

BREAK LINKS WITH TORIES!

Socialist ORGANISER

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Inside: Rip-off government — the Tories in action.

Page 16: How they sold off a college for £5 million less than its value

Page 15: How they are asset-stripping British Shipbuilders at Scott Lithgow

GCHQ union rights

ALL OUT ACTION CAN WIN

LAST Tuesday's day of action gave the lie to those fainthearts and pessimists who said that working class militancy is dead and that the labour movement is so demoralised that the Tories can kick us in the teeth as, when and where they like.

The strikers and demonstrations throughout the country, in Liverpool, London, Cardiff, Manchester, Glasgow and many other towns and cities show that the working class is willing and able to kick back.

But even the tremendous show of solidarity on February 28 may yet prove to be too little, too late.

From March 1 the Tories will have their hands round the windpipe of trade unionism at GCHQ. They intend to squeeze slowly but ruthlessly.

They will probably not sack the loyal trade unionists in one dramatic gesture, but replace them one by one.

They hope to wear down the GCHQ trade unionists — and, in the absence of decisive action from the unions, they are likely to succeed.

Some trade unionists will

find other jobs. Some will just leave GCHQ in disgust. Some will accept transfers. Some will be sacked, one by one.

At the great London rally of anything up to 40,000 trade unionists on the 28th, the call was for strike action as soon as anyone is sacked from GCHQ.

That is necessary, but it is not enough. It leaves the initiative in the hands of the Tories. They can delay weeks or months before sacking anyone, waiting for feeling in the labour movement to die down and the ban on GCHQ trade unionism to become an 'accomplished fact'.

The unions must set a date for more extended action — at least an all-out civil service strike, backed by a one-day general strike.

Given leadership, there will be a response. That was clear from the huge turnout on the 28th, despite the lateness of the official strike call leaving almost no time to organise.

The unions also need to remove their taboo on strike action at GCHQ.

The GCHQ workers have a

right not only to pay union dues but also to act as trade unionists. Unless they do take collective union action, each of them is going to be left vulnerable, facing the full pressure of the management as an isolated individual.

'National security' is the Tories' slogan. It means the security of British capitalism's military and foreign policy, nuclear weapons, NATO, South Atlantic war and all. GCHQ is also probably used for surveillance within Britain.

The union leaders should never have offered a no-strike deal. And they should certainly not maintain it now that it has been contemptuously rejected by Thatcher.

The TUC's sudden rediscovery of working class solidarity last Friday has not undone all the effects of the slump and of the TUC's own shabby record over past struggles like the NGA Warrington dispute. But it has dramatically revealed the possibilities for turning the tide.

Every union needs to set a date for further action now, not only for the sake of union rights at GCHQ and in other 'essential services', but also for their own self-preservation in face of the Tory anti-union laws.

Trade unions which organise a one-off protest on an issue like GCHQ, and leave it at that, are declaring themselves as suitable easy victims for law-wielding employers.

Trade unions which mobilise their massive full strength in all-out strike action to save union rights at GCHQ are giving notice that they will not be messed with.

Such all-out action would not only win the GCHQ issue. It would at the very least make the anti-union laws temporarily inoperable. Given a bold will to win, it could rip up those laws and rout this vicious but suddenly-not-so-solid Tory government.

No more talks on union laws!

TRADE union leaders are talking about withdrawing from cooperation with the Tories in bodies like the NEDC, the MSC and ACAS.

The sooner the better! Such a break would give a major boost to the fight against Thatcherism.

But cooperation should be ended all across the board. And most importantly the talks with the Tories on new anti-union laws should be stopped.

You can't fight existing anti-union laws at the same time as you are pleading with the Tories over details of new ones.



The organisers of the London demonstration estimated 40,000 were there.

ANDREW MOORE

ANDREW MOORE

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

The TUC's turn

JUST two months ago the TUC was ruthlessly stabbing the NGA in the back, and openly preaching a programme of collaboration with the Tories.

Then on Friday 24th it called for solidarity strike action for GCHQ by all unions. It was only the second such call since 1926. The TUC leaders themselves were breaking the Tory anti-union laws that they had so sickeningly told the NGA to obey.

Now they talk about breaking collaboration with the Tories in bodies like the NEDC, ACAS and the MSC.

Last year had one of the lowest totals of strike-days for a long time. In manufacturing industry, especially, the picture is still one of declining investment, crippling slump, and decimated shop stewards' organisation.

Then on Tuesday 28th the BL car plants in Cowley came out on political strike for the first time since 1974.

The appearance of everything being turned topsy-turvy is heightened by the fact that the most militant campaigners for strike action on the 28th were right wingers like David Basnett and Terry Duffy, while Arthur Scargill and the left-wing leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers remained silent.

The explanation for these turnabouts lies in the tenseness of the political situation and the contradictory position of the top trade union officials.

Those top officials form a distinct social layer within the labour movement. Their substantial salaries; their life centred on offices, committees, big cars and expensive hotels; their multiple jobs 'on the side' and links with government, civil servants, and employers, all define a way of life quite different from the members they represent.

Lack of accountability in the unions — whether through membership apathy or through undemocratic rules such as those making top officials appointees (rather than elected) and/or fixed in their jobs for life — reinforces the separation.

At the same time the top officials share — and indeed are the chief preachers of — the common philosophy in the labour movement of bargaining within the capitalist system rather than organising to overthrow it.

The role that the top officials seek is thus one of bargaining agents between workers and employers or government — rather than leaders of working class action.

As bargainers they will settle for what they can get. If economic conditions are bad, then they accept lower wages. If jobs are going, they bargain to save a few here or get better redundancy money there. If the Tories seem entrenched, then they open talks with them and try to live within Tory laws.

But as bargainers they always need something to bargain about and something to bargain with.

As long as the unions retain their basic fibre, then no matter how great the union leaders' privileges or how right-wing their politics, they cannot cut themselves off completely from the rank and file.

When the Tories announced their ban on union membership at GCHQ, the union leaders tried to bargain. They offered no-strike clauses. Thatcher refused. She said there was nothing to bargain about. She was determined to leave the union leaders with no members — nothing to bargain with.

So the union leaders were pushed into militant action in order to defend their position as bargainers.

But — such is the contradictory position of these top trade union officials — the militant action has implications which go beyond the bargaining that they desire.

The strike call on the 28th will have boosted the confidence of militants in many industries. As a follow-up to it the top union leaders are likely to find themselves forced into a battle with the Tories' anti-union laws.

Then comes the twist. When the union leaders are forced into a fight, they do not then cease to be primarily bargainers rather than fighters. They are still likely to sell out the struggle at the crucial moment.

So we must never forget that trade union officialdom occupies an unstable position of balancing between classes. Never assume that all it does is fixed in advance. Never let up on the demands and pressure on it.

Never collapse into the idea that the official labour movement is a write-off, and that all socialists can do is rebuild bit-by-bit from the base upwards.

At the same time, we can never forget that these top officials are bargainers, not fighters. Even when they seem most militant, don't rely on them. Don't shelve the fight to get new leaders, the battle for union democracy, and the effort to build self-reliant rank-and-file organisation.

Demonstrate! Leon Brittan is opening Orpington Police Station. Demonstration assembles at 10.30 a.m., Orpington Police Station, Friday March 9.



GCHQ



Mass turnout for union rights

"IF LEN Murray and the TUC General Council had stood up to the government over the NGA we would not be facing this attack on the unions at GCHQ."

The TUC must immediately withdraw from any joint bodies with the government.

We should recall the days of Pentonville in 1972. The Tories' attack can be halted, but only by united action by a more determined union leadership".

Dennis Skinner MP at the London rally.

Nottingham

TWO or three thousand civil servants were out in Nottingham, mostly for the whole day despite National Executive Committee advice.

Some small contributions offices struck for the first time.

Raleighs was out for the day. NUPE county council workers, and some Plessey workers, also struck.

Merseyside

ON Merseyside dockers, carworkers and many thousands of other workers were out.

London

20,000 marched in London. There were large contingents on the march from the various civil service unions, NUT, NALGO and the NUR.

Other unions represented included ASLEF, and there were a number of Labour Party and Trades Council banners.

Oxford

BOTH the Assembly and Body plants at BL Cowley walked out after midday mass meetings.

This was the first directly political strike at Cowley since a stoppage over the Industrial Relations Act fine on the AUEW in May 1974.

All civil service workers in Oxford were out, and there was also widespread action in hospitals and in print.

Birmingham

IN BIRMINGHAM about 5,000 people attended a lunchtime rally at the Central Hall, and an over-spill meeting had to be organised outside.

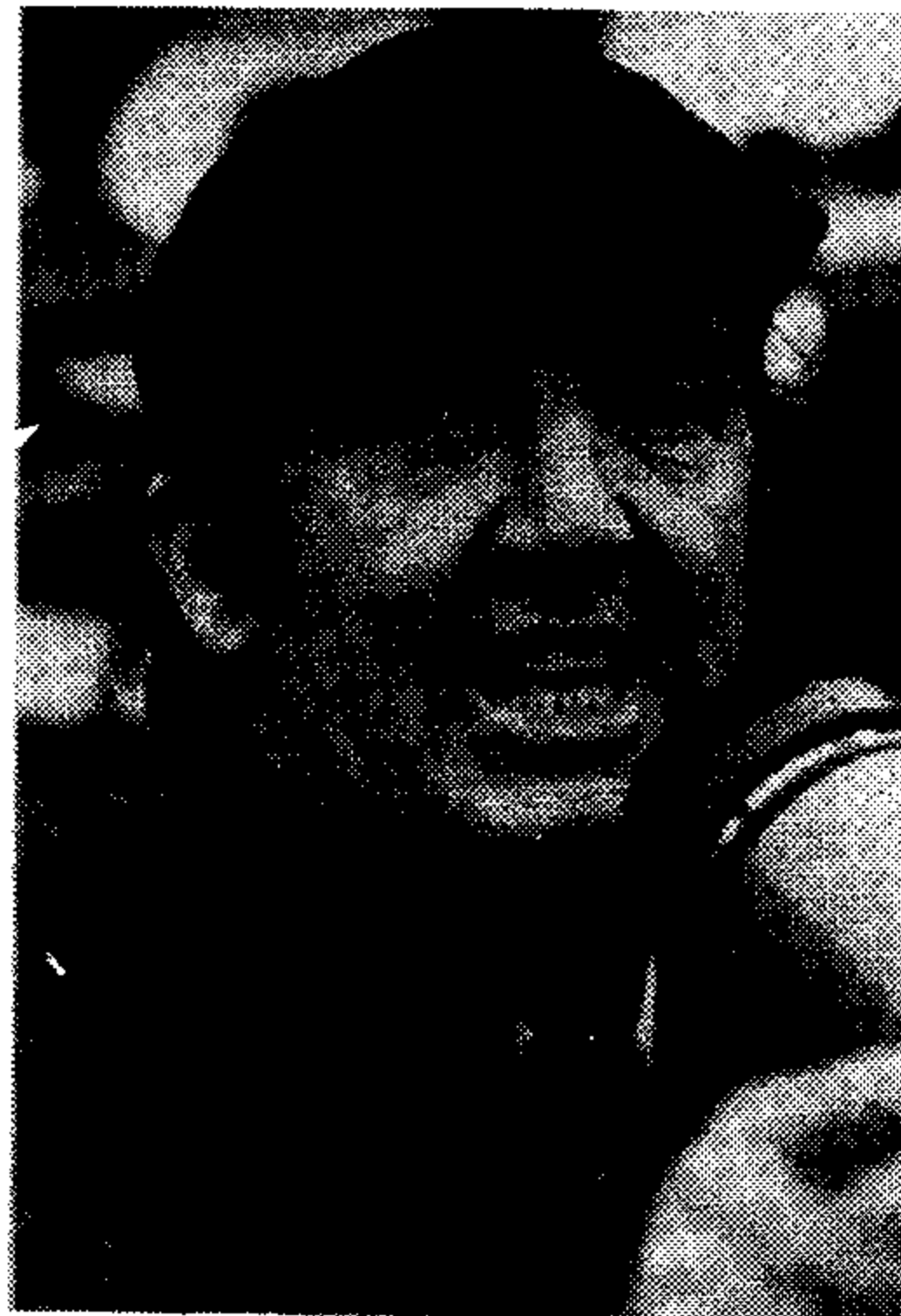
Production at some of the big factories was hit for the afternoon including BL Longbridge, Jaguar's three Coventry plants, Massey-Ferguson and Talbot plants in Coventry, Metro-Cammell in Birmingham and Trufllo.

Edinburgh

OVER 3,000 civil servants and other trade unionists filled the Playhouse cinema in Edinburgh on February 28th.

The rally was attended by a delegation from Henry Robb Action Committee, Edinburgh Trades Council and a number of full-time union officials.

Rail services, particularly on the West coast of Scotland, were disrupted and a number of factories stopped work at midday.



Dennis Skinner

Glasgow

ALL train services in and out of Glasgow halted as signallers struck as part of a massive day of action against the GCHQ union ban. Mass walk-outs took place in most Glasgow hospitals; teachers walked out of many schools; and production ceased in many factories, including BL at Albion and Bathgate.

3,000 gathered in the Kelvin Hall, with an equal number at a rally outside.

I don't need to emphasise the gravity of the situation at this meeting. Suffice it to say that it is the first attempt to openly outlaw a section of the trade union movement since 1940. And why do they do it. There are two reasons. Firstly because they are fundamentally hostile to the trade unions and want to inflict a major reverse on the trade union movement in this country.

Secondly, because they are encouraged by success. Mrs Thatcher went into this flushed with her success against the NGA.

We can welcome the initiative that the TUC has now taken on GCHQ, in supporting this afternoon's action, in implementing a 5p per member levy to support those victimised at GCHQ and of moves to withdraw from tripartite bodies with the government. But we also have to say that it is very late and it is not enough.

Alan Thornett, speaking at the Oxford rally

Daily Mail
EXPRESS
Press FINANCIAL TIMES
The Daily Telegraph
Gang
Sun

MRS Thatcher claimed a stunning victory this week, as despite a campaign of industrial warfare, millions of people went to work as usual.

A meticulously planned campaign by the TUC failed to bring Britain to a halt, even if it did win the support of a few hundred thousand red agents.

But Mrs Thatcher claimed the majority of trade union members stayed at work — supporting her ban on unions at GCHQ.

Trade unionists who did not support the strike had to defeat a plot of breathtaking complexity to get to work. Months of careful planning had gone into getting the largest possible general strike.

It began about a month ago when the TUC dubbed February 28 a 'day of action'.

But cunningly, at that stage, they gave no clue of the ferocious drive they were to launch, to stop Britain working.

Coyly they made reference only to lunch-time meetings and possible midnight marches through unfrequented streets. The TUC seemed almost to have a policy of playing down the whole affair and suggesting that come the day, Mrs Thatcher would cave in. Those of us who know their real intent realised, of course, this was a sham.

Even the civil service unions did their bit. They told members only to call a lunch-time meeting and conspicuously held back from calling strikes.

It was just two working days before the attempt to paralyse working Britain that Murray sprang his well-baited trap.

His dramatic speech calling workers to the barricades will long be remembered in the history of labour movement rhetoric.

"That's alright by me" Len told a stunned nation when asked to contemplate the awesome possibility of one trade union member supporting another through unlawful action.

The stage was set for a situation, more serious by far than the general strike. The complete closedown of British industry was on the cards.

During that frantic weekend, there cannot have been a single trade union member who was not personally visited by the hard-faced militants of the TUC's General Council and issued with dire threats if they did not go on strike. Gone was the pretence of being opposed to unlawful action. Now the full weight of the TUC propaganda machine swept into action.

Some unions went so far as to issue circulars saying that if members spontaneously took strike action they would not be disciplined.

But the ruthless wreckers of the TUC reckoned without the ability of the ordinary trade union member determinedly not to follow Red Len to the barricades.

Despite all these efforts, some trade union members even managed to avoid discussing the whole issue by stalling off meetings for a whole day.

Others pretended they could not find a single trade union leader calling for strike action, as if they could not read the winks and nods by which Red Len and his cronies run the country.

Other trade union members complained that they had blinked and missed it or had been sick or on holiday.

It is true, of course, that hundreds of thousands of people did strike. But these are the very people from whose influence the Prime Minister is trying valiantly to protect the workforce at GCHQ.

Far from infringing their rights she is setting them free from the forces which are by their very nature fatal to national security.

When you look beyond the periphery of Britain, the trains, the newspapers, the car plants, the hospitals and public offices, the thousands of other places which closed down during the strike, it is clear that the day was a humiliating slap in the face for the red wreckers who now control the unions. There was one crucial test of this day of action and everyone knew it, from Red Len down to the humblest soldier in his army of wreckers. The test was a simple one and the unions failed it. Despite their best efforts the Yorkie Bars still got through to the Alps.

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Labour Party

Right wing reorganises

IN TWO separate articles last week, the Sunday Times devoted space to a "new campaign" by Labour's right wingers to overturn mandatory re-selection at this year's Party conference.

They quoted 'a frontbencher': "Re-selection is a canker eating at the party's flesh. It dwarfs all other issues. Neil [Kinnock] has got to fight it."

The articles contained many quotes from unnamed sources and not a lot of facts. It can't be news that many right-wingers hate mandatory re-selection and are directly threatened by it, but what "a new campaign" amounts to is not clear.

Thus the reaction to the 'news' by CLPD's secretary, Vladimir Derer. "I think we should be on our guard about this. Although they may have their reservations about changing mandatory reselection, it is a potential danger. They have it on their minds. We must wait for any concrete proposals but we must be on the alert."

Mandatory reselection has to be a major target for the right wing if they are to re-establish their firm control over the Party. More than any other democratic reform, it gave the rank and file the possibility of exercising a significant amount of control over the PLP, including removing right-wingers and place-seekers.

Used properly, the mechanism places at risk many more than those mentioned as being "the men at risk" by the Sunday Times — Shore, Silkin and Kaufman.

Extreme

They are extreme cases, and even if changes were made in the rules — either by making re-selection voluntary or by introducing an individual member ballot system — it is unlikely they would be saved.

If the right wing don't want to face wider risks from mandatory reselection this time round, they have to make changes at this year's Party conference.

The time-scale for initiating the re-selection process is between 18 and 36 months after the general election — i.e. between December 9 1984 and June 9 1986. The NEC can play a delaying role as to when the process starts in each CLP, but the constitutional initiative lies with the CLPs.

The NEC (with Kinnock) could certainly pressurise a number of CLPs to delay, but there would be at least a significant minority who wouldn't accept that — and by the 1985 Party conference it would be too late.

But to make a change this year, the right wing needs the

By John Bloxam

support of the NEC. Under the one year rule, constitutional amendments submitted to this year's conference would automatically be referred back to the 1985 conference.

Only the NEC can get round this rule. An attempt from the floor has little chance of success without NEC support.

The right wing's major chance probably lay with the resolution on 'One member one vote' remitted from last year's conference. Under the heading of increasing membership participation, the resolution called on the NEC to bring proposals to the 1984 conference for rule changes to allow all individual members of twelve months' standing to vote in the elections for Leader, Deputy Leader and Parliamentary candidates.

The NEC asked for remittance 'to consider it', but since then is reported to have rejected it.

The basic problem the right wing faces with the 'One member one vote' proposals is the opposition from a large number of trade unions, including ones they can usually rely on. They have voted solidly against the proposals because their own influence on local CLPs is threatened by removing the General Committee as the decision making body.

There is also the additional problem of a division among supporters of 'One member one vote' proposals. All support it in the election for Leader and Deputy Leader, but probably not even a majority accept it so far in the selection of Parliamentary candidates.

Swing

To swing the NEC behind it, any right wing campaign would need the support of Kinnock, and it is unlikely whether at this stage he would be prepared to risk such a decisive confrontation with the CLPs, the great majority of whom voted for him. Tony Benn's return to Parliament, and with it the possibility of standing for Leadership must further inhibit him in such a situation.

But all is not gloom for the right or a source for satisfaction among the left. In the last round of re-selection, the 'shortlist of one' device proved a major defence for members of the PLP, and given the present balance on the NEC will certainly feature again. The CLPD-spearheaded campaign against this was not successful before.

