

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

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WITH WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

CLAIMANTS & STRIKERS 10p

by ALEXIS CARRAS

TWO General Secretaries of the Communist Party ousted in a decade. The Polish workers have a most enviable record of destroying even the best laid plans that the Warsaw bureaucrats and their Russian masters may have concocted.

That Gierek would have to go was on the cards from the moment he made his 'self-criticism' on the country's mass media on the 18th and 24th of August.

At once threatening and apologetic about his regime's mistakes (read: bureaucracy, corruption, economic disaster, and repression), his heartfelt pleas to the Polish workers to cease their strikes and occupations did not cut much ice.

A shrug of the shoulders, a sneering reference to 'yet again more promises of reform!', was all the reply the workers gave to Gierek's pleas, before they got down to the serious business of strengthening their strikes and the unity of their class. He was irrelevant.

News of his dismissal due to 'health reasons' (the broken heart of a spurned lover?) barely evoked any sympathy.

As one of the Gdansk workers stated: "In 1956 I hailed the arrival of Gomulka enthusiastically. I was deceived. In 1970 I celebrated Gierek's with hope. I was deceived. Today I have faith only in ourselves, in our power."

It is that power which has forced Gierek out, and won for the Polish workers the right, unique in the Stalinist bloc, to form their own free trade unions, independent of the Party and the state.

Elements

And yet when Gierek reshuffled the Politbureau, got rid of the more uncompromising 'hard-line' elements, and replaced them with people like Jagielski and Barcikowski, no-one thought that events would go this far.

The events at the Lenin shipyard, and the negotiations there between the government and the MKS (inter-factory strike committee), representing hundreds of thousands of workers, were representative of the increasing confidence of the working class and the rapid ero-

Polish bureaucrats

KICK THEM ALL OUT

sion of the Party's ability to control the situation.

When Jagielski (who took over as deputy prime minister and chief government negotiator from Tadeusz Pyka) met the inter-factory strike committee in Gdansk for the first time on the night of August 23, he was full of the bluster and bureaucratic haughtiness acquired through years of ruling over the heads of the working class, accountable to no-one.

To the individual demands of the strikers' representatives, contained in their 21 points, he would answer with insulting dishonesty.

Abolition of censorship?

But 'we' need censorship for the security of the state. It is a key element in the ensemble of 'our'

social institutions. And of course there is always the problem of pornography.

(Well, he should know. His mate, Szepanski,

head of Polish radio and television, when purged a few days ago, was found to have over three hundred skin flicks that would make any Soho porn deal-



Gdansk pickets, armed with clubs: ready to meet a backlash from the bureaucrats?

er's eyes pop out, as well as four prostitutes, a fleet of cars, yachts, mansions, and even a Mediterranean island, for his own private use! There were limits, however, to Szepanski's degeneracy. He was very hard and principled about broadcasting employees who sported long hair and deviated in other ways from the party line. He sacked them).

Release of political prisoners?

Again Jagielski would gasp in disbelief. Had he heard the strikers correctly? Everyone knew there were no political prisoners in socialist Poland.

Working class family allowances in line with those received by the police?

What ingratitude on the part of these workers who could not understand the difficult domestic life of policemen, due to their irregular work shifts! (And what about us night shift workers? asked one of the strikers. Jagielski shut up at that point).

Asses

As one of the workers put it, "He hasn't understood anything. He thinks we're a load of asses, that he can easily fool us. He forgets that we have the experiences of 1956, 1970, and 1976... all that's nothing to him. But they'll end up by understanding us all right!"

The major demand on which the workers were intransigent was independent trade unions. The bureaucracy balked at this.

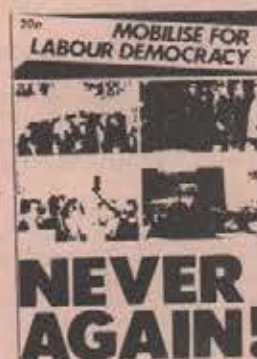
Democratisation of the existing 'trade unions'? Greater worker participation in the existing factory committees, alongside the managers and other assorted hacks? Yes! But free trade unions were out of the question.

They would without any doubt undermine one of the bureaucracy's key instruments for controlling the workers and making sure that any demands and complaints, after their initial airing, would be quietly buried in a file, in the office of some careerist who probably had never seen the shop floor in his life.

The negotiations were suspended for several days and finally resumed on Tuesday 26 August, but only after the government lifted the telephone blockade on Gdansk.

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Where we stand

... Organise the left to beat back the Tories' attacks!
No to attacks on union rights; defend the picket line;
no state interference in our unions!
No to any wage curbs. Labour must support all struggles
for better living standards and conditions!
Wage rises should at the very least keep up with price
increases. 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
an 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 a bosses'
striking force: dissolution of special squads (SPG, Special
Branch, M15, etc.), public accountability, etc.
... Free abortion and contraception on demand. Women's
equal right to work, and full equality for women.
... Against attacks on gays by the State: abolish all laws
which discriminate against lesbians and gay men; for the
right of the gay community to organise and to affirm their
stance publicly.
... The Irish people — as a whole — should have the right
to determine their own future. Get the British troops out
now! Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Political
status for Irish Republican prisoners as a matter of urgency.
... The black working people of South Africa should get
full support from the British labour movement for their
strikes, struggles and armed combat against the white
supremacist regime. South African goods and services
should be blacked.
... It is essential to achieve the fullest democracy in the
labour movement. Automatic reselection of MPs during
each parliament, and the election by annual conference of
party leaders. Annual election of all trade union officials,
who should be paid the average for the trade.
... The chaos, waste, human suffering and misery of
capitalism now — in Britain and throughout the world —
show the urgent need to establish rational, democratic,
human control over the economy, to make the decisive
sectors of industry social property, under workers' control.
The strength of the labour movement lies in the rank and
file. Our perspective must be working class action to raze
the capitalist system down to its foundations, and to put a
working class socialist 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.

Socialist Organiser aims to help build a class-
struggle left wing in the trade unions and Labour
Party, based on a revolutionary socialist platform.
Socialist Organiser supporters' groups are being
organised in many towns and cities.

Socialist Organiser is sponsored by the Socialist
Campaign for a Labour Victory.

MOBILISING COMMITTEE RALLIES

LONDON RALLY

Monday 15 September, 7.30

Camden Town Hall

Chair: Jo Richardson MP
Speakers: Tony Benn MP,
Eric Heffer MP, Bob Wright
(Asst. Gen. Sec. AUEW*),
Frances Morrell (Mobilising
Committee).

50p admission, 20p unwaged

••

Bristol

Saturday 20 September, 2.30

Central Hall, Old Market
St, Bristol 2

Speakers: Reg Race MP,
Tom Litterick, Derek Greg-
ory (NUPE Divisional
Officer, Wales).

••

COVENTRY

Sunday 21 September, 7.30

Earlsdon Primary School,
Earlsdon Avenue

Speakers: Audrey Wise,
Tom Litterick.

••

BIRMINGHAM RALLY

Monday 21 September, 7.15

Digbeth Civic Hall, Digbeth

Speakers: Tony Benn MP,
Bob Wright (Asst. Gen. Sec.
AUEW*), Les Huckfield MP.
Steel band.

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GREATER MANCHESTER RALLY

Wednesday 17 September,
7.30

Houldsworth Hall, Deans-
gate

Speakers: Tony Benn MP,
Audrey Wise (Labour Co-
ordinating Committee),
Bob Wright (Asst. Gen. Sec.
AUEW*), Michael Meacher
MP, John Bloxam (SCLV).

••

LEICESTER

Wednesday 24 September,
7.30, Highfields Community
Centre.

Speakers: Tom Litterick,
Tony Sauniois (LPYS), John
Bloxam (Mobilising Comm-
ittee), Dennis Skinner MP.

NEWCASTLE/SOUTH SHIELDS

Tuesday 16 September, 7.30

Ede House, Westoe Road,
South Shields

Speakers: Audrey Wise,
Frances Morrell (Mobilising
Committee).

••

NOTTINGHAM

Thursday 18 September, 7.30

Albert Hall Institute, Derby
Road

Speakers: Reg Race MP,
Eric Clarke (Gen. Sec.,
Scottish Area NUM*)

••

SHEFFIELD

Wednesday 24 September,
7.30

Sheffield Poly Students'
Union, Phoenix Buildings,
Pond St.

Speaker: Tony Benn MP

••

HARINGEY

Tuesday 23 September, 7.30

Haringey Trade Union
Centre, 2a Brabant Road,
Wood Green.

Chair: Cllr Jane Chapman
Speakers: Joan Maynard
MP, Tom Litterick, Cllr
Jeremy Corbyn, John
Bloxam (Mobilising Comm-
ittee).

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PORTSMOUTH

Tuesday 16 September, 7.30

The Crystal Room, Garnier
Street.

Speaker: Stuart Holland MP.

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SOUTHAMPTON

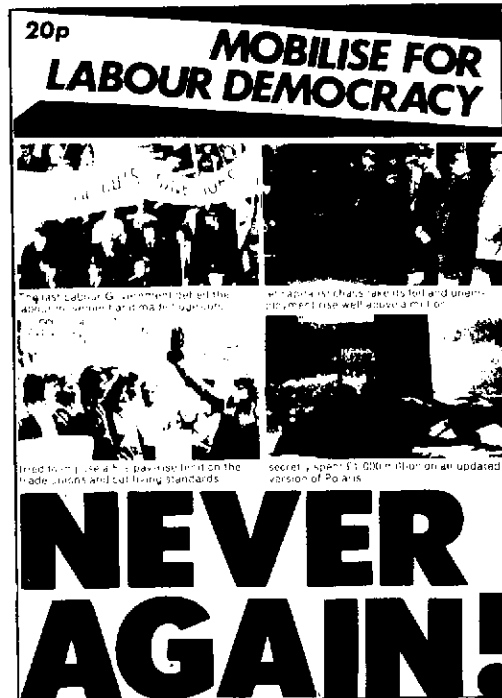
Tuesday 23 September, 7.30

Civic Centre

Speakers: Reg Race MP,
Bob Wright (Asst. Gen. Sec.
AUEW*).

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* In personal capacity



Bulk orders: 20 for £2 plus £1 p&p.

become a SOCIALIST ORGANISER supporter

To make Socialist Organiser a real campaign-
ing paper that can organise the left in the move-
ment, it needs its own organised activist support —
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paper.

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sell a minimum of 6 papers an issue and to con-
tribute at least £1 a month (20p for unwaged).
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and gives the paper a firmer financial base.

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a good job, but realise that it can't possibly do
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Fill in the form below and return to:
Socialist Organiser, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

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Name
Address
CLP
Trade Union

East End News: time for decisions

A TWO DAY conference will
be the next step towards the
launch of the East End
News, London's first co-
operative weekly newspaper.
The conference, to be held
in Bethnal Green on October
11th and 12th, will be
'open', but paid-up members
of the co-op will be distin-
guished by special creden-
tials.
The aim will be to discuss
a number of vital issues
relating to the production
of the new paper, including
the launchdate and format,
advertising, distribution,
finance, and the role of the
East End News co-operative

as a resource and publicity
centre for the local commu-
nity.
It is now almost a year
since the first informal
meeting of journalists and
trades unionists in East
London, when a provisional
steering group was formed
to raise money for a new local
paper to reflect the interests
of working people.
Few of us realised at the
time how slow and arduous
the job of collecting funds
would be. But we shared a
sense of realism, and agreed
that until we came close to
our target of £25,000 — to
guarantee publication for at

least three months — we
could not launch the East
End News.

Up to now, £14,500 has
been raised through dona-
tions and the sale of £1 shares
in the co-op. A number of
trade unions have joined,
including the print unions
NGA and NATSOPA, and
SOGAT, which bought
£1000 worth of shares.
Total membership has
topped 500, and many of
those members are individ-
ual East Enders. For the
paper will be run as a con-
sumers' cooperative, con-
trolled by a management
committee elected directly
by the readers. Yet the all-
important figure is still
some distance away, and this
could prove decisive for the
success or failure of the
newspaper.

In July, the East End News
moved closer to a reality with
the publication of a 16 page
pilot issue. The paper was
sold out at summer fairs,
by tenants' and other local
groups, and through news-

agents in Tower Hamlets,
Newham and Hackney.
Shortly after the issue
appeared, newsagents were
ringing the paper's Bethnal
Green office to demand
copies, as customers had
been asking for them!

The issue took as its
theme the decline of the rag
trade in the East End, with
an impressive 4-page picture
supplement, compiled with
the help of the National
Museum of Labour History,
showing how little garment
workers' conditions have
changed over the last hun-
dreds of years. The supplement
also featured photographs of
the East End taken sixty
years ago, by Sylvia Pank-
hurst, and never published
before in Britain.

This supplement was
printed also in Bengali,
to reach the hundreds of
Bangla Deshi garment
workers in the East End.
As the paper pointed out in
its front page lead, some
50,000 workers from the rag
trade alone have lost their

jobs in East London this
year. As the Tories' recess-
ion bites deeper, it is more
important than ever for the
East End News to appear
regularly as a focus for
opposition to cuts and re-
dundancies.

The pilot issue surprised
even some co-op members
who did not expect such high
standards of design and
production. The response
was very encouraging and
the 12,000 copies sold out
fast.

