

Paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory

STOP the Tories

Kill the Bill

"WE'RE Maggie's miners", says one of the steel strikers' badges. After only 10 months in office, the Tories are almost as battered as the Heath government was in 1972.

Their economic policies are not working, even in their own terms. As they become exasperated, quarrels within the Tory leadership are coming out into the open.

Tory councils are in revolt against the Government's public spending plans. And the Tory press is beginning to talk about the Government making a U-turn.

The steel strikers' badge expresses an awareness among thousands of workers that the labour movement at least has the negative power to make the bosses' worst attacks unworkable.

The miners, together with the dockers, the workers who struck to support the dockers in July 1972, and the engineers, forced the shelving and then the repeal of the Industrial Relations Act. Similar action now can do the same to the Employment Bill, Thatcher's equivalent of the Industrial Relations Act.

But the TUC leaders are still talking to the Tories, and want to limit action to a demonstration on March 9th and a day of action on May 14th.

The miners would never have won, and the steelworkers would never have shaken the Tories, if they had the same approach.

The TUC's feebleness, and their refusal to link up the steel strike, the fight against cuts, and the campaign against the Employment Bill, into one mighty offensive, gives the Tories a chance to regain the upper hand.

The successful victimisation of BL convenor Derek Robinson is a terrible warning.

We must mobilise to take the labour movement

onto the offensive. Leaders must be made accountable and replaced if they will not fight. The TUC leaders must be instructed to stop talking and collaborating with the Tories, and start fighting. Pressure must be built up from local Labour Parties to force the Labour leaders to commit themselves to total repeal of the Employment Bill when re-elected.

Local labour movement

conferences should start organising now for a general strike on May 14th.

We need to put the labour movement on a war footing, to kill the Bill, to thwart the Tories, to make sure a new Labour government faces powerful demands for radical measures, and to fight for socialism. We can win — but only if we organise to win. And our present leaders are organising us to lose.

ZIMBABWE: Soames Out! BRITISH troops out! MAJORITY rule now!

WHAT has British 'impartiality' in Zimbabwe really meant? Nothing less than the repression of the liberation movement.

With the last Labour government turning a blind eye, the Rhodesian racist regime was propped up by the systematic evasion of sanctions.

In the Lancaster House talks, the Tories' representatives, Lord Carrington (a former director of two of the largest companies operating in southern Africa, Barclays and Rio Tinto Zinc) threatened and bullied the Patriotic Front into accepting a blatantly racist constitution, the rounding up of its troops, and a British governor with dictatorial powers.

When Soames took up those powers, he violated almost every promise the Tory

by BOB FINE

government had made to the Patriotic Front.

He worked hand in glove with the Rhodesian and South African security forces and kept Smith's martial law and legal and police apparatus. He let Muzorewa's 30,000-strong force of mercenary thugs operate freely, and to this day he has guarded, and concealed the whereabouts of, seven to ten thousand S. African troops.

He has directed the Tory onslaught against Mugabe and ZANU throughout the election period: some are still in jail or political detention, others have been murdered. He supports the racist armed forces that have been working to discredit ZANU through the undercover oper-

ations of the Selous Scouts.

In the latest of these episodes, the racists tried to blame ZANU for blowing up the offices of Nkomo's press. But things went wrong and the team blew themselves up instead, scattering fragments of white limbs and bits of Rhodesian Army issue boots.

Soames arrogantly claims the power not only to ban any candidates he doesn't like but to cancel any election results he deems to arise out of 'intimidation'.

To Soames and the Tories, intimidation means any show of power by the people of Zimbabwe. 'Freedom' and 'fairness' mean the guns and deceit of the unholy trinity of South African, Rhodesian and British racists.

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Send us some money

Producing 10,000 leaflets for March 9th will cost us a lot of money. Preparations for the Women's Fightback conference on March 22 will strain our resources even

more.

Send money now — individually, or from your union branch or CLP — to support our work. Our fund drive has been opened with £10 from Ron Brown MP. We need at least £100 a month.

Send to: Socialist Organiser, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

ANTI-RACIST CAMPAIGNS PLAN CONFERENCES

ON WEDNESDAY 20 February the Tory Government published its new immigration rules. The rules can be challenged in Parliament, and will then be debated within 40 days. But by April they are likely to be in force.

Black women in Britain who want to marry men from overseas will then have the insulting ordeal of convincing the immigration authorities that the marriage is "genuine" — or they will have to leave the country. It will also be more difficult for black people in Britain to bring aged relatives to live with them.

Another racist restriction will be added to the present battery, all based on the idea that black people must prove themselves somehow

specially deserving in order to be allowed to live in Britain. Black militants have a sharp answer to all these restrictions: the black communities are "here to stay and here to fight", they say.

But the labour movement has so far been very slow and sluggish in giving support to the black communities. Despite Labour's Parliamentary opposition to the 1971 Immigration Act when it was first brought in, the last Labour Government continued and even tightened up the implementation of that Act.

What can be done to swing the labour movement into a real fight against racism and immigration controls? BERNARD MISRAHI reports.

What exactly is being changed by the new Tory Immigration Rules? How can you organise successful local campaigns to prevent people being deported? How can more effective and informative propaganda against immigration controls be produced? What role should the Campaign Against the Immigration Laws (CAIL) play in the wider movement against these racist laws?

These are the kind of issues that will be discussed at the CAIL Annual Meeting which will be held at Waterloo Action Centre, Baylis Road, London SE1 (just behind Waterloo BR station) from 10 - 6 on Saturday 15th March.

The timing of the meeting is particularly appropriate

as the Campaign Against the Racist Laws (CARL) is holding its conference the following Saturday (22nd) at Friends' Meeting House (Euston Road, London NW1). CARL is an umbrella group of immigrants' organisations, ANL, the Labour Party and other anti-racist bodies, including CAIL, which organised the massive demo against controls last November. CARL is planning a twice-weekly vigil of Parliament before the Commons debate on the new rules.

It is likely that many CAIL activists will argue that CARL has greater resources to organise pickets and demos, though CAIL has organised its fair share of these over the last year. CAIL should, perhaps, concentrate on its educative

and informative role.

This would include stepping up the programme of speaking to meetings of trade unions, Labour Parties and anti-racist bodies; continuing to produce our quarterly bulletin, CAIL NEWS; and maybe carrying more debate on the alternatives to these racist laws; hurrying up the production of the tape/slideshow on immigration; taking the 'Immigration Game' to more venues; and designing and distributing more and livelier posters and other visual propaganda to both explain and argue against these racist laws.

All supporters of CAIL are welcome, but if you are not an individual member you will have to become one (for £2) if you want to vote.

Affiliated bodies can send two delegates. As a security measure, all non-members should either contact us beforehand or be vouched for by someone on the day. You must also contact us beforehand if you want overnight accommodation or have children for the creche.

See you there!

Write to CAIL, c/o Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, London SE5, or phone Davy on 01-359 8371 (days) or Bernard on 01-720 2328 (evenings) for more details. There is no entrance fee or a formal pooled fare, but a collection will be held and some of the proceeds will help comrades who have travelled from outside London.

PARITA TRIVEDI of the Southall Campaign Committee spoke to Socialist Organiser about the campaign to get Blair Peach's murderers prosecuted and defend the 342 people arrested when the police rampaged through Southall on the evening of a NF election meeting, last April 23rd.

"Unofficial weapons were found in SPG lockers, and those SPG officers who were suspended or took 'holidays' on full pay just after the April events have miraculously come into enormous sums of money and left the country to set up businesses elsewhere. Yet not one policeman or SPG officer has been charged with murder or assault, despite the clear evidence against the SPG.

"The SPG and the police launched a concerted attack on the people of Southall last year, and have not been brought to account for it.

"Blair Peach was killed and hundreds of local people were brutally wounded and arrested for no other 'crime' than that they lived in Southall. There has been no public enquiry into the actions of the police under the command of McNee.

Courts

"Very few SPG dared to turn up at Barnet magistrates' court to give evidence, despite the major role they played in the police attack.

"The only investigation into the conduct of the police has been the National Council of Civil Liberties inquiry, but that wasn't widely known about, not even in Southall itself. The NCCL will be publishing a report in March.

"The arrests and brutality of the police last year have brought home to every family in Southall exactly what state racism means; that it's certainly not abstract and only in people's minds, and that it continues right through the courts into all aspects of the community's life."

Only a couple of months after the April events,

Southall: How the state has got away with murder



"All the jailed Southall prisoners are political prisoners."

the Southall police arrested Swaran Singh Grewal on his way home. By the next morning he was dead. According to the police he "choked on his own vomit". That's an example of the constant police harassment and racism towards the black community.

□□ Now that most of the trials are over, how is the campaign continuing?

Jailed

■ Most of the trials may be over, but that doesn't mean that the campaign to disband the SPG and to bring the police to account through a public inquiry is over. All the jailed Southall prisoners are political prisoners.

And six people still have to appear in court in June. They have been charged with assault and will be appearing before a Crown Court with a jury, as the magistrates

court in Barnet had not the power to sentence anyone for more than six months. So the six could face long jail terms. That's obviously what the police and magistrates have in mind.

On Sunday April 27th there will be a demonstration, just one year after the police riot, called around the slogans 'Remember Blair Peach', 'Disband the SPG', 'Amnesty for Southall defendants', and 'Stop the Tory racist laws'. That will highlight the re-opening of the inquest on Blair Peach which begins on Monday 28th April.

It will assemble at Speakers' Corner at 1.00pm and march to a rally in Trafalgar Square.

The campaign committee is also producing a pamphlet outlining the activities of the campaign over the last year and discussing the relationship between the community in Southall the campaign, and the support received from left groups, the purpose being to

aid similar campaigns in the future.

We are also translating the video of the BBC Open Door Programme 'Southall on Trial' into Hindi and Punjabi. The English version of the video has been shown to local community groups all round the country and in the USA, New Zealand, Sweden and India.

Murder

We still need money to rebuild the People's Unite community centre as the police successfully smashed up thousands of pounds worth of equipment, and we need a centre from which to continue organising the campaign.

Our message is clear: the state has so far got away with murder, and with the proposed immigration laws, it intends to continue in the same vein. We must organise to defend ourselves and the labour movement must support us.

Where we stand

SOCIALIST ORGANISER is the paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, an alliance of Labour and trade union activists sponsored by six Constituency Labour Parties, four Trades Councils, and several trade union branches and LPYS. We aim to build a class-struggle left-wing in the Labour Party and trade unions based on a revolutionary socialist platform.

- ★ 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. The same should go for state benefits, grants and pensions.
- ★ Start improving the social services rather than cutting them. Stop cutting jobs in the public sector.
- ★ End unemployment. Cut hours not jobs — share the work with no loss of pay. Start now with a 35-hour week and end to overtime.
- ★ All firms threatening closure should be nationalised under workers' control.
- ★ 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 rents 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.
- ★ The capitalist police are an enemy for the working class. Support all demands to weaken them as the bosses' striking force: dissolution of special squads (SPG, Special Branch, M15, etc.), public accountability, etc.
- ★ Free abortion and contraception on demand. Women's equal right to work, and full equality for women.
- ★ 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 to affirm their stance 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 and of Zimbabwe should get full support from the British labour movement for their strikes, struggles, and armed combat against the white supremacist regimes. 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 system in its place — rather than having our representatives run the system and waiting for the crumbs from the table of the bankers and bosses.

by
JOHN O'MAHONY

A CENTRE group has been created on the Labour Party NEC to act as a buffer between the Benn-Heffer left and the right wing, according to a report in the *Sunday Times* of February 24th.

It sees itself as "committed to maintain party unity and join with the moderates in a vigorous attack on Mrs Thatcher's government". The centre group members are named as Dame Judith Hart, Renee Short, Joan Lester, Douglas Hoyle (of ASTMS) and Neil Kinnock.

The previous week, 'Dame Judith' called for an end to "Labour's self-indulgent exercise of political masochism", and urged the party to unite.

Dennis Skinner's illness and the poor health and pressure of other commitments on Emyrn Williams deprives the left of some of its nominal strength already. The centre group would reduce the assured vote of the left in the NEC to ten or eleven out of 30.

Denials from Neil Kinnock that such a centre group exists are not very convincing in view of the public declaration of her separatism from the left by Dame Judith. And Kinnock himself pointedly told the *Sunday Times* that there was "a growing awareness among certain members of the Executive that to be left doesn't necessarily mean to jerk knees on every issue".

Kinnock, Labour shadow education spokesman and increasingly the darling of the media, recently showed his

As Right steps up pressure for witch hunt

Has the NEC left split?

growing freedom from left reflexes by refusing to commit himself to reverse the Tory cuts in a future Labour government

Offensive

It was probably inevitable that the offensive of the right wing and the Parliamentary Labour Party, backed by the enormous pressure of the media, would generate a 'conciliation tendency', partly genuine and partly treacherous, with pseudo-lefts like Hari acting as a stalking-horse for the right wing and the PLP.

And of course, right from the election campaign of 1979, the Callaghanites have demagogically used anti-Toryism to divert the labour movement's attention from the bitter lessons of the last Labour government: the right wing — who are now already prattling about the incomes policy of a future Labour government — have no effective answer to the Tories or the crisis of capitalism, and therefore the necessary precondition for really settling accounts with the Tories is to first settle accounts with the right wing, and to transform the Labour Party into a left-wing fighting force armed with a serious socialist alternative to the Tories.

neutralise them and cheat the rank and file of the party — especially if the dominant right wing in the AUEW succeeds in lining up their union behind Callaghan and Healey, as it is expected to do.

Anti-Toryism has become the last refuge of the right wing scoundrels who behaved like Tories when in office, and thus prepared the way for Thatcher's victory in May 1979. Now it looks like being the shallow justification for an attempt by the fake left on the NEC to betray the rank and file of the Labour Party to the right wing and the majority of the PLP.

