

Socialist Organiser

Paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory



CONSPIRATORS!

by JOHN BLOXAM (RFMC
organiser, in personal
capacity).

90% OF THE submissions to the Labour Party Enquiry backed mandatory reselection. 86% were in favour of NEC control over the Manifesto. And the strong party opinion that exists for choosing the Leader by an electoral college has always been based on a large, broad electoral college, with only a very limited minority voice for MPs.

Yet the Inquiry only narrowly backed mandatory reselection. It has proposed a new narrow electoral college, dominated by MPs, to elect the leader and control the Manifesto — effectively, as a new conservative power in the Labour Party, counterposed to the NEC and Conference.

Instead of Karl Marx's ideas of class struggle, the version of socialist democracy favoured by the Inquiry majority could be summed up in a motto from Groucho Marx: "I don't know what they have to say/

LABOUR AND TRADE UNION TIME-SERVERS PLOT AGAINST DEMOCRACY

It doesn't matter anyway/ Whatever it is, I'm against it".

The Inquiry majority must have thought that a clever carve-up could dispose of last year's Party conference decisions. Party majority opinion as reflected in the submissions, and (in the case of some of the Inquiry

members) their own union conference mandates.

Not so. The wide support rapidly gained by the Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy shows that Labour activists remain vigilant and committed to win the fight for the working class to control its own political represent-

atives and leaders.

William Rodgers and the militant Right wing, judging correctly that the Inquiry majority proposals could not command a consensus, came out sharply against them from their own point of view.

Now it seems that the Inquiry majority is running into problems trying to define exactly how their botched-up electoral college would be chosen. They may decide to opt for making matters as confused as possible, hoping that the water will be muddied sufficiently to obscure the whole issue of reform.

Don't be fooled. There are clear, simple and immediate proposals for reform at this year's conference: maintain mandatory reselection, write NEC control of the Manifesto into the constitution, get the leaders chosen by a broad electoral college.

Activists must explain the issues as widely as possible in the labour movement — and especially in the trade unions.

The rank and file militants

in the trade unions — the men and women who are fighting the direct struggle against the Tories now, and who also fought against the last Labour government's pro-capitalist policies — must be the left's main driving force.

The fight over Labour democracy is fundamentally the political reflection of and backup to the conflict between those militants and their time-serving leaders. It is about whether the whole labour movement is thrown into the fight against the Tories now; it is about whether the Tories are replaced by another Callaghan-type government which tries to bail out capitalism, or by a workers' government, a government controlled by and tied to the interests of the organised working class.

And more and more union militants are becoming aware of this.

The London (no.8) divisional council of ASTMS has already passed a resolution condemning Clive Jenkins' sell-out on the Inquiry of ASTMS policy in favour of

reform. Other ASTMS, SOGAT and TGWU branches and committees will also have their word to say about the defiance of union policy for reform by Jenkins, Bill Keys and Moss Evans.

A strong rank and file movement can and must be built to demand the union block votes are cast in favour of democracy.

Countdown

- Wednesday 2 July. Inquiry meets to finalise Report.
- Wednesday 16 July. Special National Executive Committee meeting to consider Inquiry report.
- Late July. Conference resolutions published.
- Saturday 16 August. Deadline for Conference amendments.
- Early September. Resolutions and amendments published.
- Monday 15 September. Big Mobilising Committee rally in London.
- Monday 29 September to Friday 3 October. Labour Party Conference

TROOPS OUT NOW!

The Labour Committee on Ireland, launched this March, has been circulating a model resolution for Labour Party conference which calls for Labour to back British withdrawal from Ireland. In some CLPs, such as Brent East, this resolution has been carried with an addition calling for Labour to back political status for the H-block men and Armagh women.

An LCI spokesperson told SO: "LCI welcomes the NEC motion and hopes that it signals the beginning of a break with bipartisanship."

"Ending repression in Ireland requires an end to British rule there. Not only the symptoms, but the root cause of repression, must be tackled, which is why the LCI has made troop withdrawal a central part of its programme."

ON WEDNESDAY 25th June the Labour Party National Executive adopted a resolution condemning "repression and torture in the prisons of Northern Ireland". For the first time for decades, the Labour Party officially came out against Tory policy in Ireland — or, rather, against the British ruling class policy which has been carried out equally by Tory and Labour governments.

And immediately a storm broke about the NEC's heads, with Party Leader James Callaghan hotly condemning the resolution.

The resolution "notes with concern newspaper reports that women in Armagh Jail have been beaten by male warders and locked up for 23 hours a day and denied proper sanitary and medical facilities".

In the H-blocks, "male prisoners, because they refuse to wear prison uniform or do prison work, are locked up for 24 hours a

day wearing a blanket in a cell with only a damp mattress, are denied reading and writing material and are subjected to body searches including probing the anus".

It calls for consideration of seven points:

- right of all prisoners to wear their own clothes;
- full access to newspapers, TV, books and writing materials, and no restriction on letters;
- a minimum of two unsupervised visits and two food parcels a week;
- prisoners' right to negotiate choice of work, training and educational facilities;
- prisoners to be paid trade union rates and have the right to trade union membership;
- prisoners to elect their

IRELAND: LABOUR BREAKS THE SILENCE

own representatives to negotiate on their behalf;

■ scrapping the no-jury Diplock courts and the special RUC interrogation centres.

TOM LITTERICK, former MP for Selly Oak, told SO:

There has been an outcry against this NEC decision because it strikes at the heart of the conventional view that the British establishment are fair and just and even-handed.

The background to it is repeated statements not just by people like Amnesty International but also by official bodies — the Compton Report, the Bennett Report and others.

All of them show that the British authorities in Ireland treat people in an inhuman

way, a brutal way, that they torture people, that they violate people's civil rights... the Establishment behave like brutes in Ireland.

But men like Callaghan see themselves as part of the Establishment and they think like the British Establishment. They are advised, after all, by people who are at the heart of the Establishment, not by the Labour Party or labour movement.

■ Why has it taken the left on the NEC so long to say anything about Ireland?

Fear. Plain ordinary gut fear. Because ever since 1970 the Irish issue has excited such savage feelings that any public person who expresses a view contrary to Ulster Unionists is regarded as an IRA activist.

I know this from personal experience.

It's very ironic that the closer injustice comes to Britain itself, the more muted protest becomes. It's so close to home that the traditional voices which are raised in the labour movement when the police and the army are brutalising people simply aren't raised.

But killing people, torturing people, and imprisoning people arbitrarily has not advanced us towards a solution of Northern Ireland's problems. We have to make a Labour government say to the Protestants in Northern Ireland that they can no longer rely on British guns to support their domination.

To do this we have to get opinion behind us in the labour movement, bring the discussion before trade union conferences and the Labour Party conference again and again, and point out that people like Roy Mason and Merlyn Rees have literally got away with murder.

MOBILISE FOR LABOUR DEMOCRACY

- 1 Defend mandatory reselection
- 2 DEFEND THE NEC
- 3 NEC must decide the manifesto
- 4 The Party must elect the Leader
- 5 MAKE THE PLP ACCOUNTABLE

Rank & File Mobilising Committee
Launched by:

Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, Clause IV, Independent Labour Publications, Institute for Workers' Control, Labour Coordinating Committee, National Organisation of Labour Students, Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory.

Contacts, activities

BASINGSTOKE

Contact address: not yet fixed, but phone Martin Timmins, 59582. Rally: 7.30pm, Tuesday 2 September, Chute House, Church St.

BIRMINGHAM

Contact: Simon Temple, 40 Landgate Rd, Handsworth (554 1503). Next planning meeting: 7.30pm, Monday 7 July, at the Labour Club, Bristol St. Public meeting planned for Wednesday 30 July, rally for beginning of September.

BRISTOL

Contact: George Micklewright, 10 Hanbury Rd, Bristol BS8 (39249).

CARDIFF

Contact: Martin Barclay, 21 Dego St, Canton; or phone Marguerite Games, 9543 4320. Next planning meeting 7pm, Wednesday 9 July. Rally: 7pm, Saturday 19 July. Venues to be fixed.

CHELMSFORD

Contact: John Brownfield, 516 Linnett Drive, Chelmsford (81534). Trades Council public meeting on the Mobilising Committee: 7.30-8.30, Thursday 3 July, AUEW House, Primrose Hill.

COVENTRY

Contact address: John Lowe, 124 Kenilworth Court (503480).

EDINBURGH

Contact address: Joe Baxter, 4 Glengyle Terrace (229 4591). Public meeting: 2pm, Sunday 31 August, at the Trades Council, Picardy Place.

GLASGOW

(No joint committee established because LCC unwilling to take part. See article).

LEEDS

Contact: Barry Winter, c/o 49 Top Moor Side, Leeds 11. Phone: 703664.

LEICESTER

Contact: 38 Portland Rd, Leicester (700498). Public meeting: 7.30pm, Wednesday 30 July, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate. Leicester West CLP has backed the Mobilising Committee.

LONDON

BRENT

Contact: Ron Anderson, 128 Dollis Hill Lane, NW2 (450 4509).

HACKNEY

Contact: Ann Cameron, 12 Palmsthorpe Rd, N16 (229 7554). Hackney North CLP has backed the Mobilising Committee and agreed to sell a copy of the broadsheet to every Party member.

HARINGEY

Contact: Jeremy Corbyn, 28

Lausanne Rd, N8 (340 9069), or Hornsey Labour Party, 28 Middle Lane, N8. Public meeting: 8pm, Thursday 17 July, at Tottenham Community Project, Tottenham High Road.

ISLINGTON

Contact: Jenny Morris, 56b Grosvenor Ave, N5 (226 7079). Public meeting: 7.45, Thursday 3 July, Central Library, Holloway Rd/Fieldway Cres. Speakers: Bob Wright, Audrey Wise, Rachel Lever.

LAMBETH

Contact: Graham Norwood, 25 Fawnbrake Ave, SE24 (274 0042). Public meeting: 8pm, Monday 14 July, Lambeth Town Hall. Speakers: Reg Race, Graham Norwood, and others.

NEWHAM

Contact address: not yet fixed, but phone Mike Foley, 555 9957.

PADDINGTON

Paddington CLP has backed the Mobilising Committee and is planning a rally in early September. Contact: 39 Chippendale Rd, W9 (286 9692).

TOWER HAMLETS

Contact: c/o 12 Tredegar Sq, E3.

