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Alliance

Socialist Organiser

Join the Labour Party! Against all bans and proscriptions

Fleet Street follows Edwardes' formula

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THATCHER'S PAY STICK-UP DOLE-LIGHT ROBBERY!



TUC runs for cover

AS THE Tory enemy marches to war, our leaders instruct the ranks to start making bandages.

The high point of the TUC's plans to counter the Tebbit law is a 10p per head levy on members to help unions meet the legal costs of actions against them under this law.

At the TUC's employment committee this Monday, 22nd, proposals for protest strikes and for union withdrawal from the National Economic Development Council and similar bodies were knocked back.

The draft document talks vaguely about joint union action to defend unions attacked under the Tebbit law, but in all proposes an even more feeble effort than the TUC mounted against the Prior law in 1980.

The proposals will go to the TUC General Council and then to a special conference of union executives on April 5.

Punitive

The Tebbit Bill would make all union action except direct employer/employee disputes confined to the workplace liable to punitive legal action. It needs the sort of mass resistance that crippled the Industrial Relations Act.

Union branches should be sending in resolutions to their national executives demanding a fight to reject the employment committee document at the April 5 conference. And they should also be demanding that trade union leaders who have spoken out for action against the Tebbit law, like Bill Keys of SOGAT, stick to their words, whatever the TUC does.

LAST WEEK'S pay offer to civil servants was a landmark in industrial relations. Gone is the soft soap and hypocrisy of detailed arguments about how much can be afforded; instead, in walks Thatcher's henchman with a sawn-off shotgun, announcing:

"The Civil Service has no difficulty in recruiting staff it needs, in most grades, at present rates of pay."

In other words the mass unemployment stoked up over the last three years—by savage Tory monetarist policies coupled with limp TUC resistance—is now being directly used to force down wages.

Freeze

As a result the government has announced a pay freeze for the 65,000 lowest paid civil servants, while nearly half are offered no more than 1-2%.

Only the top grades in the civil service, together with the strategically powerful computer staff have been offered more—a 5½% offer, plus some fringe benefits.

But civil servants are not the only victims of this latest Tory pay snatch. The same day saw leaders of the teaching unions reject an insulting 3.4% pay offer.

And in yesterday's pay talks representatives of Britain's 500,000 nurses put forward a 12% claim—only to be met with no offer at all from the employers!

Socialists have always argued that an important aspect of mass unemployment for the capitalist class is that it provides a reserve army of labour, whose existence can be used to intimidate workers in employment into accepting lower living standards.

But for the Tories to succeed in this tactic depends upon the capitulation of the trade union bureaucracy.

The climate for last

week's brutal announcements has been established through official betrayals of pay struggles in BL and Ford, and the avoidance of struggle by other public sector union leaders.

Not alone

Yet the other side of the coin—the willingness of workers to fight, given a firm national lead—was shown in the ASLEF dispute, in which BR management has been stopped in its own tracks.

The train drivers are not alone in wanting a fight. The announcement of the pay freeze for the lowest grades led to spontaneous civil service walk-outs last week.

Nurses have already staged militant demonstrations and protests over their miserable pay and working conditions.

But the Tory threats and

arrogance carry far more weight with the union leaders than they do with the membership.

Civil service union chiefs denounced the pay offer—but called for arbitration and hedged on the possibility of all-out action. Teachers' leaders are doing nothing to prepare their membership for a fight to improve the 3.5%. And while the nurses' "professional" body, the RCN, continues to oppose all strike action, the TUC affiliated health unions offer no lead for a fight on pay.

Yet inflation continues to tear into living standards. A new report shows that a 17% rise would be needed to compensate for inflation since last year—while no workers have achieved increases in excess of 9%.

To cave in now to the Tory tactic of using unemployment as a factor in pay

talks is to abandon defence of living standards for the foreseeable future. Such is the road to disaster for the working class as a whole—employed or unemployed.

Wage demands must be drawn up and fought for which at least make up for price rises in the last 12 months, and which include cost-of-living clauses to protect against further rises in prices, rents, rates and taxes in the coming year.

Challenge

This means in the public sector preparing the membership to challenge and defeat the Tory government.

Union leaders must be told either to fight for such policies or to move aside for a leadership that will.

Certainly the mood amongst civil servants has radically altered following Thatcher's pay offer.

On the initiative of an SO supporter, the London Area Committees are meeting to plan for a lobby of the arbitration meetings, and for a national demonstration linked to a one-day strike.

All-out strike

The unity on the left is shown most radically in the shift by the national Broad Left towards calling for all-out strike action.

The preparation for this strike action is moving ahead in many branches. It must be recognised that without official backing the dispute will primarily be confined to the DE and DHSS.

Yet even this strike action will lay the basis for a more radical challenge to the power of the union bureaucrats and the building of a militant movement within the civil service unions.

RUPERT Murdoch is the latest employer to try the Michael Edwardes formula—buckle under or bust. Unless workers on the Times and Sunday Times accept job cuts and redundancies to Murdoch's satisfaction, he will shut the papers down.

As we go to press, brinkmanship is still in swing. Constantly postponing the closure deadline, Murdoch has got 100 voluntary redundancies towards his target of 600 and is pressing for more.

Claiming losses of £15 million a year, Murdoch has insisted that an unbelievable 390 out of 670 clerical jobs on the two papers should go.

According to last week's Economist, the transfer of the titles from Times Newspapers to his parent company, News International, could give Murdoch the option of letting Times Newspapers go bust, and then reopening the same titles in different premises and without Fleet Street manning levels and conditions.

Locked out

It is only three years since the Times was closed from November 1978 to April 1979. Workers were locked out after refusing to accept drastic cuts in manning and conditions proposed by the then owners, the Thomson organisation.

Last September—following a lead given the previous month by Financial Times bosses—the Times locked out NGA machine men for refusing to guarantee that they would not work to rule in pursuit of a demand for a wage rise not linked to job cuts.

Despite a defeat in that dispute, the print unions are still strong. But their resistance has been crippled by divisions and by the no-fight line of the top officials.

Again in line with BL practice, the talks with Murdoch have all been in the hands of general secretaries. And Murdoch has been able to single out NATSOPA as the only union offering resistance of any sort, with hardly a squeal from the other unions.

No action

NATSOPA leader Owen O'Brien, for his part, volunteered his members as scabs in the NGA lockout last year.

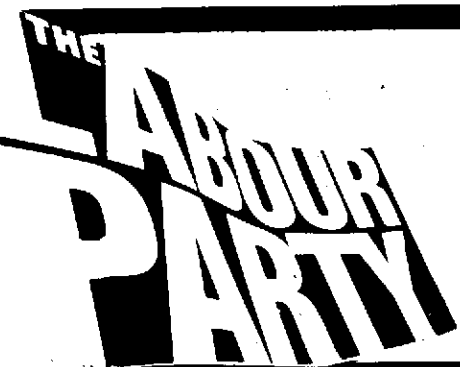
Barry Fitzpatrick, FOC for NATSOPA clerical workers on the Times and Sunday Times, has called on his members to treat Murdoch's voluntary redundancy offers "with contempt". But no action has been called, nor have there been moves for cross-union unity against Murdoch's threats.

A joint mass meeting of all the unions at the Times and Sunday Times could pave the way for a workers' occupation to begin the fightback against Murdoch and the other union-busters of Fleet Street.



Nurses demonstrate on pay—no offer in pay talks

Poland: Support Solidarnosc. Demonstration March 13. See p.5



Tatchell for Labour's NEC?

FOLLOWING the NEC's refusal to endorse Bermondsey's democratically selected parliamentary candidate, a number of comrades have suggested that Peter Tatchell should be nominated for election to the constituency section of the NEC at Annual conference in October. Comrades have pointed

out that if Peter Tatchell were to be elected to the NEC, or merely receive a substantial number of votes, it would give an added impetus to any appeal by Bermondsey for Annual Conference to overturn the NEC's decision. In such circumstances, the Conference could hardly refuse to

endorse his candidature. Though many of us in Bermondsey think the nomination of Peter Tatchell to the NEC is a good idea, we share some reservations in view of the effect it might have on the chance of other deserving, and more long-standing candidates. A decision of this nature must be made on the basis

of the widest possible consultation and agreement. Thus, before Bermondsey decides whether or not to stand Peter Tatchell for the NEC, we wish to take soundings from other constituency parties. On the basis of the feedback we receive we will make our decision. We would therefore

greatly appreciate the help of comrades throughout the country to sound out their local parties and communicate the responses to Bermondsey Labour Party, 133 Lower Road, London SE16.

Bette Crickmar,
Vice-Chair
Bermondsey CLP

WHO IS THIS BLOKE BISHOP STORTFORD?

SHORTLY before February's Labour National Executive meeting, Peter Tatchell spoke to John Bloxam of Socialist Organiser.

Labour is a very broad church, but Bishop Stortford, I think, is a bit beyond the pale. This bloke Bishop Stortford is a relative newcomer to the Party—he only joined in January—and already he is telling everybody what to do! And he's doing it without any consultation.

None of us were part of Bishops Stortford. We don't know what went on. We don't know what bargains were struck. The whole way Bishops Stortford was organised is the antithesis of a democratic party.

It really is like feudal monarchs surrounding themselves with a few barons and organising how the kingdom shall be ruled, with the serfs and peasants locked out from the castle gates. I think the leaders of the Party should be reminded what happened to Charles II!

Everybody wants Party unity. We don't enjoy spending our time on these wasteful internal divisions. We'd much rather be out campaigning and fighting for the Labour Party.

But in this case it hasn't been started by the Left. A witch-hunt has been initiated



South Yorkshire general strike against Tory policies

by the Right. For them to say that we should just keep quiet and suffer these attacks silently, I think is absurd.

The Left is trying to defend the democratically agreed gains that have been made at Conference in recent years. Whether or not I will eventually be endorsed as the Labour candidate for Bermondsey depends, I think, on the Right honouring Bishops Stortford—which they haven't.

If people really want Party unity, they've got to uphold the constitution—which they haven't done in

my case—implement agreed Party policies, remain accountable to the rank and file, and stop the witch-hunts and the attacks on the Left.

What's happened in Bermondsey?

We've had a hostile reaction from some older people, but for some younger people who have never been interested in the Labour Party or in politics, their imagination or enthusiasm really does seem to have been tapped by all this. We've received a total of £35 from kids in a

local comprehensive school who had a whip-round because they believe what we're doing is right. And we've had about 18 or 20 join the Labour Party specifically because of what has happened, because they believe what the Bermondsey Labour Party is doing is right and deserves support.

We were originally asked by David Hughes the national agent to run a new selection conference but we discovered this was not an instruction of the NEC. When we asked the NEC for guidance on this matter, they didn't even reply to our

letter. We've gone through the selection process. I'm the democratically selected candidate, and that's it.

One possible option which has come to us from constituency parties all over the country, is the idea that I should stand for the NEC this year. We are now considering that, along with the idea of an appeal to annual conference to overturn the NEC's decision, but I would like to stress that we're not going to make any final decision about that until we've had wider consultation.

Regrettably, I'm very sceptical about the prospect of eventually being endorsed. I hope I will be, but I've got not a single shred of evidence of any climbdown.

There is a possibility that Bob Mellish will resign this summer. What will the NEC do then? Will they endorse me? Will they impose a candidate on Bermondsey? If they try to impose a candidate, it will make a nonsense of Bishops Stortford and the alleged truce.

However the huge volume of support from constituency parties and branches has, I think, ensured that so far at least other prospective candidates have not suffered a similar fate. I think the NEC and the party leadership were genuinely quite shocked at the strength and size of feeling against my non-endorsement.

The most helpful thing now would be for constituency parties, trade union branches, wards, women's sections, and YS branches, if they haven't already done so, to send resolutions of support for Bermondsey to Michael Foot, to the NEC, and to local MPs, to ensure that the strength of feeling is clearly understood.

Also, we'd like to have the views of constituency parties and trade union branches about the suggestion that I should stand for the NEC.

We've got together a broadsheet, Briefing Against the Witch-hunt, which is

to racism. However, the SWP's excessive emphasis on unemployment totally avoids, for example, the problem of the work-place racism of some employed workers, and evades the socialist task of confronting racism which exists regardless of unemployment (e.g. state racism, the police and immigration controls).

The low level of anti-fascist activity (recognised by a recent editorial in Searchlight) and the influence of ANL-type politics amongst the remaining anti-fascist activists, makes the socialist task of arguing for a working class position against all forms of racism and fascism all the more vital.

Excessive

Alexander claimed that if the young fascists had jobs they wouldn't be on the streets. In this way Alexander stressed his view that the SWP's Right to Work Campaign was the solution

FIGHTING RACISM 600 protest at Brons

by Bryan Edmands and Aly Mir.

ON Wednesday 17 February 600 people marched in protest against the presence of National Front chairperson Andrew Brons as a politics lecturer at Harrogate College of Further Education in Yorkshire. The protest was the latest part of a so-far unsuccessful campaign launched nearly two years ago.

A day after protecting Snipe's bully boy scabs at Laurence Scotts in Manchester, the police were again out in force. A heavy police presence, including mounted police, were there to protect the fifty mainly young fascists from the anti-fascist demonstrators.

The demonstration, jointly called by the Anti Nazi League and local student bodies, was badly organised. After a lengthy delay the march proceeded to a rally before returning to the college.

At the rally, Peter Alexander, SWP member and national organiser of the ANL, appealed to the college authorities to establish a formal inquiry into the employment of an NF member at the college (yet similar "actions" over the last two years have failed to get rid of Brons). A far more positive contribution was made by a black woman student attending Hammersmith College in London. She said that a racist lecturer there in the past hadn't lasted for more

than a morning because students immediately occupied his classroom and forcibly drove him out.

Peter Alexander repeatedly stressed the need for a peaceful demo. Before the march he had told a TV interviewer that he "was not interested in violence". Yet such a passive and submissive approach could not stop the fascists from stabbing one anti-fascist making his way to the march.



Peter Tatchell

intended to highlight the three issues of my non-endorsement, the exclusion of Tariq Ali as a member, and the witch-hunt against Militant.

There has also been a statement by over 30 Labour prospective candidates. It was felt that it would be good if other candidates put themselves on the line, and made themselves open to the same kind of criticism and possible action that I experienced, as a gesture of very concrete and personal solidarity with the Bermondsey party.

What did Peter Tatchell think about Michael Foot's condemnation of his call for extra-parliamentary action against the Tories?

In relation to the Thatcher government, strong and inflammatory language is the very least they can deserve.

There is a fundamentally different conception of politics, between those who see themselves (as I do) merely as spokespersons for the movement, temporarily loaned authority to speak on behalf of it and elected by and accountable to that movement outside of parliament—and others who see Parliament and a Parliamentary career as a calling for the wise and people of good conscience.

Socialism can only be brought about in this country through a mass popular movement. It's not going to be brought about through MPs and councillors, no matter how left or wise or articulate.

It's the movement which gives them power, and they have to be accountable to the movement.

I was surprised at being criticised for what I said about extra-parliamentary action. As soon as Tebbit's new anti-union laws were proposed, Bill Keys of SOGAT said he was advocating defiance of this legislation and was prepared to go to prison to defeat it.

The Labour Party has been very much stuck in the Parliamentary road to socialism. That's not to say there isn't an important role for Parliament. Any socialist society needs some representative organ.

Where we fail is to make links between the struggle in Parliament and the struggle outside. A lot of the gains in recent years have been won outside Parliament.

Take the defeat of the Industrial Relations Act. What really defeated the Industrial Relations Act was the organised might of the Labour and trade union movement, based on a campaign of defiance and non-compliance with the law.

I certainly wouldn't discount the possibility that if a radical left-wing Labour government were likely to be elected to power, the combined might of the military and the police, the judges, the civil servants and the multinationals, would be used in an organised way to crush and destroy and stymie attempts at radical socialist measures. The crucial thing is that we have a popular movement, a mass movement outside of Parliament which can counterbalance and countervail against the power of the extra-parliamentary right.

Finally, Peter Tatchell told us about the NEC's other recent intervention in Southwark (of which Bermondsey is part).

The NEC has intervened to instruct the Southwark LGC to reinstate eight right wing and highly unpopular councillors to the panel of candidates. These councillors' nominations were not endorsed by the three constituency GCs in Southwark, and the Greater London Regional Executive turned down the appeals of four of them, as well.

Our decision not to endorse these eight was not taken lightly, and it was certainly not a wholesale purge of the Right. We felt that the credibility of the Labour Party and its standing in the borough council elections, would be seriously jeopardised if these eight people were on the panel.

Some of the eight had refused to campaign or even vote, for the Labour candidate in the GLC elections. One of them, in his capacity as a member of the Area Health Authority, voted with the Tories to partly close a local hospital, St. Olave's. Nearly all of them supported the building of a new £25 million Town Hall, when there is enormous housing deterioration in the borough. Nearly all supported the selling off of the Bermondsey riverside to property speculators.

They all had a very poor record of responding to local Party letters, LGC motions, and constituents' letters. They rarely attended advice surgeries. Some of them very poorly attended their ward meetings.

Many of them are on record as saying that they have absolutely no intention of implementing the manifesto that has been democratically agreed by the three Southwark Labour Parties. A couple of them have even refused to give assurances that they won't defect to the SDP.

The NEC gave us no reasons. They just said, in the spirit of Bishops Stortford these people must be reinstated to the panel. We tried to explain our reasons, and we were just constantly reminded of Bishops Stortford.

Of cabbages and contracts

IF YOU thought the Bishops Stortford concessions by the Labour left were balanced by a commitment by the Labour leadership to support party policy, then forget it.

Peter Shore, Labour's front bench spokesperson on the economy, is using his position to campaign against Labour Party and TUC conference policy on wage controls.

In 1978 both the TUC and the Labour Party conferences, sickened by 18 months of social contract and three years of real-wage-cutting incomes policy, came out against all incomes policies under capitalism.

That position stands. Shore claims that his proposals are not the same as Healey's notorious policies of 1975-9. He wants a 'voluntary' agreement.

But the basic argument, spelled out for him by left wing MP Michael Meacher, is that "unrestrained collective bargaining is incompatible with full employment".

If this argument is conceded, then the incomes policy will be 'voluntary' only so long as trade unionists (or, more likely, trade union top officials on their behalf) agree to volunteer. After that it will be compulsory.

Mind you, Michael Meacher is far from advocating full employment. His best hope is that the policies he recommends could reduce unemployment to one million within five years.

In the New Statesman last August he spelled it

out. A Labour government should start with a massive devaluation, he said. Then it would be necessary that "unions... accept a firm policy on incomes so that the huge job-creating potential of this exercise is not dissipated in a pay spiral to protect real living standards."

As Rachel Lever commented in Socialist Organiser at the time: "How depressingly familiar. Workers pay for crisis. And workers pay for 'recovery'."

"Some Labour MPs", the Financial Times said last Friday, "report a greater willingness within the Parliamentary Labour Party to face the questions involved than they thought possible a few months ago."

