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Socialist Organiser
Alliance

Socialist Organiser

Join the Labour Party! Against all bans and proscriptions

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Plessey sit-in FIGHTING

by Dave Milliken

— AND WINNING!

BL gag on Adams

from the Longbridge
Socialist Organiser
bulletin

BL Longbridge convenor Jack Adams has been threatened with the sack for criticising the management.

A Works Committee bulletin and even an interview given to a magazine have been cited as 'crimes'.

The bulletin was produced after Health and Safety rep Eric Shakespeare was suspended two weeks ago. Eric's 'offence' was that he left his job to investigate a Metro body that had fallen 30 feet, narrowly missing several workers.

Management suspended Eric because he didn't consult his foreman before leaving his job — despite the fact that the foreman was not on the section anyway, and Eric's job was covered.

Now the management has moved against Jack Adams simply for being involved in producing a bulletin outlining the facts of the case.

The bosses also objected to an interview Jack Adams gave in the Communist Party magazine Marxism Today.

As Adams already has a final warning (which he received for putting his name to the Combine Committee pamphlet that Derek Robinson was sacked for), this is effectively a sacking threat.

The threat to Adams comes only one month after a Cowley Assembly Plant workers was sacked for distributing Leyland Action Committee bulletins, and a few weeks after the company demanded the right to censor a leaflet produced by Cowley convenor Bob Fryer.

In addition, Eric Shakespeare has now been threatened with further disciplinary action for talking to the press about his original suspension!

It seems that management wants to deny BL workers the most basic democratic right — the right to free speech. General Jaruzelski would be proud of Michael Edwardes!

THE courage and defiance of 220 workers — who have shrugged aside a court order and maintained their occupation of the Plessey plant in Bathgate — was rewarded last week.

And Plessey management, prominent among hard line supporters of Tebbit's anti-union Bill, received a surprising setback in the courts.

A Scottish Court of Session judge overturned an interdict issued in February which had called for the eviction of the workers — 90% of them women — who are sitting in the plant to defend their jobs.

The result surprised everyone, but does not, as some press reports have wrongly stated, legalise factory occupations.

The original court order was granted because Plessey management had given cause for the judge, Lord Kincaid, to believe that a civil wrong was being committed in that management were unable to carry on their business. (Their business, in this case, was to run down the factory!)

Doubt

The interdict was recalled because doubt was cast on its legality as a result of the 1974 Trade Union and Labour Relations Act, which grants immunity from civil action for workers acting in furtherance of a trade dispute.

Plessey will appeal against this, and a full hearing may well reverse the decision.

But the victory in this round has given Plessey a further cause for concern. Time has been granted to the workers to work inside the law. That time will have to be used to build the struggle to such proportions that the law can be ignored.

Around 2,000 people from all over Scotland marched through Bathgate

last Saturday, 27th, to demonstrate support for the workers, whose occupation is entering its sixth week.

Although the workers were delighted by the court decision, it has not affected their understanding of the nature of our system of justice.

As George Wilson, shop stewards' convenor, told the rally after the demonstration "I got a lot of satisfaction yesterday at the court, but I got a lot more today walking down the street with you. The reality is that we will not win this dispute through any court. If we stand in isolation we will not last."

Our struggle is your struggle. The working class really do need victories. We've got troops here who won't fall from lack of determination, but the struggle really does need extending.

We need penetration into England and Wales. A lot more has to be done if we are really to hurt Plessey. The trade union movement will have to attack.

We've already had stewards here from other plants, and we must have more active support. If we do, I am confident that we can win."

The Plessey example runs in sharp contrast to the timid retreat by BL stewards at Bathgate, who voluntarily gave up their occupation immediately after the granting of a court order.

The lesson for workers everywhere faced with redundancies and closure is a

clear one: only by the firmest stand and fight for the support of the labour movement can defeats be inflicted on employers hell-bent upon attacking living standards and trade union rights.

The strength of the Plessey action has now forced even the Boyd/Duffy AUEW leadership to continue with official support, and to call

a special conference of all Plessey plants to discuss support for the Bathgate struggle.

(The dispute has not yet reached the level of confrontation where Plessey have issued the kind of threats and ultimatums to the AUEW leaders which led to their sabotage of the jobs fight at Leyland Vehicles).



About 350 people, including a contingent from the Leyland Action Committee, marched through Leyland, Lancashire last Saturday in a protest against the Edwards plan and Tebbit's anti-union Bill.

Strikes needed to beat Tebbit — see page 10.

STRONG SUPPORT TO POLISH DEMO

THE London Regional Executive of the Labour Party decided last week to lend its support to the March 12 demonstration, 'Labour supports Solidarnosc', jointly called by Socialist Organiser and London Labour Briefing.

This backing should give added impetus to the campaign for delegations and banners from the labour movement on the march, to which transport is being arranged from all parts of the country. Already two London CLPs — Harrow East and Norwood — are committed to support, as is ASTMS no.7 divisional council.

Speakers at the rally at the end of the demonstration will include Reg Racer MP and the Solidarnosc Trade Union Working Group. The march assembles at 10.30 outside ULU, Mark St, London WC1.

Leaflets and posters are available from Socialist Organiser, phone 01-609 3071.

Let's build real labour movement solidarity with the struggle of the Polish workers!

(Jaruzelski in Moscow see pages 4-5).

BA solid

THE TGWU is calling on 30,000 members working Heathrow to give assistance to the British Airways workers on strike against new flexible rosters.

If the T&G members driving the tankers that fuel planes refuse to 'volunteer' (as the scabs are sweet called in the press), Heathrow will be completely closed.

Already canteen workers are staging a 24 hour strike in support of the BA workers. Last Friday security staff stopped using X-ray equipment in protest at use of scabs.

Unfortunately for British Airways and the press there are no signs that the cleaners and baggage workers giving up — quite opposite.

FUND

YOU MAY have read about some problems they've been having at the New Statesman.

In the financial year 1980-1 the paper lost £2,800 a week, and it is not doing much better now. Editor Bruce Page went along to the directors with some proposals for new technology, and found himself sacked by the SDP-leaning board.

At least we don't have problems with SDPers. But we rely on the contributions of our readers to save us from a similar financial fate to the New Statesman.

Last month's fund total was £985.45. This month we have so far £27.50 in supporters' standing orders plus: £20 from Cardiff, £10 from Leigh, £6 Lambeth, £6 Sheffield, £5 Islington, £8.50 Hyndburn. Most appreciated was £18 which came from Alex Simpson of Cambridge LPYS with a note, "I had some spare cash and thought Socialist Organiser could spend it better than I could".

It adds up to £101 so far. Let's make sure we go well over the £1,000 mark this month. Send contributions to: Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.



Backing for Tatchell stand

*Extra-Parliamentary action must play a major role in the efforts of the Labour Movement to establish a democratic socialist society in Britain;
*The election of a government does not give that government an absolute right to pursue whatever policies it chooses, irrespective of the wishes or interests of the mass of

British people. It is an essential democratic right of individuals and groups to campaign for or against the policies or strategies of elected governments;
*Support for extra-parliamentary activity does not contradict our individual and collective support for parliamentary democracy;
*The election of socialist

Labour governments will not be achieved unless the Labour Party is seen to be active in advancing the interests of working people, not just in Parliament but in every sphere of their lives. For this reason extra-parliamentary action must form an essential part of Labour Party strategy in and out of government.

THESE are the key points of a statement signed, to date, by 32 Labour prospective candidates, solidarily with Peter Tatchell.
The 32 are:
Les Allen, S.R. Allsopp, A. Bore, Charles Clark, Martin Coleman, Mike Craven, John Denham, Janet Dyson, Brian Fish, Peter Hain, Harriet Harman, Mike Hodgkinson,

Kate Hoey, J. McAllister, Jean McCrindle, Bob Middleton, Brian Moore, David Morris, Hugh Pincott, Susan Price, Chris Robinson, Iain Roxburgh, R.H. Sedler, Harry Spillman, Peter Tatchell, David Williams, Alan Whitehead, Cathy Wilson, Audrey Wise, Kelvin Hopkins, Chris Bromley, David Offenbach.

Wall: double standard

THE DECISION OF THE NEC not to endorse Pat Wall as prospective parliamentary candidate for Bradford North probably has as much to do with the right's desire to undermine mandatory re-election as with their witch-hunting of Militant.
Endorsement was refused on the 'technical irregularities' that the selection conference had taken place in a room close to a noisy discotheque, and that a man had wandered into the room from time to time in order to set up beer barrels!
Let us compare this with the irregularities which have taken place in cases where the sitting MP has been re-elected. Most of these irregularities have centred around the 'shortlist of one' manoeuvre.
In Cardiff South East, West Bromwich and Pontefract, the National Agent's representatives have misrepresented the NEC's guidelines regarding shortlists of one. When organisations have appealed to the NEC that their nominees had been

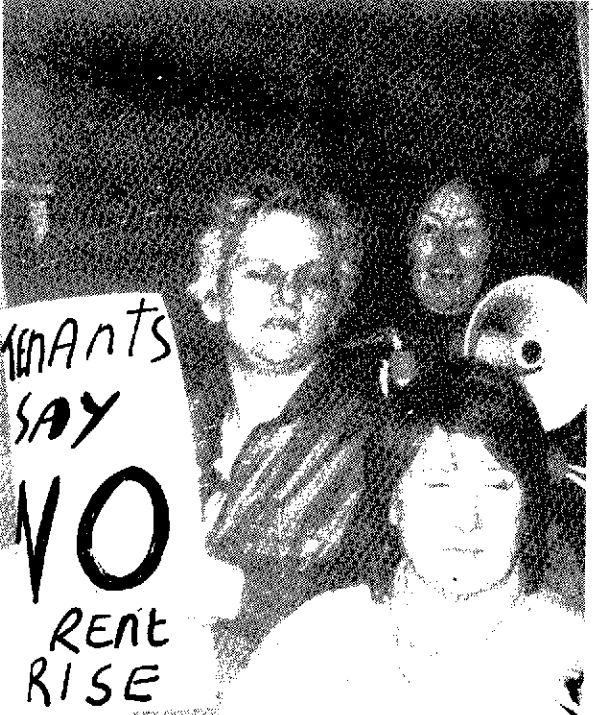
Campaign for LABOUR PARTY Democracy

struck off shortlists for no good reason, the National Agent has replied that there is no right of appeal.
In all of these cases, proper selections have not taken place, despite nominations against the sitting member.
In Pontefract, Geoffrey Lofthouse was re-elected on a shortlist of one after two other candidates were sliced off the shortlist by 43 votes to 41 with four abstentions. The executive committee had recommended a shortlist of one, and, on the advice of the regional organiser, mandated the 20 members of the executive by 11 votes to 9 to support this shortlist at the general committee.
The chairperson had also allowed a letter to be read accusing one of the other candidates of 'having attended communist meetings'.
Despite these dubious practices, Lofthouse was endorsed.



In Darlington, where the accusation was made at the shortlisting meeting that one of the candidates had not been a communist but SDP leanings, the National Agent immediately invalidated the meeting. Yet he had previously recommended that no action be taken over the communist smear in the Pontefract case!
A further interesting case occurred in Nottingham East, where a right-wing candidate, Martin Sloman,

defeated left-winger Ken Coates by four votes.
Despite an allegation that the Manvers Branch, which sent four delegates to the selection, had 55 persons on its books who were not members of the Labour Party, and a further allegation that the electoral register had been falsified to enable one delegate to take part in the selection, the officers and the Organisation Committee recommended endorsement of the candidate without an inquiry.
What all this shows very clearly is that different criteria are being applied firstly to the endorsement of sitting MPs and to those who replace sitting MPs, and secondly to candidates from the right and to candidates from the left of the Party.
In other words, the farcical reasons for not endorsing Pat Wall illustrate that any MP who is not re-elected by his local party is now guaranteed a second chance if he can invent even the flimsiest reasons why he should be allowed a re-run.
NIGEL WILLIAMSON, CLPD Executive.



Islington Labour Party joins NALGO strikers to picket the SDP council

Corbyn wins selection

AT a meeting of the North Islington CLP General Committee attended by seventy four delegates last Wednesday, Jeremy Corbyn was chosen to fight the constituency at the next election.
Jeremy Corbyn is aged 32 and employed as an organiser by the National Union of Public Employees. He has been a Party member since the age of sixteen and for the last ten years has been the Organiser of the neighbouring Hornsey Party. He is a member of Haringey Council and of the Executive of the London Labour Party.
Looking forward to campaigning in the constituency Jeremy Corbyn said 'The priority must be to fight against unemployment, public spending cuts and racism. The SDP now control the Islington Council and their attitude to Council tenants and provision of vital Council services amply demonstrates their contempt for the worst off sections of the community.'

Hypocrisy

'The Labour Party in North Islington is determined to expose their hypocrisy and demonstrate that only socialism can provide the jobs, homes and opportunities that are so desperately needed. The Party is united in this task, and the growing Party membership shows that it has popular support.'

Democratic

Speaking on behalf of the Party after the selection conference, Mick Sullivan, Press Officer, said 'we have had a very long and democratic selection process and the Party will now be spending its time on campaigns including women's rights, real jobs for youth and a fair deal for the minority ethnic communities.
'We will be working with and involving the people of North Islington to achieve a socialist Labour Government.'

Booming Basingstoke!

OUR Socialist Organiser group in Basingstoke has recently more than doubled in numbers from ten supporters to 22.
The new supporters are in the main not experienced political activists, but working class people who have become interested as a result of our campaigning over the last year.
The Socialist Organiser group played a big role in a rent strike against the Tory Council last year, and since the defeat of the strike, we've taken the struggle

into the constituency Labour Party, trying to make sure that Labour wins the local elections this year and is committed to cheap rents.
So Socialist Organiser is now increasingly influential in the CLP, as well as keeping a longer-established influence in the Trades Council and the LPYS. New support has come especially from workers in the local Post Office and the GMWU branch at the hospital.
We've also made some progress on what has long

been a weakness of our group in Basingstoke—political education—with three educational groups going.
We feel sure that other local groups that combine vigorous campaigning in direct action struggles with a consistent fight inside the labour movement and bold and confident efforts to convince individuals of Socialist Organiser's ideas, can make similar progress.

ALASDAIR JAMISON

Bradford calls for Labour action

Not only on reselection are Bradford Labour activists mounting a challenge. Several of them have signed this call for a fight against Heseltine.

THE undersigned call on the Labour councillors to vote against the proposed rent and rate increases and to refuse to pass on the Tory cuts. Recognising that such a stand will inevitably lead to over-spending we call on the Labour Group to begin immediately to prepare the ground for a labour movement reply to any confrontation prompted by the Tories.

We urge the Labour Group to adopt a position of 'No cuts, no rent increases and no rate increases' and turn to the trades unions and tenants' associations for supporting action.

We call on the Labour Group to organise a public demonstration against the Tory cuts as an initial mobilising action in a massive area-wide anti-cuts campaign.

Tory cuts

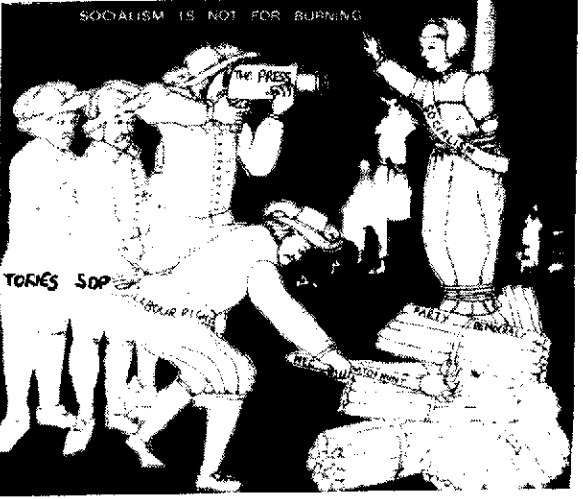
We would make it clear that it is not the business of socialists to pass on Tory cuts to working people and we therefore are not prepared to add our voices to any body of opinion on this question which is

prepared to carry out such actions.
We believe that Labour voters have the right to expect Labour councillors to lead a fight to defeat Tory cuts. We reject the notion that real growth budgets are possible while Heseltine and Thatcher control the purse strings.

Defiant

In conclusion we see a mass defiant anti-cuts campaign as the only possible way of saving services and defending the living standards of our Labour voters.

COUNCILLORS
Gary Armitage, John Dewhurst, Lea Crawforth, Alex Corina, John Lambert.
PROSPECTIVE LABOUR COUNCILLORS
Barry Turner, Arthur Hare, Mohd Ayub, Tony Miller, Gerry Sutcliffe.
Pat Wall, prospective parliamentary candidate, Bradford North; Dave Crawforth, Secretary, Bradford Tenants' Federation; Angela Sturgess, Secretary, West Bowling Tenants' Association; Bradford North Constituency Labour Party.



BRIEFING AGAINST THE WITCH HUNT
a new broadsheet out soon! Copies can be ordered c/o Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Socialist Organiser Alliance Get Organised!

SOCIALIST Organiser fights to act as a real campaigning paper which can organise workers in the struggle for new leadership.
To do so we need consistent support and money. Socialist Organiser Alliance groups have been established in most big towns.
Why not join with us? Supporters are asked to undertake to sell a minimum of 6 papers per week and contribute at least £1.50 per month (20p for unwaged).
If there is no group in your area why not help us to build one?
To 'Get Organised', write at once to us at 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Name
Address



New arrests in Turkey

THE ARREST of 42 Turkish intellectuals and academics last week marked the biggest crackdown so far by the Evren junta on the intelligentsia.

Among those detained are prominent poets, writers and academics, as well as a women's rights activist, Reha Isvan (wife of Ahmet Isvan, the mayor of Istanbul, jailed without trial since the coup of September 12 1980).

Also arrested was the president of Istanbul's Bar Association, Orhan Apaydin, who is the chief defence lawyer in the current trial of 52 leaders of the left trade union confederation DISK.

The scene for the arrests was set a few weeks earlier, when the main right wing newspaper Tercuman published photocopies of membership forms of the dissolved Turkish Peace Association, bearing the names of the accused. It was alleged that

this linked them to the pro-Moscow World Peace Council. They are expected to be charged with membership of a subversive organisation.

