

Join the
Labour
Party

Socialist Organiser

Against all bans and proscriptions!

Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance No.78 MARCH 25 1982 (Claimants and strikers, 10p) 25p

Planning a reception for Reagan!

by Peter Hain

A "hot reception" is planned for President Reagan when he visits Britain in early June.

The Reagan Reception Committee is organising a picket on Monday June 7, and a lobby of Reagan's speech to Parliament the

following day.

Sponsored by about 40 Labour MPs - including Tony Benn, Neil Kinnock, Michael Meacher and Ernie Roberts, and with broad labour movement support, the Reagan Reception Committee is an ad hoc group formed specifically to mobilise for the days around Reagan's visit.

Under an appeal headed "We Don't Want Reagan's Bombs. We Want Jobs", the committee says:

"President Reagan and his advisors condemn the brutal suppression of trade union rights in Poland and yet, with blatant hypocrisy, they increase their financial support to the dictatorial regime in El Salvador, which daily sanctions murder and torture."

President Reagan is coming to Britain because he knows he can find full support for his policies from the Tories, who themselves are prepared to spend £10 billion to buy the American Trident missile system.

We believe that the colossal sum which is being spent on arms should be spent on more hospitals, schools, better housing and bringing down the level of unemployment.

We don't want bombs, we want jobs. We want peace, not nuclear holocaust.

Further details of the committee's activities can be obtained from PO Box 51, London SW10.

El Salvador:
DEMONSTRATE
- against torture and murder
- against election fraud
- against US intervention
- against Tory support for US policy
MARCH 28

Assembly Speakers Corner 12.30pm
Rally in Trafalgar Square 2.30pm
Speakers include:
MICHAEL FOOT MP, ALAN GARRER TUC,
OR SALVADOR MONCADA, FDR,
LORD AVERBURY, Liberal Party,
SISTER PAMELA, CUR,
FENNER BROCKWAY,
Chair: STAN NEWENS MP



It doesn't take a genius or a left winger to work out that the elections this weekend in El Salvador are an irrelevance and a charade.

Even Denis Healey has worked that out. He has termed the elections "a macabre farce". European governments, reluctant to give credence to the proceedings, have almost all refused to send observers. Even Canada has refused to participate.

The sole veneer of respectability for the "elections" is lent by the presence in El Salvador of two representatives of the Thatcher government. From a bullet-proof, closely guarded hide-out above the capital they will do their best to portray the election as a serious exercise. They will be assisted by fellow observers from reactionary regimes in Egypt, Uruguay and Venezuela.

At a time when the Duarte junta in El Salvador is plainly losing the military struggle against the left wing FMLN guerrillas, and Ronald Reagan is losing the struggle for popular support for his policies in Central America, such a political endorsement from the British Tory government acquires an added importance.

Of course any notion of the election being democratic is patently absurd. The country is under the

THATCHER BACKS SALVADOR BUTCHERS

heel of a military junta among whom are three of the Generals who rigged the last elections in El Salvador in the 1970s. Under vicious martial law repression there is total censorship of the media.

This official censorship was reinforced last week by the murder by right wing or

government forces of four Dutch journalists.

Trade union activity is illegal and the names of opposition politicians are published on right wing and army 'death lists'.

In such conditions, participation by the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), the political coalition

closest to the workers and peasants of El Salvador and the guerrilla fighters of the FMLN is plainly impossible.

The contest has therefore become one between the figurehead civilian President, Napoleon Duarte and his Christian Democratic Party, and forces to their

right - the open representatives of the 'death squads' and paramilitary right wing.

Duarte's main rival, Major "Bob" D'Aubuisson has been described by a former US ambassador as a 'psychopathic killer'. He is calling for more US military involvement

including supplies of napalm, promising to 'pacify' the country by crushing all forms of opposition.

The US government has pinned its hopes and strategy upon Duarte. If his hold is weakened in the elections, and he is forced to shift further to the right, or is displaced by D'Aubuisson, then the difficulties faced by Reagan in maintaining the US war effort in El Salvador would be redoubled.

But if the elections pose problems for Reagan and his puppets, they offer nothing but further suffering to the workers and peasants of El Salvador. Duarte's regime has already slaughtered 30,000 civilians and created 600,000 refugees in the last two years.

The junta's policies can now serve only to increase this toll of bloodshed and intimidation. US "advisors" are recommending the army be doubled in size to 50,000 men - a step that could only be accomplished with increased involvement of troops from Latin American dictatorships and the US military aid from the USA.

This is no simple matter for Reagan. Despite a huge and continued propa-

ganda offensive aimed at convincing the American people that the war in El Salvador is essential to stem "communist revolution" in Central America, opinion polls indicate growing opposition to US involvement.

The latest polls show a 2-1 opposition to Reagan's Central American policy, only 16% in favour of increased military aid to El Salvador, and over 60% of Americans convinced that Reagan is headed towards a new Vietnam.

With 40% believing Reagan will soon send US troops to El Salvador, even the anti-communist leadership of the AFL-CIO trade union confederation has come out against such a policy.

If this popular opposition were directed towards the building of mass mobilisation and concrete trade union solidarity action, it would be easily possible to halt Reagan's war effort dead in its tracks.

The workers' movement in Britain must play a part in this struggle by mobilising against Thatcher's brazen support for the war, and by supporting the mass protests against Reagan's forthcoming visit.

Turkey Solidarity speakers' tour - pp 4,6

TGWU bureaucrats try to exclude unemployed

by Barry Haslam

The TGWU Region 6 has a policy of recruiting the unemployed. Over recent months pressure has been put on Region 6 to cease this policy.

At the January Regional Committee meeting discussion was held on a letter received from Moss Evans instructing the Region to suspend their recruitment of the unemployed.

The Regional Committee replied to Evans that they would continue the recruitment of the unemployed in line with rule 20 clause 18 of the TGWU rule book which states that any region can deal with its own recruitment of members. The com-

mittee also pointed out that the region was only carrying out TUC policy, who at the 1980 conference remitted a resolution calling on all affiliated unions to vigorously campaign to recruit the unemployed.

The reason why Region 6 is successful in its campaigns to recruit the unemployed is the development of the coordinating committee. This is also in line with TGWU policy.

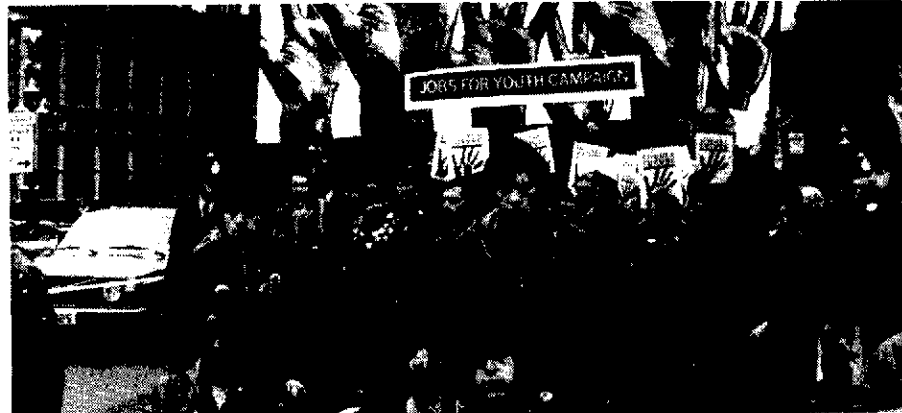
The coordinating committees are run for the benefit of the lay membership where after the General Executive Committee meeting (within days) in the Merseyside district Bro. Quinn will give a full report as will Bro. George in the Southern Region.

This ensures that the decisions made at the GEC

can be questioned and taken back to the branches for general discussion on such subjects as the GEC's decision to donate £50,000 to Trade Unionists for a Labour Victory, which was announced at the Southern Region's Coordinating Committee and caused quite a lot of concern.

In Region 5, Brian Mathers, the Regional Secretary, has written to all branches instructing them to suspend the recruitment of the unemployed. This could be the opening for brothers and sisters in Region 5 to start a campaign around the Regional Committee's refusal to implement the TGWU's rule and TUC policy.

Out of this we could see the setting up of coordinating committees in Region 5,



Keep them out of the unions, says Moss Evans

where the employed and the unemployed could come together to develop the TGWU within that Region into a more open and campaigning region.

This could also lead to a link up with Region 6 and then stop all attempts by the TGWU bureaucracy to prevent the unemployed and employed joining together

in the fight for TGWU officials to become more accountable to the lay membership.

SOA

decisions

THE Socialist Organiser delegate meeting on March 21 took these main decisions:

a) That the Socialist Organiser Alliance should affiliate to the Polish Solidarity Campaign and sponsor the Reagan Reception Committee.

b) To launch a £6,000 fund.

c) To organise a Socialist Organiser contingent to lobby the TUC conference of union executives on April 5, demanding that the TUC break all collaboration with the Tories and call a one-day strike as the first step to all-out action to stop the Tebbit Bill; and to produce a national leaflet on the Tebbit Bill.

d) To schedule the SOA Conference for the weekend of June 26/27. Deadline for resolutions, June 1st; amendments June 22nd.

The next delegate meeting will be on Sunday May 9th, from 11am to 5pm at County Hall, London.

MODEL RESOLUTION

This noting the visit of Reagan to Britain in early June and the opposition already organised to it, agrees to:

a) support the boycott by Labour MPs of all Parliamentary activity associated with the visit; and calls on (name of relevant MP) to join in this boycott;

b) support the CND demonstration on June 6 with our banner and a delegation;

c) support the lobby of the American Embassy on June 7, the day Reagan arrives;

d) sponsor the Reagan Reception Committee, and send it a donation of.....

*Contact: Reagan Reception Committee, PO Box 51, London SW10.

KICKOUT THE TORIES
Labour democracy
and the
fight for a
WORKERS
GOVERNMENT

Capital
A Socialist
Organiser
Pamphlet

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

Unemployed workers organise

AS THOSE that control the media deliberately suppress information on independent working class struggles, the most urgent task of the National Unemployed Workers Movement is to link together the unemployed groups and others through a national publication as well as direct action.

We hope shortly to produce this publication to enable us to carry out this work.

Some unemployed claimants groups have already worked with the CPSA to produce a national leaflet, opposing a pilot scheme for availability testing.

This is just one of the many attacks on the unemployed which are the result of the implementation of the Rayner Report.

In an attempt to get a national campaign against these attacks, before they

are implemented nationally, we have called a meeting on 17 April in Birmingham and invited all the various organisations campaigning around unemployment/benefits to participate.

Another issue we are involved in is getting unemployed into the unions. At present there is a considerable variation in attitude at local level to recruiting the unemployed.

Mick Jarman

NATIONAL UNEMPLOYED WORKERS' MOVEMENT

National rally

**SCRAP THE RAYNER PROPOSALS!
NO TO QUESTIONS ABOUT ETHNIC BACKGROUND!
DOWN WITH SEXIST DISCRIMINATION!
OPPOSE ALL CIVIL SERVICE JOB LOSSES**

Speakers from local campaigns invited, plus speakers from civil service unions. Socialist Organiser supporters in the civil service unions should get their branch to send a delegation and to co-sponsor the conference.

SATURDAY APRIL 17, 11 to 5, at DIGBETH CIVIC HALL, BIRMINGHAM. Creche available.

Tories press ahead with racist health charges

SO now you know.

The Tories will question your right to National Health Service care from October 1 this year.

As predicted in Socialist Organiser of December 9, Health Secretary Fowler has now decided to impose a systematic check on the eligibility of the 17 million people who seek health service care each year. Why? Officially, in order to catch the minuscule proportion of overseas visitors who obtain free treatment to which they are not strictly entitled.

Spelled out

The Race and Health Conference held in Manchester last November spelled out the implications of these proposals for the black community and for the NHS. As a result of pressure from many quarters the Tories have decided to modify the original unworkable plan of Patrick Jenkin, ex-legal adviser to Distillers ("the Thalidomide People") and sometime Secretary of State for Health. In his place is Norman Fowler. In its place is the 'principle of universal challenge' under which everyone will have to prove their eligibility.

Here is your starter for ten: what is an ordinary resident of the UK? There is a bonus of fifteen for explaining why the Fowler regulations use this term which no British court has

yet managed to clarify.

Late last year the Tories set up a working party of NHS officers with some professional and community relations representatives. Its remit was to examine Jenkin's original plan and the criticisms of it put forward by ethnic groups, health unions, and student bodies. It also organised a trial run of systematic questioning in ten hospitals.

This trial showed that out of 8162 patients challenged a mere 81 were not immediately cleared for free treatment. After further questioning, three-quarters of these 81 were also found to be eligible for free care. The level of 'abuse' on these figures is a pathetic 0.25 per cent, and it is possible that the national figure is even lower as some of the trial hospitals were specially picked for being in high-immigration areas.

Criteria

It is interesting to note that this survey used the criteria laid down by Jenkin which he said would rake in £5 million: Fowler's new, improved plan has a much narrower catchment group and yet he claims "the saving is unlikely to be less than £6 million". (The NHS budget is £12 billion).

Fowler's plan will impose charges for NHS treatment on any overseas visitors (including students) for

their first year in Britain. Originally the Jenkin proposals had suggested a three-year residency minimum, with other restrictions on workers from abroad (and their families). So, through pressure from black groups, health unions and student organisations, some concessions have been made.

Parasitic

But the dangers predicted in Socialist Organiser still remain. Despite Fowler's claims, it is hard to believe that the 'principle of universal challenge' will live up to its name. In some places only those suspected of being foreign will be questioned — and this means the harassment of black and brown people. A small but significant boost will thereby be given to the parasitic private sector, and Gwyneth Dunwoody made the point in Parliament that Fowler "intends to provide a system of charging that can be developed in the future so that NHS patients must also pay for treatment."

In 1952 Aneurin Bevan, founder of the NHS, said: "One of the consequences of the universality of the British Health Service is the free treatment of foreign visitors. This has given rise to a great deal of criticism, most of it ill-informed and some of it deliberately mischievous. The whole agitation has

a nasty taste. Instead of rejoicing at the opportunity to practise a civilised principle, Conservatives have tried to exploit the most disreputable emotions in this among many other attempts to discredit socialised medicine."

The Nationality Act suggests that ordinary residence implies some 'commitment' or 'loyalty' to Britain, which plays on the racist view of black people being in some way 'suspicious' and spreading disease and disquiet. Hence, they must be kept under surveillance at unemployment offices and hospitals (the DHSS has a computer link to the

Home Office) and elsewhere.

There must be national and local opposition by health unions and community groups to any such attacks. There must be a commitment to repeal the regulations immediately this Government is overturned. The Tory attacks are many. They are especially insidious as they use the gut reactions of many people to achieve their objective — that of dividing and then ruling the working class.

GEORGE McLEAN

(George McLean is Education Officer for the Manchester NHS Branch of ASTMS).



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.



Crisis watch
COMMENTS on the economic situation in the left press tend to be either long analyses, or brief parades of facts to show how hard the crisis is hitting the working class, with very little in between. We are starting this column to try to help provide the Left in the labour movement with a usable running commentary on the lurches of the capitalist economy.

With unemployment dipping below three million in March as seasonable jobs pick up, we will surely hear renewed claims from the Tories that the crisis is turning the corner.

Last summer it did indeed look as if the rapid downward slide of British industry since mid-'79 had levelled out. But the latest figures for industrial production — January's — show that the decline is continuing.

International

January 1982 manufacturing output was the lowest since 1967, and 19% lower than in January 1979. Total industrial production was 15 per cent lower than January 1979, and 1.4 per cent lower than the slump level of 1975.

The downturn is international. In the US, industrial production increased quite substantially between mid-1980 and mid-1981, but it was only a flicker within the slump. Since mid-1981, industrial production has been going down again, to below the 1980 low point.

In Japan national income fell in the last three months of 1981, for the first time since 1975. In West Germany and France industrial production is stagnant, in Canada it is falling sharply.

Britain is distinguished within the international downturn by two factors. First, it had far less of a recovery after the 1974-5 slump than other advanced capitalist economies. The decline since 1979 started from an already low level.

Secondly, British capital is fleeing overseas at a huge rate. Instead of responding to Thatcherite economics with a new spate of efficient industrial endeavour — as the theory would have it — British capitalists are pocketing their benefits from the Tory policies and investing them abroad.

Trend

Britain's 50 biggest industrial companies now do 43 per cent of their production abroad.

The trend is especially marked in engineering. Exports of goods have fallen dramatically. Metal manufactures exports in 1981 were 13 per cent down on the 1979 level, other manufactured materials 31% down, road vehicles 20% down — all calculated by tonnage.

The only export on the increase is capital. Exactly why this is happening, and whether the Alternative Economic Strategy's recipe of a siege economy is the best response, is a subject for another article.

Billion dollar wage cuts . . .

IN AMERICA — it is said — everything is bigger. That also goes for the sell-outs.

This week has seen the grand-daddy of them all — a negotiated deal between the United Auto Workers union and the giant General Motors corporation, in which union leaders have signed away between \$2-\$3 billion worth of pay and holidays for 319,000 members.

Surrendered are annual pay increases, together with nine days' paid time off. Cost-of-living pay increases will be deferred; and wholesale changes in working conditions will be imposed at individual GM plants.

In exchange GM have agreed to reopen four plants scheduled for closure, and pledged for a period of two years not to close any plants in order to use outside suppliers.

There is also agreement that the present system of wholesale lay-offs at times of recession (141,000 UAW members are laid off indefinitely at GM) be replaced by a policy of permanent job loss through natural wastage.

The GM sell-out is not unique. A few weeks ago the same UAW leaders concluded a \$1 billion wage-cutting deal with Ford management.

Union bureaucrats are willingly sacrificing the wages and conditions of their members in order to bail out hard-pressed employers.

Airline workers, construction workers, food processing and road haulage workers have all been dragooned into settlements which make huge concessions to the employers. But the US bosses are not that far ahead of their British colleagues.

