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Argentine socialist speaks out

Argentine socialist
Carlos Garcia told
Socialist Organiser:

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STOP LABOUR SUPPORT FOR FALKLANDS FRENZY

See page 3, inside: Editorial on Labour
and the war; analysis of Galtieri's
gambit; and Press Gang

NO WAR!

THE Tories are going to war to try to save Britain's falling prestige as a world-exploiting power. That is their concern: not the fate of the Falkland Islanders, and still less any objection of principle to the military dictatorship in Argentina.

Since World War 2 the British ruling class has lost its big patches of red on the map, as millions in the former colonies have demanded, fought for, and won the right to rule themselves. But Britain's bosses still lean heavily on economic super-exploitation of the 'Third World'.

The 50 biggest British industrial companies currently do 43% of their total production abroad, and, while profits in Britain are low and stagnant, their overseas profits are booming. The overseas profits of British financial companies have gone up 160% over the last two years.

A good chunk of this plunder is vulnerable to seizure by nationalist governments. And so the British bosses need to prop up their crumbling reputation as a big power.

That's why the fleet is sailing. Thatcher's first aim is probably to put pressure on the US and EEC to use their much greater economic and military weight to save Britain's face. But the Tories are also prepared to go ahead with the horrors of war.

All the British working class is likely to get from this war is increased cuts or tax demands. (Just getting the fleet to the Falklands, with no more, will cost £50 million!)

Behind the hollow 'Send-the-gunboats' bluster is sordid hypocrisy. At the

same time as the Tories are sending the navy across the Atlantic, supposedly to defend the Falklanders, they are taking British citizenship away from over 400 of them through their Nationality Act.

Those Falklanders have already lost their right to enter Britain through the Immigration Acts - passed after other British citizens were threatened by dictatorships elsewhere!

Dark-skinned

When British citizens in Uganda and Kenya were deprived of their rights by vicious regimes, there was no talk of sending the troops. Instead, they were reluctantly allowed to slip into Britain, while, to the tune of a great racist outcry, the legal trapdoors were shut to stop other citizens following.

But then these were dark-skinned British citizens, and racist British governments did not consider that their prestige was at stake.

Some 1,000 British families in Diego Garcia, in the Indian Ocean, had an even tougher deal. They were deported by Britain itself, after a 1966 deal which handed the island over to the US as a military base. They were dumped in the slums of Mauritius, and only just recently got half of the compensation they claimed.

Hypocritical

Hypocritical also is the sudden fury against Argentina's 'fascist junta'. British governments (Tory and Labour) have happily traded and sold arms to Argentina since the 1976 coup, and



now the Tories are seeking aid against Argentina from Chile and South Africa! In the cross-fire between British arms in British hands and British arms in Argen-

tine hands, the Falklanders will be the first to suffer. The best evidence, indeed, is that the islanders whom the Tories claim to be acting for don't want an invasion.

Kenneth Clarke of the true-blue Daily Telegraph reported from the Falklands: "Almost everybody I spoke to did not want the British task force to invade unless the islands could first be evacuated".

Other messages from the islands indicate the same feeling.

The islanders will be the first to suffer from a war. And second will be the British and Argentine working classes.

WHY did General Galtieri invade the Falkland Islands? It is clear that he and his military government had to pull something out of the bag. Faced by its biggest economic and political crisis since it took control six years ago, the military was in grave difficulties.

These have been six very terrible years; thousands of Argentinians have disappeared, been killed or imprisoned. Argentine industry has been strangled and the country handed over to international banks.

The country has suffered the worst inflation in the world - it stood at 135% last year and 100% this year, according to the International Monetary Fund. 15% of the population is unemployed.

Generals

In 1981 the country had three successive presidents, all military. In March 1981 General Videla was replaced by General Viola, who in turn was replaced in December by Galtieri.

There have been continual struggles by students and working class alike in spite of continued repression. All factories and trade unions have held strikes against the government and its economic policies.

There has been growing opposition by the different business sectors who fear the reaction of the working class.

Conservative Party leader Francisco Manrique in February of this year said:

"Either this situation is resolved quickly or the solution will come from our streets". His declaration followed the murder of a young female member of the PST (Socialist Workers Party of Argentina).

Trade Unions

Political parties, trade unions and all sectors of the community strongly condemned the government and laid the blame for the crime at the door of the government. A street demonstration of 30,000 chanted "the military government is going to end".

All these elements led the Argentine government to employ its invasion tactic, thus diverting public attention and uniting the Argentine people.

As a Trotskyist, I say we should be against a war between Argentina and Britain over the Falkland Islands because it would mean death and misery for the working class.

A war will neither resolve nor change the economic or political situation in Argentina.

For this reason I believe that:

1) The CGT (Argentine trade union confederation) should call for a general strike against a war and against the Military Government.

2) The British trade union movement should support the Argentine working class movement and repudiate the declarations of war by the Tory government and the Labour Party.

3) The Falkland Islanders should be the ones to decide what they want.

Mobilise against Tebbit Bill - back page

ISLINGTON COUNCIL AN EYE OPENER ON

FOR most labour movement activists, an SDP council is a nightmare — for us in Islington it has been a grim reality for the last four months. As the first public body to be won by the Social Democrats, Islington is a litmus-test to show what these people are like in practice — and it has not proved to be a very edifying experience.

Needless to say, the SDP did not gain control by the ballot box. Its wafer-thin majority (SDP, 26; Labour, 24; Tories 2) was gained by the defection of twenty-five Labour councillors. Only one of this clique was directly elected, in a by-election. The local Labour Parties described this as a "municipal hi-jack" and it would be hard to describe it better. The "new" SDP was, in truth, neither new nor united. It consisted of three basic groups, only united in their right wing politics and hostility to trades unionism and socialism. These groups can be categorised as follows:

a) The O'Halloran Connection
First selected at a meeting involving fraud and

NF thugs attack

TWO Socialist Organiser supporters were among a group of socialists attacked by a gang of NF thugs in Blackburn on Saturday April 3.

The two SO supporters were harassed by Nazis as they sold SO prior to and at a march and rally organised by Blackburn CND group. As they and a small group of SWP members left the rally, they were followed by a gang of ten to 15 NFers, who surrounded and attacked them.

Two managed to break free and make their way to the Blackburn Trades Club, where they were able to enlist the support of several trade unionists.

When the police were informed of the incident, they refused to act, even though the fascists were pointed out to them. So what's new?

There has been a noticeable increase in fascist violence towards socialists and Asians in the area over the last few weeks. This has coincided with the release from prison of John Smythe, a self-styled SS Reichsführer who served a 12 months sentence for assault.

This highlights the need to defend socialists and ethnic minorities against fascist and racist attack. There is an increasing need to build support in the workers' movement for workers' defence squads. Well-meaning resolutions in unions and Labour Party branches on the banning of fascists from meeting halls controlled from Labour councils are not sufficient.

SDP

impersonation of delegates, Michael O'Halloran bought his Tammany Hall style of politics to North Islington to become its MP and for his supporters to control the Labour Party locally by a mixture of packed meetings, sectarian caucusing and putting off any new members outside their control. It took ten years and three NEC investigations, before this clique (known locally as the "Murphia") was ousted and replaced by a socialist leadership. As soon as this happened, they defected en bloc to the SDP.

b) The Old Guard

Prior even to O'Halloran's emergence, Islington enjoyed a poor reputation among Labour authorities. For much of the 1950s and 60s it was run by a certain E.J.W. ("Bill") Bayliss and his supporters. They vigorously opposed municipal spending and did not undertake any worthwhile housing programmes. One of these people was quoted as saying "If you build housing, you only encourage outsiders to move here." As their power declined and newer and younger members ousted them from the party positions, Bayliss and his supporters naturally coalesced into a bloc with O'Halloran's people — and defected with them for similar reasons.

c) The "Access-card" enrolment.

The sort of member the SDP likes to say exemplifies its new enrolment — the lawyers, estate agents and lecturers, etc — have joined in much the same numbers in Islington as in other areas. However, they are poorly represented on the Council group — and a growing rift has already developed between the influx of middle class liberals



by Keith Venes (from the London Labour Briefing pamphlet 'Briefing on the SDP')

LABOUR WEEKLY

and the old ex-Labour reactionaries.

For many years the Bayliss-O'Halloran axis had a tenuous control of the council but had a vigorous opposition, both in the Council and from the three Islington CLPs. Once the SDP controlled the Council, it was free to carry out a lot of cherished schemes — now unencumbered by any pressure from its political party and with no real fear of accountability or opposition from its base. Their actions stand as a grisly example of how the SDP would operate. In only three months they have reduced the Borough to a shambles and endangered services and programmes in a devastating fashion.

Just consider this sample of horrors: i) selling of housing sites — four major housing sites — including two which were former

estates — were put up for auction to private speculators. This will jeopardise the future housing development of the Borough.

ii) selling of Barnsbury Wood — a small area of urban heathland used by schools and nature lovers is to be sold off as well. This removes another open space from an overcrowded Borough.

iii) The re-starting of "bed and breakfast" for homeless families. Labour had abolished this Dickensian practice and rehoused homeless families directly into Council accommodation. Despite its inhumanity, and greater expense, the SDP has reinstated "bed and breakfast" solely as a "deterrent" to people!

iv) Banning senior citizens groups from using council transport. An OAP group used a council minibus

to attend a council meeting to hear a debate on Luncheon Clubs. This minibus was often lent for outings — but not any more! The SDP leadership wrote to this group and told them that as they used this vehicle for "political purposes" they were banned from now on.

v) Provoking an all-out strike of council officers. A housing department worker, Rob Webb, was suspended because he tried to take up a job his contract specified. It took an all-out two week strike by NALGO to re-instate him and a subsequent Tribunal ruled he was legally in the right. During this dispute, the SDP also locked-out the manual workers in Direct Labour and union-council relations have plummeted to an all-time low during these three months.

If this is the result of the four months of SDP rule, it

requires little imagination to see the ravages of four years that would afflict Islington — or any other Borough — were the SDP to seize the reins. As we go to press, the hold of the Social Democrats looks very weak. Labour has counter-attacked strongly and many electors are already disgusted by the sight of the SDP in action. On top of this, a serious split has occurred in the SDP's ranks — with Bayliss being ditched as a candidate and the newer SDPers in open warfare with the old gang. This augurs well for a Labour victory in the May elections, and for Islington to become a strong socialist council.

Nevertheless, this short period stands as an eye-opener to anyone wondering what the SDP looks like in practice. It is not an experience we would like any other area to suffer!

Labour Party response

by Chris Smith (from the Islington Labour Party paper Islington Voice).

ISLINGTON has 7,000 people on the housing waiting list and 5,000 tenants wanting a transfer to better accommodation.

Many families on the upper floors of old estates have no access to a garden while the elderly or disabled have little chance of getting a flat suited to their needs.

But in the five months that the SDP has controlled the council, they have sold off houses and land to private developers and speculators. They are to:

- Sell off up to 800 houses in packages of ten or twenty at a time, making 1500 homeless.

- Sell virtually every housing site the borough owns, ruining the prospects for building new houses.

- Give office planning permission for the housing sites sold, despite the thousands of square feet of office space already idle in the borough.

- Give up voluntarily some of the housing money available from central government, deliberately deciding to build fewer homes and to improve fewer estates.

Labour's answer is not to sell off houses and land for a quick buck, but to keep them for the housing programme. If they can't be used immediately, the sites should become play spaces or allotments, and the houses be used for short-life lets.

This SDP council is busy selling off Islington, and selling our future down the river in the process.

WHAT'S ON

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

POLAND

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOCIALIST ORGANISER MEETINGS AND FORUMS

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

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

7.30, discussion 8.30. Next meeting April 28.

ISLINGTON. Every other Friday, 7.30 at Caxton House, St John's Way, London N19. Next meeting April 16.

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

NORTH-WEST LONDON. Monday April 12: Fund-raising social to commemorate the Easter Rising. Details from SO sellers.

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

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

IRELAND

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

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

PALESTINE

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

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

MARXISM

London Workers' Socialist League classes on basic Marxism. Next one: The Lessons of October. Friday April 16, 7.30pm. For details of venue write to PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

'THE POLITICS of the Socialist Workers Party' — pamphlet produced by Glasgow Socialist Organiser. Sections on: history of the SWP, SWP and trade union work, SWP intervention in industrial disputes, SWP and women, SWP and internationalism. Prices 43p for one copy, £1.81 for five. Cheques payable to Ian McLeish. From: McLeish, 2 Quarry Ave, Halfway, Cambuslang, Glasgow.

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Linking arms with our real enemies

"ONLY a week before thousands of Argentines had converged on the presidential palace in the first major demonstration against a military government since the 1976 coup.

"Yet on Friday [2nd] many of the same people linked arms with the same security forces who had previously beaten them to the ground, joyously waving Argentine flags" (Financial Times).

Meanwhile the British labour movement — or at least our leaders — has been linking arms with the same Tories who threw millions of us onto the dole queue, and waving the Union Jack.

Labour front-benchers in Parliament have tried to outdo the Tories in jingoism. John Silkin made it his chief complaint against the Tories that they were not keeping the navy strong enough. Michael Foot was more shame-faced, but still plainly supported sending the fleet.

A few left-wingers dissented. "The Labour Party should dissociate itself from Mrs Thatcher's military adventure", said Tony Benn.

Frank Allaun, speaking on BBC Radio, said: "To fight it out between Argentine and British

navies would mean the death or maiming of 1800 Falkland Islanders in the cross-fire. There would also be the risk to 17,000 British people in Argentina itself". He argued that the islanders would probably prefer to be resettled in Britain or New Zealand.

The Tories' war

Ron Brown, MP for Leith, told Socialist Organiser: "There's a groundswell in the PLP supporting Thatcher's war plans for Argentina. I think that's extremely dangerous and can in no way serve the interests of the labour movement here or in Argentina. A war won't help the Falkland Islanders either.

"I don't agree with the PLP leaders going along with so-called public sentiment. A war between Britain and Argentina serves only the Tories. Killing and injuring people for the sake of out-dated gunboat diplomacy won't help anyone — least of all the islanders.

"The Tories and some of the PLP are behaving as if we lived in the 1880s, not the 1980s.

"Obviously the Falkland Islands should be Argentine, but that doesn't in any way mean that I support the Argentine junta.

"I'm also no pacifist, but I won't go along with the Tory war-fever. I won't give any credence to Thatcher, and the labour movement should demand that the gunboats are immediately brought out".

Reg Race MP told us: "By the time the fleet gets there, the Argentines will be firmly dug in. If a decision is made to mount an attack on their position, it will inevitably mean a substantial loss of life, including the possible destruction of Port Stanley.

"I think what the labour movement must call for is:

- No war with Argentina,
- Respect and support the views of the Falklanders in what they want to do".

Yet Reg Race also said: "I think that Michael Foot's position can be supported, in the circum-

stances. He has not given a blank cheque to the Tories". And Tony Benn went out of his way to praise Foot's speech in Parliament.

The Labour Left needs to act, not just to mumble dissent. We should be campaigning for clear condemnation of the jingoism of the Labour front-bench, public agitation against war (like Labour's campaign against the Suez invasion in 1956 and blacking of military supplies).

Instead of helping the Tories in their crisis by patriotic support for the government, Labour should be campaigning to overthrow them — and to help the Argentine workers to overthrow the Galtieri junta.

British and Argentine workers have a common interest in this crisis, to fight against their ruling classes for:

- Withdrawal of the British fleet, repudiation of any rights for the British ruling class in the region.
- Withdrawal of the Argentine troops from the Falklands. The right of the islanders to decide their own future free of any outside military presence.



Brezhnev call to action

BREZHNEV and his East European understudies have recently been demanding that their state-controlled 'trade unions' should start being more vigorous and militant for their members. The union functionaries are not doing their proper job — after Solidarnosc — in the division of labour between the components of the bureaucratic caste.

Division of labour it is — for in Stalinist society social autonomy by any group is a

threat. "Cadres", as J.V. Stalin put it, "must decide everything". Or, as his successor Khrushchev put it a generation later at the end of the 1950s: "Spontaneity is the main danger".

Bureaucratic, hierarchical 'party' control permeates and moves or immobilises all the organs of society, simultaneously mummifying them and turning them into petrified bastions of

bureaucratic control.

The bureaucracy bases its claim to historical validity on adapting the historic claims Marxism makes for the working class. It substitutes itself for the working class. The pseudo-unions are an arm of state power, but also act to inhibit working class action because they occupy the social space that trade unions would occupy.

The workers are faced with a nightmare world in which things are not what they are named as, do not do what they are supposed to do, and go through rituals designed to confuse and mislead.