These latest arrests will cause further major difficulties in mounting a defence of the DISK leaders.

They confirm once again that the Evren junta — for all its ostentatious pose of 'neutrality' in the struggles between the terrorists of the extreme right wing and the Turkish left and labour movement — is consistently aiming its heaviest repression against the left.

Needless to say such brazen suppression of democratic rights by a military junta deeply committed to the NATO alliance and the preservation of imperialist stability in the Middle East has escaped the hypocritical and ritualistic condemnation meted out by Thatcher and Reagan to the Stalinists in Poland.

As with El Salvador, Guatemala, Ireland and South Africa, the imperialists close eyes and ears to the atrocities committed in defence of capitalist stability.

Instead the World Bank has just approved two new loans to the junta totalling \$140 million. And in the European Assembly a resolution has been carried calling for a reconsideration of its decision to expel Turkey.

Vocal in supporting this resolution was a Labour MEP, Tom Urwin, who argued that "Evren is a respectable man and we should give him some time".

Such an attitude stems from the politics of class collaboration at home — a willingness to 'see good' even in the most blood-stained and reactionary general rather than fight for the independent politics of the working class.

The upshot of such politics is an insular and reactionary approach to the tasks of international solidarity. Instead of supporting the Turkish working class in the struggle to defend even their trade unions against the junta, Urwin joins the other side!

But he is unfortunately not alone in the British labour movement. Other MPs and even trade union leaders can be found supporting all manner of reactionary regimes from South Africa to the Zionist state of Israel, from Argentina to Gandhi's India.

The forthcoming speaking tour of DISK leaders organised by the Turkey Solidarity Campaign (details, page 6) offers the British labour movement the chance to expose and isolate the Urwins in the unions and Labour Party, in the struggle for real class solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Turkey. We urge readers to take it.

MERSEY AND LONDON COPS SAY: WE'RE THE LAW!

by Martin Thomas

IF THE law restricts the police, change the law. If complaints procedures hamper the cops, obstruct the procedures.

If supervision by elected bodies limits the police, then stop the supervision. If consultation with local communities cramps their activities, too bad for consultation.

In short: 'the law' is the law!

That was the message put across last week by Merseyside and London cops. Turning all notions of control of the police by elected bodies on their head, the Merseyside Police Federation demanded the resignation of Margaret Simey as chair of the local police committee.

"It was a unanimous decision. We feel we can no longer work with her", the cops said, after Simey had criticised them in evidence to a parliamentary select committee.

Their reaction rather confirmed Simey's criticism — that people had no effective procedure for complaints against the police, that the police took vengeance on people attempting to use the existing procedures, and that as a result the Toxteth riots

were "one massive complaint" against the police.

Just the next day Leslie Walker, a Deputy Assistant Commissioner in charge of a South London area including Brixton, angrily complained that Lord Scarman's mild recommendations about consultation with local communities would make police work impossible.

Scarman responded that he was not condemning out of hand activities like the notorious 'Operation Swamp' — a saturation-level police invasion of Brixton's streets last year — only suggesting that the police be more tactful! But Walker did not seem satisfied.

The police have already been pressing for big changes in the law governing treatment of suspects — and justifying their pressure with the argument that they regularly flout the existing law, and so the law better be changed to suit their practices.

Further evidence of how the police are a law unto themselves was presented last week by the Guardian on bugging. Secret guidelines leaked to the Guardian show that police can plant microphones, tape recorders and cameras on just the say-so

of a Chief Constable. One example was the bugging of a phone box in a Welsh village, revealed this January.

The police philosophy of law and order is best exemplified by the 5,000-strong M15 unit. M15 has no legal existence whatsoever, it reports to no-one, and its activities and finances are checked by no-one.

Far from M15 being under the control of Parliament, it is certain that many MPs, including ministers in Labour governments, are under surveillance by M15.

The significant shift over the last ten years or so is that special units like M15 — the Special Branch, the Special Patrol Group, etc. — have become more important within the police, the whole police force has been pressing for (and grabbing) more of the 'above the law' status possessed by M15; and police chiefs like Robert Mark, David McNee, Kenneth Oxford, James Anderton and Leslie Walker have come out openly as political figures.

The police have never



been a neutral force, equally and democratically controlled by millionaires and workers to keep society harmonious. In a society torn by class struggle, they take sides.

Cops like McNee and

Anderton make no secret of their political stand. And even a 'liberal' cop like Devon police chief John Alderson was proposing a new Riot Act after the riots last summer.

The police force is set up

and hierarchically structured as a weapon of the ruling class.

That's not new. What is new, over the last ten years or so and increasingly today, is the strain put on the conventions and courtesies of formal democracy by the growing tension of the class struggle.

Against rickets, workers' occupations and street demonstrations, the police are increasingly demanding a free hand.

Socialists should not be indifferent to the limited formal controls which remain. Indeed, we should argue for Labour councillors on police committees to use their position much more vigorously, to demand the sacking of chief constables like Merseyside's Kenneth Oxford or Manchester's James Anderton.

And we should support moves made by, for example, the Labour GLC, to establish monitoring committees and to demand an elected police authority for London, where none exists at present.

Roy Hattersley has floated proposals for police authorities to be all elected members (one third at present are unelected magistrates) and for them to have the power to decide policing policy (at present they can

do very little except ask the Home Secretary to sack chief constables). We should demand these proposals become firm Labour manifesto commitments.

But the reaction of Walker and the Merseyside cops makes it clear that any serious extension of formal democratic control over the police would lead to police chiefs flouting, ignoring, or point blank rejecting control.

Suppose the Labour GLC had had formal control over London's police during the Brixton riots last year, and had instructed the police to withdraw from Brixton and hand over to labour movement/community patrols. What then? Undoubtedly the cops would have flatly refused, citing higher interests of 'law and order'.

Labour councillors would buckle under — which is the practice of nearly all of them on police authorities at present — or face the task of organising the labour movement and the communities to set up their own patrols, under democratic control, in opposition to the police.

Such working-class patrols — the basis for working class 'law and order' — will be the only alternative to the bosses' 'law and order' raising itself increasingly as a brutal power above society.

A bankrupt assembly

Andrew Hornung

TWO hours after the start of the London Assembly I first heard the word "Tory": members of the audience were shouting it at someone from Enfield who was accusing the Greater London Council

of overspending . . . on cheap fares, homosexuals, and so on . . .

In order to build a broad base of support, the organisers were trying to play down any clear anti-

Tory policy, though there was a deep anti-Tory feeling among the audience.

Who were the organisers? It's hard to say. Ken Livingstone was at pains to deny that it was the GLC's idea. Politically it seemed to follow the recipe, shared by the Communist Party and the Workers Revolutionary Party, of commun-

ity councils. The London Assembly was supposed to bring together representatives of trade unions, tenants associations, church organisations, single issue campaigns, pressure groups, local Labour Parties and action groups. There was nothing to exclude parties to the right of Labour; if they were there, they were (kept) silent.

Attendance

The West Indian Standing Conference, Transport 2000, Methodist church in Tower Hamlets, London Housing Advice Centre, Parents Movement in London, Hackney Under-Fives Group, TGWU, Pensioners' Voice, NUPE, Consultative Committee, Haringey trades Council, North Kensington community Health

Council, Westway Laundry Group, Gay Ice Breakers, Bangladeshi Workers' Association, Federation of London Adult Students . . . were there.

Even so, attendance was much smaller than could be expected: there were no more than 600 at the height.

Communist Party speakers — much in evidence as might be expected with Jack Dromey having something to do with the choosing the speakers' slips — stressed the need for broad organisation. Thus the inimitable Kevin Halpin (representing London Transport workers) wanted "a bipartisan policy" which would come out of "a basis of a wide spectrum of politics".

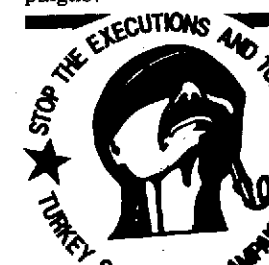
Jack Dromey (representing the South East Region of the TUC) called for the setting up of local assemblies — a position reiterated by many CP speakers.

The most militant speech of the afternoon was that by Tom Snow of NUPE. The difference between Labour councils who acted within the limits set by the Tories and the Tories themselves, he said, is only the difference between receiving

and theft".

But NUPE's policy is to support such councils unless they are aiming NUPE members, because confrontation with the Government would be disastrous.

Little is likely to come from such a gathering not even a strengthened fares fight, the least that should have been attempted. The most positive thing that came out of it was a better overview of the extent of the attacks on the working class and the drawing in — and on to the stage — of a large number of women representing community groups, parent organisations and campaigns.



Turkey Solidarity Campaign: Box BM 5965, London WC1 3XX.

Glasgow students fight cuts and sexism

from the Occupation Committee

AS WE go to press the students of Glasgow University will be entering the eighth day of an occupation of the arts faculty administration building as a protest against Tory education cuts.

The students overwhelmingly passed a resolution for immediate, indefinite occupation at an emergency general meeting of the Students Representative Council, which had an unprecedented attendance of 700 students.

They are demanding the freezing of all prices controlled by the university, a guarantee of no redundancies, no repeal of the repeat

year grant for students in academic difficulties and no victimisation of students participating in the occupation.

The students intend to continue the occupation until all four demands have been met and already the Principal, Dr Alwyn Williams has agreed to no victimisation and at the students' request has written to the staff requesting them to reschedule lectures on Tuesday 2 March to allow staff and students to participate in the NUS week of action against the cuts.

The Glasgow students are part of a wave of opposition throughout British colleges and universities in which

students have voted for direct action as the only effective method of resisting drastic reductions in grants and cutbacks in jobs and facilities.

Meanwhile, the Gay Society at Glasgow University is continuing its fight for affiliation to Glasgow University Union, one of the two students unions on the campus. When asked to explain the Board's decision to bar Gay Soc, President Vince Gallagher made the enlightened statement: "We don't want a squad of poofs in our union".

A Gay Soc picket of the union, which only began ad-

mitting women last year, was held on 26 and 27 February.

Most students on the picket were met with open hostility and threats from some members of the union who set the society's banner alight and threw it at Malcolm Clark, secretary of the Gay Soc.

In the light of the Board's decision, the unions at the other Scottish universities, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Stirling, have taken steps to break links with the Glasgow University Union. Their support was also strongly in evidence on Saturday's picket.

Vice-chairman Deng Xiaoping has disappeared from public view for two months, and chairman Hu Yaobang has appeared in a press photograph sweeping the

streets. The official story that Deng has withdrawn because of old age — he is 77 — may be true. But David Bonavia, in the Far Eastern Economic Review, points to con-

flicts between Deng and the army (the PLA), and suggests there has been "a bloodless coup".

For sure China's new "modernising" policy has

run into problems. The National People's Congress last December extended the "readjustment period" from 1979-81 to 1979-85.

ANN EVANS surveys the background.

World News

Chinese Stalinists face crisis of confidence



Yaobang on the streets... sweeping changes?

CHINA'S new openness to Western influences has been much vaunted in the press over the last 2 or 3 years. We've read about new liberalisation in the arts, greater acceptance for Western classical music, a revival of the ballet and so

There was the, albeit short-lived, period of apparent freedom of speech, when people could publish critical propaganda. Intellectuals denounced and criticised during the Cultural Revolution have been rehabilitated. And China's leaders have been even more vehement than Reagan and Thatcher in denunciation of Soviet expansionism.

These 'rightist' moves have been accompanied by far-reaching economic reforms, in the direction of free competition, foreign investment and so

the problems of the Chinese economy, which reforms are supposed to solve, are shared by other Stalinist-ruled states, whatever the declared differences between Moscow and Peking. Stagnation of consumer goods, over-emphasis on heavy industry, slow development in the infrastructure of the economy: these are problems common to China, the USSR, and other countries in Eastern Europe.

The reforms that were introduced in 1978 in 'The Modernisations' are similar, in their direction, to other programmes adopted at various times in the USSR, Hungary and Rumania. They also represent a return to the policies pursued before the Cultural Revolution of

the overall goal of the reforms is to 'readjust, consolidate and improve' known as the 'characteristic policy'. It requires the modernisation of the economy, increased production, and the improvement of the living standards of the people.

that the average party official or cadre has in the leadership. Because the struggle at the top between left and right factions seems to be only precariously solved, many cadres are worried that the pendulum could swing back and the 'reforms' be reversed.

No-one wants to be seen to be too enthusiastic about implementing a policy that might be described as 'capitalistic road' in a few years time. The whole programme has, therefore, run into a certain amount of passive resistance, and central CCP leaders have been calling for a purge of the party.

This is particularly true in the countryside. A general scheme of new incentives and greater autonomy has been introduced in all sectors of the economy. In agriculture, this means allowing 'family production', thus undermining the com-

mune system.

So long as a family unit produces a certain quota of grain (which is not, in practice, unachievably high) they can keep any surplus themselves. Previously the collective benefited from increased production, so there was less incentive, according to the theory, for any individual peasant or family to put in more effort.

In the new system, the commune has to divide the land and equipment among the family units, although tractors and major machinery are still shared.

Commune

The commune becomes little more than a welfare unit.

The peasants themselves might be expected to like such a system, but it has only succeeded in poorer communes, where the scope for increasing income is greater. There are reports of some of these poorer peasants increasing their income by several

hundred per cent. However in other communes that are already fairly productive, the change has had little impact.

The clear implication is, that the main obstacle to increasing productivity is not peasants' failure to work hard.

It may be, however, that the scheme has not been very widely implemented, because of the resistance of the party cadres who see their role and power within the commune being undermined.

Grain output per capita in China is already quite high. It is much higher, for instance, than the USSR where agriculture is extremely inefficient, but it is also higher than the USA.

Nevertheless, China is handicapped by the shortage of arable land relative to the large rural population, which limits the possibilities of expansion.

Better fertilisation and pest control is being

encouraged for more intensive farming, but the main solution, being vigorously pursued, is a further expansion of the population control programme, with the aim of limiting population growth to 1% per annum.

The official report to the National People's Congress in December claimed that 1981's total grain output "would be close to the 1979 level".

In industry, also, the new incentive schemes have not been very successful. Bonuses have been made available, but instead of being restricted to the more productive workers, they are distributed to everyone as part of wages. The so-called 'capitalist incentives' seem to have little impact.

The output of heavy industry dropped 5% in 1981.

World trade

Other industrial reforms have fared rather better: many factories have switched production from heavy machinery to consumer goods, which are becoming more widely available. There is, apparently, a great boom in the television industry. The agricultural sector's share in total investment has been steadily increasing: from 10.7% in 1978 to 14% in 1979.

Individual enterprises now have more say in local decisions, like how to distribute income within the factory, who to build up trade links with and so on.

This has helped to increase China's participation in world trade, which has probably been the most successful element of the reform.

Some areas have been designated 'export oriented' and given permission to make their own foreign contacts, rather than continually going through the bureaucratic machinery.

Joint Stock ventures between Chinese enterprises and foreign capitalist concerns are now permitted, mainly in export industries, as well as loans from foreign banks. This is an area where capitalists can now make their own profits out of Chinese workers, in a similar way to equivalent projects in the USSR, Rumania and other Eastern European states.

The two major economic problems that the 'readjustment' is failing to tackle are the development of infrastructure and the energy crisis.

Increased production and an expansion in trade both required improvements in the infrastructure: transport and communications. It is no good producing vast quantities of goods when there are no trains or lorries to take them away from the factory.

Despite a 30 per cent increase in foreign trade in the first year of the modernisation, Chinese ports haven't been improved to cope with this. Now about 230 ships are arriving at Chinese ports everyday, but there is only the facility to load and unload about 90.

Ships have to wait an average of 3 days for a berth, compensation has to be paid to the ship-owners, and the overall cost of freight is increased enormously. Obviously, a dramatic improvement will be necessary if the expansion is to continue, and this has now been given a

high priority.

The energy crisis is a similar problem. Although China has massive energy resources, its industry gobbles up the energy in an extremely inefficient manner, so that production no longer keeps pace with consumption. For every 1% increase in GNP, energy consumption increases by 18%.

Not only that, but energy production is actually stagnating because there has been no long term plan to tap the huge reserves efficiently. Because of the enormous demand, current output has been increased rapidly, without any long term policy on future production. In 1980 production of coal actually fell by about 4.6%.

Transport problems hold things up here as well, because most of the coal reserves (which provide 70% of energy use) are in the North West of the country, while the main industrial base is on the East Coast. So the railway network, as well as coal production, has to be expanded.

Oil reserves

The Chinese leadership are trying to tackle this problem by developing future resources. New investment in tunnelling has started, and there is a massive offshore oil exploration project. It is estimated that China has the third largest offshore oil reserves in the world, and this is without any exploration in the deeper waters.

The returns on these projects will be slow: the oil is not expected to flow much before the 1990s, and in the meantime, China's modernisation is being held back.



Brezhnev congratulates Jaruzelski.

'Rallying the masses'

BUREAUCRATIC leaders always have a strange concept of "mobilising the masses". Ruling Stalinist bureaucracies have particularly strange notions — and "masses" who refuse to be "mobilised" have a tendency to wind up under mass arrest or facing physical liquidation.

It was in this tradition that Leonid Brezhnev this week greeted Polish martial law chief General Jaruzelski by praising his "long standing record of commitment to rallying the masses."

So far Jaruzelski has — on official figures — "rallied" over 6,000 into jails and internment camps — over 4,000 of whom are still being held in some degree of isolation.

Polish leaders, in the National Council of

National Salvation (WRON) imposed the crackdown in December, has also successfully "rallied" crippling national indebtedness to Western bankers, and an economy plagued by inefficiency, incompetence and corruption.

Real

As a result, they have prompted the *real* masses to rally behind the banners of the 10-million strong Solidarnosc trade union, whose demands for decent living standards, democratic rights and (increasingly) for workers' control of the nationalised economy developed as the most sustained political challenge to Stalinist bureaucracy.

After a prolonged period of such elements of the Polish leadership had attempted unsuccessfully to

head off the movement or politically incorporate the Solidarnosc leadership into its own apparatus of control, came the decision by Jaruzelski and his fellow political and military leaders to impose the crackdown.

