

Socialist Organiser

FUND

A £60 donation from a reader in Bath pushes our fund total up a bit this week.

We've also had, in donations or supporters' regular contributions, £5 from Southampton, £72 from Coventry, £20 from Camden, £5.50 from Hull, £5 each from Wandsworth and the Oxford Bookshops group, and £20 from Leeds.

The first few bank statements of the month having arrived, we can tot up our supporters' standing orders. As of February 5, they totalled £143.95 this month.

So that's £192.50 this week and £719.85 total so far this month. Better, but not good...

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

No.73 FEBRUARY 18, 1982 (Claimants and strikers, 10p) 25p

JOBS: THE FIGHT IS INTERNATIONAL!

Plessey, BL
Laurence Scott
struggles—see pp.15-16

LAST Thursday, 5,000 angry steelworkers invaded the streets of Brussels, besieged the EEC Commission headquarters, and came off best from street clashes with sabre-wielding mounted police.

They were demanding the go-ahead for an investment plan for their company.

Decrees

On the previous Monday, 8th, there had been a one-day general strike against the economic policy of the Martens government, which is ruling by decree under emergency powers. The strike, called by the Socialist trade unions, was solid in French-speaking Belgium—where the Catholic unionists joined in—70% effective in Brussels, and widespread in Flemish-speaking areas, too.

Against a background of 12.9% unemployment—the highest in the EEC—Martens' decrees propose to:

*curtail the inflation-proofing system for workers' wages, to cut real wages by 3 per cent this year.

*additionally, to cut money wages by 5 per cent in 'lame duck' industries (like steel).

*to cut employers' taxes.

*to cut public spending.

The government also, last Wednesday, announced that it would let the big Cockerill shipyard, part-owned by the state, go into bankruptcy.

Belgium is only the sharp point of a general crisis hitting capitalist Europe.

39 hours

In West Germany, unemployment is 8.2%, the highest figure since 1955. In France, despite all the promises of the Mitterrand government, unemployment continues to rise, and is now 8.9%.

Last month the French government reduced the legal maximum basic working week from 40 hours to 39. Now French workers are striking, occupying, working to rule and demonstrating, as employers try to



Belgian cops charge, sabres raised, into demonstrators

bilk the reduction.

French bosses are seeking loopholes, just as British bosses have done over the 39 hour week agreement here in engineering.

Some are cutting breaks during the working day. Some say that breaks previously counted into the working hours paid for will now be counted out. Some demand speed-up. Some are cutting pay.

But many workers are going on the offensive. Where they already have a

39 hour week, they are demanding a 38 hour week; some are demanding agreements on a staged reduction to 35 hours.

The workers' struggles have already forced the government to change its tune. After initially announcing that the cut in hours would generally mean a cut in pay, on February 11 prime minister Pierre Mauroy said that wage levels should be maintained.

The international nature of the struggle is shown by

the fact that exactly the same struggle as in France is going on right now in the BL plants at Cowley, as management try to cut relief time to 'fund' the 39 hour week.

Women workers occupying the Plessey plant at Bathgate, strikers in Leyland Vehicles, and the train drivers, are all pursuing the same basic fight for jobs here in Britain, where the official jobless rate is now 12.7%.

Neither Martens nor Thatcher started this unem-

ployment crisis. The only way that capitalism can try to renew its profitability is by human sacrifice—by purging production of millions of workers, and by imposing speed-up and wage cuts on those that remain.

The steel industry shows this most clearly. Now Belgian steelworkers are fighting for their jobs. In 1980 it was British steelworkers. In spring 1979 French steelworkers struck, demonstrated and rioted

against closures. In winter 1978-9, it was German steelworkers who fought a six-week strike and lock-out for the 35 hour week.

Though the fight has taken place country by country, fundamentally it has been the same fight.

Often the workers' leadership has tried to blur the international nature of the struggle. The French Communist Party, with its slogan of 'No to a German Europe', led steelworkers to wreck railcars of German

steel. Many leaders of the British labour movement tell us that the way to win jobs is to put up high walls of import controls, or to defend the British steel industry, the British motor industry, against foreign competition.

But when workers move into real action, the same class answers begin to emerge everywhere.

If there is less work available, cut the hours and share the work. This basic argument has been behind struggles in many countries for shorter hours.

And in all those countries, workers have understood that the point of the shorter working week is defeated unless all attempts to cut breaks and impose speed-up are resisted. Working 10% harder for 10% fewer hours helps no-one but the bosses, who save on overheads.

In many and sometimes confused forms, the demand has come forward for workers' control of production—for a workers' plan to reorganise production, in place of the chaos of the profit system. To be consolidated, this demand requires a fight for nationalisation and for a workers' government, controlled by and accountable to the workers' organisations.

Understood

When the bosses say that wage cuts are necessary to get more jobs—for other wise, they cry, how can they afford to pay more employees?—workers across Europe have understood that wage cuts in fact go hand in hand with job cuts, as part of the bosses' offensive. Where will the money come from to pay additional workers? From the loot of the capitalist and the bankers, from the arms budgets, and from the new wealth created by putting the economy on a more rational basis!

From Belgium to Britain the problem is the same: the profit system. And so the answer—independent workers' struggle.

Poland: Support Solidarnosc. Demonstration March 13. See p.5



An open letter to MILITANT

UNITE AGAINST THE

WITCH-HUNT

In last week's Tribune, Michael Foot told Chris Mullin, "I'm all in favour of avoiding expulsions if we possibly can, but as far as the Militant Tendency goes, an inquiry has been set up and we must wait and see what the inquiry says". Socialist Organiser has sent this Open Letter to Militant proposing a united front against the witch hunt.

Dear comrades,

While the general witch hunt in the Labour Party threatened after the NEC's decision on Bermondsey seems to have been put in cold store, steps are being taken to prepare a more selective witch hunt.

On the basis of an agreement with the Right, the major sections of the Left are seeking to define themselves as the 'legitimate' Left, and to define others - i.e. in the first place, your tendency and ours - as Marxists and therefore alien.

This poses grave dangers, not only for us immediately, but also for the whole struggle for socialist policies in the labour movement. We

are therefore writing to propose a joint campaign by your tendency and ours, to defend the right for Marxists to organise in the Labour Party.

Last year we saw Neil Kinnock and others defining themselves as the responsible Left and the 'Bennites' as disrupters. They agreed with all the Left policies, they said, but unlike Benn they were not disruptive (i.e. not likely to upset the Right) in the way they pushed those policies.

Now the substantial Left unity that existed in the Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy and the Benn campaign is breaking down. Some of the 'Bennites' are

with delegates elected and recallable at all times.

But Kinnock's argument is a sham. He falsely identifies the present British parliamentary system with democracy in general. Besides, the Marxists will certainly be better defenders of parliamentary democracy against all anti-democratic attacks than those in the labour movement who passively accept Denning judgments, the House of Lords, the monarchy, IMF instructions, the Official Secrets Act, effective military rule in N.Ireland, etc... better than those in the leadership of the last Labour Government who initiated the Polaris replacement programme in secret from Parliament!

The other charge against the Marxists is that we are Leninists. In other words - the Right can conspire as it wishes, including with the CIA or NATO, while any move by Marxists to meet together to discuss politics and tactics is suspect.

Obstruction

With these criteria being established, the 'inquiry' into Militant is extremely dangerous. NEC right-wingers have told the Tory press that they will be pressing for expulsions. Meanwhile Tribune calls for a purge of 'secretive sectarian' groups, and the Labour Coordinating Committee is concerned to 'put light between itself and the Leninists'.

Evidence will be their last concern. The real objection of the Right and the soft Left is clearly that the Marxists - being armed with a broad historical perspective - will consistently seek to couple the anti-Tory fight with the battle to reshape the labour movement and its policies in line with working-class needs. Thus moves to shelve (temporarily! for supposed short-term advantage!) the struggle for socialist policies will always find us obstructive.

Your tendency is accused of all sorts of plots, ours of illegitimately swinging the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy to a combative policy. The same hysteria is beginning in the unions - for example the NUR. And though there is no way that

the red-baiters can stop the springs of class-struggle politics, they can - with the aid of the soft Left - temporarily cow and disrupt the labour movement to a serious extent.

We therefore propose a joint campaign. The details are entirely open to discussion, but we would suggest:

1. A joint model resolution/petition on the right of Marxists to organise in the Labour Party and trade unions.

2. Joint meetings, open to Labour Party members, to explain the issues and rally support against the witch hunt.

3. Collaboration in the campaign group set up, with our participation, to defend the rights of Bermondsey CLP.

4. A special campaign to defend the LPYS against any witch-hunting attacks.

Such a campaign would evidently leave both your tendency and ours with complete freedom of independent propaganda and criticism.

Fraternally
Martin Thomas, for
Socialist Organiser

Hooley over Hooley

A storm has blown up in Sheffield over Heeley Constituency's decision to drop long-standing MP Frank Hooley and adopt local councillor Bill Mitchie.

Strenuous attempts by the local media to come up with yet another 'Trotskyist plot' have so far revealed nothing very earth shattering.

At best there are a few supporters of the Militant tendency in Heeley but nothing more than that.

All of a sudden the press have discovered that Frank Hooley is a good guy. But it is news to most of us in the Sheffield labour movement.

Good guy, bad guy or just a plain mediocrity, the facts are that Frank Hooley falls into the latter category.

He is neither left nor right. He is most certainly never controversial. He is rarely seen in Sheffield. Some years ago he moved to Birmingham and only occasionally does he condescend to visit the people he is supposed to represent.

Campaign for



Democracy

He has done little, if anything, over steel closures and all in all the constituency was sick of being represented by a ghost, even if one with an impeccable character.

In touch

Attempts being made by sections of the Labour Party and the media to present Hooley as some hard-working, honest, but hard done-by 'man of the people' must be resisted.

The constituency exercised their right to drop him and select someone more in touch with their aims and aspirations.

At this point in time it is necessary for all Labour Party activists to defend the right of the Heeley constituency to drop Hooley and select who they wish.

Behind all the smoke-screen, that right, the right to accountability, is still the issue.

John Cunningham



Paying bosses to cut youth wages

YOPs Trade Union Rights Campaign - Lobby of Parliament. Thursday February 25. Rally at Royal Festival Hall, 2pm.

THE Tories are paying the bosses to cut the wages of young workers.

The Young Workers Scheme is the result of the Tories' promise to alleviate youth unemployment following the riots last summer. A package costing £400 million was announced but the £400 million all goes to the bosses, not to youth.

Every employer who employs a worker aged under 18, at a wage of less than £40 a week can claim £15 a week from the government. If the employer can only manage to keep your wages below £45 a week, then he can claim £7.50.

This scheme only applies to private industry, as the Tories can manage to keep the wages of their public sector youth down themselves, thank you very much. According to the Tory theory, lower wages mean more jobs.

So if you can employ young workers at slave labour wages, then the Tories will reward you with £15 a week. What a gift!

Rise

This nifty little scheme also means that young workers will now have no chance of getting a wage rise out of their bosses.

Every employer will say he can't afford to lose £15 a week from the government by paying more than £40 a week. So it's £40 or the dole!

Not surprisingly the take-up on this scheme has exceeded the Tories' wildest expectations. Since January 4 when the scheme began, 20,000 applications have

been made, a rate of 4,000 a week.

What is shameful is the lack of protest against this scheme from the labour movement. Obviously if a boss can employ a young worker at such rock bottom wages, the jobs of older workers are at risk.

And if the youth can't look to the labour movement to defend their wages and jobs, who can they look to?

Branches

LPYS branches should hold public meetings, and picket job centres and Careers Offices. Trade union branches should demand that their union nationally and the TUC refuse to have anything to do with the scheme, and campaign against it.

The Tories have also announced that they're going to phase out YOPs. Wonderful, you might think. But no! What they'll replace it with is worse!

Tebbit's (who else?) scheme means £15 a week for school leavers at 16, £25 a week for 17-18 year olds.

If you refuse this tempting offer, you can get your dole money cut off.

Tebbit's scheme also includes a chance to go to a work rehabilitation centre out in the country.

Again, if you refuse, your dole can be cut off.

This means that there will be even less chance of getting a real job, as the bosses will prefer to take on cheap labour under this 'son of YOPs'.

JO THWAITES

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



If you could really do with extra people to help you run your business, but haven't seen a way could be a great way to get off to a flying start this year.

The Young Workers Scheme offers an incentive to employ young people under 18 if the rate of pay is four times £400 a year. The scheme came into effect on January 4th 1982 and there's how to work.

Youth go-ahead

A NEW set of regulations covering LPYS branches have been approved by the January NEC. The principle was agreed at last year's annual conference of the Labour Party.

The main points are: General Committees of Constituency Parties can no longer refuse to set up LPYS branches. If there is a desire to form a YS, then it has to be done.

A date for the first meeting has to be organised and the Regional Office has to

be informed with 14 days notice given. If the Regional Officer cannot come on that date, the Regional Office should send a responsible officer of the party instead. So now there is no reason why a LPYS branch cannot be set up in every constituency.

It also means YS branches cannot be disbanded as long as there is a desire for them to continue.

JO THWAITES

trying to play the same trick on us as Kinnock played on them. It becomes doubly important to cement unity between those on the Left who will still firmly continue the fight against the irreconcilable pro-capitalist right wing.

The principle laid down by Neil Kinnock in the case of Tariq Ali is that Marxists are to be excluded because they do not believe in parliamentary democracy. It is certainly true that, for our part, we aim to help the working class, in overthrowing the present ruling top five per cent, to replace parliamentary democracy by a higher form of democracy. We propose the democracy of workers' councils, uniting legislative and executive powers, sweeping away the present Tory-dominated permanent military/bureaucratic state apparatus, and

Socialist Organiser Alliance

Get Organised!

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

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

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

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

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

Name

Address



Socialist Organiser EDITORIAL

WHY WE SAY 'FIGHT ON'

LAST WEEK Chris Mullin interviewed Michael Foot in Tribune. The interview ended like this:

"MULLIN: For weeks members of the Shadow Cabinet have been using the Tory press to attack the party.

FOOT: I repudiate the charge against the Shadow Cabinet.

MULLIN: Nobody is suggesting that you have, but you can turn on your television almost any night of the week and see Roy Hattersley or Peter Shore denouncing the party in more or less the same terms as the Social Democrats.

FOOT: I'll tell you what will happen if we continue this interview in this manner. Instead of all the interest being directed to all the policy questions we have discussed or to the success of Bishops Stortford, you'll have it all directed on to this discussion about personalities. We should avoid playing the Tories' game."

Then Chris Mullin asked about Peter Tatchell.

"FOOT: I'm not going to say anything further about the Tatchell affair now..."

Mullin came back: "Let me just put one point to you..."

FOOT: No, that's the end."

Similar arguments are going on everywhere in the labour movement. Left wingers are accused of "playing the Tories' game" if they raise criticisms or awkward questions.

In short, a drive is on to brake the fight in the Labour Party for democracy and socialist policies, motivated on the need to win the next election.

First, many argue that Labour needs unity to win

the election.

But unity in action, which we certainly need, is not the same as lack of sharp internal debate. And hard-hitting, democratic internal debate in a party does not necessarily put off voters. Indeed, one of the essential socialist messages which Labour should be trying to get across to voters is that, to change society as it needs to be changed, we need a party which actively involves masses of working people in lively political debate.

Only if we start expressing shame at the contrast between relatively open debate in the labour movement and Tory veneration of the Leader, does it become a liability. The problem is that so many Labour front-benchers do express shame and horror.

Moreover, Dennis Healey has stated that he will not serve in a government committed to Labour policy on unilateral nuclear disarmament. So unity in the sense of no more attempts to dethrone Dennis Healey, for example, can only be realised at the expense of real unity—unity to carry out majority policy.

But many activists argue, or at least feel, that a Labour Government even on Healey's terms would be better than the Tories—so we should buckle under.

The assumption is that Healey's policy is an election-winner. But it's not. If, come election time, the SDP appear as more humane Tories, and Labour as SDPers tied to the unions, then the votes will go to the SDP who at least pretend to have something new.

Moreover, a Labour government with Healey's

policies, if it got elected, would fail. It would have no better policies than the 1974-9 government, and it would face a worse capitalist crisis. It would disillusion and demoralise Labour supporters. It would pave the way for a quick return of Thatcherite axe-swinging—or worse.

Serious anti-capitalist policies cannot today just be something desirable for the remote future. They are urgent necessities. Without them the working class will suffer, not slower progress, but rapid devastation.

The earlier parts of Mullin's interview with Foot are enlightening on the prospects for the next Labour government if the Left does buckle under.

Asked about unilateral nuclear disarmament, Foot replies, "I hope very much there will be [a commitment in the manifesto], along the lines which we have agreed at the conference. But there are many complications..."

On Common Market withdrawal, he says a manifesto commitment is "high probable... But..." a lot would depend on discussion with socialist parties in continental Europe.

The House of Lords? "Yes, I think we will [do away with it]. I think we should." Again there is a "but". "I don't believe you can get rid of it in a week or a fortnight. It has to be done in accordance with the constitution." Remember that according to the constitution the House of Lords can only be abolished with the agreement of the House of Lords and the Queen!

Incomes policy? (Remember, TUC and Labour Party policy rejects incomes policy). Foot argues

Labour Government economic policy "will involve the trade unions recognising how much of the expansion of the nation's wealth over the next period can go into wages of one form or another." I.e., incomes policy. And if there is no "expansion of the nation's wealth" worth speaking of—for capitalism today offers only a prospect of stagnation interrupted by slumps—then doubtless the incomes policy will mean no wage rises worth speaking of. The concentration of over 60% of the wealth in the hands of 10% of the population will remain.

Foot of course hopes that all this will be freely and harmoniously agreed. If Foot's weak good intentions are the only guarantee of Labour Party policy being carried out, then they will have little chance against Healey's strong bad intentions. And so—if the Left yields to the pressure to become a silent backseat passenger in the Labour Party—then the prospect is of the Labour Party at the next election having nothing to offer which matches up to the scale of the convulsions of capitalism.

That's no basis for winning an election. It's certainly no basis for winning a working class majority to struggle for socialism.

That's why Socialist Organiser supporters, while fighting for a Labour victory against the Tories even under the present leadership, will go on fighting for democracy and socialist policies both in the Labour Party and in the trade unions. And we urge every left winger within the party who is sincere in wanting to defeat the right wing to fight with us.

