

Socialist Organiser

No 30

Nov. 22, 1980

Claimants and strikers 10p

20p

Labour Party
demonstration

FIGHT FOR THE
RIGHT TO WORK

LIVERPOOL, SAT. NOV 29.

ASSEMBLE

SEFTON PARK 11.00am

RALLY PIERHEAD 1.30pm

Free Charlene and Annette Maw!

BRIAN LANE drank five pints, boasted to his buddy he could drive faster, got a Hollywood-style car chase going, and killed two little girls.

They had been feeding a pony at the side of the road. Every bone in their bodies was broken.

Brian Lane was very sorry for what he had done, so the judge at Liverpool Crown Court let him off with three months, and a two-year driving suspension.

Now, over to Bradford Crown Court, for the case of Charlene and Annette Maw.

Three years each was what they got for putting an end to their brutal, drunken father. Thomas Maw had systema-

tically battered and terrorised his wife and children for 28 years.

Charlene and Annette had been 'doing time' ever since they were born. And, everyone agreed, if they hadn't put a knife through Mr Maw that night, he'd have killed one of them, or their mother.

Instead of applauding their courage and solidarity, and wondering why they had never lifted a finger in self-defence before, Mr Justice Smith said it was all very sad but 'it cannot be overlooked and you must go to prison'.

Beryl Maw, freed from 28 years of fear and helplessness when she suffered 'the total erosion of a woman's

by RACHEL LEVER, secretary,
Women's Fightback

spirit and personality', now says, 'We must fight to get them freed. I have to be a pillar of strength for them now'.

Women's groups will be mounting protests. What will the labour movement do?

It is a movement that has, so far, totally accepted the Establishment idea of the family — strong, dominant father, supportive, subordinate wife, obedient, dutiful children. And there is a direct line linking this set-up with the events of the Maw household.

Thomas Maw was clearly an out-and-out thug. But it's

only a matter of degree. 25% of reported violent crime is wife assault; and who knows how much more is never reported. It goes on in every sort of family, in every social class (though working class women, without the money to escape, tend to stay put longer).

It's time the labour movement got some new thoughts on the matter, and started taking a stand against these household tyrants and the bourgeois patriarchal ideas that prop them up and let them think they've got a right to lord it over 'their' women and children.

It could start by supporting the calls for the release of Charlene and Annette Maw. It could go on to support and link up with Women's Aid. And it could start to think and talk about people's lives behind the net curtains and beyond the pay packet.

Postscript — from Bradford Crown Court again. On Monday 17th Judge P.H. Hallam called for a new jury to try a case in which a man was accused of assaulting his wife and causing her bodily harm.

What was wrong with the existing jury? It had eleven women members.



Crabtree, the Guardian

After Foot's
victory: don't cele-
brate, organise!
pp.6-7

March for the hunger strikers on December 7

REPUBLICAN women prisoners at Northern Ireland's Armagh Jail have decided to step up their partial 'dirty protest' and join the seven men who are on hunger strike in a fast to death or victory.

For a long time the Provisional IRA discouraged the Armagh prisoners from starting a protest. But in February of this year, the 'dirty protest' spread from the H-Blocks to Armagh.

Like the H-Block men, the women of Armagh are forced to smear their excrement over the cell walls and live in their own filth... or knuckle under to a system that denies the political nature of their offences.

Unlike the men, who are naked but for a blanket or towel, the women wear whatever they were standing up in when the protest started, refusing to change their clothes.

That the loss of political status is more degrading to the men of H-Block and the women of Armagh than the terrible conditions they are now enduring is a testimony to their devotion to the cause of Irish freedom and testimony to the fact that these are indeed political prisoners.

5,000 people, including a 500 contingent, marched in London on Saturday 15th, demanding political status for the Armagh and H-Block Republicans. To stop the Tories sending these men and women to their death, we must have an even bigger turnout for the next demonstration: 1pm, Sunday December 7th, from Speakers' Corner, London.

See back page:
letter from Long
Kesh



THE firemen's local mass meetings being held in the run-up to the Fire Brigades Union recall conference on 21st November show that the conference is sure to vote overwhelmingly for the FBU leadership's proposal of one-day lightning strikes.

The meetings have voted by large majorities for strike action. A meeting of 350 firemen in South Birmingham, for example, voted with only about 10 against in favour of the EC recommendation.

by DOUG
MACKAY (FBU)

What is at stake is more than just firemen's pay (important though that is), but also the future of the fire service.

If we cave in and accept 6 per cent, the employers have got a list as long as your arm of retrogressive measures they want to force through.

These include job cuts of 6,000 to 8,000 by the extension of part-time firemen, less men on each

appliance, and a reduction in the standard of fire cover.

They also include the introduction of 3x8 hour shifts and 'variable manning' (less firemen on duty at times of so-called 'low risk'). The time they are talking about is between 10pm and 7am. There aren't so many factory fires at that time of day, but the vast majority of serious house fires with lives at

risk are at those times. So we can see where their priorities lie.

The Tories are already floating the idea of a 4% cash limit next year. If we are limited successfully to 6% this year, that figure will soon drop rapidly towards 0%.

The stakes are high. For the workers in the public sector, a 10% wage cut this year, and a similar one next year. For the working class

as a whole, the decimation of what is left of the public services. And, for the bosses and the Tories, possibly the central core of their strategy to make the working class pay for the crisis.

The immediate task must be to build a public sector alliance in action to destroy the 6 per cent limit. We must not let each section of the public sector be taken on individually. That would be a recipe for defeat.

We must demand the trade union leaders organise united action — but we must not wait for them. We should argue for the Steering Committee set up from the November 1st anti-cuts conference to mobilise support for the firemen and any other workers coming into struggle against the 6%. We should build similar conferences in every major town.

Meanwhile we must prepare in every workplace and trade union branch for massive support to be brought into play. We must endeavour to transform the Trades Council from the talking shops they are now into real fighting organisations of our class, willing and able to mobilise workers in struggle.

The firemen must not suffer a repeat of 1977. Left to fight alone, stabbed in the back by the TUC 'leaders', and having troops sent in (by a Labour government) to do their job.

The Labour leaders will hypocritically call on the Tories to pay up, just as Thatcher called on Labour to pay up in 1977. We must say to the Labour leaders: Put your money where your mouth is, mobilise the working class to smash this 6 per cent limit and bring down the Government.

BACK THE FIREMEN BURN THE 6pc

MISSING THE POINT

Socialist Challenge

Labour leadership: no support for Foot

THE Parliamentary Labour Party will go ahead with its primary election of the party leader, despite a reported widespread feeling that the conference decision to demand the resignation of Denis Healey is a defeat for the party.

The National Executive Committee will meet on Tuesday to decide whether to call for a referendum on the issue of leadership. It is expected that the NEC will support the demand for a referendum, but it is also possible that it will decide to call for a referendum on the issue of leadership.

SOCIALIST Challenge is critical of the position adopted by the Rank and File Mobilising Committee, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, and the Labour Left in general on the issues arising out of the Parliamentary Labour Party leadership elections.

Its editorial of 6th November claims that the Labour Left has "got itself into a hopeless tactical tangle".

"Having just a couple of weeks ago denounced the whole election as a fraud", *Socialist Challenge* goes on, "the left has now forgotten its own starting point. By launching an all-out campaign for Foot it is lending legitimacy to the whole undemocratic charade. The illegitimacy of the MPs-only election is being lost in the hustle to get Foot elected".

The question of what is one's starting point is indeed important. For the Labour Left, or at any rate

its most consistent protagonists, the starting point is the recognition that, at this stage, the main arena in which the struggle for socialism is being fought out is the existing political structures. This means above all the Labour Party.

Those socialists who place themselves outside

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy favoured Foot as leader, against Healey. VLADIMIR DERER, secretary of the CLPD, explains why he believes left-wing critics of voting for Foot were wrong.

the Labour Party have in fact abandoned political struggle and opted for the status quo, which accommodates them in a 'radical' ghetto.

Real struggle for socialism must give a high priority to the practical struggle against those elements in the Labour leadership which are ideologically opposed to the Party's nominal aims. This implies not just ideological

criticism but political opposition, i.e. a struggle for their removal from politically important positions.

Those, on the other hand, whose 'political' activity is exclusively restricted to ideological exposure (basically propaganda group activities) will be satisfied with 'winn-

ing the argument', forgetful of the fact that this, by itself, is politically of very little consequence.

The decision of the PLP to go ahead with the election of the Party Leader was primarily an attempt by Labour's right wing parliamentary oligarchy to secure the leadership for their own nominee. The argument about legitimacy was in this context inevitably of secondary importance.

The main purpose behind the demand that the PLP suspend its Standing Orders was to prevent the election of its right wing nominee. To allow one's tactic to be circumscribed purely by considerations of legitimacy is to act as if the issue is being fought out in a court of law rather than in the political arena.

In any case the PLP's decision was only politically illegitimate: it was taken in defiance of a clearly expressed wish of conference. Technically it was legitimate: the PLP did no more than comply with its Standing Orders.

This, incidentally, was one of the reasons why the argument about legitimacy failed to generate from the rank and file sufficient pressure to stop the PLP from going through with its pre-emptive strike which, as it turned out, backfired. For the Left to have continued to base its campaign on 'legitimacy' once the vote on the Standing Orders was lost, would have restricted it to calling for a boycott.

This may have pleased *Socialist Challenge*, but it would have merely helped to install Denis Healey. Even in the unlikely event of all the 66 MPs (who voted in favour of the suspension of Standing Orders) abstaining, this would not have made it "much easier to argue the irrelevance of the outcome", as *Socialist Challenge* suggests.

A 75% poll divided 2 to 1 in favour of Healey would have been a triumph for the parliamentary right wing. Rank and file members of the Labour Party realised this only too well and, unlike the master strategists of *Socialist Challenge*, intensified their efforts to frustrate the right wing coup by mounting further pressure on MPs to vote for the only candidate who did not push himself and at the same time stood the best chance of stopping Healey.

than the support of perhaps 1/3 of the CLPs, 1/3 of the TUs, and 1/3 of the PLP (43.3% of the electoral college). If conference voted in its present form, Benn would be heavily defeated.

But the potential harm produced by *Socialist Challenge*'s ill-informed 'optimism' is that it spreads a complacency that detracts from the urgency of preparing the ground for an eventual victory of a Left-wing candidate for leadership. A tolerant Party regime under Foot will be more conducive to such preparatory activity than

Having tried to pre-empt the January conference decision by installing their nominee, the right have now to settle for someone whom they could have had without fuss in the first place.

While it would be quite inappropriate to join the Tory press in proclaiming the election of Foot as an outright victory for the Left, it can hardly be denied that it was a defeat for the right.

The trouble with the 'principled' critics of the Labour Left — and their mouthpieces in *Socialist Challenge* — is that having



Ivan Wels

the authoritarian rule of Denis Healey.

Here once again *Socialist Challenge* grossly underestimates the extent of support within the Party for the Labour Left and for the democratic reforms: it fails to see the 'merit in avoiding a clash' between the PLP and the constituencies. It advises that the MPs' 'challenge to Labour Party democracy needs to be taken on, full frontal'.

Labour's parliamentary oligarchs would like nothing better than that the Left should be drawn into a precipitate and premature trial of strength. They know that in such a confrontation they could rely on the support of the unions as well as of the bulk of the passive membership. The latter's first consideration is their loyalty to the Party and concern for Party unity.

The PLP's obvious preference for Healey has enabled the Labour Left to draw on the vast reservoir in the centre by demonstrating that it was the Right which was anxious to precipitate new conflicts. So long as the composition of the Labour Party remains what it is now, the Left cannot win without the support of the centre. This may mean that apart from pressing for such socialist changes as are already broadly acceptable, it has also, from time to time, to promote 'compromise' candidates in opposition to right wing nominees.

Even *Socialist Challenge* must admit that it was the adoption of this tactic which led to the parliamentary right being hopelessly out-manoeuvred.

failed to become politically influential outside the Labour Party, they now accept (or some of them at least) the need to work within the Labour Party framework. Unfortunately this acceptance is only half-hearted. They still hark back after the dream-world (inhabited by the CP, SWP and WRP) in which the Far Left is engaged in an effective political competition with the Labour Party. Their continued preference for extra-parliamentary and extra-Labour Party activity as well as tactics appropriate to such an orientation, is a clear indication of this.

In the fantasy world in which the Far Left is a credible alternative to Labourism, it would, of course, be quite appropriate to see the difference between Foot and Healey, and the forces they represent, as at best a marginal one. In the real world however, the Far Left is politically irrelevant. Their pathetic pretensions serve no other purpose than to divert potentially revolutionary forces into activities which, from the point of view of the bourgeois status quo, are perfectly safe.

Acceptance of work within the Labour Party framework involves the recognition not just of the limitations imposed by this framework, but also acceptance of the need to carry on such struggles as are possible within it. Failure to use all the opportunities that the Labour Party framework offers, is tantamount to a failure to engage in the political class struggle.



Gibbard, the Guardian

Socialist Challenge merely reveals its ignorance when it claims that "any democratic election system would sweep him [Benn] to power". Such evidence as is available shows that at this stage the sizeable support for Benn is almost exclusively limited to constituency activists. If the CLPD formula for electoral college were to be adopted, in a straight fight between Healey and Benn, Benn could count on no more

The case against the Common Market

In *Socialist Organiser* no.27 John Bloxam argued that the Labour Left is wrong to push for withdrawal from the EEC. GRAHAM NORWOOD takes up the debate.

THE EUROPEAN Economic Community — through the individual nations within it and through the bureaucratic supranational state system it imposes over those nations — enshrines the ethics and workings of capitalism.

So long as that remains the case, it is Labour's responsibility as a party committed to the scrapping of capitalism, to withdraw from the EEC.

Face

Labour must similarly face up to other forms of capitalism, as expressed through private ownership of land and of industry; as expressed through wage controls and the cuts in public expenditure; and as expressed in growing state powers for the police and services, and restrictions on civil life through the Prevention of Terrorism Act and new infringements on the right to strike.

But the EEC lines up with those capitalist forms and therefore must be considered as a challenge for Labour: to ignore it is to try to defeat capitalism elsewhere, whilst letting it escape through the loopholes of the Common Market.

For a number of reasons we must withdraw from the Market, and offer a socialist alternative:

1. It aids capitalism within the EEC, by encouraging artificial marketing and agricultural conditions to the benefit of capitalists in the member nations.

2. It aids global capitalism, by enhancing the privileged industrial positions of the European states, to the detriment of ever more

reliant Third World nations, whose relative poverty increases in comparison to overall EEC growth.

