

Socialist Organiser

December 6, 1980

Claimants and strikers 10p

KICK THE TORIES OUT!

Russia, Hands off Poland see page 10

As the capitalist world seeks deeper into slump, the British people are being deliberately sacrificed in the interests of monetarism at home and militarism abroad.

Mrs Thatcher is determined to rule by fear in the hope that she can break the power of the labour movement and drive us all back into a new serfdom enforced by the police and the army.

It is a wicked and immoral policy and we will not allow it to succeed...

The Labour Party must become a mass party again. Our objectives are:

- To halt Ministers in their tracks by the strength of our response.

- To compel an early election at which the British people can dismiss the Government from office.

- To prepared workmanlike reconstruction plans now.

• To win support for those socialist policies in a constructive way.

And Eric Heffer declared:

Despite the cuts in public expenditure, despite the growth of unemployment to well over 2 million, despite the factory closures and short time working, Sir Keith Joseph is reported as saying that the Government have not cut public expenditure enough.

Labour, however, when it gets office next time, must not play around with unemployment. What is required to deal with the problem are good radical Socialist measures.

The next Labour government must not go down in history as another one that tried to administer capitalism better than a Tory capitalist government, but as one that began the rebuilding of British industry along Socialist lines.

ed about "destroying the party of unemployment, the government of unemployment".

Gardnars workers were there, fresh from a victory against sacking threats won by occupying their factory. And firemen were there, determined to win their fight for pay and against cuts in jobs and fire

protection.

Now we must make sure that the Liverpool march is followed up, not just left as a one-off protest. Direct action, like at Gardners, must halt the cuts and sackings. All-out defiance by all sections of the labour movement must bring the Tories down. And a

struggle to restructure and reorient the labour movement must prepare the way for the working class to make sure that the government which replaces the Tories is under its control and serves its interests.

★ More on the jobs fight-back: centre pages.

Support the hunger strikers

- ★ Seven men in Long Kesh and three women in Armagh are hunger-striking until they win political status — or die.
- ★ March to support them: 1pm, Saturday 7 December, Speakers' Corner, London.
- ★ Meeting: 7.45, Friday 12 December, Camden Centre, Bidborough St, London. Organised by Socialist Organiser and Socialist Press.
- ★ See inside: page 3.

ANDREW WARD (REPORT)



Now...the 100 lies a week journalist

LONDON'S only evening paper, The New Standard, fired the first shot in its propaganda war against local authority manual workers when it splashed its "£14,000 a year caretaker" story over the front page.

A week later came the second salvo, "Now...the £465-a-week councilman". Then we got: "Enter the £317 a week plumber". This is all part of the New Standard's fight to push public support away from the local authority workers before the battle starts over their pay claim.

Of course, the New Standard only knocks Labour councils. In the case of the "£269 a week school caretaker", the council concerned was Haringey, and the article appeared two days before an important by-election there... so convenient, it was just in time to be reproduced and turned into a leaflet for Tory candidate Len Jackson.

The fact is, however, that the Haringey caretakers are paid according to a London-wide agreement reached on the GLJC, a body on which the Tories have a majority.

And why not earn £14,000 anywa... particularly if you're working until after midnight several nights a week. Up early in the morning, caretakers work their normal hours and then often have to run the schools and community centres in the evenings.

But if the journalists on the New Standard think a caretaker's pay is so outrageous, let them not be jealous. They need only write off for the caretaker's job which Haringey council is advertising at St Paul's and All Hallows School. Pay is £88.17 a week. Journalists may apply... if they can afford it.

PARLIAMENT was in uproar last week when it was discovered that the Tories were trying to slip through a big rise in employers' National Insurance contributions.

Labour MPs complained that they were being kept in the dark — they only found out about the rise because of information in a written

answer. But Tory MPs had not been told either.

Did the Cabinet keep its own loyal lapdogs in the dark? Apparently not. It is widely suspected that the Cabinet didn't know the facts either.

Did mum's-the-word Maggie deceive the dogs? Apparently not. The Guardian reports, "It appeared that even the Prime Minister had been unaware of the additional burden".

Maybe then the Chancellor was hoodwinking the hounds. It seems not. Again the Guardian: "It seemed possible that Sir Geoffrey himself had been unaware of the changes in National Insurance Contributions".

So who did know? Surely not the Queen and her corgis! Answer: The Treasury. Part of the main force of state mandarins who ensure that the capitalists get the government they need whatever the results of the elections.

So much for 'Parliamentary sovereignty'. In reality it is little more than a mask behind which the real face of capitalism can hide its hideous features, little more than a carnival costume for the dictatorship of the capitalist class.

CAPITALISM is full of purely formal rights which you only ever get if you have plenty of muscle or pots of money.

Take the case of Dr Kundurty Surma, a surgeon who feels that he should have got a consultant's post in the West Midlands, but was rejected because he is black.

He took his case to an industrial tribunal. But you can't get legal aid for an industrial tribunal, and they aren't cheap, particularly if you've hired a barrister.

The defending authorities only needed to ask for 13 witnesses to be called to push the price of the hearing beyond Dr Surma's reach and force the doctor to withdraw for lack of funds. He still insisted, "There is discrimination against coloured surgeons, and I will prove it one day".

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, M5 etc.), public accountability etc.
- ★ Free abortion and contraception on demand. Women's equal right to work, and full equality for women.

Our answer to the EEC

GRAHAM Norwood, (SO 30) argues that the EEC "enshrines the ethics and workings of capitalism", and "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".

But to my mind he provides no reasonable argument as to how withdrawal from a capitalist EEC to an equally capitalist Britain moves the scrapping of capitalism forward one iota.

The reasons Comrade Norwood gives for opposing the Common Market are in fact arguments against capitalism in general rather than the EEC in particular. The "artificial marketing and agricultural conditions to the benefit of capitalists" merely reflect the natural laws of capitalist development in the epoch of large scale monopoly capitalism.

From Comrade Norwood's second point one would think that Britain played no part whatsoever in the imperialist division of the world before it joined the EEC, and that it would immediately cease to do so

if it were to withdraw.

The EEC was the inevitable result of the laws of capitalist development. It was necessary in the face of the strength of American capitalism for European capital to compete effectively. Marxists do not oppose such developments for the sake of it. On the contrary, we see in them the development of the inherent contradictions in capitalism which will lead to its replacement by socialism.

Seek

We seek to strengthen the revolutionary elements in that contradiction through our intervention. We see in moves (however feeble) towards the removal of outdated national boundaries the possibility of removing narrow nationalistic prejudices. We see in the development of multinational enterprises through the EEC the possibility of multinational workers organisation, and a greater cross fertilisation and therefore richer content of socialist ideas and tactics.

Withdrawal from the EEC would weaken the possibility of such developments without doing anything to hamper the links between British and European capital which existed before Britain joined the EEC and which would continue to exist were Britain to withdraw.

Trotsky, writing in 1923, noted that "the driving motor force to war was this, that the capitalist forces of production had outgrown the framework of European national states." "Europe cannot develop economically within the state and customs frontiers imposed at Versailles. Europe is compelled either to remove these frontiers, or to face the threat of complete economic decay."

Our answer to the impasse facing European

capitalism should not be withdrawal from the EEC, but for the Socialist United States of Europe.

The EEC represents no more of a hindrance to the development of socialism in Britain or Europe with Britain inside it than it would if Britain were outside it. Only if one believes that socialism in Britain will be brought about by Act of Parliament could it be seen to be. Though Comrade Norwood dissociates himself from the Parliamentary road, the logic of his argument is to accept the narrow nationalistic and reformist prejudices which underlie such a perspective.

When a socialist revolution occurs in Britain then obviously we will not allow ourselves to be dictated to by the EEC — but the Treaty of Rome will be the least of our problems! To argue that Britain outside the EEC is in some way a progressive alternative to Britain inside the EEC is to sow reformist illusions.

Arthur Bough



This week we have letters on the Common Market and the Labour leadership. Do you agree? Let us know what you think: **WRITE BACK** to 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

If this process is to be avoided, the question of fielding a left opponent to Foot in any election resulting from next year's special conference is absolutely vital.

Clearly Tony Benn with his widespread support and his organised following is the most appropriate candidate to stand. SO has never pretended to believe that Benn will necessarily lead a real change in British society. Nevertheless we must take the lead in demanding Benn stands.

KEVIN FEINTUCK (Edgehill CLP)

FOOT: HAVE WE ALL FORGOTTEN?

Michael Foot's victory in the Labour Party leadership election was a victory for the left insofar as it deprived Healey, the bosses' choice, of the post which the whole of the ruling class establishment had chosen for him. The reaction to the election in the media is enough to show that Healey's failure came as a severe shock to them.

On the other hand, the left in the Party must realise that Foot's leadership poses a massive new problem for those who want to develop the Party towards the fighting socialist policies projected by SO.

The essence of the problem was amply demonstrated by the respective receptions for Foot and Healey at the Liverpool demo. Although Healey's image as Mr. 5% has quite deservedly stuck, Foot's role in the last Labour government has been forgotten by some of the most

advanced layers in the movement.

Militants have a responsibility to point out that Foot at no time during the life of the last government attempted to organise a fight for policies opposed to those of Wilson, Callaghan and Co. In fact, it is generally acknowledged that Foot played a large part in holding together the Lib-Lab Pact, with its resultant Lib-Lab policies.

Particularly worrying is the danger that those who have been organising around the 'alternative economic strategy' and similar positions will lose direction and fall in behind Foot's rhetoric. This would involve the demise of organisations such as the LCC, which have begun to organise the rank and file of the party, although not around policies with which SO would totally agree.

Import controls: Why they don't work

BRUCE ROBINSON may be interested in the following piece of information which appeared in the New York Times of 12.8.80; it will, I hope, supplement his excellent article on the 'cars crisis' [SO 30].

According to a report by the International Trade Commission, the increase in imports [of automobiles to the USA] "has been less a substantial cause of

injury to American producers than shifts in consumer demand that the domestic auto industry could not meet."

The share of the market in the USA for large autos, fell drastically from 47.1% in January 1980 to 29.2% in July 1980, and in the same period, imports of cars rose from 27.7% to 34.5%.

This is grist to the mill of Bruce's argument that im-

port controls are not a way out for the working class. The large imports of German and Japanese autos into the USA is largely attributable [as Bruce points out] to the fact that the domestic auto industry has not catered for shifts in consumer demands — small cars and more economical fuel consumption.

This is not "unfair competition", as some of our union leaders like to blather — simply the workings of the capitalist system. When a dog is eating a dog, neither of them bothers very much about the Queensbury rules.

Socialist Organiser needs to take up these practical and economic points when arguing against import controls, and not just repeat endlessly calls for internationalism [we should do both!] which sometimes, in some of the left press, takes on a moralistic tone.

Finally, going back to the US auto industry, nearly 300,000 auto workers have lost their jobs since 1978 — a drop of 29%. Terrible as this is, it is not much worse than in other periods of economic downturn: for example, in 1969-70 a drop of 27%, and in 1973-75 a drop of 25%.

However, the chances of recovery this time appear much less likely to happen as quickly as before.

John Cunningham

Correction

The article on housing in Socialist Organiser no.30 credited to Dana Minns should have been jointly credited to Diana Minns and Mary Corbishley. Our apologies.

MEETINGS

SHEFFIELD Rank and File Mobilising Committee meeting on democracy in the Trade Unions. 7.30pm, Monday 1st December, Station Hotel, The Wicker. **Trade unionist on 'The Labour Party and the fight LEICESTER Women's Fightback day school.** Saturday 13 December, 10am to 4.30pm, at Bulgrave Neighbourhood Centre, Rothley St, off Bulgrave Rd. Discussion on unemployed struggles, women organising in the labour movement, cuts, new technology, Employment Act, housing.

LAMBETH Labour Left meeting: 'Stop Council House Sales'. Thursday 11 December, 7.30pm, Lambeth Town Hall.

BIRMINGHAM Women's Fightback fund-raising social. Friday 19 December, 8pm, Golden Eagle, Hill St. Band 'The Set', disco, late bar. Tickets £1 in advance from Marian Mound (194 Dawlish Rd, Birmingham 29: 021 471 1964).

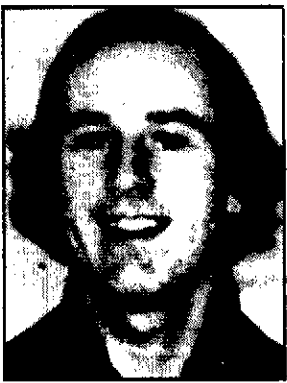
GLASGOW hunger strike action committee demonstration: Victory to the hunger strikers, political status now! Saturday 20 December; assemble 10am, Craigendmuir St, Blackhill.

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

BOOKS ARE WEAPONS! KICK OFF 1981 WITH A FIRST OF MAY BOOK Voucher, the perfect seasonal gift from Edinburgh's comprehensive left/radical bookshop.

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

The hunger strikers: Who they are, why they are fighting



John Nixon

JOHN NIXON, a 25-year old from Armagh City, is a member of the Irish Republican Socialist Party.

