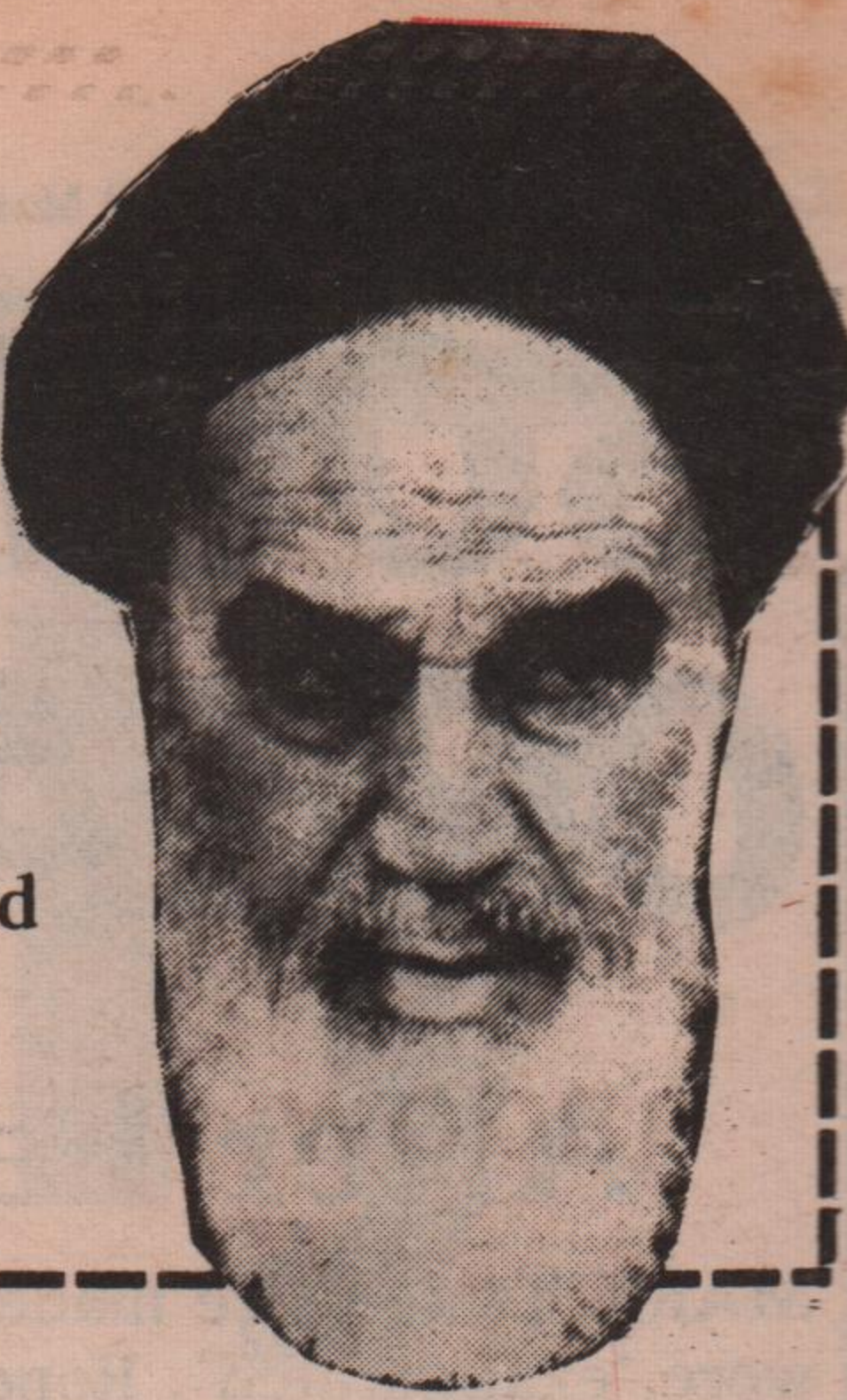


Socialist ORGANISER

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Day 1917 - and 1984
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Plus more reports, reviews,
letters, controversy.



SUPPORT THE MINERS

By Martin Thomas

THE miners and Tory hatchetman Ian MacGregor are squaring up for a full-scale fight. South Yorkshire miners are already on strike against the closure of Corton Wood and Bulcliffe collieries.

The National Union of Mineworkers executive meets on Thursday 8th to discuss action against 21,000 job cuts planned for the next year.

Coal Board boss Ian MacGregor has said bluntly that he may go for sackings. Until now, however fast the run-down of the industry, in theory at least every miner at a closed pit has had the option of transferring to another pit.

The area executive in Scotland, where Polmaise miners are already on strike over the planned closure of their pit, is calling for an area strike from Friday.

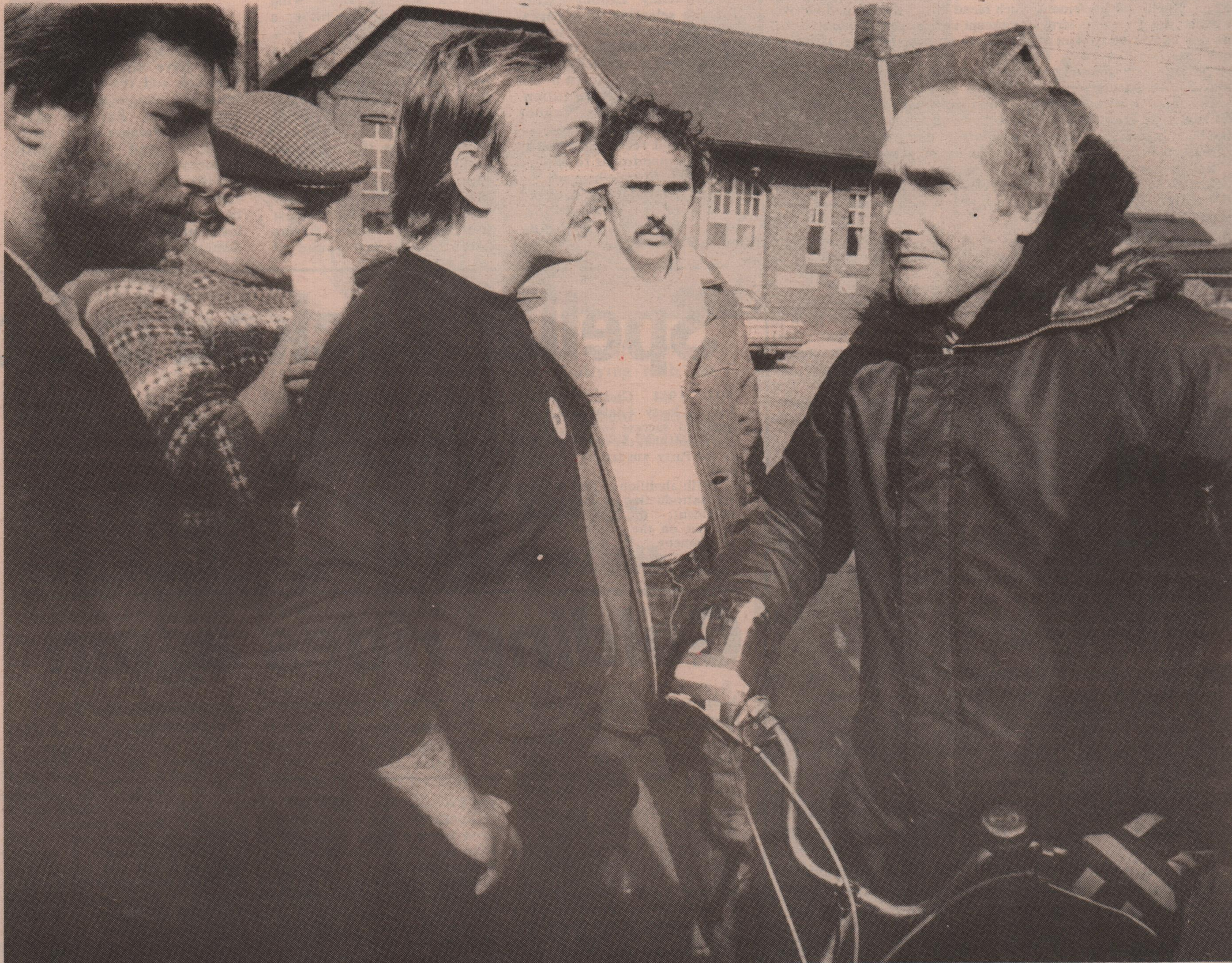
Mick McGahey, national vice-president and Scottish area president of the union, has predicted a 'domino effect' with strikes spreading from area to area, creating a national strike faster than the formal procedure of a pithead ballot could.

If miners, on this issue, can match the tremendous response of other groups of workers on the GCHQ issue on February 28 - and there is little doubt that they can - then we will have a major national battle against the Tories.

And the miners can win.

There are big coal stocks. Just like there were when the miners' strike began in 1972. But flying pickets and solidarity action by other trade unionists can tie them up.

That solidarity, and those pickets, will be unlawful. But only one group of employers, out of hundreds affected, has dared to go to law over the equally unlawful February 28 strike. If trade union solidarity action is strong enough



Pickets in South Yorkshire

and determined enough, then no words the Tories write in the statute book can stop it.

MacGregor is determined and hard-faced. But the miners made the Tories back down before, in February 1981, by brushfire spreading

strike action.

And now the Tories, beset by scandals and internal divisions, look far less strong than they did a few months ago.

But there are problems.

The NUM leadership has

failed to get action on many test-case pit closures since 1981, like Kinneil and Lewis Merthyr. Those failures have left it unsure and unconfident.

In Scotland the area leadership has let Bogside

close and delayed the call for solidarity for Polmaise again and again. Nationally, Arthur Scargill has made no definite call for action.

In 1983-4 already 22 pits have closed or been merged, as compared to 11 in 1981-2

and seven in 1982-3.

It is going to need a bold turnabout and a determined leadership to defeat MacGregor and the Tories. There is still time to turn the tide. But that time must be seized, now.

BREAK LINKS WITH TORIES!

JOHN HARRIS (I/F.L.)

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Labour Party

Gutting reselection ?

After February 28

MARK Twain once made a joke that reports of his death were 'exaggerated'. Reports of the demise of the British labour movement were shown last week to be exaggerated, too. Highly exaggerated.

The bungling TUC leaders gave the workers they called upon to come out on strike against the government short notice. The call was made on Friday afternoon for action the following Tuesday — the next but one working day.

Yet, come Tuesday, and hundreds of thousands of workers stopped work to defend trade union rights at GCHQ.

Across the country they marched in their thousands and tens of thousands — 40,000 in London, 6000 each in Glasgow and Edinburgh, 2500 in Dundee. Tony Benn spoke to a rally of 2000 in Chesterfield.

It was a partial and preliminary roll-call of our strength, and the result is tremendously encouraging.

It was a demonstration of its latent power that the labour movement itself needed very badly.

The slump, with its mass unemployment deliberately made worse by the Tories, has depleted and diminished the strength, combativity and confidence of the working class. The experience of the 1974-9 Wilson-Callaghan Labour government, which rode to power on a great wave of industrial action and then in office sold out the workers who put it in, added to that depression in the labour movement, because it destroyed a dimension of political hope.

While a minority of activists responded after 1979 by trying to change the Labour Party under the slogan, 'Never again a Labour government like the last one!', great numbers of workers lapsed into greater political passivity.

And the Tories seized every chance to put the boot in — again and again. The labour movement which faced this challenge had for over a generation known no struggles except in relatively favourable conditions. It was led by a lot of office-boys playing the roles of leaders of labour.

Tuesday 28th showed that there are limits to what the labour movement will stand for.

Of course, it was inadequate. The unions have been defeated at GCHQ, and it is an extremely important and serious defeat. It opens the door to attacks on the union rights of other workers in the civil service, in armaments factories, and in 'essential services'.

But we have had many defeats in the last 4½ years. This was a defeat in the course of which the movement had begun to fight back. Belatedly, confusedly, inadequately — but with a seriousness not seen for some time.

Tuesday February 28 showed that millions of workers will fight given a lead. It also showed that the official movement must not be written off.

The trade union officials are a distinct layer of the labour movement with material privileges and a distinct outlook: by nature they are not fighters but bargainers. But sometimes even they have to fight back against attacks from the ruling class which make their situation intolerable and threaten even their type of trade unionism.

After the TUC's criminal sell-out of the NGA last December, the outlook seemed bleak. Now, two months later, the TUC led by Len Murray calls an unlawful strike and commits itself to call a national day of action (with strikes) if anyone at GCHQ is sacked for trade union membership.

It is not enough; even if it were, we could not rely on them to carry through their promises; we need to organise a rank and file movement independent of all the bureaucrats. Nevertheless this is a shift in the situation, a revival of militancy.

Now the miners are being pushed into a confrontation, and meanwhile the Tories are shaken by divisions and scandals. In the wake of Tony Benn's election victory at Chesterfield, an opinion poll has shown Labour ahead of the Tories.

The Left must shake off its demoralisation, and prepare for the coming class battles.

Which sort of unity?

TONY Benn's return to Parliament will give the Left a new profile and open opportunities to reverse its retreat.

Since June 1983 much of the Left has back-pedalled and decayed. At last year's Labour Party annual conference lots of left-wing activists were trying desperately hard to forget all they knew about Neil Kinnock and to believe in him as a left-wing leader.

Their vision narrowed down to preserving the Labour status quo and stopping the right wing doing anything too bad.

Benn can and should change that. He could make the Campaign Group of left Labour MPs a real organising force, linked up with constituency Labour Party and trade union activists.

But at the moment Benn is singing hymns from the new religion of faith in the existing leadership. Speaking shortly before the Chesterfield result was declared, he talked about Labour winning the next election and putting Neil Kinnock into no.10 Downing St, Roy Hattersley (with his support for incomes policy?) into no.11, and Denis Healey (with his support for nuclear weapons?) into the Foreign Office.

He has also harked back to Clement Attlee — another 'compromise' leader — as a model.

Was Benn's fight against Healey for the deputy leadership of the Labour Party all a mistake, then? Or Eric Heffer's fight against Kinnock for the leadership?

Unity in action against the Tories is one thing. Rallying politically to the banner of Kinnock and Hattersley is another.

THE PRESS is still full of reports that Labour's right wing is hell-bent on overturning mandatory reselection at this year's Labour Party conference.

Last week the story was that Kinnock now wants the National Executive Committee to issue 'guidelines' for the forthcoming reselections, to pressurise local Labour Parties into adopting individual membership ballots rather than decisions at meetings.

Such individual ballots, in various forms, were used by a number of Constituency Labour Parties in the recent elections for leader and deputy leader of the Labour Party.

The idea is dear to some of Kinnock's advisers. The cry for individual membership ballots is undoubtedly the right wing's best line of attack. But as an immediate tactic for the right wing the 'guidelines' idea is worthless.

The voting procedure in Constituency Labour Parties for the selection of a parliamentary candidate is, unlike that for leadership or even National Executive Committee elections, laid down in the Labour Party constitution. And NEC 'guidelines' cannot change the constitution.

It would require a constitutional amendment to change the present procedure whereby the candidate is selected by a vote at a General Committee, in secret and by non-mandated delegates.

By John Bloxam



JOHN HARRIS

Hattersley's Labour Solidarity cronies would like to see reselection dumped

But the recent crop of press stories does show that a section of the right wing wants to try to force a change.

The core group is a number of MPs associated with 'Labour Solidarity', now semi-defunct as an organisation. Their immediate aim is to pressure Kinnock into supporting change this year, and build on the wide reservoir of support that clearly exists in the Parliamentary Labour Party for this. The greatest spur they have is the starting date for the next round of

reselections, in just nine months time.

The problems they face, however, are great. They must do it this year. They must have the support of Kinnock and the NEC. They must get the support of the large unions. But the next TGWU conference is not until 1985. And individual membership ballots will not get the support of even many right wing trade unionists because they cut out direct local union influence on the General Management Com-

mittees.

There is already speculation about other possibilities to gut re-selection, but without taking it head-on. Such an approach would make it easier for union barons to ditch existing mandates. The idea of setting up an 'appeals committee' for de-selected MPs has been mentioned in this context — i.e. a body that could over-ride a CLP's decision.

But whatever the possibilities, any proposals must still achieve the right's basic aim of taking away effective control from the CLP organisation, and whatever the details it is inconceivable that they would be able to do this without provoking a major clash with Kinnock's constituency base.

The same would be true if the NEC attempted to use its powers to sanction the timetable for each selection to postpone the whole procedure until after the 1985 Party Conference. Would they want to push such a postponement if they were faced with the prospect of 100 CLPs demanding their constitutional right to start their procedure between December 1984 and October 1985?

Here, as with the witch-hunt, it is the threat of such a response and of resistance which stops the Kinnock centre-left giving full support for the right and keeps the right isolated and ineffective.

Spellar sacked in London

THE 1984 Greater London Labour Party Conference was a qualified success for the left to the extent that the rightward shift in the Party was largely unnoticeable.

With abolition of the GLC and the introduction of rate-capping imminent, the main debate centred on the attacks on local government.

This provided some fine speeches from those whose record

is rather less impressive in the council, giving an air of holiday speechifying to the conference.

Nevertheless, reasonably strong composite motions on the GLC and rate-capping were passed and an emergency resolution declaring verbal support for Liverpool also went through with little opposition.

A resolution from Brent East calling for the Greater London Labour Party to make adequate

provisions for the establishment of workplace branches was passed but will require a lot of following up to ensure it is implemented.

On Ireland, an attempt by N. London AUEW to scrap the policy of support for immediate withdrawal of British troops was defeated.

The card votes on the Ireland motions indicated signifi-

cant trade union backing for a united Ireland.

The composite motion on the health service was very poor. Although it correctly condemned those Labour Party members who voted for cuts on District Health Authorities, it had very few positive proposals for campaigning against health cuts, not mentioning industrial action or occupations, policies which were nevertheless referred to frequently by speakers from the floor.

Composite resolutions calling for the setting up of Black Sections were passed.

A very strong gay resolution was passed, which commits the London Labour Party to set up a working party to report to the next annual conference, to affiliate to the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights.

The motion on YTS, setting out basic demands to fight for, was passed overwhelmingly, even though many of the unions voting in favour do not themselves have such a policy towards YTS.

The Left retained control of the Executive, with Arthur Latham beating off the soft left challenge spearheaded by Joan Lester for chair. John Spellar was kicked off the trade union section, to the obvious delight of the delegates.

Golding rides again

By Alistair Scott

A Militant supporter, Charlie Hughes, was refused permission to renew his Labour Party membership by his branch, Meir Park, in January. Now the entire Branch has been suspended by Stoke South Constituency Party.

Earlier this year, Charlie Hughes and two other Militant supporters were turned down as potential council candidates by an interviewing panel of the Stoke District Labour Party, as candidate for the Panel for the 1984 local elections. The interviewing Panel was dominated by the right wing and their decision was clearly politically motivated.

It turned out that the interviewing panel had been incorrectly constituted and the three comrades were asked to come and be interviewed again. This time only Charlie Hughes was turned down — reportedly for insufficient knowledge of how the Council works.

In the same constituency, Stoke South, there has been a call for an investigation into Socialist Organiser.

The main organiser behind the right wing counter-attack in the whole area is John Golding,

MP for Newcastle-under-Lyme. One of Golding's major aims has been to save Stoke North MP John Forrester from a fate worse than reselection — i.e. deselection and being thrown out of his position as Constituency secretary.

After last year's boundary changes, Forrester's 2-1 majority in the old Constituency Party was turned into a 50-50 split. Forrester and Golding set about seeing what affiliated organisations they could join, and how many of their supporters they could get delegated from these bodies.

But they have suffered fiascos. The first came at the AGM of the North Staffs Fabian Society a few weeks ago.

Without mentioning it to the local secretary, comrades Golding, Forrester, their wives and quite a few friends had spent £15 becoming national members of the Fabian Society. However, when they all turned up they were told that they could only vote and stand for office if

they became local members.