3. The Common Market serves to institutionalise capitalist power blocks in two ways:

(i) It diminishes the rights of socialists to initiate new ideas within one or more member countries. The immensity of the EEC requires similarly immense capitalist bureaucracy, which will inevitably see socialist innovation (i.e. cooperatives; municipalisation of local finance; nationalisation, between two or three states, of multinational capital) as nothing more than an irregularity to the normal large-scale capitalism. Such innovations will thus be dismissed.

(ii) It legitimises the power block of NATO, by forming a potentially cohesive economic grouping wedded to American-dominated capitalism: the perfect supranational economy to serve a future nuclear war.

For these reasons, we must rid ourselves of the EEC. For, make no mistake, to seek to change it from within is to automatically accept a capitalist structure which consists only of developed capitalist nations: it would be far better to espouse the socialist reasons for withdrawal which I have outlined, and instead to increase multinational trading and labour links with the Eastern bloc, the Third World, and socialist organisations in the capitalist world.

But in urging Britain's withdrawal from the Common Market, I must completely dissociate this strategy from the Tribune/Bennite concept of

withdrawal mainly because the EEC reduces the Parliamentary sovereignty of the British House of Commons.

Benn postulates — with great sincerity and in a way worthy of our tolerance — that the House of Commons has been diminished by the EEC, which has forced the Commons "to give away, for ever, the independence of our country and the liberties of our people, both of which it held merely in trust for the electorate which elected it. Only the British people had the moral authority to decide whether to retain their full power of democratic self-government..." (Tony Benn, *Arguments for Socialism*, Penguin Books, page 99).

Marxists must reject this, because it assumes British people have the power of decision-making, which they lend periodically to MPs. This effectively — and wrongly — denies that power lies in the hands of capital and capitalists.

The real power that British people hold is rarely expressed just through the House of Commons. More often it is shown in direct action, as the history of the labour movement and its struggles show to us all.

Weak

So the diminution of the Commons — although not in itself desirable — is perhaps the weakest justification for British withdrawal from the EEC. Instead, we must see the question in terms of capitalism being rejected in favour of socialism.

And that principle was the one endorsed so strongly by the Party conference, and which we must act upon in order to honour our commitment to working people in Britain — and elsewhere.



Up the poll

A recent Sunday Times MORI poll told us that 55% of union members thought that "most unions today are controlled by a few extremists". So saying, it laid another log on the raging fire of anti-unionism.

Now, in another poll also conducted by MORI, but this time commissioned by the New Statesman, it is said that only 11% of trade union members think their own union is "controlled by extremists and militants".

There speaks the power of the press: millions of workers accept a view of trade unionism in general that is shouted at them in the media even though they know it doesn't fit their own experience. Poll results will soon, no doubt, be produced to prove that workers think that 6% is a fair ceiling for pay rises. You won't be asked if you yourself would be satisfied if your union leaders accepted only 6% on your behalf — 10% less than the rate of inflation.

Dark and dirty work

THE CIVIL rights organisation, the National Council for Civil Liberties, is being taken to the High Court by the Home Office. The crime? Last May the NCCL gave the Guardian a copy of documents read out in court by a judge. That, says the Home Office, amounts to contempt of court.

The judge had been hearing a claim for damages from a prisoner who had been in Wakefield prison's control unit. To decide on the case the judge had to consider documents giving details of how these torture chambers came to be set up. The Home Office claimed that that would be 'against the public interest', but the judge won the day and the documents were read in court.

Having failed to stifle the prisoners' cries to the judiciary and then failed to gag the judiciary itself, the Home Office has now gone gunning for the people who supported and reported the prisoners' claim, the NCCL and the press.

British capitalism's special sickness is secrecy. Last week's SO cited the example of prison officers, all of whom are covered by the Official Secrets Act. This latest court action shows to what lengths the state will go to see to it that it can do its dirty work unobserved. If the Home Office wins, it will mean that the shadow of secrecy will grow enormously longer.

The NCCL case comes just as the government is framing

new laws concerning contempt of court, following a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights. The European Court had ruled that the Home Office had no right to try to stop the Sunday Times giving us the facts — for a change — about the thalidomide case.

The Sunday Times finally had to go to the European Court to get the hounds of the Home Office off its back. Once again we see the Home Office's love of the dark: they love to work in it and they love to keep you in it. [Any thought that the Home Office under, in this case, squire Hailsham, was protecting the interests of the multi million pound Distillers Company rather than what it calls 'the public interest' would, of course, be entirely malicious.

Patriots all

WHEN THE Sunday Telegraph got Enoch Powell to review Michael Foot's new book, 'Debts of Honour', presumably it was having its little joke. Either that or it expected the stinking racist and Catholic-basher to fix his fangs into the man that most Telegraph readers think is a second Lenin.

Not so. Perceptively, Powell sees Foot as a comrade in arms — at least on the question of nationalism. "Over and over", crows Powell, "it comes through that he is a nationalist."

Powell remembers Foot's stand on the Common Market and has only praise for what he calls Foot's 'patriotism' then. Whatever the differences between Foot and Powell — and, of course, there are many — Foot is certainly as rabid a chauvinist as you will find on either side of Parliament. Now you have it straight from the horse's mouth!

It is not only Tories who go in for inter-party backslappings. Wilson now tells millions of TV viewers watching Panorama that he thinks very highly of James Prior, who is to the trade unions more or less what Dr Crippen was to the World Health Organisation. According to the aspiring Lord Harold of Huyton, Prior is trying to do 'a sensible job' while it is the unions that are not being helpful!

Another Tory that he says he admires is Lord Carington.

While Labour leaders share the enthusiasms of the Tories, the same values and ideas, and admire the generals on the enemy side more than the soldiers on our own, how can we expect to have a workers' party, responsive to the needs of our class and implacably hostile to the interests of our opponents?

Lothian fights the cuts

I WAS pleased to read the article about Social Security cuts in issue no.28. It would be possible to fill the entire newspaper with examples of how the unwaged are being made to pay for the inability of the state to manage capitalism.

LOSS [Lothians Oppose Social Security Cuts] has been campaigning actively to inform people of these cuts and why they are happening. So far we have distributed some 40,000 leaflets and spoken to countless meetings.

On November 24th — the date the new law becomes operative — we have called a demonstration. It is obviously important to get as many people as possible out on that day, to show the strength of feeling.

Marchers assemble Waverley Bridge 11am. The rally afterwards will be addressed by Ron Brown, Jimmy Burnett, and Harry McShane.

This demonstration will coincide with others being held up and down the country.

DAVID MILLIKEN
Edinburgh Central CLP



Write back to: 5
Stamford Hill, London
N16.

The only language

ACCORDING to the Prime Minister, the Tories want to reduce state 'interference' in our lives to a bare minimum. This is apparently the reason for selling off parts of the public sector to their big business friends, albeit at knock-down prices.

But the Tory government is only de-nationalising the profitable sections, leaving non profit-making sections intact.

And far from wishing to minimise state control, Mrs T and her colleagues are strengthening the state —

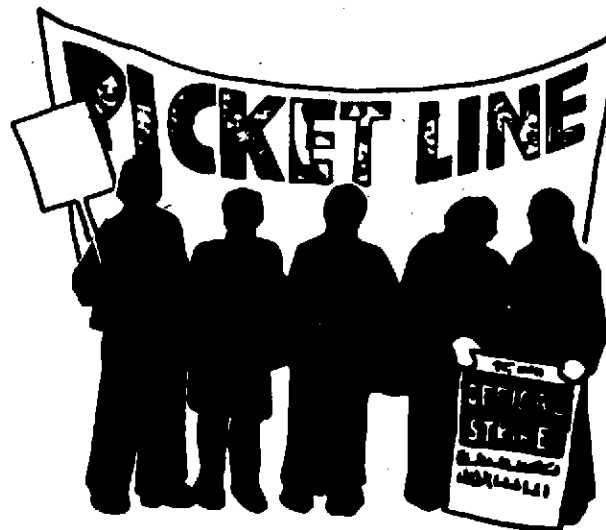
particularly the police and other related agencies, backed up by new laws.

Why? To take on the working class in order to make them pay for the capitalist crisis.

Recognising this, we must demand that the Labour Movement steps up the fight against the Tories by organising more mass demonstrations and rallies — because this is the only language Mrs Thatcher will understand.

RON BROWN,
MP for Leith.

Picketing to control imports?



IN OUR concern about import controls, we mustn't get caught in the trap of opposing the kind of import controls imposed directly by workers in struggle.

In the steel strike, workers imposed import controls as an extension of blacking. Employers traditionally use imports as a means of strike-breaking. This Thatcher government, in its war against the working class, seems to be generalising this old tactic, as imports of all sorts of goods are being used to destroy industries.

Of course, we must not futilely call for some possible future Labour Government to impose import controls. But we must support organised workers who defend their jobs by directly preventing imports.

JOHN MARTIN,
London SW5.

EDITORIAL: Why Gardners is important

JUST BEFORE the General Election in 1979, the workers of Vickers Scotswood, on Tyneside, occupied their factory, locked out the bosses, and began a work-in. They were fighting to save their jobs.

But it was soon all over. On Friday 4th, the day after the Tories' victory, the work-in was called off.

Their defeat was not due to a sell-out by cynical right-wing union officials. The union leaders in the factory were left wing. They had organised a big and energetic campaign to save Scotswood.

They had few illusions about the Labour Government's record on jobs. Nevertheless they felt it was worthwhile pressuring that Government — by direct action, if necessary — to intervene. But once the Tories took power,

they saw no way forward.

Since May 1979 the despair seen at Scotswood has spread wider. Cynical right-wing union officials have played their part in this. The steel workers, mobilised during their strike early this year, had both the power and the will to WIN the fight to save their jobs. Thousands of workers in South Wales wanted to join them in a general strike to stop the Tories.

But the right-wing steel union leaders and the TUC top brass headed off the militancy.

Since then, hundreds of thousands of jobs have gone, in steel and elsewhere, with hardly any fight. Workers have felt unable to win on the jobs issue.

That is why the Gardners occupation in Eccles, to save 590 jobs, is so important.

The November 29th demonstration should be the start of a campaign to transform the labour movement [Labour Party and trade unions] into a force capable of winning the right to work.

That means mobilising the movement round effective struggles here and now, establishing real solidarity, winning the movement to socialist policies for the right to work, and restructuring the movement so that we can make sure a Labour Government actually carries out those policies.

Import controls, the main policy for jobs pushed by large sections of the Left, make no sense as part of this effort. The sort of politics they belong to is the politics of CBI-TUC discussions, corridor lobbying, and nationalist short-sightedness.

Someone has said: Yes, we can win.

The Gardners workers know their chances are slim as long as the struggle is limited to their factory. They know, too, that their union leaders will give only as much support as they are forced to by the rank and file.

So they have gone out all across the country, agitating for support, spreading the example of their action.

The labour movement has a duty to give support — not only the trade unions, but also the Labour Party.

And socialists have a special responsibility. A serious fightback on jobs requires general, class-wide action — in other words, political action. The failure of the fight for jobs is a failure of the political movement of the working class.

Democracy invades Parliament

"MAKE WAY for Black Rod"... "Certainly not", came the reply. So began "the unprecedented endangerment of Parliamentary principles" caused by 40 Labour MPs.

The Tories had just tried to push through a £3 rent increase for council tenants in a written answer to a Parliamentary question.

There is no debate on the answers, and the rent increase would have gone through just before the closing of the current session of the House of Commons. Which is where Black Rod comes in.

Or rather he didn't. 40 Labour MPs, determined that this rent increase would not go through on the nod, formed a picket, by linking arms in front of the door through which Black Rod comes into the Commons from the House of Lords. Horror-struck as were the Tory honourable members (and David Owen and William Rodgers), there was nothing they could do.

It is easy enough to have Dennis Skinner flung out by the Sergeant at Arms, but even using

by JO THYVAITES

his ceremonial sword he could not move 40. So Heseltine, at Michael Foot's suggestion, had to withdraw his rent rise.

Black Rod was then allowed in and Parliament was closed.

So, through disrupting the antiquated procedure of Parliament, a few Labour MPs were able to stop the Tories forcing through yet another attack on workers' living standards. Which shows what the Parliamentary Labour Party could do to seriously fight the Tories.

Instead of having gentlemanly debates with the Tories, they can disrupt the workings of Parliament. If they had staged a similar disruption the week before, the 6% limit on the public sector would not have gone through.

If the Labour MPs (or

even just the Left Labour MPs) used the tactic of disrupting more (like they did over council house sales last session) they could stop a good proportion of the Tories' measures in Parliament.

The Tories would still get through their most important policies — but only with a hue and cry which would help arouse more powerful opposition outside Parliament.

The Parliamentary battle by a few Labour MPs was a big factor in

stopping the Corrie Bill — and it also showed how a fight inside Parliament can help and stimulate the movement outside Parliament.

The Parliamentary Labour Party does not have a majority — as they keep on telling us — so it then becomes their duty to obstruct Tory legislation by any other means at their disposal. They have shown they can do... — so why not do it more often and therefore more effectively?

Bob Cryer MP told SO

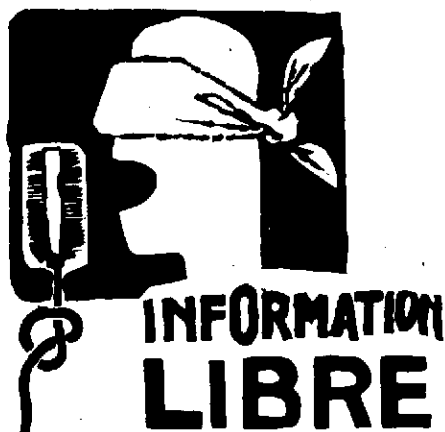
The Tories have tried this dirty little dodge before, trying to get announcements through by written answers. Then there's no discussion, no debate. They did it only the week before with the 6 per cent pay policy.

This time Labour MPs decided that it's time we got a bit of truth and democracy in Parliament. It's not the apotheosis of democracy it's made out to be, far from it. Decisions are often made behind closed doors and the truth is never known. It's high time these anti-

que ceremonies, Black Rod and the Queen, were done away with. The Tories talk about cutting jobs in the factories, but we should cut all the Parliamentary antiques.

I should think we'll do it again when something like expenditure on nuclear weapons comes up.

The two Labour MPs who have complained, Owen and Rodgers, I suspect are quite happy to do the same sort of thing themselves. It's what Rodgers did with the £1 billion expenditure on Chevaline [updating Polaris].



Poland: the unstable compromise

by ALEXIS CARRAS

WITHIN hours of a Supreme Court ruling on the statutes of the Polish trade union Solidarnosc last week, renewed threats of strike action were reported in several industries to force the government to implement promised wage rises.

In Gdansk, centre of the general strike wave earlier this year which brought Solidarnosc into being, health workers have occupied a number of premises and are appealing to local workers for aid.