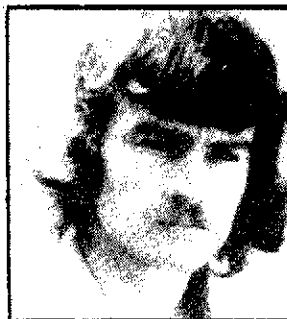
He was first charged with possessing arms after a British soldier shot at him and a friend as they were returning from a handball game. His friend was killed and John was seriously wounded, being in intensive care for two weeks.

The evidence against John was simply the word of a British soldier. The sentence: 5 years.

When John was next picked up, it was again only the word of an RUC man, who alleged that John had made a verbal confession, "at the last minute", that led to a conviction.

That was in September 1977. He went on the blanket right from the beginning of his 14 years stint.

Again the black farce of British justice is evident: John is said to be a 'common criminal' (because he was arrested for offences allegedly committed in 1976), but his brother Leroy, also in Long Kesh, has political status because his alleged offence was committed in 1975.



Tommy McKearney

TOMMY MCKEARNEY was on remand for 14 months before he was sentenced to 20 years. He was convicted on the basis of an unsigned 'confession' wrung from him by interrogators at the RUC's Castlereagh barracks.

A prison doctor was appalled at his condition when the interrogators handed him over after seven days of torture and intimidation. He was bruised, and had a black eye and a swollen forehead. Muscles in his neck, back and abdomen were swollen and tender. He had been beaten while being choked with a plastic bag over his head.

A key prosecution witness stated that Tommy was not one of those who held her at gunpoint.

Tommy McKearney's family is Republican to the core: his brother was an IRA volunteer killed on active service, while another brother is on remand. He has been on the blanket in H3-block since December 1978.

RAY MCCARTNEY is also 25 and from a Derry Republican family. Brother George was interned in Long Kesh and Raymond has been jailed three times before.

The year he was first picked up was also the year his cousin Jim was shot down by British paratroopers in Derry on Bloody Sunday.

All the other people charged with offences related to Ray's — concerning the murder of an industrialist and an RUC Special Branch man — were acquitted, but Ray got a 25 year sentence. His appeal against conviction is to be heard within the next few months.

Ray McCartney



TOM MCFEELEY, according to the law as it stands, is a common criminal. He got 12 years for allegedly taking part in an armed raid and 14 years for possession of a gun. His brother is serving 12 years in the same prison. But Tom is not classed as a political prisoner and his brother is.

Tom has spent long periods in solitary confinement for refusing to obey prison rules. One long period was for calling fellow Republican prisoners to attention — not the usual 'disobedience' of a common criminal.

Inside jail he has already won a victory: a hunger and thirst strike he staged in March 1976 forced the prison administration to release him from solitary confinement.

He dumbfounded the governor of Long Kesh on one occasion that he was in solitary. Determined to break him, the governor entered his cell to ask him to recant, only to find Tom reading *Republican News* which he had somehow smuggled into the solitary cell.

Tom McFeeley



BY ANDREW HORNUNG

THREE WOMEN, Mairead Farrell, Mary Doyle, and Mairead Nugent, are to go on a hunger strike till death or victory along with the seven men on hunger strike at Long Kesh.

Their case for being treated as political prisoners could not have been expressed more aptly: "The cause of Irish freedom is not a criminal cause, but a political cause, and in order to assert this we are going on hunger strike".

Mairead Farrell is the commanding officer of the Republican prisoners in Armagh. She is 23 and was sentenced to 14 years for possession of arms and being an IRA member.

Mary Doyle was to be released [assuming full remission] next year, after getting an 8-year sentence for possessing incendiary devices. This is her second term of imprisonment. While serving the earlier term, she learned that her mother had been killed in a Loyalist pub bombing.

Mairead Nugent is serving a 12 year sentence for allegedly taking part in an attempt to bomb the home of the then governor of Armagh Jail.

Whatever your view of the IRA's fight against what they — and SO — see as the British occupation of the North of Ireland, you cannot deny that these women were serving a political cause when they were arrested. You cannot deny that they were charged as "terrorists" — a term which itself has a clear political meaning. You cannot but admit that what unites them now is a continuing service to the same political ideals that led to their imprisonment.

You cannot deny that the courts that convicted them were set up by a political act. You cannot deny that all this is part of what the political parties in Britain call "a political solution".

So why continue with the degrading lie that these women, the 24 other women that are still on the "dirty protest" but not on hunger strike, and the hundreds of men 'on the blanket' led by the seven on hunger strike, are not political prisoners.

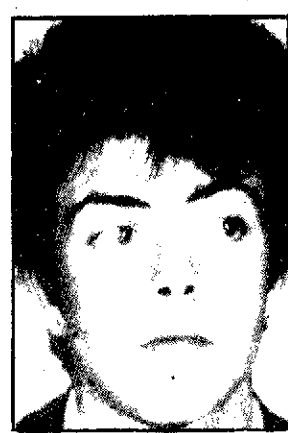
Because that would brand Britain's policy in Ireland as political repression. And that is just what it is. But you cannot deny the truth that stares you in the face simply because you don't like to face the further truths it leads you to.



Brendan Hughes

Brendan Hughes, aged 32 and on the blanket since January 1978, comes from a strong Republican family.

His father was interned in the 40s, one brother was interned in the 70s, and another brother has been a sentenced prisoner in Long Kesh.



Sean McKenna

SEAN MCKENNA was first arrested nine years ago, when he was 17. Both he and his father were arrested under the Special Powers Act.

His father got the infamous hood treatment and was one of the cases that came before the European Commission for Human Rights which found Britain guilty of torture.

The McKenna family moved south of the border, but things didn't change. In February 1975 the SAS raided their cottage and drove Sean over the border to Bessbrook barracks, where he was beaten and kicked. After 14 months on remand he was sentenced to 20 years for allegedly attempting to shoot an RUC man.

His case highlights the black farce of Britain's withdrawal of Special Category status in 1976. He is classed as a 'common criminal' because the RUC charge that he was a member of the IRA was dated 12 days after the ending of Special Category status.

If being a member of the IRA isn't a political matter, what is?



Leo Green

Save Pauline McLaughlin!

23 YEAR OLD Pauline McLaughlin now weighs only 4½ stone — she is suffering from a serious undiagnosed stomach complaint which causes her to vomit whatever she eats.

Her skin is now blackened and the whites of her eyes have turned yellow. She has lost several teeth due to calcium deficiency.

Yet the prison authorities have refused to let her receive a food parcel.

They have also refused to allow her into proper care at a hospital outside the prison system, saying that she had herself requested to be returned from such a hospital to the prison. She had indeed asked to be returned... so that she shouldn't have to suffer the humiliation of being pushed around handcuffed to a wheelchair and under permanent male police guard.

Pauline is not on hunger strike, though she is on the same 'dirty protest' as the other Republican prisoners in Armagh women's jail.

Pauline McLaughlin was convicted in February 1978 on a range of charges, including murder, attempted murder, and possession of explosives. She was sentenced to '16 years' imprisonment and to detention at the Secretary of State's pleasure. (That Secretary of State was a Labour minister. His Tory counterpart is obviously still pleased...)

Pauline pleaded not guilty on all charges. The chief prosecution evidence at her trial was a signed confession. This was contested on the grounds that Pauline is illiterate and that while she can sign her name, she could not have read the statement.

DON'T LET THEM DIE! East London labour movement meeting, 8pm, Friday 5th December, Toynbee Hall.

Speakers: Tommy Finn, Jim Denham, Frank O'Neill, and a Labour MP.

Sponsored by: Tower Hamlets Trades Council; Labour Committee on Ireland; Tower Hamlets LP Women's Section; Socialist Organiser; Tower Hamlets RFMC; Queen Mary College Labour Students; East London TOM; Women's Coordinating Committee on Ireland; City Poly Students' Union.

LABOUR/IRELAND GROUP PLANS CONFERENCE

by Tom Cashman

ON December 13th the Labour Committee on Ireland is holding a special meeting to discuss its submission to the National Executive Committee working party on Ireland. All active LCI members should attend this meeting to ensure that the submission is based on the LCI policies of troops out now and political status, and to launch an effective fight to win support for these policies in the labour movement.

The British labour movement has, over the years, been passive and ignorant on the situation in Ireland, while its leaders have collaborated with the Unionists,

the police and the military in their crimes against the Irish people.

On 29th March this year, about 150 people from 44 CLPs met in London to change that situation. They set up the LCI with the following statement of aims:

- a break with bipartisanship;
- an end to the Unionist veto;
- greater understanding of the views of Irish labour;
- a policy and commitment to the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all British military and economic involvement in Ireland;
- opposition to the policy of criminalisation of Irish political prisoners and support for their campaign for political status;

opposition to repressive legislation in Britain, such as the PTA.

The meeting decided to circulate a model resolution for Labour Party conference and to organise to see that it was discussed. Although this motion was defeated at conference, it did win support from a large section of the constituency delegates.

Decisions were also taken to support Charter 80 and to give it a high profile in the committee's propaganda material; to attempt to set up a labour movement conference on Ireland; and to back troops out now and political status.

The implementation of these decisions has been uneven. This is partly due to inactivity of the rank and file, and partly the result of confusion and/or backsliding by officers.

The December 13th meeting must change this situation.

The LCI should also take advantage of the opportunity presented by a national meeting to launch a campaign on the H-block and Armagh hunger strikes.

There is a vital job for the LCI to do in broadening support for the Irish struggle beyond small groups of the radical left.

The last time Michael Foot was Labour leader

WITH HIS election three weeks ago as Parliamentary Labour Party leader (which will almost certainly be confirmed under the Electoral College system to be decided at the Special Conference in January), it was in fact for the second time that Michael Foot found himself in the leadership of the Labour Party.

The last time had been just 20 years earlier, in October 1960.

Nobody then formally elected Foot as leader. It was to be a couple of months before he returned to the House of Commons after winning the Ebbw Vale by-election caused by the death of Aneurin Bevan. And his standing with the PLP then was expressed clearly enough when he had the whip withdrawn within four months of getting back into Parliament.

Least

But Foot was, nevertheless, the outstanding leader — or at least, the outstanding orator and journalist — of the Tribune Left and of the Labour and trade union supporters of British unilateral nuclear disarmament when they won the Labour Party for unilateralism in October 1960. Against the bitter opposition of the Leader of the PLP, Hugh Gaitskell, who threatened to 'fight, fight and fight again' to regain the party, Labour Party conference decided that it wanted the next Labour Government to scrap nuclear weapons, unilaterally.

Immediately after the decision, the Labour Party was faced by an open revolt against its authority by the PLP. Gaitskell didn't hesitate about threatening to split the Party or about pitting the PLP against the Party in the country.

He had told Conference in advance that the PLP would not be unilateralist, whatever Conference decided — the MPs could not, he said, overnight become the 'unilateralists', 'pacifists', and 'fellow-travellers' that 'other people were'. Nor could Conference control or elect the Party Leader: he told Conference that the election of the Leader was not its business, but the business of the PLP alone.

Backed

The PLP, he promised, would repudiate the Conference decision and campaign in the movement and country to reverse it.

Naturally, the majority of the PLP backed Gaitskell's revolt. So did the majority of the NEC, which put the Party machine at Gaitskell's disposal. (Anthony Wedgwood Benn, though not, so far as I know, a unilateralist, resigned from the NEC in protest).

The Right began to organise itself in a mysteriously-funded and, at first anyway, semi-clandestine organisation, the so-called Campaign for Democratic Socialism, organised by William Rodgers. They had the backing of the entire Press for their campaign against the Scarborough Conference decisions.

Faced with the PLP revolt and the threat of split, what did the Left — and Michael Foot — do? Foot at

this stage was, remember, a man of 47 involved in a conflict in which — he believed 'passionately' — nothing less than the future of the human race was at stake.

The first thing Michael Foot did was to prostrate himself publicly before the principle that the MPs had a sacred right to ignore Conference. In Tribune he rushed to concede that the MPs had a right to vote in Parliament according to their consciences. That too was something he believed in, 'passionately'.

The Scarborough Conference had, in fact, rejected a motion from Nottingham Central CLP that would have scotched such PLP pretensions. But now the revolt of the PLP could have been used as dramatic illustration in a campaign to convince the movement of the need to bring the MPs firmly under its control.

In fact the Executive of Victory for Socialism, Tribune's then rank and file organisation, voted down a proposal from Hugh Jenkins that they should answer the Gaitskellites with a reselection campaign to deprive rebellious MPs of the Party's endorsement.

In a sense that was to concede the whole game at the beginning, by giving up the sharpest weapon the Party had for dealing with

the Left was willing to go the whole hog in a fight to mobilise the labour movement against the arrogant MPs — which it was not.

So Tribune and Foot kicked unilateralism upstairs in their list of priorities, into the category of good ideas and things they believed in 'passionately', and concentrated instead on trying to find common ground on defence with Gaitskell, by adopting as their immediate practical policies what they thought might be acceptable to a reasonable right wing MP looking for a compromise with the official Party.

