

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

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CLAIMANTS AND STRIKERS 10p



She cuts

He surrenders



Labour ranks say:



Fight the cuts now!

by CHEUNG SIU MING

THE LABOUR Party conference passed an anti-cuts emergency resolution from all four Lambeth Labour Parties. The motion calls on the NEC "to co-ordinate a united fight... on a firm no-cuts position" and adds that ind-

ustrial action will be needed to defend jobs and services.

This means not waiting for the next Labour government. As Ted Knight insisted at the Conference, "If we wait, there will be no services left to defend. Our message to Heseltine should be: 'We have gone so far — we will go no further.'"

A decision to fight now is worth a hundred decisions to fight sometime in the fut-

ure. This makes the Lambeth resolution one of the most important of the Conference.

A large part of the labour movement hasn't waited. It has been fighting — often against Labour authorities, and against the previous Labour government.

The decisive factor will be whether our class can be mobilised for industrial action against the cuts. It was clear from what Roy Hattersley said — that he was opposed to workers striking in support of a political aim — that the Parliamentary Lab-

our leadership will be an obstacle in the struggle, not an asset.

After the passing of the Lambeth resolution, the rank and file will be looking to the NEC for solid support, in particular the NEC should now instruct Labour groups to take the stand that conference has endorsed and stop being part of the problem.

And then the Conference must mobilise the whole movement: with strike action by council workers, other public sector workers, and among workers in industry too (both private and public sector); and with a firm stand against the Tories by Labour Councils and Labour Parties.

LABOUR DEMOCRACY

Keep up the unity, keep up the fight

by JOHN BLOXAM

The Tories, the Press, Labour's right-wing, every hound in the pack is barking himself hoarse about what has happened at the Labour Party Conference.

The victories of the Left came as a surprise to many. To the activists of the Rank and File Mobilising Committee they completely vindicated the campaign for democracy that they have spearheaded over the last six months.

Dennis Skinner told Socialist Organiser:

'I think we ought to understand we've scored a few minor victories. But we must continue to

But the incompleteness of the victory demands that the campaign continues and steps up its activities.

Above all — particularly between now and January when a special conference will decide on the question of the election of the leader — the campaign must turn to the trade unions. The Mobilising Committee must get to the grass roots in the union branches, on the shop stewards' committees and on the shop floor. Trade union committees should be

fight in the way that has been demonstrated at this conference. The CLPD and the Rank and File Mobilising Committee have

formed to spearhead the fight, drawing up model resolutions and committing the leaders to a stand for democracy.

The Labour Coordinating Committee trade union conference on November 1st, or a large part of it, should be turned over to this task.

Between now and January, and again between January and next conference, the right wing will be busting a gut to beat us. They will use every trick in the book. As

done tremendous work in a few months, by the co-ordination of all those left-wing groups. So my message is, let's

Shirley Williams has already shown, they will try to drive a wedge between the revolutionaries supporting the drive for democracy and the reformists.

The key-note of the Mobilising Committee — as Benn and Skinner confirm — has been unity in action. Let's make sure that continues.

The Mobilising Committee must now urgently hammer out a definite set of proposals that those who want genuine Labour Party democracy can unite around.

join force, all the left groups within the Labour movement, and ensure we score further victories the next year'.

Tony Benn told Socialist Organiser:

"I think that the Rank and File Mobilising Committee played a notable part in the movement and in influencing the vote at the Conference. I hope it will continue for the January Conference. The unity created by the Rank and File Mobilising Committee was exemplary."

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The master carve-up

LAST WEEK you probably paid more tax that the whole of the Dewhurst 'master butcher' chain of shops did on one year's profit of £2,380,000.

Tax-dodging Lord Vestey, who heads a £250 million empire, tries to justify all this free-loading by claiming that the money all goes back into the firm. So how does he pay for his string of polo ponies? How does he keep up his luxury mansion with its 4,500 acre estate, or his helicopter?

Vestey's is one of the most viciously anti-union firms in Britain. In 1972 they acted as the spearhead of the Tories' attack on the dockers. Last month they did the same at Liverpool, refusing dockers a stand-by wage of £78.50. The arrogant aristocrat who turned down the dockers' demand himself inherited £56 million while he was still a schoolboy.

The motto of the Vestey family could not be more apt: 'From labour, stability'. Out of the labour of hundreds of thousands, these parasites who care more about their polo ponies than their employees have gained the stability that only a fabulous fortune can give.

Since the company was set up during World War 1, Vestey's have hired the best accountants and lawyers to work every legal loophole in the book. Their wealth has bought the possibility of getting more wealth — without doing a stroke of work. Just as the original Lord Vestey got his knighthood by paying the Prime Minister £20,000.

The 'master butchers' can carve up the system because capitalism works for them. They can scrounge for decades and live like kings because the Vestey's are vampires sucking their wealth from the labour of others.

Where we stand

- ... Organise the left to beat back the Tories' attacks! No to attacks on union rights; defend the picket line; no state interference in our unions!
- No to any wage curbs. Labour must support all struggles for better living standards and conditions!
- Wage rises should at the very least keep up with price increases. The same should go for state benefits, grants and pensions.
- ... Start improving the social services rather than cutting them. Stop cutting jobs in the public sector.
- ... End unemployment. Cut hours, not jobs — share the work with no loss of pay. Start now with a 35 hour week and an end to overtime.
- ... All firms threatening closure should be nationalised under workers' control.
- ... Make the bosses pay, not the working class. Millions for hospitals, not a penny for 'defence'! Nationalise the banks and financial institutions without compensation. End the interest burden on council housing and other public services.
- ... Freeze rents and rates.
- ... Scrap all immigration controls. Race is not a problem; racism is. The labour movement must mobilise to drive the fascists off the streets.
- Purge racists from positions in the labour movement.
- Organise full support for black self-defence.
- ... The capitalist police are an enemy for the working class. Support all demands to weaken them as a bosses' striking force: dissolution of special squads (SPG, Special Branch, M15, etc.), public accountability, etc.
- ... Free abortion and contraception on demand. Women's equal right to work, and full equality for women.
- ... Against attacks on gays by the State: abolish all laws which discriminate against lesbians and gay men; for the right of the gay community to organise and to affirm their stance publicly.
- ... The Irish people — as a whole — should have the right to determine their own future. Get the British troops out now! Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Political status for Irish Republican prisoners as a matter of urgency.
- ... The black working people of South Africa should get full support from the British labour movement for their strikes, struggles and armed combat against the white supremacist regime. South African goods and services should be blacked.
- ... It is essential to achieve the fullest democracy in the labour movement. Automatic reselection of MPs during each parliament, and the election by annual conference of party leaders. Annual election of all trade union officials, who should be paid the average for the trade.
- ... The chaos, waste, human suffering and misery of capitalism now — in Britain and throughout the world — show the urgent need to establish rational, democratic, human control over the economy, to make the decisive sectors of industry social property, under workers' control.

The strength of the labour movement lies in the rank and file. Our perspective must be working class action to raze the capitalist system down to its foundations, and to put a working class socialist system in its place — rather than having our representatives run the system and waiting for the crumbs from the table of the bankers and bosses.

Socialist Organiser aims to help build a class-struggle left wing in the trade unions and Labour Party, based on a revolutionary socialist platform. Socialist Organiser supporters' groups are being organised in many towns and cities.

Socialist Organiser is sponsored by the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory.

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Local supporters' groups are being established in most major towns to build a real base for the paper.

Supporters are being asked to undertake to sell a minimum of 6 papers an issue and to contribute at least £1 a month (20p for unwaged). So becoming a supporter helps build our circulation and gives the paper a firmer financial base.

If you like Socialist Organiser, think it's doing a good job, but realise that it can't possibly do enough unless you help, become a card-carrying supporter.

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Name

Address

CLP

Trade Union

ACTION STARTS AGAINST H-BLOCK HORROR

by BRUCE ROBINSON

"THE REACTION as always from the authorities towards our resistance has been one of further oppression resulting in continuous brutalities. In particular, constant and unprovoked beatings, the restriction of food, hosings down, humiliating and pornographic mirror searches, are but some of the daily tortures perpetrated upon the naked and dissident population of H-Block.

For instance, Armagh is the only women's prison in the UK which uses male prison officers. These screws, who wear helmets with visors, attacked the women in February while they were having a meal. Kevin McConnell, a leader of the Irish Electricians' Union, gave an inspiring account of the success of the National Smash H-Blocks Committee and particularly of how it had linked up with the trade unions. They have the support of the Irish TGWU and three other national unions; 16 factory committees in Derry; and five local trade union H-Block committees.

Charter 80 has proposed a number of activities over the next months. The most important are: a day of action on December 10th; a delegation to Long Kesh or Armagh; a demonstration on 1st March 1981; and a national speaking tour at the end of October.



Although almost all the speakers on the platform accepted and argued for the prisoners' right to be given special status and regarded as political prisoners, the prisoners' demand for political status is not included in Charter 80's platform. Instead, the campaign has focused on "human rights".

To add to the confusion this caused, Gerry Fitzpatrick, speaking for Charter 80, said that he clearly recognised the prisoners as political prisoners, and their right to political status. So why doesn't Charter 80 argue the whole issue fairly and squarely?

Charter 80 is, however, at least taking up the prisoners' major demands. Not so the Labour Committee on Prison Conditions in Northern Ireland, another campaign launched recently by the Militant.

This campaign consciously rejects all but one of the prisoners' demands because they imply that the prisoners are political.

An article by Tony Saunios in Militant spells this out. "The labour movement cannot write a blank cheque declaring all those in the H-Blocks political prisoners and thereby campaigning for their release... However, we can only rely on independent bodies set up the labour movement itself to conduct a thorough review of convictions."

In the midst of such are the nightmarish conditions in which we dwell, once described by the now Cardinal O'Faich as resembling those endured by the sewer-pipe dwellers of Calcutta."

This vivid description of conditions in H-Block in Long Kesh comes from the Republican prisoners there and was read out at the founding rally of Charter 80 in London on September 27th.

About 180 people attended the rally, which was aimed to start a campaign in support of five demands put by the H-Block prisoners: for the right to wear their own clothes; not to do prison work; to associate freely with other political prisoners; to organise their own educational and recreational facilities and to receive one visit, one letter and one parcel a week; and to get full remission of sentence.

The full horror of what the Republican prisoners have to endure was described by the playwright Margaretta D'Arcy, who was recently sentenced to three months in Armagh jail as a result of a picket to protest against the conditions of the women prisoners there, and joined them in their protest.

She said, "The British government wants the total abandonment of hope", and described in harrowing detail the pressure the women had to face.

This campaign does not clearly lay the blame for the prison conditions in the H-Block where it belongs: on the shoulders of the British state and its war in Ireland, whose policy includes criminalisation of Republican prisoners. If support for this campaign is proposed in the labour movement, socialists should instead argue for support of political status and for Charter 80.

Soviet union leader 'poorly'

BY DAVID SATTER IN MOSCOW

THE LEADER of the Soviet Unions first independent trade union, Mr. Vladimir Klebanov, was reported yesterday to be in poor physical condition after treatment with strong behaviour modification drugs in a special psychiatric hospital in Dnepropetrovsk.

Mr Klebanov, a former mining foreman from the Donbas region, tried in December, 1976, to organise a union which would fight for Soviet workers' rights outside the official trade union structure.

Mr Klebanov's grievances against the Soviet trade unions were similar to those of the Polish workers against the offi-

cial trade unions in Poland, which are also part of the structure of Communist Party control.

The Soviet trade union group was disbanded after a series of arrests in early 1977 and Mr. Klebanov was committed to the special psychiatric hospital in Dnepropetrovsk where Soviet dissidents have been held.

According to a reliable report, Mr. Klebanov has since been receiving continual forcible injections of behaviour modification drugs intended for severe paranoids or schizophrenics.

The effect has been to cause a severe swelling of Mr. Klebanov's face and to distort

his features and speech. His complexion has become yellow and the effect of one of the drugs has been to distort his physical movements.

Mr. Klebanov has continued to insist that he is psychologically normal and to denounce his detention in hospital as a form of repression, but this has only led to him being given extra injections of drugs with painful effects.

According to the report, Mr. Klebanov is forbidden to walk in the corridor and is only allowed out of his room for one hour a day when 300 people at a time are taken for exercise in the hospital yard.

Murray — bridge builder

MR. LEN MURRAY, general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, told a Soviet trade union journal recently that he welcomed the development of co-operation between the trade unions of the two countries.

The Soviet news agency Tass reported yesterday that Mr. Murray stressed the "problems on which our views diverge," and ascribed these to the different political, social and economic structures of the two countries.

Tass said that Mr. Murray, in an interview with the trade union journal Trud, had compared contacts between British

and Soviet trade unions with the supports on which "bridges of understanding could be built.

"We should build these bridges carefully and thoughtfully, paying special attention each time to the weight which they can sustain," the agency quoted him as saying.

Mr. Murray described problems of mutual interest as including attitudes to the multinationals, improvement of labour protection, and use of leisure time as well as disarmament, peace, detente and the relaxation of tensions between East and West.

The Morning Star [lower cutting] applauds as Len Murray 'cooperates' with the bureaucratic apparatus which runs the fake official 'unions' in the USSR — and hounds genuine trade unionists like Klebanov.



Steelworkers at Conference

Three workers from the Llanwern Steel Action Group spoke to Socialist Organiser in Blackpool

WYNDHAM CONNIFF

WE STARTED in Llanwern and are centred in Llanwern, but we are not only interested in Llanwern.

Steel plants have been isolated. This goes back to 1968, when the steel industry was nationalised. The policy that the BSC had at that time was to promote 'healthy competition'. Steel plants became isolated and tended to look at each other as individual enterprises.

Steel workers could never identify themselves with the whole industry, and that is one of the reasons why we have been unsuccessful in preventing the steel closures until now.

The Llanwern Steel Action Group was set up immediately after the strike. Prior to the strike steelworkers were very ill-informed about the condition of the steel industry. They had been given the official BSC information, but they had had a very poor trade union information service.

So we took up the publication of *Steel Sheet*, to start presenting to the workforce an alternative information service.

We've got this alternative method of informing people; we recognise the significance of the Trades Councils; we recognise that if we are going to be successful, the steelworkers must identify their specific problems with other people's problems.

We got involved with the Musicians' Union during their strike. Now, it would appear that there's no relation at all between the musicians and the steelworkers. But during the strike we asked the musicians to write an article for us and, reading through it, you could take 'musicians' out and it would just read like any other industrial dispute. So we showed the steelworkers they were no different from anyone else.

We also looked at what was going to happen to the unemployed, and we found that there were no services available. So we got involved with two voluntary organisations in the South Wales area who helped us as much as they could.

We feel that providing premises for the unemployed is

very important — it's very important to have somewhere they can go at any time, that they can identify themselves with. If you've got no job, you can't go to the pub. You haven't got any money in your pocket to buy a pint of beer.

We're saying that the system itself must be altered. What we're finding is that no matter what direction we go in, we find that there is a burning need for trade union, political and social reform in our country. We need a completely new change-round in society.

As regards the Labour Party — what I think is that we've strayed from our grass roots. We had workers, we banded together to form trade unions, and from the

trade unions we had the Labour Party. Now, we've all strayed from our place of origin.

