

**Join the
Labour
Party**

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AFTER last week's good total of £308, this week's post has been disappointing. In donations and supporters' regular contributions, we have received: Leicester, £3; Shetland, £25; East London, £33.40; Wantage, £10; Oxford, £3; Islington £1.

The total is £75.40. It's nowhere near enough—and, what's more, it is extremely galling for us to sit glumly over the account books and hear that £4 million has been sent in to help Freddie Laker.

Address: Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance * AGAINST ALL BANS AND PROSCRIPTIONS

REAGAN BUDGET ATTACK

President Reagan has drawn up yet another package of draconian attacks against the working class at home and abroad in his latest budget.

His plans involve an 18% increase in defence spending to finance the biggest-ever peacetime build-up in armaments.

All other government spending is to be heavily cut—by an overall total of 16.5%.

Once again prime candidates for cuts are the poorest sections of American workers—the unemployed and low paid who receive food stamps, welfare payments or housing assistance.

Meanwhile even sections of employers are profoundly uneasy at Reagan's budget which as a result of its huge arms allocation projects a deficit of \$91 billion.

Next week's Socialist Organiser will carry a closer analysis of the implications of Reagan's economics.

STRIKE OVER KILLING

THE non-racial unions in South Africa have called a national half-hour stoppage this Thursday in protest at the death in jail of union leader Neil Aggett.

Aggett was a white official of the non-racial Food and Canning Workers' Union, part of the biggest non-racial union group, FOSATU. Apartheid police chiefs said that he hanged himself in his cell while under detention without trial.

But union officials give no credit to this tale. "Neil died because of his outstanding work for our union and for the unity of all workers", said a colleague.

The national strike reflects the growing strength of the non-racial unions, which operate with the most scanty legal rights. Official figures show 342 strikes in 1981, an increase of 65% over the previous year.

The police murder of Aggett illustrates the vicious response of the apartheid state, also shown in its proposals last week for new press laws. These proposals—empowering the government to set up a register of journalists and strike off those it does not like—have been condemned even by the right wing Afrikaans press.

JOBS CRISIS: OUR ANSWER

Freddie Laker is doing OK. He still has his millions, and as soon as he likes he can be back in some better line of profit-making.

Laker's 2,600 workers never had much: no union, poverty-line wages, no sick pay, no pensions, and enforced early retirement. Now they have nothing—no jobs, and, for many of them, little chance of getting jobs.

But that's always how it is when the miracle breaks down by which the murky water of private rapacity is supposed to be changed into the wine of public benefit.

Comedy

As the official jobless figures go over three million, the rich stay rich. All they need to do is shift their activities to City speculation or overseas investment.

It will not cause Rupert Murdoch more than a shrug of regret if he sticks to his bluff and shuts down the Times and the Sunday Times. For 2,600 workers it will mean the bleakness of the dole.

Sacking 1,000 workers in Burnley is simply a necessary adjustment to their money-making for the bosses of Lucas Aerospace.

The black comedy of pensioners sending pound notes to Laker, and some of his workers offering to take social security wages, shows a desperate wish for the alchemy of the free market to work, a grotesque hope that perhaps a few pounds' charity can get capitalism thriving again.

But the accountants just snicker in derision as they survey the airline's £270 million debts.

Putty

And there is less and less welfare-state putty to plug the cracks. With the new appointment of a hard-line Thatcherite to head the Manpower Services Commission, the drive will be stepped up for the young unemployed to accept being cheap casual labour—or else.

The system of production for profit offers us nothing but increasing chaos. But, especially in the last



Leyland Vehicles mass meeting decides to fight on

month or so, many groups of workers have started to fight back.

240 officers and crew occupying the Senlac ferry in Newhaven have won a victory. Last Friday, 5 February, Sealink dropped its plans to end the service. Talks were started on reopening it, with the officers and crew maintaining their occupation to be sure of a satisfactory conclusion.

Earlier they had been helped by supporting strike action by the Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association in other ports.

300 workers at Plessey, Bathgate, are also occupying to save their jobs—and are defying a court order to

quit. Vehicles workers in Lancashire and at Bathgate, Scotland, are on strike to save jobs and defeat Michael Edwardes' corporate plan, even though the LV leadership is resisting all pressure to broaden the struggle to BL Cars, where workers are equally affected by the same Edwardes plan.

Each sit-in poses in a practical manner the question of who is the boss of the factory: the capitalist or the workers?

It raises the question of which will prevail: the drive to profit, which makes workers' livelihoods so many

corks tossed around by the convulsions of capitalism, or the right to work.

Workers demanding the right to work are seizing the means of production and insisting that their use should no longer be governed on the profit drive, but should be organised on the basis of defending jobs.

A fight on the broadest scale for work-sharing, under workers' control and with no loss of pay, is what is needed to enforce this.

That fight starts with support for the existing struggles, especially against the courts and the bailiffs, and opposition to the efforts by the misleaders of the labour movement to isolate



Laker: laughing all the way to the bank

them. But it must not stop short of the nationalisation of the banks and major industries to provide the basis for a genuine socialist alternative.

To raise the struggle to the level where it can come to grips with the chaos of capitalism, and the disaster of three million unemployed, we need to restructure and reorientate the labour movement so that it is capable of asserting working class economic regulation over the whole productive wealth of society.

Limp

Another Labour govern-

ment making limp attempts to soften the damage is no alternative to the rampant Tories. We need a government accountable to the labour movement and willing and able to defeat the capitalists—a workers' government. Only the fight for a labour movement with new structures, new leadership and new policies, capable of enforcing such a workers' government, can offer a perspective to the growing jobs resistance.

It is to discuss these questions that Socialist Organiser is sponsoring a major trade union conference—'Democratise the Labour Movement'—on April 3. Details, page 15.

BL: Vehicles struggle stays solid but Cars support blocked; background to the betrayals
—Centre pages

British Rail: Truth behind the 'line closures' blackmail; Why is Foot silent?
—page 7

Abortion rights: the Tories try to outlaw the 'social' grounds on which 80% of abortions are approved.
—page 6

Wilson-Rowntree: where black South African workers have been on strike for 12 months.
—page 4

Trade union democracy: the truth about TASS; and our plans for a conference.
—page 13

LABOUR PARTY

Labour Liaison '82 -failing the test?

Preparing for the '82 Conference

DESPITE roads like glaciers and British Rail's intransigence, CLPD supporters all over Britain converged on six centres during January.

The aim was to deepen support for CLPD's ongoing campaigns and improve our effective organisation at regional level.

Attendances were obviously not what they might have been in a strike-free June, but there was generally a very useful coming together of trade union and constituency activists, involving without discrimination both veterans and newcomers, bureaucrats and rank and file.

Neglected

The campaigns to demoralise the PLP and abolish 'shortlists of one' proved uncontroversial, though it was recognised that an enormous amount of work has still to be done if even such non-contentious issues as these are actually to secure a Party Conference majority in eight months' time.

The search for Party unity against witch hunts also evoked general solidarity, although not everyone has yet been as publicly vocal in defence of Militant and Hornsey as they have been (apart from some of those with power) in defence of Bermondsey.

CLPD's campaign to

Francis Prideaux reports on the CLPD's recent regional conferences

support the Hammersmith North amendment on Local Government Democracy ran into predictable criticism that it doesn't go far enough, but there was a general realisation that it should be supported as a significant step forward. More welcome still, a number of comrades at the London meeting volunteered to give this somewhat neglected subject more attention.

CLPD's proposals for positive discrimination ran into considerable criticism at both Birmingham and York, not least from a member of the Labour Party's current Women's Advisory Committee. The proposals were variously criticised, both on the grounds that they went too far and also on the grounds that they didn't go far enough.

There is clearly a massive job to be done if anything is to be won at this year's Conference, but the tide is slowly turning in the face of sustained pressure from those most affected. Even greater pressure will no doubt be needed if, as demanded at the Liverpool and Edinburgh meetings, positive discrimination is

Campaign for



Democracy

also to be won for black people.

CLPD's proposal to take 'at least 25' companies into public ownership also met criticism on the grounds that it didn't go far enough, but most people took the view that it was actually winnable in 1982 and therefore emphatically worth working on.

The need for public ownership to be accompanied by democratically accountable management was strongly stressed on more than one occasion.

The view was strongly put at the London meeting that the CLPD Executive was not working hard enough to build left unity with other RFMC organisations or applying sufficient pressure on Tony Benn and Norman Atkinson to stand again for the positions of Deputy Leader and Treasurer.

The meetings all provided useful feedback and, above all, a chance to plan practical organisation for



Norman Atkinson

this year's round of trade union and Regional Party conference.

A powerful imprint on the agenda of at least one such conference followed the Cardiff meeting in particular. Similar initiatives must be made and sustained on every other front also. Otherwise we'll lose.

[Offers of help and donations, please, to CLPD, 10 Park Drive, London NW11 7SH].

Graham Bash from London Labour Briefing discusses the January 23 meeting of left activists in Labour Liaison 82.

THE Labour Liaison 82 meeting on January 23 certainly failed to reflect chairperson Norman Atkinson's assertion that we were entering "the most critical period for the Left this century". There were, no doubt, a number of interesting and useful contributions from the delegates present. But the test of any structure is what it actually does, and judging from the first meeting, the signs are not encouraging.

This was probably inevitable for two reasons. Firstly it was made clear from the very beginning that Labour Liaison 82 was not a new organisation, but rather an "operation link", to use Norman Atkinson's words.

Secondly, without any focus as yet for a direct challenge to the Party leadership, the specific content of last year's Rank and File Mobilising Committee campaign was missing.

Tony Benn himself made it clear that he "wished to reassure those who had doubts" that at Bishop Stortford "no assurances were sought or given. I was not in a position to bargain away the rights of the movement".

But he too justified a low

key approach. "The TUC and Labour Party conferences have majoritised our view. Why minoritise ourselves?" he asked.

In the light of the witch-hunts in which the leadership have made no signs of retreat, we may well ask just where is our majority in the Parliamentary Party and on the NEC. The one matter in which some specific form of action seems possible was organising now for the NEC elections in October. It is hoped that Labour Liaison 82 will give a lead in coordinating a proper slate for all sections of the NEC. For, failing this, it may well be that local groups will have to take the initiative themselves.

NEC FACES BOTH WAYS

THE Labour Party National Executive Committee meeting on February 24 will be recommended by the Organisation Sub-committee to endorse the selection of Pat Wall as parliamentary candidate in Bradford North.

Ben Ford, the sitting MP, raged: "I regard this as a crunch issue, on which the party leadership must marshal its forces or suffer a humiliating defeat." Ford, notorious as a friend of

many right wing dictatorships around the world, has been trying to rally support on the grounds that Wall is a Militant supporter.

Thin

But even Organisation Sub-committee right wingers John Golding and Alan Hadden only ventured to propose that the selection be re-run because of alleged irregularities—which the

Organisation Sub-committee found "rather thin".

Peter Tatchell in Bermondsey, however, remains non-endorsed.

The Organisation Sub-committee on Monday 8th also heard that Southwark Labour Party had backed down and conceded a demand from the NEC that eight right wingers should be reinstated on its list from which wards can select council candidates.

Save cheap Tube

Buccaneer!

by Peter McIntyre

MESSAGES of sympathy and thousands of offers of financial help were pouring in last night to save a national hero from collapse.

Sir Ken Livingstone was said to be overcome by the public reaction to the news that his pioneering tube service had ground to a halt.

As the man who brought cheap tube travel to millions announced he had failed to save his famous red and silver trains from the knackers yard, Mrs Thatcher said she was choked at the

collapse. From Chesham to Barking, from Ongar to Richmond and from High Barnet to Wimbledon thousands of ordinary people were reaching into their pockets to save the stricken subterranean service.

"If we each gave 20p every time we got on a train maybe we could save it, wept one 86 year old pensioner."

One school child aged no more than six arrived at the GLC headquarters clutching her piggy bank. "It's for you, Ken", she said thrusting it into his hands before disappearing into the morning crowd.

One train was halted in the tunnel between Willesden Junction and Harlesden when the fateful news broke. The guard announced over the intercom "I have some bad news for you. We have to go back."

The passengers, their journeys to Kenton and Hatch End ruined, were shocked.

Then a wino travelling in the corner of the compartment opened his cider bottle and passed it round. The moist-eyed passengers toasted Sir Ken. A cheer broke out. Someone started singing 'Land of Hope and Glory'. Guards in smart blue uniforms were weeping with their arms round passengers at the ticket offices. "We know nothing, love" said one ticket collector. But the crowd were not angry or impatient.

Silently they began pressing 50ps, £1 notes or £1 million into a hat being passed round—whatever they, the ordinary chap in the street could afford to keep Sir Ken afloat.

"He'll be back" shouted one ordinary eccentric millionaire pressing £100,000 into the porter's hand.

Sir Ken took on the big boys of the establishment and lost. People who had never travelled on a tube before enjoyed the experience for the first time in their life. They visited exotic faraway places. People flew all the way from America so they could fly on the Heathrow to Earls Court service.

But the giants were out to get him. And the Lords of Travel put the word out. They pulled the rug from under his feet with a vicious cartel which forced prices up.

Deep down

The news was broken to Mrs Thatcher during a cabinet meeting by the underground minister Iain Sproat. The cabinet stood in one minute's silence. Mrs Thatcher said:

"Ken Livingstone was one of the finest men this country has produced. He wanted ordinary people to be able to live and work in London. His business may have gone but his name will live on."

Last night tributes continued to flood in. And the ordinary small merchant banker was still mailing off the couple of grand that might make the difference between survival and defeat.

Staff were planning a march to the Stock Exchange to ask big hearted Stock Brokers to contribute to the funds. Despite everything, deep down in the tunnels underneath London things are looking up for Sir Ken.

FIGHTING RACISM

Lilli Luczak, a Canadian woman threatened with deportation together with her six year old daughter Jessica, appeals for support

I AM a 28 year old secretary, a Canadian citizen, who has lived in London for more than eight years. I have a six-year old daughter, Jessica, who was born in this country, and although I have been trying very hard to stay here permanently as a



single woman in my own right, the Home Office have refused. Now, it seems my time is up and I must go.

Although I have no legal grounds to remain here, I do have compassionate reasons, namely that without a home, family, friends, a job and without any money, Jessica and I would have no chance of living a normal life. Everything I have is here. But the Home Office seem very willing to throw out a British subject, that is Jessica, for the sake of some 'bureaucratic principle' or alternatively, a separation of a mother from her child is also in order.

The thing that sickens me most, is that the Home Office were willing to oblige me with an extension while I was living with Jessie's father, but not when I was on my own. As a single parent, I have to work doubly hard for my little girl's happiness, but in the eyes of the authorities my value as a person is diminished because I am no longer

living with a man. A man against whom I was forced to take out a non-molestation order. The fact that I never married him, was for me personally, a saving grace.

Outcast

Immigration Control is holding my passport and I am just 'hanging on' now waiting for a decision from the Minister of State. It is nerve-racking and humiliating and I might as well have been a criminal, gone into hiding, or told the Home Office a lot of lies. I would be treated in the same way. They have not even allowed me an extension of leave while my case is pending. Why, may I ask would I have left the country and come back in, (I went to Germany for one week last December), had I wanted to stay here wilfully? It just doesn't make sense.

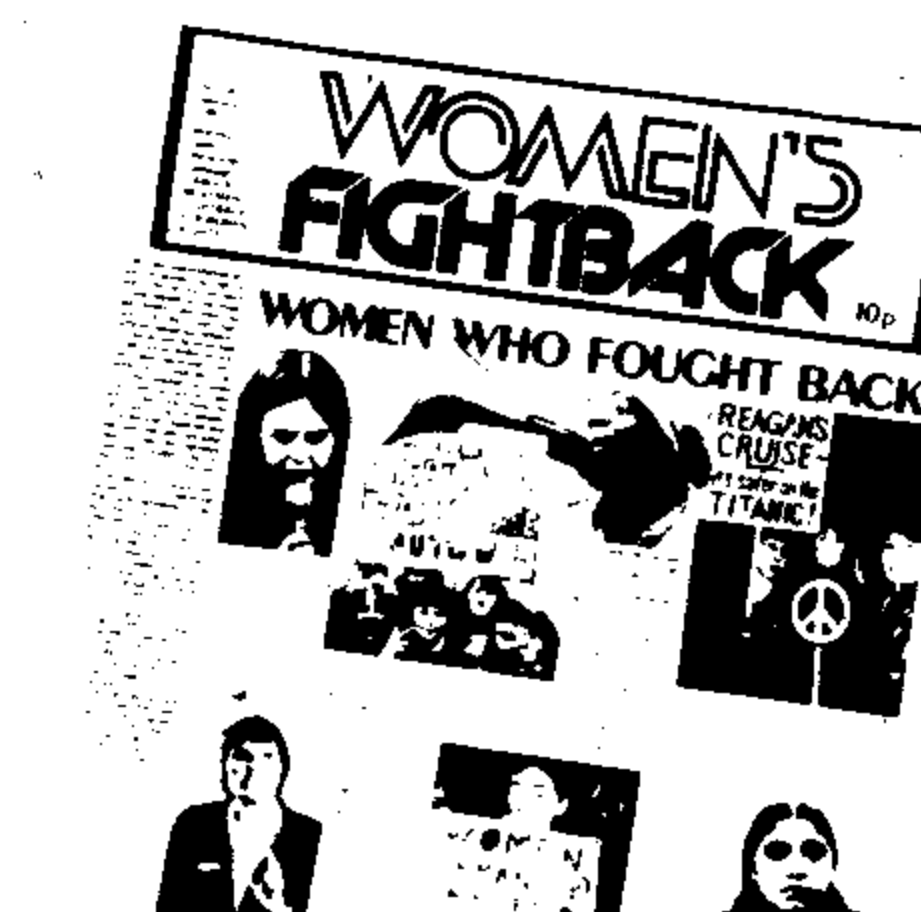
I do feel that I am not just another immigration case. Mine may not be a big

enough story to open a Parliamentary enquiry into the immigration laws of this country (as the recent rape cases are doing for the rape laws), but I've come this far and I'm not going to stop now. Had I not gone to the press in the first place, the deportation order I'm now being threatened with would have come through, and Jessica and I would have been physically removed from this country.

I don't know what will become of us if we are sent back to Canada. The best the Canadian authorities could do for us is to place Jessie in a foster home. To be destitute in a country like Canada means you are a social outcast because it reminds people of what they hate and fear most.

Decent

I desperately need public support and in particular from women who know what it's like to be up against a chauvinistic society



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**Socialist
Organiser
EDITORIAL**

SDP union-bashers; but what about Labour's right-wing?

"DON'T shoot the pianist — he's only doing his best!" — that is the gist of one strand of the limited criticisms of Norman Tebbit's anti-union Bill voiced by the SDP.

The pianist in this case is the TUC bureaucracy, whose struggles to curb and defuse the militancy of their members many SDP defectors have long admired.

But this is not an unanimous view in the SDP. Many MPs and the bulk of its middle-class members are so rabidly anti-union that they would criticise Tebbit's Bill because it stops short at shooting the pianist and fails to line up the whole orchestra before a firing squad.

One SDP proposal — compulsory arbitration in all wage disputes — amounts to illegalising all strikes!

But a more 'pro-union' representative, Brian Capstick, argued in Monday's Times:

"... by aiming, as Mr Len Murray put it, 'at the

heart' of the union movement, the Government is striking at the wrong organ. The heart of the trade union movement is a sclerotic but generally responsible affair..."

"The real mischief in industrial relations is wrought not by the heart but by the arms and legs of the trade union movement, the local groups of activists and militant shop stewards... Mr Tebbit's Bill will do nothing to restrain their activity and may even encourage it."

"One life-line which besieged employers have relied upon in the past is the (diminishing) influence which full-time union officials may bring to bear on shop-floor mavericks but, by putting union funds at risk through the activities of full-time officials, the Bill may force them to retire from the scene..."

The less hysterically anti-union elements of the SDP therefore see the task as retaining a working relationship with the bureaucracy along the well-trod lines of the 'social contract' under Wilson and

Callaghan, while supporting Tory measures to weaken shop floor action and restrict the right to strike.

For Tebbit's blunderbuss, they propose to substitute an Armatite rifle pointed at the union rank and file.

Thatcher, on the other hand, has learned from nearly three years of TUC retreats and betrayals that the pianists and fiddlers of Congress House will make stumbling attempts at playing almost any tune she cares to demand.

January alone brought the Tebbit proposals, unemployment figures topping three million, and renewed signs of a tenacious fight against redundancies and closures.

But from the TUC bureaucracy came only the jarring notes of surrender and class collaboration.

Len Murray struck up a hopeful wedding march, elaborating TUC plans not to fight Tebbit but to seek a new 'social contract' — with Thatcher! Bill

Sirs played a lament for Shirley — floating plans for a Labour /SDP coalition. Sid Weighell bashed out a reverse quickstep — sticking the knife into the back of the ASLEF strikers. And the NGA's Joe Wade tried his hand at 'We'll meet again', accompanying job-slasher Rupert Murdoch, to the horror of his members.