MANCHESTER

Contact: Dave Gardner, 312 Robert Adam Crescent, Hulme, Manchester 15 (226 6879).

MERSEYSIDE

WIRRAL

Contact address: John McCabe, 10 Heyes Drive, Wallasey (639 2739).

LIVERPOOL

Contact: Andy Dixon, 30 Church Rd, Roby, Huyton (489 4242).

NEWCASTLE

Contact: Martin Lightfoot, Trade Union Studies Information Unit, Southend, Fernwood Rd, Newcastle.

NORTHAMPTON

Contact: John Dickie, 2 Western View, Black Lion Hill (22188), or Steve Schofield, 24 Hallam Close, Moulton (499543). Northampton North and South CLPs have both backed the Mobilising Committee. Public meeting: 7.30pm, Friday 11 July, AUEW rooms, Wood Hill/St Giles Square.

NOTTINGHAM

Contact: Pete Radcliff, 8 Vickers St (625499). Next planning meeting: provision-

ally Tuesday 15 July. Rally planned for September.

SHEFFIELD

Contact: Ros Makin, 10 Burns Rd, Sheffield 10 (686773). Next planning meeting: 7.30pm, Monday 7 July, 'Prince of Wales', Division St. Open meeting: 7.30, Monday 28 July, 'Prince of Wales'. Rally planned for 13 September.

STOKE

Contact address: not yet fixed, but phone Phil Johnson (269159). Public meeting provisionally fixed for Thursday 17 July, at WEA, Cartwright House, Broad St, Hanley.

Scots LCC refuse unity

FOR THE Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy, unity is strength. For the first time for many years, nearly all the Left has united around the key campaigning issues.

Except in Glasgow...

In early June, a meeting was called with representatives from Socialist Organiser, CLPD, Militant, LCC, Clause IV and the Scottish Organisation of Labour Students.

Mick Connarty of the LCC told the meeting about the power and influence wielded by the LCC in Scotland — and drew the conclusion that there was no need for a local Mobilising Committee. The LCC could do a better job by itself. And being mixed up with the SCV would only discredit the LCC.

Militant did not care much. They were willing to go it alone, too. And the representatives of the other groups were all also LCC activists. They went along with Connarty.

A meeting was however fixed up for a fortnight later to compare notes on progress. But Connarty cancelled it — without informing the Glasgow SO supporters. When one of us phoned Connarty to enquire, his reply was a threat to witchhunt and denounce us if we try to build the Mobilising Committee in Glasgow.

It's a rather undemocratic way of launching a campaign for democracy... and, for that matter, when were the ordinary members of the Scottish LCC ever consulted about Connarty's ultimatum?

A fight for democracy is meaningless unless it organises and draws in the rank and file — instead of playing the right wing's game of bureaucratic 'power politics', as Connarty is evidently doing by relying exclusively on the 'power and influence' of the LCC's majority on the Scottish Labour Party executive.

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, MIS, 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! Repeat 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.

How we have united the Left

by JON LANSMAN, secretary of the Mobilising Committee

THE RANK and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy has taken off. The aims of the campaign — to defend Mandatory Re-selection, to defend the NEC, that the NEC must decide the Manifesto, that the whole party elect the leader and that the PLP be accountable — have attracted widespread support because they must all be achieved to assert rank and file influence on the policies of the party's representatives in government.

The seven founding organisations were joined at an early stage by Militant and the LPYS to produce an unprecedented unity of the

Left around a common platform. All the organisations have buried the sectarian hatchets which have divided the campaign for party democracy in the past.

Numerous CLPs have expressed their support already and many more will follow; but it has been much more than paper commitments. Throughout the country, party and trade union activists are meeting on their own initiatives to organise rallies, to distribute our broadsheet 'Mobilise for Labour Democracy' and to ensure that resolutions are sent to conference on the democratic issues.

◆◆

So far we have distributed 15,000 copies of the broadsheet and we are again preparing to print a special

supplement, in response to the Commission of Enquiry Report. In July, rallies will take place in Cardiff, Northampton, Sheffield and Stoke and in London: Haringey, Islington and Lambeth. Others will take place in August and September in Birmingham, Bristol, Coventry, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and Southampton.

It is our aim to cover by the autumn as many other cities as possible. The culmination of these pre-conference rallies will be in London on 15th September — a meeting which will be addressed by Tony Benn, Eric Heffer, and a full supporting cast.

We have also distributed literature and held fringe meetings at various Trade Union and Labour Party Regional Conferences.

However, perhaps the most important activity recently was the leafletting of the June 22nd Peace demonstration — important not because we sold so many broadsheets and badges but because Defence policy is currently the most glaring example of how an unaccountable leadership can destroy the credibility of the party. With Labour's front bench flagrantly ignoring party policy carried so overwhelmingly in 'Peace, Jobs and Freedom', it is hardly surprising that Labour Action for Peace recognised the crucial role of party democracy and decided to join the Mobilising Committee.

The Mobilising Committee has been effective both in coordinating the efforts of grassroots activists and in responding quickly to new

developments. Ultimately the role of the NEC may be crucial, since it will determine what constitutional amendments are attached to the Commission's report, and it will be influential in deciding what procedure is adopted at conference. For this reason, it is essential that pressure is brought to bear by activists and their organisations on the NEC and individual members of the NEC.

However, whatever the final conference agenda and procedure will be, the biggest uncertainty is the composition of conference delegations and the way they finally vote. That is why we are concentrating our activities on mobilising rank and file activists.

Organisations can still make amendments to conference resolutions, and can

mandate their delegates. It is essential to ensure that the vigilance of those concerned with party democracy does not flag in the period before conference.

◆◆

ON MONDAY June 30th the BBC programme Newsnight took a look at the fight for democracy in the Labour Party. Instead of the usual coverage of trade union leaders and MPs' opinions, this time the cameras went to two houses in 'quiet leafy streets' in London to cover the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and the Campaign for Labour Victory.

The coverage was angled as if the status of the two campaigns in the Party were just the same.

But film of a Tottenham CLP meeting illustrated clearly that the Left relies on support from the grass roots of the Party — while the CLV relies mostly on rich backers in the top echelons.

Rank & File Mobilising Cttee Statement REJECT THE INQUIRY REPORT

THE DECISIONS of the Commission of Enquiry have supported, of the three major constitutional issues of last year, only mandatory re-selection.

On the issues of the election of the leader and control of the manifesto, the commission has, by a narrow majority, sanctioned the attempt to further undermine the role of conference in policy-making.

Continued effort is essential to protect the influence of the rank and file. The National Executive Committee has yet to decide what to do with the Enquiry recommendations: the conference agenda is still undetermined; and above all it is uncertain how delegations will vote.

At every stage maximum pressure must be exerted to ensure that the rank and file is not cast aside.

MANDATORY RE-SELECTION: The Enquiry was in favour of mandatory re-selection, but only by 7 votes to 6 despite the fact that 90% of submissions were in

favour of it (for mandatory re-selection: 205; for optional re-selection: 21; for the old system: 1).

For this reason the NEC has only put a consequential amendment to clarify certain ambiguities in the resolution passed last year. This must be passed or the whole selection process will be in turmoil, but we should also be on guard against any attempts to re-open the whole issue.

ELECTORAL COLLEGE: The electoral college which the commission recommends, by 7 votes to 6, is of a fundamentally different variety from the one advocated by the Campaign for Lab-

our Party Democracy (CLPD). It should be opposed for the following reasons:

Its size and composition (50% Parliamentary Labour Party, 25% trade unions, 20% CLPs, 5% Socialist Societies, and probably only 100 people in all) render it barely accountable to anyone and, in effect, the enshrinement of the parliamentary veto.

Its members could only be indirectly elected so that the participation of the rank and file would be minimised: most organisations (and indeed most MPs) would therefore be effectively disenfranchised.

Since it would be totally

separate from the existing structures in the party, it would usurp many of the functions and powers of conference, and actually increase the power of the Parliamentary Labour Party to make policy.

The CLPD college, on the other hand, is simply conference in a different form — with a different distribution of voting strength. It would give the political and industrial wings of the movement an equal say. Half the votes would be cast by CLPs (two for each CLP — one cast by the conference delegate, one by the MP or Parliamentary Candidate (PPC)), and the other half by affilia-

ted organisations. All organisations, plus MPs and PPCs, would be involved.

So, do not be confused by the label 'Electoral College', since it can mean totally different things, and continue to support the CLPD model resolution on the election of the Leader, since it is now more vital than ever.

MANIFESTO: The Commission unexpectedly recommended that jurisdiction over the manifesto should be in the hands of the electoral college: again this was in spite of rank and file wishes, since 86% were in favour of NEC jurisdiction (for NEC control: 142; for joint control of some var-

lety: 24).

This proposal would mean that those presenting Labour's case to the electorate would cease to be directly accountable to conference, thus further reducing rank and file influence in policy determination.

The NEC was instructed by last year's conference to bring a constitutional amendment to this year's conference which would give them the final say on the manifesto. They must be reminded of this obligation.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

★ Send to conference a resolution on the election of the leader along the lines of the CLPD model which constituencies received last month from both CLPD and the Labour Coordinating Committee.

★ Get your Constituency's General Committee to pass a resolution calling on the NEC to: (i) reject the Commission proposals on the election of the Leader and the Manifesto, (ii) carry out their obligation on reselection and the control of the manifesto, and (iii) put to conference a constitutional amendment which would involve the whole party in the election of the leader.

"I never wanted the Commission of Inquiry to discuss the constitutional issues. It's not their job; that's the job of the Party and its annual conference. The NEC should make recommendations but it really is up to the Party to decide."

The position of the Inquiry minority is: reselection; NEC should decide the Manifesto — it should be nothing to do with the electoral college; and the Leader should be elected by a wider franchise.

Jo Richardson

What you can do

What you can do:

★ Order and sell Mobilising Committee broadsheets: bulk orders at 10p each plus 75p for postage if paid in advance.

★ Order and sell "Mobilise for Labour Democracy" badges: bulk orders at 15p each plus 75p for postage (in advance).

★ Get Mobilising Committee speakers invited to your labour movement organisations.

★ Get your CLP, trade union branch, shop stewards' committee, district

committee or Trades Council to endorse our five demands and to sponsor the Mobilising Committee and send a donation (minimum £1). Get them to organise sales of the broadsheet and badges, and public meetings.

★ Help organise a local Mobilising Committee, with local affiliations, which will circulate broadsheets and badges, approach local labour movement organisations, and organise factory gate and public meetings.