Michael Edwardes — egged on by Thatcher — has

led the charge, and union leaders have collapsed in his path.

Last November brought the sell-out of the BL pay strike with a settlement actually worse than the previous "final offer". Union officials and BL management are even now putting the final touches to a new procedure agreement arising from that capitulation.

In Ford an about-turn by union leaders brought a miserable betrayal on wages and a settlement well below the rate of inflation.

In Europe, too, the motor industry has been the pace-setter. 789,000 German carworkers have been led into a wage agreement giving a measly 4.2% increase — well below inflation. And in Italy, union officials at Alfa Romeo have accepted 5,700 lay-offs under threat of closure.

But the same approach is also being applied in other industries. Last week saw steel union officials concluding an agreement with the British Steel Corporation at Ravenscraig, boasting:

"We have a future . . . We are ready to break more records in steel production."

In every case the philosophy is the same: if only the employer can be restored to profitability, then surely some concessions and improvements can be made in the long run.

As TGVU official Ron Todd argues on the Ford settlement "If and when conditions improve, we will be asking for more than we got this year."

But there are three obvious drawbacks to this kind of position. Firstly, there is no immediate prospect of an end to the slump: the concessions that have been made amount to a permanent surrender of

conditions that were won with great difficulty over many years.

Indeed the redundancies now being accepted throughout industry in most cases amount to a complete loss of jobs to new technology.

Secondly as bitter experience has confirmed there is no indication that concessions and retreats by the workers' movement can placate the employers and prevent further attacks.

In BL, for example, repeated annual betrayals on pay have in each case been followed up by renewed attacks on jobs and wages — halving the workforce in the last five years, with worse still to come.

Thirdly the whole approach starts not from the needs and interests of the working class but from the problems and profitability of the employer and the capitalist system as a whole.

Though decorated with ritual phrases about struggles for improvements at some point in the indefinite future, this is no more or less than a total surrender to the anarchic capitalist system which the trade union and labour movement was built to combat.

The reformist "road to socialism" is in reality a cul-de-sac leaving workers bogged down in capitalist chaos.

In the process, individual sections of the labour movement find themselves pitted against their fellow workers at home or abroad: Ravenscraig officials boast that their members can outproduce the South Wales steel plants; Terry Duffy "backs Britain" against "foreign" competition by betraying his members at BL: UAW leader Fraser tries to cajole US car bosses into using the money saved from their payroll

to cut the price of American cars and thus undercut Japanese imports.

At each point, collaboration between union bureaucrats and employers brings an alliance against the working class, at the expense of the working class.

The more acute the crisis of capitalism the greater the pressure on bureaucrats to engage in such collaboration. Their positions of privilege and authority depend upon the cosy working class relations they have established with the employer, and they cannot conceive of any alternative way to proceed.

But the profits of capitalism depend on the exploitation of the working class — workers' interests are incompatible and opposed to those of the employers.

The working class can defend itself only through constructing a new revolutionary leadership prepared and determined to mobilise mass action.

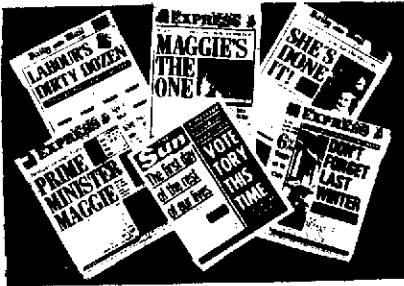
Only in this way can the marauding capitalist exploiters be challenged and overturned and the basis created for a genuine workers' government capable of carrying through the socialist transformation of society.

Experience also shows that such resistance is possible. Strikes by British miners stopped pit closures: ASLEF stood firm against the Tories. In France, Renault car workers have won shorter hours, longer holidays, a 10% wage rise and a cost-of-living clause.

The task is to create conditions in which workers feel willing and able to fight their class enemy: that means creating a leadership that will build links with the shop floor — and not with the boardroom.

Press Gang

by Patrick Spilling



HAROLD Evans described his own downfall as editor of the Times as more boring than the Borgias. It is true that his resignation came like the closing credits in a TV soap opera but it is Dallas that springs most readily to mind, with Evans in the role of one of those medium-bad guys who can't cope with the anti-hero.

Rupert Murdoch, of course, played JR without the charisma.

It was appropriate, therefore that the ITV news cameras were virtually the only witnesses as Evans faltered through his "resignation" speech, kissed his secretary good-bye, shook hands with the commissioner and stepped into chauffeur-driven oblivion.

Crumpled

Evans was even beginning to look the part. His face crumpled into a cross between Michael Parkinson and a tragic mask. His grin had become so strained, he could have auditioned for Crossroads.

Nobody should lose too much sleep over his personal downfall. The rules which allowed Murdoch to remove him were rules which Evans accepted and lived by. Although he had a reputation as an outsider to the establishment, Evans played pretty much by the book.

He was editor of the Northern Echo while Poulson and the rest of the gang were in their heyday and although rumours of major corruption were rife none of the Evans investigations were thorough enough to uncover any point.

It took a bankruptcy hearing to open up the can of worms. It was the privilege of the courts which allowed the corruption to become public — not any Evans insight.

His reputation on the Sunday Times was based on two major areas — the development of the Insight team and the Thalidomide publication. Insight often uncovered real scandals, but

in Evans' later days, it became more esoteric and trivial. Even at its best, Insight stood out as an exception to serious reporting, rather than typical of it.

The Thalidomide campaign is often held up as newspaper campaigning at its best and to prove the "freedom" of the British press.

Yet the most notable feature was that the Sunday Times was silenced by Disraeli's writs for years until the European Court ruled that the articles could be run.

The Sunday Times did not publish and be damned. It did not defy the courts. It simply hired better lawyers.

Evans was an outsider at the Times in the sense that he was not part of the Establishment. The policy disagreements with Murdoch say it all. Evans was soft on the SDP; Murdoch is a hard-line Thatcherite. Evans was critical of US policy in El Salvador; Murdoch is a hard-line Reaganite. Evans was

The much heralded guarantees of editorial independence which were extracted from Murdoch when he bought the paper, were simply sops to appearances as he eased himself into ownership. In fact, Murdoch's editors have independence like Ford cars were reported to have colour range. ("You can have any colour so long as it's black")

Throughout Evans' resignation saga, the famous six "independent" directors stood and watched silently.

sceptical about monetarism: Murdoch is a born-again Friedmanite.

The much heralded guarantees of editorial independence which were extracted from Murdoch when he bought the paper, were simply sops to appearances as he eased himself into ownership. In fact, Murdoch's editors have independence like Ford cars were reported to have colour range. ("You can have any colour so long as it's black")

Throughout Evans' resignation saga, the famous six "independent" directors stood and watched silently.

Crunch

Evans' problem was that when it came to the crunch, nobody in Fleet Street really believed that the editor could or should stand up to the proprietor. The common line in other Fleet Street

newspapers was that once an editor had "lost the confidence" of the newspaper owner, he should do the decent thing and quit.

Image

Evans, like many editors, has a self-image of the newspaper editor standing against the tide. In fact the days when newspaper editors were progressive were the days of the rise of capitalism and are long gone.

Today they are no more than puppets. So Evans gave way once again to an old style patrician. Charles Douglas Home is the nephew of the former Tory Prime Minister, a man who believes the Times should strive to return to the dear days when top people did not have to be told that they ought to be buying it.

At the same time, Douglas Home is no fumbler.

He chose his moment to go to Murdoch and resign and calculated correctly that Murdoch would rather lose Evans and see all the old stalwarts leave the paper.

He led a pro-Murdoch, anti-Evans lobby amongst the staff which became increasingly open. While it is supposed officially to be heresy to challenge an editor's right to edit, Douglas Home showed that when the proprietor is on your side, it can come to an open split in the office without any public criticism.

In the end, boring saga or not, Evans was forced to grasp the golden goblet which the chief of the Borgias handed him and swallow its poison. To play at being in charge of a newspaper is one thing. To own it is something else.

No benefit of wisdom

FROM those wonderful folks who brought you the sex snoopers — the homework police. The 1980 Supplementary Benefits Act allows people to attend school or college for "not more than 21 hours a week" and still claim benefit, provided they are willing to take up a job immediately it is offered (a likely

prospect!). But new guidelines now reaching local offices from the Chief Supplementary Benefits Officer lay down that "attendance" at school/college includes "private study on or off college premises", as well as lunch breaks and project work.

This has already led to young people losing all

benefits, after being seen by visiting officers with books open at home. While the hard right of the Tory Party denounce falling educational standards and accuse young people of being unfit for employment because of their poor qualifications, those who do try to improve their chances are offered the stark choice of ignorance or starvation.

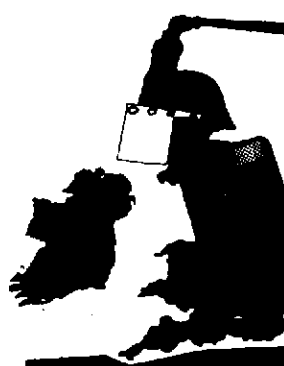
Last Sunday there was a good turn out in Chapel Market which succeeded in

scaring off the fascists who turned up. In previous weeks the Front had assembled up to 50 people against the regular 15 to 20 who leaflet there.

In fact they had even withdrawn thugs from East Street market in Southwark where they have been having a running fight with the New NF over monopoly selling rights.

It is a disgrace that we can't put these numbers on the street every Sunday to drive these scum out of all London's street markets.

MICK WOODS
Brent East CLP



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



by Gerry Byrne

Apartheid goes asset-stripping

ONE thing a recession is good for is getting valuable goods at knockdown prices. And that's not just in your local high street boutique's closing down sale. As Amersham International's sale at bargain basement rates shows, if you've got a few million to

start with you can buy up whole industries on the cheap. And one place where they seem to have taken this lesson to heart is South Africa. Allen Adams, Labour MP for Paisley is writing to the Secretary of State for Industry about where the

machinery sold off when Peugeot Citroen shut their Talbot factory in Linwood, with 5,000 redundancies, ended up.

Equipment

The Scottish Sunday Mail claims that Messina of

Pretoria, which manufactures Datsuns under licence brought several million pounds worth of press shop equipment for £1.4 million and Steel-Mobil of Durban paid £50,000 for turning equipment which would have cost at least ten times that

By special request.

"I am going to make a special request to the police, the army and the national guard not to shoot news people" — President Jose Napoleon Duarte of El Salvador.

Nice one Napoleon. Perhaps he hopes it will give him better press coverage than he's had recently.

BEHIND TURKISH JUNTA CRACKDOWN

The Thatcher government and many journalists argue that the military junta is 'returning Turkey to democracy'. Jack Johnson presents the facts.

A NEW wave of repression in Turkey has claimed the lives of another three left wing militants, raising the total of hangings to 13 since 12 September 1980.

Further arrests have taken place among intellectuals and academics while further charges and court proceedings have been brought against Ecevit's RPP.

This new turn came about after several visits to Turkey by EEC delegations in February and the decision of the European Assembly to consider re-admitting Turkey to the EEC, despite some mild criticisms of the regime's record on human rights.

The Generals reacted to these developments with anger. They banned further visits by any delegations from Europe. Then began the new hangings, arrests and suppression.

The junta is trying to prove the point to Europe that pressure will not deter them from carrying out the task of suppressing the working class movement in Turkey.

Elaborated

Peter Hopkirk of the Times last week elaborated on the question as follows:

"Despite Evren's clear determination to restore a Parliamentary role, he is under continual pressure from outside, particularly from Western Europe to return to barracks. Those familiar with the Turkish character know that such pressure, whether from well-meaning friends or from foes, is only likely to prove counter-productive."

The Times' position on Turkey is not an isolated one. It has been well argued in Europe by right wing MPs and MEPs and also represents the line of the Thatcher government.

Instead of withholding aid, they argue: "Turkey should be in the EEC so Europe can better monitor the regime's moves."

Liberal, humanitarian opposition to the regime in Europe melts away when it has to confront arguments based on imperialist interests and stability in Turkey, and in the Middle East.



Yet General Evren and his supporters in Europe are lying unashamedly when they say there will be a return to "democracy" in Turkey in 1983.

How could it be possible to talk about "democracy" when these dictators have inflicted the biggest repression ever seen in the history of the Turkish working class? Where every independent organisation of the working class and of other sections of the oppressed classes, has been crushed, thousands of class militants put in jail, hundreds killed and every section of society terrorised by the fear of torture, imprisonment and death.

Army

However, the type of "democracy" they are talking about is merely a return to Parliamentary rule, with an institutionalised dictatorial constitution, where the army will have the direct say in the running of the country.

Before the 12 September coup, the constitution in Turkey had been the one drawn up after the populist military take-over in 1960.

In the 1950s the new strategy of imperialism towards Turkey had started to affect the country's social, political and economic structure.

The intervention of large capital created an industrial proletariat which has become the main force

within the class struggle in Turkey.

The 1960 military coup took up the task of recognising the relationship between the indigenous bourgeoisie and imperialism on the one hand and the working class and other oppressed layers in Turkey.

The 1960 constitution was drawn up under conditions of growing awareness and organisation within the working class and other oppressed masses.

It had to concede democratic rights for the working class, including the right to strike, trade unions, political parties and organisations of the working class.

However, these rights — recognised on paper — were not put into effect immediately after the 1960 coup.

It was only after 3-4 years of bitter struggle by the working class (in which nearly 400 strikes involving 500,000 workers took place) that these rights were actually won.

After that, it was always the argument of the Justice Party and later the fascist NAP, that the root problem of Turkish capitalism lay in the 1960 constitution, and there were numerous attempts to change it.

The Turkish Labour Party (1962) and then the DISK union confederation (1967) were formed as a direct result of militant struggles of the working class, in opposition to the American-backed TURK-IS trade union confederation.

The new working class in Turkey made an important leap forward in the development of its political consciousness and its organisations in the early 1960s. For the first time the Turkish Labour Party managed to send 15 MPs to Parliament. DISK managed to organise the most militant and most class conscious layers within the working class.

Direct

These developments within the working class had an immediate and direct effect on youth and students.

Radical isolation among these layers gave birth to many of the organisations of the left in Turkey today.

These developments disturbed the bourgeoisie, and in 1970 they tried to introduce new laws aimed at reducing the power of



The army moves in again: tanks on the streets, September 1980

DISK and other workers' organisations.

The response of the workers to these moves was sharp and militant. A general strike was organised for a number of days, bringing clashes with soldiers on the streets.

The bourgeoisie had no option but to introduce martial law and stage a military take-over in March 1971.

However, military rule in 1971 was not stable enough to suppress DISK and the working class movement and power was handed back to civilian rule.

The 1971 coup did not manage to abolish the 1960 constitution and of course with it all the rights of the working class movement.

Failed

Having failed militarily the big bourgeoisie turned to develop a civilian fascist party, as a means to terrorise the forward-moving working class.

In 1974-5 the working class entered a period of struggle to regain the lost wages, living standards and democratic rights.

DISK was at the centre of these struggles. The whole of the left from the Turkish Communist Party to the Maoist organisations made massive gains, both organisationally and politically, in this period.

May Day celebrations nearly 1 million strong were an indication of the strength of the left.

The TKP became the main working class organisation due to their influence in DISK and other mass organisations such as the teachers' union TOB-DER.

However, the entire left remained ideologically under the influence of Stalinism, in its various historical versions and periods.

While the TKP adopted

the "popular frontist" strategy of Dimitroff and the post-1935 Comintern, supporting Ecevit's bourgeois RPP and its government, the Albanian Stalinists adopted Stalin's 1929-34 sectarian "third period" "social fascist" stance in relation to other workers' organisations.

As in the 1920s, the 1974-5 leadership of the workers and oppressed masses failed to give a revolutionary direction to the forward movement of Turkey's working class and other oppressed masses, and the Kurdish national liberation struggle.

Turkey witnessed one of the most bitter and sharp series of confrontations and struggles throughout the late 1970s. And the Turkish left failed in that test.

It was under conditions of a growing fascist movement and terror (25 killings a day) and increasing confusion and disorganisation of the working class, that Evren's present bonapartist dictatorship took control, adopting a pose of standing above all social classes as an arbiter — with sword in hand.

The junta met with no real resistance from the working class after 12 September 1980. It has so far successfully introduced the political and economic measures required by imperialism and capitalism within Turkey.

Forcefully

On the economic front they have introduced forcefully the monetary policies of Friedman.

With no open resistance to these policies from the working class they have successfully managed to bring down the rate of inflation from 120% to 40%.

They have cut down the trade deficit by 18% — with massive cuts in investments and government spending.

So, the dictatorship has

taken on the main task of restructuring the capitalist economy in Turkey. The IMF conditions which for years could not be introduced, have been carried out from A-Z. Even some sections of the bourgeoisie in Turkey have started to complain that the monetarist policies are so inflexible they cannot operate for long.

However, Turgut Ozal is pushing for another 3-4 years of his infamous economic programme before Turkey becomes an economically viable economy.

Behind all these claims of economic success, lies increased poverty and misery of the toiling masses in Turkey. Unemployment is well over 70%.

These attacks on the living standards of the masses also go hand in hand with changes in the political structure of society.

All the basic aspects of

the 1960 constitution is under attack, from the universities to trade union laws, from political parties to the rights of association.

It seems Evren is determined not to see a repeat of the 1974-5 period, when after three years of military dictatorship the working class managed to go forward and regain some of lost rights.

So any "return" to parliamentary rule in 1983 would have to go together with an institutionalised dictatorial constitution.

However, these plans of the capitalists in Turkey very much depend on the working class and its struggle.

The Turkish labour movement has the task of regrouping and reorganising its forces under extremely difficult conditions.

Only the revolutionary struggle of the masses has the power to overturn the present situation in Turkey.

To do this requires correct revolutionary leadership, and unity of the forces of the proletariat above all, clear political development and a break from the politics of reformism and Stalinism, which have dominated the class struggle and are responsible for the defeat inflicted on the masses by the dictators.