The next fiasco came at the AGM of the Socialist Education Association. Comrades Forrester, Golding, etc., had all become members. But again they failed to get their supporters elected as delegates to Stoke North Constituency.

The SEA changed its rules last year to say that only those who have been members for 12 months can stand as delegates. The right did not have a single person who qualified.

The right is now organising to challenge the 12 months membership requirement.

There are a number of lessons that the soft left in Stoke should learn from the right's counter-attack. First, it is clear that there are no grounds for believing that the right want unity in the Party or that Kinnock's election has ushered in such a period of unity.

Second, the soft left's approach is one based upon a vision of the Party moving inexorably leftward. Only a few months ago they were saying that the witch-hunt was a dead issue.

The right wing rejects that fatalism and organises. So should the left.



Join the Labour Party.
Write to: The Labour Party, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT.
Subscription is £7 per year, £2 unwaged, 50p OAPs.

Chesterfield

A ringing reply

TONY Benn, according to the Liberal who fought against him, "stands at the head of screaming mobs of Trotskyists. Let the people of Chesterfield beware".

But despite the Liberals' sub-political campaign against him, Benn polled more votes than his right-wing predecessor Eric Varley, a local man of Chesterfield.

As Benn said, his victory was "an important trigger in the build-up of confidence in the Labour Party".

The media did all they could to make Chesterfield another Bermondsey. From day one they emphasised Labour voters switching because of Benn.

'Militant' canvassers, Peter Tatchell coming to help, Benn speaking at the Broad Lefts conference in Sheffield on March 24 — they tried to make a scandal from every opportunity.

But Chesterfield was different from Bermondsey for several reasons.

First, the Labour right wing did not dare knife Benn as they had knifed Peter Tatchell. It must have caused Roy Hattersley agonies to sit beaming on a platform beside Tony Benn, but he had to do it.

Chesterfield was proof that witch-hunts lose elections — laying off the inner-party witch-hunts wins them.

Second, as Benn said, Chesterfield showed that "the passionate advocacy



of socialism and the policies of our party is a way of winning". Benn's eloquence and energy, and his campaign asking working class people to join an ongoing historic struggle rather than just to put crosses on a ballot paper, won votes.

The third factor in Chesterfield was the commitment and enthusiasm of hundreds of Labour activists who came to the town to help.

The whole campaign was a ringing practical

answer to all the tedious, tortuous arguments from Eric Hobsbawm and his sort. They say that Labour can never win elections without shifting its

policies to the centre and/or allying with the Alliance.

Chesterfield showed how they can be proved wrong.

Put the Tories into the dustbin

IN HIS first speech after returning to Parliament on March 6, Tony Benn said:

"The Chancellor cannot convince people that we are a poor country. What people want and what they are entitled to expect from any government is the meeting of their minimum requirements — for jobs, for homes, for proper health care, for proper education and for dignity in retirement.

This is a Government backed by capital helping capital to hammer labour. It is a government supported by the wealthy to tax the poor.

Every pensioner in Chesterfield who buys 10 cigarettes is helping to finance the public schools through the assisted places scheme.

Government policy is carried through deliberately by the use of fear. Does the House imagine that people at work are not terrified that the unemployed will be used to replace them if they seek to maintain their own living standards or working conditions?

Time and again the naked use of fear by employers is being used to hold people down. That is the policy.

The Government says it is rolling back the frontiers of the state. It is advancing the frontiers of the state, crushing local democracy and the trade union movement.

Britain needs a fresh start, to plan the resources to rebuild its industrial base, to extend the public sector and the public services.

In 1945 the British people turned their backs on the brutality and divisiveness of mass unemployment that had been implemented by a government just like this one in the 1930s.

Under Clement Attlee they made a start in turning away from those policies. It will not be long before the present Leader of the Opposition resumes the tasks that Attlee began, and the present Government will be swept into the dustbin of history".



Youth: fighting against

RACISM, CUTS, THE COURTS, CHEAP LABOUR

Halifax: No racists here!

BLACK and white youth in Halifax joined together last Wednesday to disrupt a council meeting, in protest over a racist outburst by a Tory councillor.

At the previous meeting, during a discussion about aid to an Asian community advice centre, Tory councillor Ron Thrower, had shouted "Send 'em back". He refused to apologise or withdraw the remark and the Tory group of councillors and both Tory MPs in Calderdale would not condemn Councillor Thrower.

A week later, Thrower stated he was quoting Enoch Powell.

Halifax LPYS decided to picket the next council meeting in protest, calling for Councillor Thrower's resignation from the council. Unfortunately he managed to slip through the picket unnoticed, and this angered the hundred or so Asian youth and LPYS members who had gathered. Half of us then

By Ian McCondach

managed to get into the public gallery and sent a delegation to the Labour mayor asking for the matter of the racist councillor to be raised. However, he refused this, saying it was not on the agenda.

The demonstrators were by now extremely angry and had started chanting and jeering, as the meeting progressed. The mayor again refused to discuss the matter and threatened to have us thrown out. By now the public gallery was in uproar and were directing their abuse at Councillor Thrower himself, who by then was looking more than a little frightened and agitated.

The Labour mayor then adjourned the meeting and went to fetch the police. We continued chanting for about 15 minutes until it became clear that large numbers of police had arrived outside, and so to avoid arrests, we decided to leave.

Before leaving, though, we made it clear in no uncertain terms to Councillor Thrower that we would be back and that the youth of Halifax would never allow openly racist councillors to represent the people of Halifax.

Court threat to student union

STUDENTS at Sheffield University went into occupation last week against cuts in the Library book grant. Within 26 hours we were out of occupation with a threatened £20,000 fine and no backing from the Students Union.

Sheffield University Library is one of the worst in the country and cuts are continuing. In recognition of the uselessness of negotiation and as a backlash against our Tory union officers failure to lead any effective campaign, we went straight from the union meeting which adopted the occupation policy, to the main University administration building.

The occupation rapidly gained support with over 200 students staying the night and 350 attending the mass meeting the following day.

The occupation was run democratically by twice-daily mass meetings and accountable occupation committees.

But the University reacted harshly. Within two hours a writ was issued. The following day

By Dave Barter

Sheffield Crown Court gave the University a repossession order and awarded the cost of enforcing it, estimated at £20,000 per eviction attempt, to the Students Union.

The tactic of the legal system was to cripple the Union financially to cripple us politically. Just like the anti-union laws used against the NGA, the tactic is to destroy political autonomy by destroying financial autonomy.

The right of students everywhere to take direct action in defence of their interests is threatened.

Instead of working to build support for defying the Court order, our Tory union president packed an unconstitutional meeting with his supporters, lied to the occupiers and tried to close the occupation.

When the occupiers refused to

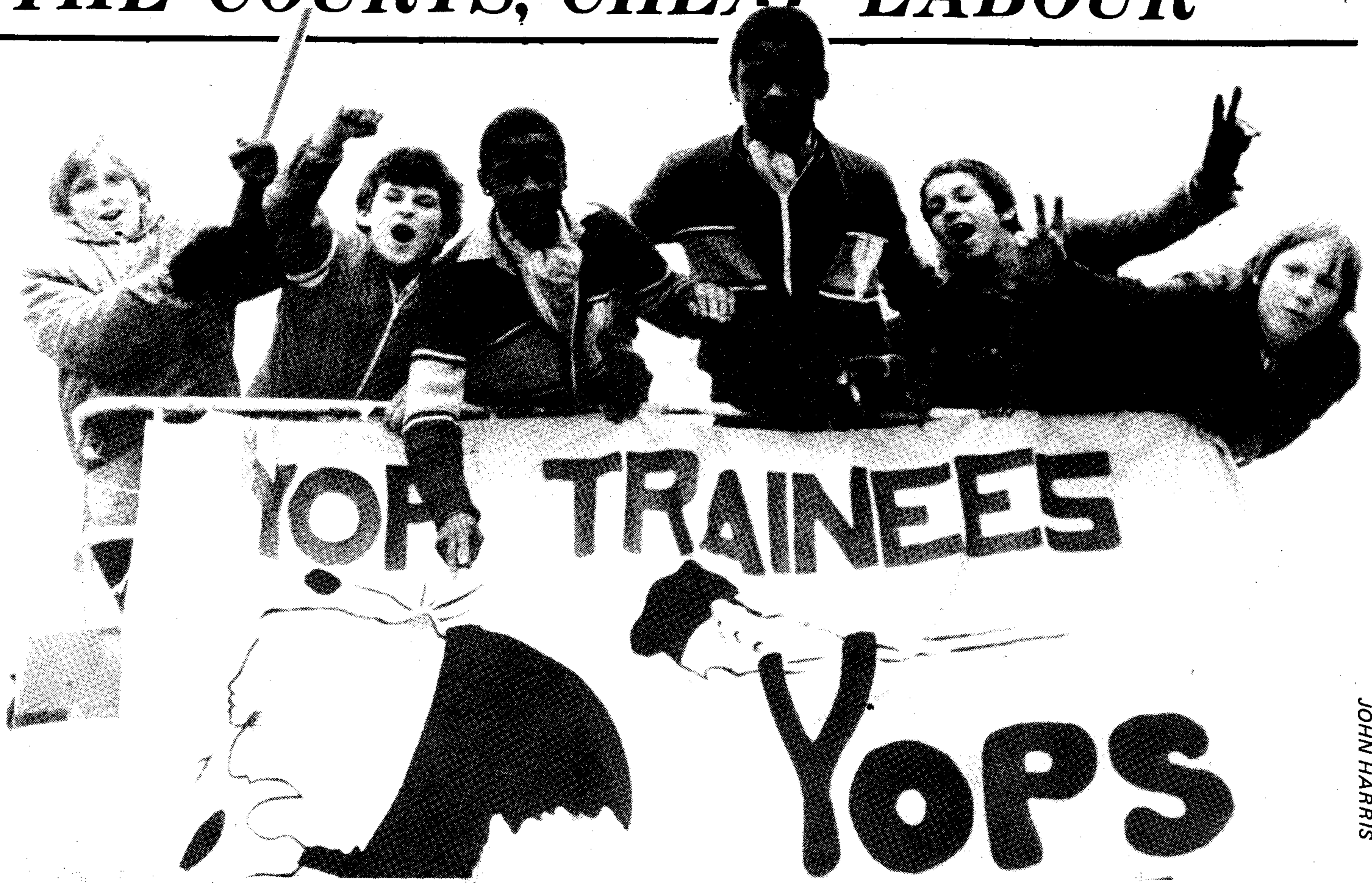
leave, he used his constitutional prerogative to overturn union policy, and withdrew our union backing. In panic, we withdrew.

There is now a core of students committed to direct action against the cuts, who have learnt from the occupation.

There were some splits in the occupation — ultra-leftists who failed to understand the difference between student action and workers action called University staff scabs when they delivered the mail, not helping us to work alongside the campus trade unions.

NUS have promised no support, with NUS president Neil Stewart telling us that illegal action was "futile".

The cuts in education are part of the offensive against the working class, and the attacks on student unions are parallel to attacks on trade unions. To defend their education, students must be prepared to break the law and build a national campaign to build student union autonomy.



JOHN HARRIS

Answer for MSC

Jim Denham reports on a response by Birmingham trade unionists and youth

THE GLOSSY complacency of the government Manpower Services Commission's 'Training Fair' in Birmingham has been shattered by the intervention of rank and file trade unionists and young people.

The Fair was intended to sell the Tories' Youth Training Scheme to groups of fifth formers dragged out of Birmingham schools. But amid the slick displays from the likes of Pitmans, Sight and Sound, 'Curves Figure Salon for Women', British Leyland, etc. etc., Birmingham Trades Council set up a stall distributing counter-propaganda.

We had trainees' rights cards, the report 'The Great Training Robbery' (which exposes the rip-off activities of private training agencies), a list of pertinent questions for young people to put to schemes, and material on backdoor compulsion.

We also showed a video of the TV Eye programme 'Death on YOPS'.

The MSC officials were clearly highly embarrassed by the Trades Council's stall, but dared not throw us out in front of the young people who quickly gathered round our display.

The MSC's agitation reached near-hysteria when our intervention inside the hall was supplemented by a 40-strong lobby outside the hall. The 'Trainees Action Group' had organised it to protest against compulsion onto YTS.

Socialist students' conference

By Jane Ashworth

WRITS and fines have been flung far and often recently, not just against the NGA and NUJ but against student unions too.

Student unions used to be able to demonstrate or occupy buildings for a short while and get away with it. If there were a fine it would be small and negotiable.

But since the student unions became dependent on college authorities and not students' grants for money, it has not been so easy.

This term Warwick University students' union effectively sold its autonomy, under threat of a £30,000 fine, it allowed the university to rewrite its constitution (to include a seven-day cooling-off period before any direct action on campus).

Now Sheffield University students' union is in serious trouble. Although a fine is only threatened, if they return to occupation they faced substantial bailiffs' costs.

In Sheffield the courts have been used to penalise the union. In Warwick the university used into hold on the union's purse-strings directly.

Meanwhile student unions in further education colleges usually remain subject to the rules and whims of their Principals and Local Education Authorities.

The Socialist Students in NOLS [National Organisation of Labour Students] AGM at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology on March 17 (starting 10.30) will be discussing the fight for student union autonomy and other battles.

Everyone is welcome. Just turn up, or phone Tony (061-273 5691) or Jane (01-609 7459) for details.



CARLOS AUGUSTO (IFL)



JOHN HARRIS

Women's Day 1984

By Gerry Byrne

INTERNATIONAL Women's Day 1984 seems a rather low-key affair — a far cry from either the bitter disputes between women of recent years, or the dazzling high-point of International Women's Day 1917 (see an account elsewhere on this page). How have we arrived at this?

International Women's Day originated in 1908 in the US, when women needle trades workers in Manhattan marched for "equal suffrage for women", "an eight-hour day" and the end of child labour.

Clearly, those women workers saw no contradiction between women's political demands (the vote) and overtly class demands (eight-hour day). Because of the underdevelopment of women's formal (as opposed to real social) equality the dividing line between "bourgeois feminists" and socialist, working class women was much clearer.

The bourgeois feminists limited themselves to demands for political equality and equal access to class privilege with men of their class. Socialist women could show clearly that liberation for all women could only come about in conjunction with class struggle.

It was therefore the socialist women's movement, as part of the Second International, who adopted International Women's Day.

In 1913, for instance, the Russian Social Democrats (Bolsheviks) marked the day by bringing out the first issue of their women's journal *Rabotnitska*, despite the arrest of most of its editorial board. In this they stressed the unity of working class women and men against the feminist sisterhood of women of all classes.

Their approach would appear to have been vindicated by International Women's Day 1917 when the action of women workers, calling on the support of the more "advanced" organised male workers, led directly to the downfall of Tsarism within a few days, and within months, the October Revolution.

The women of Petrograd acted out of class interest, under pressure of starvation, political repression and the most massive blood-letting in history to that date. But it is not accidental that it was women who were the trigger.

What is interesting is that the proponents of class struggle have not fully theorised the interaction of that oppression as women with the class struggle, in the same way that feudal relations and national oppression were analysed in Permanent Revolution.

Trotsky notes that the revolution was sparked by "the most oppressed and downtrodden" and it is clear that the October Revolution did create the biggest improvement in women's condition in history. From a position of near-slavery in the family, women won not only formal political equality but the greatest lifting of sexual oppression that was materially possible. That it was short-lived and virtually eradicated by Stalinisation does not detract from this fact.

So how have we come to a situation where the class content of International Women's Day is not only disputed but virtually invisible?

The present women's movement in Britain had its roots both in the ferment of the radical movements in the US and Europe and in the actions of women workers (Ford women, fishermen's wives).

The four original demands of the women's liberation movement reflect this. (Equal pay and job opportunities; equal education and training; nurseries; and free abortion and contraception). They clearly embody both a class and a specifically women's content. The polarisation of the women's movement between radical and socialist feminists — contributed to in no small part by the ignorance and insensitivity of the left — reflects itself in a shift away from women's oppression as

a feature of class society to patriarchy and the contradiction between men and women. International Women's Day became a battle ground for this split.

Rows took place about whether to focus on themes relating to the most oppressed women (e.g. working class women and the right to work, or black women and imperialism) or issues that unite all women regardless of class and race (sexual violence). The split was demoralising for both sides and the present downturn in interest can be seen as a kind of battle-weariness.

But now class has reared its head again in the women's liberation movement in a new guise. We now have "classism" to add to the 'isms' of oppression.

But it has largely become a depoliticised concept. Whereas racism or imperialism have both strict structural meanings and a more general liberal sense, "classism" seems only to have a liberal content. It's about the way middle class feminists (among others) oppress working class women through their attitudes, values, better access to education, jobs and money. But it is not tied to any analysis of the workings of society. It seems to me to miss the point.

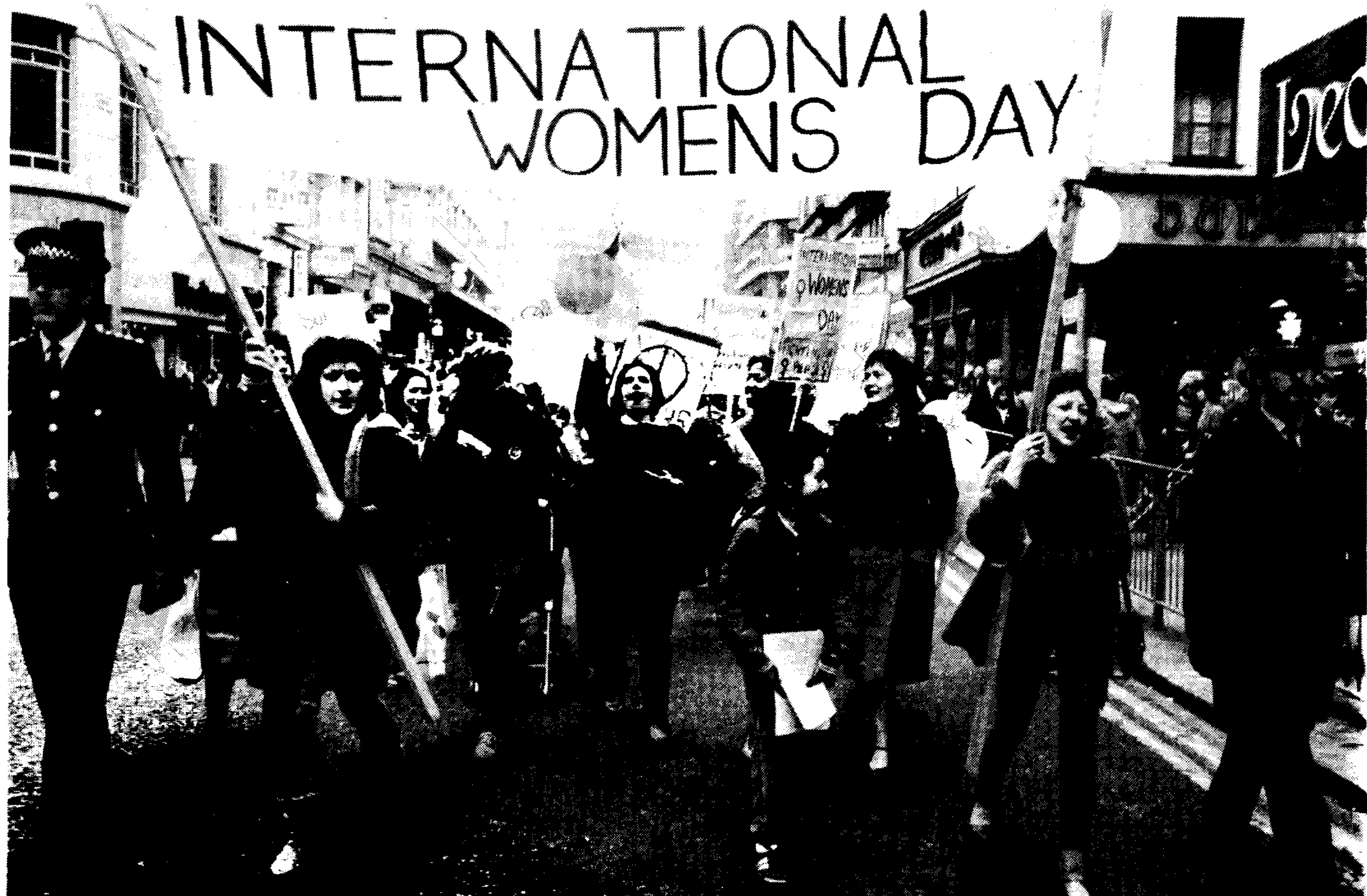
Of course, working class women are oppressed and have a different view of the world, etc. Nobody likes to be patronised or pitied. But one of the great strengths of the women's movement is the assertion that women are powerful — without negating real material inequalities of power. Why can't working class women's power be recognised?