Thus we get the scene of the boss, the actor-manager who allocates the parts in the bureaucratic parody, telling his trade unions — if you don't oppose me more noisily, I'll take your licence away or replace the leading actors.

It would be comic if not for the jailing and torture of real trade unionists, and the massive repression of the working class which the pseudo-unions facilitate.

The British labour movement should sever all connection with the Brezhnev-licensed 'unions', and help the Russian and East European workers to build real trade unions.

Galtieri's crisis move

ARGENTINA has claimed the Falkland Islands for 150 years. But what led to the invasion after those 150 years was not any anti-imperialist struggle, but a cynical calculation by the junta.

With the economy crumbling and working class revolt reviving, it went for a flag-waving nationalist gambit to rally the population behind it.

Against a direct attack by Britain on Argentina itself, Argentina would have every right to defend itself. But the Falklands were not occupied because they were any threat to Argentina.

The Falkland Islanders were neither a military, nor

an economic, nor a political threat to Argentina's national rights. Their right to decide their own future interferes with no-one else's rights.

Pawns

Yet they have been pawns in the manoeuvres of the British and Argentine governments.

Negotiations started in 1965. After 1971 they were given additional urgency by the discovery of oil in the seas round the Falklands. The seas round the Falkland Islands Dependencies and the nearest stretches of Antarctica are also rich in minerals and in krill (shrimp-like fish).

Britain's claim to a huge chunk of Antarctica — the same chunk as is claimed by Argentina — rests on its claim to the Falklands.

Neither Britain nor Argentina has gone ahead with developing the resources, because of the disputed claims.

Lease

A few years ago Britain offered to give sovereignty over the Falklands to Argentina in return for a lease-back arrangement, thus hoping to be able to get a chunk of the profits from the resources of the region. The deal fell through.

Alexander Haig's latest package proposes sharing the resources — that is, that Britain, because of a colonial expedition 150 years ago, should have equal rights in the area with the country that stands nearest.

The Labour Party international committee's statement on the Falklands says:

"All actions of the British government must be directed to their (the Falklanders') protection rather than by concern for property rights (or) natural resources."

The first step in taking this principle seriously would be for Britain to repudiate all claims to the resources of the region.

Kuron's rethink

AS THE Jaruzelski regime moves to formally dissolve Solidarnosc, Jacek Kuron has called for the armed overthrow of the bureaucracy.

Kuron, founder of the Workers' Self-Defence Committee [KOR] and a major political influence in Solidarnosc, had long argued for a reformist, step-by-step policy. Now the experience of Jaruzelski's brutal crackdown has pushed him back closer to the revolutionary socialist ideas he originally advocated in the 1960s.

Likening the martial law to an 'occupation', Kuron wrote in a Solidarnosc underground newsletter: "I advocated the principle of non-violence in my opposition activity for many years.

"But nowadays I consider the overthrow of the occupation by a mass operation the lesser evil.

"I think that such an action should take the form of a coordinated attack on all centres of power and information in the country".

PRESS GANG



PATRICK Spilling is aboard British fleet somewhere in the Atlantic Pacific the ocean. We reprint extracts from his uncensored fleet diary.

Monday. Woke up to sound of gunfire. Donned flak jacket and anti-flash mask and raced on deck. Scoured horizon for sinking ships. Found only Royal Marines in deck quoits contest with Para Regiment. Two shot, three wounded. By god, these boys are finely tuned fighting machines.

Today had press conference with Admiral of Fleet. Told us there were 100 VCs to be won and a dozen George Crosses for the press. I asked what posthumously meant. Told it was a way of saying you had a lot of spirit. Everyone laughed.

Tuesday. Sent home first dispatch. Explained what we boys are feeling. Britain has always stood up to dictators, always will, etc. Said when we had finished off Argentina, we'd finish off other dictators in South America. Reeled off a long list.

Disappointed to receive 2000 word reprimand from Foreign Desk. Said El Salvador wasn't dictatorship because they'd held elections. Chile not dictatorship. Would have held elections, but elections discredited by Allende and the reds. War reporting not as easy as I

thought.

Wednesday. Filed new dispatch on quality of our ships. Quite pleased with it. Said ships were made of metal but still had hearts of oak! Pointed out no other navy in the world could match it. Got in good pun by referring to Argentine fleet as 'jerry-built'. Good idea to play on anti-German feeling to bolster war effort.

Distressed later to find 3000 word diatribe from deputy news editor. Said Argentine fleet built by Britain and crew trained by Britain. Said I was cretin. I can't see why. Surely we loosened a few rivets before we sold our ships. Anyway, they are left hand drive.

West Germany sent note of protest to British government. Too sensitive, these Krauts.

We were told today we had already blockaded Falklands. Felt proud and cheered. Can't see them yet, though. Was reprimanded by junior officer for throwing plastic sweet wrapper over side. Apparently could get stuck in propeller and ruin whole operation. Made to run round the deck.

Thursday. Thought struck me today about preparing nation for war. Should implement nuclear contingency plans in Falklands. Hand all power to

head of police and civil service, suspend elected council. Discussed this in press corps and wrote penetrating piece on how in times of war lines of command should be tightened and power rest in hands of government representatives.

Dismayed to receive 5000 word blast from chief foreign editor. Apparently head of civil service etc in Falklands wingeing about not wanting to get killed and how they should be evacuated. Foreign Office stressing they were not democratically elected. How was I to know they were cowards? Unfortunately my piece already gone on front page. Captain hauls me into bridge and threatens to cast me adrift in life boat. Saved by fact that all life boats were left behind to slot in one more jump jet.

Press corps silent when I repeated this. Heard some unpatriotic things I had better not repeat!

Friday. Captain forced to reassure press about life boats. Apparently Thatcher requisitioned boats on Serpentine to row out and take us off. Spirit of Dunkirk still alive!

Saturday. Disaster! A sad day for the fleet. BBC crew run out of film. Used it all up on seagulls over starboard bow and Harriers landing on sunbathing marines. Sworn

to secrecy. Ship stopped for a while, but decided to press on. Captain kept muttering about no point going to war without cameras.

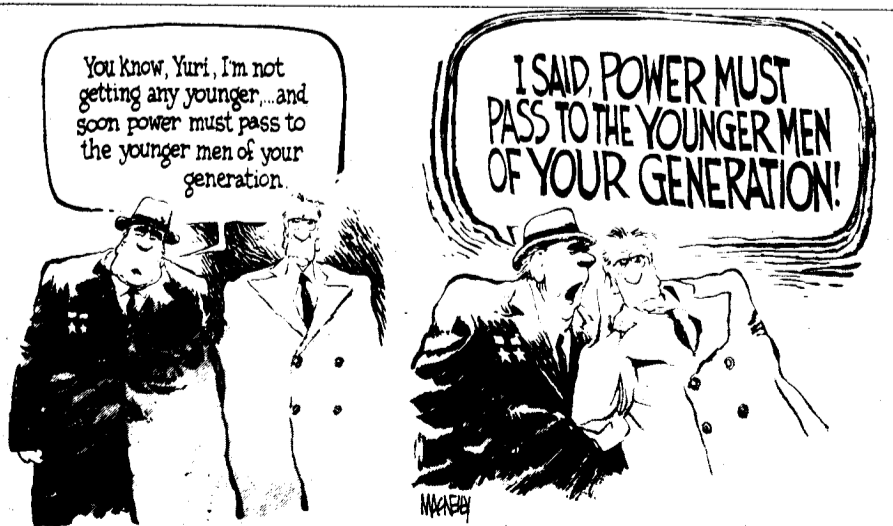
We're all keeping fingers crossed that Falklands Post Office has not run out.

Sunday. At last success. I sat up all night writing piece combining strength with peace. Suggested we dropped nuclear device on uninhabited island to demonstrate terrible effect, and forced junta to back down before we used it on them. Received 6000 word commendation from editor. Said paper decided to back this as major war strategy, and government agrees.

Apparently a group of islands about 800 miles off South America is to be used. Not more than 1500 inhabitants — a small fraction of what we could expect to lose in a full-scale war.

General Haig landed on deck to congratulate me. Said I could be first person to win Nobel Peace Prize and Literature Prize for the same work — at least, I think that's what he said.

Fleet going home. Marines and Paras not happy. Retired to press bar, where I found party in progress. They asked me if we'd left port yet. I warned to their wit.



Australia Is Fraser on the run?

AFTER THE Australian Labour Party's victory in the April 3 Victoria state elections, Malcolm Fraser faces a challenge to his leadership of the ruling Liberal Party.

Fraser, installed in power after the Governor-General ousted the previous Labour government in 1975, has pursued a policy of cuts and union-bashing on the Reagan/Thatcher model. But now the tide is turning against him. There was a 4.3% swing to Labour in the Victoria elections.

Commenting before the poll, the Australian monthly Socialist Fight wrote:

'Most workers will simply want to vote Labor in order to be rid of the Liberals, the open representative of big business. They will see a vote for Labour as a vote for the party built by the trade unions, to represent workers' interests in Parliament.'

The election will take place in the midst of the worst unemployment and inflation since the Thirties. Public sector spending is being cut to the bone everywhere, and unprecedented attacks are being made on trade unions. The bosses' system is in crisis, and they expect us to pay for it.

Most Labor voters expect that a government under [state Labor leader] John Cain would go a long way towards changing all this...

John Cain sees things differently: 'I reject the assertion that a Labor Party government is bound to introduce everything that appears in the mass of policy decisions at Conference', he stated recently.

Manager

Speaking to a Financial Review reporter in late December, he made it plain who will be laying down the law, while he's running the show: 'I will be informed so I may be coordinator, arbitrator, general manager, and the ultimate decision-maker with the final responsibility - it will be a Cain Labor government', he said, stressing the word 'Cain'.

And a 'Cain Labor government' will be decidedly

right wing, if Cain has his way'.

Socialist Fight also reports on the record of the Labour state government in New South Wales, under Neville Wran:

'Not a day passes without another area of NSW state expenditure being sent for a good slashing.'

Trying to outdo Fraser, Wran announced on February 18 another freeze on the State Public Service, as well as the formation of his very own Razor Gang. The aims of the task force are the same as Fraser's, and are prompted by \$13m deficit after only three months, when the estimate was \$3m for the whole year.

The immediate targets of the review are the poor, sick, students, and public servants. First to go will be \$8m in crisis handouts to more than 100,000 families in deep poverty.

This will take the form of: refusing cash for the purchase of food to any family on a pension or benefit; not issuing free blankets to those in need; not providing help towards burial costs or school clothing.

Aid through social workers to families in crisis after six months will cease, help for 'uncontrollable' children over 15 will stop, and appointments to see Departmental staff will be severely curtailed.

Already public hospitals and psychiatric hospitals are earmarked for 'rationalisation'.

But the most severe cutback is to the community health system itself. Health Commission offices throughout Sydney are to have 1500 jobs cut and offices closed...

Socialist Fight comments 'A State Labor government COULD provide an important rallying point for resisting Fraser's onslaught. It could refuse to implement Fraser's cuts - and encourage industrial action and mass street demonstrations to back up this stand, by building militant popular support for it'.

But Cain seems set to follow Wran's example:

'As our leaders are untrustworthy, it's up to us, the rank and file members of the ALP and the trade unions, to stop Labor doing Fraser's dirty work'.

POLITICAL STRIKE
FOR THE WOMEN
IN ARMAGH



International women's solidarity on International Women's Day

THE DELEGATION to Belfast and Armagh Women's Gaol included women from all over the world, and we were conscious from the outset why we were taking part in the delegation.

We wanted to come together as women, to celebrate our strength and our unity as women, and to commemorate International Women's Day in a country where women are doubly oppressed.

They are not only oppressed by the sexism and capitalism which dominates Western Europe, they are also oppressed by the full weight of British imperialism and all the chauvinistic and masculine values which that imperialism embodies.

Our initial reaction to the border was one of horror. We approached it from the South, and the beauty of the landscape was wrenched into perspective by the line of Saracens and the heavily fortified tower.

The border defines the reality of Northern Ireland, not only for the women and men who are actively involved in the armed struggle, but for everyone who lives in the Six Counties or travels into them like ourselves.

Saracens and a rifle

The Britz recognise this, and it is forbidden to take photographs of the Army and their 'defences'. A photograph would have shown the Saracens, the tower, and the Brit pointing a rifle at us.

Our impressions of the border were still vivid when we entered Belfast. It is a small city and reminded us of many working class towns that we have seen in the North of England. There are two basic differences...

IRISH WOMEN



Over recent years, the delegation to Armagh Gaol in Northern Ireland, where women Republican prisoners are held, has become a major International Women's Day event. Angela Birtill and Alison Court went this year, and came back with some vivid impression.

The poverty is stark and uncompromising. The narrow streets and the rows of terraced houses evoke images of the Thirties. The open spaces are derelict and the paving stones cracked and uneven. It is worth remembering that Northern Ireland has

the highest rate of unemployment in the United Kingdom. It is also worth remembering that this Kingdom is far from united.

The second difference is the army of occupation. There can be no doubt that it is an army of occupation.

The Britz are alienated and isolated from the rest of the community. They patrol it like a minefield, and their weak footprints are an indelible stain on the consciousness of the population.

Our coach meandered through the streets until we arrived at the Pass N Grove Community Centre in Beechmount. As we climbed down from the coach, men and women rushed out from the Community Centre with cups of tea and sandwiches.

It was an incredibly warm welcome, and it was in brilliant contrast to our early experience at the border.

We were taken from Pass N Grove to the Sinn Fein Centre on Falls Road. The welcomes continued and we were told that a mural had been painted to celebrate our visit. The walls and gable-ends in the Republican area of West Belfast are covered with the most intricate and colourful paintings.

The artists are youths who attempt to defend their

handiwork from the Britz. Within days of our visit the mural will have been ruined.

The Britz pick up the youths for questioning. The youths are questioning the right of the Britz to occupy their country.

In their absence, the mural will be bombed with acid. Initially, the Britz used paint, but the youths began to glaze the murals, making it easier to get rid of the paint. Acid burns through the glazing.

The Sinn Fein Centre is heavily defended against attack. Periodically the Britz tear down the wire fencing and the Centre is fire-bombed by loyalists.

We were assigned to our billets at the Sinn Fein Centre, and warned against straying into the Loyalist areas of Belfast.

It was made clear to us that although we would learn a great deal from talking to the Loyalists, we were also likely to get our throats cut. We would not be attacked because of our political differences with the Loyalists, but because we were different.

The Loyalist community is insular and paranoid, and the descriptions reminded us of the Afrikaanders in South Africa. It constantly surprised us that the Republicans we spoke to went to great lengths to stress that they harboured no personal differences against the Loyalists.

The reality of Loyalist Supremacy, as practised by their working class supporters, was seen as something that was worthy of mourning and pity rather than hatred.

Our hosts, Janice and Joe Austin, reiterated this final point when we arrived at their house, a minute terraced home, where they live with their five children and Janice's brother. It amazed us that Janice had agreed to put us up for the weekend, but the warmth and sense of purpose that motivated the household soon made it apparent that our fears were unjustified.

Initially it was difficult and almost unreal for us to adapt to the army of occupation. To see the Britz darting from street corner to street corner on their bikes, to see the Saracens patrolling the streets with all

the arrogance of male punters in Soho, to see the squaddies leering at the women and spitting their contempt at the children and the youths.

We were told that the black squaddies are always made to sit in the rear of the Saracens, and to bring up the rear of a street patrol, as these are the positions where a soldier is more likely to be shot. Our own observations confirmed this. The oppression is piled thick, layer upon layer, like an obscene sandwich of hatred and self-loathing.

The reality of British oppression also borders on the ridiculous. To enable two RUC men to walk into a Republican area, at least six Brit soldiers are needed as chaperones, surrounding and protecting the RUC from the community that they are supposed to police.

Harassed for wearing the wrong scarf

The dogs bark at the patrols, and there is a complex but effective warning system that is used whenever the Britz enter a Republican area. It is worth noting that not only Republicans are at risk from the Britz.

Youths have been beaten up for wearing the wrong colour of football scarf. Women have been assaulted for being alone, six children have been killed by plastic bullets. The Britz also shoot dogs, and Janice and Joe were quick to bring their dog into the house whenever the Britz were in the vicinity.

It was frightening for our delegation to experience a first hand the intimidation used by the RUC and the Britz.

The RUC met our coach both going into and out of Belfast, our bags were searched and the posters that we had bought were confiscated.

We emerged from the Community Centre at night to suddenly find a rifle literally under our noses. The street lamps are especially subdued to facilitate the Brit patrols, and we could just make out the squaddie's grin as we re-



The British speaking tour of members in exile of the Turkish trade union movement DISK, (Bill Duggan, Fire Brigades Union president Bill Duggan, and others) joined the call for liberty for the 52 DISK leaders now on trial and the thousands in the junta's jails. Contact: Turkey Solidarity Campaign, BM Box 5965, London WC1N 3XX.