And TUC leader Len Murray is also helping to pave the way for a new incomes policy.

Presenting the TUC annual economic review at the beginning of this month, he said the TUC was willing to discuss incomes policy if the Tories would accept the TUC proposals for refutation.

In terms of economic theory, Murray and the MPs all base themselves on a bedrock idea of orthodox economics. All other things being equal, the demand for cabbage will go up when the price of cabbage goes down, and down when the price goes up. So—the argument goes—demand for labour is high when wages are low, and vice versa.

But the relation between capitalists and workers is not the same as the relation between shoppers



Peter Shore

and cabbage! Much as many Tories or Labour right-wingers might wish it so, it is not a relation of consumer to passive object—but a relation of class struggle. The slump and the Tory offensive mean both three million unemployed and cuts in real wages.

The bitter kernel

If workers go on the offensive in conditions of boom, they can win full employment and relatively good wages. When capitalists go on the offensive in conditions of slump, they cut both jobs and wages.

Workers will not be able to resist the job cuts if they allow the bosses to ride roughshod over them

on wages.

Incomes policy hinders the fight for jobs. And it certainly diverts from the real answers to unemployment—work-sharing without loss of pay, workers' control, nationalisation, working class planning of the economy. Incomes policy—as Meacher makes clear—is the bitter kernel within the shiny shell of the Alternative Economic Strategy.

Some Labour leaders argue that "planning incomes" should be supported as part of an overall policy of economic planning. The problem is that they propose to leave the ownership of major industry and finance, and the effective control of the levers of the permanent state machine, in the hands of the present ruling wealthy minority: so the "planning" cannot amount to more than minor tinkering.

Two left-wing MPs did speak out against incomes policy at the Parliamentary Labour Party meeting last Wednesday.

David Winnick said that incomes policy could only undermine trade unionists' confidence in Labour. Ernie Roberts said that 90% of wage earners were poorly paid, and there was not case for keeping their income down further.

But Shore's campaign should be a signal for the whole of the trade union and Labour Left to come out of its corner again, fighting. Another wage-curling Labour government is not the alternative to the Tories that we need.

By Patrick Spilling

WHEN Othello strangled Desdemona—surely one of Shakespeare's most cardboard creations—he excused himself on the grounds he had "loved not wisely but too well".

It might seem a long way from Shakespeare to the Sun—from the Swan of Avon to the gutter rat of Fleet Street—but last week brought faint echoes of the Othello complex from both the Sun and the Daily Star.

The part of Desdemona is being played by Diana Spencer, the sacrificial lamb thrown up by the ruling class to act as breeding stock to the royal family.



The throttling in this case is being done by

remote control—or rather tele-photo lens. Not for the first time it has led to clashes between Buckingham Palace and Fleet Street.

It is a peculiar contest. The Sun and the Star are two of the most powerful weapons the ruling class and therefore the royal family, have against those who threaten their cosy existence.

The Sun is the crude assassin prepared for any smear (the train drivers whose 'fiddles' provided the basis of the ASLEF witch-hunt have now been sacked). The Star wears a cloak of sympathy with the working class, while

occasionally steps out of line. So it was in the Bahamas. Pictures of the future King and Queen cavorting on a beach, taken with the largest lenses the Japanese know how to make were splashed across three

pages each of the Star and the Sun.

pages each of the Star and the Sun.

The fuzzy pictures were claimed by their publishers as scoops, until they landed on the Queen's breakfast table. As you know we have a free press in this country, so her press secretary was perfectly free to ring every editor in Fleet Street with a royal rocket.

The papers had miscalculated. The princess is five months pregnant and her body does not therefore conform to the mandatory shape of womanhood. The Sun and the Star are free to publish naked nobodies on page 3. But pregnancy can only be hinted at—not displayed. Thus the princess can have a 'maternal' look in her eye. She can be imbued with that 'indefinable bloom of the mum-to-be'. She can even be said to be filling out.

But it is a well known convention that royalty does not copulate, defecate or have stomachs swollen with offspring. Royalty does not take kindly to prose such as: "Stunning mum-to-be Princess Diana plunged into the surf on her paradise island yesterday... in a bikini".

Crassly The Mirror put it most crassly: "The Daily Mirror decided to respect their privacy. We are not in the business of taking sneak shots of pregnant women bathing, whether they are princesses or not." Pregnancy should be heard about but not seen.

And so never mind about the ASLEF attack on the whiteness of Leyland truck sewers in the case study in Trade of the press. It was the royal family

which brought Ken Morgan, Secretary of the Press Council scurrying out of his cubbyhole to issue reproaches.

The Sun reprinted the photograph the next day but with a grovelling text: "Of course it was never our intention to offend. If we have done so, then we are deeply sorry." (And here is the picture again).

The Sun and the Star recalled their reporters and photographers to London. The Star offered a similar excuse: "Our interest was out of deep affection for the Royal Couple. We were so pleased to see Diana enjoying herself freely on the beach that we thought our readers would want to share her joy." (If she had looked glum, of course, the pictures would have been published to show the Star's concern).

Milked

In any case both the Star and the Sun plead—as did Othello—that they have loved not wisely but too well.

The way in which the editors jump to do as they are told, the Press Council explodes into action and questions are asked in the House of Commons shows who still has the power of veto over the press.

And the way in which the press is in danger of suffocating its fairy princess suggests that it will not be satisfied with its piece of merchandise, until it has milked all the life out of it.

Until then the lives of lesser mortals will have a wait. The best pages are reserved for the vital information that changes the world. Diana's name after this should be struck from the press. It was the royal family

PRESS GANG

Daily Mail
Daily Express
Financial Times
The Daily Telegraph
The Sun

Fiddling fatality figures

FIDDLES, fraud and the falsification of official records are fearfully exposed in the "popular" press when it involves railway workers. Is it too much to hope that they will devote similar space and screaming headlines to the exposure of such abuse in the Health Service?

The Medical Practitioners Union section of ASTMS has launched a campaign against corruption in the NHS. National Officer Reg Bird claims:

"Over the last 12 months our members have been flooding us with cases of growing abuse of NHS facilities by consultants who are involved with private health practices. The main area of concern is over consultants using NHS facilities like pathology labs without paying for the services as they must do by law."

He also claims evidence that consultants are putting private patients into NHS beds, thus charging twice, one from the private patient and again from the NHS.

Even more alarming abuses are alleged by trade unionists in the ambulance service. A group of GMWU ambulance men and women in Cardiff are calling on the Health Authority to investigate falsification by ambulance officers to cover up for staff shortages.

Emergency calls are supposed to be entered on a form and stamped with the time at which they are received, but it is alleged that officers at the ambulance control centre are not time-stamping the forms until an ambulance is free to go to the emergency.

Delays of up to 20 minutes (which could easily prove fatal) therefore do not show up on the records. The union had previously pressed for increased staff, as there were only eight ambulances, as a maximum, for emergency cover for the whole of South Glamorgan, including Cardiff. Their calls for extra crews were rejected because management claimed their records showed the service was satisfactory, despite union claims that serious delays were building up.

If the records themselves are fiddled that would explain why.

JUST to prove that Sir Keith is no lone pioneer, how about this quote from Angus Maude: "It has always been far too expensive to improve the educational standards of working class children significantly." Quite so.

which education authorities should maintain. This philosophy opens up whole vistas of unimaginable possibilities in other areas. Just think, if current medical practice is that sick people should be left to die for want of medicines, what enormous savings become possible.

In other words it is the norm for schools to be deprived of teaching staff and materials, then that is the minimum standard

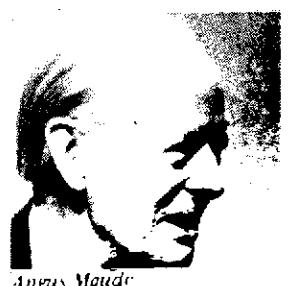
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Angus Maude



BY GERRY BYRNE

A fair cop?



NEARLY a quarter of women interviewed in a survey for ITV's "Weekend World" were either unsure or definitely not likely to go to the police if they were raped. Of those who would not go to the police the two major reasons given were (hostile) police questioning (43%) and cross examination by defence lawyers or the courts (39%).

A survey, reported in New Society, gives weight to the second objection, the ordeal in court.

Although the 1976 Sexual Offences Amendment Act disallows the victim's previous sexual history being brought up, unless the judge directs otherwise, it is still common for defence lawyers to be allowed to use this, in many cases without even asking for the judge's permission.

CYNICS who questioned whether Keith Joseph could do the same job for the education service that he accomplished for industry in his previous ministry must now be confounded. It was a difficult feat but he seems to have accomplished it.

The lowest level of manufacturing output for 15 years might seem a hard act to follow. But with his rejection of a complaint from Surrey parents that their county council was failing in its statutory duty, we have entered a new epoch in educational theory.

What the nihilists of the 60s failed to achieve, "No more teachers, no more

books", Sir Keith has accomplished at a stroke.

He did not dispute any of the detailed evidence from Surrey of shortage of teachers and books, of school buildings in a state of crumbling disrepair, but he did reject their interpretation of the minimum standards laid down by the Education Acts. These, it seems, involve a substantial element of judgement, and other factors, such as current educational practice also had to be taken into consideration.

In other words it is the norm for schools to be deprived of teaching staff and materials, then that is the minimum standard

World News

BOLIVIA

Cocaine generals brawl over profits

by Santiago Fortin

CAPITALISM in Bolivia continues to lurch from crisis to crisis with remarkable rapidity and increasing gravity.

In 1981 the regimes of Garcia Meza, the military junta, and General Torrelío successively failed in abject fashion to consolidate the pinochetazo they attempted in the bloody coup of July 1980 when hundreds of workers were killed.

Last year saw five coups. The military apparatus rapidly decomposed under the influence of the cocaine trade, which divided it into mafia-like clans scrambling for a cut of the spoils.

Miami

Income from cocaine is estimated at 2 billion dollars for 1981; it is now by far the largest export, but the great bulk of coca-dolares stay put in Miami where the officers and oligarchs salt away their gains with little thought for supporting the Bolivian state.

At the same time the legal economy is in total ruin: at the last count Bolivia has only one million dollars in foreign reserves

and a foreign debt of four billion dollars (70% of legal export earnings go on servicing the interest alone).

In 1981 manufacturing output fell by 20%, unemployment rose to 37%, inflation to 67%, and the value of the peso dropped by 75% against the dollar. The country, for decades self-sufficient in food-stuffs, had to import four times as much wheat as it produced, while coca production rose fivefold.

Faced with total bankruptcy, which would have prejudiced the cocaine interests, Torrelío has sought to gain the help of the IMF to gain a bridging loan until the next cycle of crisis arrives. Last week he introduced an economic package designed to beguile the managers of international capital and pauperise the masses; for all the dictator's palpable stupidity, he knows that the two go hand in hand.

The measures devalued the peso by 76%, increased electricity and petrol prices by 43%, lifted import duties and laid the basis for the denationalisation of wide sectors of the economy.

This 'package' follows that of January 1981 which eradicated subsidies on basic necessities (with an inflationary impact of 40% in one blow), removed the state's responsibility for insurance and social security payments and froze all wages (except those of the officer corps which received a 300% rise).

The response of the workers and peasants to the latest attempt to drive them into starvation was a 48-hour general strike, which received remarkably wide support for a country which lies under the military jackboot. Although the peasants did not impose a road blockade (taken by the bourgeois press both in Bolivia and abroad as an indication of 'defeat'), they argued that this was because the tactic was too important to use in a stoppage of limited duration.

All the signs are that the miners' strike of November has given the working class a renewed sense of confidence and radicalism which promises to overtake the bureaucratic backsliding of the COB (the Bolivian TUC), the national leaders of which are largely divorced

from the rank and file led by the sindicatos clandestinos.

Once he had announced the devaluation, Torrelío scampered back to the presidential palace and had it surrounded with tanks while various colonels chatted over the possibilities of taking the opportunity to realise their sundry ambitions and stage a coup.

They appear to have decided against it in the (very) short term on the grounds that any action might prompt further action from the masses and wipe them all away; if there is anything that tempers a Bolivian officer's yearnings for power and lucre it is the memory of 1952 when the working class defeated the army in three days of fighting.

Facade

This does not rule out the possibility of a coup dressed up in some fancy 'democratic' and 'popular' facade designed to gain the backing of the 'democratic' bourgeoisie (too weak to survive the crisis without a plethora of bankruptcies) and the 'ever compliant' forces of the petty bour-

geois MIR and the Communist Party, which now argues that workers should accept government-backed yellow trade union leaders.

Such a move would be incapable of stalling the economic crisis, would do nothing to develop Bolivia and could not hope to stall popular radicalism for very long.

Following on the failure of the 'democratic experiment' of 1978 to 1980, the collapse of the dictatorship established in July 1980 demonstrates with a clarity for which Bolivian workers have paid with their blood that capitalism can do absolutely nothing for this, one of imperialism's weakest links, whatever form it takes.

The Bolivian Workers' Support Fund still has a long way to go to meet the target it promised to the sindicatos clandestinos during the November strike. Readers of the paper are urged to raise motions for the sending of donations in their Labour Party and trade union branches as soon as possible. Personal contributions can also be sent to: BWSF, 54 Studley Road, London E7 9LX.



Leading cocaine trafficker Arce Gomez

Reagan go-ahead to CIA gangsters

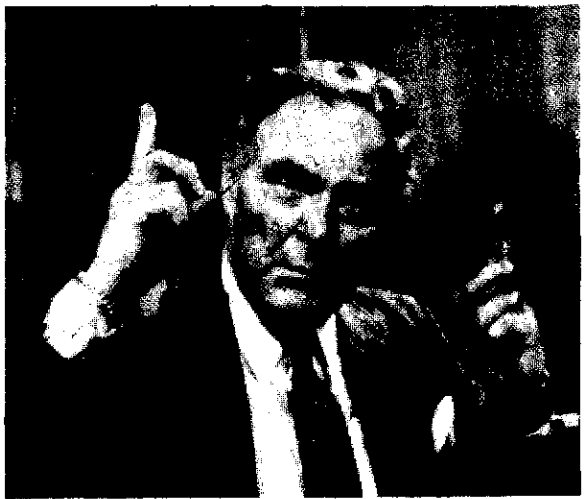
by Harry Sloan

THE CIA—the gang of terrorists that brought the world the Shah of Iran, the Bay of Pigs fiasco and the Angolan civil war are back in business.

A divided and increasingly despondent Reagan administration is resorting to desperate measures and dirty tricks to prop up the bloody dictatorship in El Salvador against the guerrilla struggle headed by the FMLN.

White House spokesmen have admitted that Reagan has given the go-ahead to CIA covert operations in Cuba and Nicaragua as part of the US effort to halt alleged arms supplies to guerrillas in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.

The Sandinista regime in Nicaragua has for a long time claimed that CIA funds were supporting an exile army of up to 6,000 former National Guard butchers from the defeated Somoza dictatorship.



Now this operation has come to light in the capitalist press, in revelations first published in the Washington Post.

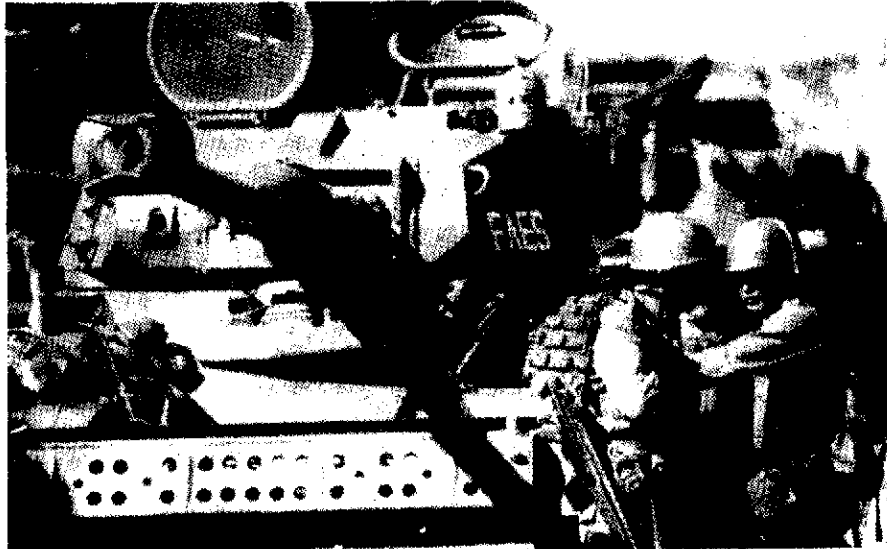
The CIA has asked Reagan for an additional

\$19 million to finance the construction of a reactionary political opposition to the Sandinistas with Nicaragua.

But their plans go much further—with contingency preparations for a naval blockade and even air strikes against Cuba, whose Stalinist government the Reagan administration accuses of supporting the guerrilla struggle in El Salvador.

The fact is that Reagan's cold war government faces major problems in preserving the Duarte junta against a strengthening popular resistance. The immense economic and political problems involved in sending US troops to fight in El Salvador means that they must therefore find means to prompt local 'proxy' forces into doing their dirty work for them.

So on the one hand they are funnelling huge sums of money directly to the Duarte junta, which is



Haig (left) wants to step up military aid to the bloody junta

already the fourth largest recipient of US aid on a world scale (despite the fact that El Salvador is no bigger than Wales, with a population of only 5 million).

Already \$126 million aid is allocated for 1982: an additional \$100 million is planned—including the supply of helicopters, transport planes and fighter bombers.

US 'advisors' have trained one Salvadorean battalion, and been filmed accompanying them in combat zones. Further training is being given to Salvadorean officers at Fort Benning in Georgia. And though Reagan has ruled out immediate dispatch of troops, there is talk of possible use of US support for ground operations in El Salvador.

And on the other hand, the clandestine CIA-backed operations on the borders of Nicaragua are designed both to cut off any supply of arms or military support to the Salvadorean struggle and also if possible to overturn the Sandinista regime—whose very existence cocks a snook at US imperialism.

Secretary of State General Haig has spelled out plans for a big increase in military aid to the vicious Guatemalan dictatorship.

Meanwhile, on the Honduran border with El Salvador, Honduran troops, in close collaboration with US Green Beret 'advisors' have begun to force march Salvadorean refugees further into Honduras.

These moves can only be a preparation for use of Honduran troops in a pincer move against FMLN strongholds inside Salvador.

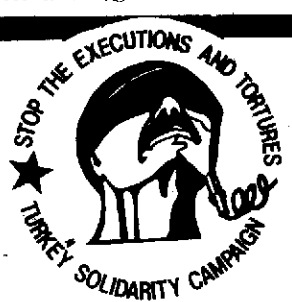
The slaughter—in the countryside at the hands of the Salvadorean army, and in the towns where militant workers face savage anti-communist death squads—continues unabated, making Reagan's task still harder in promoting the junta as a defender of 'human rights' and selling to Congress proposals for still greater military support.

