

Break
links
with
Tories

Socialist ORGANISER

Recall
the
TUC

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Stop TUC/Tory deal on political levy

UNIONS MUST STAY LABOUR

By John Bloxam

AS WE go to press the TUC employment committee is expected to approve a deal with the Tories on future union links with the Labour Party.

TUC leaders Len Murray and Bill Keys have privately worked out a formula with Tory minister Tom King.

Contract out

The Guardian reports that the deal 'provides for unions to publicise the fact that members can contract out of paying the political levy, and for the TUC to ensure that members can freely exercise that right.'

"In return, the Government is prepared to withhold plans to legislate a change in the system so that members would have to contract in if they wanted to pay the levy."

In fact the unions gain nothing 'in return'. Before this offer of a 'voluntary code', the Tories had already made clear that they were not going to legislate contracting-in at this stage.

For tactical reasons King was anyway going to legislate only for periodic ballots on unions' political funds.

Workers' voice

The Labour Party was set up by the trade unions in order to get a workers' voice into parliamentary politics. In the early days individuals could no more opt out of the political levy than out of a strike. Rightly so.

Now, in the midst of industrial decline, the unions need that voice more than ever. Indeed, the rank and file needs to democratise the movement so that it becomes really a workers' voice, not the voice of pink-liberal careerists speaking for the workers.

But the TUC leaders want to move the opposite way.

Their agreement to encourage opting-out from the political levy must, at the very least, weaken any campaign to maintain union affiliations to Labour if and when the Tories force postal ballots on the issue.

In fact TUC leaders have made it plain that they themselves want to weaken union links with Labour. They want to give up any show of fighting the Tories, and instead become brokers between the Tories and the working class.

Their refusal to back the NGA, and their willingness to make a 'no disruption' deal at GCHQ, are part of the same trend.

The Labour Coordinating Committee has launched a 'Charter' on Labour Party and trade union links. They say: "It is vital that we defend the partnership between Labour and the unions and indeed strengthening at every level". To this end they call for:

Recall TUC

- Opposition to Tory anti-union laws,
- Trade union education on why we need a Labour Party,
- Organising the Labour Party in the workplaces,
- Stronger links between local unions and Constituency Labour Parties.

The Charter has been signed by the Tribune group of MPs, and will soon be circulated for further support.

This Charter must be supported. At the same time socialists should demand that the TUC reject the deal on the political levy, break off collaboration with the Tories, and start a campaign for an integrated, fighting labour movement.

A recall TUC congress should call the TUC leaders to account for their failure to fight the anti-union laws, and for their betrayal of the NGA.

Benn must win

REPORTS in the press that Peter Tatchell had been told to get lost when he arrived to campaign for Tony Benn in Chesterfield were in fact the work of the Tory dirty tricks department. It never happened. Tony Benn has publicly welcomed Tatchell to the constituency and told him that he appreciates his support.

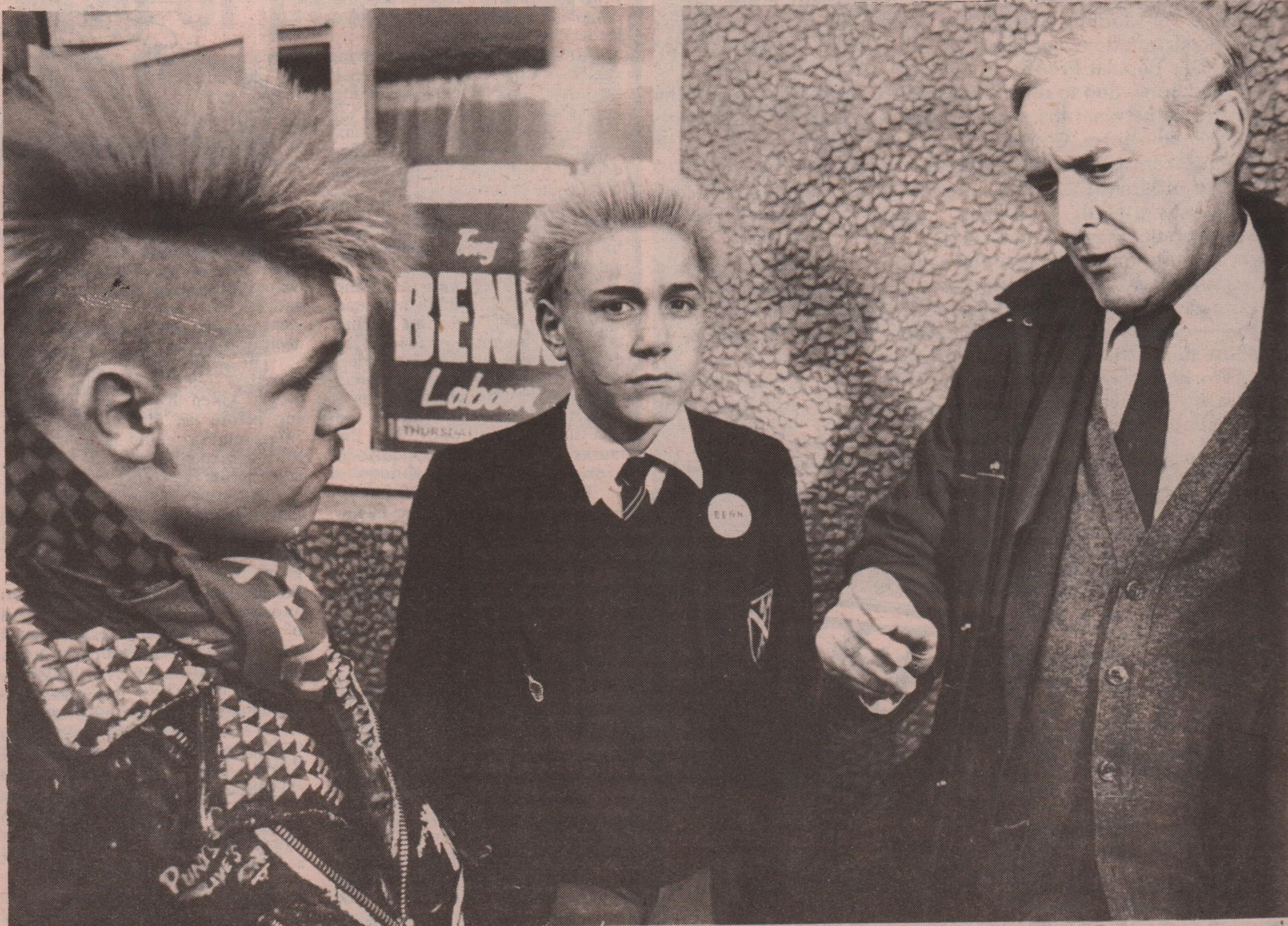
Labour's campaign in Chesterfield is gathering momentum. Last Monday night 1200 people came to hear Tony Benn and Roy Hattersley speak. 700 of them could not be accommodated in the hall, and stood outside in the market place to listen.

Chesterfield CLP still want Labour militants to come and help them. The last 14 days before polling day on March 1 are vital.

Go to Chesterfield and help Benn gain a resounding victory and give the Tories and the SDP a bloody nose!

Inside

Centre Page: Chernenko is Stalin's heir, not Lenin's.
Page 3: Support Liverpool City Council.
Page 2: CP boils over.
Page 4: Jeremy Corbyn MP on the Campaign group.
Plus more reports, reviews, letters, discussion.



Tony Benn canvasses in Chesterfield

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Two roads away from socialism

THE conflict within the British Communist Party has reached boiling-over point.

The CP executive has called for the editor and deputy editor of the Morning Star, Tony Chater and David Whitfield, to resign. Chater and Whitfield, basing themselves on the fact that the Star is, strictly speaking, owned not by the Communist Party, but by the 'People's Press Printing Society' have refused.

CP executive member Dave Cook took the floor at a public meeting in London last Tuesday, 7th, to declare that: "The left needs another narrow and sectarian paper like a hole in the head. And that will be the destination of the Morning Star if the present direction is not reversed".

He called on members of the audience to join the PPPS and help oust the Star editors.

Meanwhile the PPPS committee has taken out writs against CP member Beatrix Campbell and the magazine City Limits, in which she wrote that the PPPS's drive to get a new machine was being subsidised by an £800,000 advance payment for the one half of the Star's print run which is sold each day to the USSR and Eastern Europe.

The PPPS has been organising 'Star readers' meetings' to rally its support.

When thieves fall out, honest people profit. Though neither wing of the CP offers any hope politically, there is a lot to be learned from their mutual polemics.

The CP executive accuses the faction around the Star of being unreconstituted Stalinists. And that's true. The Star faction accuses the executive of moving from working class politics to pink liberalism. And that's true too.

But that's not all.

The 'Eurocommunist' CP executive are far from being consistent anti-Stalinists. True, they protest against the suppression of Solidarnosc, while the Star faction manage at most a few mild words of disapproval.

But they still consider the USSR and similar states to be 'socialist', and call only for the bureaucrats to mend their ways.

Likewise, the Morning Star faction are by no means class-struggle militants in Britain.

They disagree when the 'ultra-Eurocommunists' advocate a Labour/Alliance coalition. They talk about the centrality of the working class, whereas some Eurocommunists seem not to be sure whether the working class even exists any more.

But the Morning Star faction fully defends the traditional class-collaboration concepts of the CP — 'anti-monopoly alliance', 'Popular Front'.

And in relation to direct industrial struggles there is nothing to choose between the two factions. Ken Gill of TASS is with the Moscow-liners. George Bolton of the Scottish NUM is with the Eurocommunists. Both sell out struggles just the same.

The different CP factions are united by a common concept of socialism. Both, essentially, identify 'socialism' with the bureaucratic tyranny in the USSR.

The Morning Star faction advocates that bureaucratic 'socialism' as their programme — with a few reservations. The Eurocommunists respond by rejecting socialism as a practical goal — or advocating a big admixture of bourgeois liberalism to dilute this 'socialism' sufficiently to make it acceptable.

Working class socialism — the liberation of the working class by its own self-controlling struggle — is equally distant from both factions.

SO supporter wins student union election despite

Tory witch hunt

By Andy Bennett

NEITHER Durham University nor its students have a particular reputation for being radical. Yet the Students Union has just elected Simon Pottinger, a Socialist Organiser supporter as President for 1984/5.

As socialist students, the main focus for our campaign was to relate to students' interests — working towards the development of our union into a body capable of defending those interests.

Our principal demands were for:

*A full grant for all — not just in University but for everyone in post-16 education.

*Decent courses and even the right to a course in the first place, in the face of current Tory policy.

In addition we recognised that policy is not enough, and that we need to build the union into a mass campaigning organisation, transforming the policy into energetic and consistent activity.

A feature of the campaign was to involve the University Labour Club at all levels, and it supplied people to work into the early hours.

The Club's politics were at the front of the campaign, so that a political platform, rather than an individual's views formed the basis of the campaign.

In this sense it was the Labour Club, rather than Simon himself who won the presidency.

Nevertheless, the candidate's own personality inevitably played an important part. Whereas past presidents have been elected on an individualist ticket in a careerist manner, Simon's personality expressed a commitment to his own thought-out politics. Many voters found his political honesty refreshing in a union where one candidate by the name of Nutt used the slogan "Durham's number one Nutt".

The election was one of the most political in recent years. The Labour Club was particularly content to see the Tory candidate completely thrashed, and the centrist candidate also well



Simon Pottinger

beaten. This shows that the Labour Club was capable of gaining considerable support, and building on recent events.

During the campaign, the Club launched a successful mass action against the self-confessed "mild fascist" David Irving who was speaking in Durham. His speech was completely disrupted by the occupation of part of the building and a subsequent demonstration.

The Club was seen to be at the forefront of anti-fascist

activity, giving a lead to the protesters.

Winning the President election is far from the end of the story. If Simon's year is to be successful, it will depend on sustaining the sort of support that got him elected in the first place. The bureaucratic tasks of a union officer will have to be balanced against the political work in the union.

The election victory came at the end of a hard campaign, but in fact it is only the beginning of the work that has to be done.

Straight sixes for Chernenko

A DRAMATIC breakthrough for world peace could be in prospect as three vital cogs in the complex workings of world leadership fall into place.

*In Moscow, 72-year old Konstantin Chernenko, the 3-1 favourite took first place in the Soviet leadership race.

*In London Buckingham Palace announced a new contender for the British throne would be born next September.

*In Sarajevo, Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean clinched the Olympic Gold Medal in ice dancing.

Leading British experts on the Soviet Union are at their wits' end appearing on 17 different TV and radio programmes at once to explain the new Soviet leader, about whom they know nothing.

Most tried to repeat the performance they gave on the accession of Andropov, but the marks this time were not quite so high.

The absence of a KGB qualification has cost the new champion an extra frizzle of excitement.

In Red Square thousands of people passed by the body of Andropov. The symmetry and haughty beauty of the Red Guards was equal to their 1982 performance.

It was, however, a stroke of genius this time to give the whole lying-in-state and funeral display to the haunting strains of Ravel's Bolero — a daring piece of choreography which brought tears to the eyes of the watching millions as the Red Guards did their slow march past.

The music had the added advantage of lasting three whole days.

Despite speculation about a new breed of leadership, ready



By Patrick Spilling

to break through at the championships, it was Chernenko who found most favour with the judges. He scored an unprecedented eight 6s and one 5.9 for technical merit.

The Polish judge — the sole dissenter from maximum marks — was taken ill with lead poisoning before the marks for artistic interpretation could be given and here Chernenko scored straight sixes across the board.

But even as this competition was reaching its climax the race for the British Crown was thrown wide open. The performance given by Princess Diana and Prince Charles is much more andante — another seven months of mind-numbing boredom watching every move and discussing every minor step on the path to their next child. Some people complain this is not sport at all but it is attention to detail on this scale that has given the British Royal Family its record of success.

Even if the new baby does not succeed in becoming a boy it is already assured of third place and a bronze medal in the accession to the throne.

There is no dependence here on adjudication from judges. The Royal Family does not depend on

subjective impressions of quality. The new child will therefore be much more confident that it really is a champion and not the product of favouritism.

Its qualification to rule will depend on answering correctly two questions: are you extremely rich? and is your father king at present? — both questions the child will hope to answer in the affirmative one day.

It will then have only one father and one brother to clear out of the way to reach the top of the ladder.

Torvill and Dean must decide what will be their next step on the international scene after their triumph this week.

It is thought they will visit Moscow for talks with Chernenko before returning to London for a performance of the Royal Wedding on Ice — an old favourite nearly as famous as Britain's 1966 World Cup win over Russia. (Due to anti-war feeling still prevalent in the 1960s, the British population was led at the time to believe that the opponents were from West Germany).

President Reagan, due to go for Gold in his internal competition next year, watched the outcome of these races with interest. He is said to be dismissive of Torvill and Dean since their medal success rested simply on an ability not to fall on their asses every two minutes. He also attacked the result of the Moscow games, saying that once again they had chosen a winner too old to be capable of any fresh approach. President Reagan dismissed criticism that he is the only man in the world known to be older than Chernenko by pointing to the much more advanced state of US technology in the vital field of make-up and face lifts.

Witch hunt still on

By John Bloxam

TEN Constituency Labour Parties were represented at last Saturday's meeting of the National Council of Labour Against the Witch-hunt.

The meeting focussed on reports from localities where the witch-hunt is still very much alive. Alf Holmes reported from Manchester Wythenshawe CLP, where the right wing regained control at the '1983 AGM' — eventually held in January 1984 under the guidance of national agent, David Hughes.

But their victory might well be short-lived. The 1984 AGM is on February 26 and the NEC majority might not be able to come to their aid twice in just over one month.

The NEC's intervention in Wythenshawe could affect the future balance of the Manchester City Labour Group and it also has large implications for the future.

Why, then, CLP members are entitled to ask, did only two of the NEC left, [Dennis Skinner and Joan Maynard] vote to overturn David Hughes' report on the situation when it came up at the NEC Organisation Sub-Committee a week ago last Monday?

The meeting also heard reports of the exclusion of left wingers from Acocks Green ward of Birmingham Yardley CLP, the expulsion of Militant supporters in Blackburn and of the witch-hunt against SO supporters in the Stoke area.

The meeting agreed "to set up an advice and assistance service to advise individuals, constituency, district, borough and county parties and all formal and informal groups and tendencies within the party who face harassment, victimisation, disbandment or expulsion, on constitutional and legal matters."

Other decisions at the meeting were:

*To advise CLPs to demand proper time for discussion on the NEC's consultative document on affiliated organisations and reject the March 1 deadline as totally inadequate.

*To launch a new appeal for sponsorship. At present 57 CLPs nationally are affiliated, but far fewer wards and trade union organisations, and only 45 individuals.

*To schedule the next National Council meeting for Saturday April 7, to discuss LAW model resolutions for this year's Labour Party conference.

The date is early to get round possible disruptions in the normal CLP schedule for dealing with Conference resolutions (June round of meetings) because of the Euro-elections on June 14. The deadline for Labour Party conference resolutions and nominations is July 6.



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INSIDE

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SOCIALIST STUDENT

BATTLE FOR THE

NGA!

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

Council defies the Tories

LIVERPOOL City Council is in a position to inspire all those in the labour movement who want to take on the Tories by deeds rather than by words. By the end of March we can expect a situation where the question of an illegal budget will be placed prominently on the Council agenda.

By standing firm in the defence of the city's services, the Labour group will be taking a stand where Council after Council has previously failed the test.

The last few years have seen Labour Councils ranging from Lothian to the London Boroughs avoiding battle with Thatcher's Government. These Councils have mouthed defiance as a prelude to inglorious retreat to the safe terrain of cutting kindly or bashing the ratepayers.

The next few months will show whether Liverpool is prepared boldly to go where few Councils have gone before.

If the 51 Labour Councillors are not to be left fighting alone, support must be built throughout the City.

A motion from the District Labour Party to the Local Government Conference in February calls on the NEC to begin to prepare a national campaign to defend the Councils.

But for too many of our would-be leaders Liverpool is an unfortunate embarrassment. After all, it's one thing for our parliamentarians to object to next year's rate-capping legislation, but quite another for Labour Councillors to defend our services in the real world, outside the hallowed debating chambers of Westminster.

Either support for Liverpool will be won in the grass-roots of the movement nationally, or else we will be left with the

By Kevin Feintuck

accustomed platitudes and resolution mongering.

Within the City the leadership of the District Labour Party must establish a campaign which involves whole layers of society who have up to now been largely passed over.

The November demonstration and the 300 party members who attended the meeting on 11 January indicate the potential for a mass campaign in defence of the Council.

It is not enough to treat these supporters like a stage army to be wheeled on for a regular dose of rhetoric and then told to await further instructions.

Certain members of the executive committee of the District Labour Party have made public proclamations about the need for a local General Strike. Undoubtedly, discussions are being carried out to this end with union officials.

If this plan is to be brought to a meaningful conclusion, the involvement of the rank and file trade unionists is a crucial prerequisite.

There is also a range of possible actions as yet undiscussed. Perhaps the most obvious example is the question of a rent and/or rates strike.

Before any such activities become possible a broad, campaigning body must be built. The Labour and Trade Union Campaign Group, based on the executives of the party, the Trades Council and friendly union officials, is not the answer to this need.

We need a movement capable of drawing together not merely Party and union members, but also members of tenants' associations, community groups,



Thousands marched to support Liverpool City Council last November 19. Now a local labour movement conference is planned for February 27, with a recall conference on March 26, three days before the council fixes its budget for 1984-5.

ethnic organisations, single issue pressure groups, the women's movement, unemployed organisations and many other people who can be persuaded to defend the Council services.

If this movement is not built, our Councillors will be left as generals without an army. This must not be allowed to happen.

The District Party is committed to calling a broad delegate conference to mobilise support for the Council. This conference must be called as quickly as possible, and used not as a rally to rubber stamp a wordy resolution but as a launching pad for an ongoing, democratically-constituted campaigning body.



Trident

THE TORIES have been forced to admit that the real cost of the Trident missile programme is not going to be £7,500 million as they said it would be, but £10,000 million — 25% more.

The figure will come out in the April defence estimates.

We can expect the Tories to plough on with the programme regardless as the new missiles are a vital part of NATO's 'first strike' nuclear strategy and the ruling class are unlikely to be deterred by the odd £2½ billion increase.

The money spent on Trident amounts to £185 per person in Britain, or 450 new District Hospitals. Overall, the Tories' planned defence programme for 1984 works out at a cost of £5 a week for every person in Britain.

Debate

ERIC Hobsbawm, British historian and ideologue of the Eurocommunists in the British Communist Party, has recently pro-

voked much discussion on the left with his analysis of the decline of the Labour Party and what to do about it.

He opened a public debate in London last week between the Communist Party magazine Marxism Today and the Labour Coordinating Committee on the subject of 'Labour's Lost Millions'.

The basis of Hobsbawm's argument is the new, radical right Tory Party is so bad that all forces opposed to it need to be united to defeat it. The clear implication is for a coalition between Labour and the SDP. And part of the necessary strategy to secure such an alliance is to prevent the Labour Party from becoming again what Hobsbawm called 'a party political Lebanon', that is, to stop the infighting in the Labour Party.

Robin Cook and Harriet Harman from the LCC both argued against the idea of coalition with the SDP. Cook argued that it was only by fierce political warfare with the SDP that Labour could present itself as a viable alternative to the Tories.

In short, nothing particularly new was said by the speakers.

Meanwhile John Ross from Socialist Action insisted that the Tory Party did not have mass popular support.

★ Morning Star

Soviet leaders honour Andropov's life

Man of peace dies

Independent?

FOR MILITANTS and socialists who live amidst the foul filth poured out by the Fleet Street 'populists', the notion of a left wing daily is an idea that seduces. Almost any left wing daily.

