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Labour
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Socialist Organiser

No.69 JANUARY 21, 1982 (Claimants and strikers, 10p) 20p

FUND

£21 from Edinburgh this week, £6.50 from Hyndburn, and £29 from the Oxford NHS group — it's not enough!

With a better flow of contributions, we could print extra of our Trade Union Democracy supplement this week, and help to organise for the conference on March 6 (see page 7). But we're hamstrung.

Send contributions to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

RAIL: ALL OUT NOW!



AN all-out strike by ASLEF train drivers is the only sure way to defeat the attack on their pay agreement and working conditions launched by the British Rail Board.

Many members — spearheaded by the Scottish Region — have been demanding this policy since before the start of the two-day strikes.

Only a firm, all-out stoppage will build up cumulative pressure on British Rail, and give a lead to those NUR members — especially guards — who reject the vicious productivity strings imposed upon them under the pay deal signed last year by Sid Weighell.

Already in Manchester and in Kings Cross in London NUR guards have embarked on a series of lightning strikes in opposition to the 'flexible rostering' proposals accepted on their behalf by Weighell.

Plainly Weighell is determined at all costs to prevent any further growth of the rank and file rebellion against his sell-out — hence his frantic efforts to press-gang ASLEF into a hasty settlement.

At the same time BR has encouraged Weighell in his sabotage by provocatively deciding to pay NUR train drivers the

3 per cent they have withheld from ASLEF — apparently without achieving prior agreement on 'flexible rostering'.

Indeed the combination of BR tactics — threats to suspend strikers; attempts to 'buy off' the majority union in the industry; and an all-out war on working conditions won in struggle by ASLEF 60 years ago — shows that what is at stake is the effectiveness of ASLEF as a union.

Yet so watertight is the union's case that it has united the ASLEF Executive and its membership in a way not seen since the national strike of 1955 — and even secured unambiguous endorsement from TUC General Secretary Len Murray.

Murray's involvement in the negotiations at ACAS however raises severe doubts as to the value of his support — which may well simply be the public face of an intensified effort to force home a sell-out.

ASLEF members — left isolated by the Ford sell-out and the miners' vote — are now at the forefront of the resistance to the Tory attack. But they are not the only ones under the axe.

The public transport system is being decimated, to the benefit of no-one but car industry and road haul-

age profiteers.

railways.

Huge fare rises are being enforced in London and the West Midlands, and London Transport workers face major job losses in the wake of the Law Lords' judgment.

ASLEF's fight to defend itself is a necessary condition for the fight for an integrated, nationalised transport industry, to be run as a public service.

And steel workers are facing a new wave of 15,000 or more redundancies, on top of a zero pay increase.

An all-out strike on the rail would offer a lead to these sections and could build into a movement that could force back the Tories.

ASLEF members in their branches and mass meetings must take up the Scott-

ish demand that the Executive immediately escalate the strikes into an indefinite stoppage.

They must follow the initiatives made in London towards establishing joint ASLEF/NUR strike committees which will consolidate the ASLEF strikers and encourage NUR members to reject last year's sell-out.

Continuous picketing must begin at docks, container bases, coal depots and steelworks, invoking the much-vaunted 'triple alliance' in a direct appeal to miners and steel unions to defend ASLEF against BR's attack, and implementing the official union policy for joint triple alliance committees at local rank and file level.

General Strike call in S. Yorkshire

TENS OF THOUSANDS of workers in South Yorkshire will stage a one-day strike next Monday in a day of action against Tory policies of cuts and closures.

This week a mass meeting of 1,400 transport workers voted with none against to support the strike call, thus paralysing the bus service in the area.

This comes on top of strike decisions already taken by over 8,000 workers in steel and engineering, and on construction sites.

Stoppages are also expected in public works departments, hospitals and other council jobs.

But the strike has been opposed by the ISTC, whose members in the steel industry face a new wave of Tory attacks. And there has been no strike call by

the Yorkshire NUM.

The initiative has been taken by the South Yorkshire Association of Trades Councils, and supported by all four Labour councils (Rotherham, Barnsley, Doncaster and Sheffield).

It comes in welcome contrast to a background of total surrender to the Tory offensive by TUC chiefs and most local union officials, who have sat limply back and watched the decimation of jobs and of public services.

Of course a 24 hour stoppage in simply one area cannot be expected by itself to halt Thatcher's steamroller of destruction, the mass support won for the resistance in South Yorkshire shows that the major weakness of the workers' movement is not in the rank

and file but in the spinelessness of its leadership.

Until a stand is taken against the Tories in the public and private sectors, the tide of closures, redundancies and cuts will continue to erode the morale of trade unionists.

The South Yorkshire stand must be publicised along with a renewed struggle for policies of strike action and occupations to prevent further cuts and closures and build mass action to defeat the hated Thatcher government.

INSIDE: Four page pull-out on the fight for trade union democracy



A new witch-hunters' manual published

THE 'CONSPIRACY' THEORY OF LABOUR POLITICS

Nigel Williamson reviews 'The Battle for the Labour Party' by David and Maurice Kogan (Fontana £1.75).

THIS BOOK is, in short, horrible.

The Kogans' style is neatly in the accompanying publicity blurb, which claims "it exposes how small groups of dedicated left activists, by putting tactics before policies, have transformed the structure of the Labour Party".

Now publicity handouts drawn up by hacks in publishers' press offices do not always reflect the tone of the book they are ostensibly describing. But in this case no such excuses can be made.

David Kogan, a member of CLPD, was given privileged access to the thinking and workings of the Left. Large numbers of leading left-wingers, including Ken Livingstone, Chris Mullin, Vladimir Derer, and Jon Lansman, were happy to be interviewed in the belief that the book would attempt to present a balanced and fair view of the Left.

Minutes of Rank and File Mobilising Committee meetings and other documents were made available to Kogan.

This access to inside information is then used in the book to claim that "drawing on explicit interview material and unpublished documents" it "depicts a dedicated, single-minded group of people whose eight year quest for Party democracy might lead to the ultimate destruction of the Labour Party".

'Outside'

Many of those who assisted David Kogan in his research for this book must now be bitterly disillusioned. It is not so much that the book is factually inaccurate. The problem is rather one of presentation, interpretation, and what is left unsaid.

The most glaring example is one which permeates the whole book. Those who fought for the constitutional reforms are constantly referred to as the 'Outside Left'. But outside what? Nowhere does the book make clear that the arguments for mandatory reselection and the electoral college are actually accepted by the overwhelming majority of Labour Party members and the Party's annual conference.

That this is now the case is not due to 'dedicated left activists' putting tactics before policies. It is due to winning the arguments; and, in the hackneyed phrase, 'the hearts and minds' of Labour and trade union activists.

The bones of this 'Out-

Campaign for



Democracy



Hattersley (left) and Solidarity leaders lack mass support

side Left' allegation appear to lie in the involvement of Militant and SCLV. 'Perhaps more than any other members of the Outside Left', the book claims, '[John] Bloxam and [Rachel] Lever [of SCLV and SO] substantiate the charge that the constitutional Outside Left in general, and Benn's election campaign in particular, have had no scruples about joining hands with groups and individuals well outside Labour Party traditions in their views and methods...'

'There is no doubt that Benn's election campaign recruited to its aid those who openly and consistently reject Parliament as the means by which socialism should be secured'.

That is, of course, a gross distortion, and sounds just like something Michael Foot might have said about Peter Tatchell. No one on the Left believes that socialism can be secured by Parliament alone. But nor can there be many on the Left who would reject Parliament as an essential part of the transition to socialism in the conditions obtaining in 20th century Britain.

Manipulators

The fact is that CLPD, the Benn campaign, London Labour Briefing, or whatever, will work together with all Labour Party members who share the same short term aims and objectives on specific issues. There can be no tests of whether all place quite the same emphasis on the role of Parliament before such alliances are formed.

And what the Kogans regard as 'well outside Labour Party traditions' must be

purely their own subjective definition.

Again, the attempt to dress up every action of the Left as motivated by the finest tactical and strategic considerations deliberately fosters the idea that the Left by manipulations rather than by mass support.

I will, if I may, cite an example which directly involves myself. The book suggests that a letter 'on a fairly neutral subject' in the Guardian, signed by me as Treasurer of the Benn campaign committee, was a deliberate ploy to 'exploit the media' and provide a 'quick and free way' to publicise an address for donations to the campaign.

In fact the letter was a

detailed and necessary refutation of some of the ludicrous stories John Silkin was circulating at the time about the funding of the campaign. The fact that it did produce £300 in donations from Guardian readers was a pleasant surprise to myself, Tony Benn, and everyone else involved in the campaign.

The importance of the incident was not that it illustrated our tactical flair, but that it showed the level of support from ordinary people who do not necessarily read Socialist Organiser, Labour Weekly, or other left publications from which Labour Party activists would obtain the address.

No doubt virtually everyone else mentioned in the book can cite similar examples of misrepresentation of their own roles, all with one end in view - to suggest that small groups of dedicated left activists have 'taken over' the Labour Party by 'skilful and astute strategies' rather than mass support through the arguments.

Mechanistic

Likewise the failure of the Campaign for Labour Victory and the Labour Solidarity campaign to make any real headway is attributed to their lack of expertise in organising model resolutions and other tactical ploys, rather than their basic lack of support among the rank and file in the constituencies and the unions and their ideological bankruptcy.

It is, in short, a totally mechanistic view of politics in which the arguments are relegated to a secondary role and the soul of the Party is up for grabs to whoever is most adroit at manipulating the machine.

On top of the detailed examination of CLPD and the constitutional reforms, the RFMC and the Benn campaign, there is then grafted a chapter on 'The Triumph of the Outside Left in London'. Apart from



The Labour Party under Callaghan takes to the streets in 'extra-parliamentary action' November 1979. Among the rabble-rousers Hattersley, Shirley Williams and David Owen



Foot

again objecting to the Kogans' terminology, it is not clear how this relates to the rest of the book.

Some attempt to present the Labour GLC as a dummy run for a Bennite left Labour government is made, and no opportunity is wasted to air the by now familiar conspiracy theory of the authors. But the real reason why the GLC figures so prominently in the book is simply that David Kogan worked at County Hall during this period.

Hence the whole chapter on that particular struggle in London, but only passing references to significant earlier events and movements, such as Socialist Charter and the formation of the AES and Labour's Programme 1973, and no mention at all of the No campaign over the Common Market, which was an eye-opener for the Left and taught it many valuable lessons.

Boredom

There is a book to be written about the Labour Party in the 1970s. But we shall have to look elsewhere for it.

Perhaps that excellent journalist Chris Mullin, whose lively contributions must be the only thing currently keeping the turgid Tribune from suffocating itself in total boredom, will write the definitive work. This is certainly not it.

Housing crisis hits gays

by Bob Marshall

"THE majority of gay women and men seek housing as single people. Single people, however, face serious problems finding a decent place to live at a reasonable price."

"Although one in four adults is single, there has been no serious attempt to tackle their housing needs. Housing policies are geared towards the needs of married people: a bias which stems from assumptions about marriage and the family."

"Whether they admit it or not, Governments, Councils, Banks, Building Societies, Employers and Landlords encourage the view that being 'single' is a brief stage between a stable home and a stable marriage."

"Consequently, the long term needs of unmarried and childless people (including gay people) are ignored."

The above is the opening paragraph of a pamphlet by the Gays and Housing Group*, a gay pressure group, and puts into context the demands gay people are making in the development of a socialist housing policy.

Streets

Debates on housing cannot be divorced from a consideration of the ideology behind present policies, in particular the bolstering of the nuclear family, the dominance of the idea of the (male) head of household and the privatisation and consumerism in living arrangements.

No place here for the single person of 30 who wants a council house with a garden, or the two lesbian mothers who want to live together with their children, or the group of gay teenagers wanting to live communally.

Single people generally are at the raw end of the housing crisis - squeezed out of the public sector by allocation policies and the private by high rents and unobtainable mortgages.

The evidence that gay people feel this acutely can be gauged from a survey of accommodation calls to London Gay Switchboard**. Of the 4000 calls, almost 3000 were from Londoners (not new arrivals), and 1000 of the callers were threatened with homelessness immediately with about 200 actually on the streets.

Almost 150 people were being thrown out of home by their parents. Altogether, one in every five callers said that being gay was connected to their housing crisis. The gay press is full of accounts of discrimination and victimisation by landlords, building societies, local authorities, and even families.

Overboard

The importance of 'a room of one's own' for every young person is recognised, if not always easily achieved. For those young people trying to establish a gay identity in an often hostile world it can be

essential.

Living at home may be cheap - but hell. Local authorities fail to recognise any legitimate housing need by young people, and then go overboard to cater for couples - usually of the heterosexual, married kind.

Natural?

And then when old age is reached the only recognised way of life is to be packaged into a single-bedroomed flat with no thought for relationships already established or to be developed.

Some specific issues to do with gay people's housing needs can be tackled now. The recent Labour Party discussion document, 'The Rights of Gay Men and Women'*** highlights some of the major areas by advocating greater access to public housing by single people alone or in groups, joint tenancies and the right of succession for gay partners as well as proposing legislation to outlaw discrimination by landlords and building societies.

This is an important step forward and certainly should be in Labour Party manifestos nationally and locally. But equal rights in housing are not enough.

A socialist housing strategy is not only one where a decent house is everybody's right and not a commodity. It is also one designed to meet people's housing needs as they themselves express them and not, as at present, one where allocation, design and finance is grounded on maintaining the nuclear family as the natural and predominant mode of living.

Everyone?

'Gay people do not need special housing provision - a reorientation of housing policy is needed.'

This type of critique by gay people of Labour Party housing priorities is an important contribution towards the construction of socialist alternatives which will be of benefit not only to gay women and men, but to everyone.

* Gays and Housing group - a campaigning organisation. 274 Upper Street, London N1.

** London Gay Switchboard 24 hour accommodation service, 01-837 7324.

*** 'The Rights of Gay Women and Men', discussion document. The Labour Party, price 40p.

Contact: Labour Campaign for Gay Rights, c/o 61a Bloom St, Manchester M1 3LY.

Articles in this column are written by individual supporters of LCGR and do not necessarily reflect LCGR policy.

Right uses 'truce' to fight on

**Socialist
Organiser
EDITORIAL**

FOR David Basnett, one of the achievements of the Bishops Stortford deal was 'not just a self-denying ordinance for all factions and spokesmen in the party (though that is a vital first step) but a real reassertion of the unity of the party.'

Two days after this appeared in print Michael Foot made it abundantly clear what it meant in practice.

On Sunday he took the middle page of the Observer to launch a polemic against Tony Benn and the fight for democracy in the Party, to declare the Parliamentary Labour Party as a 'sovereign body', and to defend the non-endorsement of Peter Tatchell.

The decision to go ahead with publication of the article was taken after Bishops Stortford.

Predictably, the self-

denying ordinance is for the left. Michael Meacher excused Foot's article, and Tony Benn, it appears, will not be replying. When the left does go to print, the cry is almost universally for compromise.

Here, for example, is Frank Allaun: 'There must be no further election challenge to the leader or deputy leader, at least until after the general election... There should be no further constitutional reforms or pressure for them (my emphasis) until after the election.'

In contrast, the right wing is growing in confidence. Healey has re-raised the call for a one-member-one-vote system instead of the electoral college. Austen Mitchell of Labour Solidarity says that the campaign against the electoral college and reselection will

continue.

If certain parliamentary candidates are selected, he threatens a split: 'some of us are not prepared to fight' alongside them.

The cards are increasingly stacked in favour of the right (despite Militant's effort to turn reality on its head: aiming for respectability, they call Bishops Stortford a victory for the left!). The right control the PLP and dominate the NEC.

The right have given up nothing. The inquiry into Militant continues; Peter Tatchell and Pat Wall have not been endorsed; Tariq Ali is still persona non grata.

A slowing down of the witch-hunt and paying lip-service to conference policies is a small price for the right to pay for the left to turn tail. There is plenty of



Basnett

room for manoeuvre in both areas: Pat Wall's endorsement was 'delayed' at the last NEC Organisation sub-committee. Unilateralism will become 'unilateral initiatives.'

The important thing for the right is to retain control. And in this they will be greatly helped by another outcome of Bishops Stortford. As the Economist reports: 'The unions' (that is, the barons) 'have in effect taken over the running of the Labour Party. ... They will now provide a new special election fund — this time to be kept firmly under union supervision (no frittering it away on left-wing propaganda). And they have promised to finance the party's 'political education' programme.'

'This will put policy debate and dissemination into the hands of the unions' regional organisers, ostensibly to 'help out', but in fact to do the job in which the right has miserably failed to counter the dominance of the left over policy

discussion in the constituencies.'

But will not the action of Foot and the right wing expose them, show them to be the splitters, and make it much easier for the left to re-launch the fight at a later and appropriate date? For many on the left, this argument is central to justifying Bishops Stortford.