Students organise to fight cuts

by Simon Lindauf



THE Fightback Conference against higher education cutbacks met at Sussex University on February 13, two days after an overwhelming decision at the Students Union General Meeting to occupy. The conference was organised by the Students Union and campus unions.

The administration had previously removed the Students Union capitation fee in response to the rent

union and student union strike.

A speaker from Paisley Technical College (who are still in occupation) spoke of how their occupation had led to more and more students becoming involved in the fightback.

Before the occupation the students union had difficulty achieving a quorum at their meetings.

One of the most important issues at the conference was the need to build trade

union and student union union.

Trade union liaison committees exist in some colleges but not in others.

A workshop on support from and for the local community discussed those problems, raising the importance of liaising with local trades councils, unemployed centres, and Labour Parties.

The importance of setting up cross union women's groups was also stressed.

It was proposed to campaign for a joint student union/trade union action in the form of a one-day closure around the NUS week of action beginning in March.

The conference also agreed on the need for NUS to campaign for the restoration of student union autonomy.

The conference ended by setting up a national network to coordinate the fightback on cuts and grants.

Sussex University Union are to organise a bulletin and form an editorial committee. Another conference was provisionally arranged for March at Manchester University.

For further details of this conference and the national contact list, contact the Sussex University Students Union, Brighton 698111.

Less and less for more and more



EARNINGS related supplement to unemployment, sick and maternity pay has just been abolished, which means a cut of up to 45% for those who were entitled. But even before this took effect, the value of all state benefits had fallen below what they were worth at any time during the last ten years, according to the Labour Research Department.

Allied to this, as contributory benefits are cut in real terms, is a move towards greater dependence on means-tested supplementary benefits. So not only do you get less, you no longer have a right to anything and you face long investigations into whether you will be allowed the privilege of living on the bread line.

This is known as tackling the root problem of unemployment: the unfortunate tendency of the unemployed to keep living on after the time they have been deemed useless to society.

Queen's evidence

Although there are on average 2,664 complaints of assault against the police a year, only about 47 police a year are prosecuted and of these only an average of 22 result in convictions. That's less than a 1% conviction rate.

When police officers are charged with assault only 47% are convicted, compared with 89% of the general public charged with assault.

However, the Director of Public Prosecutions, giving written evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee is very doubtful whether an independent assessor for complaints against the police would have any effect. He claims

Daily Mail WIN A PLUM JOB!

The good thing about capitalism is that we can all win.

Granted socialism makes everybody equal—but all equally poor. You are not allowed to be more clever than anyone, or taller than anyone or laugh or anything like that. And you have your children taken away from you and they have to turn you over to the secret police to prove themselves.

We don't want that kind of society, and its thanks to capitalism that we don't have it.

Under capitalism those who are most talented and work hardest get ahead. It's nature's own law. People like Freddie Laker and De Lorean. They have the flair and the vision that socialism snuffs out.

And if they are unlucky enough to go bust because of some bizarre freak circumstances, then there's someone like Tiny Rowlands to step in and help. That's just like capitalists—always helping each other.

And remember that it's newspapers that bring you all this good news. That's another thing about capitalism—the great and rich variety of the press.

If this was Russia of course all the press would look the same. But with a free press we have all the range from the Sun to the Times. (Well, from the Sun to the Daily Telegraph, anyway).

And now, not content with this, the press brings all its readers a chance to win.

£70,000. That's what you could win. Think what you could buy with that. A house? A car? The Daily Mail has been offering this to you for weeks.

Of course other papers offer you Bingo. But we know that our readers are above that kind of working class activity.

That is why we at the Daily Mail decided to bring the sophistication of a Monte Carlo casino right into your home.

Every night we spin the wheel in Monte Carlo and every day you have the fun of knowing whether you have won £70,000 or £35,000 in our Casino game.

This worked fine for a few weeks but then we found a snag. Although lots of our readers like playing bingo, (sorry, Casino), not all that many of them were actually winning. To be perfectly honest, a large majority were never winning at all.

So we thought well why can't everybody win? And that's why you dear reader are one of the tens of thousands of people who have won a share of our £70,000 prize this week.

We decided that by printing identical bingo, sorry Casino, cards, and by drawing all the right numbers, all our readers could share in this good luck!

And any of you who claim, sending a first class stamped addressed envelope by first thing tomorrow morning will receive your share of the prize money.*

Of course like anyone who tries something new we have run into some carping critics.

The thousands of enthusiastic Daily Mail readers who travelled to London to congratulate the paper have been seized on in some quarters to try to attack our success.

It was purely an oversight that only the night-watchman was in the building and if he had been quicker at locking the doors he would not have been so badly injured. Basically the crowd just wanted to congratulate him but became over excited.

Naturally, some, who had not properly studied the rules, were disappointed not to get £70,000 each. But our lawyers have pointed out that we acted perfectly fairly.

This breakthrough could not have happened under socialism. Let the other jackal Fleet Street papers rant and rave. We—just as Laker brought air travel to the masses—have brought pools wins to the masses!

But for any of our readers who misunderstood the rules and therefore might—quite unfairly—feel aggrieved we have announced, out of the kindness of our hearts, a new competition.

Marked

The winner will replace City Editor and Daily Mail director Patrick Sergeant when he retires.

No skill is needed. All you require is an ability to lunch with the rich and famous and to pick out real winners in the stock market—like Laker Airways.

For the lucky winner will get a first prize of £255,646—which is Sergeant's total salary—all to yourself!

There are no strings attached. Sergeant's advice agency will show you how to minimise tax payments and you will soon get the hang of writing his City column.

To ensure there is no more than one winner we have introduced a tie-breaker. Please complete in not more than five words 'I like living in Thatcher's Britain because I have no...'

*Prize this week will be 10p.

Twice bitten TUC

IF at first you don't succeed: The TUC Liaison Committee is to consider plans for "development contracts" negotiated between unions, management and the government, should we see another Labour government in our lifetimes.

These would be backed by statutory powers and cover pricing strategy, product development, training policy, import penetration and industrial democracy—the whole works [unless you count such trivia as who actually owns the company and grabs the profits at the end of the day].

These will replace the last Labour government's ill-fated "planning agreements".

And like planning agreements, they are based on "mutually advantageous flow of information between companies and national planners" i.e. that there is some common interest between workers and their bosses which can be secured by government intervention. When will they ever learn?

Press Gang By Patrick Spilling

World News

IRELAND'S CRISIS ELECTION

JOHN O'MAHONY surveys the election provoked in the South by the defeat of Garret Fitzgerald's budget



McAliskey: standing against Haughey

ON FEBRUARY 18 the voters in the Irish Republic go to the polls for the second time in seven months. The Fine Gael/Labour coalition had a majority of just two over Fianna Fail and its life hung at the mercy of five independents. If fell trying to introduce a vicious monetarist budget which proposed to savagely increase VAT on such items as children's shoes and clothes, and taxes on beer and petrol.

Fine Gael had campaigned on a promise to cut taxes.

The economy is in a dreadful state. Unemployment is at 13 per cent (147,000 people), inflation at 23%. The budget deficit ran at 17% of Gross National Product.

The charge that the previous Fianna Fail government, led by Charles Haughey, had cooked the books and disguised the extent of the economic crisis, is given wide credence, and Haughey's standing in the opinion polls is about half that of Garret Fitzgerald, the coalition prime minister.

Fine Gael is campaigning on the basis that the budget, with minor changes, is the only solution. Fianna Fail agrees, essentially, but is demagogically pretending that it can do things with less pain to the electorate.

Disarray

The Labour Party is in serious disarray. A majority of the administrative committee is said to be opposed to a new coalition. Nevertheless a unanimous text was agreed for the sake of presenting a united face to the electorate.

Then the party leader Michael O'Leary and the chairman, leftist Michael Higgins, Lord Mayor of Galway, started giving out conflicting accounts of the Party's intentions about a new coalition with Fine Gael.

In a number of regions of the party, including Dublin,

the rank and file are known to be opposed to coalition. The decision to go into a coalition was taken by a narrow percentage of conference delegates: it is now reckoned that a conference would reject coalition.

There is a revival of the left after the exoduses and purges of the '70s, and Higgins, an opponent of coalition last year, probably speaks for the majority of the Party. A number of local parties have mandated their candidates to campaign on socialist policies rather than coalition.

(Yet opposition to coalition is not confined to the left, but also includes those, like former general secretary Brendan Halligan, who calculate that the coalition's policies are the kiss of death for Labour).

Solidly

And the unions affiliated to the party are in revolt at the savage monetarist policies of the coalition. They are now solidly opposed to a new coalition venture, and there have been threats of disaffiliation.

Only the Dail (parliamentary) Labour Party is firmly for coalition.

What will happen if Labour holds the balance in the Dail is of course a different matter.

In the election the Irish electorate have got the sort of choice that the state of Utah used to give a condemned man: he could choose the rope or the bullet.

BOLIVIA: SUPPORT IS VITAL

So far the Bolivian Workers' Support Fund has collected £120 towards its target of £500.

The 48 hour miners' strike against the devaluation of 76% imposed on the dictatorship by the IMF betokens further mobilisations which will need our help. The target of £500 will meet the living costs of two full-time union organisers for a year.

Priority should be given to getting motions of support and donations from Labour Party and union branches. Individual contributions are also needed: to BWSF, 54 Studley Rd, London E7 9LA

et, to be hanged or shot. Provisional Sinn Fein is running five candidates, the Irish Republican Socialist Party 6, and there are a few independent socialists, but the choice is between Fianna Fail and Fine Gael with Labour more or less, if no longer securely, in tow.

Fine Gael is also campaigning on 'Fitzgerald's crusade to change the constitution and make the south less obnoxious to the Six Counties, while Fianna Fail say that such changes should come as part of a deal with Britain and the North and not before.

The proposed changes would include divorce reform and the dropping of Dublin's claim to the territory of the whole island.

Fitzgerald has commented that the difference here is that Fianna Fail looks to Britain to solve the problem

(by agreeing to Irish unity and coercing the one million Protestants), and Fine Gael wants reconciliation, and work towards reconciliation, between the Protestant and Catholic communities and the two areas of Ireland.

There is truth in that comment, but the attitude socialists should take is not easy to determine. If the relinquishing of the claim to the North can create some greater chance of conciliating the Protestants then it is worthwhile. As a factor in the current struggle of the Northern Catholics, however, the abandonment of any claim to the North is denounced by the Republicans and by those socialists who support them (like People's Democracy) as a betrayal.

An opinion poll shows a big majority in Northern

Ireland, Protestant and Catholic, favours Fitzgerald's approach over Haughey's and has more confidence in Fitzgerald.

Whichever side wins, the new Council of Ireland, which has just started informal meetings, will continue. Haughey initiated the rapprochement with Britain last year, and in the election campaign the essential claim of Fianna Fail is that they would handle it all better, because in a more macho style, than their opponents will.

Abolition

This Southern bipartisanship is very important, because a new attempt by Britain to reforge a political superstructure in Northern Ireland is imminent. It will perhaps be launched to mark the tenth anniversary of the abolition of Northern Ireland's home rule parliament in March 1972.

What is expected in the new approach is that there will be an elected assembly of about 80 members.

This time, unlike 1974,

there will be no attempt to form an executive immediately, and no foredoomed attempt, as in 1975, to start with constitution-drafting.

There will instead be the creation on a proportional-representation basis of committees to run agreed areas of Northern Ireland, with power to veto Northern Ireland legislation. As these areas of working agreement expand, there will be a 'mixed executive' with the addition of local politicians

'IRELAND: TIME FOR TORY POLICIES TO GO'

Labour movement conference organised by LCI and CWI. Saturday February 27, starting 11am at The Theatre, 309 Regent St, London W1. Delegate's or observer's credentials £2 from 1 North End Rd, W14.

to the direct rule executive.

There will be staggered devolution of some powers. The theory is that as things knit together, over a time scale that will be determined by how it develops and take as long as necessary there will be movement towards agreed Northern Ireland government with the consent of the bi-majority.

It will culminate with complete devolution of power to a fully-formed Six County Executive.

Logjam

The logjam in Northern Ireland may begin to shift dramatically and quickly for another reason.

The recent conviction of leader of one of the Protestant ultra groups (Tara) together with others, for running a child prostitution ring from a children's home, has created a scandal which is snowballing. It already involves a leading Protestant paramilitary. It hasn't stopped rolling yet by any means and threatens to engulf more than Ian K Paisley, forcing helping to cover it up.

McAliskey

Bernadette McAliskey, brave socialist and anti-imperialist activist in Northern Ireland since 1968, who between 1968 and 1974 was the only revolutionary for many years to sit as an MP at Westminster, is standing for Charles Haughey's Dublin seat on a left and heavy nationalist platform, 'For an Independent United Ireland'. It is improbable that she will win - but not impossible.

All in all, however, the major event of the election will be what it does to the Labour Party and the trade unions.



Protest strike defies apartheid regime

by Jim Farnham

slashed; millions face unemployment without any benefits; redundancies are increasing; inflation facing workers is estimated to be around 20%.

Over the last few months the government has increased the level of repression and unleashed a new wave of arrests and strikers, trade union militants, and students.

But there are clearer and clearer signs that the workers are building the strength to resist those attacks. A wave of strikes over the last few months has forced the government to retreat from a planned new law to tighten control over pensions.

Even though almost every strike is illegal, hundreds of thousands of workers have taken action over the last period, on issues like wages, victimisations, trade union recognition, bonuses, overtime, defence of jobs, and price increases. Time and again, strikes have been attacked not only through the police, but also through mass victimisations.

But such attacks are being met by increased resistance. Strikers at the British-owned subsidiaries Dunlop Flooring and Wilson Rowntree have raised the call for total blacking in their continuing struggle against victimisation.

Hundreds of thousands of workers across the country responded to a call for a half-hour strike to protest Aggett's death. The docks, the motor industry and significant parts of the metal industry in particular were brought to a standstill.

The response was strongest in those industries where trade union organisation is most developed; from those workers who have been involved in militant struggles; and from the part of the country where SAAWU organises a mass trade union.

It was achieved even with relatively weak trade union structures; in the face of victimisation threats from many employers; despite the constant threat of state action; and with very little preparation. It shows the massive readiness, which must extend far deeper into the class than even those hundreds of thousands who took action.

The reaction of many big capitalists to the threat of a mass political strike was an attempt to hijack the movement. Capitalists who rely on the viciousness of the apartheid regime to force profits out of workers claimed that they too opposed the state security laws.

Bosses who immediately turn to the police to smash any strike were loud

in announcing how much they oppose police state laws.

But workers will find no allies amongst the class which lives off their exploitation and oppression.

Mass

In a mass political strike, black workers have given their own answer to state efforts to intimidate and weaken them. By protesting the death of a white trade unionist, they have shown that in the movement they lead, there is room for all, including white workers and those from the middle class who are willing to join a movement which fights for the real needs of all the oppressed and exploited.

We must multiply many times over our efforts to build solidarity action in support of the struggles of black workers. There is no better way to protest the death of Neil Aggett than to build maximum possible support for the struggle of the workers whose cause he was serving.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions has called for a week's blacking of all goods to and from South Africa to protest the death. We must fight for the TUC to follow this lead.

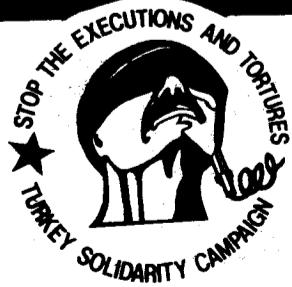
Ron Todd (TGWU) and other trade union officials who stood on the picket line

outside the South African Embassy to protest that death must be made to take up the fight for labour movement solidarity action.

The condemnation of the death by Tony Benn and other Labour Party leaders must be turned into active campaigning support for ongoing labour movement solidarity action.

And we must redouble our efforts to build immediate solidarity action in the strikes inside South Africa at Dunlop Flooring and Wilson Rowntree in particular. Because they are subsidiaries of British companies, supporting strike action here is any appropriate blacking could immediately add massive strength to the strikes.

CORRECTION: The Food and Canning Union is not as stated in last week's SO, affiliated to FOSAT. It is unaffiliated.



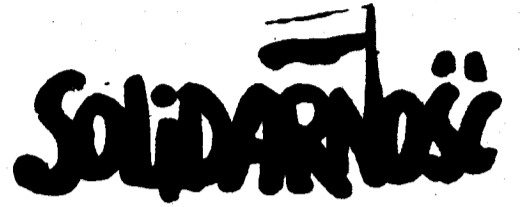
Turkey Solidarity Campaign: Box BM 5965, London WC1N 3XX.

"We don't want capitalism: we want democratic socialism"

World News

SCOTLAND: Stan Crooke reports on a second tour by Piotr Kozlowski and Marek Garztecki.

Ready response from workers



FOLLOWING on from their successful speaking tour a fortnight previously, Solidarnosc members Marek Gartzcki (Radio Warsaw shop steward) and Piotr Kozlowski (chief shop steward, Ursus tractor works) returned to Scotland last week for a second round of visits to factories and union branches.

In the Central Region they made two visits to Grangemouth docks, the first time to meet the stewards and the second time to address a mass meeting of the docks, and they also addressed this month's meeting of the Central Scotland District Committee of the TGWU.

NUJ members in Glasgow promised to ensure that a Solidarnosc speaker was invited to address their annual conference, for example, whilst Central Scotland TGWU District Committee members said they would raise the question of blacking on the TGWU National Executive.

The second evening of their tour, they addressed a public meeting organised by the Glasgow Polish Solidarity Committee. In their speeches, the Polish comrades stressed that, contrary to reports in the Western media, there was no relaxation of martial law in Poland.

On the contrary, repression was increasing, with a second wave of arrests now taking place. Marek's father was among those recently arrested.

Tour

The final day of Piotr's and Marek's speaking tour was taken up with a series of meetings in Glasgow: with shop stewards at the BL Albion factory and the Clydebridge steelworks, a meeting at Glasgow School of Art at lunchtime, addressing the NUPE (Hospitals) Glasgow Branch and Strathclyde NALGO branch, and also an interview with Radio Clyde.

From the Central Region they went on to speak at the February meeting of Edinburgh Trades Council, and then attend a reception and meeting organised by the Glasgow branch of the National Union of Journalists.

Wherever they spoke, Piotr and Marek stressed the need to step up support for Solidarnosc, and to translate passive into active support, by campaigning for the British labour movement to break off all links with the fake state-run "unions" in Poland, and by organising labour movement blacking of trade with Poland.