A major shift on the Executive could allow the right wing and the fake left to reverse the Brighton decisions on Party democracy, or to manoeuvre to effectively

accountability, we need to have the minutes of the NEC and Parliamentary Labour Party circulated in the Party. Without that, there can't be real CLP monitoring of the Party's leading bodies.

A great deal depends on the recommendations of the Committee of Inquiry. There must be a major uproar if the Committee attempts any backtracking from the decisions of the Brighton 1979 conference.

The CLPD has already circulated a model resolution and asked its supporters to reject and oppose any attempt to launch a witch hunt.

at any time since the campaign against the Bevanites 25 years ago. There are signs that in the last few weeks it has allowed the right to mobilise normally passive supporters to kick leftists, especially *Militant* people, off GMCS.

One consequence of a shift in the NEC is likely to be the green light for a full-scale witch hunt against *Militant* and other Marxist tendencies.

Last October *Socialist Organiser* warned the left against becoming drunk with euphoria and underestimating the strength of the Right and the reserves of support it has and can draw upon in British capitalist society. We warned that the left can only secure the victory it won at Brighton if it is organised and strong enough to resist the sort of backsliding, manoeuvring and treachery that has in the past deprived it of the fruits of other conference victories (like on unilateral disarmament).

Organise

Between now and the conference in October, the Left must conduct a powerful campaign to organise the rank and file of the party to insist on the implementation of the Brighton decisions and to fight for a serious socialist policy for the Labour Party — and also to call the PLP and the NEC to account.

That is the only basis on which we will be able to do the no.1 job now facing the labour movement — stopping the mad-dog Tories of Margaret Thatcher's government.

Let's have the NEC minutes

VLADIMIR DERER of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, gave *Socialist Organiser* his views on the reported split in the Labour NEC Left.

THE SO-CALLED left wing majority on the NEC was always very much a fiction of the Tory press.

If there is any truth in the reports, the only way to rectify

the position is to introduce a higher degree of accountability.

People on the NEC elected from the constituency section will have to answer at conference next year for what they do now. Democratic changes are necessary. For example, the women's section of the NEC should be elected by the annual conference of Labour women and be accountable to it, instead of being the subject of horse-trading, as it is now.

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The Right organises, so should we!

RON BROWN MP for Leith, talked to *Socialist Organiser* about the witch hunt against the 'Militant' tendency.

WITHOUT the left wing we would never have any socialist politics in the Labour Party. I welcome all left-wingers and left-wing groups who want to participate in the Party, as they have much more to contribute to the formation of socialist policies than the right wing or the so-called social-democratic forces.

No-one should feel ashamed of admitting to being part of an organised tendency in the Party.

Indeed, the right wing have been openly organised for years. There are organisations like the Social Democratic Alliance, which is openly campaigning for a separate party. There are well-founded allegations that leading members of the Parliamentary Labour Party have been involved with CIA-financed organisations.

There are many MPs who are effectively paid representatives of big business, holding so-called 'consultancies'. For instance, Brian Walden was paid by the Bookmakers' Association to act in their interests in his capacity as an MP.

It's amazing the number of MPs who are on company boards of directors, simply because they are MPs. It's a basic question of accounta-

bility that MPs' business interests should be published and read out to conference each year.

Last year, in the debate on raising MPs' salaries, those who were most vociferously in favour of an increase generally tended to be linked to big business interests in some way. And they were the ones who supported the 5% wage limit on the public sector workers.

The media will always give support to the most outrageous allegations of the right wing in order to sidetrack the labour movement, hoping of course to split it.

The Underhill report is extremely suspect anyway, and it was written some time ago. But even to think about publishing it would have been short-sighted. No mat-

ter what the report said, or whether it was true or not, the press and big business would simply have used it as ammunition to attack not just the *Militant*, but all left-wingers in the labour movement.

Since the right wing in the Party have never had any interest in fighting for socialist policies, indeed many senior members of the Parliamentary Labour Party are deeply enmeshed in the capitalist system. I suspect that the attempt at a witch hunt was a deliberate tactic to create disruption and divert attention away from the record of the last Labour government, the crisis of the capitalist system, and the need to launch a militant fight against the Tories.



William Rodgers — organiser of the Labour Right

Starving the kids to sack the cooks

JEREMY CORBYN reports on NUPE public service workers' fight against the cuts.

NUPE's attitude has been that public sector wages have always been subject to government control and that in fighting for better wages the fight must inevitably extend to greater provision of public spending.

Roy Jenkins and Anthony Crosland heralded Labour Government attitudes on public spending when, in the early days of the 1974-9 government they discovered that a high level of public

spending was a "threat" to democracy and freedom!

The IMF loan crisis of 1976 gave the Labour right wing the respectable cover that they had always sought and they set out on a course of deflation and creeping monetarism. The failure of the TUC to stand firm in 1976 and fight the total volte-face of Wilson and Callaghan led to the present ascendancy of monetarism.

NUPE fought public spending cuts from 1976 onwards, and, of course, took the brunt of the Labour Government's attack on living standards last winter.

The attitude of NUPE since the election is that the issue of public spending cuts has to be fought on several

levels and that NUPE alone, indeed public sector unions alone, cannot defeat the Tories in isolation.



The threat to jobs posed by spending cuts hits NUPE members in many ways. The Tory education bill gives local authorities the 'freedom' not to provide school meals, not to maintain nutritional standards, and not to provide transport for school children. The employment and pay of school meals workers (virtually all of them women who work part-time) depend directly on the number of meals

served in each school.

Thus a rise in the price of the meals is directly reflected in a cut in the hours allocated to any kitchen. In some areas the entire school meals service is threatened with closure, in others price rises to the "economic" level of 60p or more are almost as great a threat.

In fighting the kind of Toryism that starves kids and makes kitchen workers redundant, the union must fight on a wider scale.

The most basic and absolutely necessary task is the establishment of cuts campaigns that represent public sector unions, local Labour Parties, local community groups and industrial unions. In some areas these have

been successfully established and provide a real fighting base to defend our services.

One of the dangers that the whole labour movement faces is putting all our demands in terms of "defend" — has the labour movement forgotten that we have nearly two million out of work, that hospital waiting lists are already endless, that the inequalities of wealth grew under the last Labour government?

In the fight against cuts the NUPE strategy includes a demand that Labour controlled councils should be forced to make a political stand against the government — the pre-requisite for any stand is that councils

should refuse to make cuts of any sort, and when the agents of the state in the form of the District Auditor tries to make life difficult councillors should resign and fight by-elections on a no cuts platform.

The fight against cuts is the battle; the right wing notion of keeping quiet until the next election is a recipe for defeat. Thatcher's Tory government intends to develop a pure free market economy with low public spending on services and using the weapons of 'law and order' and unemployment to defeat the working class. Our battle is to make the Labour leadership fight and force the TUC to mount a real offensive.

The Irish issue takes off

THE last few weeks have produced further evidence that the debate on an alternative policy on Ireland is finally beginning to take off in the Labour Party.

According to an article in *Tribune* (15th February) a group of NEC members around Tony Benn have met to discuss ways of placing a debate about 'the peaceful reunification of Ireland' before the NEC. This follows in the wake of Benn's recent comments to the Irish media in which he stated that Ireland was one of the most important issues in British politics today.

A second initiative has come from the Political Committee of the London Coop Party. This influential body has placed resolutions calling for a British withdrawal from Ireland on the agendas of three Regional Conferences (Greater London, Southern and Eastern), which will be taking place in the next few weeks.

In a letter sent to all constituency parties in the London Coop area, the Political Committee gives the following reasons for selecting a resolution on Ireland for these regional conferences:

'Our aims are still those of the Better Life for All Campaign of some years ago — to end the violence, the discrimination and the deprivation in Northern Ireland. However, the politics of the last ten years have failed, and it is now clear that the



Roy Mason and Stan Ormer: is Labour's mood now turning against their "bipartisan" policies on Ireland?

aims of A Better Life for All cannot be achieved until there is a commitment to end British rule.

'This is the only policy which has not been tried, the only one which deals with the cause as well as the symptoms of the Irish problem.'

At the time of going to press it seems likely that the

Greater London Regional Executive Committee will recommend support for the withdrawal resolution, giving it a better-than-even chance of being passed.

In the meantime, the Labour Committee on Ireland is pressing ahead with its plans



for a conference on Labour Party policy and Ireland, to be held in London on 29th March.

The conference is specifically aimed at bringing together Labour Party members who are already sympathetic to the British withdrawal/united Ireland policy.

to discuss ways in which greater pressure can be built up inside the Party to force a change in direction in its policies on Ireland.

The guest speaker addressing the conference on the recent history of Labour's policy on Ireland will be veteran opponent of partition and MP for Camden St. Pancras, Jock Stallard.

The main section of the discussion will cover the aims and future activities of the LCI. A central issue will be building up support for a major intervention at the 1980 Labour Party conference in Blackpool next Autumn.

The LCI is sponsored by the London Coop Political Committee, and by Hemel Hempstead, Hackney North & Stoke Newington, and Islington Central CLPs. The conference will be open to delegates and individual members of the party.

□□*'The Labour Party and Ireland', Saturday March 29th, 2pm to 5pm at Islington North Library, Manor Gardens, London N7. Registration £1 for individuals, £2 for organisations. Further details from LCI c/o 5 Stamford Hill, London N16*

FIGHTING FASCISTS: DON'T LEAVE IT TO THE COPS

THE NATIONAL Front are planning to march in Glasgow on March 15th under the slogan of "Smash the IRA".

Glasgow ANL called a meeting on February 21st to discuss a counter-mobilisation. Over 100 delegates and individuals attended and though the general feeling was in favour of a strong counter-demonstration, delegates from the Trades Council prevented any decision from being taken. They argued that the Trades Council Executive was due to take a decision on the following Tuesday and that if the ANL took a position at the meeting, they would be splitting the movement.

The Communist Party dominated Trades Council believe that the best way to stop the fascists is to get the police to stop the march, rather than mobilising the strength of the labour movement against them. This strength should be used to "get our elected representatives to work for their money", in the Trades Council Secretary's words.

that is be putting pressure on the police and district council to ban the march.

We cannot rely on the good will of the police in dealing with the fascists. Where bans have been imposed they have usually been accompanied by bans on demonstrations by the left and the labour movement.

Delegates from the T&GWU Voluntary Organisations Branch, Edinburgh Trades Council and Chrysler Shop Stewards Committee voiced their agreement on the need for a counter-demonstration and at the Scottish Young Socialists' Conference a motion was passed unanimously calling on the labour movement to build a demonstration big enough to "swamp the fascists". In the meantime, the ANL plans a mass leaf-letting and poster campaign and a picket of the District Council meeting on February 28th which will take the decision on allowing facilities to the fascists.

IAN MCLEISH

Armagh: another H-Block

by CLAIR MCGILL

ON International Women's Day, March 8th, English and Irish women will be picketing Armagh jail, in Northern Ireland.

Republican women prisoners in the jail have been protesting since March 1976 at the withdrawal of political status. 34 of them are on protest at present. Because all women prisoners in British jails are allowed to wear their own clothes, the women have not been forced "on the blanket" like the 360 men in H-Block, Long Kesh,

who refuse to wear prison uniform.

But since early February, harassment of the women has sharply increased, forcing them into conditions more and more like H-Block.

As the women were going to dinner on Thursday 7th, they report: "Forty male screws ran on to the wing and cornered us off... the male screws just moved in on us and started beating all around them..."

Then some of the women were dragged off to the prison governor, Rosemary Callaghan reports: "Male

and female screws invaded my cell to get me down to the governor. They charged in, in full riot gear, equipped with shields..."

"I was just bodily assaulted — thumped, trailed and brutally kicked". She and other women were hauled along, with their clothes half torn off, and held spreadeagled in front of the governor.

Since then the women have been moved to a different part of the prison. They have been denied all washing and toilet facilities, so the cells and the women themselves are filthy. They are locked up

in the cells for 23 hours a day [it was 21 hours before]. And more women have been beaten up.

As before, the women are not permitted radios, magazines, or access to education or handicrafts. They lose all remission, thus effectively doubling their sentences.

"They are trying to stop us organising ourselves", writes one woman from Armagh, "but they are failing miserably". The women are still defiant. But they will need more than ever the support of the demonstration on March 8th.



Rosemary Callaghan: "They charged in, in full riot gear."

When the Irish won't play the buffoon

by TIMOTHY O'GRADY

MY IMPRESSION of the ubiquitous *Sense of Ireland* jamboree nearly solidified neatly into contempt as a result of two related incidents in the closing months of last year.

The first of these was a bash at Quaglino's, at which the luminaries (among them such friends of Ireland as Merlyn Rees and Hugh Rossi) gathered to wash down their Jameson-flavoured salami with Black Velvet and congratulate themselves on the proud heritage of Irish culture and all the good it was going to do to bring about understanding between the "people of these islands".

It was not difficult to see in the glazed eyes and uncertain swaying of the crowd that not a great deal of thought was being devoted to the menu that day in Ballsbridge, or for that matter in H-Block, and that the "understanding" being "deepened" would be much the same as had always obtained between Britain and Ireland: the Irish were as

always welcome to act stupid and play out their fantasies in public — indeed this is a favourite British pastime — but the delicate matter of politics was to be avoided at all costs.

The second was the news that the playwright John Arden has been asked to write a piece for the festival souvenir book on being an Englishman in Ireland, but he was please to refrain from any mention of certain political issues. By this time, I had indeed concluded that the coming festival would almost certainly be an anti-septic Irish Tourist Board affair, from which the London Irish were likely to be alienated, and all political content surgically removed.