Working class women do have a different angle on the world but it's not just a question of a different culture, but a reflection of the real material world. And, materially, the working class have the power to transform society, when they finally act, as the Petrograd women showed.

It's no use harking back to 1917 or before, when the issues seemed clear-cut. We're in 1984 and the present women's movement has raised issues and developed strategies which cannot and should not be ignored. What we need is to develop the understandings of both previous women's struggles and the present movement into a strategy for now that recognises the power we have and uses it.



Maria Navarro, a shop steward at South London Hospital



International Women's Day 1983 — marching in support of Greenham

Women's Day 1917

INTERNATIONAL Women's Day (March 8) was originally a workers' day of celebration.

It was also, in 1917, the first day of the Russian Revolution.

This excerpt from Leon Trotsky's 'History of the Russian Revolution' tells how.

In Trotsky's book, for these events he used the old *Ca lendar*, thirteen days behind the modern one, according to which International Women's Day was February 23 (thus, 'the February revolution!') We have changed the dates to the modern reckoning.

MARCH 8 was International Woman's Day. The social-democratic circles had intended to mark this day in a general manner: by meetings, speeches, leaflets.

It had not occurred to anyone that it might become the first day of the revolution. Not a single organisation called for strikes on that day.

What is more, even a Bolshevik organisation, and a most militant

one — the Vyborg borough-committee, all workers — was opposing strikes.

The temper of the masses, according to Kayurov, one of the leaders in the workers' district, was very tense; any strike would threaten to turn into an open fight. But since the committee thought the time unripe for militant action — the party not strong enough and the workers having too few contacts with the soldiers — they decided not to call for strikes but to prepare for revolutionary action at some indefinite time in the future.

Such was the course followed by the committee on the eve of March 8, and everyone seemed to accept it.

On the following morning, however, in spite of all directives, the women textile workers in several factories went on strike, and sent delegates to the metal workers with an appeal for support. "With reluctance," writes Kayurov, "the Bolsheviks agreed to this, and they were followed by the workers — Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. But once there is a mass strike, one must call everybody into the streets and take the lead."

Such was Kayurov's decision, and the Vyborg committee had to agree to it. "The idea of going into the streets had long been ripening among the workers; only at that moment nobody imagined where it would lead." Let us keep in mind this testimony of a participant, important for understanding the mechanics of the events. (...)

Thus the fact is that the March revolution was begun from below, overcoming the resistance of its own revolutionary organisations, the initiative being taken of their own accord by the most oppressed and downtrodden part of the proletariat — the women textile workers, among them no doubt many soldiers' wives.

The overgrown bread-lines had provided the last stimulus. About 90,000 workers, men and women, were on strike that day.

The fighting mood expressed itself in demonstrations, meetings, encounters with the police. The movement began in the Vyborg district with its large industrial establishments; thence it crossed over to the Petersburg side.

There were no strikes or demonstrations elsewhere, according to the testimony of the secret police. On that day detachments of troops were called in to assist the police — evidently not many of them — but there were no encounters with them.

A mass of women, not all of them workers, flocked to the municipal duma demanding bread. It was like demanding milk from a he-goat. Red banners appeared in different parts of the city, and inscriptions on them showed that the workers wanted bread, but neither autocracy nor war.

Woman's Day passed successfully, with enthusiasm and without victims. But what it concealed in itself, no one had guessed even by nightfall.

On the following day the movement not only fails to diminish, but doubles. About one-half of the industrial workers of Petrograd are on strike on March 9.

The workers come to the factories in the morning; instead of going to work they hold meet-

ings; then begin processions toward the centre. New districts and new groups of the population are drawn into the movement.

The slogan "Bread!" is crowded out or obscured by louder slogans: "Down with autocracy!" "Down with the war!" Continuous demonstrations on the Nevsky — first compact masses of workmen singing revolutionary songs, later a motley crowd of city folk interspersed with the blue caps of students.

"The promenading crowd was sympathetically disposed toward us, and soldiers in some of the war hospitals greeted us by waving whatever was at hand." How many clearly realised what was being ushered in by this sympathetic waving from sick soldiers to demonstrating workers?

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

by Patrick Spilling

World in Action this week exposed the bogus claims of the Sun "newspaper" to have psycho-analysed Tony Benn and found him barmy.

The Boston psychiatrist quoted by the Sun said on television that his conclusion had been casual, partial and completely misrepresented.

At the same time, a former editor of the News of the World lost his libel case against the BBC satirical programme 'Week Ending', which lampooned him as 'an East End boy made bad' and 'Sid Yobbo'.

The court decided in effect that the gibes on the programme were defamatory all right, but at the same time they were fair comment, which left the editor disillusioned with the public's lack of confidence in his profession.

Never mind all that. Here are the results of our own deep psychoanalysis of a Fleet Street newspaper editor, who wishes to remain anonymous. All known facts about him were fed into a computer and then shown to 10,000 psychiatrists with the following result.

Whacky . . . that is the verdict of your average Fleet Street editor.

Sick, sick, sick . . . that is the

outcome of our own deep research into these perverts.

MPs from all sides have been bombarded with requests to ban these weirdos. Their strange ritual of poisoning the minds of our children.

We fed the outcome of these tests to 10,000 psychiatrists and this is what they said.

*Their first trouble was finding the brain. But yes, he's got one. Only one, and very small.

Impulses measured by our experts show he could speak. Short sentences. Not more than ten words.

*Alcohol: yes. Evidence of this. Traces in the brain, kidney, liver and typewriter.

*Word test. We gave our subject a classic word test. They gave snap replies. This was their response. Girl — Page 3; Lady — Di; Boy — soldier; Lord — master; Red — Ken; Press — gutter; Democracy — . . . pass; Truth — . . . what?; Justice — (giggle).

At that point our test gave out.

Our psychiatrists conclude: whoever he is this man is not to be trusted. He could blow up at any time. We find he is fearful of authority. Has the classic symptoms of a bully. Deeply sexually repressed.

Whoever he is, this man can have no job of any responsibility.

The state of Irish solidarity

"WE must break the conspiracy of silence surrounding this undeclared war."

Jeremy Corbyn MP was speaking last week at a public meeting held by Southampton Irish Solidarity Committee and attended by around 50 activists.

This meeting was unusual in bringing together in one room representatives of most of the trends in the Irish solidarity movement, such as it is, in Britain. It is therefore worth reporting and examining in some detail.

Throughout the Six Counties, Corbyn continued, Catholics were facing surveillance of 'big brother' proportions. In Belfast, for



political/military withdrawal, he said. Active working class solidarity with this ongoing struggle was a key factor in the cause of Irish unity.

Delegations from the Northern Irish Catholic community were now on a speaking tour of the UK to counter the vicious class propaganda of press and media, explained Corbyn.

Speakers from SISC stated that support for the Irish struggle was a critical test for the English workers' movement. This view was justified with copious quotations taken from Marx and Lenin. SISC implicitly counterposed IRA-style militarism to revolutionary self-activity of the Irish working class.

Another ultra-left sect, the RCG, rejected Corbyn's view from the platform. Membership of NATO was not the issue... what the Tories really feared was the 'incipient Irish people's revolution'.

Labour Committee on Ireland strategy was then briefly outlined by three Socialist Action supporters. The LCI was an important vehicle in fighting to commit Labour to a principled class position on Ireland. It stood for British withdrawal, and end to partition and repeal of the PTA.

A none-too-popular issue was raised by a supporter of Socialist Organiser. A fight for unity with the Protestant working class must surely be intrinsic in any struggle for Irish self-determination. Did this political view hold any significance for either of SISC or LCI, he asked.

The silence was deafening. Of the rest of the left, Militant studiously ignored the meeting (though one supporter did turn up) while the SWP declared that they didn't want to get involved with guilt-ridden sectarians.

Those present finally stood in silent respect for IRA fighters killed that day.

Mitterrand cuts jobs and pay

FRANCE's public sector workers will strike this Thursday and Friday (8th-9th).

The strike has been called over pay, following union rejection of an offer from civil service minister Anicet Le Pors, a Communist Party member.

Le Pors' trade union comrades in the CP-led CGT federation are calling a one-day strike on the 8th, this trick of being on both sides simultaneously in an industrial dispute has been performed many times by the CP since CP ministers joined the government in 1981.

The teachers' union federation FEN is also calling for a strike on the 8th, and Force Ouvriere (a smaller federation which is usually on the right wing of the trade union movement) has made an uncharacteristically militant call for a 48 hour strike on the 8th and 9th.

The Socialist-leaning CFDT federation has not yet called any action.

French miners have also been on strike recently in protest at government plans to run down the coal industry from 56,000 jobs to 28,000 within four years.

The Mitterrand government started off with a policy of increased public spending and reduced working hours to cut unemployment. This attempt to tinker with capitalism failed to bring unemployment below two million — and also produced a galloping trade deficit.

Under pressure the Socialist-led government's policy has become more and more indistinguishable from Thatcher's and Reagan's. Now it is planning drastic roundings in heavy industry — shipbuilding as well as coal-mining.

Unemployment in France is now 2¼ million and rising.



French workers demonstrate against job cuts

Mobilisation for Church schools

ACCORDING to the organisers, there were up to 800,000 demonstrators in Versailles on March 4, defending the position of Catholic Church schools in France.

Bishops and right-wing politicians led the march.

The Versailles demonstration followed big protests elsewhere, including one 240,000 strong in Lille. And it looks like the Socialist-Party-led government may be backing down under the pressure.

Before the 1981 election Francois Mitterrand promised to nationalise the Church schools and integrate them into a unified secular education system.

Now the government is negotiating with Church leaders over much more limited proposals for a greater public say in the running of Church schools, and for giving teachers in Church schools the status of public employees.

Church schools have been a central issue in French politics since the 19th century.

The French Revolution at the end of the 18th century took on the Catholic Church hierarchy as one of the main pillars of the old regime. In 1790 the revolutionary government tried to make priests elected state officials. 'Church and King' became the slogan of the counter-revolution.

At the beginning of the 19th century Napoleon declared a (secular) state monopoly of education. In the course of the century right-wing governments dismantled this monopoly.

As from 1904 there were two clearly distinct school systems: a secular public system (supported by the Left) and a Catholic private system (supported by the Right).

In 1959 De Gaulle's government instituted extensive state aid to the Catholic schools. That is the status quo which the Church and the right wing are defending.

About 17% of French schoolchildren currently attend Church schools.



Druze militiamen

FOLLOWING an enormous amount of diplomatic manoeuvring between the Lebanese and Syrian governments, President Amin Gemayel is to abrogate the agreement with Israel made last May. The treaty had allowed for Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon only if Syrian troops were withdrawn as well.

Breaking the agreement is therefore a diplomatic coup for the Syrian government headed by Assad, and a blow to US policy — already floundering in Lebanon. The agreement had been patched up between Lebanon and Israel with US sponsorship.

It looks as if some government

of 'national unity' will be thrown together that will include current Syrian allies (such as Walid Jumblatt, leader of the Druze militias, or Nabih Berri, leader of the Islamic 'Amal movement) along with Gemayel's Falange. Such a government would be more 'broad based' than the Falangist one

that collapsed last month; but it would be unlikely to remain very stable.

Diplomatic

The tensions in Lebanese society cannot be so easily healed whatever the diplomatic deals made by various Lebanese leaders.



North and South

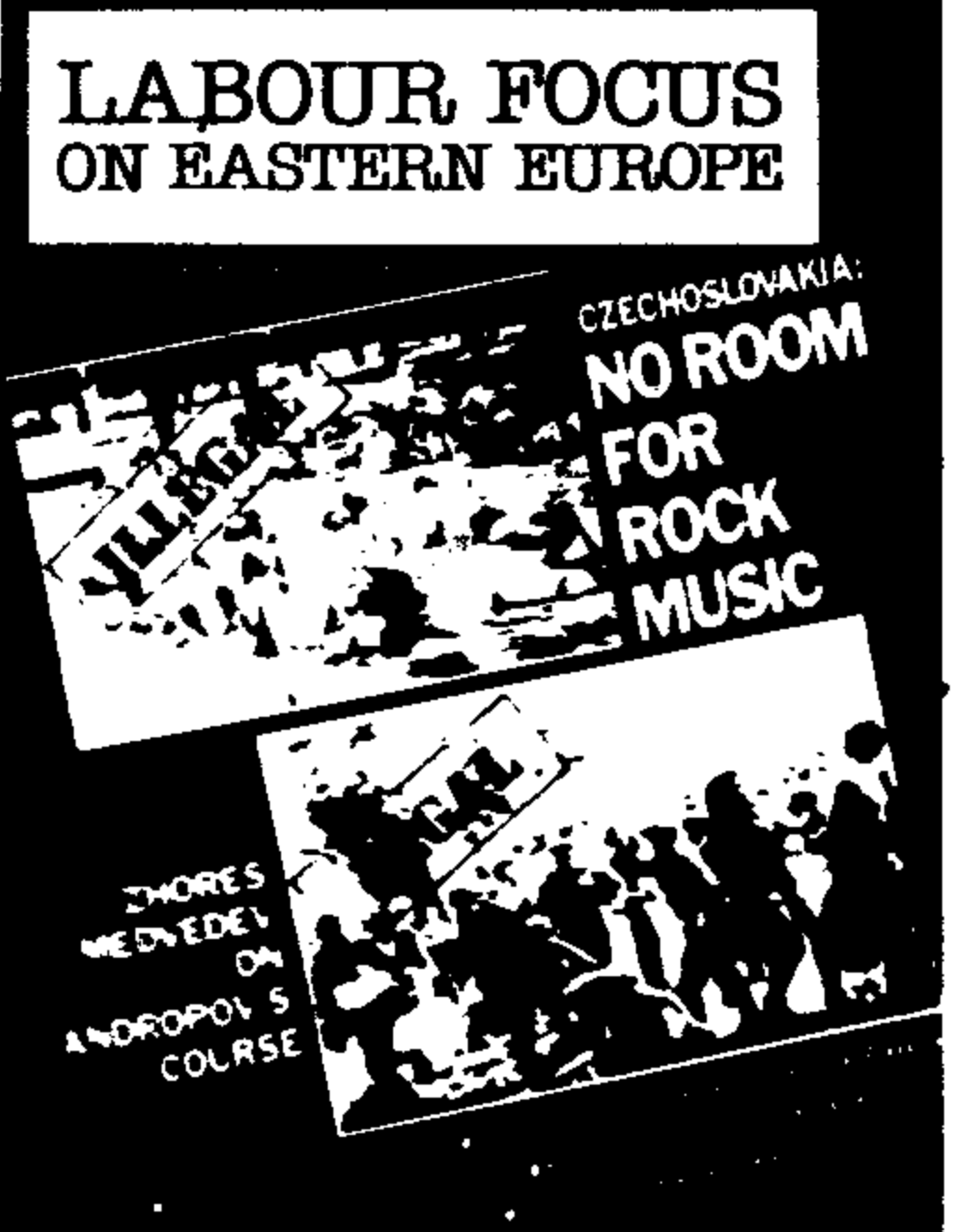
By Tony Twine

example, an especially high profile was taken by British troops.

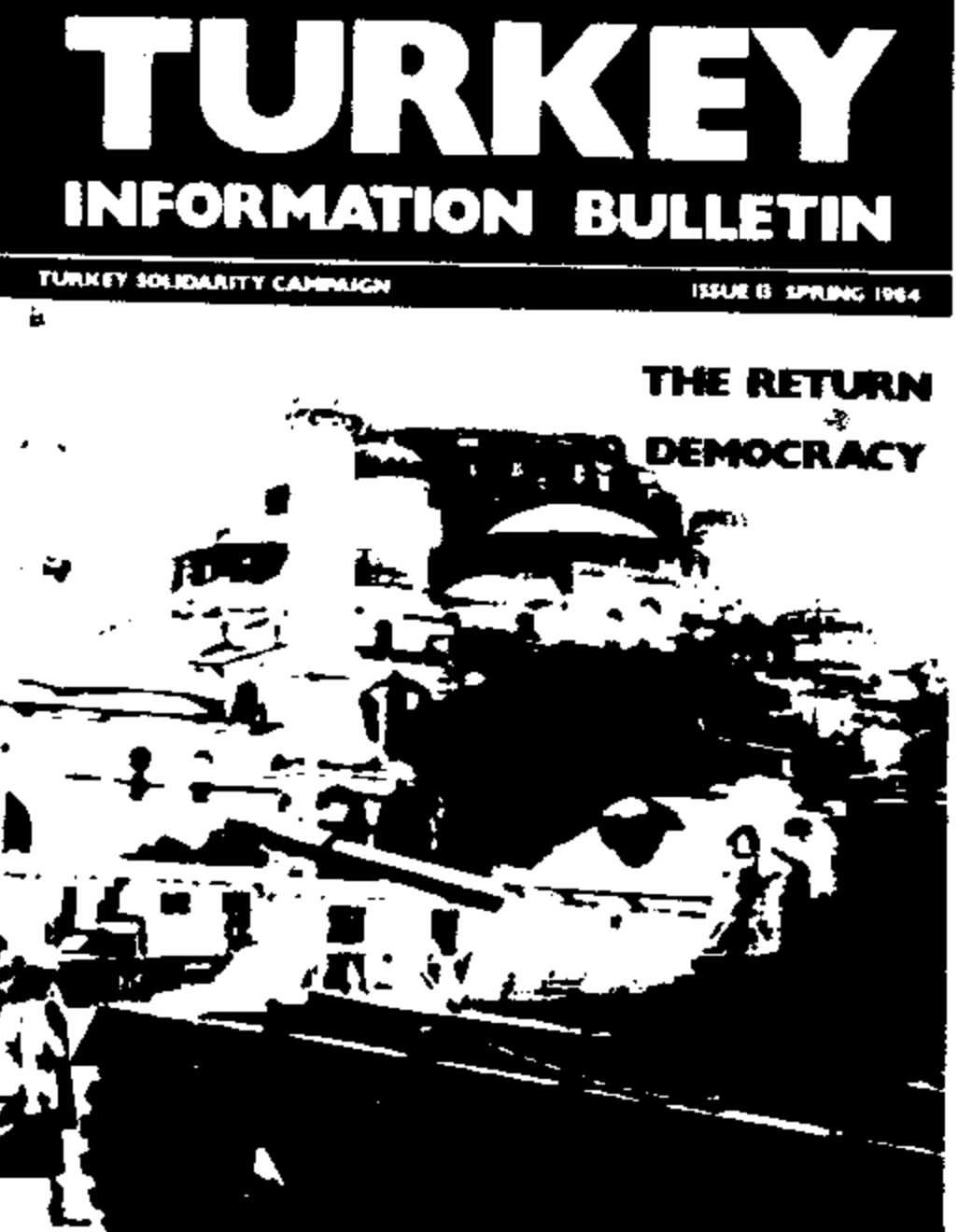
State terrorism via methods of internment, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, Diplock Courts, shoot-to-kill, and now 'supergrass justice', was systematically applied in the attempt to smash republicanism.

But, said Corbyn, it was important to realise that political motives behind the imperialist presence had not remained static. British governments feared the possibility of a non-aligned, self-determined Ireland outside NATO.

The last Labour Party conference had confirmed the policy of a united Ireland 'by consent'. But any removal of the Protestant veto first required a complete British



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FACTS&FIGURES

By Martin Thomas

THE seasonally adjusted official figures for unemployment rose by 28,600 in February. So much for the Tories' economic recovery.