Also, the rank and file did a good job of policing themselves last time. Far too often, sitting right-wingers got voted back out of a combination of loyalty and softness.

Indeed, one of the reasons for the present publicity could be to start putting pressure on the left to hold off in reselection this time, and to let the right go through in the name of 'unity' and supporting the existing leadership.

Using mandatory re-selection, getting a PLP accountable to the Party and its policies, is a job that still needs to be done. Part of the fight for this must include a campaign against the 'shortlist of one' device; it must also involve being continually on the alert about the dangers of it being reversed.

*How to select or reselect your MP by Chris Mullin and Charlotte Atkins, 85p (£1 including postage) from CLPD, 10 Park Drive, London NW11 or Tribune, 308 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8DY.



Benn on the campaign trail

Benn slams health cuts

TONY Benn, the Labour candidate for Chesterfield, speaking at a public meeting on February 22 at Holme Hall School in Chesterfield said:

"The main issues raised by the people of Chesterfield during this by-election are unemployment and the cuts in the National Health Service.

"Conservatives and Liberals, as well as Labour voters are now getting very angry indeed at the government's treatment of young people who are rotting on

ON Tuesday February 21, North Derbyshire Health Authority decided to close Maternity Units at Matlock and Buxton. In Chesterfield itself, the Ashgate annexe which had beds for 43 patients and the Ashgate maternity hospital, which had 22 beds have been lost. Another 43 beds have gone from Morton Hospital, near Clay Cross.

Now the first phase of the new Calow Hospital won't be opening on April 1, as promised. North Derbyshire district's hospital waiting list has stretched to 3,581 patients.

the dole with no prospect of work, and at the lengthening dole queues.

"They are also afraid that if more money is not put into the NHS it will be unable to carry on and meet the medical needs of the sick and the old.

"That is why Labour's commitment to take emer-

gency action to create jobs, and build up our public services, is attracting such support.

"The next Labour government will provide the funds to pay for all this by redirecting the North Sea oil revenues to rebuild our industries and services,

by stopping the export of capital, and by cancelling the Trident and other nuclear weapons which are all a complete waste of money.

"Britain is a very rich country and the poverty and misery of millions of pensioners, sick and disabled people, and of others on low pay or minimum benefits is quite unnecessary.

"This campaign is helping to boost the confidence of people in this town that we could have a fairer and better society if we really worked for it."

Next stop Bridlington

Labour Party Young Socialists national conference is in Bridlington at Easter. Jane Ashworth reviews the debates at the regional conferences leading up to it.

be not taken. Howls of protest from the audience and a word in the ear of the Chair by a more experienced Militant supporter got the motion taken.

The Tories' Youth Training Scheme was a central discussion in most conferences. But a motion calling for the YS to support and call on trade unions to prevent schemes being set up unless they give union rights and rates and safety protection, moved by Jane Ashworth of Islington North YS in London, was defeated. Militant interpreted it to mean that where schemes were set up, trade unions shouldn't have anything to do with them.

YTS action

In Yorkshire, Mark Osborn told the conference about the YTS work going on in his area and how comrades from Harrogate and York YS branches are organising a day of action against compulsion. The Regional Committee agreed to recommend support for Harro-

gate's motion and will help organise the day of action against compulsion.

Class Fighter supporter Dan Duncan, who is the Yorkshire regional rep on Youth CND national committee, addressed the conference, urging the YS to get more involved in YCND. But at all the regional conferences, the YS decided not to build YCND, but go along with its major activities.

Occupations

Jim Kearns from Blantyre YS (in Scotland) and Mark Sapsford from Lewisham YS (in London) both argued for the YS to propose demands related specifically to particular struggles, instead of just having one set of general slogans for every occasion.

Mark explained how important it is to campaign for occupations of hospitals threatened with closure — and why a demand on the next Labour government to extend the health service isn't really enough.

Steve Battlemuch, a Class

Fighter supporter and CPUSA militant, gave a five minute speech to the East Midlands conference about the dispute at GCHQ. Heenan Bhatti from Orpington YS argued at the London conference about the importance of the recruiting of ethnic minorities to the Labour Party.

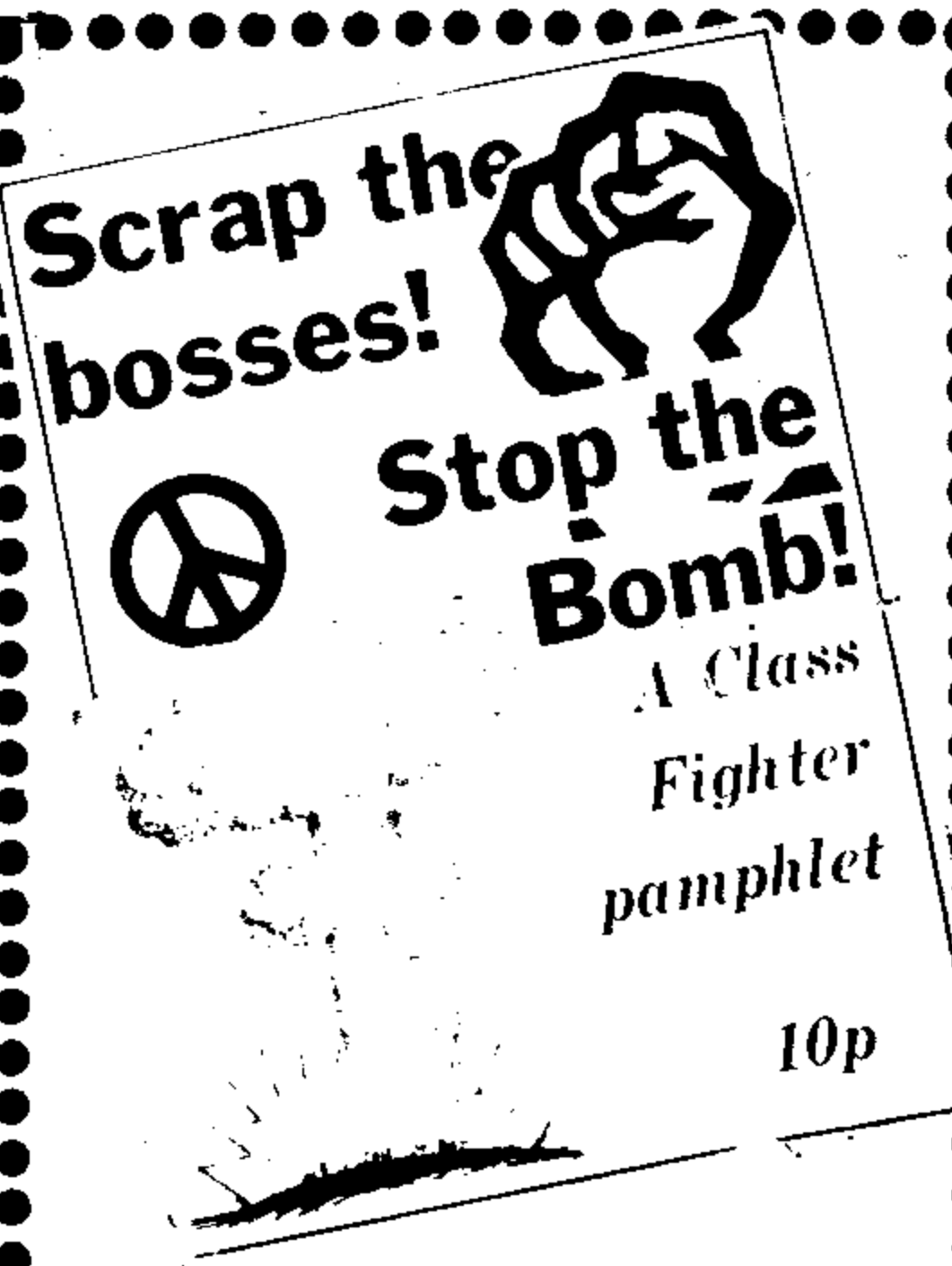
He said that black people are put off the party because of its lack of anti-racist activity and the record of past Labour governments which have introduced racist immigration laws.

Heenan said that a Labour Party black section is necessary to involve more black people and to force the Party to take up campaigns like deportations.

He also argued that we need black people to represent black people and we should support positive discrimination in the Party to ensure that representation.

Petitions calling for a YS women-only conference collected over 400 names.

Next is the national conference on April 20-23. Judith Bonner (Peckham YS) is being supported by Class Fighter for the NEC, and Tony Dale (Manchester Central), Mary Morrison (York), Clive Bradley (Manchester Gorton) and Tim Anderson (Harrogate) for the Standing Orders Committee.



10p plus postage from
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Still fighting for women's choice

Mary Wilkins reports on the NAC conference.

IN OCTOBER, 1983, the National Abortion Campaign split to form two groups: one, the new National Abortion Campaign, which continues to fight for the original demands of free abortion on demand and woman's right to choose; the other the Women's Reproductive Rights Campaign.

NAC held its first conference since the split on Saturday, February 25, in London.

It was well-attended, constructive and positive.

Abortion facilities in the National Health Service are under attack like the whole NHS, and attempts also seem likely to reduce the present time limit for abortions from 28 weeks to 24 weeks, either through a government Bill or by a Private Members Bill.

This move is based on the fact that some foetuses are born before 28 weeks, and survive.

20 weeks

It seems to have wide support amongst the British Medical Association and MPs. But in effect it would mean a reduction of the limit to 20 weeks, because of the margin of error which doctors allow. Only about 1% of all abortions are performed after 20 weeks, and these are mainly on young women, or the result of avoidable delays and/or the late stage at which some foetal abnormalities can be detected.

The Conference felt that we should oppose the shorter limit, and also put our case for better abortion facilities, and more research into technology for earlier diagnosis of foetal abnormality.

If these demands were won there would be far fewer late abortions than the present 1%.

Similarly, the Conference felt that we should not merely defend the NHS against cuts and privatisation, but fight for an extension and improvement of gynaecology services. In particular, we need



"For millions of women, even the limited provisions of the 1967 Act have not been implemented."

more day-care abortion centres, and state-funded well woman clinics.

We opposed setting up women's self-help groups as a feminist form of privatisation, and a diversion from the struggle for better services on the NHS, to be controlled by the workers and by the women who use them.

Anti-cuts

Women suggested that local NAC groups should involve themselves in NHS anti-cuts campaigns, making abortion and contraceptive provision a central part of such campaigns.

Abortion waiting lists are

growing, and women often have to wait for up to 5 or 6 weeks for an abortion.

We also discussed publicising women's abortion rights, and access to abortion facilities generally, but in particular, for young women and black women. One workshop discussed producing NAC literature in different languages, and making contact with ethnic minority women, both to publicise their rights, and to take up the fight against the racism of the NHS.

Also, more work is needed to educate Trade Union members on the importance of abortion rights and the fact that this is a trade union issue.

The anti-abortion campaigns, SPUC and Life, with their massive financial resources, have been stepping up their campaigns, and orientating more towards the Trade Unions.

Women from the CPSA and the National Association of Probation Officers told us about glossy handouts at Conference, filibustering in debates, and mass mailings of all trade union members, slandering NAC's pro-choice policy.

Workplaces

Perhaps most importantly, the Conference discussed how to build an effective campaign with active local groups. There was a very large measure of agreement about priorities for future activity, and the number of active women from all over England, as well as Scotland and Wales, provides us with a basis for building and re-establishing local groups.

Plans were made for setting up workplace NAC groups, as well as developing the activity of Trades Council Women's Subcommittees and Labour Party Women's Councils in pro-choice campaigning.

Underlying it all was the confidence and determination of the women present to carry on the campaign, and fight to make free abortion on demand a reality.

All this activity needs resources, and as ever, NAC is short of money needed to fund its work. Donations and affiliations are very welcome, to NAC, 47, Waldrum Road, Park Road, London SE23 2PW.

Campaigns: not either-or!

By Gerry Byrne

IT IS heartening that the split of the former National Abortion Campaign into the new National Abortion Campaign and the Women's Reproductive Rights Campaign does not seem to have led to a falling-off of support.

Both campaigns have now held well-attended conferences fired by positive ideas and a will to go forward and campaign on their particular priorities.

More disturbing is that rumour and rivalry seems to have been generated — pursuit of affiliations and support, financial and political.

Some trade union branches and other organisations which had supported the old NAC seem to have been presented with a virtual ultimatum: either NAC or WRRC, you can't support both.

NAC had a history, almost alone among women's rights campaigns, of impressive labour movement links and support.

The NAC/TUC sponsored anti-Corrie demonstration was a landmark in labour movement/women's rights collaboration. The millions of ordinary working class women reached through that work should not be lightly dismissed.

Especially in the decade of a butchered health service, the importance of retaining that link with the labour movement cannot be overstressed. And, as NAC points out, for millions of, predominantly working class, women even the limited provisions of the 1967 Act have not been implemented.

They live in areas where free NHS abortion is made virtually unobtainable

because of the "conscience" of anti-abortion consultants. And it can only get worse.

The issues raised by the WRRC, however, need to be faced. Black working class women from certain 'deprived' areas may not see abortion as the central issue. Faced with pressure for forced abortion and sterilisation, foisted with long-term untested contraception, often without their knowledge, they assert the right to choose to continue their pregnancy, retain their fertility and take control of their own bodies.

Some black women see the central focus on abortion as indicative of a white, middle class-centred orientation.

There is enough in this accusation to give (mainly

white) socialists pause for thought. It is not enough to state our opposition to racist 'population control' and the abuse of black women as guinea-pigs. We have to prove in practice — to women who have recognised and been alienated by the racism of the labour movement — that we are prepared to take up the issues black women define as central to their oppression.

It is not acceptable to say "Yes, you go off and campaign on these if you think they're important." They must become central to any campaign to transform the labour movement.

It is therefore extremely damaging to the interests of women, black women particularly, that there should be any suggestion of labour movement organisations having to decide which issues, focus and campaign to support.

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK will be holding a national conference on WOMEN: FIGHTING LOCAL GOVERNMENT CUTS!

on: Saturday June 23 (provisional date)

in: London (venue to be confirmed)

Open to: delegates from women's and Labour Movement organisations and individuals.

Our conference will include:

*with women from the Labour Party and trade unions, representatives from women's groups and organisations to talk about the services they offer with local authority funding: child-care, women's centres, training and employment, and why we must keep these services;

*women from areas not directly affected by the abolition of the metropolitan authorities. In these areas, where the white, male, right wing has ruled for a long time, how can women break through, and direct council services to their needs?

*women saying "No!" to the Tory policy of driving women back into the home. Victorian values? No thanks!

If you'd like to receive notice of our conference or would like to be involved, contact Women's Fightback, 10b Landseer Road, London N19, or phone Gerry (789 7587) or Mary (263 2073).

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Lane,
London
N8.

Liverpool against the Tories

'We'll be out on March 29'

How real is the prospect of an illegal budget being adopted by the City Council on March 29?

The budget being presented to the Council will certainly be an illegal one. Whether it will be carried by the majority of councillors present is another matter.

There is talk of four Labour councillors defecting. Although some in the Labour Party think that this will be offset by the non-attendance of the Liberals, it shouldn't be forgotten that Liberal and Tory councillors could be surcharged too.

The threat of a £600,000 surcharge is certainly an incentive to improve a councillor's attendance record.

If 5,000 local authority jobs were cut under a budget plan the Tories found 'acceptable', how would this affect members of your own union, NALGO?

We would have to expect around 800 job losses among local government workers. I feel, however, that the main axe will fall on teachers should any future council or government imposed administration carry out redundancies.

They will do this in expectation that the teaching unions will be less likely to resist redundancies than, say, the manual unions.

How has support for the council's stand shown itself within the Liverpool branch of NALGO?

The policies of our union are certainly similar to those of the local Labour Party, and we have conducted a lively campaign around them amongst the rank and file membership. We have had 4,500 members attending various workplace meetings in recent weeks, and our members are not enthusiastic at the prospect of losing their jobs.

Why is NUPE the only public sector union not supporting the March 29 strike?

NUPE has a small membership in the local authority. A lot of its members are officers of the council. Others are in the welfare branch involved with the care of old people.

We are also of the opinion that the local leadership of the union has made no real effort to get the workers involved in this struggle.

How adequate is the Campaign Working Party in involving broad forces necessary for the struggle, such as tenants associations and wider community groups?

The Campaign Working Party is based on a vague membership. Its original lack of broadness has to some extent been overcome with the inclusion of some community groups. There is of course still room for greater involvement, and this is what we have to encourage in future months.

Pete Creswell, branch secretary of Liverpool NALGO, spoke to Bas Hardy.

How do you judge the role of the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee of local authority workers?

It has been to a large extent a question of persuading the members to take action. We want to organise the unions for a mass publicity campaign for the March 29 strike and have tried to reach unanimity for a strike on that day. The JSSC voted 117 to 3 for a strike on the 29th.

What advice have you been able to give to your members so far about what they should do if the government imposed commissioners on the City?

As far as I'm aware the appointment of commissioners requires special legislation yet to be enacted. It is more likely that officials will be appointed to run the city by some kind of official receiver.

In either circumstance we must try to block the flow of information to these people.

What is your answer to the Liberals' call for a secret ballot of council staff over the impending industrial action?

Simple. Our members have their say at mass meetings.

What can Labour Party and trade union activists in other parts of the country do to support Liverpool?

They must give public support for the authority's no cuts stand. It is also essential that the Labour leaders acknowledge that there is no real alternative to the course of action adopted by the present council.

The arguments over Militant are, pardon me, a red herring. It would be difficult to see even a right-wing Labour Council carrying out the kind of policies the Tories are expecting.

I would certainly say that Liverpool presents a major challenge to the Thatcher government and will be a portent for what is likely to happen to most major Labour-controlled authorities next year.

Demonstrations, regional lobbies and other actions around this question must be supported up and down the country if the local labour movement is not to be isolated.

Strike plans

Lol Duffy and Bas Hardy report

THE mood and the numbers at the rally on Monday 27th showed that the Merseyside labour movement is gearing itself up for a fight.

The solidly working class audience of 1200 to 1500 gave a standing ovation to Derek Hatton, deputy leader of Liverpool's Labour City Council, which is defying the government by refusing to make cuts or raise rents and rates.

Labour leader Neil Kinnock attacked Liverpool's stand last week, and he sent the meeting a letter saying he could not attend because of other arrangements. The meeting decided to send a reply asking Kinnock to be at the day of action scheduled for the council's budget day, March 29.

But a message of support was read out from Labour Party chair Eric Heffer.

MPs Eddie Loyden, Bob Parry and Terry Fields spoke, with Pat Hardy (Merseyside community groups), Ron Todd (TGWU), Pete Creswell (council joint shop stewards' committee), Alan Draper (Scotts bakery), Charlie Pearce (Liverpool buses), Ray Williams (NGA), and Pete Leonard (GMBU council workers).

Pete Leonard dealt with the decisions recently taken by NUPE and the NUT not to support the March 29 day of action.

The NUPE decision had been taken by their District Committee, and already two NUPE branches had stated that they would come out on the 29th regardless.

Leonard called on NUT members to reverse their very close decision, and said that the schools would be closed on the 29th anyway because of action taken by other workers. Liverpool council workers joint shop stewards' committee has voted overwhelmingly for a strike on March 29.

Two further meetings are scheduled to organise action. On Tuesday March 13 there will be a meeting under the official Campaign Committee of representatives from shop stewards' committees, trade union branches, District Committees, community organisations and workplaces. There will be a full recall conference on Monday March 26.

The resolution passed on Monday spelled out the agenda for the March 26 conference: its aim will be to organise industrial action in the event of government commissioners or troops being sent into Liverpool, councillors being surcharged or penalised for their stand, or workers not getting paid.



Liverpool demonstrates against cuts last November 19

Retreat in Islington

"IF THE council continues on its present course, there are going to be a lot more demonstrations like tonight".

But the joint meeting of Islington council Labour group with the Labour Parties' Local Government Committee last Friday, 24th, did not heed this warning from Nik Barstow, secretary of the council workers' Labour Party workplace branch.

