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Labour
Party

Socialist Organiser

Against all bans and proscriptions!

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Plastic bullet kills Irish child

ELEVEN year old Stephen McConomy is dead, killed by the British Army of occupation in Northern Ireland.

He died on Tuesday April 20 after being shot with a

plastic bullet by the Royal Anglian regiment last Friday. Some stones had been thrown at the troops in Derry. Then a group of young children gathered round a Saracen troop carrier. One of the soldiers opened a gun port, and the children ran away.

The soldiers fired plastic bullets, hitting Stephen on the back of the head.

A BBC journalist reported that Stephen's brain was completely demolished by the impact of the 3½ inch hard plastic cylinder, and he was kept alive by a life-support machine until his parents reluctantly agreed to it being turned off.

Stephen was the 13th person killed by Army or RUC plastic bullets. Many others have been young children, too.

Deadly

Between March and October last year, the RUC and the British Army fired 16,000 of these deadly weapons, killing three children and four adults (none of them 'terrorists'), and maiming or blinding many others. All in the name of crowd control and peace-keeping.

The British labour movement has silently ignored this horror. There was some protest even when William Whitelaw explained last year that the use of plastic bullets should not be extended from Ireland to Britain... because they kill people.

We can begin to redeem this scandal by mobilising for the demonstration called in London on May 8 (1pm Speakers' Corner) for British troops out of Ireland and self-determination for the Irish people.

AGAINST THATCHER'S WAR! JOIN UP — WITH ARGENTINE WORKERS!

AS THATCHER'S warships sail within a few days of the Falklands, Argentine trade unionists in exile have appealed to the TUC to meet them to discuss common labour action against the war.

Ricardo Perez, a leader of the suspended General Confederation of Labour, told journalists in Brussels: 'We are anxious to speak to our comrades in the British trade unions to see what we can do to help the situation'.

John Palmer reported in the Guardian: 'Mr Perez said that the trade unions insisted that there be a peaceful solution and said that the international labour movement should act in unison to try to achieve it. There are politicians in both Argentina and Britain who want to exploit this crisis to deflect attention from other problems', he said.

Meanwhile Britain's TUC leaders are silent or openly supporting the Tories.

Union and Labour Party branches should demand that the TUC and Labour Party immediately meet the Argentine workers' representatives to discuss how to fight together against Thatcher's war and for class battles to overthrow Thatcher and Galtieri.

The rights of the Falkland Islanders should be part of that discussion. But the British workers' movement cannot even gain the right to be heard by the Argentine workers unless we first of all, and clearly, reject Thatcher's use of the islanders' rights as a pretext for sending the fleet, and oppose the Tory war moves firmly and unconditionally.

In fact the fleet is not going to the South Atlantic to defend the islanders — who will be among the first to suffer in a shooting war —

but to defend the prestige, reputation and standing of the British ruling class as a world-exploiting power... to defend the tatters of Empire.

Down with Thatcher's war! Repudiate Britain's claims to the oil, mineral and fishing resources of the South Atlantic and Antarctica! Withdraw the fleet!

Defending the rights of minorities? Defending democracy against bigotry?

As the troop ship Canberra docked at Sierra Leone, on the west coast of Africa, a group of soldiers leaned over the railings and spat at black dockworkers below.

'Why are you doing that?' the dockers angrily asked. 'Is it because we're black?'

'Yes', the heroes of Thatcher's democracy replied.



THIS Tuesday, April 20, the Tories pushed through a 'guillotine' on the Parliamentary debate on the Tebbit anti-union Bill.

The Bill is now likely to have its third reading immediately after the May Day holiday.

Time is therefore very short. The TUC is still doing nothing about the Tebbit Bill except collecting money for legal costs. The only action called by the official leadership of the labour movement is a lobby of Parliament on April 29, organised by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions.

Unions in Manchester and Sheffield who planned to lobby on April 26 against the cuts have switched to the 29th to make a united event. It is up to the Left now to make this lobby as big, as loud, and as angry as possible.

If we cannot generate a serious campaign to stop the Bill becoming law, then any fight against the Bill once law will be half-crippled from the start.

The Tories' guillotine should prompt emergency resolutions in every trade union and Labour Party

branch:

*supporting the April 29 lobby,

*calling for the TUC to organise a one-day general strike on the third reading of the Bill, as a preparation for more extended action,

*demanding that the TUC breaks all links with the Tories, and the Labour Party commits itself to maximum

parliamentary obstruction to hinder the Bill becoming law.

*supporting the Mobilising Committee in Defence of Trade Union Rights.

SEE INSIDE: Centre page — How Tebbit's Bill affects you; Women against Tebbit; Page 15 — Mobilising Committee appeal.

We should ask ourselves if it makes sense any more for trade union leaders to continue to serve as lonely token figures on the boards of nationalised industries charged under new statutes passed by the Conservative dominated House of Commons with the task of selling off profitable public assets and closing down unprofitable parts of the business.

We must question whether it is in the interests of the Labour movement that the TUC should continue to nominate six members of the National Economic Development Council, at which the Chancellor outlines his own monetarist strategy and seeks by the TUC presence there to acquire a legitimacy for policies that undermine the whole role of trade unionism.

A conscious decision by the Labour movement to disengage from institutions which consistently work against the interests of those we represent would have an electric effect upon the conduct of public affairs in Britain and abroad... The institutions from which we disengage would be stripped of the artificial veneer of consensus legitimacy upon which they rely for their public support.

TONY BENN

BRITAIN'S BLOODY RECORD OF

REPRESSION



Thatcher's War

Martin Thomas looks at some of Britain's many other wars since 1945

AT THE beginning of his book on 'War Since 1945', Michael Carver, former chief of the British Army laconically observes that "British servicemen, principally soldiers, have been fighting somewhere in the world every year since 1968".

In fact 1968 — with Britain's undercover war in Oman — was no exception.

It is no accident that British forces have been bombing, shooting and killing in dozens of countries over the last 37 years, while Britain has not been troubled by the slightest hint of invasion.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Britain, as the pioneer capitalist power, gained a huge world empire. For every democrat in London, as Leon Trotsky observed, there were ten slaves in the colonies.

Since World War 2 the British Army has been resisting, or trying to control, the decline of that imperial power in face of the newly-confident revolt of the oppressed millions of the colonial world.

Its biggest operation was in Palestine (then a British 'mandate territory') in 1945-48. With 100,000 British troops (the equivalent in relation to the population of



2½ million in Britain), "the country", as Carver dispassionately records, "was turned into a form of military camp".

In Palestine the British

Army was not trying to keep British rule but to control, to Britain's advantage, the battle between the Zionist Jews and the anti-Zionist Arabs.

Britain clashed with Zionist groups armed under its own wing.

Yet techniques of colonial-war were developed, in a series of massive cordon and search operations.

At the same time British troops were helping the monarchy in Greece to beat down left-wing Resistance forces. In 1948 they started a major colonial war in Malaya.

In June 1948 a state of emergency was declared, after a wave of strikes in the tin mines and rubber plantations. Left-wingers led by the Malayan Communist Party went underground and started armed struggle. The war was to continue even after independence was finally won in 1957.

The strategy of the British Army — 45,000 strong by 1954 — was to

sweep entire areas, moving all the people into military camps. Once in the camps, people were subjected to strict curfews and controls.

Identity cards were checked every day. Food was supplied only after the identity checks. Even then, communal cooking had to be imposed to make sure no food reached the guerrillas.

By the end of 1953, 500,000 people had been moved into these camps.

Malaya was a model not only for the techniques but for the outcome. In strict military terms the Army could defeat the guerrillas. But the political cost of doing so made it clear that Britain had to grant independence. What the war achieved (in this case though not in others) was to secure the crushing of the most militant or left-wing forces while independence was granted.

Britain's colonial war in Kenya used similar methods. It began in October 1952, when the colonial adminis-

tration declared a state of emergency, imposed new pass laws, deported 100,000 Africans to 'reserve' areas, and jailed Jomo Kenyatta and 182 other nationalist leaders.

Over the following years, more than one million Africans were herded into special camps or villages. 80,000 were interned in detention camps.

Rural areas were ruthlessly swept by the British forces. In 'prohibited' areas the troops could shoot at sight; in 'special' areas, they could shoot anyone who did not stop when challenged. Areas were surrounded by ditches filled with bamboo spikes — built by press-ganged African labour — while the soldiers swept them, or the RAF bombed the forests.

But the revolt affected the towns, too. So in April 1955 almost the whole African population of Nairobi was driven out into the fields to be surveyed and searched. 17,000 were interned. 2,400 deported to the 'reserves'.

The rebellion was crushed after some 10,500 had been killed, and, as Carver remarks, "a very large proportion of the able-bodied Kikuyu male population who were not actively supporting the government... or... in gangs in the forest, were languishing in detention camps". (The Kikuyu were the tribe mainly involved in the revolt).

Despite a great outcry about 'Mau Mau atrocities', just 32 European civilians were killed by the rebels.

But after the fiasco of Britain's invasion in 1956, when the Suez Canal was

nationalised, British power was very clearly on the wane. In Cyprus 20,000 troops in an island only 60 miles by 140, with some 550,000 people, were not able to preserve British control.

Cyprus became independent in 1959, Kenya and many other African countries in the 1960s.

But Kenya and Cyprus had been not just colonies, but important military bases for British influence in the whole Middle East. In 1962 the British government decided to concentrate its forces in Aden. They would be there 'permanently', it said.

A base, it reckoned, could surely be maintained in this tiny Crown Colony of 30 square miles, with only 220,000 people, surrounded by largely desert hinterland.

But the trade unions and the People's Socialist Party in Aden thought different, demanding the union of Aden with Yemen, where a Nasserite revolution took place that same year.

By 1965, "strikes, riots and demonstrations became weekly, if not daily, occurrences", as well as guerrilla warfare. The local elected ministers were sacked, PSP leaders were arrested, newspapers were banned, and the SAS tried to promote conflict between rival nationalist groups. Amnesty International protested about Britain's treatment of prisoners — "The use of similar methods in Northern Ireland in 1971", Carver comments, "was to cause rather more fuss".

The strong-arm methods were in vain. In June 1967

there was a major mutiny in the locally-recruited, British-led 'South Arabian Army'. In November 1967 Britain withdrew.

Today Britain continues with its efforts to beat down the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland and its undercover war against rebels in Oman. Its colonies are fundamentally gone for ever, but the British ruling class still tries to maintain itself as a world military power.

That is the motive behind sending the fleet to the Falklands. It also tells us something about the nature of the British armed forces being sent there.

Defeats in colonial wars since 1945 has pushed the top brass of the French armed forces into two coups, one successful (May 1958), one not (April 1961).

Britain's wars have been much smaller than France's. (There were 152,000 French troops in Indochina and 200,000 in Algeria as against 10,000 British troops in Kenya or 20,000 in Cyprus).

But already some British veterans of colonial wars have been openly active in right-wing politics, like 'Mad Mitch' of Aden and Walter Walker of Borneo. And the Irish war has trained a breed of top officers like Frank Kitson, oriented to 'counter-insurgency'.

The British army, wherever it is sent, is a thoroughly and dangerously reactionary force.

It is not about to conquer Argentina. It probably does not even have the strength to hold the Falklands as an outpost. But its arrival in the South Atlantic can promise no good.



PRESS GANG

Daily Mail
EXPRESS
FINANCIAL TIMES
The Daily Telegraph
THE Sun

Part two of the uncensored diary of our man with the Fleet, Patrick Spilling.

Monday: Peace plan is scuppered. Plan to drop warning nuke on little inhabited island (1,500 only), 800 miles from Argentina called off. Thatcher demands sovereignty over fragments and Peter Scott Trust discovers colony of 50,000 penguins. Blue Peter raised £11 million in three days to buy Ark Royal and launch 'third force' to rescue penguins.

Captain imposes strict censorship on fact he loosed off half Fleet's rockets in premature celebration. Three dead seagulls granted Argentine nationality after captain uses powers to marry them to reluctant sailors. Write glowing account of how three Argentines shot down in air battle. Invited to sit at Captain's table. Write another piece on 'marriages of convenience' wrecking immigration laws. Sailors ostracised after claiming compensation for 'loss of companionship' of dead seagulls.

Tues: Glowing with pride! My piece 'Whose side are they on?' is the toast of the

ship. As I put it: "We are fighting so British people can be free. Anyone who says different should be put up against the wall and shot." Named Benn as 'Coward of the Year'. Paper plans to issue white feathers free with next issue. Considering a piece on what a statesman Michael Foot has become. Editor was a bit worried by Foot saying he was "inveterate peace monger". I knew he didn't mean it.

Wednesday: Wrestling with conscience: Taking late night walk on deck when spotted commotion in swimming pool. Diver with periscope tied to his back practicing surfacing and diving. Watched with interest from shadows. Realised with shock that this was man who had blockaded Falkland Islands. British subs never arrived after Americans refused to send spares. Should I tell you?

Thursday: Prince Andrew helicopter pilot on neighbouring ship. Watched him flying around boat and landing on deck. Wrote piece about long tradition of British royal family leading troops into battle. How

talent showed in every member of royal family. Compared Prince Andrew in his chopper to Princess Anne on her horse. Prince Andrew grounded while truth of this is investigated.

Friday: Crossed the equator today: Had a small celebration with the ship's rum ration. Ship's doctor dressed up as Neptune squirted us all with shaving foam. Having great time until he squirted SAS squad who were practicing shouting obscenities from the bridge.

Riddled

Moments later doctor lay dead on deck, riddled with bullets. Thought it rather spoiled the show but must keep morale up so wrote 500 words on how SAS keen for action. Wanted to bury doctor over side, but marines practicing bayonet drill on him. Ship's padre said simple sermon over corpse on theme of physician heal thyself. Message arrived from Archbishop of Canterbury. God on our side. Roman Catholic God on their side. Wrote piece for religious

page 'Let's hear it for the Prods!'

Saturday: Captain called press conference to deny rumours that nuclear weapons on board. Also banned press from visiting E deck. Passed Ascension Islands today. Captain in jocular vein said they were aptly named or would be when he had finished with them. Asked him what he meant but he only laughed and asked whether I liked mushrooms. Wonder if the strain is getting to him.

Sunday: Got up early as I had to send an end of week 5,000 word special. The whole Fleet has come together and it was a grand sight as the dawn came up. Out of the mist loomed cross channel Townsend Thoresen steamer requisitioned to carry the Fleet's duty free. Wallowing slightly in Atlantic swell but on deck most fearsome sight. School party had no time to get home before boat pressed into service. Gave us broadside of empty vodka bottles as they passed singing something to tune of 'Rule Britannia'. Didn't recognise words, though.

Disciplining the 'Third World'

**Socialist
Organiser
EDITORIAL**

WHILE many of the Fleet Street papers scream and rant as if violent words and big headlines could restore the glories of the British Empire, more serious ruling class opinion has been different.

The Financial Times argues: "The aim of the exercise is to ensure a solution without a shot being fired. It is to that end that the display of force is necessary. Yet what matters most of all is the combination of military, diplomatic and economic pressures..."

"What Britain is attempting is... not so much deterrence... as compellence, backed by international law and economic power".

The argument is not hypocritical. The British ruling class is well aware that it has slim chances of winning a shooting war with a substantial industrial power like Argentina in Argentina's own offshore waters. It also knows that by sending the fleet — and perhaps by starting a shooting war — it can put pressure to mobilise the full diplomatic and economic weight of the biggest capitalist powers against Argentina.

The Financial Times is also not quite hypocritical when it describes the issue as "a test of international order".

For the British ruling class and for the

other big capitalist powers, the problem is that if Argentina gets away with grabbing the Falklands, then nationalist regimes throughout the 'Third World' will be given confidence that they can get away with seizing imperialist assets in their countries.

The Economist summarised this issue thus: "That no major world power like the United States (or medium power like France, West Germany or Britain) should or can sit neutrally by when one ally ravages by force the interest of another".

In other words, the military, diplomatic and economic efforts are aimed to prop up the 'international order' whereby a few rich capitalist powers economically dominate and exploit most of the world.

In all this the Falkland Islanders themselves are just pawns. That is one reason why those on the Left who think that in order to oppose British imperialism we must support Argentina's claim to the islands, are wrong.

True, Britain's claim is simply a relic of empire. And it would be more logical geographically for the islands to be part of Argentina. But such geographic considerations cannot override the fact that there is a distinct, well-established community on the

islands. Nor should denying any rights to Britain mean denying rights to the islanders.

The islanders could very well decide their own future without that being any threat to Argentina's national integrity, security, or sovereignty. The fact that the island population originates in a colonial settlement is beside the point: there is no recently dispossessed population reclaiming the islands, and Argentina's population is also mostly of European settler origin.

Most of the Argentine people think the islands are Argentine. They could seek to convince the islanders of this, while giving them the final right to decide their own future.