Brezhnev's warm speech to greet Jaruzelski, defending the martial law measures as "timely" and promising further Soviet economic aid is no surprise. It is an open indication of the concern felt by the Kremlin that all forms of political opposition should be stamped out in the Stalinist states.

Tighter

Behind the assured pronouncements that "stabilisation is setting in", Brezhnev is aware that the Kremlin's chief spokesman, Leonid Zamyatin was calling

IRISH ELECTIONS



World News

'Nationalism first' offers no road to liberation

HAUGHEY would not be the British government's first choice for Taoiseach. It is unlikely, however, that his election will be a serious blow to the plans for a new British government 'initiative' in Ireland. The showing of the Provos and their allies in the election may even help it along.

It has been shown that the upsurge around the hunger strikes was not hard support for the activities of the Provos — and nationalism in the South seems for now to have ebbed back into the safe channels of ossified Fianna Fail 'republicanism'.

Glaring

The election showed the political bankruptcy of the various republican factions under a glaring light. It also revealed — to put it moderately — the political inadequacy of those like People's Democracy (PD) who tail after them and mimic their politics.

Because the Provisionals (and to an extent the INLA, linked to the IRSP) lead the struggle of the Catholic community in the North against the British government, they have to be given critical support by British socialists. Any solution to the impasse in Northern Ireland, however, depends on breaking out of the crippling limitations of a national struggle conducted only by a fragment of the Irish people, the Catholic minority in the North.

Any possibility of bridging the gap between Protestant and Catholic communities depends on developing working class politics. In the South an advanced capitalist society exists. A revolutionary workers' movement in the south

could begin — over time, and it would probably take a long time: there are no miracles likely — to create the conditions for a united working class solution to the stalemate in Northern Ireland.

All the Republicans showed in the election how far they are from being able to play the irreplaceable combined role of being both revolutionary Irish republicans and revolutionary socialists.

To the electors of the South they had nothing to offer but a combination of nationalist and socialist rhetoric, and the call to support the Northern Catholics.

The Provisionals paper An Phoblacht (4.2.82) explained that by standing in the 26 County election 'for the first time in 20 years', they gave the electorate 'a clear opportunity for another true declaration of Irish nationalism which was made so forcibly last year in the vote for the H-Block candidates. By standing candidates in the South Sinn Fein — the only Republican party — is complementing and reinforcing the Republican fight in the North'.

And the concerns and struggles of the South? 'If elected' [Sinn Fein candidates] 'will not take their seats in the partitionist parliament of Leinster House, but will work as elected representatives within their own constituencies' — whatever that may mean.

Primarily a vote for Sinn Fein is a demand for British withdrawal. It is a declaration of support for the Republican struggle to secure that withdrawal... it is a loud expression of disgust at the determined collaboration with Britain by successive Free State

John O'Mahony, in the second part of his discussion of the Southern Ireland election results, looks at the campaigns of the Provos and IRSP.

governments, for which' (the editorial writer adds, to get in tune with the budget debate) 'the voters are being forced to pay out of their own pockets'.

There follows some general rhetoric about socialism — almost totally unrelated to the concerns, other than the Northern struggle, of those who are being called on to rally to the Provos.

'The IRA', said An Phoblacht on February 18, 'not only has a monopoly of true Irish patriotism, which its volunteers register through their continual sacrifice, but it has additional political, social and economic goals, which Sinn Fein shares, as incentives in the struggle for a free Ireland — a 32-county, democratic, socialist republic' (emphasis added).

You won't get the Rep-

ublicans' way of seeing social questions in the South spelled out more plainly than that.

And again: 'The only way to break the chains of slavery is through the revolutionary force of armed struggle... The Republican movement [is responsible for] bringing about a united Ireland. Arising from this solemn and proud task is the necessity for sustaining the struggle,

face unpleasant choices at election time between the nakedly pro-imperialist party of Fine Gael (with Labour usually tagging onto its coat-tails) and... Fianna Fail who identify more closely with the majority of Irish people but who eventually act against them... Socialists and republicans should vote against the coalition at all costs, given that there is nothing further to the right

IRELAND OCCUPIES a position among the nations of the earth unique... in the possession of what is known as a physical force party — a party, that is to say, whose members are united upon no one point, and agreed upon no single principle, except the use of physical force as the sole means of settling the dispute between the people of this country and the governing power of Great Britain...

The latter-day high-falutin hillside man exalts into a principle that which the revolutionists of other countries have looked upon as a weapon, and in his gatherings prohibits all discussion of those principles which formed the main strength of his prototypes elsewhere and made the successful use of that weapon possible.

Our people have glided at different periods of the past century from moral force agitation, so called, into physical force rebellion, from constitutionalism into insurrectionism, meeting in each the same failure and the same disaster, and yet seem as far as ever from learning the great truth that neither method is ever likely to be successful until they first insist that a perfect agreement upon the end to be attained should be arrived at as a starting-point for all our efforts...

Every revolutionary movement in Ireland has drawn the bulk of its adherents from the ranks of disappointed followers of defeated constitutional movements. After having exhausted their constitutional efforts in striving to secure such a modicum of political power as would justify them to their own consciences in taking a place as loyal subjects of the British Empire, they, in despair, turn to thoughts of physical force as a means of attaining their ends.

Their conception of what constitutes freedom was in no sense changed or revolutionised; they still believed in the political form of freedom which had been their ideal in their constitutional days; but no longer hoping for it from the Acts of the British Parliament, they swung over into the ranks of the 'physical force' men as the only means of attaining it.

James Connolly: 'Workers' Republic', July 1899.

not alone through the call to patriotism, but through radical and realistic political activity on all issues which confront the urban and rural communities, where possible tackling their problems with them' (emphasis added).

This is far from working class politics. Armed struggle, as James Connolly understood over 80 years ago, is a possible tool of revolutionaries, but is not in itself social revolution. In terms of social programme and class concerns, the Provos are far from being adequate revolutionaries.

The national struggle is the main concern and main attraction of the Provos. The February 11 'An Phoblacht' front page says: 'Vote Sinn Fein — the only Republican party'.

The rebuff at the polls is likely to dampen the recent Provisional enthusiasm for taking a ballot paper in one hand to complement the Armalite in the other.

The IRSP prides itself on abandoning the old Republican fetish of abstentionism. It calls itself revolutionary socialist; and in Britain is widely accepted as such because of its elected members. To say that it is a revolutionary party is to say that it is a party of the working class.

of the political spectrum than Fine Gael.

Against the coalition support... those whose national and economic programme is most progressive... (vote) for revolutionary candidates where they exist and anti-coalition candidates elsewhere' (The Starry Plough, Feb. 1982).

That is, vote Fianna Fail — the main government party of the Irish bourgeoisie for 40 of the last 50 years, and one that has jailed and shot republicans!

Main enemy

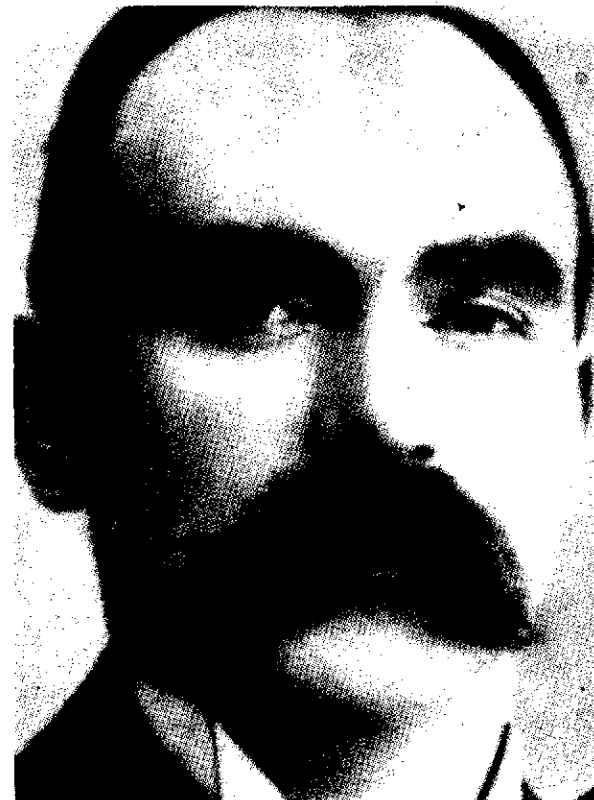
The IRSP now attacks Sinn Fein the Workers' Party (from which it was an apparently left split six years ago) for attacking Ireland's 'national capitalists'.

'The last few years have seen the trade union movement — increasingly influenced by various reformist such as SFWP — direct their fire at Irish capitalists, the Irish middle class, and the Irish government, to the exclusion of the main enemy which is imperialist finance capital and its governments'.

Official account of policy in 'Starry Plough', December 1981.

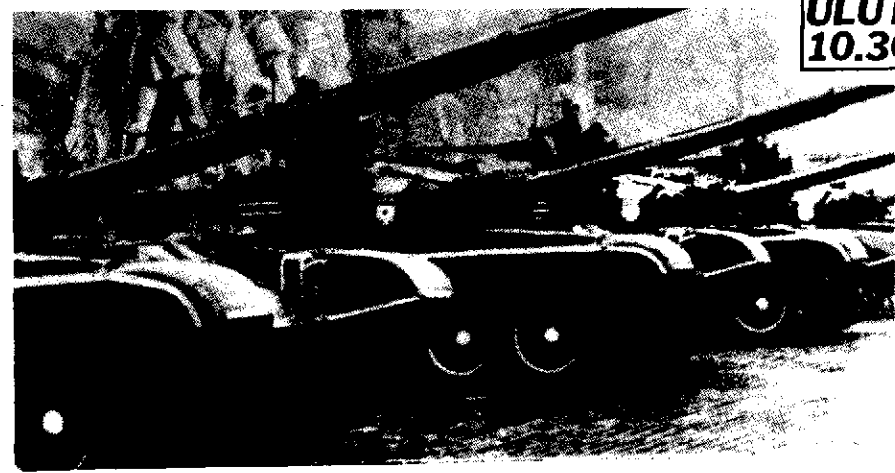
The main enemy is British and the multi-national companies.

The IRSP believes in



James Connolly

— Kremlin-style!



last weekend for a night clampdown.

Zamyatin claims that the forces which are the 'counter-revolution' are

been checked but that some of the forces which are the 'counter-revolution' are

between the privileged and the working class and the forces which are the 'counter-revolution' are

Labour supports

Demonstrate

ULU Malet St. London

10.30 Sat March 13

'rooted out'. But the international workers' movement, in defending the nationalised property relations in Poland while fighting for the political overthrow of Stalinism, must lend its political solidarity and material assistance to this struggle for the independent organisation of the Polish working class.

At the same time the lessons of Solidarnosc's struggle show the need for a leadership within that movement which grasps the nature and origins of Stalinist bureaucracy and offers a revolutionary political programme.

Laurence Scott strikers fight to oust Duffy leadership

by Martin Thomas

workers at Laurence Scott Electromotors, Manchester, are now focussing the struggle on the campaign to force the removal of the AUEW Executive under union's Rule 14.

They need 251 AUEW votes to pass resolutions (inset) calling for the EC to face a national ballot of members on whether it should continue in office. It is by no means impossible — last year, 1060 votes passed motions condemning the EC's handling of the dispute.

Laurence Scotts workers are also appealing for financial support — they get no strike pay, and face a bill for £200 from the courts.

Throughout the Laurence Scotts struggle for jobs, the AUEW and the AUEW leadership, each in its own way, have been the chief supporters of the LSE boss Arthur Snipe.

When, on February 15, hundreds of police smashed through the Scotts picket line to enable scab lorries to take away £2 million worth of machinery from the factory, the strikers were bitter, not surprised.

Class weapon

Over their ten months of struggle they have seen the use of the police and the courts as a class weapon of the bosses, again and again.

It was with the backing of the law that bailiffs entered in last August 18 the factory, putting the strikers there when they were in the small hours in for their physical safety.

It was the courts that issued injunctions last November under the Employment Act to stop Laurence Scotts strikers picketing the major company, supplying in Doncaster.

It was the police that organised Snipe's helicopter raid on November 4 to get equipment from the factory.

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It was the police that organised Snipe's helicopter raid on November 4 to get equipment from the factory.



The police and Duffy: obstacles for the LSE strikers on two fronts

presidency — did nothing.

And on July 21 the AUEW executive withdrew official support from Scotts.

The EC had given its backing to a deal proposed by Snipe offering a two-day week to some of the workforce for three months. The deal was resoundingly rejected by the LSE strikers at a mass meeting and again at another special meeting convened by AUEW official Ken Cure. It was also rejected by the local AUEW District Committee, Manchester North.

The EC's withdrawal of official support flouted AUEW rules — which give district committees the right to decide on official support for disputes — and AUEW policy. Resolution 545 passed by the AUEW National Committee in April/May 1981 stated: "We

further instruct Executive Council... to support all our membership involved in the struggle against the continued plant closures and the

decimation of our industry." The LSE strikers took the issue to the AUEW's highest body, the Final Appeals Court. The EC

refused to pass on relevant papers. The FAC concluded it was unable to adjudicate and passed a motion of censure on the EC.

PETE ROWAN, chairperson of the strike committee:
"This was an exercise to show the community as well as the Laurence Scotts workers who is in charge. It was an insight into how Maggie Thatcher thinks Britain ought to be run. She opposes state intervention into trade unions in Poland but practises it in Britain.
We say that solidarity begins at home.
It's a despicable state of affairs not getting solid support from local factories. The trade union movement is at rock bottom. This has been brought about by the trade union executives aiding and abetting the Tories.
What happened here wasn't done by management alone. They had help from this reactionary government and the police. But it will have a domino effect. It's a sad fact but it looks as though the dispute has been conceded. But we are carrying on the fight to remove the Executive. We hope the rank and file can learn from our dispute and others.
Otherwise there could come a day when we'll lose all trade union democracy."



"THIS BRANCH believes that the Executive Council has mishandled the Laurence Scotts Electromotors dispute. As this is an issue of concern to all AUEW members, this branch demands a ballot for the removal of the Executive Council in line with rule 14, paragraph 5."

Send to AUEW, 110 Peckham Rd, London SE15, with copy to LSE Strike Committee, c/o 20 Roundcroft, Romiley, Cheshire.

The EC was undaunted, and continued campaigning against the strikers.

The weight of this official sabotage finally isolated the Scotts strikers sufficiently for the police and Snipe to launch their final raid.

Weakness on left

But the weakness of some on the Left also helped. Arthur Scargill refused to heed repeated calls for blacking. And Scotts convenor Dennis Barry told Socialist Organiser last year:

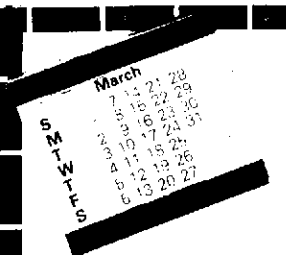
"For forty years the Communist Party have preached socialism and progress — but when it comes to basic, fundamental questions like at Scotts — they don't want to know."

"They've become so ob-

essed with winning the next election in the union they've forgotten the ABCs of trade unionism, like organising physical support for workers defending jobs when your national union leaders have stabbed you in the back."

The lessons the Scotts workers had learnt were spelled out last month, when deputy convenor Steve Longshaw wrote an Open Letter to the Leyland Vehicles strikers, advising them (contrary to the line of their CP leadership) that extension of the struggle to BL Cars was vital to defeat Edwardes and the Tories.

Steve Longshaw will also be speaking at the Socialist Organiser/London Labour Briefing 'Democratise the Labour Movement' conference in Birmingham on April 3.



WHAT'S ON

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

POLAND

Contact: Solidarnosc Trade Union Working Group, 64 Philbeach Gardens, London SW5. 01-373 3492.

Glasgow Polish Solidarity Campaign. Ian McCalman, 18 Mossiel Rd, Glasgow G43. 041-632 1839. Edinburgh PSC. c/o Edinburgh Trades Council, 12 Picardy Place. Oxford Labour Committee on Poland, 468 Banbury Rd, Oxford. 0865 58238. Coventry PSC. John Fisher c/o ASTMS, 26 Queens Rd, Coventry.

Labour Poland Solidarity Fund, c/o Cooperative Bank, 110 Leman St, London E1.

SOUTH YORKSHIRE Labour Movement Polish Solidarity Committee: meeting Friday March 12, 7.30 at Memorial Hall, Sheffield. Speakers: Piotr Kozlowski, Bernard Connolly, Peter Tatchell.

BRENT SOUTH Labour Party meeting, 'Solidarity with Solidarnosc'. Wednesday March 17, 7.30 at Stonebridge School, Shakespeare Ave, London NW10. Speakers: Eric Heffer MP, Oliver McDonald.

NORTH ISLINGTON Labour Party meeting, 'Solidar-

ity with Solidarnosc'. Wednesday March 10, Manor Gardens Library. Speakers: Marek Garzdecki and speaker from El Salvador Solidarity Campaign.

NOTTINGHAM Labour Movement Solidarity with Solidarnosc meeting. Thursday March 11, 7.30 at TGWU offices, 259 Mansfield Rd. Speakers: Piotr Kozlowski, Oliver McDonald.

TURKEY

Turkey Solidarity Campaign Democratic Platform Speakers' Tour

Wednesday March 24: 11am press conference at St Bride's Institute, off Fleet St, London. 6.30pm meeting for MPs at House of Commons (room 10) — chaired by Ernie Roberts MP.

Thursday March 25 — meetings in the London area.

Friday March 26. 7.30. Meeting at McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall St, Glasgow. Chair: a representative of the STUC. Also meetings in

Glasgow, Edinburgh and London.

Saturday March 27, 2pm. Public meeting at The Pleasance, 60 The Pleasance, Edinburgh. Chair: Secretary of Edinburgh Trades Council. Speakers include Gavin Strang MP.

Monday March 29. Meetings in the Manchester area.

Tuesday March 30. 7.30. Public meeting, Bridge Hotel Newcastle upon Tyne. 7.30. Public meeting, Trades Club, Leeds. Also other meetings in Leeds and Newcastle areas.