The official total is about 3.2 million. But that is an artificially low figure, and trade union estimates put the total over four million. Just using the official basis of calculation employed before November 1982 increases the total to over 3.5 million.

660,000 people are on the government's Youth Training Scheme and other 'funny jobs' projects.

A NEW report gives further facts on the use of microelectronics in British industry.

In 1983, 95% of manufacturing companies with 1,000 employees or more used microprocessors (tiny computers). But nearly 90% of them already had microprocessors in 1981.

In small companies the increase in use is more visible: over 30% of manufacturing companies employing 20 to 49 workers, for example, now use microprocessors. It was only 17% in 1981.

But the intensity of use is also rising in big companies: "Use of micros rapidly gathers momentum. Once a company does take the plunge, it generally finds the advantages greater (and the difficulties no more) than it expected."

The most common uses of microprocessors are relatively simple ones, for example in computer-controlled machine tools.

The report, from the Policy Studies Institute, estimates the loss of jobs due to micros at no higher than 35,000.

THE Department of Trade and Industry has just published figures for the stock of British direct investment abroad.

It makes the total £44 billion. About one-third of this total is in the US, and about 20% in the EEC.

Most of the rest is in other advanced capitalist countries — Canada and Australia foremost among them — and about 20% is in Third World countries.

The stock of direct investment from abroad into Britain is estimated at £29 million.

A FOOTNOTE to the item two weeks ago on Third World-based multinationals: a recent Financial Times survey lists the world's top 30 international construction companies.

13 of the 30 are US-based, 10 EEC-based, and two Japanese. But there are five giants based outside the capitalist metropolises: three South Korean firms, one Turkish, and one Greek are in the top 30.

One South Korean firm, Daewoo, has just bought up Hymac, a bankrupt South Wales manufacturer of hydraulic excavators.



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

Neither Hart nor Mondale!

FORMER US Vice-President Walter Mondale seemed set to win the Democratic Party's nomination for Presidential candidate in the US election later this year — until last week. In the primary election in New Hampshire, a relatively unknown contender, Gary Hart, won the party nomination. He seems set to be the big competitor with Mondale to become the man who stands against Reagan.

The United States' bizarre system of choosing candidates for elections is not really a democratic process. The Democratic and Republican Parties do not have a proper membership structure. A series of 'primaries' and 'caucuses' are held in different states to decide which candidate to nominate. It is not unusual for people to attend the primaries of both parties, so loose and vague is their organisation.

But winning nominations in primaries is no less important for that. The New Hampshire primary has a special — if rather mythological — significance, because no one who has lost the primary in New Hampshire has won the actual Presidential contest for the last few decades.

Mondale's election

By Gerry Bates

machine is well oiled and run by the trade union bureaucrats in the AFL-CIO. Their campaign to get him elected is described by Newsweek as 'simply the biggest and best in the history of US politics'.

But like all US election campaigns it has more to do with show business than politics. Saatchi and Saatchi's swish PR job for the Tories last year would seem mild in comparison. In the final election play off, the Presidential candidates have special jingles, their families have to come over as charismatic as does the candidate himself (so far it's always himself in presidential elections), and so on.

On major policy questions, Mondale and Hart are in general quite similar. Both are against the MX missile and B-1 bomber. Both are for a nuclear freeze and for reducing the arms race. Both are against aid to the Nicaraguan contras, against aid to the El Salvadorian regime (while the death squads are still active), and against US troops in Honduras.

Both are in favour of maintaining the existing US

policy of total support for Israel; both are for a total US withdrawal from Lebanon.

Both are for an equal rights amendment for women; for equal pay; for abortion on demand. And both are for health cuts.

They differ slightly in those areas where spending should be increased. Mondale is for a degree of state intervention in the economy, but Hart is in favour of the free market. Mondale is in favour of protectionism, but Hart is against it.

And Hart is in favour of a 4.5-5% increase in defence spending a year; Mondale only wants 4%.

While on some issues they would both seem preferable to the Moral Majority reaction of the Reagan administration, it would be a mistake to believe that any of the differences are fundamental ones. Democrats and Republicans alike, of whichever shape or form, are firm defenders of US capitalism, at home and abroad.

The US working class should not — though it will — be conned into voting for any of them. What is needed instead is an independent party of American labour committed to fighting all sections of the ruling class.

How US helped Thatcher

ACCORDING to an article in the latest issue of the 'Economist' magazine, US aid to Thatcher's war over the Falklands was much greater than publicly revealed.

The US's motive, according to the magazine, was not simple.

"Given the Reagan administration's carefully nurtured

rapprochement with Latin America, there was a clear foreign policy motive for neutrality...

"Both President Reagan and Mr Haig had privately told Mrs Thatcher that, if negotiation failed, public opinion would force them back to Britain. But that only increased their anger at

Britain's fixation with what President Reagan termed a 'little ice-cold bunch of land down there'...

"If foreign policy considerations led Washington strongly in the direction of non-involvement, so too did global strategic ones. The Falklands were not just irrelevant to NATO but a distraction from it..."

"The [US] decision to 'tilt' Britain's way on May 1 was therefore bitterly contested by certain State Department and Pentagon officials..."

But for the majority in US ruling circles, once the conflict was on, there could be no choice but to back Britain — the US's number one military ally — against the shaky and unreliable Argentine regime.

If necessary, the US government was ready to help publicly on a large scale. It offered to lend a US ship to the British navy if either of the two British aircraft carriers was put out of action.

But that was a risky last resort. The US's chief aim now was that Britain "win soon and without American help being too conspicuous". So it poured in masses of behind-the-scenes aid.

On Ascension Island, "additional accommodation and water purification plants were supplied. Roads were repaired and fuel pipelines built. An astonishing 12.5 million gallons of aviation fuel were diverted for British use".

Weapons for the British forces — notably Sidewinder missiles — were also sent to Ascension Island. The Economist reports an estimate that at one stage Wide-awake Airport on Ascension Island became the busiest airport in the world!

Maybe even more importantly, a US military satellite was moved from watching the USSR to watching Argentina. "The Americans claim '98%' of British intelligence of Argentine movements came from them".

Throughout all this the US had not changed its views on the rights and wrongs of the issue — it remained, and remains, neutral on the question of sovereignty over the island. But world power politics calculations were more important to the US than rights and wrongs... and much more important than the human lives lost in the war.



JOHN HARRIS

It's easier to be 'resolute' with the Pentagon behind you...



Hart with a hatchet. He wants to use it against government spending on health

Algerian Trotskyists

ELEVEN members of the Socialist Workers Organisation (SWO) — a group of Algerian Trotskyists — are on hunger strike in Barboraisse prison in Algeria.

They were imprisoned on 23 December last year, apparently simply for belonging to the SWO. The SWO is in opposition to the Algerian government and has put forward a programme for freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and organisation, and for a democratic Constituent Assembly.

The eleven prisoners have not been awarded political status by the Algerian authorities, and so have not been given the rights of political prisoners. The eleven demanded the right to be regrouped together in a single room; the right to communicate without limit on the number of visits; the right to receive books and newspapers; and improved sanitary conditions.

On February 13, two weeks after making their demands to the authorities, and having received no reply, the prisoners went on hunger strike. They deserve our support.

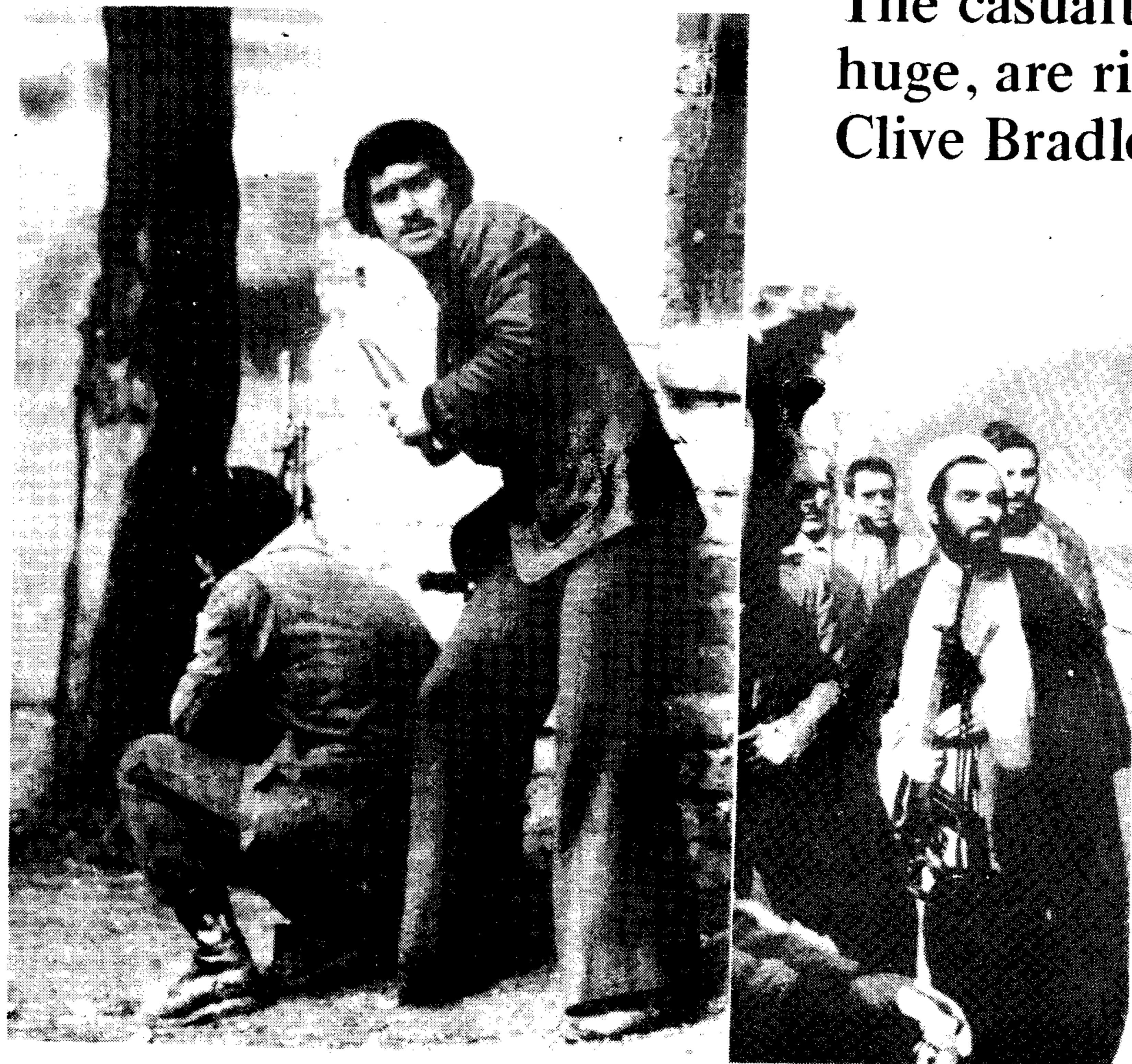


Two of the jailed militants

Hussein's and Khomeini's war

Iran/Iraq: barbarity

The casualty figures in the Iran/Iraq war, already huge, are rising rapidly — and the war could spread. Clive Bradley reports.



THE Iranian revolution of 1979 was a great popular revolution shanghaied by a viciously reactionary caste of Shi'ite muslim priests. From late 1978 to February 1979, a wave of enormous popular demonstrations rocked, and finally toppled, the regime of the Shah of Iran. That regime had been pumped with arms and military aid by the US — which had seen Iran as one of its main 'policemen' in the Middle East (along with Israel).

The Shah had been overtly backed by the US since 1953, when a CIA-organised coup overthrew the nationalist government of Mossadeq. Right up to the moment when the Shah finally fled the country, US intelligence could not believe what was happening, that their well-fed, corrupt and repressive ally was really on the way out.

The Shi'ite muslim clergy organised like a tight religious party opposed the Shah as a moderniser of Iran and took the lead of the

insurgent masses whose weapons included strikes and factory seizures.

The religious leadership gained enormous authority within the mass movement that united different classes opposed to the old regime. The aims of that movement were confused; and the politics of the various left wing parties (some of which had some influence in the powerful Iranian working class) were equally confused.

So, by relying partly on religious feeling, partly on its revolutionary record, the new Shi'ite regime of Ayatollah Khomeini was able to base itself on mass forces that it could mobilise against the more secular or radical opposition that began to emerge. The opposition is a mass movement as well: but the ruling Islamic Republican Party still has a great deal of authority and maintains itself in power five years after the revolution by a regime of repression which slaughters men, women and children without scruple.

FIGHTING in the Gulf War between Iran and Iraq has recently reached a new pitch. The Iraqi regime has been attempting — so far unsuccessfully — to attack the Iranian oil terminal on Kharg (Gulf) Island. It is from this island that Iran's oil is exported, and the Iranian 'Islamic Republic' has threatened to close the Straits of Hormuz if an Iraqi attack is successful. Since the Straits are vital for Western oil supplies, the US and Britain (despite mutual recriminations and the occasional statement to the contrary) have threatened to intervene against Iran to keep the Straits open. If they do so, there is the obvious danger of superpower confrontation.

Iraq is attempting this action because its war efforts have come into major difficulties. Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime launched the war in September 1980, believing that it would be able to swiftly topple the Khomeini regime in Iran, and establish itself as the major power in the Gulf. Three and a half years later, it has failed miserably to do either; and for the last year or so has been visibly losing the war.

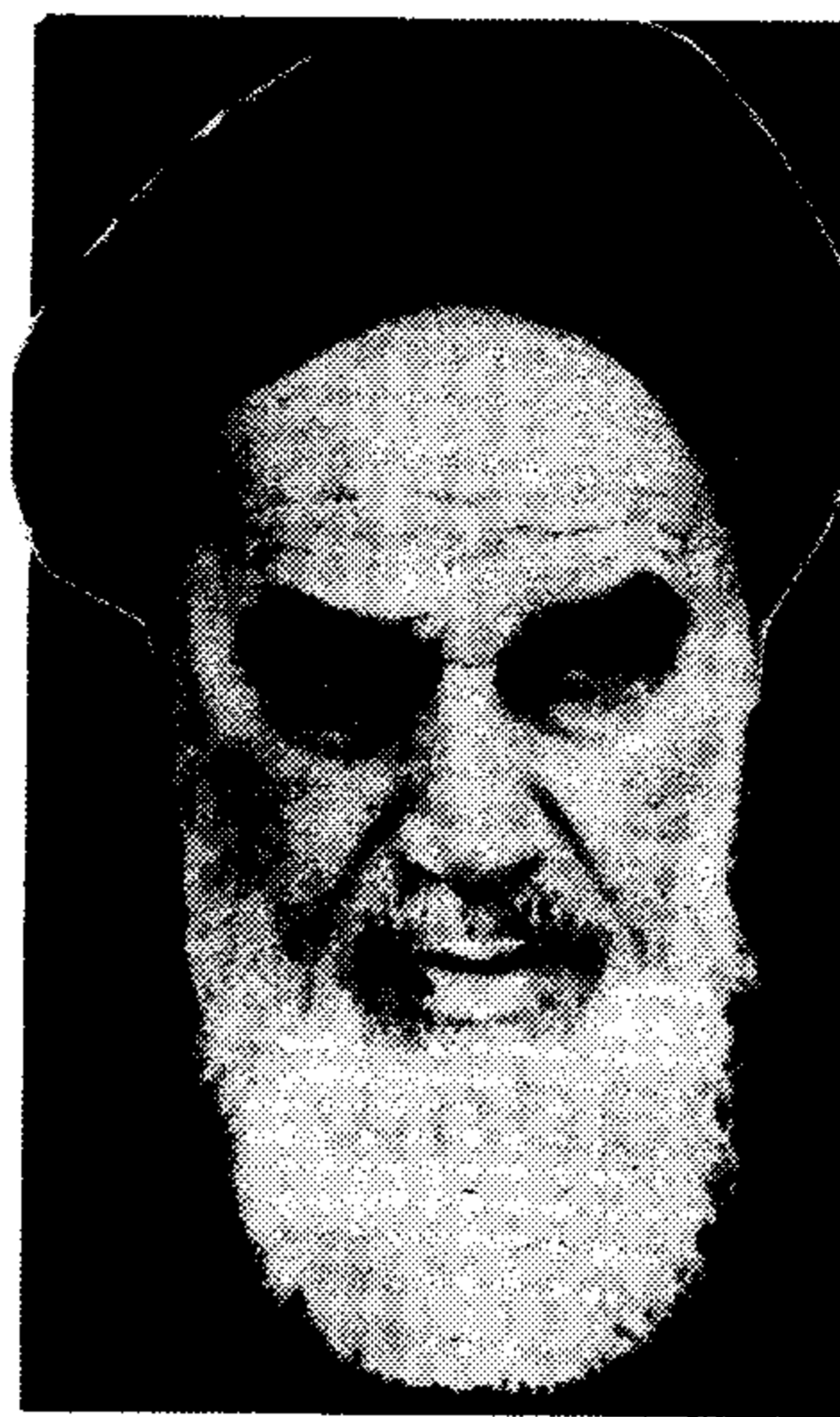
Its economy is consequently collapsing. The costs of war are huge — running into billions of dollars a year. The Iraqi economy is based on oil production, but as a result of the war its oil exports have dried up completely, and the regime is now enormously indebted to other Arab Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia. The reactionary Arab oil states have been footing the bill for the Iraqi war effort in the fear that if Saddam falls, their own regimes may come under threat.

For the Iranian regime, the war is also costly, but has been politically to their benefit. Early in the war Khomeini commented that "We must thank Allah for this war which has united our people", and the war has been consciously used by the 'Islamic Republic' to suppress internal dissent.

The fact that it has survived the Iraqi attack and turned the tables has been in the interests of Iran's reactionary rulers, and there is every indication that it sees its own interests best served by prolonging the war as long as possible.

The original issue over which Iraq declared war — sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab waterway which connects the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to the Gulf — has long since been lost sight of in the fighting.

In 1976 Iran and Iraq agreed to a mutual border



Khomeini

running down the middle of the waterway (i.e. effective joint sovereignty). It was a stitched up deal by which Hussein's regime in Iraq agreed to stop opposing Iranian activities in the Gulf region, in return for an end to support for Kurdish rebels in Iraq by the Shah's regime in Iran. The Kurds are a stateless nation spanning (and oppressed within) Turkey, Iraq and Iran. The immediate result of the 1976 agreement was the defeat of the Kurdish resistance in Iraq, and an unhindered intervention by Iran (with British backing) to crush the Dhofar Liberation Front in Oman.

The fall of the Shah in 1979 fundamentally altered the status quo between Iran and Iraq. The 'Islamic Republic' in Iran clearly posed a threat to Hussein's regime — it toppled the main 'policeman' of the Gulf, and the new rulers in Iran had a stated intention of spreading their 'Islamic' revolution.

Shi'ites

In Iraq there is probably a majority of the population who belong to the Shi'a Muslim sect that predominates in Iran, and the Iraqi regime clearly believed that there was the possibility of the Iraqi Shi'a following the Iranian example.

The abrogation of the 1976 agreement was completely arbitrary: the declaration of war that it entailed was an attempt to head off opposition within Iraq and remove the threat the Iranian regime posed. As we have seen, it turned out to be a disaster for the Iraqi Ba'ath, and a boon to the Islamic Republic.

Both regimes are equally reactionary. The Ba'ath Party in Iraq took power in a coup in 1968. It had previously held power briefly in 1963 — and on that occasion slaughtered tens of thousands of their opponents, in particular dealing heavily with the Communist Party. By 1968, the pseudo-radical elements in the Ba'ath Party had been

defeated, and the Hussein al-Takriti family had consolidated their hold on the party apparatus.

From the outset the Ba'athist regime was viciously repressive. For a while it expended a lot of energy in radical and 'anti-imperialist' rhetoric, and nationalised the Iraq Petroleum Company in 1972. It was also one of the loudest voices in the Arab 'Rejection Front' after some forces in the Arab world moved closer towards accommodation with Israel.

