

Paper of the
Socialist Organiser
Alliance

Socialist Organiser

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CRISIS IN FIGHT AGAINST TEBBIT

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No.76 MARCH 11, 1982 (Claimants and strikers, 10p) 25p



Denning



General Kitson



YES! SWEEP THEM

PAT WALL, selected as parliamentary candidate by Bradford North Labour Party, is under assault from the Tory press and the Labour leadership for a speech saying that a Labour government should sweep away the House of Lords, the monarchy, and the top figures of the army, police and civil service. By some strange twist of logic, a challenge to these unelected, undemocratic centres of capitalist power becomes a challenge to democracy. But what does the Labour leadership's reaction mean for the prospects for a future Labour government?

THE predictable media outburst against Pat Wall and the continued witch-hunting of Militant and left activists throughout the party demonstrates not just the paranoia of the press but the naivety of the leadership.

The vicious reaction of the Tory government and their extra-parliamentary allies in the judiciary to the GLC proposals to merely reduce public transport fares demonstrates what is in store for Labour councils to be elected this May on radical programmes.

It also demonstrates that the next Labour government is going to face tremendous pressure from the judiciary, from the City and the military to drop, weaken and abandon the policies that the party has adopted.

The tragedy in all this is the blindness of the Labour leadership to the realities of power in this country. Does Michael Foot really think that a Labour government can withdraw from the EEC and nationalise major companies without the City trying to destabilise that government?

Do the parliamentary leadership really believe that we can unilaterally disarm without tremendous opposition from the military high command?

Or do they in fact have no intention of pushing ahead with Labour Conference policy commitments?

Disarm

The failure of the leadership to be prepared to campaign on the issue of the power of a Labour government means that they are disarming the labour movement and preparing us for the defeat and retreat that characterised the Wilson and



Pat Wall

OUT!

Callaghan governments when confronted with extra-parliamentary opposition from the City, the military and the Pentagon.

The hysterical reaction of Michael Foot to Pete Tatchell's 'Briefing' article and his preparedness to use the media to attack Labour activists is a disgrace.

Party members have a right to know why Michael Foot and his cohorts are so

"The whole business is an attempt to undo the idea of re-selection. So far objections have only been raised where standing MPs have been de-selected. If you can't de-select MPs, there's no point in having re-selection."

Pat Wall

keen on defending Ben Ford, whose record of collaboration with right wing dictators

ships is well documented; or of Bob Mellish who is ending his right wing career by accepting a post in the Docklands Development Corporation to play his part in the destruction of working class communities.

The Labour leadership of Southwark has been completely discredited - why are they being supported?

Pat Wall quite rightly pointed out that a Labour government committed to a socialist programme will come under attack, and quite possibly under violent attack, from the forces of the establishment.

Unprepared

The poverty of inner city areas, the rising unemployment and increased military spending can only be reversed by a socialist government. If that government gains power by a series of retreats and compromises to appease their self-perceiv-

ed media image it will be totally unprepared for the great tasks that will face it.

"With or without the article in the Sunday Times, we expected a re-run of the selection and I'm glad to have the opportunity to bury the myth that Ford was in some way cheated in the previous selection meeting. I'm absolutely confident that Pat Wall will win the re-run."

Ronnie Fieldhouse,
chair, Bradford North CLP

Ford: fascists' friend

Pat Wall is being witch-hunted as a threat to democracy. But what is Ben Ford's record as a democrat?

1966: Heavily criticised for accepting an invitation to visit Spanish dictator Franco.

1973: Attended London banquet for Portuguese dictator Caetano. On the following day, he joined with Reginald Paget in abstaining from a Labour vote condemning the visit.

1976: The state visit of Ernesto Geisel from Brazil.

The NEC called for a cancellation of the visit.

Ford drew up a counter-motion which commended Geisel's moves to 'strengthen Brazil's parliamentary institutions' and got 86 signatures, mostly Tory.

At the present: a member of the all-party group on Namibia, an apologist for the Namibian regime and for South Africa's role in Namibia.

Labour supports

Solidarnosc



Demonstrate London
10.30 Sat March 13

Scottish Labour Conference - page 2

Bradford jacks up rates and rents

BRADFORD Council's controlling Labour Group passed on an 18.2% rate increase and a rent increase of £2.27 per week to Bradford workers last week.

The budget was narrowly carried with only three Labour councillors abstaining and so refusing to endorse the increases.

Two further councillors, who had originally signed a letter opposing increases, caved in following a meeting with the group leadership four days before the vote. Six prospective councillors also supported the letter along with Bradford North Constituency Labour Party, four Ward Parties, the secre-

taries of four tenants' associations and Pat Wall as prospective parliamentary candidate for Bradford North.

The right wing leadership of the labour group have already begun a concerted attack on the socialist councillors. Using their control of the Executive of Bradford South Constituency they

have sent a letter to the District Party calling for the deselection of Alex Corina, one of the three socialist councillors who faces election in May.

Bradford North GMC Executive have made clear their intention to appeal against any District decision which goes against Corina.

The three councillors plus the prospective councillors who signed the anti-cuts letter are to meet to discuss a 'no cuts/no rent or rate increase' position over the next year and to organise to support rent protests and cuts fights.

A public call for action against rent and rate increases has been made and a public meeting has been called on the Buttershaw Estate at Buttershaw Middle School on Monday 15 March at 7.30pm. Councillors and prospective candidates will speak. Councillor Alex Corina told Socialist Organiser: "I cannot support cuts of this magnitude in living standards for working class people. I hope that council tenants and ratepayers in Buttershaw will support this meeting."

If working people in Bradford are not to be forced to shoulder Tory cuts then clearly some of the strength shown in the Bradford Labour Party around the rejection of sitting MP Ben Ford must be turned towards the issue of local government. Left councillors must give clear, consistent leadership in a fight to remove the right wing from the Labour Group and mobilise the labour movement to confront this Tory government.

Barry Turner

CUTS WILL BE CENTRAL TO SCOTS LABOUR CONFERENCE

by Stan Crooke

THE debate on local government cuts will be among the liveliest at the Labour Party Scottish Council annual conference opening on March 12 in Perth.

Motions from Cathcart West, Renfrewshire, and Pollok CLPs, differ in details but propose: no cuts, no rent/rate increases, and publicity campaigns, demonstrations and strike action against the Tories.

After last year's conference, a mis-named 'council of war', with representatives from the Scottish TUC, the Scottish Labour Party, and Labour Groups, was established, allegedly to fight the cuts. In practice, it did nothing at all.

This year there are more than place demands on the next Labour government and/or call for 'United and effective resistance' to the Tories' attacks — without saying what this should consist of.

Savage cuts in spending have already been implemented by Labour councils. Rejection of the three no-cuts motions would mean a continuation of that shameful record.

They are weakened, however, by amendments proposed from North Edinburgh CLP and Lothian Region Labour Party, which advocate majority opposition by Labour Groups as an alternative to making cuts. This is likely to emphasise manoeuvres in the council chamber rather than a real confrontation with the Tories.

Motions on Labour Party democracy — less numerous this year than resolutions directly on the Tory



Scottish TUC: unions need to mobilise against cuts attacks — also focus on local government.

At last year's conference Alex Kitson, conference chairperson, fought tooth and nail to ensure the defeat of motions demanding accountability of Labour Groups. A repeat performance from Kitson or others, can be expected this year to head off the motions from Glasgow District Party, West Lothian CLP and West Dunbartonshire CLP.

These motions call for such measures as: annual election of Group or Committee chairpersons by joint Group/Party meetings; implementation of measures promised in election manifesto; minutes of Group meetings and voting records of the members to be available to the local Party; annual policy

conferences to discuss and update policies.

There is also a dangerous amendment from AUEW-TASS to an East Edinburgh CLP motion. The amendment seeks to delete the final paragraphs of the motion which demand implementation of party policy by a Labour government but defend the right of groups such as 'Militant' to campaign for their own ideas in the party, and replace them with a statement of how imperative it is that 'Party policy is implemented by Labour government and supported fully in opposition.'

Shopping list

Given what it aims to delete, the amendment is aimed not against the likes of Dennis Healey but against the rank and file Left.

There are 27 motions on public ownership, but they read like a shopping list of what the next Labour government should nationalise, or re-nationalise: British National Oil Corporation, British Gas, the entire energy industry, banks, friendly societies, insurance companies, building societies, salmon fisheries, land, forestry, all forms of transport, and, of course, 'the top two hundred monopolies which dominate 85% of our economy.'

They differ on compensation.

Eight motions are against any compensation, four are the Militant tendency's formula of compensation only on the basis of proven need, eight leave the question open, and a motion from Gallo-way CLP argues that it should be on the basis that profits acquired in the priv-

ate operation of these assets will be recovered.

Two motions clearly coming from Militant supporters, call for workers' control and management; one motion talks of 'community control' of nationalised salmon fisheries; the other motions are silent and therefore presumably accept the present form of administration of nationalised industries.

'No compensation' should be supported, as the best policy against the profiteers now snapping up hived-off industries.

But even 'nationalisation under workers' control and management' is inadequate on the issue of control, implying a bureaucratic concept of 'socialism' as something bestowed from above by a benevolent labour government, after nationalisation.

The worst aspect of all the motions on public ownership is the absence of proposals for a campaign right now against the Tories' plans for privatisation. Only one motion, from Kirkcaldy CLP refers even vaguely to the immediate need for struggle, by 'encouraging the Labour Party Scottish Council to do everything in its power to stop this move by the Tory government.'

Waiting

The 15 motions on training and youth employment do mostly demand immediate campaigning, rather than waiting for the next Labour government.

They condemn YOP schemes and the Tories' proposals for making them worse than ever.

But the section on 'Industry and economic policy' might more appro-

priately be entitled: 'Nationalism and the Alternative Economic Strategy'.

The next Labour government is repeatedly urged to throw up the barriers around Britain and establish a sort of island of socialism in the midst of a capitalist Europe.

And this is seen primarily, if not completely, in terms of legislation passed in Parliament. The working class will remain passive recipients of reforms, bestowed from above.

And the motions fail completely to relate the blueprints for tomorrow to the class struggle of today.

Liveliest

An amendment from the Union of Communication Workers to a motion from AUEW-TASS will provoke the liveliest debate in this section. The original motion is a clear statement of opposition to wage controls, whilst the UCW amendment seeks to add: '... but recognises the need for a national economic assessment between the trade unions and Labour government.'

They can only mean a new social contract, another pledge by union leaders to keep down their members' wage demands.

The three other topics most likely to put some life into the proceedings are defence, Ireland and Poland.

Some motions call for unilateral disarmament: one from the Co-op calls for 'progressive nuclear disarmament' and one from the AUEW (Construction Section) calls for 'world disarmament'.

Star raps Wall

THE whole left reacted angrily to the Sunday Times witch-hunt of Pat Wall except the Communist Party's Morning Star.

"His words will cause concern to many people on the left... 'ultra-left rhetoric', 'conspiratorial and elitist' — that was the Morning Star comment (Monday 8th) on Wall and the Militant tendency."

The best they could say in defence of Wall was: "The elitism of entrust groups will not be overcome by a witch hunt."

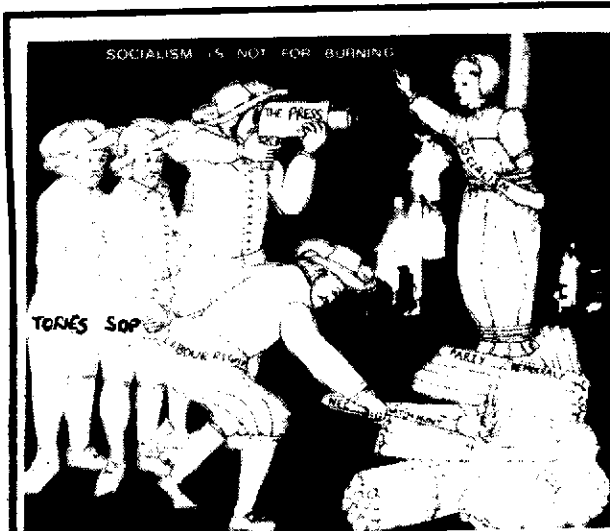
"Ultra-left rhetoric"? On the contrary, Wall stressed that in his view the replacement of the present Tory-dominated capitalist state machine by a working class system could all be done peacefully, provided Parliament were bold enough. The question, surely, is whether Wall's view does not gloss over the need for the working class to organise and equip itself to meet right wing violence, without relying on Parliament.

Is Wall "ultra-left" because he challenges the view that the permanent state power of the bosses is unchallengeable? The Morning Star argues that the state apparatus must be 'transformed' — but gradually. (As if the bosses will peacefully tolerate their armed might being dismantled bit by bit!)

So when the right wing is on the rampage against Marxists, the CP soon discovers that its Marxism is something gradual, for the future, and above all not for now!



Wall



BRIEFING AGAINST THE WITCH HUNT.
5p per copy, plus 11½p postage, or 20 copies for £1 post free, from Ann Matthews, c/o Bermondsey Labour Party, 133 Lower Rd., London SE16.

Howe's "People's Budget"

New! From the firm that brought you the "Fair Rents" Act and the "Employment" Act comes Sir Geoffrey Howe's "People's Budget".

Of course some people do benefit from the budget. A man on £40,000 a year for instance - (why is it always men who get such salaries?) - will be over £800 better off as a result of Sir Geoffrey's hand-out.

This may give such a man added "incentive" - to carry forward the policies of rationalisation and imposition of speed-up being pursued by British capitalism. Or it may just give him the cash to blow on a few days' luxurious holiday.

On the other hand Sir Geoffrey's package leaves single people earning between £120 and £240 a week worse off. Married couples on average earnings gain around 60p per week after the new increases in national insurance are taken into account.

This is indeed a mighty incentive for all of us. And Sir Geoffrey has offered so many ways for us to spend our 60p. We could use it to defray the increased cost of 7 gallons of petrol, of 12 packets of cigarettes or 30 pints of beer. Alternatively we could put it towards our soaring rents, our rates bills - or, if we live in London we could blow the whole lot in

one go paying for one of Lord Denning's special increased fares on London Transport.

Mind you, the same 60p per week has also to pay the forthcoming rise in electricity and gas bills - and make up for the drop in living standards as our wages lag further and further behind inflation.

For the unemployed, low paid and pensioners there are similarly generous "incentives". Dole goes up to a princely £25 for a single person, pensions up to £32.85 - significantly less in real terms than two years ago.

And the enterprising Tory cabinet has allocated £150,000,000 for a new cosmetic scheme to force 100,000 unemployed off the register into temporary jobs paying only dole money and "expenses". But we can be sure that by the time these victims have paid for fares and meals they will be worse off than on the dole - and subjected to savage exploitation into the bargain.

The "people" Sir Geoffrey is aiming at - the top crust of the middle class and the big employers - are already doing very nicely from three years of Tory rule.

The level of tax on top earnings has fallen dramatically while the low paid are being screwed for

more. Most big firms continue to pay virtually no tax at all on their profits.

Now the budget has given industrialists another £1,000 million hand out by cutting the National Insurance surcharge, and reprieved them from increases in gas and electricity prices.

The banks - who make profits in a recession as well as during 'boom' years - are notching up increased takings.

The speculators have had a field day with the bargain basement sale of Amersham International and other 'hived off' property and concerns, and are licking their lips expecting to make a killing on the sale of BNOC.

The warmongers - despite occasional squeals from naval dockyards - are doing fine, with soaring military spending (£14,000 million this year alone).

The judges have got their teeth firmly into the trade union and labour movement; hospital consultants are cashing in on opportunities for private gain opened up by the NHS cuts; and of course the Queen is doing nicely with a £280,000 hand-out with more to her entourage of spongers.

But for the vast majority of people - working

class men and women, the Budget means simply more misery and more exploitation.

Ironically, in 1909 the original "People's Budget" of Lloyd George and the Liberal Party proposed steeply to raise income tax for the rich in order to pay for old age pensions, introduced that year.

These measures - brought in under pressure from a militant, menacing labour movement, in a frantic effort to steer it away from socialism - caused a two-year constitutional crisis when the House of Lords blocked them.

We are still of course saddled with the House of Lords - and with the Liberal Party and its SDP boot boys.

Yet Labour's right wing today concentrates its venom against socialists who stress the impossibility of overthrowing capitalism through peaceful Parliamentary reform.

And their idle utopian fantasies of £9 billion reflation schemes coupled with wage controls do nothing to prepare the labour movement to fight the Tory attack.

The people's answer to Howe's "People's Budget" requires first that we ditch the people who speak in our name, and build a leadership that will struggle for a workers' government.

TORY CLASS WAR MOVES

The Tories are not content with putting anti-union laws on the books. They are also mobilising the physical force to suppress resistance.

Last week a new 'Home Service Force' was announced, to supplement the Special Patrol Groups, Tactical Aid Groups and regular army and police.

This force, made up of 4,500 people with regular armed service experience, is designed for "our times of

tension or war".

Defence Secretary John Nott last week also confirmed his scheme to put some 7,000 young unemployed on two or three week 'courses' in the armed forces.

Peter Shore may not believe (or pretend not to believe) in violent ruling class resistance to working class struggle. But the Tories certainly do.

Housing disaster

THE government's record on housing - failing to finance new house-building or maintenance and rehabilitation and selling off council housing - has already been slammed by a select committee with a Tory majority.

If further proof were needed that the government has something to hide, then you need look no further than the publication of a Department of Environment report on the single home-

less. The report, commissioned by the last Labour government and carried out by the no longer existing Centre for Environmental Studies, has been held up for two years. It was released, in shortened form on the day before budget day, when it would be overshadowed by other news items.

Most of the recommendations of the report, on policy for the single homeless, health checks and changes in social security regulations, have been deleted, as have detailed criticisms of hostel provision in particular areas.