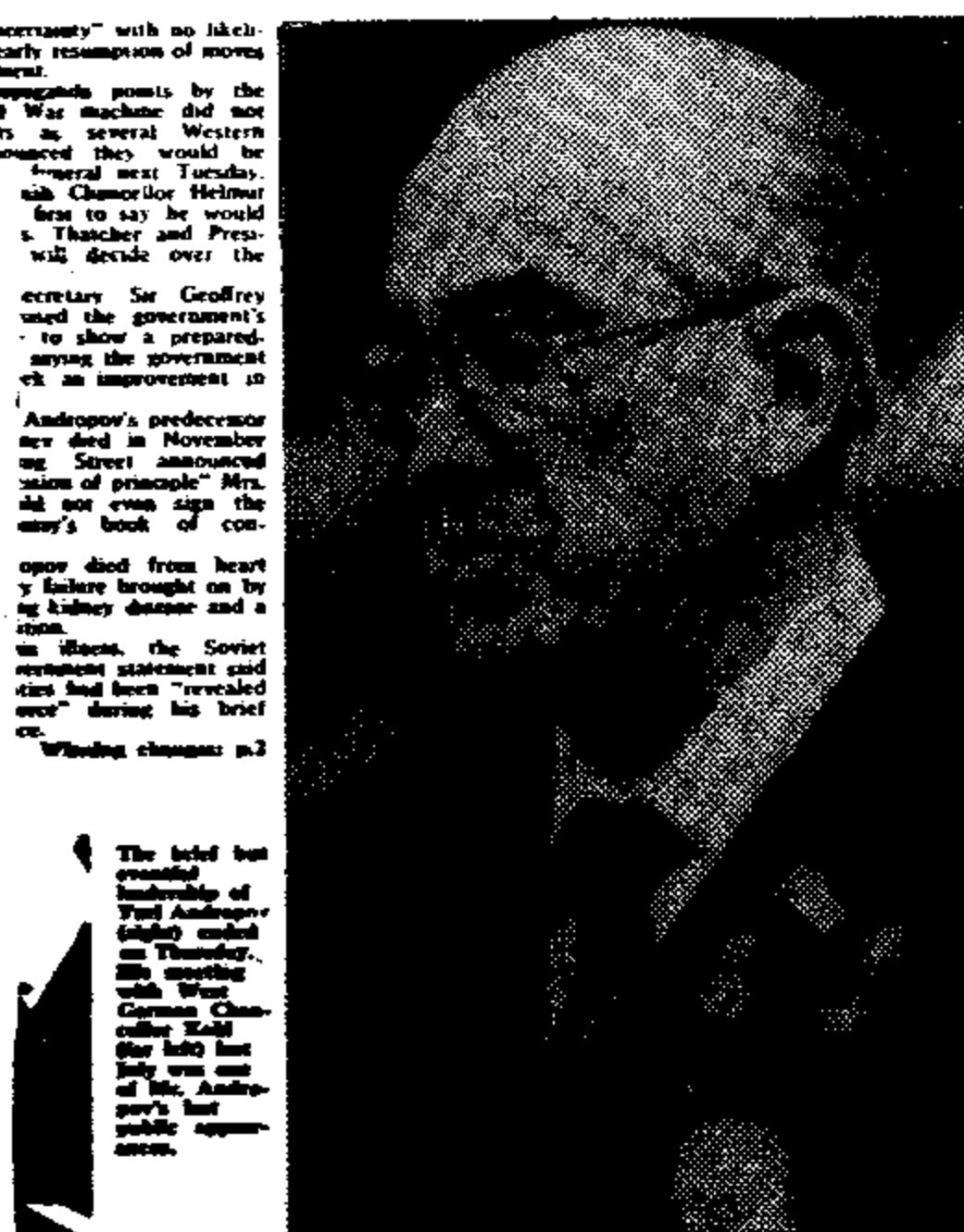
For this reason the Morning Star (and even the Gaddafiite rag Newsline) get a friendly response from many people who stand far to the right, or left, of their politics.

Only a few years ago, even the Trotskyist Socialist Challenge (forerunner of Socialist Action) joined in an appeal to the labour movement to save the Morning Star.

Tribune recently came down in support of the Chatterites who have seized the Morning Star from the Communist Party. It is a question, Tribune thinks, of defending press freedom and independence.

What world does Tribune's editor Chris Mullin live in? Leaving aside any other benefits it may get from the Stalinist states, the Morning Star sends over a third of its present print-run to Eastern Europe and the USSR.

How can a newspaper that chooses to tailor its news selection and presentation to the requirements of the rulers of the



totalitarian Stalinist states be an independent labour movement paper? Independent of what?

And the Morning Star does tailor what it says to the needs of its important East European market. It did it before the Chatterites cut loose from the CP's control. For example, during the days of the Gdansk soviet in August 1980, the Morning Star presented Polish events not from the Polish workers' point of view, but from that of the official police-state 'unions' and the Polish government.

Compare it with the lying rag 'Newsline' and the Morning Star is possibly a decent paper. Some standard of comparison!

No, the Morning Star does not deserve sympathy or support from anyone in the labour movement who does not share its Stalinist-reformist politics.



Strike against NHS cuts

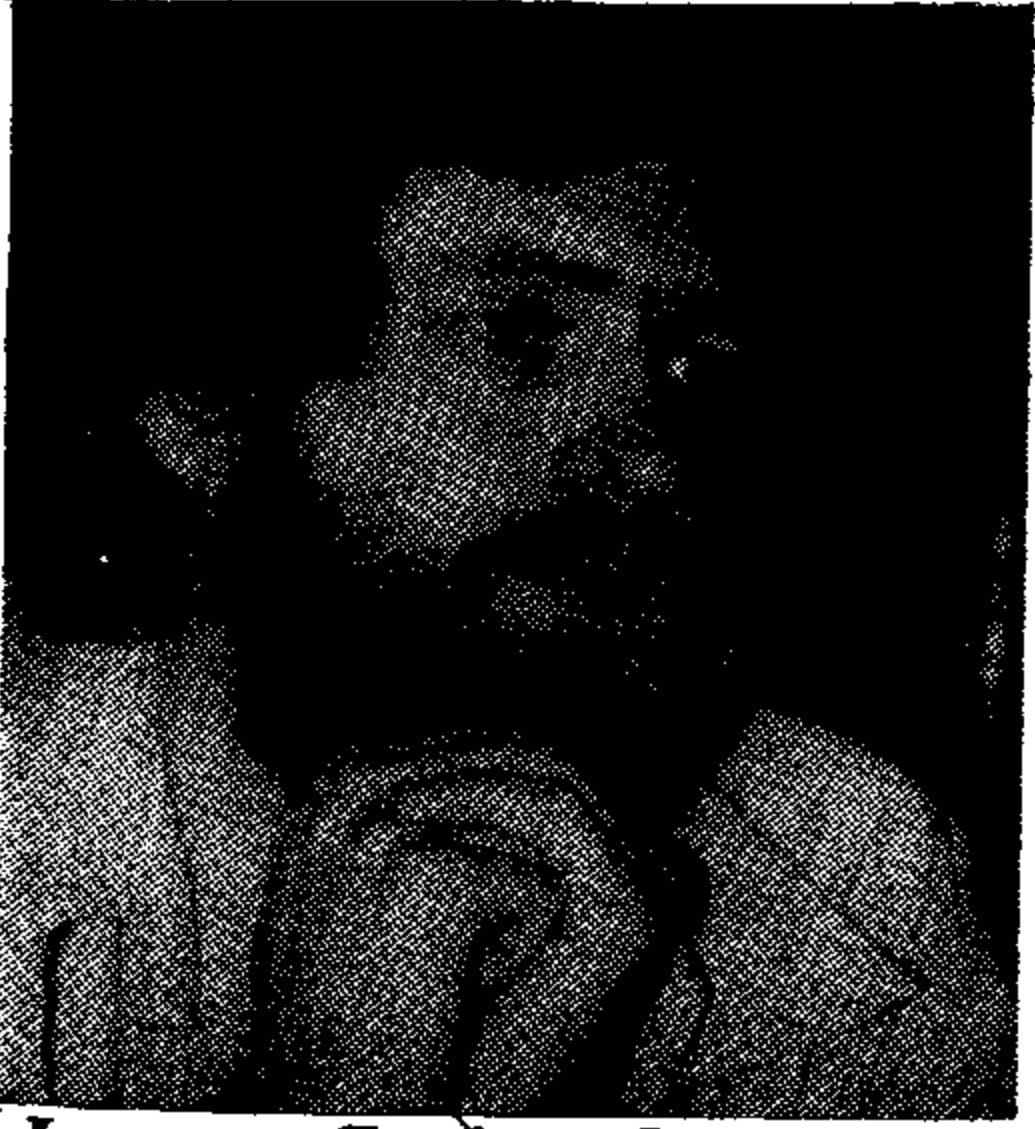
Merseyside dockers and seafarers will be joining local bus workers and workers at Yorkshire Imperial Metals in a 24-hour strike on Monday February 20 in protest at NHS cuts.

A meeting last Saturday (February 11) of local shop stewards and officials finalised arrangements for the day of action, calling on all other trade

unionists to strike over planned cuts which include the closure of the Duchess Ward at the Women's Hospital, the closure of Heswall Children's Hospital and proposed closures of Princes Park and Newsham General Hospitals.

The strikers are asking NHS staff to remain at work that day, where they are most needed.

How left MPs are organising



Jeremy Corbyn MP spoke to John Bloxam.

THE Campaign Group consists of 35 Labour MPs who are committed to carrying out Party policy by campaigning outside Parliament as much as inside it.

We meet every week to discuss not only Parliamentary business but also support for industrial struggles outside Parliament.

We have been very active in supporting the POEU in their struggle against privatisation and supporting the NGA at Warrington. We sent delegations to the picket lines on both occasions and issued messages of support.

We're continuing that work, particularly on the NUM dispute and on GCHQ Cheltenham.

We see the Cheltenham dispute as a fundamental attack on trade union rights which could lead to the Tories dictating that section after section of public employees can no longer be members of independent trade unions.

We see that the trade union leadership has not stood up on the issue of the NGA and has not stood up effectively on GCHQ. It has not stood up with effective action to defend those members who are in struggle.

So part of our work has to be building an understanding and a leadership in the trade union movement which will recognise that there are political attacks against the base of the trade union movement, and that there has to be a political and an industrial response.

The Campaign Group can help by working with the Broad Lefts of the trade unions; showing by practical action where we stand; and, above all, by saying to activists in the Party that their job is to strengthen the local industrial ties.

That means development of workplace branches; and the Party showing itself to be active on the picket lines whenever a dispute breaks out.

We have had some discussion about developing the work of the Campaign Group further. The most important idea is that we will promote fringe meetings at the Labour Party regional conferences and the major trade union conferences this year. Campaign Group speakers will set out what we see as the political agenda.

We are also working quite hard to try to make the PLP more into a body that is prepared to carry out Party policy and campaign on it, rather than set its own agenda and its own policies.

There has been talk of a conference called by the Campaign Group, but there has been no decision yet.

I hope there will be soon, but so far we have spent most of our time dealing with current industrial disputes.

The Campaign Group has also issued a statement opposing the witch-hunt, condemning the expulsion of Militant supporters and calling for their reinstatement.

I think it is completely incompatible to have an active, campaigning socialist Party which at the same time is expelling socialists from its own ranks. Our support for the campaign

against the witch-hunt is complete and total.

We have discussed the Chesterfield by-election, and — with, I'm glad to say, a lot of other people in the Party — we'll work to ensure that Tony Benn gets returned. We want the Party nationally to organise the fullest support for Tony Benn as the candidate in Chesterfield and we'll obviously all be up there ourselves.

I think there is a degree of confusion on the Left now. People are worried that we lost the general election and some think that to recover the Party must maintain a low political profile but a high personality profile.

I wholly reject that view. To win the next general election, the Party must grasp the seriousness of the situation we inherit, the crisis that millions of people are facing, and offer them some real alternative to it.

Since the election I've noticed an increasing politicisation of campaign meetings about the future of the education service, the health service and local government.

I think that is something the Party must understand and must reflect in its propaganda and in its publicity.

Every constituency party has to take seriously the need to be out continuously campaigning and putting forward an alternative policy.

I believe we can win on the issue of local government democracy — but only if we continue to expand and mobilise more people.

Recently, 40,000 people marched in London against the government's proposals for the GLC and ILEA. That was excellent. It was a wonderful start. But it can only be seen as a start.

The people on that march were, by and large, ILEA and GLC workers, students and parents.

We need to expand the campaign into the industrial sectors.

In terms of political debate inside the Labour Party, I think the main issues in the next nine months, leading up to the TUC and Labour Party conferences, will include expanding democracy within the Party, and making the Parliamentary leadership genuinely accountable to the rest of the Party.

I also think it will include a clearer economic policy for an incoming Labour government. If we don't have a clearer economic policy for challenging the control and ownership of the economy, then the next Labour government is going to be elected with all the contradictions of past Labour governments.

I think that is an area where people must concentrate in policy making.

The Campaign Group is developing ideas from an understanding of the problems of previous Labour governments, but so far there have been no statements prepared on it.

I hope the Campaign Group will prepare statements on particular policy issues, but so far we are concentrating more on campaigning and active work within the movement.

One other point. I would like to emphasise most strongly that, once a local Party gets involved in local campaigning, it must stay with it, and make sure it links the issues all the time.

There is a tremendous thirst for political leadership, a tremendous thirst for political activity that I've never known before — despite, or because of, the very large Tory majority in Parliament.

So the message has to be — campaign, not in a defensive way, but in an aggressive way, to defend working class living standards and improve the welfare services.

Providing we're always demanding, rather than just defending, then we'll be well on the way to taking power.



PHOTO: JOHN HARRIS (JFL)

KASHMIRIS PROTEST AT INDIAN RULE

LAST Saturday, 11th, India hanged the Kashmiri secessionist leader Maqbool Butt, sentenced eight years ago. His supporters kidnapped and killed an Indian diplomat in Birmingham recently.

When India and Pakistan separated in 1947, the Hindu monarch of mainly Muslim Kashmir took the state into India. India denies self-determination to the Kashmiri people.

Unemployed organise in Hull

by Janet Devrill

LAST week 12,500 people applied for 60 menial jobs at the West Midlands Airport. Last year a fake benefit office provided the base for the mass arrest of 200 homeless claimants in Oxford. Mass unemployment and state poverty have magnified to a scale not seen since the last down-turn in the economy — the dark days of the 1930s.

When set against this background, the much-heralded 'recovery' of economic forecasts seems a world away. Industrial decline has in fact taken root in this country. Whole regions have been industrial graveyards over the last few years. Hull and Humberside have been among the areas hardest hit, as factories and firms have pulled out and the great staple industries have gone into decline.

In the country as a whole, unemployment has stabilised at around 3½ million. Though each single digit represents a person who has lost their livelihood, even the present totals must be matched against increasing numbers of people actually disappearing from the registers. The YTS has absorbed many jobless school-leavers on low levels of benefit. New counting methods have discouraged people from signing at the Job Centres. And dole investigators have persuaded people to sign off. The 'Oxfraud' incident was just one example of how far benefit harassment can go.

The effort to reduce the unemployment figures has been coupled with a commitment to

cutting the benefits and clamping down on the rights of the unemployed. A Tory MP, Matthew Parris from West Derbyshire was re-assured recently that the unemployed do not live a life of luxury and leisure, after having to survive for only one week on the single flat-rate benefit of £26.80.

Faced with this climate of cut-backs, clampdowns and hostility, some of Britain's unemployed are beginning to fight back. Amongst the ranks of the unwaged, a voice is growing that refuses to submit to the 'natural consequences' of economic experiments.

As part of a nationwide movement of unemployed people, a group was formed in Hull to fight for the interests and defend the rights of the unwaged locally.

Collective

The Hull Unemployed Fightback Group aims to provide a basis for collective action, and emphasises the common interests of the unemployed with those in work. It offers self-help support and advice to its members, and acts as a campaigning forum around unemployment in Hull.

The HUGF is currently drawing attention to the DHSS ruling which classed claimants who live in shared accommodation as

'joint-householders'. When the rules changed last November it meant that thousands of people lost benefit through being incorrectly classified. The HUGF believes that by informing claimants of their rights, many will be encouraged to make appeals for a review of their circumstances.

Further campaigns are planned around the touring dole hit-squads and the cheap labour YTS.

The Hull Unemployed Fightback Group is actively countering the media image of the unemployed as passive, resigned to their fate. 'If you push people too far, they will eventually start to defend themselves', said a HUGF spokesperson, Ms Janet Devrill, 'and the sooner that happens the better.' As part of a wider movement, the unwaged are showing themselves to be ready to fight back against long-term unemployment, benefit cuts and government harassment.

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Women

Wise and Richardson for NEC

THE approach of spring presages the breakout of closed meetings and conspiratorial huddles as the annual slate-making process comes into play in the Party. Concern has been expressed over a number of years at the narrow nature of this exercise on the left and in particular at the way in which the slate for the women's section of the NEC has been drawn up. So what is happening this year?

As far as the CLP section of the NEC is concerned, this year must be one of consolidation. It doesn't appear as if any of the present incumbents are leaving, so support for the present seven seems the order of the day, particularly in relation to Jo Richardson and Audrey Wise who are precariously placed at the bottom of the poll.

It is never good to jump to conclusions too hastily, but voting in the CLP section over the past couple of years has shown a marked degree of male chauvinism (hence Jo and Audrey's present situation) and it is imperative that we mobilise support for these two good socialists.

The situation with the Women's Section is somewhat different. At present the major vote-holders are the trade unions and the women who get elected leave a lot to be desired. However, a major breakthrough has taken place this year with the general, if guarded acceptance on the left that women should draw up the left slate for the women's section. In the past, women have felt extremely aggrieved as the views of women have been ignored and men have cobbled together slates — often with disastrous results.

This year things are different. The growth of the women's organisation and the Labour Women's Action Committee, has pressured the

By Mandy Moore

left, not only to support the principle of the Women's Conference electing the Women's Section of the NEC as a long-term aim, but to accept that, in the meantime, positive action is needed on the women's slate issue. Hence the changes this year.

One knock-on effect of this change is that the slate making process is being opened up. WAC is calling a meeting with women's groups from a number of left campaigns and organisations to discuss drawing up a slate. If a common slate can be agreed, this will be the first time women on the left have been able to influence the slates for the NEC in a significant way, and it will be extremely difficult for men on the left to oppose.

This process can never, however, take the place of a real solution to the 'problem' of the women's section of the NEC. Until women win the right to elect their own section through their own conference, any other arrangements will be merely stop-gap measures which cannot — even if by some miracle we sweep the board — produce the kind of NEC women's section women really want to see.

And what of the trade union, YS, Socialist Societies sections? These bastions of male power and privilege will,



At Labour conference 1983, women challenge the platform

whether left, right or whatever, be denied to women. Women stand for election, albeit in small numbers; how much longer will it be before one gets elected? Your guess is as good as mine.

Fascists swarm into Tory ranks

By Rajesh Khana

highlighting the level of fascist infiltration, and looked at one of these groups — Tory Action.

This group is led by the former deputy director of MI6, George Young, and claims to have the support of two Cabinet ministers and 24 MPs. The group was set up to back Thatcher's bid for leadership against Ted Heath and Thatcher is known to have attended at least one meeting of Tory Action.

The Tory Party right wing contains within it many ex-members of fascist organisations, some of whom have been Tory Party candidates for

councils and Parliament.

Tory Action, the Monday Club, WISE (Welsh, Irish, Scottish, English), and the Salisbury Group are sort of Tory-to-fascist bridging devices.

But why this greater interest by fascist groups in joining the Tory Party? One of the new revelations of the programme was a letter from former National Front and League of St. George activist, Richard Franklin, outlining a conscious fascist strategy of infiltration.

Franklin's plans were based on the assumption that "the nature of the Right of the Conservative Party in shifting from Laissez Faire liberalism to nationalism".

This, I believe, is the key to the question. Over the last decade or two the Conservatives have been seen by the fascists and ultra-rights as being 'soft' and not the true representatives of white racist goals. The fascist organisations offered them what the Conservatives could not.

But the Conservative government since 1979 has been one of the most right wing for a long time. It has championed the fight against black people, bringing in the Nationality Act and the Police Bill, and waging the fight against the working class as a whole.

The Tory Party is once again the main party of the extreme right, and the fascists must feel well at home in it.

Defend abortion rights

THE National Abortion Campaign is demanding that action be taken on the recent report of the Royal College of Gynaecologists (RCOG) which reveals the disgraceful delays which face women seeking abortions.

The report proves precisely what working class women, and pro-choice groups like NAC, have always known — that for women seeking abortions on the NHS there are difficulties and delays which simply do not exist for those with the money to go to the private sector.

The report states: "Deficiencies in the organisation of the abortion service, especially in the NHS, make a substantial contribution to avoidable delay." No mention, however, of the reasons for the deficiencies, which are caused by anti-abortion doctors and greatly exacerbated by Tory Government cut-backs!

Significantly, the RCOG also points out that it has no data on women who are refused abortions because of inordinate and unnecessary delays.

At present, the law allows abortion up to 28 weeks, but in practice abortions are rarely carried out after 24 weeks, in case of diagnostic error. Already, the anti-abortionists have seized upon an RCOG sub-committee report which questions the 28 week time limit, and they are bringing pressure to reduce this limit to 24 weeks or less. In reality, this would mean that doctors would not risk carrying out abortions after 20 weeks.

Time limit

Ignoring the fact that women having very late abortions are among the most desperate cases — either very young or with a malformed foetus — the anti-abortionists are trying to restrict the time limit by the use of an Act passed more than fifty years ago, the Infant Life [Preservation] Act of 1929.

The National Abortion Campaign has already organised a conference on abortion facilities

care to which black women are subject, and the treatment of young women seeking abortion. The conference will also now be used to help organise the fight against this latest attack.

United

The Labour and trades union movements have always been allies of the National Abortion Campaign. It is essential that there is a united response, involving all sections of the women's movement and labour movement, to defeat those who seek to subject women to outdated and reactionary laws.

Conference

*National Abortion Campaign Conference. "Abortion Rights and Facilities — What Future?" University of London, Malet Street, London WC1 Saturday 25 February, 10 am to 5 pm. For further details contact: NAC, 47 Waldram Park Road, London SE23 or phone 01-993 2071.