Misrule

I have since seen a considerable number of festival events and have also read John Arden's piece in the souvenir book. It is to be indicated that even the most innocuous subjects in Ireland have a way of leading inevitably to the questions of partition, English misrule and state repression which

are at the root of Irish society. He also expresses the hope that the festival 'will find the backbone' to examine such troublesome questions.

The festival has drawn a considerable amount of criticism — some legitimate, some merely bitter and self-righteous. It has been alleged that the London Irish have been contemptuously disregarded, that funds have been grossly mismanaged and that, particularly in the seminars at the ICA, republican views have been excluded amid the over-representation of Sinn Féin, the Workers' Party.

But while I believe that there is a strong case for the organisers to answer, I have a good measure of admiration for the festival's breadth and energy. And, simply because art and politics are inextricably bound in Ireland, major political issues were raised again and again at cinemas, theatres and galleries.

There were such films as *Man, Line and Sinner* at the National Film Theatre, splendidly edited archive material from the explosive and formative years of

1916-22. They displayed an interesting continuity of republican resistance when compared with a significant group of films at the ICA about war in the Six Counties; one of these, *The Patriot Game*, is unequivocal in its support for the present IRA campaign.

Clichés

There is an entire subsection of the festival, 'The State of Emergency', at the Action Space, devoted to attacking Britain's role in Ireland through a photographic exhibit, films, music and other types of performance.

There is an intriguing sociological exhibit at the ICA called 'No Country for Old Men' which is polemical in the sense that it specifically challenges a number of clichés about Ireland, and which also displays an enviable and disarming ability to manipulate social trends as metaphors with a sophistication rare in contemporary Irish art. The list goes on.

There has been a macabre and long-standing covenant between the Irish and the

English, composed of love and hate, whereby the Irishman plays the fool in exchange for recognition of a kind in England, to him the apogee of civilisation. Political tensions are sublimated and everyone remains happy. One of the avowed intentions of this festival is to destroy this foul little pact, these old stereotypes, and to demonstrate on a grand scale that the Irish are not bloodthirsty provincial buffoons (the stage Paddy when he is dangerous or brooding), but members of a modern European nation with special problems (not least of which is England's continuous assumption of part ownership of it), and which is currently undergoing a kind of artistic renaissance.

Growth

Whether this can be done, and whether the artistic renaissance is merely a matter of a sudden growth of artistic entrepreneurship in the form of subsidised venues (the result of EEC-fed "prosperity"), remains to be seen.

But it is clear that much as Irish politicians have only been able to posture desperately about their country's freedom because all power has ultimately rested in Westminster, so the Irish arts will only come of age and the Irish people only awakened from the morbid history which James Joyce called a nightmare when the English at last find the nerve to view them without the vain prejudices which they have so jealously hoarded.

Such is the nature and strength of the bond. It's had its run and I would hope that it will at last be broken. The Left has perhaps been the most cynical of all in preserving it, for the Irish, particularly those in Britain, have time and again placed their faith in them only to be disappointed. Now many of the same group are squealing hypocritically about the apolitical content of this festival; they should open their eyes and look.

[An extended version of this article will appear in *PS Magazine*, for which it was originally written.]

ZIMBABWE: Soames Out! BRITISH troops out! MAJORITY rule now!

continued from p.1

Just in case the Rhodesian forces, and Muzorewa's auxiliaries, the martial law, the barring of the return for the elections of quarter of a million refugees from Mozambique, and the location of polling stations on white farms, all fail to produce the election results favoured by the Tories; just in case the South African armoured cars in which the votes are to be transported also fail, and in case Muzorewa's financial backing from South Africa is unable to grease the palms of enough officials — then Soames declares that he alone has the right to annul any election results and to appoint a government that has nothing to do with the

election result.

Such is Tory democracy and impartiality.

It is to the shame of the Labour Party leaders that no fight has been mounted against the Tories. Some LP leaders have openly defended a bi-partisan attitude so as 'not to undermine Soames's efforts'!

The silence from Labour has left the media free to rant on with parroted quotes about intimidation and the dangers of 'tribal warfare' in Zimbabwe.

The *Times* was confident enough to mount a six-page supplement on business prospects in Zimbabwe, full of boasts by companies with 'long experience of exploiting the maturing Rhodesian market' — demonstrating

more eloquently than any Labour spokesman the nature of British imperialist interests behind Zimbabwe politics.

But every time Soames locks up a Zanu comrade, the resistance of others is strengthened. Each time Muzorewa send in his thugs, he is confirmed in the eyes of the people as the enemy.

Every agreement that Soames breaks tears away illusions in British democracy that still remain within the liberation forces.

The situation is very precarious, but so far the balance of forces has seemed to move systematically in favour of the liberation movement. Zanu in particular has consolidated its political base undercutting Muzorewa and to some extent Nkomo.

The imperialists have no obvious quisling to put into power, no one to fill the role played by Kenyatta in Kenya. Muzorewa is too discredited. Nkomo lacks support.

Militarily Zanu's base in Mozambique has been free for some time from the raids by SA and Rhodesian security forces.

A coup is possible, but large scale intervention by South Africa would extend its scattered military resources even further, and draw into the conflict the front-line states and possibly even Nigeria, destabilise shallow despotisms like Malawi and Zaire, and give rise to further internal revolts by the mighty South African black working class.

To the Zimbabwe people,

repression is no new experience, but now the source of such repression can be clearly identified. Soames as spokesman and coordinator of British imperialist interest has exposed the true nature of British 'democratic' solutions.

Whatever the result of the elections, the struggle in Zimbabwe will carry on, with enormous implications for the southern African revolution as a whole.

We must reinforce our solidarity with the liberation movement, and with those organisations in Zimbabwe which most actively pursue the struggle (at present, ZANU). We must step up our opposition to the British presence in Zimbabwe, pushing the Labour leaders to denounce the whole operation.

THE special measures to reduce unemployment, introduced by Labour as unemployment reached its post war peak of one and a half million in 1977, are being dismantled by the Tories, together with an entire range of services provided by Job Centres and Skill Centres and such. But how much of these services should socialists seek to save?

Special Job Creation Programmes of the type run by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) were no unique panic measure of the last Labour Government confronted with recession. In every major capitalist country special employment programmes were used throughout the late '70s.

From phoney factories trading with each other in West Germany to the massive CETA and other job-creating schemes in the USA they were aimed to take the edge off social unrest, to maintain a certain level of demand in the economy, control over the labour force and to stop a layer of permanently unemployed congealing at the very bottom of the pile — people who would have nothing to lose.

In the States, federal and state job programmes meshed with the urban renewal and poverty programmes to provide against a re-emergence of the ghetto riots of the late '60s. Homespun programmes of 'community' capitalism and cultural projects were provided for ethnic minorities ... murals to substitute for mass action.

Angry

In Britain, after the demise of the much-criticised Job Creation Programme in 1978, the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP, for 16-18 year olds) was started together with the Special Temporary Employment Programme (STEP, for adult long term unemployed: it provided 6 months' work for under-25s, 12 months' work for over-25s).

The Tories have expanded YOP — originally an attempt to get 16-18 year olds out of the jobs market altogether — by some 25%. This will boost places, which on some schemes, especially of the type called Work Experience on Employers' Premises (aptly abbreviated as WEEP) are little more than cheap labour, to 250,000-260,000 nationally. At a basic 'training allowance' of £23.50 a week the Tories doubtless find this particular programme a cheap investment — better, perhaps, than the cost of policing quarter of a million angry kids.

The STEP scheme clearly does not find such easy fav-

Fighting the Tories' attack on 'funny jobs'



Not only the steelworks, but even the make-work schemes, are for the axe

our with the Tories. With maximum pay rates of £71 a week, STEP has been seized on by a number of community groups in the same way as the Partnership and Urban Aid schemes, to finance a number of useful projects. (For instance, Joint Co-Partnership workers produced a Marxist account of the local economy of Tottenham.) But the mid-term Review of STEP which circulated in MSC last Autumn stated 'In 1980-81 ... priority should be given to well-devised schemes, especially those

which provide mainly semi- or unskilled manual work'. Back to rock-breaking and oakum-picking, perhaps?

Victims

In fact, the MSC bureaucrats like to see themselves as both providing a social service and exercising some degree of control over the labour market. The same Review talks about the possibility of re-directing the programme in a preventive way by schemes for victims of

major redundancies and 'those likely to become long term unemployed'.

But the authors conclude that this is unviable and that the programme must be addressed to the 'long term unemployed in general'.

After cuts have halved the programme (from £42 million down to £24 million), inflation and cash limits mean a further cut to reduce occupancy levels from 14000 to 8000 unless a further £5 million gross is forthcoming.

Furthermore, the prog-

ramme has been cut back to Special Development Areas, Development Areas, and the inner urban areas; and these SDAs and DAs are themselves being reduced from 44% of the country to 25% over the next two and a half years, by order of Keith Joseph at the Department of Industry.

This is only the beginning. If Special Programmes — 'funny jobs' — are too expensive for those suffering from major redundancies, then re-training is also a luxury the government cannot afford.

In December, Prior cut a further £150 million from the MSC's 1980/81 budget, with the promise of a further £30m a year to come off as well for the next three years. This leaves them with £670m a year at 1979 prices.

- The cuts will mean:
- The closure of 20 Skill Centres
 - 10,000 places cut from the TOPS re-training programme.
 - The Occupational Guidance Scheme for adults will be wound up.
 - Disablement Resettlement work will be severely curtailed
 - 3,400 MSC staff jobs will go.

Defend

It looks like the Labour Government's grandiose attempts to control the labour market will end up with more redundant civil servants. The cuts in training will hit particularly hard at black youth attempting to break out of the unskilled, low paid ghetto, at women trying to move into non-traditional areas and at those made redundant in plant closures.

With just such mass redundancies looming in steel, the motor industry and elsewhere, with Treasury forecasts of 1.65 million on the dole by the end of 1980 and 2 million by the end of 1981, and 300,000 extra on the job market each year, even the pathetic and dubious attempts of the MSC to provide work experience, training and employment services are looking like something to defend.

But defending the MSC's schemes is clearly not enough. Trade union intervention in and ultimately control over training programmes must be fought for. In a climate where old skills are rapidly being replaced by new technology and a restructuring of the work process, training must be made an issue and the demand for the right to socially useful and rewarding work should be raised alongside the call for the reduction of hours with no loss of pay.

GEOFF BENDER

What's On

SUNDAY MARCH 2ND: 'Labour and the Cuts', SCLV fringe meeting at the London Labour Party Conference, 12.30 Committee Room 2, Camden Town Hall. Speakers: Bill Bowring (Lambeth Council), Stephen Corbishley (CPSA NEC, personal capacity).

SUNDAY MARCH 2ND: Stop the National Front from marching in South London. Counter demonstration 10.00 at London College of Printing by Elephant and Castle tube. Called by Southwark Campaign against Racism and Fascism.

FRIDAY MARCH 7TH: NUS Demonstration against the cuts, 1pm, ULU, Malet St, London WC1.

SATURDAY MARCH 8TH: Day School on Ireland sponsored by Leicester South CLP. Includes sessions on the historical background and the media and Ireland and debates on Troops Out now and the British government and Northern Ireland, 10.30am to 5pm at Highfields Community Centre, Melbourne Road. Creche provided. Further details: Irish Day School, c/o 1 Florence St, Leicester.

SUNDAY MARCH 9TH: TUC Demonstration against Tory anti-union laws and the cuts, 11am, Speakers Corner, Hyde Park, London.

MONDAY MARCH 17TH: 'Debate of the decade — the crisis and the future of the left', Speakers: Tony Benn, Tariq Ali, Paul Foot, Stuart Holland, Hilary Wainwright, Audrey Wise, Central Hall Westminster, 7pm. Tickets £1 from LCC, 9 Poland St London W1 (Send SAE).

SATURDAY MARCH 22ND: Labour Movement Fightback for Women's Rights Conference, Conway Hall, London WC1. Participants include: NAC, LARC, Gingerbread, nus nursery Campaign, JCWI, National Council for One Parent Families, CPAG. Details from 41 Ellington St, London N7.

SATURDAY MARCH 22ND: National anti-cuts conference, called by Liverpool Trades Council and District Labour Party, 11am, St George's Hall, Liverpool. Credentials: 50p from T.Harrison/A.Dodswell, 70 Victoria St, Liverpool 1.

SATURDAY 22ND MARCH: Labour Coordinating Committee conference on the Alternative Economic Strategy, Digbeth Hall, Birmingham. Followed on Sunday 23rd by a conference on the future direction of the LCC for LCC members. Details from LCC, 9 Poland St, London W1.

SATURDAY MARCH 29TH: Labour Committee on Ireland conference, North Islington Library, Manor Gardens, London N7, 2-5pm.

SATURDAY 5th-Monday 7th APRIL: Labour Party Young Socialists Annual Conference in Llandudno, visitors also welcome. Details of accommodation, fringe meetings etc from 'Barricade', 16 Glen St, Edinburgh.

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Fightback for Women's Rights

WORKING CONFERENCE

AS THE decisive votes come up on the Corrie Bill, the women's movement has been campaigning actively, marching, and lobbying Parliament. But nothing is heard from the TUC.

Last October 28th the TUC organised a huge demonstration against Corrie. But with that the TUC leaders obviously felt they had done their bit. Any further trade union action against Corrie has been left to a few individual unions.

As they stand, relations between the women's movement and the labour movement present a dilemma. In the fight for women's liberation, the power of the labour movement could be central. The TUC's turnout against Corrie, and the importance of the labour movement in fighting the cuts and the threat they pose to women, show that.

Yet at the same time the labour movement remains half-hearted in its support for women's rights — and the movement itself, in its internal structures, is heavily male-dominated.

The women's movement has had a big effect on the labour movement. The increased confidence which the movement has given women to fight for their rights is a big factor in the 60% rise in female trade union membership over the last decade. The TUC's demonstration against Corrie, the TUC Women's Charter, and the support given by many unions to the Working Women's Charter, all reflect the impact of the women's movement.

