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Labour
Party

Socialist Organiser

Against all bans and proscriptions!

Turkish Junta kills leftists

THREE left wingers were hanged last weekend by Turkey's vicious military junta.

The Generals also announced that the former Mayor of Istanbul, Ahmet Isvan will stand trial — after 16 months in jail.

Isvan has been repeatedly tortured during his imprisonment without charge. He is expected to be accused of supporting the left wing trade union confederation DISK — 52 of whose leaders are currently on trial facing possible death sentences.

A further 132 leaders of Isvan's Republican People's Party — which won 43% of the votes in the last elections in Turkey — are also likely to face charges, as the junta moves firmly to repress all forms of democratic opposition.

The RPP leader, former Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit, has just been released from a 2-month prison term for the 'crime' of speaking to the foreign press.

The repression in Turkey is directed of course primarily at the workers' movement and democratic opponents of the Evren junta.

Jail sentences

Leaders of the banned teachers' union Tob-Der have recently received hefty jail sentences averaging 8-9 years for their union activities.

All the more important therefore that socialists rally support and sponsorship for the speaking tour by exile Turkish trade union leaders and democrats being organised in the next two weeks by the Turkey Solidarity Campaign.

Details — pages 3 and 14

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NO FIGHT — and no discussion of a fight.

That is the prospect on offer to the workers' movement from the TUC as Norman Tebbit drives his vicious anti-union Bill through Parliament.

A 'conference of union executives' has been called by the TUC for April 5 in Wembley. But the sole proposal to that conference — in which no rank and file member will have had any voice whatever — is the TUC's '8-point plan', which envisages only feeble protest before the Bill is passed, and is equivocal about the possibility of any action afterwards.

Obstacle

No amendments or alternative resolutions will be allowed — even from unions such as the GMWU which have argued within the TUC for a more radical line of opposition.

Once adopted, these 8 points will be paraded as TUC policy — and become a major obstacle to a serious fight to stop the Tebbit Bill becoming law.

But as yet there is little sign of any such fight. Almost without exception the whole of the trade union and Labour bureaucracy — 'left' and right alike — has renounced any intention of mobilising strike action to defend the unions.

"Progressive"

An indicator of this is the attitude of the South East Region TUC, whose leadership prides itself on its 'progressive' image.

SERTUC has always had a leaflet, a lobby and a conference for every occasion and campaign — from childcare to the construction industry. Now it is convening a conference on the Tebbit Bill for April 3.

Speakers will be carefully chosen to ensure they have not been near a strike or occupation in the last few years — unless to sell it out.

They will splutter the usual phrases about 'the campaign', insisting 'we must show them we mean business', and calling upon us to 'educate and mobilise our members'.

But mobilise them to do what?

Rank and file delegates will have no say in deciding on that activity — and SERTUC's leadership is already on record as firmly opposed to strike action or even a withdrawal of cooperation with the Tory government.

The chair at last Saturday's meeting of SERTUC called limply for a 'heavy salvo' to be 'fired across the Tory bows'.

And when Oxford County Association of Trades Councils delegate Anne Marie Sweeney spoke out criticising the weakness of the TUC's 8-point plan, she came under heavy attack from SERTUC secretary Jack Dromey.

ONLY STRIKES WILL STOP TEBBIT!

Bitter lessons of Taff Vale

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Tebbit and Trade Union Democracy

— page 13

Her correct demand was for a break-off by the unions from all talks and joint committees with the Tories, and for the TUC to call a one-day General Strike and lobby of Parliament on the day of the Tebbit Bill's second reading, as preparation for all-out action to defeat the Bill.

Dromey branded such policies as 'infantile ultra-leftism'. He poured scorn on the idea that there is 'a mass revolutionary membership in the trade unions held down by just a bureaucratic handful'. He argued that unlike 1972 the working class today is 'demoralised and broken', unwilling to fight.

As 'proof' Dromey referred to the May 14 Day of Action of 1980, and denounced all talk of one-day strike action as 'idle words'.

Nothing could more clearly sum up the real position of the TUC leaders. Far from attempting to mobilise their members to fight the Tebbit Bill, they are in fact opposed to any call for serious action.

To argue that the working class is 'broken' is to admit in advance that the official TUC campaign against Tebbit is simply a facade behind which defeat has already been conceded.

Militancy

Nor do Dromey and his fellow full-time officials have an accurate assessment of the strength of the working class. The solid ASLEF struggle, the stubborn strike at Heathrow, and the occupations and strikes against closures in BL and in Scotland indicate an underlying — frustrated — militancy on the shopfloor, which has found no real reflection in the TUC bureaucracy.

And despite all the betrayals they have suffered, workers have never yet refused to follow when called out officially on strike.

May 14 1980 was of course never an official strike call — the TUC opposed strikes. But nevertheless that day saw over 500,000 workers take strike action against Prior's law.

Far from 'idle words', the demand for action now is the only serious perspective to defeat Tebbit. The fight for a one-day General Strike now could put the whole workers' movement on a war footing, preparing the necessary awareness for an all-out General Strike to defend the unions and defeat the Tory attack.

Coupled with such a fight must go the fight to force trade union and Labour leaders to break off all links and collaboration with the Tories, and to struggle on every possible front to obstruct, harass, and defeat this vicious government.

We urge every reader to put forward resolutions to this effect in their trade unions and Labour Parties.

For Dromey and his fellow bureaucrats, the talk of a 'broken working class' is simply a cynical ploy. But if the movement is not to suffer the most demoralising and avoidable kind of defeat at the hands of Tebbit, the fight for action must be taken up at once.

LOBBY TUC APRIL 5!

PHOTO: JOHN HARRIS



Thousands demonstrate for cheap fares last Saturday. Unite to fight! — back page



Shades of Pinochet?

by Martin Thomas

"BECAUSE the Labour Party now has a political majority he now wants to get rid of police committees."

When Labour wins the next General Election, will he [Manchester police chief James Anderton] want to get rid of the House of Commons?" asked Peter

Kelly, chairperson of the Manchester police committee, this week.

The least that can be said is that Anderton is clearing the rails for that.

In a statement issued on Tuesday 16th, he called for the (partly) elected police committees which now exercise a very limited

supervision over local forces to be abolished and replaced by non-elected boards.

"A quiet revolution" is taking place around us and the prize is political power to be wielded against the most cherished elements of the establishment, including the monarchy.

"It is as much the duty of the police to guard against this, as it is to guard against crime. [So much for the police being non-political!] I sense and see in our midst an enemy more dangerous, insidious and ruthless than any faced since the Second World War".

It is the same line as used by Turkey's military dictator General Evren — the politicians are leading us to chaos and the men in uniform must intervene to save the nation.

Anderton's views are — we know — shared by judges like Lord Denning and generals like Frank Kitson. The hard reality exposed by their threats and speeches is that the power of the ruling class does not rest essentially on votes and Parliament, but on a permanent state hierarchy, ready to use violence to defend that power.

Hillhead ordeal for Jenkins

by John Wilde

SEEN BY the media as 'the most important by-election since the Second World War', with 'the most educated electorate in the country', there are some other striking aspects to the Hillhead by-election.

Until the death of the incumbent it was the only Tory seat in Glasgow.

Of course, much does depend on the result. The Tories need to hang onto what is now a marginal, and hope to win approval for Howe's Hillhead-directed budget.

Jenkins needs to win if he is going to make anything of his leadership aspirations

in the SDP. This could be the election which will stop the so-called unstoppable SDP bandwagon.

According to the polls, Jenkins is trailing behind Tory and Labour despite such initiatives as his hastily produced announcements on devolution for Scotland.

David Wiseman, the Labour candidate, is standing on Labour Party policy, with jobs and peace as the two main planks, coupled with the Alternative Economic Strategy, women's rights, and housing.

He supported the democratic changes at Wembley, and supported Benn for the

deputy leadership, but denies the labelling he has received from the press as a hard-line Bennite... which indeed he is not.

He has sharply distanced himself from Pat Wall's call for Labour to sweep away the hierarchy of the permanent state machine, and said that he thinks the inquiry into Militant will probably show that they should be expelled.

Going along with the idea that left-wing ideas are dangerous and need to be purged is no good basis for a left-wing party to gain support.

As a local councillor for the Drumchapel area, Wise-

man has however fought against the recent rent rises on the Labour-controlled district council, and campaigned consistently on housing.

Labour's stand on nuclear disarmament puts the party in a good position to win votes. A campaign organised by the local disarmament group and others, 'A Vote for Peace', calls on supporters to vote for unilateral nuclear disarmament.

With Trident on the way and Glasgow a potential eye of the holocaust, nuclear disarmament is a big issue here. Both SDP and Tory made excuses for not attending a

four-way debate organised by the Vote for Peace campaign. Labour and SNP accepted.

Gerry Malone, the suave hope of the Tories, had his own meeting the same night. You've guessed: Gerry supports 'strong effective defence'. 'Jobs and peace are both put at risk by the policy of the Bennite Left'.

Strong stuff indeed, but will it convince the electorate to have a Trident missile base in their back yard?

Wiseman has declared in favour of the Labour Party discussion document on gay rights, in a letter to and interview with 'Gay Scot-

land'. He also led the recent Polish solidarity demonstration in Glasgow.

The Hillhead Labour Party women's section have produced their own leaflet, and organised an election meeting on women's rights.

With the last days of the election campaign coming up, a series of meetings are planned on women, education, and disarmament.

Labour has a good chance of winning this election if the policies are fought for. A victory over the SDP multi-coloured swap-shop and the past dominance of the Tories in Hillhead would certainly be an encouragement to the Scottish labour movement.

'Tender meat' on show in Scotland

'SWEETNESS and light' were the order of the day at the Scottish Labour Party conference in Perth last weekend. Controversy was to be kept off the agenda lest the potential voters in Hillhead be frightened away.

"The red meat of socialism will be on view at this conference, but hopefully it will be more tender than in previous years", said chairperson George Galloway.

Time and time again, the weaker of two composites on an issue was passed by the conference, while any composites containing even a trace of what the mass media would term 'extremism' were voted down.

Thus, on the cuts for example, a composite making an undefined call for 'united and effective resistance' was passed, while the composite advocating no cuts and no rent/rate rises, backed by industrial action, was defeated.

But the section of the Standing Orders Committee report dealing with women, which would have prevented any seats on the Scottish Council of the Labour Party being reserved for women until after 1984, was successfully referred back.

Another challenge to the Standing Orders Committee resulted in a guarantee that there would be annual conferences of the Scottish Labour Women's Council.

And a composite was passed overwhelmingly advocating unilateral nuclear disarmament and a campaign to ensure that no trade union labour is used on missile sites in order to prevent them being built.

Stan Crooke

Left gains at London conference

by Nigel Williamson

PHOTO: JOHN HARRIS



Ken Livingstone speaking at the Fares Fair rally on March 13

Scots back Solidarnosc

DESPITE efforts from the platform to block it, the Scottish Labour Party conference last weekend voted 414,000 to 395,000 to back the Polish workers against Jaruzelski.

The Scottish Council had not been prepared to invite a fraternal/sororal delegate from the Solidarity Trade Union Working Group to the conference, nor had the Labour Coordinating Committee been prepared to invite one to their fringe meeting on international affairs.

Too many leading left-wingers in the Scottish Labour Party get their views on such matters from Soviet Weekly.

An attempt to challenge the Standing Orders Committee at the beginning of conference over the non-invitation was unsuccessful.

Solidarity

Then, during the compositing, an amendment from Cathcart CLP which called for solidarity measures such as demonstrations, material aid, labour movement delegations to Poland, and breaking off links with the official state-run 'unions', was lost.

The composite presented on the final day had thus been stripped of detailed proposals for solidarity, but it did call for support for

Solidarnosc and workers elsewhere in Eastern Europe fighting to organise free trade unions.

Apart from the proposer and seconder, no-one else was allowed to speak on it — on the grounds of lack of time, though at that point the conference was an hour ahead of schedule.

Conference chairperson George Galloway tried to get the composite remitted, but was challenged from the floor. A second attempt by Galloway to get it remitted

developed into a speech against the motion, and he was again challenged.

Finally, Johnny Walker from ASLEF, introduced as someone with 'an outstanding record on international affairs', was given the task of getting the composite remitted.

But his appeal for it to be remitted was no more successful than the executive's recommendation of a vote against, and the composite was carried on a card vote.

Polish fringe meeting

'SOLIDARNOSC was our big chance, and possibly for many years our last chance'. That was how Artur Swiergiel, a member of the executive of Warsaw Solidarnosc, and now a representative of the Solidarity Trade Union Working Group in Britain, expressed the feelings and hopes of the vast majority of Polish people about their free trade union.

Comrade Swiergiel was speaking at the fringe meeting on Poland at the Scottish conference of the

Labour Party on Saturday March 13. Despite the small attendance at this meeting, it and the lobbying of conference delegates by comrade Swiergiel and supporters of the Polish Solidarity Committees in Edinburgh and Glasgow may have been the deciding factor in swinging the Sunday session of the conference to back Solidarnosc.

The differences of view between Artur Swiergiel and Piotr Kozlowski and Marek Garzdecki, two Soli-

darnosc members who have already visited Scotland, gave some idea of the debates which must have gone on in Poland around the question of workers' control, what kind of democracy to fight for, and how to defeat the Stalinists.

Most of those present at meeting agreed that whatever disagreements they might have with individual parts of Solidarnosc's programme, they had to fight for its right to exist.

Joe Baxter

THE LONDON Labour Party's annual meeting on March 6-7 did not degenerate into bickering over the disappointments of the GLC's first nine months, as it so easily might have done.

It is the case that the manifesto we fought the GLC elections on last May has been defeated on a wide range of issues. The GLC Labour Group's report to the meeting largely glossed over these defeats in a few words.

But the meeting was clearly in a generous mood, and large-scale recriminations were not heard. The party in London will however be looking at the GLC very closely over the next year, and looking for signs of a more determined fight than we have seen up to now.

However, a resolution was carried on education making demands which the recently agreed ILEA budget will probably struggle to meet, though a reference-back on the ILEA report itself was defeated.

Support was expressed for the Barking teachers struggling against a Labour authority making redundancies.

No resolutions

Unanimous support was given to the Fares Fair campaign, but unfortunately the 'Can't Pay, Won't Pay' campaign was not debated, simply because there were no resolutions on the subject.

It was recognised that the Law Lords had changed the whole nature of the fight for local government, and a demand was carried calling on local authorities to defy Heseltine's legislation and on the next Labour

government to retrospectively indemnify councillors surcharged for implementing manifesto commitments.

This was particularly pertinent when the Camden councillors are facing the courts at the end of this month for paying their workers a minimum wage of £60 a week in 1979. £896 was donated by delegates to the Camden defence fund.

Big strides were made in terms of women's rights and positive discrimination, with a resolution demanding women be placed on every parliamentary shortlist being carried.

Conference also rejected the shortlist of one man-oeuvre, and backed the right of Bermondsey CLP to choose Peter Tatchell as their candidate.

Lone

Only one lone voice was heard in support of the witch hunt, unfortunately from a delegate from my own constituency, Orpington, which caused me great personal embarrassment!

The EETPU resolution calling for one member, one vote ballots to decide the leadership and deputy leadership of the party and parliamentary selections was defeated, with Arthur Latham in the chair counting the hands in support of the motion. He did not reach double figures.

The Left was strengthened on the Regional Executive with the election of Vidya Anand, Nadine Finch, Mark Feeny, and Conor McAuley in the constituency section. An attempt by London Labour Briefing to get Chris Knight and myself elected was not successful, and

provoked great criticism from Militant supporters whom we were seeking to replace, and a castigation of us as 'so-called lefts' in the Militant newspaper.

Unopposed

It is not clear while Militant supporters feel they have the right to be unopposed on the Left — the last time a doctrine of unopposed elections was voiced was in favour of Dennis Healey as deputy leader. Of course the Left must not risk splitting its vote and allowing in right-wingers to win elections, but this was never a possibility in this instance.

Let us work together on those issue where we agree, let us debate those issues where Militant disagrees with other sections of the Left, like positive discrimination, but don't let us dismiss each other contemptuously as 'so-called lefts' and pass that off as a substitute for real discussion of the issues which divide us.

Low-key

All in all, then, a low-key conference which recognised that the GLC and the ILEA have been isolated and forced to retreat on a number of issues. Labour victories in London this May will hopefully give added strength to these bodies in resisting pressures from the Tory government, the judges, and the Establishment.

Next year the GLC Labour group must come to the annual meeting with a record of a much more determined fight. If not, I trust conference will not be so generously uncritical again.

...all the way to the bank

THERE are those who would say it is money well spent. After all, a man of Joe Gormley's calibre and managerial skills doesn't come cheap.

At £25,000 his salary was modest — supplemented only by his expenses claims when he went anywhere or did anything, and by his "moonlighting" directorships.

His car — at £15,000 — was by no means the top of the scale for a man of his prestige. And the house (with swimming pool) which he occupied at "peppercorn" rent was in a distinctly down-market, proletarian quarter of that old mining area of Sunbury on Thames.

Now, after a lifetime of service, Joe has to look to the future. True there is some consolation in the £30,000 lump sum hand out but the pension — a mere £10,000 a year — is distinctly on the stingy side.

It seems that Joe will need to work on in retirement — taking on more directorships and advertising work — to keep himself in the style to which he has become accustomed as president of the NUM.

But at least he will keep a roof over his head (the house is at his disposal until he dies), and the car will remind him of the times he would drive to the offices of the Daily Express to deliver his appeals for his members to "see sense" and accept the latest NCB offer.

Joe will no doubt be hoping that his declining years could be graced with recognition of the service he has rendered — a peerage, he has said, would be welcome (and the attendance allowance at the House of Lords would be handy pocket money). Perhaps Margaret Thatcher will oblige.

He will be remembered

as the man whom the press described as "close to his members". They had so much in common. Joe knew what hard times were all about. Occasionally he would even have to buy his own lunch.

With his finger on the pulse of the industry and his hand on a glass of wine Joe could assess from his Thames Valley vantage point the mood of the average miner.

After he had been press-ganged into strike action in 1971-2 and 1973-4, it was Joe who recognised that beneath the veneer of mass pickets, solid votes and militant demands, miners really wanted — like he did — to live peacefully with the Heath government.

He was expressing this innermost urge of the miners when in 1974 he engaged in secret talks with Heath at Downing Street in unsuccessful attempts to save the Tories

from defeat.

But in his lifetime of dedication and service Joe has perhaps been most distinguished by his closeness to the Tory press. This has shaped his relationship to his members.

Certainly since the 1974 settlement there has emerged a rare unity of purpose between Gormley and the mass media — a unity achieved only by other great statesmen like Terry Duffy, Frank Chapple,



Tom Jackson and Denis Healey.

Even in his parting political utterances in the NUM Gormley was providing classic Fleet Street copy. He spoke warmly, recalling his 30 years of fighting the left.

He advised his admirers in the NUM to fight on against the newly elected left wing leadership of Arthur Scargill — though generously hinting that perhaps Arthur himself will settle down into the kind of pattern expected of NUM Presidents.

