

Socialist Organiser

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20p

Join the LABOUR PARTY

Write to 150 Walworth Rd, London SE17 1JT

May 7 was only the start

THE MAY 7 county elections showed people's anger against the Tories. But the fight does not stop at the ballot box.

Under the last Tory government, Clay Cross showed what impact even a tiny Labour council could have in rallying the fightback. If even one of the newly-elected big city Labour councils takes the same fearless line as Clay Cross, then it can play a decisive role in rousing workers to cripple and shatter this Tory government.

Powerful forces are working to block this possibility.

The Tories are planning new regulations to limit business rates (not household rates). They can cut off central government money to rebel councils. They can call in the law as they did with Clay Cross or more recently with Camden.

The press is backing them up with a red scare.

And some of Labour's right wing is helping the press. Ousted GLC Labour leader Andrew McIntosh, for example, fed the New Standard a story about his replacement as Labour leader by Ken Livingstone being a shocking, sinister 'County Hall coup'.

The Left was caucusing, complained McIntosh in pious horror. As if the Right didn't caucus!

It's all nonsense, because Livingstone's election as leader was no surprise, and the GLC Labour Left makes no secret about its caucuses. Caucuses and factions are a normal part of democratic political life. When Stalinist-type parties ban them, they are really saying that only one caucus is allowed; the existing leadership.

Michael Foot has, shamefully, helped McIntosh, discreetly telling the press that he is 'unhappy' about the left-wing victory on the GLC.

Against this line-up, there is neither wisdom nor sense in just relying on the good intentions of individuals on the GLC or other councils.

Only a strong labour movement, ready to make councillors the spokespeople for a mobilised rank and file, can ensure a fight against the Tories. The first task after May 7 must be to make active Labour members from passive Labour voters, and to step up the campaigns against the cuts.

'THERE are two parts to our manifesto. We'll be cutting fares and school meal prices, and so on. And secondly, we'll use the whole structure of the GLC to support trade unionists in struggle throughout London — set up a trade union resource centre, identify the council with trade union struggles, and work with the trade unions to try to bring this Government down ahead of its time'.

Ken Livingstone, newly-elected Labour GLC leader, speaking to Socialist Organiser, April 4th.

More on page 3

BOOT OUT THE TORIES!



See p.7,8,9,10
4 page EXTRA
on the jobs fight

Political status now

BOBBY SANDS and now Frankie Hughes have been forced to death because the Tories want to maintain the pretence that they are not political prisoners.

It is pretence, maintained only to save face for the Tories and to conciliate bigots like Ian Paisley.

The Catholics of Northern Ireland have been trapped in an artificial sectarian state for 60 years. They demanded civil rights and got beatings, bullets and pogroms. They

fight back with guns because that's the only way they can see how in a gerrymandered state under military occupation.

They are hunted by special security forces under special laws; interrogated in special centres, where — even according to official reports — they are tortured; convicted in special no-jury courts where confessions obtained in the interrogation centres are decisive evidence. The prisoners are political prisoners.

Even the Tories admitted this as recently as 1972-6.

So why are Labour leaders going along with the Tories, even going further as when Concannon visited Bobby Sands on his death-bed to assure him that Labour would not support political status?

Tony Benn has said troops should be withdrawn (but replaced by UN troops — how would they be different?). The break with the shameful record of Labour echoing everything the Tories say is

welcome.

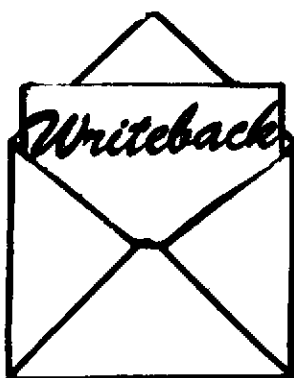
But what does it mean now? The troops are there now. The sectarian, unjust structure they help prop up is there. Its victims are fighting back, fighting for the elementary human dignity of political status when they are taken prisoner in the fight.

Do we support them or do we support the British Government's face-saving and concessions to Paisley? Labour must say: political status now!

More on pp 4-5



Frankie Hughes



Write back to Socialist Organiser, c/o 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Asians and Labour

CONCLUDING his article on Brent East CLP (SO 38), Mick Woods said that the new Asian members 'must be integrated' into the local Labour Party. The words suggest a passive adaptation to the needs and methods of the almost entirely white labour movement; but I assume he means that we must expect Asian comrades coming into the Party themselves to actively transform it through their experience of oppression and their fight against it. If this does not occur, the cycle of oppression will be repeated... within the labour movement.

JOHN MACDONALD, Edinburgh.

Rate rises: a necessary retreat

YOUR ATTACK (April 4th editorial) on London Labour Briefing for its 'rate rise' policy requires a clear answer.

Briefing does not support the recent cuts made in Lambeth, or indeed the cuts made by any other Labour council. On the contrary, as you must know, Briefing has organised an effective campaign in the London Labour Party against councillors who have refused to fight Heseltine's cuts.

However, Briefing remains convinced that the 'no rate rises' position of Socialist Organiser and most of the rest of the revolutionary left has been an abstentionist position which has given no lead as to how Heseltine should be fought.

Had Ted Knight, for example, carried through such a policy, Lambeth would now have suffered massive cuts and redundancies at the hands of Heseltine's agents. In short, the 'no cuts' position requiring rate rises has been a necessary, temporary retreat whilst the forces are

assembled both in the local Labour councils and in the trade unions and tenant organisations to support councils prepared to defend services and refuse to make rent or rate increases.

The level of resistance to the Tories, begun by the miners, and the success of revolutionary and other left-wingers inside the Labour Party, has now created the position where such a fight ought to be possible.

Briefing has not been slow to criticise Ted Knight and others who have made cuts and thus weakened the support for Labour amongst sections of the working class. However, the major portion of blame for these decisions lies with the refusal of Labour councillors across the country to support Lambeth with equally strong 'no cuts' positions.

Socialist Organiser, with its self-fulfilling prophecy that Knight and Livingstone would cut, has taken up the cosy propagandist position so beloved of large sections of the revolutionary left that 'Labour will always betray', etc.

What is needed in the coming period is a firm commitment by Socialist Organiser to replace Labour councillors who have failed to fight cuts with its own supporters and others who are determined to spread the example of Lambeth's battle across the whole country. It would be a great step forward for Socialist Organiser and Briefing to combine their efforts to ensure that in London, Lambeth is not left to fight alone again.

Unless Socialist Organiser begins the real fight against Labour's 'cutters', then we will be reading 12 months hence the familiar line that isolated councils have sold out, rather than the reports Briefing anticipates of several Labour councils supported by unions and tenants united in a no cuts, no rate rise struggle against Heseltine.

GRAHAM DURHAM
London Labour Briefing and
Brent East CLP.

Why Joe Louis was a hero

Dear Comrades,

I would like to take issue with a number of points in the article 'Joe Louis - Black Hero' in SO 40.

To dispense with the trivia first: the AAU is the Amateur Athletic Union, not the American Amateur Union; and the author of the article was not Tom Cashman, although it was loosely based on a long, boring, bad article I wrote on the subject.

More seriously, the article is built on the statement, 'The boxing ring was the unlikely arena in which Nazi claims for white racial supremacy were put to the test...'

Regardless of the claims of Nazis, I do not think that we should accept the concept of testing their ideas in a boxing ring. I'm sure there are very few SO readers who would accept that had Schmelling won it would have been a vindication of Hitler.

Given we don't accept the validity of the test, why do you consider it 'unlikely' that some people should claim it as one?

Racial bigotry has been a major element in the world championship at least as far back as 1810 when Tom Molyneux was cheated out of his title and is still the reason Gerry Cooney can make his name and his fortune by beating up old men.

Certainly in 1937 in the USA with fresh memories of Jack Johnson, and 20 years before Louis' home state of Alabama was desegregated, the 'unlikelyhood' was not that it was seen as a test of racial supremacy, but that so many white Americans supported their champion

against the foreign contender.

Mr. Louis' public image was no more a happy accident than was his punching skill. It was the work of John Roxborough, ex-Detroit numbers king, and Julian Black. These together with Jack Blackburn and Joe Louis made an all-black camp.

The Joe Louis the world saw did not brag or complain, did not brawl or seduce white women (Johnson's downfall). But nor did he roll his eyeballs, pose with watermelons or any of the other Amos and Andy tricks that were the stock in trade of photographers at the time.

Louis was presented as a dignified, honest, patriotic citizen with a sensitivity that was only really possible from black men in a white world.

Finally, unlike the article, Louis did not end in 1949. He made a brief sad comeback to try and clear his tax debts and failed. He wrestled briefly and acted as a big-name hanger-on to various gambling and fighting enterprises.

In the mid-60s he reached an accommodation with the government on his back taxes. In 1969 he had just started in business with Billy Conn when he collapsed in the street through cocaine abuse. On leaving hospital, he became a semi-retired grand old man of the fight game.

Probably the greatest compliment that could be paid to Joe Louis (or to Roxborough or Black, who died in 1975 and 1976 respectively) is that young blacks and whites who weren't even born in 1949, who grew up while Louis went through that last stage of his life, know only the 'Black Atlas' of Chester Higgins memories.

Tom Cashman, London

Free Abibu Kamara

ABOUT 40 anti-racists picketed the immigration office in Liverpool on Tuesday 28th April in protest at the arrest and threatened deportation of Abibu Kamara. The picket was called by the Campaign Against Racism Laws, Liverpool Trades Council, the GMWU, ANL, and a number of black groups.

Abibu Kamara is currently held in Risley remand centre al-

though he has committed no crime. He is threatened with deportation. He is a member of the GMWU and was arrested by the Special Branch while at work for the Liverpool Council cleansing department.

The Home Office allege that his marriage to a British citizen is one of convenience and that therefore he has no right to

remain here. This is yet another example of how Britain's racist immigration controls are used to harass and intimidate black workers. The arrest of Abibu Kamara is a threat to the whole trade union movement.

Messages of support etc. to CARL, 64 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool 3.

ANDY DIXON

Who polices the police

THE NEW Labour GLC had barely got into the seats at County Hall before the media raised a new outcry over the call in Labour's GLC Manifesto for accountability for the Metropolitan Police.

Shrieks about 'political control' of the police falling into the hands of 'Marxist extremists'! We should be so lucky!

What these hysterics fail to point out is that every other police force is 'accountable' to local police authorities of whom two-thirds are local councillors. Even more bizarre, the police authority for the Met. is the Home Secretary, William Whitelaw - hardly a non-political arbiter!

But what does accountability mean in practice? The statutory role of local police authorities is to 'ensure the maintenance of an adequate and efficient police force'. The 'direction and control' is the responsibility of the Chief Constable. Chief Constables are required to submit an annual report, but that goes into that report is entirely at their discretion.

Some of the omissions are startling. No mention of the use of the Prevention of Terrorism Act in any of the 1978 reports from Scottish police chiefs, for example, although Scottish forces have used the PTA more than any others except Merseyside and the Met.; no mention of local Special Branches in



Can we trust the police even with selective bans?

some; no details of complaints against the police in others...

Local police authorities also have the power to call for reports on matters of local concern. But they have no way of compelling Chief Constables to cooperate. And very often they don't request reports anyway, because they see their job as backing up the police.

That kind of accountability is not going to be much of a step forward for London.

But it doesn't have to be that way. In the last century, police forces in urban areas were controlled more directly. Watch committees were composed

entirely of elected councillors. In Swansea in 1844 the local police chief had to report weekly to the watch committee. And there are cases of watch committees battling with police chiefs over policy and winning.

Even that would hardly solve the problem completely: it's hard to see how any committee could do more than make David McNee or James Anderton just slightly less of a menace. But it's a peculiar concept of democracy that can see control of the police by elected representatives of the community as the ultimate horror!

A KICK in the teeth for Duffy! The AUEW national committee, against the advice of the Executive voted 55:36 not to take government money for postal ballots.

A kick in the teeth, too, for the Tories' attempts to shackle the unions with the snivelling connivance of Duffy, Boyd, etc.

But it's a shot in the arm for militants in the EETPU who'll be fighting a similar proposal at their conference this week. Even Frank Chapple has now backed off taking the Tory money.

REMEMBER all the debates about rate rises, when Socialist Organiser argued that the line of raising rates and doing your best within government-imposed limits had just the same logic as the Denis Healey line of doing the best you can within IMF limits?

Remember? Now listen to what Lambeth council leader Ted Knight said after a visit to Lambeth by Jamaica's ex-Prime Minister Michael Manley.

'We told Mr. Manley that we have been financially penalised by the Government, and explained how we had campaigned to defend jobs and services. He said that he had experienced the same situation with the IMF in Jamaica and he quite understood our problems'.

A somewhat over-dramatised, or over-generous, comparison. After all, Knight in Lambeth is not likely to face the threats of CIA-sponsored armed upheavals which Manley faced in Jamaica.

But there is a common principle - and a striking difference. The important thing about Manley's government was that it finally refused to accept the IMF's conditions! Whereas Lambeth Labour Council has 'done the best it can' within Tory government conditions.

What about that old debate now?

THE RECENT rash of blanket bans on marches, provoked by the fascists, but hitting International Women's Day, El Salva-

The precise legal mechanics are secondary.

And it's not just in Britain. In the US, the House Un-American Activities Committee which ushered in the McCarthy era of anti-communist hysteria and led to years of unemployment and often prison for those fingered, was created at the instigation of a Jewish immigrant congressman, Sam Dickstein, who was alarmed at the activities of the American Nazis!

Dickstein himself was excluded from the committee on the grounds that 'an investigation of this kind should not be headed by a foreign-born citizen'.

Expecting the state to impose bans in our interest is a bit like

offering a killer shark a lettuce leaf with your bare hands.

dor solidarity, CND, and H-block hunger strike demonstrations to name but a few, and covering large areas of the country, has led to calls for the Home Secretary to use his powers under the 1936 Public Order Act to ban only SPECIFIED marches in PARTICULAR areas.

But that misses the point. Any such specific ban could hit not just the fascists but the Anti Nazi League, and anti-fascist protesters. And can we really trust the police to 'discriminate' in our favour?

Besides, state bans have always been used against the Left much more than the Right.

Fund: nearly a disaster

NOT VERY good, was last fortnight's report on our regular Socialist Organiser fund. Verging on disastrous, is the verdict this fortnight.

Apart from the £200 or so of regular bankers' orders (we don't have the full figures from the bank yet), only £55.50 has come in this month so far - £35 from Edinburgh, and smaller amounts from elsewhere.

This month we need not only our usual target of £500, but £141 to make up last month's shortfall. As things stand at present, we are counting the pennies and borrowing here and there in order to be able to print the paper.

For this issue, we have printed 16 pages and done a four-page offprint on the People's March. It is a big risk, with our finances so low: but we felt the policy for socialists must be to rise to the needs of the struggle and fight confidently for support. Unless sales are pushed up, money is sent in promptly, and extra donations are collected, we will be in trouble.

The cause of our problems seems to be that comrades are concentrating their efforts

on the Labour Movement Press Defence Fund. That defence fund has now collected around £1200. It still needs more: if the WRP does not back down, our legal costs will be measured in thousands.

But if the WRP brings us to our knees by choking off the flow of cash to our regular fund, then the cudgel of unscrupulous wealth is working just as effectively as it could directly through the courts. Don't let that happen!

Check up all the SO supporters in your local group to see that they have bankers' orders. See if any of them can increase their contributions. Get the paper money and the contributions for the whole SO group on a common bankers' order, which ensures regular payment.

Take a collecting tin with you whenever you sell the paper. Ask regular buyers to give 50p or £1 - or £5 or £10 if they're well off. Take a collection at every SO meeting. Organise fund-raising events - socials, jumble sales, book sales...

Send cash to: Socialist Organiser, 214 Sickert Court, London N1.

Target 82

by Jeremy Corbyn

LONDON Labour Briefing have organised a series of meetings of the Target '82 group, which is building towards the 1982 London Borough elections.

All left activists in the Party have been rightly critical of the failure of Labour-controlled Borough Councils to make any real attack on the Tory Government. The purpose of the Target '82 group is to bring together activists from all over London to ensure that the new Labour Groups after 1982 are committed to socialist policies, to a real attack on the Tory Government, and to genuine cooperation between Labour Boroughs.

A meeting at County Hall on Monday 11th was attended by a large number of activists who heard encouraging reports of the defeat of the Right in Brent and the development

of left-wing manifestos in other boroughs.

The new leader of the GLC, Ken Livingstone, was given a rapturous reception after he described the results of the Labour Group AGM, which elected a clear list of left wingers to all the major positions. He also described the way the Labour Group will carry out the manifesto and publicise the efforts of the Labour GLC to attack the Tory Government.

He stressed reporting back to the Constituency Labour Parties and the need to mobilise support for the programme that has been endorsed by the people of London.

London Labour Briefing is developing the process towards the 1982 Borough elections in order to make local government a real base for attack on the Tory government.