But all this often remains on paper, or as the labour movement making gestures towards doing something for women, rather than helping women to organise them-

selves to fight. The October TUC demonstration was a big boost for the fight against Corrie; it also showed the TUC's sense of priorities, with the TUC bureaucrats marching at the front and the women's contingents at the back.

The same attitudes run throughout the movement. Union meetings are rarely organised in work time or

prejudices can be and often are rapidly overturned. The steelworkers' union had always been exceptionally conservative. But after a few weeks on strike, many steelmen are coming to recognise and value the militancy of women joining the picket lines.

The key problem is the bureaucracy. It nurtures prejudice. It restricts or sells out the struggles that could smash the prejudices. And it systematically leans on the more conservative sections of the working class to keep the movement under control: more prosperous, older, skilled, white, male workers.

The bureaucratised structure works not only against women, but against young workers, black workers, and all the most oppressed and exploited sections of the working class. When Marie Patterson of the TGWU was first elected to the General Council of the TUC, she was the only woman and the youngest member on the Council. Sixteen years later, she is still the only woman and still the youngest member!

Thus the fight to gear the labour movement differently so that it really fights for women's liberation is part of a wider fight to bring the labour movement under the control of the rank and file — to take the leadership from the well-heeled bureaucrats and those workers closest to them in attitudes, conditions, and life-style, and to put it in the hands of militants from the most exploited and angry sections of the membership.

It is a fight for regular accountability and democracy throughout the movement, from the Labour front-bench in Parliament and the TUC leadership down to shop steward level; for control of

all disputes through mass meetings and elected strike committees; for women's caucuses and strong rank and file movements in industries and unions... And hand in hand with it goes a fight for the policies that can meet the needs of the rank and file, which can only be policies for socialism and women's liberation.

This general fight to transform the labour movement, and women's specific role within it, will be at the centre of the discussions at the Fightback conference. We do not see this work in the labour movement as counterposed to other campaigns and special groups — co-operation is vital — but we do see it as the best way that we, as socialists, can make a contribution and help draw some threads together.

Through a fight to change the labour movement, attitudes and prejudices will be changed. And militant women will be able to make sure that the labour movement is their movement to fight for their rights, not just a male-dominated movement that may give some help to their cause.

Without a concerted battle to renovate the labour movement, militant women will remain trapped in a dilemma: either turning away from the labour movement in exasperation, and so cutting themselves off from the most powerful forces that can be brought into action against attacks on women's rights (and from thousands of women who are already active in the labour movement); or coming to an accommodation with the labour movement as it exists, bureaucratic and reformist.

CLARE RUSSELL



They used to say steelworkers were backward and

We'll be there on the 9th

ORGANISING for the Fightback conference has really been easy since we've had the broadsheet, Socialist Organiser supporters from around the country have told us.

The idea of the broadsheet

was as an introduction to the conference and its 18 or so participating groups and campaigns.

Three pages on legal rights cover benefits, taxation, DHSS snoopers, and the racist and sexist immigration laws. An article contributed by Rights of Women cuts through all the complicated technicalities to explain simply the common link between the various ways women are cheated out of money.

Three pages on the labour movement have a guide to the maternity leave clauses in the Employment Bill and articles on organising a trades council women's caucus and the changing ideas about LP women's sections; an account of some

of the snooker equal rights can well as carrying charter on co women in trade.

Further arrang FIGHT 41 ELL

an interview w Langton of the Region TUC's e unities committe ing the Employn organising in the

Four pages g care — under flves, childmin help schemes, get nursery prov statutory requir the problems cau lal administrati and incoherence

CALLAGHAN BACKS THE COLD WAR

by MARTIN THOMAS

NO GOVERNMENT has given firmer support to the US cold war drive following the Russian invasion of Afghanistan than Britain's Tory Government. And no-one has supported the Tory Government more faithfully than the Labour front bench.

When some Tory MPs claimed to find Labour leader James Callaghan's support for Thatcher not keen enough, Callaghan retorted, "I do not know why the honourable Gentleman wants to introduce party considerations into this matter". And later: "I think it important that we should get as much agreement as we can in this area. That is why, unless I am dragged into it, I shall not venture into trying to find points of difference between us" (House of Commons, 28 January).

Callaghan was quite ex-

plicit. "The shadow of the Soviet Union hangs over many countries in that long arc stretching from Turkey to Pakistan. This uncertainty and doubt will prompt those countries to strengthen their armed forces and no-one can blame them... it is inevitable and essential..."

"We must welcome the intention of President Carter to set up a task force of 100,000 men which could move quickly into position [in the Persian Gulf], if only because of the utter dependence of the West on oil..."

Wishes

The Tory condemnation of Russia's invasion of Afghanistan, echoed by the Labour front bench, naturally had nothing to do with the interests or wishes of the people of Afghanistan. Lord Carrington put it like this in his Parliamentary statement (24 January): "The

Soviet action is a breach of all the conventions which have governed East-West relations for the last decade. It is a vivid demonstration of the Soviet drive to gain wider influence whenever possible, by propaganda, by subversion, and, where necessary, by force..."

A popular revolution which allies with the USSR, like China's, Cuba's, or Vietnam's, would be seen by the Tories in just the same light: as a trespass on the right of the big capitalist powers to dominate all of the world, except a sector agreed to be the Kremlin bureaucracy's sphere of influence.

Peter Shore reflected the same attitude even when he mildly chided the Tories for not sufficiently stressing moves to get some reforms in the Third World. "Where conditions of real injustice, poverty and exploitation exist, there is bound to be political instability... it is precisely those conditions

that provide the opportunity for revolutionary movements of all sorts — whether Communist, as they often are, or non-Communist". And for Shore it went without saying that such revolutionary movements are the worst evil.

Against revolution, and against the USSR, the Labour front bench is at one with the Tories in supporting a new arms build-up, nuclear weapons, NATO, and more arms for the repressive right wing regimes in Turkey and Pakistan.

Differ

Within that framework, some Tories differ. Edward Heath, for example, opposes the boycott of the Olympics. Callaghan and Shore did not even go that far.

When Carrington made his statement on Afghanistan in the House of Lords, it was a former Labour Minister,



US tanks practise desert operations for the Gulf

Lord Wigg, who demanded registration for conscription be brought in. When that proposal was debated in the Commons, a Tribune MP, Russell Kerr, got up to support conscription but suggest that conscripts be given the choice of the armed forces or community service.

Explaining his idea, he said, "As a member of the wartime Air Force, I found... we all came out... very much bigger and better people than we were when we went into the Service... Having gone in as boys, youngsters emerged later as men in the

true sense". Though many emerged maimed, crippled, or in coffins...

Other Labour MPs argued — like the Tory front-bench — that more recruitment to the professional army and to the Territorial Army reserves would be better than conscription. Even Eric Heffer, who spoke against conscription, said he was not against recruitment. Don Concannon, a junior minister in the last Government, added a warm recommendation. "I remember the call-up of selective people for the Suez campaign, and how quickly

and how well that The same day ton's statement stan, there was the limentary debate weapons for 15

Hig

Defence Minister Pym announced... ies are continuing million project se ed by the Labo ment to upgra and are planning £4,000 to £5,000 successor to Pola

ghts

Conway Hall
Red Lion Sq WC1
Sat. March 22
11am - 5pm

Every Labour vote should be a vote against Corrie

THE Labour Abortion Rights Campaign has called on Labour activists to keep up the campaign for women's right to choose.

Whatever the outcome of the Corrie anti-abortion Bill, the great strength of the labour movement in favour of a woman's right to choose has become obvious during the anti-Corrie campaign.

Even the early Commons votes showed a strong turnout of Labour MPs, with most of them sticking to Labour Party policy, which advocates free abortion on demand with uniform provision through the NHS. And the wider rank and file movement — as shown by the October 1979 demonstration organised by the TUC — has been active too.

Many CLPs and trade union branches have passed resolutions condemning those Labour MPs who last July supported the early Commons stages of the Corrie Bill. And over a dozen Labour MPs have now changed their minds and are opposing Corrie, in response to the tremendous pressure which has been exerted.

But, with the slight tactical advantage of having prevented the 20 week time limit from being introduced, we should not feel the battle is won. We must ensure that those Labour MPs who didn't bother to turn up to the votes on Corrie, or who deliberately went against Labour Party policy, are reprimanded by their local parties.

So it is up to Labour's rank and file to keep up the pressure for a woman's right to choose.

LARC is holding a conference on May 31st at Lambeth Town Hall. Watch out for details.

STOP CORRIE!



Jo Richardson

JO RICHARDSON MP talked to Socialist Organiser about the chances of defeating the Corrie Bill.

The amendment putting the time limit at 24 weeks got passed, instead of 20 weeks as proposed by Corrie. Our next big day is February 29th, when the Corrie Bill will be debated again. Then there is the possibility of two more Fridays after that, though that depends on whether another Bill is out of Committee by then.

We'll be discussing the criteria for legal abortion on the 29th. We, the opponents of the Bill, have tabled an enormous number of amendments, so it's not all over by any means.

Swing

What worries me a little is that, having got rid of the 20 week upper limit, a lot of MPs are thinking that the Bill is now okay and won't bother to turn up to vote against the Bill.

What a lot of people don't

realise is that the new criteria for ending a pregnancy proposed by Corrie are one of the most dangerous clauses in the whole Bill — even if you're under the time limit, if these criteria go through, you still won't have the chance of a termination. [The Corrie Bill allows legal abortion only if continuing the pregnancy would mean a "substantially" greater risk of "serious" injury, or death].

There has been a swing in attitudes towards a pro-choice position both in the House and in the country at large, and a stiffening of resolve on our side by people who feel they are being hounded by SPUC. One MP told me he'd received 8,000 letters from them in the last 4 weeks, and he was going to write back to all of them saying why he would vote against Corrie.

The voting last week on the time limits was an index of that change in attitudes. I put forward an amendment to lower the time limit to 27 weeks. I didn't have any hope of succeeding but it was interesting the amount of support I got.

120 MPs voted for an amendment which was virtually saying there should be no change in the existing law — that is larger than the number who voted against Corrie at the 2nd Reading. So we are actually gaining support in Parliament.

On the chances of the Bill falling or running out of time: I think the odds are against us. If it came to the final vote on the 3rd Reading I think it would get through. But we have got an awful lot of amendments and lots of arguing still to do.

The thing that should be stressed is that it's not all over yet. Organise for the 29th. Keep up the pressure.

and clubs government indifference or hostility. Three other pages concentrate on Women's Aid, a scheme for young women in

details of speakers, conference elements and agenda, etc., from: BACK FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000

North London, and the fight against the Corrie Bill and the use of Depo Provera. And the broadsheet carries a provisional agenda for the conference and tear-out registration form at the back. We wondered, when we began to organise for the conference, if it wasn't a bit presumptuous to talk of dialogue, of bringing people together, and so on. But already we've had a number of inquiries such as 'Is there

any national link-up of nursery campaigns?' and, also on nursery campaigns, whether there is any group in the Labour Party coordinating this, as LARC does on abortion?

Quite a number of women have written in who are active both in the Labour Party and in women's groups; in Somerset, I was told, it was LP activists who set up the local Women's Aid refuge. Inquiries and registrations are so far evenly divided between Labour Parties (and LPYS) and women's groups and centres. One whole women's group is coming! And North London chauvinists will be amazed by the immense response from south of the Thames!

The next few weeks will be

very busy. Apart from invitations to speak about the



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Edinburgh St., London
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conference, we will be organising our own fringe meeting during the women's TUC at

On replacing Polaris, he said, "To me, that remains an open question... I have a nagging feeling that it would be a wise insurance policy for the next century".

Frank Allaun proposed a motion reasserting Labour Party policy: "This House strongly opposes the Government's proposals to deploy, on British soil, Cruise and Pershing 2 missiles, which incidentally would not be controlled by Great Britain, and equally strongly opposes plans to replace Polaris..."

Warning

While Barney Hayhoe, for the Tories, welcomed the "support for the NATO decision from the Opposition front bench", only 54 MPs backed Allaun's motion. The two front-bench Labour MPs who supported Party policy, Neil Kinnock and Les Huckfield, got a warning a few days later from Callaghan that they would be sacked if they did the same again. (Kinnock soon learned his lesson: within days he was proclaiming he would give no promises about a new Labour government restoring the Tory cuts!)

Labour Left MPs did differentiate themselves from the front bench, in speeches as well as Allaun's motion. The Tribune group put out a statement (28 January) condemning the Russian invasion

of Afghanistan but also saying, "In the light of... for example, Vietnam and Suez, it is the height of hypocrisy for the Governments of the USA and the UK to claim to defend the principle of territorial integrity".

"We condemn their attempts to use the Afghan crisis to intensify East-West confrontation and in particular their commitment to rearm the brutal and repressive regime of President Zia in Pakistan".

And the Labour Party National Executive has come out against a boycott of the Moscow Olympics.

Some Labour MPs justified, or half-justified, the Russian invasion. James Lamond echoed the Kremlin's line: "I believe that Amin's regime [THE Afghan government before the invasion] was fast proceeding along the same lines as that of Pol Pot [in Cambodia]". Ernie Ross and Tam Dalyell half-supported him, with Dalyell arguing that the invasion, while not to be approved, was the natural response of a big power to unrest on its borders: the USSR had got dragged in "like Britain in Northern Ireland".

No-one said anything bearing any resemblance to the Marxist argument that socialists should defend the nationalised and planned economy in the USSR against capitalist world power, in spite of and against the crimes of

the Kremlin bureaucracy, though plenty of left MPs had enough Marxist education in their youth to know the argument. No-one said the workers of the USSR, not Carter's nuclear missiles, should settle accounts with Stalinism. No-one, in fact, tried to argue a policy from the point of view of the world working class, rather than



Eric Heffer

from the point of view of the interests of the British state. No-one challenged the basically Tory idea that there is a 'national interest' that overrides all class struggles.