The lessons of the past lessons of the collaborationist "popular frontist" policies of the Stalinists, the lessons of ultra-left sectarian, divisive "social fascist" policies, the lessons of the strategy of "vanguard army struggle" have to be learned in order to be able to effectively mobilise the proletariat and the oppressed masses in the struggle against the dictatorship and the reserve fascist forces of the bourgeoisie.

Only through the maximum unity of the working class with the poor peasantry in actions against the dictatorship and through the struggle for a clear and consistent revolutionary programme can the proletariat in Turkey be able to rise to its feet and overthrow the dictatorship once and for all.

Women in jail

MONDAY 8 March was International Women's Day. Newspapers reported shortages in Moscow flower shops. But in Turkey 91 women political prisoners in Mamak prison were appearing in court for alleged assault on prison guards, when they organised a hunger strike against the continuous torture in Turkey's jails.

All of the women prisoners insisted on giving a statement about how the prison authorities insulted them during their protest.

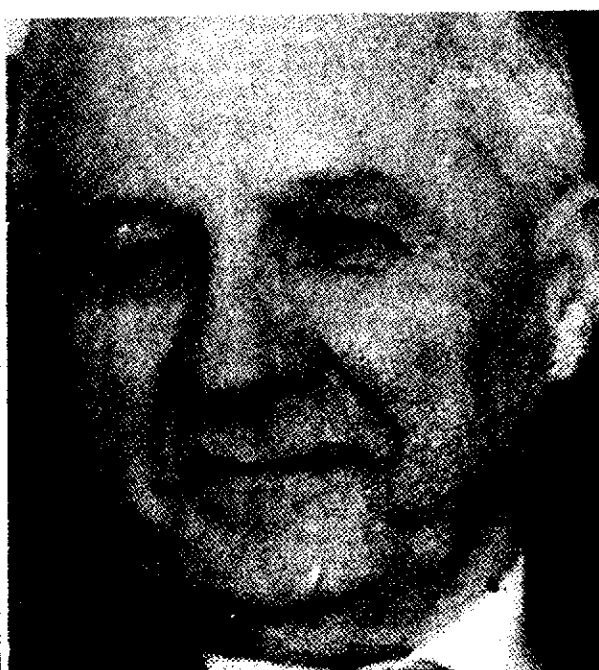
Recently women's rights activists in Turkey — including Deka Isvan (wife of Ahmet Isvan, former mayor of Istanbul and himself in jail without trial

since 11 September 1980) were jailed as part of a new crackdown on the intelligentsia.

No doubt they will get the same treatment which is common practice in the jails of Turkey's dictators.

If International Women's Day has any more meaning for the working class movement international than a bunch of flowers then it must mean organising a real and active solidarity with our sisters in Turkey and in struggle against similarly repressive regimes.

If you are interested in receiving further information, write to Turkish Solidarity Campaign, Women's Working Group, BM Box 5965, London WC1N 3XX.



Evren: determined to maintain dictatorship



Prime Minister Martens

Belgian General Strike called

by Ian Swindale

A decision by the Belgian government to intervene in the dispute between the country's steelworkers and the EEC Commission over the restructuring of the steel industry failed to prevent a demonstration by 15,000 striking steelworkers on 16 March from erupting into the most violent clashes seen in Brussels for 20 years.

The government had been refusing to participate in negotiations between the steel unions and EEC Commissioner Viscount Etienne Davignon who want to cut steel making by 4 million tonnes from 11 million to 7 million tonnes a year, with the loss of 10,000 jobs in the French speaking south. Unemployment in the steel-making towns of Liege and Charlerois already stands at 20%.

Day before

But the day before the demonstration the government appointed a new chief executive — Michel Vanderstrick — to the Cockerill Sambre steelmaking plant.

Prime Minister Martens also announced a compromise programme of closures for Mr Vanderstrick to negotiate with the EEC.

Faced with rioting in which police used tear gas and baton charges to disperse demonstrators, leaving some 170 police and 30 marchers injured, and an all-out steel strike — now in its fourth week — the EEC Commission this week announced a £260 million aid package for Cockerill-Sambre. But significantly, they rejected the modernisation plan being put forward by the Belgian government on the grounds that its aim of viability by 1985 could not be achieved unless the plan was further modified.

Coalition

Meanwhile, the Socialist FGTB union has called a 24 hour general strike for March 26 and the Social Christian union, the CSC, is following that up with a mass march of 100,000 on Brussels on the following day.

With unemployment now standing at 453,000 and the government's austerity programme likely to increase unemployment still further in the short term, the coalition government of Wilfried Martens faces a very uncertain future in the face of these massive actions by the Belgian working class.

Mauroy loses ground to Right and Left

THE second round of the local elections in France, on March 21, confirmed the first round shift to the Right. On Tuesday 23rd the Right is hoping to intimidate the Mauroy government further with a mass demonstration of peasants in Paris.

A French comrade recently in London talked to Socialist Organiser about the background.

"Some sections of the middle class — like lower managers or peasants — who voted for Mitterrand have demonstrated a cer-

tain disillusion, and have rallied to the Right. So the Left has lost ground there.

In the period before the elections, there were some significant events like attacks on workers' strikes by commandos made up of local peasants.

Also a number of Communist Party voters abstained.

But there were relatively high votes for some candidates to the left of the Communist Party and Socialist Party, for example PSU candidates and some Maoist candidates.

On many fronts the government has made concessions to pressure from the bourgeois parties, for example on the reduction of the working week. In response there has been a certain mobilisation of the working class.

Figures have been published for January — before the bulk of the strikes on the 39 hour week — and they show a 33% increase in strike days over January 1981. But you must remember that 1981 had the lowest number of strike

days for many years.

The discontent of the peasants does not date from Mitterrand's election. There were demonstrations under Giscard and under Pompidou, too. The main cause of discontent is the EEC Common Agricultural Policy.

But the leadership of the main peasant organisation is strongly influenced by the RPR [the Gaullist party], and undeniably the right wing parties are using the discontent to increase their pressure on the government.

As the government runs into more problems, the debate inside the trade unions is sharpening.

The policy of the CGT [the biggest trade union federation, led by the Communist Party] is determined by two factors.

Firstly, support for the government, which is characterised as being on the right path. At the same time, at least officially, the CGT proclaims the necessity for the workers to act independently.

The CGT thus keeps some leeway for itself in order to be able to lead and head off any working class struggles which challenge the government.

Sacrifice

The CFDT [the second-largest union federation], on the question of the working week for example, has gone so far as to criticise the government for not having a "courageous" attitude. It should have said that a reduction in the working week is possible, but only at the price of a sacrifice on wages.

This orientation derives, so it seems, from the CFDT's concern not to arouse high hopes among the working class and find itself confronted with big mobilisations when those hopes are disappointed. It is a continuation and a stepping-up of the so-called 're-centring' orientation, which dates from 1977 at least.

In Force Ouvriere [the third union federation, which declares itself 'non-political'], the attitude of the leadership has been

more and more right wing, often lining up with campaigns pushed by the right wing parties.

For example, currently there is a big hue and cry about the 'Lucet affair'. Lucet was a manager of the social security fund in the Marseilles region, a member of FO and also of the RPR. He set out to smash the CGT in his department.

After official reports of financial malpractice by Lucet, he was removed from his job. Then he was found dead. At first it was supposed to be suicide, but the suicide theory is now seriously placed in doubt.

The RPR immediately seized on this suicide, or assassination, to present Lucet as the victim of a slander campaign by the CGT, and the first victim of the socialist regime. FO has lined up with this campaign.

Oppositions are developing within the unions.

In the CGT, a current developed before the presidential elections around the demand for left unity. It included SP members, some dissident members of the CP, and sections of the far left.

Issue

The main issue in the CGT since the elections has been Poland. The CGT more or less lined up with the position of the CP, which is that nothing should be done in solidarity with the Polish workers. Here again, SP members, CP dissidents, and sections of the far left were able to link up to establish a 'CGT for Solidarnosc' committee.

The question of trade union unity may be coming to the fore again, too. But there will probably be some deal between the CP and the SP to give the SP more elbow room in the CGT.

In the CFDT, the criticism made of the leadership on Poland is that it has had a sectarian attitude, using Poland merely to boost the CFDT as against the CGT.

The most important issue in the CFDT is the leadership's attitude on the 39 hour week and wage cuts. There is strong opposition in the CFDT on this issue.

The real scandal of arms to El Salvador

by Harry Sloan

"THIS MUST be the only guerrilla war in the world where you do not see Soviet-made AK-47 rifles with their distinctive curved chambers."

These words from Guardian correspondent Jonathan Steele sum up a central weakness of the struggle in El Salvador.

For behind the fiascoes of US attempts to "prove" Cuban and Soviet involvement in the civil war for the overthrow of the Duarte junta lies the grim reality: no evidence has been produced by the Pentagon to substantiate their charges — because little or no material aid is being provided to the FMLN guerrillas!

News conferences to "prove" that Cuba and Nicaragua have been training guerrillas; CIA documents to "prove" shipments of arms by air, sea and land into El Salvador; and aerial photographs to "prove" the development of advanced aggressive military forces in Nicaragua by Moscow and Havana have all fallen flat.

Revelations

Instead, revelations of Reagan approval for CIA operations against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua have been vindicated.

But while 'left' support-

ters of the Salvadorean guerrillas make much of these embarrassing gaffes by the US imperialists, they remain silent on the scandalous lack of support to the armed struggle on the part of the Kremlin and Havana leaderships.

The fact is that while Reagan is mustering the strongest possible military attack against the left wing opposition in El Salvador, the Stalinist leaders are engaged in no comparable moves to assist the guerrillas.

Brezhnev has repeatedly made it crystal clear that the Moscow bureaucracy has little or no interest in the struggle in Central America. Nicaragua, suffering a punitive economic blockade and growing military provocations at the hands of the Reagan government has received only a pittance in terms of assistance from the USSR or Eastern Europe.

Assistance

Such assistance as has been given has come via Castro's government in Cuba which, a mere 60 miles off the Florida coastline, is itself more directly threatened by the sabre-rattling Reagan government.

But despite occasional earlier blasts of rhetoric, Castro's overt and still limited material support for

the Sandinistas emerged only after the defeat of the Somoza dictatorship. And in its present arms-length relationship with the struggle of the FMLN in El Salvador, the Cuban regime appears to be following exactly the same course.

Material

In other words while Castro is ready and willing to utilise setbacks to imperialism to further strengthen his own diplomatic support in Central America and the Caribbean, he is no more willing than his Kremlin sponsors to commit material resources to support the armed struggle.

Like the Kremlin leaders, the bureaucrats in Havana seek first and foremost to preserve their own basis of power and privilege by arriving at a balance of forces — a 'peaceful coexistence' — with imperialism.

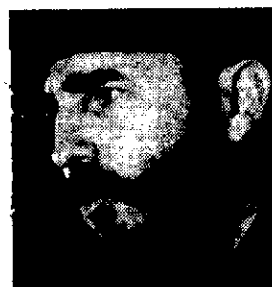
A similarly cynical approach — in which the objective is to establish a political framework of class collaboration rather than class confrontation — dictates the stance of the so-called "Socialist International" on the war in El Salvador.

Fearing a defeat of the junta, they would prefer to see a "negotiated solution" in which the reformist leadership of the opposition Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) would be established in office presiding over a stabilised 'mixed' capitalist economy.

Wonder

Small wonder therefore that the leaders of the FDR — and some of the politically confused elements of the FMLN guerrillas — are enthusiastic supporters of the Second International, and of the Mexican government which has taken a similar view.

An interview in the current El Salvador News Bulletin reveals representatives of the largest FMLN grouping, the FPL, praising the "firm role" of Mexico,



Castro: a lot of words, but how much action?

and the "bastion of support" offered by the Mitterrand government in France.

Yet workers in France and Mexico know to their cost the real nature of these so-called 'allies'.

In their struggle to end not only political repression but also poverty and exploitation, the masses of El Salvador will need to develop a new leadership with a more advanced political perspective, starting from an understanding of the treachery of social democracy and Stalinism, and their fundamental opposition to socialist revolution.

That is why a revolutionary part is needed in El Salvador based firmly upon the proletariat, fighting to weld a fighting alliance with the poor peasantry in El Salvador and with the oppressed masses throughout Central America in the struggle for socialism.



Mitterrand: conceding to the right wing

Socialist Organiser Alliance

Get Organised!

SOCIALIST Organiser fights to act as a real campaigning paper which can organise workers in the struggle for new leadership.

To do so we need consistent support and money. Socialist Organiser Alliance groups have been established in most big towns.

Why not join with us? Supporters are asked to undertake to sell a minimum of 6 papers per week and contribute at least £1.50 per month (20p for unwaged).

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

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

Name

Address



Affiliate to the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign, 29 Islington Park Street, London N1

Women in struggle



From the Yorkshire Miner: but what have wiggling backsides got to do with the low pay of part-time women workers?

NUM surface workers on £33

by Jo Thwaites

GUESS which members of the NUM earn £33 a week. Yes, got it in one — the women. The part-time cleaners, to be precise.

This finally came to the notice of the Yorkshire Area NUM council at their February meeting, when women lobbied the delegates before their meeting.

However, King Arthur is coming to the rescue of the 'cinderellas' of the industry, as the Yorkshire Miner put it.

He said: "These women are members of our union and we can't pretend they don't exist".

What a relief! But more: "It's high time we repaid them by showing our loyalty. It's time for us to give them our strongest support and make plain to the Coal Board that they must be part and parcel of NUM/NCB agreements".

Aware

Strange. Could it be that Arthur Scargill didn't know that he had members who were on such low rates of

PHOTO: JOHN HARRIS



Last Sunday, 21st, hundreds of CND demonstrators joined the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp to block the gates of the planned Cruise missile base. Police arrested 39.

Bureaucracy in Bournemouth

If the Women's TUC last week did nothing else, at least it showed why the Women's Fightback TU conference on March 27 is necessary. Rachel Lever reports.

BOURNEMOUTH was reeling. "They've filled 20 hotels, must be 2,000 of them", the taxi driver told me.

In the event, the Women's TUC mustered 267 delegates, including the voteless pariahs sent by trades councils. Rows and rows of empty seats in the big gloomy cinema testified to the reluctance of

head offices to send their full quota of delegates. After all, the money might be needed if stocks of cigars were to run low.

The one controversial motion was moved by the NUJ (whose well functioning Equality Working Party had placed a number of good ideas on the agenda). The motion asked for half a day of work-

shops at Women's TUC, a bookstall and the right to send five motions on to the main TUC conference.

The whole lot fell. "There'd be problems with a bookstall — we'd have to find some way of vetting the books", Bill Whatley of USDAW replied from the platform. And there was a suggestion that sisters whose books were

on the stall might have an unfair advantage when it came to elections to the Women's Advisory Committee — a none-too-subtle attack on Anna Coote, who was elected in any case.

Another controversy was over the rights of part-timers. Last year's Congress had passed a motion deploring discrimination in redundancy agreements against part-timers (i.e. women), but the TUC had taken the guts out of it with a leaflet appealing against "unfair" discrimination and reminding brothers that some part-timers (single parents, main breadwinners, etc) really did need their jobs. Which left others as still not 'real' workers.

Apparently 30 agreements have come to light in which part-timers are expected to get the sack first.

Terry Marsland of the Tobacco Workers didn't do herself a lot of good with the feminists, with her impassioned opposition to the anti-smoking resolution. There must be better ways to defend your members' jobs, and the logic would be to campaign for arms spending if your members make the things.

Smaller

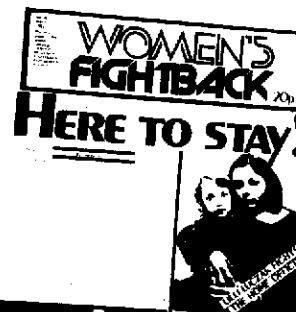
On the fringe, a rather small meeting was briefed about the June 5 Festival and demonstration. The Labour Party's fraternal delegate, Anne Davis, had made no mention of the Party's festival for women.

And the Women's Advisory Committee report contained a classic cover-up of how the demand for a demonstration had been turned into an 'event'. It's been left to the Action Committee for a Woman's Right to Work to publicise the Festival properly, and to call a demonstration for the day to make sure some protest is made.

Evidence

On the evidence of the Women's TUC, it won't otherwise happen. If the tremendous energy exuded in the Lord Mayor's knees-up (not a dry armpit in the house) had gone into the resolutions, we might see some action, and Bournemouth might indeed tremble.

As it was, it had all been filtered through smoke-filled National Executives and steered through conference by Marie Patterson, who has done more than anyone else in the past nine months to sabotage even a demonstration for a woman's right to work.



The latest Women's Fightback — 20p plus postage from 41 Ellington St, London N7



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 Langan (Foyles strike), Jean Sprey (Brent CHC) and a speaker from Plessey's occupation, plus many others to be confirmed.

There will be an all-day creche. Workshops on various topics under these main headings: 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). Starts 10am at Kingsway Princeton College, Sidmouth St, WC1.

MARCH 27

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.

TGWU region 6 southern coordinating committee: meeting to discuss the Tebbitt Bill. Sunday April 4, 10am at Stella Maris, across from Transport House, Salford. Speaker: Wally Wainwright. All TGWU members welcome

TURKEY

Turkey Solidarity Campaign Democratic Platform Speakers' Tour

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, Furnival 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

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?

MARXISM

London Workers Socialist League classes on basic Marxism. Next one: State and Revolution. Friday April 2nd, 7.30pm. For venue write to PO Box 135, London, N1.

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.

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

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.

Highgate/Archway Anti-Apartheid fund-raising event — Saturday March 27, noon to 11pm, at Caxton House, St John's Way, London N19. Dance, drama, poetry, music, theatre, workshops, jumble, gig, etc. Admission 50p, £2.50 (£1.50 UB40) for evening gig.

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

WHAT KIND OF ALTERNATIVE FOR BL?