★ Make sure your CLP

delegate to Labour Party conference backs the Mobilising Committee's demands. Use every means available in your union to build rank and file support for swinging its block vote behind our demands.

★ Get your CLP to pass a resolution calling on the NEC to reject the Inquiry majority report and to stand firm for NEC control of the manifesto and election of Leader by a broad Party vote.

★ In ASTMS, TGWU and SOGAT branches and

committees, move resolutions condemning the failure of those unions' leaders — Clive Jenkins, Bill Keys, Moss Evans — to stand up for union policy and for democratic reforms on the Inquiry.

★ Explain to trade unionists that this fight for Labour democracy is not just an obscure internal affair of the Party, but the essential political back-up to the direct trade union struggle to kick out the Tories and defend workers' interests. Draw industrial militants in to join the fight for socialist policies.

Their electoral college and ours

Why a broad electoral college? Vladimir Derer explains

ONLY A SMALL minority in the Party, primarily MPs and the AUEW leadership, are still convinced that the present method of choosing the Party Leader should be retained.

The majority of Labour Party members, including many conservatively-minded trade union leaders, now accept that it should be changed and that the Party Leader must be elected by a body more representative than the Parliamentary Labour Party. The debate has been going on in the Party for some five years and a number of options have emerged.

The election of the leader by Conference appears to many the obvious and most logical option. The great majority of the NEC members are elected by Conference; why should the Leader be the exception? If it is desirable to increase the authority of Conference, why not make the Party Leader accountable to it?

Politics, however, seldom follows formal logic. To change political structures, more is needed than a Fabian blueprint. The immediate problem is not to devise the ideal constitution, but to gain support for proposals which would be acceptable to Conference in 1980 and come as near as possible to introducing direct accountability of the Leader to Conference.

At present the election of the Party Leader by Conference does not stand an outside chance. When this was proposed in 1978 it received

less than 7% of the votes cast. (457,000 for, 6,084,000 against) Last year a substantial majority of the 26 Conference resolutions and amendments on the leadership favoured an electoral college. Only five opted for election by Conference. This proposal was not put to Conference.

The proposal for an electoral college, however, was. It was lost only because one of

have a considerable say in who is chosen.

Above all, they seem anxious not to be put into a position where a deal between a few union leaders would make the result of the 'election' a foregone conclusion. This appears to be the reason why the union leaders serving on the Commission of Inquiry put forward the electoral college formula

PLP — and to guarantee continued safety to the Labour establishment — they also decided to diminish the power of the NEC and implicitly that of the rank and file.

If the new structure were to be able to perform independently of conference the two new functions assigned to it, i.e. to elect the Leader and act as final arbiter on the



the AUEW delegates unexpectedly voted against it in his delegation's meeting, and thus produced a tie. This, in turn, enabled Terry Duffy to use his casting vote and prevent the resolution in favour of the college from being carried.

Furthermore, the submissions of all the major unions to the Commission of Inquiry show that they are opposed to the election of the Leader by Conference. But the union leaderships now accept that the election of the Leader by the PLP alone is not satisfactory, though they still believe that the PLP should

which gave the PLP 50% of all the votes.

Fortunately this proposal is proving unworkable: the Commission's drafting committee has been unable to agree about the detail of the provisions. This is not surprising. It takes more to devise a satisfactory constitutional compromise than it does to reach a satisfactory result in wage negotiations.

On the one hand the trade union leaders on the Commission agreed to take away from the PLP the exclusive power to elect the Party Leader. On the other hand, to make this palatable to the

Manifesto, then it had to be small, both to deny direct representation to CLPs, all MPs and all affiliated organisations, as well as to enable it to be convened at short notice to endorse the Manifesto.

The requirement that the college be small (a figure around 100 members was suggested) immediately presented difficulties. How were the 50 MPs to represent the PLP, the 25 trade unionists to represent the 50 affiliated unions, and the constituency representatives to represent the 25 CLPs to be chosen?

In practice, an electoral college cannot reflect the true preferences of MPs and CLPs unless they are all given a vote, nor can it reflect those of affiliated organisations unless each of them is given at least one vote. If elementary democratic principles are to be observed a small college is, therefore, a non-starter.

There are two other proposals for an electoral college — one prepared by CLPD, and the other floated originally by Neil Kinnock and now favoured by several members of the NEC.

Both are geared to a large and representative assembly i.e. Conference. The Kinnock proposal gives the TUs, the PLP and the CLPs 33% each of the voting strength, whereas the CLPD's gives 50% to trade unions and socialist societies, with the remaining 50% being shared between the PLP and CLPs.

Thus the Kinnock proposal is slightly more generous to the PLP and CLPs, and might appeal to those trade union leaders who do not wish to appear to be king-makers.

The main drawback of Kinnock's "three-thirds" proposal is that, unlike that of the CLPD (which has already been submitted by several constituencies in the form of a constitutional amendment, it has not been worked out in detail. It will therefore be up to the NEC to arrange for this if Conference is to be presented with a genuine choice and reach a decision.

RFMC model resolution

"THIS CLP/TU branch welcomes the Commission of Enquiry's recommendation that last year's conference decision on mandatory reselection be upheld. It urges the NEC to submit to conference the necessary consequential amendment."

"This CLP/Branch also welcomes the Commission's recognition of the need for expanding the electorate of the leader of the party. However, it deplores the proposed structure of the electoral college, which would make the PLP dominant and under-represent the trade unions and constituency parties. It therefore calls on the NEC to submit to conference proposals for an electoral college which would give an equal say to the political and industrial wings of the movement, give a vote to every MP or candidate, to every CLP and every affiliated organisation, and thereby ensure the accountability of the Leader to the Party."

"Further, this CLP/Trade Union branch condemns the proposal that the responsibility for the manifesto be vested in the electoral college, thus further depriving conference of any effective influence on future government policies. It therefore urges the NEC to put down a constitutional amendment in line with the 1979 conference decision on the manifesto."

"Finally, this CLP/TU branch rejects the proposal that the 3 year rule, abolished by conference last year, should be reintroduced, for constitutional issues. The current debate on the 3 main constitutional issues shows that the party may need longer than 1 year to decide what is desirable. This artificial distinction between constitutional and other issues would unnecessarily restrict debate and may land the Party with an undesired solution."



A MASS PARTY?

The case for workplace branches

by ERNIE ROBERTS

THE LABOUR Party was created to 'secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry'. About 25 million people in Britain come into the category of 'workers by hand or by brain' — that is, they sell their labour in order to live.

But of those 25 million, only 7 million are affiliated members of the Labour Party through their trade unions. And fewer than 400,000 (at the most optimistic calculation) are individual members of the Party which was created to serve their interests.

So the Labour Party is hardly a 'mass party', in spite of the fact that about 12 million people vote Labour at each General Election. Each one of those 12 million is a potential Labour Party member. How can we go about recruiting this vast and virtually untapped reservoir of Labour support?

Much play is made (particularly in the media) of the 'disproportionate' power wielded by the trade unions in the Party, especially in the form of block votes at Party Conference. The old answers to this argument still hold good: the trade unions created the Party, and to a considerable extent finance it; furthermore, trade union members choose to pay the political levy, and have the right to a say in Party affairs, through their union, just as much as any individual Party member.

But (in spite of the persuasive voice of the media to the contrary) there is no real conflict between trade-union affiliated members and CLP activists. After all, the CLP activists are trade unionists, too!

But there is a vast discrepancy between the number of affiliated members and the number of individual members, because the trade

unions have made a much more successful job of recruitment than the CLPs have so far been able to do.

The answer is to draw as many as possible of the 12 million Labour voters into individual membership of the Labour Party — that is, to boost the voice of the constituencies, rather than diminish the legitimate voice of the trade unions. How can this be done?

The problem certainly cannot be solved by administrative changes alone, or even by changes in the Party Constitution. There is a need for mass participation by ordinary people. What do these 12 million people have in common? They work. So where better to draw them into the Party than in their places of work?

This is not a new idea. It has been tested on a small scale. And it was a success.

During the 1939-45 war, the Party organisation collapsed in many areas, partly due to wartime collaboration between political parties. There was no organised collection of subscriptions, and very little official activity by the membership within the CLPs.

Such was the situation in Coventry, an engineering centre of the war effort.

I raised the question of creating a 'factory branch' of the Labour Party in the factory where I worked (Daimler Browns Lane). The Midland Regional Council of the Party agreed to approach the NEC with the proposition, and eventually a Factory Branch came into being on an experimental basis.

I found it easy, as a Shop

Steward, to make individual members of the Party in the factory, and I was able to collect their Party subscriptions at the same time as I collected their trade-union subs. Many of the new individual members were of course also contracted-in members of the Party, through paying the political levy to the Engineers' Union.

Within a few weeks, there were about 100 individual members in this one factory. We held meetings in one of the coaches which brought the workers to the factory, and this was parked in the firm's car park.

It held 36 seated and about 12 standing, which was adequate for an average lunch-

time meeting. We met once a week, and held discussions on a wide variety of political and trade-union issues, including the kind of Britain we wanted after the War.

We paid the membership subs into the Coventry Labour Party. We had no direct representation there, but we sometimes worked out resolutions and sent them to the local Party.

This factory branch continued for about a year, until I was sacked by Daimler as a Toolroom Shop Steward, and shortly afterwards the branch folded up.

In my opinion, this was a valuable experiment in the building of the Party, and I am convinced that the same idea could succeed again, although on a regularised basis, with more formal links between the workplace branch and the local Party.

Such branches would be successful for the same reason that an on-site trade union branch is often more successful than an off-site one — people are at work anyway, available for meetings say, lunch-time or at the end of a shift, and they are less likely to be seduced away from political activities

by television, family commitments, etc. than if they first go home and then have to set out for a meeting.

The detailed arrangements would of course have to be a matter for wide discussion within the Party, but the following ideas could prove to be a satisfactory basis for opening talks about workplace branches.

Officers of the workplace branch would be responsible for the collection of membership subscriptions, which would be paid into the CLP in which the workplace was situated. Such a branch would have the right to elect delegates to the CLP in the same way as wards or trade union branches, and they could forward resolutions to the CLP, MP or NEC in the same way as any other constituent body of the Party.