- THE SPIRIT OF RESISTANCE

coiled from his gun in horror.

It should be remembered that they had been told to be polite with us.

On Saturday night alone, 37 people were picked up for questioning under the Special Security Laws. Almost every person that we talked to had either been inside the Brit gaols themselves, or had close friends or relatives who had been imprisoned. A man who stayed with us overnight had never been out of gaol for more than three months at a time over the past eight years.

It was accepted as fact that the RUC and the Britz would fabricate evidence, lie and torture, to extract the maximum punishment from the non-jury courts.

Every time that someone knocked at Janice's door, their identity had to be verified before they were admitted. The door itself was reinforced with locks and bolts, with the dog keeping guard constantly.

The threat of violence was ever present

The adults didn't mention the names of activists or discuss political business when the children were present, to protect them from harassment and intimidation from the Britz. Joe pulled his little boy down quickly when he was playing near the window in the evening.

Another of their children, who was fascinated by our camera, told us that he had been photographed 'once, when I got shot in my head'.

Violence, and the threat of violence, was ever present. It pervaded everything, even the jokes and

the stories that we shared, it awoke with us in the morning and it slept next to us at night. It was a measure of Janice and Joe's warmth that we slept well.

Joe had been close to death himself on many occasions. A close friend had been murdered by Loyalists when the two of them had been walking down the road. Both Janice and her husband recognised that their lives were always at risk.

Hymns to bondage and oppression

A neighbour had just been released from gaol. A young woman who had not even been involved in the war had been murdered and her breasts had been cut off. Yet another neighbour had been shot and killed.

Each of these people had lived in the same street as Janice and Joe. Their specific horror was not untypical. Each street has its own obscene and violent history.

And across this history, the Brit and RUC barracks straddle like monstrous insects, enlarged and deformed and sucking at the life about their wire and metal legs.

They are implanted onto the community, dividing tiny streets and commanding acres of derelict and wasted space. Their fortifications are hymns to bondage and oppression. They not only impose their reality on the community, they sanctify a dogma with the red, white and very, very blue stamp of imperialism, capitalism and sexism.

Terror patented by Britain - plastic bullets and Diplock

'Hey, Sister, don't you mourn, don't you weep, Hey, Sister, don't you mourn, don't you weep, The Women's Army is marching, Hey Sister don't you weep'.

The spirit of resistance in the Republican areas of West Belfast was unbelievable. You can almost taste it in the oxygen, and the intricate murals depict this

spirit with a power and a beauty that is impossible to deny.

Yeats termed this beauty 'terrible', but the terror belongs to the Britz. They have patented it, and they sell it in the form of plastic bullets and Diplock Courts.

We were told that the community had always been strong, and that the people had always been warm and caring. The war has solidified this strength, and the struggle has brought people closer together.

When Bernadette McAliskey spoke to us outside the women's gaol in Arm-

agh, she stated that women are playing the 'most important part' in the war of liberation. The importance of women, and the recognition of this importance by their sisters and brothers, was evident throughout our stay.

On the Saturday afternoon, there was an exhibition of 'Women in Ireland' at the St James' Community Centre in Andersonstown. The exhibition demonstrated the extent to which women have been involved in the war, and the appreciation that is felt for this commitment and involvement by the

entire community.

Films and video tapes were shown, and we heard women from Armagh Prison speaking about their hardship and their struggle. They described the suffering that they had gone through in the prison, the pain that they had experienced when their sisters and brothers had been tortured and murdered by the Brits, the horror and shock of internment and imprisonment, and their own fears and beliefs for their country and their comrades.

Not only women from the delegation attended the exhibition. Throughout the day, women and men from the surrounding area came into the community centre to show their support for their sisters.

There were cries of recognition when a close friend or a neighbour's face appeared on the film, and they told us about the role that the imprisoned women had played within the community.

Around the hall, there was a display of photographs which illustrated 'Women in Ireland'. These were not the lying images of the BBC and ITV television companies, these were not the distorted and pornographic images of Fleet Street, but images of women by women, truthful and clear beside the Brit and male version of history and reality.

The women who fight oppression

In the evening, there was a social for the women who had come across to Ireland on the delegation. We were joined by scores of women and men from the surrounding community, and we sang our songs and performed our plays.

The men who attended

the social were polite, well-mannered and non-sexist. It was wonderful to be able to drink and sing and cheer in the company of men without being sexually approached or molested.

It was immensely moving to be in the company of women who were so actively involved in the fight against oppression.

The most powerful moment of the evening was when the Provisionals appeared from the rear of the hall.

They were armed, masked, and wearing their uniforms. They marched to the stage, and then three of them spoke to the audience. It was completely unexpected, and the fact that the community centre was virtually opposite an RUC fort would seemingly have precluded the Provisionals from making an appearance.

The biggest shock was when the three Provisionals began speaking. They were women! It was a measure of our own sexist conditioning that we had not expected this, even though the evidence of women's involvement in the war had been around us since we had arrived in Republican Belfast.

The women spoke about the armed struggle, and about the oppression of women. They told us of the need to unite, of the need to educate our sisters in our home countries, of the need to take home with us the full horror of British imperialism. And they told us of their strength and their power in opposing the Britz, capitalism, and sexism.

When they had finished speaking, the Provisionals presented a bouquet of flowers to a woman who was celebrating her 80th birthday. She had been involved in the Republican Movement since she was fourteen, and it was incredibly moving to see her reaction to the presentation.

The following day, we were delayed from reaching Armagh Prison by both the Britz and the RUC. They searched our coach, our bags and our luggage. We were now strong enough not to feel intimidated by their sneers and their rifles, but we were not foolish enough to attempt to stop them from confiscating our posters.

We assembled outside the prison gates, and our sisters on the delegation spoke to the crowd. There were speeches and solidarity greetings from our sisters in the south of Ireland, from Germany and America, from SWAPO and the Troops Out Movement, from Hackney, Harlow, Kilburn, Brent East, Liverpool and London, Manchester and Tameside.

We called out the names of our sisters who were inside the prison. We sang to them, our voices echoing through the tiny streets and the barbed wire that separated us.

Women in the North of Ireland are our sisters. Their strength and their warmth, their compassion and their commitment, is our strength, our warmth, our compassion and our commitment.

They are oppressed not only by the capitalism and sexism that oppresses all of us, but also by the full chauvinistic power of British imperialism. They have been arrested, interned, tortured and murdered. They have been abused, vilified, and ridiculed.

And yet they continue to fight.

Janice and Joe Austin, and their five children, who cared for and protected us over that weekend, will one day be free, and their freedom will be our freedom.



'Within days of our visit, the mural will have been ruined... bombed with acid by the Britz'

Discrimination is built into the benefits system

Women in struggle



Gerry Byrne argues for the right to an independent income for all

THERE are now four million people claiming supplementary benefit — the highest ever figure.

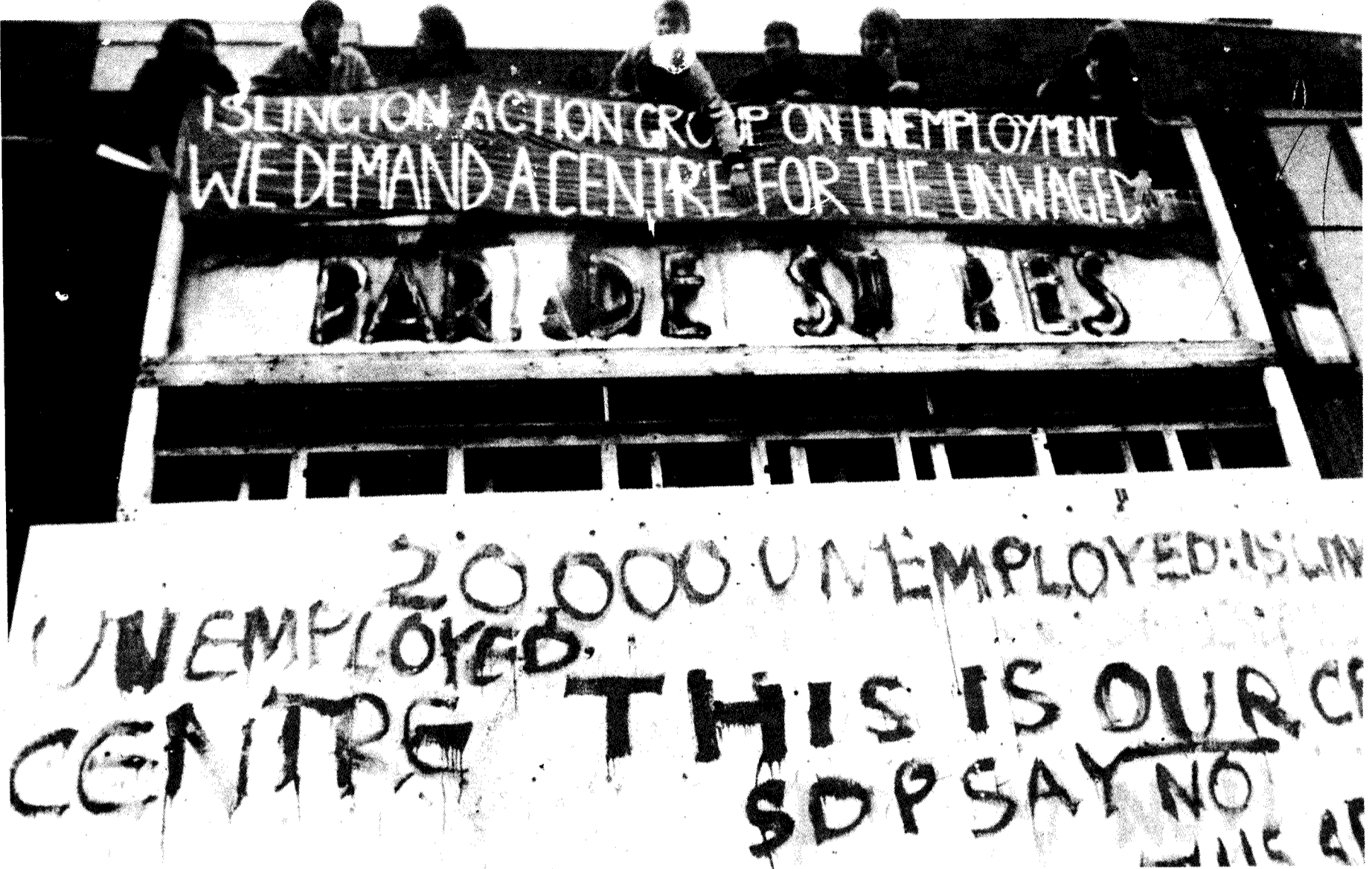
This has been pushed up by the removal of earnings' related supplement from unemployment and sickness benefit and the fact that over one million of the unemployed have been out of work for over one year, and are forced onto supplementary, rather than unemployment benefit.

This catastrophic total point to the need, while not letting up on the fight for save jobs and create new jobs, to take up as an immediate priority winning a living income for everybody, regardless of this system's willingness or ability to provide jobs.

Central to this fight has to be the right to an independent income for all. Sexist discrimination is built into the benefits system.

It's not just the blatant examples like non-contributory invalidity benefit — where a woman has to prove not only that she's incapable of work, but also of 'normal household duties', whereas a man just has to prove he's incapable of work. It runs far deeper than those outrageous 'anomalies'.

The whole system is structured round the belief that women are not people in their own right. Married women are assumed, and therefore in practice are



Women suffer most heavily through unemployment; but some are already fighting back...

forced, to be dependent on their husbands. Women who live with men, or even have frequent visits from them, are considered to be the same as married women — even where they

may have consciously decided they don't want to be in a 'dependent' relationship.

Any sexual relationship, or even shared activities and company, is presu-

med to involve a financial commitment — a pretty degrading view of human relationships. Single mothers have to undergo humiliating interrogations on the identity and where-

abouts of their children's fathers.

Women who definitely reject any continuing involvement with these men — whether because of a history of battering and abuse or simply because they want nothing further to do with them — are pushed into a position of claiming not to have any idea of who the father is (with the implication that they have so many casual sexual encounters that they've lost track of who it was with).

This in turn leads to suspicion either that they are prostitutes and therefore do have a source of income, or that the father really is still around and supporting the woman. In both cases it's liable to lead to increasing unannounced visits and early morning snoops.

The effect of this is to increase the harassment and humiliation of women. (I would like to see the treatment of women claimants included in the category of "sexual harassment" when it is taken up in the unions, for example).

Furtive

It also has the effect of precisely encouraging what it's nominally designed to prevent — women being forced out onto the game; furtive unstable relationships or total social isolation; and women taking casual 'under the counter' part-time work where they have no protection and no possibilities of organising to better their conditions because they're not supposed to be working at all.

There have been various

proposals to soften up and prevent 'abuses' in the application of the cohabitation rule, but they will always prove ineffectual if they do not confront the real abuse — the assumption that where a woman and a man have any relationship (whether married, 'living together' or less permanent than that) that the man has the right to expect certain services in exchange for financial support.

Inequality

Until women have the right to an independent income (provided by the state if it cannot or will not provide jobs and the facilities necessary to keep those jobs) to keep themselves and any children, then any other independence and equality is illusory — relationships based on financial inequality inevitably result in inequality in every other area.

Any demand for financial independence and the right of individual benefits must also include married women. The DHSS are right to say that cohabiting women should not have an unfair advantage over married women, but wrong in their conclusions — to punish both.

Vulnerable

Because married women have no entitlement to money in their own right, they are prepared to take on the low-paid, part-time unpleasant jobs, which are so vulnerable in a recess-

ion, just so that they can have some money of their own in their hand, which they don't have to beg, plead, cajole their husbands for.

Even within the same family, women have a lower real standard of living because any money they get goes on necessities, whereas most husbands reserve some money for spending on 'luxuries' — drinks, nights out etc.

The one guaranteed source of income for married women with children is child benefit. Yet this bears no relation to the cost of having children and is now under threat.

All new recipients of child benefit will get it paid in arrears (with the exception of those on social security). But it is precisely those women who don't have any other benefit who desperately need the small amount of financial room for manoeuvre that child benefit gives who will lose out on weekly payment.

Dire

Benefits are under dire attack from the changes proposed in the Rayner report on unemployment benefits and the new social security legislation. This attack has to be beaten off urgently, but we must not lose sight of the fact that the present system is not only woefully inadequate for its poverty levels but also absolutely rooted in the assumption of women's inequality and designed to perpetuate and worsen the plight of women.

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

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

WOMEN'S
RIGHT
TO
WORK

JUNE
5th



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

HOW YOU CAN HELP

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

THEY'LL KEEP THE WHITE FLAG

HARRY SLOAN gives the flavour of the April 5 TUC conference of Executives.

FLYING HERE

ARMS were waved. Cheques were brandished. Cliches tripped off tongues — tired old allusions to swords and sabres, weapons and armouries, firing lines and battlegrounds; not standing idly by, winning hearts and minds, and the unity of this great movement of ours...

But above the stage-managed deliberations of the TUC conference of union executives fluttered the white flag of surrender to Tebbit's anti-union laws.

Len Murray made this clear in his opening speech, when he deliberately began to talk of the Tebbit Act:

"I say the Act, because realistically nothing we decide today will stop the Government from putting its Bill on the Statute Book this summer."

Outrage

Nobody who spoke disagreed with Murray. Like him they were surprised and outraged that after all the TUC leaders have done to prevent the development of mass struggle against the Thatcher government, they should now be subject to new legal attacks.

"It is the Government which has picked this fight", argued Murray. "The trade union movement has not picked a fight with employers — or the Government. We know what damage that could cause."

Rank and file trade unionists of course know what damage has been caused to their living standards, social services and trade union rights as a result of the TUC's collaboration with the Tories.

Yet the eight point plan adopted at the conference does not end that collaboration. Recommendation seven calls on trade union members to boycott tribunals only when they are discussing cases arising from Tebbit's closed shop restrictions. In very



Empty hall, empty speeches...

other respect it remains 'business as usual' between union leaders, employers and the Tory government at all levels.

Certainly as long as union officials continue to hob-nob with the union bastards it is true to say that:

"It will not be easy to bring home to them the members, the full force of the threats to their unions and to their own rights and interests"

Meanwhile, in case anyone is tempted to take seriously the vague threats by Scargill and others of industrial action to support a union under attack, Murray made clear that what the TUC is proposing is not solidarity with sections of workers in struggle.