But the only thing 'exposed' at the moment is the left's wishful thinking.

It's like the argument in the last two years that Labour councils couldn't do anything because the labour movement wasn't ready or 'ripe' for a fight; that they had to hang on until the Tories were clearly seen as responsible for the cuts and rises in rates and charges. Then it would be a better time to fight...

Last Saturday (18th), the Executive of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy decided unanimously that it would not disband its fight but would campaign for the decisions taken at its recent AGM: further democratic reforms (including local government democracy); support in election to Labour Party positions for those candidates who had fought for democracy and accountability; and for a re-yamped Rank & File Mobilising Committee as a united front on the left on agreed issues.

The more we can win sections of the Left to this perspective of continuing the fight, the better the Left can regain the initiative — and stop the gains of the last two years slipping away.

YOP conference

TRADE unionists should welcome the initiative of the YOPs Trade Union Rights Campaign to organise a conference next week that aims to broaden the fight to organise the cheap labour schemes and to highlight the real situation of YOP workers by calling for a mass youth lobby of Parliament.

YOP workers get a mis-

erable £23.50 for 40 hours work and terrible conditions. And along with other working class youth they face the threat of a conscript scheme that pays £15 or less a week to 16 year olds.

Both of these schemes add up to cheap labour: and YOPS in unbelievably being maintained with the support of the TUC.

Although the YTURC does contain demands that are important to YOP workers, it must be strengthened. This can be done by demanding full trade union rates and full union rights for YOP workers, and for the TUC to withdraw support from these cheap labour schemes.

Instead of condemning

the 400,000 youth on YOPs to the dole queue, the TUC should fight for a programme of useful public works, such as building badly needed houses and hospitals, employing youth at full union rates.

YOPs Trade Union Rights Campaign conference: 12 to 5.30, Saturday, January 23, at Manchester Town Hall, Albert St, Manchester.

Open up police dossiers!

by Harry Sloan

Lawyers' friend

AS regular readers will know, last year Sean Matgamna and John Bloxam of Socialist Organiser received libel writs from Vanessa Redgrave of the Workers' Revolutionary Party because we criticised the WRP. The case is still buried in the legal machine which grinds small and exceedingly expensive.

But expense is clearly no object for Ms. Redgrave. The Observer of January 17 reports another writ from her, against a Moss Side (Manchester) Labour activist, on the grounds of his evidence to the tribunal on the Moss Side riots.

The Oxford Journal has also heard from Ms. Redgrave's solicitors. It can be forgiven for apologising quickly, since the article which sent Ms. Redgrave once again rushing to her solicitors was a spoof!

The Journal reports: 'In a light-hearted look at the resolutions which some of the country's famous figures might like to take on board, the Journal wrote about Ms. Redgrave's supposed plans.'

'But Vanessa did not like the idea that she might have spoken to us from the Seychelles.'

'She instructed her solicitors to write, asking us to apologise for implying that 'she enjoys a life of luxury in a sunny climate'.'

'We would like to assure readers who might love to have a home in the Seychelles that there is no need to be jealous of the actress.'

'We gladly acknowledge that Vanessa Redgrave neither has a home in the

Seychelles or anywhere else abroad. She does not take holidays in fashionable overseas sun spots and for some years has holidayed in Britain. Her home is in Hammersmith.'

Worst of the slurs in the spoof was the suggestion that Ms. Redgrave might be joining the Workers' Socialist League! The Journal states: 'We also acknowledge that Miss Redgrave is a member of the Workers' Revolutionary Party, not the Workers' Socialist League.'

The Journal adds: 'Footnote for readers without a sense of humour: All the New Year resolutions in our article were imaginary. There is no truth in the suggestion that Michael Edwards is going on strike, or that Ian Paisley is quitting politics in a dramatic new bid to restore peace in Northern Ireland.'



BY GERRY BYRNE

IN-AND OUT

First the good news: between 1973 and 1977 the progress made in ending sexual segregation in jobs was equivalent to what might be expected to happen over a 14-year period. In higher grade white collar and professional jobs, the proportion of women rose

by 7% in those four years, compared to a rise of 4% in the years 1911-1971. And the bad news? You don't really need to be told — since 1977 the trend has been reversed. Not only are women losing their jobs faster, but the jobs they're getting are worse.

Contractors clean up

SOUTHEND Council, the pioneers of privatised street cleaning, claimed that it would save the ratepayers £500,000 a year — but they forgot about the weather. When they gave the contract to Exclusive Cleaning, they also sold them the council's vehicles cheap and had just renovated the depot, which they now rent to Exclusive, at a cost to the ratepayers of £170,000.

They also had to pay out £472,000 in redundancy payments and have a con-

tinuing cost of £50,000 a year for inspectors to oversee the work that Exclusive does.

You would expect, then, with all these handouts, that Exclusive would manage to make a good job of it.

Not a bit of it. They had already doubled their charges for the collection of trade waste from companies and schools and for garden waste. And now the bad weather has really shown up the flaws in the system.

The council has been flooded with complaints from ratepayers about streets not being cleaned. The last heavy snowfall cost them an extra £20,000 and the latest one will cost at least as much again.

Not only that. Half the buses have been unable to run because the routes haven't been properly cleared.

Several other councils are said to be looking into privatisation. Perhaps they should look a bit more carefully at pioneer Southend.

A TORY MP has gone publicly 'over the top' in a bid to halt the destruction of Special Branch files on thousands of innocent West Country civilians.

He called upon police officers to disobey the orders of Chief Constable John Alderson, who had told them to 'weed' their files to throw out those on such people as anti-blood sports campaigners, anti-nuclear activists and anti-apartheid supporters.

In doing so, Plymouth MP Alan Clark flouted the same law which is used to prevent pacifists and socialists from fighting to persuade soldiers or police to disobey the orders of their officers and side with the working class.

It is safe to predict however that Mr. Clark will escape Scot-free from prosecution. It is less safe to imagine that his advice has not already found an echo among Special Branch officers in Devon and Cornwall, as well as their colleagues in MI5, who are dismayed at the way Alderson's moves have lifted the lid on the extent of their surveillance.

One million, largely law-abiding, people are the subject of computerised Special Branch files. This figure obviously includes tens of thousands of trade unionists and Labour activists.

A huge network of modern computer technology is employed in legal and illegal phone-tapping and surveillance to keep those files up to date.

To imagine that the pleas of a retiring rural Chief Constable will bring an end to this vast operation is the purest fantasy.

Fresh evidence of the ever-present eyes and ears of the state has come in the

form of complaints to Tory Home Secretary Whitelaw over the bugging of a Welsh village telephone kiosk by unidentified Home Office spies.

A local resident found a small radio transmitter concealed behind a panel in the kiosk after two strange men had been acting suspiciously.

Before he could take it to the police, the men returned in a car and snatched back their 'bug'.

Checks on the car number plates showed it to be protected from identification by Home Office directive.

Of course this incident simply the tip of the iceberg — since in most cases it is unnecessary to resort to cumbersome transmitters, and the telephone network itself is used for 'tapping'.

The labour movement should not allow Alderson to set the pace: the demand should be raised within the POEU and other unions for a full-scale workers' inquiry into secret service snooping — calling upon former Labour ministers to make public their inside knowledge of the scale of surveillance of working class activists.



World News

New purge as Polish junta tries to rebuild apparatus

US pay cuts

GENERAL Motors' sales in the US dropped 7.8 per cent last year. So GM bosses want to cut prices and see if they can shift a few more cars.

Even if it meant a lower profit margin on each car, such a price cut could yield bigger profits in proportion to the great mass of capital which GM will have lying expensively idle unless sales revive.

But GM has scored an exceptional bonus. It need not even have a lower profit margin per car. The car-workers' union, the UAW, has volunteered to take wage cuts, on the sole condition that the full amount of the wage cuts is passed on in price cuts.

The UAW and GM are now discussing the details of the deal. GM is pressing for 25 per cent wage cuts and corresponding price cuts, while the UAW wants to limit the cuts to 10 per cent, and have it off extras, not the basic rate.

The UAW is also offering a similar deal to Ford (6.1 per cent sales drop last year), and negotiations are in progress.

The US unions have begun to talk more militantly against Reagan. But they remain ideologically tied to capitalism. And the GM/UAW deal shows how destructive such ideological ties are in the midst of crisis.

HOW THE high-minded 'reformers' have fallen!

Mieczyslaw Rakowski, once the exponent of political renovation in Poland, has become a mouthpiece for the military junta.

On Monday 18th January Rakowski stated that 'the end of martial law could not be determined by any concrete date. We do not treat martial law as a normal state of affairs.'

Despite earlier promises that martial law would be lifted 'in a matter of weeks' the message coming over is that Jaruzelski is here to stay. Some restrictions are being lifted (for example, restoration of the telephone system) but the greatest change foreseeable is for most of the martial law regulations to be made into civilian law regulations.

Even by official government claims, there still remain over 5,000 political prisoners, despite the recent release of about 1000 detainees.

Stiff prison sentences are being handed down. Last week, Radio Warsaw announced that Bronislaw Wiergosz, head of the Solidarnosc branch at the Gliwice factory, was sentenced

to three years imprisonment for having organised a strike of 2000 workers on December 14th.

On January 11th the President of Solidarnosc in the Huta Warszawa steel works was sentenced to 19 months for organising a strike (though two co-defendants were released).

In Radom, eleven activists were arrested on 6th January for distributing leaflets.

Destroy

The resolve of the regime to destroy any vestige of independent working class power can be seen in a statement from the chief of the much hated Militia (a privileged paramilitary force linked to the ruling party, PUWP) in Radom. 'The declaration of martial law has not resulted in the defeat of the enemy but only in its temporary paralysis. The enemy is always

trying to create new structures'.

The enemy referred to is the ten million strong organised working class.

Even in the regime's dungeons, though, the resistance continues. At the Bialoleka prison near Warsaw (where it is rumoured Walesa has been transferred) prisoners began a hunger strike 2-3 weeks ago.

The authorities hit back by reducing the amount of time the prisoners could spend outside their cells, and contact between prisoners has been stopped.

The Militia has also been put in charge of guarding the prison because the soldiers on duty had become too friendly with the prisoners.

Solidarity's former National Press Officer in Rome reports that 'three thousand workers at the Gdansk shipyards, members of the



independent union, have been sacked.'

But the repression is not only directed against the working class. One of the main preoccupations of Jaruzelski and his Kremlin masters is to rebuild a viable political apparatus. The 18 months of revolution shook the Party to its foundations. When it came to the clampdown only a few of the Politbureau itself knew of the military's plans.

A purge is now on. Polish foreign affairs minister Czyrek recently met Mikhail Suslov, the Russian Communist Party's appointed 'theoretician', in Moscow and was urged to ensure 'that the Polish Party undergoes a radical purge before once again assuming the role it had to hand over to the army.'

Meanwhile, a vicious attack has been launched in Zolnierz Wolnosci, the army's daily paper. It pompously announced that the working class 'had been duped and that the main aim (of the extremists) had been, according to the plans and decisions of the 'brains trust advisors' (i.e. KOR), operating under the protective umbrella of Solidarnosc, to raise to power people such as Kuron, Michnik, Geremek and such 'defenders' and 'representatives' of the working class as the deserter Rulewski and the adventurer Bujak...'

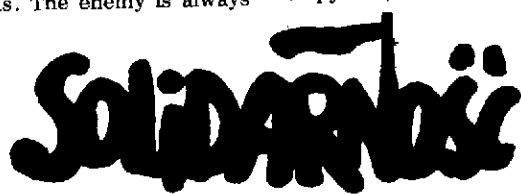
Zbigniew Bujak, who used to work at the Ursus tractor plant and was leader of Warsaw Solidarity, is one of the major Solidarity leaders still free. From the underground he has called for resistance to the regime since 'if this decisive resistance continued and there is a chance (that) it will escalate, I see a real possibility of stifling the dictatorship, or at least bringing about its liberalisation and returning rights to the dissolved and suspended organisations'.

Bujak has openly attacked all the bourgeois parties in the West and those in the workers' movement have accused Solidarnosc 'going too far'. 'My answer will be brutal. I know many western politicians believe that if we had wiser we could have avoided this tragedy.'

'But I also know what they call wisdom means collaboration with the state and party authorities, a collaboration would have been directed against the workers, the intellectuals, the men of letters and the arts. We have become another of the totalitarian systems creating only an impression of democracy.'

'This must not be demanded of us or our Solidarity union.'

The paid hacks of Zolnierz Wolnosci and other mouthpieces of bureaucracy may well be infiltrated against workers' militants of Bujak's status: prison or in clandestine they represent the working class's hatred of its oppressors and its fight to destroy the bureaucracy that have ruled Europe for thirty years.



'Star' readers split on Polish crackdown

Alexis Carras looks at the debate over Poland in the Communist Party's daily paper

A DEBATE has been raging in the letters page of the Morning Star.

Some writers approve the mealy-mouthed criticism of the military clampdown in Poland by the CPGB's Executive Committee, which has bemoaned the faults of everything and everyone in Poland, without coming down clearly on the side of the Polish workers. A lot of letters back Jaruzelski. But a significant minority call for sharper and more serious criticism of the military regime.

Tom Durkin (January 4th) writes: 'The Morning Star, by becoming a mouthpiece of various rumormongers and speculators is doing no service to the British working class and Poland in its hour of need.'

Rages

Even minimal and qualified support for Solidarnosc is too much for Durkin. He rages against 'powerful forces in the leadership of Solidarity, internationally backed by a motley of reactionary forces including fascists, Trotskyists, right wing Labour and trade union leaders, church bodies (even progressive forces) and such champions of 'free trade unions' as Thatcher, Reagan, Pinochet etc etc.'

Note that parenthesis: '(even progressive forces)' — in the midst of Durkin's outburst he has remembered

that the Church, unlike 'Trotskyists', is not a permitted target for Stalinist condemnation. So his list of reactionary forces includes 'even progressive forces'. Difficult, this dialectics!

Durkin insists: 'It is naive to accept that workers are always right when they express aims of 'democracy and renewal', as history proves, the worst example being how Hitler fascists and others used the label of 'National Socialism' to exploit discontent, win mass support and eventually hurl their working class stormtroopers at the throat of all progressive mankind.'



Tom Durkin is no doubt speaking on behalf of this 'progressive mankind'.

In a more philosophical vein, Frieda Park from Glasgow (January 5th) approvingly quotes Marx: 'Men make their own history, but not in conditions of their own choosing'.

No doubt very, very true

for the Polish working class — but Frieda seems to miss the irony and proceeds to lambast 'many of the leaders of Solidarity who were inspired by anti-socialist western-backed dissidents, who aimed not at solving problems and strengthening socialism but at its destruction'.

The more subtle apologists of Jaruzelski argue that once the Party glibly admits or recants its 'past errors', then this ritual excuses it and allows it to continue ruling on behalf of the working class. Until the next bout of 'mea culpa'.

But for Bill Alexander (London SE26, January 5th) such superficial acceptance of 'past mistakes' is not enough. 'The tragic events in Poland compel every Communist, whether in the socialist or capitalist world, to face up to fundamental questions concerning the CPs themselves.'

Correctly Bill states that 'It is not enough to deplore the present situation and criticise past mistakes of the Polish CP'. For Bill the cause of the problem lies much deeper in 'views which equate a CP with the state and place it above and superior to the state organs'. All that this lead to is a limitation of 'the rights of the majority of the people who are not members of the Communist Party'.

He recognises that

'only the fullest involvement of all the people can ensure continued all-round progress of society, check and if necessary control the



work of the CP', but he does not yet clearly say how this power should be exercised, through what channels and organisations and he remains ambiguous as to how far 'the leading role of the party' should be challenged.

Tom McNally (Birmingham, 13th January) quotes Brecht's comment on the East German state's suppression of the 1953 uprising. 'If the government has lost confidence in the people then surely it must dissolve them and elect a new lot'. This is what the military are doing with Solidarity's 10 million workers, and Rural Solidarity's three million peasants.

He notes that 'this is the third wave of repression in 20 years including the murder of Gdansk shipyard workers'. He lists the

atrocities committed in supposedly 'socialist and anti-imperialist regimes', from the 1930s in Stalin's Russia, right through to the Kampuchean experiment in creating a 'new man' (unfortunately few were left).

Tom McNally however clearly believes that the CPGB with 'The British Road to Socialism' programme has finally found a way to avoid all these tragedies, but that even now '...some in the CP... still refuse to accept these positions.'

Subordinate

David Searby from Nottingham (January 15th) takes up where Bill Alexander's letter left off.

'The fact is that in the socialist states of Eastern Europe, what we have is not the dictatorship of the proletariat but the dictatorship of the Communist Party. All the institutions of the state, from the top to the lowest level, including the trade unions, are subordinate to the Communist Party'.