Bit

They sought a 'compromise' which contained a *bit* of the substance and spirit, and a lot of the rhetoric of unilateralism, and might therefore attract the disarmers, while not being anything like unilateral nuclear disarmament. This, they hoped, would — by gutting the Left — also conciliate the reasonable Right.

They thought they had found their issue in the US Polaris missile base. By happy coincidence the Tory Government's decision to establish this base at Holy Loch, in the West of Scotland, came through just then. This, said Tribune and Michael Foot, custodians and champions of the Party's decision for unilateralism, is an issue that can unite us all.

They were wrong about this. The only unity the



CHRIS DAVIES (REPORT)

that they would not be the first to unleash nuclear weapons.

Should Prime Minister Macmillan and President J.F. Kennedy be 'pressed' to 'declare' that they would never use nuclear weapons first, asked Michael Foot in Tribune. That question, he wrote, 'goes to the heart of the recent controversies about defence in the Labour Party' (Tribune, 3 March 1961).

In this way, instead of fighting to consolidate the Party's official policy, the Left abandoned more and more ground. The idea that serious socialist politics mean deciding what is necessary and then fighting to carve it out of the existing reality — that was not their idea. Compromise even about an issue involving the very fate of humanity, an attempt to average-out a common line with the Right on an agreed anti-Tory government rhetoric behind which all could, for the moment, unite, despite having antagonistic views — that was the furthest reach of their political ambition.

Listen to Tribune, in December 1960, two months after Scarborough, lamenting Gaitskell's intransigence and unwillingness to play the game they proposed. (They are talking about the Government's proposals, debated in Parliament, to set up the Polaris base).

"And here was a proposal which could be frontally opposed; not only by those who support the Scarborough decision of the Labour Party, but also by the Parliamentary leaders of the Labour Party who have criticised NATO's strategy on the technical grounds that it is too reliant on nuclear weapons. But Gaitskell put down a motion which could not possibly be voted for by supporters of Scarborough... implicitly accepting the nuclear strategy and specifically approving in principle the Government's plans accepting Polaris".

But Gaitskell would have none of them. The Right had firmer convictions — or a firm commitment to the interests of the ruling class, anyway. They certainly had a better idea of what serious politics is: they sought a clear victory for their own position.

Gaitskell referred to the compromise-seekers with public contempt as men of infirm principle, as well he might. When Foot and four others voted against the Air Estimates of the Tory Government, Gaitskell expelled them from the PLP.

The public spectacle of the unilateralists abandoning unilateralism as practical politics in vain search for a compromise, while the Gaitskellites spurned them, helped the Right gain ground. They won the day at the Blackpool 1961 Conference by 4,526,000 to 1,756,000.

Many things were unfavourable to a stable victory for the unilateralist cause in 1960 — the majority was small, for example, politically unclear, and over-dependent on block votes. But probably it was the vacillations and lack of fight by the Foot-led Left which turned a small pro-unilateralist majority in 1960 into a rout for unilateralism in 1961.

Game

The Right, entrenched defenders of the status quo, had an easier game to play than the Left, to be sure. Fighters for basic change need determination and lasting convictions, and they need also a refusal to be cowed by the strength of the entrenched forces they face. But Foot and company abandoned the fight immediately after they had captured the main citadel, Party conference.

Today, 20 years on, four of those years spent as chief fixer for the Wilson and Callaghan governments, cooking up deals with such as the Orange

bigots in the House of Commons, Michael Foot will apply the sorts of technique and advice he and Tribune offered to Gaitskell in 1960. If he urged them on Gaitskell, for use to deflect politics he 'passionately' supported, Foot will certainly now use them against policies like reselection, to which he is opposed.

Listen to his line now that Labour is unilateralist again, though as a member of the inner Cabinet Foot must bear part of the political responsibility for Callaghan's secret fund for updating Polaris. "What I want to do now is to prevent the campaign on the arms race, which we urgently need, from being distorted by an argument between the multilateralists and the unilateralists. That may be a difficult thing to do, but then life itself is difficult" (Guardian, 13 November 1980).

Who can gain from such techniques? As always, those who benefit from the status quo, who would benefit if the Left offensive slowed down; and who will lose unless Michael Foot can take much of the force out of the Left advance.

Unite the Party around the fight against unemployment? Excellent. But in unity with Dennis Healey? And with what policies?

Fight the Tories? Indeed we must, by all means possible and with every weapon available, but we need fighting mobilisations and socialist policies to back up the anti-Tory rhetoric. That means above all else that the rank and file must press ahead now to make reselection work, so that the movement controls the Party in Parliament.

Kick out the Tories and return a Labour Government? As soon as possible! But not like the last one, comrade Foot! This time it must be a government serving the working class and controlled by the working class: a workers' government.



Tony Benn

the MPs.

Foot and the Tribune Left were to concede a lot more. Within a couple of months of their victory at Scarborough they had effectively abandoned unilateralism!

Their technique and motivation then should be noted and remembered by anyone inclined to expect good for the Left from Michael Foot. Of course Tribune and Foot remained convinced — 'passionately', no doubt — of the unilateralist cause. But Gaitskell's revolt had taken unilateralism out of 'practical politics'; unless, that is,

Gaitskellites cared for on this issue was their existing unity with the Tory Government.

Foot and the Left now revived the agitation for a nuclear-free Europe first proposed by Poland (that is, by the USSR) in the late '50s. Surely that would unite the Party?

Surely Gaitskell and the PLP could stomach that?

No they could not! Then, pursuing their political Dutch auction, Michael Foot and Tribune declared that it would be a great contribution to the cause of peace if the USA and Britain could be got to declare

'Tampon disease' linked to Tampax

by Mandy Williams

The first case of toxic shock syndrome [TSS], a potentially fatal disease affecting menstruating women who use tampons, has been reported in this country [British Medical Journal, 15th Nov 1980]. It is now recognised that other such cases could well have gone unreported, since the link with tampon use only recently became evident in the USA, where 29 women have died in the last three years, and over 300 cases have been reported this year.

The victims are usually under 30, and are affected during or soon after a period with tampon use. The cause is an unidentified toxin [poisonous waste producer] produced by the bacterium *Staphylococcus aureus*, but there are various theories about why this toxin is absorbed into the woman's bloodstream.

The toxin causes high fever, diarrhoea and shock. *Staphylococcus aureus* is present in less than 10% of unaffected women during menstruation, and has not been found in unused tampons. Present theories as to why and how menstrual blood and or the toxin are

reabsorbed include laceration of the vagina wall by the plastic tampon applicator; irritation of the vaginal wall by deodorants in the tampon; synthetic material in the tampon lowering resistance to the disease; and superabsorbent materials [cellulose derivatives] in the tampon, causing reflux of menstrual blood.

An early survey of 50 affected women in the USA showed 71% to be using a brand called 'Rely', and 19% to be using 'Playtex'. Subsequent studies have made similar findings.

Rely [which had a plastic applicator and was covered in synthetic material] is produced by Procter and Gamble, who still assert its safety. But under considerable pressure from the Food and Drugs Administration they not only voluntarily withdrew that tampon from the market [in anticipation of being banned] but carried out an expensive advertising campaign to recall unused tampons.

Playtex remains on the market, in this country, Europe and the States. It has a plastic applicator with teeth [described as 'petals' in the advertising], and deodorant. The packets warn

that the deodorant [a quite unnecessary additive] may cause irritation or discharge because, the firm says, some women are 'hypersensitive'.

The case reported in the BMJ was of a 16 year-old woman using Tampax, which holds 60% of the market in this country. Tampax has a cardboard applicator, and, like all other tampons on sale here, contains rayon, a cellulose derivative, to raise profit margins.

There has been very little research on tampons. They are not classed as medicines or cosmetics, so neither the Department of Health nor the Department of Trade is responsible for investigating their safety. 70% of menstruating women use them. The BMJ, in an editorial and in the case report, suggest intermittent use of tampons during a period reduces the risk of TSS.

But there are few alternatives. The traditional external towel is unacceptable to women accustomed to tampon use, because of discomfort, bulk and leakage.

Before the BMJ report, the DHSS announced that the

disease was restricted to the USA and so there was no cause for alarm here. Since the report, it still refuses to issue warnings on tampon packets, as is required in the States now.

The present incidence of TSS is 3 per 100,000 but it is likely that many cases still go unrecognised. Jo Richardson MP has written to the Health Minister, Gerard Vaughan, that the Government has "behaved with unsufferable complacency", and to demand that suspect products be withdrawn from the market.

But it will need substantial and unremitting pressure. The Department of Health has an appalling record of inaction, notably over Depo-Provera, the injectable contraceptive, and the Dalkon Shield, an IUD. Both have caused women's deaths, here and abroad. The company producing the Dalkon Shield has, as a result of expensive compensation orders by injured women in the USA, begun to warn doctors of the dangers of its use. But the Department of Health still refuses to issue a warning to women or to doctors and family planning staff.



November's Fightback includes: politics of contraception, interviews with a Polish woman shipyard worker, a Bolivian women's leader, and Marie Mulholland of Sinn Féin, and much more. That issue, or the new [December] issue, out soon, 10p plus 10p post from 41 Ellington St, London N7.



Will the Ripper scare us off the streets?

by Fran Brodie

ON NOV. 22nd hundreds of women marched through Leeds with placards bearing "We mourn all the victims of male violence against women". They also demonstrated for the right to arm themselves against the Ripper — following the police prosecution of a local woman teacher for carrying a small clasp knife in her handbag.

Women must have the right to arm themselves against all attacks carried out against them; whether arming themselves means learning self-defence or carrying weapons.

But in the wake of the 13th Ripper murder, the police and the media are doing their best to scare women off the streets.

In the media the Ripper has been portrayed as a kind of anti-hero.

Scare

All the shock and horror has been splashed across the front pages not to help women but to scare us even more.

The Mail's half-horrified, half-admiring description of the Ripper as "handsome, arrogant, and menacing" reflects a link between the Ripper and the daily abuse of women.

The fact that at the Leeds football ground, men could shout, in reply to a police message about the Ripper, "11-0", "11-0" shows that mistreatment of women is seen as a normal thing to do and the Ripper can even be seen as 'a bit of a lad'.

Women are seen as sex symbols or skivvies, a butt for abuse and maltreatment.

The Daily Telegraph, pointing out that the Ripper is now drawing no distinction between ordinary women and prostitutes, used the phrase "innocent victim" for the killing of a young student. Prostitutes are then seen as fair game for murder by the bourgeois media!

One policeman said that

"perhaps the flimsiness of the victim's dress contributed to her death". Here again is the idea that women ask for all they get, that what we wear, we wear to attract men, that when we say no, we really mean yes.

Millions of women suffer violence in the 'safety' of their own homes, there are now hundreds of battered women's refuges. When women are beaten up by husbands or boyfriends, it is seen by the police as a 'domestic' matter. We must have done something to deserve broken legs or arms, or black eyes.

The logic of all this abuse is the Ripper: the reflection in a sick individual of the idea that men have a right to assert themselves by violence, arrogance, or condescending abuse against women.

The police have suggested that women should stay at home because of the Ripper. Some women have tried to turn this round with the demand for a curfew on men. But this curfew, if put into practice, would be enforced by policemen!

First of all we must remember Pat Malone whose body was found in Epping Forest. She had been killed by a policeman. And what kind of person joins the police force — bullies, wife batterers etc.

We have only to see them in action when demonstrating against the fascists or on a picket line to know where their sympathies lie. Remember the Reclaim the Night demonstration through Soho and the brutality of the police against women demonstrators?

We cannot rely on the police to defend our rights. Defending the rights of women is not what the police are about!

If the rich were being attacked and robbed on the streets, we would then see the police do something to protect them, we would see massive amounts of money and resources used on their behalf. But when women are attacked, the police tell us: stay at home!

We are opposed to curfews whether by the police or anyone else. We all have the right to walk the streets, men and women alike, without harassment by the police.

There is a kind of curfew now against blacks: it's called the 'Sus' law. It seems that the police want to establish, if not a curfew for women, at least the idea that any woman out alone late at night is 'asking for it'.

Idea

What of the idea of vigilante groups also put forward by some women? The logic of such groups is to catch the Ripper. Does this mean that we attack all men we see on the streets or just those who act 'suspiciously'? Would we if the Ripper was black, chase all black men off the streets, beat them up, hand them over to the police? It makes no sense.

Women are angry at the attacks carried out against them whether by the Ripper or by husbands and boyfriends. But we are also frightened. If the Ripper and the media set out to frighten us, they have. But we have always been frightened of walking the streets late at night, with or without this lunatic.

In Manchester, there was a demonstration last Saturday because the Council, as part of the cuts, is threatening to turn street lighting off early to save electricity! One of the things that would help us is more street lighting, not less.

Some real respect for women as human beings and not as skivvies or sex symbols would help us even more; from the cradle to the grave we are abused and maltreated, not only by sick individuals, but by a sick society. One of the ways in which this sick society expresses itself is through its treatment of over half its members — women. But more and more, women are no longer willing to accept this treatment.