The Party, the unions and the workers are one and the same thing, and people who consider that there are any differences between the three are losing their sense of direction.

Unless we can get back to this concept of them being one and the same thing, I don't think we'll ever progress forward.

We're all in the local Labour Parties: Ray Davies is a county councillor for Mid-Glamorgan; Ray and myself are also executive members of the Wales Labour Coordinating Committee.

There are constituencies that have given support to

the Llanwern Steel Action Group. It isn't as strong as perhaps it should have been, but you must remember that this is one of the tasks of the Labour Coordinating Committee, to bring together and identify the whole labour movement in struggles.

The Monmouth CLP sponsored our meeting this week. But we don't care who comes along to our meetings, Marxists or whoever, as long as they help us in the fight to save jobs. That is the main thing. The group is essentially rooted in the members of the Labour Party, but we are not excluding anyone from outside who wants to come in and help fight with us.

STAN ELLINGTON

I WAS disappointed that nothing is being put forward about steel. You would expect with the situation in the industry, it would be debated.

The class struggle hasn't been taken up as it should be. And that is what the rank and file are facing at the moment — the backlash of capitalism on the rocks. The conference hasn't brought up the class struggle from the rank and file point of view.

It's encouraging what's being changed, but it's certainly not as rosy as a lot of people are making out.

We've got to work, build and organise, draw in the militants.

Workplace branches are a good idea. People would be more prepared to come to workplace branches than to night-time ward meetings which may be a couple of miles away.

magic into the trade union movement — I believe the desire is there, it only needs kindling — I believe we will find the way forward.

Because the country has been talking about democratising the Labour Party, it will make our job of preaching the gospel of democratising the trade unions and our own particular trade union much easier.

I think people up and down the country are beginning to realise what democracy really means. When they begin to look at their own trade unions and realise how undemocratic they are, the mood for change will sweep through the trade union movement.



Triumph for lunacy

LAST WEEK was not uneventful. On Monday, the Labour Party got its annual conference under way. By Thursday, it was dead. Well, so the *Daily Express* said. In most papers, the rank and file and the odious Wedgie were blamed for its tragic demise. Not so in *The Times*.

In its editorial columns, the Tories' ultimate deterrent, William Rees-Mogg (or is it Smog?), a man much loved by German printworkers, wrote that it was due to "the dark side of Britain possessing the spirits of ordinary British people". Jolly decent of him to let us into the secret, but his explanation does pose some interesting questions:

- Does he know something we don't?

BY DAVID BLACK

- Is his favourite film *Star Wars*?
- Can he tell us the winner of Monday's 3.30 at Doncaster?
- Has the ruling class gone crazy?

Answers please on a post card. Winners will receive a life-size, fully inflatable Mad Monk, complete with lame duck.

While the team from *The Times* was playing *Space Invaders*, Rees-Mogg was studying the portents, other lubricated scribblers were popping into the Winter Palace... it may as well have been... to catch the flavour of the proceedings.

Because they all peered through an alcoholic haze, not a single one managed an accurate report. Some were at a different conference from many of the delegates. But, when have such niceties as fact ever deterred the denizens of Fleet Street?

What they did manage, apart from the usual diet of beer, whisky, brandy, gin, vodka... ad nauseam... was to turn upside-down some of their recent ventures into print.

Only six weeks ago, all these characters were telling us of the marvels of democracy in Poland and how splendid it was for workers in Gdansk to be able to elect their own representatives. Amazingly, when Labour Party members wanted the same thing, and voted for it

in Blackpool, there were howls of outrage. Listen to them:

'LABOUR ANARCHY' — *Daily Express*; 'THE RAMPAGE OF THE LEFT' — *Daily Mail*; TRIUMPH FOR LUNACY — *Daily Mirror*; BENN'S BLITZ — *Sun*; MARXIST MONSTER — *Daily Express*.

Obviously, the Press was a little ruffled by the idea that members of the Labour Party might have the audacity to demand control of their own party. So horrified was the *Daily Express* that on Friday it exhumed the very party it had buried the day before. The purpose of that was to dissuade the Gang of 3 from an unsavoury bout of necrophilia. As an inducement not to wrestle with the

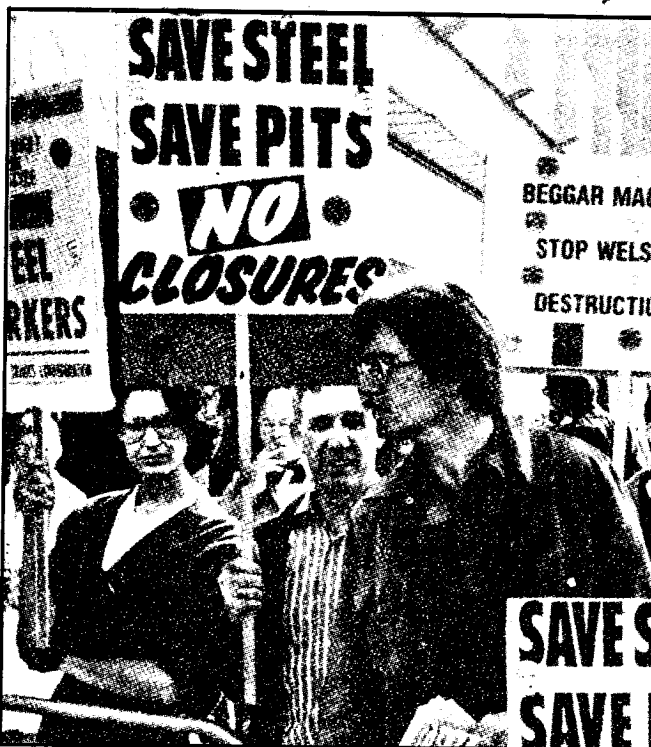
corpse, a figure of £8 million has been mentioned.

While all this was going on, what was the dastardly Benn doing? I know, 'cos I read a paper. He was — don't read this, it'll frighten you — "revealing his master plan"! Which would, when implemented, "demolish our economy and our Constitution". Notice the 'our'.

If reading the papers was a shade less boring than listening to Owen, there was one touching aspect: the sudden love-affair with what used to be called the "excessive power of the trade unions". May 14th and the anti-union hate campaign were quietly forgotten while Fleet Street gleefully applauded Sunny Jim's sordid search for union support against the National Executive. When Duffy delivered the goods, the Press went delirious. No doubt, that was Callaghan's 'masterplan'.

Amid all the 'animosity' and 'viciousness', a slight glimmer of Press 'honesty' did shine through. As the *Daily Express* said, "Party Conferences are when Parli-

amentary Parties go through the routine of listening dutifully to their grass roots and then go away and decide, as they please, what to do. The only difference is that, now, Labour's parliamentary careerists have been rumbled. And not before time!



Ray Davies lobbying the TUC Conference

RAY DAVIES

THERE ARE very few trade unions, you can count them on one hand, who will report back to their membership how they voted on each resolution, and there are very few trade unions who consult their membership on the bulk of the resolutions which come before conference.

So the real fight after this conference is to democratise the trade union movement. The Llanwern Steel Action Group is making that our top priority. We are going to call a fringe meeting at the ISTC when they have their one-day

conference on 27th November.

Bill Sirs has preached the idea of 'One Union for Steel' — but we will say that it has to be a democratic trade union, and all officials who have negotiating rights must be elected by the membership for a four or five year period. The EC members must be picked on a regional basis, not on the divisive trade basis as it is done at the moment.

We will be campaigning for one industrial trade union, whose national conference will be a policy-making conference.

There is great feeling for change in the movement expressed at the last two Labour Party conferences. If we can transfer that

Socialist Worker

Right to work
In the fight against the Tories...
CAN WE WAIT FOR LABOUR?



"REALLY IT is all a fuss about nothing... It's all talk. It happens every time at Labour conferences".

Amid all the press clamour last week, one paper was keeping very cool — *Socialist Worker*. Or maybe they weren't so cool. Their arguments went round and round

Can we wait for the SWP?

in circles.

"Do the Tories really fear the militant words and promises of Labour politicians?" *SW* asks. In face of the evidence that the Tories really are scared of something this time, *SW* admits: "True, Tony Benn is being hounded for daring to suggest that Labour governments start matching words with deeds for a change".

"But..." — the eternal "but" — "the chances of Tony Benn getting his way are extremely remote". For months, *SW* has argued that the left isn't just an ever-maintaining Benn waiting to win. Perhaps now they'll go back to their previous line:

certainly the left can win, but it makes no difference.

SW is tripping over its own feet because it is desperately trying to evade the facts.

They try another tack. "Can we wait for Labour?", the front page headline asks; and the article says, "We can't wait for socialists to take over the Labour Party... Organising amongst the rank and file workers in the here and now is the real test..."

SW is quite right here as against the leading Labour politicians who see the be-all and end-all of politics as getting themselves elected to the top positions, or who say we can do nothing against the Tories until 1984. Indeed

we can't wait.

But *SW* is dead wrong as against Marxists who combine rank and file industrial organisation and action with a fight (not just 'waiting') in the ranks of the Labour Party for a new political leadership and direction. *SW* offers us only rank and file industrial action — and, as

their political perspective, an effort to expand the SWP bit-by-bit until it becomes a mass socialist party.

We can't wait for the SWP. The battle lines are drawn now in the Labour Party, and Marxists must be there in the forefront of the fight.



ANGELA SHERIFF

[Brent E CLP], who moved the Ireland composite

200 CLP's vote for Troops Out

THERE WAS massive support from the Labour Parties. I think at least 200 CLPs voted for the resolution, and some of the smaller unions. I know the Bakers' Union did. There's a real groundswell in the Labour Party on Ireland.

The NEC recommended remission, and on the morning of the debate Jock Stallard came to try to persuade me to remit. We got together as many as possible of the delegates involved, and still had a majority to go for a vote. We felt that the real way to test our strength was to go to the conference and get a

vote. The Labour Committee on Ireland had a really good fringe meeting. There were about 250 there. The message from all the speakers, including Tony Benn, was that it's important the Labour Party should discuss the issue. All of them, apart from Ray Buckton, accepted that it's a British problem in Ireland — though of course they've all got their own interpretations.

It's important that as many Parties as possible get in resolutions next year, and also make submissions to the NEC's working group on Ireland.

JAMES McALLISTER

[Basingstoke CLP] who moved the NATO composite

Building a campaign to get out of NATO

THE LOSS of the resolution calling for withdrawal from NATO by a vote of 826,000 for and 6,279,000 against does not in any way mean that the campaign to withdraw from NATO is over.

In fact the opposite is true. We are now at the beginning of what will be a long and, I believe, bitter campaign to ensure that the Labour Party does more than pass paper resolutions about peace and disarmament, without effectively tackling the major war threat in Europe, NATO.

There were many delegates at last week's conference who failed to grasp that the NATO resolution was an integral part of the unilateral campaign, without which the unilateral motion merely becomes an empty sentiment. It is patently absurd to suggest that Britain could unilaterally disarm while at the same time remaining in NATO.

Yet on many occasions throughout the Conference week, the supporters of the NATO resolution found themselves being lobbied to remit the resolution to the NEC.

Our eventual refusal to remit was based on a number of factors. We believed that left in the hands of the NEC, the question of NATO would go into formal limbo.

We had no guarantee that the NEC would in fact have taken the issue up — or that any report would do more than fudge the issue.

We also felt that the issue of NATO should have been tied in strongly with Cruise, etc., so that we could utilise the same public outrage building up against Cruise to sweep us out of NATO.

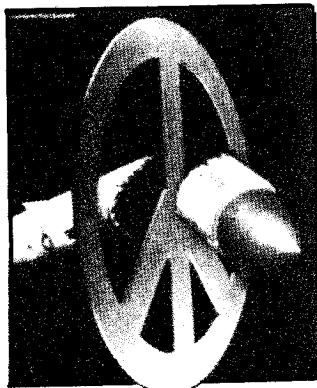
Whether we were correct in refusing to remit remains to be seen,

but the question must now be, where do we go from here?

I believe we should begin to organise on two fronts. Firstly, we should attempt to popularise withdrawal by leaflets, articles, speeches and meetings, continually pointing out the cost of NATO, the danger it poses to peace, and the links with Cruise. But secondly and more importantly, we should seek to call a delegate conference of those organisations that submitted anti-NATO resolutions to Conference.

At such a meeting, it would be possible to set up a campaign to coordinate meetings and future resolutions to Conference, so that by next year we would again have enough resolutions to get on the agenda. And if our work has been done correctly, withdrawal will be a popular issue.

CLPs interested in the idea of an anti-NATO delegate conference should contact: James McAllister, 48 Woolford Way, Winklebury, Basingstoke.



March for disarmament, Sunday 26 October. Assemble 11am, Speakers Corner, London.

VLADIMIR Derer, secretary of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, presents a personal view of the Blackpool Labour Party conference.

THE TORY press greeted the outcome of this year's Labour Party Conference with horror. 'Labour Anarchy', 'Labour Chaos', were the headlines.

The comments in the 'quality' newspapers were no less hysterical. The Times perceived what happened at Blackpool as "the dark side of Britain" and the Guardian spoke of the labour movement being rocked by the revolt of the "lumpen polytechnic".

The Sunday Times discovered in Blackpool the road to serfdom, while the Sunday Telegraph is haunted by the vision of a Britain enslaved by an unrepresentative Commons majority acting as "agent of a revolutionary caucus". By contrast the Observer merely predicted that a Party so riven with internal dissensions will wither away.

The Observer's fantasy was fittingly underwritten by members of the Labour parliamentary establishment. After Wednesday's vote on the Party Leader, Shirley Williams quickly wrote off all Labour's chances of winning the next general election.

There is, of course, nothing new in Tory propaganda representing the Labour Party conference as a Bolshevik revolution. What is more interesting is that members of the establishment and their mouthpieces in the 'quality' press should over-react in this way. One cannot help wondering what their response would be once a Labour government began to implement the radical reforms on the promise of which it would be returned.

What is significant, however, is that the Tory well-wishers of the Labour movement should be more perturbed by Labour's timid steps towards greater party democracy than by Labour's commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament or to withdrawal from the Common Market. For the constitutional reforms decided on in Blackpool are in fact extremely modest.

The vote on mandatory re-selection was no more than a confirmation of last year's decision. It was widely anticipated. The only thing which is perhaps surprising is that the opposition to a "tidying up" amendment should have gained the support of so many leaders of major trade unions.

One might speculate how many of the rank and file unionists who support Duffy, Bassnett, Whatley or Chapple would have approved of the efforts by their leaders to make the Labour Party vulnerable to legal action by not getting the amendment passed. The success in getting mandatory re-selection confirmed must, however, be set against a number of defeats.

Conference went back on its previous year's decision to put an end to the scandal that the Party leader should be free to veto any NEC proposals for inclusion in the Manifesto he or she disapproves of. It also recommended that the three year rule be reintroduced for constitutional issues. This means that the rank and file party and trade union members — who, because of the three year rule, had to fight for eight years to get mandatory re-selection — are once

Electing the leader

again to be gagged.