And the way out of this dictatorship? 'Workers must be allowed to form alternative political parties if they feel it necessary and to freely contest elections. They must be allowed to produce their own newspapers and so on. Above all they must have truly free and independent trade unions.'

This will be the only way to prevent a privileged bureaucratic stratum from crushing society. 'Comrades have also referred to corruption. Of course there will be corruption when the only avenue for 'getting on' is under the patronage of the CP, when to be a member is a short-cut to the best in houses, jobs, education and medical care. Naturally in such conditions the most opportunist and corrupt will flock to the CP.'

To obscure reality and the logic of the class struggle in Poland, many CP members are still dragging out myths of 'Trotskyite' sabotage and perfidy from the shameful archives of Stalinism in the 1930s — or the hoary and irrelevant assertions of CIA infiltration.



Often Tories incapable of understanding the forces pitted against class rule end up shouting 'provocateurs', and 'infiltrators'. It is that this 'police men' and skewed view of the world is alive and well in the CP as well.

Realistic

Under the impetuous revelation cracks in the 'socialist camp' since the death of the infallible Joseph Stalin many CP members emptying a more realistic assessment of states.

The Italian CP has accepted that the 'socialist state' is incapable of renewal. The Chinese leadership have adapted superficially radical actions only to further the quest for respect with their domestic bourgeoisies and to provide 'democratic' credentials (read subservience to bourgeois state institutions).

But for many reformist militants both in the West and the East gradual and painful realisation of the need to move away from these state/party monstrosities can mean a move to the fight for a working class power on democratic class institutions.

French 'Dennings'

stall nationalisation

FRANCE too has its Lord Dennings. On January 16 its Constitutional Council overruled the Socialist-led Government's plans to nationalise several French banks and big firms.

This council, set up under de Gaulle's authoritarian constitution of 1958, consists of nine members, appointed for nine-year terms by the President of the Republic, the President of the Assembly, and the President of the Senate.

All its present members are right-wingers, appointed by right-wing Presidents. (Mitterrand gets to replace three of them in 1983). The youngest is 68. And their ruling corresponds exactly to what the right-wing parties were pushing.

Not generous

The Council said that the nationalisation law was unconstitutional because its compensation terms were not generous enough — even though the compensation had already been increased after pressure from the Council of State, another right-wing dominated official committee. It's not clear, but it looks as if the Government will have to pay another 30% more compensation — another £900 million to the bourgeoisie!

And there'll be a few fortunes to be made in speculation on the shares of the firms to be nationalised.

What would Michael Foot say? Marxists' argument about parliamentary democracy is precisely that this sort of undemocratic obstruction is likely to face any radical parliamentary government. Either the government backs down — or if it uses its democratic



mandate to override the constitutional obstacles, it must be ready to mobilise the workers to meet the counter-revolutionary violence which the ruling class will deploy (in the name of constitutionalism!) once its constitutional safeguards fail.

Presumably Michael Foot believes that the principles of parliamentary democracy necessitate backing down. Certainly Mitterrand and Mauroy have backed down — as their government has backed down every time in face of determined or noisy opposition from the Right.

These backdowns have won them a more friendly attitude from big business. The new head of the French CBI, Yvon Gattaz, visited Mitterrand soon

after taking office on January 1, and told a bosses' conference, 'We have been agreeably surprised by M. Delors (the finance minister's) statements.'

Some serious reforms are still going through. ON January 13 there was a government decree reducing the maximum work-week from 40 hours (the 1936 law) to 39. Overtime was also limited, and a fifth week of paid annual holiday made compulsory.

So much for the great tries of triumph with which AUEW leader Terry Duffy heralded the 39 hour week he negotiated — with so many strings and delays — for the British engineering industry!

The reduced work-week is without loss of pay for

workers on the legal minimum wage in France, but for other workers loss of pay or otherwise depends on what they can negotiate with their employers.

Concessions

The government sees the 39 hour week as part of the fight against unemployment, and is also offering tax concessions to firms which reduce hours further. But on the government's own calculations the measure will create only some 50,000 to 100,000 jobs.

Unemployment in France is over two million and still rising.

Revolutionary Marxists are demanding the immediate introduction of the 35 hour week and proposing a fight for work-sharing with no loss of pay.

IN TURKEY, the trial continues of leaders of the DISK trade union confederation by the Evren junta. In Britain the Turkey Solidarity Campaign is organising a speaking tour by DISK leaders in Europe, to take place

South African strikers sacked

THE ENTIRE 500-strong workforce of Dunlop Floorings at East London in the Eastern Cape have been dismissed.

Dunlop Flooring is the biggest flooring factory in southern Africa producing soft and hard floorings, tiling and carpeting.

The workers in the factory are in dispute with Dunlop management over pension rights and the company's refusal to negotiate with the South African Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU). It is clear that Dunlop is following Rowntree's in collaborating with the South African authorities' attempt to smash the SAAWU — an attempt that has already taken the life of one woman union member. Dunlop is also fully collaborating with the 'homelands' policy.

Sham

Against opposition from the workers, Dunlop is changing the pension rights to bring them into line with the workers' new 'foreign' status, as the Ciskei, where most of the workers live, received its sham 'independence' this month.

SAAWU began organising in Dunlop Flooring in November 1980. Management reacted by threatening to sack union members and harassing members and organisers. In spite of this SAAWU membership is presently about 75% of the workforce.

When workers showed dissatisfaction over the



Pension Fund scheme last February 27 workers were dismissed. Objections continued and on 19th October the workers sent a delegation to negotiate their demand for refund of pension contributions.

On 22nd October, workers demanded a clear explanation of company policy on the Pension Scheme. Instead they were given an ultimatum to go back to work or be dismissed. They decided to strike.

The company is refusing to negotiate with SAAWU and has been recruiting workers to replace the strikers, who are facing police harassment.

Help

SAAWU members working in another British owned company operating in the Eastern Cape, Wilson Rowntree, are still striking after 10 months for union recognition.

We must not allow the struggle in Dunlops to drag on in this way. Immediate help is needed.

SAAWU has appealed for international solidarity, and has contacted unions in

Britain. The union has called for anyone directly or indirectly involved in handling material or products for or from Dunlop SA to refuse to handle such goods.

Other solidarity action: Put a motion to your union branch or trades council calling for reinstatement of all the strikers; commitment to meaningful negotiations by Dunlop; no recognition of the 'independence' of Ciskei.

Send a letter to Dunlop UK supporting the strikers.

Send a telegram or letter of support to SAAWU PO Box 7002, East London 5200, South Africa.

Boycott all materials and products for and from Dunlop SA.

If you work for Dunlop UK, press your union to take up the issue with the company at both plant and national level.

Please send reports of action taken to the North West Trade Union Anti-Apartheid Liaison Committee, 59 Tintern Ave, Manchester 20.

STUART HOWARD TGWU

PETE EVANS, GMWU

Ghandi cracks down on strikers

by Bruce Robinson

As we go to press, millions of Indian workers are taking part in a general strike aimed against Indira Gandhi's anti-union and repressive legislation.

Over 6,000 trade union and political activists were arrested before the strike and are being held without trial. In some states, police were given orders to shoot strikers on sight and so far ten workers are reported to have been shot.

Illegal

The unions are protesting at Gandhi's legislation which makes any stoppages in the public sector illegal, allows strikers and union organisers to be sentenced with summary trial and which also allows for detention without trial for political

opponents of the regime. There is, however, no ban on lockouts or lay-offs.

Rigging

The Indian government faces a 20% inflation rate and cuts in aid from the World Bank. The anti-union laws are their means of imposing a wage freeze and crushing union resistance to austerity measures.

At the same time, Gandhi's Congress Party is losing by-elections for state assemblies and looks increasingly doubtful to win the next general elections in 1985.

In these circumstances, there is speculation about Gandhi rigging a new Constitution or reintroducing a state of emergency such as existed between 1975 and 1977. Crushing union resistance is a necessary first step to doing this and Gandhi is sparing no effort to carry this through.

WORKERS Socialist Review 1

50p

'Capitalist Crisis and Socialist Alternative', a detailed study of the breakdown of the boom, by Bob Sutcliffe. 50p plus postage from PO Box 135, London N10DD.

between March 24 and April 2.

Labour movement bodies are invited to affiliate to the TSC and sponsor the tour. The TSC can be contacted at BM Box 5965, London WC1N 3XX.

KITSON KILLING

STEPHEN Kitson was released by South African police last week after a storm of protest against their clumsy attempts at a frame-up. Kitson was arrested while visiting his father, Dave Kitson, in Johannesburg, where he is serving a 20-year sentence for alleged sabotage and membership of the African National Congress.

The police claimed that Stephen Kitson was making sketches of the prison where his father was held in order to plan an escape, and tried to link him to a successful escape from the same prison in 1979.

While he was held, Kitson was kept in solitary confinement, forced to stand for hours without sleep, slapped around the face, and threatened with further torture. Kitson's bad state was confirmed by the Foreign Office official who visited him in prison.

On the day he arrived back in England, Kitson's aunt — who had been the

first to tell his family in Britain of his arrest and who acted as a contact between Dave Kitson and his family — was found brutally murdered, with severe bruising on her head and some teeth knocked out.

Even the South African police are treating this as a murder (which is more than they do when people die in police custody). It remains to be seen if anyone is charged with the murder as there is widespread speculation that the killing was done by an agent of the government as another way of getting at the Kitsons and increasing the isolation of Dave Kitson in prison.

The Labour Party and Kitson's union TASS are protesting over the attempted frame-up. Now the British labour movement must make solidarity with other victims of apartheid a major priority and help bring down the South African regime.



Women's Fightback meeting: 'Women Against the Bomb', with CND chairperson Joan Ruddock. Tuesday February 2, 7.30, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square

'COUNCILLORS MUST GET OUT OF THEIR TALKING SHOP'

REACTIONS in the mass media to the play United Kingdom ranged from 'How civilised we are to show it', to 'Of course the author hails from Liverpool', as if this explained



JD: Yes. This is the objective problem. Neither councils nor trade unions have

It all needs to be cemented by a 'council of action' type organisation, involving tenants' groups, trade union rank and file, CLPs etc, and they must demand the leadership of the Labour Party be campaigning and mobilising up and down the country, not just moving motions of no confidence.

JD: The play itself involved workers in its production — for example, camera operators, local people, people who have a record of struggle. What sort of working relationship did you all have? Did you come along with a script, discuss it, work out the action...

They accepted this analysis and commissioned me to write the play. It's then

The technique or style is 80% script, 20% ad lib. 20% is quite a big chunk -

JA: I like to feel I'm using
the tools of dialectic

JD: I understand you've

Ken Loach and T Garnett tried to get
ance, but there was no
they could get it, and
three years — no. It's
in the drawer and now
again we still look at
any class content.

Here you get the class question, with native Irish bourgeois and that's a vital one that's got to come out. It has to be integrated in a film if we ever get the cash.

JD: What are your future plans?

War and Australian nationalism

Frank has personal ambitions to get into a business, and is not interested in enlisting, but eventually gives in to social pressure.

At the very end of the film we see the mass slaughter of troops who were ordered to run virtually defenceless into machine gun fire. Yet we see no attempt to explain or even investigate why so many lives were lost in such



But in 1915 a leading Industrial Workers of the World activist was jailed on a sedition charge for opposing the war. The IWW

'War is hell! Send the capitalists to hell and wars are impossible'.

socialists and militants.
The Coal Strike of 1916
the General Strike of 1917
the split in the Labour Party
over conscription, and the
jailing of 12 IWW leaders
ten of them for four years.
Frank and Archy are tot

Gallipoli is really a promotion of mateship and Australian nationalism and the setting was chosen not for what could be learnt from it, but because the Gallipoli campaign is a symbol of the birth of Australian nationalism'. 1914 was also a good year for the Australian bourgeoisie - BHP* really got off the ground!

* BHP: the giant mining company Broken Hill Proprietary.

Unilateralism

JD: Which class do you belong to?
who?

JA: That's right. The question of whether the working class can pose CND, and in the place workers politicise the activists.

So that's the ne
project for next year.

**Trade
union**

DEMOCRACY

SPECIAL The obstacles to the
fight for new leadership

Fighting for new policies and real control

OVER RECENT years, and especially since the 1979 general election, a struggle for renewal has been shaking the labour movement.

Learning from the experience of the 1974-9 Labour government, constituency Labour Party activists have fought for accountability of MPs to Party policy — to make sure the next Labour government bases itself on the labour movement to act against the capital-

ist establishment, rather than vice versa.

This fight for democracy — for Labour policies to be actually carried out — has gone together with battles for those policies to be really socialist.

Tony Benn's deputy leadership campaign took political issues into the trade unions as never before. But it also showed the size of the task to be done in the unions.

In many unions the membership had no voice — or it had only a botched-up 'consultation', like the TGWU. In NUPE it became clear that the official support for Labour democracy at the top had not been translated into any real effort to lead and involve the rank and file.

Now, with the Bishops Stortford deal, the top union leaders are

trying to put a stop to the struggle to transform the Labour Party.

They plead the necessity of unity to win the next election for Labour. But another Labour government like the last one is not much of an election-winning prospect. And above all it would not be adequate to what the working class needs in the present crisis.

It would predictably be a failure — and lead to the return of Tory reaction, perhaps in a much worse form than Thatcher.

Link

The strong link between the fight in the Labour Party and the fight in the trade unions could not be clearer.

Many trade unionists are drawing the conclusion that a fight for trade union democracy is necessary, linked with and parallel to the fight for Labour Party democracy. If MPs and Labour leaders should come up regularly for 'reselection' or election, then so should union officials.

Recent industrial struggles have also shown

the need for trade union democracy. At BL, eleven general secretaries stepped in over the heads of the Joint Negotiating Committee to fix a sell-out. AUEW President Terry Duffy boasted he was 'backing England'.

In the recent Ford pay dispute, as the disgusted convenor of the Swansea plant complained, a single phone conversation between TGWU full-timer Ron Todd, ACAS, and Ford, was enough to get the democratic strike decision of thousands of workers overturned.

The AUEW leadership have also recently flouted union rules to withdraw official support from the Laurence Scotts fight for jobs in Manchester.

And the women's movement has added a new dimension to the fight for labour movement democracy — demanding that the labour movement be transformed to suit the needs and interests of the doubly oppressed half of the working class, women at home and at work.

Each of these issues and struggles underlines

the fact that the fight for democracy and accountability must run hand in hand with the fight for a programme of socialist policies to arm the working class with a genuine answer to the bosses' offensive.

The so-called 'Alternative Economic Strategy' embraced by Benn and by many left wing opponents of the existing leaders of the labour movement rests both on divisive nationalism (import controls) and on the belief that it is possible to 'plan' the crisis-ridden anarchic capitalist economy.

To defend jobs, wages and working conditions, we need to take action on demands which start not from what capitalism can or might afford, but from the independent needs of the working class.

This means for instance fighting for cost of living clauses in pay agreements to protect wages against inflation; fighting for occupations, supporting strike and blacking action, and for work-sharing without loss of pay in opposition to employers' plans for

redundancy; and demanding the nationalisation of major industries and a crash programme of useful public works to create jobs and trade union rates of pay.

Such demands are consistently stifled and sabotaged by the present bureaucratic leaders who seek instead simply a basis to coexist with the employers.

Conference

With these points in view, Socialist Organiser together with London Labour Briefing and others is co-sponsoring on March 6 a conference on democracy in the trade unions and the Labour Party.

This pull-out marks the beginning of a series of articles in coming weeks around the theme.

Future issues of Socialist Organiser will carry further discussion including our suggestions for a platform of demands for democracy in the trade unions, as well as more reports on the particular problems facing militants fighting for democracy in their key unions.

CONFERENCE

Democratise the labour movement!

WHERE: Lanchester Poly, Priory St, Coventry.

WHEN: Saturday March 6, 11 to 4.30

INITIAL SPONSORS: Socialist Organiser Alliance, London Labour Briefing, Oxford Trades Council, Nottingham Labour Briefing, CPSA British Library Branch

DELEGATES: and observers invited from all labour movement organisations. Individuals also welcome. Credentials £2.

CRECHE: Available.

WRITE TO: Democracy Conference, c/o Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Coventry March 6



NUPE: A Nobody became General Secretary!

THE 1979 Winter of Discontent gave NUPE the reputation of being a union to be reckoned with — the union central in the 'low pay dispute' which helped lay the Callaghan government to rest.

Alan Fisher and the NUPE leadership were violently attacked in the capitalist press as the determined militants throwing the country into chaos in pursuit of the £60 minimum wage and 35 hour week claim.

Any NUPE member will tell you how far from the truth this was.

The leadership did everything possible to ensure that the action was contained to selective strikes which served only to demoralise the membership, who saw it having no effect on the employers while losing themselves wages.