A women's agenda for Labour

by Rachel Lever and Jo Thwaites

A hundred and sixty women from Labour Parties and women's sections all over the country spent a day on November 22nd working out plans to advance women's rights in the Labour Party and drafting policy demands to push for Labour to fight for.

From the start the Fightback campaign has set out to stimulate the fight for the transformation of the labour movement, especially the tendency to regard women as 'optional extras'. A crowded workshop at the March conference on women in the Labour Party suggested a full day's discussion would be useful.

Attack

Pat Longman (of the Fightback Steering Committee and Islington Central women's Section which co-sponsored the conference) set the day's discussions against the disastrous attacks on women's rights coming from the Tory government.

Whatever changes we wanted to see in the Labour Party, we should discuss these with a view to making our participation in the struggle of working women more effective.

Mandy Moore (Labour Abortion Rights Campaign veteran and now a member of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy women's

action committee) explained the reasons for the suggested democratic reforms for women, especially positive discrimination, that the CLPD was now debating. And Jo Richardson told conference about the new Women's Rights Study Group that the National Executive Committee had set up, and hoped that Fightback would bring its ideas to the Study Group.

After this brief opening plenary, most of the day was spent in workshops. During the morning, examining how women's sections could campaign more effectively, form links with women's campaigns and women in trade unions and workplace and community struggles, and begin to break through the sexism that is so prevalent in the party; and in the afternoon, discussing eight areas of policy to endorse, amend or add to the preparatory material that had been contributed by seven campaigns (NCCL, CPAG, One Parent Families, National Campaign for Nursery Education, Fawcett Society, Women's Aid and NAC).

Linda Youd, from Eccles, addressed the day school on behalf of women from the Gardners' occupation. The women themselves were unable to come because of the meetings going on in the occupation over the weekend which led to their victory.

Linda described how the women had organised themselves into a support

committee and drawn women together in the occupation so that the wives of the strikers wouldn't be left ignored and uninformed about what was going on in the occupation.

A collection was taken, half of which went to the Gardners' occupation and the other half to Fightback.

A special appeal was also made to the day school on behalf of Pauline Mc Loughlin who is on protest for political status in Armagh jail in the North of Ireland. She is seriously ill and now, weighing only 4½ stone, close to death. She will die unless she is taken out of Armagh and given the special medical treatment she needs.

Time was short in the afternoon workshops, and the day school was not able to hear all the report backs. But what we did hear showed the discussion had been detailed and fruitful.

Plans

Fightback plans to produce a short pamphlet outlining the decisions the workshops arrived at, with model resolutions for the use of CLPs and women's sections. To do this a working group was set up and over a dozen women volunteered to help publish the results of the conference and organise to popularise and implement its ideas over the next year.

Socialist Organiser EDITORIAL

Draft Benn for Leader

WILL Tony Benn stand against Michael Foot in the election for Party Leader under the system which will be set up from the January Special Conference? He has announced that he will not.

Foot's position is too strong, and he is virtually certain of election with the backing of the Parliamentary Labour Party and union leaders like Moss Evans. So Benn will probably run for Deputy Leader, against Dennis Healey, instead.

In our opinion Benn should challenge Foot, even if this time round he is unlikely to win. The big threat to the process of democratic renewal now going on in the Labour Party is that the Left's drive for change will be smothered or deflected by Foot's oratorical anti-Toryism. Foot will consciously use the burning desire in the movement for a real fight against the Tories to derail and demobilise the drive to make re-selection work for the Left.

It is better to have Foot as Leader than Healey, but there is no reason for the movement to have political confidence in Foot, and every reason to distrust him as a known opponent of the democratic change the Party is undertaking.

Watch

It is necessary for the serious Left to distance itself from Foot — and to teach those in the Labour Party who want change to distrust him, watch out for him, and resist the pressure to tone down the struggle to change the Labour Party in order to 'fight the Tories'.

Nothing would do that more clearly than for Benn, who is the recognised standard-bearer of the Left,

to challenge Foot in the election. Politics isn't only about winning elections: it is also about rallying and educating the forces now to win later.

Drive

But shouldn't we respect the movement's desire for unity and unite behind Michael Foot? In every practical anti-Tory action Foot takes or initiates he should have the loyal backing of the Left. But the fight must still be prosecuted to win control for the labour movement and the rank and file over the next Labour Government. It won't be done if we let the drive for democratisation lose its momentum. We will be faced with a new (Foot-Healey?) edition of the disastrous Wilson-Callaghan-Healey government which massively increased unemployment, cut real wages for two years running, and prepared the way for Thatcherism.

The Liverpool demonstration was an inspiration to the whole movement. But what an obscenity to see Labour's monetarist ex-Chancellor Dennis Healey, under whose stewardship unemployment doubled, jumping on the unity bandwagon with Foot.

And Healey is not an apologetic ex-monetarist. He is still a monetarist. This shows how Foot's drive for unity against the Tories is also a drive to disarm the Left.

A Benn challenge to Foot would allow those determined to continue the drive for Party democracy to rally and organise to push the Blackpool policies ahead.

The Left should now start moves to draft Benn against Foot, just like we drafted Foot against Healey.

Will Tories fight Thatcher?

THESE ARE strange days indeed, when a Tory government gets bitter criticism from leading bosses and from former Tory prime ministers and front-benchers.

Falling out among the Tory thieves is all to the good. But it would be foolish indeed to think that the Tory critics have anything in common with the labour movement's fight against Thatcher and Howe.

"Certain Conservative voices are already saying it as well as our own", Michael Foot said in Liverpool: "of course there are alternatives".

But what alternatives do the Tory critics want? They want lower interest rates, of course, and less obsession with the mumbo-jumbo of money-supply figures. But they also want more direct wage curbs — being dissatisfied with the extent of the Government's reliance on market forces — and more cuts in public services.

We can fight the Tories through working-class action — first and foremost, industrial action — not through vain hopes and illusions about the anti-Thatcher Tories.

Labour's 150,000 for t

Steelworkers organise for Triple Alliance

WYNDHAM CONNIFF, secretary of the Llanwern Steel Action Group, talked to Socialist Organiser.

TRADE UNION leaders in South Wales have begun talking about setting up a new Triple Alliance of steelworkers, railworkers, and miners to fight closures. This follows a lobby of the TUC Nationalised Industries Committee in Cardiff on 17th November.

The lobby succeeded in persuading the committee — meeting outside London for the first time — to back industrial action to protect jobs, though the committee specifically refused to initiate action itself.

Socialist Organiser asked Wyndham Conniff about the prospects for the Triple Alliance.

Wyndham Conniff told us: "It can do a lot of good things if the trade union leaders involved go into it in the right spirit. The attitudes of the miners' and railworkers' leaders are OK, but I'm doubtful about the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC) executive."

The alliance even has the support of George Wright of the Wales TUC, but our own union still seems to prefer the path of isolation. There is absolutely no chance of a fightback unless it is right across the board."

■ But isn't the Alliance simply an arrangement between the leaders of the various unions without any real base on the shop floor?

Certainly the rank and file and the leadership must come together to create a real alliance.

I know that miners' leaders in South Wales have gone round the pitheads to rally support. It's the same with the railworkers in Gwent. Branch officials have gone round the yard, explaining the issues and getting support.

For its part, the Steel Action Group is calling a meeting in Cardiff to set up a shop floor organisation of anyone who wants to fight against unemployment. We've had a tremendous response from the miners. My phone hasn't stopped ringing, and support has come from the Port Talbot, Ebbw Vale, and Panteg steelworkers. We have also circulated Trades Councils, but there has been no response there yet.

Gwent railworkers have promised support, and we'd like to contact other yards in South Wales.

■ Will the meeting decide on a policy of strike action to defend jobs?

An agreement on strike action is possible, but the first task is to make each group aware of each other's problems. We need agreement on the situation we're in and the exact nature of the crisis.

The second job is to build the links at shop floor level. Then we can decide how these links can best be used to safeguard industry in South Wales.

This will probably mean strike action, but I can't pre-empt discussion at the meeting. That's the place where policy will be decided.

■ We can certainly pledge the support of 80 supporters in the Health Service for the meetings.

That's good. We want to appeal for as much support as possible.

The meeting takes place on Friday 5th December, at 2pm, at Transport House, Cardiff, and is open to all trade union members.

WHAT WE THINK



BY SSA HOWLAND (FL)

The Right to Work

THE LIVERPOOL march against unemployment, the biggest demonstration organised by the Labour Party for decades, showed the tremendous anger which exists in the labour movement. It also showed that the fight for Party democracy has not crippled Labour's fight against the Tories, but revived it.

The TUC, which has been living dead since May 14, has been shamed into scheduling a week of demonstrations against unemployment 'in the early part of next year'.

But there are still big obstacles in the way of an effective fight for the right to work. One of them is

being organised by the Scottish TUC — a 'Convention Against Unemployment' to which employers' organisations are being invited!

Too many leaders of the labour movement still have the idea that joint campaigns with the bosses for import controls are the best way to save jobs.

But the labour movement neither needs nor can hope for any help from the bosses in fighting for the right to work. We need working-class action.

Occupations, backed by strike action in solidarity can defeat mass sackings and closures. Work-sharing under workers' control with no loss of pay can protect jobs against the slump. An

immediate fight for a 35 hour week can reverse rising unemployment.

A stand against the cuts by Labour councils, backed by trade union action, is needed to protect jobs and services in the public sector.

And the Labour Party must be mandated, when it comes to office, to nationalise the banks and finance institutions which crush public services with their interest burden, and to nationalise any firm attempting mass sackings. In both cases, without compensation.

With unemployment at 2.1 million, rising faster and faster, we can't afford the waste and anarchy of capitalist profiteering.

GARDNERS: FOLLOW THIS EXAMPLE

by Pete Keenlyside

THE WORKERS at Gardners have ended their sit-in after seven weeks, having won virtually all their demands.

Faced with solid resistance from the workforce and solidarity from rank and file workers throughout the country, the bosses have had to back down and withdraw the 590 compulsory redundancies they were trying to push through.

And the support of workers up and down the country has been really magnificent. Everywhere that Gardners workers' delegations went, they received a ready hearing. Thousands of pounds were collected, and parcels of food kept streaming in to help keep the fight at Gardners going.

The Gardners' workers themselves during the strike built a formidable organisation and collective strength which the bosses in the end could not crack. The local community was solidly behind the occupation, while the women inside and outside the factory played a crucial role. For example, the Wives Support Group insisted on being involved and informed of all decisions that were taken during the occupation. A far cry from the image the media usually likes to project of women as strike breakers. Apart from backing down on the compulsory redundancies, the bosses have also had to withdraw the

bonus scheme they were trying to implement, the 5% wage deal and restrictions on the activity of the stewards. Any changes will now have to be negotiated with the shop stewards, and given that they want to introduce a new production line in the factory, this is an important victory for the workforce.

The experience at Gardners shows that it is possible to fight the sack if the workforce are militant and determined enough. This message has to go out to all factories threatened with redundancies — FOLLOW THEIR EXAMPLE!

However the mood is not totally one of jubilation. The management still hope by negotiations to push through voluntary redundancies and implement natural wastage and thus reduce the workforce from 2,400 to 2,075. If this isn't achieved, the factory will go on short-time working, with a loss of pay. Also, during the strike, jobs were lost as several workers left.

But the mood remains to keep intact the organisation built up over the occupation and maintain the solidarity.

No thanks to the national union leaders, who did nothing to aid the fight, the workers have won the first round, but the second round is around the corner.

For Gardner workers, as for workers throughout the country the issue of who pays for the crisis cannot be put off. That's why socialists in the fight for jobs need to argue for work-sharing without loss of pay and the nationalisation without compensation of all firms declaring redundancies — so that the bosses cannot rob us of any of our victories.

ANDERTON LAUNCHES WITCH-HUNT OF GAYS

by the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights

RECENT events in Stockport, where the number of arrests for 'gross indecency' (that is, having sex in a public place) has increased from 12 last year to over 150 already this year, and the arrest of George Morton MP in Manchester recently, merely highlight a trend which has become apparent ever since James Anderton became Chief Constable.

The trend is towards using ever greater amounts of police time and resources for spying on toilets, setting traps in them, and even resorting to using police to actively seduce men in toilets in order to arrest them.

Meanwhile, complaints from women in many areas of Greater Manchester about kerb crawlers continue to be largely disregarded by the police.

The purpose is to alarm the public about the apparently growing numbers of homosexual men in the area and to whip up a panic about the dangers of 'innocent people' being lured into homosexuality. Anderton's strategy has already been highly successful in Stockport where, on the basis of the police arresting more men than previously in toilets, the Council are now having emergency meetings to discuss how to deal with the 'corruptive menace' of homosexuals.

In short, the Chief Constable is mounting a full scale attack on homosexual people and is doing it by focusing attention on the area which causes most embarrassment both to gay people and the general public: that is, sex in public toilets. By creating a panic over this, he hopes to encourage a backlash which will drive gays back underground, having lost even the small gains which have been made over the past ten years.