Maybe there are signs he is right. His final executive meeting saw a unanimous decision to endorse his lavish pension and conditions, and a handshake from Scargill in what Gormley has described as an atmosphere of "wonderful goodwill".

Is this the kind of atmosphere in which the much-needed democratic reforms

in the NUM will be fought for by Scargill and the left? Is it a sign that Scargill will honour his pledge to break the reactionary policy by which the union's President is elected for life — and stand for regular re-election? Will "Marxist" Arthur Scargill reduce his salary and renounce the other perks of the Presidency?

Be that as it may, Gormley's life-style and attitude are by no means exceptional. When we talk about the role of the union bureaucracy we are talking precisely about an undemocratic layer in the labour movement who enjoy huge material privileges more akin to those of the capitalist class than the living standards of the members they are supposed to represent.

Gormley and his ilk see the working class as more of an enemy than the Tory government with its battery

of anti-union laws.

The struggle for a leadership which will fight for workers' class interests means precisely destroying this encrusted structure of bureaucracy, which stands as the principal obstacle to policies of class struggle and the socialist overturn of the capitalist system of crisis and slump.

That is why Socialist Organiser is sponsoring the April 3 conference on the fight for union democracy.

Those who regard Joe Gormley as good value for money are the capitalist class who have profited from his betrayals and consistent struggle against socialist politics. Is it not high time the labour movement stopped paying out to support the agents of its enemies in a life-style no worker could ever dream of attaining?

Let the case of Joe Gormley be a stark reminder of the task we face.

Prisoners of war appeal for support

IN British prisons there are approximately 400 Category A prisoners, those considered top security, and nearly 25 per cent of these are Irish political prisoners. It is a fact that out of 44,000 prisoners in jail, 400 are Category A and the Irish prisoners are all placed in this category. And even within this small minority, Irish politicals are discriminated against further, being called variously 'Special A' or 'Irish A' prisoners, the main form being the terrible visiting conditions which are imposed under the pretext of security, exclusively against the political prisoners.

Despite the Home Office recognising that Irish prisoners are different from other prisoners, albeit in the harsh measures taken against them, they refuse to transfer us to prisons in North East Ireland.

None of the objections made by the government stand any kind of scrutiny and their only fall-back is the fact that they have the physical power to do whatever they like.

The first objection, that people should serve sentences where they are convicted, does not hold water when we see that nearly a hundred soldiers have been moved to



England and Scotland after conviction in Ireland.

The second objection, that there is no procedure in the bureaucratic machine

ry for transfers, is exposed as a lie when we see that a large proportion of Loyalists convicted in Britain are transferred to Ireland as well as four Republicans who underwent a mammoth hunger strike in which Michael Gaughan died and for which Frank Stagg later died.

Mrs Thatcher made a venomous refusal to move prisoners recently, and made it clear that the refusal was to add a degree of vindictiveness to an already oppressive punishment.

This desire to keep Irish prisoners in Britain does not extend past the prison gates as when a sentence is completed, the Special Branch are waiting to whisk the free man off to Ireland under an Exclusion Order.

Added to this is the savage beatings meted out to Republicans, some who have been offered compensation for the injuries and warders have been convicted of assault, only to receive paltry sentences.

This plight of the prisoners is made worse by the anguish suffered by the relatives who have not only financial restrictions placed on them by travelling over from Ireland, but also restrictions on visits placed by the police and restrictions placed on mail by the prison censor.

Although every visitor is photographed and passed as 'suitable' weeks before a visit by the Special Branch, many are arrested and questioned, the most tragic being the case of G. Conlon who was arrested in London visiting his son and died in prison from a neglected illness.

PRO Republican Prisoners Hull Prison PS. We thank Owen Carron MP for visiting us on Wednesday 24 February and for the work which he is doing on the transfer of Irish prisoners to Irish prisons. Anyone wishing to help should contact Owen Carron MP at the Clinic, 7 Market St. Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh, Ireland

SAS link

Robert McConnell, a UDA member gaoled for life for shooting John Turnly, a Republican politician, in front of his wife and two children, claims he was working for the SAS. He says the SAS gave him weapons and listening equipment.

An army spokesman claims their investigations reveal no support for his allegations.

No doubt the army didn't pursue these inquiries as they would if the murdered man was a Unionist politician and the murderer claimed to be working for the IRA.

thereby give its stamp of approval to the murderous US-backed regime.

The BBC is not the only obstacle the Emergency Committee has come up against. The clearing banks are refusing to give the free giro facilities they normally make available for this appeal. According to their spokesman, "Being seen to be too closely involved might offend the countries where they are doing business."

ologist, giving evidence, has come up with a novel theory of how his fatal injuries might have been sustained. Dr. Benjamin Davis, a senior lecturer in forensic pathology at Birmingham University, told the jury that an examination of the body revealed no signs of any assault!



by Gerry Byrne

Barry Prosser dies in his cell in Winson Green, of massive internal injuries. He was covered in bruises and his stomach split open. Three prison officers are accused of murdering him, in a case that is at present before Leicester Crown Court.

Now a Home Office path-

Gag over El Salvador

An appeal by the Disaster Emergency Committee, a group of five charities, for 1/2 million victims of the war in El Salvador and the repression in Guatemala, as well as refugees in Honduras and Nicaragua, has run up against the non-cooperation of the BBC and the big banks.

The five minute broadcast has involved a month of negotiations, with all kinds of conditions imposed before it could be shown.

The BBC consulted the

Foreign Office, an unusual step for a charities appeal, before allowing it, and stipulated that any money collected would go exclusively to refugees. They also demanded it be screened within two weeks of February 26th (the day the decision to allow the facilities for the appeal was taken) so that it would not be too near the El Salvador 'election' on March 28th.

Britain is the only European country to send observers to the election and



Socialist Organiser supporters were among the estimated 15,000 who marched last Sunday on a demonstration called by the Anti Apartheid Movement. They handed out a specially printed leaflet appealing for the AAM to take up the fight for concrete labour movement solidarity with the 12-month long strike at Wilson-Rowntree in South Africa.

Support Turkey speakers' tour

FOR Thatcher and Reagan military juntas are a tactical question and this week the dictatorship that gets no Tory government criticism or USA TV spectaculars devoted to it showed the world why.

Three more anti-fascists were hanged by General Evren as the Turkish state authorities continued their repression of the left, the workers' movement and Kurdish people. All democratic rights have been swept away in order to defend the interests of the Turkish capitalists and their international backers. NATO and the Pentagon watch approvingly



Evren

at the monster they helped give birth to.

Critics of the regime outside Turkey (they are not allowed to exist within) are labelled by General Evren as "brainwashed", no doubt confident that if he had the chance he could make them think differently. In reality the propaganda campaign mounted in Evren's defence by the majority of Western governments makes the task of those involved in solidarity work against the junta immensely difficult.

To counter this well-financed laundering of the dictatorship's blood-stained uniforms the Turkey Solidarity Campaign is organising a tour of Turkish trade unionists to allow them to present the truth to the labour movement in this country.

Sponsorship

Important backing for this has built up significantly in the past few weeks. Sponsorship has come from the Fire Brigades Union, the Scottish Regional TUC, the Northern Region TGWU, Rotherham and several other trades councils, Sheffield City NUR and many more trade union branches.

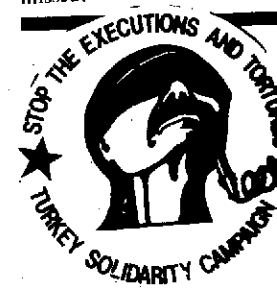
Kent Area National Union of Mineworkers have

said they will organise meetings at three of their pits.

The organisers are particularly keen to fix meetings of rank and file trade unionists in workplaces where this is possible as well as the main public meetings so far planned.

Some of these can still be arranged and anyone able to organise one should get in touch with TSC nationally as soon as possible.

The Speakers Tour gives workers here the chance to hear first-hand from their Turkish counterparts about their struggle to first build and now defend their organisations. It is a unique opportunity not to be missed.



Turkey Solidarity Campaign: Box BM 5965, London WC1E 3XX.

World News

ELECTION SETBACKS

FOR FRENCH LEFT

by Martin Thomas

IN FRANCE'S local elections on Sunday 14th, the Socialist Party and Communist Party did badly. The Socialist Party and its Left Radical allies got 32% of the vote (as against 37½% last June), and the Communist Party did no better than its 16% last June.

These results confirm the pattern of recent by-elections. Behind them, it seems, lies a political polarisation.

Last April 26, in the first round of the presidential elections, the Socialist Party candidate Francois Mitterrand got 26% of the votes. Relative to that result, the SP has not lost but gained.

But in the second round of the presidential elections, on May 10, Mitterrand scooped many votes from the right and centre to total 52%. The disarray of the Right, and Mitterrand's claim that only he could forestall an upsurge of work-

ing class militancy, defeated Giscard. In the wake of that victory, the Socialist Party was able to score its 37½%.

Now the honeymoon is over. Over the last two months, strikes and occupations have swept through many factories - not, as yet, directed against the government, but rather to make good the loopholes in the government's decree making the legal work week 39 hours in place of 40.

No conditions

The decree laid down no conditions for maintaining wage levels, and prime minister Pierre Mauroy declared: "Work-sharing must mean wage-sharing". In Britain, when the engineering unions won a 39 hour week, they meekly agreed that it would have to be 'funded' by increased productivity. French unions

have been less servile, pointing out that if the 39 hour week is paid for by wage cuts and speed-up, then it does nothing but save overhead expenses for the bosses.

It must be a straight cut in hours to create more jobs, the French workers have demanded. And mostly they have won.

As the strikes developed, Mitterrand announced "Workers need not fear for their purchasing power being affected by the implementation of the 39 hours".

As the workers have mobilised, so has the Right. Agriculture Minister Edith Cresson has faced angry demonstrations of farmers. On March 1, workers occupying a dairy were evicted by club-wielding peasants, members of the cooperative which owns the dairy.

The management had insisted on cutting pay when the work week was reduced to 39 hours, and on varying the actual work week round the 39 hour standard between 32 and 48 hours, depending on the tempo of business. (The law permits this).

But the peasants were not sympathetic. They invaded the dairy and moved out the cheese stocked there.

The head of the cooperative is a former right-wing minister, and the workers' union denounced the raid as a political operation.

Elsewhere too, the Right is reasserting itself. On February 16, some hundred scabs stormed a factory in

Clichy occupied by trade unionists, and one of the workers in occupation was killed in the struggle.

The previous week, 160 scabs were led by 40 ex-paratroopers in storming a workers' occupation and seizing 700,000 camembert cheeses held in a factory in Isigny.

More recently there have been several cases of police evicting workers in occupation.

The government has annoyed and alarmed the Right. But it has got nowhere towards resolving France's crisis. Unemployment has topped two million, industrial production is stagnant, and inflation is running at 14%. And the government has shown itself willing to back down whenever the Right applies strong pressure.

Vetoed

At the end of January, the government's nationalisation proposals were vetoed by the Constitutional Council. Nine old men, all nominated by previous right-wing presidents, said that the government's compensation proposals - already once revised in an effort to placate the Right - were not generous enough. The government buckled under and promised to pay another £700 million.

The whole record of the government shows similar weakness. The legal minimum wage was raised by 10% last June, and the death

penalty abolished last September.

But the government has decided to go ahead with a new nuclear submarine. It has kept military service at one year, despite promises to reduce it to six months. The Socialists' attempts to win anti-nuclear votes have been followed by a go-ahead for six new nuclear power stations. Extra deductions from wages have been imposed to make good the deficit of the social security budget.

In January the government's decree on the 39 hour week left the door open for wage cuts and for many manipulations by the employers.

Struggles exploded, and are still bubbling, especially in the post office. The general shape of the outcome is indicated by the agreement reached on February 22/23 for two and a half million workers in the metal industries.

Contrary to what the bosses said at first, there will be no loss of pay for the reduction from 40 hours to 39. But for each further hour's reduction in the standard week, 18 minutes' pay will be lost.

On continuous production processes, five shifts will be introduced instead of four, so that the standard work week is cut from 42 hours to 33½ - this with a 4% cut in pay.

The unions also managed to maintain existing extra holiday entitlements in addition to the fifth week's annual paid holiday required by the government decree.

The CGT union federation (led by the Communist Party) refused to sign this agreement, demanding an immediate reduction to 38 hours with no loss of pay. But under French labour law the signature of the other union federations is enough to make the agreement binding (even though the CGT is the strongest union in the industry).

The diversity of disputes on the 39 hours and the fifth week was surveyed by the Trotskyist weekly *Lutte Ouvriere* in its issue of February 6.

"For a start, in many cases, there is no real reduction in working time, like at Jeumont-Schneider in Lyon, where it is still 40 hours a week as before, but the 40th hour becomes overtime (which means a 0.6% wage rise) [by law the overtime must be paid at time and a quarter].

Shift workers, particularly, found employers saying that if their breaks were counted out, they were already doing less than 39 hours, so the decree did not

affect them!

In many factories, disputes were provoked by the bosses' attempts to impose speed-up in return for the reduction in hours.

Some disputes have been about how the cut in work time should be organised - some railworkers, for example, have demanded an extra day off every two months instead of a reduction of 12 minutes every day. Elsewhere, in the post office for example, workers have gone on the offensive, demanding an hour's reduction even where they were already doing 39 or less.

Pay has of course been a big issue.

And the other main issue has been attempts by bosses to lop off existing extra holidays 'in exchange' for the legal 5th week.

The CGT has taken a militant stand, in line with the CP's general policy since last May of a 'split personality'. The four CP ministers are loyal members of the government. But the CP allows itself a measure of criticism - thus maintaining its credibility with militant workers and at the same time trying to keep militancy within limits that do not challenge the government politically.

So in the wage negotiations for four million government employees, CP 'com-

rade minister' Anicet Le Pors has made a wage offer seriously trimming the workers' cost-of-living rises; while the CGT (and also the Socialist-oriented CFDT) has condemned the offer and refused to sign the agreement finally reached on March 10.

The CFDT has gone along more than the CGT with the government's demagoguery about unemployment - appeals to employed workers to forgo their supposed 'privileges' for the sake of the unemployed.

CFDT leaders approved wage cuts in exchange for the 39 hour week, and were caught out when the workers' struggles forced Mitterrand to condemn the wage cuts. "By speaking thus", CFDT leader Edmond Maire complained, "the president of the Republic is giving priority to the purchasing power of the higher-paid, over the creation of jobs."

Along with the general political polarisation has gone a sharpening of competition between the CGT and the CFDT. The CGT condemns the CFDT for its line on the 39 hours; the CFDT condemns the CGT for its support for martial law in Poland; and both refuse united action.

For now the CFDT is winning the competition. In recent trade union elections it has made gains - most spectacularly, a 12% swing at the Renault Billancourt factory (where a militant line by the local CFDT in a strike last October was an important factor).

But most rank and file workers do not see why they should choose between support for wage cuts and support for Jaruzelski. The demands for united action will grow, and can lay the basis for a clear challenge to the government from the Left as well as the Right.



French steelworkers opposing closures in 1979

BATTLES IN BELGIUM

by Ian Swindale

THE national steel strike in Belgium, now in its third week, was supported by workers in Liege last week when they staged a 24-hour strike on Tuesday 9 March.

Railways and motorways were blocked and pickets stopped people entering banks, insurance companies and the university. The stoppage was called by the Socialist union - the FTGB - and strongly supported by members of the Social Christian CSC union.

The steel strike is described by militant workers as a "fight to the finish" with the EEC over plans to re-structure the Belgian steel industry with a loss of at least 10,000 jobs.

Confrontation

Two days later Brussels was, for the second time in five weeks, the scene of a violent confrontation between workers and riot police.

5,000 workers employed by Sabena (the national airline) were attacked by special units of the Gendarmerie Nationale when they marched on the "neutral zone" - a group of government buildings near the National Assembly - after the Communications Minister - Herman De Croo -

refused to meet them.

The airline workers were demonstrating against proposals by Mr De Croo to cut wages by between 15% and 24% in an attempt to reduce the airline's heavy losses.

Spending cuts

Meanwhile the Belgian Prime Minister, Wilfried Martens, has been telling union leaders of the government's proposals for reducing the public spending budget deficit. Central to these proposals are huge cuts in social security.

Although the plans have not yet been made public it is likely that unemployed young people and working women will bear the brunt of the cuts.

Union leaders have been postponing the question of industrial action against the government's austerity measures until the full budget is announced. But with three sets of austerity measures now enacted under the special powers granted by the National Assembly to the Martens government, and the south of the country at a virtual standstill, the calling of united action by the major trade union federations to defeat the government's attacks on the working class must not be delayed any longer.



Mitterrand

Haughey back in

CHARLES J. Haughey, the millionaire property dealer who leads Fianna Fail, was voted back as Prime Minister of the Irish Republic in the Dail on March 9th. He was elected Taoiseach by 86 votes to 79 for Fine Gael. The working class and socialist deputies divided according to which party of the bosses they wanted to form the government.

The Labour Party was unwilling to form a new coalition, but nevertheless voted for Fine Gael's Garret Fitzgerald. The three Sinn Fein Workers' Party deputies and Tony Gregory joined Independent Fianna Fail nationalist Neil Blaney to give Haughey a comfortable, though inherently unstable, majority.

Independent Socialist TD from Limerick Jim Kemmy (associated with the self-styled British and Irish Communist Organisation, which would make him somewhere around the centre in British Labour Party terms) attempted to form a Dail bloc of Lefts-for-Fitzgerald, but ended up as the only 'left' to vote for Fine Gael.

Haughey outbid Fitzgerald, undertaking to spend £120 million on projects to placate SFWP and independent TD Tony Gregory.

That means they will vote for a slightly modified version of the austerity budget which the Fine Gael-Labour coalition tried to put through the Dail last month.

Reagan's Central American quagmire

Harry Sloan reports

A NEW crop of public relations fiascos last week added to the headaches faced by Ronald Reagan in crushing the revolutionary movement in El Salvador.

Despite the carefully cultivated image of US imperialism as all-powerful and engaged in a world-wide offensive, Reagan is increasingly bogged down in an impossible situation.

The Salvadorean state forces, with crumbling morale, are known to be losing the war in the countryside. Sooner than confront the guerrilla forces of the left-wing FMLN, they have preferred to slaughter unarmed civilians in a series of well-documented atrocities.

Lavish supplies of US military equipment and aid to the junta have failed to compensate for its lack of trained officers, loyal troops or popular support.

Stubbornly

But it is in the USA itself that Reagan is now facing his most pressing problems. American public opinion, traumatically shaped by the horrors of the Vietnam war, has stubbornly refused to swing behind the US war effort in El Salvador.