The October conference
will now tackle the much
harder problem of regular
production. On the first
day, workshops will be set
up to examine editorial
control, premises, busi-
ness organisation, finance,
etc. The workshops will
report back on the second
day, when proposals will be
drawn up and a new steering
group elected. The confer-
ence will be introduced by
journalist Crispin Aubrey,
and Aidan White, joint
secretary of FEN. A crèche

will be provided and accom-
modation and food should
be available.

After a year of hard
campaigning, the time has
come for some decisions
about the future of the
East End News. Without
more money in the bank,
the paper may never get off
the ground — and that
means more shareholders,
donations, members willing
to make a regular contribu-
tion from their wages,
or groups of workers holding
regular workplace collec-
tions. The East End News
could be a valuable weapon
for the working class.

The East End News con-
ference will be on October
11/12 at Oxford House,
Derbyshire Street, Bethnal
Green. For more information
contact East End News,
17 Victoria Park Square,
London E2. Tel. 981 1221.

KATE HOLMAN

AN OPEN LETTER TO FRANK CHAPPLE

MR CHAPPLE:

You protested noisily against the decision of the TUC to send a delegation to Poland as guests of the strike-breaking police-state 'trade unions' of that country. You have called on the TUC to support Polish workers in their struggle.

You advocate free trade unionism independent of the state — for Poland — and you seem to think that the TUC would have been best employed helping the Polish workers create such unions instead of hobnobbing with the bureaucrats of Poland's sham unions.

Excellent! What you said on this matter needed to be said. That it was said most vehemently by the one figure in the British labour movement most odious to socialists and militant trade unionists is a terrible verdict on the state of that movement's official leadership.

Every thinking worker in Britain, everyone who has ever known what it is to give or receive basic class solidarity in a strike, every worker who would revolt against a police tyranny over the British working class, ardently sympathised with and wanted to help the workers of Poland. He or she felt betrayed and dirtied by the bumbling and spineless bureaucrats of the TUC who were so eager to be the guests of those who run Poland's 'company unions' for the Polish and Russian Stalinists.

Shame

They are people without honour and without principle who shamed the labour movement and themselves by their fawning on the anti working class Polish Stalinists. Just like they do by their docility before the Tory offensive against the British working class.

But who are you, Mr Chapple? You are a professional anti-socialist and anti-communist, eager to pretend that the police state in Poland is socialism and that socialism is thereby discredited. You are a man initially installed as a leader of his own union by a High Court judge, instead of by election, a man widely denounced as a scab by his own union's members — and with good cause.

Does he really support the Polish workers?

You run the nearest thing to a 'union police state' in Britain. You have more than once played the role for the capitalists of Britain that those that the TUC was going to visit in Poland always do for the bureaucrats there.

Of course, Britain is not a police state, and despite your own tin-pot despotism in the EETPU, despite your readiness to call in the state and its courts to arbitrate in the affairs of the labour movement, the EETPU is a genuine workers' organisation, qualitatively different from the police state 'trade unions' of Poland. Even you, Chapple, sometimes have to represent the interests of your members, and even to fight for them.

In the last analysis it is this that determines that you, despite what you are, came out on the right side in this question. You are part — a malignant part, but still a part — of a real working class movement, whereas the Polish 'trade unions' are designed to prevent a real Polish workers' movement from emerging.

The problem, Chapple, is that your support taints the cause you say you support. Militants in Britain who know you for what you are in the British labour movement and in the fight against the bosses here may thereby become confused about who is who and what is what in Poland right now.

The TUC discredits only

itself; you, by your championing of them, threaten to discredit the Polish strikers in the eyes of a lot of good working class militants, especially those who mistakenly believe that the system in Poland is some sort of 'socialism'.

The *Morning Star*, the newspaper of the Communist Party of Great Britain, which tried to whitewash Gierek and the other Polish tyrants, eagerly seized the chance to tell those working class militants who read it just how many of the enemies of socialism and of working class militancy in this country were 'supporters' of the workers' struggle in Poland, ranging, as they did, from yourself to the *Sun* and *Daily Mail* newspapers.

In fact, Chapple, you don't really support the Polish workers at all. No doubt you do rejoice at the troubles of the Polish Stalinists. But you are a liar if you say you support what the Polish workers were fighting for. Or in any case you oppose in Britain most of the demands the workers in Poland fought for.

Demands

Let us look at their demands.

• Do you support free trade unions, independent of the state and the managers? The Polish workers do.

But you run autocratically the least democratic union in this country. It is only thanks to the intervention of the state within the workers' movement that you, Chapple, are where you are today. Rather than independence from the state, you have slavishly sought interference by the courts to maintain your grip. You accept the Employment Act (with the state financing of postal ballots which would tie the unions closer to the state) and want to work it for the Tories.

• Do you support the right to strike, the safety of strikers and all those who support them? The Polish workers do.

You support the legal right to strike, of course. But you have publicly scabbed on many strikes. In the 1968 grading dispute in Scotland, your members, when they demonstrated, had to wear masks to protect themselves from expulsion

But what about open democratic debate within your own union for a start? Chapple, the internal goings-on in your union are probably some of the closest guarded secrets in this country — especially from EETPU members! And Chapple, think how the bosses, the civil service mandarins, and all those other parasites who rule our lives, parasites with whom you work hand in glove, would fight bitterly against any move to break down their monopoly of information and the mystique of 'expertise' with which they try to blind and confuse us.

Wages

• Do you support the sliding scale of wages — wage increases to compensate for the rise in the cost of living? The Polish workers do.

problems seem a mere trifle?

• Do you support early retirement, at fifty years of age for women and fifty-five for men? The Polish workers do.

• Do you support improved working conditions, medical services and facilities which workers need?

Chapple, we've never heard you protest angrily, let alone do anything about the dismantling of the welfare state, the closing of hospitals and schools. Nor have you ever protested against the miserable conditions that millions of our class slave under in small non-union sweat shops, constantly raided by the police in search of 'illegal immigrants', nor have we heard you protest against speed-ups, undermanning, and the capricious and petty foremen who have sold out their class and do the bosses' bidding on the shopfloor.

• Do you support increases in nursery provisions to meet the needs of working mothers, and the extension of maternity leave for women to three years on full pay? The Polish workers do.

Since when has your union made a stand on the rights of working class women, let alone the right of women to work, and not be sacked first as a matter of course, when profits are bad for the bosses?

Finally, Chapple, the Polish workers are not fighting for the return of industry to private ownership. All reports tell us that socialised industry is accepted as the basis of a democratic alternative to Stalinism, that is, inescapably, as the basis of a democratic working class system. In other words, the Polish workers are in agreement with the programme of the socialisation of industry under workers' control, which socialists fight for in this country and you fight bitterly against.

These, Chapple, are the demands that the Gdansk workers fought for. The 21 demands of the Inter-Factory Committee of Gdansk are firmly on the terrain of our class's age-long fight against the capitalists and of the decades-long struggle to overthrow the ruling Stalinist bureaucracies.

Your support of the Polish workers, Chapple, is only so much hot air and bluff. A mass movement for the same programme in this country would sound the deathknell of your rule in the EETPU. In British working class politics you fight against those who stand for the programme the Polish workers fought for — and you use all the arts and tricks of the turned-around, inside-out 'Stalinist' that you are.

The programme of the Polish workers and the victory (as yet not consolidated) they have won, should inspire the British labour movement to move into action against the Tories, to fight for what the Poles demanded. The day we do move, Mr Chapple, will see you lined up squarely with the Giereks and Brezhnev of Britain — against us — and against the programme of the Polish workers.

Jim Denham, Angus McDougall, George Makin, Frank McGuirk (T&GWU shop stewards, BL Longbridge), Steve Griffiths (AUEW shop steward, Rover Solihull), Frank Henderson (NUSMW deputy senior steward, BL Longbridge).



So Chapple supports strikes — but not when it is his own members on strike, like against Ford [above]

CPSA leaders rat on picket militants

by Malcolm Rennard
[CPSA Department of
Employment Section
Organiser, in personal
capacity]

THE CIRCUMSTANCES surrounding the return to work for the strikers at Brixton dole office hold lessons for those of us who were directly involved and for all strikers.

Once the Department of Employment had conceded the reinstatement of Phil Cordell and Richard Cleverley, an act that was a public climb-down for them, and one which must have stuck in Jim Prior's throat, it was clear that they would try to salvage what they could from that situation.

This was made ridiculously easy for them by the assistance of Terry Ainsworth, the full-time officer of CPSA who was given the job to 'get them back to work' by the NEC of CPSA.

Following a meeting of the strikers, discussions were arranged with DE Management to talk about a return to work. They were attended by representatives of the strikers together with representatives of the Department of Employment CPSA Section Executive (who have always supported the strikers) and Terry Ainsworth. The deputation had clear instructions from the strikers' meeting on what was acceptable for a return to work — i.e. no victimisations, etc.

But it became obvious that no attempt was to be made by Ainsworth to challenge management's interpretation of events, including their fulsome praise of those who had 'braved' the picket lines in the face of 'threats and intimidation'. When attempts were made by others in the delegation to challenge those statements, they were silenced by Ainsworth, who claimed to be the only member of the delegation with any negotiating authority.

An immediate adjournment

was called when he admitted that since the strikers' meeting he had had a phone call from Alistair Graham, the CPSA Deputy General Secretary, and he was acting on Graham's instructions. He refused to disclose the deputation what the instructions were!

This amazing demonstration of the shared interest of management and trade union bureaucracy set the scene for turning a victorious return to work into what inevitably became something of a surrender.

Then the CPSA NEC decided to take no action in support of the five striking members who were to be victimised by being transferred out of the Brixton office. At the same meeting a decision was taken to call for the cancellation of the TUC visit to Poland. Presumably the NEC see the freedom to organise and strike as being a virtue in Poland and a vice in their own union.

The NEC also decided to mount a 'witch hunt' against activists prominent in the campaign and those arrested on the picket line. They have set up a committee of enquiry to investigate allegations that the union was 'brought into disrepute'. This crime is punishable by removal from elected office and exclusion from union membership.

The 17 who were arrested for picketing at Brixton will appear on October 29 at Lambeth Court. All are pleading not guilty and it is vital that they are supported.

The precedents are being set now and have to be set by us, not by the police or the courts — and that means not waiting for the TUC chiefs to lead the fight.

They have already been left behind. Where were they when the arrests were made at Brixton and Adwest? A defence fund will be established in the next week and all trade unionists should give their support.

Polish bureaucrats KICK THEM

continued from p.1

There was a remarkable change in the government's attitude towards the strikers. The silly ultimatums that Walesa, Anna Walentynowicz and Gwiazda should be excluded from the negotiating team were quickly forgotten. Regional party boss Tadeusz Fizbach was now full of goodwill towards the strikers, 'whose actions are not really directed against the 'people's state', and whose frustrations were perfectly understandable given 'the planning mistakes, the overcentralisation and the imperfections in socialist democracy'.

The bureaucrats' line chops and changes

However, by that very evening the negotiations were off again. Jagielski was prepared to go only as far as recognising the right to strike, but not free trade unions. It probably had occurred to Jagielski that this was not much of a concession, since whether or not the government recognised the right to strike, hundreds of thousands of workers up and down the country over the last two months were in practice affirming and defending that most basic class right, and had shaken the government and

the party from top to bottom.

Jagielski hurried back to Warsaw to confer with his cronies at a summoned Politbureau meeting.

Negotiations only started again two days later, on Thursday 28th. If the authorities' aim was to isolate the Baltic workers, in particular those in Gdansk, to slowly whittle away their nerve and force them to return to work short of gaining their major demand — free trade unions — this tactic was manifestly beginning to fail.

The Gdansk and Szczecin workers remained solid, whereas the Party's base was beginning to show serious cracks. In Gdansk the repercussions of the strike were felt inside the PUWP (Polish United Workers' Party) itself.

A manifesto was circulating among the rank and file of the Party calling for autonomy for different levels of the Party's membership and apparatus, democratic voting procedures, and the convening of an Extraordinary Congress for autumn.

Since the departure from the Politbureau of Lukaszewicz, former head of propaganda and the mainstay of the hardliners in the Party, the Polish press had loosened up to such a degree that it was cutting the ground from under the Party's feet, exploding its attempt to maintain its monopoly of

information. The daily youth paper, published in Warsaw, for example, devoted an entire issue to the shipyard workers' strike under the title, 'What do the workers want?'

Divisions inside the bureaucracy

On that same evening, the talks were suspended again, with the government completely unwilling to concede free trade unions. The attitudes of sections of the bureaucracy, previously willing to go along with the 'soft-line' negotiators, began to harden.

Jankowski, the new head of the state-controlled 'trade unions', who replaced Szydlak, and Wojciechowski, head of Interpress, again began to hurl accusations of extremism, and, mouthing their peculiar variant of 'Marxist' phraseology, violently insisted on the need to defend the 'unity of the trade union movement'.

Trybuna Ludu, the official CP daily, taking a cue from the Russians who 24 hours before had denounced the strike movement, ruled out completely any idea of 'plurality' in the trade unions, and without the slightest betrayal of embarrassment accused the strikers of smashing the unity of the Polish working class!

Other sections of the Party leadership obvious-

ly disagreed. Rakowski (a Central Committee member and editor of the weekly magazine Polityka) outlined two possibilities: 'chaos and self-destruction, or a deep, sincere and serious renovation of all walks of life where there have appeared deformations'.

Similarly, Jagielski, in a television interview, was very circumspect and made not the slightest derisive remark about the strikers. Had he dared to do so, that would have been the end of his function as the chief negotiator with the Gdansk strikers.