London's new Labour leader, Ken Livingstone

WHY DID WE LOSE NORWOOD?



by Martin Thomas

EVERY cloud has a silver lining, was the motto of the Tory press as it reported the election results on May 7th. And the silver lining was the defeat of Ted Knight in Norwood.

The media hailed it as a rebuff for the left. Ted Knight himself, cornered by the gloating media-people, put the result down to press smears.

The "rebuff-for-the-left" theory is certainly wrong: many well-known left-wing candidates, like Steve Bundred in Islington North, Tony Banks in Tooting, Frances Morrell in Islington South and Ken Livingstone in Paddington won with bigger-than-average swings.

But press smears aren't a full explanation, either. Papers like the 'Standard' have done all they can to brand Knight as an irresponsible fanatic; but their

efforts have been puny compared to the media campaign against Tony Benn, which Benn has survived with no damage at all to his electoral popularity.

Was Knight's defeat a triumph for the Social Democrats? Probably not. Stephen Haseler got 3,700 votes in Norwood; but everywhere else the Social Democrats flopped badly, and in Streatham [another of the Lambeth constituencies], there was an even bigger swing from Labour than in Norwood, without the help of a Social Democrat. It's quite probable that most of Haseler's 3,700 were voters who would otherwise have gone Tory or not voted at all.

So was it Lambeth Council's big rate rises? That seems to be part of the truth.

If a pattern can be made of Labour's three worst results — Streatham, Norwood and

Hampstead — it is a pattern of losses for Labour in middle-class areas in Labour-controlled high-rate-raising boroughs.

In working-class areas, the picture was different. Islington, where the rates are just as high as in Lambeth, had a very big swing to Labour, so did Newham, where the council imposed a 52% rate rise last month.

In Camden, which has the highest rates in the country, left-winger Charlie Rossi [in Holborn] and right-winger Anne Sofer [in St. Pancras North] gained about average swings to Labour, and Labour did badly only in Hampstead.

In Lambeth itself, candidates standing to the left of Ted Knight won the more working-class constituencies of Lambeth Central and Vauxhall, with results that were bad by London standards but much better than

Norwood's or Streatham's.

The full explanation for the results in Norwood, and in Lambeth generally, must be more complex.

Labour voters are usually pretty tolerant and undemanding — partly out of class loyalty, partly out of political cynicism. But they are not tolerant towards people who play with their hopes and aspirations. And that's what Ted Knight has done.

He has promised a fight against the Tories. He has presented himself as the champion of militant socialism. And what has resulted? A small flurry of demonstrations and declarations — and then the huge rate demands, and then the cuts, just the same sort of cuts as in Labour boroughs which made no pretence of being militant.

Halfway

When Knight did start organising against the Tories, there was a response that showed that enthusiastic mass support could have been won on the streets and in the polling booths for a consistent stand. But the about-turn disillusioned not only marginal Labour voters, but also many Labour activists.

There is a general lesson here for the whole left, and also for the new GLC Labour group. Those who make a revolution half-way dig their own graves, said Saint-Just. The same goes for those who start a serious struggle and turn back halfway.

How Labour won Hornsey for the first time

by Jeremy Corbyn

ON THURSDAY 7th Labour candidate Tony Hart won Hornsey by 553 from the Tories, overturning a 4,000 majority and sweeping away 87 years of uninterrupted Tory representation of the area.

Behind this win lies years and years of dedicated effort by Party workers in Hornsey, and an especially clear espousal of socialist policies.

The election campaign itself was dominated by the usual local press hysteria surrounding the Labour campaign — in this case by strike-breaking journalists who have continued to bring the Hornsey Journal out during an official NUJ strike over the dismissal of union activists. It is a tribute to the influence of the paper that Labour's greatest ever result in Hornsey was achieved with us sending not one word of copy to the paper, and with it printing a litany of attacks on the Labour Party.

Issues

Throughout the campaign it was clear that there was strong support for the Labour programme of attacking the Government and changing the transport policies to aid working people; but the press attacks on the Labour Party had led to some confusion among supporters over what we were actually proposing.

Our strategy for the election was to decide on what issue we wanted to fight, and stick to them, thus forcing the Tories to answer us on our ground. So far as we were concerned, the issues on which we fought the campaign were the withdrawal of Government funds from local government, unemployment, nuclear waste and weapons, and the Nationality Bill.

Through the campaign the Labour canvassers were finding the largest swings to Labour on council estates where the effect of the Tory government was at its most tangible — rent increases and a 43% rate rise, together with

unemployment. Support from the Cypriot, Asian and Black community was bigger than ever and more offers of help were received than in most elections.

Hornsey is a very mixed area — it stretches from Hampstead Heath to Finsbury Park. House prices near Hampstead Heath frequently top £250,000, yet only three miles to the east there are thousands in desperate housing need. The Borough of Haringey has 10,000 jobless and nearly 1,000 school leavers from last summer still without a job. The Labour campaign clearly caught the imagination of the people, and proposals for the police gained widespread support.

On polling day 300 people worked to get the Labour vote out — certainly more than at any other local election, and only 200 less than helped try to get Ted Knight elected in 1979. As the returns came in it was clear where the Labour victory had come from; the turnout on council estates was higher than the constituency average — nearly every polling district reported turnout of Labour voters of 66%, and in two cases nearly 80%.

Drive

Activists in Hornsey see this as only the start — a massive recruitment drive will now be getting under way to boost membership (already about 1200) by bringing into membership all the people who voted Labour last week — all those who get a raw deal from society.

The most vital thing is for the Labour GLC to carry out the programme it was elected on, and to mount the strongest possible opposition to the Tory Government. Credibility for the labour movement can only come from the realisation of the Labour programme.

The Hornsey result is not unique; it shows that if the Party relies on its own resources, and its own people, and continuously campaigns on all the issues, then victory is there to be won.

Let them read books

by Les Hearn

REAGAN'S latest blow for free enterprise is to halt a programme to warn patients about



possible adverse effects of ten controversial prescription drugs, the ten being the most commonly prescribed drugs in the US, accounting for one prescription in every six.

They include Valium, Librium, the anti-ulcer drug cimetidine, the painkiller propoxyphene, and several others with a variety of side-effects such as addiction or which may be dangerous if taken with certain other drugs.

The programme already marked a significant retreat from an original proposal for information inserts with 375 drugs, which aroused strong protests from the drug industry.

Pharmacists claim that the inserts are not really necessary because there are several books on the market which give

information about drugs, and, anyway, the patients can always ask their local chemist.

But suppose you can't afford the books, or can't understand the scientific language. And who's going to have a discussion with their local chemist [who may not be willing or able to explain anyway] while a queue of irate customers builds up behind them?

So, while a tiny reform is withdrawn in the US, what is the situation in Britain? Patients in Britain have to swallow the tablets and trust the doctors. Perhaps we should be pushing for more information about the medicines we take.

ONCE AGAIN, the system whereby adverse side-effects of new drugs and interactions with other drugs are detected by the drug industry has fallen down. Research recently published in the US on the anti-ulcer drug cimetidine shows that

in addition to reducing acid production in the stomach (its intended role), cimetidine also significantly reduces blood-flow through the liver. A common dose would cut flow by 25%.

Now, the liver, in addition to being the power house of the body, also deals with foreign chemicals circulating round in the blood, which as far as the body knows may be poisonous, and converts them into harmless waste products. These foreign chemicals obviously include any other drugs that a patient may be taking.

But people with ulcers are often suffering from anxiety, for which the drug propranolol (an anti high blood pressure drug) is a recommended treatment. So if you were given ordinary doses of propranolol while also taking cimetidine, the level of propranolol in the blood would be about 25% above the normal level because of the reduced flow of blood through the liver.

You would be experiencing an overdose of a drug which produces its own nasty side-effects, and this has in fact happened to patients in the US.

Worse still this effect could have been predicted two years ago on the basis of the then current knowledge of how cimetidine works, and in any case should have been picked up by observation of patients after it was put on the market — observation which was not done.

Cimetidine is the first of a class of drugs called H2-blockers to be put on the market. Can it be that safety checks were skimmed so as to be first on the scene?

Another H2-blocker has since appeared which does not have this side-effect? Was there a race between the two?

(P.S.: Cimetidine also has this effect on valium, phenytoin [an anti-epileptic drug] and warfarin [taken to prevent thrombosis: an overdose causes internal bleeding]).

BOBBY SANDS MP

The spirit of defiance

In an article smuggled out from the H-Blocks in 1978, Bobby Sands described how the spirit of defiance grew within him.

The article, here abridged from An Phoblacht/Republican News, is semi-autobiographical, differing in some details from Bobby Sands' actual life history.

FROM MY earliest days I recall my mother speaking of the troubled times that occurred during her childhood.

Often she spoke of internment on prison ships, of gun attacks and death, and of early morning raids when one lay listening with pounding heart to the heavy clattering of boots on the cobble-stone streets, and, as a new day broke, peeked carefully out of the window to see a neighbour being taken away by the Specials.

Although I never really understood what internment was, or who the Specials were, I grew to regard them as symbols of evil. Nor could I understand when my mother spoke of Connolly and the 1916 Rising, and of how he and his comrades fought and were subsequently executed — a fate suffered by so many Irish rebels in my mother's stories.

Flames

When the television arrived my mother's stories were replaced by what it had to offer. I became more confused as 'the baddies' in my mother's tales were always my heroes on the TV.

The British army always fought for 'the right side' and the police were always 'the good guys'. Both were to be heroised and imitated in childhood play.

At school I learnt history, but it was always English history and English historical triumphs in Ireland and elsewhere.

I often wondered why I was never taught the history of my own country and when my sister, a year younger than myself, began to learn the gaelic language at school I envied her. Occasionally, near the end of my school days, I received a few scant lessons in Irish history. For this, from the republican-minded teacher who taught me, I was indeed grateful.

I recall my mother also speaking of 'the good old days'. But of all her marvellous stories I could never remember any good times, and I often thought to myself, 'thank God I was not a boy in those times', because by then — having left school — life to me seemed enormous and wonderful.

Starting work, although frightening at first, became alright, especially with the reward at the end of the week. Dances and clothes, girls and a few shillings to spend, opened up a whole new world to me. I suppose at that time I would have worked all week, as money seemed to matter more than anything else.

Then came 1968 and my life began to change. Gradually the news changed. Regularly I noticed the Specials, whom I now knew to be the 'B' Specials, attacking and baton-charging the crowds of people who all of a sudden began marching on the streets.

From the talk in the house and my mother shaking her fist at the TV set, I knew that they were our people who were on the receiving end.

My sympathy and feelings really became aroused after watching the scenes at Burntollet. That imprinted itself in my mind like a scar, and for the first time I took a real interest in what was going on.

I became angry. It was now 1969, and events moved faster as August hit our area like a hurricane. The whole world exploded and my own little world just crumbled around me.

The TV did not have to tell the story now, for it was on my own doorstep. Belfast was in flames, but it was our districts, our humble homes, which were burnt. The Specials came at the head of the RUC and Orange hordes, right into the heart of our streets, burning, looting, shooting, and murdering.

There was no-one to save us, except 'the boys', as my father called the men who defended our district with a handful of old guns.

As the unfamiliar sound of gunfire was still echoing, there soon appeared alien figures, voices, and faces, in the form of armed British soldiers on our streets. But no longer did I think of them as my childhood 'good guys', for their presence alone caused food for thought.

Before I could work out the solution, it was answered for me in the form of early morning raids and I remembered my mother's stories of previous troubled times. For now my heart pounded at the heavy clatter of the soldiers' boots in the early morning stillness and I carefully peeked from behind the drawn curtains to watch the neighbours' doors

Every time I turned a corner I was met with the now all-too-familiar sight of homes being wrecked and people being lifted. The city was in uproar. Bombings began to become more regular, as did gun battles, as 'the boys', the IRA, hit back at the Brits.

The TV now showed endless gun battles and bombings. The people had risen and were fighting back, and my mother, in her newly found spirit of resistance, hurled encouragement at the TV, shouting 'give it to them boys!'

Easter 1971 came, and the name on everyone's lips was 'the Provos', the people's army, the backbone of nationalist resistance.

Survive

I was now past my 18th year, and I was fed up with rioting. No matter how much I tried, or how many stones I threw, I could never beat them — the Brits always came back...

I had seen too many homes wrecked, fathers and sons arrested, neighbours hurt, friends murdered, and too much gas, shootings, and blood, most of it my own people's.

At eighteen and a half, I joined the Provos. My mother wept with pride and fear as I went out to meet and confront the imperial might of an empire with an M1 carbine and enough hate to topple the world.

To my surprise, my school-day friends and neighbours became my comrades in war. I soon became much more aware about the whole national liberation struggle — as I came to regard what I used to term 'the troubles'.



fate. Others weren't so lucky, they were just murdered.

My life now centred around sleepless nights and standbys, dodging the Brits, and calming nerves to go out on operations.

But the people stood by us. The people not only opened the doors of their homes to us to lend a hand, but they opened their hearts to us, and I soon learnt that without the people we could not survive and I knew that I owed them everything.

Political status was won just before the first, but short-lived, truce of 1972. During this truce, the IRA made ready and braced itself for the forthcoming massive Operation Motorman, which came and went, taking with it the barricades.

The liberation struggle forged ahead, but then came personal disaster — I was captured.

It was the autumn of '72. I was charted, and for the first time I faced jail. I was nineteen and a half, but I had no alternative than to face up to all the hardship that was before me.

Given the stark corruptness of the judicial system, I refused to recognise the court. I ended up sentenced in a barbed wire cage, where I spent three and a half years as a prisoner of war with 'special category status'.

I did not waste my time. I did not allow the rigours of prison life to change my revolutionary determination an inch. I educated and trained myself both in political and military matters, as did my comrades.

In 1976, when I was released, I was not broken. In fact I was more determined in the fight for liberation. I reported back to my local IRA unit and threw myself straight back into the struggle.

Quite a lot of things had changed. Belfast had changed. The ghettos had disappeared, the process of moving. The war was forging ahead, all tactics and strategy had changed.

At first I found it a little bit hard to adjust, but I settled into the run of things and, at the grand old age of 23, I got married.

Life wasn't bad, but there were still a lot of things that had not changed, such as the presence of armed British troops on our streets and the oppression of our people.

The liberation struggle was now seven years old, and had

braved a second and mistakenly-prolonged ceasefire.

The British Government was now seeking to Ulsterise the war, which included the attempted criminalisation of the IRA and the attempted normalisation of the war situation.

The liberation struggle had to be kept going. Thus, six months after my release, disaster fell a second time as I bombed my way back into jail!

With my wife being four months pregnant, the shock of capture, the seven days of hell in Castlereagh, a quick court appearance and remand, and the return to a cold damp cell, nearly destroyed me. It took every ounce of revolutionary spirit left in me to stand up to it.

Jail, although not new to me, was really bad, worse than the first time. Things had changed enormously since the withdrawal of political status. Both republicans and loyalist prisoners were mixed in the same wing.

The greater part of each day was spent locked up in a cell. The screws, many of whom I knew to be cowering cowards, now went in gangs into the cells of republican prisoners to dish out unmerciful beatings. This was to be the pattern all the way along the road to criminalisation: torture, and more torture, to break our spirit of resistance.

I was meant to change from being a revolutionary freedom fighter to a criminal at the stroke of a political pen, reinforced by inhumanities of the most brutal nature.

Already Kieran Nugent and several more republican POWs had begun the blanket protest for the restoration of political status. They refused to wear prison garb or do prison work.

After many weekly remand court appearances the time finally arrived, eleven months after my arrest, and I was in a Diplock court. In two hours I



Bloody Sunday — 13 unarmed demonstrators shot dead

being kicked in, and the fathers and sons being dragged out by the hair and being flung into the backs of sinister-looking armoured cars.

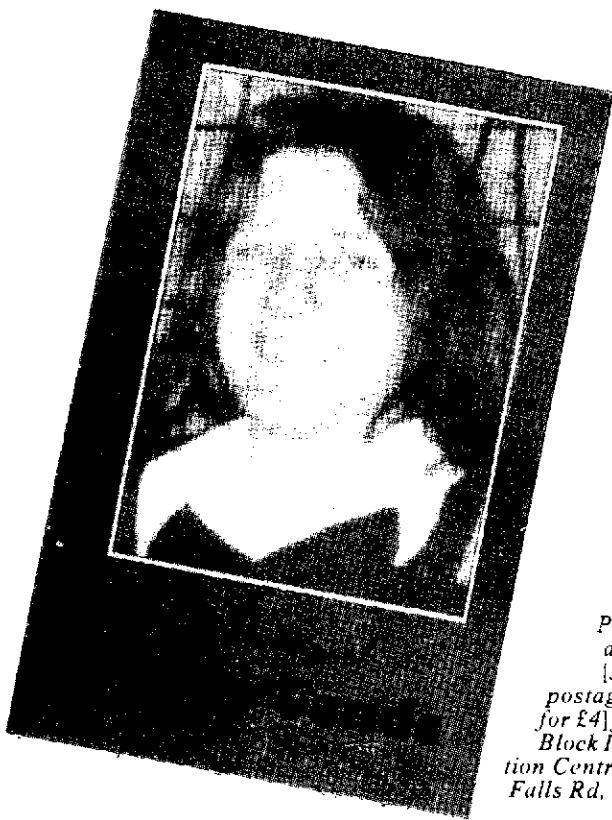
This was followed by blatant murder: the shooting dead of our people on the streets in cold blood.