“

The Labour Campaign for Gay Rights wholly rejects the idea that sex in public toilets is on the increase. All that is increasing is police surveillance of toilets and the number of arrests.

This is a 'victimless offence' since those participating are willing and consenting partners. The police are only justified in acting on the basis of a complaint from a member of the general public: a principle long since forgotten in the Greater Manchester Constabulary.

The Labour Campaign for Gay Rights is fully aware that many members of the general public may

consider sex in a public toilet to be sordid and dirty. We are equally sure that very few of the men who have sex in toilets consider them to be the ideal place to meet another person.

In our view the solution to this lies in the hands of the general public themselves. For as long as homosexuals are the victims of prejudice and discrimination, many of us are going to be forced to live double lives. Research suggests that the average man who seeks sex in toilets is married, does not mix with gay people, and may not even identify himself as homosexual or bisexual.

Having no social outlets, it is hardly surprising that he seeks sexual relationships in the most anonymous and impersonal places he can find: that is, in toilets.

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In Manchester, the third biggest city in the country, apart from the Manchester Gay Centre there are three gay pubs and three gay clubs. These represent the sole social meeting places which gay men have in the area. How would the general public feel if three loud, smoky clubs were the only places in which men and women could meet and mix socially together?

The Labour Campaign for Gay Rights considers that what is really sordid is a society which refuses to accept homosexuality. Until public opinion changes, homosexual people will continue to be forced to lead double lives and to seek sexual relationships at the margins of society. The heterosexual majority must face up to their responsibility for this state of affairs.

★ Contact: Manchester Labour Campaign for Gay Rights, c/o Manchester Gay Centre, 61a Bloom St, Manchester 1.

ISLINGTON: Helping NALGO fight the cuts

by Peter Kenway

SEVEN of the ten local social service offices in the borough are to be closed on the orders of the local council, the last Islington Socialist Organiser meeting was told.

NALGO members invited to the meeting, on November 20th, described how the closures would destroy the close contact built up over the past ten years between the teams of social workers and the local community each serves. If the council wins, many people will be unable to make the journey across the borough to see a social worker, and social workers will no longer be on hand to solve problems as soon as they arise.

The last local Socialist Organiser bulletin, distributed in

over a dozen Labour Party wards in the borough, was given over to the social workers to explain their opposition to the council's plans, drawn up by a team of council officers without any consultation with the local NALGO. As a result of the publicity, the Islington Labour Party Local Government Committee passed a resolution on November 21st condemning the plans.

Social workers were invited to the SO meeting to explain their opposition in more detail and to discuss how support could be mobilised for the campaign against the closures.

In the face of united opposition from NALGO and local people, the Labour council has now been forced to put the plans out to public

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consultation. But at the same time it made it clear that intends to take no notice of demands to scrap the plans! Unless the left wing on the council can force a change in policy, local support is urgently needed from Islington people for the direct action which will be the only way in which the plans can be defeated.

The next SO bulletin will call upon ward parties to invite speakers from NALGO and to take NALGO leaflets round local estates to build support for the struggle in the New Year.

CARDIFF: Labour protest blocks sacking

by Martin Barclay

A CARDIFF busworker, sacked for wearing political badges, has been reinstated after local labour movement protests. But the fight is not yet over.

Paul Byers, a Socialist Organiser supporter, was sacked on Wednesday 19th for wearing two badges: one saying 'No Cuts, No Rent or Rate Increases', produced by Socialist Organiser, and a CND badge.

The sacking was reported

in the local evening paper and the community radio station, and Paul got support and encouragement from Cardiff Trades Council, Cardiff North CLP, individual Labour Party members, and CND.

Support also came from a number of left organisations in the city, including several individual SWP members (though the SWP branch itself was noticeable by its absence).

Paul Byers was reinstated on Tuesday 25th: but he still

has a final warning down against him, and the loss of four days' pay. The whole issue will now be debated by the Transport Committee of Cardiff City Council, hopefully at its next meeting on December 5th.

The councillors will discuss general uniform enforcement practices and an appeal aimed at clearing Paul Byers completely. It is also possible that the Committee could initiate an overall review of 'industrial relations' in the department.





Lambeth calls for strike in February

by Lambeth Councillor Neil Turner

AT THE November 1st Lambeth conference, a national steering committee was set up to coordinate action against the cuts and prepare for a recall conference which will be held on January 17 at the Central Hall, Westminster.

On November 23 it had its first meeting.

The composition of the Steering Committee was not clearly known before the meeting, because it was made up of 40 or 50 nominations from the floor, rather than being elected.

Although many came from London, comrades from all over the country turned up. Many different political tendencies were represented, but the Lam-

beth manual unions were the largest single contingent.

This was good in that they have decided to take a firm stand, and are organising two weeks' strike from February 2. The direct labour department has already agreed, as has the AUEW, and in other unions it has been agreed by the stewards, who are confident that their members will back them at meetings

due in the next few weeks.

The Steering Committee unanimously backed this action, and called for supportive action up and down the country. This, and one day's action called in Lewisham to coincide with the firemen's first strike against the 6% pay policy, were seen as the beginning of a snowball of action, aimed at forcing the government to back down.

But the Lambeth workers

seem to have overlooked that within two weeks of their strike their employers will have to choose between a 70% rate increase and 1,000 lost jobs, and Thatcher is unlikely to be turned so quickly. The February strike plan needs to be backed up with firm perspectives for continuing the struggle afterwards.

The Steering Committee also decided to produce a newsletter to coordinate the

fight against the cuts, to campaign to get the NEC conference on December 6 to endorse the strategy adopted by the Lambeth conference, and to work for even bigger representation at the recall conference, which unlike the last one will be open to Labour Party wards and industrial unions.

One disadvantage of the Steering Committee's domination by the Lambeth manual workers was that it overlooked the fact that in other parts of the country the fight back has already begun. In Manchester, the strike by NUPE and NALGO closed the housing department. Greenwich, Bradford, Merthyr, and Harlow are refusing to sell council houses, and NALGO is preventing sales in Glasgow, Camden, Lambeth, and Newcastle. And these struggles need to be supported and developed now, not just in February.

The call from the November conference

The November 1st conference declared: A conference constituted like this one cannot of course instruct individual councils of trade union branches how to act. But it can agree on a programme to be argued and organised for in the Labour movement by those who support it.

Such a programme must involve joint action between local authority trade unions in both the public and private sectors, trades councils and CLPs in a united stand to reverse government policies.

But this should not mean unions, CLPs or Labour Councils using the inactivity of others to justify implementing of accepting cuts.

Specifically, Labour Councils and Councillors should undertake

1. no cuts in jobs or services — no redundancies, maintain and develop services, no running down of direct labour.
2. no rent rises or supplementary rate increases this financial year and no rent or rate rises to compensate for Government cuts.
3. no sale of council houses or housing land — with Lambeth and all other Councils reversing their decision to sell Council Housing.
4. to work with local anti-cuts committees and community groups to build up local support among residents.
5. to introduce a 35 hour week for all employees.

This conference calls on trade union organisations at all levels (from the TUC General Council to branches and shop stewards committees) to pledge themselves to campaign for all-out strikes and occupations of workplaces as soon as any Labour council faces receivers or commissioners, or is surcharged for taking a stand against the cuts.

On November 1st, 599 trade union and Labour Party delegates met at a conference called by the Lambeth labour movement to map out a fighting strategy against the cuts.

TED KNIGHT, leader of Lambeth Labour Council, recently spoke to Martin Thomas of Socialist Organiser about his plans for following up the conference.

My view of the November 1st conference is that it was a major success. It demonstrated the wish of a wide cross section of the labour movement for a fight with the Tories.

Lambeth must take the conference at its face value, and the suggestions from the conference that if Lambeth were to take a lead then supportive action would be organised around that stand.

Full

So what I'm proposing to the Labour group and to the Labour parties — and I've also discussed this with the trade unions in Lambeth is this. When the Rate Support Grant is announced, and when we know the full impact not only of the Rate Support Grant but of the housing subsidies and other factors, then we will prepare the budget for 1981-2 on a basis of no cuts in services or jobs. We will then take the projected rate increase necessary for that (perhaps 70%), and a detailed analysis of what would be required to cut the council's services and jobs in order to bring the rate increase down to an acceptable figure.

Value

We will use those as a platform to mobilise support in Lambeth for a campaign against the government, demanding more central government funding. We will campaign over the next two months, and I'm suggesting that we should demonstrate the value of local government to the people of Lambeth and also to the Government itself by a week of action at the beginning of February, in which we will invite the trade unions to use all their resources, including industrial action, to ensure that Lambeth people understand what services from the council mean.



Will it lead the fightback?



Ted Knight speaking on November 1st

In other words, we would bring Lambeth to a halt in that week, and we would make an appeal to workers and to Labour councils throughout London and the rest of the country to join us in that action.

For the recall conference which was suggested for January, we would ask the Steering Committee to consider asking people to bring commitments as to what action they can take to support Lambeth in that particular week.

We will also be ap-

proaching the trade unions outside the local authority sector to invite their support in whatever form they think possible during that week.

At the present moment the trade unions in Lambeth are giving this consideration, and also the Labour parties will be considering this strategy over the next month.

If we're successful, and we come to a general agreement that it is a possible strategy, then we should be able to launch a major anti-

Tory campaign in favour of more central government funding and a change in policy between now and that week of action in February.

There is no way that we should confine this purely to an industrial or a council matter. We need public support. And that requires a campaign by the local Labour parties alongside the trade unions and the Labour council.

But the conference resolution called for Labour councils not to sell council houses. Will Lambeth be continuing to sell?

Issue

We won't be changing our view on this issue. We took our decision, not because we are in favour of the sale of council houses, but because, quite clearly, if we were to take a public stance on that issue then we would be liable to be heavily surcharged and excluded from office. Our view was that this was not the issue on which we could get our councillors excluded from office.

That still remains the position. There's a major fight ahead and we intend to be here for it. We don't intend to be diverted on a single issue.

But Greenwich council, and also a number of NALGO branches, have taken a stand against council house sales. They've started a struggle. Doesn't that change the situation?

Not at all. Greenwich is the only council that has firmly taken that position. The advice on which they took it is in my opinion very suspect — they were the

only council or Labour group that received advice that they were in no danger of being surcharged.

The fact that NALGO is involved in an industrial dispute is a decision for NALGO. It doesn't affect our position.

Is it not the case that Lambeth NALGO have protested against the council's decision?

Well, of course they have protested against it, because they are themselves in danger of being surcharged. What they have suggested is that we should take the danger of surcharge, and not them. Well, that's fine, but it's their decision, not ours.

Fine

But the conference did pass a resolution saying that councils should not sell council houses.

The conference was a platform from which guidelines were drawn. They also called on the TUC to prepare for a general strike. That's fine, but I don't necessarily think that we are guided by every resolution that was passed.

You have the conference, and it calls on councils, trade unions and so on to make various commitments. And then Lambeth Labour group, which was a leading force in organising the conference, comes back to another conference and says: We haven't carried out the action that the first conference called for. However, we've got another course of action, which we didn't put to the conference...

The conference agreed that individual councils and individual trade unions would take whatever action they thought was appropriate, including industrial action. We're suggesting that we've got to take a stand in February. We're going to the conference with a positive position, calling on people to take whatever action they can to support us.

The conference called for Lambeth to take a stand, and it was not suggested that the only stand we could take was on the sale of council houses. Far from it, in fact. The emphasis of the conference was on the economic cuts which are being directed against local authorities.

What do you propose we do?

Carry out the commitments called for by the conference. Launch the broadest campaign you can for other councils and Labour parties...



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■ ■ ■ What do we do about the financial situation facing this Council?

■ ■ ■ Let's pursue this from a different angle. Even if you get very widespread support for the week of action in February, it is not probable that the Government will back down after one week. So we need to have some perspective for what happens after then. What perspective will you be putting forward?

■ ■ ■ We'll have to evaluate our position at that time. I can't speculate now.

■ ■ ■ What sort of campaigning activity would you like to see between now and February?

■ ■ ■ The Labour parties throughout the country should be mounting a campaign explaining what the Government is doing. Co-ordinated action in February could give them a focal point. That was what was missing at the conference: a focal point.

■ ■ ■ But the conference did make a proposal about the focal point. The conference said that to defeat the cuts, some councils must be prepared to take a stand against the Government. To the point where they say they're not making cuts, they're not raising the rates, they're not raising rents and charges. The labour movement must be mobilised to support them, through industrial action, through tenants' action and so on. If the Government tries to step in.

■ ■ ■ We could take the stand that we would make no cuts. But it requires more than one council taking that decision. You're not suggesting that we should take a decision now that the council should go bankrupt?

■ ■ ■ You can't mobilise forces if you say to people: 'We want you to go on

strike. If you're strong enough, if you force the Government to back down, then we won't make cuts. But if you're not strong enough, then we're sorry, but we're going to make the cuts and raise the rates and rents.