In Czestochowa delegates from over 150 factories in and around the city ceased all negotiations with the regional governor and demanded that officials come from Warsaw to parley with them. The workers were responding to the declaration by governor Miroslaw Wierbicki of a State of Emergency.

Wierbicki's action was taken just as Solidarnosc's case was to be heard in court, and was a deliberate attempt to increase political tension and thus apply pressure on the union. Attempts were also made to confiscate the union's newly acquired printing equipment.

At the same time Polish television was showing newsreels of supposed military manoeuvres by Warsaw Pact troops, including the Polish army, in

preparation for the threat of enemy action, 'external or internal'. In reality Western military experts doubt whether these war games ever took place.

The Supreme Court ruling itself marked a victory for Solidarnosc over such tactics of intimidation. The judges upheld an appeal against the unilateral inclusion by a lower court of a clause in the union's constitution recognising the 'political leadership of the Polish Communist Party'.

Unity

But the new ruling was also hailed as a victory by the government. They pointed to the inclusion of an 'annexe' upholding Communist Party supremacy, which Judge Witold Formanski insisted was 'an integral part of the union's charter'. And an official explained that the compromise showed yet again that 'Pole can speak to Pole', and for the sake of national unity arrive at an understanding.

The decision of the Polish bureaucracy to compromise with the union once more does not represent any amazing change of heart. It simply marks an intelligent recognition that they need time to manoeuvre, wheel and deal, bribe, coerce, and eventually render impotent the institutions which the Polish workers have created since the summer. A

head-on collision at present would be disastrous, since the union — which now claims ten million members — remains united and confident. Apparently the Polish Stalinists have also managed to convince their Russian overlords of the wisdom of caution for the time being.

But danger lies within Solidarnosc itself. The euphoria of the summer months, when the workers won their first major victories against the State, has now given way to an increasing bitterness at the obstructions the government is placing in the way of the union's functioning at every level. None of the workers' economic demands have been met.

Yet Solidarnosc leader Lech Walesa, following a recent meeting with Polish CP secretary Stanislaw Kania, could say that he found Kania 'honest and forthright'. Walesa also continues under the guidance of the Catholic Church to seek compromise with the bureaucracy.

Meanwhile promise after promise is broken, the bureaucratic monopoly of economic planning and official secrecy are jealously guarded, and the bureaucrats' privileges flourish as before. But as winter approaches, the rationing of meat is being enforced, while even the most basic foodstuffs such as potatoes have disappeared from the shops.

Kania may try to shore up the disintegrating economy for a short time with the help of further loans from the West, but the underlying sickness will still remain. The Soviet Union will not indefinitely underwrite Warsaw's bills; nor is there any sign of a massive upturn in the Western economies, from which Poland might hope to gain through the expansion of its exports.

Two

For the Polish working class, two alternatives are ever more sharply posed. The first is to try to seek a compromise with the bureaucracy; this would mean the imposition of an in-

creasingly tight rein on the activities of Solidarnosc, which would in turn lead to incorporation of the union once more into the apparatus of the state — or, more likely, the bureaucracy physically smashing up Solidarnosc after demoralising the workers.

The other alternative involves a relentless battle for workers' democracy and economic justice alike. From the formation of independent trade unions, Poland's workers must go on to break the political monopoly of the Stalinists explicitly, and build an independent working-class party which has as its goal not a bargain with the bureaucracy but their overthrow for good and all.



Women fighting back Women fighting back Women fighting back

Will NALGO fight sexism at work?

by JANE KEMP

THE Equal Opportunities Committee of the town hall workers' union NALGO is circulating its branches with a report by the Canadian Labour Congress on sexual harassment at work.

It is requesting discussion and comment on the report to the Equal Opportunities Committee, which will examine the problem.

The Canadian report found that 70 to 80 per cent of women workers in a wide variety of workplaces had been subjected to varying degrees of sexual harassment.

In response it recommended changes in the law, and training of officers to deal with cases of sexual harassment and to help protect women against the discrimination which usually accompanies it.

Over half NALGO's members are women, and they have national and local bodies dealing with women's organisation and needs in the union. But this is the first time that this problem has been raised at national level, and the handling of a recent case at local level was extraordinarily biased.

In Spring 1979, two women employees of Brent

council, members of NALGO, complained of serious sexual harassment by a senior member of the council. The man was suspended — but given support by the branch secretary.

The two women, and two NALGO officials who originally advised them of the grievance procedure, were also suspended, quite without precedent — and given no such support.

Eventually, after very irregular handling of the women's cases, including the condition that they made no contact with workmates or any union members except the advisers appointed, their case was lost, and they were offered redeployment. They were isolated both from the rank and file support in their branch, and from the union machinery which should have taken up their case.

The Canadian survey found a high proportion of women workers physically ill, depressed, or otherwise affected by threatened or actual sexual harassment at work, and by the pressures (such as demotion or promotion) which accompany it.

Only the guarantee of support and protection from their unions, and the strength of self-organisation in women's caucuses, can encourage women to confront sexual harassment at work, to use union complaints procedures effectively, and to put the sexists on the defensive.

FOLLOWING an Appeal Court ruling concerning the duties of nurses in non-surgical abortions, the Royal College of Nursing has issued the statement that "We are now going to advise our members that they should not take part in any abortion involving prostoglandin because they would be acting unlawfully."

"The rate of using that abortion should not be affected. It is just that the doctor is going to have to administer the drug himself".

The British Medical Association, however, has said that the ruling will have a serious effect on the availability of abortions.

The National Abortion Campaign's comment is:

"We support the nurses in their struggle for better working conditions. We hope that doctors will take back the responsibility for performing this procedure and resume their rightful role in administering the prostoglandin drug."

"We call on the Department of Health and Social Security and the Minister of Health, Gerard Vaughan, to ensure that the 7,000 women per year affected by this decision will still be able to have the abortions they need".

The case arose over a Royal College of Nursing declaration opposing the DHSS circular which advises nurses that they may take part in medically-induced

Corrie by the back door?

BY MANDY WILLIAMS

abortions. Patrick Jenkin, the DHSS Secretary of State, has now suspended the circular and is considering appeal to the House of Lords.

The RCN has been extensively lobbied by the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child and various other Catholic and anti-abortion organisations, and is being less than honest in saying that the case has no relevance to the availability of abortions.

Nurses in various fields perform (and defend their right to perform) procedures which technically should be carried out only by registered medical practitioners. NAC has pointed out that "the decision to take the abortion issue rather than any other to court is political. It is using the courts where the Corrie anti-abortion Bill failed".

But because of the insensitive and frequently punitive attitudes of many gynaecologists, doctors, and hospital administrators to women seeking abortions,

shortage of beds and unnecessary delays lead to many women requiring late abortions only because of poor NHS provision of earlier and safer methods.

Women given prostoglandin are not infrequently left in an open gynaecology ward to abort, an appalling experience for the woman, and extremely distressing to other patients and to nurses.

Prostoglandin is a labour-inducing drug used in about 7,000 abortions out of a yearly 142,000. It is safer than surgical procedures in later abortions, but can take up to 30 hours, during which time a doctor is available but not present.

Nurses are required to top up the level of prostoglandin hourly until the woman successfully aborts.

The Pregnancy Advisory Service, a charitable organisation which offers facilities for abortion, has stressed that many nurses who do support a woman's right to an abortion feel that doctors

are acting irresponsibly in leaving nurses to cope with this situation.

The legal battle continues. Meanwhile, cuts are making all abortions, but especially late ones, more difficult to obtain. Despite the defeat of the Corrie Bill, the anti-abortionists' propaganda is often quoted as 'public opinion' by doctors and others unwilling to provide or defend local facilities for abortions.

There are many ways in which women's present restricted right to abortion can be eroded: apart from cuts, many of them selectively applied, legal rulings and DHSS 'guidelines' can enforce stricter limits.

The DHSS, bowing to pressure over stories about live aborted fetuses (which its own investigation subsequently found to be untrue) made a ruling requiring hospitals where abortions were performed over 20 weeks of pregnancy to have at hand resuscitation equipment suitable for premature babies. This requirement cut the availability of late abortions.

But there is no such ruling for premature baby units, and under half of them have such equipment!

NAC is holding a forum on Saturday 29th November to discuss future campaigns. You can get details from NAC [01-278 0153]; also, contact nar.as for local groups campaigning to defend and extend facilities in their areas.

Anwar's children are her right

CLOSE ON 1,000 people marched through Rochdale on Saturday 15th November, shouting 'Here to stay, here to fight — Anwar's children are her right'.

Support for the right of Rochdale woman Anwar Ditta to bring her children to Britain came from as far away as Bristol and Dewsbury, as well as Bradford and Manchester. There

were large contingents from the Asian Youth Movement and the Indian Workers' Association.

All came with examples of other Asians being harassed and deported under the immigration laws.

In Rochdale itself Anwar is not alone. Nasreen Akhtar has been served with a deportation order because her Islamic marriage is not

recognised according to the Home Office. She has two teenage children, who are also to be deported, and a three year old child born in this country who has the right to stay here — with; out Nasreen!

The determination of Anwar and her friends is unshakable. They are intent on continuing until their children are restored to her.

Labour & women's rights

A one-day conference organised jointly by Women's Fightback and Islington Central CLP women's section, November 22, Central Library, Holloway Rd, London N7. Registration £1 from Women's Fightback, 41 Ellington St, London N7.

Gays: up against the State

by Ian Dunn (vice-chairman Edinburgh North CLP; secretary TU Gay Rights group; personal capacity)

THE STATE has been assembling sophisticated reactionary arguments to keep the gay community in its place, to divide gay against gay and pretend that homosexuality is a scientific 'condition', inferior to heterosexuality and family life.

Labour Social Democratic Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, in July 1975, asked the Criminal Law Revision Committee to review the law relating to, and penalties for, sexual offences. Over 5 years later, under a right wing Tory government, the Committee has issued its provisional views in a Working Paper (HMSO, October 1980, £3.70, 63 pages).

There are some small concessions to commonsense: it is recommended that the offence of rape is extended to all cases where a man has sexual intercourse with his wife without her consent, whatever their living arrangements; it is recommended that some consensual sex in private should be made lawful, e.g. buggery between a man and a woman (buggery between two men was legalised in 1967), some forms of incest and in some cases for the mentally ill or sub-normal.

The general tenor of the report is grudging and bit-

ingly patriarchal. There has been little or no impact of anti-sexist or gay rights liberation thinking.

It is not known how many Left Parties or Tendencies sent in reports to the Criminal Law Revision Committee: judging by past track records I guess there was a stone-wall of silence from the Left.

In our silences we connive with the State. Gay people are treated as second-class, their natural sexuality is seen as a 'practice' to be steered away from, if at all possible.

Everyone is to have an age of consent (16) but if you're gay, the recommended 'minimum age' is to be 18. The reasons cited are that the 'public must be protected' and so must youth — male youth of course!

This is a cock-centred phantasy. It quite consciously pushes homosexuality towards the edge: it marginalises gay people. It patronises women in that, for all the wrong reasons, lesbian age of consent will remain at 16.

There are several other aspects of this Working Paper which socialists interested in sexual politics should follow up and get in a submission before the closing date: April 1st, 1981.

Saunders case becomes precedent

John Saunders, working as a handyman at a Scottish residential schools camp, was sacked in 1979 because and only because he was gay. The Employment Appeals Tribunal said that 'reasonable employers' couldn't be expected to know about 'modern scientific opinion' that gays are no more or less a 'risk' with children, co-workers, or anyone else.

The judgement was used as precedent in June 1980 when a Coal Board worker, who was known to be epileptic by his employers, was deemed to have been fairly sacked after an unexpected critical attack. His doctors informed the Tribunal that new medication could keep things in hand, but the Tribunal said 'reasonable employers' couldn't be expected to know about 'modern scientific opinion', upheld the sacking as fair, and quoted Saunders as precedent.

I have checked the Tribunal's membership, and Lord Macdonald [President of Tribunals in Scotland] and James Jack [former General Secretary of the STUC] sat on both of these fateful 'courts'. It is a disgrace that a former Labour Movement leader and spokesperson should side with the State to crush workers' livelihoods by pandering to the prejudices of employers, including the Nationalised Industry employers.

The Saunders Case is being appealed to the Court of Session and will come up most likely in February 1981. Whatever the result we must demand fundamental changes to the Employment Protection Act because it no longer provides the semblance of protection to the workers it is supposed to protect.

The Labour Movement in Lothian is worried. Edinburgh Trades Council and North Edinburgh CLP have sponsored a Half-Day Conference on 'Gay Rights at

Work' on Saturday 29th November, 10.30am - 2pm. NCCL are the main speakers, and there will be contributions from the labour movement locally. If you live in Lothian and are interested to find out what the movement is doing in this important area, just turn up at Edinburgh Trades Council, Picardy Place, at 10.30am with 40p (covers room and coffee).

Labour starts discussing gay rights

The Labour Party's National Executive's Human Rights and Race Relations Subcommittee has just completed a Report, 'The Rights of Gay People'. You are urged to write to Liz Atkins, Research Officer, Labour Party HQ, 150 Walworth Rd, London SE17, and ask for a copy. The NEC has yet to approve the Report's publication and circulation to all CLPs for comment.

Please assist at CLP/Branch level by getting hold of a copy and sending your Constituency's views, etc. The Report is rather worthy in tone [left-liberal] and tends to see homosexuals as yet another poor 'minority group'. Watch that classification: gay people reject it [see 'Homosexuality - Power and Politics', Gay Left Collective].

Half-day conference on GAY RIGHTS AT WORK Sponsored by Edinburgh Trades Council and North Edinburgh CLP. 10.30am-2pm, Trades Council, Picardy Place, Edinburgh 6.

Rebirth of the ANL

The 'European Remembrance and Reconciliation Association' did not after all join the parade to the Cenotaph on Poppy Day. Their exposure in the Daily Mirror as Hitler-worshippers put an end to that. But the National Front held their march as usual — and no one was there to stop them.

by JAMES RYAN

Fascist marches which go unchallenged or which outnumber their opponents have become commonplace for the first time since the war. For while the Nazis have been growing at a disturbing rate since the Tories came to power, the anti-racist and anti-fascist movement is only now beginning to awaken.

Monday 10th November saw the relaunching of the Anti Nazi League. A rally is planned for London on 8th December, when Tony Benn and the Mayor of Bologna — where 84 people were killed in the summer by a fascist bomb — will address anti-Nazi delegates from France and Germany as well as Britain. The ANL also promises a national conference for the spring of next year to rebuild local groups.

The tone of the extreme Right's publications has become much more anti-semitic, according to ANL Press Officer Peter Hain. This is linked to the faster growth of the openly Nazi British Movement than the various brands of National Front. For it was not simply the success of the ANL's

propaganda which led to a decline in the fortunes of the fascists; more fundamental was the fact that the Tories had stolen the NF's racist clothes.

