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Zionist hands off Lebanon!

ONE of the world's most ruthless and efficient terrorist outfits moved again into action against a wide range of civilian targets last week — with the full support of the United States administration.

The vicious Zionist regime headed by Menachem Begin launched its long-expected full-scale invasion into Southern Lebanon — brushing aside "peace-keeping" UN troops and pounding not only established Palestinian bases but also refugee camps and the Lebanese capital itself.

The racially-exclusive

state of Israel depends for its survival on the intimidation of the dispossessed Palestinian people and of the surrounding Arab regimes.

It is for this reason that — with colossal US financial support — the Zionists maintain and continually expend a lethal military machine and time and again use it to strike fear into those who would struggle against them.

While the American imperialists would prefer to develop a policy for the Middle East which rests more upon a relationship with the reactionary Arab regimes of Egypt and Saudi Arabia they recognise in the Zionist state a solidly committed, if not always entirely pliable ally.

Just as Reagan's gang was forced after weeks of procrastination to come down squarely behind Thatcher's military adventure in the Falklands so Secretary of State Haig, after initial behind-the-scenes attempts to curb Begin's excesses, has come out openly in support of the Lebanon invasion.

According to Haig, "sovereign states must have the right to self-defence, just as Britain exercises that right today in the Falklands."

So in the arrogant world view of imperialism the "self defence" of sovereign states extends 8,000 miles across the world in the case of the Falklands — and across borders into neighbouring sovereign states in the case of Lebanon!

The workers' movement must vigorously reject such notions and rally to the support of the oppressed Palestinian and Lebanese masses.

Zionist hands off Lebanon!

If Thatcher wins — who loses?

STOP THE SLAUGHTER!

BRITISH artillery continue to bombard Port Stanley, and the Tories and the British commanders are clearly determined to press on to the biggest bloodbath yet in this squalid war.

At the United Nations even the Tories' closest ally, the US — concerned to save face for Galtieri and avoid further disruption of its relations with Latin America — was half favourable to ceasefire proposals.

The UN resolution called for an immediate ceasefire and 'to initiate, simultaneously with the ceasefire, the implementation of' Argentine withdrawal.

But that wasn't good enough for the Tories. They want a bloody and spectacular military victory, at the cost of hundreds of lives of Argentine conscripts and British 'economic conscripts'.

They seem confident of winning — which means establishing a big military base on the islands, perhaps in cooperation with the US.

But the working class will lose out. For British workers, the main enemy in our war — the class war — is the British capitalist class and their state. That enemy will be strengthened.

They will reassert their power to sacrifice hundreds of lives for their prestige and glory. They will reaffirm their ambitions to hold sway as world-wide exploiters.

Last Sunday there were thousands of anti-war placards on the CND Reagan demonstration. Even now the protests from the labour movement must continue, loud and angry.

Stop the slaughter! Unconditional withdrawal of the fleet! Black work for the war effort!



Thousands marched against the Bomb, against Reagan, and against the war

HAILING THE CHIEF

250,000 on Sunday 6th, and thousands more on Monday and Tuesday, demonstrated against Ronald Reagan, warchief of the western world.

Most Labour back-bench MPs stayed away from Reagan's visit to Parliament.

But Michael Foot and the Labour front-bench sat through all the official functions. They listened politely as the man behind El Salvador's military butchers held forth about a 'crusade for freedom'.

They extended their common front with the Tories over the South Atlantic war, and reaffirmed their common front with NATO.

Why? And what should the Labour Left do about it? See page 10, Reagan's war in El Salvador; page 11, campaigning against the Bomb; page 7, time for the Labour Left to take the offensive again.

Officials knife all-out action

by Ellen Taylor

LAST week there was a report in Socialist Organiser that the whole of Sheffield would be out. Up to going to press this was true. NUPE had notified all stewards that any action would be supported and that £12 a week

strike pay would be provided for strikes over two days. Emphasis was placed on this by an NEC member speaking to the Joint Shop Stewards Committee as a let-out for not organising a national strike.

Once we had a commitment from NUPE conference to organise a national strike, the Executive refused to pay strike pay. Regional NUPE officials were informed of this and that all-out action was not on.

Consequently all-out action was not even put to the Middlewood mass meeting.

I visited several picket lines on Friday where workers were confused as to why they weren't on indefinite strike - only two days before they thought that this was what would be happening.

The feeling was of lethargy and disinterest in a one-day action, of really just going through the motions.

Only

On the 9th we will be lobbying the TUC Health Services Committee to call for indefinite action as the only way to get our full claim.

2,000 health workers and their supporters marched through Sheffield in support of their 12% claim. Although not present in any great numbers on the march, 44,000 of Yorkshire's 67,000 miners stopped work in support of the NHS workers.

Weak

This was despite a weak call from the Yorkshire NUM leadership who only asked NUM branches to support the action, instead of calling out the whole area.

Steel workers and engineers locally also gave support.

The mood of the demonstration was determined and enthusiastic. Calls from the platform for an escalation of the action received great support.

The general feeling was that all-out action couldn't be delayed any longer.

Birth of a rank and file group

by Mick Barwood

GROUP 81, the Broad Left grouping in COHSE, has emerged from its first year with a fine fighting record, and a growing list of about 200 supporters.

Our first campaigning issue was the NEC's decision to ignore last year's conference call for affiliation to the National Abortion Campaign.

Our motto - 'Campaigning for Democracy' - was immediately justified, and at conference next week we should win on the abortion rights issue.

Group 81 however would not have survived this past year without a lot of hard work by a small number of people elected to their position at Group 81's first national conference.

Organise within branches and spread the word through the regions was our aim. Regional organisers were elected at last year's conference but unfortunately it did not work out like that.

However Group 81 has lived through disappointments resulting from broken conference promises and we have gone from strength to strength. Mailing lists have grown, and responses to our bi-monthly newsletter have been coming in regularly.

Articles are now being sent in and published from people all over the country, with a wide range of views on the left.

With the number of articles now coming in,

this will soon become a monthly newsletter, bigger and better every time.

We have to recognise that the way forward is through organising at the grass roots of the union, involving our branch members, displaying our fighting resolve and proclaiming our campaign issues at every opportunity.

Ours is not an overnight campaign with a swift and conclusive victory, but a methodical and deliberate fight to win for our members an effective, strong and democratic union organisation and to build COHSE into a socialist trade union.



SOCIALIST ORGANISER ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

DATE: Saturday June 26 and Sunday June 27.

PLACE: Lanchester Polytechnic, Priory St, Coventry.

TIME: 10am to 5pm Saturday, 10 to 4.30 Sunday.

TO DECIDE: perspectives and structure for the Socialist Organiser Alliance over the next year, and to elect the Socialist Organiser Secretariat.

OPEN TO: all paid-up Socialist Organiser supporters (with the right to vote), and observers from trade union branches, Labour Party branches, and other labour movement bodies.

AGENDA: will include workshops on aspects of Socialist Organiser activity, and workshops with invited speakers from the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, the Labour Committee on Ireland, the Solidarnosc Trade Union Working Group, the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights, etc.

AMENDMENTS to resolutions can be submitted up to June 22.

CRECHE: available. Please give as much notice as possible.

FACILITIES FOR DISABLED PEOPLE: available.

Please give us notice of requirements.

CONFERENCE FEE: £4 waged, £1 unwaged. There will be a fund to assist comrades travelling large distances.

WRITE TO: John Bloxam, Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.

Name
Address

*I wish to attend the Socialist Organiser AGM on June 26/27 as a paid-up SO supporter. My local SO group is and my SO supporters card number is I enclose £..... to cover arrears in SO contributions (£1.50 per month minimum waged, 20p unwaged), and £..... conference fee *Our branch (committee, CLP, etc) wishes to send the following comrades as observers to the Socialist Organiser AGM.

..... (names)

We enclose £..... conference fees.

(*delete as appropriate. All cheques payable to Socialist Organiser).

Please send conference literature to the address above. I enclose a stamped addressed envelope.



June 16 action day

THE WALES TUC Health Service Committee has called for a day of strike action in the NHS and a demonstration in Cardiff on Wednesday 16 June.

Miners, seafarers and waterworkers are set to join the health workers on a one-day strike.

South Glamorgan health workers will be taking part in the miners' gala in Cardiff on 12 June and will be lobbying Emlyn Williams and Arthur Scargill to make the day official.

The Wales TUC called off action on 4 June because in South Wales it fell in the same pay week as the one-day strike on 8 June. The 16th was chosen as an alternative date for action.

The RCN's rejection of the 6.4% pay offer proved to be a tremendous shot in the arm and the Tuesday strike was well supported with management again agreeing to cancel routine clinics and surgery.

South Glamorgan Area Personnel Officer Gordon Harry has departed from this line, however, and

threatened to send home COHSE workers in the blood transfusion service for working to rule.

The blood transfusion unit serves six area health authorities in Wales and the staff normally work a 12 hour shift to fit in donating sessions, taking time off in lieu.

Last week they decided to work only their contracted 37½ hours.

By the end of the week the effect will be felt throughout Wales and all routine surgery will have to be cancelled.

Not surprisingly Harry decided to get tough and send the blood transfusion workers home, unless they worked normally.

In response, the Area Joint Shop Stewards Committee has threatened to withdraw all emergency cover if one worker is sent home.

The message is clear. We will not allow any one section of health service workers to become isolated and victimised for taking industrial action.

North West strike and lobby

IN the North West the militancy of the health workers' struggle spilled over to produce an unfamiliar burst of unofficial action in the form of a supporting strike by miners at Agecroft colliery.

Contact had been established with the miners by shop stewards from the nearby Prestwich hospital. On June 8 health workers addressed a meeting in the canteen - including some miners who had already changed ready for the morning shift: they won a near-unanimous vote for strike action, which was then followed by the afternoon shift.

Health union pickets also halted production at three

other Lancashire pits as miners refused to cross picket lines.

Other support came from engineering workers at GEC Trafford Park - where a workplace lunchtime meeting was held - and from local train drivers.

A coachload of Manchester health workers was arranged to travel down to lobby the meeting of the TUC Health Services Committee on June 9, pressing for a policy of all-out strike action.

The struggle was also discussed at a local meeting of the rank and file grouping Health Workers for the Full Claim, at which a South Yorkshire miner and local Labour councillor spoke.

Leicester

HEALTH workers in Leicester mounted pickets on all hospitals on the 4th and the 8th. In this we were supported by Leicestershire miners, who came to the Leicester Royal Infirmary picket line.

On the 4th, at Carlton Hayes hospital all catering staff and domestics were out, with strong picket lines on the gates. At other hospitals the response was more patchy, but there were good turnouts from the Leicester Royal Infirmary and the Leicester City General.

On the 8th, the turnout was similar, with the addition of the ambulance staff. They had said that they would provide only emergency cover, and management had replied that they would only be paid 50% of their wages. They walked out and came onto the picket lines.

Now they are on all-out strike until the threatening letter they received from management after the 8th is withdrawn.

There was also a march of over 400 hospital workers and supporters on the 10th to the Town Hall square, where a rally was addressed by speakers including Leicester South MP Jim Marshall.

CHARLIE SARELL

Hants

IN Hampshire, strike action on June 8 was patchy, with the most militant action in Basingstoke being led by the GMWU in the psychiatric sector. COHSE members in the area staged a 2-hour strike.

Both in Basingstoke and Southampton psychiatric hospital staff have embarked on guerrilla action, restricting admissions to 'section' patients only.

And in Southampton, where hospitals struck solidly on June 8, NUPE has also withdrawn the hospital courier service carrying clean linen to the Isle of White.

Oxford

BACKING for the strikes in Oxford was very strong. Many feel that one-day strikes are not enough and are calling for all-out action.

One militant told us "What is the point of a one-day strike when we give management three days' notice?"

At the John Radcliffe Hospital there has been almost 100% support from domestic staff. Picketing has been strong. The police tried to break it on Tuesday, attempting to let cars through without pickets stopping them.

Pickets threatened to remove emergency cover if this continued, so the police stopped it.

Under pressure of pay day after a bank holiday weekend, at Littlemore on Friday there had been some who went in.

But on Tuesday they were all out except for

emergency cover and even non-union members were signing up for the union on the picket line.

And under pressure from their own members, leaders of the ambulance branch have called a meeting for Thursday to give a chance to discuss their attitude to the dispute.

An important victory has been scored against the local press. The Health Services Joint Trade Union Committee decided not to speak to non-union reporters sent by the Oxford Mail. This meant that the union side was not presented.

The Oxford Mail has now backed down.

The feeling is clear in Oxford: for all out action. Many health workers see the other issues at stake as well. That's why a delegation of health workers will be leading the Trades Council anti-Tebbit demonstration on June 10.

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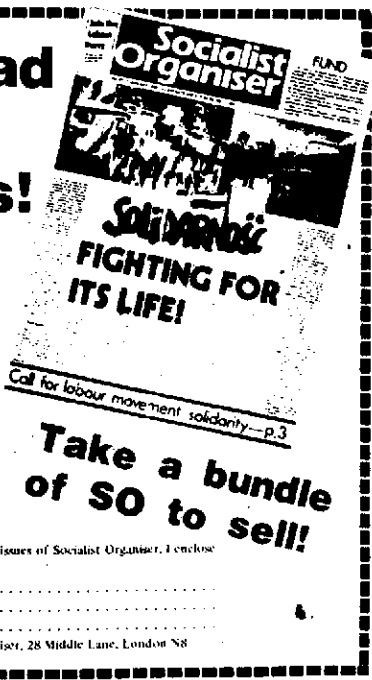
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Jane Goss reports on the issues at CoHSE conference

'GROUP 81' LEADS THE FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY

OUR experience at last year's conference guarantees that democracy will be a major issue at this year's COHSE conference.

As a result of a series of struggles in 1981, that conference had (in the words of an NEC member) "the most political agenda I have ever seen in COHSE".

Then day after day at conference controversial resolutions were not taken as time ran out.

Platform speakers spent 25 to 30 minutes on trivial subjects and delegates attempting to object had the microphone switched off. Emergency resolutions were lost by the Standing Orders Committee!

Labour Party leadership was not to be debated. The mention of Benn's name meant the microphone would be switched off, but the 'fraternal speaker', Willie Hamilton MP, was allowed to give a long-winded pro-Healey speech with open attacks on Benn.

When the vice-president (this year's president) was in the chair he 'forgot' to call delegates for their right of reply, and appeared to have a blind eye and deaf ear to one whole side of the conference hall.

The crucial debate on the ambulance strike — which was going on at the time of conference — was turned into a vicious point-scoring attack on NUPE by the COHSE ambulance negotiator, Terry Mallinson.

Faced with all this came a loud, clear cry from delegates for a more democratic union which could be controlled and run by members and not by out-of-touch bureaucrats.

The union rules state that full time national and regional officials must have worked in health or welfare and must have been COHSE members. In theory this should mean that our officials have an understanding of what it is like working in the health service.

In practice, however, it has been on average 15 years since any of the national officers worked in hospitals.

None of them have any direct experience of the savage cuts and closures which have characterised the NHS for the past five years.

Health service workers have become increasingly strong and political since the 1972 strike action over pay. But COHSE has preferred to keep its reputation as a soft option union.

Recently, however, things have changed.

COHSE members were prominent in hospital occupations at St. Benedicts and Longworth — both of which had little active support (but a lot of lip service) from the leadership — and both of which could have won with the right kind of support.

St Benedicts and Longworth were viciously smashed by the police, acting on orders from the Health Authorities. From the controversy around an administrator joining the picket line at St. Benedicts (a COHSE member) came the 'sackers charter'.

This was in the form of a memorandum from the DHSS authorising authorities to discipline and sack 'managers' for trade union activity.

The 'sackers charter' was leaked to a lay COHSE official and sent to general secretary Albert Spanswick to act on. He suppressed it and it was eventually leaked to the press by Alan Fisher.

Meanwhile, brewing at head office was a storm surrounding Spanswick's refusal to give recognition rights to COHSE employees to join an independent trade union (APEX).

Spanswick sacked the APEX organiser and all hell broke loose.

At the same time there were press reports that COHSE full timers had access to private medical facilities as a perk. A National Executive Committee member resigned in disgust but was forced to leave the NEC before his official resignation date by order of Spanswick.

Around the regions, COHSE members were asking questions but getting no replies. It appeared that the only way to get answers was to put resolutions to conference.

Many of the same issues are relevant. And over the past year a Broad left in COHSE — Group '81, formed at the 1981 Conference — has been campaigning for union democracy.

This work has paid off, with 13 resolutions on this year's agenda calling for rule changes. They range from delegate control of standing orders committee to election every two years of full time officials. (At present all full-time officials are appointed, except the general secretary, who is elected for life).

And one resolution calls for a working party composed of lay officials to

report to next year's conference on wider democratic changes.

It goes without saying that the NEC are recommending opposition to all 13 resolutions! Frightened by the response after last year's conference, and no doubt wary of an organised left, the NEC are putting forward a few cosmetic changes.

Delegates, however, are in no mood to be manipulated again this year. Recent talk in one region was of 'taking control' if this year's conference mirrors last year's!

This year is the time to get these resolutions for elections and re-elections through.

Spanswick retires in 1984. Whoever replaces him must be elected on a mandate, and must know that s/he will face that election again in two or three years.

Rules can only be changed in COHSE every two years. If we don't take the chance this year, then Spanswick's successor will be installed for life.