Wednesday March 31. 7.30. Public meeting, Oxford Town Hall. 7.30. Public meeting, AUEW House, Farnival Gate, Sheffield.

Thursday April 1. 7pm. Public meeting. TUC, Congress House, Gt Russell St, London WC1. 7.30. Public meeting, Wesley Hall, Cambridge.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER MEETINGS AND FORUMS

NORTH-WEST LONDON. Monday Mar.15: A Woman's Right to Work.

Monday April 12: Fund-raising social to commemorate the Easter Rising. Details from SO sellers.

SHEFFIELD: Every other Wednesday, at the Brown Cow, The Wicker. Business 7.30, discussion 8.30.

Mar.3: Turkey Mar.17: The decline of US capitalism.

Mar.31: Women and the labour movement

ISLINGTON: 7.30 Fridays, upstairs room in Caxton House, 129 St John's Way. Mar.12: A Woman's Right to Work

Mar.26: Central America — still the USA's backyard? HOUNSLOW Socialist Organiser social. 8pm. Saturday March 13, Hanworth Labour Hall. Waged £1, unwaged 50p, please bring a bottle.

Half the proceeds go to the Hanworth Ward election campaign.

BASINGSTOKE Socialist Organiser forum. The Case for Extra-Parliamentary Action'. 7.30, Friday March 12, Chute House, Church St.

MARXISM

London Workers' Socialist League class on basic Marxism. Next class: The labour theory of value. Friday March 5, 7.30pm, for venue write PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

'THE POLITICS of the Socialist Workers Party' — pamphlet produced by Glasgow Socialist Organiser. Sections on: history of the SWP, SWP and trade union work, SWP intervention in industrial disputes, SWP and women, SWP and internationalism. Prices 43p for one copy, £1.81 for five. Cheques payable to Ian McLeish. From: McLeish, 2 Quarry Ave, Halfway, Cambuslang, Glasgow.

Miners' blacking
On June 4, the Executive of the Confederation of Building and Engineering Unions (dominated by AUEW) called for the blacking of equipment used by any of Snipe's companies to the mines.
But the blacking was carried out. Even Scargill presumably complied by his campaign for the national NUM

Women in struggle



STRIKERS SACKED

by Winnie Murphy

THE BOSSES at the Rulecan clothing factory in Runcorn sacked the whole workforce last week.

The 70 women came out on strike when they discovered their £50 fall-back pay - the minimum wage

paid out by the company - was to be axed. This meant that pay packets went down to about £30 and in

some cases to a miserable £15.

The women had already agreed to a 12 month wage

freeze, and some had even taken a wage cut, in order to keep their jobs...

The boss, a Mr Rattle, refuses to recognise the union (NUTGW) and claims that the strike was wholly due to 'outside trade union interference'.

He has put big adverts in the local paper for new workers and is paying them £55, £5 more than the minimum wage he has just taken from the striking women.

Non-union

Most of the work at the Runcorn factory has been sent to a non-union factory in Kidsgrove, Stoke on Trent where workers are putting in overtime to get it done.

Pickets outside the factory have been successful in turning away a lorry load of cloth and support has been won from Runcorn Trades Council, Collections and support for the picket line have been given by workers in Bass Charington and ICI in Runcorn.

And dockers are being approached to block supplies of cloth.

Pin money

The women at Rulecan say:

"We do not work for 'pin money' and are determined to stop Rulecan becoming the type of sweatshop that gives the clothing industry its rag trade image. We need your support."

"If Rulecan succeeded with treating us in this way it will encourage other employers to do the same."

Support the picket line in Picow Farm Road, Runcorn and send donations and messages of support to NUTGW, Room 46, 62 Dale Street, Liverpool 2.

How we are building for June 5th jobs march

Karen Hammond describes the experience in Hackney.

THE National Organising Conference for a Woman's Right to Work took place on February 20, and while it was a reasonably successful conference in that it attracted many women interested in organising the June demonstration and rally, little has been started at local level.

Some of the sisters from the Hackney Women's Right to Work Campaign attended the conference and we were asked to explain how our local conference had been organised.

Many felt that it is difficult to know where to start when building a campaign so instead of writing an article concentrating on why there is a need for a woman's right to work conference it would perhaps be more beneficial if I enlarge upon Hackney's experience.

Initial call

The initial call for a local campaign came from a Socialist Organiser supporter who began by contacting a few people. A small meeting was called where it was decided that the campaign should take the form of a conference as a way of publicising the June demonstration and rally. A leaflet was produced and sent to community groups, women's groups, Labour Party wards and trade unions, asking for their support and help. We then opened a bank account and organised a Post Office Box.

It is worth mentioning that when organising a new grouping, it is important to acknowledge the numerous women's groups and community schemes already in existence. These should be contacted very early on to see what they have been doing, with the aim of seeking advice and support.

Real link

It is very easy to quite inadvertently step on other groups' initiatives, making it difficult to gain any real link up in the area.

We received little response from our introductory leaflet, but found personal contact more successful. However, if a conference is to be successful, and not preach to the already

converted, it is crucial to involve the trade unions and community at large.

Don't be put off by initial lack of interest. Go back until notice is taken.

Getting union support is not, however, the end of the problem. In Hackney, for example, many women work in non-unionised factories, some are contract cleaners, home workers unprotected by employment laws, so the only way these women can be contacted is by going to the factories and talking to them.

Off the ground

Factory leafletting, street leafletting, a campaigning stall on the market, etc., are necessary activities to reach the bulk of women workers. For the unemployed, dole leafletting, visiting youth clubs, etc., should be organised if possible.

The Hackney campaign was formed last November and is only just beginning to get off the ground. Most of us didn't realise how slow the process of organising a conference would be, so plan well in advance.

Putting the organisational aspects to one side, most of the discussion centred around the actual content of the conference. We soon realised that calling a conference to primarily build for the June events was not sufficient. Something more than an informative or educational event is needed.

It was eventually agreed that the conference should be divided into two sections.

In the morning the general situation of women in Hackney would be covered by speakers and workshops, including council employees; positive action; home workers; unemployed women; YOP's schemes; and child care facilities.

The afternoon would be devoted to local action and ways to take the campaign further. Action workshops on the following topics hope to do this: redundancies; a code of practice for women (a charter to make local councils ensure fair employment for women); stand up and be counted campaigns (organise a local register of unemployed women to reveal the numbers who do not officially sign on); and so on.

If you want to know anything more about the Hackney Women's Right to Work Campaign, write to PO Box 42, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8.



Last year in Armagh

Women's Day solidarity

OVER the last few years, the demonstration outside Armagh Jail, in Northern Ireland, in support of the women prisoners there, has become the main event marking International Women's Day in the British Isles.

In 1979 in Ireland a group of women, mainly from Dublin and Belfast,

held a peaceful demonstration on March 8 in solidarity with the women prisoners in Armagh Jail. This demonstration was broken up violently by the RUC and 11 of the women were arrested and charged.

Two of the women were imprisoned in Armagh Jail for non-payment of fines.

On International

Women's Day 1980 over 550 people (including 200 women from England, Scotland and Wales) attended a protest at the prison. In 1981 an even larger number gathered outside Armagh Jail on the same day and solidarity greetings from all over the world were read out.

This year, too, women are going over from Britain

to join a (mixed) demonstration outside the Jail.

March 8 has been International Women's Day since designated by a women's congress in Copenhagen in 1910. The day was chosen in honour of a militant march by women garment workers in New York in 1908.

TEN THINGS TO DO FOR FIGHTBACK CONFERENCE

Rachel Lever presents some ideas

1. Make copies of the draft covering letter (or your own wording) and send it out with leaflets to all available trade union addresses. Some you will have already, others can be ferreted out from phone books or local resource centres. Others can be sent to workplaces: e.g. 'NUT rep' sent to large schools, or 'Nalco Office' to your Town Hall, 'Natthe rep' to colleges, NUPE secretary or ASTMS secretary to all hospitals, etc.
2. Get the local trades council to support the conference and send out leaflets to all affiliated branches.
3. Put a resolution to your Labour Party GMC, to support the conference and include some leaflets in the next mailing to ward branches and affiliated unions with the suggestion to discuss sending a delegate.

Transport

4. Book transport NOW. If you can, put a motion through a college NUS or a particularly sympathetic union branch to subsidise it. Ask people for money towards cheap transport to the conference: you may even make a surplus that can cover other expenses.
5. Insert a duplicated slip in your papers saying where people can contact you about the conference. It'll draw attention to it and give encouragement to women if they know there's a group going down.
6. Stick up the handbills about the conference in every possible public place, e.g. bookshops that display such things, cafes, whole-food shops, etc.

7. Go through all labour movement and women's movement coming events for the next three months and make sure someone can take leaflets along. At meetings, get up and tell people about it. Please try and think ahead rather than phoning up for Red Star parcels of leaflets the day before a big event.
8. Hold a Women's Fightback meeting a few weeks before for preliminary discussion. And set up in advance a meeting for shortly after the conference so you have something to bring women to and discuss what a local group can do to further the initiatives that come out of the conference.
9. Make a list of active trade unionists in the area, talk to them about the conference and get them involved in some of the above.
10. In a union women's committee or broad left, try to get the conference sponsored and actively supported. (For the first Fightback conference, one comrade got the CPSA London Broad Left to distribute leaflets and organise a delegation of ten people).



The latest Women's Fightback - 10p plus postage from 41 Ellington St, London N7

Women's Fightback Trade union conference

Siobhan Lanigan, the sacked shop steward at the centre of the unionisation fight at Foyles bookshop in London, will be among those speaking at the conference.

The conference is designed as a focus for organising women to change the unions on many fronts and challenge their present leadership.

It 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

REAGAN'S 'BORN AG

by Bob Sutcliffe

THE right-wing coalition in America which propelled Ronald Reagan to power was a very broad one. It didn't consist only of those whose main aim was to restore capitalist profitability and those who wanted to return to the days before 'detente'.

Virtually every reactionary and traditionalist group and interest in the United States saw in Reagan's election its opportunity to turn back the clock. Reagan's presidency is like a piece of rotting meat in which the grotesque sects of right wing maggots are flourishing in a way which they have not done since the days of Senator Joe McCarthy in the early 1950s.

On the other hand these born-again reactionaries are finding that it is quite a struggle to roll back some of the social changes and constitutional gains of the last 25 years in the USA.

Reaganism, therefore, has opened a period of bitter fighting over all kinds of social and ideological issues — on religion, on the content of education, the rights of women, the rights of lesbians and gay men and on racial discrimination.

Dark Ages

As an example of the attempted come-back of the dark ages nothing could be more apt than a widely publicised court case at the end of 1981 in the State of Louisiana.

The State legislature had passed a law which ordered that equal time in school natural history programmes should be allotted to the theory of evolution and to 'creation science' (a new euphemism for the biblical myth of Genesis). For several weeks a judge heard rival evidence — a British astro-physicist was even flown in to attest to the truth of creation.

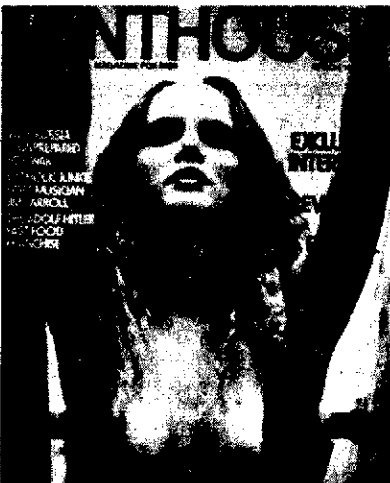
In the end the judge decided in favour of Darwin and declared the law unconstitutional. But now the same process is likely to take place in neighbouring Mississippi where the judges may be closer to God.

Such a grotesque procedure, reminiscent of an earlier century, illustrates a general point about the offensive of the New Right — its organisational and doctrinal link with religion, especially certain branches of the Christian Church.

Moral Majority

Although racist and fascist organisations like the Ku Klux Klan are showing greater signs of activity, the more archetypal case of the new right movement is a Christian organisation such as the famous Moral Majority (which, a popular lapel badge has it, is neither).

The Moral Majority, led by the Rev. Jerry Falwell, who seems as ubiquitous as Superman, is a super-energetic, super-blogged, well-financed and politically efficient group dominated by born-again Christians of what in Britain are known as the 'non-conformist' churches



'Moral Majority' leader Jerry Falwell (right) ran into some trouble when he gave an interview to 'Penthouse' above. But, despite the fight from gays (above centre) and others, Reagan, the cops and the racist right wing are on the rampage.



and their various mutant offspring.

On a number of crucial questions, especially relating to sex and the family, the ideas and political pressures from this source coincide with those from the other extreme of the Christian spectrum, the Roman Catholic Church.

This holy alliance is now organising a major attack on the right to abortion, on equal rights for women, and on the rights of gays and lesbians.

A few years ago the US Supreme Court held, in a historic decision, that it was unconstitutional to impose any legal restrictions on abortion rights. Although medical facilities for abortions are insufficient, and often very expensive, the decision meant that the United States has been one of the countries where abortion rights have been legally best protected.

During 1982 two bills will be debated in Congress which are designed to put a dramatic end to all this. The most radical of them is the so-called Human Life bill, sponsored by Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina.

This bill would simply define life as beginning at the moment of conception. Abortion would thus become not simply a crime but first degree murder. Even a natural miscarriage might provoke a police murder investigation.

The second bill, sponsored by Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah, would over-

rule the old Supreme Court decision by allowing individual states to make their own laws on abortion.

The Helms bill would require only a simple majority in both houses of Congress; but lawyers expect it to be declared unconstitutional, if passed. The Hatch bill is a constitutional amendment and so would require a two-thirds majority of each house and ratification by 35 of the states.

Family break-up

The so-called 'pro-life' lobby prefers the Helms bill but its likely fate is leading the most realistic lobbyists to favour the Hatch amendment. The Catholic bishops have now declared for this as an attainable second best. If passed (and that is by no means impossible) it would allow the equivalent of the Human Life bill to be introduced in individual states.

While this new threat to women looms ahead, an old promise of reform is rapidly receding. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the US Constitution requires the ratification by only two more states (to make 35) to become law. But it must get that before the (already extended) deadline of June 1982, or the whole process will have to begin again.

In December a Federal

Judge ruled that the extension itself was unconstitutional; and in any case the possibility of its ratification by two more states now looks quite low.

So, despite massive public support, the ERA appears to be nearly dead.

Reagan in his campaign explicitly opposed the ERA as unnecessary, but said that women deserved more rights and he would do his bit to see they got them in his employment policy in the Federal government. In fact out of his first 400 senior appointments, only 43 were women, though his appointment of Sandra Day O'Connor, a conservative Republican and no friend of women's liberation, to the Supreme Court was given maximum (and sickening) publicity.

Reagan's economic policies, too, are giving women maximum opportunities to go back to where the New Right believes they belong — the kitchen. In fact one of the main ideologues of Reaganomics, George Gilder, author of the best-selling *Wealth and Poverty*, believes that the whole problem of modern capitalism boils down to the erosion of the dominance of men:

"The man has the gradually sinking feeling that his role as provider, the definitive male activity from the primal days of the hunt and on into modern life, has been largely seized from him; he has

been cuckolded by the compassionate state".

As the (admittedly limited and hazy) sunshine of the ERA recedes, another cloud is appearing in the sky in the form of the Family Protection Act which like the abortion acts will be discussed by the Congress in 1982.

The Moral Majority and similarly minded groups are mounting a massive campaign in favour of what they see as the stabilising conservative influence of the traditional family. They can point to numerous pieces of evidence about the break-up of the family and its 'virtues' in the USA. In New York in 1980 37 per cent of births were to unmarried mothers (in Central Harlem the figure was 77 per cent); and there were many more abortions than births.

Recent census data reveals that there has been a tripling in the number of unmarried couples in the US during the last decade, most of them under 35. And in the same period the number of divorces doubled.

Gay rights

At the same time far more people in America than in any other country have adopted a gay lifestyle. It is now generally accepted that about 10 per cent of the US population

are gay and the proportion of gays in the adult population of New York City and San Francisco is put at between 25 and 35 per cent.

The Family Protection Act would not by itself reverse any of these trends. But by stipulating the conditions for the receipt of Federal funds it aims to define a kind of official moral code on the family and sexuality; and it would be used as a precedent for even more powerful and oppressive legislation. But as it is it would involve a manifold attack on the rights of women, gays and lesbians and of racial minorities.

These have been summarised as follows by a group organising opposition to the act.

Against Women

1. Federal funds ended for any organisation offering abortion counselling, contraceptives, abortion or venereal disease treatment for unmarried minors without parental consent;
2. Abolition of federal spouse abuse regulations;
3. Federal funds ended for all law groups involved in abortion and divorce litigation;
4. No tax exemption for day care centres which participate in political campaigns;
5. No federal funding for schools which present educational materials which "do not reflect a balance between the status role of men and women, do not

reflect the different ways in which women and men live and do not contribute to the American way of life as it has been historically understood";

6. Schools will be permitted to discriminate against students and teachers on grounds of sex as well as sexual preference, disability and religion;

7. No federal funding for training women in non-traditional jobs;

Against lesbians and gays

See 1, 5 and 6 above plus:

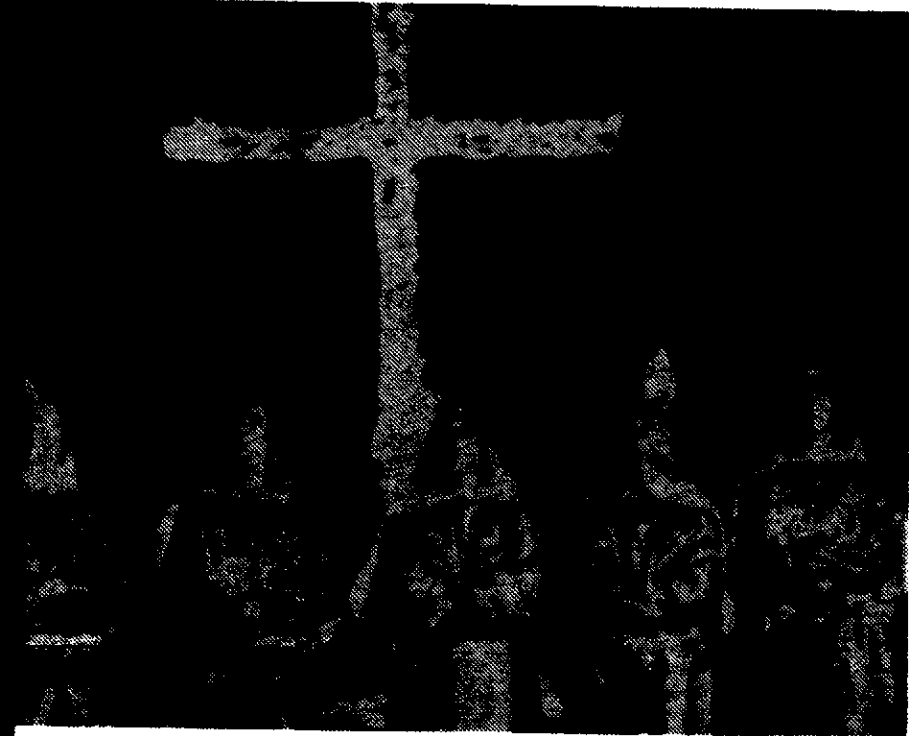
8. Law firms and groups involved in gay rights litigation will lose all federal funding;

9. No federal funding under any provision of federal law to public or private groups or individuals who suggest that homosexuality can be an acceptable lifestyle.

