

Socialist Organiser

Paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory

by MARTIN THOMAS

AFTER the fiasco of the USA's April 25th raid on Iran, the danger of Carter unleashing war over Iran is still there.

He has pointedly not ruled out further military action. There is strong pressure on him now to do something 'successful'. And the Pentagon, according to press reports, favours immediate resort to tactical nuclear weapons if it comes to a clash with the USSR in Iran.

In 1968 the US negotiated for 11 months to get hostages released by North Korea. But then, as one US official recently commented, there were no television cameras in North Korea, and no Presidential election was coming up.

For the sake of his Presidential ambitions, and for the sake of trying to assert that the US will not be pushed around, Carter is willing to risk war, or even holocaust.

In Iran, the holding of the hostages is primarily a political weapon of the clerical right wing. They use it to whip up 'national unity' round 'anti-imperialist' demagoguery while they unleash an onslaught against the Left and the Kurds.

But that is not the point. The Shah butchered, tortured and tyrannised Iran for 35 years with US and British backing. The Iranian people have a right to have him returned for trial if they wish it.

And the US, the power that devastated Indochina, is not about to give Iran lessons in civilised behaviour.

The fundamental idea underpinning Carter's raid is that the US has a right to control the world and to use force against lesser nations. More than

NO TO CARTER'S WAR-DRIVE

the hostages, the real issue at stake is the drive of the US to keep a grip over the huge oil resources of the Gulf area.

That idea and that drive are part of the basic mechanism of imperialism, which constantly seeks to expand its domination in

its insatiable quest for profit. That quest, sooner or later, leads to war: for with the world tightly divided up, there is no way the expansionist drive can be satisfied peacefully.

After World War 2, a reconstruction of the world

under US hegemony and a capitalist boom allowed for the drive to war to be contained within limits. Despite that, the Vietnam war concentrated more destructive power over 40 million people or so than was used in the whole of World War 2.

MAY DAY PROTEST SAYS: HANDS OFF IRAN

THE CENTRAL London May Day demonstration will be rounded off by a picket of the US Embassy in protest at the American raid on Iran.

Arthur Latham, chairman of the London Labour Party, will hand in a protest signed by *Socialist Organiser*, the London Co-Op Political Committee, the London District Committee of the Communist Party, the Association of Kurdish Students Abroad, Labour MPs Frank Allaun,

Stuart Holland, Ron Leighton, Stan Newens, Reg Race, Jo Richardson and Stan Thorne, and a number of leading trade unionists.

Pickers will be calling on the USA to abandon military threats or actions against Iran, and halt the military build-up.

No to Carter's war drive!
Hands off Iran!

4pm to 6pm, US EMBASSY, GROSVENOR SQ., W1.

Now imperialism has less leeway than in the 1960s. The tension is rising. The risks are increasing. The imperialists' military build-up and their warmongering propaganda, aimed at reversing the weakness caused by their Indochina defeat, pave the way for disaster.

The bureaucrats of the degenerated and deformed workers' states do not have the same expansionist drive as the imperialists. They are more defensive. But they too are shortsighted and grasping enough to allow the war danger to increase.

We must check the war drive. We must break the murderous mechanism of imperialism. We must replace the irresponsible rule of capitalist politicians and generals, who make us all hostages now, with a direct working-class democracy which would make this sort of uncontrollable insanity impossible.

In Britain the labour movement must oppose the Tory Government's backing for Carter — and call to account the Labour front-bench leaders who have backed the Tories.

The Labour Party National Executive has called

a demonstration for June 22nd, in Hyde Park, with the slogans: No Cruise missiles on British soil, no successor to Polaris, no increase in arms spending.



But more immediate and more radical action is also necessary. Demonstrations, pickets and meetings must demand:

- Hands off Iran! No sanctions, no military threats.
- No war over Iran!
- No Cruise missiles. Unilateral nuclear disarmament. Withdrawal from NATO. Millions for hospitals, not a penny for the 'defence' of imperialism.



Swedish social democratic leader Olof Palme. Labour right wingers used to quote Sweden, with its 44 years of social democratic rule up to 1976, as showing how class struggle could be reformed away.

Sweden: From social peace to class war

PUBLIC SERVICES in Sweden have come to a virtual standstill since Friday 25th April as a result of escalating strikes, overtime bans and lockouts.

Every year in spring, the Swedish Employers' Federation (SAF) negotiates the level of wages for the coming year with the main unions' federation, LO (Land Organisation). Public sector workers and shop workers have done especially badly in the last two years with settlements down to 2%. Last April there was a series of strikes in the manufacturing industries to force higher settlements.

There has been no tradition of militancy among the public sector workers until last week, when negotiations

broke down between LO and SAF. The LO claim is 11% for private sector, 12½% for the public sector. The offer was 1.3%.

On Friday the air traffic controllers struck, preventing any planes from landing or taking off from Swedish airports. Nurses and other hospital workers have come out for the first time, leaving only emergency services, although this is illegal in Sweden. Gothenburg harbour has been closed down by strikes of dockers, pilots and customs officers. Frankfurter Allgemeine on Saturday 26th April says, "Sweden is in almost total isolation".

The only goods traffic is through Helsingborg harbour between Denmark

and Sweden. The trains have stopped and the metro in Stockholm is not functioning.

Most shop workers have banned overtime and the transportation of bread is being held up by the action of van drivers. Television and radio have been cut off apart from a single news programme because the telecommunications engineers are on strike.

The battle could escalate. The employers' federation plans to lock out hundreds of thousands of workers on Friday. The unions say that 2.4 million private sector workers will come out if there is no improved offer.

The ruling liberal-rightist coalition may attempt to force workers back through legal action. Although the

employers' federation says they are not in favour of government intervention, they will undoubtedly go along with the government's use of the law. The previous government, in 1977, forced strikers back to work like this.

Swedish socialist Philip Weiss told *SO*: "The union leaders are less afraid to confront a non-social democratic government. They obviously feel under pressure from their members to do something. This is the biggest struggle in Sweden since the coal miners' in 1968. But the opposition Social Democratic Party has made no comment on the one news channel that is still open."

JOHN MACDONALD

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ALL OUT MAY 14

Greetings for May Day

WALLASEY LPYS
sends May Day greetings.

FIGHT FOR A DEMOCRATIC AND SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY — NOT A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

BRENT EAST C.L.P.
sends May Day greetings to all sections of the labour movement.

UNITY IS STRENGTH
BASINGSTOKE AND DEANE DISTRICT TRADES COUNCIL
extends its fraternal May Day greetings to all in the labour movement.

WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE
SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST ORGANISER GROUP
sends May Day greetings to all Labour activists.

FIGHT THE CUTS, NO RATE OR RENT RISES
BARRICADE
the new youth paper sends greetings to all Socialist Organiser readers.

Build a mass socialist youth movement in the fight to beat the Tories
(16 Glen St, Edinburgh)

FIGHTBACK FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS
extends its greetings to all in the labour movement fighting for socialism and women's liberation.

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- Wallasey LPYS
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- EETPU North West London lodge
- Manchester Central ASTMS
- Boilermakers' Amalgamation, Basingstoke branch
- ACTSS, 6/522 branch
- Royal Free Hospital shop stewards' committee
- and many activists in a personal capacity.

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Please send updates and additions for this contact list to SO, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

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.

SCLV calls TU conference

The Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory is holding a conference for trade unionists on Sunday 24th May. The aim will be to bring together socialist trade unionists, particularly Labour Party members, to discuss the way forward for the movement in the fight against the Tories.

The conference will concentrate on a number of themes:

- Fighting joint Tory-bosses offensive in firms like BSC and BL
- Organising in the workplaces against the cuts
- Fighting for labour movement democracy
- Labour Party workplace branches

The conference will take place at Caxton House, London N19, on Saturday 24th May, 11am - 6pm, for delegates from trade union branches. Credentials £2 from John Bloxam, Conference Organising Secretary, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.



BL: AFTER THE DEFEAT

by MARTIN THOMAS

FORD is closing its biggest assembly plant in the US. Chrysler lives almost from week to week without knowing whether it will have enough cash to pay the wages. General Motors plans to cut its worldwide workforce by 10%. 200,000 out of 787,000 workers employed by the three big car firms in the US are currently laid off, and the industry is operating at half capacity.

As world capitalism stumbles into a slump, Britain's car industry is suffering hardly less than the US firms which dominate world car production. And BL workers find themselves at the sharp point of this crisis.

The BL bosses are aiming to crush trade union strength in the company. They hope to restore profitability by crippling and beating down one of the central units of militant trade union organisation in Britain, and restructuring production on that basis.

Failing that, they threaten to let BL collapse. It is a serious threat now. Some factories would be closed, bits (Rover? Jaguar?) would be hived off, and a deal could probably be made with some Japanese firm about the use of the big assembly plants.

The main trade union leaders have even less of an answer to the crisis than the BL management. They draw

up plans on paper for BL expanding without trouble, and then when trouble comes they run, scared.

Last year the unions in BL drew up a claim for £24 across-the-board increase, inflation-protection for wages, and progress on the 35 hour week. The bosses refused even to consider it, and laid down an ultimatum: 5% pay rise (10% for skilled workers), and 85 pages of strings.

In November — the month the new agreement was due to come into effect — the bosses gave proof of their intentions by sacking Longbridge convenor and shop stewards' combine chairman Derek Robinson. The AUEW sabotaged the strike for Robinson's reinstatement.

But the unions were still talking to BL about the pay and conditions agreement which should have started in November. The only result was that the 85 pages of strings were slightly modified... and became 92 pages.

Meanwhile, BL's share of the British car market sagged to a miserable 15% or so.

So in mid-March the bosses announced that they would impose their ultimatum, union agreement or no union agreement. April 8th/9th was set as the deadline. Any worker resisting the ultimatum after the date could be sacked, the bosses said.

The Leyland Cars Joint Negotiating Committee

(LCJNC) called on the unions to organise strike action. The AUEW flatly refused. A dismayed meeting of officials and senior stewards left further action to individual plants.

After the ultimatum date on April 8th/9th, a strike wave grew, drawing in about 20,000 workers after April 11th, when the TGWU honoured its promise to give official support.

The 92 pages

The 92 pages of strings include:

- Total mobility of labour.
- Scrapping of trade demarcations.
- Team working, with workers in each 'team' expected to cover each others' jobs.
- Drastic cuts in lay-off pay.
- Cuts in rest allowances.
- The way night shift pay is calculated will be changed — to make the rate lower.
- The right for bosses to bring in three-shift working whenever they want — and full mobility between shifts.
- The standard for each job to be discussed only between the foreman and the operator, without the shop steward being involved. The worker can refuse to agree — but then stands to be penalised if his complaint against the foreman is not upheld!

On Wednesday 16th BL bosses threatened to sack anyone still out on strike by the 23rd. In talks the following day the TGWU capitulated — agreeing a return to work on the basis of the 92 pages, in exchange

for nothing but vague promises of consultation and 10 days' notice of 'major (?) changes' in future.

On Sunday 20th TGWU general secretary Moss Evans said his union would continue to support the BL strikers if they decided to stay out. But the damage had been done. Seeing no national leadership for a fight against the bosses' determined and ruthless offensive, mass meetings at several BL plants on Monday 21st voted to return.

A few days later 1500 strikers in the West Works at Longbridge went back with a compromise deal on their specific grievance about a 'toggling-up' allowance taken away under the terms of the 92-page document.

Only Jaguar in Coventry — where the specific grievance was about regrading — was left out on strike. The bosses put back the deadline for sacking the strikers, first to Monday 28th, then to Wednesday 30th. But over the weekend of 26th/27th, they bludgeoned officials and stewards into 'attempting to get a return to work' at a mass meeting on Tuesday 29th. The meeting voted to return.

So the rank and file in BL is left fighting a rearguard battle after a serious defeat for which the trade union leaders must take prime responsibility.

The 92-page document adds up to a radical reshaping of work conditions and management control. En-

forcing it on the shop floor will be a long and bitter process. There will be rebellions, and it is the job of socialists and militants to work for solidarity so that those rebellions are not easily isolated and stifled or crushed.

But this defeat was not just an episode in the normal to-and-fro of trade union struggle. The scale of the capitalist crisis, and the dimness of the prospects for recovery, mean that the bosses are really going for bust.

The bosses do not see BL just in terms of trade-union negotiating within one company. Indeed, their ultimatum showed they were not much interested in negotiation any more. And they have a social programme. The onslaught on BL is a front-line battle in the Tories' strategy of beating down trade union strength, letting the free market do its best (or worst), and restoring profitability at whatever cost to jobs and conditions.

BL workers need a social programme too: the restructuring of the car and components industry under workers' control to protect jobs and conditions, as part of a fight for a workers' government which will reorganise the economy to get rid of the waste, inequality, and brutality of capitalism. Normal trade unionism on the basis of working within the system, in today's crisis, cannot even defend the basic essentials of trade union organisation.

Oppose the war drive!

Hands off Iran!

FRIDAY APRIL 25 should be remembered. It was the day that the President of the United States risked sparking off a war rather than return a brutal criminal to stand trial before the people he oppressed and robbed.