We must argue that the democratic principle behind the reselection of MPs, now achieved in the Labour Party, should be implemented in the trade unions.

By getting more militant officials in, and putting them under greater rank and file control, we can go a long way to ensuring that the rank and file actions which are taken over pay, cuts, and improving our working conditions are backed nationally.

Whatever happens at COHSE conference this year there is no doubt that the left is firmly organised. We will continue to campaign for real democracy in COHSE — at all levels — until we win.



Albert Spanswick: elected for life. Will his successor be the same?

Row over NAC vote

THE good news for women in COHSE this year is that our role in the union was "considered" by the NEC.

The (not surprising) bad news is that nothing was decided, nothing positive will be recommended and the NEC recommendation on the one resolution which could alter our effect on the union — resolution 52 calling for the creation of a post of National Women's Officer — will be to reject.

The position of women in COHSE is a disgrace. COHSE membership is approximately 230,000. 77% are women. There is one woman on the NEC and there is one woman national officer, whose job is not specifically to work around women's issues.

The NEC (25 men, remember) in "considering" women's roles in the union decided that they couldn't recommend any rule changes this year but that the discussion about positive discrimination for women should be held at Regional Councils. A nice exercise in decentralisation you might think.

But not so nice if you know that women are vastly under-represented on Regional Councils — only 30% of Regional delegates are women.

Any woman who has attended a Regional Council knows the extent of sexism that we encounter at that level. It is outrageous that a male-dominated, patronising and sexist body should be deciding whether positive discrimination is a good thing.

There is a crying need for COHSE men to be educated about their attitudes and treatment of women in the union and that education can only come from women.

Two years ago there was a picket line at our union conference to try to stop a "Miss COHSE" contest going ahead. The organisers of the contest were supported the following day by an emotional speech from the President — the picketers were attacked for damaging the reputation of the union!! Every year at conference women are patronised and put down.

But the major attack on women's rights this year came from the decision of the NEC not to carry out the affiliation to the National Abortion Cam-

paign. The decision to affiliate was taken by conference last year — with no debate allowed.

There can be no question that a woman's right to choose whether or not to have a child a major factor which affects her whole life — and is particularly relevant to her work — and therefore her trade union. The decision to affiliate to NAC was therefore a positive step forward for COHSE.

Suddenly

But suddenly at their August meeting the NEC decided not to affiliate. Not only did this make a mockery of Conference but it raised the whole question of the male-dominated NEC's awareness of and respect for women's issues.

Supporters of NAC in COHSE have been working throughout the year to reverse the NEC decision. Abortion promises to be one of the major topics at this year's conference.

In the NEC report there is a mention of "a mistake" in not debating the abortion ("an emotive subject") resolution.

However, the real feeling of the NEC can be seen by its reaction to the two resolutions on abortion at this year's conference.

Resolution 88 condemns the NEC for not implementing the affiliation and instructs them to affiliate "without further delay". Never keen on criticising, let alone condemning themselves, the NEC is opposing this resolution.

Open

Resolution 89 calls on support from the union in fighting the attacks on social factors through the new notification form and reaffirms the decision to affiliate to NAC. The NEC is leaving this open.

If they really believed in women's rights to abortion, to childcare, to jobs, to equality, they would be supporting both of these resolutions plus resolution 52 on the women's officer.

In campaigning for women's rights we must also be campaigning for democracy and accountability throughout the union.

All out for 12% pay claim!

THE most important decision taken at conference will be on how to fight for the 12% claim. Tuesday morning has been set aside for the pay debate.

The lack of any effective leadership in this year's pay campaign has been apparent from the beginning. Despite militant resolutions on pay coming from Regions and Branches as early as January, Spanswick did nothing until April 26 — three weeks after the pay settlement date.

COHSE then took the 'lead' [jumping the gun, said Fisher] by officially calling for work-to-rules and two-hour strikes.

This 'lead' had been totally overtaken by events at NUPE conference, and now Spanswick's militant noises are nearly inaudible.

The massive response to May 19 showed the leadership and the government

that health workers would not be split and were eager to strike for the full 12% claim.

In typical TUC style this action was not built on by calling for indefinite strike action — instead two more one-day strikes were called.

Meanwhile NUPE conference voted unanimously for indefinite strike action from June 4. The EC let-out however came with the clause "involving all health service unions".

How well Fisher must have known what Spanswick's response would be.

Spanswick's position on escalating the action to indefinite strike with emergency cover only has been tested in Edinburgh.

COHSE members at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital voted for indefinite strike action from May 19 — but the COHSE leader-

ship refused to make the strike official and workers were forced to go back to work on the 25th.

This scandalous betrayal of the fight for our wages will be raised at conference. An emergency resolution backing NUPE's call will be put to the Standing Orders Committee.

The NEC will doubtless have some emergency resolution of their own, 'reaffirming' their determination to fight! It is significant that when discussing action on the 19th one NEC member announced that he would be the first to cross the picket line!

The pay debate at the conference must not be allowed to get bogged down in organisational points. This would only let the leadership off the hook.

Some branches [those not wanting to take action] will claim that the present

action is unconstitutional because there was no ballot. Already right wing NEC members are muttering that the directives are not what the members want.

Lousy

We must use this argument for our stand. The directives are wrong. Members don't want isolated one-day strikes. They want a call now for indefinite action.

COHSE members know how good Spanswick, Williams and Mallinson are at talking about fighting. We also know how lousy they are at changing talk into action.

Mallinson's behaviour during last year's ambulance dispute should be in everyone's mind. Militant speeches about fighting will not be enough this

year. We must spell out clearly by backing the emergency resolution what action we want and when we want it. COHSE leaders must not be allowed to sit and wait as Fisher has done since the NUPE conference.

The leadership must be left in no doubt about their mandate.

Fight

If we pass an emergency resolution calling for indefinite action and give NUPE support, then we can win the 12%.

Other workers have already pledged support. The day after our own pay debate, miners in South Wales will be striking in solidarity with health workers. We must take the initiative and other sections will follow.

ITALIAN BOSSES SCRAP SLIDING SCALE

SCALE

By Wendy Mustill

ITALY erupted into strikes last week over the unilateral decision of Confindustria — the Italian equivalent of the CBI — to end an 8-year cost-of-living wage indexation agreement: the 'scala mobile' or sliding scale.

Cost-of-living awards have been part of Italian wages since at least 1957. In January 1974 the CP-led unions renegotiated the indexation agreement to make it worth more to the low-paid. Previously, different grades of workers had received different awards, with higher amounts going to higher-status job-holders.

The new system abolished the status-related clauses and gave flat-rate payments related to the number of points the index had moved each quarter.

The Italian cost-of-living index is biased more favourably towards working class expenditure than is the British RPI. Ours is constructed on a nationwide average of shop prices, regardless of the fact that food, fuel and transport constitute a higher proportion of the working class budget than the middle class's.

The Italian index is based on the consumption patterns of urban manual workers' families — in other words, the organised working class.

Suspension of the threshold payments from January 1983 is a real threat to the living standards of Italian workers because they are heavily dependent on the sliding scale for the bulk of their wage rises. In 1981, two-thirds of all pay increases came from threshold payments.

Since 1977, the Italian union leaders have moderated pay claims in an attempt to deflect criticism of the 'scala mobile', which is intensely unpopular with the employers. In June last year, Confindustria attempted to break the agreement,

Franco Grisola of the LOR, an Italian socialist organisation told us:

"The Confindustria decision affects workers in big and medium private industry — about 30 or 40% of Italian workers. Shop floor workers who previously had 70% of price rises covered by the scala mobile, now only have 35%.

"Workers' reaction has been strong. In Milan there was a demonstration of 100,000. The trade union bureaucracy first called a token four hour strike, but the pressure has forced them to call an eight hour general strike — of all workers, not just those affected — on June 25, probably with a national demonstration.

"This struggle could topple the government. But the LOR argues that something more is needed to shift the bosses — we're calling for factory occupations.

"We're also calling for rolling strikes, workshop by workshop, to paralyse production, on the issue of the three-yearly wage negotiations. These were due in January — but not even the preliminaries have started.

"The employers understand very well that the present slump gives them a chance to seize the advantage."

but were talked out of it by the government promising to 'moderate labour costs'.

The employers have tried to turn workers against the 'scala mobile' by using the reactionary argument that the flat-rate increases compress differentials on the shop-floor. Last week's show of protest proves that, on the contrary, Italian workers are determined to fight to keep their sliding scale, imperfect as it is.

In 1981 it paid them an average weekly rise of 90.5 pence, but this compensated for only 65% of price rises. Last year the unions successfully fought off government attempts to put a ceiling on the number of threshold payments.

Now they want to extend the practice of indexation. As well as defending the existing system, they want

to restore an agreement lost in 1977 which included indexation payments in calculations for redundancy and retirement pay.

Since 1980, cost-of-living payments have been in force in 10 out of the 18 major Western European countries. In places such as Belgium they have recently been suspended as part of government attacks aimed at forcing workers to pay for the recession.

Acceptance

But there is a remarkable degree of acceptance in the European workers' movement that cost-of-living payments are a necessary part of defending standards.

No country has a price index monitored by the unions, reflecting working

class interests, although the Papandreou government in Greece is currently reconstituting its consumer price index to meet union demands. But the sliding scale payments do guarantee some degree of automatic recompense for wages eroded by inflation.

More importantly they form a potential basis for much greater participation by workers in several ways:

*In controlling how statistics are compiled and asking in whose interests they are used.

*By monitoring and challenging price rises more effectively (cf London Transport and the response to a similar situation in Paris).

*By basing wage demands on needs as experienced and formulated by active rank-and-file involvement in areas outside traditional pay bargaining.

*By showing solidarity with workers abroad who face the same problems, as explained in Socialist Organiser two weeks ago.



Italian carworkers demonstrate

Fighting for socialism in 'Mo

HARRY SLOAN reports on his recent visit to Detroit

THE potholes in the freeway tell their own story; Detroit, America's famous 'motor city' has fallen victim to Ronald Reagan's policies of depression.

Production cutbacks and mass layoffs have left a cloud of depression over this sprawling metropolitan area, which houses a 5 million population as well as the world headquarters of three automotive giants — Ford, General Motors and Chrysler.

Detroit city, with a diminishing 2 million population, 60% of whom are black, faces the full brunt of the unemployment and the poverty which this brings in the 'land of the free' — where once lay-off pay is exhausted there is no dole or state support for the jobless.

The once 60,000-strong workforce of Ford's giant, integrated River Rouge plant — where raw iron ore is shipped in from the Great Lakes and finished cars shipped out — has dwindled to 20,000. There are layoffs throughout the other car plants — and spin-off cutbacks reaching even into the privately-run hospitals, where profit margins have been hit by the spreading poverty.

The Rouge plant in the 1940s was the site of bitter mass struggles which eventually forced trade union organisation into Henry Ford's empire of exploitation; but in the 1980s the battles so far have been of a very different character.

On the one hand the car industry employers — Chrysler, Ford and General Motors — have demanded 'concessions' on the

wages and benefits won by workers under existing wage contracts. In Chrysler this took place as part of the government 'rescue' operation under Carter; in Ford and General Motors the concessions have been pressed home by management using the threat of more layoffs as a pistol at the heads of the workforce.

And from the other side, bureaucratic leaders of the United Auto Workers union have pulled every trick in the book, in order to ensure that these concessions are ratified by the workforce.

They have not found an enthusiastic response. In Ford, only 28% of workers turned out to vote 'yes' to a package of cutbacks which deprived them of annual increments, cut overtime pay and axed holiday entitlements. In General Motors a bundle of wage cuts and cuts in benefits totalling \$3 billion was handed to the employers — but only by a 52%—48% margin.

Ironically, the GM concessions were completed as the company announced a 1981 profit of \$333 million and a new bonus programme for top executives.

The only basis on which any workers at all could be mustered to vote for the concessions to the car industry bosses was through their fear of layoffs.

Less security

US workers have less job security than almost any section of workers in the advanced capitalist world: layoffs go largely unfought and inflict indefinite hardship on workers whose contracts are written to outlaw industrial action for three years at a time.

And the initial pool of unemployment assistance paid to the first wave of laid-off car workers in the

mid-1970s has long ago dried up. Now a laid-off worker receives next to no benefit, while standing no chance of finding another job.

Having created mass social misery, it was motor industry executives, together with other business chiefs, who recently took the lead in an attempt to restore some of Detroit's 'civic pride'. No, they are not planning to open new plants or take on more workers: instead they have stumped up \$2.5 million to resurface the roads around the town centre and instal crash barriers ready to stage a Grand Prix motor race!

The race will circle the showpiece — but artless — Renaissance Centre — a complex of office blocks erected by similarly cynical businessmen in the wake of the bitter riots in Detroit's black ghettos in 1967.

In this, the depressed industrial heartland of Reagan's America, are to be found in microcosm all the strengths and weaknesses, all the problems and possibilities of the US working class.

And it was to Detroit that I went to visit one of the organisations fighting to build a revolutionary Marxist party in the American labour movement.

The Revolutionary Workers League is a Trotskyist organisation, politically sympathetic to the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee.

It has fought to establish roots in the main industries and unions (the auto workers, the Teamsters, amongst hospital workers and among hotel and catering workers on the West Coast) as well as develop work which will bring contact with especially oppressed sections of the working class — black workers,

other national minorities, women workers and gays.

The Second National Conference of the RWL was therefore a time for taking stock of the achievements in these arenas and of the organisation's fusion with the Socialist League (Democratic Centralist) last year.

Trade union reports revealed patient and courageous work in the UAW, fighting the pay concessions in Ford and General Motors. It revealed serious work in the Teamsters union, building on and developing work begun initially by the SL(DC). A caucus in which RWL members and supporters are active in the 12,000 strong St. Louis Teamsters Local 688 had won a number of stewardships in the teeth of a witch-hunting right-wing opposition.

And in the Harper Hospital in Detroit the RWL-supported 'Membership Action Committee' has

been the core of the opposition to a management offensive designed to force wage concessions in the forthcoming contract negotiations.

In mounting any such challenge to management, the RWL has found that consistently the most militant stance is that of black workers and women, who face the additional burden of racial and sexual oppression at the hands of the system.

The readiness of in particular black militants to break from the conservative political views of the US labour bureaucracy and capitalist 'establishment' was also confirmed by an initial surge of interest for the National Black Independent Political Party (NBIPP) — interest which subsided as the Party itself lost momentum and began to fall under the influence of Stalinist and petty bourgeois politics.

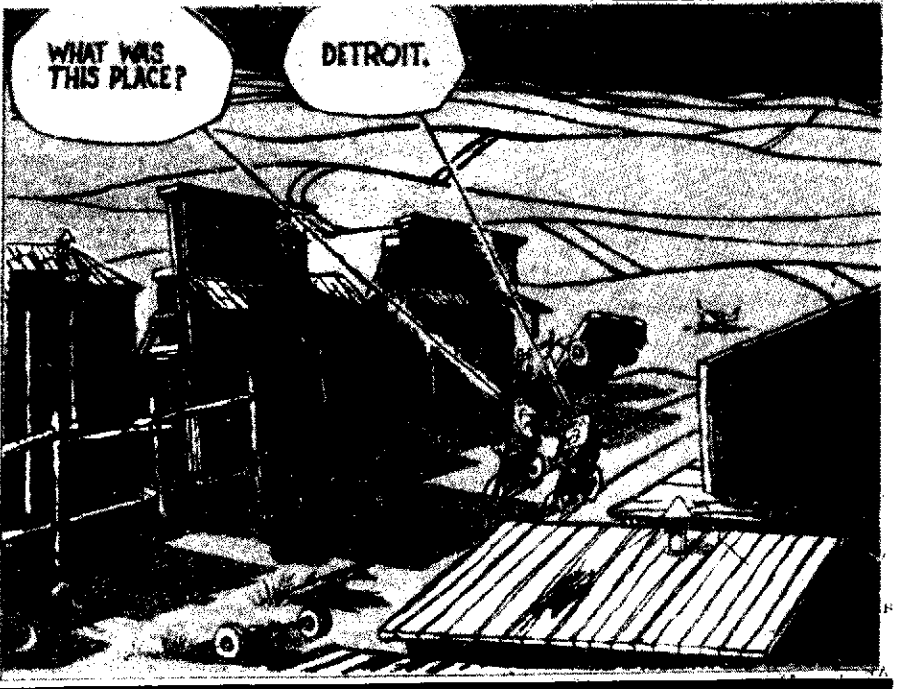
But work by the RWL in

the gay and lesbian communities in Detroit, Ann Arbor and the West Coast Bay Area has also shown that other especially oppressed and alienated sections of American society can rapidly move towards a grasp of the need for revolutionary action to overthrow the capitalist system.

Conditions for political work are tough. Tens of thousands of industrial workers are laid off. Only 15-20% of the American working class is organised into trade unions, unofficial strikes are illegal and almost unknown, and there is no independent workers' party.

Union leaders on salaries as high as £150,000 a year (plus expenses) line up unashamedly with capitalists on every key issue.

It is plain that a revolutionary organisation seeking to root itself in the US working class must look primarily towards the most



Begin seizes pretext for Lebanon invasion

By Andrew Hornung

ISRAEL's land, sea and air attack on the Palestinian population in Lebanon has already cost scores of lives and hundreds of injured. Its final cost is incalculable — thousands will die even if a war between Syria and Israel does not break out.