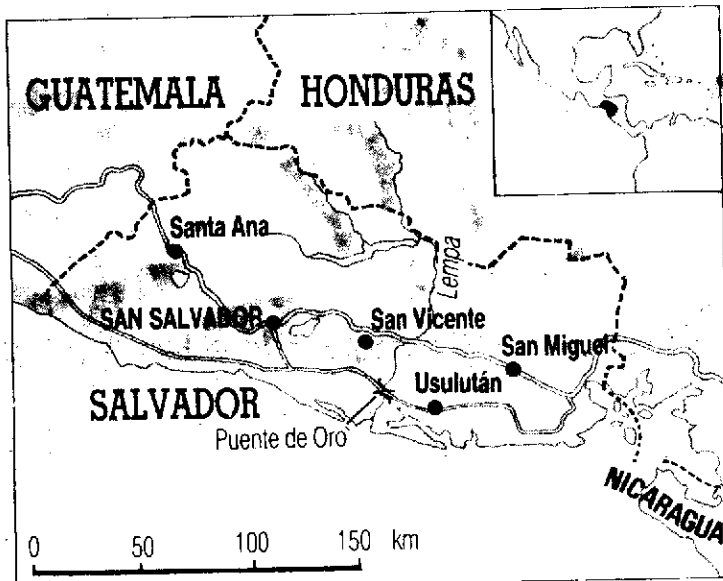
And the growing unpopularity of the war makes it more and more difficult for Reagan to increase on the \$325 million in aid already earmarked for the junta this year.

In military terms it is plainly impossible for the present junta to cling to power for long without direct external military assistance.

Yet a recent poll by the right wing Newsweek magazine has shown no less than 89% against sending US troops to Salvador, 60% against sending military supplies and 54% against sending military advisors.

A clear 49% disapprove of Reagan's policy in Salvador, and 74% thought it either likely or very likely that the war could develop into a situation like Vietnam.

This opposition to involvement comes in spite of the fact that some 80% of those asked thought it likely that a toppling of the junta in El Salvador could lead to the same kind of thing elsewhere in Latin America.



The campaign on El Salvador has gathered strength even among some diehard defenders of the Vietnam war. AFL/CIO leader Lane Kirkland has declared the US trade union movement opposed to sending any troops to El Salvador.

In an effort to turn this hostile tide of public opinion, Secretary of State General Haig has embarked in the last few weeks upon a series of public relations exercises designed to emphasise the "communist threat" in Central America.

Beginning at the top, Haig went to the Senate's intelligence committee, presenting CIA documents on Nicaragua and Cuban involvement in El Salvador.

Yet the effect was to persuade one Senator that the whole package of allegations was exaggerated!

Then Haig tried his hand with the press. A story was worked out alleging that a Nicaraguan trained as a guerrilla in Mexico had been

captured by the Salvadorean junta - but escaped into the Mexican embassy!

This story not only cast ridicule on Haig but has done nothing to improve US relations with the Lopez Portillo regime in oil-rich Mexico.

But there was worse to come. Another Nicaraguan was produced, who had allegedly admitted to being trained by the Cubans, and had been captured fighting in El Salvador.

Pack of lies

But as soon as he was in front of the world's cameras and reporters this unfortunate youth insisted that the whole story was a pack of lies which had been extracted from him only under torture in San Salvador!

Embarrassed State Department officials were forced to put their recalcitrant stool pigeon on a plane home for Nicaragua.

An almost equal credibility gap was opened up by General Haig's additional ploy - the publication of the CIA's illegal aerial reconnaissance photographs of Nicaraguan military installations.

In a deliberate attempt to echo the drama of the 1962 Cuban missiles crisis, reporters were ushered into the same State Department auditorium to hear the same photo-interpret John T. Hughes.

But every one of the details pointed out related plainly to the development of a defensive military capacity in Nicaragua, whose Sandinista regime faces hostility not only from the USA but from the pro-imperialist dictatorship in Honduras (which has supported an army of 1,500 former Somoza National Guardsmen).

The Sandinistas have made no secret of their attempt to mobilise a militia of 100,000 to defend the country against cross-border raids from Honduras and other imperialist provocations: but Haig and the CIA have been quite unable to prove any Nicaraguan military activity in El Salvador or Honduras.

Indeed even while they spoke, the Washington Post was publishing highly classified material confirming that Reagan last November gave the go-ahead to a \$19 million CIA operation to recruit a guerrilla force for raids into Nicaragua from Honduras.

The Post claims that such raids would seek to destroy Nicaraguan power stations, bridges and other installations. And it quotes from documents suggesting that the operation should be extended, with the use of another 1,000 men - some of whom are being trained by the Argentine junta.

Against such a military threat the Sandinistas can rely only upon the mobilisation of their popular support in Nicaragua - since

their blockaded and bankrupt economy lacks resources to buy adequate food - let alone sophisticated arms. As Haig well knows, neither Moscow nor Havana have been willing to supply extensive military aid to Nicaragua.

Both Castro and Brezhnev are reluctant to become embroiled in support for the revolutionary struggles in Central America, which they see as an obstacle to their efforts to reach a political accommodation with US imperialism.

And they recognise that for all the nationalist limitations of the Sandinista leaders - there is no guarantee that arms to Nicaragua would not be used to aid the FMLN guerrillas in El Salvador.

So they are effectively withholding the weapons needed to defend the gains of the anti-Somoza struggle.

This scandalous state of affairs should be exposed - but in the context of a fight within the imperialist countries to halt Reagan's war drive in El Salvador.

Too slowly

Last week saw a 40,000-strong rally in Bologna, Italy against US policy on Central America: but international solidarity is developing far too slowly.

In the USA, socialists should exploit to the full the opening offered by the AFL/CIO stance against the involvement of US troops by demanding trade union action to block economic and military aid to the junta.

In Britain the workers' movement must mobilise against Thatcher's support for Reagan. And throughout the workers' movement the fight must be waged for concrete solidarity with the FMLN liberation forces as part of the anti-imperialist struggle throughout Central America.



BALLOT THREAT TO DUARTE

THE electoral threat to President Napoleon Duarte of El Salvador does not come from the left wing. The murderous activities of semi-official anti-communist death squads have seen to that.

Anyone foolish enough to have stood as a candidate for the opposition FDR coalition would have faced the same grisly fate as the hundreds of left wing activists and working class militants who have been assassinated in the urban districts of El Salvador.

Psychotic

The challenge to Duarte comes from the ultra-right wing who oppose the junta's phony agrarian "reform" programme. Headed by Major "Bob" D'Aubuisson (described by former US Ambassador Robert White as a "psychotic killer") these elements want to see more direct US involvement - possibly including use of napalm - and they are calling for Duarte and his government to stand trial for treason.

It seems increasingly likely that the phony "elections" of March 28 could produce either a stalemate in which Duarte must seek out new coalition allies to his right, or a defeat of Duarte's Christian Democrats by the right wing Party for National Conciliation.

In either case Reagan's plight in El Salvador would be dramatically worsened, since even his present cynical pledges that "human rights" are being upheld in El Salvador would be rendered patently ridiculous. As one of D'Aubuisson's campaigners put it:

"We don't believe the army needs controlling. We are fighting a war, and civilians will be killed. They always have been. It's got to be that way."

It is perhaps fear of this political quicksand, together with the increasingly gloomy

military prospects in the war that have forced Reagan this week to look towards the possibility of some form of negotiated solution.

Well-publicised diplomatic feelers have been extended by General Haig for talks with the Stalinist leaders of Moscow and Havana - plainly with a view for a joint effort to impose a "compromise" capitalist government on the people of El Salvador.

This is the kind of policy that has been advocated by the so-called "socialists" of the Second International and by the capitalist government of Mexico (which has made no secret of its disapproval of Reagan's tactics). It is also endorsed by many of the reformist leaders of the FDR political opposition in El Salvador.

But for the guerrillas of the FMLN in the countryside and the workers of El Salvador such a "solution" would offer no escape from the crushing poverty, exploitation and repression which have driven them into struggle.

There is no scope in an economically underdeveloped country like El Salvador for the development of the formal niceties of bourgeois parliamentary politics alongside the free organisation of trade unions and working class political parties.

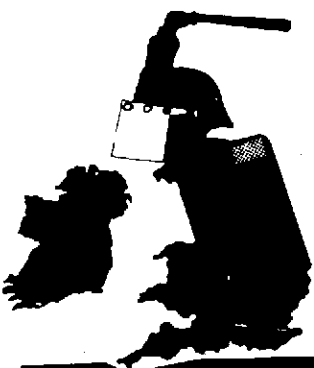
The ultra-right of El Salvador recognise this, and are prepared to crush even the most rudimentary democracy.

Only the overthrow of capitalist rule and its military defenders and the establishment of a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government can secure the rights of the toiling masses of El Salvador.

*El Salvador Solidarity Campaign, 29 Islington Park St, London N1.

RIGHT WING SPLITS IN GUATEMALA

THE strengthening of the forces of left wing guerrillas in Guatemala is only one of the factors now shaking



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

political stability in the wake of brazenly rigged elections last week.

The government's Presidential candidate General Anibal Guevara allegedly topped the poll with a claimed 35% of the vote. But even government figures admitted that blank and invalid votes called for by the regime's left wing opponents - had registered 10% of the total, and there is widespread scepticism as to the claimed turnout of 49%.

Fraud

Certainly Guevara's rival right, extreme right and "centre right" candidates were unanimous in denouncing the results as a fraud.

Their anger is the greater because Guevara's ratification as President lies in the hands not of the newly-

elected Congress - the results of which have not yet been revealed, but are expected to show a majority for the opposition - but of the old Congress elected four years ago, with a built-in Guevara majority.

Bizarre

Hence the bizarre spectacle of Guatemala's savagely anti-communist armed forces using tear gas and brute violence on the streets against extreme right wing demonstrators from the country's ruling class.

This division within the right wing is bound to increase the confidence of the left among Guatemala's working class and peasantry - and intensify the gloom hanging over Ronald Reagan and the State Department.

DEMONSTRATE London March 28

Fighting racism

COPS, COURTS SHOW RACE BIAS

FOR nicking a TV from Woolies and two radio clocks in the riots last summer, Carl Williams is to be deported to Jamaica for five years.

Carl is 18. He was born in Britain and has lived here all his life. Yet when Judge Clay discovered that Carl and his mother were going to Jamaica for a four week holiday soon,

he delayed the trial, waited until their passports and air tickets were fixed up and then pronounced his verdict: that he would bind Carl over, on condition that he left the country for five years.

Petty crime

British residents have not been deported for petty

crimes like this since a century and a half ago when convicts were transported to Australia. Judge Clay had no legal authority for his sentence. But it is happening to Carl now because he is black.

'Coincidentally', this deportation came in the same week, that Scotland Yard announced that 55% of people committ-

ing robberies and 'mugging' in the street are black (according to the victims).

After questioning Scotland Yard admitted that street crime accounted for only 3% of offences reported in London, and mugging, less than 1%. But there are no statistics for the skin colour of the other 97% of law-breakers.



Coventry conference called



COVENTRY Trades Council is organising a Labour Movement Conference against racism on May 8, 1982.

The murders and the string of racist attacks in Coventry during the spring of last year drew attention to the weakness of the Coventry labour movement in leading an effective defence and counter-offensive against the fascists.

Racist attacks continue against black people, in their homes, at school and out on the streets. The most publicised attacks have been on bus drivers.

The black community and workers' associations

took a lead by organising a tremendous demonstration against the fascists last year. However, if the threat of fascism is to be removed the labour movement must make this struggle its own.

It is the aim of this conference to develop a labour movement programme that can unite the working people of Coventry in a struggle against racism and fascism and the economic and political conditions that cause them.

Contact: Secretary, Coventry TC, c/o Tom Mann Club, 34 Stoke Green, Coventry.

We're simply seeking our identity!

From the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights*

LAST YEAR the News of the World published an expose of an actress in the latest James Bond film. The format was identical to one it had published only a few months earlier for which it had been severely condemned by the Press Council.

A county court judge considering a divorce case involving a young child only permitted access to her by one of the parents if she (the parent) wore male-orientated attire with no jewellery or make-up.

In 1977 a man employed by the British Sugar Corporation was dismissed by them for 'lying' about his sex.

The viciousness, hostility and discrimination which was aroused in these three examples had a single cause — all three people involved were transsexuals.

I too am a transsexual. I have a knowledge about my sex which is at complete variance with my physical body — what I desire is the body and social acceptance of what for me is my true sex, which is female.

This way of seeing myself arose somehow in childhood as I grew aware that there were fundamental differences between males and females. It may be helpful to illustrate what I am saying if I add that I do not see transsexualism as being caused by gender-role conditioning. I think that it would, in fact, still exist in a non-sexist society since it is concerned with female-male/masculinity and not femininity/masculinity.

*Articles are by individual members of LCGR, and do not necessarily reflect LCGR policy.

It is only very recently that I have had the courage and, equally importantly, the help and support of others like myself, to make the attempt to live according to my innermost nature.

Like most transsexuals, I wish to pass unrecognised in society. The few who have achieved spectacular publicity are neither typical nor representative. As with the rest of society, transsexuals include those who are asexual, homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual; sexual relationships are no more or less important than they are to any other person.

Transsexualism is a question of identity; it affects people assigned at birth to either sex; it is independent of class, race or socio-economic system; it is certainly not a 20th century medically-contrived phenomenon — people have felt this way about themselves throughout history.

Of course, today more help is available, particularly with the latest medical techniques but it is a complete misconception to see the availability of medical technology as creating the transsexual "problem"; rather the opposite — action by the medical profession has to be fought for and insisted upon.

The position in this country is that medical treatment to bring about necessary changes is available on the NHS but surgery is not promised until an individual has lived according to their true sex for usually two or more years. Legally many official documents can be changed, however, under present law a birth certificate cannot be altered for

changes occurring after birth; thus I remain legally the sex I was assigned at birth, creating great difficulties.

Thus the state, through the NHS will give expensive and scarce medical help to aid the change-over whilst at the same time denying the right to change the most fundamental document concerned with it.

Absurd

This absurd situation has arisen because the judge in the leading case regarding our legal status (Corbett v. Corbett) adopted a definition of male and female limited to chromosomal, gonadal and genital aspects and ignoring psychological and hormonal. The case was concerned with marriage but this narrow reproductive view of sex identity has been used to justify legal and administrative decisions in other areas, particularly pensions and employment.

In employment transsexuals have little or no protection from unfair dismissal if their status becomes known in view of the decision in E.A. White v. British Sugar Corporation IRCR 121 (1977) in which a female-to-male transsexual was sacked when his past was discovered. The Industrial Tribunal found the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) was applicable as he was female (!) and then dismissed the case because he "lied" to his employer about his sex. The Tribunal also decided that the Factory Acts should also be applied in this absurd and ludicrous manner.

It has, in any case, become all too clear that

Industrial Tribunals believe it "reasonable" to dismiss on the grounds of prejudices of fellow employees (as has occurred in cases involving homosexuality and epilepsy) and this would presumably be invoked if a transsexual was more open and honest.

The importance of reforming the law on Birth Certificates stems from the fact that under present circumstances such a change would affect conscriptive rights on marriage, pensions, actions under the Sex Discrimination Act and many other situations where ordinary birth certificates are legally valid.

At present a case on the question of amending one's birth certificate is being pursued by a British citizen at the European Court of Human Rights. The Commission of the Court has already given a decision in regard to a similar case of a Belgian female-to-male transsexual where they found this was a violation of two articles of the European Convention on Human Rights: i) Article 8: respect for private life; ii) Article 12: the right to marry.

Aspects, which in such a brief article I can only mention, concern the treatment of transsexuals in prisons and special hospitals; the need to ensure that on the question of access, custody and adoption of young children, transsexualism is not a factor used in determining a person's eligibility and suitability; and the prevention of invasion of privacy by the gutter press.

Why the hostility and discrimination? As I see it, transsexualism highlights the inflexibility and narrowness with which society views sex and gender.

A patriarchal society uses biological differences between men and women to define gender roles and to assign personal traits in a way which helps perpetuate male domination and power. However, the

very existence of transsexualism subverts such a convenient classification since, in this case, an inner knowledge regarding one's sex identity remains entirely independent of gender conditioning and the role one is trained and expected to perform in society.

Thus the essentially arbitrary nature of this classification by sex is exposed for what it is — an element in the structuring of society, and not a biological and therefore inescapable, fate. So, at the societal level, we threaten the basis on which our capitalist and patriarchal society exists, whilst with individuals we threaten those with feelings of insecurity about their sexuality; so the fear and hatred.

However, transsexual-

ism, unlike forms of sexuality, is not a thing in itself, but rather a state of transition which those of us who are transsexual eventually have the courage to go through. None of us sees it as a goal to be proclaimed and asserted.

Thus, for instance, my wish to be the anonymous author of this article because I do not wish to be characterised permanently as "transsexual" (i.e. used as a form of label).

One of the charges transsexuals are open to is the perpetuation of gender-role stereotyping. It would be foolish not to admit that it occurs for just like other men and women we are susceptible to the pressures to conform and are exposed to the conditioning that society practices on its members.

There can be no glib solution to the problem; it can only come through changing the nature of society and achieving a greater understanding of how that society moulds us. As a way of combatting sexist conditioning and beginning the process of self-awareness a number of us have formed TAG (Transsexual Action Group) whose address is TS Group, Box BM 683, London WC1N 3XX. TAG is a collective whose aims are:

- *to communicate with other transsexuals and increase mutual awareness;
- *to liaise with other groups fighting against sexism;
- *to increase public awareness of transsexualism;
- *to campaign for equal rights.

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 5 papers per week and contribute at least £1.50 per month (20p for unwaged).

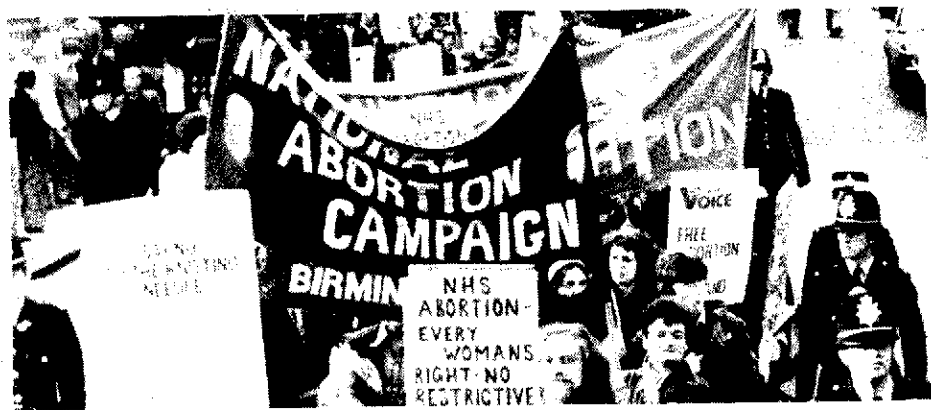
If there is no group in your area why not help us to build one?

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

Name

Address





COMMON PROBLEMS

Women
in
struggle



Force DHSS to withdraw forms!

by Mary Wilkins

THE recent attack on women's abortion rights resulting from the DHSS's bureaucratic changes in the forms filled out by doctors performing abortions, was one of the topics discussed at last Saturday's Conference on "Abortion and the Health Service" organised by the National Abortion Campaign and ALRA.