The leaders of world imperialism and their clients talks as if the release of the American Embassy hostages who have been held in Iran since last November could be brought about by only two methods: military assault or a combination of trade and diplomatic sanctions, both of which mean aggression against Iran and could spark off a full-scale war — or even lead to nuclear war.

President Carter parades himself as a defender of 'human rights'. The same man never tires of demanding the extradition of what he calls terrorists. What hypocrisy! He is in fact prepared to risk war rather than have someone extradited who terrorised 35 million people for 25 years, denying them the most rudimentary 'human rights'.

As socialists we are not in favour of punishing the innocent as a way of putting pressure on the guilty. But it is even possible that the hostages might be freed if the United States government were to admit its complicity in the criminal rule of the Shah, in installing him, aiding him, and maintaining him in power.

But imperialism is not going to tear its veil off and expose its crimes. In any case, the existence of the hostages gives the United States a cover for military intervention on a larger scale.

Imperialism's drive to war

BUT A SPARK does not make an explosion by itself: you need gunpowder first.

World War I was not caused by Archduke Ferdinand's assassination in Sarajevo and World War 2 did not happen because Germany invaded Poland. These wars were the logical outcome of the rivalry between the major imperialists, of imperialism's insatiable expansionist appetite.

Today world imperialism is in crisis. Throughout the imperialist world there is growing crisis: inflation and unemployment are rising, trade wars threaten, and an even deeper recession looms.

The imperialist nations can put off the crunch by tinkering with the system, but they can't do it indefinitely. Sooner or later they will use military means to solve their differences — unless they are overthrown first.

The more immediate dan-

by
Andrew Hornung

ger is imperialism ganging up to attack the degenerated and deformed workers' states, in particular the Soviet Union. These states — however anti-working class their political systems — have been won from imperialist domination. If imperialism were able to reassert its hold there, it would be granted a new lease of life.

For now, imperialism still agrees to divide up the world with the bureaucracies of the post-capitalist states. But the tensions are growing.

The ability of the oil-exporting nations to organise themselves and insist that imperialism increases what it pays for oil has also dealt a body-blow to the western powers. Although the OPEC countries are certainly not workers' states, imperialism would love to be able to bring them back under its firm control, dictating their policies from a distance as if they were colonies.

Successful imperialist intervention in the more important oil exporting countries would be a huge boost for imperialism, though not as decisive as a re-integra-

tion of the Soviet Union into the capitalist system.

The possibility of doing this without unleashing World War 3 is slight, however. Indeed, at present the trend is towards less control for imperialism. Further, the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan has meant a slight shrinkage of imperialism's realm of domination.

The imperialist leaders are not about to deliberately decide to launch a world war. But, as the tension rises, the chances rise of conflicts escalating uncontrollably.

The war-mongers' propaganda

SINCE THE U.S. defeat in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, and since the Watergate revelations, Washington's ability to play the bully-boy on a world scale has been diminished. The American ruling class would face enormous hostility if it 'sent in the marines'.

Likewise Britain: after the fiasco of Suez and Britain's general withdrawal from 'east of Suez', direct military intervention — except of course in Ireland — has risked provoking a huge outcry. The Russian invasion of Afghanistan and the holding of the US Embassy hostages, however, have allowed the British and American ruling classes to try to restore their old room for manoeuvre.

The ruling classes in Britain and America have for the moment won the ideological war in favour of military intervention. The voice of the warmonger has for the moment become in the popular mind the voice of reason and moderation.

The leaders of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini in particular, are painted in the press as madmen, as primitive savages. This too is part of the pro-war propaganda.

The same press, prostituted to the interests of the ruling class, doesn't mention that until February last year Iran was ruled by a man who, for all his apparent urbanity and upper-class western-type sophistication, actually believed he had spoken to the arch-angel Gabriel and to Mohammed. Now there's superstition for you!

The campaign for an Olympic boycott is another part of the ideological preparation for military intervention and possible wide-scale war. We too oppose the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, but we can see that Thatcher and Co. are intent only on raising the temperature internationally and stoking



NATO warriors: missiles in the background, masks for chemical warfare

ing up anti-communist feelings.

The Tories' last budget shows that they are not limiting themselves to a stepping up of the ideological war. That budget included a huge increase in arms spending and a big rise in forces' pay.

Thatcher and Callaghan back the war drive

"WHEN I READ of trade sanctions and the possibility of mining the Persian Gulf, I think of what could be the situation within a matter of hours.

"If the Iranians were to take out the Saudi Arabian pipelines and the United States were to be deprived of oil, that would inevitably lead to American intervention in Saudi Arabia and Soviet intervention in Iran as the situation became catastrophically dangerous.

"F-111 bombers on our own airfields, which are not subject to British veto, soon to be replaced by missiles not subject to British veto, could suddenly be sucked into world conflict and confrontation".

When Tony Benn put this nightmare prospect of a Third World War possibly using nuclear weapons and therefore threatening the destruction of humankind, some delegates at the Scottish TUC conference in Perth might have thought he was scaremongering. By the next day they knew he wasn't. By then they had heard of Carter's military raid on Iran.

Despite the dangers, the Tory government has slavishly supported US government policy. Within the EEC, Lord Carrington was the main mover of the two-stage sanction plan directed against Iran... as an alter-

native to military intervention! Now that there has been military intervention, Tory Defence spokesman Ian Gilmour continues to support US actions, going so far as to claim that the raid wasn't military at all.

The Labour leadership for the most part is no better. Under Callaghan Labour gave unstinting support to US foreign policy moves. They supported the Shah, they backed US involvement in Vietnam, and they covered up for the actions of the US intelligence agencies even when it was shown that the Labour leaders themselves were being bugged by the CIA.

Britain's membership of the NATO alliance, the unquestioning toleration of US bases in Britain — as Benn points out, without there being any control over their activities — and the joint US-UK military manoeuvres and military cooperation agreements are all part of government policy whether the government is Labour or Conservative.

The collusion of the British government in the crimes of US imperialism in Iran — on top of the thousands committed directly by the British state — is vividly shown by the latest events. The assault group that Carter sent to Iran had done training with the SAS in Hereford, and maintained close cooperation with these official terrorists.

There are differences between the European imperialists of the EEC and US imperialism. In many ways they are rivals. They are also affected differently by the events in Iran, as the EEC nations are more dependent on Iranian oil than is the US.

Still, the firmness of NATO and the Atlantic Alliance when it comes to opposing the deformed and degenerated workers' states, or crushing colonial or semi-colonial revolt, cannot be underestimated.

French President Giscard d'Estaing put it simply: "When the chips are down, we will stand by the Americans — even if they are dead wrong". And West Germany's Chancellor Helmut Schmidt made it clear that the EEC "cannot possibly leave America in the lurch".

The working class and the slide to war

ONE OF CARTER'S speech-writers recently said that he feared the "slide towards war". Chancellor Schmidt himself declared only two weeks ago that "The World War I analogy is not far-fetched. It looks more and more like July 1914".

The ruling classes of the imperialist states are prepared to drag the working class into a war that threatens the destruction of humankind for the sake of the maintenance of capitalism. They are prepared to place millions on the sacrificial slab of the great god Moloch, the god of profit and plunder.

The task of the working class movement is to oppose the war drive. Our leaders must be called to order: they must stop the anti-working class bi-partisanism with the Tories which now threatens to suck us into the maelstrom of military aggression.

We must call for solidarity with the anti-imperialist struggle of the Iranians and others. The working class is an international class that has no interests in national division. Its hostility must be not to other nations' workers but to the oppressors of the working class, to the capitalists and to the bureaucratic bosses of the non-capitalist states.

Above all we oppose 'our own' ruling class, and should expose their crimes wherever they occur.



US bombs fall on Vietnam. Wilson and Heath backed up the US all the way

Dear Comrades,
I'm writing to you about a demonstration being organised by Campaign Against The Oxfordshire Missiles on May 17th to protest against the basing of Cruise missiles in this country.

There is at present a terrifying acceleration of the arms race: whilst cuts

abound in health and education, the government's 'defence' spending is rocketing past £10 billion. At best this is a waste of money, at worst it is taking us towards the final holocaust. Arms spending does not create jobs, for the arms industry is very capital-intensive. Re-directing of resources

towards socially useful production would result in a massive decrease in unemployment.

The only beneficiaries of the arms race are the directors and shareholders of the arms corporations. Boeing stands to reap 2 billion dollars revenue from NATO's

adoption of the Cruise missile; military contracts are generally much more profitable than comparable civilian ones. Of course, it's not surprising that many senior officials from the Ministry of Defence and top civil servants move on to work with companies involved in production for 'defence'.

The rally on May 17th is a vital manifestation of opposition to the government's lunatic course; there will be a march leaving Oxford at 9.30am, with a similar one, I believe, leaving Banbury. These will converge on Upper Heyford USAF base, where there will be a mass rally at 3pm.

I'd be very grateful if you could give whatever publicity you can to this rally, since its success depends upon a truly massive attendance. If this is to be obtained, it is essential to start building for it NOW.

Yours fraternally,
DICK WILES

Support Black Freedom March

IN JUNE/JULY the Asian Youth Movement (Bradford) is organising a Black Freedom March from Bradford to London.

"We believe", they state, "that the cuts implemented by this government, the increase in unemployment, the rise in inflation and the general decline of the economy foretell a massive increase in racism in the coming years."

"We believe that the present level of racism is intolerable for black people to live with any dignity in the country, and a massive increase in racism will make their position impossible."

"Therefore we believe that a national event involving all progressive elements has to take place to launch a genuine fight back against racism: This is why we are organising this march."

As one of the most oppressed sections of the working class, West Indian and Asian workers and youth have suffered higher levels of unemployment, worse

housing, lower pay and fewer opportunities. They have had less access to services (health, benefits, legal rights, education) than many white workers.

The Tories promise to make this worse.

While cutting back on services which are essential if working class people are to have a decent standard of living, they are increasing expenditure for the police, the army and other agencies whose aim is to ferret out "illegal immigrants".

The blatantly racist 1971 Immigration Act has recently been reinforced with new rules aimed at preventing specifically black and Asian women from bringing their husbands into this country. The arrest, imprisonment and deportation of illegal immigrants has increased.

Direct police repression also hits the black community.

The elite SPG are being used more frequently to harass black communities and trade unionists, while

the 'sus' laws give the police the power to arrest blacks on the mere suspicion of intending to commit a crime.

The march will raise several specific slogans:

- End all racist immigration controls; all immigration controls are racist.
- No arrest without warrant.
- No more deportations.
- Release the deportees.
- No imprisonment without trial.
- Defend the Southall community.
- Release the political prisoners of Southall.
- Disband the SPG.
- SPG killed Blair Peach.

In the main, the official labour movement has remained oblivious to the plight of black workers: passive viewers from the sidelines as police and the fascist groups have stepped up their repression.

The Black Freedom march will help to rally the black communities up and down the country, and to bolster the dignity of black workers and youth. It will assert their right to freedom from

fear, and their right to be in this country.

The march will pass through Bradford, Dewsbury, Huddersfield, Rochdale, Oldham, Manchester, Sheffield, Alfreton, Derby, Burton on Trent, Walsall, Birmingham, Coventry, Leicester, Northampton, Bedford, Luton and Southall, on its way to Central London.

The AYMB is calling for Black Freedom March Support Committees to be formed to raise money (a provisional target of £15,000 has been set), to arrange accommodation, to organise rallies and public meetings for the march, and to help with security for the march.

Resolutions of support should be passed in the Labour Party and trade unions.

The AYMB has proposed this text:

"This body recognises that the Black Freedom March is an important initiative in the fight against racism. This body undertakes to sponsor the march, to make a donation, to participate in a support committee, and to mobilise for the mass demonstration in London on Saturday July 19th."

People interested in marching or wanting further information should contact: Asian Youth Movement Bradford, 266 Lumb Lane, Bradford 8, West Yorkshire. Tel: Bradford 999310.

ALEXIS CARRAS



ST PAUL'S IS STILL FIGHTING

A MONTH after the St. Pauls area of Bristol exploded in fury against the police on April 2nd, arrests are still continuing.

According to some estimates at least 120 local people have so far been picked up. The police are taking out search warrants by the street and handing out charges for the looting that followed after the police retreated out of the area. The first set of cases comes up on May 1st.

But the local community is not willing to take this passively and see the police try to get their own back for April 2nd.

On Wednesday 23rd, 600 people joined an Anti-Nazi League march and picket of the local police station. The slogans were: Remember Blair Peach, stop Tory racist laws, disband the SPG, end police harassment.

Defence groups have been set up and are raising money for defence costs and fines. Donations and messages of support can be sent to the United Defence Committee, 146 Grosvenor Road, Bristol.

A Labour and Trade Union Defence Campaign has also been established. Campaign Secretary Pat Graham told SO that the campaign does not intend to replace or compete with the other defence groups, but rather to raise funds for them and

organise a response from the labour movement.

Feeling that "We couldn't have a lot of faith in an inquiry that was set up under Whitelaw", the Labour/Trade Union Defence Campaign has raised the call for a Labour and Trade Union Inquiry into the events of April 2nd and police harassment in the area.