President Duarte, facing the hurdle of phony 'elections' on March 28—in which he may well be toppled by the ultra-right-moaned plaintively to a Newswatch reporter two weeks ago:

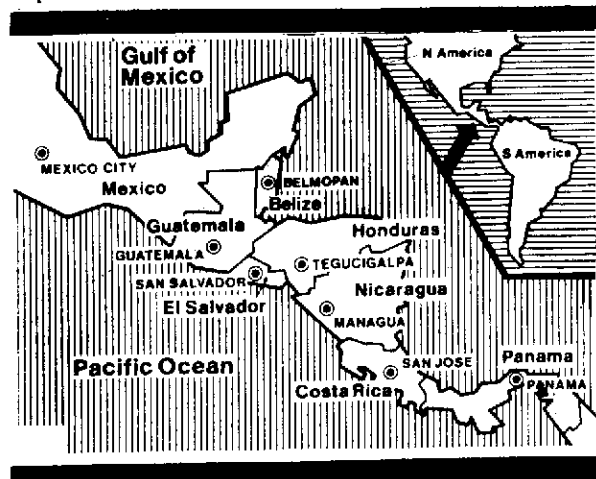
"Why are all your stories the same—with the same pictures of bodies and blood all over and big headlines that say 'El Salvador! Murders! Death!' Why does only part of the truth get told and retold? We are losing the fight with the guerrillas not only in the countryside but in the pages of the New York Times and the Washington Post".

It is high time that the leaders of the US labour movement took up their responsibility to ensure that Duarte and Reagan do lose the fight and that the people of El Salvador are freed from this vice-like grip of imperialism.

In Britain, we urge trade unionists and Labour activists to fight for affiliations to the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign and to build activity to publicise and rally political support for the struggle.



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



Faced with unbroken resistance,

World News

Polish bureaucrats look for Vatican assistance

by Harry Sloan

WHERE all else—military force, censorship, imprisonment, and curfews—fails, wheel in the Pope. This seems to be the desperate conclusion of Poland's ruling Stalinist junta in the face of continued resistance from an unbroken workers' movement.

The announcement that the government will proceed with its planned invitation for the Pope to visit Poland in August came in the midst of a week of heavy repression.

A few days before, 194 demonstrators had been arrested in the western city of Poznan. The next day came a nationwide crackdown on martial law regulations—which led to 4,000 people being detained, 7,000 fined and 29,000 "reminded of their duties".

Steamroller

And three Catholic priests closely associated with the suspended Solidarnosc trade union were arrested, while steam-roller court proceedings continued meting out jail sentences ranging from three to six years to martial law violators.

"Crimes" incurring such penalties include painting slogans 'hostile to the State', printing leaflets allegedly intended to 'incite riots', refusing to obey orders in the now militarised workplaces, or "slandering and mocking" the State authorities.

In the Baltic city of Gdynia, two militants, Ewa Kubasiewicz and Jerzy Kowasi recieved

sentences of 10 years and 9 years respectively for organising a strike in a shipping academy and distributing leaflets.

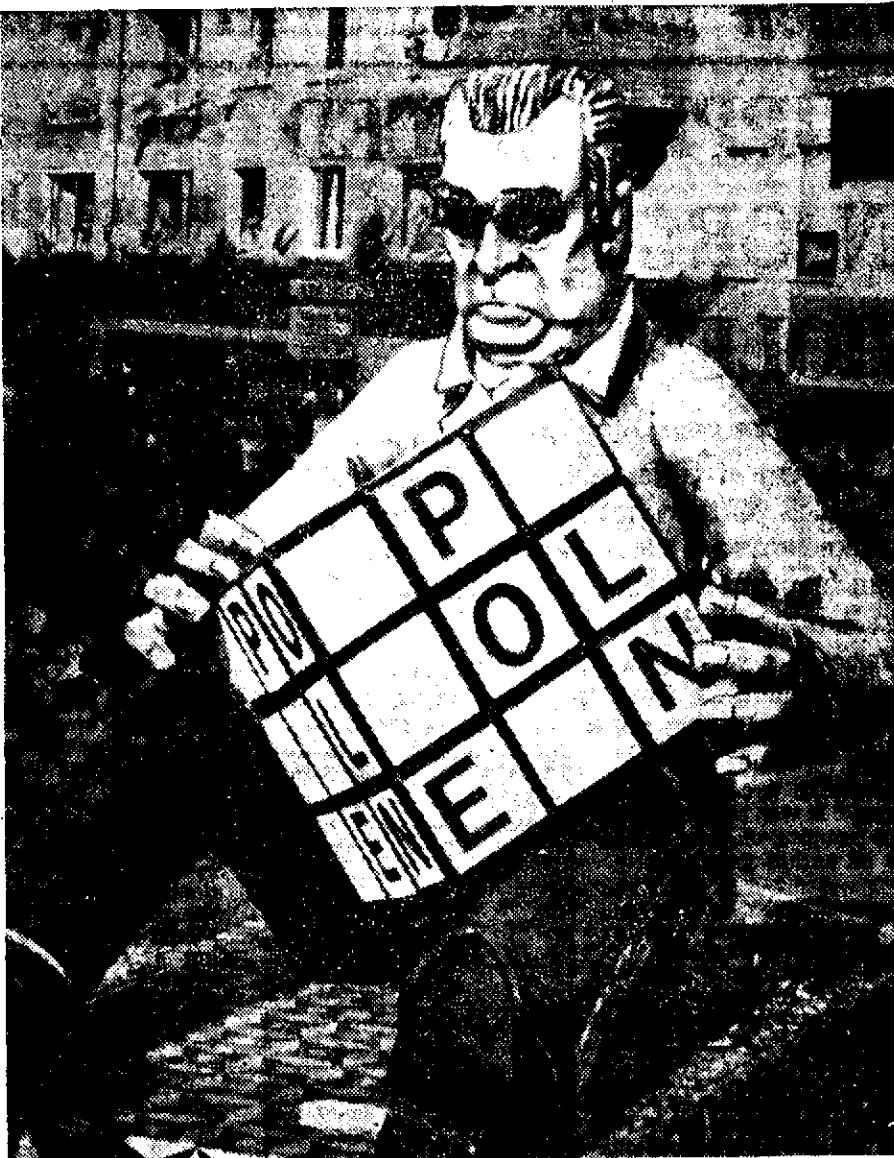
To announce in the midst of such events that the Pope is to be invited is to make it clear that the regime, far from making concessions, is simply seeking the Vatican seal of approval.

But it is by no means certain that such approval would be withheld. The Catholic Church has for decades enjoyed a privileged relationship with the bureaucracy within Stalinist Poland on the basis of its political support for the regime.

In the aftermath of the December imposition of martial law, the Vatican was slow to respond, and Papal envoy Poggi did not even bother to ask to see imprisoned Solidarnosc leader Lech Walesa. Statements from Catholic leaders ever since have been studiously worded to avoid unambiguous support to the Polish workers or all-out condemnation of the martial law. Stalinist party chiefs, pondering ways and means to extricate themselves from the present acute economic and political crisis, have been increasingly driven towards reliance on the Church.

Sejm

It is no coincidence that a series of important debates in the Party leadership on the next steps forward centre around a February 27 meeting of the Church-State Commission and a meeting of the Polish Episcopate.



A week later junta chief Jaruzelski has been summoned to visit his own spiritual leaders—Brezhnev and the Kremlin bureaucracy.

In finalising plans for

these meetings the 200-strong Party Central committee is to meet on Wednesday for the first time since martial law.

It will be followed by a meeting of the Sejm. Among the proposals likely to be put forward at that meeting are a package of draft laws making substantial concessions to Poland's private farmers.

Legislation would guarantee the rights of private farmers and increase five-fold the amount of land they are allowed to own.

This must be seen as a placatory gesture both to the wealthiest farmers (who alone will be in a position to buy more land), and the Church—which has insisted that the vast bulk of Polish agriculture remain in private hands.

With the collapse of the Polish zloty and the chronic shortage of industrial goods on the market, more and more of the most wealthy farmers have been effectively withholding supplies of vitally needed foodstuffs from the official distribution network and instead selling on the black market for hard currencies.

By the latest concessions—recognising private agriculture as "a permanent and equal component of Poland's economic and social system"—the bureaucracy is plainly hoping to coax some of these hoarded supplies into the open market.

But this retreat in the face of the wealthiest

farmers is also linked by the regime with moves to crush the organisation of the poorer farmers and rural workers who spearheaded the struggle for union rights in the formation of Rural Solidarity.

Under the new proposals farmers would apparently only be entitled to form associations of agricultural producers—which would of course become dominated by the larger concerns.

This substantial extension of the rights to small scale capitalist enterprise at the very heart of the Polish economy (private farmers produce 70% of all domestic food supplies) comes from the same Stalinist leaders who claim that Solidarnosc—with its 10 million worker members and its challenge to bureaucratic control over the country's nationalised economy—is a "counter-revolutionary" and "reactionary" threat to socialism!

Persuaded

Of course Marxists do not advocate the forcible collectivisation of the Polish farmers—or of peasant holdings in general.

The alliance between the working class and its fellow toilers in the countryside requires that the peasantry be persuaded, through its own experience, that the collectivisation of agriculture in a planned socialist economy offers the least arduous and most

Polish figures confirm that between December 13 and February 15, 2,727 people have been 'investigated', 2,616 of whom were arrested. 1,575 have been brought to court with 1,089 found guilty and only 79 acquitted.

Armed forces are so jumpy that last week in Warsaw a military patrol in an area close to the foreign press centre seized duplicate copies of articles dispatched abroad, thinking them to be seditious leaflets!



rewarding way forward.

The chronic deformation of the Polish economy—under constant bureaucratic control since the nationalisation of industry and the banks in the late 1940s—has meant that the experience of Polish farmers has been precisely the opposite.

The so-called "planned economy" has offered them inadequate supplies of finance, machinery, fertilisers, pesticides and animal feed, while paying artificially low prices for farm produce in order to keep down pressure for wages in the towns.

But none of these problems will be resolved by the junta's concessions to the private farmers. They could only be tackled by the ousting of the bureaucracy and the assertion of workers' control over the economy as a whole.

food queues and economic dislocation.

It is their savage attempts to muzzle the voice of the Polish working class that perpetuate the passive resistance and anger on the shop floor which in turn continues to cripple production in Polish industry and thus worsen the economic crisis.

But while the junta chiefs may dream of a deal with the Vatican which would lend them a seal of legitimacy or even create conditions for the release from detention of Lech Walesa, hardliners and "moderates" alike must still be disturbed at persistent evidence that Solidarnosc retains a powerful mass base of support while worker members have left the Stalinist party in droves since the 1980 strikes.

Church pleas for moderation to Polish strikers

The junta has issued guidelines for the future of the trade union movement which in effect seek to destroy Solidarnosc as a national organisation.

The guidelines call for strict limits on the right to strike, insist that unions should henceforth concern themselves only with bread and butter issues, and make no proposals for talks with Lech Walesa and other leaders of the 10-million strong Solidarnosc.

While it would be an exaggeration to claim that the concessions raise immediate dangers of a restoration of capitalism in Poland as a whole, the consolidation of an increasingly powerful private sector in a key department of the economy can only be seen as a further bid to establish a reactionary alliance against the revolutionary struggles of the Polish working class.

It is, of course, the bureaucracy itself whose bone-headed mismanagement of the economy and reactionary foreign policy plunged Poland neck-deep into hock with the capitalist bankers and precipitated the present

have repeatedly been made: but the last 18 months has seen them produce diminishing returns.

It is a measure of the desperation of the country's ruling junta that it now turns back to the bishops to restore order where tanks and prisons have failed.

In saluting the courage and tenacity of the Polish workers who remain active in the now clandestine Solidarnosc groupings, the British labour movement must recognise its duty to provide political, practical and financial support to their struggle.

Labour supports



Demonstrate
ULU Malet St. London
10.30 Sat March 13

DEMONSTRATION CALLED BY
LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING
AND SOCIALIST ORGANISER

LAST weekend an Oxford demonstration on Poland was supported by over 200 trade unionists and socialists—another indication of the level of backing for Solidarnosc in the British labour movement.

To further develop this support, Socialist Organiser and London Labour Briefing have called a national demonstration in London on Saturday March 13.

The demonstration will

be addressed by Reg Race MP and by speakers from the Solidarnosc trade union working group. It is open to all labour movement bodies, trade unionists and socialists to attend with their banners. We particularly urge other groupings on the left to lend their support to this initiative.

Leaflets for the demonstration (£5 per 1,000) can be obtained from Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane,

London N8. We ask readers to campaign for delegations and sponsorship to the demonstration which is based on the following slogans:

*End martial law!
Release all political and trade union prisoners!

*No Warsaw Pact intervention!

*No to the state unions!
*Unconditional support to the Polish workers' fight!

World News

ZIMBABWE

Jim Farnham reports on Mugabe's moves towards a one-party state

Dumping Nkomo won't solve workers' problems

LAST week, prime minister Robert Mugabe carried through a major purge of his cabinet, sacking the leader of ZAPU, Joshua Nkomo, and three other ZAPU ministers—and thus effectively terminating the government alliance between the two nationalist organisations, ZANU and ZAPU.

The sackings follow the discovery by army units of huge arms stockpiles on some of the farms owned by Nkomo and the ZAPU leadership.

This is being used as evidence that Nkomo and other leaders were plotting an armed coup against ZANU.

Mugabe accuses Nkomo of having held secret meetings with South African officials, in which he sought support for a possible coup attempt. Nkomo has vigorously denied any such coup plans or contacts with the apartheid state.

But despite Nkomo's denials and his claims that the arms caches were planted on ZAPU property, Mugabe has pressed ahead with the seizure of ZAPU's considerable property assets, and with the major purge of government.

These moves have been followed by controlled demonstrations by ZANU supporters, backing the actions of Mugabe, and calling for the imprisonment of Nkomo.

Last month, at a mass rally in Salisbury, Mugabe had announced that the two leaderships would be holding talks on building a one-party regime. But the next day, Nkomo issued hot denials of any such talks—and added that he was alarmed at the trends towards arbitrary rule which he saw in



Nkomo and Mugabe: an uneasy alliance breaks down

ZANU. In rejecting Mugabe's offer, Nkomo was probably gambling on getting much more out of waiting for the crisis facing the government to deepen.

Ambitions

But he overplayed his hand. Mugabe is in no position to tolerate the ambitions of Nkomo. He is caught between the militant demands and actions of his supporters among the working people on the one side, and the pressure for tighter control coming from the capitalist reaction on the other.

Each day the balancing act on which Mugabe and his ZANU bureaucracy try to maintain their position, is coming under greater and greater chal-

lenge. A government which claims on the one hand to be there to meet all the needs of the masses, and on the other acts to protect the property and profits of the capitalists is always trying to achieve an impossible balance.

While the economy remains under capitalist control, while production takes place for private profit and not human need, while the forces of the state are used to protect private property—then Mugabe's government, whatever it says, is a bosses' government.

Increasingly, workers and peasants are seeing this reality.

They see a government which sends out the police if they strike, the army if they seize and occupy land. And all the time, their

standard of living continues at the same appalling level without any sign of the improvements which Mugabe and ZANU promised.

As the world capitalist crisis bites harder, things are getting worse. Inflation is running at around 20%—while unemployment is probably higher.

Two years after Mugabe's grand promises of land redistribution—absolutely central to his appeal amongst the masses of rural poor—only 6,500 families out of nearly 200,000 have been settled on land bought from capitalists.

Workers and peasants are responding to this situation with growing confusion—but also with growing anger and resistance. In the rural areas, thousands have occupied



Arms alleged to have been found on Nkomo's farm

parts of the big farms in defiance of the law and the threat (and use) of force by the government.

In the towns, there is mounting anger over the totally inadequate housing and services, the rising prices, the lack of jobs. While the working class has not yet mobilised strikes on the scale of the 1980 wave, the signs all point in this direction.

A strike by 250 railway workers (firemen and shunters) brought the whole rail network to a standstill for one week last month. The workers were demanding nearly 100% wage rises to bring their pay closer to a living minimum wage as they assessed it—rather than the totally inadequate figures decided by government bureaucrats in the new minimum wage laws.

Mugabe arrested all the workers under a law which Smith had introduced against strikes. In the courts, these workers were fined and given six month suspended sentences.

Disarmed

Mugabe's reformist politics force him into the camp of the bosses. And his actions over the last two years confirm this. He has disarmed the guerrillas; continually renewed the state of emergency brought in by Smith; banned all demonstrations and meetings without government permission; made sure that bosses' representatives sit in government; and put one of Smith's generals at the head of the armed forces.

Mugabe has done much

of this in the name of guarding against the threat of right wing reaction, from inside Zimbabwe as well as from South Africa.

He is correct to see a threat from these sources. But there is only one force that can overcome it—the strength of the workers of Zimbabwe, mobilised behind an independent programme of struggle, united with the peasants, and drawing on the strength of the South African workers' movement.

And all of Mugabe's actions cut across the task of preparing and mobilising this force. The repressive measures which are announced as aimed against the right, are in reality used more and more to clampdown on the workers and peasants.

This is the reality that lies behind the plans for a one-party state which ZANU leaders have talked more and more about, and which is brought closer by each measure of clampdown.

This is the same reality which has emerged time and again from the nationalist leaderships in many countries—from Algeria to Zambia.

The purging of the cabinet may not have been the action that Mugabe and the ZANU leadership wanted to use to try and tighten up control. But they will not regret the fact that the purge opens up a huge diversion from the real issues and the real enemy facing the working people.

And more than this, the governmental crisis threatens to open up divisions within the working masses.

They will have to rely on and build their own independent organised strength. They will have to join in a united front of struggle behind demands that start from the needs of the people, and take the struggle forward towards the only solution that can meet those needs—the defeat of the bosses and their state, and the building of socialism and a workers' and peasants' government.

A right royal conspiracy

by Henry Phillips



Juan Carlos with Franco

IT HAS not been a happy birthday for last year's attempted military coup d'état.

Over the last few weeks there has been another dramatic rise in political tension in Spain.

One reason for this is that at last some of the conspirators of last February have brought to a kind of trial. The other is the decision of the Basque nationalist organisation ETA (Militar) to end the military truce it has maintained since

last year's coup attempt.

The increasingly rickety right-wing government led by Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo was installed shortly before the coup attempt partly to allay military dissatisfaction with the alleged softness of the former Premier Adolfo Suarez.

Insatiable

Since February 23, 1981, Calvo Sotelo has been trying simultaneously to satisfy two insatiable pressures. In

the first place he had to be seen to be moving against the plotters in order to respond to popular demands for their punishment.

Only if the government did something could the Socialist and Communist Parties present with even a semblance of conviction their policy of relying on Spain's post-Franco "democratic" monarchy and head off more militant mass actions.