"The General Council will, as they always do, deal

with unions [i.e. union officials], not with individuals or groups of workers. And the support they give cannot be unconditional: there will be no blank cheques. So unions [officials] can have confidence in the General Council both to give firm and positive leadership and to act in a responsible way. There may well be situations from which we will have to extricate unions: that would not be the first time that the General Council have had to advise a union to draw back from a no-win situation".[!!!!]

Bluster

No wonder, then, that with this plan on the table the Wembley conference centre witnessed such rare unanimity of the bureaucrats from the extreme

right and one-time left. After Scargill's bluster — reminiscent of vintage Gormley speeches — Terry Duffy moved in on the act, claiming credit for the siege of Saltley Gates and defiance of Heath's Industrial Relations Act. Roy Grantham insisted that the fighting fund must not be frittered away on legal costs, while NALGO's Geoffrey Drain reminded the conference of the strikes over the Pentonville Five!

All were confident that the eight-point plan (to which no alternatives were allowed and which could not be referred back, or amended by the conference) would be passed unanimously — and that, once passed, they would be obliged to do nothing more than pay a few thousand pounds into a 'Campaign

and Defence Fund'. Nobody laughed when Murray solemnly pronounced that "this is a formidable programme of action". Not even employers' representative Paul Dwyer of ACAS, who cruised around the hall sporting visitor's credentials, being warmly greeted by Sid Weighell and other officials — while rank and file trade unionists lobbying the conference were kept firmly on the outside.

But for trade unionists on the shop floor in industry and the public sector the TUC decision is no laughing matter. It is a major betrayal — the cost of which we could still be carrying many years hence.

The urgency of a campaign to stop the retreat and mobilise for all-out action against Tebbit could not be clearer.



"... a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." - Shakespeare



Duffy claimed the credit for Saltley!

PLAN OF ACTION TO FIGHT TEBBIT

The April 3 conference sponsored by Socialist Organiser and London Labour Briefing proposed:

- For the immediate setting up of an action committee to rouse the labour movement to the dangers of the Tebbit Bill, and to prepare for the fight to defend the trade unions if the official leaders refuse to undertake their responsibilities.
- For the TUC to call a General Strike on the day the Bill becomes law, and to prepare for this in the labour movement by a series of one-day general strikes, beginning with the third reading of the Bill.
- To demand that the TUC breaks collaboration with the Tories.

- Support strike action and occupations against the cuts, closures, etc.
- Argue within the unions and the Labour Party for a full-scale offensive to stop the Tories, using the strength we have here and now, refusing collaboration.
- Demand that the Parliamentary Labour leaders start a campaign of Parliamentary obstruction.
- Demand that the TUC leaders break off their cosy chats with the Tories in the National Economic Development Council and dozens of other governmental and industrial 'participation' bodies.
- Demand that Labour councils defy the Tory cuts. We must call for the

- leaders of the trade union movement and the National Executive of the Labour Party to launch such a campaign to stop the Tories, including preparation for a General Strike. We must be prepared to fight to remove Parliamentarians, councillors and trade union leaders who collaborate and cooperate with the Tories.
- We ourselves — the militants, the socialists — must prepare on a local level, now. A General Strike will be won through the network of workers' committees and organisations, most of which exist already as part of the routine self-defence and self-betterment of the working class: stewards' committ-

ees, combine committees, etc. We must transfuse into these bodies the urgency of preparing for a head-on clash with the Tories, and

equip them with the necessary democratic structure and flexibility to mobilise millions of workers for that clash.



Delegates at the April 3 conference

Conference report

THE LONG shadow of Norman Tebbit and his battery of anti union legislation loomed over the trade union conference in Birmingham on April 3 called by Socialist Organiser and London Labour Briefing.

The theme of the conference was 'Democratise the Labour Movement'. And it was clear that the fight for a new, principled, accountable leadership is central to the fight against anti-union legislation, which TUC bureaucrats have shown themselves ready to accept.

As witch-hunted NUR Executive member Ian Williams pointed out from the platform:

"I'm going to the TUC Special Conference on Monday. But I can tell you now that they're as ready to fight to the Tebbit Bill as the Royal Navy was to defeat the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands!"

The conference unanimously endorsed the appeal from the Mobilising Committee in Defence of Trade Union Rights for a fight to secure one-day strike action against Tebbit and the breaking of all union links with the Tories.

But at the same time speakers recognised that the task is bigger than simply the single issue of fighting Tebbit. The labour movement as a whole must be shaken up, remoulded and mobilised on a mass basis to confront this government and to cast off the treacherous caste of bureaucrats who presently stand at its head.

As steel union militant and rebel Labour councillor Ray Davies put it,

"We need a vibrant, pulsating trade union movement. The only way to the socialist transformation of society is through democratising the labour movement".

The same concerns were voiced by witch-hunted prospective Labour candidate Peter Tatchell in a vigorous speech reprinted on this page.

And the conference as a whole responded to this problem with the adoption of a strengthened and amended platform for trade union democracy, and with lively workshop discussion on the trade unions and Labour democracy and the building of Broad Lefts.

But any discussion of the labour movement in 1982 must also take account of the four million workers largely excluded from its ranks by unemployment. The conference heard Bobby Owens of Liverpool's 6/612 TGWU branch describe the struggle there to recruit and organise the unemployed into the unions and to establish adequate services and rights for them — and a workshop on organising the unemployed was conducted by Mick Jarmaine, secretary of the Unemployed Workers' Movement.

The prominent role of women, as often the most militant group of workers in struggle against the Tories, was underlined by platform speakers on the Barking teachers' strike [Louise O'Connor], the fight to save St Mary's Hospital [Rita Maxim], and the NHS pay struggle [Anna Lunt], as well as a report-back by Women's Fightback secretary Rachel Lever from the successful women's trade union conference held the previous week by Fightback.

Among the additions to the platform for union democracy were a number of demands specifically geared to the need to draw women actively into the life of the unions.

The conference concluded by approving a proposal that the organising committee remain in being and continue to invite sponsorships, to act as an organising force in the struggle for the policies adopted. A collection raised £180.



Alan Thornett: There must be a fight before the Tebbit Bill becomes law



A workshop discusses the fight against Tebbit

Alan Thornett, TGWU deputy senior steward at BL Cowley, called on the conference to mobilise against Tebbit

We must start, as from today, to ring some very loud warning bells about what is going on in the workers' movement, faced with the legislation which the Tories are now rapidly putting through Parliament to hamstring the trade unions.

Already, the Second Reading has gone through Parliament, and we are within a few weeks of the Third Reading.

It will then go to the House of Lords and by June the Tebbit Bill will become law. And nothing whatsoever is being done in the Labour and trade union movement to stop it.

In 1969 or 1971 there were previous similar packages of legislation. By this stage, massive movements were mobilised in the trade

unions against it. In 1971 we were lobbying Parliament with TUC support, on the First Reading of the Bill.

Now we are almost to the legislation stage of the Bill and absolutely nothing is being done.

So why is that? Is it that suddenly everybody has gone to sleep? This is something which affects everybody, right through the labour movement, even the left.

A number of things affect this response. We are not at the end of the 1960s, which was a period of rising militancy. We are at the beginning of the 1980s, and the working class faces a massive offensive from the Tory government with a huge economic crisis and three million unemployed.

That is one side of it, but I think there is a more important reason why we find ourselves in this crisis — the way the Tories have operated, and the way the trade union leaders have operated.

How did the Tories operate with the Prior Bill? They were careful not to challenge major sections of the working class on secondary strikes and secondary picketing.

So now it is argued that 'Oh well, we have the 1980 legislation and there's not been any really serious situation for the working class under that legislation,' so it is lulling people into a feeling that maybe this package is going to be similar.

The Prior Law

Maybe it won't be so bad after all.

Last November we stood on the gates of our factory with 2,000 pickets, blocking the gates, the road, everything and there was no challenge from the police at all. This has been quite deliberate in a number of strikes where there have been powerful pickets.

In other actions the law has been used, and the pickets have been restricted to six. The trade union leaders have said, 'We don't want to confront the law. Call off the strike or accept the picketing limitation'.

And so there hasn't been a confrontation on the Prior Act and that is quite fundamental to the situation we find ourselves in today.

One serious fight against Prior would have completely transformed the situation we now face against Tebbit.

Prior and Tebbit are actually going to be brought in together. They dovetail a stage one and stage two. And if stage two isn't fought we'll be in a worse position when it comes to stage three.

So what does the Tebbit Bill involve?

The reason for the 1906

We cannot succeed v

Peter Tatchell from Bermondsey argued that a fight for trade union democracy must go together with the campaign for Labour Party democracy

As we meet here today in Birmingham, about 800 miles away in Poland, our comrades are fighting just like we are, to establish a democratic labour movement.

In Poland our comrades are fighting against General Jaruzelski, in Britain we are fighting against Norman Tebbit. And indeed we might say that Norman Tebbit is Britain's General Jaruzelski.

Norman Tebbit would like to see the trade unions coopted as part of the state apparatus. He would like to destroy them as instruments for the defence of working class interests.

We need a massive popular movement to defeat this government's legislation. Dare I say it, we need a mass campaign of extra-parliamentary action.

If necessary, we need to be thinking about organising a one-day general strike to give that effect.

I believe from the experience of the Industrial Relations Act struggle ten years ago, we can defeat the Tebbit Bill through a campaign of defiance, of non-compliance with the law, and by mobilising a popular movement in the work places.

This legislation should be scrapped because we demand the workers of Britain have the right to form free and independent trade unions, to withdraw their labour and take industrial action in defence of their interests.

A mass party

The struggle for democracy and accountability within the Labour Party and the trade union movement is part and parcel of our effort to defeat the Tebbit Bill. It is part and parcel of our efforts to secure the election of a Labour government at the next poll in order that we can restore the trade union rights that have already been taken away by the 1980 Bill, and in order that we can push forward to bring about a fundamental redistribution of wealth and power in society.

To achieve this we need to look towards a new

campaigning, mass membership style Labour Party. It is necessary to think about, talk about and take steps now, towards recreating that Party by reunifying the political and industrial wings of the labour movement.

I'm not talking about the kind of unity conducted by a handful of Labour MPs and trade union leaders at Bishop Stortford, I'm talking about forging a unity between the trade union movement and the Labour Party at the grass roots level — a unity forged by the rank and file activists in the unions and in the Party at large.

I think that to defeat the Tebbit Bill we are going to have to work to increase massively the trade union affiliation to local Constituency Labour Parties, and we need to get, all of us as Labour Party members, to take a much more active and assertive role in our local trade union branches. And the plans to set up workplace branches of the Labour Party are a vital means of reunifying the two wings of the movement.

Not only can socialist ideas be taken into the trade union movement, but we can get feeding back from the trade union movement the interests and aspirations of

our trade union comrades.

We also need to be taking a critical but comradely look at trade unionism in Britain today. We have, and I think we must face it, the problems of sectional interests, of preoccupation with wage bargaining, which we must overcome if we are to build a strong and united labour movement which can use its collective power as a united movement to extend beyond the merely economic struggles within the framework of capitalism.

We also need to be exploring ways in which the stronger unions can be using their power to help the weaker ones such as the low paid nurses who we heard of this morning — and perhaps for the stronger unions to help those workers who are not yet unionised — groups such as the home workers, who are amongst the most exploited and oppressed.

Workers' control

And to make the leap to socialist consciousness from trade union consciousness, we need to be thinking about putting the struggle for workers control on the agenda of every trade union.

We need to be developing the strategies and policies to bring about workers con-



Peter Tatchell: 'We need a mass campaign of extra-parliamentary action'

Alarm-organising the fight

Act arising out of Taff Vale was that without immunities against strike action being sued for damages and compensation, it is impossible for the trade union movement to exist.

Fines

Take the example of a car plant producing a hundred cars an hour where there's a strike for a week. If the employer could sue for the entire damages arising from that strike, the TGWU with £45 million in the bank would be bankrupted by one week's strike in one factory.

Tebbit is saying that he wants to bring the trade unions under the law like everybody else, as if the trade unions have been bankrupted for years.

The fact is that is rhetoric from Tebbit. There could be no trade unions under those conditions, so he is putting on a limit of £250,000 for a union with over 100,000 members.

And he redefines the immunities. Under the 1906 Act, union action had to be 'connected' with a 'trade dispute'. Under Tebbit, action must 'relate wholly or mainly' to a dispute between workers and their own employer.

So, if a strike is seen as mainly political, and it is so easy to see a strike as mainly political it is unlawful and immediately open to a series of court actions probably resulting in £250,000 fines.

Political strikes

The bureaucrats would redouble their efforts to stop you going on strike in the first place and the courts are there to bankrupt the union of the strike takes place.

Some strikes are completely between the workers and management on a wages issue. But how long does a wages issue remain industrial? When do the political overtones come into a wages struggle?

It is an absolutely fundamental change that takes the



Socialist Organiser supporters joined the 200-strong lobby of the TUC on April 5, demanding 'Strike to Stop Tebbit', and 'Break Links with the Tories'

labour movement back to before 1906.

Take the closed shop provisions. I'll give you a quote from Tebbit referring to the closed shop provisions in the debate on the second reading.

He said "The Bill provide the most effective protection for non-trade unionists that we have ever had."

They are proposing that in order to have a closed shop, which is quite fundamental to the structure of the trade union movement in Britain, you've got to have a ballot periodically either every three or five years.

Then you've got to win either 85% of the vote or 80% of those eligible to vote in that election.

Now that, of course, is absolutely impossible when you've got a press campaign. If you don't get that, then immediately anybody refuses to join a union, and they lose their job as a result they can then go for compensation - a minimum of £17,000 for anyone refusing to join a union under those conditions.

It's a bounty for anyone prepared to do a bit of union-busting.

It doesn't finish there. Anybody who has got a

strongly held personal conviction can leave the union and take advantage of exactly the same provisions.

What does it mean for sub-contracting? It becomes illegal for workers in a factory to insist that sub-contractors in the factory are members of a union.

This is what Tebbit said, again on the second reading: "You may not like the lump, but properly managed it's a very effective institution."

The response

Tebbit's Bill also gives employers the right to dismiss all or part of a striking workforce with five working days' notice.

And already the back bench Tories are pressing to make ballots compulsory when strike action takes place.

All this when the working class is already under the most virulent attack both from the government through the cuts, through unemployment, and from the employers on the shop floor.

The trade union structures are being broken down in industry after industry.

There the shop stewards' movement is under attack, where speed-up is taking place; and where people are being continuously thrown out of their jobs.

What has been the response? In essence the TUC is saying, 'Yes, we can live with it for 18 months or two years, and hopefully there will then be a Labour government and maybe we can persuade them to repeal it.'

From that stance they've got their 8-point policy which they are going to put to the conference on Monday with no amendments or additions allowed. It simply sets out to deal with the effects of the Bill after it becomes law.

They haven't put forward a single proposal aimed at stopping it.

People say that as soon as somebody is arrested in the autumn there'll be great explosions within the working class, and it will be like the dockers all over again.

But it won't be like the dockers all over again. The reason the working class exploded in 1972 was because the labour movement was keyed into the situation. The Industrial Relations Act was a massive

issue in the labour movement and we had been fighting it for 18 months before it came in.

So as soon as the dockers were arrested there was an explosion. The TUC was forced to threaten a one day general strike and the dockers were released through the official solicitor.

That won't happen this time, because if there's no fight beforehand, no one will be ready and the labour movement will be in a very difficult position.

It is essential that there is a fight now. But who is going to organise it? Last weekend I went to the conference of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions which of course is basically controlled by the Communist Party.

Communist Party

It decided to do nothing before the Bill becomes law. It decided on a policy of locally-based 2-hour strikes and a lobby of Parliament, with no date set.

It means that they've decided to do absolutely nothing, and it says what the position of the Communist Party is.



The Communist Party is best placed to put pressure on the TUC if they decided to do so. But if they are going to go along with the TUC then it puts us in a very serious situation.

The resolution from my branch to the LCDTU conference was not allowed and the conference was very strictly controlled. They booked a very small hall and turned away delegates - every AUEW delegate was turned away - because they said that seating arrangements did not allow for a greater attendance.

So where do we go from here? Will the working class fight?

Our initiative

There are 3 million unemployed. That makes it more difficult than in 1972.

But if we look at ASLEF and Leyland Vehicles - two recent examples - then we find that if workers are called upon and get backing, then they are prepared to fight this government even under conditions of 3 million unemployed.

The question is who is going to mobilise that fight? If there's going to be a fight it is only going to be mobilised from those to the left of the CP and those who are prepared to mount a massive campaign now throughout the labour movement.

To that end we have done quite a bit of work. You will see that Socialist Organiser has raised the campaign against Tebbit very sharply now for a number of weeks. We had a meeting with the leadership of the IMG last week to urge them to join us in a campaign and looking at this week's Socialist Challenge there has been a response which we hope we can build on.