CLPs and trade union branches in the Bristol area have been circulated, and support for the Labour/Trade Union Inquiry call has so far come from Bristol South East, Kingswood and Bristol West CLPs and the Executive of Bristol Trades Council.

Meeting

The Labour Party wards covering the St Pauls area are also planning a joint public meeting for May 15th. "We support the self-organisation of all oppressed people", says Ashley Ward in its leaflet.

But a "political attack... demands a political fight-back, we must turn our anger to political activity and organisation... We face a common enemy. We can learn from and reinforce each other."

IAN HOLLINGWORTH

No cash for McNee, says Labour council

£500 MILLION of public money is given to the police every year from public funds and the public has no say in how its money is spent. This is the point that Lewisham Council is highlighting by its refusal to pay the 1981 Metropolitan Police precept.

In Lewisham, where the rates went up by 42.8% this April, £5½ million will be handed over to the police — despite widespread local opposition to the activities of the local 'P' division.

'P' division is well known for its use of the 'sus' laws to harass young blacks, and for its prominent role in protecting NF marches.

At a time when Lewisham hospitals have been under the axe of the Government-imposed commissioners for their wanton spending on people's health (!), no yardsticks for spending are given to the police — not even the yardstick of their ability to control local traffic (which

they can't!).

Lewisham's campaign for public accountability of the police has won verbal support from some other outlying authorities within the Metropolitan Police area, and it reflects the policy of the Greater London Regional Council of the Labour Party. The campaign should be strengthened by spreading it to other councils, but at the same time it should be changed into a mass popular campaign: those people who are usually the victims of the police such as ethnic minority communities (not to mention the left!) have some strong ideas on how their money is spent!

At present, Lewisham Council is making the point that it wants 'good policing', and some jurisdiction over police policy and practice. In the light of recent events (Jimmy Kelly, Blair Peach, Operation Countryman, etc) this is hardly even scratching



Traffic control Lewisham-style

the surface — the Tories are expanding the police at the same time as they're contracting public services, and the logic there is the logic of class struggle.

Unless Lewisham Council's example is supported, and made into a real cam-

paign on the issue of the police, the most likely outcome is that the amount of money due will simply be deducted from next year's Rate Support Grant to the borough, and the issue will be quietly forgotten.

BOB SUGDEN

Irish activists jailed

AFTER BEING arrested in Luton under the Prevention of Terrorism Act early in April, Jimmy Reilly and Gerry Maclochlainn are being held in Welford Road prison in Leicester. So far they have been refused bail.

They have been charged with 'conspiracy to cause an explosion'. 'Conspiracy' is a notorious catch-all charge, but the real reason for the arrests is probably that Jimmy Reilly and Gerry Maclochlainn

are active members and speakers for the Provisional Sinn Féin. Jimmy Reilly recently spoke alongside Jim Marshall, MP for Leicester South, at a Leicester day school on Ireland.

Socialists in Leicester have organised protest pickets of the prison. Send copies of protest resolutions, or requests for more information, to Leicester Trades Council sub-committee on Ireland, c/o 74 Highcross Street, Leicester.

Nazis' Corby demo flops

DESPITE a poor turnout — only about 1000 — anti-fascist counter-demonstrators clearly outnumbered the 300 fascists on the National Front's St George's Day march on April 26th. The NF held the march in the steel town of Corby under the slogan of import controls, in an evidently unsuccessful effort to rally support from sacked steelworkers.

The Communist Party and the local SWP tried to avoid confrontation. But when a supporter of Workers' Action grabbed a megaphone and asked the counter-demonstrators whether they wanted to smash the NF or "pussyfoot round the town", they mostly marched off after the NF, led

by 50 local skinheads. About 30 CPers were left to hold a peaceful rally.

The anti-fascists got to the route of the NF march, but were kept apart from the NF by the fascists' escort of 1,000 police. 50 anti-fascists were arrested, some merely for taking photos. Among them was one heroic comrade who got far enough to give Martin Webster a black eye.

Though few in number, the anti-fascists showed the NF that they will be opposed on any streets where they march, and that the memory of Blair Peach will only strengthen our resolve to keep the Nazis off the streets.

CHARLIE SARELL

—SWAPO—
BENEFIT DANCE
SAT. 3rd MAY
PROCEEDS: SWAPO MEDICAL AID
DANCERS —
the EXPLO-SIVES.
SINGERS —
the SWAPO SINGERS
ISLINGTON TOWN 7.30
HALL — UPPER STREET NW
(near Victoria Station Tube)
BAR — FOOD
TICKETS: £2-50 adv. / £3-00 at door
available from: Namibia Support Committee — 198 NORTH ST. / 300, 301

JO THWAITES
reviews 'Southall 23
April 1979': the re-
port of an unofficial
committee of in-
quiry on the huge
police operation to
defend a National
Front meeting and
terrorise the people
of Southall.

ON APRIL 23rd last year, the National Front held an election meeting in Southall Town Hall. Only a handful turned up, but there were thousands of police there to protect them.

When local protestors arrived outside the Town Hall, it was provocatively flying the Union Jack (according to council officials, this is traditional on St George's Day). And they found their way blocked by hundreds of police.

Members of the Southall Youth Movement had police permission to stage a peaceful picket on the pavement outside the Town Hall. They were moved on or arrested; the officer in charge told them, "Who the fuck is Gosse? I'm in charge here. Move!" (Gosse is the police liaison officer who had agreed to the picket).

There was nowhere the demonstrators could stand without the police harassing them. Then the people carrying the SYM banner were arrested just for carrying that banner.

As more and more demonstrators turned up, the situation became more tense.

Peter Baker takes up the story: "At about 7.30 the good humour of the crowd... was shattered... a roar went through the crowd, emanating from the fear... I saw to my amazement a coach being driven fast into the back of the crowd..."

"How no-one was killed I don't know... The coach had a civilian driver and a uniformed police officer standing beside him."

Charged

Martyn Grubb, Ealing Community Relations Officer, said: "Everyone got out of the way... if I had not done so the coach would have run over me. The crowd was furious."

Peter Baker continues, "Then, from the back again, a blue police transit van, charged through at such a speed that people had to jump for their lives onto the pavement."

"The vans would squeal to a halt, police would rush out from the back, seize people, throw them in and drive off. A third van drove up, which was more heavily

What really happened in Southall?



10,000 marched in London on April 27 demanding: disband the SPG

loaded. The policemen who got out of this third one had plastic riot shields."

One witness reported to the committee, "They had riot shields and truncheons. Someone from the Church told me off for throwing stones, but I felt I'd been provoked by their behaviour... we felt they had declared war on us."

And war it was. The police and SPG continued for the rest of the evening to harass, intimidate, assault and arrest demonstrators, local people, black and white, young and old.

In Southall Park, where people had been driven by the police, Mike Pearce described the scene, "There was a mass of people trying to squeeze through [a small gate about 4ft wide]. Police horsemen were charging at people so there was a massive crush. Their long batons (2½ ft) were being used to hit people as policemen pushed them, through the narrow gate..."

"Police officers used a lot of racist abuse and hit people with their truncheons and riot shields... The police charged into the park. It seemed to me that they were going specifically for

the young Asians..."

"In this attack they did not seem to arrest anyone. They just wanted to give the blacks a kicking. They ran after people indiscriminately and hit them. There was no reason for it, there was no noise, no nothing..."

He goes on, "There was a big policeman... in the park with a riot shield and his truncheon drawn. A group of 6 or 7 Asian youths was nearby and he was taunting them: 'Come and take me. Any one of you. Come and take me. I'll have you'. He was saying: 'You black bastards. Come on...'"

"I thought he was deliberately inciting the group to attack him because the vans driving up and down gave him protection."

In pain

Even the *Daily Telegraph* was moved to report on what happened to about 80 people, many of them elderly, who had taken refuge in a church. "Within 3 minutes, mounted police had cornered about 50 demonstrators against the walls of Holy Trinity churchyard, and moving through

the churchyard, rounded up stragglers. As we watched, several dozen, crying, screaming coloured demonstrators were dragged bodily along Park View Road... to the police station and waiting coaches."

"Nearly every demonstrator we saw had blood flowing from some sort of injury; some were doubled up in pain. Women and men were crying."

One of the worst incidents was the police attack on the Peoples Unite centre at 6 Parkview. Prior to the 23rd, a member of Peoples Unite had been told by a cop: "We know what you are doing round at No 6 and we are going to get you", and from early on on the 23rd, police vans were parked outside.

No 6 was also being used as a medical centre. Police claimed that missiles had been thrown at them from the house and they smashed their way into the house.

Solicitor John Wittenfield said, "I was pushed into the hall with the others behind me. Suddenly I felt a blow to the back of my head..."

"I saw Richard [an ambulance man] holding his head, from which blood was pour-

ing. He fainted on the floor... Then I saw the woman doctor also bleeding badly from the head... The other girl, Eve, had a bloody bandage on her head and another young boy's head was swathed in bandages..."

A woman who was upstairs when the police raided said, "The policeman at the top of the row got me by the hair. He pulled my head back. He then brought his truncheon down on my forehead. It was a heavy blow and I was completely stunned..."

"By this time blood was pouring down my face and it was in my eyes. I shut my eyes... As I went downstairs I was being kicked and my hair pulled..."

"When I was about halfway down the stairs I heard one of them say 'Steady on, it's a girl', then another said, 'She's a nigger loving cunt'."

"I was kicked in the stomach with someone's knee... I received another in the back."

She was taken to hospital where she received 11 stitches. Clarence Baker got a blood clot on his brain from the police attack on him in No 6.

The report goes on to examine the trials held at Barnet Magistrates Court, 20 miles away from Southall. The 342 defendants went through a mockery of 'justice'. Most got heavy fines. 14 were jailed, many simply on the basis of uncorroborated evidence given by one policeman in no-jury courts where the reasoning went that if you were black and on the streets of Southall that day then you deserved everything you got.

Even witnesses for the defence in one case were bound over to keep the peace by the magistrate, when they hadn't even been charged.

Racist

The unofficial enquiry was organised by the National Council for Civil Liberties at the request of some of the community leaders in Southall when it became clear that the government had no intention of setting up an official one. The committee, headed by Michael Dummet and including Bill Kayes (General Secretary of SOGAT), Joan Lester (MP for Eton and Slough), Dick North (NUT Executive member) and Ranjit Sondhi (Director of the Asian Resources Centre in Birmingham), took evidence from many individuals and organisations, studied the press and television coverage of the events, and attended the majority of the trials at Barnet court.

The Metropolitan Police

refused to give evidence. Assistant Commissioner W. H. Gibson reckoned that "...your enquiry will delay the improvement in race relations in Southall and elsewhere in London which the Metropolitan Police is trying to achieve".

Where the report falls down is in tackling the political questions posed. They argue as if all that was wrong was that the police lost their rag on that specific day, and there was no strong leadership from the commanding officer, (or if there was, then there must be something wrong with that officer's judgement in particular).

But the events of April 23rd were not simply a one-off mistake. Black people in this country have to put up with racist harassment from the police every day. This harassment is institutionalised through the courts and the British legal system.

It is not only at Barnet court that a policeman will always be believed rather than a black person.

As Parita Trivedy from the Southall Campaign Committee said in Trafalgar Square at the rally after the Blair Peach memorial march on Sunday 27th, state harassment goes further than that too. From the very moment that black people enter the country, they are subject to the most humiliating racist treatment, through immigration rules designed to discriminate against black people.

In the report's conclusions, a glaring omission is



"There is reason to believe that Blair Peach was killed by an SPG officer, and no evidence to suggest that he was killed by anyone else"

the demand that the SPG be disbanded. There is only a suggestion that the government should establish a public enquiry into it.

The report also falls into the trap they say the Press fell into — blaming the trouble on 'extremist groups'. It calls for the amount of the electoral deposit to be increased from £150 to discourage small parties from putting up candidates. This is exactly the sort of measure which, though perhaps intended against the NF, actually hits the black hard.

WANTED... FOR EXPOSING MURDER

by JO THWAITES



POSTERS saying "Wanted for murder of Blair Peach — Murray, White, Lake, Freestone, Scottow, and Richardson, members of the Number One Unit of the Metropolitan Police Special Patrol Group" were used to picket 82 police stations all over the country last Wednesday 23rd in order to mark the first anniversary of the death of Blair Peach and the Southall police riot. Sunday 27th several thousand people marched through London, past Scotland Yard, calling for the disbandment of the SPG, an end to police and state harassment of black people and also shouting the names of the six SPG men.

But the Director of Public

Prosecutions has decided to order an investigation into the poster issued by the Friends of Blair Peach Committee which names the six SPG officers suspected of killing Blair Peach.

These SPG officers were named last month by the Sunday Times (which is also being investigated by the DPP) in an article outlining how the police and the DPP were hindering the prosecution of the murderer of Blair Peach.

The Scotland Yard investigators headed by Inspector Cass submitted material to the DPP including

• evidence tending to show one officer having been responsible for Peach's

death.