By Carol Thomson

in London on Saturday 25 February.

Among other subjects, the conference will discuss the cuts in NHS facilities, the quality of

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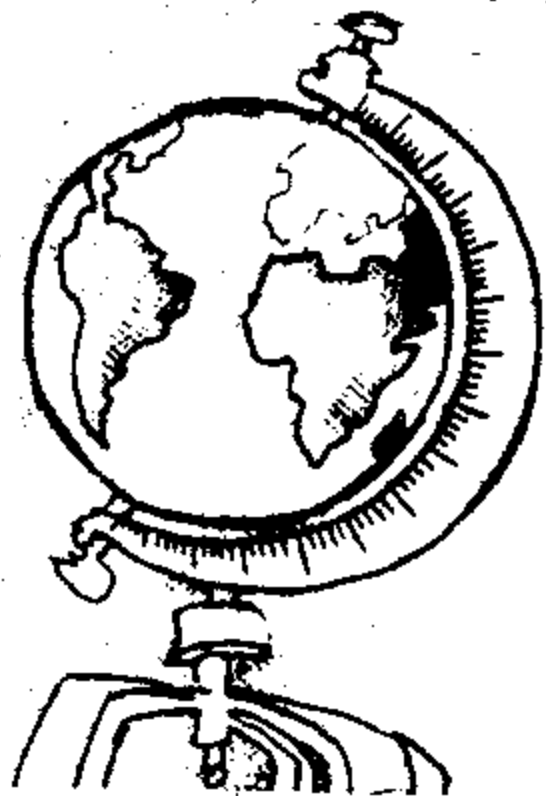


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WORLD



BRIEF Moscow arrest

ON FEBRUARY 5 seventy members of the British peace movement protested outside the Russian embassy in sympathy with Olga Meoveokova, a member of the Moscow peace group.

She faces trumped up charges of having assaulted a KGB man last October. The alleged incident took place on October 13 when Olga, together with several other members of the group, tried to attend the trial of their comrade, Oleg Podzinsky. To forestall this the police arrested her and the others and held them at a police station till the court proceedings ended and Podzinsky was sentenced.

If Olga Medvenkova is brought to trial she can expect a sentence of three years in a labour camp.

Her case has already been taken up by the campaign of "Women for Life on Earth" who have strong connections with the Greenham women. It was this organisation that arranged the demonstration on February 5.

Apartheid

A 15 year old black school student in South Africa was killed on Monday 13th by a police vehicle.

Emma Satheke was run down as she protested against excessive corporal punishment in school. The police also injured eight other students so severely that they were taken to hospital.

Iran/Iraq

THE Iran-Iraq war escalated last week, promising further casualties in this conflict which has already claimed tens of thousands on each side.

Also last week, Amnesty International published a report on repression in Iran.

Since the revolution in 1979, there have been more than 5,000 executions by official figures. Amnesty notes that this total must be far below the reality. The Mujaheddin opposition say that 30,000 have been killed — an average of nearly 20 a day.

The main victims of the executions have been members of the Kurdish national minority in Iran; political oppositionists; and adherents of the Bahai religion.

Adultery, homosexuality, and drug trafficking have also been made subject to the death penalty.

El Salvador

Ballots and butchers

AN essential part of US strategy in El Salvador is the pretence that America is supporting not a military dictatorship against the people but democracy against extremism of the left and right. Accordingly, Reagan made much of the March 1982 Constituent Assembly elections and is currently hoping that the forthcoming Presidential election will demonstrate to the world the vitality of Salvadorean democracy.

But history shows that the formalities of electoralism in El Salvador provide little more than a fig leaf for the naked class dictatorship of the "14 families".

The "reformist" military regime of the 1950s allowed no opposition although it went through the formality of having members of the "officialista" (pro-government) party elected to the assembly.

In 1960 that regime was toppled by a broad coalition of oppositionists but a counter-coup quickly installed another military dictatorship.

The military decided that although they would establish their own party (the PCN — Party of National Conciliation) they would also attempt to curry favour with moderate civilian oppositionists.

The newly formed middle class Christian Democrats (PDC) were asked to join the new government. The PDC declined the offer but the PCN allowed them to hold a reasonable amount of seats in the Assembly.

The PCN could always assure itself of a majority in the assembly by a mixture of judicious ballot stuffing, mobilisation of the rural vote through the National Guard and paramilitary groups and selective repression against such organisations as the Communist Party (PCS).

In 1964 PDC leader Jose

By Paul Muddle

Napoleon Duarte was elected mayor of San Salvador. His high spending on urban sanitation, new markets and construction projects won him the loyalty of the city's workers and poor.

In 1969 a border war with Honduras led to an influx of Salvadorean peasants who had previously crossed the frontier looking for unoccupied land. This increased the problem of landlessness and in the 1972 Presidential elections land reform was a burning issue.

A reformist coalition of the PDC, PCS and Social Democrats backed Duarte for President, land reform being one of their election pledges. Despite the sabotaging of Duarte's broadcasts and the murder of several of his aides, initial election returns indicated that he had secured about 54% of the national vote.

After this was announced there was a mysterious 24-hour silence on national radio. When the silence was broken it was to announce that PCN candidate Molina had won by 9,884 votes.

Molina was quickly sworn in.

Two weeks after the elections a group of army officers sympathetic to Duarte mounted a coup attempt in San Salvador. Duarte announced his support for them and called for a general



El Salvador soldier — and three victims

strike. The rebels were beaten when the army outside of San Salvador refused to support them and Somoza of Nicaragua came to Molina's aid by bombing the city (Nicaragua and El Salvador were members of the US-inspired Central American Defence Council).

A similar process took place in

the 1977 elections. There was massive fraud and in response a demonstration of 40,000 oppositionists marched through San Salvador and occupied the central plaza. The occupation lasted three days until the remaining 6,000 protestors were dispersed by troops who shot 1500-2000 people in the

process.

In March 1982 it was a similar story. Armed soldiers sporting armbands of the extreme-right ARENA (National Republican Alliance) looked on as voters dropped their ballot papers into clear perspex boxes.

Estimates of the turnout on election day put the voters at around 720,000 but when the final result was announced it was declared that 1,551,680 had voted out of a population of 1,500,000.

For then US Secretary of State Haig an election in which intimidation, press censorship (four Dutch journalists had been murdered) and ballot stuffing were the rule were "a major achievement in the development of democracy in El Salvador."

Duarte and ARENA leader D'Aubuisson are the main contestants in the presidential election next March.

Duarte presided over the dictatorship from 1980-1982 which was responsible for 20,000 deaths. D'Aubuisson is the man who coined the ditty "make El Salvador the tomb of the reds" and who is personally implicated in several high-level assassinations.

Although D'Aubuisson is the hero of San Salvador polite society and of every butcher from the Rio Grande to the Magellan Straits, many sections of the Salvadorean bourgeoisie fear that his election would endanger future arms supplies from the US. This possibility is heightened by renewed bipartisan demands from the US Congress that Reagan should regularly certify progress in human rights or risk all aid funds being blocked by Congress.

Whatever the outcome of the election it is clear that no true democracy can flourish in El Salvador until the oligarchy and its state has been physically smashed by the FMLN.



US troops arrive for exercises in Costa Rica

BEHIND the ritual references to "improving the human rights situation" and "progress towards democracy" the real purpose of the Kissinger Commission's report on Central America is clear — beefing up and integrating the activities of the Central American military establishments.

By Paul Muddle

Military aid to El Salvador should be increased to \$400 million by 1985, military aid to Guatemala should be resumed [it was suspended by Carter], big doses of arms should be supplied to Honduras so that it can "build a credible deterrent" to "the Nicaraguan/Cuban threat."

US sets war plans

Since Kissinger's report was delivered it has been announced that a new round of US/Honduran manoeuvres — Big Pine 3 — will begin in June. The 2,700 US personnel currently involved in Big Pine 2 will stay in the country ready for the next round.

Speaking in Tegucigalpa on February 6, US Senator J. Sasser really let the cat out of the bag when he admitted that: "there appears to be a process taking place here in Honduras of preparation for a military infrastructure that's far beyond, in my judgement, what's needed to carry out the military exercises."

It was reported in the International Herald Tribune that General Paul Gorman, commander of the US Southern Command in Panama, has become "Washington's pro-consul in the area, frequently overshadowing ambassadors and at times overruling them." The US ambassador to Guatemala was recently sacked for being "too soft".

What bourgeois alternatives are there to the policy of US military build up? One is that put forward by the "Contradora Group" [Mexico, Venezuela, Panama, Colombia] who advocate the withdrawal of foreign advisors, UN supervision of national boundaries and a negotiated solution to the Salvadorean conflict.

This stance is supported by the Salvadorean FDR/FMLN, the Nicaraguans and the Cubans [although it should be noted that a new group has emerged in El Salvador — the Revolutionary Workers Movement [MOR] — which is opposed to any negotiations].

The diplomacy of the Contradora group was seen to achieve some success when, on January 8, all five Central American governments signed an agreement calling for a "census" of all arms and advisers in the area and the eradication of irregular forces crossing national frontiers.

Superficially a negotiated peace may sound appealing but

it would leave the repressive military apparatus of states like El Salvador intact. Such a solution would only be a breathing space.

On several occasions in the past, the Salvadorean military has shown its desire to crush the organisations of the workers and peasants, even when the country has been ruled by supposedly progressive governments.

And it should not be forgotten that the only reason the Mexican bourgeoisie pursues such a strategy is to prevent guerrilla warfare spilling over into its own territory.

Only the destruction of the US backed war machine in Central America and the expropriation of the landowners and industrialists by the working class can provide a lasting peace.

When imperialism sees its vital interests threatened [and it has plenty in Central America: the Panama Canal, oil, manufacturing], it will brush aside any "scrap of paper" — it would be a mistake to believe otherwise.

Anti-semitism in France

ANTI-SEMITISM is on the rise in France. Over the last year, the National Front — politically similar to the British group of the same name — has scored several election successes. At a series of by-elections, and in one Paris district during municipal elections, it has scored over 10% of the vote.

Its main political drive is against North African and other non-white immigrants. But co-thinkers and associates of the NF have become more and more vocal with anti-Jewish propaganda reminiscent of the Nazis.

"The modern world," they say, "is characterised by a new intrusion of the Jewish phenomenon... Marx and Rothschild are so to speak two sides of the same coin."

They denounce the "four superpowers which are colonising France... the Jew, the Protestant, the Freemason, and the communist", and condemn "the tendency for Jews to occupy all the key positions of the Western nations."

They specifically attack Jewish members of the Socialist-dominated government: one, Robert Badinter, is described as, "by heritage, for the nomad against the settled population. For the cosmopolitan, against the native... For the marginal, against the society which for so long rejected the Badinters."

Simone Veil, a Jewish leader of the mainstream right-wing UDF [and a former Auschwitz inmate] has been attacked in similar terms. According to a survey published in the Paris daily Le Monde, the

NF's support is strongest among working-class male youth.

Fertile soil for their growth has been created not only by the economic failures of the Left government, but also by the thoroughly nationalist bias of the Left parties. French Communist Party poster slogans in recent years have included "I love my country — so I'm joining the CP", and "No to a German Europe".



Nazi anti-semitism — Polish Jews forced to dig their own graves

A QUESTION OF SOLIDARITY

Independent Trade Unions in South Africa

Published by Socialist Forum for Southern Africa Solidarity. Available (at 90p plus 20p post) c/o SO, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

90p

Bob Fine

Poland

Militants face death on hunger strike

'We can still win struggles'

says Solidarnosc leader Zbigniew Bujak

THE MOST important thing is not to allow the price rises to take place. Compensations — no matter how high — will never be full, and they will not halt the continuous fall in living standards. The matter of the level of life and, in general, the whole economic situation, is our current priority.

I am deeply convinced that huge protest actions — strike actions — will occur in relation to the price rises. Everything points to the fact that people have had enough, and that they will defend themselves.

Apart from the struggle against the price rises, in the near future we await a struggle for cost of living allowances compensating for the continuous fall in living standards.

At the present time, we cannot win cost of living allowances through any centralised country-wide protest. They can only be effectively demanded at work enterprise level. Well-organised enterprises, with access to different departments, have by far the best chances of exerting pressure.

Even at those enterprises where there is no organisation, effective actions can be conducted. A very fruitful leaflet campaign can be waged by as few as two or three people; managements greatly fear such actions, and are therefore prepared to make concessions to avoid them. Poster actions — although they demand more people — evoke a similar response on the part of management. We cannot provide more detailed directions than this, because the situation differs in every establishment.

If we see enterprises commencing a struggle for cost of living allowances, we will support them with both regional and eventual national actions, which will continue until everyone has won appropriate compensations. Thus even when a region's largest enterprises have succeeded in this, we will continue our actions until we have affirmed that everyone else has also done so.



Edmund Baluka

THE POLISH government admitted last week that Solidarnosc militants are on hunger strike in all four of the major political prisons.

In Strzelin prison there are 13 hunger strikers. Four of them have been transferred to hospital because of their condition. One, Janusz Palubicki, now weighs less than 8 stone.

In Barczewo, nine are on hunger strike, including Trotskyist Edmund Baluka.

The hunger strike started on December 5. To prevent the authorities torturing and injuring the prisoners by force-feeding them, the hunger strike is organised in shifts. One group strikes for two days, and then another group relieves them.

They are demanding political prisoner status. At present they are treated worse than ordinary criminal prisoners. They demand the right to buy food in the prisons once a week, as ordinary prisoners can. Normal prison food is inedible.

They also demand to be allowed four visits a month. At present they have two hours a month with relatives, in guarded cells.

These shortened excerpts from an interview with Zbigniew Bujak are taken from *Voice of Solidarnosc*, c/o 314-320 Grays Inn Rd, London WC1. The interview appeared in the underground publication 'Tygodnik Mazowsze' last November.



Anna Walentinowicz (1965 photo above) has been in Katowice prison since December.

SOLIDARNOSC STILL HAS ONE MILLION MEMBERS

'Solidarnosc has now been operating underground for two years. Have there been any permanent achievements during this period?

Achievements at two levels can be discussed — the political and the organisational. After the imposition of martial law, everything hinged on whether Solidarnosc would be able to maintain continuity and to defend itself as an organisation, or whether it would be crushed.

In my opinion, this struggle was won by us. The Union currently maintains its activity at all levels — national, regional and factory — and, moreover, its structures are renewable, despite the blows inflicted on it by the Security Service.

While the capture of certain people could indeed have resulted in the paralysis of the Union at the very beginning of martial law, today even after such setbacks as the Hardek affair and the breaking up of a regional structure, the latter was rebuilt in a short space of time.

Could the Temporary Coordinating Committee [TKK] also be rebuilt?

Yes, now the structure of the TKK could be rebuilt. We've acquired resistance to the blows of the Security Service because at both national and regional level, certain individuals are willing to function under their own names. This protects us from infiltration by the Security Service, and from all types of provocation.

The adoption of the principle of open leadership is a continuation of the openness of union life; for Solidarnosc members it is also a symbol of the legality of our activity. I consider that our very existence would be threatened were we to do away with this principle in favour of operating under pseudonyms. The co-option of several-score named individuals to the TKK and to the more important regions cannot pose a problem for a union comprising around a million people.

Furthermore, the fact that the Union's leaders are known creates a psychological bind — a sense of common leadership — which helps make us a united organisation.

You say Solidarnosc numbers a million people. Who are they?

Of course, this is an estimate. It includes those paying Union dues and receiving benefits, as well as those receiving the Union press. According to our information, roughly 10% of people in each centre pay dues, and different actions are employed at smaller enterprises, and the situation in these varies: either they are extremely well organised and 50-70% of the workforce pays dues, or nothing happens in them at all. Many more people read the (underground) press than pay dues, and many more also involve themselves sporadically in

Union activity. All things considered, a million is probably a conservative estimate.

What do you mean by the Union's achievement on the political level?

Above all that the whole of our society is, without exception, aware of both the immediate and long-term aims of Solidarnosc. Everyone knows that our current basic aim is the freeing of the political prisoners, as well as winning union pluralism and the right for other independent unions and associations to exist.

Then there are our other important tasks for today: the struggle with the fall in living standards, and the preparation for a boycott of the elections.

The fact that people are aware of these aims and that they agree with them means that they identify with the Union — and this is where the Union's strength lies. These immediate aims and assignments constitute a preliminary stage in the achievement of our long-term basic aims.

Winning freedom for political prisoners is a stage in the struggle for full law and order, while the boycott of the elections and the building of independent organisations are steps on the path to sovereignty.

None of these aims divide; they unite people, and make for unity and activity, despite extensive decentralisation.

Another important achievement has been the definition of the organisation's identity, and the adherence to the principle of its defence. Neither the union movement, nor (any other independent) associations permit any concessions when it comes to matters deciding on their independence.

While they are quite prepared to negotiate with the authorities when it comes to other issues, they are manifestly aware that relinquishing even a fraction of their identity would lead to their automatic absorption into the totalitarian system of government.

As proof of this, they have both past Polish experiences, and the highly enlightening example of Czechoslovakia, where, following the Soviet intervention, the adoption of the principle that everything possible must be saved at all costs ended in the complete suppression of absolutely everything.



The workers at Gdansk shipyard listen to Lech Walesa, August 1980

In Poland, the unions did not give in, and smashing them proved an impossibility, so that — despite their formal dissolution — they continue to exert a powerful and potent influence.

Take the example of the writers: they made no compromise, which meant that the whole milieu retained its authority, and is still able to influence the life of the country.

You've discussed the Union's survival, the general awareness of its aims, the retention of its identity, and the organisation's independence. These are obvious achievements. However, people await concrete and effective activities, for it is only these that they tend to regard as successes.

The effectiveness of the Union's activities won't become really obvious until after our struggle in connection with the price rises and the elections. The fact that we are dealing with a totalitarian regime influences our methods of operation. This is the reason why our means of exerting pressure involve principally direct resistance: demonstrations on the one hand, and boycotts and organisation in unofficial currents on the other.

I'm quite convinced that if it weren't for demonstrations, many of the regime's decisions up until now — in fact, our entire situation — would now be considerably worse than it is.

True, it's difficult to prove the success of a demonstration, but there is no doubt that they are essential. The authorities must by now be aware that both the price rises and the elections will be accompanied by demonstrations of some kind.

The fact is, demonstrations are the basic weapon of any society struggling against a totalitarian system — as can currently be witnessed in Chile.

As long as the regime continues to try and make all existing organisations a tool of the regime, the most effective way of opposing this is to conduct a full boycott of these organisations and to organise ourselves in unofficial currents and resolve all problems independently of the authorities.

The whole unofficial movement has an enormous influence on the structures organised from above by the government. For the regime unions, our activity is and will be a point of reference as long as Solidarnosc exists. If the regime unions will genuinely care to concern themselves with working matters they will come into conflict with the regime; if not, they will compromise themselves utterly as trade unions.

At present, we exert a greater influence on our country's political life — as well as on other matters — than we did towards the end of our open and legal existence.

In the three months prior to 13 December 1981, the authorities were only pretending to negotiate with Solidarnosc and to arrive at agreements. In fact, they were already by-passing the Union completely, making all their decisions apart from it, and preparing for the introduction of martial law.

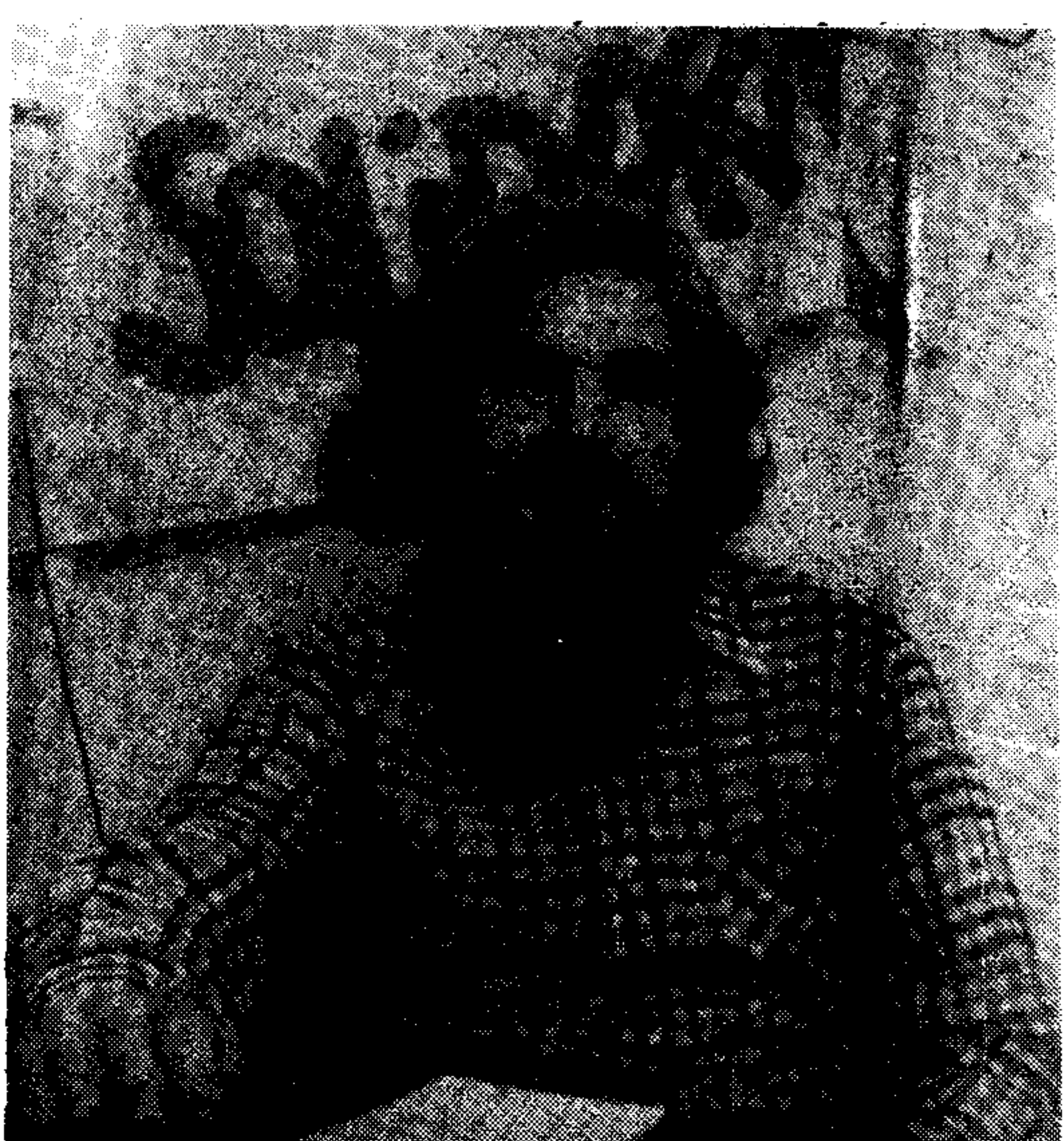
Now, the situation has been reversed: the authorities pretend that the Union doesn't exist, while in reality they have to take into account its existence before taking any important step.