The curfew came and went, taking more of our people's lives.

Things were not easy for a Volunteer in the Irish Republican Army. Already I was being harassed, and twice I was lifted, questioned, and brutalised, but I survived both of these trials.

Then came another hurricane: internment. Many of my comrades disappeared — interned. Many of my innocent neighbours met the same

1972 came, and I had spent what was to be my last Christmas at home for a quite a while. The Brits never let up. No mercy was shown, as was testified by the atrocity of Bloody Sunday in Derry. But we continued to fight back, as did my jailed comrades, who embarked upon a long hunger-strike to gain recognition as political prisoners.



Pamphlet available (50p plus postage or ten for £4) from H-Block Information Centre, 51-53 Falls Rd, Belfast.

SAVE THE HUNGER-STRIKERS Political status now!

by Stan Crooke

ON MAY Day, traditionally the day when the international solidarity of the working class is celebrated, Don Concannon, Labour Party spokesperson on Northern Ireland, visited the dying Bobby Sands in Long Kesh prison.

Unlike the reports from *Labour Weekly* who were denied access to the prison a fortnight ago, Concannon had no problem in gaining admission. Sands, already past the point of no return, was informed by Concannon that the Parliamentary Labour Party fully backed the government's refusal to grant political status.

It was a brief visit, lasting little more than a minute. But it was enough to add another indelible stain to the record of the British labour movement on Ireland. At the bedside of a man being forced to starve to death for his political principles, Concannon, speaking for the political wing of the labour movement, calmly tells him not to look for any support in that direction.

Sands had principles worth dying for. The same cannot be said for the scabby class-collaborationist record of Don Concannon, a vicious and reactionary minister under the last Labour Government, and now, in opposition, a servile toady of the Tories.

It was Concannon who, as deputy to Roy Mason, had responsibility for prisons in the North of Ireland and withdrew political status from the prisoners during the last three years of the Labour government. He hailed the death-camp of Long Kesh as "the most modern prison in the United Kingdom".

When Sands stood for the election in Fermanagh and South Tyrone in April, Concannon surpassed even the Tories in his vilification. A vote for Sands, he claimed in the Commons on the day of the election, would be "a vote of approval for the perpetrators of the La Mon massacre, the Warrenpoint explosion, the murder of Lord Mountbatten,

and all the other senseless murders that have taken place in Northern Ireland".

Sands won the election. And even in death he won the struggle for political status. He died a political prisoner, not a common criminal, the status to which the Tories and the Labour front bench wanted to reduce him.



Lech Walesa hailed Bobby Sands as 'a great man who sacrificed his life for the struggle'.

But on the morning of Sands' death, Foot issued a statement underlining his support for the Thatcher regime's line. The granting of political status, he claimed, "would give sure aid to the recruitment of terrorists"; it would lead to "a great increase in the numbers of innocent people that would get killed". Foot was of course "greatly concerned" about Sands' death, but the government had to stand firm.

Lech Walesa, leader of the free trade union movement in Poland, hailed Sands as a "great man who sacrificed his life for his struggle", and agreed that hunger strikes were sometimes the only way to fight. "I also have undertaken hunger strikes. That is why I grieve for Mr Sands".

US dockers launched a 24 hour boycott of British-owned ships. But the leaders of the Parliamentary Labour Party lined up unashamedly and enthusiastically with the Tory government.

And what of the Labour left? In Tyneside Eric Heffer refused to share a platform on May Day with a supporter of Sands, since to do so would be 'political suicide'. And in Glasgow Tony Benn refused to say anything about Ireland at the May Day rally.

But the utter servility of Foot and Concannon has been too much for some Labour MPs. In the Commons, Pat Duffy denounced the government for its 'moral bankruptcy' and its 'colossal, criminal incompetence at all times in its dealings on Ireland'.

32 MPs have signed a motion calling on the Government to make concessions to the hunger strikers, and 14 have also signed a motion 'regretting' the Government's intransigence over reforms at Long Kesh prison. Pressure continues to grow from the Northern Ireland Group, headed by Jock Stallard, for an end to the Opposition's bipartisan ship with the Tories. And *Labour Weekly* has criticised the Foot/Concannon line.

Although these mutterings of discontent in the ranks shrink from any idea that political status should be restored to the prisoners in Long Kesh and Armagh, they are being stamped on by Foot. Foot is meeting the Northern Ireland Group this week to pull them back into line. The situation was summed up by last week's *Observer*: "The strong line taken by Mr Foot and Don Concannon has pleased Ministers and Tory MPs".

So most leaders of the Labour and trade union movement in this country are backing the Government wholeheartedly. Some are dissenting, but take the argument no further than tactical inflexibility — the motion passed at the recent Scottish TUC congress condemned the Government's hard line and called for prison

reforms, but strongly rejected political status.

But what 'common criminals' would hunger-strike to death for political status? What 'common criminal' could get elected MP on the basis of his right to political status? How can a movement of working class men and women who believe that the only way to peace and freedom in Ireland is an end to Partition, and who fight for that aim in the only way open to them, be just 'common criminals'?

Rank and file socialists must step up the fight for both political status and an end to bipartisanship.

- Push motions through Labour Party and union branches calling on the NEC to publicly dissociate itself from the statement of the PLP leaders, and to demand the immediate removal of Don Concannon from his post. (A model resolution on these lines is available from the Labour Committee on Ireland, c/o 5 Stamford Hill, London N16).

- Produce petitions raising the same demands and circulate them among Labour Party and union branch members.

- Support the lobby of the May meeting of the NEC and a demonstration being held in Don Concannon's constituency in Mansfield, both being organised by the LCI.

- MPs should be pressured into moving writs for a by-election in Fermanagh and South Tyrone — to expose the hypocrisy of those who call for the use of the ballot-box not the bullet.

- Labour Party and union branches can also send messages of condolence to Bobby Sands' mother, dissociating themselves from the actions of the labour movement leadership.

- And, most important of all, the campaign for restoration of political status must be stepped up, with resolutions, leafletting, pickets and demonstrations. Bobby Sands is dead. We must make sure that none of his comrades, our comrades, have to make the same sacrifice.

Notes

BURNTOLLET: where a civil rights march from Belfast to Derry, in January 1969, was ambushed by Loyalists. The ambush was set up with the cooperation of the RUC, and many of the ambushers were off-duty B-Specials.

CASTLEREAGH: one of the RUC interrogation centres, where, according to Amnesty International and even the official Bennett Report, violence and ill-treatment are used to get confessions.

B-SPECIALS: An Ulster Special Constabulary of 'loyal citizens' was formed in 1920, recruiting mainly from the bigoted Ulster Volunteer Force. The full-time 'A-Specials' were disbanded in 1925. The part-time (but armed and 100% Protestant) 'B-Specials' continued until October 1969. In 1970 a new part-time armed force, the Ulster Defence Regiment was set up to replace the 'B-Specials'. It initially re-recruited many of the old B-Specials, is overwhelmingly Protestant, and overlaps heavily with Loyalist paramilitary groups like the UDA.

DIPLOCK COURTS: Special courts set up for political cases by the Northern Ireland (Temporary Provisions) Act 1973, on the recommendation of Lord Diplock. There are no juries. Hearsay evidence is allowed. And confessions extracted in Castlereagh are accepted as decisive evidence.

BLOODY SUNDAY: 30 January 1972, when 13 people on a peaceful demonstration in Derry were shot dead by the Parachute Regiment.

ORANGE BIGOTS INVADE MAY DAY MARCH

BANNERS about the hunger strike banned from the march, paper-sellers threatened with arrest if police disapproved of the headlines; an Orange band accompanied by a gang of fascist thugs; left-wing paper sellers being chased through the streets by the fascists — that was the 1981 May Day demonstration in Glasgow.

Police

The first act of censorship occurred when a contingent of marchers raised a banner with the slogan, 'Don't let Irish prisoners die' on it. Police immediately intervened and told the contingent that the march organisers (i.e., officers of the Trades Council) had instructed them not to allow any such banner on the march.

While the banner was being wrapped up, a group of Loyalists approached the police and told them of another banner on the march, that of the 'Smash H-Block/Armagh Committee', which they felt ought to be removed.

Fascists

The police duly ejected this contingent, and later arrested one of its members for 'breach of the peace for shouting derogatory slogans'.

After the banners, it was the turn of the newspapers. SO supporters were threatened with arrest and imprisonment for selling SO 40 (front page

headline: Thatcher's blood-offering to Paisley). Displaying the headline was 'likely to lead to a breach of the peace'.

But it was a different story when it came to the Orange band, their berets decorated with the Red Hand of Ulster, and the accompanying group of fascists. There was no effort to remove them from the march, despite the objections raised by many on the march (and not just the far Left) to their presence.

The fascists distributed a few leaflets produced by the 'Scottish Loyalists' organisation, and

after the march attacked left paper-sellers. A member of the Revolutionary Communist Group was attacked by them, and three SO supporters were chased through the city centre by about 15 of them.

And just to round off the day's events, Communist Party stewards violently ejected people from the closing rally when they shouted slogans about the prisoners and unfurled banners about the hunger-strike from the balcony in the hall.

The main responsibility for the day's events must lie with the officers of the Trades Coun-

cil, particularly its Communist Party secretary, who instructed the police to remove Irish banners from the march while ignoring the Orange band and the fascists. Their actions on the demonstration only underline their incapacity to work in the interests of the labour movement.

A defence fund is being set up for the arrested marchers. Send donations to: 1st May Bookshop, Box 15, 43 Candlemakers Row, Edinburgh. Any witnesses to the arrest should also contact this address.

100 at Glasgow Irish solidarity rally

Nearly 100 people turned up last Saturday (May 9th) to a meeting on political status for Irish political prisoners organised by the Glasgow branch of the Labour Committee on Ireland (LCI). And, unlike other recent events in Glasgow connected with Ireland, none of them were Loyalists.

Veteran socialist Harry McShane, who celebrated his 90th birthday this week, described how socialists reacted in 1920 to the death of hunger-striker Terence McSwiney.

Only hours after news of his death reached Glasgow on a Sunday morning, they were out

on the streets with a leaflet headed, 'The Murder of the Lord Mayor of Cork'.

"John Maclean was a political prisoner", concluded Harry, referring to the Clydeside revolutionary of the early years of this century, "and won political status for his two terms of imprisonment after the war. The prisoners in Northern Ireland are political prisoners too, and we must make sure that they win political status as well".

Other speakers included Rowland Sheret of Stirling Trades Council and Daisy Mules of Edinburgh TC.

The weakness of the meeting was that, despite its size, most

of the audience already supported the prisoners' struggle, so there was no real clash of different points of view. (Militant, inevitably, never showed their noses).

But many practical proposals for activity were made. And the meeting did represent an important step forward. The LCI branch in Glasgow, initiated less than a year ago by SO supporters, has now emerged as the main force fighting in the local labour movement for political status and immediate British withdrawal from Ireland.

STAN CROOKE
[Secretary, Glasgow LCI]



A member of the audience speaking at the LPYS meeting that launched the Brixton Labour Movement Defence Campaign

Brixton: the state regains its grip?

by Les Hearn

FIVE weeks on from the uprising of April 10th-12th — the courts are steadily processing those arrested, while the police have been carrying out dawn raids, looking for stolen goods.

Five weeks on, too, from one of the largest meetings held in Brixton, when 600 people, including many of the youth who had actually been fighting the police, attended a Young Socialists' meeting, at which Ted Knight called for police out of Brixton and a labour movement enquiry and denounced the Scarman whitewash.

The meeting overwhelmingly approved the declaration, which supported those demands. However, since then, nothing has been done to organise such an enquiry. And the other local initiative, the Brixton Defence Committee has had internal problems.

Meanwhile the Scarman white-wash has got underway, with a leaflet through every front door in Brixton. The scope of the enquiry is: (1) to investigate what happened on April 10th-12th and its immediate causes. This will doubtless find that there was an unprovoked attack on the forces of law and order who were peacefully performing their duty without fear or favour. (2) to assess the underlying reasons, "looking specially at the problems of policing multi-racial communities". Police racism is unlikely to be identified as one of these reasons.

People are asked to send evidence to Lord Scarman, who will then choose who shall give oral evidence. Anyone wanting legal representation must ask permission.

It is vital that the state is not allowed to re-establish control unchallenged and peddle its own version of events.

1. A Labour movement/People's Enquiry must be initiated.

The GLC Labour group and Lambeth Trades Council have decided not to cooperate with Scarman. Lambeth Council Labour group is cooperating — indeed, some of the Scarman Enquiry's hearings are due to

take place in the Town Hall.

The Lambeth Labour Group policy must be reversed — and the council unions also won to a boycott policy.

Lambeth Trades Council has called for the GLC Labour Group, the Lambeth Labour Group, and the Greater London Association of Trades Councils to initiate a labour movement enquiry. SO and Socialist Press supporters will be proposing motions along the same lines at ward Labour Party meetings this week.

It is particularly important that the "front-line" community around Railton Road be involved in planning the enquiry.

2. The isolation of the local Labour Parties from the black community must be ended. The Labour Parties must begin to listen to the black community and make special efforts to recruit and organise amongst blacks, especially the youth suffering most acutely from unemployment and police repression. It must adopt strategies of positive discrimination to encourage black involvement (not one of the present Labour councillors is black).

3. Money to help the legal defence of those arrested should be sent to the Brixton Defence Committee, c/o Abeng Centre, Gresham Road, Brixton.

The police's word against the victims'

THE DEPTFORD fire inquest ends this week. And lawyers representing the black youths have been protesting strongly about bias in the running of the inquest.

The police have it all tied up. According to them, some lads at the party spilled inflammable liquid in the front room after a fight, and the fire started soon after.

They have statements from several of the young people at the party 'supporting' this story. The problem is that all these young blacks have told

the inquest that the statements are untrue and were forced out of them by police pressure.

Commander Graham Stockwell, the senior police officer in the case, was the policeman who took confessions of three young men convicted for the murder of Maxwell Confait. Those men have now been released, since the confessions have been proved to be false. Stockwell's comment now is that he wrote down the confessions "faithfully and honestly".

The young blacks' lawyers

have complained about the coroner harassing the youths while they gave evidence, and summing up in a biased way. And black people in the gallery loudly supported these protests.

It's the police's words against the youths' word plus some unexplained evidence like the fire-bomb device found outside the house. If the jury is persuaded into accepting the police story, then there will be an explosion from the black community as bitter and angry as the one directly after the 13 died.

Libel action: the WRP comes out into the open

THE WRP has at last found its voice to say something about its legal action against *Socialist Organiser* other than in the language of libel writs.

In a letter to *Tribune* (May 1st), Paul Jennings, of the WRP's paper *Newsline*, tries to justify their resort to the court. We reprint Jennings' letter as published in *Tribune*, and a reply which appeared in the following *Tribune* — and hope that the debate will continue in *Tribune*.

involving some of the comrades who have personal experience relevant to the truth of what we wrote about the WRP.



Meanwhile, support is still coming in for our call for a labour movement inquiry, and money for our defence fund. Latest signatories to the appeal *A Labour Inquiry*, not

the Courts include Jeremy Corbyn (Haringey Labour councillor), Mike Ward (Wood Green GLC councillor), Jim Marshall MP (Leicester S.), Jo Richardson MP (Barking), and Don Scott (TASS).

But we still need more — to force the WRP to back down by pressure of labour movement opinion, or, failing that, not to be forced into bankruptcy by the wealth of the WRP and the expense of the courts.

'Apparently the only way'

IN HIS Diary (*Tribune*, April 24) John Street published an appeal for the 'Labour Movement Press Defence Fund'. It appears to have aligned *Tribune* with the sensational allegations that have been made against Vanessa Redgrave and the Workers' Revolutionary Party by Sean Matgamna and his *Socialist Organiser*.

No one at *Tribune* consulted Miss Redgrave, her solicitors or the WRP to ask for their side of the story, a strange procedure for a paper proclaiming itself as 'Labour's independent weekly'. The facts are as follows.

In January this year Mr Matgamna wrote an article in *Socialist*

Organiser which made seriously defamatory and completely unwarranted allegations against the WRP. The attack was especially curious since *Socialist Organiser* has rarely, if ever, been mentioned in the columns of our daily newspaper, *News Line*, and Mr Matgamna's name had last appeared in WRP's previous daily paper some ten years earlier.