Their appeal for support found a ready response:



Demonstrate!

A COMBINATION of local and national events offer socialists the opportunity to show their support for the Polish workers' movement.

Saturday February 20 sees a local demonstration in Oxford called by the local Labour Committee on Poland, set up from a highly successful Trades Council public meeting. It assembles at 2pm at Cowley Road Hospital.

The next national focus for solidarity is the demonstration called in London on March 13 by Socialist Organiser and London Labour Briefing.

We urge all readers to raise this important demonstration in their union branches, Labour Parties, and student unions, and to bring the biggest possible contingents with their banners. More details will be published next week's Socialist Organiser.

The Labour Party London rally, tentatively planned for March 9, has now been fixed for March 16. We urge Labour activists and militants in the London area to mobilise for this important initiative.

In addition we draw readers' attention to the appeal issued for a Labour Poland Solidarity Fund, raising money specifically from the British workers' movement for our class brothers and sisters in struggle against Stalinism.

The fund is endorsed by Ken Livingstone, Eric Heffer, Tony Benn, Ron Keating (NUPE), as well as Socialist Organiser.

Donations should be sent to Labour Poland Solidarity Fund, c/o Coop Bank, 110 Leman St, London E1.

COVENTRY: Julia Redman reports on the setting up of a solidarity campaign.

ON February 6 the first meeting was held in Coventry to launch support for Solidarnosc.

We were lucky to have Piotr Kozlowski addressing the meeting. He gave a really inspiring speech which I want to recap briefly.

The Polish people's history of fighting the Soviet bureaucracy goes back to 1935 when Stalin called the leaders of the Polish Communist Party to Moscow, and liquidated them. It has continued, bitter and bloody, ever since.

Stalin

By the time of Stalin's death, 4½ million Poles had been murdered for refusing to kow-tow to Moscow. In 1947, the first conference of the new Polish CP, Stalin claimed 80% support for his policies—in fact it was only 18%.

In 1956 Soviet tanks were sent in against demonstrators protesting against food price rises.

In the 1960s two factions formed inside the Polish United Workers Party—democratic and Stalinist. The democratic faction was thrown out. In 1970 when there were protests in Gdansk against food prices 1,800 workers were murdered as they returned to work though the authorities only admitted to 76.

Massacre

It was none other than Jaruzelski who instructed this massacre. It was Jaruzelski again who led the Polish army into Czechoslovakia in 1968. Today Jaruzelski is again leading



Resistance at Gdansk's Lenin shipyard after the coup

Fighting for solidarity with Solidarnosc

the repression of Polish workers. All the large factories are militarised. Barbed wire fences divide the factories into sections, so that workers cannot mingle and the fences are patrolled by the military.

Soldiers armed with machine guns parade up and down the tracks. Jaruzelski now has 49 camps and is holding 100,000 workers. The price rises mean that a loaf of bread costs about one-tenth of a day's wages. That means the equivalent wages in Britain would be

£3.50 a day.

Despite all this, the Polish workers refuse to give in and Kozlowski said the policy of non-cooperation is having a tremendous impact.

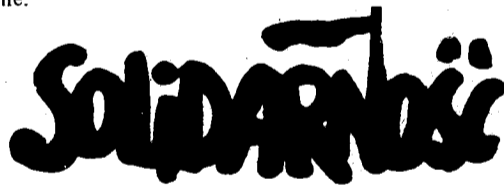
In the Ursus tractor plant and the FIAT car plant, production is estimated to be 2.3% to 2.5% of full production. In the tractor plant they only produce one tractor a week and in the car plant they produce virtually no cars because the workers carefully produce all the parts a little too large.

In one steel plant the workers had "missed" the mould when they poured the iron ore and it had flowed down the waste pipes and has now got to be dynamited out.

The protests, too, are not confined to workers. Kozlowski had information that 80% of soldiers had refused to take orders at one time.

With a history of repression and struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy, one might wonder if the Polish people might not look to the relative freedom of Western capitalist states, but Kozlowski said:

"We do not want capitalism. We had that before 1939. What we want is democratic socialism."



Scots Stalinists give Johnstone a rough reception

by Stan Crooke

ACCOMPANIED by a constant barrage of jeers and heckling, Communist Party "theoretician" Monty Johnstone attempted to address a public meeting on Poland organised by the Glasgow Committee of the Communist Party (CP) on Friday 5 February.

"Monty CIA Johnstone" as numerous members of an audience dominated by the CP Stalinist hard-liners referred to him, pointed to the "inadequacies" of the Polish political system: over-concentration of power in the hands of a bureaucratic elite, lack of socialist democracy and political pluralism, the puppet-like nature of the official trade unions, etc.

Such comments produced repeated bouts of enraged barracking from the hard-line Stalinists. And when Johnstone went

on to make some favourable comments about Solidarity, their anger reached the point of apoplexy.

But Johnstone persevered only to find his speech drowned out by the hard-liners after referring to martial law being imposed "under Russian pressure".

The hard-liners demanded to know how much the CIA was paying him for his speech. Where did he get his information from, some of them asked. From Radio Free Europe, others obligingly replied.

Charitably

What followed could not be described even charitably as discussion from the floor.

Solidarnosc, the hard-liners claimed, was led by reactionary anti-socialist elements, financed by the

CIA, riddled with anti-Semitism, under the ideological tutelage of the Catholic Church (itself led by a CIA agent), and cracking down on Solidarnosc was the best thing for



Johnstone

socialism since October 1917.

But surely, the Eurocommunists asked, not all the workers killed in Poland since 1945 could have been the agents of counter-revolution? The hard-liners thought otherwise. In fact, they thought there hadn't been enough executions: they were openly demanding the immediate shooting of all members of Gierk's and Kania's government now in prison.

The Eurocommunists were clearly somewhat aggrieved at workers being murdered on the streets by Jaruzelski's thugs. It doesn't quite fit in with their ideas about broad democratic alliances, historic compromises, and progressive forces.

But it would be dangerous to have any illusions in the Euro-Stalinists. In no way was Johnstone calling



Women in struggle



June 5: fight for jobs demo!

*Call a local Fightback meeting specifically round planning a campaign on a Woman's Right to Work.

At this meeting draw up a list of every conceivable body who could be pushed to build the campaign—for example: trade union branches, district/divisional committees, women's committees, shop stewards committees, trades councils and Regional TUCs, Labour Party branches, women's sections, YS branches, GMCs (Find out the date of your LP Regional Conference).

Women's groups and campaigns, women's centres, nursery campaigns, anti-cuts campaigns, local strikes and disputes, unemployed groups and centres.

Try to organise to get round to talk to activists in the above personally to convince them to take an active part in the campaign, take leaflets for their organisations, push model resolutions and support any local activity (public meeting, dayschool, pickets, petitioning, etc).

Where you can't do a person's visit, send a letter: giving local contact address for ordering leaflets, etc., inviting them to sponsor/support your local meeting/conference.

*In your own trade union, LP branch, etc. Put a resolution (stressing we want a demonstration, not just an event) to go to regional and National Executive, etc.

Ask them to take and circulate leaflets, advertising local and national events.

Sponsor local meeting or conference on women's right to work.

Book transport for June 5.

*Public meeting: try to get other organisations to jointly sponsor, if not, still go ahead and call one as a Women's Fightback meeting. Invite speakers from local struggles who are actually fighting for a woman's right to work—jobs struggles, anti-cuts, nursery closures, etc.

Use the public meeting to get together a mobilising committee for the demo—at the very least circulate a list to get the names of all those attending.



Fighting for the right to work

A conference on Saturday February 20 will discuss a campaign for a Woman's Right to Work. Terry Smith looks at some of the political issues involved.

UNDAUNTED by a torrent of redundancies, a conference of brave women will this weekend map out a campaign for a Woman's Right to Work, culminating in a demonstration on June 5.

There will be discussion of ways to publicise the fact that the brunt of unemployment falls upon women—who figure high in the statistics of registered unemployed, and whose real percentage of unemployment is concealed by the fact that most unemployed married women are not eligible for benefits and do not register.

But at the same time there must be discussion on the lessons of those struggles which have attempted to stem the tide of cuts and closures, and defend jobs against the Tory offensive.

Indeed the struggles of 1981 became almost synonymous with the battles fought for by women: on the industrial front, there was the Lee Jeans occupation, a beacon for those defying closures in the textile industry; in the health service, the occupations at Longworth and St. Mary's hospitals set the pace for those fighting the cuts; and in Coventry thousands of council workers, the majority of them women, spearheaded the year's biggest struggle against speed-up and outright wage-cutting.

Their experiences shed light on why such struggles are so isolated amidst a

sea of redundancies.

In each case the struggle took place against a background of repeated and continuing betrayals by the official union leaderships. Lee Jeans women were forced to organise their own campaign for blacking action by dockers and transport workers, and had to secure official support for their action.

At Longworth and St. Mary's too the work-in action drew substantial local support—but complete inaction from the health unions on a national level. And in the Coventry strike NUPE leaders did everything to contain the militant action to a single, isolated area as part of their effort to press-gang the women into ACAS arbitration.

The fact is that the union bureaucracy—which is in every case reluctant to embark upon struggles against the Thatcher government—is particularly reluctant to engage in struggles which bring to the fore some of the most oppressed and exploited sections of the working class.

They exploit every weakness of women's shop floor organisation, the lack of trade union experience and self-confidence as a means to divide, stifle and obstruct women looking for a way forward against the

Tories, while offering not the slightest lead or perspective to women faced with cuts and closures.

Then, as more jobs are lost, the officials turn round and blame the women members, claiming they are not prepared to fight!

A fight against women's unemployment, for the right to work for every man and woman, must mean a political struggle against such misleaders within the labour movement. This requires a programme of action that can defend existing jobs, as a basis for the offensive to defeat the Thatcher government.

Only a workers' government can implement socialist policies to create the 4 million new jobs needed to end unemployment among women and youth and utilise to the full the productive capacity squandered under capitalism.

For this reason, the struggle is not simply for the replacement of Thatcher with a Labour government like that of Wilson or Callaghan, but a fight for a new, revolutionary leadership in a revitalised labour movement, responsive and answerable to the men and women on the shop floor.

Women's Fightback, campaigning along these lines, has put forward the following programme for action on jobs:

*A woman's right to work. In a period of runaway capitalist crisis women's (especially black women's) jobs are the first to go. We must encourage unemployed women to organise in the unions of the unemployed workers, by establishing women's sub-committees in these organisations to focus on the special problems of women's unemployment.

We should build for the women's right to work demonstration by organising at the local level as well as nationally—turning the attention of the labour movement to the scale of women's unemployment and demanding to know what is going to be done about it.

*Action on jobs. We must organise for occupations to prevent closures from taking place, and demand throughout the labour movement the necessary levies, blacking and strike action to support the occupation.

Every redundancy should be fought, by giving women confidence to refuse to take an extra workload and face direct confrontation with the employer, demanding work sharing on full pay. We should never believe the employers' word, demanding like Lee Jeans, to see the accounts for ourselves, and get the unions to organise a thorough investigation of the books to prove real 'bankruptcy' or not in the industry, in its suppliers and distributors. We should demand the nationalisation of bankrupt industries, e.g. textiles.

*Health cuts. We need occupations to defend hospitals. We must demand supporting strike action to stop occupations being threatened and brutally ended. Women's jobs and vitally needed health care is being eroded as clinics, wards and beds are lost. We should build campaigns involving women in the community, to join with health workers to fight the cuts, to black private medicine and to demand of the unions that they organise no cover of unfilled vacancies.

*Local authority cuts. School meals and other staff have organised local campaigns in many areas to defend services against the cuts. Their actions have been left isolated by union leaders and kept to sporadic, selective action. Fight for the full necessary direct action to protect jobs and services.

*Child care cuts. In Oxford, London, Coventry, Leicester and Glasgow women have occupied threatened nurseries in the fight to prevent closures. Beale Street in Leicester was a great victory in the fight against such cuts.

Follow this lead and campaign for labour movement action to defend and extend state funded childcare. Women's Fightback should join with the Nation-

al Child Care Campaign to defend and extend provision.

*Unionisation. More and more women are joining unions, many like the Chix women fighting tough battles for union recognition. All these struggles must be supported. Many women feel excluded from union decisions. Demand meetings be held in working hours or that adequate childcare or creche facilities are laid on for every meeting. Fight for positive discrimination linked to the struggle for democracy and accountability for women to be represented on every union body. Fight sexism in union procedures and publications.

Step up fight on abortion rights

THERE has still been no news on whether Peter Huntingford and a number of other doctors will face prosecution for their refusal to submit to new backdoor restrictions on abortion rights.

They have refused to specify a medical reason for abortion as required by new forms issued last March by the DHSS.

They point instead to the provision under the 1967 Abortion Act for social grounds—under which, until recently, over 80% of abortions have taken place.

While they remain under threat the labour movement must rally to their defence.

So far we have heard that Oxford NUJ Branch have tabled an emergency motion to the Union's conference calling for TUC action to oppose any prosecutions.

Every union branch and Labour Party should be discussing similar motions until this threat is beaten back.



Women's Fightback Trade union conference

Time and again women trade unionists have come forward to fight the Tory onslaught on their rights and living standards. And each time they have run up against the limitations or outright treachery of the existing bureaucratic leaders.

And they have found a movement which has for decades ignored the issues and problems faced by women.

The March 27 Trade Union conference called by Women's Fightback is designed as a focus for a movement to change the unions and challenge their present leadership.

The conference is open to women either as individuals or as delegates from any group, workplace organisation, branch or women's group at local, regional or national level.

There will be an all-day creche. Workshops on various topics under main groups: Pay; public sector and the cuts; jobs; fighting sexism; racism and the Third World.

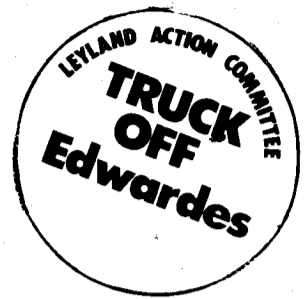
The conference fee is £3.50 (£2 for low-waged or unwaged non-delegates). Credentials from 41 Ellington Street, London N7.

MARCH 27



A CLOSER LOOK AT EDWARDES' JAPANESE MODEL

Vince Dunn looks beyond the current strike at Leyland Vehicles to examine the goal sought in Edwardes' strategy for cutbacks and closures.



The difference between Leyland Vehicles and its competitors can be summed up in one word—investment. Indeed, the loans made to Leyland from the Government have been on a short term basis with a high interest of return (14%) whilst Japanese competitors, Toyota for example, pays only 2½% interest on long term loans.

This brings us to the question of the "Japanese experience" that so motivated Edwardes and his advisors to embark on the "Corporate Plan". The "Japanese road to a more efficient capitalism", presently propounded by monetarists of all hues, is significant for workers precisely because it gives us a glimpse of what 'Monetarist Britain' may end up like if the present drift to the right is not reversed.

For Japanese capitalism, sub-contracting of component production has been the key to success. The Toyota truck company, for example has literally thousands of sub-contractors who agree informally to hold large numbers of components in reserve for their "master company".

This system of "outsourcing" has produced a massive division within the Japanese working class. On the one hand there are



Leyland Vehicles strikers struggle to hold down a picket hut—and a job

"permanent" workers who work for the main multi-nationals, and number about 20% of the total labour force. These 'fortunate' workers undergo extensive technical education before recruitment and in exchange are given 'guarantees' about a job for life.

These workers are also

bombarded with the company esprit-de-corps and spend most of their leisure time within the ambit of social facilities provided by the firm.

On the other hand, the majority of workers work on short term contracts, earning approximately 60% of their brethren's income in the big corporations.

Moreover, the length of the working week also varies according to the size of your company and the one third of the labour force who work in companies employing under thirty people work an average 48 hour week!

Indeed, casual labour operates on a wide scale in the firms, almost like the

docks in Britain in the 1920s, with hundreds of thousands of workers working only one day a week. Combine this with a large amount of seasonal work, particularly among women who are banned by law from joining a trade union (Tebbit 'forgot' to include this in his Employment Act!), and one gets a

good idea of the type of economic regime that Edwardes and Thatcher would like to impose on the working class in Britain.

Yawning

This yawning division within the Japanese working class, also runs right

through the structures of the trade union movement as well.

"Company unionism" is rife in Japan, particularly in the multi-nationals, because once you leave the company you also leave the union. Interestingly, when the Americans occupied Japan in 1945, they opposed the formation of centralised "all-in" unions as we have in Britain. Instead they fostered the growth of parochial company centred bodies and thwarted the growth of national trade union organisation.

The result is that only 30% of workers are unionised and this figure is going down, essentially because of the casualisation of labour. In other words, the Japanese capitalists can hire and fire at will with no worries about a backlash from a well organised labour movement.

Absence

Combine this with the virtual absence of a system of social services in Japan, the fact that an hourly paid engineering worker earns about a half of the purchasing power of his American counter-part and one can see why Japanese capitalism is more profitable than in the UK.

Attempts are being made, though, to set up independent "solidarnosc" style unions. In particular, for seasonal and part-time general workers there is the Zenichijiro which is campaigning for national legitimacy as a trade union, and for a genuine social security system and minimum wage.

There is more to the success of Japanese industry, however, than purely a low-wage economy: for every robot operating in British factories, there are 800 in Japan; compare, for example, Japan's largest company, Matsushita (which owns Hitachi among others) with the UK's largest multi-national, GEC.

Percentage

In 1980 Matsushita spent more money on research and development, it has 12,000 research scientists, than GEC—which has 80 researchers—grossed in paid sales for its electrical engineering division!

The massive gulf in the scale of capital operations is accounted for by the much higher percentage of profits per year ploughed back into the Japanese manufacturing over the past three decades.

In contrast, the UK financiers have tied up 78% of Pension Fund assets in non-productive enterprises (a staggering £30 billion!).

And it is with these people, the traditional financial backers of the Tory Party—not the BL strikers—that one has to locate the responsibility for the state of BL and the collapse of the UK economy as a whole.

Red purge at OKI Electrical

Taken from 'Rodo Joho', a bulletin of 'news from militant Japanese workers'.

OKI Electrical Industry Co. is one of the oldest manufacturers of electric machines in Japan and celebrated its centennial on November 1, 1981. Oki was the first in Japan to manufacture telephone systems and is now a leading telecommunication machine maker, producing telephone autoswitching equipment, computers, integrated circuits, etc.