But the bureaucracy was quickly shaken out of its inertia and its playing for time by events in other parts of the country.

On Friday 29th August the giant steelworks of Huta Warszawa went on strike. In Wroclaw over 30 factories created their own Inter-Factory Committee, and reports were that the strike was spreading.

Strikes spread through the country

Bydgoszcz, 150km southwest of Gdansk, was paralysed by strikes. In the Cegielski factory at Poznan, one of the largest in the city, a 48 hour strike in solidarity with the Gdansk and Szczecin workers, and a call on the government to meet their 21 demands.

The previous disdain of the Gdansk workers at the docile attitude of the Silesians now began to be dispelled. The Gdansk workers used to say, what can you expect of the Silesians, stuck down there at the bottom of their mines, whereas the Baltic workers, living at the edge of the sea, were always open to new horizons. This sense of regional superiority now became increasingly irrelevant.

Victory — but will the freedom last?

Faced with the spread of the strike wave, the government rushed to sign an agreement with the MKS. By Saturday morning, 30th August, a pact was made. Over the public address system in the Lenin shipyard, which had been used throughout the negotiations to keep the rank and file workers in touch, with live transmissions of the talks, the agreement was announced.

Jubilation in the strike committee, which numbered hundreds of delegates. Outside in the shipyard, on the streets in

COMING EVENTS

NATIONAL ANTI-CUTS CONFERENCE

called by the labour movement in Lambeth

Date: Saturday 1st November.

Time: 10.30-4.30.

Place: Camden Town Hall.

Delegates: 3 per controlling local authority Labour group, 1 per minority Labour group, trade union branch, shop stewards' committee, CLP or Trades Council.

Delegate fee: £1 (cheques/POs payable to 'Lambeth Joint Conference').

Write to: Organising Committee, Room 103, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Hill, London SW2 1RW.

MONDAY 22 SEPTEMBER.

Mass picket at Adwest Engineering, 6am, Headley Rd (east), Woodley, Reading

SUNDAY 28 SEPTEMBER.

March against Missiles: 10.45am from War Memorial, near Butlins Hotel, Blackpool.

SUNDAY 26 OCTOBER.

Labour Party/CND demonstration against nuclear arms. From Hampstead Heath, London.

SATURDAY 8 or SATURDAY 15 NOVEMBER (to be confirmed).

Committee for Withdrawal from Ireland demonstration: No Tory plans for Ireland; Self-determination for the Irish people. In London.

SATURDAY 29 NOVEMBER

Labour Party unemployment demonstration, in Liverpool.

Trade Union Conference

LABOUR PARTY RANK & FILE TRADE UNIONISTS' CONFERENCE.

Called by the Labour Coordinating Committee. Co-sponsored by Socialist Organiser, ILP, and Clause 4

Saturday 1 November 1980, 10.30am to 5.45pm, at Leeds Town Hall.

11-11.30: Introduction — Arthur Scargill.

11.30-1.15: The Right to Work — Bernard Connolly (craft convenor, BSC Rotherham), Larry Connolly

(Lucas), Pat Longman (Women's Fightback), Stuart Holland MP, plus discussion.

2-3.30: Demands and Policies — Ken Tennent, Eddie

Loyden, Colin Lindsay, Audrey Wise, plus discussion.

3.45-5.45: How do we organise in the movement — Tony Banks, Phil Holt (POEU), Stephen Corbishley (CPSA), Anne Ceseek.

Creche available. Delegate fee £1.25 (free for short-time workers and non-waged). Write to: LCC, 9 Poland St, London W1, or phone Tony Banks (01-767 4098) or John Blogam (01-607 9052).

* Plans to rearrange this conference for Saturday 15th have now been dropped.

What the Polish workers won

The agreement between the Baltic workers and the government, signed on August 31st, was a great victory — but contains many loopholes.

The government promised to repeal articles 52, 64, and 65 of the labour code, which forbid strikes — but whether it does so remains to be seen.

There will be a delay of three months before the government passes a new law on censorship — and even then it will maintain the right to censor material prejudicial to 'state security', 'economic security', or 'good morals'.

The demand for 2000 zlotys wage rises has been trimmed down to give only 1000 zlotys to those earning less than 3500 zlotys a month and 500 to those above. Even these rises will not be introduced immediately, but phased over time, and negotiated on a plant-by-plant basis.

The sliding scale of wages has been modified so as to index wages only with the prices of certain goods.

On the lowering of the retirement age of 50 for women and 55 for men: the government has only promised to discuss this question sometime in the future.

And on maternity leave, too, only discussions were promised.



The Gdansk strike started after the sacking of Anna Walentynowicz, a crane driver at the yard and founder of a rebel workers' paper.

ALL OUT!



Socialist Organiser supporters and other socialists picketed the Polish Embassy in solidarity with the strikers

front of the Lenin works, the response was more unsure.

Many questioned the sincerity of the government's promises. More importantly, a visible gulf had begun to appear between the rank and file strikers and the elected strike committee. Little by little, the committee had taken small decisions without consulting the membership. The verbal division of 'them and us' not only referred to the party bosses and the workers, but by now (though in a different way) to the leadership of the strike and the rank and file.

Would that remain the case with the return to work, when the workers were scattered throughout their individual factories.

'OK. I'll accept. I'll sign'

It was these uncertainties which forced Walesa to cancel the talks and the signing of the agreement on Saturday afternoon, until the government had given an answer to the ultimatum over the release of the political prisoners. For a moment it looked as

Sunday, the next day. After the Plenum of the Central Committee of the PUPW signed the text of the agreement, and after a few more delays to ensure the release of the political prisoners (they were to be freed starting the next day), at 4.35 on Sunday afternoon Jagielski and Walesa entered the large hall in the Lenin yard.

Sitting there in complete silence were over 1000 delegates from different factories in the region.

Walesa took the microphone. "Dear friends, throughout this strike we have thought of the inter-

An MKS had been established in the Silesian coalfields as well. Centred in Jastrzebie, it grouped 26 mines and 208,000 miners, as well as 27 other factories, representing 100,000 workers.

Silesia: the state 'unions' abolished

No pretence at delay, or even hard-line rhetoric, now. The government rushed to negotiate with the MKS directly, and apart from granting the same demands as at Gdansk it agreed to negotiate other demands

workers and peasants.

Yet Kania's appointment is symbolic of the crisis that faces the Polish bureaucracy and their masters in the USSR.

His role will be to police the crisis which has now exploded in Poland and shows no sign of abating. Not only to police the numerous strikes breaking out every day anew throughout the country, but also the crisis of morale of the leadership of the 'Communist Party', and the rebellion of its lower ranks who are demanding a genuine democratisation.

The Polish bureaucracy previously prided itself on

see how they will be able to contain the extension of the free trade unions and the demands for the abolition of the state-controlled ones. In the last few days, this has even spread to the 400,000 agricultural labourers working on state farms in Poland.

Yet obviously, if they are to maintain their caste dominance and privileges, the bureaucrats can never accommodate themselves to such a basic democratic class right.

Kania, a specialist in the control of dissidence, after his years as head of the secret police, will undoubtedly try to ride out the storm now crashing over the bureaucracy's head — and at an opportune time try to take back the concessions.

The degree to which he will be able to do this will depend on the future level of organisation and vigilance of the Polish workers, and the extent to which they can spread their movement to the other working classes of Eastern Europe.

Why the workers are cautious

The fearful isolation of the Polish workers at present, the vulnerable position of the country, squeezed between East Germany and the USSR, obviously pressed heavy on the minds of the Polish strikers, and to a certain extent determined how far they would go in Gdansk and Szczecin. That the MKSs did not develop into genuine soviets controlling the running of the towns and production was in large part due to the fear of military intervention.

Walesa's repeated denials of any interest in politics, his studied indifference when asked what he thought of *Pravda's* attack on the 'anti-socialist elements' — "all that has to do with politicians, we are only trade unionists" — reflects a feeling that the Polish workers can push the bureaucracy just so far and no further without provoking a military backlash.

The struggle can't stop halfway now

But with a worsening economic situation, the inability of the bureaucracy to meet the needs of the workers, and the increasing political strain that free trade unions will place on the bureaucracy, how long can this last? Can the Polish workers keep even their limited gains without overthrowing the bureaucracy?



Gdansk shipyard leader Lech Walesa addressing strikers

Was it really true that the agreement said that the trade unions recognised the 'leading role of the Communist Party'? And as for the free trade unions, were they to cover only Gdansk? What about the rest of the country? What about the imprisoned KOR members?

Above all, there was the feeling that the great carnival of working-class freedom of the last few weeks was now about to end. The return to work, the return to the normal daily grind of the factory routine.

During the strike, the area in and around the Lenin yard had been transformed into an island of freedom. Delegations from all over the country, and many parts of the world even, had come to Gdansk. Actors and singers would come and perform in the open, every day something new, and above all the fear that had marked the life of workers for so many decades was no longer there.

though the tenuous agreement had broken down yet again.

Jagielski could not believe it. Only an hour before he had undergone the humiliating experience of trying to get Walesa and the strike committee representatives to sign as soon as possible, whereas they insisted on reading every single demand and agreed formulation out aloud, one by one, in front of reporters and delegates. The hapless minister could only repeat again and again, "OK, I accept, I'll sign".

'Now we have our own trade unions'

Now yet again more delays, even possible breakdown. Jagielski was sent packing to get immediate assurance from the government about the release of the KOR members. His arrogance and self-assurance had been totally knocked out of him.

Jagielski arrived on

ests of our country, and it is of that that we shall be thinking when we start work tomorrow — 1st September, a date whose significance you all know.

"Have we obtained everything? No, but we have obtained a lot under the circumstances. The rest we can obtain because now we have our trade unions. We've fought to get them, not only for us but for all the country. Let's make sure we maintain their independence. The strike is over".

For other Polish workers the fight was just beginning. Silesia, the industrial heartland, whose workers are the highest paid in the country, was continuing the strike it had called out of solidarity with the Baltic workers.

They tore to shreds the government's last hopes that the disease of free trade unionism would remain firmly enclosed within the Baltic coastal area. The Silesian workers were now demanding their own free unions.

such as abolition of the 4x6-hour shift system, lowering of the retirement age to 50 years, a working week of five days, and the abolition of the official trade unions.

The PUWP ranks begin to revolt

The wave of strikes in Silesia destroyed the myth that these highly paid workers could be relied on by the party to remain faithful. And it put the last nail in Gierke's coffin. His reputation was interwoven with Silesia, and he was known as the 'baron' of that region. The revolt of the miners signalled his end.

Yet Stanislaw Kania, the new General Secretary of the party after Gierke's sacking, faces an equally precarious situation. The appointment of a cop (Kania was the Politbureau member in charge of the secret police and internal affairs) is hardly going to thrill the Polish

its unique relationship to the working class, unmatched anywhere else in Eastern Europe. One in ten of all Polish industrial workers is a member of the PUWP. Any revolts in the factories are bound to have shattering consequences within the party's lower ranks.

Many of the leaders of the Silesian strikes were members of the PUWP, who took the daily rhetoric of the party about expressing the interests of the working class seriously.

As one Silesian strike leader said:

"I'm not a traitor to the party, but, as Lenin said, and he was no idiot, the aim is to give power to the working class. I don't want to buy a Mercedes or even a Volkswagen. I only want that strikers' wives should not have to queue at shops any more and that people should live comfortably".

The situation for the bureaucracy remains very unstable. It is difficult to

Tory GLC plans sale of assets

"LABOUR boroughs must step in with Compulsory Purchase Orders on any properties being sold in their areas, and the Party must demand the compulsory purchase — without compensation — of properties in Tory areas when we get a Labour Government", GLC Labour councillor Ken Livingstone told *Socialist Organiser*.

The Tory-controlled Greater London Council is planning to sell off up to £1 billion of GLC-owned sites.

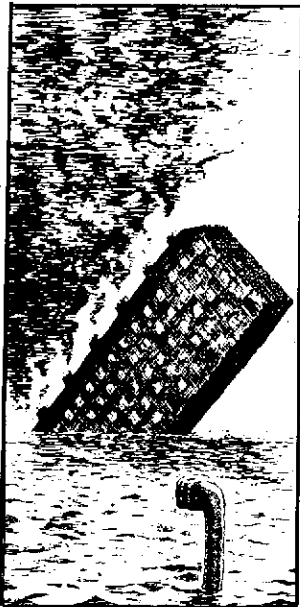
As the *Guardian* reports, "Every time the Conservatives feel they are about to lose control of the Greater London Council, they normally sell off a number of prime sites to keep down the rates and to prevent Labour from using them for redevelopment."

"The difference this time is the scale and the thoroughness of the operation".

Already the Tory GLC has practically ended GLC housing development, sold off housing sites, and tried to transfer all GLC council houses to the various London boroughs. Its sales so far (since 1977) total £104 million, plus £98 million of council houses.

Now it is going for a huge sales operation to strip the GLC of as many assets as possible before next May's election, when the Tories may be ousted by a left Labour GLC.

But some people stand to gain. The *Guardian* reports: "Hundreds of millions of pounds of assets for Londoners could be handed to developers and even speculators at a fraction of their value".



The Tory government is scuttling housing provision — and the Tory GLC is helping out

by JOHN BLOXAM

THE FIGHT for the right to work and for relief from the squalor and destitution of unemployment has a long history in the British working class movement.