Bill Peters discusses the Leyland Vehicles stewards' "Alternative Plan", and suggests that it ducks some crucial issues

LEYLAND Vehicles: the Workers' Alternative, published by the Joint Works Committee of Leyland Vehicles (LV), Leyland, Lancs, was planned and written during the recent four week LV strike and published shortly after the return to work. It was compiled with the assistance of the Manchester Engineering Research Group (MERG).

PHOTO: JOHN HARRIS

It is an extensive 44-page pamphlet which contains a lot of very useful information about the heavy vehicle industry.

It exposes BL policy which is to run down LV through the liquidation of its productive base and outsourcing the manufacture of major units and by preparing for further closures and hiving off.

It contains, however, many weaknesses which generally reflect the crisis of perspective which prevailed at leadership level throughout the strike itself. For example there is not a word about the central problem of the strike, which was the involvement of the rest of BL in the struggle.

Repeats

Instead it repeats the well established line of the strike committee of "seeking the support of the whole labour movement". During the strike, the strike committee and the convenor, Mick Coyne, a Communist Party member, actually resisted moves from within the Combine Committee to call a conference of all BL shop stewards in order to discuss support for the 12,000 strikers.

It highlights a weakness which recurs throughout the pamphlet which is to see things in the parochial terms of Leyland Vehicles in isolation and not BL as a whole. In reality the only way to win the strike was to crack the myth of Edwardes' invincibility and defeat his overall strategy and thus defeat the corporate plan of which the LV cutbacks are a part. It is difficult to do that from one division.

The pamphlet is certainly right to devote a lot of space to the Ryder Report, (commissioned by Tony Benn on behalf of the Labour government at the end of 1974), which still lies at the root of many of the problems facing BL workers today.

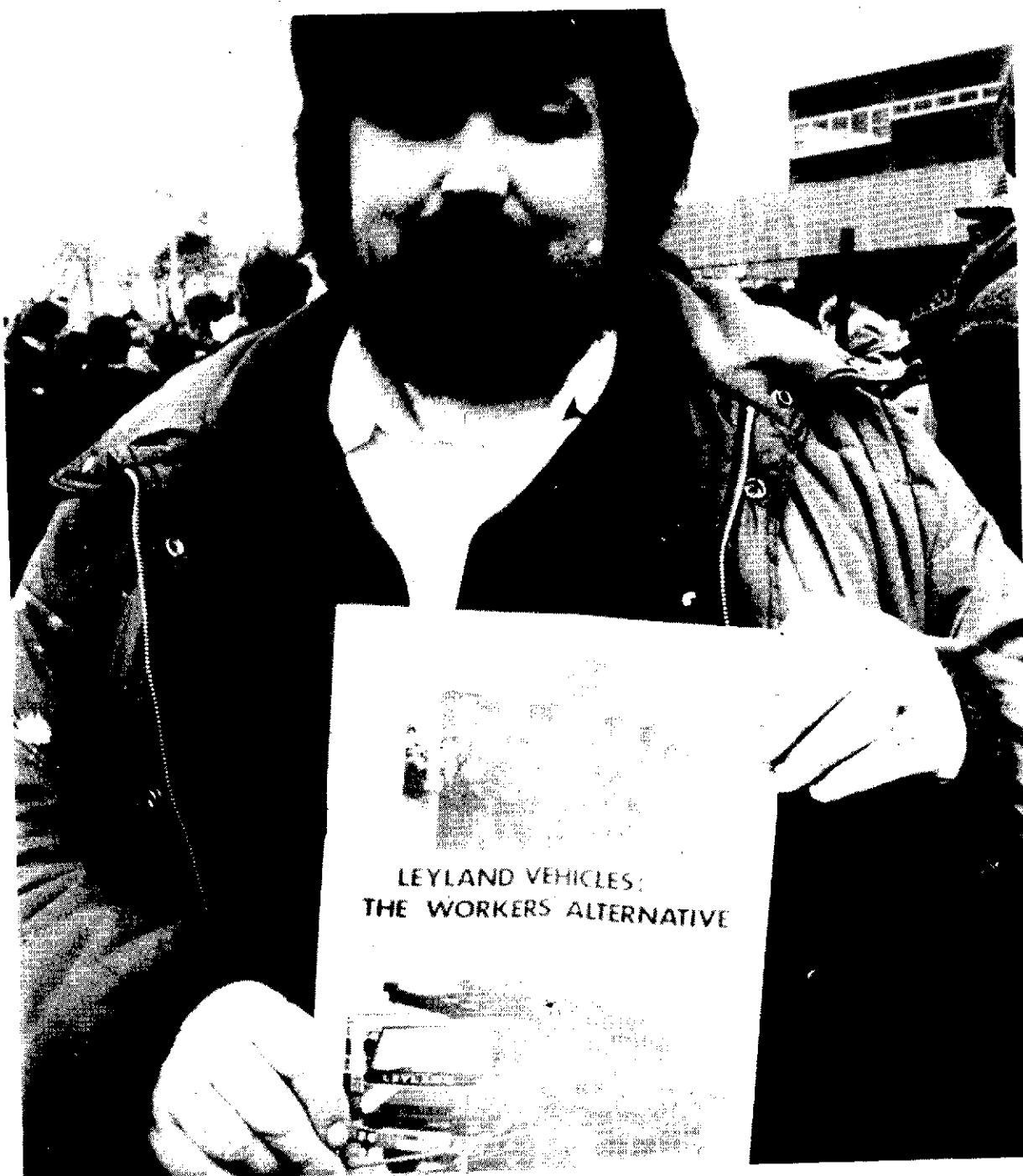
The conclusions it draws, however, seeing LV in isolation, have the same weakness.

Although there are two slightly contradictory chapters on Ryder, (obviously written by different authors), the general conclusion drawn is that the Ryder Report was an inadequate plan which was only half implemented!

Dismisses

It accuses Ryder of failing to establish a proper nationalised industry out of the report and dismisses the so-called "worker participation" as a "farce".

It goes on to credit Ryder with "exposing the inadequacies of private ownership" and accuses manage-



Leyland convenor Mick Coyne with the Alternative Plan

Attack needs united response

ment of failing to implement the full investment programme for LV as proposed by Ryder — particularly new foundry facilities.

(The attack on participation directly reflects the influence of the Communist Party on the pamphlet since the CP have now switched policy and decided that they were wrong to back Ryder Participation in the way they did. Derek Robinson, speaking at a recent public meeting in Oxford said that it "had been a mistake to go into 'participation' as conceived by Ryder".)

But Ryder was not just a weak plan with a few good points and a few bad! It was a major attack on BL workers. Likewise, participation was far from just a "farce". It actually facilitated the dismantling of the trade union movement which took place during the 3 years of Ryder [1975-7] and gave Edwardes the power base to force in his closure programme, the latest phase being the proposed 4,500 redundancies in LV.

Under Ryder the trade union movement at shop steward level was hamstrung. After the adoption of the Report by Parliament

in April 1975 the National Enterprise Board effectively became the top management of the Corporation. Sitting on the NEB were Hugh Scanlon and Harry Urwin representing the two main unions in BL — the AUEW and TGWU.

Breaking

Harry Urwin also sat on the Ryder inquiry team as the trade union representative. All this resulted in massive backing from the trade union leaders for Ryder, under conditions where the stated purpose of Ryder was to make BL a more efficient producer of vehicles by the more effective exploitation of the labour force, which could only be done by breaking the power of the shop stewards.

Its detailed objectives were to facilitate a major rationalisation programme, i.e. plant closures. To achieve "better manning levels", "less strikes" and "higher productivity" plus "greater mobility and interchangeability of labour".

The promise of participation also ensured that Ryder also received enthusiastic backing from the most prominent convenors — particularly the Com-

munist Party who saw it as a "step towards workers' control".

As a result the Combine Committee was castrated and everything channelled through the 'participation' bodies — the Cars Council and the Bus and Vehicle Operations Councils.

It is true that 'participation' has done more damage in BL Cars than in Vehicles. In 1975/6/7, the Cars Division was the main target of management because it was making a loss whilst LV was making a profit. When LV stewards pulled out of 'participation' after management ignored them and announced the arbitrary closure of AEC in Southall, it had not been used for wholesale reorganisation as it had in Cars.

False

Despite these differences it is false to separate the two divisions. A blow against the shop stewards movement in one part of BL affected the whole movement.

When Derek Robinson led a standing ovation in January 1978 to welcome Michael Edwardes into his

new job as BL chairman, it undermined the trade unions and strengthened Edwardes in his role as an asset stripper throughout the whole Corporation.

In a similar way, when Edwardes sacked Derek Robinson, and disciplined the then LV Lancs convenor Len Brindle, it was a massive blow against the trade union movement in the whole corporation.

Clear

Throughout this period it has been increasingly clear that Edwardes' corporate-style management requires a corporate-wide response from the trade unions if it is to be combatted. It requires a break with class collaboration and all that goes with it and to begin to seriously rebuild the shop stewards' movement on the basis of unity throughout BL, which would provide the basis to combat the repeated sell-outs from the top.

Unfortunately the opposite has been the case. The Combine Committee began meeting again last year without a meeting following Robinson's victimisation. The meetings

ceased again after Adams' weak role in the BL Cars wage review and his fear of being victimised for it.

Stewards from Leyland, Lancs, have not attended even these sparse meetings. Repeated calls from the Leyland Action Committee supporters for a more active combine beginning with a conference of shop stewards to discuss the offensive against the shop stewards' movement have been ignored or manoeuvred against.

Instead we have had a succession of "alternative plans for BL" — most of which are well documented in the pamphlet. They all present things in capitalist terms by calling for import controls or by suggesting ways in which the business can be run and organised more successfully.

The last strike committee bulletin, for example, said of the meeting with BL management "We agreed that the intention of all people concerned with BL was to return to profitability as soon as possible."

Illusion

Or like the recent Alternative Plan for Vehicles creates the illusion that it is possible to convince Michael Edwardes to see reason and adopt a different, more constructive course.

In concept they are no different to the Ryder plan. Quite correctly they say "keep the industry going" rather than shut it down, "increase investment" and "preserve the manufacturing base" which like reflation, is what the CP argue all the time.

But they, like Ryder, ignore the reality of capitalism which is the world economic crisis, particularly severe in Britain.

The investment programme proposed by Ryder was based on crassest market forecasts for trucks. It says the following:

"Partly as a result of the tendency to replace such vehicles more frequently because of more stringent vehicle legislation and the cost and scarcity of qualified maintenance staff, total UK demand for heavy vehicles seems likely to be about 30% higher than last year (1974) by 1980 and there should be some further growth between 1980 and 1985." (Ryder Report, page 2, para. 8).

The Ryder team based all their decisions for LV on that estimation. Before the period covered was half way through they were faced not with gradual expansion over ten years — but the complete collapse of the heavy vehicle market.

Alternative

The working class needs an alternative road which is based on a very different yardstick — their own independent interests as a class. They need a fighting policy to defend jobs and a programme based on the development of workers' control in the plants. Above all they need to develop a new leadership both at national level in the unions and within BL which break

from class collaborationism and begin to fight on these lines.

Not a mention of an alternative appears in the pamphlet, of course. In fact it is far worse. The whole pamphlet goes out of its way to avoid any criticism of the trade union leaders at all. Yet the majority of workers at LV are in the AUEW, and the AUEW Executive Council subsequently played a key part in breaking the strike by instructing the District Officer to read out a letter from Edwardes to the mass meeting just before the vote was taken — which threatened the complete wind-up of LV.

This kind of attitude comes out of the politics of the Communist Party and their relationship with the right wing who controlled the strike committee behind the scenes throughout the strike.

In fact the pamphlet goes to astounding lengths to cover up the role of Duffy and Co. in BL.

For example, it completely covers up the role of the trade union leaders in the ballot on the 1979 "survival plan" which resulted in an 8-1 majority in favour of closing 13 plants and losing 25,000 jobs. All it says is the following:

"The success of the management's propaganda campaign was reflected in the overwhelming support of 86% given to the Edwardes plan in the referendum of the workforce."

It completely covers up the fact that the key role in this was played by the CSEU [and particularly by the AUEW] who wrote to every BL worker urging them to accept the plan!

The pamphlet even covers up the role of Duffy in Derek Robinson's sacking, which came out of the survival plan ballot! It says:

"There were strikes at a number of BL plants, notably Longbridge and Coventry. But other parts of the Combine, including LV, did not think the time was right for a major confrontation. The strike and support for Derek Robinson was finally dissipated despite a lengthy inquiry by his own union."

You wouldn't think from this that 32,000 were out in support of Robinson and were ordered back by Duffy! Nor was support "dissipated" despite a lengthy inquiry by his own union! The fact is that the inquiry was used to end the strike and then found him guilty of breach of rule — thus ensuring that no further strike action would take place.

CP members would agree in private that all this is true, but when it comes to putting it in an important pamphlet like this in the middle of a struggle and when workers are about to be sold out by the same traitors, everything must be covered up. The cosy relationship of the CP with the top trade union leaders must prevail.

Such a method effectively ensures that the continual betrayals that occur with such monotonous regularity will continue unchallenged.

SOOPER SNOOP

SOMEONE, somewhere may know a lot more about you than you think. Informant given quite innocently when you sign on at the dole, go to the doctor, run an overdraft at the bank, or pay your income tax may end up in the hands of quite different people from those you gave it to.

And talking of innocence, we are told the law exists to protect the weak and innocent but innocence is no longer enough to prevent you ending up on police files. If you're an active shop steward, a political activist or a squatter or even just against fox-hunting — if you fall into one of these 'suspicious' categories, the odds are even greater that you'll be on a computer somewhere, even if you don't have a criminal record.

Private agencies — such as the agencies that supply credit ratings on request — abuse data collected for purposes other than that which they use it for. But it is the fast and massive growth of the state's role in this area which presents the greatest threat to democratic rights.

Government departments probably hold more information about us than other agencies, for example, quite legitimate information about tax, national insurance contributions and payments, vehicle ownership. Over 220 functions of central government involve computerised records.

However, no law restrains the departments in the way in which the information is used and the secrecy which covers all government departments applies specially to the ones

Bruce Robinson looks into the growing banks of police computers

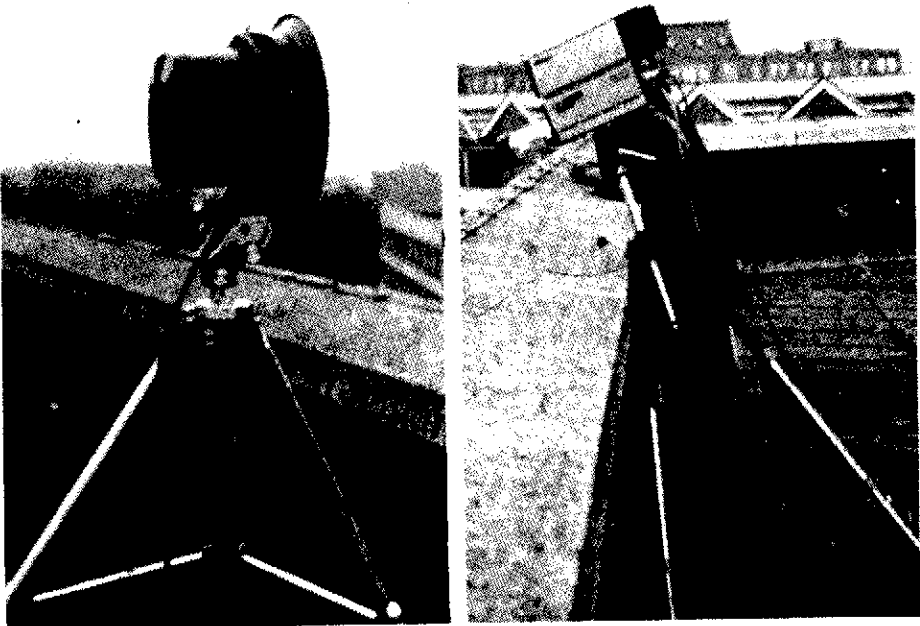
most likely to want this information — the police and security services.

40 million personal records are already held on the Police National Computer (PNC) at Hendon and the Special Branch holds 1.3 million records at Scotland Yard (their only interest is political activists).

This sort of information gathering and surveillance preceded the use of computers, but computerisation makes for far wider availability and easier and faster storage and retrieval of information.

A number of scandals recently have served to indicate the extent of state information gathering and the way in which the information can be abused.

The first and probably best known example emerged through objections to the renewal of licences for a number of London casinos. It was alleged, and later proven in court, that police officers had, through their access to the PNC and thus to the DVLC, provided the casino owners with the names and addresses of the owners of



cars parked outside rival casinos at a charge of 80p a time.

More recently, the retiring Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall, John Alderson, revealed some of the information kept on innocent people by his force. This included people involved in anti-nuclear campaigns, opposition to blood sports or members of Anti-Apartheid.

In February, the Sun revealed that it had paid £500 to a firm of 'computer snoopers' to see how much information they would be able to provide on a Labour MP, Michael Meacher (with his agreement).

The results showed that the company involved was able to gain access to bank, medical and police records. Thatcher said that she "shared the distaste that this information should be available", but, as we shall see, the government has demonstrated its unwillingness to do any more than is the absolute minimum about it.

In the last few weeks, articles in the New Statesman and Computing have revealed the most secret and probably the most sinister of the extensions of state information gathering: MI5's acquisition at a cost of at least £20 million of two large ICL computers with backing storage capable of holding records of 150 words of descriptive information on about 20 million people. This system was acquired without Parliament even knowing.

No-one asked by journalists Duncan Campbell and Steve Connor would specify its purpose, beyond vague talk of "national security" — a concept which is supposed to silence all but the most persistent and "unpatriotic" inquirers.

The keeping of computerised information raises a number of related issues.

—whether the keeping of the information is justified

in the first place; how it is decided when to add or delete information;

—whether it is used for purposes other than that for which it is intended e.g. car licensing records being made available to the police;

—whether the information is relevant to the purpose for which it is used;

—whether it is kept secure;

—whether it is kept private;

—whether it is accurate and what rights a person has to examine and correct data held about them;

—how the use of information is monitored and to whom the holders of it are accountable.