Low-paid council workers had lobbied the meeting demanding improvements. They got a London weighting payment to match the white collar workers', but not

the rest of their demands, notably a 35 hour week.

On every issue except a motion that the council should open negotiations with nursery workers on their claim, the Labour group leadership's line prevailed.

There will be no cuts. But rents will be raised. Rates will be raised 14%. A 'tight budget' will allow the council practically no option but confrontation with its workers in the event of demands it has not budgeted for.

A motion that the council should reconsider its adverse planning decisions on two women's

centres and a feminist bookshop was lost.

The Left had hopes of winning on the issue of Building Works Department pay. Both Islington North and Islington South GCs had backed resolutions supporting the flat-rate pay system negotiated in the department after a three day strike last year.

Although the flat-rate system was part of Labour's manifesto, the council is threatening to return to some sort of bonus system on the grounds that promised improvements in productivity have not been delivered.

But at Friday's meeting ten councillors put an amendment to the resolution supporting the flat-rate which effectively nullified it: the flat-rate should be continued 'provided this did not put the department in jeopardy under the Local Government and Land Act'.

The argument was that the department is making losses, and under the Tory Act that could mean that the council would be compelled to shut it down.

Councillor Pat Longman opposed the amendment: "I think the workers are saying to the council - we're willing to fight the Tory legislation if you are". But the amendment was carried.

The days of the Red Flag over the Town Hall are in the past, and the bust of Lenin at the door to the council chamber looks more out of place than ever. Islington council, once the banner-bearer of the London Labour Left, is now set on proving itself a sober, respectable municipal administration.

RENTS FIGHT IN STOKE

By Alistair Scott

ARTHUR Bough and Jason Hill, who were facing expulsion from Stoke City Council Labour Group, have now been reinstated, and given a severe censure.

The two councillors, both supporters of Socialist Organiser, had walked out of a council meeting and along with their Labour Party branch issued a press statement condemning the City Council for increasing council house rents by 5%.

The 'soft left' had voted for the increase after failing to win support for the "Sheffield system" of higher rents for selected tenants who will have the increase covered by state housing benefit, or for an amendment calling for a 2½% increase.

Having won the support of

their branch to oppose the increase and stage the walkout, Councillors Hill and Bough carried out the branch policy at the December Council meeting. In January a special Labour Group meeting was called which voted with the support of the soft left to expel the two councillors.

Both councillors appealed to the Labour Party National Executive Committee and were informed that the Labour Group had acted unconstitutionally by expelling them without first consulting the Executive Committee of the District Labour Party.

The Labour Group had to retreat, and the decision was eventually to 'condemn' the council-

lors' action but not expel them, in return for a pledge to abide by Labour Group standing orders in future.

The 'soft left' then proceeded to de-select Councillor Bough at the branch selection meeting on February 22.

But the underlying issue has not gone away. At its meeting on February 20, Stoke Labour Group agreed to cuts in next year's budget, and a 2½% increase in rates. There was no attempt to consult the Party, and even councillors have been given no details of where the cuts will fall.

At the Labour Group meeting Councillor Bough asked for the decision to be deferred so that the Party could discuss it, but the 'soft left' sat silent!

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



E. German dissidents are freed

ON January 24 Ulrike Poppe and Baerbel Bokley were released after a month in prison and charges against them dropped.

Arrested on December 12 last year, they had been charged with having "passed on" information which was "detrimental" to the State. They might have drawn a sentence of up to twelve years.

The reason for Ulrike's and Baerbel's arrest is most probably that they are peace activists.

In early 1982 their signatures appeared on a petition to Party leader Erich Honnecker, signed by 150 other names. It protested at new legislation which empowered the army to extend conscription to women at times of "national emergency".

Since that time the two women have been closely involved in the emergent unofficial peace movement.

By Alex Simpson

Along with other women activists they contributed to the formulation of a feminist analysis of the arms race and to discussions on the role of women in East German society.

Their analysis and activities contrasted with the official state truth which insists that the party is the custodian of peace and detente. In reality the party is intensifying the already high levels of militarisation in East German society.

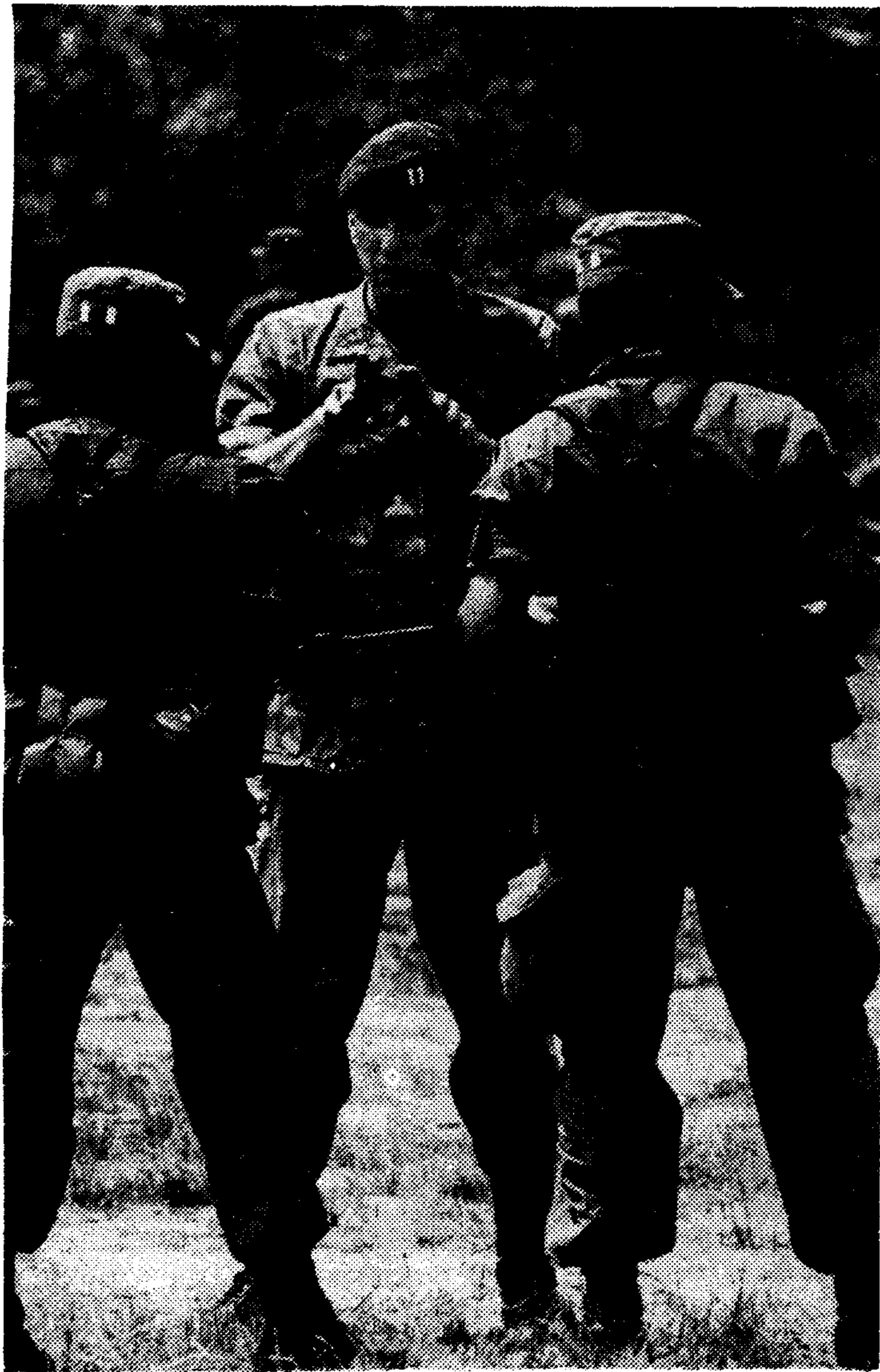
Also, of course, the unofficial women's movement shed light on the East German state's claim to have achieved genuine social equality for women.

The arrests of Poppe and Bokley came after they had met Barbara Eichorn, a member of British END and a university lecturer in the GDR.

The authorities alleged that Baerbel and Ulrike had expressed anti-GDR sentiments in conversation notes with Barbara.

The last action of Baerbel and Ulrike prior to their arrest was to be among the signatories of a letter to the West German Bundestag protesting against its ratification of the decision to deploy Pershing missiles.

Their release was probably obtained by persistent protests to the party leadership by members of the Western peace movements.



US troops in El Salvador

Sandinistas call poll in November

THE hypocritical outcry from the US and from right-wingers in Central America about democracy in Nicaragua has backfired.

Now the right wing opposition parties in Nicaragua are demanding that elections be put off.

Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega announced on February 21 that presidential and national assembly elections would take place on November 4 this year, earlier than previously expected.

He also announced an extension of the amnesty for counter-revolutionaries.

Press comment has linked the election date with the US presidential contest. The Sandinistas want to have the strength of an election victory behind them before they face Ronald Reagan returned for a second term.

No one doubts that the Sandinistas will win.

They have also reduced the voting age to 16. This move has especially enraged the right wing, which complains that the schedule does not allow them sufficient time to campaign.

The Conservative Party may boycott the poll.

The election schedule is part of a whole recent turn of policy by the Sandinistas which also includes such things as an agreement with other Central American governments — including El Salvador's! — to stop any subversion based in one government's territory and directed against another.

The Sandinistas probably see this as a way of calling the US's bluff. For sure it is a dangerous way of playing with the struggle of the FMLN in El Salvador.

Yet, whatever the Sandinistas' motives, the calling of the elections can only be of benefit to the possibilities of working-class socialist activity in Nicaragua.

Union laws in Argentina

ARGENTINA'S Senate is currently debating a new trade union law which has already been approved by the lower house of parliament.

Paralleling the current Tebbit/King legislation in Britain, the law provides for state intervention in the unions to secure formally more

democratic elections.

What makes it slightly different from Britain is the nature of the trade union bureaucracy.

Argentina had a Socialist Party, anarchist groups, and a trade union movement as early as the 1890s. But the populist military regime of Juan Peron smashed up that old labour

movement in the 1940s.

It created a new trade union movement, very much linked with the state — something like the Mexican union movement, which is a component part of the party which has run the Mexican state for some 60 years.

The top union bureaucrats

are notoriously corrupt and closely connected with sections of the top ranks of the armed forces.

That makes the Radical government's moves more of a parallel to the measures taken by US government agencies against gangster leaders in the US unions.

As in the US, it would be unwise for rank and file trade unionists to trust in the government. Rather, they should say: 'Hands off the unions. We'll clear out the gangsters ourselves'.

The Radical Party, historically, has had scarcely less close links with the military than the Peronists. And the union laws are part of a package which will include wage controls.

Hong Kong's right to decide

HONG KONG'S economy has been reviving as an agreement between China and Britain over its future looks closer.

Terms may be announced as early as this spring. They are likely to include the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty, but with a very large degree of autonomy,

allowing a free market capitalist system to remain there.

Beijing and London intend to put together a deal and then present it as an accomplished fact to the people of Hong Kong.

But last week even the 'unofficial' members of Hong

Kong's Legislative Council — hand-picked business big-wigs — called for the people of Hong Kong to have a say.

Working-class socialists in Hong Kong have demanded the right of the people of Hong Kong to decide their own future through a freely elected Assembly.



THRILLER writers have always known how to use The Reading of the Will... the mystery-making will by which a bequest goes to an unexpected quarter; the will which uncovers the hidden loves and malevolences of, or reveals something else quite unexpected about, its author.

George Wigg was one of Labour prime minister Harold Wilson's main lieutenants in the mid-1960s, when Wilson's government was squaring up to launch an attack on trade union rights. The recent reading of his will revealed something very unexpected about

Wigg... that he was worth a quarter of a million pounds.

Lord Wigg, who died last August at the age of 82, started work in a factory at 14 and then joined the army on a long enlistment. He became a Labour MP (for Dudley) in 1945.

As Postmaster General between 1964 and '67, he was Harold Wilson's chief trouble shooter and intrigue-master, before falling out with Wilson and resigning in a huff, then going out to grass in the House of Lords.

These days a quarter of a million isn't much if you say

Where did Wigg get his fortune?

it fast — only the equivalent of 30 years' wages for someone on the average income of about £8000 a year..

And the equivalent of a life's wages for one of the millions of workers who earn much less than the average.

Gerald Kaufman has suggested that Wigg, who was a gambling man, may have

won the money on the horses. Which takes me back to the world of thriller writers.

The racetrack winnings explanation of Wigg's wealth may of course be true. But no self-respecting thriller writer who wanted to keep the readers' confidence would use it.

Kinnock & GCHQ

WHILE trade unionists across the country struck to support union rights at GCHQ, Labour leader Neil Kinnock was busy... sacking front-benchers who had voted against the Tory ban.

On February 28 Kinnock

sacked Max Madden and Frank Field from their front-bench jobs. They had voted against the Tories in Parliament on Monday 27th, in contradiction to the Shadow Cabinet's 'tactical' decision to abstain.

Arafat or Kelly?

THIS month the Labour Party's right wing in Glasgow has once again been in action over the election for Rector of Glasgow University.

The Labour Club at the University had decided to adopt as its candidate the current leader of the PLO Yasser Arafat — rather than the socialist journalist, John Pilger.

This came to the ears of Glasgow city's Labour Baron Lord Provost, Michael Kelly. Having missed the gravy train to Brussels by failing to get a Euro-MP nomination, Kelly, whose term of office as Provost comes to an end this May, decided that he should be rector.

Labour Club members soon found themselves caught up in a Kafkaesque world of clandestine meetings with Kelly himself and his various assistants.

Kelly's propaganda machine then got into top gear. The Labour Club had to face a hysterical editorial in the Evening Times of February 22 and a vicious feature in the Glasgow Herald of the 25th.

At the Glasgow District Labour Party meeting of Thursday 23rd, the Militant and the

right wing clubbed together to vote down a motion supporting the Labour Club.

The Labour Club now needs support against this bullying onslaught.

The post of Rector is largely symbolic. However a sizeable vote for Arafat would be a blow for the Palestinians and for democracy in the labour movement.

Brent

AT the AGM of Brent South Labour Party on Saturday 25th, Socialist Action supporters backed the nomination of John Godfrey as CLP Secretary.

Godfrey has been at the forefront of the local attempted witch-hunt on those who disrupted the Brent council meeting before Christmas. Previously, in his capacity as chair, he spoke and used his casting vote in support of a resolution condemning those who disrupted the meeting.

International

Lebanon smoulders



The marines go... the people of Lebanon still pay the price

THE US marines left Beirut on Saturday February 26, with the US battleship New Jersey signalling their departure by yet another round of shells at Druze and Syrian positions.

The US intervention has been a fiasco. Its aim was to help create a strong pro-imperialist Lebanese state, linked by a treaty to Israel. It has created only an intractable chaos of communal conflicts.

The marines pull out, to await better times. And as for the people of Lebanon... too bad about them.

The country is now effectively partitioned. The Israelis control the south. Syria and its Muslim allies are dominant in the north. The nominal Lebanese government of Amin Gemayel controls practically nothing.

Gemayel is trying to make a deal with Syria, with Saudi Arabia adding pressure from the background. Other Christian forces oppose his abrogation of Lebanon's treaty with Israel. Muslim militias want to see Gemayel removed.



Sinn Féin press conference on 'supergrasses'

Supergrasses condemned

former accomplices.

*Although in English law the normal rules of evidence ruled out testimony obtained by "hope of advantage... held out by a person in authority", in some 'supergrass' cases testimony had been admitted in evidence which was given by people who had themselves been offered immunity from prosecution for serious crimes.

*Some such witnesses had been in custody for long periods — well over a year — before the trial, so that the police had ample opportunity to unduly influence their testimony.

*Lack of juries in "Diplock Courts" in Northern Ireland meant that the normal practice of the judge warning the jury of the dangers of convicting defendants on the sole basis of such evidence could not be carried out.

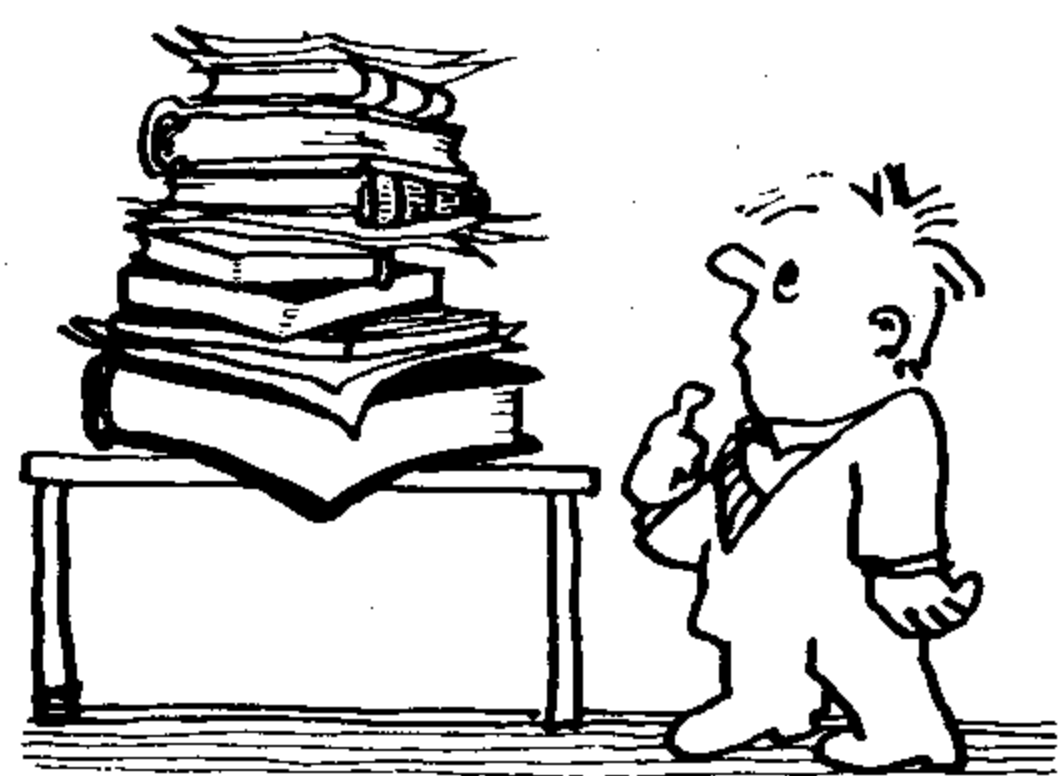
Propaganda tag

Joan Maynard MP talked to Socialist Organiser about the Press outcry against her last week when she said that the word terrorist was a tag attached to opponents of the establishment for propaganda purposes.

"The main point I made was that they called men like Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya a terrorist and he became a founder of his country. So did many others called terrorists for daring to oppose imperialism.

"The way the media use tags like terrorist is just shameless propaganda to stop people thinking of the issues.

"I think the main reason for the outcry against what I said was the Chesterfield by-election. They wanted something to hit the left with, to try to smear Tony Benn with. As usual..."



FACTS&FIGURES

By Martin Thomas
Capital in China

CAPITALIST investment in China is increasing.

The total so far comes to about \$490 million in offshore oil, and \$400 million elsewhere.

105 joint ventures were approved last year, involving foreign capital to the tune of over \$250 million. The biggest were a Belgian telephone equipment operation, and an American Motors jeep factory.

'Multi-skill'

A RECENTLY-published survey has identified 150 factories where 'multi-skill' agreements have been brought in.

These agreements remove traditional craft demarcations and call for skilled workers to cover several different jobs.

The survey finds that payments for such flexibility have usually been small, and that the agreements are becoming more and more common.

Back to barter

STARTLING figures have been published about the increasing share of barter in world trade.

A US company, 'Business Trend Analysts', reckons that some 30% of world trade now takes place by barter, and some 40% of Third World/Third World trade.

"Ford trades its cars for thousands of Uruguayan sheepskins, Levi-Strauss sells a turnkey plant to Hungary and gets jeans in return, ... and a Washington law company receives chicken and leather jackets and payment for its advice to a developing country".