The Guardian's David Hirst quotes an Israeli Cabinet Minister, Gideon Patt, as saying three weeks ago — before the assassination attempt on Ambassador Argov in London — "Those bastards on the northern side of the frontier must realise that any attack against Jews anywhere in the world will bring their own annihilation".

Grotesque

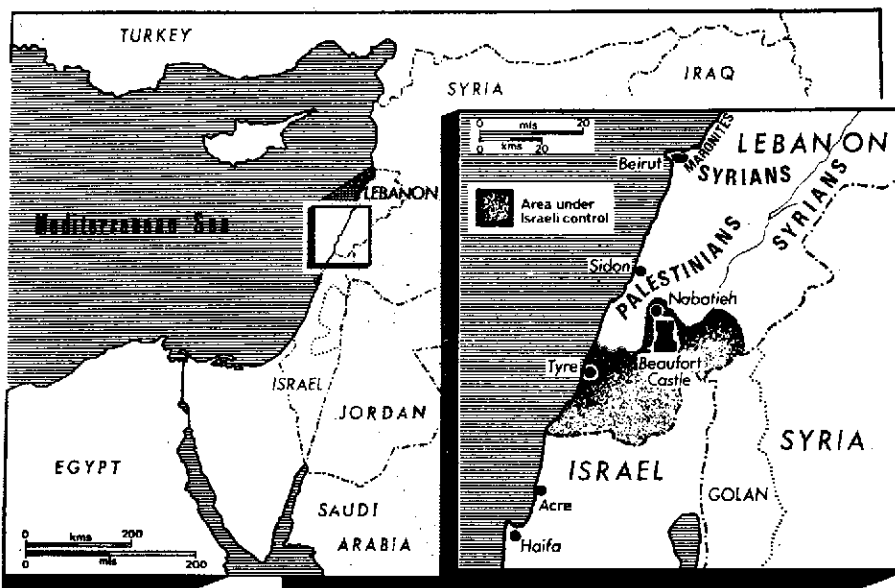
That the Zionists should point to the London assassination as justification is simply grotesque. The pavement outside the Dorchester is not on Israel's doorstep; the assassination attempt was in any case not carried out

by the PLO (unless PLO and Palestinian are the same thing — which the Israelis hotly deny); and the scale of the present invasion shows that we are not witnessing one of Israel's ferocious "punitive" raids.

Begin is not avenging Argov. He is continuing the offensive started in 1978 but halted under pressure from the US who wanted nothing to interfere with the Camp David

"peace" process. Now that the ink on the "peace" accord is newly dry, Israel feels free to continue its northward march.

The attack started with the bombing (on June 4) of Beirut. The next day over



More deaths sought by junta

PROSECUTORS representing Turkey's ruling military junta are demanding no less than 1,850 death sentences in a series of mass show trials of political opponents of the regime.

Last week saw demands for death sentences for 259 defendants in a mass trial of members of the left wing Dev Yol organisation accused of taking control of the Black Sea town of Fatsa, before the September 1980 crackdown.

Meanwhile another show trial finds 416 people facing demands for prison terms ranging from 5-15 years; they are at present in a military detention centre in Erzincan.

The ruthless suppression of left wing opposition has been increasingly extended by the Evren junta to include action against the liberal bourgeois opposition party the RPP, led by former Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit.

Ecevit himself was released from jail last week after 57-day detention — only to face further allegations that he spoke to foreign journalists in defiance of the junta's restrictions. He could be sentenced to as much as two more years imprisonment.

In a new move against Ecevit's now banned Party, the junta barred 133 RPP MPs from foreign travel — lending further fuel to speculation that a show trial of RPP members could be in the offing.

The horrific conditions and torture faced by the victims of the campaign of institutionalised terror have prompted 2,000 prisoners at Istanbul's Metris jail to go on hunger-strike for the past two weeks.

The Danish government is contemplating possibly taking the Turkish regime to the European Court of Human Rights.

But the British workers' movement can show its solidarity with Turkish trade unionists and socialists by affiliating to the Turkey Solidarity Campaign, c/o BM Box 5965, London WC1N 3XX.

fifty more localities were attacked, mainly along the southern coast, inland around Beaufort Castle near the most northerly point of the Israeli border, and in the south-east Lebanese Arkoub province.

UN troops have been brushed aside; Israel's Lebanese allies, the right-wing militias under Col. Saad Haddad which with Israeli support control part of Lebanon south of the Litani River, have played little role; and the Syrian troops occupying the country have stood by passively.

Only Palestinian and Lebanese leftist forces now stand between Israel and a de facto dismemberment of Lebanon and the extermination of the Palestinians.

non. They seemed to realise that with the change in population (domination by the Christian Maronites was guaranteed by an agreement based on an old census) and with the radicalisation of the Lebanese Muslim masses (in large part as a result of contact with the Palestinians) they might only be able to hold on to power by agreeing to cede territory.

Dead bodies

But to whom? To Syria which has designs on all of Lebanon? No, that would not work and would be opposed by imperialism and Zionism. To the Lebanese Muslims? No, for the same reasons. What the Israelis seem intent on is a de facto division between themselves and the Maronites.

That is a "solution" — over the dead bodies of the Palestinian population! — that would suit imperialism. But it cannot be achieved without a war in which Syria is defeated.

Camp David, we wrote long ago, is not a "peace" formula, but a formula for the murder of the Palestinian people. Having failed to draw more than one Arab government into the talks, the "peace" process now threatens to drag them all into war.

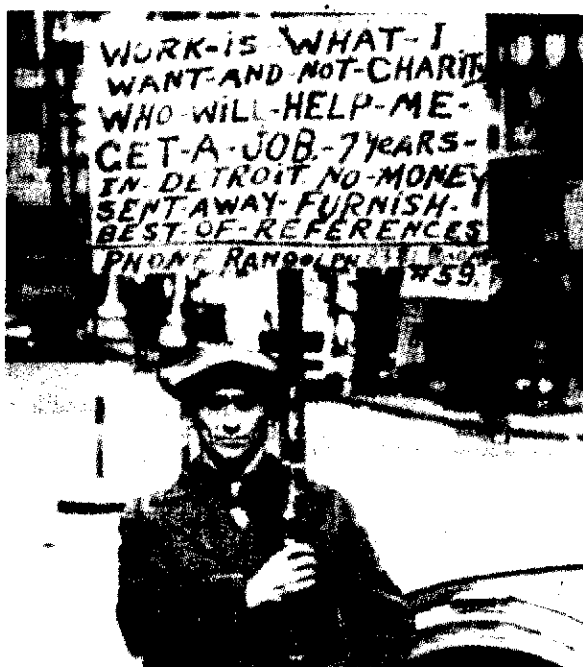
Restraint

The only other restraining factor might be the US. If the US fears that the Soviet Union might be drawn into the fray through its commitments to Syria, then it will rush to secure another ceasefire.

Like the last one, this will offer no security to either the Palestinians nor the Lebanese masses.

Since the Lebanese civil war escalated in 1976, the Lebanese right has hesitantly contemplated a dismemberment of Lebanon.

tor City'



In Detroit, the 1980s have brought a return to 1930s-style soup kitchens

exploited and militant workers as its mainstay.

The RWL correctly champions the demands and struggles of the specially oppressed — but does not tail-end the often confused, classless politics which can arise in the organisations of blacks, women and gays.

Instead, the organisation both in theory and in practical work points towards the need to build a revolutionary working class leadership if capitalism — and its divisive system of exploitation and oppression — is to be overthrown.

As I left Detroit airport — passing visual reminders of the collapse of Braniff and a strike-bound maintenance depot of North West Orient airlines — I realised once again that Reagan's recession is by no means over.

And for socialists in the USA, fighting to establish

mass currency for ideas which at present are vigorously rejected not only by capitalists and bureaucrats but also by most shop-floor workers, the fight for a revolutionary answer is only just beginning.

Despite the great explosive history of trade union organising and the mass struggles led by Communists in the 1920s and 1930s; despite the past echoes of a Communist Party which at its peak in the 1930s reached 4 million members; despite the upsurge of mass militancy which shook the complacency of the post-war US government in 1946, the starting point for socialists in the 1980s is the fight to win the most advanced workers to a political struggle for a politically independent, revolutionary labour movement.

July 3: back SAAWU!

by Harry Sloan

JULY 9 is now the date fixed for a major demonstration in York organised jointly by the Anti-Apartheid Movement and York Trades Council.

The march is designed to show active solidarity of British trade unionists with the 14-month strike by 500 workers employed by the Wilson-Rowntree confectionery multi-national in South Africa.

York is Rowntree's headquarters in Britain. And the demonstration will follow on a week of action organised by AAM on the Rowntree strike to take place between June 19-26.

An AAM Broadsheet — "The Rowntrees Dispute — the Facts" has been produced — price 5p. Leaflets too have been produced for AAM groups around the country to distribute at a cost of £5 per 1,000.

And AAM is working to get other union leaders to echo the general statement of solidarity with the Rowntree strike made recently by Len Murray.

Of course such statements would have much more impact on the employers and on the British workers' movement if they were related to calls for concrete solidarity action such as a week of blacking action of trade with South Africa by transport and other unions.

Unfortunately there is no sign of British union leaders being prepared to take such a stand — and the punitive restrictions introduced against any international solidarity action under the Tebbit Bill make such action less likely in the future.

We urge SO supporters to fight in their union branches for such action, and to link

the campaign around Rowntrees with the fight against the show-trial of three leaders of the Rowntree union SAAWU, currently facing massive jail sentences under South Africa's notorious Terrorism Act.

Thozamile Gqweta, Fisa Njikelana and Sam Kikine have been remanded until June 14 after a court appearance last month. They need the full support of the international labour movement.

Move the following motion in your union branch or Labour Party:

"This branch/ward: 1) condemns the arrest of the SAAWU leaders and their trial with three other militants under the Terrorism Act.

2) Expresses its total support for the workers' movement in South Africa and calls for the unconditional release of all workers and militants jailed for opposing the South African government and employers.

3) Agrees to mobilise the largest possible contingent for the July 9 demonstration in York (assemble 1.30 pm, Heworth Green, Monk-gate Roundabout).

4) Calls on the Executive to organise a full national mobilisation for this demonstration.

5) Calls on the Executive to call on the TUC to support solidarity action by organising total blacking of goods to and from South Africa during the action period June 16-26.

6) Calls on sponsored MPs and the Parliamentary Labour Party as a whole to campaign on these issues in the constituencies and in Parliament."

AAM can be contacted at 89 Charlotte Street, London W1.

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

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THOUSANDS OF WOMEN BACK JOBS MARCH

Gerry Byrne reports



After the London demonstration, next step is a cross-country Women's March for Jobs

"WHAT do we want? A pint of beer! When do we want it? Now!"

By the time we reached Battersea Park at the end of the Women's Right to Work March on a sweltering June 5, marchers were wilting, banners were drooping and the slogans had taken on a somewhat desperate immediacy.

Chanting

"Women's jobs, women's rights, women's independence" we had started out chanting. "A woman's right to paid work", "Equal pay not low pay", "Childcare and social services. A Woman's right to work" we had shouted to impatient, almost exclusively male, car drivers.

As we passed Parliament, we yelled "Women's rights, not right-wing women" and "Tories out, women in". It was a scorching day as we left County Hall - not a huge march, it seemed, but dazzlingly colourful. But as we moved off it seemed to grow. Had they all been hiding in the cafes and parks round about?

Coaches kept arriving, disgorging their passengers to swell our numbers. It was really quite a respectable number after all - a slap in the face for the fainthearts who didn't think the handful of women on the Action Committee could bring women onto the streets in any numbers.

Indeed, when we arrived at an almost deserted Battersea Park, it seemed a vindication of our argument that women wanted a demonstration and the only way of guaranteeing success to the Labour Party's Festival was to push ahead with our plans for a march to it.

Labour Parties and trade unions had come with their banners, and no doubt many more would have, were it not for the behind-the-scenes playing down of the march.

Lively

Sandwiched between Sisters Against Disablement singing "Equality not charity, disabled women are strong" and Spare Rib "What do we want? An end to male power", Women's Fightback had a lively contingent with several banners.

Sporting our much-admired "Women's March for Jobs" tee-shirts, we made a real visual impact. We want to turn that into political support for our plans for where we go next after June 5.

We'll be arguing, at the national meeting of the Action Committee on July 3, for a "Women's March for Jobs" organised along the lines of the "People's March" but without the bureaucracy.

Long march

We want to turn the disadvantage of it being women who will march into a political plus; using the fact that many jobless women have children to link up with campaigns to defend nurseries; gearing into the networks of women's groups that made, for example, the Women Live month a possibility, building on the goodwill in the labour movement that was developed by the campaign for June 5.

Footnote: we will have to go into training now. My feet were badly battered just by the few miles from County Hall to Battersea, and we're planning a cross-country march!

And they didn't have a beer tent in Battersea Park! We'll have to have better organisation than that for the Long March!

Labour women fight for control

Jo Thwaites reports on issues at the Labour women's conference this coming weekend

FOLLOWING hard on the heels of the successful women's march for jobs, and not quite so successful Labour Women's Festival, comes the annual Labour Women's Conference in Newcastle this weekend, 12-13 June.

Over the past two years women's sections in the Labour Party have been blossoming - and not just at a steady annual pace, more like one of those speeded up films! The Women's Conference has grown by 300% in the last two years. There are 650 delegates this year!

Yet despite this tremendous growth - there has been no corresponding growth in the resources allocated and power held by the women's organisation. The women's organisation has less control over its functioning than the LPYS has.

And this is clearly challenged by demands from 42 women's sections and

councils to the Newcastle women's conference for more control.

These demands, argued for by Women's Fightback and the CLPD Women's Action Committee for the last two years, are:

*that the Women's Conference should have the right to put at least five resolutions to Annual Conference of the Labour Party;

*that the women's places on the NEC at present controlled by the trade union leaders, should be elected by the Women's Conference;

*that there should be positive discrimination on Parliamentary shortlists in favour of women;

*that the National Labour Women's Committee should be elected by the Labour Women's Conference - instead of the secretive postal ballot system that operates at present or the system of election at Regional Women's Confer-

ence (the same as the LPYS) voted for last year.

The drawback with the regional system is that the committee is not accountable to the National Conference.

Of course, even if all these demands were passed - and it is likely that they will be, this would only be a beginning. There is also a proposal to conference that there be a special one day conference that would deal exclusively with reorganising the women's organisation - so that it works for us.

Chosen

Several women at the Festival last weekend wanted to know how the speakers on the platform were chosen. There had not been any say in them from the rank and file women's section. That meant that the health workers' fight and strikes where women predominate like Rulecan and

Kigass weren't given prominence.

The overriding concern from the resolutions down for the women's conference is the need to change the present organisation of the women's sections of the Labour Party so that we can be more successful and so that the women in the localities have the power and the say in how things are done - not the NEC or Walworth Road.

Women's Fightback is holding four meetings in Newcastle over the weekend. "Women fighting the Tories" with NHS workers, and a Fightback speaker on the Women's March for Jobs: "Withdraw the Fleet! Stop the War!" on Sunday and two meetings on Monday on "Where Next?" - one for trade union delegates and one for women's section delegates.

Watch out for Fightback leaflets at Conference.



The March gave life to the Festival

June

S M T W T F S

WHAT'S ON

Paid ads 5p per word, £4 per column inch. Send to Socialist Organiser (What's On), 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER MEETINGS & FORUMS

ISLINGTON Sunday June 13, Thornhill Neighbourhood Project, Caledonian Rd., 3.00pm. Tea/coffee and sandwiches. For babysitting ring 607-5268.

LEICESTER. Sundays 7.30 at the Socialist Centre, High St.

Basingstoke SO Group Political Forum: The Falklands War: Who are the real winners and losers? Saturday 19 June at 2.15pm at Chute House. Further info, phone 0256 57038.

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 Pland, 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.

LABOUR COMMITTEE ON IRELAND South West London Branch Public Meeting, Wednesday 16 June at 8.00pm at Lambeth Town Hall (Room 2), Acre Lane, Brixton SW2. Don Flynn, National Secretary of the Labour Committee on Ireland will speak on the LCI campaigns to stop the use of plastic bullets in Northern Ireland and for the repeal of the PTA.

LOBBY of Labour Party NEC to demand Labour Party oppose the renewal of the PTA. Wednesday 23 June at 9.00am at Labour Party Headquarters, Walworth Road, London SE17 (nearly tube - Elephant and Castle).

CAMPAIGN FOR LABOUR PARTY & TRADE UNION DEMOCRACY 'A Question of Leadership'. The film HTV refused to screen. Discussion after showing of the film led by Ken Loach, the film's producer, Alan Thornett, film participant and British Leyland shop steward, Ray Davies, ISTC and film participant. Wednesday June 23 at 7.30pm, Ringland Club. Sponsored by the Llanwrn Steel Action Group.

London Workers Socialist League classes on basic Marxism. Next class: The Transitional Programme, Friday June 11, 7.30pm. For venue write to PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

WORKERS' march against Racism: FROM Brick Lane through Brixton to TUC conference in Brighton. September 4 to 8. Sponsors include: Jayaben Desai, Anwar Ditta, Nasira Begum, Tony Benn, Ted Knight, Ken Livingstone, Paul Boateng. Details 01-274 3951.