Finally, conference rejected the alternatives offered to it which would have enabled it to implement the principle of a wider franchise for the election of the Party leader which it had just endorsed.

Thus virtually the only new step forward in a democratic direction was taken when conference voted in favour of this principle. The proposal itself is hardly revolutionary. After all, this is how the European social democratic parties elect their leader. It is therefore quite misleading to pretend that the victory on this issue was by itself a major one.

There are, however, some reasons why, despite the number of setbacks in other directions, this step could become vital, and, on balance, give this year's conference the importance claimed for it by both opponents and some supporters of reform.

In the present context the question of method of electing the leader, like that of mandatory re-selection before it, has clearly come to occupy the central position in the current stage of political struggle. That this is so is indicated by the heat which this conflict has generated.

As a result even a modest advance in this area assumed the significance of a major breakthrough — certainly in the eyes of the defenders of the status quo. However, whether their assessment is correct, and not just the product of hysteria or euphoria, will only be decided by the outcome of the struggle

fulfilled these conditions. Both the NEC's 1/3:1/3:1/3 'amendment' and their subsequent proposal providing for a 40:30:30 representation for trade unions, PLP and CLPs failed to satisfy these requirements, since the annual election principle as well as the provision for a recorded vote was omitted from them.

Even though tactics at conference dictated that all three proposals should be supported, in the new situation it is crucial that all these provisions are incorporated in any new proposals.

Opponents of reform, having failed to frustrate a decision on principle, will no doubt try to minimise the 'damage' by producing a 'soft' option. The only way to counter such moves is:

a) to work out as soon as possible a new proposal, based on the above three conditions and at the same time likely to be acceptable to the majority. CLPD will shortly be circulating a draft.

b) to campaign for the adoption of the new proposal as widely as possible. It is essential that it be put forward by a vast number of CLPs and at least some trade unions.

Apart from the CLPD normal channels, the Rank and File Mobilising Committee will have a vital role to play here. Massive support alone will defeat attempts to render the newly won principle harmless by its integration into an establishmentarian setting.

Unity among those favouring democratic reform is essential. It is to be hoped

seven or more organisations are involved with resolutions or amendments on the same subject for group meetings to be held on the Saturday afternoon preceding the Conference".

Representations to the Standing Orders Committee by the delegates of all the eight CLPs proved ineffective and the Tottenham delegate when moving the reference back was not allowed by the chairwoman to say more than a few words. The subject — which includes the demand for the availability of a detailed record of PLP deliberations and decisions — was thereby successfully kept off the agenda. It is imperative that it be debated next year, since greater democracy in the PLP is a precondition for the effective monitoring of an MP's performance.

On other subjects, the compositing session on economic strategy failed to produce an acceptable composite which would have included the demand for a significant extension of public ownership in industry and financial institutions as well as a commitment to a realistic rate of economic growth. What emerged instead was a resolution with 'maximalist' demands including our old friend the call for the nationalisation of 200 monopolies.

Predictably this was heavily defeated. A definite commitment to the adoption of vital measures for the control of the economy was thus prevented. Once again the ultra left has col-



Callaghan's concept of the Labour Party: the rank and file launches the MPs into orbit, then falls safely into the ocean.

Ivan Wels

which this advance made possible. It will entirely depend on the extent to which the opportunities which the extension of the franchise offers, will actually be used.

It will depend on conference adopting next January a method of election of the Party leader which would ensure that the rank and file are given a significant say.

More specifically it will depend on the adoption of a provision:

a) for direct representation of CLPs in the electoral college of no less than 30%.

b) for an automatic option to elect a new leader annually (and not once and for all);

c) for a recorded vote. It is customary for trade unions and CLPs to declare how they voted. There is no reason why this principle should not be extended to MPs who, at present, are allowed to keep their preferences secret (both in respect of policies and personalities). The PLP will not be accountable until this anachronistic practice is ended.

Of the three options that were put to conference, only the CLPD proposal, reluctantly backed by the NEC,

that Tribune MPs will this time join in the common effort and that Militant supporters will refrain from producing slightly different proposals.

Hopefully unity will be made easier by the fact that the January conference will be limited to one issue only. This may spare us the repeated experience of being lectured at by some comrades from the LCC and Militant, for example, on the relative importance of constitutional issues.

Space allows only a brief mention of other matters. Still on the constitutional issues, the suppression of the vital resolution on democracy within the PLP passed almost unnoticed. The Conference Arrangements Committee ruled that the eight resolutions and amendments on this subject were not eligible to become a composite resolution since three resolutions were identical and "therefore" could only be amended.

This rule is unwritten and contradicts the official circular to all organisations which states that, "It is the established practice where

luded with the Right to maintain the status quo. Will the Militant comrades ever learn?

Among the emergency resolutions that on Poland was perhaps the most important. It was also kept off the Agenda. This was made relatively easy by the fact that from among the many resolutions submitted on the same subject that inspired by Militant was chosen.

It contained primarily Militant's advice to Polish workers, and had practically nothing to say on how the Labour Party might help the newly emerging movement of the Polish working class. The demand that the Labour Party should recognise the newly-formed Solidarity trade unions as the only authentic representative of the Polish working class was thus not made. Hardly a demonstration of international working class solidarity.

Renewed efforts in this direction are imperative if the British labour movement is not to be regarded by the East European working class as an accomplice of the oppressive bureaucratic regimes they have to live under.



Half a revolution?

JOHN O'MAHONY draws a balance sheet on Blackpool and the tasks facing socialists.

TO JUDGE by the frenzied and almost demented baying of the press, a revolution occurred at Blackpool: "Benn's October Revolution", as one paper put it. A new Labour Party is born, proclaimed the Express.

Not quite yet. Blackpool merely unblocked some of the passages through which a real revolution can surge.

It is one of the most important political breakthroughs for the labour movement in decades: but at best it is half a revolution: the opening half. We would do well to remember what Saint-Just said during the French Revolution: Those who make a revolution by halves only dig their own graves.

STATUS

Where are we at, after Blackpool?

The status of Parliament and Parliamentarians in the labour movement has been drastically reduced. No longer is Parliament a magic mountain whose residents can look down on the labour movement and ignore it at will, after getting their first leg-up from it. The movement has gained the right to control the MPs and dismiss them.

In principle the movement has also decided to remove the Parliamentary Labour Party monopoly in voting for the prime minister should Labour have a majority.

As well as the shift of power away from the Parliamentarians, three important decisions taken at Blackpool add to the alarm of the ruling class and flatly contradict what it sees as its interests.

By a big majority Labour voted that Britain should leave the Common Market. It voted to scrap the British H Bomb and nuclear bases in Britain. And Conference decided, against the opposition of the PLP leaders, to back direct action to stop the cuts, throwing the support of the Labour Party behind Lambeth's initiative.

FUDGE

These are grievous blows to the traditional method of burying or fudging all important differences between Labour and the Tories. In a situation which may well quickly become explosive, they give good reason for the ruling class to gnash its teeth. They deprive the ruling class of a reliable fall-back party of government such as Labour was after Heath was routed in 1974. (Whether EEC withdrawal would actually serve working class interests is a separate issue...)

Control gained over MPs is a sharp reassertion of the fact there is one labour movement, Labour Party and trade unions.

Re-selection gives the trade unions affiliated to local Labour Parties a direct and regular role in determining what the labour movement does in Parliament. If we are not cheated on the

Blackpool decision in principle on electing the leader, the electoral college will give the unions as the unions, and the local Parties (including union delegates), a direct voice in exercising control over the Party leader and over the Prime Minister if Labour is in office.

This direct dependence and control is a powerful extension of the competence of the labour movement. Previously we sent MPs who entrenched themselves in the bourgeois Parliament and set up Labour Governments which entrenched themselves behind the state machine. From now on we send representatives — and we can call them back, too.

If we organise to make these reforms work for the working class, they are the beginning of a situation that has not existed in the three-quarters of a century since the trade unions developed a political arm. Direct channels are being opened for the control by the labour movement over our own representatives in Parliament and therefore, if Labour has a majority, control over Parliament.

And we can win the next election. That is why the ruling class is scared.

All the more significant therefore is the conference decision to support direct action now against the Tories (on the cuts), and not to wait for the election.

The right wing is heavily discredited. The Gang of Three spent the week threatening to commit political suicide if the Conference did not stop cutting their throats. They have still got great reserves of support which the press might help them mobilise.

But their only immediate hope is the unions. Their desperation is shown by Owen's open attack on the union block vote. If the block vote does not save him, nothing will in the period ahead.

HOWEVER, the strength of the Left is full of weaknesses.

The Left's reliance on the block vote is a source of great potential weakness.

A strange unevenness allows certain trade unions to play a positive role in securing more Labour Party democracy when often they themselves are not at all democratic. It is good they play a positive role. But it is sheer illusion to dream that small groups of trade union officials wielding block votes can be stable allies of the Left on democracy. It is nonsense to think that they and their methods of functioning can be our allies in a serious fight for socialism.

The second weakness is the lack of a real mass membership base in the Labour Party, the result of the way Labour has functioned in the past. Resolutions like the Lambeth one lay the basis for building up an active mass membership.

There is also much political confusion. The conference voted to come out of the Common Market yet to stay in NATO; to unilaterally give up nuclear weapons — but to stay in a military alliance depending on them.

Conference voted both for incomes policy and against it.

The proposal to withdraw from the Common Market is not part of a drive to secure Britain for the workers, but a reflex of little Englandism at best, and chauvinism at worst. It is also nonsense. It implies that Britain can be self-sufficient. It cannot. Apart from questions of internationalist principle, the British workers need the European working class.

Our central weakness is that the working class movement does not yet have a coherent policy to deal with the enormous crisis of British society. It has a hodge-podge of measures which propose more or less drastic tinkering with the economy and the political system — not its replacement by a radically new system.

Nothing less than the submission of the economy to democratic planning on the basis of social ownership will allow the regeneration

of British society and provide a new dynamic and purpose for the economy.

This means that the working class must take over the monopolies (about 200 of them) and begin to plan and organise the resources we have to serve the needs and interests of the working people.

To do that we need to organise ourselves to take on the existing rulers who control not only the press and the House of Lords but the police, the civil service bureaucracy, and the army. The experience of the whole world and the class struggles of all history, from Britain itself in past centuries to Chile seven years ago, shows beyond reasonable doubt that they will use those weapons against us if we seriously threaten them.

The violence and unscrupulousness of their press now, early in the game, is a declaration of intent by the ruling class — which has no scruples where protecting its rule is concerned, and has the potential to attempt the violent destruction of the labour movement.

What is Labour's policy?

It was Wilson's veto (for the 1974 Manifesto) of the 1973 Conference decision to nationalise the 25 biggest monopolies that triggered the campaign for Labour Party democracy which has now changed the basis of the Labour Party. Yet the first version of the 'rolling manifesto' issued by the 'left-wing NEC' this summer omitted that policy.

Instead it had various proposals for attempting to regulate capitalism so that it would behave like something else while still controlled by the capitalists.

At Blackpool a resolution committing Labour to nationalisation under workers' control of firms making workers redundant was defeated. Tony Benn spoke against it.

Labour needs a firm commitment to nationalise the major firms of the economy as a basis (the only possible basis) for creating a democratically planned economy.

In relation to the ruling class's massive reserves of power and force concentrated in the state machine, Labour, as of now, proposes to abolish the House of Lords, to pass an Information Act to reduce official secrecy, and to abolish the SPG. This is ridiculously inadequate!

For all his valuable exposures of the unelected and undemocratic power of the permanent civil service bureaucracy, Tony Benn does not favour dismantling and

destroying that power. He does not even propose the US system in which many public officials are elected. He wants the labour movement to act as an extra-parliamentary force to counterbalance the bureaucracy's influence on "the Minister". The most useful thing about the outcry against Benn's Blackpool speech on the House of Lords is this lesson: if that is what we get when we threaten one of the checks and balances that protect capitalism, what would the Tories and their class not do if we actually threatened capitalism and their power? They would use all their entrenched positions — the monarchy, the bureaucracy of the civil service, the Army — in every way necessary, if faced by an attempt by the labour movement to get them off our backs.

labour movement increases its direct control of the MPs it elects.

In the last analysis, the capitalists' power resides not in Parliament but in control of industry and in the monopoly of force in the state. We must not confuse Parliamentary with state power.

It is immensely important to use Parliament and to control our MPs; but the working class will take power where power is to be found, in society and by destroying the bourgeois state.

SO WHAT dangers does the Left face now?

We may be cheated on the leadership question. A coup may be pulled by the election of Healey — who believes that possession is nine points of the law. Or a wretched fake-left like Shore may be elected.

The fact that the Manifesto remains in the hands of the leader and the Shadow Cabinet (elected by the MPs) makes the selection of the leader of great importance now. As it is, Labour conference can still be ignored or manipulated. Reselection is a powerful weapon, but punitive and retaliatory rather than controlling, and only every four or five years. If the right wing wriggle out of yearly re-selection of the leader, they will keep a huge power.

Any reliance on individual leaders is a danger for the Left. Despite everything positive Benn is doing now, his Conference speech against nationalisations confirms that rule in relation to him.

All sorts of manipulation by the right wing are also possible if they regain the initiative: a separate PLP leader, American-style 'primaries' to get round mandatory re-selection, etc. But the greatest danger for the Left is that we will fail to fight to rearm the movement politically, hot on the heels of the breakthrough on democracy. We must rearm the movement with real socialist policies at the same time as we fight for democracy.

At any given moment we must intelligently focus (as on the immediate struggle on the electoral college between now and the January conference), but it is an illusion that the transformation of the labour movement can be done in segmented stages. The energy that has helped secure the democratic advances is left-wing political frustration, desire for the Labour Government to be different next time, built up in the class struggles against the last Labour government.

CLASS

The victories so far are formal. They must be filled out with the content of the current working class struggles if they are to really live, if the movement is to be regenerated.

That can't be done after we have clinched democracy; to really ram democracy through we need the force and the energy of the working class struggles, just as those struggles need a democratic labour movement.

It is impossible to do this without proper attention to the whole range of class struggle political questions.

A 'democratised' labour movement will become a fighting organisation of the workers, hammering at the Tories and their backers, or it will quickly fall again under the control of bureaucrats and timeservers.

Most of the planks in the Labour Party 'platform' (including most of the left

ones) have such a loose grip on reality, such a lack of clear definition of what is to be done and how, by whom and against whom, that the drive to renovate the labour movement can be derailed. Whoever led it, a Labour Government elected on these policies would flounder. This needs to be said now while there is still time to do something about it.

As Benn said at conference, a Labour government would be tested in its first hours as to whether it would accommodate to vested interests or challenge them. If it set out to challenge policies the bosses consider fundamental, like EEC membership, but not to deal seriously with their right to own the means of production and their actual control of society, it would almost certainly wind up accommodating on the essentials. The point about ideas like price controls, presented in the rolling manifesto as a bright idea without any notion of ends and means and who and whom, is that they can only be jettisoned, and at the very point when workers who have been led to believe in them as realistic socialist policies are expecting them to perform their miracles: that is, when the Labour Left would assume governmental power.

The fuzziness now prepares the way for betrayal in future — even if one takes for granted the honourable intentions and sincere commitment of the entire leadership of the present Labour left.