Argentina's invasion of the islands was in no way a blow in favour of Argentina's national rights or ability to develop free of hindrance by imperialism. Rather, it was a manoeuvre by a right-wing, pro-imperialist regime to undercut and stifle growing working class and anti-imperialist opposition.

The reaction of Britain and the other big capitalist powers helps the Galtieri regime in this manoeuvre; it can only rally the Argentine people behind the junta.

Against the British ruling class's attempt to

assert itself as a big world power, and against Galtieri's manoeuvre, we need a common programme of action by British and Argentine workers. This programme can also recognise the islanders' rights, seeing action by the Argentine labour movement as the means to ensure those rights.

We should fight for the British fleet to be turned back, and Britain's claims to the resources of the South Atlantic and Antarctica or to military outposts in that area repudiated. If the conflict goes so far as British military attacks on Argentina itself, we should support Argentina's legitimate right to defend itself.

Around the Falklands, we should not be for the victory of either Thatcher or Galtieri. We should be for the withdrawal of all troops and the right of the islanders to decide their own future.

By advancing a programme of this sort, the British and Argentine labour movements can rally their forces for the overthrow of both Thatcher and Galtieri. But the first step must be a break by the British labour movement from the chauvinism in which at present it is almost completely drowned.

'Mass meetings had backed a General Strike'

Argentine socialist Carlos Garcia told Socialist Organiser about the background to Galtieri's invasion of the Falklands

What do you know about the events in the last few weeks in Argentina?

I have just had a letter from a friend in Argentina who gives more information on the background to the invasion.

On 29 March there was a very big demonstration against the government in Buenos Aires — and it was met with very heavy police repression. 2,500 were arrested, some were killed and many injured.

The next day there were big demonstrations by workers in Mendoza, Cordoba, Rosario and Tucuman.

The union leaders called a General Strike for April 5 and got huge support from factory-mass meetings.

A section of the junta told Galtieri to find a solution — and the invasion took place on April 2. But other elements of the junta recognise that whatever the outcome on the Falklands issue, the invasion will not resolve any of their real problems.

Thousands may demonstrate in support of Argentina taking the islands — after all we have all been told from the age of 5 when we first went to school that they are Argentine islands and we all hate British imperialism — but that does not mean they support the junta.

But all the political



After the April 2 invasion — the movement towards a general strike diverted into backing for Galtieri

parties have now been told they can meet and organise freely. Even the demonstrators arrested on March 29 have been released.

The PST, of which I am a member, put out a leaflet which, while recognising that the islands should be Argentine, opposed the war — and called for the nationalisation of imperialist investments and property in Argentina and release of political prisoners.

What is the situation of the unions in Argentina?

3-4 months after the Videla coup of 1976 the government closed down the CGT confederation, jailed large numbers of union

leaders and imposed military control.

Most bureaucrats were gradually released — some of them after up to four years in jail — and allowed to maintain their apparatus under the supervision of the junta, so long as the unions did not step out of line.

The trade union movement divided into three groupings. The CNT, dominated by the metal workers and building workers, has maintained very friendly links with the junta.

White

'The 20' is a grouping of white collar and middle class unions.

'The 25' has emerged as the most militant, left wing

grouping of unions, including the carworkers' union SMATA.

Within four months of the Videla coup SMATA embarked on a two-week strike in Fiat — and under the impact of the recession and inflation militancy has been very high among car workers.

Strikes have continued on average every five months despite closures, lay offs and repression. The general strike movement of April 1979 was led by the carworkers.

The SMATA bureaucrats, though they talk left, always follow rather than lead struggles. But the April 5 General Strike this year was called by SMATA General

Secretary Jose Rodriguez together with other 'left' union leaders.

Until now the bureaucrats have really done nothing to fight the junta. Even when in 1979 the government proposed a law to do away with the system of industrial unions and confine union organisation to a factory-by-factory basis, together with the imposition of government control on union funds, the leadership would not fight.

We in the PST called for a general strike — or at least for the issue to be put to a referendum in the plants. So great was the rank and file opposition that the junta eventually offered the unions 15 days to show a

majority opposed to the new law — but they did nothing, with the exception of SMATA which raised the issue two days before the junta's deadline.

By December 1979 the same union leaders were working with the bosses to victimise PST members in Ford and other factories.

What is the situation for rank and file militants in Argentina?

The mood is very different. Workers in Britain, even when they are on strike, are very passive. In Argentina the atmosphere is much more violent. Strike leaders have often been murdered, and militants tend to carry guns.

Scabs get maybe a warning or two — but if they carry on working, militants will go round to their houses...

Under the Peron government the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance (AAA) grew in strength and killed many militants. You would hear gun battles as they attacked working class districts.

Militants, Trotskyists and even union leaders would move together into large houses and protect themselves with guns.

I myself was held by the AAA for 15 days — but released because of a strike in my factory in which the management was taken hostage.

Now more and more workers are learning the need to defend themselves. On March 29 when the police fired on demonstrators, they fired back.

And workers are very angry at the fall in their living standards. When I worked in Fiat in 1973 I was able to buy a car in six months. By 1979 both I and my wife were working in good jobs but could hardly afford to live.

The junta is also attacking other rights. A friend of mine is in the leadership of the Homosexual Liberation Front in Argentina.

Two weeks ago the government began a big campaign for "morality" against gay rights. My friend, a schoolteacher, was arrested, held for 36 hours without water, food or toilet facilities. He was interrogated very hard.

When his pupils came to demand his release he was let go, with a warning to them that they should watch him as a homosexual.

How would you describe the junta? Is it fascist?

No, it is not a fascist government — not even as fascist as Pinochet. Of course it has some aspects which seem fascist — its repression.

But I think it is a right wing bonapartist government.

It would like to smash the trade unions on the fascist model, but the opposition of the workers is too strong to allow them to do so.

Workers think "our leadership is shit but the unions are us". Their leaders are Peronists — (only Rodriguez claims to be a socialist) — but the unions defend interests which are different from those of the bourgeoisie.

The union bureaucrats are not the same as the leaders of Franco's "vertical unions" or of the yellow unions run by the bosses.

We in the PST have always said that the only solution is a new leadership in the unions — but that it is essential to work in them.

And the government recognises the strength of the unions: it still will not release two leading trade unionists, Jose Paez and Pichinini, and many other militants who are still in jail.



Thatcher's War

ARGENTINA: BALANCE-SHEET OF REPRESSION

by Bob Sutcliffe



Thatcher's War

WHAT country in the last few years experienced erratic and generally falling production, balance of payments problems despite near self-sufficiency in oil, out-of-control government deficits and money supply and unacceptably high inflation.

What country has experienced a government whose doctrinaire monetarist creed has led it to try to cut the money supply and government services, keep interest rates high, sell off the public sector, create mass unemployment and lower real wages, policies which have squeezed industrial and commercial companies into bankruptcy but created a bonanza for the banks?

Ironically the two countries which arguably best fit that description are on the point of trying to sink each other's navies in the South Atlantic.

But for all the uncanny similarities between Thatcher's Britain and Argentina under the military dictators Videla, Viola and now Galtieri, the economies they are trying to control are far from identical.

Mature

Argentina is not a mature industrial country like Britain. Yet on the other hand it is a long way from the more backward underdeveloped countries of Latin America, let alone Africa and Asia.

In the nineteenth century it became an enormously prosperous supplier of agricultural staples (wheat and then beef) to the rich markets of Europe and North America. At the end of the century its economic development stood on a par with Australia and New Zealand and was greater than much of Europe.

Since then Argentina's economy has been left far behind by its former equals. Despite surges of industrialisation in the 20th century the economy has been ravaged by paralyzing bouts of economic, financial and political crisis which mean that today the country can only be regarded as a semi-



Well they may look worried...

industrialised one even though qualitatively more developed than most underdeveloped countries.

Unlike most countries, Argentina has never had a very sizeable subsistence, peasant agriculture. Its farming almost from the start grew up on modern capitalist lines. That is why today only 13% of its labour force work in agriculture (less than Poland or the USSR or Spain, and about level with Japan), and 82% of the population live in cities (nearly as many as in Western Europe and the USA).

28% of workers work in a wide range of industrial jobs. Argentina has sizeable heavy industries like steel, petrochemicals and armaments (especially the army-owned corporation Fabricaciones Militares).

It has the only commercial nuclear power plant in

Latin America and, helped by its moderate reserves of uranium (enough discovered to supply present total electrical energy needs for 30 years), it has a major programme of nuclear development — including, by the government's own admission, the development of a nuclear bomb.

Exploration

Argentina has produced oil and petroleum products for many years and the government now has a plan of exploration to develop new supplies and export 300,000 barrels a day by the mid-1980s.

This plan is behind schedule partly because the major US oil companies have not been keen on the government's terms and partly because new discoveries have not been made as rapidly as was hoped (though expert world oil opinion is divided about the prospects around the Falklands/Malvinas over which the UK and Argentina already clashed in 1981 about prospecting rights).

Despite past development and ambitious future plans, the standard of living of Argentinians remains well below that of Britons.

Average income in 1980 was \$2230, compared with Britain's \$6320. That makes the average income of Argentina slightly ahead of Portugal, Mexico and Turkey and slightly below Yugoslavia, Greece and Venezuela.

And the distribution of income is even more unequal than in Britain. In Argentina

the figure is 7.4%. And the top 10% get 35% (compared with 23% in Britain).

Argentina has more doctors per head of population than Britain (one for every 530 inhabitants).

But since nearly all medicine is private the services of doctors are extremely unequally spread.

Argentines are in general better educated than Britons. Nearly one in three school leavers get some kind of college education compared with less than one in five in Britain. Much education, like medicine, is private, so workers and the poor certainly don't get their share.

And, since the military seized power in April 1976 (after the 3-year interlude of Peronist rule), their share of everything has been declining.

Over the last six years of bloody dictatorship it is not the structure and long term development of the economy which has mostly concerned the makers of economic policy but its short term crisis.

Catastrophic

When Videla took power he installed Jose Martinez de Hoz as his economics minister, which he remained for five catastrophic years.

Martinez de Hoz is a kind of Geoffrey Howe of the South Atlantic (he even went to the same school — Eton!). A doctrinaire monetarist, he has tried to deal with Argentina's severe economic problems with a series of policies which have

Thatcher and Howe.

Argentina's inflation rate when Martinez de Hoz was installed by his military friends was a staggering 600%, the result of the intense class struggle and collapse of financial discipline of the Peron era.

Monetarist

Martinez de Hoz proposed to deal with the inflation by the now familiar monetarist remedies of an intense squeeze on the money supply, savage cuts in government welfare spending to reduce the budget deficit (which had been nearly 15% of the GNP in the last year of the Peron government) increasing taxes and maintaining an artificially overvalued exchange rate to hold down the price of imports.

The result of the overvalued exchange rate has been a growing balance of trade deficit which was offset by inflows of short-term funds attracted by enormously high interest rates.

And these interest rates in turn have increased government spending on financing the national debt and have produced a catastrophic worsening of the financial position of industry and commerce (nationalised and private).

Last year this resulted in several major bankruptcies — of Celulosa Argentina, the largest pulp and paper firm; of Saestru, the biggest agro-industrial complex with interests in grain, flour mill, wine, fisheries and banking; of Credibono, a large finance company along with other finance companies. These companies are now run-

ing at \$150 million a month.

The danger of more bankruptcies forced Martinez de Hoz and his successors to channel government funds into failing companies, further undermining plans to cut public spending.

One contradiction of Thatcherism not shared by Videlanomics was that the Argentinian government has not had to pay money to those they have forced into penury and unemployment by their policies.

Burden

The result is that massive inflation, the control of wages and unemployment (which is still officially below the British level) has imposed an almost incredible burden on the Argentinian working class.

Real wages are now around 50% of what they were in 1976. Although official unemployment is only about 5% in Buenos Aires the real figure (including underemployment in ultra-low paid jobs) has been estimated at over 40%.

The hoped-for results of Martinez de Hoz economics (as with Thatcherism and Reaganomics) that after a short sharp shock the policies would produce a new upsurge of healthy capitalist growth.

In fact it led to no overall growth at all but to extreme fluctuations from year to year.

At length in 1981, after Martinez de Hoz had left office along with his patron Videla, the contradiction of his policies suddenly exploded.

Devalued

During 1981 the Argentinian peso was devalued from 2,000 to the US dollar to 10,000 to the US dollar providing the potentiality for a tremendous new boost to inflation, which in 1981 rose to 138% and now threatens to go up further.

Alongside the devaluation went a tremendous slump. The GNP in 1981 fell by 8.6% and industrial production by a staggering 14%. Car sales fell by 64% and excess capacity in industry was estimated at 42%.

It was this series of economic disasters which helped lead to the collapse of the Viola regime in December 1981.

General Galtieri who then seized power represented a bunch even further to the right both politically and economically. He declared that "the period of words and promises is over; now is the time for firmness and action."

Budget

And he has installed as Economics Minister, Roberto Alemann.

He plans a budget which cuts spending further and raises taxes so that the budget deficit falls to 2% of the GNP (from 3% last year). But this included a 10% cut in military spending which has already been abandoned.

Within 60 days he intends to present a plan for selling off large amounts of Argentina's large public sector to private capitalism.

This will include the state-owned banks (which hold 47% of deposits) and

even army-owned enterprises like Fabricaciones Militares.

He has raised VAT from 10 to 12%, imposed a complete freeze on wages and state pensions and failed to raise income tax allowances in line with inflation.

The effects of these policies once again will be more slump and unemployment, lower real wages and higher interest rates in the short term even if it were to "work" in the long run.

For that reason it provoked, as soon as it was announced, a wave of militant resistance.

The decision to indulge in an international adventure arises very clearly from the effects of this combination of the need to intensify the economic attack on the working class and growing evidence that the working class will step up its resistance to such an attack.

Cynical

The Falklands adventure reflects the cynical decision to whip up chauvinistic sentiment in order to hold down class resistance.

But now a new problem has arisen — the economic effects of reactions to the invasion. The EEC boycott would cut off 28% of Argentina's exports: it is not likely that the USSR would fill the gap since Moscow has been complaining about the fact that Argentina does not import enough Soviet goods (last year it had a deficit of \$1 billion with Argentina).

Besides Galtieri came to power with promises to reduce links with the Soviet Union and strengthen those with the West. He was regarded as Reagan's man in the Junta.

Britain's war threat may have produced mass demonstrations in the streets but it also produced financial panic. There has been a run on the banks, huge capital flight and the regime has had to impose emergency measures. The peso was exchanging last week at 14,500 to the US dollar, when its official rate is 11,500.

This means the war will create even more inflation while wages are frozen. Patriotic demonstrations could well turn into something else.

Disaster

The situation has already led to the effective default of Argentina on its international loans as a result of the freezing of assets in London.

Argentina's economic situation is so bad that it is imperative that it maintains access to international loans. Its total international debts, public and private, probably amount to \$32 billion — more than Poland's.

But while it would be a disaster for Argentina if it could not continue to borrow, it might also be a worse disaster to the stability of the world capitalist financial system if a major default were to happen.

Two major debtors (Argentina and Poland) and many minor ones are now on the brink of default.

Both militarily and economically therefore, the weapons available to the imperialists against Argentina are two-edged.

New dangers face Salvador masses

THE setback suffered by the El Salvador junta leader Napoleon Duarte in last month's farcical "elections" leaves the workers and peasants of Central America still facing growing dangers.

The extreme right wing parties which won the majority of seats in the "election" continue to debate and wrangle among themselves over who should form the new government.

Though Duarte lost ground and won only 24 of the 60 seats in the new Constituent Assembly, he and his so-called "moderate" Christian Democratic Party have the support of the Reagan administration.

Washington has made it clear that if the Christian Democrats are excluded from the new government, then the huge US military and economic aid which has propped up the puppet regime and fuelled its war against left wing guerrilla forces could come to a swift halt.

In particular Reagan has vetoed any possible appointment to the Presidency of the main right wing leader Major Roberto D'Aubuisson, notorious as a leader of El Salvador's savage death squads.

Possible alternatives include Rodriguez Porth - also a member of D'Aubuisson's extreme right Arena party.

Grim warnings

But other names banded around include Christian Democrat Chavez Mena, a reactionary member of the Party of National Reconciliation, Colonel Garcia, and the leader of the 'Democratic Action Party', Rene Fortin Magana.

The military itself has uttered its own grim warnings to the politicians, pointing out that "the least alteration in the economic and military support which is

given to us could bring a collapse". The army itself, insists C in C Gutierrez, is and always will be political.

Meanwhile the Reagan government is preparing for the worst and sizing up the possibilities of other methods of stabilising capitalist rule in El Salvador.

In particular the State Department is looking at the prospects for regulating a regional "peace plan" designed to isolate the Salvadorean guerrillas.