Although Huntingford and other pro-choice surgeons are not being prosecuted for non-compliance with the form at the moment, the forms are still in use.

Speakers at the conference urged the importance of putting pressure on the new health minister to withdraw these forms altogether.

However, the form change demonstrates how vulnerable existing abortion rights are. We need legislation to de-criminalise abortion and discussion about what kind of positive moves for example a facilities bill, we should be pressing for.

The Labour Party will be drawing up its election manifesto soon so we need to pressurise the NEC to include firm commitments on abortion rights in this document.

But the legal right to abortion was not the only

issue discussed. Dr Sheila Abdullah spoke of the struggle by the Merseyside Abortion Campaign for a day-care abortion centre in Liverpool.

Their experience showed that even in a reputedly anti-abortion city, with a large Roman Catholic population, abortion facilities can be expanded and improved if pressure is put on sympathetic CHC reps and doctors through an effectively organised campaign.

The experience of the Liverpool day-care centre and of elsewhere demonstrated that there are problems too.

In Liverpool there have been difficulties in finding adequate numbers of well-qualified, sympathetic staff necessary to enable the centre to respond to women's needs.

Elsewhere there is a tendency to make day-care a cheap option, allowing health authorities to cut down on in-patient gynaecology beds and denying the women the choice as to whether they can stay in overnight.

What made these discussions particularly useful and informative was the fact that a significant proportion of the people present were health service workers who spoke from their own experience of how existing facilities operate and how government cuts are affecting services. It became clear that the NHS is increasingly contracting work out to private hospitals. This increases costs for the NHS, encourages the private sector, and lets the NHS off the hook over providing adequate provision itself.

Clearly abortion is particularly "suitable" for contract work. Also it is common practice for consultants to use NHS beds for private abortion patients which benefits the consultants but not the NHS or ordinary women who can't afford private care.

It therefore became clear from the conference that women's free access to abortion requires two things - the removal of legal restrictions and adequate NHS provision.

It is crucial that the labour movement fights on both fronts. The Trades Union Liaison Committee of NAC is seeking to coordinate this work but activists all over the country and in Scotland and Wales should pressurise their union to adopt pro-choice policies, to fight attacks on the NHS and to actively press for the expansion of existing abortion provision.

OVER the past few years, women trying to get equal representation, fighting to get women's liberation taken seriously, have come up against a number of common problems.

Even in unions which seem to encourage their women members to participate, the procedures aren't known about... "I know there's a Women's Advisory Committee, but how you get on it, or contact it, I haven't a clue!"

If there is a national women's officer in the union, you don't know how to get hold of her, what power she has, who she's elected by or accountable to.

Answers

We have to find out the answers to these questions and make sure that all women in the union know about them. This should be a major part of the workshops on individual trade unions held in the afternoon of the Women's Fightback 'Women in Trade Unions' conference.

In Yorkshire, the GMWU has negotiated with some employers provisions for workplace women's groups to meet during the working day.

Surely this is a great step forward? Does it happen anywhere else?

One of the most important aspects of encouraging women to come forward in the union is to recognise that women must organise themselves and that the union should make provision for this to happen.

Most unions now have women's officers, equal opportunities committees, or women's advisory bodies, or support the TUC Charter for equality for women in the trade unions.

But how many unions put aside sufficient resources for a campaign to get women to take up the opportunities? Is there a budget for women's campaigns? Do the unions put their money where their mouth is?

All unions have their own journals. But how much does the journal or newspaper campaign for women to participate? How many women write for it?

Does the journal present their material in non-sexist terms as Point 10 of the TUC Charter states?

The workshops will also discuss how we increase the representation of women on the leading bodies of the unions.

Special seats

Should there be special seats for women on the National Executive (as in NUPE)? Or should we argue that women are elected from a special list by positive discrimination?

Should there be a strict correlation between the number of women on the

Executive and the number of women in the union? If so, how?

If there is a special women's conference in the union how much power does it have? Should it have more? What demands do we have to make?

Many unions have rules revision conferences. And often we'll be faced with having to make a change in the rules in order to get better representation for women.

Impact

We need to discuss how it can be used and how much work would be needed to make an impact on it.

A huge proportion of women are part-time workers. We need to make sure that part-time workers are always considered when fixing branch meetings, and that they have as much opportunity to attend union courses and branch meetings as any other member of the union.

At the Labour Party and the TUC, the sea of balding grey male heads is depressingly uniform, even from the unions where the majority of the membership is women. What can be done to make sure that women are represented in the delegations?

Despite the TUC's Women's Conference and the TUC Women's Advisory Committee, there is very little co-ordination or even contact at local and rank and level between women from different unions.

This conference will be the first of its kind. We must discuss how we can strengthen the links between women from one union to another - and make women's committees of Trades Councils more

Jo Thwaites discusses some of the questions arising from a Women's Fightback planning meeting for the Trade Union conference on March 27th

effective. We should work towards a national movement of rank and file women trade unionists. Can we start from this conference?

Sell-outs like Lee Jeans could be avoided if the women in an occupation like that had a network of other women trade unionists to organise the support that the NUTGW leaders refused them.

We could also discuss a national newsletter to overcome the isolation felt by many women activists.

The value of stunts carried out by women at national conferences should be assessed. The TV coverage of Alex Kitson being given flowers at Labour Party conference last year



drew much more attention to his patronising attitude than any number of speeches.

All this gives a great deal to discuss and decide on in the short afternoon of the Fightback conference. Why not start discussing some of these issues in your Fightback group, union branch or Trades Council sub-committee now?

Then your delegate to the conference can contribute more to the discussion and you can start campaigning now.

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

Trade union conference

Speakers at the conference will include: Hilary Bird (Lambeth NALGO), Jan Pollock and Vida Bond (Women in NUT), Theresa Gunn (Edinburgh Unemployed Centre), Helen Allison (War on Want), Hilary Land, Harriet Harman, Andrea Campbell, Ursula Huws, Cathy Warnock (Hackney NALGO), Angela Phillips, Lucy Gaskell, Winnie Murphy, Christine Bickerstaff, Helen Flack, Siobhan Lanigan (Foyles strike), Jean Sprey (Brent CHC) and a speaker from Plesseys occupation, plus many others to be confirmed.

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.



Even when women are the majority on the shop floor, men dominate the union executives

MARCH 27

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

THE 39 HOUR

- OUT GO THE BREAKS

- UP GOES THE PACE

- DOWN GO REAL WAGES

THE introduction of the 39 hour week in the engineering industry has been the occasion for a series of attacks by the employers on established working conditions.

In this article MARY WILKINS takes the example of the situation at British Leyland's Pressed Steel Fisher (PSF) plant at Cowley and shows how management is acting along lines analysed by Karl Marx over 100 years ago.

WHAT is happening now in PSF and BL in general is typical of the whole economy. The workers are being subjected to increasing exploitation in a bid by management to step up productivity and safeguard profit margins.

The attack on working conditions and pay in BL is not due to Michael Edwardes personally. When he leaves in December, his successor will have to follow the same path.

For with capitalism in a state of crisis, fierce competition for markets and falling rates of profit, the only solution for management is to increase the exploitation of the workforce, to drive down costs and undercut competitors.

In PSF this has meant an attack on wages (which we saw in November with trade union leaders selling out on the annual review despite strike action by the workers and accepting the 3.8%) and changes in working conditions which ensure increased productivity. Thus management win both ways: they pay less for more work.

Gain

This may seem wrong since the workers at BL won a shorter working week with the reduction from 40 to 39 hours. This was a significant gain for the working class in a bid to reduce hours and create more jobs for the increasing numbers of unemployed.

But management have turned this gain into its reverse, demanding that the 39 hour week be financed by shorter breaks and speed up.

On the tracks, the relief breaks have been cut from 15 minutes to 13 minutes, thus saving 4 minutes a day. The rest of the 'loss' is made up by speed up - a 1½% increase in track speed. On sections without relief breaks 40 hours work must be done in 39.

This is only a small part of a general tightening up on time. There is now no flexibility over the start of the shift.

The line starts at 7.15 on the dot, and if people are not in their place at 7.10 the foreman lines others up to cover their jobs and ensure no time is lost. This also means workers have to get ready for the job in their own time.

Protective clothing, must be put on before the line starts and thus the working day is effectively lengthened.

Breakdowns

The effective length of the working day has also been increased by management cutting down on line stoppages resulting from breakdowns, maintenance problems and quality

failures.

Whereas two years ago the line only ran at 75% efficiency, and was stopped about 25% of the time to fix breakdowns, etc., it now runs at 98%. Therefore, excluding teabreaks at 9am and 3pm, when the line stops for ten minutes, there is continuous production.

Relief breaks are organised on a rota basis, with one person going round, covering for workers in turn.

Labour has been cut back so much that cover labour is not available, so a worker on the track who feels ill, suffers an accident or even

just wants to go to the toilet, has difficulty in getting off the line except during the tea breaks and shortened relief breaks. Shop stewards are also restricted and are unable, or only able with the most difficulty to get covered for trade union business.

All this increases the

pressure on the workers and increases the work load too, since no cover labour is being carried. While this affects the lines most, similar cuts and restrictions are being made on other jobs.

The drive for continuous production is demonstrated most dramatically on the new models. In the new paint shop, the job has been physically separated from lockers by building locker rooms.

No papers, reading material or personal belongings are allowed in the paint shop and workers are only permitted in the locker rooms during breaks.

Thus if anyone can work up a couple of minutes or if the line stops for any reason, no one can read during the stoppage. All attention is concentrated on the job. And this ruling will apply to other new models.

Moreover, industrial engineers the time and motion people - have tightened up on all jobs, cutting jobs out wherever they can, and allowing no leeway and no negotiation.

Increase

This is accompanied by increasing the line speed. Both line speed and manning are subject to agreement and based on 'internationally recognised industrial engineering standards'.

The level of 100 BSI is taken as the 'comfortable working level'. Since the introduction of the 39 hour week, BSI levels have risen to 101.5, even in excess of the industrial engineers level. The Ital tracks, for example, have been working at over 100% efficiency recently.

In addition, the job itself is being intensified by cuts in allied trades. Inspection, line feeding, time work jobs etc are being incorporated into line work, adding pressure,

while at the same time management demand no decrease in quality.

This not only means that the job involves more, but the change excludes certain types of worker from PSF.

In the past, production workers who were injured, disabled or grew old could transfer to lighter, generally lower paid, time work - sweeping, toilet attendant, inspection, etc. Now these jobs have been cut and time workers transferred to the lines.

Health

This will adversely affect their health and shorten their lives. But it will have the advantage for the company of forcing people who become ill or old to leave or take voluntary redundancy, since there is no lighter work to move onto.

The company wants a younger, physically fit workforce. Disabled workers or people over 40 are being pushed out. And this tactic is being repeated throughout the motor industry.

Already this procedure, in addition to other speed ups and increases in productivity has resulted in more accidents.

Under piece work, there were a lot of accidents in PSF. With measure day work the work load was lighter and accident rates went down. Now these are returning to piece work levels.

Further, the cuts in non-production jobs have resulted in cuts in maintenance staff which again can lead to more safety problems. For example, the 'heavy gang' who used to deck overhead wires have been cut back.

But even this super exploited workforce is not safe from attacks, for new machines, already being

introduced, will cut out many jobs. The robots brought into PSF will be even more advanced than Longbridge and will greatly cut jobs.

Predictably, these changes in working conditions have been accompanied by increasingly heavy enforcement of disciplinary measures. Any one who skips out of time or fails to conform to new rules and

productivity requirement receives a pink slip and ultimately suspension and the sack.

Similar moves are being made at Fords. There have been strikes at Halewood and Dagenham over discipline and sackings.

This recent company offensive marks a new level of the company's profit drive in response to the deepening recession and the need to



Car production line, 1950s

"The great improvements made in machines of every kind have raised their productive power very much. Without any doubt, the shortening of the hours of labour . . . gave the impulse to these improvements. The latter, combined with the more intense strain on the workman, have had the effect, that at least as much is produced in the shortened (by two hours or one-sixth) working-day as was previously produced during the longer one."

Factory Inspectors' Report, 1858, quoted in 'Capital', p.416



Why they call it 'take-home pay'. USA, 1972. Rising Up Angry

SQUEEZE!

Socialist Bookshelf

Books and pamphlets that you should read

"Capital is dead labour that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks . . .

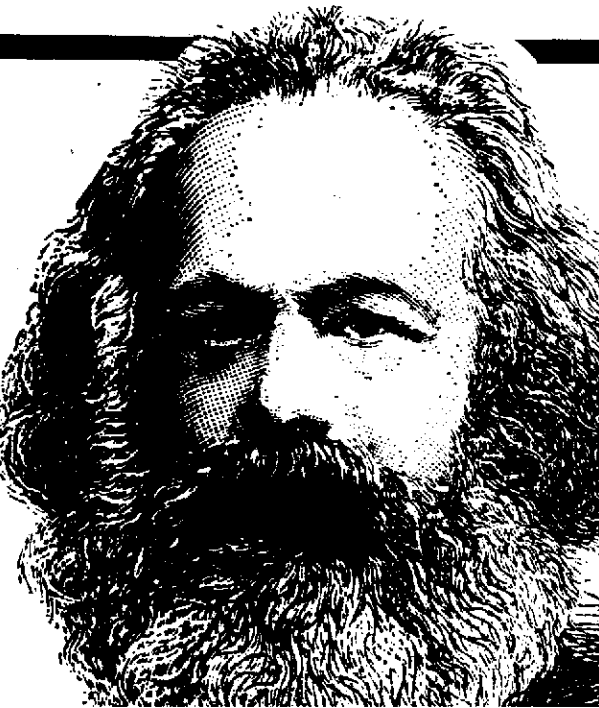
"If machinery be the most powerful means for increasing the productiveness of labour . . . it becomes in the hands of capital the most powerful means . . . for lengthening the working day . . . (And if the hours of labour are shortened), machinery becomes in the hands of capital the objective means, systematically employed for squeezing out more labour in a given time.

"At the same time that factory work exhausts the nervous system to the uttermost, it does away with the many-sided play of the muscles, and confiscates every atom of freedom, both in bodily and intellectual activity. The lightening of the labour, even, becomes a sort of torture, since the machine does not free the labourer from work, but deprives the work of all interest.

"Every kind of capitalist production, in so far as it is not only a labour-process, but also a process of creating surplus value, has this in common, that it is not the workman that employs the instruments of labour, but the instruments of labour that employ the workman. But it is only in the factory system that the inversion for the first time acquires technical and palpable reality.

"By means of its conversion into an automaton, the instrument of labour confronts the labourer, during the labour process, in the shape of capital, of dead labour, that dominates, and pumps dry, living labour power."

Karl Marx, *Capital*, p.233, 403, 413, 423.



Engels on Capital

by Harry Sloan

FOR many readers, Karl Marx's *Capital* will seem, if not exactly a closed book, at least an extremely heavy one to open.

Yet as the main article on these pages indicates, the laws and contradictions of capitalism unmasked by Marx in this and other writings are of central importance to the workers' movement in its struggles in the 1980s.

In fact *Capital* is not as difficult a book as it often reckoned. And readers can make a beginning with some of the shorter, more popularised pamphlets on the question.

Most obvious in this regard is the pamphlet by Engels entitled *On Marx's 'Capital'*. Included in this pamphlet are three reviews of the first volume of *Capital* which Engels wrote as part of an effort to publicise the content of this new, revolutionary analysis of the laws of motion of capitalism. These laws affect us all.

To live we all need access to certain basic commodities — food, clothing, housing and other services. But we can only obtain these in exchange for money.

Since none of the regular readers of *Socialist Organisation* are landed aristocrats or industrialists we must find that money by in turn selling something. And all that we have to sell is our ability to work, our labour power.

If we are lucky enough to find a job, we can sell our labour power in exchange for enough to keep us at a minimum standard from week to week.

But then our ability to work, transferred to a 40 (or 39) hour week in a factory is turned from a potential ability into actual, physical labour.

And it is labour which creates new value in finished commodities. The capitalist at the end of the week pays our wages — and keeps in his possession the fruits of our labour, which incorporate new value far in excess of the amount we take home.

Thus the formally equal exchange of labour power for wages conceals an unequal relation between capital and labour.

While we walk out of the factory with a pay packet barely large enough for a week's groceries and necessities, and are forced to return the next week and following weeks in order to survive, the capitalist each week increases the surplus product extracted from our efforts. He then exchanges these products once again for money.

This goes under the heading of a "free exchange" between the labourer and the money-owner. Yet as Engels points out:

"That contract on the part of the labourer is not a

free contract. The daily time during which he is at liberty to sell his working power is the time during which he is compelled to sell it."

Engels also looks at the very different standpoint of the capitalist and the worker. While the worker sells his only commodity (labour power) in order to obtain money for the purchase of other commodities, the capitalist begins with money, and purchases commodities (raw materials, machinery and labour power) in order to increase his money.

Where there is no prospect of profit, the capitalist has no interest in production — no matter how vital the commodity concerned. The system is one of private gain and anarchy.

The increase in the wealth of the capitalist thus comes at the expense of the exploitation of the working class. And the effects of this exploitation are by no means confined to the workers directly employed by the capitalist class.

Indeed Marx and Engels point clearly to the need for the capitalists to utilise unemployment in order to hold down wages.

The hundreds of thousands of youth on cheap labour YOP schemes may well detect a prophesy of their plight in Engels' words:

"They form an industrial reserve army which during times of bad or moderate business is paid below the value of its labour and is irregularly employed or comes under the care of public Poor Law institutions, but which is indispensable to the capitalist class at times when business is especially lively . . . and which under all circumstances serves to break the power of resistance of the regularly employed workers and to keep their wages down."

In pointing to the central element of exploitation embodied in the normally unquestioned everyday realities of the wages and the length of the working day, Marx and Engels expose for all to see the conflict of class interests that lies at the centre of capitalist society.

They show the necessity for the exploited majority of propertyless wage workers to rise up and take into their own hands the privately owned means of production.

Only a system of production to satisfy public need rather than private profit can bring an end to poverty and oppression.

It is the contribution of Marx and Engels to have so thoroughly spelled out the contradictions within capitalism which make such a revolutionary development both necessary and possible.

undercut competitors. However, it is not unprecedented. For the same type of moves which BL management are making at PSF now, were being carried out by capitalists a century ago.

Karl Marx analysed this in *Capital* Vol. I published in 1867. Capitalists then tried to increase productivity by speed ups, longer working hours, more intensive labour, new technology,

and disciplinary measures.

While BL is not a private enterprise concern but a nationalised industry it is run on capitalist lines — for profit.

Marx argues in *Capital* that the only source of value and hence ultimately of profit, is labour. The value of a commodity is related to the amount of socially necessary work-time it takes to produce it. But labour power is a unique commodity because its consumption creates new value.