The way these factors come into play when the state starts collecting information about us will be examined by looking at the way three systems operate (insofar as it is possible to get definite information).

They are the PNC information about vehicles (a small part of the information held on the computer); the Thames Valley Police 'Collator' system, an experimental system in

centralising and computerising information gathered by the police locally; and the MI5 system mentioned above. The first two systems in particular reflect the shift in policing methods towards trawling information that may later prove to be related to some criminal or political activity regardless of whether the people on whom the information is being kept have broken the law or not.

In 1972 the Police Review said "Police intelligence is now forward-looking, anticipating who is going to commit what, when and where and because it is so powerful it is frequently libellous."

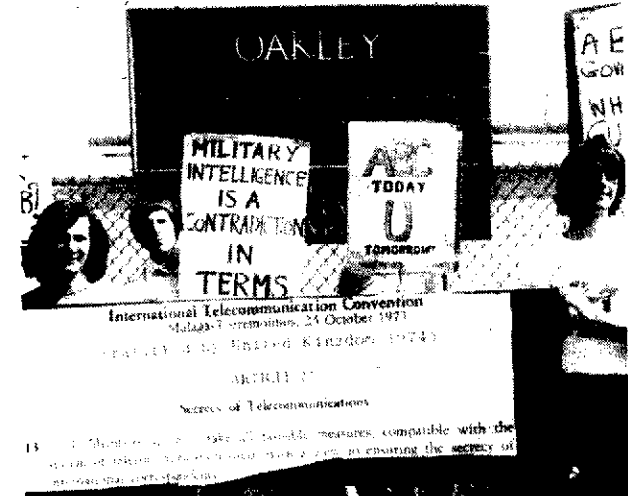
(I won't go into the first issue of justification beyond saying that those who make up the state machine see its preservation as a task that justifies almost anything.)

Successive governments, whether Tory or Labour, have left the police and security services to get on with their job with as little disturbance as possible. But for socialists and the labour movement the increased incursions of the State into areas of civil liberties can lead to a life-or-death threat and must be fought, whatever the justifications given in the name of 'fighting crime' or 'national security'.

The PNC is based centrally at Hendon and is

open to access from terminals held by regional police forces. It contains information on a number of fields, e.g. wanted or missing persons, criminal records and stolen or 'suspect' vehicles. It is estimated that there will be 4 million checks on names and 20 million on vehicles this year.

The information for the 'vehicle owners' index comes from the DVLC at Swansea, where all vehicles are registered along with the names and addresses



Crispin Aubrey and John Berry: harassed for lifting a corner of the veil of state surveillance



Black people will suffer specially from increased state surveillance



EARS

WAS

A

Z

of their owners. The names can then be used to check against other files kept on people.

According to an article in the latest issue of Computing, since 1979 a simple vehicle check to find the name and address of the owner has also automatically accessed the stolen and suspect vehicles index, which contains information on cars 'of interest' to the police. At least three, and possibly five of the categories this covers are for the use of the Special Branch.

The significance of this becomes clear when you consider that vehicle checks are not just used to recover stolen cars but also to monitor movement of vehicles of 'interest'.

In 1976, only 25% of the 120,000 entries in the stolen and suspect vehicles

index referred to stolen cars, and the use made by local forces reflects this. In 1979, according to Computing, Bedfordshire police made 127,933 stolen vehicle checks but reported only 3,710 stolen vehicles. Figures for Gwent were 61,864 and 1,414 respectively.

As the Computing article states: "Without public discussion or announcement or debate in Parliament, the police have set up the basis of a countryside intelligence system that monitors vehicle movement."

Not all police information is kept centrally on the PNC. An increasing amount of data is held by 'collators', based in local stations who gather local 'criminal intelligence'. Thames Valley police have undertaken an experiment

in 1976 to centralise this information on a computer.

Although the Thames Valley police are keen to dispute anything said about their system, they are not too prepared to supply much information about how many people find their way into the computer or why.

Two senior policemen answered queries about this as follows: "The majority of the information in on criminals. You have to trust us." "To my mind, all the information in there is factual (!). We are simply providing a service for the lads."

Duncan Campbell has managed to get figures of the size of the different files on the system. The file on people is around 160,000 (some 10% of the region's population, though the police claim that this includes crime victims).

It is growing by 120 records a day. The file on 'occurrences' — non-criminal events — contains 148,000 records and is growing by 175 a day. On the other hand the file on crimes only contains 49,000 records — one-third of the predicted capacity.

This sort of system makes detailed policing of an area much easier. A new system in Greater Manchester will add to their

locally collected information, information on their area from the PNC.

Although the Thames Valley system is independent of the PNC, the Home Office admitted that the main obstacle to holding locally-collected information centrally was public opinion. Their long term aims are "one definitive record held centrally" and "to computerise completely the central definitive record available to all forces".

The MI5 system, according to Duncan Campbell's and Steve Connor's deductions provide such a centralised system, in which records of individuals are held, uniquely identified by their National Insurance number.

The size of the storage on the new computers, ordered secretly four years ago, is such that if MI5 built up its own files from scratch it would take years to get anywhere near the capacity obtained.

The conclusion Duncan Campbell draws is that MI5 is receiving large amounts of data directly from other government computers. Two other facts point in this direction: MI5's secret charter gives it "access to the records of such government departments and agencies as you may deem necessary for the



purposes of your work.

Secondly, the Ministry of Defence was experimenting in linking the computers into a network in the mid-70s, and ICL, the computer supplier is still working on this.

Neither the Inland Revenue nor the DHSS would deny that MI5 had access to their records, given that there is evidence that MI5 uses National Insurance numbers as identification, there must

be a considerable flow of information from the DHSS's Newcastle NI computers to MI5.

The MI5 project was conceived and set up in total secrecy without any Parliamentary discussion or accountability. Something that represents a serious threat to civil liberty is outside the law or the framework of Parliamentary democracy.

(Maybe Michael Foot should ponder this before

rabbiting on about how Tatchell, Wall and Benn are enemies of democracy). The police systems mentioned are also out of control by either local police committees or of Parliament, covered by a cloak of secrecy.

The labour movement must fight for that secrecy to be removed. The state's information gathering and surveillance poses above all a threat to trade unionists and the left.

Fight drift towards police state



THE law'n order lobby has been spitting out a particularly vile concoction of racism, dogma and repression recently.

Manchester Chief Constable James Anderton has called for the abolition of police committees, the only official forum for local accountability of the police.

The Police Federation has placed half-page advertisements in the national press calling for the re-introduction of the death penalty (for citizens murdering police or prison officers, not for the police or prison officers murdering citizens!).

Illusory

The Met has released figures supposed to demonstrate an association between being black and being a mugger. They forgot to point out that it is fifty times more likely for Asians to be attacked by a white man than vice versa, and thirty times more likely for West Indians; or that the crimes of street violence for which they gave figures are only 3% of all serious crimes; or that these figures are based on notoriously unreliable evidence.

Home Secretary William Whitelaw is under siege

from the Tory right-wing, and is murmuring about legislation to increase police powers.

A renewed offensive against crime? But despite (or perhaps because of) tougher policing, the crime rates are going up.

Unreliable

Police detection of criminals requires public support, and there is a large section of the 'public' from which the police are deliberately alienating themselves. Capital punishment has no impact on murder rates, except perhaps to provide an example of legalised murder.

In fact law and order is the illusory cloth with which attacks against the working class are disguised.

Anderton accuses police committees of being agencies of 'subversion' and 'demoralisation', of 'harbouring an enemy within' and of designs to subject the police to the political control of a 'one-party state'.

Half the cost of policing is raised out of local rates. In return for this taxation, there is precious little representation.

The police committees are two-thirds elected rep-

resentatives and one-third unelected magistrates. Their powers are very limited.

They are not permitted even to advise on 'operational decisions', and it is the Chief Constable who decides what is 'operational'. Anderton decided last summer that the decision to use gas canisters was operational.

Police committees can ask Chief Constables to make a report. But the Chief Constable can refuse.

When Manchester police committee asked Anderton to explain his 'over-reaction' in using hundreds of police in a military-style operation to break the Laurence Scott picket line, Anderton refused, saying that he did it 'in the light of his experience' and that he 'had not come here to apologise.'

Ask

The committees can only ask the Home Secretary to call for the resignation of the Chief Constable.

They do not use even this limited power. The Labour leader of the Manchester police committee, Peter Kelly, said that he 'did not believe in sacking people for making stupid state-

ments'.

Why, then, does Anderton want to abolish police committees?

Even if they cannot do much, they can still scrutinise and provide an official focus for public dissent.

They do not often do so. But when they do — as in Manchester and Liverpool, and surely in London if we had one — the cops cannot tolerate the challenge to their right to define and defend public order as they see fit.

If the police define the Laurence Scott pickets, for example, as disorderly and needing to be dealt with by force, then they do not want an official committee questioning their definition.

Anderton's attack does not come out of the blue. The rights of local authorities have been eroded ever since the 1964 Police Act replaced the old watch committees with the much weaker police committees. Equally significant has been the tremendous growth in the power of the police (especially its largely unnoticed centralisation into fewer but larger police areas).

The beneficiaries of this process have been the Chief Constable — who emerged at the end of the



by Bob Fine

1970s as new local potentates — and the Home Office.

It is the clear duty of socialists to protect existing scraps of democracy, alongside democrats, reformists, civil libertarians and even Callaghan when he comes to the defence of police committees. But it is also our task to expose their meagre limits and to fight for far more radical forms of popular accountability

over the police: to move, in brief, from the defensive to the offensive.

The police are always the instrument of the ruling class. But the nature of this instrument is changing.

There is no inevitability in the drift toward a police state. It can only be realised through the defeat of the workers. We cannot allow this to happen.

Tories slam claimants and civil servants

By a CPSA militant in DHSS

THE recent Budget was no surprise to those who work in the Department of Health and Social Security or the Department of Employment.

It was well within Thatcher's promises of reducing welfare spending by keeping benefits only just above starvation level.

Since 1979 the Tories have eroded the living standards of those who can't work. The two social security Acts abolished Earnings Related Supplement, made unemployment benefits taxable, abolished supplementary benefit for those with over £2,000 of capital, and tightened up the rules on exceptional needs payments, so that only those on supplementary benefit can receive them, (and even then they have to prove that an exceptional need does exist!)

Shrinking

The shrinking rates of National Insurance Benefits (e.g. sickness benefit, invalidity benefit, maternity allowance, retirement pensions and unemployment benefit) have created a higher and higher percentage of supplementary benefit claimants, who are of course quite stringently means-tested.

Cuts have also been made in the civil service workforce. When Thatcher was elected, there were 732,000 industrial and non-industrial civil servants. In October 1981 there were 679,835.

The Tory government aims to cut the civil service by 100,000 between 1979 and 1984.

Since 1979 Sir Derek Rayner, managing director of Marks and Spencer and champion of "free enterprise" has conducted 68 "scrutinies" into the activities of the civil service.

By the end of 1982 he will have conducted a total of 108.

Rayner has so far identified 11,000 possible job cuts. Four-weekly payment of Child Benefit in arrears and direct payment of some benefits into banks are some of Rayner's ideas. He also has plans to do away



PHOTO: JOHN HARRIS

The Tories put them on the dole - then pinch pennies from their dole money

with the government's statistics collecting service with a loss of up to 2,500 jobs, and to change the way National Insurance contributions are recorded - to reduce more jobs.

Rayner's most damaging proposals are those for the unemployed, he intends to:

a) Make registration for work at Job Centres voluntary.

b) Combine the payment of supplementary and unemployment benefit at one office - thus cutting more jobs.

c) Yes, you've guessed it, increase fraud investigation.

The CPSA - the largest civil service union, representing nearly a quarter of a million, mostly in lower paid, clerical grades, and the National Federation of Claimants Unions - have opposed all Rayner's proposals.

At first sight voluntary registration for work seems a god-send to the newly unemployed. In fact, it is thoroughly detrimental to those with the poorest job prospects.

Because the very few

unemployed with decent job prospects will turn to private agencies and the press for vacancies, employers will stop using Job Centres and the government will have the excuse it needs to close down job centres and the specialised service they are supposed to provide.

Although Tebbit has not yet admitted it, closure of Job Centres will result in redundancies.

Attached to voluntary registration is ethnic minority monitoring by staff in Unemployment Benefit Offices.

In principle this is not new. Since 1963 there has been some monitoring of non-whites by staff in Job Centres, as a result of the various Immigration Acts.

However staff have generally ignored it, as it is not necessary when helping someone to find a job.

As a result the government has only sketchy and inaccurate statistics.

The new questions to be asked at unemployment offices will be about ethnic origin, not country of birth.

These sort of questions were going to be included in the national census, but black organisations objected and they were dropped.

The categories used to define ethnic origin will be those in the Nationality Bill. Ethnic minority monitoring will of course only affect those who don't appear to be British.

The DHSS is the most highly unionised and one of the best organised parts of the civil service trade unions.

DHSS workers make up the largest section of CPSA and they have been some of the most militant members in the union.

The government aims to cut DHSS jobs by at least 10,000. The Warner Report provides a way of doing this and undermining the strength of the unions.

DHSS is presently divided up into 12 regions. These will be amalgamated to produce seven. Regional Offices will be closed and their specialised work transferred to local social security offices.

1,800 jobs will be lost at Regional level but local

offices will only get another 600 extra staff and 90% of these will go into fraud or special investigation.

The power of local office managers will be massively increased. Managers will control training, resulting in more inadequate "desk top" training.

In areas where there are few welfare rights organisations, claimants will suffer from the decisions of mean managers, who will have greater control over the way all claims are dealt with and fraud investigation in particular.

A third social security Bill is now making its way through Parliament, unfortunately with little opposition from either Labour MPs or trades unions.

This Bill is the first step towards the privatisation of benefits payments.

It abolishes the first eight weeks of sickness benefit, and industrial injury benefit altogether, and replaces it with employers' statutory sickness benefit. It also introduces voluntary registration for work and the unified housing benefit scheme for council tenants.

Altogether it will cut 6,000 jobs in DHSS.

The campaign against it has not attracted the support from the trade unions necessary to defeat job losses.

The TUC and the leaders of the civil service unions have clung to the coat tails of the CBI who originally opposed the Bill. Now that the government allows employers to recoup 100% of the sick pay from their monthly NI contributions, the CBI are supporting the Bill!

On top of all this there are less obvious cuts in the civil service. They range from the closing down of research and advice provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries to the reduction of the government's own repairs body, the PSA.

The government's Defence Review will cut thousands of jobs in naval dock yards. The civil service commission and the number of Quangos are to be reduced.

The government intends to hive-off to private industry the heavy Goods Vehicle

Testing Stations and the 12 Royal Ordnance factories. The list of job losses is almost endless.

Certainly the civil service and the welfare state as a whole are bureaucratic, unjust and inefficient. The whole system has to be revolutionised, through a planned economy, and controlled for and by the working class who use it.

The press and the Tory government exploit the reactionary and divisive view that civil servants are drinking scroungers in pin-striped suits. In fact most civil servants are women doing poorly paid and increasingly complex clerical jobs under increasing pressure from more and more desperate and aggressive claimants.

As in the rest of the public sector, women are concentrated in the lower grades. 99% of typing grades, 80% of Clerical Assistants and 65% of Clerical Officers and only 7.5% of senior executive officers are women!

After the fiasco of the 1981 civil service pay campaign and the acceptance by the Council of Civil Service Unions of any arbitration agreement for 1982, we can't put any faith in the civil service trade union leadership.

Alistair Graham, the CPSA General Secretary-elect, has already made it clear in the Guardian that he will put Militant-bashing before leading a real fight against the government's pay offer!

Civil service workers must not rely on arbitration. All-out strike action is the only way to defend jobs and pay.

CPSA must not tie itself to the management unions like the FDA and IPCS but instead make real fighting links with other public sector workers like the nurses, who have everything to gain and nothing to lose by militant action.

The third social security Bill can and must be stopped, but the fight has to go wider than the civil service unions. Labour MPs and the TUC must be prepared to oppose it in and outside Parliament, through questions, filibustering and mass action.

A lead for Labour youth

by Simon Hunt

Over the Easter weekend, April 9-12, around 3,000 young people will meet in Bridlington for the annual conference of the Labour Party Young Socialists.

The LPYS is the official labour movement organisation for youth. It is led by the Militant tendency, but by no means all the youth attending the conference are Militant supporters or even sympathisers. So there are huge debates and discussions - albeit mostly off the conference floor, as the conference speeches themselves tend to be somewhat stage-managed.

The National Left Wing Youth Movement was set up from last year's YS conference. Supporters of

the revolutionary youth papers Barricade and Red Youth decided to unify to build a strong group in the YS and transform the YS from its present state into a mass revolutionary youth organisation reflecting the real concerns of youth.

To do this we need to bring young people into the YS from the dole queues, the YOPs schemes, the schools and the factories. Youth from the YCND and the women's movement, young people who are fighting fascists and racists all need to be won to the YS - not by telling them they're doing it all wrong and that the only way we'll achieve true liberation is with the ending of capitalism sometime in the future, but by showing that the YS is as concerned about fighting in

these campaigns with youth now.

We say that youth who are looking for a way forward in the fight against the Tories should not shy away or dismiss the LPYS conference simply because we disagree with the leadership. If we all took that attitude, we'd be busy forming our own trade unions instead of fighting the fakers who lead the unions now.

This year's conference is a very important one for the NLWYM. Since last year we have been busy building the YS around the country, going around YS branches, getting them to sponsor our paper, Class Fighter and debating with Militant about the way forward for the YS.

The NLWYM candidate

for the YS place on the Labour Party NEC is Dave Curtis, an ex-YOPster from Wallasey YS - get him to come to your YS before conference to speak on why your delegate should vote for him.