An 8-point package has been put to the Nicaraguan government which has been ominously described as a "positive act" by a Sandinista spokesperson. US officials have suggested that it might be "easier to deal with Castro and Ortega than with D'Aubuisson."

While the imperialists remain clearly in disarray however there are real dangers of a further political disorientation of the left wing forces in El Salvador.

Ally with Duarte

One guerrilla leader told reporters that the victory of the extreme right in the "elections" changes the political situation.

"Open and legalised fascism calls for a solid military confrontation with its forces and for a policy of broader alliances to fight against them. That would include the Christian Democrats."

Barely has Duarte lost the election before elements that have been conducting the armed struggle against him since 1979 turn to seek an alliance with him in the name of democracy!

The fact is that there can be no 'normal', parliamentary democracy in El Salvador. The requirements of capital in El Salvador can only be secured through the ruthless dictatorial suppression of all forms of organised

opposition by the working class and peasantry.

Only the revolutionary overthrow of capitalist rule and the smashing of the bloodstained state machinery - its army, police and other agencies - can create the basis for real democracy for the masses of El Salvador.

Workers' defence

The mobilisation and political preparation of the forces to carry out such a struggle must begin with the fight to organise the self-defence of the working class in the towns - which were shown in the elections to be still very much under the heel of the military.

And in the countryside too the agricultural workers and poor peasants must organise in revolutionary councils - beginning now in the liberated areas.

As the struggle advances, such councils can and must take the lead in expropriating the property of capitalists and landowners, establishing workers' control over production and distribution, and crushing the fascists and other reactionaries.

There is no way in which the bourgeois Christian Democratic politicians - however 'liberal' their speeches may appear in contrast with D'Aubuisson's fanatics - will participate in a front which is committed to such a perspective.



JOHN HARRIS

MARTIN BARCLAY
Wales AAM NC
(in a personal capacity)

AFTER a year of mixed success and failure, the first AGM of the Wales Anti-Apartheid Movement attracted over 60 people to Pontypridd on Saturday 27 March.

The most crucial discussion, on trade union work, spelled out some of the successes of the past year. Largely as a result of the support of a number of NUM lodges, the Cwmbach Male Voice Choir cancelled their visit to South Africa.

This led to the Rhos Orpheus Choir cancelling their visit, and indirectly, to the Welsh Rugby Union's decision not to send a national team to tour South Africa.

The basis for the Cwmbach victory was laid by the production of a bulletin on mining in South Africa comparing wage rates and



conditions of black miners to those in South Wales.

Since then WAAM has produced a series of bulletins on Car Production, Education and Sport, which hopefully will do the same in these other areas.

The AGM also agreed to mount a campaign against cultural and sporting links with South Africa, centred on Cardiff Rugby Club's coming tour and South

African participation in the Llangollen International Eisteddfod.

The only real debate came on a motion on the Wilson-Rowntree strike in South Africa. This strike is now more than a year old, and, despite the fact that the parent company is a British firm - Rowntree MacKintosh - almost nothing has been done by Anti-Apartheid nationally to build support and solidarity for the strikers.

The union involved, the South African Allied Workers Union, has been subjected to systematic harassment by the South African government, who have shut down its office and arrested and tortured its leaders. At the AGM, a resolution on the strike proposed by a Socialist Organiser supporter, called on Anti-Apartheid to:

1. Support the resolution

adopted by the Rowntree-MacKintosh Joint Craft Shop Stewards Committee at York in January, calling for a TUC convened conference of all shop stewards and officials of all unions organising in Rowntrees to hear a representative from SAAWU and discuss ways and means of organising solidarity.

2. Urge the TGWU to agree to SAAWU's request to send a delegation to South Africa from all levels in the union.

3. Produce a broadsheet on SAAWU's struggle in conjunction with Rowntree shop stewards to mobilise support for the strikers.

4. Call on the TUC to organise a joint week of action on Rowntrees and a national demonstration in York.

The arguments against the resolution all boiled down to the accusation that

we were being dangerously 'naive' and 'patronising' in putting forward these proposals.

Other arguments suggested that these contacts should be made secretly and should not be the subject of motions at AGMs. Hardly a trade unionist approach to strike that is over a year old!

An amendment was put forward which deleted the whole of the motion and which failed to call on Anti-Apartheid to do a single thing to support SAAWU.

Instead, it laid all the campaigning work at the door of the trade unionists in Rowntrees.

In the event the motion was heavily defeated and the amendment carried.

Unlike the British Anti-Apartheid's AGM in London we did actually manage to hold a debate and we felt that, though we had lost the vote, we had clearly won the arguments.

El Salvador needs the same solidarity as Vietnam

TUC backs Solidarnosc

This new joint statement by the TUC and the Solidarity Trade Union Working Group (Solidarnosc members in exile in Britain) gives the STUWG an official stamp of recognition at last. But there is still no move by the TUC to organise action for Solidarnosc - or even give the STUWG office facilities.

At a meeting with representatives of the Solidarity Trade Union Working Group in the UK at Congress House on April 6, Mr Len Murray reiterated the firm support of the TUC and British trade unionists generally for Solidarnosc as the representative trade union organisation in Poland.

He reaffirmed the call of the General Council for the release of all Solidarnosc members in detention or in prison, for the ending of martial law, and for the commencement of constructive dialogue between the authorities and the elected

Solidarity leadership in Poland.

Mr Murray told the Solidarity TUWG representative that the General Council would continue to take advantage of any opportunity to remind the Polish regime of their demands. They are maintaining their shipment of food to be distributed by the Polish Episcopal Charity Commission to those in need in Poland.

Assist

The Solidarity Trade Union Working Group discussed with Mr Murray the practical difficulties in which Solidarnosc operates as a trade union in Poland in conditions of martial law and put forward suggestions for ways in which the British trade union movement might assist in achieving its objective of restoring trade union freedom to Solidarnosc.

A LABOUR INQUIRY, NOT THE COURTS

A writ has been issued by Vanessa Redgrave against Morning Litho Printers Ltd. and Sean Matgamna, alleging libel in respect of the article entitled "Gaddafi's Foreign Legion to Knight's rescue", written by Sean Matgamna in issue no.33 of Socialist Organiser of 24 January 1981, misdated 24 January 1980. This writ is being contested by Sean Matgamna who will defend

the said article.

Facilities have been offered to Vanessa Redgrave to publish an article in reply in 'Socialist Organiser', in exchange for one of the following articles to be published in 'Newsline':

(a) an article by Alan Thorne of the Workers Socialist League, to explain to the readers of 'Newsline' how 20 members of the WRP came to Oxford two

weeks ago and made a mass distribution at British Leyland's Cowley plant of a printed broadsheet, which, among other things, implied that he was a police agent;

(b) an article by George Novack, on behalf of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, to reply to the WRP's libellous campaign;

(c) an article by the Stalinist Iraqi Communist Party, the slaughter of whose members 'Newsline' has publicly justified;

(d) an article by Sean Matgamna, discussing the recent statement by Colonel Ghaddafi calling for the rehabilitation of Hitler and Nazism.

Sean Matgamna has also offered to confirm that he accepts that it is no part of

Libel writ will be contested

With the legal processes continuing, it now seems almost certain that the libel case brought by Vanessa Redgrave of the WRP against Sean Matgamna and John Bloxam of Socialist Organiser will go to court. We reprint the appeal of the Labour Movement Press Defence Fund.

Appeal for funds

LABOUR MOVEMENT PRESS DEFENCE FUND

Send donations to Jonathan Hammond (Hon. Treasurer), c/o 214 Sickert Court, London

grave's legal advisers, and to date the only response has been the issue of the writ.

N1 2SY. Cheques payable to 'Labour Movement Press Defence Fund'.

Name:

Address:

Organisation:

Donation:

Let down for Labour students

by Clive Bradley

THE National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) recently took control of the leadership of NUS, breaking years of domination of the Broad Left/Left Alliance.

NOLS conference this year, coming in the wake of this victory, was possibly the most important conference in the history of NOLS.

Were the stranglehold within NOLS of the Clause IV to be broken, this would represent a tremendous development within the student movement.

As students are increasingly turning towards the Labour Party, a more open NOLS could possibly act as a channel for radicalising Labour students into taking effective action against the Tory government.

In the event, Clause IV was not defeated. In numerical terms on the NC, the left in NOLS (Militant and the Socialist Student Caucus) had rather less people than last year.

Absurdly, Militant had only one NC member.

But this conference was by no means a defeat for the left. On a whole series of issues the revolutionary left and its sympathisers were able to intervene decisively into the conference and if

not win the vote, nevertheless pick up substantial support.

On Ireland, for the fourth year in succession, NOLS adopted no policy.

This year, the vote for troops out now was bigger than ever, despite the fact that one of the NC resolutions included all sorts of demands designed to placate the left.

A motion on Poland calling for the maintaining of links with both the state-run Polish students union SZFP and the independent Solidarity MZS was passed. However, after the vote had been taken the speaker from MZS described the SZFP as a scab union, comparing it to a union run by Margaret Thatcher, and clearly embarrassed the Clause IV leadership.

This conference had the biggest presence of the revolutionary left of any NOLS conference to date - primarily the comrades of Socialist Organiser, Socialist Challenge/Revolution, Socialist Newsletter and independents who support class struggle positions on a whole series of questions organised in the Socialist Students Caucus.

With the possibilities opening up inside NOLS to present a serious alternative to both dominant tendencies it is vital that SSC is transformed from a caucus at NOLS conference into a campaigning committee within the national organisation.

Drawing oppositionists around the perspective of transforming NOLS into a mass student organisation oriented towards organising the action of students within colleges around campaigns against cuts, against racism, on international issues, sexual politics, etc., such a new class struggle tendency within NOLS could aim to build on the gains made so far.

There will be a national NOLS activists conference in the near future, to discuss the launching of such a campaign within NOLS. This conference will be open to anyone supporting the general aim of breaking the Clause IV/Militant logjam on a revolutionary perspective and recognising the need for an orientation towards NOLS in order to transform the NUS.

Anyone interested please contact Ken Stratford, Thames Polytechnic Students Union.

Black workers must organise

Aly Mir reports from the black workers' workshop at the April 3 Socialist Organiser/London Labour Briefing trade union conference

THE workshop on black workers began with a look at the historical roots of racism in colonialism, and it was seen that black workers came to Britain to provide cheap immigrant labour for British capitalists.

The capitalists' drive for profits during times of boom and their attempts to make the workers pay for times of crisis have been significantly aided by racism within the labour movement.

The failure of the trade union movement to defeat racism within its own ranks left black workers isolated with the worst working conditions, the lowest rates of pay, the least secure employment, and with unions that refused to even bargain with the bosses on behalf of the black workers.

For example, during the Leicester Imperial Typewriters strike of 1974, the refusal of the local TGWU leaders to support the strike of mainly Asian workers against the bosses' non-payment of bonuses not only left these black workers isolated but created such a racist climate that openly fascist groups such as the NF were able to influence some of the white workers.

By helping the bosses to divide the workers the union leaders not only maintained the special oppression of the black workers, but cleared

whole workforce which happened later in the year when the bosses closed the factory.

More recently, when the Leyland bosses ordered the searching of all the black workers at Cowley, attempts by stewards to fight this were frustrated by the local union official who argued that such a fight was divisive! What use are the words of the TUC Charter on racism if no action can follow?

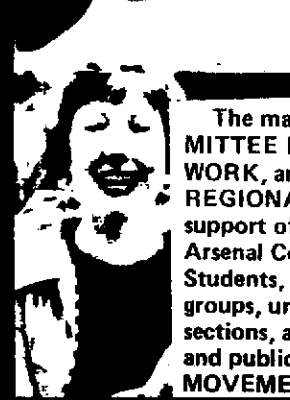
To overcome the appalling record of the labour

movement bureaucrats, black workers must fight alongside white workers, because only the whole working class can defeat racism and the capitalist system responsible for it once and for all.

The workshop discussed how the ruling class is attempting to divide workers through the operation of race checks and "ethnic minority monitoring" using skin colour charts, and that anti-racist arguments within the unions can help oppose such schemes.

MARCH WITH US TO THE LABOUR PARTY WOMEN'S FESTIVAL AND RALLY

JUNE 5th



Come and join us on June 5th. We'll be assembling at County Hall, Waterloo, from 10.30 and the march will start to move off at 11, and go to Battersea Park for the national Women's Festival and Rally organised by the Labour Party. There'll be women's bands, stalls, theatre, open-air discussion forums, a rally with national and international speakers, plus food, kids' entertainment & creche, and lots more.

WOMEN'S RIGHT TO WORK

The march is called by the ACTION COMMITTEE FOR A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO WORK, and co-sponsored by the SOUTH EAST REGIONAL COUNCIL of the TUC, with the support of the London Labour Party, the Royal Arsenal Co-op Society, the National Union of Students, the Bakers' Union, and dozens of local groups, union branches and Labour women's sections, as well as all the major campaigns, groups and publications of the WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

* Come to the Action Committee meetings - there is a meeting every Monday evening at 7.15 at County Hall, Waterloo. Send us a donation. Publicise the march in your local press, at work, at college, at school, among your friends. Leaflets from: Action Ctee for a Woman's Right to Work, 181 Richmond Road, London E8.

Labour Movement conference against racism

Organised by Coventry Trades Council: May 8, 1982.

Delegates invited from TU organisations in the Coventry area. Contact: Coventry TC, c/o The Tom Mann Club, 34 Stoke Green, Coventry

Marching for women's jobs

THE 20,000 leaflets produced by the Action Committee for a Woman's Right to Work have nearly all been distributed. More are being printed, though, as well as posters. Most were taken at the LPYS conference and the NUT conference over Easter.

Many YS branches from all over the country took bundles. We now have to make sure we use them to full advantage and not leave them lying in a corner!

As Angela Britain pointed out at the Women's Right to Work Meeting at YS Conference, "We have to get the women who don't usually come on marches. Women who may have children, whom local organising committees must arrange

creches for. We have to make sure that the local labour movement is fully behind the march and makes the commitment to help with transport.

"If you haven't got a mobilising committee in your area - set one up! Call a meeting of local women's groups, community groups, Labour Party branches and trade unions, make sure that the leaflets are circulated as widely as possible. Publicise the march in your local press, at work, at college, on your estate, among your friends.

"We want a march and festival on June 5 that shows that women aren't going to sit back and let our jobs be snatched from us".

Angela then went on to

the NUT conference in Scarborough to address a meeting of 200, distributing more leaflets.

Bundles of literature were widely distributed at the National Organisation of Labour Students conference in York over Easter too.

Requests for leaflets and posters are pouring in - so make sure you place your order now!

Write to the Action Committee for a Woman's Right to Work, 181 Richmond Road, London E8 or to the Women's Fightback national office, 41 Ellington Street, London N7.

If you're in London come to the Action Committee meetings - every Monday evening at 7.15 at County Hall, Waterloo.

WHAT'S ON

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

POLAND

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

Glasgow Polish Solidarity Campaign. Ian McCalman, 18 Mossiel Rd, Glasgow G43. 041-632 1839.

Edinburgh PSC. C/o Edinburgh Trades Council, 12 Picardy Place.

Oxford Labour Committee on Poland, 468 Banbury Rd, Oxford. 0865 58238.

Coventry PSC. John Fisher, c/o ASTMS, 26 Queens Rd, Coventry.

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

SOCIALIST ORGANISER MEETINGS AND FORUMS

Socialist Organiser delegate meeting: Sunday May 9, 11am to 5pm, at County Hall, London SE1. All local groups asked to send delegates.

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

7.30, discussion 8.30. Next meeting April 28.

Socialist Organiser delegate meeting: Sunday May 9, 11am to 5pm, at County Hall, London SE1. All local groups asked to send delegates.

ISLINGTON. Every other Friday, 7.30 at Caxton House, St John's Way. London N19. Next meeting April 30.

BASINGSTOKE: El Salvador and the Central American Revolution. Thursday April 29, 7.30 at Chute House, Church St.

STOP THE DEPORTATION of Najat Chafee! Public meeting: Friday April 30, 7.30 at Moonshine Community Arts Workshop, Victor Rd, London NW10. Picket of Najat's appeal: Friday May 7, 9am at Thanet House, The Strand. March (if the appeal fails): Saturday May 15, 11am from Roundwood Park. Contact: Friends of Najat Chafee, c/o 138 Minet Ave, London NW10.

IRELAND

DEMONSTRATE MAY 8: British out of Ireland, self determination for the Irish people. 1pm, Speakers' Corner, London. Called by Labour Committee on Ireland, Indian Workers' Association, Troops Out Movement, and Veterans Against the War. Send labour movement sponsorships to Robert Jones, Box 353, London NW5 4NH.

MANCHESTER Labour Committee on Ireland meeting: Thursday May 13, 7.30 at the Britons Protection pub, Gt Bridgewater St, Manchester 1. Speaker: Pat Byrne, who was secretary of the Irish Republican Congress in the 1930s. LP members only.