This return to primitive economics is caused by the drying-up of international credit in the wake of the great debt squeeze.

Deportations

DEPORTATIONS from Britain are still increasing. The most recent figures available are for 1982: in that year, nearly 2,000 people were deported, or an average of six a day.

In 1973 465 people were deported.

Women get 69%

WOMEN'S pay in Britain is only 69% of men's (figures for manual workers in manufacturing industry).

Inequality here is worse than in other countries. In Italy women get 87% of men's pay, and in Denmark 85%.



Polish miners

Solidarnosc underground

Zbigniew Bujak, a young worker from the Ursus tractor factory on the outskirts of Warsaw whose work-ers played a central role in the protests against price increases in June 1976, became a leader of an unofficial group of activists in the plant in the late 1970s.

When Solidarity was formed Bujak became the chairperson of the Warsaw regional organisation, known as the Masowsze region. He became one of the most authoritative national leaders of Solidarity during its period of open existence.

Aged 29, he is said to be one of the foremost leaders of the Solidarnosc underground organisation now.

The following is the conclusion of a recent interview with him.

How do you see your future?

If everything goes normally, I think that the authorities will retreat from their current policies in 1985. After all the years in hiding, I'll emerge, go home and hide, and no one will be able to find me, for one thing I have learnt is how to hide.

Of course, things could get worse, and we could continue scuffling and struggling for Solidarnosc for a long time to come. I can remain under-

ground, but not for long: a maximum of five years.

I'm an optimist, and therefore never speculate on the chances of the situation getting even worse. What will happen, if things get very bad? Let Rakowski and Jaruzelski ponder on it.

Isn't it difficult for you?

I find the huge number of changes — daily changes — to be the greatest strain. Something changes at every moment, every week: here a different place to stay, there different people, new contacts, new problems. But apart from this... I have a very large family. We were always on good terms with one another, and it was always noisy and lively. I miss that, of course. I used to live in Lesna Podkowa, in the forest, among the trees — this cannot be compared with living in hiding in Warsaw.

Five sacked

FIVE Polish workers have been sacked, and 67 fined, for strikes in protest at the recent food price rises.

Prices were raised by an average of 20% on January 30. A number of workplaces have struck: the Polish government admits to four.

The sacked workers are from the Hutmen copper goods factory in Wroclaw.

March

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

MONDAY March 5: Who killed James Davey? Public meeting, 7.30pm in the Main Room, Hillfields Community Centre, Charles St, Coventry. Speakers include the father of Colin Roach.

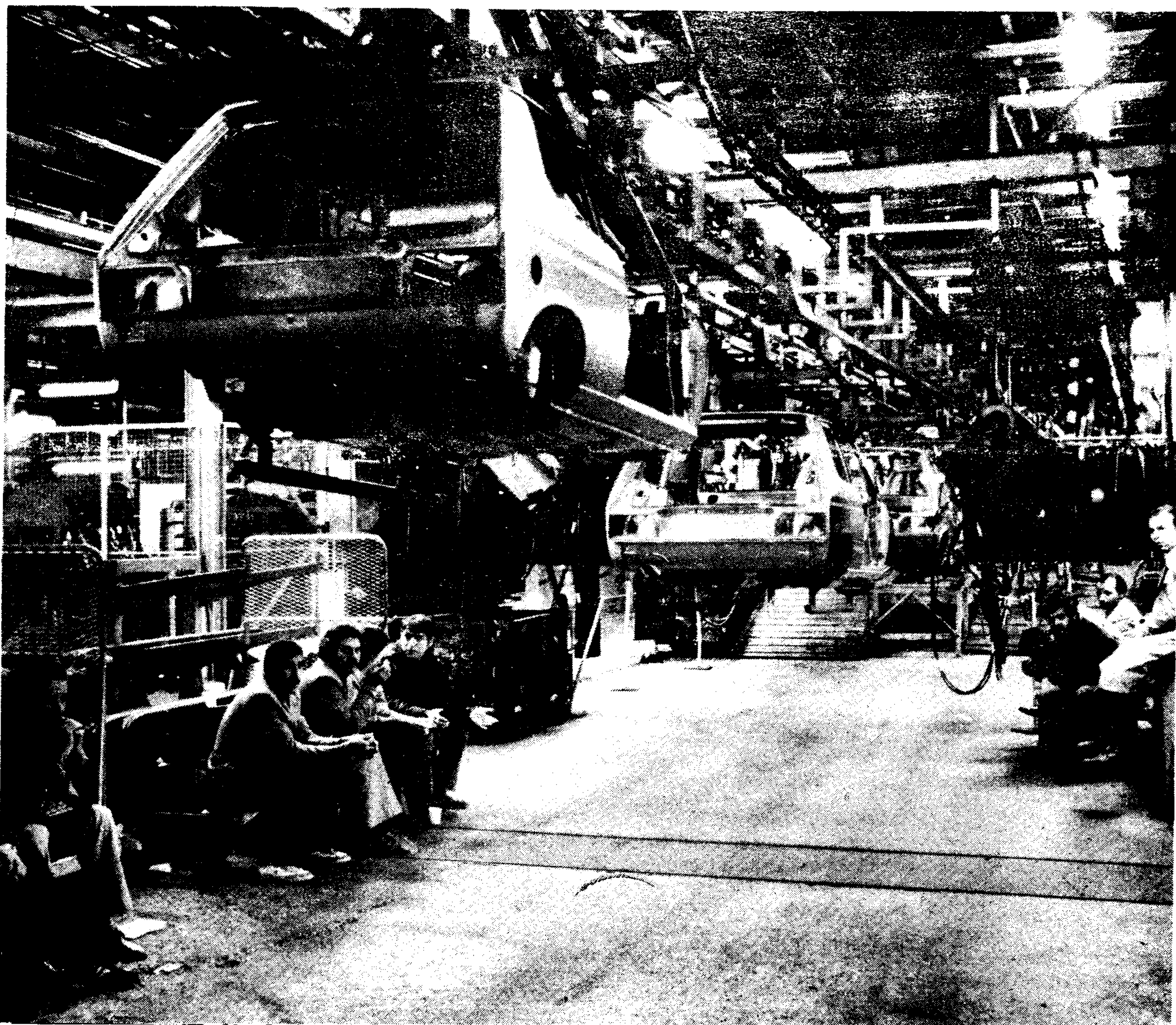
Saturday March 24: National conference of CLP delegates, in Nottingham. Credentials for up to 4 delegates per CLP from Tony Simpson, 26 Rockingham Grove, Bingham, Notts NG13 8RY.

Saturday March 31: Socialist Organiser day school in Sheffield. 10.30 to 4 at the Mount Pleasant Community Centre, Sharrow Lane, off London Rd. Waged £1, unwaged 20p.

Saturday April 14: Next Socialist Organiser delegate meeting, in Nottingham.

TROOPS OUT NOW!

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



Talbot, Poissy (France) during the recent strike: a socialist Euro-MP could have helped build solidarity

Comrade Chair, comrades, thank you very much for inviting me to this Euro-selection conference.

The first thing to answer, I think, is why any socialist would want this job. I've been swotting up on the Common Market, recently, as you might expect, and I came across this extract in "The Economist": "The 434 members of the European parliament lead a dog's life, travelling thousands of miles, living out of suitcases, attending countless boring committee meetings only to see their pet projects vetoed by the Commissioners at the end of it all. Worse still, the public view is of a gravy train of high salaries and elastic expense accounts funded by the taxpayers."

Why indeed would any socialist want this job? The fact is that the European Parliament has consultative power only, rather like the House of Lords — real power lies with the Council of ten Ministers and the 14 Commissioners.

There are, of course, those in the British Labour Party who believe that socialism will come through parliament alone — in the fullness of time. Well, one thing is for sure, socialism in Europe cannot come through the European parliament alone as present constituted.

Extra-parliamentary

So the most important role for a socialist Euro MP must be an extra-parliamentary role. That means making the links between the various struggles of the workers and the oppressed in Midlands Central and those in the rest of Europe. That means avoiding boring committee meetings and maintaining a base in and a knowledge of this area and its problems. It also means a strict accountability to the labour movement here.

Let's face it. The Common Market was formed as a free trade area to give the multi-nationals a field day at our expense. They can move their capital and plant from area to area, close down factories, take over other firms taking advantage of looser EEC trade restrictions and EEC money. They play ducks and drakes with our jobs and our lives and we have little or no control over them.

Let's face it. The Common Market was

by Dave
Spencer

THIS was Dave Spencer's speech when he was a candidate for the Labour nomination in the Midlands Central Euro-constituency. He lost the nomination to David Blackman — a right-winger whose slogan is "A square deal for Britain and a new deal for Europe."

One major reason was that left-wingers, short-sightedly, had failed to fight for delegacies to the Euro-selection, or if delegated had failed to turn up.

go away or to want to throw up import controls to conserve British capitalist industry is self-defeating.

The only way is to make the links with European workers, to fight in solidarity against the multi-nationals who are taking us all for a ride. That may sound like pie

in the sky, but there is really no other way comrades.

A Euro-MP would be useful in making these links. How he or she would do that, I will explain in talking about the two most important issues on which, in my view, the Labour Party should fight this election, that is on unemployment and the threat of nuclear war.

There are over eleven million people unemployed in the EEC at the moment and the situation is getting worse. One thing I learnt from my grandfather, who worked at the Humber Stoke car factory all his life, is that unemployment is the scourge of the working class. Not only does it eat into the individual's soul, but it divides us amongst ourselves, as we all fight for a job — the employed against the unemployed, the young against the old, men against women, white against black.

Maggie know this of course and so do her co-thinkers in Europe.

Unemployment does not come like bad weather, it can be created, it can be manipulated to break the back of the labour movement. We must not be played off one against another, and this means on a European scale too.

A classic case is the recent Poissy-Talbot dispute in France, where workers fought each other in the plant, as far as one can see along race lines. Then our own Pat Fox in Coventry was reported as having said, "If they don't want the work, we'll do it here at Ryton."

Fighting racism

This is where a socialist Euro-MP could have intervened. Delegations from each factory would speak at labour movement meetings in each town. The question of racism would involve meetings between the immigrant communities in both areas. Each people must know the thinking of the other, solidarity

against the multi-nationals must be built, not division.

It may not of course work out exactly like that, but the effort must be made, lessons learnt, the consciousness raised.

What was the response of our Tory Euro-MP, John De Courcy Ling? He went to meet the management of Peugeot Citroen to get reassurances on the future of Ryton — and this only because there is an election in the offing.

Multi-nationals

The man is a dairy farmer from Henley-on-Thames, doing quite nicely thank you on the subsidies from the Common Agricultural Policy — 70% of the EEC budget. He represents a different class from us, he knows where his bread is buttered.

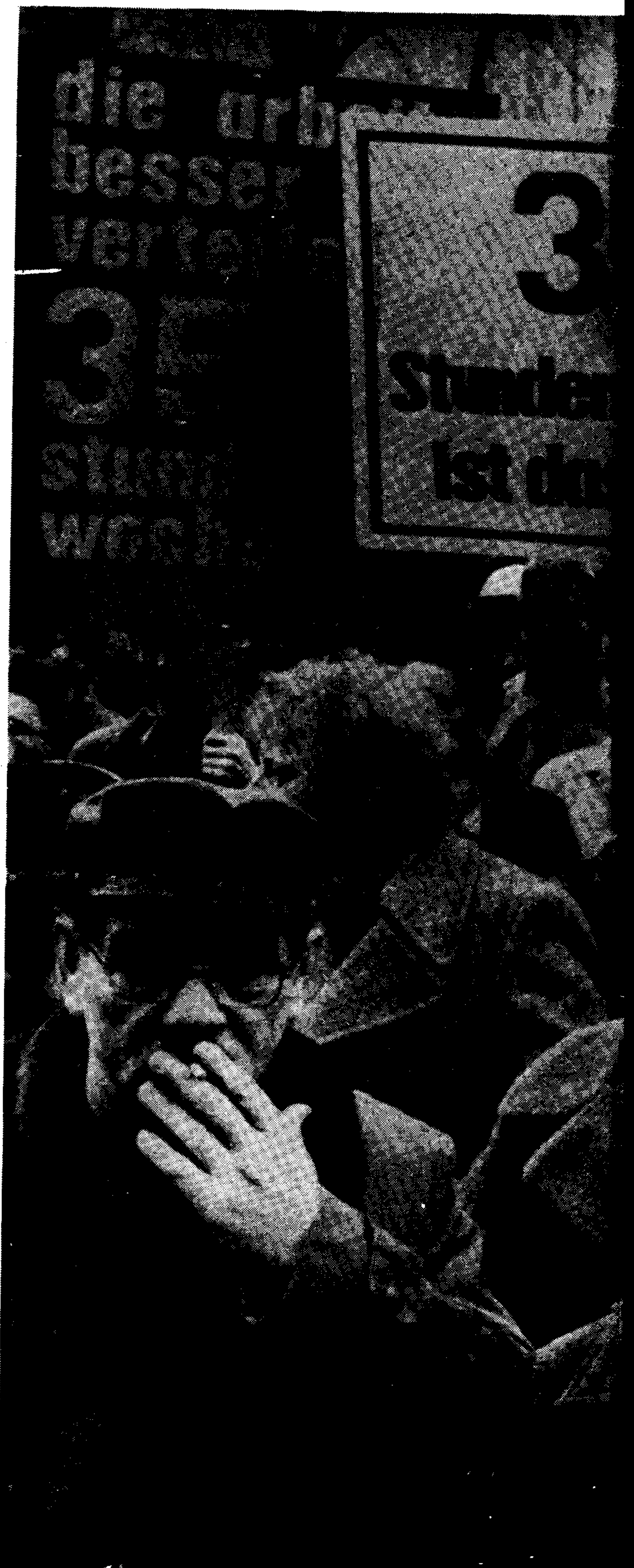
There may be those who say a Euro MP should be fighting for special regional status for Midlands Central — to grab as much grant as possible to set up industry again.

I'm not opposed to that in principle. But as I have seen on the West Midlands County Council, you can put money in to stimulate local industry and create a few jobs, then behind your back Dunlop come along and close down a whole factory throwing over



Solidarity with workers in Eastern Europe is an essential part of the fight for a united Europe

Our H



An international issue. German workers demonstrate for a 35 hour week

a thousand workers on the dole.

It is the multi-nationals that have to be tackled and that means working class solidarity, European and international if it comes to that.

One last example on this — involving the Ford foundry at Leamington. Ford have decided to produce a small car for the American market.

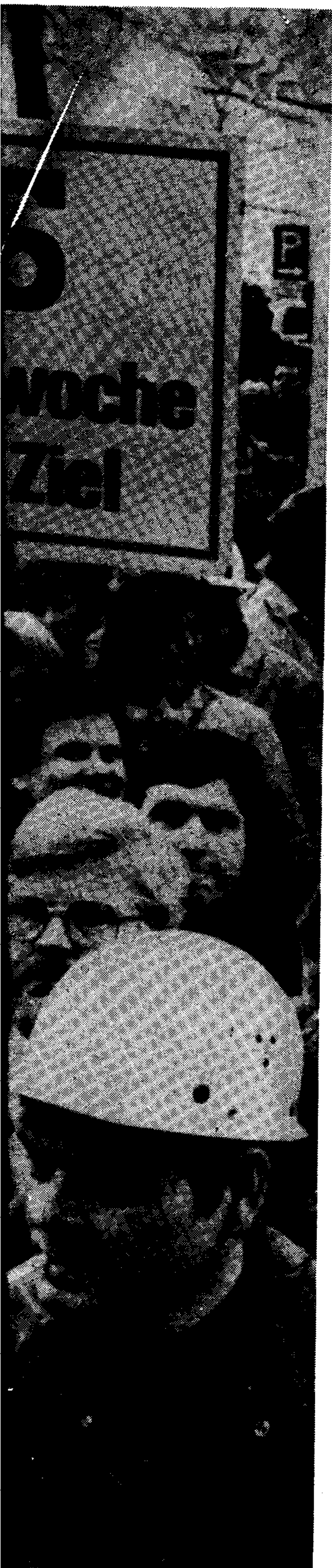
Picked off

They plan to invest 350 million dollars in Mexico and bring the new cars over the border. Ford Cologne produce a small car for the American market at the moment — that will go by the board. So Ford Cologne have spare capacity — why not build a new foundry there and close Ford Dagenham's foundry? The plan is for maximum profit for Ford, while the jobs and lives of workers are dispensable.

We can only fight this properly on a multi-national scale — otherwise we get picked off one against another.

A socialist Euro-MP could play an invaluable extra-parliamentary role here.

Europe...



Germany and Czechoslovakia. This constant nuclear escalation is frightening the hell out of us all, particularly with that self-styled Flash Gordon in the White House and our own peculiarly British strutters and poseurs in the House of Commons. In Midlands Central, of course, we would get the full force of any nuclear attack — there would be no survivors.

World War 3

At the same time Coventry stands in the world as symbolic of the terrible destruction of World War 2. It has been chosen for that reason by CND nationally as a focus for a national demonstration in early June to intervene in the Euro-elections.

I myself was born during the Blitz and can, I think, speak for a post-war generation which views the prospect of a World War 3 with horror. It is a natural feeling amongst ordinary people which impels them to international solidarity.

My friend Eric Harrison went on a demonstration in Bonn last Easter. He told me when he unfurled the Coventry CND banner, he had German people young and old coming over to shake his hand, their eyes full of tears.

Peace links

A Euro-MP for this area would be in a good position to build links based on the growing peace movements in Europe — West and East, based on a genuine fear of nuclear war and a genuine desire for united action to get rid of nuclear weapons once and for all.

One thing we must do in this campaign and afterwards is to break the "culture of silence" which surrounds this question. On campaigning on the issue of Civil Defence for the West Midlands County Council I have found that most people believe that there will be a World War 3 but they cannot see what they can do about it. By making the links in Europe, by developing self-confidence in our solidarity we can change this fatalism.

This is not an act of faith or idealism, comrades, this is an act of absolute necessity.

A socialist Euro-MP would have to speak out on international affairs, since a World War is more likely to spring from a war in Central America or the Middle East than from a stand-up fight in Europe.

Some may say that this is foreign affairs and far away from the economics of the Common Market and of the Euro parliament. But this is not the case.

EEC imperialism

The Foreign Ministers of the ten EEC countries meet regularly, the ambassadors of the ten meet regularly in every country in the world and in the United Nations to try to forge a common EEC foreign policy — ignoring of course, meanwhile, the European parliament. After all, foreign policy has a lot to do with foreign trade. Business is business wherever it takes place. The 1979 Lome conference has brought 63 Third World countries under the Common Market umbrella.

This is latter-day imperialism, an attempt to carve up influence in the world — not between Britain and France as in the old days but between Europe as a whole, the USA and Japan.

This is the world we live in, comrades, things are moving very fast and as I said earlier, we socialists have a lot of ground to make up.

The Common Market has nothing to do with internationalism or even common humanity — it is merely a convenience for capitalists. What we must want is a United Socialist States of Europe.

To this end a socialist Euro-MP for Midlands Central should fight for the interests of the working class of this area — this must mean links and solidarity with the working class in Europe and the rest of the world. We have nothing to lose but our chains.



Peace demonstration in West Germany. another issue on which socialist Euro-MPs could help build solidarity

and theirs



Only international workers' unity can stop the ebbs and flows of multinational capitalism devastating whole communities

Knitting capitalism together

AFTER the Great Crash of 1929, the world in general and Europe in particular split apart into rival trading blocs, based on colonial or semi-colonial empires.

The inter-imperialist rivalries led to World War 2.

Intra-European trade (trade between one European country and another) did not recover to its 1913 level until 1950.

After World War 2 the 'super-imperialism' of the US provided an umbrella under which West European capitalism was remodelled.

In connection with the Marshall Plan of US aid, the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation [forerunner of the OECD] was set up in 1948.