An all-out strike was deemed out of the question, even though this could have closed the country down.

The only section which won the claim was the only section to go on all-out strike for two weeks — the London Borough of Camden.

The NUPE leadership argued then, as they have argued since, that they are helpless 'generals without an army'.

They argue it is not their place to instruct the membership to act. They depict themselves as saddled with a non-militant membership, mainly women, many of them part-time, working in the caring sector, who think that 'strike' is a dirty word.

So, no lead is given and the membership are offered not a word of encouragement about how they could take effective strike action, or how emergency cover could be organised.



NUPE strikers press for the full £60/35 hour claim in the 'Winter of Discontent' — to be offered only partial strikes

Since that winter, in the face of a sustained attack devastating its members' jobs, pay and working conditions, the NUPE leadership has remained absolutely passive and stony silent.

In the first year of Tory rule they argued in the cuts conferences and demos that they chose to attend that the working class was only getting what it deserved in voting the Tories in.

NUPE's national policy was publicly declared to be one of 'low profile'. For a whole year the NUPE membership received nothing more than the odd

handful of glossy leaflets telling us nothing more than the now inevitable battle cry, 'contact your local press, write to your local MP'.

In the same period there was the massive November 9 demo against the cuts. NUPE produced thousands of lollipop placards declaring 'Stop Thatcher' — perhaps hoping that cardboard and printing ink would do the job, as they busily ensured that nobody in NUPE could do anything.

The executive had deeply buried the conference resolution on blacking

private hospital beds — leaving the path open to the massive privatisation of the NHS and use of its facilities which has gone hand in hand with the cuts.

Where a fight has been organised against these health cuts, it has usually been initiated without a shred of assistance from the NUPE officials and even its lay Executive members, and often in the face of downright opposition.

Struggles like the occupations of St Benedict's and St Mary's Hospitals have stood as beacons in the fight to defend the NHS —

but have been left isolated.

In what must be counted as Fisher's finest hour, he hid in an ante-chamber at St Benedict's to avoid the press gaze and to talk things over, while scab ambulances and security police dragged out terrified geriatrics from the occupation.

As the leading union of the local authority manual workers, NUPE obviously had a major responsibility to put pressure on Labour-controlled councils to adopt a policy of no cuts and no rate increases.

Yet Ron Keating argued at the Lambeth Conference

at the end of 1980 that it would be impossible to back those Labour councils that defied the government because (surprise, surprise) 'the membership won't fight'!

To Keating's embarrassment, however, the membership did fight last year in Coventry, where 4000 NUPE members took indefinite strike action against the Labour council's £2 million cut in services.

It was soon made clear who really didn't want the fight. Not one other branch of NUPE outside Coventry received so much as an official whiff of the strike.

The bulk of NUPE members heard of the strike only from the papers. When the NUPE London Division sent a cheque for £200, it was stopped by the executive!

NEC members were certainly to be seen on the picket line — but urging the women to return to work and to settle for a formula giving them 'only' a four per cent cut in wages.

In the end the strike was called off, with NUPE encouragement, for the sell-out deal of accepting ACAS arbitration.

Generally the NUPE Executive seems pretty apt at encouraging its members to accept wage cuts.

Admittedly, there have been information packs on what the four per cent 'rise' really means. A mass of leaflets has been circulated urging us to reject the four per cent. But there is no hint of what should be

done in order to win even the pathetic 12 per cent claim.

When the negotiators of the Labour-controlled Metropolitan Authorities offered seven per cent, the NUPE leadership emerged triumphant as if the battle were over and won.

It still has to go to the membership, but the vote is a foregone conclusion.

The 'left' image of NUPE received another severe blow in the past year on the question of its vote in Labour's deputy leadership election.

NUPE made much of how democratically they conducted the ballot. However, conference policy was to support the candidate that represented closest the interest and policy of the union — and that this should be decided by the membership. It was clear that only one candidate — Tony Benn — fitted this category and deserved Executive support. But in the midst of one of the most vicious smear campaigns against Benn, NUPE leaders kept silent.

Of course we can't expect elections, accountability or democracy to be too close to the heart of a NUPE bureaucracy which has just appointed a nobody — Rodney Bickerstaff — as the new general secretary, without the slightest consultation with the membership.

Bickerstaff has served five years as national officer for local government,

In this pull-out examines the 'left' union is elected, while the problems 'democratic' the right wins

AUEW: Under the heel of full-time right-wingers

AUEW education officer Ian Hughes and research officer Trevor Esward were sacked by John Boyd in 1980 for helping assistant general secretary Bob Wright to prepare a critic-

al analysis of the union's record on the Prior Bill and the 1979 pay and hours fight.

Hughes and Esward had done the work in their own time, and the union's Final

Appeal Court supported them. But Boyd pressed ahead.

Here Alan Hughes discusses the way to fight back against Boyd's bullying.

In 1972 the AUEW (Engineering Section), led by the Left in the persons of Hugh Scanlon, Bob Wright and Reg Birch took on the Tory Industrial Relations Act and virtually stood alone in the official Trade Union movement in its total opposition to the last major attempt by the Tories to cripple the organised Labour Movement.

The left leaders stood at the apex of a vigorous shop stewards' movement, willing to struggle in the defence of engineering workers' living standards.

Now in 1982, the same union finds itself in its most desperate straits for many years, and the Left is its most disorganised. The AUEW has lost 100,000 members since 1979. The elected officials are dominated by a power-

ful Right Wing axis which meets regularly with Tory Ministers, top industrialists and Right Wing journalists under the name of 'The Group'.

Scanlon has joined the Establishment in the Lords, Birch has retired and Bob Wright is a virtual 'prisoner' in Peckham Road.

Shreds

The Left, still dominated by the Communist Party (CP), finds it difficult to win any elections, even with well-known candidates such as Derek Robinson. The shop stewards' movement, as a national progressive force, is in shreds.

Meanwhile, the Right enjoys such total control as to oppose local district committees as in the Laur-

ence Scott dispute and to ignore even its own supreme judicial body, the Final Appeal Court, when it sees fit.

How has this volte-face occurred in such a brief space of time? The answer is far more complex than just slinging mud at the fallen heroes of the Left.

The Right in the AUEW has been well organised, well financed, and given more media support than in any other Union. Apart from journalists such as Woodrow Wyatt and Bernard Levin, the AUEW Right has benefited from the attentions of groups such as Truismid and Catholic Action, which are shadowy organisations aimed at crushing the Left in the Unions.

The Right has captured the two major decision-

making bodies in the AUEW — the Executive Council of full-time officials and the National Committee of lay officials. This alliance of the executive and policy-making wings of the union, combined with subtle rules changes enacted in 1980, has led to the complete dominance of all the Union's functions by the Executive Council, President, and General Secretary.

The consequences are this. By effectively appointing the women's seats on the National Committee the Right has guaranteed itself an inbuilt majority on this body. The delegations to the TUC and Labour Party now have to kowtow to National Committee policy (dictated by the full-timers on the EC) instead of casting their votes independ-

ently as in the past. All power over decisions among the Irish membership (both North and South) is now held by a Committee consisting entirely of full-time officers.

Because of the supreme power of these bodies, the rank and file checks of district committees and Final Appeal Court can now be overruled.

The effects are obvious. The AUEW leadership stands idly by as mass redundancies take place at Laurence Scotts and BL. The pay battle has been an abject surrender. At the TUC and Labour Party conferences the AUEW machine swung solidly behind the most reactionary policies and voted for the most reactionary individuals of the TUC General Council and the Labour Party NEC.

There is a crying need for a strong Left offensive to capture district and divisional committees, to 'win back' the National Committee and to push strongly for Left activists in all full-time elections. This can be done but not until the dead hand of the CP is removed from the Broad Left alliance in the AUEW.

Oust

A new initiative is required in which a Broad Left, based firmly in the Left of the Labour Party, campaigns to fight redundancies, to step up the pay struggle and to build up a viable rank and file movement involving stewards and convenors and oust the tyranny on the Right.



The faces that launched a thousand Duffy confers at the TUC Congress

MARY ANN TODD
situation in an ostensibly
which no officials are
ALAN HUGHES describes
of the AUEW - a formally
union tightly controlled by

starting off as an
(appointed) Divisional Off-
in Newcastle.
is 38 years old -
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s, a clear run of 27
as leader of one of the
try's biggest unions.
is new deputy, replac-
Bernard Dix, is the
ally unknown and un-
ed Tom Sawyer from
Northern Division. He
is in his late 30s and
expect a long career
of worry about re-
sion

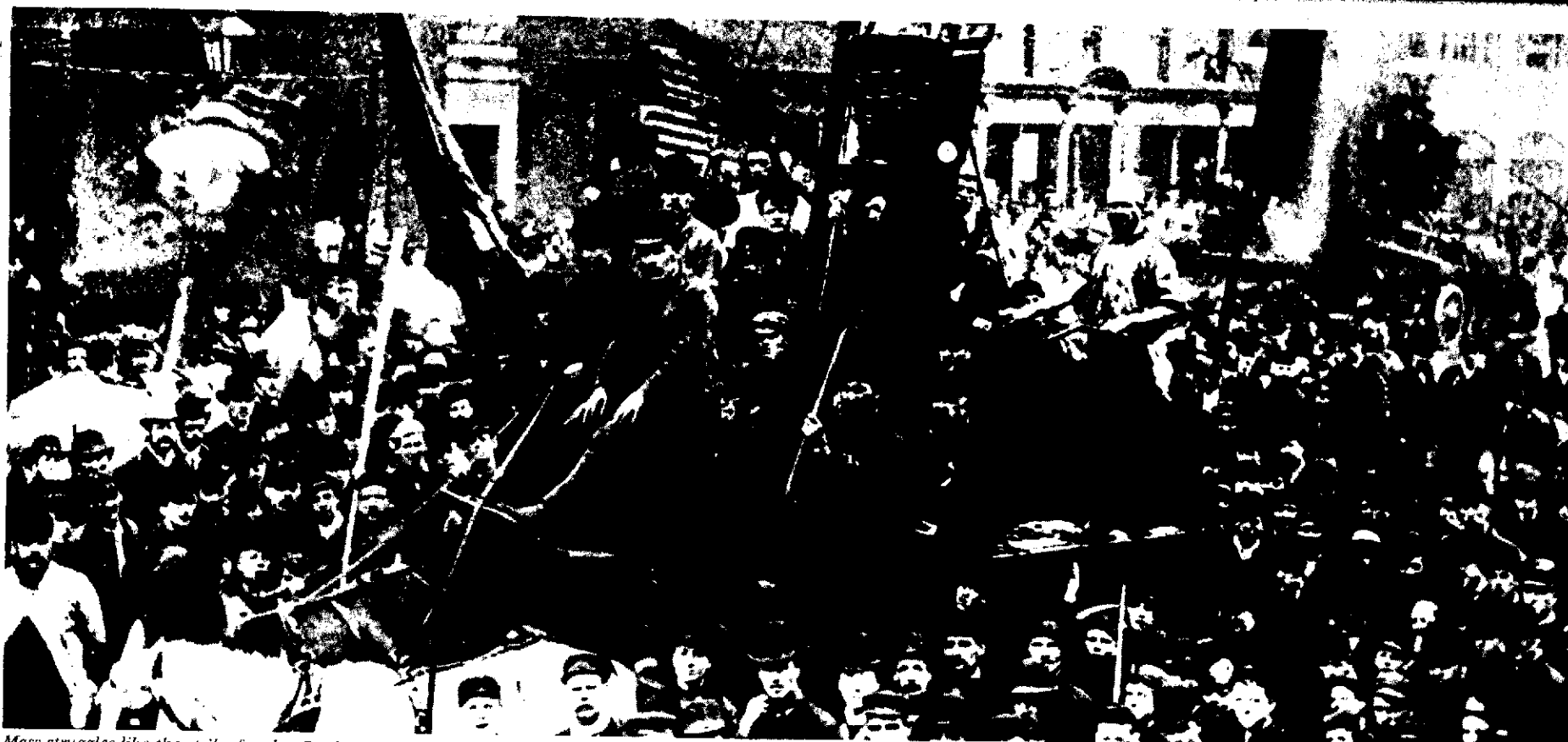
Docility

E members have no
in the selection of any
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heads, and who are
often sustained on
basis of dormant or
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NUPE members -
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little experience of
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or individual work-

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gle for democracy in
2 must be based.



outs: Boyd and



Mass struggles like the strike for the 'Dockers' Tanner built the unions - but also build a solid base on which the bureaucracy arose

WILLIAM BOOTH
examines the rise of
a privileged, conserv-
ative layer of leader-
ship in the labour
movement.

THE BIRTH OF BUREAUCRACY

WHEN trade union mem-
bers struggle for better
conditions or decent wages,
they often face vicious and
reactionary employers, and
nearly always hostility from
the press and mass media.
They also frequently con-
front Government min-
isters.

But one other influence
nearly always stands be-
tween the workers and
victory. This is the trade
union leaders, the full-
time officials who so often
hold back the struggle it-
self, or in one way or an-
other prevent full success.

Why? And how can we
defeat these bureaucrats?

The first full-time offi-
cials in Britain more than a
century ago did not come
from the ranks of the poor,
but from the 'aristocracy of
labour'. They were often
said to embody in their own
persons the same prosper-
ity that they were supposed
to demand for their
members.

Many of these early lead-
ers fitted very easily into
the political establishment
of the time.

'Moderation'

George Howell, one of
the first Secretaries of the
TUC, was essentially a paid
agent of the Liberal Party.
His successor Henry Broad-
hurst was a minor member
of one of Gladstone's
Governments in the 1880s
- the peak of his ambition
was a meeting with Queen
Victoria at Windsor Castle.
He also received some
shares from friendly
employers.

As early as the 1870s,
meetings of the TUC were
feted by 'enlightened'
employers and town coun-
cils, and praised for their
dignified bearing and their
'moderation'.

As the union movement
grew more powerful, the
capitalist class took meas-
ures to ensure the leaders
stayed 'moderate'. John
Burnett, a distant prede-
cessor of John Boyd in the
leadership of the Engin-
eers, was given the job of
setting up what was to be-



Will Thorne

come the present-day De-
partment of Employment.

The process of integr-
ating trade union leaders
into the government mach-
ine took a big step for-
ward with the First World
War. Union leaders were
drawn into official admin-
istration and given enlarg-
ed possibilities for recruit-
ment in return for ensuring
labour's cooperation in the
war effort.

By the 1920s, no Govern-
ment inquiry, no local
administrative body, was
quite complete without
a 'workers' representative'
who received his expenses
and was helped to see the
other side that there always
is to every question.

In World War 2, again,
there was another big push
for closer links between the
union machinery and the
state machinery.

Craft

The early unions were
mostly craft unions of
better-off workers. In the
great general and industrial
unions, most of which got
going in their modern form
round the time of the First
World War, the full-time
officials sometimes had
built the organisations up
from nothing, and often
began with radical or even
revolutionary ideas.

Many of the main lead-
ers of this period served an
apprenticeship as fighters.

Thus Will Thorne, who
built the modern General
and Municipal Workers,
worked closely with Freder-
ick Engels and with Elean-
or Marx. Ernest Bevin, who
started in circumstances of
the direst poverty, was for a
time in the Marxist move-
ment, and then became a
leader of the Transport and
General Workers' Union.

What was it that trans-
formed Thorne into a weak
and ineffective MP and
member of the TUC Gen-
eral Council? What made
Bevin into a brutal and
authoritarian bureaucrat,
whose many services to the
ruling class were widely
acknowledged during the
celebration of the centenary
of his birth last year?

It was not just that
people like these were
bought off in some simple
way. They started off with
the clear aim of building
and maintaining powerful
organisations. They some-
times had to arbitrate
between sections of their
members who fought one
another instead of the
bosses.

They came to see them-
selves as reflecting the gen-
eral interests of their
organisations in ways that
the members themselves
might fail to appreciate.
They came to support col-
lective bargaining mach-
inery which tied their mem-
bers to procedures which
they were not necessarily
prepared to accept.

So it was that massive
unions like the Transport
and General and the NUR,
whose strength helped to
improve the conditions of
generations of workers,
at the same time became
remote from those very
members. This happened
even when their rules and
constitutions were on paper
quite democratic (and
sometimes still remain so).

The big general and in-
dustrial unions in particular
have created a full-time
'civil service' whose rou-
tines and activities have
drifted apart from the
members, linked to stable
organisations and fixed
bargaining procedures.
The individual official who

starts off with radical ideas
is quickly absorbed, unless
(exceptionally) a clear
understanding of and orga-
nised participation in
Marxist politics prevents
this.

Now trade union officials
have a standard of living,
a life style, and a set of atti-
tudes, that brings them
closer to the employers.
Like the pigs in George
Orwell's *Animal Farm*,
they come to resemble the
human beings whose inter-
ests they once opposed
more closely than the
fellow members of the
animal kingdom.