Its publication coincided with the launch of the Youth Training movement which is chaired by Miss Redgrave, a member of the WRP central committee. Youth Training is a nationally organised scheme to give practical job skills to unemployed young people and

the first two centres — in Brixton and Liverpool — were opened in January.

Mr Matgamna's article notably alleged that:

(1) The WRP is "a pseudo-Marxist goobledook-spouting cross between the Moonies, the Scientologists, and the Jones Cult which committed mass suicide in the Guyana jungle three years ago".

(2) The WRP "recruits and exploits mainly raw, inexperienced, politically, socially and psychologically defenceless young people".

(3) "It employs psychological terror and physical violence against its own members (and occasionally against others)".

John Street states that the WRP "is not above resorting to the capitalist courts whenever it has a disagreement with its Labour movement comrades".

This is untrue. The one and only time we took legal action in respect of untrue allegations appearing in the Labour press was 15 years ago and the apologies were made without the need to go to court.

A request was made to Mr Matgamna to withdraw these allegations. He countered with a proposal to publish a statement by the WRP in *Socialist Organiser* if, but only if, the WRP's daily newspaper, *News Line*, published "an article by critics of the WRP". This cannot have been intended to be considered seriously for acceptance since it did not involve the complete retraction and an apology to which Miss Redgrave is entitled.

A recourse to the capitalist courts is not Miss Redgrave's attempt to "intimidate" a Labour movement journal nor to put anybody "out of business", as John Street suggests. It is, apparently, the only way to clear her name of these unfounded accusations which, if left to fester in people's minds, would harm the vitally important work she is doing for the Workers' Revolutionary Party and as chairman of the Youth Training movement.

PAUL JENNINGS
Editor, *News Line*.

Appeal for funds

Send donations to Jonathan Hammond (Hon. Treasurer), c/o 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY. Cheques payable to 'Labour Movement Press Defence Fund'.

Name:

Address:

Organisation:

Donation:

'The principle'

THREE MONTHS and three separate libel writs later, Paul Jennings' letter (*Tribune*, May 1) is the first attempt by the Workers' Revolutionary Party to justify Vanessa Redgrave's "recourse to the capitalist courts" against both the printers and individuals connected with the Labour movement paper *Socialist Organiser*. We are told that *Socialist Organiser's* criticism of the WRP had "nothing whatsoever to do with legitimate political differences of opinion" and that "the capitalist courts" were "the only way to clear" Vanessa Redgrave's name.

For an organisation that accuses opponents of being (among other things) police agents, it is not clear what for Paul Jennings is the difference between a legitimate and a "wholly non-political" criticism. Presumably it is whether it is aimed against the WRP or not. *Socialist Organiser* would not accept such a definition, nor do we believe it is only "legitimate" to criticise policies but not the nature and practices of organisations espousing them. We would not only criticise Stalinist parties because they had wrong ideas!

However outspoken, *Socialist Organiser* believes the quoted statements to be justified, and indeed indicated the source of some of the evidence in the original article (a fact conveniently omitted from Paul Jennings' quote).

The statements were made because they could be backed up, and now Paul Jennings has repeated them in *Tribune* and others would be happy to provide the evidence in these pages. What we are not prepared to do is to say they are "untrue" and "unfounded" because the WRP asserts that they are and threatens us with "the capitalist courts" and the inevitable heavy legal costs.

Paul Jennings finds the reasons for the criticisms "especially curious", although the political basis for them was spelt out at length in a later issue of *Socialist Organiser*. Although he doesn't mention this statement, he must have read it because it was the immediate subject of a further libel writ from Vanessa Redgrave. He must also know that the subsequent libel writ means that the statement cannot be summarised fully in reply to his letter. That presumably was the intention of the writ.

Vanessa Redgrave was not mentioned in the original article, nor was the "Youth Training movement". But apparently "the capi-

talist courts" are the only way "to clear her name". This is not true.

There has yet to be a "repudiation" in the pages of *Newsline*. Presumably this is not "the firmest possible way", although it was the way the WRP chose to deal recently with what it regarded as unfounded accusations in the rich Tory press (*Daily Telegraph* and *The Observer*).

There has been no request for a right of reply in the pages of *Socialist Organiser*, although a conditional one was offered after the legal threats. There has been no reply to the offer of a jointly agreed *Labour movement* inquiry to investigate the statements. Paul Jennings' letter does not even mention this, although it is scarcely a secret.

Already Tony Benn and six other Labour MPs, as well as Chris Mullin, Vladimir Derer and many other individuals and organisations in the Labour movement have supported the call for such an inquiry, and condemned Vanessa Redgrave's and the WRP's use of the courts against a Labour movement paper.

It would have been interesting to hear Paul Jennings' explanation of the apparent rejection of the type of inquiry *Newsline* often calls for in relation to other organisations. Is the rejection of an open inquiry inside the Labour movement because there is not the confidence to make a political response to our comments?

The legal action that Paul Jennings' letter seeks to justify involves more than a refusal to debate the issues inside the Labour movement. It flies in the face of the basic principle that we should sort out disputes inside the Labour movement, and not bring the courts in. And it seeks to "settle" an argument by using financial and legal threats, which money has given Vanessa Redgrave access to.

That is the only explanation for the succession of libel writs, including against the secretary of *Socialist Organiser* for writing a letter to supporters explaining what was happening and the need to raise money to cover the legal costs. And it was the threat of bankruptcy that forced *Socialist Organiser's* printer to delete all reference to the WRP from the paper, including a simple financial appeal. On these issues Paul Jennings' letter is "silent".

JOHN BLOXAM
Secretary, *Socialist Organiser*

A LABOUR INQUIRY, NOT THE COURTS

We, the undersigned, condemn Vanessa Redgrave's and the WRP's use of the courts against the labour movement press. We support the proposal that a labour movement inquiry be set up to investigate the statements made in the *Socialist Organiser* article.

NAME ORGANISATION

Return to Labour Movement Press Defence Fund, c/o 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Firmest

You will no doubt agree that these statements have nothing whatsoever to do with legitimate political differences of opinion. The WRP sees no reason to tolerate the publication of such statements, whether in the capitalist press or the Labour movement press. Nor, may I suggest, would you if they were said about the party or trade union to which you belong.

We have a clear obligation to our members, to the working class and to all those who have worked so hard to make Youth Training a success to repudiate such statements in the firmest possible way.

People's March

Special

Socialist Organiser

ORGANISE FOR ACTION!

COVERAGE of the People's March in the national press may not be brilliant, but everywhere the march passes through it's receiving an enthusiastic welcome from local trade unionists, unemployed youth and even passers by on

the street.

As Mick Cashman, an unemployed marcher from Liverpool told us, 'the atmosphere is very good. There's a real sense of purpose and solidarity among the marchers — especially the younger ones.'

'In Stoke we had a great reception, with ordinary townspeople and housewives out shopping waving and cheering as we passed.'

'The local *Dole Mirror* unemployment campaign had done a lot of work publicising our arrival among the unemployed, and it obviously struck a chord.'

'We've been particularly heartened by the number of big donations we've received from shop stewards' committees along the way. I think we should have put more emphasis on sending out delegations to factories, because where it has been done — the delegation we sent to British Aerospace in Manchester for instance — it's been a very

worthwhile experience for the young marchers who've no experience of trade unionism, and no doubt it had a good effect on the workers in the factory as well.'

'What would really please me is if we get a few factories stopping work and coming out to join us. I think that may have happened in Stoke, but I'm hoping there'll be some big stoppages in Birmingham,

Coventry and the other industrial towns in the Midlands.'

When the Eastern leg of the march came to Sheffield an estimated 4,000 workers downed tools in solidarity. Workers from factories like Shadlows, GEC, BSC River Don and Firth Brown voted to stop work and join the march.

That's the kind of action we need to make the 'People's



Mick Cashman

March' an effective focus for a fight against unemployment.

Unfortunately, the assorted union officials and CP members who have organised the march don't see things that way.

Midlands organiser Peter

Carter told Birmingham marchers 'This is a *people's* march. That means we don't want political slogans brought into it. We don't want people to think they've been conned into supporting something, when it's really a front for organising action that they might not agree with.'

But what could be more of a con than telling the unemployed that they can do something about unemployment *without* linking up with employed workers in action for demands like the 35 hour week, work-sharing without loss of pay, and a programme of useful public projects paying trade union rates.

And that means *taking on* the Tories — not pleading for a 'change of course'. And it means campaigning on issues like the massive amounts being spent on armaments and war preparations.

The reason the organisers won't raise these issues (and are trying to make sure that none of the marchers do, either) is clearly because they don't want to embarrass the various church people, employers and local worthies who they've roped in to make sanctimonious noises in support of the march.

Unemployment won't be defeated by pleas to Thatcher, or prayers to an even higher authority. We need class-wide action against the Tories.

The People's March can only help build for that action by highlighting unemployment. Which leaves socialists with the job of *organising* in the factories, on the dole queues, in the union branches, Labour Parties and community organisations — organising a *fight* for jobs.

THE PEOPLE'S MARCH IN LONDON:

Saturday May 30th:
Rally in Brockwell Park,
10am to 1pm.

Sunday May 31st:
Rally in Hyde Park,
12pm. march to Trafalgar
Square. (Creche in Hyde
Park.)

Monday June 1st:
Presentation of petition
to Parliament. Workplace
meetings. **London Says
Farewell**, rally and
concert. York Hall, Old
Ford Road, 7pm



PHOTO: KEVIN O'HAGAN

EVERYONE agrees that unemployment is a national scandal. Even Tory MPs and the CBI shed crocodile tears about it. But the question is, what are we going to do about it?

The miners' victory showed that *direct action* can save jobs — and scare the life out of the Tories! But there are still 2½ million unemployed, and it will take more than a slight shift in Government allocations to deal with that!

Calling on this Government to 'change course' is (at best) a waste of time. Our aim must be to beat it back, to kick it out — and to commit the labour movement and the next government to a series of measures that will take on the root cause of unemployment, the capitalist profit-system itself.

First and foremost, we must challenge and defeat the notion that 'if there's less work available, there must be fewer jobs'. Against this, we need to raise the call 'cut the hours, not the jobs' — in other words, work-sharing on full pay and under workers' control.

Combined with this must be a serious, national fight for the 35 hour week. This has long been an officially stated objective of the unions. But up till now, it has been the first demand to be dropped in negotiations at both local and national levels.

Putting a stop to overtime has to be part and parcel of the campaign for shorter hours — otherwise all that will change is that the employed will get

To win the jobs fightA WORKERS' GOVERNMENT!

time and a half for working the extra hours that could provide the unemployed with jobs.

And, of course, we must go onto the offensive for improved basic wages, with automatic inflation-proofing, ending once and for all the situation where workers have to do overtime to earn a living wage.

The basic principle throughout must be the *unity of the working class*, including unity of the employed and the unemployed. Trade unions must be committed to resist press-

ures to force black workers, youth and women out first. The unemployed must be integrated into the existing unions with full membership rights, paying special low rates.

This, of course, in no way should detract from building a National Unemployed Union recognised by the TUC (unemployed members of existing unions could have 'dual membership').

The workers at Gardners in Manchester showed the power

that a factory occupation gives us in the fight against redundancies. The women at Lee Jeans are doing the same.

Support for such struggles should be the most elementary duty of any trade unionist. But we need to go further, and fight for the nationalisation (without compensation) of companies declaring redundancies.

The workers' inquiries at Lucas and Vickers revealed many real needs that are not being met because of the profit motive. A big programme of public works under the democratic control of the workers' movement, paying full union rates, could wipe out unemployment and at the same time provide much-needed housing, health facilities, public transport, and so on.

But where's the money going to come from for all this? For a start, the massive resources currently being squandered in the build-up to war could be used to finance

such a programme. More money, if needed, could be raised by taxing the capitalists.

This would have to be combined with the development of workers' inspection of the bosses' books and accounts.

In short, we need a planned use of public resources. For an effective plan, the banks, the finance houses, and the corporations which dominate economic life, must be in the hands of the state. And for the plan to meet working-class needs, the state must be in the hands of the working class: the whole apparatus of top civil servants, judges, police and army must be cleared out and replaced by working-class power.

All this will require the stepping up of the campaign for democracy in the Labour Party and the trade unions, so that the labour movement can take on the capitalist state and impose a government accountable to the movement — a workers' government.

It's a woman to have a

"Is there a Margaret Thatcher here?" Jo Richardson asked the mass rally that drew together the themes of the Festival for Women's Rights against Tory attacks.

Unfortunately the woman who has done so much to smash the rights of ordinary women was not to be found. So the 3,000-odd women who had come to the Festival had to find some other way to get their message across to her. And what was their message?

Rachel Lever, opening the Rally, spelt it out:

"People say, now you've got a woman Prime Minister, what more do you want? We'll tell them what more we want.

"We want a nursery place for every child, right through the day, right through the year. Properly funded state care for the sick, the old, the handicapped. The right to determine our own lives and our own morality. The right to a job, which is crucial to our independence."

The purpose of the festival, she said, was to assert that we were not going to reduce our aims and demands, we were not going to be driven back by people telling us that the country can't afford it, or the boss can't afford it, or the borough can't afford it.

"What we are saying is that women can't afford this system and this government which is running it with single-minded ruthlessness. No — we are going to go onto the offensive!"

Battle

But to do that we've got a battle in our own movement, the labour movement. As Elsie, Royal Pride striker and one of the People's Marchers pointed out, we've got a battle to convince the leaders of our own movement to take the issue seriously: she and the other women on the People's March had to fight for the right to

wear sashes proclaiming a 'Woman's right to work'. They won that argument, "and if 25 women can do that, think what we can do when we're all united. We've got to stop being split up. We've got to get Royal Pride, Lee Jeans and all the other struggles together. Then look at the power we'd have."

Step

The Festival was a good step in that direction. All day, in discussions, exhibitions and in the 'fun' events, women got together to pool their experiences, to gain strength from the struggles of other women. Not only for jobs and nurseries, but against the racist British state and British imperialism in Ireland.

A lot of us were disappointed that the union caucuses and the workshops on political organising weren't better attended.

The crowds went to the workshops on more

Anwar Ditta: 'I'm happy now I've got my children. All I'm unhappy about is the system, and how we're going to change it.'



3,500 women at the Festival Against Tory Attacks

man's right job

purely feminist issues, while the workshop on fighting for workplace nurseries was cancelled for lack of attendance. Anwar Ditta expressed disgust that only 10 women came to the workshop on fighting the Home Office.

Perhaps that reflects a failure on our part to get more working class women along to the festival. But the concluding rally gave us a great send-off to go out and organise the labour movement.

Terrible

Anwar Ditta described her 6-year long battle to get back her children, the terrible emotional exacted from her and her children and her determination that gave courage to us all: "I'm not going to sit back and say Anwar's won after six terrible years. Anwar

Ditta has won, but we have to fight for all the other sisters who face deportation, Nasira, Jaswinder, and all the black sisters who are facing the same Home Office I fought, the same lies."

Silence

We heard from a woman from the Relatives Action Committee about the heroic battle of the sisters in Armagh jail for political status, of the constant exhausting struggle of those on the outside to keep up the pressure on the British government and the morale of the hunger strikers and the political prisoners in Armagh and the H-Blocks. A minute's silence was observed for Bobby Sands.

At the rally we were moved to anger at the way that the Tories and this system oppress us, and to

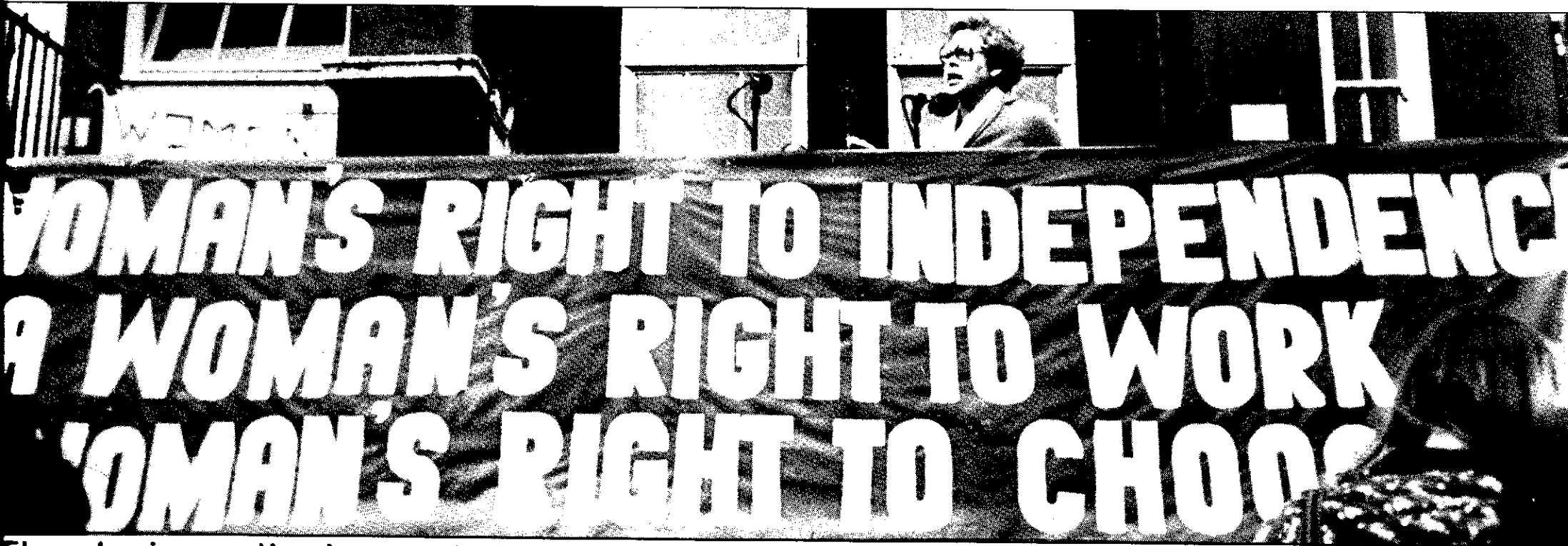
elation, hearing of sisters who have fought and won. But however exhilarating, emotion won't move us forward unless we translate it into action.