At the same time Calvo Sotelo is a prisoner of the Francoist military.

The least he could do on its behalf was to delay the conspirators' court martial and to limit any legal action to those handful of officers already arrested.

This is despite the fact that many revelations have since been made through the press about the wide extent of participation by the military hierarchy in plans in advance of the coup attempt.

Most of these suggest that King Juan Carlos was closely involved as well as most of the regional military commanders.

The limit to the government's ability to delay the trial has now arrived and a military court martial opened on February 19.

The state prosecutor is asking for heavy sentences of up to 30 years' jail for the main accused.

This probably lays the basis for the imposition of lesser sentences which the government hopes will be a compromise designed to satisfy both democratic public opinion and the army. But it is now extremely doubtful that any such compromise is politically possible. It is being made more difficult by the defence offered by the accused themselves.

They are not surprisingly browned-off at being made into scapegoats for organising a conspiracy which had extremely wide backing.

So in their defence they have all drawn attention to the embarrassing fact that they believed that in preparing the coup they were conspiring with no less a figure than King Juan Carlos.

As the trial develops, therefore, it remains to be

seen whether the "innocents" among the top generals are prepared to let it continue rather than initiate another coup.

Many of them will be stimulated in that direction by the renewed plans of ETA (Militar) to attack military targets in the Basque country.

Coup

While the pressures and opportunities for a new Francoist coup are once again growing, there are still no signs that the main parties and organisations of the labour movement are preparing to combat such a coup.

The Socialist and Communist Parties and trade union leaders have for the last year maintained their common front with the right in support of the monarchy and Parliamentary democracy.

They have insisted, but almost inaudibly, that the conspirators be brought to trial. They have hit on the head demands for an inde-

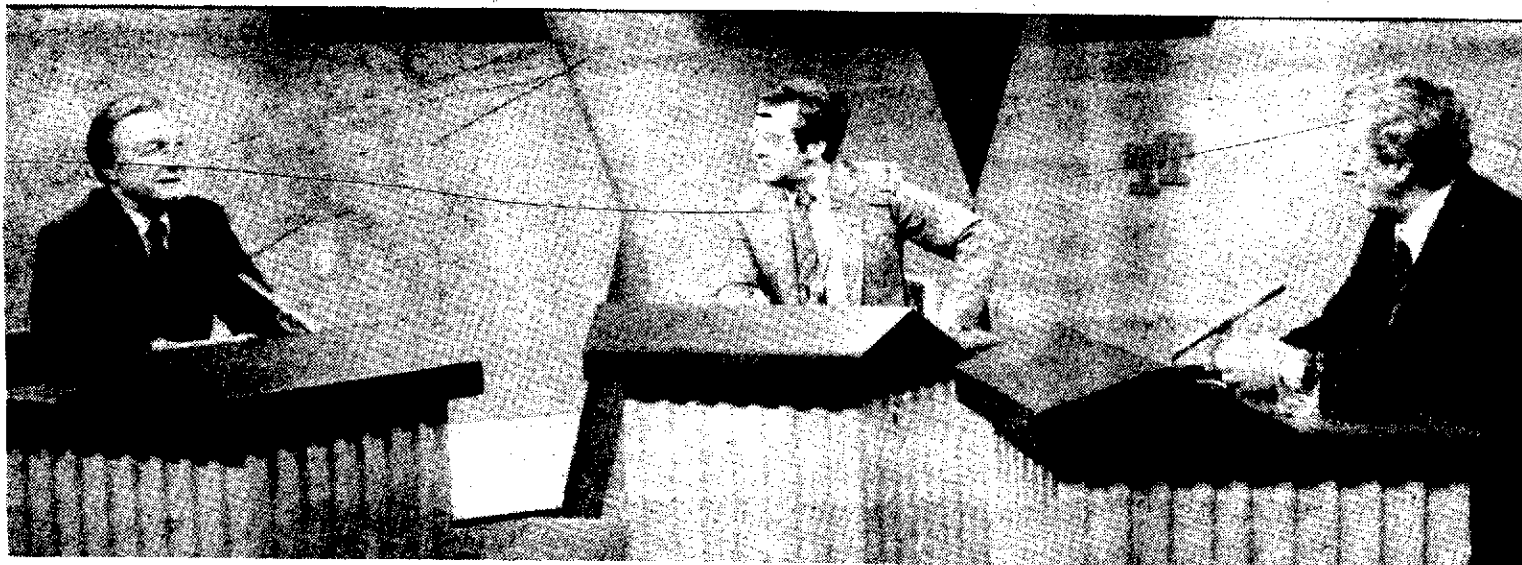
pendent labour movement enquiry and now they make no serious protest against the limited number of indictments or that the case is being tried before military judges.

The trial opens a new period of high tension in Spanish politics. It will not be forgotten that the last World Cup in Argentina was preceded by a military coup. This year the World Cup takes place in Spain!



Tejero

IRISH ELECTIONS



Haughey (left) finished a nose ahead of Fitzgerald (right)

Hung Dail has no answers

JOHN O'MAHONY surveys the election results in the South and what they show about Irish politics. (First part of a two-part article, to be continued next week).

THE GENERAL election of February 18 in the Irish Republic has produced another hung Dail [Parliament].

Fianna Fail had 78 seats in the outgoing Dail to the Fine Gael/Labour block's 80. Now, after a gain of three seats for Fianna Fail, with Fine Gael having lost two while Labour has the same number at 15, Fianna Fail has a majority of three over the coalition government block (81-78).

The balance is held by a group of seven deputies, five of whom are men of the left.

The outgoing Taoiseach (prime minister), Garret Fitzgerald, has refused to concede defeat because he still hopes that a deal may be fixed up with some or all of the seven. But FF leader Charles Haughey has similar hopes and a better chance of success.

The outcome of the frantic huckstering now going on will be registered by the Dail's vote on March 9. Haughey can already count on the support of one of the independents, his ex-colleague on the nationalist wing of FF, Neil Blaney.

Whether the new government is FF or FG/Labour, it will be an insecure government, probably un-

stable. The contradiction that toppled Fitzgerald has been reproduced in the new Dail with only minor modifications: a government committed to social service cuts and economic austerity must depend for its parliamentary majority on the support of deputies of the Left who are likely to respond to pressure from those chosen by the ruling class to bear the brunt of Ireland's economic crisis.

Foreign debt

Ireland's ruling class needs a government strong enough to carry through an unpopular austerity programme. The next decade is expected to be one of economic stagnation for the Republic and of rising unemployment (it is now 13%). The 26 County economy is, per head of the population, more steeply into foreign debt than Poland is. The IMF insists that there is no room for budgetary concessions.

One in five is below the official poverty line. Emigration has ceased to be the safety valve it has been for many decades. There is a powerful labour movement and a working class that has been massively

augmented in the last two decades.

Even apart from the North, there is a lot of explosive material in Irish society.

An unstable and weak government, especially one dependent in the Dail on left wing votes, is therefore very bad news for the Republic's ruling class.

In fact, in a poll of 71%, neither of the main bourgeois parties lost votes. FF got 47%, a rise of 1.99%. FG got 37%, a rise of .84%.

The Labour Party lost one per cent, getting 9.13 per cent. This is complicated, however, by the standing down of two Labour deputies, including former leader Brendan Corish in Wexford. Their seats were lost to the party but would probably have been kept by the incumbents. Personal factors are central in Irish politics. So Labour could have come out of the election with two extra seats. In fact it won two new ones. One went to the outspoken anti-coalitionist Michael Higgins, chairperson of the party.

The campaign was dominated by the economy, and Northern Ireland was a marginal issue. Polls showed the electorate concerned with unemployment and inflation.

All the major parties united to conduct a barrage of propaganda aimed to convince the electorate that cuts and austerity were necessary and could not be avoided. Their seeming success may affect the immediate prospects for the new government.

Coalition budget

The coalition proposed to drop its outrageous proposal to add VAT of 18% on clothes and shoes, and instead to raise money by putting up the price of beer, cigarettes, and foreign holidays. FF promised to maintain food subsidies and not to tax short-term social security benefits, as well as scrapping VAT on kids' shoes and clothes, but endorsed the main thrust of the proposed coalition budget.

So whichever side sets up as the government on March 9 will claim a mandate for the basic budget which the ruling class will implement with a vengeance.

badly, averaging about half the vote for hunger strikers and their supporters last year. For example, Fra. Brown standing in Louth got 3714 first preference votes from an electorate of 57,075. They got a total of 16,894 votes, 1.01% of votes cast.

Bernadette McAliskey, candidate of PD (Irish affiliates of the USFI), associated herself with the Provos and did not do badly, with 2085 first preference votes. (The constituency electorate was 54,726, and Charles Haughey, in the same constituency, got 16,143 first preference votes).

Despite being hounded for supporting the right to abortion, McAliskey improved on the 1481 first preference votes won by a H-Block candidate in the same constituency last year.

Mostly, the votes that went to the hunger strikers last year are reckoned to have gone back to Fianna Fail, and in one area to Sinn Fein the Workers' Party.

The Irish Republican Socialist Party, with six candidates, made little impact. For example, J. Gilligan got 343 first preference votes in Limerick East, and Brigid Makowski 232 in Clare.

Anne Wilkinson, a supporter of Militant and chair of Letterkenny Trades Council, standing for the Labour Party, got 493 first preference votes (while the three winners in her constituency got from 8,000 to 9,000 each).

The biggest event of the election is the consolidation of Sinn Fein the Workers' Party as a force in Irish parliamentary politics.

SFWP is the political descendant of the leftist

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.

and Stalinist-influence Official IRA, from which the Provos split away in late 1969. It called off its own military campaign in the North a decade ago, and by now has broken with much of the Republican tradition.

It secured one deputy, Joe Sherlock (Cork East) in the 1981 election, and this time it won three seats, and 38,094 votes (2.29% of the poll) for 15 candidates.

Its gains came from FF and FG. 1950s ex-internee De Rossa won a seat in Dublin West, and Paddy Gallagher in Waterford, with 6682 first preferences. (Curiously, a lot of votes which in the 1981 election went to a H-Block candidate are estimated to have swung back to Gallagher this time, though his party is very hostile to the military campaign of the Provisional IRA and bitterly denounced the H-Block campaign as its extension).

SFWP got 15,748 votes to Labour's 49,721 in Dublin.

Of the left independents Tony Gregory, who won a seat in Dublin Central from Fianna Fail, is a nationalist-leaning leftist, formerly linked to the IRSP. Jim Kemmy, who was returned again from Limerick, is extremely hostile to the whole nationalist tradition in Irish politics (he is associated with the so-called British & Irish Communist Organisation).

SFWP has called for the creation of a left opposition block ('Grand Alliance of the Left') in the Dail, consisting of its 3 members, Labour's 15, and the left independents. It called on Labour in the election

campaign to form a workers' opposition and break with FG and coalitionism, and it asked voters to treat Labour as their second choice.

No doubt designed to appeal to the anti-coalitionist rank and file of the Labour Party, the appeal may produce results. The Labour Party is badly divided, and the anti-coalitionists have been strengthened within the Parliamentary party.

Also, with perhaps the exception of Tony Gregory, the independent leftists, the Labour Party, and SFWP have a common antipathy to Republicanism, which would be a binding force.

SFWP has a curious notion of what a 'workers' opposition' should be. It considers it to be its democratic duty to vote for a Taoiseach on March 9. 'There is no question of abstaining', said SFWP president Tomas McGiolla. 'It is our duty to help provide a government'.

SFWP 'will vote for the best offer made to meet its demands about the new government's budget. Then, it will go into opposition'. McGiolla has sought a meeting with the Labour Party leaders and is willing to talk to FF and FG.

Its main demands are:

- VAT to be held at its pre-budget level.
- A reduction in income tax for the PAYE sector.
- Increases in property and capital taxation.
- Legislation allowing divorce.
- Dramatic improvement in family planning services.
- Meat and food industries to be expanded.

SOLIDARITY Campaign for MOVES ON RESELECTION

by Nigel Williamson

THE unexpected failure of Frank Hooley to be re-elected in Sheffield Heeley—the constituency which he has represented for 14 years—has started up anew the attacks on mandatory reselection.

The decision of the Labour Solidarity campaign in January to cease its efforts to remove mandatory reselection from the constitution now appears to have been conditional on the process not being put into effect in any of the constituencies which are still to select.

One of Solidarity's leading members, Peter Snape, has written to Michael Foot asking him to raise the case of Mr Hooley on the NEC and demand that Heeley CLP be required to produce valid reasons for not reselecting him as their candidate.

It is worth noting that the NEC has not yet decided on the case of Mr Hooley, and that the NEC has not yet decided on the case of Mr Hooley.

and spice has been added to the situation by the fact that Heeley CLP apparently attempted to mandate Mr Hooley to vote for Tony Benn in the deputy leadership election.

Hooley voted for Silkin and then abstained in the second round and so the right has not been slow to claim a Bennite vengeance killing.

Red herring

The truth is, of course, that to argue over the reasons for his failure to be re-elected is a complete red herring. Ultimately there can only be one reason—that on the night, the majority thought that the other candidate was better, and no doubt they voted for the successful candidate for different reasons.

If Peter Snape and others now want the NEC somehow to intervene with the democratic process and mandate Mr Hooley to be re-elected, they are asking for a

party, they are returning to the bad old days prior to mandatory reselection, when it was virtually impossible for constituencies to replace an MP with whom it was dissatisfied.

For the NEC to act in the way that Snape and others are demanding, would be a step back to the 1950s when, for example, Hayes and Harlington attempted to replace Arthur Skeffington, Hackney Central voted to replace Herbert Butler, Liverpool Exchange voted to replace Bessie Braddock and Coventry sought to disown Elaine Burden. All four were reimposed on the local parties against their will by the NEC.

It happened again with Arthur Irving in Liverpool Edge Hill in 1971 and it took his local party another six years to replace him.

It is precisely the reason why mandatory reselection was introduced. Some, like Stanley Evans in 1956, Alan Brown in Tottenham in 1964, and Peter Reg

Prentice, joined the Tory Party, and Margaret MacKay, in Clapham in 1969, had the good sense to accept the 'get-democratic' decision of their parties.

Fortunately, Frank Hooley, who is by all accounts a thoroughly decent politician, with no thoughts of trying Ben Ford-style blackmail tactics by threatening to oppose the official Labour candidate at the next election, is showing similar good sense.

He has said that he has no plans to challenge the decision and no intention of leaving the Labour Party.

But if some of Mr Hooley's more strident right wing Parliamentary colleagues persuade him to challenge this decision, then Sheffield Heeley could be as important a test as Bermondsey, Militant or Tariq Ali. Nothing less than the whole principle of mandatory reselection would be at stake.

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—ORGANISING THE UNEMPLOYED— LEARN LESSON OF

from the TGWU
6/612 publicity
committee

MASS unemployment in Britain has a long legacy. Fifty years ago, in the 'devil's decade', the labour movement was forced to confront the problem in a dramatic way.

One-third of the insured workforce was out of work. The organisations of the working class, in particular the trade unions and the Labour Party, signally failed to combat the demoralisation and disillusion that became widespread.

The Labour Party was reduced to a rump in Parliament but refused to initiate or cooperate in any campaign that had as its focus Britain outside of the precincts of Westminster. Electoral politics reigned supreme, which provided no inspiration for the thousands trapped by the Board of Guardians and the means-test man.

Similarly, the trade unions and centrally the General Council of the TUC held the view that the unemployed had placed themselves outside the ambit of their legitimate role. They were concerned solely with the conditions of those still at work.



They too held out little solace to the unemployed.

Just over a year ago, it seemed that the organisations of the working class in Britain in the 80s, has understood, however partially, the drastic limitations of the response in the 30s. The Labour Party mass demonstrations at Liverpool and Glasgow appeared to herald a 'change of course'.

The TUC conference,

'Services for the Unemployed', instituted policy calling on unions to retain unemployed members and to recruit from the dole queues.

The People's March for Jobs caught the imagination not only of whole sections of the working class, but also appeared to stimulate the trade union leaderships.

Today, those initiatives look distinctly 'historic'.

The Labour Party leadership has officially shunned 'extra-Parliamentary' strategies of any hue. The trade unions have steadfastly refused to re-examine their options.

Four years ago, Standard Triumph at Speke on Merseyside came under Edwardes' hammer. After the closure, the activists of the branch, the TGWU 6/612, decided to continue membership of the TGWU

as per rule book, as a step towards forging a unity of the employed and unemployed—another feature that was noticeably absent in the thirties. In association with the lay activists in the Merseyside TGWU division, via the Merseyside Co-ordinating Committee, the 6/612 branch has been instrumental in getting Region 6, the TGWU in the North West to adopt a very progressive

policy with regard to organising and mobilising the unemployed. This includes not just retention and recruitment of the unemployed and to make unemployed centres, campaign centres, as opposed to the tea-and-sympathy proposals so close to the hearts of many in the union leaderships.

On Merseyside, the 6/612 branch has grown for the 'wrong' reasons—



the crisis of the local economy has been charted by the roll call of new members.

Dunlops, Massey Ferguson, Ross foods and recently Courtaulds bear witness to that.

Centres

But the membership has also responded by putting in the ground work for the People's March, supporting in more than a monetary way those workers fighting for their jobs, and getting unemployed centres off the ground around the city—in Kirkby, Walton and Tuebrook.

Now they are establishing the county-wide centre in the old police station (in other words, clearing out all the old whisky bottles!).

Moves are afoot on Merseyside to take the campaign forward. But there are still problems. For instance, those joining the TGWU for the first time are required to pay 50p a

Unemployed campaign for union membership

by Chris Erswell

THE National Unemployed Workers Movement is launching a campaign for the unionisation of the unemployed, for the opening up of the unions to the unemployed and for rule changes

to allow this or clarify the ambiguities in the rules where they exist.

The TUC has been very slow to implement its policy of unions retaining and recruiting the unem-

ployed, and it is clear from the recent circular from Moss Evans to TGWU branches that some leading trade union bureaucrats are less than keen to implement the TUC policy.

The circular in question apparently claimed that the rules did not allow the recruitment of unemployed from the doles, and mentioned the North West region as breaking rules.

In this region it is policy to recruit the unemployed under rule 20, clause 18, which gives the regional committee the last word on new applications for membership.

Only one branch is actively recruiting the unemployed in practice—the 6/612 in Liverpool.

They have leafleted dole queues with specially printed recruitment forms supplied by War on Want.

Clearly, the fact that this region is isolated leaves it vulnerable to attempts by the National Officials to close down these activities.

Victory

Fortunately, in this case, a vigorous counter-campaign was able to put pressure on the lay members representing the region on the General Executive Committee, referring the GEC to its previous decision endorsing regional policy on this issue.

To press home this victory it is essential that other regions receive resolutions demanding they adopt similar policies on recruitment. This will obviously have to be initiated largely by the employed membership, as there seem to be few unemployed members of the TGWU in other regions.