Crisis on left

The SWP are miles behind the situation on this. They had a speaker at the LCDTU conference, Roger Cox, a long time member of theirs, who made no criticism whatsoever of the declaration at that conference. He talked entirely pessimistically about the working class. It's very difficult, we can't talk about strike action, and so on.

He went on to attack the TUC levy of 10p and said we should have a 5p rank and file levy instead.

I'm not saying that to make a sectarian point. But it does illustrate the position we are in.

Unless somebody starts to seriously organise then nothing is going to happen.

We have produced a statement to form the basis of such a campaign.

In the next few weeks, we want to build up a massive campaign behind that statement.

It proposes - a one-day strike on the day of the third reading of the Bill. Now in the past I've been hostile to one day strikes.

Today, a call for a one-day strike would be a massive step forward.

If you call for a one-day strike you've got to go and argue it in the workplaces what Tebbit means, why we've got to go on strike etc.

The other demand is to break off links with the Tories now. The TUC may say we can't get strike action but they could break off talks with the Tories.

If they did so, that in itself would raise the Tebbit issue to new heights in the working class.

If the TUC said that from Monday morning we aren't going to speak to the Tories because they are legislating against us, it would create a completely new situation.

So why don't they do it? Because they are not prepared to lead a fight and they don't want to lead a fight against Tebbit.

without union democracy

rol in public and private industry. To achieve that we need to start to demand that trade unions have a statutory access to company books and accounts and to have statutory access and right to an equal say over the whole range of company decisions whether it be from new technology to investment.

We also need to look at greater awareness amongst the trade unions about different layers of oppression within the working class.

Women's rights

We need to now look with greater vigour and more interest and more support to the rights and interests of women, of black workers of gay workers, of disabled workers. We need to take up their rights and special interests with greater vigour, perhaps through the conclusion of negotiations with employers for creche facilities, for equal pay for work of equal value, for equal opportunities, and for anti-discrimination clauses in union contracts.

I believe that by looking at the trade union movement in a comrade- and critical way, in

coming up with new ideas, we can make the trade union movement in the 1980s more relevant to people's needs and aspirations, we can encourage a revival of participation and popular support in the trade unions, and we can push forward on a new wave of increased membership of the trade union movement in this country.

But comrades, none of this is going to succeed without an extension of union democracy. Workers are only going to join and involve themselves in trade union affairs with a degree of enthusiasm if they feel that by so doing, they can have an effective and meaningful say over those decisions and if the leaders implement the policies they democratically agree.

Now, of course, in arguing this case we may well be characterised as anti-trade union, and quite possibly we'll come up against the union establishment.

Witches

But for the last few years, those of us who have been fighting for democracy in the Labour Party came up against the Party establishment as well. We've got

to recognise that is part of the game when we are struggling to democratise the trade union movement.

No doubt there will be demands from certain right wing trade unionists for bans, for proscriptions, for expulsions, and for witch-hunts. Last year the London Central Branch of the EETPU refused to toe the line for Frank Chapple, and he suspended the branch.

But we must keep up the struggle. We must take to heart the words of Anne Connell, in Briefing Against the Witch-hunt.

In the Middle Ages, women were subjugated and forced to conform to socially accepted roles and conventions out of fear of denunciation as witches. Women in their hundreds and thousands were witch-hunted and tortured, burned, drowned or hung.

And who were these witches? They were heretics, they were non-conformists, they were women who challenged prevailing authority, who challenged prevailing ideas.

To defeat the Tebbit Bill and to win a socialist transformation of our society, what the Labour Party and trade union movement needs today is not witch-hunters but witches.



NUPE shop steward Anna Lunts told the conference: 'The response has surprised even me. The rank and file are ready for action on NHS pay'. On her right: conference chairperson Jeremy Corbyn, and Alan Thornett.



Prior's White Paper

TORIES STUMPED BY IRISH CRISIS

THE TORY Government's White Paper on Northern Ireland is the first major attempt to set up a new political framework for the Six Counties in over seven years. To believe in 1982 that it can achieve its stated objective is to believe in miracles.

Stable

"The government adheres to the view that in any administration in Northern Ireland there must be reasonable and appropriate arrangements to take account of the interests of the minority which are acceptable to both sides of the community. This is no more than a recognition of the reality that in the special circumstances of Northern Ireland nothing else can provide stable government on a lasting basis" (emphasis added).

Again: "The object of the government's proposals is to point to a way whereby, in spite of their acknowledged and continuing differences, the two sides of the community may achieve sufficient mutual respect, and make sufficient mutual accommodations, to participate more creatively in the public life of the province. Total repudiation of violence, with all that implies for economic advance and the prevention of further suffering for families in Northern Ireland, is only likely to come about when both sides of the community recognise each other's different aspirations and when they are able to live together as good neighbours" (emphasis added).

This will only be when neither community feels constrained or threatened by the other — and that means never, so long as the Six Counties is the framework. And the government is not here repudiating its own violence — the demand is that the Catholic community's essentially defensive violence should cease.

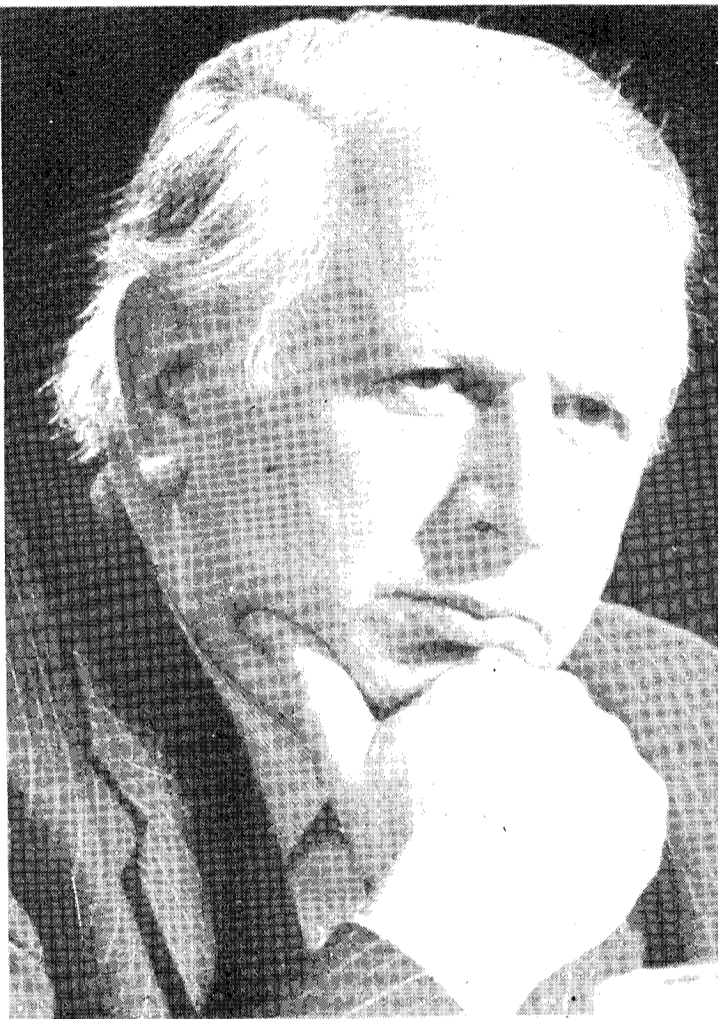
Assembly

The main proposals are these:

There will be an election for an assembly of 78 members, perhaps in the autumn. It will set up committees to shadow the existing departments of Northern Ireland government administered by the British Government's Northern Ireland Office.

The powers that have been held by the Northern Ireland Office since the collapse of the last Northern Ireland government in May 1974 can be either handed over in toto to this Assembly, or doled out to it, bit by bit, department by department, at the will of the British government.

It will insist on certain conditions, of which it will be the judge, before agreeing to partial or full devolu-



Prior ponders — as the war of the Catholic minority against the ruling state power continues



John O'Mahony argues that the only solution is British withdrawal and a united Ireland.

Why does the British government think things are to be different this time? Plainly it doesn't. It cites the fact that 1981 passed without large-scale civil war as evidence of the likely cross-community support for its policies! It is close to an admission by the government that the problem has been beaten there.

All the main parties in Northern Ireland have condemned the White Paper (DUP, OUP) or said its proposals are unworkable (SDLP). But it seems they will take part in the elections and in the Assembly.

Re-run

The Protestant/Catholic proportions within the Assembly are a foregone conclusion, so we may see an indefinite re-run of the 1975 Assembly. The Protestant politicians will demand majority rule — logically insisting that if there is a democratic validity in the Six County state, there should be majority rule.

Rejecting that logic, but insisting that the Six County state is the only possible framework (the Anglo-Irish Council set up in 1980 is rudimentary), the British government will just irritate and exacerbate the situation.

There was widespread fear in the Catholic community in 1975 that the Protestant majority would use the legitimacy conferred on them by the Assembly to organise a political coup — claiming for themselves, as the majority, the right to set up a government, or a provisional government. That would most likely have led to full-scale civil war.

Communal tension is probably less now than in 1975, but the communities are more politically polarised. The Prior proposals will stoke up the fires.

Condemn

The British labour movement should condemn these proposals. The Six Counties is not the framework for a solution. Quite the opposite — it makes the Catholic/Protestant antagonism worse and unresolvable.

The Labour Party is committed to a long-term goal of a united Ireland. Now, when the Tories propose new, foredoomed and very dangerous tinkering with the artificial and undemocratic Six County state, is the time to raise the whole question of a independent and united federal Ireland. That is the only fundamental solution to the tragic mess that successive British governments, Labour and Tory alike, have made and continue to make in Northern Ireland.

tion of powers. There must be a consensus across the Protestant and Catholic communities, represented by at least 70% of elected representatives. The British government will retain ringmaster powers, and the right to dispose of whatever the Assembly may propose.

Thus the politicians of Northern Ireland are being placed in a largely blank political framework of connections and institutions, and told to fill in the details, to improvise and reach agreement — with the incentive of fully devolved Northern Ireland home rule if they comply and succeed in carrying it through.

Magic

What new magic element is going to induce the necessary cooperation between the politicians and reconciliation between the communities, the White Paper does not say.

The new approach differs from the approach in 1973-4 and 1975. All previous proposals — political kites and hard 'initiatives' — made definite proposals. These do not, except for laying down guidelines that the Catholics cannot be

entirely overridden.

In 1973 a full Northern Ireland Catholic/Protestant coalition government was set up — and in 1974 it crumbled. In 1975 a constitutional assembly was elected and told to work out an agreed constitution before proceeding to a new power-sharing executive. The Protestant majority demanded majority rule — i.e. Protestant rule — and Britain had to admit defeat.

Now the onus is thrown on the Northern Ireland politicians.

It is difficult to see what other approach they have left to take — but this one seems to see the British government's role and responsibilities in old-fashioned terms of the 'night watchman state' — the government should interfere as little as possible, merely set up a framework and hold things together, trusting to institutions to grow, develop, knit together and evolve away from the present bitter realities of Northern Ireland.

A policy that might work — or seem to — in an organically expanding, healthy society, it is incredibly irresponsible for Northern Ireland.

This is a chronically divided society with a declining economy, a war by the Catholic minority against the ruling state power, and a muted civil war between the Catholic and Protestant communities.

In 1982 we are in the 14th year since the original Northern Ireland state established in 1920 crumbled and fell apart into chaos and anarchy.

There is no solution within the Six County unit. That is the lesson of the 62 years since Ireland was partitioned.

The Six County unit is artificial, unviable, an outrage imposed by superior British force against the democratic rights of the Irish people. Justified as a necessary defence of the rights of the Protestants of Ulster, the Northern state has always had a bigger Catholic minority than the Protestants of all Ireland would have been inside a 32 County state.

Cockpit

Catholics are today about 35% of the population of the Six Counties.

The Six Counties have been a cockpit, and inside that small arena, Catholic/

Protestant communal animosities, economic competition, and conflicting political aspirations have been murderously intensified and concentrated. The working class has remained chronically divided along communal lines.

From 1920 to 1972 there was one-party rule at Stormont on behalf of the Protestant community, whose political and social supremacy was openly proclaimed ('a Protestant state for a Protestant people'), and pursued with boneheaded narrowmindedness and with religious, political and even racial bigotry resembling that of the Boers in South Africa.

Catholics were discriminated against in jobs and housing, deprived of rights taken for granted in Britain, subjected to special powers of detention without charge or trial. They were treated as the conquered and subjugated people that they in fact were.

Their revolt after 1968, which grew into a powerful guerilla offensive, finally forced the British government — nominally in charge all along — to shatter the Orange political establishment in Northern Ireland in March 1972.

The intention was to then proceed to create a new political edifice into which would be incorporated Catholic middle-class politicians, thus bringing Northern Ireland politics to the general level of West European democratic regimes.

They have failed repeatedly. They have failed either to placate or to beat down the Catholics.

The Catholic revolt and the abolition of Stormont led to a tremendous Protestant backlash and the eruption into a sort of political life of the Protestant working class, who had been overwhelmingly docile and deferential to their Tory-Unionist 'betters' throughout the life of the State.

Guerilla

One-party Protestant dictatorship was brought down by the Catholic guerilla offensive. In 1974 it was the Protestant working class that brought down the Catholic/Protestant coalition government with a general strike of revolutionary proportions (though for a reactionary goal: they wanted the restoration of Protestant supremacy, straight majority rule over the Catholics).

DEMO MAY 8: TROOPS OUT NOW!

Building the left wing in the Labour Party YS

by Linda Mouldale and Sam Jones

OVER the last year, youth have taken to the streets to show their anger and frustration at the Tory government. The huge CND march and the summer riots opened up the minds of many thousands of young people to new ideas.

This growing movement should have reflected at this year's YS Annual Conference held in snowy Bridlington. It wasn't.

Last year, mainly due to the efforts of the opposition in the YS, the conference voted to affiliate to CND. Yet delegates still came out with the argument that CND is a middle class campaign, but we'll do a raid on it and recruit the best to Militant. One delegate complained that there was a Tory on a CND march he attended who complained about him shouting socialist slogans. He didn't like marching with Tories. This of course ignores the fact that by marching and chanting, we can force the Tories out of the campaign and win the youth to a socialist perspective.

Speeches

Speeches concentrated on the inadequacies of the CND leadership and particular bad experiences LPYS members had had at the odd meeting. Instead of going all out to build CND, and win the respect and support of its thousands of young followers, the YS majority are only prepared to point out that socialism is the only way to stop war.

Conference also refused to support an excellent resolution from Weymouth YS outlining what YS members could do to build CND and calling for the YS to take up the call for Britain to get out of NATO.

To the thousands of youth arrested and beaten up by the police, the message was 'hang on, the police are only doing their job, don't fight them, ask them to join Militant, after all they are only workers in uniform?'

Bob Towers from Huyton YS pointed out that the attitude youth take to the police is based on what they receive at the hands of police truncheons and that instead of accepting the bosses' police we can perfectly well police ourselves in our communities and through the trade unions.

As the opposition at LPYS conference, Class Fighter supporters made a



200 attended the Class Fighter fringe meeting



Amanda Barnes: called for solidarity with FMLN's fight against the El Salvador military and US imperialism

big impact. Yet time and again we were blocked from the bureaucratic platform, with National Committee recommendations against everything which wasn't a Militant resolution. Not only that but every NC member summing up on the 'debate' could take as much time as they liked. Much of the conference was wasted in this manner and several delegates came to the Class Fighter bookstall to complain and ask the National Left Wing Youth Movement to organise a campaign for democracy in the LPYS.

Even though the British Fleet was steaming down to the Falklands during the conference the Militant supporters refused to take an emergency resolution from Coventry NE YS calling on the YS to organise a national demonstration against any war. As Class



Eric Lucas: called for the LPYS to build a mass CND and to fight for withdrawal from NATO

Fighter supporters pointed out, if the LPYS doesn't organise such a march, who will?

The NC produced a statement condemning the war and the jingoistic posturing of the Labour leadership, but included a demand for blacking by the trade unions of Argentinian goods — a strange thing for socialists to call for. There is enough anti-Argentinian feeling being whipped up in the Tory press and by the Labour leadership without the YS adding its tuppence worth.

The Chair refused to take any Class Fighter speakers in this debate.

On Ireland, Chris Brind from Welwyn and Hatfield YS and Andrew MacDonald from Aylesbury YS showed that it was the duty of British socialists to support the Republicans in their fight against the British



Dave Curtis: won 20 votes in the election for LPYS representative on the Labour Party NEC

Army. To condemn them as criminals as some speakers did, was to give conditional support to the British state.