Some CLP members may object to the fact that a workplace branch would be sending delegates to the CLP who would be representing Labour Party members who in fact lived outside their constituency. But we have lived with such a procedure for many years with regard to trade union branches, whose membership may be drawn from a number of constituencies, and no harm appears to have come of that! (Providing their delegate lives within the constituency)

There is no reason, either, for friction between the CLP in whose area the workplace is situated (which would be receiving the subs) and the various CLPs in whose areas the workplace branch members actually lived (who would get no financial contribution).

The new member would be notified to his local CLP where he would be entitled to attend ward or branch meetings where he lived, receive Party literature, etc., in the same way as any other Party member.

And his 'free' membership of his CLP would be balanced by the benefit to the CLP of other workplace branches affiliating to them, whose members in fact lived in another constituency.

It would be a case of swings and roundabouts. Even if a few non-industrial CLPs found themselves marginally losing by this arrangement, they could take comfort from the fact that (a) those workplace members who pay their subs in another constituency would probably never have joined the Party in the traditional way, and (b) a new member is a member for the Party nationally, not a feather in the cap of a particular constituency.

At present a young woman engineer who joins the AUEW and pays the political levy can also join the LPYS, the women's section, her ward party or branch, the Cop party, or the Fabians... so why not also a factory branch?

Such workplace branches would take the policies of the Party onto the shop floor. They would activate many more workers to take part in local and national politics. They would permit workers to decide where to engage in Labour Party activities, in the workplace, in their CLP branch, or both if they were politically enthusiastic. Thus every workplace could be made into a socialist fortress, a socialist school.

The Party should not be afraid of members being too active, but rather encourage it. We could have thousands of workplace branches, with millions of active members, in factories, shops and offices, in schools and in hospitals. This would be real democracy in action within the Party, and nobody need then complain about trade union versus CLP votes in Conference!

With a mass membership actively participating in the Party, keeping Party leaders and the PLP accountable to the membership and firmly on Party policy lines as laid down by the Mass Party at Annual Conference, we would surely be on the road to a Socialist Britain, involving the maximum number of 'workers by hand or by brain' in the decision-making process of our Party.

Unity is strength!

HOW WE DO IT IN KILMARNOCK

HUGH McGUINNESS is a T&GWU senior steward at the Glacier Metals factory in Kilmarnock. At the Tribune conference in London on June 28th, he talked to Pete Firmin of Socialist Organiser about the Labour Party workplace branch in his factory.

"We set up the branch about 2½ years ago after a discussion among Tribune supporters in the local Constituency Labour Party. Branches have also been set up at two other local factories, Johnny Walkers and Vesuvius Crucibles.

"In my factory there are 300 workers organised in the TGWU and AUEW. About

200 turn up to the regular discussion meetings we hold in the canteen with left-wing speakers such as Stuart Holland, Dennis Canavan, and Alex Grant — though not all the 200 are Labour Party members.

"The works committee notice board has a regular report from the GMC, and we took a decision that if a delegate from either of the unions misses three GMCs in a row they automatically have to stand down as a delegate. We have only had to give three delegates the push over 2½ years, but it has certainly kept them on their toes".

Swaying the trade union vote

WHATEVER compromise the Committee of Inquiry works out, or whatever the NEC proposes on the constitutional reforms, the final decision will take place at Blackpool. And there, the power lies in the union block vote.

Most unions have decided their position on the reforms and the odds are fairly evenly balanced. The NUM, with 250,000 votes, and the NUR, with 180,000 votes, are in a position to swing the balance either way.

The NUM voted against the reforms last year, and at its conference on July 7-11 there are no resolutions on Labour democracy.

The NUR is in favour of mandatory reselection (as part of a package with changes in the composition of the NEC) though General Secretary Sid Weighell has come out

against reform.

But even unions like the TGWU, ASTMS and UCATT which have clear policy in favour of reform still have their leadership to reckon with. Moss Evans and Clive Jenkins both sided with the majority of the Committee of Inquiry and ignored the decisions of their unions. Clive Jenkins only two weeks after the ASTMS conference.

It is clear that most union leaders are in favour of maintaining the status quo. When it comes down to it, they feel closer to the Parliamentarians than to the rank and file.

The fight for Labour democracy cannot be won without a simultaneous fight for trade union democracy.

Position of larger unions on democratic reforms:

For:	
TGWU	1,250,000
NUPE	500,000
UCATT	200,000
ASTMS	147,000
Total	2,627,000
Against:	
AUEW	927,000
GMWU	650,000
USDAW	429,000
EETPU	260,000
Total	2,861,000
Uncertain:	
NUM	250,000
NUR	180,000
Tailor and garment workers	105,000

Black Metro Cammell!

ON MAY 16th, 150 electricians working on the Metro Cammell site in Birmingham went out on strike for a 20% wage rise, an improved redundancy scheme and sick scheme. Management refused to make any agreement unless the electricians were prepared to give up their current bonus scheme. This would have led to 25% redundancies and lower wages in the future.

Following the strike, the production workers who make the trains which the electricians work on were laid off. On June 6th, the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee for the production workers issued a statement that management should reopen the plant and that they would be prepared to cooperate in any way with management to get trains out. The clear implication was that they were prepared to work with scab labour.

On June 24th, eleven of the striking electricians returned to work, thus breaking the solidarity of the strike up to that point. The following mass meeting of the strikers then

voted that they would return to work on management's terms, provided they were all taken back on.

Management's response to this was to issue a list of ten names of striking electricians who they were not prepared to take back on. The list was made up of the shop committee plus several other leading strikers.

GEC management are clearly determined not only to break the bonus scheme and get redundancies, but to break the electricians' shop organisation as well. The electricians rejected management's attempt at blatant victimisation and are continuing the strike until management agree to reinstate everyone.

Throughout the dispute, and even with this victimisation of union members, the EETPU official has refused to support the strike and to get official recognition for it.

The strike is now for the reinstatement of all the electricians, and to win it, they need support through blacking of all Metro Cammell trains produced since May 16th and through financial donations to continue the picketing and blacking campaign. Please send all messages of support and donations to: Dennis Squelch, 33 Hereford Drive, Frankley, Birmingham.

Support Adwest

"WE ARE ALL convinced of the importance of this struggle for the whole working class", Adwest striker Martin Kaufman told Socialist Organiser. "If we can give a lead in a small factory like this, many other factories can do the same."

Strikers at this Reading factory are fighting a battle against victimisation.

On May 2nd, Martin Kaufman was sacked for following union policy and working to rule in support of a pay claim. 38 other day shift workers stopped work in protest. They were sacked too.

Since then another 23 workers on the night shift have struck in support, and most of them have been sacked too.

About 300 workers are still working, and scabs have been brought in to fill the strikers' jobs. So on Monday 23 June the strikers organised their first mass picket.

100 pickets turned up, from Oxford, Swindon, Slough and BL Cowley. It was not enough to stop the scabs, but, Martin Kaufman told us, "every single strikebreaker had a very tough time going into that

factory."

The next mass picket is on Wednesday 2 July — and the one after that on Monday 14th (from 6am, at Headley Rd (east), Woodley, near Reading).

Although all the TGWU stewards in Adwest have been sacked, and the bosses claim that the TGWU no longer exists in the factory, the strikers still do not have official TGWU support. The bureaucrats' lame excuse for not giving support is that there are gaps and discrepancies in the Adwest TGWU branch's bookkeeping.

The AUEW District Committee has passed a resolution of support — but done nothing about it. They have not responded to the strikers' call for the AUEW convenor — one of the two stewards in Adwest who is scabbing — to be suspended.

So the strikers are campaigning hard for official union support.

Their demands are:

- Reinstatement;
- Scrapping of the works rules;
- The right to negotiate a decent wage rise.

They need:

- Support on the mass pickets;
- Resolutions through AUEW and TGWU branches calling on the unions to support them;
- Money. Send donations to: D. Broderick, Flat 4, 46 Berkeley Avenue, Reading.

A T&GWU steward from Longbridge argues the case against import controls

AS INDUSTRY sinks deeper into crisis, with more short-time working, layoffs and redundancies announced every day, the demand for import controls is growing. In the motor and components industry in particular, both unions and bosses are now demanding protectionist policies from the Government.

Michael Edwardes started the ball rolling with the "Buy British" campaign and his calls for "a little healthy chauvinism". Now BL is planning a full scale campaign amongst its employees to whip up feeling against European and Japanese imports, and to put pressure on the Government for controls.

Bill Hayden, a senior executive with Ford Europe, has also come out publicly for import controls against Japanese cars, and, again, a campaign amongst the workforce is planned:

"Ford wants to alert its employees, not just to the immediate threat of Japanese imports, but also to the fact that the likes of Datsun and Toyota can make cars much cheaper by organising their factories more efficiently". (Sunday Times, June 22nd)

So the campaign also ties in neatly with the bosses' plans to persuade workers to accept speed-up, increased flexibility, new technology and reduced union rights (the Ford "Business Plan Shopping List" and the BL "92 Page Document") — all of which will cost more jobs, of course.

The bosses can expect

CARS CRISIS: ARE IMPORT CONTROLS THE ANSWER?

support from their old friends like Terry Duffy in all of this. Already, Duffy is calling on "Sir Michael" to join him in a joint appeal to the Government to demand import controls. And the T&GWU is backing the bosses, too. Its paper, the Record, has devoted the bulk of its last three issues to the import controls demand. The T&GWU's ten point "Charter" includes the following:

"Joint Action: that trade union negotiators should join with employers in joint campaigns to exert maximum pressure on the govern-

ment and the CBI to take action against specific import penetration problems, using tri-partite machinery such as NEDC Sector Working Parties and Economic Development Committees wherever possible".

It's no surprise that the self-same bureaucrats who sabotaged the fight against the Edwardes plan, and who've stood idly by while 40,000 jobs were slashed in BL, now want to join with the bosses in demanding import controls to "save British jobs". The whole logic of the demand is to tie British workers to "their own" boss

class, and to regard foreign workers as "the enemy".

Meanwhile, in Europe and America exactly the same thing is going on, with unions and company executives getting together to demand import controls against "foreign competition" — like British cars!