However, unemployed groups affiliated to the NUWM can assist by finding

out when the regional committees meet to discuss any resolutions calling for recruitment of unemployed, and mounting a lobby of the meeting.

Ultimately of course, the rules must be clarified to make them explicitly allow for recruitment.

Closed

The GMWU apparently allows for retention of members made redundant but does not allow for recruitment of new members.

Thus in Liverpool the Tate and Lyle GMWU is still in existence but unable to receive new members. The Meccano branch, which only used to meet during working hours, never met again after the factory closed. Only a handful of people kept on paying subs.

But in the case of one leading woman shop steward it took nine months of repeatedly writing to the regional office before she received a new card when her old one ran out. She, along with other Meccano members were put into a miscellaneous branch which is non-functioning.

Movement

When she wrote to ask if the unemployed members in the miscellaneous branch could be transferred to the functioning Tate and Lyle branch, she was informed that there must be a resolution passed by the Tates branch.

The resolution was passed, but there is still no movement on the question.

The National Unemployed Workers Movement needs information about similar problems in other branches up and down the country to help coordinate the isolated struggles over these issues.

It needs to know which branches have moved resolutions to regional/district committees in the past and in future so that we can monitor their progress and effort.

We need to know which unions have got rules revision conferences in the near future so that a campaign within the union can be mounted prior to it, and a lobby of the actual conference itself can be carried out.

Isolation

We also need to mount a campaign within unions, not only on the question of recruitment but also the representation of unemployed on leading committees (positive discrimination for the unemployed?) so that they are not just lumped into non-functioning branches and forgotten about. We need unemployed branches and an unemployed trade group within the TGWU with the consequent rights to delegates to regional and national committees.

In this way the voice of the unemployed would be heard at all levels and would prevent isolation.

The National Unemployed Workers Movement is in the process of drawing up a programme of such demands within the union.



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1930'S De Lorean's stainless steel albatross



Prior

Patrick Spilling looks at the latest jobs disaster.



week for nine months to gain compliance—difficult when you're living on £22 a week.

Also, there are disturbing signs that the leadership is attempting in an underhand way to prevent the recruitment of the unemployed.

But more significantly, the unemployed are not all white, male, 40-year old manual workers. One-half of the unemployed on Merseyside are under 25. One-third are women and not a few are black. Because of this, a union branch attempting to fight alongside the unemployed faced very different problems from an industrially-based branch.

Ignored

However, trade union and labour movement education courses are being organised and out of pocket expenses being met.

We are faced with showing people who, because of their race or sex or age,

have been ignored by trade unions, the relevance of self-organisation and solidarity, that unions, despite how they have treated these groups in the past, do have something to offer. This for us is a concrete expression, within Region 6 of the TGWU, of the necessary link between those in and those out of work.

Voice

These are the problems that we'll all have to face and overcome if we are to succeed. And at root, they are political problems and their resolution demands the attention and support of all activists and socialists. As our first dole bulletin will say:

"For too long this government in particular, has been able to rule as if the unemployed were slaves, without rights and without a voice. We seek to change that."

Worker Alliance

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DE LOREAN's gull-winged luxury cars have a problem with their finish.

If the owner of one of these smart \$25,000-plus toys is unlucky enough to get a handprint on the bodywork, it becomes a permanent part of the decor. It is virtually impossible to shift the mark without a special spray which the manufacturers now have to dish out to all owners.

The blemish is instructive. There is a similar grubby, well-thumbed feel about the deal struck between John De Lorean and James Prior on behalf of the Thatcher government.



and Mercedes.

It is typical of capitalist production that one of the most downtrodden labour forces in Europe has been forced to link its future to the menopausal aspirations of the richest ruling class on the planet.

Craven

In 1978 De Lorean was touring the world seeking to set up production of his dream car at well below American labour rates, and seeking the best possible deal in Government subsidies and tax concessions. At the same time the Labour government was



The Cabinet was publicly committed not to add to the £80 million stake already sunk into the South Belfast factory, but could not afford politically to be seen to be allowing the complete collapse of the project — particularly at the same time as the Laker collapse.

The decision to call in Sir Kenneth Cork, the receiver, was forced on De Lorean by Prior. It put a distance between the Government and any catastrophic end result.

It avoided for the time being the question of whether to write off £80 million given to a man who comes out of the collapse with his own personal fortune intact and a flourishing US company ready to profit out of any new Belfast production.

The Belfast workers who were supposed to benefit from this brilliant project are left to sit and sweat.

Of the 2,600 workers, 1,100 have already lost their jobs. Many of the 1,500 still being paid face the axe even if the company is 'rescued', since the scale of production will be dramatically reduced.

Praised

Yet, far from calling for occupations or attacking De Lorean, the trade union leaders have praised him for his efforts.

Unemployment in the area rises to 50 per cent on some Catholic estates. At least another 2,000 jobs in Britain and Northern Ireland are at risk in the component manufacturers.

The overall total could be 7,000 jobs, and the company owes about £40 million. How did this state of affairs come about?

The cars being built in Dunmurry, where there were green fields until 1980, are aimed at the US executive car market — competing with Porsche

appeared regularly on British TV to draw his confidence in the project.

The factory was built at breakneck speed, and many workers in South Belfast found themselves in work for the first time in their



lives.

But before the first cars were produced, just over a year ago, De Lorean had to go back to the Thatcher government for another £14 million.

De Lorean was talking of selling 18,000 to 20,000 cars a year in the United States. The Belfast plant was initially cushioned against the extravagance of these aims because of the distribution system.

De Lorean set up a net work of dealers in the United States who each had to invest heavily in the car.



looking for some relief from the unemployment rates in the Six Counties.

It says something for the cravenness of the Callaghan Cabinet that it was able — through the Northern Ireland Office — to outbid Southern Ireland and Puerto Rico.

Roy 'Butcher' Mason took the credit for the deal, announcing a £63 million package of subsidies. Unions were told the project would be off if they rocked the boat, and De Lorean himself — looking like a refugee from an American TV series —

This meant that cars were 'in demand' from the dealers completely out of relation to the potential sales.

A second production shift was taken on last year, and Government nominees on the De Lorean board were behind moves — later scrapped — to increase pay to the executives.

As it was, De Lorean was paying himself well over £200,000 a year and



— according to the Sunday Times — his personal expenses were running at the rate of £3,500 a month after he knew his firm was in trouble.

He stayed in the best hotels, flew by Concorde and put two of his servants on the company payroll.

BL workers and train drivers may legitimately wonder why these extravagances on public money



were not exposed as a scandal in the press.

The De Lorean pipe dream was rapidly crumbling. Less than half the 7,700 cars made by the end of last year were sold, and dealers had only accepted 4,750.

De Lorean's attempts to raise big money on Wall Street had failed, and he went back to the Government for help.

But this time it was the receiver, Prior said, "No credibility would have been left in many things we are seeking to do to help in



Ulster had we taken any other course".

Like all freeloaders, De Lorean can walk away intact. He is not responsible for any debts personally, and now his US-owned distribution system has also been freed from the Belfast losses.

He has even been making ludicrous allegations of being firebombed on average more than once a day — yet the trade union leaders he left behind still praise him.

TGWU convenor George Clark confined himself to expressing anger and disappointment at the Government's failure to give De Lorean another blank cheque.

Concannon

Collaboration began with the Labour government, and has continued with the Labour opposition. The debate in the House of Commons last week revealed the usual friendship and mutual admiration between Prior and Don Concannon, the Shadow Secretary for Northern Ireland.

Prior appealed to the House, "Nothing should be said which in any way makes the task of Sir Kenneth Cork [the receiver] more difficult".

Concannon was fully behind Prior.

"The key word for the future must be confidence.

The De Lorean car will be marketable only when dealers and consumers have confidence in continued production and in the support of the Commons.

"The more people have knocked De Lorean, the more sales have been restricted in American and harmed jobs. We want an end to these personal antagonisms. There is a future for the De Lorean car in numerous markets around the world".

Invited to comment on the original Labour decision to back De Lorean, Prior



was in generous mood:

"There may be some doubt with the benefit of hindsight whether this was the right project to go into, but the trouble is in Northern Ireland when one is desperate to attract industry to get employment improved, you tend to go for industries which otherwise would not require that degree of assistance and might be in a stronger position".

Prior's comment was greeted by Labour cheers. Industry, then that is clear evidence that bi-partisan ship is alive and well and living in the Six Counties.



The future holds bleak prospects for the De Lorean workers. Cork is said to be looking at a plan to produce about 8,500 cars a year, but that is probably more than the recession-hit US market will bear. A lower level of production — say the 6,000 that could be sold — would leave the production company operating at a permanent loss.

If it is kept going, the distribution in the US will have to be handled by De Lorean, and at present the distributors are on a gross profit of around \$4,000 a car. If the 8,500 target were reached, this would give De Lorean a turnover in the US of \$34 million a year.

In return for continuing this network (which is in his interests anyway) De Lorean has obtained major concessions from the British Government, the most important being that he has been freed from his guarantees to meet the Irish debts from his American company.

De Lorean has escaped scot free, and the only real losers are the thousands of workers in Belfast and in the component industries for whom the gull-winged car has become an albatross round their necks.

'I'd rather go to court than deny women their rights'

Women
in
struggle



Peter Huntingford speaks to Socialist Organiser

Gynaecologist Peter Huntingford has been cleared of allegations that he had performed illegal abortions.

On Monday 22 February, Attorney-General Michael Havers gave a written answer to Labour MP Peter Archer saying the PP had decided that there was no case to answer.

Now we need to step up pressure to force the HSS to change their forms back to the old format where there was provision for a woman to get rid of an unwanted pregnancy on social grounds.

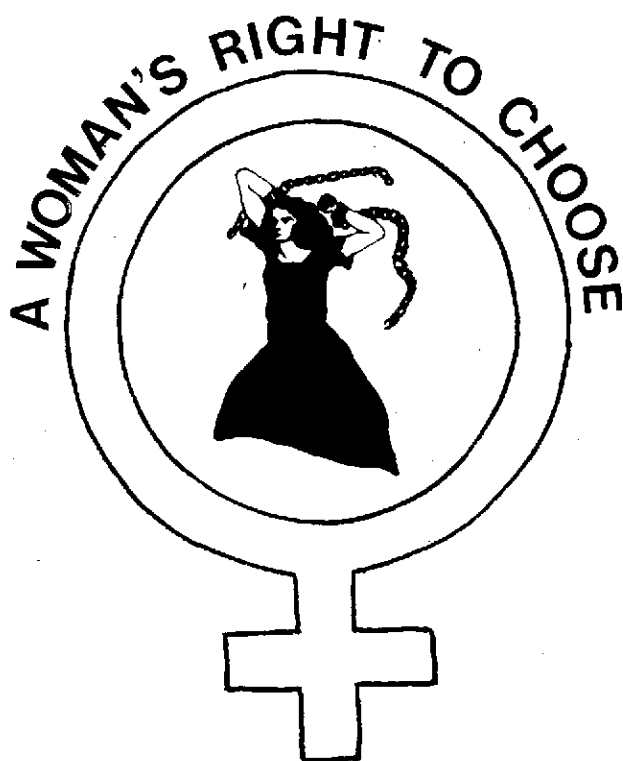
A woman who wants an abortion is not 'sick'—as Peter Huntingford says in his interview (which was conducted three days before the case was dropped).

I've not been charged yet, though I've been cautioned and Scotland Yard have taken a statement.

I understand that if action is to be taken it'll happen next week. Of course they're not obliged to tell me anything, and it could drag on for months.

On 5 October last year, one of my abortion notification forms was returned. I was asked to re-do the form the way I'd filled it in was not acceptable to the DHSS.

Against Clause 2, the form has 'State main medical reason'. I had written 'none'. I returned the form to the Chief



Medical Officer of Health, with a letter saying I'd written none in these cases for the last 12 years and I was not going to certify disease where there was none.

I wrote none and I meant none.

On 5 December about

five or six other forms were returned with a note. Then I got a letter from the Chief Medical Officer saying he felt he had no alternative but to inform the Director of Public Prosecutions. He thought there was a case for prosecuting me on the grounds of performing illegal abortions.

But all through I have maintained that I meant what I wrote: that there were no medical reasons. On the old form there was a separate section for recording non-medical reasons where relevant.

For 12 years, in the case of unwanted pregnancy, I have filled in such reasons and nobody has ever returned the form.

I couldn't believe I should be accused of breaking the law just because the DHSS has changed the form.

Since 1970 I have declared that I think that under the Abortion Act every woman is entitled to get an abortion up to 14 weeks. A new form shouldn't make me change what I'd been saying publicly and openly for years.

I've had a considerable number of letters supporting me. I've not had any from other doctors who do abortions, not that there's many of them.

When the new forms were issued, there was no guidance as to how to fill them in. They had been drawn up without consultation with gynaecologists.

There was a rather strange incident. I had been filling in the space for 'medical condition' on the new forms with 'none' for quite a while before I got a warning. I found this rather puzzling.

Since, I've discovered that some of my forms have been changed without my permission or consultation. And whatever was written instead was acceptable to the DHSS.

A principle is at stake. This is just the thin end of the wedge. It enables restrictions in the Abor-

tion Act to be introduced in a surreptitious and underhand way.

It's designed to intimidate the middle of the road doctors who don't want to go out of their way to give women abortions.

I've been accused of arguing about semantics. It's not semantics. I believe the Abortion Act does make provision for abortion on demand in good faith up to 14 weeks.

The new form denies that provision and I won't have it.

Political pressures will influence the Director of Public Prosecutions and the National Abortion Campaign has organised events to protest about the new forms.

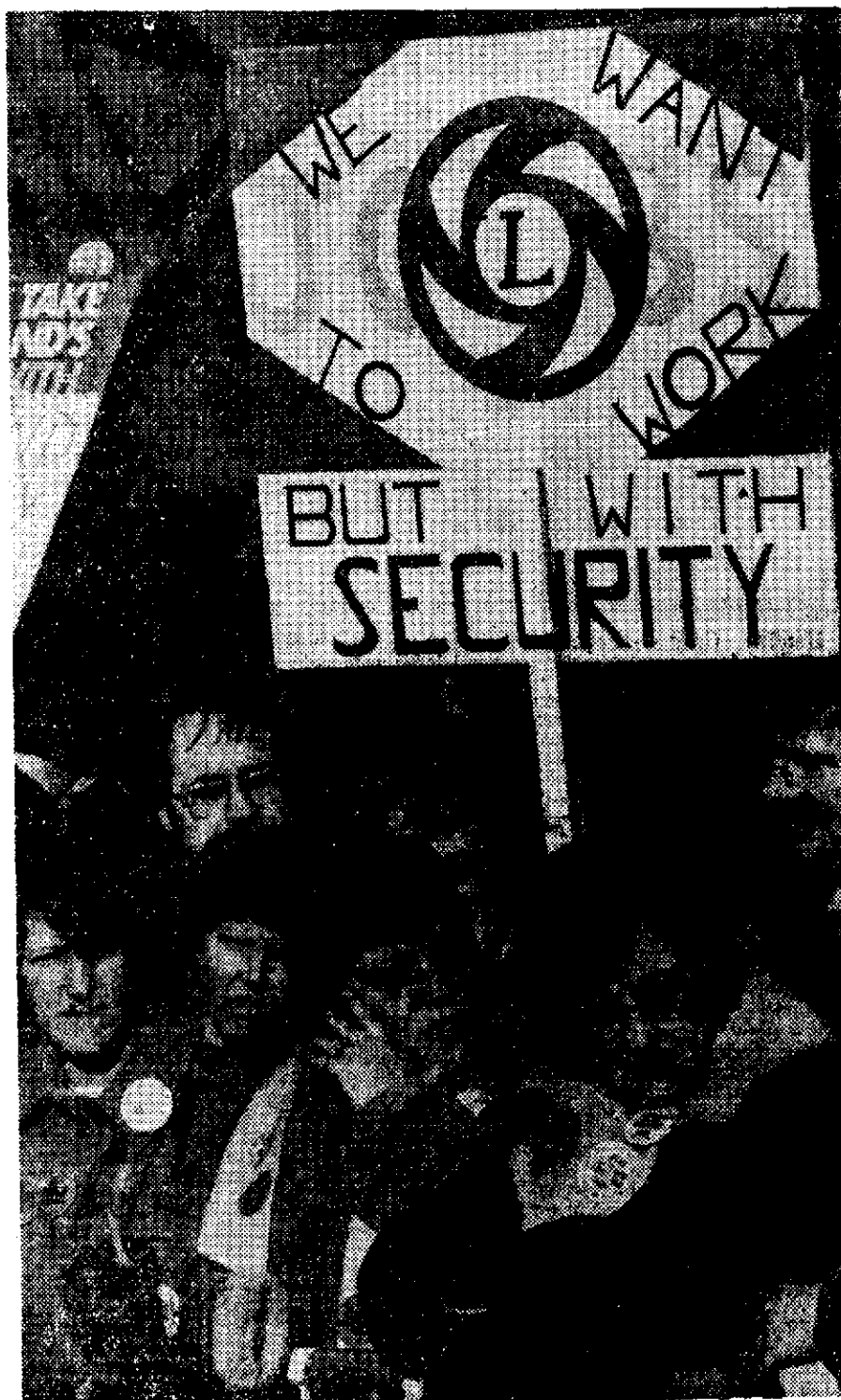
The problem is that once I'm charged (if I am), the case becomes sub judice, and there can be no public comment about it. The press—the national dailies not Socialist Organiser—won't touch it, or even report campaigns and lobbies organised by NAC.

This also means that there will be nothing said about it in Parliament, which is ironic as I believe the government are trying to change the law without having anything to do with the Parliamentary process.

We should have a campaign to get the forms withdrawn. Maybe that's an issue the TUC and Labour Party could get their teeth into.

If they don't charge me then we've won a resounding victory. If nothing happens, then it is a statement de facto that abortion on demand up to 14 weeks is allowed. That would be tremendous.

If it goes to court, then it'll be a test case. But I'd rather go to court than fill in a form which I think denies women their rights.



Women from BL's Bathgate plant — the scene until last Friday of a month-long strike and short occupation in defence of jobs — at the head of a protest against Scottish unemployment last week.

Women's Fightback Trade union conference

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.

MARCH 27

250 back campaign for right to work

by Ann Evans

ABOUT 250 people, nearly all women, met last Saturday at the organising conference for the Women's Right to Work Demonstration.

It was obvious from all the discussions, both in workshops and plenary sessions, that the vast majority of the delegates were actively campaigning in local groups against women's unemployment.

Although the conference was billed as organising for the demonstration, it was much more wide-ranging than this.

One particular discussion was around the slogans of the campaign—

a perennial issue that has been raised on the Action Committee since its inception last year.

The objection to the central slogan 'For a Woman's Right to Work' is that it denies the importance of the real, unrecognised work that women do in the home.

Additional slogans have been added to try to get round this problem, but no doubt the dispute will continue. The most encouraging aspect of the day was the number of ideas for campaigning that were suggested.