This point was emphasised at the Labour Committee on Ireland meeting where Patrick Murphy from Stockport South YS spoke.

Starkly

The pettiness of the YS leadership's opposition to all Class Fighter resolutions was most starkly shown in the session on fighting racism and fascism. Judith Bonner from Coventry North East YS argued for a resolution stemming from the experiences of the YS and Asian youth in Coventry who are YS members arguing for support for self defence.

Yet the National Committee argued against it on the basis that there was a phrase in it saying 'purge all racists from the unions'. In fact the resolution said 'purge all fascists'. This was pointed out and acknowledged by the Standing Orders Committee as a misprint. But they still recommended opposition!

Dave Curtis, an ex-YOP worker and now NUR member stood as the Class Fighter candidate for the YS seat on the Labour Party NEC and won 20 votes. In his hustings speech he said:

"We'll only win large numbers of youth to the YS if we fight to win. We don't think a bosses' government will disarm, but that doesn't stop us building a mass CND now, we can't leave everything till after we've won socialism".

Surprisingly the LPYS did not seem to have grown since last year. There were around the same number



Judith Bonner: explained how Coventry N.E. YS had organised for anti-racist defence squads

of delegates — about 280 — despite the claim that there are 10,000 members in 480 branches. (The print run for Socialist Youth, the LPYS paper, is only 6,000 according to Andy Bevan, the Labour Party Youth officer).

Class Fighter and the National Left Wing Youth Movement were clearly the opposition in the YS. Many delegates and visitors were interested in our activities and our literature. We are a growing part of the LPYS but for many LPYS members, the only time they are allowed to hear a different viewpoint is at the Annual Conference. If there are any YSs near you who have not had a Class Fighter speaker yet, we'll come and speak. Get in touch with us by writing to NLWYM, BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX.

Women's rights

A fringe meeting was held by the Action Committee for a Woman's Right to Work, which highlighted the appalling levels of women's unemployment and the need for a fight amongst the whole labour movement on the issue of a woman's right to work.

It was agreed that creches should be provided at all conferences so that women can play a more active part.

There were also suggestions that there should be a separate YS women's conference. The meeting supported the demonstration for a woman's right to work, called for June 5 and the need to make this a massive event.

Unfortunately the conference debate on women was not so good. We

THE National Left Wing Youth Movement was a noticeable force at the conference this year.

At the Class Fighter meeting, 200 people turned up to listen to the speakers and discuss with us.

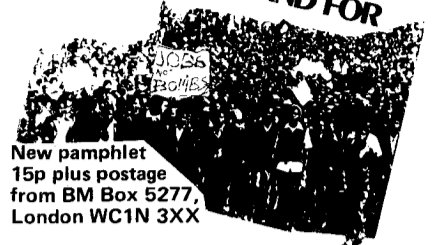
From the platform Mick Liggins outlined what our policies are. He said, "We want to see a mass LPYS. We will know when we have got a mass LPYS when we see LPYS slogans written all over the walls on housing estates rather than NF and BM that we see now. To achieve that we need to show youth that the LPYS will take up their fight, and take it up to win, not to make propaganda."

Judith Bonner spoke on Class Fighter. She outlined the weakness of the official YS paper Socialist Youth, and urged people to write for Class Fighter, and of course sell it.

Alan Thornett, a deputy convenor of British Leyland's Assembly Plant in Cowley, spoke on the Tebbit Bill, warning of the dangers of treating the proposed legislation with complacency. He spoke about the real effects that the Bill would have on the trade union movement and outlined the sort of campaign needed and being built for by supporters of Socialist

200 at meeting

New pamphlet 15p plus postage from BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX



NOTHING TO LOSE
... A WORLD TO GAIN!
CLASS FIGHTER
WHAT WE STAND FOR

Organiser. From the floor there was a lively discussion. The supporters of Militant present were asked if they would like to make a contribution, but none of them did, except to ask a question about our call for a workers' government.

During the meeting a contact list went round which many people signed, requesting Class Fighter speakers for their YS Branch.

Every day of the conference we printed news bulletins to explain Class Fighter's views on important issues and to advertise fringe meetings.

The NLWYM bookstall sold over £100 worth of literature and 350 copies of our pamphlet "Nothing to lose, a world to gain" were sold.

Throughout the conference many people came over to our bookstall and had discussions with us and we gained a lot of support. Thanks to the conference we are now much better known in the YS and we are stronger as a result.

The job now is to go back to YS branches and show that we can build the YS better than the Militant supporters because our politics are better.

'No time for gay rights'

YET again the resolutions on gay rights were excluded from the final agenda, with poor excuses like lack of time. But there was no shortage of time for a tub-

thumping half-hour spent on ... the monarchy! (Surely there can't have been any disagreement on the need to abolish them and other relics of feudalism).

In protest at the NC decision, a petition was drawn up which 300 people signed and in one afternoon a meeting was organised which attracted over 60 people.

Just in talking to comrades and asking them to go to the meeting or sign the petition, the need for a discussion on gay rights became absolutely clear, faced with such comments as 'God made men for women'.

We must fight the oppression of homosexuals in our society and develop the very low understanding of so many people, including some of those offering themselves as the leadership of the labour movement, on this subject.

Homosexuals will not disappear under a socialist state. Now is the time to challenge narrow views on morality.

Get a speaker to your YS branch to discuss homosexual and bisexual rights. Contact the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights.

DEMONSTRATE IN LONDON



MAY 8th BRITAIN OUT OF IRELAND MAY 8th
SELF DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE

Writeback A letter Socialist Challenge would not publish



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 Leyland Vehicles jobs strike this January and February led to a sharp debate between Socialist Organiser and Socialist Challenge. This letter was sent to Socialist Challenge but has not been published there.

AS A TGWU senior steward who attended the picket lines at Leyland and several of the meetings, I would like to express my grave concern at the articles written by P.Sikorski in Socialist Challenge (March 4, March 11). It is thankfully a long time since I last encounter-

ed such a distressing mixture of waffle and evasion. Serious workers looking for lessons from this debacle will unfortunately have to look beyond your pages. I will limit myself to the following points. Elected stewards are open to the same bureaucratising pressures as full-

time officials, as BL workers know to their cost. Whilst Mick Coyne or Jack Adams have to be distinguished from Boyd and Duffy, their politics, the politics of the Communist Party, are totally inadequate to the tasks facing workers today. Does Socialist Challenge agree? Why then don't you say so?

The strategy of the strike committee was all wrong right from the start. The main problem, you say, was that the Combine Committee decisions were not campaigned for. In fact they were campaigned against... by the local leadership.

The central focus — an all-Leyland stewards' conference — was rejected by Mick Coyne, who throughout verbally attacked those who argued for the extension of the strike.

In all of this the IMG acted as Coyne's cocker spaniels.

At the Leyland Action Committee meeting in Leyland, the IMG supporters mixed adulation of Big Mick with attacks on those like Steve Longshawe of LSE who argued for taking the strike into the Cars Division.

Against this they posed a precise and parochial formula, 'Build the struggle in Lancashire'.

As Steve pointed out, the stoppage had near-unanimous support, much greater than that at Scotts at the start. There was a clear basis for pushing forward.

Your paper throughout the dispute failed to argue through the strategy and tactics necessary to win. Unlike Socialist Organiser you failed to hammer home the central argument: 'You're dead wrong, Mick, only a corporate-wide response can beat a corporate plan. Only the cracking of Edwardes can maintain jobs in Lancashire'.

Increasingly the focus of your paper seems to be 'When workers struggle, we uncritically support them'.

Let me assure you, serious workers welcome fraternal criticism and advice. To be painfully honest, there was no difference between your coverage and that of the Morning Star.

What would have been your position if the Scott 'elected plant leadership' had accepted the July 10 sell-out that Boyd and Duffy attempted to impose? Had the CP had more influence in Scotts, this would have happened. Would you then have argued it was necessary for Socialist Challenge to be 'with the strike committee'?

Leyland is a greenfield site. The Scotts workers come from Openshaw, which has 'more than a century's experience of reformist domination'.

The Scotts workers seem to have done a good job in breaking from it. For example, there was more horse sense in Steve Longshawe's open letter calling on Leyland workers to extend their fight than in your whole coverage of Leyland.

Socialist Challenge ended up playing Cardinal Wolsey to Mick Coyne's Henry VIII. And we all know what happened to Henry's mates, don't we?

T.Hart, TGWU convenor, Akzo Chemie, Rochdale.

Failings of left in fares fight

I THINK that Cyril Newgate (letters, Socialist Organiser 78) is right to find Socialist Organiser wanting on the London fares fight; but he misidentifies our failing.

The cheap fares were the battle emblem of the London Labour Left. The transport unions accepted the policy without enthusiasm, after watering it down for the GLC manifesto.

An effective fight against the Law Lords had to draw on those most committed to the cheap fares — the Labour activists; and those most dramatically affected — the millions of passengers whose fares doubled and whose services were cut from one day to the next; as well as the LT unions. A class rather than a sectional fightback was necessary as well as being desirable.

If the LT union leaders had called all-out action against the Law Lords, cer-



'Can't Pay, Won't Pay' — were we right to back it?

tainly they would have got a response. But the leaders had no wish for such action; and the shop stewards' conferences showed that there was not spontaneous militancy sufficient to force them into action. An organ-

ised opposition had to be built in the unions.

The London Labour Left's failure to link up with organised left wings in the unions — its one-sided focus on fighting within the Labour Party — was cripp-

ing here.

One-off calls for strike action from 'Can't Pay, Won't Pay' councillors would have been useless. What was needed was for every Labour Party to contact local bus garages and NUR branches, organise joint meetings, and work out joint plans for resistance.

The Labour Parties could have helped to organise passengers, too — through the unions in the workplaces that they travel to, or the tenants' associations in the estates they travel from.

The left councillors' main responsibility in such an all-round fightback was to do what only they could do, and do at will — i.e. vote down the budget including the fare rises.

None of this was done. And Socialist Organiser's real failing, it seems to me, lies here. I know individual Socialist Organiser supp-

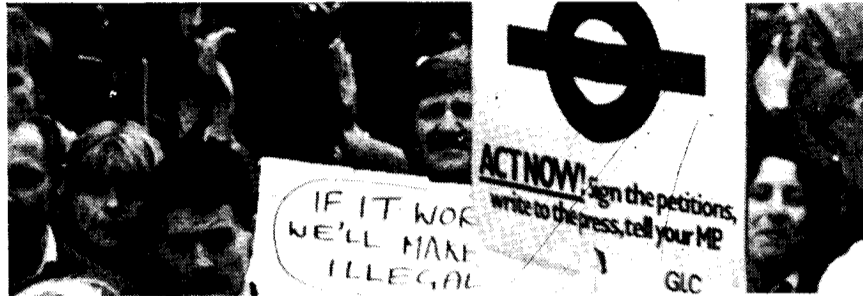
orters were very active in the LT unions and in local Labour Parties — but I think we failed to mobilise our full resources sufficiently, to map out what had to be done on all fronts, and to give a lead.

But when it came to it on March 21, and 'Can't Pay, Won't Pay' was the only resistance organised, I think we were dead right to support it to the end.

Yes, a flop was foreseeable. But we might have

foreseen wrong. Over-reaction by LT might have sparked a more powerful movement than we could have predicted. In any case, better to be with those few hundreds or thousands who were fighting, however inadequately, than to sit on the sidelines, playing the professor of Marxism, as Socialist Challenge for example did.

COLIN FOSTER, Islington.



New Zealand right wingers attack

An ultra-right gang in the New Zealand Labour Party has publicly come out with four propositions which in

effect would make the whole New Zealand Labour Party a clone of the British Social Democrats.

It is highly unlikely that they will succeed, but there is a distinct possibility that a quarter of the Parlia-

mentary Labour Party will split off and form a separate party if they cannot capture power in the present Labour Party.

Against this background, some Labour Party members have got together to launch a 'Committee for informed decision making'.

The committee notes that elections within the Labour Party take place at present under conditions where members weighing up the merits or demerits of candidates have nothing beyond the barest biographical details to assist them in making a choice. It proposes reforms to remedy this, and in the meantime suggests a questionnaire for Labour Party branches to circulate to candidates on their own initiative.

Union ties

The questions include points raised by the right wing: do candidates favour the Labour Party changing its name? do they favour the Labour Party cutting its ties with the trade unions?

The questionnaire also asks about withdrawal from ANZUS (the military pact linking New Zealand with Australia and the US) and repeal of the abortion laws.

HECTOR McNEILL, Wellington, New Zealand.

Porn backs up the Puritans

ANN EVANS (Letters, Socialist Organiser no.76) tries to reduce my arguments on pornography to the absurd by saying that the fight against sexism must include the closure of all newsagents because they sell the Sun, the tearing up of the Militant, and the destruction of Turner's erotica.

What she ignores is that the fight against pornography, 'ripping up and tearing down' as I suggested, is an attempt to change people's consciousness by drawing attention to an oppression and an injustice, not to impose some narrow-minded doctrine on an unsuspecting public.

In my view, women's consciousness has changed markedly over recent years, largely by-passing the revolutionary left. Hence it is ludicrous to suggest as Ann Evans did originally that sexuality could be driven back into the closet — women would not allow that.

The fight against pornography is a fight to free sexuality from sexism, from the sado-masochism of 'normal' sexual relations, a sado-masochism which reflects the oppression of women by men.

There can be no genuinely 'open sexuality', which both Ann Evans and I believe in, until both women and men realise how sexism and its propaganda in pornography distort and mutilate sexuality.

My argument originally was against sex shops, which are as pernicious with regard to sexism as the National Front is to racism in my view. The examples made by Ann Evans are involved with other things as well as sexism, and can therefore possibly be changed rather than closed down.

Newsagents, for example, usually sell sweets to rot your teeth and cigarettes to give you cancer, as well as selling the Sun.

I would not be opposed to workers in the printing or distribution industry refusing to handle the Sun or other papers and magazines because of their sexist content. This type of action has happened before, for example with the Jak cartoon in the Evening Standard during the electricians' strike or more recently the banning of the Sun by the train drivers.

But to call for the closure of all newsagents would be ridiculous, as Ann Evans said.

Erotica

The case of Turner's erotica is a different question again. I'm sure that John Ruskin did not destroy those paintings as a contribution to women's liberation, and even if he had done so, it would have been a sexist thing to do — very patronising.

We read great literature and view great paintings because they tell us the truth about life at a particular time. Pornography does not do that — it provides an escape from reality, it reinforces accepted ideology (including puritanism and monogamy of which it is merely the flip side), it is the male equivalent of Mills and Boon.

Like Ann Evans, I would like to have seen Turner's erotica. Given his other paintings, I am sure his erotica would be quite different from your average blue movie, since he would treat all human beings with dignity and not despise and degrade women for profit.

DAVE SPENCER, Coventry.

Socialist Organiser Alliance

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Name

Address





JOHN HARRIS

The only labour movement march for Solidarnosc in London — and the IMG campaigns against it!

Damaging the Polish economy? Perhaps Solidarnosc should have held back?

WHY IS IMG LYING?

John O'Mahony responds to the attacks levelled against Socialist Organiser by Socialist Challenge

THE POLITICAL degeneration of Socialist Challenge and the IMG proceeds at remarkable speed.

Three weeks ago they sabotaged — to the best of their ability — the Socialist Organiser-initiated labour movement demonstration for Solidarnosc (which was supported by the London Labour Party).

Socialist Challenge carried an attack on 'action by small groups' aimed to tell IMG members not to support the demo and to discourage other Socialist Challenge readers. (Only three weeks before, they had supported a small demonstration of about 300 for Solidarnosc in Birmingham).

Blatant

Last week's Socialist Challenge told the blatant lie that supporters of Socialist Organiser at the Polish Solidarity Campaign conference voted for a resolution to have a campaign which would include Tories and Social Democrats. To judge by reports from Socialist Organiser supporters, IMG members are being told that Socialist Organiser supporters joined the anti-Leninists at the conference in 'witch-hunting supporters of Socialist Challenge'. (In fact, as we reported last week, supporters of Socialist Organiser, were themselves witch-hunted).

After the factional sabotage at the expense of solidarity with Solidarnosc, now come factional lies to justify themselves and to

seal off their supporters from discussing the serious political issues which divide us from the IMG on Poland.

In fact Socialist Organiser supporters voted for this resolution from Robin Blick 'PSC seeks support for its activities from all individuals and organisations which uphold the unconditional right of working people to form and belong to independent trade unions everywhere in the world'.

Do the comrades of Socialist Challenge then think that Thatcher's Tories, and the SDP who voted for Tebbit's anti-union bill, believe in 'the unconditional right of working people to form and belong to independent trade unions'? Or do they think we do?