One other way in which
union officials grow remote
from their members is in
the possession of know-
ledge and information not
available to the rank and
file.

There was a time when
the piecework system in
some cotton factories was
so complicated that Gen-
eral Secretaries of the weav-
ers' unions were appointed
by competitive examina-
tions. Nowadays, the great
complexities of legal and
other regulation of almost
all aspects of trade union
activity make it very diffi-
cult for ordinary union
members to keep up with
everything, especially
when they are not active in
the union all the time.

Higher

The trade union official,
on the other hand, rises up
the rungs of promotion
within the trade union
machinery, sometimes
showing sparks of militan-
cy to retain respect, some-
times having to stand in
elections to obtain a higher
position.

The official becomes
more knowledgeable in
confronting employers, and
slicker in dealing with the
gripes of his/her own
members. S/he becomes
more and more concerned
with industrial peace and
with keeping agreements
in ways that members may
not like.

There are revolts in

every generation against
the dead hand of bureau-
cracy. The syndicalist
movement at the beginn-
ing of the century argued
for greater militancy and
for unions covering individ-
ual industries, or even all
of the working class.

They had great influence
among miners, and also
among engineers who were
prominent in the shop stew-
ards' movement during the
First World War.

The defeat of the Gen-
eral Strike in 1926 was
followed by a period of
the consolidation of the
bureaucracy, and national
talks with employers under
such figures as Ernest
Bevin and Walter Citrine
of the TUC. Such discuss-
ions culminated in such
modern arrangements as
the National Economic De-
velopment Council, and
various 'social contracts'
and other agreements to
hold back wages.

During the post-war
boom, also, there were re-
volts from the rank and file
against the deals organised
between management and
unions. A new network of
'unofficial' industrial action
developed, often quite
apart from the established
trade union machinery.

The new shop stewards'
movements of the post-war
years were less influenced
by revolutionary ideas than
their predecessors, but
they were nevertheless
powerful and effective, pre-
paring the way for great
victories of the trade union
movement in the period
before 1974.

Since then there has
been a series of vicious at-
tacks on rank and file mili-
tancy, spearheaded by such
employers and Leyland,
and continuously supported
by such bureaucrats as
Terry Duffy.

This attack has included
the victimisation of mili-
tants and the erosion of
the rights and conditions
painfully built over
decades.

The stewards' move-
ment has been attacked not
only by direct repression
but also by the spread

downwards of the crumbs
from the employers' table.
The independence of the
stewards has been sapped
by free lunches, travel in
expensive cars and other
minor perks - often
accepted at first without
any dishonourable motive.

The maintenance of the
independence of trade
union representatives
needs a relentless battle.
To secure it is not simply a
matter of maintaining the
'purity' of the rank and
file, as some would have it,
it also involves a necessary
confrontation with the
bureaucrats.

It is certainly essential to
organise the militant rank
and file within the unions.
However, the rank and file
will not succeed unless it is
able to mount a challenge
to the bureaucracy.

The bureaucrats under
pressure can be forced to
fight - and they can be
replaced by more principled,
more accountable
leaders.

Challenged

The struggle for demo-
cracy in the unions is not
lost before it has begun -
and without that struggle,
the prospects for isolated
rank and file battles which
seek simply to ignore or
by-pass the official union
machine are very limited.

The bureaucracy must be
challenged by militants
who are conscious of the
issues at stake, who refuse
to be bought off, and who
are aiming at serious
opposition to the employ-
ers.

As Trotsky put it in 1938,
we 'should always strive
not only to renew the top
leadership of the trade
unions, boldly and resolutely
in critical moments advanc-
ing new militant leaders in
place of routine function-
aries and careerists, but
also to create in all possible
instances independent
militant organisations
corresponding more closely
to the tasks of mass strugg-
le against bourgeois
society...'

Democracy Special

Fighting for representation for women

JO THWAITES argues that democracy must include women's rights

ONE OF the most striking failures of real democracy in the unions is the paltry number of women who are active at any level, from shop-floor right up to the national executives.

In many workplaces, even though the majority of the workers are women, there will be a male shop steward.

Many men say that women bring it all on themselves — if they won't vote for women as shop stewards, what can the union do? If women won't come to the meetings and participate in the union's activities, don't show any interest in the union at all, then it's because of their domestic responsibilities, or that women aren't interested in politics, or women are more conservative than men.

There are many time-worn excuses and 'explanations' — going back to the last century, when John Hendry, a Scottish Mill Workers' union organiser, said:

"Women broadly speaking, from a Trade Unionist standpoint, are bad subjects. This is due not a little to the dependent and subordinate position the woman has been so long taught to look upon as her proper place. She is difficult to get and being

got is difficult to keep".

In truth working-class women, being more oppressed than working-class men, are often more militant once they get into action. And that's closer to the real reason why women are oppressed in the unions.

Sluggishness

There have been very militant struggles led by women, like Lee Jeans, Royal Pride, Glencroft, and the Liverpool typists recently, and further back Trico, Grunwick, and Chix.

These struggles decisively squash any accusations of women's reluctance to fight. Indeed they highlight the sluggishness of the trade unions in backing those women.

It took the National Union of Tailor and Garment Workers (NUTGW) six weeks to decide to give official support to the Lee Jeans women. 92 per cent of the membership of the NUTGW are women, yet there are only five women on an Executive of 15, and out of 47 full-time officials only nine are women. Men run a union that consists almost entirely of women.

Positive discrimination is often criticised as being patronising to women. It

is said women can get onto committees on their own merits and capabilities.

But surely there's a cast iron case for insisting that there should be a greater proportion of women in the leading bodies of the NUTGW. Out of 92 per cent of the union, there cannot be only five women capable of sitting on the Executive!

The consistent trend of trade-union routinism is always to give predominance to the most conservative sections — from the full-timers down through the older, better-off, more skilled, male, white workers.

These workers have more time, more confidence, more experience. They come to identify themselves with the union, and then, often, with the union machine. They resent — or at best are patronising towards — militant women who challenge their routines.

So often the trade union movement reproduces the same male domination as exists in the family and in capitalist society — stifling and repressing the energy and vigour of the more oppressed half of the working class, and strengthening the hand of the bureaucracy.

When you think of a

'typical trade unionist' or a trade union leader, the image which springs to mind is of a white, middle-aged, greying or balding, man (more or less corpulent according to how high he's got in the union hierarchy).

That might appear as a caricature, but the general image fits. You only have to go to a TUC conference for proof.

And most union officials are reluctant to change long-established procedures, to adopt the kind of changes that are necessary to make sure that women have a chance to get involved in the union. The stereotypes are self-perpetuating.

Represented

Despite all this women are joining unions at a much faster rate than men. But there has not been an equivalent increase in the number of women trade union activists, shop stewards, full-time officials, or executive members.

What efforts have unions made to encourage women? NUPE, with 67 per cent of women members, now has five places reserved for women on its executive. That brings the percentage of women on its executive up to 31 per cent — still less than half of what it should be if women were represented properly.

Various white collar unions — TASS, NALGO, APEX, ASTMS — have set up Equal Opportunities Committees. Some unions have special training schools for women shop stewards.

The Yorkshire region of the GMWU has negotiated provisions with a few employers for workplace women's groups to meet during the working day.

But more is needed — all the way through the unions, from top to bottom. Women trade unionists have to see that they are needed in the union; they have to be encouraged to come forward and take an active part in the union.

Work-time

Providing creche facilities at branch meetings is a start, but not enough. Most women don't want to take their kids out with them to meetings at night. The most convenient time for women who have

responsibilities at home to attend branch meetings is during work time.

That is what unions should be fighting for nationally. That would be real encouragement.

Unions should encourage women to get together from different parts of the country and build up networks of contacts. All too often the problems women activists face — sexist attitudes from male trade unionists, lack of self-confidence and demoralisation — end up with the woman thinking there is something wrong with her, until she starts discussing the problems with other women and discovers that they are general.

The Women's Fightback conference on the unions should help.

Unions need to be won whole-heartedly to support and fight for a woman's right to work. As long as any male trade unionist believes that saving his job is more important than saving a woman's job, the bosses will be able to peddle reactionary rubbish about a woman's place being in the home looking after the kids, and sabotage any real fight against unemployment.

Women's lack of representation in the unions is usually lumped into the women's rights section in conference agendas. Since 99 times out of 100 it will be women who raise this representation, it is seen as simply a 'women's issue'.

But a fundamental part of democracy in any labour movement body is that the elected representatives represent the membership. When the vast majority of the representatives of the trade unions are men, with the Executives of some unions having no women on them at all, and 31 per cent of all trade unionists are women, there is something very wrong.

A big chunk of the working class — an oppressed and potentially radical and militant chunk — is being disenfranchised.

This is not simply a 'women's issue', but an issue that must concern all those who are fighting for democracy in the labour movement.



Women's Fightback Trade union conference



Coventry Council strikers

Time and again women trade unionists have come forward to fight the Tory onslaught on their rights and living standards. And each time they have run up against the limitations or outright treachery of the existing bureaucratic leaders.

And they have found a movement which has for decades ignored the issues and problems faced by women.

The March 27 Trade Union conference called Women's Fightback is designed as a focus for a movement to change the unions and challenge their present leadership.

The conference is open to women either as individuals or as delegates from any group, workplace organisation, branch or women's group at local, regional or national level.

There will be an all-day creche. Workshops on various topics under main groups: Pay; public sector and the jobs; fighting sexism; racism and the Third World.

The conference fee is £3.50 (£2 for low-waged unwaged non-delegates). Credentials from 41 Elling Street, London N7.

MARCH 27

Socialist Organiser Alliance

Get Organised!

SOCIALIST Organiser fights to act as a real campaigning paper which can organise workers in the struggle for new leadership.

To do so we need consistent support and money. Socialist Organiser Alliance groups have been established in most big towns.

Why not join with us? Supporters are asked to undertake to sell a minimum of 6 papers per week and contribute at least £1.50 per month (20p for unwaged).

If there is no group in your area why not help us to build one?

To 'Get Organised', write at once to us at 28 Middle Lane, London N8.



Say 'no' to arbitration!

THE WEAKNESS of certain sections of the movement is reflected by increasing resort to the arbitration boards and industrial tribunals, as can be seen from Socialist Organiser no. 63.

I have no wish to criticise Pete Cresswell without being aware of the detailed circumstances of the Liverpool typists' strike, but I

hope Pete will agree that the job of socialists is to fight against resort to arbitration, whether the suggestion comes from union leaders, the bosses, or the workers themselves.

Reinforce

Arbitration provides not only a way out for the waverers and the union bureaucrats. It reinforces central ideas of joint interest between bosses and trade unionists, and the existence of 'objective' standards of fairness which can be discovered by 'independent' functionaries — ideas which ultimately bind the workers to the employers' interests, whatever short-term successes are achieved.

Centrally, it hinders the workers from realising that their own independent strength is all that can be relied upon, and channels confrontation into technical argument.

It is dangerous to believe that workers can tactically use this debilitating process, and I hope that when it was raised in a confused way by the workers, Pete and the local branch officials carried out a sustained educational campaign along these lines.

There seems to be a hint in Pete's letter that because workers raise this demand, socialists in leadership positions should simply accept it.

If it is what the workers really want, then we will have to accept a democratic decision to go to arbitration. But we must never pass up the opportunity to argue and agitate against it.

DAI C. RILEY

BEST WISHES

YOUR LEAFLET re: the Birmingham conference on March 6th was discussed at our Lodge meeting on Tuesday 12th January.

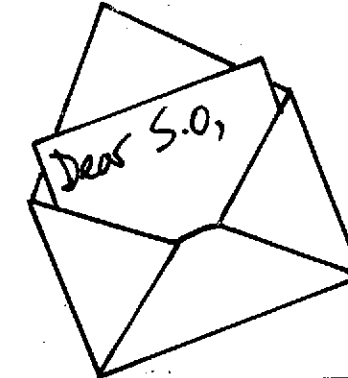
Our Lodge fully supports your Conference, but unfortunately our Union Rules will not allow us to sponsor the Conference.

A member of South Islington Labour Party and a member of our Lodge will be at the conference, and we are hoping that he will be able to raise at the conference the issue of our so-called leadership's attack on democracy in our Union in closing a number of Lodges and Branches.

With our best wishes for a successful Conference,

Yours fraternally,
T. PAINTER,
Secretary, North London Lodge, EETPU.

Writeback



We invite readers to send us their letters, up to a usual maximum length of 400 words.

Send to 'Writeback', Socialist Organiser, c/o 28, Middle Lane, London N8.

How to treat rapists

WHILE I agree with a lot of the article by Jill Smith from Women Against Violence Against Women on the judgment of rapist John Allen, I would like to oppose her call for mandatory prison sentences for rapists.

As a socialist, I see crime not in isolation from the rest of society. Rape surely is a very clear expression of this.

It is not in isolation to the general sexism of society, the viewing of women primarily as objects.

But the question raised by the idea of mandatory prison sentences is for what point. Most criminals do not expect to get caught, and this is probably even more the case with rapists, so the idea of deterrence is not true.

I think there is a point for arguing that prison would make men more aware that rape is a major crime. But it is scapegoating for a general oppression of women.

Surely instead of mandatory prison sentences, we should be calling for centres for the re-socialisation of rapists to tackle the attitudes and feeling that lead them to rape. I understand that in the USA there was such a centre (now closed by Reagan) which had a very high success rate (99%) in preventing repeat cases of rape.

The centre aimed to educate the rapists in the ideas of feminism and tackle the whole problem of sexism. Surely this is the way forward.

CHARLIE SARELL,
Leicester.



Marxism and women

IN REPLY to Les Hearn's appeal on this Letters Page for discussion on 'patriarchy', I outlined a criticism of that concept (or at least of one main interpretation of it).

We could learn something if comrades who disagree with that criticism told us why they think it is wrong. But Les Hearn and Dave Spencer (Letters, Socialist Organiser no. 67) simply raise an outcry against me 'laying down the line'.

I am supposed to show an 'extraordinarily complacent' attitude to the theoretical problems. Dave Spencer, following Les's earlier argument, asks for a booklist to indicate what theoretical light Marxism has shed on women's oppression.

His sarcasm is ill-founded. Revolutionary Marxism has been the only theoret-

ical tradition to maintain and integrate the basic ideas of women's liberation continuously since their origins in the 19th century.

No classic Marxist text gives a once-and-for-all answer to the issues currently raised by the new women's movement, and it would be a grossly un-Marxist method of thinking to wish that it could. But over recent years there has been a tremendous flowering of Marxist studies on women's oppression — the booklist Dave asks for would exhaust my 400 word limit before I had named even the most important books and articles!

Questions remain open. These Marxist studies are varied and incomplete. Non-Marxist studies also have much to teach us

(though even the radical and revolutionary feminists often base their work on criteria and methods deriving from Marxism).

Perhaps we will eventually find such problems as force us to reject or fundamentally revise the Marxist approach. But Les and Dave are surely too quick off the mark, to say the least.

On pornography, also, I think Les and Dave cut too many corners. No question that women are insulted by vile sexist pornography. But are bans a solution?

Some (not all) feminists, I know, argue that in sexist society there is no real erotic literature at all, but only sex-hatred literature — pornography. But would bans on pornography suppress sex-hatred — or just unleash more sexual repression and thus more oppression of women?

Les is indignant that I interpreted him as being for state censorship of pornography. But Zilla Smith and Dave Spencer interpret him similarly — though approvingly.

When Marxists argue against state bans on fascists, we point out that these bans — even if apparently aimed against fascists and sometimes used against them — always end up giving the state extra police powers against the working class.

And such extra police powers, surely, always end up used against other oppressed sections — not only against the working class. There have already been official outcries against feminist literature on the grounds that it is 'indecent' and 'pornographic'.

COLIN FOSTER,
Islington.

Struggle to liberate women

DAVE SPENCER and Les Hearn (November 26, January 7) have raised a question over Marxism's contribution to the theoretical understanding of women's oppression.

The question is misconceived: for the issue before us is not simply the elaboration of texts but the lifting of the material burden of oppression thrust upon women both by capitalism in decay and by Stalinist bureaucracy. In this struggle Marxists have a solid record of achievement.

Marx and Engels fought to develop a materialist analysis of the ideological and institutional foundations of women's oppression under capitalism. Such analysis — like any scientific analysis — has required to be developed in the light of fresh knowledge, but stands as a major starting point.

It was Marxists in the socialist movement who pioneered the development of special forms of work to mobilise doubly oppressed proletarian women, recognising the inevitable limitations of bourgeois feminism.

It was the Bolsheviks who, with the active involvement of Lenin, took the initiative in organising women in Russia to bring about the biggest single step towards their own liberation ever accomplished

— the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a workers' state.