If your YS has not got a delegate yet, send off to Labour Party HQ, 150 Walworth Road, London SE15, quickly, as delegates can still be registered.

We are helping to organise several fringe meetings at conference with: Turkey Solidarity Campaign, Labour Committee on Ireland, Women's Fight-back, and the Action Committee for a Woman's Right to Work. The National Left Wing Youth Movement Rally with a speaker from Socialist Organiser is on Sunday night.

There is also an important YCND meeting, and we're hoping to help organise a workshop with the Labour Campaign on Gay Rights.

Since the Reagan visit on June 6 has come up after the deadline for resolutions to conference, we should push for the adoption of the emergency resolution printed below in as many YS's as possible so that the YS has a clear commitment to supporting the activities of CND and the Reagan Reception Committee during the visit.

If you haven't booked accommodation yet, our places cost £8.50 (self-catering) for three nights. Book now - we haven't got many left. Ring Jo on 01-609 3071 or 01 354 1050.

CLASS FIGHTER

Official Tory Government Job Office

WANTED: SLAVES!

Can't afford to employ more people? You can now under the new Working Scheme.

10p plus postage from NLWYM, BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX.

Inside: THE MONTH ISSUE

OPINION 1977?

Emergency Resolution

Put this to your YS!

Conference notes: The Reagan visit to Britain in early June.

Conference agrees to:

- 1) Call for Labour MPs to boycott Parliament if Reagan addresses it.
- 2) Instruct the LPYS National Committee to organise a huge YS con-

tingent on the CND-called march on June 6.

3) Instructs the LPYS National Committee to sponsor the Reagan Reception Committee and organise a huge YS contingent on the lobby of the American embassy in London on June 7 [the day Reagan arrives].

IN HIS Marx Memorial Lecture last week, Tony Benn explained why he believes that Marxists have an important place in the Labour Party, and he opposes any witch-hunt against Trotskyists.

He also argued in defence of extra-parliamentary action, and the possible use of force by the labour movement to prevent the overthrow of an elected government.

He explained his objections to Marxism, and his view of "a reconciliation of Marxism and political democracy".

Over recent months, Socialist Organiser has carried several articles explaining our views on Marxism and political democracy. We continue the discussion with extracts from Benn's lecture.

The full text of the lecture is to appear exclusively in the May issue of the Communist Party magazine Marxism Today.

"The attacks upon the so-called hard left of the Labour Party by its opponents in the Conservative, Liberal and Social Democratic Parties and by the establishment, are not motivated by fear of the influence of Marxists alone.

These attacks are really directed at all Socialists. They derive from the knowledge that democratic socialism in all its aspects does reflect the true interest of a majority of people in this country, and that what democratic socialists are saying is getting through to more and more people, despite the round-the-clock efforts of the media to fill the newspapers and the airwaves with a cacophony of distortion.

If the Labour Party could be bullied or persuaded to denounce its Marxists, the media having tasted blood would demand next that it expelled all its socialists and reunited the remaining Labour Party with the SDP to form a harmless alternative to the Conservatives.

(...)

Trotsky has had an immense influence on the world socialist movement, so much so that many different Trotskyite groups have been established.

Trotsky's profound ambivalence about the nature of parliamentary democracy led him into error, both of judgement and of prescription.

I do not believe that those socialists in Britain who claim to represent the views of Trotsky, are in any sense serious revolutionaries.

In my view, the weakness of their argument lies in their underestimation of what has been and can be achieved, and the confusion which they perpetuate between the absence of actual reform and the inevitability that reform, if pressed, is bound to fail.

The constraints on capital and the gains achieved by the trade union and labour movement over the years have been formidable.

It is, I believe, a major error to argue that the advocacy of reform, rather than of revolution is synonymous with betrayal and capitulation, for it undermines the very working class confidence which is central to the success of the movement, spreading pessimism about the prospects of victory — which is what the establishment has been trying to do for centuries.

Benn: Labour without Marxism would be like astronomy without Copernicus

PHOTO: JOHN HARRIS

BENN ON KARL MARX

Moreover, by suggesting that parliamentary democracy has only a limited role to play, and by speaking vaguely of direct action to by-pass it, they seem to imply that socialism can be introduced by some industrial coup.

They are also unacceptably vague about what would follow such an event if it ever occurred.

But we must never forget



Trotsky

that a socialist government that came to power by the exercise of industrial muscle, rather than by election, would be compelled to retain itself in office by a similar exercise of industrial power.

Having said all that, I am profoundly opposed to any attempt to outlaw, expel or excommunicate the followers of Leon Trotsky from the Labour Party.

Some of them may, as I believe, be too simplistic in their analysis of Britain. But, if so, the correct response is to discuss the issues with them, and within the labour movement these discussions are taking place and are exercising a mutual influence on those who take part on both sides.

The main recruiting agents for Trotsky's ideas in Britain have been those who have so cynically betrayed their faith in both socialism and democracy, while occupying high positions with the Parliamentary Labour leadership and then defec-

ted to the Social Democrats.

These right wing entryists used their positions as Labour Members of Parliament to obstruct the advance to socialism, and retain their seats in defiance of democracy."

On extra-parliamentary action, Benn said:

"There is clearly an inherent right to take up arms against tyranny or dictatorship, to establish or uphold democracy, on exactly the same basis, and for the same reasons, that the nation will respond to a call to arms to defeat a foreign invasion.

The defence of ancient and inherent rights, as for example the rights of women, or of trade unionists, or of minority communities, could legitimately lead to some limited civil disobedience, accompanied by an assertion that the responsibility for it rested upon those who had removed these rights in the first place.

And, at the very opposite end of this scale of legitimate opposition, lies the

undoubted right to act directly to bring public pressure, from outside Parliament, to bear upon the relationship between Marxism and Democracy is to be explored. I have listed some of these aspects which explain in part why I would not think it correct to call myself a Marxist.

To assert that extra-parliamentary activity is synonymous with anti-parliamentary conspiracies is to blur a distinction that it is essential to draw with scientific precision if we are to understand what is happening and not to mistake a democratic demonstration for an undemocratic riot; a democratic protest for an undemocratic uprising or a democratic reformer for an undemocratic revolutionary."

Benn explained his differences with Marxism thus:

"The Communist Manifesto, and many other works of Marxist philosophy, have always profoundly influenced the British labour movement and the British Labour Party, and have strengthened our understanding and enriched our thinking.

It would be as unthinkable to try to construct the Labour Party without Marx as it would be to establish university faculties of astronomy, anthropology or psychology without permitting the study of Copernicus, Darwin or Freud, and still expect such faculties to be taken seriously.

Yet there are many schools of thought within the Marxist tradition. It would be as foolish to lump them all together as to bundle every Christian denomination into one and then seek to generalise about the faith.

And there are certain aspects of the central Marxist analysis which it is necessary to subject to special scrutiny — if the relationship between Marxism and Democracy is to be explored. I have listed some of these aspects which explain in part why I would not think it correct to call myself a Marxist.



Marx wrong because he downplayed moral principles

Marx seemed to identify all social and personal morality as being a product of economic forces, thus denying to that morality any objective existence over and above the inter-relationship of social and economic forces at that moment in history. I cannot accept that analysis.

Of course the laws, customs, administration, armed forces and received wisdom in any society will tend to reflect the interests and values of the dominant class, and if class relationships change by technology, evolution or revolution, this will be reflected in a change of the social and cultural superstructure.

But to go beyond that and deny the inherent rights of men and women to live, to think, to act, to argue, or to obey or resist in pursuit of some inner call of conscience — as pacifists do — or to codify their relationships with each other in terms of moral responsibility, seems to me to be throwing away the child of moral teaching with the dirty bath water of feudalism, capitalism or clericalism.

In saying this I am consciously seeking to re-establish the relevance and legitimacy of the moral teachings of Jesus, whilst accepting that many manifestations of episcopal authority and ritualistic escapism have blanked out that essential message of human brotherhood and sisterhood."

(...)

"I believe a reconciliation of Marxism and political democracy is possible, necessary and urgent, if humanity is to solve the pressing problems which confront it and avoid the risk of war.

But if we are to achieve that synthesis, there is much that needs to be done, and I suggest a draft agenda that we might use to guide us.

First, the acceptance in the West of the importance of the socialist analysis of society within which Marxism must be seen as playing a key role.

Second, the acceptance in the socialist societies of the principle of democratic accountability and full political rights as central to the practice of socialism.

Third, the beginning of a regular series of structured national and international dialogues between Socialists, Euro-Communists and Marxists of all schools of thought, to explore the relationship between democracy and Marxism and the experience of actually existing socialist parties and socialist countries.

Fourth, the reunification of the world trade union movement, which was divided during the cold war when the ICFTU broke away from the WFTU, partly to permit a reunited world trade union movement to enter into the dialogue described above."

Writeback Zionists repress left



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.

A letter from a comrade in Israel

LOTS OF things have happened since I came back to Israel, most of them were not very pleasant. Just one week after my return, a comrade of mine was arrested for "having given financial and political help to deserters from the army". The police tried to prove that that girl was part of an organisation which has the aim of encouraging

soldiers to desert the army. During the next three weeks, five more comrades were arrested, and detained for periods of 4 to 15 days.

Beaten

Only one was beaten, but because of that he signed a statement which may cause some problems if there is a trial.

One of those arrested is a member of the Black Panthers (in a common front in Parliament with the CP). This guy refused to go into the army for social reasons (he is a son of a big and poor family from Iraq and he argued that the country hasn't done anything for the welfare of his family and there is no reason why he must spend

three years in the army for that country).

When he was fighting on that issue he was held in a military prison and we organised with some others a movement in defence of his rights.

Since being released from the prison, and from the army, he has spent all his time in trying to publicise and fight against bad treatment in military prisons.

Most of our activity now is in solidarity committees. One is the solidarity committee with the Bir-Zeit University (a university on the West Bank which had been closed for the second time in twelve months).

All the left organisations and also the CP are members.

The second committee is in solidarity with the Arab population of Golan who demand that the Israeli law on the annexation of the Golan should not be put into effect.

They have been on complete general strike for three weeks now (not going to work, not buying anything, schools and shops are closed). The army is surrounding all the villages and not allowing anyone to get out or in until the strike ends.

This fight is breaking all the illusions that Zionism tried to build about the Druze population as a different part of the all Arab population which is more sympathetic to Israel. All the Golan's citizens define themselves as Syrian Arabs who are living under Israeli occupation.



Israeli premier Begin

Fight to break grip of sexism

I AM dissatisfied by the debate that's been taking place in the paper on pornography. In particular I think that the whole argument about whether pornography encourages men to commit violence against women is secondary as to what should do about it. If the labour movement took a public stand against pornography it could shake the much challenged grip of sexism on the working class and open up a political debate on sexual attitudes towards women.

How much of an impact such action would have on the pornography business is irrelevant.

Sick

On the point of pornography's effect, the whole idea that it somehow itself can "clean out" sexual desires is bourgeois. It is quite wrong to think that men can go home and indulge their sadistic fantasies and that be end to it.

We all live within social and what people read and think in private affects the way they act socially. recognise that in certain limited circumstances pornography can be beneficial — in bringing out people's fantasies as part of a controlled, conscious struggle to change.

But outside these circumstances pornography can only reinforce sexism.

Of course the greater sexual freedom of the 1960s was a big gain but not an unqualified one. It was by opposing sexual exploitation in pornography elsewhere that socialist can persuade women sexual freedom is something worth defending preventing the reaction from using pornography for their own ends.

Yours comrade
MARK ALEXANDER
Cambridge

Why call for a one-day strike?

JOHN O'MAHONY's otherwise excellent article on the movement's failure to fight Tebbit's anti-union law (SO76) makes the mistaken call for a one-day general strike. In the past Socialist Organiser has always opposed such a call. The importance of a general strike is that it is one of the most powerful weapons the working class possesses, as well as being politically useful in generalising particular struggles to the whole working class.

A one-day general strike (currently the main 'action' slogan of the reformist Militant tendency) could only serve to demoralise and confuse workers given its inevitable failure and self-limiting (by definition) character.

The most likely outcome of a one-day general strike (which could not "smash the Tories" or defeat Tebbit's law) would be a propaganda victory for the labour movement bureaucracy, who would argue

against real action on the grounds of the failure of the one-day strike.

Socialists and trade union militants should argue for all-out action against the Tories. A general strike, properly prepared for, and with adequate organisation, would be a threat not only to the Tories, but to bourgeois control of society.

ANDY DIXON
Stockport

ONE DAY general strikes

are an important tactical option for the working class when the circumstances are right.

In 1969 the May 1 national action was probably decisive in mustering the forces which eventually forced a compromise and the withdrawal of Barbara Castle's notorious Bill — In Place of Strife.

In 1972 however a rising tide of spontaneous strike action against the jailing of the Pentonville dockers made an all-out General

Strike against Edward Heath's Industrial Relations Act a real possibility.

Under these conditions the one day general strike call by the TUC was designed to turn a powerful movement capable of removing the Tory government [something which it eventually achieved] into a mere protest.

Similarly during the 1980 steel strike, when a strong mood developed in the working class for general strike action, the TUC moved to turn a general strike decision by the Wales TUC into a one-day action which actually defused the movement.

But today we are in a very different position. There is no national steel strike. The Thatcher government have successfully imposed most of their policies on the working class and put three million on the dole.

The powerful potential of the working class to fight and defeat the Tories has been repeatedly frustrated by the betrayals of the trade union leaders.

Now, with only three months or so to go before Tebbit's Bill becomes law, not a finger is being lifted by the TUC to stop it.

Under these conditions, a call for a one day general strike from the April 5 Conference of Executives on the third reading of the Bill would be a major step forward.

It would mean the beginning of a fight to stop Tebbit and have the possibility of generating a movement which make realistic a call for an all-out strike on the day the Bill becomes law.

Fraternally,
PETE REGAN
ALAN O'SHEA

Solidarity first on Ireland

AS two Socialist Organiser supporters in Birmingham we would like to express our total disagreement with some of the sentiments and implications in the recent series of articles on Ireland by John O'Mahony, in particular, those in SO76. Revolutionary socialist commentary on Ireland should have two major facets:

1) Political solidarity with those forces conducting the struggle against imperialist British domination over the six counties.
2) A political evaluation and constructive comradeship criticism of the policies, tactics and methods of these anti-imperialist and socialist forces. (We believe Comrade John O'Mahony's recent writings to have been neither constructive nor comradely).

It is clear (according to Lenin and Connolly) that the absolutely overriding

duty of revolutionaries is that of conducting solidarity work with those in struggle.

This is indeed doubly and triply the case for revolutionaries in the occupying, imperialist country, the oppressor nation and taken in this context we believe that Socialist Organiser's recent coverage of Irish events (and in particular comrade John O'Mahony's articles) have been totally misplaced.

What we have had is a long list of tedious and sectarian articles slamming the republican movement, with many fewer solidarising articles (we can remember the "31,000 say smash H-Block" headline and a couple of adverts for the Bloody Sunday demo).

This is pitifully inadequate and dangerous. Returning specifically to comrade O'Mahony, ten

years ago he saw fit to say:

"... we can and must offer full solidarity with those in the front line against imperialism" (from "James Connolly and Ireland's Struggle for Freedom", Phoenix Pamphlet no. 2, 1972). We believe that this central aim has recently got a little lost among "criticism of the republicans".

Comrade O'Mahony continued:

"Any 'socialist' (sic) in Britain who uses criticisms (however 'correct') of the republican struggle, or an appreciation of its limitations as a cop-out from active solidarity with the IRA's military fight, shares the responsibility for these limitations. By setting 'socialism' destructively against the republican struggle, he (sic) helps to perpetuate the sterile separation of socialism and Republicanism." (op cit).

In a short letter such as

this we have only offered a hurried general criticism and have left out a lot, notably comrade O'Mahony's points on the South particularly.

However, we will let comrade O'Mahony himself make our central point (again from his 1972 pamphlet):

"Active solidarity with the fight for self-determination for Ireland is a hundred times more useful to the Irish working class than any number of lectures on immediate class unity and non-sectarianism." (or anything else for that matter, we would say). Precisely!

We hope this will open up a much-needed wider discussion of the question within Socialist Organiser and in the wider Trotskyist movement.

Fraternally,
PETE REGAN
ALAN O'SHEA

Fighting for Leyland action

I WAS pleased to read the letter from Socialist Challenge supporters working in Leyland Vehicles in Socialist Organiser number 77. At least now we know exactly where the comrades stand and what their criticisms of the Leyland Action Committee are. Up until now I'd had the distinct impression that the comrades had decided to distance themselves from LAC for factional reasons but weren't quite sure what arguments to use to justify this.

Fact

The two most important criticisms the LAC (and SO) have made of the LV leadership are 1) at the mass meeting of 18 February, LV convenor Mick Coyne set aside a clear majority vote for continuing the strike and announced that a ballot would be held to decide whether or not the strike would continue.

2) The LV strike committee consistently opposed all moves towards spreading the fight into BL as a whole. The first point is a straightforward matter of fact. I haven't met anyone

(including Mick Coyne) who was at that meeting, who denies the truth of this.

And yet the comrades bleat "The result was by no means clear to everyone".

Certainly Coyne was wrong to have described the vote as "overwhelming" but it was at least 60-40 for continuing. The comrades are quite right to say that "the news of the split vote and the ballot produced a domino effect with the other mass meetings" — except that the vote wasn't split!

Is it unreasonable to point this out as the LAC did or should we have been tactfully silent and covered up for Coyne as the Socialist Challenge comrades appear to advocate?

The second point is perhaps even more important. The comrades say "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-North West stewards meeting."

This is simply not true.

It may be that it is what the strike committee told the comrades. But if they believed it, they must be very naive indeed.

From the start the leadership made it quite clear that their major priority was to attract "public sympathy" and passive labour movement support from the North West region.

Taking the issue into the rest of BL came a very poor second to this and only then on the basis of calling for "moral and financial support". Any suggestion of solidarity action from the Cars Division was vigorously opposed by them.