Even so, the report dispels many of the myths about homeless people - the

image of the socially inadequate/uneducated/drunken dossers who are supposed somehow to bring their plight upon themselves is effectively shattered.

One survey found half the homeless people had jobs; another than 40% had been educated past the age of 16 with 5% having university degrees and 7% technical education.

The report gives a detailed picture, which could no doubt be strengthened by publication of the suppressed parts, which confounds the government's complacency and indicates just how seriously the government is prepared to take research which shows up the inadequacy of their policies.

Repeal the PTA!

Front-bencher Roy Hattersley is reported to be pressing for Labour to vote against the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act this year.

The PTA was introduced by Roy Jenkins as Labour Home Secretary in 1974, after the Birmingham bombings - and has since been regularly renewed with Labour support, and used as a dragnet for Irish people and Republican sympathisers.

The Act allows police to detain people for up to 72 hours without charge. Up to

the end of 1981, these powers had been used over 5,300 people. Only 92 had been charged under the PTA, and only 75 convicted. 214 had been convicted on other charges following detention under the PTA.

Also 255 people have been deported to Ireland - without charge, trial or conviction - under the Act.

Over the years there has been growing opposition to the PTA in the ranks of the labour movement. Last year 35 Labour MPs voted against renewal.

Press Gang

by Patrick Spilling

TODAY Socialist Organiser exposes the true nature of the hard core right wing in the Labour Party.

Last week, I infiltrated a cheese and wine party in a home counties constituency and secretly tape-recorded a right wing Labour MP brazenly speaking at a gathering of the ultra-right wing SDP.

The transcript - part of which we print - shows clearly that the Labour MP, a member of Solidarity whom we will call Mr H, is in favour of violence and is secretly planning to undermine democracy.

We filled our glasses from a well-stocked drinks cupboard before filtering upstairs to join the meeting. The audience consisted of identikit middle aged men, in grey suits and sombre ties. Mr H, completely at home, was swapping anecdotes with these open enemies of the Labour Party.

During the meeting one SDP activist claimed the Labour Party had fallen into the hands of socialists.

Mr H replied with derision:

"Don't worry about them. Any constituency that selects a Trot will have its bollocks cut off."

His remark drew laughter from the normally hatchet-faced ranks of the extremists. They nodded and thumped the table in agreement as Mr H outlined his chilling plans for the next Labour government.



"As soon as we come to power, we will have to - and I stress this must be done quickly - axe all reference to nationalisation, purge all mention of restoring the cuts, and above all, throttle at birth unilateral nuclear disarmament."

Mr H clashed with his audience, but only over tactics on the question of whether to infiltrate the Labour Party.

"The Labour Party is still the party to which the people will turn. If we are not there fighting to stop it the party will fall into the hands of people who will be dedicated to changing society as we know it. Your anti-Labour split just makes the real struggle harder."

Mr H went on to outline in detail his group's sinister plans to prise all remaining power from the hands of constituencies into the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Another member of the audience claimed Solidarity would never change things while Foot was in control. Mr H said frankly, "Foot will do what he is told. We set the limits. He doesn't go beyond them."

Last night my tape recording spread shock and dismay throughout the Labour Party. The consensus was now that Foot would be forced to expel everyone associated with the right wing and hand the party over to the left.



Exposed by our intrepid photographer...



by Gerry Byrne

Blaming Heseltine!

It's a hard life being the leader of a Labour council. We all know the problems Ken faces with fares and Law Lords.

But on Merseyside the going's even tougher. There the courts ruled in favour of the cheap fares policy. So Jim Stuart Cole and Jack Greshman had to do the decent thing. They resigned as leader and deputy leader of the County Council, after the Labour Group had voted against their proposals to raise the fares by 14.5% in line with Heseltine.

Careers

It's a sad day for the labour movement to see the careers of such men of honour cut short.

"The transport issue is the main one that many of my colleagues are taking a stand on. That is their decision and I respect them for it," said Stuart Cole,

honouring the humble Labour group with his condescension.

"The problems have been caused by Heseltine and the House of Lords. I would love to make a stand against them, but I'm not prepared to lead my colleagues against the law... Each councillor

is simply sticking to his decision."

Such magnanimity! What a shame the courts couldn't have ruled Mersey's cheap fares illegal too, and thus spared the wretch of parting these two fine men from their ambitions!

Supermum

DIDN'T we know it all along. Underneath that glittering callous exterior, beats the heart of an ordinary housewife and mum!

In a late night radio interview with Pete Murray, Margaret Thatcher explained that she found housework "a pleasure and a relaxation these days".

Don't we all! There's nothing like a little trudge down to the supermarket, a relaxing two-hour wait for the bus and the soothing realisation that the shopping

bag is a little lighter this week thanks to rising prices.

Or what could be better after a hard day's work trimming the public purse, to devise dainty little recipes for nettle soup, potato peelings and bones cadged from the butcher for the non-existent 'dog'?

Still, when it all gets too much for you, you know where to turn... to Supermum at No. 10 who is always ready to help out with a bit of skivvyng.

accusations of ballot-rigging were rich and plentiful.

It is generally acknowledged that O'Halloran would never have got his seat without flooding selective conferences with extremely dubious delegates from affiliated organisations.

While leopards may change their parties, they do not change their spots. Bayliss, ex-Labour deputy leader of Islington council and current SDP councillor, is at the centre of an inquiry by the SDP into irregularities.

It seems he delivered 11 membership applications to party HQ on December 31st, the closing date for eligibility to vote in their postal ballot selection of candidates for the May council elections.

Head Office refused to accept them since they were not accompanied by the membership fee.

Now Bayliss and his other members, including nearly all the councillors, have called a special party meeting to overturn the party's new constitution and enable all SDP supporters, including those ineligible by head office, to vote in the ballot.

With the enormous experience acquired over years in the Labour Party they clearly understand a to do when the rules are uncongenial.

Irish workers can't afford to wait

John O'Mahony
concludes his
discussion of the
general election in
the south of Ireland



for socialist policies

PEOPLE'S Democracy candidate Bernadette McAliskey talked of socialism in her campaign literature in a much more serious way than the Provos and the IRSP did in theirs.

But still the profile she presented to the electorate was predominantly nationalist. 'For a united independent Ireland' was the keynote. To the electorate, what she said will have seemed the same as what the populists of the IRSP and the Provos (who talked of socialism too) were saying.

This, for example, is the way PD labelled itself for new readers in the special issue of its paper Socialist Republic put out for the election campaign. "People's Democracy is an anti-imperialist socialist organisation which puts the unity of Ireland as the first task to be met by socialists in every part of Ireland" (quoted in full).

First national liberation, then socialism? Given that the border segments Ireland into very different areas, the focus in the South on the Northern question, to the exclusion of the class struggle in the South, inevitably means that.

Acting on a confused notion that what is happening in Ireland is 'the permanent revolution', PD wind up having the social/political reality that they fail to adequately assess impose on them the historical opposite of the permanent revolution — a stages theory.

PD would indignantly repudiate the idea that their line now is like the old line of the Stalinists in Ireland and the successive generations of Republicans influenced by them. PD would say that in their view the national struggle is inseparable from socialism, and will grow into the socialist struggle.

They never explain how, though, and the self-label above is not accidental phrasing, but a clear description of what they do and what they stand for in the political life of Ireland.

This is how the front page of Socialist Republic described what their candidate stood for and would do:

"If elected to Leinster House, Bernadette pledges herself to help lead the fight against austerity measures of both the coalition and Fianna Fail. She will show how Irish working people and their families cannot get justice in our partitioned country, how the economy is at the beck and call of the multi-nationals, the politics of high finance and the EEC.

"The fight by Irish people to take the wealth and produce of Ireland into our hands will be a central part of her campaign. Unemployment, high taxes, denial of rights to women and youth, lack of social facilities, denial of civil rights and repression will all be exposed and combatted by Bernadette. Give her your no.1 vote".

Does "the politics of high finance" refer to the Irish bourgeoisie? In the context it is not at all to be taken for granted that it does.

Appeals to 'working people' are common stock also for the Provos and the IRSP. So is the talk of the

'Irish people'. At best PD is here mimicking the populists.

Part of the reason for the politics of PD may be that it is orienting to the Republicans.

But the work of educating and uniting the working class north and south on socialist and anti-imperialist politics can only be done by a struggle against the populism and narrow-minded nationalism of the Republicans — and above all by combatting their right wing politics (despite socialist rhetoric)



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

in the south, where the working class forces primarily exist which can solve the 'Irish problem'.

If PD's politics do result from a desire to orient to the Republicans, then it is the 'orientation' of the chameleon, which becomes indistinguishable from what it 'orients' to.

PD proposed to the Republicans that an anti-imperialist united front be formed, to build on the achievements of the Armagh/H-Block campaign, on the following programme:

* For a united, independent Ireland. Complete British withdrawal. Against collaboration with Britain.

* Defence of workers' living standards. Against austerity. Give working people control of the nation's wealth.

* Defence of democratic and civil rights.

* Complete opposition to imperialist alliances. No to NATO — out of the EEC.

PD's appeal for a united front was aimed at the Provos and the IRSP and not, as with the IRSP's 'broad front', at Fianna Fail or sections of it. It is doubtful if the distinction will have come across at all clearly.

All the populist republicans use the 'working class angle', but nationalism

remains the axis around which everything revolves, not class. Of central importance here is PD's de facto common front with the Republicans on placing the North at the centre while keeping the 'socialist' element at a vague and undefined level.

Bernadette McAliskey was quoted in the — sympathetic — Irish Times as saying that 'her instinct' would be to vote Haughey for Taoiseach if she got to the Dail... which is quite a thing to say when most of the 'socialist republicans' say it too, and draw conclusions like those of the IRSP (vote Fianna Fail).

It means that, whatever their intentions, PD and McAliskey are at one end of a linked 'anti-imperialist' chain at the other end of which many of the 'socialist republicans' see... Fianna Fail.

What makes all this extremely pernicious is also the main lesson from the experience of the Republicans in the election. After 62 years the Border divides two very different Irelands. The massacre of 13 unarmed Catholics in Derry ten years ago had the power to stir some active support in the South for the Northern Catholics. So did the hunger strikes. In both cases it ebb-

ed very quickly.

The population in the South is separated off, and despite the sentimental nationalism of sections of Fianna Fail, essentially feels itself to be separated off, from the North and its problems.

Probably the only road by which the southern working class can arrive at James Connolly's republicanism now lies through redeveloping socialist conviction and building a socialist movement which accepts its responsibilities to the oppressed in the Six Counties and can also propose class unity to the Protestant workers, to fight for a working class socialist-republican solution in Ireland.

To try to tell the southern working class that the border is the first question and the main one, is to stand no chance of bringing the Irish working class into the struggle. Only a movement that roots itself in the straightforward struggle for workers' interests in the south, and offers immediate answers there, can hope to bring the strength of the Irish working class into the struggle for a solution in the North.

That is the lesson of the last dozen years of war in the North, and now again of

the election. That is the conclusion to be drawn from the growth of Sinn Féin the Workers' Party (though it is a precise mirror-inversion of the Republicans, equally though differently one-sided).

From the '30s, at least, Republicanism has repeatedly played the role of a social lightning conductor in the South. It has attracted generations of would-be revolutionaries, propelled often by impulses of social revolt, to a nationalist movement that related only to the North, was essentially without a social programme for all Ireland (including, of course, the South), and was therefore politically sterile. The working class must wait — that was its answer to 'Connollyites'.

The decades of politically sterile physical force revolution in the South are one of the causes of the isolation of the Catholic revolt in the North now. Bits and pieces of socialist rhetoric grafted to the Republican movement don't change that. They only emphasise the void of serious policies and the absence of precise class commitment.

The rhetoric — no longer concerned exclusively with 'Ireland, mother Ireland' — has changed, but essentially the message is still: The

working class must wait. But with mass unemployment and poverty in the south, the working class cannot afford to wait.

Therefore, to mimic politics such as were offered by the Republicans in the southern general election to embrace and promote their political sterility. It also to abandon the struggle to win rank and file republicans to James Connolly's politics.

And it is to be ineffective in bringing to the oppressed Northern Ireland Catholics aid of an all-Ireland working class revolutionary socialist movement that can settle with capitalism and imperialism throughout Ireland, building on the great strength of the southern Irish working class.

All in all, with the exception, despite everything, Bernadette McAliskey, the workers of the 26 County were not entirely off base to refuse the nationalist vote. The socialist-republican programme of liberating a unified Ireland on the basis of working class politics north and south was not an option they were presented with in this general election.

The Irish working class urgently needs to build a movement that will present this programme, and work to organise republicans and socialists to fight for it both sides of the border.

Provisionals' topsy-turvy view

by John O'Mahony

PROVISIONAL Sinn Féin's campaign in the 26 County election was a new departure for that organisation, encouraged by the H-Block vote last June. The initial assessment published in An Phoblacht of February 25 — 'Questions Posed', by Kevin Burke — suggests that a recoil away from that new approach may develop.

Initial

Writing "an initial assessment of Sinn Féin's election intervention", editorial writer Kevin Burke says that "Sinn Féin is faced with the serious task of soberly, and intelligently, assessing its structures, strategy and policy in the light of its electoral experience". His article is an honest attempt to start doing that.

He says that Sinn Féin's campaign was rushed and Sinn Féin lacked 'preparedness' to carry through its recent decision to offer itself in elections.

"There was a level of confusion in the electoral strategy" among Sinn Féin supporters, and "Sinn Féin was struggling to develop a policy to put on offer". A tendency developed for Sinn Féin "to distance itself from the armed struggle in the North" — especially as they had to campaign against a government ban on their broadcasts. (The ban was eventually declared illegal by the High Court).

Difficulties arose in arguing abstention, especially as people were confused when Sinn Féin decided to take the government to court on the radio and television ban.

Sinn Féin got drawn into the "figure-swapping" of the election campaign. The "defining of partition by the economic cost of partition..." was a valid point to make, but not the main one.

"The vital message here

is the crushing violent oppression of the nationalist population by a foreign army as evidenced by death, torture, imprisonment, constant harassment and so on. To support those taking up arms against this enemy is vital and it is to this support existing in the 26 counties that Sinn Féin must always first appeal" (emphasis added).

"It is imperative that the economic and social struggle is not divorced from the national struggle; that is the path of reformism. The emphasis must always be that native capitalism and British imperialism are inter-dependent and the former can only be overthrown when the latter, its prop in Ireland, is broken."

"Capitalism in the Free State thus depends on the British as its first line of defence and has come to depend on it more than most neo-colonies".

Now, while this may be a convenient propaganda 'line' to link the northern question with socialism, it is nonsense as a description of reality. For example, the Southern bourgeoisie on issues like agricultural policy pursues policies in the EEC hostile to British interests. The implication that military withdrawal by Britain would be the end of the power of British capi-

talism — or perhaps of all capitalism, including Irish — in Ireland is also nonsense.

It is not an adequately true view of the nature of modern imperialism — which does not mainly depend on military occupation — or of the nature of capitalism and how to overthrow it in Ireland. It ignores the centrality of the communal antagonism in Northern Ireland.

It justifies the 'nationalism first' political focus of the Republicans — by way of transparently spurious and false definitions of the realities of Irish economic and political life.

Kevin Burke is merely restating the central error

of socialists in Provisional Sinn Féin — that the national question can be the main locomotive of working class revolution in Ireland.

Against the elements of 'social work' politics he sees in PSF's election campaign, against the huckstering and 'clientelism' that is dominant in 26 county politics, and against the possible notion that a socialist republic can come by parliamentary decree, he argues that the road to the socialist republic lies through "the moulding of all the working class, including the unemployed, the youth, women, small farmers and the underprivileged in whatever way, into a definable and self-conscious class which is in a position to take into its hands and control for itself the economic wealth of the country. Without that, party political success is meaningless".

Final goal

Exactly (though small farmers are our possible allies, not part of the working class).

But how? With what slogans? With the class struggle in the south related how to the Northern struggle?

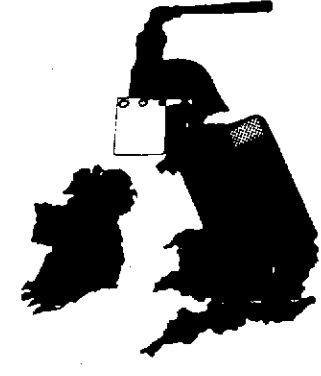
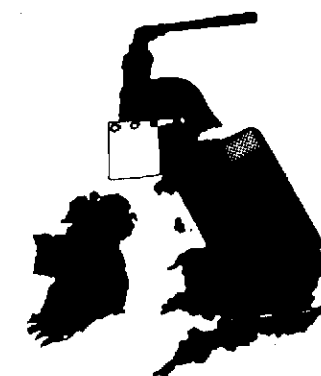
But how... individual

battles and campaigns housing, employment and so on must be engaged and fought with vigour. The final goal must always be kept in mind, the political aim not only of Sinn Féin members but of all people towards the removal of the British presence from the North and the overthrow of the capitalist system, North and South. (Emphasis added).

Burke's conclusion clearly that what is needed was a sharper version of the nationalist core of their campaign, and a more general 'elevated' and abstract proclamation of the socialist goal alleged to be at the end of the nationalist road. That is, an intensification of everything that showed the impotence of PSF's campaign in the 26 county elections.

No, the lesson is that the national question must be viewed, assessed, and assessed in the light of the working class program for Ireland of which is only a part, and not other way round.

Provisional Sinn Féin is a political satellite in an upside down, backward view of the present relationship of the national question and the fight for workers' power, north and south, in Ireland today.