POLISH SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN bulletin: new issue out now. Individual copies, or sale-or-return bundles, can be obtained from Marion Pitman, 29 Hampton Road, Twickenham, Middlesex. (01-898 7165) at 30p per copy. Subscription (six issues) £2.50.

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WOMEN'S RIGHT TO WORK

SOUTH ATLANTIC: THATCHER'S SLAUGHTER HOUSE

Class Fighter, paper of the National Left Wing Youth Movement of the LPYS. 10p plus postage from BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX.

This is no time for moderation!

**Socialist
Organiser
EDITORIAL**

FROM THE start it was clear that the Bishops Stortford 'truce' meant no let-up in the efforts of Labour's right-wing leaders to gut Labour Party policy.

The 'truce' was therefore a gag to be applied firmly to the left wing, while the right wing fudged Labour's commitments and prepared the bonfires for any left-wingers who would object.

In the half-stifled struggle continuing since Bishops Stortford, the next month or so could be decisive. There is a series of meetings of the National Executive, and of the Shadow Cabinet/NEC liaison committee, to discuss policy.

The report on Militant comes before the NEC on June 23. And on July 4 there is another Bishops Stortford type 'summit' between the NEC and top trade union officials in Trade Unionists for a Labour Victory.

In Tribune on May 28, Tony Benn sounded a warning:

"If the Shadow Cabinet has its way, this year's Labour Party conference will be denied a chance to vote on Labour's full Programme 1982 or on the campaign document drawn from it — upon which Labour's next election manifesto will be based..."

"Instead it was suggested that the campaign document should be drafted after the conference had ended... left until the last minute — as in 1979 — and vulnerable to a veto..."

"This is not the end of the matter... but if the Shadow Cabinet gets its way Labour will go into the next election without any firm commitments decided by conference. In effect, the party will be told not to worry about policy, just to

get out and do the canvassing."

"The manifesto will not go to conference and when Labour is in power the new Cabinet can tell the party what it intends to do, with the usual appeals to loyalty to overwhelm the critics. But that won't work any more."

"After the experience of recent Labour governments the party will not work to give a blank cheque to its Front Bench."

The draft programme which front-benchers are trying to push aside includes, according to press reports, the following commitments:

*Renationalisation of hived-off assets and further nationalisations;

*More control for elected police authorities and disbandment of Special Patrol Groups;

*Repeal of the 1971 Immigration Act, the 1981 Nationality Act, and Tory laws curbing union rights and forcing council house sales;

*Unilateral nuclear disarmament;

*Withdrawal from the EEC;

*Abolition of the House of Lords;

*Repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and 'gradual' withdrawal from Northern Ireland;

*Reduction of the gay age of consent to 16.

From the point of view of Labour activists this is a modest enough summary of Labour Party policy — somewhat lacking, unless the press reports are misleading, on issues like the right to work. (Only 'encouragement' for the 35 hour week is promised).

But Michael Foot was quoted in the Sunday Times as saying that the programme would take 40 years to implement! On this principle of the 'inevitability

of gradualness' — recognised neither by the Tories nor by the decline of British capitalism! — he must want to cut out seven-eighths of the policy.

Right wing front bencher Gerald Kaufmann has obtained a legal opinion that it would be against the law for Labour Conference to adopt the draft as the Party Programme!

The scene is being set for policy to be gutted, and for those who complain to be branded as disrupters. Meanwhile last Sunday's Observer reported on 'tape recordings' supposed to show "that Militant is a subversive organisation".

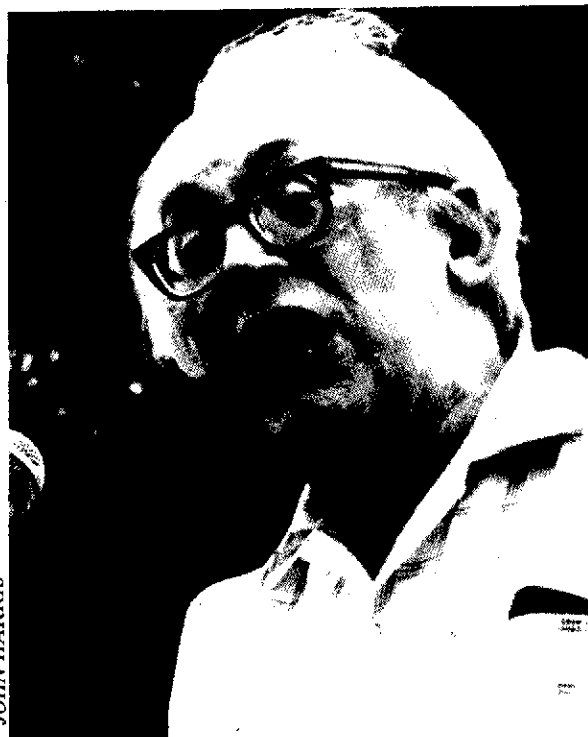
The NEC on June 23 could recommend proscription of Militant or expulsion of selected Militant supporters. A Wales Labour Party conference vote last month for a pro-witch-hunt resolution gives weight to this possibility.

And by-election setbacks like Mitcham and Morden will be blamed on the Left.

The Left needs to stand firm and launch a counter-offensive.

The prospect of another Labour government like the last one — kow-towing to the bosses and bankers and the IMF — is no recipe for rallying support. And even if such a government scraped in, it could only pave the way for a return of Thatcherite Toryism — or worse.

We need to fight for a workers' government — a government accountable to the labour movement and willing to base itself on the labour movement for decisive action against the capitalists and their state. The labour movement as a whole — Party and unions —



JOHN HARRIS

Will Foot cut seven-eighths of the programme?

needs to galvanise itself with a policy capable of dealing with capitalism's crisis and the will, the organisation, and the leadership to fight for it.

The moves for Labour democracy and for left wing policies since 1979 represent a beginning of the necessary political transformation of the movement. If the right wing succeed in halting and reversing those moves, then Labour will have the worst of all worlds.

It will be branded by the Tories and SDP as a party of way-out radical policies — but instead of vigorously fighting to win support for those policies, it will have its leaders frantically disavowing them.

Look at the lesson of the

local elections. Labour was openly right-wing in Birmingham — and lost. In Lambeth and Lothian Labour had made left wing promises, then failed to deliver — and lost. In Islington a campaigning Labour Party had shown its will to fight for left-wing policies, despite massive SDP defections — and won.

With four million unemployed, war in the South Atlantic, continuing military occupation in Northern Ireland, one of the greatest arms drives in history, and capitalism lurching through crises unparalleled since the 1930s, now is no time to seek the virtues of moderation, consensus and a quiet life. The Labour Left must re-launch the offensive.

Not-so-great white hope

by Tom Cashman

ON Friday, Larry Holmes, the heavyweight boxing champion of the world, meets Gerry Cooney at Caesar's Palace, Las Vegas. Holmes took the title from Ken Norton in 1978 and has defended it against rated opposition with skill and guts.

Cooney has won 25 fights against no-hope opposition in a series of highly publicised, highly lucrative TV mismatches.

Yet they will share about \$20 million equally.

How did Cooney achieve this honour?

He is awkward, he telegraphs his punches and he crouches away the few inches of height that should give him his best hope.

The answer lies back in the late 70s. Muhammed Ali was staggering to the seedy end of a fine career. Promoters were faced with the problem of maintaining public interest at high enough levels to keep prime TV network time and international pay-TV coverage.

The search for a white hope was on again. But Jerry Quarry was too old. Duane Bobich has a string of wins against nobodies but failed to finish the first round of his first fight against Ken Norton.

Then late in 1978, while South Africa was pumping millions of Rand into the game in order to promote a couple of animals called

Gerrie Coetee and Kallie Knoetze as contenders for the rival WBA title, a new hero was found in New York.

Gerry Cooney was launched as a title contender. He was a publicists' dream, a big, polite, Irish boy, good looking with mildly right of centre old fashioned views on everything.

He fights all in green and tells the world he owes everything to his late father.

"He used to make me run at four in the morning, no matter what time I stayed out the previous night. One time I ran a hundred yards or so and fell asleep."

"He came looking for me. He believed that to get something across, you had to be physical so he started hitting me. After that I ran six or seven miles."

Of course this is not the 1920s and Larry Holmes is not Jack Johnson. Too cautious to preach the 'great white hope' line openly, Cooney's camp are accusing Holmes of being anti-white.

On Friday Holmes will beat Cooney, but the white no-mark will walk off with \$10 million. And he will be followed not by a great up and coming fighter worthy to take the crown off an under-rated champion, but by a series of other white hopes and other publicists' creations.

Tebbit's other Bill

by Sam Jones

WHILE the blood and guts continue to flow in the South Atlantic, and the Tories refer with disapproval to the conscription nature of the Argentine army, Norman Tebbit is busy fighting it out with the TUC and the Manpower Services Commission to ensure a conscript scheme of cheap labour for 16-17 year olds next September.

The opposition to Tebbit's scheme is of course weak.

Quarrel

The TUC and the MSC have no real quarrel about the level of wages now that they have got Tebbit to agree to scrap the £15 wage for 16 year olds. That would be a little too embarrassing to Messrs Murray and Co. The point of disagreement now is whether the scheme should be voluntary or not.

The TUC say that it shouldn't be compulsory because the training would be no good for people who didn't want to be there. Tebbit seems to be sticking to his guns. The reason for this is clear. Tebbit's scheme is not of course designed to train youth for work.

Even if it did train us, which it won't, we couldn't get a job at the end of the scheme, either because there are none to get or because employers would rather take on more cheap, subsidised labour.

Tebbit insists on the element of compulsion — in effect conscription — because the scheme is an exercise in political discipline on working class

youth and the trade unions. The scheme will undoubtedly mean that the jobs of trade unionists are taken by cheap labour.

We must fight to expose and stop this scheme. The TUC has the power to stop the scheme by withdrawing its backing and coming off the MSC.

That should not be done solely on the conscription issue. The wages, too, are a very real issue for the youth on the schemes now and for those who are drafted into the new scheme. So is the fact that they won't get a job when they finish.

The TUC must campaign for full trade union rates and rights and also a guaranteed job at the end of the scheme and strict trade union control as well as unionising YOPs now.

We know from experience that they won't do that willingly. It is the duty of rank and file bodies in the labour movement, trade union branches, trades councils, Labour Parties (and their youth and women's sections) to fight to unionise YOPs workers and fight for real jobs on real wages for young workers.

Army

One of the organisations Tebbit is considering as possible suitable participants in the scheme is the army. No wonder he wants it to be compulsory. Who in their right mind is going to 'volunteer' to go to the Falklands and get their head blown off for £25 a week — with no insurance cover?

Kigass strike: 'BLACKING IS MAIN WEAPON'

Women workers at Kigass in Leamington have been on strike for ten weeks. Julia Redman spoke to them about the Labour women's festival and their other efforts to gain support

Women strikers from Kigass wanted to address the Labour Party Women's Festival and take a collection. The platform stopped the collection saying that it was illegal, and Joyce Gould from the Labour Party said she could find them no time on the platform until 4.45 when our coaches were due to leave.

She showed no interest in these women at all. We asked ourselves, what is the purpose of a women's festival if women like these

can't gain a hearing.

Can you explain about the two disputes in Abex and Kigass for union recognition?

Abex and Kigass are both owned by a family firm under Mr. Wardman. Abex is a smaller factory two miles away that supplies components to Kigass. Women at Abex came out when they heard about our dispute.

Wardman tried to divide us into two groups, but the way we see it we're right together. He also owns another firm which is unionised but they are afraid to come out in support of us because they are threatened with redundancies.

But our strike is still affecting production there.

I understand that some workers have returned. Is this making your strike less effective?

Some of the women were

forced back as they had no money. They were promised no victimisations, but they have been victimised. One had a bed of nails nailed on her chair and it was covered with her overall.

She couldn't stand it and came back out on strike. They have also recruited workers off the dole who they have instructed not to speak to us.

Our main weapon is the blacking. Kigass is blacked at Rolls Royce and Ford, which are the two main outlets.

But with the press saying that the strike was over, we are going to have to check that the blacking is still continuing.

Rumours

How have these rumours got about that your strike is over?

Mr Wardman says he will accept the union. He said he

always would. But we have it in writing that he says he would never have a union as he sent us out individual letters at the beginning of the strike.

We met with him but he wants us back on his He says he'll take back some of us now and the rest when work is available.

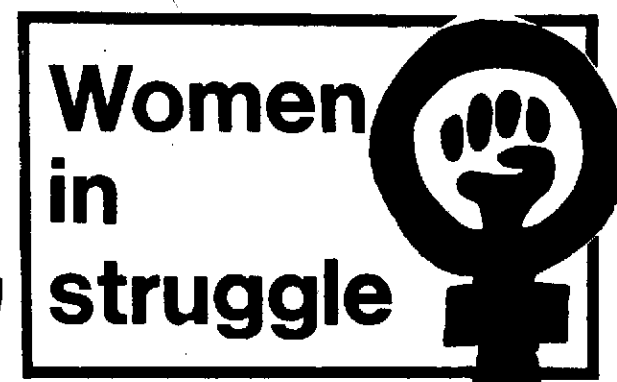
He expects us to turn up each morning to see if there is a job and go home if he has no work.

He even admitted that he would put us on a different section to "police us".

We're not accepting this. We want a union so they have to treat us with a bit of respect.

What were the conditions like before you came out on strike?

If we asked for safety guards they laughed in our face. There was compulsory overtime, we had to clean the toilets ourselves and had no canteen facilities. We were



HOW WORKERS DEFEAT ANTI-UNION LAWS

BY THE 1970s the decline of British capitalism was becoming more acute, with the disintegration of the post-war boom. From the mid-'60s, moreover, the industrial militancy of the British working class followed an upward spiral and spread into new sections of workers, though without ever escalating decisively into a deeper political consciousness.

Strikes grew, membership soared and the defeat of the Labour government's In Place of Strife reinforced confidence and combativity in the economic class struggle.

The government of Edward Heath which took office in the summer of 1970 was acutely conscious of the long drawn out failure of the Wilson government to use its 'special relationship' with the union leaders to redress the situation.

Consensus

The Tories promised a break with the consensus-style policies which had characterised both Labour and Tory governments since 1945.

Government would withdraw from intervention in industry. The capitalist begging bowl of state aid would be terminated. Capital would be galvanised by entry into the EEC and the infirm sectors would be left to go to the wall.

There would be no formal incomes policy. But the Tories would make a firm stand in the public sector, and the behaviour of the unions would be transformed through the use of the law. The Department of Employment was out — the law courts were in.

The TUC leaders had little inkling of this. Soon after the election Vic Feather told the NUT Executive, "Conservative economic policies are better than those of the Labour Party. We think the present government will do very many of the things we were wanting the previous government to do..."

"I can knock on the door of Ian McLeod as well as I can knock on the door of Roy Jenkins and get an equally friendly response... I can knock on the door of Robert Carr and get a more friendly response than I got from Barbara Castle".

Feather's unilateral honeymoon was shattered by the publication of the Tories' Industrial Relations Bill. Among its proposals were: legally binding collective agreements, the outlawing of the closed shop, compulsory ballots and cooling off periods before strikes, restrictions on strikes and picketing and the establishment of a special Industrial Relations



1972: mass strikes, mass demonstrations, mass pickets, crippled the Tories' laws

Court.

The centrepiece was the system of registration, or state licensing of unions. If a union registered it got certain protection under the Act, but the Registrar had power over its rule. If a union refused to register then it would be open to a whole range of legal liabilities.

The TUC failed to take any immediate action. Instead, in the period October 1970 to march 1971, they ran a campaign of education and propaganda — which, however, did play a useful role in provoking discussion and awareness amongst the ranks.

The leading role in the first phase of opposition was played by the Stalinist-dominated Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trades Unions. The first one-day strike called by the committee, however, could mobilise only one hundred thousand.

On November 14, 1970 a LCDTU Conference produced a large turnout and voted for a series of stoppages.

The first, on December 8, produced a turnout of over half a million. TGWU Regions' and the AUEW nationally responded to pressure from below.

On New Year's Day 45,000 TGWU workers in Birmingham struck. The TUC's main drive was focussed on Parliament. They persuaded Labour to put down amendments to the worst aspects of the legislation and prostrated themselves before Heath, bellowing that they could do the job of controlling their members better without legislation.

But they called a demonstration in London in February 1971 where the depth of the growing resistance to Heath could be seen from the quarter of a million marching. On March 1

there was an AUEW strike with a 1.5 million turnout, and on March 18, two million stopped work.

The latter stoppage coincided with a special TUC conference called to discuss the TUC position on the Act.

By now it was dawning on the TUC leadership that Heath meant what he said, that he was determined and capable of getting the proposals on the statute book, and moreover that his proposals were part of a coordinated strategy to weaken their influence.

The state would walk into their rulebooks, fine them if they failed to police their members and at the same time weaken their influence through reducing their members and finances by outlawing the closed shop.

The TUC were not prepared to unleash industrial action which in destroying the Tories might weaken their own position.

On the other hand they

were deeply aggrieved that they were to be forced to serve capital without being paid their just time honoured reward. They were not prepared to give up the comforts of wage-slavery for a return to serfdom, and they felt that there was no necessity to do so.

They therefore adopted a centre position between open conflict and open collaboration.