PALESTINE

Bradford Labour Movement Campaign for Palestinian Solidarity - day school on 'Zionism, ideology of expansion'. Saturday April

24, 10.30am to 5pm, at Queen's Hall, Bradford. Credentials £1 waged, 50p unwaged, from 7 Westfield Cres, Undercliffe Old Road, Bradford 2. Speakers include Moshe Machover, Andrew Hornung, Elfi Pallas, and John Nelson.

MARXISM

London Workers' Socialist League classes on basic Marxism. Next one: Trotskyism and the mass movement. Friday April 30, 7.30pm. For details of venue write to PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

OXFORD UNEMPLOYED WORKERS AND CLAIMANTS UNION women's group, meets every Thursday, 10.30am to 12.30 at East Oxford Community Centre, block B. Tel: 723750.

'SOLIDARITY with Iranian workers': rally, Saturday April 24, 2pm at Friends House, Euston Rd, London. Speakers include Richard Balfe MEP, Stan Newens MP, and Bill Deal (FBU). Organised by the Moslem Students Society (supporters of the PMOI).

Send your May Day greetings through Socialist Organiser...

Organisation

Secretary or officer responsible

Message:

Space required (column inches):

Money enclosed: £

(£4 per column inch; cheques payable to Socialist Organiser). Send to: Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Raising socialist banner— in May elections

**Stand against
rent and rate
rises!**



Graham Shurety

working class in Camden and provide a crucial lead for the people of Somers Town.

Somers Town is a closely knit community, with 99% of them living in council housing in the square mile that lays behind St Pancras and Euston stations.

My comrade Tom Devine and I are campaigning for a policy of a rent freeze and no cuts, and have begun discussions with other labour movement leaders for mounting a campaign against Heseltine in the future.

Alongside another SO supporter who is standing in the neighbouring working class ward of St Pancras, I will be pressing for a politically coherent alternative to the pessimism and inaction of the existing right wing leadership of the council."

charging the highest rent, rates and heating charges of any Labour controlled authority.

This, coupled with massive redundancies in the building department (over 600 out of a department of 1,300 a year ago) has led to a new layer of left candidates coming forward in the election to replace the right.

I see myself as part of that left.

We have campaigned for two years against rent increases and against cuts.

We have argued that the only way forward is to fight alongside Tenants Associations and Council unions to win back the £30 million stolen from us by Heseltine.

These policies are the only way forward for the

SO supporter Graham Shurety is one of the candidates standing for the Somers Town branch of the St Pancras South Labour Party. He told Socialist Organiser:

"I was selected to stand for the Somers Town branch because of the record built up along with other members of the Camden Labour Left against the existing Labour Council's capitulation to Heseltine's policies.

In the past two years Camden has become the highest rated borough in the country with its Council

**FIGHT THE MISERY OF
BAD HOUSING**

Susan Carlyle and Stephen Corbishley are two SO supporters standing for Labour in the East End Spitalfields ward in Tower Hamlets. Susan is secretary of Tower Hamlets Women's Section.



Brick Lane: the Bengali community fights back

Spitalfields ward has what must be the poorest housing conditions in the whole of London. It borders on the City of London where there's multi-million pound complexes like the Barbican and the Stock Exchange with the yacht marina at the Tower of London to set the scene.

Insult can only be added to injury with private house-building commencing as a result of the previous Tory GLC selling off land earmarked for council development.

Bengali people living 2 or 3 different families to one small flat are the norm. And others can be living with as many as 8 children to a household in perilously overcrowded conditions. Homeless families, not wanting to be put in hotels or hostels, or refugees from racial harassment on white estates have taken every available room or squatted empty property.

Two young men lost their lives in a fire in Brick Lane a few weeks ago. They were members of a family

who had been waiting for 8 years to be rehoused after the council had compulsorily purchased their home.

A borough housing committee no longer exists. The attempts to run a joint committee during the hand-over period from the GLC to Tower Hamlets borough is on the point of collapse.

The SDP snipes away and attacks the previous Labour Party maladministration, but their solution comes to nothing more than some local housing offices and decentralisation of repair services.

Stephen Corbishley and Susan Carlyle have organised against the right wing council, campaigning against nursery closures and fighting in the trade unions and with the left of the Labour Party to oppose privatisation.

Stephen and Susan say in their manifestoes:

"We've got to fight back. Councillors should be in the front line of that fight. We can beat the Tories and make the government pay back what it's taken off Tower Hamlets. If tenants, rate payers, council workers, and councillors all get together and fight - voting Labour will be part of that campaign."

The Tower Hamlets Labour Party have put out a special leaflet in Bengali pledging support against deportations and opposing passport hospital checks in the NHS.

TIME TO DEMOCRATISE LONDON REGION

by Pete
Willsman

THE success the Left has achieved in recent years at the Greater London Regional Council of the Party should not lead to complacency. Nor should it lead comrades to think that the question of simple democratic reforms at the GLRC can safely be left on one side while we concentrate on democratising the Party at national level.

Aside from the fact that this is a somewhat unprincipled position it is also very short sighted, since it is by no means guaranteed that the London Left will always be so favourably situated.

Some comrades may be unaware that the procedures associated with the GLRC in

general and the Regional Conference in particular, are among the most undemocratic of any Region in the Labour Party. The Annual Report of the Regional Executive Committee contains no mention of the previous year's Conference or of any of the decisions made at that Conference - it is as if previous Conferences did not exist.

The resolutions that are

ruled out of order are not published and disappear without trace. The delegates are denied a right of reply and so on; the list of undemocratic practices is a long one.

A comparison with the procedures at the Southern Region Conference, which is certainly not Left dominated, dispels any illusions about the GLRC and reveals just how undemocratic it is.

The following are some of the democratic practices at the Southern Region:

a) Soon after the Regional Conference all organisations are advised, in a summary of the proceedings of the Conference, of the resolutions carried or remitted to the Regional EC.

b) The EC examines each resolution and where applicable, during the year informs appropriate organisations of progress in dealing with their resolution.

c) The Annual Report of the Regional EC gives details of the decisions taken by the Regional EC in relation to resolutions carried or remitted at the previous Regional Conference. In a similar way the NEC reports to Annual Conference on the decisions they have taken in relation to resolutions carried or remitted at the previous Annual Conference.

d) The Annual Report contains a list of all the CLP Secretaries in the Region together with addresses and phone numbers.

e) The Annual Report also contains a list of the affiliation levels of all affiliated organisations.

f) Resolutions ruled out of order are published in both the preliminary and final agendas. This is also the practice at trade union conferences and CLPD is pressing for this reform to be adopted at Annual Conference.

g) At the Southern Regional Conference the Annual Report of the EC is examined page by page, questions are put from the floor, and the Report is put to the vote (as at Annual Conference). By contrast it seems that at the GLRC

organisations have to write to the EC if they wish to have a question put on the Annual Report.

h) At the Regional Conference the proposers of motions have the right of reply at the end of the debate, in common with the practice at trade union conferences, not to mention GMCs and every other Party meeting (except the GLRC and Annual Conference).

There are several other simple democratic reforms that could be carried out at the GLRC. For instance delegates could be told at the start of the Regional Conference (on a duplicated sheet or verbally if there is not time) exactly what the EC's recommendation will be on every resolution which will come before Conference.

This is important information for delegates when preparing their speeches, since with no right of reply they have no opportunity to answer the EC speaker.

This reform was achieved by the delegates at the 1981 Annual Conference at Brighton. In future delegates will always be made aware at the beginning of Annual Conference exactly what the NEC will be recommending on each resolution.

Also the NEC has now agreed that its minutes should be made available to affiliated organisations and the Regional EC should follow suit with its own minutes. This has now been agreed to in the Southern Region. This will help to increase interest in the activities of the Regional EC, since at present the prevailing impression among the

rank and file seems to be that the EC is a little known irrelevancy.

There is also very little, if any, attempt by the members of the Regional EC to ascertain the view of the organisations who elected them and who they are in theory representing. This reform has also now been agreed to in the Southern Region. Nor do they give any individual report back.

Without minutes of EC meetings or individual report backs the members of the EC are not accountable in any meaningful sense.

Finally, there is the question of the election of the Leader of the Labour Group by the Regional Conference which I understand was agreed as long ago as 1979.

Since then the issue has almost disappeared from sight, despite the fact that in

the meantime the Party at national level has changed its system for electing the Leader and now involves all sections of the Party in the College.

Eliminate

We should be asking our supporters on the Executive and the Standing Orders Committee of the GLRC exactly what have they been doing to eliminate the undemocratic procedures, exactly what are they doing at the moment and exactly what do they intend to do in the future. Individuals and organisations should be adding their weight to this.

After all it makes it a little difficult for us to criticise the lack of democracy at national level if the situation in London is as bad if not worse.



Less democratic than the national Labour Party?

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

How does Tebbit's

Industrial action

You can only take action "wholly or mainly" connected with the following:

- *terms and conditions of employment
- *physical conditions of work
- *engagement or non-engagement
- *sacking
- *suspension
- *work duties
- *distribution of work
- *discipline
- *trade union rights
- *negotiating and consultation machinery
- *procedural rights

What does this mean for you?

Can you take action/issue leaflets concerning government policy?

Probably not. Action is only lawful if it's "wholly or mainly" concerned with a trade dispute. "Wholly or mainly" has yet to be defined by judges but remember in May 1980 (when disputes only had to be "connected") that the TUC's Day of Action was held to be an unlawful strike.

This will affect workers in local government; health service; civil service; teaching where disputes challenging policy could be construed as partly 'political'.

Can you support disputes between worker and worker? (E.g. over the use of non-union labour).

No. This sort of dispute is excluded from protection. Even if your employer will inevitably be involved, it does not mean the courts will interpret it this way.

The 1980 Act also restricted interference with commercial contracts in pursuit of disputes between worker and worker.

This means NO solidarity action to recruit low-paid contract workers into unions.

NO solidarity action over pay and conditions.

NO action over demarcation disputes.

Can you take action supporting exploited workers abroad?

No. Action in connection with anything outside the UK is unlawful unless *your* terms and conditions will be affected by the outcome.

What is your position in a sympathy strike?

It is already the law that secondary action (i.e. supporting other workers where *your* own employer is not in dispute) is restricted. Your employer must

have a customer/supplier link with the employer in dispute for it to be lawful, i.e.:

—be a current customer or supplier of the employer in dispute.

—principal purpose must be to disrupt these supplies.

—action must be *likely* to achieve this purpose.

NOW strikers must be in dispute with *their* employer. You cannot take action by withdrawing supplies or other services, if it is to a company in which the employees of that company are not in dispute.

This will affect industry-wide disputes between unions and employers' associations. What other action will be unlawful now?

If you organise or threaten industrial action to put pressure on an employer to employ only trade unionists you are liable to be sued.

OR if you organise industrial action *on the grounds that* those employed are not union members, you are liable to be sued.

Can you still picket your own place of work?

The picketing provisions of the 1980 Employment Act still apply. That is:

"lawful picketing is still limited to picketing by workers at their own place of work (or by union officers at the workplaces of members they represent)".

Only this type of picketing is protected. There is a Code of Practice which is *guidance not law*. This says:

"pickets and organisers should ensure that in general the number of pickets does not exceed six at any entrance to the workplace."

This is NOT LAW but could be used by police to back-up charges of obstruction or breach of the peace.

If you are sacked while on strike?

Can you claim unfair dismissal?

It used to be the case that if the employer dismissed *some* but

not all of those involved, the industrial tribunal would hear your unfair dismissal claim.

NOW if you are dismissed while on strike but others are not, you can claim unfair dismissal UNLESS some workers who have been on strike have returned to work!

If this is the case you have no protection.

So if your employer:

*gives notice to all on strike that anyone who does not return to work within four days will be dismissed

*does not dismiss people *within* this minimum 4-day period

*then dismisses all employees *still taking action* when this period ends these people cannot claim unfair dismissal.

This could facilitate sacking shop stewards and active members most likely to stay out.

It will encourage employers to use intimidatory types of ultimatums and will undermine union solidarity.

Trade union membership

Only by maximum possible organisation can individual workers influence their terms and conditions at work through trade unions.

The 1980 Act has already exempted three new categories of employees from union membership requirements:

*where employee genuinely objects to being a member on grounds of conscience or other deeply-held personal convictions

*where employee was employed before the union membership came into force

*where a union membership agreement came into effect after 15 August 1980 and has not been approved in a secret ballot by at least 80% of all employees covered by it.

Our answer



What does the new Bill add to this?

Whether or not there is a union membership agreement it is now automatically unfair to sack someone for non-union membership unless the closed shop has been confirmed by ballot in the LAST 5 YEARS preceding dismissal.

"Confirmed" means 80% of those covered by the present agreement having now voted for it. For later agreements it will be 80% of those covered or 85% of those voting.

This means *automatically* anti-unionists can gain compensation of a *minimum* of £12,000 if sacked and £17,000

if not reinstated.

It will not be difficult with these sums to persuade people *not* to join a union.

This should be compared with the present average compensation for unfair dismissal of a few hundred pounds.

The "five yearly review" secret ballot could provide regular source of friction in the workplace.

There will be retrospective compensation for people dismissed for non-union membership between September 1980 and August 1980 if the dismissal would have been unfair under the 1980 Act. (The Employment Secretary has estimated this covers 400 people)

strikes, beginning with the third reading of the Bill.

* 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 labour 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 closures, etc.

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

Demand that the Parliamentary Labour leaders start a campaign

Break links

Bill affect YOU?



How does it affect your union?

Trade unions can now be sued for unlawful action organised by its officials if the action is "authorised or endorsed" by a "responsible" person or body. These are to include:

- *principal executive committee
- *any other person empowered to do so by unions
- *an official who is a regular attendee at meetings of the executive committee
- *any other employed official
- *any union committee to which an employed official regularly reports

It will not be authorised if the union actually "repudiates" the action — as soon as is reasonably practicable.

But the union must not do anything "inconsistent" with repudiation. This means it will be even harder to get official union support for action such as recent ones at Foyles and St. Mary's Hospital.

Damages will be on a sliding scale:

- £10,000 for unions with less than 5,000 members.
- £50,000 for unions with 5,000-25,000 members.
- £125,000 for unions with 25,000-100,000 members.
- £25,000 for unions with over 100,000 members.

This Bill attempts to undermine union strength with its provisions for closed shops, selective dismissal of strikers and increased dismissal compensation.

It attempts to stop workers taking industrial action by making more areas unlawful and offering the threat of imprisonment for contempt of court.

It is important that all trade unionists learn of these threats not from the media but from their own unions and activists within them.



Women against Tebbit

WOMEN are already the lowest paid, worst-organised sector of the workforce. The areas in which they predominantly work — health, education and local government services — have been singled out for particular attack by the Tories. Jobs have been decimated in the school meals service and 'women's' employment such as cleaning is increasingly being contracted out to non-unionised labour.

Women's Fightback believe that Tebbit's Bill hits women workers particularly hard. If passed it will:

*Outlaw strikes or industrial action against public service cuts.

By tightening the definition of a trades dispute, the Act could outlaw any action not "wholly or mainly" related to a trade dispute. This would jeopardise industrial action in local government; the health

service; civil service; teaching; all employers of millions of low paid women.

*Outlaw disputes between worker and worker.

'Women's' work is currently most vulnerable to deskilling and job loss through the introduction of new technology. Any dispute arising from new work practices, e.g. introduction of new part-time staff into banks, would be unlawful. Women will find it more difficult to defend the status quo and their jobs. Grading disputes between men and women workers could also be unlawful.

*Outlaw action against non-union contract workers.

This has direct implications for:

—solidarity action to ensure

negotiated pay and conditions —solidarity action to recruit contract women into unions.

Women currently ghettoised into the lowest paid jobs such as cleaners can therefore expect less supportive action from better organised workers.

*Outlaw action supporting foreign workers.

Any solidarity action taken to support exploitation of women abroad — in multi-nationals, South Africa, the Third World — would be unlawful. This bill will prohibit our right as trade unionists to organise effective support for them.

Women's Fightback calls for:

*One day strike against the Bill.

*Complete boycott of Tebbit's law if passed.

*Demonstrate for a woman's right to paid work on 5 June and against Tebbit's law.

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK PUBLIC MEETING

To discuss the implications of Tebbit's Employment Bill for organising women workers, and how to fight it.

FRIDAY 7 MAY at 6.45pm

A WOMAN'S PLACE
48 WILLIAM IV STREET
LONDON WC2
(Leicester Square tube)



What if your employer has a 'union labour only' practice?

The 1980 Act established that an employer could not sack anyone because of such an agreement.

NOW all union-labour only contracts are unlawful.

(These are normally used to safeguard standards of safety, wages and conditions, e.g. construction, engineering).

It is even unlawful to refuse to make a contract with a subcontractor who won't employ union-only labour.