Khomeini's campaign of terror against the left

THE recent murder of Moussa Khomeini and other leading Mojahedin members in Teheran, just two days before the anniversary of the uprising that toppled the Shah, is a tragic reminder of the despotic regime which rules Iran today. For the thousands of people who took part in the demonstrations and strikes which finally brought down the government of Premier Bakhtiar on February 11, 1979, the strength, the elation and the hope that they then felt has long since died.

Rising inflation, unemployment at 30% and chronic food shortages are the reality of life in Iran today. In the 16 month old war with Iraq many people have lost both



Khomeini

family and home and are living in makeshift refugee camps. Food and fuel are rationed to provide for the war effort. Five gallons of petrol can cost up to

£60.

The government tries to foster and maintain support amongst the urban and rural poor by ensuring efficient distribution of the basic necessities through the local mosques and Islamic committees. At the same time the Islamic Republican Party, now the dominant force in the government, has mounted a systematic campaign to eliminate all opposition.

Since summer 1981 some 8,000 people have been executed, among them children and pregnant women. In this purge, the Islamic opposition organisation, the Mojahedin and left wing groups such as Fedayeen Minority, Peykar etc., have suffered tremendous losses. In the past

few weeks the regime has stepped up their activities to paralyse the opposition groups.

How is it that such a reactionary regime could have survived so far, coming to power as it did on the crest of a mass movement against one despotic and ruthless regime?

Part of the answer must lie in the failure of the left opposition groups to organise and build a base. Even before Khomeini returned from exile to Iran, his future Islamic regime had a base of support built up via the local mosques whose continued functioning under the Shah enabled a level of organisation which was not possible for the left opposition groups. They were unable to take the lead in

the 1979 uprising.

After the Shah's downfall there was, however, a short period when a more democratic atmosphere prevailed. The left failed to understand that prolonging this period was vital for their development and the building of a firm base; that the fight for democratic demands was not a 'bourgeois' diversion away from the real struggle for socialism but a vital and necessary part of that struggle.

Autonomy

Early in 1979 struggles for regional autonomy by the national minorities in Turkomansahra, Khuzestan and Azerbaijan were crushed without heed to the

demands of the people.

Only in Kurdistan has the fighting continued.

The move against the national minorities was followed by moves to rid the country of any vestiges of democracy and return Iran to the dark ages. Factory committees which had sprung up during the anti-Shah movement were rapidly transformed into Islamic committees; liberal newspapers were closed; the veil became compulsory for women; meetings of left groups were attacked as were people handing out leaflets and selling political literature.

Instead of interpreting these events as part of a total picture, each attack was seen in isolation and either deplored or ignored

accordingly. For example, when the newspaper Ayan-degan was closed down, some small groups defended press freedom but the rest of the left considered it an unimportant issue.

They thought their task was to defend the toilers not a bourgeois liberal paper.

Similarly, when compulsory veiling was introduced, and women protested, this was again another bourgeois issue, nothing to do with working class women. The question of the veil and women in general was secondary to the main class struggle.

In November 1980 when the American hostages were seized, the confusion of the left was seen most clearly. The main groups, such as the Fedayeen, embraced the action as genuine anti Imperialism by the regime and failed to notice how this act and the propaganda coup it achieved for the government actually served to disarm the left.

The Tudeh Party gave its clear backing to aya-tollah Khomeini and the IRP in the struggle for control taking place within the government, and eventually the Fedayeen split in 1980 with the 'majority' throwing its support behind Khomeini as well.

Explicit

The Mojahedin, who emerged in 1981 as the major opposition force to Khomeini, for some time gave explicit support to him. Even when the severity of attacks on the opposition increased, the continued to appeal to the 'good nature' of Khomeini as if he was somehow separate from the government and unwittingly allowing the attacks to take place.

It seems their tactic was to buy time in order to rebuild for the eventual toppling of the regime. But in May 1981, when Bani-Sadr was removed as President, it became clear that the IRP had won the power struggle and that Khomeini was firmly behind them.

With this consolidation of power the way was now open for an onslaught on all opposition.

The Mojahedin joined forces with Bani-Sadr and the Kurdish Democratic Party in the National Council of Resistance.

But their expectations of a quick victory have not materialised. Although moral support is given to the heroic militants of the Mojahedin, and left groups, this support has not developed into mass action. It seems that the people of Iran face another long struggle against a despotic regime.

It is vital that the left groups in Britain and the labour movement give their solidarity and support to this struggle as well as contributing to the discussion which by learning from the experiences of the past paves the way to a stronger and more united movement.

MANSUR HALLA

Wage cuts for US carworkers

by Jo Thwaites

IN THE United States during January of this year, 50,000 carworkers were permanently laid off. 288,000 more were on indefinite lay-off. One-third of all US car workers are out of work.

Yet Douglas Fraser, President of the United Auto Workers Union (UAW) announces a wage-cutting deal he's just made with Ford as a 'historic breakthrough'. At the end of February the UAW settled with Ford agreeing to 'concessions' which will save Ford a billion dollars

(£550 million) over the next 2½ years.

The concessions mean no annual wage increase for this year, deferment for nine months of cost of living agreements and the loss of six days paid leave.

In effect a wage cut. This was ratified by 43,683 votes to 15,933 by the union membership and Fraser hails it as a 'historic breakthrough, which leads to greater security for themselves and their families'.

In return Ford is increasing lay-off benefits slightly, guaranteeing an income for workers with more than 15 years seniority, offering a profit-sharing scheme. Plant closures will still go ahead.

So the union leaders' rationale for wage cuts — namely that they would then secure jobs — is nonsense.

But Ford have made it quite clear that they won't guarantee jobs. They insist on their right as capitalists to hire, fire and lay-off or recall as they see fit.

Price cuts

Even if the bosses passed on to the consumers some of the money they save through concessions from workers this wouldn't lower the price of their cars enough to increase sales, and therefore increase the number of cars produced.

Indeed, when the General Motors workers refused to accept a wage cut earlier this year, demanded by the GM bosses so that they could lower the price of their cars, GM went ahead anyway and lowered their prices. So clearly that has nothing to do with saving jobs.

UAW negotiations with General Motors broke down at the end of

January when the workers refused to accept the wage cuts demanded of them, but these are due to start again now that Ford have settled.

Campaign

But the UAW bureaucrats have not had it all their own way. Car workers at the giant Ford Rouge plant in Detroit weren't fooled. Several groups along with independent militants organised a United Front Caucus to campaign against job losses and the concessions. In the 24,000 member UAW local (branch) 600, they gathered 3,000 signatures demanding an emergency mass meeting of Local 600 members to plan a strategy to fight the concessions, lay-offs and plant closures. They also organised to bring thousands of angry workers to the

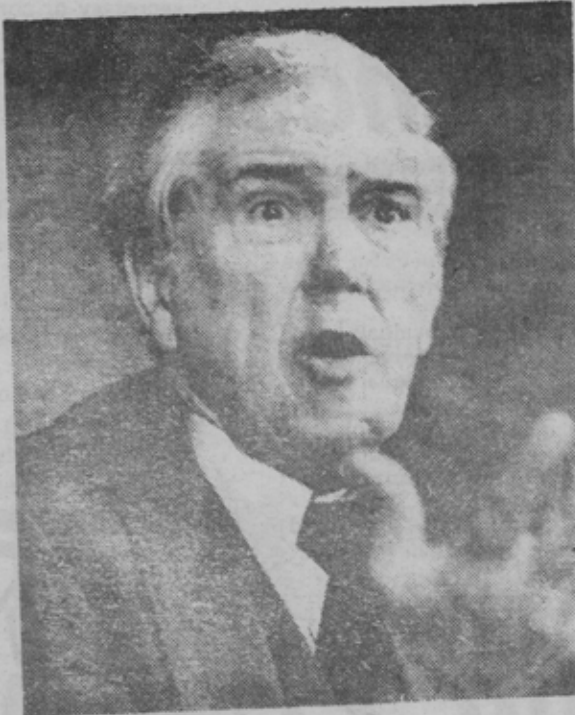
Central Motors Council where a sell-out was planned on the wage concessions. This rattled the union leaders so much they moved the meeting from Detroit to Chicago.

The UAW members in General Motors are continuing to organise against the wage 'concession' though obviously their fight has been made harder by the Ford settlement. Their strategy for a fight-back is outlined in the United Front caucus programme.

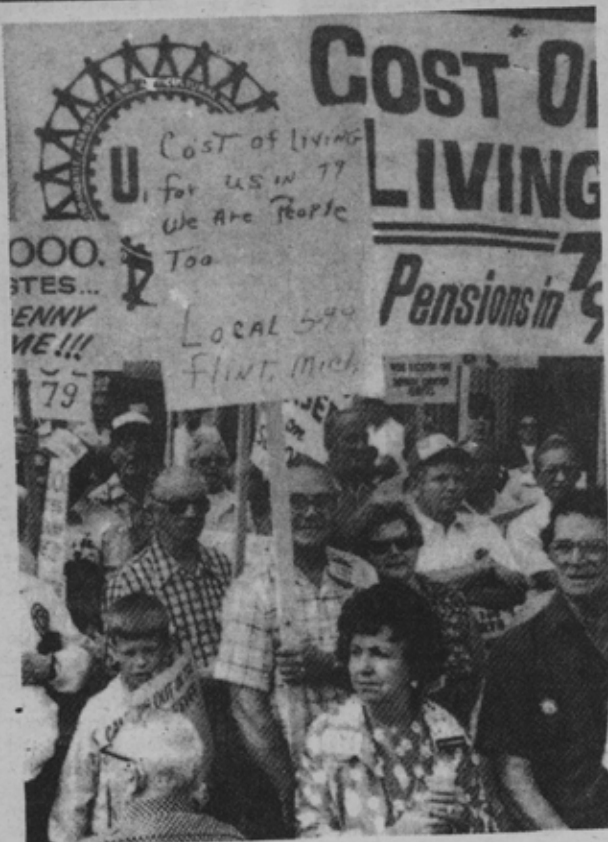
"We are threatened with plant closings. First the Engine Plant was threatened then Frame, and Michigan Casting Centre is next. The company does whatever it wants to do. It does not have to be this way!

"We need a sit-down strike of Local 600, authorised by the International UAW, built by elected strike committees and backed by an industry-wide strike. This is how the UAW was built."

That is how rank and file UAW members will be fighting Fraser's next attempt at a 'historic breakthrough'.



Doug Fraser: hasn't had it all his way



'Moderation' — Belfast-style

by John O'Mahony

RIOTING BROKE out at the Belfast Town Hall when it was announced that Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) candidate, Rev. William McCrea, had been beaten into third place in the by-election to fill the Westminster seat vacated by Official Unionist Rev. Roy Bradford, shot last year by the Provisional IRA.

Rev. Martyn Smyth, a Presbyterian minister and the Imperial Grand Master of the Orange Order, won the seat, and the anti-sectarian Unionist party, Alliance, came second [as it did in 1979, with about the same vote].

The DUP, which did not contest the seat in 1979, attempted to grab it from the OUP, claiming with some justification that Roy Bradford was a closet Paisleyite. The DUP holds two of the four Belfast seats [the fourth is held by Gerry Fitt], and had the Paisleyite tide continued it might

have been expected to win Belfast South.

Jubilant Official Unionists are saying that this result was Paisley's 'Waterloo', and the decisive refutation of his claim to be 'the leader of the Protestant people of Ulster'.

It is too early to say whether the tide has turned that decisively. But certainly Paisley's credibility must be suffering erosion, as what looks like increasingly hard evidence emerges that he must have known about and helped to cover up for the organisation of a [homosexual] child prostitution ring in Belfast — the still reverberating scandal of the Kincora boys' home.

On the eve of the poll, William McGrath, former house father there, issued a statement from jail contradicting Paisley. The size of the problem for Paisley was illustrated in the election, where the DUP and

OUP vehemently opposed the proposal to extend British legislation on homosexuality to the six counties. Paisley has revived his notorious 'Save Ulster from Sodomy' campaign to defeat the proposal.

The South Belfast by-election was very much an intra-community affair of the Protestants. In an electorate of 66,000, the [Catholic] SDLP vote of about 4,000 reflects the communal divide. Thus the bitterness among the Protestant factions.

The rioting on polling night was said to have been sparked off by two women, from the DUP and OUP, getting into an acrimonious dispute about a point of bible interpretation. This is a world in which the return to Westminster of the Presbyterian minister who is also the Imperial Grand Master of the Orange Order is a sort of 'victory for moderation'.

Women in struggle



Fighting nurses put male bureaucrats on the spot

by Diana Turpin

ON Thursday March 4, over 20 hospital workers from Herefordshire, Oxford and London came to lobby the COHSE NEC about our current pay claim, to

demand that our leaders call action from April 1 - the Review Date.

We were invited in and two people were allowed to present our views!

The two spokespeople were chosen - both women. This was quite appropriate, speaking to an NEC composed with just one exception entirely of men

(COHSE's membership is 75% women).

These spokespeople read out a statement from all lobbyists and presented our case - our inability to live

on our wages, our determination to stick together, and for nurses not to be bought off separately from other NHS workers; our anger at our leaders' apathy and inaction over our pay claim.

We told them that mere demonstrations separated from any action would demoralise the membership. We should learn from ASLEP's lesson in how to win by striking, even in the teeth of opposition from the media.

Strike action was the only way to win against this government.

The General Secretary, Albert Spanswick, replied in person. He said that a ballot on industrial action would be sent out as soon as the management side made an offer. However, until management had made an offer, no ballot would be held at all.

He also made it clear there would be no recommendation from the leadership on what, if any, industrial action should be taken. We should remember, he said, that we were not trying to defeat the government as such.

Snail's pace

The NEC's tactics would be to woo the media and give a resounding lead by calling... a lobby of Parliament, followed, in a month by... a demonstration!

We left with the impression that the leadership was set on a snail's pace race to see if the membership could be demoralised before they had to be mobilised.

But they are also wary of us, the membership - wary enough to be afraid of their image if they turned us lobbyists away, wary enough to open up a closed NEC meeting for us to present our views - for the first time in COHSE's history that I am aware of!

For years we have had to watch while our health service is dismantled and our wages driven down.

Low-paid, often part-time and women workers in this situation, we don't realise our own strength.

We cannot win a pay battle against the Thatcher government without taking strike action. This will entail providing essential patient cover. Although our own union leaders try to hide it from us, we do have the strength, joining together, to win this battle.

Foyles: action needed

WHEN the USDAW Executive Committee meets next Monday 15 March, the sacked workers at Foyles bookshop will be hoping for official support.

16 have so far been sacked for being members of the union, and are picketing the shop. Many customers have turned back, and workers at Heinemann, Murray, and Edward Arnold publishers have blacked deliveries, but without official support the sacked members are in a weak position.

Mass pickets are held every Saturday, and donations and messages of support should be sent to Colletts International Bookshop, Charing Cross Road, London WC2.

BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS TO WOMEN IN THE UNIONS

by Jo Thwaites

THERE are now 3½ million women in trade unions. That's nearly one-third of the TUC's membership.

Over the past ten years, women have joined unions much faster than men, though this is now levelling off thanks to the recession and the fact that women are losing their jobs faster than men.

Obviously great strides have been made by women in the unions since last century. But, as many older women militants would tell you it's a long, hard struggle which is by no means over yet.

Despite women playing an enormous, and heroic, part in the fight for our unions (just think of the movement the match-girls spearheaded) the trade union movement has always to an extent been organised to exclude women.

Initially the trade unions' official aim was to secure a family wage for a man - to keep his wife and family.

This clearly meant that women did not have the same right to work as men. Women were expected to be dependent on men and to earn lower wages if they did have a job.

Stay at home

Obviously this was not an attitude held solely by the trade unions. It was a generally held belief that women should stay at home. But the structures of the trade union movement that reflected these attitudes haven't changed very much.

This month's Labour Research highlights the recent changes in the unions over the past few years.

Some unions - GMWU, AUEW, TASS - produce

special pamphlets on fighting for equality. Other unions, notably NUPE, have had campaigns specifically aimed at encouraging women to be active in the union, with reserved places on their Executive for women.

More unions are sending women to the Women's TUC. And more unions are holding courses for women in their unions.

However all this is relatively recent, and no one would say that the prejudices against women, sexism and discrimination have been overcome. Indeed all that has been gained in the unions has been fought for by women over many years.

We still run into the most backward attitudes, reminiscent of the days when

women were excluded from unions or reckoned not to be radical enough to have the vote (yes, many socialists used to argue that!).

It is still common to hear male trade unionists saying women should stay at home, that women are only working for pin money or that women should be sacked first.

Yet often if you object, or try to organise women together to take on these attitudes, you get the age-old complaint that you're being divisive, you're splitting the movement or you're ghettoising women. Taking up sexism is 'trivial' or 'middle class'.

Faced with this barrage of non-arguments and downright sexism, we have to



organise as women to provide the challenge to existing structures and attitudes. We have to make quite clear that there is no division created by women fighting for their jobs and their rights in the unions, that fighting sexism is part and parcel of the fight for a woman's right to work.

This applies to all sections of the unions. It's not just the union bureaucrats or executives that have backward attitudes towards women, but that the fight

needs to be taken up in the local branches, where you can often find some of the most entrenched chauvinists.

This is what the Fight-back trade union conference is going to discuss on March 27 with some 25 workshops on subjects ranging from sexual harassment to fighting Tebbit's Bill and health service cuts.

In the afternoon there are workshops for all the major unions - with discussion on how best to organise ourselves in the unions, hopefully ending up with women's caucuses.



Coming to the conference: Siobhan Lanigan, sacked by Foyles bookshop for trade union activity. Women fight tremendous battles for the right to a union; now let's fight to control our unions.

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.

REGISTRATION FORM

Name:

Phone

Address

Union Branch

If a delegate, name & address of branch secretary or contact:

I can offer/I will need somewhere to stay on Friday 26th/Saturday 27th

I enclose £3.50 conference fee (£2 if low-waged or unwaged non-delegate)

Send to: TU Conference, 41 Ellington Street, London N7. Credentials will be sent out in early March, but please help by registering early.