Further, by lifting martial law and by acknowledging the situation as 'normalised' while the underground exists, the authorities have signalled their reconciliation to the fact of our existence. We have thus become a permanent element of political reality in Poland.

Haven't the authorities yielded before the threat of social explosion, rather than before the pressure exerted by Solidarnosc?

The regime has, up until now, managed to stifle any spontaneous outbursts quite well enough. Our strength relies on the fact that a potential explosion could, with lightning speed, take on organised forms.

It could then transpire that society's representatives would demand of the government the realisation of solutions in the realm of the functioning of the state.



Zbigniew Bujak, a central leader of the Solidarnosc underground



Solidarnosc demonstration, 1982

After Andropov

Workers in the

A PRECISE picture of inequality of incomes in the USSR seems difficult to establish. In 1919, when working class democracy still existed, a maximum differential of 1.75:1 was decided. Differentials quickly slipped beyond that maximum, but it was not until the consolidation of the Stalinist counter-revolution in the 1930s that inequality increased massively.

Since the mid-'50s inequality seems to have decreased again, somewhat, but a Marshal of the USSR receives 28 times the income of a worker on the minimum wage.

Official figures show relatively small differentials between managers and workers in the factories, and Lane stresses that *maximum* differentials between the very highest incomes and the very lowest are smaller than in the West.

The Russian oppositionist Roy Medvedev, however, reckons that "in some enterprises, pay differentials between senior executives and workers may vary from one to ten, . . . sometimes even one to fifty . . . the differences may be as high as one to one hundred if practical advantages, medical care and hospitals are taken into account."

In the USSR, Kerblay reckons, the top 10% averages ten times the income of the poorest 10%; in the UK, eight times and in West Germany, fifteen times.

Inequality

Inequalities of *wealth* are obviously less in the USSR because the major means of production are not privately owned; but inequalities of *income* are probably similar to those in the West.

Kerblay further notes: "among the different elements of Soviet lifestyle, income counts less than access to goods . . . It matters little how high or low rents are if one does not have an apartment of one's own . . . various shops and dressmakers in the capital are reserved for a few privileged customers . . . Dignitaries have their own chauffeur, and even domestic staff."

"To this list of privileges must be added official living accommodation, whose size and comfort depend on rank; priority tickets for entertainment and travel; special waiting rooms in stations . . . special showings of films to which the public is not admitted; dining-rooms reserved for notables in restaurants . . .

By Martin Thomas

direct deliveries to the home; and a pass to jump queues."

In everyday life, especially in rural society, other "imponderable distinctions" belong to "the new notables" — "possession of a passport permitting travel without special permission, the way of dress . . . and the fact of being addressed by one's patronymic" (i.e. as 'Ivan Ivanovich' rather than 'Ivanov' — an equivalent to calling people 'sir' in the West).

The elite perpetuates itself to a large degree. 72% of the children of top bureaucrats become top bureaucrats or middle-rank managers or technicians. 73% of the children of unskilled workers become manual workers.

The chance of a child of a manual worker becoming a senior manager in the USSR is about 2% — around the same as in France, and five times less than in the USA.

With inherited wealth not a major factor, inequality in education is the main way in which the elite perpetuates itself. In 1975-6, 49% of the students of Moscow University were classified as from the intelligentsia.

Secondary school fees were abolished in 1956 (after being introduced in 1940), and the total numbers in higher education are high by Western standards. But selection for higher education is sharply competitive; 'political' criteria are openly stated as being part of the selection; and students' grants cover at most two-thirds of their living costs.

Workers' living standards have increased considerably since the Stalin era. But economic growth since World War 2 has been slower and slower.

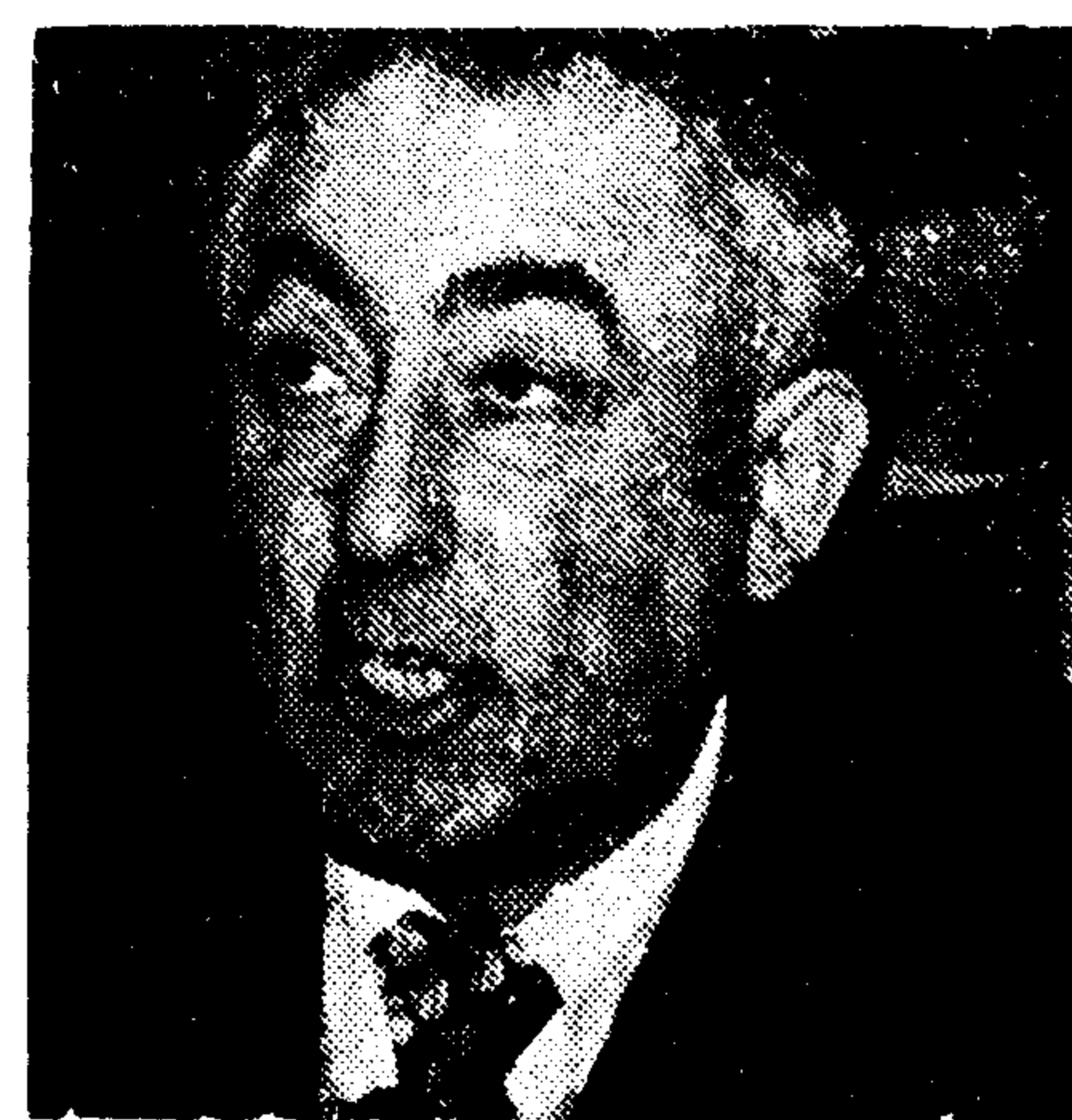
Industrial output increased 16% per year between 1928 and 1940. In 1951-55 it increased at 10% per year, according to Western estimates; in 1961-65, at 7% per year; and in 1971-75, 6%.

Total output increased at 4½% per year in 1975-9 by USSR estimates (3% by US estimates) — and only 3% per year in 1980-2.

Urban housing, according to Kerblay, has improved a lot since the 1960s — when conditions were very bad. In 1964,

No-one knows what the choice of Konstantin Chernenko to succeed new leadership decides to follow a new course, that will be decided by workers and peasants of the USSR will find out only when the policies are put into effect.

The political regime serves, and is underpinned by, economic inequality. The political regime serves, and is underpinned by, economic inequality in this survey come mostly from the book 'Modern Soviet Society' by Lane (1983), with some supplementing from David Lane's 'Politics and Society in the USSR' (1978). These are both sober academic studies, very tolerant of the established order in the USSR, and basing themselves largely on official statistics.



Vladimir Klebanov is an Ukrainian miner, and a representative of 'the other USSR' — the suppressed and stifled working class.

In 1978 he, with others, tried to form a Solidarnosc-type trade union in the USSR. Within nine days Klebanov was arrested. He had already suffered sackings and spells in prison and in psychiatric hospital over the previous 20 years.

He is now, like many other oppositionists, held in a psychiatric hospital. Nothing has been heard of him since 1980.

in Leningrad. 57% of working class families lived in a single room, 21% in two rooms.

In Novosibirsk in 1965, over 60% of workers who had recently moved into the city had to sublet a single room or even a 'corner' of a room.

Recent statistics are scanty, but it seems that even today some 40% of unskilled workers' families live in accommodation where they have to share washing and cooking facilities. For young workers the alternative is factory hostels: "some 70% of enterprises run such hostels, under the supervision of a 'Commandant' . . ."

Meanwhile dissidents report "property developments that result in the expulsion of ordinary citizens from the centre of Moscow in order to build luxury housing for a carefully selected elite."

The USSR has more doctors in proportion to population than any other country in the world; but infant mortality remains at the level of Portugal or the Caribbean, rather than of wealthier western societies, and there are prescription charges.

Only 15 days holiday a year are granted to 44% of the citizens, while managers average 24 days.

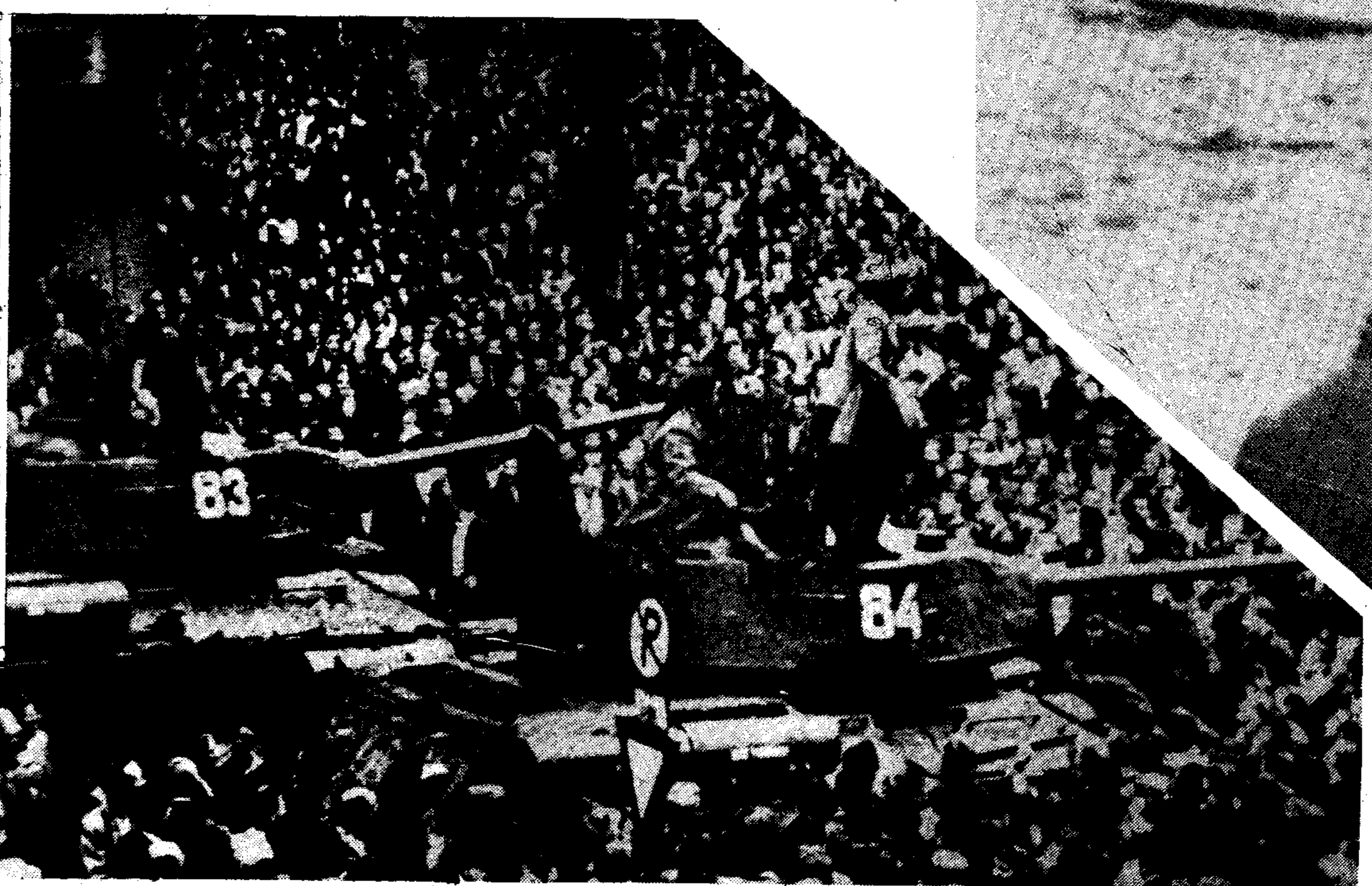
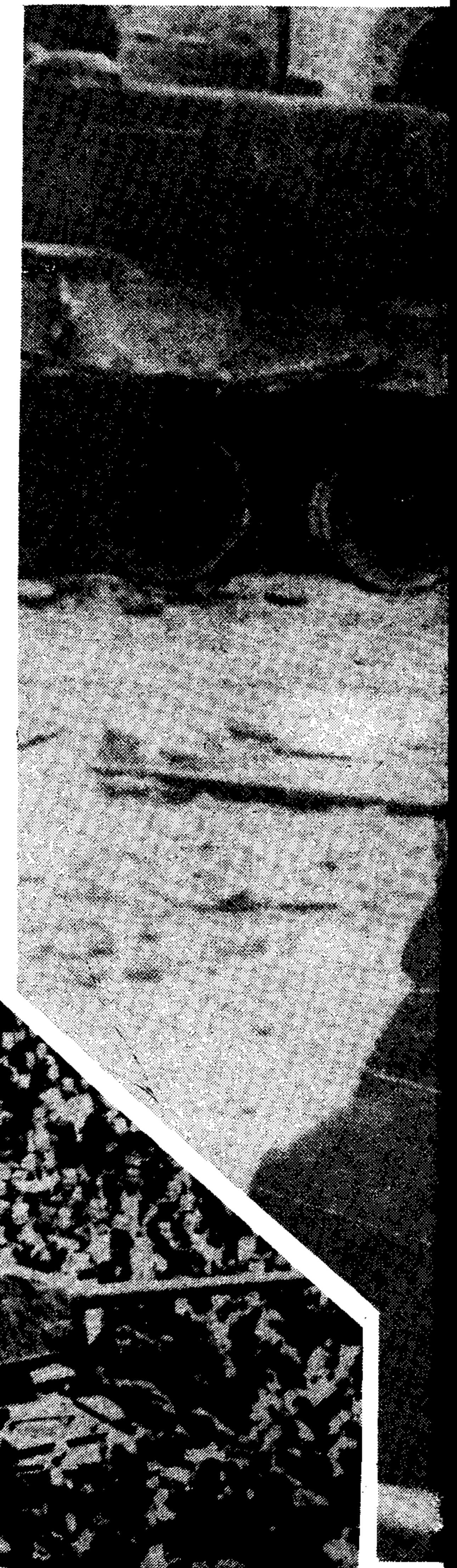
Women

One of the major claims made for the USSR by the friends of its regime is that it gives equality to women. 82% of women of working age are

employed, and sometimes in jobs which in the West are male dominated. 74% of doctors, for example, are women.

Since the 1950s the Stalinist laws against abortion and divorce have been repealed.

But women are still lower-paid than men. A survey in one town showed that 66% of women were in jobs classified as comparatively unskilled, but only 19% of men. Only 16% of factory directors and chief engineers are women.



min, Trotsky, and the struggle they stood for (anti-clockwise): workers demolish Stalin's statue, Hungary 1956; the first workers' state is established, Russia 1917; East German workers rise up against Stalinism, 1953; and another picture from Hungary 1956.

USSR

ri Andropov means. If the behind closed doors. The is imposed on them from

lity. The facts and figures Basile Kerblay (Methuen, ety in the USSR' (second in their attitudes to the USSR statistics.

omen also face a tremendous burden of housework. Cause of the frequent ies, they spend an average six hours a week on ping. In industrial worker lies, the husband is oned to have an average of ours' free time a week — wife 20.

asant women are worse till.

Production

t the point of production condition of the USSR king class compares unfavorably with that of workers in y capitalist societies. viet-style centralised ning", as Kerblay puts it, incompatible with workers' agement . . . the rank and have no say in objectives or duction norms."

unishments in the official our Code include fines, otion, sacking, or deporta- to a labour camp. Bureauc- ic mismanagement makes stress of work worse.

The work rate is frequently upt by shortage of spare s or absence of supplies The slackness of the first days in the month is made

up for by a sudden rush of work in the last ten days, which means overtime, lost weekends . . . the poor quality of certain goods is a consequence of the relaxation of inspection procedures towards the end of the month."

"Since strikes are forbidden and since wage-bargaining is not in union hands . . . the trade union is not an organ for the pressing of claims . . . but a mechanism in the service of productivity and the welfare of the workers". It is in effect a department of the management, organising social security, holiday camps, theatre tickets, sports and other cultural facilities, etc.

Barred from any collective action to improve conditions, workers respond by individual rebellion: low productivity, absenteeism, crime. Alcoholism in particular is a major problem in the USSR.

Consumption of alcohol per

USSR are attributed to drink problems.

'But', the reader may reply, 'there have been improvements. Sixty years ago the USSR was desperately backward; today material living standards there are comparable to, say, Spain or Ireland. In some respects material standards compare favourably with richer western countries, and in the USSR there are fewer very poor people'.

True, though many capitalist states have also had period of rapidly rising living standards.

But a socialist judgement on the USSR must surely adopt the viewpoint of the worker who curses his or her miserable and unequal position, rather than of the bureaucrat who points complacently at chosen economic statistics.

Moreover, the 'good' statistics are often misleading. For example: people in the



"Andropov should be replaced by a young man". "What?"

head is three times higher than under the Tsars, when vodka was already a notorious scourge. Fully one half of all the numerous divorces in the

USSR read, study, and get educated more than in France. But what can they read and study?

Quite apart from the inequality in the education system, it is also very restrictive. As Lane reports, "In contrast to [the imaginative and libertarian] methods employed in the early years of Soviet power, the present techniques are based on formal class teaching."

The system is highly exam-oriented: as in the US, students have to repeat a year if they fail the end-of-year exam, and teachers are also assessed by exam results.

Then the libraries, the publishing houses, the press, the radio, the TV, the school

Anti-clockwise: Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko

curriculum, are all controlled by the totalitarian bureaucracy. No idea is permitted to live unless it comes from above.

Censorship is, indeed, quite an industry in the USSR, employing some 70,000 people.

The self-liberation of the working class demands that aspirations and ideas emerge from below; are clarified, filtered, and integrated through free debate; and become a material force through class organisation. The bureaucracy in the USSR is an absolute obstacle to that self-liberation.

The nationalised economy created by the 1917 revolution is a basis worth defending; but for half a century now that basis has had standing upon it a consolidated, self-perpetuating bureaucracy which stifles and crushes every progressive impulse.

As Leon Trotsky argued as long ago as 1939, the revolutionary overthrow of that bureaucracy by the working class is the precondition for any socialist progress in the USSR:

"We are not a government party; we are the party of irreconcilable opposition, not only in capitalist countries but

also in the USSR. Our tasks, among them the 'defence of the USSR', we realise not through the medium of bourgeois governments and not even through the government of the USSR, but exclusively through the education of the masses through agitation, through explaining to the workers what they should defend and what they should overthrow . . .

"In order that nationalised property in the . . . USSR become a basis for genuinely progressive, that is to say socialist, development, it is necessary to overthrow the Moscow bureaucracy."

No, Chernenko isn't Lenin's heir !

THE RULERS of the USSR claim continuity with Lenin. The imperialist bourgeoisie are happy to agree. They try to bury Lenin under the crimes of Stalinism.

Yet no greater lie has ever been told.

The present system did not arise from the 1917 Revolution. It arose out of the destruction of the working class rule won by that revolution, and the seizure of power by a privileged bureaucracy, led by Stalin.

This counter-revolutionary transformation was carried out by a one-sided civil war, in which the Stalinists slaughtered millions of workers and peasants — and almost all the leading members of Lenin's party.

Lenin spent his last dying months in 1923 trying to fight the growing power of the new bureaucratic elite. He denounced Stalin's brutal

methods, and his oppression of non-Russian nationalities in the USSR, and urged Trotsky to take up the fight against Stalin.