As the US/UK/French control over West German coal and steel was ended, the European Coal and Steel Commission was proposed and eventually set up in April 1951. The UK refused to join: the members of the ECSC were the same countries as became the original six mem-

bers of the EEC, France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg. The ECSC was to create a 'common market' in coal and steel.

This came at the beginning of rapid growth. Steel production in the EEC Six grew by 114% between 1952 and 1967.

The EEC was set up by the Treaty of Rome in March 1957.

The UK, Denmark and S. Ireland joined in 1972/3, to create the EEC Nine. Greece joined in 1980/1, making an EEC of ten countries.

1962: Common Agricultural Policy begun.

1968: Abolition of internal tariffs and creation of customs union completed. Free movement of labour established.

Agriculture

1968: Mansholt plan for drastic rationalisation of agriculture in the EEC.

1969: EEC sets aim of economic and monetary union.

1971: Common Fisheries Policy begun.

1978: European Monetary System set up: a system of tying EEC currencies to each other. Meant to be a first step to a common monetary system. Not a great success. UK has not joined.

1979: European Parliament elected for the first time. It has practically no powers. Theoretically it can sack the EEC Commission by a two-thirds vote.

Trade bloc

Today the EEC is by far the biggest single bloc in world trade. In 1973 the EEC countries accounted for 39% of all world trade. The percentage has decreased since then, mainly because OPEC accounts for a much bigger share of world trade since the oil price rises: but still the EEC accounts for 34% of all world trade.

Trade within the EEC has grown faster than trade between the EEC and the rest of the world. In 1953, intra-EEC 6 trade accounted for only 5% of all world trade. By 1973, intra-

EEC 9 trade was 21% of all world trade.

Every EEC country shows an increase in the proportion of its trade that is with other EEC countries. In 1957, the biggest EEC countries had 20-odd% of their trade with other EEC countries; by the 1970s, around 50%.

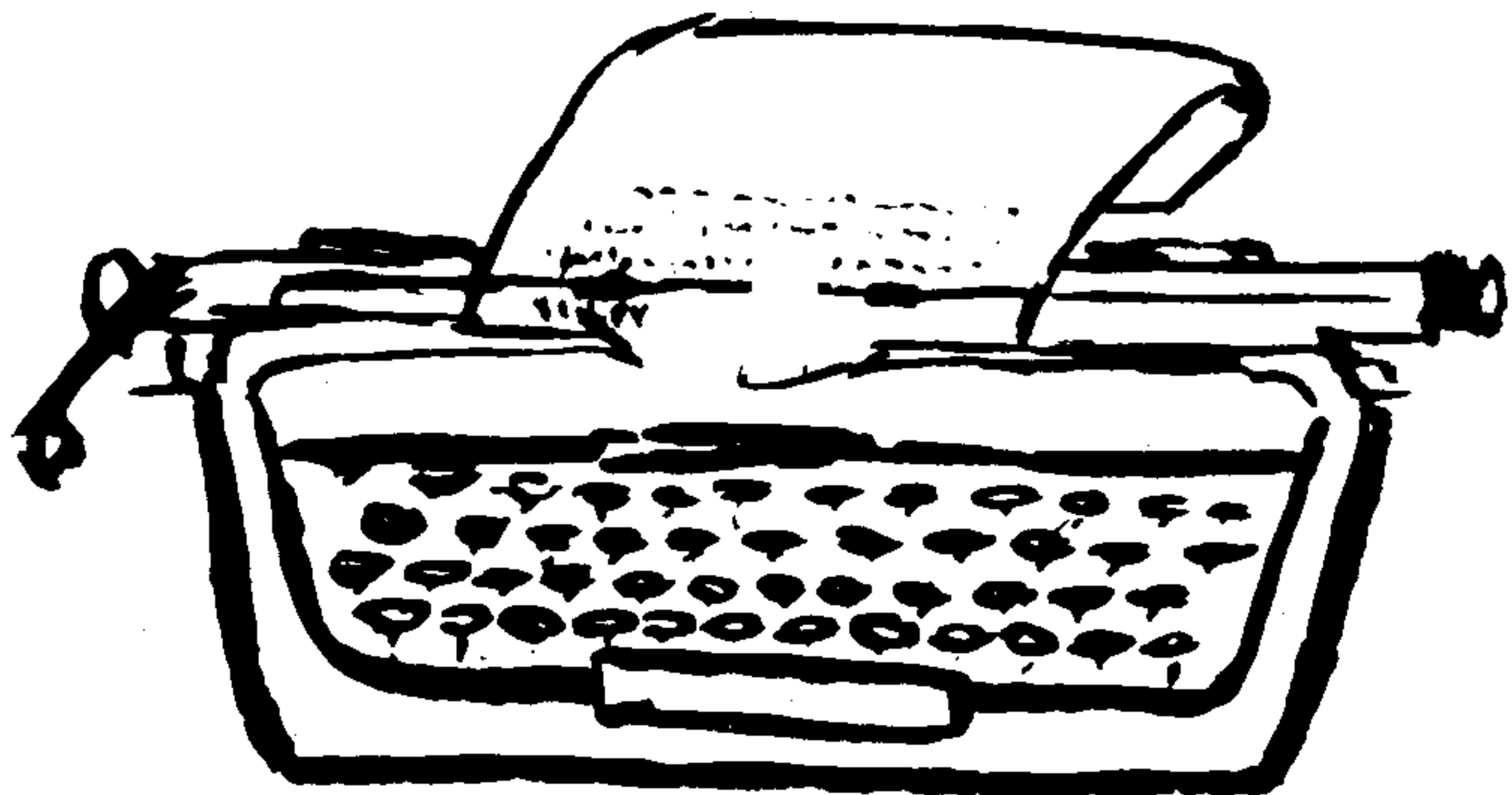
Possibly the capitalist group which has gained most from the development of the EEC has been the US multinationals.

In 1959 only 16% of the stock of US foreign direct investments was in Europe. By 1968 it was 30%.

However, as the EEC has developed it has become a powerful challenger to the dominance of the US in the capitalist world.

Logically, the sharpened inter-imperialist competition of the 1970s and 1980s should face the EEC with the options of either flying apart or complete integration. In fact tendencies in both directions have been visible, but the outcome so far has not been dramatic change but slow, faltering movement towards integration.

WRITEBACK



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

Progress in the USSR?

TO MY mind Mike McNair has got an amazing number of important issues confused in his letter (Socialist Organiser 167).

Centrally, Mike starts all his reasoning from labels rather than from facts.

In the 1930s, Trotsky tried to analyse a fact not envisaged by previous Marxist theory: a state where the bourgeoisie had been expropriated and the economy collectivised, but the working class was crushed and oppressed by a totalitarian bureaucracy.

The best term he could find for this state was 'degenerated workers' state'. A label like 'state capitalism' or 'bureaucratic collectivism' would better express Marxists' feelings about the USSR: but for Marxists terms like 'capitalism' are not curses but have precise theoretical content.

Mike proceeds from Trotsky's label by formal logic. The USSR is a degenerated workers' state, therefore it is a workers' state, therefore "the workers have made real gains there" and "it is an element in the class camp of the working class."

Thus Mike sets conclusions derived by formal logic from Trotsky's label against the facts from which Trotsky derived that label.

Mike does not dispute any of the facts I cited about workers' conditions in the USSR.

He merely insists that revolutionary principle requires us to compare workers' conditions in the USSR with those in India and not those in Western Europe or the USA.

Why India? Why not Japan, which was at a similar level to Russia in the early years of this century?

Broadening the field, how can we convince workers in East Germany that they should compare their conditions with India rather than with West Germany? More to the point, why should we want to?

Workers' conditions in the Stalinist states are atrocious compared to what is technologically possible, and that should be our criterion.

Mike's reasons sound rather like the flip-side of the conservative argument socialists hear in Britain: 'Complain as you like, you're still better off here than in Russia.'

But Mike squares his logic by arguing that workers in Western Europe and the USA are a privileged class. Rather than themselves being exploited, they live off the exploitation of the Third World.

This is not true. Western Europe and the USA do not only consume vastly more than the Third World, they produce vastly more. True, the relative prosperity of these areas is tied together with social relations which perpetuate low productivity in the Third World countries and drain resources from them: but that is not the same as

'exploitation' in the precise Marxist sense.

And Mike should not attribute his own Third Worldist views to Trotsky, who always argued for working class politics in every country, not for the politics of camps and blocs which Mike prefers.

A lot more could be said — for example on Mike's presentation of Trotsky's views on Stalin's invasion of Finland — but space forbids.

CHRIS REYNOLDS
London



Russian troops advancing during World War 2

A workers' state

WHAT are we to make of an article (Clive Bradley on Lenin, SO, February 9) which says nothing of that fundamental of the Trotskyist tradition, the theory that under Stalin by the 1930s the USSR was a 'degenerated workers' state'?

This is not a phrase Trotskyists may easily dispose of. It means that some of the political and social gains of the 1917 Revolution remain and must be defended both by the Russian working class and by the workers of the imperialist countries. It means that the laws of motion of society in the USSR are funda-

mentally different from those of capitalist society.

Clive Bradley's discussion of Lenin on the state suggests otherwise. If this is not an accident of a bizarre kind, it is a conscious sleight of hand.

He says the existing state machine must be smashed, not taken over. By juxtaposing the need to "smash" the capitalist state and the "bureaucratic Stalinist states" he suggests that the two tasks for revolutionaries are the same in each case. Disgust at the "monstrous perversion" of Stalinism must not

be allowed as a reason for dissolving categories of analysis.

If Bradley wishes to abandon elements of the Trotskyist heritage that is his prerogative. Let him say so clearly. I, for one, have no desire to follow his example.

Major threat

If Stalinism was the major threat in the working class movement I could understand the writing of an article which sought to mark a clear line between such ideas and those of revolutionaries. However, the

major danger at the present time comes from social democratic and liberal ideas about the Soviet Union, from 'state capitalism' to 'totalitarianism'.

In such a context, Bradley's way of defending Lenin's heritage is nothing more than pandering to the prejudices of those we must win to such concepts as the need to defend the Soviet Union against imperialism. Your paper has attacked Jack Barnes' anti-Trotskyist pursuit of Castro. This is something quite as pernicious.

PAUL HUBERT
Leeds

Forum

'LABOUR TAKE THE POWER'

Ambiguity isn't revolutionary

IN HIS polemic against Fergus Ennis (SO, February 16), Chris Knight explains some general notions about transitional demands quite well. But he does not answer Ennis's specific objections to the slogan 'Labour Take the Power'.

"All transitional demands", Chris argues, "are 'ambiguous', and have got to be. They are initially accepted by workers who believe that they can be implemented within the system... The transition to the opposite meaning of the slogans — their revolutionary sense — is accomplished in the course of the practical struggle for power".

This is half true. A slogan like the sliding scale of hours (work-sharing without loss of pay) can be seen by masses of workers as an immediate answer to economic problems, while Marxists see it as leading towards a revolutionary struggle for workers' control over the economy.

In that sense there is an 'ambiguity'. But the 'ambiguity' is about where the demand leads, not what it is.

Start struggle

The tactic consists of Marxists saying to other workers: we can agree on this immediate demand. We think an extended struggle for it is likely to escalate into a fight for workers' control; lock-outs; factory occupations; clashes with the police; workers' defence squads... Maybe you don't. But let's start a struggle and let the further perspectives be decided by experience.

The point of a transitional demand is not to find a form of words which can embrace a multitude of meanings, from reformist to revolutionary. On the contrary: it is to channel

Martin Thomas contributes to the debate on Labour Briefing's new slogan, 'Labour Take the Power'.

vague aspirations (like: 'we want jobs') into more precise paths of class struggle.

Its virtue is its ability to help make working class aims more precise.

Open-ended

'Open-ended' would be a better description than 'ambiguous'.

But 'Labour Take the Power' is ambiguous rather than open-ended. What it leaves open is not its sequel, but its own meaning.

The idea of transitional demands is to break down our full socialist programme into a linked chain of partial demands which can be closely geared into concrete struggles.

The 'Labour Take the Power' approach is the opposite of this. Instead of providing gears and levers to make limited, vaguely-formulated struggles more precise, more far-reaching, and more victorious, it provides a catch-all phrase to link limited struggles with revolutionary objectives... by using the same words for them.

The link it establishes between day-to-day Labour Party routine, and revolutionary battles for power, is not a practical one: it is a purely verbal one, simply a matter of using the same form of words to cover two different things.

It does not help to transform the labour movement; on the contrary, it sanctifies its present routine, casting a false revolutionary glow over it.

Compare the slogan which Socialist Organiser has used

recently, for a workers' government: a government accountable to the labour movement, taking decisive measures against capitalist power and privilege.

The slogan is open-ended: many workers may think that such a government is possible in a reformist framework. But in immediate terms the slogan can help us turn the vague aspiration, 'not another Labour government like the last one', into precise action.

It can help us give more precise, far-reaching aims to the fight for Labour Party democracy.

The slogan does not presuppose a Marxist education for the workers it is addressed to: but it can help develop a revolutionary struggle to the extent that we are adequate in agitating for the precise measures to be taken against capitalist power and privilege.

The 'workers' government' slogan is a lever to help transform the labour movement to make Labour capable of 'taking the power'. 'Labour Take the Power' has no such dimension.

The implicit assumption behind 'Labour Take the Power' is that the Labour Party is a sort of massive 'government surplus stores', equipped with all the machinery for a working class seizure of power — only the leaders choose not to use it.

Comforting

In reality the problem of reformism is much more profound: the present structures of the Labour Party are suited to election campaigns, not revolutionary uprisings!

In a situation where the Labour Party had far more participation in its structures, and a far stronger spirit of self-assertion among the rank and file, a slogan like 'Labour Take the Power'

might be relevant: it might map a concrete step forward in struggle for the labour movement. Right now it can only breed the comforting illusion that the routine process of trying to get Labour into office is at least a limited form of socialist revolution.

Sober

When Fergus Ennis emphasised the need for a sober assessment of the Left's setbacks, he was not sneering at Briefing. He was warning that we must not deceive ourselves by overestimating the significance of resolutions or positions won in small meetings.

The practical test of this whole debate is the experience in local government. Chris Knight protests that "comrades like Ken Livingstone and Ted Knight" are "with us" on the key points, and must not be equated with "our real internal opponents" like Kinnock.

Stuart Marshall Clarke (SO 167) complains that Ennis's criticisms of the local government Left do not take account

of the "objective conditions" facing them.

Yes, Ken Livingstone (for example) is not to be equated with Kinnock, and, yes, he has faced difficult objective conditions.

But none of that, in my view, justifies his opposition to the tube workers' pay claim in 1981; his climbdown over cheap fares; his links with those slavish apologists of Islamic reaction, the WRP; his 'Popular Front' methods of defending the GLC; his capitulation to the Tories over the Harrods bombing; or his failure unequivocally to back Liverpool council today.

'London's ours'?

Too many Labour left-wingers have been drawn in Livingstone's wake by deference to the 'power' supposedly associated with his and similar offices. And for all Chris Knight's protestations, I'm not sure he is free of the confusion himself.

It was the same Chris Knight, after all, who had a hand in Briefing headlines like "London's Ours!" and "Fortress Islington"

INSIDE

NAB

CENTRE PAGE 1

NEWHAM 8

PAGE 4

THE SWP

PAGE 1

MID EAST WAR

PAGE 3

SOCIALIST STUDENT

Page 10 Socialist Student in NOLS Issue 2 December January 83 84 10p

BATTLE FOR THE

NGA!

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

Stateless nations

WE HAVE already had three instalments of BBC Scotland's series about the 'Stateless Nations' of Europe. Last week's was about a people I'd never head of, the Valdians, who speak a French dialect but are part of the Italian state.

They live high up in the Alps in Val d'Aosta, just on the border between France and Italy, but on the wrong side of it.

They have been part of an Italian state since 1861. During World War 2 the area was a base for the French maquis against the Germans, and suffered heavy German and Italian fascist reprisals for it. The Valdians were granted autonomy — under French pressure — in 1946, and there is official bilingualism.

Autonomy

Yet their autonomy is constricted: any laws they pass have to be approved by a commission on which the representatives of the central Italian government have a two-to-one majority.

The area used to be isolated for half the year, but tunnels through the Alps and other transport improvements have changed that. Land in the Val d'Aosta is now the highest-priced in Italy, and there is a relentless pressure on the native population from immigrants. French is on the retreat.

The main industry is steel, which is, there as elsewhere, in massive crisis. So the cry for full self-control, and (for example) for charges to the Italian state for electricity generated in Val d'Aosta, is growing.

One irony is that the Italian state is far more tolerant in such matters than the French is. The Valdians speak a Franco-Provençal dialect like that of southern France, where there are stirrings of a long-buried southern French regionalism — whose advocates charge that the south is oppressed by the French state.

Ramshackle

Peoples with a common language and culture are the raw materials of states and nations. The pre-capitalist monarchic states were loose ramshackle structures, often conglomerates of peoples, areas, peoples, and parts of peoples changed states as a result of conquests and by way of dynastic shifts and successions, or even purchases.

An area like the Lowlands (Belgium and Holland) would go with a prince and attach to Spain or the German Empire as he did.

The modern nations were bonded together from this raw material by the creation of unifying national markets. But even in the classic cases like France, the state did not coincide with the entire ethnic/linguistic group of people.

The Walloon half of Belgium (independent since 1830) is French-speaking. They are yoked with Flemings who are akin to the people of neighbouring Holland.

When Germany was finally united in 1871, it was according to a smaller-Germany option which excluded German Austria, then at the head of a ramshackle empire embracing many

Mick Ackersley reviews BBC2 TV's series, 'The Stateless Nations'.

nations.

Millions of Germans were scattered in the East — three million of them in the Sudetenland alone, an area which became part of the Czechoslovakian state after World War 1. They had been resident in the region since the Middle Ages.

13 million Germans, including many from East Prussia (now part of Poland), were driven west in 1945.

On the other hand, nations like the Basques and Catalans were distinct entities within the archaic and backward Spanish state. Catalonia, with a language having much in common with French, was perhaps the most developed part of Spain, but all these minorities were imprisoned and oppressed, to varying degrees.

The Swiss created a nation out of peoples speaking four languages — French, Italian, German and Romansch. But that is very much the exception. The normal relations within states including peoples of different cultures and languages was that of the dominant and the dominated, if not the oppressed and the oppressor.

Boundaries have been changed and shifted many times, notably after the Napoleonic wars, World War 1 and World War 2. But today there is still a large scattering of peoples, nations and national minorities in Europe, imprisoned more or less against their will by states dominated by other peoples. They do not have the right to secede at will and form their own state, or join another one.

Ireland

Ireland is a peculiarly snarled-up example. After many centuries in a common state with England, a distinct Irish nationalism developed, and took its present form in the 19th century. Independence for most of Ireland and Partition came together in 1920-22. The natural minority is the Protestant community in north-east Ireland.

It might be defined as a British-Irish national minority. But because of the Protestant alliance with powerful sections of the British ruling class, the partition they imposed on Ireland has created a Catholic minority in the Six Counties which is bigger as a proportion of the Six County population than the Protestants are of the whole people of Ireland.

The result has been a 'carnival of reaction'. But Ireland would have a minority, and per-



The jigsaw of ethnic and language groups in part of Eastern Europe before World War 1

haps a minority problem, even if there were no partition.

Val d'Aosta shows that the question of minorities cannot be disposed of by talking vaguely about 'imperialism', or, in the case of Ireland, pretending that British intervention in Ireland is the only problem.

France was one of the powers that long kept Italy divided. Not until after France's defeat by Prussia in 1870 did the final unification of Italy become possible. In 1861 the cause of Italian unity was a major part of

the programme of Democrats and socialists alike. The First International took up this cause when it was formed in 1864.

Loathing for the empire of Napoleon III then was what loathing for fascism is on the Left today.

That did not make the national injustice done to the Valdians, any the less. The injustice continues long after Napoleon III and the fight for Italian unity disappeared into the mists of history, and long after capitalism in the 20th century has inflicted horrors on the people of Europe, and especially the working class, compared to which Napoleon III seems quite a benign gentleman.