• evidence suggesting that several officers could be charged with causing an affray;

• evidence the crucial questions had been met with refusal to answer, and that charges of obstruction of justice could therefore be laid;

• evidence that senior uniformed officers in the Metropolitan Police had tried to thwart the inquiry.

But the DPP decided that there was insufficient evidence to bring charges against anyone. According to the DPP there has to be a 51% chance of a conviction before he can bring charges against anyone. This case is

particularly difficult as, according to him, juries are always reluctant to find police officers guilty!

It doesn't take much imagination to work out what would happen if the situation was reversed — if six anti-fascists had killed a policeman in Southall. Not a minute would have been wasted. If there was not enough evidence to pinpoint any one person in particular, then all six would have been charged.

If witnesses had refused to answer questions, there would be no doubt that they would be charged with obstructing the course of justice.

But because the killers were policemen, and also

members of the SPG riot-squad, over a year after the murder no-one has been charged.

Blair Peach wasn't the first to be killed by police with impunity and won't be the last. 245 people have died in police custody over the last ten years. Liddle Towers, Jimmy Kelly, Jimmy McGeown and Blair Peach are only the most publicised cases of many which are doubtful or point strongly to police violence.

The DPP loses no time when he rounds on the Friends of Blair Peach Committee for their posters. He reserves speedy action for those actually looking for Blair Peach's murderer.

STREET WOMEN

Fighting Labour Movement sexism Organising against the Tories



- When nurseries close, who stays at home looking after the kids?
- When meals on wheels and home helps disappear, who pops round to grandad every day?
- When the geriatric ward closes, who leaves work to look after the old folk?
- Who will look after the handicapped and disabled without a break when social services support is cut?

WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN THE TUC DAY OF ACTION, May 14

OUT NOW: * 4-page tabloid paper, Womens Fightback, 5p per copy plus postage.
* 4-page A5 leaflet (see right), £10 per 1000 sent by train (specify station and name of addressee) or £8 per 1000 collected.

* Open letter to trade unionists (see below), 30p per 50 copies.
* Poster, 'First Lady puts Women Last', 20p per 10.
* Orders to 41 Ellington St, London N7.

IT'S COSTING MORE

- UP — prescription charges to £1
- UP — gas and electricity bills 19% higher
- UP — rent and rates rises add pounds a week to hold costs
- UP — VAT to 15%
- UP — school meals, up to 50p in many places, and £1 next year.
- UP — fares to get to work and school

...TO LIVE ON LESS

DOWN — Women's wages: despite Equal Pay, in last two years women's wage rates fell compared to men's jobs: the official rate of unemployment for women has been going up 3 times faster than for men — and only about half the women who lose their jobs are included in the official figures, so the real number is a lot higher.

If it wasn't for the wife's wage, the number of families living in poverty would be trebled; and thousands of women are bringing up families on just their wages.

DOWN — Free school milk and meals: you'll have to pay to qualify, and may not get them at all.

DOWN — Child Benefit: it was meant to cover the cost of a child, but that's been reckoned as over £10 a week less than half that, Child Benefit is losing value in the Budget.

DOWN — Benefits for strikers' families: a cruel ploy to use hungry families as pressure on strikers to return to work.



FIGHTBACK TAKES ON THE YS

JUST HOW FAR we have to go to get rid of the sexist and chauvinist attitudes in the labour movement was made very clear to Fightback supporters at this year's Labour Party Young Socialists conference in Llandudno at Easter.

Although the so-called Marxist Militant tendency controlled the conference, Anna Twentyman, the delegate from Manchester Moss Side YS was whistled at when she got up to speak for the composite resolution arguing for women's self-organisation and affiliation to the Fightback campaign. Militant supporters nudged each other, whispering "She must be queer".

At the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy meeting during the weekend

the Labour Abortion Rights speakers, Liz Gallacher, was sniggered at by Militant supporters when she criticised the shouting of slogans like "Ditch the Bitch" on the March 9th TUC demonstration and the Militant poster "Plunder Woman" (which shows Thatcher as an obese bikini-clad Wonderwoman). When the Fightback speaker at the meeting challenged the Militant supporter on this, he did get up to apologise, so we're not quite hitting our heads against a brick wall.

The blinkered attitude towards the fight for women's rights, prevalent throughout the conference, was highlighted by the contribution of another Militant supporter at this meeting.

He described his mother's

situation. She's a single parent with three young children. She has very little money and lives on a council estate an expensive bus journey away from the nearest shops and laundries. He said: there's only one solution for my mother and that's socialism.

What can his mother do in the meantime? According to his argument — nothing.

The idea that child-care could be organised to allow her to fight for her rights and for socialism didn't seem to have occurred to him. His mother is simply to carry on until her son, along with the rest of the Militant group, builds socialism. At the rate they're going, that could be never.

This year women were better organised. Fightback held a women's caucus on

the Saturday lunchtime to discuss what we were going to do and we put out two conference leaflets. But this meant there were more incidents like male Militant supporters coming up to us saying: "We don't feel oppressed, what's wrong with you?"

When Fightback women wrote "Attack Thatcher for her politics, not as a woman" on their 'Plunderwoman' posters, they were harassed and intimidated by Militant heavies.

Over the weekend, many women came to the Fightback stall to buy books on women's liberation they couldn't get at the other stalls. They put their names on the Fightback mailing list and for the women's YS newsletter which the Fightback caucus decided to launch.

Malvern to Blackpool

"Women's Conference resolutions — where do they all end?", a big display will be asking delegates at the Labour Party women's conference at Malvern, May 11th to 13th. Looking in the official report and agenda, we see that "the views of (the last) conference have been conveyed..." to this or that committee as interesting advice — but not as policy.

Fightback supporters at Malvern will be publicising and arguing for a model resolution to be sent from constituency Labour Parties to the annual Labour Party conference at Blackpool, demanding: "The NEC should make arrangements for Annual Conference to have a regular session given over to

resolutions sent on to it by the women's conference, to be taken in order of priority decided by the women's conference".

Ward branch meetings in May start off the process of annual conference resolutions. If you think women's conference decisions should have the chance to become party policy, after debate by the whole party, try to persuade your ward or women's section to adopt this resolution and argue for it to be adopted by your CLP.

That won't be at all easy. If you're successful, let us know — no medals, but it'll be the start of a campaign that could change the face of the Labour Party if it gets taken up by party women.

Fighting Labour Movement sexism Organising against the Tories Fighting Labour Movement

This Open Letter to trade unionists can be used on local demos, sent to local union branches (you could send one to your own branch to start a discussion) and stewards' committees; why not type it out and send it to your union journal signed by your branch or a number of members, or give it out at your union conference. Let us know if you get your branch to endorse it. Send s.a.e. for more copies.

On May 14th, and on other days of action against the Tories, large contingents of women will be taking part, as they did on March 9th. The signatories of this letter will be making an effort to ensure that women play a full part in these events.

Women are defending their rights as trade unionists and workers along with the rest of the movement. But there are special attacks on women which it is especially important we do not forget.

Women's jobs, independence, living standards and health needs are all being eaten away by the public spending cuts. Government ministers such as Patrick Jenkin have declared against a woman's right to work: in a recession, women are the first to suffer.

The Employment Bill includes clauses to restrict a woman's right to return to her job after having a baby. This right was introduced by the last Labour government, and is seen by women as the first step towards adequate maternity rights. Now the Tories are cutting it back.

But many women taking part in the March 9th TUC demonstration must have felt they were under attack there too. Slogans such as 'Thatcher — first woman prime minister and last one', and numerous others whose insults concentrated on the Tory Prime Minister being a woman, were felt by women on the march to be an insult to all women.

Sexist abuse such as bitch, cow, and other less printable epithets made many women trade unionists feel that they are outsiders in a movement that has such feelings of hatred towards Thatcher purely as a woman.

We believe that the use of such slogans degrades the trade union movement and threatens to divide it, and to undermine the solidarity of working men and women in a united fight against our class enemy. It is, moreover, contrary to the spirit and intention of the TUC's own Charter for women within trade unions, which aims to involve the women members more

actively at all levels, so it will not forever remain 'a man's world'.

If instead of being a woman Thatcher had been black, we hope the movement would not tolerate placards and slogans using words like 'coon' or 'nigger'. Likewise, if Keith Joseph were Prime Minister, we hope that the movement would not sink to using anti-semitic slogans. Neither should it blithely ignore the equivalent of such insults directed at a woman.

We ask trade unionists to discuss this matter seriously, and to decide not to approve personalised, sexist slogans on their contingents. Let's have a big mobilisation of women against the Tories. But let us not feel that the Tories' attacks on women are being reflected by the men in the trade union movement, threatening to undermine women's fight against the Tories.

Labour Movement
FIGHTBACK FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS
41 Ellington Street
London N7

EQUAL RIGHTS IN CLAM

WOMEN FIGHT exclusion from Men's Clubs annual conference. Clubs and Inns at Blackpool, in attendance by delegates from the clubs, represent 2 million members. Nearly 200 delegates from the clubs, represent them and argue on their way to the conference pubs. They were



'Go home and women pick Blackpool. B'

Tory minister Rhodes Boyson: "I think the welfare state is quite evil"

Tory minister Lynda Chalker: "Maybe in years to come, the country will look at the labour market and decide that perhaps it would be better for women with children to stay at home"

Tory Lord Spens: "Married women should not compete in the market for paid jobs"

Tory minister Patrick Jenkin: "If the Good Lord had intended us to have equal rights and to go out to work and behave equally, he really wouldn't have created man and woman"

Margaret Thatcher: "I did not exactly need the Equal Opportunities Commission" (she had a nanny to mind her children...)

A DOUBLE CUT

Tax cuts of thousands a week for the rich are paid for by 'saving' on public spending — that is, the welfare state. It means the end of hundreds of thousands of jobs for women — teachers, cleaners, meals staff, hospital workers, library, nursery and office workers, home helps, social workers, etc. And with the services gone, women will have to do the caring work, unpaid, at home.

Look at school dinners: the Tories' Education Bill will mean that schools won't have to do dinners. Some will do snacks, others will close down at 2 o'clock for the day. So what's the chance of a job for mum — or for the dinner staff? Up to 40,000 dinner staff could lose their jobs.

They're closing down nurseries too — a lost nursery place is a woman out of a job!

YOUR HEALTH AT STAKE

Health minister Gerard Vaughan is cracking down on the charities that do low-cost abortions for women who have been turned away by the NHS. Will more women turn to backstreet abortions?

Hundreds of family planning clinics are to close, leaving women to go to their GP. It'll mean less choice about contraception, and more women being given the pill (or even more dangerous things like the Depo Provera contraceptive injection) whether they want it or not.

Health authorities round the country are saving money by closing down women's wards.

VICTORIAN MORALITY

The Tories want to launch a backlash against the fight for women's independence and equality. As well as shoving us back to the kitchen sink, there's talk of making divorce more difficult; and refuges for battered women are finding it harder to get funds.

A return to the workhouse? The Association of District Councils wants to make the unemployed work for local councils, on dole rates! Then they could put other council workers onto the dole, and make them work for nothing... and so on.

A man can marry a woman from anywhere in the world and bring her to Britain to live with him. The Tories' new immigration rules restrict a woman's right to bring a foreign-born husband to live with her.

Women are to be used to cushion and hide the crisis of the capitalist system. Millions of women unemployed don't show up in the statistics and aren't expected to cause trouble — just to go quietly out of our minds at home.

But Mrs. Thatcher's government does fear trouble, from the labour movement. The **EMPLOYMENT BILL** is meant to stifle the ability of organised workers to fight back. It is aimed against every worker and trade unionist — but it has a very special sting for women.

THE EMPLOYMENT BILL

will increase the red tape and difficulties is taking maternity leave, abolish the rights of women working in firms of less than 6 to come back to their jobs after having a baby, and abolish every woman's right to return to her own job after taking maternity leave.

The Bill will mean that even the big employers won't have to offer a woman even another job on the same terms as her old job — they'll just have to offer a job that's not 'substantially less favourable' than her original job. It she refuses what's offered, she would lose her right to redundancy pay on her old job.

Will make it harder for women like those at anti-union firms like Grunwicks to win the right to join a union. Will make it illegal to support women on strike with solidarity pickets or blacking.

Will make it harder to take your boss to a tribunal for unfair dismissal: since two thirds of working women do not have union protection and are more easily sacked, this will hit women hardest.

Will repeal a clause of the Employment Protection Act that tries to improve wages for the very low paid, who are mostly women.

The TUC has called a Day of Action on May 14th: strikes, marches and rallies, leafletting, to show our opposition to Tory policies. If you're in a union or if you're not, join in! Bring your own placards to show what YOU think of the Tories. And if you haven't got a union to march with, look out for women's organisations like FIGHTBACK FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS.

Organising against the Tories Fighting Labour Movement sexism Organising against the Tories

'A woman's right to cues'

...their Working picketed the minutes of the Union. The conference of 2500 delegates was held about 1000 affiliated women lobbied questioning with them and out of the demanding

that 10 minutes of the conference be given over to discussion of equal membership for women.