This could remove Medicaid payments, unemployment benefit, social security, old age pensions, food stamps, federal tuition grants, veterans' benefits, federal disability insurance and workmen's compensation payments for openly gay people;

10. Action by an employer or union against a homosexual employee shall be excluded from the definition of "unlawful employment practice";
- Against young people
- See 1, 4, 5, and 6 above plus:
11. Runaway children mandated to be returned to their parents;
12. Child abuse laws amen-

AIN' REACTIONARIES



you aren't married" then you could be liable for a 10,000 dollar fine in Wisconsin, or six months hard labour in Alabama.

Newton's study uncovered such almost unfathomable anomalies such as the fact that "a married man or an unmarried woman can safely commit adultery in Minnesota or Michigan, respectively, but not vice versa, and not with each other!"

So far it has been the economic plans and the militarism of the Reagan programme which have been kept in the limelight by the administration rather than the racist, sexist and other ideological concerns of much of the New Right.

In fact on these questions the most virulent sections of the New Right are denouncing the Reagan administration as liberal. And there have been strange spectacles such as a strong attack by Senator Barry Goldwater on the New Right for undermining American democracy!

Progressives and socialists, blacks, women and gays in America now face a very difficult battle to defend the limited but tangible social gains which have been made in the last two decades. It will not be won by rallying behind the loud-talking demagogues of the liberal Democrats, but only by an independent, united front coalition of those with no need to look over their shoulder at the needs of capitalism.

by creating an exception for discipline or corporal punishment applied by parent or someone authorized by a parent;

School textbooks to be endorsed by committees of parents;

More opportunity to be given for prayer and religious education in public schools;

Against racial minorities

No federal funds for segregation relating to desegregation and busing;

Tax exemptions allowed for savings accounts earmarked for tuition in private, non-profit schools. In effect, white, middle class schools;

To prove a charge of racial discrimination against these schools, it must be shown to have been deliberate practice for at least ten years. Then a year after the school exhausts all avenues of appeal (which may take years) the worst can suffer loss of tax exempt status;

No federal funds for education to be given to states in block grants. The Guidelines would allow these states to apply for federal funds.

Tax exemption for white parents adopting a child of another race.

No provision for affirmative action or quotas to correct racial imbalance;

Against unions

Union shops for teaching outlawed;

Private, non-profit schools are exempted from obligations as employers under the National Labor Relations Act. Hence no general protection for employees in these schools. The Family Protection Act is regarded as crucial by many New Right strategists and lobbyists. One up, the National Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress (led by Paul W. Ryan), sees it as a central legislative tool to oppose liberals and the left anti-family.

The FPA embodies the principle advocated by another New Right group, the Conservative Caucus (led by Howard Phillips who was employed by Nixon to dismantle the anti-poverty programme).

This is the principle of "defunding the left", that cutting off federal aid to anything even vaguely

progressive.

The FPA also embodies the favourite principle of another prominent New Rightist, Onalee McGraw of the Heritage Foundation, the New Right's well-financed think tank. This is attacking "secular humanism" in the public schools system.

Bombarding

As with all the previous lovers of the family (for example Hitler and Stalin, and on a lesser scale James Callaghan and Margaret Thatcher), the authors of this monstrous bill are protecting the family as part of a very broadly based reactionary programme.

They rightly see marriage and the family as traditionally understood in capitalist society as an essential element in the preservation of both the reality and ideology of exploitation.

Their successors in America today are bombarding their fellow citizens with propaganda for the family. As an example, a recent issue of the Los Angeles Times carried a hugely expensive advertising supplement about the Mitterrand government in France (also carried in some British papers) paid for by the extremely obscure right wing Catholic group, the Society for the Defence of Tradition, the Family and Property.

Before any other alleged actions of the French Socialist Party government this "analysis" was concerned about the "Confirmation of State secularism — marriage put on the same level as cohabitation — complete sexual freedom — 'rehabilitation' of homosexuality — unrestricted access to free contraceptives — freedom of abortion for both adults and minors — the gradual death of private education — state education starting at age two".

Defeats

Against such values as these the women's and gay movement in America have still managed to win

important new rights and freedoms in the last two decades. Increasingly, however, this struggle is becoming an uphill one. The halt in the progress of the ERA is one example of this. So are a series of recent defeats for gay rights.

In November 1981 a Bill outlawing discrimination on grounds of sexual preference was voted down for the third year in succession by the New York city council. This despite support from the allegedly popular Mayor Ed Koch (who has issued an executive edict banning discrimination which could easily be revoked by his successor). The opposition to the proposed New York bill was orchestrated by fundamentalist religious sects, Catholic, Baptist and Jewish.

In the first showing of a major new situation comedy series on one of the national TV networks an (extremely discreet) allusion is made to the fact that its middle aged leading character, Sidney Shorr, is gay. The Boston Globe described the allusion as "so muted it shouldn't upset anyone".

Closet

They had not counted, however, on the moral susceptibilities of the Moral Majority. After an outcry from that source Sidney Shorr had by the second episode returned for ever to the closet.

Another network, also under pressure from the Moral Majority, dropped plans to introduce a gay character into one of the most widely networked mid afternoon soap operas for which American TV is renowned.

In Florida the state legislature recently passed the Bush Trask amendment to the State budget which would cut off State funds from Universities and Colleges where gay rights groups are allowed to operate. This, of course, is the state where the infamous Anita Bryant ran her strident pro-family, anti-gay campaign in 1977. She herself, ironically, has since then been divorced and has publicly admitted

that she may have been too hard on the homosexuals. So maybe there's hope for everyone.

And the legislative picture is not everywhere so bleak as it is in New York and Florida. As New York City was voting out gay rights, the State legislature of Wisconsin was voting them in. A number of cities now have gay rights ordinances and in one case, Washington DC, the city council has not only voted a gay rights bill but has also voted never to allow the issue to be reopened.

That, however, is ironic to say the least since homosexuality in Washington DC remains illegal. In fact so does the vast majority of the sexual activity which takes place in that city.

The responsibility for this is not with the city council, which in 1981 passed an eminently liberal law legalising virtually all consensual sexual activity. It replaced an existing law which outlawed everything except heterosexual "missionary position" sex between legally married couples in private.

After a vocal campaign of lobbying by the Rev. Gerry Falwell, leader of the Moral Majority, the liberal reform was vetoed by the US Congress which has reserve powers over all legislation in the Federal capital.

This amazing decision has focussed attention on the extraordinarily primitive and oppressive nature of the United States laws on sex. Many states possess a host of repressive laws which, if they are not often used today, could easily be employed much more viciously if the present pro-family, anti-gay movement gains ground.

Sodomy laws, banning anal and usually oral sex, exist in 27 states. In 7 of these the laws apply to homosexuals only. Penalties range from 30 days prison in Arizona to a possible life sentence in Idaho.

These so-called blue laws are most used today against gays, but they create tricky problems for law-abiding heterosexuals too. In 19 states only the missionary position is legal even for married couples. In 26 states adultery is illegal and in 19 fornication

(sex between people married neither to each other nor anyone else) is banned. Incest and prostitution are illegal in 49 out of the 50 states.

If the Kinsey report on modern American sexual behaviour are correct, then the great majority of Americans have committed acts which in a good part of the country are defined in law as "lewd and lascivious, abominable and unnatural."

Americans who travel a lot would have a tough

time actually keeping in touch with what they could do where. The journalist Clark Newton, writing on the sex laws in Inquiry of October 5 1981, advises the law-abiding that the safest thing is "Never do anything in Utah"; it would be safer to stay in neighbouring Nevada where just about anything is legal.

If, he warns, "you're engaging in nothing more than straight and narrow heterosexual intercourse involving only government-approved orifices — but



As TUC rationalise retreat on Tebbit law

The real lessons of May 14 Day of Action

IF we are to build united action against the Tories' new proposals to put trade unions in a legal straitjacket, then we need to learn the lessons of the campaign—or lack of it—against the first instalment, the 1980 Employment Act.

Looking back it is clear that right from the start the TUC had no intention of mounting any campaign that could stop the Bill becoming law or provide a foundation for its immobilisation if it did reach the statute book.

Any co-ordinated campaign of industrial action and boycott, the only realistic strategy, would have required a conference of Executives. The TUC had no intention of calling one.

Torn between fear of risking their organisations in unfavourable circumstances of depression and mass unemployment and their terminal allergy to the independent working class action that a real lead could unleash, the General Council decided to live with the legislation, wait out the recession, hope for a Labour government.

Murray himself put it very well, "We are not talking about a revolution or a general strike in the sense of bringing the government down. We are talking about protest—loud protest."

The legislation was, of course, skilfully drafted to encourage the view that the union leaders could co-



Murray: would mass action interfere with the paperwork?

exist with it. Whereas the 1972 Act had provided a monolithic extended onslaught on the functions of leaders and rank and file, the 1980 Act was more skilful and more limited.

It involved pecking away at unfair dismissal and maternity rights, hedging around the closed shop with restrictions rather than outlawing it, making funds for secret ballots available rather than imposing such ballots, hitting workers who picketed but not the union organisation and funds.

O'Fishall

Prior had no intention of going too far all at once and repeating past mistakes. As he pointed out to his right wing, "To do so would unite the whole of the trade union movement against the Conservative government. The unions are in a state of flux. They are divided about their future. While the division is going on there is the possibility of change and that is what we want..."

(Like the TUC, Prior tends to overestimate his opponents!)

Stage II of course, was yet to come but your General Council member lives for the minute.

As far as O'Fishall was concerned it would be business as usual: rhetoric about hard won rights and Taff Vale, pleading with Thatcher for consultation, beer and sandwiches and an attempt to show the membership that something was being done by calling for action in such a way as to illustrate practically what the General Council had stated all along: the members were to blame—there was no fight on the shop floor.

The TUC determined on a Day of Action set for May 14, 1980 and a march in London on March 9. Two points are vital to recall: the one day action was to be an isolated incident, it was in no way integrated into, still less the starting point for an ongoing campaign of action.

There was, for example, no instruction to boycott industrial tribunals, no directive not to participate in closed ballots.

Moreover, in the absence of a Special Congress of Executives the general Council simply asked affiliates to respond to their

call. There was no instruction to come out, action was optional.

Generally this strategy was based upon the perspective that the Bill would become law. Specifically it was a recipe for a shambles.

As leaders such as Duffy, Chapple and Jackson campaigned against strike action, Murray and company retreated from earlier claims that May 14 would be 'like Christmas Day' and spoke of lunch-time meetings as sufficient.

In the face of a vicious press campaign centred on the Sun, Express and Mirror, the TUC refused to organise. They had no intentions of even attempting to bring down the Tories. "I would never be a party to attempts to smash up a democratically elected government. If we did that we wouldn't know what to do with the power we had got" said Len on BBC TV.

Congratulate

The lefts on the General Council did not differentiate themselves. Bill Keyes claimed "We could have found ourselves outmanoeuvred on the General Council if we had put a strike resolution". Ken Gill's view of Len Murray's muddle and confusion was that "Len Murray has been much cleverer than any General Secretary since 1926. I'm prepared to congratulate Len Murray."

Many unions opposed action or left it to the members. A one day stoppage is always difficult to organise, particularly a protest with no dynamic concrete demands. Why lose a day's pay in action which is likely to achieve little?

Given the way the union leaders had in the previous months stood by through the steel strike, organised scabbing at the Isle of Grain, battered union organisation at Leyland and accepted cuts and growing unemployment there was scepticism even amongst militants.

Many ordinary workers were determined to go in, and where unions such as the EETPU were supporting this, it was difficult in multi-union situations to stop an escalation.

In these circumstances the response on May 14 was mixed. Over a million workers came out and around a quarter of those demonstrated. There was a

large turnout in Scotland, a large turnout generally where stewards planned, worked, leafleted, argued to build support. Those who simply called mass meetings without preparation were often knocked back, and so many stewards refused to call meetings for fear of rejection.

In the face of the lack of leadership the response was amazing. It showed a sizeable minority prepared to fight even in the face of adverse circumstances and confusion from above.

Of particular importance was the fact that, despite an injunction obtained by Victor Matthews against Express workers on the grounds that the dispute was a political one, Fleet Street was halted and the Express did not appear on May 14 or 15. (The leaderships of the NGA and SOGAT, but not NATSOPA accepted the court order).

Len Murray said that May 14 had achieved everything he wanted. He was probably right. It signalled the end, not the beginning of TUC activism against the Act. It strengthened the bureaucracy in relation to the militants amongst the rank and file.

Given the limited response, the Chapples were able to argue that the left were out of touch with the membership. The Ken Gills were able to argue "We tried. More action now would be adventurism".

Living with Tebbit

The General Council will have more difficulty living with Tebbit than with Prior and have already called a conference of the Executive. May 14 shows us what we are up against but that if there is a co-ordinated lead from above it can be built on at the bottom.

We must fight for the TUC to organise strike action as part of a campaign to boycott and uproot the whole Prior-Tebbit edifice.

Moss Evans is talking about 'half hours of action'. This will have all the disadvantages we have outlined in looking at May 14. There is no alternative to instructions to strike from the top of the movement.

A series of one day stoppages against the Bill would help build the momentum of an anti-Tebbit campaign. That is what we should fight for.

CAROL HOBBS



1980: a year of big talk and little action by the TUC. Above: March 9

Fame is the Spur

by Sue Lister

ANYONE who saw the TV serial of Howard Spring's novel Fame is the Spur may be surprised to find it recommended in Socialist Bookshelf, but although I did not see all parts of the serial, I felt that they left out a lot of the important parts or else interpreted them wrongly.

It is a remarkable book which shows how the Party sprang from the working class before the Labour Party, a moving story of the suffragette movement.

that they are "in it for the good of all" and not for self glorification. After all, none of get promotion from being trade union militants or Labour Party activists.

But I often looked at a trade union official and muttered fame is the spur and thought how rapidly "career" aspirations colour their judgement of what the membership really needs as well as their interpretation of democracy.

This book was my first lesson in the role of the bureaucracy.

Evolved

My understanding has obviously evolved over the last sixteen years since I first read the book, especially as the last eleven years have been spent as an active trade unionist around politics.

initial founda-

Socialist Bookshelf

Books and pamphlets that you should read

tion of my mistrust of all bureaucrats has been one of the most valuable lessons I have had in left wing politics. It is a book I would recommend to all, not just to those who are starting to think about politics like I was sixteen years ago.

Re-read

But having recently re-read the book I would also urge those with a lot of experience and a foundation in Marxist theory to read this book which has a lot of insight into the problems which still face the Labour Party and the trade unions with their bureaucracies and which is very enjoyable reading.



Ramsey McDonald

JIM ALLEN'S ONE-DIMENSIONAL

WOMEN

JIM ALLEN'S play achieved what I think it aimed to do. It gave us a glimpse of the barrenness, emotional and spiritual poverty and the tedium of sexual relationships structured within capitalism.

This was done by taking a group of working class men and showing how they matched up to their male stereotypes. The image they aspired to was that of the sharp dresser, cool seducer, in perfect control, puffing on his slim line Panatella, with his thick wallet bulging, foot loose and fancy free.

Grim, grey

Against this we were shown their grim, grey reality.

They were approaching middle age, hanging around the 1950s shopping precinct, balding, fat bellied, bored, bigoted and broken.

Unemployment lay as the background to the sexual fears of male middle age — not only past it in bed but past it in getting a job too.

"It's like a needle in a haystack finding a job. I've been scratching for two years . . . they want a driver, 25 with 20 years experience."

Male pride

Unemployment was seen to strip men of their virility — but what really emasculates and strips all masculine pride from the unemployed male (so much so that he's reduced to a snivelling, crying, begging wretch at closing time), is the fact that his wife works!

This indeed was shown as the real misery of unemployment.

Jim Allen has established himself as one of the finest socialist playwrights active today. But Mary-Ann Todd argues that his new play presents a cardboard image of women.

"I feel like a dead fish rotting from the head down. No job, no money, me and her sleeping back to back every night. Goes right against the grain. Your wife out working — keeping you. It goes right against the grain." This is indeed seen as the degrading reality for many men. But what is the corresponding reality for working class women?

Their 'reality' — what they actually face and feel is never in any way portrayed or developed in the play.

There is no glimpse of how they feel unemployed or under pressure to give up their job, or trapped in their total emotional and financial dependence of their men.

They are referred to or written in through a whole series of cardboard cut-out characters as standard stereotyped images of women.

These bear looking at. There is a continuous, blatant use of sexist caricaturing: We see a "bird dying to be pulled, asking for it"; a nagging "big-gobbed" wife who was also asking for it (this time to be "stiffened" by her husband for bawling him out in public in front of his mates);

"What you do in the house is one thing. You can lock the door and turn the key, but in a pub . . ."