The unemployed marched the streets in 1878, battled it out with police at London's Lord Mayor's Show in 1886 and organised huge marches in 1903. The Right to Work Campaign which organised throughout Britain between 1904 and 1908 clashed violently with police in Manchester in 1905, and staged a defiant demonstration through London in 1907 and 1908 under the slogan "Work or Riot, One or the Other".

Hunger

But the biggest of all unemployed movements, the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, was founded in 1921 when it linked up the numerous local bodies organising unemployed workers and war veterans.

The best remembered feature of the movement must be the "hunger marches". From the early 1920's to the middle 1930's, the National Unemployed Workers' Movement organised a series of marches from every part of Britain to London. The slogans of the marchers were directed above all against the poverty-level benefits, the "Means Test" and the "not genuinely seeking work" clause operated by the dole authorities and the degrading rules enforced by the workhouse officials.

Councils

The NUWM also organised militant direct action to force local councils to give the unemployed premises to meet in and facilities for recreation. Essex Road Library in North London, for instance, was held by the unemployed for several weeks before police were able to retake the building. That occupation along with many others was to force Islington Council into providing premises. The Manchester and Sheffield unemployed marched to meet each other in the area where the Pennine Way is now to claim the right to ramble on the lands of the lords and big farmers. Dozens were injured and scores arrested in the huge battle with the police which eventually established the right to walk over that area without permission.

Fierce battles were also fought to prevent evictions.

Harry McShane tells of when he was arrested in 1922 on two charges of sedition and fighting an eviction order. "Evictions for not paying rent had become numerous. This case was an old man, his wife and their grandchild being evicted from their home... Three of us went up to the house and put the furniture back in. During the day we held meetings in the street, and a very large one in the evening."

"Some of us stayed in the house all night. After we had a meal at home, we entered the house and barricaded the door. When the police came at midnight we told them we were in the middle of a draughts tournament and refused to let them in... By the next morning we were being supplied from the street with food by means of a pulley and a rope..."

Direct action tactics were not dropped when the NUWM helped people get their benefits either. Offices were sometimes besieged by hundreds — and in a famous case in South Wales, thousands — of workers and unemployed.

Boots

In Birkenhead in September 1932, 10,000 unemployed demonstrated to the Public Assistance Committee demanding an extra three shillings a week benefit, an immediate supply of boots and clothes, and one hundredweight of coal for the winter. They also called for work schemes to be started at trade union rates. Battles between the police and unemployed continued for a number of days and nights.

And in the winter of 1934 the government was forced to retreat on its cuts programme after huge marches on the Public Assistance Committees, occupations of their offices in some places, and widespread violent clashes between the unemployed and the police.

Inevitably the staple activity of the NUWM local committees was helping individual workers and their families get the benefits they were entitled to and representing them before the Poor Law Guardians. How could it be otherwise?

As the leaders of the NUWM were well aware, the real strength lies with those still at work. The employed workers are a thousand times better placed than the unemployed to fight the capitalists, to impose their control over industry, to transform the chaos and misery of the system, and to establish the principle which NUWM leaders aimed for: "social

The Right to Work

service as a basis of production, and not the private aggrandisement of capitalists."

The failure of the working class to fight effectively against being thrown out of work is striking in the accounts of the events of the period. In his famous history of the unemployed workers' struggles between 1919 and 1936, Wal Hannington, the best known leader of the NUWM, begins with a description of the closure of Slough Depot.

Funeral

The Depot had been nicknamed the "white elephant", so when the workers got their redundancy notices, they decided to stage a funeral and bury a

mock elephant. There were to be pall-bearers, workers dressed up as choirboys carrying candles, a "clergyman" to lead the service and a mourners' procession of the huge workforce headed by "the jazz band with its instruments ready to play the Dead March in 'Saul'".

On the morning of the funeral, with everyone ready to play their part, the workers discovered that the elephant had been stolen. There was only one thing for it: make another one in double quick time! This was done and the funeral went ahead, with management, fearing an attack on them by the workers, even doffing their hats "as a mark of respect."

Yet, with all this imagination, this fire and this skill in organisation, the Slough Depot workers accepted the closure as if it were a natural law rather than an attack on their class by our capitalist enemies. And Slough Depot did not lack organisation — the funeral is witness to that — in fact, among the shop stewards there were figures of national repute within the then vigorous Shop Stewards and Workers' Committee Movement.

Charter

The policy of the NUWM was expressed in a series of leaflets explaining the six points of the Unemployed Workers' Charter — work or full pay, public works to provide jobs at trade union rates, state workshops, a shorter working week to be regulated according to the requirements of industry, proper training and retraining and a crash programme of house building.

These ideas were explained rather unsatisfactorily — there was much talk of "the nation", as if both bosses and workers could agree on such good sense measures, there was hardly a reference to the capitalist system and none at all to the need to fight the capitalists tooth and nail if any of these policies were to be put into effect — and they frequently took a back seat to the vital routine of helping the destitute survive from day to day. Nevertheless, they remain still today essentially the right policies against unemployment.

Unity

A key element of the NUWM's message was the unity of employed and unemployed. What happened at Kilburn shows the importance the NUWM gave to the idea and the practice of uniting these two sections of the working class.

The London District Committee of the unemployed — actually a precursor of the NUWM in London — was told that at the Central Aircraft Factory in Kilburn the workers were being forced to work overtime. The LDC had some contacts in the factory who supplied them with a plan of the place.

So as not to arouse suspicion as they approached the factory, the LDC "raiders" all carried football gear. At a given signal they all rushed the gates and quickly entered the factory, first finding the motors and switching them off. At the same time the telephones were commandeered.

The workers were called to hear the raiders, and soon, of course, the manag-



Setting out for

THE

THE PICTURE people's march hunger march Jarrow march the biggest the national brought London from country.

The idea of marches first Birmingham soon caught over of 1922 the march saw 2,000 tramping blizzards of a October and N

The slogan was 'Fight for Prime Minister refused to see of the march stayed in

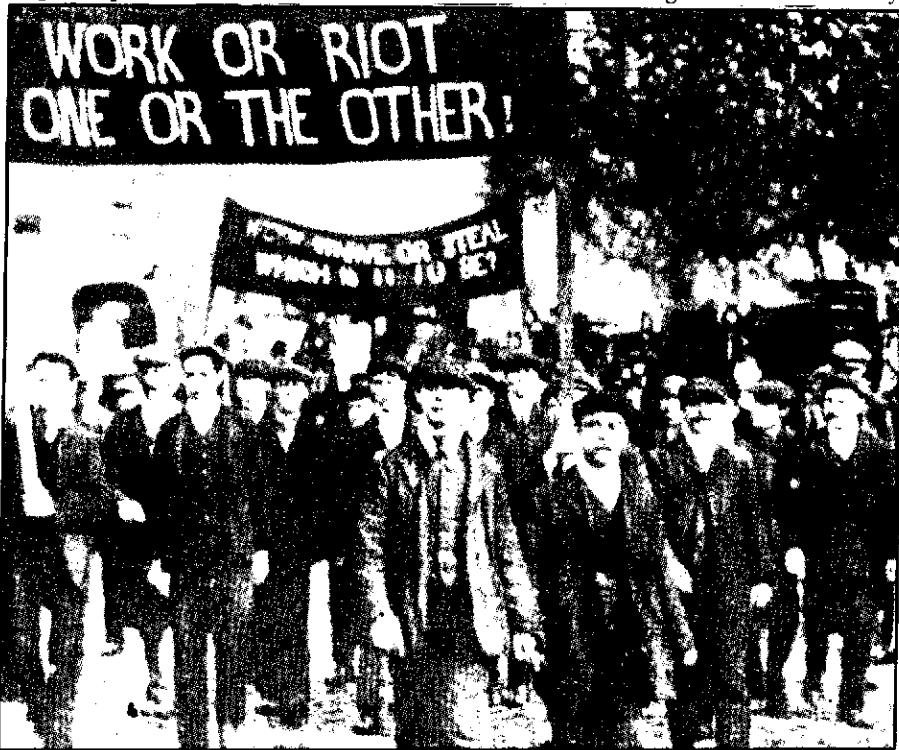


Women's co-

er arrived. assured they were with struggles, and was to seek that was worked. T in victory for The manager overtime as from weekend. Obvi a bit shaken events — not the police the called to throw ers beat him up

Fact

Factory co- marches of the the unemployed picket lines in stoppages which joined a hunger passed through or district, and tions to vario ies — all the certain unity employed and loyed, something also expressed



Jobless protest in 1908: Work or Riot!



Glasgow in 1934

HUNGER MARCHES

in most months rallying the workers there to pressure the government to meet them.

The second national march faced terrible conditions. In the January of 1929. With the defeat of the General Strike in 1926, the unemployed were now much more isolated from the employed. The TUC, which at the outset had supported the NUWM, now opposed the marches. The march's slogan was the abolition of the 'not genuinely seeking work' clause being used by the Public Assistance Committees to deny payment of benefit.

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Contingent on the 1932 march

The raiders workers that them in their aim no overtime raid ended LDC men. agreed to stop in the coming busily he was by the day's east because had been out the raid-by mistake!

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ections for unemployed, d manning strikes, short e a factory march as it their town point deputa- is authorit- e created a between the the unemp- g that was in the slogan

of the shorter working week to absorb the unemployed. The NUWM also waged a campaign for the unionisation of the unemployed — both school leavers and sacked workers — again something that should be an important element in our struggle today.

Last year the TUC's slogan was "Forward to the Eighties. No return to the Thirties". This year all the TUC can suggest to stop us being plunged into the conditions of the thirties is talks with the Tories. And all Callaghan can suggest is wage cuts!

We need to keep up maximum pressure on the official movement — particularly on the matter of unionisation of the unemployed. In 1923 a national demonstration was jointly organised by the NUWM, the TUC General Council, the Labour Party and Trades Councils. In 1980 the TUC warned four trades councils jointly investigating the role

of the Labour government in boosting unemployment that they should stop the investigation.

Militant socialists today must begin to take the question of the organisation of the unemployed seriously again. They need to publicise once again the basic ideas of the NUWM, while in the workplace they need to centre the struggle around the shorter working week and workers' control. For, as Tom Bell, the Communist Party's first national organiser put it as long ago as 1921, if we do not "rally the workers around the slogan of workers' control of industry", it will become almost impossible to "lift the unemployed above the plane of a charity movement."

This is the first of a series of features on the fight for the right to work. Next: fighting for 'work or full pay' in the 1950s.

GRAHAM NORWOOD reviews two new books.

With Northern Ireland on the agenda for Labour Party Conference, with new policies emerging on the issue from the Party in the regions, and with the new Labour Committee on Ireland just founded, two books on aspects of the crisis have appeared.

Both are by Tim Pat Coogan, the editor of the Irish Press.

In one of his books, 'The I.R.A.', he writes that the "Northern state is fundamentally unstable". He says its "majority population cannot and, where a large percentage of its population is concerned, will not govern the area in the sense that that word 'govern' is understood in Western European democracies."

This book is an updated and improved version of the IRA originally written in the late 1960's.

The work explodes certain myths: that, for example, the IRA has always been a fractious movement. In the 1930s, as the capitalist depression gripped the six counties, the IRA tried to woo Protestants into a more overtly class-based movement, and proposed a march under a banner proclaiming the need to join forces to defeat capitalism. And ten years earlier representatives of the IRA approached the unlikely figure of Stalin to buy arms and obtain financial assistance for what the IRA clearly saw as being primarily a socialist fight for self-determination and a united Ireland.

On the domestic front, IRA supporters successfully worked against quasi-fascist 'Blue Shirt' gangs in the 1930s, defending working-class interests in a more effective manner than the evidently biased police and military forces.

More recently, the book illustrates the varying fortunes of the IRA, describing some well-planned operations which came only after

years of ham-fisted attempts to right past wrongs. The argument today is largely one of simple gut reaction: sometimes there is no knowledge of the injustices which history records as having befallen the six counties. If this book fails at all, it is in failing to place the IRA's evident support in the vacuum of understanding which now exists in Northern Ireland. And it fails to give details as to why the IRA — with single-issue, single-minded determination — cannot by themselves right the wrongs.

While Coogan never sympathises with or congratulates the IRA, he accepts them as a voice (and an authentic voice), speaking for a substantial part of a gerry-mandered and false political community. In reading this book, most will be presented with a similar dilemma.

No such problem exists with his other work 'On the Blanket — the H Block Story'. The chronology and facts concerning the dirty protests of prisoners denied political status has been well documented in *Socialist Organiser* and elsewhere.

The strength of the book is that, through the author's words and the verdicts of the prisoners, interested parties, the Church, even occasionally through the words of warders, one thing becomes clear — the prisoners who have gone on the blanket are being mis-treated, are fighting for a serious and understandable principle, and deserve support from the

ordinary people and their representatives. That they have a right to being 'special category' prisoners is undeniable. They have been tried by the Diplock courts without a jury: their confessions came after interrogation and torture by methods which have been wholly discredited and castigated by Amnesty International and the European Court of Human Rights. They have blossomed in number because of a liaison of force initiated by successive Westminster Governments and endorsed by the police and security services working in the six counties.

The book is a fertile ground of quotes from prisoners and their families, supporters and activists. It incorporates not only a political context in which the protest must be seen, but a series of eye-witness accounts of what life is like on the blanket...of the mirror searches in the anal passages of prisoners...of the ways in which prisoners have to wipe human excreta on the cell walls in order to prevent it piling up and rotting in a corner...and it portrays the thuggery that goes on in the name of the warders 'doing their duty'.