But while this cacophony is coming from the TUC bureaucrats, there is a haunting silence from the labour movement's windsection. The Shadow Cabinet is preoccupied with its own attempts to crush those same rank and file militants which the SDP finds so objectionable.

Labour representatives have of course gloated over the much-advertised divisions in the SDP over Tebbit's Bill.

But now is the time to demand that our leaders follow our baton, not that of the Thatcher government. It is time that the workers who pay these pianists and pipers got to call the tune.

Can censorship help liberate women?

by Ann Evans

REG RACE achieved a mild notoriety last Wednesday when he added another word to the list of 'unparliamentary' expressions. The poor man was only quoting from a book found in a sex shop, but as Speaker George Thomas pointed out, none of us would say 'fuck' in our own homes.

The absurdity of this little incident obscured an important decision taken unanimously in Parliament: a decision to introduce licensing laws to cover sex shops. Not many laws are passed unanimously, and the fact that left-wingers like Reg Race were in complete agreement with the government should give us cause for thought.

The reasons given by Race were very different from the reasons of Tory backwoodsmen, and the result was a curious alliance of feminist-influenced progressives and the most reactionary characters who think

sex shops epitomise all the degeneracy of the 'permissive society'.

Race supported the proposal because:

"Sex shops portray women as simply available for sex, as mindless bodies with no views of their own and no position in life other than as sex objects to be used for the pleasure of men. I reject that completely."

No doubt we would all agree with that assessment of pornography, but is it a reason to introduce censorship and state control on sex shops? Sex shops, it should be pointed out, not only sell 'pornography' but also sex aids which many people (men and women) find useful or necessary for sexual fulfilment.

Apparently, local authorities, who will issue licenses, will not be able to ban sex shops altogether, but they will be able to say no to particular sex shops in particular areas—which could prob-

ably amount to the same thing.

Such state control, like the obscenity laws, is not a step towards the liberation of women. On the contrary, it is a further step in the repression of open sexuality—a step backwards.

Women suffered most under Victorian sexual morality. Unless they were among the many thousands of prostitutes, they were denied any sexual feelings at all. Gay men and lesbians also have a lot to lose from the gradual moves we are now seeing of sexuality being pushed back into the closet.

Liberals

Since we live under a male-dominated society almost all erotic literature or pornography (however we define these) uses women in the way Reg Race described. So for that matter does a great deal of mainstream literature, the popular press, advertisements and so on. We have to challenge this, show how misogynist and male-dominated ideas and images are put across, but censorship is no answer.

If Lady Chatterley's Lover were on trial now, and the criterion by which it were to be judged were the feminist-type arguments used against modern pornography, the book would certainly be condemned. If any novel describes sexuality from an entirely male point of view, this is it.

In the 1970s obscenity laws were relaxed, and liberals were generally in favour of eroding censorship. We are now in a period when this libertarianism is being reversed, with Sainsbury's Bill coming into force last year, and now restrictions on sex shops.

It is no coincidence that censorship is being introduced at the same time as a revival of the ideology of the family, attacks on abortion and on working mothers. Women have nothing to gain by it. Unfortunately, now the liberals are on the side of censorship.

Psychology of SDP recruits

by Gerry Byrne

"Depressed, disillusioned individual, lacking self-esteem seeks young, smartly dressed, well-educated, dynamic party with view to future government. No politics please"—sounds like one of the more desperate entries in a lonely hearts column.

In fact it sums up how potential SDP voters see the party and themselves according to two "in-depth" studies just published.

The first, by Consumer Insight, looked at how a group of ordinary working class and lower middle class voters in London perceived the SDP-Liberal Alliance and its constituent parties.

Using various projective techniques borrowed from clinical psychology, the

group were asked to indicate how they pictured activists of the Alliance, the SDP and the Liberals.

The SDP, setting the style for the Alliance, was seen as young, glamorous and dynamic, although no-one could positively identify what its policies were, and, in particular, on unemployment which was seen as the major problem facing the country.

This last finding was borne out by the second study by Cooper Research and Marketing (CRAM). They looked at people who had voted SDP in national and local elections, but were not members or activists of the party.

They were found to be positively hostile to the



party developing policies: "Although SDP voters know full well that the movement must eventually stoop to articulating policies, some supporters strenuously reject policies as the language of the SDP", say the researchers. Many "did not want their Peter Pan to grow up."

But perhaps most interesting about this survey was what it revealed about how SDP voters see themselves and their subconscious motives for being drawn to the party.

They presented a bleak picture of depression, lost self-respect, disillusion with their own lives and a sense of remoteness and isolation from the political process. Often expressed was a "jingoistic" wish for a return to good old British values.

While in both cases the samples were very small and the usefulness of this type of

"qualitative" research unproved, it does present a consistent and almost alarming picture (which also tallies with findings of much larger surveys on how far SDP policies are known or seen to be important).

The irrationality in relation to politics, the national chauvinism, the underlying despair and the intense romanticising of the image of the party are all eerily reminiscent of the original attraction of the Nazis, and other fascist parties, between the wars.

It's not that the SDP or its politics are fascist, but that the conditions, both social/economic and psychological, which enabled the rise of fascism, are ripening. Whether the labour movement can respond more adequately this time, is down to the left's will to organise.

PRESS GANG

by Patrick Spilling



"NOT since the siege of Mafeking, or possibly Little Nell's fate dragged out from the installment 'to installment' has the British public followed a sequence of events with such deep and genuine emotional involvement as the fate of Sir Freddie Laker's airline."

That was how the Telegraph, in its solemn manner, summed up the hysteria that surrounded the death of Laker Airways.

Perhaps they talk of little else but Mafeking and Little Nell in Fleet Street bars. If so Mafeking is probably mentioned to ridicule days of the British Empire. Perhaps in years to come Sir Freddie Laker will be the punchline in Thatcher jokes.

Laker himself was cleared by the press of any responsibility for the crash. The Daily Mail said: "It was Margaret Thatcher, the champion of free enterprise who gave the final thumbs

down to Britain's best-loved entrepreneur (but) it was the international airline industry which was responsible for the closure."

"Poor Sir Freddie is the victim of recession, of bad luck—of contracts to pay for his aircraft in dollars made when the pound was high—of his own buoyant optimism, and of the vindictiveness of the big airlines who were out to get him for blowing their cosy price-fixing cartels sky-high."

In fact it was not Laker who pioneered cheap package flights. He used the principle of cheap flights to attack the cartels over the Atlantic. And he was able to do so because he had powerful financial backers who, like Laker, thought that they would make a packet. He was not the David of the popular press against the Goliath of the giant air companies.

The TV news followed the press in portraying Laker as some kind of folk hero. But the TV cameras panning down the lists of subscribers to the Save Laker Fund could not hide the truth. It was not the 'public' coming to Laker's aid at all, but big and small businesses.

The Telegraph reported that one businessman offered £1 million and that fund organisers "were also checking offers of £35 million and £5 million to see on what basis the money was being offered and to ensure the bona fides of the donors".

The Oxford Mail reported that Blackwells, that bastion of anti-trade unionism and Freedom Association-style management—was flying a union jack upside down at half mast. "If Sir Freddie can't fly again, then neither will our flag", said the company.

When the News of the World produced across its front page the banner headline "We Love You, Sir Freddie" it really was speaking for Fleet Street. Behind the razzmatazz there was no space for the 2,500 workers whose jobs are now in jeopardy.

Those who declare themselves ready to work for nothing, and the 200 (who was the general public?) who marched to the Stock Exchange and to Parliament were allowed on stage only as cheerleaders for the absent hero.

As for those poor bemused people who meekly parted with their 50ps and £1 notes to help their hero they may be meek, but they sure won't inherit the earth they won't even inherit the skies.

Advertisement

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World News

Fighting Khomeini's repression

ACT NOW TO BACK S.AFRICAN STRIKERS!

12 month struggle at Wilson-Rowntree

by Colleen Molloy

ONE year on strike: that is the unprecedented extent of the struggle by workers at the Wilson-Rowntree factory in South Africa, organised by the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU).

Despite mass arrests and detentions of SAAWU's membership and its entire leadership by the stooge police of the Ciskei bantustan, the union is growing, galvanising widespread support.

Last November after ten months of a widespread consumer boycott, two SAAWU mass meetings called for a blacking of Rowntree products by railway workers and suppliers.

The company's response was a significant shift from their claim that the strike was over.

Obviously concerned at the potential effects of such a strengthening of SAAWU's action, management offered to take back the strikers as vacancies arose, on condition they joined the company's Sweet Workers Union.

A mass meeting of SAAWU completely rejected this, and reiterated their demand for unconditional reinstatement of their workers, recognition of SAAWU and an end to victimisation and state harassment.

Victory for the workers at Rowntrees is crucial, since SAAWU is spearheading the struggle in South Africa for trade union rights.

Strength

If Rowntrees workers are defeated and the alliance between East London employers, the South African state and the sham "independent" Ciskei authorities succeeds in smashing SAAWU, the struggle for independent trade unions outside the reactionary TUCSA (Trade Union Congress of South Africa) would be a massive setback for black workers in South Africa.

Last week, SAAWU's offices were closed down by the South African and Ciskei

authorities. The mobilisation of the strength of the organised labour movement in Britain is urgent.

Small beginnings towards this were made at a meeting last Saturday 6 February, of Anti-Apartheid Rowntree Activists. They supported a resolution adopted by the Rowntree-Mackintosh Joint Craft Shop Stewards meeting at York last month, which calls for a TUC-convened conference of all shop stewards and officials of all the unions organising in Rowntrees to hear a representative from SAAWU and discuss the ways they can assist.

Workers should pass resolutions on the same lines in the relevant trade union branches (TGWU, GMWU, USDAW, AUEW, EETPU, UCATT).

The meeting also called

for an investigation into the shipment of Lecythin from the UK to Rowntrees in South Africa with a view to organising blacking.

Anti-Apartheid will also produce a broadsheet in conjunction with Rowntrees shop stewards. This can be used as an agitational and educational weapon to inform workers at the Rowntree-Mackintosh plants in the UK and their suppliers such as Metal Box and British Oxygen to provide a network of support.

The possibility of international action through the ISFTU and IUF and their affiliated unions will be investigated.

The meeting deferred a decision to organise jointly with the TUC a week of action (when trade unions could black all movement of Rowntree's products) and a

national demonstration in York where Rowntrees have their headquarters.

These positive moves towards real class solidarity by the meeting was despite attempts by the Anti-Apartheid Executive to go instead for a consumer boycott of Rowntrees. Such a policy would be a dangerous diversion away from international action by the workers' movement—the only source of victory.

Unfortunately the decisions of the meeting have yet to go to the AAM's National Committee. Socialist Organiser supporters should raise these policies for labour movement action in their local AAM groups, and ensure AAM mobilises for them.



According to Tehran Radio, a number of leading members of the People's Mojaheddin have been killed by Khomeini's Revolutionary Guards in Tehran.

Among those killed, was Moussa Khayyabani, in charge of PMOI operations after the flight from Iran of the organisation's leader, Massoud Rajavi. Other victims were Moussa Kayyabani's wife and Massoud Rajavi's wife.

Clearly this represents an important set-back for the PMOI and for the movement of resistance to the Khomeini regime. But it is ridiculous to think, as the government's press statements predict, that these deaths will silence the fight back against the Islamic Republic's butchery.

These deaths are the latest in a long, heroic line of PMOI martyrs. They come almost three years to the day after the same people had risked their lives in the mobilisations that overthrew the Shah.

The most important focus of resistance is the national Council of Resistance, headed by Massoud Rajavi and including Iran's ex-President Bani-Sadr.

The NCR also includes the largest of the Kurdish

organisations, the Kurdistan Democratic Party.

We must support the struggle of the NCR against the government's repression. But the programme and leadership of the NCR aims at best to secure for the Iranian masses a (valuable), brief, democratic interlude after the double carnage of the Shah and Khomeini.

Inevitably the programme of the PMOI and the linking up with Bani-Sadr will hinder the development of a distinct party of the working class, instead tying the masses to sections of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie.

IRANIAN WEEK OF ACTION

4-13 February 1982

Picket and photographic exhibition, 10am-6pm 9 February, Tottenham Court Tube

Fleet Street, Theatre Lane

Victoria 11th and 12th

Demonstration on 13 Feb.

2 pm, Assemble behind

Albert Hall, Rally Trafalgar

Square, 4 pm. Hunger fast—

6 pm, outside UN Information

Office, 14 Stratford Place, W1 (Bond St. tube).

Organised by Muslim

Students Society (Britain)

(supporters of PMOI)

SCOTTISH RALLY

AN open air rally of 100 people held in Edinburgh on 6 February heard Ron Brown MP and Robin Cook MP condemn the torture, executions and general repression being carried out by the Khomeini regime in Iran.

It was the first event to be carried out by the Iran Solidarity (Scotland) and as such proved quite successful.

The rally provided a very effective visual as well as vocal display and many people were attracted to it to sign a petition against the Iranian government.

Messages of solidarity were given by the Turkey Solidarity Campaign and the El Salvador Solidarity Cam-

paign, emphasizing the links between the regimes of all three countries.

In his wind-up speech the chairperson took special care to point out the non-exclusive, non-sectarian nature of the campaign. This was shown by the decision not to make support for the National Council of Resistance of the Mojaheddin and Bani-Sadr a condition of support for Iran Solidarity.

IS (Scotland) will now be furthering its attempt to build support within the Scottish labour movement and working towards a fringe meeting of the Scottish Conference of the Labour Party which will be held jointly with the Turkish Solidarity Committee.

INTERNATIONAL ACTION

El Salvador junta weakened

by Santiago Fortin

OVER THE last two weeks substantial advances by the guerrillas of the FMLN have brought the national liberation struggle in El Salvador to a critical phase in which the Duarte junta and Washington find themselves

faced with the prospect of defeat in the civil war.

The FMLN has broken the year-long military stalemate by consolidating its hold on the key provinces of Chalatenango and Morazan and launching fresh offensives in regions where its presence was previously slight—Usulután in the south and Sonsonate in the west.

The FMLN now has firm control over a quarter of the national territory, and in many regions the army only maintains a precarious hold by supplying its isolated garrisons by air. Its depleted forces are incapable of fielding more than one major operation and are increasingly being forced onto the defensive.

Lying

There was no more striking example of this than the destruction, a fortnight ago, of the bulk of the Salvadorean airforce stationed at Ilopango, 14 miles from the capital. Without air power the regime is gravely weakened in a war where there are no clear lines and mobility is all-important.

The success of the FMLN attack had severe repercussions in Washington, coming a few days after Reagan's unparalleled display of hypocrisy and lying when he

certified the junta's respect for human rights a day after the massacre of nearly 800 civilians by the National Guard appeared in the press.

The destruction of the airforce and the FMLN's advances meant that much of the proposed \$55 million of US aid will have to be spent on replenishing the dictatorship's dwindling stock of weaponry.

The administration's crisis-ridden anti-communist crusade in Central America relies upon a degree of consensus not just to its objectives but also over its means; this it is manifestly losing. The opposition in Congress differs not one jot from Reagan on the need 'to crush communism'; it is increasingly frightened that the tactics being used will

simply fail with disastrous regional consequences.

This fear has now entered the government itself, with the State Department hawks (Haig and Enders) continuing to lurch towards direct intervention with a jingoistic glee while Weinberger and the Pentagon start to back off such a course. They fear—with good reason—that support for the dictatorship without any fallback measure in negotiations with the reformists in the FMLN-FDR will land them in the same situation as in Nicaragua in 1979.

We urge readers to ensure that their union branches and Labour Parties affiliate to the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign, 29 Islington Park Street, London N1.



IN BRIEF

ITALY

During a meeting in Florence of the national councils of the 3 Italian union federations last week, police arrested Luigi Scricciolo, a member of the foreign affairs office of the UIL (the Socialist dominated federation with 8 million members). The police say he is being charged with membership of an "armed group", and with "subversive activities". This is just one more of the growing number of examples of police using anti-terrorist legislation to hit all forms of opposition and struggle against the bosses state. It confirms yet again that the workers movement should oppose the state in any measures it seeks to step up repression—nominally against the Red Brigades and other groups—even though

the actions of these groups are totally incapable of advancing the workers struggle.

COLOMBIA

Workers and militants in this South American state now face a new murdering enemy in addition to the long established forces of the bosses. The new death squad has been set up by a national conference of drug traffickers and gangsters held in December.

These scum of capitalist society have a deep interest in maintaining the status quo—which means holding on to their huge profits. The death squads have been financed with £3 million.

Already they have claimed at least one victim, a union official in the industrial city of Medellini, whose

bullet-ridden body was found dumped on wasteland last month. In recent weeks, two more union officials have disappeared. The bosses, are no doubt very pleased to have another weapon against the oppressed. They and the rotting system which they uphold are facing mounting resistance and struggle.

The country has been under martial law ("state of siege") for 35 years now. In the rural areas, the army is carrying out a campaign of terror—including torture and indiscriminate executions of peasants.

SOUTH KOREA

Last week, the military dictatorship launched a mass arrest operation in the capital Seoul. More than 11,000 people are reported to have been arrested. Accord-

ing to the blood-stained murderers who rule this country, those arrested were "hoodlums, thieves, robbers, delinquents, and traffic violators". These are the lies of a government whose system means terror and poverty for the mass of working people.

To protect the profits and the rule of the capitalists (and especially of the imperialist US and Japanese bosses who have huge stakes in the country), the dictatorship of General Chun needs to arrest thousands and thousands of workers and militants, and throw them into the infamous "re-education" centres.

JAMAICA

The country's crucial bauxite industry has been hit by strikes that have shut down 3 of the 4 refineries.

Crackdown has not cracked Solidarity

by Alexis Carras

"THE ENEMY is not defeated. He continues to show himself... One of our major tasks is to fight against underground activities. Information we have suggests that an organisation is being rebuilt".

That is how the Warsaw chief of the notorious paramilitary militia, the ZOMO, assessed the situation in an interview with the Russian weekly Literaturnaya Gazeta.

It could be a ploy by the more headline elements of the new regime, seeking even greater vengeance.

More likely, however, it represents the truth — that although the military has taken over the country, its ability to continue running it in the face of an alienated and bitterly hostile working class is dubious.

In official jargon — "The Gdansk events show that there are still in Poland forces out to provoke the population, hostile to law and order and to all the efforts aimed at leading the country out of the crisis".

One of the measures aimed at resolving the crisis has been the across-the-board price increases, instituted from February 1st, averaging about 400%



for foodstuffs and 70% for industrial goods.

The bureaucracy has justified these devastating price rises by citing the need to soak up the enormous amount of paper money

in circulation. The rises, it is argued, will stabilise the supply and demand of goods and hence re-value an increasingly worthless Polish currency.

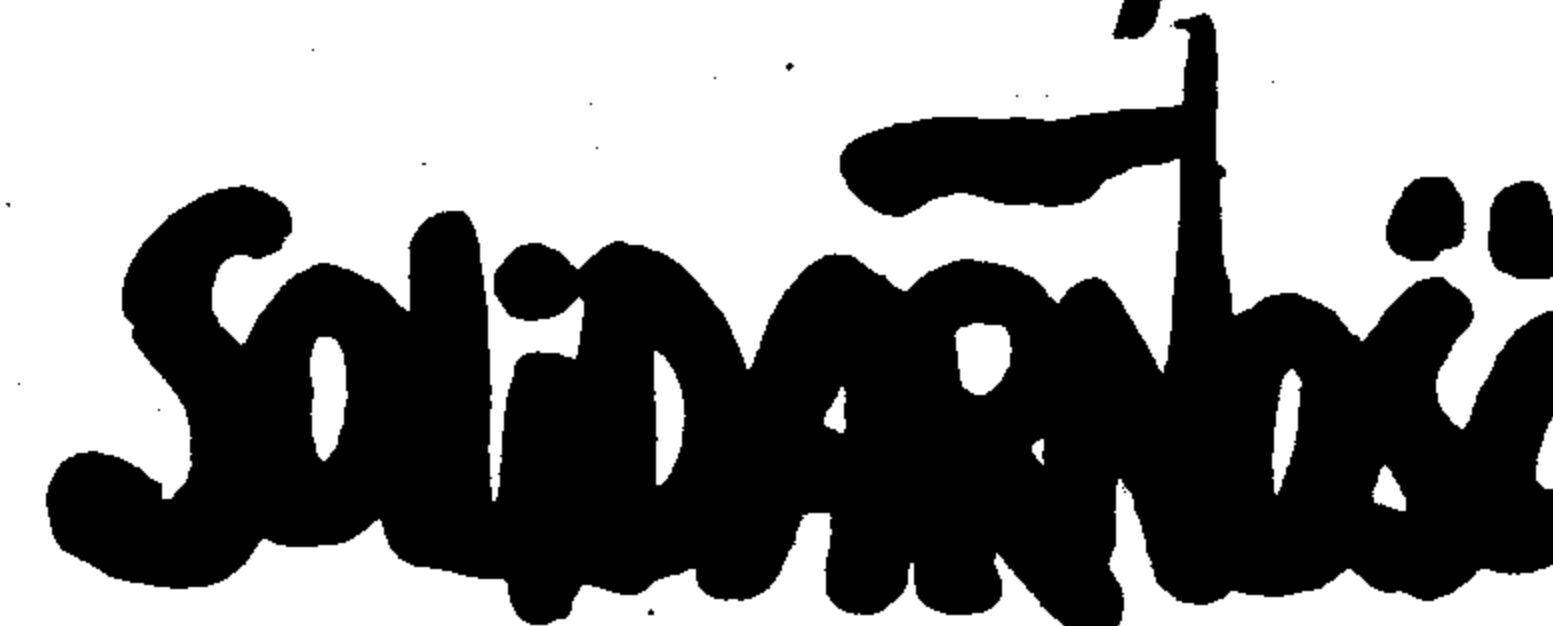
Problems created by bureaucratic distortions will be 'solved' by further attacks on working class living standards and civil rights.