There was the boring old cow — the "dragon" — insisting on her Sunday night out, to sit lifeless, as her husband complains to his mates:

"It's murder, absolute murder sat there trying to think of something to say".

We hear of the muddled inefficiency of women who bung everything on top of the wardrobe and when he "feels like it", has to get up on a chair rooting about for her cap and the baby starts crying."

Stupidity is their most notable characteristic. Stupid women, so easily duped and flattered with a box of chocolates like a dumb animal. "What have you got there?" "Bag of hay and a bucket of water for the horse — for the wife".

Stupid woman who doesn't soak the wall paper enough before stripping it off — can't even build her love nest professionally!

Then of course there is the woman as castrator — as the only breadwinner or too eager and rampant in her sexuality.

This latter is Lil, the publican's wife, going around the bar in her low-



cut dress dropping the hint to every male that her husband is off for the weekend golfing.

One of the cruellest images of women consistently shown was of the woman past 40 . . . with only her husband and home, desperate to keep him chained up.

. . . old women when they get around 40, losing their looks fast, down hill now all the way, caught up in a minefield fight every inch, scared stiff someone else'll get us up."

All they have to look forward to is becoming grannies or the ubiquitous mother-in-law.

The way the women were shown in the play stank — just like the revolting seaside post-

card images of them or Andy Capp cartoons stink.

Ah, you may reply, that's because they, like the play, are highlighting reality, and reality stinks.

Well, yes it does; but in a different way. Seaside postcards, music hall jokes and the thousand other means by which women are portrayed in exactly these ways don't attempt to provide an insight into reality or a glimmer of hope for women's liberation.

On the contrary, the continuously reinforce and buttress sexist ways of looking at them and treating them.

To compare Jim Allen's writing to society's nastier portrayals of women is pretty damning — especial-

ly when he is a leading socialist playwright. I'm sure it'll be argued it's unfair, I've missed the point entirely, that he was only trying to show women from the working class male's point of view.

But women do not resemble the distorted, bigoted, chauvinistic images Jim Allen continually presented.

They do not exist in one fixed dimension as stupid, nagging battle axes; nor as pretty, sweet, loyal, dedicated little wives.

Jim Allen's play sickened me.

The men were portrayed developed, so you could try and understand their pathetic fears, worries, the frustrations they lay behind their violence, and their

need to dominate and be emotionally supported in the desolate bleak life that our class society has to offer.

The family and marriage was shown as a dead end jail not based on the romantic dream of love and tenderness and a supportive partnership, that we are brought up on.

"Hands up them that love their wives."

"Nowt to do with love."

"If they were to pass a law saying wife and kids would be looked after it'd be the biggest jailbreak in history."

"So long suckers, stop rattling your cages."

But in the end it's shown that it's better for all men to stick by the missus — your good and faithful wife.

Indulging in anything outside of the security of the home is a risky business — for all its cracked up to be.

It can result in — horror of all horrors — humiliation.

Secret fears

It's all right for women to continuously be seen as a source of contempt and ridicule, but perish the thought for our hero.

"What's the matter with you?" asks Lil, bitter and frustrated with secret fears it might be her spare tyre that has turned him off.

"When it comes to it you are all mouth and no shout. First time ever I step over the traces and end up with a bummer like you."

But don't have too many fears for our hero. He can always go back and wake up his property, his "little treasure", to check he is still functioning:

"Bernie, are you awake? Are you alright? There's my girl — wouldn't swap you for a gold clock."

Blue Lightnin'

Andrew Hornung describes the life and music of Lightnin' Hopkins

THE first time I heard a Lightnin' Hopkins track was on a blues compilation album of tracks recorded in the fifties

and early sixties. Lightnin' was in high class company — Muddy Waters, Elmore James, BB King, Howlin' Wolf and others — but his



Lightnin' Hopkins

song stood out from all the others.

That song, "Leave Jike Mary Alone" was typical Lightnin' Hopkins. It is a brief narrative, not very detailed, but particular enough to convey a sense of something deeply personal without the passionate, declamatory, often aggressive tone of many blues songs.

In place of the highly generalised, highly stylised statements that make up many blues — sometimes a song will be nothing but a few of such traditional verses strung together — Lightnin' Hopkins blues were frequently sharply original in their themes and their imagery and quite irregular in their structure.

His repertoire included folk ballads, reworkings of the songs of blues musicians of the twenties and thirties as well as over 150 of his own compositions on themes ranging from love songs, songs of complaint and sorrow to topical, humorous and political songs.

Even the most stylised themes are handled with startling originality. "Little and Low is a love song: She's little and she's low. She's right down on the

ground. She's little and she's low. She's right down on the ground.

Well, the way she acts Would make a rabbit of a hound.

She's mine, she's mine, she's mine, she's mine. She's mine, but she's crippled

And the poor child's blind. Another song addressed to his love, says:

I wished I could do something

To change that woman's mind

I wished I could do something

Oh yes, to change that woman's mind.

You know I hate to see her twisted

Would up like a ball of twine.

If Sam "Lightnin'" Hopkins' work was full of originality, his life-story reads like a copy-book blues biography.

Born in 1912 at Centreville in Leon County, Texas, Hopkins was one of six children of a farmer-musician. Two of his brothers, Joel and John Henry, were also blues singers, and three of his many cousins — the much older Texas Alexander and the younger Frankie Lee Sims and Albert Collins — were celebrated musicians.

As a boy he sung in the baptist church choir; at the age of eight he made his first guitar out of a cigar box; soon dropped out of junior school and hoboed; played with Texas Alexander some of the time and farmed the rest; served time in Houston County Prison Farm; worked the streets, dives, parties and buses for tips.

First recorded — with pianist "Thunder" Smith, hence "Lightnin'" Hopkins — in 1946; recorded on small labels in the Houston area, making local hits; "disappeared" (from the view of white folklorists, that is) for a decade; "rediscovered" in abject poverty, his guitar having been pawned; success on the newly opened up college circuit, appearance on stage at blues/folk festivals; many records and two Buicks later, in February 1982, he dies, his music largely unchanged from the recordings of the forties and fifties . . .

In his book, *The Rural Blues*, Sam Charters described the impact on those white audiences of the campus and coffee house scene of Lightnin' Hopkins' country blues.

"Lightnin'" was a little bewildering to most people who heard him. He was

accompanying himself on an unamplified guitar. There was no piano, no drums, no bass. He was one of the first blues singers to work without a group in ten years.

"His singing was very free, almost disorganised. Some verses were twelve measures long, some were thirteen and a half, some were ten. Lightnin' sang in the same unmeasured, harsh style that lemon Jefferson and Texas Alexander had recorded twenty years before.

"The guitar trailed along, echoing the words, droning in a rhythmic drumming on a lower string then ringing above the voice between the lines . . ."

This blues was a primitive Texan blues, a mixture of the hard chopping style of a number of south Texas players, African-style drones and rag-like fast-finger picking. The players who influenced Lightnin' were all from the Texas-Louisiana area — from that area of America lying inland off the Gulf coast between Houston and New Orleans.

That is an area where black music has two basic styles — blues and zydeco

or cajun. And Lightnin' played both styles: the overwhelming majority of his work was blues with guitar accompaniment, but he also recorded zydeco music accompanying himself on organ.

Unlike the best-known blues artists — people like Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf — he never travelled North. His country roots were unbroken, unchanged even by the urban styles emanating from post-war Houston.

The death of Lightnin' Hopkins means the snapping of one of the last threads of what until recently was a strong cord, the cord connecting the primitive country blues with the present. Lightnin' Hopkins made that connection not as a vestige of the past, a curiosity in the museum of music, but as a constantly creative musician rooted in the culture of the black rural South.

Of course, he lives on in the music of others as well as his own recordings: blues artists as varied as Robert Pete Williams and Buddy Guy openly announce their debt to him. But blues music has lost one of its most creative, most powerful and most deeply reflective performers.

Writeback



We invite readers to send us their letters, up to a usual maximum length of 400 words. Send to 'Writeback', Socialist Organiser, c/o 28, Middle Lane, London N8.



Leyland Vehicles: how could the workers have won?

IMG confusion on Leyland strike

I WAS interested to read Pat Lally's analysis of the failure of leadership in the recent strike at Leyland Vehicles against mass redundancies.

His description of the opposition of the Communist Party and the International Marxist Group to the Leyland Action Committee's policy for an orientation to the BL Cars Division reminded me very much of a similar scenario 45 years ago in the North American Teamsters' strike.

During what was to become one of the most titanic battles in the history of the American labour

movement to unionise truck drivers, the US Socialist Workers Party flew veteran organiser Jim Cannon from New York to the Minneapolis strike centre in order to provide experienced tactical advice on how to take the struggle forward.

After discussions with the strike committee, it was agreed by the Teamsters that the only way to bring the bosses to heel was by launching an 'over the road' campaign, that could pull out truck drivers in the rest of the mid-west.

Organisers were sent out, a national conference of truck drivers was called, calls

for action to other workers issued, and a campaign built through official union structures to bring out other workers in support of Minneapolis.

Interestingly, the American Communist Party at the time, rather like its British counterpart in BL today, denounced such proposals as "adventurist, substitutionist", etc. and "the members won't support this" and "you don't understand the mood of the workers" they said.

At the end of the day, of course, the SWP's proposals were carried out, and not only was one of the

greatest victories in the history of the international trade union movement secured, but the subsequent right wing president of the union, Jimmy Hoffa, was to admit "if it wasn't for the drive and leadership of Cannon and Dobbs, the Teamsters Union would not be America's most powerful union today."

If only some of these elementary lessons in trade union organisation had been grasped by the CP and IMG at Leyland, then maybe the unprecedented majorities for strike action at the first two mass meetings could have been translated into a real

offensive against Edwardes throughout the whole of BL.

Indeed the points that Pat Lally makes in his article are hardly revolutionary demands. They can be found on day four of any TUC introductory course for shop stewards! In other words, when your factory is on strike you call on sister plants for support.

Importantly, however, the seeds of the defeat of the strike were sown at the crucial Combine Committee meeting when the CP agreed that there would be no national conference of BL stewards and hence no chance of sympathy action

from the car plants.

This effectively walled up the struggle in North Lancashire and Bathgate.

Indeed one CP member said to me, rather apologetically, "You've got to understand that Jack Adams (the CP convenor at Longbridge) is in a delicate position at Longbridge. A conference of BL stewards at this time could de-stabilise the situation."

In short, the Communist Party, integrated as it is in the lower echelons of trade union officialdom was feeling the pressure from Boyd and Duffy to leave Leyland Vehicles well alone.

Obviously, therefore, because the CP places great store at capturing official positions to the exclusion of mobilising the rank and file to defend jobs, one would expect them to block off a unified inter-plant offensive within BL as a whole.

But what on earth were the IMG, a revolutionary organisation, doing subordinating themselves to a policy that was obviously rushing headlong to disaster and defeat?

Firstly, due credit must be given to the Preston IMG for their unstinting graft in building support for the strike on a whole number of levels. However, the accommodation of the IMG to the CP in Leyland was a product of the "turn to industry" instituted two years ago at its national conference.

The inability of the IMG leadership over the past 12 years to build a serious

base in the working class — significantly neither the national secretary nor national organiser of the IMG have had any employment in or substantive experience of working class organisations, indeed the turn was motivated in such a way that "this would not be necessary for them" — led to the wholesale sending of lower middle class people into factory jobs.

The result has been a fragmentation of experience, an increasing federalisation of branches and political adaptation — in the case of Leyland Vehicles towards the CP. Now it is quite a natural and normal thing that the comrades should adjust their style and intervention to the peculiarities of the local situation, but the real problem in Leyland was that the IMG's subordination to CP industrial strategy was ratified and endorsed by the IMG's national leaders.

Indeed the open letter from Steve Longshawe, AUEW deputy convenor at Laurence Scotts, places the IMG well to the right of the Laurence Scotts strike committee on the BL question.

Hence the refusal of the IMG leadership to formulate a coherent strategy for winning the strike has left the unfortunate Preston comrades defenceless when confronted by young workers asking the question "Well what alternative was there to the policy of the Works Committee?"

VINCE DUNN, Manchester

The roar of the greasepaint, the smell of the management!



SOME managers just get on quietly with exploiting their workforce. Others make a song and dance out of it.

BL management in their spare parts division — Unipart — fall noisily into the second category. They have gone on the road with a £150,000-a-time extravaganza of musical comedy described as "Business Theatre".

The theme song 'There's no business like component business' was backed up by catchy little numbers entitled "Cooperation" and "Winning is Possible".

Butchers

Among the cast were not only scantily-clad dancing girls and a model from Unipart's latest sexist calendar but also more demurely dressed (male) BL senior managers and directors. Appropriately in the context of BL's redundancy policy they wore

striped butchers' jackets along with their panama hats.

20 coachloads of workers were bused in working hours by agreement with the convenors to the Cowley performance.

They witnessed not only the 2½ hours of music and song but also speeches from Unipart's managing director John Neill and a guest appearance from a (non-dancing) Michael Edwardes.

£1 million

No expense was spared in this furious effort at making workers enthusiastic about a firm that is grinding down their living standards and union rights. The total cost is estimated as high as £1 million.

Senior managers cajoled on stage in an embarrassing double act in which sales director Tom Gotzl could be heard singing: "Oh Mr H, there's plenty to be done. If we always give the best, better

than the rest. There's a market waiting for us."

Marketing director Frank Hemsworth replies "Let's go get it Mr G".

But management shrewdly left it up to the troupe of dancing girls to put over the "foot-tapping" message of "Cooperation".

The show was significantly and cynically

aimed not at Unipart's customers but solely at the workforce.

Impressario John Neill explained to the Daily Express:

"We could have used the money instead in giving bonuses which would have been quickly spent".

Too true — as Unipart's 7,000 workers face dwindling

pay packets while turnover has quadrupled since 1974.

"This way we have invested in something as intangible as sentences and songs. We cannot measure the effect precisely but we know Unipart workers feel a strong personal commitment to the company and our goals."

Meanwhile bonus payments in Cowley Unipart have fallen from £20 per week to £3.75, forcing convenors to call a stewards meeting on February 16.

A resolution was submitted to a national meeting of Unipart union representatives last week calling for changes in the incentive scheme, or in the event of

non-cooperation by management, for industrial action.

As John Neill wipes off his grease paint we can expect the real face of management quickly to reappear. The disgruntled workers in the stalls are demanding their money back!

A Unipart worker writes:

production in large plants.

A new computerised system for lifting and moving parts about means that one person can do work that used to need 12 — which is part of the company's technology programme.

Productivity was up over last year by approximately 60 to 70 percent. But the company is not satisfied.

Workers are coming to feel that it is unbearable, given the hostile attitude of management. Although some of the supervisors are reasonable themselves, they have been told by higher management to drive the workers to get more production out of them. There has been a

big change in the last four years in the balance of power on the shop floor.

The trade unions used to be in a stronger negotiating position and could call the tune on lots of things like movement of labour. Management are now in a position to dictate and demand.

Usually they get what they want, given the recession and mass unemployment. If you take industrial action over a pay claim to meet the cost of living the company will send you a letter saying that if you don't return to work by a certain date they will take it that you have terminated your employment.

The Senior Stewards

have become like partners with management in disciplining the workers and fully co-operating with the company.

This is because they agree on the need for productivity and belt tightening to keep British Leyland afloat and are prepared to trade off jobs for bonuses.

This takes place under an incentive scheme that is so complicated that neither management nor senior stewards could tell the work force in advance what the workers would get: it has to be worked out by computer for all the plants in the Unipart division.

As a Unipart worker I find it is a complete waste of time calling in the

senior stewards — you could well finish up worse off!

The trade union officials will not defend workers' job security, wages and conditions unless they are pushed into a corner by the whole of the workforce.

Better link

The workers need a better rank and file link between all the different plants to stop British Leyland from playing one off against the other.

We need solidarity between different grades and for the Leyland Action Committee to fight for workers' basic rights.

UNIPART

Fighting for union democracy

The struggle for rank and file control of CPSA

THE CPSA has changed dramatically over the last decade from a closed society where only those "in the know" had any idea what was going on to a fairly democratic union where the ordinary rank and file member can now play an active part in deciding who runs the union.

From before the war until the late 60s, control of the union see-sawed between two groups, the Communist Party-dominated "left" and the Catholic Action Group-dominated "right".

This battle for control took place away from the membership and was carried out largely in secret. The President, Vice-Presidents and National Executive Committee were elected once a year on a bloc vote system. That is, votes were cast by branches and not by individual members.

Trust

So in the Presidential election, if a Branch had 500 members but on 20 members turned up to the voting meeting (a not unusual occurrence), and of those, 11 voted for candidate A and 9 for candidate B, it meant that 500 votes from that Branch went on candidate A even though only 11 members had voted for him/her.

Also, most members had no idea what candidates A or B stood for. There were no election addresses, and no practical way of finding out about the candidates, so that most branches took on trust the



recommendation of their Branch Committee, or even just the Branch Secretary.

Most branches had a membership of between 100 and 500, but Newcastle Central Office had 7,500 members, the London Telephone Region 7,500 and the London Post Office Savings Bank 5,500. Control of these three branches therefore virtually assured election.

With the Communist Party completely obliterated, the right became very complacent and the whole union stagnated during the 1960s. No new initiatives were taken and the CPSA became little more than a house union.

Towards the end of the 60s, a new left emerged, based in the Post Office section of the membership.

This new left group directed its attentions towards

breaking the grip the right had on the union. Unfortunately, their way of doing this was to call for the disbandment of groups, and in the early 70s they managed to get through conference the (infamous) Rule 9.4 which said:

"Ca vassing for nominations and votes by the circulation of lists, and the organisation or participation in the activities of unofficial committees or similar bodies which seek to influence the policies or electoral processes of the Association, shall be deemed detrimental to the interests of the Association." (Being "deemed detrimental to the interests of the Association" could mean expulsion from the union).

The only effect of this Rule was to drive the groups even more underground than they had been already, but neither of them went away.

The secret lists were still sent to Branch Secretaries and the groups still met. The only real effect was to stop the groups coming out into the open, as the left should have done instead of trying to play the right at its own game.