These two publications may be written in a style rather away from the usual political approach of Labour movement publications, but are nonetheless wholly committed to self-determination and a just solution to the Northern Ireland crisis.

period in 1978 have been wrongly convicted". A RUC constable had been forging the magistrate's signature, which was needed to start prosecution. The person who discovered this has been intimidated by the RUC.

RUC men have been seen standing among Loyalist crowds attacking Catholics' houses in the Springfield Road area of West Belfast.

Hardly the impartial force that they would like us to think they are!

DANIEL BERRIGAN, an American priest well known for his activity against the Vietnam war, tried to visit the prisoners 'on the blanket' in H-Block two weeks ago. He was refused permission to enter Long Kesh or Armagh jail.

He commented: "Clergy are supposed to have access to prisons, so clearly these prisoners are a special case. We wonder if it is because they want the truth hidden of the inhuman treatment these prisoners are suffering."

Meanwhile, the latest 'concession' from the prison authorities is that the prisoners will have the right to have piped music in their cells. While they refuse to grant the prisoners' demands for political status and while the blanket protest goes on, the British authorities want to appear less repressive — so that's why they're making ridiculous proposals about piped music!

A Protestant RUC sergeant from Ballymena has been charged with murdering a Catholic RUC sergeant — one of the few Catholics in the force. He was also charged with armed robbery.

The Sunday World claim: that "hundreds of people who appeared in Belfast courts over a four month

IRELAND UNFREE

BRUCE ROBINSON reports on the fortnight in Ireland

AS PART of its campaign to become more 'acceptable', the RUC has recently held a number of seminars with influential groups in the North — the churches, lawyers, businessmen.

The most interesting meeting was between 8 RUC officers and the entire Northern Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, including John Coulthard of NUPE, who tried to break the Royal Victoria Hospital workers' strike against the troops.

The union leaders complained about the RUC's role on picket lines and the police complaints procedure, but went on to say that there "was no ambiguity in their support of the RUC". They proposed more Catholic recruitment to the RUC.

Most importantly, the union bureaucrats offered the RUC help against leftists or Republicans raising issues that embarrassed them. The Irish Times reported the ICTU's proposals as follows: "...the



from Republican News

Ireland: only one solution

UPDATE

THE LABOUR MINORITY on the Home Affairs Committee of MPs has come out for the repeal of the Public Order Act.

The Public Order Act was brought in 1936, supposedly against Mosley's fascists. It has been used more often against the left than against the right. Most recently it was used to ban all marches in various Midlands areas for a month, because of a National Front march and anti-fascist counter-demonstration planned in West Bromwich.

The Tory majority, however, recommends that the Act should be strengthened and 72 hours' notice should be required for all protests. This could have the effect of banning flying pickets.

ON THURSDAY 4TH, Consett Steelworkers finally admitted defeat in their fight against "the wrong and unjustifiable closure" of their works — a closure which will put unemployment in the area up to 30% or 40%.

WHILE LEN MURRAY responds to 2 million unemployed by suggesting talks with the Tories, Raymond Powell, MP for the South Wales constituency of Ogmore, has come to a different conclusion. "The TUC should call a general strike next week", he said on August 29th. "We can do very little [in Parliament] because Mrs Thatcher has got such a large majority. The only alternative I can see is for the trade union movement to demand some action."

AT THE END OF AUGUST, the US finally sewed up the arrangements for its new military build-up in the Middle East. It has made agreements for new bases to be established at Mombasa in Kenya, Ras Banas in Egypt, Berbera in Somalia and at least one site in Oman. At least \$400 million will be spent on construction work at Ras Banas alone.

DID YOU THINK WILLIAM Rodgers was the only creep in the labour movement with the brass to argue openly for Cruise missiles? Wrong. AUEW president Terry Duffy wants Cruise too. His statement appears in the latest issue of the 'Labour and Trade Union Press Service', a publication subsidised by NATO.

KIRSTEN CROSBIE AND Mike Duffield will face trial on December 18 for 'breach of the peace' — a charge carrying a possible 6 month sentence.

Crosbie and Duffield, members of the Revolutionary Communist Group, were arrested while selling the paper 'Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!' in Glasgow. At first they were charged under the Prevention of Terrorism Act with "soliciting support for a banned organisation" [the IRA].

The PTA charge was dropped after a campaign of protest, but support is still needed by the Glasgow 2 Defence Campaign, c/o 49 Raiton Road, London SE24.

In a new pamphlet, 'On reviving the reliance on Parliament, towards Labour Party', Peter Hain argues more campaigning activity. In this issue of Socialist Org- and responses from Peter Hain and, from resolution-passing and pure aniser Jon Lansman and Andrew we hope, other readers.

Reviving the Labour Party?

Dual strategy, dual tactics?

JON LANSMAN discusses Peter Hain's vision of the road to socialism.

AN ESSENTIAL part of Peter Hain's framework for 'Reviving the Labour Party' is the dismissal of 'the myth that parliamentary and extra-parliamentary strategies are necessarily in conflict, that there is a straight choice to be made between reform and revolution'. It is this myth which is largely responsible for keeping some self-styled 'revolutionary' groups outside the Labour Party, and which prevents those that are within the Labour Party from having more than a marginal influence (despite their illusions to the contrary) on the politics of the party. The explosion of this myth is quite essential if we are to build up an effective unity of the Left, both within and without the Labour Party, to include both self-styled revolutionary and so-called reformist elements. The hope that this is possible

is strengthened by the existing, albeit insufficient, degree of such unity shown in the ANL outside and the Mobilising Committee inside.

The Labour leadership and the Tribune Left share the blame for the perpetuation of the myth. The Labour Party has been 'far too committed to parliamentarianism'. But if we are to accept the compatibility of the two strategies, then what is the role of parliament?

Those who rely exclusively on the parliamentary struggle, Hain believes, must do so 'in the belief that real power lies in Parliament', and that must be rejected. However, using the argument that 'effective power... really lies in big business, the multinationals and the private and public bureaucracies' to totally reject any role for parliament is also unacceptable. That rejection, after all, is based on a very static analysis. Parliament's role must surely lie in its potential as a source of power. As the existing

theoretical source of power, it has almost universal recognition and therefore legitimacy. Our task must be to use that legitimacy by giving real power to parliament, and ensuring the accountability of Labour's representatives there to the movement at large.

However, we cannot turn theoretical power into effective power by Act of Parliament, although some of the blockages in the system of parliamentary democracy are more easily removed than others. The abolition of the House of Lords and the removal of the obstructive powers of the Brussels bureaucracy are relatively easy to achieve. The implementation of an Alternative Economic Strategy and industrial strategy, and of an alternative defence strategy, on the other hand, depend on mass popular participation and support. We need to win not just the votes of the electorate but their hearts and minds.

The success of the parliamentary strategy depends on the creation of a mass

campaigning Labour Party, just as the possibility of creating a mass party depends on making the leadership of the party accountable to the rank and file.

However, the creation of a mass party relying solely on its existing institutions is problematic. Ironically, the great strength of our Labour Party, its structural links with the Trade Union movement, poses problems both for the nature of the party's development and for the modus operandi of the Left: for the nature of the party's development because the link, at least at national level, is between bureaucracies and we wish to develop in the workplace (as well as in the community) as a rank and file party. The possible solutions are the encouragement of more trade union affiliations on a local level, the establishment of structural links with Shop Stewards' Committees and Trades Councils, and the creation of workplace branches (though some think that this runs counter to the other two). But all this is certainly not serving the interests of the Trade Union leaderships who wish to maintain their influence in the party.

The difficulty for the Left in the Labour Party is the necessity often to rely on the support of sympathetic union bureaucracies (e.g. the ever-helpful (?) NUPE), while at the same time wishing to organise among rank

and file trade unionists. Perhaps it is necessary to make assessments on the respective merits of each option in each individual case so that CLPD could seek the support of the leadership while the LCC was attempting to initiate a Broad Left organisation in the same union.

This suggests the need not just for a dual strategy, but also dual tactics for implementing those strategies. There may seem to be a contradiction in this approach, but that is unavoidable. In any individual case, unity in action around a set of demands is possible, despite differences of approach, long-term aim or analysis. This has been proved possible on the issues of Labour Party democracy.

It is also possible in the fields of sexual politics, racism, community politics and defence. It should even be possible in the troubled sea of economic and industrial policy if we concern ourselves with the practical and tangible demands for implementation by the next Labour government and are willing to confront such realities as limited resources, conflicting interests among our own ranks and international trade in a capitalist world.

As Peter Hain so rightly says, 'Sectarianism is the cancer of the Left', and on no account must this be allowed to prevent the 'unity in action' which is necessary to create a mass party.

ANDREW HORNUNG argues that Peter Hain leaves out a crucial element: organising a militant left wing.

According to the 'Hackney People's Press', it has taken someone over 18 months to join a local Labour Party. Rumour has it that one North London Labour Party branch tightly controlled by the right wing told a keen applicant for membership: 'Sorry, we're full up'.

An inquiry into the affairs of Roy Jenkins' constituency revealed it to be little more than a 'rotten borough' run by a tiny committee.

Peter Hain, in his recent pamphlet, *On Reviving the Labour Party* — refreshing the parts that others cannot reach, makes a diagnosis:

'Far too much of what passes for political activity is geared to 'declaratory politics' rather than 'activist politics'. Typically, discussion at CLP (Constituency Labour Party) level is followed by the passing of a motion which is sent elsewhere, thereby neatly passing the buck and avoiding the pressing problem of implementation or campaigning for such a policy at CLP level.'

'The National Executive Committee, despite its left composition in recent years and its important stands, appears not to conceive its role outside elections in campaigning terms.'

'In the case of a national strike, the Party's function nationally ought to be to mobilise maximum support for picketing and so forth, not just by issuing appeal circulars, but by practical intervention'.

The passive approach makes the Labour Party dead and unattractive: 'The new member's first real contact with the Labour Party is usually at a ward meeting and that can be enough to put you off for life'.

But why doesn't the Labour Party turn outwards? According to Peter Hain, 'The dominant perspective has been that socialism could be achieved through the ballot box alone'.

Instead of this pure 'Parliamentary road to socialism', Hain suggests a parliamentary road to socialism backed up by mass action: 'Party activists have neglected the vital task of creating a mass movement outside (Parliament), capable of exerting sufficient power to make feasible socialist changes through Parliament or the local Council'.

And he adds: 'It is necessary to dispel the myth that parliamentary and extra-parliamentary strategies are necessarily in conflict, that there is a straight choice to be made between reform and revolution'.

Is this right? Consider first Peter Hain's argument on roads to socialism.

The police, the armed forces, the civil service hierarchy, and the secret services are not controlled by Parliament at all. Shuffling through Parliamentary lobbies, even with back-up 'mass movements' outside, will not deal with these heavily-armed, hard-bitten, solidly-Tory bodyguards of capitalism. Chile proved that.

The power of capitalism can be overthrown only by the fully-mobilised power of the working class, acting through its own workers' councils, and willing to meet violence with violence.

'Mass movements' as a theatre chorus for Parliament are not enough.

Revolutionaries do not reject the fight for reforms. We do not reject Parliamentary activity. But Peter Hain, by searching for some mystical 'third road' between reformism and revolution, does reject revolution.

The 'Alternative Economic Strategy' which he supports sees mass action only as a back-up to a gradual transformation of capitalism by action from Westminster.

Peter Hain goes on from his argument about reform and revolution to a gross underestimation of the struggle needed to reorientate the Labour Party. His argument is: 'The mistake made by the Labour Party has been to assume that socialism could be grafted on from above through governmental action in a hostile capitalist environment'.

So the 'mistake' can be corrected just by getting more mass involvement and campaigning activity at grass-roots level, to back up a worthy but one-sided effort to get socialism through Parliament.

No ruthless fight to replace the Party's present leaders and transform its structures is necessary. There is no need to bind the class struggle

left together into a solid fighting force. Peter Hain does not map out any militant role at all for an organised left wing, not even for the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, to which he belongs.

Is the emphasis on Parliament which Hain criticises really just a 'mistake'?

No. Callaghan and Wilson were not courting socialism by some long drawn out and unsuccessful method. They were already wedded to capitalism and snugly in bed with the City.

Their opposition to mass action was and is not because of some philosophical preference for the ballot box, but because of their close commitment to capitalism.

So we need more than a fight against inertia, routinism, lack of imagination or wrong ideas. We need a bitter struggle against those in the Party who want to keep capitalism pretty much as it is.

Peter Hain backs up his argument by accusing revolutionaries who follow the Bolshevik model of 'seeking to impose or introduce socialism from the top down'. 'Unless people have been actively involved in the process of themselves building socialism the result will not be socialism at all...'.

Ducking the choices

This might be reasonable as a criticism of the Communist Party. But it is not a valid criticism of the Bolshevikism of Lenin and Trotsky.

Lenin and Trotsky fought for a democracy far more real and extensive than parliamentary democracy — the rule of workers' councils, directly based on the workers in the factories, with regular re-election of delegates and right of recall.

They also fought for a militant, disciplined organisation of revolutionaries — as the only way to win the bitter fight for real workers' democracy.

In the same way, an organised class struggle left wing is really needed to 'revive the Labour Party'. Peter Hain has many good ideas:

'CLPs should help to set up or become closely involved in tenants' associations... local Labour Parties (should) support and relate to local women's movements... we need to mount specific drives amongst black people, especially black youth... the party should be involved in single issue campaigns such as the Anti-Nazi League and the Anti-nuclear campaign'.