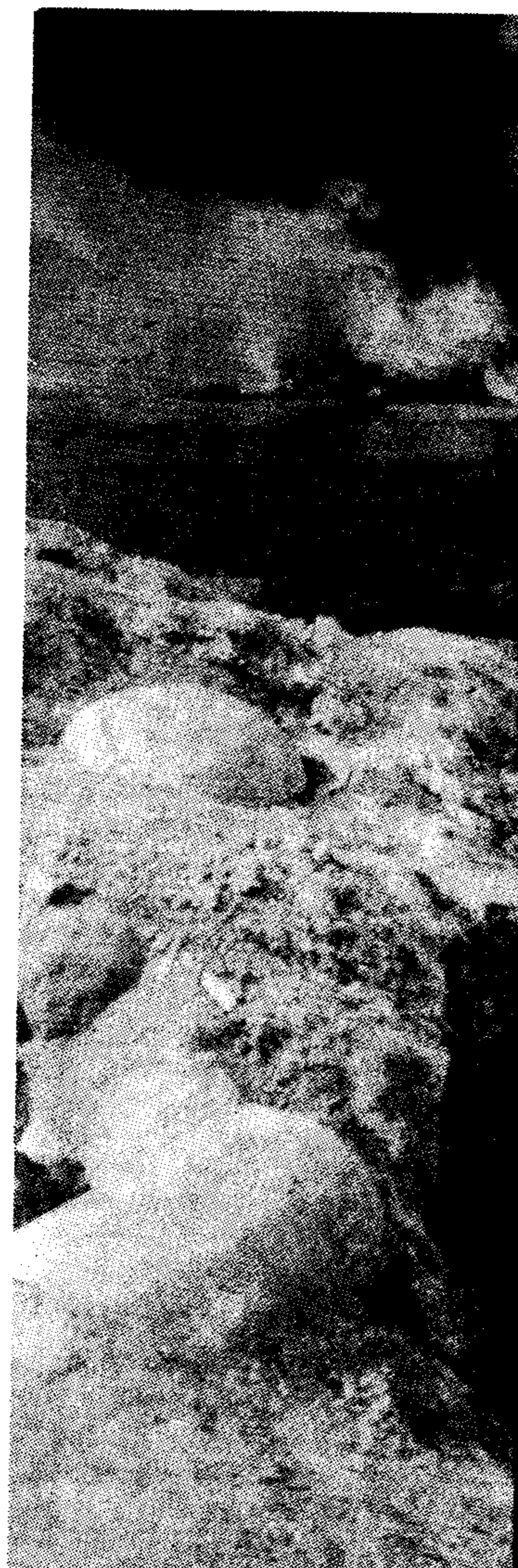
But its internal policies, despite being frequently dressed up as social reform, were essentially the methods of a police state. It had a policy of "Ba'athisation" (especially in the late '70s): to get anywhere, a person had to be a member of the Ba'ath Party (and preferably from Saddam Hussein's home town of Tikrit) or be fiercely discriminated against.

Iraqi Kurds

It also had a policy of Arabisation: that is, Iraq's large Kurdish minority was denied elementary national rights (the right even to speak their own language, for example) — never mind the right to autonomy or their own state. The Ba'athists carried out forced population transfers to alleviate the 'demographic problem' (too



Scenes from the 1979 revolution



Iranian casualties

y against barbarity

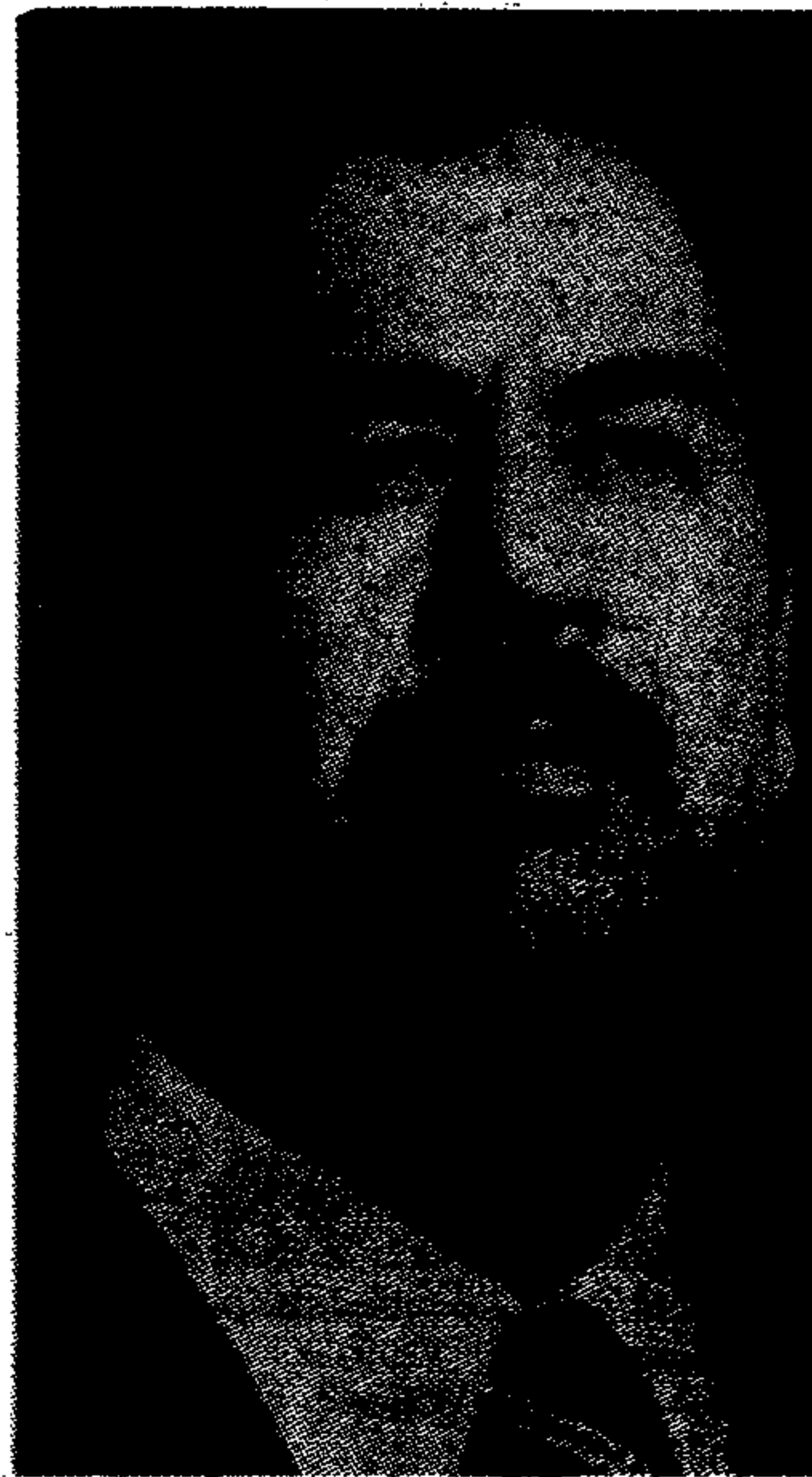
many Kurds in one area).

Before 1976, there was a longstanding state of war against the Kurds (in particular the Pesh Merga guerrillas). The Communist Party, criminally, joined the Ba'athist government and went along with this war. They left the government in the late '70s, after Hussein eliminated all opposition to himself and became president. The CP was forced underground, and is now the major force in the opposition to the Ba'ath.

But now the Ba'athist regime is in trouble. The regime is undoubtedly on the verge of falling. Last month, Khomeini declared, as Iran began its latest offensive on his way out. He is on his way out." Although some of the opposition (notably in Kurdistan) has the Ba'ath to unite against Iran, most of the opposition has stood firm, and dissent is rife in the armed forces — including at the top.

As a result, the Ba'ath is moving further and further towards accommodation with overtly pro-imperialist governments in the Middle East.

Last year the Iraqi and Egyptian foreign ministers declared they had total agreement on the Middle East 'peace process' — that is, acceptance of the US's Reagan Plan. And in May last year, the Baghdad government gave the go-ahead to Turkish troops to invade Iraqi Kurdistan in pursuit of



Hussein

Kurdish rebels making raids in Turkey. As we have seen, Iraq is almost completely dependent on Saudi financial support.

Although close military ties with the USSR remain, Iraq also has important connections with French imperialism. Britain, too, has supplied it with arms.

The mullahs

But the Iranian regime is no less reactionary. Because the mosques were the only place where it was possible to organise opposition to the Shah, the mullahs were able to put themselves "at the leadership of the mass movement in 1978-9. In reality, the decisive force that toppled the Shah, along with popular mobilisation on a scale unprecedented in world history, was a strike by oil workers.

'It is the unity of the working class in both countries against their respective governments that can put a stop to the fighting'

The Khomeini regime was able to curtail the mass movement — all opposition has been dealt with by the most barbaric measures. War was launched against the Iranian Kurds. Religious minorities, women, gay people have all been attacked with genocidal savagery.

The opposition movement is deeply divided, although the main group continues to be the People's Mujaheddin — a radical movement that adheres to Islam. The Iranian CP (the Tudeh), along with the so-called Fedayin 'Majority', collaborated with the Khomeini regime, until it turned on them last year. Last week a number of its leaders, including a former head of the Iranian navy were shot. The civilian leaders now face trial and probable execution.

Still equipped with US military supplies it captured from the Shah's army — and apparently still sold arms by Britain — the Iranian army (and especially its fanatical, semi-fascist Revolutionary Guards' or Pasdaran) proved more effective than their Iraqi opponents had expected.

Having turned the tide in the Gulf, the Iranian army has now begun — in contradiction to its previous policy — to bombard Iraqi cities.

Iran is in a position to close the Straits of Hormuz. The Islamic Republic has stated that if the US Seventh Fleet intervenes to keep the Straits open, it will only prolong the closure.

United front

The solution to the war in the Gulf is not US or British naval intervention. It is the unity of the working class in both countries against their respective governments that can put a stop to the fighting. A united front of the oppressed peoples of Iran and Iraq against both brutal dictatorships is desperately needed. We can contribute to that aim by supporting the struggles of the opposition movements already fighting.



Iranian fighter in the marshes

US war threat



THE stated intention of the Reagan administration to intervene militarily to keep the Straits of Hormuz open should the Iranians seek to close it poses an immediate threat to world peace.

Since 1978, the US has been developing what it calls a 'Rapid Deployment Force' to intervene in the Middle East — especially the Gulf — to defend its 'vital strategic interests'. The idea is to be able to swiftly intervene in the event of insurrection or war that might endanger its regional allies or Western oil supplies.

Apart from the threat this poses to revolutionary struggles in the region, it is also a threat to us. The Rapid Deployment Force has a nuclear capacity, and Pentagon policy is based on the idea of threatening to use nuclear weapons — or even using them in a 'theatre' nuclear war the US along with the rest of NATO believes it could win.



THE Kurdish people is one of the most savagely oppressed peoples on earth. There are approximately 15 million Kurds in the Middle East, mainly concentrated in Turkey, Iraq and Iran. They are Muslims. In all three of these countries the Kurds have suffered terribly. In Turkey their language has been suppressed and their national identity denied — the word 'Kurd' is considered treasonous, and Kurds are referred to as 'mountain Turks'. Over the last century many thousands of Kurds have been massacred, and others uprooted and forcibly dispersed.

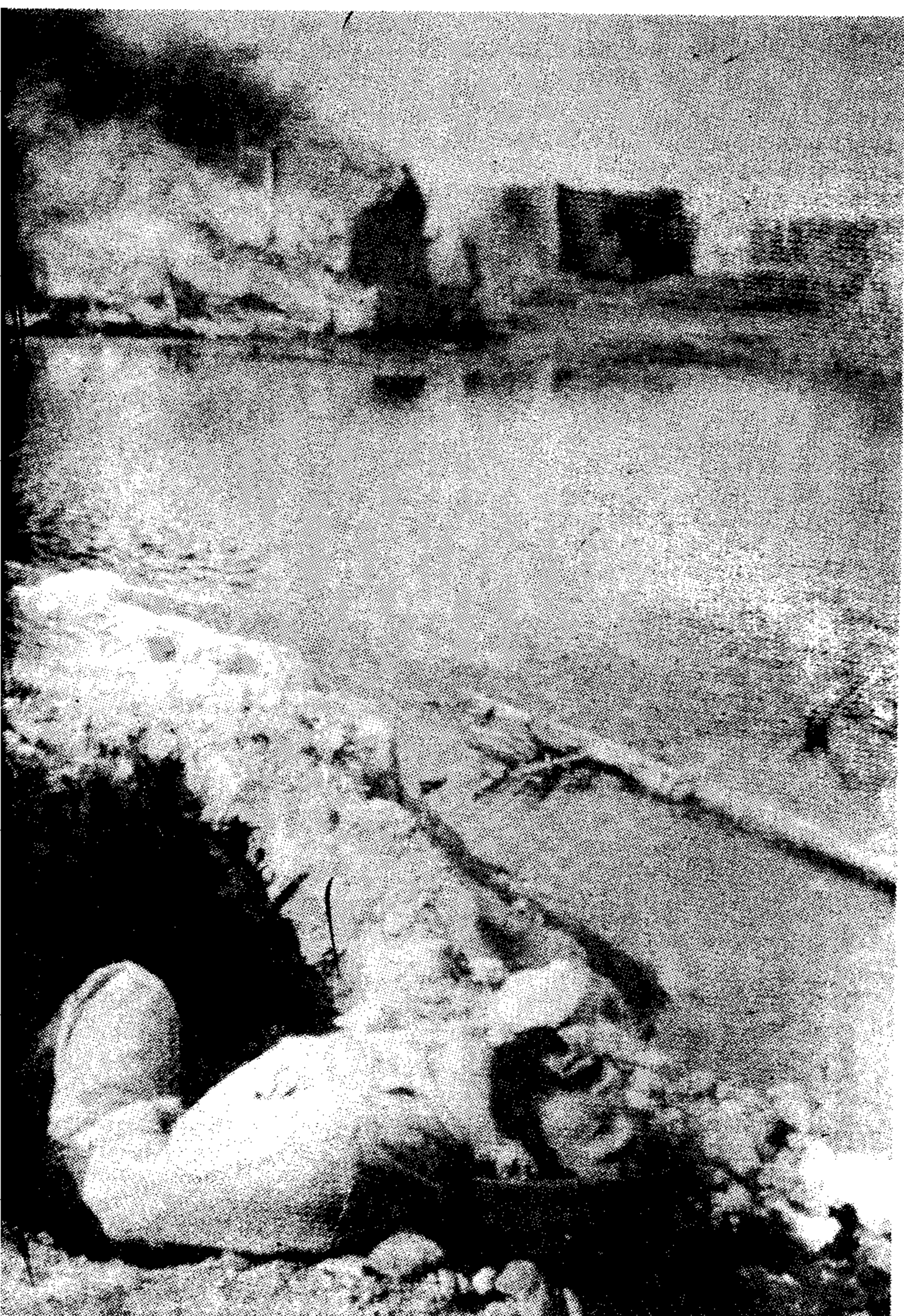
They are an important and often forgotten or ignored oppressed nation who have never had their own state — except for a brief republic in Mahabad, Iran in 1946 — and who have been denied even limited autonomy in the countries where they live.

Right now the governments of Turkey, Iraq and Iran are all waging war against their Kurdish minorities.

The Kurds



Kurdish nationalist fighters



Stalinism is not Bolshevism!



Red Guards' flying column in January 1918

A SHORT article I wrote commemorating Lenin's death, (SO 165), has been attacked, first by Ian McCalman (SO 167) as "typical of the hagiography [Bible-thumping] which performs a disservice to the socialist movement in that it obscures rather than clarifies the legacy of Leninism"; and second, by Paul Hubert (SO 168) as showing probable "conscious sleight of hand" in failing to refer to the fact that the USSR is a 'degenerated workers' state'.

So I am apparently, simultaneously, an unthinking, dogmatic orthodox Leninist, and a vile, underhand, conscious

revisionist. Critics are hard to please.

Ian accuses me of "betraying an unserious attitude towards the most contentious issue facing revolutionary socialists", which is this: "did Lenin lay the foundations for Stalinism, and, if so, in what ways was this relationship expressed?" And Ian refers to one line of thinking by way of an answer: "the growing process of bureaucratisation was the inevitable and logical culmination of Lenin's concept of the party, the consequences of which he recognised too late." And Ian suggests, at least, that he agrees with this line of

thinking.

The idea that Lenin's concept of the party, and the organisation of the Bolsheviks prior to 1917, in some way caused the Stalinist police state, is a widespread one. It is, however, not very convincing.

First of all, the Bolshevik party before the revolution was not the monolithic apparatus it was to become by the end of the 1920s. Even in 1917, for example, Lenin had to wage a sharp — and public — struggle to win the party to opposition to the Provisional Government and to a perspective of 'all power to the Soviets'. It had never been that bureaucratic, centralised machine that it would have needed to be to in any way 'cause' Stalinist degeneration.

Other factors account for Stalinism: the profound backwardness of capitalism in Russia, which worked against the foundations of a socialist society being established unless the revolution was internationalised; the failure of revolutions elsewhere, which reinforced the isolationist tendencies in the new workers' state; the disruption, economically and politically, caused by civil war and imperialist blockade/intervention, strengthening the power of a bureaucratic elite that wanted, in this situation, to establish and maintain privileges amidst 'generalised want'.

Ian says that it is wrong to 'dismiss out of hand' more negative assessments of the influence of the Bolsheviks' methods of organisation. But it seems to me wrong to 'dismiss out of hand' Lenin's last struggle (Moshe Lewin's phrase — not mine — as Ian notes) against bureaucratisation, as well as by implication to dismiss the subsequent struggle of the Left Opposition. These were not simply the result of confusion and disillusionment, but necessary and important, and not necessarily doomed to failure.

The Left Opposition — I think rightly — saw a part of their struggle to be a return to Leninist principles of organisation, which the Stalin faction had broken with. To smugly believe that the Left Opposition shared the Stalin faction's basic ideas about the party is unhistorical and insulting.

This is not to say that Lenin and Trotsky did not make

By Clive Bradley

mistakes. Rosa Luxemburg, in a spirit of fundamental solidarity with the Bolshevik revolution, criticised them for making general theoretical justifications for actions they were forced to carry out by exceptional circumstances. I would tend to agree with her about this.

But I do think that the choices that faced the Bolsheviks immediately after 1917 were severely limited, as the new workers' state was fighting for its life. The mistakes that they made need to be assessed coldly in light of this historical situation.

Ian throws out two largely rhetorical questions. "Did Lenin ever conceive of... submitting to the will of a democratically elected Constituent Assembly?" and "Did Lenin ever believe in a plurality of political parties?"

Lenin had consistently argued that the Soviets were a higher form of democracy than the Assembly: the decision to dismiss the latter was not made suddenly. But it would in any case seem to me pointless to maintain a bourgeois parliament (which is what the Assembly was) with a majority elected some time earlier and opposed to the revolution in a situation in which power had already passed

to the Soviets as institutions of the new working class state.

Rival parties were banned due to the exceptional circumstances referred to above. At the beginning of the October revolution, power was shared, with the Left Social Revolutionaries. Judgements about later actions should not be made with reference to abstract criteria about pluralism, but made historically.

But whatever judgement we make does not directly affect our view of the Leninist method of party organisation. Lenin's original work on the party was an attempt to apply then accepted forms of social democratic (in the pre-1914 sense) organisation to conditions of Tsarist clandestinity. And its basic principles are, I think, sound ones. An organisation in which there is the greatest possible political discussion (and what is possible is not always going to be what is desirable — for example if the organisation is permanently under threat of police infiltration); which has a democratically elected leadership with the authority to make interim decisions; and whose conference decisions or interim leadership decisions, are implemented by its membership, strikes me as extremely sensible, extremely democratic and extremely necessary. It does not rule out the possibility of

bureaucratisation; but it also does not, and did not, cause bureaucratisation.