Although they didn't achieve this — the women met with a considerable amount of sexist abuse ("Go home and cook your husband's dinner"), and the man who dared raise the issue from the platform was booed off it — many men were willing to listen and to agree to some points when approached individually. A number bought badges,

though one insisted on wearing his inside his lapel!

And the CIU was not able to ignore the women's protest, which was mentioned by the President at the beginning of the conference.

Although women can be members on paper of working men's clubs, many clubs bar women from their premises, and others allow women restricted rights only. No woman is allowed to hold a CIU affiliate card, which entitles the holder to entrance to all the clubs belonging to CIU.

Change in this policy requires the two-thirds majority of the membership, and although the executive has raised it three times in the last six years, it has been defeated each time.

The secretary of the CIU has stated that he doesn't see why women should be allowed membership of CIU — after all, men can't join the Women's Institute. The assistant general secretary, however, is sympathetic.

Because these clubs are private, they are not covered by the Sex Discrimination Act: at least, that has been the ruling so far. However, a court case due to begin soon in Birmingham is challenging that, with the partial backing of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Joyce Bonner, a widow and ex-servicewoman, is entitled to club membership by her membership of the

British Legion, which is affiliated to CIU. Women are allowed voting rights and places on the management committee, but not the CIU affiliate card.

Ms Bonner issued a summons against the club secretary, and sought legal advice. The solicitor she approached requested a deposit of £250, which the EOC has now agreed to pay.

This year's lobby of the CIU conference was the first, and ERICCA — the Equal Rights in Clubs Campaign for Action — is busy planning for a much bigger turnout next year. Local groups are planning pickets of local clubs, and ERICCA hopes to hold a national conference.

Sheila Capstick, the founder of ERICCA, has emphasised how important this issue is for women active in any area, as local clubs are often the centre for trade unionists.

And Caroline Bradford, founder member of the CIU Suffragettes, now incorporated in ERICCA, told *Fightback*: "This is a very important issue. It goes much deeper than the CIU cards — it raises the issue that a woman has a right to a social life".

She feels that there are important links with the fight for women to be able to go into pubs alone without being regarded as a pick-up, and for women to be able to walk alone at night without being seen as willingly risking rape.

CONFERENCE

BOOK NOW

Fightback's second conference will be held on June 21st, at Digbeth Hall, Birmingham, to put the campaign on a firmer footing. We will discuss the publication of a newspaper; decide how the campaign will be run and what it should set as its aims; sum up the work we have done so far, and map out future work.

The basis of the conference will be the same as before: we would like people to come as delegates, so they can report back to others in the women's movement and the labour movement — but it will be open to individuals too, who will have the same voting rights as those who have been delegates.

And we want it again to be overwhelmingly women, though men will not be excluded.

The Planning Committee will agree a draft structure and draft aims and policy which will be available, with credentials, if you send sae with your registration. These will be sent out by May 28th, together with other resolutions [which we must receive by May 24th].

Amendments to resolutions and to the draft statements must get to us by June 7th.

REGISTRATION FORM

NAME..... Phone No.....

Address:.....

What organisation (if any) are you representing?

.....

Your main areas of activity/interest (eg women's group, trade union, Labour Party, NAC or other campaigns, etc.) Special responsibilities or positions?

.....

REGISTRATION: £2 (£1 unwaged) in advance; or £2.50 on the door. Cheques payable to Fightback for Women's Rights.

There will be a pooled fare

CRECHE: please give names and ages of children who will/may* be using creche. (* Delete will or may)

.....

Please return to 41 Ellington Street, London-N7 as soon as possible



...cook the dinner', some delegates told 200 ... the Clubs and Institute conference in ... there was also some support.

continued from p.12

Let us discuss the situation. I want to try to state and define the differences dividing us for two reasons.

In the first place, SO cannot go on silently tolerating disloyal attacks such as yours. And in the second place, to define our differences and clear away misunderstandings (if such there be) will help perhaps to prepare unity in action against our common enemies where that is possible.

Most of what I have to say implies that you have much in common with SO — if that were not so, there would be no point in the letter.

DECLINE

Our root difference lies in our perspectives for the labour movement and what conclusions serious socialist militants should draw from them. Britain is in a chronic and accelerating decline. There is no way out under capitalism. In order even to protect itself the working class must fight to put in a workers' government to fight for its interests.

Socialists must strive to orientate the entire labour movement towards the goal of taking control of society away from the incompetent parasites who now dominate and threaten to ruin our lives — not in the distant future, but in the next period ahead. All the present struggles — including the struggle to kick the Tories out — must be focused (insofar as Marxists can affect their focus) on that perspective. It is a matter of great urgency that the Marxists within the labour movement bind themselves together to help prepare the labour movement for this fight.

The alternative may very well be a major and historic defeat for the working class in Britain.

The central question now is to break the labour movement from class collaboration; to break it from the reformist commitment to bargaining within the capitalist system on a basis of taking responsibility for the system and being confined to options within it.

LOPSIDED

But you see your role in Lambeth as only that of a humane administrator. That Lambeth Council has avoided any serious cuts is something to be proud of. But how has it been achieved? By backdoor cuts in living standards.

You act and talk as if the council services, plus disposable income, plus Government services, did not add up to one standard of living for the workers in the area. You operate as if your only concern is with the gross council service component of it — even if that is maintained by 'redistributing' net income within one and the same living standard to sustain it.

This is a myopic and a bureaucratically compartmentalised falsification of reality. So long as 'the department' makes it quota, why bother about the world outside?

That your view of your 'department's' responsibilities is a humane and a good one does not make a difference to the utterly inadequate view of the world involved here. A socialist militant, as distinct from a professional councillor, is concerned with the social overview and the general consequences of what he does to sustain his or her own 'department'.

In pursuit of your lopsided vision, and in order to avoid the risk of losing your position in Lambeth (as a result of taking on the Tories and

being surcharged or disqualified) you pass on the Tory cuts, translated into cuts in income by rent and rate rises. You refuse to stand and fight the Tories now, and cling to the power to decide from which area of working class income the siphoning-off should take place.

This is the essential truth, even if some redistribution of income to the working class of Lambeth may occur from the high proportion of Lambeth rates raised from business premises. And of course you know that rate rises are not a way of avoiding indefinitely the choice of cuts or taking on the Government.

In pursuit of your lopsided vision again, you have turned Lambeth Council into a major school of reformist class collaboration for Lambeth and the London labour movement. You teach 'responsibility', confinement to the parameters and options laid down by the Tory government (until the 'big battalions' of Labour kick the Tories out), to justify and explain the choices you make and advocate within those parameters.

To justify your rate-rise policies you refer to powers above you that you dare not take on or challenge at a fundamental level. Isn't this

capitalism, and therefore that only if the anti-capitalist movement spread to countries like France and Germany could there be the possibility of stabilising the workers' power.

Immediately after taking power, the British workers' state would face a very difficult period. If we apply your argument about Lambeth — supposedly under the control of the Left and those like you who present themselves as revolutionaries — to Britain, it is an argument not to take power until the 'big battalions' of France and Germany lead... It is an old, old argument of the more aware reformists and reactionaries in the labour movement, to justify their own passivity and accommodation.

In your interview with the Chartist magazine (March-May 1980) you say you hope to avoid cuts on top of the rate rises. You base this on the belief ('perspective') that the labour movement will fight the Tories and drive them from office. (You seem to have a maximum time scale of one year for this — it must happen 'before April 1981'). The clear implication is that if we don't fight, or if we fight and don't win, then you will probably have to cut.

But this is the 'perspective' you had in July 1979

in 1973 calling for a general strike — when he was trying to convince the miners they alone should not take on the Tories?

In the second place, following from the above, it has nothing to do with a Marxist idea of 'perspective' — it is nothing but passive expectation and hope.

STRUGGLE

Your conception of the role and responsibilities of a militant is remarkably like that of the Militant tendency. What is to be the role of the leader of Lambeth council in the battle to dislodge the Tories? Of Lambeth Council itself? Is it to be a bastion of Left strength and working-class strength (which it could be perhaps, but is not now), or is it to be preserved at all costs from possible damage in the struggle?

Your vision of the struggle against the Tories is of a purely industrial struggle — to be initiated and waged by others. The industrial struggle will come to your rescue and meanwhile 'the Leader' administers Lambeth (humanely). If the rescue does not come in time you will have to consider administering it (less humanely) by making cuts. I suspect that this 'syndi-

labour movement clash with the Tory government then you would be less timid in face of the Government (and feel less need to lash out at the Left). And if you were still a militant, you would not shirk the personal risks (surcharge, disqualification as a councillor, gaol) of confrontation with the government, if that could give a lead to the movement.

Of course one understands the psychological logic of someone switching from the mindless voluntarism of the late-'60s SLL to Militant-style passive 'perspectives'. But the fact remains that either you no longer see any role for yourself in the struggle, or that you do not believe in 'the perspective' you enunciate. Which?

Before you tried to identify SO with the Right, you should have remembered the proverb, 'One does not speak of the rope in the house of the hanged'. For though you need to present yourself as one who is hounded by the Right, in fact you seem to have much better relations with the Right (in Lambeth and in London) than you have with the revolutionary Left. For example, a few minutes of discussion between yourself, pocket calculator in hand, and the Right, sufficed to determine the size of rate increase in Lambeth.

Last July — and we have seen what perspectives you had then — when you decided to carry out cuts, you gave a much appreciated signal to every right wing council in the country to follow suit. Your 'Red Knight' publicity had given you a national standing as a foremost opponent of the Tories and their cuts, and you had a solid base of support.

Two months (!) after the election, when the movement was still feeling its way on how to deal with the Tories, when many people looked to Lambeth's 'Red Knight' for a lead, you gave it. You signalled, loud and clear: 'Surrender', 'cut'.

You said the 'big battalions' had not moved to bring down the Government, so you had no choice but to surrender. And every right wing council in the country breathed a sigh of relief.

The revolt of the Lambeth Labour Parties soon forced you to rescind the cuts. (In my opinion you do not have a right to the lavish self-praise for 'democratic accountability' which you now give yourself when publicly discussing this episode. A right winger or a Tribune might have: not someone with your history).

But if one wants the outstanding recent example of leftists helping the Right, and even momentarily politically amalgamating with them (under cover of 'left' flak), then that was surely it, comrade Knight.

It is, I have suggested, this sort of contradiction between what you do and what you say that makes criticism from the left dangerous (and perhaps painful) for you. How unaware are you of the contradiction? The record

suggests that you must be aware of it.

In July 1978 the SCLV conference, chaired by you, adopted the no rent and rate rise policy, with not one voice of opposition. It must have seemed to everyone present to be your politics too.

At a conference on the cuts called by the SCLV in June 1979, you may have been decisive in persuading the majority to opt for rate rises as the only alternative to cuts. A couple of weeks later you tried to cut as well as raising rates.

That you considered cuts an immediate option when you made those 'militant' speeches seems more or less certain. Were you just saying the 'popular thing' at conference to bamboozle people that rate rises were an alternative to cuts — or don't you know from one day to the next what you will do?

Again, in the recent interview with Chartist magazine, you pronounce yourself against rent increases — about a week before you impose an average rent increase of about £1.50 a week on the working-class tenants of Lambeth Council.

How would you go about arguing that this is not the record of one who knowingly fakes?

Finally, one of the central things about the role and contradictions I have discussed above is, I think, that you necessarily have a purely personalist view of politics now.

A man alone in a very loose social democratic party, you must protect yourself from surcharge, jail, disqualification. What is 'the Leader of Lambeth' if he can no longer be even a councillor?

The Clay Cross councillors took on the Heath Government and when the 'first 11' were victimised, a 'second 11' came forward. They were part of a fighting community. Each one could confidently say, 'If I go down, there are others to come after me'. They behaved as great working class fighters, and dealt blows to the Government out of all proportion to Clay Cross's size.

But you, comrade Knight, are an individual operating through loose alliances, without a stable political base, and not one of a group of revolutionaries. You cannot think that you are replaceable — or not at any rate with equanimity. You have only the weapons of manoeuvre and manipulation. You are increasingly driven by the contradictions in your position to resort to the arts of the 'fake left' — and to the use of techniques like 'the amalgam'.

Without being part of a serious political organisation, you have advanced to high political office, to a key position in the London labour movement. Faced with the prospect of a fight you feel weak and isolated; faced with capitulation — with betraying your whole political life — you vacillate and try to manoeuvre, and lash out at the revolutionary Left.

The name the Marxist movement has given to the type of political course you have chosen is *adventurism*. It is a process whereby the one-time professional revolutionary can sink into being a professional leader of a safe Labour council.

The point where you find yourself using Stalinist techniques against the revolutionary Left should be the point where you take stock. Events are likely to move fast in the period ahead. You are probably much further along the road to being a professional councillor, and more distant from being a revolutionary, than you know yourself to be.



On November 7th Lambeth council called a mass demonstration against cuts. But now the recipe is: raise rates, raise rents, sit tight

in essence the sort of argument Callaghan used to justify his posture before the IMF?

If the argument holds good for you in Lambeth, confronting the Tory government, why not for Healey and Callaghan and Wilson in the weak and isolated British state, confronted by the IMF.