But without a militantly organised left wing these proposals will just be good intentions — or irrelevant frills.

WRITE BACK

An open letters section for the labour movement. Write to Socialist Organiser, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16

Women: 'last in, first out'?

Dear Socialist Organiser, Whatever happened to equal rights and positive discrimination? Whatever happened to our hard-won reforms?

The gains made by women are now being eroded by the most reactionary Tory government we have seen in decades. We are once again being forced back into the isolation of hearth and home.

Once again we are being forced to give up our independence and self-respect and 'live off' another's wage (that is, if the man is working), or to go onto Social Security benefit and live in poverty.

We need to maintain our independent income hand-in-hand with our self-respect. Positive discrimination, which was brought in by a few local authority employers so that women got preferential employment, is becoming meaningless — women are being laid off first.

This is partly because a 'last in, first out' policy often operates. Camden Council, for example, have a policy of positive discrimination in favour of women and blacks. So, of course, it is women and blacks who have been the last to be taken on on any large scale.

If Camden are forced to lay off workers, the rule of last in, first out will hit women and blacks hardest.

The labour movement has fought for the 'last in, first out' policy, and it should be maintained, but where preferential employment has gone through on grounds of positive discrimination, then this too should be maintained and operated if redundancies are forced through. It is hardly the fault of women that they are usually the last to be employed.

The 'last in, first out' rule should be used in the way that we, as workers, want it used, and not in favour of the bosses.

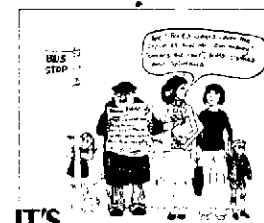
Unless the gains we have won are defended, they become meaningless. It is a false argument to say that positive discrimination means that we accept redundancies for men but not for women — just a cop out for not defending workers' rights.

The fight against unemployment must be fought by the whole labour movement. Unless that happens there will always be unemployment. But where redundancies do go through, they should not hit women hardest.

A fight to protect one job is the start of a fight to protect all jobs. Defend women's right to work!

FRAN BRODIE
(Stepney & Poplar Labour Party & Fightback).

WE DON'T WORK FOR PIN MONEY!



IT'S A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO HAVE A JOB

New Fightback leaflet: £5 a 1000 from 41 Ellington St, London N7.

Time for a general strike

From: DAVE CUNNINGHAM (Convenor, Metal Closures, Bury)

IN THESE days of rapidly rising unemployment and falling living standards, the whole trade union membership would be well advised to wake up and follow the example and leadership of Bury District Committee of the AUEW, in calling on the Executive Council through the TUC to call on the entire trade union movement to strike until this government reverses its policies.

In a letter to the Executive, the District Committee has stated: "... it would be disgraceful to express support for a General Strike in Poland and at the same time deny the workers in this country the leadership and support for a General

Strike which would enable British workers to win a decisive victory against the Tory Government's economic policies which are leading to mass unemployment, falling living standards and the de-industrialisation of Britain.

"The District Committee call on Executive Council through the TUC to give that leadership and call a General Strike to correct the grievances of millions of British Workers."

It is only with pressure from the branches and grass roots membership that the TUC will be forced into making a decisive stand, and mobilise the trade union movement against what this government stands for: "Four million on the dole".

If a general strike by twelve million trade unionists is what this government needs to effect a change in its monetarist policies, then let's do it now.

"If the trade union members walked out of the factories and joined with the unemployed, in a march down our motorways to Downing Street, monetarism would be dead."

Anti-Cruise campaign gets going

From: GLYN WHITEFORD

BOND, the Basingstoke Organisation for Nuclear Disarmament, has been the biggest political campaign in Basingstoke for years.

The first public meeting of BOND was called on the initiative of the Constituency Labour Party. Credit is due to *Socialist Organiser* supporters and others who have consistently pushed the issue of Britain's nuclear

power, and others feel that the group must focus on the immediate local issue of nuclear weapons).

BOND has widespread support from people willing to commit themselves, on the issue of Cruise missiles. Many also believe that total nuclear disarmament is the only solution.

But it also must be realised that the 1960's solution of peace poems and marches have proved vacuous. We need a determined front which must incorporate the trade unions, in an effort to



Part of *Socialist Organiser's* 'Out of NATO now' contingent on the June 22 anti-Cruise missiles demonstration

weapons in Basingstoke. The initiative was also partly a response to the Tories' intention to base Cruise missiles at Greenham Common air base (close to Basingstoke).

Two subsequent public meetings have established a four person committee, with a Treasurer, Chairman, Secretary and one other to liaise with other local groups. A standard membership fee was also adopted, applicable to individuals, families, or groups and organisations which may wish to affiliate. The name BOND was also officially adopted (in place of BANG: Basingstoke Anti-Nuclear Group). Many people in the Basingstoke group do not — at least in principle — object to nuclear

show that no-one will stand idly by to see a whole generation decimated.

BOND's main weakness may come from its political understanding of the issues at stake. Although the CLP supports British withdrawal from NATO, many members of BOND do not.

NATO is and was in its conception a force committed to war. The ideology that NATO is acting as a deterrent to Russian expansionism hides the imperialist aspirations of our own ruling class. Until Britain is no longer a member of that alliance, any hope of escaping a holocaust means idealistic dependence on those in power to act responsibly, and in all our interests — despite their track record.

SOPHIA CAPLAN reports

TRAINS TO LEEDS on the last Saturday in August carried sizeable groups of men and women bearing sketch maps of Leeds University and copies of the book *Beyond the Fragments*. They were on their way to the 'Beyond the Fragments' conference.

...

The book has become something of a bible to thousands who have given up on the ideas, methods and organisations of the 'hard left'. It articulates the fears and prejudices of some against Leninism as a theory, and expresses the experience of many of relating to the apparent practice of 'Leninism' by allegedly Leninist organisations, primarily the SWP.

Admirers of the book see it as the summary of new ideas that the hard left has failed to take on board, or to which it is inevitably counterposed: ideas about the importance of subjective experience, personal relationships and grass roots spontaneity. These are today more associated with the women's movement and various libertarian currents than with the left, whose preoccupations lean more towards combative political action.

The conference was due to discuss these ideas: how to take them further, perhaps

ROUND AND ROUND THE FRAGMENTS

how to organise around them. But there is no one clear analysis in the book, nor any one line of action indicated. Perhaps that is a clue to its popularity: people can see what they want in it.

...

At one and the same time it rejects the far left and concedes that its ideas probably are the best for overthrowing capitalism; it both accepts the women's movement as a model, and quite brutally criticises its shortcomings; it can be seen primarily as an affirmation of life-style politics, localised action, loose structures and political heterogeneity — or primarily as an attempt to counter the shortcomings and ineffectiveness of these modes of organisation, in order to go 'Beyond the Fragments'.

It is difficult to envisage what could come out of such a gathering, with its stress on the virtue of diffuseness of ideas and its rejection of clear demarcation lines or defined goals.

A newspaper? But papers and journals already exist (such as *The Leveller*).

Common action based on the big struggles facing the working class in response to unemployment, cuts, the strengthening of the state's powers, etc? None was proposed, and the stress on the 'personal' cuts across that.

A serious sifting of ideas to see which are and which are not compatible with a more purposeful revolutionary strategy? The afternoon workshops were asked to be constructive and try to find "what we have in common as socialists". But,

to judge from the 5-minute report to the plenary summarising this discussion from 30 workshops, this didn't get very far.

However constructive people wished to be, the main basis of the conference was a negative one, directed more at the far left than at capitalism.

The hopes that so many people placed in this first gathering in Leeds (1400 turned up) seem to indicate that for them the event promised a way forward, some sort of unity. But in a conference where the entire discussion was confined to workshops, it is difficult to assess either what people wanted to get out of it, or what they did get out of it.

It took three straw polls and a lot of coaxing to persuade something approaching a majority (with hundreds of abstentions) that a further conference would be useful. A lot of people clearly felt let down.

...

One can very well understand the temptation to try to group together the 'orphans' of the far left — a very large collection of people, many of them doing good work in dozens of different areas as individuals or in small groupings. But building "a mass socialist movement" without any guiding idea other than the absence of clear ideas and opposition to an ordered democratic structure, seems a very self-defeating task.

Stoke: fightback against council cuts decision

by Councillor MICK WILLIAMS (Vice-Chairman Works Committee, Stoke City Council)

Stoke's Labour-dominated (57-3 majority) Council at its June meeting accepted a series of recommendations from the Policy Committee which will have serious implications for the City Works departments of the authority.

A joint report from the Town Clerk, City Treasurer and Works manager was submitted to the Policy Review Sub-committee of 29th May this year. This outlined problems in the Works department, and sought to show that 'overstaffing' was the crux of the matter.

Now this poses a problem in Stoke, since there is a long-standing policy of 'no compulsory redundancy'. However, the report said that capital contracts were almost at an end, and therefore the Building Division should be 'phased out', and that function integrated with the Maintenance Division. This was to be achieved by 'nat-

ural wastage'.

Many trade unionists protested, recognising that 'natural wastage' is only a polite way of saying 'deferred redundancy', and that redundancy means that not only your own job is sold, but also the job opportunity of your kids.

However, the recommendations went ahead, albeit amended to include a provision that such action should be in consultation with the appropriate Trade Unions. The Policy Committee accepted these recommendations, and they were sent forward to the full Council meeting of the 19th June.

The usual Labour Group meeting was held on the Monday prior to the Council meeting, and a very long and heated debate took place on the matter. A 'reference back' was moved, and defeated by the narrowest of margins. This vote was taken at 10.35pm when several members had left to attend Trade Union District Council meetings.

Pressure from the City Labour Party and other persistent individuals resulted in a special Group meeting being convened to reconsider the matter. This was to take place one hour before the full

Council meeting.

In the event the original decision was upheld — and with an increased majority. Certain of the members indicated that they could not, in all conscience, support the recommendations which they considered to be in part inconsistent with fundamental Socialist principles.

The Council meeting duly started, but when the Policy minutes were reached, 16 of those present 'voted with their feet' and left the Chamber.

Naturally the local Tory-dominated press had a field day, describing the event as a 'Major Split In The Ranks'.

Several aspects still need to be resolved. When a 'recommendation' is carried by a Council it becomes 'policy', and the whole organisation of the authority is committed to achieving it.

This is unfortunate if such a recommendation has never seen the light of day, for it means that goals are pursued which are not known about by the general public.

The report referred to above contains a recommendation to 'examine other ways of improving efficiency and saving costs as outlined in conclusion 6 of the report'.

Unfortunately, although the recommendations had to be published to be carried, 'Conclusion 6' has only been discussed as part of a 'confidential agenda', and still retains that 'confidential' status.

Very wide-ranging issues are contained in 'Conclusion 6', and include: elimination of overtime; reduction of car user payments; and even suspension of the intake of apprentices.

This last item may have been the sticking point for many members, since they might feel that such a measure could not be tolerated at any event.

The fight goes on. Since the June Council meeting there have been special meetings of the District Labour Party; a special meeting of North Staffs. Trades Council; a one-day school organised by the WEA and sponsored by UCATT; and a special meeting of the Labour Group (on 11th August) at which the trade unions concerned were able to put their cases.

Pressure must be maintained — not only in Stoke, but everywhere that a Labour controlled authority forgets where its roots are, and to whom it is accountable.

Cuts: time to start a fight?

by JOHN WILDE

"WE'LL RAISE the rates by 100% if necessary". That was how one Dundee district councillor saw the fight against the cuts in Scotland, next year.

Most of the 85 activists at the Scottish LCC conference on Saturday August 23rd agreed.

Dissent came from Socialist Organiser supporter Joe Baxter, who argued that rate rises are not a policy

which faces up to the reality of the Tory offensive: cuts in rate support grant, threats to restrict the level of rate rises by law, and refusal to endorse capital spending programmes. Mass mobilisation to confront the Tory government is the only way.

No-one disagreed that the Left should fight for Labour councils to reject cuts. Yet when Scottish LCC secretary Mick Connarty tried to take a vote on who would be willing to organise a campaign to get every Labour-controlled council to adopt a no cuts,

raise the rates policy, other LCC executive members jumped in.

The meeting was in no position to take such a decision, they said: it could only start the debate.

But the convenor of the Labour-controlled Strathclyde Regional Council has just stated that there will be cuts next year. When is the time for a concerted campaign, if not now? And how can a strong campaign be built by squeezing working class living standards through huge rate rises?

Wages: drawing the battlelines

PAY RISES of 10% or less while prices rise at around 20% a year — that's the Tories' and bosses' plans for this winter.

Lucas workers have accepted 10%, and Talbot 15% over 18 months. Strike figures since May have been down to the lowest levels since 1976. But the bosses should still get a rough ride.

This is the line-up. Vauxhall workers at Ellesmere Port have already rejected an 8% offer. BL shop stewards are demanding a £17 rise, and the Ford unions are going for a 'substantial' rise (about 20%) and a 35 hour week.

BP refinery workers have rejected a 10% offer and want more like 20%. They are planning to link up with Texaco and Shell workers. Tanker drivers working for the same firms are also demanding 20% plus.

Lorry drivers are going for 20% and a 35 hour week.

The Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engin-

earing Unions is claiming a 'substantial' rise (about 20%, again). And the miners' conference decided on a 35% claim — and a recall conference to discuss the offer.

The Tories are relying on the fear generated by a two million long dole queue. At BL and in some other hard-hit areas this may work. But the Ford workers and the miners, especially, are in no mood to be scared off.

The Tories will try to use the weakest-placed groups of workers to set a norm. The job of the trade union movement should be to organise so that the best-placed groups of workers set a norm, and to unite workers to fight for what we all need: wage rises which at the very least keep up with price rises.

Across-the-board increases to catch up on last year's inflation, and automatic monthly rises in line with a working-class cost of living index, should be the minimum.

The Tories' bluff

THE TORIES say that unemployment is due to workers 'pricing themselves out of jobs'.

What are the facts? Labour costs (wages plus 'social costs') in the big capitalist countries are:

W. Germany	21 DM per hr
US	17DM
Italy	15DM
France	15DM
Japan	12DM
Britain	10DM

And wage increases between 1970-79, calculated in DM, were:

France	115%
W. Germany	101%
Italy	99%
Britain	64%

Between 1975 and 1979, real earnings in Britain dropped 1.3%, while in Italy they rose 16.5%, in France 14.5%, and in West Germany 9.7%. Wages are now

falling still further behind prices (a further 1.7% loss between May 1979 and June 1980).

The theory of workers 'pricing themselves out of jobs' is pure bluff. Wages can increase at the expense of profits. Increased wages mean more consumer demand, more pressure for capitalists to update their technology — and, usually, more growth.

Where capital accumulates fast, like in West Germany, wages are relatively high and unemployment is relatively low. Where capital accumulates slowly, like in Britain or even more so in the poor capitalist countries of the Third World, unemployment is high and wages are low.

Most important of all: the strong shop-floor organisation that can win and defend higher wages can also win and defend jobs.

Threat to docks jobs

by HAROLD YOUNG

T&G HARRISON closed their stevedoring service on September 30th. The Mersey Docks and Harbour Co. have refused to employ the 160 dockers who will be left jobless on that date.

By doing so, they are blatantly breaking an agreement which was made in 1972 — the so-called Jones Aldington Agreement — the same one which sold the last national docks strike down the river.

The Liverpool shop stewards' committee is due to meet the Minister of Transport on Tuesday 9th, the same day as Alex Kitson of the T&G meets Patrick Mayhew, for what he describes as urgent talks: urgent because the major ports have threatened a walkout on the

day the dockers return to the unattached register.

The union vote was for switching men from one employer to another in a matter of one to two days, but even that was scrubbed with the '72 Jones Aldington Agreement.

Not only Liverpool dockers are facing this situation. Thirty dockers employed by Bowaters at Ellesmere Port are not guaranteed work by the Manchester Ship Canal Company.

The port employers are flexing their muscles and can now rely on Thatcher for support — while the T&G waits till next Thursday for its national meeting to discuss this situation.

The union hierarchy will try to push the problem under the carpet by trying to get the employers to put up more severance payments.

by Jimmy Matley and Pete Keenlyside

ELEVEN PEOPLE were arrested on the mass picket at King Henry's bakery in Manchester on August 29th, as Anderton's bullies in blue decided to give a demonstration of what their profession is all about — strike breaking. The 100-strong picket of Bakers' Union members, busmen from Parris Wood depot, nurses from CoHSE, TGWU and NUPE members, and members of the Labour Party and of left wing groups, was relatively peace-

King Henry's: the police wade in

ful until a van tried to drive through at speed.

The police, members of the notorious Tactical Aid

Group, used this as an opportunity to move in and get some practice. As seven out of the eleven arrested were



Bakers' Union NC member Val Dunn on the King Henry's picket

young girls, it was obvious that they were picking their targets. One girl was even arrested for trying to give a cigarette to another already under arrest. Local residents and even some of the local police expressed their disgust at the way the TAG acted. 'Animals' was one of the more polite descriptions. They even managed to knock down a garden wall by pushing pickets into it.

Hollins, the manager, was clearly rattled by the mass picket. He's now said that he won't take any of the strikers back, after previously agreeing to take back four out of thirty!

If the pressure can be kept up, there's a good chance he'll crack. Another mass picket has been called for September 19th and hopefully this will be bigger than the last one. So far, the main factories in the area have been slow to give support and this has got to change.

Meanwhile, further attempts are being made to black the pies coming out of the factory. The NUR has been asked not to handle King Henry's stuff on the roll-on-roll-off ferries to the Isle of Man, and workers at a firm in Wigan that distributes the pies have been asked to give their support.

Police interest in the strike is bound to grow now. And an added danger is the threats that the strikers have been getting from some of the scabs. So support is still needed on a 24-hour bases for the picket line. Trade union and Labour Party branches should organise rotas to go down and lend a hand as well as raise money for the strike fund. With the support of the labour movement, this strike can be won.

Firemen fight the cuts

by DOUG MACKAY

CUTS are hitting the fire service fast and furious. In the last 18 months, local authorities have cut the number of firemen by getting on for 700, and taken nearly 100 appliances out of emergency work.

In London, the fire brigade has an application before the Home Office to cut manning and scrap another 42 appliances.

Up until now, most jobs have been lost through natural wastage, but firemen now fear that any further cuts will have to mean sackings.

Standards are already being whittled down. For instance, on the day that the Alexandra Palace in North London burnt down, the London Fire Brigade was so stretched that another appliance had to be brought from Eastbourne to deal with

a road accident in South London.

The government has just produced a 433-page green paper, wrapped up in all kinds of technical jargon, with supposedly objective research into the level of fire cover. But it is a strategy for cutting fire service manpower by something like 20%.

The green paper proposes that every fire station should have only one pumping appliance and possibly an additional 'special' appliance such as a hydraulic platform or a foam-carrying tender. Translated into firemen's jobs, that means about 8000 firemen on the dole.

The response of the FBU leadership has been formally correct — arguing for the maintenance of the 1977 agreement which means a rise in wages in line with earnings as a whole, and for no job losses or redundancies.

However, despite the

outraged response to the government's green paper from the FBU, there has been a signal failure to mobilise the rank and file members of the union into a campaign to defend wages and jobs. And thus the leadership is finding itself gradually becoming more and more isolated from the membership.

After the 1977 strike, firemen gave up their moonlighting jobs, but now jobs on the side are increasing again.

The Tories' usual argument is that there will be enough jobs to go round only if workers will accept wage cuts. But they want the firemen to accept a wage cut as well as job cuts.

This year, the employers, backed up by the government, are offering only 9%. With inflation at current levels, that means a 10% wage cut. If this offer is to be accepted it will mean that the limited gains won

from the 1977 strike are wiped out at one fell swoop.

The attack on firemen by the government must be seen as just one part of the general assault on the public sector by the Tories. The whole spirit of the green paper is that money must be saved — and if that means loss of life, then that's too bad.

It says that enforcing of fire safety laws could be made more economic by certifying only buildings the local brigades think are serious fire risks. This could be done 'without an unacceptable rise in casualties'.

It is essential that firemen build rank and file links with other public sector workers in order to defend jobs, and also to defend services.

The Tories' argument that workers must accept low wages in order to save jobs is rapidly proving a hollow sham. They want both — we must accept neither.

Staffordshire: It'll take more than petitions

STAFFORDSHIRE'S Chief Fire Officer, Tom Burn, admitted at a meeting of the County Council's Fire and Public Protection Committee on 16th July that a cut of 3% already made by the Committee had delayed recruiting for the service to such an extent that Hanley and Newcastle had been operating under strength for several months.

But at the meeting of the county budget panel on 28th July, proposals were put forward to axe the jobs of 102

firemen, and to scrap 8 appliances, as part of a plan to cut the council's spending by £13 million. FBU Secretary John Taylor said: 'It will devastate the brigade and cause lengthy delays in men reaching fires. We are extremely concerned that it will leave the county without adequate fire cover and there will definitely be action if it goes ahead.'

In fact, there was industrial action the next day by some FBU members. At the

control room in Stafford, telephone operators were taking emergency calls only.

Until last year, there were six women employed on each of the four shifts in the control room. Cuts reduced this to 5 per shift. Due to illness or holidays there can be as few as three per shift, meaning that women have been forced to work long hours of overtime, and double shifts.

The women are refusing to carry out a number of 'normal' duties, including taking messages from directly linked fire

stations, completing paperwork, and drawing up schedules detailing the number of men and appliances available for calls.

The county budget committee, however, eventually decided to lop off another 2% from the brigade's budget. In response, the FBU is asking local people to sign a petition calling on the council to change its mind. Already several hundred people have signed the petition — but it will take more than petitions to change the Tories' minds.

TUC: The making of another Social Con-trick

by JO THWAITES

AT LAST week's TUC, Len Murray declared that he was sick and tired of being told that a good hefty dose of wage restraint would put everything right. Applause all round! Quite right.

But then, on the same day, Congress voted to accept a motion from the UCU (formerly the UPW), which said that in order to have a planned economy under the next Labour government, there must be discussion on controlling incomes.

One swing round was not enough. Congress only a few minutes later voted that there should be commitment to free collective bargaining and opposition to all forms of incomes policy and wage restraint.

How is this explained?

The General Council of the TUC may not be strong on logic, but they are sure of some things.

They want another Social Contract with a future Labour government — but a Social Contract on better terms than the last one. To keep their bargaining points safe, the T&G, G&M and other public sector unions put a motion against wage controls and got it passed.

Callaghan in his speech to Congress laid down his demands. He pledged to repeal the Employment Act — and asked: "What code of self-discipline are you going to work?" And he called for new wage curbs worked out by the unions and a Labour government. There must not be a repeat of the 'winter of discontent', he declared.

That same 'winter of discontent' and the 5% limit was what pushed a minority of the TUC — the T&G and some other unions — to vote against wage restraint even under a Labour government. But what Moss Evans really wants is a more 'flexible' agreement, something that can allow him to main-

tain his leftish pose. He said: "There is a tremendous long way to go. I don't think a Labour government can in fact meet this sort of demand which the TUC will put in return for incomes policy."

Tom Jackson, of the UCU, on the other hand, argued for incomes policy — as part of a planned economy.

But what is Jackson doing to get a planned economy? The NEC's draft Party manifesto doesn't put forward any strategy for taking over major industry, establishing a planned economy and fundamentally overturning the

way the capitalist system is run. And Jackson complains about the NEC being too left wing!

So, in fact, Jackson just means wage restraint in the same economy as we have now — plus some hot air.

Anyway, even in a planned economy socialists wouldn't be against trade union action within it. Or doesn't Tom Jackson agree? He says he supports the Polish workers in their fight for free trade unionism. What about supporting his own members in Britain?

All the arguments about

'having a dialogue with a future Labour government' simply come back to controlling the rank and file in unions and accepting the Tory ideology that wage rises cause inflation.

Incomes policies have never been used in the interests of workers and there is no reason to believe that any future incomes policy worked out by the TUC and a future Labour government would be any different.

Here and now, the incomes policy salesmen are only weakening our fight against Tory wage-cutting.

CONGRESS voted by a large majority to call for the release of the Charter 77 dissidents in Czechoslovakia. And this despite Len Murray arguing against it.

He claimed that support for the Charter 77 dissidents would harm the TUC's other efforts to help trade unionists in Eastern Europe! A line had to be drawn between human rights issues and trade union issues.

It was a bit rich after the debate on Poland. The General Council got Congress to vote down a resolution from the EETPU simply stating solidarity with the Polish workers fighting for trade unions.



photo: Susan Glen

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK organised a lively lobby of the TUC on the opening day of Congress to demand "A women's right to work". Over 30 placard-carrying lobbyists distributed leaflets to delegates and collected signatures for Women's Fightback's new petition. The petition says that "...women should have an equal right to work and we deplore any measures which make women the scapegoat. This can only weaken and divide any militant class response

to unemployment..." and condemns those 'trade unionists' who have been calling for the forcible early retirement of women.

Signatories to the petition on the day included Moss Evans, Tony Benn, Arthur Scargill, Jo Richardson, Gordon McLennan and Joan Maynard.

Copies of the petition can be obtained from **WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK** c/o 41 Ellington Street, London N7.

Running scared from the crisis

COMMENTING on the TUC congress, the big-business weekly the Economist noted that: "The two million unemployed were frequently bemoaned, their numbers emblazoned on banners in the vast conference hall."

"But they inspired fear and packaged rhetoric rather than passion... The TUC is relying on the CBI and Tory backbenchers to force its economic prescriptions on the government: lower interest rates, selective import controls and a measure of reflation."

The TUC leaders are running scared from the crisis. Their campaign against the cuts and the Employment Act has vanished.

The TUC General Council made sure that the Bakers' Union amendment calling for the expulsion from the TUC of any union that accepted money from the state for ballots (as the AUEW and EETPU intend to) was dropped.

So the motion on the Employment Act had no teeth — the AUEW and the EETPU both voted for it, though they have made it clear they will cooperate with the Tories.

The TUC still bleats about persuading the Tories to 'change course'. What we need is a campaign by the rank and file to get the TUC to change course — to break collaboration with the bankers and bosses.

St Benedicts fights for life

by ANDREW HORNUNG

TOOTING carpenter Harry Baily hasn't left his council flat or had a bath for months. He was paralysed by a stroke in July 1979 and was taken to St James Hospital in South London. Later he was transferred to a unit at St Benedict's geriatric hospital at Tooting, where he responded well to treatment.