Tighten the screws even further! That is the call coming from the likes of so-called 'trade union leader' Albin Siwak and from the Politbureau members dissatisfied with the 'mildness' of the regime since December 12 and unhappy with the presence of 'liberals' such as Rakowski and Barcikowski in the ruling bodies.



World News

Fighting for Solidarity in Britain



The simmering Polish crisis could result in a violent explosion yet. December 13th was a serious blow against the rights and confidence of the Polish working class, but it is now clear that it did not result in its total dismemberment.

For Jaruzelski to achieve totally his designs of pacifying the country, he would probably have to institute methods of political terror not seen since the 1930s in Stalin's Russia.

It is highly dubious how far he could go ahead with such a purge, even if he wanted to. Equally, any attempt to erect a new trade union bureaucracy composed of repentant and renegade elements from Solidarnosc has fallen flat.

Walesa's latest communiqué from house arrest — "Not a single step backward. This 'partner' never has been, nor ever will be, honest!" — will further dissuade any potential collaborators.

This statement came after the junta stated that he had been under arrest since December 13th. Although entirely obvious, this admission by the junta puts an end to the cant about Walesa 'aiding the authorities' with their negotiations.

MANY hundreds of supporters of Polish Solidarity marched through Birmingham on Saturday to protest at the continuing state of martial law in Poland.

Among the delegations on the march were the West Midlands branch of the Confederation of Health Service Employees and the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (Birmingham branch).

Paul McNee, president of the Trades Council stressed the importance of linking the struggle of British trades unionists with those of the Polish workers.

The meeting concluded with an appeal to all trade unionists in the city to raise the question of blacking by British workers of goods produced under the military dictatorship.

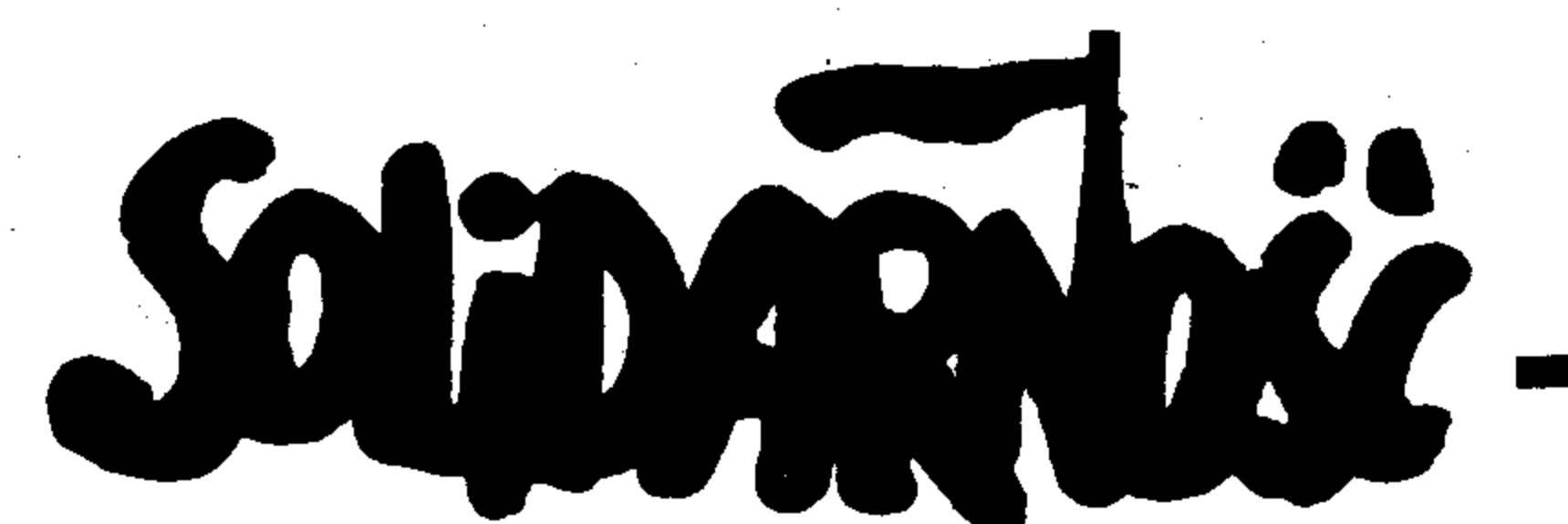
IN SCOTLAND, the occupied Plessey factory at Bathgate welcomed speakers from Solidarnosc.

Marek Garzdecki and

Piotr Kozlowski, Solidarnosc shop stewards who were in Scotland to speak to Grange-mouth dockers to call for blacking of trade with Poland, visited the plant on Tuesday 9 February. Piotr spoke of the similarities in their struggles. "Our rights were taken away by the gun while yours are being taken away by more subtle means, but the result is the same. You must not give an inch, and you must not listen to anyone who tells you to go easy. If you surrender any ground you will have lost."

Meanwhile the NUJ National Executive has adopted a resolution committing the union to lead a campaign in the British labour movement against the censorship imposed upon the Polish media by the junta.

Lynn Gregory



Battle over Belgian austerity

by Jim Farnham

The Belgian government has voted through parliament sweeping powers of emergency rule to tackle the raging economic crisis in the country. New emergency laws allow the government to rule by decree for the next year. These decrees aim to:

*Cut real wages by ending the index system of wage rises won by the working class;

*Slash public spending by £1.5 billion;

*Introduce special extra wage cuts in the nationalised steel, textile, shipbuilding and other enterprises;

*Give the parasite capitalist class extra relief by cutting company taxes.

Employers—local and foreign—have of course welcomed the measures. The working class anger and militancy has forced Socialist

union leaders to call a one-day general strike this week.

Union bureaucrats allied to the capitalist Christian Democratic parties are opposing the mobilisation—although the leadership in some regions is being forced to go against this line.

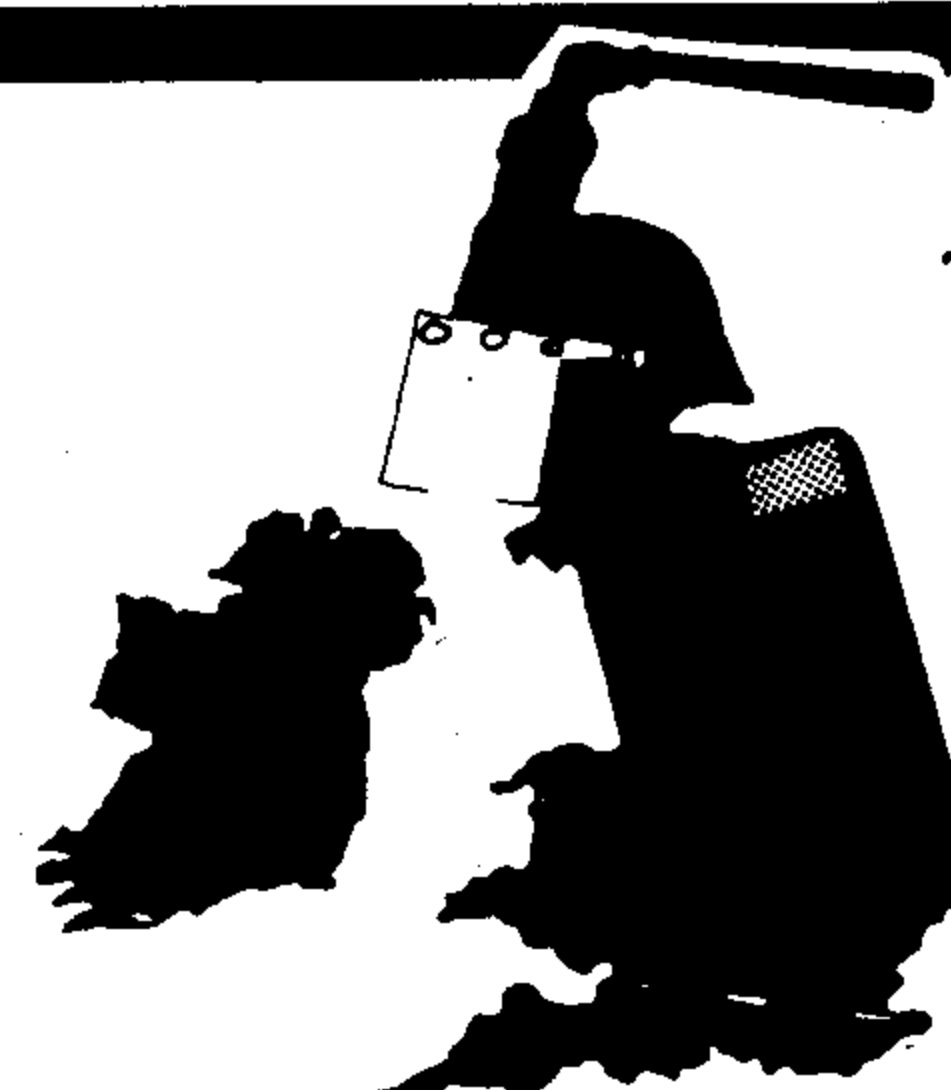
The Socialist-led unions of both the Flemish and French-speaking sections of the working class are taking a common stand on this issue. In a recent strike at the Liege steel company Cockerhill-Sambre, workers in the Socialist and Catholic unions took joint action.

The divisions maintained in the working class by the employers and their bureaucratic agents in the labour movement can and must be overcome in united struggle for the common needs of all workers.

The one-day strike must be used to take forward the fight for mass united action.

Raising Ireland in the Labour Party

by Bruce Robinson



OVER 100 activists took part in the third Annual General Meeting of the Labour Committee on Ireland in Birmingham last week.

Following the massive upsurge of opposition to Labour's bipartisan policy in the last year, the meeting was faced with a number of important decisions about a new phase of the campaign.

The last Labour Party conference adopted a policy of a united Ireland 'by consent' in the indefinite future, while rejecting calls for withdrawal and for an end to partition. Much of the discussion at the AGM focused on whether this decision was a real break with bipartisanship or not.

One group of comrades felt that the decision of the Brighton conference represented a major step forward which required the LCI to adjust its activities towards providing information on the situation in Ireland and working out a detailed strategy for withdrawal from the Labour Party to adopt.

Other comrades, including the Socialist Organiser supporters present, argued that the LCI should still focus on campaigning to commit Labour to the principles of immediate and unconditional withdrawal, an end to Partition, and repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Last year's



Labour Committee on Ireland: Box BM 5355, London WC1.

conference decision was not a fundamental break with bipartisanship, and we still need a high-profile LCI.

This difference was reflected in several discussions about the press of the LCI, its activities, and the basis on which it should campaign. The second approach, for a campaigning LCI, generally had the majority.

The AGM also reaffirmed the platform of the LCI decided at its first conference, including immediate withdrawal from Ireland.

At Brighton the trade union block vote was decisive in defeating radical motions on Ireland. It was generally agreed that the LCI needed to take up more

energetic work in the unions.

There was some discussion as to how to do this, given that the LCI is open only to Labour Party members. This restriction is necessary for the work in the Labour Party, but restrictive for the work in the unions.

Socialist Organiser supporters therefore proposed the creation of a parallel 'Trade Union Committee on Ireland', independent of the LCI but closely linked to it.

This proposal was defeated. It was agreed to welcome non Labour Party members to work with the LCI in the unions, and a range of activities was mapped out, but it is not clear that the mechanisms which now exist are sufficient to allow many non Labour Party trade unionists to become involved.

Anniversary

The decisions of the AGM, however, form a firm basis for campaigning in the year ahead. All LCI members and branches should start now to organise the campaigns the AGM agreed.

After the labour movement conference on February 27, the next major event will be the demonstration jointly organised by the LCI for the anniversary of Bobby Sands' death in May.

Trades councils under threat

MEMBERS or officers of 20 Trades Councils defied Len Murray's threat of expulsion by attending a conference on Ireland last weekend in London.

The conference, organised by the 'Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign', was the subject of a circular letter from the TUC stating that Trades Councils or members of Trades Councils must refuse support to it or face expulsion.

This even applied to members sponsoring the conference in their personal capacity.

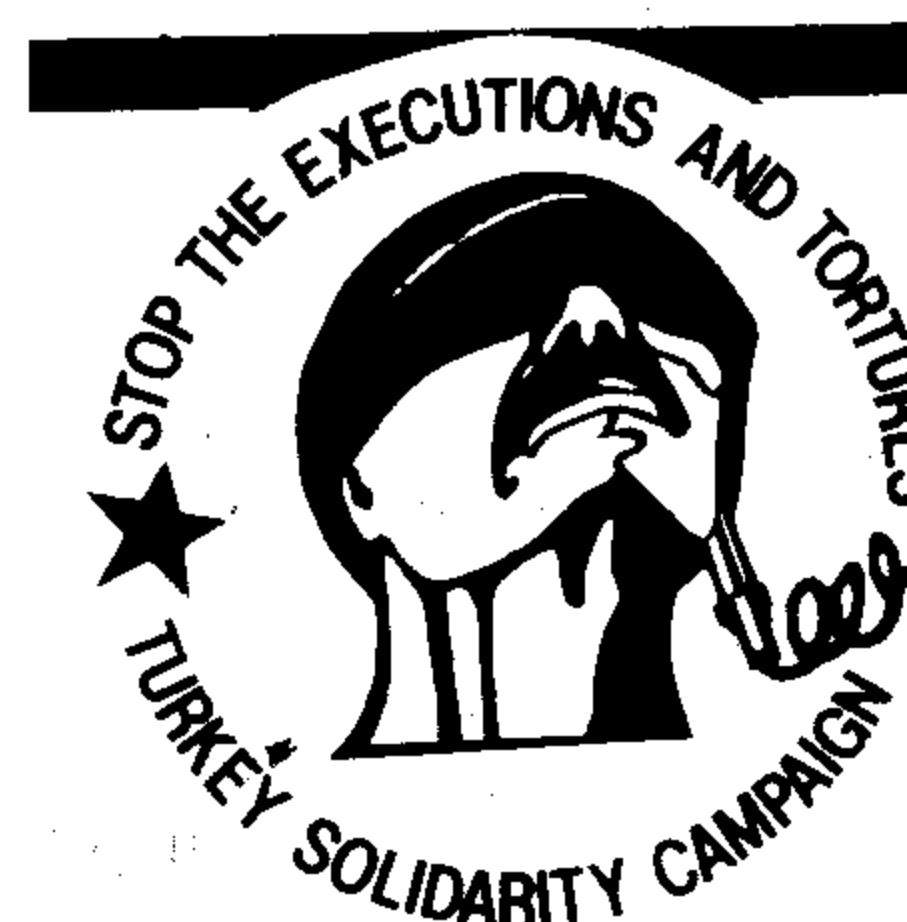
Although in the past the tactics and slogans of the SPTAC have been doubtful, we must defend them and those who sponsored the conference against the thought-control threats coming from the TUC.

If Trades Councils stood by TUC policy on every issue, they would be hollow shells useful for nothing except rubber-stamping TUC circular letters. Many

Trades Councils refuse to act like that, and are threatened by the TUC for it.

This conference was not sponsored by Trades Councils, only by individuals. As yet nothing has happened to them, but we must be prepared to defend them if Len Murray decides to make good his threats.

Send messages of support to SPTAC, BM RCT, London WC1V 6XX.



Turkey Solidarity Campaign: Box BM 5965, London WC1N 3XX.

CONFERENCE

'IRELAND — TIME FOR TORY POLICIES TO GO'. Labour movement conference organised by Labour Committee on Ireland and Committee for Withdrawal from Ireland. Saturday February 27, starting 11am at The Theatre, 309 Regent St, London W1. Delegate's or observer's credentials £2 from 1 North End Road, London W14.

ALARM CALL FOR ABORTION RIGHTS

THE National Abortion Campaign is desperately struggling to fight the new restrictions on abortion rights, and the threatened prosecution of five doctors.

The DHSS has ruled to the doctors who perform abortions under the 1967 Act, that social considerations alone do not constitute grounds for legal abortions.

Back door

But doctors like Professor Peter Huntingford have made it clear that they will not state false medical conditions as a reason for performing an abortion, when in fact the 1967 Act says that a woman's "actual or foreseeable environment" may be taken into account.

The vast majority of abortions performed since 1967 have been on social rather than medical grounds, and if the DHSS manages to enforce this new restriction, abortion rights will be left in shreds.



The TUC must be called upon to defend doctors against prosecution

There have been constant attacks on the 1967 Abortion Amendment Act, through restrictive Bills—but all these have been smashed due to the energetic work of organisations like NAC, and

the support of women, trade unions and the Labour Party.

This new restriction has been slipped in through the back door, via a Statutory Instrument of Parliament. It

means the law has been changed without any Parliamentary debate.

The Director of Public Prosecutions has referred five cases for prosecution already. No charges have

been laid as yet, but if they are, doctors will be charged under the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, and face a maximum jail sentence of 14 years.

Professor Huntingford (formerly responsible for the Mile End Day Care Clinic) and well known for his defence of women's abortion and maternity rights said:

"If this prosecution goes ahead, I would regard it as the prosecution of 80% of the women who have had legal abortions under the 1967 Abortion Act. I feel I am in good company."

The DPP will only pursue prosecution if it believes there is at least a 50% chance of conviction.

But as soon as charges are put, campaigning for the defendant will be hampered. Therefore it is crucial that we work now to convince the government that the medical profession, the Labour Party, trades unions and women themselves do not support restrictions in the 1967 Act.

Women in struggle



This latest attack has taken us by surprise and socialists should be doing everything they can to support NAC, the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign, Abortion Law Reform Association, the National Labour Women's Committee and working women's organisations, and the National Council for Civil Liberties, in defence of abortion rights.

Things to do:

Move resolutions along the lines of the text below at your union, branch or Labour Party:

"This organisation opposes and condemns the DHSS Statutory Instrument of March 1981 which amounts to a back-door restriction of the right to abortion provided under the 1967 Abortion Act."

We call upon our National Executive Committee, the TUC and the Labour Party to ensure that the strength of the labour movement is mobilised in the campaign against these regulations, and

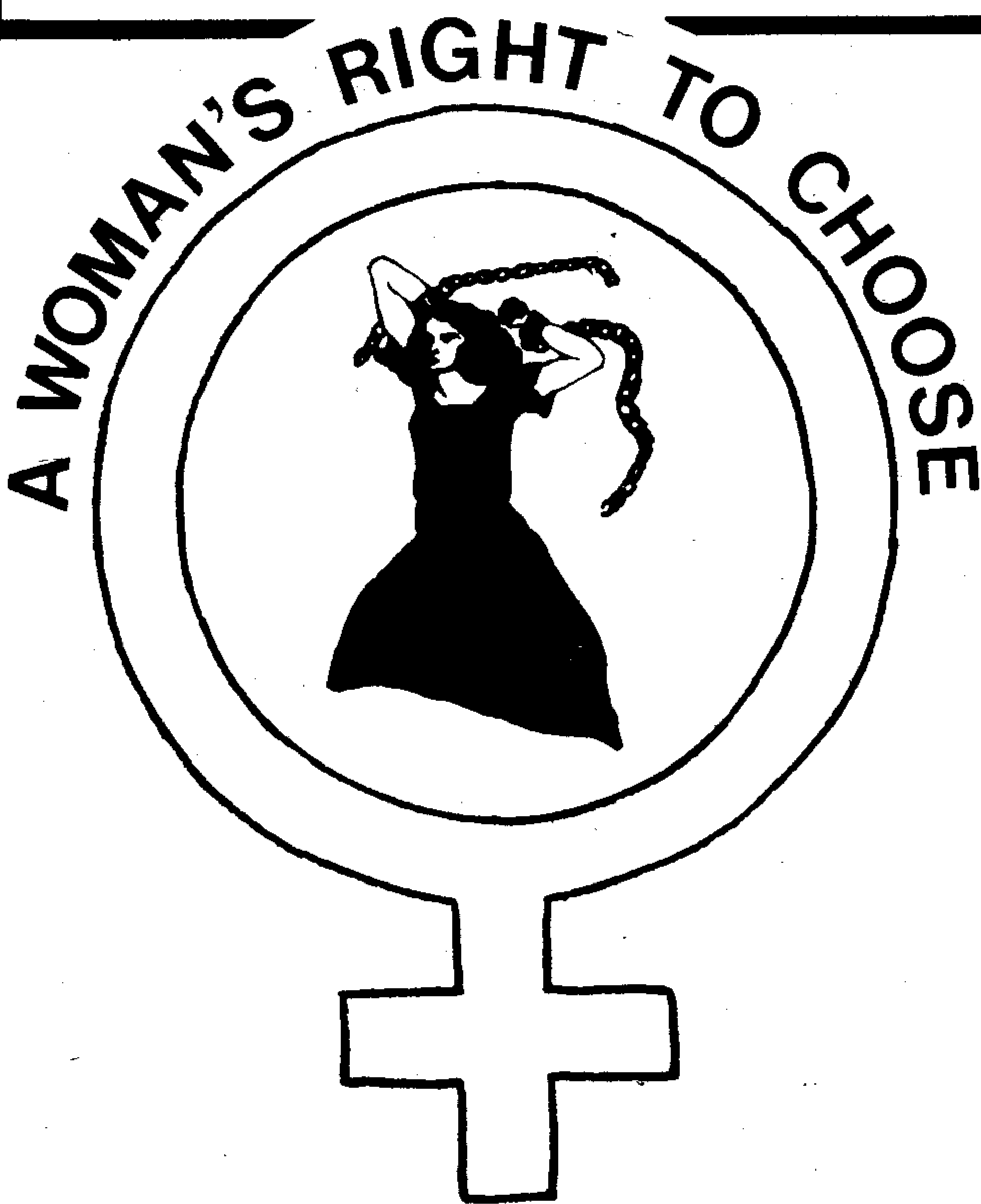
to lend their support to any campaign which has the objective of overturning them.