Thus, when a worker is engaged in productive labour a certain proportion of his/her working time is taken up with producing sufficient commodities and hence sufficient value to meet the costs of their wages, that is to reproduce themselves as labour power so that they can eat, pay the rent and 'live to work another day'. However worker actually produce more value in a day than the equivalent of their wages.

Extra

They create extra, surplus value over and above, which the capitalist keeps — and from which capitalist profit derives.

Now, Marx says, the capitalist has an obvious interest in making this 'surplus value' as big as possible. He can do this in two ways.

Either he can make his workers work longer hours: that is, if the worker has to work six hours to produce enough value necessary to cover his/her wages, and works an eight hour day, then the capitalist gets two hours work free and for nothing. But if the capitalist can force or persuade his workforce to work a nine hour day, he is getting more surplus value.

Or, more likely, the capitalist can increase

productivity, so that the workers produce as many commodities in eight hours as they used to in nine or ten hours. This is the characteristic method of advanced capitalism.

It can be done in several ways — speed-up, new, more efficient machinery which needs fewer workers to produce the same amount of commodities and so on.

Productivity

Now this increase in productivity benefits the capitalist in two different ways. Firstly, if the capitalist is first in the field with this new level of productivity, he will produce more commodities at below average cost, but, because the other capitalists need more labour time to produce each commodity, the average value will hardly change.

The innovating capitalist will be able to sell his commodities at more than their value. Later, all the capitalists will make similar innovations and increase their productivity so the average value of commodities will decrease and the first innovating capitalist will not be able to make such high profits.

But secondly if capitalists in general increase productivity so that it takes less labour to produce all commodities, then the value of labour power itself will fall, because the commodities workers need to live on will contain less labour and less value. Therefore capitalists can pay workers lower wages and it will ensure they have enough to live on and be able to continue working.

This increase in productivity does create problems for capitalists. If a certain group of workers used to produce 100 commodities in eight hours, but with increased productivity they now produce 200 in the same time, each commodity only contains half the value as before. Thus the capitalist

has to sell more commodities to realise the same amount of surplus value and hence profit.

New markets must be found for the increased volume of goods.

This is what is happening today. Managements are competing with each other to increase productivity, undercut their competitors and corner a larger share of the limited market. With the recession — a crisis of capitalism — the need for companies to undercut and increase productivity is even greater than usual. This is why BL is increasingly exploiting its workers.

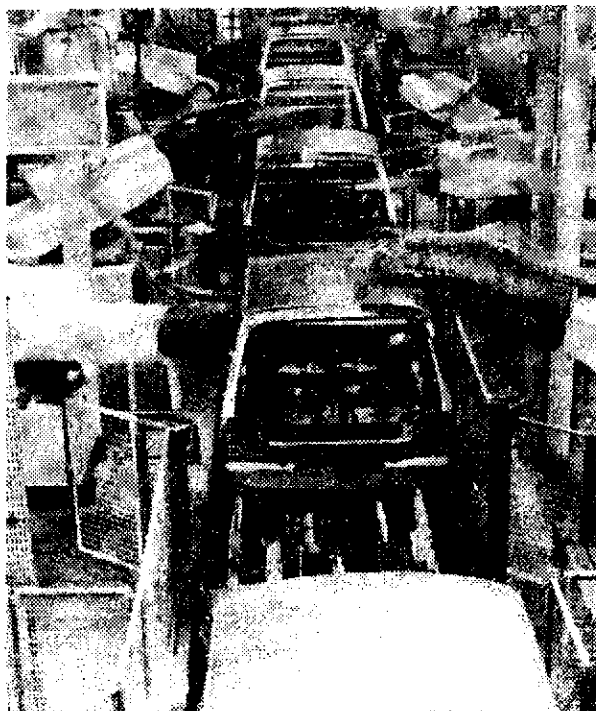
The only way workers can stop this increased exploitation is by uniting and fighting back. Increased productivity doesn't mean higher wages or more jobs — it means quite the reverse. But because so much is at stake, because BL management can only remain com-

petitive by exploiting the workforce more and more, they will not give in easily — as BL workers have already experienced.

It is a question of the relationship of forces between the company and the workers.

Management have taken advantage of the wages sell-out last year, seeing in the treachery of the union leaders an opportunity to get them to put the screws on the workers over productivity as well as pay. If BL workers had won in the wage review, they would be better able to fight this increasing exploitation on the shop floor.

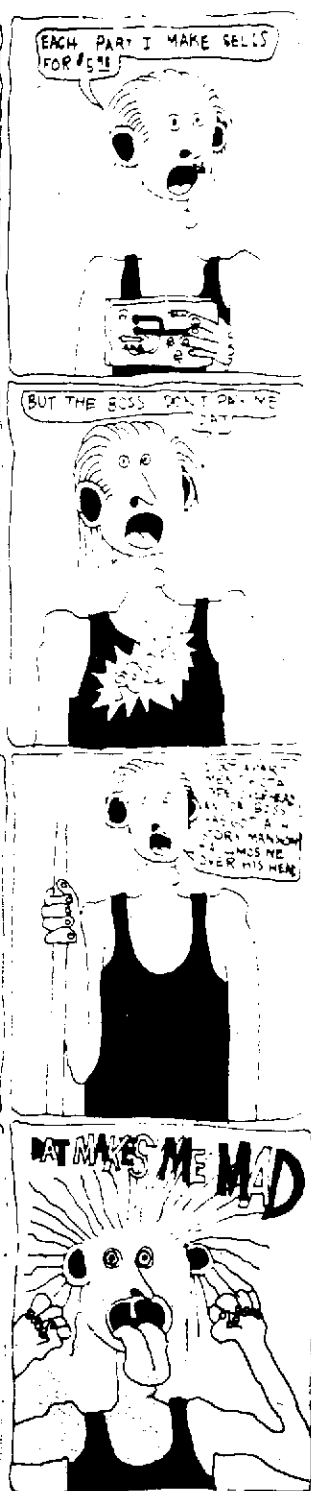
But despite last year's sell-out, the unions still have the power to fight management if the determination is there. The alternative is to accept even lower pay and ever increasing productivity and exploitation.



BL production line, 1980s: machines replace workers

On the tracks, the relief breaks have been cut from 15 to 13 minutes, thus saving 4 minutes a day. The rest of the 'loss' is made up by speed-up — a 1½% increase in track speeds. On sections without relief breaks 40 hours work must be done in 39 hours.

Cowley PSF, 1982



Sam Gordon 1910-1982

Death of a pioneer

Trotskyist

by John O'Mahony

LAST Friday Sam Gordon died in a London hospital, in his 72nd year. He had fought a 20 year battle with cancer before it finally killed him.

Sam Gordon's life, from early youth to old age, was a part of the Trotskyist movement, at times a central part. It traversed the entire long history of that movement.

He was secretary of the world Trotskyist movement during World War 2, when its centre had to be located in the USA. This was because of wartime repression which claimed the lives and the liberty of many Trotskyists all across Europe and in both of the warring camps.

He was an important leader of British Trotskyism in the '40s and '50s. In the '70s he was an important influence on the work Socialist Organiser did, offering moral support, advice and suggestions (though we did not always take them, and in retrospect I can think of cases where it would have been better if we had).

Born

Sam was born in New York City in 1910. He joined the American section of the Trotskyist Left Opposition in 1929.

Led by James P Cannon and Max Shachtman, a small group of Marxists had broken with the American CP the year before. Trotsky had been decisively beaten in the factional struggle with the bureaucracy within the shell of the CP of the USSR, and spent 1928 in exile in Central Asia, before being expelled beyond the borders of the USSR in 1929.

The comrades who raised the banner of Trotskyism in the USA seemed to choose a lost cause, and certainly chose to be an ostracised and persecuted minority in the communist movement.

Criticisms

Writing in the mid '70s, Sam described how he came to Trotskyism. In a student club he was drawn towards communism, but also became aware of some of the Trotskyist criticisms of Kremlin policy.

"We searched for and got hold of Max Eastman's book 'Since Lenin Died', which first broke the full story of the Russian Left Opposition and what it stood for. Together with some who were already in the YCL, I was discussing the import of this work when we heard that James P Cannon was about to be expelled from the Communist Party for Trotskyism.

"It was in this atmosphere that several of us from the club went down to the Fourteenth Street Labor Temple, to one of the first public meetings of the Communist League, to see for ourselves.

"As we came in and took our seats there were several commotions in the hall. A rush for the platform [where Cannon and Shachtman were seated and the



(L to R) Arne Swabeck, James P. Cannon, Rose Karsner, Sam Gordon, Oscar Coover, Sr., and Carl Skoglund

chairman, Martin Abern, was trying to get some order) had been repulsed by a guard strung out in front.

"Hecklers, and one particular heckler who seemed to be leader of the CP 'commando' assigned to break up the meeting, were being handled by Max with his usual verve. Shachtman eventually won the crowd around after rallies of laughter that reduced the Stalinists to silence.

"Cannon was the next and last speaker. He spoke quietly, in lecture style, in a ringing tenor voice, and his topic was internationalism and communism, how the two were inseparable, how the task that the Left Opposition had set itself was to re-establish this fact here and in the world movement.

"Jim's speech left a powerful impression on me, and I believe I was won over to Trotskyism then and there. But the YCLers in the club were still working hard on us outsiders, and a few of us decided we should have a look at Europe, Germany in particular, and after seeing advanced class struggle in action, we would finally make up our minds.

"The way to do that was to catch a ship on a pier-head-jump for Germany, work our passage, and jump ship at the other end. For all this, contact with the CP was regarded as indispensable. It was not easy with growing maritime unemployment.

"We did just that, each in his own way. I got to Berlin and eventually found a job that allowed me to do a lot of reading and studying and to participate in demonstrations, etc. It was there I made up my mind to join the Left Opposition. I contacted the Militant, and wrote several letters to Martin Abern [the acting

secretary] that were treated as articles.

"Naturally I was thrilled to see these published in the Militant, which had in a short time gained an unequalled reputation for journalistic excellence in radical circles."

Back in the USA he helped produce the Militant. During a particularly bad period in the life of the young, persecuted, poverty stricken movement, when isolation and personal conflicts led to the temporary withdrawal of Max Shachtman from editorial work, he served as editor of the Militant. He was less than 21 years old.

Responsibility

The spirit in which he undertook that great responsibility is the key to understanding how the organisation could survive such unfavourable conditions and develop.

"I had not yet turned 21 when I assumed my editorial duties on the Militant. No young man of that age could have undertaken such a responsibility on mere self-confidence. I was not particularly ambitious. If anything, the contrary. But it was the self-confidence inspired by the feeling that I was doing what was politically correct and necessary that kept me going.

In the '30s the American Trotskyist movement broke out of its initial isolation and went from strength to strength. In 1934 the Trotskyists made a major step forward when they fused their organisation with the American Workers' Party, which had essentially adopted their ideas. In 1936 they joined the Socialist Party as a faction, but were expelled in 1937.

Sam Gordon worked closely with James P Cannon. Sam was an organiser.

a writer, whatever was needed.

He was secretary of the emergency conference of the Fourth International held in 1940, and thereafter administrative secretary of the International Executive Committee of the FI, based in New York. He travelled as a seaman to make contact with the Trotskyist groups wherever American ships could go.

In this capacity he came to Britain in 1943 and helped set up the collaboration between groupings within the two main Trotskyist organisations — the RSL and the WIL (led by Ted Grant, Gerry Healy, and others) — that eventually resulted in the fusion of the two organisations into the Revolutionary Communist Party in summer 1944.

He was also a key influence pressing that organisation to abandon sectarianism and integrate itself in the mass political labour movement. This was a central theme of Sam's politics, as it was of Cannon's and Trotsky's. Trotskyists are not and cannot be a self-contained and self-sufficient group of people who must preserve themselves for exhibition in a historical showcase, in elemental purity untouched by the labour movement around them.

Fought

If they are to be of any use of the working class, they must know how to grapple with it, struggle within it constructively, learn from it, not be afraid of it. Sam and others fought for such an approach in the '40s and '50s.

He settled finally in Britain in 1952 when his English wife, Mildred, was witch-hunted out of the USA as a Trotskyist in the era of McCarthyism.

This was a period of

great crisis for the Trotskyist movement.

The isolation and seeming impotence of the Trotskyist movement lifted in the later '30s, and in the early '40s progress was made. Then came great but perplexing historical events like the Chinese Revolution — led by Stalinists and setting up a totalitarian Stalinist state.

To many Trotskyism seemed consigned to the footnotes of history.

Crisis

Whole layers of the hitherto Trotskyist movement were thrown into crisis by these developments. A mood of conciliation to Stalinism developed: the overturns of capitalism and imperialism were seen as far more important than the fact that it was Stalinist bureaucrats who had led the anti-capitalist revolutions and that they had imposed totalitarian anti-working class systems at the same time.

Though in certain circumstances the Stalinists had shown themselves capable of being consistently anti-capitalist (unlike in Spain, France, etc in the '30s), they had not ceased to be simultaneously anti-working class.

Sections of the Trotskyist movement began to talk and act as if they had, and to abandon the Trotskyist programme of political revolution to overthrow the bureaucratic rulers in the Stalinist states.

Major political disorientation set in. World War 3 seemed a certainty. Some Trotskyists developed a black and white view of the world as consisting of two blocks, with no meaningful alternative but to choose between them.

There was no role for independent working class politics in a world where

the expectation of the leaders of the world Trotskyist movement (Pablo, Mandel, etc) was that in World War 3 the Russian Army would rule over Europe and carry out the task of the socialist revolution there as part of an 'international class war'. At best independent working class politics would have a role at a later period of history.

Those who held to these views gave critical support to the Mao regime in China, not advocating a working-class revolution there. They refused to side unequivocally with the Berlin workers' uprising against the Russian and German Stalinist bureaucrats in June 1953 — even though the 'Red' Army was slaughtering the Berlin workers, to call for its withdrawal, they argued, would have been to risk letting the US Army in. International power block considerations had replaced class-struggle and working class considerations even to this extent.

Sam Gordon was one of the earliest Marxists to sound the alarm against the drift of the Trotskyist movement, led by secretary Michel Pablo, towards politically disarming itself in face of the imposing successes achieved by Stalinism in World War 2 and after.

Criticised

He criticised the documents of the Third World Congress of the Trotskyist movement, held in 1951. Eventually, especially after the East Berlin workers' uprising, Cannon and others launched a full-scale drive to purge the Trotskyist movement of what they called 'Pabloism'.

Sam Gordon later used to describe himself, with some justified pride, as 'the first anti-Pabloite'.

(The documents and letters of the period, Sam Gordon's included, are available from the publishing house of the American SWP).

Sam Gordon was in semi-retirement from the '60s — perhaps preoccupied with his illness. He was bitterly hostile to the recrudescence of sectarianism in the '60s and '70s — breaking his decades-old links with the leadership of the Socialist Labour League (which mutated into the WRP). He followed the affairs of the labour movement very closely. He attended the last Labour Party conference, and appreciated very highly the qualities of the left leaders, especially Tony Benn.

He was to the end of his days a loyalist for the American Socialist Workers Party. He tried to view their political development in as sympathetic a light as possible, and to explain it to those of us who were harshly critical.

All the more significant, therefore, was his readiness to admit that when in the first six months of 1980 the segment of the USFI led by the SWP welcomed the Russian invasion of Afghanistan as a case of 'going to the aid of the revolution', in that instance they had departed from Trotskyism.

He encouraged at least one critic of those politics to write against this pernicious and reactionary nonsense. The 'first anti-Pabloite' had not entirely ceased to live in the 70 year old Sam Gordon.

Following the affairs of the Marxist movement, and occasionally intervening, Sam was completely free from narrow factionalism. He said he was 'elated' and 'enthused' by the fusion that took place in July 1981 between the International-Communist League and the old Workers' Socialist League to form the new Workers' Socialist League. It reminded him of the events in which he played a central part nearly 40 years earlier, leading to the creation of the RCP.

Loss

He saw it as perhaps the beginning of the end of the period of fragmentation and unravelling for the forces calling themselves Trotskyist.

What has to be said of the great pioneers of Trotskyism who survived Trotsky, like James P Cannon, must also be said of Sam Gordon: they leave many unresolved problems, some of them fundamental, to the present generation of Trotskyists. But it is thanks to the courage, dedication and unbreakable conviction of those like Sam Gordon that there now exists a Marxist movement at all, able to build on their work and to renew and politically develop itself in the coming class struggles.

Sam Gordon's death is a loss to the labour movement, and to us.

We send our condolences to his wife Mildred and their son.

FIGHTING TEBBIT: BITTER LESSON OF TAFF VALE

THE centrepiece of Norman Tebbit's legal attack on trade unions is the proposal to make union funds liable when officials or members are involved in blacking or defending 100% trade unionism. Multiple actions could mean unions being liable for millions of pounds.

Tebbit would in fact restore the law to that laid down by the House of Lords in the Taff Vale case 80 years ago. What happened at Taff Vale and what can it teach us for today's struggles?

The successful dock strike of 1889 had been seen as a clear danger signal by the class that had ruled the world for most of the nineteenth century. There was a clear dynamic towards what they had always feared — the militant organisation of the majority of the working class — the unskilled.

Engels, who had often despaired of the old collaborationist craft unions, wrote of "... this gigantic strike of the lowest of the outcasts — the dock labourers. If this stratum can be organised it is a fact of the greatest importance."

If the industrialisation of Germany and the USA threatened British capital from without, the possibility of mass trade unionism was a powerful challenge from within. It was not only the organisation of 'the children of the abyss' which terrified capital but their increasing susceptibility to socialist ideas.

The Socialist Democratic Federation grew in the 90s. In 1893 the ILP was formed. Demands for a united independent working class presence in Parliament intensified. The cloth cap began to replace the top hat at the TUC.