Lamond, Ross, and Dalyell argued only that the Tories overestimated the Russian threat. Allaun said, "My own position is clear: Neither Moscow nor Washington, but peace... We [i.e., the British state] must negotiate with Russia to stop the

arms race".

The same outlook was expressed by Eric Heffer, although he was the only MP to denounce conscription for its possible use against strikes and workers' struggles. He put his view by quoting the Observer: "The caution shown by President Giscard [of France] and Chancellor Schmidt [of West Germany] about writing off detente is not just a sign of anti-Americanism... It reflects a realistic appreciation that for Europe there is no alternative to detente..."

"I think that that editorial was excellent", said Heffer. "It completely sums up my own view about how we must approach this matter".

Buffer

On the grounds that "we cannot allow ourselves, as a country, to take sides and help the war atmosphere", he argued for "an extended buffer between the Soviet Union on the one side and the US on the other. That buffer should comprise more and more countries that hold a neutralist position".

With this argument, Heffer and other left MPs were on very weak ground. They accepted the Tories' basic framework: how to deal with the Russian threat from the point of view of the British state. They added only that the US is also a threat. Their

argument was then made up of sugary illusions about how much international arms control talks can achieve, and the virtues and possibilities of neutrality.

No-one argued for withdrawal from NATO. No-one said anything about the hypocrisy of condemning Russian troops in Afghanistan while British troops are in Ireland and Zimbabwe. No one used Parliament as a platform to speak, not to the "honourable Gentlemen and Ladies" on the Tory benches, but to the working class, denouncing the cold war drive and saying that the best contribution British workers can make to peace is to overthrow our own war-mongering ruling class.

No-one could bring out the simple idea, "Workers of the world, unite", against the world-devouring drive of the big capitalist powers and the nationalist, self-seeking policies of the Moscow bureaucrats. No-one said: The main enemy is at home — our own ruling class.

And so the official Left helps prop up the ideas of national interest which hamstring the working class even in everyday struggle, and threaten to deliver us bound hand and foot to a nuclear holocaust. It's time we had a different policy for Labour's Left, and a real fight to kick out the openly pro cold war right wing from Labour's leadership.

Mike Davis and Geoff Bender outline some criticisms, based on a document recently put to the SCLV Steering Committee by themselves, Jeremy Corbyn, Mark Douglas, Keith Veness and Pete Rowlands.

The founding conference of the SCLV over 20 months ago brought together over 200 Labour activists who saw the need to organise in the face of the low profile of the 'official left' in the movement to provide a united socialist alternative to the unpalatable choice of Callaghan or Thatcher. Our aim was to group together, on a flexible non-sectarian basis, all the forces inside (and out, in some cases) of the Labour Party prepared to fight for a Labour victory on a clear anti-capitalist and class struggle basis. Labour lost the election. But the need to develop, clarify and above all unify the growing and revitalised forces on the Labour left is now imperative if we are to defeat both the Tories and the forces of the right in the Labour Party itself. To do this successfully we believe the SCLV needs a relatively open structure capable of forging the widest class unity in action and providing a forum for tendencies and individuals on the left to come together for debate and action.

We believe the conference vote to amend the Hackney resolution which argued for an open alliance, and to reject the West London motion which made the call for the SCLV to be open to those in the Party ready to break with the social-democratic leadership and go forward to the socialist reconstruction of society, means that the SCLV has now

detached itself from the conception which originally created the campaign and motivated it up until the Local Government Conference in London in June 1979. The conception of the SCLV as a broad alliance of tendencies and individuals, as a campaign rather than a revolutionary sect with an outward-looking approach to involving new people in the paper and campaign activity and with the platform as a guide rather than as a catechism has now been rejected.

This conception which enabled us to organise the successful local government conference attended by 230 activists from the London region with representation from 30 CLPs etc, interventions at the Party and TUC conferences, gain wider sponsorship and created a credible image for the campaign with a potential for growth has now been junked in favour of a more tightly-knit organisation, with a hard-line intransigent face.

The problem is one of confusing a campaign for definite aims — the defeat of the right wing in the Labour Party and the creation of a broad socialist alliance — with the functions of a Marxist tendency which has a wider mandate based on programmatic and strategic considerations for achieving socialism. A campaign is by definition an *alliance*, and whilst it requires guidelines for its activity, should not be

organised or directed by the tighter 'higher-level-of-agreement' prescriptions that bind together a revolutionary tendency.

Many leading SCLV activists seem to be motivated by the view that we're not so much a campaign, more a finished revolutionary grouping imbued with the idea that it has all the political answers while the rest of the left wanders about clueless, waiting for us to rope them in.

We believe that in adopting such a conception, the SCLV is unlikely to attract the many unaligned socialists in the party or outside or involve in the campaign the activists in the Institute for Workers' Control, Independent Labour Publications, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee and Tribune supporters, Campaign for Labour Party Democracy workers and the like.

Well before the recall conference it was evident that supporters of Workers' Action were working to change the SCLV into a much harder, tighter, more exclusive set-up. The organisation of the recall conference along narrower lines, for example, the refusal to agree to send open delegate invitations to CLPs and other organisations not sponsoring SCLV, the issuing of Supporters' Cards before a conference decision (we are not opposed to the idea in principle), the creation of 'Socialist

Organiser' groups even where other similar and usually broader forums existed (e.g. Islington) and so on. Whilst motivated by a desire to cement existing supporters, it had the effect of closing doors to potential supporters. The most damaging decision was the conference rejection of the Hackney proposal that no tendency should have a majority on the Steering Committee, both de jure and de facto; thus marginalising the vital tension and premium on winning others to particular views that gave the campaign strength in its early days. At the very time that the campaign should be proving itself as a genuine, non-dogmatic alliance of tendencies and individuals and creating a democratic climate capable of attracting Labour Party militants trying to tackle the right, a single — though important — tendency in the SCLV sees fit to assert its own politics.

The conference refused to accept the need (proposed by the Overseas Telephones SO group) for a reworking of the platform along less declamatory lines, making it less of a shopping list of slogans and demands and actually explaining out the

aims of the campaign (as the founding statement did) and we have a sectarian, 'holier than thou' attitude emerging. The left must be built 'around our platform and politics'.

On the fight against cuts the Campaign seems to be accepting the view expressed by a speaker that the *main divide* in the movement is not between those prepared or not to fight the cuts but between those who believed local councils should follow a policy of bankruptcy by refusing to raise rates and those who raised rates to maintain and expand jobs and services.

On women's oppression, the successful amendment to the perspectives document blandly called for the 'restructuring and re-orientation of sections of the existing women's movement.' Fortunately such patronising arrogance has not at present marred the work of the Fightback campaign though a political rethink

away from glib formulas of 'for a working class women's movement' is surely necessary.

For a campaign like the SCLV to have any value it must set its sights on the fight against the right wing within our movement and seek to organise on the left in a patient and non-sectarian manner. Already a number of individual supporters have withdrawn to direct their abilities elsewhere. Can the SCLV return to its original conceptions and recoup the ground that has been lost? Some of us hope so, but the onus is on those conference elected to reassess their direction before it is too late.

light of the 'power' and 'broad labour movement influence' of Lambeth Labour group?

The SCLV conference gave a majority to the broader class-struggle perspective — against those who wanted to veer away from the SCLV's original politics. It also established a flexible, open structure in which comrades with a different emphasis and different priorities can work.

Mike Davis and his co-thinkers have not actually been deprived of any valid minority rights.

All their objections come down to the fact that they are not the dominant majority!

There is a curious parallel — with all the necessary qualifications granted — with the protests of the right wing in the Labour Party against the left's majority on the National Executive Committee and the Inquiry... the same protests about the need for a 'broad church', the same assumed concern for anonymous unaffiliated individuals who are going to be put off by the left's extremism, the same wrapping up of political disputes in organisational protests.

The right wing in the Labour Party is trying to appeal over the heads of the Labour conference, of the elected NEC, and of Labour activists, to 'public opinion' and to confused and passive Labour voters. They use popular anti-socialist prejudices. Mike Davis and his co-thinkers are — certainly in effect, if not intentionally — trying to appeal to the general, more or less confused and more or less passive broad left. They use popular anti-revolutionary prejudices, which harm the SCLV as a whole.

In fact, though, they will damage themselves more than the SCLV. These comrades are spokesmen for a tendency which is moving strongly to the right and



which is governed by a strong impulse to divest itself of its one-time revolutionary politics and to accommodate to the 'Left' establishment and the 'powerful' individuals like Ted Knight.

It is not coincidental that they are trying to scandalise the SCLV over their imaginary grievances and in so doing present themselves to the broad non-Marxist left as a 'good SCLV'. Their political trajectory is not only away from the positive work that the SCLV is doing — on their own admission, even where they opposed the initiative, as with the Fightback campaign. It is away from serious left-wing politics altogether towards reformism.

In Britain in 1980 a refurbished reformism is the last thing that the working class needs or can afford to waste time on. It needs a serious, hard left, Marxist movement, rooted in the broad labour movement, including the Labour Party. That is what the SCLV conference decided to try and build in the working class struggles that are now opening up.

Martin Thomas and John O'Mahony reply.

WHICH WAY FOR THE SCLV?

UP UNTIL very recently, Mike Davis and his co-thinkers were citing the *Fightback* campaign as example no.1 of the SCLV's sectarian turn. Now they recognise its success in attracting broad interest. But the loss of their prime piece of evidence doesn't disturb their theory!

What about the secondary evidence for the 'sectarian turn'? Campaigns against the Tories and against the witchhunt in the Labour Party have been agreed *unanimously* by the SCLV Steering Committee in recent months. Equally unanimously, the SCLV has set about preparing a submission for the Inquiry on Labour Party organisation and supported the Labour Committee on Ireland.

In fact, nearly all the SCLV's recent decisions on campaigning have been unanimous. Not much sign of a sectarian carve-up there.

Mike Davis and his co-thinkers disagree with the SCLV's policy against rate rises (and that gave rise to the only recent divided vote on SCLV activity, where two comrades — against 18 — opposed an SCLV appeal for labour movement support for no cuts and no rate rises this spring). But the majority

policy was not only in the original platform of the SCLV but also endorsed after democratic debate at the SCLV Conference last November.

That's democracy, not sectarianism. Moreover, the minority favouring rate rises have had, and still have full freedom to argue their views, including in the columns of *Socialist Organiser*.

There's no evidence here that the SCLV is no longer a 'broad alliance'. Not only on rate rises, but also on other issues, critics of SCLV policy have been able to air their views repeatedly in *Socialist Organiser*... Indeed writing fanciful polemics against supposed sectarian turns now seems to be some comrades' main contribution to the SCLV!

The complaints about conference organisation stand up no better than the rest. How is it sectarian to say that SCLV policy should be decided by people and organisations which support SCLV at least to the minimal extent of taking out a supporter's card or sponsoring the campaign, rather than by anyone who happens to turn up on the day? In any case, the conference arrangements were — after long discussions — agreed *unanimously* by the old Steering Committee, including Mike Davis and Geoff Bender!

Did the conference decisions show the majority was junking the original idea of

the SCLV? We reaffirmed the SCLV's original platform (with updating amendments), against a move to replace it by an unstated alternative (i.e. something that was not made available by its advocates for conference decision one way or the other). And we rejected a resolution from West London which would have effectively scrapped the platform altogether.

Julian Wells from West London was very clear when he moved the resolution whose defeat Mike Davis and Geoff Bender so much regret. The SCLV should be an open organisation for debate, he said. 'We want a formulation which would include all the disparate elements who voted for the resolution on party democracy.'

'The line should be drawn between us and people like Shirley Williams and Roy Hattersley'. Within that broad left spectrum, 'the LCC has a more coherent and sharply defined view — one that we in West London would agree with fairly closely.'

The main issue here is the class struggle, internationalist politics on which the SCLV was founded, versus the parliamentary, nationalist politics of the LCC. And to the extent that it is an organisational issue, it is an issue of campaign versus discussion forum, rather than broad alliance versus sect.

Mike Davis and Geoff Bender don't actually agree with most of the political ideas put by Julian Wells. Yet they make themselves spokesmen for them in their letter. The reason for that is that they are indulging —

and not very fastidiously — in a dead-end factionalism that refuses to disarm even when events like the development of the Fightback show their factionalism to be unfounded. It is the dead-end factionalists who are guilty of 'sectarian arrogance', not the SCLV.

No: Mike Davis' theory about the SCLV's organisational sectarianism does not stand up. What the dispute is actually about is *politics*. Since the general election, many Labour politicians who were quite tame during the period of Labour government have suddenly been talking left. Left-wing activity focused on wheeling and dealing around official positions in the labour movement has been given a boost.

There is a tension in the SCLV between that focus and a broader class-struggle perspective, centred on campaigning in the factories and on the streets. The rate rises issue sums it up very well: do we look for alternatives for Labour councillors trying to manage the system or for policies to mobilise anti-Tory mass action?

When Lambeth Council leader Ted Knight makes rousing speeches against the cuts (last June), and then a few weeks later gives a lead for every right-wing and fake left council by proposing cuts, do we draw any conclusions? Do we learn any lessons about the real value of the policy of 'rate rises instead of cuts to gain time for a fight', which Lambeth was supposed to be the model for? Do we draw conclusions now when Ted Knight follows up a battle to get the Lambeth Labour movement to agree to rate rises by also pushing through rent rises and cuts in growth?

Do we learn the lesson of the need for an independent campaigning policy? Or do we go on fluttering like moths around the illusory

London Labour challenges education cuts

by KEN LIVINGSTONE
GLC member for Hackney North

THE DECISION of the Labour-controlled Inner London Education Authority to give in to government pressure and make a £21 million (4.2%) cut in next year's budget will be debated at the Greater London Labour Party conference on 2nd March.