You cannot organise to put pressure on any employer to get him to employ union-only labour.

align of Parliamentary obstruction.

Demand that the TUC leaders break off their cosy chats 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 Parliamentarians, 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.

with the Tories now!

The Irish Republican Socialist Party, formed in a split from the Official Republican movement in late 1974, and its armed wing, the Irish National Liberation Army, are among the leading organisations in the Catholic resistance in the North of Ireland. In reporting in Socialist Organiser on the Southern elections this February, John O'Mahony criticised the IRSP for failing to give real substance to its socialism. This week we print a reply from the IRSP, sent to us by the editor of the IRSP paper Starry Plough. We hope that other Republicans and socialists will contribute to a continuing debate.

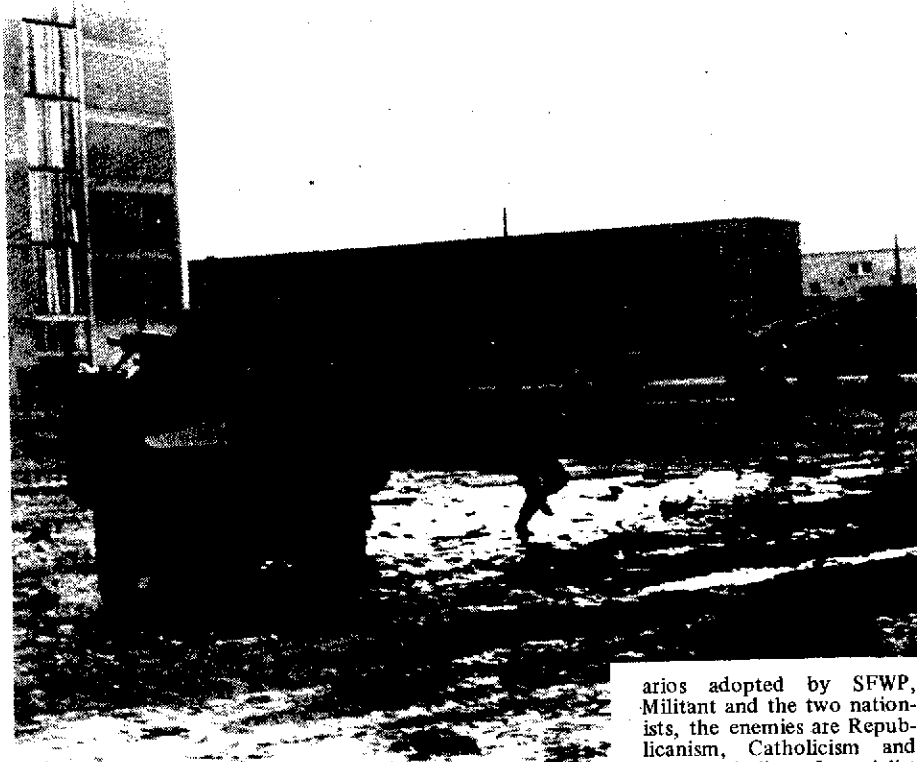
HAVE some British socialists learnt nothing from the last 14 years of Irish struggle? John O'Mahony's attack 'on backward Irish nationalists', like ourselves and Provisional Sinn Féin, coupled with his defence of Sinn Féin, the Workers Party (SWP) was a regurgitation of those prejudices of British reformism towards Irish revolutionaries dressed up in the usual sociological jargon that so often masquerades as Marxism.

Like a World War 2 Japanese soldier emerging from some Pacific island in a later decade, O'Mahony wants to revive old battles fought over the years against the logic of anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland.

Today, however, those prejudices have earned a new currency with the rise, electorally at least, of two-nationists and anti-national 'socialists'.

The lynchpin on which those prejudices exist is the abiding tenet of many British socialists who take the model of British class struggle as absolute and who berate Irish class protagonists for not playing fair... fair meaning British.

If only Irish people and revolutionaries would behave as if they lived in 'advanced capitalist society' as O'Mahony postulates. The fact that we do not conform to the British model means that either O'Mahony's diag-



nosis is wrong or that the Irish people are incorrigible in their backwardness.

This latter view, which approximates to an unmentionable political viewpoint, is something that O'Mahony's favoured group, SWP, has erected as its new 'socialist' justification for supporting imperialism in Ireland.

SWP's analysis of Ireland's industrial underdevelopment, blames not imperialism but the innate parochialism of the Irish middle class. Progress lies with industrialisation from outside by multinationals - British, European or other-

wise - plus the rejection of any form of anti-imperialism (or nationalism as both SWP and O'Mahony prefer to call it).

It may interest Irish workers and British socialists to know that one of SWP's criticisms of Irish capitalists is that they are incapable of extracting the maximum productivity or capitalisation from the Irish labour force.

SWP's rejection of nationalism has led it to support 'majority' rule and RUC law and order in the six counties, while they condemned the hunger strikers as murderers and terrorists.

In the cosmopolitan scen-

arios adopted by SWP, Militant and the two nationists, the enemies are Republicanism, Catholicism and Irish capitalism. Imperialist capital is at worst neutral, and at best progressive because that industrialises the nation, builds up the proletariat and creates the prerequisites for socialism.

In Russia this type of ultimate stages theory was called Menshevism; in circles inspired by British reformism it is called socialism. To Irish republican socialists it is simply the age old imperialist argument that urges the natives to forget about their independence and garner the advantages of 'advanced society'.

To SWP the national question is dead because imperialism can drag the Irish nation into the 20th century. To O'Mahony the national question is dead

because this has already happened. The conclusions are the same - at least in their negative aspects: reject republicanism and adopt the methods of class struggle which exist in advanced (British) society.

So Ireland according to O'Mahony, is an 'advanced capitalist society' and has a southern government as stable as any in Europe.

We could say a lot about the 'advanced' nature of our industrial base and infrastructure, north and south. It is currently the subject of an anguished debate amongst the Irish bourgeoisie. But this is not the point. The bald phrase about Ireland's 'advanced capitalist society' even if it were true, says nothing about real politics which is about the relations of power between classes and nations.

Occupying

We have British soldiers occupying part of our country and a border divides Irish territory. The Irish middle class regard this as a continuing source of destabilisation and a threat to their whole existence.

Central

Leninists have always regarded the attainment of national unity and independence as the two central tasks of the national revolution. But O'Mahony seems to believe that this has been done in the north but not in the south; the most peculiar variant of two nationism we have yet encountered.

O'Mahony reveals the most appalling ignorance or revision of socialist attitudes towards this border which as Connolly predicted, has produced a carnival of reaction, north and south.

For while that border

divides workers within one part of Ireland, namely the six counties, it also divides and retards the working class in the whole of Ireland.

The border is the basic reason for this division, not a result or some side effect. Workers unity depends on eliminating the cause of disunity, not ignoring it and hoping that it will disintegrate in the face of some economic onslaught from the 26 counties.

Economism

This should be self-evident. But O'Mahony and others whose economism blurs their view of the national question, draw up tough sounding battle plans for socialist struggle which ignore this reality. In their scheme of things one fights for workers' power in the south in the naive hope that the border, along with its subsequent divisions, will simply disappear. In Britain this type of economism can lead to serious political errors. In Ireland it starts off as an ultra-left joke and ends up as a defence of loyalism.

Revolutionary politics in Ireland mean tackling the border and all its manifestations head on. In reality such an approach is working class and merely flows from our analysis which says that imperialism is the main enemy in Ireland. Yes, in this sense, we are nationalists first, to use an economist's distortion of Marxist definitions.

The fact that Irish class divisions break down, electorally and otherwise, along mainly national lines is to SWP an unfortunate obsession with civil war politics and the Irish people's domination by provincial ideas and backward political forma-

tions.

And to O'Mahony? An explicit answer would be interesting. One implicit view underlying his patronising and anti-republican 'socialism' is that the anti-imperialist movement is out of touch with 'advanced capitalist society'. To British reformists and the modern breed of liberal West Brits we have ever been backward.

Some specific points in reply to a catalogue of reformist jibes posing as 'hard Marxist' criticism:

1. We criticise SWP, among others, not for criticising Irish capitalism, something we do constantly ourselves, but for doing so to the exclusion of and as a diversion from attacking imperialism.

2. The IRSP's election programme pointed to specific economic links between Irish capitalism and imperialism. That programme was conveniently and dishonestly ignored by O'Mahony in his rush to dismiss republicans as 'reactionary'.

What he also ignored in his lengthy article was mention of a single constructive point or proposal for a socialist election programme.

Was this because any attempt to do so would have revealed a shift towards Militant, whose British and Irish sections both refused to support the H Block campaign or hunger strike?

The use of a quote from James Connolly, which attacked the physical force tradition and which doubtless mesmerised putative students of Irish labour history, conveniently ignored two facts among others.

First, it was written 17 years before Connolly, like Lenin, broke from the Second International on the

TAIL-ENDING HAUGHEY



THE DECISIVE question is whether Irish socialists and republicans have learned anything from the last 14 years of the Catholic revolt in the North of Ireland - and what they have learned.

The socialists of the IRSP, it seems to me, have learned (or had reinforced the previous belief) that the national question is the major component and dynamic of the Irish revolution. That is the reason why they called in the 26 County election for votes for Fianna Fail, ruling party in the South for 40 of the last 50 years but still flaunting the tattered rags of a Republicanism it abandoned back in 1926!

It means that their socialism, like the tattered 'Republicanism' of Fianna Fail, is unreal.

I will try to show this in briefly responding to some of the points in the IRSP's letter.

I did not 'defend' Sinn Féin the Workers' Party: read the article. I cited the fact that the IRSP attacks SWP for one of their strengths, their nominal hostility to native Irish capitalism. The SWP TDs voted for Haughey in the Dail, of course.

Who talked of 'backward Irish nationalists'? Not me.

What have 'the prejudices of British reformism (!) towards Irish revolution-

aries' to do with what I said about the IRSP? I argued that traditional physical-force-on-principle Republicanism, common as the main core of the politics of both the IRSP and the Provisionals (though the foliage on the trunk differs) is simply not revolutionary. I cited facts about the 26 Counties election to substantiate and justify this view.

Automatically

The writers defend those facts rather than denying them. Indeed, they try to define away the arguments and questions I raised.

They define what is revolutionary (physical force), so that critics of themselves and of the class-collaborationist 'anti-imperialism' that they graft onto physical-force politics are automatically reformists (and British as well!)

Why, and since when, is the class struggle common in all more or less normal capitalist societies (and not entirely absent even in the Six Counties)? 'The British class struggle'? Again, the writer 'defines away' the problem and the arguments by way of sticking labels.

In fact the election reinforces the view that the Border does segment vastly different areas of Ireland.

Arguments and facts are decisive, comrades of the IRSP, not labels and abuse.

If only Irish people and revolutionaries would behave as if they lived in 'advanced capitalist society', then, comrades of the IRSP, we might get socialist action appropriate to the 'advanced capitalist society' that exists in the South and is not warped, as is the 'advanced capitalist society' in the North, by communalism and British occupation.

We would not get the nonsense of supposed socialists supporting the main governing party of the bourgeoisie because it spouts a hollowed-out nationalist rhetoric.

The point here, I think, is that commitment to the centrality of the struggle in the North, and within that of the armed struggle there, shapes and moulds everything else: it is only seen from that angle that Fianna Fail and its 'anti-imperialism' and 'Republicanism' can be seen as anything but the most bitter enemy of Republicanism and socialist republicanism.

Avoiding

As well as avoiding argument about the real issues by way of ruling the opponent out of court with labels

and spurious definitions, the writer uses the 'amalgam'. My views are linked with political trends with which I have little in common - Militant, Sinn Féin the Workers' Party, and the British and Irish Communist Organisation ('two-nationists'). It is just flak: what has Socialist Organiser got to do with the politics of Sinn Féin the Workers' Party?

But note the way it is put: 'In the cosmopolitan scenarios adopted by Sinn Féin the Workers' Party, Militant and the two-nationists, the enemies are Republicanism, Catholicism, and Irish capitalism'. Out of your own mouths, comrades of the IRSP, you show I didn't misrepresent you. You identify on one side, yours, Republicanism, Catholicism, and... Irish capitalism.

For myself I am a socialist republican. I defend the Catholics against the British Army and the Orange supremacists. I'll leave the IRSP to defend 'Irish capitalism' as part of the holy trinity!

The national question is not dead. But the idea that the national question is sufficient to itself, that it is the first stage, separable from or counterposed to the working class socialist struggle - that idea was already dead and stinking at the time of James Connolly.

Even in the 1840s, Fintan Lalor proclaimed that the land question contained the seeds of liberation for the Irish people and the national question alone did not. Today it is the class question.

Unify

The IRSP writers state that national unity and independence are the two tasks of the national revolution. This would certainly hold for backward, pre-capitalist societies. But Ireland is not such a society.

The Irish bourgeoisie have shown themselves historically incapable of uniting Ireland's people or territory. Split themselves, they have had different relations with British imperialism, but both segments of the divided Irish bourgeoisie have, in their different ways, helped to perpetuate the communal divisions that imperialism fostered or created in Ireland.

The problem is to unify the Irish working people - and to conduct the national liberation and socialist movement in such a way as to achieve this unity, or at least to maximise the chances of achieving it.

The main charge I made against the IRSP (and others) about their activity

THE LESSONS

appropriate grounds that it had shed its internationalism; 17 years before Connolly's Irish Citizen Army took up arms against the British Crown.

More specifically, Connolly was ostracised by British socialists for his stand on Irish sovereignty and armed struggle in 1916, something which Lenin defended to the hilt.

Polemic

Secondly, Connolly's polemic was pitched against the late 19th century invincibles who in the middle of perhaps the only Irish generation not to launch a serious armed assault against British rule emphasised political adherence to physical force without seriously engaging in either political or physical struggle.

Connolly understood this and criticised it. But what O'Mahony, like other British socialists before him has done is to use that understandable criticism to condemn present day revolutionaries engaged in both types of struggle. Anyone who wishes to compare the invincibles and this generation to the IRA or INLA is either seriously misinformed or maladjusted or both.

Yes we distinguished between Fianna Fail and Fine Gael in the election. The latter earned full backing of all sections of unionism, the British media and such as Conor Cruise O'Brien.

Workers in the 26 counties also distinguish between the two in a similar way as do the British working class between the two main imperialist parties in Britain. One, Labour, bases much of its appeal on the aspirations

of the working class while the Tories make no such pretence. In Ireland Fianna Fail pitches much of its propaganda at workers and small farmers (partly through economic and partly through republican propaganda) while basing itself primarily on Irish capitalism and thereby ultimately on imperialism. Fine Gael, once again makes no attempt to even pretend to be in favour of either workers or the republic in the same way as do Fianna Fail.

Fianna Fail not the IRSP, is the nearest thing to a populist party in Ireland today. Doubtless O'Mahony would riposte by pointing to sociological and even class difference between Fianna Fail and British Labour (the fact that they are in different countries may occur to him).

What he cannot do is dispute the essential political and historical division between Fianna Fail and Fine Gael; a division which most closely approximates to that between Labour and Tory in his own country.

Wrong

An understanding of Irish class politics demands more than the trite label 'green tory' used to describe Fianna Fail. Such an understanding would also explain why the phrase 'Irish People' which the Marxist O'Mahony objects to, is as legitimate as that of the 'Irish working class'.

The former implies a republican potential; the latter implies a republican socialist one. In Britain it would be wrong to appeal to the British people, for obvious reasons. But, and this is deliberate repetition — we live in Ireland a country

dominated by imperialism.

The fact is that both Fianna Fail and British Labour have aspired to the description designated to Fianna Fail by O'Mahony, i.e. "the main government party of the bourgeoisie for 40 of the last 50 years".

Pious condemnation for making the distinction we have made in Ireland is a little rich coming from someone who, however understandably, has actually joined such a party in Britain.

Distinguish

We distinguish between Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. We also distinguish between ourselves and all bourgeois parties. Does O'Mahony really not understand these distinctions or is he just making political capital from the misconceptions of British reformists? If he does not understand these categories in Irish politics he should cease posturing as some learned Marxist.

Incidentally, from where we stand, there is no difference between imperialism of the respective British governments, be they Labour or Tory. Once again while we do not condemn British socialists for involvement in the British Labour Party it is hard to stomach platitudes from the same quarter on the distinctions we draw between Fianna Fail and Fine Gael.

The IRSP never called for a broad front with Fianna Fail or the national bourgeoisie. A careful perusal of O'Mahony's text and his misleading use of single quotes indicates a Jesuitical mind at work here.

O'Mahony's depiction of IRSP's attitudes during the

hunger strike is similarly dishonest. Unlike others we regarded the main target as Thatcher, not Haughey.

In O'Mahony's previous article on the elections he spoke uncritically of SFWP's left opposition to the government. Since then SFWP have gone into government with Haughey as Taoiseach on the basis that his economic programme is more generous to the working class than that of Labour or Fine Gael. In the same article O'Mahony dismissed the IRSP's election effort by quoting two of the three lowest voting figures achieved by our candidates.