SO WHAT do we need to do?

First things first. The Left, as broadly defined as possible, from Tony Benn to Moss Evans, must band together to consolidate the decision in principle taken in Blackpool on the election of the leader. We must maintain the Mobilising Committee.

We must make re-selection work. We need to act with great urgency immediately to seize the chance to make a real breakthrough. We must turn the Labour Parties outwards against the Tories.

UNIONS

We must make a drive to build factory branches.

The basis for a democratic labour movement will never be secure until the unions are democratically controlled by the rank and file. We must turn to the unions. It was the skulduggery of Terry Duffy and people such as the leaders of UCATT and ASTMS that almost brought the drive for Labour Party democracy to nothing at Blackpool. We must link up with and help build rank and file movements in the unions.

The Marxists in the Labour Party and the trade unions must treat the work of organising themselves with great urgency. We must seek the broadest possible alliances for the immediate struggles (around the January conference, the cuts struggle, etc.) and at the same time group committed Marxist revolutionaries around the platform of Socialist Organiser and the perspective of working to win the real mass labour movement to thoroughgoing socialist politics.

Only an organisation of Marxists in the Labour Party and the trade unions can hope to do the tasks which are essential, interconnected, and indivisible, if the labour movement and the working class is really to make the breakthrough which is objectively possible.

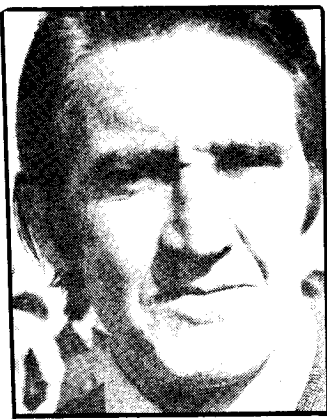


The Tory Sunday Telegraph got it right for once



DENNIS SKINNER

Back to the picket lines



CONTRARY to all the press talk, my guess is that a lot of younger people, women in particular, and those that are unemployed, will be enthused about the activities that have taken place here. You can always measure conference by the enthusiasm of those attending. There were more people attending this conference right up to the last morning than any time I can remember. The seats were full for nearly the whole time.

Now that must be a reflection as to what is happening outside. Working people must realise that if they want to get rid of Thatcher, they don't just want a Labour government that's going to threaten to do things. They want one which is going to carry out these promises, and that means that the accountability arguments have got to be sustained.

The new NEC must ensure that they don't get outflanked by the Parliamentary leadership, and they've got to understand that the right wing don't like losing. They're not used to it.

Whereas some of us are used to losing, they will fight back with any kind of weapons at their disposal.

Then of course we have to carry out the campaigns we are committed to, like the unemployment rally on November 29th in

Merseyside. We've got to ensure that we are a campaigning party and not one simply devoted to winning Parliamentary or local government elections.

When we've left Blackpool, we're back to the picket lines, aren't we? We're back to the battles that are going to take place over wages, and my view is that instead of trucking along to No.10 Downing St trade union leaders ought to be putting in pay demands for 21% like they've given the police.

It used to be frowned upon when I first went to Parliament for MPs to actually go on a picket line. I remember in the coal miners' strike of 1972, I was caricatured in a newspaper for going on a picket line.

Had it not been for an illness, I would have been there at the Brixton picket line. I sent a message down, supporting them fully and wishing them well, and I was pleased that Reg Race and Stuart Holland went along.

And then we had Ken Thomas, the leader of the civil service union involved, who was attacking MPs for being there. I think Ken Thomas ought to be looking over his other shoulder, at the right wing in his union. Because those people on the picket line, not just the MPs but all the rest, helped to gain a partial victory for the two men concerned.

DOUG KNOTT



It was no mistake!

THE DEFEAT of the right wing bid to alter the composition of Labour's NEC was universally portrayed by the press as a 'mix-up'. One member of the AUEW delegation, Dougie Knott, was singled out as 'the man who didn't know who he was voting for'.

The Financial Times reported: "Sir John Boyd, general secretary, later claimed that despite instructions before the meeting, a delegate from Dorset, Mr D A Knott, had confessed afterwards he did not realise whom he was voting for. 'I told him who to vote for', Sir John said.

"Mr Terry Duffy, AUEW

president, said that Mr Knott "was very, very sorry for what he did."

But Bro. Knott, who attended Socialist Organiser's fringe meeting at conference, explained there that he had made no mistake.

"Sir John, in common with others, has been flattered by Fleet Street in some ways and, as I am, misquoted in others".

Dougie Knott explained: "I believe that the constituency parties, the workers at the bottom, are the people who should make the effective policy of the Labour Party and the working class movement".

Five days that shocked

WHILE THE debate on democracy and accountability was not taken until Wednesday, its shadow loomed (threateningly for Labour MPs) over every debate.

Monday morning saw the debate on economic strategy, incomes, and employment. Two resolutions were passed contradicting each other on wage controls, a demand for 'selective import controls' was endorsed, and the conference rejected a resolution calling on the NEC to organise a campaign now to fight unemployment.

David Basnett, from the GMWU, moving Composite 19 on economic strategy, declared that the arguments of the '60s and '70s for totally free collective bargaining no longer applied, and we needed an agreement between the next Labour government and the TUC to work out an incomes policy but 'within the context of a national economic and social plan'.

What this meant was clearly spelled out by Denis Healey — who knows exactly what incomes policies mean, having had long experience of imposing them on the working class! An incomes policy is needed to avoid another winter of discontent and the embarrassment that caused the Labour leadership.

As a delegate from the floor pointed out, "Dennis Healey is weeping crocodile tears. It was him that led the attack on the working class last time... No incomes policy has ever worked in the interests of working people".

Part

But the right wing insisted deceitfully that wage restraint could only be considered as part of an overall plan for socialism. Conference rejected any form of wage restraint now under the Tories, and then said it should be possible under the next Labour government if it is worked out with the TUC. But we've had enough experience of this type of Social Contract swindle, as rank and file trade unionists will agree!

The CLP vote seemed on the show of hands to be mostly against the post office workers' union resolution for wage restraint under a future Labour Government, and it was nearly the first card vote of conference. Then Lena Jeger made up her mind and ruled that the motion was carried.

Tony Benn (summing up for the NEC) argued against Composite 20 and 31.

20 called for public ownership and control of industry, achieved through an Enabling Act passed by the next Labour government (a Militant-inspired resolution), and 31 for the NEC to organise a campaign to fight redundancies with the policy: cut the hours, not the jobs; nationalise firms threatening redundancies.

Benn said that since these issues had not been fully worked out between the NEC and the trade union leadership, no guarantee could be made about a future Labour government

putting them into practice. Since these were the two resolutions to commit the Party to transforming this capitalist society into a socialist society, this hardly bodes well for the future role of the NEC.

CALLAGHAN'S speech stirred and surprised no-one.

Predictably he attacked the Tories, calling Thatcher "the most self-opinionated prime minister" since himself... sorry, he actually said Neville Chamberlain. He admitted that many in the Party thought him a bad socialist. But not to worry, as he was coming to the end of his political career.

police. "They tell us there has been a shortage of police — but there never seems to be a shortage when there is a picket-line to bust up".

Alan Fisher, moving the Composite on Low Pay (35), managed to avoid breaking his neck while looking both ways at once. "Incomes policy as part of economic planning — I go along with that". But: "we had to strike against the Social Contract in the winter of discontent".

He rounded off with a declaration: "Never again must we find ourselves in conflict with a Labour government over pay". Never again, indeed, must a Labour government try to cut the real wages of the work-

JO THWAITES reports

money had to be generated so that education could be freely available to all.

Restoring education to pre-Tory standards was not enough, he said. Very true — but where was the declaration that he would even do that? He didn't tell us.

Reality

Until the debate on transport, very little was said about what could be done now, before the election of a future Labour Government. Ken Livingstone pointed out that transport comes under

see why so many young jobs have so little future.

TUESDAY the beginning of slow business, the consternation, the speeches, the Commission report. What has been done, controversies, in through the by laborious. The N



He declared himself for incomes policy, and against disarmament until everyone else has disarmed first. He had met Brezhnev and Carter, and "None of the generation that went through the last war... will ever release the bomb". Some hope!

He finished off by calling for trust as an alternative to Party democracy. Trust him after what he did in the last Labour Government? He had to be joking. The disgusting thing was — he wasn't.

Police

A large number of delegates walked out after Callaghan's speech and consequently missed the debates on the Health Service, Low Pay, and Social Security benefits.

All the composites were carried — including no.14 on Disabled Persons, against the NEC recommendation to remit. It called on the next Labour Government to restore all cuts in benefits and services that the Tories have made. Surely the NEC should have been in favour of that!

Tony Banks — speaking to Composite 25 on the NHS — drew attention to the disgusting spectacle of the harassment of old people for the sake of monetarism at St Benedict's Hospital. He pointed out the role of the

ing class. But if there is an incomes policy (worked out with the TUC or not), NUPE members will be in the firing line again.

On Social Security benefits, Terry Parry of the Fire Brigades Union pointed out that if private insurance companies did what the Tories plan to do with Earnings Related Supplement, i.e. we pay the money in but we don't get any out — they would find themselves before the courts.

"80% OF JUDGES, 86% of generals and 60% of Tory MPs went to private schools", said Graham Lane from the Socialist Education Association, moving Composite 22 on education. That's what we're up against — and the Tories are busy transferring more money from the state education system to the private schools.

Conference passed unanimously the resolution demanding an end to private schooling. The next Labour government should make it illegal to charge for education.

But Neil Kinnock, summing up from the platform, still did not commit himself to restoring all the cuts the Tories had made in education. Instead he came out with an oblique explanation that there had to be enough money to go round, and

the control of local authorities, so free transport was something we could implement now.

The resolution was overwhelmingly carried, but Ken Livingstone stressed: "It's vital that the key constitutional issues are passed, to ensure that policies voted for at conference are carried into reality — otherwise we are just talking".

Despite Arthur Scargill's support for the composite on nuclear power, calling for its phasing out on grounds of safety, it was defeated. If the supporters of nuclear power could give him a cast-iron guarantee that nuclear power could be produced safely, said Scargill, then he would change his position. But he reckoned they couldn't; and that, as long as there are 1000 years of coal beneath our feet, there is no need for nuclear power.

'Protects'

Nuclear accident inspectors give 500,000 as the number of people at risk in an accident of the kind that nearly happened at Three Mile Island.

But the big votes backed Gavin Laird's claim that the AUEW protected its members and there was no danger to workers in nuclear power stations. If the AUEW 'protects' its members like that, then we can

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Look the Labour Party

Reports from Blackpool

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ed Joe Ashton, assetlaw, who the floor that 5 MPs who

would go to the Centre Party when it was formed. He was slow handclapped by delegates, and Sam McCluskie roared from the platform in his summing up: "Let them go!" We agree — but they may have to be pushed.

Tony Benn's speech on the control of the Manifesto by the NEC was aimed at getting the case for democracy over to the trade unions. The points must surely have struck home, not to the Basnetts and Duffys, but to the rank and file members around the conference. He said that many of the policies in the

and privately", in the Clause 5 meeting that decides the Manifesto.

The vote was lost by 117,000, but the argument was not. The fight will go on.

Beaten

Although the election of Party leader was won in principle, the right wing union leaderships managed to vote down both methods of electing the leader. Duffy was practically beaten up by members of his own delegation when he refused to call a delegation meeting to decide which way to vote on the different electoral colleges. Since the AUEW was against any broad electoral college, it had no position on the alternative. So Duffy should have abstained. But he voted against both.

Then it was up to the NEC to come up with another formula for conference the next day. Basnett also came up with an emergency resolution that a special conference should be convened in January to decide how to elect the leader. This, in Basnett's words, will give us time to 'go home and think about it for three months'.

Basnett may be thinking hard, but will he be consulting his membership? That's what he claimed should be done between now and January.

Enemies

The whole point of the emergency resolution was to get time to carve up the left — and to get Healey installed as leader in the meantime. Martin Flannery shed light on their real intentions: "Every enemy of the work-

tumultuous applause from the left on the AUEW delegation, and Boyd and Duffy looked sick.

But the right wing managed to push through the special conference, with their hypocrisy about wanting to consult their membership. We have to make sure that the union membership demands consultation.



John Bloxam, organiser of the Mobilising Committee

BEHIND ALL the speeches for Composites 32 and 33, on provision of more housing and against the sale of council houses, was an appeal for action and leadership from the NEC. The Sheffield Brightside delegate said: "It isn't in Parliament that this Government will be defeated" — but "it took the NEC 10 months to send out a circular reminding councils of Party policy against the sale of council houses".

Conference passed both resolutions committing the NEC to launch a national

Roy Hattersley tried to derail the debate by warning us that everything must be "within the law", a point that was echoed by the platform in the summing up. The resolution instructed the NEC to campaign against all cuts, the campaign to include industrial action. This should mean NEC support for the Lambeth November 1st Conference. Will it get it?

War

Angela Shariff moved the Composite calling for British withdrawal from Ireland, for the next Labour Government to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and for political status for prisoners in H-Block. A railworkers' delegate speaking for the Composite called for an end to bipartisanship. The Party must accept the need for a united Ireland. "As socialists we must stop bolstering up the Loyalists — who are only loyal as long as you do what they want you to".

But the NEC wanted the resolution remitted on the basis that they had already set up a study group to formulate policy for next year's conference. We don't want to rush things and adopt a 'rash' policy, said Alex Kitson! Apparently 11 years of war aren't long enough for the Labour Party to work out a 'sensible' policy.

Although composite 15 was defeated, a much larger number of CLPs voted for troops out than ever before.

THURSDAY morning saw delegates passing a strange combination of resolutions. Conference voted for unilateral disarmament (i.e. in Britain) and also for multilateral disarmament (i.e. the rest of the world, all together). The multilateral disarmament argument can be used as a reason why Britain should not go first — we should wait until everyone else agrees to disarm too.

Nato

This can be very dangerous. A future Labour government can say: "Well, look at Party conference, it passes contradictory resolutions. We'll just please ourselves" — and do nothing about unilateralism.

The other contradiction is the defeat of the resolution calling for withdrawal from NATO. As Terry Parry of the FBU told Socialist Organiser, "How can you have unilateral disarmament and stay in NATO?"

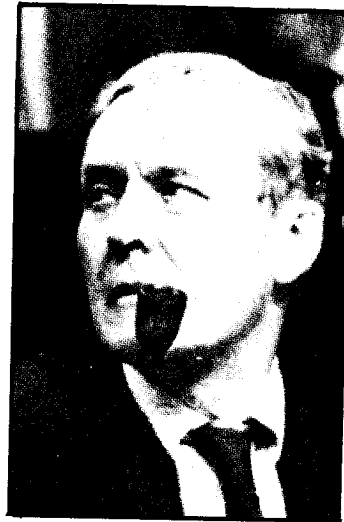
The women's debate was left to the very last session on Friday morning. And Lena Jeger forgot to take the vote. She was reminded,

got the formality over quickly, and then gave someone from the media half an hour to say what they had thought of the conference and why they had reported in in the distorted way they did.

Then the Red Flag was sung by some, and we went home — to continue the fight.