Lambeth alone can't defeat the Tories! No indeed! You could give a lead that could inspire the general resistance to the Tories. At the least you would be a Clay Cross on a much larger scale. Even to be a Clay Cross on the original scale was no small thing...

Wilson and Callaghan might have said that weak Britain could not win against the international capitalist system — and many miseducated reformist workers would agree. It is even true that though the workers in Britain could take power, the immediate consequence would be, at least, boycott and sabotage, withdrawal of credit etc. by international

when you cited the fact that the 'big battalions' had not yet moved against the Tories (two months after the election!) to justify capitulation to Heseltine and imposing cuts (later reversed).

Three things are wrong with your 'perspective'.

In the first place, it is a more or less explicit 'declaration of intent' to capitulate on cuts (on top of rent and rate rises) if the labour movement does not manage to settle with the Tories in a few short months. SO also believes the working class will take on the Tories and that we can beat them this time round too. But for a militant in a key position to make his decision on whether to fight (or, as now, manoeuvre) or surrender dependent on a decisive victory by others on his own side within a short time ahead is utterly unserious.

Your 'left' talk about industrial action to bring down the Tories turns out to be an excuse to wait on events. Do you remember Joe Gorm-

calist' (for other people) view of the struggle is probably central to your present outlook. For if you conceived of the struggle as demanding the mobilisation of working class communities, tenants, etc. then you could not blithely raise rents and rates.

In the third and final place, I suspect you do not believe in your own 'perspective'. You do not at all act like a man who takes his own ideas seriously.

If decisive class battles are in the offing, then a serious militant would feel a strong need to find his own role in the struggle, to help develop it, perhaps to spark it (because there are no grounds for confidence in the leaders of the 'big battalions' as leaders in the working class struggle against the Tories).

Your only conclusion from the 'perspective' is that it is a licence to hang on in Lambeth. It is no more than an alibi for time-serving now. (The parallel with Militant is quite striking here.)

If you really believed in the likelihood of a decisive

SACKED...for resisting the cuts

TO DATE, 5 schools and about 50 teachers in Notts are either suspended or on strike over the sacking of Eileen Crosbie, a nursery teacher.

The dispute began this January when Eileen Crosbie was suspended after refusing to teach a grossly over-size nursery class of 40.

During the Easter holidays, the County Council said there would be a special disciplinary hearing of her case on April 22nd, the second day of term. This gave the NUT, Crosbie's union, very little time to organise.

A half-day strike and rally was organised for April 22nd. 2,000 teachers turned up. Ballot forms had already gone out to the schools to take a vote on one-day no-cover action, and in primary schools a refusal to teach classes over 30.

The proposed actions were overwhelmingly accepted in the schools and by teachers at the rally.

But, by leaving the implementation of the action to the individual members and NUT school reps, the NUT action committee miscalculated how aggressive Nott County Council would be

on the issue.

On hearing of the proposed action, the authorities demanded all teachers should sign a letter declaring they would work 'normally'. A failure either to sign or to work normally would lead to immediate suspension.

The NUT has said that if one teacher is suspended, then all other members in the school should refuse to

teach and stay in the staff-room. So since Eileen Crosbie was sacked, suspensions and strikes have escalated.

The action can't be left to a few brave teachers in the primary schools. It must be extended to all Notts schools. And it must involve parents too.

In the actions so far they have often shown more flair

and imagination in organising than the NUT leadership. Action must continue till all the suspended teachers, including Eileen Crosbie, are reinstated.

Some schools have already called on the NUT's action committee to call an all-out strike as soon as possible, calling on other unions such as NAS/UWT, NUPE and NALGO to support us.

NUPE and NALGO have already supported action but NAS/UWT has consistently copped out, saying that the sacking of a teacher in another union doesn't concern them! Indeed, the only teachers still working at Eileen Crosbie's school — are in the NAS/UWT.

Action must be carried out as a unified directive from the action committee. There should be regular — at least weekly — association and reps meetings to monitor protest and discuss further action — no more behind-the-scenes diplomacy!

There is no going back in the fight against the county council without disastrous consequences for the NUT and all teachers in Notts.

IVAN WELLS
(South Notts NUT)



Notts campaign against cuts needs to include parents and school students

Resistance grows to ILEA break-up

THE LONDON labour movement is beginning to move into action against Tory plans to break up the Inner London Education Authority, which now have the official support of the Government.

Breaking up the ILEA would require an Act of Parliament, and at least some measures to equalise the resulting rate burden on London boroughs. But campaigners reckon that the Government may announce legislation as soon as September or October.

"The Tory attempt to break up ILEA would represent a massive blow to the working class boroughs, a severe curtailment of educational opportunity, and an enormous job loss for both teaching and manual workers", Haringey Labour councillor and NUPE official Jeremy Corbyn told SO. "It must be resisted".

The South East Region TUC is coordinating a campaign by unions and Labour Parties. The London Labour Party is calling on GLPs to oppose the break-up, and has planned a delegate meeting for June 8th. In Wandsworth, where the Tory council is pushing hard to get out of ILEA, there is a strong and active parents' organisation campaigning to keep the borough within ILEA.

Contact: 'Defend ILEA', c/o 13-15 Stockwell Road, London SW9.



Jeremy Corbyn

Labour council plans house sales

DUBBED by Roy Hattersley as the Labour Council that 'likes to make cuts', Islington seems set to break new ground in its eagerness to grovel before the Tory government.

The last meeting of the Council's Housing Committee on 27th March, not satisfied with ratifying the complete abolition of its housing programme, decided to go one stage further and sell off 150 empty properties from its existing housing stock.

Committee chairperson Chris Pryce emphasised that they would not be sold to residents — who could not afford the prices of £30,000 upwards — but to property speculators.

The borough is littered with empty homes bought by the Council when it was making efforts to solve our appalling level of homelessness and slum housing. Decisions to slash — and now end — the provision of new accommodation means these houses will never be renovated by the Council itself. The Council is also considering plans to sell off sites that it has acquired for new house building.

By selling to speculators, Labour's right wing hopes simultaneously to claw back a little money, to appease the ratepayers' group which has been campaigning about 'waste', and to earn a pat on the back from Michael Heseltine.

The losers, of course, are the homeless — there are over 10,000 families on the Council's waiting list, and this figure is growing by 100 a month — and tenants in slum conditions awaiting transfer. Manifesto commitments and Labour Party policy have also been ignored.

All three Constituency Labour Parties have voted overwhelmingly to oppose the sales proposal. Islington Campaign against the Cuts and the local Labour Parties are determined to see that the right wing doesn't get away with it. Already ten public meetings on this and related issues are scheduled in the borough, in conjunction with tenants' associations, and the Campaign is organising a petition on housing in preparation for more direct action against the Council's policies.

LAMBETH LABOUR LEFT

Linking up across London

by
Graham Norwood

AS REGULAR *Socialist Organiser* readers will know, Lambeth Council has been at the first-point of the clash between Labour local authorities and the Conservative central government.

Two recent articles from Lambeth councillor Bill Bowring have shown how the brave words in the early months were not totally supported by the recent

ing from across London, sharing the experiences of Lambeth and promoting a strong left-wing alternative to the programmes put across in Lambeth and elsewhere.

The LLL alternative would bring Lambeth into direct conflict with the Tory government — but it would do so on a basis which could maintain the support of local residents.

The only way cuts can be avoided in 1981 is if council workers and the people of Lambeth fight the cuts tooth and nail — and that means beginning the fight now. There is no use throwing out phoney rhetoric and synthetic indignation at the Government if — in November 1980 or early 1980 — the Lambeth council backs down further and imposes cuts in services as well as the present cuts in standards of living.

A firm stand will have to be taken, and the best time is now when we still have support.

The group's stated aim is not to change the leadership of Lambeth council, but to change its policies. Confrontation with the Tories is inevitable, so let us do it now with principle and dignity — when we have a good chance of winning.

But that chance exists so long as Lambeth is not in isolation. If the receiver is brought in, the Government establishes a short-term victory. But what if a second council stands up to the Tories?... then a third... and on an on?

That is why Lambeth Labour Left is organising this June public meeting to debate across London what can be done to make boroughs adopt a socialist strategy in defence of working people.

LLL already has contacts in Southwark, Lewisham, Islington, Woolwich and Haringey, and there is at least a core of support for the 'no rate increase/no cuts/no rent increase' strategy in every London borough. We now hope to tie these strings together, for a free interchange of ideas.

The meeting is in Lambeth Town Hall at 8.00pm on Friday June 27th. Everyone who shares the broad aims of LLL — in Lambeth or elsewhere — is invited to come along and share in the debate.



actions of Lambeth Council. A massive 49% rate rise has bitten into the standards of living of working class people in the borough, and with the exception of a small number of councillors, there has been no 'official' sympathy with working class residents over this problem — until now.

'Lambeth Labour Left', a group of Party members in the borough who stand on a strident programme in opposition to cuts, rate rises and rent increases, is now undertaking a meeting to gain advice and understand-

A socialist GLC in 1981?

THIS IS the year in which the London Labour Parties will decide policy and select their candidates for the May 1981 GLC elections.

For the first time, the election will be a major event in the struggle to bring down the Tory government.

The election must be used to rally support for councils refusing to make cuts, and to mobilise opposition to the Tories' policies of cuts. It will be a major defeat for the government if we can win a decisive majority on the GLC.

GLC and ILEA finances must be used to help any

Labour borough from whom the Tories withhold government finance. We must also close down the GLC Housing Disposals Department and sack the spivs and 'super-salesmen' brought in by Horace Cutler, the Tory leader of the GLC, to destroy the housing stock of London.

At previous GLC elections, few socialists have been willing to stand, because of daytime meetings and the remoteness of the GLC. So GLC Labour politicians have been worse than Labour MPs, and that is really saying something.

Now there is something close to hysteria among the

careerists and time-servers who clutter up County Hall as they face a serious challenge for the first time.

Already one third of the Labour Group has decided not to stand for reselection and a number of others have started making left wing noises to their GMCs. This year's Greater London Labour Party conference voted for automatic reselection of GLC councillors, for election manifestos to be decided by the whole party and for the annual conference to elect the Leader of the GLC.

These changes were carried by 800,000 to 300,000

votes and are now forwarded to the NEC for endorsement.

Yet as we go to press, the old guard at County Hall has already shown its total cynicism towards such attempts at democratising the Party.

Sir Roy Goodwin, GLC Labour opposition leader, has resigned early to enable the present 'rump' Labour Group to pick a successor before the new changes take effect. This flouting of the will of London Labour must be the subject of protests from CLPs throughout the Greater London area.

The Campaign for Labour Victory and other far right

wing groups are now organising an attempt to return most of the old 1973 councillors and to prevent the implementation of a socialist manifesto. They must be opposed and roundly defeated.

We can win our biggest victory ever at County Hall, and strike a damaging blow against Thatcher's government. But it is essential that in the coming months we select as candidates committed socialists who will stick by the decisions of London Labour. The discredited right wing must be thrown out and its hold on the GLC broken.



by Keith Veness, recent candidate in Croydon NE GLC by-election

NEAL SMITH
reviews 'The
First Fabians',
by N and J Mac-
kenzie, Weidenfeld
and Nicholson.

LOOKING BACK over the lives of the old Fabian leadership — the Peases, the Oliviers, the Shaws, the Wallases, and the Webbs — Beatrice Webb reflected that they were "the utter essence of British bourgeois morality, comfort and enlightenment". The great value of the Mackenzie's book is that it demonstrates how accurate Beatrice's opinion was, and in so doing, portrays with dramatic force the contradictions (which we still face today) within the socialist movement: the contradictions between working-class aspirations and the benevolent bourgeois paternalism of leaders of the labour movement.

At least the Webbs had few illusions about their role. From the earliest days of the Fabian Society in the 1880s, Sydney Webb in particular saw the role of the Fabians as that of propagandists amongst the middle class. Despairing of working class movements, the Fabians set their faces towards middle class 'progressives', such as the Liberal Radicals, and assiduously pursued this course for nearly 20 years. Their aim was to 'permeate' the Liberal Party with the Fabians' own peculiar brand of corporate socialism — an aim which only slowly was seen to be at odds with much that Liberalism stood for.

Idea

In the beginning much was obscure. The Fabian Society, founded in 1884, included all kinds of people who were attracted to some vague idea of socialism for a wide variety of reasons. Its leading lights — Edmund Pease, Herbert Bland, George Bernard Shaw, Sydney Webb, and Annie Besant — differed widely in their views. In Webb's phrase, they were little more than "a mere group of friends meeting to discuss their own intellectual difficulties". Some, like Bland, were close to the revolutionary socialism of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF); others, like Pease and Webb, were drawn towards the Liberals. Two events pushed the Fabians down the road mapped out by Webb: both were directly connected with the SDF.

In the general election of 1885, the SDF ran candidates in Hampstead and Kennington. The money to pay for these was obtained secretly from Tory sources in the hope that the SDF would draw off Radical votes. The

Organising the poor into a flock of sheep

SDF 'Tory gold' was uncovered and everyone was upset.