Fight

So possibly the most important, but by no means the most spectacular thing to come out of the Festival was that the resolution from the Planning Group was endorsed unanimously. It calls on the TUC and Labour Party to call a demonstration for a woman's right to work and pledged to fight in all our organisations to make it happen.

A meeting for all those wanting to build for this demonstration has been called for May 18th at Duke of Buckingham, Villiers St [nearest Tube Charing Cross] at 7.00pm.

Gerry Byrne



The closing rally demanded: Labour must call a women's right to work march

Breadwinners, workers and fighters...equals!

married women can't work, as Tory ministers and some Labour government figures have suggested; the number of families living in poverty has trebled. Women don't work for pin money. Hundreds of thousands of women are their family's breadwinner. Besides that women don't have the money anyway. Rents and rates have gone up, gas and electricity bills up, school dinners you're lucky enough to get in an area where they haven't been cut (together) have gone up. Local services that used to be free now cost

money. Then what's left for food and clothing?

The Tories want to put the main burden of unemployment onto women. They say that married women ought to stay at home looking after the kids.

BUT

• 48% of pre-school kids have no garden or outdoor play area. They'd be better off in a good nursery — and 96% of mothers want nursery places for their kids.

• Children cooped up in cramped housing with depressed, frustrated mothers are a far cry from the cosy family

image we get from the advertisers and the Tory government.

• 3½-4 million kids are living on or below the poverty line. If that number trebles, how can that be good for the kids?

And most of all, women want to have jobs. We want to get out of the home, learn skills, have careers, take part in workplace trade unionism, and have the independence of our own wage packet. We want the burdens of housework to be shared equally. We don't want to be just housekeepers dependent on a man's wage.

And that's our right!

The economic laws of capitalism decree that workers are employed only if they yield a profit — and the rest go on the dole. But we don't accept that system. Society should be reorganised so that everyone has the right to a decent, useful job.

We say: fight for jobs for all! Accepting that there's a shortage of jobs, and then trying to keep the few there are for men, just plays into the hands of the Tories and the bosses.

FIGHT BACK NOW!
Cut the hours not the

jobs! Work sharing with no loss of pay.

Campaign against overtime working. Let's have a decent basic wage instead and share out the work.

Don't let the union officials negotiate closures. Occupy to stop closures like the Lee Jeans workers. If we accept redundancy money that's the job gone for ever.

Get your organisation, Labour Party or trade union to support the call from the Women's Festival for the TUC to organise a mass demonstration for a Woman's Right to Work.

Women's Fightback
London Forum

ZOE FAIRBAIRNS on
BENEFITS AND A
WOMAN'S RIGHT TO
WORK

7.30pm, Tuesday 26 May,
at A Woman's Place, 48
William IV St, WC2.

AFFILIATE

- ★ Individuals can join the campaign for £2 a year (£1 for claimants).
- ★ Local organisations, campaigns and groups can affiliate to a local Fightback group or to the national campaign for £5 a year (or by arrangement).
- ★ National organisations and campaigns can affiliate for £20, plus £5 for every 1000 women members.
- ★ Write to 41 Ellington St, London N7 for membership and affiliation forms.

How they organised in the 20s & 30s

IN OCTOBER 1920 a demonstration of London unemployed was savagely attacked by police in Whitehall.

Up till then, the jobless 'Great War heroes' had been organised in purely local, non-political 'unemployed ex-servicemen's organisations, whose main activity was marching the streets begging for charity.

But as Wal Hannington, the best-known unemployed organiser of the 1920s and '30s, describes in his book *Unemployed struggles*, 'the Whitehall baton charge ... had the effect of sharply awakening masses of the unemployed to a clearer understanding of their class position and making them realise that they would receive no redress for their plight as unemployed by quietly looking to a capitalist government for sympathy.

'The urge for unity, for organisation with a militant policy, rapidly gained strength. Everywhere the unemployed spoke in bitter tones of their conditions and of the treatment they had received in Whitehall. 'We've got to stand together', 'We've got to stop begging and start fighting' — these and other similar remarks were to be heard in all labour-exchange queues and wherever the unemployed gathered in groups on street corners.'

The National Unemployed Workers' Movement was founded in 1921 when it linked up the numerous local bodies organising unemployed workers and war veterans.

From the early 1920s to the middle 1930s, the NUWM organised a series of marches from every part of Britain to London. The slogans of the marchers were directed above all against the poverty-level benefits, the Means Test and the 'not genuinely seeking work' clause operated by dole authorities and the degrading rules enforced by the workhouse officials.

The NUWM also organised militant direct action to force local councils to give the unemployed premises to meet in and facilities for recreation.

Essex Road library in Islington, for instance, was held by the unemployed for several weeks before police were able to retake the building.

That occupation along with many others was to force Islington Council into providing premises.

The Manchester and Sheffield unemployed marched to meet each other in the area where the Pennine Way is now, to claim the right to ramble on the lands of the lords and big farmers. Dozens were injured and scores arrested in the huge battle with the police which eventually established the right to walk over that area without special permission.

Fierce battles were also fought to prevent evictions.

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

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

On that occasion, battles between the police and unemployed continued for a number of days and nights.

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

As the leaders of the NUWM were well aware, the real strength lies with those still at work. The employed workers are a thousand times better placed than the unemployed to establish the principle which the NUWM leaders aimed for: 'social service as a basis of production, and not the private aggrandisement of capitalists.'

The policy of the NUWM was expressed in a series of leaflets explaining the six points of the Unemployed Workers' Charter — work or

The unemployed must organise ... but not under the TUC's thumb

by Jim Denham

WILL THE 100 or so Unemployed Workers' Centres being set up by the TUC be bases for militant campaigning under the control of the unemployed themselves? Or will they turn out to be tea and sympathy emporiums designed to channel the frustration of unemployed people into passive acceptance of their fate.

The outcome will depend on whether the TUC succeeds in implementing its 'guidelines' on the centres and in placing them firmly under the control of councillors, the Manpower Services Commission and full-time union officials.

In Newcastle, where the Trades Council took the initiative in setting up a centre before the TUC announced its plans, the emphasis was on active campaigning — leaf-

letting dole queues, supporting unemployed workers fighting redundancy, demanding free public transport for the unemployed, agitating for an unemployed workers' union and so forth.

Last January, the Newcastle centre called a conference to discuss setting up a national federation of unemployed centres. One of the leading Newcastle activists told us, 'The response was pretty good. We had delegates and observers from all over the country, as far afield as Cornwall.'

'But we also had a man called Peter Ashby from the TUC, armed with 50 copies of a letter dated 29th January (the previous day), setting out the TUC Guidelines.'

'These strictly limited what we were allowed to do, and were clearly designed to head off any chance of a militant,

national unemployed movement developing.'

'Now we've been told that unless we toe the line, abide by the 'Guidelines' and break off our relation with the unemployed workers' union that was being set up in the area, the TUC General Council will recommend that the funds (from the MSC and the local authority) be cut off.'

'We'll be campaigning at the forthcoming Annual Conference of Trades Councils to get these guidelines thrown out as ill-conceived and negative and to curb the TUC's dictatorial powers over the centres.'

The 'guidelines' (agreed between the TUC and the MSC) limit the objectives of the centres to: 'counselling and advice', 'opportunities for training', 'channeling requests for assistance to tribunals', 'Educational classes', and 'promoting schemes under the MSC programme'.

The management committees of the centres must comprise 50% from the local authority and 50% from the TUC Regional Council. 'Other groups' (presumably meaning voluntary organisations and charities), can send observers and — finally — 'it will also be important to include representatives of the unemployed'.

Clearly, we have to wage a campaign to get these 'guidelines' torn up, to place the centres under the control of the unemployed themselves, and to ensure that funds from local authorities and the MSC have no strings attached.

At the same time we need to fight for Unemployed Workers' Unions to provide a focus for organising the unemployed in struggle — both around their own immediate concerns (free travel, improved benefits, useful public works schemes etc) and around broader issues like support for picket lines, occupations and anti-racist defence squads.

The Unemployed Workers' Unions could thus establish their place within the labour movement, and provide organisation necessary for the unemployed to fight for their rights within the existing unions and for control over the unemployed workers' centres.



WARRINGTON 3RD MAY: Unemployed marchers meet to discuss the way the People's March is being run.

full pay; public works to provide jobs at trade union rates; state workshops; a shorter working week to be regulated according to the requirements of industry; proper training

and retraining; and a crash programme of house building.

These ideas were explained rather unsatisfactorily — there was much talk of 'the nation', as if both bosses and workers

could agree on such good-sense measures.

Nevertheless, they remain still today essentially the right policies against unemployment.

The links between jobs and racism



Coventry Anti-Racist Defence activists march to police station after a comrade is arrested.

Coventry youth are determined to use the arrival of the People's March on May 20th to highlight the link between unemployment and racism.

Coventry, once the boom town of the British motor and engineering industry, now has unemployment running at 13.5% — and rising. Of last summer's school leavers, 60% have still not found a permanent job. And the figures are even higher among blacks.

There are two 'Topshops' in Coventry, running training courses lasting between three months and a year. The pay is a miserable £23.50, but even so, quite a few young people regard it as slightly better than no job at all.

It may be significant that some of the first signs of a new upsurge in racism occurred on those courses. Black youth on the courses have been harassed by skinheads and abused by the tutors, some of whom habitually refer to them as 'wogs' and 'sambo'.

Racist attacks in the city have been increasing for some months, culminating in last month's murder of Satnam Singh Gill who was stabbed to death by a group of skinheads in broad daylight in a busy shopping precinct.

This was the incident that prompted Barricade supporters in Coventry North East Young Socialists to call an emergency meeting, where 350 people, black and white, agreed to form an Anti-Racist Defence Squad.

Judith Bonner, from Coventry NE YS, told us: 'It's obvious to everyone involved in the campaign that the question of racist attacks is directly linked to unemployment. We're planning to organise a big contingent of youth on the march as it passes through Foleshill (the main Asian area of Coventry) and to distribute leaflets explaining the connection between unemployment and racism. We also hope to organise a meeting for marchers in Coventry on May 20th.'

A new war in the Middle East?

Andrew Hornung surveys the background to the crisis in the Lebanon.

TWO WEEKS ago Israeli jets shot down two Syrian helicopters over Lebanon. The helicopters had been sent by Syria to reinforce its drive against Christian-rightist positions on Mount Lebanon in the centre of the country. Syria inevitably responded by installing 100 ground-to-air missiles.

Now Israel threatens a full-scale war if Syria does not withdraw the missiles. Lebanon could be shattered in the cross-fire of a war waged by

its two self-appointed protectors. The diplomatic involvement of the US and the Soviet Union is a measure of how near we are to another Middle East war, albeit a more limited one than in 1948, 1967 or 1973.

The Israelis will continue to insist on the removal of the missiles. President Assad of Syria cannot agree to this without being humiliated. A retreat on the Israeli side is even less likely. Begin's renewed warmongering is vital for his build-up towards the forthcoming Israeli elections.

In any case, Begin is in a much stronger position than

Assad. Assad is under pressure from the US and Saudi Arabia to drop any pretence to an anti-imperialist stance, to speed up the economic orientation to the West and to make a settlement with Israel — in short to take the same road as Egypt under Sadat.

Assad is also more isolated than in the past. If Syria goes to war with Israel, no other Arab state will stand with it — Iraq is hostile and otherwise embroiled, Egypt has become a client of the US, and Saudi Arabia would refuse to give open support. Jordan is at present closely linked to Iraq

and in any case would be militarily ineffectual against Israel.

There is a further reason for Israel's intransigence. Israel has just been campaigning for a reversal of the US's decision to sell reconnaissance aircraft — the AWACS — to Saudi Arabia on the grounds that this will permit the Saudis to monitor what is going on in Israel. If the Syrians secure the peaks of the Lebanese mountains they will be provided with a far more effective monitoring position than the AWACS could possibly give.

If Assad backs down, it will not be because of subtle shuttle diplomacy, but because he has agreed to go down the Egyptian road: to take increased foreign 'aid' in exchange for the annihilation of the Palestinian people.

As in the previous Middle East 'peace settlements', such agreements are initialled in the blood of the Palestinians.

As in the case of Hussein's massacre of the Palestinians in Jordan in 1970, the Palestinians find themselves under

attack not only from Zionism, but also from the leaders of Arab Nationalism.

The present rightward drift within the Arab world sees the anti-imperialist pretensions of the Arab nationalist regime crumble. The Palestinian movement — still dominated by people who are fundamentally ideologically distinct from the likes of Assad — needs to deepen its contact with the proletarian revolutionary trends in the Arab countries, as only these can be firm allies in the struggle against imperialism.

Syria, Israel and the Lebanese Right

The first stage of the Syrian invasion — the intervention of Syrian-based units of the Palestinian Liberation Army and of the Syrian-backed trend within the PLO, Saïqa — came in January 1976.

The Lebanese Right were delighted at this. The Left were in no position to go onto the offensive against Syria and their Lebanese opponents and therefore acquiesced to these first steps.

Assad, it appears, was still looking for a political solution: he ignored the Left's demands for an end to sectarianism and concentrated on trying to beef up the country's central authority. In response to the Left's opposition, Assad cut off arms supplies to them.

There were mass defections from the PLA and Saïqa. Assad moved his regular troops into the border areas.

This move was 'justified' by widespread outbreaks of fighting, the results, it is generally believed, of Syrian provocations. Within a short time, this second stage had gone over to a third stage: the full-scale invasion of the Lebanon. In that short space of time, however, thousands of Palestinians were murdered by Rightist militias. The Syrians helped to hold down the Palestinians and the Left, and the PLA and Saïqa were used directly in support of the Right.

Syria had obviously given up all hope of trying to control the situation indirectly. The Right, however, having been saved by the Syrians, began to raise their demands. Gradually they recovered their arrogance and, egged on by the Israelis, refused to be controlled by their Syrian saviours. In time this was bound to lead to a bloody confrontation with the Syrians turning on the Right.

That is just what happened. In the South, below the line of the Litani river, where there was a strong concentration of Palestinians, the Israelis were giving direct support to the Right. They invaded the area in March 1978, officially withdrawing their forces the following June. The following year their protegee Major Haddad declared the area under his control to be an 'independent, free Lebanese state'.

The attempts by the extreme Right at various stages to partition Lebanon had all failed. Now Israel had managed to break off a piece of Lebanon, which it proceeded as quickly as possible to integrate economically.

While Israel had officially withdrawn (leaving the United Nations Interim Forces in their place) it kept up a constant supply of arms to the Right, blocked shipments to the Left, and frequently raided not only south of the Litani, but much further North.



A Beirut suburb after Israeli bombing

The legacy of French rule

WHEN the French developed the 'confessional' system in Lebanon following 1922, they thought they had fashioned the perfect antidote to Arab nationalism. They had done better than that, though. They had built a system based on religiously defined communities which was to retard the development of any modern politics in Lebanon.

The confessional system makes religious sectarianism the official system of the country. It provides that all important, and many not-so-important, state posts be distributed according to religious community. The President, for example, is always a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and the President of the Chamber of Deputies a Shi'a Muslim.

The Maronite Christians dominate. They have refused to participate in any Arabist movements, and evolved an ideology — based on a completely

spurious history — according to which they are the last crusaders, an outpost of Western Christian civilisation and a bulwark against Arab-Muslim backwardness. The Zionist racists of Israel have not been slow in recognising the similarity of this view to their own.

Conflict

Each confessional group, Maronite, Greek Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Druze, Sunni, Shi'a and so on, each has its place in the sectarian state order, based on its population size — as recorded in a 1932 census. In 1932 the ratio of Christians to Muslims was six to five. Today about 60% of the population is Muslim.