Eighty years since Keir Hardie



Tony Benn told Socialist Organiser:

"Keir Hardie eighty years ago demanded the abolition of the House of Lords. Now there is horror, eighty years later.

"This horror shows that the Labour Party means business this time round. No other country in the world has such an unelected, undemocratic second chamber."

Up from the shop-floor



TOM LITTERICK

THIS HAS been not only a good conference, but a conference that starts a new piece of history for the labour movement. Things cannot be the same again.

The differences are in favour of democracy. This is good, not only for the constituencies and the constituency party members, but also for trade unionists. The constituencies have again asserted views that are contrary to those held by the ruling junta within the Parliamentary Labour Party — and this has also been happening within the unions.

It's less and less possible to talk about powerful trade union barons having massive votes at their command.

I think some Members of Parliament will probably suffer as a result of this. In my opinion and from my knowledge of the PLP, they deserve to suffer. The attitudes of Labour MPs will be changed. For the first time Labour MPs will genuinely have a constituency within the labour movement towards which they must feel responsibility.

Power

Up to now for Labour Party members Conference has been a spectator sport. From now on, if things develop logically from what we have done this week, this is no longer the case.

Over the years thousands of us have been involved in struggles over single issues within the Party — and by and large, most famously over nuclear arms, we've won. But those victories

were meaningless because we did not have the means to ensure that they became a fact. Now it's different.

That's not to say we aren't going to have to keep on fighting. The right wing are not going to go away. Some of them will. Others will stay and fight, but their weapons will be different.

They are going to have to try to mobilise opinion within the Party, they're going to have to fight on more like even terms.

Whatever reforms we make in the Party will be devalued considerably so long as the unions do not change. In the past I argued that the block vote ought to be changed, but I have come to the conclusion that was dealing with the symptom. The basic cause of reactionary, stultifying union attitudes lies in the way the unions run their affairs, placing quite disproportionate power in the hands of a small number of officials.

Fervour

The shop stewards' movement has, over the years, changed this a great deal. That's why Frank Chapple is so intent on destroying shop stewards and his own union branches — because the dynamic part of British trade union life goes from the shop floor through the stewards. It's got to be democratic — de facto the membership always has power of instant recall.

You are getting an injection of democratic fervour at the base of the trade union movement.



GMWU resolution carried on Monday were Party policy before the last election — wealth tax, cuts in arms spending, etc. — and were simply vetoed by the PLP leadership.

What the existing system means is that the leadership never bothers to argue anything at conference. "They simply kill policy secretly

ing class supported the right wing of the Party. Look who your friends are. If you want the aid of all the enemies of Labour, you're welcome to it. I certainly don't".

"When I saw what happened in the AUEW delegation and the sheer viciousness of those that called themselves 'moderate', I was disgusted". This drew

campaign against the sale of council houses.

Ted Knight spoke for the Lambeth emergency resolution on cuts. "Heseltine has committed an act of war against workers and their families... We can't wait — we've got to fight back now, and the NEC should be carrying out that fight".

EEC WITHDRAWAL

Victory..

I THINK the resolution on withdrawal from the Common Market has broad appeal and will get us out of the grip of the Treaty of Rome.

It has nothing to do with being anti-international. It's all about taking some power away from the multinationals, and hopefully having a socialist government which will give some of that power back to the workers by taking hold of the commanding heights of the economy.

So I view the Common Market resolution set against that background.

DENNIS SKINNER

THE MAJOR argument in the debate on Composite 15 will be between its supporters and those who want British capitalism to remain in the business club of the EEC. With existing Party policy and the NEC's recommendation of support, it will probably be carried.

But there is another position that is likely not to be heard in the debate.

At the CLPD pre-Conference rally last Sunday, Dennis Skinner pointed out that there is no such thing as the 'national interest' in Britain today. There are only class interests. These are certainly not mentioned in Composite 15. But would they still be served in supporting it?

The argument is that the EEC should be opposed because it threatens British resources, British democracy and the living standards of British working people. But is that from where the threat really comes?

..or a blind alley?

by JOHN BLOXAM [from the Socialist Organiser Labour Conference Briefing]

Who dictated that the last Labour government slashed public expenditure by £8 billion and implemented policies that resulted in one and a half million unemployed? Who really controls North Sea oil and reaps its benefits? Who decided whether and on what terms factories should be opened? Not the bureaucrats in Brussels — but the IMF, the City of London, the oil monopolies and the boardrooms of companies like the Ford Motor Co. of Detroit.

Many capitalists would oppose withdrawal from the EEC — but a number would

support it (so also would Enoch Powell and the National Front). But their power to decide the basic facts of workers' lives would not be altered if there was withdrawal. That power existed before EEC membership. It would continue after EEC membership. It needs to be directly challenged, and Composite 15 doesn't do that. In fact, it points in another direction.

James Callaghan and Shirley Williams will argue against the Composite by saying that they are 'internationalists'. They are wrong, and our movement needs no lectures on inter-



nationalism from supporters of American imperialism and of immigration controls that keep out black people. But there is no internationalism in Composite 15 either.

Socialist internationalism has nothing to do with the foreign policy of a capitalist Britain. It has everything to do with supporting liberation movements and building links with workers in other countries. British and French and German workers have the most basic fact that they are workers in common. Yet Composite 15 has nothing to say about developing any links between them as an alternative to the bosses' EEC, or about a United Socialist States of Europe.

What need has the working class for a campaign for an 'independent' capitalist Britain? The only thing we

have in common with British bosses are the chains between the exploiter and exploited. They and their class internationally are the ones we have to deal with to solve our problems. Composite 15 doesn't help in any way in doing that. It is a diversion up the blind alley of nationalism. We urge delegates to oppose it for those reasons.

(If the Composite is carried, we will need the democratic proposals being debated this afternoon as much as on any other issue. Whatever their own political opinions, those charged with carrying out Party policy must be held accountable for doing so — or, if they can't in conscience, then they should resign their positions. That's democracy.)

Ditch the sexism!

by RACHEL LEVER

FOR THE first time in living memory, the Labour Party conference debated women's rights; but the handling of the debate, and the treatment of women at conference, was marked by gross insensitivity — and that's being polite about it.

With the exercise of the tiniest scrap of imagination, the party could have made something of this debate: it could have been used to compensate for the smattering of women that got to speak in the rest of the conference. In the event the composite was moved and seconded by men, and the 'debate' consisted of one woman from the trade union side.

Lena Jeger proved impervious through the week to pleas for decent treatment of women delegates. Comments like 'clear the gangway, you're standing in the way of a beautiful woman' as Angie Shariff got up to move the Ireland composite, or 'not you, dear, the man behind you' came again and again from the chair, and she thought that objections to this sort of thing were themselves 'sexist'.

Sheffield Brightside were there too, with their badge-making machine churning out 'Ditch the Bitch' and infantile smut against Thatcher, and Militant were there with their repulsive 'Plunderwoman' poster.

The creche, which last year was free, was charging £1 per child per day to delegates, and twice that much for visitors. As it was being run by the RACS, the NEC disclaimed responsibility but promised they would do it for free next year. However, a petition demanding that parents be reimbursed for what they had paid this year was ignored.

But the tide is turning — and fast. What the older men (and women) fail to grasp was as clear as daylight to 11 year old Rachel Brodie. She wrote in Socialist Organiser's briefing, 'The badge Ditch the Bitch is sexist and it is a disgrace

to the Labour party'. The press spotted a good story and splashed it all over the popular papers. (It even made the 'quotes of the week' in the Observer, alongside Ayatollah Khomeiny...)

Jo Richardson, angered by Jeger's charring and particularly shocked at the lack of debate on the women's rights composite, picked up the theme in her reply. 'Thatcher's no sister, and what she is doing is not because she is

subject of 'Socialism and Feminism'. Audrey Wise, who six months ago was distinctly one of Labour's 'strong women' who reject any special treatment for women as if it were charity, gave a well thought out exposition, and Jo Richardson told us about another big advance, the establishment of an NEC women's rights study group which she will be chairing. She told me: 'we're going to be very thorough; we're going to look at sexism in the

problems of being a woman and organising women in the party.

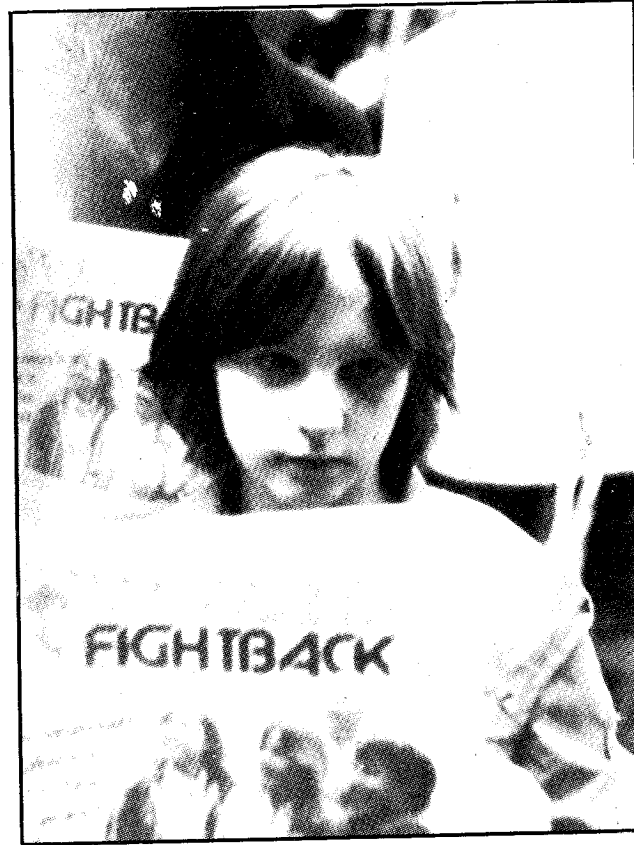
Controversy centred as usual around the linked questions of positive discrimination and separate women's section organisation, but there was tremendous applause for Sheelagh Delaney of Poulton-le-Fylde women's sections when she said: 'the strong women must realise that they've left a lot of women behind; they should use some of their strength to help the others who are less able to overcome the drawbacks of upbringing and the burdens of family responsibilities'.

There was no controversy in the Conference debate itself. The resolution calling for a 3-line whip on abortion was left out of the composite, as was the call for statutory provision of nursery education. Resolutions from Stepney & Poplar and Birmingham Ladywood, for the strengthening of the women's conference, also failed to get a debate.

And the composite that was passed (calling for improved abortion and contraception facilities, 9 months' maternity leave on full pay and three weeks' paternity leave, and an end to the cohabitation rule in social security) was taken on a show of hands. Virtually unanimous, it was a typical example of women's rights going through on the nod.

We should welcome the gains, and see this year's conference as a trial run. The conference organised by Women's Fightback on November 22nd will kick off a solid stint of organising for a major debate at next year's conference, for a continuing campaign against sexism, for the party to take a lead against the Tories, and for constitutional reforms to give women equality in the party.

Immediately, women are campaigning to get the NEC to organise a women's right to work contingent on the demo on unemployment in Liverpool on November 29th. Send letters or resolutions from CLPs or women's sections, or from groups of women or campaigns. On the evidence of the changing mood at conference, they might just do it!



Rachel Brodie: 'The badge 'Ditch the Bitch' is sexist and it is a disgrace to the Labour Party. Things like this we do not need. The badges 'Socialist Organiser' and 'Mobilise for Labour Democracy' are fine... I say 'Ditch sexist badges' as well as Thatcher'.

a woman', she told delegates.

Six months ago, when Women's Fightback took up the issue of sexist slogans in an Open Letter to trade unionists, we didn't think it would get such a response. Now it has been supported from the platform at Labour's conference.

Another small, but significant, sign of change: the Women's Advisory Committee held an official fringe meeting on the sub-

ject of 'Socialism and Feminism'.

The other major fringe event was the CLPD Women's Action Committee meeting, billed as 'the first-ever women's rights rally at a Labour conference'. Though it was mainly called to introduce the issues in the consultative document due to be discussed at their conference on October 11th, most of the floor debate (in which about 15 women spoke) centred around the

What it's like for the delegates



ROS NASH

Vauxhall CLP delegate

IT WAS an amazing experience to be a constituency delegate at last week's conference. I'm still a bit shell-shocked and unsure whether or not the gains the left made will be snatched from us at some future date. I do, however, have some thoughts and questions about the procedures I observed.

I came straight off the M6, after being held up for many hours by road works and a bad accident, into a compositing meeting. Two minutes later and our constituency resolution would have fallen.

I understand that every year up to half the resolutions are not taken because people are either late or do not turn up to the meetings.

One is faced by the full-time bureaucrats on the Standing Orders Committee, and a few of the union full-timers. Unfortunately, this puts some of the first-time CLP delegates at a disadvantage. Those who are not as knowledgeable or assertive as others felt that by the end of the compositing meetings, they would have made far better delegates if they'd been through it before.

However, I am convinced that it is absolutely correct that the delegate should be rotated.

What is needed is some form of briefing, or even role-play, set up in advance to prepare delegates for the tactics of compositing.

Of course, it was tremendous that some of the major resolutions were passed, e.g., withdrawal from the EEC, and a commitment to unilateral disarmament — but at one stage myself and other comrades felt as though we might as well go home and leave it to the trade union block vote (sacrilege to say so, but the truth).

It was difficult for most of us in the CLP delegation,

having overwhelmingly voted against increased membership fees and two tier membership, to see it overturned by the block vote. How is it possible in such circumstances that relationships cannot become strained and people start talking about different 'sides' — when we are all supposed to be in the labour movement?

I heard arguments from some of our Militant comrades, that we don't want to fight the block vote, we want to win it. Upon reflection, however, I would like to put forward the argument for some form of regionalised and mandated vote by the unions — as, to date, it is the only method I can envisage which might be acceptable to the union rank and file.

These regional delegates would, of course, be more accountable to their membership. This is something we would all have to fight for in our trade union branches — but there is no reason that I can see, after last week's conference, why the CLPs should not suggest it, or something like it, to the trade unions directly, and why our trade union comrades, who say they are trade unionists first and Labour Party members second, should not honestly and reasonably consider such a move for the health and unity of the labour movement generally.

Having said all that, it was an instructive conference for me, and I would now like to urge the rank and file trade union members who maybe were not too interested in the leadership issue, etc., in the Labour Party, to rethink their attitudes. They must realise that things like incomes policy can only be foisted on the labour movement by a leadership which knows it is not meaningfully accountable for its actions.

An open letters column for the labour movement

WRITE BACK

Write to: 5 Stamford Hill, London N16

Let's have a general strike

I HAVE just received my "sample" copy of *Socialist Organiser*, and I am very impressed by it.

May I take this opportunity of making a few comments through your columns.

Congratulations to Moss Evans and his call for a mass protest by his union — this would go much further if other unions followed his example. Just how much more can we stand at the hand of Thatcher the Snatcher? Escalating unemployment, escalating inflation, erosion of the working class position: just how much can we take before we say that enough is enough?

Now is the time for all to come to the aid of the Party, say once and for all that we've had enough, for if we don't it will continue to get worse. Why should we wait for the new financial year to suffer still further burdens by way of increased rates and rents. It is high time that we all stood shoulder to shoulder and said NO!