The Fabians rebuked the SDF and Annie Besant, foreshadowing the characteristic approach of the Fabians, declared that socialism

none the less, but as a destroying angel, with fire, and bloodshed and confusion. On us, of the upper and middle classes, rests the burden of this choice." This view was reinforced when on Sunday November 13th 1887 the

servant of genteel lower middle class background, Sydney Webb was a brilliant and hard-working researcher and a dedicated propagandist of his own 'gradualist' approach to socialism. Aided by the spectacular polemical gifts of Shaw, and the industry of Beatrice, Webb became the head of the Old Gang that was to lead the Fabians until the First World War.

The municipal 'gas and water' socialism of the Webbs is well known, and the Mackenzies spend more of their time delving into the personal characteristics of the Webbs, and the effects these characteristics had on their political actions.

Unruly

Neither of them come out very well. Both of them frequently expressed views which showed all too clearly that they conceived of socialism as something an enlightened despotism of the middle class would bring to the unruly workers. In fact, their 'socialism' came to have less and less connection with the needs of workers. In Sydney's case, he always seems to have been motivated by the bureaucratic desire for planning and 'efficiency'. These seem to be the key words in his 'socialist' view — a view which prompted a one-time Fabian, Hillaire Belloc,

Webbs distinctly unloveable, yet they defined a whole current of socialist thought which has survived to become the ethos of the upper reaches of the labour movement.

While other leading labour figures, such as Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald, were busy stumping the country speaking and organising, the Fabians were busy turning out a succession of pamphlets on every aspect of politics. Informed with the

became apparent that the Liberals were hardly serious allies. By the start of the First World War, the Fabians had come to see their future as lying with Labour — and the Labour leaders welcomed them warmly as intellectual champions of a gradual road to socialism.

In 1916, Webb became the Fabian representative on the Labour Party executive — a post previously held with little enthusiasm by Pease — and he soon became



Sydney Webb

diligent analysis of the Webbs and fired with the wit of Shaw, these pamphlets laid the base in the labour movement for the ideas of the Fabians. No other group could compete in depth of research and style of writing — sales soared into tens of thousands.

Coupled with the Webb-sponsored *New Statesman* and the London School of Economics, the pamphlets ensured that the ideas of the Webbs became common coin in the labour movement.

Party

Yet relations with the labour movement were strained for most of the early period. Despite the odd flirtation, the labour leaders saw the Fabians as middle class Radicals hostile to the idea of an independent working class political party. This perception was essentially accurate. At the time of the founding of the Independent Labour Party in 1893, only Bland among the Fabian leadership favoured a separate socialist party. Webb and Shaw both belonged to local Liberal organisations and had high expectations of the new Liberal government. At the outset of the ILP founding conference, Shaw, who was only just allowed to be a delegate, came out "extravagantly" for permeation of the Liberal Party.

However, the only political force interested in socialism, of whatever form, was the labour movement. Over the years, 'permeation' was the keystone of the Fabian approach, but they occasionally veered towards the labour movement as it



Beatrice Webb

a member of the Party's inner group. Towards the end of the war, Sydney drafted the Party's manifesto — Labour and the New Social Order — setting out a comprehensive programme of public ownership, social welfare and political reform. He went on to serve in both Labour governments of the '20s, along with other Fabians such as Olivier.

As the Mackenzies remark: "The essential ideas of Fabianism had at last become official Labour policy".

As is well known, in later years, disillusioned by the failures of the MacDonald governments, the Webbs swung to being uncritical admirers of Stalinist Russia. This is not surprising. The Stalinist system appealed to their elitism and paternalism, their desire for order and planning, and their lack of sympathy with working people.

Legacy

The legacy of the early Fabians has little to recommend it to socialists striving to discover a socialist strategy for today. We must start from the opposite point of view — that of working people and their aspirations — and disdain all expressions of elitism and paternalism. If we do not do this, we will end up with empty schemes and plans divorced from any political force to carry them out. The Webbs set one good example — that of policies and programmes backed up by serious research and analysis. Let us follow that — and disregard the rest.



Bloody Sunday 1887: before police attacked a march of the unemployed, Fabian George Bernard Shaw went home for tea

was to be achieved by "a slow process of evolution, not by revolution and bloodshed". This was becoming a general view of the Society. Their middle class sensibilities were outraged by the demagoguery of the SDF leaders, and they disparaged the SDF attempt to organise the unemployed. During the year 1885 the SDF promoted massive, and often violent, demonstrations by the unemployed in the centre of London.

The Fabians anxiously distanced themselves from the rioting, and Pease wrote, of socialism: "If we prepare the way before it... it will come peaceably. If, on the other hand, we harden our hearts... it will come upon us

police smashed up an enormous demonstration converging on Trafalgar Square.

The events of Bloody Sunday demonstrated to the Fabians that insurrectionary tactics were doomed to failure. Shaw took part in the early part of the demonstration, but went home for tea as the fighting reached its peak. In his footnote to the affair, he commented, "It all comes from people trying to live down to fiction instead of up to fact". From this point on, the Fabians began to move along the lines already being followed by Webb, who was working in the London Radicals.

About this time, Webb became the central figure in the Fabians. A professional civil

to remark that Webb itched "to manage the affairs of others" by organising "the poor into a flock of sheep".

Beatrice displayed similar views. For example, in 1908, when she and Sydney were on the Royal Commission investigating the Poor Law, Lloyd George tried to interest them in his new plans for social insurance, which he proposed to launch with small non-contributory old-age pensions. Beatrice replied that she was against paying out public money without imposing any obligation on the person receiving it. She felt that relief should be "conditional on better conduct".

Such po-faced puritanism and paternalism made the

LABOUR SPECIAL CONFERENCE

Something for almost everyone

LABOUR'S SPECIAL conference on May 31st will be presented with a long statement from the National Executive Committee (NEC) which has something for everyone — except those who want a real fight against the Tories.

It is supposed to be a left-wing statement — but it has support from James Callaghan. "Essentially it contains no new policies", as *Labour weekly* puts it.

The statement says that

the Labour Party should oppose Cruise nuclear missiles in Britain. But it does not tie down the Shadow Cabinet, and will not stop front-bench spokesman William Rodgers continuing to back the Cruise project.

Cuts

The statement condemns the cuts, but makes out a plan of action and no campaign

for throwing the weight of the labour movement behind Labour councils which defy the Tories.

The approach, according to Dennis Skinner MP, quoted in *Labour Weekly*, was to "edge as far as possible towards the alternative strategy while maintaining unity". To preserve this delicate balance, no amendments from Constituency Labour Parties or trade unions will be allowed at the conference.

But the Labour Party cannot become a real alternative to the Tories just by making declarations for show. Repeating promises is no good, when millions of workers are well aware that the promises of the 1974 Manifesto were never kept. And promises for what the next Labour government will do cannot be a substitute for plans to fight this Tory government now.

To make Labour a real alternative, rank and file

control over the leadership is vital, to make sure that policies decided are actually carried out. When right wing leaders refuse to go along with those policies, they should be promptly booted out of their positions.

Break

Labour must seriously come to grips with fighting the Tories — by breaking all collaboration with the

Tories, and beginning an offensive to halt the Tories' attacks and drive them from office. Socialists must fight for the labour movement to break with the bourgeoisie, to reorient and restructure itself, and to form a workers' government.

Many Labour activists are beginning to see this. And they are protesting against the NEC's plans to reduce the Special Conference to little more than a rally.

MARTIN THOMAS

A year of Tory government 1979-80

□□ MAY. Tories elected. Queen's Speech promises to ban trade union solidarity on picket lines, to raise police pay, and to tighten immigration curbs.

□□ JUNE. First Tory budget. Big tax handouts for the rich, while an increase in VAT to 15% hits everyone else. Prescription charges raised from 20p to 45p.

□□ JULY. Tories publish draft anti-picket law. Industry Minister Joseph announces that nationalised industries will have to cut jobs to make profits, and that make-work palliatives will be scrapped.

£4,000 million of public spending cuts announced. Lewisham/Southwark/Lambeth Area Health Authority sacked for refusing to make the cuts.

□□ SEPTEMBER. New Edwardes plan for BL: 25,000 jobs to go. First let-up in the steady stream of convictions at the Southall trials.

□□ OCTOBER. Director of Public Prosecutions decides not to prosecute anyone for Blair Peach's murder.

James Prior announces that the legal right to maternity leave will be severely cut. (Later, he retreats slightly, but the Employment Bill still contains clauses restricting maternity leave rights).

□□ NOVEMBER. BL sacks Longbridge convenor Derek Robinson. Keith Joseph had prepared the way by saying the Government would starve BL of funds unless workers accepted managing director Michael Edwardes' ultimatums.

□□ DECEMBER. Tories put out new immigration rules: husbands and fiancés will not be allowed in if immigration officers suspect the marriage is not 'genuine'. Entry of young or elderly dependants is also further restricted. Zimbabwe agreement: Tories force liberation movements to accept a settlement on the basis of leaving the

old white-dominated state apparatus more or less intact.

52,000 job cuts announced for British Steel.

Heseltine Bill published: drastic pressure on councils to make cuts, squeeze on direct labour.

NATO Council calls for 572 medium-range nuclear missiles to be based in Western Europe. Tories welcome Britain's quota of 160 Cruise missiles.

□□ JANUARY. Steel strike starts. Tories say they

will not intervene... but everyone knows they are pulling British Steel's purse-strings.

Defence Minister Francis Pym announces that the Tories are continuing a £1,000 million plan to update Polaris secretly started by the Labour Government, and intend to spend £4,000 to £5,000 million on a successor to Polaris.

□□ FEBRUARY. Tories call on police to use the law against steel pickets, and say they will tighten up the Em-

ployment Bill.

Junior Minister John Biffen promises "three years of unparalleled austerity".

□□ MARCH. BL makes an ultimatum to its workers, explicitly backed by Thatcher: Accept 5% and 92 pages of strings; resist and you will be sacked.

Tories' second budget. Prescription charges go up to 70p, and are later to rise to £1.

□□ APRIL. Thatcher backs Carter's raid on Iran and his call for economic sanctions.

A year of Labour opposition

SINCE getting elected a year ago, the Tory government has declared war on the working class. Yet the Labour opposition in Parliament has carried on with 'business as usual'.

Labour's period in opposition began in May with Callaghan laying down the line to the NEC. "The Tories have won a majority and have the right to implement their programme", he said, opposing the use of industrial action against the Tories. He also opposed any attempt to commit the Labour Party to renationalisation without compensation of industries hived off by the Tories, or to buying back council houses at the price at which they were sold off.

Since then, the PLP has done its best to hold back direct action against the Tories and to oppose anything that would tie them down in the future.

Roy Hattersley told Labour councils to do "anything within the law" to oppose cuts, ignoring the fact that the Tories have a big enough majority to change the law as and when it suits them. He also beat down calls for "no cuts, no rate rises", or even for a general policy of "no cuts", even within the law, and

tried to divert Labour councils from a policy of all-out opposition to cuts into wrangling in the courts about Heseltine's precise powers.

Neil Kinnock, previously identified with the left, argued against any commitment by the Labour Party to restoring all cuts made by the Tories when a Labour government is returned. And in January the Labour front bench said that it wouldn't necessarily repeal the whole of the anti-union Employment Bill.

The Labour leaders have been incapable of presenting an alternative to the Tories' economic policies. Almost all bourgeois political commentators remarked on the feebleess of Labour's Parliamentary opposition to the last Budget.

Dennis Healey has claimed — for example in a TV discussion with Thatcher's monetarist guru Milton Friedman — that he was the first real "monetarist" Chancellor who tried to cut back public spending and the supply of money. His main disagreement with the Tories is that monetary restraint is not enough and should be combined with an incomes policy.

In the steel strike, Callaghan's attacks on the Tories

focused, not on their attempts to force through redundancies and a 2% wage rise, but on their failure to intervene in the strike directly. He later called for a court of inquiry — not dissimilar to the bunch that eventually produced the sell-out agreement.

While the Labour front bench has done little to lead a fighting opposition to the Tories, it has spent a lot of time opposing attempts to extend democracy in the Party. Just as it wants to avoid any clear statements about what it'll do when returned to government, so it wants to avoid any constitutional changes that would lead to it being held to account.

Callaghan has relied on the backing of the Shadow Cabinet and the PLP for his attacks on the left on the NEC and on democratic reforms in the party.

To fight and beat the Tories, the labour movement must be put on a war footing. The Labour leaders are doing all they can to obstruct this and to hold us back. We must fight to get rid of them and to reorientate and restructure the movement in line with the needs of the fight against the Tories.

BRUCE ROBINSON



Tory warriors: Heseltine, Thatcher, Joseph, Prior



Leading the retreat: Callaghan, Healey, Kinnock.



APEX: Spearhead of the Right?

A conference delegate reports on how the clerical workers' union APEX is shaping up to become a spearhead for the right wing within the labour movement.

THE APEX Conference (Friday 18th to Monday 21st April) was a triumph for the right wing of the labour movement. The APEX leadership — including Dennis Howell, Shirley Williams and Dennis Healey — is clearly a spearhead for the right's counter-offensive to reverse the gains of the Brighton Conference. The attack is two-fold — over Labour Party democracy, and over proposed union amalgamation.