The General Council put a seven point plan to the Croydon Conference. The next Labour government would be pledged to repeal the Act; affiliates would not sign legally enforceable agreements; unions would not cooperate with the Act's institutions or serve on any of the statutory bodies that would implement its provisions. These were quickly accepted.

More contentious was 'strong advice' to unions not to register and the rejection of industrial

action to stop the Bill becoming an Act. Many felt "strong advice" was insufficient as a deterrent.

It was carried but overruled at the Annual Congress in September by a successful AUEW motion (carried against the General Council's advice) and replaced by 'instruct'.

This decision was of crucial significance. It meant that unions would be open to all kinds of legal action. In conjunction with the fact that the Act gave individuals, not the state, the right to take legal action, this created the pre-conditions for an explosion outside the state's political control, an explosion which was bound to occur sooner or later.

The TUC's policy of non-collaboration and non-registration at least provided some basis and legitimacy for the socialists to work on. The LCDTU, however, failed to take up the challenge.

It held another conference in April 1972 after the Bill was passed. It declared that 'only industrial action would defeat the Act' and called for 'resistance action' against paying fines or carrying out court instructions. But despite another meeting in June and small scale industrial action in September, never wielded again the influence of 1970.

Crippled

Crippled by the Stalinists' subordination of the whole to the needs of the existing leadership, has never done so since.

Meanwhile, the Heath government had faced down the power workers late December and opened up the New Year by driving down the post workers, to fight alone by the rest of the union leaders.

After a nine-week struggle the Ford workers were back after a personal deal between Ford Europe and Jones and Scanlon. 1971 was on the whole a successful year for Heath, and it closed the TUC policy showing some big gaps.

32 unions with 500,000 members decided to stay the register, and 12 others with nearly 2 million members postponed a decision on collaboration. Amongst unions such as USDAW, ISTC and EET looked to the narrow short-term institutional interests of their apparatus and

Mass action the only way to answer Tory attacks

ATED HEATH'S

John McIlroy maps out lessons for the fight against Tebbit from the fight against the Industrial Relations Act



tight. (They only deregistered when the dockers were imprisoned. Even then around 20 unions had to be expelled from the TUC including the NGA and the Bakers' Union).

The miners' strike and the Manchester engineering sit-ins, however, showed that the belly for a fight with the Tories was there.

In March and April 1972 the railway unions collaborated in the operation of a cooling off period and ballot ordered under the Act. However, the ranks demonstrated their hostility by a 90% vote for industrial action.

The tide was to be turned by the dockers. Organising a campaign to ensure that container work was handled under the conditions of the Dockworkers Board Scheme, they picketed container depots and blacked haulage firms that dealt with them. The TGWU was hauled before the National Industrial Relations Court and ordered to call off the action.

The Executive failed to convince the dockers that they should call off their action, and were fined for contempt of court in failing to ensure that the injunction was carried out.

Jack Jones immediately caved in and got the General Council to change its policy so that he could

attend the court.

He argued that the TGWU as an organisation was not responsible for the actions of its representatives. The injunction should have been issued against the stewards as individuals. The executive had not authorised the action.

This reasoning was accepted by the Court of Appeal, headed by Lord Denning. But the dockers continued to demonstrate their contempt for the Act by going right on with what was required to win their dispute. On Friday July 22 five stewards were arrested and lodged in Pentonville Gaol.

Dockers all over the country walked out on strike. Fleet Street was closed down and, despite the fact that it was the holiday period, a rolling strike movement began.

With over a quarter of a million workers out the General Council acted quickly and called a one-day national stoppage for the next Monday. Despite the TUC's inadequacy, the judiciary saw that this would undoubtedly escalate into an indefinite general strike.

The Times was calling for Heath's resignation. His number two, Maudling, questioned whether democracy could survive.

With unprecedented haste a judgement of the House of Lords overruling the Court of Appeal judgement was rushed put,

finding that the TGWU as an organisation, not the stewards as individuals, was responsible.

Despite the fact that the latter had not 'purged their contempt' they were swiftly released on 28 July.

The rank and file had smashed a hole through the Act and the Government strategy. They had shown the power of united rank and file action.

Tailed

The leadership and the MPs tailed behind (when Bernadette Devlin tried to move a motion in the House of Commons urging the General Council to call a General Strike not one Labour MP would second it). They missed the opportunity in the summer of 1972 to dislodge the Act and the Tory government.

The voice of those who had argued constantly for a General Strike, and who saw its preconditions mature through that year, was unfortunately too small and weak to exercise mass influence and change the course of history.

Heath was adaptable. The Industrial Relations Act was crippled, for a time at least: but he changed course, and by the autumn had inveigled the TUC into a formal Incomes Policy.

When the AUEW was fined for refusing to admit anti-union James Goad and again for continuing a recognition strike at Con Mech there was widespread solidarity action. On the other hand, the Shrewsbury pickets were successfully victimised with only minority support action.

But by late 1973, of course, the miners' strike that was to kick the Tories out was developing.

The Act itself received its final comeuppance in the early days of the Labour government, when the NIRC attempted to seize AUEW assets to pay for a fine arising out of the Con Mech dispute. The AUEW Executive called out its entire membership, the response was instant, and an anonymous donor (reputed to be the Engineering Employers' Federation) paid the fine. This incident alone was an

excellent rebuttal to those who argued the members were not prepared to respond to decisive leadership.

The Industrial Relations Act had been a gigantic failure, but not simply because of its own contradictions. Anti-union law can and has worked. What stopped it was the response of the workers.

Its impact from the point of view of the employers and their state was negative. Heath made capital's predicament worse.

On the other hand, since then we have learned painfully about the limitations of the industrial militancy of those exciting years.

The fight against Tebbit has both parallels and differences with the fight against the Industrial Relations Act.

The Act tried to do too much at once. Today's Tories have not made that mistake. However, they have involved themselves in the same potential contradiction in trying to attack the union leaders' institutional interests at the same time as seeking to gain their cooperation against the rank and file.

Against the Industrial Relations Act, even a limited campaign was able to energise the rank and file and legitimise their action. Then rank and file action was able to make the state to bend, retreat and back down. The way the dockers were released, for example, showed the state's fear of escalation. Even a bourgeois politician as stubborn as Heath was forced to change policy.

In today's conditions, however, the union leaders, faced with declining membership and finances and a weaker rank and file, may be less willing to mount even a protest campaign. For example, right wing AUEW Executive members backed strikes against the 1970s legislation which they saw as an attack on union functions. They wouldn't today.

However, even limited official protest can help fuel rank and file action. The fight to push the leaders into action must continue alongside the rank and file mobilisation.

What the Tebbit Bill means to you

UNDER Tebbit's Bill, you can only take industrial 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.

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?

No. This sort of dispute is excluded from protection.

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.

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.

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

plant but not another, or workers in one section of the civil or health service taking part in selective industrial action.

*after three months, choose who to reinstate from among those still out on strike.

Sacked workers still out will no longer be able to 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.

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

*where employee genuinely objects to being a member of 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.

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.

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.

Trade unions can now be sued for unlawful action organised by their officials if the action is "authorised or endorsed" by a "responsible" person or body.

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.

£250,000 for unions with over 100,000 members.

What to do

*Affiliate to the Mobilising Committee for the Defence of Trade Union Rights (28 Middle Lane, London N8) and campaign for:

*Withdrawal of union representatives from all bodies implementing the legislation.

*Send the Tories to Coventry, no talks and withdrawal from all government machinery.

*A series of one-day strikes to build the campaign against the proposals.

*The General Council to make clear now to the government and employers that a General Strike will be the result of any attempt to enforce the legislation against workers or unions.

*No union to participate in closed shop ballots or accept government money for any ballots.

WORKERS' PRESS



Good God! I do believe he's coming back for more



back-up charges of obstruction or breach of the peace. 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 or taking any other form of industrial action — e.g. overtime bans or work-to-rule, 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.

Under the new amendment, employers will be able to:

*selectively sack groups of workers in the same dispute e.g. workers at one



Since Reagan took office, 17,000 have been slaughtered in El Salvador....



.... but Reagan declares the army is 'making progress' on 'human rights'

HORROR OF REAGAN'S WAR IN SALVADOR

by Santiago Fortin

ONE OF the key reasons why Ronald Reagan has taken a decidedly low profile in expressing US support over the Falklands/Malvinas crisis is because he — like most of the 'Moral Majority' from the West Coast and the Sunbelt states — is desperately aware of its critical repercussions on Washington's offensive in Central America, and most particularly in El Salvador.

Until early April the White House clearly believed that Galtieri's junta would do their dirty

work for them and provide a surrogate shock-force to bolster the disoriented and decrepit Salvadorean military in its extended, highly bloody, and progressively critical war against the national liberation forces of the FMLN.

Now there is no chance of this in any, but the long term. Almost without exception, Washington has found its Latin American client states ranged against its pro-British stand.

So the US urgently needs to look for new options for

its offensive in El Salvador; a struggle that in recent weeks has all but disappeared from the press but continues unabated and in an ever more brutal and acute form.

Reagan's commitment to a militant counter-revolution in El Salvador is total, and in practice qualified, only by a gradual recognition in the US congress of the growing isolationist sentiment of the Northern American working class suffering the brunt of the recession. This has led to a number of

efforts to stall the White House's momentum towards a direct and substantial military intervention, repeating the disaster of Vietnam.

Scared

However, none of the pettifogging and piecemeal manoeuvres attempted by scared congressmen have had any effect in alleviating the misery and terror of the five million besieged people of El Salvador. Under the new president, Magana, it is as it was under Duarte.

The puppets provide a certain nuance in political style, but the armed forces are the real rulers and ultimate destroyers of this desperately poor state.

In 1979 direct US economic and military assistance to the Salvadorean junta was \$8.6 million; in Carter's last year it rose to \$78 million, a massive jump reflecting the growth of the FMLN and the decision to commit US resources in massive quantities to ensure a defeat of the national liberation movement.

In this Carter was followed by Reagan but with considerably more emphasis. In 1981 aid rose to \$172 million — the highest received by any Latin American state, with a full \$35 million in military aid.

In 1982 it has already reached \$388 million (\$116 million for the military) and existing plans for fiscal year 1983 allow for \$226 million. The military component is over 25%.

El Salvador is now only in the most nominal form a sovereign nation state; it has become a US military outpost, the survival of which is daily dependent on massive infusions of dollars and weapons.

The only beneficiaries of this are the military, fattened by modern material and bloated with corruption on a massive scale, and the newly resurgent landed oligarchy, the victor of the sham elections in March and openly derisive of Washington's carefully sponsored 'agrarian reform'. The impact on the Salvadorean masses can best be quantified in their dead.

Since October 1979, when Washington expressed its pleasure at the form and activity of the new military regime, well over 30,000 people have died and nearly half a million have been forced into exile or refugee status. Since Reagan assumed office over 17,000 have died; of these roughly one in every hundred may be assumed to be a combatant in the civil war.

Vetoed

Recently Congress vetoed \$100 million extra military aid on grounds of the new regime's block on

land reform. But over 70% of military aid is granted by Reagan without reference to Congress.

Last year congress passed measures that required Reagan to certify every six months that the Salvadorean junta was 'making significant efforts to improve' the human rights situation before aid would be ratified. Some misguided liberals thought this would bring the president up short.

Not a bit of it; this January the smiling septuagenarian duly made such a ratification and embellished it with every manner of unctuous praise for his 'colleagues' in San Salvador. Three days before, some 800 civilians, the overwhelming majority of them women and children, had been shot and dismembered with machetes by the US-trained Atlacatl battalion in the village of Mozote, in eastern El Salvador.

But Reagan has felt constrained to fall in with a Pentagon plan to maintain a relatively low contingent of US soldiery in the country, and instead to bring Salvadorean troops to the US. For six months some 1,600 troops have been trained in counter-insurgency war in North Carolina and Georgia.

Recently they returned. The event was scarcely noticed by the world's press, and that will please the mandarins of the Pentagon, who know very well

what the result of their training will be.

Reagan's keenness to take a stand in El Salvador stems from an absolute belief in the crudest form of the domino theory. He understands Nicaragua to be a 'Marxist state' intent on exporting socialist revolution to the rest of the region.

In fact, the FMLN has received very minimal assistance from the Sandinistas, and even less from the Soviet Union and Cuba, which have generously limited themselves to making expressions of solidarity.

Nonetheless, Reagan's view that the bloody struggle in El Salvador holds the key to the future of the Central American isthmus and will substantially affect the political balance of forces in the hemisphere as a whole is not at root misconceived. This is why Reagan shows every sign of continuing to pursue the policy of total military victory.

Under no circumstances can this policy be allowed to succeed, and under no circumstances should readers believe that the defeat of imperialism is the sole responsibility of the FMLN; it will only be achieved with the very highest level of international solidarity with the national liberation struggle against the murderous war drive of the empire.

'Dirty weapons' and double standards

by Martin Thomas

IN THE latest stages of the Tory government's war for the greater glory of the British ruling class, there has been a black-out on all war reports — except the discovery of napalm stocks at Goose Green.

'Hero Paras Braved Napalm Bombs', screamed the Sun. Indeed it is hardly to be expected that an army trained over the years in the bloody repression of the Argentinian working class should be delicate about its methods against British troops, or polite to the islanders.

But the outrage rings hollow from the Sun. When did they ever have much to say against the Argentine army's crushing of the Left and the unions? And the napalm was not in fact used at Goose Green, while the British did use cluster bombs. These bombs explode 50 feet above the ground and shower 147 small bombs, each of which then throws out about 2,000 lethal fragments.

From all accounts, they killed the majority of the Argentine 240 dead at Goose Green.

Moreover, the Sunday Times reported:

'Britain, like Argentina, has signed a UN convention which would restrict the use of incendiary weapons — but, like Argentina, it has so far failed to ratify it...'

'(And) it was British troops, not Argentinians, who first concluded that — in extremis — burning men alive was a possibility

Marines

When the marines on South Georgia expected an Argentine landing from the sea, after April 2, they improvised napalm-type fire bombs. 'We could have turned the beach into an inferno', their commander said.

Fortunately for the Argentinians, they came by air instead.

Napalm was invented by Britain's allies in this war, the US. They used it to fire-bomb Tokyo in March 1945, killing 80,000 people (15,000 more than in the Hiroshima bombing).

Britain, too, used fire bombs against civilians in World War 2, slaughtering some 100,000 people in a raid on the German city of Dresden.

And in Vietnam the US used napalm against civilians on a huge scale and to

terrible effect. Not just napalm, but defoliants, scatter bombs and all the weapons to maim and mutilate that millions of dollars could buy.

Papers like the Sun had little to say about it then.

They also have little to say about the horrors of another war that Britain is waging today — in Ireland.

The British Army does not use napalm in Ireland. TV, even with all its self-censorship, makes that impossible. But it does use plastic bullets against civilians.

Last year, between April and August, the British Army and the RUC killed three children and four

adults (none of them 'terrorists') with plastic bullets.

Since 1972 a total of fourteen people have been killed by rubber or plastic bullets. And many more have been maimed. Last year, for example, Dermot Gallagher (aged 11) had his skull fractured; Sarah Begley lost an eye; Sean Tumelty suffered brain damage; Patrick Callaghan and Brendan Kelly each lost an eye.

An army trained and drilled in such operations can only serve an arrogant minority ruling class. In our war, the class war, the enemy is that British army and the capitalist class it represents.



LONDON 'DIE-IN'

FOLLOWING an appeal by Helen Johns from the Greenham Common Peace Camp at the CND rally last Sunday, 60 women staged a 'die-in' at the Stock Exchange on Monday morning.

They blockaded five streets round the Stock Exchange by lying down in the street for half an hour, while other women handed out leaflets explaining to passers-by what they were doing.

The Stock Exchange was chosen as a symbol of the capitalism and militarism that allows millions to be pumped into the manufacture of means of killing people.

It was also a protest at Reagan's visit and the siting of American Cruise missiles in Britain. The women 'died' in London — as London would also be hit by any nuclear bomb attack on Greenham Common.

Eight women were arrested.

JOHN HARRIS



'And how would you like a Cruise?' — a scene from the giant CND march in London last weekend

Class line needed in CND

by Arthur Bough

ON THE weekend before the massive demonstration against the Reagan Thatcher war drive, Labour CND met in Bradford to discuss 'Alternative Defence Strategy'.

The alternatives were varied — not even agreeing about what should be defended, let alone how.

Together with another Socialist Organiser supporter and a Militant supporter at the conference, I tried to put a motion:

"Labour's defence policy must be based on working class interests. Such a policy should be dictated by the interests of the international working class. This should include the building of international workers' unity against war. Workers' organisations are their only defence."

The platform refused to take this motion, but we were able to argue the issue further in workshops.

Defence policy, I argued, should be based on defeating the British capitalist state and creating a workers' militia. The workers' defence squads formed for protection against fascist and police attacks could be the beginnings of such a militia.

Other options discussed included non-violent resistance, guerrilla tactics, etc. But the main conference debate was about NATO.

Many of us argued that Labour's support for NATO stands in contradiction to its commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament. But conference chairperson Robin Cook MP replied that withdrawal from NATO was unlikely in the near future, and anyway it was not in Labour's interests for Labour CND to say that Labour's present policy is based on a contradiction.

Dan Smith presented a more elaborate argument — proposing 'conditional' British membership of NATO, using the threat of withdrawal to extract concessions from NATO and turn it into an anti-nuclear alliance!