We oppose any prosecution of doctors under these new measures and any restrictions on women's right to abortion. In the event of prosecutions taking place we call upon the health unions to take the lead in fighting for strike action in defence of those victimised."

*Demand and write letters to this effect to the DHSS and Health Minister Vaughan (Hannibal House, London SE1 6TE), and to Prime Minister Thatcher.

*Write also along these lines to MPs, Community Health Councils, GPs and the press.

*Send copies of motions demanding action to the leaders of the health unions—MPU, COHSE, NUPE—and if possible, to Socialist Organiser, where we will be following the campaign.



Women discuss fight on new technology

by Wendy Frankland

New technology was a major theme at a 100-strong conference for women trade unionists organised by Leeds Trades Council Women's Advisory Committee last weekend.

In her opening remarks, Pam Thorne of the WAC said that the major changes that had taken place regarding the status of women in society during the post-war period—in particular the growth of women's employment and the availability of abortion and contraception facilities—had made women less amenable to the current attacks on their rights.

There had been several important examples of women fighting back against attacks, such as the Lee Jeans workers and the Liverpool Corporation typists. It was hoped that this conference would encourage women to work together in their trades unions to protect their existing rights and improve their conditions.

Ignored

Guest speaker Judith Hunt of AUEW (TASS) spoke of the value of organisations such as the Leeds Trades Council WAC and hoped that all Trades Councils would form Women's Advisories.

Since 1968, the growth of trade unionism amongst women has accounted for the major area of growth in the trade union movement as a whole. Women now numbered about 3½ million trade unionists, and yet were still mainly very poorly represented in the numbers of full time officials and national executive members in most unions.

The benefits that unions have negotiated that primarily affect women, e.g. maternity rights, child care facilities, flexibility in working hours, have not reflected the support given by women in terms of union membership

and dues paid. The special considerations that affect women are often ignored in negotiations, largely conducted by men. Negotiations for shorter working hours are often aimed at obtaining a free half or whole day, whereas many women with children would prefer to finish work earlier each day in order to meet children from school.

Recognition

Ms Hunt quoted the example of local union officials at Hoover, Merthyr Tydfil who signed a redundancy agreement allowing the dismissal of part-time women workers in direct contravention of a nationally adopted resolution stating that part time and women workers should not suffer disproportionately as a result of redundancies!

This example is particularly disgraceful in view of the tenacity and discipline shown by women involved in disputes such as Lee Jeans where no drinking was allowed in the area of the dispute, and care was taken not to damage the owners' machinery etc and thus open the union to liability.

There is however a growing recognition of the problems directly affecting women; for example, the issue of sexual harassment at work is to appear for the first time this year on the agenda of the TUC.

Ms Hunt concluded by saying that women must not be put off by the tactics of trade union officials and politicians who say that demands for women's rights should be shelved during the current "recession" for reconsideration later on—there never is a "right time" for women's liberation. Women must mobilise and fight for their rights throughout the trade union movement as part of the overall struggle for jobs, pay and conditions of work.

The workshop on new technology was led by two women from the West Yorkshire Technology Group.

They pointed out that the rapid introduction of new technology had been prompted by the falling rate of profit over the last decade, pushing capitalists to cut production costs and employ fewer people.

APEX estimated that ¼m clerical jobs will have been lost by next year, and figures from West Germany indicate that 40% of clerical jobs in that country will have been lost by 1990 owing to new technology.

Where new technology is being introduced, jobs are becoming fragmented and "de-skilled".

For example, at the Grattons mail order factory in Bradford the clerical staff used to have personal contact and responsibility for a group of agents. Now their jobs are reduced to

coding meaningless sequences of codes onto a database, with the constant use of VDUs throughout the working day.

New technology is frequently introduced into areas of "low status" work where workers, mainly women, are using obsolete equipment in an unpleasant environment, so the improved machinery and surroundings brought in with the new technology are seen as a benefit, even though jobs may be lost.

The areas involved are often those with little or no trade union organisation (e.g. Grattons, where despite a closed shop in the warehouse, there is little more than 50% union membership among clerical staff).

The way in which the hardware for new technology was produced was discussed. Multinational companies exploit women's slave labour in Third World

Countries such as Korea and the Philippines—women work long hours for a pittance, producing silicone chips, etc. Then they are dismissed when their health and eyesight gives out and are reduced to begging, prostitution, etc.

So new technology can be produced cheaply in countries where vicious regimes prevent union organisation.

In the long term, we saw work sharing on full pay as the only solution to avoid the absurd imbalance between those doing soul-destroying alienating work and those in equally soul-destroying unemployment.

And we mapped out some initial steps to fight for

- 1) the elimination of any measurement of work incorporated in new technology.
- 2) Salaried work—no piece work.
- 3) Adequate health and safety provisions.
- 4) No redundancies.

Vital goals for victory

THE 1967 Abortion Act was, in its time, a major piece of progressive legislation, but it must surely be proved by now just how fragile it is.

In effect, all it does is to take a statutory crime (abortion is a "crime" under both the 1861 Infant Life Preservation Act and the 1928 Offences Against the Person Act) and to say that, in certain extenuating circumstances, the criminality does not apply.

It has nothing to say about provision of NHS facilities, and it refrains totally from giving the pregnant woman the right of choice.

Any attack, therefore, on abortion rights, need only chip away at the terms of the interpretation of the 1967 Act, and the "crime" is there, ready and waiting.

The new abortion notification form, by attempting to force the doctor performing the operation to state 'major medical grounds' is right in line with this tech-

around, this kind of crisis—in one form or another—is going to occur again and again while statute law remains as it is.

Sooner or later, we are going to lose unless abortion is de-criminalised and treated in law, as any other surgical procedure.

The Labour Abortion Rights Campaign has identified three major goals: improvement and equalisation of facilities under existing legal provision, decriminalisation which will involve action on the 1861 and 1928 Acts, and enshrinement, in law, of a woman's right to choose.

Whatever the techniques that may be applied to realise these goals, they are absolutely vital. Without them we will be perpetually under attack. In short, LARC, like other abortion rights campaigns, is aiming to render itself redundant.

from the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign



WATCH OUT! there's a microchip about!

CASH LIMITS THROW BR OFF THE RAILS

by Harry Sloan

DIRE predictions of imminent financial collapse of British Rail were made this week as part of a media campaign to force ASLEF leaders into a sell-out on their pay-and-conditions struggle.

BR management insisted that the Board has now broken through its cash limit by more than £50 million: this would increase to £90 million if the strikes continue throughout February.

And they claimed that the dispute had brought permanent loss of business to BR estimated at "between £50 and £150 million a year".

Provoked

They were making too much of their case. After all a loss of £50 million is the equivalent of paying every single member of ASLEF a further £35 per week. For £150 million BR could almost afford to hire an additional 27,000 drivers!

Such huge losses far exceed the possible cash benefits to BR even if they were to win their demand for flexible rostering of ASLEF. In other words, there is a double bluff involved: there is more at stake in the dispute than management have admitted — and the cash crisis of British Rail, provoked by Tory policies, was in any case leading rapidly towards further cutbacks.

The war on ASLEF's hard-won 8-hour day is of course only one component in a grand strategic offensive on jobs throughout the rail industry.

BR's five-year plan centres on the axeing of 38,000 jobs by 1975. They are already running ahead of schedule, thanks to the collaboration of union leaders — and 12,000 jobs have gone in the last two years.

Plight

To go further and faster, the imposition of flexible rostering is necessary both for station staff and for train drivers. And in this onslaught on the conditions of 200,000 NUR members, it is important to eliminate ASLEF as a likely pole of opposition.

But in any event the huge



Ray Buckton



As the Tories cut back, BR is reduced to advertising in the press to plead for money to electrify track

cost of fighting the current dispute can be viewed in a different way. Tory cash limits had even before the dispute left British Rail in a dire financial plight, with borrowing limits some £300 million lower than required to implement its Corporate Programme.

Withdrawal

Chancellor Geoffrey Howe has not only blocked plans for the much-delayed electrification programme, but insisted that BR can borrow no more than £950 million in the year 1982-3. This is an increase of £30 million on 1981-2, and makes no allowance for preserving existing services in the face of inflation.

Long before the strikes, BR had warned of the consequences of these cuts — including more withdrawals of antiquated diesel, trains without replacement, and more restrictions on the use of track and signalling.

Handcuffs

At the end of last year, BR management was stressing that "productivity alone cannot bridge the financial gap created by vital equipment, maintenance and renewal needs. Without additional financial support, the choice falls between higher fares or deterioration of service".

The Tory government response was to brush aside these complaints and insist that:

"we cannot solve the problems simply by expecting the taxpayer to provide yet more support for them".

Instead the Tories have used the pistol of cash limits, together with the handcuffs of the 1981 Transport Bill, to force-march the BR Board into selling off their most profitable operations — hotels, ferries and Seaspeed hovercraft — to private enterprise, in order to raise the cash for survival.

Hiving off

The naked self-interest of such moves from the standpoint of the Tories and their big business friends was revealed when it emerged that the chairman of European Ferries Ltd, the first big bidder for Sealink, is Keith Wickenden — Tory MP for Dorking!

In the event Wickenden's move to clean up on Thatcher's hiving-off venture ran into the unpredictable obstacle of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission who spotted the likelihood that it would lead to increased ferry prices, fewer services, and possible squeezing out of European Ferries' competitors.

Meanwhile some of British Transport's prime hotels and other BR property holdings have been sold in a bid to balance the books.

Such a policy is at best a short-term delay in the full-

scale cutbacks in the rail service and the rail network itself that are implied in present Tory cash limits.

The losses incurred by BR in the present dispute with ASLEF may have brought forward the cash crunch in the industry — but have in no way created the crisis.

The Board of course has not wasted the opportunity to utilise the cash crisis as a lever to prise Ray Buckton out of his Hampstead office and into the infamous ACAS sell-out chamber.

They must be well aware that the mere threat of impending bankruptcies and closures has consistently succeeded in reducing even arrogant 'left' talking loud-mouths in the union bureaucracy into quivering heaps of jelly — and in drawing the most obedient responses from right wing collaborators such as Boyd and Weighell.

So far ASLEF's leadership has held firm in the face of threats. But Buckton is hovering with no visible means of support.

Refusing to call for an all-out strike, he is unable at present to force a sell-out upon his mobilised members.

But neither can he offer his members — or the NUR rank and file, labouring under the misleadership of Weighell — a coherent answer to the BR/Tory offensive.

In fact the war on jobs in BR and the decimation



NUR general secretary Sid Weighell

Keeping Foot silent

FOR some time Reg Race and Les Huckfield have been getting up at PLP meetings and demanding that the Shadow Cabinet makes a statement of support for the ASLEF strike.

It seems certain that a major factor in Foot's silence is the intensive lobbying by Sid Weighell. He has made no secret of his desire to smash the struggle by ASLEF against the same sell-out that he has imposed on NUR members — and thus ease the path to still further collaboration with British Rail management and the Thatcher government.

Indeed Weighell would shed few tears were ASLEF to be defeated and its industrial backbone broken by BR — clearing the way for the absorption of train drivers into the NUR and thus silencing a vocal left-wing element in the labour bureaucracy.

John Boyd of the AUEW and EETPU boss Chapple have poked in their noses — calling for an end to the strike! — and a similar stance is clear in the Labour Party right wing.

Weighell is plainly not the only right winger to have made such calculations. The vast majority of the PLP has refused to side with ASLEF in its struggle against BR and Thatcher.

A letter to Michael Foot demanding he follow the lead of the Party's Executive and support the train drivers has attracted only 21 signatures from MPs.

Reg Race told us: "We have been pressing the Shadow Cabinet to take action and support ASLEF as we believe that MPs should stand up and support workers who are struggling against their employer. Unless pressure is put on quickly then it is likely that the BRB will succeed in isolating ASLEF from the other unions."

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BL: THE BACKGROUND TO THE BETRAYALS

THE SUCCESS of BL management strategy is increasingly used to spearhead the employers' offensive in other sections of industry. The fundamental reorganisation of the payment system, and the offensive against the shop stewards' movement, is the envy of other major employers in the engineering industry.

Here **BILL PETERS** gives an outline sketch of how this large section of the industrial working class, originally numbering 200,000 workers in 55 plants, have been consciously and repeatedly betrayed by trade union leaders who acted as, and at one stage actually were, effectively part of corporate management.



THE POST-WAR development of the shop stewards' movement was largely spearheaded by the car industry, where militancy and the piecework system produced relatively high wages, giving the shop stewards their power base.

The decline of the post-war boom in the second half of the 1960s sharpened competition among the car barons, and focused the attention of the Labour Government towards curbing car workers as front runners in the wages field and controlling the shop stewards' movement.

Piecework and payment by results (PBR) systems were singled out as a primary target for change well before BL was formed in 1968 with Pat Lowry as Director of Employee Relations. Lowry, however, elaborated a detailed strategy on these lines for BL.



Longbridge convenor and CP member Derek Robinson led support for 'participation'—and applause for the Edwardes plan in February 1978

1971: Imposition of Measured Day Work

PBR was to be replaced by Measured Day Work (MDW) — flat rate payments and work effort controlled by time and motion study, as at Ford.

Then BL would move towards a completely centralised USA-type bargaining system, which would remove the shop stewards from the process and give power to the full-time officials.

Lowry moved in 1971 to force MDW into the major plants of the Cars Division. This met protracted strike action in the Cowley Assembly Plant and Jags, which was sold out by the officials, with the acquiescence of the Communist Party. A year later MDW was established in the majority of plants.

BL admitted publicly three years later that they had offered low work effort as a tactic to get the MDW principle established. But, as militants had warned at the outset, the drive was soon on to re-establish piecework effort for flat-rate wages.

Alan Thornett was victimised and removed from plant leadership in 1974, during strikes in opposition to the use of stopwatches on the tracks in Cowley. This was used by Jack Jones and Region 5 of the TGWU to establish the right wing in control in Cowley, and speed-up on the tracks quickly followed.

In December 1974 Tony Benn, as Harold Wilson's Industry Secretary, commissioned a team of four, headed by Lord Ryder from the NEB and including TGWU deputy general secretary Harry Urwin, to inquire and prepare a report on BL for submission

to Parliament.

The Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) promptly appointed a 'team' of convenors to discuss with the Ryder committee. Ryder records that he found a ready response to his ideas from the 'team', which included Derek Robinson and several leading members of the CP — a response which was to become quite fundamental to the future course of events in BL.

1975: the Ryder report

The Report was finalised and presented to Parliament by Benn in April 1975. On the basis of market forecast figures it called for BL to be maintained as a producer of cars, trucks and buses — on the basis of Government share-

holding and capital loans, since its profit base was 'wholly inadequate'.

The money, however, would be paid in six-monthly tranches which could be used to blackmail BL workers. The report laid down:

"That the process of the capital expenditure programme and the injection of new finance by the Government should be staged and that each stage should depend on evidence of a tangible contribution by BL's workforce and management to the reduction of industrial disputes and improvements of productivity."

It connected with Lowry's strategy by calling for reform of the wage structure through a common review date, a reduction in the number of bargaining units, and a bonus scheme.

It called for more 'industrial democracy' through an extensive system of 'worker participation' committees — something which came directly out of Benn's original terms of reference.

1975-77: the unions, Ryder and 'participation'

The report received massive backing from all

the unions in BL and from the CSEU Executive. That support, with all its implications, remains unshaken to this day, and has been a crucial factor in all subsequent events.

'Participation', under Communist Party control, eventually cut very deep into the shopfloor movement in BL Cars. Thousands of shop stewards, and the vast majority of BL Cars' 500-plus convenors and senior stewards, were eventually sucked into it and had their teeth drawn.

The Combine Committee was cast aside. Though officially they were non-negotiating bodies, the 'participation' committees rapidly took over the role of the trade union structures. On top of this, with BL run by the government through the NEB, Scanlon and Urwin effectively became very senior members of management.

By the end of last year the effects added up to the loss of 70,000 BL jobs (far more than the entire Ford labour force); wage rates falling to the lowest car wages in Europe; and the systematic smashing of conditions and agreements established over many years.

In addition, BL's achievement in rationalising the pay structure in BL

Cars, gaining control of many thousands of different rates and payments in 34 diverse plants scattered across the country, is viewed with envy by employers in other sectors of industry.

For this reason it is well worth looking a bit closer at how this was achieved, and how participation was used to defuse opposition and push it through.

The document detailing the structure of the participation committees was signed in October 1975 by a body known as the 'Joint Trade Union 32 Man Committee', and sets out the terms of reference of the scheme:

"To examine future plans to make BL Cars a more competitive designer, producer and seller of cars; to seek as far as possible to reach agreement on those plans, whilst recognising that executive responsibility rests with management."

As a result of this an ad hoc committee was set up in March 1976 to administer the introduction of the Ryder scheme into all the plants. The scheme was pushed into most plants by the autumn of 1976, but the committee was already involved in other things.

By January 1977 they had negotiated the so-called 'Security of Earnings

Document', which in return for a marginal increase in lay-off pay and a corporate sick scheme contained dangerous no-strike clauses.

Despite their recommendation, the document was decisively rejected at a series of mass meetings.

The toolroom strike in early 1977, which was whipped up into a national emergency, gave BL the chance to force the pace on wage reform, particularly since Scanlon excelled in his role as NEB boss by publicly endorsing BL's decision to sack all 6,000 on strike.

Despite their hard line, however, BL basically agreed with the toolmakers that skilled sections should be at the top of the pay scale. Therefore, along with the threat went a joint commitment with the unions to take a new initiative to examine differentials and change the wage structure in BL Cars.

This took the form of a Joint Working Party (JWP), set up by the CSEU Executive (none of whom work in BL) in March 1977 to examine 'differentials'. It quickly became a new lever for forcing the pace for Lowry's strategy of corporate bargaining.



Robots in Longbridge: only one side of Edwardes' "Japanese model"



The palm days—or it seems now. The millionth Mini

ND



Leyland workers voted solidly last week to reject Edwardes' blackmail

PHOTO: JOHN HARRIS

Vehicles strikers must fight isolation

LAST week mass meetings of Leyland Vehicles workers defied threats from BL bosses that continuation of their strike against job losses would mean a complete shutdown.

Before long they are likely to face that threat again—in the form of a typical Edwardes ultimatum: accept my terms or it all shuts down.

This will underline the need to spread the jobs fight to BL Cars—which faces the same Edwardes plan, and the same Tory government standing behind it.

But last Saturday, 6th, the leadership of the BL Joint Shop Stewards Combine successfully resisted attempts to create active support in the Cars Division.

amongst the workforce, he said. If the union leaders were prepared to make a stand, and say "This is where we make a stand against Edwardes" the response would be there. The same delegate moved a resolution calling on the Combine Committee to call an emergency conference of shop stewards from the whole of BL to discuss support for the dispute.

Jack Adams in the chair said that he supported this as Combine Committee policy, but it could only be activated if the request was made from the strike committees themselves for such a conference. This was a safe move since such an initiative would be controlled by the Communist Party, of which Jack Adams is a member.

There will not be a conference unless militants involved in the strike force the strike committees to make the call to the Combine.

Financial support is important, but winning the strike means defeating Edwardes and his corporate plan, which will be difficult from just the Lancashire and Bathgate plants.

A conference of BL shop stewards could raise more effective financial support as well as making the strike an active issue in the Cars Division.