MARCH 27

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

JOB CRISIS THREATENS TO TOPPLE BELGIAN COALITION

by Ian Swindale

THE crisis in the Belgian steel industry which only last Autumn led to the collapse of the coalition government led by Mark Eyskens now threatens the future of the new coalition government of Wilfried Martens.

The Eyskens government — the fifth government to be formed since the 1978 General Election — collapsed when the Socialist Ministers in it refused to deal with any other business until agreement was reached on a rescue plan for the Belgian steel industry.

A plan had been worked out by the EEC, the Belgian government and the banks in January 1981. When the banks refused to pay up unless the previously agreed number of redundancies was dramatically increased, the plan collapsed.

Pressure

The steel industry is concentrated in Liege and Charleroi in French speaking Wallonia. The ministers of the French-speaking Socialist Party were therefore under heavy pressure from the working class in the South to pull out of the government.

An election on November 8 resulted in Eyskens' Social Christian Party losing a quarter of its seats in the House of Representatives — no mean feat in an electoral system based on a form of proportional representation that usually ensures only modest gains or losses.

The Socialist Party maintained its position, gaining three seats, despite having participated in the outgoing government. The Liberal Party — the most right wing of the big parties — made the greatest gains.

In attempting to put together a new coalition the Belgian ruling class faced serious economic and political problems that went far beyond the crisis in the steel industry. While inflation stands at a relatively modest 8%, unemployment is now running at 13.1% — the highest in the EEC.

The government deficit for 1982 was due to rise to 8% of gross domestic product according to the government, 15% according to the banks.

At the same time the divisions between Flemish-speaking Flanders and French-speaking Wallonia, which had receded into the background during the boom years, have been re-emerging with the growing economic crisis.

Dilemma

So the dilemma facing the ruling class was this: To hold the country together, the widest possible coalition was necessary, preferably a 'Grand Coalition' involving all three major parties. However, the wider the coalition, the less decisive it would be in tackling the now urgent economic problems facing Belgian capitalism.

The Liberals were first invited to form a government. They refused. An attempt was made to form a coalition with the French-speaking Socialist Party and the Flemish-speaking Christian Democrats. This too failed.



In 1961 (above) Belgian workers shook the system with a general strike. And 1982?

before Christmas, a Social-Christian/Liberal coalition was put together led by Wilfried Martens.

However, this coalition was not put together without difficulty. The Social Christian party has a Flemish and a French-speaking wing. The French-speaking wing is very conscious of the threat the Socialist Party poses on its left and is fearful of losing members of its trade union federation, the CSC, to the Socialist FTGB.

Liberal Party

They therefore scuttled the Liberal Party's attempt to form a government and only agreed to back a Social Christian-led alliance with the Liberals when it became obvious that the 'grand coalition' could not be put together. So the Walloon Social Christians represent a permanent source of instability in the new government, particularly with the continuing escalation of industrial action in the French-speaking South.

In seeking a vote of confidence from Parliament in the first week of February, Martens announced that he was seeking the right to rule by decree during the next 12 months so that he could act decisively to bring the economic crisis under control.

Among his proposals were: A change in the indexation system which gives wage earners and the

security automatic compensation for inflation. Martens wants to freeze wages until May 31 and then allow only partial compensation, so that real wages fall by 3% in 1982. Only the lowest paid will continue to be protected by indexation.

*Cut corporation tax from 57% to 45%.

*Force 'lame duck' industries — being propped up by state aid — particularly steel, shipbuilding and textiles — to cut wages of workers by 5% and salaries of managers by 10%.

*Reduce public spending from BF325 billion to BF200 billion in 1982, primarily by cutting social security payments, which are among the most generous in Europe.

At the same time the government would try to reduce unemployment by a token amount through tax concessions to the construction industry.

After four days of debate Martens won his vote of confidence. He announced that before introducing the economic measures there would be 'real but brief' consultation with the unions. Lack of agreement would not stop the government acting.

The Belgian trade union movement was split in its response to these proposals. Leaders of the Catholic unions tended towards acceptance of the proposals, while the Socialist union, the FTGB, called a 24-hour general strike for Monday 8 February.

These differences had already been reflected in

the textile industry where workers in Flanders voted to accept wage cuts in late January while those in Wallonia had burnt their ballot papers.

The 24-hour general strike was total in the French-speaking south (with the Socialist union and the French-speaking wing of the Catholic CSC union observing the strike) and widespread in Brussels but not so widely observed in Flanders.

The extent of the pressures building up within the French speaking wing of the Social Christian Party were illustrated by a near unanimous vote on the eve of the one-day strike by workers in the CSC in Namur to form a new political movement because the Social Christians — in supporting the government — were drawing away from their grass roots trade union support.

Two days later, Martens called the receiver into the state-owned Cockerill yards, the leading shipyard in Belgium. Since this was one of the 'lame ducks' propped up by state aid, the government had proposed introducing the 5% wage cut for manual workers and 10% for managers.

Close down

The 2,700 workers voted narrowly to reject the wage cuts, and in a show of strength the receivers were called in.

Whether Martens will

proceed to close the shipyard down remains to be seen. An estimated 45,000 people in the Antwerp area and 10,000 engineering workers in Wallonia rely on the shipyard.

Wage-cutting

Martens finally introduced his wage-cutting decree on February 21 together with an 8.5% devaluation of the Belgian Franc — the first devaluation in 33 years. The immediate effect was to raise the cost of food, energy and imported raw materials.

The government no doubt hoped that the shock wave created throughout Belgian society by the devaluation would neutralise union opposition to government austerity

plans. The response of the unions to the wages decree and devaluation was certainly muted. They suspended all industrial action and announced their intention of waiting to see what cuts in social security the government would propose in their March budget before deciding on further action.

The crisis in the steel industry, however, is forcing the pace of conflict between the working class and the government. Belgium, with a total population of 9.8 million produces 12.3 million tonnes of steel a year (compared with Britain's 15 million tonnes) but only sells 20% of this to the home market.

Overcapacity

With massive overcapacity in steel-making throughout Europe, the EEC Commission is anxious to see Belgium contribute its share to the reduction in steel-making capacity within the Common Market. By heavily subsidising the steel industry, successive Belgian governments have safeguarded their large shares of other EEC countries' steel markets.

The EEC commissioner responsible for ensuring the restructuring of the Belgian steel industry is himself a Belgian — Viscount Etienne Davignon — the object of a violent demonstration in Brussels by steelworkers which ended in clashes near the parliament building.

between sabre-wielding mounted police and steelworkers in which the police came off worst!

The heart of the problem in steel is Cockerill-Sambre, the result of a recent merger between Cockerill of Liege and Hainault-Sambre of Charleroi, in which the government has an 80% holding. The steel mills have been kept going because they are situated in areas of high unemployment.

In Liege, unemployment has stood at over 20% for the last two years. Total closure of Cockerill-Sambre would result in a further 25,000 direct workers and 75,000 indirect workers losing their jobs.

Cut capacity

The restructuring that the EEC Commission now wants to see would cut capacity by 2 million tonnes a year at a cost of 10,000 direct jobs. The Belgian government also wants to introduce its 5% wage cut for workers in lame duck industries into steel.

The response of the steelworkers has been militant. The march on the EEC offices and Parliament was followed by a general strike in Liege against the threat to steel and the government austerity measures on 24 February which shut down the city's steel plants, buses, department stores and other factories, including the leading Belgian arms factory, Fabrique Nationale. Trains on the Liege-Brussels line were blocked for 2 hours by steel workers.

And when talks between the steel unions and Viscount Etienne Davignon — in which the Belgian government conspicuously refused to participate — collapsed at the end of February, an all-out strike was launched in the steel industry from 1 March.

While the main objective is to defend jobs and wages in steel, militant steel workers have made it clear that they want to broaden this strike into an all-out assault on the Martens government and its austerity programme.

Half mast

Liege — with many shops shut, flags at half mast, and music only being played by the strike band RTBF radio station — highlights the emerging political crisis in Belgium — a crisis which the workers can only begin to resolve by pressing further the tentative moves towards a united front by the Flemish and French-speaking unions towards a general strike against the Martens government.

The next few weeks will see important decisions taken on cuts in social security in the budget and the fate of the Belgian steel industry.

The government has on the surface seemed determined to ride out the storm but it is an uneasy balance. Mass action by the unions could lead to the government's fall.



Prime Minister Martens

CRISIS

RATHER THAN accept state-imposed limitations on trade union activity, the labour movement made it impossible for the last Tory government to rule. Finally we brought it down.

But today the labour movement is suicidally passive and docile, as a restrictive new legal framework is imposed by Thatcher's government on the trade unions.

If we don't begin to fight back now, we will find that a major legal shift in the balance of power in industry has been imposed on the working class — without a fight.

Surrender

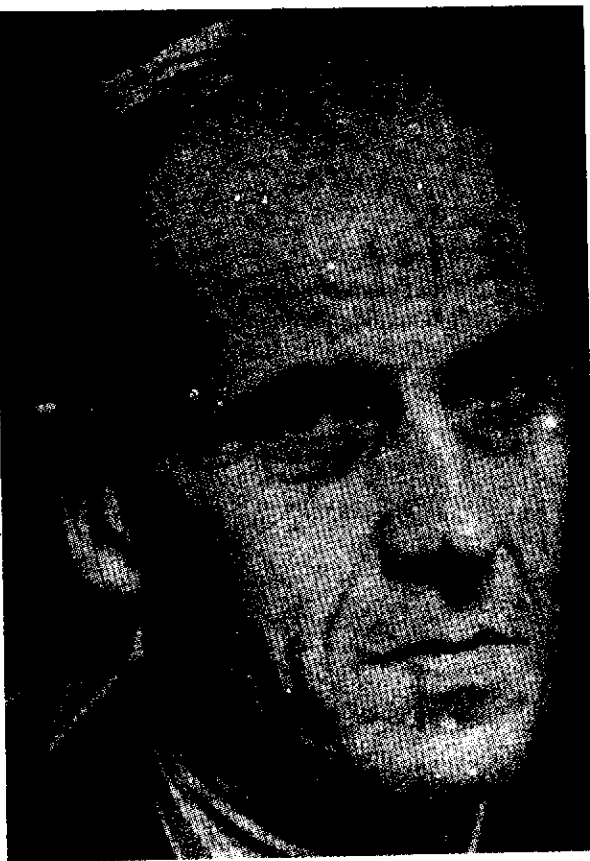
Nothing so shameful as this surrender of what we spent many decades winning has happened in British labour movement since the General Strike was betrayed by the leaders of the TUC back in 1926. Yet it is happening.

If the serious left does not sound the alarm and succeed in rallying the labour movement to fight this vicious government now, then we will enter the next round of industrial militancy at a massive legal disadvantage.

We have now, and can decide to use, the power of direct industrial action to confront and defeat the Tory attempt to shackle the unions. We must galvanise ourselves to use it.

Look at the facts.

In 1980 the 'Employment Act' was brought in by



James Prior. It outlawed mass pickets and flying pickets, and restricted the right of sympathetic strike action.

The TUC responded weakly and indecisively. The slump deepened and unemployment accelerated dramatically. The day of action on May 14/1980, was not a shot across the

Tories' bows, but proof the TUC had deliberately let its powder get damp.

It encouraged the Tories. The TUC has not even tried to do anything since.

Now Norman Tebbit has brought in the second instalment of what the Tories want to do to the unions. It is not likely to be the last instalment if we

The TUC leaders are selling the pass to Norman Tebbit — and so far the rank and file has reacted more with weary resignation than with precise demands for action. JOHN O'MAHONY sounds the alarm.

IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TEBBIT

don't fight back against it more seriously, militantly, and effectively than we did against Prior's instalment.

Certainly, the return of a Tory government or of a Tory/SDP/Liberal coalition would lead to an attempt at a third instalment.

These are the Tory salami tactics to achieve what Wilson failed to do in 1969 and Heath in 1971-4 by the tactic of all-out assault.

Tebbit's Bill is the fourth attempt to reshape the unions in the last dozen years. Wilson's and Heath's were ripped up by trade union action.

This is what the clear-headed Financial Times — which is as moderate or extreme as the bosses need it to be at a given moment — said in an editorial on November 24 last year:

"The Wilson government's proposals in 1969 fell foul of trade union opposition. The Heath government's attempts to impose a legal straitjacket on a voluntary informal system of industrial relations was precipitate and over-ambitious.

"The present Conservative government has taken a more cautious approach. The 1980 Employment Act dealt with specific abuses relating to the closed shop, picketing and certain other matters. Now Mr Norman Tebbit, the new Employment Secretary, has introduced proposals which go somewhat further, particularly on trade union immunities and the definition of a trade dispute".

David Waddington, under secretary of State for Employment, has let the Tory cat out of the bag with the blunt warning that if the trade union leaders do not proceed to 'reform' the trade unions in time, 'the government will have to react to democratic pressure to democratise the unions themselves' (Financial Times, December 1st). He has in mind the 'democracy' made notorious in the labour movement by Frank Chapple.

Thus the employers and their government want to do what Heath and Wilson attempted — to get the trade union 'leadership' to act as vigorously repressive policemen for the ruling class against the rank and file.

Mr Walter Goldsmith, director-general of the Institute of Directors, said that the proposals, "begin to bring unions within the framework of law that applies to the rest of society, invite them to undertake a long overdue reform of their internal democracy, and, above all, put some onus on trade union leaders to act responsibly in the interests of all their members" (Daily Telegraph, 24.11.81, emphasis added).

They want to put the trade union bureaucracy on the spot.

In the 1969 and 1971-4 attempts on the effectiveness of the unions as instruments of the rank and file, there was not mass unemployment and mass closures. There was a vigorous rank and file shop stewards' movement.

Crust

From the mid-'50s onwards, the bureaucratic crust imposed after the defeat of the General Strike (and by the slump) was loosened and pushed aside, along with the centrality of nationally negotiated wage agreements. The bureaucracy had time and again proved unable to deliver its goods over the counter to the employers.

The law was brought in: the goal was to compel the union leaders, in tandem with the state, to police the rank and file in the interests of the better running of the capitalist system.

But they still could not deliver. They were forced into opposition — caught between the millwheels of the government and the rank and file. In the struggle against Wilson, and then again in the fight against Heath, the bureaucrats were driven into opposition to the government.

Not vigorous opposition: tail-ending, foot-dragging, inhibited and inhibiting opposition — but opposition. The opposition of the bureaucrats helped to generate the wide and mass-based hostility to the government's plans, especially in 1971.

Despite the bureaucrats' intentions, their agitation stirred up workers who were not easily quelled and quietened — and thus helped create the basis for mass rank and file action, such



The TUC: public protest, private willingness to live with T as that which arose when five dockers were jailed in July 1972.

This period partly restored the union bureaucracy to a central leadership role, and rehabilitated them with sections of the rank and file. The dominant face of trade union officialdom became of 'lefts' Jones and Scanlon. But the credit accumulated with the rank and file was handed over to the Labour Party in government after 1974.

Today things are very different from the early '70s. There is mass unemployment and slump. Openly right wing trade union leaderships are in the ascendant.

Eroded

The upper layers of the shop stewards' movement have been seriously bureaucratised. Trade union membership and rank and file militancy have been eroded.

That means that the Tory approach is not merely a matter of taking a slice at a time, but also of calculating that the bureaucracy is now much more likely to be able (and therefore willing to try) to comply with the demand that they again become effective policemen.

To judge by their response so far, the bureaucracy are willing to try. In any case they prefer to 'have a go' at policing the rank and file, rather than to take on the government.

They have gone through the motions of objecting and protesting. Some of them have proposed feeble gestures like half hour strikes. They have got the

Labour Party to agree to repeal the Tory legislation. And that's all! Like an unwilling soldier glad to let himself be a prisoner of war, they now fold their arms, accept Tory shad for the labour movement and collect 10p a head for the legal expenses.

Slump

The effects of the slump on the labour movement and even the depressed fiasco of the Day of Action do not suffice to explain it. The explanation is the bureaucracy itself can live with the new legislation. And it thinks it re-establish the relationship with the rank and file which existed from after the defeat of the General Strike to the late '70s.

There is no reason to expect anything else from the bureaucrats. They won't lead in a serious way unless they feel the breath of the rank and file on their necks. Treason of the working class is trade, and generation after generation they have served an apprenticeship in it.

But what of the Communist Party, the most powerful supposedly militant force among the rank and file and sections of the bureaucracy? Prior's Tebbit's Bills put the bureaucracy on the spot. Because their entire strategy is to work with, and get into the bureaucracy, 'push it to the left', it is also being put on the spot.

To organise a fight against Tebbit would require them to be willing to break with the bu

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.

WORKSHOPS on: Women and the unions; black workers, Labour Party democracy and the trade unions; organising the unemployed; organising the rank and file — Broad Lefts etc; debate on officials — 'accountability' and direct election. Video 'Question of Leadership'. And in the lunchbreak — trade union caucus meetings and video on Laurence Scotts.

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, USDAW D96, NUPE ILEA District Committee, Bradford District Labour Party, Upper Stoke branch Coventry Labour Party, Coventry Labour Left, Birmingham 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

LOBBY THE TUC

TUC's 8 points of surrender

The anti-union legislation being driven through Parliament by Tory hatchet-man Norman Tebbit appears less draconian in content than the 1971 Industrial Relations Act. But it could be a bigger threat, since it relies upon the TUC leaders themselves to police their membership — and because these leaders themselves show every sign that they will accept this 'responsibility'.

The Bill proposes to open up trade union funds to claims for damages from employers hit by industrial action.