It was the Bolshevik government which — despite colossal objective economic difficulties — took immediate measures to lift women's oppression, changing the laws on marriage, divorce, abortion and sexuality, and beginning the communal provision of catering, laundry facilities and housing.

It was those who fought for the continuity of Marxism — Trotsky and the Left Opposition in the Soviet Union and internationally — who opposed the moves by the Stalinist bureaucracy to reverse these gains and re-establish the nuclear family unit as a foundation of authoritarian rule and focus of oppression of both women and youth.

And to this day it is only Marxists who can offer women who struggle for their rights an understanding of the conservative, sexist labour bureaucracy, and a perspective to challenge their control.

In the fight against women's oppression it is not only Marxists who must learn from the women's movement: rather it is through grasping the gains of the Marxist movement that feminists can best organise to carry through the struggle for women's liberation.

TERRY SMITH, Banbury.

SCIENCE



LAST September and October the British Medical Journal carried a series of very useful articles on 'Medicine and the Bomb', by Jape Smith and Terry Smith.

The first article described the probable effects of a one megaton bomb (equivalent to one million tons of TNT) exploding 2000 metres above BMA House.

This is fairly modest by today's standards, but is still 80 times larger than the

Medicine and the bomb



Hiroshima bomb which killed 65,000 people either outright or within a fortnight.

The Smiths estimate that a one-megaton explosion would destroy by blast most buildings in a radius of seven kilometres, i.e. about 150 square kilometres or 60 square miles, including

Neasden and the Isle of Dogs. Nearly everyone out in the open or in an unreinforced building would be killed outright.

But while in the equivalent blast zone at Hiroshima 90% of people were killed by blast and fire, in London there would be fewer deaths and more non-fatal injuries — as buildings are stronger and the blast zone for the bigger bomb would reach further than the fire zone.

Outside the blast zone there would be less damage but even so, windows would be broken at Harrow and Woolwich 40 seconds after the explosion. After two minutes, 440 kilometre per hour winds (gale force 27) would be blowing dust and debris and bits of people from five kilometres around

into the mushroom cloud at the site of the vaporised BMA House.

The heat of the fireball would blind anyone who looked at it, and cause second-degree burns (blistering) on naked skin within 16 kilometres (Harrow and Woolwich again).

Any combustible material within 10 kilometres exposed to the heat would be set alight (paper, clothes, curtains, leaves, grass). Nearer the centre there might be a firestorm, a self-perpetuating fire drawing fresh air from around and burning until all combustible materials had been consumed.

The greatest firestorm of World War 2 at Dresden killed 100,000 people, including all those in deep

shelters (for a fictionalised account of this deliberate fire-bombing of the civilian population, read Slaughterhouse Five by Kurt Vonnegut, my favourite author).

After blast and heat, radiation. There would be few immediate deaths from radiation after a one megaton bomb, as anyone near enough to get a lethal dose would be killed by blast or heat. However, tons of dust thrown up by the explosion and made radioactive would be carried by prevailing winds, bringing illness and death.

For instance, a one megaton bomb on Glasgow with a 25 kilometre per hour south-westerly breeze would deliver enough fallout to Aberdeen to kill half its inhabitants. The fallout from

the London bomb would cause significant numbers of deaths in Manchester with the right winds.

Cancers and mutations would abound.

Stratosphere

The radioactivity in fallout declines quickly (by 99% in two days), but even the one per cent left would make areas unsafe for weeks.

Some more long-acting radioactivity would be shot into the stratosphere and start coming down in the Northern Hemisphere after two weeks. This could cause an increase in leukemia.

Next week: effects of acute radiation injuries.

by LES HEARN

JOHN McILROY looks at the historical development of the Labour Party as the political party of the workers' movement, closely linked to the trade union bureaucracy.



Ben Tillet addresses dockers' mass meeting in 1911

AS TRADE union and Labour leaders try to knock the Labour democracy struggle on the head, it is useful to look back over the history.

If you were in a union 120 years ago, in some ways you might be very pleasantly surprised. There were no permanent full-time officials, for example.

The executive would be drawn in annual rotation from one of the larger branches, the head office would be moved around from time to time and from town to town.

'Government', as the writers Beatrice and Sidney Webb pointed out, was by all the members in general meeting which strove itself to transact all the business and grudgingly delegated any of its functions either to officers or to committees.

Workers understood the necessity for organisations which must have powers of discipline and control over the members if they were to be effective. They were determined that the discipline and control should be used in their interests.

As unions grew in size and became national rather than local bodies, this type of democracy was undermined, yet the centralisation of policy-making and the growth of bureaucratisation occurred only slowly and was forced to come to terms with 'primitive democracy'.

Designed

Union rules, as they developed, were designed to make sure that leadership and policy-making were subject to the control of the ordinary worker. If certain functions had to be carried out and certain decisions taken by particular individuals, then they must act not as representatives following their own knowledge, judgment and personal inclinations, but as delegates acting upon the mandate of the members they represented, decided upon by a vote after a collective discussion.

Full-time officials should be regularly elected and answerable to an elected executive carrying out the wishes of a strong delegate conference. You can still see this type of set-up, somewhat changed, today, in the rules of a union like the AUEW.



1867: some workers win the vote - but as yet with no workers' party to vote for

There were, of course, counter-pressures: by the turn of the century writers like the Webbs and Robert Michels noticed what the rank and file had always known: there were strong pressures on union officials to become separated from and more conservative than those they represented in terms of both life style and ideas, pressures that were maximised by employers and a hostile state. Moreover, the early trade unionists were often something of a craft elite in the working class.

But the original traditions still remained the model that many workers carried in their minds, their ideal of what working class democracy should be, and they maintained this model, above all, in the workplace.

Its strongest embodiment can be seen in the shop steward system, with officials elected annually, closely supervised by the members they work with and subject to recall, and in the factory meeting where all workers vote openly after public discussion of the issues.

When the Labour Representation Committee was established to carry into Parliament an organised way the aspirations of the trade unions, the political organisation it established was bound to carry the

influence of this tradition. However, it could also be expected to come up against a very different view of democracy.

Tony Benn has said, "in the heart of Parliamentary democracy lies the continuation of the Burkean myth. We've got to deal with that..."

Edmund Burke, the 18th century theorist of Parliamentary Democracy, saw MPs not as delegates who should follow the wishes of those who had voted for them, but as autonomous representatives of the whole community and all their constituents.

For Burke, the House of Commons was 'a sanhedrin of skilled legislators who interpreted the cries of distress of the people'. They did this on the basis of 'the stable and eternal rules of justice and reason'.

Monsters

It was not the fact that they were representatives of the people; but the fact that they were wise and experienced which gave them the right to rule. Parliamentary rule was 'authoritative instructions' and mandates from the electorate. MPs should, said the 19th century prime minister Lord John Russell, 'follow the will of their constituents only if it co-

incides with their own deliberate sense of right'.

With the extension of the franchise, particularly after 1867, party organisation was needed to recruit support from the new mass electorate. But the accepted argument was, as Robert McKenzie claims, that 'the new extra-Parliamentary organisation must not be allowed to become Frankenstein's monsters which might destroy or at best control their creators'.

Despite further developments such as the growing powers of the Prime Minister and Party in the Commons, and the increased by-passing of Parliament by the government machine, these ideas still remain. Compared with working class ideas, this conception of democracy is profoundly individualistic and elitist.

Whereas delegate democracy is the attempt by workers to ensure that their class interests are carried out in a hostile society, representative democracy serves a privileged minority class.

Moreover, the ruling classes made sure they ran no great risk in playing the Parliamentary game. The right to vote and legislate were concessions forced on the ruling classes by mass action, but at the same time power was concentrated elsewhere - in the ownership and control of capital and industry, in the civil

service, in the judiciary, in the army and the police force.

A vote every five years in a situation where workers were split up, individualised, and open to hostile propaganda, did not influence this real world. It did essentially give the appearance of democracy and help to encourage workers to leave politics to the MPs.

Despite the Parliamentary outlook, Labour in the early 1900s had no intention of simply establishing a second Liberal or Tory party. In accordance with working class tradition, policy was to be decided by an annual conference of delegates, mandated by affiliated organisations. An NEC elected at Conference would administer the party, and neither national officers nor MPs were given higher status than ordinary members.

As early as 1907 the problem of power relationships and the tension between the two kinds of democracy was highlighted by a resolution at Labour conference which argued, 'That resolutions instructing the Parliamentary Party as to their actions in the House of Commons be taken as the opinions of the conference, on the understanding that the time and method of giving effect to these instructions be left to the Party in the House in conjunction with

the NEC'.

In practical terms, the authority of conference in the early years was strong. It became a forum in which the record of the parliamentary group came under close and critical scrutiny. The PLP was, as yet, a weak force with no leader but a rotating chairman.

In 1913 the requirement that it should present a formal report was introduced, and in 1914 a special conference was held to examine their policy and performance. At that conference, J.R. Clynes stated that 'The conference and no-one else had the right to judge and decide what the Parliamentary and electoral policy should be'.

War

The general acceptance of this idea was illustrated by, for example, the extra-parliamentary party's control of policy towards the war.

In the new constitution of 1918, Clause 5(1) stated, 'The work of the party shall be under the direction and control of the Party conference...'.

But there were loopholes in the constitution: and as they developed expert skills and prestige, the parliamentarians were able to gain election to the NEC and have a strong impact at conference. The radicalising influences of Parliament came into play.

The MPs' involvement in day to day Parliamentary tactics; their desire for security; their cringing constitutionalism; their divorce from the day to day struggle; above all their reformist ideas, meant that the PLP more and more asserted its autonomy as it attempted to prove its fitness to govern. The advent of the first Labour government tilted the terms of the comparison firmly in the direction of Parliamentaryism.

Ramsey MacDonald was as autocratic as any Tory leader. 'As long as I hold any position in the Parliamentary Party - and I know that I can speak for my colleagues also - we are not going to take our instructions from any outside body unless we agree with them', MacDonald told the 1928 Conference. He had swallowed Burke whole, and the membership were now forced to do so.

Reflecting on the first two Labour governments'

successful defiance of working class democracy, McDonald's deputy Philip Snowden exhibited his contempt for the grass roots. 'My experience of conference has taught me to attach very little importance to their resolutions. Of the hundreds of resolutions I have seen passed outlining a drastic programme of reform, I can hardly call to mind one which has had any practical result.'

'Conference will talk let them talk. The rank and file ought to have learnt their lesson by now. They have had enough experience of the futility of conference decisions'.

The rules were changed in 1929. Clause 4(c), which specified the duties of the MPs, disappeared, and conference should not decide what measures the NEC and PLP should 'promote' but only what went into the programme.

After McDonald's desertion in 1931 there was a lurch back to extra-parliamentary control. The TU and the large unions for the first time began to play a decisive role - but often to the right of the MPs.

The trade union leaders were as hostile to genuine rank and file control as McDonald ever was.

There was, therefore, far from a forthright assertion of the need for MPs to accept a mandate from conference, simply an attempt once more to reconcile Parliamentaryism with working class democracy, with the result that the former ultimately dominated.

The 1945 government with its prestige and the support of the union leaders, was only defeated nine times at six conferences, mostly on minor issues. A good example of the reality of the 'compromise' could be seen from the 1946 conference.

A year previously a resolution was passed instructing the NEC to discuss with the government the abolition of tied cottages. Bevan opposed it on the grounds that 'It is impossible for the conference, not knowing the Parliamentary situation, to determine the Parliamentary timetable'. Nothing was done, and the 1948 conference a resolution was moved calling the government to legislate.

Bevan again argued 'It is quite impossible for the conference of 1,100, even

Socialist Bookshelf

Books and pamphlets that you should read

MICK LIGGINS introduces some basic reading on the current situation in the six counties of Northern Ireland

IF YOU want to know the real nature of the Northern Irish state, then read Michael Farrell's book 'Northern Ireland: the Orange State' (Pluto Press, £5.95).

The book is written by a socialist who was involved in the Civil Rights movement in the late 60s and early 70s and helped set up the 'People's Democracy' group. It deals with many aspects of Irish history from the time partition was established up to 1973.

The main contents of the book deal with the Orange leadership and the mobilisation of Protestant workers on the side of or even to the right of the British state; the role of the Loyalist special armed police forces, the A, B & C Specials, and the RUC; the role of the British state in the North, which shows up so-called British democracy exactly for what it is; and the politics of the opposition — the Northern Ireland Labour Party, the bourgeois nationalists, the republican movement, the civil rights movement. It also covers the growth, and the sabotage, of the industrial militancy of the Catholic and Protestant working class, dealing with various strikes.

Significant

After reading the book, events in Northern Ireland — deaths, Republicans refusing to go to Westminster, the determination of the hunger strikers, Paisley's third force — all become much more significant.

The book is not really a political statement or propaganda, although quite obviously it has no sympathy with the British or Loyalist forces propping up the state. It is more a list of facts put into a coherent account.

Its account of the Bloody Sunday massacre, where the British murdered 13 unarmed Civil Rights demonstrators, is excellent and very moving without any special efforts to dramatise it. It also describes will the reaction by the Catholic community as they started to defend their community against the British army, which was sent into Ireland in 1969 by the Labour government to 'defend' the Catholic community from Loyalist pogroms. Within a short time, as the book clearly shows, the real role of the British army was revealed — to defend the Orange state on behalf of British imperialism.

Engineering

The accounts of the industrial action in the North are also very good. In 1919 an engineering strike, although defeated with no



official support from the unions) closed down the docks and factories for four weeks and put Catholic and Labour supporters in the leadership. After the strike 100,000 workers marched on May Day calling for Labour representation.

Purge

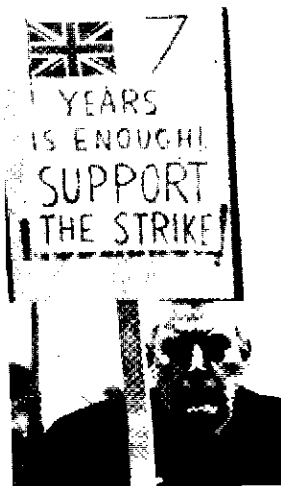
The Unionist leaders put a stop to it, seeing their position and state in jeopardy. Carson and other Unionist leaders made inflammatory statements that resulted in a purge from the shipyards of all 'communists' and Sinn Féiners' — which in effect meant all Catholics. This was followed by violence.

The other side of industrial action was shown in 1974 when the Ulster Workers' Council called a strike against the Sunningdale agreement which gave 'catholic representatives' positions in government. The strike was carried out and made effective by the intimidation of the Loyalist paramilitary groups, and the quiet co-operation of the British army.

This book also clearly shows the case for defending the Republican movement, despite its wrong methods against imperialism. The motivation for the acts of the Republicans is fuelled by years of repression by the British state, and each death in Ireland or Britain is caused by the British state.

Recommended

If you have not read anything other than newspaper articles on Ireland, I would strongly recommend you read this. It is informative, good reading and gives you an idea of the issues in N. Ireland for further study.



Paisley

Ramsey McDonald, Jimmy Thomas and Arthur Henderson — labour movement leaders wedded to capitalist system

it were constitutionally proper, to determine the order in which the PLP and the government introduce legislation'.

Compared to McDonald, Attlee was prepared to allow conference decisions a role, but he was not prepared to accept the full rigours of conference control.

Parliamentarianism had fed on itself. Even lefts like Bevan accepted it. New generations of Labour Party MPs were socialised into its rules and mystique even before they were selected. Once in the House, all the pressures were for the incineration of any more basic democratic ideals.

Most saw it as the first step on the ladder, and Prime Ministers like Attlee possessed enormous patronage. They could make or break a career. The temptation to accommodate was immense. Moreover, there was no alternative threat, no alternative pressures.

The PLP, with its own meetings, with no circulated minutes and few votes, was insulated from external control, whilst the leaders with their prestige, experience and skills, were in a position, with a little lip-service, to manoeuvre conference to their way of thinking so that confrontation was rarely necessary.

Harsh

By the end of the '50s, many on the left would agree with Richard Crossman that the harsh reality of the situation under the fine words had been that, '... since it could not afford, like its opponents, to maintain a large army of paid party workers, the Labour party required militants, politically conscious socialists, to do the work of organising the constituencies.'

But since these militants tended to be 'extremists', a constitution was needed which maintained their enthusiasm by apparently creating a full party democracy, while excluding them from effective power.

Hence the concession in principle of sovereign powers to the delegates at the Annual Conference, and the removal in practice of most of this sovereignty through the union block

vote on the one hand and the complete independence of the PLP on the other'.

However, some possibilities of rank and file control and defeats of the parliamentary wing were still there.

For the Gaitskellites who wished to formally change the nature of the party it was a major problem.