I concentrated in the article on the ideas in State and Revolution because they express the basic ideas of revolutionary socialism (Ian seems to be dismissing them as anarchistic). And I think they should form a central corpus of our theoretical ideas today.

Paul Hubert's letter is ridiculous. Certainly, I do not use the expression 'degenerated workers' state' in my article, but I think I spell out the basic idea behind it. If we always have to use the right phrases not to be accused of revisionism, we are in a sorry state.

I also said nothing about Lenin's position on imperialism, the national question, the united front, etc., etc. No doubt that was 'conscious sleight of hand' as well.

But Paul's letter is disturbing in other respects. He attacks me for juxtaposing the need to smash the state in capitalist societies and in the Stalinist countries. Of course the tasks facing the working class are not exactly the same in both cases; but does Paul mean that the Stalinist states do not need to be smashed? In the name of an irate orthodoxy, Paul seems to be chucking out the idea of political revolution. If I'm the revisionist, so be it.

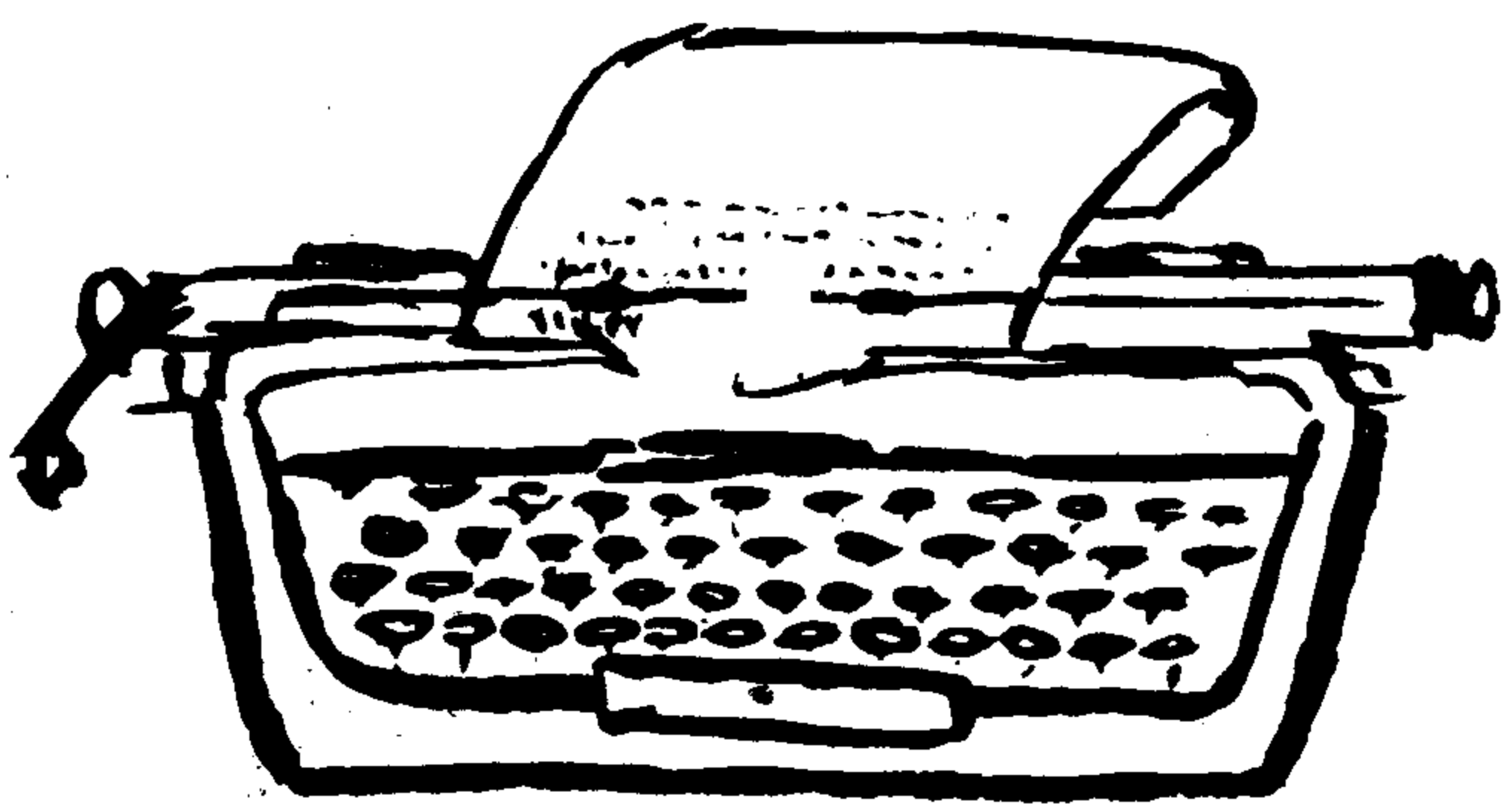


People behind the statistics: some of the 13 million Germans driven west by the Russian army at the end of World War 2



Stalin, Rykov, Kamenev, Zinoviev. Four Old Bolsheviks: Stalin shot the other three to become dictator

WRITEBACK



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



Gerry Byrne

Stop abortion divisions

IN HER article on the abortion and reproductive rights campaigns (Socialist Organiser 168), Gerry Byrne comments on reports that trade union and other organisations are being pressed to give support to one campaign at the expense of the other.

Similar moves are referred to in the current Labour Abortion Rights Campaign newsletter, and, whilst we in the National Abortion Campaign know of no concrete instance as yet, we would be equally disturbed and horrified by any such develop-

ment, which could only bring joy to the anti-abortionists.

The National Abortion Campaign supports all the declared aims of the Women's Reproductive Rights Campaign, and hopes that individuals and organisations will affiliate to both campaigns. NAC has written to the WRRC offering to work jointly in response to the present attack on time limits, and has offered space in the NAC newsletter for a fund-raising appeal for the WRRC.

NAC is absolutely opposed to divisive tactics, and can

give a categorical assurance that we will not employ them.

We hope that the reports at present circulating prove to be without foundation, and would welcome a public assurance of intentions from the WRRC, as we have done in order to settle the matter.

The approach outlined by Gerry Byrne in her article is fully endorsed by NAC.

Yours in sisterhood,

CAROL THOMSON,
for the National Abortion Campaign.

Bolstering Labour's illusions

"Labour - Take the Power!" Briefing's new slogan has been vehemently defended in issues 166 and 167 of Socialist Organiser by Chris Knight and Stu Clarke respectively. But they have failed to answer the central points raised in the original article by Fergus Ennis in SO 163.

Chris Knight calls the slogan a transitional demand - a demand which as he says should take people from a non-revolutionary political standpoint to a revolutionary one. He then goes on to say that all transitional demands are ambiguous and have got to be, in the sense that these demands cannot be realised under capitalism. And he quotes examples of these 'ambiguous demands' - the demand for the right to work, for a mass housing programme, a sliding scale of wages - but what he quite clearly chooses to forget is that their meaning is clear. The demands cannot be misinterpreted as can "Labour - Take The Power!"

Ennis quite correctly pointed out that the slogan means different things to different people. For a start is 'Labour' the Labour Party or is it the working class? Is 'Power' state power or parliamentary power? What does 'Take' mean in the abstract way that the slogan is presented? Take what power? None of these things are clear. They do mean different things to different people at different times. Even Stu Clarke and Chris Knight disagree as to whom the slogan is addressed to. The slogan is wide open to misinterpretation.

We assume that the demand refers to the Labour Party (although not everyone would interpret it in that way as I found out by asking a few of my friends what they thought that 'Labour' referred to). In the context in which it is presented, i.e. a Labour Party not in office, then it appears as a call for the Labour Party to either take office or somehow seize control of the state - an armed struggle for power perhaps? In the present period?

Who was it that Stu Clarke said had a sectarian attitude? It is most certainly not Ennis! I suggest that Clarke looks to sections of the ranks of Briefing before starting to accuse others. The context in which it is placed is seemingly irrelevant to the Clarkes and Knights of this world. It has become a slogan to be produced regardless of the objective conditions that prevail, as part of a sectarian schema.

In the present period and

the Labour Party as it is, then it can only bolster illusions in reformism. A Labour Party which under its present leadership has no perspective outside capitalism, a Labour Party with a left that is ideologically formless and susceptible to gross vacillation, a witch-hunting Labour Party, a Labour Party that has no real answers to the needs of our class: to demand of this Labour Party - a Labour Party that is not in office, that it takes the power (whether people interpret that as state power or parliamentary power) can only mean, coming from a supposedly class conscious section

of the Labour Party, a massive strengthening of the Kincock leadership.

It can only mean the bolstering of illusions that the Labour Party in its present form can achieve real long-lasting gains for our class. Unity is not the burial of all political differences with those who would betray and lead our class up the blind alley of reformism. We do not wish to give the idea that the Labour Party has a leadership and programme adequate for the needs of our class. Unity at all costs is not a Marxist method.

Another way in which the slogan can bolster illusions in

reformism is because of its most likely interpretation as "Labour - Take Office!" equating that office with 'the power' and thus leading people into the trap that Chris Knight wishes to avoid - "the mistaking of office for power".

Finally, slogans for Marxists are tools. They have a specific use at a specific time.

The slogan "Labour - Take The Power" raised in this period is about as useful and educative as the slogan "Take the Toys from the Boys". Both direct class action in the wrong direction. Both are harmful.

DAVE SCOTT, Hull



When Labour 'took the power': MacDonald, Attlee.....



.... Callaghan, Wilson



Rolling forward

I WAS very interested in the welcome given by the Editorial of SO 163 to the unity call to the Labour Left published in the February edition of the National Labour Briefing Supplement. As you rightly say, proper unity can only take place on a principled basis with "serious political discussion on the issues that divide us".

However on Page 12 of the same issue under "Left Press", the same Labour Briefing was slagged off in the most sectarian manner by Fergus Ennis. Fergus starts off, "Don't let the pessimists kid you that these are times of universal defeat and retreat for the Left. Briefing is still advancing." This cynical approach does not seem to me to be a very good beginning for the "serious political discussion" advocated in the Editorial.

Fergus Ennis to my mind has gone over the top. Basically, he complains that the likes of Ted Knight and Ken Livingstone and their "local government left" supporters are not revolutionaries. But then who is surprised by that? The point is do we denounce them, marginalised at the back of the hall, as Martin Thomas puts it, or from outside the hall, like the SWP; or do we, like the SO editorial, unite in a movement and in the process of struggle point out and develop in as courteous and comradely manner as possible our own distinct brand of socialism?

The new element in the 1980s, which both Martin Thomas and Fergus Ennis seem to have forgotten is that of the fight for democracy, accountability and re-selection in the Labour Party.

Thus the Left expects elected councillors to stand by manifesto commitments and councillors expect trouble if they do not. Add to that the Tories' rate-capping and privatisation proposals and you have all the elements of a very real crisis indeed.

What we should be pointing out to 'municipal socialists' is that in no one way can their pet reforms be carried out without a real campaign amongst the population and local govern-

ment workers against the government. And what better place to point this out than on the council itself!

The Labour Party is organised as an electoral machine and it is perhaps natural that members should gear themselves to 'power' through elections of councillors, MPs and so on. It is possible therefore that the Briefing slogan "Labour take the power" could be interpreted as reinforcing this passive role. But not inevitably so, as Fergus suggests. For he ignores the whole development of the Labour Left over the past period in which Socialist Organiser has played a crucial role.

SDP

We have, after all, driven out a whole section of the right wing to the SDP: not enough, perhaps but this is no mean achievement. In a number of areas, the left has taken control of District Parties and Constituencies, de-selected sitting MPs and councillors, put their own candidates forward.

In all of this the spirit of democracy and accountability are to the fore, rather than the traditional backstairs manoeuvres and mafia-like deals. In other words, there is an active struggle taking place and still continuing during which lessons can and need to be learnt. In this context the slogan "Labour take the power" would be interpreted as stressing the self-activity of the movement and the need to roll it forward into the trade unions and into the council estates, to challenge the power of the class enemy and their agents.

It is my experience that rather than suffering a period of defeat, the Labour Left at the moment is taking stock, maybe licking a few wounds, but learning from recent struggles and looking for answers. In that case Briefing is correct to be optimistic and to claim it is advancing. It would be a shame if Socialist Organiser retrenched into a sectarian defeatism.

Yours fraternally,
DAVE SPENCER
Coventry

Demanding perfection

IAN McCalman's attack on Leninism is especially unfortunate because his claim that Leninism and workers' democracy are mutually incompatible appears when the bourgeois media is depicting Lenin, and by implication all present-day revolutionaries, as power-mad bloodthirsty potential dictators. For reasons of space, I can only give a brief outline here of the real views of the Bolsheviks and their political continuators on this issue.

1) The Bolsheviks maintained political pluralism as long as they could, and this in the worst conditions imaginable, created by civil war and intervention by fourteen imperialist countries.

Not only were the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries allowed to function legally until they joined the armed counter-revolution, but the Left Social Revolutionaries were invited into a coalition with the Bolsheviks. The coalition was broken not by the Bolsheviks, but by the Left SRs, when they took up arms against Soviet power.

2) Likewise, the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919 was led by a coalition of Communists and social democrats. The excessive influence of the latter in the coalition was no doubt a factor in the rapid downfall of the revolution at the hands of internal and external reaction.

3) But a more accessible example of the real position of Leninism on workers' democracy is provided by present-day Nicaragua; here is a small country under siege by US imperialism, and in these extremely adverse conditions not only have genuine organs of workers' democracy been built - above all the Sandinista Defence Committees and the Assemblies for Economic Reactivation - but political pluralism operates at all levels, even including in the government.

The FSLN led the workers and peasants in the overthrow of Somoza, so obviously it leads the revolutionary government; but the government also includes other workers' organisations and even some bourgeois forces (it's hardly the fault of the FSLN

that the bourgeois forces have been boycotting nearly all the sessions of the Council of State since November 1980).

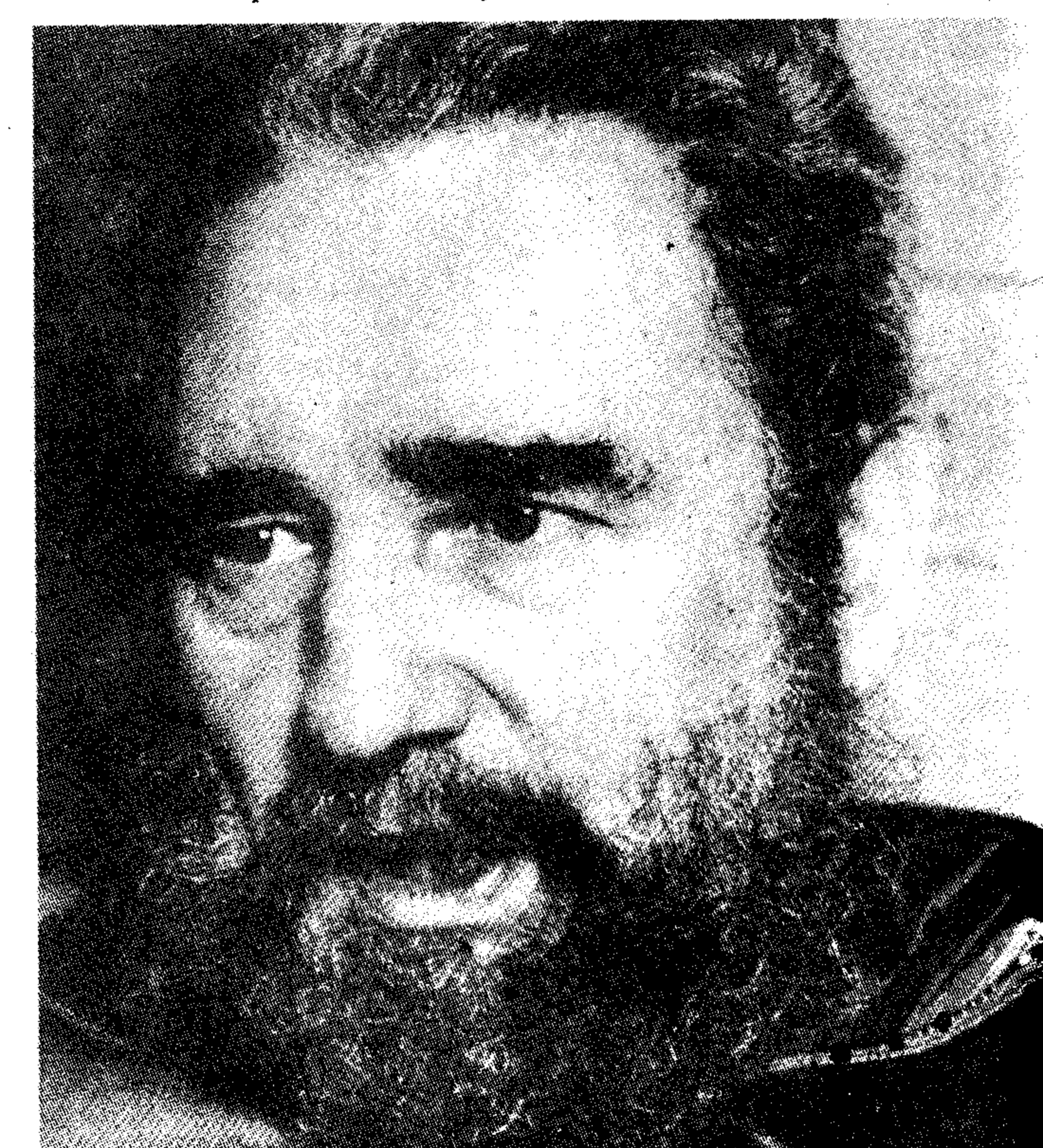
These examples are not intended to give the impression that political pluralism is an essential component of workers' democracy. This is a tactical question which has to be answered according to the circumstances. On Cuba, the most democratic society the world has ever seen, the Popular Power bodies, function on the basis of compulsory mandates and instant recall, and their members are paid no more than ordinary workers (most often they are ordinary workers). It is true there are no opposition parties - the Cuban people don't need them, and they certainly don't want them!

Finally, a word about McCalman's reference to "the crucial weaknesses of post-war Trotsky-

ism". These are real, and disastrous, and Socialist Organiser exemplifies all of them. One of the worst is the incessant demand for perfect revolutions in an imperfect world, and the unloading of the blame for any departure from democratic perfection onto the leaders of the revolution - whether in China, Cuba, Vietnam or Nicaragua - rather than blaming the real culprit, the constant political, economic and military pressure exerted by imperialism.

And this is the basis of the convergence between his analysis and that of such distinguished "students of the subject" and "opponents of Leninism" [is the term 'bourgeois academics' too vulgar for McCalman's taste?] as Leonard Shapiro.

Comradely,
MIKE WEBBER
Wendover, Bucks



Castro: in his 'most democratic society the world has ever seen' no-one needs or wants opposition parties

Socialist ORGANISER

Where we stand

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

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

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

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

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

*Freeze rent and rates.