And, as a follow-on to Prior's laughably misnamed 'Employment Act' of 1980, Tebbit's Bill further tightens the straightjacket on the unions' shop floor activity by:

*New moves to break up the closed shop and prevent the establishment of new ones;

*Outlawing 'political' strikes and making it easier for employers to victimise militants and groups of strikers.

*Decisive steps to undermine trade union democracy through secret ballots.

In addition a benevolent fund is set up to benefit those blacklegs sacked for refusing to join a union.

What is the response of the TUC leaders?

In November Tebbit unveiled his savage new

plans. It took three whole months for the TUC leaders to draw up policies for action to oppose the legislation.

And in the event even tentative suggestions of half-hour lunchtime "strikes" against the law were defeated by the General Council. The "8-point plan" to be put to a conference of union Executives at Wembley Conference Centre on April 5 contains no call for action of any description. The TUC's proposals are:

1) "Affiliated unions should affirm their commitment to conduct a campaign among their own members to highlight the dangers in the Employment Bill."

—In other words a few circular letters to branches and perhaps a few leaflets: even badges, posters and stickers, but no action.

2) "Affiliated unions shall not hold or participate in secret ballots on union membership agreements under conditions laid down in the Employment Bill."

—But will affiliated unions press a determined unionisation drive and fight to establish closed shops in the traditional way in defiance of the Tebbit plan? The TUC formula amounts in fact to an abandon-

ment of the fight to establish 100% trade union membership — just what Tebbit wants to achieve. And no proposals are spelled out for the defence of existing closed shops against Tebbit's plan for imposing regular ballots.

3) "Affiliated unions shall observe Congress policy and not seek or accept public funds for union ballots under the 1980 Employment Act ballot funds scheme."

—The TUC is deliberately vague about what would happen to a right wing union which did accept funds — as appears to be the case now with the actors' union Equity. Will they be expelled from the TUC? But, possibly more important, the TUC leaders raise not a voice in defiance of the traditional methods of workers' democracy — shows of hands at mass meetings — in opposition to the Tory strategy of balloting individual members by post — in the isolation of their own homes.

4) A call for "closer working between Unions" in disputes. "The further aim, wherever possible, should be to co-ordinate and concert negotiations and industrial action."

—This poses as a challenge to the moves by Tebbit and Prior to render 'secondary' strikes,

picketing and blacking illegal: but all of the evidence of recent "close working between Unions" has been of General Secretaries ganging up against the rank and file workforce to sell-out struggles on pay, jobs and conditions.

Socialists of course support inter-union solidarity and the spreading of strikes: but the fundamental problem in achieving this is to win the solidarity of union officials for the struggles conducted by their members on the shop floor. There is no reason to believe this would be greater after Tebbit's Bill becomes law than it is now.

5) Empowering the General Council, on receipt of a request from a union faced by legal action, to:

i) coordinate action by other affiliated unions in support of the union in difficulties, including, if necessary, calling for industrial action against the employer concerned, or more widely.

ii) to provide financial assistance to a union which experiences severe financial problems as a result of damaging actions.

—But this whole, militant-sounding proposal relates to unions under attack after Tebbit's Bill becomes law! This is not so much a fight against Tebbit but dishing out aspirins for the wounded after the fight has been lost.

6) Financial assistance for unions faced with legal action for pursuing existing TUC Disputes Principles and Procedures.

—Once again conceding that Tebbit's Bill will be put on the statute books, and that the main beneficiaries of the TUC's 'action' programme will be the legal profession pocketing fat fees.

7) "No trade union member of an industrial tribunal or the Employment Appeal Tribunal should serve on cases arising from the application of a union membership agreement or arrangement."

—In plain English this means that union bureaucrats will continue to sit on Industrial Tribunals and a whole panoply of collaborationist bodies with management and government representatives right up to the NEDC level — while the bosses sharpen the knife for use against the shop floor.

8) A financial levy of 10p per member on all affiliated unions to set up a 'Campaign and Defence Fund'.

—This is to pay the armies of lawyers who will take over negotiations and to finance a stream of ineffectual leaflets and posters justifying the TUC's inaction.

Yet this bankrupt package of surrender is being vaunted by 'left' bureaucrats as a recipe for struggle against Thatcher!

No challenge has been mounted by the Communist Party — whose front organisation the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions is calling a conference on Tebbit on March 27.

Recognising that the bureaucracy are firmly set against strike action to stop Tebbit, the LCDTU has not so much as whispered its usual demand — for a one-day token strike.

Nor has such a demand yet been taken up in a determined way by groups to the left of the CP. As time ticks by, the need for action becomes increasingly urgent.

It is for this reason that we have spelled out below the policies which must be taken at once into every union branch, Labour Party and labour movement organisation in the fight to defeat Tebbit. There is no time to lose.

What to do:

*Move resolutions in your Union branch and Labour Party clearly demanding that the TUC call action now to defeat the Tebbit Bill.

*Spell out demands for: an end to all joint committees, tribunals and talks with the employers and the Tories; Labour MPs to mobilise against the Tebbit Bill in the constituencies and in Parliament; the TUC to call a one-day strike or series of strikes against the Bill as part of a campaign for all-out action to defeat the Tory anti-union offensive.

*Join the Socialist Organiser contingent lobbying the TUC conference of Executives on April 5 demanding strike action against Tebbit.

*Support the conference on trade union democracy called by Socialist Organiser and London Labour Briefing on April 3.

Carried at TGWU Birmingham joint automotive and power and engineering quarterly shop stewards' meeting:

"That this meeting of Engineering and Automotive Shop Stewards fully supports the opposition being mounted against Norman Tebbit's Bill and calls on our Executive Committee to initiate and support positive industrial action (up to and including strike action) at the special TUC conference to be held on 5th April. We also call upon all members to actively support the various campaigns that will be taking place in the near future, including disputes if necessary, and further undertake to hold factory/shop meetings to explain the full implications of the Bill on it becoming law."



hit's law

cracy. Even in 1969 and after 1971, that was something the CP didn't dare do.

Now, shackled to the bureaucracy, which has bowed its neck to the Tories' yoke, the CP and those it influences have nothing to offer to the rank and file activists who want to resist except a militant gloss on the TUC policy of meek surrender to the Tories and prayers for the return of a Labour government.

But a Labour government may not be returned at the next election. The SDP and Liberals are pressing for a harsher attack on the unions. The results of the next election may well give the signal for a third round of anti-union legislation.

Damage

The policy of putting our hands up now and waiting for a Labour government to come to the rescue is a policy of peacefully surrendering — for the foreseeable future — rights won by the labour movement in many decades of struggle and effort. The slump has inflicted damage on the labour movement, but this is surrender, not defeat.

Not to fight now is nothing less than treason to the most basic interests of the working class.

If the official leaders won't lead a fightback — and they won't — then the rank and file must. If those, like the CP, active and influential among the rank and file militants and shop stewards, won't challenge the passivity, acquiescence and treachery of the bureaucracy, then that responsibility

devolves on those of us who are not tied to the bureaucracy, who understand that the trade union bureaucracy is one of the most backward, conservative and often reactionary forces in the British labour movement — the central link binding that movement to the capitalist state.

Self-defence

Socialists and trade union militants need to do two things. We must campaign in the labour movement for the movement to confront the Tory government in self-defence.

We still have immense strength. The rot, the debilitating lack of self-confidence, the urge to do a deal with the Tories — that all comes from the top of the labour movement.

Strike figures are lower than for many years, but in a whole range of limited struggles over the last year the rank and file has shown a powerful will to fight.

Look at BL: treason by Duffy and weakness among convenors like Jack Adams led to the collapse of the attempt to get concerted national action last November. It has been followed for three months by a rash of struggles throughout Edwardes' empire — unfortunately lacking co-ordination.

Smashed

Edwardes could have been smashed. The Tories can be smashed. We must argue inside the labour movement for the preparation of a general strike to throw out anti-union legis-

lation.

Immediately we must argue for a one day general strike — or a series of such strikes — to mobilise and galvanise the rank and file, so that the labour movement demonstrates to itself that it still has a lot of strength to deploy.

Trade union branches, shop stewards' committees and Labour Parties must raise a crescendo of demands that the labour movement does what Tony Benn has called on it to do: break off collaboration with the government and all the state agencies.

Use Parliament to agitate and obstruct and confront them: refuse collaboration in every area from Parliament to the NEDC.

That is the way to rouse up the labour movement for a fight back.

Respond

The conference called by Socialist Organiser, London Labour Briefing and others on trade union democracy will be discussing the Tory attack on the unions as the most threatening immediate challenge the labour movement faces. We will be discussing how to respond to it, hammering out policies, and forging the rank and file organisational sinews for the necessary fightback.

We will discuss plans to further the fight to democratise the unions and to break the power of the bureaucracy, which is once again showing itself to be the best friend the ruling class and its Tories have within the labour movement.



July 1972: mass action against Heath's law

TUC LEADERS - APRIL 5

Place your bets for the Kremlin handicap!

THE inexorable march of old age and death through the ranks of the Kremlin bureaucracy has for some time prompted speculation on the probable successor to 75 year-old President Brezhnev.

But a new touch has been added during the past week with revelations of some of the scandals involving Brezhnev's family and their political cronies on the party's leading Politburo.

In particular Brezhnev's (53 year old) daughter Galina has been linked both with a prominent diamond and currency speculator Boris Tzigan ('Boris the Gypsy') and with the police chief in charge of investigating him.

Another close friend of Galina is another gold and diamond speculator — the head of Soviet State Circuses Anatoly Kolevatov.

Both speculators have been arrested in the last three months and are under investigation.

But more damaging still, it appears that the recent death of the deputy head of the KGB, Semyon Tsvigun was suicide, following a major confrontation with Brezhnev's chief ideological body-guard — the late Mikhail Suslov.

The conflict was apparently around Tsvigun's investigations into top level party corruption, which threatened to spread their tentacles to embrace Brezhnev's son Yuri's activities in his lucrative post as Deputy Foreign Trade Minister. Suslov himself died a week after his exertions in silencing Tsvigun.

But among Brezhnev's surviving allies in beating back any probe of the seamy affairs of his family and their jet-setting friends are three other Politburo leaders who avail themselves of a notoriously luxurious style of life — Andrei Kirilenko, Konstantin Chernenko, and Vladimir Shcherbitsky.

The investigation is being pressed home by none other than KGB chief Yuri Andropov — who as a Politburo member himself, plainly has his own views on who should succeed Brezhnev.

Unlike similar scandals in the capitalist countries these bureaucrats are playing for high stakes. While capitalists can engage in indiscretions secure in the knowledge that their private wealth will remain intact, in Russia the losers could find themselves rapidly stripped of all of their present lavish privileges and pilloried by their rivals as convenient scapegoats for the rampant corruption of the bureaucracy as a whole.

In this context, while Andropov tries to fix the odds and arrange the result, Brian Lucas looks at the runners in the race for succession at the Kremlin.

BREZHNEV, throughout his tenure of office has conspicuously avoided grooming, or more importantly, allowing the natural emergence of a successor.

It is an anomaly of the highly structured bureaucratic system of the degenerated workers' state, that no set procedure exists for the ascension into power of a subordinate on the death or retirement of the leader.

Instead the leader will be decided in much the same way as the Vatican chooses the next Pope, by manoeuvres in smoke-clad backrooms.

As to who will succeed to the throne in the Kremlin, the race is wide open. Socialist Organiser book-makers were quoting odds of two-to-one on for a triumvirate, 5 to 1 for one outright winner, and 6 to 1 that Brezhnev died five years ago and at the moment power is held by an android!

Though there are approximately 24 runners in this race, only 12 of these can be regarded as serious contenders.

They are the Politburo, as it stands today.

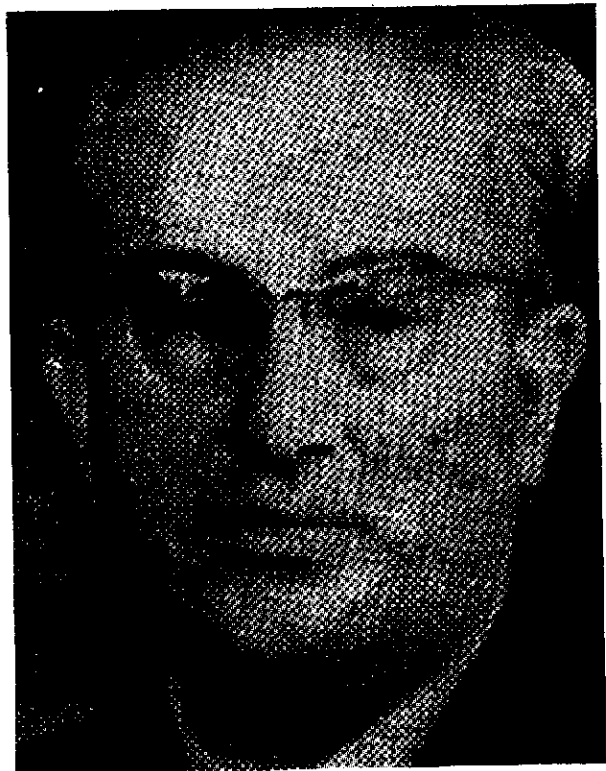
But even within these 12 there are some rank outsiders who stand little or no chance.

Outsiders

Under any circumstances Arvid Pel'she must be discounted. He is 82 now and although his membership of the Politburo goes back to Stalin's day his age — and position as the secretary of the Latvian CP — must exclude him from the top post.

Only four others can really be regarded as outsiders, and two of these mainly on the criterion of age.

In their 50s, Grigori



Andropov Romanov and Mikhail Gorbachev are very much the babies of the Politburo! But these cannot be totally disregarded if Brezhnev clings onto life for another five years.

Romanov is certainly a name for the future. He is seen as the leading member of a new generation of super-bureaucrats. Other leading members of this group are Dolgikh and Ryabov, but for the moment, at least, these can be left out of the reckoning.

A third outsider is Kunayev. Although he has been a Politburo member for a long time his membership seems to be due to the fact that he is both First Secretary of the Kazak CP and a close personal friend of Brezhnev!

Another personal associate of Brezhnev's who



long one. It is a good thing that in our country this is only considered middle aged." (!!!)

There are, however, doubts as to whether he is destined for any higher office — he only joined the Politburo as a full member in 1980 and although his rise to premiership can be seen as somewhat meteoric in Soviet terms, the premiership does tend to be a dead end position in terms of political advancement.

However, Tikhonov must be considered as a possible member of any power-sharing group who may take control in the immediate future.

Gerontocracy

Another member of a power-sharing gerontocracy would inevitably be Andre Kirilenko. At the age of 75, he has spent 18 years in the Politburo and 14 in the Central Committee and he holds the post of secretary to the party.

It is from this post that all three leaders since Lenin have emerged, but Kirilenko is extremely unlikely to take sole charge; instead it could be argued that a more fruitful occupation for him would be to look around to find a successor to him as top party organiser.

Another member of the "well over 70" group is defence minister Dmitri Ustinov. Usually when his name is mentioned, it is accompanied by a glowing reference like "highly gifted", though quite why or what he is highly gifted at is not specified.

He would certainly be the choice of the powerful military/industrial sector of the bureaucracy with which he seems to have a special relationship.

By the process of age and

pedigree elimination we are left with the four best bets: Gromyko, Andropov, Chernenko and Grishin.

Andrei Gromyko is probably the most difficult member of the Politburo to place. As foreign minister he is very well known to Western television screens, perhaps only second to Brezhnev.

However, inside the USSR his prestige is not quite so high. He was made a full member of the Politburo in 1973 and has enjoyed a position in the top six thereafter.

But at 71 years of age, he is no spring chicken, and he suffered a setback in the personality ratings in the 26th CPSU Congress last year, at the hands of Brezhnev.

Not only was he demoted in the seating order (usually a reliable source of information as to who is in favour at that particular moment), but his chairmanship of the conference was also put back after all the top leaders and Shcherbitsky, Kunayev and Pel'she.

So how much influence and support Gromyko will eventually get is a puzzle.

Another contender for the top post who joined the Politburo in 1973 is Yuri Andropov.

Mystery

There is little mystery about this man. He has a solid army background, rising to the post of General (if Poland is regarded as a trend setting for the Soviet bloc, Andropov must be the man for the USSR).

He has for many years been the head of the KGB but despite this "recommendation" he is said to be a cultured, well-educated and able man, possessing a

"solid" political background.

Being "only" 67 is also advantageous. The largest single factor that will prevent Andropov from reaching the top is his lack of any broad support among the party secretaries. But I think he will be among the front runners.

Rising star

The favourite of the bi-monthly magazine "Problems of Communism" is Chernenko. It is incredible to note that Chernenko would have qualified for an old age pension in Britain four years ago. However, his career has blossomed in those years and again he is seen as something of a rising star.

The seating arrangements of the 26th Party Congress put him above anyone except Suslov. Another remarkable factor in his rise to the top echelons has been that he is nominally in charge of agriculture while in the last four years agriculture has been a total disaster in the USSR.

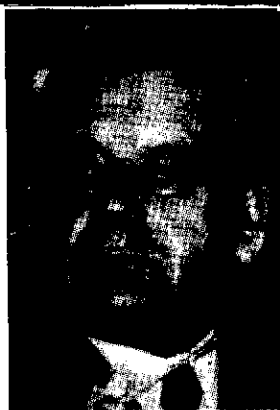
However, Chernenko seems to have exonerated himself from any blame for these calamities.

Perhaps the major reason for this is his close personal friendship with Brezhnev.

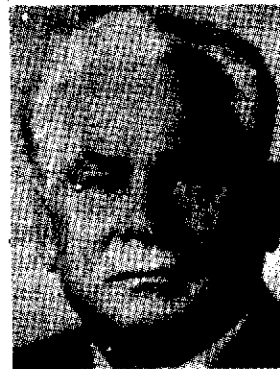
Chernenko comes as close as anyone to being Brezhnev's confidant and advisor. These factors may augur well for eventual takeover — provided Brezhnev himself does not go down in a tide of scandal and corruption.