The lengthy Executive Report, together with a barrage of sexist remarks from the platform, dominated conference and forced many important branch resolutions off the end of the agenda.

Paragraph 14 of the Report proposed that "in voting on constitutional issues within the Labour Party, only members [of APEX] who are individual members of the Labour Party have any standing". This was carried on a card vote by 3 to 2 — the nearest the left got to overturning the Executive's recommendations.

Block vote

The decision has two effects. Firstly it is undemocratic, debarring affiliate Labour Party members from deciding APEX branch

policy on Labour Party issues, whilst APEX bureaucrats continue to use their block vote of affiliate members at Labour Party Conferences. Secondly, it cuts across attempts to involve rank and file trade unionists in Labour Party issues and activities, by giving affiliate membership little or no meaning.

Mild

This was a portent of things to come in the debate around Composite No.4 on Labour Party democracy. The mild composite called for the party leader to be elected by "a wider body than the PLP"; for GMCs to have the right to reselect their MPs; and for Labour governments to carry out conference decisions. President Dennis Howell ruled from the chair only

2 speeches for, and 2 speeches against the composite, each of 3 minutes.

He then summed up for 11½ minutes, devoting much of his speech, like the pages of the last 2 APEX journals, to a crude witch-hunting attack on Militant. Attention was diverted away from the composite's proposals, which the right wing was singularly unable to criticise. The composite was defeated 3 to 1 on a show of hands.

But the main debate of conference was on the future development of the union, with a view to amalgamation. Three possibilities were presented by the Executive:

■ a management/staff organisation dominated by APEX.

■ The creation of a large staff union by merger with either TASS or ASTMS.

■ A confederation of unions.

Much of the debate con-

sisted of uncomradely remarks about ASTMS — and an amendment calling for merger with ASTMS was heavily defeated. But the underlying objection to both ASTMS and TASS seemed to revolve around their 'left' politics.

Hushed

The position of Roy Grantham and his fellow Executive seems to be in favour of a large right wing confederation within which APEX would be the dominant part of the white collar section. Prime targets for amalgamation appear to be the GMWU (whose white collar section is MATSA) and the EETPU (staff section EESA).

According to Tim Gopsill, writing in the *New Statesman* (April 18th), "A hushed up joint committee of the

GMWU, APEX, EETPU and USDW has been talking about this [project of a giant right wing federation] for some months and these talks are about to bring in CoHSE — one of the health workers' unions — and the Engineers and Managers' Association".

In the end, conference left the decision open — with all negotiated terms being available to the membership, and the deciding factor a special delegate conference followed by a ballot of all members.

The left must organise to make sure that a confederation with the GMWU and EETPU — on the terms it would no doubt be made — is killed before it gets off the ground. At the same time, amalgamation in principle is desirable and the left must be prepared to come up with constructive proposals of its own.

Socialist Organiser

PAGES OF FROTH

The Daily
Express
and May 14

SINCE APRIL 16th the *Daily Express* has been running a campaign against the TUC's May 14th Day of Action.

Stridently pretending to be the voice of the common folk, the *Express* protests: "Lenin(!) Murray and all the Bully Boys are manipulating the people just for political aims."

"The *Daily Express* has the same message for Lenin Murray as it has for anyone who unfairly seeks to impose his will on the British people... Get lost!"

"Millions of trade unionists have never been consulted by the TUC bigwigs", they say, failing to mention that the Day of Action was decided on — unanimously — by elected delegates at the last TUC Congress.

The signal for the *Express* campaign was the EETPU Executive decision on April 15th, attacking the Day of Action. On April 17th the

Express carried a big article by EETPU General Secretary Frank Chapple.

Unfortunately for both of them, this unholy alliance gave the lie to the *Express*'s protests about democracy, and to Chapple's protests about May 14th weakening the trade union movement.

Chapple's article is headlined: "Make no mistake, this is the road to dictatorship". He should know...

Chapple's union is about the most undemocratic in Britain. It has just suspended one of its largest branches in Cardiff, for the stated reason that it is controlled by left-wingers. It is run like a mini police state.

In contrast, it is left-wingers in the trade union movement who push for regular election and recall of officials, and democratic decisions by mass meetings on all major issues.

And as for Chapple's

argument that May 14th will strain workers' loyalty to the TUC and thus weaken the movement... why does he have to go to the right-wing *Tory Express* to voice it? Why is it Margaret Thatcher who congratulates him the next day on an "excellent article"?

While the *Express* has provided the froth, Chapple provided the basic argument. "Democracy cannot function if Government policies are to be changed, not through the ballot box, but through the disruption of industry by political strikes".

So workers have no choice but to put up with hospital closures, school cutbacks, the rundown of major industries — and presumably even cuts in real wages, where they are government policy — take no action and wait for the next general election!

The argument is unreal.

The workings of Parliament do not override the class struggle. When the bosses and bankers are dissatisfied, they apply pressure fast enough. The IMF bankers giving their instructions to the Labour government in 1976 did not think of waiting until a general election. Neither can or should the working class.

The *Express* screams that May 14th "is an attempt to bring down a government by some kind of mob rule." They are exaggerating for the sake of sensation. But what if May 14th should be a step forward in organising for an all-out general strike which does bring down the Tories?

If the Tories call an election and lose, then by the *Express*'s logic, they have no right to complain. They must just put up with what they can get for five years.

And if the Tories are rep-

laced by a government based on the workers' organisations coming out of a great general strike, then that would mean more democracy, more real control by working people over how society is run.

That is what the *Express* means by "mob rule". Underneath the fake "voice of the people" act, the real hatred of the *Express* is directed not so much against Murray and the TUC leaders as against the active and militant sections of the working class.

And at root they would rather see the trade unions crushed. Speaking the language of war, the *Express* rages: "We need the TUC like we needed the Luftwaffe in 1940".

The fact people like that stand behind the Tories, urging them on, is one of the best reasons for coming out on the 14th.

Organise for May 14

SADLY, the campaign for May 14 is being organised by the trade union leaders much less energetically than the *Tory* press campaign against it.

TUC leaders say they want as many workers as possible out... but not a general strike! Translate that bit of wriggling into plain language, and they want enough action to give them some bargaining strength with the Tories, but not so much as to pull them into an all-out class battle.

Add to that the bureaucrats' inbred reluctance to do more than pass resolutions and put out circulars,

and you have a picture of the problems in mobilising for May 14th.

A few unions are instructing their members to come out: SOGAT, the Tobacco Workers' Union, the Fire Brigades Union. The NUR is calling on all members other than safety staff 'to give maximum support by striking' on the 14th.

Weaker

Other print unions will probably find their workplaces shut down by the SOGAT action, and are making slightly weaker calls. The

NGA 'asks members to lend full support'. The NUJ will 'encourage' its members to strike. NATSOPA 'does not expect its members to be available for work'. SLADE 'invites its members to take action'.

Some other unions are giving similar relatively strong support. The National Union of Seamen is 'strongly recommending' a work stoppage. The TGWU National Passenger Services Committee is calling a strike, and the Construction and Automotive groups 'expect their members to stay away'. (The TGWU as a whole confines itself to 'support for the

Day of Action'.)

NUPE 'calls on' its members (other than those on emergency services) to come out, and CoHSE 'supports' strike action. So do UCATT, the Boilermakers, and the CPSA.

The GMWU is 'supporting' stoppages of the whole day or half day, depending on what is 'appropriate'. The NUT will support half-day strikes.

Other unions have a weaker policy. The Bakers 'invite their members to support local activities'. NALGO asks its members to co-ordinate with other local action, but 'authorises'

strikes.

And a few big unions are hardly supporting the Day of Action at all. The AUEW national committee resolution supporting it had a specific mention of 'industrial action' deleted. The EETPU has attacked the Day of Action and left it up to individual members to decide what to do.

When I phoned the TUC press office they had no information on the NUM other than what they had read in the press. The NUM press office told me they were 'supporting the TUC'. "Will members who strike have the support of the

union?" "No". "So they won't have the support of the union?" "I didn't say that either".

Beat

Some areas of the NUM are, however, expected to call their members out.

In the biggest unions, especially, the turn-out on May 14th will depend almost entirely on the effort put in by rank and file activists. Let's make sure it's a bigger turnout than the bureaucrats want — one that really begins to beat the Tories back.

COLIN FOSTER

In an open letter to Lambeth council leader Ted Knight, John O'Mahony replies to Knight's recent attacks on SO and our policy against cuts and rate rises.

DEAR COMRADE KNIGHT, I decided to write you this open letter when I read your article *Build a wall of unity across London in London Labour Briefing*. It was perhaps due in any case.

From being chairman of the July 1978 conference which founded the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, and an early supporter of *Socialist Organiser*, you have adopted a more and more antagonistic, rancorous and splenetic attitude to us.

You long ago abandoned the position against rent and rate rises adopted without opposition at the July 1978 SCLV conference, and we find ourselves sharply opposed on this serious question.

You now denounce the no rent and rate rise policy as a 'recipe for political disaster'. We think, on the contrary, that your policy of rent and rate rises is a policy of disguised cuts of working class living standards, and a backdoor form of collaboration with the Tories. It testifies to a grievous misunderstanding on your part of what the responsibilities of serious socialists is right now, be they in a trade union, the Parliamentary Labour Party,

OPEN LETTER TO TED KNIGHT

or in control of a Labour council.

Far from being a policy to rally forces behind Labour councils, it can only give Heseltine a weapon to split and divide local communities and alienate support from Labour councils.

SUPPORT

Whatever our differences, SO will continue to support Lambeth or any other council which fights the Tories, even if only partially and hesitantly, and even if with politics which we think inadequate or seriously wrong-headed. Since we do not (contrary to the view you attribute to us) think it a matter of principle never in any circumstances to raise rents and rates, the dispute, for now, is about opinion and political judgment.

We try to win support to make our judgment Party policy and to have your policy rejected, but this is still to be fought by argument and votes in the appropriate labour movement bodies. It is a dispute within the left wing of the London labour movement.

But you don't think so. Any left-wing criticism of your policies you present as testifying to bad faith and rendering the left the same as the right. Your *London Labour Briefing* article attempts through smear tactics to link the SO left with the right wing. You write:

"A feature of the [London Labour] conference was a unity between right-wing spokesmen and those associated with *Socialist Organiser* in a desperate, and at times hysterical, endeavour to characterise Lambeth coun-

cil as a 'cutter'.

"Both groups see the danger of acknowledging that an independent left wing council can defy the *Tory* government and maintain a policy of refusing to cut any service, or job, or job opportunity...

AMALGAM

"Finally they declare Lambeth councillors to be traitors because they have put up council rents. After a three-year rent freeze, and a manifesto commitment limiting such a standstill to a period of wage restraint, Lambeth councillors were faced with a clear risk of surcharge if they refused to make an increase."

The technique you use here has long been a prize exhibit in the black museum of working-class history. It is the Stalinist technique dubbed 'the amalgam' by Trotsky in the 1930s when it was used to poison the labour movement against the Trotskyists by 'amalgamating' their politics and criticism of Stalinism with those of the Right, and pretending that Right and revolutionary Left were in some mysterious way identical.

Just what has the position of SO to do with the Right? They are unhappy with rate rises and prefer cuts instead; we oppose cuts and oppose rent and rate rises because we think they are a variety of cuts. What is there in common. Nothing whatsoever except that Ted Knight wants to present himself as being hounded by the Right and resents and fears the



Knight: 'SO united with the right wing'...

criticism of the Left. Comrade Knight, you spent a considerable part of your life in the Trotskyist movement. (It is no secret, and you have not declined to talk to the capitalist press about it.) 23 years ago you were a business manager of *Labour Review** which exposed and helped clear away the mountains of Stalinist lies and amalgams which had suffocated the Marxists between the '30s and '50s.

Many SO readers will find it hard even to imagine how effectively — for quarter of a century — the system of ideological terrorism based on lies and 'amalgams' was in poisoning the moral, political, and intellectual life of the labour movement, and in isolating the Trotskyists. You however must remember it. Like everyone who lived through even part of that period as a Marxist, you learned to hate the mendacity, the demagoguery, and the

lack of political scruple of those who used 'the amalgam'.

Of course, the content of your smear is modest enough compared with what the Stalinists did. And there is no Lambeth GPU. But in principle it is no different. Nor, I suspect, is it different in intent.

When spleen against your left critics leads you to use this foul and dishonourable technique, then perhaps it is time you took a cool look at where you have arrived politically now — and at where you are going.

Your smear on SO results, I suggest, from the fact that there is a major and increasing contradiction between your projection of yourself (and, perhaps, how you think of yourself), as a man of the revolutionary Left, and the actual political role you now play. You now occupy a position not too far from what we used to call a 'fake left'. Your talk is a great deal more 'left' than are your actions.

You feel any challenge to your credibility keenly because you know it to be vulnerable. When you say — on what basis? — that we call you a 'traitor', one wonders if the accusing voice you hear is not inside your own head. We have not called you a traitor. You are seriously failing to be a revolutionary militant, but you are not yet a traitor.

* Not to be confused with the publication of the same name now put out by the WRP.

continued on p.8