The Regional Executive committee is taking the unprecedented position of asking the conference to reject the annual report of the ILEA Labour Group on the grounds that the report justifies the cuts, labels those Labour members who stood by Labour Party policy, and makes several anti-trade union comments, even going so far as to blame the unions for the advent

of the Thatcher government. In actual fact, relations between the Labour Group at County Hall and the Greater London Labour Party now make the NEC/PLP struggle look positively comradely.

Things started to go wrong when the Labour leadership prepared a full list of cuts totalling £26 million (5%) back in September 1979. These were rejected in the ILEA meeting by a back-bench revolt, and immediately members came under pressure from their GMCs and the Regional Executive when they saw the publicity which accompanied the rejection of the cuts.

Contempt

Pressure built up, with many members being instructed to vote against the cuts and the Regional Executive asked the Labour

Group to listen to a deputation. Although this request was granted, many councillors treated the delegation with open contempt, spoke throughout their presentation, and then instructed them to leave before the Group took its decision.

Threat

In the end, the Labour leadership accepted a small reduction in the package of cuts, and forced them through by the threat of resignation if the cuts were rejected. They also stated that they would not support any alternative Labour administration which did not make cuts.

Thus the Labour leadership which had justified the cuts on the basis that otherwise the "government will abolish the ILEA" ended up threatening to terminate Labour control themselves.

The final package of cuts make their impact by adding to the dole queues — over 1000 jobs go in under 12 months, and to make the situation worse, student grants are cut, which will also mean more unemployment. Almost every section of the education service gets some level of cut, higher education in particular.

The scale of the cuts forced one third of the Labour Group to vote against them or to abstain, but with the Tories voting solidly with the Labour front bench they went through by 49 to 8.

Record

Make sure you raise the voting record of your ILEA member at the next GMC, and if s/he voted for cuts, don't forget reselection for the GLC elections starts in May!

An appeal Stand up to the Tories

AN appeal for a real fight against the cuts by local authorities issued initially by Labour councillors in Lothian, Hackney and Lambeth is now gaining wider support. Socialist Organiser's last Editorial Board decided to issue the appeal as a leaflet and it will be ready soon. However, signatures are still needed to help show the widespread feeling that Labour councils should start standing up to the Tories and stop acting as their agents.

IN February local authorities will have to prepare a budget for the coming year. They will draw up their budgets under the threat of the Tory axe.

The Tories are trying to force the councils to implement the cuts. They are pushing a bill through Parliament which will mean that councils that put up rates in order to offset the cuts will be punished by deductions from the Rate Support Grant.

Rate rises are not a way round the cuts. They hit workers in council housing with the same effect as an increase in rents. They hit workers and middle class people with their own homes, who are already hit by the massive increase in the cost of mortgages.

And to offset the cuts, rate rises would have to be impossibly large. So it is not a question of rate rises or cuts, but rate rises and cuts.

And a fight with the Tories over the right of councils to put up the rates would be a fight on territory not of our own choosing. It is difficult to mobilise people to support your right to cut their living standards!

We believe Labour councils should stand up now to the Tory attacks. They should refuse to implement the cuts, and they should refuse to put up the rates.

That means a fight against the Tories. It means not thinking that Labour councils can dodge round the Tory attacks, but mobilising the organised labour movement to stop the Tories in their tracks. We need to build support in the trade unions for councils who take a stand against the cuts, and pledges of action in the event of the Tories moving against them.

We ask you to put the following resolution to your trade union/Labour Party branch to be sent to Labour regional and District parties: 'We call on Labour councillors to refuse to implement the Tory cuts, and to refuse to put up rates to offset the effect of the cuts. We pledge our support to the council in taking this stand, and pledge our full support in the event of the Tories trying to take punitive action against councillors.'

Jimmy Burnett, John Mulvey, Neil Lindsay (Lothian Regional Council), Ron Brown (MP for Leith), Des Loughney (Secretary, Edinburgh Trades Council), Alex Wood (Labour Party Scottish Executive), Eleanor McLoughlin (Edinburgh District Council), Patrick Kodikara, John Sweeney (Hackney Council), Jenny Morris (Islington Council), James Ryan (Convenor, Islington Campaign against the Cuts), Derek Robinson (Convenor, BL Longbridge), Dave Emery (Birmingham City Council), Jack Gould (Secretary, Coventry Trades Council), Allen Torrance, Bob Davies, Carolyn Taylor, Paul Snell, Sandra Tully (Stewards, Coventry NALGO), Pete McLaren (Vice Chair, Coventry NE CLP), Dave Nellist (Chairman, Coventry SE CLP and APEX B59 branch secretary), Ann Coffey (Chair, TGWU (Club One) branch, Coventry), Richard Paine (APEX Rep, GEC Telecomms Weekly Branch), Rob McGonigle (ASTMS Rep, GEC Telecomms and Sec. Coventry NE LPYS), Eddie McCluskey (Senior Shop Steward, TGWU, Talbot, Stoke), Roger Kline (Vice-President, Coventry Trades Council), Mohammed Iqbal (Sec. Coventry SE CLP), Malcolm Marshall (Basingstoke Borough Council), Alistair Jamieson (Secretary, Basingstoke Trades Council), Margaret Gleeson (Secretary, Basingstoke LPYS), Stephen Corbishley (CPSA NEC). (All in personal capacity).

Lambeth's year ends in a sell-out

by BILL BOWRING

1979 WAS the year of Lambeth Council. There was a bad start in May; but readers may recall Ted Knight's remark (SO supplement): "We made the cuts to show what they will mean". So from July onwards, the Lambeth Labour councillors made a stand.

The full programme would be carried out — though not without a little gentle pressure from the Labour Parties and the Unions. There would be a deficit at the end of the year, but that would be a small price to pay for leading the fight against Heseltine's axe. And on November 7th, 20,000 demonstrated through Lambeth to show their solidarity.

In the past few months, the Labour Parties have been deciding the strategy for 1980. As in the pages of Socialist Organiser, the debate has centred around the question of whether cuts should be avoided by raising the rates. In Lambeth, we were told that a 56% rate increase would be needed to carry out the programme, without raising rents.

Some of us who felt strongly that such an increase would amount to fighting the cuts by cutting the living standards of the working class, and thus indirectly carrying out Tory policy believed that Labour Councillors should mobilise a movement to challenge the Government — on the principled platform of no cuts and no rate increases.

On my own GMC (Norwood CLP) we lost — by 33 votes to 21. Ted Knight won a majority

to his proposal that "the Lambeth Labour Group of Councillors should refuse to make any cuts in services or jobs, and should levy the necessary rate" to carry out such a policy. Streatham GMC carried a proposal for cuts; Lambeth Central supported Ted Knight; Vauxhall couldn't make up its mind — though one ward mandated its councillors to a no cuts/no rates position.

And so we expected a battle royal in the Labour groups between a largish group of right wingers in favour of cuts; and Ted Knight and his supporters for the 56%. A few councillors would support no cuts/no rates.

On Saturday 16th February the Labour Group met, and debated for 5 hours. First, there were several surprises. There was no deficit! Somehow Lambeth would end the year £9,000 in the black.

Next, the Council officers had warned that not to increase council house rents would mean certain surcharge. So Ted Knight told us that there would be a free vote. He would make no recommendation. Members' consciences would decide.

Finally, Ted Knight was recommending that programmed schemes for 1980-81 be "revised" to give a saving of £2,130,000. Not a cut, of course! Among other projects, Environmental Improvements, a One O'Clock Club, Maintenance Depot and Adventure Playground, street lighting and a Civic Amenity site would be "revised", and two leisure centres would be trimmed down to swimming pools only.

The rents debate came first. Ted Knight voted for a rent increase — of £1 per

week. Ten of us voted against any rent increase. Finally, by 22 votes to 18, an average increase of £1.50 per week from April was chosen, saving £2,157,000.

Many right wingers, who had been holding out for cuts to achieve a rate increase of less than 46%, were appeased. After disappearing outside the council chamber, calculator in hand, with some of them, Ted Knight won a substantial majority for a rate increase of 49.4%.

Some questions arise. Will a "wall" of inner city councils, united by high rate increases (and some cuts), be able to defy Heseltine and force him to withdraw his penalties in November? Will such a united front be able to mobilise a real mass movement against the Tories? Will such a mass movement include Lambeth tenants, faced with increases in April of £3 to £4 per week? And what will Lambeth councillors do next time a surcharge is threatened?

There are some lessons to be learned. For decades, the Labour movement sought to carry out reforms within capitalism, and to pay for such reforms by raising taxes. Taxes, including rates, have been seen as redistributive and therefore acceptable. It has been axiomatic that Labour should, whenever possible, hang on to power, locally and nationally, so as at least to mitigate the effects of the attacks of the class enemy on what has been gained.

So with the last Labour Government in the face of the IMF demands; so now with Lambeth Council. And, as in Lambeth, it is likely that

the Unions will support such a strategy, rather than risk an immediate threat to jobs and conditions.

Unfortunately for some in the Labour Party, what is now posed is the question of power. The crisis of capitalism worldwide, intensified in Britain by the corruption and decadence of the native capitalists and their desperate policies of repression and mass unemployment, of making the working class pay for the crisis, means that for Labour it is no longer a matter of defending a corner and hoping for better times (in 1984?). The Government must be challenged politically.

Councillors (and union leaders) must not be party to implementing Tory policies.

For one or more Councils to break the law in the present crisis would have qualitatively greater consequences than Clay Cross or Poplar. If politics can now be brought into the Labour movement locally and nationally (21 votes is a start), then there is some prospect of ending Toryism once and for all.

The most pernicious doctrine is that being peddled by Roy Hattersley and his agents: that what is at stake is the "independence" of local authorities — their right to raise rates, or to delay the sale of council houses. He expects to win some allies from Tory urban councils. But if a future Labour government is faced with another Tameside (or, heaven forbid, a Tory Lambeth with a Tory Ted Knight), wouldn't we expect some firmness, some decisive action? The liberals should join the Liberal Party

Hackney: fighting for accountability

by JOHN SWEENEY

LIKE COMRADES in other parties, the left in Hackney has been divided as to the best method of resisting the cuts in public expenditure. The main decision, as in many other parties, is between those who advocate massive rate increases to safeguard jobs and services, and those who feel that rate rises, in these circumstances, are cuts, and so should not be implemented.

But what is agreed by both sides is the need for a council-led campaign against the policies of central government, involving workers, council tenants and residents of the Borough.

Cynical

It is readily understood by all sections of the left that any real resistance to the capitalist policies of central government must have the support of the council workers and residents of the Borough.

So far, the leadership of Hackney Council has deliberately avoided mounting such a campaign, and instead has retreated behind the closed doors of the Town Hall, only emerging to tell the Labour Group what cuts "had to be implemented".

The result of this "managing the cuts" has been the cynical abandonment of the pledges contained in the Manifesto on which the present Hackney Council was elected.

In this manifesto, we promised no rent increases during periods of low wages — now the intention is to increase

rents by 25% despite evidence that shows Hackney to have the lowest income per family in the whole of London. We also promised a housing programme to meet people's needs — instead the proposal is to cut back on an already inadequate programme.

Sponsor

The same under-fives provision, where again we promised expansion and are now cutting back to the extent of keeping closed three newly built day nurseries.

All these proposals for cuts have been formulated without any consultation with the workers and people of the Borough, who are the ones most affected by the cuts.

In response to this 'siege mentality' of Hackney Council's leadership, the Broad Left councillors called a special meeting to which all members of the Labour Party who were willing to defend the council manifesto and to help organise a fightback against the Tories were invited.

A resolution was passed calling upon the three Hackney

Labour parties to sponsor and help convene, along with the local Trades Council, a special conference to organise a co-ordinated fightback against the cuts.

We felt that this conference should draw together the grass roots organisations within the Borough, such as community groups and tenants' associations, along with the various strands of the labour movement, to put pressure on the council leadership to see itself as accountable to the people of the Borough, and not just managers of the local state.

by MICK WOODS

STEEL STRIKE

Political from day one

WHEN we entered the ISTC Division No3 HQ in Doncaster Road last Wednesday morning, we found the front garden covered in copies of a publication called *Hadfield News*. Who's been littering Rotherham, we thought? Examining the publication (whose heading looks suspiciously like *NF News* typeface) we found it was a collection of articles from the more rabid end of the bosses' press about Anarchy on the streets, a few pictures of mass pickets and a cartoon of Arthur Scargill dressed to kill in jackboots and brown shirt. Odd to relate, it had no printers' address on it — thereby rendering it illegal. That, plus littering, which carries a hefty fine in South Yorkshire! Prosecution is considered unlikely.

Upset

Entering Edgumbe House, we were quickly guided to a room holding a colour telly and 12 to 15 strikers who were watching the local news report of the Hadfield secretaries who'd been sent up to Barnsley in two coaches (source of funds for coaches not specified) to picket Arthur Scargill who'd cunningly turned up early, and came out and invited them in for a cup of coffee and a chat. Confused, and obviously rather upset, they went in, and shot out two minutes later even more confused. The strikers in the TV room made appropriate comments about scabs and idiots. After this upset, the ladies had then returned via Doncaster Road and scattered their little litho-printed broadsheets over

the garden.

After the news, which had included film of police beating up pickets at Sheerness, and the AUEW in Longbridge stabbing Robbo in the back — "silly bastards" — we got talking to the strikers.

"It is a bit quiet today. Mind you, we've sent 850 down to Sheerness from South Yorkshire. Nothing's happening around here since we shut down Hadfields", said a worker wearing a sticker saying 'The Hadfields Massacre, 14.2.80 We were there'.