Trotsky was to wage this fight for the seventeen years before his assassination in 1940.

No, Chernenko is not Lenin's successor. He is the successor of the gravedigger of the revolution, Josef Stalin.

As Trotsky, Lenin's comrade and co-thinker after 1917, expressed it — a river of blood separated Lenin's Bolshevism from the Stalinist counter-revolution.

Lenin's programme and Lenin's ideas — what Lenin really stood for — are the deadly enemy of what exists in the Soviet Union today.



Men of the Soviet dynasty. Lenin made the revolution, Stalin created a superpower, Khrushchev liberalised, Brezhnev restored, Andropov tried to reform.

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 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. Billions 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 fascists from positions in the labour movement. Organise full support for black self-defence. Build workers' defence squads.

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

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

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

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

The black working people of South Africa should get full support from the British labour movement in 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 take 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.

Leicester Socialist Organiser day school

Saturday February 18, 10am to 4pm at the LUCA centre, 12 Rutland Street.

Agenda includes: Fighting to change the labour movement, Middle East, Central America and Ireland, combatting racism, campaigning for nuclear disarmament.



CLPD votes to fight on Blackburn

Joe Macaulay reports on the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy's Annual General Meeting

THE CLPD Executive Committee's official reason for holding this year's AGM in three different places was to increase participation by supporters outside London. In these terms, their SDP-style conference was not a success.

By far the biggest of the three meetings was the one held in London, representing nearly 75% of the aggregated AGM votes. Scotland was the smallest with about 25 votes. Overall there were about 240 votes cast, less than 50% of last year's unitary AGM, held in London.

Many of the votes cast were little more than postal ballots. Votes were registered on forms handed out at the beginning, and — certainly at the London meeting — many of these were simply filled in by people who left well before the end. This happened side-by-side with one of the main debates on the 'One member One Vote' system — in which the CLPD EC criticised Clause 4's proposals because they would reduce active participation in debates in the Party!

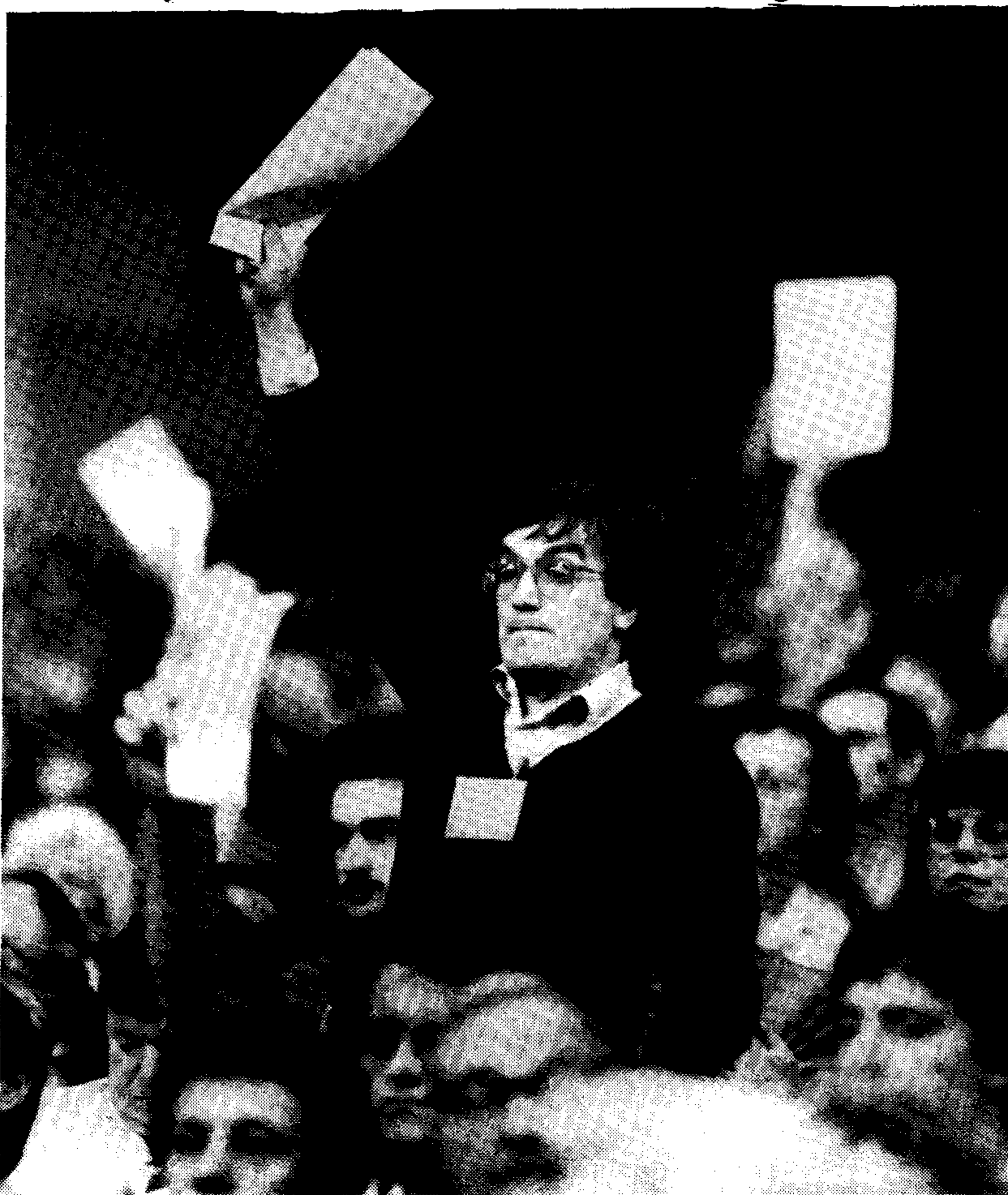
It emphasised that this year's AGM structure was designed to enable the EC to get the results they wanted whatever the effect on CLPD democracy.

The only defeat suffered by the CLPD leadership was on the NEC's new Party Campaign Committee (in a resolution moved by John Bloxam).

Should the CLPD oppose and campaign against a Committee 'not under the control of the NEC and therefore of Party Conference... (which) represents a major threat to Party democracy and the fight for the implementation of Conference policies'? The EC said that CLPD couldn't jump to conclusions and argued for the remittance of Bloxam's resolution. They were defeated 93-87.

On the other issues pushed by the left the EC won by an average margin of 2 to 1. On the central issue of response to the witch-hunt, however, the vote was closer. The EC said yes, the CLPD opposes the witch-hunt, but this is not 'a central' part of its work.

The reinstatement of the expelled Militant supporters is not for the 'immediate future'. CLPD will not support those



JOHN HARRIS

Labour Party conference 1983 was Kinnock's triumph. The CLPD AGM showed the resulting pressures — but did not entirely give way to them.

CLPs that 'refuse to comply with the purge'. This position was carried by 121-90.

Last year's AGM decided to oppose a 'left' version of the Register but this has now been changed. The EC now has AGM sanction for supporting restrictions on the right of Party members to organise. Their margin of victory was 124-97.

But on the more general issue of opposing the expulsion of six Militant supporters by Blackburn CLP, there was nearly a 3 to 1 majority for an emergency resolution committing CLPD to 'mount a major campaign in defence of these members of Blackburn Labour Party and other Party members who are similarly victimised for their political views.' The 50 votes

against the resolution were the hard-core of Clause 4/Labour Coordinating Committee members present. Vladimir Derer voted for this motion.

The most significant result in the EC elections was the successful attempt by the EC majority to oust Francis Prideaux from his long-held position as one of the Trade Union Organisers. Prideaux's 'crime' was to have opposed the EC on a number of occasions.

A proposal from the LCC/Clause 4 for 'One Member One Vote' was defeated by a margin of 3 to 1 because it would downgrade participation and cut out local trade union delegates in the votes for Leader and Deputy Leader.

The Derer-Willsman group of

the EC won a majority to commit the CLPD to campaign for CLPs to 'have a vote at Annual Conference more commensurate with their material and financial contribution.'

Whatever the arguments for and against a change in voting proportions it is likely that this issue will now dominate CLPD's activity.

The CLPD will now, for the first time, campaign on an issue that will immediately and directly affect the trade unions in the Party. Instead of supporting campaigns to democratise the block vote, they propose to reduce the trade union weight in the Party.

The resolution on the organisational character of future AGMs was put at the end of the agenda and never reached.

The EC's exclusion of long-standing President Joan Maynard, and Vice-President Jo Richardson from the list of nominations was also not discussed. They also had committed the 'crime' of opposing the EC majority. But any discussion of the purge was ruled out of order at the AGM because it was only the EC who had the right to nominate... and therefore there was nothing to discuss!

There can be little surprise at the outcome of the 1984 AGM, given the Executive's firm grip on the CLPD and the fact that many leftists have now turned their backs on CLPD.

The AGM, despite its faults and failures, shows that those who have turned away from the CLPD are mistaken. The CLPD still clearly opposes the witch-hunt and supports the fight to defend and extend the democratic reforms in the Party — unlike the Labour Coordinating Committee and Clause 4.

*Despite the decline in its membership (both individual and affiliated) it still remains the largest organisation on the left, and retains a real influence in the CLPs.

*And despite the fact that many on the left boycotted the AGM this year, there is still a sizeable hard left opposition within the campaign that does want to put teeth into the fight against the witch-hunt and which is fighting for democracy within the CLPD. On at least one vote at this year's AGM we defeated the entrenched EC majority.

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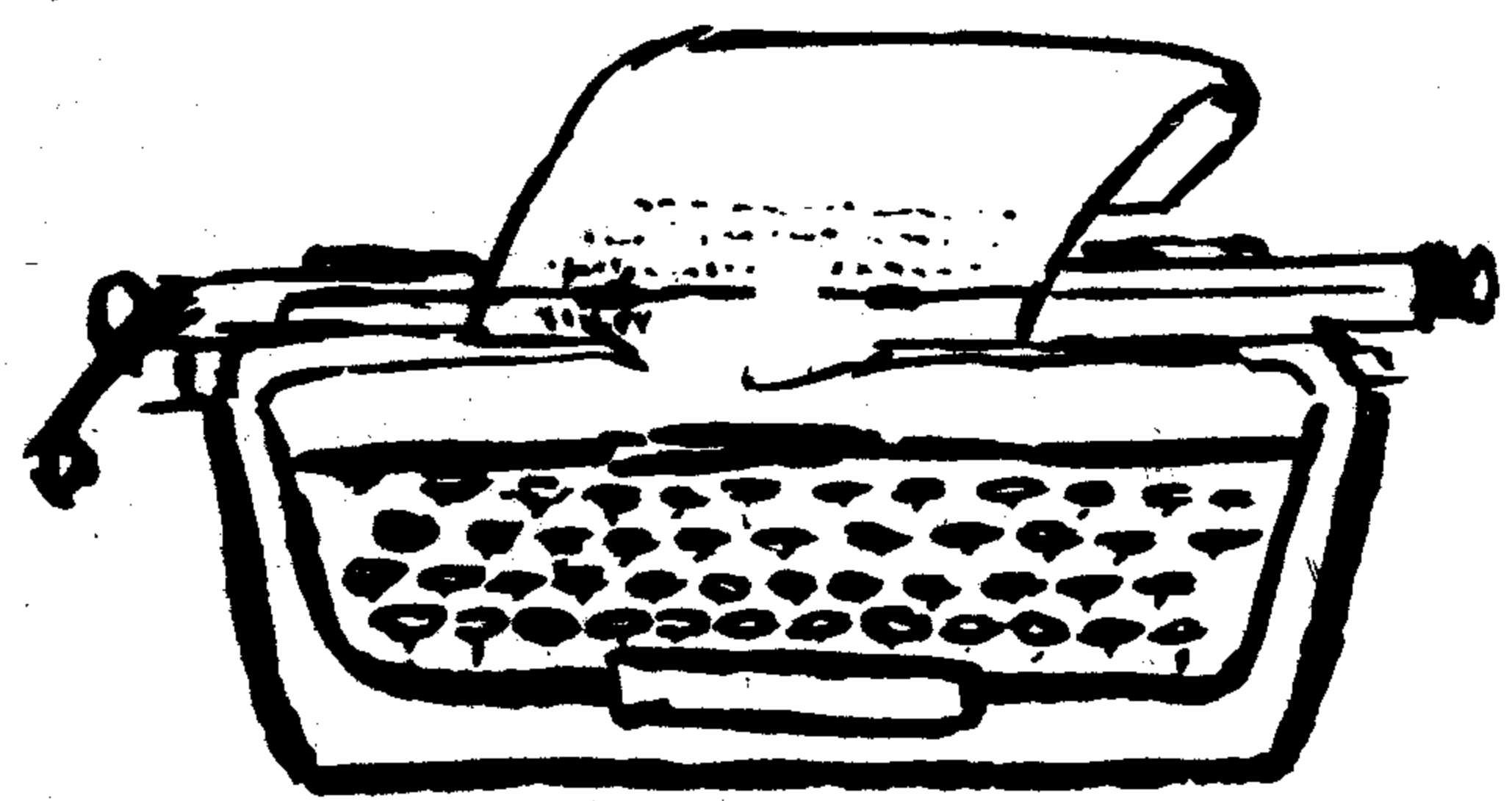
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'Murray Must Go' — from 'Mole Badges' c/o 28 Middle Lane. 25p each.

WRITEBACK



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

Protest in Czechoslovakia

THE February 7 edition of the Guardian reports that 939 people signed a petition to President Husak of Czechoslovakia. The petition expressed concern at the escalation of the arms race. It also protested at the siting of Soviet nuclear missiles in the country.

This action to my mind is both significant and courageous. At the end of 1983 the governments in Eastern Europe gave strong warnings to the unofficial peace movements not to criticise the Warsaw Pact's nuclear strategy. In particular they were told not to protest at the stationing of new missiles in Czechoslovakia and East Germany.

These new weapons (SS21s and SS22s) are the Soviet Union's response to the United States' deployment of Cruise and Pershing. In January an article in a Soviet army publication clearly indicated that some SS21s and SS22s were already deployed in East Germany.

It is my opinion that it is the duty of socialists to work for the realisation of a nuclear free zone in Europe. This must entail the support of all those campaigning on whichever side of the Iron Curtain for genuine nuclear disarmament.

We cannot allow Ronald Reagan or Andropov's successor to use Europe as a nuclear battle ground.

ALEX SIMPSON
Cambridge CLP

Workers' writing

THE Durham Voices Project was set up recently by Keith Armstrong, a Community Arts Worker who has previously been involved in the publishing venture "Strong Words".

Strong Words, based around the North East publishes inexpensive booklets about working class life in the area, past and present, written largely by working class people. Content is considered more important than "style" and tapes are used so that people communicate their experiences directly.

Their publications include "Tell Me What Is Real", "Hello, Are You Working?" (memories of the thirties), "Shipyard Muddling" (poems by Ripyard Cuddling, a Tyne-side welder) and "Revolt Against the Age of Plenty", a collection of articles written by Jack Common.

Like "Strong Words", Durham Voices is committed to publishing the work of working class writers. It is based in Durham City but encompasses many of the surrounding colliery villages.

About thirty people attended the first meeting to launch the project and there was some confusion about what kind of project "Durham Voices" should be. A "professional" writer suspected some kind of conspiracy was taking place and, fortunately, decided to leave.

Other people could not understand that Art is political. It was said that we should publish anything that is good, regardless of its content. What is "good" has always been decided by the Literary Establishment and, consequently, there are few openings in the publishing rat race for worker writers. They could not see that working class people have stories to relate about their work and things to say about social and political issues but are denied the opportunity to do so.

I am pleased to report that these people have dropped out and we are now left with about a dozen people who are committed to developing the project in a socialist direction and specifically promoting working class writing.

At present we are collecting material for the first issue of our magazine which we hope will become quarterly. The first issue will reflect a wide range of issues that are taking place in the Durham Coalfield and will probably include pieces on pit closures and the Durham Miners' Gala.

In future we hope to publish autobiographies by working people and we will be affiliating to the Federation of Writers Workshops and Community Publishers.

GARY SCOTT

Keeping the Bomb?

TONY RICHARDSON (SO 161) argues that we should be politically opposed to disarmament movements in Stalinist states whilst supporting their right to exist. 'Solidarity with their right to exist' should be coupled with pushing them 'in the direction of overthrowing the bureaucracy and defence of the nationalised property relations'.

Comrade Richardson argues that disarmament in any or all of the Stalinist states would open them up to the possibility of attack by imperialism: to fail to recognise this is to break with the Trotskyist understanding of Stalinism.

I would disagree with this position on a number of counts. First of all, we have to have an understanding of the political tasks that face workers in those states. Whilst I think it is in general right not to couple opposition to the Warsaw Pact with opposition to NATO, this is because we are in favour of centring our opposition on the 'enemy at home'.

We are — or should be — in favour of the breaking up of the Warsaw Pact by working class action in the Warsaw Pact countries themselves. The military arm of international Stalinism is as anti-working class a force as imperialism is.

And concretely, the destruction of the Stalinist states would seem to me to entail the dismantling of its present nuclear capacity.

Second, and connected to this, we should categorically condemn all nuclear weapons as not only nastier than conventional weapons, but as fundamentally and inherently anti-working class. Their use could only mean the wholesale slaughter of our class on an international and unprecedented scale.

Any genuine working class government would unambiguously state that it would, under absolutely no circumstances, be prepared to use them against its class allies world wide.

The least that can be said is that if comrades do not agree with this argument it is a bit disingenuous to claim that workers' power is the solution to the war drive, since they actually believe that a workers' state would keep the weapons.

Are comrades such as Tony Richardson in favour of the Stalinist states, or any future workers' state, using nuclear weapons? Hopefully not. But if not, then they should logically be in favour of such states clearly stating that they won't — in which case the effectiveness of the weapons as a 'deterrent' is somewhat reduced.

Do nuclear weapons act as a deterrent anyway? Although I accept that the main thrust behind the war drive comes from imperialism, I for one am not prepared to trust the Stalinist bureaucracies not to blow the world up. And it seems to me to be a terrible deceit for us to pretend to workers in the West that we do put that much faith in them.

Further, put the question another way. Suppose the USSR was to unilaterally disarm tomorrow. That might give imperialism the edge in certain areas of international power politics.

But our alternative to imperialism in the third world is not to rely on the USSR. We have a completely different alternative.

Also, it is false to believe that the US would then be able to invade the USSR unhindered. Soviet disarmament would be a tremendous boost to anti-imperialist movements in the West.

For one thing, the 'deterrent' argument would be blown wide open; no longer able to use the 'Soviet threat' to justify its actions, imperialism would face enormously increased problems in implementing its strategies at an international level.

Certainly a healthy workers' state would unconditionally disarm — we rely on the armed working class for our defence, not on any capacity to blow up foreign workers. In my opinion,



A Russian poster from World War 2. But is the question of defence changed when nuclear bombs replace rifles?

a healthy workers' state would also say to the international working class that it believed its own defeat to be preferable to the world-wide slaughter of workers.

At least we would live to fight again.

Yours comradely,
CLIVE BRADLEY
Manchester

Another tactic?

I AM wondering if there is another tactic that could be used in support of the CPSA at GCHQ instead of a one-day strike.

If a day's strike action was part of a genuine build-up to a general strike as it was in support of the NGA it would be appropriate.

But as a member of NALGO I know we've had numerous strikes in the last two years. These have been in support of the health workers, Greenham Common women and the residential workers.

NALGO members are feeling that Socialist Organiser's answer to everything is a one-day strike. And that these are

not necessarily effective. If a genuine grass-roots movement is to be built I feel that more activity is needed on the part of CPSA members themselves and a call for an all-out strike.

In support, or even in the CPSA itself, lightning sit-down strikes or a refusal to deal with particular actions, i.e. for social workers to refuse to attend court hearings or police interviews might be an alternative build up.

Has anyone got any other suggestions or comments?

In comradeship
CHRIS GOODWIN
Leicester

— LP YS — Class Fighter's impact in London

CLASS FIGHTER made its political presence felt at the 400-strong London Regional Conference of the Labour Party Young Socialists.

Because YS Regional Conferences are very much smaller than the Annual Conference, opposition delegates have more time to speak. Class Fighter was thus able to put our views over on Ireland, gay and lesbian liberation, YTS and the health service cuts. Unfortunately, we were not called to speak in the debates on housing, ILEA, privatisation or local government.

We had our hands up to speak, but the dominant Militant tendency like to be able to present us as trendies with nothing to say on such matters, so we weren't called.

A mark of progress was that Lesbian and Gay YS had a strong influence on the conference. It started by putting "Gay 16 Okay" badges on everyone who walked into the hall and hanging up their banner at the front of the room. Their fringe meeting also attracted about 30 people.

Unfortunately the lesbian and gay debate passed a Militant amendment which deleted proposals for a discussion document on gay oppression and support for councils which stress that they do not discriminate against gays and lesbians. So, it's YS business as usual, a statement against discrimination but no action.

On YTS Class Fighter motions were rejected because we called for trade unions to stop schemes going ahead where they were undercutting union rates and rights and where YTS was being used as a substitute for real jobs. We were told that this was unrealistic — even though it is happening all the time!

CLASS FIGHTER

NO CONSCRIPTION

ON TO YTS!



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.

Labour Campaign for Gay Rights

To join or affiliate, write to Chris Richardson, 21 Devonshire Promenade, Lenton, Nottingham NG7 2DS. £5 for individuals, or for affiliated organisations, per 1000 members; £2 low-waged individuals, £1 unwaged.

Councillors - not without the rank and file!

GARTH Frankland's Forum piece in Socialist Organiser (February 9) is a road to hell paved with good intentions. He says, "If Martin Thomas follows his reason through he would not support the Labour Party at all. In fact he would really join the Socialist Workers Party".

I can't see that implied in any way at all in Martin's articles which argue for looking at the question of SO councillors tactically in each particular area and set of political circumstances. But if Garth Frankland followed his own reasoning, as outlined in his article through to its logical end then he would have no time left from council work to do the other work of revolutionary socialists. He would stand on a political strategy quite feasible for any decent left reformist.