The left's NEC list was drawn up by those members already on the NEC including full time officials. (By 1971 there were 11).

There was no question of consultation with other "left" supporters up and down the country. The new left became as secretive and elitist as the right and the old Communist Party left.

In 1972 a new group emerged dedicated to opening up the CPSA and ending the secret rule whether by right or left. This new group, the Redder Tape Group, made its first priority the repeal of Rule 9.4 so that the various groups could come out into the open and argue for votes among the membership on the basis of policies and political differences.

At this time Redder Tape was composed of a number of factions. All the various Trotskyist groups, except Militant, as well as a few Communist Party members were involved with it.

But there were also a large number of members owing no particular formal political allegiance who joined Redder Tape because they were fed up with all the secrecy in the CPSA.

Along with the demand to repeal Rule 9.4, the Redder Tape group campaigned for the regular election of all full-time officials. (They were all appointed for life at this time by the NEC). The circulation of election addresses so that members could see on what platform those standing for election were standing on and the circulation of the NEC minutes to all branches, so that members could see what individuals were up to on the NEC.

All these demands were vehemently attacked by the right while the left, though not so virulent in their attacks, did nothing very positive to support most of the demands.

The pressure for reform

A CPSA activist chronicles the fight for democracy in the biggest civil service white collar union.

continued throughout the early 70s, and Redder Tape supporters brought matters to a head at 1974 conference, when they published both the right and left lists. One Redder Tape supporter also went to the rostrum at Conference and waved the original lists in the air for all the delegates to see.

If a wave of unbelievable hypocrisy, the right launched a strong attack on Redder Tape and, along with Bill Kendall, the then General Secretary, called for an investigation into the Redder Tape Group for breaking Rule 9.4. At the same time they began to issue anonymous circulars themselves.

These were often libellous and untrue and consisted mainly of the usual red-scare tactics.

Unfortunately for them the left now had control of the NEC for the first time since the late 1940s, and they refused to carry out an investigation into Redder Tape but instead "expressed concern" at the circulation of anonymous circulars.

Farce

Rule 9.4 had by now become an utter farce, with Redder Tape organising openly and both the right and left circulating well-publicised lists. At the 1976 conference, Rule 9.4 was quietly laid to rest with not one vote in its favour.

Following the repeal of 9.4, the Broad Left was formed as an open group. With the influx of a large number of rank and file members it quickly took up the demands of Redder Tape on union democracy. By the end of the 1970s, NEC minutes were being circulated to all branches and the circulation of election addresses had been achieved.

In 1981 a motion was carried at conference which called for the regular (5 yearly) election of the four senior full time officers (General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary, Assistant General Secretary and General Treasurer).

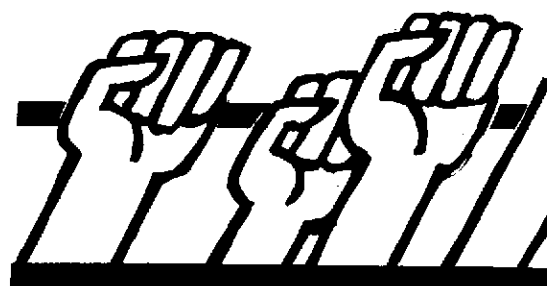
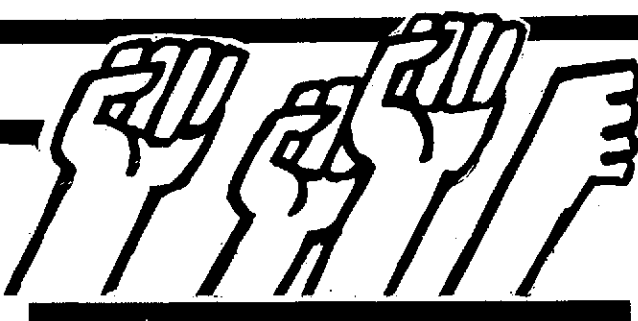
Towards the end of the 1970s a new campaign was launched by some people in the Broad Left together with the Redder Tape Group. This was called the Campaign for Union Democracy.

Demand

Its first and most immediate demand was to end the bloc vote and bring in a system of individual voting at branch meetings.

Although reforms such as the circulation of election addresses had increased membership awareness and participation in elections, it was still a fact that too few branches controlled the outcome of elections.

Opposition to this proposed reform came from two directions. The right wanted to go straight to



a postal vote for members, so that there was no need for them to attend a meeting at all. In other words read the list printed in the Daily Mail and put your crosses in the right places.

And some, almost exclusively Militant supporters, who wanted to retain the bloc vote system.

At the 1979 conference, thanks to a last minute switch by the right, who realised that their proposal did not command the necessary support to get it through conference, individual voting at branch workplace meetings was carried.

The immediate result was that in the 1980 elections, the first where the new system of voting was used, a Broad Left majority of 19-6 on the NEC was turned into a right majority of 23-2! Militant supporters lost no opportunity to tell the Broad Left how that proved they'd been right all along.

But they convinced no one else on the left. The vote had shown clearly the work that still needed to be done among the membership to win them over to socialist policies.

With the bloc voting it had always been impossible to tell how the members really felt. The apathy and corruption possible under that system, particularly in the large branches meant that the vote had no real meaning as a reflection of the members' wishes.

Even if a left majority controlled the NEC it did not necessarily mean the members were really behind it.

Between 1980 and 1981, the Broad Left were forced to campaign much harder on specific issues, something they had been very reluctant to do before, relying on their control of big branches to see them through.

This resulted in the left clawing back eight or more seats on the executive and being in a 15-10 minority.

Militant are still pursuing the return of the bloc vote but the argument is over. The membership will never return to that system.

There are a number of problems that have arisen as a result of the new rule, not foreseen when the original proposal was put to conference. Militant are trying to use the confusion that has arisen in some areas to discredit the new rule. But the rule refuses to be discredited.

It is massively popular with the members who now feel that they have some say in who runs their union

after 70-odd years of secrecy.

As for the left, it means that if and when they are returned to "power", it will be because that is what the members want and not just a few large branches.

The left has to explain its policies to the members and when it wins it will know it has succeeded and will know exactly where it stands. A return to Militant's beloved bloc vote will mean a return to the days when one group or other controlled the NEC but couldn't do anything because it had no confidence in the membership to follow its lead.

Every member

Following the passage at the 1981 Conference of the constitutional change allowing for the five-yearly election of the four senior full time officers, the individual vote has even more significance as every member now has a chance to vote in these elections too.

The immediate aims of the left now must be to extend the voting for full-time officers to all Assistant Secretaries and to consolidate the individual voting rule. The danger here is not from Militant but from the right's proposed postal voting.

They are already trying to eliminate the counting of votes in branches, so that although members still have to attend branch meetings to obtain a ballot paper, they send them off to the returning officer themselves. This could presumably mean that they can take them home and read their Daily Mail before sending their paper off.

Openly

Discussion of the various candidates at a branch meeting is a vital part of the election procedure and we must not allow any erosion of this.

The CPSA has come a long way in the last few years.

We now have the various groupings operating openly, publishing journals and bringing the debate into the membership. We have individual voting at branch meetings. We have the circulation of election addresses. We have the circulation of NEC minutes to all branches. We have the regular election of the senior full time officials.

It is an encouraging sign for the future but we must keep the pressure up.

And then comes affiliation to the Labour Party

CONFERENCE

Democratise the labour movement!

WHEN AND WHERE: Saturday April 3, 10.30 to 4.30, Digbeth Hall, Birmingham. For details of transport to Birmingham, phone John Bloxam on 01-609 3071.

SPEAKERS: Val Dunn (victimised Bakers' Union militant), Bernard Connolly (steel strike leader, Rotherham), Ray Davies (ISTC), Steve Longshaw (Laurence Scotts), Peter Tatchell (Bermondsey CLP), Ian Williams (NUR), Bobby Owens (TGWU unemployed branch, 6/612), plus reports from women in struggle and from Women's Fightback trade union conference.

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, CPSA British Library branch, TGWU 5/822, TGWU 5/287, TGWU 5/104, Oxford NUJ, ACTSS-APEX joint committee GEC Coventry, Bradford District Labour Party, Upper Stoke branch Coventry Labour Party, Nottingham Labour Briefing, Manchester Labour Left, Coventry Labour Left, and, in a personal capacity, Reg Race MP, Les Huckfield 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



Industrial News

Barking teachers strike for jobs

by Dettie Clinton

AT LAST the NUT leadership has sanctioned action in defence of jobs! Gone now is the Executive's excuse that there is no point calling action as the members would not respond.

900 members in Barking have decided to take indefinite strike action to protect about 160 teaching jobs and the level of education in the borough.

The Labour council have not disputed that their cuts could decimate areas of the curriculum, including remedial, geography and art and up to half the sixth forms.

This right wing council simply throws its hands up in horror and blames the government. Yet they are the ones refusing to fight the Tories and doing their dirty work for them.

The groundwork has clearly been done very thoroughly to gain such a level of support from the members. This work has not been done by the union nationally but by a local branch leadership which has had confidence in its members' support for action.

Workplace meetings in

schools, regular general meetings often of 300 members, and meetings with parents have explained the issues and attempted to put pressure on the local council not to implement these cuts. All negotiations have, however, failed.

The National Executive have even endorsed picketing of the schools. There is to be a rally and march on 10 March when the council's rate-fixing meeting takes place.

The President of the NUT, Jack Chambers, stated at a union meeting in Leeds that the members in Barking "have become the first and last line of defence between education and indifference and ignorance."

Fine words but it remains to be seen whether the union is now seriously going to give full support to the Barking teachers and not leave them isolated from the rest of the union.

As Ken Jones, the union secretary, rightly claims, "we are now the national focus for activity which will determine the future course of

the union".

Messages of support have been pouring in from all parts of the country. The defence of jobs of teachers throughout the country will very much depend on a victory being won in Barking.

Relations on the picket lines with pupils and parents have been reported as being very friendly. One boy at Erkenwald comprehensive was quoted as saying "I agree with what the teachers are doing. It's wrong for the council to talk of sacking any of them."

Barking teachers have shown the way to defend jobs and to maintain and build union membership.

*Messages of support should be passed through NUT Associations, with calls for supporting strike action.

*Members in Outer London should vote Ken Jones No. 1 in the National Executive elections.

*Labour Party members should pass motions condemning the action of the Barking Labour Council.

Strike HQ is at 588 Rainham Road, South Dagenham (tel: 595 7810).



YOP workers in revolt

Mick Liggins reports on the YOPs Trade Union Rights Campaign Demonstration last Thursday 25th.

LAST Thursday, 25th, three thousand YOPs workers and unemployed youth converged on London to say what they thought about the so-called 'Youth Training' and 'Youth Opportunities' schemes.

In the days running up to the march I was on the Right to Work march through London highlighting the plight of YOPs workers and young unemployed.

All through the march we had delegations to YOPs workers and other workers in struggle. We even visited a group who never struggle, the TUC General Council. On Wednesday we lobbied their meeting.

As they went in, not one of them stopped to say that they supported YOPs workers being organised.

Ken Gill, a so-called "Communist Party" member, walked straight through.

Terry Duffy, who has appeared in a full page advert in all the daily papers pleading with bosses to take on cheap labour, got a rough reception.

Jostling

Although there is not much to gain politically from jostling the bureaucrats, I certainly understand the feeling of YOPs workers and unemployed who did it. Anyone who is quick to condemn should stand outside the NUM, ISTC or TGWU headquarters when the workers are lobbying for a fight.

On Thursday we marched round London, through Fleet Street (who were very quiet about the lobby) up to the Royal Festival Hall for a rally. When we went in after our hard slog round London, singing and chanting, the atmosphere was electric. It really gave you confidence in our ability to defeat Thatcher.

From the platform,

speakers from the YOPs Trainee Union Rights Campaign (the organisers) outlined the true nature of YOPs as cheap labour.

Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner both seemed to be very wary of the presence of the BBC camera in front of them. They kept their comments mainly on the Tories, well away from the right wing of the Labour Party who set up YOPs in the first place.

Tebbit

It would have been good to hear them say that they will fight for the next Labour government to implement the demands of the YTURC.

Alan Sapper spoke from the TUC General Council. He never mentioned the conduct of our 'glorious leaders', who have consistently supported YOPs, and gave the usual 'we're doing all we can' speech.

A deputation of six demonstrators went to see Tebbit to ask him four questions:

1. Will you affirm the right of YOPs workers to join unions?

He answered yes, surprisingly.

2. Will you allow an introduction from a trade union rep at the beginning of each scheme?

He said it was not his job to recruit to the unions. Of course, we all know his task is to smash the unions.

3. Will you confirm that YOPs workers are covered fully by the Health and Safety at Work Act without delay?

Health

He gave a shady answer to this: no, because they get an allowance and not a wage, so are not workers.

Last year, five YOPs workers were killed at work and hundreds injured. If it's left to Tebbit, they will get no compensation.

No wonder he is against this. Any trade union health

rep would have YOPs workshops closed down if they could inspect them.

4. Do you think that youth are overpaid and have priced themselves out of jobs?

He answered yes. He uses this farcical view to justify cutting wages in the Young Workers Scheme.

The most significant thing about the lobby was that YOP workers from all over the country had taken strike action — the only way we will defeat Tebbit's plans.

Let's take Tebbit up on his own words. If you're on YOPs, join a union, get your mates to join. If you're in a union, fight

for YOPs workers, get your trades council to back YOPs.

The TUC should withdraw support from YOPs, not to condemn 500,000 youth to the dole but to force a programme of useful public works with full pay.

The Tories say there's no work. Well, how about the millions on the housing waiting list? Or the hospital waiting list? Or those who can't get education, because there's not enough college.

Of course there's work. The only thing is, this does not mean profit for the Tories. We've got to force them out and get real jobs and real wages for youth.

Islington NALGO fights sackings

ISLINGTON Council Housing Department workers came out on strike three weeks ago to back Rob Webb, who had been suspended for trying to take up a permanent job for which he had a contract and a starting date.

On Friday Feb. 19 the whole NALGO branch came out to support him. At a disciplinary hearing on Wednesday 24th, he was completely vindicated, and the branch officers immediately went to discuss a return to work of the 1500 members.

Then the council dropped its bombshell. They had permanently closed a children's home, 29 Highbury New Park, cutting seven jobs.

Outrage

The branch meeting was so outraged by this that they voted 954 to 60 for indefinite strike action until the victimisation ended. NALGO's NEC also instructed all members to continue action, and agreed strike pay.

On Friday night, 26th, negotiations took place between SDP councillors, ACAS, and the union, and a proposal was made, to be taken up by members and the SDP, for a normal return to work, including retraining for the children's home and the council's other services.

On Monday 1st, the SDP group rejected their proposal their negotiators had agreed, and on Tuesday morning NALGO members voted to continue their action.

The strike is over the most basic trade union

issues: the right to work, no victimisation, and the keeping of agreements and procedures freely entered into.

Messages of support to strike HQ, 359 6174.

IAN STEWART

Publishing strikers win jobs back

TWENTY members of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) who work at BPC, a subsidiary of millionaire 'socialist' Robert Maxwell's Pergamon Press, were surprised when they turned up at their workplace on Friday February 26 to discover that they had been sacked and locked out.

On the previous day they had taken part in the very successful half-day official strike action to protest against the appalling levels of pay in the book publishing industry, along with over 600 NUJ members from 55 different book publishing companies.

When the BPC chapel notified the company of its intention to take part in the strike protest, the man-

agement launched a barrage of intimidatory letters addressed to union representatives and individuals which were ignored.

At the first ever mass meeting of the NUJ book branch in Congress House, which formed part of the low pay protest, a proposal committing the branch's full industrial support to any chapel which was victimised was carried overwhelmingly.

For the NUJ members at BPC, this was the second time in 15 months that they had been sacked and locked

out. A letter from the management resulted in unconditional reinstatement of the sacked workers on Tuesday.

KYRAN CONNOLLY

CPSA fights back on pay

by Stephen Corbishley

AFTER Thatcher's insulting offer to the Civil Service unions, which condemns the lowest paid workers to a further cut in living standards, the CPSA London no. 2 Area Committee has given a lead for a fightback.

But the national union leaders are planning to take the issue to the arbitration tribunal soon to be set up.

The bureaucrats' line was expressed by CPSA general secretary Ken Thomas. At the latest meeting of the CPSA NEC he claimed that the unions had outmanoeuvred the Tories on pay, and the arbitration tribunal would have no alternative but to give us a better increase!

Every move towards preparing for action is being ruled out of order by the top bureaucrats. Either they argue that it is too soon, or else that action might frighten the arbitrators!

But the lesson of the ASLEF dispute is that only action will force any arbitration tribunal even to

begin to think of bending towards the Civil Service workers.

A meeting of the London no. 2 Area Committee on Friday February 26 unanimously supported a motion from DE(MSC) Central London, calling for:

*the NEC to organise all out strike action from April 1 if the full offer is not conceded by arbitration;

*a lobby and demonstration against the arbitration;

*an immediate campaign to build links with NHS unions against the offer of group rates for civil servants to get access to private medicine.

CORRECTION: There was a mistake in the report in SO last week on the CPSA offer. The 5½% increase applies to all grades, but only those who are on the maximum of the incremental scale within the grade.

All others will either get nothing (if they are 20 or under, or have just started work in their grade) or very little (1-2%).

Murdoch can be beaten!

HOW LONG can Rupert Murdoch continue bluffing the Times workers?

On Monday 1 he postponed his 210 compulsory redundancies for NATSOPA

clerical workers from March 9 to March 15. The prospect of the Times and Sunday Times being shut down and then reopened elsewhere, with new manning and work

conditions, has also receded, since Murdoch has had to postpone the transfer of titles from Times Newspapers to his parent company.

But talks are still continuing for a compromise package of redundancies.

The leadership of the Times NATSOPA clerical chapel, it seems, wants to make some deal itself for fear of the whole thing being taken entirely into the hands of the NATSOPA executive, and a worse deal being imposed on it. The national union leaders have made it clear that they see the alternatives only in terms of large numbers of redundancies vs. very large numbers of redundancies.

Risky

Yet Murdoch can be beaten. Closing down and restarting would be risky and costly for him. A workers' occupation of the Times could defeat him.