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

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

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

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

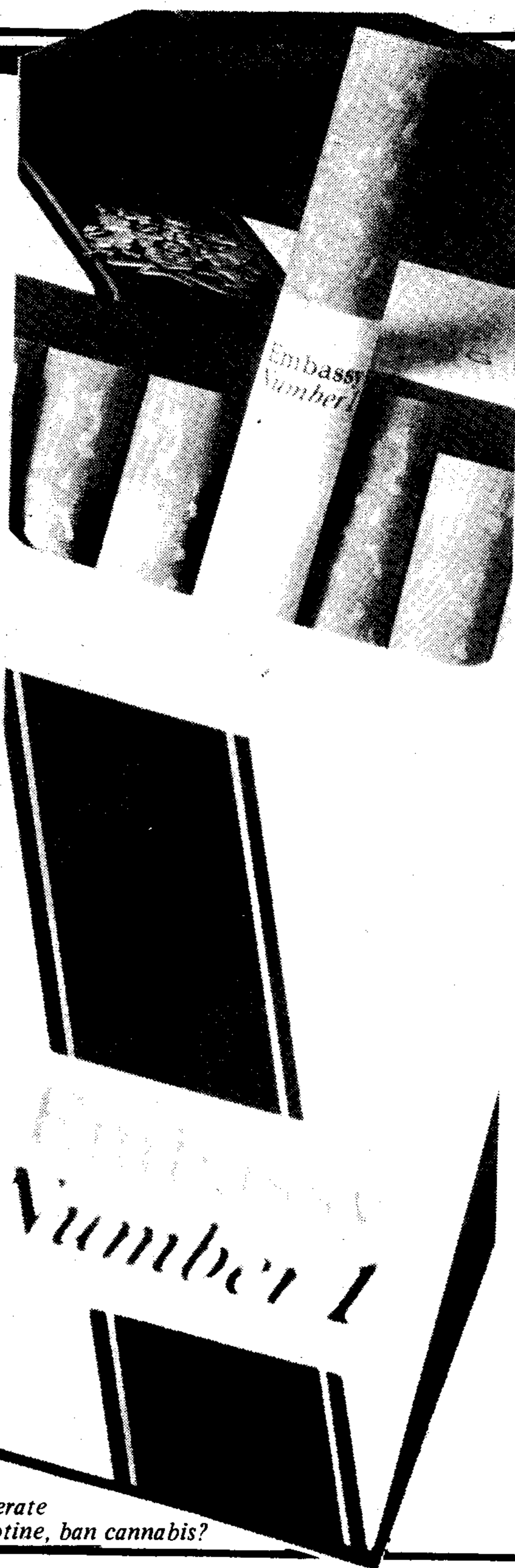
*The black working people of South Africa should get full support from the British labour movement for their strikes, struggles and armed combat against the white supremacist regime. South African goods and services should be blacked.

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.



Tolerate nicotine, ban cannabis?

SOCIALIST ORGANISER Day School, Sheffield, Saturday March 31. Mount Pleasant Community Centre, Sharrow Lane, off London Road. Workshops, videos, plus social. Tickets for day school £1 (unwaged 20p) and for social, £1 unwaged 50p.

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK public meeting, North Staffs Poly, College Road, Stoke. Speaker: Gerry Byrne. For more details contact Jill Mountford, 64 Nelson St., Fenton, Stoke-on-Trent or ring Stoke 84170.

'SAVE the Prince' — public meeting against the rundown of the Prince of Wales Hospital in Tottenham. Friday March 9, 7.30 at Tottenham Town Hall. Called by Haringey Health Emergency.

What's on

guy Health Emergency.

'DRILL Hall', 16 Chenies St, London WC1 (01-631 1353). Theatre workshops led by actress Effie Arestides, Fridays 6.30-8.30pm, Rehearsal Room 1, until September 28 1984. 'Should interest those who seek an alternative to the usual drama school training'.

GLASGOW Labour Campaign for Gay Rights meets in the AUEW Halls, 7.30, second Thursday of every month. Contact Box 35, 488 Great Western Rd, Kelvinsbridge, Glasgow.

HARINGEY Socialist Organiser meeting: 'The attack on local government: what should Labour councils do?' Tuesday March 13, 8pm at Haringey Grove Community Centre, Wightman Rd, N8. Speaker: Pat Longman (Islington councillor).

CHILD Poverty Action Group fringe meeting at East Midlands Labour Party regional conference: Saturday March 17, 1pm at Manhattan Room, Parade Hotel. 'Unfair Welfare is no fun-fair'.

CRITIQUE public meeting.

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, H-lfway, Cambuslang, Glasgow.

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

'IRELAND' — the issue facing Labour. Southampton Labour Committee on Ireland meeting, Thursday March 22, 7.30 at the Labour Club, Queensway. Speaker: Don Flynn.

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

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NOTTINGHAM. Contact Pete, 585640. SO is sold at the Victoria Centre (Saturday 11 to 1), and at Mush-room Bookshop, Heathcote Street.

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To join or affiliate, write to Chris Richardson, 21 Devonshire Promenade, Lenton, Nottingham NG7 2DS. £5 for individuals, or for affiliated organisations, per 1,000 members; £2 low-waged individuals, £1 unwaged.

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Keep fit

ALL too often, I seem to write about things people shouldn't do, so for a change, here's something people should do — exercise!

Most animals are naturally quite physically active, and we are no exception. However, the societies we live in frequently discourage the sort of all-round exercise we need to remain fit.

Keeping us cooped up in offices, buses and tower blocks makes us unfit, obese and prone to heart disease (like animals in cages). It is therefore up to us to find the time and energy for exercise, no easy thing if you're exhausted after a day of work, looking after kids, driving a bus or pushing a pen or a broom.

Anyway, here is some encouragement.

Regular exercise, even in moderate amounts, provides significant protection against heart disease. This protection operates even when a person is

By Les Hearn

at risk of heart disease from smoking or high blood pressure, etc.

In addition, regular exercise can have a beneficial effect on obesity, diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure, depression, poor circulation, survival from heart disease and ageing.

There are two types of exercise — aerobic and anaerobic. Let's have a look at each and see what their effects are on the body's health.

Aerobic exercise involves the complete breakdown of carbohydrates (starch and sugar) and fats, using up oxygen and producing carbon dioxide and energy. It involves an adequate supply of oxygen through the blood and the supply of fats and carbohydrates from the liver and fatty tissues. Aerobic exercise can be kept up for hours, depending on how fit you are.

Anaerobic exercise does not require oxygen, but can only be kept up for about a minute before exhaustion sets in.

Anaerobic metabolism comes into play when the body is making a massive but short-lived effort, e.g. sprinting or weight-lifting. This builds up your muscles but doesn't do much for your heart and blood vessels.

Aerobic exercise (e.g. running) trains you for endurance. Aerobic muscles use more fat and less carbohydrate and can work for longer before exhaustion takes over. They are more efficient at taking oxygen from the blood. In addition, the circulation of blood is improved so that more oxygen can get round the body. A fit person's heart seems larger and capable of pumping more blood. The heart muscle is better supplied with blood, reducing the risk of oxygen starvation and heart attack. In consequence, a healthy heart beats slower than average.

Aerobic exercise also counteracts atherosclerosis, a disease in which plaques of fat build up on the walls of arteries, reducing blood supply to the heart itself (risking heart attack). Exercise helps the body get rid of the cholesterol that causes atherosclerosis.

Exercise must be regular to have effect. Former athletes who have given up exercise get as much heart disease as anyone else, while middle-aged people taking up exercise will reduce their risk.

Maintained exercise can delay the process of ageing. Thus President Reagan is actually fitter than some SO supporters a half or a third of his age!

As people age, their muscles waste away and they lose calcium from their bones, making them more brittle. The elderly are therefore more liable to fall and break bones. However, exercise can counteract the processes of muscle wasting and loss of calcium.

If you are intending to take up exercise, you should start gradually to build up your stamina. Exercise should be steady and aerobic, like swimming, running or cycling, though weight-training can be a useful supplement. You should warm up and warm down properly, avoiding hot showers and not having a fag straight after. Failure to do this will bring a small risk of a potentially fatal uneven heart beat. Middle-aged people taking up e.g. squash, should first have a check-up for heart trouble.

If, like me, you find it difficult to set aside time for exercise, try and fit it into your ordinary activities, or choose something useful or enjoyable. For example I cycle because it gets me places, I study Kung Fu because it gives me a useful skill and I attend dance classes because I enjoy it.

Anyone want to hire a halo?
Information: New Scientist.

The Sweeney

Andrew Hornung reviews the return of the TV series 'The Sweeney'.

I REMEMBER once asking a group of young workers (all male) what they thought was so good about The Sweeney, which they all rated among their favourite programmes. The answer was never in doubt, "It's realistic".

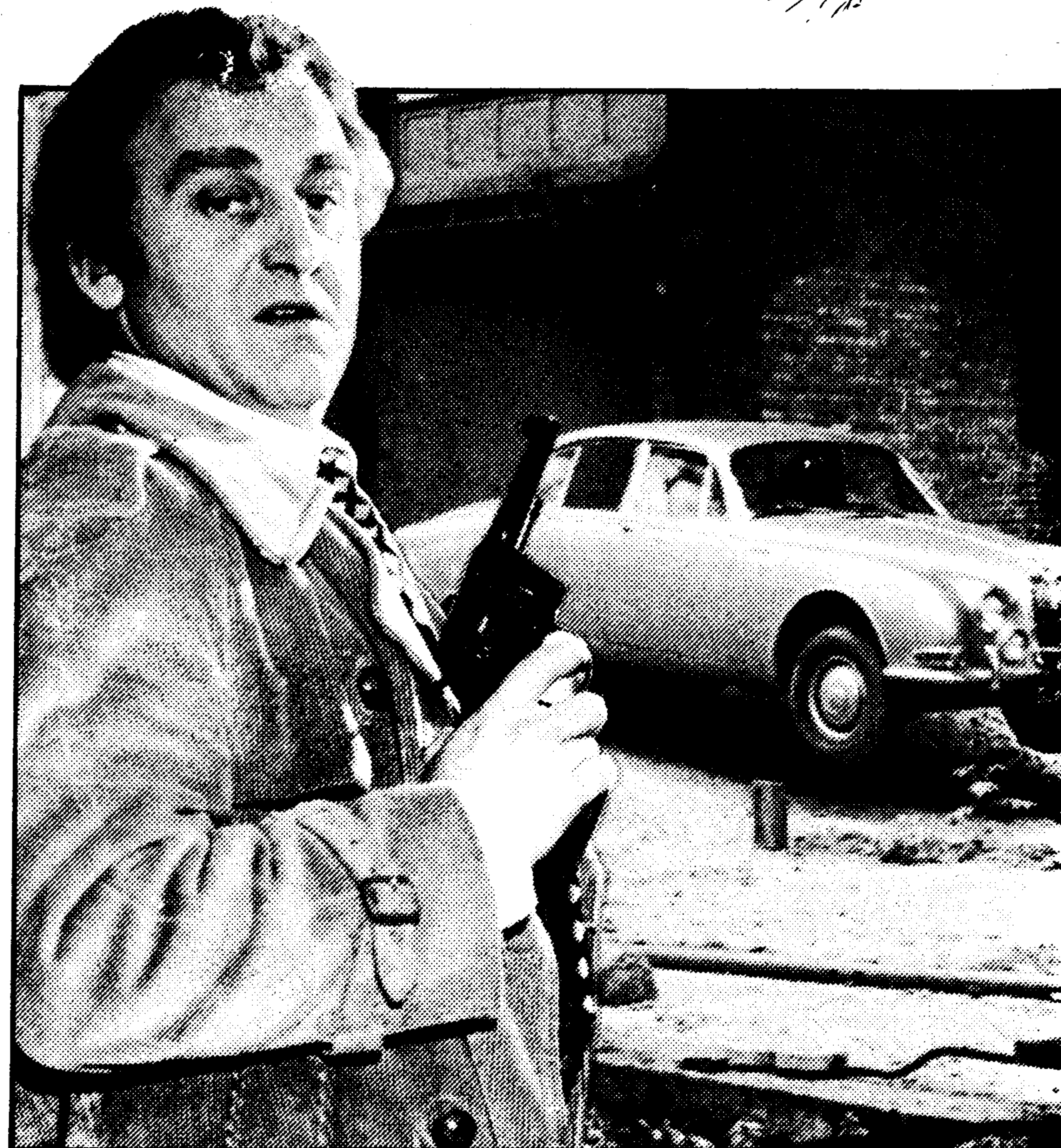
Of course, realistic is as realistic seems. The young workers I was talking to knew as much about the Flying Squad as The Sweeney told them and no more. But most had had enough bother with "the filth" to know the difference between a tender heart and a panda car. Realism was less a matter of plot than of character presentation.

Watching the re-run of The Sweeney last week, I was struck by the crudity of that presentation, a crudity that was partly obscured when the series was new to our screens because of the novelty of the treatment. After all, no media event stands in isolation: its reception is determined in part by prior media experience of the viewers. In this case, it is the memory of tight-lipped conservative clones like Fabian of the Yard, your commanding officer sitting in a squad car wearing a trilby, never racked by self-doubt or conflicts of interest in a pre-Suez society with morals as stout as truncheons.

However fresh The Sweeney might have seemed when first screened, today it seems about as innovative as a piece of burned toast. Take last week's romp of realism: an eccentric professor (can make you go nutty, you know, being too brainy) has developed a wonder drug which the NHS isn't backing (the kind of hide-bound bureaucratic bungling you can expect).

But which the Americans are willing to finance (typical of the Yanks, we invent the stuff — the jet engine, penicillin, World War 2 — and they come along with their money and take it over).

Anyway . . . a ruthless group of Arab revolutionaries (typical Arabs, even the revolutionaries are rich; typical Middle-Easterners, nutty and fiendish; typical Marxists, Russian-backed and murderous) are after the wonder-drug because it's the only thing keeping the ruler of their country alive and they want him dead



The actor John Thaw (an active Labour supporter) as The Sweeney's Inspector Reegan

(typical of these banana republics with no bananas and plenty of monarchy, one man stands between a prosperous stable present and a fanatical unstable future . . . and that man's a tin-pot tyrant).

Anyway . . . the professor's wife is a psychologist, laughably upper class, sexually libertine and involved with a young black man (nothing surprising in that, is there, gov'nor?) Not that that's got anything to do with any-

thing, it's just part of the closely observed richly real tapestry of life The Sweeney specialises in.

Chorus girl

Anyway . . . this professor is really in love with this chorus girl who works as a fall-girl with Morecombe and Wise. He hasn't been in touch with her for more than a year, but when he explains that he's been busy in the lab and now he's being chased by the police, MI5 and members of the

National-Liberation-Front-Marxist-Leninist and that he loves her and wants her to join him in California next week, she says yes! What woman could resist a line like that?

Anyway . . . The Sweeney's main attraction is its realism.

What this comes to is little more than the screen-credibility of a "dropped aitch", puffing conflicts with superior orders and impatience with people who play it "by the book".

What is being acted out is a grand social and historical drama; class war, hatred of vested interests and the bold assertion of the claims of social justice against legal and constitutional power. Yet this class war is folded like a handkerchief along the old lines of sexual, racial and political stereotyping and tucked neatly into the top pocket of an executive suit.

Few things strike the audience as being clearer indicators of realism than well-observed and well-imitated speech and gesture. Once these are got right almost any reactionary, brain-boggling script can pass as realistic and — when it is first broadcast — even fresh.

The measure of The Sweeney's success and of its failure is likewise the measure of the difference between a class able to recognise an image of itself and a class able to create one which imposes its own realism.

Tolpuddle

150 years ago six men were sent to prison camps in Australia for breaking the law. That law was the Combination Acts, which outlawed the coming together of workers to form a trade union. The six men in question were found guilty of secretly taking illegal oaths to

set up an Agricultural Labourers' Friendly Society, in Tolpuddle, Dorset, in 1834.

In London, demonstrations of 40-50,000 workers forced the government to take back its decision, and in 1836 the 'Tolpuddle Martyrs' returned to Britain.

Labour and trade union leaders today, who are so afraid of breaking anti-working class laws, would do well to remember that it was the heroism of workers like those from Tolpuddle, and the thousands who supported them, that created the labour movement we have today.



BACK
THE *inga*
NO TO TORY
LAW!

BADGES 25p or £2 for 10 (plus 16p postage) from 'Mole Badges', 165, Liverpool Rd., London N1.



Scottish Labour Conference

THE agenda for the Labour Party Scottish conference on March 9-11 does not promise a lively weekend.

Most resolutions do no more than declare opposition to the Tories' policies and advocate an alternative set of policies, generally for implementation by the next Labour government.

References to campaigning are usually very vague and general.

A number of important issues are not taken up at all. For the first time in years there is no resolution on Ireland.

Poland, and the rest of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union do not get a mention. The 14 resolutions submitted on international affairs all refer to Latin America alone.

And there is also no reference in any resolution to the witch-hunt — despite the growing number of Constituency Labour Parties in Scotland falling in behind the NEC's ban on the sale of Militant.

Even in the section on local government democracy and services there is little to reflect the urgency of the situation, despite Glasgow Council having opted for no cuts and a rent/rates freeze and thus heading for confrontation with the Tories.

Only the resolution from Pollok CLP in this section really begins to take up the question of what policies Labour-controlled councils should be pursuing right now and what kind of campaign needs to be built. Resolutions from East Edinburgh CLP and Glasgow District Labour Party advocate that Labour-controlled councils "withdraw themselves and their staffs from existing areas of co-operation with the Scottish Office and other government departments."

Twelve resolutions have been submitted in support of the demand for a Scottish Assembly.

The resolutions reflect three different approaches to the question: the wait-until-the-next-Labour-government approach, (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, and Dunfermline West CLPs), the all-good-Scots-unite-for-a-Scottish Assembly line (NUM and Stirling CLP), and the supposedly socialist case for a Scottish Assembly (Muir Society).

Women's rights and gay rights get only one resolution each (other than motions on women's organisation and representation within the

By Stan Crooke

Labour Party), both of them in the Law and Citizens' Rights section. But the Scottish Labour Students resolution on gay and lesbian rights is probably one of the best on the agenda, calling upon the Scottish Executive to circulate all affiliated bodies with the policies contained in the resolution and all affiliated bodies to subscribe to the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights.

The Labour Party Organisation section contains a variety of generally positive proposals for raising the campaigning profile of the party. This, however, makes it all the more ironic that most of the rest of the agenda should be so devoid of a campaigning approach.

Two points of controversy can be expected to emerge when resolutions relating to Defence/Nuclear Disarmament are debated. Fife Regional Labour Party calls for Labour-controlled local authorities "to fulfil only those duties which are statutory in relation to civil defence", and Edinburgh East CLP seeks to replace that with: "to refuse to implement the new Civil Defence regulations".

The second, much more significant controversy, is between general calls for nuclear disarmament and specific calls for unilateral disarmament, and also over a Hillhead CLP resolution which argues that "the Party recognises and publicises the fact that leaving NATO is not a prerequisite of British nuclear disarmament."

In the International Affairs section of the agenda, over three pages are taken up with resolutions calling for an inquiry into Thatcher's conduct of the Falklands war, especially with regard to the sinking of the Belgrano, a reflection of the positive work done by Tam Dalvell MP around the issue.

On the EEC there will be a straight clash between an East Lothian CLP resolution calling for Labour to work for socialist advance within the EEC and a Lothian Regional Labour Party resolution putting forward the traditional demand for "withdrawal from the EEC within the lifetime of the first term of the next Labour government."

The current issue of "strathclyde Labour Briefing" backs the policy of Europe-wide socialist action. It remains to be seen whether the conference will agree, or remain ensnared within a "little Britain"/"little Scotland" approach to the EEC.

NUJ backs down

By Peter McIntyre

support for defying the law as recently as January.

Executive members who then had personally pledged they would reaffirm support for the strike, after a House of Lords ruling reneged on their promise.

The strike started when the owner of the papers, broadcaster David Dimbleby, sacked NGA members and transferred the contract for printing to T. Bailey Forman in Nottingham — the

union-busting firm which sacked all its NUJ journalists in 1979.

NUJ members at Richmond struck alongside the NGA and were joined by some non-union editorial staff, confident they could force Dimbleby to back down.

Last week the House of Lords confirmed that the NUJ strike was unlawful and secondary. To do so, they confirmed that companies which divide themselves into separate legal entities can stop lawful strikes spreading

from one element to another.

The House of Lords ruled that the NUJ had a lawful dispute with T. Bailey Forman publishers, but an unlawful dispute with TBF (Printers) — despite the firms sharing the same head office, phone number, writing paper and a substantial number of shareholders.

The collapse of the NUJ Executive was covered over by a resolution which instructed officers to examine the possibility of moving the union headquarters to another European capital — presumably on the theory that if you don't stand and fight it is better to run away.

The Executive also noted that the Richmond chapel still had the right to continue its strike — bitter words for the Mother of Chapel Joanna Davies to swallow as she heard the news outside the meeting.