Every delegate was issued with an 'Action Kit' which contained factsheets and information from various campaigns.

One proposal was for a 'Stand up and be Counted' campaign, to get women who are not at work and not on the unemployment register to sign an alternative register.

This could then be used to publicise the large numbers of women who aren't employed and don't show up on the statistics.

The morning workshops centred on various aspects of women's employment, including Women's Right to Work, sexual harassment, fighting for jobs, positive action. Many experiences were brought in both of general campaigns and of disputes like the Liverpool typists' strike.

In the afternoon, regional workshops discussed how

the policies of the campaign could be acted on in the local areas.

Finally, a resolution was passed that if by April 3 the Labour Party and/or TUC have not officially backed a demonstration to complement the 'Festival' on June 5, then the Action Committee will call the demonstration themselves.

We must not let up the pressure on the Labour Party and TUC. The next month is the most vital time to flood them with resolutions demanding that they take women's unemployment seriously and pull their members out for a demonstration in June.

CONTACT: Action Committee for a Woman's Right to Work, 181 Richmond Road, London E8.

Death of the 'tin king'

by Santiago Fortin



Bolivian miners

VERY FEW people indeed will mourn the belated demise of Don Antenor Patino, 84, two weeks ago in a New York clinic. Patino was the son of one of the twentieth century's leading entrepreneurs, Simon Patino, who became known as the 'tin king' and amassed a fabulous fortune on the world market at the expense of generations of Bolivian miners—whose average life expectancy is 35.

Patino the elder started his career as a clerk in a silver mining office in the 1890s. It was a time of considerable crisis in the capitalist system, when the majority of the world's states were turning to the gold standard from bi-metalism (measuring the value of currencies against both silver and gold).

Paid off by his employer, with a part-share in a dis-

used silver mine, La Salvadora (now part of the huge Siglo XX complex), Patino tried his hand at exploiting the then modestly priced metal of tin, which all other mine-owners cast aside as virtual waste.

Among other factors, the necessity of feeding British troops in the Boer War led to the rapid rise of the tin can, and the market for the metal expanded very quickly.

By diligent management and ruthless methods more akin to primitive accumulation than the rules of competition under monopoly capital, Patino cornered a major share in the market. By 1910 he had freed himself from dependence on the British banks in Santiago and was even displacing British and French mineowners with his greater local know-

ledge and contacts.

When European imperialism drove itself into war in 1914, Patino was set to make his own killing in an open market in which his only real competitors were in distant Malaysia and the still underdeveloped mines of the Congo.

By 1924 the family corporation made the move to Delaware, which has some of the laxest company legislation in the world, and denied the weakling Bolivian state any but the most minimal taxes. The great man himself set up camp in Paris where as ambassador he could keep an eye on young Antenor, who was flexing his business muscles after a sobering stay at an English public school, and put as much distance as possible between himself and the massacre of hundreds of his workers that was a

ritual central to the extraction of surplus value under the most horrendous conditions.

Company requests for 'law and order' during strikes led to the deaths of hundreds in 1921, 1923, 1942, 1947 and 1949.

Between 1911 and 1952 only two Bolivian governments lacked the export advice of a Patino employee in the cabinet, and together with the smaller family firms of Aramayo and Hochschild (known collectively as the 'rosca'), the Patinos ruled the country almost absolutely until the revolution in 1952 which led to the nationalisation of their properties.

By then the elder Patino had been dead for five years. Antenor was in charge—conveniently, but not coincidentally well away from the country with his wife, Princess Christina

de Bourbon—when mine workers took up arms, defeated the army and forced the new government led by the petty bourgeois MNR to nationalise the mines and give the workers a veto on all management decisions.

This was an undeniable blow, but Patino capital had long expanded into numerous enterprises, including the Williams Harvey smelter in Barrow, controlled by the family until its closure in the late 70s.

Antenor continued to direct the billion-dollar businesses from his chalet outside Zurich and his offices in New York, unconcerned at the terror and poverty still suffered by his compatriots as they moiled out the tin he continued to control on the international market. His homeland, for all its woes, did not have its soil besmirched by his presence for 40 years.

Socialist Bookshelf

Books and pamphlets that you should read

Andrew Hornung concludes his two-part introduction to the "Letters to Americans" by Marx and Engels.

THE slogan of the Marxists—to organise a Labour Party—was vindicated again in the late 1870s when Labour Parties arose spontaneously in many cities to run candidates for government office. These spontaneous organisations led to the founding in 1877 of the Socialist Labour Party of North America.

But again the Lasalleans diverted the movement from the establishment of a real workers' party and led the SLP into another alliance with a money-reforming group, the Greenback Party.

In 1880, the year of the formation of the Greenback-Labour Party, Marx, in a letter to Friedrich Sorge in New York, turned again to the theme of the need to relate to the real movement in his comments on the situation in France: "The economic section of (the election programme for France)" he wrote approvingly, "consists solely of demands that have spontaneously risen out of the labour movement itself, except for the introductory passages where the communist goal is defined in a few words... Up to the present time only sects existed there, which naturally received their mot d'ordre (slogan) from the founder of the sect..."

Lever

The Socialist Law passed in Germany in 1878 restricted the activities of the German socialists and forced many into emigration. This emigration brought a number of anarchists, most importantly Johann Most, to America. Now, again, Marx and Engels' correspondence turns to attacking the anarchists for the way in which terrorism turns its back on the mass movement.

Marx and Engels first referred to the reformer Henry George in a letter of 1881. By 1886 Engels had received several requests to write a critique of George's cranky scheme to emancipate mankind by nationalising land. His responses to these requests hammer out again and again his concern with the real struggles of the workers and their need to establish a distinct working class party.

To Sorge, Engels writes: "The Germans have not understood how to use their theory as a lever which could set the American masses in motion; they do not understand the theory themselves for the

most part and treat it in a doctrinaire, and dogmatic way as something that has to be learned by heart... To them it is a credo and not a guide to action. What is more they learn no English on principle..."

Engels characterised the main trade union organisation, the Knights of Labour, as a "ludicrous organisation" with "confused principles". Yet, opposing the abstentionists among the Marxists, Engels insisted, "it is necessary to work inside them, to form within this still quite open plastic mass a core of people who understand the movement and its aims..."

"The rottenest side of the Knights of Labour," Engels saw as "their political neutrality". Again he spelled out the importance of a Labour Party: "The first great step of importance for every country newly entering into the movement is always the constitution of the workers as an independent political party... That the first programme of this party is still confused and extremely deficient, that it raises the banner of Henry George, these are unavoidable evils but also merely transitory ones. The masses must have time and opportunity to develop, and they can have the opportunity only when they have a movement of their own..."

In the same letter he accuses the Socialist League in England, which he brackets together with America in terms of the lack of political development of the working class, of having "no time to concern itself with the living movement that is taking place in front of its face."

The same theme is taken up again in the famous letter from Engels to one of his translators, Mrs Florence Kelly Wischniewitzky: "For a whole large class, there is no other road, especially for a nation so eminently practical and so contemptuous of theory as then Americans (than)... to learn by one's own mistakes..."

This collection of letters is shot through and through with Marx's and Engels' excitement at the progress of the real workers' struggle and their impatience with all narrow-mindedness and rigid doctrinairism. Above all it is a document of exuberant energy and optimism.

Of course, it would be betraying the whole approach of Marx and Engels if one were to read the letters and just repeat its ideas without thought to changing situations.

Above all, it would be fatal if today, after roughly a century of labour bureaucracy and eighty years of the Labour Party—both brokers for imperialism and class collaborationist ideas within the working class—we gave so generous an evaluation to the contribution of reformists and radical quacks.

Newsline attempt to refute SO comes out

WHITER THAN WHITE!

TWO replies in Gerry Healy's and Tom White's Newsline (Saturday 20th and Monday 22nd) have conspicuously failed to answer or even to refer to any of the questions that I raised in last week's Socialist Organiser.

Since then Tom White has been nominated as a candidate in the election for the TGWU convener of the Cowley Assembly Plant.

In response to a campaign in Newsline against the current convener, Bob Fryer, I posed four questions from Tom White's record in the plant, showing that he is in no position to criticise Fryer.

1. That Tom White stood for election for the participation committees in 1975, an action which was defended by Workers Press (forerunner of Newsline).

2. That Tom White and Newsline supported a joint management/participation inquiry into productivity on the Princess track (which was opposed by the workforce, and led to the victimisation of a young Asian worker).

3. That Tom White was on Reg Parsons' (extreme right wing) recommended list of deputy convenors for the December 1975 plant elections.

4. That Tom White resigned from the 5/293 branch committee during the campaign to defend the Cowley 9, and wrote to the

TGWU officials denouncing the other 8 as being guilty of breach of rule.

The Newsline has nothing to say about these four serious allegations against the WRP's candidate for convener of the plant.

In fact, the embarrassingly weak reply (reprinted inset) is the best proof that Healy and White have no answer at all.

Saturday's article says no more except to confirm (in advance of the nominations) that Tom White will be standing.

Healy is reduced to a few fatuous and factually wrong points about the Oxford Labour Party, like the assertion that Alan Thornett has applied to join it. The Oxford Labour Party would be the first to confirm that no such application has ever been made. Not that Alan Thornett has much choice in the matter, given the atmosphere in the Oxford party in the recent period.

Sectarian stance

The left has been fighting for the reinstatement of those expelled or blocked by the right wing. The WRP has never been part of that fight. The sectarian stance of the WRP means that neither Healy nor White have the slightest idea what is going on inside the Oxford Labour Party or any other Labour

Party.

If Healy wants to criticise Fryer's involvement in the Labour Party, it should be from the point of view of what Fryer does, what policies he supports, not that he is a member!

Healy should drop the smokescreen and answer the questions I have raised.

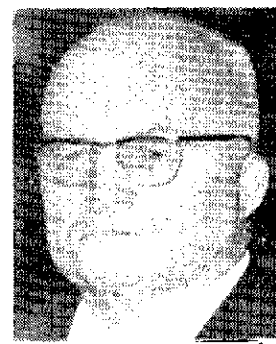
In fact, much more could be said about Tom White's record, since his record becomes an issue now he is aspiring to the leadership of the plant.

For example: last year

the WRP distributed a leaflet in the Assembly Plant which implied that Alan Thornett was working in the plant as an agent of Scotland Yard. Tom White at first expressed reservations about the leaflet, but was then pulled into line and began defending it.

If Healy is prepared to sink to lies of that sort about other people, he should not object when some of the truth begins to be told about Tom White.

BILL PETERS



Healy

PAGE 2 The News Line Monday February 22, 1982

Labourite back-scratching

THE 'Socialist Organiser' is a weekly paper specially catering for such people as the left and right-wing members of the Oxford Labour Party.

Recently, almost an entire page was given to one 'Bill Peters' who concocted a set of distortions about the history of British Leyland's Cowley plant at Oxford.

'Bill Peters' is none other than Mr Alan Thornett who has applied to join the Oxford Labour Party so that he can be near his 'old mate' Bob Fryer, who has been accepted as an esteemed and respected member by that party.

The article calls the Workers Revolutionary Party a right-wing party, when everybody knows that it would be hard to find a more discredited right-wing body than the Oxford Labour Party.

The importance of the article is not in what it says but in what it doesn't say.

COMMENT

It omits, for example, to mention that its publication is timed for the election to decide the Cowley convener.

This is a matter of excruciating importance to the aforementioned 'Bill' (Thornett) Peters whose man in the election is Labourite Bob Fryer, the current convener, though he does not admit it in the article.

This is because of Mr Fryer's recent unfortunate behaviour in the factory.

He allowed the management to censor an important letter from the stewards to their members in the factory. Whole paragraphs were dropped and others were rephrased in a form more acceptable to BL top brass.

It grossly violated the stewards'

right to communicate freely on trade union matters with union members.

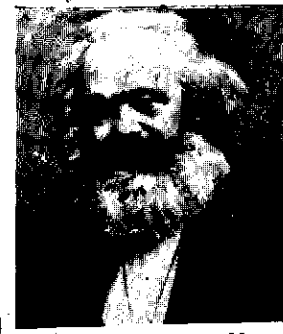
This capitulation, reported in News Line on Tuesday, February 9, is completely ignored by 'Socialist Organiser'. Instead, Mr Fryer is fraudulently presented as the champion of workers' rights at Cowley.

And 'Bill' (Thornett) Peters hopes he can get Bob Fryer elected to carry on the kind of work so much appreciated by the Cowley BL management.

In return, Thornett hopes that Fryer will persuade the right-wing Oxford Labour Party to accept Thornett as a loyal member, which he certainly will be.

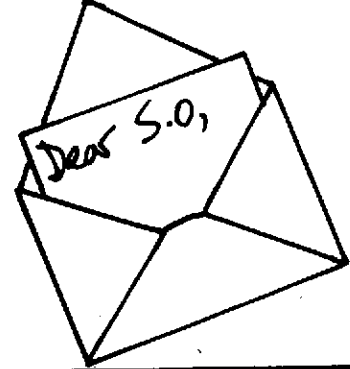
Cowley workers will soon have their own opportunity to give a verdict on Mr Fryer so the matter can be left in their hands.

As for Thornett, he is just lying about the WRP as usual.



Marx

Writeback Censorship and sexism



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.

ANN EVANS' article "Can censorship help liberate women?" showed some very muddled thinking in my opinion. What would her attitude be if women workers at her place of work demanded the removal of sexist pin-ups from notice-boards or lockers and a campaign against sexual harassment? Would she complain that this was wrong because Mary Whitehouse might agree? Would she say that the women were trying to

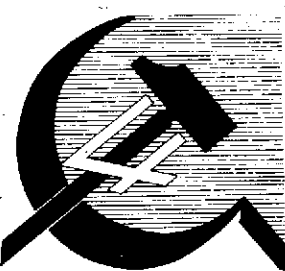
restrict the expression of "open sexuality"? Surely she would support the women wholeheartedly. What then if the delegates from her place of work to the local Labour Party and Trades Council demanded a campaign on a wider scale within the community? What if it was taken up by the local Labour Council? What if it became part of the Labour Party Manifesto? Censorship as part of a mass anti-sexist campaign would be a step forward, not

a step backwards. Ann Evans says that sexism is all around us in the newspapers, in advertisements and so on and that we have to challenge this. Well, how do we challenge it if we don't rip them up and close them down? Pornography makes me very angry as a man—not because I am a puritan or opposed to open sexuality, but precisely because it distorts my sexuality; it reinforces sexism; it takes away genuine human feeling for

others and for oneself as independent people in their own right. I cannot understand why a woman would not feel even more angry and I think frankly that any woman who does not is the equivalent of an Uncle Tom to slavery. Ann Evans says that we would all agree with Reg Race's assessment of pornography. Unfortunately this is not the case. There are those who still cling to the liberal, cathartic

What's wrong with politics of French PCI

MIKE PEARSE wants my opinion on the political issues in the split in the Fourth International (International Committee), in more than nine words, and without brackets. So here it is. The central issue was the question of what attitude Marxists should take towards the French government.



Evidence like its attempts to limit wages, its support for NATO, its acceptance of the veto of the Constitutional Council, and its doomed efforts to solve unemployment by hand-outs to the bosses, define the Mitterrand/Mauroy government as a pro-capitalist government. Because the government is heavily dependent on and subject to pressure from working class support, the French ruling class distrusts it. Hence their loud denunciations. But this clamour has a very practical purpose of browbeating the government—and the government has shown itself willing to be browbeaten.

The election of Mitterrand was the concentrated result of the whole class struggle since 1968. The Mitterrand/Mauroy government is therefore a government of class collaboration amidst deep political crisis. It falls into the category described by Trotsky as 'popular fronts'. Trotsky said: "People's fronts" on the one hand—fascism on the other: these are the last political resources of imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution." Thus the short-term alternatives are working class revolution or the overthrow of Mitterrand by fascism. The whole analysis proceeds by reasoning from (supposed) first principles rather than from facts. The practical conclusions? The demands

presented by the PCI are more like a list of advice to the government for measures like price controls than an adequate programme. Its whole politics are presented in terms of the choice between the government going forward to defeat capitalism or being suborned by it. Working class self-reliance is not stressed. The danger to the working class from the bosses and the permanent state machine is stressed, but any danger from the government is hardly mentioned. Yet this limited, uncritical policy is presented in the most hectoring tones of blustering self-proclamation. In so far as Nahuel Moreno and his co-thinkers criticise the opportunist side of the PCI policy, I think they are right. I also think that Mike Pearse's self-righteous condemnation of "the split prepared by Moreno" rests on shaky ground. Moreno's co-thinkers in the OCI were expelled in a way not at all designed to avoid a split. One group, for example, was faced by a resolution in their local



French workers are occupying in pursuit of shorter working week

OCI area condemning their supposed 'cliquist' activity—and saying that anyone who voted against this resolution (as the majority of the meeting did) was automatically considered to have 'left' the organisation! Basis Finally: Mike Pearse argues that the FI(OC) had a solid political basis. But that basis—as the split has confirmed—was not sufficient to allow a constructive debate on orientation towards a social demo-

cratic government in France. And its generalities offer little in the way of practical guidance for Marxists in the class struggle. Hence the inability of the FI(OC) to produce a resolution on Poland calling for anything more than free elections. Was it to prevent anyone pointing out such weaknesses in its founding Theses that the FI(OC) founding conference was turned from an "open" conference into a closed event? MARTIN THOMAS, London.

May poll

Prepare the fight for socialist policies! Discussion meeting for Socialist Organiser supporters who are standing as Labour candidates in the May

elections. Sunday February 28, 2pm to 5pm, at Central London Poly, Marylebone Road, room 317.

Wave

The government did not come to office on a wave of working class action. Rather, Mitterrand won his majority as a result of the crisis of the right wing, with some bourgeois politicians backing him on the grounds that he would be better able than Giscard to forestall working class action.

Whether those bourgeois politicians calculated correctly, is another matter. Marxists should try to prove them wrong—by fighting for the mobilisation of the working class independent of the government.

While understanding that the first moves of the working class—like the present battles over the 39 hour week—will probably be seen by most workers as supplementing the government's efforts, not contradicting them, Marxists need to present a clear explanation of the nature of the government, without shrill denunciation.