LEYLAND ACTION COMMITTEE
Keep Leyland truckin'

A special meeting of the Combine Committee was requested by the Leyland Vehicles Joint Shop Stewards Committee. Reporting to the Combine, they requested "moral and financial support" for the strike but stressed that they were not seeking to spread the action beyond the present striking plants.

A delegate from Cowley questioned this policy, arguing that whilst the Combine itself would not be capable of extending the action to BL Cars, the unions at official level could.

There is an anti-management, anti-Edwardes mood

LEYLAND ACTION COMMITTEE
TRUCK OFF Edwardes

Next week, the last 2½ years

be the cast-iron yardstick BL would use to determine the grading for the 120,000 workers involved.

By May 1979 the JNC had agreed detailed parity proposals, equalising the rates in three stages. Pressure would be put on workers by withholding payment from each section until they had accepted the 5-grade structure and where they slotted into it.

Participation had played its role, and soon disappeared under Edwardes. In a calculated strategic shift, BL had moved from 'participation' to confrontation.

It met a shop stewards' movement greatly weakened and demoralised by

class collaboration, in bad shape to withstand an onslaught of hardline management. And Edwardes knew it.

A regime of fear was generated. Threats, blackmail and intimidation became the order of the day. Management philosophy was no quarter and no concessions.

It was an all-or-nothing policy which could be effective provided that the workforce, which was militant and had not been defeated by the employers, could still be prevented by their leaders from taking on Edwardes and beating him.



Michael Edwardes

Leyland ACTION

LAST week the LAC organised a public meeting in Leyland, with a speaker from the BL Cars Assembly Plant at Cowley. And the LAC has also been producing leaflets to try to build links between the Leyland Vehicles struggle and the Cars Division.

All this costs money! Please send donations to help. Address: LAC, c/o 194 Dawlish Road, Birmingham 29. Cheques payable to Leyland Action Committee.

Leyland convenor Mick Coyne

PHOTO: JOHN HARRIS



words 'corporate bargaining', but BL knew the obvious: that parity and corporate bargaining meant the same thing, when linked to a common review date. Corporate bargaining had been agreed in all but name.

Having made this breakthrough Lowry wanted it endorsed by a secret ballot of the workforce, a technique he and Edwardes after him were to use many times in the next three years in BL cars.

In November 1977 a package drafted by Lowry was balloted. It was presented to the workforce only in vague outline, before what was in reality a blind vote. It was nevertheless strongly recommended by the CSEU and a convenors' conference.

Ballot papers were accompanied by a CSEU letter urging a 'yes' vote.

The package was accepted by a two-to-one majority. It included parity proposals, the 'outline' of a bonus scheme, and ten per cent on the rate payable from February 1978 (because of Callaghan's 12-month rule).

It also included the previously rejected 'Security of Earnings' document, with slightly modified no-strike penalty clauses.

1977-78: the first Edwardes plan

This vote was an important milestone which Edwardes inherited when he was appointed BL chairman by Eric Varley the following month — on the recommendation of the NEB, with the full support of Scanlon and Urwin.

The 'participation' atmosphere ensured that Edwardes came to BL with massive backing from the trade union leaders inside and outside the corporation.

At a convenors' conference — with plant directors invited — at Kenilworth in February 1978, he received a standing ovation led by Derek Robinson and the CP. The following week he announced his first closure — the Speke Assembly Plant.

In April Lowry pushed a set of new, slightly modified, bonus proposals to another postal ballot. They were one of the few things actually opposed by the trade unions in BL Cars for the past eight years, and were rejected by the membership with a two-to-one majority.

1978, parity and the 5 grade system

The next major BL thrust was at the November 1978 wage review. A five per cent offer (Callaghan's famous 5%) was conditional on the abolition of all existing rates. Grades covering the entire labour force, with skilled at the top and a £19 differential between skilled and unskilled, were to be introduced from November 1, 1979.

The package was strongly recommended in a further postal ballot by the Working Party, which by now had been transformed into a Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC). It was a completely undemocratic body, not elected by the membership, and with a built-in majority for the skilled workers, despite the TGWU organising two thirds of BL workers.

Although the package was accepted 60/40, the most difficult part was to actually slot the thousands of existing rates into the five grades and make them stick.

Most would be hotly contested, since the commitment to the tool-makers (and to BL philosophy) involved moving production workers, who in many plants were at the top of the pay scale, down to grade III.

Even before the package was balloted, secret meetings of a new body — the Joint Job Evaluation Committee (JJE) — had taken place to tackle the problem. They met behind closed doors, ticking off question sheets and feeding the results into a computer.

The print-out — 60 'benchmark jobs' — would

1977: Corporate bargaining

At the end of May the trade union side of the JWP put a policy statement to a convenors' conference, along with its proposals on wage bargaining reform. These went far beyond its terms of reference. They were a variant on what Lowry had been pushing for months, and were entirely in line with Ryder.

"This meeting of Leyland Cars senior shop stewards recognises the need to change our present method of bargaining in order to comply with the Ryder recommendations and the decision of the CSEU officers... We propose the following steps:

1. Phased programme over two years to achieve the bargaining reforms of the Ryder Report.
2. Principle of parity in all grades in BL Cars to be achieved no later than November 1979.
3. Staff conditions to be implemented by November 1978.
4. Introduction of incentive schemes, mutually agreed at plant level."

Although the company side of the JWP disagreed with details of the four points, the points gave Lowry all the loopholes he wanted.

On June 27, 1977, the JWP met in the plush All-lesley Hotel in Coventry to consider Lowry's proposals:

1. Common review date November 1st.
2. Establishment of a graded uniform corporate wage structure established by job evaluation.
3. Parity payments to equalise rates once the number of new grades and the differentials had been established. [A five-grade structure had already been discussed].
4. Lowry outlined how he would see a bonus scheme. Needless to say, these proposals were accepted by the working party. They left out the still supposedly contentious

SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY

JOHN O'MAHONY concludes his discussion of Michael Foot's 'Observer' polemic against the Labour Left, arguing that the real dividing line is not the Left's alleged disrespect for democracy but the extra-parliamentary struggle now against the Tory government.



LET ME give you a word of the philosophy of reforms. The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of struggle. If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favour freedom and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without ploughing up the ground.

They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. The struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle.

Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.

Frederick Douglass, American anti-slavery agitator, 1849.

WHEN you look concretely at how the existing British parliamentary system might be displaced by workers' councils, the difference between Marxist democrats and the burnt-out Parliamentarians becomes clear.

Propaganda by Marxists will not by itself win enough workers to workers' councils to threaten the parliamentary system. The relevant historical experience on which the proposal is based is too remote.

Even if it is partly eroded, belief in the parliamentary system as the form of democracy is very deep and powerful in the British people and the labour movement. And the system still has a lot of flexibility.

Soviets have most often emerged in conditions where parliamentary democracy was non-existent or limited. The precondition for soviets in Britain to move from the realm of propaganda, historical accounts, or analysis of the Polish experience of 1980, to become practical working class politics, would be — obviously — mass struggle, but also and centrally a major erosion of belief that parliament is an accessible democratic institution or can be such.

Councils of Action have existed in Britain (1920). Something like an incipient soviet emerged in Durham during the 1926 general strike. But even if a vast network of Councils of Action were now to emerge in a general strike, it is unlikely that they would starkly counterpose themselves to the existing system, as an alternative system of democratic rule — unless there were a serious erosion of belief in parliament as THE democratic system. The use of elections would be a major weapon of the ruling class and the Right to derail and demobilise any such general strike movement.

How will such an erosion occur? Even if a large revolutionary Marxist party existed, it could not occur as a result of its propaganda alone. It will occur when the ruling class — in response to the exigencies of the struggle to keep or exert control — is forced to begin to abrogate its own system, to downgrade it and to rob its processes of credibility.

Thus the existing system would be undermined from two sides — by growing self-confidence, self-organisation, and disillusionment among the working



Michael Foot tries to invoke the memory of Trotsky against his (Foot's) opponents in the labour movement today. The best answer to Foot, expressing the attitude of Marxist revolutionaries to the struggle to deepen, develop and preserve democracy, is given in the words of Leon Trotsky himself, writing 48 years ago about France:

class, and by growing impatience or desperation among the ruling class.

The recent decision of Lord Denning and the Law Lords on London's fares is a limited example of this sort of process — which Marxists see as inevitable.

But if the Marxist expectation that the ruling class will not be bound by its own parliamentary rules is wrong, then very probably we will be confined to propaganda — and the Right and soft Left has little to worry about.

They worry in fact because they are not quite naive liberals. Foot in his Observer articles talked of the danger of the 'storm-troopers', and says that the Left gains from the Parliamentary niceties because the Right has a tradition of fighting and the Left does not. He knows the political facts of life (but he lacks the socialist seriousness to call new facts into being — like the fact of a working-class militia, for example).

Meekly

What happens when the bourgeoisie does begin to disrupt democracy and attack it? The labour movement will fight back.

We will not abandon bourgeois democracy or democratic rights. Soviets may well arise in

defence of democracy — as the only way to continue what was valuable in bourgeois democracy, as it is abandoned by the bourgeoisie.

We will defend democratic rights tooth and nail — with guns. Most of the right wing 'professional democrats' won't.

The German Social Democrats helped the Junker army to massacre revolutionary workers in 1919 under the banner of preserving parliamentary democracy: they meekly surrendered it to Hitler in 1933. The Party leader in the Reichstag, Otto Wels, meekly offered his and his party's collaboration to Hitler, who didn't need it.

So it is not propaganda for soviets, or disrespect for parliament, by the Marxists, that worries the Right. It is not even entirely a matter of grabbing a convenient demarcation-line to serve an organisational purpose.

The dividing line is extra-parliamentary struggle now and the main target is not Trotskyists and soviets but the serious reformist left.

The print union SOGAT is now proposing strike action in open, proud defiance of the law, against the Tebbit Bill.

Are the leaders of the Labour Party seriously proposing to rule out such

action? Are they seriously proposing that the labour movement should allow itself to be crippled??

Yes they are! In any case they are not fighting back. Their rallying cry is a lie because they will not fight back to defend democracy either. We will.

They counterpose the existing parliamentary system to the needs of the living labour movement. They stand for an exaggeratedly slavish legalism — and against resistance to a government that is an outrage against the spirit of even bourgeois democracy.

Liberal

It is the socialists who reject Foot's fetish of the existing forms of parliamentary democracy, or at least reject the rules that would sanctify Thatcher's work as the distillate of pure parliamentary democracy, who oppose the 'sacrifice of generations'.

We can conceive of a different and better society, and we think the labour movement should fight for it. Politically prostrate, Foot can only hope for a new, tepid, Labour government, to do things more humanely than Thatcher.

Foot is no longer even notionally a socialist: his

AS LONG as the majority of the working class continues on the basis of bourgeois democracy, we are ready to defend it with all our forces against violent attacks from the Bonapartist and fascist bourgeoisie.

However, we demand from our class brothers who adhere to 'democratic' socialism that they be faithful to their ideas, that they draw inspiration from the ideas and methods not of the Third Republic but of the Convention of 1793.

Down with the Senate, which is elected by limited suffrage and which renders the power of universal suffrage a mere illusion!

Down with the presidency of the republic, which serves as a hidden point of concentration for the forces of militarism and reaction!

A single assembly must combine the legislative and executive powers. Members would be elected for two years, by universal suffrage at eighteen years of age, with no discrimination of sex or nationality. Deputies would be elected on the basis of local assemblies, constantly revocable by their constituents, and would receive the salary of a skilled worker.

This is the only measure that would lead the masses forward instead of pushing them backward. A more generous democracy would facilitate the struggle for workers' power.

We want to attain our objective not by armed conflicts between the various groups of toilers but by real workers' democracy, by propaganda and loyal criticism, by the voluntary regrouping of the great majority of the proletariat under the flag of true communism.

Workers adhering to democratic socialism must further understand that it is not enough to defend democracy; democracy must be regained.

The moving of the political centre of gravity from parliament towards the cabinet, from the cabinet towards the oligarchy of finance capital, generals, police, is an accomplished fact. Neither the present parliament nor the new elections can change this.

We can defend the sorry remains of democracy, and especially we can enlarge the democratic arena for the activity of the masses, only by annihilating the armed fascist forces that, on February 6 1934, started moving the axis of the state and are still doing so.

programme is liberal humanitarian administration of capitalism.

For Foot now, everything leads to, and must be subordinated to, the holy grail of again holding office and again trying to administer capitalism more humanely. He wants to soften the blows of British capitalism's decline, but no doubt will be willing again to obey the dictates of the IMF, and to make secret deals to sustain the state apparatus of potential violence against the working class (in the same way that he conspired behind the back of the Labour Party to update Britain's nuclear weapons).

That is, the grand conclusion from his great historical excursion into Stalinism — don't go for 'remote ends' or a different system, go for a new middle-of-the-road or right wing Labour administration.

He displays a holy terror that Proportional Representation may be brought in by the Liberals and Social Democrats. His conclusion is to mimic the Labour Right (who are politically Social Democrats), and stick to the safe ground that he believes is likely to be acceptable to the electorate.

He is willing to bowdlerise the living historical pro-

cess by abstracting from it the struggle of socialists for a socialist solution.

He talks of the 'treason' of those on the Left whom he says are now reconciled to defeat in the next election.

But it is the witch-hunters who are willing to gut the Party to make it safe for themselves who commit this treason. The Left is not reconciled to electoral defeat.

Minimalism

There is another, and more deadly, sort of defeatism, though — inner political defeatism such as Foot's which abandons the very goal of socialism, and disguises this with a great show of commitment to electoral victory.

Even a Foot Labour government would be better than Thatcher, if only because it would be more amenable to working class pressure. But what Foot leaves out is this: if such a government does not attempt radical solutions to the crisis of British society, it will fail miserably, probably preparing the way for worse than Thatcher.

The policy of Labour minimalism is not just the sure road to the failure of a new Labour government. It will be one more nail in



Print union leader Keys says: 'Break the Tory law'. And Foot...



Nazi book-burning: as society disintegrated in the 1930s, democracy seemed irrelevant

the coffin of bourgeois democracy.

In the 1930s the effete bourgeois liberals and their radical understudies repelled the rebel youth who were being ground down by the capitalist crisis. Some went over to fascism. Those who thought they were choosing communism found Stalinist totalitarianism acceptable in part because of revulsion against Foot-style worship of passivity in the cloak of formal democracy.

The disintegration of society seemed to show the impotence and irrelevance of democracy. Democracy had either to be renewed and continued, as a weapon of socialists fighting to re-make society, or sink into discredit along with capitalism.

Fetishist

There is a fine scene in one of Luis Bunuel's films. A woman sits in a chair, and a man, a foot fetishist, crouches in front of her, fondling her foot, putting it against his face, kissing it.

His sexuality is expressed in this way because the foot has taken on all the meaning that other people find in a partner's body. The

man is experiencing his ecstasy, locked into a private world — and the woman finds it impossible to suppress a big bored yawn.

Obsessed

The symbolic links in the man's subconscious, rooted in childhood memories and associations (and childish misapprehensions) mean that her foot has the power to trigger his emotions. But they can't mean anything to her. They exist only in his private world.

That is how the legalistic concerns of Michael Foot's political ancestors appear.



Stalin

ed to the radical youth in the '30s. And today the PLP are the foot-fetishists of democracy.

They are obsessed with their own symbols and reminiscences of the infancy of parliamentary democracy. The labour movement has its own concerns. In the here and now, the PLP fails to speak to more and more workers about the things that concern them.

In the present condition of Britain, either democracy will be linked with an effective programme of socialist transformation, or democracy will be radically undermined and discredited.

Hopelessness

Only the struggle for a workers' government which will base itself on the roused and active masses of the working class — that is, on mass workers' democracy — offers a road out of Britain's impasse.

Only a labour movement which is willing and eager to use its strength in industry and on the streets to challenge the government, and to deny its claims to democratic validity, will be able to rally the forces to carve out that road.

Foot's reasoning and its conclusion of hopelessness offers nothing to socialism and not much to democracy, either.

He talks airily and at length about parallels which he supposes to exist between the Labour Party since the 1979 defeat and the Party after 1931 — as if we are on a roundabout with a fixed recurrence of events. He does not notice that the apparently circular motion is on a downward spiral — that Britain is declining and rotting, that Thatcher's drastic action needs to be met with a working class alternative for drastic action in our interests.

The labour movement needs to rouse itself into a campaign to bring down this undemocratic and anti working class government. We need a perspective of hope and belief in the possibility of an alternative system. The labour movement needs to have its vague commitment to socialism honed sharp and clear, in a campaign to fight the Tories with everything we've got and to prepare a working class socialist alternative.

Socialist Bookshelf

Books and pamphlets that you should read



Marx

Martin Thomas outlines some aspects of the Communist Manifesto.

THE 'Communist Manifesto' of 1848, together with 'The Poverty of Philosophy' (1847), was Marx's and Engels' first statement of their theory of class-struggle socialism. And as the first statement, is still fresh and vivid today as not even the most brilliant re-statements can be.

The Marxist theory did not drop from the sky or spring suddenly from the private genius of Marx and Engels. They based themselves on painstaking study of earlier writers and, decisively, on their own experience in the workers' movement.

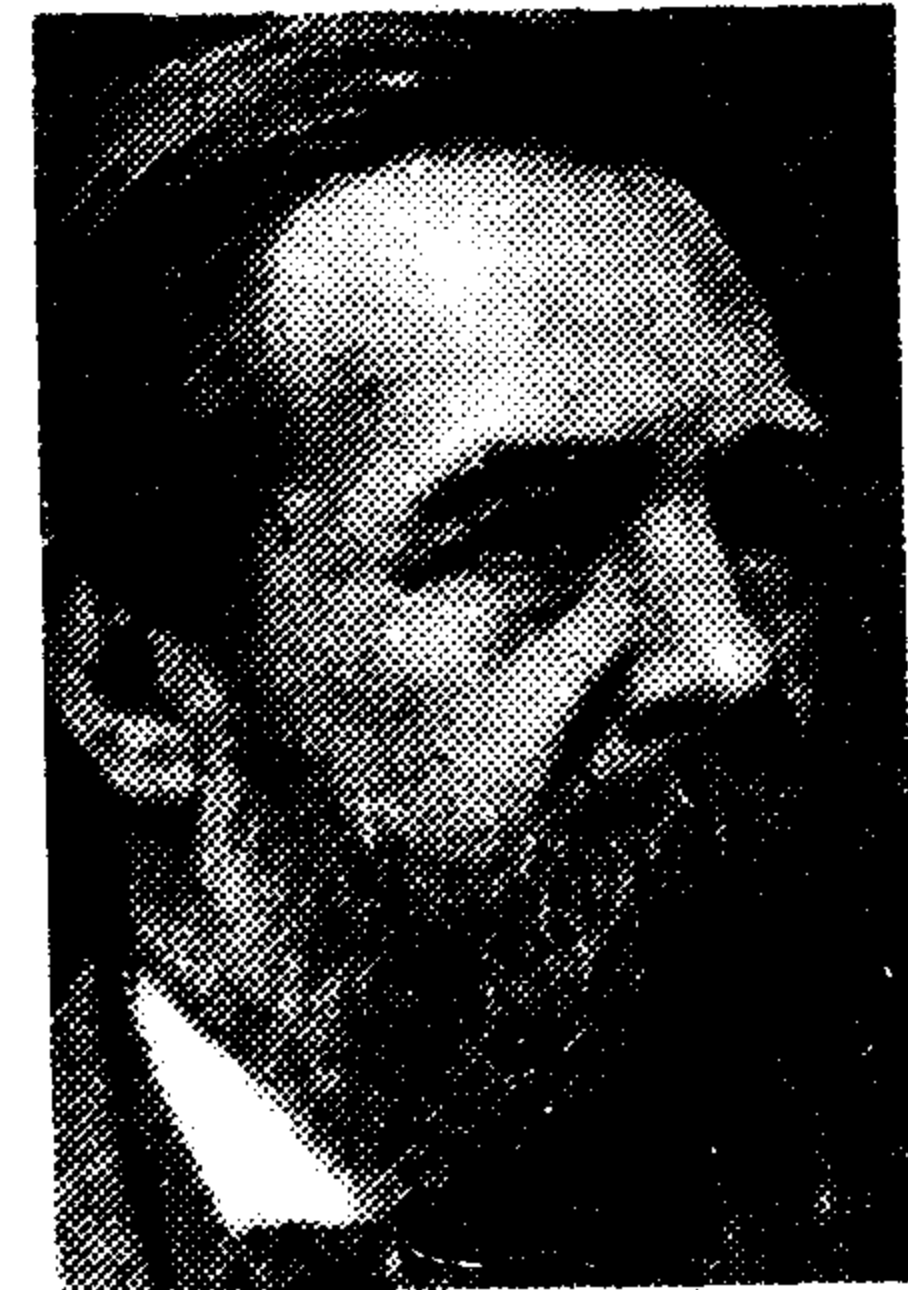
Marx and Engels started their political activity as radical democrats. They were educated and won over to revolutionary socialism by the workers' communist groups they came into contact with.

Instinctive

Later Engels recorded: "when it appeared, we could not have called it a *Socialist Manifesto*. In 1847 two kinds of people were considered Socialists.