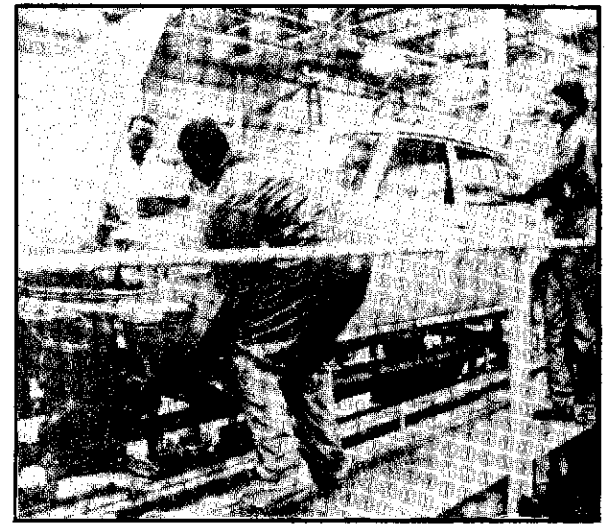
In America, the campaign has gone furthest with laid-off Detroit carworkers being encouraged (with some success) to smash up any Japanese car they see, and Doug Frazer of the United Auto Workers Union taking class collaboration to its ultimate by taking a seat on the board of the bankrupt Chrysler Corporation, and persuading his members to accept sackings, lay-offs and lower wages "in return".

So what would happen if the Government were persuaded to introduce import controls?

For a start, the cost of living would go sky high and many goods (particularly electrical goods normally imported from Japan) would become too expensive for many workers to afford.

Talbot would almost certainly close down its British operation (which depends upon imported components) and BL (which exports over 40% of its production) would come off the worst in any generalised trade war. Even if the controls were directed only against Japanese products, the resulting flood of cheap Japanese cars into other markets would still clobber BL's exports.

But the real objection that socialists must raise to the demand for protectionism is not just that it wouldn't work. More important, to advocate import controls is to disarm the working class ideologically, to imply



British carworkers have to ally with carworkers in other countries like South Africa (above), not compete with them through import controls.

making common cause with "our own" capitalists, and to encourage nationalist and even racist illusions.

It can be no coincidence that the T&GWU, as it steps up its campaign for import controls, is also preparing to give up the last vestiges of opposition to the Edwardes plan (using the fig leaf of the "Eurofinance" report which the union commissioned in January, and which warns that BL cannot survive any further serious disruption). Import controls are not just ineffective as a means of combatting unemployment — the demand militates against the kind of independent working class strategy that can defend jobs, and begin the fight to overthrow the crazy, unplanned system whose over-production is causing the crisis!

Now, more than ever before, British workers need to be forging links with their brothers and sisters overseas in a common struggle for shorter hours

and workers' control. In the motor industry, only Ford workers have any effective links with their foreign counterparts — and it was significant that at a recent meeting of the Ford European Combine Committee no-one felt able to raise the demand for import controls!

Talbot and Vauxhall (General Motors) workers have virtually no contact with their European opposite numbers. And as far as the unions in BL are concerned, that company's operations in Seneffe (Belgium), South Africa and elsewhere, might as well not exist. With the likelihood of a permanent link-up between BL and Honda being strongly rumoured, the unions cannot afford to continue with their insular, nationalist outlook.

Genuine, rank and file-controlled international combines have to be built as a matter of urgency:

Car workers of the world unite against the common enemy!

ASTMS MOVES LEFT, BUT WILL JENKINS?

by SAM DARBY

(Secretary of Manchester Chemical Branch, in personal capacity)

ASTMS ANNUAL Delegate Conference this year (June 7,8,9) resulted in many more positive resolutions than for some years past. The National Executive Committee was instructed to campaign actively in favour of the proposals for democratic reform in the Labour Party.

Decisions were also taken for improvements in the democracy of our delegations at TUC and Labour Party conferences; full support for all actions by ASTMS groups against cuts; and a vigorous campaign of resistance to the Employment Bill.

But any real progress for the membership will depend on whether or not these policies are put into effect. General Secretary Clive Jenkins has already flouted the Confer-

ence decision on democratic reforms in the Labour Party. What price the other decisions?

The Conference swept aside the platform's wish not to fight against job losses on a number of occasions. The most outstanding was a condemnation of the NEC's approval of the CSEU decision to go along with axing 25,000 jobs at British Leyland.

Despite the platform's claim that our members at BL had "sovereignty" in this matter and had agreed, they were told that these jobs belonged to all workers, not just to those in BL.

The NEC must "oppose unequivocally any further attempts by BL or any other employer to attack the rights and jobs of Trade Union members and to support any groups of members who decide to resist the loss of their jobs and defend and improve their working conditions".

In other resolutions carried against the platform's advice,

the NEC was told to bring the full resources of ASTMS to the struggle against redundancies. If new technology is to be introduced, the benefits should go to the workers involved, with no change in overall employment levels and no voluntary redundancies.

But the President's Address, given by an ex-Labour MP, Doug Hoyle, called for a revitalised capitalism through import controls in a "new economic strategy" which did not mention socialism. And an import controls resolution was carried, with the President allowing only one speaker against and refusing to allow a challenge to his ruling.

If ASTMS is to move forward, our struggle must be based on the need for social change rather than for import controls, and for the socialisation of the means of production, insurance companies and banks, under workers' control to be made policies of ASTMS.

then took it to the ballot.

But there can be no doubts about the result of that ballot.

Scottish teachers are prepared to take on the government to break their 14% limit on public sector pay. But to win that fight teachers will have to join forces with other public sector workers in an alliance to beat the Tories.

Meanwhile Labour-controlled councils, who in Scotland are the education management, will have to make a decision. They should stop acting as the Tories' first line of defence, refuse to take part in the negotiations and back the teachers.

Fight Duffy, fight Callaghan

CLOSING the militant Engineers' Charter conference in London on Saturday 28th June, veteran revolutionary Harry McShane stressed the importance of the fight within the Labour Party and the fact that no serious trade unionist can afford to stand aloof from that fight.

"I'm not a member of the Labour Party", said McShane, "but when Terry Duffy says he'll withhold the union's political levy if the left keep up their fight for accountability in the Labour Party, then I say every AUEW member should be ready to take sides in the battle against the right wing within the union and within the Labour Party."

There was spontaneous applause from the 250 engineers at the conference, but the conference organisers, members of the Socialist Workers' Party, just looked embarrassed.

Earlier they had refused to take a motion from a Northampton AUEW branch calling for support for the Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy, and made it clear that they regarded the whole issue as irrelevant.

The platform also refused to take any other resolutions, and put no resolution of their own. There was no real debate on demands and strategy in engineering, let alone on broader politics. Yet the

turnout [the Charter's biggest ever] showed real possibilities for Charter to come forward as a driving force on the left in the AUEW, where the Broad Left is in continuing decline.

The conference heard a number of useful reports from current and recent disputes at BL, Chix, Harshaws, GEC and other factories. There was also a report from the recent AUEW rules revision conference, outlining the union leadership's latest moves towards abolishing the democratic structure of the union in preparation for merging with Frank Chapple's dictatorially controlled EETPU.

Brixton dole goes for a strike

BRIXTON DOLE office sub-branch of the CPSA decided on 30th June to take a week's unofficial action in response to the sacking of two branch officials, Phil Cordell and Richard Cleverley. The decision to strike for a week and to review the situation on Friday 4th came after the union's National Executive Committee had refused to call an indefinite stoppage.

The right wing NEC refused to call any action apart from a 3 day stoppage from 26th to 27th June, and a request to other branches to take "protest action" on June 27th. Their only strategy is total dependence on Appeals Boards and Tribunals.

The membership at Brixton have from the start demanded that the official union machine call all-out action. They were left with no alternative but to call this week's action in the face of threats and pleadings from full-time officer and NEC member Terry Ainsworth who said that the NEC would stop money for the campaign and then said that there might

be a special NEC meeting to organise further action if Brixton members postponed their strike.

The courage of the membership at Brixton dole and the ability of the Brixton Campaign Committee to continue the fight will show that the only thing the NEC is good for is selling them out.

As the strike goes on, the whole of the union can be involved through unofficial levies and strategic blacking of all work coming from Brixton dole. Only organised rank and file action will be able to defeat the sackings.

JIM FARRELL

Colin McMann, Branch Secretary for South London Department of Employment Offices, told SO:

We have tried for the last six weeks to go through official channels to get industrial action to win reinstatement — and we have achieved nothing but tokens.

CPSA members in Brixton see token action as useless. We have nothing to lose by

taking a lead and calling on the support of CPSA members and other trade unionists.

The Brixton UBO (dole) members are the core of the campaign. We have tried to organise a national network of contacts to raise the issue in their own areas.

In the few weeks that the campaign has been organised, donations from branches of most of the Civil Service trade unions have raised over £2500 and more is coming in. We have guarantees of over £1500 a week for unofficial action.

But after they were taken by surprise by our day of action on 13th June, management have hit back. More people have been threatened by management.

Some who are on probation as Employment Officers have been told that the probations will be terminated and we will be transferred.

And one activist has been told that the "charges" will be dropped... if she accepts a transfer.

Scots teachers vote for strike

by CALLUM McRAE

SCOTTISH teachers in the Educational Institute of Scotland (the main Scottish teachers' union) have voted overwhelmingly against arbitration and for strike action starting next term. We are demanding a rise in line with the 'going rate' of pay settlements, now over 21%.

The voting in the secret postal ballot was 21,000 for rejection of arbitration and for strike action, 6,000 for arbitration and action 'if necessary', and 12,000 for no action.

Neither management — who are currently offering 14% — nor the notoriously reactionary EIS leadership can take heart from the very high poll — 85% of the membership.

The EIS executive, who last term called off a three week old strike the day before negotiations, has long been attempting to sabotage the action. Their reason for calling off the action was that the EIS conference, due to take place a few days later, should take the decision on future action.

However, even an overwhelming conference decision for restarting the strike was not enough for the exec. They

London Labour debates the cuts

Bring all the Councils into line

This conference will be the first meeting of councillors and party activists to discuss how to react to Heseltine.

We need to pin down councils so they don't drift off and compromise with packages of cuts. They need to be mobilised to stand firm. We need to build up pressure on them, so that a couple of councils are not left isolated.

The issue won't be rate rises. Heseltine's Bill means that the government can withhold all the Rate Support Grant if it chooses, to isolate and break the Councils it chooses.

All Labour Councils have to stand together. We have to put pressure on Councils like Islington and Southwark to reverse their decision to make cuts in line with Heseltine's earlier demands. I think that's the major question, bringing those councils into line.

Camden won't be the worst hit. It could mean an extra £1 on the rates on top of inflation. In Lambeth, it could mean doubling the rates.

We have to see how we can use the GLC, with its rate base, to protect Labour Councils against the cuts.