Brian Lucas's tip for the top, is the head of the CP in Moscow, Viktor Grishin. A spritely 67 year old, he has had 11 years at the top.

He has consistently come before the likes of Gromyko in seating arrangement and he is



Kirilenko



Chernenko

without a doubt a "hard-liner".

It seems to have been Grishin who first moved for the invasion of Afghanistan, and he has always argued for a tougher line in Poland.

With the US plunging into a massive arms build-up associated with a new type of cold war politics, the Kremlin may feel the need for a hard man at the top, and Grishin seems to fit the bill.

Some commentators tend to dismiss Grishin as not capable for the job and better suited to his present position in Moscow, but it is that position in the mainstream of Russian political affairs that has enabled Grishin to manoeuvre himself into the extremely healthy position he is today.

The problem with favourites in this race is that it is very much like the Grand National rather than the Gold Cup, in other words they don't always run to form and they can get pulled down by some stray runner which has no hope of success for himself.

The main features of the winner of this race will be the ability to conform, ruthlessness to get to the top position and ability to live a long time.

On past form the characteristics the successor will have to have are: an age of ten years younger than the incumbent; close association with him; a long tenure in both the Politburo and the Central Committee; and to be an ethnic Russian.

However, the face of the Soviet oligarchy is changing, antiquity is now a prerequisite. Although Stalin was 73 and Khrushchev 70 when they died the average age of the Politburo was then much younger. Khrushchev was 59 when he took control and Brezhnev 58.

The major reason why the average age has increased quite so dramatically is basically due to a dearth of the old-style purges.

Whether this will start a new trend of leadership where one geriatric passes on control to another so vastly increasing the frequency of change of leader, we have yet to see.

This also could have the by-product of increasing the instability at the top of the bureaucratic machine.

So the most likely outcome of the Kremlin chase is some form of dead heat, with the top prize being shared by three runners, quite which permutation of bureaucrats will very much depend on how long Brezhnev lives — and how long he stays in office.

Fares crunch CAN'T PAY - MUST FIGHT!

AT THE time of going to press, Wednesday's strike call on London's buses and underground trains is expected to receive substantial support from London Transport's 60,000 workforce.

The one-day strike was called by all LT unions (acting together for the first time ever) in protest against the Law Lords' decision in December to outlaw the Greater London Council's 'Fares Fair' policy which cut fares by 32% last October.

The strike call, as part of a larger campaign involving a publicity campaign launched by the unions and the GLC, received unanimous endorsement at a meeting of 600 shop stewards and staff representatives in mid-February. Support for the strike strengthened last week when both the TGWU and the NUR, the major LT unions, made the strike official.

Staff cuts

The doubling of fares on March 21 itself has serious implications for jobs in the coming three years. But the Law Lords decision has also forced LT to announce immediate staff cuts totalling 5,000 by the end of 1983. The strike is also against these cuts.

Many LT workers have criticised the one-day strike as an action quite incapable of winning the campaign on its own. Nevertheless, a solid strike on Wednesday will show the power of the workforce to take action which can force a major retreat by

by Andrew Rossing

the government.

LT workers face three hurdles in preparing for decisive action: working for a co-ordinated response; overcoming LT management's disinformation, specifically designed to create a false sense of job security, and cutting through the variety of strategies touted by union and GLC leaders.

The basis of an all LT shop stewards committee met four weeks ago, but with the immediate priorities of winning the call for, and then winning support for, the one-day stoppage, it has not met since.

A further meeting is now planned for Sunday 14th, which leaves only a week to act before the fares increase and cuts. A recall of the February delegate conferences to confirm future action is the obvious and urgent step.

LT management has tried to reassure workers that though it intends to cut 5,000 jobs by the end of 1983, there will be no redundancies. This argument can be destroyed.

5,000 will leave LT over two years through normal staff turnover. But inevitably, they will not leave in the right places.

At risk

Particularly at risk are LT's 7000 conductors. Some 40% of buses are 'one-person operated'. Yet in 1970, LT

was planning for 100% one person operation of buses by the end of the decade.

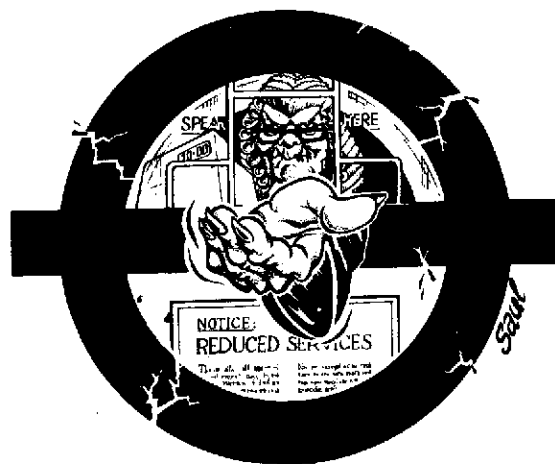
And the fewer the

'Viable'

passengers, the more 'viable' are single person operated buses.

Conductors will only be retained in the more heavily loaded central London area. Conductors employed in the suburbs will either be made redundant or have to travel (by car?) very early in the morning or late at night to get to or from work.

Routes will also be cut and the more lightly loaded ones in the suburbs will bear the brunt, leaving drivers there with the same problems as conductors.



But they voted for the fare rises...

The strongest reaction so far, though, has been to the announcement of 15% to 20% cuts in rush hour underground train services from March 21. Provided NUR leaders' protests are turned into an official instruction train crews may refuse to operate the new timetables.

Network

LT will send them home and this will bring a major part of London's commuter

network and all of the centre's rail services to a halt.

Fares

'Can't Pay, Won't Pay', a campaign initiated by two GLC Labour Councillors, Valerie Wise and John McDonnell, is pressing the public to refuse to pay the new fares, instead carrying on with the old fares from March 21.

This has the obvious attraction of being able to unite LT passengers and workers in joint action against the government, at least over the fares implications of the Law Lords' judgement.

LT would run out of money in a matter of days and short of effectively forcing a closedown of the bus and underground networks, the government would have no real alternative to a massive climbdown.

Toleration

Success will need more than mere toleration and non-harassment by conductors and ticket collectors of passengers trying to pay the old fare. To have a big enough impact on LT fares income, will require the LT workers involved trying to

Eventually the whole GLC Labour Group buckled under and voted for the budget including the fare rises. But the first break from the Labour Group decision to vote against fare rises was on January 26.

Ken Livingstone moved the implementation of the fare rises and 25 Labour members voted for:

Bramall, Branagan, Davies, Dawe, Dimson, Edwards, Garside, Handy, Harrington, Hart, Hinds, Judge, Little, Livingstone, McBrearty, McIntosh, Morgan, Nicholson, Ross, Sieve, Stead, Turney, Ward, Williams, Wilson.

Nineteen voted against:

Banks, Boateng, Bundred, Daniel, Davies B, Gough, Hammond, Harris, Herbert, McDonnell, Mackay, Moore, Morrell, Pitt, Rossi, Ward, Wetzel, Wise, Wood.

charge the old fares to all passengers. The tactic was tried successfully in Milan where it had precisely this union direction.

But if success needs the participation of the LT workers, then the difficulty is that management would hit back with disciplinary action against the (relatively few) workers directly involved with ticket issue and fare collection. To prevent this, all other LT workers would have to be ready to come to their immediate defence.

Strike

'Can't Pay, Won't Pay' and the real threat of strike action must go together if management is to be dissuaded from such disciplinary action.

A recall conference of shop stewards and staff representatives would be the ideal forum to decide whether to go for 'Can't Pay Won't Pay' with the threat of strike action to back it up or go directly for an all-out strike on a given date. The first of these is much the harder to put into effect and many may feel that it is an inadequate response to the jobs and wages questions.

Either way, all LT unions need to prepare now for strike action.

Ken Livingstone told last weekend's London Labour Party Annual Conference that he supported the March 10 stoppage and is now reported in the press as supporting any future strike action though at the same time suggesting that a 'Can't Pay, Won't Pay' tactic would be more imaginative.

If the GLC leadership added its weight to the 'Can't Pay, Won't Pay' campaign (which so far it has steadfastly refused to do) then its support and chances of success would be many times greater. Instead, Livingstone offered the Conference the prospect of continuing the propaganda campaign - until the next General Election if necessary. These are empty words.

Subsidy

The GLC has put the case over well so far for restoring subsidy to London Transport and reversing the Law Lords' decision. But the crucial question is whether the GLC leadership and the Labour Party as a whole is willing to urge action - 'Can't Pay, Won't Pay' and an all-out strike - to make its policies stick in the face of government opposition.

If it is not, then no amount of rhetoric will convince the working class to turn out at the polls to support it. And rhetoric, whilst acting on the government's terms, has already meant the GLC approving an LT budget for 1982 which has only a 5% pay increase.

Campaigning till the next election will count for nothing besides this kind of thing.

The London Labour Conference allowed itself to take neither debate nor votes on any of these pressing questions. An emergency resolution calling for Labour Party support for strike action was kicked out by Standing Orders Committee, who were allowed to get away with it by Conference.

The transport debate was squeezed into a mere 30 minutes.

London Labour Parties must fight to get the GLC Executive and the GLC to campaign for action. London Borough elections in May will depend upon it.

*Meeting for London Transport workers to organise for immediate future action, 14 March at 7pm at the Prince Albert pub, Wharfedale Road, London N1.

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.

LAMBETH/SOUTHWARK Thursday March 18: The fight for trade union democracy. Lambeth Town Hall, 8pm.

WOMEN AND TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE At the Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies Dept., Leeds University on Saturday March 20. Registration (£1 waged, 50p unwaged) from TUCRIC, 6 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 2 (Tel. 396333). Cheques payable to TUCRIC.

ABORTION AND THE HEALTH SERVICE Conference called by the National Abortion Campaign and the Abortion Law Reform Association, on March 13, 10.30am to 5pm at 21 Star St., London W2. Registration: £5 sponsored, £2.50 unsponsored, 50p unwaged from NAC, 374 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1.

MARXISM London Workers Socialist League classes on basic Marxism. Next one: The general law of capitalist accumulation. Friday 19 March, 7.30pm. For venue write to PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

'THE POLITICS of the Socialist Workers Party' -

Public meeting, Transport House, Islington, Liverpool, 7pm. Sponsored by Kirkdale CLP, TGWU 6/612, and Tuebrook ward LP.

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.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.

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.

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

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.

TURKEY

Turkey Solidarity Campaign Democratic Platform Speakers' Tour

Wednesday March 24: 11am press conference at St Bride's Institute, off Fleet

Fight back -don't take cover!

IN THE Science Column in SO 74, Les Hearn argues for Labour councils to reject the half-hearted attempts at protection against nuclear attack offered by the government and draw up their own counter-proposals for civil defence.

I agree that we should argue for Labour councils not to participate in Civil Defence exercises, especially since the Government's form of civil defence is based on preserving some form of capitalist "law and order" not only after a nuclear war but also, it seems to me, during a major upheaval, such as a general strike, which threatened the existence of capitalist rule.

However, I feel it would be wrong for us to argue for Labour councils, to counterpose their own ideas for civil defence to those of the government. In my

view, the only real protection against nuclear war is for the working class to disarm the capitalists.

Arguing for "better" civil defence can only deflect us from that aim. We should argue for Labour councils to use their rejection of civil defence measures to agitate for the working class to disarm the imperialists.

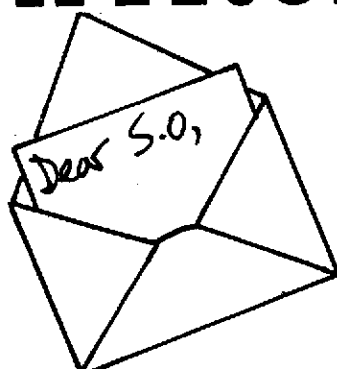
Alternatives

Nuclear war, even if originally limited to Europe would lead to the destruction of not only most of the population but also of much of the material base of capitalist society. It is on this material base that we seek to build a socialist society.

We should fight for socialist alternatives to it, not seek protection from its barbarism.

Will Adams
Cambridge

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.

PORN AND POLICIES

DAVE SPENCER suffers more from muddled thinking than I do. (SO74 letter).

My point is not that pornography is not sexist, but that the way to fight or destroy sexism is not by bans and censorship, whether these come from the state or the women's

movement.

If pornography is to be banned because it is sexist, then we must be consistent and ban everything that is sexist. Dave Spencer is in favour of shutting down sex-shops — is he then in favour of closing every newsagent in the country?

He should be, because they all stock the Sun — not to mention explicitly pornographic magazines.

If he thinks the way to challenge sexism in newspapers is to 'rip them up and tear them down', then where does this policy begin and end? Presumably we would have to tear to pieces every newspaper from the Daily Telegraph to the Militant. And what about novels and paintings?

John Ruskin destroyed all of Turner's erotic paintings after Turner's death. It is probably fair to assume that these paintings were sexist — did Ruskin do a service to women? Not only did he not do a service to women, but he also did an immense disservice to art. I would have liked to have seen those paintings, sexist or not.

It may be a tired old liberal argument, but it is nevertheless true that banned books and magazines gain a certain mystique simply because they are proscribed. Even if it were possible or correct, banning pornography would not get rid of it.

Dave is right to point out the way in which the 'sexual revolution' has benefited men more than women. But the answer to this is not to go back to the days of puritanism and monogamy: the gains may not be unqualified, but they are nevertheless gains.

The way to fight men's distortion of our own sexuality is to assert women's sexuality, to produce women's erotic literature.

Unless we resist the creeping reactionary movement against sexual liberation (such as it is) none of this will be possible.

I do not argue against banning pornography simply because Mary Whitehouse wants it. I recognise that feminist arguments are the opposite to Whitehouse's. But the attitude that pornography should be banned, torn up, etc., converts us from fighting an important part of the reactionaries' policy of restoring happy family life, putting women back in their allotted place in the home, persecuting homosexuals and so on.

This anti-pornography legislation will be used against women, not for us.
ANN EVANS,
Lambeth

INTERNATIONAL ACTION

SUPPORT TURKEY SPEAKERS' TOUR



AS part of the Turkey Solidarity Campaign's drive to draw attention in Britain to the plight of trade unionists in Turkey who are facing death penalties by the military prosecutors of the Junta, we have planned the following event.

This is a tour around Britain of several leading members of DISK (the progressive trade union confederation), TOB-MER (the teachers union representing 100% of unionised teachers), TMMOB (the union which represents all the architects and engineers in Turkey), Tabirler Birliği (the doctors' union) and the owner of the newspaper, Demokrat, which was the sixth largest daily newspaper before the coup when it was banned.

Abolished

DISK had about 800,000 members before it was abolished by the military regime immediately after they seized power. All the people who will speak are presently exiled in Europe.

The purpose of the tour is to create an awareness in Britain of the threat to trade unionism in Turkey, and to point out the links between the two countries.

These are both political and racial, and include common membership of the Council of Europe and NATO, IMF links and British firms having investments in

Turkey, such as British Leyland, International Harvester, and Lucas Electric Diesel Motors.

Furthermore, the present British government gives unconditional support to the five-man Turkish junta as witnessed by the £15 million military aid package proposed, and by various statements made by conservative MPs after the coup. The speakers will be able to answer questions about the latest situation of their 52 colleagues from DISK whose trial began on 24 December 1981 and who all face death penalties; the many thousands of trade unionists who have been held for long periods without trial or being allowed access to their relatives or lawyers, and about the tortures being done to them in the prisons.

Finally, they want to discuss what sort of effective solidarity actions the British labour movement may be able to take in order to help their brothers and sisters in Turkey.

*Give your name, or the name of your organisation as a sponsor of the tour.

*Help to support the tour financially (it will cost in the region of £2,000), sending a donation to Box 5965, London WC3XX. Cheques payable Turkey Solidarity Campaign.

*Organise meetings which the speakers invited. These could be the form of one to one meetings with MPs, trade union leaders, etc., workplace meetings, informal discussions or larger events.

Details of tour meetings see page 11.



Turkey Solidarity Campaign: Box 5965, London WC3XX.

SCIENCE

by Les Hearn

How fall-out kills

THE long-term effects of nuclear war are caused by radio-active fall-out (particles of dust made radio-active and thrown into the air by a nuclear explosion).

Most fall-out comes down locally — in our example of a one-megaton bomb on the centre of London, with a stiff breeze towards Manchester, heavy deposits of fall-out occurred as far away as Glasgow. Up to one-fifth of the fall-out may be shot higher into the atmosphere and be carried around the earth by the prevailing winds, most staying in the northern hemisphere (where it was produced).

Long-term

Most will descend in a belt around the world over the next four weeks. The longer it stays in the air the less radioactivity it will contain as this gradually breaks down.

Only the longer-lived radioactive elements (Caesium-137, Carbon-14

and Strontium-90) will be left.

Cancer

But what are the long term effects on humans of radiation? There are two types of long-term effects — one is on those who have survived immediate exposure to fall-out, the other is on people who may be thousands of miles away.

In the first case there is a greater risk of cancers — in our example, 5-10% of the survivors of an LD50 dose of 450 rads* (Derby area) would develop cancers.

Even in Glasgow, something like 1,000 cancers will be caused — from a bomb in London!