In the nature of such bigotry, anti-black feeling will never be satisfied. So the fascists are recruiting again, but in a situation where 'public opinion' has shifted to the right.

Equally important is the trend noted by the ANL's new full-time organiser, Pete Alexander, for Nazi propaganda to concentrate on economic questions and high unemployment. 'British jobs for British workers' has become their most popular slogan.

The ANL recognises that the success of the Nazis will depend in large measure on 'the scale of response to Tory government attacks on working people. If the response is muted or fragmented it will be easier for the NF to exploit feelings of powerlessness and frustration.' But we cannot afford to ignore the Nazis in the belief that their



Martin Webster's much-splintered National Front is becoming more active again, and so is the openly-Nazi British Movement

support will melt away in the heat of the anti-Tory struggle. The speed with which the NF and BM have been recruiting the youth in schools and on the football terraces must be a forcible reminder that without a continual struggle against the Nazis and their poisonous, divisive ideas the chances of building a united fightback are greatly weakened.

Anti-Nazi work must be taken up again where it has been allowed to drift. The relaunch of the ANL, and the recent national anti-racist conference held in Leamington, are welcome signs that the tide may be about to turn. What is

needed now is an open debate on the way to build a united anti-racist and anti-fascist movement, drawing on the strengths and avoiding the weaknesses, of the first period of the ANL.

We would like to hear news from your area of the current strength of the various Nazi groups, how much anti-racist and anti-fascist activity there is, and what Socialist Organiser supporters are doing to mobilise the labour movement against the Nazis. Equally valuable are your ideas on how to build a powerful anti-Nazi movement in the coming months.

Stop the Nazi British Movement!

The BM are planning to hold a national demonstration in London this coming Sunday.

Assemble 11.30 a.m. Sunday 23rd November Ladbroke Grove LT Station, West London. SO supporters are urged to attend.

As LGC 'divorces' Council NEEDED: A CAMPAIGNING PARTY

Relations between the Islington Labour Parties and the London borough's ruling Labour Group should be severed, it was decided by the Local Government Committee on October 24th.

Two years of conflict between the Council's savage cuts policy and the views of rank and file party members finally spilled beyond the bounds of inner-party lobbying procedure.

Islington was one of 13 Labour-controlled local authorities threatened by Environment Secretary Michael Heseltine in September with penalties for alleged overspending. But it took leading councillors less than five minutes to persuade Tory minister Lord Bellwin in a private meeting that the council had in fact done all that was demanded of them, adding proudly that cuts in the past two years had totalled 16 per cent. Immediate assurances were given by the government that Islington would not after all suffer penalties.

The council voted in July to sell 150 council houses, in direct opposition to local and national party policy. But it was the waiver application which finally pushed the parties to break off relations.

The apparent unity of purpose expressed by this decision masked considerable differences. Socialist Organiser supporters opposed the application for a waiver for the simple reason that cuts had to be made to qualify for the waiver. The fact that big cuts temporarily saved Islington from even bigger cuts was irrelevant. And breaking the common front with other threatened councils was downright scabbing.

But many party members were upset because the party had not been consulted before the application for a waiver was made; they freely admitted that had they been consulted, they would have supported the application.

There is also dangerous confusion over what the decision really means and what should be done now.

One option is for the party to remain closeted in smoke-filled rooms, routinely preparing a 'radical' manifesto for the next election in 1982 and seeking out candidates pledged to fulfil party policy once elected.

Socialist Organiser supporters are arguing that the parties must now take the lead in mobilising local trade unions and tenants' associations against Tory attacks. This task cannot wait until after the next council elections.

Immediate action was agreed at the last SO supporters' meeting, which heard from a representative of UCATT in the Direct Labour Organisation. The Labour Party ward in which the DLO is sited is to publicise its policies on cuts, rent and rate rises, redundancies and pay to workers in the yard. The ward supports the SO position of 'no cuts, no rent or rate increases' and has recently campaigned in support of the Right to Work Campaign, urging workers to fight unemployment by resisting all attempts to cut jobs or pay.

It was also agreed to call on the Local Government Committee to support and campaign around a

leaflet to be prepared together with the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee at the yard. DLO workers and party members will distribute this on council estates.

NALGO members have been invited to the next SO meeting to discuss joint action between the parties and the union to fight threatened cuts in social work provision. The SO bulletin — distributed in more than a dozen wards in the borough — was this month devoted to an explanation by NALGO social workers of their opposition to the cuts.

PETER KENWAY

become a SOCIALIST ORGANISER supporter

To make Socialist Organiser a real campaigning paper that can organise the left in the movement, it needs its own organised activist support — and money.

Local supporters' groups are being established in most major towns to build a real base for the paper.

Supporters are being asked to undertake to sell a minimum of 6 papers an issue and to contribute at least £1 a month (20p for unwaged). So becoming a supporter helps build our circulation and gives the paper a firmer financial base.

If you like Socialist Organiser, think it's doing a good job, but realise that it can't possibly do enough unless you help, become a card-carrying supporter.

Fill in the form below and return to: Socialist Organiser, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

I want more information ☐ / I wish to become a Socialist Organiser supporter ☐

Name
Address
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Trade Union

The Tories' housing programme

Home ownership for the rich, slums for the poor

'THE HOUSING Bill makes as profound a social revolution as any in our history... it will transform the personal prospects of millions of our citizens, offering to turn them at their wish from tenants to owners'. So said Michael Heseltine when introducing the 1980 Housing Act.

This Act, which offers the 'right to buy' to a few privileged council tenants who can afford the high interest rates on mortgages, or who aren't

beset by unemployment or fear of redundancy, is sold as 'home ownership within the reach of many for whom it would otherwise be an impossible dream'.

The stark reality, however, behind the new Housing Act and the Tories' cutbacks is that the chance of decent housing for the millions living in poor housing becomes a truly impossible dream.

DIANA MINNS reports.

Housing is to bear the brunt of public expenditure cuts — 75 per cent, in fact. National spending on housing will be slashed by 48 per cent over the next four years, from £4,700 million in 1980 to £2,790 million in 1984. The moratorium on all local authority housing programmes, imposed on October 23rd, is a sign of Heseltine's determination to cut housing to the bare bone.

The attacks come at a time when waiting lists are growing. There has been an increase of 10 per cent in local authority waiting lists since 1979. In London there have been 100,000 new applications for housing since 1978, an increase of 60 per cent over two years. In Leeds the waiting list has increased by 7,000 in just one year.

But while there has been a dramatic increase in the number of people applying for public housing, the chances of actually getting rehoused are becoming more and more remote. In one London borough, for instance, the points level for rehousing has risen so drastically that a family with two children needs to be living in one room, sharing the kitchen and bathroom with others, and have one member of the family ill, in order for them to stand any chance of rehousing.

By 1982 that same London borough reckons that it won't be rehousing anyone off the waiting list.

The long-term effects of government policies will mean fewer houses built, and properties in both the private sector and the public sector falling into decay. A recent report by the London Boroughs Association (a Conservative-controlled body!) predicts there will be a shortage of 500,000 homes over the next five years. Nationally, new-build programmes are 47 per cent lower than in 1979.

In inner cities where there is little spare land for new buildings, councils have to rely on buying old properties and rehabilita-

ting them. Money for this has been cut back and even the money that councils receive is controlled. The government dictates which houses can and cannot be bought. In the London Borough of Haringey the acquisition programme has dropped from 419 for 1979-80 to an anticipated 70 for 1980-81.

In addition the Department of the Environment scrutinises all rehabilitation schemes which go above certain very low levels of expenditure — levels set so as to bear no relation to building costs, the condition of the property, or decent rehabilitation standards. Cutting corners now will mean that converted properties will rapidly deteriorate.

Between 1970 and 1978 the number of workers employed in Direct Labour Organisations fell from 165,580 to 163,680. Five local authorities disbanded their DLOs altogether.

It is not only building workers' jobs which are at risk: there are also 86,630 white collar staff.

Even the Direct Labour Organisations' good record on training is threatened: from 1975 to 1978 the number fell from 10,025 trainees to 9,054.

After the slow decline under the Labour Government, the Tory cuts threaten to crush the Direct Labour departments.

A report by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities predicts a £14 billion repair bill to replace decaying properties in the 1990s.

Council tenants awaiting improvements to their flats or repairs can expect a long wait as local authorities scrap their estate im-

provement programmes, cut back on repairs, and continue to reduce their Direct Labour Organisations.

In Liverpool, a quarter of their 54,000 council dwellings are considered 'hard to let', that is, sub-standard. Programmes to improve these properties are being scrapped.

While the best council properties are sold off, thousands of tenants with damp, mould, insects and rats are condemned to go on suffering them. And Heseltine expects these same people to subsidise housing revenue.

For the time being his plans to force up rents by between £2.50 and £3.50 in May 1981 have been stalled by the Labour Opposition. But we can be sure that he'll raise the issue again in the next Parliamentary session, which is only a week away. And having changed the subsidy system for council rents in the 1980 Housing Act, the Secretary of State can now dictate the level of rents to be charged and penalise those Councils who charge too little rent.

In the private rented sector, shorthold tenure is being introduced, enabling a landlord to let on a fixed term from one to five years with a guarantee of getting the tenants out at the end of the lease. Private rents will be going up, as the Rent Officer will be fixing rents for a two-year period instead of three, and rent reductions will no longer be backdated to the date of application.

Controlled tenancies, which are held by elderly, long-term tenants in accommodation which lacks basic amenities such as baths or hot water, will be scrapped and 'fair rents'

More homeless

ENGLAND			
	1978	1979	
January-June	26,460	28,280	
July-December	26,650	28,470	
LONDON			
	1978	1979	
Inner London	8,620	9,350	
Outer London	5,810	7,060	



In Liverpool, 37,000 out of 54,000 council dwellings need repairs. A quarter of them are classified as 'hard to let'; 42,000 are empty, waiting for repairs to make them fit for

living in. Sheffield's repair queue has lengthened from 6 to 13 weeks over the past 18 months.

will be fixed with immediate effect. But there is no obligation on the landlord to do anything about providing amenities.

Tenants of resident landlords who already enjoy little security will no longer be able to go to the Rent Tribunal for an extension of a Notice to Quit for up to six months, but will have to go to court to argue that they should be given up to three months to find somewhere else to live.

Hostel

These proposals, which are to come into effect on November 28th, will mean a further increase in homelessness, to swell the ever-growing numbers of families living in bed and breakfast and hostel accommodation. The 1977 Homeless Persons Act makes it obligatory for local authorities to rehouse families or elderly people who are homeless. At the beginning of 1979, 31 per cent of homeless families in London were in bed and breakfast accommodation. This number had risen to 33 per cent by the end of 1979.

The housing crisis is not just about bad homes and people being forced to live in bad property. Its effects are already mirrored in the quarter of a million unemployed in the building industry. Whole sections of local government employees, from Direct Labour Organisations to cleaners, architects, surveyors, tech-

nical staff and clerical staff, are being affected as posts stand vacant. Employees of housing associations, another source of public housing, are faced with redundancies.

At present many Labour councils have declared there will be no redundancies, but unless they are prepared to take a stand against the government this time, deteriorating housing will go hand in hand with an increase in unemployment.

Right now it is necessary for all local authority unions, tenants' associations, Labour Parties and community groups, to organise together against these attacks by forcing

councils to refuse to sell council housing. Tenants should organise for 'strikes' against rent or rate increases. NALGO and UCATT should be organising together against the cuts and in defence of each others' jobs.

However, in our concern about the housing crisis, we must not forget that the last Labour government's record was miserable. Housing only seems to get discussed when things go very wrong.

While we are fighting the Tories, we must not forget the need to formulate a housing policy which gives a choice of adequate housing for all — not just those who can afford it.

A socialist policy

IN CAPITALIST society the main reason for building houses is not to provide homes for people, but to provide profits for contractors, speculators, and money lenders. Offices and luxury housing get built in preference because it is more profitable.

Council housing is fettered not only by central government restrictions but also by the huge interest charges paid to banks and financial institutions.

What we need is a united campaign to kick out the unscrupulous profiteers and bankers who live on our backs.

We need to nationalise the building industry without compensation and under

workers' control, so building is done properly and safety standards are guaranteed. This would also ensure that 'casual' employment, endemic to the building industry as long as it is geared to profits, is eliminated.

The banks and finance houses will have to be nationalised, to cut the burden of interest payments to the money lenders.

Committees of tenants, building workers and the local labour movement should organise to draw up plans for what is needed in each area and where. If enough good housing can't be built quickly enough, then the plush offices and the big houses of the rich should be taken over.

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Don't celebrate, organise!

EL FOOT has through a mud-denigration and personal abuse Tory press to decisive 10-vote victory over Healey in the election leader of the party.

by JOHN O'MAHONY

begin to look like Prentices and Tavernes, rather than a serious force to be reckoned with. Even if they can rally a dozen MPs, that is still peanuts: as a political force they are now close to being no more than a projection of the media.

The Left was therefore right to support Foot: without the pressure we generated from the constituencies Healey, who started the favourite, might well have won.

But it would be fatal for us to think that the Left has gained anything positive — other than time to organise — from Foot's election.

Now the direct right-wing offensive has been stopped, we must prepare for Foot's indirect offensive against the gains of Blackpool and Brighton.

Foot was an opponent of democratic change. He says openly that he will represent the interests of the Parliamentary Labour Party in the discussions about the details of the electoral college.

He is a conciliator, and he is faced with a clear conference decision, but he remains hostile to the spirit and intent of the Labour

conference decisions: for democracy, and he will try to neutralise them as much as possible.

He said after his election, "It is my determination to protect the right of every Labour MP to use his own judgment" (*Guardian*, Thursday 13th).

What does that mean? Conference has just armed the Labour Party rank and file with power to cut through the idea that the MP is sacrosanct. Foot is here defending the right of a Parliamentary oligarchy to act with self-serving arrogance against the rest of the labour movement, to enter the rich men's club and forget the world outside, and to do endless dirty deals with the Tories and the civil service bureaucracy, for as long as their judgment and conscience permits.

Deal

The labour movement's judgment is that this system is not tolerable and should not continue.

But Foot will wheel and deal with such as Hattersley on the non-kamikaze Right, Neil Kinnock on the soft Left, and the trade union leaders, to get the maximum proportion of the electoral college for

MPs. (Terry Duffy talks of 80%).

Foot will dress this up as part of a drive to unite the Party around a campaign against the Tories. By appealing for unity against the Tories, he will bring pressure to bear to slow down or stop the transformation now going on in the Labour Party.

Callaghan tried to play this anti-Tory card, too. But he lacked credibility. Foot, the orator, is uniquely equipped to fulfill his promise of a 'whirlwind' of protest against the Tories.