Norway and Denmark are members of NATO and do not have nuclear weapons, he said, and it would be wrong to withdraw from NATO and leave them isolated.

Tim Summers from London pointed out that NATO is run by a bunch of generals who are not likely to be converted into humanitarians by a British government negotiating with them. And others argued that we must oppose NATO not only because of its nuclear weapons but also because of its class nature. NATO back-up for the Turkish generals shows NATO's role as a counter-revolutionary alliance, even though it is conventional weaponry that those generals use to shoot down workers.

The conference ended without any votes or decisions, though Bob Cryer's summing up speech came down firmly for withdrawal from NATO.

The discussion needs to be continued, and on a better-organised and democratic basis.

Open the bunkers!

by West Midlands councillor Dave Spencer

THE LAST Manchester conference of local authorities supporting the concept of nuclear free zones was told that 140 councils have now signed the NFZ declaration. But what does this mean?

It can only be a propaganda declaration since councils have limited powers.

For example, British Rail transports nuclear waste every day through the major cities of this country, whether they be 'nuclear free zones' or not, and they refuse to give any indication of their timetables to the local councils concerned.

If there was a derailment or an accident, as there was at Bescote sidings in the West Midlands a few months ago, then the emergency services cannot be properly alerted.

Another factor is that the whereabouts of the real anti-nuclear bunkers are not known to democratically elected representatives — councillors or MPs. (The ones under the town hall and so on are remnants of the 1950s).

Since 1973 (after the miners' strike, and learning from Diplock and events in Northern Ireland) Civil Defence has been under military control. There are 12 sub-regional centres — i.e. bunkers, with a trio of leaders in each, consisting of a government minister, the chief of police and the chief execu-

tive officer (i.e. bureaucrat) of the area concerned.

The main object is the maintenance of law and order after a nuclear attack, with emphasis being placed on policing at local levels and emergency courts and sentencing.

There is no policy of blast shelters for all, as in Switzerland, or of mass evacuation to the countryside as in the USSR.

In the UK, you are advised to stay put under the stairs or the table until your friendly neighbourhood bobby comes and sorts you out.

The amount spent on Civil Defence is extremely small. In the West Midlands, for example, with a population of just under three million, it amounts to £200,000 a year, that is less than 7p per person per year.

When you compare that to the £6 per week we each pay towards the armed forces and nuclear weapons you can see how much your life is valued at by this government.

So the NFZ declaration can only be of propaganda value. All NFZ councils should take full advantage of their statutory obligation under the Civil Defence Regulations (1974) 'to instruct and advise the public'.

Most Labour councillors unfortunately see themselves as managers

whether of the left or of the right, whereas they should be organisers of campaigns. Thus some see it as enough to make a NFZ declaration and not to be involved in the coming 'Hard Rock' exercise, whereas what we need is continuous publicity campaigns on the con-trick that Civil Defence is and in the need for unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Some councils have set about this in an energetic manner and some activities were reported at the recent Manchester conference.

These need to be encouraged and spread to other areas by local CND groups and Labour Parties.

Watford and Islington have published their war plans. Watford stressed the need to link with NCCL because of the highly authoritarian nature of the plans.

Darlington have had a series of public showings of the War Game. They have taken a market stall to publicise NFZ and to sell literature. They enclosed a leaflet on nuclear war and defence expenditure with their rate demands.

Bradford have opened up the bunkers to television, the press and the public. They have widened their Civil Defence Committee into a Peace Action Group, involving 15 councillors and two representatives from every Peace Group. They also fund special WEA and

FE classes in Peace Studies.

Dunbarton and Avon have both held exhibitions of CND literature and posters in all libraries and public buildings — including the baths. Avon have stressed the importance of Peace Studies in schools and colleges.

Manchester let council facilities free or at cost to all Peace Groups.

South Yorkshire have used their civic newspaper to publicise the nuclear free zone concept.

The GLC are preparing a report on the legal implications of withdrawing from Civil Defence altogether.

Clearly this is the logical conclusion of any argument on Civil Defence but it also needs great support from the 140 NFZ councils, as well as public backing. There needs to be some unity in action rather than allowing councils to be picked off individually by the government.

Fight

This raises the whole question of the fight inside the Labour Party itself. The disgraceful jingoism of the Labour leadership over the Falkland Islands crisis gives us very little hope for any struggle on Civil Defence or on CND for that matter. Yet, unilateral nuclear disarmament is Conference policy and the 110 local councils have

made some sort of stand.

It is again up to local activists to give these declarations some real meaning and not to leave it as lip service and a face saver.

The last Emergency Planning Committee of the West Midlands County Council decided to produce leaflets and material on the Council's NFZ stand for local groups to distribute. We also decided to open up the bunkers to the television and the press, and to form a Civil Defence Forum involving coun-

cillors and representatives from Peace Groups.

We want to have a discussion on the GLC report on withdrawing from Civil Defence when it is published.

A recommendation was also made to appoint a new officer for 'hazard analysis'.

Civil Defence, after all, is supposed to include defence against peacetime hazards like stores of chemicals and liquid gas. Yet no-one even has a clear picture of where these hazards are.



Bring the coffins home!

THE most appalling hypocrisy was revealed this week on the Falklands crisis when Field Marshall Carver stated: "The bodies of dead soldiers cannot be brought back to Britain at tax payers' expense."

It has always been the military tradition in Britain to bury the dead where they fell — this is particularly so given the economic climate.

So whilst millions have been spent sending them there, the Tories couldn't even be bothered to have

them brought back in coffins.

Vietnam

During the Vietnam war one of the main demands of the "Bring the Boys Home Campaign" was for the dead to be brought back to

the States.

The arrivals of the coffins had a tremendously radicalising effect on the civilian population — the arrival of hundreds of coffins really brought the reality of war home to ordinary folk.

We should be campaigning for this demand today in order to shift the public mood towards Thatcher's war drive and bring it home what the war is really about.

JOHNNY RENO,
Stockport

Writeback



We invite readers to send us their letters, up to a usual maximum length of 400 words.

Send to
"Writeback",
Socialist Organiser,
c/o 28, Middle Lane,
London N8.



Thatcher wouldn't be there if the rest didn't support her

Islands fear of British bombs

THERE IS quite a strong connection between New Zealand and the Falklands. Some people estimate that there are as many as 500 ex-Falklanders living here, and a letter recently received by one from a relative in Port Stanley gives an interesting picture of the islanders' views.

"Yes, I guess you would be worried. We were pretty scared ourselves in fact."

"We were up all night waiting for them (the Argentinians) to arrive and then lay on the floor for three hours with bullets and mortars banging everywhere."

"Certainly I have never been so scared in my life at any time. I was sure we were going to die. And as it was, a mortar bomb landed in the yard and showered lots of metal all over the house and we have some bits of metal to show for it. Nothing found a home in anything valuable, luckily."

"But I don't think I want to go back over that again. But the British Fleet will be here soon and I suppose if anything it will be worse."

"We have been told what to do in case of an air raid. But if the British are mad enough to bomb the place I'll be surprised."

"Certainly we are more bothered about the British than about the Argentinians at present."

HARRY HOLLAND,
Wellington,
New Zealand

No: don't defend Argentina!

WHILST supporting Socialist Organiser's position of refusing to line up with either Thatcher or Galtieri in the present Falklands dispute, I would like to express my disagreement with the argument repeatedly advocated in Socialist Organiser that, should the fighting spread to Argentina itself and thereby threaten its "territorial integrity", socialists should call for a victory for Argentina.

Predatory

As SO has pointed out: Argentina is not a "typical third world oppressed country". It is an exporter of capital, a predatory power with territorial ambitions other than the Falklands (e.g. Beagle Islands), it intervenes in the internal affairs of other Latin American countries (e.g. El Salvador, Bolivia), and it is destined to play a central role in the proposed South Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

In a war between a (decaying) imperialist power (Britain) and a sub-imperialist power (Argentina) what basis is there for socialists to call for a victory for the latter? Socialists should be working for the defeat of both sides by independent, international working class action.

Historical analogies are always of limited use. In some cases (mis-)interpretations of them can be completely misleading. The muddle-heads who deduce support for Argen-

tine in the present Falklands squabble from brief asides made by Trotsky in relation to a hypothetical war between Britain and Brazil half a century ago provide the clearest and most immediate proof of this.

But an analogy with the Menshevik arguments in the 1914-18 war does serve a purpose. The Mensheviks argued for support for the Russian war effort on the grounds that Russia was a dependent economy, subject to control by the major European powers (cf the arguments now circulating

about Argentine "dependence"). Lenin ruthlessly combatted such pernicious arguments.

Instead of joining the Mensheviks as a recruiting agent for the Tsar, he worked to transform the imperialist war into civil war.

Groups like Socialist Challenge have already put themselves in the camp of latter-day Menshevism by lining up with Argentina and ascribing a "progressive content" to Galtieri's reactionary invasion of the Falklands.

(Like the curate's egg, it seems, the military dicta-

torship is "good in parts" — just like Khomeini in Iran, fake 'trade unions' in Eastern Europe, etc. etc).

Basing itself on Lenin's struggle against the Mensheviks, and extending the logic already applied to reach its position on the current conflict, SO should draw the conclusion that a thorough-going revolutionary defeatist position must be maintained against both Britain and Argentina, even if the scene of the fighting were to shift to Argentina.

STAN CROOKE,
Glasgow

Don't single out Thatcher!

I AM writing to complain about the headline of Socialist Organiser 86, the picture on the front page and the poster in the middle of the paper.

My objection is not against the politics of Socialist Organiser but against the way that the war in the South Atlantic has been personalised into one woman's fight against the Argies.

The headline of the paper was 'Thatcher's Bloodbath'. The front page picture was of a grotesque Thatcher with a big nose, big teeth and big breasts, sailing along on the body of a dead man (no big breasts for him).

The poster in the centre is no better. It shows Thatcher with the body of an animal and 'Dracula' like teeth.

Where are the rest of the Tory Party? Thatcher is their leader, but she wouldn't be there if the rest of the party

didn't support her. The war is not going on just because of her, but because of the Tory Party (not to mention the Labour Party).

To show pictures of a deformed Thatcher, with enormous breasts only encourages sexism and hatred of women in politics. How many pictures do you see of Norman Tebbit with a big penis, playing on the fact that he is a man?

She shouldn't be attacked because she is a woman, but for the politics she represents.

This isn't just a fault of SO. It is spread throughout the labour movement with slogans like 'Ditch the Bitch' and 'Plunderwoman'. The left are supposed to be liberating women, so why not start with not printing sexist pictures and slogans?

In sisterhood,
KATE WILLIAMS

Getting organised

WHEN I started work at Bridgeports, a machine tools factory in Leicester, morale — and wages — were very low.

But after a successful strike in March for bonus money, we have a regularly-meeting stewards' committee and a mandate for the stewards to try and put more money from that bonus onto the basic rates in the annual pay negotiations.

A year ago the union (AUEW) had only 30% membership. There was a reluctant convenor, three stewards, no regular stewards' meetings, and no proper communication with the shop floor.

When the 39 hour week came, we still had to produce the same as in 40. And then with falling orders we were put on a 4 day week (some sections 3 days), with

redundancies. After losing 8 hours' work and bonus payments, our wages were halved.

I got myself elected as a shop steward, and started recruiting workers into the AUEW. The reason why they hadn't joined before was not the myth that the unions are too militant, but the fact that they couldn't see the union doing anything. Join and fight the union leadership and management together, was my answer.

Soon membership was 50%.

On Tuesday afternoon March 30, 98% of the factory stopped work over the bonus money. Management refused to negotiate because we were out of procedure. The next morning we stopped work again.

The union district secretary, Bridget Paton, did not

want to know. Pressure was put on me from management and from the convenor to advise the workers to go back on the grounds that I did not know the procedure.

I said I knew the procedure, but the workforce was on strike, and there was nothing I could or would do about it!

After another stoppage on the Wednesday we won approximately £10 guaranteed bonus until the May pay deal.

And we also got five new shop stewards elected, and more workers joined the union.

So the lesson for all workers is: organise and fight, don't be put off by backward-looking, well-paid full-time officials. We now have a base to work on for future organisation — and that's the crucial question.

AUEW steward, Leicester

SCIENCE Giving a lead on lead!

by Davy Jones and Jerry Ben-Noah

FOR years now, there has been concern that lead from petrol may result in impaired mental ability and behavioural problems in children living close to motorways. Although, in some parts of the USA, Australia, Sweden and Japan, this worry has resulted in the banning of lead additives from petrol, the idea has been pooh-poohed in this country.

In 1980, a government working party chaired by Professor P.J. Lawther advised that the evidence which suggested that even low blood lead levels were harmful was inconclusive (it is well-known that high levels of lead are very toxic indeed).

The Lawther working party also concluded that, in any case, most of the body's lead came from food and water, not petrol. Nevertheless, last year, the government cut the legal level of lead in petrol from 0.4 to 0.15 milligrams per

litre*.

Now, at an international conference organised in London two weeks ago by the Campaign for Lead-Free Air (CLEAR), several researchers produced evidence which goes directly against the conclusions of the Lawther Report. Firstly, a group of Italian scientists (using the fact that lead in petrol in one region of Italy has a different proportion of unusual isotopes from lead in soil and food), found that 30% of lead in the blood comes from petrol.

And in California, in the four years after lead was banned from petrol, blood lead levels fell by a third.

Secondly, psychologists from both the USA and Britain (including two members of Professor Lawther's committee) have found new evidence for a link between even low blood lead levels (above 120 micrograms* per litre) and inability to concen-

trate, nervous tension, and lowered performance in IQ tests.

The brunt of airborne lead pollution is carried by working class communities in inner-city areas. As a consequence, there must be some doubt as to whether the effects attributed to lead are not instead the result of social deprivation, so that lead is a coincidental, not a causal factor in affecting ability and behaviour. (The dangers of ignoring this possibility are best illustrated by the assertions of Reading's Professor Bryce-Smith that last year's riots were in some way due to lead pollution!)

Despite this reservation, Professor Michael Rutter, an educational psychologist, and another member of the Lawther Committee, commented that he was now in favour of the elimination of lead from petrol since "the level of probability (of an association

between lead and lowered intelligence) is such that I think it is worth acting upon."

The Labour Party NEC last month pledged that the next Labour government would ban lead from petrol. With the medical establishment of the British Medical Association also convinced of the adverse psychological effects of lead in petrol, and with the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution launching an investigation into lead, it seems that we shall eventually see lead-free petrol in Britain, though several years after its prohibition in Australia, Sweden, Japan and the USA.

Cooperate

Since even the oil companies which jointly own Associated Octel, suppliers of tetra-ethyl lead additives for petrol, say that they will cooperate with the government if it bans lead (after

all, fuel consumption will increase a little), the only remaining opposition is the government itself.

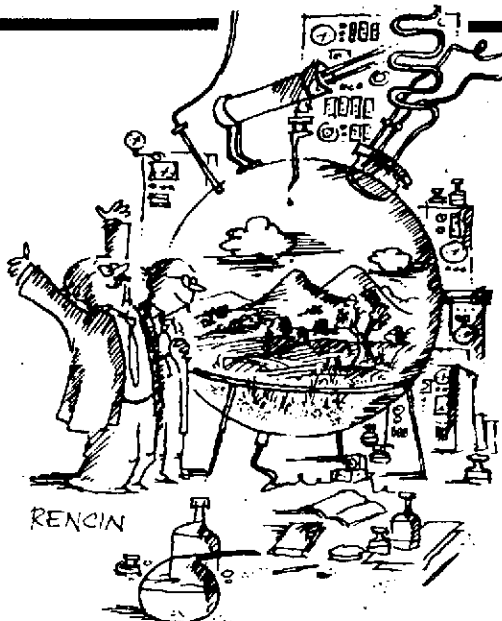
They argue that the costs of increased fuel expenditure, together with the technical improvements that car manufacturers would have to carry out, makes lead-free petrol too expensive a proposition.

In other words, lead-free petrol could be the straw that breaks the back of the British motor industry.

In the meantime, the costs of keeping lead in petrol will be paid for, not by Ford and Leyland, but by the next generation of working class kids.

Of course, if lead is banned from petrol, then their parents may have to pay for it with their jobs. That's capitalism, comrades, that's capitalism.

*A milligram is one thousandth of a gramme. A microgram is one millionth of a gram.





SOCIALIST COUNCILLORS MUST UNITE

ON the front page of April's London Labour Briefing, over 100 Labour candidates pledged to stick to their manifesto commitments and refuse to make attacks "no matter what the pressures and threats".

The conference at County Hall on 19 June, will be the first opportunity since the elections for those councillors who signed the pledge to meet together to discuss how those policies can begin to be put into practice.

The results of the local elections have been mixed but at least in some areas, such as Hackney and Islington we are very strong indeed and the conference will be geared to making the best use of strong positions we have gained.

At best, until now, Labour councillors have been allowed to become very isolated both from one another and from the labour movement itself.

No organisation on the left has existed to cater specifically for the needs of councillors who have no intention of administering the state in the traditional right wing way.

Avoid

There is only one way we can avoid becoming instruments of the capitalist state on a local level and that is by representing inside the council chamber those extra-parliamentary forces — the trade unions, ethnic minority organisations, women's movement, tenants and residents organisations — which alone can provide the forces for a real fight.