Oki Electric's management, proud of being a pioneer, has long been irritated by its undistinguished business results compared with new-comers to the field such as Nippon Electric Company (NEC) and Fujitsu. Running on an operating deficit amounting to 0.4 billion yen for the financial year 1978 (sales proceeds come to about 120 billion yen), the management in November 1978 forcibly discharged 1,350 employees, more than 10 per cent of all employees.

Oki president Miyake Yasuo, who had been invited in from the board of directors of Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Public Corporation in 1977, the largest user of Oki's products, engineered the



Electronics: less and less jobs in sight

mass dismissals with the full financial support and consent of Fuji Bank.

In enforcing the firings, the company showed the union the following list of criteria for dismissal it had drawn up:

- *Workers of low efficiency;
- *Frequent absentees and late-comers.

- *Workers with low morale;
- *Workers breaking shop flow rules;
- *Workers who do not cooperate with management policies;
- *Workers in double harness (particularly when both husband and wife work for Oki);
- *and workers who refuse

to accept the personnel reshuffles and those who cannot accept transfers to a new address.

The Oki Electrical Workers Union (a closed shop with about 13,000 members), which belongs to Denki Roren (All-Japan Federation of Electrical Machine Workers Unions, one of the leading industrial unions in Japan), organised some formalistic and languid strikes under the guidance of the company-kept executive committee. One thousand workers accepted management's exhortations to apply for retirement.

The company then enforced the dismissal of about 300 employees. Among the 300 forcibly discharged were left wing activists, working couples, women in pregnancy, etc. The dismissals constitute in substance a red purge. The mass discharge of so many full time permanent employees of a large enterprise attracted the attention of the mass media, as it was the first such incident since the mass dismissal of coal miners at the Mitsui Mining company's Miike mines in

1960.

The executive committee of the Oki union, however, accepted the forcible mass dismissal and declared that the discharged workers were formally divested of union membership.

Now 71 workers among the 300 dismissed are continuing the struggle, organising the Oki Electric Labour Dispute Group, since the union abandoned its struggle against the mass dismissals.

Many labour unions and workers are supporting our struggle in the courts, at

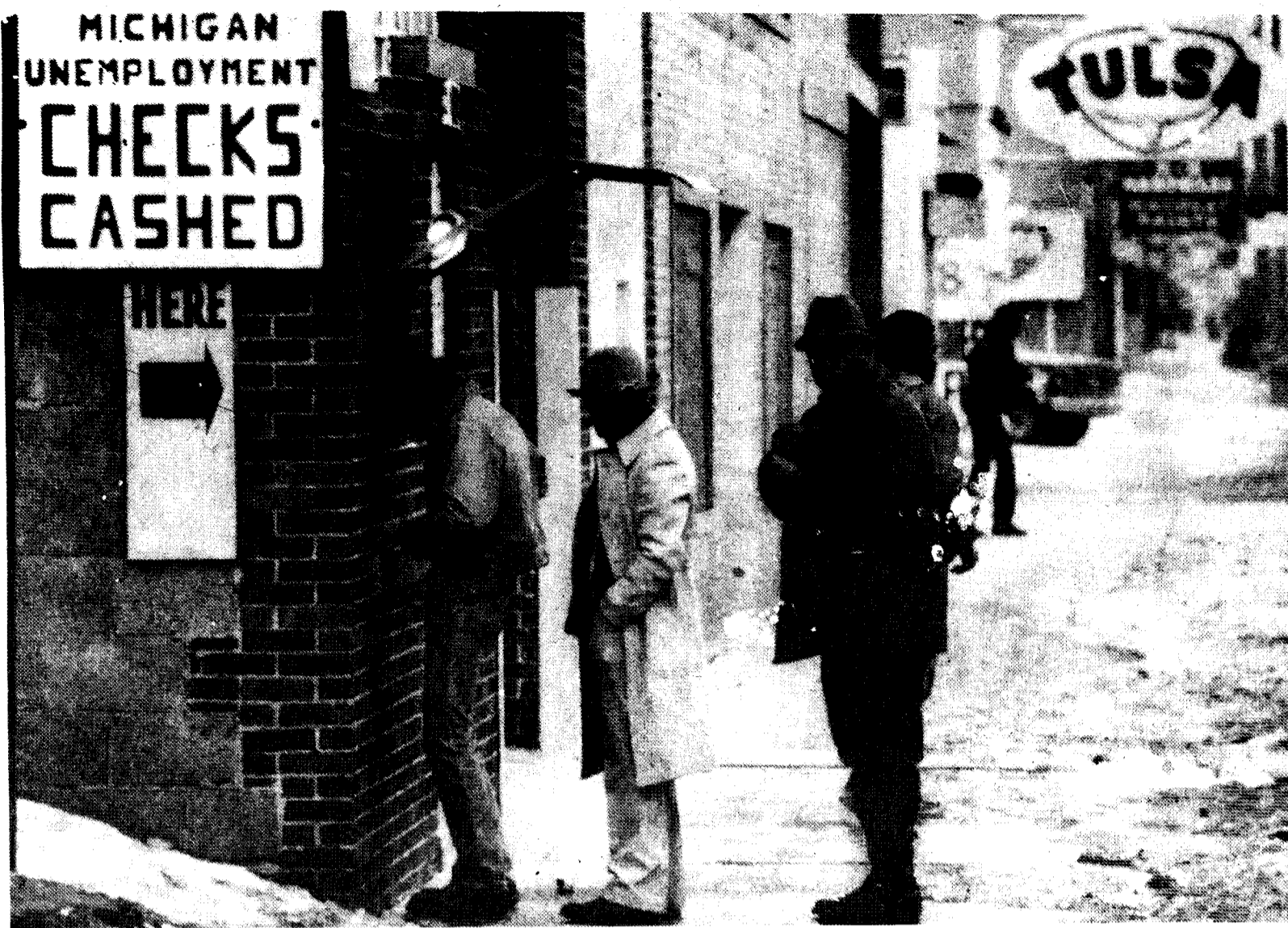
rallies, at demonstrations, etc. Fund-raising campaigns among supporting workers and part-time jobs have enabled all 71 of us to survive and support our families.

We peddle fireworks, etc., in summer and calendars, etc., in winter all over the country to seek to build solidarity with workers through propaganda, which makes up our living expenses.

We are badly off, but remain fully convinced of the future victory of our struggle.



'Poor performance' heralded redundancies



Unemployed cash their Social Security cheques—Michigan. (right) PATCO striker led in chains from court in the first days of the strike



Ronald Reagan's new budget—projecting a deficit of over \$90 billion next year and deficits until at least 1986—has unleashed a storm of protest even among his fellow Republicans.

His initial 'honeymoon' period as President is now definitely over, and he faces a tough fight to force his new proposals through Congress.

The House of Representatives is less amenable than the Senate. This is partly because it has a Democratic majority. But Democrats are no great defenders of Federal spending programmes as such. The stronger reason for the House's intractability at present is that it has to be re-elected in its entirety in 1982, while only one-third of the Senate faces re-election.

This political problem for Reagan is one of the factors which have exacerbated differences in strategy and tactics within the Reagan administration.

As one of his hard-line supporters Jack Kemp put it: "It's no secret that there is a healthy and rather fierce debate going on in the Administration about whether there should be a U-turn."

"Not an inch"

But with so many back seat drivers, the Reaganomics vehicle is still careering dangerously all over the road while the captain maintains, Thatcher-like, that he will "not give an inch". In fact, he is preparing a renewed offensive.

In particular the Reagan administration has realised, perhaps faster than Thatcher did, the profound obstacle to its programmes which is posed by what in the US is called "entitlement": the legal right to receive certain benefits such as free or subsidised health care and education, unemployment pay, old age pensions, and welfare benefits.

Despite the efforts of Reagan so far most of this entitlement—the essence of the so-called "welfare state"—is still intact. And yet his programme calls for budget cuts of hundreds of billions of dollars over the next three years. This can only be done by a basic attack on all these kinds of entitlement. And that is what is now being prepared in detail by the

agencies of the Federal government.

But it is one thing to think of what to do; it is another to have the political power to carry it out in a bourgeois democratic country with trade unions and periodic elections. That is why a host of planned attacks on entitlements this year—such as reduction in the real level of pension and the Ketchup proposal—were proposed by Reagan, and then later withdrawn as it became clear that they could not politically be carried.

It is why the administration's economists are searching for underhand ways of reducing entitlement programmes such as the proposal, now in a fairly advanced state, to alter the composition of the Federal price index on which many benefits and also millions of workers' wages are adjusted upwards. The new index would exclude housing which is one of the fastest rising elements.

Compared to the billions of dollars of needed savings, however, these are marginal. One of the things which has pierced the bubble of self-confidence in which Reagan floated into office is the realisation that all the measures direct and indirect which it has so far managed to implement do not stop its computers from predicting a bigger deficit every time they are consulted. The latest estimate for 1982 is \$109 billion instead of the \$43 billion to which Reagan is committed.

This problem lead to one of the most revealing state-

ments in David Stockman's recent notorious interview in Atlantic Monthly. The budget, he soberly observed, "isn't something you reconstruct each year. The budget is a sort of rolling history of decisions. All kinds of decisions made five, ten, fifteen years ago, are coming back to bite us unexpectedly. Therefore, in my judgement, it will take three or four or five years to subdue it. Whether anyone can maintain the political momentum to fight the beast for that long I don't know."

Strike at trade unions

Politically, fighting the beast of public spending means in reality fighting those interests which benefit from it. Up to now the cut-backs have hit the least organised interests most. If there is no U-turn, then a deeper incision will strike at more organised interests—in particular the trade union movement.

On its showing so far Reaganomics is neither consistent monetarism, nor classic deflationism and fiscal conservatism, nor born-again militant supply side economics. At present its contradictory and, by its own standards, incomplete policies seem headed for the same sorry fate as those of Thatcher in Britain: the aggravation of economic slump without any significant lessening in the travails of capital; and the loss in

this process of electoral support and the gaining of a reputation for giving the corporations and the rich what they want while imposing cruel and unusual economic tortures on the poor.

There are some possible signs that Reagan is learning something from the pitiful experience of Thatcher. Her attempts to curtail government expenditure, while they have managed to destroy some valuable social services and create considerable hardship, have nonetheless not succeeded in reducing the economic weight of the state in the way she intended. Cuts in spending have been matched by rising needs for social security and unemployment pay; and it has so far proved extremely difficult to create the number of redundancies in the state sector which the Thatcher government originally intended.

One of the factors behind these problems in Britain has been the strength of the trade union movement. Despite their many failures, the unions have nonetheless put up resistance to redundancies and have so far been able to defend the basis of unemployment pay and social security benefits.

But the logic of Thatcherism and Reaganomics require the destruction of the kind of labour strength and solidarity which can defend jobs in the public sector and state benefits. Perhaps it was an awareness of this which in the air traffic controllers dispute led Reagan to make such a

decisive attempt at union busting in his first few months in office—and of a union which had supported Reagan's presidential campaign.

The PATCO struggle itself is still not over, despite the reverses which the traffic controllers continue to receive.

In the face of a seemingly inflexible policy on the part of Reagan the morale and solidarity of the majority of the strikers has been exceptional.

Regardless of the outcome for PATCO itself, the repercussions within the labour movement are only just beginning. Further moves towards reducing union power will require legislative backing. And at present there is a backlog of anti-union measures in the legislative pipeline in Congress which would make even Len Murray blanche.

Any attempt to pass this legislative programme, along with the implementation of Reaganomics and the actions of the crisis afflicted capitalists themselves may entail further sharp conflicts with the unions during the Reagan administration. There is a growing awareness in the labour movement that many of those struggles will be lost unless the weaknesses which the PATCO strike has revealed are overcome.

Even if a PATCO cannot be easily repeated in relation to other unions, Reagan and the American ruling class as a whole regard the ruthless treatment of PATCO as a welcome pointer to a new

approach to organised labour. The President of one union, the American Federation of Government Employees sees this very clearly: "The Administration intended to have a chilling effect not just on Federal unions but on public unions everywhere. And the word pretty much went down to Mayors and Governors: That's the way to deal with unions."

Like most US union leaders Kenneth Blaylock, who said that, is better at explaining why PATCO has been an important setback for American labour than he was at producing any concrete solidarity at the time it was most needed. The most prominent self-proclaimed socialist in the leadership of American labour unions, William Wimpisinger—head of the Machinists union which could have brought the airlines to a halt—has claimed pathetically that he was "helpless" to assist PATCO because a strike or blacking action by his union would have been illegal.

Knight in armour

But the PATCO struggle, for all its importance is not yet the decisive test of intentions or results of the struggle between Reagan, the knight in armour of US capitalism, and the interests of the American working class. The nature of that battle will become clearer within a very few months as

major contracts come up for renewal in both the public and the private sectors.

During 1982 one of the largest public sector unions, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), is due to negotiate contracts in the cities of Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Memphis, New York, Philadelphia, Phoenix and Toledo. In the case of New York one quarter of a million workers will have their wages and conditions settled by this contract.

In addition, in the private sector, there are major contracts to be negotiated in 1982 in the petroleum, electrical, motor manufacturing, rubber and lorry transport industries.

What is the power of American labour in the face of these coming important battles which will help to shape the fate of Reaganomics?

In some ways the picture appears as a bleak one. American unions have recently been losing members, both absolutely and relatively. Today a little over 20% of the workforce is in unions. Thirty years ago, at the peak, that figure was nearly 26%.

Relative strengths vary a lot between sectors: in the chemical industry the figure is 26%; in textiles only 15%; but in construction 32%.

White collar workers (15%) are still much less organised than blue collar workers (39%); but it is white collar jobs in America

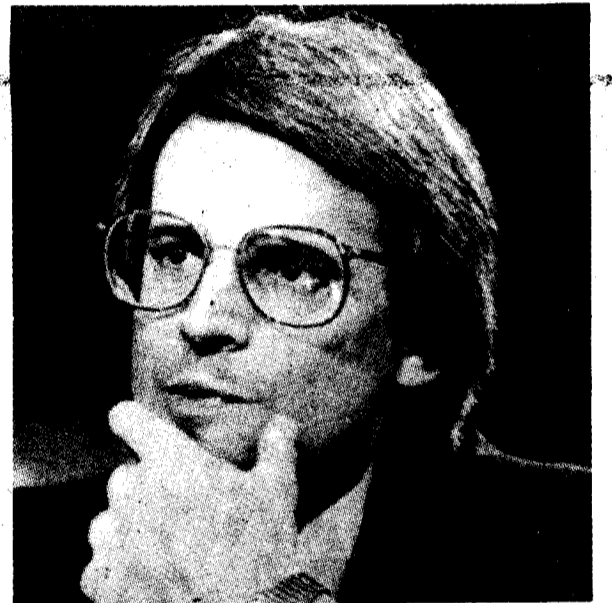
REAGANOMICS IN US WORKERS' M



Laid-off steelworkers

MEANS WAR ON MOVEMENT

By Bob
Sutcliffe



David Stockman
magazines such as the Economist (Britain's Business Week).

which are growing as a proportion of total employment.

American organised labour has still been unable to break the anti-union policies of many major US monopolies. IBM, for instance, is a non-union company; so are Polaroid, Hewlett Packard, Grumman, Eastman-Kodak, Gillette and Texas Instruments. At this very moment a battle is raging between Dupont and the United Steelworkers of America about whether the union will be able to represent Dupont workers.

In other words many of the most advanced and successful corporations in American capitalism, those in the vanguard of new technologies, have been successful in keeping out the unions.

The National Labour Relations Board, which is the Federal agency responsible for the supervision of union representation, reports that in 1979 (the latest year for which figures are available) unions won only 45% of representation elections in plants (in which ballots decide if the union will get representation rights). In the early 1960s they were winning over 60% of these ballots; and in the 1930s when the ballots began they were winning virtually all of them.

In addition in 1979, there were 777 decertification ballots (a big increase compared with the 1950s and 60s); and the great majority of these were lost

by the unions (a fact which is not surprising since in order for a decertification ballot to be called where a union already has negotiating rights a petition must be made by 30% of the workers).

All these obvious sources of weakness of the American labour movement at the present time, however, don't mean that Reagan and the local governments will be able to tread down the interests of labour easily. For one thing the public sector is more organised than the private.

AFSCME estimates that 51% of county and municipal workers belong to unions and 39% of State government workers. For teachers and other education workers (in whose sector the cuts will bite deep) the figure is 35%.

Union membership, however, obviously does not mean successful labour resistance, as can be seen in the case of New York where municipal workers are among the most organised in the country. There, during the last five years of New York's financial recovery programme, the unions have accepted a decline of 20% in the city's labour force without a single major strike.

The strength of response to Reaganomics, therefore, will depend on how much the rank and file of American unions can successfully combat not only the policies of compromise and sell-out of the bureaucrats, but also the widespread corruption at

the top of US unions and the politics of alliance with the Democrats. It is to that that the AFL-CIO leadership is turning again according to tradition when faced with Republican attacks.

Rank and file movements on these questions are growing within the US unions even though they remain relatively small. And growing also is the sentiment, still an extremely minority one, for the building of a workers' party independent of the big capitalist parties. That was evident from many of the banners on Solidarity Day in Washington last September 19. That biggest ever labour movement demonstration showed that for a serious fight against Reagan there would be a huge following.

Keynesian programme

But if that fight doesn't develop on a sufficient scale, and if Reaganomics remains as contradictory as its predecessors and fails to solve any of the major symptoms of the economic crisis of capitalism in the USA, what comes next?

Sections of the Democratic Party and of the organised labour movement leadership have been preparing for some time a campaign which would bring the Democratic candidate of 1984 (Teddy Kennedy? Walter Mondale?) to power on a programme of massive Keynesian increases in

Federal government spending to restore all the Reagan cutbacks.

But the fact that this simple solution has run into so much trouble before is giving other, more thoughtful and (capitalist) class-conscious Democrats pause for thought. They are coming up with some more complex plans.

One of the architects of such a plan is Felix Rohatyn, a partner in the big financial corporation Lazard Freres (which also provided the head of the British Steel Corporation), who was head of the Municipal Assistance Corporation of New York during the last six years.

His ruthless financial pruning, done with semi-corporatist methods involving the trade union bureaucracies in decisions, is generally credited with having shifted New York City from a deficit of \$1.7 billion in 1975 to a surplus of \$500,000 in 1981.