"On the one hand were the adherents of the various Utopian systems... On the other, the manifold types of social quacks who wanted to eliminate social abuses through their various universal panaceas and all kinds of patchwork without hurting capital and profit in the least. In both cases, people who stood outside the labour movement and who looked for support rather to the 'educated' classes.

"The section of the working class, however, which demanded a radical reconstruction of society,



Engels

convinced that mere political revolutions were not enough, then called itself *Communist*.

"It was still a rough-hewn, only instinctive, somewhat crude Communism. Yet... Socialism was, on the Continent at least, quite respectable, whereas Communism was the opposite.

"And since we were very decidedly of the opinion as early as then that 'the emancipation of the workers must be the act of the working class itself', we could have no hesitation as to which of the two names we should choose."

Socialism had become a political movement with the French Revolution of 1789-1799. Throughout the first half of the 19th century, radicals sought to find a road to the society of fraternity, and equality which the revolution of the French middle class had tantalisingly promised but been unable to create.

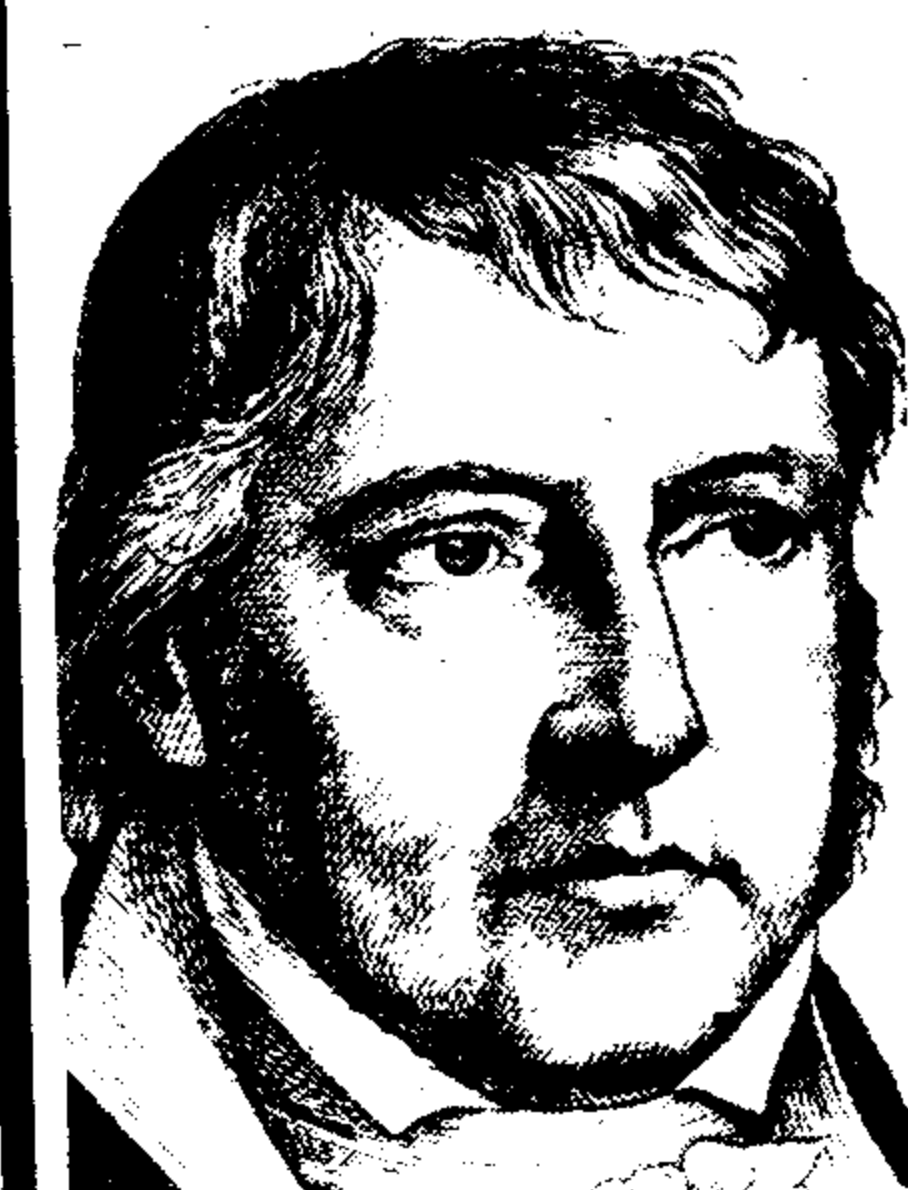
Schemes for co-operatives, 'labour banks' or miniature socialist communities, were one road. Supporters of each scheme, of course, considered the rival schemes wrong.

'Social quacks'

Marx criticised the utopians, too—but showed how they reflected a real stage in the development of the socialist movement, when the working class was still barely developed. Their schemes contained, in however fantastic a form, revolutionary criticisms of existing society—of the alienation of labour, of the oppression of women—from which Marx learned.

The Manifesto surveys all the utopians and 'social quacks'. But from the general criticism it specifically exempts "that literature which, in every great modern revolution, has always given voice to the demands of the proletariat, such as the writings of Babeuf (leader of the Communist conspiracy of 1796, during the French Revolution) and others".

This "revolutionary literature that accompanied these first movements of the proletariat had necessarily a



Hegel

reactionary character. It inculcated universal asceticism and social levelling in its crudest form."

The Manifesto was in fact the manifesto of an organisation—the Communist League—directly descended from Babeuf's conspiracy.

What Marx meant by the "reactionary" character of the Babouvist doctrine, he had explained some years earlier: "The crude communism is only the culmination of this levelling-down proceeding from the pre-conceived minimum... How little this annulment of private property is in reality an appropriation is in fact proved by the abstract negation of the entire world of culture and civilisation, the regression to the unnatural simplicity of the poor and undemanding man who has not only failed to go beyond private property, but has not yet even reached it."

In short, this communism did not propose to develop a system of human liberation including everything positive in bourgeois individual freedom. It did not propose to strip that individual freedom of its competitive, alienated, race character, and to lift the burden of material inequality which makes that freedom a mockery for the exploited majority under capitalism.

It simply negated bourgeois individualism with, as Marx later called it, barracks communism."

Marx took from the Babouvist tradition its programme of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the common ownership of the means of production. But instead of crude levelling-down, he succeeded in winning the Communist League to a programme of socialism as a step for human liberation which goes beyond and encompasses all the positive achievements of bourgeois civilisation.

In the opening section of the Manifesto, he portrays capitalism's tremendous development of the productive forces, which makes it possible to transform the dreams of the utopians into practice.

And, instead of the fixation of the early communists on conspiratorial armed uprising, Marx showed that the class struggle inbuilt in capitalism is the means to realise these possibilities.

The basic struggle over wages and conditions of labour unites and organises the working class in opposition to the capitalists. But the workers cannot hope to seize bits of factories for their private property to establish themselves as a new privileged class. They can only raise themselves by fighting for common ownership and making their own rule of struggle—solidarity—the rule of society.

Thus "the theoretical conclusions are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered by this or that would-be universal reformer."

"They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes."

The 'Communist Manifesto' laid the basis on which socialist theory could develop, not as a clever scheme or a blueprint, but as an effort to learn from and interact with the living class struggle.

FILMS THAT HELP US GALVANISE ACTION

by Dave Turner

ANYONE who has taken part in a strike, occupation or any action that has attracted the attention of the media, in particular television, will have experienced the frustration and anger of seeing their struggle distorted and misrepresented on their screens.

It is this kind of experience that demolishes those illusions that the media have so carefully created for themselves as neutral arbiters, "objective" always in their representation of the working class in action.

But even when film crews, film editors, etc., cover events with good intentions, the problem of professionals going into a "location" from the outside with little or no understanding and certainly no real involvement with the people they are supposed to be representing remains, with the inevitable consequences.

As always, it is imperative for an oppressed class, sex or people to represent and express themselves for

themselves.

There were attempts in Britain back in the 1930s to set up workers' film groups, such as the Film and Photo League and the Kino Group, but with a few exceptions, much of what is nostalgically resurrected from time to time is particularly unimaginative (endless rallies and marches), plain embarrassing (Tory ladies won over to sweet reason by left book clubs) or simply giving out the current Stalinist line at the time (demos in Trafalgar Square, etc.), all in all recipes destined mostly for the dustbins of history.

Myth

The British labour movement had to wait until the late '60s to get a film group more attuned and integrated into the realities of class struggle.

Cinema Action was formed around a nucleus of amateur and professional

film makers and militants in 1968, with the understanding of the need for films communicating class action (strikes, occupations, rent strikes) that would be part of those struggles, breaking with that bourgeois myth that documentation (news) is somehow "above" taking sides—a vitally useful myth for the capitalist class.

Their first film, *In Place of Strife*, was made in 1969, and so Cinema Action were able to take a part in the mass mobilisations that took place against the Heath government: with films on the campaign against the Industrial Relations Act, the Dockers' strike (title: *Arise Ye Workers*), the UCS occupation, the miners' strike and many other smaller actions, with a film on the north of Ireland made in 1971.

These films were often made very rapidly, enabling them to be used as part of those struggles—campaigning films communicating information, the lessons to be

learnt, encouraging solidarity, and shown at branch meetings, public meetings, and workplaces, seldom reaching proper "big screens", and of course, never on TV.

Finance was always a struggle in itself for Cinema Action—occasionally some unions (NUM, AUEW) contributed, but mostly these films came together on borrowed money and donations.

Changes

After the Tory government's downfall and the debilitating effects of the Social Contract, the group found it necessary to re-adjust to the new conditions and have spent the last few years creating a small cinema in north London (to be opened next spring) and finishing a new film on the lives of a woman, her family and community in the valleys of South Wales, examining in a historical

context the changes taking place in peoples' lives under the pressures of the capitalist crisis.

Reminder

Some of these films will be very useful for SO meetings: in the film sense they go from good to excellent, politically they will be a good focus for discussions on the role of the reformist and Stalinist leaderships in these historic struggles.

And for those with short memories or suffering any symptoms of defeatism, these films will act as a forceful reminder that the working class, when mobilised, can defeat anti-union laws, get workers out of jail and bring hated governments down on their knees.

For a full list of their films write to: Cinema Action, 27 Winchester Road, London NW3. Tel: 01-586 2762.

Danger of Industrial Tribunals

THERE IS an important issue which seems to be going unnoticed at the moment by the workers' movement.

This issue is 'Industrial Tribunals', which is a way that the bosses and Tories can attack the workers from behind the capitalists' law.

An industrial tribunal is a bosses' kangaroo court. All the three members of the panel are appointed by the government. This means that select people who do not wish to see the extension of workers' rights.

Unfortunately, I did not realise this and took my case before the Tribunal, where I thought it was certain I would win.

The background of the case was that I worked for a local Golf Club as a green-keeper in this area. Average take-home pay for 40 hours

was £27. Overtime pay was not allowed, but overtime was expected. This 'usually' meant a 5.30am start most Saturdays and Sundays during the 'growing season'. The Club also refused to give me the rights of a 'contract of employment'.

My crimes for receiving the 'sack' was missing five days at Horticultural College for which my punishment was the removal of 19 days holidays. After this I decided to join the TGWU again (I had been a member before taking that particular job).

I tried to unionise the Club with the other employees and try and receive the basic union rights on breaks and pay.

The crunch came when the club extended the course by four holes and expected me to cut the old holes and the new ones, meaning overtime without pay. I refused and was sacked without the chance to consult my union official.

Not satisfied with this I was found guilty of bringing an unreasonable case and a £50 fine was imposed, and I was told how lucky I was to have been employed earning 80p an hour—better than the youngsters on YOPs.

In my experience of this 'court' I have seen that the rights of all workers cannot be defended until these kangaroo courts have been disbanded and smashed. I feel they should be replaced by:

1. Workers' committees, with freely elected people from local factories and unemployed unions.

2. Less centralisation of the hearings and these should be moved to most towns, to allow witnesses to travel.

3. Free legal aid and full wages to every applicant and witnesses.

4. No waiting time scale before cases can be taken to a hearing before the committee.

5. Complete press freedom to put each side of the argument without omissions and distortions of the usual media.

I think that a campaign has to be fought quickly to preserve workers' rights, if not around these ideas then similar ones. I personally hope that somebody can expand these ideas into a concrete set of proposals.

Yours fraternally,
ANN McKINLEY
UCW (in personal capacity)

Organise left in UCW

I NOTE with interest recently the two articles written in SO by POEU members and am writing now to initiate something that I believe is well overdue—a Socialist Organiser Post Office Group formed of militants and socialists who read or actively support SO in the UCW, POEU and CPSA.

While each of these unions has its Broad Left (UCW's set up only a year ago), I believe there is a need for socialists and militant trade unionists in the Post Office (Telecoms and Postal) to have a general and co-ordinated strategy on their industries.

I would be willing to convene a meeting to see the possibilities of this, preferably on a Sunday before the end of March.

Anyone interested should contact me at 33 Norreys Avenue, Oxford OX1 4ST or phone (best time 11-12pm) at 0865 725517 and let me know the Sundays they cannot attend and I will arrange for a date and venue, obviously somewhere central like Birmingham.

ANN McKINLEY
UCW (in personal capacity)

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.

Disgrace of those who vote for PTA

I WISH to bring to your notice a subject which I feel the trade unions and indeed the Labour Party itself has ignored for far too long. It is about time that we all tried to get something done about the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the Official Secrets Act.

Now both of these Acts are being abused and have

clearly outlived any usefulness they may have had.

It is a well-known fact that the PTA has been used to intimidate the Irish population from becoming politically active in this country.

It was the creation of Roy Jenkins and has been supported ever since by the majority of MPs and indeed some so-called left wing MPs

have been very quiet about it.

It is a disgrace for any trade unionist or socialist to vote for an Act as draconian as this.

We know Mr Jenkins was no socialist so one can understand him bringing in such repulsive legislation.

But it has been around for too long and must be removed from the statute book.

Also there is too much secrecy in this country. If we really believe in a democratic system we must work to publicise the fact that people in every other country in the world can know what is going on in Britain. But the people who live and work here must be kept in the dark.

The Official Secrets Act has been used to suppress free speech and threaten people with imprisonment. It is not about giving secrets to the Russians (Anthony Blunt has already kept them up to date). It is there mainly to cover up all the scandals which, if exposed, would possibly bring down governments.

It is used to protect people in high places who are involved in all sorts of corruption and graft. Admittedly there are a lot of things that need changing. But until we get rid of these two undemocratic Acts of Parliament we will make no headway on the other fronts.

The PTA also stops the troops out movement because people know the harassment they can get and no comeback. Please let's get a campaign to get rid of these Tory laws and get a breath of fresh air into Parliament.

You can through SO start campaigning, but we need the trade unions to come out in favour of repeal as well.

How about it?
PAT BYRNE
Coventry

Fighting for unity on Turkish solidarity

THE letter from Jim Moody (SO 99) on behalf of the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey taking issue with Dogan Tarkan's recent interview SO 99) needs a reply.

Though the Turkey Solidarity Campaign is not mentioned, since we were the main organisers of the successful fight against Dogan's deportation it is possible for us to say something about the 'distortions' of which he is accused.

On the question of CDDRT being notified about initiatives organised by Dogan's defence campaign. The picket of Downing Street was part of a Week of Action leading up to the first anniversary of the military coup; the programme of activities was announced at a press conference on August 1, to which the CDDRT were invited.

Requested

They were later circulated with details. Regrettably, CDDRT as an organisation failed to support that or any other of our activities.

But at a rally held after the picket, with CDDRT supporters present Dogan spoke from the platform and strongly argued for the CDDRT to give their support to his struggle.

The following day came the CDDRT rally referred to by Dogan where the question of his speaking arose. It is not true that nobody from CDDRT was informed. I personally approached a leading CDDRT organiser, a person

who had been acting for them in joint TSC/CDDRT discussions for many months and requested that Dogan speak.

Category

This was refused. If Jim Moody still disputes this, perhaps he might also explain why TSC supporters who were in the hall getting signatures for Dogan's petition, were obstructed from doing so by stewards.

He might also let us know of a single thing actually done by CDDRT to assist Dogan's campaign.

The failure of CDDRT to join with us and work together on this or indeed any other campaign is a real problem which TSC has consistently done all it can to overcome.

But the difficulties are compounded by Jim Moody's version of events at their conference on December 12 where the issue of TSC/CDDRT unity was proposed by the delegates supporting the TSC.

It is worth pointing out that, as with the June 1981 congress to which Jim Moody refers, the TSC was not only not informed that the December 12 conference was taking place, but we were actually refused the right to attend since TSC was not regarded as falling into the category of 'democratic progressive organisations' to which the conference was open.

Nevertheless, many TSC members attended as delegates from a number of bodies, primarily to sup-

port a lengthy motion they had submitted calling for unity around a series of practical activities.

It is right to say there was 'free and open discussion': but what Jim Moody fails to mention is that a counter resolution to that moved by TSC was then introduced by CDDRT's main Turkish supporters which took up practically all the points in the original but omitted any reference to unity.

"Unanimity"

It was this which Dogan was referring to as an example of divisiveness. TSC members, having failed to restore the resolution's call for a united solidarity campaign, nonetheless did not oppose the final conference statement since we give support to all actions designed to further opposition to the Turkish dictatorship, whether based on the need for unity or not.

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Less comment!

I HAVE bought, read, sold and written for SO since it began and have come to the following conclusions.

The paper does not escape from the criticism I would level against all the left press. It does not speak to people as people; the jargon excludes most ordinary people.

Your writers are never content to report events but

always give running commentaries and descriptive words that attempt to order your readers to think and feel the same as your writers about certain events.

Useful

The big raging headlines on the International page give the mind and eye no room to think and decide if

that's the way they want to see things.

The reasons for this should be examined by all those who find this paper useful to them and who want to create an alliance of activists who can use it successfully to fight for the creation of a socialist society.

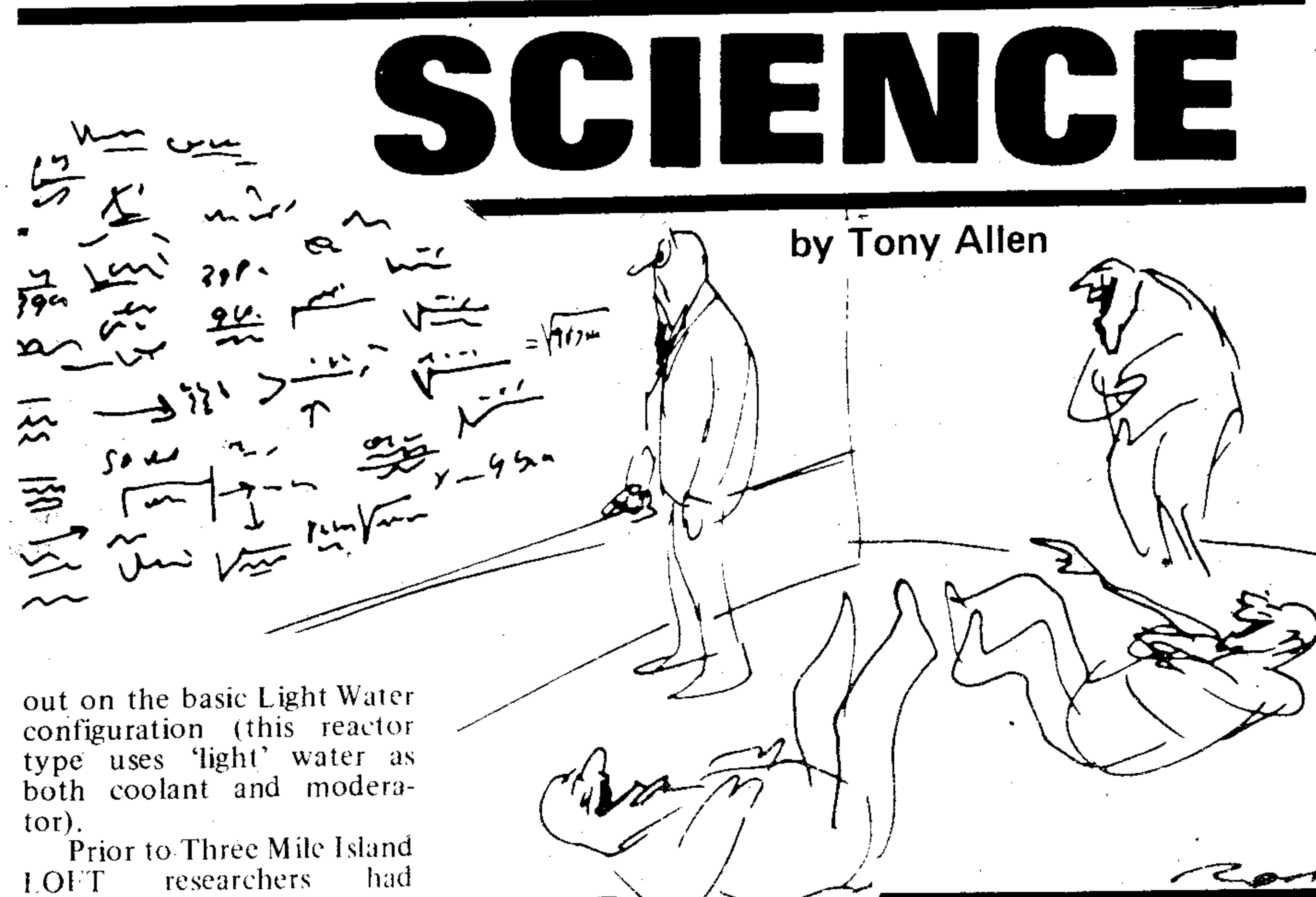
JOHN McDONALD
Edinburgh

Rehearsals for full-scale melt-down

ONE OF the few progressive acts of the lately defunct Carter clique was the presidential directive calling for a special enquiry into nuclear reactor safety. Certainly with public opinion running skyhigh after the calamitous meltdown at Three Mile Island, something had to be done.