This population change made a conflict between the Christian

communities and the Muslim communities inevitable. But the struggle has been against confessionalism itself, not for rejigging the sectarian balance. This reflects a growing social differentiation, the relative impoverishment of the Muslim population and their radicalisation (in part as a result of contact with the Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon).

The reformers, people like Raymond Edde, who were in favour of concessions to the Muslim bourgeoisie by adjusting the confessional system to the new demographic realities, have been increasingly isolated.

On the one side, they are faced with the ultra-conservative Christian parties, the National Liberal Party (headed by the Chamoun family) and the Phalangist Kata'eb (headed by the Gemayel family) and the many clan-based militias; on the other side there are the components of the Lebanese National Movement — a front of more

than a dozen organisations and their militias, which is in alliance with the Palestinians.

There are, of course, some Muslim reactionaries on the side of the so-called Lebanese Front, as well as Christian leftists (not to mention the many Christian Palestinians) on the side of the National Movement.

Squalid

One of the central points of the programme of the Left is the 'abolition of sectarianism as a basis for political organisation and appointments.'

So the Lebanese internal conflict is not simply a squalid affair of communal rivalry. The Muslim-Left forces are fighting to end confessionalism. And they reflect the growing social consciousness of the swelling ranks of the poor.



Bleeding Lebanon

The "civil war" in Lebanon which broke out in early 1975 was in fact the third round in a long-drawn out battle between the Lebanese ultra-Right and the growing Muslim-Left opposition.

Round one came in 1958. Fearing the dual development of a leftist and Muslim-Arab nationalist movement and banking on American fears about the newly-installed regime of General Kassem in Iraq, Camille Chamoun called for US troops to put down "communist subversion". Compromised by their intervention, the US left without firing a shot. But they stabilised the situation by removing Chamoun from the presidency and giving economic aid.

For ten years stability reigned, with Lebanon benefitting from the newly-found oil wealth of the Arab world. But while Beirut became the undisputed banking capital of the East, while luxury hotels mushroomed along the front in the capital and the service sector developed with great strides industry was fairly stagnant and agricultural production remained backward.

In 1969, the Lebanese Right opened round two of the conflict by attacking the Palestinian population. Between April and November 1969 the forces of Lebanese reaction — state forces and private militias — tried to crush the Palestinian resistance. They saw the Palestinians as provoking Israeli retaliation, which was bound to have an adverse effect on the Lebanese economy, above all on tourism.

In addition — and this was possibly the primary reason — the Palestinian resistance inevitably had a radicalising effect on the Lebanese left at a time when

Arab nationalism in general provided no such inspiration.

Egged on by imperialism, the Right attempted for six months to crush the Palestinians. That attempt ended in failure.

That phase came to an end with the signing of the Cairo agreement which stipulated certain limitations on Palestinian action, but left them with the right to carry arms, train and carry out military actions.

Camps

Having failed to crush the Palestinians in Lebanon, imperialism urged Hussein of Jordan to smash the Palestinian presence in his country. Hussein had many reasons for doing this — he didn't need any persuasion — and in September 1970 he dealt a shattering blow to the Palestinians in Jordan. One of the results of this action was that hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled to Lebanon. Another round in the conflict was bound to break out there.

From about 1970 onwards there was a tailing-off of the boom-time prosperity in Lebanon. The ranks of the poor were growing quickly. In the countryside poverty was even worse than in the towns and tens of thousands of families drifted to the towns in search of work.

There they were faced by almost unimaginable squalor. Away from the hotels, the casinos and the fashion salons, the shanty towns merged with the refugee camps. The economically dispossessed shared the lives of the politically dispossessed. ... and not surprisingly they shared each other's causes.

From this combination there

emerged the forces of the Lebanese National Movement, headed by the Druze leader Kemal Jumblatt. Its programme consisted of six main points: (1) abolition of sectarianism as a basis for political organisation and appointments; (2) electoral reform based on proportional representation; (3) reform in the military structure; (4) labour, social and welfare reforms, including an end to arbitrary firing and a rise in the minimum wage; (5) "Arabism"; (6) support for the Palestinian armed presence in Lebanon.

How did the latest round start?

In February 1975, a fishermen's strike broke out in the Chamounist stronghold of Sidon. Armed intervention against the workers was opposed by the militias of the Left (Even the Communist Party has an armed wing for it, like most of the other left trends, is heavily influenced by the Palestinians).

Fighting

On April 13th Phalangists, hoping to exploit right-wing resentment of the Palestinians after a retaliatory raid by the Israelis, attacked a bus coming back from a Rejection Front demonstration, killing 27 people. The following day fighting broke out between the Kata'eb and the Rejection Front, mainly supporters of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (the tactic was clearly to try to divide the PLO leadership from the PFLP militants). At the same time the General Federation of Workers sponsored a general strike

in favour of the Palestinians.

Despite the Rightists' determination to go on the offensive, despite their predominance in the state forces and despite aid from Israel, they proved no match for the Lebanese Left. The PLO maintained a position of non-involvement in what it termed a "purely internal Lebanese affair", but gradually they were forced not only to defend the camps but co-ordinate their actions with the Left.

Syria

Over the next eight months the Left conquered position after position. By early 1976 Syria was convinced that within a short space of time, Lebanon would be the home of a leftist regime which would increase pressure on Assad from the Syrian masses, limit his move towards imperialism and take from him a possible trump card in negotiations with imperialism and Israel, the claim to be able to control the Palestinians.

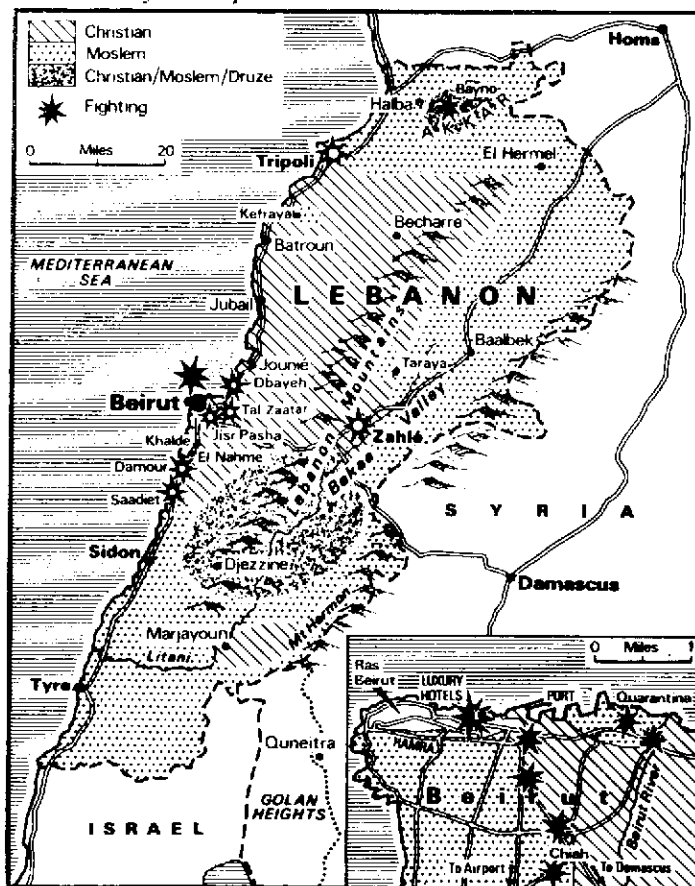
Egypt's unilateral agreement with Israel put further pressure on Assad and the Syrian Ba'athists to invade Lebanon — before the Israelis did! — and control the situation there.

Areas

At the end of January 1976 the Syrians had become directly involved. Soon they moved into the border areas and in a third step moved in to occupy the whole of the Lebanon north of the Litani River (the area to the South being disputed between the Left-Palestinian alliance and the Rightist-Israeli front).



Tel al Zaatar refugee camp — bloodily destroyed by rightists in 1976 with Syrian help



Could China follow Poland?

by Chan Ying

RECENT strikes in China have demanded not just better conditions but democracy and free 'Polish-style' unions. Student protests have also demanded democratic rights. The official media's coverage of the Polish events, intended as anti-USSR propaganda, has backfired, and further fuelled the revolt.

The bureaucracy has responded by switching repression into high gear. After tolerating the existence of unofficial journals for two years since the West learned about Peking's Democracy Wall, the regime has now launched widespread arrests all over the country.

Sensing that they can no longer contain the rapid growth of the unofficial journals' circulation and political

influence, the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee has issued a 'document no. 9' giving detailed instructions to local provincial authorities to stamp out 'illegal journals and organisations', now numbering dozens and existing in all of China's major cities.

Influence

The unofficial journals had recently picked up on the strikes and student protests. Last year a 'National Association of Unofficial Magazines in China' was formed. And experiments in local elections initiated by the authorities have given the democratic movement activists an unusual platform. Election results in the Peking student districts, for example, have shown that the movement has very strong support.

The Chinese authorities' inability to neutralise the democratic movement by limited concessions and low-profile harassment, and the movement's increasing political influence among workers, led to the new policy of blanket repression.

The repression has at least helped resolve the political debate within the democratic movement about whether the CCP can be reformed. Those who argued that the CCP is thoroughly corrupt and bureaucratic, and that China needs not reform but revolutionary transformation, have now gained a greater hearing.

The democratic movement has had to retrench and go underground. The present period is crucial: if the movement can survive the repression and continue to win influence among the working class,

then a Poland-type upheaval could happen in China, with equal ferocity. If the Chinese bureaucracy can gain a breathing space and carry through readjustments at the expense of the workers, then their new collaboration with imperialism will probably succeed in battering down the hatches for a period ahead.

Bulletin

All socialists supporting the fight against bureaucracy in Poland must equally support the Chinese democratic movement.

Activists in Hong Kong in contact with the movement in China have produced a bulletin, and welcome donations and subscriptions (£5 for a year). Write to: Chinese Democratic Movement Resource Centre, Kowloon City PO Box 89278, Hong Kong.

France ends 23 years of right-wing rule. But what now?

by Martin Thomas

23 YEARS of right-wing domination in France have been ended. But to win real changes the French workers can only rely on their own struggles.

The newly-elected Socialist Party president, Francois Mitterrand, has promised nationalisations (steel, armaments, banks, insurance companies, etc.), a 'progressive reduction' of the work week to 35 hours without loss of pay, a moratorium on nuclear power development, and other reforms.

But the promises are hedged around with qualifications. And the structure of France's Fifth Republic presents many obstacles to reform — or excuses for avoiding reform.

A conservative Constitutional Council can veto Mitterrand's measures. He will call new elections for the National Assembly, but under France's present electoral system, favourable to the Right, a Left majority in the Assembly is unlikely.

Mitterrand wants proportional representation, but is unlikely to get it implemented before the Assembly elections, due to take place before July 1st.

And in any case a clear Left majority would embarrass Mitterrand more than anything. The final days of his election campaign were devoted to reassuring Centrist and Gaullist voters — and, in cold fact, it was such voters who gave him his victory.

The vote for the workers' parties (SP, CP, Trotskyists, PSU) was only slightly more this year than in 1974. But years of corruption and chaos have set the Right in disarray and pushed floating voters over to Mitterrand in the run-off.

Mitterrand may well now want to form a government coalition with stray Centrists and Gaullists. The French CP is loudly demanding 'Communist ministers' instead. But the CP's big losses, due to workers' disgust at the CP's cynical disregard of any political consistency in pursuit of those ministerial jobs, make its position very weak.

The French workers want to change the set-up which has made France the most unequal society in Western Europe. That's why they voted Mitterrand. But if they are not to be cheated, they must now insist on a CP-SP government — and prepare to fight even against that government to win their demands.

Socialist Fight, a new Australian monthly, has carried several reprints from Socialist Organiser. The first three issues also include reports on industrial struggles in Australia, such as the recent major Qantas dispute, and a major statement: The Politics of Socialist Fight. Sub. rates: Aus\$15.60 for 12 issues, air mail. From GPO Box 1729P, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia.



BEVANISM

JOHN McILROY examines the Bevanite movement of the 1950s and its lessons for today, in a review of two studies of the movement: 'Bevanism — Labour's High Tide', by Mark Jenkins [Spokesman Books, £12.50], and 'The Rise and Fall of Bevanism' by David Howell [ILP, 45p].

Labour's Left the last time round

THIRTY YEARS ago this April, Nye Bevan, Harold Wilson and John Freeman resigned from the Attlee government, concerned over defence expenditure and the introduction of charges into the National Health Service.

Korea had brought home to the Left the extent of the Government's subordination to US policy, and the ambitious Cold War springs of that policy. They feared the distorted priorities this subservience would impose particularly in relation to reforms at home.

In his resignation speech, Bevan widened the front and attacked the government for a loss of socialist direction. It is from this date that Bevanism — the Left's reaction to the limitations of the 1945 government — is usually dated.

In fact, Bevan placed himself at the head of a movement which was already developing in response to the policies of the government to which he had belonged for five years. It was only a matter of months before that, as Minister of Labour, Bevan had been involved in the imprisonment of striking dockers under the notorious Order 1305 (an anti-strike law introduced during the war, and continued by the Labour government after 1945).

A *Keep Left* group of MPs to some extent associated with *Tribune* had been established, and was to provide several of Bevan's adjutants. This group had already produced pamphlets, and in fact had taken the struggle into the constituencies, organising the first Brains Trusts.

In 1949 the *Socialist Fellowship* had been established, involving not only the British Trotskyists but MPs such as Ellis Smith and Tom Braddock and leading trade unionists such as Jim Figgins of the NUR and Jack Stanley of the Constructional Engineering Union. Some of these people split away when the Trotskyists supported North Korea against the United Nations troops, but the Fellowship and its associated newspaper, *Socialist Outlook*, made such a strong impression that it was proscribed in mid-1954. Many of its supporters were to constitute the ranks of Bevanism.

The Bevanite MPs met regularly as a group throughout 1951. From 15, the group grew to 30. However, they never grouped together even all the Parliamentary Left.

Ten specialist groups were set up to study policy. Tours and itineraries for speaking engagements were established, and spokesmen appointed to put the group line in Parliamentary debates.

During the summer two pamphlets *One Way Only* and *Going Our Way?* were produced. Labour's defeat in the autumn 1951 election provided new impetus. *Tribune* pointed out that if the voting patterns for all constituencies had followed those for the Bevanite MPs, then the narrow defeat would have been a comfortable victory.

In March 1952 Bevan and



Aneurin Bevan

57 MPs voted against the Tory defence proposals.

The Parliamentary Labour leadership's line was to vote with the Tories: it was Labour, after all, that had started a huge rearmament drive and sent British troops to Korea. A campaign by the Right in both unions and Party, backed virulently by the Press, led to a Parliamentary Labour Party vote that the Bevanite group should be disbanded.

The Bevanites adapted to the ban by splitting their activities into two fields. The 'first eleven' consisted of the MPs meeting clandestinely each week at Crossman's house. The 'second eleven' consisted of the most organisation-minded of the parliamentary Bevanites, meeting with *Tribune* activists to plan propaganda and constituency work.

At the 1952 Conference, the group won six out of the seven constituency seats on the National Executive. Bevan stood against Morrison as Deputy Leader, but was defeated by 194 votes to 82. During 1953, hundreds of Brains Trusts were held — up to eight a week — attracting thousands of constituency activists.

But the right-wing witch-hunt gathered momentum. The feel of the times can be gauged by the comment of Will Lawther of the miners' union. 'The opinion of the trade unions is that the Bevanite activities are a deliberate attempt to undermine the

leadership in the same way as Hitler and the Communists did. There is no difference whatever between them'.

Expulsions increased. In July 1954 *Socialist Outlook* was proscribed. Resolutions from 119 Labour Parties opposed the ban.

German rearmament became a burning issue. A pamphlet, *It Need Not Happen*, had a mass sale, and at the 1954 conference the Bevanites' opposition to German rearmament was lost by only 3,270,000 to 3,022,000. The Bevanites did not pose the issue in internationalist terms, as the Trotskyists did, but cashed in on nationalistic anti-German sentiments. Bevan stood against Gaitskell for Treasurer and lost by 4,338,000 to 2,032,000.

SIZE

But the Bevanites had many differences and ambiguities. When Bevan attacked the cold war alliance SEATO (South East Asia Treaty Organisation) and resigned from the Shadow Cabinet in April 1951, Wilson replaced him, with Crossman's support. And Bevan himself supported NATO and argued only about the size of the British rearmament drive.

In October 1954 came the biggest initiative of extra-Parliamentary Bevanism, as

Tribune took up the cudgels for union democracy against the right-wing Arthur Deakin of the TGWU, many of whose dockers had split to join the Stevedores and Dockers' Union. Meetings were held, pamphlets were produced, *Tribune* was sold at the dock gates, but the intervention in the docks, as distinct from 'brains-trusting', was untypical. Bevan, like Benn today, certainly failed to stimulate and support direct action by workers.