Union officers

I urge comrades to read Garth's article again imagining that he is referring to an industrial struggle. Imagine that he is urging us all to consider becoming union District Officers rather than councillors.

Now, obviously there are differences, but it's not an unreasonable parallel. It suggests and it brings out starkly just how much Garth's eyes are on the day-to-day measures (all good and valuable) which left Labour councillors and councils can implement rather than seeing councillors as one arm of the labour movement.

Substitute

Councillors can of course provide information, organisation and a tactical option inside the council chamber to back up the struggles of working class people who are employed by councils and/or are the consumers of council services. But even the best councillors and their activities in the council chamber are not themselves that struggle. In no way can they be a substitute for it.

Garth's article is pervaded by hints of linear conceptions on the achievement of socialism - 'exhausting' capitalism, 'getting' a socialist society, etc. None of these are wrong in themselves but are unusual choices of words.

William Gallagher's 'Revolt On the Clyde' contrasted with Harry McShane's 'No Mean Fighter' brings out, from the history of the British workers' movement, the difference I am getting at.

Basingstoke councillor Alasdair Jamison responds to Garth Frankland's contribution to our discussion on socialists and local government

For Gallagher, though he never says it and may never even have thought it, the workers of Glasgow in the Red Clyde period after the First World War were the stage extras, doing the back-up work for their 'politically knowledgeable' and 'un-corrupted' leaders. Gallagher's political degeneration into a hard-line Stalinist can be clearly foreseen (with the benefit of hindsight) in these attitudes.

For McShane, by contrast, the workers are the life and blood of Red Clydeside. Their creativity, courage and organisation is a base for leaders of varying political quality.

Honeypots

Garth Frankland's article makes no more than a few passing references to direct action and these references, like it or not, read as merely a way of rendering councillors activities more profound.

Council chambers are a valid area for furthering the struggle for socialism. But it's essential that SO supporters don't try to flock blindly into them. A strong SO group as a political anchor must be built up in an area before we even consider putting comrades into an area of work which is so full of honey pots, wasted time, posturing and pretentiousness that it often makes trade union bureaucrats look quite principled by comparison.

Rank and file

We must not be pessimistic about councils, but we must be cautious about taking council positions. There is no Chinese Wall of 'political knowledge' which can be a talisman against political degeneration among our comrades. The primary way in which we 'take responsibility for the fight' must always be by politicising and organising the rank and file of the working class.



Islington's left wing Labour council in joint session with the Labour Local Government Committee

Labour-take the power!

AS I understand it, Fergus Ennis's main objections to Briefing's new slogan, "Labour - Take the Power!" are 1) that "the slogan means different things to different people" and 2) that it is wrong to transfer a slogan appropriate (in its revolutionary sense) only to a pre-revolutionary situation, to a situation of general downturn and retreat, when it is bound to be interpreted in a non-revolutionary sense. Let me respond to these two points in turn.

1) The demand "Break with the bourgeoisie - take the power!" is defined by Trotsky as a "transitional demand". It is, in fact, the culminating demand of the whole series of "transitional demands" outlined in "The Transitional Programme".

The idea of a transitional demand is that it should take people from A to B - from a non-revolutionary political standpoint (the politics on the basis of which the demand is initially taken up and fought for) to a revolutionary one (the conclusion that implementing the demand in full necessitates a revolutionary seizure of power).

In that sense, all transitional demands - the demand for the right to work, for a mass housing programme, a sliding scale of wages, etc., etc. - are "ambiguous" and have got to be. They are initially accepted by workers who believe that they can be implemented within the system (i.e. accepted by people who interpret them in their 'non-revolutionary' sense).

The transition to the opposite meaning of the slogans - their revolutionary sense - is not accomplished through academic nit-picking and definition-mongering at the outset. It is accomplished in the course of the practical struggle for power.

Revolutionary

As for myself, Graham Bash, Jane Stockton and others who were once part of the Chartist group and are now committed first and foremost to the independence of Briefing - I think we have made it perfectly clear in plain print what our politics consist of. If the power is to be taken, we ourselves are going to have to take it - all of us, as workers, women, ethnic minorities, the unemployed, etc., etc. - united in a revolutionary alliance of something like the kind that the Briefing alliance is already beginning to represent.

But if other people think that Kinnock and Co. are going to form a government independent of the bankers and bosses - well, let's take them through the experience, whilst providing a practical, organised, unifying alternative, and let's show them who is right.

That is the Bolshevik, the Trotskyist - as opposed to the sectarian - way of doing things, as a moment's reading of any of Trotsky's writings will show.

We are not going to impose every last dot and comma of a

Chris Knight of London Labour Briefing responds to our 'Left Press' column on the national Briefing slogan, 'Labour, take the power!'

revolutionary communist 'line' on a journal whose function is precisely to 'bind people together who are politically disparate' (as Fergus indignantly charges us). Our immediate aim is precisely to provide the framework for a consistently anti-capitalist united front, and this, indeed, we have begun to do (with the generous help, I should add, of Socialist Organiser supporters).

"Labour - take the power!" is a united front slogan. It is, I believe, the slogan under which the Labour Party as a whole (minus a few leaders) will ultimately become united on the

The fact that the LCC draw caricatures of us as weighed down with "ultra-left obsessions and delusions" is surely no reason why we ourselves should insist on acting out the caricatures!

As far as we in Briefing are concerned - yes, we do want the Labour Party to win the next election and boot the Tories out. Even the slightest hint that our interests lay elsewhere would be politically disastrous for the 'hard left', in terms both of the internal Party struggle and our wider appeal.

It would also be politically incorrect on any basis to counterpose the internal struggle to the fight for a Labour government (which is the disastrous trap into which Fergus falls).

Indeed, the basis of our lack of confidence in Kinnock must be our conviction that his leadership is not unconditionally committed to the strength and victory of our movement at all, and is not even unconditionally committed to winning the next election.

To the extent that guaranteeing electoral victory involves taking measures now which would undermine the future stability of capitalism as a

But certainly the LCC, the "Chartist majority" (publishers of the magazine 'Chartist'), Frances Morrell and the whole "soft left" camp will reject the idea of "taking the power" more and more vehemently the more its revolutionary implications are understood.

Let them make the distinction between office and power as we force them to expose their position!

Let Kinnock and his allies justify their insistence on assuming office whilst leaving all real power in the hands of the same old ruling class who govern us under the Tories.

On a local government level this is inevitable - power just isn't to be seized from the base provided by a local borough's labour movement. But on a national level, to take office without power is unforgivable.

Our real internal opponents, therefore, are not comrades like Ken Livingstone and Ted Knight who are ideologically with us on these points. They are the Kinnock camp and the 'soft left'.

A full transitional programme - up to and including the demand for state power - is now the weapon we need most of all in our battle against Kinnock and his allies.

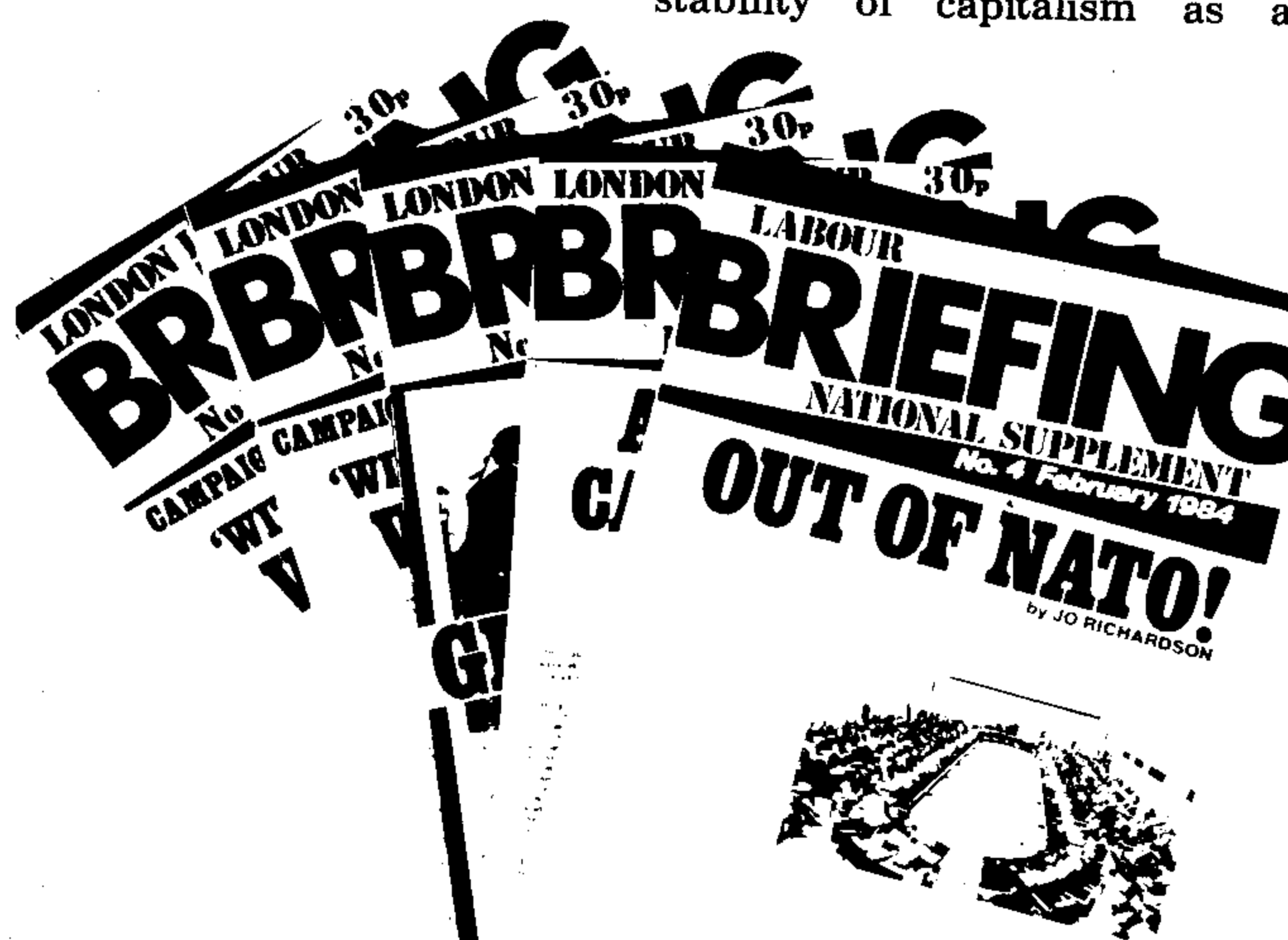
Let's force them to reject our demands, by conceiving these demands themselves in the most 'transitional' and 'popular' possible forms - aiming precisely to win support from the rank and file who at present are with Kinnock.

Three further points. Trotsky did not say that the demand "Break with the bourgeoisie - take the power!" is for use only in situations of dual power. Trotsky himself used it in the Transitional Programme under conditions of international defeat and downturn immeasurably more daunting than those we are in today.

It is true that we are now in a situation in which "the question of power" is by no means immediately posed (we don't need lessons from Socialist Organiser on how to work with the movement, as it is). Even now, however, it is crucial that we learn to force the competing leadership tendencies to differentiate themselves politically within the Labour Party precisely in respect of their ultimate goals, above all in relation to the question of state power.

John Bloxam of Socialist Organiser voted for the slogan 'Labour Take the Power!' at the National Briefing Editorial Board meeting!

Finally, Socialist Organiser accuses us of being half in the Kinnock camp, while the 'soft lefts' see Briefing as ludicrously ultra-left. This makes me think we have probably got it about right.



basis of an anti-capitalist offensive to the extent that objective conditions change and allow such a development to occur.

2. This brings me to the second objection. Fergus charges that the slogan "gears into the prevailing mood of the soft left" under conditions in which "the yearning for some alternative to the Tories" is being used as a "major weapon" by Kinnock and his supporters.

Are we, then, to leave Kinnock and the right wing to usurp the claim to represent such yearnings felt by all sections of the working class who vote Labour, while we on the left get on with our own internal priorities in terms of the exhaustive definition - leaving no ts uncrossed, no is undotted - of our own ideal programmes for socialism?

system - as we insist is already the case - then Kinnock must draw back. We press the demand "take the power!" against the Kinnock leadership and despite it.

I know this from experience - in a public debate with Frances Morrell not so long ago, she made the same accusation against us as Socialist Organiser makes: "A lot of Briefing's readership don't know that what you really mean by us 'taking the power' is that we should seize state power and overthrow the system!"

Well, if people don't know, it's their problem - I think we've made it clear enough whenever opportunity has arisen.

PHOTO: JOHN HARRIS

February	
Monday	6 13 20 27
Tuesday	7 14 21 28
Wednesday	1 8 15 22 29
Thursday	2 9 16 23
Friday	3 10 17 24
Saturday	4 11 18 25
Sunday	5 12 19 26

Socialist Organiser

Saturday February 18/
Sunday 19th: Youth CND
 conference, at Kingsway Prince-
 ceton College, London. Dele-
 gates only.

Saturday February 25. Health
Fightback 84 conference at
Bradford University, 10.30 to
5. Delegates' credentials from
12 Ship Lake House, Calvert
Ave. London E2.

Saturday March 24. National
conference of CLP delegates,
 in Nottingham. Credentials
 for up to 4 delegates per CLP
 from Tony Simpson, 26
 Rockingham Grove, Bingham,
 Notts NG13 8RY.

Saturday April 14. Next Soc-
ialist Organiser delegate meet-
ing, in Nottingham.

LUTHER AND THE BOMB

MARTIN Luther, whose quincentenary fell recently, cannot be divorced from the prevailing socio-economic conditions of the society in which he lived, and nor can the commemoration of his quincentenary be seen in isolation from the contemporary politics of Europe.

The East German state is one of the most prosperous and loyal Soviet satellites and administered on strict Stalinist lines. It is also paradoxically one of the most cosmopolitan countries in Eastern Europe, with a church that is second only to Poland in its degree of independence and toleration of the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED).

No-one in the GDR can escape the fact that they are the inhabitants of the smaller and considerably less attractive half of a divided German nation. The ordinary people of East German feel above and apart from the rest of Eastern Europe as a result of their material prosperity and a close identification with West Germany.

The people of the GDR can receive with no difficulty West German television and radio broadcasts which have fostered a sense of latent nationalism.

By Alex Simpson

This latent nationalism has its manifestation in the development of relationships between the governments of the two countries. The early and mid-seventies saw the ease and normalisation of exchanges and contacts between the two with the "Ostpolitik" of Willy Brandt matched by the increased references to schemes for the eventual reunification of the two Germanies in the speeches of party leader Eric Honecker.

The result of this meeting in March 1978 was the recognition of the church as a legitimate institution within "socialist" East Germany, in return for an undertaking by the Church not to act as a political opposition.

Symptomatic of the new relations between church and state was a total reevaluation of the role of Martin Luther in the eyes of Party historians. Almost overnight Luther was transformed from being a "murderous, nationalistic counter-revolutionary" to being assigned a place amongst the "first progressive and authentic revolutionaries."

The period since 1978 has seen the heating up of the Cold



Martin Luther

War and its effects on the two Germanies. The scenario of West Germany as a nuclear battlefield in the event of super-power confrontation in Europe and the proposal to site Pershing missiles on West German soil has created the seedbed for one of the most active and numerous disarmament campaigns in Europe.

The activities of the West German movement could be followed by all East Germans and the official Party media gave fulsome coverage to the protests of the growing peace movement in the West. The one-sided coverage of the Western peace movement contrasted with the Party's increasing militarisation of East German society.

The example of the peace movements in the West and the status of the Lutheran church as the one institution outside party control provided the opportunity for young people to initiate their own autonomous peace organisation.

An unofficial demonstration of 5,000 young people took place in Dresden in February 1982. It arose in part from an annual church commemoration of the bombing and devastation suffered by the city during World War Two.

A demonstration of similar size occurred in Potsdam in June 1982. These unofficial actions announced to the world the inauguration of the autonomous peace movement taking the name from an Old Testament pronouncement "Swords into Ploughshares".

The significance of this political development for both the campaign against nuclear weapons in Europe and change within East German society has been best expressed by Rudolf Bahro.

"For the first time since partition . . . we have on both sides of the wall opposition movements in which the motivations and goals are the same . . . They regard both establishments as two sides of the same coin . . . one antagonistic system which has to be overcome in its totality."

The autonomous peace movement has survived nearly two years despite state persecution and the refusal of the church to give it proper endorsement so as not to harm its cosy relationship with the Party, established in 1978.

Both the church and the party this year are holding a whole series of commemorative events including festivals and rallies to celebrate the Luther quincentenary. Apparently there has been considerable attendance by supporters of the Swords into Ploughshares which augurs well for the future.

We would do well to remember as the fight against foreign-imposed Pershing and cruise missiles gathers apace in Britain and West Germany our courageous comrades in East Germany.

If we think the fight against nuclear weapons systems placed here by the United States is tough, remember how much harder will be the fight by those in the GDR, if the Soviet Union carries out its threat to site medium-range weapons on East German soil as a response to the West's escalation of the arms race.

Ulster on TV

I DON'T know what travel does for your mind these days, but television sometimes broadens mine.

After watching Gus Macdonald's World in Action special on the Protestants of Ulster (Thursday 9th), I felt more sympathy for those Socialist Organiser supporters who think we shouldn't be so 'soft' on the Northern Ireland Protestants than I've ever felt when they've raised a hue and cry in the pages of SO.

The programme would also have broadened the minds of those on the Left who think that the Protestants can be ignored.

Macdonald said he would let the much misunderstood Northern Ireland Protestants speak for themselves. And that's what he did.

His people ranged from Lord Brookeborough, son of a long-serving Northern Ireland prime minister of the same name, to Harry Murray, Harland and Wolff shipyard shop steward and Loyalist militant.

Brookeborough spoke proudly of his ancestors who were planters in Ulster four centuries ago. 'For us Irish history begins at the plantation', he said.

Northern Ireland, he said, was part of Britain's secular liberal democratic society, and the 26 Counties was dominated by the Catholic Church.

People there accepted the centrality of that Church in the life of society and in the state. Catholic doctrine had shaped

By Frank Higgins

southern legislation on divorce, abortion and so on.

Murray, an organiser of the 1974 Orange general strike, said much the same thing, but was more fierce in condemning the IRA and INLA.

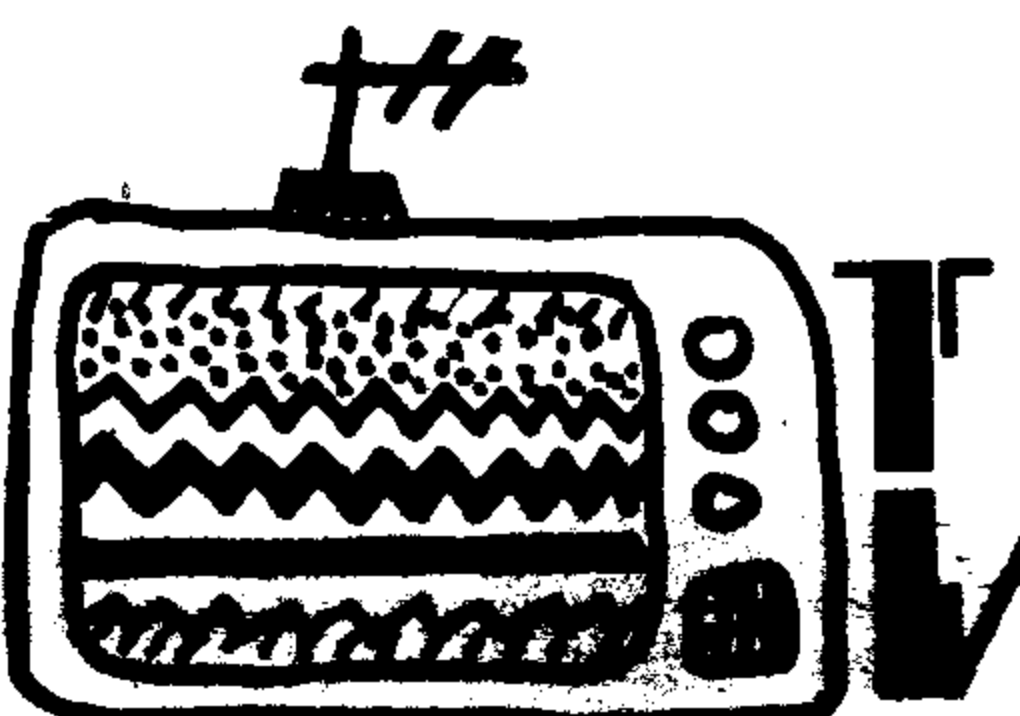
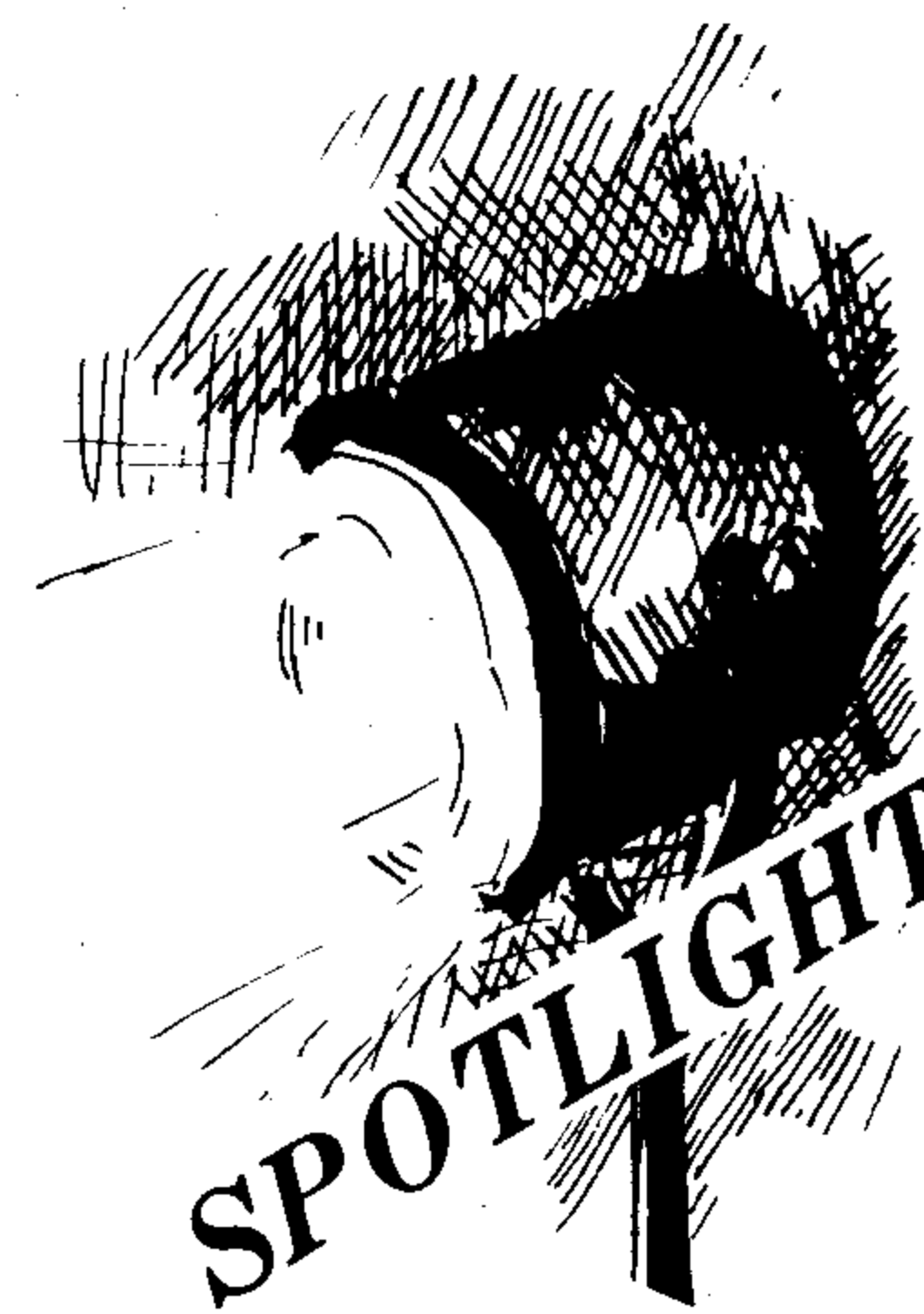
A born-again Paisleyite Christian wanted to bring back hanging; it was 'right for any country', he said, because it was 'scripturally based'.