You will be relieved to know that as a result, scientists at the US National Engineering Laboratory (Idaho) were instructed to alter their expensively scheduled safety programme and to further investigate the type of accident occurring at Harrisburg. The tests involved simulated accidents in a one-sixtieth scale thermal reactor.

The programme—named the Loss of Fluid Test (LOFT)—refers to an unfortunate loss of vital reactor cooling water and is carried



out on the basic Light Water configuration (this reactor type uses 'light' water as both coolant and moderator).

Prior to Three Mile Island LOFT researchers had

carried out simulated nuclear 'alerts' involving a traditional scenario: large pipe breaks with subsequent loss of reactor cooling water. On each occasion the malfunction was located and contained within a minute.

But Three Mile Island involved minor leakage from a damaged relief valve that wasn't spotted for 90 minutes so the LOFT schedule was redirected towards this type of breakdown, and more specifically, into analysis of operator response times.

So what did the experts find?

Strain

The key points are summarised thus. In sharp contrast to previous experiments of a minute or so, one small leak test was timed at 90 minutes while another lasted

all of six hours. Further tests have indeed confirmed that long, simmering accidents place tremendous strain on both operators and emergency systems.

It was reasoned that LOFT did not reveal any flaws in existing nuclear technology although every reactor type carried its own set of potential malfunctions. However, unmoderated 'fast' reactors do generate mechanical failures absent from thermal LWRs, so that during a scram there is a definite risk of a core re-alignment creating an intense radio-active surge... and nuclear explosion.

Significantly, it was admitted that the 250 reactor-years of crisis-free operation of LWRs (so far) have limited value in determining the accident rate for the year 2000.

Clearly absolute safety is an illusion, a fact echoed by the anti-nuclear lobby. They argue that LOFT offers incontestable proof that all nuclear plant is inherently unstable and so a public menace, especially so since 90% of American reactors are of the Harrisburg mode (i.e. LWRs).

And, as they point out, investigation of that \$1 billion radio-active disaster has yet to be carried out!

Nevertheless, the long-term direction of energy supply is going increasingly toward nuclear power and continued massive profits for Exxon, Westinghouse, Rio Tinto Zinc, etc. A fast reactor programme alone will screw American workers for a cool \$200 billion... unless they scam it first!

Source: Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists Nuclear Engineering International.

Fighting for union democracy

TASS: WHERE THE CP OPPOSES ELECTION OF OFFICIALS

TASS, the white collar section of the AUEW, is often cited by Communist Party members and sympathisers as an example of how a union can be militant and democratic with APPOINTED full-time officials. GEORGE MASON examines the reality.

TASS prides itself on its 'progressive policies'. In some ways this is true. TASS was one of the few unions to oppose wage control throughout the period of the last Labour government, although its officials found every opportunity to prevent actual struggles over wages.

TASS also gives consistent support to the National Council for Civil Liberties and to many liberation struggles.

However, it was also the first union to put forward the Alternative Economic Strategy, and the most strident in its calls for import controls on cars and other manufactured goods. In fact it represents faithfully the industrial and political policies of the Communist Party, which dominates its Executive Committee and full-time officials.

Amalgamation

The merger of DATA (forerunner of TASS) with the AEU and two other unions to form the AUEW in 1970 was part of a grand strategy by the CP to gain a dominant influence in Britain's second largest union. Together with Hugh Scanlon's supporters on the AEU executive and national committee, the CP hoped that the Broad Left leadership of TASS would ensure a permanent Left majority within the amalgamated union.



Ken Gill - appointed General Secretary of TASS

During the 1960s the Broad Left in DATA, which contained a major section to the Left of the CP, had fought around the slogan 'one union for engineering'. In the course of major industrial struggles such as the shipbuilding lock-out and the Rolls Royce strikes, the Broad Left succeeded in mobilising members to throw out the previous right wing

leadership of the union and adopt a policy of amalgamation.

Members such as Mike Cooley argued that technological change was destroying the distinction between manual and white collar engineers, and that the only way forward was through creating a united organisation at plant, combine and national level.

But no sooner had the

Broad Left been victorious than the CP turned on its left-wing allies. Since then every method, including slander, rumour, organisational changes, political persecution, jobs for the boys, and complicity in victimisation, has been used to destroy any opposition on their left.

For instance, the composition of annual conference

was changed so that instead of delegates and motions being sent directly from branches, they were filtered at divisional level. This ensures that to have a voice at conference a minority must control a whole division.

To get over the fact that the largest division in the union was controlled by the revolutionary left, the

structure of the executive was changed so that this division had to share an executive member with two other smaller divisions under CP dominance.

In this way the revolutionary left was removed from the executive. The union office in this division was also closed down.

In the recent disputes in Lucas Aerospace, the TASS leadership has done everything to isolate the TASS combine committee from its membership by leaving groups of members isolated and confused. The result was that Mike Cooley was victimised and other leading stewards demoralised.

Hostility

One Divisional Organiser had previously boasted that he had been sent to London to 'deal with Cooley'.

Why has the CP behaved in this way? The answer can be seen in the attitude of the TASS leadership to the election of full-time officials. One major cause of friction with the other sections of the AUEW has been that TASS is the only section whose officials are appointed and not elected by the members.

Originally TASS's position was that new officials would stand for election but that existing officials would keep their jobs for life. But recent informal statements by leading activists suggest a shift to outright hostility to any elections. The view is expressed that TASS's predominantly status-conscious professional workers

would not vote for left-wing officials.

This is given the lie by the many plants where TASS members have consistently supported leadership to the left of the CP.

Fear

The truth is that the CP sees leadership as bureaucratic control from above. They have a mortal fear of mobilising the rank and file through industrial and political struggle. For instance motions calling for plant level amalgamated union committees were always opposed at TASS conference, and where inter-union combines have emerged they have been treated with suspicion and hostility.

Stranglehold

TASS's vote in the deputy leadership contest went to Tony Benn, but this was not the result of any consultation with the members. Neither branches, divisional councils, nor annual conference were asked for an opinion.

The fear of losing control is brought out even more clearly by TASS's extraordinary record on CND. Throughout the 1970s when CND was a paper organisation, the union supported it and Divisional Councils had CND delegates. But at this year's annual conference affiliation was rejected on the grounds that CND was now 'out of control' (i.e. recruiting).

From being the standard-bearer for reform of the union, the Broad Left has now become a bureaucratic stranglehold that prevents debate of political and industrial matters, and prevents an open struggle for leadership positions which would involve the rank and file members.

Abide

The decline in activity of branches and divisional councils is a direct result of these policies of the CP. To bring the union back to life the following steps are essential.

1. The return of control over industrial disputes from National Industrial Officers to Joint Office Committees, branches and Divisional Councils.

2. The freeing of TASS representatives to play their full part in inter-union combine organisations by being able to commit their members to abide by majority decisions.

3. The return to branches of the right to send policy resolutions direct to Annual Conference.

4. The regular election of all negotiating officials including the General Secretary.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER MEETINGS AND FORUMS

NORTH-WEST LONDON. Monday Feb.15: Poland Monday Mar.15: A Woman's Right to Work Monday Apr.12: Fund-raising social to commemorate the Easter Rising. Details from SO sellers.

SHEFFIELD: Every other Wednesday, at the Brown Cow, The Wicker. Business 7.30, discussion 8.30. Feb.17: Ireland Mar.3: Turkey Mar.17: The decline of US capitalism Mar.31: Women and the labour movement

LEIGH: Every other Sunday 7.30 at the White Lion (opposite the market).

Feb.21: Afghanistan and the Soviet invasion.

STOCKPORT. 'The way forward for the Labour Left'. Thursday February 11 7.30 at the Manchester Arms, Wellington Rd.

LAMBETH: Sundays at 7pm. For venue phone 609 3071. Feb.28: The origins of the Labour Party.

MARXISM

London Workers' Socialist League classes on basic Marxism: alternate Fridays, next class February 19 on 'The Working Day'. For details of registration and venue, write to PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

IRELAND

Trent Poly Labour Club conference on Northern Ireland. Saturday February 13, registration from 11am, at Trent Poly Student Union, Byron Building, Shakespeare St, Nottingham. Delegates' credentials £1.50 from TPLC, address above; visitors' 75p on the day.

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.

Manchester Labour Committee on Ireland: discussion on the southern Ireland general election. Thursday Feb. 25, 7.30 at the Briton's Protection pub, Gt Bridgewater St, Manchester 1. Open to all LP members.

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.

Defend a Women's Right to Work: public meeting called by the Women's Advisory Committee of Leeds Trades Council. Friday February 26 8pm at Leeds Trades Club, Saville Mount, Leeds 7.

Abortion and the Health Service: meeting organised by NAC and ALRA. Saturday March 13, 10.30 to 5, at 21 Star St, London W2. £2.50 (50p unwaged). Food and crèche.

Oxford Women's Fightback meetings. WOMAN'S RIGHT TO A JOB: Monday February 8, 8pm, East Oxford Community Centre, room 2. PORNOGRAPHY: Monday February 22, 8pm, same venue.

Rally for International Women's Day sponsored by Socialist Challenge, Revolution Youth. Speakers from the Fourth International. Mary Vinns, United Mine-workers of America. Speaker from Peoples Democracy. Speaker from Nicaraguan women's movement. Camden Centre, off Euston Rd, 7.30pm, March 12. Doors open 5.30pm. Stalls and displays. Entrance £1; 50p unwaged.

Hackney North Labour Party meeting. Monday February 15, 7.30 at Center-

prise, Kingsland High St. 'Unite to defeat the Tories, For Socialist Democracy, Join the Labour Party'. Speakers: Peter Tatchell, Bermondsey Labour Party: Bob Labi, Militant; Tariq Ali, Socialist Society. Chair: Ernie Roberts, MP.

Picket Kilmarnock Sheriffs Court: Friday February 19, from 9.30, in support of Abie Courtney, ex-Hunterston shop steward, on trial for the 'crime' of picketing the Hunterston oilrig yard during the September/October 1980 dispute there.

Transport details from Glasgow: phone Ian McLeish, 041-641 2204. The Campaign in Defence of the Right to Picket is to date supported by ASOB Glasgow branch 11, ASOB Glasgow branch 1, ASOB Partick branch 2, NALGO Edinburgh, Hillhead CLP, Ibrox branch LP, Crosshill/Prospecthill branch LP, Drumry/Summerhill LP, Portobello/Milton LP, Inch Gilmerton LP, Telford/Blackhall LP, Broughton/Inverleith LP, Rutherglen LPYS, Stirling Unemployed Workers' Association, Edinburgh UWA.

February
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WHAT'S ON

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

Fight the Cuts: rally and march organised by Birmingham Trades Council Anti-Cuts Campaign. Saturday February 27, assemble 10.30am Chamberlain Square.



Industrial News

Angry return at Scott-Lithgow

ON Wednesday 3 February, a meeting of the strikers at the Scott Lithgow shipyard at Greenock, near Glasgow, voted in favour of a return to work.

The strike had begun a fortnight before, when the workforce walked out in protest at management's failure to repair toilet facilities at the yard.

The dispute escalated into an all-out strike after management announced that they were not prepared to pay the workers for the time lost for the two days they were initially out.

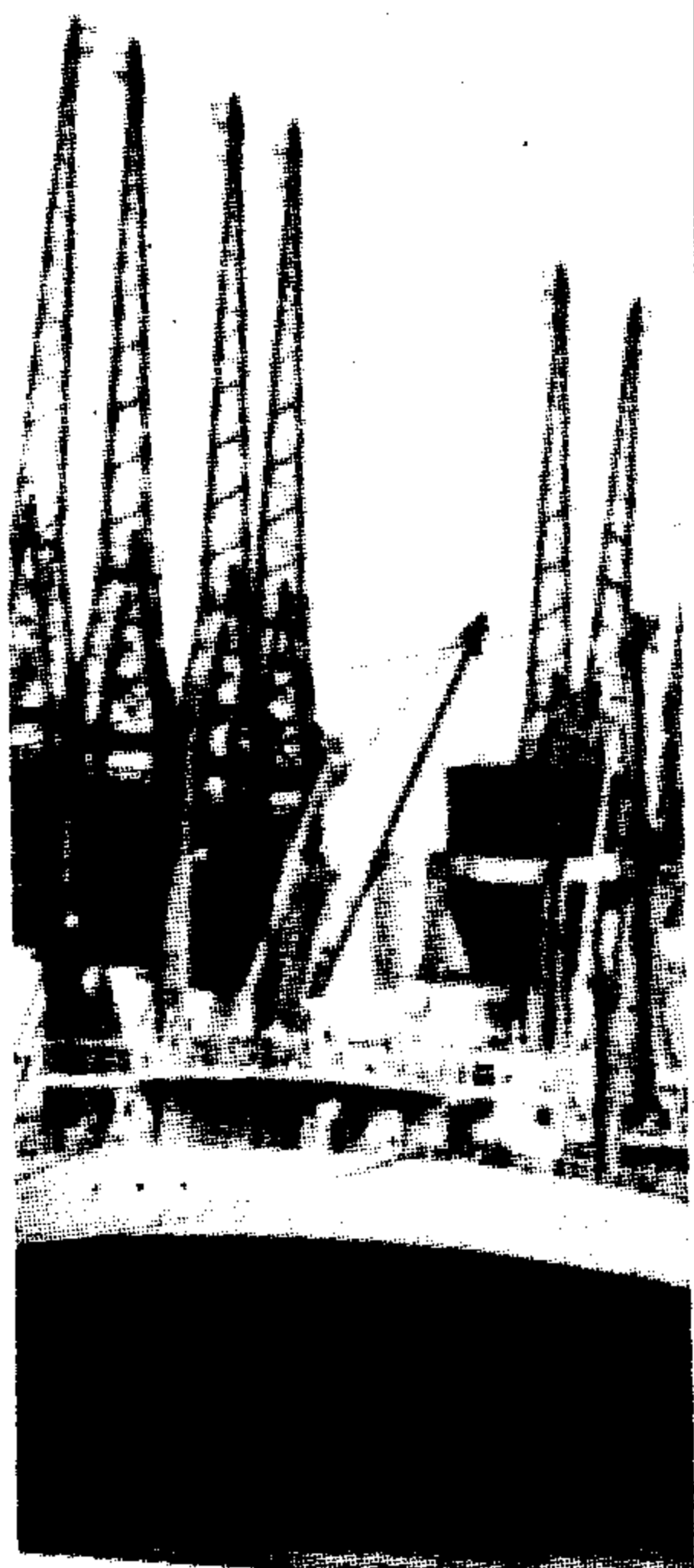
The workers were demanding restoration of adequate toilet facilities, full pay for the days on which there had been walk-outs,

Concede

The strikers were demanding restoration of adequate toilet facilities, full payment for the three days on which there had been walkouts, and full payment for the period during which the ensuing strike took place.

By the end of the first week of the strike management was prepared to concede payment for two of the days on which there had been walkouts. And by the end of the strike's second week, payment for the third day as well.

Last Wednesday, a mass meeting attended by 1,000 of the 1500 strikers voted by a margin of just 22 to accept this as the basis of ending the strike. They were being starved back to work. The strike was unofficial so there was no strike pay and the DHSS had docked £12 of the first week's Social Security due to the strikers, as well as throwing up other obstacles to prevent the strikers receiving benefits.



Discontent at the way in which the dispute has been conducted has also played a role in determining the vote at the mass meeting: many of the pickets had been angered by the fact that no strike committee was set up and by the decision by a majority of the shop stewards committee to allow out a vessel during the strike.

Anger

The narrow margin of the vote at the mass meeting is a reflection of the anger felt by the workforce toward management's do-nothing approach to working conditions at the yard, and a clear warning that the workforce at Scott Lithgow is no longer prepared to put up with worsening working conditions.

Students plan cuts fightback

by Simon Lindau

OCCUPATIONS at Salford, Southampton, Sheffield, Manchester and the Polytechnic of Central London and the 20,000-strong lobby of Parliament by students have demonstrated the great level of militancy against the cuts.

The majority on the NUS Executive, led by Left Alliance member David

Aaronovitch, have refused to actively support the occupations or to take the initiative to direct a national campaign of direct disruption.

Instead the NUS Executive has mobilised for ineffectual boycotts of lectures, and night time vigils in university libraries.

So much for the programme of events in the

forthcoming so-called Week of Action starting on March 1.

Sussex Students Union, alongside the campus trade unions, NALGO, ASTMS, NUPE, and AUT have organised a conference on Saturday 13 February to coordinate the present militant activity, which hopefully will form a basis to challenge

the ruling Left Alliance at the forthcoming NUS Easter conference.

Trade unions involved in higher education both locally and nationally are invited to send representatives to the conference where there will be discussions and workshops.

For further details contact the Students Union, tel: Brighton 698111.

Isolation takes toll of occupations

Loveable, Invergordon fights sabotaged

by Stan Crooke

BY THE time this issue of Socialist Organiser appears the sit-in at the Loveable Bra factory in Cumbernauld near Glasgow, occupied round the clock by its workforce since 8 January, may be all but over.

On Thursday 9 February Richard Corbett, head of the consortium, which is the only buyer interested in taking over the factory, visited Loveable and outlined his conditions for a takeover; reduction of the workforce to 92, compared with the present figure of over 300; and the right to pick and choose the 92 to retain their jobs.

If the chain stores renew their orders with the factory's new owners then another 48 jobs will be guaranteed.

A meeting of the workforce voted reluctantly to

accept the conditions. Sadie Lang, convenor at the factory told SO: "The consortium were the only people making an offer and the Receiver said the time was running out for them. It's a small victory. Corbett is offering jobs here in Cumbernauld and that's something. And it has prevented asset-stripping. If the Italians had taken over the factory, all the machinery would have been shipped out to Sardinia."

Deaf

Provided that the new deal between Corbett and the Receiver due to be finalised this week, goes through, the sit-in will continue until the new owners have declared the entire workforce redundant and selected the 92 to be re-employed. If the deal does not come off the sit-in will continue indefinitely.

While the retention of 92 jobs is a victory on one level the loss of 200 jobs is also a defeat. The blame for this must be put where it belongs—with the leadership of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers, the union to which the women belong.

Asked about the support they had received from their union, Sadie, after a lengthy pause, would only comment: "They've not been as helpful as they could have been. But I don't want to put people off joining the union. It's better than nothing."

The NUTGW has played an even more scurrilous role in this dispute than in the Lee Jeans sit-in of last year.

In that sit-in, the NUTGW provided next to nothing in the way of active support, but did at least publicise the sit-in. The women at Loveable Bras, however, have not even received publicity, never

mind, real support from the union.

As a result, messages of support for the women have been virtually non-existent.

Only three NUTGW branches, the local NALGO branch and the SNP have sent expressions of support.

Denied backing by their own union, isolated from and ignored by the rest of the labour movement, the workforce is forced into a weak negotiating position with the consortium.

Corbett must have known this and knew how to

exploit the situation created by the NUTGW leadership's scabbing by pushing through further cuts in the workforce and ensuring the right to pick and choose the victims.

The outcome of the sit-in, assuming the deal between the consortium and the Receiver is concluded, underlines the need to drive out the misleaders of the NUTGW and replace them with a leadership committed to and understanding the needs and interests of the membership.

Smelter fight called off

THE six week old occupation at the Invergordon Aluminium Smelter has ended.

Workers voted on Saturday 6 February to accept the BACO redundancy payments. These will average out at about £4,500.

The workers accepted the money after union leaders left them without support and the local Social Security refused to give them any money—telling them to ask BACO for some of the redundancy money they would be receiving!

The workers could not have continued without massive backing from the British labour movement.

They did not get this. Union bureaucrats never intended to wage a real fight

for jobs. The local union leaders spent their time negotiating increased redundancy payments, and organised no national tours for the Invergordon workers to rally support for the occupation. And the STUC did little or nothing to back the workers.

But even after the occupation is ended BACO needs a buyer for the Invergordon smelter otherwise its smaller smelters at Fort William and Kinlochleven will close—since the aluminium for these smelters comes through Invergordon.

Consequently BACO is allowing the Action Committee access to the plant which is remaining open on a maintenance basis.