■ ■ ■ We're not saying that. We're saying we'll have to make an evaluation. We'll have to consult the trade unions.

■ ■ ■ It requires someone to go first. When you call on workers to go on strike, you're asking them to take risks, like the councillors would run risks by defying the Government. But the Tories won't be defeated until substantial sections of the labour movement are ready to take the risk...

■ ■ ■ That's right.

■ ■ ■ If Lambeth council, which has been put in quite a leading position, says it will go as far as it can short of taking that risk...

■ ■ ■ What risk? The councillors wouldn't be bankrupt. The workers in the Town Hall would have no wages. We can't take that decision ourselves. We must consult the unions.

■ ■ ■ You have had a conference at which a large part of the Lambeth labour movement was represented. You're in a very strong position, then, to go to the local labour movement and say you intend to carry out the policy decided by the conference.

■ ■ ■ That's exactly what we intend to do.

■ ■ ■ Except that the main line of action you're proposing is one that wasn't decided by conference, and other action which was called for, for example not selling council houses, you're not pursuing.

■ ■ ■ That's right. We have no intention of being excluded from the stage on that single issue.

■ ■ ■ I hope your paper will be backing Lambeth council in the stand it intends to take.

by Andrew Hornung

TRAPPED by a threatening mob on his return to England from France, Joseph Merrick alias the Elephant Man stammers fearfully, 'I'm not an animal. I'm a human being. I'm... a man.'

The same words appear on the posters advertising David Lynch's film, *The Elephant Man*, announcing presumably that this is (to quote the subtitle of a 1970 biography of Merrick) 'A Study in Human Dignity'.

But is it? Is it an account of the undiminished humanity of even the most hideously deformed person — at the same time a study of the easy inhumanity of normal society — or is it a piece of tasteless voyeurism tinged with horror?

Joseph Carey Merrick was born in Leicester in 1862. He was not deformed at birth, but when he was about two he developed a swelling in his lower lip which spread to his right cheek. Before long, his head became quite misshapen, deformed by hard protrusions on the forehead and a great pink fleshy mass on the right side of his face which further contorted his mouth.

His right arm and both feet also swelled, and huge folds of blotchy fungus-like skin hung over his back and hips. Today, the general condition of which this case is still the worst recorded is called fibromatosis. But in the 1860s, the condition was attributed to the fact that Merrick's mother had fallen during her fourth month of pregnancy after being panicked by a circus elephant.

After his mother's death in 1873, Merrick's father remarried and the eleven-year old boy, by then grotesquely deformed, was driven out into the streets to hawk. But passers-by turned away from him in horror, and his hawking brought him no reward but a good whipping from his father. His hawking finally came to an end in about 1880 when the commissioners refused to renew his license.

Alone and unable to find employment, Merrick throws himself on the ferocious charity of the workhouse. There he suffered for twelve weeks before he left, the acid mercies of the post-1834 Poor Law for ever etched on his mind. The filth and torment of the streets were preferable to the charity of Victorian capitalism, but soon he was forced to return to the workhouse rather than starve.

A study in human dignity?

Over the next four years, Joseph Merrick's life was ground between the millstones of workhouse discipline and a rapidly worsening deformity. In time it became almost impossible for him to eat and he was admitted to the Leicester Infirmary. 'I had to undergo an operation on my face, have three or four ounces of flesh cut away', he later recorded.

Now he hit on another idea — again preferable to the rigours of the workhouse: he wrote to a music hall star, Sam Torr, offering

hospital authorities and the horror of ordinary people. Merrick is not crushed by either the physical nor the spiritual torment however, and soon he is patronised by high society, even royalty, as a symbol of their Christian compassion towards the deserving unfortunate.

But dreadful ordeals still await him. The hospital caretaker leads a troop of drunks and whores to stare and mock at Merrick. His old 'owner', Byce, (presumably a fusion of two historical characters: Norman and



himself for exhibition as a freak. The Elephant Man 'act' was born.

Torr soon passed over his 'act' to the impresario Tom Norman. In 1884, while Norman was exhibiting the Elephant Man in a store front in Mile End, the 'act' was seen by the fashionable surgeon Frederick Treves.

David Lynch's film starts at this point. It takes us from Treves' 'great find' when Merrick was 21 to Merrick's death at the age of 27. We see the impersonality of the stiff-collared doctors, the hostility (at first) of the

an Austrian impresario who mistreated and cheated Merrick) recaptures him during this disgusting bacchanal and takes him to France to exhibit. There the Elephant Man is treated with even more violence than when Treves first found him chained, half-starved, beaten and broken in health.

On his escape and return to England, Merrick is chased by a mob that corners him, but he is rescued by police who take him back to Treves. Again he is feted by society, even receiving the applause of a theatre

audience as he shares the front of the royal box with Alexandra, Princess of Wales.

Shortly thereafter he dies at the hospital, choked to death by the weight of his head pressing on his windpipe, as he strives to sleep not as usual with his head on his knees, but head back on the pillow... as normal people do.

David Lynch's film departs from historical accuracy at a number of points. In itself that's no crime. Why shouldn't he fuse the character of the (apparently kind) Norman and the merciless Austrian impresario and come up with the disgusting Byce? Why shouldn't Merrick receive the plaudits of the theatre audience when in reality he sat unnoticed at the back of the box, screened off from the public?

There is no offence in that. Yet, the fact is, that every time Lynch departs from the truth, he presents us with one of the many scenes which fill the viewer with an overwhelming sense of revulsion. You are left wondering whether Lynch isn't more interested in a sort of emotional stunt work than in the development of his announced theme of human dignity or any other less developed themes.

Not long before I saw *The Elephant Man*, I saw Tod Browning's 1932 film *Freaks*. Banned until 1963, this film had a reputation for being tastelessly voyeuristic. But, in fact, it is not. You leave *Freaks* feeling unpatronising admiration for the solidarity of the circus freaks, feeling a common bond of warm humanity with them and only hate for those who seek to exploit them. *The Elephant Man*, by contrast, just makes you feel sick and appalled.

When Byce's sideshow is closed down, the police give as their reason that 'This exhibit will degrade the viewer'. Of course, this is nonsense: it is the fact of exhibition not the exhibit itself that degrades. The same is true of the film: it is not Joseph Merrick, brilliantly played by John Hurt, who degrades, it is the way his wretchedness is exhibited for commercial gain that degrades.

Soon after, Byce arrives at the hospital to reclaim his human 'property': 'He is my livelihood. He is the greatest freak in the world', he snarls at Treves. 'You only want the freak to show those doctor friends to make a name for yourself.' Perhaps the same accusation should have been snarled at David Lynch.

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Nicaragua faces the Reagan doctrine

WAR-DEVASTATED Nicaragua is now unlikely to receive the \$75 million in aid promised by the US Government.

Carter and the US Congress eventually decided to offer the aid as a way to strengthen the influence of the leading industrialists who are members of Nicaragua's Government of National Salvation, and curb the influence of the left-wing Sandinista guerrilla leaders who led the overthrow of the pro-US Somoza regime in 1979.

Reagan's new administration has a more aggressive approach to the problem that the Sandinista-led government raises for the US in the unstable situation in Central America. This has led to a crisis in the Nicaraguan government — but also a crisis for the bosses on how to conduct themselves.

On November 12th, a week

after the presidential election, the 11 pro-bourgeois members of the country's Council of State walked out. They were the representatives of the Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP, the main employers' organisation), the National Democratic Movement (MDN, the most right wing of the legal political parties), and two small right-wing trade union federations.

The pretext for the walk-out was a ban by the security forces on an MDN rally on November 9th — but the real reason seems to be that they lost an opportunity to influence the government from the inside because statements from Reagan's aides seemed to indicate that the government would not get the aid anyway.

The approach of pressuring the Sandinistas, using US aid as a lever, has worked well so far for the bourgeoisie in Nicaragua. Despite the complete dismantling of the old state machine — the National Guard, for example, was disbanded, and

most of its members fled either to Honduras or to the USA — the Sandinistas have made concession after concession to private business, under threats of resignations and aid cut-offs.

Now the Nicaraguan industrialists are out on a limb. They can climb down; they can wait, perhaps vainly, for the Sandinistas to make further concessions to win back US aid; or they can try to stage a coup, with US support.

On November 18th the Sandinista security forces shot one leading industrialist allegedly involved in a coup attempt. Jorge Salazar Arguello, the president of the Agricultural Producers of Nicaragua, was shot while allegedly running guns.

Two other members of COSEP, Mario Henon and Alejandro Salazar, were charged on the same day with attempting to 'undermine national security', and Henon has been held in



custody.

With the shift in US policy towards central America, the Sandinista leaders' hopes of a 'middle course' between subservience to the US and an assault on capitalism are fading. The coup threats — at present feeble and maybe even fictitious — will grow if the Reagan administration is prepared to send troops in. In Guatemala in 1954 that was the result of the 'Truman Doctrine': what will the 'Reagan Doctrine' be in 1981?

Further concessions by the Sandinista leaders will not only further harm the interests of a working class already plagued by the food and housing shortages caused by the civil war and its aftermath, but will also strengthen the confidence of the Nicaraguan bosses and their US backers.

by Alexis Carras

THE POLISH 'Communist Party' authorities backed down once again last week, in the face of growing anger and militancy among workers.

On Thursday 27 November, Jan Narozniak and Piotr Sapelo were released by the authorities after being held in detention for about a week. They had been arrested the previous Friday, charged with revealing state secrets.

Narozniak is a printer for the Warsaw section of the new oppositional trade union movement, Solidarnosc. Sapelo, an employee of the Prosecutor General's office, was accused of leaking a secret internal memorandum on how the police and the secret police should attempt to harass the growing dissident movement.

The bureaucrats' climb-down came after a growing strike wave and the threat of further strikes. The demand for the release of Narozniak and Sapelo was taken up by tens of thousands of workers throughout Poland, dovetailing with other grievances over wages, corruption, and the dismissal of state and party hacks. The slogan, 'Today Narozniak, tomorrow Walesa, and then YOU', became national.

On Monday 24th November the railworkers of Warsaw and Gdansk came out on strike for 10 hours. The same day the Ursus tractor

Russia: Hands off!

POLISH WORKERS WIN ANOTHER VICTORY

factory on the outskirts of Warsaw, one of the largest factories in the country, struck for the release of Narozniak. The assembly line section stayed out indefinitely.

In Lodz textile workers' delegates from all over Poland occupied a building until their wage demands were satisfied. In Bielsko-Biala, an industrial city near the Czech border, workers demanded the sacking of local officials for corruption and their utter failure to come to terms with the new workers' unions.

Head

The events in Bielsko-Biala were almost a carbon copy of the fight in Czesochowa two weeks before, which forced the resignation of the local party head.

In the city of Olstyn the first Secretary of the local Party was accused of mis-

appropriating millions of zlotys. While workers lacked even the most basic of services, like decent hospitals, the bureaucrats had built huge plush headquarters for their own use.

Workers in the sugar industry also came out that Monday. Their strike had already been delayed by Solidarnosc representatives for 15 days, as 'inopportune'. However, the denunciation in the Diet (Parliament) by a vice prime minister of their 'unrealistic' wage demands and their supposed responsibility in aggravating the already acute shortage of sugar and related products in the shops, was the last straw for these workers.

In Warsaw again, the workers in the FSO car factory came out on a one-hour strike for Narozniak. That same night the presidium of the Warsaw-based unions demanded the release of Narozniak and added five other demands:

action to be brought against the Prosecutor General; the cessation of all action against those accused of supposed anti-socialist activities; the Parliament to set up a joint Government/Solidarnosc commission to investigate the police and secret police, as well as the legality of the document which Narozniak was arrested for possessing; a reduction in the budget of the security forces; and an investigation into who was responsible for the massacre of workers in 1970 and the subsequent attacks on militants in 1976.

Nine

The following day the nine largest mines in Byton (Silesia) struck for wage rises. That week also saw the huge Huta Warszawa steelworks come out in support of the six demands of the Warsaw trade unions.

A general strike in Warsaw was now on the agenda if the Government did not concede to the workers' demands.

To head off this threat, on Thursday morning Narozniak and Sapelo were released. But some strikes continued, and it took Walesa's personal intervention to convince the workers to go back at Huta Warszawa.

If they did not, Walesa warned, the Government's answer would be guns and mortars. A partial victory had been won, he argued: for the moment the workers could not go any further.

By backing down, the bureaucracy has again opted for the soft course: fob off the growing anger of the working class with more promises of talks and committees. Just buy time, seems to be Kania's rallying cry.

Alleys

There can be no doubt that the promises about joint Government/Solidarnosc commissions will come to nothing. They will be bogged down in bureaucratic blind alleys.

The agreements which the workers wrested from the government over the summer — the 21 demands — have still to be fulfilled. Agreed wage increases are only granted after strikes and pressure from the rank and file.