The resolution was presented and argued for by Blick as an alternative to the following resolution from Wictor Moczyski:

'PSC should mount a national campaign... encouraging support from all [regardless of political affiliation] who agree with the

universal concept of trade unions free of governmental control and who oppose all rule by military juntas or armies of occupation'.

Both resolutions were passed. Naturally Socialist Organiser supporters voted against the second one. Martin Meteyard, author of Socialist Challenge's article, saw us vote against it.

Political issue

Whatever Blick's opinions or intentions may be, the resolution we voted for does not call for or commit us to unity with Tories and Social Democrats. It is not counterposed to the labour movement oriented campaign we want, nor does it inhibit us from working for that inside and outside the PSC.

The political issue involved here is whether we adopt the narrowest possible attitude to Polish solidarity work, trying to confine it to fully paid-up left-wing members of the labour movement who are

prepared to begin every meeting and every resolution about Poland with prayers for the defence of the USSR and for the speedy damnation of Reagan and Thatcher. Socialist Organiser does not adopt that destructively narrow attitude and Socialist Challenge — for reasons of its own — does.

Marek Garztecki of Solidarnosc nailed the double standards here when he asked if the IMG would go to an El Salvador solidarity meeting and put down a motion demanding a clear pro-Solidarnosc declaration from everyone there before agreeing to work with them for Salvador solidarity.

Of course neither they nor we would do that. Nor did we refuse to work with Stalinists for Vietnam solidarity.

(But at the PSC meeting, faced with a resolution explicitly condemning Reagan and imperialism, we voted with the IMG for it).

The double standard expresses the same ambivalence as the IMG's refusal

of vigorous and straightforward support for a working class response to Solidarnosc's call for class action — blacking — in the West.

It would of course be unprincipled to join in activity where pro-imperialist politics or politicians dominated. This has nothing to do with the PSC — despite the Leninophobe clique of Westoby and Blick. The meeting's vote to send greetings to the Salvador solidarity demonstration is decisive evidence here.

But inevitably people whose anti-Stalinism leads them to a mood of conciliation with liberal capitalism will be part of any broad Polish solidarity campaign. Decisive is what it does and can do for Poland and Solidarnosc.

We retain our political independence within any campaign — for Poland or for Vietnam. We avoid destructive ultimatums. We break with our allies if their politics become destructive of the work of solidarity or subordinate that work to alien politics.

The reason the IMG finds our approach unacceptable is because its own political line is torn between gut support for the Polish workers and unwillingness to urge the British labour movement to do anything against the Polish state.

The IMG has supported some blacking action when it has occurred. But with obvious reluctance. They insist that blacking — i.e. working class direct solidarity action — should not be the central thrust of a labour movement campaign.

They argue that blacking would inflict economic damage on the Polish economy — as if Solidarnosc does not have the right to decide it wants that, and as if that is not what industrial action is usually about!

For some of them, support for one of the two camps into which they see the world as divided overrides independent working class politics on the Polish question. (The US SWP rejects blacking and calls on the labour movement in the West to demand of its governments massive economic aid for the Polish state). The others are inhibited, torn between their own better class instincts and the pressure of powerful sections of their international movement which explicitly reject working-class action in the west for Solidarnosc.

We must 'defend the USSR' with the methods of the international working class. To counterpose support against Reagan and Thatcher for the Polish (and USSR) state to inter-

national working class action for Solidarnosc is to raise something else above the international socialist revolution, and to adopt a conservative and quasi-Stalinist version of 'defence of the USSR'.

Left and right are defined by class alignments and political perspectives on each question. On the Polish question, the left consists of those who pursue class action for Solidarnosc, and working-class political independence from both the Stalinist bureaucracy and imperialism.

The IMG's mixed feelings about class action by the British labour movement to strike at the state which is trying to grind the Polish labour movement into powder means that it is now on the right of the labour movement forces active in solidarity with Solidarnosc.

They sabotage Socialist Organiser's work and now misrepresent us and lie about us, because that is so much easier than honest reporting and argument, when you yourself are riddled with unresolved political contradictions.

Increasingly they seal themselves off, telling themselves that thereby they are 'building the party'.

Comrades of the IMG: if you study the walls of the road that you are now within sight of, you will find scribbled among the graffiti: 'Gerry Healy was here'. Serious people shouldn't be.

SCIENCE



Last October Socialist Organiser reported on a toxic waste tip exploding in Stoke on Trent. That came three weeks after an official report saying that the government had no clear idea of what was dumped, where.

Now a tip in Edinburgh has exploded. Lothian Labour councillor PAUL NOLAN reports.

AN EXPLOSION equivalent to about five tons of explosives reached the 25,000 residents of the Niddrie and Craigmillar housing estates on the south east of Edinburgh in the early hours of Sunday March 21.

The blast was the result of the self-ignition of a lethal cocktail of chemicals used in the making of fireworks and other explosives which were buried in 1970 under what is now a refuse disposal tip. It hurled two ton sacks over 100 yards and left a crater 100 feet wide and 60 feet deep.

Cover up on tip blast

Tons of refuse went flying into the air and rained down over an adjacent football pitch, houses, a primary school, and surrounding streets for a distance of over two miles.

Eye-witnesses describe hearing an enormous bang which sent shudders through nearby buildings, then a huge 100 feet high 'roman candle' shooting into the night sky, followed by a black cloud of incinerated refuse descending into the area.

Within a few hours local Labour councillors David Brown and myself, along with Edinburgh East MP Gavin Strang, visited the site and met with council officials, police and mines inspectorate.

The Niddrie and Craigmillar tenants' and residents' association visited people in the area to assess

the damage and possible dangers. The elected representatives spent an intensive next few days quizzing officials to find out what caused the explosion and if there was any likelihood of another blast.

Officials had in their possession documents and photographs that showed that the explosion was caused by up to ten tons of Barium Carbonate, Barium Nitrate, Strontium Oxalate, aluminium powder, magnesium, antimony, charcoal, sulphur, and arsenic sulphide. These were all buried together in the same pit, some in steel drums, others in paper bags — with huge quantities just shovelled in loose.

But they refused to give this information to elected councillors and an MP. This vital evidence was passed on through sympathetic

trade unionists.

Over the years, the chemicals had mixed with each other and developed into a self-igniting bomb.

Combustion

In 1978 Edinburgh District Council officials recommended to the Environmental Health Committee that the site where the chemicals were buried should be made into a refuse tip, without informing councillors what had been dumped there eight years previously. Experts believe that a combination of heat caused by the combustion of the rubbish tip and earth movement from heavy plant used at the tip were contributory factors that led to the chemicals mixing and exploding.

Dr William Gibb, a senior lecturer at Strath-

clyde University's Department of Chemistry and an acknowledged expert on the investigation of explosions said that 'the chemicals should never have been buried together, but taken away individually and disposed of separately'.

After pressure from local Labour representatives and tenants the Council has agreed to take the advice of a Department of the Environment expert and excavate the refuse tip down to the pit and find out what is there.

Watergate

Gavin Strang, David Brown and I are insisting that a guarantee is given to remove all chemicals that are left and have called on the Health and Safety Executive to carry out a full

inquiry into why the chemicals were dumped there, why councillors were not told about this danger, and why there was a 'Watergate' style cover-up to stop elected representatives and the public finding out the facts.

SOSG

Interested in science and socialism? Your job to do with science? Contact Socialist Organiser Science Group, c/o 28 Middle Lane, London N8

Shift to left in NUS

AT LAST week's National Union of Students conference, Labour Party members swept into the leadership of the NUS, taking four out of the five full-time NUS posts.

Three of these candidates, including the new NUS president, were elected on a National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) ticket; the fourth, Sarah Veale, was elected as a Socialist Students' Alliance candidate, defeating the 'Left Alliance' contender officially backed by NOLS.

These gains marked the end of over 15 years rule of NUS by the Broad Left alliance.

Despite this success, NOLS gave little cause for confidence that they will be able to provide a different sort of leadership — i.e. a fighting leadership.

An important battle was lost in the student union financing debate. Student unions have already lost their financial and therefore political autonomy. The motion launched by conference dodged the need to launch a campaign to force the government to change the law.

Instead, it recommended that each student union should secure its autonomy by agreement with the college authorities.

Continuation

In many cases, this tactic would be correct as part of a wider national campaign. But it was proposed instead of a campaign.

A continuation of the practices of the old Broad Left/Left Alliance leadership was again in evidence in the elections for the NUS delegation to the annual meeting of European student unions, to be held in Moscow later this year.

The student wing of Solidarnosc will not be represented at this meeting but the Stalinist states' stooge student unions will be there.

The Solidarnosc student union appealed for the NUS not to send delegates, and revolutionaries at the NUS conference took up this appeal.

Attempts to prevent the election taking place did not succeed. Boycott candidates then stood, but in the middle of the election outgoing NUS president David Aaronovitch ruled that any boycott candidates elected would be deemed to have resigned. Their places would be taken by the candidates with the next highest votes.

A third of the delegates then left the conference, determined to have nothing to do with the election.

But the NOLS delegation candidate, Ruth Cadbury, declared that if elected she would attend the Moscow meeting.

Clear policies

So although the names have changed on the NUS executive, there is no decisive change yet from the policies of the old Communist Party/Liberal alliance leadership.

Socialist Organiser supporters in NOLS must work for the implementation of clear and active policies, and for the conversion of NOLS into a campaigning force.

JANE ASHWORTH



Industrial News

BARKING JOBS SAVED

THE SIX week strike by 900 members of the National Union of Teachers in Barking ended last week. 104 jobs had been saved. The council originally wanted to enforce 159 job-cuts

[including compulsory redundancies], and introduce fixed-term contracts. Now 55 jobs will go and there will be no compulsory

redundancies. Louise O'Connor of Barking NUT [above] spoke at the April 3 Socialist Organiser/London Labour Briefing trade union conference and declared: "This is not a strike for pay. It's a strike about jobs. And not just about redundancies — we're fighting to save every job".

UNITED ACTION VITAL IN NHS PAY

FIGHT

by Martin Barclay

get support.

This pathetic approach reached its anti-climax last month, with a cold, miserable and wet day's lobby of Parliament, which got about three lines of publicity in the press.

The only real action has been organised locally — like that in Manchester on March 23, when hundreds of nurses, domestics, porters and canteen staff struck for half a day to lobby the regional health authority.

This approach — uniting all the different grades of hospital workers — is in complete contrast with that of NUPE and CoHSE leaders. They have tried, ever so quietly, to hive off the nurses and negotiate a separate deal around the 6.3% already offered them.

All NHS workers face the same rising prices, bigger bills, and low pay rises year after year. For the first time

we can have a pay campaign which can unite nurses, ancillaries, and administrative workers.

The only way to go forward after Wednesday is to take strike action which unites these different grades, like in Manchester. The lead must come from the branches, but we cannot allow the union leaders to sit back and leave the action isolated.

Branches should send resolutions to their own union executives calling on them to push for united national strike action in the TUC Health Service committee. We also need resolutions to go to the Health Services committee itself, urging it to call on the constituent unions to support strike action as the only way to preserve our living standards and our health service against the attacks of the Tory government.

Who is to control emergency cover?

by Geoff Williams

THE CAMPAIGN on pay launched by the health service unions has raised an old ghost — the question of emergency cover.

In the past, for example in 1979, the Tory press had a field day, accusing the unions of killing people by not providing emergency cover.

In fact, in past disputes the problem has been the determined effort by administrators to continue to run the hospitals as if nothing was happening. They left it up to those who crossed the picket lines to run the service, and inevitably this led to mistakes and accidents.

Alternatives are possible, many of them tried and tested in local disputes.

Most health workers have regular experience of providing emergency cover. At night most departments operate emergency cover, with a minimum number of staff. During holiday periods,

too, the service is run down to a minimum.

When consultant surgeons are at conferences or want extended leave, too, work is rescheduled.

In abnormal weather in South Wales recently, the service was reduced to a minimum, with no out-patient facilities for seven days and only emergency admissions. And everyone was praised at the end of it for the marvellous job they did.

Emergency cover preventing any risk to the patients' lives is entirely possible — as long as health workers themselves can organise and control it, instead of the patients' health being used as a pawn in management attempts at strike-breaking.

Most workers have a clear answer on emergency cover: We will provide it, but if other people are recruited to try to break our strikes and provide the full service, then the emergency cover will come off.

FOR THE first time in this year's pay campaign, the leaders of the National Health Service unions, through the TUC Health Services committee, are calling for coordinated national action.

On Wednesday afternoon (14th) at 2.30pm, one-hour joint union meetings are to be held in hospitals up and down the country. The hour is called a 'worktime meeting'; if it were called a strike, the hour might stretch into an afternoon or even a few days, and that is the last thing the bureaucrats want.

All the staff involved in 'direct patient care' are being told that they are not to attend the meetings and should stay in work. This formula is an attempt to exclude the nurses, who are the ones most directly involved in patient care, from taking any action at all.

Circulars

This is the first real action the union leaders have organised. The pay campaign started with circulars urging members to write to their MPs and lobby their area health authorities to



Does the slump work?



Crisis watch

By Martin Thomas

THE SLUMP works — after a fashion. That's the message from the latest figures.

Since the early 1960s profit rates in Britain (and, less markedly, throughout the advanced capitalist countries) have been drifting downwards. The Bank of England estimates that companies' real pre-tax return on trading assets fell from 11% in 1963 to 2.9% in 1980.

Profits recovered slightly for a short period under the last Labour government, as wages were held back. But then the decline continued.

In the 'second half of 1981, it seems, it was reversed. Gross trading profits after stock appreciation were 25% above their previous stagnant levels.

Sweeping conclusions from such figures are dangerous — later investigation often shows that the

first official estimates are misleading or plain wrong. But they fit in with the trend shown by wage and productivity statistics.

Real personal disposable income fell about 3½% last year, as wage rises were outstripped by inflation. And between the fourth quarter of 1980 and the fourth quarter of 1981, output per person employed in all production industries rose by 8½%.

In metal manufacture output per person rose by an astounding 40% (21% rise in output, 13% fall in the labour force). In chemicals it rose by 14%, in engineering by 11%.

These figures fit into the classic pattern of capitalist slump. Slumps are not simply a misfortune for capitalism, but an essential phase of its mechanism of self-development.

Capitalism has no conscious system for adjusting supply to demand. Capitalists are always producing for a more or less uncertain market rather than for democratically-expressed need.

'Excess' capital

In boom times, capitalists invest and expand production in hopes of an increasing share of an increasing market. Sooner or later production outstrips the market — not because all needs are filled, but because many people do not have the cash to translate their needs into market demand.

Then comes the slump. 'Excess' capital is scrapped or 'devalued'. (Currently bankruptcies are running at record levels). Wages and

conditions won by workers in the boom are lost again. The rate of exploitation is pushed up. Capitalism is 'rationalised', a new equilibrium is established, and a new phase of expansion (if, perhaps, these days, a feeble one) begins.

For most of the time since World War 2, major capitalist governments have tried to moderate and smooth out this cycle. The Tories' belief is that the cycle must be given more leeway to do its work and purge the economy.

So are they vindicated? Possibly and up to a point, from the viewpoint of the bosses. But not one bit from the viewpoint of the working class.

Any new expansion is very doubtful and promises no great gains for wages and jobs. What we need to do is replace the system.

BR attack pushed back

by Steve Good

APRIL FOOL's day produces its regular quota of practical jokes, but the suspension of Steve Forey, branch secretary and LDC rep for Kings Cross ASLEF, on the day, was in deadly earnest. It was the culmination of nearly two weeks of intimidation by the Area Manager at Kings Cross, Charles Wort.

Essentially, Steve Forey was suspended for observing the disciplinary procedure and refusing to go to an interview with the Area Manager without a witness being present.

A joint mass meeting of NUR guards and ASLEF members took a decision to walk out. Signalmen also stopped the job, and at one point trains were blocked all the way to Peterborough.

By 8pm the management had reinstated Steve on full pay.

Vivid

The strike was a vivid demonstration of our strength and confidence. It also served warning to British Rail management that we would not be intimidated and our determination to resist 'flexible rostering' is still very much alive.

It now seems likely that the Railway Staff National Tribunal will lean heavily in its decision towards the position of ASLEF. The declared intention of the British Railways Board is to implement flexible rostering come what may.

The ASLEF EC can be under no illusions about the total opposition of the rank and file to flexible rostering. The only concession that the union leadership has been prepared to offer the Board is the acceptance of seven to nine hour diagramming, but with a guaranteed eight hour payment.

In other words, some flexible rostering, but at a price. This option has been rejected by the Board as it would cost a further £12 million in wages.