Rohatyn is worried that "no democracy... can survive half suburb, half slum" and he sees this dichotomy growing. His answer is to revive the private sector of the economy, especially in the de-industrialising northern cities through government direction and assistance.

The key institution in this plan would be a revival of the 1930s Reconstruction Finance Corporation which would be financed through recycled oil money from OPEC countries and thus be no direct drain on the US budget.

Rohatyn is a fiscal conservative who believes in "balanced budget liberalism" —and a state that intervenes in a "pragmatic and flexible" way to strengthen the capitalist economy. Government financial planning would be combined with wage and price controls imposed on trade unions and corporations. Some freedom, he argues euphemistically, may have to be sacrificed in the interests of fairness and growth. This kind of "liberal corporatism" is catching on. A few months ago the weekly Business Week ran a lengthy analysis of what is wrong with US capitalism, reaching very similar policy conclusions to Rohatyn's.

And the Democratic Party think tank has also been coming up with compatible ideas. They advocate controlling inflation by punitive taxation of companies which raise prices excessively or agree to excessive wage demands; the simultaneous use of wage-price controls and sharp fiscal and monetary controls; and changing tax laws to give a big incentive to profit sharing plans.

Return to Gold Standard?

And if British readers think that they have read this before somewhere they are not mistaken. It is almost word for word what is being said in Britain by the Social Democratic Party and the Liberals, and also right wing

serious chance that the Committee will end its hearings in a few months time by backing the idea.

Already there are signs of support for it in the top echelons of the Reagan administration (from Treasury Secretary Regan for instance, though he tends to agree with everything anyone else says as long as it is reactionary enough).

The near suicidal implications of that kind of proposal, however, confirm the degree to which the old days of "Keynesianism" consensus in the boom period are past almost beyond recall.

Reaganomics is ugly enough. But, bearing in mind what sections of the American right may try next, perhaps we ain't seen nothin' yet.



Reagan with foreign policy hawk Haig

Newsline attacks Cowley convenor WRP RECORD OF SUPPORT

BY BILL PETERS

FOR RIGHT WING

THE Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP), has a long history in the Cowley car plants. From 1966 until 1974 the WRP and its forerunner, the Socialist Labour League, had a very large group of members in Cowley. They included important sections of the trade union leadership in several plants with a principled record.

Early in 1974 an opposition developed inside the WRP which challenged the increasingly wild sectarianism and paranoid political line of the Gerry Healy leadership. Alan Thornett and Tony Richardson, as leading militants in the Cowley plants, were at the centre of the opposition.

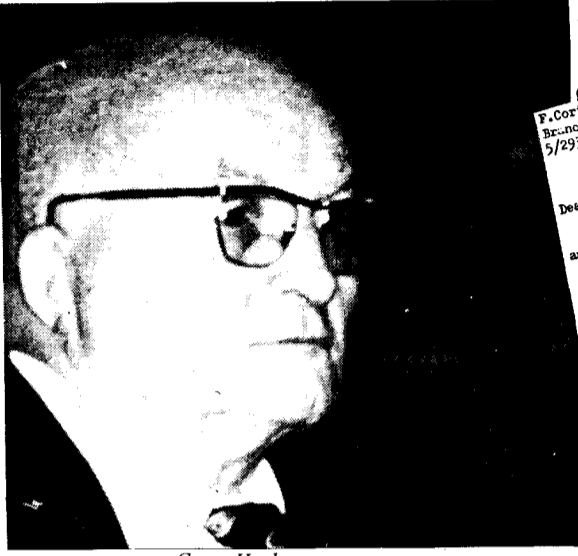
It resulted in their ruthless suppression by the vicious and bureaucratic internal regime of the WRP (see *Battle for Trotskyism*, Folrose Books). They were expelled in December 1974 along with 200 others from the WRP's Western Region just before they were to present their views to the WRP annual conference.

One member

Of the 200 expelled, 70 later formed the nucleus of the Workers Socialist League. Of the rest, a few joined other tendencies while the majority went out of politics after the experience.

At the time of the expulsions the WRP had over 100 members in the Oxford area. Only one stayed in the WRP after the experience—Tom White, a full-time deputy senior steward in the Assembly Plant.

Since the expulsions



Gerry Healy

Healy has put considerable resources—including frequent visits to Oxford—into keeping his lone Cowley member inside the WRP ranks. He has kept White on the WRP Central Committee to this day despite his obvious inability to rebuild a Cowley Branch. Healy hangs on hoping new conditions will arise where his foothold can be used against the Workers Socialist League.

Now Healy's paper, the *Newsline*, is running a campaign against TGWU Convenor Bob Fryer.

This has centred on a very bad decision of Fryer's to allow management to redraft a leaflet he had written to the membership as a condition of their authorising its distribu-

tion. Socialist Organiser would also criticise Fryer for such an action which undoubtedly creates a very dangerous precedent; but the WRP and Tom White are in no position to take Fryer up on such a matter.

Fryer in his 20 years as convenor has established a far better record than Tom White. Fryer stuck to his guns during the 3½ years following his removal from office in 1974—a major move by Jack Jones and the leadership of the TGWU at that time.

Reg Parsons, an extreme right winger was installed as convenor of the plant in the midst of a huge witch-hunt against the left which received national prominence.

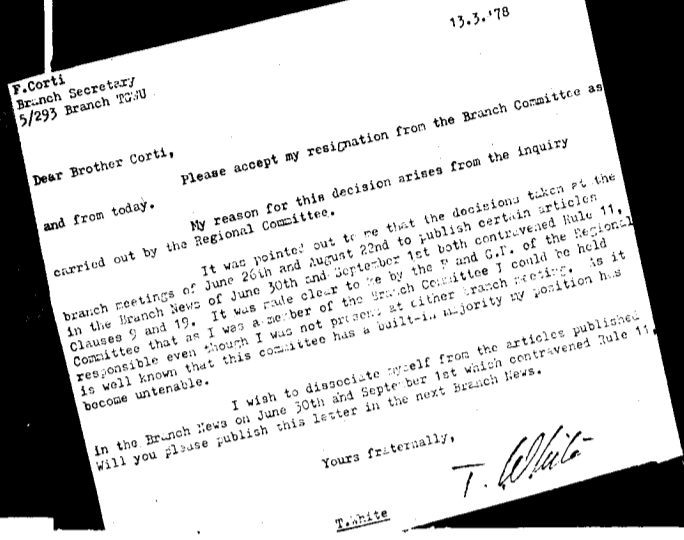
White's record in that period was deplorable. When 'Worker Participation' committees were brought into BL in the Autumn of 1975 the WRP verbally opposed them. But when Healy found that this disrupted his relationship with a leading right wing supporter of Parsons whom he was hoping to recruit, White stood for election for the participation committees and was elected a stand-in delegate—despite the hostility of the labour force to the scheme. Healy's paper at the time, *Workers Press*, carried a whole page article theorising the correctness of White's move.

A few weeks later the WRP supported a Joint Management-Participa-

tion' Committee set up to investigate 'quality and performance' on the Princess track. Although workers on the track struck and marched to Parsons' office protesting about the joint investigation, the *Workers Press* (November 26) praised its findings.

Such positions didn't go unnoticed by Reg Parsons and the right wing. A few weeks later were the biennial elections for convenor and deputy convenor in the plant.

Parsons won the election for convenor and published a recommended list for the election of the deputy senior stewards. Tom White was on it, with a glowing write-up from rabid anti-Trotskyist Parsons.



Tom White

White gave out a few copies of a token statement dissociating himself from the list—when it was too late to make any difference and after Socialist Press had challenged the issue.

The same month, the elections for the officers of the TGWU 5/293 branch were held.

This was the branch which had been set up at the time of the 1974 witch-hunt and been used as a right wing base against the left. A left victory therefore would be a major blow against the right.

Alan Thornett was standing as the left candidate with a very good chance of winning.

There were 140 members at the highly charged meeting with the press and TV outside. There were three candidates for President—Thornett, Albert Paintin—a Parsons supporter, and Tom White of the WRP.

Support White

After hasty discussions on the odds, Parsons & the right wing decided to withdraw Paintin and throw their full support behind White!

They figured that White would stand a better chance since his past left-wing record might split a few votes from the left, whilst Paintin would only get the right wing vote.

In the event the whole left vote quite clearly went to Thornett and the whole right wing, including Parsons personally solidly voted for White, giving Thornett victory by 77 votes to 64.

Because the elections were given national coverage by the media, millions of readers of the national press saw reports that "Trotskyist" Alan Thornett had defeated "moderate challenger" Tom White.

Thornett's victory at the branch was followed two years later in December 1977 with a complete victory for the left in the convenor and deputy convenor elections. Fryer was re-elected convenor. Promptly Jack Jones and the TGWU bureaucracy, who had originally installed Parsons, laid trumped up charges in a move to expel the new leadership from

the union and put the defeated Parsons back in control.

Nine stewards—including Tom White—were charged. One of the reasons White was included was because he had been elected as a member of the 5/293 committee and most of the charges were based on articles written in the 5/293 Branch Report which was published in the plant at the time by the branch committee.

By March 1980 it looked as if the victimisation would succeed. Jack Jones and the bureaucrats in Region 5 were absolutely determined, two kangaroo courts had been carried out, the defendants found predictably 'guilty' and the sentences announced.

The only problem was the support the nine had amongst the membership in the plant and the broad campaign which had developed throughout the TGWU including a successful conference in defence of the nine—which the WRP refused to support.

Then, at the most crucial point of the struggle, Tom White wrote a letter to the TGWU officials resigning from the branch committee and denouncing the other eight as guilty as charged!

He fully accepted that the Branch News articles were contrary to rule 11, under which the nine were charged and absolved himself by saying he had been faced with a built-in majority on the committee!

Such a treacherous and cowardly letter could only be intended to get Thornett and the others expelled from the union and therefore sacked from the plant.

Before the *Newsline* talks about "dangerous precedents" they should comment on the precedent involved in White's letter. And before they criticise Fryer for allowing management to censor his letter they should say why they approved of TGWU bureaucrats censoring publications like *Branch News* by the use of rule 11?

White's letter was the result of a decision taken at the highest level in the WRP. It was designed to use the right wing TGWU leadership and BL management to eliminate those with whom they disagree. Fortunately they failed.

Marx's fight for a party

Andrew Hornung introduces Marx's and Engels' Letters to America

MARX and Engels' correspondence with American socialists lasted for nearly half a century. Beginning with the aftermath of the great revolutionary upheavals of Europe in 1848, through the American Civil War, the establishment of the International Workingmen's Association (First International) in 1864 and its subsequent dissolution after the defeat of the Paris Commune (1871), the publication of *Capital*, the death of Marx in 1883, the founding of the Second (Socialist) International six years later to the great rise of the working class movement internationally in the 1890s... through this long period the correspondence touches on scores of different topics.

There are economic subjects, questions of strategy and tactics, problems of publication, portraits of personalities of the socialist and radical movement—even a letter dealing with folk-songs! All these are interspersed with Marx's constant quest for money and Engels' persistent demands for information on military matters.

Above all, however, the letters—as Lenin pointed

out in his introduction to a Russian edition of them in 1907—provide a vivid illustration of the method by which Marx and Engels analysed the question of the necessary relation between Marxists, their party and the mass of the working class.

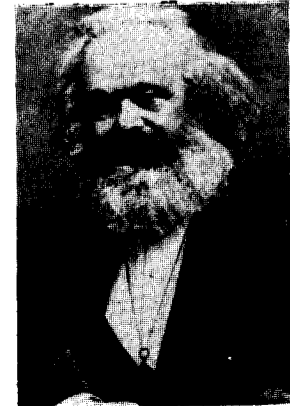
At every point, the founders of scientific socialism stress the need to relate to the real struggles of the workers. They condemn doctrinaire socialists who remain aloof from these struggles; they condemn middle class philanthropists who see themselves as the liberators of the working class instead of understanding that liberation is the task of the workers themselves; and they attack opportunist socialists and trade union leaders who blocked the way to the founding in America of an independent mass workers' party. Public enemy number one is sectarianism in all its varieties.

the German emigrants in America in the 1850s included Marxists. But most of the socialists who had come from Germany tended to sit about in German-speaking discussion circles, making no attempt to relate to the

struggles of the day.

If some of the German workers in America who claimed to be socialists turned their backs on the living struggles going on around them because of a wrong attitude towards theoretical purity, other German emigrants followed the reformist utopian ideas of Ferdinand Lassalle.

Writing to Bolte in 1871 Marx emphasised the importance of the First International's fight against sectarianism of all kinds. "The 'International' was founded," he says, "in order to replace the social-



Marx

Socialist Bookshelf

Books and pamphlets that you should read

ist and semi-socialist sects by a really militant organisation of the working class... The development of socialist sectarianism and that of the real working class movement always stand in inverse proportion to each other. Sects are (historically) justified so long as the working class is not yet ripe for an independent historic movement. As soon as it has attained maturity all sects are essentially reactionary."

The task now in America, as Marx and Engels say it, was to raise up that "real working class movement" in a country where the proletariat was immature.

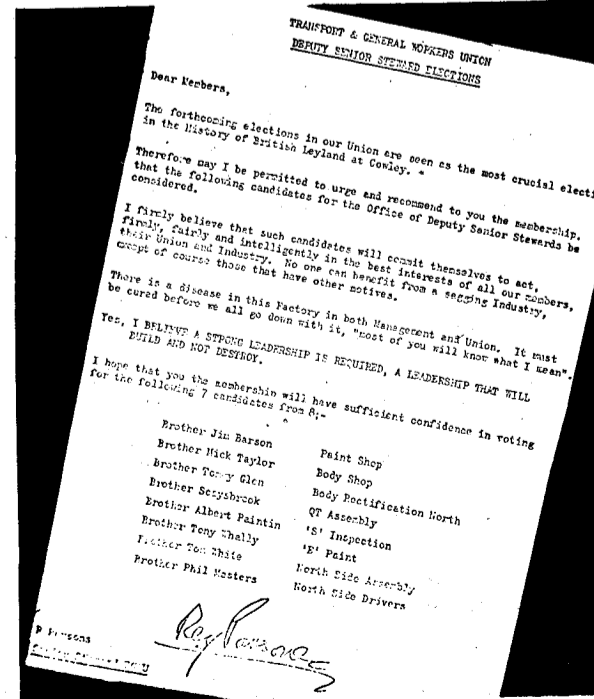
Despite that immaturity, as early as 1866 militant workers—Marxists—among them—had founded the National Labour Union, a union which aimed to organise both skilled and unskilled workers and establish a distinct union-based Labour Party. That

Marx and Engels, stressed repeatedly over the next thirty years, was exactly the right direction for the American working class.

Soon after its foundation, the Lassalleans took control of the NLU and turned it towards an alliance with the National Labour Reform Party. In effect this meant hitching a genuine workers' movement to a middle-class quack sect that was interested in nonsensical monetary reforms and not class struggle.

Through the 1870s, Marx and Engels correspondence is peppered with attacks on the anarchists and on German middle-class "friends of the workers". Both express their anger at the weakness of the German Marxist leaders, Liebknecht and Bebel, faced with the growth of opportunism and Lassallean foolishness.

Next week: Marx and Engels on the Labour Party in the US.



Part 2 of
an account
by BILL
PETERS

BL: BACKGROUND TO THE BETRAYALS



1979: the Tories come to power. New corporate plan.

Following the election of the Thatcher government in May 1979, Edwardes brought in a new corporate plan to replace the ten year plan drafted a year earlier with the Cars Council. It heralded a drastic contraction of BL.

In September 1979, Edwardes announced the crunch decision. His so-called 'survival plan' meant the closure, or part-closure, of 13 plants, and the axing of 25,000 jobs.

The CSEU promptly set up an 'emergency committee' to oppose the plan. It set out to develop an 'alternative strategy' for BL, and importantly called for resistance to the plan through the blacking of work moved from one plant to another.

The CSEU backed the policy, and called BL workers to a demonstration through London against the plan.

When it marched past Leyland House, an Edwardes aide handed out a statement expressing surprise at the demonstration since the survival plan had already been accepted by the CSEU.

It turned out to be true! The CSEU Executive had already met Edwardes and reversed their opposition.

Edwardes, as usual, seized the advantage. The plan was put to a postal ballot. 100,000 workers were urged in a joint BL/CSEU statement to vote 25,000 out of their jobs. This and the emphasis on 'survival' produced a 74-1 majority in favour.

The CP and therefore the combine committee actually opposed the closure, at least in words. Despite opposing an occupation motion at the combine, Robinson co-authored a pamphlet calling for occupation. Edwardes replied with the sack in what was the most significant victimisation and defeat for the shop stewards' movement in the car industry since Ford in 1962.

Deadline

It put Edwardes in a powerful position over the crucial November 1979 wage review — the deadline for the implementation of parity and the five-grade system, and the first review to be conducted under corporate bargaining.

He produced another bombshell. A general increase of 5% was conditional on acceptance of a 92 page document abolishing all previous conditions and agreements — including the 'Security of Earnings' agreement forced in two years earlier.

It involved full mobility and flexibility of labour, and abolished the 80% lay-off pay — originally a prime selling point for the MDW system. Instead of the 'staff status' dreamed of by the collaborators, Edwardes proposed a return to casual labour.



Longbridge mass meeting

BL and the 1980 steel strike

Negotiations on the package dragged on into the new year, and into the steel strike which began on January 4. In February, the JNC, with BL cooperation, conducted yet another postal ballot of the workforce, recommending rejection of the offer and calling for authority to call a strike. The vote was two-to-one for strike action.

Surprised by the vote, the JNC refused to implement it. The Leyland Action Committee organised a joint Leyland workers/steelworkers' lobby of the convenors, calling for the implementation of the decision to strike alongside the steelworkers. Still they refused.

At the end of March, Edwardes seized the initiative once again. He wrote to the Leyland Cars labour force. The package would be implemented from April 8th. Anyone clocking in on that day would be accepting the package. Anyone not clocking in would be sacked.

The major Midlands plants struck. Although the AUEW were party to the postal ballot which called for strike action, Duffy and Cure promptly conducted a 'sounding' exercise among AUEW members and declared that their members were in reality against striking.

AUEW members were ordered to accept the 5%/92-page package.

The TGWU, however, were no better in practice. Moss Evans intervened,

made the strike official, and then, in an astounding about-face, signed an embarrassingly naive document on April 17.

This called for the disbanding and reconstitution of the JNC — not a bad idea in itself. But far more important — and contrary to statements made since — it agreed in writing to accept the 92-page document.