Monetarist policies are already being implemented by many employers; wage increases will be, as before, well below the cost of living and in consequence our purchasing power will eventually affect the livelihoods of many of our brothers, not to forget our own standard of living, which will mean next to nothing. Let us come together in solidarity to protect the livelihood of our families. Mass action is but the only way to put paid to Thatcher and her Government.

Far too often the weak are made the scapegoats for monetarist policies, the weak who do not know their rights, the weak who are unable to stand up for themselves, the weak who are cast to one side all in the name of monetarist policies which are being seen to fail — look at the CBI, Edwardes: are they not also saying enough? Only the CBI says, enough of this, let it be tougher! The bosses' own mouthpiece says: enough of this, it is not working — get on with the job.

No, I say to you, join Moss Evans' call for a General Strike and show this reactionary Government that enough is enough: you are not going to walk over us any more.

Yours fraternally,
TONY BILES

Snide asides

I AM WRITING in response to the report on the 'Beyond the Fragments' conference in SO 25 by Sophia Caplan which, I feel, was characterised by snide asides rather than by serious analysis.

While I am not a sympathiser of the various libertarian currents mentioned (in fact I am an SO supporter), I must protest at the implications that the women's movement and the libertarians are not part of the left, or that they abstain from combative political actions. Both implications are patently untrue.

Admittedly, antipathy to Leninism, as a reaction against the Leninist pretensions of groups such as the SWP, is a serious weakness in these movements but, given the smallness of those currents to be found around Workers' Action, Socialist Organiser and

Women's Fightback, the women's movement can hardly be blamed for not noticing our 'perfection', overshadowed as we are by the SWP, CP, etc.

The women's movement has done much good work in areas unforgivably ignored by the Trotskyist left in the past, and if we wish to unite the labour and women's movements under the banner of revolutionary socialism, we would do well to acknowledge this rather than to stand from the sidelines. We must demonstrate our political superiority in action rather than expect people to accept it on faith, and we must show our willingness to learn from the women's movement just as we do from the labour movement.

LES HEARN
Lambeth SO

The battering boom

IN HIS ARTICLE 'Noble and Manly', Tom Cashman rightly condemns boxing for the organised and legalised thuggery that it is. The avowed aim of the game is to club the other man into submission, or to injure him so badly that the authorities are forced to intervene.

To enjoy this spectacle is surely to take delight in a rather pernicious form of entertainment — which 'body' will collapse first!

However, while it is easy enough for us to condemn the argument that boxing is the poor boy's only way to fame and fortune, it is a sad fact that there is a boxing boom in the ports and valley towns of South Wales, because of the present economic depression.

The boys are not conned into boxing by devious trainers, nor do they go into

it because they enjoy beating people up. Boxing is seen as a legitimate means for young boys to get out of the poverty and boredom of unemployment, or to avoid the prospect of unemployment.

If a boxer is successful, if he can hurt his opponent more than he is hurt himself, then he can get on, and for him, boxing is a good, enjoyable sport — which is why Pinter, and all the other 'successes', are able to shrug off the damage done to their opponents by blandly stating that "Life must go on".

What sort of life is that? It is a *deliberately* brutal and destructive life into which they are pushed by the promise of an escape from poverty. But just think of what they're involved in.

As Tom says, possibly the most persuasive argument against boxing is the sight of

'punchy' ex-boxers, prematurely aged, with their twisted hands and deformed faces, doing their roadwork for the chance that still may come".

It's tragic that a good, honest boy like Johnny Owen was forced to decide at the tender age of 8 that the greatest contribution he could make to British society was to climb into a boxing ring, to stealthily and skilfully hammer another human being into submission. In Pinter he found somebody who could do it better.

Johnny Owen, the boxer, was as much a victim of the present distortion of human relationships as the prostitute found floating in Newport Dock, but the battering he received was legal.

Yours fraternally,
MIKE THOMAS

A TALE AGREED UPON?

"WHAT IS history but a tale agreed upon?" said (I think) the first Bonaparte. There are also, of course, facts. Tony Benn's account of the development of the Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy would be less of a "tale" and more like the actual history if he had a clearer grasp of the facts.

In his interview with Pat Kane and Hugh Richards (*Socialist Challenge* 165), he says: "All of a sudden, and very much to my surprise, there was the development of the Mobilising Committee... When the *Militant* tendency came in to the Mobilising Committee... all of a sudden it began to come alive..."

This account bears no resemblance to the reality. Apart from the fact that the Mobilising Committee did not die when *Militant* joined, it is the opposite of the truth.

The facts: *Militant's* involvement came after the Mobilising Committee was launched. It has been a formal involvement, tokenistic to the point of being nominal involvement. For example: *Militant* took 50 of the first broadsheet — about one for each of its organisers. (Total sold: 17,000). It took 75 of the second broadsheet (which carried an article by one of its people). The LPYS, completely dominated by *Militant*, took 200 copies of

the first, none of the second. Less than 100 of the first broadsheet were ordered by *Militant* supporters in the provinces; none, as far as I know, of the second.

The paper *Militant* has only had lukewarm occasional little articles on the Mobilising Committee. *Militant* has not been involved prominently in organising local meetings (with perhaps one exception); in most places, it has not been at all involved, even to the extent of its people turning up.

In short, *Militant* involved itself just enough to keep contact with the 'Tribunite/Bennite Left' and just enough to stop its supporters asking why it stood aside. To the specific work of the Mobilising Committee, its contribution was marginal: that is, unless Benn thinks *Militant* has an occult power to influence the labour movement irrespective of what its members and publications do and say.

Of course, *Militant's* formal support has added to the appeal of the Mobilising Committee as the embodiment of a united left, which is something, I suppose. But it is not much. And *Militant* is not short of resources.

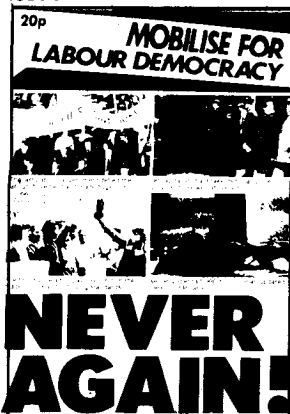
Strange also is Tony Benn's choice of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (and Women's Fightback, which it initiated) to illustrate his percep-

tion that there has been a "great splinter activity" outside and inside the Labour Party. The SCLV initiated the Mobilising Committee and, together with the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, 'carried' the major weight of its uniting and organising work, both at the centre of the campaign and throughout the country.

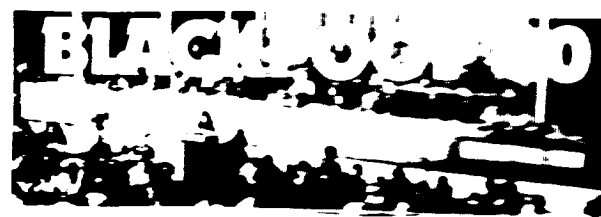
But comrade Benn or his advisors may just have noticed that the SCLV forms the revolutionary socialist wing of the Mobilising Committee...

Yours fraternally
JOHN O'MAHONY
(SCLV Steering Committee)

★ This letter has also been sent to Socialist Challenge, commenting on their interview with Tony Benn in their Labour Conference issue.



Single copies 20p plus 10p post; 20 for £2 plus £1 post; from 10 Park Drive, NW11.



Ken Livingstone

THE SURPRISE was the change in the trade union delegates. Several trade union delegates who would have been seen at the conference a few years ago went with the Left. A new generation of younger, more left wing activists is working its way through the trade union structure, and was visible at the Conference.

Between now and January, the right wing will spend all its time trying to carve up the electoral college. The half dozen main union leaders will get together and try to

Callaghan is giving no lead at all, and the Party desperately needs a leader prepared to fight the Tories. Callaghan is just waiting for his gold watch.

It's important that the January conference should both decide on the electoral college and elect the new leader. There's no good reason for delay.

Next step: democracy in the unions



Jeremy Corbyn

BLACKPOOL '80 must go down as one of the momentous Labour Party Conferences.

Not because the Conference voted to commit the Party to a whole range of socialist measures such as the 35 hour week, expansion of public ownership, wealth tax, ending of nuclear weapons, opposition to wage control and support for a vital emergency motion from Lambeth proposing a united labour movement response to the Heseltine axe — but because of the depth of the constitutional debate.

Steps were taken to give real effect to ending the elitist position of the Parliamentary Labour Party and making it accountable to the movement as a whole.

The now mandatory reselection of MPs must mean that the arrogance of "our superiors" such as Joe Ashton MP will be threatened. How many MPs would vote for a 5% pay policy in defiance of the Party, whilst threatened with removal?

Although the leadership issue was not settled, the principle of a wider franchise than the Parliamentary Party must extend the debate about democracy throughout the labour movement.

Trade union delegates will now be involved in choosing the Labour leader, and this will no doubt turn the mind of union members to many other aspects of democracy within the trade union movement.

Anyone who witnessed the naked power broking of the

right wing trade union general secretaries in Blackpool, in a desperate effort to protect Callaghan, must seriously question the present set-up. Individuals rushing from smoke-filled rooms to drink-sodden bar "offering" the support of their entire membership in return for some deal or other, is not a pleasant sight, and hardly fits in with the image of accountability.

A useful guide to the success of a Labour Party Conference is the press reaction to it. For months, we have all witnessed an almost unprecedented campaign of adulation for the 'Gang of Three', and joyous declarations about the impending eclipse of the left. The fury of the press, and their inability to report accurately on the proceedings, amply demonstrates the need for activists to go out and campaign, and to build the Party at local level.

The strength of the Labour Party, as opposed to other socialist parties, is its direct trade union link. The weakness is that too often, this is seen as a formal link and not a sufficiently alive one at local level.

To hold the Party to the decisions taken at Blackpool must mean that we use to the full the opportunities of accountability, but that we also extend our appeal to workplace activists, and persuade them to pressurise their union leaderships to back a genuine electoral college in January.

Mike Ward

THE TORY press appears to believe that the members of an organisation have no rights — that individual members of the Labour Party should not attempt to control its policies or constitution, and that these should be left to parliamentarians and pollsters, whose task should be to produce an inoffensive mishmash of lowest-common-denominator compromises. They say that the Labour Party can

only win elections if it promises to be nice to everybody.

That is what they say — but I do not think it is what they believe. Their fear is not really that the policies of the left are unpopular, and will not work — they shout so loud precisely because they are worried that the opposite is true: that our policies can be popular and will work.

COUNCIL HOUSES Lambeth NALGO says: don't sell

by GRAHAM NORWOOD

YOU MAY have seen the advertisements on television and in the newspapers. You may already have heard something from your council. The sad news is that municipal asset-stripping is now legal. Council houses are up for sale.

The Department of the Environment's publicity is costing £60,000 alone. But that's just chicken-feed compared to the cost in money and housing-stock terms which the scheme means for us all.

Kids

It may be idyllic for a family in a mixed private/public estate of 'nice' houses to buy their own, with garden front and back. But what of those living in tower blocks, with broken lifts, no grass for the kids to play on, and graffiti on the walls? For them, the great council house rip-off is not so marvellous, for it removes the chance for them to move into the 'nice' houses which will soon be

Squatters fight council sales

A GROUP of housing activists has occupied Kilner House, on the Kennington Park Estate, in South London.

This block of 60 flats has recently been renovated by the Greater London Council, and put out for sale on the open market at £19,000-£22,000 each.

The activists moved in on Friday night, 3rd. Within a day they had won the support of the estate tenants' association, who helped them to leaflet the entire estate, explaining their aim of preventing the sale of the flats.

Some families on the estate have moved into the block to show their active support. Tenants are angry that flats get freshly done up for sale, but left to rot if council tenants are living in them.

When the block was originally 'decanted' (cleared for renovation), displaced tenants were promised that they would be offered the flats back when renovation was completed. Now the GLC has cynically gone back on its word.

This first decisive action against the GLC 'sale of the century' has now gained wider support, from all-London tenants' leaders and Lambeth Trades Council.

George Tremlett, the GLC housing chairman, has promised quick action against the occupation. "We're going to court. We're going to issue writs against these politically-motivated squatters. We're going to kick them out as soon as possible. We're going to smack them hard".

But the occupation is preparing against eviction, legal or otherwise. The Trades Council is contacting housing, water, gas and electricity workers, urging them to black all action against the occupation.

Donations and messages of support to: 1 Kilner House, Kennington Park Estate, London SE11.

CHEUNG SIU MING

private property.

And tragically it seems that more and more Labour councils have now backed down from the original stand which some were prepared to take, in defiance of the Tory Government.

Much of the problem, of course, comes from lack of central direction and leadership. Roy Hattersley's approach has been basically to fudge the issue: the NEC, with one or two notable exceptions, have advised Labour local authorities to work within the law, and thus eventually sell their properties.

But some blame must also lie with Labour councils who promised one thing, but are now doing quite another.

Let us look at Lambeth. It is organising — with great importance to the labour movement — a conference which may call for a national strike of town hall unions in an attempt to make Thatcher retreat. The council are working with local Labour Parties and trade unionists, and will urge the town hall workers to come out in defiance of the Government.

And yet — in complete contradiction of an earlier pledge, and in full knowledge of the policy of NALGO to oppose council house sales — Lambeth has now decided to operate the 'slow implementation' of council house sales.

The local NALGO branch executive has written to Lambeth Council leader Ted Knight expressing 'dismay', recalling its Branch policy to 'take all relevant industrial action to prevent council house sales', and pointing out: "If the Labour group takes a decision to sell council houses our branch will not receive... official backing" [from NALGO for this industrial action].

Law

The NALGO branch exec also says: "a decision to sell council houses... will seriously undermine the credibility of a call for urgent joint action against the Government".

Of course, many other Labour councils (indeed, the majority) have been far less democratic and socialist in their near-enthusiasm to comply with the law and sell their municipal housing. But that does not remove the shadow of shame on Lambeth and similar Labour groups who should have seized this chance to demonstrate defiance of Heseltine, and promote the confrontation which so many of these councillors say they want to have.

A year ago, Lambeth led the struggle between Labour's local authorities and the Conservative central government. A march last November showed public and political support for a stand against Thatcher. But since then we have had pragmatism instead of principle.

We have had the 'savings' on future expenditure (every other council has called them cuts), and now the selling of council houses. It will be a tragedy if, in years to come, history looks back on the Thatcher Government and records that Labour local authorities did much of the dirty work for the Tories.

Nov 1: fight the cuts!

PROBABLY THE most important resolution at Labour conference about fighting the Tories NOW was the emergency motion on the cuts. Conference voted for a Lambeth resolution backing industrial action against the cuts.

Now the November 1st national anti-cuts conference called by the Lambeth labour movement must get maximum support — and decide a fighting strategy.

Southwark councillor Paula Moore told Socialist Organiser: "It's got to be a joint fight — councils and unions — neither can expect the other to do their fighting for them. The conference has to build to-

wards involving workers outside the town halls as a second phase of opposition".

Paul Fletcher, leader of the Labour group on Lincoln City Council, added: "Heseltine, by his actions, has removed the democracy that has operated in local government since elections began. The Lambeth conference must mobilise the whole labour movement".