The Combine Committee meeting of February 13 showed this very clearly. LAC supporters proposed a motion calling for the whole of BL to discuss what solidarity action was possible.

The motion was passed, but as Combine Chairperson Jack Adams pointed out, that decision could not very well be activated unless the LV leadership requested it — which they very conspic-

uously didn't.

The reasons for this lie partly in the complacency and parochialism of the LV leadership. But more importantly it is the logical outcome of their overall strategy: to use the strike to put pressure on Edwardes and the BL Board to negotiate concessions for Vehicles alone.

Deal

Exactly what sort of a deal would have been acceptable to the LV leadership is of course not known but it is a good bet that it would still have involved heavy redundancies even if the bosses could have been persuaded to accept certain aspects of the LV unions' "alternative plans".

Throughout the strike the leadership made it clear that their aim was to "return the company to profitability" — in other words, they agreed with Edwardes' overall objective, but wanted him to show a little more flexibility in achieving it.

Obviously such an approach requires LV to be taken as a "special case",

separate from the rest of the company. That is why the leadership reacted with such hostility to the LAC's call for the fight to be taken into the rest of the Corporation and turned into a head-on confrontation with Edwardes and his plan.

Far from turning the link between Cars and Vehicles "into an obsession" as the comrades accuse us, the LAC simply pointed out that this was the only way to win against an employer with Edwardes' record, backed to the hilt by the Tory government.

When pointing out this self-evident truth brought us into conflict with the strike committee then we accepted that as a regrettable necessity, but we certainly didn't seek such a conflict.

And it isn't true to say that "the LAC... did more to alienate militants towards the revolutionary left than the whole of the media put together."

Our leaflets and badges were snapped up by the pickets and the vast majority of the LV activists I spoke to wholeheartedly agreed with our perspectives

for the strike.

In fact several militants criticised us for not being sharp enough towards the leadership!

The comrades raise a number of other more minor points, all of which could be answered in some detail if space allowed. They make great play, for instance, of the claim that "the actions of the LAC lost their two supporters in the plant during the course of the dispute."

True

This is not true. Of the two workers referred to, one was pressurised by the strike committee into disavowing the LAC right at the start of the dispute, before the LAC had made any intervention at all; the other worker is still in contact with us and as far as I know still agrees with our positions. In addition the LAC is now in contact with a significant number of LV militants who strongly support what we said and did around the strike.

Finally, the comrades accuse us of "arriving out of

the blue on the picket line and putting demands on them.

They must have memories. Back in November, three of us from LAC met with Socialist Challenge supporters in Vehicles and to the LAC conference in January.

The comrades keen for maximum contact with us then — we changed since is not true. LAC has gone on a sabbatical but that the comrades have been forced to between uncritical of the CP/right wing ship and working with revolutionaries and in the LAC.

Their role (or lack) in the strike shows choice they made. I hope that their choice indicative of a more turn towards combinatorianism and opposition on the part of Socialist Challenge support industry.

Yours frat
JIM D
Secreta
(in a personal



Industrial News

Matthews offers £7

AS WE go to press, strikers at Bernard Matthews turkeys are due to ballot on Wednesday morning, 24th, on a new offer from Matthews.

The offer, made on Friday 18th, is a £7 pay increase — more than the £5.67 previous offer, but nowhere near the workers' 15 per cent claim. The

workers get £48 to £66 take-home pay for a 40 hour week.

The strikers' union, the NUAAW, merges with the TGWU at the beginning of

April. The power of the TGWU should have been easily able to defeat Matthews. But the union is making no recommendation on the £7 offer.

Chaos in NUT pay fight

by Peter Flack

WHILE IT is reasonable to assume that the rumours that Fred Jarvis is about to change his name to Fred Karno are untrue, there can be little doubt of the fact that under his leadership the National Union of Teachers (NUT) is doing a fair impersonation of a headless chicken.

In the week beginning March 15, many teachers were encouraged by the union executive to call off their withdrawal of goodwill action, because local education authorities had agreed to support arbitration and the union campaign was one of local pressure.

Now, literally a week later, NUT members are being asked to resume this action because 'the pay claim is now a national issue'.

Fortunately many teachers were already aware of this, and had refused to call off the action. In addition, many schools and associations had begun to call for strike action.

Faced with continued management intransigence and an increasingly restless membership, the executive have now attempted to hold the whole charade together by what they call an escalation, to include one-day no-cover action (which is existing practice in many areas hit by cuts) and the threat of half-day strikes (for which they have made no preparation) if the management side do not concede arbitration.

Behind this, what teachers are being told is that the 12 per cent pay claim has in fact been abandoned. The greatest danger right now is a sell-out at the Burnham meeting on Thursday March 25.

Unlike the nurses' leaders, it is highly likely that Jarvis, Casey and Co. would leap at an offer of 6 per cent despite the fact that it would mean a massive cut in real pay for their members.

Any such sell-out would be a blow to teachers' morale, and would in fact be a green light to right-wing authorities like Hampshire to immediately begin savage cuts in jobs.

In this situation, the Socialist Teachers' Alliance has rightly called for motions from schools and associations reaffirming the original pay claim, coupled with a demand for a national strike levy and a call for national strike action.

Socialist teachers should immediately take this up, and begin to fight for emergency local association meetings, insisting that the strike levy be used at once to support the Barking teachers who have been on strike for four weeks now against redundancies. This would bring an important link between the jobs and pay fights, which the NUT leadership seeks to avoid.

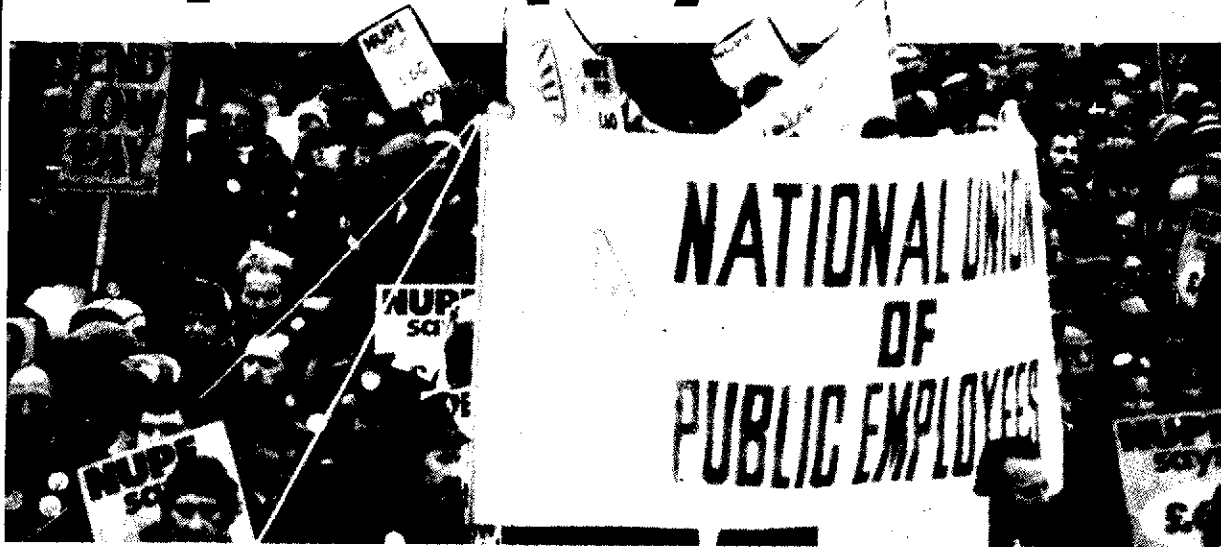
At the same time, it would create better conditions for the week of strikes beginning on March 29 and bring an important link between the jobs and pay fights, which the NUT leadership seeks to avoid.

At the same time, it would create better conditions for the week of strikes beginning on March 29 and culminating on April 3. Militants in the NUT should use this week of strikes to create a massive groundswell of active support at local level for indefinite strike action to hit the Tories where it hurts most, in their beloved exam system, which begins after the Easter holidays.

Most particularly, NUT militants must recognise that this fight has to be taken into the NUT Easter conference, to transform NUT's policy and commit NUT to taking on the government on both jobs and wages.

Health workers strike to press pay claim

by Anna Lunts (NUPE shop steward, Prestwich hospital)



HUNDREDS of nurses, laundry workers, domestic porters, canteen staff, etc poured into Manchester on Tuesday 23rd, shouting 'Maggie Out' and 'Low Pay, No Way, Smash the Four Per Cent'. Over 3,000 workers in the Manchester and Salford area struck for half a day and lobbied the regional health authority headquarters in Manchester city centre.

The unity between the different grades of workers was obvious. There was no talk of special payments for different sections.

The action was initiated by the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee in the North Manchester district, by calling the lobby of the RHA

and holding a mass meeting where a nurse proposed half day strike action and got an overwhelming response.

Other areas soon heard the news. Mass meetings in Salford and Withington also resulted in a decision to walk off the job.

As contingents of workers filed into the centre of Manchester, it was obvious that the mood in the NHS has rapidly changed. Workers are sick of low pay, sick of broken promises, and sick of the inactivity of the national leadership in the health service unions.

What's needed now is a plan for action at national level to smash the four per cent and win the full claim.

Plessey sit-in called off

by Dave Milliken

THE NINE-WEEK strike at Plessey Capacitors, Bathgate, ended on Monday 22nd.

The workers handed back control of the factory to management, after a deal under which Arcatronics (a new company with close connections with Plessey) proposes to save 80 jobs, a quarter of the number employed before the occupation began.

Work for these 80 has been guaranteed for just one year.

This result has left many of the workers confused and bitter. The determination they showed has not been entirely in vain, but the blame for the destruction of yet more jobs rests squarely in the already bloodied hands of the union bureaucrats.

It was evident for some time that there was no real desire on the part of the union officials to spread the action. Instead, they were content to take their place across the table from the bosses, and pick up whatever crumbs were tossed over.

One of the major factors contributing to the vote to end the occupation was the real fear of the workers that if they rejected the deal, ag-

ainst the recommendation of the union full-timers, official support would be withdrawn.

It was of course a better offer than the one which caused the Laurence Scotts Electromotors workers to lose official support. This

highlights yet again the need for the union leaders to be accountable to the people they are supposed to represent. 'Just whose side are they on?' was one of the comments I overheard.

Masseys occupied

ON TUESDAY 23rd workers at Massey Ferguson, Coventry, occupied their factory 'to defend jobs. TGWU shop steward Terry Rollings spoke to Socialist Organiser.

'The management want 425 redundancies, about one in seven of the workforce. They only got 150 voluntary redundancies, so we offered short-time working — a three or four day week — in place of compulsory redundancies.

However, the management proposed that those who would have been selected for compulsory redundancies should be laid off on the guaranteed week, and payments would be funded by the rest of the workforce,

i.e. we would have a 40 hour week with an average reduction in pay of £12.50 a week.

Some weeks ago, at a mass meeting, the convenors were given the right to call action if they saw fit. There was also a unanimous vote to keep the closed shop. Many feel that an attack on the closed shop is at the back of the present attack.

Yesterday the convenors called a sit-in. Today this escalated into a full-scale occupation, with 24 hour pickets, and nothing is moving in or out.

Tomorrow there is a mass meeting to ratify this action'.

Lawyers sabotage picketing case

by Stan Crooke

'They weren't out to give us a slap across the wrist for being bad boys. What they were after was nailing us to a cross and then throwing it in the Clyde.'

This is how Abie Courtney, former shop steward at the Hunterston oil rig yard in Ayrshire summed up the industrial tribunal held in Glasgow last week to hear the case of four shop stewards sacked from the yard in the aftermath of the strike there in September-October 1980.

The four stewards, who argued that they had been victimised for their union activities were ex-convenor Ronnie Munro (Boilermakers Society), ex-deputy convenor Abie Courtney (Boilermakers Society) and ex-shop stewards Dominic Sullivan and Gerry Ryan (GMWU).

The tribunal was preceded by yet another piece of sharp practice by the

stewards' solicitors. Although they had known about the tribunal for fifteen months, their solicitors informed the stewards only days before the hearing itself that they didn't believe that they had a worthwhile case and were therefore pulling out.

Throughout the hearing, therefore, Dominic Sullivan was left to argue the stewards' case — against the two QCs, solicitor and solicitor's junior, employed by the multinational which owned the yard.

This in itself meant that the odds were stacked against the stewards.

The QCs argued that the stewards had not been reemployed after the strike because they were in the habit of spending too much time away from their place of work before the strike and because they had been arrested during the strike itself.

In fact, though, the QCs' arguments show that union activities were the factor behind the sackings. Absences from the workplace were necessitated by the stewards' union activities and even the arrests arose from the men carrying out union activities — picketing during the strike.

The QCs argued that since the stewards' union activities were opposed by the union executive, and resulted in 48 arrests and convictions, it was not really trade union activity at all.

Management witnesses denied that the yard had been riddled with health and safety risks, denied ever making anti-union statements and denied any attempt to buy off the convenor and deputy convenor with offers of jobs as foremen.

The hearing finished last Friday, 19 March, and the verdict is due out this week.

The stewards have no illusions about the outcome. 'The odds were stacked against us from the beginning,' said Abie. 'Management is out to crucify us. We are going to lose the case.'

While the tribunal may not prove that the stewards were victimised for trade union activity it certainly did prove that such tribunals in which the only things that count are legal niceties and knowing how to address the tribunal chairperson, cannot be relied on to defend trade union rights.

Donations are still required to help Abie Courtney pay off a fine of £100 recently imposed on him for picketing during the strike. Send donations to: Campaign in Defence of the Right to Picket, c/o Courtney, 72, Tallant Rd., Drumchapel, Glasgow. Cheques to be made payable to Campaign in Defence of the Right to Picket.

FUND

A FEW months ago we had no Socialist Organiser group in Durham. Now there are twelve supporters there, and in this week's post we got £70 contributions towards our monthly fund.

If longer-established groups could do likewise, we would be much better off! With £6 from Hackney, £5 from East London, £10 from Islington, £1.25 from a subscriber in Brentwood, and £4.50 from Middlesbrough, it was a total of £96.75 in this week's post.

That's £479 so far this month. There are standing order contributions still to add to that total, but for sure we'll be way below the £1,000 we should have.

The £6,000 special fund will be so much wasted effort if it means a corresponding reduction in the monthly fund. Please keep the contributions coming.

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

LEYLAND ACTION COMMITTEE
TRUCK OFF
Edwardes

Leyland Action Committee:
c/o 194 Dawlish Rd,
Birmingham 29

Fighting Tebbit's Bill

BREAK ALL LINKS WITH

THE LABOUR movement is under severe attack — yet its official leadership has been in retreat since the Tory government was elected in May 1979.

We are about three months from the second instalment of Tory anti-union legislation becoming law. The labour movement has still not roused itself into a serious response.

We have borne blow after blow — to our wages and conditions and legal rights — with a patience and docility that would not have seemed possible even three short years ago.

1. The pressures of the slump

In the first place the blows came from the extremely severe crisis of the capitalist system. The conditions of expanding capitalism which prevailed through the '50s and '60s and even much of the '70s, have given way to conditions of capitalist crisis unknown since the 1930s.

Over three million have been thrown out of work, and the numbers continue to rise.

This has led to a loss of trade union membership. It gives the employers a tremendous weapon to bludgeon workers in jobs into accepting cuts in real wages and worse conditions, and to drive women out of industry and back into the home. They have relentlessly taken their opportunities and pressed home the attack in industry after industry.

The upper layers of the shop stewards' movement having become somewhat bureaucratised, the shop stewards' movement was badly placed to defend itself, and has been weakened in the conditions of extreme slump.

2. The role of the official leadership

But the decisive role in deepening and worsening the impact of the slump on the labour movement has been that of the official leaders of the trade union movement.

The rank and file does not lack the will to struggle to defend itself, to refuse to bear the burden of the capitalist crisis. The strike figures have gone down, but a rash of limited struggles show the mettle that could have been organised in a coherent class-wide movement of resistance to letting slump devastate our wages and conditions, and even the labour movement itself.

The precondition for that movement of resistance would have been a serious, responsive, loyal official leadership, determined to fight and to organise the movement to fight. Instead we have seen the official movement continue to collaborate with the most vicious ruling class government in recent British history.

They have refused to use the strength of the movement to resist redundancies and to fight wage-cutting pay settlements.

They have scabbed on their members and broken acts of resistance.

BL workers last November wanted to fight in a coordinated way. They were disrupted, disorganised and side-tracked by their own leaders, who acted dramatically and brutally to undermine the solidarity and self-confidence of those who wanted to take on Edwardes — and the Tory government behind him.

Yet the spirit of resistance was there still, and led to a rash of uncoordinated battles throughout BL in

the following four months.

Nothing shows more clearly the potential — and where the responsibility for not using it lies.

3. Tory tactics against the unions

Out of those conditions, and out of the treasonous activity of the official leaders, has directly grown the second stage of the attack on the wages, standards, rights and organisation which we have built up over many decades — the deliberate, conscious govern-

ment attack which is designed to take advantage of the crisis and its effects on the labour movement to bring about radical changes in the legal framework in which the labour movement operates.

Now, even more than in the period after June 1970, we face a vicious and reactionary Tory government, with the knuckledusters on for the working class. Motivated by middle-class spite and blind bourgeois economics, and driven by the desperate state of the British economy, they are

making the working class pay for British capitalism's crisis and for the Tories' quack solutions.

They build on the policies of the Wilson/Callaghan governments and add their own vicious twists. Encouraged by an electoral victory which was handed to them by the right wing policies of Callaghan's government, they have moved to make the fourth attempt in a decade to shackle the trade union movement.

Where Wilson failed in 1969, and Heath in 1971-4, the Tories are now succeeding. Instead of all-out assault, they move by instalments, using salami tactics to do what Wilson and Heath tried to do — to shackle the unions with laws which inhibit them from functioning as they have functioned through many decades, and once again to help the union leaders to set up as brutally efficient policemen to control the labour movement.