He knows about the struggles of the 'common people' that went to shape the Parliamentary system he reveres, and therefore is no fuddy-duddy about limited direct action in Parliament, like the picket that stopped the rent rises.

A mass campaign to fight the Tories at every level is long overdue, and if Foot initiates it he will be doing a great service. But it is not enough.

Foot has, perhaps rightly, been described as the first 'revivalist' Labour leader since Keir Hardie. But to be 'born again' the labour movement will need to do more than immerse itself in the floods of Foot's rhetoric. It needs to make reselection work, and to commit itself to

socialist policies for the struggle against capitalism.

If we allow anti-Tory rhetoric to lull us into a mood of reconciliation with the soft Right, then we will find ourselves robbed of our gains on Labour democracy — robbed of the means of giving a real socialist perspective to an anti-Tory campaign.

Lasts

However long he lasts, and whatever his intentions, Foot is bound to be an interim leader. Peter Jenkins, lachrymose bard of Labour's beleaguered pink Tories, probably got it right when he wrote in the *Guardian* that the Parliamentary Labour Party had voted for a continuation of the Wilson-Callaghan regime. But can such a regime continue?

The Labour Party is faced with either providing an answer to the crisis of our society that measures up to the scale of the destruction that capitalism is creating all around us, or total impasse. Foot's answer would be more of the Wilson-Callaghan medicine that prepared the way — by its failure to solve anything — for demolition-squad Toryism. Even if a 'continuation of the Wilson-

Callaghan regime' lasts until Labour is returned to office, it will then show itself impotent. What could such a Labour government do, even in the way of small reforms, to satisfy its supporters in a Britain devastated by capitalist slump? What could it do to solve unemployment?

Reselection alone, by subjecting MPs to some control or at least punishment, would have destabilised the Wilson-Callaghan government in 1974-9. It would destabilise a new Wilson-Callaghan type government under Foot. Politically Foot can only be an interim leader.

The question is, whose interim leader — ours or the Right's?

The nightmare of the Press will come true and Foot will be the Left's 'interim leader' if we drive relentlessly to put the MPs under the direct control of the labour movement, and to rearm the labour movement with a real socialist alternative to the Tories.

... if we succeed in maximising — against Foot's arguments and machinations — the CLP and union part of the votes for Labour leader,

... if we immediately go ahead and purge the list of future Labour candidates of all those MPs who supported the attempt to organise a PLP coup by foisting Healey on the labour movement — one by one, and constituency by constituency, they should be deprived of Labour's mandate so that at the next election a Parliamentary Labour Party will be returned that is a new PLP,

... if we succeed in winning the organisations of the labour movement — trade unions and Labour Party branches alike — to broad support for the politics of the Socialist Organisation platform, as the minimal basis for the pro-

gramme of a future Labour government,

... if we insist that anti-Tory rhetoric is not enough.

... if, finally, we organise the revolutionary left in the Labour Party and unions to provide a stable force which makes propaganda for serious socialist politics and organises the fight for them.

This is the work SO has set itself.

As Michael Foot launches an anti-Tory crusade, the Left must have its own proposals for what the Party must do to fight the Tories seriously:

- Launch a campaign of obstruction and filibustering in Parliament, to stop the demolition squad in their Parliamentary tracks.

- Organise rent strikes against the outrageous imposition by Heseltine. A Parliamentary protest is fine: power to stop the Tories decisively lies with the tenants.

- Support every industrial struggle against the employers or Government pay policy.

- Give full Labour Party support to Labour councils and unions defying or taking direct action against the cuts.

- An unqualified pledge to restore Tory cuts.

- A pledge by Labour to implement an immediate 35 hour week on returning to office — and to support all trade union demands for shorter hours now.

Keep

The victory of Foot over Healey will be of advantage to the Left only if we keep a clear political line against conciliation with the Right, and use the breathing space gained to educate and organise a class struggle left wing.

After Foot's victory, *Socialist Organisation's* proposal to the Left is therefore: 'Don't celebrate — organise!'



The gains of Blackpool [above] must be defended against Foot's insidious attacks as well as Healey's open assaults

ANDREW WIARD (REPORT)

FMC and the CDLM

Things which have found the Rank and File Mobilising Committee democracy is the unity it has managed for a specific very broad political views on

Agency that sup- principles of the Committee and small amount of showed to affili- Efforts were draw in group- ant not prepar- ute much to work of the mmittee.

y continues to major features ing Committee. ly, most of groups now ping sight of of non-exclus- application to the Campaign in the Labour e in the day, any rate, wel- lectively been

is a rank and in the Labour ade unions, the Workers' e, a Trotsky- a. Its leading Alan Thorn- in the fore- strug- the battles for democracy in

The reasons for refusing the CDLM are not at all clear, and have not been made explicit by the groupings — like Militant, the Labour Coordinating Committee, Clause 4, etc. who, under the Mobilising Committee's consensus system of taking decisions, have been able to block the CDLM's application.

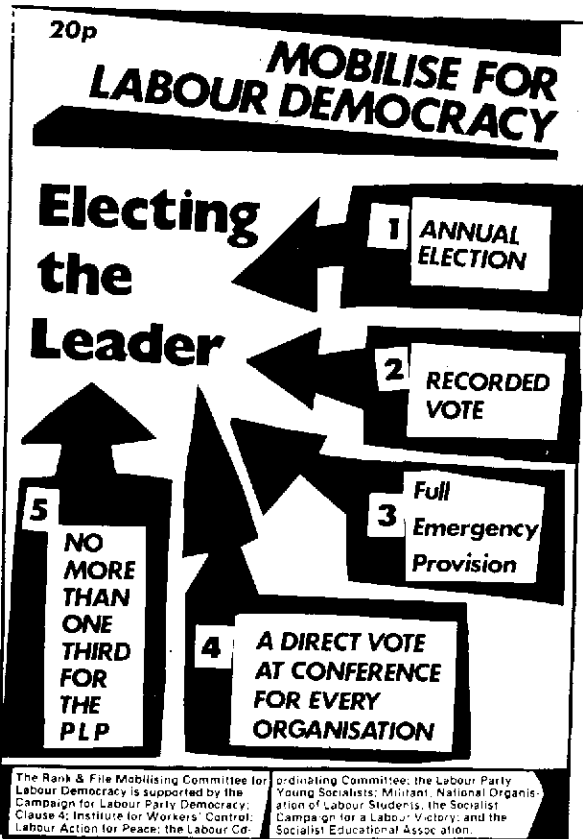
The CDLM has taken 200 copies of the Mobilising Committee broadsheet 'Never Again' — a lot more than a number of affiliates, some of them, like Militant, considerably bigger than the CDLM. It supports the aims of the Mobilising Committee.

Despite that, the CDLM has only been granted observer status at Mobilising Committee meetings. The Mobilising Committee secretary, Jon Lansman, the organiser, John Bloxam, the chairman, Reg Race, and influential members like Vladimir Derer, have all argued for full status for the CDLM — to no effect.

The matter is due to come up again in December, and it is to be hoped that the Mobilising Committee will return to the principle of broad unity.

If not, then a very bad precedent will have been set. There should be no place for bans and proscriptions in the ranks of those fighting to democratise the Labour Party.

JOHN O'MAHONY



In the new broadsheet from the Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy, articles by Tony Benn, Jo Richardson, Robin Cook, John Bloxam, Rachel Lever, Vladimir Derer, Francis Prideaux and others cover the arguments about one member one-vote, annual elections, recorded vote, and the other issues in the run-up to the January Special Conference. And in a special feature, active 20p per copy; bulk orders at the rate of 10 for £1; plus £1 postage; from 10 Park Drive, London NW11



WHY DID the BBC ban *Babylon*? They had, after all, originally intended to show it as a play, but then changed their minds.

Presumably the BBC bosses think that TV has done enough for the cause of 'race relations' with *Love Thy Neighbour*, *The Forsytes*, *Mixed Blessings*, *Empire Road*, and even *Till Death Do Us Part*.

They register a certain progress over the US-imported *Amos 'n Andy Show* that graced and disgraced TV screens in the late fifties. And Alf Garnett's Idiocy can't be more insulting to blacks than the boggle-eyed grit-throated murmurings of Jack Benny's butler, Rochester, dabbling the sweat off his face like some lunatic and overheated Jeeves. But still their aim is 'good race relations'.

Franco Rosso (who also made the documentary *Dread, Beat and Blood*) doesn't want that sort of 'good race relations' —

BABYLON INNA BRIXTON

tolerant acceptance on all sides of the racist status quo. He wants whites — he is white, as was the film's scriptwriter — and blacks to become more conscious of what is going on. He wants the audience to understand oppression and why it has to be fought.

Thus *Babylon* is too close to the bone for the BBC. It is too true, too 'hard' by far. The racist cops are too much like the Brixton bulldogs, the dereliction and despair too obvious, and the sense of strangeness, hostility, and incomprehension too stark.

The plot revolves around the Ital Lion sound system and its supporters who hope their sound will beat that of the dread Jah Shaka (a real London-based sound system) in a 'battle of sounds'. The Ital Lion toaster — its dj — is Blue (played by Brinsley Forde of the reggae group Aswad). Blue's troubles pile up till he breaks and the film is transformed from documentary to drama.

But, if the end of the film is more gripping than the detailed, often humorous observation of the long build-up, it isn't any less

real. The axes, the dogs, the blood-lust on the coppers' faces, are seen in Ladbroke Grove, in Brixton, in Dalston, in St Paul's, in Moss Side, and in Cheltenham every night.

If it was just 'documentary', without 'drama', the result (for white audiences) would inevitably be a kind of cultural voyeurism — watching young working class blacks do their thing, finding their circumstances and actions 'interesting'. Rosso avoids this while retaining a substantial core of documentary-type material.

The end, Blue's murder of a NFER, seems to have struck many in the audience as too sudden, a break from the characterisation built up in the earlier part of the film, more the kind of thing his friend Beefy would have done.

In a way that's true. But that surely is Rosso's point, a point made in scores of reggae lyrics: *Babylon is pressure and, as Toots and the Maytals put it in 'The Harder They Come', 'pressure gonna drop on you'. And then you explode.*

ANDREW HORNUNG

Labour Council sacks anti-cuts fighters

SINCE 4 November the whole staff of Manchester's Housing Department have been on strike. Eight hundred members of NUPE, NALGO and MATSA came out after ten members were sacked for following national union policy and refusing to cover for unfilled vacancies.

by NUPE Housing Branch members

The roots of the dispute lie in the decision of the Housing Committee to make expenditure cuts in line with the policy of the City Council. Included in the savings were sums due to the non-filling of vacancies as well as abolishing some jobs altogether. So far the Council has cut £120,000 more than it was required to do.

The unions were assured by the Housing Committee that they would be consulted about the Director of Housing's plan to 'restructure' the department and about the implementation of the cuts. This has never happened. Instead the Joint Consultative Committee is used by management to present policy which has already been decided, and no negotiations have taken place.

The most disturbing fact about the dispute has been the attitude of many of our Labour councillors. With the exception of a minority of 'rebels', most councillors either did not really understand what it was all about or uncritically supported what senior management told them. Many of them see their role as 'managers' rather than as 'Labour representatives', leading them to the view that the unions consist of 'mindless militants' trying to deny the Council the right to make policy decisions.

With the intransigent style of management adopted by the Director of Housing the only way to make any progress in the dispute is by negotiations directly with the Council. Many of us in the Labour Party have ensured that the

dispute has been brought up through our General Management Committees. A letter has been sent by the Strike Committee to all councillors explaining our position, and there have been a couple of meetings between councillors and the Strike Committee, so far with little success.

Last Thursday (13th) a well-attended all-Manchester NALGO branch meeting was held. A motion was put for an all-out indefinite strike, but this was defeated by an Executive proposal for a one-day token strike which will take place next Thursday (20th).

It has been left up to the individual consciences of town hall staff whether they cross the picket lines or not — but the strikers are determined to make the pickets strong.

It has also been decided by the strikers at their last mass meeting (Friday 14th) that there should be an elected strike committee to negotiate with the employers. This was a response to Piccadilly Radio announcing last week that a 'peace formula' had been agreed, when in fact it was just a NALGO full-timer acting behind the scenes with the employers.

Our conditions for a return to work are straightforward: Reinstatement of the ten sacked members and meaningful negotiations about workload and unfilled vacancies.

Messages of support and donations to the strike fund should be sent to:

NALGO Guild Office
Elliot House
Jacksons Row
Manchester

A WEEK of action — that's the latest plank in the Lambeth fightback against the cuts in public expenditure.

The idea, which has yet to receive official support from Lambeth wards and GMCs, was unveiled by council leader Ted Knight on November 9 at a report-back meeting, which discussed the 'Local Government in Crisis' conference.

The left in the borough — organised in the non-sectarian Lambeth Labour Left grouping — were active in the organisation of the Conference, and have already discussed the proposed week of action in February.

The week will consist not merely of demonstrations, but of a total shut-down of council services for the week, with similar strike action taken by the councillors, who will effectively not govern Lambeth for that week.

Lambeth Labour Left has thrown its weight behind the idea, but has also insisted that this week of action should not be seen as a distraction to the specific proposals which were democratically agreed by the massive November 1 Local Government in Crisis conference.

Specifically, these initiatives were:

- Non-cooperation with cuts, in both services and jobs.
- Organising campaigns to support any Labour council faced by commissioners or receivers after standing against the cuts.
- No use of rent or rate increases to cover cuts.
- No sale of council houses.

Cuts fight can't wait until February

Of course, while Lambeth may well be considering a week of action, we must all remember that the controlling Labour group has already decided to sell council houses, and this week the policy and resources committee discussed 'trimmings' of a quarter of a million pounds, including options such as reductions of services and curtailments on overtime.

So the emphasis must be on fighting for the commitments placed on Lambeth and every participant by the November 1 conference. When asked repeatedly at the report-back meeting, Ted Knight failed to give any specific financial proposals as to what he feels should be Lambeth's strategy for 1981.

He insists that he is going to wait until after the week of action, even though discussion on what Lambeth's budget should be will have to be rushed through if we all wait until then.