Blacking essential at Jewel Razors

STRIKERS at Jewel Razors in Sheffield who have been out now since Christmas have been sacked by the firm. The management sent

all the strikers dismissal notices saying that they were "in breach of contract" and that management wanted a "happy, family atmos-

phere".

The response of the strikers was to stuff all the dismissal notices through the firm's letter box. A "happy, family atmosphere" at Jewel is maintained by scabs, which includes between 7 and 10 people recruited by Jewel from the Sheffield Job Centre; an old-age pensioner who has been taken on; and invites to former employees, some of whom have been sacked in the past, to return to their old firm.

Long

The pickets, who came out originally over the victimisation of shop steward John Cunningham (no relation) have just received a donation of £50 from the Yorkshire Area National Union of Mineworkers and NUM branches are being circulated to get more money for them.

The dispute is officially backed by the AUEW District Committee and the dispute looks set for a long fight. The strikers are determined to carry on and financial support and blacking action are essential.

Donations and messages of support to: Jewel Razors Strike Fund, c/o D.Brameld, 10, Parsons Cross Road, West Wadleybridge, Sheffield 6.

LEYLAND ACTION COMMITTEE
TRUCK OFF
Edwardes

Gerry Hoffa, ASTMS, outlined some of the background to the Edwardes plan. The aim was the destruction of the Vehicles Division as a manufacturing base as part of welding BL into a minor component of multinational capital.

He explained the details of investment starvation, outsourcing and privatisation. The answer was not AES-style demands for import controls or investment and planning agreements, (25,000 jobs were declared redundant under the NEB which also appointed Edwardes).

The only answer was a nationalised car industry, controlled by the workers, a demand which should be taken up as part of the fight for a workers' government.

A speaker from Cowley stressed the need for the strikers to learn the lessons of the past period and he

Fighting to spread BL jobs struggle

LAST Saturday in Leyland more than 30 workers attended a meeting called by the Leyland Action Committee to discuss the progress of the three-week old strike at the Vehicles Division.

In his introductory remarks, victimised ex-Longbridge steward Jim Denham (TGWU) pointed out that it was often groups thought of in the past as moderate—the last big strike in Lancashire was in 1969—which were providing the most stubborn and determined resistance to the Tories.

"You are the first group in BL to fight against Edwardes' redundancy plan with an enthusiasm that many will find astonishing. Because of this you can expect strong opposition, not only from the employers but also from Boyd and Duffy."

John Boyd, leader of the majority AUEW had recently published an article congratulating Edwardes, the man his members were fighting, and calling for the "casting aside" of stewards not prepared to collaborate with the Edwardes plan.



There should be no illusions in this leadership. Denham questioned whether the demands of the strike were adequate to the scale of the struggle. Vague calls for negotiations could easily lead to a return to work with promises but no concrete achievements.

Shouldn't the works committee educate the membership on the basis of "no return till no redundancies"?

Disputes follow NUM deal

by John Cunningham (NUM, Dinnington Colliery)

SINCE the settlement of the miners' claim a whole series of disputes have erupted in the Yorkshire coalfields.

Askern Colliery in the Doncaster area, Brookhouse and Manton in South Yorkshire have all had disputes in the last couple of weeks.

It looks like the National Coal Board has been encouraged by the ballot result to have a go at Yorkshire and a lot of pits are reporting disputes, often over quite niggardly and petty things.

Bonus payments are being cut back generally. Many pits are receiving less

than £6 a week and some only £2. The Doncaster panel have shown the way to deal with this attack by the Coal Board.

They have pledged to bring out the whole Doncaster area over the dispute at Askern and it is about time the South Yorkshire panel took the same stand.

We can't allow the board to pick us off pit by pit.

What do YOU think about the way forward in the NUM? Write in to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8

'An all-out strike is inevitable'

AS the ASLEF dispute continues, estimates vary as to the chances of its escalation by the union's Executive. SOCIALIST ORGANISER spoke to militants from Hertford and Kings Cross:

"THE general feeling at my branch is that diversifying the present two-day strike is a move in the right direction, but that eventually an all-out strike is inevitable—sooner rather than later.

"In the last week or two support for the picket has been dwindling—the general mood being that we seem to be wasting time and that to win requires a stronger fight.

"Some of our people at Hertford feel that Sid Weighell and some of the NUR Executive are deliberately making things difficult for us—after selling their own members down the river they seem determined for ours to go the same way.

"In the light of what seems to be an all-out effort to break ASLEF, it is increasingly important for all trade unionists to resist the Tory policies of lack of investment that originally brought this struggle about. They must support ASLEF and the NUR guards who have been sold out."

Alan Johnson, Trustee of Kings Cross ASLEF, spoke to Socialist Organiser:

What is your assessment of the present stage of the dispute?

It has only been a nuisance value so far. It has had some effect on BR's finances but the government have shown that they are prepared to extend cash to see the BRB through the dispute. The

effect on the transport of coal and bulk materials has been minimal.

What do you think of the ASLEF executive's present policy?

The present tactics could go on for weeks—we've given the initiative to the BRB to make the next move—an all-out strike should have been called weeks ago.

What can be done in terms of picketing to make the dispute more effective?

We should be organising pickets of all London Transport depots. Most LT ASLEF members realise they are next in line for flexible rostering and would be prepared to support us. Our EC is restricted by "legal ties" and won't touch LT—we must do it ourselves.

With the launching of the Liaison Committee do you believe that this body should be taking up the question of effective picketing?

If the Liaison Committee is not sabotaged from above then it must be expanded to cover all London depots and arrange for extensive picketing. Time is short.



Sid Weighell

Stable job- no wages!

£5 for a 60-hour week, great job, eh? That's what one young groom earned, according to the Low Pay Unit.

Their survey on the wages and conditions of the 20,000 (mainly girls) working in stables reveals that half of them earned less than £30 a week and 10% were paid less than £10. That's for well over 40 hours.

Six out of seven work over 40 hours, with half working between 41 and 50 hours and another third working 51-60 hours.

Many got no holidays at all and those that did were very lucky to get up to two weeks off. Lots of girls take the jobs because they like horses but then find as they get older they can't afford to keep the job. Employers are happy to see them go as they have no difficulty in finding new, younger super-exploitable labour. No doubt as the flood of unemployed youngsters swells they'll have even less difficulty taking them on at even lower wages. What an enviable prospect, the choice of compulsory government training or shovelling horse shit! Could you taste the difference?

Stockport stoppage

by Patrick Murphy

WORKERS at McLure and Whitfields Electromotor Plant in Stockport have been on strike for four weeks in protest at their low wages and poor conditions.

Some workers in the plant, at the top rate, take home just over £60 per week. The going rate for engineering workers in Stockport is £100 plus.

The Stockport factory is small, with some 100 workers, but the strike has 100% support from the shopfloor and official backing from the AUEW and EETPU and the white collar union. The workers have received no strike pay as yet and a strike committee fund has been established.

Conditions in the plant have been described by the workers as 'Victorian'. There is no canteen and no proper lighting. Workers must pay for their own overalls and working clothes.

Machines in the plant are packed tightly together. Up until recently the workers had to pay for the 'barrier cream' which they need for the job.

Management are making a big deal of the fact that this is now to be provided free. This 'barrier cream concession' has not impressed the strikers.

Apart from this the management will concede

nothing. In fact the parent company, based in Scotland, refuses to negotiate directly, sending instructions to local management not to budge.

The only serious offer to the workers was of £90 conditional on it being a bonus. This was unanimously rejected since the management have a long history of reneging on agreements and still refuse to put anything in writing.

Support from outside the plant has been strong. The main customers are the NCB and the Ministry of Defence, and the NUM have been contacted for support.

Support

The Scottish plant of the parent company have agreed to refuse to handle any work that is transferred, even though it is a very recently unionised plant.

Meanwhile back in Stockport no deliveries have passed the pickets and 100% support for the strike was reaffirmed at a mass meeting on Wednesday 27 January.

Support has been forthcoming also from engineering unions locally and the Stockport South Labour Party.

Donations and messages of support to: Strike Committee, c/o AUEW House, Wellington Rd., Stockport.



Unions to discuss fares fight

by Peter Kenway

Representatives from all London Transport branches have been called to a meeting on 17 February to decide on first moves in the fight against the fares rise.

The meeting has been called by a committee of nine full time union officials representing seven major LT unions. The committee was formed after the GLC Labour Group's original vote against compliance with the Lords' judgement.

The committee's aim has been to work out a joint response to the Law Lords decision and it is expected that their recommendations will be put to the delegate meeting for approval.

Union leaderships are thought to favour a one day strike, but there are considerable doubts whether the NUR is backing this. But LT workers have been left completely in the dark by the unions. A leaflet promised four weeks ago still shows no sign of appearing. The one-day strike proposal was criticised at a meeting last week of sixty workers representing LT unions where it was pointed out that a one-day strike could achieve little. The meeting decided nevertheless to call for the strike and at the same time call for an all-out stoppage. A leaflet for distribution at all LT sites will be drawn up in time for the delegate meeting.

Illegality

Support for the proposal not to collect the fares increase after March 21 was limited. So far one garage and one branch of the Transport Salaried Staffs Association are known to have come out in favour of this proposal. There are thought to be some difficulties in getting this to work and fears about its illegality may well frighten away the union leaderships.

FIGHT COWLEY WITCH-HUNT

By Harry Sloan

IN the run-up to elections for senior TGWU shop steward in BL's Cowley Assembly plant yet another witch-hunt has been launched by the right wing.

Two years ago, during the last elections right wingers aided by the Communist Party mounted a press and leafletting campaign witch-hunting the plant's left wing leadership over their defence of the Irish republican struggle: their "crime" had been to support the right of Provisional Sinn Féin to march through Oxford.

This time TGWU District Secretary Buckle has used the pages of the scurrilously anti-union Oxford Journal to launch accusations that "left wing Trotskyists" are "stirring up race hatred at British Leyland".

Buckle's allegations centre on a wave of written complaints tabled by black workers in the plant to the Commission for Racial Equality against the brazenly racist behaviour of the plant's chief security officer Ray Coxon.

Such complaints were "stupid", declares an arrogant Buckle. He claims that it was "attempts by left wingers to orchestrate a protest" which led to the delay between the initial angry walkouts over Coxon's actions last September and the complaints being brought.

Incapable

"The extreme left wingers have jumped on the bandwagon," insists Buckle—who plainly believes that black workers are incapable of thinking for themselves or organising their own campaigns. "They're exploiting the blacks for political reasons."

Of course nobody has been "exploiting" the legitimate anger of Cowley's black workers at the continued presence of Coxon in the plant. And if his

removal is a "political" question, then every principled socialist and trade unionist should endorse such politics.

Indeed TGWU convenor Bob Fryer fought hard at the time for a mass meeting and a 24-hour stoppage by the whole plant demanding Coxon's removal.

Cynical

Buckle, on the other hand, in a desperate bid to weaken the support of the left wing in the plant, is prepared cynically to attack a struggle by black workers to assert—in however limited a way—their rights.

By thus sabotaging the complaints, Buckle effectively lines up himself—and the TGWU—with BL's racist management, and sabotages the TGWU's official policy at the time of the dispute, which was to support the call for Coxon's removal.

This action has met an angry response from the biggest union branch in the plant—the 5/293 Branch—which has decided to challenge Buckle's conduct through the machinery of the union.

KICK OUT THE TORIES!

Labour democracy and the

fight for a WORKERS GOVERNMENT



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Women's Fightback Trade union conference

MARCH 27

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 by 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 cuts; jobs; fighting sexism; racism and the Third World.

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

POLISH DEMO -MARCH 13

Socialist Organiser

The Gdansk riots two weeks ago showed that the spirit and militancy of the Polish workers has not been broken by Jaruzelski's takeover. The Polish crisis simmers as the military attempts to quell a disaffected and hostile working class.

Unfortunately the reaction within the British labour movement has been very silent.

It is only now that the Labour Party has committed itself to holding a rally in support of Solidarnosc around March 9.

Although useful—it has been too little, too late. A far more powerful message of solidarity was the mass decision of Massey Ferguson workers to back Polish components.

It has been Solidarnosc trade unionists in Britain who have been centrally involved in visiting factories up and down the country, drumming up working class support for Poland.

A national demonstration is now being jointly sponsored by the Socialist Organiser Alliance and London Labour Briefing. The demonstration will be on Saturday March 13 in central London.

There will be speakers and representatives from the Solidarnosc Trade Union Group in the UK.

It is a specifically labour movement initiative and demonstration and we appeal to all Labour Parties, trade union branches and all left groups to sponsor the demonstration and help build it into as big an event as possible.

Down with the Polish Junta!

Free all political and union prisoners!

Free Wales!

No Warsaw Pact intervention!

No to the state unions!

Unconditional support for the Polish workers' fight!



Solidarnosc

ALL-OUT STRIKE VITAL FOR ASLEF!

BRITISH Rail's stab at breaking the ASLEF strike flopped dismally last Wednesday and Thursday, as NUR drivers rejected BR's appeal to cross the ASLEF picket lines at Aylesbury.

Now—according to the Guardian on Monday 8th—the BR bosses are considering:

*An Edwardes-style declaration that everyone must turn up to work on BR's terms as from a set day, or be suspended without pay.

*An outright union-busting move against ASLEF, telling its members that they must join the NUR or be sacked.

*A lock-out, shutting down the whole rail network.

Their strength to push through any of these is doubtful. So in the meantime BR are trying to bolster themselves with



threats of more line closures and a show trial of ASLEF at the McCarthy inquiry.

Their reserve weapon is NUR general secretary Sid Weighell, who despite his union executive's declared support for ASLEF's case joined BR's attack on the train drivers for boycotting the McCarthy inquiry.

Since ASLEF's demand is for the 3% already agreed to be paid without productivity strings, the McCarthy terms of reference are in effect 'to investigate how ASLEF can best be sold out'. An attempt by McCarthy himself to modify the terms and draw ASLEF in was blocked by BR—again

with the support of Weighell.

But continued stonewalling and stalemate on both sides, with ASLEF continuing its one-day strike policy, can in the end only wear down the drivers' militancy without delivering the knock-out blow. ASLEF militants are more and more convinced that an all-out strike is necessary.

Such an all-out strike, backed up by energetic picketing at docks, coal stocks and steelworks, could mobilise the strong support that exists for ASLEF in the rank and file of the labour movement, and hit not only BR but also employers dependent on supplies carried by rail like coal and steel.

It could transform the Triple Alliance of rail, coal and steel unions from a good idea existing only on paper and in official speeches, to a force capable of beating the Tories.

Already Yorkshire NUM has voted to extend their blacking support by adopting a policy of picketing coal depots to prevent coal shipments being diverted from rail to road transport.

Local liaison committees and strike committees can create the leadership necessary to push the ASLEF leadership into this all-out mobilisation, and to take it through to victory.

Plessey women defy the courts

by Dave Millikin

Workers occupying Plessey's Bathgate factory have voted to defy a court order (interdict) instructing them to leave the premises. The factory which employs 350 workers, 90% women, was occupied by the workers at 6 am on Monday 25 January.

Plesseys had announced complete closure of the plant to be effective from the end of February, and with Bathgate already one of the unemployment blackspots in Scotland, this proved too much for a workforce which had never before been on strike.

On Thursday 4 February management applied to the Court of Session for an interdict to remove them from the premises. Three senior stewards attended the hearing to read out prepared statements which invoked natural justice. Unmoved by this, Lord Kincaid announced that he was there to administer the law, not justice. The workers, how-

ever, were under no illusions about the law. A mass meeting held after the court hearing decided unanimously to continue the occupation and are showing more determination than the BL strike committee which had meekly surrendered their position the week before.

Blacked

The unions with members involved in the dispute are AUEW, TASS and APEX, all of which have declared the strike official. AUEW have written to other Plessey plants in England informing them of the situation and instructing them to black any work transferred from Bathgate.

What is urgently needed is for all Plesseys products to be blacked. Although the occupation is sitting on approximately £½ million worth of goods, for a company which declared over £100 million profit last year this will be little more than a nuisance. To turn it into a headache will require

action by other workers.

Bathgate supplies circuits for washing machines, calculators, computers and a whole range of other products. The steering committee has not yet organised around this demand although deputations have already been to visit other workplaces.

The Beeston factory will be visiting Bathgate on Friday 12, and it is to be hoped that the action will spread.

Play down

As usual, STUC have managed to play down this dispute. The workers are waiting for some concrete leadership but none is yet forthcoming. Time will run out for the sit-in unless support is urgently built. The interdict expires on Thursday 18 February and Plesseys can then bring in the Bailiffs to haul the 142 named individuals off to court. They will surely exercise this option unless the workforce can demonstrate

that they are fighting not only for their jobs but are doing so with the full weight of the labour movement behind them.

Noone ever believes that the law can benefit anyone in their situation, but the feeling is that if 200 bailiffs turn up, what can they do?

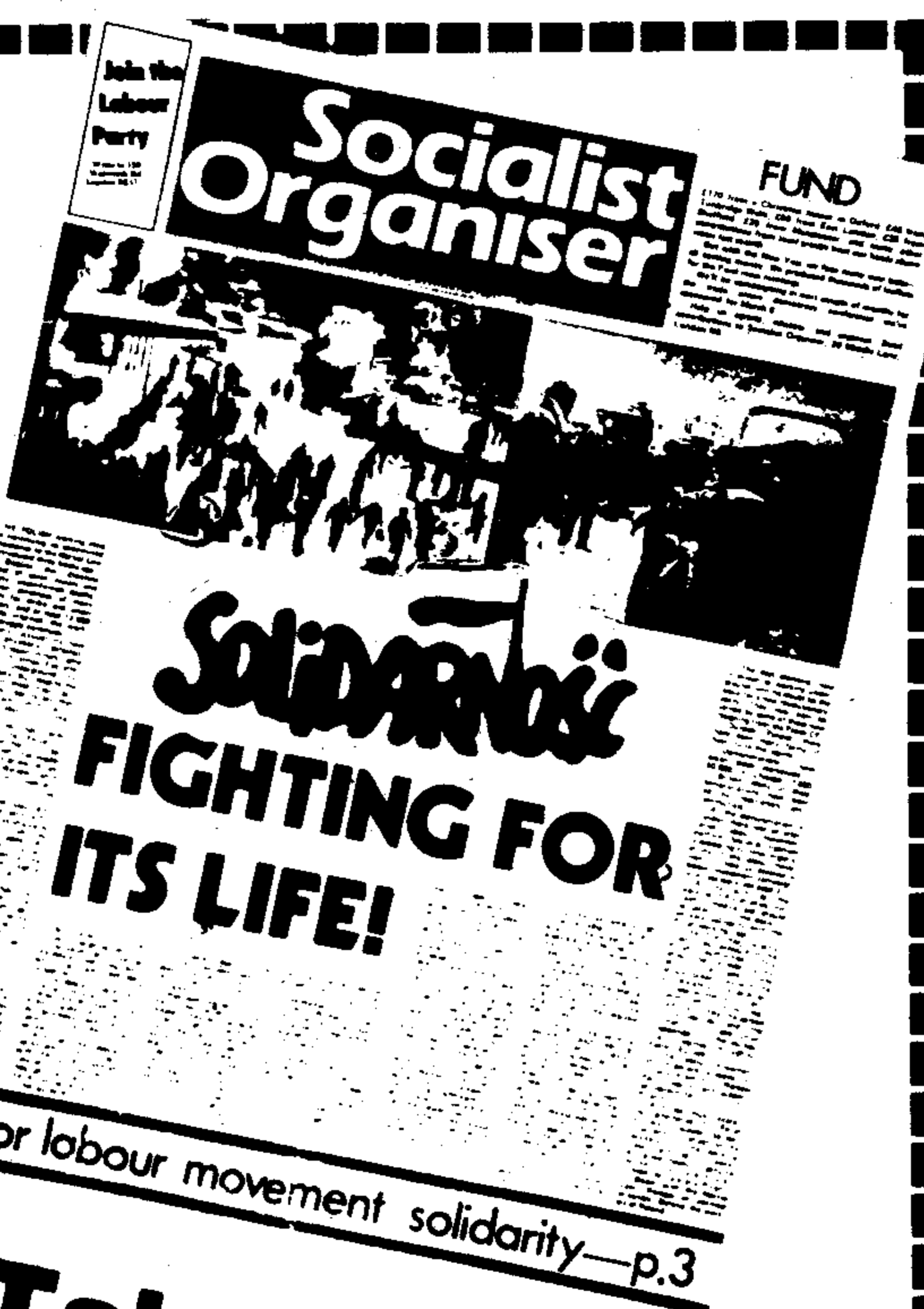
Susan Bradley, who has worked at Plesseys for 25 years, told me:

"I have spent a large part of my life working for the firm and feel that I am entitled to be treated better than a number."

Funds are urgently required. Noone has had any income since 15 January and they are thoroughly dependent on donations. Strike pay has not yet filtered through, and although contributions are coming in, (e.g. Govan Shipbuilders, formerly UCS, have pledged nearly £600 a week) it's a breadline existence.

Messages of support and contributions to the treasurer, Mary Murphy, 30 Main Street, Fauldhouse, West Lothian.

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