DATE: Saturday 1st November.
TIME: 10.30-4.30.

PLACE: Camden Town Hall.

DELEGATES: 3 per controlling local authority Labour group, 1 per minority Labour group, trade union

branch, shop stewards' committees, CLP or Trades Council.

DELEGATE FEE: £1 (cheques/POs payable to 'Lambeth Joint Conference').

WRITE TO: Organising Committee, Room 103, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Hill, London SW2.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER SUPPORTERS have prepared amendments to the conference Draft Statement, calling for industrial action to be linked to a committed anti-cuts stand by Labour councils. Copies of the amendments can be got from Cheung Siu Ming, c/o Socialist Organiser, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

We need the big battalions

GLC councillor KEN LIVINGSTONE told Socialist Organiser:

SUPPORT will have to come from the grass roots. There's no more chance of the trade union leaders calling a strike than there is of the PLP leading any extra-Parliamentary activity. Both these groups will only move when the rank and file forces them to, as during the low pay strikes in the winter of '78-'79.

The response Ted Knight got in Conference, and the deceitful refusal of the NEC to say where it stood on the Lambeth emergency resolution indicate that their role is one of pushing back while the rank and file pushes forward. Neil Kinnock is a leading left rhetorician, but when lobbied by Lambeth people to support Composite 21 [calling for the NEC to organise a mass campaign against the cuts], he refused contemptuously, saying "I'm not going to hold your coat tails while you fight the government".

Step

People like Kinnock, who have sought the leadership of this movement, now have a responsibility to lead and not stand back while individual councils are picked off.

The other key issue is this. Councils which haven't been penalised, because they've made enough cuts, (Southwark, for instance), must be forced to restore those cuts as their actions are merely aiding Heseltine's attack on the 'Municipal 14'.

The November conference must be a step towards

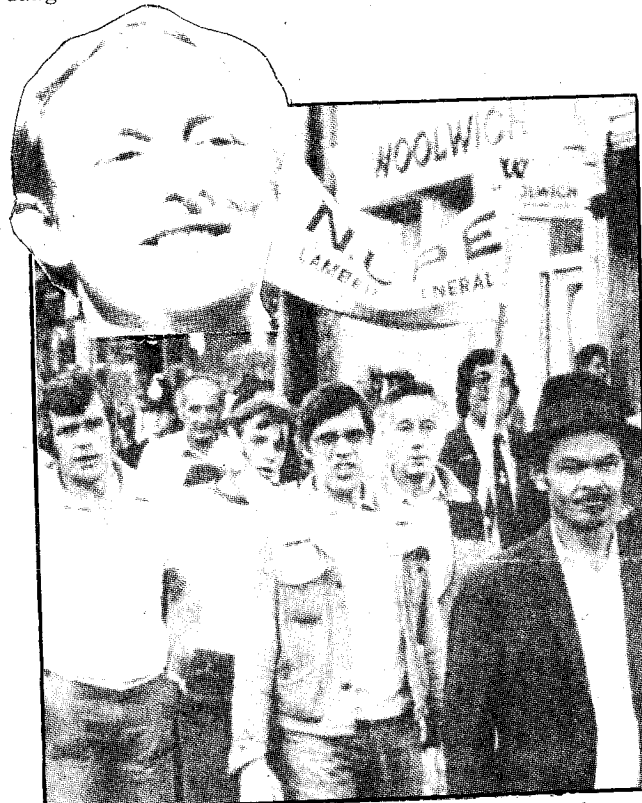
generating rank and file pressure to moving those leaderships. Whilst the November 1st conference can't instruct the trade unions or Labour councils, it can provide a forum in which we expose those whose only concern is to keep their heads down till the storm passes over and then resume their careers.

The Lambeth conference must discuss means by which the labour movement gets out and mobilises public support for industrial action to bring down this government. It would be dangerous to let two or three

public sector unions, whom the Tories might ignore, go out on a limb and get crushed. The industrial unions are essential.

Miners

The Tories look upon a council workers' strike as the best way of cutting council expenditure. The government has already backed down on the dockers, the power workers and the miners. There are the sort of groups to have to come behind the weaker public sector unions.



Lambeth NUPE will be fighting, but Kinnock [above] says he won't help

WE WON'T SELL COUNCIL HOUSES

ROCHDALE Council Labour Group has voted not to implement the Tory Housing Act.

Labour's manifesto for the Council promised not to sell council houses, and on Thursday 2nd, the District Labour Party passed a resolution calling on the Labour Group to

make good that promise by defying the Housing Act.

It was a victory for democracy in the Labour Party — and I think it had a lot to do with what had happened at Conference.

The Council is meeting on Wednesday, and the Tories will have great backing from the Liberals to attack the Labour

decision. They have already taken the council to Court over the question of the closed shop.

What we must do now is get together with other Labour Councils which are going to refuse to sell council houses.

BARRY HASLAM
Secretary, Rochdale District Labour Party

IRAQ DRAWS FIRST BLOOD

by BRUCE ROBINSON

Khorramshahr is largely destroyed. Refugees flood out towards the east, hoping to get away from the battle front. The Abadan oil refinery, the world's biggest and Iran's chief source of wealth, is half destroyed. The ceasefire appeals, as usual, come from the momentary victors, the Iraqis, and they are inevitably rejected by Iran, whose government covers its war losses with denials and bluster.

Everything now seems set for a long war of attrition.

In the last week other Middle Eastern states have become more actively involved. Jordan has allowed Iraqi planes to use its airstrips and it is reported that Jordanian and Saudi troops are actually stationed inside Iraq.

Israel has meanwhile been assured by the US that the Iraqi plans stationed in Jordan will be no threat to her. Syria, for some time now Iraq's rival, has come out in support of Iran.

The Iraqi regime has such widespread support from the other reactionary regimes in the region because it has been moving away from its previous close relations with the USSR in order to become imperialism's new policeman in the Gulf and because they fear the effects within their own countries of the Iranian revolution with its radical, anti-imperialist rhetoric.

Although both the USA and the USSR have so far strained to appear neutral, the USA is poised to intervene if things get out of control; for example, if blocking of the Straits of Hormuz was to threaten the West's oil supplies.

Iraq is ruled today by a faction of the Ba'ath party led by President Saddam Hussein which bases itself on the Iraqi capitalist class and the mass of functionaries who administer the state apparatus and the huge nationalised sector of the economy.

Executive power in concentrated in the hands of a small group whose leaders come from the area of Takrit. They, like preceding ruling groups in Iraq, are Sunni Muslim, unlike the majority (about 54%), who are Shi'a Muslims — like the overwhelming majority of Iranians. The ruling National Progressive Front includes a puppet Kurdish party, but the Hussein regime, like previous Iraqi regimes, is a brutal opponent of the right of the Kurds to self-determination.

In this it is the mirror image of the Iranian state. That is even more of a patchwork of nations — Kurds, Arabs, Baluchis, Azerbaidjanis, Turcomans, Lurs and others in addition to the Persians. Those who thought the fall of the Shah would lead to the liberation of the nationalities, who were demanding different degrees of autonomy, were rudely disappointed.

»

Khomeini has murderously attacked all the national minorities since coming to power in February 1979 on the fall of the Shah. The Iraqis claim to be fighting in support of a national liberation movement in Khuzestan is simply a cover for their aim of grabbing a part of Iran. No national movement in that area has ever expressed a wish to join Iraq.

The claims of such regimes to act as liberators is the grimmest cynicism. Supporting such regimes means supporting national oppression and the suppression of the masses. The Iranian paper *Islamic Republic*, organ of the ruling party, when it isn't stoking up the fires of nationalism, attacks the leftist organisations of the Mujahedeen and Fedayeen and actually suggests that the war could provide an excellent opportunity for getting rid of these 'trouble-makers'. Iraq, meanwhile, hopes that the imported troops will batter down any



Saddam Hussein

domestic upheaval while the Iraqi troops concentrate on the war against Iran.

While Iraq initiated the war, the driving force on both sides is a reactionary nationalism — in Iraq's case, it takes the form of trying to humble Iran, seizing a piece of Iranian territory and damaging its oil production; and making a bid to become the strongman of the Gulf, something it cannot do without at least the toleration, if not the support, of imperialism.

In Iran, Khomeini used radical anti-imperialist rhetoric to blur over his attempts to impose an anti-working class Islamic fundamentalist state.

Iraqi troops should certainly be withdrawn from Iran; but a victory for either side would not advance the interests of the masses or the national minorities in the region. Socialists must support the rights of the national minorities in both states to decide their own future and we should oppose the war without taking sides.

We must also oppose any move by imperialism to intervene in the Gulf zone as the war progresses.

* The article on the Iran/Iraq war in the last *Socialist Organiser* was wrongly credited. It was in fact written by Bruce Robinson, not Andrew Horning. We apologise to both comrades for the error.

Several articles sent in for recent issues of *Socialist Organiser*, and particularly for this one, have been cut, left over, or squeezed out altogether. The reason: acute and growing pressure of space. We offer our apologies to the comrades who sent in the articles, and hope they will join us in working to get the resources for *Socialist Organiser* to expand.

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GARDNERS WORKERS OCCUPY

A spark for the jobs fightback

"THERE WAS no way that we could accept those redundancies. That's why we decided to occupy." The words of Tom Williamson, chairman of the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee at L Gardner and Sons in Eccles, met with unanimous approval from the other stewards in the union office as he explained to *Socialist Organiser* why the workforce was putting up a fight over the bosses' plans to put 590 on the dole by Christmas.

The decision to occupy wasn't taken in the heat of the moment. Negotiations have been going on for some time to try and find a way out, and the union side had offered to work short time and to share the work out under the short time working scheme. They have already been operating this for thirteen weeks, but it ran out on 30th September and the management refused to extend it.

Obviously, the bosses are trying to take advantage of the current economic situation to cut down the workforce, and they're not interested in any job-saving schemes. But in taking on the Gardner workers, they've bitten off more than

they can chew.

It's not for nothing that they're well known as the best-organised factory in Manchester, and they're no strangers to the sit-in tactic either. In 1973 they were in there for three months during the engineers' pay campaign.

The sit-in has the support of all the unions in the factory, both shopfloor and staff, and they're digging in for a long fight. "We'll stick it out as long as need be — until we win", said Dave Marsden, treasurer of the Occupation Committee.

The canteen is the main centre of the occupation, and they've already been offered fifty mattresses by Manchester University Students' Union, to make things more comfortable for the night shift. Some local people have also brought food in.

There's a strict code of conduct operating. "We consider this is our place and we'll leave it as we found it", said Tom Williamson. Alcohol is banned, and all movement in and out of the factory is controlled by the Occupation Committee. They are not stopping the management from coming in, but

they make sure they're not left alone. There is not much for them to do, though, as the factory is at a complete standstill.

What makes this occupation so important is that it is over jobs. Time after time, workers in the Manchester area have seen their factories closed or the workforce slashed, and not lifted a finger, preferring to take the redundancy money and run. At Gardner's, this trend has come to a full stop. If they win, then this could act as the spark which sets off a whole new fight.

Workers throughout the area are looking at Gardner's to see what happens, and the workforce, which is very conscious of this, is appealing to the labour movement for all the support it can give. We've got to make sure that they get it. Every reader of *SO* should raise this issue in his or her union or Labour Party branch.

They especially need money to finance the many delegations that they intend to send out. All donations and messages of support to Dave Marsden, 187 Barton Lane, Eccles (cheques to: L Gardner's Joint Shop Stewards No.2 account).

Potteries cutbacks: we need unity

UNDER THE banner headline "Disaster Day for Potteries", the North Staffs Evening Sentinel announced that Royal Doulton Tableware Limited were to close four factories in Stoke-on-Trent and a crystal glass factory at Tutbury.

The resulting loss of jobs would be in the region of 975-1000, approximately 10% of the Royal Doulton labour force and 2% of the local ceramics industry.

The Executive Chairman of Royal Doulton, Mr Richard Bailey, blamed the general world recession, high interest charges and the strong pound. "Reality has got to be faced", he said, "It is regrettable but the action has got to be taken to keep us strong in the face of fierce competition".

The cutback comes just about one year after a group-wide cost-cutting exercise which caused the loss of 300 jobs, and 15 months after product-range changes at one of the factories resulted in half the workforce (about 250) being sacked.

A number of unions are involved, the principal ones being the Ceramic and Allied Trades Union (CATU), the National Flint and Glassworkers' Union (NFGU), and the

Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs (ASTMS). Other unions involved, covering a small number of maintenance workers, are the AUEW and EETPU. Royal Doulton, in line with their agreements with each of these unions, is seeing them separately and consulting with each union as to how the redundancies should be effected.

From a union point of view, it is difficult to understand the merits of each union 'going it alone'. Effort is fragmented and completely uncoordinated, with the possibility of one union's actions harming the other unions involved.

The probability that Royal Doulton are maintaining profit levels by balancing the books with an annual 'shake-out' of workers must be given serious consideration by all unions involved. They must show a united front, not only to fight the current wave of redundancies, but to make the whole policy of maximising profits by cutting jobs too risky and too costly an exercise for Royal Doulton to contemplate for the future.

BARRY HOLMES
Secretary, Royal Doulton
(832) branch ASTMS

'New Nazis' flop in Hull

THE 'NEW National Front' held its first public demonstration in Hull on September 20th.

The NNF, a split-off from the NF, is led by John Tyndall, and said to be even more racist than the NF.

The NNF had been refused permission to speak at the City Hall. As a second best effort to gain support, Tyndall had chosen to lay a wreath at the City Hall "in memory" of British fishing jobs. It was a deliberate attempt to use the dying fishing industry, a considerable cause of unemployment in Hull, to his own advantage.

On 20th September, a drizzly Saturday afternoon, the anti-fascists began to mobilise on the steps of Queen Victoria Square, Hull. Opposite the City Hall the police were already in evidence, their ranks swelling all the time.

We were fifty strong when the NNF arrived. There was an uproar of anti-fascist chants as Union Jacks were unfurled and Tyndall led four other supporters to lay the wreath at the locked gates of the City Hall.

The whole thing took four minutes. Union Jacks were hastily thrown in the van and the fascists retreated.

There were six arrests of anti-fascists. The police station was picketed until the arrested were released, after being charged with breach of the peace.

Although the NNF succeeded in their aim to place a wreath at the City Hall, the fascists were far outnumbered by the counter-demonstration — and the wreath was quickly thrown away.

The hasty retreat of the NNF was our victory.

JULIA GARWOLINSKA

LETTER: Textile jobs, is there an answer?

"ANGRY WORKERS hurled stones and debris at the windows and gates of the Standard Mill, Corporation Road, Rochdale on Wednesday" — so reports the *Rochdale Observer* this week as yet another textile mill sacks its workers and cuts its losses.

Cyril Smith MP urged the workers not to take any "irresponsible" action (such as the threat to overturn an official's car), over the loss of their jobs. In this case, all 268 workers were sacked. Many workers felt it was "time for action. We have seen it happen in Poland."

It is the case, however, that the kind of action commonly urged at such times it to call on Government to control imports.

Smith himself urges textile workers to accept a "slight cut in wages" to save their jobs.