Anthony Crosland specifically attacked parliamentary democracy. 'Continuous political activism by the great bulk of the population would pose a real threat to the stability of our democracy'. Gaitskell called the pattern of delegations and mandates 'a ridiculous business'. He wished to deliver the final coup de grace to the traditions of grassroots democracy.

Defied

Defeated over unilateralism, Gaitskell simply defied the conference decision — supported by union leaders who overturned norms of democracy which they had in the past at least paid lip-service to. As Lewis Minkin points out, '... a new precedent had been created, the party leader who had flatly refused to obey a conference decision on the most contentious issue of the time had survived with his prestige and power enhanced. The lessons of this were available to any future party leader'.

Despite his left past, Wilson built on his predecessor's achievement. He asserted the rights of his government against conference. 'The government must govern'. Conference censures were merely 'warnings'.

Unlike Attlee's government, Wilson's first administration suffered numerous defeats at Labour conference, peaking in 1968. Indeed, the reverses were deeper and more wide-ranging than any government had ever suffered. They were, however, simply ignored. Protests were treated with contempt.

As Minkin comments, 'by the time of the 1970 general election the Labour Party conference appeared to have moved into irreversible decline as a political institution. Its authority over a Labour government was openly defied'.

But throughout the 1970s, as the parliamentary

leadership maintained its rightward drift and carried the PLP with it, there was growing radicalisation in the ranks. A watershed might be seen in Wilson's statement that under no circumstances would the proposal for the nationalisation of 25 of the largest companies, contained in the 1973 programme, become part of Labour's next manifesto.

The development of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy which followed from this was based on the realisation that no matter how left policies passed at conference were, they would remain so much paper and print unless new means could be found to exercise direct control of those charged with their implementation.

This reform programme was based on a reassertion of working class democracy and on the lessons of history: if the rank and file don't control the leaders, then the leaders will control the rank and file.

The successes of the reform programme have shown that there is no need for fatalism or pessimism in the fight to control the Parliamentarians. It has shown the role that conference can play in transforming the Labour Party.

If the fight for democracy is now being blocked, that is essentially due to the

fact that it has not been extended into the bureaucratised trade unions. And it can be extended.

We also need to broaden the range of the Labour Party's support and extend its reach away from the Parliamentary focus. We can do this through the establishment of workplace branches, Labour Party involvement in industrial struggles, and direct affiliation for community, black and women's groups.

The ideological root of the stifling of working class democracy has been the idea of a **parliamentary road to socialism**. It is not good enough simply to replace this with ideas of more outside pressure, more outside organisation, and more mass mobilisation being required.

Insist

If we realise that it is the direct action of the workers themselves, and not their parliamentary representatives, that will destroy capitalism, we will begin to see that parliamentary activity is very much subordinate to the task of encouraging and stimulating that direct action.

We will begin to insist that MPs are no more important than the party's ordinary members, its industrial representatives.



Today's PLP — fighting to fend off external control



Industrial News

Scots women occupy

by Stan Crooke

ON FRIDAY, 8th January, workers at the Loveable Bra factory in Cumbernauld near Glasgow began a sit-in for jobs.

All workers at the factory are members of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers (NUTGW). Shop Stewards' Convenor Sadie Lang and Staff Representative Kathie Platt told me:

"Since October 19th the factory has been in the hands of the receiver. We didn't know anything about the receiver taking over until he walked in."

"In December, after a lot of soul-searching, we reluctantly agreed to 123

1982 looks like being an even worse year for NUTGW bureaucrats than 1981. In February of last year women at the Lee Jeans factory launched an occupation which the union took 7 weeks to make official, did nothing to support apart from paying out strike

pay, and withdrew even this token support weeks before the end of the sit-in.

This year, even before the middle of January, NUTGW members have once again begun a sit-in to fight for jobs. It must be glum faces all round at NUTGW head office.

redundancies. We were told that the size of the workforce left after those redundancies would guarantee that another buyer would take over the factory.

"The receiver announced on a Monday that he wanted 123 redundancies. The

next day he just went down round the canteen and tapped the people on the shoulder who he had chosen.

"Last Friday, 8th January, there was a mass meeting in the canteen with the convenor. I (Sadie) demanded assurances about our job security. He wouldn't give any assurances. So we began a sit-in straight away. It'll continue until all jobs here are guaranteed."

Workers now remain in the factory round the clock. From eight in the morning till half four they work as usual, but then stay on, on a rota basis, to prevent any stock being moved out of the factory, and to prevent a lock-out, since they are already technically redundant.

Thanks to the deliberate policy by the receiver of keeping the women in the dark, whether another buyer for the factory can be found is unclear.

Sadie and Kathie explained: "There is very limited information from any source. We haven't heard anything from the Scottish Development Agency, (which owns the factory premises) or the Cumbernauld Development Corporation (which owns the warehouse premises). And the receiver doesn't let us know what's going on."

"The receiver's company, Touche Ross, is based in Romford and that's where all the decisions are made, although they do have an office in Glasgow.

If any firm did have intentions of buying the factory then they would have begun talks by now. This makes us more suspicious."

"And the receiver has been running down the factory. It seems a clear case of asset-stripping to us. When he came, we were producing 7,000 dobras a week, now the machines are set to produce 3,000 dozen, but we don't see that number in fact."

"Norman Hogg (the local Labour MP) has been involved from the beginning. He's arranged to meet Tony Houghton, the head of Touche Ross, on Monday to try to get more information."

Apart from Hogg, the local Trades Council has also pledged its support to the women's fight, which the NUTGW has provided a fair amount of support and is currently making investigations."

Cobwebs

As Sadie and Kathie put it: "Cumbernauld can't afford to lose any more jobs. It's already a 'ghost town' full of empty warehouses and factories - cobwebs. Cumbernauld needs these jobs and want support from every other factory round here to help keep them."

Although the similarities between Loveable Bra and Lee Jeans springs to mind, Sadie and Kathie point out that there were differences: "We're different from Lee Jeans. They were fighting with their company, but we're fighting the receiver and banks, in this case, since an owner no longer exists here."

Textile workers in Scotland and elsewhere must make sure that women do not face the same isolation and betrayal at the hands of their leaders.



Lee Jeans struggle - sold out by NUTGW

More jobs under Rolls Royce axe

MANAGEMENT'S remorseless offensive against jobs and conditions at the Rolls Royce plant in Hillingdon near Glasgow continues. Last week they announced a further batch of 480 'voluntary redundancies'.

The first that workers heard of these redundancies, as usual, was from the press and television at the weekend. 120 volunteers are wanted from the offices, and 360 from the shop floor.

Already, on the official figures, there have been:

- * 500 'voluntary redundancies' in October 1981;
- * a 10% speed-up in November 1981;
- * a pay rise of only 4% plus increments for length of service (differentiated according to the worker's grade) in December 1981;
- * the announcement of further redundancies in the same month due to Lockheed ending production of the Tri-Star aeroplane, powered by the RB 211 engines produced at Hillingdon;
- * increasing use of subcontractors to manufacture parts, and transfer of production to other plants.

Worse

In fact though, the situation is even worse than the official figures admit. It was more like 800, rather than 500, who left the factory in October, and the speed-up for some jobs has been as high as 60%! And management also has plans to make workers operate two machines each.

If ever there was a need for a fightback, it's right now. Management is decimating the workforce in slices of 500, until the remainder is small enough to polish off with a single chop.

But the shop stewards' convenor and Communist Party member George McCormack has not even called a shop stewards' meeting, never mind a mass meeting, to organise against the job losses. The next shop stewards' meeting will not be held until a fortnight after the announcement of the redundancies, and another three working days on top of that will pass before the committee members can report back to the shop-floor.

Record

In fact, a lot can be done but McCormack is the last person in the world to do it. His record over the previous attacks shows that.

The fightback needs to be organised right now. Every day that passes increases management's chances of achieving their body count. Already workers have begun putting their names down for red-

undancy, tempted by management's offer of a minimum £2,500 pay-off (increased this time because of the abolition of earnings related benefits).

The shop stewards' committee must take the lead in hammering home the message that anyone taking redundancy has no chance of finding another job, and the job they are giving up isn't theirs to sell in the first place.

Shopfloor meetings, block meetings, and mass meetings must be organised during working hours to build a united campaign against job losses

and oppose anyone volunteering for redundancy.

Enforced redundancies and further speed-ups must be countered by blacking the work involved and strike action in the case of sackings and the use of disciplinary measures to victimise workers. The fightback needs to be linked to other fights

against job losses, both locally and nationally - the Loveable Bra sit-in at Cumbernauld, the probable sit-in at BL in Bathgate, the Rolls Royce plant in Coventry where 500 jobs are under threat etc.

STAN CROOKE



IDENTIKIT DUFFIES HERALD NEW BETRAYALS OF ENGINEERING STRUGGLE

by Gerry Hoffa

SIR John Boyd, the Dr. Frankenstein of the AUEW and specialist in the manufacture of clones, has launched a new product on the labour movement - Duffy Mark II - in the form of the President's 'brother' Dennis, recently elected organiser for the West Midlands Division.

Escalating

The appearance of other identikits in the regions is the product not of test-tube technology or Madame



Duffy

Tussaud's, but of a bureaucratic retrenchment of the union machine in the light of the witchhunt in the Labour Party and escalating unemployment.

A major target for attack are the Broad Left officials and stewards in Manchester, in particular CSEU Secretary John Tocher, who comes up for re-election in September. These activists have been in the forefront of the fightback at Gardners, Laurence Scotts and, to a lesser degree, at Barnes Flexible Packaging.

With unemployment peaking 400,000 in the North West (14% minus school leavers) and a new wave of mass redundancies on the way from leading multinationals in the New Year, militants are fighting a two-front defensive battle. On the one hand, Thatcher has blocked with international capital against her own industrialists in order to produce a 'leaner' economy.

On the other hand, central echelons of the trade union leadership (Boyd, Chapple, Grantham, Weighell) have been pulled into Thatcher's slipstream

like helpless marionettes.

Indeed, at a recent mass meeting at Leyland Vehicles in Preston called to discuss opposition to 4,000 redundancies, Gerry Russell (AUEW Executive Council) said "We must beware of those people who spread false hopes that there is an alternative to all pulling together to save the only British motor company". What is clear, though, is that no leadership, help or assistance can be expected for workers wanting to struggle from such people.

Looming

Battles are also looming at a number of other companies in the North West. At Gardners, scene of a bloody points victory for the workers in the Autumn of 1980, the membership have been confronted with the demand for 160 compulsory redundancies. More over all 2,000 workers were sent a letter from the management saying "a small malignant minority of men on the Works Committee are manipulating the machinery

revolutionary objectives."

But the stewards will not budge from their policy of no compulsory redundancies and have taken considerable initiatives to gear up the workforce for a resumption of hostilities.

Massive 'restructuring operations' are also being carried out at International Harvesters (plants at Oldham, Doncaster and Bradford), Massey Ferguson (Manchester, Coventry) and Leyland Vehicles (Preston, Glasgow, Wolverhampton).

These 'operations' have a number of common characteristics in each company: plants are switched from manufacturing products on site to simply being assembly factories, where the management 'out-sources' orders for components to a wide number of suppliers, thus weakening the bargaining position of the unions.

New technology is rapidly introduced, usually with the active assistance of the EETPU. Indeed, at recent negotiations at one major company, a leading official said: "We are willing to encourage our members to encourage our mem-

if we can have guarantees that our union will have a monopoly of membership over the craft grades created by new technology."

In order to finance these activities the multinationals have sought large loans from the banks, and in response the banks have demanded more close control of the 'cost-cutting' operation.

At Massey Ferguson and Harvesters respectively Conrad Black and Roy Shepherd have been brought in 'to kick these companies into shape'.

Further, the November issue of 'The Engineer' stated: "These men have spent the last few years operating as freelance management consultants - being retained by leading financial institutions and conglomerates as chairman or chief executive in textiles, furniture, special steels, motor vehicles and automotive components."

Steve Taylor (AUEW Senior Steward at Massey's in Manchester) put it in a nutshell: "These guys are like professional gunfighters, they are a law unto

themselves and if you arrive at your factory there are for one only."

Besides the need for dissemination of information about what is going on in these companies, there is an urgent need to establish an interplant leadership on a city-wide and linking top plants in the same industry.

Such a rank and file organisation must also be geared up to remove trade union officials who stand with the bosses



Occupations stay solid



Industrial News

No to police racism

THE workers at DUNLOP'S SEMTEX plant in Brynmawr, South Wales, have unanimously rejected an ultimatum from the management to get out of their occupation by Monday 18th January.

They've been in occupation of the plant for over four weeks since the bosses proposed sacking 60 workers. Dunlop then threatened to close the whole plant and sack all the workers.

Despite a severance pay bribe, the workers have remained solid. Management also claim

that the workers are in breach of contract, which would disqualify them from receiving unemployment benefit for seven months.

The INVERGORDON smelter occupation also continues. BACO (British Aluminium) has agreed to defer the redundancies until January 24th and to take on some short-term work-

ers to keep the plant in operating condition for six months, while they try to find a buyer.

Blacking

The TUC has proposed nothing to support the workers at Invergordon, who need extensive blacking by the whole labour movement, such as that imposed by NUR members at Invergordon: they have blacked ore supplies coming through Invergordon to the smelter at Fort William.

TWO hundred seafarers remain on board the SEALINK cross-channel ferry the SENLAC. (Our report in SO last week of a one-day strike by officers in support of the Senlac occupation was wrong. In fact the officers struck for a week in solidarity with Senlac.)

The occupation has had an effect on Sealink who were determined to close the Newhaven-Dieppe ferry.

Talks are now going on with Sealink and SNCF (the French rail company) and British and French seafarers' unions about keeping the service open.

Stark

When a company announces redundancies, workers have a stark choice — either they fight like they have at Invergordon, Brynmawr and on the Senlac, or they accept the loss of jobs.

The fact that so many jobs have been lost over recent months is in the main due to the reluctance of the TUC to take effective action to stop unemployment.

There can be no doubt that the decision last week of the Leyland truck workers at Bathgate not to occupy their plant is a direct result of the lack of support other workers in the car industry have had when trying to save their jobs. They see little chance of winning on their own.

But occupations can give a lead — and the TUC must act to support these workers, through national solidarity action and blacking.

New threat to steel jobs

MORE STEEL plants could be shut. At least 15,000 jobs will go over the next year anyway. That's the steelworkers' reward for accepting no national pay rise at all this year!

British Steel boss Ian McGregor says that the job slaughter may be even greater than scheduled because of disruption caused by the weather, the rail strikes, and US anti-dumping law suits. (So much for import controls as a way to save jobs!)

Yet Bill Sirs, leader of

the steel union ISTC, is talking of snuffing out the little spark of action which ISTC has planned — an overtime ban from February 7. Instead of adopting the principle that McGregor's difficulty is ISTC's opportunity, he told the press that the overtime ban might be 'taken off or delayed' because 'we wouldn't want to compound the temporary difficulties which have emerged for the corporation'.

The overtime ban is to demand the immediate introduction of a 39 hour

week (British Steel insists on delaying this to January 1983) and the consolidation of some locally negotiated bonus payments.

The present ISTC strategy is like throwing a few snowballs into the bonfire on which McGregor is roasting steelworkers. A new policy is needed. What about the idea that the work available should be shared out among the workforce, on the basis of cutting hours with no loss of pay?

GOING to the aid of a Bangladeshi family being attacked by a gang of 15 white racist youths, Bethnal Green community worker Shoaib Chowdhury found himself arrested, assaulted by the police, and charged with 'wilful obstruction of a police officer in the exercise of his duty'.

It's a common enough occurrence. But there have been repercussions.

As a result of what happened to Shoaib Chowdhury on 6th December in Brick Lane, 300 people turned up to a protest meeting. They declared no confidence in the police, demanded an independent inquiry involving the Bangladeshi community, a more accountable method of policing, and an end to further involvement by the community in police 'liaison' exercises which they condemn as police 'face-savers'.

The meeting also set up a Campaign Against Police Harassment, which stresses that its scope will go beyond the East London Bengali community.

A demonstration is also being planned for Sunday 14th February, leaving St. Mary's Church at Bethnal Green at 1pm and going via Bethnal Green police station to Brick Lane.

The campaign can be contacted at 39 Fournier Street, London E1 (phone 01-515-6213, 790-8781 or 529-3988.)

Victory on race law

AFTER Anwar Ditta, Nasreen Akhtar, Nasira Begum and Jaswinder Kaur, Shirley Graham has now won her fight against the immigration laws.

Shirley Graham, a nurse from Jamaica, has lived in Britain since 1974 but was summarily threatened with deportation on returning from a trip to the USA.

But the same week Lilli Luczak, a Canadian secretary who has lived here for eight years, was refused re-admission after a trip abroad. And Mumtaz Kiani in Bradford is still fighting her case against the immigration laws.

Drivers set strike date

ROAD haulage drivers in the South East are planning strike action on pay from January 25th.