Programme

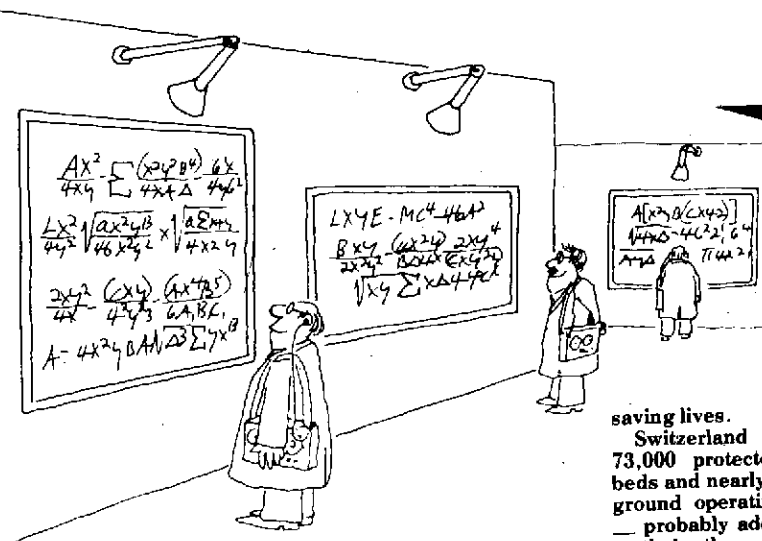
They also, I think, need to propose an action programme of working class demands on the model of the one outlined for France in the Socialist Organiser.

SCIENCE

by Les Hearn

CONTINUING my series based on the articles, 'Medicine and the Bomb', in the British Medical Journal:— A nuclear attack on Britain would result in hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of injured. Treatment of blast and fire victims would require resources unavailable even in peace-time (i.e. large supplies of blood, plasma, and skin grafts), let alone with most hospitals destroyed and medical workers dead or injured. After about five days, the symptoms of radiation sickness would start to appear, demanding more blood and fluids to cope with the bleeding, vomiting and diarrhoea, as well as vast amounts of antibiotics to combat infections due to loss of white blood cells. In the absence of adequate facilities, countless preventable deaths would result. The serious medical problems of the injured would be compounded by the lack of food and shelter.

reduce casualties as much as possible. There are three ways of doing this:— 1. Evacuation of people from likely target areas, i.e. big cities. Civil defence plans write off attacked cities due to the impossibility of mounting rescue operations. In response to this problem, both Norway and the USSR have detailed plans for evacuating cities, while West Germany has partial evacuation plans. Even the USA has made a half-hearted gesture in this direction. In Britain, however, people would be forbidden to move about the country or would be banned from using major routes. 2. Protection from blast, fire or fallout. Outside the firestorm zone, basement shelters or even just reinforced buildings could protect from blast. The greater the thickness of stone, brick or earth above you the less radiation you receive. In fact, a concrete ceiling of 10 cm thickness will reduce the radiation dose to 1% of the outside dose. 3. Training in civil defence and protection of emergency services. Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the USSR all train substantial proportions of their populations in defence measures and this could be of considerable help in reducing panic and



much airborne radioactivity out. West Germany plans to subsidise shelters in new buildings; the Netherlands require all new homes over two storeys to include a basement fall-out shelter; Norway has shelters for 60% of people; Sweden has shelters against blast, fire, fallout, chemical and biological weapons for 70% of people; Switzerland has shelters for 90% of people. In Britain there are deep shelters for the members

of the machinery of government. The much ridiculed whitewashing of windows and fallout shelters under the stairs would protect many against heat and fallout, but as the total contribution of the government to our safety, it's a bad joke! 3. Training in civil defence and protection of emergency services. Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the USSR all train substantial proportions of their populations in defence measures and this could be of considerable help in reducing panic and

saving lives. Switzerland also has 73,000 protected hospital beds and nearly 100 underground operating theatres—probably adequate, given their other precautions. On the other hand, Britain's civil defence system is pathetic and some Labour councils have rightly refused to have anything to do with it. The inescapable conclusion is that the British government is only concerned to preserve its control over us in the event of nuclear war. But should we just reject civil defence without putting alternatives? If we oppose the cold war argument that the possession of a nuclear deterrent

makes war less likely, then we must take our own safety more seriously. Labour councils should be drawing up counter-proposals for civil defence. Next, the long term effects of nuclear war.

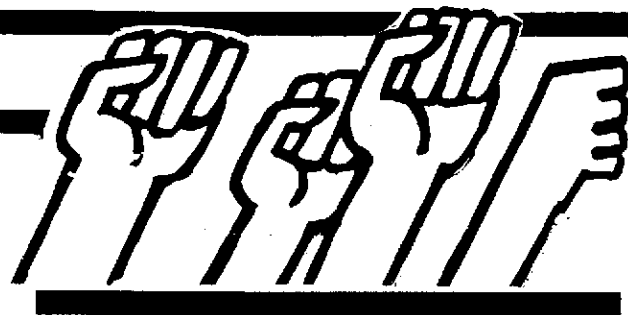
HAPPY BIRTHDAY, SCIENCE COLUMN!

This week marks the start of the second year of the only regular science column on the left, one that tries to be informative and political. Once again, I'd like to call for support for a Socialist Organiser Science Group. This could collect and collate information, provide speakers, coordinate activities, and provide back-up for local struggles (like the fight against a toxic tip in Stoke). With enough support, we could also look at such questions as a socialist science policy and Marxism and science. So send me your names and addresses if you are interested.

Fighting for union democracy

An outline platform for union democracy

Alan Thornett and John O'Mahony present a draft platform for union democracy in preparation for the April 3 conference. The draft will be discussed by the sponsoring organisations, and organisations sending delegates are also invited to send amendments and resolutions.



UNION OFFICIALS AND COMMITTEES

All officials should be elected for definite terms (no more than two years) and subject to recall at any time. Full-time officials should be paid the average wage in their industry.

Union policy-making bodies should be made up of elected lay members only. The same should go for Standing Orders Committees and Appeals Committees.

Full minutes and voting records of policy-making bodies should be circulated.

National delegate conferences should be held every year and should have supreme policy-making power.

ELECTIONS

Voting should be at workplace meetings or by workplace ballot. It should not be by postal ballot. We want informed, collective working class decision-making, not ballots manipulated by Fleet Street lie-machines. Election addresses must be circulated unaltered, and candidates and their supporters must have unrestricted rights to circulate literature.

STRIKES

Strikes should be automatically official until declared unofficial. All strikes for trade union principle, work conditions or wages should be made official. Strike committees must be elected from (and subject

to recall by) mass meetings. Through mass meetings and strike bulletins, they must keep the membership fully informed throughout the strike.

There should be no secret negotiations. Every stage of negotiations should be subject to rank and file ratification at mass meetings. Mass meetings should never be presented with package deals unless each part of the deal has been voted on separately by the meeting beforehand.

WORKPLACE ORGANISATION

Shop stewards must be elected at mass meetings held in the workplace, in company time if possible. They should hold regular report-back meetings, also if possible in company time. Joint Shop Stewards' Committees should be set up on a plant, combine and international basis. Technical and clerical workers should also be represented on these committees.

Despite the general need for unity, there will be cases where shop stewards disagree strongly with the majority of the stewards' committee and want to put their minority views to the membership. They should have the right to do so, after notifying the committee of their intention, so long as they also make it clear to the membership what the stewards' majority view is.

Union branches should have the right to meet at the workplace and in work time if possible. If not, creche facilities must be provided to ensure women workers can attend. Labour Party workplace branches should be set up with all the rights of ordinary

ward branches.

CLOSED SHOP

We must campaign: for 100% trade unionism; for the right of trade unionists to enforce closed shops; for the right of trade unionists to discipline fellow workers to scab or flout democratic decisions; against the check-off system; and against employer-policed 'agency' shops.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Full equality for women in the trade unions. Equal contributions and equal rights. Positive discrimination to ensure real equality. Support for the right to form women's caucuses.

BLACK AND IMMIGRANT WORKERS

No discrimination against black or immigrant workers in the unions (including in social clubs). Positive discrimination to ensure real equality. Support for the right to form black caucuses.

Campaigns to recruit immigrant workers to trade unions (using leaflets in the immigrants' own language).

A purge of open racists from all positions in the labour movement. Expulsion of fascist activists from the unions.

A vigorous and sustained trade union fight against racist and sexist job discrimination. Automatic endorsement of all strikes against discrimination.

YOUTH

Full trade union rights for young workers, including the right to strike. Formation of youth committees.

THE UNEMPLOYED

Unionisation of the unemployed, with full rights within the unions.

INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

Right of members to criticise union policy; to meet unofficially and visit other branches; to write, circulate and/or sell political literature. Right of appeal direct to union Appeals Court.

All education or other special qualifications for union office to be abolished. No member to be disqualified from holding union office on political grounds, other than fascist or racist activity.

RIGHTS OF BRANCHES AND DISTRICT COMMITTEES

Defend the rights of trade union branches and

district committees against the central union bureaucracy. For the right of branches or district committees to take or approve industrial action.

DEVELOPING SOLIDARITY

Develop links between unions. Expand trades councils to include representation from the unemployed, tenants and students, and, most important, direct representation from factory committees and other shop floor organisations.

Affiliate trade unions to the Labour Party and local union branches to the local CLPs. TUC and Labour Party conference delegations should be bound to follow union policy where it exists. There should be democratic control of the block vote cast at Labour Party conference: delegations should be elected and consist of lay members. Members of all working class parties and tendencies should be eligible for inclusion in the delegation.

Trade union branch delegates to Trades Councils and Labour Parties must report back regularly.

BREAKING COLLABORATION

Trade unions should fight for full independence from the state. Total non-cooperation with the TEBBIT Law and the Employment Act: state money for postal ballots should be rejected.

The National Economic Development Council and all the other governmental and industrial 'participation' bodies should be opposed and boycotted. Trade unionists must be answerable to the membership, not to joint committees with the bosses.

No interference by the bosses' courts in the internal affairs of the labour movement. Even when an appeal to the courts is motivated by a desire to thwart the right wing bureaucrats, it runs counter to the principles of working class democracy.



Police bust through the Scotts picket line last week

Scotts call to action

"It wasn't Arthur Snipe who beat us. It wasn't even the police or the Tory government. It was the leadership of our own union - that's what beat us."

These words of Dennis Barry sum up better than anything else, the events at Laurence Scott over the past week. Whilst Snipe's scabs have been systematically looting the place of anything worth taking, helped by hundreds of police every day, the labour movement in Manchester has sat back and let it happen.

Pickets

1,000 pickets could have kept the scabs out and sent them packing along with their friends in blue. It shouldn't have been too difficult to get that number to turn out, considering all the promises Scotts workers had been given in the past.

What went wrong? The treachery of the union leadership at national level, especially in the AUEW, has to be top of the list.

It wasn't just the lack of support they gave to the

strikers, they were actively campaigning against them.

Boyd and Duffy broke every rule in the book to withdraw official support from the dispute. And when they did circulate branches, it was to warn them off giving support. Last week's events must have come as a great relief to them. The motion calling for new elections to the Executive has already been passed by over 130 branches, and the pressure was on.

One of the lessons the Scotts workers are determined to take with them, is the need to build up the strength of the movement at grass roots level again. In the meantime they are carrying on their campaign to remove the AUEW Executive and get fresh elections and at the same time to get the Mining Supplies Group blacked throughout the country.

They are also preparing a broadsheet on their experiences. That will be essential reading for all militants.

"When the police came 500 strong with their Tactical Aid Groups, there was no way that the Laurence

Scotts pickets could hold the gates on our own. We were let down by the grass roots engineers. Laurence Scott fought on our own we gave a lead and showed that it was possible to fight. We hope now that someone else takes up the cudgel.

"The fight now revolves around Rule 14. Branches must send resolutions through and fetch the Executive to the polls. These are the men that sold us out - and we're not the first, witness Plansees. We saw what happened at Leyland with the lack of lead given there. District Organiser Len Brindle even read out a letter from Edwardes to the mass meeting!

Sell out

Now there will be massive redundancies there. Boyd and Duffy sell out their members in big companies, so what chance those in the small ones.

We rejected the Executive's ultimatum to settle, and that was a democratic vote. They ignored that and withdrew strike pay and official backing.

Laurence Scotts will still fight on to make the union democratic. We've been called militant morons but we were just fighting to save our jobs and we would have succeeded.

What we've got to do now is strengthen the grass roots of our union to make sure that this debacle doesn't happen again.

It's the rank and file that should dominate the leadership, and not the other way around. We need people with different views on the Executive who will do the job they were put there for and represent the views of their membership.

There's one more thing. Through occupying the factory, seven stewards are faced with a bill of over £6,000, two thirds of this is to pay for the Sheriff and the bailiffs who we didn't invite and who chucked us out of the factory.

All AUEW members should be demanding that the union pays for this. But if they don't then we are going to be asking for donations. And that isn't the end. There are still two more cases to come up."

CONFERENCE

Democratise the labour movement!

WHEN AND WHERE: The conference has been PUT BACK from the original date of March 6 - which turned out to clash with other commitments for many invited speakers - to **Saturday April 3.** A venue will be confirmed shortly.

SPONSORS INCLUDE:

Socialist Organiser, London Labour Briefing; Oxford Trades Council; Trafford Trades Council; Basingstoke and Deane Trades Council; Oxford CATC; Laurence Scotts strike committee; Kings Cross ASLEF; CPSSA British Library branch; TGWU 5/822; Oxford NUJ; ACTSS-APEX joint committee GEC Coventry; Bradford District Labour Party; Upper Stoke branch Labour Party, Coventry; Nottingham Labour Briefing; Manchester Labour Left; Coventry Labour Left; TGWU 5/104 branch; Leicester TGWU 5/287 branch; Sussex University Labour Students; and in a personal capacity, Reg Race MP and Mike Cooley.

DELEGATES: and observers invited from all labour movement organisations. Credentials £2. Cheques payable to Socialist Organiser.

CRECHE: will be available.

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

Saturday APRIL 3



FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP AT LEYLAND VEHICLES

PAT LALLY examines the reasons behind the failure of the strikes to save jobs in Leyland Vehicles.

AMIDST angry scenes following last Thursday's mass meeting of strikers at Leyland Vehicles Division factories in Lancashire, the Communist Party-led Strike Committee collapsed in front of a back-to-work backlash and agreed to abandon a clear majority decision of that meeting to stay out.

That was to be the beginning of the end.

Soon after, other, weaker white collar sections voted to return, and confused and divided workers at the nearby Chorley factories did the same.

Later in the day the Strike Committee formally called off the strike.

Inevitably, in the wake of these events, Friday's meeting at the Bathgate plant, Scotland, voted to end their action.

So another 4,100 people are set to join the dole queues of West Lothian and Lancashire and British Leyland boss Sir Michael Edwardes has written another chapter in his "success" story—a fairy story for the Tory government but one of gargantuan horror for BL workers.

Yet the Leyland strikers had confirmed only a fortnight before, their determination to fight on with an overwhelming vote to reject the company's threat of sackings and remain on strike.

Media

While it is true that management stepped up their media offensive subsequently, the reasons for the turnaround lie entirely in the actions and inactivity of the strike leadership at local and national level.

The Thursday mass meetings had been preceded by talks on the Monday between national and factory representatives of Leyland Vehicles management and trade unions. The company maintained an absolutely hard line, typified by their one "concession" being to put off the sackings for a few weeks.

On the morning of this meeting, a press report speculated that leaders of the Engineering Union—by far the biggest in the strike—had been having secret talks with Edwardes and were moving to withdraw support.

Though it was quite consistent with all that the AUEW Executive had done in BL and elsewhere in the past, there was no outward sign of such a sell-out at the meeting.

Gerry Russell, North-West EC member, was apparently still going along with the strikers' demands, no doubt under strong pressure from the membership, who showed their militancy outside the meeting by lobbying with shouts of 'Edwardes Out' and 'No sell-out'.

Equally, there was no hint from the Strike Committee that much new had happened. It only became clear later in the week, and for most people, at the mass meeting itself, that the union leaders had accepted unprecedented demands from the company about what would happen at the crucial meeting of the membership on Thursday and Friday.



Leyland convenor Mick Coyne (right) with pickets



Leyland mass meeting

The unions had agreed that the strike committee would make no recommendation to the membership; that the company's 12 point proposal would be presented to the meetings and, most incredibly of all, the text of a letter from Edwardes to AUEW leader Duffy threatening to shut down the whole division at the end of the week, unless there was an end to the strike, would be read to the meeting by the

Union's District Officer.

Such an agreement, with the union being seen as the mouthpiece of management, was tantamount to strike-breaking of the worst kind.

It is true that the Leyland and Bathgate strike leadership defied the agreement to the extent that they did call for the strike to continue, and in Preston the AUEW District Committee condemned the decision on Edwardes' letter before

local Secretary, Len Brindle read it out.

But the fact remains that the mass meeting that led to the strike being called off had been run entirely on the company's terms, significantly loading the odds against the strike carrying on.

Still, there were other factors. The most decisive of them being the inadequacy and impotence of the leadership at factory level.

In Bathgate, where an occupation of the factory had correctly been organised, legal moves by the company for repossession were meekly accepted by the shop stewards, putting a very large question mark against their commitment.

A short while later they were to be shown up by the women in the nearby Plessey factory who refused to give in to similar pressure.

But the decisive sections of the strike were in Lancashire, where by far the largest numbers were out.

The ignominious failure at the mass meeting of the strike committee chairman and recently elected convenor, Mick Coyne, was not just the weakness of an individual in front of a hostile minority which was allowed to

overturn a properly decided majority vote. The source of his inadequacy at that meeting was the strike leadership's complete inability from the start to offer a real chance of victory.

This was summed up in the actual resolution that he proposed—no more than to stay out until there was an "honourable settlement".

In other words, he was openly dropping the demand for no redundancies which had been the sole principled basis of the strike in the first place.

And throughout, as the management became more belligerent, and the national officials bided their time and waited to move in for the kill, the response of the strike committee had grown steadily weaker.

This lack of commitment to the kind of the policies needed to win, was summed up by the strike committee's attitude to the rest of the BL workforce. Edwardes was forcing cutbacks in the Vehicles Division as another part of the corporate plan. He had proved in other BL Divisions that he was prepared to go all the way and a full-scale, BL-wide confrontation would be needed if his closure plans were to be defeated.

Yet it was this policy that was resisted most tenaciously by Coyne and the Leyland leadership. No doubt Duffy and Russell strongly opposed it, but that should have been an even better reason for taking it up. All the way through, the line of Mick Coyne was against spreading the action onto a BL-wide level.

A further weakness was the adaptation the strike committee made to the largely conservative influence of the white collar unions.

While the unity between these unions and the manual workers was potentially a great strength it was progressive only insofar as the industrial unions dictated policy.

Fearful of alienating their support, the strike committee attempted to preserve the unity by avoiding giving a militant lead and this proved self-defeating.

The timidity of the Leyland shop stewards—far and away the most conservative layer of workers in the factories—was born out of many years of union collaboration with management in job losses and low pay deals.

As convenor, Communist Party member Mick Coyne was following in the tradition of CP involvement in this in the Leyland factories where they have had a strong influence for many years, notably through former convenor Len Brindle. On no occasion, on any issue, were Coyne and the CP openly at odds with the right wing. Underpinning this alliance was the trades unions' alternative plan—a set of proposals that were based on a solution to the problems of the Vehicles Division alone, through a combination of more government money and import controls.