ALL-OUT STRIKE

ONLY ACTION CAN STOP IT!



Reg Race MP reports on the Tories' plans to push the Tebbit bill through Parliament

THE TEBBIT Employment Bill is still in committee in the House of

Commons. It is being opposed line by line by the Opposition; it is likely that the Government will put down a guillotine motion to time-table the Bill within the next 2 or 3 weeks.

This will be debated on the floor of the House of Commons and no doubt the government will use its majority to get a guillotine motion through. So when the Committee on the Bill recommences its deliberations it will be forced to conclude named debates by certain times on specified days.

The Chairman of the Committee will be forced to put any outstanding amendments — even though they have not been debated — to the vote out of that time. The Committee will then move on to further amendments.

In this way the government is certain to get the Bill through its Committee stage by the end of April at the latest. The Bill will come back to the House of Commons report stage, at which the Opposition will move further amendments seeking to remove crucial parts of the Bill.

The House of Commons will then move to debate the Bill for the last time, its Third Reading.

The Bill will then go to the Lords and the same procedure will take place all over again, although the government will not be able to use guillotine measures in the Lords to get the Bill through. Because of the government's majority, it is certain that the Bill will become law by the summer.

The only thing that can stop the Bill proceeding is a combination of Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary activity.

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 Trades Council, Oxford CATC, Laurence Scotts strike committee, Kings Cross ASLEF, CPSA British Library branch, TGWU 5/822, TGWU 5/287, TGWU 5/104, TGWU 5/293, NUPE ILEA district committee, NUPE Leicester Hospitals branch, NUJ Oxford branch, NUJ Book branch, ACTSS-APEX joint committee GEC Coventry, USDAW D96, Bradford District Labour Party, Bradford North CLP, Rochdale CLP, Carlton CLP, Upper Stoke branch Coventry LP, Peckham LPYS, Basingstoke LPYS, Coventry Labour Left, Birmingham Labour Left, Nottingham Labour Briefing, 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), Rita Maxim (St Mary's Hospital), Ray Davies (ISTC), Steve Longshaw (Laurence Scotts), Peter Tatchell (Bermondsey CLP), Alan Thornett (TGWU, BL Cowley), Ian Williams (NUR), Bobby Owens (TGWU unemployed branch, 6/612), plus report from Women's Fightback conference

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

CRECHE: will be available.

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.

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



Saturday APRIL 3

Fighting Tebbit's Bill

THE TORIES!

4. The bureaucracy's submission to Tebbit

They played that role from the mid '20s to the mid '50s, and then lost the ability to do so as real power shifted to the rank and file on the shop floor. Now the Tories aim to help shift it back again, and to compel the union bureaucrats to play the role once played by Arthur Deakin, Ernest Bevin, Will Lawther and others, notorious in the history of our movement.

The union leaders are



1972: strikes force Tories to free five jailed pickets

Tebbit can be defeated — if the unions break with the Tories and rally their forces for strike action. This statement argues the case for resistance to the Tories. Section 10 summarises the plan of action, and will be presented by Socialist Organiser supporters to the Trade Union Democracy conference on April 3.

the hope that, maybe, two years from now, perhaps a Labour government will be voted in which may undo some of the Tory damage.

Or the movement will fight back here and now, recognising no Tory or ruling class right to meddle with the trade unions, to cut into the standards which the working class has won in decades of activity, or to destroy whole working class communities through closure policies. It will refuse to keep within the normal channels of official politics. It will resist the Tories' attacks by every means necessary.

8. Break collaboration with the Tories

It is necessary to fight now and on every front, at the same time as we argue for and prepare for general



1982: Norman Tebbit tries the salami tactic

As we prepare for a new round of struggle which can culminate in the defeat of Thatcher, we need to be clear that this time round there must be a real alternative to the Tories — a Labour government unlike all that have gone before — a workers' government which will serve the inter-

strikes, beginning with the third reading of the Bill.

To support a contingent at the April 5 lobby of the TUC demanding that the TUC breaks collaboration with the Tories and organises a one-day general strike as the first step to all-out action to stop Tebbit.

ACTION TO

DEFEAT TEBBIT!

unhappy with the Tory legislation. They have got the Labour Party to agree to repeal it. Yet they have refused to do more than feeble gestures to fight it.

This is their normal way of life, in keeping with their unwillingness to fight against the powers-that-be and for their members. But there is more involved.

In 1969 and under Heath, the union leaders went through the motions of fighting because they knew that they were not strong enough to do what was demanded of them, to police the rank and file. Now they feel that they have a better chance of being able to comply with the requirements of the ruling class.

In any case, they would rather comply with anti-union legislation than try to organise the rank and file to fight the Tory government.

It must be said plainly that their proposal to let the Tories bring in instalment after instalment of anti-union legislation — Tebbit's bill will not be the last if they get away with it — is nothing less than treason to the working class and the labour movement, treason on a scale that has not been known since the TUC betrayed the General Strike in

1926. They are helping the Tories to inflict on us the worst sort of demoralising defeat — defeat without a serious struggle.

5. Tebbit can be stopped

The central task facing the labour movement now is to rouse itself into action to defeat Tebbit. We demand of those who officially lead the labour movement that they undertake their responsibilities.

We demand of political forces in industry such as those of the Communist Party that they break their ties with the bureaucrats who will not fight Tebbit and Thatcher. We demand of organisations like the Socialist Workers' Party that they rouse themselves out of the slough of despair and defeatism into which the official leaders have led the movement, and join us in a crusade to rouse the labour movement to defend itself.

We can still stop the Tories in their tracks!

Nothing less than a full-scale industrial mobilisation to confront the Government and its legislation will suffice to stop Tebbit and Thatcher. We have strength still in industry if the movement has the will and leadership to use it.

6. Rally the unions for a general strike

The TUC must call a general strike to smash Tebbit's Bill and force the withdrawal of Prior's 1980 law.

To prepare the movement to defend itself, to regain confidence in its own strengths, a mobilising series of one-day strikes and demonstrations should be mounted, beginning with the third reading of the Bill.

The possibility exists of galvanising the movement for a general strike to smash Tebbit's Bill and Prior's Law on the day the new Bill becomes law.

A general strike could pull together the partial responses so far — none of them quite coming to grips with the scale of the Tory offensive — into a mighty power. In place of the hawking and dithering which has characterised labour movement resistance to the Tories so far,

we would have full mobilisation of our strength against their full mobilisation of their strength.

7. Don't wait for a general election

As in 1970 and after, we face a militant class-struggle Tory government, firmly entrenched behind a large and stable Parliamentary majority, and backed by all the military and police power of the British state. They are making war on the standards, conditions, and organisations of the working class. In their attack on our class they will use to the full their legal right to make the laws and control the finances of the state.

Either the labour movement will allow this Tory government with its programme of blatant ruling-class legislation to rule and administer society in the interests of the class they represent — even to the extent of the movement obeying anti trade union laws in

industrial action.

The labour movement needs to develop, and organise round, an overall strategy to stop the Tories. For Thatcher can be stopped, just as Heath was stopped.

In the first place, we need to spell out and win support in the labour movement for this immediate objective — to stop the Tories, to force them to retreat, to defeat their attacks, to stop their closure policies decimating working class communities, to make them abandon their cuts policies, to break their will, to thwart their plans, and to drive them from office as soon as possible.

The outrageous anti working class politics of this government demand from the entire political and industrial labour movement — from every section of it which claims to represent the working class interest, all the way through to the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Shadow Cabinet — a refusal to collaborate with the Government. The movement should cut all ties and links with the ruling-class establishment and its agents.

The movement must demand that its leaders really fight the Tories, and really fight for Labour Party policies. And we must be prepared to break with and get rid of those who refuse to fight.

9. Against the Tories — fight for a workers' government

The starting point for the downward spiral in the fortunes of the labour movement was also the point of its greatest recent triumph — when we forced Heath to a kamikaze election in 1974. The great tragedy was that we only had a right wing Labour Government to replace him.

ests of the working class and not hesitate to strike at the ruling class to do so; a government based on the working class itself.

There are two preconditions for this.

That we prosecute the fight to democratise the labour movement. The labour movement is indivisible. We need democratic and accountable trade unions, and a democratic and accountable Labour Party.

We need socialist policies. To end unemployment, the working class must take control of industry and reorganise production so that work is shared, on the basis of a shorter working week and with no loss of pay.

To make this possible, and to provide useful jobs for all, we call on the next Labour government to nationalise the basic industries and the banks under workers' control and with no compensation for the big shareholders.

10. A plan for action

Conference pledges itself to fight in the labour movement for the following policies:

For the immediate setting up of an action committee to rouse the labour movement to the dangers of the Tebbit bill, and to prepare for the fight to defend the trade unions if the official leaders refuse to undertake their responsibilities.

For the TUC to call a General Strike on the day the Bill becomes law, and to prepare for this in the labour movement by a series of one-day general

Support strike action and occupations against the cuts, closures, etc.

Argue within the unions and the Labour Party for a full-scale offensive to stop the Tories, using the strength we have here and now, refusing collaboration.

Demand that the Parliamentary Labour leaders start a campaign of Parliamentary obstruction.

Demand that the TUC leaders break off their contacts with the Tories in the National Economic Development Council and dozens of other governmental and industrial 'participation' bodies.

Demand that Labour councils defy the Tory cuts.

We must call for the leaders of the trade union movement and the National Executive of the Labour Party to launch such a campaign to stop the Tories, including preparation for a General Strike. We must be prepared to fight to remove Parliamentary leaders, councillors and trade union leaders who collaborate and cooperate with the Tories.

We ourselves — the militants, the socialists — must prepare on a local level, now. A General Strike will be won through the network of workers' committees and organisations, most of which exist already as part of the routine self-defence and self-betterment of the working class: stewards' committees, combine committees, etc. We must transfuse into these bodies the urgency of preparing for a head-on clash with the Tories and equip them with the necessary democratic structure and flexibility to mobilise millions of workers for that clash.



1971: trade unionists demand TUC calls a general strike against Heath's law

LOBBY TUC APRIL 5

Socialist Organiser

Limited response for fares campaign

West Bank killings

THE underlying savagery and violence of the Zionist occupation of Palestine emerged once again this week with street riots and military violence on the West Bank of the Jordan.

Troops fired shots and teargas and mounted baton charges against Arab youths who had set up barricades, thrown stones at soldiers and raised the Palestinian flag.

By Wednesday this army violence had brought a toll of 3 dead and many injured.

Refused

The Palestinian revolt had come as a result of the Zionist dismissal of the Arab mayor and town council at El Bireh — who had refused to cooperate with the occupation forces.

Palestinian workers and shopkeepers began a general strike and youth took to the streets in riots which underlined the strength of their resistance to Zionist oppression.

In East Jerusalem police ordered shopkeepers to reopen their closed stores — but few complied.

Tied vote

Fanatical Zionist zealots added their contribution, taking to the streets in armed vigilante action against the Arab militants, producing an unknown number of casualties.



ber of casualties.

Meanwhile the Begin government has run into its own crisis, having failed to defeat a 'no confidence' motion in the Knesset.

After a humiliating tied vote, Begin called a cabinet meeting, proposing a new General Election. But he was defeated by a 2-1 majority.

The dispossessed Palestinian masses can draw little comfort from this new crisis among their Zionist rulers: in seeking to reassert his political authority and placate his opponents, Begin is quite likely to undertake new and brutal military action on the West Bank.

LEADERS of 460,000 nurses yesterday voted to reject a divisive 6.4% pay offer designed to split their pay claim from that of other health workers.

Meanwhile protest strike action by nurses and ancillary workers in the Manchester area (see page 13) underlined the mounting anger on wages in the health service.

Other public sector workers involved in pay struggles include teachers and civil servants.

Women are a majority of the workforce in each case — and are at the forefront of the struggle to defend living standards against Tory cuts and cash limits.

But in each case they find themselves at loggerheads with a conservative, male-dominated union bureaucracy which is running scared from any serious action against the Tory government.

Health union leaders have repeatedly disavowed any prospect of calling strike action. NUT leaders are restricting action to token levels. And civil service unions have offered no serious response to Tory blackmail.

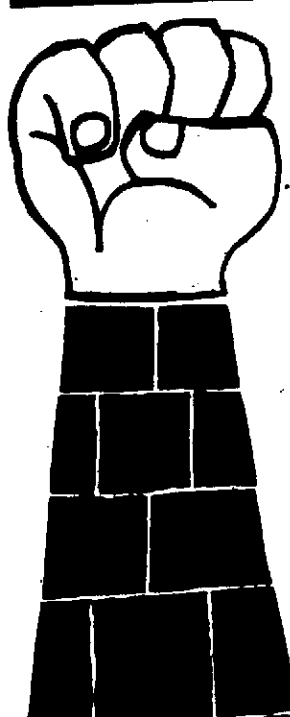
The fight for a new leadership, prepared to confront and fight the Tories, and prepared to struggle for the interests of women members, is a crucial one.

The Women's Fightback trade union conference this Saturday in London will discuss a wide range of issues affecting the involvement of women in the unions, and map out proposals to increase the influence of women workers in policy-making and leadership.

We urge women readers to attend.

Women at forefront of pay fight

£6000 fund



The Socialist Organiser delegate meeting last Sunday, 21st, supported a proposal originating from comrades in Coventry for a £6,000 special fund drive.

The £6,000 will do two things. It will clear a backlog of debts which hangs over us and hinders everything we do. And it will enable Socialist Organiser to take and fit out new offices.

To start the fund we have £495. That's the little red splotch below. Money has come from: Dave and Anna Lunts £25, John Cunningham £80, Andrew Hornung £50, Keith White £150, Chris Hickey £10, Peter Flack £60, Alan Clinton £15, Tony Richardson £10, Wendy Frankland £50, Charlie Sarell £10, Geoff Williams £15, Jim Denham £20.

We also have definite promises of about £1,000 more. The deadline for the £6,000 is July, but we need a good chunk of it — £3,500 at least — by the end of April.

Please send money 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.

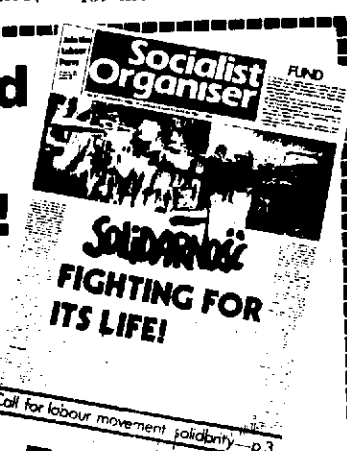
From: Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8. Please make cheques payable to Socialist Organiser.

Please send me... issues of Socialist Organiser, I enclose:

Name:

Address:

Post to: Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8



Take a bundle
of 50 to sell!

by Andrew Rossing,
with additional reports
from Mick Woods
and Pete Firmin



many people have done so, but campaigners put the numbers at no more than a few hundred.

This will have little or no impact, since London Transport carries around three million passengers each day.

400 people did attend a rally at County Hall on Sunday afternoon, 21st, to give a defiant two fingers to the new fares. Most of them had travelled at the old fares. Large contingents from Wandsworth and Brent Labour Party (including eight

prospective councillors and two members of the London Labour Party executive were most prominent.

On Monday, a group of about 50, led by GLC transport chairperson Dave Wetzel, six other GLC councillors, and Les Huckfield MP, protested by travelling from County Hall to Poplar and back by tube at the old prices, followed by a bevy of camera teams and reporters.

Threats

No attempt was made by LT staff to prevent the protest. At Bow Road station ticket collectors took prominent notes.

On the buses, however, drivers and conductors have been under strict instructions not to allow people to override. They have been told the stop the bus and the police to have the fare protesters removed, though not arrested.

Although a few conductors have turned a blind eye, most are obviously intimidated by management threats of disciplinary action.

Defeated

In hindsight, the campaign was effectively defeated before the fares went when a busworkers' delegates conference on Tuesday refused to back a call for some shop stewards for conductors to issue tickets the money they were owed, and not to throw any off the bus.

If the union leaders argued for this tactic from the very first, it could have been possible to secure commitment from other workers to take action if conductor were disciplined. As it was, conductors hostile to being made bear the brunt of the campaign in isolation.

GLC councillors — those who did make a test by refusing to pay new fares — also bear of the responsibility for failure of resistance.

If they had taken the positive step available to them in the struggle against the Law Lords, by refusing to vote for the new London Transport budget which tied the fares increase, confidence of both workers and passengers fight the increase could have been boosted significantly.

CONFERENCE
MARCH 27, 1982
WOMEN IN TRADE UNION
A NEW APPROACH
at
KINGSWAY PRINCETON COLLEGE
Sidmouth Street, WC1

OPEN TO WOMEN ONLY (all events) as delegates or individuals
Followed by films and discussion, and late bop with TOUR DE FORCE

CRECHE will run all day up to the end of the bop, including lunch.
DISABLED ACCESS: The building is not well equipped but we are improvising, with the advice of Sisters Against Disabling. Help go in free. Readers and sign language interpreters available if required.
REGISTRATION: £3.50 (£2 for non-delegates who are unwaged) includes lunch and films and gives reduced entry at £1 to the bop. The lunch is only guaranteed for those registered in advance. (Early films only: £1; to the bop only, £2)

SPEAKERS include Hilary Bird (Lambeth Nalga), Jan Pollock and Bond (Women in NUT), Theresa Gunn (Edinburgh Unemployed), Helen Allison (War on Want), Hilary Land, Harriet Harman, Andrea Campbell, Ursula Huws, Cathy Warnock (Hackney Nalga), Angela Lucy Gaskell, Winnie Murphy, Christine Bickerstaff, Helen Flack, Siobhan Lanigan (Foyles strike) and a speaker from Plesseys occupation, plus many others to be confirmed.

INFORMATION: contact Women's Fightback, 41 Ellington Street, London N7. (607-9052 or 607-5268)