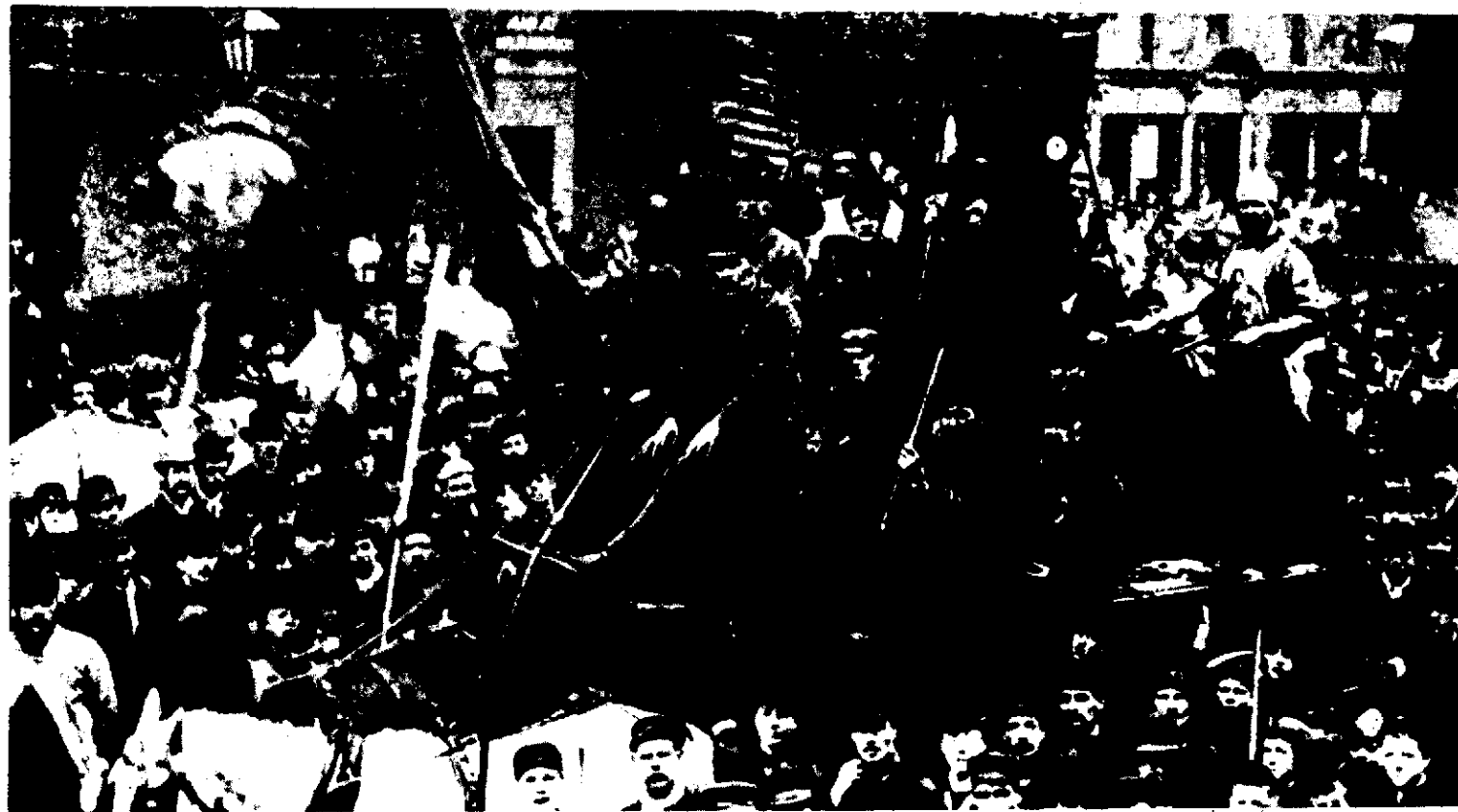
Capital

Resolutions claiming that "Trade Unionists are beginning to realise that so long as the capital and machinery are in the hands of a small class no real progress can be made towards bringing about our social emancipation" (Iron Founders to 1893 TUC) were increasingly accepted by union bodies.

Then, as now, opinions on how to stop the rot differed. Whilst some sections of the employers and the state were prepared to accept Randolph Churchill's urging not to cling to "unreasoning and shortsighted support for the rights of property" and were ready for concessions, others were not. Employers Federations developed apace. The Times and the Economist preached stridently against the New Unionism and the tyrannies of collective organisation.

The repressive stance of the more confrontationalist sections of capital climaxed in the 1887 engineering lockout.

William Collison, who believed in "the right of every man (sic) to pursue his trade or employment without dictation, molestation or obstruction" established the National Free Labour Association



The 1889 dock strike: part of the menacing movement of the most oppressed workers which provoked the capitalists' legal counter-attack

to supply employers with blacklegs. Free Labour Exchanges and District Offices were established throughout the country and were particularly energetic in supporting the Railway and Shipping Employers.

From the early nineties there was an increasing tendency by both Liberals and Tories to use police and troops in strikes at Featherstone, Mold and Belfast. Most important of all was the role of the judiciary.

The 1871 Trade Union Act and the 1895 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act had constituted a limited armistice but through the 90s these bewigged vultures began to persistently peck away at this compromise. In a series of cases such as *Temperton v. Russell* and *Lyons v. Wilkins* their flexibility fine-tuned the law to weaken industrial action.

The employers' offensive and the weakening of the new unionism together with the sectarian impotence of the SDF produced a turn towards parliamentary politics. At the 1899 TUC a motion calling for the establishment of a Special Conference representing unions, co-ops and socialist organisations was carried, and in February 1900 this conference agreed to establish a Labour Representation Committee.

However, for 12 months this kernel of the future Labour Party marked time. It attracted few substantial affiliations and at the 1900 General Election elected only two MPs. This

was to change dramatically after the Taff Vale affair.

James Holmes, the West of England Organiser of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, was a militant Socialist. The Society was not recognised by the Taff Vale Railway and was still smarting from the victimisation of a signaller, Ewington, by Beasley the General Manager.

While the Boer War coal prices were high, demand was increasing while reservists were being called up. Holmes saw his opportunity. He organised a strike for recognition and increased wages.

Pickets were sent to the docks and the mines. There were 24 hour rotas. Blacking led to 100,000 pitmen being laid off.

When Collison's Free Labour Association ferried in blacklegs they were met at the station, arrested by the pickets and triumphantly paraded through the streets of Cardiff.

The employers hit back. Beasley had 400 summonses issued against those who had struck without notice. Aware of the limitations of the law of picketing since *Lyons v. Wilkins*, he applied for an injunction.

Richard Bell, the General Secretary, was a moderate who had earlier attempted to discipline Holmes. He now tried to stop the strike being made official. Overruled by his Executive, he hurried to South Wales to take the reins out of irresponsible hands, and in short order snatched defeat

from the jaws of victory.

He negotiated a return to work on the terms existing before the strike. Not, however, before an injunction was granted to the employers by the High Court — not, as was normal against the officials, but against the union itself as an organisation.

In other words, the union funds were up for grabs.

It had generally been accepted even by right wing opinion that this was not the legal position. Those who had argued that union responsibility would be a useful weapon to break strikes had argued for the law to be changed. Mr Justice Farwell's verdict was, in the words of the *Daily News*, "contrary to the opinion held by all lawyers who had professionally considered the subject".

Even the Times accepted the Court of Appeal's reversal of the judgement, but the House of Lords reaffirmed that the union was responsible for the actions of its officials.

The ASR eventually ended up paying out £42,000, a vast sum in those days.

Surveying the damage, the union leaders faced a similar choice to that facing the General Council today.

Can we already detect some right wing minds thinking what James Sexton, dockers' leader and self-styled 'agitator', was bold enough to openly state at the time of Taff Vale?

"There are those in the Labour movement sanguine enough to think that the Taff Vale case will be a blessing in disguise, and will tend to strengthen

executive control and minimise if not entirely kill irresponsible action in the localities".

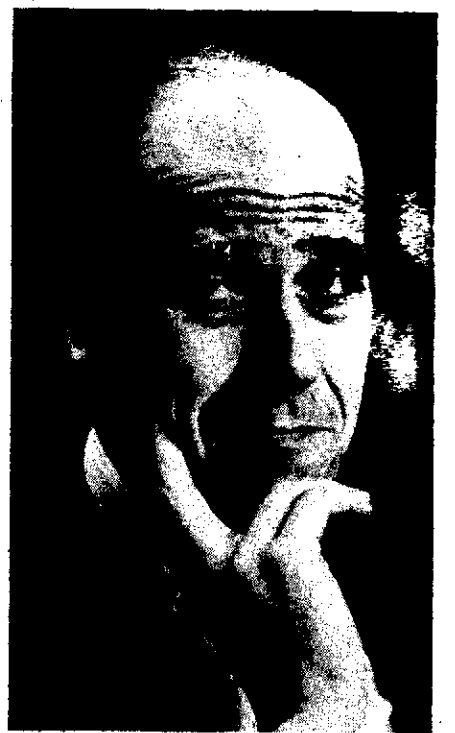
Richard Bell felt the same: "I have all along held views which did not gain much popularity as to the conduct and actions of some of the rank and file and younger bloods of our trade unions. Rules, Executive Committees and responsible officials have been ignored".

The judgement he felt would be "a useful influence in solidifying the forces of trade unionism and in subjecting them to wholesome discipline". His view was shared by Sidney Webb.

While the left urged that the Taff Vale judgement should be overturned lock, stock and barrel, many union leaders took the line of Chandler, General Secretary of the Carpenters and Joiners who warned his committees and officials "... to carefully guard against affording any employer or individual the opportunity of taking advantage of the latest move against the unions.

"It is impossible to do anything of an active character during a strike without running immense risk of actions for damage. Therefore, the most sensible plan is to avoid strikes as far as possible."

In the immediate aftermath of Taff Vale it was this conservative approach which predominated. The TUC Parliamentary Committee (General Council) argued that "with a judicious amendment of the rules it will be possible to a



Tebbit: back to 1905?

JOHN McILROY surveys some pointers from the past for the fight against anti-union laws.

change was on Parliament, not direct action. Affiliation to the LRC increased by 100,000 in the year after Taff Vale. In 1902-3 it doubled. Taff Vale provided the impetus and focus for the formation of the Labour Party.

At first the timidity of the Parliamentary Committee led to attempts to get very limited bills through Parliament which would protect unions against some of the problems the judges had created in earlier cases without giving them complete immunity.

Only gradually did the fear of financial loss and the pressure of the rank and file lead to a more ambitious approach.

When Shackleton's Bill was defeated in May 1903 and the Tories' final word was to establish a Royal Commission hostile to the unions, the scene was set for a victory at the September conference for those who advocated a Bill with more far reaching protections as finally introduced by the victorious Liberals in 1906. That election of course saw for the first time a strong independent working class presence in Parliament.

The union rights secured then are once more in danger. Tebbit could be used as some union leaders wished to use Taff Vale to rewrite union rules, undermine democracy and justify a policy of retreat in today's conditions of mass unemployment.

Some union leaders may oscillate between dislike of the law, fear of the membership and fear of illegal action. We must make sure that it is the strength and power of the membership that wins out in this situation.

Taff Vale produced a workers' party to protect our interests within capitalist society. The fight against Tebbit can help to produce a fight to push that party in the direction of dismantling capitalist society.

avert many of the difficulties, especially in protecting the funds of the unions." For many leaders the latter was the first consideration but the rank and file looked at things differently.

Up and down the country there were militant marches and demonstrations. Many leaders found themselves in the position of Will Thorne who reported to the Gas Workers Conference "members have threatened to leave the union if the EC did not allow them to come out on strike."

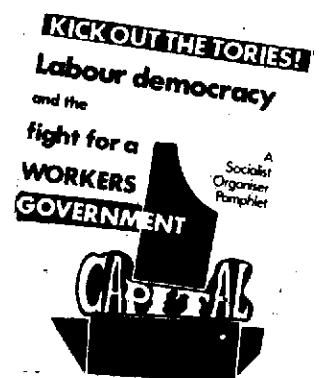
The fact that the period 1902-5 was one of depression militated against an explosion against Taff Vale. In a period when one might expect long defensive struggles the low rate of working days lost argues that the judgement must have had some effect in restraining militancy.

However, as other cases were brought against right wing unions and the total bill moved towards a massive £200,000, the union leaders began to see the nature of the albatross they had been saddled with. They might have welcomed allies in controlling their membership, but the law set the price of failure too high.

Rallying

It proved a rallying point for the members who had trade union ideology on their side and its unpredictable use took the timing, tempo and tactics to a large degree out of their hands.

Even so, the focus of



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Wrong on Leyland strike? Writeback

PAT LALLY'S article in Socialist Organiser (Feb. 25) entitled "Failure of Leadership at LVL" contains numerous inaccuracies and distortions which have to be exposed.

The final shopfloor mass meeting did vote by a slender majority to carry on the strike. However in the midst of the angry scenes at the end of the meeting the Strike Committee agreed to take a ballot in order to confirm the result.

Many people at the meeting have said that a count should have taken place because the result was by no means clear to everyone.

However, immediately the vote was taken many people started leaving and so this was not possible. The news of the split vote and the ballot produced a domino effect with the other mass meetings.

When the results of all the mass meetings were received by the strike committee, which was composed of all unions on-site, the decision was made to end the strike. This is the correct record.

Link up

All through Lally's article he adopts an amazingly sectarian attitude towards the Strike Committee. At no time did the strike committee drop their demand for the withdrawal of all redundancies and this is precisely what the strike committee meant by an "honourable settlement". At no time were the strike committee opposed to building political support in the rest of BL and a campaign was initiated to do so with the intention of calling an all-BL shop stewards meeting at a date to be decided after our own all-NW stewards' meeting.

It must be realised, however, that whilst there is a link between Cars and Vehicles at managerial level, Edwardes never threatened Cars with closure during the dispute.

Had Edwardes made such threats it would have destroyed management's strategy of containment and possibly produced a reaction of unimaginable consequences for the Tories.

The links which existed between the unions before the strike were virtually non-existent and the links in the minds of the two workforces are in the main, vague.

So why does Lally turn the link between Cars and Vehicles into an obsession?

Lally is all over the place: For a start the shop stewards are not "by far and away the most conservative layers in the factory." The composition of the shop stewards committee is uneven and at the all-union stewards meeting before the final mass meeting they were 100 per cent in favour of carrying on the dispute.

The influence of the white collar unions is not "largely conservative", indeed it was ASTMS who voted to have a sit-in in the first place, and TASS had taken action long before the

shopfloor started their campaign against the redundancies. How can Lally get these facts so wrong?

The work of the LAC on the picket lines did more to alienate militants towards the revolutionary left than the whole of the media put together. The LAC were seen as divisive and unable to contribute constructively.

As for Socialist Challenge supporters in the dispute. We had a good working relationship with the strike committee because of

the work we did to win the dispute.

We had our differences with the strike committee over how to win the dispute. Our comrades in the strike argued for delegations to be organised to leaflet, visit and win support from other plants.

Delegations

They led the delegations to Manchester and elsewhere in the north west.

Our comrades in other industries won the commit-

ment of a CSEU stewards conference to organise strike action should LVL carry out their threat of closure. We were able to play a part in winning the majority of the strike committee to this position.

We had better things to do than give Coyne a full report on what was said at LAC meetings. We did tell him what a good idea it was to build support in the Midlands for our dispute. Because of the lunatic approach of the LAC we

had to formally disassociate ourselves from their suicidal actions.

It was ironic that the actions of the LAC lost their two supporters in the plant during the course of the dispute. Demands on revolutionaries working in the industry by comrades who arrive on the picket line from out of the blue is never the best way to carry out joint work. The experience of LVL proves this conclusively.

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE
SUPPORTERS WORKING
AT LVL.



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.



CHRIS KNIGHT of London Labour Briefing replies to John O'Mahony's and John Bloxam's Open Letter about the editorial on the GLC and the fares fight in the March Briefing (Socialist Organiser no. 75).

GLC: THE REALITIES OF POWER

THANKS for your "open letter" in response to the Briefing Editorial. This reply is my own alone.

One point I accept. The editorial was not half hard enough on Ken Livingstone or on the leadership of ILEA (who caved in to pressure quite unnecessarily and without a fight). Our editorial said:

"We are not yielding ground to the Tories any more than we are being literally forced to".

For some of us, this may be true, but we should have made a sharper distinction between certain members of the GLC left and others.

At various times, there has been clear dissatisfaction with the way in which Ken Livingstone led resistance to the decisions of Donning and the Law Lords: those points should have been reiterated.

Compromised

The substantive issue, however, is whether or not the whole Labour GLC should have voted against its own budget last month and resigned. You say that this should have happened, in accordance with the vote at the February meeting of Target 82.

My view is that it was correct to say: "Resign rather than capitulate"; anything is better than to be seen by Londoners as politically compromised through collaboration with the rule of the Judges and the Tory Government.

But is this what is happening? I don't think so. It is not quite fair to describe Ken Livingstone's policy as "protest against the fare rise but vote for it"

(which is how you describe it in Socialist Organiser). When the crucial vote came up, Ken Livingstone and the GLC left voted almost unanimously against complying with the Lords.

Morale

It was a combination of Labour right wingers, the SDP and the Liberals with the Tories which defeated this line. From then on, the question became whether to draw up a budget at all. At the Target 82 meeting in question, I felt it necessary to place the hardest pressure on Ken and others to avoid them being seen to compromise in the smallest respect, because of the effect such weakness at the top might have had on the morale of those engaged in the "Can't Pay - Won't Pay" campaign and the struggle for industrial action in support of Fares Fair. As the budget vote approached, however, there began to develop the most intense bitterness between those who had supported the Target 82 line on the one hand, and virtually the entire left of the GLC Labour Group on the other. Should we have pressed the division to the point of splitting the Briefing network irrevocably, with the Tories and the press able to exploit this split?

Had we been sure that "disengagement" - i.e. the immediate resignation of the Labour GLC - was popular with the mass of London Labour Parties, with the trade union rank and file and with all those wanting a fight against the

Lords' decision, and had we been sure that this would have strengthened, rather than weakened, our forces in relation to the Tories, we would have carried through the necessary split. But was this the case? Would Briefing have carried the bulk of London left activists with us in direct opposition to Ken Livingstone, and the GLC? I don't think so. It is important that we are conscious of our own strength - not underestimating it, but not wildly overestimating it either.

My view is that the mass of Londoners see the attempted doubling of fares on London Transport as being despite the efforts of Dave Wetzel, Ken Livingstone and the Labour GLC. They are not

blaming us for these increases: they do see the Law Lords and the Tories as responsible. An editorial in Briefing must surely perform a slightly different function from a vote taken by activists at a meeting of Target 82: it is more public, and it must attempt to transcend tactical differences and unite the maximum possible range of left activists around us under the conditions which actually exist.

Once the "disengagement" line had been shown to have little support, we had to take account of this, not keep pressing it mechanically and regardless of consequences. You write: "You talk about doing better next time, in a different fight later. But if the GLC left will not fight

for its major manifesto plank, what will it fight for? Comrades, the class struggle is always now."

I would agree that "the class struggle is always now", but on the other hand a sense of timing is useful sometimes as well.

What I think you inadequately understand is that we are engaged in a struggle not just for propaganda points, but for power.

Choice

It is the realities of power which are the problem, not "incorrect ideas" in Ken Livingstone's (or anyone else's) head.

If we had full state power in our hands, we wouldn't have to make difficult choices between almost equally unsatisfactory alternatives: we could smash through the system, implementing cheap fares (or free fares) without raising rates, without having to bother about Judges or the "law", without having to take account of "economic realities" in capitalist terms. To the extent that we lack full power, however, things aren't so easy. We have to choose between unsatisfactory alternatives. On the other hand, the fact that we do have to do this just shows that we are living and struggling in the real world, not just in a world of paper, propaganda and resolutions.

When I have advocated "disengagement" in Briefing, I have always made clear the implications of this. Ceding office may be an appropriate

tactic at times, but ceding power is always a mistake, unless it is forced on you.

Disengage

The only circumstances in which it would be right to disengage would be those in which we would have more power out of office than in.

If the Tories and their allies, in assuming the responsibilities of office in place of ourselves, found themselves up against an absolute wall of resistance which made them virtually incapable of ruling at all, then the tactic would have been proved correct. Even then, however, it would only be correct if we were so permanently strong that we could soon force another election and regain office ourselves - this time with real power in our hands.