SPLIT

Nuclear disarmament was now becoming a major issue. Bevan clashed with Attlee in the Commons (March 1955), and this was followed by a revolt of left MPs. The PLP voted to withdraw the whip from Bevan, but his expulsion was lost by one vote on the NEC.

From then on it was anticlimax. Gaitskell won both the Treasurership and Leadership elections from Bevan at a canter in 1955. Nye settled for domestication and the promise of influence.

He joined Gaitskell's Shadow Cabinet, and won the vote for Treasurer in 1956. But then in 1957 he broke dramatically with his followers, denouncing unilateral disarmament at the 1957 conference. 'Bevan into Bevin', remarked the *Telegraph*, referring to the right-wing ex-Foreign Secretary and TGWU leader.

He ended as the faded and not too credible elder statesman at Gaitskell's elbow in the 1959 election. Bevan died in 1960. In October 1964, after '13 wasted years', the day of the Bevanites finally dawned, as Wilson formed a government with Crossman, Greenwood, Davies, Wigg and Castle. The rest we know to our cost.

Two points strike us today: the extremely narrow range of issues on which the Bevanites campaigned, and their almost complete lack of success.

It was, of course, a different world. The achievement of the Attlee years was generally seen not as a reorganisation of capitalism carried out within a broad consensus, but rather as an important, if limited, step in the direction of socialism. The leadership's prestige, and its close links with a powerfully entrenched right-wing union leadership, against the backdrop of intense cold war and the initial belief that the Tories were bound to fail, made life very difficult for a Left whose limited outlook had been forged in the decades of defeat after 1926.

And when the Right lost the arguments, they purchased silence by proscription.

We can still learn, however, from the experience of Bevanism, and Jenkins' book, published last year, might have been expected to produce more discussion. It is a closely researched work, clearly relating Bevanism to the world and political concerns of the '50s. It treats its subject with seriousness and understanding. In particular, the book documents the exten-

sive dimensions of Bevanism and its relationship with the trade unions, underestimated by previous writers such as David Coates.

We have to remember that despite austerity, rationing, and the use of troops against strikes and in Greece and Korea, Labour achieved its highest-ever vote in the lost 1951 election — almost 14 million as against 11.5 in 1979. As 'Bevanism' emerged between 1947 and 1952, individual membership increased by 406,037. Trade union affiliate membership was 27% higher in 1957 than in 1947, individual membership 50% higher. The biggest increase occurred between 1951 and 1954, as Bevanism peaked.

Jenkins sees an unimpeded and gradual march of the Left in the Party and unions since the '50s. 'Whatever controversy may surround the record of the Wilson governments, it was a period of steady advance of the Left within the unions and the Party, the kind of development which Aneurin Bevan projected and worked for'.

This kind of analysis misses and obscures the reasons for the conjunctural ebbs and flows, reverses and steps forward. It is related to Jenkins' conception of a strong organic Left, gradually and inevitably maturing in tune with objective circumstances. There is a certain over-optimism and fatalism, as if the Bevanites could have done no other than they did.

This in turn leads to an underappreciation of the serious weakness of the Labour Left, then and now, and an under-estimation of leadership and organisation. Bevanite organisation, we are told, was quite adequate for their perspectives. Basically, the Party organisation itself was sufficient.

Once the Brains Trusts became popular, Jenkins argues, *Socialist Outlook*, the Trotskyist-influenced paper, '... became superfluous to the Left's requirements and the development of its struggle'.

Now Jenkins is quite right to stress that a 'hard left' should swim in the stream of a developing broad left current, relating to its concerns in order to clarify it. To do this, however, it will need to produce its own agitation and propaganda.

UNITY

It will certainly need to avoid raising barriers, as does the sectarian 'take it or leave it' approach of *Militant*. It will also need to develop a transitional politics rather than breaking impatiently to the 'socialism now' approach which, Jenkins argues, handicapped the work of the Socialist Fellowship.

But the advances of recent years would have been impossible without organisation, whether broader, such as the CLPD or R&FMC, or narrower like the SCLV and the Socialist Organiser groups. Both are needed.

Even within its own terms, Bevanite organisation was woefully inadequate. Its lead-

ership would take decisions and articles would be typeset for *Tribune* before the group had even a chance to meet!

Despite this, Jenkins' book should be a must to order from your library.

Howell has done a useful job within the confines of a short pamphlet. In particular he stresses the Bevanite striving for an international perspective, and he analyses the forces at work within the unions to show that they did not present a monolithic right face. He shows the specific and at times autonomous processes at work, rather than seeing changes within the unions as having a one-to-one relationship with changes in the Party.

Howell comes closer than Jenkins to explaining the crucial failure of Bevanism. Objective constraints were important, but central was the view that a Parliamentary Labour government had the power in itself to destroy capitalism, and by gradual means. The mass movement was inessential, often a problem.

This optimistic view of the state was, of course, strengthened by the 1945 experience. The result was, as Ralph Miliband has pointed out, '... Parliamentary Bevanism was a mediation between the leadership and the rank and file opposition.'



Harold Wilson

But the parliamentary Bevanites, while assuming the leadership of that opposition, also served to blur and to blunt both its strength and its extent'.

Within the Left's parliamentarianism, Howell correctly points to the castrating effect of 'unity to win elections'.

Howell also stresses the deradicalisation process operating on MPs in a situation where they are seen and allowed to act as the leadership.

Today, we are starting to deal with some of these problems. Re-selection can play a role in subordinating MPs to the Party, but we need to go further, and through socialist delegate democracy transcend capitalist representative democracy. Workplace branches, the direct affiliation of ethnic organisations, the revitalisation of the LPYS to reflect the concerns of today's youth — these are just three of a host of measures which can go some way to reaching a new audience.

We need not only a Labour government of a new type. We need a Labour Left of a new type. As far as the Bevanites are concerned: 'Never again!'

APEX: not such a triumph for the Right

by Richard Paine
(conference delegate from
APEX GEC Coventry Weekly
branch)

THE APEX conference over the weekend Saturday 25th to Tuesday 28th April was in appearance the predictable triumph for the right wing.

Not one substantial motion from the Left was passed. APEX policy for an electoral college of the 50-25-25 variety was reaffirmed by a large majority.

Tony Benn's candidature for Deputy Leader was condemned, often in an insulting manner. And Michael Foot's developing rightward swing edged one step further in a speech to Conference containing very little of substance, but clearly lapped up by President Dennis Howell and the APEX Executive.

But the anger of left-wing delegates, and the frustration of many more delegates, was clearly in evidence. A successful reference-back was moved on the first day which allowed the 11 resolutions at the end of the Agenda, relating to nuclear disarmament (which otherwise would not have been taken), to be allocated a special debate.

The debate eventually took place on the Tuesday morning, and reflected the methods used by the Executive to control Conference. APEX itself, as a union, is relatively democratic, but conference procedure is not.

The Executive Report, essentially a factual summary of the previous year, is taken in parts at Conference — and motions from branches are therefore taken as amendments to the Report.

So on each occasion only the Executive has the right of reply!

In the nuclear disarmament debate, the floor debate itself had two speakers in favour of unilateralism and three in favour of multilateralism. All were carefully chosen, allowing none of the branches behind the unilateralist composite to speak, and the right of reply was given to the Executive alone.

Even so the multilateralist position was only, narrowly carried, with many delegates convinced that had the unilateralist position been given equal time it would have won the day.

The same undemocratic Conference procedure ensured the

Executive held sway on other issues throughout the four days. In the unemployment debate, apart from supporting initiatives to unionise unemployed workers, and supporting the 'People's March' for jobs, the only amendments of any substance (for progressive overtime bans and for work-sharing) were opposed by the Executive (on the grounds that they weren't practicable!) and consequently defeated.

A resolution calling for Executive recommendations on positive action in order for women to play a greater role in the union was passed, but, despite a number of delegates objecting, the patronising attitude to women shown by many leading officials, and the President in particular, continued unabated.

But clearly the Executive has something to fear. A Campaign for Labour Party Democracy fringe meeting, addressed by Tony Benn and attended by 300 people, was condemned by the Executive in Conference as 'un-constitutional'. It seems that only the right wing are allowed to organise, through the Executive and their stooges, while the left-wing activists must voluntarily forgo any real political debate.

In the meantime it seems an inquiry is currently underway into the activities of rank and file delegates to the North-West Area Council who have committed the heinous crime of meeting in the pub before the Council meeting. An Executive which feels threatened by its own members discussing issues together is clearly very unsure of its own position.

The task for rank and file activists now is to organise at Branch and Area levels, and for national conference, to democratise union procedures and build a fighting union. With a dwindling membership (down by 10,000 to 140,000 during 1980 alone), and an Executive seemingly no longer enamoured by the prospect of amalgamation (a resolution calling upon the TUC to expel ASTMS for poaching in General Accident was passed), APEX's long-term prospects are not good.

Clearly the Executive as it presently stands is unlikely to stop the underlying trend to obscurity. That task must fall to the rank and file.

USDAW sticks with 30:30:40

by John Douglas

THE PERSONNEL managers and industrial relations directors of the big companies that the union deals with were all there. Sitting in the visitors' gallery, they kept an eye on their employees, and wine and dined delegates throughout the conference.

That was the USDAW conference. But the voice of the left inside USDAW is growing.

The Broad Left held a successful meeting of about 300 delegates and visitors, with Tony Benn speaking.

Even after the appearance of Michael Foot, calling for a

reversal of Wembley, the USDAW Executive reaffirmed the 30:30:40 formula — though leaving themselves room to manoeuvre if any other proposal comes up.

Conference endorsed support for Denis Healey as deputy Labour Leader — but also passed a motion for unilateral disarmament.

The right wing in USDAW is organised round two groups: 'Mainstream', and the 'Progressive Labour Group'.

The PLG was set up in the '40s to combat Communist Party influence. Mainstream is a new group, stemming

from Labour Solidarity, the group set up by Labour MPs to reverse the decisions of Wembley.

The Mainstream/PLG leaflets put out at conference contained nothing about their policies, relying instead on gutter-press abuse of the Left, whom they term 'vipers'.

The Broad Left needs to fight to renovate USDAW, with demands like banning bosses' representatives from the conference, and setting up women's caucuses. (Women are 60% of USDAW's membership).

A motion calling for multi-company shop stewards' committees was passed at the conference, and must be built on by the Broad Left and USDAW.

A motion from my branch calling for a fight for a workers' government, was decided by general secretary Bill Whatley because it came from 'a branch where they are always on strike'. (The last time we were on strike was four years ago). He also said that it would mean organisations like the WRP (!!!) being given the support of USDAW — so the motion was lost.



THE ISSUES FOR ASTMS

Sue Lister presents an activists' guide to the ASTMS conference.

THE Thirteenth annual conference of ASTMS will start with a debate on economic policy. The first motion is to endorse the TUC's and Labour Party's 'Alternative Economic Strategy', with left-wing amendments to delete import controls and right-wing amendments to delete nationalisation.

A large section of the agenda for the first day will be on unemployment and the rights of unemployed members. If passed, it will extend ASTMS' correct position on recruiting unemployed members. There are important rule changes which will increase democratic control of the TUC and Labour Party Conference delegations. And between 4pm and 5.30 on Saturday delegates are expected to discuss, digest and vote on motions on the disabled, state benefits, the NHS and 32 pages of the NEC annual report.

The other important event on Saturday is a CND meeting in the lunch break addressed by Tony Benn. This meeting is important not only because the question of nuclear weapons is essential for all trade unionists, but also because, at some point in the conference, the NEC will move their emergency motion calling for a vote for Denis Healey as Deputy Leader of the Labour Party at Labour Party conference.

This is probably going to be the biggest battle of the conference because at least three Divisional Councils have already submitted emergency resolutions calling for a

vote for Benn, who more accurately represents ASTMS policy.

First thing on Sunday morning the NEC are hoping to pass a motion that will increase subs by 25% before delegates recover from the hangovers induced by the mayor's reception the previous night. I'm sure that someone will point out that ASTMS has not negotiated a 25% increase for its membership.

On Sunday afternoon there is an amendment in favour of positive discrimination. This will be one of the few times women's rights have been discussed — just before delegates leave on the Monday Morning.

Ireland isn't going to be discussed, not because there is agreement, but because it will not be on the agenda! It's every socialist's duty to get Ireland discussed. This conference season is too close to the death of Bobby Sands MP and the impending death of the other H-Block hunger strikers for us to let the bureaucracy get away with ignoring the issue any longer.

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Wales TUC rejects 'Social Plan'

by Geoff Williams

THE WALES T.U.C. has thrown out the 'Social Plan' put forward by the General Council.

At the conference over the May Day weekend, rejection of the plan was moved by Derek Gregory from NUPE and seconded by Emlyn Williams of the NUM.

Derek Gregory pointed out that the document was more in line with a manifesto for the SDP than the Wales TUC. He went on to explain that the General Council had only discussed the document for 20 minutes before a secret ballot was held to decide if it should be put to conference.

Emlyn Williams said that in no way would the miners be tied to any Social Plan or Social Contract with any Labour Government, especially after the experience of the Callaghan government.

The platform attempted to continue the discussion, and ruled remission of the document out of order. The debate continued, but ended after eight of the 23 sections had been remitted, and the whole debate turned into a farce.

Eventually a delegate from the UCW moved next business, and the document was remitted in order for a full discussion to take place in the unions, down to branch level, and in the Trades Councils.

The conference also overwhelmingly supported unilateral disarmament.

The General Council opposed the setting up of a youth section and a conference to organise youth, because they couldn't afford it. They did support a resolution calling for an inquiry into the abuse of YOP schemes. Many speakers pointed out that youth need a full-time job with the proper rate of pay, instead of the pittance of £23.50.

COKEMEN VOTE FOR STRIKE

THE COKEMEN'S Area of the National Union of Mineworkers recently held a national ballot for industrial action to stop further closures of coke ovens and allied plants. The decision to hold the ballot was taken at the cokemen's national conference held on March 24th.

Feelings are running high. Over the last two years Glasshoughton, Norwood and Manvers coking plants have been closed [20% of the coking industry owned by the National Coal Board] and further closures are being threatened at Brookhouse [Sheffield] and elsewhere.

The result of the ballot was overwhelming: 2,445 in favour of taking industrial action, 798 against. If the cokemen take action they must not fight alone — the pits must come out and support them.

If the coking plants close, then it is only a question of time before pits follow.

Can all Socialist Organiser supporters delegated to union conferences this summer please write to John Bloxam, c/o 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY, giving as much advance notice as possible.

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Glasgow lagggers defy court writ

by Stan Crooke

BY THE time this issue of Socialist Organiser appears, lagggers currently sitting in at Bestobell Insulation Ltd, Glasgow, may well have been physically ejected from the buildings by the police. They're supposed to appear in court on May 12 to explain why they have ignored a warrant of ejection delivered by a sheriff's officer.

The sit-in at Bestobell began over a month ago after management put boiler-makers onto insulating work on the 'Isolair' support vessel. After a sit-in at the shipyard, from which they were evicted by the police, the lagggers moved into occupation at the Bestobell offices.

They are fighting to defend union organisation and the right to work, not to get the boiler-makers put on the dole. As a leaflet distributed at their picket of the Scott-Lithgow shipyard on Thursday 7th put it:

"We don't want the boiler-makers paid off — we want them redeployed by the firm to other work. As far as the company is concerned, they are out to smash our union organisation. We are fighting to defend it and our livelihoods."

Raymond Platt, the lagggers' convenor, told us about the aims of the Scott-Lithgow picket.

"We wanted to get the workforce to black all work on the Isolair support vessel in there. There were about 50 or 60 of us on the picket, lagggers and other people backing our fight. We want the workers to black the job so we can get round the table with management. I reckon the workforce will back us. We'll get support, no bother."

Last October, the dispute went to ACAS, and in January they ruled that the insulating work should be done by us, lagggers from the TGWU branch 7/162. But at the end of the day management said 'no' to redeployment and insisted on trying to use the boiler-makers to do our work.

"And they've shown no signs

of backing down.

"The dispute is still unofficial. Hugh Wyper and John Meffin [TGWU full-timers] were down here and gave us some advice, but we never took it. They've let us down."

"We asked them to make it official, but they said that as far as they were concerned it was unofficial and staying that way. They thought the action we were taking was wrong."

"But we've been through all the channels and got nowhere. We're going to win this one. There's no way we're giving up."

"The next step is to get the other Bestobell works, in

ISLE OF GRAIN: THE FIGHT'S NOT OVER

by Martin Thomas

LAGGERS are still picketing the Isle of Grain power station construction site in Kent. But it seems that the long struggle there is reaching some conclusion — for now, at least.

The scabs who have been doing the lagggers' work for the last year will be taken off it and found other jobs on site. The lagggers will be re-employed... probably.

Under the TUC formula which is finally being implemented, the lagggers are having to go for job interviews, one by one, with the two contractors who are now doing the work on the Isle of Grain, Babcocks and GEC. (The orig-

inal insulation contractors were thrown off the site long ago by the Central Electricity Generating Board).