On the wall were posters brought over from French and German unions. One picket wore an I.G. Metall (German Steelworkers' Union) badge produced during their historic strike for 35 hours a year ago. Pictures of this strike mixed with photos from the picket at Hadfields. Posters from Longwy — the Lorraine steelworks which fought

Giscard's closure plans with mass demonstrations and occupations. Last week there was a girl photographer at Hadfields recording the steel strike for the Dutch Steelworkers' Union.

They talk about subsidies given to steel on the continent and the effects of US

import controls on exports. In the UK, steel is subsidised by £5 per tonne. In France it is £32 per tonne; Italy £20; Germany £22. "It's daft — they're trying to carve up our industry, destroy it — it's not even economic, it's political. That's why we've been political from day one".

Papers

This is shown by the piles of left wing papers on the tables: *Socialist Worker*, *Workers Action*, *Newsline*, *Socialist Organiser*, leaflets, copies of *Yorkshire Miner*, *Real Steel News*, *Claimants' Union*. "We read the lot — I don't say we understand half of it but we read it..."

Going downstairs for a cup of coffee with a lad, we talked about the idea of a General Strike. "Good idea... it was on the cards after the Denning judgement but it's gone off the boil a bit now. Situation could change. The trouble is that the TUC and the ISTC leadership are scared shitless of upping the ante. We've had to put 'em on the straight and narrow a couple of times

already with this Hadfields business, when they gave them the dispensation..."

Leaving Edgumbe House, loaded with leaflets and other information we headed back to Sheffield. Along Sheffield Road there were about 15 picket lines, most of which were quite willing to talk once they discovered we weren't WRP members, who have the habit of descending on picket lines and giving lectures to pickets about the police, getting on people's nerves.

There wasn't a lot happening on most of the picket lines, but at Thomas Wards, trucks with their names blacked out had been driving through the picket lines without stopping. The management laid off their own drivers a fortnight ago and since then they've been calling in cowboys to move supplies for them.

The Wards' drivers' shop steward (URTU) is trying to get the loaders pulled out on strike by local officials.

The day before, a big low-loader with a boiler on it had been stopped at the picket line. The driver refused to cross, though he told the

pickets, "I'll be looking for another job tomorrow". A cowboy was sent all the way from Leeds to cross the picket line.

The firm in that case was Kelsalls of Leeds. Local firms such as Yendors, Wilson's of Tinsley, RDB Freight lines, have been breaking picket lines, but probably none more determinedly than the companies owned by Sid and Wilf Harrison. A driver from the first got his name taken after almost putting a copper into a brazier while charging out of Hadfields No4 Gate.

Numbers

A lot of firms are covering their names, but pickets are taking registration numbers and will refuse to handle any of their goods in future.

The strike in South Yorkshire is solid and morale is high, despite the local papers' daily headlines about 'revolts' in Firth Brown's and other firms. The indication of the mood of the strikers is summed up by this poem on the wall at Edgumbe House.

THE DENNING INJUNCTION

Geoff and Tommy, William too
We're going to lock you up —
It's off to jail with you
If you don't do what Denning says —
Kow-tow, kiss-me-clutch
And always answer — "Yes".

We'll put you in a nasty jail —
And all the other Union men
Will weep and wail.
And when those men are scared enough,
We'll tighten up our stranglehold —
And call your bluff.

That's what they tell us, one and all,
But what they do not know is:
We will have a ball,
We'll let them know their place in life
And then we all shall see how much
They like strife.

In Scargill's footsteps, Paine and Wilkes,
We'll make the whole Judiciary
To stuff their 'Silks'.
And when their power is truly rent,
We're going to pay them off —
Mind — only 2 per cent!



Lord Denning

It's jobs as well as pay

"THIS STRIKE isn't just about pay for me and all the others at Whiteheads (in Newport). It's about our jobs".

A steel picket from South Wales explained to *Socialist Organiser* that BSC's cuts would mean 50,000 jobs going in steel and other industries in South Wales alone. He went on: "I've worked in steel for the last 12 years. What else do I know?"

"We've got to win on jobs too, or I'll be out of a job in August. If the steel mills are closed in South Wales, there'll be nothing left but ghost towns. Sirs must declare himself for jobs too".

The strike committees at Llanwern and Port Talbot and the South Wales district committee of the NUB have announced that they now consider the steel strike to be for jobs as well as pay. If the pay claim is won, they will stay out until the closures have been reversed too.

If the unions nationally do not take up the issue of jobs now, then there is the danger that the unity forged during the present struggle will be lost. For years, the fight against steel closures has been fragmented and consequently weakened. The demands were 'Save Corby', or 'Save Shotton', and steel workers were competing with each other over which plant was the most 'viable'.

That splintering of the fight has been overcome by the present strike. Steelworkers have been drawn together on the pay claim, and must use that unity to nail the Tories and the BSC bosses on jobs too.

If they let them off the hook now, when they have the power of mass mobilisation, how will they ever beat the bosses on jobs later?

The risk is that a deal on pay alone could split the steel-



workers region by region. Teesside and South Yorkshire do not face big job cuts immediately. In Shotton and Corby, it seems, many workers feel the fight for their jobs is already lost (a lot of them are due not to restart work at all after the strike), and they are fighting for a big rise for those left in the industry as a way of getting their own back on the BSC bosses — as their last 'go' at BSC.

In Consett, some workers, though not all, think they can fight for their jobs best as a 'special case', not as part of a national struggle.

But the steel strike can win on jobs, too. The massive response from the Welsh labour movement for the January 28 strike and demonstration; the calls for a general strike from the Wales TUC; and the support the steel strikers have had on the picket lines from the miners, engineers and other workers, all show that the will to fight is there.

The steel union leaders must insist on saving the jobs as well as winning the pay rise. And the TUC must organise for a general strike to stop the Tory job cuts.

JO THWAITES

HOW COVENTRY BACKED THE STEEL STRIKE

WONDERING what we could do in Coventry — with no steel works near, and no flying pickets in the area — to help the steel strike, we organised a meeting with a steelworker at short notice. Too short notice — it was not well attended.

But we did get an address of pickets from Corby, and started looking for labour movement meetings to get them along to.

Through the Labour Party, we heard that the Talbot Stoke plant shop stewards' committee were getting an ISTC full-timer along to speak at a meeting on new technology. We invited some pickets to come too.

It was the first meeting they had come to, and since it was over 120 strong, they were quite taken aback. 260-odd from the meeting, plus £100 from shop stewards' committee funds, made it a useful trip for the pickets.

Perhaps more useful was that the pickets, who were already learning how to fight, were introducing to the much more experienced Coventry

labour movement. Where are your collection sheets? letters to union branches? and, more often: Will you come back to speak to my branch?

They have been back several times since, collecting £250 plus expenses from ASTMS GEC, £100 from Massey Ferguson, and similar amounts from other branches.

A danger with donations is that the money often does not get to the strikers. The ISTC nationally is sitting on a vast nest-egg and some cheques are lying out of reach in union offices inside the steel plants themselves.

That's bad enough, and in Corby there is also a problem of ISTC and NUB disunity. ISTC money is restricted to ISTC members. The NUB, who feed anyone on a picket line or any family in hardship, were the ones who came to Coventry.

Send money to the NUB: Steve Crooks [secretary], 2 Boon Walk, Corby, Northamptonshire.

ROB MCGONIGLE

TUC SABOTAGES WALES GENERAL STRIKE

by GEOFF WILLIAMS

THE LACK OF a real lead from either the British or the Welsh TUC resulted at the end of February in a massive vote by South Wales miners against striking for jobs. At pit-head meetings miners voted by 22,000 to 4,000 to reject the South Wales executive's call for an all-out strike from Monday 25th February against the steel closures. Only eight lodg-

es [branches] had a majority in favour of strike action.

As the results of the meetings came in last week, there were reports by NUM officials of widespread interference by Coal Board officials and managers. In more than a few pits, rumours and false reports were spread, claiming that neighbouring pits had voted against strike action before any votes had taken place.

But lack of leadership by the TUC was undoubtedly the crucial factor behind the voting. Many miners voted against going it alone — they

wanted joint action with other unions in South Wales and other NUM areas.

January 21st was originally set to be the start of an all-out strike in Wales. The Welsh TUC, under pressure from Len Murray, backed down and called a 'day of action' on January 28th instead. All-out action was postponed to March 10th.

Now George Wright, secretary of the Wales TUC, has been busy sabotaging the strike movement by trying to postpone it yet again, in response to new pressure from

Len Murray. A Welsh TUC conference planned for February 27 has been put off. This cowardice sapped the confidence of the South Wales miners, who eventually found themselves faced with the prospect of starting a general strike on their own, with no support from the TUC.

As soon as they heard of the miners' decision, Newport dockers decided, in protest at the vote, to begin unloading 20,000 tons of US coking coal from the Jezera, blacked since before Christmas.

Although solidarity with the

steelworkers has suffered a setback with this vote, the steelworkers themselves are determined to stay out against the closures as well as for pay. Strike committees at Port Talbot and Llanwern will be meeting to decide whether to picket the pits.

And South Wales trade unionists must keep up their demands on the Wales TUC. A general strike must be not only declared but ORGANISED FOR.

The Welsh TUC must call a conference of delegates from union branches and shop

stewards' committees to discuss how best to explain the issues and mobilise the membership. Instead of giving in to Len Murray's pressure, it should send out delegations to win support from British trade unionists at rank and file level.

And we cannot afford to wait for the Welsh TUC to act. Labour Parties and Trades Councils can start work now on organising local conferences to discuss the perspective of a general strike, and plan for all-out action on May 14th and immediate solidarity with the steelworkers.

HOW THE TORIES WILL WRECK DIRECT LABOUR

by PAUL
LOWENBERG

THE LABOUR movement and local activists are beginning to recognise the fundamental threat posed by the Tories' Local Government Planning and Land Bill. What is at stake is a principle which the working class has continually fought to defend and extend: the provision of services based on need rather than on principles of profit or ability to pay.

Most of the political debate and opposition has focused on the new rate support grant system and controls of capital spending; the repeal of the Community Land Act and powers to force the sale of public land; and the setting up of Urban Development Corporations.

However, Part III of the Bill will impose fundamental changes in the organisation of Direct Labour departments, and in its financial and accounting procedures. Because the Tory proposals take a highly technical form, and because of the contradictory policies of the last Labour Government towards DLOs, there is confusion about the impact and threat of the new requirements and controls. Indeed, the Tories have been able to declare that "they are confident that they are on common ground with the previous administration" in this DLO legislation.

In part this is true: the assumptions which underlie both the previous Labour Party

proposals, as expressed in 'Building Britain's future' and the DoE Working Party 'Report on Direct Labour Organisations', and the Tory Bill, are broadly similar — tendering, profit-making and "competition" are accepted as the mark of "efficiency" and "value for money".

The objects of the two parties however were fundamentally different — the Labour Party was committed to an expansion of direct labour, but the method proposed was misguided and inconsistent. The Tories, on the other hand, seek to curtail and eventually to close down DLOs. The Bill opens the door still further for private contractors to dictate the terms of local authority building and

to set up DLOs to lose.

There are four key points in the Tory Bill. DLOs must:

■ win virtually all of their work (new building, modernisation of repair and maintenance) by tender against at least 3 private contractors;

■ keep separate trading accounts (that is, accounts which are designed to show financial profits or loss on operations) for four different types of local authority building work;

■ produce these accounts as public documents, to serve as their mechanism of accountability;

■ therefore, show that they are making profits to prove their worth.

If any of these requirements are not met, or if the Environment Secretary, for any other reason (which need not be

publicly stated) is dissatisfied with the record or performance of a DLO, s/he has the power to close down the DLO in part or in whole.

The contracting system has shown itself to be exceedingly wasteful. Not only does it require unnecessary administration to operate, but, far from assuring high quality building work at a fair price, it reproduces all the worst elements in the construction industry — price-rigging, skimming on work, sub-contracting and the use of the lump, dangerous work conditions, casualisation of the workforce, and massive profits for some amidst bankruptcy for others.

Yet it is the contracting system which provides private contractors with their work

and tendering strategies which largely dictate their profitability. Profits are no more a measure of building "efficiency" than "fair competition" and tendering are evidence of lower building costs. To maintain that accountability is achieved and performance measured in DLOs by tendering and profitability is to transform the whole principle upon which DLOs were initially created and still function — building for need and to the requirements of local authority spending committees would be replaced by contractors' principles of building for profit.

As socialists, this is a crucial struggle for us: direct labour has demonstrated the practical alternative to the

contracting system. The building industry need not be based on contracting and profit-making.

Direct labour can meet the local authority building requirements within the context of public accountability. Actual costs can be examined in the context of:

- a planned building programme;
- the phasing of such a programme;
- the actual time required to complete specific types of work;
- the quality of work and of working conditions;
- what tenants want, and whether they like what is done and how it is done.

For this reason, the Tories are out to break direct labour and to hand virtually all local authority building work to contractors.

Direct labour is a test case for the running down of local authority services, for forcing higher costs and private provision of what is left, and for contracting out virtually every sphere of local authority work.

Not only are hundreds of thousands of council workers' jobs at stake, as are the services they provide, but so is the future of a building service for council tenants. Building workers and their unions, tenants, the labour movement as a whole, are under attack by the Tory direct labour proposals.

A concentrated fightback is the key to the future of local authority building, and of council housing.



**Tory building bosses
Joseph and Rippon —
Joseph is head of Bovis
and Gilbert Ash;
Rippon is one of Cubitt's
bosses.**



ON Wednesday February 20 workers at BL's Longbridge voted by a big majority against the call by the AUEW to strike for the reinstatement of convenor Derek Robinson, sacked last November 19. The Tories rejoiced, claiming the tide had turned against trade union militancy. But BL bosses and the Tories have not heard the last from the Longbridge workers. Socialist Organiser discussed the situation with four socialists working at Longbridge.