All of this was valuable as a portrait of Ireland's minority community. In a word, what they said was that they are 'British' and won't in any circumstances agree to incorporation in a united Ireland because it would be Catholic-dominated.

They saw the Catholics in Northern Ireland as a fifth column supporting the claim of a foreign state to take over their country. Power-sharing in Northern Ireland was a first instalment of a Southern and Catholic takeover.

Macdonald chose to 'let them speak for themselves' by just passively listening to them. It would have been a better portrait — sharper and clearer — if he had actively probed and questioned.

As it was, Macdonald, a one-time member of the International Socialists (now SWP), came across as sharing their basic attitudes, talking of such strange things as 'the Irish border'.



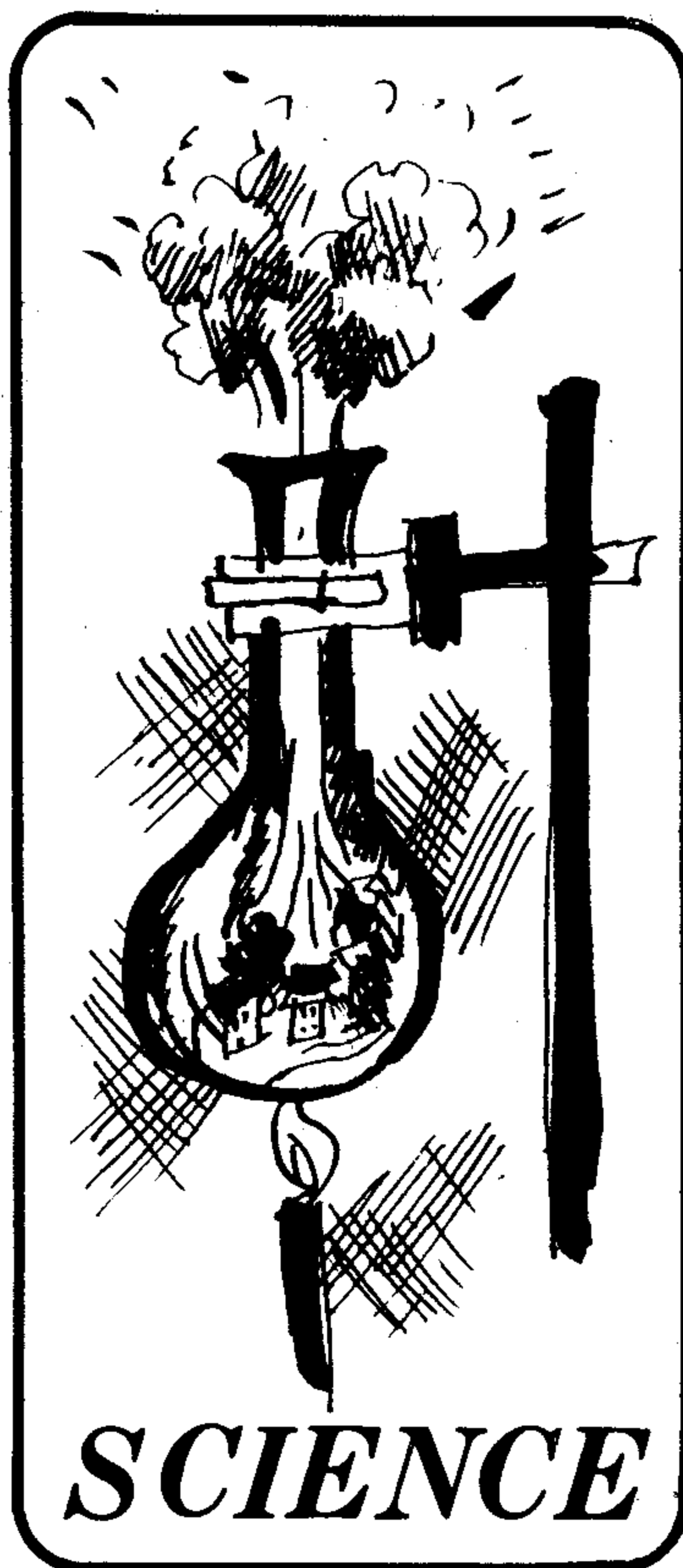
His socialism was confined to asking 'the question that left-wingers put' — wasn't it all a matter of a ruling class conspiracy to divide the workers and rule them?

This was to set up a particularly stupid Aunt Sally and invite them, one after the other, to knock it down.

20/20 Vision on Saturday was a discussion between John Hume of the SDLP, Unionist Harold McClusker, Clare Short MP, and a Tory.

Hume is touting for the new SDLP and southern bourgeois proposal of joint British and Irish sovereignty in the Six Counties. McClusker, a 'left wing' Unionist on social questions, didn't budge an inch.

Breathing Domestos



By Les Hearn

LONDON hosts one of the world's foremost centres for monitoring toxic chemicals in the environment of cities.

Amongst other things, it pioneered the use of limits for toxic materials in building land and it developed the Hazchem code for the transport of hazardous substances.

It provides a 24-hour emergency service to give advice on dealing with major accidents. Its largest case so far involved the evacuation of 6,000 people in Barking after two tonnes of sodium chlorate exploded in a warehouse fire.

It is the scientific services branch of the GLC and if the GLC is abolished, it is quite likely to be closed. It would take an unprecedented level of agreement amongst the 32 boroughs of London for them to jointly fund it, and few could afford to purchase the expensive equipment to set up their own scientific branches.

The alternative would be to absorb it into the new Fire Authority, but this will quite likely lack the cash to run it, particularly as the government says the GLC is spending 20% too much on the Fire Brigade at the moment.

So we will be less safe as well as poorer if the Tories abolish the GLC.

ACID rain in Northern Europe and Canada has been known about for some time, but now the Californians have been surprised to find that the "sunshine state" also suffers from it. Indeed, it may be worse than in other places, especially since California seems to be prone to acid fog as well.

The acid pours out of local industry and cars, of which there are a vast number. Acid gases dissolve in rain or fog to make nitric and sulphuric acids. In addition, particles of acidic dust and soot fall onto buildings, cars, crops, etc., and are then converted into acids by moisture while they are in the right place to do maximum damage.

This causes corrosion of buildings and vehicles, while crops are damaged. Losses have reached 20% in the agricultural heartland of Southern California.

Acid fogs seem worse for human health. What happens is the haze of fumes and smoke from car exhausts produced by day in places like Los Angeles acts as a nucleus for the formation of fog at night.

This prevents the pollution from dispersing at night and so it is still there next day, when the fog evaporates.

Acid fog can be up to 100 times as acid as acid rains and while the most acid rain is as strong as vinegar (Pasadena), the worst acid fog (Corona del Mar) was as strong as Domestos!

Acid fog seems to be particularly bad for people's lungs, and may explain the high death toll in the Great London Smog of 1952. Californian researchers think that it may have been more acid than the worst Californian fog!

California is starting a massive study of the environmental effects of acid rain and fog but necessary though this is, what is more urgent is action against the causes which are already known to be industry and traffic. But, of course, tackling these would harm the profits of those pillars of US capitalism, the car and oil industries.

(All information from New Scientist).

MORMONS don't smoke, drink coffee or alcohol, and many don't eat meat, and yet the Mormons of Utah suffer an unusually high rate of cancer. ("Serves 'em right" I imagine some of the smoking, boozing, coffee-drinking carnivores who read this column saying).

The reason seems to lie in the neighbouring state of Nevada, where a massive series of atmospheric A-bomb tests was carried out in the 1950s.

If this carries on, the US government will have killed more of its "own" people than its "enemies".



OUR GREAT ENGLISH POETS (PART OF OUR GREAT HERITAGE)

Our Great English poets
Spew out Sensitivity
From tortured souls.
Love to hear the melancholy
Sound of their innermost voice.

Lack of insight
Hidden by walls of metaphor
And obscure references.
Their minds like antique shops,
They sell their old fashioned beliefs —
All rather quaint.

Our Great English poets
Have good friends among the poetry elite
Who praise their work to the skies
And put them on pedestals
For a private display.

By Gary Scott

Our Greatest English poets
Win huge cash prizes
May win a Queen's Medal —
For irrelevance.
Their work gives students of Literature
Something to nibble.

But who am I to criticise?
I feel I am taking liberties.
Perhaps I am being unkind.

One must never be too negative in one's criticism.
One must not be too hard on these psycho-sensitive
These barely living Icons creatures
These little pieces of England.
One must not wreck their illusions
Or knock down their sand castles.

They may slash their wrists
Write their epitaphs in blood —
Monuments to their literary genius.

Cowley Strike

By Bill Peters

THE 250 trim shop workers at BL's Cowley Assembly Plant voted to continue their two week old strike at a mass meeting on the morning of the 15th.

The strike has closed down two production lines - the Rover and the Acclaim - and has laid off 1100 other workers.

It has been provoked by the imminent ending of Acclaim production in Cowley which is being switched to Longbridge and programme reductions on both the Rover and the Maestro. Workers made surplus are to be switched to the new LM11 model, which is a derivative of the Maestro.

Management insisted on total control of the move, with no seniority applying. This has been the situation in most of the plant for some time, but not in the trim shop where the seniority agreement has been largely maintained.

The breaking down of seniority agreements has been one of the major achievements of management in the recent period. Without the protection of such agreements, job allocation can be used to break up trade union organisation, isolate shop stewards, prevent militants from becoming stewards and victimise militants by putting them on the worst jobs.

The trim workers demand for seniority is therefore a major challenge to management strategy and potentially a major fight-back against management attacks.

Management did shift their ground a bit in the course of the strike but it amounts to no more than vague promises which they refuse even to put in writing.

Scots NUM leaders block action

ONCE again the Scottish area leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers has blocked action against the closure of Polmaise colliery.

At an area NUM delegate meeting on Monday 13th, the area executive, led by Communist Party members Mick McGahey and George Bolton, proposed a one-day strike on the 20th.

The feeling from the floor was too strong for that, and the conference decided to reconvene on the 20th to discuss all-out action. But immediate action had been prevented.

The February 13 conference was itself a product of earlier moves by the area leadership to delay the issue.

Polmaise miners present at the conference were furious, and later stormed a press conference being held by McGahey.

Meanwhile the national overtime ban grinds on. 21,000 miners were laid off on Monday 13th because of weekend maintenance work not being done, more than on any previous Monday.

But moves towards strike action are obviously long overdue.



Pit jobs menaced

A warning that up to 50% of NUM pit maintenance workers could lose their jobs over the next few years due to the pit closure programme and the introduction of new computerised monitoring equipment was given by Arthur Scargill last weekend.

The NUM propose a technology agreement to protect jobs and provide new training, but the National Coal Board has been pushing maintenance craftworkers into other pit jobs or to accept redundancy, while skilled work under the new system is privatised.

This comes on top of renewed threats by the NCB to axe further collieries in Scotland - Polmaise, near Stirling and Bogside, Fife - and speculation that two out of the three Kent pits are to be closed following a refusal by area management to meet with the NUM to discuss a report last Friday (February 10).

Union derecognised

A SMALL but growing trend is underway for employers to derecognise unions.

Last week the food company Nabisco withdrew union recognition from its sales staff, members of ASTMS.

The Financial Times reported: "The decision follows similar moves by ICI, Birds Eye, Tadworth Court Hospital and National Mutual."

So far these moves by private employers have involved relatively small and weakly-organised groups of workers - nothing on the scale of the Government's move at GCHQ.

If the Tories get away with it at GCHQ, however, many private employers will clearly be quick to seize on the precedent.

Print claim

A 10% pay rise and a move to a 35-hour week for members in the general printing industry was submitted as a claim on Friday (February 10) by the National Graphical Association and SOGAT '82 to the British Printing Industries Federation.

A further meeting is expected to take place this Friday.

Bakers' ballot

A ballot on industrial action amongst the 8,000 workers employed by Allied Bakeries (owned by Associated British Foods), Britain's biggest bakers, was given the go-ahead on Friday February 10 by the Executive of the Bakers' Union, BAFW.

Due to take place in a week's time, the ballot has been prompted by the five-week strike by 400 union members at Allied's Thomas Scott bakery in Liverpool over compulsory redundancies and management insistence on a no-strike agreement.

Election complaint

JOHN Walsh, the defeated right wing candidate for general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers, has claimed that there were irregularities in the ballot.

He says he is considering High Court action.

His complaints are that unused ballot papers were not counted and that the poll closed early at some pits.

The election was counted by the Electoral Reform Society, and won by the left wing candidate Peter Heathfield, by a narrow margin.

Money goes west



FACTS&FIGURES

By Martin Thomas

MORE on international capital flows this week, to follow up last week's item on the US becoming a net importer of capital.

This development is a combination of short-term and of long-term trends.

The short-term trend is a huge flow of capital into the US through bank transactions and stock market operations.

Foreign purchases of US government and company securities have far exceeded US purchases of foreign securities for several years. The purchasers are mostly from the Middle East and Europe. According to Business Week magazine (February 13):

"In a dramatic reversal of traditional capital flows, foreign money is flooding into the US, and a good portion of it is helping to finance the burgeoning US budget deficit. Bankers Trust Co. estimates that this year foreigners will double their purchases of US government securities to \$25 billion."

Causes here are the suitability of the US as a safe place to invest in, especially for Middle East oil millionaires; and, more short-term, the high level of the dollar, of US interest rates, and of the US stock market.

US banks have been building up huge assets abroad for many years. In the 1970s they sucked in enormous funds from the oil-exporting states, and pumped out even more in loans. Now the inflow from the oil-exporting states is drying up; and, with the international debt squeeze, the outflow to industrialising Third World states is dwindling even faster.

In the second and third quarters of 1983, the US became a net importer of bank-loan capital to the tune of \$4.6 billion in quarter 2.

But the biggest element in the short-term inflow is recorded in the US official Federal Reserve Bulletin as "statistical discrepancy". This uncharted inflow was \$41 billion in 1982! The Federal Reserve reckons this may represent foreign capitalists building up assets with non-bank financial enterprises in the US.

Direct investment

Longer-term is the shift in the pattern of direct investment ownership of foreign enter-

prises, rather than of securities or bank-loan debts).

In the '50s and '60s, the US absolutely dominated world foreign direct investment, accounting for some 65% of the outflow in 1960-62.

Relatively little foreign direct investment went into the US in those years, however: it took in only about 8% of the world total flow.

This pattern began to change seriously in the late '60s and early '70s. As the absolute dominance of the US within world capitalism declined in the face of West European and Japanese competition, the US's share of the world total outflow declined to about 50% by 1977-9, and its share of the inflow increased to nearly 30%.

Then after 1979 direct investment started pouring in, mainly through West European take-overs of US companies. \$14 billion in 1980, \$22 billion in 1981, \$10 billion in 1982, \$3.5 billion in the first half of 1983. Since 1981 the inflow has far exceeded the outflow.

Foreign investment from the US is still about 40% of the world total stock; but foreign investment into the US is now perhaps 20% of the world total stock.

Dollar crash

What does it all mean?

Longer-term, these developments are part of the relative decline of US capital from its former unchallenged supremacy. It is still number one: but it faces increasingly sharp competition from numbers two and three, EEC and Japanese capital.

The growing international trade 'cold wars' are part of this same trend.

The old Third-Worldist way of seeing the world, as 'imperialism' (a single blob) versus 'the masses' (another homogeneous bloc) was always un-Marxist. It had some apparent plausibility when the US was all-dominant. Today everyday reality contradicts it more and more glaringly.

The rise of Third World states as capital exporters is another development contradicting that simple view; more on that next week.

Shorter-term, the massive, lurching surges of capital across the world indicate that the world capitalist system is becoming more and more unstable.

A sudden reversal of the capital flow into the US - which is quite possible: after all, the authorities don't even know how most of that inflow is coming in! - could send the value of the dollar spiralling downwards.

And the dollar is still the basic currency of international trade, at the same time as it is the main currency of international speculation. If the dollar goes, the world trading system goes.

Mercury trains cancelled

THE four week period "granted" by the British Rail Board to the NUR for discussion of the running of Mercury Communications fibre optic cables is over (even though they tried to run trains every weekend throughout the period).

They had planned to run two trains; on the Saturday night (4 February) from Rotherham to Sheffield, and on Sunday night from Chesterfield to Sheffield, and had plenty of management on hand to try and make sure they ran.

However, after sending two guards home on the Saturday night, and threatening to send a signaller home if he did not signal the engine out when he

was ready, they gave up early Sunday morning.

A few hours later they cancelled the Sunday night train and likewise on Tuesday. A further train was meant to run from Cudworth (just north of Barnsley) to Rotherham on Wednesday morning.

Previously five signal and telecommunications staff (S&T) had refused to work on the train doing any necessary disconnections.

Meanwhile the BRB have met the NUR and conceded some of the demands, including that S&T staff should fault and maintain the cable; that a guarantee should be given that no redundancies should arise out of its

use and that S&T staff do the weekend installation rather than contractors.

It is only the last one of these that has not been conceded by the BRB.

The NUR has accepted the Appeal Court ruling on the POEU battle against Mercury and so is making no opposition to Mercury on the grounds of privatisation.

Latest news is that the disciplinary charges against the two guards sent home for refusing to work the trains, have now been dropped.

The Board is again meeting the NUR to discuss the matter on Wednesday 15 February while already planning to again run a train for Mercury on 19 February.

ISLINGTON

Council vs unions

By Nik Barstow

ISLINGTON Council's leaders seem set on overturning one of the main benefits for council workers that the 'left-wing' council has conceded.

In the process they will overturn Labour's manifesto, threaten key council policies and disrupt their own plans for a joint campaign with the unions against rate-capping.

Six months ago the Council introduced a 'flat rate' payment system for manual workers in their Building Works Department. All craft and manual workers are now paid a flat rate wage - consistent from week to week - and the previous bonus scheme was scrapped.

This scheme went part-way to fulfilling Islington Labour's manifesto commitment to extend staff conditions to manual workers in the department.

Even then the decision was reluctant - it took a strike and intensive lobbying by trade unions to get the scheme on a temporary basis.

Now the Chair of the Council's Personnel Committee has virtually ruled out keeping the scheme on, and the Labour Group's leaders seen to agree.

Their reasons have nothing to do with providing a decent repairs service for tenants - they are about trying to screw out more work for less money.

The leading councillors claim that the flat-rate scheme is losing thousands of pounds per week compared with the bonus scheme.

But their own figures disguise a lot: they are based on 'bonus figures' of tried work for jobs - not on the actual service delivered and they ignore the fact that the council is part-way through a complete reorganisation of its department to locally-based repair teams.

All the evidence shows that the local teams have greatly improved maintenance services - cutting the waiting time for jobs by weeks, or even months. But these 'decentralisation' plans will fall if the council reintroduces the bonus scheme.

The trade unions have made no commitment to the decentralisation, other than the one implied by the flat-rate scheme. If the scheme goes, so will decentralisation. That is the logic of the Council's own way of treating council workers - but the Chair of Personnel describes it as a 'union threat' that will lead to a dispute.

All this comes at a time when Islington Labour Councillors have agreed on a joint campaign of meetings, in every council department, against rate-capping. That will fail too if leading councillors are dead-set on provoking a dispute.

Many Labour Party members, and councillors, are trying to reverse this lunatic stand by the leading councillors. A joint meeting of the Party and Labour Group at the end of February has a number of motions to it to keep the flat rate scheme.