It is obvious that the disengagement tactic presupposes a very high state of class consciousness in the population.

Showdown

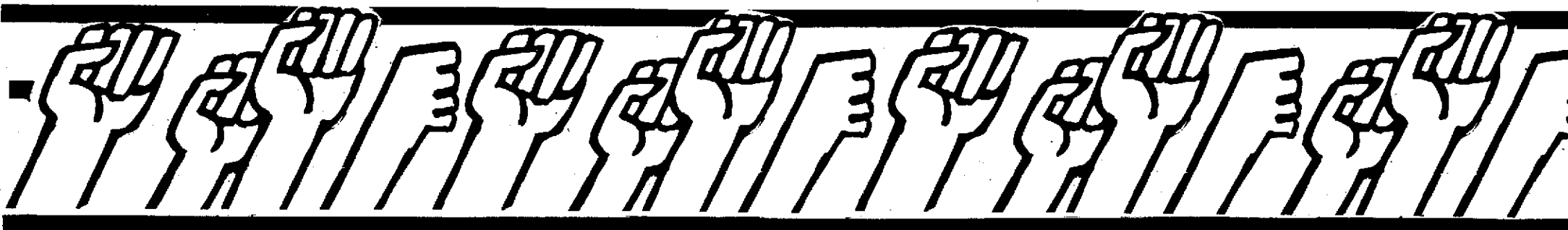
The moment of disengagement then becomes a signal for massive, near-insurrectionary, upheavals in which something like "dual power" becomes posed. It would have been nice if that had been the situation this spring in connection with the Fares Fair fight, but unfortunately, it wasn't. It is correct and necessary to state that we will have to "do better next time, in a different fight, later". The decisive showdown with the ruling class is yet to come.

Yours fraternally
CHRIS KNIGHT

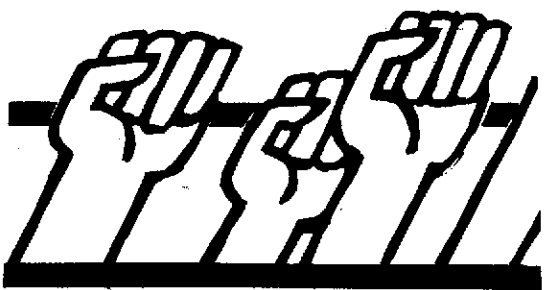


BRIEFING AGAINST THE WITCH HUNT.
5p per copy, plus 11½p postage, or 20 copies for £1 post free, from Ann Matthews, c/o Bermondsey Labour Party, 133 Lower Rd., London SE16.

LEYLAND ACTION COMMITTEE
TRUCK OFF
Edwardes



Tebbit and the fight for trade union democracy



THE LABOUR movement is indivisible. You cannot do anything serious with the Labour Party unless the trade unions — which have the main weight in decision-making — agree to it. And at present that means — unless the trade union leaders agree to it.

In the battle for democracy in the Labour Party, we saw the paradox that unions like NUPE played a positive role in that struggle while being far from democratic themselves. We were dependent on men who were bureaucrats in their own organisations to help us win democracy in the Labour Party.

Failure

It was impossible that such trade union leaders should go all the way for Labour Party democracy. All the setbacks for the Left at Brighton and since have come, in the last analysis, from the failure of the Left to organise independently among the rank and file in the unions.

Had the union rank and file been organised for Labour Party democracy, the Right would have been rendered powerless and the self-interested squealings of the MPs would not have mattered much.

In the Labour Party we have focused on reselection and PLP accountability. Its equivalent in the unions is the fight for elected, accountable, and easily recallable trade union leaders who will serve the interests of the rank and file, against the employers.

The trade union bureaucrats were as much a pillar of the last right wing Labour government, which prepared the way for Thatcher, as the PLP was — and probably the more decisive one.

Most of the unions are scandalously authoritarian and bureaucratic. Leaders and officials at all level are mostly either appointed or elected once and for life.

The rank and file cannot control their own organisation, even during bitter batt-

les with the bosses. Even in one of the least undemocratic unions, the AUEW, the leaders can, once elected, act with impunity as saboteurs and scabs against their own members in dispute — as Duffy and Boyd did for Edwardes and BL last November and for Arthur Snipe at Laurence Scotts.

The bureaucrats form a distinct interest group. Their living standards are above those of the members, and in now way linked to their performance for their members. They feel and know themselves to have distinct interests, and act accordingly.

Live with Tebbit

Now they are peacefully letting the Tories bring in laws to shackle the unions as fighting organisations, because they think they can comfortably live with them.

The unions too need to be democratised. Even if we could make the rest of the labour movement democratic while the unions remain as they are (and we can't),

the lack of democracy in the unions would set crippling limits to what the movement could do.

It is a commonplace on the Left by now that the great tragedy of 1973-4, when trade union direct action forced Heath into kamikaze tactics and a lost election, was that the working class only had a right-wing-led Labour Party to turn to in politics — a party which pledged itself to secure a 'decisive shift in the balance of wealth and power' for working people, and whose leaders and Parliamentarians in office inflicted wage cuts and social service cuts instead.

The mirror image of that situation would be, and is, a powerful Labour Left with no trade union clout, cut off from the most decisive energy and strength that the working class possesses and can at will use — industrial direct action. One of the factors now pushing a segment of the Labour Left into assuming the role of local government administrators is the lack of adequate

links with the trade union rank and file.

The great central task we face is to construct and organise a coherent Left that can fight the class struggle on both the industrial and political fronts, and integrate the different fronts into a coherent strategy to achieve working class power in society.

Unless we win the rank and file of the unions for socialist policies and for a renovated, democratic labour movement, willing and able to control the leaders and Parliamentarians — the possibility of achieving a Labour government different from those that have gone before simply will not exist, no matter how big the Left is in the constituencies.

The most powerful Labour Left that has existed in Britain was that of the mid-20s, which (influenced by the young Communist Party) linked and combined work in both the Labour Party and the trade unions,

to do the irreplaceable work of transforming and renovating the entire existing labour movement.

It rejected the ultra-left notion — now typified by the SWP — that an entirely new and parallel labour movement (their own) must be constructed.

In the mid '20s, the National Left Wing Movement of the Labour Party consisted of nearly 40 hard left CLPs and many thousands of individuals in others. The parallel but intermeshed Minority Movement in the unions organised the rank and file, and at its peak had an affiliated membership of one million — a quarter of the then members of the TUC.

But that movement was deliberately destroyed after 1929, when the CP went rabidly ultra-left. Then, in the mid-30s, when the CP swung back again to the mainstream labour movement, they had a different policy for the unions — to work with and integrate themselves into the bureaucracy. The entire Left has felt the effect of that political sea-change ever since.

Today the 'Communist Party' led left in the unions is scandalously docile in face of vicious Tory anti-union legislation, because to organise the rank and file for the vitally necessary fightback now, they would have to break with the bureaucracy — and they won't.

They prefer to peacefully let the Tories break the strength of the unions.

Today the fight against the Tory government, to defend the unions, is inseparable

able from the struggle to break the power of the bureaucratic bosses in the unions.

And the lesson of the fight for Labour Party democracy is that the Labour Left — especially when it is a middle class Left, as it often is — must turn to the unions or be content to remain forever (or until they expel us) at the political mercy of those who have the decisive weight in the Labour Party — the trade union bosses.

Response

The conference for trade union democracy called by London Labour Briefing, Socialist Organiser, and others, will be a major opportunity for the Labour Left to discuss these questions, to propose a response to Tebbit's onslaught on the unions, and to begin to prepare the organisational sinews for a fightback. Labour Party activists will be able to discussing building Labour Party factory branches with shop floor militants and leaders from BL, Laurence Scotts, etc. *There will be special discussion with comrades from Women's Fightback participating on how to go about wiping out the shame and scandal for the labour movement of the way the trade unions treat their women members.* And there will be a chance to air views on how to organise the Left in the unions and on the possibility of setting up an ongoing campaign for trade union democracy.

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

JOHN O'MAHONY and JOHN BLOXAM

Scotts motion blocked

THE AUEW Executive has manoeuvred to deflect the challenge from the Laurence Scott strikers. Motions calling for a ballot to remove the executive have been ruled out of order for next month's AUEW national committee meeting.

These motions should — so the AUEW leaders claim — go to a rules revision conference. No such conference is due this year.

The resolution circulated by the strikers states: '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'.

Branches are asked to send it to AUEW, 110 Peckham Rd, London SE15, with copy to LSE Strike Committee, c/o 20 Roundcroft, Romiley, Cheshire.

CONFERENCE

Democratise the labour movement! Fight for action to stop Tebbit!

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, Rochdale Constituency Labour Party, Upper Stoke branch Coventry Labour Party, Peckham LPYS, Basingstoke LPYS, Coventry Labour Left, Birmingham Labour Left and in a personal capacity, Reg Race MP, Les Huckfield MP and Mike Cooley.

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.

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

CRÈCHE: Will be available.

Saturday APRIL 3

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





Industrial News

Sit-in saves textiles jobs

by Stan Crooke

THE fight for jobs by women at the Lovable Bra factory in Cumbernauld, near Glasgow, ended last Friday (March 12), when a takeover deal for the factory was finally concluded.

The women's fight began in the new year when the receiver, who had been running the factory since mid-October the previous year, refused to provide guarantees about future job security for the 320 workers at the factory.

For six weeks the women carried out a round-the-clock sit-in and then, when declared redundant, moved out to picket the warehouse in order to prevent the backlog of stock being sold off. Whilst the sit-in and picketing were being enforced, negotiations about a take-over of the factory dragged on.

Potential buyers emer-

ged and then vanished again. Deals seemed on the brink of conclusion and then collapsed again as one of the partners in the negotiations pulled out.

But however often the seemingly imminent takeover failed to materialise, the women carried on their fight.

And it was a fight against the odds: they received even less support from their union — the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers — than did the women at Lee Jeans; the response from the local labour movement fell far short of what could have legitimately been expected; and outside of Cumbernauld itself, the fight was scarcely publicised.

"We never received much support," Sadie Laing, the NUTGW convenor told Socialist Organiser. "Once you're in a sit-in like this,

the support should come in automatically. We didn't feel we should have to go round the local factories cap in hand. The support should be spontaneous."

Collections

Most of the donations which came in were not from the local labour movement bodies but the result of collections by the women around local pubs and clubs. And the biggest donation of all — £210 — was donated by a local theatre group who staged a play about the weavers' uprising to raise funds for the women's fight.

Even some of the local employers did more to support their fight than sections of the labour movement. The Portacabin used by women while picketing the warehouse, for example, was donated by a local building

Officials sabotage blacking

AFTER five weeks on strike for union rights and against wage cuts and despite scab labour, women of Rule can are still as determined as ever to win.

Successful blacking of the catalogue warehouses

(Gratton and Kayes), supported by USDAW members is beginning to bite.

Lorries have been turned back, and delivery of some cloth has been stopped.

Runcorn Trades Council has called a demonstration in

support on Saturday March 20, and some money has been collected.

Although it has been made official by the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers, no other help is being given by the Executive Board or Head Office.

The local official has been left completely isolated to deal with everyday union problems (which are numerous in the clothing industry) and also run the strike.

No attempt

The women — though learning rapidly — need all the help they can get.

But the Executive Board has made no attempt to get support from other clothing factories or from women who have been in similar struggles (Lee Jeans, Lovable Bras etc).

As a result of this blacking, the factory boss met area and local officials and agreed to take back half the workforce. This would have left 25-30 women outside the gates while those taken back would be outnumbered by non-union labour.

Turned down

This was turned down by the strikers, and the shop steward has said that it is "all back or nothing".

The latest move by the employer is to seek a court injunction against the

official and the USDAW convenor for secondary blacking.

The first reaction of the NUTGW General Secretary was to tell the official to ignore it because he has had "plenty of similar problems".

But this is only a front. It has been revealed that the very same day he was issuing this statement he was phoning the employer to say that the secondary blacking would be lifted.

This is a gross betrayal and an attack on union rights via the Prior Act.

Instruction

The local official has now been instructed by Head Office to write to USDAW and tell them to lift the blacking.

If this is done the whole future of the strike is in jeopardy.

This must not be allowed. The strikers must demand that the shop stewards in the area call on the Executive Board to condemn the General Secretary's actions.

The branches of the union must come to the defence of those officials who are prepared to fight in defence of their members.

by Jean Munro

Huge support for turkey strikers

STRIKERS at Bernard Matthews turkey processors in Norfolk have been receiving tremendous support.

Over the past week, backing and sizeable donations have come in from local branches of the National Union of Seamen, ASLEF and the Yorkshire Labour Party.

At the moment Matthews is refusing even to speak to the strikers, and will not reopen pay talks. Shop stewards have agreed to reduce the claim, in an effort to get Matthews to negotiate. It is now 15%, Matthews is offering between 5% and 8%.

Matthews has tried an Edwardes-style threat to the strikers' jobs, and has lied about the number of people continuing to go into work.

Pickets have been on the gates 24 hours a day, and report 30 crossing the picket line, mainly management — not the 300 claimed by Matthews.

Workers at Twydale Turkeys in Driffield, Yorkshire, have decided to black any processing coming from Bernard Matthews and NALGO has also advised meat inspectors not to cross the picket line. TGWU members working in cold stores are blacking Matthews turkeys.

Extended

This sort of blacking must be extended to win the dispute. Donations are also important as the strikers

were particularly low-paid and have no savings.

Send money to Bernard Matthews Strike Fund, c/o The Landworker, NUAWW, 308 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8DS.

JO THWAITES

Foyles fight—official?

THE FOYLES dispute seems to be made official — but the General Secretary's not telling. Jeremy Corbyn came to our office on Tuesday morning and said there had been a report given on Foyles to the London Labour Party executive on Monday night which had said that the USDAW National Executive Committee had decided to make the dispute official.

But on Tuesday afternoon Siobhan Lanigan, the sacked shop steward, still didn't know. She'd been phoning up the General Secretary Bill Whatley of USDAW all day to find out and he refused to tell her on the phone. It had to be done through the official channels — she'd get a letter!

Now that the dispute's official — when that's officially confirmed — the 16 sacked bookshop workers must get the support of mass pickets on the shops, with USDAW members from all over London attending, and blacking of the deliveries must be extended.

Donations and messages of support to Foyles dispute, c/o Collets International Bookshop, Charing Cross Rd., London WC2.

Enterprise zone prompts sackings

ANOTHER company in the North West announced redundancies earlier this week, but this time their plans will be met with industrial action.

Ken Cotterill, the convenor at Ward and Goldstones in Pendleton, Salford, said that shop stewards will be putting forward a plan of action at a mass meeting on Friday 19th March to fight any enforced redundancies.

So far the company has given news that 286 jobs out of 766 in three of its

plants in Salford will be lost but it is feared that more redundancies are on the way.

'Sales Slump'

Management has blamed a slump in sales and an increase in operating costs, but considering that all their plants are making profits and that dividends paid out to shareholders last year were the highest for a long time, their reason doesn't seem to carry any validity.

The demanning of the

plants in Salford seems to have more to do with Ward and Goldstone's proposed move into the nearby Trafford Park Enterprise Zone where firms are guaranteed rate-free sites.

So it seems that the Enterprise Zones are not so much for creating new jobs or helping ailing industry as for boosting company profits and enabling job cuts elsewhere. All three plants facing redundancies and other plants nearby have full order books.

MARY JOHNSTON

Given the lack of support which the women received, to maintain any jobs at all must be recognised as a victory. But there can be no guarantees that the workforce will grow again to its previous size.

And yet the determination of the women showed that the retention of the 320 jobs could have been achieved in the short term had they received the support they deserved — especially from their own union.

Asked what she thought the main lessons to be drawn from this dispute were, Sadie commented:

"The main lesson is:

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, 10 Fleet

St, London. 6.30pm meeting for MPs at House of Commons (room 10) — chaired by Ernie Roberts MP.

Thursday March 25 — meetings in the London area.

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

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

Monday March 29. Meetings in the Manchester area.

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

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

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

Socialist Organiser delegate meeting, Sunday March 21, 11am to 5pm, in Birmingham — ring John Bloxam, 01-609 3071, for details.

NORTH-WEST LONDON. 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.31: Women and the labour movement.

ISLINGTON. 7.30 Fridays. Upstairs room in Caxton

House, 129 St John's Way. Mar.26: Central America — still the USA's backyard?

HORNSEY Labour Party: Spring Festival. Saturday March 27, 3pm to midnight at the YMCA Hall, Tottenham Lane, Crouch End. Admission £1, unwaged 50p.

MANCHESTER Labour Committee on Ireland meetings (LP members only).

Thursday April 1, 7.30 at the Briton's Protection pub, Gt Bridgewater St, Manchester 1. Speakers from Women and Ireland group, May 8 Organising Committee, and 'Irish in Britain Representation Group'.

LEEDS Troops Out Movement: public meeting with speakers from TOM and the Bradford 12 Support Committee: 'Political Prisoners are not Criminals'. 8pm at Trades Club, Savile Mount Leeds 7.

BRITAIN OUT of Ireland! Self determination for the Irish people! Demonstration

in London on May 8, called by Labour Committee on Ireland, IWA, TOM, etc. To sponsor the demo write c/o Robert Jones, Box 353, London NW5 4NH.

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.

WOMEN AND TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE At the Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies Dept., Leeds University on Saturday March 20. Registration (£1 unwaged, 50p unwaged) from TUCRIC, 6 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 2 (Tel. 39633). Cheques payable to TUCRIC.

WALES Anti-Apartheid Movement conference. Saturday March 27, AUEW building, Sardin Rd, Pontypridd. Registration: Secretary, WAAM, 33 Romilly Rd, Cardiff (phone 382846).

'THE SOVIETS': conference organised by Iranian Stud-

ents' Association — 'Left Platform'. Speakers include Branka Magas, Hillel Ticktin, Ahmad Ghotbi, Duncan Hallas, Pete Goodwin, Michael Cox. Saturday April 3, noon to 9pm, at ULU, Malet St, WC1. Fee £2, advance booking to ISALP, 72 Gordon Rd, London W5.

NO TO NUCLEAR weapons — youth demonstration in Nottingham, Saturday April 3, 12.30 Old Market Square. Carnival 2pm, Concert 8pm at Manning School, Gregory Boulevard.

SOCIALIST Labour Group public meeting, March 20, 2pm, Room 3D, University of London Union, Malet St. 'Rebuild the Fourth International — perspectives for Trotskyists after the Moreno split'. Admission £1. International speakers from the leadership of the Fourth International (International committee of reconstruction)

NO TO 4%! Public meeting organised by CoHSE Hackney branch. Wednesday March 24, 7.30 at Centerprise, 136 Kingsland High St, E8. Speakers: Michael Meacher MP and David Williams.

Plessey women throw out ACAS offer

by Dave Milliken

LAST THURSDAY, March 11, the 220 workers involved in the occupation of Plessey Capacitors at Bathgate voted almost unanimously to reject the proposals put to them as a result of an ACAS meeting.