AUEW steward Pete Leyden said, "It was a major setback."

"My first reaction was that the shop floor don't deserve to have a union at all at Longbridge! But the reason they voted that way was mainly the role of the AUEW Executive."

Adrian Chadwick (TGWU) said: "The response was: 'His own union has sold him out, so why should we fight now?'. And Angus McDougall (TGWU) commented, "They said, 'We lost money going out before Christmas over him, and it was the AUEW who sent us back. Now they're telling us to come out again...'"

"The AUEW Executive's role has been disgusting", said Pete Leyden. "They sabotaged the strike last November, had an inquiry into whether Derek Robinson was sacked unfairly,

and took three months to find that he was innocent."

"Then Terry Duffy and Ken Cure said they would not discipline anyone who crossed an official picket line — which is against the rules of our union."

Strong

"The back-stabbing AUEW Executive lost us our convenor, and they have put the organisation in Longbridge back 30 years. The shop floor will come to realise that in the coming months."

Has this setback sunk the prospects of action over pay, against the BL bosses' "offer" of 5% and 92 pages of strings?

TGWU steward Jim Denham said: "It hasn't helped, but the press and the government have been reading too much into it, saying there's no militancy. Even at the mass meeting there were people shouting that they wanted to come out on wages, but not over Robinson."

"We had expected that and raised the demand that the two issues should be linked."

"The prospects for action over wages are still pretty good although a certain amount of demoralisation has set in, mainly among the militants. Among the mass of the workers there is still a very, very strong feeling on wages."

So a lot of the workers don't see any contradiction between being against a strike over Robinson and in favour of a strike over

wages?

"That's right", said Angus McDougall. "The militants see the contradiction. But [Grenville] Hawley [the T&G official] and the JNC [negotiating committee] are much bigger problems as far as the wages are concerned than the Robinson affair."

"Though the Robinson affair", said Jim Denham, "has given Hawley and the JNC an excuse to sell out."

"The future does not look good", said Pete Leyden, "but with the coming struggle over wages we may be able to build a strong

organisation across the whole of BL and make the union leadership accountable to the shop floor."

Will BL follow up the Robinson sacking with a bigger purge of militants?

Jim Denham replied: "Not immediately, I think. But in the long run it has opened the way for militants to be weeded out."

What about the theory that the Longbridge vote showed a gap developing between the stewards and the membership?

"I wouldn't put it like that", said Jim Denham. "Probably, had they not been stewards, a lot of the

in an impossible position by the AUEW Executive."

"But the vote has been a shock for the Communist Party [which has had the leading political influence on the Longbridge stewards' committee]. I can remember a CP steward saying to me: 'We don't want the members too well informed. We want them to come out when we say out, and not when we say not.'"

"Well, that idea is pretty well finished now. Even CPers are saying, 'We were wrong, we've got to get back on the shop floor and start building from the rank and file'. Jack Adams, who is tipped as Robinson's successor, is saying, 'Participation was the greatest mistake we ever made'."

"Whether or not they're capable of reorienting and going back to the rank and file, I don't know."

"The main villain of the piece is the AUEW Executive. But a secondary factor that made it easier for them and the management to do what they did was the fact that Robinson was not in touch with the shop floor."

"Even during the campaign for his reinstatement, that showed. Robinson was going round the country, trying to get support from people like Leslie Huckfield [a local Labour MP] — not with that, but it was at the expense of doing anything in Longbridge."

"And the CP opposed the Engineers' Charter campaign to unseat the AUEW Executive because they didn't want to alienate the Executive. They were

desperate to make friends in high places, at the expense of trying to build up support on the shop floor."

Pete Leyden added: "When they supported the participation set-up and the Ryder plan, the CP was able to argue a policy of expansion and more investment — but in return the shop floor had to accept speed-up and job loss!"

Market

"The result was that thousands of jobs were lost, the participation set-up took all the best stewards away from the shop floor, and the organisation was weakened."

"Then the first Edwardes plan was supported by Robinson and the CP. In fact, at the senior stewards' meeting, they gave Edwardes a standing ovation."

"When Edwardes brought out his second plan, Robinson saw that he was doing a hatchet job. But the CP was still arguing the same sort of line: expansion to save jobs. They called for import controls, in other words exporting our unemployment to other countries, which in turn would only mean more job losses in this country."

"The latest forecast is that there will be over a quarter of a million less cars sold in 1980, and with BL having only 15% of the market, there will be more job cuts."

"We should be fighting for work-sharing with no loss of pay, and control of the job."



In December BL workers marched through Birmingham in support of Derek Robinson — the AUEW executive helped sabotage that support.

organisation in Longbridge again.

"Edwardes has been shown the green light with the Longbridge vote, so even with a six-to-four majority against the 5% plus strings package he will try to impose it."

"We'll have to fight over wages, conditions, and jobs. We need to build a strong rank and file organ-

isation. It have voted with the majority themselves. There is a considerable loyalty to the majority of the shop stewards' committee, which in this case kept most of the stewards in line."

"I don't think the vote reflects a big gap between the stewards and the membership. It reflects that fact that the stewards were put

Socialist Organiser

by JO THWAITES

"ANARCHY has won", screeched the Daily Express when Hadfields private steelworks was shut down after the successful picket in Sheffield on February 14.

With the support of the South Yorkshire miners and other local workers, the steel pickets won. The workers at Hadfields voted to come out and that's what the press was so angry about: the picket was successful.

At Sheerness, another major private steelworks where there was scabbing, the bosses and the police did not even try to move steel in past the 1,000 strong picket on February 20, as they knew no lorry could get through.

But the Government and the press, aided by the feebleness of the steel union leadership, have continued to campaign against the effective picketing which could be the key to winning the strike, shrieking about the 'violence and intimidation' on the picket lines.

Violence and intimidation there certainly have been — from police and scabs. A picket arrested in Scotland told *Socialist Organiser*, "There's no doubt in anyone's mind that the police took to heart the statements on picketing made by Tory ministers and the Attorney General. The police have definitely got tougher in their interpretation of the law".

Strathclyde Regional police had arrested five pickets at a steel stockholders in Bellshill as they tried to stop a loaded lorry leaving, and another 25 from a picket of 300 at another branch of the

Steel pickets can beat the Tories

same stockholders in Wishaw, where the police charged the picket line to make way for a convoy of four lorries.

Pickets said the police had obviously got the heavies in. "They were punching and kicking their way in", another picket said. "If you sneezed the wrong way, you got lifted".

The fact that the police were arresting senior branch officials also suggests that the police were making a concerted attempt to smash the picket lines.

Wives

The Tories have also been making as much mileage as they possibly can out of the wives' 'pots and pans' protest at Sheerness, without mentioning a word about the support that the vast majority of steelmen's wives have given the strikers in the rest of the country, or the women steelworkers and wives who have been out on the picket

lines themselves.

On February 19 in Birmingham, police barged into the Labour Club, where flying pickets from all over the country are coordinating their activity in the West Midlands. With vans and dogs waiting outside in the street, they ransacked the offices used by the steelworkers.

Taking up the attack from another angle, the Tories have threatened to withdraw the meagre social security payments to strikers' families (an average of about £4 or £4.50 a week). And Tory backbenchers like John Wheeler (a former assistant prison governor) have come out with demands that 'picket offenders' should be banned from public meetings and demonstrations.

All the fury comes from the fact that effective mass pickets have been the key to every major success of the steel strikers so far, when the rank and file have taken matters into their own hands. The Tories and the BSC

bosses underestimated the years of resentment and frustration that had built up among the rank and file. They counted on the moderate Bill Sirs and the ISTC bureaucrats to head off any militancy that there was. But the attitude of the rank and file is summed up in a poster issued by the South Yorkshire divisional strike committee: "Treated with contempt — not ever again!"

Preside

The South Yorkshire strikers have learned quickly, shaking off past years of inactivity in a matter of a few days. At the ISTC offices in Doncaster Rd, Rotherham, strike HQ until it was fire-bombed, probably by fascists, the rank and file have taken over where bureaucrats used to preside.

At a recent meeting, Bill Sirs was heard to say that he would settle accounts with the Rotherham Red Army

when the strike was over. Within a few days, pickets appeared proudly wearing a new badge: "Rotherham Red Army"!

The strike is now in its ninth week. Although the BSC bosses have moved from their initial 2% insult, the offer is still a long way off 20% with no strings. Since many private steel firms are threatening to return to work

or have still not come out, the picket lines are still crucial.

Support the steel pickets!

- Take collections. The steel strikers get no strike pay and the Tories are threatening to cut off their already minimal benefits. In steel communities where whole families are on strike, money is very short.

- Defend the picket lines against police attacks. Give support on the picket lines.

- Black all steel. Report any movement of steel to the nearest strike committee HQ or Trades Council.

- Refuse to cross picket lines. National T&GWU policy is not to touch any steel.

- Organise Labour Party public meeting in support of the steel workers in every area, and hand over Party facilities (rooms, telephones, duplicators, etc.) to the strikers.

- Demand that Labour-controlled local authorities make council facilities available to the strikers (as some councils did for the miners in 1972).

ISTC ROTHERHAM AREA HARDSHIP FUND

Friends,

With the steel strike entering its eighth week may we appeal for your support in cash or food for our hardship fund.

We are attempting to help cases of severe hardship who, in some cases, can no longer afford to eat properly.

Please contact us with donations or for us to organise collections on your premises.

Phone us on Rotherham 61541 and contact any of the following: Owen Lewis, Frank Davies, Joan Thompson.

Yours Fraternally, Dick Lake (Strike Committee, Edgumbe House, Doncaster Road, Rotherham).

STOP THE TORIES ALL OUT MARCH 9

THE RIGHT TO PICKET is a basic right

for the working class. Effective trade unionism calls for collective, disciplined action, enforced by picketing. Otherwise individual workers or small groups of workers are feeble against the concentrated power of the bosses and the State. Flying pickets are necessary when a group of workers risks being boxed in and worn down, and needs to spread the struggle. Mass pickets and aggressive, militant picketing are necessary when scabs and police go all out to smash through picket lines. Violence on picket lines starts with the scabs and the police. Pickets have been killed or seriously injured many times in recent years. Mass turnouts, and good organisation on picket lines, are a necessary response.

THE TORIES WANT TO hamstring the

trade unions. They want to make picketing anywhere but at your own place of work unlawful — which means you could have an injunction against you or be sued for damages for picketing your boss's other factories, for going on a flying picket, for joining a mass picket like Grunwick, or just going down the road to express support for workers at a neighbouring factory. Most blacking or solidarity strikes would also be unlawful. The Tories are encouraging the police to use the powers they already have to declare that pickets are too many, too obstructive, or too intimidating, and to arrest workers on obstruction, intimidation, and similar charges. Police chiefs are pressing for all mass pickets to be legally subject to police approval and control. In addition to its clauses on picketing, the Tories' Employment Bill also includes attacks on women's rights, on the closed shop, and on many Labour reforms.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER says: We must

demand the TUC withdraws its Guidelines on Picketing, which put curbs on picketing almost as tight as the Tories' laws, but policed by union bureaucrats rather than by the courts. The TUC should break off collaboration with the Tories and talks on the Bill. It should make May 14 a one-day general strike. Rank and file labour movement activists should also organise for all-out action on May 14th. Trade union organisations should support the Rank and File Code of Practice adopted by over 1000 trade union delegates last June, and enforce the Code of Practice against and despite the Tories, the police and the courts. Defiant industrial action cracked the Industrial Relations Act. It can stop the new anti-union laws.

THE RANK AND FILE code of practice

calls for: • No crossing of picket lines. • For the building, and defence,

Official TUC demonstration

of 100% closed shop. For sanctions against any individuals breaking closed shop. • For full rank and file discussion and decision making by traditional democratic procedures — no enforced secret ballots. • Pickets to be positioned at whatever locations necessary to win the dispute and in sufficient numbers to ensure that picket lines are observed. Strikes to be run by elected strike committees. • All appeals for blacking and financial assistance to be carried out wherever practicable. • Support calls made by strike committees for mass and sympathy pickets. • No settlement of disputes without full report-backs to, and decision-making by, the members concerned.

CUTS, CLOSURES, attacks on women's

rights, and state racism, are all part of the same Tory class-war policy as the anti-picket laws. The profit system world-wide is in deep crisis, and the Tories are determined to save profits at workers' expense — to make the working class pay for the crisis. The labour movement must fight the Tories on all fronts — and work to unite all the fightbacks into a mighty offensive. It is no good waiting and hoping that a Labour Government in four years' time will undo the Tory damage. We must organise for a General Strike which can stop the cuts, stop the closures, stop the anti-picket laws. We must kick the Tories out.

THE LABOUR movement must be

renovated, restructured, and reoriented, to fight the Tories now and to stop a repeat of the 1964-70 and 1974-79 Wilson and Callaghan governments. Put the labour movement on a war footing. Turn away from cosy talks with the Tories towards mobilising the rank and file. Replace the leaders who refuse to fight the Tories. Use the democratic reforms decided at Labour's Brighton conference to oust MPs who side with the Tories against workers in struggle. Use trade union delegacies to local Labour Parties to help win support for socialist politics. Fight for democracy and accountability throughout the labour movement. That way we can kick the Tories out — and make sure no future Labour government rides roughshod over workers' interests without facing explosive resistance from a class struggle left wing in the labour movement.

SUNDAY MARCH 9, 11AM, Hyde Park, London

Coaches/trains leave from

SOCIALIST ORGANISER is the paper of

the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, an alliance of Labour and trade union activists sponsored by six Constituency Labour Parties, four Trades Councils, and several trade union branches and LPYSs. We aim to build a class-struggle left wing in the Labour Party and trade unions, based on a revolutionary socialist platform.

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