The point — well brought out by the material presented in 'The Stateless Nations' — is that the bourgeoisie proceeded not according to consistent democracy, but by other principles. It did not recognise the free right of peoples, nations, and segments of nations to join together or separate at will: its primary drive was to ensure that each state should hold what territory it had, and acquire as much more as possible.

The East European and Russian Marxists at the turn of the 20th century drew the lessons of West European history, consciously using them as a guide for the breaking-up of the empires of Russia, Austria, and Turkey.

Oppressed

Their basic socialist programme was to unify the peoples, and in the first place the working class. They advocated free federations of peoples. That implied the right not to federate. It means that the Russian Marxists championed the right of the oppressed nationalities in the Tsarist Empire to secede (as some did after 1917).

Today, in Western Europe, the stateless nations are still victims of the lack of consistent democracy in the organisation of the European state system. The EEC is not organised as a democratic federation, but as a capitalist cartel ruled by a bureaucracy subject to very little accountability.

In the East and in the USSR, the Marxist programme is as topical and urgently needing to be realised as it ever was.

The biggest conglomerate of oppressed nations in the world today is held within the USSR and on its borders. Poland lacks self-determination; the Ukraine, a nation of 60 million, not only lacks self-determination but is

subject to systematic cultural oppression.

Throughout the rest of the world the creation of new states has simultaneously created problems of stateless peoples and nations. As the Russian and East European Marxists noted long ago, the bourgeoisies and petty bourgeoisies of oppressed nations are usually eager to assert themselves chauvinistically against minority peoples within their own claimed territory.

This includes peoples resident for many centuries (Tamils in Sri Lanka), peoples who moved from the Indian part of the British Empire to the African in the 19th and early 20th century, and some pockets of colonising Europe.

The stateless nations of Europe hold a mirror to the world in which a comparatively civilised version of a world-wide problem is shown. It is a problem which will probably only be resolved by the creation of free socialist federations and finally by a free world socialist federation.

Next week 'The Stateless Nations' deals with Brittany, the Celtic area in north-west France populated by people who moved there as refugees from the Saxon invasion of Britain 1400 years ago and still retain a distinct character.

Coming up

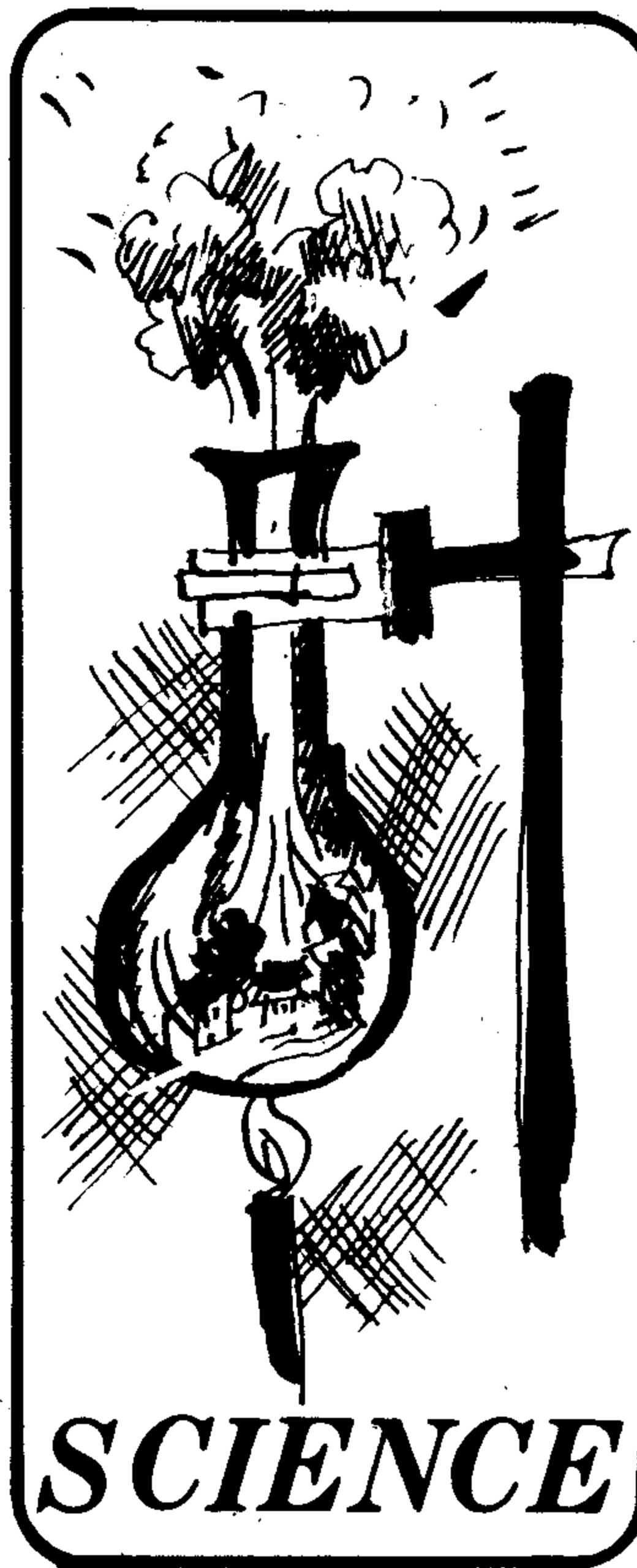
Saturday Channel 4: 7.30pm. Union World. Gus McDonald's series which this week is a film by Anne Lester about the unions in Nissan.

Saturday Channel 4: 10.30 pm. The Comic Strip Presents... War. Godfrey and Hermione on the run from a war-torn Britain occupied by Russians, Americans and various underground armies.

Sunday BBC1 11.20 am. Inside YTS. 'Who needs guidance.. not just the trainees, but the supervisors too.'

Sunday BBC2: 8.05. One Pair of Eyes. John Wells of Private Eye fame and Dennis Thatcher impersonator enlists the help of Max, a chimp, to teach him our language and to ask why we work.

Tuesday Channel 4: 6.30pm. Cautionary Tales. A guide to your legal rights. Violence in the house. Three women offer practical advice. A leaflet is available free from PO Box 4000. London W3 6XJ.



By Les Hearn

I recently wrote about the discovery of how one particular cancer gene works. Now some more have been uncovered.

Cells normally grow and divide in a controlled way. Control is often by chemicals called 'growth factors' (GFs) produced by cells elsewhere in the body.

If cells can escape from this control, they may form tumours, causing swellings and blockages, squeezing blood vessels and nerves, wasting the energy of the body, and lowering resistance to other diseases.

The control of growth is laid down in our genes, and it is the

Genes and war

type of damage that affects our genes that can cause cancer — radiation, certain chemicals, etc. But what sort of damage is it?

The discovery I previously wrote about concerned cells in the walls of blood vessels. When a blood vessel is damaged, certain blood cells, called platelets, release a GF which stimulates the blood vessel cells to repair the damage.

The blood vessel cells contain the gene for this GF, just like every other cell in the body, but the gene is switched off. If the gene is damaged in a particular way, it may be switched on, and the cells will then stimulate themselves to grow and divide. Result — cancer.

No doubt, many cancers will prove to be caused in this way, but there are other ways to achieve the same result.

GFs work by attaching themselves to special proteins called receptors, on the outside of their target cells. The receptor is like an ignition switch.

The GF switches it on and part of the receptor sends a message to a special gene in the nucleus controlling growth and division, switching it on in turn.

One cancer gene recently discovered codes for the part of the receptor that sends the message to the nucleus. Such a cell doesn't need a GF to make it grow.

Yet another type of cancer gene has been discovered. It is a modified form of the special gene controlling the whole process of growth and division.

Normally, it can only be switched on by the appropriate message, but in Burkitt's lymphoma (a cancer of the immune system) this gene has somehow hopped from its normal place on a chromosome into the middle of the genes for anti-bodies which are always switched on in immune cells. So these cells are

constantly dividing.

Incidentally, some viruses carry human cancer genes and can insert them into human chromosomes. Burkitt's lymphoma is thought to be caused by just such a virus, probably carrying a copy of the special gene mentioned above. Genetic engineering leads to biological warfare.

Worries about biological warfare are fuelling a row about genetic engineering in the USA.

The US Recombinant-DNA Advisory Committee (RAC) has just approved the cloning of a gene for a potent toxin. The toxin is made by certain gut bacteria and is responsible for the symptoms of a type of dysentery which kills many children in the Third World.

The researchers work for the US Department of Defense in the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences and say they are interested in developing a vaccine against this type of dysentery.

However, the research could easily be used for aggressive purposes, despite the good intentions of the researchers. This raises several difficult questions. On the one hand, we want to fight the many virulent diseases ravaging the Third World. On the other hand, we don't want to allow our rulers to develop ever more terrible weapons of destruction.

One solution might be to take all such research out of the hands of 'Defence' departments. However, capitalist governments could still find ways to misapply health research, so the question of workers' control of the results of such research comes up.

Alternatively, do we just try to ban such research while capitalism lasts, and perhaps encourage public health measures to combat such diseases as dysentery? Suggestions, please.

Socialist ORGANISER

Where we stand

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

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

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

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

*Defend all jobs! Open the books of those firms that threaten closure or redundancies, along with those of their suppliers and bankers, to elected trade union committees. For occupation and blacking action to halt the closures. For nationalisation without compensation under workers' management. *Make the bosses pay, not the working class. Millions for hospitals, not a penny for 'defence'! Nationalise the banks and financial institutions, without compensation. End the interest burden on council housing and other public services.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sheffield Socialist Organiser day school. Saturday March 31. 10.30 am to 3 pm, at Mount Pleasant Community Centre. Sharrow Lane, off London Rd.

With workshops on the peace movement, gay rights, racism, women in the labour movement, videos.



Socialists on the council

Martin Thomas reports from a Socialist Organiser meeting



Islington councillors and local Labour activists in session

ORGANISING support for Liverpool was one of the main discussions at a thinly-attended but lively meeting last Sunday, 26th, of Socialist Organiser supporters who are councillors.

The best support for Liverpool City Council's decision to defy the government over their 1984-5 budget, by making no cuts and no rent or rate rises, is for other Labour councils to do the same. But most council Labour groups have already decided cuts or rate-rise budgets.

The meeting decided to take up a suggestion from Manchester councillor Pete Keenlyside: if Liverpool has its credit cut off by the banks, other Labour councils should lend it money to enable it to pay wages. Such lending would probably get the councils hauled into court by the District Auditor (a government official) for 'financial irresponsibility', but it is the least they can do.

We also have to campaign for Labour councillors elsewhere simply to make statements of support for Liverpool. Although the Labour Party's local government committee is now chaired by leftist David Blunkett, it has done nothing for Liverpool.

The play-safe budgets adopted by most of the reputedly left-wing Labour councils this year have been justified in the cause of 'keeping their powder

dry' for the big battle next year, over rate-capping and the abolition of metropolitan authorities. But militant preparations for this 'big battle' are nowhere to be seen.

Instead, reputedly left-wing councils are lobbying businessmen, Tory MPs, and the House of Lords; doing all they can to make themselves look thrifty and respectable; and drafting 'tight' budgets which almost certainly will lead them into confrontation with their council workers.

The meeting felt that a lead against the new Tory measures is more likely to come from the council unions than from the councils. We decided, however, to investigate whether the Greater London Council should be pressed to respond to the abolition of the May 1985 GLC election by organising

its own election — with all the formalities of a regular election.

The sharpest argument in the meeting was over council workers' pay, focused on the current Building Works Department dispute in Islington.

The Islington SO group has supported the workers, but Islington councillor Alan Clinton argued that support for council workers' disputes could not be automatic. Councils have limited funds and many deserving claims on them. Why should council workers' pay take priority over other claims?

Camden councillor Graham Shurety took a middle position, but the majority of the meeting felt that the issue was not even open to debate.

Pete Keenlyside put it most trenchantly: "When trade unionists are in dis-

pute, you support them first and think about the details afterwards."

It is fallacious and dangerous to suppose that we really control the council machine and must take responsibility for balancing the books of 'the local state'. If multiple working class claims make the position of the council impossible, then the conclusion is not that some claims must be opposed but that the Labour councillors must confront the government.

"It's not a matter of councillors and non-councillors", said Pete Keenlyside. "It's a division between revolutionaries — whether councillors or not — and non-revolutionaries."

There was a related discussion on budget-voting. Pete Keenlyside explained that he intended to vote against this year's budget

in Manchester — no cuts, a small rate rise and a small rent rise.

He did not suppose that the government could be confronted over the small rent and rate rises. But, firstly, there was an issue of accountability. The District Labour Party's policy was for no rent rises. The DLP might decide that a 40p rent rise was not worth arguing about. But unless and until the DLP did decide that, the councillors must stick to the 'no rent rise' mandate.

Secondly, the record of the council is such that within the Labour Party he could not argue for confidence in it to the extent of demanding even a small amount extra in rents and rates from working class people in Manchester.

The meeting was more sympathetic to that position than to that of Graham Shurety, who explained that in Camden Labour Party he had argued in favour of a budget with no cuts, no rent rises, and a 7% rate rise. It was, he thought, an acceptable basis for preparing a struggle and the best that could be got this year.

We also discussed organisational problems of councillors' work: some comrades complained that they were left on their own too much on the day-to-day council issues, and Socialist Organiser did not organise enough centralised campaigning.

The next councillors' meeting is May 6.

What's on

SPEAKERS: Jeremy Corbyn, MP; Sinn Fein; Andrew Smith, Oxford East CLP; Alan Thorne, President of Oxford Trades Council; Anita Richards, National Treasurer of the LCI.

WHO killed James Davey? Public meeting, Monday 5 March at 7.30 p.m. in the Main Room, Hillfields Community Centre, Charles St., Coventry. Speakers include: father of Colin Roach, William Wilson (former MP, Coventry South West), Geoff Cogan, prisoners rights organisation.

LABOUR MOVEMENT Campaign for Palestine public meeting, "The Future for Palestine". Thursday 1 March, 7.30pm at Lewisham Labour Club, Limes Grove, SE13. Speakers: Richard Balfe, MEP, Women for Palestine, Ian Driver (trade unionist), Palestine Solidarity. Sponsored by East Lewisham Labour Party.

CRITIQUE public meetings. Friday March 2: What is Marxist about Marxist Political Economy? Speakers: Simon Clarke, Ben Fine, Sue Himmelweit and Hilel Ticktin.

Friday April 6: The Limits of Local Council Socialism. Speakers Robin Murray, Chief economic advisor to Ken Livingstone and Scott Meikle, author of *Essentialism in the Thought of Marx*. All meetings at 7.30pm, University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1.

THE THORN in the Rose — the Politics of Clause Four, A Revolutionary Marxist Critique. By Brian McKenna. Produced by Socialist Student (Glasgow). 30p. Rates (including postage): 1 copy: 50p; 2 copies 80p; 3 copies: £1.25, 5 copies: £2.00, 10 copies: £3.95. Special rates for larger orders. Write for details. Available from Socialist Student (Glasgow) c/o 29 Bowmont Place, Halfway, Cambuslang, Glasgow.

LABOUR Briefing conference on 'Labour and NATO'. Saturday March 24, from 10.30am at County Hall, London SE1.

GREENHAM Common benefit. Friday March 2, Chats Palace, Brooksbury Walk, London E2. £2.50, £1.50 unwaged.

ACTION Group on Immigration and Nationality conference. Saturday March 24, 10 am to 4.30 pm, at AUEW House, 43 The Crescent, Salford.

NEXT Socialist Organiser delegate meeting. April 14, in Nottingham.

Where to find us

SCOTLAND

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

GLASGOW. Contact Stan Crooke, 63 Dixon Ave., G42. Paper sales, Friday lunchtime, Springburn shopping arcade; Saturday morning, Coatbridge shopping arcade; Tuesday morning, Maryhill UBO; also West End bookshop.

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NEWCASTLE - ON - TYNE. SO is sold at the Days of

Hope bookshop, 115 Westgate Road.

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BRADFORD. Contact Richard Moore, 6 Ashgrove, Bradford.

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Industrial

Polmaise on its own

"THE press has stated that Mick McGahey, George Bolton and Eric Clarke (members of the Scottish Executive of the NUM) did not get the support of the miners last Monday.

"But at no time did I, as the NUM delegate from Polmaise, nor the Polmaise miners, nor Mick McGahey ask for an all-out strike. The recommendation was that official support be given for all-out strike at Polmaise from Tuesday. I agreed entirely with the recommendation."

This is what John McCormack, the NUM delegate from Polmaise, had to say about the decision reached by the Special NUM Delegates Meeting on February 20, when he spoke at a Communist Party rally (billed as a Scottish "Broad Left" rally) last Sunday in Glasgow.

No doubt it was sweet music to McGahey, Bolton and Clarke, who were all sitting in the audience. But it is hardly in tune with reality.

The Polmaise miners had been demanding an all-out strike. In the run-up to the February 20 meeting, all mines in Scotland

held pithead meetings where the question of all-out strike action was voted upon. And at the February 20 meeting, delegates were challenged on which way they had been mandated to vote.

So what was the logic behind McCormack's statement last Sunday? To keep differences within that movement rather than being latched upon and misrepresented by the capitalist media? That would be fair enough.

But, given the context in which the statement was made, it could only end up helping cover up for McGahey's increasingly tattered credentials as a militant trade union leader.

It is only through coming into conflict with the Scottish NUM Executive that the Polmaise miners have any chance of winning their fight. The demand for an all-out strike is the only demand that contains the possibility of saving the pit.

But, going on past experience, the NUM Scottish Executive will only campaign for "moral and financial support", rather than an all-out strike.

Certainly the NCB will immediately use any conflict between the Polmaise miners and the NUM Executive to try to weaken the standing of the NUM. But this must be of secondary importance to the fact that the Polmaise miners, in order to save their jobs, must appeal for all-out strike action in the face of whatever opposition may come from the Scottish Executive.

And the basis for the Polmaise miners campaigning in support of this demand clearly exists.

Miners cannot doubt the determination of the Polmaise miners to fight on to the end. As McCormack pointed out to the rally last Sunday, "In 1937 there was a ten-month strike at the pit for a pay rise of 1½d per ton of coal mined. This time we are fighting for our livelihood, so we'll stay out for ten months or ten years if need be. There's no way there'll be any crack-up in Polmaise. There's no way we will surrender to the Coal Board or redundancy payments."

Also, the Scottish Colliery Enginemen and Boilermakers' Association voted last week in favour of all-out strike action to save jobs, while the Scottish Triple Alliance also pledged to black imports and the movement of coal in order to step up the effectiveness of the current NUM overtime ban.

At the moment Polmaise stands isolated. Winning the conflict is dependent upon breaking out of their isolation and winning the argument for all-out strike action.