The Islington Council Workers Labour Party Branch has made an appeal to councillors and Party members to support keeping the scheme - "to stop the Council plunging itself into an all-out confrontation with its workers in the Building Works Department".

If it doesn't Islington will join the long list of left wing councils who have turned on the workers and abandoned any pretence of fighting the real enemy - the Tory government and its plans to slash local authority spending.

Glasgow

PUBLIC transport in Glasgow ground to a halt last Monday, 13 February, as bus, rail and underground workers took strike action against the threat of garage closures, job losses, and cuts in services.

NUR members organised a 24-hour strike against the introduction of driver-only trains and understaffed stations, which would cause the axing of 500 jobs in the West of Scotland.

The strike was unofficial, having been called by the local NUR branches themselves and had not been endorsed by the union's national executive committee.

The NUR general secretary, Jimmy Knapp, the left-winger who replaced Sid Weighell, called for NUR members not to support the strike and instead to trust the fate of their jobs to the forthcoming talks between the Executive and British Rail.

Over 75% of NUR members, in the West of Scotland, however, backed the strike.

Bus and underground workers in Glasgow held an official two-hour stoppage the same day against plans by Labour controlled Strathclyde Regional Council to shut three bus garages in Glasgow and increase both ordinary fares and concessionary fares for pensioners.

The convenor of Ibrox garage - one of the three threatened with closure - told Socialist Organiser:

"Workers at Ibrox have been promised transfers to other garages in Glasgow, but that would mean extra travelling costs for us. We have asked for talks with the council on how money could be saved but they have refused to even meet us. This shows that their real aim is to run down the bus service itself."

Scott Lithgow shipyard worker speaks out on the fight to save jobs

Rowntree

CRAFT unions at Rowntrees in York have now been on strike for a week over the loss of around 200 maintenance jobs. Management forestalled the dispute before Christmas by announcing the losses would be achieved through voluntary redundancy. However only 130 takers were found for the scheme so strike action is being taken to stop enforced redundancies.

The AUEW has now made the strike official and over 800 workers have already been laid off as the lines break down with no-one to fix them.

The strikers are still hopeful of winning the dispute, although members of the GMBATU on the production lines are still working.

Pickets believed that the strike would be won within a handful of days if they came out in support.

Messages of support and donations to: J. Ramsden, AUEW, Matmer House, Hull Road, York.

Why to go on Feb 25

Sheffield CoHSE activist Alex Brady says why he is going to the Health Fightback conference

LIKE any conference, the Health Fightback '84 Conference is a great opportunity to establish contact with other workers who are going through the same experiences, especially in the NHS, where the way workers are scattered across the country makes it difficult to maintain a common approach to our problems. We clearly can't depend on our trade union leaders to keep us moving together.

Rank and file activity demands personal direct contact and this sort of experience is ideal for making those links.

Of course, if that was all there was to it, we could achieve the same effect with a good social get-together. But just as important is the exchange of ideas and experience. Of particular note in the Health Fightback '84 conference is the workshop on creeping cuts. All health workers will be aware of unfilled vacancies, ward closures, rationalisation of services. If we can come away with some strategy to fight this, the conference will have more than justified itself.

Something else that isn't sufficiently stressed is the aspect of morale. As we all beaver away in our separate hospitals, planning, agitating and pushing the fightback, it is very easy to get in a state of mind that everything depends on our - obviously insufficient - efforts.

When this makes us downhearted we need to meet others who are doing the same work. If you've ever been to this kind of conference, you'll know what an emotional buzz you can get and how it can support you in your daily grind. It isn't something to be underrated, it is essential to our work and it is not something you can get from a distance.

I think a good side effect of the conference will be the messages it sends out. By that I mean we'll be indicating to our opponents - the health authorities and the government - and to the labour movement - especially the 'ward-floor' workers - that we're still going strong, we're organised and we're looking for the future of the struggle.

Don't underestimate the effect of that. Getting our presence at the front of people's minds is an important psychological tactic. In particular, if we can show our fellow workers that they're not on their own, the effect of the fight on their consciousness will be redoubled.

'Ranks must take over'

THE much-publicised Inverclyde District Council public meeting against the closure of Scott Lithgow took place on Friday 3 February. But it turned out to be only an opportunity for politicians to either pat each other on the back or snipe at each other. Labour, Tory, SDP-Liberal Alliance, the Scottish Nationalist Party - all were on the platform. All the main speakers turned up, with the exception of Alex Ferry, general secretary of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, whose train had been derailed. Justice seems to have been done, as the same Mr. Ferry has been derailing the workers for years.

As regards the turnout, the meeting was a success. The hall was packed out, and many were excluded due to lack of space.

A considerable number of those inside the hall were ex-shop stewards and ex-workers from Scott Lithgow who had already taken voluntary redundancy.

But in every other way, the meeting was a failure. For example, not one lay speaker was allowed to go to the microphone and speak on behalf of the shopfloor workers.

The only speaker who could relate to the workers in any way was Duncan McNeil, convenor at Scott Lithgow. But he only gave his usual well-practiced speech about the yards belonging to the Scottish people, who owned them as they were a nationalised industry.

Someone should inform Mr. McNeil that you don't own anything you don't control, and the people of Scotland certainly don't control Scott Lithgow.

Most of the main speakers were given a polite round of applause, except the two Tory MPs who spoke, Michael Hirst and Anna McCurley. They were continually booed and whistled during their speeches. The

By Joe O'Rourke
(Scott Lithgow)

theme of their contribution was that the Tory Secretary of State for Scotland, George Younger, had been unfairly pilloried and that only a private company could save the day at Scott Lithgow.

McCurley was followed by the local Labour MP, Norman Godman. Fireworks might have been expected from him. In fact, he was as effective as an ashtray on a motorbike.

It must by now be clear to everyone that the only way to save the yards is for the rank and file workers of all yards threatened by redundancy and closure to take the initiative and start occupations immediately.

We cannot look to the union leaderships for help. They have already shown their true colours. Even after the latest attacks by Graham Day and his henchmen, the Shipbuilding Negotiating Committee saw fit to agree to the new National 'Survival' Plan, which had already been turned down by the workforce.

Nor can we look to the shop stewards committee at Scott



Lithgow either. Its members have a history of compromise and capitulation. All they seem to want to do is tour the country and get their pictures taken. Duncan McNeil has played to more audiences than Frank Sinatra and said less than Harpo Marx.

And we cannot look to the politicians, because Thatcher has too big a majority for them to put any pressure on her at all.

So it is left to us, the grass-roots militants, to start the fight. Too much time has been lost already. The days of being responsible people are over - just look at Henry Robb in Leith. They voted against a national strike thinking that it would save them. No chance.

This fight should have been started a long time ago.

As far back as September 1982 a secret document was leaked. It was written by members of Strathclyde University in conjunction with Scott Lithgow management and contained projected contract-finishing dates, projected redundancy numbers/dates, and projected closing date.

A local free-lance journalist offered a copy of the document to Duncan McNeil, but the offer was turned down. McNeil preferred to sit around and wait for something to happen rather than make something happen. He has been running and hiding from the fight ever since.

So the rank and file workers must take over now. We must throw out the management, we must elect occupation committees and run the yards ourselves. And one of the first things to be done is to tear down the obscene sign saying Scott Lithgow and erect one saying Lower Clyde Shipbuilders and Oilrig Builders.

Then we must broaden out the fight. We must get the railway workers, the steel workers, the miners, hospital and transport workers, dockers - in fact, all workers must stand together and rid this country once and for all of Thatcher.

Thatcher is doing to jobs what Hitler did to the Jews. And now the time has come for her to pay for her crimes.



SO badges 25p each, or £2 for ten.

No fight from leaders

By Stan Crooke

WITH every day that passes in Scott Lithgow's fight for survival as a nationalised oil rig construction yard the incapacity of the trade union leadership, locally and nationally, to initiate the fight needed to save it becomes that much clearer.

The Clydeside Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) has followed up its recent rally of 1,000 in Glasgow with mass production of a leaflet.

The leaflet warns that "If George Younger (Tory secretary

of state for Scotland) refuses to intervene, Scotland's reputation in the offshore industry could be seriously damaged". This would mean that "the Koreans, Norwegians, Japanese and others would be delighted."

So, the leaflet asks, like as if it was World War Two all over again, "Whose side are you on?" and goes on to pledge that the Scott Lithgow workers, if their future is assured "will accept flexibility and three-shift working. Compare this positive attitude with the negative stance of George Younger."

The only action which the leaflet calls for is to "write now to your MP urging government action to save the yard."

The Clydeside CSEU is also considering calling a demonstration. But no date has yet been fixed. Presumably it wants to wait until the whole affair is over before doing anything so adventurous as call a demonstration.

The well-attended mass meeting on February 10 rejected a call for immediate occupation of Scott Lithgow convenor Duncan McNeil opposed occupation and announced those speaking in favour of it as people whose goal was to disrupt the meeting and who would oppose whatever was proposed from the platform.

Then he pledged occupation if a takeover deal was done without the union's approval. But how can such a pledge be taken seriously? McNeil used to vote against privatisation. But now that privatisation is on the cards, he only quibbles about the terms of privatisation.

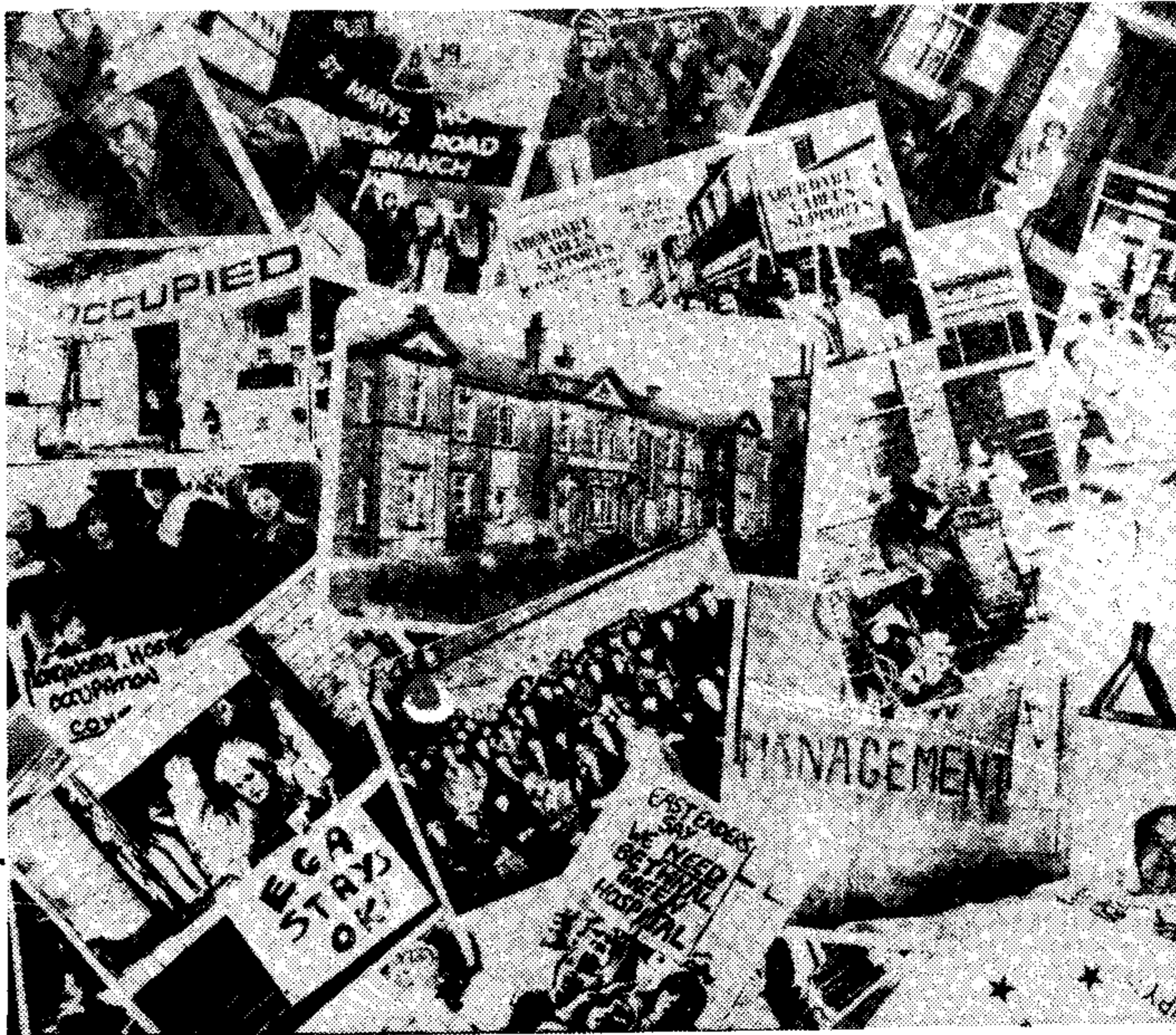
But the meeting did agree to a ban on overtime. That overtime was still being worked at this stage in the dispute is itself an indictment of McNeil's record as convenor. McNeil attempted to prevent the meeting discussing the resolution calling for an overtime ban. It was not relevant to the purpose of the meeting, he said!

The purpose of the meeting for McNeil and his backers on the shop stewards committee was two-fold: demand the right to be consulted on the takeover talks, and declare acceptance of the so-called "survival plan".

McNeil won on both points. By accepting British Shipbuilders' survival plan, McNeil succeeded only in isolating the yard's workforce from workers elsewhere prepared to put up a fight against the survival plan.

The best chance of saving the yards now is that the terms of the privatisation will turn out to be so unacceptable that it becomes impossible to reopen the questions of the survival plan and privatisation and ditch them along with McNeil and the other shop stewards who travel the same path as him.

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.

Socialist ORGANISER

GCHQ: no deal!

So far only one in four union members at Government Communication Headquarters have agreed to exchange their union card for the Tories' £1000.

In some vital specialist sections, even fewer have agreed.

As we go to press, it looks like the Tories may go for a compromise — but a 'compromise' that will give them all they really want!

A Parliamentary Select Committee is recommending that a 'no disruption' agreement be imposed instead of a ban on union membership. In other words, the GCHQ workers should be told: you can have unions — as long as they don't do anything!

And the union leaders seem set to accept this.

CPSA general secretary Alistair Graham, in a union circular, writes: "We are not about agreement a crude 'no strike' clause for all GCHQ staff which can be used as a precedent for the rest of the public sector. We have offered a 'no disruption' clause..."

The civil service unions have already negotiated a 'no disruption' deal at the submarine dockyards in Faslane and Rosyth. And despite all the fine distinctions, it means no industrial action!

The CPSA action committee at GCHQ is planning 'passive resistance' through 'leafletting, mass meetings, short stoppages and picketing', and asking for motions to the CPSA executive calling for a one-day national stoppage.

But in a letter sent to a DHSS official replying to the demand that the day of action on February 28 be made a one-day strike, Alistair Graham, general secretary of the CPSA, wrote:

"I do not believe that calling a one-day strike for that day would be very helpful. It would allow Mrs Thatcher to go out on the attack and demonstrate that the Civil Service trade unions were once again taking industrial action rather than looking after their wider responsibilities."

Every letter and circular that arrives from union headquarters on members desks contains outrageous examples of the leadership's unwillingness to lead the type of fight that can actually win this dispute.

The CPSA Broad Left has now put out a leaflet calling for the 28th to be made a one-day strike. All branches must take up the call and make the 28th a day of massive industrial action against the ban on trade unions — or an alternative ban on trade union action.

Messages of support and donations to the Cheltenham strikers should be sent to: GCHQ Campaign, 4, Royal Crescent, Cheltenham, Glos.



The civil service unions have called a day of action on February 28 and a lobby of Parliament on February 28. CPSA says that February 28 is not a strike, but has authorised branches to take industrial action. The CPSA Broad Left is pressing for a one-day strike.

Lebanon tears apart

US, British and Italian troops are to withdraw from Lebanon. The Lebanese government has resigned. It looks like the Lebanese army has effectively disintegrated and collapsed.

Yet Lebanon's Maronite President, Amin Gemayel, has said that he does not intend to resign.

All the interventionist powers — the US, Israel, Syria — and the reactionary Arab regimes are eager to support him in an attempt to rescue and slightly restructure the Lebanese state.

But it is unlikely that they will be able to carve out a basis for agreement. The US and the Lebanese

Phalange are willing to see changes in the structure of the Lebanese state — the removal of religious information from people's identity cards, and a 50/50 balance between Muslims and Christians in parliament rather than the present six-five balance in the Christians' favour.

But they are not prepared to give up the basic sectarian framework of the Lebanese state. Gemayel himself said:

"The important thing is not the person but the institutions".

The Syrians will accept Gemayel as long as they keep their influence in Northern Lebanon. The Israelis, on the other hand, have stated quite bluntly that they will keep their forces in southern Lebanon.

More and more it becomes clear that Lebanon is now effectively partitioned.

Amidst the cynical diplomatic bargaining, Lebanese reality is summed up in the following statistic. The Lebanese government spent \$2.3 million on aid to West Beirut last year, and \$48 million on shelling it!

Cops raid left journalist

LAST Saturday, nearly a dozen Special Branch officers searched the house of Duncan Campbell, a journalist for the New Statesman.

Campbell is well known for his investigation into various aspects of the security state. Because of an article which exposed the surveillance and spying activities of GCHQ he was one of the defendants in the famous ABC Official Secrets trial in 1978.

The Police seized the opportunity to search Campbell's

house after a bicycle accident led to him being admitted to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London.

They held his personal possessions for 48 hours, including keys, a contacts book and files, and then applied for a search warrant under the Official Secrets Act.

After ferreting through most of Campbell's possessions — including Christmas cards — the Special Branch disappeared with a set of documents including one which detailed instructions to Her Majesty's Forces on defaecating in the

Arctic Circle. Campbell had used it for an article in the New Statesman to show just how absurd and paranoid the State's official classification categories are.

Special Branch intend to use the material they have seized as the basis for a report on Campbell's activities to be sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions, which they hope will lead to his prosecution.

Incidents like this show that our rulers are not prepared to put up with even the most minimal investigations of their security state system.

— Scott Lithgow —

Free hand-out for the Tories' friends

THE Tories' financial wheeling and dealing as they manoeuvre to privatise the Scott Lithgow shipyards on the Lower Clyde is slotting more and more into line with the various other dubious business deals currently creating an atmosphere of financial scandal around the government.

On 3 February a delegation from the Trafalgar House conglomerate visited the shipyards. They declared a readiness to take over the yards if the Britoil contract was restored and if the workforce was cut to 1,500. They claimed that no other company was interested in taking over Scott Lithgow.

Four days later, Trafalgar House and British Shipbuilders representatives met for discussions in London. The following day an outline agreement for the acquisition of the shipyards by Trafalgar House was announced.

The transfer of ownership would take place not later than the last day of February. Trafalgar House planned to cut 2,000 jobs straight away, and another 750 by late summer.

How much, if anything at all, was being paid for Scott Lithgow [current book value: £18 millions] remained unclear: initial reports said nothing, whilst the British Shipbuilders chairperson claimed that "it was not a free transfer, money will be passing to us in due course," without mentioning a figure.

Trafalgar House would also benefit from the government writing off Scott Lithgow's debts (£168 million), making the redundancy payments (£15 million) and providing further capital investments for the yard.

This agreement with Trafalgar House was reached before other bodies with an interest in taking over the yards [the British subsidiary of Bechtel and a consortium involving Howard Doris and Gotaverken Arendal] had had a chance to make an offer.

Moreover, it was British Shipbuilders who had approached Trafalgar House to suggest a take-over of the yard, not vice versa, and British Shipbuilders did not admit Bechtel's interest until after it had already been reported in the media.

And from the point of view of 'straight' capitalist management and profitability, a Bechtel take-over makes more sense than one by Trafalgar House. The former is far more experienced in oil-rig construction than the latter, for example, and Trafalgar House has also admitted that it would have to buy in a new management team to complete the Britoil contract.

In addition, Trafalgar House hopes to win a contract from Sun Oil for an oil rig if it gets hold of Scott Lithgow. But the advisers for the Sun Oil rig are Bechtel.

None of this is to say that workers should take sides in the wrangling over which group of capitalists should get their money-grubbing hands on Scott Lithgow. The workforce needs to oppose privatisation itself, not privatisation to a particular company.

What it does show however is the extent to which the government must have been active in attempting to hand Scott Lithgow over on a plate to Trafalgar House.

By Stan Crooke

This point is underlined by the fact that, faced with uproar at the announcement of the initial agreement, Britoil [effectively controlled by the government, since it owns 48% of it] suddenly announced an extension of its deadline for pulling out of the yards, thereby allowing other firms apart from Trafalgar House to make a bid for the yards.

In other words, the fate of thousands of jobs and the livelihood of thousands of families dependent upon them was being stitched up in backdoor deals which were not only closed to the workforce but kept secret from them as well.

Such financial chicanery underlines the need for workers at Scott Lithgow, and all other industries threatened with job losses, to demand the opening of the books and an end to secret negotiations and deals.

Windscale scandal

SERIOUS leaks of nuclear waste occurred at the Windscale (Sellafield) nuclear plant last year and the full facts have come to light this week.

The leaks occurred on the 11th, 13th and 16th November last year and contaminated 25 miles of beaches with radioactive pollution.

The government is treating its inquiry into the leaks with obsequious secrecy. In a similar vein, the Serious Crime Squad has been investigating Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth because they held a press conference last September which revealed plans by the government to dump nuclear waste at sea.

FUND

THIS WEEK we thank Northampton supporters, who've sent £20, the proceeds from a social; and Basingstoke supporters, who've sent £13.43, raised by selling badges and books at a dayschool (badges supplied courtesy of Islington supporters).

But £33.43 won't pay the week's bills.

The Fund Column bloodhounds scoured the countryside last week, looking for fund-raising plans amongst the Socialist Organiser groups outside London.

Northampton supporters are holding another social. Stoke have promised to send money raised in a raffle, and plan to hold a jumble sale in March.

But with only £118.43 raised so far this month, more groups need to get going now!

Send your donations to 214 Sicket Court, London N1 2SY.