A key job of Lambeth Labour Party activists is to

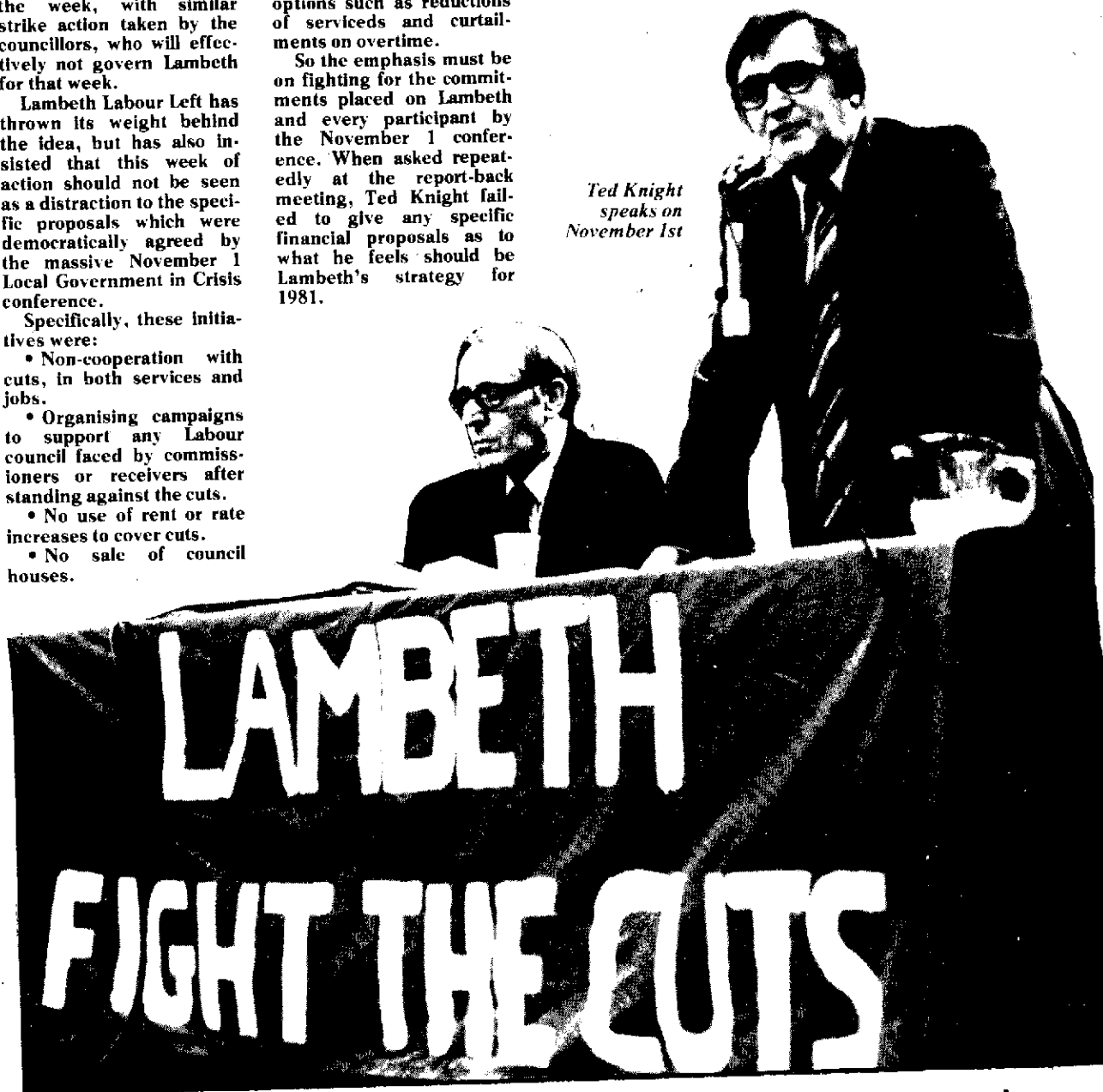
press their elected representatives at every opportunity to unveil a financial perspective for this supposed 'confrontation' against the Tories.

A steering committee has been set up following November 1, to help fulfil the pledges of that Conference, and to organise a recall conference in early 1981.

Let us hope that by that time, the councils represented on November 1, including the London Borough of Lambeth, will have moved towards the implementation of those recommendations.

If they haven't — why the hell did they help organise the Conference in the first place?

GRAHAM NORWOOD



Ted Knight speaks on November 1st

TESSA HOWLAND (JFL)

ROCHDALE: THE CAMPAIGN CONTINUES

THE LABOUR Group on Rochdale council was the first in the country to stand firm against Heseltine's instruction to sell council houses.

With a rapidly growing waiting list of over 9,000, and a further 2,500 houses scheduled for slum clearance, the Labour Party in Rochdale is convinced that dismantling the housing provision is breaking faith with the working people of the area.

Rochdale has a very high rate of infant mortality. In fact two years ago the rate was the highest in the country. Part of the reason for this is poor housing.

The Labour majority was elected on May 1st on a specific promise not to cut services and to refuse to sell council houses.

But now the Group leader has informed the media and Heseltine that although the Council has no intention of selling council houses, maybe the government would like to do it for them!

The councillors still admit that there could be an all-out fight if the issues could be explained to the working class. So the 'Save Our Services' campaign has been launched, consisting of Labour Party members and women's movement activists in Rochdale.

We have been leafletting, petitioning, and writing to voluntary bodies and the trade unions, and the response has been encouraging.

Many people began by supporting the right to buy council houses, but changed their minds when the issue was explained. And many people we interviewed in the street were very fervent about getting rid of the Tories, and pointed out that 'council houses have always been for the working class, and should remain so'.

So, for the Council's benefit, there is understanding of the issues, and there is support for the council's refusal to sell.

It looks as if the council will make a 'tactical' retreat at the Council meeting on November 19th. They claim that as Heseltine will not in fact sell the houses for them, the individual councillors will face financial penalties and surcharges.

But the 'Save our Services' group is intent on campaigning against sales or cuts in services of whatever kind, and will carry on pressing the Labour Council to stick to its promises.

SUE ARNALL

Greenwich council says: no sales



Greenwich must not be left isolated in its defiance of the Housing Act like Clay Cross was in its fight against the last Tory Government's 'Fair Rents'.

GREENWICH council, in South East London, is defying Heseltine's new law, and refusing to sell council houses.

In so doing it has become the first council (not just Labour group) to take an open stand on this issue. The urgent need now is to organise support for the Greenwich councillors' stand in the labour movement nationally and locally.

Support would be best shown by the maximum number of other Labour councils following Greenwich's lead and refusing to sell. Already Harlow council has declared that it won't sell as long as the council-house building 'moratorium' is imposed, and Rochdale Labour group has declared opposition to sales.

Michael Heseltine is not yet reeling in dismay, and in fact the Tories are likely to react very quickly. In their arsenal of weapons to use against councils like Greenwich they have the power to appoint a

Commissioner to force through the sales, and the power to surcharge not only councillors but also council officers who actively impede the sales.

So it is urgent that support be organised in a very short time — and those councils that have relied upon 'delaying' tactics (until the next general election in 1984?) must be made to change their approach.

This time we mustn't have one or two councils left to fight on their own as Clay Cross was.

Greenwich's decision, which honours a 'no sale' pledge in the last Council election manifesto, was made after the three Constituency Labour Parties in the borough had all called for defiance by large votes.

Active support for the council's stand must now be built in the local labour movement, trade unions, and tenants' organisations.

BOB SUGDEN

Miners must fight for pay AND jobs

by John Cunningham

THE PRESS says the miners have been offered 13%. In fact we have been offered £10 on basic for faceworkers and £7 for surface workers (9.8%), plus a small increase in bonus payments. It is not even enough to keep up with inflation.

And the NUM Executive's vote to recommend acceptance is the continuation of a 'campaign' for the union claim pursued with all the energy of a ruptured slug.

Because of the spineless cringing of Joe Gormless, press arguments that the claim for £100 minimum and a 4-day week is unrealistic, and 'the industry can't afford it', have carried a lot of weight with

many miners.

And so far the left-wing-ers on the NUM Executive, while opposing the Coal Board offer, have mobilised no real campaign capable of convincing miners that we can win more.

There seems to be more will for a fight on closures than on pay. But a setback on pay, without a struggle, is a bad starting point for a fight on jobs.

The immediate focus in the struggle against closure in the Yorkshire area is Orgreave colliery, just outside Sheffield.

Orgreave, South Yorkshire's oldest pit, is due to close next year. The Coal Board say there will be no job losses but nevertheless many of the men will face the prospect of moving house or a daily journey

of some 10 miles to the nearest pits like Thurgate and Dinnington.

Yorkshire NUM is backing the Orgreave men, who say there are workable reserves in the ground. At a 1000-strong rally in Barnsley on Monday 11th, Arthur Scargill stated that Yorkshire's 66,000 miners will be balloted on taking industrial action to support Orgreave. Only a few days before, men at Peckfield Colliery also received a pledge from the Yorkshire NUM Area council in their fight against closure.

Long and bitter struggles are looming. We either win, or return to the Robens era of the early '60s when thousands of jobs went down the river.

Vote no to the pay deal — and prepare to fight

NALGO stops the sales

By Mary Corbishley

MORE NALGO branches have taken action over council house sales.

In GLASGOW, the Labour City Council has decided to carry out the letter of the law in selling council houses, but as slowly as possible. Glasgow NALGO is refusing to co-operate with the processing of any applications to buy council houses.

At the moment their non-cooperation is based on the fact that the Council did not consult with the union over new work schemes and they were given no guarantee of extra staff for the new work on the sales.

Since NALGO took this decision in early October, the Housing Department members have passed a motion at their section AGM that the branch should refuse to carry out any work on council house sales on grounds of principled opposition to sales.

This stand has now been supported by the branch executive and the branch AGM on December 2nd will vote on it. Meanwhile, as Glasgow NALGO branch secretary Chris Barber told SO, they have stopped all negotiations on staffing levels until the outcome of the December meeting.

In HACKNEY, the branch as a whole has not made a decision on the question of council house sales. The branch AGM will discuss it on November 25th.

Policy

Meanwhile the housing department members have met and decided on a policy of non-cooperation, which has been backed by the branch Executive.

Unfortunately, although the majority of the housing department are refusing to process applications, one or two people are doing the work. The Valuers' Department, which is also centrally involved in sales, held a

meeting last week. The majority were opposed to non-cooperation, but the people who would actually be doing the work were in favour.

Mark Adams, a departmental steward in the housing department, told SO that a clear policy would have to be established at the branch AGM.

The NEWCASTLE NALGO branch is still going through consultation over the question of extra staffing levels to meet the increased workload. Members are refusing to work on applications for council house purchases until a satisfactory agreement is got on staffing levels, but the union has not taken a stand against sales in principle.

In CAMDEN, a NALGO branch meeting on Thursday 13th November backed the housing department's decision not to do work on selling council houses.

Camden NALGO is seeking national backing on the basis of:

1. The fact that central government has allocated no extra money to cover the work of selling council houses;

2. Camden council has

employed no additional staff for this work;

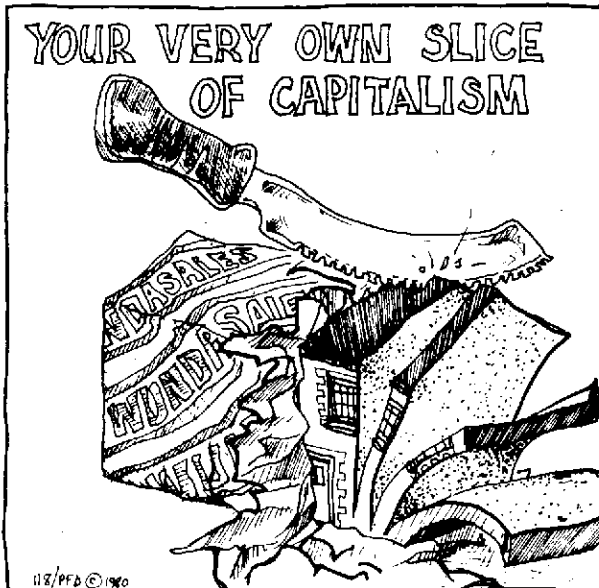
3. The policy of selling council houses represents a significant cut in service in terms of its effect on the size and standard of the council housing stock. And in the longer term it poses a direct threat to jobs.

LAMBETH NALGO has asked for official backing on the same basis. But at present the National Emergency Committee is giving official backing only to action on the basis of disputes about additional staffing.

Lambeth NALGO has asked if they will get financial support if any officers are surcharged for blocking council house sales, and they have had no reply yet.

The Emergency Committee has referred the issue of support for action against council house sales on principle to the National Executive Committee. Present NALGO policy is opposed to council house sales.

NALGO members must demand that the NEC does not leave that policy as empty words, but gives full support to action to stop the sales.



AUEW: What went wrong?

TERRY DUFFY, the right-wing candidate in the AUEW presidential election, has won by a landslide. For the first time in many years one candidate has gained an outright victory in the first ballot, beating the strongest left-wing contender, Bob Wright, by more than two-to-one.

What went wrong?

Duffy's record is appalling. He boasts of never having led a strike, he allowed Derek Robinson to be sacked, he has witch-hunted union employees, sold thousands of jobs, hijacked the union block vote at Labour Party conference, and disgraced the union's name over the Isle of Grain.

He has also built an efficient electoral machine inside and outside the union. Inside the union he has a solid block of right-wing officials, with potentially the opportunity to appoint full-time branch secretaries. Outside he has the firm support of the bosses' press.

Against this, Wright, the candidate of the Left, was unable to win. Partly this was due to the influence of the press, the undemocratic nature of the postal ballot, and Duffy's electoral machine. But the fact remains: the Left was incapable of enthusing the members with its policies.

The slump has had serious effects on the engineering industry. Order books stand at 16% below the previous slump level of 1975, and output is 9% below. This has hit militancy, with current strike figures the lowest since 1975-6, when trade union leaders were policing the

by MICK WOODS

£6 limit for the Wilson government.

The left has found itself isolated, disorganised — and lacking the policies to pull support together. The Scanlon-Wright record of left talk covering cave-in after cave-in when in power in the union also devalued the policies the Left did have.

Duffy advocates wage cuts to save jobs, while Wright calls for import controls! Better the certainties of Duffy's class collaboration than the economic mumbo-jumbo of Duffy's alternative economic strategy, many must have thought.

But there is another alternative, one that did not reach the vast majority of union members in this election campaign — and that is to fight against wage cuts and unemployment with the militant methods the Gardners workers are using.

We must fight to ensure the victory of the occupying workers of Gardners, and this also means fighting to turn the union leaders' paper support into real support, with at least a national levy.

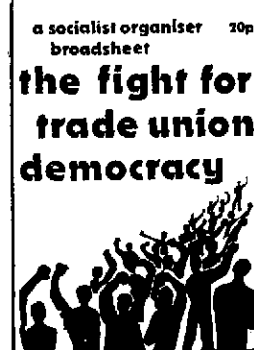
We must also carry on the struggle to organise the left and fight for rank and file control of the union, through such groups as Engineers Charter, as well

as pushing for Labour Party workplace branches.

There are thousands of individual Labour Party members in the AUEW who can be the nucleus of a viable left wing. The immediate tasks of the branches would be to inject life back into the union branches and to campaign for union workplace branches with meetings in work time to encourage participation of women workers.