Understanding

The 'Agreement of Understanding' over Evans' signature actually claims as a 'major concession' from Lowry his commitment to give ten days' notice before changes arising from the 92-page document were implemented. On that basis Evans ordered the TGWU members back to work!

Any longstanding agreement or working practice could now be terminated by BL after ten days' notice. To the embarrassment even of the right wing, Evans claimed this as a 'victory'.

But there was worse. Trapped by BL's viability argument and Evans' lack of any political answer, he commissioned a Paris-based firm of industrial consultants, Euro-finance, to produce a report on future policy for BL.

No-strike clause

From that the TGWU produced its own document, ironically with the same title as Ryder: 'BL, the next decade'.

Incredibly, it offered the TGWU's own no-strike clause: "continuity of physical production" in return for more investment and a 'partnership' with a Japanese corporation.

The fight against the 5 grade system: 1980

Evans' sell-out on the 92 page document did not resolve all Edwardes' problems. The 5-grade structure and the grading remained contentious, despite the parity payments.

From April 8, 1980, everyone was slotted into their new grades, mostly to their disadvantage. The result was an immediate series of sectional strikes which threatened to paralyse BL for an extended period.

The General Secretaries and National Officers were soon back for an exercise which, in terms of sheer abrogation of trade union democracy, outclassed even their previous treachery.

Meeting on May 8, they agreed an 'appeals procedure' which effectively smashed opposition to the grading. It provided a three stage binding procedure which ended with the so-called 'three wise men' set-up: one BL management, one TUC, and an 'independent' chairman. Their decision was final and binding, with no right to strike once the procedure was exhausted.

And worse was to come. The General Secretaries then imposed the appeals procedure on BL workers without the slightest consultation. The individual plants were notified of it by management.

They then ordered all grading strikes to cease, and all disputed grades into the appeals machinery. Thousands of claims were placed on appeals commit-

tees at various levels. Virtually none were settled, and eventually the committees disbanded and the heat inevitably went out of the issue.

In the Cowley Assembly Plant, of 90 claims submitted, none were conceded, and the committee was disbanded arbitrarily by the company.

The next massive sell-out was at the second corporate wage review in November 1980, when 6.8 per cent was offered. This time pressure from Cowley replaced the secret ballot principle with votes at a simultaneous series of mass meetings, producing a big majority for strike action. The result: panic in the JNC.

They reopened negotiations on paltry bonus guarantees, and then reversed their recommendation, appealed for acceptance, and recalled the mass meetings.

Everything hung on a controversial decision by Jack Adams to declare the Longbridge vote, cast for acceptance in the face of claims by the militants that it had gone strongly against.

Bitter resentment and frustration at the JNC's capitulation produced a mass demonstration against management inside Longbridge which was labelled a 'riot' by the media. A month later, four stewards and five members were victimised and sacked as 'leaders of an unruly mob'.

Strikes in their defence were ended with the institution of a joint inquiry which ended with the unions actually agreeing to the sacking of the four stewards and two mem-

findings.

Lowry's move to ACAS, to give the employers in general the benefit of his BL experience, saw an escalation of management's offensive. In March 1981, Edwardes began pushing for a new disputes procedure and disciplinary procedure.

A document was produced which, it emerged, had already been the subject of secret meetings with national officials and senior management.

It was another major move by BL, giving management the right of summary dismissal in the event of what the company considered 'gross industrial misconduct'.

It ends all previously established full-time convenor and deputy convenor positions, and makes the grievance procedure a part of the individual contract of employment — a disguised no-strike clause. It calls for a new JNC, appointed by the union executives and consisting almost entirely of full-time officials.

The November 1981 review

Last November's wage review will be well remembered as a major political test case for Thatcher's four per cent policy. Edwardes offered 3.8 per cent and for the first time the JNC called for strike action from November 1st.

Mass meetings gave the call a massive ten-to-one backing, despite a threat from Edwardes to close down the whole corporation and sack the entire labour force if the strike went ahead.

Each union made it official in advance, but Machiavelli would have been proud of the manoeuvres which began once Duffy and Kitson (acting in Evans' absence) realised that they were heading for an all-out confrontation which could bring down the government.

Everyone from Michael Foot to Len Murray, plus the general secretaries of all the unions in BL, combined on the eve of the strike to sell it out.

They actually recommended a deal which was worse than the original offer — since the 3.8% remained unchanged — but it included a commitment to negotiations on the March draft of Edwardes' new procedure document, dragged in for the first time.

Implications

The sell-out had far-reaching implications for BL's negotiating machinery. Even the grossly undemocratic JNC, resurrected for the review, and still not reconstituted despite Evans' 1980 agreement, was cynically over-ridden by the General Secretaries, who effectively became the negotiating committee. This was some-

thing Edwardes had always wanted.

They even allowed the 39 hour week negotiated in 1979 to become enmeshed in the review, provoking an all-out strike of assembly workers in Longbridge when management cut the relief allowance to fund it.

This time the month-long strike was sold out not just by the officials, but directly by the Longbridge Works Committee, who strongly recommended and fought for a return to work on terms worse than the proposals that the workers originally struck against.

Not only was relief time cut, but the tracks were speeded up, and the night shift had their hours increased from 38 to 39.

Although BL are still balking at attempting to force RA cuts into Cowley, two major sell-outs in two months was a tragedy for BL workers. Each came at exactly the point when management were under extreme pressure and Edwardes could have been broken.

He survived at BL workers' expense, by the efforts of the trade union leaders and the Longbridge Works Committee.

Instead of the 'new management approach' promised to Duffy and Kitson as part of the wage review sell-out, the assault on shop floor workers sharply increased. Victimisations, harassment and pressure became constant factors on the production line.

Edwardes began implementing in advance many of the clauses in the new procedure document.

Edwardes' objectives became more clear. Having used the convenors through 'participation' to end plant-level bargaining, he was now marginalising their role and that of the JNC. Full-time deputy convenor facilities have been withdrawn in most plants, and management have made it clear that this will soon apply to convenors. Moves are already being made to reduce the number of shop stewards in the sections.

It represents in a very real way the drive to completely smash the shop stewards' movement, and in this Edwardes still gets the total support of the top union leaders.

Any doubt about this can be dispelled by the current edition of the AUEW Journal, where John Boyd commits himself totally to Edwardes and his strategy in the following astounding terms:

"A new procedure agreement must be fully exploited now, and a new relationship forged between the shop stewards of the nation's assets [the Board] and the trade union stewards, under the guidance and control of their union executives. If for any ideological reason individual representatives from either do not wish to participate, then they must be cast aside."

Despite such breathtaking treachery, BL workers remain militant and prepared to fight. Where strikes break out, management can be pushed back.

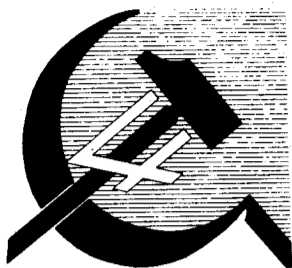
The task is to build a new leadership within the BL unions capable of fighting the betrayals at top level.

Writeback



We invite readers to send us their letters, up to a usual maximum length of 400 words. Send to 'Writeback', Socialist Organiser, c/o 28, Middle Lane, London N8.

The split in the FI(IC) FACT OR FICTION?



Dear comrades,

PLEASE acquaint your readers with these lines, seeking to correct the inexplicable fictions and distortions contained in Martin Thomas's article on the split in the Fourth International (International Committee) in Socialist Organiser No. 67.

The lesson comrade Thomas draws from the split is that the Fourth International (IC) was not based on 'solid political foundations' but on 'hasty self-proclamation'. Nothing could be further from the truth. Over a year elapsed between the split in the United Secretariat and the setting up of the Fourth

International (IC), during which a lengthy document of principles was elaborated and discussed by all those organisations participating in the international regroupment. At the same time, we sought to ascertain the attitude to the initiative of other groups claiming adherence to the programme of Trotskyism.

The Socialist Labour Group believes that the principled reunification of revolutionary forces on a world scale is an urgent necessity for the international working class and a precondition for building mass Trotskyist parties. In this context, the split perpetrated by Moreno is a criminal act against the Trotskyist movement internationally. His 'criticisms' of the French OCI are only a mask for his intentions; Moreno broke off all links with the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International (IC) less than one month after he first articulated these criticisms.

SWPERS miss lesson of Laurence Scotts

Tariq's tactics

I READ with amusement Barney Davies and Cynthia McPowell's letter in Socialist Organiser No. 68 giving the SWP's critique of SO's 'left reformist policy'.

If this letter had been written in 1921 then may be it would have had some relevance, but to say that it reminded me of the old adage "History repeats itself first time as tragedy, second time as farce" would be being lenient with our friends.

Squeezed

The comrades must try and grasp what the real relation of forces actually is between revolutionaries and the rest of the labour movement.

"Not so" say our latter-day Lenins from Warrington



Lenin

who go on to inform us that "the Labour Party is being squeezed between the SDP on its right and the SWP on its left". Yet if one were to ask the majority of people today what letters "SWP" stood for it would not be an insult to say the likely reply would be "a new sort of washing powder".

In their frenzied and obsessive desire to refight the Russian Revolution, our friends have dressed poor Tom Hart and John McLroy (SO 68) in the garb of Father Gapon and Kerensky as a mere parliamentarianist flotsam and jetsam that will herald the "Great Coming" of the pure essence—the Socialist Workers Party—to mass influence and leadership of the working class.

Resilient

Throughout their letter Barney and Cynthia continually reduce complex realities to simple truisms. "Power lies on the shop floor not in Terry Duffy's office. Look at Laurence Scotts", they say.

And what does Laurence Scotts show? Quite simply that "rank and file" organisation, even with 100% support for industrial action as at Scotts, is not sufficient on its own to bring victory. Indeed, Sir John Boyd and Roy Hattersley know very well that if you control the union and Party apparatuses with their colossal funds, official legitimacy and extended domination over confederated union structures then you can isolate and starve out even the

most dedicated and resilient fighters.

Hence the central importance of combining a strategy of strong inter-plant solidarity with a policy of capturing the union organisations for the class struggle left and bringing them under democratic mass control. Simple self-activity at the level of the factory, will sooner or later lead to demoralisation unless it is integrated within an understanding of the dominant power structures of the labour movement and of how to break up these centres.

The same goes for the Labour Party.

There is nothing Boyd and Hattersley would like better than for the "Trots" to leave the Party and ghettoise themselves within the SWP.

The major question for revolutionaries today is to appreciate the unity of the left reformist movement in the Labour Party and the trade unions and that whilst the programme and practical steps taken by the Bennites on this or that question may be woefully inadequate, it is clear that by fighting for a campaigning Labour Party that takes support for industrial struggles seriously, we can gain a massive audience for Trotskyist ideas.

Groups

Yes, at the end of the day the historical evidence tends to show that the Labour Party would be unable to lead the working

class to a socialist overturn and a society of workers' councils. However, a socialist Labour Party could take the working class a long way down that road—at least until the conditions were ripe for the formation of a mass revolutionary workers party—which is certainly not what propaganda groups like the SWP are today.

JOCKY ATKINS, Rochdale (EETPU)

I BELIEVE that our original coverage of Tariq Ali's application to join the Labour Party was misconceived, and I am in full agreement with the recent letters of comrades O'Mahony and Watts on this matter. I believe that Socialist Organiser should have immediately offered Tariq space to state his position, or alternatively interviewed him.

However Tariq appears to be behaving rather strangely. I see that he is now writing a regular column in the press of the sectarian Socialist Workers Party.

Arguably in terms of principle, most assuredly

in terms of tactics, this appears to be a surprising way to prosecute what will be a long and bitter struggle to join the Labour Party.

Whilst not for one minute accepting the position of Newsline that Tariq should not be entitled 'to roam at large' (!) I think he should explain why he is making life a little more difficult for those who oppose the witch-hunt against his entry and are arguing in his support.

Can SO ask him for a contribution?

Yours fraternally, TIM FINNEGAN Liverpool



The method of the OCI is not that of a sectarian grouplet, but the method of mobilisation based on the Transitional Programme. Daily propaganda in the form of criticism and exposure of the popular front in France, which Moreno seems to think is the proof of a correct policy, is totally inadequate in the present pre-revolutionary situation in France. The OCI is in a position to lead real struggles in the French workers' movement and has already done so since the election of Mitterrand. The demonstration for the reduction of military service was the first mobilisation against the policies of Mitterrand since his election—and it was organised on the initiatives of the OJR, the Trotskyist youth supporting the Fourth International (International Committee).

Finally, it is interesting that Martin Thomas gives his opinion on the political questions involved only once, in nine words, in brackets. A more fruitful discussion could take place on the basis of comrade Thomas stating clearly where he stands on these matters.

Trotskyist greetings, MIKE PEARSE Socialist Labour Group

FOOT NO SOCIALIST

I AM glad to see the recent articles by comrades Thomas, O'Mahony and McLroy making clear our position on Parliament and democracy.



Michael Foot

We have to make clear that Parliament is a form of the state which is related as are other forms, such as fascism or military dictatorship, to the system of capitalism.

Obviously this form represents a tremendous historical improvement on past forms, e.g. rule by Kings and Nobles) as does capitalist society over feudalism.

Similarly, within capitalism, parliamentary democracy gives more freedom than military dictatorship. Not least of the freedom it gives is the freedom to commence the work of replacing capitalism by socialism.

We won't have the bourgeois state in a socialist society. And neither will we have Parliament. Socialist society, con-

trolled not by the capitalists but by the workers, will produce its own forms.

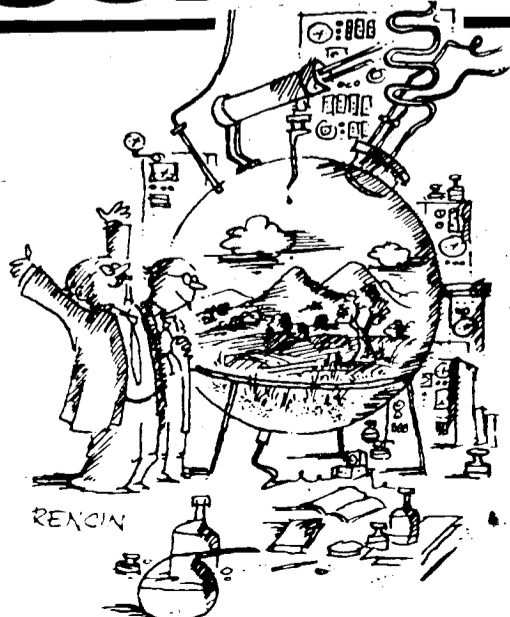
And of course there's the rub. Michael Foot is not really a socialist in the sense of wanting to create a socialist society, which obviously involves dismantling capitalist society.

He just wants to civilise things a little, although tragically there is no room to do so.

We should relate the arguments about Parliament and working class democracy more to the question of Clause IV. Also if the workers do take control, will capitalist parties pledged to the destruction of socialism be allowed?

Yours fraternally, JOHNNY DHU Stockport

SCIENCE Brave new world?



THE development of life-forms on Earth depended on several interrelated factors, but some of the most important were abundant sunlight, the presence of an atmosphere rich in nitrogen, the ability to generate hydrocarbons (compounds of hydrogen and carbon—the basic building blocks of organic molecules), the presence of water and water vapour.

One of the commonest arguments of those who believe we are God's creation is the evidence from space exploration, which apparently shows that of all the objects in the Solar System, only the Earth can support life. Because we are unique, we must be God's creation. The research of the US

Space Agency NASA has been much criticised by socialists. Yet, some of its recent work has produced important results that socialists can use to advantage in debating the nature of life.

The Voyager space probes have surprised many by revealing that lurking amongst the moons of Saturn is the only satellite in the Solar System known to possess a substantial atmosphere. This atmosphere has many of the characteristics which could be conducive to the support of life later in the lifetime of the Sun.

The moon Titan is about one-third of the diameter of the Earth and has an atmosphere composed mainly of nitrogen with

some methane and more complex hydrocarbons, including hydrogen cyanide. The presence of hydrogen cyanide is important because laboratory simulations of the chemical steps that lead to the origin of life on Earth have used this substance as a starting material.

Although hydrogen cyanide does spawn more complex molecules on Titan at present it cannot produce compounds capable of giving rise to life. There is a missing link—oxygen—which is locked in water ice comprising 45% of the freezing surface and interior of Titan. Surface temperature may be as low as 180°C below freezing point of water, and the water ice at the surface

may support liquid methane oceans.

On Earth the relatively high surface temperatures mean that water and water vapour are abundant. The oxygen in water vapour can react with complex hydrocarbons and the liquid water provides a "soup" for the reactions to be facilitated and nurtured to yield life forms.

Titan

Life on Titan is impossible at the moment because it is so cold. But when the Sun enters its mature stage and grows to be a red giant Titan's temperature will be raised and may reach the point where conditions parallel-

ing those of the present Earth will be achieved. In its turn, the Earth, being much closer to the Sun, will be vaporised or charred beyond recognition.

The religious emphasis on the uniqueness of life on Earth has therefore been struck quite a severe blow. If the conditions exist for two planetary bodies to develop environments conducive to the formation of complex organic molecules during the lifetime of one sun, then there must be many more examples amongst the millions of solar systems in the Universe.

Stuart Sutherland

Fighting for union democracy

NALGO - the gap between policy and practice

OVER recent years traditionally passive white collar unions in the public sector have become increasingly militant. Members of NALGO, among the least militant of white collar workers, have had their eyes opened by the onslaught on their jobs and the services they provide.

The 1980 NALGO conference passed a motion calling for support for councils that confronted the government, even when it meant breaking the law.

But progressive conference motions do not translate into action automatically, especially where members are not involved and are ill-prepared.

The fight against the cuts highlights especially the need for greater democracy, as well as a leadership prepared to support and extend struggles by its members.

The most militant branches over recent years have been those that have developed a shop steward system of organisation in the branch, as opposed to the archaic, bureaucratic system of departmental representatives which still exists in many branches.

These reps have no powers to represent their members directly to management and often have to cover a number of different workplaces. The branch executive, consisting of all the different departmental reps runs the branch, and although some branches do have regular meetings, the statutory obligation is only one branch meeting a year!

Staff side

The body responsible for negotiating with management is called staff side and is elected by the branch executive—in theory, and very often in practice, a member of one department could be representing members in another dep-

practice



Fighting the cuts: NALGO is often militant on paper but meek in practice

artment about which they are totally ignorant.