If individual councils are isolated, they can be broken, but the Tories couldn't take on the whole of London so easily.

Ken Livingstone, Camden council and GLC

We should say: no rate rises!

UNITED opposition to the Tories is fine, but the question is united opposition on what basis. It's not clear to me what we can expect to come out of the conference, since it is organised as a forum for discussion and will not be taking any decisions.

London Labour and trade union activists will be meeting on Saturday July 5th (from 10am at Hampstead Town Hall, Haverstock Hill) to discuss the fight against the cuts at a conference initiated by 'London Labour Briefing' and sponsored by 70 councillors.

Socialist Organiser asked four activists for their views on what should come out of the conference. The biggest debate will probably be on rate rises. SO believes a clear line of no cuts and no rent/rate rises is vital if the labour movement is to mobilise working class communities for mass action against the Tory squeeze.

We also believe that the Left in the labour movement has to organise for this policy. As a step to getting some organisation on a London-wide basis, SO supporters have planned a follow-up meeting to the London Labour Briefing Conference: 7.30pm on Friday 18th July, at Lambeth Town Hall.

The people organising the conference are wedded to the idea of rate rises as an answer to cuts, so I think it is unlikely that it will be prepared to take a stand against rate rises. And unless real pressure is put on them I don't think we'll see a real fight, just shadow boxing.

I'd like to see the conference coming out with a commitment to opposing rate rises. I don't believe in hitting working class people in their pockets with cuts in their living standards (which is what it amounts to) in any way of mobilising their support for an all-out fight against the government.

Those who see rate rises as no answer to the cuts need to organise to make sure our point of view is heard in all the discussion groups.

What those who favour rate rises need to bear in mind is that most London boroughs are not like Camden, with huge office blocks providing a large rate base. In most boroughs the working class has to shoulder much of the rate bill, and rates therefore operate as a kind of regressive taxation.

Neil Turner, Lambeth councillor

Knit together the Left

This conference is important for two reasons. Firstly, as a stage in building towards unified resistance in London to gov-

ernment cuts and the Local Government Bill. Secondly, in laying the groundwork for a Labour Greater London Council next year.

There was a division of opinion last year on tactics. The first local government conference last year began to thrash out differences in relation to rate increases, whether to default on interest repayments, what to do if the District Auditor is brought in, and so on — but these issues weren't fully resolved.

Our real job is to support comrades who are in the fight now, like Lambeth, and ensure they're fighting on the best tactical ground. I think they were wiser to take the road they did rather than immediate confrontation with the government.

If they had gone into it without the preparation and got surcharged prematurely, we'd have lost.

On the GLC: we can begin to knit together the Left. In the meetings that have been held round London on the GLC Manifesto, there's been lively discussion and the biggest question that always comes up is: how can you convince us and the electorate that you're actually going to do these things you promise. The Labour Party doesn't deliver the goods.

The answer to that is, that the Party must be more involved in deciding these policies, and we must select the right candidates — people who will actually do the job they promise.

We're starting to set up the machinery of accountability. It needs to be much stronger.

Mike Ward, Wandsworth

Unite — but not for rate rises

We need a commitment to united action. If councils decide not to pay the police precept (especially with the SPG now operating saturation policing in Hackney) it has got to be all inner London boroughs doing that. What we need is concerted action on a common programme.

After all, one of the main alibis of the right wing is that on your own, as an isolated borough, you can't possibly hope to take on the government and win. At the same time, the right wing does nothing about this isolation.

They are not going to come to the conference and they are not going to call one to fight the Tories their way, because their way doesn't exist. They actually delight in isolation.

I'm not hopeful that a really united approach will come out of the conference though. There are many differences among the left.

My own view is that, without raising rates and rents, councils should adopt a strategy of running the services to meet the needs of the working people locally. Of course, the money will run out before the end of the year.

But by that time, by running things the right way, by doing things democratically and involving local people, by improving services to meet needs, and by campaigning full out for the fight ahead, we can develop a mass movement that really has something to protect and to fight for.

At that point there should be sit-ins, work-ins, and mass struggles demanding that the government fork-out for these obviously-needed services. The finger will be pointed at those who are really responsible.

At the moment, rates act as a vast double taxation. The vast majority of revenue collected by central government comes from PAYE, working people. It's supposed to come back as the 'social wage', but it's spent on arms and things that we have no control over. And then working people are taxed again by the rates.

John Sweeney, Hackney

HACKNEY

Fighting the cuts, fighting for socialism

by JOHN SWEENEY

HACKNEY COUNCIL has made £10½ million cuts already this year and raised the rates by 49%. Only about half a dozen of us in the Labour Group (of 59) voted against cuts and rate rises — and we're due to be disciplined for defying the Whip.

We've just held a conference of Hackney Fightback Against the Cuts.

Our main job now is to broaden the fight. Most people at the conference were members of far left groups and the Communist Party, which means that so far our campaign hasn't got through to the grass roots.

We also need a much stronger input from the Labour Parties, since the Labour Party is the political party that most working class people in this country relate to. It is only when the grass roots of the Labour Party have been radicalised and demand change, that the present leadership of the Party, which has followed Treasury policies, can be forced to change course.

Above all, we must have a campaign that has the active involvement of the trade unions and workplace organisations.

This isn't just a question of figures. It isn't just that without mass support, no anti-cuts campaign is possible — though that's certainly true.

Our aim must be mass actions in which groups of people really do feel they are getting a grip on the power that runs their lives. It is this experience of control that will help develop the consciousness of what socialism is.

Benefit

In Hackney, we have to try to rebuild — that is, to democratise — our services, putting them in the hands of those who use them and work in them. The consumers and the direct workers have to decide.

We should have self-management on estates, for instance. This is not a distant utopia. The fact is, that if people do not identify with the services the council provides, they will not be

prepared to fight to defend them.

Tenants, for instance, are not going to fight to protect direct labour if their only experience is that repairs don't get done.

In that sense, the fight against the cuts has a revolutionary perspective, since it highlights the question of who runs society, and for whose benefit.

We must also have clear line on rate rises — although some people see it as divisive... that is, divisive among the present activists — obviously the local people themselves are all dead against rate rises

Interest

We could agree a broad programme that skirts round the rates issue — but I think that would be wrong. It is a vital issue. In any case, the question is raised every time the rates are raised, and rates in Hackney have doubled in the last four years.

But although the rates have increased massively, the services in the borough have not improved. You need only look around Hackney to see the deprivation — slum estates, inadequate hospitals and social services, and schools with insufficient resources.

Anyway, a large part of the money raised through rates goes again to big business in the form of interest charges. Hackney raises £22½ million in rates and has to give £23 million each year in interest charges.

Any anti-cuts campaign has to explain this. Also, there is the fact that the council majority and some trade unions call for rate rises as a way out of the cuts without waging a fight. This is a cop-out, of course.

It means further burdening working people who pay rates, and in any case it is no more than passing money from one pocket to another in the same pair of trousers.

If this were a very short-term stop-gap to give time to bring the campaign up to a point where it would be strong enough to take on the government, that would be a different thing. But rate rises offered as a solution is nonsense. And we've got to say that in the campaign.

by DAVE SPENCER

COVENTRY: RIGHT WING DEFIES DEMOCRACY

THIS YEAR'S AGM of Coventry City Labour Party in May saw a decisive swing to the left on the 'No Cuts' platform. About 150 delegates turned up twice as many as last year's and passed a 'Defence of the Public Services' motion.

The motion called for a 'No Cuts' campaign and for the Labour Party to stand firm against the cuts. It also called for a 'No Cuts' campaign and for the Labour Party to stand firm against the cuts.

Two cuts in the council's education budget have already been delayed. One is the closure of the City of Coventry boarding school of St. Mary's Mortimer. The other is raising the price of school meals from 35p to 40p.

The result of this challenge is that the City party cannot meet to decide policy until the AGM has been held again — and the right wing can get on with the annual business and the cuts without any interruption.

as invalid, on the grounds that some people did not receive notices on time (this did not prevent the 150 turning up!) and that some organisations sent too many delegates.

The result of this challenge is that the City party cannot meet to decide policy until the AGM has been held again — and the right wing can get on with the annual business and the cuts without any interruption.

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wing for many years.

The contempt with which the right wing councillors view democracy generally, let alone just in the party, can be seen by the fact that notices telling parents of the rise in school meal prices were sent home via children on the very day when the Education Committee was meeting to decide what to do. That is, the letters were printed and in schools before the decision was made.

The result of this challenge is that the City party cannot meet to decide policy until the AGM has been held again — and the right wing can get on with the annual business and the cuts without any interruption.

education officials, NUT officials and NALGO education reps have all been Fabian Society members. Harold Bey, a local headmaster, a Fabian and a local NUT secretary for more years than anyone cares to remember, once put forward the breathtaking comment on democracy in the unions: 'We don't want the tail wagging the dog'.

The question was: why does the Coventry NUT never hold any ordinary branch meetings? The answer was: 'The NUT is a Fabian Society'.

is quite clear in these circumstances. In practical terms, the fight has already begun in Coventry. The links with the TUs have been made with some success as can be seen by City Party delegations Recruitment and education drives have begun in branches like Upper Stoke and Lower Stoke where the Left has gained ground.

Many people are joining the Labour Party because they are seeing that the cuts can't go on unchecked. They want to see the Labour Party stand firm against the cuts.

by DIANA MINNS

THE HOME Secretary recently rejected a call for the immediate scrapping of the 'Sus' law; part of the reason for so doing was that there was nothing to put in its place.

In Hornsey, the police are working hard on their own alternative; since October last year they've been arresting kids [mainly young blacks] on a variety of charges ranging from robbery, theft from the person, handling of stolen goods, etc. But it's more than a normal police exercise — coordinated from Hornsey Police Station, by the ex-head of the SPG, it's involved at least 70 kids so far. The

Dragnet in Hornsey

number is increasing daily.

The method the police have used is to arrest and charge a few kids, holding them for between 24 hours and 72 hours [and in a few instances, longer].



Held in custody, these few give the names of others.

These are arrested, and in turn tell on others. All the so-called confessions and arrests are based on hearsay evidence.

Once the kids get to Highgate Magistrates' Court they come up against more difficulties. Legal Aid has been difficult to obtain, defence lawyers have indulged in 'plea-bargaining' [i.e. closeted

themselves with the police and then advised their clients to plead guilty to certain of the charges against them], bail has been difficult to get, with sums as large as £6,000 and more being requested for surety. The court has also been making one of the bail conditions — for kids who have not yet been judged — a curfew system, reporting to

the police each day at a certain time and remaining at home between 9pm and 6am. In addition, the committal proceedings have been adjourned for weeks at a time.