In this way it should be possible to win members to our policies of work-sharing and the 35 hour week to stop redundancies, defence of wage rates, and defence of women's right to work.

AUEW members will fight for their jobs and living standards where they believe they can win, as Gardners workers have shown. We must fight to win now, or else end up with an EETPU-style rule-book and our union run by supporters of the CIA and Catholic Action.



New pamphlet from Socialist Organiser. 20p plus 10p postage, from 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

Meetings

BRISTOL Socialist Organiser group: discussion on the Alternative Economic Strategy. 8pm, Wednesday 10 December, 29 Muller Ave, Horfield, Bristol.

COVENTRY Socialist Organiser meeting: Cllr Dave Edwards (T&G convenor, Talbot Stoke) on 'The fight for trade union democracy'. 8pm, Monday 24 November, Hertford Tavern.

SHEFFIELD Rank and File Mobilising Committee meeting on democracy in the Trade Unions. 7.30pm, Monday 1st December, Station Hotel, The Wicker.

ISLINGTON Socialist Organiser group: joint meeting with Islington NALGO members on the cuts. Thursday 20th November, 8.30pm. Details of venue: phone 607 5268.

HACKNEY Socialist Organiser group: discussion on Labour's January conference. 8pm, Monday 24th November; for details of venue phone Nigel Richards, 802 4747.

NEWHAM/LEYTONSTONE Socialist Organiser group meeting: John O'Mahony on Ireland. 8pm, Tuesday 25th November; details of venue, phone Mike Foley, 555 9957.

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43 Candlemaker Row. Open 10-6 Mon-Sat, 031-225 2612. Browsers welcome.

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 rent and rates.

★ Scrap all immigration controls. Race is not a problem; racism is. The labour movement must mobilise to drive the fascists off the streets.

★ Purge racists from positions in the labour movement. Organise full support for black self-defence.

★ 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 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 crumbs from the tables 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 programme. Socialist Organiser supporters' groups are being organised in many towns and cities.

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

Women organise in Eccles

by LINDA YOUNG

LAST MONDAY, 17th, after a Gardners Support Committee meeting in Eccles, I spoke to Jackie Adams, whose husband, Stuart Adams, is on the Gardners strike committee.

Jackie told me that she used to have nothing to do with politics, but now all that's changed. Along with several other women, she has set up the Eccles Support Committee.

The support committee is concerned that the women who work at Gardners

and the wives of men in the occupation are not being sufficiently involved. They suggest that in the regular mailings a specific letter should be sent out to the wives of the strikers, informing them of events the support committee has organised, like the kids' Christmas Party on December 3rd or the women's contingent on the Liverpool unemployment march, which women from Gardners will be marching on.

Jackie reckons now that she'd be the one who would be more determined to see the strike through to the very end if her husband

was showing signs of defeat.

The effect of the Gardners occupation has spread into her own workplace. She works in a local Bingo Hall, and discovered that a load of King Henry's pies had been delivered.

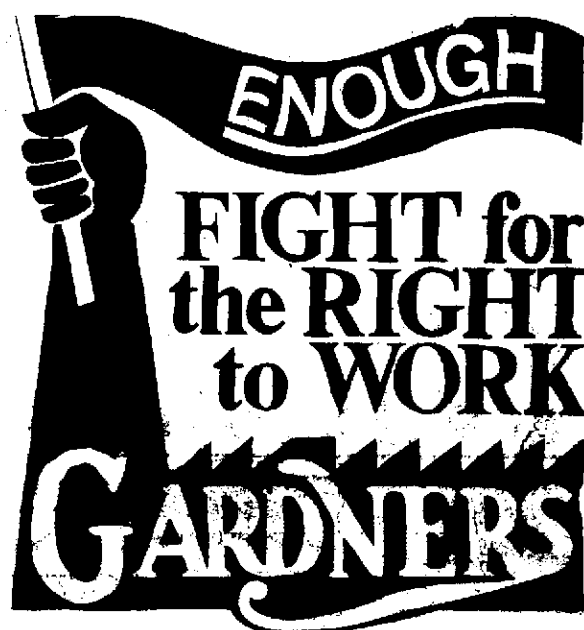
Jackie went straight to the microphone and warned everybody that the pies were King Henry's. Nobody bought any of them.

The management were furious but dared not do anything. So they just told Jackie that they were making an 'exception' by 'allowing her to stay on'.

They're terrified of her getting to the microphone to make announcements about the occupation.

Something has to be done about the Tories and unemployment. Jackie says, and the support committee is there to make sure that the women get involved.

The delegations group of the strike committee is being approached to send a speaker to the Fightback conference on November 22nd. And Jackie says that if they don't send a woman then she'll come down herself.



Not just official support - but REAL support

by John Douglas

THE occupation to stop 590 sackings at Gardners in Eccles has the official support of the AUEW - but that's not enough.

The Gardners Joint Shop Stewards Committee are travelling up and down the country trying to get support, because they realise very

well that 'official' support can be very slow in coming - or only exist on paper.

For instance, the AUEW members get strike pay at their branches, and some outlying branches have not received the official instruction to pay it - three weeks after the dispute has been made official.

The Manchester district

AUEW has just agreed to levy members in its area - but there is still no national levy for Gardners.

ASTMS members are getting support from their own area, but they have to ask for official permission to approach other areas for support.

The limits of official support were shown clearly when four of the strikers

visited Oxford recently. At BL Cowley the management were allowed to frog-march the Gardners workers off the site.

The Gardners workers then addressed the students at the labour movement college, Ruskin, who had collected around £100 for them. The Board of Governors, which mostly consists of union general secretaries,

regional secretaries, and other full-time functionaries, was meeting in another room.

When their meeting broke up, the Governors were invited to attend the Gardners meeting. Not one of them turned up.

So 'official' support through 'official' channels is plainly not enough. And

2,500 Gardners workers have not got the time until the AUEW leaders find their consciences. They need support and they need it now.

It should be the duty of all activists who are prepared to take on the bosses to rally round Gardners and set up support committees where they can, to make sure Gardners get the cash and any other assistance they need.

Firemen: United in disgust and fury

Glasgow firemen told SO:

Our reaction is disgust and fury in the same breath. After the last strike three years ago, we assumed we would be in the upper quartile of male manual workers' earnings. That's what we've got comparability with - not with inflation, not with public sector workers, but with male manual workers in the private sector. And that means 18%.

In our eyes it's a complete reversal. Three years ago Thatcher said that the Labour government should pay up and avoid a public service like us having to go out on strike. And just before the General Election William Whitelaw wrote back to one of his constituents saying that he would honour the agreement to the full. His letter was pinned up in fire stations all over Kent.

Mass meetings of our members in Glasgow are being held next week, and there's the recall conference coming up. But all

this is only a formality. I don't know if we were united before, but we certainly are now. We all feel disgust and anger at what the government is saying, and we're certainly not going to just lie down and take it.

People don't want to go on strike, but we will. We don't take pleasure in seeing places not having adequate fire cover. Last time the government used troops and the media gave the impression they could cope - but they couldn't, certainly not here in Glasgow. We don't see ourselves as a special case, and we're responsible people. But we've got wives, relatives and friends, and we suffered long and hard for nine weeks in the last strike to get up to a more realistic level of pay.

As of midday today, all NAFO [National Association of Fire Officers] members in Strathclyde are working to rule. It's a move that we welcome, and we'll welcome any further action they take. It'll be a big help for us if they don't help the troops like last time.



BURN THE 6pc

CPSA leaders duck out

by STEPHEN CORBISHLEY

ACTING LIKE stage generals, the Council of Civil Service Unions (covering the nine non-industrial civil service unions) is calling on its troops to take action against Thatcher's 6 per cent limit - but only to attend rallies from 3 o'clock onwards in the week beginning 24th November.

If the rallies are to be any use, the Left will have to fight in them for a policy quite different from the union leaders'.

The union leaders are taking legal action to get hold of the information produced by the Pay Research Unit comparison study, which the Tories have suppressed.

Yet CPSA general secretary Ken Thomas, in his circular to all CPSA members, makes it clear that if there is going to be any action in the New Year, it will be about getting the 'going rate'. So even the PRU figures, widely thought to point to rises of between 12 and 20%, are too adventurous for him!

The only function of the legal action is to undermine those militants who want to organise a fight starting now.

In the pay rallies, only senior full-time officials will speak from the platform, and quite likely no rank and file members will be allowed to speak from the floor.

So what will the bureaucrats' next move be? The possibility of a deal with the Government is ruled out - so the stage generals will inevitably organise a retreat - decorated by a series of token actions.

Unfortunately the Left in the civil service unions is not well organised. The 200-strong CPSA Broad Left national conference failed to adopt a policy based on fighting for no less than what is needed to defend living standards, and instead accepted a motion pushed by Militant that commits the left to a defensive campaign.

But now, along with building a fight in the workplace against the 6 per cent which starts with supporting the firemen, militants must push for joint action with other public sector unions.

This means not only defending living standards, but also trying to build local public sector alliances, which should take on the job of pushing the leadership into action - or pushing them out of the way.

The Tories' wage cut

BRIEFING

PRICES are currently about 16% up on a year ago. The Tories claim that next year prices will rise about 11%.

They may be right. The slump is holding prices back, and import prices have dropped. But we would be foolish to rely on it.

In any case, a 6% limit on pay rises means a serious cut in real wages.

To maintain real wages in face of 11% inflation we need more than 11% pay rises, because usually a bigger proportion of any increase than

of the original wage goes in taxes.

On average, workers need about 14% pay rise to keep up with 11% inflation, or 20% to keep up with 16%. The problem is often much worse for low paid workers - like the majority of public service workers. Against any pay rise they have to offset not only increased taxes but also the loss of means-tested benefits.

Up to £80 a week, a pay rise can actually leave workers worse off - with less money after paying taxes, rent and rates and receiving benefits due. To take a less extreme example: a 3-child family on £81 would need a 32% pay rise (to £107) in

order to get a 16% rise (£68 to £79) in money-in-the-pocket.

Figures like this are part of the case for a legal minimum wage, an end to means tests on benefits, and automatic month-by-month inflation-proofing in wage agreements. But for now public service workers face a cut in real wages of at least 6%, perhaps 10% or 15% for many of them.

The Tories have not formally announced a 6% limit. They have just said that the cash limits for councils will be based on a 6% pay rise. In theory the councils could finance a bigger pay increase by staff cuts and rate rises, but any extra would be very

little given that the government is budgeting for 7.7% cuts in council spending next year anyway.

In the civil service, the Government has said that it will refuse to recognise the established pay-comparability system, and pay only 6 to 8%, or even less. It looks like they will impose a similar limit on nationalised industries, too.

The firemen were due 18.8% on November 7, under the deal agreed after the 1977-8 strike which pegged their pay to the top 25% of manual workers. They have taken industrial action because that deal has been ripped up.

The council manual work-

ers' settlement date was due from November 5. NUPE is demanding a 'substantial increase' on the basic rate of £54.40. Health service ancillaries, who normally get the same rise as council workers, come up next month. The council white collar workers' union (NALGO) is waiting for an employers' response to an arbitrators' recommendation of 13% from last July and 2% from next April - to settle the claim put in for July.

Water workers, perhaps the strongest group of local authority workers, want £20 and an hour off the week this winter. The civil service workers' settlement date is in

April.

Meanwhile the police have got 21% and MPs, 24%. The banks are turning in record profits. The Vestys and other tax-dodgers get away with about £3.5 billion a year, perhaps more. (That's about £17.50 a week for each of the 4 million public sector workers).

Over £50 a week for each of those 4 million workers is spent on weapons of war.

Lots of top managers get over £100,000 a year, plus growing extras in fringe benefits. And the productive power of more than two million would-be workers goes to waste as Tory policies kill jobs.

It's the same the whole world over

IT'S not just BL that's cutting production and sacking workers. Across the capitalist world, car producers are facing the worst crisis since the sharp oil price rises of 1974.

In the US car sales in June were 30% down on the previous year.

Ford US, Chrysler, and General Motors have all declared large losses. Over 180,000 car workers are laid off, and in Detroit adult unemployment is over 20%.

In Europe, Fiat is planning to reduce production by 30% and start laying workers off. Peugeot's production has fallen by 12%.

The car industry is always hit hard by a general recession, but government austerity programmes in Britain and the US have cut the market for cars even further. At the moment it is also suffering because of higher oil prices, caused by the effects of the cut in production from Iran.

Only the Japanese car industry is managing to keep its head above water, by boosting exports to the US and Europe (even in Japan, the domestic market has contracted in the last year). Japanese cars now have a 26% market share in the US.

There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the American manufacturers were slow to start producing cars which used less petrol. More importantly, the Japanese car industry has both a higher level of 'productivity' (for which read rate of exploitation) and a higher level of investment. At the moment, Japanese car workers are working 20% overtime, but Japanese car manufacturers are introducing robots and automating their plants.

To compete with the Japanese, other countries' car firms are squeezing their workers, through lay-offs, sackings, cuts in real wages, and speed-up.

For example, Fiat workers in Turin, who struck against lay-offs in October were forced to accept a sell-out engineered by their leaders which gives man-

Bruce Robinson on the CARS CRISIS

agement back a great degree of control over the workforce. At Ford (UK), the management has succeeded in imposing a new strict disciplinary code, while BL's miserable pay offer is accompanied by a threat to close if a strike occurs.

But to compete more is needed than a defeated workforce and low wages. Each manufacturer has to aim for a bigger slice of the market, and to do so it must invest in new plant and technology. The manufacturers have to do this at a time when profits are non-existent — and to the extent that they do invest, they are collectively building up capacity which will drag the industry down into another slump sooner or later.

The worst-off car firms have to turn to the state for support. Chrysler US was only saved from bankruptcy by \$1.5 billion guarantees from the government. BL would not have been able to build the plant needed for the Metro from the funds generated by its falling sales, and Edwardes does not believe that BL will stop losing money until 1983-4. Continued production will depend on government money, which will in turn be tied to more and more attacks on the workers.

A partial alternative to direct competition with the Japanese is a rationalisation based on getting funds from the Japanese car manufacturers for joint production. BL is already planning to produce a car with Honda, and Ford (US) and Alfa-Romco in Italy are both talking to Toyota about joint production. Other Japanese firms are considering setting up their own

plants in the US. These would allow them to avoid any quotas or import controls.

It's not just in Britain that workers are joining with their bosses in the clamour for import controls. In the USA, the United Auto Workers have been running a joint campaign with that great defender of working class interests, Ford, to restrict Japanese imports. Japanese cars have been smashed up on the streets in Detroit.