And even if he did stick to his threat to close down, official strike action at his other papers, like the Sun, could beat him back.

Warning bells for Telecom jobs

by Anne McKinley

WORKERS in the hived off profitable Telecoms Industry have each been given individual copies of an 8-page glossy magazine entitled 'The Need for Change'.

Once you've waded through the preamble about what dedicated and experienced staff British Telecom have and the need to cut costs to be more efficient in the face of competition, the crux of the whole Report is to inform staff that over the next three years there must be a 25% cut in costs!

It then breaks down areas where these cuts are needed.

It even mentions flippantly in one passage that:

"It amounts to a situation in which it should be extremely difficult to justify increasing pay next year."

It emphasises the 'need for change' and states that "with all this change going on, future security of employment will be a natural concern. Let me make it clear: there are no plans for sweeping across-the-board cuts or redundancies. But I cannot guarantee that there will never be redundancies..."

"We need to review existing practices on the retention of staff over 60 and to be more stringent on employment of staff who aren't up to standard."

The closing paragraphs

outline union reaction to these proposals. Management "have been heartened by the general response of unions' representations so far."

A statement from the UCV Telecoms Management Group confirms the general attitude of the executive - which is to tell Branch Secretaries not to turn down management proposals on

staff without going through agreed procedures and negotiations first.

However Branch Secretaries are urged to realise the need to co-operate in the face of competition and BT's future viability.

This combined attack has to be fought by the whole membership of UCV, CPSA (P&T) and POEU.

Foyles mass picket

ON SATURDAY a mass picket took place outside Foyle's bookshop, where a trade union recognition dispute has been going on for about three weeks.

Ken Livingstone spoke at the picket and promised the support of the GLC. He also pledged to push for blacking from ILEA and the Labour-controlled London boroughs.

Since the original five, a further seven have been sacked, when management discovered that they had joined USDAW.

Another 12 members still remain inside, their identities unknown by the bosses.

Police have limited pickets to two per door and stopped any collection of funds in the street. This has obviously limited effectiveness, but customers and deliveries are still turning back.

I spoke to Siobhan Lanagan, who having been elected shop steward, was the first to be sacked. Although cold and tired she is not demoralised. She is still trying to recruit more people inside the shop and putting pressure on USDAW to give official backing. She is planning to take her case to an industrial tribunal.

"We hope they will find

in our favour but we still need to put as much pressure as possible on the company by picketing and organising blacking" she told me.

Any help with picketing during the week will be welcome and there will be a mass picket every Saturday. Siobhan will be speaking about the dispute at the Women's Fightback Trade Union Conference on March 27.

Donations and messages of support to Colletts International Bookshop, Charing Cross Road, London WC2.

Amanda Barnes

BENN BOOST AT ST. MARY'S

TONY BENN gave his full support to the campaign to keep St. Mary's W9 open when he spoke to a packed public meeting last Wednesday at the 510 Centre, Harrow Road.

The public meeting (organised by the Hospital Defence Committee) was an attempt to extend the campaign into the local community at a time when the hospital management are continuing to run down the major casualty unit in the district and are planning the closure of the obstetric services on February 27.

Terry Petifer (London Ambulance Drivers' Convener), said that the present situation was that St. Mary's

had been closed to ambulances since February 15th.

This was because there were not enough beds to back up the Accident and Emergency unit. The hospital management had stated that the A&E unit was only open for serious injuries but ambulance drivers were having to decide whether or not to take serious cases to the hospital knowing that without beds these patients would have to be transferred to another hospital. (It is known that 50% of seriously injured patients die if transferred).

Terry said that if there was a major disaster in the area such as a big fire there would not be enough beds to cope. The hospital manage-

ment had said that St. Mary's W2 and St. Charles could cope but this was not true. The next nearest hospital able to deal with this sort of situation is the Middlesex W1 which is difficult for ambulances to get to because of the London traffic.

The area casualty officer, who was present at the meeting, summed up the seriousness of the present situation when she said that there were only three beds available in the whole area that Wednesday night.

Tony Benn told the meeting that the closure of St. Mary's was part of the wider issue of this Tory government's attack on the Health Service. The Tories

were deliberately trying to dismantle the Health Service so that there could be a return to the old system where private health schemes would make large profits for those that ran them.

Benn said that if the campaign was to succeed the fight had to be continued. He said that the only people who win are those that fight such as the workers at Lee Jeans and the ASLEF train drivers.

He saw that the main problem in getting support for the campaign as the lack of media coverage - if people knew the issues there would be massive support for St. Mary's. Had this meeting been taking place in Poland our press would have

called the hospital workers 'heros'.

The last speaker was Rita Maxim, a ward orderly employed at St. Mary's for the last 19 years. She said that she had suffered a great deal of harassment from the hospital management. It was because she had stood up for her rights and refused to do three people's work that Nettal, the hospital administrator, had threatened her with the sack for what he called 'serious misconduct'. It was this that led to Nettal's office being occupied.

The sector administrator, hospital administrator and the domestic supervisor had all attacked some of the weakest hospital workers. Shop stewards who had fought to save the hospital had been sacked. Rita said that as well as the management she had to fight her own union officials who had failed to support her.

Finally a resolution was

early January when hundreds of people were dying each week. This Inquiry should be organised by the CHC and should take evidence from local residents, patients, CPs, London Ambulance Service, Trades Unions etc. (...)

f) calls on all candidates in this May's local elections to commit themselves publicly to fight for the restoration of all services at Harrow Road;

g) calls on local parties to establish the principle immediately that they will consider as their prospective parliamentary candidates only such individuals as are prepared to make the same public commitment."

Whilst this public meeting was successful, the difficulty of winning this campaign must not be underestimated especially considering the lack of serious support there has been from the official union

Lovable strikers fight on against the odds

by Stan Crooke

THE fight for jobs by the women of the Lovable Bra firm has now shifted away from the firm's factory at Cumbernauld, near Glasgow, to its warehouse at Blairlorn, a desolate industrial estate on the outskirts of Cumbernauld.

On January 8, the women began a sit-in at the Cumbernauld factory. Negotiations were carried on with potential buyers for the firm. By the beginning of February, there remained only one possibility, a consortium headed by businessman Richard Corbett.

But as the deadline set by the receiver for a take-over (Wednesday 17 February) came closer, there was still no sign of a deal, although the women were prepared to accept Corbett's demands for a cut in the workforce from over 300 to 92, and the right to pick and choose the 92.

On 17 February, the receiver declared everyone redundant apart from some of the cleaners and office and canteen staff at Cum-

bernauld, and the workforce at the warehouse.

The workers left the sit-in at the factory to start picketing the warehouse. Kathie Platt, one of the convenors, explained why:

"There's no money to be had from the sale of sewing machines (at the factory). The money is in the stock, and that is in the warehouse. The receiver is interested in the stock because that's where the money is tied up."

Regular orders

The pickets do not attempt to stop everything leaving the warehouse. Orders for the regular customers are still allowed out, after the receiver at the warehouse has let the pickets check the contents and destinations of what is being despatched: the pickets feel that preventing these deliveries would alienate both the regular customers and any potential buyers.

In the last fortnight there has been a steady increase in the amount of

support being received by the women: from the local trades council, from miners; from local factories, and from the local community in general.

The women have also met a delegation from the occupied Plessey factory in Bathgate and Helen Monaghan, who led the sit-in at Lee jeans. A demonstration and rally were held last Saturday (27 February) in Cumbernauld in support of the fight by the Lovable workforce.

But the women's union, the National Union of Tailor and Garment Workers (NUTGW), continues its God-like role: many are certain of its existence, but it has yet to provide any concrete manifestation of itself. The union is not prepared to make the dispute official on the grounds that the women cannot, by definition, be on strike since they have all been sacked.

The pickets continue to focus their hopes on the emergence of a buyer for the factory and warehouse. The consortium headed by

Corbett is continuing with negotiations and has now been promised the financial backing of the Scottish Development agency as well.

The Italian firm of Berlei is also again showing an interest in a possible take-over.

But, speaking bluntly, there can be no grounds for optimism. The ending of the sit-in was a serious step backwards, throwing away the trump of possession of the factory and the machinery in it.

And allowing out orders to regular customers from the warehouse negates the purpose of the picketing. The receiver has no reason even to attempt to move any of the rest of the stock out.

Weakens

Permitting the workforce at the warehouse and the remnants of the workforce to continue working is another factor which weakens the fight for jobs. Their work is running down operations and thereby bring-

ing complete closure that much nearer.

And only limited efforts are being made to break out of the isolation which the women find themselves in, as a result of the failure of the NUTGW to provide them with any support. The retention of jobs in Cumbernauld is certainly a central aspect to the fight, but to retain the jobs there must involve building support outside of Cumbernauld as well.

Stacked

With the odds now stacked against the women, a new buyer could demand and win even more concessions from them than those already gained by Corbett. All these factors make it more vital than ever that the labour movement rallies to the support of the women.

Send donations to: Sadie Lang, c/o Lovable Co. Ltd., Wardpark Road, Wardpark South Industrial Estate, Cumbernauld. Cheques payable to Sadie Lang.



put to the meeting and was carried unanimously. It included:

"This meeting resolves to continue support for the campaign to save services and jobs at W9. In particular this meeting:

a) calls for a public vigil outside St. Mary's from 2-3 pm on February 27, the day the obstetric services are due to close;

b) calls for an Inquiry into the closure and into the general level of Casualty provision in this area of London and into the Casualty services provided elsewhere."

machinery, trade union leaders and the wider labour movement.

It is perhaps significant that when Tony Benn was asked how to get this support he couldn't or wouldn't say. What he said was that he, and others like him, were just bigger "megaphones" which get meetings like this reported in the press. What he didn't say was how to get union leaders, MPs and others to publicly state their support for the campaign.

Ian Riaz

Socialist Organiser

Fares Fight:

Dear comrades,

It was with some surprise that we read the editorial in the March London Labour Briefing, not least because it was in flat contradiction to the position adopted at the February Target 82 meeting.

There, it was agreed by a big majority that the only socialist policy for Labour was one of resistance, up to and including voting against the GLC budget. Probably the strongest speech at that meeting, against what is now Briefing editorial policy, was made by Chris Knight.

Now you justify the decision of the GLC majority to 'make the best of it'.

It seems to us that your present policy is seriously wrong. As people who value the collaboration of London Labour Briefing in such enterprises as the forthcoming conference on trade union democracy, we think it especially important to discuss this with you.

Your editorial is a strange mixture of lucid condemnation of what the GLC majority decided to do (and you now justify) and other bits expressing a mood of depression and defeat.

Pose clearly

You pose the questions clearly:

"If... we are in office without power, are we not, perhaps, doing more harm than good... allowing ourselves to be used as instruments of the Tories and the capitalist state - forced to do their dirty work for them, because our opponents would rather not face the anger of the people in their own name."

"Is this what is happening? To some extent no doubt it is. And to the extent that this is so, we are actually preventing the working class of London from being able to see the class enemy clearly exposed, stripped of the figleaves..."

"Are we not clinging to the trappings of office as real power drains steadily from our hands? Is this not the pattern of all past Labour governments played out on a smaller scale within our own ranks?"

"And if our experience as a left wing GLC is to prefigure the future of the next Labour government, shouldn't we be doing better than this?"

Sharp and true

Every word is sharp and true, and inexorably points to this conclusion: *those who are determined not to allow a re-run of the experience of past Labour governments must refuse to accommodate now in local government, or accommodate to those who accommodate.*

Instead, the mood of depression and defeat leads you to this conclusion:

"The task is stay in office and add to our power by winning, first, the borough elections..."

But you know and state the serious left wing case against this, too. You say: "We are almost forcing the

An open letter to Briefing

ON March 10 London Transport workers are striking for one day against the fare rise and cuts imposed by the Law Lords. 'Fare Fight' is campaigning hard among LT users.

Up to now the London Labour Party and GLC left has played a big role in this struggle. Left-wing councillors led by Valerie Wise and John McDonnell have fought for Labour to vote against the fare rise at every stage.

And the monthly London Labour Briefing has been a voice for the campaign. (In December it carried a joint statement with Socialist Organiser).

But an editorial in the March Briefing signals a shift towards Ken Livingstone's line of 'protest against the fare rise, but vote for it'.

JOHN BLOXAM and JOHN O'MAHONY address an open letter to Valerie Wise and Chris Knight who wrote the editorial.



majority of Londoners to conclude that their real enemies are the forces which are *ostensibly* and *legally* in charge: 'socialism', 'politicians', the electoral process, the Labour Party..."

That is not how to win elections!

Look at the lessons of the rate rise policy.

Because the major forces of the rank and file left tied themselves to Labour councillors who chose to try to be administrators rather than militants, they gave up the chance to organise tenants and workers to fight back. When the rate rise policy collapsed, there was nothing.

It is not a matter of calling Ken Livingstone 'traitor' which he is not. But a line must be drawn between the local government administrators and those who focus on a rank and file fightback now, in whatever way possible and with whatever weapons are to hand.

Has London Labour Briefing learned nothing from the rate rise fiasco?

Against your own better judgment, you are now again

allowing your policy to be decided for you by those who are - however reluctantly - trapped in local government administration.

This is no way to build and sustain a serious Labour left.

You talk about doing better next time, in a different fight later. But if the GLC left will not fight for its major manifesto plank, what will it fight for? Comrades, the class struggle is always now. The struggle now is decisive for organising and training a serious left that can secure the socialist future.

Pass up that struggle, strike your flag in deference to the established leaders who are refusing to give a militant lead, confine yourselves now to talk of what you will do in another fight in the future, and unavoidably you contribute to perpetuating the vacuum of militant political leadership in the labour movement.

We hope you will reply in the columns of Socialist Organiser.

NURSES PAY: UNIONS MUST GIVE A LEAD!

by Mary Ireson (NUPE shop steward, Heath Hospital, Cardiff)

WAGE CUT after wage cut has eroded our pay. This year looks no better.

Broken promises! The no-strike agreement in return for a fair deal has allowed the government to kick our goodwill in the teeth. The Royal College of Nursing are choking on their heroic, humanitarian declaration.

Now, more than ever, nurses are on the offensive. Four per cent or even six per cent is not enough. Even the 12 per cent claimed by the unions is pathetic.

Many nurses are the main wage earners in their families. 12 per cent won't cover the rise in the electricity bill, let alone anything else.

The negotiators have made no firm offer yet - they're keeping us dangling. Nothing has come from the table, and nurses are getting angrier each week.

Strike action

We need to get organised now, and nurses are talking about strike action.

That's a real start - two years ago, strikes weren't really mentioned. A caring strike, with patient services being organised by us, to suit us, could occur, but our leaders mustn't be afraid to talk about striking.

At the moment they are backing off, arguing that a stand would frighten away members.

A NUPE Head Office 'Health Service News' circular dated March 1 has insisted that NUPE is calling for no protest action by



nurses. "Strike action by nurses would be so serious as to virtually rule it out."

NUPE in particular is trying desperately to recruit

more nurses (only a quarter to a third of nurses are in TUC-affiliated unions). They have issued new recruitment literature, run courses for

nurses' shop stewards and issued new professional advice circulars from the Nurses' National Advisory Committee.

These developments are good, it's just that it's only being done to increase the membership which NUPE has lost by letting school meals jobs be decimated.

Meanwhile COHSE is offering no lead, while the "professional" RCN, despite a growing current of members calling for the right to strike, remains committed against strike action, and against affiliation to the TUC.

Nurses face more moral pressure and legal obstacles to strike action than almost any other section of workers.

It is unclear at present whether we could all be sacked or even sued one by one if we were to walk out on strike.

And none of the health union leaders have made it clear we would receive supporting action from other hospital workers.

A lead

We need a lead. We need legal advice. We need representations before the General Nursing Council - our unions should be obtaining guarantees that we won't be sacked for striking.

*£20 a week rise across the board.

*No sackings of striking nurses.

*35 hour week - three weekends per month maximum unless desired.

*Six weeks annual leave per year - no loss of shift increments during leave.

*Double time and time and a half shift payments instead of time and a third and time and two-thirds.

Time

We mustn't nurse our grievances any longer. Demonstrations, petitions, we've done them all before.

This time, only a strike will win us our pay claim. Nurses in Canada went on strike for 100% and won it, after only 24 hours on strike.

Relatives and doctors cared for the patients. They've shown a lead - it's time for us to fight.

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.

From: Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8. Please make cheques payable to Socialist Organiser.

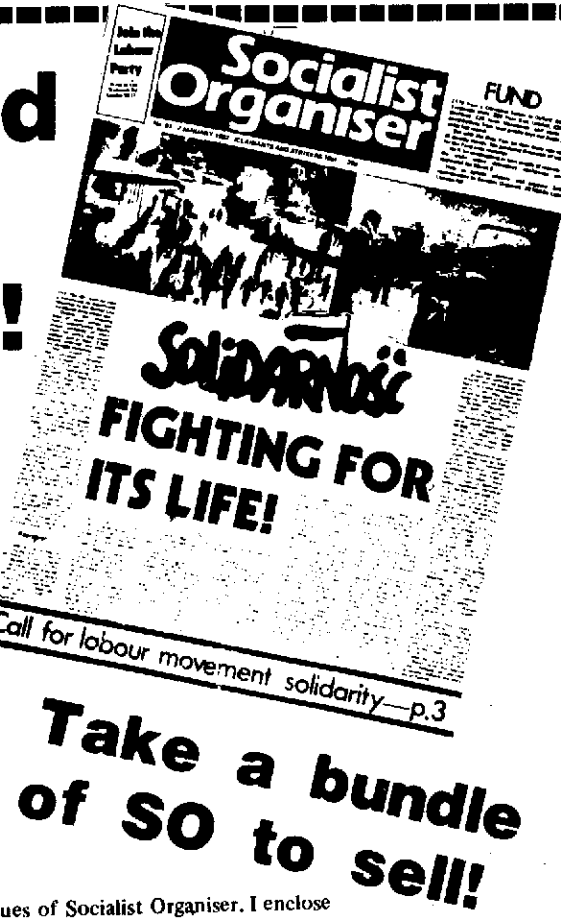
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