Phillips evicted

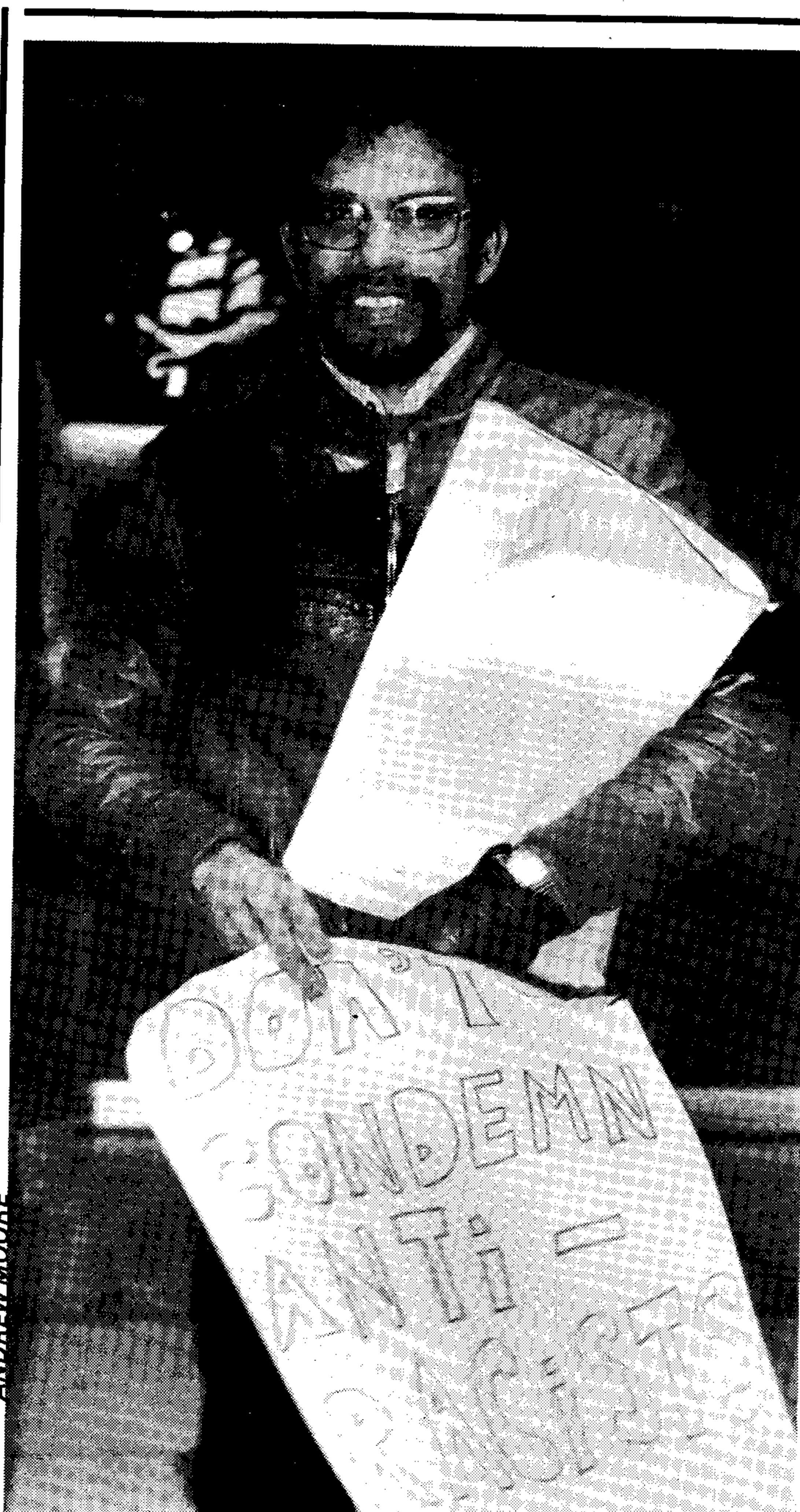
THE 103 workers at Phillips Rubber in Manchester are now in the eighth week of their strike.

The occupation which has successfully kept out all scab labour ended on Thursday with the serving of an eviction order.

However, morale is still high. As one of the shop stewards said, "The occupation has ended but we're still fighting. We'll continue with mass pickets until we have won this dispute."

As a demonstration of their determination to win the sacked strikers have now called a mass picket for Thursday.

However, attempts to get solidarity action from the company's other factory in Stranraer have so far failed. The Manchester strikers must build contacts with the Stranraer workers at rank-and-file level as well as seeking to broaden support in the local labour movement.



John Fernandes, a teacher sacked from Hendon Police College for publicising his students' racist essays, picketing his union, NATFHE, in support of four colleagues penalised for supporting him

Strathclyde school closures

ONLY a week after being confronted by a mass lobby of over 500 bus service workers, striking against threatened garage

closures, Strathclyde Regional Councillors had to run the gauntlet last Thursday (February 23) of some 200 parents, pupils and teachers protesting at plans to close six schools in the Region.

This latest lobby involved REACT (Resist East Area [School] Closures Today), fighting the closures of the St. James and Thomson Street schools in Glasgow's East End, and "Parents Against School Closures", campaigning against the closure of four schools in East Kilbride (Long Calderwood, Allers, Hunter and Maxwellton).

A spokesperson for REACT pointed out: "Labour councillors were voted in to fight the Tory cuts, not carry them out. But that's what they are doing. We voted them in and we can vote them out."

The Regional Council schools sub-committee refused to meet the lobby's demands. It decided against closure of St. James School — but resolved to shut another two schools in its place.

In East Kilbride, Allers is to be closed for "financial and geographical reasons", the future of Hunter and Maxwellton is to be "reviewed" in the light of proposed housing developments in the area, and Long Calderwood is to be kept open.

Increased pressure is required to force the Council to drop all its plans for school closures. In particular, the Educational Institute of Scotland (the Scottish teachers' union) must take a firm stand against the closures, which it has yet to do in the case of the East End schools.

Oppose deportations

Zeynep and Fatih Hasbudak are British citizens; they were born here. Unfortunately for them, they were born too recently, six and eight years ago. Unfortunately, that is, because their mum and dad are overstayers and the Home Office wants to deport them.

The Judge who heard the case against Mr and Mrs Hasbudak fined them for overstaying. She did not use her power to deport them because of the bad effects it would have on the children.

But Home Office minister David Waddington has pressed ahead with the deportation order because "it would clearly be wrong if parents could escape the consequences of their misdeeds solely because their children might suffer."

Zeynep and Fatih are in hiding now while the campaign for them to stay goes on. The police are hunting for them, going to where they used to live, pressurising people in the North London Turkish community for information.

The campaign is organised by the Parent Teacher Association of William Patten School, Church Street, Stoke Newington, London N16, and needs a lot of money to go with resolutions of support.

GCHQ rundown

By Mike Grayson

December 30: In her New Year message to the Tory Party, Thatcher promises that 1984 will be a year of hope and liberty.

January 25: Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe reveals the nature of 1984 Tory-style "liberty" by announcing a ban on trade unions at the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) based in Cheltenham.

The stated reason for the ban is that normal trade union activity might harm national security. Unions blame American pressure on the cabinet to break any resistance to the introduction of lie detectors at GCHQ.

Staff at GCHQ are offered £1,000 each if they sign away their union rights by a deadline of March 1.

January 26-7: Spontaneous walk-outs and protest meetings by civil servants take place across the country. Alan Sapper, general secretary of ACTT, suggests that union leaders should pull out of the current talks with the government on trade union reform.

January 29: Speaking on Weekend World, Len Murray rules out the idea of suspending talks with the government. He states that attempts to dissuade the Tories must precede any consideration of industrial action.

January 30: Civil service union leaders meet with the TUC Finance and General Purposes Committee. The latter pledges "full support to the unions in their attempts to retain the right of workers in GCHQ to maintain trade union membership and representation."

No strike

The civil service leaders stress that they have not offered a "no strike" agreement to the government, in return for the continued recognition of unions at GCHQ.

February 1: Union leaders meet with Thatcher and offer her a "no disruption" agreement, in return for the continued recognition of unions at GCHQ.

Despite being offered every possible compromise and sell-out, Thatcher remains unmoved but magnanimously agrees to meet the leaders again.

The "Socialist Caucus" (the "hard left" grouping within CPSA's Broad Left) puts out a leaflet calling on the Council of Civil Service Unions (CoCSU) to organise a one-day strike across all the civil service, as the start of a campaign to make the Tories back down.

February 2-3: In Parliament, Howe faces calls for his resignation, and charges of misleading the House, following the "TV Eye" fiasco. Howe confirms (in contradiction to what he said on the TV programme) that staff at GCHQ may be sacked if they refuse to sign away their rights.

Meanwhile, civil service union leaders plan a lobby of Parliament on the 23rd, and a "Day of Protest" on 28 February.

Graham

February 6: The press reports that today the civil service unions launch the "second phase" of their campaign, under the slogan, "No, Prime Minister!"

In a CPSA circular, general secretary Alistair Graham outlines plans for the 28th, but stresses "We are not making this a one-day or half-day strike."

February 7: The government bans the director of GCHQ

Cheltenham, and Jack Hart chair of GCHQ's side — from giving evidence to parliamentary enquiry into ban.

CPSA Broad Left produces leaflet calling for the 28th to be made into a full-day strike.

February 15: The House of Commons Employment Select Committee, with a Tory majority, unanimously recommends the government withdraws ban, and accepts the union concessions. Thatcher remains unmoved.

February 16: TUC "rally" (attendance by invitation only) held at Congress House. Lumley and Callaghan speak in favour of retention of unions at GCHQ, and a "no disruption" deal.

February 20: A CPSA circular branch and sub-branch secretaries refers to the Select Committee's report as "the major breakthrough" and states "the dispute will be won by the force of public opinion rather than industrial force."

Claims

February 21-2: Claims and counter-claims about the number of GCHQ staff who have signed the "no unions" document. Thatcher claims that her proposals have the support of the majority of GCHQ staff! Unions say the "nowhere near 50%" have signed.

SCPS, the union covering lower/middle management grades, calls for the 28th to be a one-day strike. This follows rumours circulating for some days that SCPS was taking a firmer line than the other CoCSU unions.

February 23: About 1,200 civil servants attend a rally at Central Hall, Westminster, which followed by a lobby of Parliament. Many management prevent their staff from taking annual leave in order to attend these events.

A meeting with Thatcher finds her still unmoved, and union leaders bristle as they get the "two fingers" treatment. They respond by calling for a half-day strike on the 28th, for a trade unionists in the civil service — except those at GCHQ.

Half-day

February 24: Len Murray clearly offended by Thatcher's refusal to be talked out of her decision, now calls on other unions to support the CoCSU half-day strike: though he is careful not to say that he is calling for a half-day general strike.

February 25: Support is promised from several of the largest unions — including NUPE, NALGO, the General and Municipal Workers, AUEW and TGWU — for the half-day strike.

The SDP and Tory "wets" whose support the TUC leadership had been cultivating, now turn on Murray at the first moment of strike action.

February 26: NUR adds its support to the CoCSU strike. A special meeting of CPSA's National Executive votes down a proposal from the left wing minority on the committee, for the 28th to be made a full-day strike. However, it then unanimously backs the call for a half-day strike.

BROAD LEFTS ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Conference. Saturday March 24, 10am to 5.30 at the Octagon Centre, Western Bank, Sheffield. Credentials for up to 5 delegates per trade union body from George Williamson, 11 Sutton Place, London E9 6EH.



WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK 10p

No 28 December 1983

Page 1 of the women's campaign

Page 2 of the women's campaign

Page 3 of the women's campaign

Page 4 of the women's campaign

Page 5 of the women's campaign

Page 6 of the women's campaign

Page 7 of the women's campaign

Page 8 of the women's campaign

Page 9 of the women's campaign

Page 10 of the women's campaign

New issue out soon: 10p plus postage from 10b Landseer Road, London N19.



Women demonstrated on Monday 27th against the proposed closure of the South London Hospital for women

Link-up on health cuts

THE Health Fightback 84 conference last Saturday, 25th, decided to investigate the possibility of a newsletter to link health cuts struggles.

A full contact address list will be circulated, a recall conference is being considered, and there may be fringe meetings at NUPE and COHSE conferences.

The conference, between 100 and 200 strong, was different from all other recent conferences and rallies against the health cuts in that it brought together activists from struggles in progress to discuss their experiences. The major part of the day was given over to workshops.

Ken Williamson reported from the campaigns workshop: in Oxford, at least, there was "a direct clash between those who want to take action and those

By Colin Foster

who merely wish to gather people together to educate them."

From the privatisation workshop, Steve Akers emphasised that unions should not get involved in the process of setting specifications for contracting-out. Some union leaders argue that privatisation can be combatted by getting sufficiently tight specifications: but once a union branch moves towards setting an 'in-house tender' for its own job, we are, Steve said, "cutting our own throats".

Maggie Pearson reported from the discussion on health authorities: Labour and trade union representatives within these "highly undemocratic structures" could use their position "to get information, to publicise dissent" — but this

could never replace direct action.

"Many and varied" are the "creeping cuts" used by managements to pave the way for closures, reported Martin Barclay. Close monitoring, good links with clerical staff, and readiness to take strike action, were necessary to resist these cuts.

Unity between nurses and ancillary workers was a major theme from the nurses' workshop, reported by Michael Walker. It is also important to combat the weight of hospital hierarchies and "get nurses used to complaining about lack of supplies."

"Occupations are not an end in themselves but the start of a fight to defend facilities", reported Anne Marie Sweeney. The conference was held in Bradford to demonstrate sup-

port for the occupation at Thornton View hospital: but it is a major problem that only one hospital is occupied while hundreds are under threat.

Jeremy Corbyn MP, the closing speaker, also stressed the need to fight for more occupations.

And the spirit of the Thornton View occupation was brought into the conference by Hazel Ward, a speaker from the hospital.

"Why aren't any of the trade union bosses here today?", she asked. The occupation was about "working together as a team. It's not just one person against Mrs Thatcher, it's everyone against the government. We mustn't allow any victimisations."

*Contact Health Fightback 84, c/o 12 Shiplake House, Calvert Ave., London E2.

NURSERY CLOSURE RESISTED BY

Wakefield occupation

RITA HALL was at the Health Fightback conference from the Sandal nursery occupation in Wakefield.

The nursery has been occupied since December 23 in response to the Labour council's decision to close it.

The 11 nursery workers, members of NUPE and NALGO, have support from parents and from the local Labour Party.

Council unions are refusing to cooperate with the closure, and the Trades Council has called on electricity and gas workers to maintain supplies.

The District Labour Party has voted to keep the nursery open, and expressed no confidence in the council.

Councillors involved are liable to be de-selected. 8,000 signatures were won in a single day for a petition to keep the nursery open.

But this has had no impact on the Labour council leadership — run by Jack Smart, a prominent dignitary in Labour local government decisions.

They have already broken another nursery occupation, at Langthwaite Grange, sending in private contractors.

Langthwaite Grange nursery was sited in an industrial unit, which has been sold to a neighbouring company. The land on which Sandal nursery stands has already been sold — but the council isn't saying to whom.

Both nurseries cater (or catered) for families with severe problems, children at risk of battering, etc.

The council is pursuing legal action to get possession of the nursery, and the occupiers need financial support for their legal costs. Send donations to Sam Steward, 'Save Our Nurseries Appeal Fund', c/o Labour Club, Vicarage St., Wakefield.

Glasgow rents fight

Glasgow's Labour-controlled District Council decision to freeze rents and rates could be the start of a real campaign in the city against Tory attacks on local government. The council is carrying out District Labour Party policy.

But rank-and-file activists will need to do a lot of work for that to be the case.

A joint committee, involving the District Labour Party, the Council Labour Group, trade unions, and tenants has been set up which organised a demonstration last Saturday (25th).

But there are problems. Glasgow District Labour Party's decision for a rent freeze went against the District Party Executive's recommendation for a 6% increase. A piece of procedural incompetence by the chair allowed Executive members to escape their mandate and vote

for the rent freeze.

The Executive won't lead a serious fight to defend the rent freeze it never wanted.

And the Glasgow District Labour Group is a long-standing faithful administrator of Tory cuts.

There is more than a grain of truth in the accusations by Tory councillors that the rents/rates freeze is motivated by the approach of the May District Council elections.

With regard to the unions most involved in the joint committee (NALGO and the TGWU) the situation is little better.

Both are primarily concerned about defending their members' jobs, which is obviously a legitimate desire, and are far from firm against rent and rate rises.

And the Glasgow Council of Tenants' Associations, which is represented on the committee, is weakly based and hostile to

the more active Glasgow Rents Freeze Campaign.

The campaign lacks a clear leadership committed to a serious fight.

Socialists have to take the campaign into Labour Party and trade union branches and tenants associations at grass-roots level, arguing the case for opposition both to rent and rate increases and to job losses, using the forthcoming District Council elections to help build a campaign, and stepping up the fight for accountability of the District Labour Group.

By May we need to have a newly elected Labour council, committed to fighting the Tories, with all escape routes blocked off to prevent it ducking out of confrontation, and backed up by a united, Glasgow-wide campaign, based on trade unions, the Labour Party and tenants associations.

North Staffs.

AT ITS meeting on February 13 the North Staffs District Health Authority approved proposals for reorganisation including the closure of three hospitals.

The District Health Authority put out a consultative document on its proposals last year, but the local Labour Party failed to make any submissions — and the Labour Deputy Leader of Stoke City Council, Ted Smith, endorsed the proposals!

Action Committees had been set up at the three threatened hospitals, and the committee at the Westcliffe Geriatric Hospital invited councillors from the northern end of the City to a meeting to discuss the closure. Committee members expressed great anger at Ted Smith's statement that the hospital should have been bulldozed 30 years ago.

The Westcliffe Action Committee called on the councillors to make public statements in support of the hospital; but the councillors refused, assuring the Action Committee that they would "lobby behind the scenes" instead.

The Action Committee lobbied the meeting of the DHA on February 13 and the only councillors to turn up were Jimmy Dunn and SO supporter Arthur Bough. A dozen other SO supporters also supported the lobby.

The DHA also proposes to close down school clinics [minor ailments clinics, as they have redesignated them], or where they are used for other purposes to take the school nurses out of them. When minor accidents occur at school, children will have to be rushed several miles across the city to the Accident Unit.

It is also rumoured that half the 100 beds which were to be made available at the City General Hospital for geriatric patients from Westcliffe will now be used for other purposes.

Industrial digest

More health cuts

A SPECIAL hospital centre — the Leon Gillis Unit at Queen Mary's Hospital in Roehampton, London — is being forced into partial closure by government health cuts.

It was set up in 1963 to help thalidomide children and now deals with spina bifida and other severely disabled children.

The centre is being told to make cuts of up to £450,000 by April (the end of the financial year).

On Monday, March 5, the Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton health authority is due to discuss the cuts — with proposals of withdrawing weekend and rota care service.

Pit closure

ON Friday, March 2, the National Coal Board is closing Cronton colliery, near Liverpool, because remaining coal stocks at the 70-year old pit are "uneconomic" to mine.

550 workers will lose their jobs; though the NCB has said that the miners would be given the choice in the coming weeks of moving to other collieries in the North West.

Union ban

FOLLOWING moves to ban union membership at GCHQ the government is now pressing for a no-disruption agreement with 900 House of Commons workers — employed by the House of Commons Commission — in talks with their Civil Service union representatives.

Do MPs fear that their bars, restaurants and other perks may face disruption in the future, or perhaps that government secrets that threaten the working class may be overheard and passed onto other union members?

Ford workers' unity?

FORD plant shopfloor leaders who met at the weekend, issued a statement saying that all plants would act in mutual solidarity if the future of any was threatened.

Representatives from most of Ford's European car plants called for full consultation on the company's future plans; with a ban on any investment in one country which leads to disinvestment in another, and a call for a shorter working week.

Under threat now are the Dagenham foundry and petrol engine production in the UK, Eire's Cork assembly plant and plants in Portugal.

Ford is planning to open a new plant in Mexico. The Mexican workers — with maybe 40% of them unemployed or only casually employed — will understand why European workers want to defend jobs.

But how can they understand European workers making opposition to the Mexican plant part of this defence of jobs?

International workers' unity should not stop at the frontiers of Europe.

Low pay

A REPORT by the Low Pay Review — "Setting Record Taxes Straight" — says that the poor in the UK are now the most heavily taxed in Europe.

Since 1979 the low paid have seen their tax bill double, with taxes on the average family increasing by 6%.

The UK also has a higher starting tax rate on the low paid — greater than any other EEC country, the US, Canada, and Japan.

However, the rich over the same period (since the Tories took office!) have seen their taxes decline to a point where they contribute only three pence in the pound of all tax revenue, 25% less than five years ago.

Diary of a People's Marcher

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



by Satinder Singh and Tony Purtil
Introduction by Jeremy Corbyn, MP

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Industrial

SCOTT LITHGOW SHIPYARD

It's not too late

SCOTT Lithgow at the moment resembles Berlin in the latter part of 1945. A lot of people have already gone, and most of those left have no fight left in them.

They have been hammered senseless by the big guns of capitalism. They have lost their pride and they see their proud history crumbling in front of them.

Now, as the Germans waited to see who would take over their empire — the Americans, the Russians or the British — the workers of Scott Lithgow wait to see whether Trafalgar House, Bechtel or Howard Davis will take over their particular empire.