A local 'Hornsey 70' defence committee has been set up, following a public meeting.

Its main aims are to contact all the kids and their parents, interview them to get all the facts; organise a decent defence; and get the maximum publicity for the case. We don't just need to defend the Hornsey 70 [who may be 80, 90 or 100 by now] but to stop it happening again. What's happening in Hornsey now is the pattern of police operations elsewhere, in the future.

Next meeting of the Defence Committee is on Friday July 4th, 7.30pm, at 28 Middle Lane, N8. Speakers include Paul Boateng and Rudi Narayan.

Donations, offers of help should be sent to The Secretary, Hornsey 70 Defence Committee, c/o 28 Middle Lane, N8.

The case of 245-T From Seveso to Somerset

by NEAL SMITH

THE SMALL village of Over Stowey in Somerset is suffering from a plague.

Surrounding the village are the plantations of the Forestry Commission, where some of the villagers work. Over the years, these woods have been frequently sprayed with the weed-killer 245-T.

Now the villagers are reaping a terrible harvest. Several wives of forestry workers have had miscarriages; local people suffer from stomach disorders and skin rashes; and animals and fish have been dying.

One day local farmer Geoffrey Heffer saw a cloud of chemical waft over his flock of sheep from where some Forestry Commission workers were spraying. Nineteen ewes aborted. Some lambs were born without mouths and ears.

David Thomas is a farm worker on a large farm in the Midlands. During the early 1970s he and other workers sprayed hedges with the Boots brand of 245-T (called BBN). They used back-packs which sometimes leaked.

During 1972-3 his wife suffered two miscarriages. Eventually she gave birth to a daughter who was found to have a defective kidney and deformed urinary tract. Since then she has had another miscarriage.

Working with David was Edgar Trehern. On one occasion he was splashed on the neck with undiluted 245-T. Within a few weeks he had developed a growth. Now he is dead from a rare and agonising form of cancer.

Many other case histories have been collected by local officials of the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers (NAAAW), including the deaths by cancer of two young farm workers within months of contact with the weed-killer.

In February this year the unions presented Peter Walker, the Agriculture Minister, with a dossier on 245-T and urged him to ban it. Yet no action was taken — Peter Walker and his advisers on the Pesticides Advisory Committee have told the public that they have nothing to worry about.

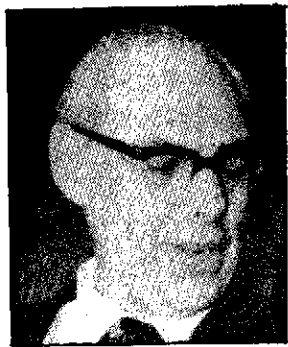
As Jack Boddy, General Secretary of the NAAAW, puts it, they are prepared to use people 'as guinea pigs'. This attitude has so outraged the union that now it has called for the disbanding of the Pesticides Advisory Committee.

The problem with 245-T is that it contains the deadly chemical dioxin. It was dioxin released into the air from a factory that caused widespread skin disease and miscarriages in the town of Seveso in northern Italy. Three years later, the dioxin is still there in the soil of Seveso.

It acts by attacking the molecules of DNA in the body which are responsible for tissue reproducing itself properly and also for the formation of new tissue in the human embryo.

Tests on animals in the US have shown that minute amounts of dioxin cause birth deformities and various types of cancer in test animals. The US National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety reckons dioxin may cause cancer in humans.

There is plenty of evidence to support this. In North Wales, while on a picnic, the Adgar family walked into a cloud of it. Over the next few months the father developed breast cancer, the son came out in boils and then



Denis Thatcher

developed a bone disease, and mother later gave birth to a son with a hole in the heart and other deformities.

Dioxin has also poisoned people on a much wider scale. Apart from Seveso, the most notorious case is Vietnam.

The US sprayed vast areas of forest with the defoliant 'Agent Orange', which contains dioxin. Now there are over 2,000 lawsuits against the manufacturers of Agent Orange, mainly by American ex-servicemen claiming compensation for cancers and birth deformities in their children.

Australian soldiers who served in Vietnam are claiming as well. A recent survey has shown that birth deformities among the children of Australian ex-servicemen are 250 times more common than the national average.

The Vietnamese themselves do not even have the possibility of compensation.

Knowing all this, the Pesticides Advisory Committee is

still complacent. They claim that dioxin disperses within 24 hours of exposure to sunlight. Yet ten years later it is still present in the ground in Vietnam and still affecting the people there.

Dioxin is not an essential part of 245-T. It could be removed from the weed-killer before it leaves the factory — but that would cost more and lower profit margins!

One of the manufacturers of 245-T, the Swiss firm Hoffman La Roche, admitted as much in a recent *Horizon* programme, and said they would take no action until their competitors did the same.

One of the biggest users of the weed-killer in this country, British Rail, has already banned its use. On September 25th of last year, a train spraying 245-T accidentally sprayed a line of allotments on a suburban route. The local council had to warn allotment holders not to eat anything grown there, and the makers paid out an unspecified amount of compensation.

BR had been buying most of their 245-T from Chipmans Ltd: a subsidiary of Staveland Chemicals, whose chairman is a certain Denis Thatcher.

Other firms apart from Denis Thatcher's also make 245-T in this country. The best known is Boots, who market it under the brand names *Nettlekiller* and *Touchweeder*. But Boots appear to be phasing out the sale of these products.

But a meeting between the NAAAW and a sub-committee of the Pesticides Advisory Committee, on June 12th, got nowhere. According to one union delegate, the union members really walked out of the meeting because the PAC were treating them 'as a load of yokels who didn't know what they were talking about'.

Farm workers have little power, but they are fighting an issue that affects not only themselves.

Picnickers, campers, in fact anyone in the countryside or a garden, could be at risk from 245-T. Other trade unionists need to get involved in the campaign. How much longer are people going to be used as guinea pigs in the interests of profit?

A come-back for Tribune?

by BRUCE ROBINSON

"Does the Tribune group still exist?", asked the *New Statesman* a couple of years back.

In the 1974-9 Parliament, Tribune seemed to be very strong with 80-odd MPs.

But most of those 80-odd were Tribune group members only to impress or placate their constituency Labour Parties. They never went to Tribune group meetings. They hardly ever voted for Tribune proposals.

And even the Tribune 'hard-core' of 20 or so had their will apparently broken after Wilson faced down their rebellion over IMF-ordered cuts in March 1976.

Some Tribune group MPs did continue to speak up, as individuals. But as an organised effective group... well, did Tribune still exist? Does it still exist?

The Tribune group still has 70 members in Parliament — but as the Left-Right battle inside the Party has heated up, so the status of Tribune within the Left has declined.

The *Tribune* paper has a miserable circulation — and who can be surprised when it is duller than and in no way more left-wing than the official *Labour Weekly*?

Challenge

In the broad left alliance on the key issue of Labour democracy, *Tribune* as such has so far played no role. And how could it play a role, when Michael Foot, one of the leading anti-democrats, is still a member of the Tribune group and was a featured platform speaker at last year's Labour conference Tribune rally?

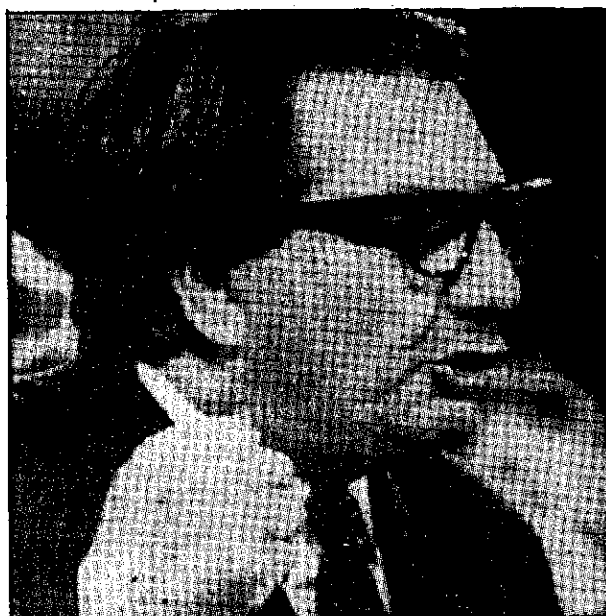
How can the Tribune group play a serious role, at a time when the struggle has gone way beyond Parliamentary posturing and polite debate, if it is just a club of MPs, with no connection with or accountability to an organised rank and file movement.

Local Tribune groups have existed for a while in a few constituencies — but without official encouragement from the MPs group in the party. The Tribune group has been a bit of a joke, a bit of a laughing stock, a bit of a punch line. It has been a bit of a joke, a bit of a laughing stock, a bit of a punch line. It has been a bit of a joke, a bit of a laughing stock, a bit of a punch line.

Some Tribune MPs seem to be becoming aware of the problem. On June 25th, for the first time ever, a national conference of Tribune activists was called.

The 200 attending heard a bold campaigning speech from Eric Heffer — who perhaps is setting out to be for Tribune what Tony Benn

LAST MINUTE: As *Socialist Organiser* was about to go to the printers, we heard that the Tribune group of MPs, at a meeting on 30th June, voted against backing the Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy. According to our first reports, the vote was 10 to 8.



Heffer: a new Tribune of the people?

is for the LCC:

"There are really two basic alternatives in front of the Party", he wrote in a paper for the conference. "Either it consolidates its socialist base, further strengthens its socialist concepts, or it is slowly transformed, (not merely into a Right-wing Social Democratic Party, as the SPD in Western Germany) but into a type of US Democratic Party, which totally embraces capitalism, but accepting that some reforms are required from time to time."

He told the conference that the major proposals of the Party Inquiry were "weird" and no agreement was likely to be reached on them. The Inquiry should "either accept the Minority Report or kick the whole thing out and let Conference decide as it should have done in the first place."

Heffer replied militantly to Duffy's and Chapple's threats to cut off cash to the Labour Party if the Right does not win. The rank and file are the trade union movement, he said. Duffy and Chapple are the Labour Party, he said. The rank and file are the trade union movement, he said. Duffy and Chapple are the Labour Party, he said.

He doesn't believe in 'rank hunts', he added, "but we say to minorities in the party — we say to Bill Rodgers — accept that you can be defeated."