We realise the limitations put on British socialists arguing inside the party of Mason and Concannon (incidentally, whatever happened to the threatened campaign to oust Concannon) but your coverage of Ireland could at least bear some resemblance to socialist reality.

We sincerely hope that your readers and supporters inside the British Labour Party do not derive any inspiration from such 'left' philosophy.

Arguments

In summary: the development or degeneration of SFWP and Irish Labour has to be seen against the arguments inside the Irish working class of the 26 counties on how to provide jobs, houses and a general level of prosperity.

The arguments are the same as they have always been in oppressed countries. One argument says that investment, financial solvency and so on can only be provided by outside forces.

The alternative argument is republican and claims that

only an independent nation can properly provide such things in the long run.

The socialist republican viewpoint is that only in the framework of independence can socialism develop. And vice-versa. Put crudely, how can the working class control the forces of production without controlling the nation?

At the same time one cannot separate the struggles for independence from workers' emancipation. This has led in the past to the failure of both struggles.

O'Mahony would have us walk right into this trap. While condemning De Valera's message that labour must wait he turns it around to conclude that the republic must wait. We wish for neither to be postponed and unlike straight nationalists or British economists refuse to counterpose one to the other.

Today much of the Irish labour movement is still polarised by this false choice. SFWP believe that to be socialist involves rejecting everything not 'much of a republican tradition'. Part of

their appeal is to sections of the working class who fear that the development of republicanism will jeopardise investment from outside.

Instead of combatting such fears as they did some ten years ago, SFWP is their replacement of the Irish Labour Party whose abandonment of the national question has always deprived them of majority support inside the Irish working class, the industrial working class in particular. Labour are now, ironically, under electoral threat from a new, mark 2 model of Labour in the shape of SFWP.

The essential political debate inside the Irish left today has not changed since the turn of the century. On

one hand there are those who see the way forward via British methods of class struggle within the status quo of imperialist domination. On the other hand revolutionaries in Ireland realise the centrality of the national question in Irish class politics.

Over 60 years ago that debate was exemplified in the Connolly-Walker controversy. Walker demanded that Connolly and his Irish Socialist Republican Party reject their backward nationalism and join with the army of British Labour. Is John O'Mahony issuing the same invitation? What was that remark by Karl Marx about history repeating itself?

BLOCKS STRUGGLE

John O'Mahony
replies to the
IRSP

in the South is that their tailing Haughey militates against the action that could be taken in the South which would react back on the North and help change the situation of chronic communal antagonism there — action on the lines of socialist politics, according to the model of the international class struggle (which the writers ridiculously call 'British').

There are, after all, two different types of 'two nationalism'. There are those who see Orange reaction as the legitimate expression of a 'Protestant nation'. And there are those who pursue the national struggle as a purely national struggle, on the basis of the historic Catholic-based Irish nationalism of the last 150 years which has not attracted the Protestant people. They pursue the national struggle only as a struggle of the existing 'nationalist population', implicitly forever excluding the 25% Protestant minority as outside the Irish nation.

Conceive

Thus they can conceive of 'anti-imperialist' unity with Charles J Haughey or someone like him; they can choose 'nationalist' unity as against working class unity, North and South. This is Catholic two-nationism.

It is the technique of defining out again — this time used to forget about one million Protestant Irish men and women, most of them proletarians.

Opposite

This 'Catholic two-nationism' is the opposite of the Republicanism of Wolfe Tone and Patrick Pearse, not to speak of James Connolly.

'The Border' is a social institution, the product of the interaction of British imperialism, the Catholic Irish majority, and of the Orange community. The writers use it to explain everything. It must itself be explained.

Divisions

It was only possible for British imperialism to do what it did and continues to do to Ireland because it found or created communal divisions in the Irish people. The problem for Irish revolutionaries, for socialist republicans, is to combine the struggle against imperialism with socialist struggles inside Ireland that will unify the Irish working class and link it to the small working farmers, against those in Ireland who, north and south, have been the imperialist garrison, the bourgeoisie.

Thus the politics of the

IRSP have no chance of actually removing the border. In 60 years right-wing Republicanism (which had, at one time, some ruling-class support) and populist republicanism, have not been able to remove the Border. That's the problem that we are arguing about!

Define away

I don't say: fight for workers' power in the south and 'hope' the Border disappears. I say: fight for workers' power in Ireland, and unify the Irish working class, North and South, on the politics of socialist anti-imperialism, linking and uniting the struggles in the North and the South while taking due account of the different conditions.

Abandon the Catholic two-nationist politics which lead you to talk and act as if one million Irish Protestants do not exist (and the political method that seeks to 'define them away' with political labels like Unionist, pro-imperialist, etc.) Stop extrapolating your political programme from the exigencies and limits of commitment to an immediate physical-force solution. Stop making the physical-force struggle the all-shaping core of your politics — not a tool but a fetish, the overriding commitment to which undercuts and devours your socialism and even your nationalism

(in Tone's sense or Pearse's).

Only

I do not say that this is an easy road, or that it offers the prospect of quick results. But it is the only socialist republican road.

The IRSP policy of united fronts with Fianna Fail (or left wing Fianna Fail, or rank and file Fianna Fail, or Blaney's independent Fianna Fail) decisively turns its back on these politics.

Influenced

Comrades of the IRSP, you do not meet the Border 'head on': you called for a vote for the party that has been the garrison of imperialism and Irish capitalism on one side of the Border for 50 years.

It is utter nonsense to say 'Irish class divisions break down... along mainly national lines' — as if Fianna Fail is part of the 'proletarian nation' and the Northern Protestant workers are — what? And this from people who accuse me of 'two-nationism'!

When James Connolly wrote what I quoted, he was influenced by one of the precursors of communism within the Second International, Daniel De Leon. Plainly he was not just referring to the heroic terrorist sect, the Invinc-

ibles.

The writer seems to think that James Connolly ceased to be a socialist first on Easter Monday 1916. This is the view that the Irish bourgeoisie have peddled since they made James Connolly, after his death, one of their plaster-of-paris icons.

Yet James Connolly told some of the Citizen Army men in 1916: "The chances are a thousand to one against us, but in the event of victory hold onto your rifles as those with whom we are fighting may stop before our goal is reached".

Connolly was a revolutionary socialist who understood the importance of the national question in Ireland. He was not a born-again Irish nationalist who subordinated socialism to nationalism, or put it away from him 'for the duration'.

Committed to the view that there had to be two distinct stages in the Irish revolution — first national liberation, then socialism — the Stalinists developed their own version of this. The IRSP, following through the right wing logic of their politics, now pick it up.

It is simply not true — as the events of the election prove — that the IRSP engages in both political and physical-force struggle, in James Connolly's tradition. In basic substance, the IRSP in the

election was hardly distinguishable from bourgeois politics, despite the rhetoric.

The writers know what is wrong with the comparison of Fianna Fail and the Labour Party. The Labour Party has a working-class character, despite the bourgeois politics of its leaders and despite its role as a governing party of British imperialism, because it is rooted in the bedrock working-class organisations, the trade unions, responsive to them, and potentially under their control. Fianna Fail is a machine, originated by ex-revolutionaries, which relies on a certain populist and Republican appeal.

It is a radically different social organism. It is 'in a different country', but it certainly isn't the Irish equivalent of the Labour Party!

The writers' defence of Fianna Fail against the 'trite label' Green Tory is as instructive as the holy trinity of Republicanism, Catholicism, and Irish capitalism. So is the notion — in 1982 — that the 'Irish people' implies a republican potential distinct from the socialist republican one implied in the term 'Irish working class'. An Irish people that includes Fianna Fail and not the Northern working class majority? An Irish socialist republic coming after 'the republic'?

First the Republic, then the Socialist Republic, as the ideological precursors of the IRSP, the right wing of the Republican Congress, put it in the mid-1930s?

I gave quotations to back up what I said about the IRSP's attitude to a broad front with Fianna Fail. Other Jesuitical minds reading Socialist Organiser can check for themselves (Socialist Organiser, March 4, 1982).

There were higher figures for the IRSP than I quoted. Anyone who thinks that 800 (Dublin West) is qualitatively higher than the 343 and 232 which I cited as examples, is free to accuse me of misrepresentation (in fact, it was a slip-up).

The writers say: "O'Mahony wants to revive old battles fought" over 10 years ago.

In the present state of the Republican movement and of the Catholic revolt in the Six Counties, only a stern devotion to an inner vision can lead the writers to the conclusion that the debates of the late '60s and early '70s about the relation of socialism and the Republican movement are a matter of history, decided in favour of the physical-force republicans.

Quite the opposite. The impasse in Northern Ireland makes them burning questions of the moment.

Writeback One-day strike a 'criminal demand'?



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.

POLISH SOLIDARITY

THE articles in Socialist Organiser on the recent conference of the Polish Solidarity Campaign require amplification in some respects.

A major issue at the AGM was whether PSC objectives were to be revised to contain an explicit call for a break with the state run "unions" and political parties within the Warsaw Pact.

SO supporters argued for the adoption of this position as policy, but against its inclusion in the constitution.

In the event, however, a strident plea by Robin Blick secured its inclusion in the constitution, despite the argument that such a course pointed the Campaign in the direction of becoming a sect rather than a broad based movement.

While Robin Blick and his supporters were hellbent on having this demand included in the objectives whatever the cost in terms of support, at the other extreme was the IMG who argued that this demand be contained neither in the objectives nor in the policies of the Campaign.

At a recent meeting of the Glasgow Committee, some IMG comrades argued that this is a purely tactical question; others, that such a demand "smacked of Reaganism", or exaggerated the differences between the "trade unions" within and outside the Soviet bloc.

Such an abysmal failure to get to grips with the phenomenon of Stalinism reveals a frightful intellectual paralysis within the ranks of the IMG. Years of hero-worship of the recent host to the conference of the Soviet bloc "trade unions", Fidel Castro, has blunted their political perceptions.

Searching desperately for progressive features of the

"workers' states", they opposed blacking until forced upon them by the insistence of the demands of the representatives of Solidarnosc, and they now make a futile effort to artificially wall off the struggle in Poland from the obvious collaboration of the other Warsaw Pact regimes in ensuring the crushing of Solidarnosc and the installation of Jaruzelski.

They are also now attempting to disaffiliate local committees from the national Polish Solidarity Campaign, seeking to substitute a campaign built around the labour movement conference argued for by the Manchester Committee.

Can this be justified? Of course there were aspects of the AGM of which we would be highly critical, including the sectarian attacks upon "Leninists".

But anti-Leninists are not necessarily anti-socialists. Leninism is a distinctly minority strand in socialist thought in Britain today. Its adherents should beware of trying to depict all those who castigate our theory and practice of organisation as being necessarily pro-capitalist.

No one can deny the fruitful activity undertaken by the Polish Solidarity Campaign over the last 18 months. None of the socialist groups can hold a candle to the PSC in terms of fighting on behalf of the Polish people.

Those who refuse to recognise that, who want to break away and form their own rump organisation, are both afraid of putting their own inadequate ideas to the test and guilty of weakening the Polish solidarity movement in Britain.

IAN McCALMAN
Secretary, Glasgow Polish Solidarity Campaign
(in a personal capacity)

I WOULD like to express support for Andy Dixon's recent comments [Letters, SO 78] on the inadequacy of calling for one-day general strikes.

As comrade Dixon points out in his letter, a general strike is "one of the most powerful weapons" which the class possesses. A general strike situation by its very nature poses the question of power in society, given the fact that whole areas of the administration of society are taken out of the hands of the bourgeoisie and placed under working class control.

Essential services, such as electricity for hospitals etc., would be organised by the working class, for example; similarly, it would be pickets, not management and their factory police, who decided what and who entered and left workplaces. And the kind of mass picketing occurring during a general strike would make the functioning of bourgeois 'law and order' [such as Tebbit's anti-union laws] inoperable.

Revolutionaries relate to such a situation by seeking to maintain — and extend — the inroads made into capitalist rule by the striking working class. Calling for a one-day general strike is to do the opposite: it is to set limits in advance

to the potential of a general strike.

In fact, it is even worse: it is to reject in advance any attempt to develop the possibilities of a general strike. [Or else it is dishonest: call for a one-day general strike because this sounds more 'realistic', but once they're out, then argue to stay out indefinitely].

Relaxing

What threat does a one-day general strike pose to the bourgeoisie? None at all. They can spend the day relaxing, then go back to the Stock Exchange, the banks, etc. the next day, knowing that everything is as it was before.

And calling for a general strike, of any kind, in relation to the third reading of Tebbit's Bill in Parliament is particularly useless. The fact that some MPs will go out through one door at the division, and others through another door, is utterly irrelevant to the working class. But that is all that is involved in the third reading of the Bill.

Impact

What will make an impact on the working class, however, is the first occasion on which an at-



Murray: wait until the Tebbit Law is used...

empt is made to actually use the Act. Such an event — not MPs pottering about in Parliament — is the kind of spark that could unleash a general strike.

But the reply to comrade Dixon's letter fails to take up such points. Instead of looking at the question of one-day general strikes as wrong in principle, the reply merely looks at the question from a 'tactical' point of view: the working class is demoralised, there's not been any campaigning about the Bill, so an all-out general strike isn't on. What's needed are

one-day general strikes to mobilise the class etc. etc.

The reply is right about the successes hitherto of the Tories anti working class offensive, the do-nothing attitude of the TUC, etc. But this in no way validates the call for one-day general strikes as opposed to an all-out general strike.

To say it is wrong to call right now, this very minute, for an immediate indefinite general strike is one thing; but to argue that therefore the demand which should be raised is for a one-day

general strike is irrational, since it fails to consider how pernicious such a demand for a limited general strike is by its very nature.

Instead of raising this criminal demand, what we should argue for is an indefinite general strike on the first occasion that the Tories try to put Tebbit's Bill into operation.

STAN CROOKE,
Glasgow.

REPLY: Stan Crooke describes very clearly what happens in a full general strike, and shows why during a general strike any proposals by the reformists or the bourgeoisie that would cut across the logical growth and development of the struggle would be fought tooth and nail by serious socialists.

But why is it unprincipled for the movement to flex its muscles in a limited, set way, with warning actions like a one-day general strike?

Stan Crooke surely will support demonstrations as limited actions against Tebbit. But would he support strike action to back up the lobby of Parliament on April 29, for example? Or would he insist that all demonstrations must be at weekend for fear of breaking the taboo on one-day strikes?

Such a mobilising, self-discovering action might well be the work of limited militant sections of the labour movement. The stoppages on May 1 1969 were of that sort. They nevertheless established the rank and file resistance to Wilson's anti-union legislation as a force to be reckoned with. Was it unprincipled to call for this action?

In some circumstances a one-day strike can be an attempt to restrict real possibilities of an all-out general strike. But Stan Crooke himself recognises that an immediate all-out general strike call is not on the agenda. So his 'all or nothing' alternative reduces to... nothing, until the Tebbit law is used.

This position parallels Len Murray's — with the important difference, of course, that Stan Crooke really wants to fight for all-out action, and Murray is faking.

But the first use of the Tebbit law will not necessarily be as spectacular as the jailing of the dockers in 1972, nor directed against a section as ready to fight back as the dockers. Look at the experience with the Prior Law.

If — for whatever reason — we fail to fight the TUC's passivity now, then we have no chance of fighting their faking when the law is used.

No national solution to Polish struggle

SINCE the front page article of SO 67 on Poland I have been considering the correctness of one of the slogans posed, namely: "Independent Socialist Poland", mentioned again in the current issue of the paper (re TILC bulletin).

I see the usefulness of this formula in differentiating and rightly distancing ourselves from the nationalistic/religious/anti-socialist elements supporting Solidarnosc for their own reactionary reasons; but does the full implication of this formula represent a true revolutionary position?

Implies

It seems to me that it implies (correctly) support for a socialist Poland free of the control of Warsaw Pact bureaucracies and of ties with Western Imperialism.

However, the way this is

posed could be read to imply the notion of the development of a separate socialist Poland which would then allude and give credence to the revisionist theory of "socialism in one country".

Betrays

For almost sixty years the world working class has been suffering the betrayals of Stalinism; and this theory which represents a turn away from revolutionary Marxism developed as an ideological justification for the privileged role of the growing Soviet bureaucracy after the disastrous dislocation of the economy of the first workers' state suffered as a consequence of the war against the counter-revolutionary armies of intervention, the brunt of which being borne by the Soviet proletariat.

To counter this implication then is of course necessary since it is also as important to differentiate ourselves from any seemingly ideologically Stalinist position. This would be possible and correct I think if we substituted the formula: "Independent Workers' Poland".