The Polish bureaucracy will never allow an inquest into its political malpractices. There are too many skeletons in this cupboard, untold numbers of victims killed or morally broken in the underground chambers of the secret police. And too many in power at the moment who are thoroughly

inculcated in these crimes against the working class, starting with the present head of the CP, Stanislaw Kania, who headed the internal security services during the last decade.

The Polish police state will guard or try to guard these secrets closely. Exposure of these crimes would tear to shreds the last remaining 'credibility' of the reformers. An attempt at outright military repression of the working class would then be the only option for the bureaucracy; or, more likely, the present rulers would be swept away by Warsaw Pact tanks and troops.

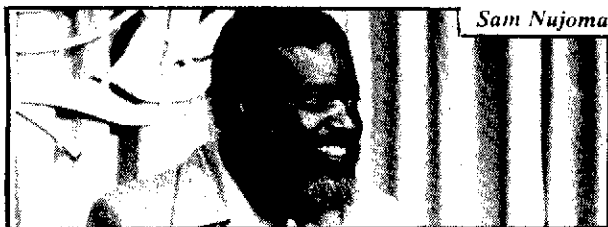
The noises from Moscow are becoming increasingly ominous, while the mouthpieces of the Russian rulers, the servile cretins of East Germany and Czechoslovakia, are waxing more and more indignant at the events in Poland. Their responsibility is to establish the 'ideological case' to indict the Polish working class 'for anti-socialist activities'.

Solidarnosc, Walesa, and KOR are damned as saboteurs, collaborators with the imperialists, even as fascists.

Virus

Truth was never a consideration with the Stalinists, and when it comes to defending their power and stopping the Polish virus spreading, any dirty smear, lie or abuse is permissible.

But for the growing numbers of workers who see through those lies, the abuse and threats must be further proof of the need to completely overturn the power of the bureaucrats.



Sam Nujoma

by John Gates

ON Wednesday 10th December, Sam Nujoma, ex-railway worker and now President of SWAPO, the Namibian national liberation movement, will fly into London to address a public rally at Friends' Meeting House, Euston Rd (starting at 7pm).

His visit coincides with a renewed diplomatic offensive on SWAPO by the imperialist states, led in this case by Great Britain, with Lord Carrington at the helm, and the USA, with Reagan's mentor Henry Kissinger entering the fray.

The other imperialist states involved are West Germany, France and Canada, making up what SWAPO calls the 'Gang of Five', or what they themselves called the 'Western Contact Group', originally formed in 1977 under Labour-traitor Dr Owen.

The renewed offensive involves bludgeoning the SWAPO leadership to speak directly to a string of South African sponsored groupings from South African-occupied Namibia about arrangements for a UN independence election. The Gang of Five, using their position of hegemony in the UN Security Council, got top UN bureaucrat Waldheim to issue a report last week calling for a UN conference on Namibia in January involving all the

'Namibian political parties' in order to settle the election arrangements.

The problem is that the rapidly escalating war in Namibia is being fought by several thousand SWAPO guerrillas, on the one hand, and by a colossal South African army of occupation on the other. In order to allow all Namibians a nation-wide vote for a constituent assembly, as in the UN plan, only the South African rulers can order the required prior withdrawal of their army.

If the UN allows a dozen puppet groups into the conference in place of South Africa, despite the almost universal assumption that SWAPO would win hands down in any remotely fair election, the chances of getting South Africa out before an election will be dramatically reduced by their clients' objections at the proposed January conference.

Already the major client group in Windhoek, the South African-appointed, tribally-based DTA, is threatening to try to get its own private armies exempted from demobilisation as required under the UN plan and white settler politicians inside and outside the DTA are demanding Lancaster-House-type 'safeguards' for their property. Under the UN plan, the latter issue should be shelved until the Namibian constituent assembly is elected.

The imperialists know

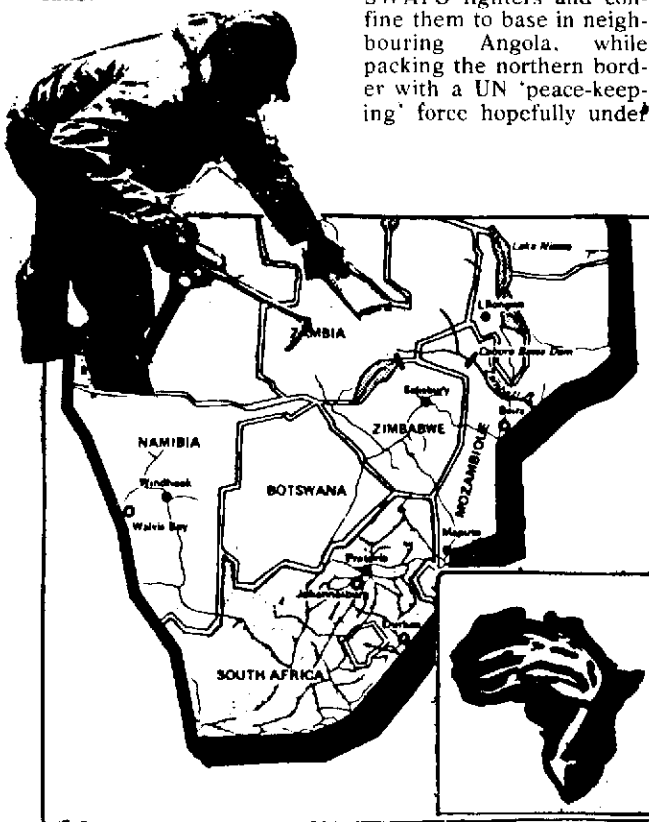
that there will be no stopping the growing war, which has spread into Southern Angola and deep into Namibia, short of a SWAPO government. For them, the January conference is merely the latest stage in a calculated effort to ensure that a future SWAPO regime would have its hands tied to capitalist property guarantees by an elaborate web of military and police arrangements.

Already, in the UN plan, the mushrooming South African Police will be responsible for 'law and order' during the 7-month election period. Walvis Bay, Namibia's only deep-water port, will remain militarily occupied by South Africa. The South African Administrator General and his civil service will remain intact, only to be watched by the UN Special Representative overseeing the election. And 1,500 South African troops will remain in monitored bases in the north.

'Our' Dr Owen, with US Uncle Tom Andy Young, forced these measures into the original 1978 UN plan. Now robber-baron Carrington and CIA shuttlecock Henry Kissinger are busy dragging out new leg-irons for the future Namibian government from the ageing treasure-chest of neo-colonialism.

Carrington has a personal stake in Namibia as ex-director and shareholder of Rio Tinto Zinc (Britain's largest mining multinational) and Barclays Bank (the biggest single UK company in Southern Africa). Barclays dominates the financial swindle in Namibia and RTZ has — with the

help of Tony Benn, who signed the original contracts in 1970 — made Namibia Britain's nuclear colony, by developing the world's largest uranium mine there, to supply one half of Britain's yellow-cake.



With fortunes like this to be made out of Namibia's brutally oppressed working class (about 90% of all Namibia's families are to some extent wage-dependent), with super-profits coming from the large variety of diamond, uranium, copper, zinc, silver, tin and tungsten mines, the likes

of Carrington (not to mention Her Majesty, who receives dividends from RTZ) are eager to clip the general socialist aspirations of SWAPO.

Carrington's recipe so far has been to try to clear out SWAPO fighters and confine them to base in neighbouring Angola, while packing the northern border with a UN 'peace-keeping' force hopefully under

blocking implementation of the UN plan. Namibia is the only 'soil on earth' where the UN is supposed to be the sovereign power — but the UN had its teeth extracted by imperialist-Stalinist agreement at its post-Second World War birth, and is only riding the backs of SWAPO's liberation army to get the South African army out.

SWAPO is the only political movement in Namibia independent of South Africa, the only one which has the confidence of the masses in its 20-year battle, the only one generally committed to socialist reforms, and, most importantly, the only movement which has armed the oppressed to bravely confront the bulk of South Africa's operational forces. All socialists must help to defend SWAPO against the racists and our ruling class.



Give Sam Nujoma the reception SWAPO deserves, as an important contemporary ally of the slowly awakening British working class.

Also on the platform are Fennis Augustine, from Grenada, and Ray Buckton (ASLEF General Secretary and Deputy Chairman of the TUC International Committee); but he may be a bit lost for words recounting what the TUC and Labour Party leaders have done to assist the Namibian struggle.

See you there.

Strathclyde stewards plan action committee

by John Wilde

A CALL FOR a Strathclyde action committee of shop stewards and workplace delegates was made at a conference on Nov 17th called by the sacked Joint Shop Stewards Committee from the Hunterston oil rig construction site.

About 200 delegates and observers attended from stewards' committees, LPs and Trades Councils.

The Hunterston dispute has highlighted the apparent inability of the Scottish TUC to take any lead against redundancies. In fact, the forthcoming Convention

against Unemployment called by the STUC General Council will include representatives of employers' organisations and the churches. Jimmy Milne, General Secretary of the STUC, saw fit to condemn the Hunterston conference on TV as 'divisive'.

The lack of official support for the Hunterston workers and the sell-out deal agreed by the executives of the GMWU and the Boiler-makers' Union has meant the loss of 300 jobs; victimisation of shop stewards; re-employment of workers at the bosses' discretion; surrender of the right to seek changes

in the working agreement and the right to strike; a mandate for the bosses to bring in subcontractors whenever they wish; and job flexibility in many areas.

All this without any acceptance of the workers' demands on safety. Ronnie Munro, the site convenor, told SO that there were now no shop stewards or safety reps on site, and conditions were so bad that some workers who were re-employed after the lockout have since left.

48 workers arrested during the dispute in what the JSSC described as a 'military-style operation' against a

peaceful picket still face charges.

The resolution passed at the conference called for a delegate committee to be formed from the workplaces, to get a united campaign linking all sections facing redundancies, closures, and public service cuts, and those resisting wage cuts. The committee should give support to workers occupying their factories to defend jobs, and help to organise the unemployed in trade unions.

The conference resolution also calls for all branches of the GMWU and Boiler-makers to demand complete reversal of the Hunterston

agreement, and full reinstatement of the jobs, conditions and shop stewards on the site.

The Hunterston stewards are applying for delegacies to the STUC Convention, and a meeting of trades councils in Perth to put their case. And a further conference will be held, probably in the New Year, to win wider support.

Meanwhile, the Scottish Graphical Division of SOGAT (West Branch) has called on the Glasgow Trades Council to convene a permanent Strathclyde Shop Stewards' Committee which

could organise immediate practical assistance to workers threatened with redundancy. This call has since been taken up by the LPYS, who have circulated a leaflet asking for support to be raised for the resolution in union branches and Labour Parties.

Supporters of SO and Socialist Press plan a leaflet for the STUC Convention calling for a break with the present collaboration with the bosses and for a lead to be given by the STUC. We also hope to hold a lunchtime fringe meeting.

**FORD
GET
SET
FOR A
FIGHT**

by Les Hearn

Ford workers have overwhelmingly backed their unions' negotiators who rejected the company's 'final' offer of 9.5% with nothing on hours. This was in response to a claim for a substantial amount (believed to have been about 20%) and an immediate reduction of one hour in the working week as a step towards a 35 hour week.

In the Halewood plant press shop on Nov. 26th a worker was suspended in a dispute over job rotation (a right previously won to combat boredom). 22 other workers who refused to do his job were then suspended, followed by a further 350 press shop workers who were in sympathy. Under these new procedures suspensions are automatically extended to the next shift as well.

Day shift workers were also penalised for solidarity action resulting in lay-offs in both Body and Assembly plants. Workers believe management may be using the big stick to try to solve technical problems arising from the introduction of new machinery.

In any case, a strong response from Ford's unions is necessary to roll back the company's offensive on discipline and to ensure that Ford workers do not suffer a substantial cut in living standards. In contrast, the union negotiators have no plans for industrial action, Ron Todd of the TGWU saying only that he could not rule it out.

There must be an immediate National Shop Stewards Conference to organise all-out strike action for 20% and a 35 hour week and to force withdrawal of the dictatorial disciplinary measures.

Ford has been up to its tricks in other countries too. In Cologne, 8000 Ford workers have been laid off, following 8000 sackings in August this year, with a recession in the W.German car industry being blamed.

International solidarity between Ford workers is essential to prevent the company shifting production back and forth to defeat isolated struggles.

After the 6.8pc sell-out FURY AT LONGBRIDGE

by a TGWU SHOP STEWARD

THE ATMOSPHERE at BL Longbridge is like a tinder box. Continual attacks on working conditions, mounting speed-up, arbitrary lay-offs, and arrogant, dictatorial management — all this, combined with the 6.8% pay insult, rammed down our throats by spineless union leaders, lay behind the Longbridge 'riots' a fortnight ago.

The spark that set off the tinder box was a company-provoked dispute in the Trentham seat-build shop. The bosses had imposed a standard of 25 sets of seats

per man per shift. The workers insisted that the maximum they could reasonably be expected to produce was 22.