A similar number of genetic (i.e. inherited) handicaps will also be caused. Other long term effects suffered by some of the victims of immediate fall-out will be cataracts, leukaemia, retarded development of unborn children and infertility of

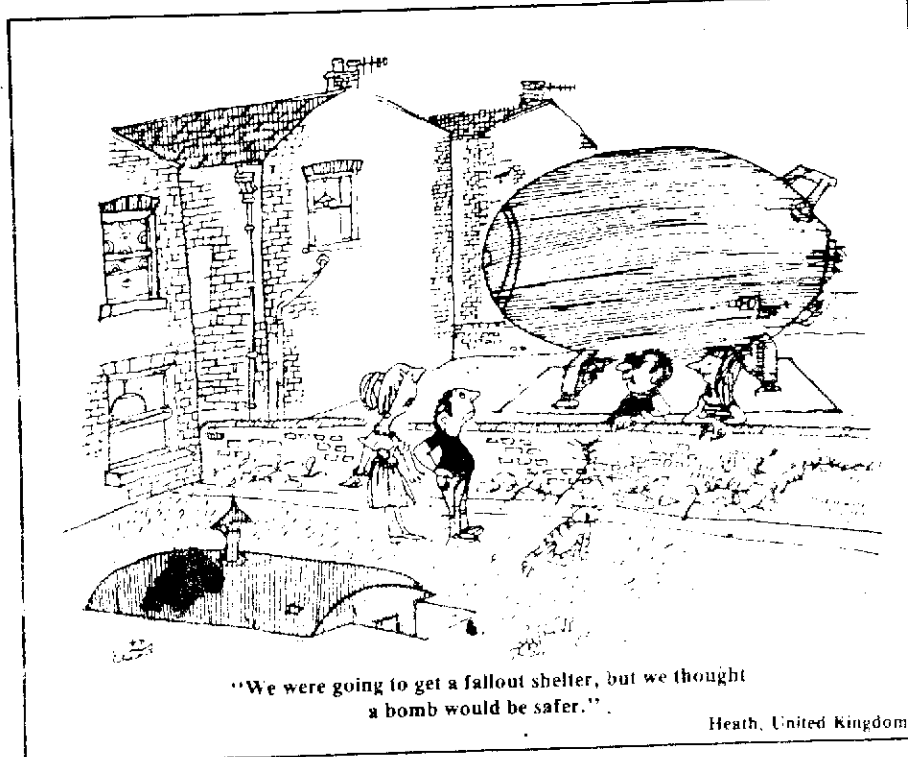
men lasting for years.

There will also be an increase in stillbirths and mental retardation of some newborn children.

Now what about delayed fall-out? This will pose a risk to anyone in the world — more so in the north. For example, there was a small increase (about 5%) in leukaemia cases, when atom bomb tests were taking place in the atmosphere. An all-out nuclear war would pose a far greater threat.

The long-lived elements mentioned previously are easily absorbed by plant life which will eventually be eaten by various animals including us. Strontium-90 is very similar to calcium and goes straight to the bones where it can cause leukaemia while Caesium-137 and Carbon-14 will go to all parts of the body where they can cause other types of cancer.

*The LD50 dose is the amount of radiation that will kill 50% of people who receive it.



Heath, United Kingdom

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

Labour Poland rally-BUILD TRADE UNION SOLIDARITY ON IRELAND

Bruce Robinson reports on the Labour Movement Conference on Ireland on February 27.

AFTER a prolonged period of shamefaced inaction, at last an official labour movement event has been staged to mobilise solidarity for Solidarnosc.

A Labour Party rally will be held in Central Hall, Westminster on the evening of Wednesday March 16.

Chaired by Joan Lester, the meeting will feature a mixture of speakers ranging

from Dennis Healey and Roy Evans of the ISTC on the right, through Clive Jenkins (representing the TUC) to Eric Heffer on the left as one of the few Labour MPs to have taken an active interest in building labour movement support.

Solidarnosc activist Zbigniew Kowalewski is expected to fly from Paris to speak at the rally.

But there does not appear to have been as much work devoted to building the attendance at the rally as there has in assembling a platform of speakers.

It is vital that socialists support the event and prevent any attempt by Labour bureaucrats to use a poor turn-out as an excuse for further inaction on Poland.

The target must be the mobilisation of the Labour Party and TUC in concrete solidarity action — fund-raising, demonstrations and propaganda in support of Solidarnosc, and the fight for trade union blacking of food (with the exception of food and medical supplies) with the Jaruzelski junta.

Hands off El Salvador

by Harry Sloan

THE Thatcher government has been the only European government to lend its backing to the farcical "elections" scheduled for El Salvador at the end of March.

Two British observers will fly to the country where, according to the latest Amnesty International reports, the savage activities of right wing murder squads against working class militants and opponents of the regime are backed up more or less openly by the so-called "forces of law and order" — the army and police.

They will spectate from a safe distance on elections which are boycotted by the main progressive political opponents of the regime, the Democratic Revolutionary



US-backed candidate Duarte Front (FDR).

The political strength of the FDR flows from the mass popular support of the war in the countryside being

waged by the guerrillas of the FMLN — a war which junta chief Napoleon Duarte now admits his army is losing.

Dragged

As a result the Reagan government is being dragged more and more into open involvement through economic and military aid, the provision of equipment and advanced training, and the sending of US "advisors" to the battle zones.

But as the tide continues to flow towards the anti-imperialist fighters, the "hawks" of the Pentagon and in the junta are looking increasingly to direct US military support.

An opinion poll con-

ducted last week by the right wing magazine Newsweek reveals overwhelming hostility within the US to any such intervention.

Now is the time to step up the fight to turn such anti-war sentiment into an active campaign by the international labour movement in solidarity with the fight in El Salvador.

A demonstration in London with this objective has been called on March 28 — to coincide with the phony elections.

It begins at Speakers Corner at 1pm, and will go to a rally in Trafalgar Square.

And all labour movement bodies should affiliate to the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign.

Solidarity or sectarianism?

by Harry Sloan



'Don't dig there
Dig it elsewhere
You're digging it round
It ought to be square
The shape of it's wrong
It's much too long
And you can't put a hole
Where a hole don't belong'

These were the words of the bowler hatted gent giving arbitrary instructions to a labourer at work in the old Bernard Cribbins song.

But they seem equally apt as an explanation for the curious display of sectarian hostility by Socialist Challenge to this Saturday's labour movement demonstration in support of Solidarnosc.

Socialist Challenge has now appointed itself the arbiter of solidarity activity — and decided for its own reasons, to publicly attack a demonstration which it has been repeatedly urged to co-sponsor. From such behaviour nobody can benefit.

The demonstration was called at the initiative of Socialist Organiser and London Labour Briefing as the continuation of appeals by both papers — at first supported by Socialist Challenge — for a campaign of labour movement support to Solidarnosc independent of the Thatcher/Reagan cold war propaganda blitz.

It has been supported by the London Regional Executive of the Labour Party, by ASTMS No. 7 Divisional Council, and by a number of CLPs and union branches.

Ken Livingstone has given a news conference to support it, and Reg Race MP — and the Solidarnosc Trade

Union Working Group are to speak at the rally.

It has been advertised by Socialist Worker and Labour Weekly. And it has been opposed by only one tendency — Socialist Challenge.

To justify this curious stance, Socialist Challenge has taken a whole page of their March 4 edition. Readers are treated to an introduction of innocuous generalities on the need for labour movement solidarity with Solidarnosc, the failure of either the TUC or the Labour Party leadership to offer such solidarity, and the fight that has been waged by rank and file socialists to

rectify this weakness.

The article points to the concrete example of such work done in Scotland — carefully omitting the leading role of Socialist Organiser supporters in the local committee.

It correctly underlines the need to build local labour movement support for Solidarnosc:

"now, through financial aid, adoption of internees and other suitable means."

We quite agree. And we agree when author Martin Meteyard goes on to insist that the campaign must "build up such a head of steam in the labour movement on this issue that the TUC and Labour Party

leaders are themselves forced to organise action in support of Solidarnosc."

Their proposals to take such a fight into the labour movement are positive. But then comes a curious sentence which marks the switch from general discussion to particularised sectarianism. From calls for local, rank and file activities in support of Solidarnosc, Meteyard suddenly turns round and insists:

"Nothing less will do than for the TUC and Labour leaders to organise a national demonstration in support of Solidarnosc, a national tour of the labour movement by Solidarnosc activists, and a national financial appeal to help Solidarnosc rebuild its shattered apparatus."

Nothing less? Does this mean that the local demonstrations jointly sponsored by Socialist Challenge and Socialist Organiser in places such as Oxford, Glasgow and Birmingham should not have occurred?

Is this what Meteyard means when he declares:

"Any attempt by rank and file activists to substitute themselves for this process risks harming rather than helping the cause of Solidarnosc in Britain."

From this haughty position Meteyard launches into the main purpose of his article — vigorously denouncing the demonstration called by SO and Briefing.

With a lordly wave of the hand he dismisses Socialist Organiser and Briefing as "two small groups in the Labour Party".

And ignoring the evid-



Glasgow demo: should they have waited for the TUC?

ence of at least one meeting on solidarity work convened by SO and attended by leading Socialist Challenge supporters, he falsely claims that the demonstration was called "with no attempt to consult" activists who have been organising support for Solidarnosc.

Concealing the fact that the march is backed by the London Region Labour Party, he claims that there has been "no attempt to take such a proposal through the official structures of the movement."

Meteyard goes on to make the ludicrous suggestion that the march could "seriously set back" the fight for solidarity because it could be used by (unnamed) "supporters of martial law [?!] as an example of how little 'national labour movement backing' there is for Solidarnosc."

Following this catalogue of falsifications and inventions, Meteyard announces that — for all his earlier pronouncements in favour of building "local labour movement support for Solidarnosc now" — the policy of Socialist Challenge is not to build this

campaign for support in London, but to urge us to call it off!

What do they offer instead, "now"?

"We urge the organisers to... commit themselves to working with other supporters of Solidarnosc in Britain to force the TUC and Labour Party leaders into action on this question."

Beneath the fig-leaf of quibbles and objections, therefore, Socialist Challenge proposes no tangible course of action for socialists to build support for Solidarnosc in the London area!

Minimise support

Blinded by sectarian and factional motives, their prime objective is simply to minimise support for the march that has been called.

This single-minded sectarianism reaches the level where this whole page supposedly on building labour movement solidarity fails seriously to advertise the Labour Party's own national rally in support of Solidarnosc in London on March 16!

If the conference is not just to be a re-run of this one it is important to focus it on deciding on activity and in the meantime to organise a solid base of support in the unions and Labour Parties to make it really representative.

To this end, the Labour Committee on Ireland National Council last week-end decided to call on the committee to focus on building up the trade union groups initiated at the conference.

Union groups

But it was only after a Socialist Organiser supporter insisted, from the floor, that it was agreed to put aside time for delegates from different unions to meet. The groups that met must form the core of Irish solidarity caucuses in the unions.

It was also decided that the committee which organised the conference should remain in existence and organise another conference at the end of the year.





Industrial News

Blackening could win 'turkey war'

BLACKING action can help win the strike by 1,200 workers in the Bernard Matthews turkey processing factories.

Some 16 year old workers are on £48.45 for a 40 hour week. Matthews is offering an across the board rise of £5.67 which would

raise the adult minimum wage to £76.71 for 40 hours. The National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers - noting that Matthews made £4½ million profit last year - is demanding the full rise awarded by the Agricultural Wages Board, twice Matthews' offer.

Ironically, Matthews was helped to make that profit by the union - which, instead of throwing its resources into improving its members' conditions, has campaigned against imported French turkeys!

The TGWU - with which

the NUAAW will merge on April 6 - has backed the dispute, though 12 TGWU drivers have been sacked for refusing to cross picket lines.

Contributions: Strike Fund, c/o Land Worker, 308 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.

Left-wing victory in Cowley election

by Bill Peters

BOB FRYER was re-elected TGWU convenor of the BL Cowley Assembly Plant last Wednesday. Fryer received 710 votes in the secret ballot held in the plant.

The right wing candidate Frank Corti received 216 votes and Tom White of the Workers Revolutionary Party received 129 votes in a 45% poll of TGWU members. (The poll was slightly below average - its size reduced by the strict administration of the ballot which required attendance at an appointed time and the production of a current contribution card).

Despite White's position as a leading member of Gerry Healy's Workers Revolutionary Party, the result was an important victory for the left. It represents the biggest majority for the left candidate in the convenors elections in the plant since the secret ballot was introduced in 1974 in order to remove the left leadership and install the right wing.

The WRP's daily newspaper 'Newsline' has struggled to cover Tom White's humiliating defeat, since in previous elections he has topped the poll for the deputy convenor positions and WRP members have been led to believe that he was about to win this election for convenor.

Ducked

Thursday's 'Newsline' ducked the issue, simply printing a few obscure words reporting Fryer's victory and noting that Tom White got "over 120 votes".

On Friday, Healy recovered himself and produced a lengthy "theoretical" rationalisation of White's defeat for the consumption of bewildered WRP members (who may have got hold of the voting figures).

Fryer's victory, he said, "represents the hesitations that are apparent in the working class as they face the most momentous struggles in their history."

(Still no voting figures are given - this time Fryer is said to have won by a "clear majority").

Blame

To blame the workforce and point to hesitation is wrong from every standpoint. The reality is that following repeated sell-outs,

BL workers are looking for firm leadership. But this aspiration does not lead them to vote for Tom White.

Far from it. The fact is that White has worked long and hard to develop a base amongst right wing activists in the plant. He has become inseparable from a number of leading right wing stewards and ex-stewards who were ardent and loyal supporters of Reg Parsons and active supporters of the witch-hunting of the Cowley 9 in 1977-8.

Both camps

These people openly campaigned for him throughout the election. White, therefore, was trying to do what he had successfully achieved in the past in the

deputy elections - draw votes from both camps.

He wanted to pull a substantial part of the right wing vote and at the same time pick up votes from militants who have been alienated from Fryer by the bad positions he has taken on a number of issues in the past year.

In the event, things went very differently. The right wing ORMO campaign (Organisation Representing Moderate Opinion) backed Corti. And the importance of the convenor position brought the spotlight on White which had not happened before.

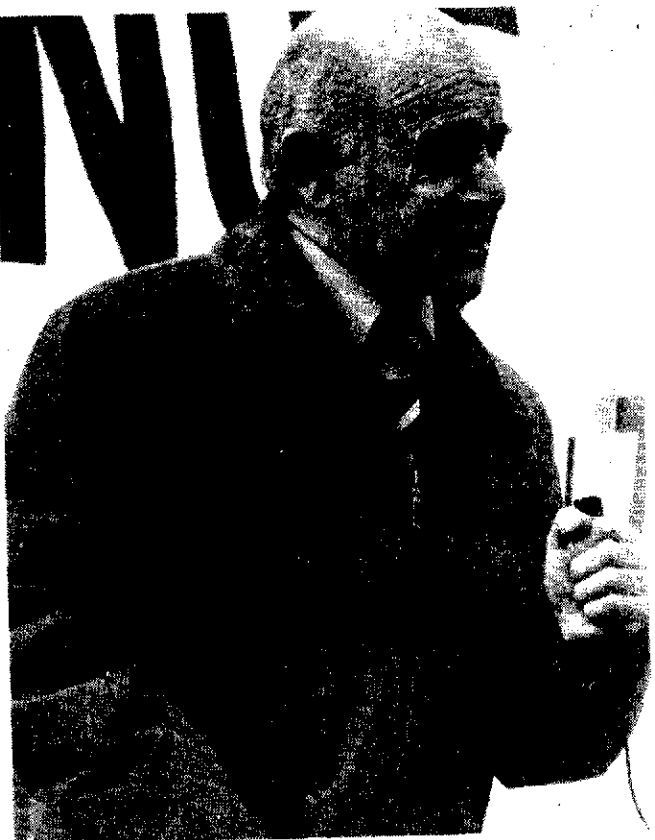
The right wing ensured that his membership of the

WRP, normally kept out of sight, received publicity. At the same time attention was drawn to White's appalling record in the plant which prevented him from receiving any support at all from left activists amongst the stewards.

(The only left support he received was from the SWP who mass leafleted the plant on the day before the ballot with a leaflet which could only be interpreted as heavy support for White.)

As a result, he lost the left vote and the hard right wing swung to Corti.

Socialist Organiser published four serious allegations against Tom White



Victorious: Bob Fryer

Defeated: White (with Healy, right)

which are documented and irrefutable (and which the SWP should think about).

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

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

3) That Tom White was on Reg Parsons' recommended list of deputy convenors for elections in December 1975.

4) That Tom White resigned from the 5/293 Branch Committee during the campaign to defend the Cowley 9 and wrote to TGWU officials denouncing the other 8 as being guilty of breach of the rules.

Newsline has failed to mention, let alone answer a single one of these allegations against somebody they have acknowledged since the elections is a WRP candidate.

Newsline simply said that the Socialist Organiser allegations were lies. But they didn't reveal to their readers who are strongly discouraged from reading the press of other movements, the content of these "lies".

The only aspect of the SO article referred to by Newsline was a claim that SO supported Fryer's decision to allow management to censor his letter to the members, some weeks earlier.

SO readers will know that in fact the main SO article on February 18 roundly condemned Fryer for that incident.

SO supporters will continue to give critical support to Bob Fryer, as long as he is prepared to offer a principled resistance to the offensive of BL management.

They certainly will not support anyone as unprincipled as Tom White.