Whilst this may appear to some as pedantic, I think it has the advantage of not only carrying the implication of working class independence from imperialism and from the Stalinist bureaucracies (including Poland's own parasitic bureaucracy) but also doesn't give any false revisionist and/or reformist impressions that Poland can exist alone as a socialist country by, for instance, its workers overthrowing their bureaucratic yoke and breaking ties with finance capital.

Such a development is of course progressive, giving a

democratic transitional society based upon nationalised property and production relations that would be under the control and management of workers' councils, but still not a developed socialist society — hemmed in on all sides by on the one hand the remaining Stalinist states and on the other the still predominantly capitalist world. (However the objective situation that as a result would flow from such a development would open up very favourable conditions for the world working class).

Finally, I hope I haven't laboured the point but what I'm trying to say is that "Independent Socialist Poland" may have unwanted and quite unintended implications whereas I feel "Independent Workers' Poland" does not.

Yours comradely,
BRYAN EDMANDS
Coventry

LPYS mistake

YOUR report of the LPYS conference which appeared in last week's paper was very good. It seems support for the real 'ideas of Marxism' is growing in the LPYS. However one aspect was unfortunately missed.

In the debate on the Falklands supporters of Class Fighter voted for the Militant resolution which called, among other things, for labour movement blacking of trade with Argentina.

Intend

After the debate, supporters of Class Fighter rightly pointed out that we were wrong to vote for this. Although Militant undoubtedly meant their proposal as a labour movement blacking of trade with Argentina, they intended to use it as a means of attacking the Labour Party and the Labour movement.

I think that while we should separate ourselves from the position put by the supporters of Revolution Youth at the conference, arguing Argentine sovereignty rights before the war even started, we must make our position honest and clear.

We made a mistake, like any genuine Marxist movement we are prepared to admit it and learn from it.

Another omission was the important fact that the LPYS conference voted to back the protest in support of the Bradford 10 — black youths arrested during last summer's riots — on April 26, 1981 from outside Leeds Central Jail.

The Class Fighter meeting at the conference was focused on the Bradford 10 with a speech on the defence campaign from Andy Dixon.



Crisis watch

THE DAYS when you could call in the US Marines to solve international disputes are over", a banker wearily observed to the Financial Times last week. "The subtleties of life are such that these instruments are no longer usable and we as banks have to recognise that we are pawns and will be used in warfare".

His comment underlines the fact that alongside Thatcher's waving of rather rusty sabres, a huge weight of economic pressure is being mounted for a settlement in the South Atlantic. And the way that is done relies on, and highlights,

the close weave of the network of economic connections in world capitalism.

Apart from persuading the EEC to block trade with Argentina, Britain has frozen Argentine assets.

Merchant bankers Schroder Wagg — apparently knowing about the Falklands invasion in advance — shunted all its Argentine loans off to Zurich on April 1. (So much for the banks being pawns!) But the freeze has effects.

As the Financial Times explained, "Banks from countries which have no dispute with Argentina have found their international

operations severely disrupted merely because they happened to channel business through London".

There are a lot of banks in that position. London is by far the world's biggest banking centre, accounting for about a quarter of the world total of banking business.

As Bob Sutcliffe explains on page 4, the economic sanctions against Argentina could have a crippling effect on its already disastrous economy.

Bob Sutcliffe also explains that the sanctions are double-edged: capitalism relies on a smooth and

rapid flow of finance round the world, and the jolt of a blockage can cause bankruptcies and slumps.

But the double-edged character of the sanctions is also a pressure for a solution. The big bankers and bosses all over the world, while not caring a hoot for the people of the Falklands or the people of Argentina, will want to get trade and finance flowing smoothly again.

Even if imperialism can no longer control affairs as it wishes with the Marines, it is still a formidable machinery of economic power.

Human beings fighting for socialism

Simon Hunt reviews 'REDS'

'REDS' is a film about an American revolutionary called John Reed. He went to Russia in 1917 to witness the revolution, was won to it, and became a communist. He wrote a great book about it, 'Ten Days that Shook the World', which you should all read.

The unusual feature about the film is its portrayal of the revolution. Other films which show the revolution, like Dr Zhivago, show the middle class going down. This film shows the workers and peasants moving up.

It also shows the participants of the revolution not as hard-faced Bolsheviks, but human beings fighting for socialism.

If you expected the film to be a love story, you're right. The film is spoiled, really, by the cynical portrayal of Louise Bryant as the devoted wife, who trudges through the snow to support her man. In fact she didn't go to Moscow to see John Reed in 1921, and was much more independent than the sexist portrayal shows her.

I found the film very inspiring. The portrayal of the revolution, with the storming of the Winter Palace, makes you want to



John Reed and Louise Bryant

State and revolution

Bob Fine introduces Lenin's 'State and Revolution'

LENIN wrote his classic text on the state amid the turmoil of 1917. The czar had fallen in February, Kerensky was at the head of a bourgeois provisional government in Russia, the war was continuing to wreak devastation, the threat of counter-revolution was looming under the banner of General Kornilov, and the Bolsheviks - though suppressed by the 'democratic' state - were winning new adherents in droves.

At first the attitude of the Bolsheviks was to restrain these popular demands by defending the 'democracy'. Lenin's 'State and Revolution' was part of his effort to move the Bolshevik leadership to the left and to counter the influence of reformist ideas: he argued that the soviets could become the base of a workers' and peasants' government going beyond the narrow limits of bourgeois democracy.

The revolution, Lenin argues, requires not only a transformation of economic relations (from private to collective ownership of the means of production), and not only a transfer of power from one class to another (from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat); but also a transition from one form of power to another.

The old state form of power must be smashed by the working class: a new political form appropriate for the economic emancipation of labour must be set up in its place.

The bourgeois state is a 'special' form of power, standing 'above' the people, sucking the blood of society with its parasitic bureaucracy, police, courts and army.

This power 'above' society must be brought down to earth. The narrow horizons of bourgeois democracy must be broken - not to do away with democracy but to extend it.

All officials, Lenin argues, should be elected and subject to recall; all officials should receive average workers' wages; the judiciary, the police, the bureaucrats should become accountable directly to the people.

The army should be turned from a public power above the people into the

Socialist Bookshelf

Books and pamphlets that you should read

people armed.

This extension of democracy from bourgeois law and parliamentarism into direct popular participation must be the immediate fruit of the seizure of state power.

'State and Revolution' portrays vividly and simply the basic Marxist position on democracy. Marxists are not cynical about democracy. Unlike reformist socialists, we struggle to push democracy far beyond a vote for parliamentarians every five years.

'State and Revolution' is not the last word on the state. It was unfinished, written in a hurry and had to rely on Marx and Engels' scattered notes on the state (neither was able to achieve their intended project of complementing their critique



of political economy with a parallel critique of law and the state). But as a starting point for understanding the bourgeois state in all its forms, 'State and Revolution' is unsurpassed.

TRESPASSERS WILL BE CELEBRATED



JAKE JACKSON, SO supporter and member of the socialist walking and climbing club Red Rope, looks at the Kinder Tresspass.



"It was a great day for the rambling movement. After a hard day's work in Manchester the finest rambling country was closed to us because a few individuals wanted to shoot grouse a few days a year. Our united action won the day and helped to force the landowners to negotiate."

That is Bernard Rothman describing the mass trespass of the moorland of Kinder Scout in Derbyshire, the Duke of Devonshire's 'private garden' and still privately owned.

Bernard was jailed for four months for his part in the trespass. That was in 1932.

This weekend on April

24, working people from all over the country will assemble in the North Derbyshire village of Hayfield to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Mass Tresspass on Kinder Scout.

50 years ago the tresspass was planned to start in

Mayfield, but the police prevented it. They tried to serve an injunction on Bernard, but he evaded them on his bicycle. Undeterred by the police, the walkers moved off towards Kinder, stopping for a meeting in a quarry on the way. They agreed to stick together, and offer no violence to gamekeepers or police.

Though they were met with violence from gamekeepers on their climb up, they brushed them aside, meeting up with other ramblers from Sheffield and Stockport at the summit.

On their return to Hayfield they were met by the police, who arrested six of them. They were brought before a jury packed with landowners at Derby, and

were convicted of 'riotously assembling to disturb the public'. The unfortunate six were given jail sentences totalling 17 months.

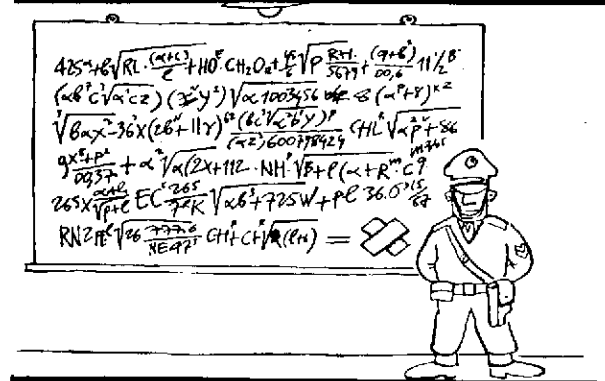
Even so it wasn't till 1949 that a law was introduced allowing some access. And today there are still large expanses of land in the Peak District, Wales and Scotland where there is no public access; over 1,000 square miles are held by the Ministry of Defence.

Red Rope will be holding a meeting over this weekend and discussing the question of a socialist policy on land and access. If you live near Kinder Scout, why not grab your SOs and come out for a walk?

Red Rope can be contacted at 46 Ada House, Pritchards Road, London E2. Phone 01-739 6668.

Chimps refute chauvinists

by Les Hearn



SCIENCE

A RECENT article in the Guardian about the discovery of direct evidence of meat-eating by hominids (human-like creatures) of 2 million years ago in East Africa, claimed that feminists would be upset because this discovery touched on "a highly sensitive and emotional" argument about hominid diet and the organisation of early society. So what's it all about?

The traditional view that the development of cooperative hunting groups of males was decisive in the development of tools (weapons), language

(to coordinate the hunt) and society (the hunting group plus their 'dependents').

However, there is no evidence for this whatsoever.

True, in nearly all hunting societies today, it is the men who hunt (though in a few like the Agta of the Philippines, women also hunt - our traditional anthropologists have no explanation for this).

Also, our closest relatives, the chimpanzees, sometimes hunt, and it is the males who do this.

But there is no evidence that tools were first invented for hunting - to the contrary, as we shall see later.

Elimination of male supremacist "Just so" stories by feminists has revealed the emperor in a state of undress. In most modern hunter-gatherer societies, the gathering of vegetable, fruit and nuts by women and children is more important than the provision of meat by the

men.

As Richard Leakey pointed out in a recent episode of The Making of Mankind, the women of the !Kung bushpeople of Southern Africa gather more than enough food to satisfy the needs of both sexes. The men seem to go hunting because they enjoy it and their contribution to the diet is seen as a luxury (the equivalent of earning "pin-money").

Using arguments like this, feminists have claimed that early humans were predominantly vegetarian and that women were the main (or at least equal) breadwinners. It seems to me that this is a "highly sensitive and emotional" argument - for male chauvinists who resent the toppling of MAN from his pedestal of breadwinner, protector and originator of civilisation.

Now Glynn Isaac, a professor of anthropology in San Francisco, has discovered evidence of

tool marks on animal bones in East African fossil deposits. Aha! Man the hunter! The feminists are wrong!

But unfortunately for the male chauvinists, it has not been denied that some hunting went on - the question is how important was it in determining the organisation of society? After all, chimps also hunt but they are a mainly vegetarian species.

Perhaps we can get some clues about our own past by considering some recent research on chimps, who after all have very similar genes to us (99% identical). It seems that their behaviour and abilities are quite similar to ours.

Thus, chimps can learn a sign language and even invent new words (including swear-words) in it. At least one chimp has been shown to be able to count up to four and recognise proportions of 1/4, 1/2, 3/4, and 1.

They also display self-

awareness - unlike any other species but ourselves and orang-utans, they will recognise mirror reflections of themselves. In the wild, chimps use a variety of tools, throwing sticks at their enemies, using them as whips, levers, tooth-picks and probes to get termites out of nests.

They use larger sticks and stones as hammers, chewed up leaves as sponges and whole leaves as toilet paper!

Now researchers in chimp behaviour (Christopher and Hedwige Boesch of Zurich) in the Ivory coast have found a particularly complex type of tool use.

The local chimps like to eat coula and panda nuts, but first they have to break the hard shells with a wooden or stone hammer.

Coula nuts may be collected in the trees and then broken on the ground, or the Chimp may take a hammer into the trees, collect some nuts and then find a flat branch for an

anvil. Here, it performs a complicated juggling trick so it can crack and eat each nut, without dropping the hammer or the other nuts (presumably this is to avoid having to share its nuts).

Panda nuts are harder and have to be cracked on the ground with a stone first with powerful strokes to break the shell and then accurate hits to get the kernels out intact. Now, while opening coula nuts on the ground is done by both sexes, the more complex tasks of cracking coula nuts in the trees or cracking panda nuts are performed almost entirely by females.

So, female chimps are the innovators in tool-use.

If early humans developed similarly to chimps, then females may well have supplied the brains, by inventing new tools. Little consolation for the sensitive and emotional male chauvinist.

Death knell for Rolls plant?

by Stan Crooke

THE final announcement of the complete closure of the Hillingdon Rolls Royce plant in Glasgow with a workforce of over 4,000 is now clearly only a matter of time.

On Thursday 15 April, every member of the workforce received a letter with their pay packets stating how much he/she would receive if they were to opt for "voluntary redundancy".

According to the letter, the reason for this personal approach was "the continuing interest of employees in the company's voluntary severance terms and the evident reluctance of some employees to make public their interest in the terms."

But the real reason behind the letters is that this move represents part of a continuing softening-up process, paving the way for the plant's eventual closure.

Axed

500 jobs were axed at the close of last year, and another 480 already this year.

Now management have announced that they want a further 400 redundancies.

Whilst hundreds of jobs are disappearing, discipline is being savagely tightened for the remainder of the workforce. Movement between blocks by workers has been banned, the starting and finishing times of breaks are being strictly adhered to, multi-machine manning is being extended throughout the factory, and workers are no longer permitted to have union representatives present when appealing against a sacking.

The clearest indication of the coming closure of the Hillingdon plant is, as Socialist Organiser can exclusively report, the management's proposed withdrawal from the firm's pension fund: £12 million is to be withdrawn during the first six months of 1982 and a further £35 million during the second six months for the purposes of "early retirement and other contingencies".

Management strategy at Hillingdon is clear: weaken opposition to complete closure by a series of phased redundancies; make working conditions so intolerable that the remainder are glad to get out; and use withdrawals from the pension fund to buy off any opposition to closure.

Such a strategy tallies

with the contents of the Rolls Royce Annual Report published just a fortnight ago. The report pointed out that 5,900 jobs had been lost last year and "a comparable decrease is expected in the course of 1982."

The axing of 5,900 jobs would involve the complete closure of one plant (Hillingdon), and a trimming back of the workforce at other plants.

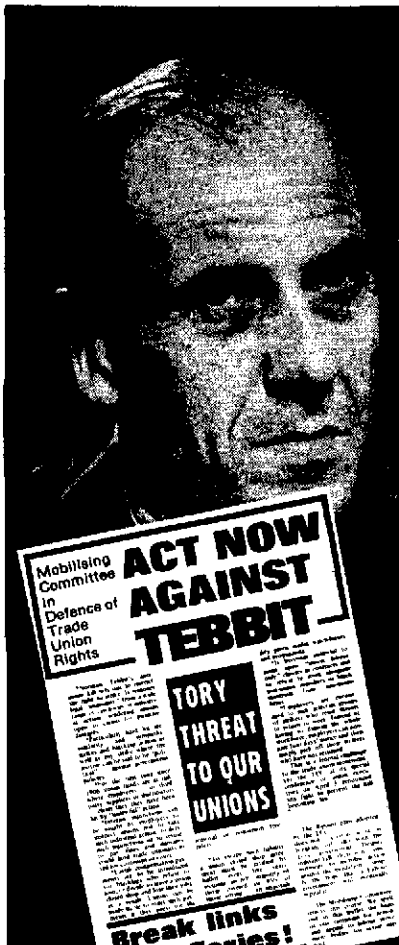
A campaign based on strike action and occupations has to be built to fight both the immediate threat of 400 job losses and also the longer term threat of the plant's eventual closure.

Within Hillingdon itself a campaign to dissuade anyone from going for voluntary redundancy, was demanded by the shop stewards committee. The work of anyone who does take voluntary redundancy should be blacked, with immediate strike action in the event of victimisation.

And support for the fight to safeguard Hillingdon's future must be fought for throughout the combine.

The National Aerospace Liaison Committee of Shop Stewards must also take up the fight, especially in the light of the motion passed at last month's meeting which pledged industrial action in the event of any compulsory redundancies in the aerospace industry.

MOBILISE NOW AGAINST TEBBIT!