In addition, staff side is responsible not just to union members, but also to non-union members.

It has been a national 'recommendation' for some years now that branches develop shop steward systems, where members can be represented in their workplace by someone able to negotiate directly on their behalf, and where members can have greater feed-in to and feed-back from the branch.

However, it has been left very much up to the local branches to organise and campaign for such a system—and in those branches where there is a well entrenched local bureaucracy, it is going to be a hard fight.

It is a lesson that women in the union especially, are learning. On paper, NALGO is a very progressive union on women's issues, with excellent policies on maternity and paternity provisions, workplace nurseries, etc.

It has also promoted local equal opportunities committees to take up issues relating to women, ethnic minorities and disabled people.

In practice it has done little to fight for its policies nationally.

During the recent Liverpool typists' strike the NEC gave backing to the dispute but failed to develop action in other branches, and so the typists in Liverpool were isolated and weakened.

The EOC are often not

Mary Corbishley reports on the fight for democracy and women's rights in the town hall workers' union.

are women yet the NEC is 80% men. In comparison to some other unions 20% women may seem like quite a good proportion, but very small numbers of women attend annual conference, hold positions in the branch locally or attend branch meetings.

Babysitters

Fundamental to attendance at branch meetings is the time they are held. In our branch most women felt the best time would be in the morning. Creche facilities are not always the most convenient method of childcare for late afternoon meetings. If the child is with a childminder or likely to be alone at home, then paying a babysitter or childminder out of union funds is better than the mother having to go all the way home to pick up the child and return to the meeting.

Positive discrimination not as a panacea but as an encouragement to women, is also important. In Haringey we now have a policy that at least half of the delegation to annual conference should be women.

When this was passed last year it was also agreed that no member should attend conference more than twice in four years.

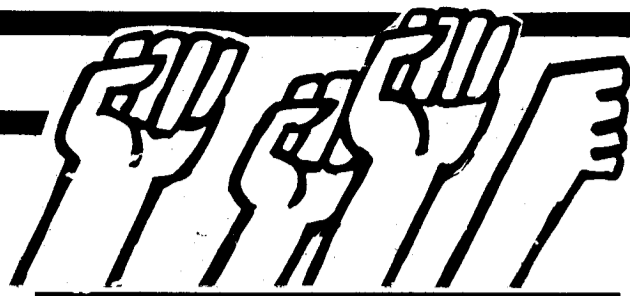
Challenge

This changed the composition of our conference delegation. Women were encouraged to stand, and generally more members felt confident to be put forward—i.e. it didn't have to be the same old people who went year in, year out.

Once you challenge entrenched positions, it becomes much more important what people have to say, rather than how many years they have been secretary or whatever.

This year the debate on whether NALGO should affiliate to the Labour Party can begin to challenge some of the entrenched attitudes in the union—the 'keep politics out of the union' approach. Somehow because our employers are members of different political parties, NALGO members are expected to be 'non-political' and concentrate on such 'non-political' issues as wages and conditions of work.

The debate and ballot of members has come at a time when it is more and more apparent to members that the threat to jobs and services is a very political issue. By remaining unaffiliated to the Labour Party we are weakening our ability to fight, and isolate ourselves from the rest of the trade union movement.



COHSE: union officials get private treatment

by Jane Goss

ON PAPER, the Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE) is a democratically run union, with members making policy decisions. In reality, however, COHSE is run by a right wing male bureaucracy which is made up mostly of male nurses.

The full time officials are not elected and are not accountable to the membership.

In 1981 there were major wranglings within Head Office, resignations, and splits on policy decisions. Albert Spanswick, the general secretary, has ignored wishes of members and came under attack at the 1981 annual conference.

With the constant strain of cuts, closures and appalling low pay settlements, COHSE members are becoming more militant. But, while the members move forward, the leadership consistently retreats.

The National Executive Committee which is elected by Regional Councils has traditionally been right wing. There is only one woman on the NEC. This year one of the few left wingers resigned in disgust at COHSE policies, particularly the 'perk' whereby COHSE full time officials have the option of private medical examinations.

The lethargy of COHSE nationally can be seen particularly around pay struggles. This year, when there should be a major fight for a decent wage settlement, COHSE has not produced any posters, badges or even given branches any encourage-

ment to campaign locally for action on pay.

In order to fill the vacuum within COHSE, a broad left group has recently been formed.

GROUP 81 was started at conference 1981—which proved too much even for conservative delegates.

Following a year of constant rundown of services, and attacks on militants in the Health Service, COHSE was under pressure from several resolutions put forward by branches.

Farce

However, what promised to be a stimulating conference turned into a farce. The platform and Standing Orders Committee arranged for debate to be stopped in every session just before controversial resolutions were to be taken.

Platform speakers spoke sometimes for 25 minutes on 'reports' or resolutions which they wanted defeated and then accused delegates of wasting conference's time on points of order. When delegates asked for extension of sessions in order to discuss crucial resolutions they were told it was impossible as it would conflict with planned socials.

As a result, delegates from all over the country met and formed GROUP 81. One of the major aims of the group is to restore democracy in COHSE.

We are also campaigning for a minimum wage of £100 linked to a 35 hour week, unilateral disarmament and several other specific demands. We have already produced a newsletter and organised fringe meetings for conference 82.

1982 will be an important year with attempts to change the rules and make the full time officials accountable to the membership. This can only be done if they are elected and subject to re-election.

If we can accomplish this then the first step towards building COHSE as a recognisable force within the NHS will have been taken.



Spanswick



Women's Fightback Trade union conference

MARCH 27

Time and again women trade unionists have come forward to fight the Tory onslaught on their rights and living standards. And each time they have run up against the limitations or outright treachery of the existing bureaucratic leaders.

And they have found a movement which has for decades ignored the issues and problems faced by women.

The March 27 Trade Union conference called by Women's Fightback is designed as a focus for a movement to change the unions and challenge their present leadership.

The conference is open to women either as individuals or as delegates from any group, workplace organisation, branch or women's group at local, regional or national level.

There will be an all-day creche. Workshops on various topics under main groups: Pay; public sector and the cuts; jobs; fighting sexism; racism and the Third World.

The conference fee is £3.50 (£2 for low-waged or unwaged non-delegates). Credentials from 41 Ellington Street, London N7.



Industrial News

PUBLISHING PAY PROTEST

MEMBERS of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) from over 30 book publishing houses in the London area have decided to stage a half-day official strike on Thursday 25 February against the low level of wages in the book industry.

The NUJ represents editorial, design, production, and publicity staff and about 1,000 people from well known publishing houses will be taking part in the action.

A lunch-time demonstra-

tion outside the employers' organisation, the Publishers Association in Bedford Square will be followed by a march to Congress House, where a mass meeting will be held in the afternoon. Freelance workers and members of other unions in

book publishing (notably NGA, SOGAT, NATSOPA, SLADE and ASTMS) will be participating along with NUJ members in companies where the union has not yet achieved bargaining rights.

Union members in book companies outside London will support the strike by local initiatives and by sending delegates to the mass meeting.

Support for the action has been enormous, with 75% of those voting at workplace meetings backing the strike.

This is not surprising since real wages in the industry have fallen by 12% between 1975 and 1980 while profitability has risen by about 50% in the same period.

This half-day strike has to be seen as the first in a series of actions to bring the wage levels of workers in the book industry up to an adequate level and arrest the decline in living standards that has been taking place.

KYRAN CONNOLLY

SCOTS BOILERMAKERS DEFEND THE RIGHT TO PICKET

ON 10 September 1980, 48 pickets, members of the Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers (ASOB) and the GMWU, were arrested during the dispute at the Hunterston oil-rig yard (Ayrshire).

Last October, fines totalling £2,350 were imposed on 47 of them. The last of those arrested, Abie Courtney, a member of ASOB, and former shop steward at the yard, is coming up for trial on Friday 19 February.

Last week Abie spoke to Socialist Organiser.

"There were 120 of us on the picket line that day. The police told us they were going to arrest us for picketing on private property. They asked us to move. We refused. They asked us again and we refused again.

The police formed up a quarter of a mile away from the picket line. They marched towards us in military formation, three abreast and 20 deep. The way they marched towards us over that distance made a real psychological impression on the picket line.

The line dwindled from 120 to 48. One of them even climbed a tree to get out of the road of the police. They arrested us and took us to the police station in Largs. There were even more police there, from Kilmarnock, Irvine, Saltcoats and Largs itself.

We were charged with breach of the peace and so on, and photographed in groups of 12. Ronnie, the convenor, and me were interviewed by the chief inspector. At the time he struck me as quite sympa-

thetic, but in court a lot of things the police said simply weren't true.

Was this the first time you had had trouble with the police in the strike?

Aye, but it wasn't the first time we had trouble with the firm. They were anti-shop steward, and I mean bitterly anti-shop steward.

The first eight of those arrested were tried in the test case. How did their case go?

I wasn't in court the first day, so I never got to hear what the prosecution was saying. I was there the second day and heard the defence speeches. The solicitors didn't take up the cases on a political basis, the right to picket, but on a purely legal basis. At no time on that day did they make a statement about the right to picket. The solicitors didn't fight based on a political stand.

They had promised they were going to co-operate with the stewards, but they didn't. I missed the first day of that trial because they never told us about it!

And before that, when we were signing the legal aid forms, I had said we should get a leaflet out about the trial to the labour movement. The solicitors objected very strongly to this and said it would jeopardise our case.

The test case was lost, and so was the appeal to the Lords in Edinburgh. What did the solicitors do between the defeat of the appeal and the trial of the

other 40?

Nothing. There was no communication at all between the solicitors and us before our trial, nor any communication between the solicitors and the shop stewards before the appeal in Edinburgh.

They took the case the way they thought it should be taken, not the way that we, their clients, wanted.

The morning of the trial of the other 40 in Kilmarnock, was the first time we saw the solicitors since signing the legal aid forms. They told us we're advising you to plead guilty. If anyone pleads not guilty, you'll have to find another solicitor to defend you.

Some of the boys pleaded guilty because they had jobs again by that time and

just wanted to get it over with. But quite a few had said they would be pleading not guilty, before they heard what the solicitors had to say. But out of disgust, and I'd emphasise that, people change their minds.

In my opinion it was a bit of sharp practice by the solicitors on working class people. I'd emphasise that too: sharp practice. Like the promise to cooperate, and then they didn't. And the way they worked to hush the whole thing up in court.

What was the reason for the Campaign in Defence of the Right to Picket [CDRP] being set up?

Because it was wrong for us to get arrested for picketing. We were

picketing for health and safety at work (the initial cause of the strike), we were fighting against 300 getting made redundant (management's response to try to break the strike). We were fighting to stop scab labour being imported from America and being used against us, and breaking the site agreement. We were defending our liveli-

MINERS!

What do YOU think about the way forward in the NUM? Write in to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8

Campaigners fight private hospital

by Tony Twine

IN THE face of mounting public anger, Southampton's Tory-controlled council has given the greenlight to plans to build a 100-bed private hospital smack on the doorstep of the existing Southampton General.

By just one vote last Wednesday, 10th, a full council meeting agreed the planning application of American-based Hospital Corporation International for development of the £8 million, 12½ acre Chalybeate pay hospital.

Prior to this crucial vote 150 lobbyists had given the

Tories a rough ride while handing over a 1,100 name petition demanding a public inquiry, many staying to occupy the public gallery during the four hour debate.

Unfortunately they hadn't reckoned with these hard-bitten Tories, many of whom are themselves members of private health schemes.

At an earlier public meeting, speakers from HWAC (Health Workers Against Chalybeate) had angrily rejected claims that the Chalybeate would be an acute hospital able to handle accidents and emergencies.

The project is, after all, a money-making exercise for a privately owned company—with a responsibility to its investors, not the general public.

The city council's decision is nothing short of a scandal. Clearly, with such widespread opposition building, the Tories felt that any searching examination would be a bloody affair, with HCI pulling out of the project altogether.

Their ruling must be vigorously challenged by the labour movement. Certainly Trades Council policy must be for a total blacking of the private hos-

pital. This applies especially to members of the building union, UCATT.

Issue

Steve Ferris, Southampton Hospitals branch secretary confirmed this would be the issue at the next Trades Council meeting, while a spokesperson for HWAC stated the need for escalating the fight to draw in health service unions, local residents, environmentalists, as well as tapping the Regional Health Authority's hostility to the scheme.

Razor strike wins support

THE STRIKE at Jewel Razors, Sheffield, is beginning to get the support it needs to win.

Shop stewards Ambrose Shardlow, a factory, have blacked firm Warrington Transport which has been busting picket line to deliver supplies to Jewel. The bosses maintaining production by scab labour after sacking the strikers.

The strikers—who originally came out over the issue of convenor John Hingham—are confident they are planning further pickets.

Donations and messages of support are needed. To: Jewel Razor Strike Fund, c/o D. Bramell, 10 Park Cross Rd., Sheffield 6.

DAVE AYR

Victory in pay strike

THE four week dispute at the Stockport Electronics plant of McLure Clarkes ended on Tuesday 2 February with a victory for the workers, who remained solidly behind their picket line.

The company, facing a determined workforce and with the order book full, conceded all the union's demands, including a pay rise of 15½% improvements in working conditions.

A negotiating team sent from the parent company in Scotland saw only one day of negotiation before the necessary concessions were made.

This is being seen as a great victory for a workforce with no real history of militancy. Certainly it has been learnt through dispute. The lesson for workers is that living standards can be defended by united and determined struggles.

PATRICK MURPHY, Stockport

WHAT'S ON

February

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

Fight the Cuts: rally and march organised by Birmingham Trades Council Anti-Cuts Campaign. Saturday February 27, assemble 10.30am Chamberlain Square.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER MEETINGS AND FORUMS

NORTH-WEST LONDON.
Monday Mar. 15: A Woman's Right to Work
Monday Apr. 12: Fund-raising social to commemorate the Easter Rising. Details from SO sellers.

SHEFFIELD: Every other Wednesday, at the Brown Cow, The Wicker. Business 7.30, discussion 8.30.

Mar. 3: Turkey
Mar. 17: The decline of US capitalism
Mar. 31: Women and the labour movement

LEIGH: Every other Sunday 7.30 at the White Lion (opposite the market).

Feb. 21: Afghanistan and the Soviet invasion.

LAMBETH: Sundays at 7pm. For venue phone 609 3071.

Feb. 28: The origins of the Labour Party.

STOKE SO
Structure of the Labour Party.
Thurs 25 Feb at 8pm.
The Resource Centre,
Mollard St., Hanley.

MARXISM
London Workers' Socialist League classes on basic Marxism: alternate Fridays, next class February 19 on 'The Working Day'. For details of registration and venue, write to PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

IRELAND
What is Britain doing in Ireland?
Speakers include: Ken Livingstone, Ernie Roberts, MP, Richard Balf, MEP, Phil Flynn, Deputy General Secretary, ILGWU.
Friday Feb 19 at 7.30. Stone Newington Town Hall, Stoke Newington Church Street, N16. Organised by North London Labour Committee on Ireland.

Labour Movement conference on Ireland: Saturday February 27, from 11am at The Theatre, 309 Regent St, London W1. Sponsored by LCI and Committee for Withdrawal from Ireland. Credentials £2 from 1 North End Road, London W14.

Manchester Labour Committee on Ireland: discussion on the southern Ireland general election. Thursday Feb. 25, 7.30 at the Briton's Protection pub, Gt Bridgewater St, Manchester 1. Open to all LP members.

Defend a Women's Right to Work: public meeting called by the Women's Advisory Committee of Leeds Trades Council. Friday February 26 8pm at Leeds Trades Club, Saville Mount, Leeds 7.

FARES CAMPAIGN
Keep Fares Fair
Speakers: Dave Wetzel, Chair
GLC Transport Cttee.
Richard Balf, MEP
Speakers from LT unions
Monday 22 Feb at 7.30pm.
Dominica Centre, 69, Peckham High St.
Organised by Peckham Labour Party.

Oxford Women's Fightback meetings.
PORNOGRAPHY, Mon. Feb 22, 8pm, East Oxford Community Centre, room 2.

Rally for International Women's Day sponsored by Socialist Challenge, Revolution Youth. Speakers from the Fourth International. Mary Vinns, United Mine-workers of America. Speaker from Nicaraguan women's movement. Camden Centre, off Euston Rd, 7.30pm, March 12. Doors open 5.30pm. Stalls and displays. Entrance £1; 50p unwaged.

SUPPORT LEYLAND VEHICLES WORKERS!
Demonstration and rally Saturday 27 February. Assemble, 12 noon, Leyland Civic Centre, Leyland, Lancs
Speakers: LV Leyland Strike Committee, Tom Dalzell MP LV Bathgate speaker.

Picket Kilmarnock Sheriffs Court: Friday February 19, from 9.30, in support of Abie Courtney, ex-Hunterston shop steward, on trial for the 'crime' of picketing the Hunterston oilrig yard during the September/October 1980 dispute there. Transport details from Glasgow: phone Ian McLeish, 041-641 2204. The Campaign in Defence of the Right to Picket is to date supported by ASOB Glasgow branch 11, ASOB Partick branch 2, NALGO Edinburgh, Hillhead CLP, Ibrox branch LP, Crosshill/Prospecthill branch LP, Drumry/Summerhill LP, Portobello/Milton LP, Inch Gilmerston LP, Telford/Blackhall LP, Broughton/Inverleith LP, Rutherglen LPYS, Stirling Unemployed Workers' Association, Edinburgh UWA.

Signs of solidarity with Plessey fight

AS the occupation of Plessey Capacitors in Bathgate enters its fourth week, there are signs of solidarity action by other employees of the multi-national.

by Dave Milliken

Following visits to the Bathgate plant by shop stewards from Beeston and Northampton last Friday, 12 February, mass meetings are taking place on Friday 19, to decide what form of support to give.

Deputations from Bathgate will attend these meetings and on Saturday 20 a meeting of the Plesseys Combine will take place.

The workforce at Bathgate are well aware that they can only inflict so much damage on their own and it is becoming increasingly apparent that this dispute may well be lengthy.

The confidence of the

workers was noticeably higher this week. They recognise that Plessey management, not known in the past for a softly-softly approach, may balk at using large numbers of police to smash the occupation.

Workers in neighbouring factories have indicated that bodies will be available should force be attempted against them.

Although the phone was cut off last Thursday, a call box allows outgoing calls to contact for support.