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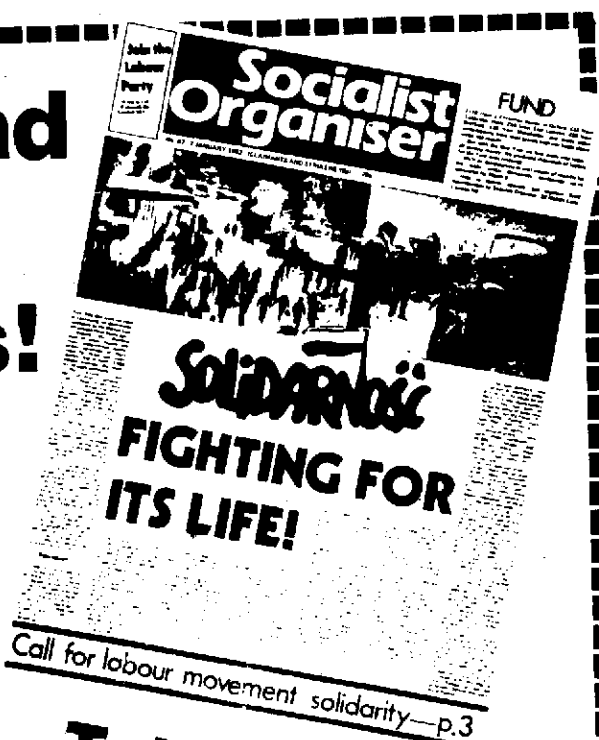
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Take a bundle of SO to sell!

15,000 on student march

by Steve Macarthur

Increases in fees for overseas students, cuts and a grant rise of only 7%. This year the rise looks like being nearer 4%—well below the rate of inflation.

The scale of parental contributions has been frozen so that students from low-paid working class families will have to depend upon their parents to contribute towards their grants.

Grants are becoming even harder to obtain for many courses. Most students in the Further Education sector receive no grants at all.

Now there is talk of closing whole departments in Universities and Polytechnics.

The present NUS leadership seems to be bringing about cynicism and demoralisation amongst students. Yet also a degree of frustration could be seen at Friday's rally.

Heckling

Sceptical and heckling students listened to Neil Kinnock, Labour's front-

THE largest all-student demonstration since the 1960s was how the NUS described the 15,000 strong march and rally in London last Friday. The rally marked the end of the NUS week of action designed to publicise the importance of Further and Higher Education and the increasing hardships that students have to face.

The aim, an NUS spokesperson told Socialist Organiser, has been to persuade Tory backbenchers to pressure the government into ploughing more finance into higher education. Yet at the same time, the Left Alliance (Liberals, SDP and Communist Party) which controls the NUS Executive has campaigned vigorously to prevent occupations and radical direct action by students.

Recent

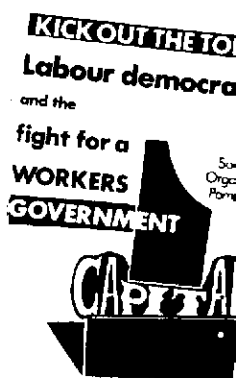
Recent occupations at the Polytechnic of Central London and elsewhere have been denounced by the NUS leadership.

Yet a government which shows no sign of weakening its attack upon education at all seems encouraged by NUS feebleness.

Last year saw massive

bench education spoke person, who promised that Labour would honour its policy of guaranteed courses and grants for all 16 to 18 year olds.

The second speaker, SDP MP Ian Wigglesworth, was met with howls of abuse as rally organisers had to appeal to students to stop throwing eggs. The NUS President met with only a slightly warmer response from the crowd.



40p plus postage from Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8

Nurses leaders prepare sell-out

by Jane Goss

IN A well-timed article, published to coincide with the management side's offer to ancillary, nursing and administrative and clerical workers, a major trade union official has given a clear indication of how the NHS pay struggle will be fought - with hollow words and endless, useless negotiations.

David Williams is the assistant general secretary of COHSE, but more importantly he is chairperson of the Staff Side of the Nurses and Midwives Whitley Council which makes him the chief negotiator for nurses pay.

Luxury

Not renowned in COHSE for being a militant, he confirmed to a Times Health Supplement reporter (26 February) that "radicalism is a luxury of youth". He says that as you get older you "drift over... become less idealistic".

For thousands of health workers facing a 4% pay rise, idealism is not the issue. The reality of inflation running at well over 12% (the staff side's claim) and the erosion of jobs is enough to occupy most people.

Many health service workers take home pay below the poverty level. All grades in the NHS are fed up with being low paid. The



Nurse pressing for action during 1978-9 'winter of discontent'

climate is right for industrial action.

But in a paper read almost exclusively by top managers and DHSS officials (the Times Health Supplement) David Williams says we are so strong that we aren't use our strength. We are in a better position than anybody else in the country to bring pressure to

bear. The only thing is, the consequences are too terrible for anyone to contemplate."

The consequences could be a 12% pay rise and a humiliating defeat for the government.

It could also be a politicising of thousands of health service workers and a realisation of how much can be won through challenging the

management and the government - and consequently a realisation of how little the trade union leaders and the TUC have done to fight the Tories.

Consequences

This is the real consequence that the bureaucrats do not want to know about.

Industrial News



Monstrous lies over NALGO strike

Nik Barstow reports

"MONSTERS". That's how the Sun described striking NALGO members in Islington.

Despite the fact that the council's SDP leaders had to back down on the original issue that provoked the strike, despite the fact that it was the council's management who shoved kids in two of Islington's children's homes into a squalid, damp, unsupervised replacement building.

Despite the fact that the council's leaders prolonged the strike by making a snap decision to close one of the homes for good in the middle of the strike. Despite the fact that the SDP group threw out a deal made by their own negotiators to end the dispute.

The Sun might like to be seen to speak on behalf of the kids who've been "affected by the strike", but the kids spoke for themselves in a letter to NALGO:

"Dear NALGO,

Us kids at Colgrain Children's Home support all our staff and want them to win this dispute. Since this strike began management have hardly been to see us and the only way we have carried on is because of the pickets outside.

"We all read in the Sun that our staff were 'monsters'. This is not true. They are really nice people. It is Islington council who are the monsters, not our staff.

"We want our staff back but only if all our homes can stay open.

"Thank you to everyone who has supported this dispute. Thank you.

Susan, Irene John, Gill, Marcella."

Despite being 100% in the right, it looks like the strikers may be beaten by NALGO's own highly bureaucratic structures. Because official support for all-out action will only be given after a ballot of the members is taken, the action has been running on a day-to-day basis that has weakened its impact.

If there isn't a 2/3 majority for action in the ballot, a return to work is likely.

But this action is only a taste of what will come if Britain's first SDP council keeps on the way it has begun.

by Peter McIntyre

Fords get tough

FRED Court, an electrician at Ford Dagenham, has been sacked on a trumped-up clocking offence. He follows some 30 other workers sacked on various charges in the few months since October.

220 electricians struck in support of Fred Court, but went back this week without winning his reinstatement. They had had no official support from the EETPU, and their calls for blacking of their jobs were turned down by other Dagenham workers.

Under pressure of a relentless management offensive on clocking offences, workers conceded to Fords argument that Fred Court had clocked out four other workers. But the four were still on their jobs 20 minutes later!

Ford is up in front with BL in setting the pace for tighter management control on the shop floor.

Ownership of press is key to 'right of reply'

THE drive for a right of reply against lies and witch hunts in the press, is a demand which has already gained wide support among victims of such attacks.

The Campaign for Press Freedom has built its most concerted pressure around the Right of Reply and called a 500-strong audience at the weekend to discuss how it should be taken forward.

The demand has been shown at its best by the ASLEF and NUR members who blacked the Sun and other Murdoch papers during the rail strike after the paper turned its pages over to an attack on the train drivers in an open attempt to break the strike.

The blackings forced a right of reply of some sort in the Sun and caused fear and consternation to ripple throughout Fleet Street. But while the "reply" (accompanied by a further attack)

was the token concession, it was the removal of Murdoch's papers from large areas of the country which provided the real power and force of the action.

But now the Labour Party Executive has voted for a commitment to a legal right of reply to be included in the next manifesto. Frank Allaun has already sponsored a private member's bill which would give the courts the power to fine newspapers which refused to grant it.

Allaun supported the ASLEF action but presented his bill as an improvement and a refinement. "It shouldn't require industrial action", he told the conference.

Yet speaker after speaker correctly identified the root of the witch hunt as being the class interests of the press owners which are of course the same class interests that the courts uphold.

Moreover, the attacks are not always based on identifiable "inaccuracies" but rather on a whole onslaught of smear. To identify the problem as one of inaccurate reporting is to miss the point by a mile.

A legal right of reply would give an occasional platform to Len Murray or Tony Benn to write a piece in the centre pages of the Daily Mail or the Daily Express.

If they were to take up that right its effect would be to increase the smugness of the press without altering its coverage.

Fleet Street would not only be able to attack the left but would have official credence for a policy of fairness.

(In fact Allaun's Bill has

a naive simplicity which conjures up some strange images.

He calls for the right of reply to be given equal space and the same position in the paper as the original attack. This conjures up the vision of the Daily Mail running some extremely odd front pages, probably every other day.

This would include headlines screaming out messages such as "Red Ken loves peace and freedom".

But then the Right of Reply Campaign has already produced some macabre oddities.

The main victim of the campaign so far has in fact been the New Statesman which has been inundated with demands for a right of reply from Frank Chapple.

A legal right of reply already exists in Germany and in France but has not stopped a single witch hunt.

Denis MacShane, a former president of the NUJ who supports the right of reply campaign, admitted frankly in a paper he wrote for the conference that in Europe "people do not bother with the right of reply because, in the end, it does not add up to very much."

Fig-leaf

Even the fig leaf of the right of reply would not have been available.

In fact, experience in France suggests that a more powerful democratic demand would be the duty of national distribution centres such as W.H. Smith to stock the left press.

The Allaun Bill is not a partial gain. It will foster illusions in the "fairness" of the press and will tend to

demobilise direct action against its grossest witch hunts.

A Right of Reply Campaign does have a progressive role to play but it is not in sponsoring Bills; rather it is in urging unequivocal support from the Labour Party and from the trade union leadership for direct action such as that taken by the ASLEF members.

In practice, the leaders of the labour movement could be guaranteed to capitulate under prolonged pressure and call off any such action to defend "press freedom".

Tony Benn, winding up the conference made a speech well to the left of the Allaun bill, in which he identified the ownership of the press and the structure of the IBA and the BBC as the problem - to be directly attacked.

"It is not enough to say go on printing lies and then establish a right of reply. The question is why such lies are being printed."

He called for the NUJ to affiliate to the Labour

Party - an embryonic campaign has already started within the union.

The question is not to uphold some abstract concept of accuracy but to recognise that all campaigns should be directed at a political battle against capitalist ownership of the press which is not a separate problem but just part of capitalist exploitation of the working class.



Benn called for NUJ affiliation to the Labour Party

AUEW action needed

"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.

Times: NATSOPA retreat

AS we go to press, Rupert Murdoch's blackmail against Times workers seems to be succeeding.

The Sunday Times on March 7 reported that NATSOPA clerical chapel negotiators had agreed to 200 jobs going - 60 unfilled vacancies remaining that way, and 140 voluntary redundancies.

This would make a package of 450 job cuts, which Murdoch found close enough to his initial demand for 600-plus.

On Wednesday 10th the Times reported that the Times and Sunday Times clerical membership had approved the deal. The main group which had not yet conceded was the Times NATSOPA machine

assistants.

The deal could still trip up. But nothing is being done to prepare direct action by Times workers to save jobs - and without that action, the cards have always been stacked in Murdoch's favour.

3 months after
martial law imposed

LABOUR MUST SUPPORT SOLIDARNOSC!

Socialist Organiser

Plessey fight must be spread



THIS Saturday March 13 — the three month anniversary of the imposition of martial law by Poland's Stalinist bureaucracy — is the date of the first labour movement march in London in support of the repressed Polish workers' movement.

As Ken Livingstone told a news conference in promoting the demonstration last Tuesday:

"The labour movement needs to organise its own class solidarity with the Polish workers, completely independent from the cold war politics and actions of Reagan and Thatcher.

This demonstration — the first labour movement march on Poland — has been called as part of such a fight: to build understanding and support for the Polish

struggle in the trade unions, Labour Parties, student unions and communities.

I urge every trade unionist, every socialist to take up this call and fight within their organisations for official contingents with their banners on March 13, and for the following political demands as a platform of working class solidarity.

*End martial law. Free Lech Walesa: release all political and trade union prisoners in Poland. An end to all restrictions on Solidarnosc.

*No Warsaw Pact intervention!

*No to the state unions: build links with the underground workers' resistance. Send money, food and literature to these organisations.

"Unconditional support to the Polish workers' fight!"

Livingstone went on to attack the hypocrisy of the imperialist outcry over the repression in Poland:

"Reagan wants to 'let Poland be Poland' but to 'let El Salvador be Vietnam'. Thatcher supports trade union rights in Poland but attacks the unions in Britain."

Thatcher's closest allies in the labour movement — the Terry Duffy's, Roy Granthams and Frank Chapple — have of course been quick to exploit the Polish events for their own reactionary purposes.

But the left within the official labour movement has been too slow to respond with genuine class solidarity.

Livingstone, together with Eric Heffer and Tony Benn has sponsored a Labour Poland Solidarity Fund to help Solidarnosc's underground resistance.

And at rank and file level a number of areas have established important links with Solidarnosc activists through successful speaking tours — particularly in Glasgow, the North of England and the Midlands.

Saturday's demonstration — timed to allow militants to support the London Transport Fares protest in the afternoon — is the first of its kind in London.

Called by Socialist Organiser and London Labour Briefing, it has been supported by the Greater London Labour Party Executive and a number of labour

movement bodies.

Speakers at the rally will include Reg Race MP and a representative of the Solidarnosc Trade Union Working Group.

Concrete support

From this demonstration Socialist Organiser supporters will be redoubling their efforts to build concrete support for Solidarnosc in the labour movement — beginning with the Labour Party rally in Central Hall on March 16.

As Jeremy Corbyn of the London Region Labour Party said at the news conference "The very fact that events like this are called forces union branches and Labour Parties to discuss Poland."

Appeal

The appeal launched by Plessey against the interim interdict was postponed on Tuesday to await the decision of this mass meeting. Although no details of these negotiations have yet been released, it is believed that it involves the takeover of Plessey Bathgate by another company, possibly run by Harold Jackson, managing director of the Bathgate plant, who put forward proposals some time ago for retention of

80 jobs. It seems unlikely that the contempt which was expressed for this proposal when it was first mooted will have changed sufficiently for the workers to accept it.

Solidarity

We can only hope that the offer is rejected on Thursday. If this is the case, then the need for labour movement solidarity will be even more vital. That means sufficient broadening-out of the action will have to take place almost immediately. Several of Plessey's plants staged a token stoppage on Friday 5th March. While this is to be welcomed, it in no way goes far enough to force Plessey's to change their plans.

Redundancies have been announced at the Ilford factory and the lead shown by the Bathgate women must be followed up by cross-plant strike action. Plessey's run-down plans will not be over if they succeed in chopping Bathgate.

Dave Milliken

Why Bradford went to Wall

In "Briefing Against the Witch Hunt", published this week, Barry Turner of Bradford

North Labour Party explains why the constituency chose Pat Wall in

place of Ben Ford.

"Involved with a long string of reactionary states via various parliamentary groups, he is a convinced supporter of the South African-backed Democratic Turnhalle Alliance in Namibia, in public defiance of the wishes of Bradford North GMC.

He campaigned with International News Service, a public relations organisation used on behalf of Bristol Ship Repairs in their fight to prevent the Labour government's plans to nationalise the shipbuilding and repair industry in 1975.

He is also a director of Welltrade International Ltd and was until January 1981 a director of Saunders Walker and Associates.

A supporter of Dennis Healey, he naturally ignored the call of Bradford North GMC to vote for Benn in the deputy leadership contest, and refused to comply with a call to resign from the all-party group on Namibia.

"My roots are in the Labour Party and that is where I intend to stay", said a determined Ford on Octo-

ber 24, announcing a campaign to challenge the selection conference.

Our lifelong Brother Ben has now announced his intention to stand as an independent candidate if the NEC do not find in his favour."

The Briefing broadsheet also includes articles by Peter Tatchell, Ernie Roberts, Jo Richardson, and others. Reg Race criticises the 'archaic, isolating and radicalising effects of parliamentary life'.

For the ruling class, he says, the Tory party is 'only one of a number of divisions in the army used to control society for the benefit of the rich and powerful. But we, poor socialists, are asked to limit our activities to parliament alone, for fear of offending those who we seek to remove from power. It is too pathetic for words.'

The broadsheet was jointly produced by Socialist Organiser, London Labour Briefing and Bermondsey Labour Party, with the help of individuals from other London Labour Parties.

For details of distribution see page 2.

Airport strikers fight on

by Martin Thomas

THE strike by 2,000 ramp workers at Heathrow is still solid. As we went to press, a meeting of all TGWU stewards in Heathrow was being held on Tuesday evening, 9th March, and TGWU members in the short-haul base were planning a stoppage from Thursday evening in protest at scabbing by other Heathrow workers who are doing the ramp workers' jobs.

Support

The TGWU has officially approached all other unions at Heathrow for support, and drivers from outside tanker companies, in particular, are honouring the picket lines.

The ramp workers were locked out by British Airways bosses four weeks ago when they refused to accept new work schedules, with an extra 1½ hours a week, a block on guaranteed overtime, stiffer penalties for being late, and moving workers from job to job.

Last week the govern-

ment arbitration service ACAS said it would intervene but no talks have yet taken place.

Mike Le Cornu, chairperson of the ramp workers' committee, told Socialist Organiser that the strikers

especially need financial support from the whole labour movement. Donations should be sent to: R. Davies, 1/238 TGWU, c/o Feltham Community Centre, Hanworth Road, Feltham, Middlesex.

FUND

The fund is dangerously slow this week. We've had £35 from Coventry, £4 from Oxford, £2 from Bridgewater, and £4.75 from Leigh. The total of £45.75, with £89 in standing orders so far this month, leaves us with £208.25 towards the March target of £1,000.

We can't afford to fall short!

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

Rally
21 MARCH
London Transport
100% Increases
from
Westminster

Car Park, County
Hall, SE1 at 2.30pm

Saturday
March 13