THE whole of the labour movement, including the Left, has been slow to react to the Tebbit Bill. But the Mobilising Committee in Defence of Trade Union Rights, initiated at the end of March, has begun to take up the campaign.

A London Mobilising Committee was set up last Wednesday, 14th. It is meeting regularly, preparing a big mailing to London trade union branches; and organising for two public meetings.

Women's Fightback has called a "Women against Tebbit" meeting for May 7 (details, centre page).

And signatures are being collected for the appeal. They include (in personal capacity) Bernard Connolly (crafts convenor, BSC Rotherham), Jeremy Corbyn (NUPE), Abie Courtney (Boilermakers, victimised shop steward Hunterston oil rig site), Ray Davies (ISTC), Jonathan Hammond (president NUJ), Rachel Lever (secretary, Women's Fightback), Steve Longshaw (Laurence Scotts strike committee), Harry McShane, Fraser Neill (AUEW TASS shop steward, BSC Clydebridge), Reg Race MP, Alan Thornett (TGWU deputy senior steward, BL Cowley), Geoff Williams (NUPE, University Hospital, Cardiff).

Information from, and support and donations to: Mobilising Committee, c/o 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.

THERE IS a serious crisis in the struggle against the Tebbit anti-union laws. With the first and second readings of the Bill completed in Parliament and its enactment probable in June, nothing is being done by the TUC, or anyone else, which aims to stop the Bill before it becomes law. The TUC 8-point plan seeks only to deal with the effects of the Bill after it becomes an Act.

The signatories of the statement (organisations and individuals) are not prepared to accept that Tebbit is to be allowed to enact his legislation without active opposition from the trade union movement; such conditions would make it doubly difficult to fight the laws once they are on the statute book.

We therefore pledge ourselves to fight within the trade union and labour movement for action to stop the Tebbit Bill before it becomes law. We intend to do this by enlisting support and campaigning in the trade unions and Labour Party at every level for a policy of:

- a) breaking all links with the Tories now, including withdrawal from the NEDC and other tri-partite committees,
- b) working towards a national one-day strike on the day of the third reading of the Bill as a means of preparing for more extended action when the Bill becomes law.

April 29 deadline

Reg Race MP told Socialist Organiser:

"The guillotine motion says that the Bill has to be through its committee stages and report to the House of

Commons on or before 29 April.

Since they have only reached the very early stage of the Bill in committee, this means the Bill could become law in the next couple of months without there having been a proper debate anywhere!

It's clear that this Bill is so complicated and it's such a legal minefield that needs debating line by line.

Also, since it restricts the most fundamental rights of the trade unions, I think it is a constitutional matter and should in any case have been debated on the floor of the House of Commons.

The Bill itself represents the most fundamental and far-reaching erosion of the rights of the trade union movement since 1906 when trade unions won the right to strike without threat of being sued for damages by the bosses.

Most importantly, the labour movement has to have a major campaign to make sure that we all understand just what the Bill is about. Very few people know what it means - just how far-reaching and vicious it is."



Massey workers in occupation

Victory at Masseys

A mass meeting of workers at Massey Fergusons, Coventry, voted last Thursday to end their occupation of the plant.

They had heard from shop stewards, that following eight hours of talks with management the previous evening, the compulsory redundancies which had sparked the occupation, had now been withdrawn as had management proposals for drastic changes in working practices.

TGWU shop steward

Terry Rollings, told Socialist Organiser, "They withdrew compulsory redundancies on the grounds that they now had enough volunteers, but I think that that was really a face-saving exercise on their part. Really the compulsory redundancies were not the main issue. If they had succeeded in forcing us to accept them, then they would have been able to impose a series of drastic changes in working practices throughout the plant."

"They wanted to introduce a new skilled job - what they call a 'plant fitter'. This job would involve work now being done by electricians, tin-smiths, machine tool fitters, welders and so on. They tried to introduce a plant fitter apprenticeship before but we stopped that."

"We've won a big victory because they've withdrawn these proposals altogether."

Undoubtedly the stand taken by the workers at Masseys has been an important one. As we reported last week, TGWU officials were arguing that they couldn't win and that they should not fight on the issue of compulsory redundancies.

Workers sacked a couple of weeks ago are now re-employed.

It was also not an accident that a large number of stewards were on the compulsory redundancy list. The company clearly hoped to damage shop floor organisation as a prelude to forcing through the new working practices.

Mellish: two fingers at Labour

Peter Tatchell told Socialist Organiser.

BOB MELLISH, the Labour MP for Bermondsey has put out a statement of support in the May elections for three independent candidates - one Labour Party member, one who previously claimed to be voting Labour, and one who is said to be of no party. These have got Bob Mellish's backing against the official Labour candidates.

Some of the Labour candidates have worked hard for many years to get Bob Mellish elected, and see this as very disloyal. Everyone in

the Bermondsey Labour Party has worked for Bob Mellish because he was the official Labour candidate - in fact many of us who opposed him within the Party did a lot more work than his right wing cronies. He was very happy to accept our help. We expect some kind of loyalty and support from Bob Mellish in return.

But he has put out a statement of support for these anti-Labour candidates, and has threatened to put out another and to spend two weeks canvassing

for them. We have referred the statement to the Regional and National Labour Party, who are now investigating.

There are also rumours that Bob Mellish will retire from Parliament this year and force a by-election. We will have to wait and see whether it is sabre-rattling. But if he goes ahead it will create a minefield. What are the NEC going to do? Recognise me as the duly selected Labour candidate or impose someone else?

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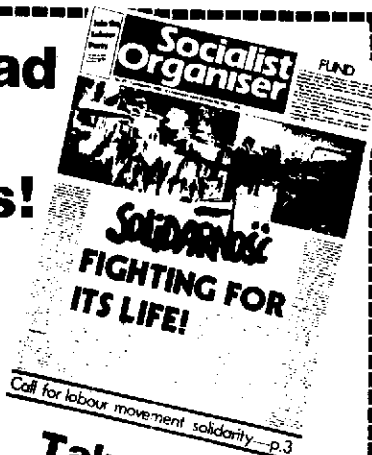
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FUND

£9.50 Hyndburn, £4 Huddersfield, £9 Rochdale, £3 Lambeth and £46 Birmingham - those are the contributions and donations to the regular monthly fund this week. Total - £71.50, or £137.50 altogether this month.

There has been some £200 more in standing order contributions not totalled yet, but even so we're hard doing better than last month.

We can't afford to let the special fund decimate the monthly fund. Send contributions and donations to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL. Cheques payable to Socialist Organiser.

Socialist Organiser

NHS PAY

ALL OUT STRIKES THE WAY TO WIN!

Polish workers defy junta

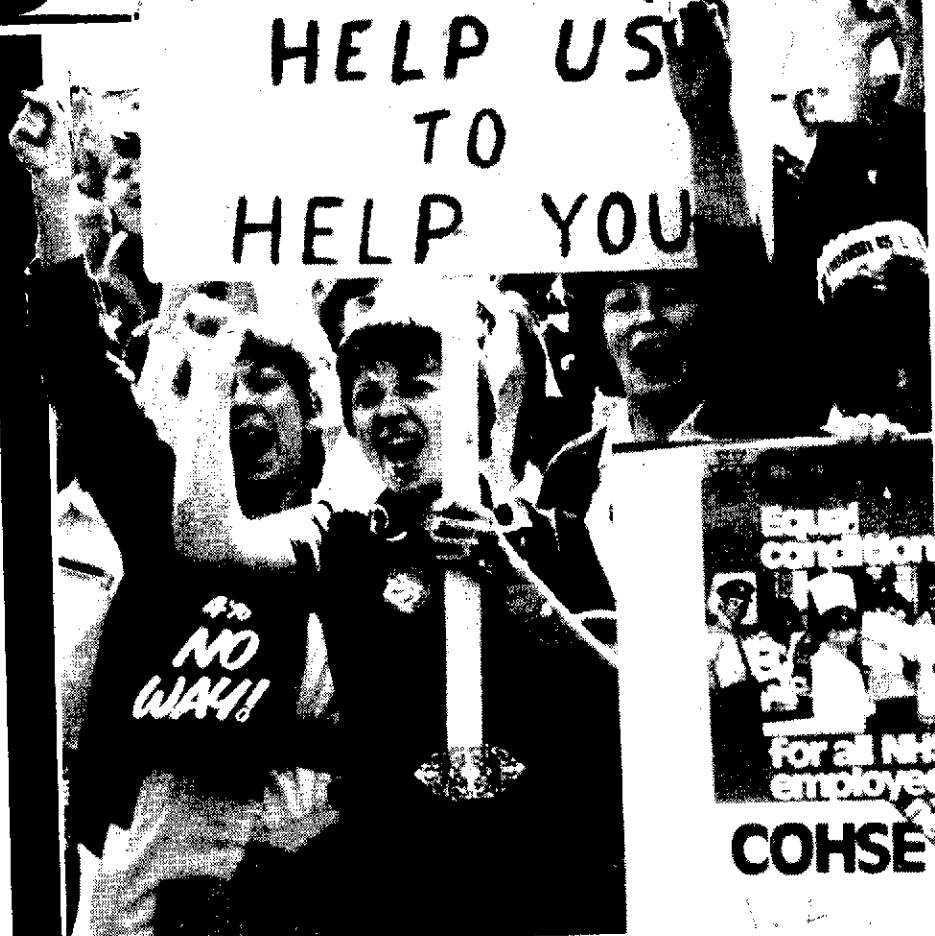
SOLIDARNOSC is not dead. On Friday 16th, 500 demonstrators, bearing candles to the memory of the workers killed by the Jaruzelski regime after the imposition of martial law on December 13, gathered in Warsaw.

They mounted a brave and brief protest before being dispersed by the police.

Protests continue in the factories, too, despite penalties under martial law of three years' jail for any strike action and ten years for other protests.

The Paris daily Le Monde reports that in many factories there is a symbolic one-minute strike on the 13th of each month.

Workers in Britain, where we are still a great deal more free to act, owe it to our class brothers and sisters in Poland to start putting some real teeth into our solidarity with them.



THE saga of this year's NHS pay claim continues, with the main health unions outbidding each other in their efforts to abdicate from any leadership responsibility and leave the members to their own devices.

COHSE leaders were the first in the field. They graciously "authorised" local branches to undertake limited action, including bans on non-emergency admissions and the admission of private patients to NHS hospitals.

But even this action is not to begin until April 26 (a month after the review date). And it is not an instruction but an authorisation to branches, thus ensuring that it will be only patchily implemented.

Now NUPE has gone one better. Under the guise of being ultra-democratic, it's

New Zionist war danger

THE continued instability of the Begin government was underlined this week by the court verdict that Welfare Minister Aharon Abuhatzira is guilty of fraud, breach of trust and larceny.

Begin only has a Parliamentary majority of two for his ruling coalition. Abuhatzira's party has three seats — and his Moroccan Jewish supporters are claiming that the court case was a set-up engineered by Western Jews.

But this pressure, together with the tensions created by the military evictions of fanatical Zionist zealots from settlements in the Northern Sinai, intensifies rather than reducing the danger of new Zionist military adventures.

Begin could well seek to save face by responding to growing demands from the military and other forces that he mount an invasion of Lebanon to crush concentrations of PLO resistance fighters and dispossessed Palestinians.

Fight

Repeated assurances by the government that it has no plans for such an invasion are widely discounted. As one government spokesman pointed out, "If there is ever any plan to strike against the PLO, we won't put it out in a press release".

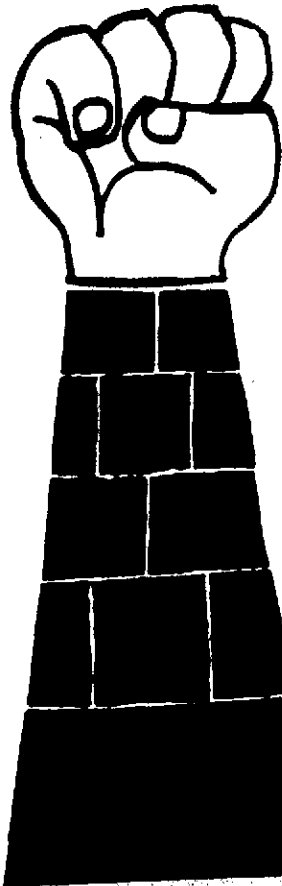
Israeli troops and armour have been moved north, and regularly conduct exercises in a 10-mile stretch of South Lebanon controlled by the Zionists' fascist ally Major Saad Haddad.

Zionist commanders have declared themselves ready to move as far north as Beirut while their US sponsors, fearful of the final collapse of the Camp David 'peace' accords, sit back unable to affect developments without seriously weakening Israel as their principal point of support in the Middle East.

The workers' movement must mobilise against the expansionism and vicious racial oppression of the Zionist state, and provide active support and solidarity to the struggle of the Palestinian masses.



£6000 fund



THE TOTAL of the special fund drive now stands at £1142 (represented by the red patch below).

This week's contributions include £32 raised at a booksale run by Socialist Organiser supporters in the print in Oxford.

In every local group there must be Socialist Organiser readers or supporters with dozens of books on their shelves which they could spare. A small effort could pull in a substantial amount for the fund.

Meanwhile, Lambeth/Southwark supporters are planning a jumble sale for the fund. They reckon this one is sure to beat the £80 they collected in their previous sale.

£10 from Bob Sutcliffe and £10 from Ann Evans also came from Lambeth this week.

Send contributions to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL. Cheques payable to Socialist Organiser.

LOBBY TUC APR 29

Executive has decided to conduct a ballot of its branches asking them to reject the 4% pay offer and indicate whether or not they favour "some form" of industrial action.

The Executive itself does not suggest any forms of action — and proposes to leave it all up to individual branches or even individual hospitals and sections of members to decide what to do.

As one official pointed out, "this could mean action varying from area to area, hospital to hospital".

The only form of action NUPE is ruling out is all-out strike action without emergency cover.

But the whole approach by the Executive is guaranteed to fragment, confuse and demoralise health workers, who in a successful series of 1-hour token strikes

last Wednesday confirmed that they are ready to fight against the Tory 4% limit.

NUPE admits that members are ready to take action, "But they want to be consulted about it first, and they want it to be united".

Yet with bitter memories of the 1978-79 pay campaign, with its patchy, partial strikes and its eventual sell-out in the hands of the Clegg 'comparability' board, health workers are plainly reluctant to become embroiled once again in such half-cock action.

A firm lead from COHSE and NUPE, calling for all-out strikes with a policy of emergency cover under the control of local strike committees would convince health workers that they can win. Other sections of workers — lab technicians and clerical workers — could well then follow suit.

Instead NUPE leader Alan Fisher has done his best to persuade his members that any action will drag on for months, warning that:

"It may not just be a spring offensive. It may well be a summer of discontent".

Yet urgent action is needed. In particular the unions must move swiftly if they are to prevent yet another miserable defeat on nurses' pay which could split the ranks before the fight even starts.

Last year both NUPE and COHSE rejected the government's final offer — only to be outvoted on the "staff side" by leaders of the "professional body" the

RCN.

This year COHSE officials have made noises saying that the unions will 'go it alone', regardless of the RCN. But this must mean taking steps to boycott further talks with management on nurses pay to prevent the offer once again being imposed, and simply paid out to nurses.

The case for a fight is a cast-iron one. Government pay offers to ancillary workers in the last two years — 4% and 8% — mean a 13% cut in living standards. Nurses have faced a 25% cut in living standards. Nurses have faced a 25% cut in living standards since the Clegg awards of 1979. White collar and technical staff face the same pay squeeze.

But in this "do it yourself" pay fight, it is left up to the rank and file to kick their leaders into a struggle.

To this end a lobby has been called of the TUC Health Services Committee which meets on April 29. It is there that union leaders will formulate their plans in the light of the NUPE ballot.

Already, workers in at least one hospital — Littlemore Hospital in Oxford — have voted for a one-day strike on that day to pile pressure on their leaders for all-out action. Other health workers should follow suit.

Let the demand ring out long and loud from NUPE, COHSE and other health union branches for all-out strike action with emergency cover as the way to win the claim.

BL document decision

AS WE go to press, on Wednesday 21st, shop stewards' meetings are being held in many BL plants to discuss the company's new draft disputes procedure document.

AUEW shop stewards and TGWU convenors have met nationally and decided to put the draft back to shop stewards' committees for consultation. But a decision on the document is likely to be taken this Friday (23rd) by the Joint Negotiating Committee — with the shop stewards' committees' opinions expressed only by letter.

The document is wide-ranging. It gives management the right of summary dismissal where they say there

is 'gross industrial misconduct'. It entitles them to impose 'productivity changes' after a 10-day talking period.

It cancels the existing agreement on 100% union membership, and tightens the disputes procedure.

If it is accepted by the JNC, this will be further proof of the cynical bureaucratic willingness of the BL union leaderships to sign sell-out deals with no reference to the wishes of the membership.