It was also pointed out that the company was keeping the seat-build area deliberately undermanned, and using only 58 out of the available 90 jigs. The company gave a commitment a few years ago to maximise labour in trim areas (like the seat-build) in exchange for the introduction of new technology on the body side, so the seat-builders not unreasonably told the company that if they wanted more seats they would have to bring in more labour.

But the bosses refused to budge and announced instead that they intended to bring in seats from an

outside firm — blatantly breaking their promise to maximise labour in the trim areas.

When the first batch of 'out-sourced' seats arrived on Thursday 20th, storemen declared them black and refused to unload. The storemen were put into dispute and the seat-builders came out in solidarity.



The next day the company did something which seems to have become their standard policy over the last few months — they laid off every single worker on the Metro chain, and blamed the men who were in dispute. The company's aim was obviously to use the lay-offs to pressurise the storemen and seat-builders into submission, and also use this opportunity to clear up some of the 6,000 Metros awaiting rectification.

They had done exactly the same thing for two days the previous week, and had even sent the night shift home at 11.30pm. But this time their little trick backfired on them. 500 workers in the CAB1 Metro trim shop held an angry meeting and voted to march on the management's offices and tell the bosses just how we felt.

While we were at it, we decided to picket the end of the Allegro tracks to stop that model as well. We also paid a call on the works committee office to let the senior stewards know how we felt about the bureaucratic style of the plant

leadership and the 6.8% sell-out.

But our main fire was saved for the bosses. The demonstration culminated in a seige and partial occupation of 'The Kremlin' — the inner sanctum of the top Longbridge management. Plant director Stan Mullet was forced to come out and face the workers he treats like casual labour.

Mullet and the other bosses attempted to turn the trim shop's anger against the seat-builders, but the meeting would have none of it. When Mullet refused to even consider any payment for the lay-offs, the blokes simply overturned the tables and walked out.

From there we went out and joined the assembly shop workers who were picketing the gates.



On the following Tuesday the seat builders voted by a narrow majority to accept a compromise deal negotiated by the works committee — to lift the black on the out-sourced seats in exchange for a vague promise of more labour. When the CAB1 trim shop night shift was recalled, a shop meeting voted unanimously to take 'whatever action is necessary' to resist future lay-offs and to defend anyone victimised because of the protest.

That night another dispute stopped all Metro production from 11pm — but this time there were no lay-offs.

Manchester housing: Sackings are defeated, but it's a sell-out

by Anna Twentyman

The ten Manchester housing department workers sacked for carrying out their union's policy of no cover for unfilled vacancies have been reinstated. The 800 members of NUPE, NALGO and MATSA who came out in their support have now returned to work.

But the union leaderships got the members back to work on the basis that they'd got the senior management to agree to put off their 'restructuring' proposals, i.e. cuts, for a month, while there are consultations with the unions.

So now, after a three week strike on the issue of refusal

to cover, Manchester housing is in fact covering for unfilled vacancies.

The cuts the management want to make consist of various regrading schemes. By regrading posts they can reduce the wage bill at the same time as increasing the work load. For instance, a housing officer who has left recently will be replaced by a housing clerk who will be paid less, but will be doing the, if not more, work.

The union leaders have sold out the members. There was no question of the solidarity of the strike, as there had been a march of 3,000 only the week before through the centre of Manchester.

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8 arrested in Edinburgh

ON SATURDAY November 29th three people were arrested in Edinburgh for taking part in an open-air rally in support of the H Block hunger strikers.

The rally, organised by the Revolutionary Communist Group and supported by the Scottish Hunger Strikers Action Committee, was broken up by the police although the site is regularly used for meetings by all sorts of political and religious organisations.

Immediately a number of people went to protest outside the police station in Gayfield Square and were told that this was the continuation of a banned meeting.

Five more people including an SO supporter were then arrested for refusing to stop this protest action. They were released after three hours after intervention by two Lothian Regional Councillors and one Edinburgh District Councillor.

A defence campaign has been launched to draw attention to police censorship on Ireland, the fight for the dropping of charges and to highlight the Hunger Strikers fight for political status.

Please send donations and messages of support to the Edinburgh Aid Defence Campaign, Box 40, First of May bookshop, Candlemaker Rd, Edinburgh.

Lothian plans no cuts for 1980-1

by Joe Baxter

LOTHIAN Regional Council is to make no cuts next year. Despite threats from Secretary of State for Scotland George Younger, this Labour-controlled authority, covering the area round Edinburgh, has been told by the local Labour parties to protect services and budget for growth where it is needed. Finance must come from the rates, aggregate and General Management Committee meetings of the regional party decided on Sunday 23rd November.

Taken at face value, this policy is a step back from that taken last year. Then the regional party declared against rate rises as well as cuts, and instructed the officers to investigate the implementation of such a plan.

But as the Regional Party Secretary told this year's aggregate, 'No work has been done by the party to build support for that policy.'

Socialist Organiser supporters moved an amendment for no cuts and no rate rises. We argued that even if local authorities in Scotland do have the option of raising rates this year (which is not sure) those in England and Wales do not. Lothian will be weakening the common fight if it does not fight for no cuts and no rate rises.

The reply was that the Council must first have guarantees of support from trade unions for such a policy. But what about the role of a bold stand by the Council in winning that support?

A resolution was passed from Edinburgh Central CLP mandating the Regional Party to call a labour movement conference on how best to prevent the Tories from forcing local authorities 'either to cut the public services or to reduce the standard of living of the working class by imposing rate increases.'

So the debate, and the fight, will continue. And we must make sure that decisions are not taken and then not campaigned for, like last year.

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Socialist Organiser BACK PAGE

More NI for less NHS

Martin Barclay [Cardiff NUPE] argues that the health service union leaders' 'wait and see' attitude on their pay claim [due for settlement this month] can only help the Tories swindle the low-paid.

IF THEY ARE lacking elsewhere, Tories certainly have no lack of nerve. Only weeks after the Government announces the 6% limit on pay in the public sector, Sir Geoffrey Howe puts National Insurance contributions up by £1.

On the one hand, he doles out a few crumbs to the low paid, on the other he takes it back through deductions in the pay packet, 6% on the basic grade for the lowest paid full-time health worker will mean a paltry £3.37 — and that's *before* tax! This will give them the magnificent sum of £59.57.

While the Tories mean to take back only 1/3 of that increase in bigger deductions, the real irony is that NI contributions are meant, in part, to pay for the health service. So what we are effectively being asked to

do is to finance part of our own pay rise.

On top of that the NHS is steadily being ripped to shreds through cuts and closures.

S. Glamorgan Area Health Authority, for example, has just announced that 400 jobs are to go and two hospitals are to close with a further two short-listed for closure. We are being asked to pay more NI for an ever-dwindling service.

With the settlement date for health workers on December 15th, NUPE full-timers are running scared of any fight against the 6%. They prefer to blame the attitudes of "the women" for low morale and the lack of a fighting spirit. Instead of building support for strike action, they are sitting back and hoping that victory for the firemen will bring an improved offer.

Civil service: 50,000 rally against the 6pc

by Stephen Corbishley

AT THE end of the civil service unions' week of action against the 6 per cent limit, the Tory government contemptuously announced a further cutback in civil service jobs: an all-round cut of 10%, to be achieved no later than 1983.

But the rallies and walk-outs in the last week of November brought out 50,000 workers. Many others are angry at the Tories' policy

but unwilling to join the bureaucrats' token actions.

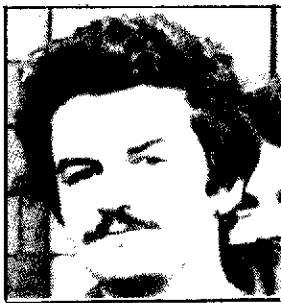
Serious action is unlikely until after the CPSA and SCPS special conferences in late January, but the Left will be using the delay to organise. We must argue the need for all-out action — rather than the selective action the bureaucrats are likely to prefer — and for local rank and file coordinating committees of all the civil service unions.

THE TORIES' 6 per cent pay policy can be beaten. On Monday 1 December the local authority employers backed down and offered firemen the 18.8% they were due under the 1978 settlement.

The employers' efforts to get cuts accepted 'in return' for this pay rise failed. The only concession they got out of the Fire Brigades Union was a staggering of the pay rise, 13 per cent is to be paid immediately and 5.8 per cent next April.

Although the one-day

by Doug Mackay [FBU]



strike planned for Wednesday 3rd was called off, the firemen will remain on work-to-rule until the agreement is finalised — to make sure there is no trickery by the employers and no backsliding by the FBU leaders.

The firemen won:

- Thanks to their resolve to use industrial action. A series of lightning one-day strikes was planned, which would have tied down large numbers of costly army personnel and equipment. And FBU militants were already pressing for an all-out stoppage to follow the lightning strikes.

- Thanks to the solidarity of other fire service workers. The National Association of Fire Officers, which



PHOTO: COLIN CHALMERS

After the firemen's victory

Unite against the 6pc limit

scabbed on the last firemen's strike, said it would give support this time. And large numbers of retained (part-time) firemen also decided to back the FBU.

The (mainly female) fire control staff joined the 1977-8 strike out of loyalty to the union, standing to gain nothing from it directly. This time, however, they had a direct interest in guaranteeing their support: their own pay agreement was likely to be scrapped if the employers got away with flouting the firemen's agreement.

- Thanks to support from other unions. The TUC declared support for the firemen. It also has policy against the army being used in industrial disputes. Some rank and file trade unionists followed up this policy: POEU members in Worcester, for example, refused to install extra phone lines for an emergency fire control centre.

- But no thanks to the leaders of other public service unions, who sat on the sidelines and 'waited to see how the firemen got on'.

Now the employers have caved in, they will try to argue that the firemen are a 'special case'. But they

didn't see anything special about the firemen before. The firemen got the same 6 per cent 'offer' as everyone else. What changed that, what made the firemen 'special', was their readiness to take industrial action, and their success in winning solidarity.

The same militancy and the same drive for solidarity can force a way through the 6 per cent limit for other workers, too.

It will probably take more of a fight. The firemen (32,000 of them) are few enough that the employers can absorb the cost of a pay rise into their budgets fairly easily. For over one million council manual workers, and for the health service ancillary workers, the stakes are higher.

For them, the fight for a pay rise is not only a fight against the local authority employers, but also a fight against the Government's policy of cash limits on public services.

But the firemen have shown the way to win. And now is the time for socialists and militants in other public services to organise to force their union leaders to start

united industrial action against the 6 per cent limit.

For the firemen, meanwhile, the next struggle will be one to defend the fire service against cuts in jobs and quality of protection. But they are stronger for that struggle now after their victory on wages. And they know what weapons will serve to beat back the employers' attack.

Christmas

THE NEXT issue of Socialist Organiser will be dated January 10th.

On our usual schedule it would be dated December 20th — but in the fortnight after the 20th labour movement activity will be mostly at a standstill for the holiday period. For that date we will therefore be bringing out a special Socialist Organiser pamphlet on the fight for a Workers' Government, instead of the usual paper.

We offer our readers our best wishes for the holiday period — and we hope you'll keep in mind our fund drive (£500 a month needed!), and the deadline for articles for the next Socialist Organiser: Friday 2 January.

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Telling the council what we think

by Mick O'Sullivan

ON MONDAY 24th, about 50 workers from Haringey Direct Labour department lobbied a meeting of the Labour Council which was due to hear a deputation from the local campaign against school closures and a debate on the future of the Direct Labour.

The workers' contingent, mobilised at short notice, swelled the ranks of teachers and parents who had come to demonstrate against the school cuts.

When the Direct Labour convenor asked for workers to go into the meeting, everyone moved into the civic centre. Various petty officials found themselves brush-

ed aside as we made our way to the public gallery.

As the Mayoress led the procession of councillors into the chamber, the gallery applauded, adding suitable boos for the Tories. That set the tone for what was to follow.

When the deputation on school closures was called, applause broke out. The deputation had the Labour Council squirming. Destroying the 'educational' arguments, they demanded the council come clean and admit it was closing schools to make cuts. The council declined and moved next business.

Next business was a question by the Tories about the number of unswept leaves in Muswell Hill (the middle-class area of the borough).

Shouts of derision and laughter accompanied the debate on leaves. The cloak of municipal pomp slipped round the councillors' ankles as they squirmed in their leather chairs. The mayoress threatened to call the police if the gallery continued to protest. Eventually her nerve broke and the meeting was adjourned. As the disgruntled councillors began to walk out, they were bombarded with flour bombs, making a mess of Tory and Labour councillors alike.

The police arrived and lined the back of the gallery. After a while, the workers agreed to let the council continue.

Three more final warnings were issued before our patience was finally broken

when the council decided not to vote on school closures. This time the police cleared the gallery.

We never did hear the discussion on direct works. We did, however, get our point over.

For many workers it was the first time they had seen the majesty of Haringey council, and there could be no better way of meeting the councillors. Their patronising smiles and 'leave it to me' attitudes were stripped away, and they were seen as a spineless bunch of incompetents scared of our presence (and that was only 50 of us).

They got the message about what Direct Labour department workers think of cuts, and we were able to give a boost to the campaign against school closures.