For this reason the conference is not being restricted to councillors: all Labour-supporting activists are welcome to attend. It is hoped to set up as a result of the conference an Associ-

Lewisham councillor Ann Bliss explains the June 19 conference.

ation of Socialist Councillors in London to provide a London-wide means through which the pressures and demands of activists can be brought to bear on our councillors and through which the councillors in turn can organise across borough boundaries and call on the help of the movement as required.

It is to provide this link up between external and internal council resources that the Association of Socialist Councillors in London is being set up. We should put demands on others only to the extent that we ourselves are prepared to carry them out.

By acting in a coordinated way through the Association of Socialist Councillors, hopefully we will be supporting each other and giving each other the strength we will need to really put into practice the politics which for the past few years we have been advocating that others commit themselves to.

Personally I would like to emphasise the importance of forms of activity not normally regarded as within the province of council chamber politics.

I mean the levels of struggle which the Briefing Streetlife supplement has begun to reflect. This means becoming strong and organised not only in our workplace but also in the homes and streets where we live. For example, the fight against racist violence, racial harassment and other forms of crime will be an important theme in the conference and alternatives to reliance on the police will be suggested.



What is the future for Tribune?

Last month Chris Mullin took over as editor of Tribune. Within three weeks Michael Foot had denounced him for "infantile leftism . . . giving aid to Thatcher and Galtieri" and Neil Kinnock had lambasted the "self-righteousness" of the new Tribune. What is it all about? Socialist Organiser spoke to Chris Mullin.

What changes do you hope to make in Tribune?

Some of them will be noticeable from the first few issues. The editorial line has changed.

My view is that we in the labour movement have two principal tasks. We have to sell to the public at large the idea that we have a credible alternative to the way the world now turns round. And we have to find elected representatives prepared to implement that alternative.

I think that by far the most difficult of those two tasks is to find elected representatives prepared to implement the programme of the Labour Party.

The left wing press divides roughly into two categories — the sort of paper you might buy at a newsagent, and the sort you might buy at a meeting or demonstration. Tribune has been very much in the first category. Do you see it moving into the second?

Yes. I think it will be quite a long process, but we want to build up a network of sellers.

Do you want to see Tribune groups set up?

Yes. Up to now the paper hasn't been very keen on these groups, but I am keen. However, there are

certain difficulties. A number of organisations that are not interested in Tribune wish to hijack the name for their own purposes. That's not something I'm keen to encourage.

But I think all we would ask of a Tribune group is that they actually sell the paper.

In the '50s, it is said, Tribune was a paper of the rank and file left activists in the unions as well as in the Labour Party. Do you see Tribune campaigning in the unions?

Yes. In the last couple of years we've begun to see the end of non-political trade unionism — the idea that trade unionism is just about wages and conditions of work, and that any input they have into the Labour Party will be done by a few general secretaries.

I'm glad to see that in many of the great unions, particularly those with right wing leaderships, Broad Lefts are now getting off the ground — and that at just about all trade union conferences now they have fringe meetings, an entirely new and exciting concept there though, long well known to those of us who go to Labour Party conference.

How do you see the particular role of the new Tribune

in the spectrum of the Left? Where does it fit in?

We'll differ from some of the other papers of the Left. For example, I shall always keep the paper open to our opponents. If Roy Hattersley wants to call for something unpleasant to be done to us, I'd far rather he said it in Tribune than read 'Purge of the Parasites' on the front page of the Daily Mail.

Nobody, whether of the Left or of the Right, need fear that their point of view will not be allowed to get into the paper. If they feel they have been misrepresented, there will always be a right of reply, with equal space and equal prominence.

For the Labour Left generally, do you think it is time now to go on the offensive again?

I think we've got to choose our ground carefully for going onto the offensive. I would prefer to see it on the basis of issues rather than personalities.

The danger of going only for issues is, of course, that we end up winning on the issues and nothing gets done about them when Labour takes power. That's the experience of the past,

anyway.

But I think it's a bad habit on the Left to demand absolute purity from our representatives, and to write them off if they score less than 99%. I think that leads us to end up fighting a lot of people who really should be with us.

Which issues would you prioritise?

The Bomb is the one that extends not only across all sections of the Labour Party but also to majority opinion in the country.

I think we have to keep telling our friends in the Parliamentary Labour Party, when they are advising us to fudge something, is that there is nothing to be gained even electorally by fudging issues like the Bomb.

There is a danger that we will go into the next election with two versions of the SDP. And if we do the real SDP will win.

We need a clear statement that the next Labour government will remove American nuclear weapons from British soil. But when I tried to interview our defence spokesman, Mr Silkin, on the subject, he wouldn't see me.

Isn't fudging on this issue made easier by the fact that Labour Party policy is not clear — trying to combine unilateral nuclear disarmament with staying in NATO?

Personally I am against remaining in NATO. I'm in favour of Britain being a neutral country.

That isn't however the view of the Party as yet. And getting rid of nuclear weapons is the policy of the Party.

I don't think the two things are incompatible. Canada and Norway are members of NATO and they don't have nuclear weapons.

Issues, not personalities: does that mean that you are not in favour of a challenge on the leadership or deputy leadership this year?

When they should be challenged is a matter of tactics. If someone could demonstrate to me that the strength of the Left would be improved by a challenge, then I would be in favour of it. If someone demonstrates that it would set us back — and we also have to look at the general electoral prospects — then I would be against. I have an open mind.

RUNNING LONDON — OUR WAY

Credentials from: Jim Ring, 55 Stonard Rd., London N13. Price £1. Creche available.

Speakers include Jeremy Corbyn, Valerie Wise, Sue Carlyle, Valerie Veness.

June 19 County Hall

LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING is organising a working conference of Labour councillors and Labour supporting activists. Councillors need to break out of Council Chamber politics and link-up with "extra-parliamentary forces" — the trade unions, the women's movement, tenants and ethnic minority groups, etc. The aim is to set up an "Association of Socialist Councillors in London".

BRADFORD Council Labour Group has called an independent labour movement inquiry into the police arrest and assault on councillor Barry Turner last Saturday, 5th.

Witnesses have been invited to attend a hearing this Friday, 7pm at the City Hall. The Labour Group is also launching a financial appeal for Barry Turner.

Barry, a Socialist Organiser supporter, was arrested on a Trades Council counter-demonstration to a British Movement march in Bradford. Only a couple of months ago Mohammed Arif was murdered in Bradford

by a British Movement member.

There was no confrontation on the demonstration, and it was dispersing peacefully when Barry was arrested. He saw a freelance journalist being assaulted by a police sergeant and intervened, identifying himself as a councillor and asking for the sergeant's number.

"You're arrested", was the policeman's reply, and Barry was bundled into a police van where he was attacked and punched. At the police station he was put into a cell with three

British Movement members, and not allowed to make a phone call to his wife. He has been charged under section 5 of the Public Order Act, and is due to appear in court on June 23.

Another Socialist Organiser supporter, Matthew Kirkpatrick, was also arrested on the demonstration, while trying to see what was going on when Barry was arrested.

Barry has lodged an official complaint, and hopes for support from the Trades Council and others in the Bradford labour movement as well as the councillors.



Disastrous deal by Wandsworth officials

by Gerry Byrne

WANDSWORTH dustmen have returned to work. The council meeting on Thursday May 27 decided by 2 votes to sack them if they had not returned to work by June 7. The following day saw union officials locked in secret negotiations with the council to end the dispute.

The deal they cooked up means council workers will be allowed to put in a bid, drawn up by the council Director of Technical Services, for their jobs. They will be competing against 14 tenders from private contractors, including Pritchards who already have the street cleaning and who started the whole show off by offering to tender for the dust contract.

Even if the council

workers get the contract, at least 50 jobs will go and new working practices will mean speed-ups and inevitable corner-cutting on safety.

In effect, after seven weeks on strike, the dustmen will have the dubious privilege of selling their own jobs and worsening their conditions in competition with private firms who will have no qualms about pitching their estimates artificially low and upping charges for little "extras" once they've safely landed the contract.

So how did it happen that when this appalling package was put to the strikers they voted overwhelmingly for a return to work? Clearly, the sackings, no longer just a threat, had an influence. But this could

POEU suspensions lifted

Left wingers at the POEU conference celebrated an important victory over the union's right wing leadership this week, when 2-year disciplinary suspensions against six branch officials were lifted.

The branch officers - from Kidderminster, the

Black Country and Potteries branches - had distributed ballot papers on the Labour Party deputy leadership at branch meetings rather than by post.

The suspensions had been in force for only six months when a Broad Left-backed composite motion demand-

ing the members' immediate reinstatement was carried against the vehement opposition of General Secretary Bryan Stanley.

The conference voted to affiliate to CND. But the right wing too

had some successes. Union President John Scott-Garner was able to get away with a tacit threat to disaffiliate from the Labour Party if it moved to the left, and a pay package was endorsed which actually conceded a reduction in wages for new starters.

NALGO must fight privatisation

TWO ISSUES will dominate NALGO's conference in the coming week: privatisation and the fight against the Tebbit Bill.

The conference comes at the end of a year when the trade union has been shaken by struggles against the cuts (as in Islington) and privatisation of services (in Wandsworth). It also follows a

national ballot in which a call for Labour Party affiliation was decisively defeated.

The conference agenda includes calls for:

- * disobedience against the Tebbit law, and strike action to ensure its defeat,
- * renationalisation without compensation of 'privatised' assets.

But it is clear that NALGO's NEC will be out to block any calls for decisive action against the government, in favour of the 'moderate' approach that resulted in NALGO abandoning the Wandsworth refuse strike.

Two other important debates will be on rape and nuclear energy.

A resolution from East-

ern District Council calls for reform of the rape law to protect the victim from harassment by the police, and to recognise the severity of the offence. On energy, amendments to the NEC's policy statement call for the extension of full trade union rights to all workers in the energy industry.

BOB SUGDEN

Rail Broad Left on right lines

by Rob Dawber (Sheffield City NUR)

52 NUR members from 31 branches met in London last Saturday, 5th, for the second conference of the railworkers' Broad Left.

The NUR leadership has been obliged to make some threats of strike action in



response to BR's attacks - the closures of Shildon and Horwich, the half-closure of Swindon works, and the 5% pay offer from September instead of April.

Some of the lefts on the NEC had succeeded in proposing united opposition on these issues, rather than let each section be isolated with its own problem.

But now the industrial action has been postponed. No one at the conference was in any doubt about BR tactics in deferring the works closures.

They wanted to avoid united action by all three rail unions, and they didn't want to throw away all the good work that Weighell has been doing for them in stabbing ASLEF and the rest of us in the back.

But Weighell will argue

that the deferment is a victory and justifies withdrawing the threat of strike action.

Indeed, it has already been suggested on the NEC that any strike should be held up until the Falklands war is over, so as not to appear unpatriotic!

All the better, then, was a resolution at the Broad Left conference calling for withdrawal of the task force and negotiations, for a positive response to be made by the TUC to the Argentine CGT's appeal for a meeting to find a labour movement solution to the war, and for this appeal to be printed in the Broad Left's journal Left Lines and submitted to the NUR's Transport Review.

The resolution was narrowly passed against the opposition of the biggest single group present - Militant.

Militant supporters also lost an amendment aiming to take away the call for withdrawal and negotiations, and the publication of the CGT's appeal, replacing them with general opposition to Tory policies and a call for a Labour government with socialist policies.

Other successful resolutions committed us to organise a speaking tour for BR Engineering workers from Shildon and Horwich. A resolution from Socialist Organiser supporters for the Broad Left journal to appear regularly every two months, and more frequently during disputes, and for the setting up of local groups as the backbone of a campaigning Broad Left, was passed unanimously.

This will allow us to be less of a propaganda group, and more able to intervene in disputes.

The NUR AGM later this month was also discussed.

A new steering committee was elected (including Socialist Organiser supporter Dave Lunt), and the conference was overall encouraging.

BR bid to split unions

"AS a first step in their campaign, British Rail is attempting to isolate ASLEF with a tactical surrender to the biggest rail union, the National Union of Railwaymen, by shelving plans to shut and run down some of its engineering workshops."

Thanks to the treachery of NUR leader Sid Weighell the British Rail bosses' plans, outlined in brutal detail in the Sunday Telegraph (June 6), could succeed. After BR postponed the workshop closures at Horwich and Shildon, Weighell announced on June 7 that he wanted to negotiate a pay deal for the NUR separate from ASLEF.

The British Rail Board has offered a 5% pay rise to both ASLEF and the NUR - delayed five months and conditional on ASLEF accepting flexible rosters. ASLEF has rejected flexible rosters but planned no action. Until last week-end the NUR was talking of industrial action from June 7 over pay and the workshop closures.

The NUR leadership has accepted flexible rosters. But the NUR sectional conference of the workers most affected - the guards - has voted 229 to 29 to reject flexible rosters and to call on the full NUR conference to reverse the Executive decision.

This vote - in defiance of attempts by Weighell to stop the guards' conference discussing the issue - shows that there is a basis at rank and file level for a united fight.

The Sunday Telegraph explains: "British Rail is preparing for a head-on clash with the militant train drivers' union ASLEF in a final bid to bring order from the industrial chaos in the industry..."

"British Rail has been told that there would be strong Government backing for a trial of strength with the train drivers even if it means lengthy strikes and disruption, with all the misery it will inevitably cause..."

And the Telegraph quotes NUR left-wingers who "fear that when the battle with ASLEF is over, British Rail will again turn their sights on to the NUR for the closure programme..."

"An NUR spokesman said, 'There is no way that this union will ever be used as a weapon with which to blackmail a fellow trade union'..."

Clearly Sid Weighell thinks different. The task is now urgent for NUR members to call him to account, and for railworkers of all unions to campaign for an all-out strike on united demands for an unconditional pay rise.

Support S&K strike!

AS REPORTED in last week's Socialist Organiser, 30 black workers have been on official strike since May 18 at Sandhar and Kang wholesale warehouse in Birmingham.

The workers are striking against appalling work conditions, low pay (many workers get only 80p an hour, and work well over 50 hours), and victimisation of workers believed to be involved in the fight for union recognition for the TGWU.

Action has spread to one of Sandhar and Kang's other warehouses, in Kingsland Road, Foleshill, Coventry. Striking workers from Birmingham and Leamington have mounted daily pickets outside the Coventry warehouse, in an attempt to stop deliveries to S&K and to help the struggle of the Coventry workers.

Most deliveries have been turned back.

The Coventry workforce of about 20 has the same wages and conditions, but it has stayed at work. Those Coventry workers who have joined the T&G in defiance of their bosses are in favour of following the lead of the Birmingham workers, but the regional T&G leadership has said that until the remaining nine or ten work-

ers not in the union have joined, they will not call Coventry out on strike.

Help build support for blacking of S&K cash and carry goods, the stopping of deliveries to the warehouses, and the fight against victimisation and for union recognition.

Send donations and messages of support to S&K strike committee, c/o TGWU, 211 Broad St, Birmingham 15.

ALY MIR

Caplan confrontation

A FIGHT for union recognition has been taken on by seven workers at Caplan's Cash and Carry, Derby Street, Manchester.

The dispute began when two employees, both members of the TGWU, were dismissed. Their colleagues in the TGWU took up this case as victimisation with the result that they too were sacked.

So at the moment the seven union members are mounting a picket outside the warehouse gates in an

attempt to stop deliveries and close down the Cash and Carry, in order to be reinstated as union members with full union rates of pay and union rights.

The seven union members described the conditions under which they worked previously as appalling. They were working a 48 hour week, including five hours on Sunday, and taking home around £55.

They were continually

abused at work by the owner and had to work in what they believed to be dangerous conditions. Their canteen facilities were almost non-existent, with the workers themselves having to club together to buy a kettle and a table.

The workers need help with donations as they have been out of work for three weeks now. The address to send donations to is: David Jones, 24 Broomfield Drive, Manchester 8.

Fight at Data firm

"IT'S the first time they've all been at work this early" commented one striker at 7.30 this morning, referring to the parked Rolls Royce and other prestigious symbols of achievement in the directors' car park at EDP in Sheffield.

He was one of half a dozen men and women on picket rota outside the gates of Electronic and Data Processing. Two months ago Jenny Wright organised the workforce there into ASTMS and the management retorted with her immediate dismissal at ten minutes' notice.

The workforce then chose to strike for her reinstatement and for recog-

nition of their union. Management then sacked all union members, and have persistently refused to meet strikers.

Management are importing scabs from city centre employment agencies. SOS and Windsor are suspected, using high-speed taxis through the picket lines.

However, to their credit, Securicor, Red Star Parcels and the GPO have so far refused to cross the picket line.

This is an important dispute not only because victimisation is abhorrent, and effective union organisation of workers is necessary, but once the principal of union recognition in one newly established computer company is established, an important lead to others will be given.

This is another symptom of the rapid and ruthless growth of the new technology appearing as high-profit sweat shops with fluorescent lighting, carpets and pot plants.

ASTMS are backing the dispute officially and have called for support in the blacking of EDP products and computer programmes and have helped set up and publicise the workers' case.

A hardship fund is open. Please send all donations and messages of support to: EDP Strike Committee, c/o 61, Wostenholm Road, Sheffield, S7 1LE.

By Brian Wood

Workers' Socialist League

SUMMER SCHOOL

Sun 25 July - Sun 1 Aug

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Further details from "Summer School" PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

PRIVATISATION

Tories 'sale of the century'

NOEL HIBBERT looks at the Tory strategy for nationalised industry.