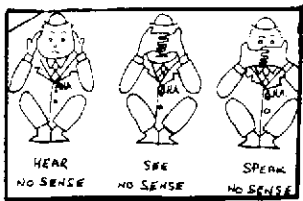
But then the Area Health Authority announced the closure of St Benedict's. With one nearby hospital full and another due to close under the AHA's plans, Harry had to go home to be nursed by his wife and daughters.

It is too dangerous to bathe him because there are no rails fitted to his bath, and it is too dangerous for him to be carried out of his flat be-

cause he lives on the fourth floor.

Harry is a victim of the Tory cuts — cuts which follow with sickening logic the practice of the previous Labour government.

But at St Benedict's a fight is being put up. It is a fight for services and it is a fight for jobs.



Eight months ago workers decided to occupy the hospital and run it themselves. At the same time a support committee has been organised and has produced a short pamphlet, *The Fight for Life*, explaining the issues. Another pamphlet is mainly

made up of poems written by eleven year olds at Sellin-court Junior Mixed School.

Since the work-in began in November 1979 the St Benedict's staff, who are mainly NUPE, RCN and CoHSE members, have resisted all management's efforts to undermine solidarity. Management's tactics have included two attempts to move patients out (both of them foiled by pickets), running patient numbers down, and offering staff alternative employment without replacing those who leave.

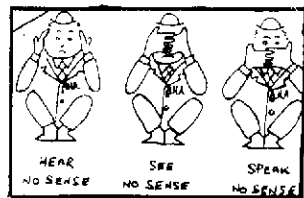
Vital support is coming from nearby Bolingbroke Hospital, where stewards are refusing to allow patients transferred from St Benedict's to be admitted.

As *The Fight for Life* puts it: "A victory at St Benedict's with labour movement solidarity can begin to turn the dismal tide of defeat in the fight against the cuts at

the Tories' hands. This can only be achieved, however, if the movement uses its strength and pledges industrial action".

The Fight for Life also tells you what you can do:

"Invite a speaker from St Benedict's to your organisation. Make a donation to the Occupation Committee."



"Pass a resolution pledging strike action in the event of any management attempt to break the work-in. Send a representative to the St Benedict's Defence Committee. This meets every Sunday [and can be contacted at 72 Glasford Rd, SW17]."

"Join the picket rota at the Church Lane entrance to St Benedict's to prevent management from moving patients or equipment out. Get on the 'telephone tree' so that you can get down to the picket at short notice in an emergency".



from the "Fight for Life" pamphlet produced by the St. Benedict's workers

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

BENN ON LABOUR DEMOCRACY

Like Poland, like Britain

TONY BENN told
200 TUC delegates:

I SAY to you candidly that even if the TUC were to say that there should be no Cruise missiles sited here, and if the Labour Party conference were to say there would be no Cruise missiles here, there is no reason whatever to believe that a Labour government elected thereafter would in fact remove the Cruise missiles. There is no reason to believe it, because there is no mechanism to ensure that it will happen.

Events in Poland in the last few days — which have indicated the desire for democratic control of the trade union movement in Poland — have come at a time that is very helpful for us. It indicates that it's not only in Britain that people in the labour movement want to control their leaders, and not have their leaders control them.

The only way that members of trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party can influence the manifesto for the next general election, or be sure that the

next Labour Government carries out that policy, is by supporting all three constitutional changes. If these changes were blocked by trade union votes at conference, the trade unions themselves would be voting to weaken their own influence in the Labour Party.

The political demands for full employment, the restoration of the welfare state and for peace, which will be coming from the TUC at Brighton this week, cannot be put into effect unless the trade unions vote in support of these same policies at the Labour Party conference, and vote to ensure that those policies are made clear in the manifesto and are carried out.

Rousing speeches at Labour Party conference, followed by massive votes in support of clear policies, raise legitimate expectations that if a Labour Government is elected these policies will be carried out. But if these policies can be vetoed by the Parliamentary leadership, for example on the abolition of the Lords,

and completely different policies can be introduced that are not in the interests of the labour movement, for example, a compulsory wage restraint policy, confidence in the labour movement will be undermined.

The Labour Party can only defeat the Conservatives in the next general election if it says what it means and means what it says.

OVER 100 people were turned away from the Mobilising Committee's meeting at the TUC on September 1st. 200 packed into the meeting room while dozens of others milled around outside the doors trying to hear the speeches.

The meeting wasn't a run-of-the-mill conference fringe meeting; it was part of a battle. As Tony Benn, Ron Todd from the TGWU, and John Bloxam from the Mobilising Committee were speaking in the Royal Albion Hotel, the enemy were gathering at the Metropole.

Equal

On the Campaign for a Labour Victory's platform David Owen, Terry Duffy from the AUEW, and CLV spokesman William Rodgers were outlining their plans to fight against Labour democracy.

The audiences for the two sides were roughly equal. The money spent

200 TUC delegates cram Labour democracy meeting

by the CLV on producing a glossy printed briefing, handed out by suntanned right-wingers in smart suits, was more than matched by the Mobilising Committee's determined lobbying of delegates during the two days before.

Never

Opening the Mobilising Committee's meeting John Bloxam said: "The issue is whether we're going to have another Labour Government like the last one. The Mobilising Committee's new broadsheet says it all in the headline: 'Never Again'.

"It's whether we can have the possibility of a government representing the working class in the same way that the Tory government militantly represents their class."

"It's about whether we can have a party that can attract mass membership; particularly amongst working class people, women and black people... a party in which policies aren't thrown in the dustbin, and where members aren't just footsloggers for others.

"It's about whether we can have a united determined and credible opposition to Thatcher's government — an opposition which can fight to sack Thatcher at the earliest possible opportunity."

Tony Benn followed up this theme in his speech saying: "We face the most serious challenge that has been faced by the labour movement, possibly since 1926, and we must be united. We can only be united round a structure of our party that is democratic.

Broad

"We want a broad and tolerant party, but the decisions must be made by the members of the party at the conference, advocated by the candidates, and implemented by the government."

Many of the questions at the meeting were about how we could fight for democracy in the unions to bring about reforms in the Labour Party. The Labour Co-ordinating Committee/Socialist Organiser trade union conference on November 1st should be a place to start answering those questions in practice.



At the TUC fringe meeting: Tony Banks, Tony Benn, John Bloxam

by VLADIMIR
DERER

THE AGENDA for the forthcoming Labour Party Annual Conference is now out. It shows that the Party continues to give high priority to constitutional reform.

About a third of all the amendments to Conference resolutions are on Labour Party democracy. Thus, contrary to the assertions of the opponents of reform, it is clear that the Party is not 'getting bored' with constitutional issues.

The fact that relatively few CLPs chose constitutional reform for the subject of their conference resolution (21 resolutions and 16 constitutional amendments) must be put down to a misunderstanding by the CLPs. They confidently expected that their submissions to the Enquiry, which many of them prepared with meticulous care, would carry weight.

A large proportion of these submissions were in favour of mandatory re-selection, election of the Party Leader on the basis of a wider franchise, and the NEC's final responsibility for the Manifesto. It may have seemed superfluous to many CLPs that their Conference resolution should once again reiterate their position.

Insofar as this was the case, their mistake was soon revealed. The majority of those serving on the Commission of Enquiry paid little attention to the submissions, and the Commission finally decided not to pronounce on the three issues.

The lesson is clear. The only way CLPs can influence Party policy is by making sure that Conference takes the right decisions, for, as far as the rank and file are concerned, it is Conference alone which carries weight. And the right decision at present means the introduction of procedures which will give ordinary Party members greater control over their elected representatives.

Leadership: In relation to the leadership issue, the 60-odd amendments on consti-

Labour Conference: a guide to the issues

tutional issues now on the agenda give Conference an opportunity to be presented with appropriate choices on the method of electing the Party Leader.

Firstly, amendments to the Tottenham/Hendon North resolution (Resolution 14) from 10 Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) and the National Organisation of Labour Students would make it possible to produce a composite resolution which will enable Conference to vote simply on the principle that all sections of the Party should participate in the election of the Leader.

Secondly, the 25 amendments to the two resolutions — from Thirsk & Maldon and Scarborough (Nos. 11 & 12) — make it possible to produce a composite resolution demanding that Conference be allowed to vote on the constitutional amendments submitted this year. Unless such a resolution on the method of electing the Party Leader is framed and adopted, the 8 constitutional amendments (agenda pp. 15-16) all containing the model CLPD proposal on the subject, would not be taken this year but would automatically be referred to the NEC for report and recommendation to Conference the following year (1981).

It is true that because an identical proposal has now been adopted by the NEC (Agenda p.7), the above composite may be unnecessary. However, the NEC are not united behind the proposal. It may well happen, as it did last year on the Manifesto, that the NEC will withdraw their own original proposal at the last minute.

In this case Conference would be unable to vote on the

constitutional change proposed in the amendment, or even on its relative merits — as no general resolution on the proposal was submitted this year. The procedural composite is therefore quite vital.

Thirdly there are the various alternative methods of electing the Leader. The vote on these would come last. Among these, the constitutional amendment should clearly be taken first, as, if it is passed, the constitution would immediately be amended.

Should Conference reject it, the next alternative is embodied in the Sheffield Brighton side motion (no. 16).



The composition of the college suggested in this resolution gives equal say to the Parliamentary Labour Party, the Constituency Section, and the trade unions. So far as the Rank and File Mobilising Committee and CLPD are concerned, it is an acceptable second best. Newham North East submitted an amendment to this resolution demanding that, in the event of its being passed, the NEC should prepare a constitutional amendment along the lines suggested, to be put to Conference immediately.

It is quite essential that the NEC should be prepared for this contingency, for if and only if a constitutional amendment is passed will the election of a new leader under the old system become impossible.

Finally, there is the resolution from Leeds South, which

is also backed by the National Advisory Council of the ILP (Independent Labour Publications). Its proposals give the PLP 50%, TUs 25%, CLPs 20%, and other affiliated organisations 5% in the proposed electoral college. Unlike in the CLPD/NEC college, no provision is made for record voting and for an automatic option of an annual election. In the interests of democracy, it is vital that this proposal is rejected. The fact that the PLP would continue to enjoy a dominant role would mean that the adoption of the Leeds South proposal would merely perpetuate the present system in a new form.

Manifesto: The proposed constitutional change giving the NEC the final say in the wording of the Party's Manifesto is covered in the constitutional amendment proposed by the NEC (Agenda p.7).

It is unlikely that the NEC would withdraw it again this year, but should it do so, practically the same amendment was submitted last year by Chipping Barnet, Hendon South, Louth, and Selly Oak (see NEC Report p.18) and Conference will be entitled to vote on it.

Re-selection itself continues to be on the Agenda. Just how it is going to be debated and voted on remains an open question. Strictly speaking the only thing that needs to be done is the adoption of amendments which are consequential to those changes in the constitution already effected last year. Such amendments are being put forward by the NEC.

Normally such tidying up processes would be wholly non-controversial. Re-selection, however, is not uncontroversial! Its opponents, having lost

the argument, have still tried, and tried successfully, to stop this much needed measure by putting every possible obstacle in its way.

It seems more than likely that they will try to turn the vote on consequential amendments into one on principle. If they are successful we will have yet another year during which the existing provisions for re-selection cannot be activated, and Labour Party members are unable to use this important mechanism for securing accountability. Supporters of reform must remain on the alert against this danger.

Finally, the agenda contains a number of resolutions and amendments on issues which are in many ways complementary to the three major ones. In their case, the problem will be to get the issues debated.

Firstly there is the demand that the Women's Section on the NEC should be elected by Labour Party women themselves at the National Conference of Labour Women. The present practice is for them to be elected by the male-dominated trade union block vote.

It might seem obvious that for women to be attracted to the Party, it is essential for them to elect their own representatives. This would show that the Party, in action as well as in words, is for women to make their own choices.

Unfortunately few affiliated organisations think this. Only one resolution and two amendments on this subject appear on the Agenda. It will take much-needed positive discrimination to get the subject debated.

The problems of the other constituencies struggling to get the constitutional issue of their choice on the Agenda are different. There would appear to be no difficulty about them having a legitimate and technical claim to have their subjects debated.

The present practice is that if seven affiliated organisations send resolutions/amendments on the same subject, they are invited to attend the

compositing session on the Saturday prior to Conference. There, a resolution is produced which appears in the booklet of composites from which the subjects for debate are chosen.

The question of democracy in the Parliamentary Labour Party in fact attracted eight resolutions and amendments. In addition, there are eight constitutional amendments proper on the issue. Yet no group meeting to finalise a composite was fixed. Instead there was to be compositing by post.

This is unusual and there is anxiety that composites not emanating from the compositing session may inadvertently be omitted from the booklet of composites and overlooked when the timetable is being devised. The democratic reform of the Parliamentary Party is of course most important if, among other things, re-selection is to work.

Labour Group democracy is another subject for which no compositing session has been called. There are altogether seven resolutions and amendments on this subject. They have however been artificially separated into two groups: "Group Leaders" (resolution 26), and "Group Standing Orders" (resolution 27). As a result, neither subject on its own has the backing of a sufficient number of organisations.

This may of course have been due to an oversight. Nevertheless old hands will remember that back in the '60s the method of placing under different headings what were basically resolutions on the same subject, was used successfully to keep debates on the extension of public ownership off the Agenda.

Delegates should be on the alert and support all moves to give Conference an opportunity to consider all these important issues.

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