipbuilders.

The bosses had announced the closure of the Scottish yard, together with Clelands

on Tyneside and the Goole yard, at the same time as they secured agreement from national union leaders on 'flexible' working in the shipyards.

John Waugh, finishing trades convenor at Leith,

spoke to Socialist Organiser.

"We've occupied the yard, and we're looking for all the support we can get from the labour movement.

But time is not on our side. British Shipbuilders are dangling a nice golden carrot, offering men 30 weeks' wages in redundancy payments, free of tax.

They've got to decide by Friday, and anyone who doesn't accept by Friday only gets his statutory minimum. That means a bloke could lose £700 or £800.

It can be very hard for a man who has been laid off for several weeks, taking home between £45 and £50, not to accept the carrot.

But the stewards are saying: hold on and fight."

You're working on a submarine which is in the yard for repair?

We've stopped working on it at the moment.

Someone phoned this morning and said he was a Mr Williamson from the Ministry of Defence. He said we were breaking the Secrets Act by allowing photographers and reporters into the yard. There could be a court case, and he was giving us a final warning.

So we stopped working on the submarine and said: 'Sorry, no more photographs'.

But the Ministry of Defence deny knowledge of any Mr Williamson in the department!

We're taking advice from our union officials.

If you re-start work on the submarine, and finish it, what do you plan to do then?

If we can finish that submarine, we'll be negotiating with the Ministry of Defence for payment for it — because we will be paying our own men their wages while they're working on it.

British Shipbuilders have ceased trading here as from last Friday, and that's why we have now occupied.

That submarine is lying here about two-thirds finished, and our idea is that we will try to finish it as quickly as possible.

We want the right to finish that submarine.

What about using the submarine to put pressure on British Shipbuilders not to close the yard? What happens to the yard when the submarine is finished?

We hope that by that time something will turn up.

But what if it doesn't?

By that time we'll either have a fight here or not. It's hard to judge at the present moment. Come back and ask me in three weeks' time.

Asset strippers dive in

THE CAT is out of the bag! The Tories are trying to soften up shipbuilding workers to accept privatisation.

Mrs Thatcher has offered the choice to Clydeside workers at Scott Lithgow: face closure or submit to the leeching of private owners once more.

Thatcher told the Scottish TUC at a meeting in Downing St that she is willing to 'wipe the slate clean' for Scott Lithgow and 'to allow' a private capitalist to take it over — with government assistance.

A number of companies are now negotiating with British Shipbuilders. There is talk that a deal will be cooked up with indecent haste and announced next week.

If workers fall for it, this rotten carrot could split the shipyard workers. Yard will compete with yard to prove how hard-working, flexible, and suitable for private exploitation they are. The asset-strippers will be able to take their pick and leave the rest for the dole queue.

Open Labour to affiliates

By John Bloxam

GOING round Constituency Labour Parties for discussion is a paper called 'Affiliation of small single-purpose organisations'.

CLPs are asked for their comments by March 1. The document gives three options:

- To continue to refuse to accept new affiliations from pressure groups and socialist societies (no new organisations have been let in since 1973) but to leave the present ten affiliates as they are;

- To abolish the whole category of affiliated societies;

- To open the door and agree to accept affiliations from 'organisations which conform to an acceptable basis (yet) to be defined'.

The paper leans towards the second option, scrapping the category. This would mean one less place on the Labour Party National Executive, and the seat which the societies elect is traditionally a left seat.

It would also mean that the Register would be reactivated. Groups that want to maintain a link with the Labour Party would be monitored by the Register.

Not surprisingly, the paper is strongly against inviting new affiliations, which would "result in a flood of applications to secure representation at annual conference and a possible proliferation of new organisations seeking only to secure an additional delegate to Conference".

But this option is clearly the best, acknowledging that groups like, perhaps, CND, and the small socialist parties, have a role to play in formulating Labour policy and encouraging a more broad-based, federal Labour Party.

FUND

THE last week of the fund has spurred four groups into action. Leeds supporters collected donations from readers in W. Leeds and N.W. Leeds CLPs, to make sure they achieved 100% of their target. Miranda Stead from Hounslow sent us £9, Harrogate £5, and Islington £5.14.

Manchester supporters have sent in £25 raised at the day school a fortnight ago. But, like some other groups, Manchester are still clearing old debts, so the £25 doesn't show in the fund table.

The fund-raising must not let up. We still need £1000 a month to support Socialist Organiser as a weekly paper, without running into debt.

For the next few weeks we'll be totalling up fund donations on a weekly basis. We'll be back with a new Spring Appeal when the weather improves. But in the meantime we still need groups to contribute their share.

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

Percent of targets achieved to January 31. Brent 176%, Tower Hamlets 130%, Leeds 100%, Leicester 98%, Cardiff 54%, Harrogate 47%, Chelmsford 33%, Sheffield 32%, Nottingham 30%, Islington 30%, Southwark 29%, Hounslow 18%, York 15%, Hull 13%, S.E. London 8%, Halifax 6%, Putney 3%, Coventry 1%, all others 0%.

Total this week £66.64. Final total: £2064.29 (69%),