The question is: what can we say to encourage workers in this tragic situation? We rightly oppose import controls, cuts in wages, etc. — but have we thought of really credible alternatives to explain our ideas?

Obviously textile workers are faced with the same problems as workers in other contracting industries and we need to link their fight with that of other sectors, but can *Socialist Organiser* help us out by explaining its position in such a way that it would be easily accessible to ordinary workers?

SUE ARNALL

A night off for socialists

by MANDY WILLIAMS

IF YOU'RE expecting political comedy from *The Secret Policeman's Ball*, you'll be disappointed. Like Amnesty International, which organised the original show as a benefit, it doesn't set out to make radical criticisms of Western society.

It is a mixture of sketches, songs and solo acts from various well known performers, and some of them do aim at the targets of Church and State, somewhat more consistently than in *Life of Brian*. What sticks in my mind particularly are two solo sketches: Eleanor Bron praying; and Peter Cook as the Judge summing up in the Thorpe trial.

Eleanor Bron, as a 'good' middle-class Roman Catholic woman, leading an uneventful and relatively harmless life, has little to confess to God other than sharp remarks to her sister ("Thou

knowest, the one in Watford"), or dubious motives. But each item she confesses leads to complications: "Thou knowest that already"; "I'm not trying to make excuses"; and "But Thou knowest that too".

The conventions of biblical language, and the double binds of trying to explain to Someone who knows everything beforehand (and perhaps planned it?) make it a ridiculous exercise, not so much self-examination (as which it is sometimes defended by liberals) as an anxiety-making guilt trip. She ends feeling that her major sin must be thinking so much about herself.

Peter Cook conveys almost as much by his pompous and senile manner, as by the content of his summing up, the mediaeval values and views which determine the process of 'justice'. He twists the logic so that Thorpe's refusal to give

evidence shines out as unquestionable proof of his innocence; and he virulently denounces attacks on individual liberties — "What sort of country would this be if this man cannot spend his Party's funds exactly how he likes, and not have to tell anyone?"

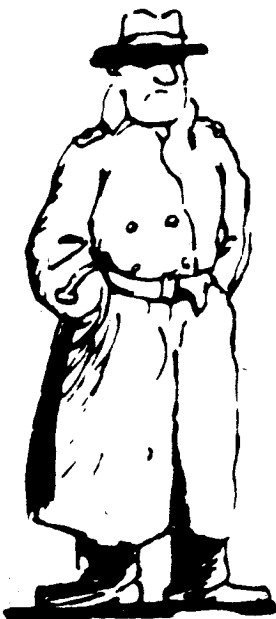
The defamations of Scott's character (ending with "a self-confessed pillow-biter!"), and of Newton's ("A man who cannot even successfully carry out a murder"), and the eulogy to Thorpe's ("A man who, might I say, would have become Prime Minister of Britain, if not President of the world") are little more blatant than those at the trial itself. The directions to the jury are superb: pure prejudice in the guise of legal guidance.

In addition, Tom Robinson appears, and sings *Glad to be gay* (live version — with verses about specific gay victims of the law) so angrily

that the audience cowers, and hardly knows whether to applaud. He comes over very powerfully — bitter and utterly alienated — and conveys some of the pain and tension of coming out as a gay, and the continual confrontations and difficulties that entails.

Whether or not it's worth going to see depends on what you want from it. It won't extend or deepen your political consciousness, and it is most unlikely to arouse any in an unpoliticised audience, as the attacks are well within the limits of "nothing is perfect" acceptability, and the humour silly enough for the criticism to be dismissed.

But it is a positive relief to find a funny film — a night off for socialists — which doesn't depend on sexism, racism, and a whole hotch-potch of other areas of ideological oppression for its material. And that's rare enough.



REVIEW: *The Secret Policeman's Ball*. Odeons, general release.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Support the lagger!

by MARTIN THOMAS

THE T.U.C. has given the EETPU and the AUEW construction and engineering sections until October 10th to agree to the TUC's decisions on the Isle of Grain.

If they don't, they will be suspended from the TUC at the next General Council meeting on October 22nd [or perhaps at a special meeting called earlier].

And a national GMWU lagger's conference on Tuesday 7th is considering national strike action.

The issues at the Isle of Grain power station are fundamental. A banner on the picket line states: "Scabs are a disease, destroy them before they become an epidemic". A placard gives the pickets' reply to the press propaganda about "Treasure Island": "Treachery Island".

27 GMWU lagger's and 33 mates have been in dispute for 14 months. In May scab labour was brought in to do their jobs, and since then the scabbing has been the central issue of the dispute.

The EETPU, the AUEW, and the NUSMW have deliberately organised scabs, broken picket lines, and helped the bosses tear up safety agreements.

The GMWU has supported the lagger's — because the EETPU, AUEW and NUSMW are not only scabbing but also breaking the GM-

WU's monopoly in lagging. But the GMWU leaders have refused to move for a national strike by lagger's to support the members at the Isle of Grain until all TUC procedures are exhausted. They have not even called out the other GMWU members on the Isle of Grain site itself.

And the Isle of Grain lagger's have never been consulted on all the deals and compromises which the GMWU officials have tried to work out with the TUC.

The Isle of Grain is a test case for trade union organisation and safety. If the scabbing is successful there, the same thing will be tried on every construction site in the country. It has already

been tried at the Texaco and Amoco sites in Milford Haven.

In Milford Haven, the contractors have said they will not employ GMWU lagger's but only members of other unions — who are given four weeks' training instead of the lagger's four-year apprenticeship!

At Milford Haven most of the 4,000 workers on site are refusing to cross the picket line. A mass picket on 29th September was well supported. The construction industry profiteers and the union leaders who lick their boots are being forced onto the defensive at last. But one day of mass picketing did more to achieve it than over a year of talking and negotiating by the GMWU leaders. (The GMWU has officially advised its members to get other union cards in order to get on the Milford Haven site).

At the Isle of Grain, near Rochester, in Kent, the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) is building the biggest oil-fired power station in Europe.

First the lagger's were laid off because they refused to touch blacked work during an AUEW construction section scaffolders' strike. Then the bosses proposed to take them back one by one. After getting agreement on 'one back, all back', the lagger's were faced with an ultimatum from the CEGB for a ceiling on their bonus payments of £4.60 an hour all in. They refused because of the national implications.

The excuse the CEGB gave

agreements which the lagger's had won. It chose a time to do that when the other trades on the site had plenty of work in hand even if the lagger's were locked out.

Lagger's have to work with the most deadly materials: rockfill, glass fibre, calcium silicate. Most of them do not live long, even with good safety agreements. The Isle of Grain pickets told me: "At least by being out on strike for so long, we've probably put a couple of years onto our lives".

Now, at the Isle of Grain and at Milford Haven, the employers are operating with no safety agreements at all. The pickets told me that the scabs "have no idea of safety at all".

For the construction industry bosses, smashing safety agreements is the key to breaking site organisation, speeding up work, and safeguarding their profits at a time when construction is in a slump.

At the same time as they are trying to smash the lagger's at the Isle of Grain and Milford Haven, they are trying to negotiate a new national wages and conditions deal for all the finishing trades in the construction industry — a set-up like the JIB in electrical contracting.

The deal would bring in a check-off system for union membership — and restrict the number of stewards on each site. It would demand two years' work record for every steward, thus excluding blacklisted stewards. It would give the bosses more

power on labour discipline, working in bad weather, and transfer between sites.

At the Isle of Grain the lagger's initially got some support from the other shop stewards. The the employers threatened to sack the whole site if the lagger's weren't replaced by scabs. Coming from an area with little history of trade union militancy, the workers gave in. Their union leaders encouraged the scabbing, or did nothing effective to oppose it.

Among the scabs are many members of the Communist Party. The president of the AUEW construction section is a CP member, and so is George Guy, the general secretary of the

LATE NEWS: The GMWU lagger's conference on Tuesday 7th called for a national strike and official backing for the GMWU members picketing Milford Haven. An emergency meeting of the GMWU executive this week will consider these calls.



Hello? Rent-a-scab? Terry here.

NUSMW.

Speaking to *Socialist Organiser*, George Guy told us that the NUSMW "supports the TUC policy" — a compromise which would give the lagger's their jobs back and find the scabs other jobs on site. The AUEW and the EETPU have refused to accept the TUC proposals. The NUSMW has also, so Guy told us, instructed its members at the Isle of Grain "to come off the site" — while AUEW construction section and EETPU officials have been riding in on the scab coaches.

But the NUSMW members haven't come off the Isle of Grain site, and there are no NUSMW officials down there trying to bring them off. At Milford Haven, Guy said, the NUSMW has given no instructions to its members who are doing lagging jobs.

Some lorries are respecting the picket line and — significantly — a lot more did the day after the TUC took some action for once and kicked Frank Chapple of the EETPU off its finance and general purposes committee. The fact that 400 or 500 redundancies (out of 1600 workers) are coming up soon at the Grain site might spark some resistance: workers who have been on the site for years will resent being sacked while the newly-arrived scab lagger's keep their jobs.

But to win this dispute the real answer is a national lagger's strike, backed up by a mass campaign by the GMWU (and TUC) to explain the issues. The lagger's have already had a lot of support from some AUEW construction section members — and AUEW construction section general secretary John Baldwin's reaction has been to move to suspend the Poplar branch of his union, which passed a motion condemning him. A big campaign by the GMWU could turn the tables in the AUEW construction section and force Baldwin to stop scabherding — or, better, resign.

Socialist Organiser readers can help by giving solidarity to a national lagger's strike if it comes off, putting resolutions through their union branches (if they are in the AUEW, EETPU, or NUSMW), and sending donations to the lagger's strike fund: 112 Whitebairn Lane, Dagenham, Essex.

Solidarity is vital

ABOUT FIFTY people turned out for a mass picket on Friday 3rd October at King Henry Pies, Manchester, where workers have been on strike for 14 weeks for union recognition and reinstatement.

Managing director Hollins has 'offered' to take back eight of the sixteen workers sacked at the start of the dispute — those who had been at King Henry's for six months or more. The rest would be paid for the period they had been on strike.

After the Bakers' Union rejected this offer, Hollins refused to have any further negotiations.

A King Henry's worker who is in the Baker's Union but not on strike has lost a finger because there was no safety guard on one of the machines.

It's not the first time

it's happened on that machine, and safety is one of the issues behind the strike. The worker who lost a finger has said that she will never go back to work at King Henry's. The Union has agreed to take up her case despite the fact that she was not on strike, and despite protests from some of the strikers.

At the mass picket on the 3rd, there were about eight people who had come down from the Right to Work march, and two of the strikers have gone on the Right to Work march themselves.

Solidarity is vital to win this strike: donations are needed (to Bakers' Union, Room 4, George House, 30 Dudley Road, Manchester 14), and, more important, blacking of all King Henry's products.

KAREN REISSMAN

EDINBURGH TORIES FACE TENANTS' FURY

ON SATURDAY 27th September, over 100 angry Edinburgh tenants marched to a rally on Leith Links, near the house of Cornelius Waugh, the notorious convenor of the Tory District Council's housing committee.



Leith MP Ron Brown

The marchers, protesting at the Council's decision to make tenants pay for all maintenance costs, included tenants' from Muirhouse, Pilton, Westerhailes and Broomhouse, supported by the Trades Council and a number of Labour Party branches.

Speaking at the rally, Ron Brown, Labour MP for Leith, described the Tory decision as 'class law'. "The only way to

answer this law is organisation. Reasoned argument will get you nowhere with these people. We need to fight through the trade union movement, but the movement must have a strong new leadership, a leadership that works from the grass roots upwards."

Eleanor McLoughlin, councillor for Muirhouse, described the antics of the District Council, getting the police to close the Council buildings during their committee meetings for fear that they will again be occupied by angry council tenants.

Twice this summer, council meetings have been taken over by tenants who are angry that their demands have been totally ignored.

The Edinburgh Tenants' Group is considering what action to take following yet another snub by the council last week, when the Tory majority refused to discuss the issue, referring it back yet again to the housing committee. Support for the campaign is gathering, and even the Sunday Mail has taken it up with a front page story about old people who have had to separate because the council has boarded up their broken windows and refused to rehouse them.

Yorks NUM to act against 'cowboys'

THE YORKSHIRE area council of the NUM decided at its last meeting to move against the use of unauthorised outside contractors by the National Coal Board. In a strongly worded message the area council has given notice that if these parasites are not removed in three months, then some form of industrial action will be taken.

This decision, follows the result of a union survey which revealed that literally hundreds of jobs, including underground work, are being done by outside contractors, who are not NUM

members and many in no union at all. Existing agreements stipulate that outside contractors can only work in the Yorkshire coalfield with the specific approval of the union.

Pit management has been ignoring these and bringing in the cowboys through the back door. As Ken Horner, Yorks NUM financial secretary said, "It is high time we gave these parasites short shrift. Not only do they feed off the board and deny jobs to our men, but in some cases they are a positive danger."

JOHN CUNNINGHAM



United we stand, say the Isle of Grain lagger's

WU's monopoly in lagging. But the GMWU leaders have refused to move for a national strike by lagger's to support the members at the Isle of Grain until all TUC procedures are exhausted. They have not even called out the other GMWU members on the Isle of Grain site itself.

And the Isle of Grain lagger's have never been consulted on all the deals and compromises which the GMWU officials have tried to work out with the TUC.

The Isle of Grain is a test case for trade union organisation and safety. If the scabbing is successful there, the same thing will be tried on every construction site in the country. It has already

been tried at the Texaco and Amoco sites in Milford Haven. In Milford Haven, the contractors have said they will not employ GMWU lagger's but only members of other unions — who are given four weeks' training instead of the lagger's four-year apprenticeship!

At Milford Haven most of the 4,000 workers on site are refusing to cross the picket line. A mass picket on 29th September was well supported. The construction industry profiteers and the union leaders who lick their boots are being forced onto the defensive at last. But one day of mass picketing did more to achieve it than over a year of talking and negotiating by the GMWU leaders. (The GMWU has officially advised its members to get other union cards in order to get on the Milford Haven site).

At the Isle of Grain, near Rochester, in Kent, the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) is building the biggest oil-fired power station in Europe.

First the lagger's were laid off because they refused to touch blacked work during an AUEW construction section scaffolders' strike. Then the bosses proposed to take them back one by one. After getting agreement on 'one back, all back', the lagger's were faced with an ultimatum from the CEGB for a ceiling on their bonus payments of £4.60 an hour all in. They refused because of the national implications.

The excuse the CEGB gave agreements which the lagger's had won. It chose a time to do that when the other trades on the site had plenty of work in hand even if the lagger's were locked out. Lagger's have to work with the most deadly materials: rockfill, glass fibre, calcium silicate. Most of them do not live long, even with good safety agreements. The Isle of Grain pickets told me: "At least by being out on strike for so long, we've probably put a couple of years onto our lives".

Now, at the Isle of Grain and at Milford Haven, the employers are operating with no safety agreements at all. The pickets told me that the scabs "have no idea of safety at all". For the construction industry bosses, smashing safety agreements is the key to breaking site organisation, speeding up work, and safeguarding their profits at a time when construction is in a slump.