The basis of these proposals was that 80 jobs were on offer — and improved redundancy payments were to be made to the others.

Having failed to sell that, management are to try again. Direct negotiations between management and the stewards took place on Tuesday 16th.

This was the first time the two sides had come together since the sit-in began. Any improved offer will, like the first, be put to a mass meeting.

The original offer was not refused simply because 80 jobs out of 220 was not good

enough. This was made clear at the fringe meeting held by the Plessey workers at the Scottish Labour Party conference on Saturday March 13. Strike leaders Ina Scott (AUEW) and George Wilson (TASS) spelled out further complications in the offer.

The 80 jobs were not even definite, but dependent on negotiations between Plessey and Arcatronics, a new company set up in Holland.

There was, however, an implication in the strike leaders' speech that a more solid offer of 80 jobs would receive serious consideration. But acceptance of such an offer would be nothing short of a defeat for a workforce which was united and determined.

No-one should underestimate the workers' strength of feeling. There

were large redundancies payments awaiting anyone who didn't fight. Most of the women have been employed for 15 or 20 years, and many are approaching retirement age. They are fighting not only for themselves, but for the future.

Delegations

But there is no question that the expectations of the workers have diminished. This is not because of a shortfall in the efforts they themselves have put in. Delegations have gone out, Scotland has been well covered, and inroads have been made into England as well. Good contact has been kept with the other Plessey plants, and every effort has been made to use the combine committee.

And yet the dispute is not really hitting Plessey hard.

The main culprit here is the leadership of the AUEW, whose members form the majority of the occupying workers.

The women I spoke to today (March 16) had not heard of the proposed conference promised over two weeks ago by Duffy, nor are they likely to, because the tactics being employed by the leadership are solely negotiations — negotiations conducted with one hand tied behind their back. If they do not escalate the dispute, just how do they expect to negotiate a better deal than is already on the table?

The answer is probably that they don't, and moreover lack the will for it.

So readers of this paper must push hard. If you are an AUEW, APEX, TASS, or EETPU member (all these unions have members involved), pass a motion demanding action. If you are in TGWU, try to ensure blacking of products, particularly by dockers, as over 50% of Plessey products are exported.

Blacking

If you are in POEU — then British Telecom, as one of Plessey's main customers, could severely damage the company's profits by blacking.

If you are a member of the Labour Party, make sure your Labour council does not buy Plessey products (most of them do — traffic lights).

Nothing less will win this fight for the labour movement.

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



Backing for Barking

by Dettie Clinton

AN ESTIMATED 4,000 people turned out on March 10 to support the Barking teachers in the fight against job loss.

A lobby of the council rate-fixing meeting had been called on the day of the LT strike. The local NUT association had asked the Exec to call for half day strike action, at least in the London area if not nationally, as back-up.

Wisdom

The Exec in its wisdom had instead invited Associations to send delegations. And the invitation was wilfully ignored by many association secretaries.

However, the response on the day showed the support that is there both among the local people and other NUT members. There were many banners, and the lively gathering showed what they thought of the council's plans to axe jobs and decimate the education of the local children.

However, this display did not shift the council from its policy of cuts.

As Chris Giles, the Barking action committee press spokesperson, stated:

"They even admitted that they did have enough money to avoid redundancies and maintain staffing standards as at September 1981".

But, he told the reporter from 'The Teacher', they refused to use this money as it would create a precedent for other public services and would make the council liable to financial penalties by the government.

It is a disgrace that a Labour council can take this stand and yield only to pressure from the Tories. How do they think disgruntled parents and teachers will vote in the May elections?

Massive work will need to be done by Labour Party members to extricate the party from such betrayals.

No comment

Neil Kinnock MP, the Labour Party spokesperson on education, apparently had a three-hour meeting with leaders of the authority, but would make no comment afterwards.

Meanwhile the local NUT association is well organised. On some days 12 reams of paper are used to pro-

duce leaflets and statements presenting the union's case. Picketing has completely closed down many schools.

Good support has been reported from other union members such as T&G drivers. Eight sub-committees of the strike committee have been set up.

The strike HQ in Rainham Rd South, Dagenham, is a hive of activity. Morale among members is high, and they are confident of victory.

Money

However, other areas of the union must be involved in supporting this action. Money is needed to finance the campaign. Donations should be sent to the strike HQ. The local association's call for a one day strike must be backed by motions from other branches.

Ken Jones, the Barking secretary, is standing in the National Executive elections in the extra-metropolitan area of London. All teachers in this area have the opportunity to show their support for the action by voting Ken Jones no.1 in the election, which closes on March 23.



Industrial News

Miserable day for NHS pay

by Andrea Campbell

THE BIG day in the bureaucrats' fight for more than four per cent for Health Service workers came and went on March 15.

It was a cold, miserable and wet day's lobby of Parliament — which just about describes the fight that the trade union leaders are prepared to wage over this year's pay claim.

Health service workers from all over the country came to queue — in some cases for over two hours — to speak to their MP or to listen to what politicians had to say in meetings. There was a meeting with Labour MPs, a meeting with Conservative MPs, and an 'all-party' meeting (which no conservatives attended!).

The mood was very angry and there was talk about strike action from the workers, but of course not from the leadership. They

are content to address meeting while their members get drenched and freeze for the privilege of telling an MP why they should earn a decent wage.

Pay in the Health Service is a scandal and yet union officials are doing nothing. While inflation rises and the government's offer stays at 4%, the leaders sit around talking about deals and negotiations and wooing the media, but do not even think about mobilising for strike action.

This week has seen two management side 'offers' — for nurses and for ancillary workers.

The management's offer for nursing staff was so complicated that the negotiators had to go away and figure it out. It should have been rejected immediately. It is 4% for all nursing grades, with a minute extra payment to ward sisters/charge nurses (£59 per year), student and pupil

nurses (£45) and nursing auxiliaries (£45).

No doubt this extra will be taken away from either another section of workers or account for through unfilled vacancies and other cuts in services.

Ancillary workers have been offered a straight 4% in line with the government's cash limits, with no improvement in annual leave or shorter hours.

The Tory tactic is 'divide and rule'. It will probably make the RCN happy, as they see nurses as 'more deserving' than other workers.

It will also please the press — the Sun has already slammed Alan Fisher for daring to suggest that ancillary workers deserve the same rise as nurses.

The next meeting of the nurses' negotiators is on March 23.

It is likely that the pay offer will be accepted, as the RCN and other 'professional' bodies have the balance of votes on the staff side. This happened last year, and apart from angry words the TUC-affiliated unions did nothing.

The ancillary offer was rejected outright. There is no time to waste in preparing for industrial action from April 1st. Every branch should be getting ready now for strike action in defence of a decent wage.

It is only by organising ourselves and then forcing the leadership to move that any action will be taken. We must not allow ourselves to be divided, with ancillary workers being left to take on the fight themselves.

Every union branch should be organising a meeting on pay and passing resolutions to take strike action regardless of what the leaders say.

It is our wage and our health service. The only way to fight this government and preserve both wages and the health service is by striking.

NUT in pay dance

by Peter Flack

CONSIDERING the occupation they serve, the leadership of the National Union of Teachers are remarkably impervious to any lessons which might help win struggles.

Thus, while teachers in Barking are left isolated in their fight against redundancies, the rest of the membership of the NUT is currently being led a merry if irrelevant dance in supposed pursuit of their national pay claim.

Presented with an offer of 3.4%, the leadership of the NUT have come out with an action so watery that Hamilton House could soon have a moat.

The action — a withdrawal of lunchtime supervision and a withdrawal from out-of-school activities other than sports and social activities — is, in typical NUT fashion, voluntary. This means in practice that individual members are left open to pressure from reactionary heads, some of whom happen, of course, to be in the NUT, and in particular puts local union reps in the school at the hard end of the fight against right wing unions like AMA.

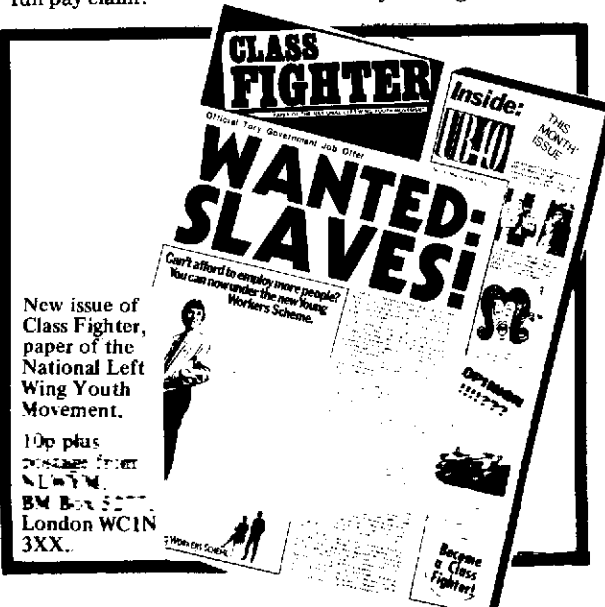
But to make matters worse, the action is not directed to winning the full claim at all, but simply towards getting arbitration.

Having thus abandoned all attempts to achieve the full claim the NUT Exec has been able to present the campaign for the national pay claim into what is now being presented to

members as a local dispute, i.e. over whether local authorities will agree to support the demand for arbitration.

In this situation, NUT members should immediately begin to bombard Hamilton House with resolutions demanding that all members are involved in the action alongside NAS/UWT members who are taking similar action everywhere. In addition, school groups and local associations should begin preparing now a campaign to win strike action votes in schools and in local associations and divisions.

Central to this ought to be the demand that the National Executive should continue to fight for the full pay claim.



Call for Civil Service action

CIVIL service union leaders are hoping that the arbitration tribunal will come up with an offer of 6% to 9%, and thus pose the Tories the problem of whether to accept arbitration or put the pay increase to a parliamentary vote.

Apart from this, the contingency plans of the Council of Civil Service Unions are non-existent. They have nothing prepared, but are rumoured to be favouring an all-out strike call (with no prior mobilisation). If it fails, they will blame the rank and file.

Spineless

In contrast to this bureaucratic and spineless approach, the four London Area Committees of CPSA have called a London-wide conference of branch and workplace delegates from all unions to plan possible all-out strike action, including fund-raising for hardship, setting up of strike centres, and organisation of picket lines.

The SCPS area committees, with the covert approval of their EC, have called a demonstration on April 1st, the day the pay settlement should be made. There are also calls for a strike and lobby on April 19, the day the arbitration hearings begin.

The official leaders of the civil service unions cannot recognise the growing feeling for action, and to show their contempt for the membership the COCSU are signing a national new technology agreement on Wednesday March 17 which gives no protection at all against job loss.

Now only the rank and file can organise and lead the fight for a decent pay increase in 1982.

Socialist Organiser

Unite to fight fare rises!

by Andrew Rossing

THE NUR has agreed to support train crews on London Transport's tubes who refuse to work new schedules planned by management to coincide with the doubling of fares on Monday.

These new timetables mean cuts of up to 25% on nearly all LT tube lines. Faced with a firm refusal by train crews to run them, LT management may back down - which would be a first significant (albeit temporary victory).

Or if they don't retreat, a rail strike on LT is likely.

The 'LT Workers for United Action' group formed last Sunday, 14th, is urging all bus and rail workers to come out in support of the train crews, to extend the fight to a united one against all the cuts planned for the next year.

The group also agreed to circulate a leaflet to as many LT workers as possible, explaining the cuts.

An all-out strike was recognised as the best means of defeating the cuts and fare increases. But 'LT Workers for United Action' also recognised that this might be best achieved if all workers in LT commit themselves to support strikes by any section of the workforce.

Another boost to the fight against the cuts and fare rises was the TGWU announcement on March 15 that it would call an all-out

strike if any driver or conductor were suspended for not collecting increased fares.

Workers involved in ticket issue and fare collection seem for the most part strongly opposed to the tactic of carrying on with the old fares after March 21. Most probably busworkers will just collect nothing if the new fare is not offered.

Take action

If LT finds that the fares take is far lower than expected, then they will take action against drivers and conductors. All workers should come out in support of any disciplined - and all

should stay out until the fare increases and cuts are withdrawn.

The industrial strength of the LT unions was clearly demonstrated when their call for a one day strike on Wednesday March 10 received overwhelming support from the 60,000 workers. Not one bus or underground train ran in London for 24 hours. Despite a quarter of London's commuters staying at home, the capital's roads were brought to a standstill.

LT workers saw their importance to London, and felt the power that they could exercise if further action is taken to defeat the government's attack on passengers and transport workers.

ANC bombed

THE AFRICAN National congress has accused the South African regime of responsibility for the bombing of the ANC's British headquarters on Sunday 14th.

The ANC offices were wrecked by a bomb shortly before a 15,000-strong anti-apartheid demonstration in Trafalgar Square [photo: page 3].

Socialist Organiser supporters distributed a leaflet on the demonstration calling for the Anti Apartheid Movement to start a serious campaign for industrial action in the British parent firms to give solidarity with the year-long strike at Rowntree in South Africa and the strike at Dunlop in East London.



PHOTO: JOHN HARRIS

British unions must back Solidarnosc!

ONLY 70 people attended the Poland rally organised jointly by the Labour Party and the TUC in Central Hall, Westminster, last Tuesday 16th.

This is the only national action the Labour Party has organised. It is a good measure of the support the Labour Party has given to the struggles of the Polish working class.

All the leadership wanted was to be able to say they had 'done something' and to save their conscience. To counter those demanding a national demonstration, they organised this 'rally'.

They even called it a 'rally', to sound as if it were more than a meeting. They

then proceeded to give it little or no publicity.

The speakers were Roy Evans (ISTC), Dennis Healey, Zbigniew Kowalewski from the Paris office of Solidarnosc, Clive Jenkins for the TUC, and Eric Heffer, with Joan Lestor in the chair.

Not one of the speakers called for blacking or responded to a demand from the floor on this. Clive Jenkins made a pathetic speech in

which he just said that the TUC was opposed to 'all martial law'.

Arguing against taking any action, he quoted Dennis Healey, saying that they didn't want to 'exacerbate the situation'.

Healey had said that any economic measures would weaken the Polish economy and bring about Russian intervention.

demonstration on Poland called in Central London by Socialist Organiser and London Labour Briefing.

Present were delegations from as far afield as Sheffield and Merseyside, representing over 15 labour movement bodies including three Trades Councils, several CLPs and a number of union branches.

Curiously absent were the SWP and the IMG - who failed even to send paper sellers, let alone join an open demonstration in support of Solidarnosc.

The concluding rally brought a strong speech from Marek Garztecki of the Solidarnosc Trade Union Working Group, who welcomed the march and urged those present to challenge the inaction of the TUC and Labour Party over Poland.

Exposing those who denounce the new Polish trade union as 'counter-revolutionary', he pointed to the fact that while Solidarnosc has never questioned nationalised property relations in Poland, the bureaucracy has in effect sold whole chunks of Polish industry to western banks and industrial monopolies - leaving Lloyds Bank the main proprietor of the Ursus tractor plant!

Reg Race MP spoke out strongly against those on the left of the Labour Party and TUC who are reluctant to support Solidarnosc for fear of offending the 'official' Stalinist state-run 'unions' in Eastern Europe.



Reg Race

SOLIDARNOSC

AIRPORT ACTION

WAREHOUSE workers at Heathrow took 24 hour strike action last Monday March 15 in protest at the use of scab labour.

Baggage handlers have been locked out for five weeks now by British Airways management.

A formula put forward by BA, which allowed for scab labour to work on the airport while talks took place, was thrown out by the union. As we went to press, a mass meeting was due to hear a progress report from the stewards.

BL support

A MASS meeting of TGWU members at BL's Cowley Assembly Plant voted on Wednesday 17th its full support for victimised militant Dennis Kilgarriff.

Kilgarriff was sacked for distributing Leyland Action Committee leaflets before the beginning of his shift.

The mass meeting has given management a ten-day deadline to reopen negotiations and reach an agreed settlement with the union: if not, a further mass meeting will discuss what action should be taken.

Fund

£2.45 from Lambeth, £3 from Islington, £4 from Glasgow and £9.50 from Hyndburn, makes a miserable total of £18.95 in donations and supporters' contributions this week. Standing orders so far this month add up to £244.75, so the overall total is £382.95.

£617.05 to reach our £1,000 target in the last week! Bring money to the Socialist Organiser delegate meeting this Sunday in Birmingham (details: John Bloxam, 01-609 3071) or send to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Spread the news!

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

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

From: Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8. Please make cheques payable to Socialist Organiser.

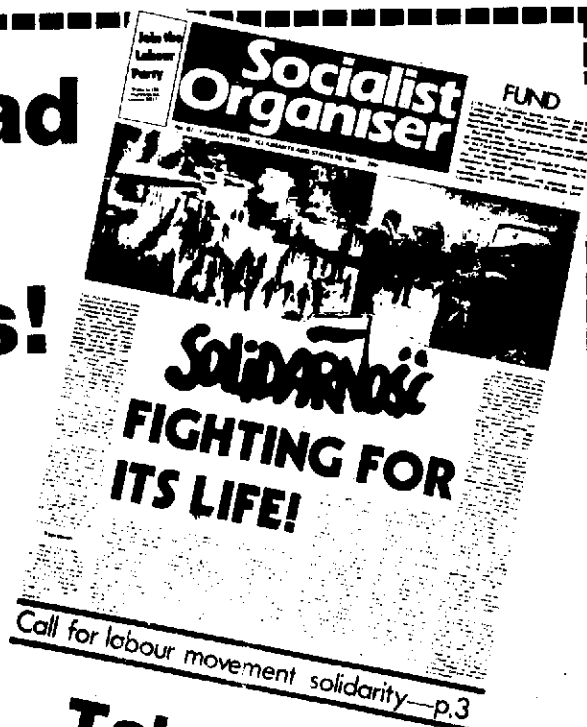
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**Take a bundle
of 50 to sell!**

Roy Evans supported the Solidarnosc Trade Union Working Group's policies, and Eric Heffer made a strong speech on those lines.

Kowalewski outlined the call for an end to martial law, release of political prisoners, and the return of all 'democratic freedoms'.

He made a strong speech, saying that it was Solidarnosc that was struggling for true socialism through 'workers' self-management', and it was the bureaucracy that was counter-revolutionary.

The dissatisfaction of the audience with the lack of activity of the TUC and Labour Party was shown by the strong applause for a Socialist Organiser supporter who called for blacking and for the TUC and Labour Party to provide facilities and finances for the Solidarnosc Trade Union Working Group (which has no offices or money).

Polish speakers argued for the same.

A Socialist Challenge supporter (one of the five or so present) called for a national Labour Party demonstration in December.

Finance

Members of the Labour Party and trade unions should demand that they do give the Solidarnosc Trade Union Working Group offices and finance, and that they organise a national demonstration - but earlier than December.

In a much more lively affair, Saturday saw nearly 300 join a labour movement