The level of support in the community is high, for it faces almost complete devastation if these redundancies along with the 1365 planned for BL also at

Bathgate are allowed to happen.

For these reasons, as the Plesseys and BL disputes escalate, Bathgate could become the focal point for the jobs fightback.

Support is steadily growing, and coverage in the media in Scotland has been significantly higher than the Lee Jeans occupation received a year ago.

To hit Plessey even harder blacking of their products is essential. British Telecoms is one of their most significant customers.

In stark contrast to the British Leyland dispute, (where the workers are picketing daily while the strike committee talks to management without any consultation with the membership), the strike committee consults the member-

ship before any steps are taken and everyone is involved in decision making.

While financial support is beginning to come in better, money is still urgently needed.

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

Foyles fight

by Amanda Barnes

Foyles of Charing Cross Road like to be known as London's leading book shop. However, when it comes to employment practices they are back in the 19th century.

Rights of any description are an unknown luxury if you happen to work there.

Job security, reasonable health and safety, canteen facilities, and trade union rights are just a few of the basics most workers take for granted. But these are conspicuous by their absence in Foyles.

Because of the low pay and poor conditions, the shop workers' union USDAW has been successful in recruiting new members in Foyles.

However, when management found out that unionisation was spreading within the company they dismissed the five people (including shop steward Siobhan Lanigan) who they knew were unionised.

Since this blatant act of victimisation occurred last Wednesday, there has been a growing campaign for reinstatement of the five and recognition of the union.

There has been a continuous picket mounted by the five plus other sympathetic trade unionists.

So far management have refused to respond to calls to negotiate. However the pressure on them to do so is increasing as delivery vans are turned away by the pickets and membership of the union spreads rapidly inside the shop.

Messages of support and donations should go to: Foyles Action Committee, c/o Collective National Book Stores, Charing Cross Road, London WC2.

Industrial News



ASLEF

from back page



had his instructions from somewhere in the union hierarchy to torpedo the Liaison Committee. This view is reinforced by the conspicuous absence of Stratford ASLEF branch (another branch with a strong CP element) from the second meeting of the Liaison Committee.

It has now emerged that Stratford branch have themselves called for the re-launch of the Liaison Committee and are proposing to create a rival 'official' Liaison Committee. More evidence, perhaps, of EC-inspired sabotage.

Scotch

Whatever attempts are made to scotch the Liaison Committee or divert moves to rebuild it towards a safer 'official' body, there can be no question that there is a burning need for this kind of organisation. Genuine militants who want to see greater consultation and coordination between depots, especially in the present situation, can only view the creation of a rival committee as a divisive and treacherous move.

The issue of flexible rostering is by no means resolved. If the BRB firmly ligs its heels in, with backing from the Tory government, then the sharpest stage of this struggle is still to come. ASLEF members must guard against any move by our leaders to grab defeat from the jaws of victory, and an effective Liaison Committee will play a key role in this.

COPS BUST SCOTTS PICKET

ONLY widespread blackings of all goods from owner Arthur Snipe's firms can now gain victory for the fight for jobs at Laurence Scotts, Manchester.

On Monday 5th, at 6.45 am, over 500 police smashed a way through a 300-strong mass picket. Vans and lorries - including some from Armitage's of Hull - went in to collect the £1 million worth of Admiralty equipment blocked in the factory.

Another raid backed by masses of police, at 3pm, removed further equipment.

One woman picket was injured in the morning raid, and two strike leaders, Dennis Barry and Phil Penning, were arrested.

Toxteth

The people living near the factory were bitter about the police brutality: "Toxteth 1982!", some shouted.

The Scotts strikers are undaunted. They deserve support if anyone ever did. Where they specially need support is in dealing with the leaders of their own majority union, the AUEW, who have defied union rules to remove official recognition from Scotts and even to denounce the struggle publicly.

The strike committee are asking for AUEW branches to pass a resolution calling for the removal of the union's Executive Council (see text in Open Letter to Leyland, back page).

The resolution needs maximum support now - to force the AUEW to restore official support and lay the basis for blacking Snipe, or at the very least to ensure that the lessons of Scotts are learned as widely as possible in the labour movement.

GARETH CALEY



Plessey strike leaders George Wilson and Lena Scoular

Fight on 39 hr week

by Bill Peters

THERE was a patchy response to BL's imposition of cuts in relief allowance in both the main Cowley plants last Monday. Management moved suddenly last Friday afternoon, having told the Convenors and officials when the dispute procedure was exhausted, that they would give five days' notice of imposition.

They gave what was effectively two hours.

A letter was handed to every worker on Friday afternoon informing them that the relief times would be cut by four minutes from 50 to 46 minutes and the track speeded up by 1 1/2% (future work study would be based on 101 1/2 BSI).

In the Assembly Plant shop stewards implemented the policy adopted by mass meetings early in January when management first tried to implement the cuts, which they say are to fund the 39 hour week. This policy involves clocking off fifteen minutes early at the end of each shift.

The response was only partial and it will be necessary to stiffen the action if it is to be successful.

In the Body Plant where there has been a series of strikes recently, production stopped when the cuts were forced in, under conditions

where there was no prepared response by the leadership.

The Rover Ambassador track stopped for the first four hours, demanding common action throughout the plant. Action also took place in the paint shop and on the Ital and Acclaim track.

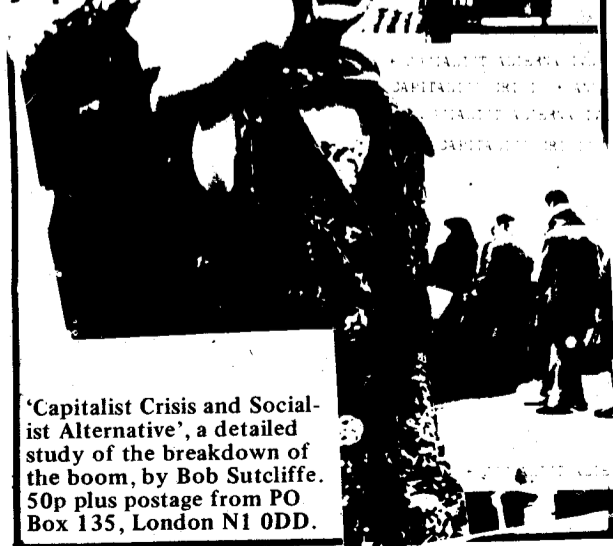
Eventually a mass meeting was called, which voted to impose an overtime ban and a policy of non-cooperation against the company's move.

A resolution for an all-out strike was opposed by the convenor and defeated by a 5-1 majority. The night shift struck for three hours but eventually adopted the same policy as the day shift.

Advertisement

Workers Socialist Review 1

50p



NUT STRIKE

ON FEBRUARY 15, secondary school teachers in Barking started a three day strike against cuts and redundancies. Secondary and primary teachers will begin an indefinite strike on March 2, with the official backing of the National Union of Teachers.

Barking has a right wing Labour council, which has gone along with the cuts demanded by the Government. 80 teaching jobs were lost last year, and compulsory redundancies were only stopped by the action of the local Association (union branch).

This year Barking's proposed cuts involve the loss of another 150 teaching jobs.

The NUT leadership, which has taken no effective action against cuts so far, has been forced to give official backing by a strong local branch.

This strike is important because it is a pre-emptive action before the jobs have

actually been lost, and it is not confined to the issue of compulsory redundancies.

The NUT is understood to have authorised picketing of schools to prevent deliveries during the indefinite strike. This is unprecedented for a teachers' union.

Rent Freeze

Barking council is freezing rents. This should be supported, even if it is a pre-election gimmick, but it should not be paid for by cuts in jobs and services.

Barking NUT has made it clear that it does not want the council to pass government cuts on to the working people in any way at all. It is time for the council to defy the government.

The Barking teachers' action is not an isolated issue, and should be supported throughout the labour movement.

TONY GARD

CONFERENCE

Democratise the labour movement!

WHEN AND WHERE: The conference has been PUT BACK from the original date of March 6 - which turned out to clash with other commitments for many invited speakers - to Saturday April 3. A venue will be confirmed shortly.

INITIAL SPONSORS: Socialist Organiser, London Labour Briefing; Oxford Trades Council, Trafford Trades Council, Oxford CATC; Laurence Scotts strike committee, Kings Cross ASLEF, CPSA British Library branch, TGWU 5/822, Oxford NUJ, ACTSS-APEX joint committee GEC Coventry; Bradford District Labour Party, Nottingham Labour Briefing, Manchester Labour Left, Coventry Labour Left; Sussex University Labour Students; (in personal capacity) Reg Race MP, Mike Cooley. DELEGATES: and observers invited from all labour movement organisations. Individuals also welcome. Credentials £2. CRECHE: will be available.

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

Saturday APRIL 3

"Send delegations to all the BL plants"

Socialist Organiser

Dear Brother/Sister,

Laurence Scotts workers have been on strike for ten months now. Like you we've been fighting to save jobs. We've shown the way. Congratulations on joining us. Like us you have shown that ordinary workers have had their bellyful of Thatcher and employers like Michael Edwardes and Arthur Snipe.

We are a little flame. You have made it burn brighter. Let's hope that other workers follow our example. Here are some lessons that I think you might find useful—lessons that we have learned during our many months of picketing. You can't go it alone. Don't think you can, you can't. We've got other factories. We have spent months picketing Doncaster where Arthur Snipe has his headquarters. If the other workers had supported us and come out with us we could have won by now. So get on your bike. Send delegations out to all the British Leyland plants, including the car factories. Ask them to support you by joining your strike. Financial support is essential, of course, but you know the real way to stop Edwardes is to hit him where it hurts—in his pocket by closing down the whole combine. If all the British Leyland workers come out you can win, but not by just restricting it to Vehicles.

Another thing—Boyd and Duffy. I'm told that the AUEW is your biggest union. It's the same at Scotts. You've got a problem. Your union leaders are playing for the other team. We've been fighting them for ten months as

An Open Letter to Leyland Vehicles from Laurence Scotts strikers



Leyland pickets

well as Arthur Snipe. Don't be taken in because they have made your strike official. They did the same for us. But when we wouldn't accept the sell-out they negotiated, they put us out on the street.

When you begin to bite they'll try and put the muzzle on you as well.

They won't leave you to get on with it.

You could do yourselves and us a big favour by passing this resolution in your branch. If we can get 10% of AUEW branches to support our resolution,

we can get a national ballot on whether Boyd and Duffy stay in office.

"This branch believes that the Executive Council has mishandled the Laurence Scotts Electromotors dispute.

As this is an issue of concern to all AUEW members, this branch demands a ballot for the removal of the Executive Council in line with rule 14, paragraph 5." (Send to AUEW, 110 Peckham Rd., London SE15 plus copy to LSE Strike Committee, c/o 20 Roundcroft, Romily,

SUPPORT THE LEYLAND VEHICLES WORKERS!

Demonstration and rally: Saturday February 27. Assemble noon at Leyland Civic Centre.

Cheshire).

Anyway, best of luck. Stick together, hold regular meetings, go to anybody else who is willing to support you, watch the union leaders and try and get other Leyland workers to come out. United we stand, divided we fall. That's what it's all about.

In solidarity,

STEVE LONGSHAW, AUEW deputy convenor, Laurence Scotts.

Police bust Scotts picket — page 15

ASLEF: sharpest battle to come?

AFTER THE report of the McCarthy inquiry, the British Rail Board is on the defensive, and can be routed as long as ASLEF sticks to its position, maintains its action, and escalates action if the BRB remains obstinate.

McCarthy recommended that the 3% pay rise be paid to ASLEF immediately and that the issue of flexible rostering be taken to the railways negotiating machinery, without any binding arbitration. McCarthy's recommendation that ASLEF reaffirm its commitment to productivity is, in this context, no more than a mild slap on the wrist for the union.

ASLEF has accepted the McCarthy report, while the BRB — as we go to press — is stalling.

The humiliation for the Board is all the more acute as the Committee of Inquiry was set into motion on their initiative. It was the Board that attacked ASLEF for refusing to come to the Inquiry.

When the BRB began to see that McCarthy's findings would in all probability not go in their favour, they restated their position on pay and productivity and promised, once again, mass

by Steve Good (Asst. Branch Secretary, Kings X ASLEF, in personal capacity)

sackings. This threat has so far proved to be just bluster.

NUR general secretary Sid Weighell, in spite of his statements identifying himself with McCarthy's findings, must also be smarting from the result. Having sold thousands of guards' jobs for 3%, he is now faced with a situation where ASLEF has received the same payment without committing themselves to any binding agreement on flexible rostering.

Determination

The determination of many NUR guards to defeat flexible rostering can only be strengthened by McCarthy's findings.

In spite of the defeat for the Board, ASLEF cannot claim a total victory even if the BRB accepts McCarthy. The ASLEF executive went into this dispute with two central weaknesses.

Firstly, there was an attempt by the ASLEF leadership to limit the dispute to the technicalities of the agreement of August 20 last year. The dispute was geared around the 'honouring of agreements' and the 'credibility of the machinery of negotiation'.

The ASLEF executive has point-blank refused to escalate the stoppages to all-out action. Linked with this refusal has been the pathetic and deliberate failure of the EC to ensure effective blacking action from other unions.

Reluctance

These attempts to restrict the development of the struggle clearly point to the reluctance of the EC, from the very start, to take on the Board at all.

This reluctance has been reflected, often quite viciously in the EC's attitude to unofficial action taken by many depots in an attempt to escalate the dispute. But it is even clearer in the leadership's response to the re-launch of the London Liaison Committee.

At the committee's last meeting, Andy Moynihan, branch secretary of Willesden ASLEF, argued that the Liaison Committee be disbanded forthwith. It was a mysterious about-face by Moynihan, a Communist Party member, who has previously supported the Liaison Committee.

There is every reason to believe that Moynihan

Why we must support Solidarity

by Reg Race MP

THE labour movement is at last waking up to the importance of events in Poland. After a period of relative silence, the Labour Party has now called a National Rally on Poland on 16 March.

The International Committee of the Party, meeting in January, passed a resolution, moved by Eric Teffer, supporting the objectives of Solidarity and calling for non-intervention by both the USA and the Soviet Union.

The resolution also called for a ban on fraternal contacts with the Polish United Workers Party and the official Polish trade unions "whilst the military regime continues, whilst trade unionists and other supporters of Solidarity are imprisoned, and whilst freedom of expression of trade union organisation is banned. We therefore give our full support to Solidarity in their hour of need."

How can members of the labour movement in Britain help the Polish workers?

By firstly, submitting resolutions through their trade union branches to commit their unions to an unequivocal support for Solidarity.

Secondly, by getting their local Labour Parties to pass resolutions urging the NEC of the Labour Party to give a firm lead in organising actions in defence of the Polish workers.

Thirdly, by convincing their local labour movement organisations of the need to set up local defence committees based exclusively on the labour movement.

Fourthly, by organising material and financial aid to Solidarity, this aid to be channelled through the representatives of Solidarity in Britain—the Solidarity Trade Union Working Group.

Fifthly by supporting the call of the Lancashire Association of Trades Councils for a national labour movement conference and by building this conference in their own area.

In this way we can overcome the legacy of Stalinism in both Poland and Britain. A defeat for the Polish workers will be a big setback for the working class movement and for socialism throughout all Europe.

This is why we must defend Solidarity.

Fighting for solidarity — see page 5

Joint stewards' conference vital

by Pat Lally

MONDAY'S meeting of the BL Bus and Truck division management and representatives of the three-week long strikers in Leyland and Bathgate was a virtual re-run of their meeting two weeks ago, management sticking hard to their plan for mass sackings (their one concession being to postpone them to April 2) and the AUEW-led trade union side formally refusing to accept.

Stalemate

But the situation is far from a stalemate. For there are ominous straws in the wind that the crucial AUEW members are to be faced with demands from their leaders that they return to work. The reasoning being that, since the company refuse to concede and have further threatened to close the whole of Bathgate and the Leyland factory soon, it will save jobs to accept the present 4,100 sackings.

The source of this speculation is not the AUEW

Journal but the Fleet Street press, a medium which in the past has been far more reliable in predicting the union's national policy. And, in BL, many times before have such press leaks of secret meetings and deals between BL executives and top union officials proved right.

That means Thursday's mass meetings will be faced most likely with the collapse of their national leaders and the problems of going on without even their paper support. However easy it was to predict this scenario, and NW EC member responsible Gerry Russell has never differentiated himself from the Boyd-Duffy duo who have done the same so often in BL Cars, nevertheless the situation is a difficult one.

Stance

What will largely decide will be the stance of the strike committee. Even with betrayal of this order from above, a strong response

from the plant leadership can go a long way to counteract it, particularly when the Leyland Vehicles strike has shown such unity and tenacity so far. But a way forward under such conditions means going on the offensive if isolation and weakening are to be resisted.

Deeper

That means not only a deeper turn for support from the whole labour movement, but, as a priority, urgent approaches to the remainder of the BL workforce. BL Cars, with its large union membership and control over the company's volume car production, holds the key.

It is inconceivable that victory can be gained without them if Edwardes and his pernicious Corporate Plan are to be really defeated and not marginally deflected. The recent AUEW Foundry Section decision to black any components out-



Duffy

sourced by the company to combat the strike's effectiveness can lead to an important escalation of the dispute by hitting Jaguar production.

Easily the best means of building unity between the vehicles strikers and the Cars Division would be through activating the BL shop stewards combine committee decision to convene a joint stewards conference. It is urgent that the strike committees now take this step.

LV Strike Fund, c/o Austin Senior, 240 Leyland Lane, Leyland, Lancs. Tel: Leyland 34600.

WORKERS from left and community bookshops in many cities from Scotland to the south of England have recently sent in their signatures for the Labour Movement Press Defence Fund Appeal.

This appeal — 'A Labour Inquiry, Not the Courts' — was launched after Sean Matgamna and John Bloxam of Socialist Organiser were sued for libel by Vanessa Redgrave of the WRP, a year ago.

The case is still making its slow and costly way through the legal procedures. No date is fixed for it to come to court.

The Labour Movement Press Defence Fund is also asking for contributions towards the legal expenses.

Name

Address

Organisation.....

I would like to associate myself with the appeal 'A Labour Inquiry, Not the Courts'. Please send me copies of the petition form/ I enclose cheque or PO to LMPDF for £..... (Delete as appropriate).

Send to: Jonathan Hammond, Treasurer, LMPDF, c/o 214 Sicket Court, London N1 2SY.