Bernard Dix of NUPE took up the challenge to the trade union right-wingers. The union leaders, he said, have traditionally been the staunchest supporters of the right wing in the party. The unions "at all levels" must reassert control over Labour Conference delegations and over union-sponsored MPs.

In the winter of 1978-9,

the TUC was "more concerned to protect the government than helpful to NUPE."

So — "how can we avoid a constant repetition of the experience of the movement over the last 16 years?" Dix replied: "We must force the changes now happening whether the leadership wants it or not."

But Dix did not explain why he does not campaign for regular elections and right of recall of officials in his own union. And some people at the conference — like ABS official Tony Banks, reporting back from a workshop, argued that the Labour left should not take up union democracy as a general issue, but that individuals should only take it up within their own union. The right wing, they reckoned, would claim that the left was 'interfering' in internal union matters.

Undecided

Pete Firmin of Brent East CLP replied that without trade union democracy, Labour Party democracy can never be a reality. Trade union and Labour Party politics are so closely interconnected that talk of 'interference' is nonsense.

A serious organised left wing in the labour movement can hardly exist unless it organises in the unions as well as the Labour Party. But Tribune has not yet decided whether that is what it wants.

The conference did not decide on any plans to organise, nor even on any precisely defined policies to organise around.

Does Tribune still exist? Yes. But the pulse is very slow and flickering.

Socialist Organiser

by LAWRENCE WELCH

South Africa:

A smouldering revolt, an explosion on the way

THE WAVE OF protest in South Africa has died down now to a smouldering discontent in the black and Coloured working class, and a number of strikes are still unbeaten.

800 meatworkers in the Cape are still on strike. Organised by the militant Western Provinces General Workers' Union (WPGWU), they are demanding recognition of worker-elected committees. This has been the first industry-wide strike to take place over a wide area since the 1973 strikes in Natal, and has involved both Coloured and black workers.

A meat boycott was organised by the black and Coloured communities and gained some support from black and Coloured butchers. Students in particular backed the boycott, persuading butchers and workers to boycott red meat. However, the action predictably found no sympathy among whites, the major consumers of fresh meat.

A far more effective consumer boycott has been the continued bus boycott against fare increases. Workers are cramming into trains and taking makeshift 'taxis' while the buses run empty and with windows smashed.

The second major area of industrial unrest has been centred around Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage, about forty miles away, involving 7000 African and Coloured car workers. Reports from Uitenhage, particularly, are very limited since it has

been declared an 'operational area' from which journalists are prohibited. Volkswagen and Goodyear in Uitenhage, and Fords and General Motors in Port Elizabeth, are especially affected.

The Motor Assembly Workers Union (Coloured) and the Union of Auto Workers (black), both members of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), are strong in the industry.

The workers have a tradition of militancy and are demanding increases of R 0.85 an hour in the case of motor workers, and R 1.85 an hour for tyreworkers, on their basic common wage of R 1.15. (The Rand is currently worth 55p). The trade union organiser, Saul, just called for blacking as a means of solidarity (it is an offence under the Riotous Persons Act to call for a strike), but the workers quickly went beyond this and came out on a strike which at its peak involved 18 factories.

In the last week in May, 100 textile workers armed with sticks in Durban stormed their factory to back up a wage demand, after 1200 workers had struck. The strike soon spread, to involve some 7000

workers in the Frame Group's textile mills. It appears to have been crushed, however, when employers brought in new labour.

4,500 black mineworkers brought work to a halt on three shafts in the Stilfontein

gold mine near Johannesburg. Police used batons and teargas to 'restore order'.

The state's attack on the unions continues to mount. Already 6 officials of the WPGWU have been arrested. The biggest of the in-

dependent organisations, FOSATU, with 13 affiliated unions and a signed-up membership of 50,000, has recently had its fund cut off under the government's Fund Raising Act — it is prohibited from receiving money from overseas or from its affiliated unions.

The recent Wiehahn Commission was a new attempt by the state to incorporate and split the unions by offering them a degree of legality through registration, but imposing obligations on them as well, such as having to submit their books and membership lists to the state.

The WPGWU, representing more than 10,000 workers, has rejected this, but some FOSATU affiliates, committed to non-racial unionism, have applied for registration on the grounds that the legality would give them greater freedom for manoeuvre, and that the obligations on them exist anyway in other state legislation. They are also making demands of the registration commission.

The struggles are becoming increasingly well organised and more widespread. Joint action between blacks and Coloureds, and the linking up of struggles in different areas, is much stronger. The protesting school students at Elsie's River, where at least 42 people were killed last week, held daily public meetings to draw in mass support, and distributed leaflets extensively.

The state is running out of solutions.



They shot to kill, too... but the rebellion still grows

What's on

Socialist Organiser Conference on the FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY IN THE TRADE UNIONS
Saturday 1 November
11-5.30, in Birmingham
Open to Labour Party members and to trade unionists.
Inquiries to John Bloxam
c/o 5 Stamford Hill
London N16

SATURDAY 5 JULY. Hornsey Labour Party Fighting Fund social, to raise money to pay off legal expenses incurred by being taken to court by the National Front. 8pm at Harin-gley TU and community centre, 2a Brabant Rd, N22. Tickets £2

SATURDAY 26 JULY - SAT. 2 AUGUST. Labour Party Young Socialists summer camp, Bracelands campsite, near Coleford, Gloucestershire. Booking fee £5 (cheques to 'LPYS Summer Camp Fund') to LPYS, 144 Walworth Rd, London SE17. Cost for full week £35.

Subscribe to SOCIALIST ORGANISER: £2 for 12 issues, or £12 for 10 copies each month. From 5 Stamford Hill, London N15. [Cheques payable to Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory].

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The miners' choice

by JOHN CUNNINGHAM (Yorks NUM)

Yorkshire miners' leader Arthur Scargill, speaking at the Yorkshire Miners' Gala recently, said he believed that the National Coal Board's eventual aim is to reduce the industry to 80-100 "super pits" with a manpower of around 100,000.

This would mean 130 pits closed and well over 130,000 miners' jobs gone.

No one who works in the industry is opposed to "super pits" — as far as it is humanly possible every miner would like to see his pit run like the new "super pit" at Selby. But why should new technology, which makes mining not only more productive but usually safer, cleaner and less arduous, result in thousands of redundancies and pit closures?

The miners should get the benefits of new developments instead of a hand-out and a one-way ticket to the dole queue.

The Tory Coal Industry Bill which got its second reading in Parliament recently, calls for a break-even date for 1983-4 after which the NCB will receive no more financial aid. It's the same approach as for British Steel, and with the same meaning: massive closures.

Fearing a fightback, the Coal Board has offered big increase in transfer and redundancy payments.

Miners who are forced to move to a new area can now qualify for transfer payments of up to £2,000 plus money for accommodation, help with solicitors, household settlement grants etc.

A 35-year old miner with 15 years service can now receive over £2,000 if he leaves the pits, and a miner over 55 can get £20,000 if he retires early.

The union hasn't yet accepted this offer but it is discussing it at the moment. By offering such handouts the Tories are obviously hoping to buy off the miners and ensure that there will be no struggle over closures.

But at the Yorkshire Miners' Gala Arthur Scargill expressed the feelings of most miners when he called for resistance to closures unless it is proved that the seams are exhausted. Even Joe Gormley has found time off from pursuing his various directorships to appear in South Wales and give his pledge that the NUM would do everything to resist the closures.

At the coming NUM conference (July 7-11) several resolutions will reflect the membership's feelings about closures — but there is a danger that the desire to fight the closures will be sidetracked into the nationalist shadow-boxing of demanding import controls, a favourite hobby-horse of Scargill and other NUM leaders.

There are a number of resolutions on wages. The one from Group 2 area [Scottish craftsmen] dem-

ands that "In the next round of negotiations, the wages element of the claim shall be for a minimum weekly wage of £100 on the surface, with appropriate differentials for all other grades on the surface or underground." A South Wales resolution repeats the £100 minimum call and also adds that this year's increase should be paid as a flat-rate increase across the board, so as not to widen differentials.

A South Yorkshire resolution which calls for a minimum salary of £5,500 a year, with the fringe benefits presently accorded to senior management and adjustments to take account of inflation, was ruled out of order by Gormley and will not now appear on the agenda.

The conference can lay the basis for a fight on wages, against closures, and for a shorter working week — or it can throw in the towel in advance, and see the mining areas devastated.

00

On the question of Labour Party reforms, the NUM has a clear policy in favour of mandatory reselection. But on the election of leader and who decides the Manifesto, the NUM conference will have nothing to say — leaving the final decision to the NUM delegation at Labour Party conference and the executive.

Unless the delegation [which is chosen area by area] is able to keep Gormley in line it is difficult to say which way the crucial NUM vote will go. Last year Gormley cast the vote against mandatory reselection.

MOBILISE FOR LABOUR DEMOCRACY

- 1 Defend mandatory reselection
- 2 DEFEND THE NEC
- 3 NEC must decide the manifesto

- 4 The Party must elect the Leader
- 5 MAKE THE PLP ACCOUNTABLE

Rank & File Mobilising Committee

Launched by:

Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, Clause IV, Independent Labour Publications Institute, for Workers' Control, Labour Coordinating Committee, National Organisation of Labour Students, Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory

Contributors include:

Tony Benn, Vladimir Derer, Rachel Lever, Ken Livingstone, Frances Morrell, Reg Race, Brian Sedgmore, Audrey Wise, Bob Wright

20p

"I BELIEVE we've got two Parties", Tony Benn writes in the new *Mobilise for Labour Democracy* broadsheet, "the Parliamentary Party and the Labour Party... the Party as a Party is squeezed out when we're in office..." Democracy in the Labour Party is vital, he argues, "if we are going to mobilise our full strength to change society, as distinct from sending some people into Government as Ministers..."

Other contributors include Vladimir Derer, Rachel Lever, Ken Livingstone, Frances Morrell, Reg Race, Brian Sedgmore, Audrey Wise, and Bob Wright. And an article from the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory explains why SCLV took the initiative to launch the Mobilising Committee. The broadsheet can be ordered at the rate of 20p for £2 plus 75p postage (or 20p plus 10p for individual copies), from the Mobilising Committee, c/o 10 Park Drive, London NW11. Or phone John Bloxam (01-607 9052), Jon Lansman (01-440 9396), David Smith (01-985 8635), or Barry Winter (0532 703664).