I have spoken to a lot of people at Scott Lithgow, both from a microphone at mass meetings and personally in the yard. And from what I've heard, the workers could be led into a fight with the proper leadership.

Leadership

Now I don't normally believe in leadership in this sense. I believe in collective leadership. But in this case a strong voice is needed to start the fight and then broaden out the responsibilities into Occupation Committees.

At the present time we have MPs debating in Parliament, we have had public meetings, we have had delegate conferences, we had the 'Women for Scott Lithgow' descending on Downing Street, we have pensioners sending donations to the fighting fund. Everybody is fighting *except the workers*.

Downing Street should have been packed last week — with workers from Scott Lithgow. We should have taken up our position and refused to move.

We should have invited workers from other yards to join us, then called for workers from other industries to join us — miners, railway workers, NHS workers. In fact the streets of London should have been brought to a standstill.

But the shop stewards at Scott Lithgow just want to amble along in their own piti-

by Joe O'Rourke

ful way and the workers are just following on.

The softening up of the workers at Scott Lithgow has been going on for two years now.

In January 1982 the workers in Kingston/Glen yards walked out, because over the Christmas holidays the pipes in the yard froze up and burst, leaving the workers with no toilet or canteen facilities. At a mass meeting it was decided to walk out until the facilities were returned, and to demand payment for the days lost.

No strike

After three weeks on strike the men were forced to return to work — firstly because the full time officials of the CSEU had recommended them to return and progress the claim through the National Grievance Machinery, but mainly because the shop stewards committee had no stomach for the fight.

In May of the same year, the Shop stewards signed a no strike agreement with management. They did this without consulting the workforce.

Two of us had argued on the shop stewards committee that by signing this

agreement we were accepting responsibility for everything that was wrong with Scott Lithgow and that it should be put before a mass meeting. This request was denied and as a result both of us resigned from the Joint Negotiating Committee.

Later the same year, in September, came the ill-fated Crossword strike. This was when the management decided to sack one of the best shop stewards in the yard and at the same time take on and defeat the most militant department (Kingston/Glen Platers). They succeeded in doing this with no little help from the shop stewards committee.

Since then they have taken on and defeated the only other militant department, the stagers. They did this by giving away a large part of their job to the shipwrights — who grabbed it with both hands, leaving the stagers again unsupported.

Compromise

So what we have in Scott Lithgow now is a workforce steeped in compromise and capitulation. A workforce who by blindly following the lead of the shop stewards committee have invited That-

Sharks swarm

THE only movement at the Scott Lithgow shipyards on the Lower Clyde recently has been that of the three firms competing to take it over. The union full timers and leading shop stewards who pledged to lead a fight back are just letting these predators get on with it.

Trafalgar House has met shop stewards to explain their plans for the yards in more detail. They would retain only 1,250 of the current workforce, thereby causing a leap in the local male unemployment rates to 43%.

Trafalgar, the Tories' first choice to take over the yards, just happens to be the conglomerate which owns Cementation

International, the company for which the Prime Minister's son recently won a contract in Oman in unusual circumstances.

The second company in the running, Bechtel GB, has also announced its plans should it take over the yards. Bechtel GB would close Scott Lithgow for three months, pay off the entire workforce, pick and choose the 1,500 they would re-employ, and introduce higher levels of "supervision" (i.e. work discipline) into the yard.

The third shark cruising on the Clyde with its teeth showing is a joint venture headed by Howard Davis. But they have yet to tell the shipyard workers what they will do to their industry if they acquire Scott Lithgow.

British Shipbuilders and the three firms interested in a takeover are rushing around like hungry sharks, but the shop stewards' committee at Scott Lithgow remain passive, as if reconciled to their fate.

They have yet to produce even a bulletin informing workers of current developments, never mind arguing the case against volunteering for redundancy, and attempting to rally workers for a serious fight.

The result is that the management and media propaganda goes unchallenged and the number of voluntary redundancies continues to grow: 3,944 were working at the yards in mid-January this year (compared with 5,400 in March of the previous year) but only 3,544 by the beginning of February and 3,484 a week later. A further 738 inquiries about voluntary redundancy are also — so the management claims — lying on the table.

cher and her government to attack them.

A workforce who by not taking the lead in their own fight, have discouraged other people from supporting them.

It is not too late.

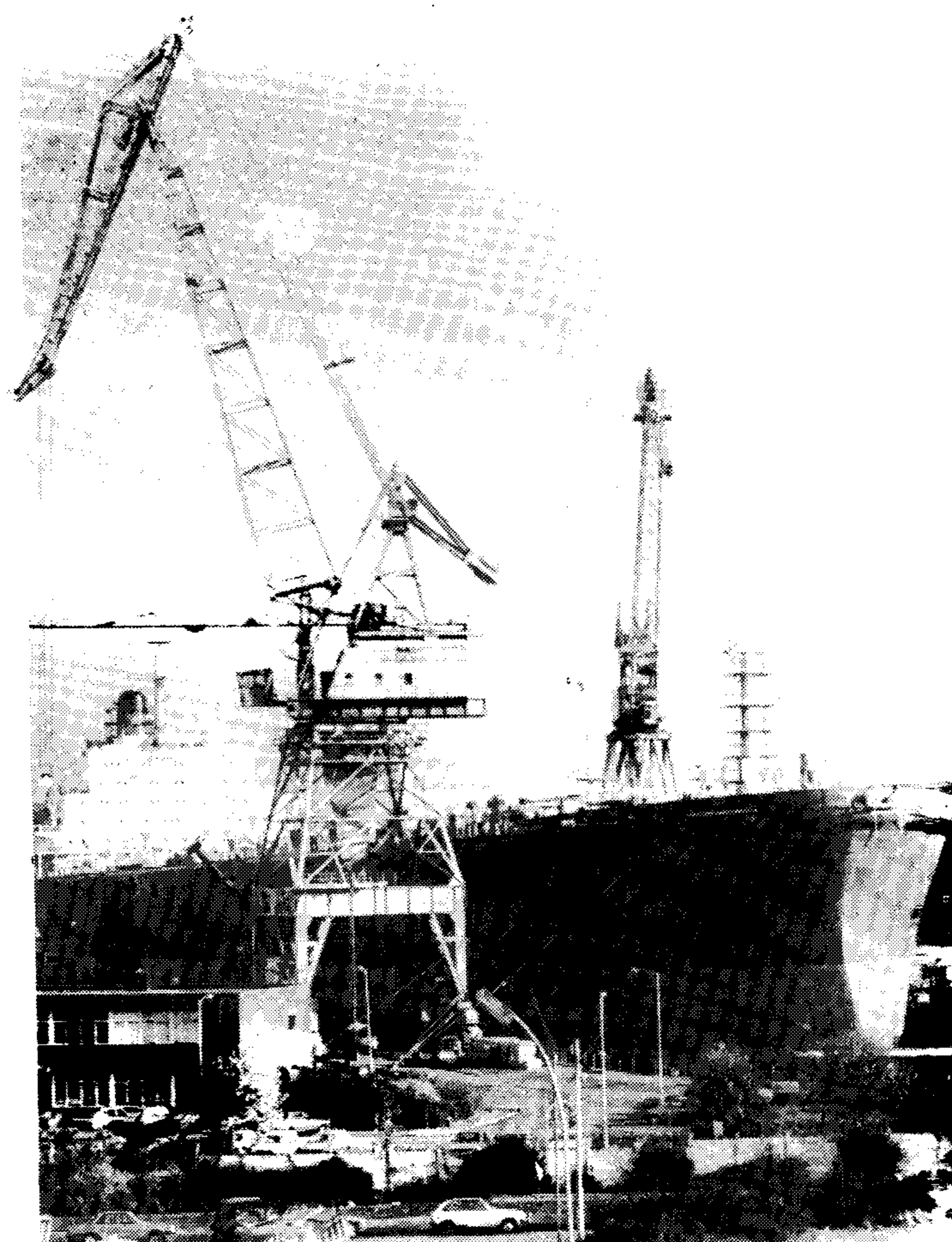
If the workers rise now and take a positive lead by occupying the yards and calling for workers throughout the country to support them, then we might still win. We might restore the once proud name of Red Clydeside.

I know that all might seem lost but think of this:

Compared to British industry, Scott Lithgow is small.

And compared to a ship an anchor seems small.

But when the time is right, and when set properly, an anchor can stop a ship.



The shipyard under threat

STOP THE ROT- IN THE SCOTS TUC

by Stan Crooke

THIS Saturday, March 3, the Scottish TUC has called a demonstration in Glasgow under the slogan "Let's Stop the Rot and Win a Future for Scotland" — opposing job losses at Scott Lithgow and elsewhere.

But it is difficult to regard the demonstration as other than a cynical token gesture.

The leaflet for the demonstration declares that: "The magnificent fight put up by workers at Scott Lithgow has forced Mrs Thatcher to eat her words."

"At the end of 1983 she insisted the yards had to close."

Privatisation

But the Tories' strategy all along was to brow beat the Scott Lithgow workforce into accepting privatisation, job losses, and a new "survival" plan — not closure.

Even more disastrous is the leaflet's statement that, "The NCB says Polmaise and Bogside Collieries have to close . . . (but) the miners have said no." But in fact the Scottish NUM has said no to strike action in support of Polmaise and Bogside, leaving Polmaise miners on an isolated strike.

The leaflet talks of "half a battle being won" here and successes there. But the reality is one of defeat after defeat for Scottish workers.

Bedlay, Kinneil, Monktonhall and Cardowan pits have all been closed by the NCB. NUM leader Mick McGahey let the rot begin. He has only his own bureaucratic politics to blame when miners do not respond to his last-minute calls for strike action for Polmaise and Bogside.

CORRECTION

An article on Scott Lithgow in Socialist Organiser 166 stated that "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." This should have read: "... possible . . ." (i.e. anger at the terms of privatisation would make it possible to overturn the previous decision on the survival plan and privatisation).

In shipbuilding, Robb, Caldon in Dundee was privatised and taken over by Kestrel Marine after workers occupying the yard were left in the lurch by the union leadership.

Now, Henry Robb faces closure or privatisation, and Scott Lithgow is to be raffled off. Once again the leaders of the shipbuilding unions, along with the STUC, have equated a "fight to save the yards" with an endless round of visits to various Tories and industrialists.

It is the same sad story in every other industry too.

In every case, the fighting talk of the STUC has remained just that — talk. And where workers have organised to defend their jobs, as in the sit-ins at Lee jeans and Timex, the only support provided by the STUC has been "financial and moral".

Carousel

Solidarity strike action has never even been considered. Take the Carousel dispute in Glasgow. For over six months,

young workers from a Glasgow East End sweatshop have been on strike for union recognition, reinstatement and better working conditions.

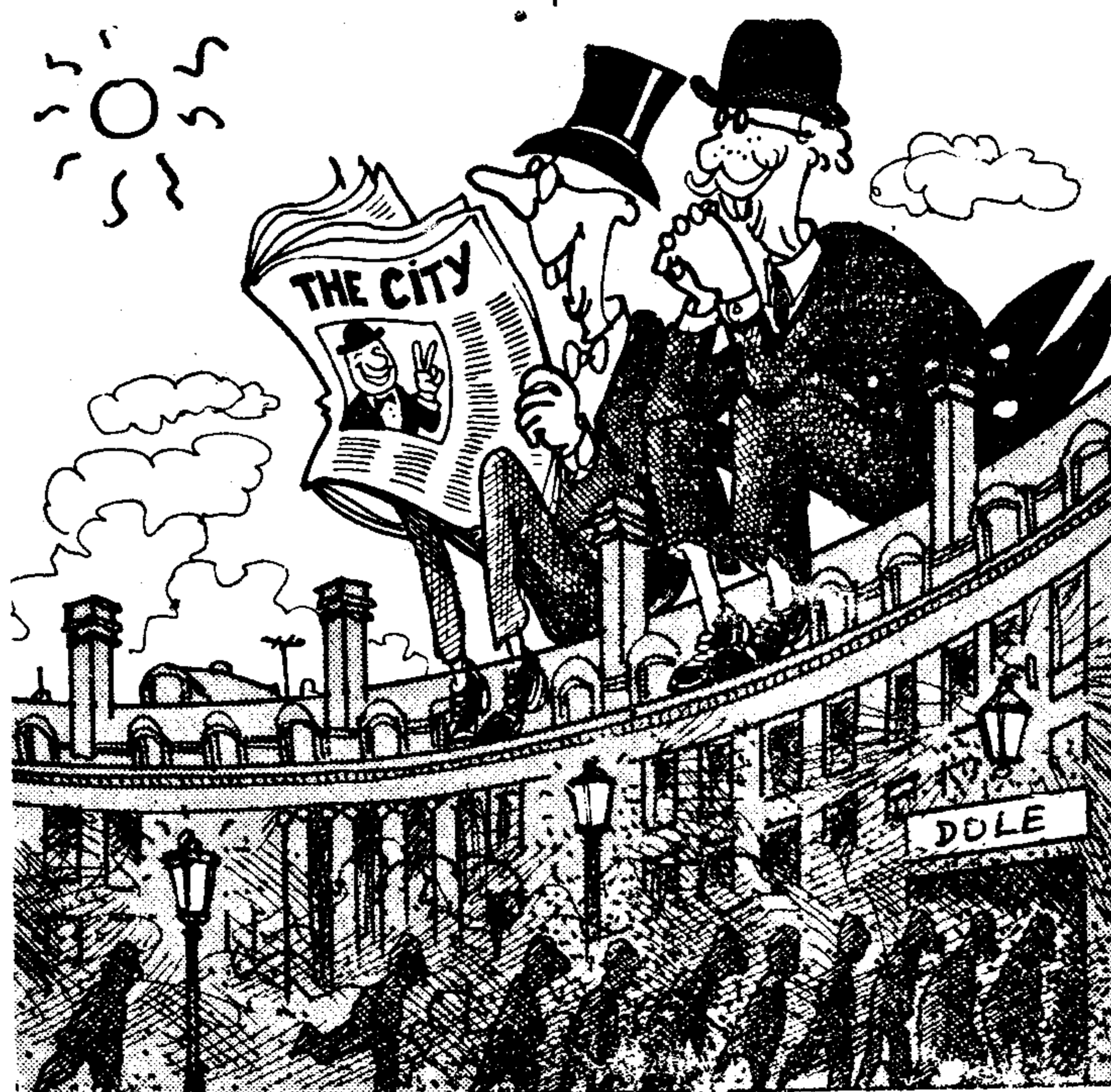
Their own union, the TGWU, has declared the strike official but done precious little else. And the STUC has done nothing at all.

The STUC's answer for job losses is class collaboration. It turns away from mobilising the working class to fight in its own interest through working class forms of struggle, and looks instead to the "moral impact" of a united plea from themselves, Chambers of Commerce, the CBI, vicars and "progressive" Tories.

Echelons

The theoretical justification for this is provided by the Communist Party.

But the workers pay the bill. Scotland, like the rest of Britain, rots. And the reason for that rot will be found not just in the upper echelons of the Tory Party and the CBI, but also on the platform at this Saturday's demonstration — tired served union bureaucrats and Labour Party careerists with not even a half-ounce of class consciousness and militancy share between them.



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College scandal

THE atmosphere of financial scandal beginning to enshroud this government was again highlighted last week when the Public Accounts Committee reported on the sale of Hamilton College, near Glasgow.

The report shows how the college was sold for £5 million less than its market value and describes the method of the sale as "astounding". The committee has apparently "never before reported in such strong terms."

Hamilton College was opened in 1967, a teacher training college which always served mainly local needs. It was closed in August 1982.

Before the closure there was a broad based campaign involving staff, students, unions, politicians of various parties and others such as church leaders — but it failed.

The college and grounds were bought for £270,000 by Christian Schools (North West) Ltd., a company owned by Mr. Charles Oxley, an activist in Mary Whitehouse's National Viewers and Listeners Association. The residences were bought by Miller Homes Ltd. for just £410,000.

The college stands in grounds of 51 acres and the estimated value was £6 million. It would cost £20 million to build at today's prices.

George Robertson and other Labour MPs are calling for the resignation of Alex Fletcher (the Scottish Education Minister at the time) and other Ministers.

The sale is another example of the Tories' destruction of the public sector, whether it be services or property. By the next election this government plans to have sold off over £20 billion worth of public property — that's public companies, state services, and council houses.

A valuable teacher training college has been lost forever, teachers and other workers thrown out of work (some also out of tied houses), and educational opportunities lost to the already depressed areas of Hamilton, Motherwell and the rest of Lanarkshire.

The parasitic friends of the Tories in private education and property development have benefitted to the tune of millions.

Miller Homes Ltd are likely to make profits on the deal in excess of £5 million, and the private school of Charles Oxley charges £700 per year per pupil to offer

By Steve Harvey

what he describes as a "sound education based in the Christian faith".

Meanwhile, Strathclyde Regional Council are currently looking for a site for a much needed new secondary school in Hamilton.

Socialist ORGANISER

Benn leads in Chesterfield



JOHN HARRIS

ROB Johnston, a Socialist Organiser supporter from Nottingham, has been canvassing for Tony Benn in Chesterfield. He told us:

"There are Benn posters all over the town. I've never seen a town like it. It's fantastic, phenomenal."

"A lot of new members have been recruited to the Chesterfield Labour Party since Varley's resignation, and have been out canvassing."

"There has also been a lot of support from Labour Party members from outside Chesterfield. For example, last weekend Sandwell Labour Party sent three coaches."

"The campaign has included a lot of factory gate, workplace, and street meetings, which have been very large and enthusiastic."

Despite all the efforts of the media, indications as we go to press are that Benn will win. His return to Parliament should be the signal for the Left in the Labour Party to get out of its doldrums and back on the offensive.

It's a long time since mass public meetings were a feature of Labour Party election campaigns. It is a long time since Labour candidates used elections to reach to rank and file Labour supporters and ask them for their commitment to a continuing fight after the election, not just for their vote on polling day.

But in Chesterfield Tony Benn has done just that. Many hundreds of people have come to his meetings to listen.

Benn has emphasised that this is not just a by-election. It is a confrontation between two opposed types of politics.

BLOC should organise

THE approach of a new crisis over the Tory anti-union laws makes the Broad Lefts Organising Committee conference in Sheffield on March 24 even more important.

Called by a joint committee of some 20 trade union Broad Lefts, the conference will be the biggest such rank and file gathering for several years.

It also becomes more crucial that the conference should decide on some definite lines of action, rather than just being a rally.

Despite its great potential power, the BLOC, dominated by the 'Militant' tendency, had no profile at all in the NGA Warrington dispute. But the lack of any coordinated national campaign on the

anti-union laws is one of the worst failings of the labour movement and the left today.

BLOC could remedy that. The conference should launch a campaign against the anti-union laws, centred on the demands for defiance of the laws, solidarity strikes to defend unions attacked under the laws, and no more TUC talks with the Tories.

Such a campaign should not follow the model set by the 'Militant'-initiated Labour Steering Committee against Witch-hunts, which became little more than a signboard to hang on big 'Militant' rallies.

It should have democratic delegate committees both at national level and in every town and district.

Details, page 13

FUND

Northampton supporters dominate the fund column this week; with a £5 donation (belatedly acknowledged) from Tim and Jan; and a donation of £235 from Ross Catlin. With other donations — £5.10 from John Douglas, raised by selling extra papers; and £6 from Stoke supporters, who organised a raffle — contributions in February reached £418.03.

Large individual donations are always very welcome, but we don't rely on them to keep our fund totals up to the necessary level. And smaller donations, or smaller amounts raised by supporters groups can, put together, add up to the amount we need.

In March, we urge all supporters of Socialist Organiser to make a special effort to send us money. Some groups have plans planned. We look forward to receiving donations from table sales in Islington, Oxford and Stoke; from socials in Northampton and Manchester; from fund-raising events in Basingstoke. As well as planning events, each supporter can make a contribution of their own. Make a contribution and ask each of your readers to match it. Or make a special effort the week to sell extra papers.

We raised over £400 in February — let's double that for March!

Donations to: The Treasurer, 214 Sickert Court, Essex Road, London N1.

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