The chapel, however, has resolved to fight on, "with or without the support of our union" and money is still being collected through unofficial channels.

This week (on Wednesday evening) BBC Lime Grove TV chapel was being instructed by the NUJ to black Dimbleby on his budget day programme. The TUC and Labour Party have already pledged not to take part in that, or any other programme hosted by Dimbleby.

A demonstration through Richmond on Tuesday drew more than 600 NGA and NUJ members, ending in a rally at the riverside.

NGA General Secretary elect, Tony Dubbins, called on the TUC to break all links with the Tories — saying that the GCHQ ban showed that those who rolled over to have their tummies tickled by Thatcher get their faces stamped on.

The NUJ Executive is likely to get its comppance at the Annual Conference. If a new Executive is afterwards to get the chance to make the Richmond strike official again, the strike must be supported unofficially at present to allow it to continue.

Phillips workers reoccupy

WORKERS at Phillips Rubber in Manchester reoccupied their factory on Sunday night. This, together with an impressive mass picket on Monday morning, ensured that management could not set scab labour to work.

The occupation was ended on Tuesday as bailiffs and police re-versed the eviction order granted by the courts last week.

The 110 strikers are out for a wage claim of £76 a week, at present they only get £48 a week basic.

Nine weeks into the strike, the workers still refuse to be bludgeoned back to work by management sackings. There is no doubt that the will to fight is still there. The successful mass picket on Monday points the way forward. It drew in other sectors of workers, including dockers, and has built up the strikers' morale.

With more publicity for the mass pickets, and increased links with the local labour movement, the strikers can ensure that they are not isolated.

Donations and messages of support to: John Hood, 14 Torness Walk, Openshaw, Manchester 11.



JOHN SMITH (JFL)

Tax workers vote to accept new technology

INLAND Revenue Staff Federation members have voted in office ballots by a 2-1 majority to accept a New Technology Agreement. The voting — by 23,984 to 10,703 — means an end to the eight week long dispute at the 14 West Midlands offices involved in the computerisation of PAYE (COP) project.

The agreement had been vigorously

opposed by the left in the short time available, but the odds were always stacked against them. Members were given three days in which to read and digest a

complex 15 page document which will govern the conditions of employment for most of us for the rest of our working lives.

The Executive Committee was

so anxious to railroad the package through that the constitutional position that only the Delegate Conference can change policy was ignored. Indeed, even the ballot itself was only to be advisory and not binding.

Most disturbing of all, is the fact that we have won nothing on the major issue of no compulsory

redundancies that we did not have before the suspensions took place.

An agreement which states that the management "aim to avoid" compulsory redundancies gives our members no protection at all.

Other IRSF demands, including a shorter working week and no changes without agreement, have been cast aside. Another paragraph leaves the path open for the introduction of shift work. Measures to redeploy staff displaced by the VDUs sound fine on paper, until you realise that every other major government department is introducing computers with similar effects on staff numbers — there will be nowhere to redeploy anyone.

General secretary Tony Christopher, and the executive committee have said that the agreement is a good one and that the matter has been taken as far as is humanly possible". Yet the 430 in the COP districts have not even been called out on strike. The battle has not been started!

Having put its faith in the courts and lost, the executive committee have no stomach for a fight and chose the first opportunity to quit.

Unfortunately it is the lower grade clerical workers who will suffer the consequences of such cowardly leadership. It is they who will be receiving redundancy notices, not the executive committee members who are predominantly management grades.

Overall, a 10,700 vote against is a good opposition vote in a union not noted for going against its leadership's recommendations. The lesson of relying on legal wrangling in the court room rather than on rank and file activity is here for all to see — it spells defeat.

Attack on dock labour scheme

THE Tories are planning to introduce a new scheme in the docks that would abolish the present National Docks Labour Board (NDLB) system that protects dock workers' jobs.

Under the NDLB — which in 1947 replaced the daily hiring of dock workers and the abuses that were entailed in it — dock workers have guaranteed employment if work is slack, and control over the size of the workforce in the 54 registered ports throughout Britain. The most important ports are in Liverpool, London, Hull and Southampton. The present system is run by boards of union representatives and management, making sackings very difficult.

Nevertheless, the number of dock workers has fallen from 80,000 in 1947 to 13,500 today. New cargo handling methods such as containerisation have been the cause of this. But management have had to buy out the workers at a cost of £16 million a year for the past fifteen years — and by spending millions on keeping employed workers they would rather sack. Unregistered ports such as Felixstowe and Dover have been raking in business as the registered ones have declined.

As a result, the government wants to ditch the existing labour protection scheme. They realise,

of course, that the dockers are still a formidable opponent — they were at the forefront of the fight against the Industrial Relations Act — and that an attempt to implement their new plans could lead to a national dock strike.

The National Association of

Port Employers has therefore attempted to persuade the transport union to abolish "restrictive practices" voluntarily. So far they have been unsuccessful. They will not be successful in the future if the dockworkers use their strength to prevent them.

Boycott LaBour pumps

FOR three weeks now, 37 sacked union members have been picketing LaBour Pumps, Wellingborough, visiting branches and factories in the area for support and trying to arrange blacking to and from the company.

The sackings took place after union members struck to defend a workmate suspended without pay for arguing with his foreman. This followed a long period of management provocations because of an overtime ban, imposed to secure a decent annual wage increase.

Management are attempting to keep production of pumps going with non-union labour and office staff doing long hours.

They have refused to negotiate with the union or see ACAS and appear to want to smash the union — something they have wanted to do for some time.

For the union side support is

being built locally and nationally and backing from Darwen's factory in Sheffield (a sister firm who supply castings) is being sought.

A rally at 12.30 in Wellingborough on Saturday March 10, has been organised but if mass picketing or supporting industrial action is not worked for in the support campaign, it could be a long haul with no guarantee of success.

If your firm uses LaBour pumps (widely used in petrochemical plants), or supplies components then contact the strike committee.

All donations for this official dispute should be sent to LaBour Pump Strike Fund, Treasurer, TC Puckerin, 6 Palmer Close, The Links, Wellingborough, Northants.

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:

*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).



THE Civil Service has been cut back by more than 100,000 employees since the Tories came to government in 1979, according to a Treasury analysis published last week.

The reduction — to its smallest size since World War 2 of about 630,000 — is being achieved principally through the dropping of some functions, saving £54 millions, and providing lower standards of service in others, saving £52 millions (1982-3 financial year). This is in line with Tory plans of an employee target of 593,000 by April 1988.

Some of the savings noted by the Treasury were achieved by privatisation, hiving off, or contracting-out from the public to the private sector, notably in the Ministry of Defence and in the Property Services Agency.

Seafield

THE three week strike at Scotland's largest pit, the Seafield colliery at Kirkcaldy, ended this week when the 340 craft workers voted to return to work.

Talks are now to be held with the National Coal Board over the downgrading of a craft worker which led to the dispute and on the introduction of new shift working.

Share-owning

A RECENT report by the Institute of Directors reveals the thinking of leading company bosses in the field of industrial relations. The message is that all employees should own shares in the company they work for.

The reason, of course, is that a worker who is also a shareholder will be less likely to disrupt production, and thus the possible share value in the company. Or as the report puts it: "The propensity to regard labour and capital as two implacably opposed adversaries will be correspondingly reduced."

The guidelines for company directors come a week before the Budget which is expected to contain proposals for legislation on employee share option schemes.

Polmaise

A RALLY of 500 miners and their supporters in Stirling on Monday night heard Arthur Scargill stress the unity of purpose of the NUM in fighting pit closures.

He reaffirmed NUM support for the miners at Polmaise colliery near Stirling, which is threatened with closure. Polmaise miners are currently on strike against this closure threat.

Scargill claimed the NUM officials were giving positive leadership in the struggle and that the 17-week overtime ban was beginning to bite. The Coal Board had suffered nine million tons of lost production.

At the end of the meeting, Mick McGahey, President of the Scottish Area NUM, referred to the decision of the 60,000 Yorkshire miners to strike from Friday. He said that the call would be going out to all Scottish miners to take similar action, starting on Friday night.



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

Millions out on 28th

MILLIONS of workers took action on February 28 against the Tories' union ban at GCHQ. Half a million civil servants alone were out on official strike.

LONDON

40,000 took part in a demonstration through the centre of London.

In Southwark all health workers were out for the whole day, and factories all over the city came to a standstill. Tube services stopped for an hour, and some commuter services were hit. 40 out of 60 London Transport bus garages took some action. The National Union of Teachers shut ten London secondary schools, and 10,000 school students were sent home.

SCOTLAND

The entire machinery of central government in Scotland came to a halt. 6,000 people attended the rally in Glasgow, 6,000 in Edinburgh and some 2,500 in Dundee. In the Glasgow area, 11 hospitals had stoppages with emergency cover only, whilst nine bus garages took action, and Glasgow district council was closed. Railway workshops, sewage works, post office engineering depots and the Govan and Yarrow shipyards all saw action. From midday there were no trains in or out of Glasgow.

On Clydeside strikes took place at Rolls Royce, Wears of Cathcart and Wills Tobacco. In Dundee there were strikes at Timex, Bonar Long, Kestrel Marine, Ferranti, Ninwells hospital and other workplaces, as well as a strike of district council workers.

Rosyth naval dockyard was closed, and for the first time, 40 clerical and administration workers in Scottish Command Army HQ walked out. Action was taken at Torness nuclear power station, East Lothian.

WALES

Buses and trains were disrupted and 1,500 joined a demonstration. In Swansea, TGWU dockers came out to support the demonstration, and there were strikes on the buses. A number of factories came out throughout Wales.

MIDLANDS

BL Longbridge stopped work, and 5,000 people attended the rally in Birmingham. In Coventry there was strike action at Jaguar, GEC, Rolls Royce and Talbot.

YORKSHIRE

The majority of Manpower Services Commission workers, along with town hall workers, joined the stoppage in Sheffield. 2,000 construction workers took action at Drax, and 1,000 dockers were on strike in Hull.

NORTH WEST

100,000 were out in the Merseyside area. All buses were stopped, along with government offices and parts of industry including Cammel Laird. Civil servants, transport workers and dockers joined a march of thousands.

In the Manchester area there were strikes at GEC Openshaw, Massey Ferguson, Chloride, Shell Carrington, on the railways and in the direct works department. The Free Trade Hall was packed in a rally addressed by Alistair Graham.

DERBYSHIRE

Miners took action at four pits, and in Chesterfield most factories were out, and Tony Benn spoke to a rally of 2,000.

NEWCASTLE

Newcastle saw a hundred per cent turn out in the local shipyards, and action in many engineering companies.

Elsewhere, British Aerospace workers took action in various places. In Northern Ireland, Shorts Aircraft and Harland and Wolff joined civil servants taking action. Action taken at Vauxhall, Ellesmere Port and at Luton, reportedly lost the company £3 million in production. Austin Rover, Oxford, decided to come out. There was a response by 50,000 workers in Nottingham. The National Union of Seamen were on strike for half a day at Felixstowe.



Demonstrators in London

Rowntrees York strike to save jobs

By Richard Bailey

THE strike by maintenance staff at Rowntree Mackintosh in York against the company's plans to reduce the 850-strong maintenance workforce by 200 is now entering its fifth week.

The strikers are under intense

pressure from both the employers and other workers. Process and transport staff are still working normally. 1,250 production line workers have been laid off.

When it became clear that

voluntary redundancy and internal transfers could only achieve 130 or so of the required job losses, the craft unions, led by the AUEW and the EETPU, decided to fight management on the issue.

The roots of the dispute lie in the company's controversial decision to call in an "outside" research firm to investigate efficiency at the factory early last year. On their supposed findings, management announced a reduction of maintenance staff. But to the intense fury of the workers involved, management have consistently refused to show the report to the unions.

Five weeks into the strike, the craft workers remain very solid, and picketing is being stepped up to 16 hours a day. There is a picket rota operating, with fines for those who miss their turn. This is one symptom of the seriousness of the strikers and of their determination to win.

TGWU members have pledged not to work that would regularly be done by craft workers, but the firm's lorries still cross the picket line unimpeded.

The local Evening Press has weighed in on the side of the bosses. Last week it printed a front page article entitled "Lost Millions at Rowntrees". It was little more than free space to let the Rowntree management argue that maintenance staff should be made the scapegoats for the company's current sales problems. The paper has assisted management in its attempts to split the strikers by publishing unsubstantiated claims that strikers are being bought off by voluntary redundancy and internal transfers.

Despite all this, the strikers fight on. What they most desperately need is the spreading of strike action to all sections of the factory.

Labour council suspends unionist

DAVE Norwood, NALGO Assistant Branch Secretary said last week "Sometimes Labour councils can be really dumb, or devious or both. They're supposed to be there to fight for the labour movement — this lot have just engaged in bloody battle against their workers."

He was speaking about Labour-controlled Greenwich Council which last week drove 1,600 NALGO members it employs to take strike action in defence of their basic trade union rights.

Not that most Labour councillors knew what was happening — the dirty work was carried out by senior councillors on the Personnel Committee and by leading officers in management. Most of the Labour Group have been misled about the issues.

The Council suspended without pay Terry Woodford, who is one of 20 architects taking limited official industrial action over a grievance which should have been solved eight months ago.

NALGO's reaction was an all-out strike on March 1, with another one-day strike planned for March 8. The workers in Terry Woodford's department are on an all-out official strike.

This dispute concerns the appointment of an underqualified worker in the Architects division. NALGO proposed a solution whereby this person wouldn't have lost money. The Council now admit they were wrong at the time not to agree to this but instead of putting things

right, they've escalated the dispute into a head-on collision over workers' rights to take official industrial action.

Messages of support and donations to: Dave Offord, Secretary, Greenwich NALGO, Riverside House, Woolwich High Street, London SE18.

Carousel: build support

THE Carousel strikers in Glasgow are still waiting for a reply from the Scottish Finance and General Purposes Committee of the TGWU.

They met the committee a fortnight ago to ask for support for their fight for union recognition, reinstatement, and better working conditions.

But TGWU officials have not been inactive since the committee meeting. The Glasgow District Officer David Stark continues his tour of local TGWU branches, denouncing the broadsheet-history of the dispute produced by the strike support committee as a gross misrepresentation of the "true" facts (though also insisting that the TGWU will continue formal support for the strikers).

It looks as if TGWU officials will continue to recognise the dispute as official, but do nothing to mobilise support for it.

So the strikers' own East End Support Committee is more important than ever.

We are not seeking conflict with the TGWU officials for the sake of conflict. To break the strikers' isolation we have no choice but to reply to the accusations being levelled against the EESC broadsheet-history of the dispute and to mobilise active support in the face of the indifference or hostility of TGWU full-timers.

A Glasgow-wide labour movement conference called by the EESC is needed — and long overdue.

London backs Socialist ORGANISER

By Mick Mellor

The London Labour Party conference last weekend (March 3-4) voted unanimously to support Liverpool City Council — and, though it was unfortunately only at a fringe meeting, Ken Livingstone replied to a question from Councillor Chris Hickey by saying that he would personally move a motion in the GLC Labour Group to support Liverpool.

Proposals to send delegations of councillors and workers to Liverpool, to show support from sections of the London labour movement aroused interest.

The continuing problems were summed up by John McDonnell, chair of the GLC's finance committee. Speaking from the floor in the debate, he urged delegates and councillors to "follow Liverpool's example. Follow Liverpool's example when it comes to April next year."

Next April

Liverpool might be in "the forefront" as Ted Knight said, but the London councils were only going to join the battle a year later!

In the meantime, the Greater London Council had offered to help finance Liverpool's shortfall in government rate support grant to help them wait for London.

Such financial assistance would be a cop-out from Liverpool's fight, which has to be this year.

An offer by the GLC or other Labour councils to lend money to Liverpool directly in the event of the banks cutting off Liverpool's credit would be action of an entirely different order (and would certainly put them in the firing line together with Liverpool).

So too would a coordinated refusal by other Labour councils to refuse to pay debt charges to the banks in solidarity with Liverpool.

Both are possible forms of solidarity action by other Labour councils, but neither have yet been put on offer by any of them.



JOHN HARRIS

VICTORIAN VALUES-LATEST!

ISN'T family feeling a beautiful thing? What would Mrs Thatcher's cherished Victorian values be without family feeling? And what would Tory family feeling be without Victorian values? Like,

for example, the 11th commandment which tells you: Don't get caught?

Now Dennis Thatcher has been caught with his hand, so to speak, in Mark Thatcher's bank account. The

Sunday Times revealed last week that Mark Thatcher's account with Barclays Bank into which was paid perhaps £50,000 Mark Thatcher got in Oman by exploiting his mother's position is in fact a

joint account with daddy.

Money Mark got because Margaret is British Prime Minister went into the bank account of Margaret's husband, Dennis. The scandal creeps nearer and nearer the

throne. It would be interesting to know just what the state of family feeling is in the Thatcher family at the moment.

Liverpool votes for strikes

AT A meeting in Liverpool's Central Hall on Monday March 5, 1,000 GMBATU workers from the Council's cleaning department voted unanimously to strike on March 29.

A one-day Merseyside general strike is being organised on that day to support Liverpool City Council's stand against cuts and rent or rate rises.

The Council's 5,800 NALGO members were due to vote on Tuesday.

2,000 members packed into the Stadium, and 1,000 were left outside. After those inside had voted overwhelmingly in favour of striking on the 29th, an official stepped in to say the vote would have to be taken again at a further meeting because some had been unable to get in.

GCHQ: What went wrong

"I WAS over the moon on Tuesday. It was tremendous", one CPSA member told Socialist Organiser.

"Then by Wednesday evening there were reports on the television that our union leaders were admitting defeat, and it was all over".

Whether the Tories' figures for numbers who had accepted their ultimatum at GCHQ were right or not, we can't know. But in any case as soon as the Tories were able to claim that 90% had signed, and the unions did nothing in direct response, the Tories were well-placed to make their claims true.

Each loyal trade unionist at GCHQ was left as an isolated individual, facing their full strength of management, without any recourse to collective union action.

Civil service union branches are still passing resolutions for all-out strike action if anyone is sacked at GCHQ. But the only sort of resolution that was adequate after February 28 was one calling on the union leaders to set a definite date for all-out strike action, sackings or no sackings.

At best the policy of striking when someone is sacked leaves the initiative completely in the hands of the Tories. It now seems that the Tories feel strong enough to get away without sacking anyone at all at GCHQ. Those who do not submit they can get rid of by transfers or

by resignations.

Now the Tories are talking about increased political vetting in the Ministry of Defence.

The civil service union leaders must still be called to account. Resolutions for this year's union conferences must make sure they never offer no-strike deals again.

And in every union socialists should demand that the TUC really breaks collaboration with the Tories, rather than just

leaving the National Economic Development Council. (Union representatives are still attending even the detailed subgroups of the NEDC, as well as the Manpower Services Commission and the conciliation service ACAS!)

Most importantly, the TUC must stop talks with the Tories on new anti-union laws, and turn to wiping the existing anti-union laws off the statute book.

THANKS to some large donations and other fund-raising efforts, we start the March fund drive with a very good first week's total of £195.20.

And if all the events planned this month are successful, we stand a chance of having one of the best monthly fund drives for a long time.

Events planned are: jumble sales in Islington, Stoke, Oxford; socials in Manchester and Northampton; and other events in Basingstoke.

To back that effort up, we need other groups of supporters to make an effort to raise money for Socialist Organiser.

In February we raised £418.03. We've already raised nearly half that much in the first week of March. Help build on a good start, send donations to: 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY. Thanks this week to: Pete Firmin, £100 from a "wind-fall"; Andrew Hornung, £50.50; Carla Jamison, Basingstoke, £15 from fund-raising efforts; A. Chan, £8 birthday present for the Science Column; Siu-Ming Cheung, £7 from sponsored sit-ups, Sheffield supporters, £9.50 from extra paper sales; Neil Rigby (no relation), £4.20 added to a subscription to SO, Tim Summers, £1.

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