ON THE day that HMS Sheffield was sunk with the loss of 20 lives, 27 people died on Britain's chronically congested roads. These two sets of statistics, and the absurd imbalance in national significance given to them, express the real economic and political priorities of Thatcher's Britain.

They also reflect the two fundamental principles that run through the whole domestic and foreign policy programme of the Tories: to re-establish Britain as a vigorous, interventionist sub-lieutenant in Reagan's imperialist ship of war; and to break up the social and economic gains made by the British labour movement since 1945.

Competition

For whilst the Falklands expedition has been shedding lives by the score, the onslaught on the nationalised industries has been proceeding apace.

Nicholas Ridley, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, put the government's policy in a nutshell: "The introduction of competition must whenever possible be linked to a transfer of ownership to private citizens and away from the state. Real public ownership — that is ownership by people — must be and is our ultimate goal".

The government have been pursuing their policy of 'privatisation' with venom since 1979. In that time, they have sold £3.7 billion of public assets in both nationalised industries and in companies in which the National Enterprise Board had a controlling stake, to private financiers.

Assets

Indeed the Tories are planning to steal a further £2 billion of assets in the next three years.

Provisions are already on the statute book to permit the privatisation of British Airways, the British Transport Docks Board and the disposal of subsidiaries of British Rail and British Telecom.

The National Enterprise Board has sold off the following publicly owned shares in private companies.

1979: Hird Brown, £0.4 million; ICL, £37.2 million.
1980: Brown Boveri Kent (Holdings), £2.6 million; Barrow Hepburn Ltd, £0.27 million; Computer and Systems Engineering, £2.14 million; Fairey Holdings, £21.8 million; Ferranti, £55.2 million; Middle East Building Services, £0.1 million; New Town Securities, £0.13 million; R.R. Chapman, £0.35 million.

1981: Automation and Technical Services, £0.9 million; Negretti and Zambra Ltd, £0.5 million; System Designers International, £1.19 million; Energy Equipment, £0.8 million. This gives a total of £124,480,000.

The methods used by the Callaghan Labour government through the agency of NEB, prepared the way for the Tories' present policy.

In 1974 to 1979, when the National Enterprise Board stepped into the breach to



A Wandsworth mass meeting votes for action against privatisation

help ailing companies, almost always a series of practical stipulations were laid down before public money could be invested. The electronics giant, Ferranti, is a classic case here.

The post-Benn regime in the Department of Industry in 1976 demanded that a policy of "divisionalisation" be applied within Ferranti before substantial aid could be given. In other words, the inter-site and inter-plant negotiating committees that had won significant gains in wages and conditions during the 1960s must be broken up.

Sebastian de Ferranti was told quite clearly by the DOI "you must get a stronger grip on your costs of production before the government can be convinced that it will receive an adequate return on its investments".

The result was a massive onslaught on shop floor organisation that resulted in the workforce's nose being pushed out of having any say into how "their" Labour government's investments were to be democratically controlled within the company.

Profits

By 1979 many of the NEB companies were in a relatively profitable state, yet the morale of the workforce was not exactly at a peak and capable of repelling the Tories' moves to sell off the public shares in the firms. It was the same story in the majority of companies in which the NEB had a controlling interest.

The Callaghan government delivered a number of body blows to shop floor organisation during this period, lining up workers in both the private and public sector for the coup-de-grace from the Tories.

The most striking

advance, and also the stiffest resistance to Tory monetarism, has come from the transport industries.

The Tories are pursuing a policy of creating a massive shift in freight and passenger traffic from rail to road. The principles of the market economy have led to cut-throat competition among express coach firms and exacerbated Britain's road congestion.

Instead of developing a cheap, efficient and safe rail network, the government are now proposing to introduce private auctions into British Rail's activities.

Provisions for the sale of BR properties in hotels, land, hovercraft, Sealink and now the Engineering Workshops have or are being made ready for private consumption. Already BR's hovercraft subsidiary has merged with Hoverlloyd, its main competitor, to form a private firm, Hoverspeed.

The most momentous developments, however, are being reserved for the rail network itself and for the principal unions, the NUR and ASLEF.

The government are using a number of combined devices to prepare the ground for private sale of the industry.

This includes cuts in cash limits (by £53 million for 1982-3), the tying of agreements on electrification proposals to "proven" increases in productivity, the abolition of the 1919 agreement on the 40 hour week through the introduction of flexible rostering, and the dismembering of the Engineering Workshops in Horwich in Lancashire, Shildon in County Durham and Swindon.

Importantly, the Horwich Loco Workers Joint Action Committee have produced their own analysis in pamphlet form* of the under-

resourcing of BR compared to its European counterparts. According to the NUR stewards "more money is spent on the Paris Metro than on the entire BR network".

They go on to argue that "in 1976 BR engineers featured in the top 25 of the manual workers pay league. Today, some grades — toolmakers, die casters and testers — are not even in the first division. Similarly, platers, welders and shipwrights have fallen from fourth to sixteenth place in this period".

Wages

How can the Tories seriously argue that high wages have caused the collapse of industry?

Last year the 13 BR engineering workshops made a profit of £1.3 million.

But the real motivation behind the government's plans was revealed on 15 May when BR executives told the press that BR's wagon fleet is to be cut from 132,000 to 40,000 in the next three years.

42% of the UK's total rail freight stock will be in private hands in 1986, compared to 16% today. There will be 25,000 privately owned wagons on the network by 1986 compared with 17,000 at present.

The extra 8,000 wagons will be produced by private manufacturers. And 5,000 engineering workers in the BR workshops, workers, that is, who were described by their "friend" the Financial Times (10 October 1980) as having "a broad and versatile skill base" will be cast into the dole-land wilderness.

It is estimated that if BR receives no increase in its investment quota in the next two years then 3,000 miles of BR's 11,000 miles of track will become unus-

able by 1986. Britain is bottom of the railway investment league table.

Government subsidies to European Railways.	
Italy	68%
Belgium	50%
France	44%
Holland	44%
W. Germany	39%
Britain	29%

One steward at Horwich put the problem well: "If Thatcher could build a railroad down to the Falklands then all of a sudden we would become an 'essential industry' to be preserved at all costs." The Horwich JAC have galvanised the whole of their local community behind them in the attempt to halt a closure that would result in the town having an unemployment level of 51%.

Dennis Green (chairperson of the JAC), has stated:

"If BR pushes ahead with its closure policy we shall be seeking not just a national rail strike, but also to bring into action the Triple Alliance of railworkers, miners and steelworkers, to force a change in Thatcher's crazy economic policies".

A national rail strike has already been agreed by both the Joint Rail Council and the CSEU for sometime after June 7.

Cynical Syd

However, sinister rumours are now beginning to percolate out of Unity House in London that 'cynical' Syd Weighell is preparing to argue that Shildon in the North East, Syd's former hunting ground, should be made a special case for keeping open, whereas Horwich and Swindon can be placed as offering on Peter Parker's altar of sacrifice.

The government are also

preparing to move in on what was once one of the main bastions of working class organisation: the docks. After devastating the industry through severance pay-induced redundancy, the government are now confident that the British Transport Docks Board can be dismantled and its 19 registered ports handed over to a consortium of private companies called Associated British Ports.

The government intend to sell 49% of the equity in the holding this year. After that they will take no further part in the industry.

With the workforce drastically weakened over the last 10 years, the Tories are doubtlessly confident that they can inflict revenge on the dockers for the defeat they suffered during the Pentonville Five strikes in 1972.

Piecemeal

It is clear that the onus for organising the fight-back against the Tory attack will fall to the rank-and-file Joint Ports Shop Stewards Committee. The Tories have taken on and chewed off different sectors of nationalised industry in a piecemeal fashion, but this has more to do with tactical timing rather than lack of strategic coherence.

Tebbit's law is an instance of Thatcher's strategic grasp.

By placing industrial relations in this legal corset the Tories are aiming to hamstring any prospective upswing in industrial militancy in such a web of repressive constraints that Britain's trade unions will become acclimatised to being mere "business unions" like their counterparts in the USA.

Lord Cockfield (former Minister of State at the Treasury) put it well: "The government does

have a plan for clearing up the rubble and debris left by decades of inflationary governments. Costs have to be cut back.

"The unions' tentacles have to be taken out of those institutions and areas of life for which they were not designed. The market has to be placed once again on its rightful throne — at the centre of the UK economy."

The latest gem to come to light from the Tories' think tank is the introduction of Free Trade Zones — as they operate at present in South East Asia — into Britain. The proposal, at present under discussion at the Department of Trade, will establish six large zones next to Britain's largest ports.

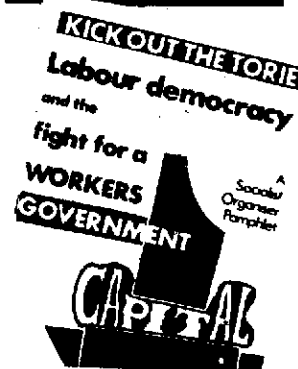
Conglomerates of merchant banks and companies will be encouraged to buy land and build factories in these areas, which will become in effect, self-regulating enclaves of foreign capital on British soil.

All existing legislation, from Company Law to the Employment Protection Act or the Health and Safety Act would not apply inside the Zones. Even local councils and police forces would have no jurisdiction whatsoever inside the enclaves.

Wages and conditions for workers in these areas, of course, would "be determined by the natural laws of the market place". These islands of laissez-faire capitalism would act as pressure points on the rest of the economy — pushing down standards of working and living accepted for years — thus taking labour back to square one in terms of basic organisation.

Such projects as this would have been thought inconceivable only a decade ago. The project for socialists today is a simple, but hard one — the reconstruction of a broad socialist movement inside the trade unions and the Labour Party.

*The Horwich Loco Workers Joint Action Committee pamphlet can be obtained from Dennis Green, Horwich JAC, Horwich Loco Works, Chorley New Road, Horwich, Lancs. Tel: 26 66801 ext. 7351.



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

PRESSURE RISES FOR ALL-OUT STRIKE

by Harry Sloan

HEALTH workers this week again carried forward the torch of struggle against the Tory government and its vicious wage controls.

And the stand taken by hundreds of thousands of health trade unionists won moral and practical support from miners, engineers, train drivers, and other public sector workers.

The one-day national strike on June 8 marked a consolidation of the strength shown in the May 19 stoppage and an advance on the level of support on June 4.

Gained

Workers had also gained in confidence after the surprisingly strong two-to-one vote by the non-union Royal College of Nursing to reject the Tories' divisive 6.4% pay offer, delivering a blow to government attempts to split nurses from other health workers.

Despite every effort by union leaders to divide and defuse the pay struggle and to avoid the necessary call for all-out strike action with emergency cover, the signs are that the struggle continues to gain momentum — and force the leadership into an increasingly uncomfortable



GMWU's Basnett: strong words but no strong action able corner.

NUPE, the largest union involved, adopted a policy of all-out strike action at its conference last month.

Though NUPE leaders have so far evaded implementing this policy, the stubborn stance of Social Services Secretary Norman Fowler makes this increasingly difficult. Other union leaders too are under pressure to escalate the action — with the GMWU arguing for

sympathetic action from other sections, and next week's COHSE conference facing demands for all-out strike alongside NUPE.

Amid rumours that ACAS officials are standing by ready to move in and arbitrate, it is plain that neither the government nor the rank and file workers are ready to compromise.

The health workers' claim — 12% — is a modest demand in the context of the fall in living standards suffered by this low-paid section. The union leaders must be forced to call the only action which can win the full claim — all out strike action, in which elected strike committees control the provision of emergency cover.

NUPE in particular must be forced to undertake this action whether or not COHSE votes to support it.

This fight could be the biggest single challenge yet mounted to Thatcher's pay policy — and also to the anti union strategy spelled out in the Tebbit law.

A leadership must be built within the health unions that is ready and willing to carry through such a struggle to the end.

Socialist Organiser

JUNE 10 — 'D' DAY ON TEBBIT

by Lol Duffy (Boilermakers' steward, Cammell Lairds)



The Mobilising Committee for the Defence of Trade Union Rights is campaigning for action on June 10. Contact: 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

AS part of the fight against the Tebbit Bill, the Cammell Laird Confed Shop Stewards Committee passed the following resolution:

"This Shop Stewards Committee resolves:

1. To inform Cammell Laird management that we will not abide by any ruling contained in the Tebbit Bill and that they should not operate the Bill.

2. To call on our Executive Committee to call an all-out general strike on the day the Bill becomes law.

3. Support the call for a one day general strike on Thursday June 10.

4. To call on our union leaders to cease cooperation with the Tories, e.g. the NEDC."

This resolution was also agreed at a meeting of Merseyside Confed shop stewards

on Tuesday June 8.

A mass meeting has yet to be held in Lairds, but it should take place on Wednesday the 9th.

Other action on Merseyside has been coordinated by Liverpool Trades Council and the District Labour Party who have a statement which includes support for the dockers' call for a strike on June 10, a demonstration through Liverpool on the same day and a major conference to be held after June 10 to discuss what to do next. (The Confed shop stewards also voted to back the demonstration and the conference).

The statement also calls for firm leadership from the TUC and that union leaders withdraw from cooperation with the Tories.

Council call to action

TWENTY Labour councillors in Islington have signed the Mobilising Committee for the Defence of Trade Union Rights statement which commits them to:

* fight Tebbit's Employment Bill before and after it becomes law,

* call for strike action on June 10 and any future day of action against the Bill,

* refuse, as employers, to implement the Act, especially the clauses relating to the use of non-union subcontract labour,

* fight to return a Labour government which will repeal Tory anti-union laws.

The Council has agreed to sponsor an Islington Trades Council public meeting against the Bill on June 30.

It is important that councillors take a stand against Tebbit. Otherwise they will just end up doing the Tories' dirty work for them.

The 'Running London Our Way' conference on June 19, called by London Labour Briefing, should be an important chance to spread support for the Mobilising Committee statement.

* Copies of the statement from the Mobilising Committee, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.

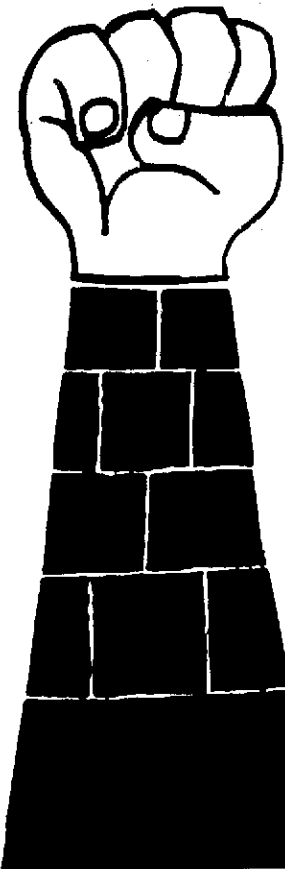
£6000 fund: action needed!

This week we combine our chart showing overall progress towards the £6000 target (the red patch, right) with a table analysing the contributions area by area.

For each locality we also list a target based on the size of the local groups — and for each region the percentage of the target so far received.

It's pretty clear that several localities still have a lot of work to do!

The grand total is lower than given last week, despite contributions received since then, because of bounced cheques.



	Target	So far		Target	So far	
SCOTLAND AND NORTH						
Glasgow	120	10	Coventry	420	300	
Edinburgh	180	10	Total	920	613	67%
Stirling	30		EAST MIDLANDS			
Carlisle	10		Nottingham	100	50	
Total	340	20	Leicester	400	60	
		6%	Northampton	50		
YORKSHIRE AND NORTH-EAST						
Durham/Sunderland	100	50	Total	550	110	20%
York			SOUTH WALES & WEST			
Bradford	140		Cardiff	100	15	
Leeds	100	68	Bristol	80		
Hull	60		Total	180	15	8%
Sheffield	100	86.50	WEST			
Total	500	204.50	Oxford	500	307	
		41%	Southampton	40		
NORTH-WEST						
Merseyside/Runcorn	320	100	Basingstoke	100	45	
Manchester	390	118	Total	640	352	55%
Winsford	30		LONDON AND SOUTH-EAST			
Stoke	30	10	Brighton	40		
Total	770	228	London	2060	195.50	
		30%	Total	2100	195.50	9%
WEST MIDLANDS						
Birmingham	500	313	MISCELLANEOUS		13.80	
			Overall total	6000	1751.80	29%

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

Fighting for withdrawal

LABOUR Left wingers have launched a campaign against the British invasion of the Falklands, calling for a complete military withdrawal.

Tribune editor Chris Mullin, GLC leader Ken Livingstone, Peter Tatchell, Socialist Organiser, London Labour Briefing and Socialist Challenge are among the first signatories to a statement which "totally condemns the stand taken by the party leadership, which has compromised the Party by identifying it with the jingoistic line adopted by the Thatcher government".

The main aim of the 'Labour Committee for Withdrawal' is to stop the

Falklands issue being brushed under the carpet on the NEC — which has received over 100 resolutions from CLPs attacking the leadership's policy — or at this year's party conference.

The Committee will be circulating CLPs and union bodies with model resolutions and amendments for Party conference to ensure the issues are debated, as well as making the stand taken by the majority of activists as widely known as possible.

For further details contact Labour Committee for Withdrawal, c/o Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.