What this meant for the strike was that the leadership never saw it as being more than a protest—a pressure on the company to be reasonable.

There was an alternative being offered to the strike committee's dead end. But it came not from within the strike but from members and supporters of the Leyland Action Committee, backed by Socialist Organiser, which has been active in the Cars Division over the past two years.

The LAC immediately took up a campaign from its conference, two days after the strike began, in support of the dispute. Recognising that the main danger was the isolation of the strike to the Vehicles Division, a fight was taken up for an urgent meeting of the combine committee.

When the combine met, it was LAC members from BL's Cowley Assembly that successfully raised a motion for a Cars/Vehicles conference to discuss extending support. Mick Coyne's response was that the time was not right for such a meeting.

Nothing more was to come of it.

Through a series of bulletins, the LAC was able to take up the limitations and passivity of the

local leadership and counterpose an aggressive policy of corporate-wide action.

It was able to prepare militants for the inevitable betrayal of the national officials and take up the vacillations of the local leadership.

In the strike's final week, during which the heroic Laurence Scotts strikers were the victims of a police-scabs raid, it carried an open letter from a Scotts strike leader, pointing out the need to spread the fight in Vehicles to the rest of BL and the treachery of Boyd and Duffy. In return the LAC earned the support on the picket lines of the most determined strikers and the vitriolic hostility of the strike leadership who tried unsuccessfully to stop LAC leaflets being given out.

Had their energies expended on the LAC been directed against the AUEW leadership, the outcome of the strike might have been a lot different.

This anti-LAC hysteria, was given the blessing of the International Marxist Group members in the strike, though in the Cars Division, members of that organisation have been involved in LAC activities.

Not only was the Vehicles strike not regarded as an appropriate medium for joint work with other organisations with supporters in BL, the IMG were against the policy of making a turn to the Cars Division a central orientation, favouring instead general labour movement support.

However, the IMG had developed a close working relationship with the strike leadership, in particular, Mick Coyne. This was confirmed following their attendance at an LAC public meeting in Leyland which had been witch-hunted and declared blacked by Coyne personally, after he had turned down an invitation to attend.

He subsequently announced that the IMG had given him a full report of all that was said.

Then Coyne made an Edwardes-style ruling that no-one was to hold meetings or distribute leaflets without the approval of the strike committee.

The LAC replied that they would not comply—it was a breach of basic labour movement rights. Coyne responded that the "ultra-left" had already agreed to it—as the IMG had asked his permission to hold a meeting and allowed him to vet their leaflet!

So a four week mass strike in defence of jobs has met with defeat. It means a further grinding down of the BL workforce and can only boost Edwardes' drive to exterminate militant trade unionism in the company.

Though there is nothing which can make up for that, still it provides yet more evidence of the worst kind that big changes are necessary at all levels of the trade union leadership.

Leyland ACTION

LEYLAND ACTION COMMITTEE

During the Leyland Vehicles strike, the Leyland Action Committee organised meetings and produced leaflets to try to build links between the Leyland Vehicles struggle and the Cars Division. It will now be trying to consolidate a LAC group in Lancashire alongside the established group in BL Cars.

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

Industrial News

New victory in nursery fight

by Helen Flack

READERS may remember the successful eleven week occupation at Beal Street Play Centre in Highfields, Leicester, last year.

The occupation ended when the County Council agreed to keep the play centre open with two staff for a six month trial period.

The trial period is now over, and the review by the Social Services Committee has decided to keep Beal Street open permanently, to make it into a family centre and to halve the charges.

This is a real victory and is due in part to the positioning of the play centre—Highfields, where riots took place last summer and the council want to 'be seen' to be doing something for the area.

But the main strength comes directly from the fact that a struggle was waged through occupation to keep the play centre open in the first place.

The parents, having been involved in defending their provision, have maintained their involvement, holding regular meetings with staff and bringing in new parents.

The nursery operates much more democratically than usual, with parents being involved in decisions and this is evident from the way the centre has flourished.

The centre always seems to be teeming with people, parents (both men and women) and children of all ages.

Groups that meet there and bring their children mothers and toddlers groups, Parents Anonymous, Outlook, Women's Aid, a handicapped group and the child-minders intend to return to hold their meetings there.

It would have been a very different matter for the Council to try and close the centre down this time. Support for the centre was now widespread: the parents had already shown their commitment to it staying open; and the staff would probably support an occupation in the event of closure.

This victory at Beal Street will be a strength to all those nursery campaigns which face cuts or closure.

Hunterston pickets fined

by Stan Crooke

CAPITALIST class "justice" lashed out with a vengeance last week at Abraham Courtney and John Breen, members of the Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers (ASOB) and the GMWU respectively.

Abie and John were the last two trade unionists to be put on trial for the "crime" of picketing the Hunterston oil-rig yard in September 1980. The other 46 charged after the mass arrest of pickets on September 10, 1980, had already been tried and fined £50 each, after losing their appeal to the High Court in Edinburgh.

Abie Courtney pointed out: "We're being criminalised for carrying out picketing activity, for defending our jobs and livelihoods. We've both been unemployed since the dispute, and that shows we were correct to fight for the right to work by picketing, since we've not had any work since then."

A fine of £100 each was imposed on John and Abie. This is double the fine imposed on all the others who had been tried. And John and Abie were ordered to pay it off at £5 a week—again double the rate for

others unemployed.

In the months leading up to the trial the "Campaign in Defence of the Right to Picket" set up by local Labour Party members and trade unionists, had worked to build support for Abie and to publicise the political nature of the trial.

It was backed by a considerable number of union and Labour Party branches by the time of the trial, but nowhere near enough.

And the picket of Abie's and John's trial called by the CDRP was poorly attended despite a contingent from the Glenburn yard (Scott Lithgow). Although all left wing groups in Glasgow had been contacted, there was no response from them on the day.

The vindictive fines imposed on John and Abie underlines the need for the CDRP to continue with its work of explaining the politics of the trial, and right now, raising money to pay off John and Abie's fines.

Send donations to CDRP, c/o Courtney, 72 Tallant Road, Drumchapel, Glasgow.

Cheques payable to Campaign in Defence of the Right to Picket.

Heathrow rostering strike

"AN unnamed shop steward" was quoted in most newspapers last week. Did he exist? According to the Press Association he did, and he said that "It now seems almost certain there will be a vote for a return to work" at Heathrow.

Shop steward Mike le Cornu who represents baggage handlers at Heathrow wasn't so sure, "someone, somewhere seems to be trying to subvert this action" he said. The 2,000 baggage handlers themselves didn't back up the Press Association's claims. On Monday 22nd they

voted overwhelmingly to continue their action.

If the Heathrow baggage handlers have enemies in the press they have worse enemies lined up against them. They have now been locked out for two weeks by the British Airways management.

The bosses wanted them to accept new work schedules: an extra 1½ hours a week, a block on guaranteed overtime, stiffer penalties for being late and moving workers from job to job.

These attacks are part of British Airways' "survival plan" that involves pushing

through an overall total of 9,000 redundancies by June. When they've cut the staff, dealt with the unions and made more money the government plans to sell off BA to the people who know how to keep airlines running, private owners.

The Heathrow workers refused to be pushed about like this. Despite management-organised scabbing, at least 15-20% of all domestic and European flights have been cancelled and many others delayed.

On February 19 baggage handlers at a third BA terminal at Heathrow.

Fares strike March 10

"It isn't only a fares increase, there will be cuts in services and jobs too". The Law Lords attack on the GLC Fares Fair policy is starting to bite, and services are already being cut.

From Monday February 22 overtime working—which keeps a lot of services going—was cut back.

The threat to services and jobs was uppermost in the minds of many of the

600 London Transport shop stewards who met at the TUC on February 17 to discuss how to fight back. Proposals from union officials for a one day protest strike got over-

whelming support—but the stewards never got a chance to plan out a real campaign.

Officials from the TGWU and NUR wouldn't even let the meeting decide on the date for the strike action—they didn't want the stewards fixing an early date. The officials claimed that fixing the strike date would make it the only aspect of the campaign that the press would focus on, as if that would be some disaster!

But now, thanks to the pressure of the meeting, the date has been fixed for March 10. And on March 11, bus and tube workers will be asked to refuse to collect fares.

Support has to be built throughout London Transport not only to ensure that the day of action itself is a success but also that it becomes the start of a real fight to stop swingeing cuts, sackings and fare increases.

Groups like Fare Fight who have been doing an enormous amount of work in building a campaign amongst passengers will need to be at the forefront of organising public support for the strike, so it isn't an isolated one-off event.

Despite Tebbit's loud complaints about the GLC and union leaders 'using fares as a political football', the reality has been that they have been dragging their feet and few clear plans have been laid for any action. So far the main focus has been on building protest rallies called by the GLC on March 11 and 13.

The strike should be used as the first step in a campaign that goes beyond just protesting and starts action that can be effective even if the 100% fares rise is pushed through on March 21.

Monday 1 March: Fare Fight Day of Action from 8.30 am, Law Courts, the Strand (Temple tube).

Thursday 11 March: Mass lobby of Parliament organised by GLC. 2pm, House of Commons.

Saturday 13 March: Rally against the rises, 2.30 pm, Jubilee Gardens, next to County Hall.

Fares Fight has local groups in most London Boroughs. For details contact Fare Fight on 629 5268.

DAVE AYRTON

NALGO vs. SDP council



Striking NALGO members joined a lobby of Islington Council to protest against rent rises

a 'new style of management'. They want everyone to have 'flexible' job descriptions, so they can be moved from job to job. You could be a clerk one day, a rent officer the next, in another section the next.

"I refused to be treated like that and took up my job. On the next day, February 10, I was suspended."

That was at 11.15. By 12 the Housing Department staff were having a meeting and by 1 o'clock they were all out. When it went to a full NALGO branch meeting the next week the voting was 520 for the strike and only 70 against.

NIK BARSTOW

"The way people have acted has been great. The Housing Department has been out for 11 days already, and some sections that you would never expect to strike are out."

Britain's first SDP council

are showing themselves for what they are—union bashers. They've also helped show something else, though—that council workers won't be pushed around any more.

NIK BARSTOW

Dole office strike

DOLE office staff in North West London went on strike on Monday and last week in protest against the present suspensions of staff for refusing to participate in the racist ethnic monitoring scheme and against the pay offer which offers nothing to most of the lower grade staff.

The ethnic monitoring scheme, at present on a trial run in 14 offices, basically involves staff assessing the racial origins of claimants in one of three ways—a card assessment system, a visual assessment scheme, whereby the dole clerk assesses the ethnic background of the claimant, and in some cases where, according to the Department of Employment, staff have difficulty in assessing the claimant's background, a straightforward black/white assessment might be considered.

Staff at Hendon and Mill Hill offices, two of those involved in the pilot scheme, have been threatened with suspension if they refuse to

carry out these checks, a move which prompted staff in other offices to walk out in solidarity.

It is absolutely essential that management does not get away with such victimisation, given the pathetic response of the union leadership. Readers and supporters

of Socialist Organiser should get down to one of the 14 offices and help in mass leafleting.

Organise for a levy if you are a Civil Servant, and in case anyone gets suspended make sure the matter is raised in your union branch.

A CPSA MEMBER

Dunlop backing

450 workers occupying the Dunlop Semtex plant at Brynmawr, South Wales, have won TGWU official backing for their action and a promise of supporting action.

The occupation started before Christmas, in protest against 60 redundancies. Dunlop has since said it will close the plant.

A national Dunlop TGWU shop stewards' meet-

ing was called in Skelmersdale last weekend. It decided on supporting action—but TGWU officials refused afterwards to say exactly what. They wanted to take the company by surprise, they said. A more certain result of this policy is that Dunlop TGWU members will be kept in the dark.

TGWU members should insist that the promises of supporting action are kept.

ASLEF VICTORY: LESSONS FOR

US ALL!

By Martin Thomas

AFTER a few gestures of defiance, the British Rail board last week accepted the McCarthy report—and so conceded defeat to ASLEF. The train drivers will get their three per cent pay rise in return for no more than entering talks on productivity, which they were always going to do anyway.

The BRB, which provoked the dispute by refusing to take the productivity talks all the way through the rail industry procedure, has now agreed to put those talks back into that procedure.

This shows that workers are prepared to fight, given even minimal leadership, and can beat the bosses and the Tories.

The ASLEF executive stood solid on the eight hour day. But it also stood solidly against any efforts to develop the train drivers' action beyond the one-day and two-day strikes.

If the leadership had been willing to base itself on and to develop the militancy of the rank and file, then surely more could have been won. The whole British Rail speed-up and cutback plan could have been knocked back, and NUR members could have been mobilised to reject the strings already imposed on them by their leaders.

As it is, train drivers will have to beware concessions in jobs and conditions made by the ASLEF leadership in the negotiations now to follow.

Basic stand

Another lesson from this victory is that slick negotiating is the least important quality for trade union leaders. ASLEF general secretary Ray Buckton

developed no subtle tactics. He did nothing but repeat ASLEF's basic stand on the eight hour day and on the three per cent wage rise agreed last summer being not conditional on prior agreement on productivity.

Contrast the Leyland Vehicles dispute, which ended last week in defeat (analysis, page 14). The Leyland stewards had skilled researchers working on an alternative plan for BL's truck business. They were at great pains to appear reasonable. In would-be subtle tactics, their demand was not the simple saving of jobs, but 'negotiations'.

The most prominent

leaders at Leyland were members of the Communist Party.

They proved disastrously weak when it came to the crunch because they were hog-tied by the Communist Party's strategy of always manoeuvring, always trying to avoid head-on confrontation with the bosses and sharp clashes with the right wing in the labour movement, always looking for the clever way round.

The same problem has led to repeated sell-outs by CP leaders in BL Cars, too, most notably at Longbridge.

In a rough and ready way, the ASLEF leaders were more accountable to

and more under pressure from the membership than some of the CP convenors in BL. And accountability is ten times more important than left wing words and reputations.

*Democratise the labour movement! Conference sponsored by Socialist Organiser and London Labour Briefing, April 3. See page 13 for details.

Socialist Organiser

Plessey workers firm against courts

AS WE go to press, Plessey workers will be appearing in court to explain why they defied the interdict instructing them to vacate the Bathgate factory which they have been occupying to save jobs.

Management took the step last week of applying to the Court of Session to instruct the workers to explain their action.

The explanation is simple: they cannot abandon their fight for jobs.

The 142 workers involved in the hearing are well aware of the likely outcome, but afterwards the whole workforce will hold a mass meeting to decide the next steps.

I spoke to George Wilson, shop stewards' convenor at the plant. "Supportive action by other workers has been promised. Financial support from the other Plessey plants is already

coming through, and the Plessey combine committee, which met on Saturday 20th, discussed what other support could be given.

"The combine is weak — it has not before been faced with such a crisis — but the stewards attending will be well aware that it is not simply a dispute confined to Bathgate, but relates to the future of Plessey Capacitors entire workforce."

The strike committee has discussed the blacking of Plessey products, and knows that this will be essential if they are to seriously hit their bosses. Many of Plessey's products are exported, and

cooperation from dockers would go a long way to escalating the effects.

Informal approaches have already been made, and formal approaches will be made to the TGWU.

Many of the women I spoke to were angry at the BL decision to return to work. They know that management at BL has the workers on the run, and they don't expect the factory will last much longer. This only strengthens their resolve to protect their own jobs.

Messages/money: Mary Murphy, 30 Main St, Fauldhouse, West Lothian.

DAVE MILLIKEN

Victory at Gardners

THE workers at Gardners Engineering factory in Eccles have won an important victory by forcing management to reinstate their victimised deputy convenor Mick Brightman.

Last Wednesday an apprentice in the milling section followed the night-shift's example by refusing to do a job which had been blacked. The foreman suspended him and the rest of the section went off the cards (go-slow) which resulted in the whole section being suspended.

The same day, Mick Brightman, who is the shop steward for the section, was summoned to the office and given his cards.

Support quickly spread throughout the factory, and by Friday about 85% of the workforce was sitting in. A mass meeting that day decided there would be no return to work until Brightman was reinstated with his deputy convenor's credentials. On Friday afternoon management offered to reinstate Brightman without his credentials. This was turned down and by the beginning of the week management were clearly caving in.

Accepted

On Tuesday they offered to take Brightman back, with his credentials, and five days suspension.

This was accepted by the mass meeting on Tuesday morning, and the workforce voted to go back.

The action taken by Gardners workers was swift and effective, and shows they are no easy meat for bully-boy tactics. Management must have felt like flexing their muscles after

the workers narrowly accepted a 3% wage increase in January and have obviously totally miscalculated the strength of their workforce.

This continued willingness to fight bodes well for the future both in Gardners itself and in the wider labour movement.

Keeping fund healthy

THIS WEEK, the Lambeth and Southwark group has shown us all how to keep the fund healthy. They made £80.20 on a jumble sale.

If just the better-established groups organised a similar jumble sale each, every other month, then our fund-raising problems would be ended.

Other contributions: Sheffield, £20 from a sponsored walk; Cardiff £35; Peter Kenway, Islington, £30; Leicester £10.50; Lambeth £5 on top of the jumble sale; Liverpool £5; Birmingham £6.50. This week's total, £182.20.

So far as we've been able to add it up, supporters' standing orders this month have totalled £161.70 so far. Overall total so far £919.80, with more to add when we get more bank statements.

Let's make sure the March total is well over £1,000. Send contributions to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Spread the news!

We're offering bundles of five each week for £1 post free, and bundles of 10 for £1.75 post free. That's £12 for three months for bundles of 5, and £21 for bundles of ten.

Regular subscription rates are £5 for three months, £8.75 for six months, and £16 for a year.

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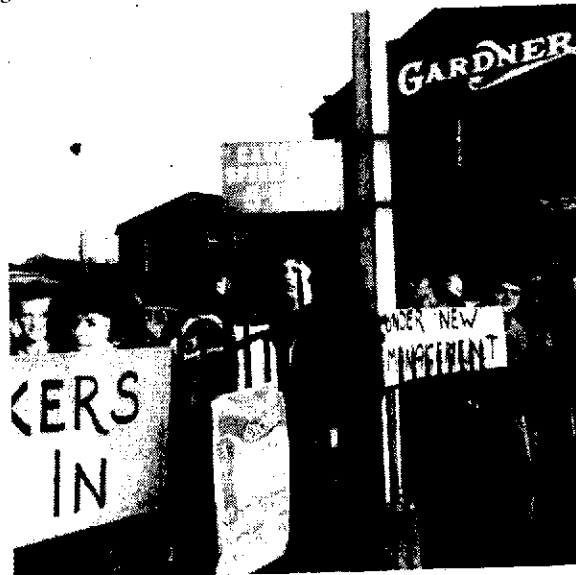
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Socialist Organiser

Solidarity FIGHTING FOR ITS LIFE!

Call for labour movement solidarity—p.3

Take a bundle of 50 to sell!



An earlier Gardners occupation against mass redundancies