TGWU drivers are claiming £100 per week basic — which would just about maintain the real value of the £78 basic which drivers nationally won two years ago. But road haulage bosses have offered an increase of only £4 on last year's £82 basic in the South East.

Road haulage pay negotiations take place regionally for most employers, and nationally for a few. The

pace-setting offer so far is £87 to Pickfords Removals drivers — but the East Midlands has settled on £85.60.

West Midlands drivers are holding a delegate conference to decide on a £86 offer.

Much of the road haulage industry is in a depressed condition (though there are exceptions like container haulage). But the opportunity to take action alongside the rail workers must put the drivers in a strong position.

General Secretary loses seat

METHODS more like a mafia than trade union democracy were described in the High Court this week as the Boilermakers' Society ballot-rigging case proceeded.

Former general secretary John Chalmers told the court that he returned to his office from a trip abroad to find his desk drawer empty, the locks replaced, and even his toilet seat changed.!

During the period when he was supposed to be working in tandem with the new general secretary,

James Murray, Chalmers was banned to a quiet room upstairs in the union HQ.

Chalmers also said that he was sure that no-one other than Murray had ordered the printing of 150 extra ballot papers for the 1980 general secretary election one year after the election had taken place.

Barry Williams, the defeated candidate in 1980, is alleging unfair methods. The union leadership has already conceded that the votes supposedly cast by the Belfast No.1 branch for Murray were invalid.

Leyland Action Conference

THE sell-out of the November 1 wage review at BL revealed more clearly than ever before the massive gulf which exists between the shop floor and national trade union officials.

Meanwhile the all-out management offensive against the work-force is going on with even greater intensity: the company's drive for speed-up and demanning now directly threatens basic shop floor organisation.

The tasks facing militants in BL centre on these chronic problems of leadership at all levels of the unions. The Leyland Action

Committee, which played an important role in the preparation of and during the wages strike, has called a conference to discuss the new situation in BL and the practical steps necessary to defend workers' interests.

As well as reports from factories in BL Cars there will be a first-hand report on the situation in Leyland Vehicles from a delegation of LAC supporters in those plants.

An important part of the agenda will be organising resistance to the company's new procedure document.

All BL workers who support the general aims and objectives of the LAC are urged to attend.

The Conference will be held at Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham, on Saturday January 23 1982 from 10.30 to 5.00 pm. Conference fee will be £1.



Cowley bosses retreat

BL management in Cowley have again drawn back from implementing a Longbridge-type cut in relief allowance. In the Assembly Plant management backed off their January 11 deadline when faced with mass meeting decisions to cut the working day and night by 15 minutes.

They are now negotiating with officials to seek a possible new formula to fund the 39 hour week.

In the Body Plant management backed off a new deadline for implementation last Monday when key production sections voted to strike if the deadline was implemented.

BILL PETERS

SOCIALIST ORGANISER MEETINGS AND FORUMS

LAMBETH: Sundays at 7pm. For venue phone 609 3071.

Jan.31: Stalinism.
Feb.28: The origins of the Labour Party.

NORTH WEST LONDON. 'Organise the Left', with speakers Merle Amory (Brent councillor), Rachel Lever (CLPD Exec.), and Steve Marsling (Asst. Sec. Bermondsey CLP). Tuesday January 26, 7.30 at Kent Room, Anson Hall, Anson Rd, London NW2.

LEICESTER: 7.30 Sundays at the Socialist Centre.
Jan.24: Poland.

LEIGH: Every other Sunday 7.30 at the White Lion (opposite the market).
Jan.24: Iran — what's happened and what's happening now?
Feb.7: Women's liberation

Fen.21: Afghanistan and the Soviet invasion.

ISLINGTON: Every other Thursday, 7.30 at the Florence, Florence St.
Jan.21: Support Solidarnosc
Feb.4: What is Trotskyism?

WALLASEY: Monday January 25, 7.30 at Wallasey Labour Club. Winnie Murphy on 'The Fight for Union Democracy'.

Socialist Organiser Delegate Meeting: Saturday Jan.30, 11am to 5pm in Birmingham. For details phone 021-471 1964.

MARXISM

London Workers' Socialist League classes on basic Marxism: alternate Fridays, next class January 22 on the Communist Manifesto. For details of registration and venue, write to PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

'The Socialist Society' foundation conference, January 23-24, Institute of

Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1. More details c/o 7 Carlisle St, London W1V 6NL.

IRELAND

Glasgow Labour Committee on Ireland are showing 'Ireland's Hunger Strike', a video made in April 1981, followed by discussion. Sunday January 24, 2.30 at Queen Margaret Building, Glasgow University.

Labour Committee on Ireland: AGM, Saturday February 6, from 10am at Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham. Voting restricted to LCI members paid up for 1981 by January 6, 1982: conference fee £1.50.

Labour Movement conference on Ireland: Saturday February 27, from 11am at The Theatre, 309 Regent St, London W1. Sponsored by LCI and Committee for Withdrawal from Ireland. Credentials £2 from 1 North End Road, London W14.

TRADE UNIONS

CoHSE Broad Left inaugural meeting. Saturday January 23, 12 to 4 at UMIST, Sackville St, Manchester.

Manchester anti-cuts committee: meeting January 27, 7.30, Milton Hall, Deansgate.

Media Freedom and the Right of Reply: conference organised by the Campaign for Press Freedom, 10 to 5, Saturday March 6, at Queen Mary College, Mile End Road, London E1.

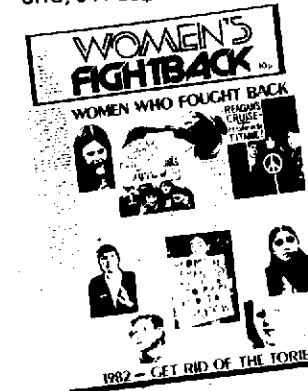
TUC Education Course meeting: Sue Bradbury on Women, Work and Health. 7.30, January 26, at South Cheshire College, Danebank Ave, Crewe. Further info: Mick Williams, Crewe 69133 x 28.

WOMEN

Action Committee for a Woman's Right to Work organising conference: Feb.20, University of

London Union, Malet St, London WC1. Registration £3 (or £1.50 unwaged) from WRTW, 181 Richmond Rd, London E8.

Sexual Politics conference: Feb.6-7, at Edinburgh University. Sponsored by NUS Scotland. Open to all interested. Starts 10.30am Saturday. More details from Glasgow School of Art SRC, 041 332 0691.



ANTI-FASCISM

Brons out... now! Andrew Brons, NF chairman and politics lecturer at Harrogate College FE. Anti-fascist demonstration assemblies college main building, 12.30, Wednesday January 27. Details, Nick 0904 56603.

POLAND

Poland Solidarity Committee, Glasgow: demonstration, Saturday January 23, 1.30 from Queen Margaret Drive. Rally 3pm at Partick Burgh Halls: speakers, member of Solidarnosc, John Maxton MP, Dennis Canavan MP, Helen Monaghan, Jimmy Reid and others. End Martial Law! Free all Polish political prisoners! Free trade unions, East and West!

IRAN

Demonstrate against torture and executions in Iran: Saturday January 23, 1pm from Hyde Park. Called by Iran Solidarity.

WHAT'S ON

Ads for Socialist Organiser events and many campaigns are carried free. Paid ads: 5p per word, £4 per column inch. Send to: Socialist Organiser (What's On), 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

MASSEYS VOTE TO BLACK POLISH PARTS

by Alexis Carras

WORKERS at the Massey Ferguson plant in Coventry have voted unanimously to black all components coming from Poland.

The recommendation was put by the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee to mass meetings of three thousand on the day shift and several hundred on the night shift.

The meetings were addressed by Piotr Kozłowski, who was Solidarnosc convenor in the maintenance section of the giant Ursus tractor plant outside Warsaw. Kozłowski is a member of the London-based Solidarity Trade Union working group, a group of Solidarnosc members forced to remain in Britain by repression in Poland.

The press release put out by the Massey Ferguson shop stewards states that: "We are not prepared to fit or handle components that come at the point of a gun".

Although no deadline has been established to start the blacking, negotiations are now to begin with the management to force them to find alternative sources of supply.

This is the type of direct action and class solidarity — contrasting with the hypocritical and warmongering sanctions of Reagan — which is needed to help our brothers and sisters in Poland.

It is a lead which should be followed in the entire British labour movement.

The Polish experience has shown that the working class in the Stalinist states, given half a chance, will bolt at breakneck speed out of the state-controlled unions which are supposed to represent their interests. The brutal military takeover has also shaken prev-

ious ideas and prejudices about the 'socialist' nature of the Stalinist states.

Rather than offer moral support and credibility to the police-state unions, our solidarity must be for the working class and the resistance to the military regime in Poland.

The British TUC has finally announced that it will break off relations with the East German 'TUC', whose craven support for Jaruzelski was too shocking even for Len Murray. This must be repeated with the other Stalinist states.

We must press the TUC to take the example of the Massey Ferguson workers as the basis for a nationwide — and Europe-wide — labour movement boycott and isolation of the Jaruzelski dictatorship, in solidarity with the Polish workers.

Solidarity groups for Solidarnosc throughout Europe are also planning a day of action on January 30. Details in next week's Socialist Organiser.

TUC against action on Tebbit law

by Martin Thomas



COORDINATED trade union action across whole industries if a single employer sues a union for damages; TUC withdrawal from the NEDC.

Not ultra-militant — but these proposals from the GMWU and the TGWU would at least give a start

from which to fight for a policy of TUC non-collaboration with the Tories and strike action to defeat the Tebbit Bill.

Yet while the Tories press ahead, expecting to have the Bill drafted in a week or so, and law by mid-summer, Len Murray's staff are trying to hold back the unions even from the GMWU and TGWU proposals. A publicity campaign is all they want.

The TUC employment, policy and organisation committee is meeting this Wednesday, 20th, as we go to press, to decide. Then there

will be a conference of union executives in March.

SOGAT is also proposing that the TUC take powers to instruct unions to act in defence of unions attacked under the Tebbit Law, and that a central fund be set up to help them financially.

SOGAT leader Bill Keys told the Observer: "We shall be mobilising the whole movement in opposition to these laws and we should be prepared to defy the law".

But AUEW leader Terry Duffy is calling for... a joint campaign with employers against the Bill! "We feel that they have a bigger infl-

uence than we have in urging the Government to change from a course that will undoubtedly lead to confrontation", said Duffy.

The Tebbit Bill in fact reflects closely the wishes and interests of the employers. As well as attacking the closed shop, reducing legal protection against victimisations, and outlawing 'union labour only' contracts, it would make union funds liable for damages for much industrial action.

Exactly what industrial action would put trade union funds at risk depends on the judges' interpretat-

ions. But for sure a great deal of routine, normal trade union action could lead to injunctions and then court cases and crippling fines.

And the real or pretended fear of such legal action would be used by union leaders to stifle even further the struggles and protests of the rank and file.

Rank and file trade unionists must raise the call for trade unions and the TUC to break collaboration and organise for such action now — before the TUC fixes its policy as one of passive and powerless protest.

TV UNMASKS POLICE PREJUDICE ON RAPE

THIS WEEK's 'Police' programme on the Thames Valley constabulary's treatment of a rape victim shows that fictional programmes like 'The Sweeney' are not far from the mark in their portrayal of police violence.

The Thames Valley constabulary may not have been physically violent, but they left Reagan and Carter stand-

ing when it came to psychological hammering.

A woman had claimed she had been forced into the back of a van by three men, driven to a house, then forced to have sex with all of them under the threat of being cut up and thrown in the river if she did not cooperate.

Within minutes of the

start of the programme, it was obvious that the police had decided that it was not a 'serious' allegation. They had decided that she was of dubious psychiatric background (she had had a nervous breakdown and been treated in the psychiatric hospital following her divorce), and that she had obviously tactically agreed — implying that she either didn't know her own mind or couldn't say no anyway.

They therefore proceeded to undermine her and force her to drop the charges.

Their lines of argument were that it didn't really happen like she said, because she must have agreed to go with the men; or that, whether or not it happened, she did not want to press charges because she would not have gone to the police if her boyfriend had not told her to. She didn't want to go through the hassle of the court proceedings.

The last argument was the one that wore her down, and she dropped the charges.

The police gave an example of some of the worst of the things that are wrong with our society's attitude to women, and how the police are there to protect property and not people.

Barrage

One of them said it was just one of those things that happened, but she could get over it if she was strong enough. Very few women are strong enough to go through a police barrage alone after rape, and still come out willing to fight for the charges to be pressed.

Another CID man said he thought she had agreed to go back for coffee, and things just got out of hand. If I had agreed to a cup of coffee, and ended up being forced to have sexual inter-

course with three men, I would say that things had more than got out of hand!

If a man had gone to the police saying he had gone for coffee with three people and been robbed under the threat of being knifed, they would not have said things had got out of hand and he had tacitly agreed. But women are worth less than property in our society.

Guilty

The programme ended with a superior, who had not been involved, saying, 'That's the second this month that's ended like that'. And the CID man involved said, 'In all my years only one hasn't. And that one turned out to be someone she knew, so no thing came of it' (if you know the man, it obviously can't be rape!)

The basis of their attitude was that women often lie, they are unstable, and women are guilty by being there.

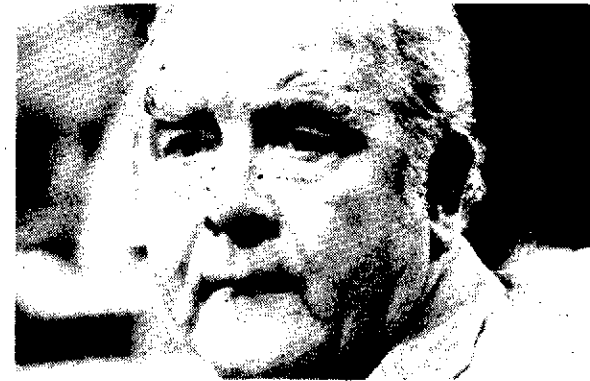
Midlands retreat

by Dave Spencer (West Midlands county councillor)

BUS FARES in the West Midlands will go up by 70 per cent from March 1st.

The flat rate 2p child fare is to be abolished, and plans for free travel for the unemployed will be ditched.

The 74-strong Labour group decided these drastic measures with only 7 votes against after legal advice that their cheap fares policy was probably unlawful. They caved in before even knowing the result of the court case brought against us by Solihull Tory council.



One vote saves Gormley

As we go to press, the final figures of the NUM pay ballot are not known.

But the extensive 'leaked' figures from the supposedly secret poll suggest that the Executive has failed to secure the necessary 55 per cent for a

strike vote.

What is known is that Joe Gormley has narrowly escaped a censure vote of the union's executive for his public attacks on the strike call.

Yet probably more significant than Gormley's article in the Daily Express [for which he was paid at least £5000] was his advance work in sabotaging the strike against an offer which he long ago accepted.

He made no secret of the fact that he deliberately left talks in abeyance until after the settlement of the BL claim, due at the same time as the NUM.

And the miners' vote proper also took place in the shadow of the official betrayal of the Ford pay struggle.

The miners are thus paying the price not simply for Gormley but for the bankruptcy of the whole official leadership of the unions.

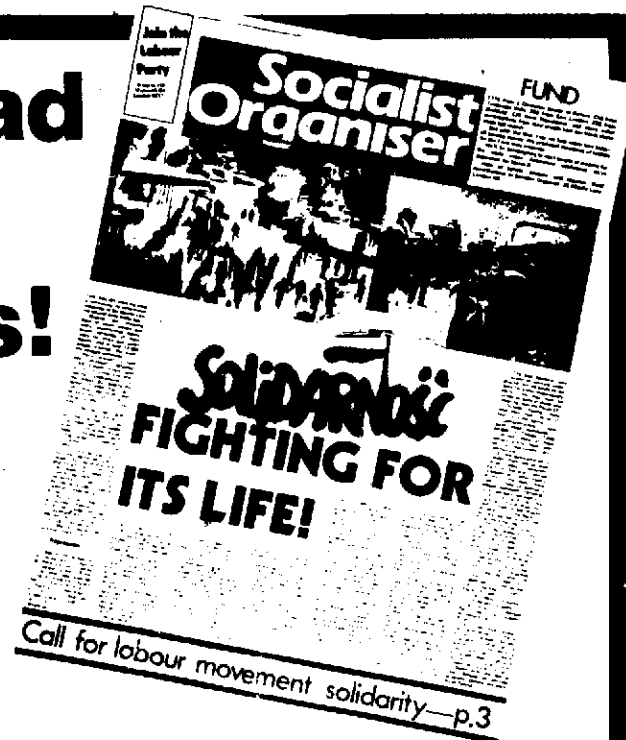
A fuller analysis of the ballot result will appear in next week's Socialist Organiser.

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