The lagggers have made it clear that if a single one of them fails to get his job back, then they'll all stay out on the picket line — and their union, the GMWU, is backing this stand. But there are no promises from the employers.

And there is one other big problem: the lagggers are to be re-employed under the mechanical contractors' agreement, not the thermal insulation contractors' agreement they had before. Since the lagggers' job — working with rock-sill, glass fibre and calcium silicate — is extreme-

ly dangerous, safety conditions are very important for them.

Exactly how this settlement works out will depend on whether the lagggers can get themselves strongly organised once they are back on site.

Basic trade union principles have been at stake in this long and complex dispute; but the TUC's efforts have been directed solely towards patching up something acceptable to all the national union leaders involved and the employers.

It started 21 months ago, when 27 lagggers and 33 mates were locked out by the CEBG. Supposedly the dispute was about bonus payments. The press ran big stories about how well paid the lagggers were.

In reality the CEBG was using the bonus payments as an excuse to provoke a conflict and break the lagggers' organisation. In doing so, they acted as a front-runner for all the construction industry bosses.

The bonus payments ceased to be an issue long ago. In May last year scabs — members of the AUEW, EETPU, and NUSMW — were brought in, given a few days' training in place of the lagggers' four-year apprenticeship, and put on the job.

AUEW Construction Section and EETPU officials rode through the lagggers' picket lines with coach-loads of

scabs. The NUSMW turned a blind eye.

In October last year the dispute provoked a crisis in the TUC. GMWU officials protested about this scabbing, which broke their monopoly of organisation in the lagging trade. A national lagggers' conference called on the GMWU leaders to authorise a national lagggers' strike.

The TUC gave an ultimatum to the AUEW and the EETPU to accept a compromise formula or be expelled from the TUC. The AUEW and EETPU refused. Months of haggling followed, concluding in the present settlement.

The last hitch was the refusal of one section on the site to accept redeployment of the scabs. To beat this resistance, a site ballot was called on the TUC formula.

The ballot, including office staff and of course the scabs, was organised by the Electoral Reform Society. On whose request? No-one's telling, but probably it was the CEBG's, and some union leaders might have had a hand in it too.

The rebellious section was told that the ballot had gone against them — so, finally, they caved in, and the ballot results were never published.

And day after day, all through these months of manoeuvring, the lagggers manned the picket line. But they were the last people to be consulted by the union leaders.



Isle of Grain: the 21-month picket line

Slough, Manchester and Cardiff, supporting us as well.

"As for next week, when we're supposed to appear at the Court of Session — they can talk to themselves, because we're not turning up."

"It's something to do with the writ from the sheriff's officer. But we don't know what's in it. He left it at the gate and the wind blew it away. We're not turning up."

Messages/money to: J.P. McKenna, c/o TGWU, 216 West Regent St, Glasgow.

Support Royal Pride!

by Anna Lunts

THE WORKERS at Royal Pride furniture factory in Salford have been striking for union recognition for over 11 weeks now.

At the moment they are picketing the factory every day, although no production is taking place. The workers fear that the bosses might try to dismantle the factory by getting the machinery out and carrying on production elsewhere.

The strikers, nine women and two men, are absolutely determined to fight to the end for their jobs and their right to join a union, although the support they have received from the

union, FTAT, has been miserable.

The officials refused to back them when they occupied the factory and were faced with a High Court possession order to get them out, using the excuse that the union couldn't afford the legal costs.

Furthermore, FTAT has refused to organise support or industrial action in other FTAT shops in the area.

Small disputes like Royal Pride can so easily be defeated and isolated without support from other sections of the labour movement. But one of the strikers has gone on the People's

March and has been speaking at rallies up and down the country. And the Royal Pride strike committee has called a demonstration in Manchester on Saturday 16th May (12.30 from All Saints, Oxford Rd).

The demonstration is supported by Salford Trades Council, Manchester City Labour Party, and Salford West CLP. All rank and file trade unionists and Labour activists should be there to give the bosses a clear message — no more attacks on trade union rights.

Messages/money: Royal Pride strike fund, c/o FTAT, 37 Anson Rd, Victoria Park, Manchester 14.

YOP workers strike on May 14

by Stan Crooke

ON MAY 14th, the day before this issue of SO appears, youths working in the Youth Opportunities Project schemes in Glasgow are striking for the day in support of their campaign for: more pay, shorter hours, better working conditions and full trade union rights.

YOP schemes, introduced by the last Labour government, are a con. They are a cosmetic to conceal the real level of unemployment. They are cheap labour — £23.50 for a 40 hour week. They help cause more unemployment — firms sack workers paid the going rate for the job, and replace them with youths on YOP schemes.

Increasingly youths are being forced to go on YOP schemes. Refusal of an offer of a YOP place is used as an excuse to cut social security on the grounds that the claimant is 'not available for work'. And youths are warned that unless they go on YOP schemes as a sign of readiness to work, possible future employers will not take them on.

On April 24th, youths at the Polmadie Training Workshop in the Gorbals came out on strike for 24 hours. Together with local SO supporters they have been building support during the last fortnight for a Glasgow-wide strike of YOP workers: leafletting YOP workshops, getting petitions circulated round local factories, contacting local union branches to get motions of support, etc.

For May 14th the plan is to assemble outside the City Chambers at midday for an hour-long picket while a delegation goes in to get the backing of the Lord Provost, and then go down to the Manpower Services Commission offices to hand in a petition.

The lobby will also be used as an opportunity to get the names of delegates from the different YOP schemes to set up a co-ordinating committee.

WHERE WE STAND

★ Organise the left to beat back the Tories' attacks! No to attacks on union rights; defend the picket lines; 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.

★ Free abortion on demand. Women's equal right to work and full equality for women.

★ Against attacks on gays by the state; abolish all laws which discriminate against lesbians and gay men; for the right of the gay community to organise and affirm their stance publicly.

★ The Irish people — as a whole — should have the right to determine their own future. Get the British troops out now! Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act, political status for Irish Republican prisoners as a matter of urgency.

★ The black working people of South Africa should get full support from the British labour movement for their strikes, struggles and armed combat against the white supremacist regime. South African goods and services should be blacked.

★ It is essential to achieve the fullest democracy in the labour movement. Automatic reselection of MPs during each parliament and the election by annual conference of party leaders. Annual election of all trade union officials, who should be paid the average for the trade.

★ The chaos, waste, human suffering and misery of capitalism now — in Britain and throughout the world — show the urgent need to establish rational, democratic, human control over the economy, to make the decisive sectors of industry social property, under workers' control.

The strength of the labour movement lies in the rank and file. Our perspective must be working class action to raze the capitalist system down to its foundations, and to put a working class socialist alternative in its place — rather than having our representatives run the system and waiting for crumbs from the tables of the bankers and the bosses.

★ 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 quads (SPG, Special Branch, MI5 etc); public accountability etc.

Ansells strikers fight sabotage

by Jim Denham

TGWU officials in the West Midlands are working flat out round the Ansells brewery strike — in order to collapse the action as soon as possible!

Pickets from Ansells who had gone up to Burton Allied Brewery [Allied own Ansells] discovered that lorry drivers were being given a letter by Allied management telling them that the dispute was unofficial outside of Birmingham — and if the drivers wanted confirmation, the bosses gave them T&G official Doug Fairburn's telephone number!

"Most of these blokes wanted to honour our picket, but what could they do when a T&G official was telling them to cross?" commented one picket.

Then, last Friday [8th], all 1,000 strikers received a letter from T&G regional secretary Brian Mathers. The letter told them that "the time has come to make a decision". Continue the dispute and lose the company's offer of redundancy payment (£1,000 for the first five years of

service plus £100 for every year after that), or allow the officials to negotiate a 'settlement' — in other words, accept the company's terms.

The letter stated that, in the view of Mathers, Ansells would never re-open the brewery. It also stated that a continued strike would jeopardise unemployment and social security payments later on. And enclosed was a ballot form on the two alternatives!

Activists at Ansells have been arguing for a boycott of the ballot, and a mass meeting will be held to decide the issue this Wednesday [13th]. All the Ansells strikers are clear that the mass meeting decision must take precedence over the ballot that has been foisted on them from above — whichever way the vote goes.

But it's now clear that if the meeting votes to continue the action, the strikers will have to take matters completely into their own hands, and fight on despite the attitude of the T&G officials.

a socialist organiser 20p
broadsheet
**the fight for
trade union
democracy**



34p with postage,
from 214 Sickert
Ct, London N1.

Labour Campaign for Gay Rights

National conference for lesbians and gay men who want to work actively for gay rights in the Labour Party.

From 10.45am, Saturday 6 June, at UMIST Students' Union, Barnes Wallis building, Sackville St, Manchester 1. Creche provided. Free for wageless, £1 for others.

More details: David Mottram, 34 Elmin Walk, Manchester M15 5BN.

Socialist Organiser

CPSA demands an all-out strike

by Stephen Corbishley

WHEN MARION Chalmers of the CPSA Executive challenged delegates at the union's conference at Brighton to come forward if they could prove they had the support of their members for escalating industrial action, over 100 delegates immediately made for the rostrum.

After weeks of selective action in support of their 15% pay claim, civil servants are angry and in a militant mood. The Tories' 11% award to the armed forces has only added insult to injury.

Despite opposition from the CPSA Executive, the delegates reflected that

growing militancy and passed a motion calling for all-out action in the docks and airports to be backed up, if the Government is still holding out, with a complete shutdown for a week.

A total shutdown would affect the benefit computer centres and the motion therefore called for an emergency payments system so that claimants would be protected during the strike.

Vague reference was made to the prospect of an all-out indefinite strike should these other tactics not break the Tories' tight grip on civil servants' pay, but this idea was played

down by the proponents of the 5-day strike motion.

There is every danger, however, that if the Tories decide to go for a showdown — knowing that a defeat could set the union back years — the union will be ill-prepared for an indefinite strike. Only by facing that prospect now can the members be prepared for an all-out struggle.

A further problem is the way the motion leaves the calling of the different forms of action to the union leaders... if they see fit.

The CPSA is not alone among the civil service unions in committing itself to escalating industrial act-

Coventry police try to stifle anti-racists

by Judith Bonner

ON FRIDAY May 8th at mid-day the funeral of Satnam Singh Gill was held here in Coventry. Over 1000 mourners — family friends and black and white anti-racists — were

at the simple outdoor ceremony held in the grounds of Canley cemetery.

Police cordoned off roads and patrolled the route as the funeral procession of cars, vans and seven public transport buses hired for the occas-

ion made its way to the crematorium from the Sikh temple in Foleshill.

Four weeks have passed since Satnam's murder by a bunch of racist thugs. Since then the Anti-Racist Defence Squad, with the support of the black community in Coventry, has organised three rallies in the city centre precinct. The aim is to declare openly that there will be no more 'no go areas' for black people.

The rally on Saturday May 9th was peaceful, with speakers from the Coventry labour movement. Unfortunately all the speakers were white (and male), but even that was indicative of the breadth of support already gained for the anti-racist defence squad.

With their usual bias the local media, TV and radio, interpreted the rallies as 'race riots', initiated by 'outsiders' (on ATV they said this while holding a Coventry North-East Labour Party Young Socialists leaflet to the camera!)

Although the rally was peaceful, the police were not so well controlled, and they arrested five people (all black) for no apparent reason, except that they were there. In previous rallies 11 anti-racists had been arrested when the police attempted to force us out of the precinct. One PC put it like this: 'It's bad enough one of you walking through Woollies, but a lot of you together is even more of an intimidation to white shoppers'.

Now it's evident that we face more than just the fascists in our fight against racist violence, but this hasn't deterred the black community and the youth from taking a stand against racism.

The precinct rallies have been valuable, but the day to day running of defence has yet to be organised. Time is not on our side. There have been many more racist attacks since Satnam's death.

As one Asian youth pointed out, 'the time is ready to go on the offensive now, as well as to defend'.

The delay is partly due to the burden of work on producing leaflets for trade unions and Labour Parties, the national demonstration, petitions and collections.

But if we fail to organise correctly now, black youth won't wait — and they will run the risk of isolating themselves and falling victim to a police backlash.

We must also seek to involve West Indian youth. After a vicious sexual assault on a young West Indian woman by a group of four skinheads, some young West Indians produced an Open Letter to the Mayor (who refused to distribute it) warning that Coventry could 'make Brixton look like a tea-party'.

The Asian youth are the backbone of the fight against racism. Established leaders in their community are trying to hold them back. We must make certain this does not happen. On the contrary, more and more militant young people, including young Asian women who are traditionally very much kept out of political life, must be drawn into the fight.

We'll be discussing and organising to make sure that the North-East LPYS plays a major active role in this work.

**National demonstration
NO MORE RACIST
MURDERS!**

Saturday 23rd May, 1pm,
Edgewick Park, Coventry.

LAST MINUTE: BL announced a threat to close Rover Solihull. The answer must be: occupy, spread the fightback through BL!

Metro: get the pickets out!

SIX MONTHS after the so-called 'riots' at BL Longbridge that resulted in the sacking of four stewards and two other workers, BL is using the same tactics [intimidation of workers and unnecessary lay-offs] all over again. And the same group of workers — the Metro Trim lines in CAB1 — is fighting back, despite the Longbridge Works Committee's opposition to the strike.

The SO Longbridge bulletin of 11th May explains the background to the dispute.

BL seem set upon recreating exactly the same situation in CAB1 that led to last November's 'riot'. Things have reached boiling point, with the increase of track speeds to 31 1/4 per hour.

Workers who were pushed out of station or couldn't hold the job have been given written warnings for 'insufficient effort'.

On the headlining gang, the IEs [work study engineers] have arbitrarily reduced estimated times allowed for elements of the job, so that the time allowed for sunshine roof models would fit into the cycle of the track — which is one car every 1 minute 56 seconds.

There were two downers over the disciplinings. And then on Thursday morning, the headlining gang were threatened with written warnings if they didn't complete the job in station. The next time a sunshine roof model came down the track, they went out of station, were given the warnings, and walked off.

Management then started taking other CAB1 track workers off the clock [although they wanted rectifiers to work and others to stay in the shop in case the headliners went back!] The outcome was that all CAB1 Trim and Assembly walked out, stopping all Mini and Metro production.

Everyone reported Friday morning, but when CAB1 Trim rejected the Works Committee's recommendation to return to work while discussions took place [although the company refused to withdraw the warnings], management immediately started laying off. The night shift had already rejected the Works Committee recommendation.

Management are once again using their tactic of immediate layoffs in the event of any dispute.

What we need, instead of just going home because the weather's nice, is effective picketing to stop deliveries to dealers and hit BL's cash flow straight away.

NATIONAL LEFT-WING YOUTH CONFERENCE

What's it all about?

COVENTRY youth organise anti-racist defence after an Asian is murdered by fascists in the city centre. Republican youth fight the army and the RUC on the streets of Derry. Mods fight it out with the police in Scarborough. And Brixton smoulders.

Youth are fighting back. And we need a socialist youth movement to help give that fightback organisation and direction.

Barricade and Red Youth are calling a conference to start building a National Left Wing Youth Movement.

The National Left Wing Youth Movement will be active on every front of the struggle — for anti-racist workers' defence, for decent jobs for youth, for the rights of the unemployed, for women's rights and gay rights, for nuclear disarmament, for solidarity with the Irish struggle.

But it will also organise to make the official Labour Party Young Socialists the sort of movement it should be: the mass youth organisation of the Labour Party that youth ready to fight the Tories immediately turn to and identify with.

The Young Socialists is the youth section of the labour movement, but at present it is dominated by the Militant tendency, which reduces political activity to preaching general formulas about the need for bold socialist policies nationalisation of the top 220 monopolies, etc. Barricade and Red Youth have been organising a revolutionary opposition, and we want the National Left Wing Youth Movement to continue that work.

We are proposing a policy platform. At the Young Socialists conference this Easter, we found that hundreds of Young Socialist activists support policies like these. On the streets, hundreds are beginning to fight for them. Now it's our job to organise!

AGENDA

SATURDAY

10-10.45. Introduction.

11. The Fight Against Racism. Film, speakers from Coventry Anti-Racist Defence and from Brixton.

1. LUNCH Black caucus meeting.

2. The Fight for Jobs: Speaker from Lee Jeans occupation.

3.30 Workshops on: YOPS, School Students, Youth in the Trade Unions, and Organising on the Dole Queues. (plus Film).

SUNDAY

1. Ireland's Fight for Freedom: film and discussion.

2. Women's Rights and Gay Rights [workshop sessions]

3. What sort of revolutionary youth paper? Workshop sessions followed by a short plenary.

4. LUNCH and film on El Salvador plus speaker.

5. Workshops: YCHD, and History of the YS.

6. Plenary session. Discussion of resolution and amendments from workshops. Elections for steering committee.

7. Conference ends. Singing of the INTERNATIONAL

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