Such campaigns merely create the illusion that there is a real mutual interest between the workers and the bosses. In anything but the very short run, they would not go any way to solving the crisis in the car industry unless accompanied by attacks on the living standards and jobs of the workers who had fought for them.

The car bosses across the

world are desperate to increase profits, or at least cut their losses. We must insist that the workers — whether in the US, Japan, Britain or Europe — do not pay the price for the bosses' chaos. To be effective against an international onslaught, we need international links between trade unionists in different countries. We need to fight for a united policy of:

- Opposition to redundancies. Work-sharing under workers' control with no loss of pay. Occupations to prevent sackings or closures. Refusal to accept work transferred from other countries, and blacking during strikes.

- Opposition to rationalisation and speed-up.

- Opposition to nationalist solutions such as import controls which only divide workers along national boundaries.

- Nationalisation of car and components industries, and their restructuring under workers' control with no loss of jobs.

- International link-ups between car workers.

Only by a united fight for such policies can we develop an adequate response to the depth of the crisis in the car industry internationally.

CLAMPDOWN AT FORD

"THE Company therefore intends to discipline strikers who stop work unconstitutionally".

With these words, Ford bosses announced their intention to implement a new attack on shop floor rights on Monday, November 17th. 'Unconstitutional strikers' will now be locked out "until they are prepared to work normally" — and the same will happen to other workers who refuse to scab. "Innocent" plants are also threatened with lay-offs.

With Ford insisting that workers should get a single figure wage increase and no more in the present negotiations, the new

attack is part of a drive to continue 'building vehicles at low cost' in the jungle of capitalist competition. It is particularly aimed at the Halewood plant, where there has been militant resistance to the bosses' attempts to attack conditions along with the introduction of the new Escort.

Ford workers must not allow Halewood to be isolated. There should be an immediate national shop stewards conference to organise company-wide strike action for 20% and a 35 hour week, and to force Ford to withdraw their lock-out proposals.

JOHN BLOXAM

Sell-out at Leyland

IT'S LESS than three weeks since we voted overwhelmingly to reject the 6.8% insult. Over the whole company the vote was 2:1 for rejection — and everyone expected that to mean a strike for our £17 wage claim.

So what's changed since the last mass meeting? Not the basic offer — that's still exactly the same. Not the principle of the bonus scheme (the only 'concession' on that is an agreement to guarantee 12 weeks at £1.25 a week!)

No — all that's changed is that the union officials (plus most of the senior stewards) have given in to Edwardes' blackmail at a series of secret meetings and overruled the mass meetings without any consultation with the membership whatsoever.

Oh yes — one other thing has changed since the last mass meeting:

THE VOTE at Longbridge was about 50-50, so far as anyone could see. But the Communist Party-led Works Committee, having already flouted the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee decision by recommending that the workers accept BL's 6.8% poverty package, had no hesitation in declaring the offer accepted.

And so the BL workers' efforts to rebel against Michael Edwardes' attacks on wages and conditions were finally defeated — thanks to the direct betrayal or nerveless bungling of the full time officials and the convenors. The Tories' efforts to impose a 6% pay limit on public service workers have got a big boost.

But Edwardes and the union bureaucrats have been given a warning — despite all the defeats at BL, there is a continuing will to fight which sooner or later, if the socialist militants in BL organise effectively, will break through the bureaucratic sabotage.

The Socialist Organiser bulletin distributed at the Longbridge mass meeting on Tuesday 18th November outlined the issues.

Michael Heseltine has announced a £3 increase in council house rent, which would more than wipe out the 6.8% all by itself.

SELL-OUT OF THE CENTURY

After the last round of mass meetings voted 2:1 to reject, the senior stewards met and gave five days notice of strike action. But instead of preparation for a strike, what then happened was a series of secret meetings between the Company and the union general secretaries, frantically seeking a sell-out deal.

The General Secretaries 'sold' their deal to the Joint Negotiating Committee, who in turn 'sold' it to the senior stewards' conference. So, on the basis of accepting the 6.8% plus a promise of 'meaningful talks' with BL about the bonus scheme, the senior stewards called off the strike.

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Let's be clear, none of these people have any right to overturn the decision of the mass meetings. The officials and General Secretaries don't work at Leyland and don't have to live on our wages. David Bassett of the GMWC, for instance, only has 25 members in the whole of BL (and they'll all lose their jobs at the end of the month when Abingdon closes!), and yet he was centrally involved in the negotiations!

The senior stewards' conference is notoriously unrepresentative. Convenors representing several thousand production workers can be outvoted by craft union convenors representing a few hundred or even less. We must tell these people: you have no right to accept the 6.8% or to call off the strike.

THE NEXT STEP

It's all very well blaming the officials, the senior stewards, or anyone else, but what are we going to do about it now? What we need is a delegate conference, with delegates elected from the shop floor to control wage negotiations,

draw up our claim and elect a negotiating committee.

The figure of 250 members per delegate has been suggested, which would allow delegates to be directly accountable to the shop floor, and would mean that the number of delegates from any union would be in proportion to the number of members they have in the plants.

Resolutions of no confidence in the LCJNC and demanding a delegate conference have been passed by Longbridge and Cowley Joint Shop Stewards Committees and by mass meetings at Cowley and Rover Solihull. If the proposal is not to be discussed in committees and then forgotten, the first thing we need is a vote to reject the 6.8% today. If we accept the offer, the LCJNC can say "the membership supports us", and we'll never get rid of them.

The other thing we need is some action to get such a body off the ground now. Longbridge and Cowley Joint Shop Stewards should organise the election of delegates now and urge all other BL plants to do the same.

On that basis we can get a strike off the ground and ensure that it is not sold out by people who don't represent us and who we have no control over.

YES, WE CAN WIN

The choice is clear: either we back the Longbridge Joint Shop Stewards Committee and vote to reject the 6.8%, or we accept the 10% wage cut and probably the same for years to come. Cowley voted almost unanimously for a strike, and together with them we can shut down BL Cars.

The T&G promised official support when the 5-day notice of strike action was given by the senior stewards. They must be held to that.

There is no choice. Reject the 6.8% and prepare to strike.

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SOUTH-WEST LONDON. Gerry Byrne, 11 Farlington Place, SW15.

TOWER HAMLETS. c/o 5 Stamford Hill, N16.

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Socialist Organiser

H BLOCK IS HELL BLOCK

BY STEPHEN SULZMAN

"EVERYTHING goes up your bum. The lads are circling around so that the screws don't see the priest slipping us the cigarette box. We roll up the fags in our hands and cram the tobacco into a biro casing. Then one of your mates comes behind you and you bend down and up it goes."

The lads make sure that it's well up so nothing will show when the screws search us after Mass. It's amazing what fits up there — one fellow brought out three pencils that way and another hid a pen, a comb and a lighter. You don't feel it unless the casing it too long, but you do bleed all the time and sometimes pieces of flesh come off."

This is the degradation of H Block. This is the life of the men and women who refuse prison clothes as part of their protest to demand political status. It is the defiance of those destitute of all weapons but their own ingenuity, will-power and dedication.

Jo Maguire went on to talk about the millions of little white maggots in the cells: "You wake up with them in your hair and in your nose and ears. You lift up the mattress and they are crawling under it."



To most people, the fact that hundreds of prisoners are prepared to endure this hellish nightmare proves that these men are not common criminals. Yet that is just what the British state insists they are.

Special Category status was granted to Republican prisoners in 1972 in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday and the fall of Stormont.

What was conceded to the Republicans (and later to Loyalist prisoners) were five points:

1. The right to wear their own clothes.
2. The right to abstain from penal labour.
3. The right to free association within one's own prison area.
4. The right to educational and recreational facilities.
5. Remission restored.

Over the next few years, the British tried several tacks to solve the Northern Ireland situation. But the proposals of the Sunningdale talks collapsed before

the force of the Ulster Workers' Council strike. Again there were talks between Republican and British (now Labour) leaders, leading to the setting up of Incident Centres, and a second truce. Finally, by November 1975, Britain decided to end the softly-softly approach and simply go for the kill.

Long before that, though, in December 1972, Parliament was presented with the Diplock Report. Britain's hard-faced counterpart to Special Category status.

need to be an English bourgeois to say it — "conventional cellular accommodation".



Above all, however, Gardiner insisted that the Special Category status should end. The fact that the government was now in Labour's hands made not the slightest difference: the Labour leaders sent the troops in, now

and throw their shit out through the windows. What they threw out, the warders threw back in.

Soon the protest escalated and the prisoners began smearing their own excrement over the cell walls both to keep some room on the concrete floor clean — after all, there was no furniture, mattress or reading material throughout the day, and only a bare mattress at night — and to darken the walls and cut down on the dazzling light.

Now over 500 are on the



The Diplock Report, presented in December 1972, introduced a whole new court system to try "terrorists".

Diplock started a real conveyor-belt of convicts. Ninety four per cent of Diplock cases have resulted in conviction. Between 70% and 90% of convictions are on the basis wholly or mainly of self-incriminating confessions.



But Diplock was only a sampler. It was followed by the Gardiner Report. By the time that was commissioned the N.I. prison population had risen from 727 in 1968 to 2,848 in 1975. Gardiner pointed to the lack of control by the authorities in the prison compounds of Long Kesh and Magilligan and the need for — you

they decided to deny the victims of their policies political status.

Of course, it made no sense. It was just another act of oppression, another capitulation to the Orange bigots and the British bourgeoisie. On the one hand Britain claimed the IRA were "terrorists" (for whom there were special courts and a special act), while on the other hand there was nothing special about them at all.

It was to assert this simple fact — that the Republican prisoners are political prisoners — not common criminals — that on September 15th 1976 Keiran Nugent went on the blanket. The warders soon retaliated, not only with abuse and beatings, but also by not letting the prisoners empty the cell chamber pots. Soon these following Nugent's lead had to pour their piss out through the cell spy-holes

blanket, supported by a partial 'dirty' strike by the Republican women prisoners in Armagh, who have just decided to join the seven men on their hunger strike.



No one should doubt that the IRA prisoners will fast till death if the authorities don't give in. Their courage and solidarity, their determination and self-sacrifice in the cause of a free Ireland cannot be doubted.

That makes them very uncommon "criminals" indeed.

The real criminals in Ireland are the British. The sooner they get out the better.

Insist on political status for the prisoners! Fight to get Britain out of Ireland now!

CRACKDOWN IN IRAN

AS WE go to press Tehran Radio has announced that Mohammad Reza Sa'adati, a leading member of the People's Mujahedeen Organisation of Iran, has been sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment on a charge of spying.

At the semi-secret trial, which came after more than 18 months illegal detention and was open only to a few hand-picked journalists, Sa'adati had to defend himself.

The reactionaries who rule

now in Iran are out to get the Left. At present their main target is the PMOI. With the verdict on Sa'adati came the statement that while the Mujahedeen were anti-US, they were not anti-USSR and that consequently they did not fit in with the line of the Imam and the Islamic Republic. The PMOI's leaders have been declared outlaws.

Meanwhile hundreds of arrests have been carried out against leftists, the PMOI

having had 170 militants arrested in Khuzestan alone, many having been pulled out of trenches and from the front line where they have been organising defence and supply committees.

We urge all socialists to send telegrams to the Chief Prosecutor of Iran in Tehran, demanding the release of Sa'adati and an end to the repression against the Left.

'We turn, therefore, to our ally, the working class in England'

THE unprecedented brutality and torture inflicted on the political prisoners in Armagh Gaol and in the H-Blocks has stripped the veneer of normality and respectability from the Northern Ireland statelet, once more exposing the naked face of sectarian hatred, state terror and military oppression, the face of British imperialism and its shadow of loyalist fanaticism.

Despite the long expectation of a hunger strike in the H-Blocks or Armagh, the reality has shocked us into a renewed awareness of the vicious conditions which have forced seven Irish Republicans to take this drastic step.

4 1/2 years of deprivation and suffering, nakedness, isolation, beatings, semi-starvation, living in dirt and filth, a soaked mattress their only furniture; 4 1/2 years of total denial of all rights and human necessities: all this as a direct result of their refusal to accept the Brit policy of criminalisation and their demand to be treated in the same way as their comrades here in the Cages of Long Kesh, where political status and recognition still exists for 200 Republican prisoners.

The only difference between the comrades in the Cages and those in the H-Blocks and Armagh is their date of capture, an unbelievably illogical basis for calling the former political and the latter criminal. But, of course, it is not the intention of the Brit Government to be logical but rather to defeat the anti-imperialist movement, and in so doing insure their interests in Ireland.

They have attempted to brand the struggle for national liberation and socialism as a criminal plot, through the medium of the prisoners. Our sisters in Armagh and our brothers in the H-Blocks have, by their heroic resistance, exposed this fallacy.

The hunger strike has been greeted by total support and solidarity within the Republican working class ghettos. Even the

middle class nationalists have been forced, in the face of mass mobilisation, to voice their disagreement with the Brit Government on this issue. The Loyalists, on the other hand, have united to back the stance of the right-wing Thatcher Government.

The Republican working class has been, for the past 12 years, in open and active opposition to the British administration, so alone, and even with the mass agitation on the streets of Belfast and Derry, we cannot hope to save the lives of our comrades on hunger strike. British Governments are not inclined to listen to the wishes of the Irish people.

We turn therefore to our ally, the working class in England, who do have the political power to force the Tories to stop their torture of political prisoners. This common resistance to the criminalisation of the national liberation struggle in Ireland will greatly increase the unity of the working class in our opposition to imperialism.

With the assassination of Republican leaders by SAS and Loyalist terror gangs, open British Army intimidation in the ghettos and self-censorship of the media, which has greatly increased as a result of the contrived Loyalist hysteria, we appeal to the working class in the less dangerous (at least at present) arena of England to act, in any way you see fit, to save the lives of our seven comrades dying on hunger strike, and to end the torture of our 32 sisters on protest in Armagh Gaol and our 530 brothers in the H-Blocks.

Already the feminist movement in England has shown the lead in their direct involvement in the protests outside Armagh Gaol. Together we can show the Tories that their imperialist chauvinism will not destroy the unity of revolutionary socialism.

Victory to the political prisoners. On to the Socialist Republic.

In solidarity,
The Republican PoWs,
The Cages, Long Kesh.

Correction

★ The article on 'The H-Block Conveyor Belt' in the last SO said: "Under the Emergency Provisions Act anyone whom the RUC believe is a member of the IRA can be held for up to 18 months".

This compressed statement could be misleading. The facts are these: under the EPA, it is very difficult for people charged with 'terrorist offences' — like, for

example, being a member of the IRA — to get bail. Also, cases often take a very long time to come to trial.

Thus people can be held in jail 'on remand' for 18 months or more — and then they may have all the charges against them dropped.

In this way the remand system can have the same effect as the internment without trial in operation between 1971 and 1976.