Rosters

The confrontation over the rosters seems set for this summer, and coincides significantly with the introduction of Tebbit's Employment Bill. The Tories look prepared for a confrontation with ASLEF, and the EC cannot be allowed to vacillate under these conditions.

Any attempt to implement flexible rosters at one depot must be met with an immediate official call for all-out action.



Masseys fight on three fronts

by Keith White

A GRAPHIC demonstration of the links between the Labour Party and the trade unions can be seen in the current Massey-Ferguson occupation in Coventry.

For some three weeks the plant has been occupied in defiance of management imposition of compulsory redundancies.

Coventry South West CLP last week passed a motion of support for the occupiers and sent the same motion as an emergency resolution to the District Labour Party the following night.

Imagine the surprise of many delegates when District chairperson Bill Lapworth attempted to block any discussion of the resolution, and to stop South West CLP delegate Terry Rowlands (who is also a T&G shop steward and member of the Massey Ferguson strike committee) from addressing the meeting on the dispute.

The reason becomes obvious when you know that Lapworth is a T&G official and that the role of the local officials has been to urge the occupiers to drop their demand for no compulsory redundancies.

Fortunately, officials carrying this message to the

plant have been given short shrift, and the occupiers are standing their ground. Terry Rowlands told Socialist Organiser: "The latest trick management have pulled is to send out ballot forms to all the workforce."

"But as they seem to be based on the same computer print-out as they used for their letter calling on us all to go back to work, it's likely that even the people who have been sacked will be asked to take part."

"I know a number of people who were sacked and then got a letter urging them to go back to work".

Inept

This rather inept approach to individual workers seems to be mirrored by the line put out by management over the transfer of orders. "They told us that the CKD contract for Brazil was being transferred to the French factory because of the dispute. In fact we got it from them in similar circumstances, and even before the dispute started the Brazilians had said they didn't want kits any more, so the whole process was being transferred to Brazil anyway."

"The French workers are

involved in a similar dispute to our own. They are on contract, and there is a lot of immigrant (Turkish, I think) labour there".

The company's tricks and lies extend to the issue of voluntary redundancy. Terry told us: "We've only let emergency services into the plant, but we let personnel and industrial relations in to deal with VRs. They only turned up for a couple of days, and after that they didn't bother."

"We think they've got enough VRs, but they're not the sort they want, so they won't give us any information".

Messages of support and money have come from all the major plants in the district, from NUPE, and from the Labour Party. Even at the District Party meeting, Terry eventually got to speak, and £28 was collected. Many right-wingers were worried by Lapworth's behaviour.

As we go to press, management is hoping for a court order to remove the occupiers. The case is being heard on Wednesday afternoon following a one-week postponement.

Messages/money: Jimmy Dunn, secretary JSSC, 82 Stoke Green West, Coventry.

BL document

from back page

cession by management, since the original document called for a JNC made up entirely of full time officers.

But this has to be seen against the practice at the last two wage reviews of using the general secretaries as the negotiating body as soon as deadlock is reached. (In reply to a question, Hawley anyway refused to confirm that the TGWU's delegation would be made up of lay members).

The disputes procedure in the document has three stages with an optional extended plant conference. It is an extension of management control.

Plant industrial relations officers are to be present from the first (superintendent) stage of the procedure to ensure the uniform operation of BL policy in every department. There is no longer a time limit for the completion of procedure. Although 20 working days is mentioned, that is only to apply 'where necessary'.

Serious

More serious is a separate procedural arrangement to facilitate the imposition of 'productivity changes' by management. This must be completed in 10 days, after which management have the right to implement the changes.

It is a variation of the notorious agreement signed by Moss Evans on May 17 1980 which amounted to a 10-day declaration of intent for management to introduce the provisions of the 92 pages of strings foisted on

BL workers a few days earlier. (This section has been added to the original draft).

But perhaps the most serious clause in the document is the provision of two distinct types of dismissal procedure.

Gross

Where management decide that 'gross industrial misconduct' has taken place, they have the right of summary dismissal before any procedure has taken place at all. This amounts to an institutionalised victimisation procedure.

In other cases, where management decide that 'gross industrial misconduct'

has not taken place, the worker will remain on the payroll until the procedure has been completed.

If this document is accepted, it will be another major setback for BL workers foisted on them by the complicity of the leadership of the trade unions in the corporation.

A campaign must begin immediately in all BL plants to stop it being agreed by the JNC on April 23.

The document must immediately be made available to all workers in BL Cars. Shop stewards' committees must take it to the membership, and push for the JNC to throw it out and break off all further negotiations on it.

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AFTER previous two-day unofficial strike five weeks ago, 112 women are now again striking at Kigass Engineering Ltd, Leamington, together with 30 or so women at a smaller subsidiary factory in Warwick, over the right to belong to a union.

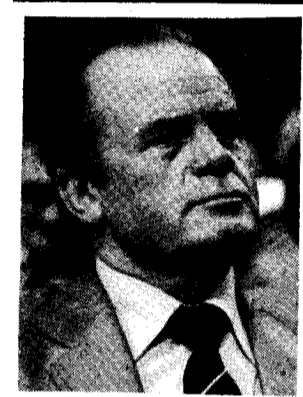
These small factories assemble and manufacture parts for gas cookers [Flavell, Parkinson, etc.] and also some minor component work for BL and Ford.

The women on the shop floor have all recently joined the AUEW. Kigass has up to now refused to negotiate with them over union recognition.

No support is being given by the small number of male shop floor workers [themselves apparently unionised], and the clerical staff, who are crossing the picket lines. Management have already advertised jobs at the factory, where the very top rate paid to the women shop-floor workers is £52.10 for a 40 hour week.

Messages/money to: 10 Waverton Mews, Sydenham Estate, Leamington.

BRYAN EDMANDS



Bitter lessons of Heathrow defeat

by Harry Sloan

"IT'S difficult to make a backbone out of a wish-bone".

With these words, TGWU National Organiser Ron Todd has tried to blame the collapse and defeat of the Heathrow baggage-handlers' strike upon the union's 30,000 members.

His words will no doubt strike a chord among the frustrated ramp workers, who witnessed wholesale scabbing on their seven-week struggle and the complete inaction of the bulk of their fellow TGWU members.

But the fact is that, like their fellow workers in British Leyland, the Heathrow workers are the victims first and foremost of the refusal of their official leaders to lead a serious fight in defence of their jobs and conditions. It is Todd who lacks the backbone to defy and fight for action against management threats of closure and bankruptcy.

The British Airways 'survival plan' was announced last September. It includes a 12-month pay freeze, the axing of 9000 jobs, the suspension of 16 routes, the closure of engineering bases in Cardiff and Manchester, the end of apprenticeship training, and a decision to sub-contract most catering operations.

Print

In other words, the company's workforce is to bear the brunt of resolving the cash crisis which left the firm claiming a £145 million deficit last year and predicting the same again.

Management have taken a tough line on imposing new work rotas, job gradings and longer hours, together with cuts in staff. For the ramp workers these mean an estimated 17 to 30 extra days' work per year without extra pay, and more weekend working.

Ramp workers refused to

accept the new rotas — and on February 9 were locked out by management. Within three days their struggle was made official by the TGWU.

But there matters were left — for week after week. In the face of stiff airport by-laws, even limited attempts by the ramp workers to picket were inhibited.

And despite immediate and wholesale scabbing on the strike by management, pilots and other airport staff, there was no attempt by TGWU officials to call out other sections of their membership to support the ramp workers.

Return

On the contrary, a week after the lock-out, a mass meeting had to vote down a recommendation by these officials to return to work for a 28 day period!

By February 22 a mass meeting of 1500 was being assured by the TGWU's so-called 'coordinator' for West London, Jack Dromey, that "50,000 members in the area are behind you". But as with most of Dromey's 'mobilisations', the net effect of this was — zero! Indeed the only real show of solidarity had been two one-hour strikes by APEX women check-in staff at Terminal 1.

Two days later Ron Todd swaggered: "We are going to stop the scabbing at Heathrow". But this meant not the convening of TGWU section meetings to explain the case and its implications and mobilise supporting strikes and blacking action, but simply 'strong representations' — to other unions!

By mid March there had been a one-day token strike by TGWU members in Terminal 3, and a similar decision by import/export workers. But still — after a month of official strike and



organised scabbing — there had been no call for sustained all-out action.

Lambasted in the press, beset by blacklegs, isolated on the airport itself, and denied any real leadership from their officials, the ramp workers were already plainly headed towards defeat when Todd moved at the end of March for his final empty show of militancy.

A mass meeting was called, supposedly for all 30,000 TGWU members on the airport. Only an estimated 3,000 turned out, to vote in favour of a call for all-out strike action by the whole TGWU membership in support of the ramp workers.

Yet the bulk of those voting were strikers themselves. The action was plainly doomed even as the decision was taken.

Boot

But, to put the boot in on trade union organisation in the airport, police were called out the next day to arrest ten pickets who had successfully persuaded plane refuellers to turn back from a picket line inside the airport complex itself.

The following day a bitter meeting of 1,000 ramp workers voted 2-1 to return to work, accepting the new management rosters.

Todd even had the cheek to complain that the strikers should have 'hung on' for another top-level chin-wag on the National Joint Council for Civil Air Trans-

port!

But by then the ramp workers had recognised that the bureaucratized union leadership on the airport, corrupted by years of joint management/union collaboration in sectional 'panels', was not prepared to lift a finger in the defence of their membership and shop floor organisation.

Todd — the man who presided over the sell-out of the Ford pay claim — has done it again. His brand of loud-mouthed rhetorical militancy, combined with top-level manoeuvring and a refusal to mobilise the rank and file in defence of their interests, has cost workers dear.

As they take stock of their defeat, Heathrow workers — like so many others — face the task in the next period of constructing a new leadership, politically capable of leading the necessary fight against the employers.

Baggage handlers must raise the demand that all TGWU representatives are withdrawn from the joint committees with management, and that negotiations are conducted by elected representatives directly answerable to the shop floor.

Only a reinvigorated independent shop stewards movement can defend Heathrow jobs and conditions against the onslaught to come as management prepare to give it off to private ownership.

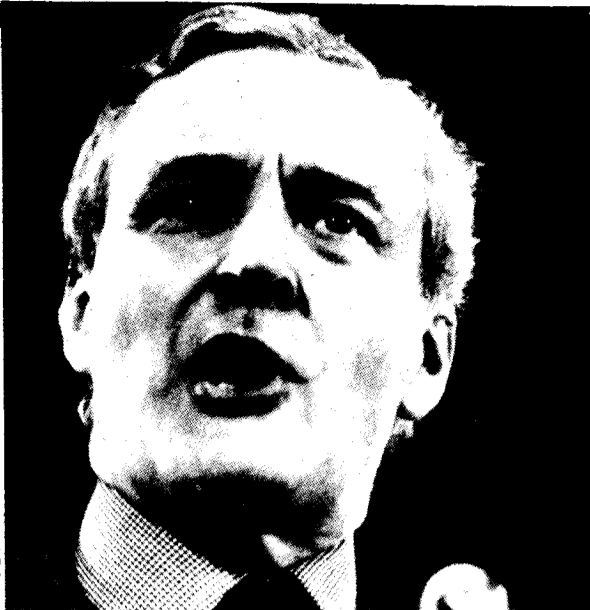
We should ask ourselves if it makes sense any more for trade union leaders to continue to serve as lonely token figures on the boards of nationalised industries, charged under new statutes passed by the Conservative dominated House of Commons with the task of selling off profitable public assets and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

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

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

TONY BENN

JOHN HARRIS



Socialist Organiser

**NHS
PAY**

COHSE

**plan for
'warm up'
action**

MOBILISE NOW AGAINST TEBBIT!

250 trade unionists at the Socialist Organiser/London Labour Briefing trade union conference in Birmingham on April 3 voted to back this appeal for a Mobilising Committee in Defence of Trade Union Rights, against the Tebbit bill. The appeal is also backed by Oxford Trades Council and by several individuals in their personal capacity, including Ray Davies (ISTC), Bernard Connolly (EETPU), Jeremy Corbyn (NUPE), Jonathan Hammond (NUJ), Abie Courtney (Boilermakers), and Harry McShane.

The trade unionists at the conference committed themselves to go back to their branches and committees and fight for support. A London Mobilising Committee is being set up this Wednesday, 14th, as we go to press and a leaflet for the national campaign is out this week. Contact: c/o 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

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

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

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

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

AS HEALTH workers staged one-hour strikes against the 4 per cent pay limit on April 14, the CoHSE leadership announced further action.

Members will: ban non-emergency admissions; ban admission of private patients to Health Service hospitals; refuse to cooperate with private hospital contractors; organise selective two-hour strikes; and impose a strict work-to-rule over administration duties by nurses and other staff.

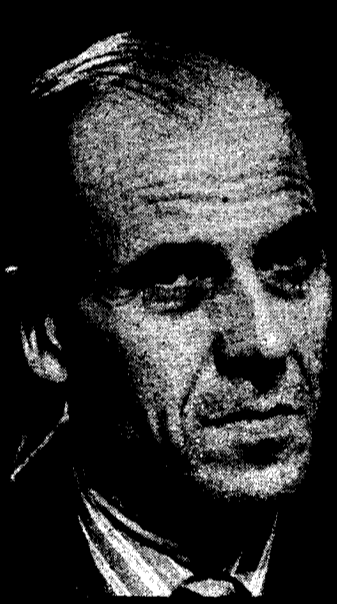
This is supposed to be a build-up for further, more militant action.

But: The action does not start until April 26 — a month after the settlement date. At this rate of 'warming up' we'll be at next year's settlement before the action develops into an

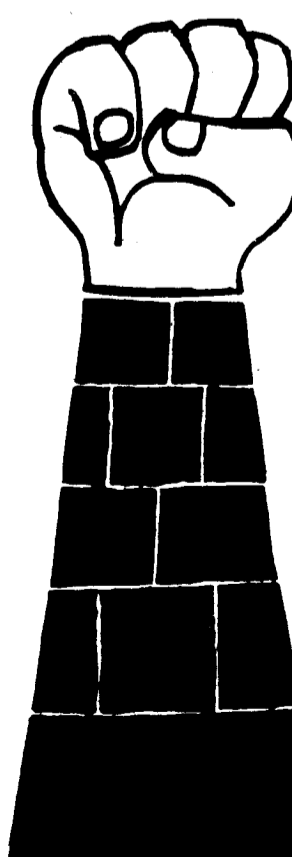
all-out strike. More and more health service union members are realising that all-out action — with emergency cover under workers' control — is the only way to win.

Branches are not instructed to carry out the action [with local decisions on HOW to implement it], only authorised. This will weaken branches in face of management, especially in action like a ban on non-emergency admissions, which is potentially effective but difficult to carry out in face of determinedly hostile management and senior medical staff.

NUPE is deciding on its action on Friday 16th. Rank and file members of all the health service unions need to press their demands for united and decisive action by all the unions.



£6000 fund



Our £6,000 special fund appeal has topped the £1000 mark (represented by the red patch below). Recent contributions include £250 from a Birmingham supporter, £25 each from two Oxford supporters, £30 from Pete Keenlyside, £10 Sue Erswell, £30 Pete Cashman, £35 from supporters in BL Cowley, £10 Nelle Darlington, £25 Richard Paine, and £50 Dave Spencer — total £1090.

But our aim is to get £3500 by the end of April. That means a lot of big contributions in the next two weeks! Send to: Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8. Cheques payable to Socialist Organiser.

BL puts the boot in!

A new document to tighten control over the shop floor could go through on April 23. Bill Peters reports

BL's new disputes procedure document is due to be accepted on the nod by the Joint Negotiating Committee on April 23.

It is designed to further hamstring the trade unions, and provides for a range of new measures to strengthen the hand of management in the plants.

In line with the decision of the AUEW shop stewards last week, the TGWU convenors have decided to put the 'final draft' of the document back to the shop stewards' committees for 'consultation'.

But no further convenors' meeting will be held prior to April 23. Objections are simply to be sent to TGWU automotive group national secretary Grenville Hawley by letter, and Hawley has undertaken to present them to the JNC.

The document has been under discussion at JNC level for two months. An agree-

Procedure agreement builds on Tebbit

ment to reintroduce it into negotiations was smuggled into the sell-out formula at the conclusion of last November's BL Cars wage review.

Throughout the two months, details of the negotiations have been withheld from the shop stewards and the workforce.

Management has made few concessions since the original draft was tabled in March 1981. In fact, in some ways the new draft is worse.

The document is written

to take the Tebbit Bill fully into account. Instead of workers being required to be members of an appropriate trade union, as in the existing BL agreement, the new draft says only that it is in the 'mutual interest' of the company and its employees that they are members of a union, and provides for 'discussions' in the event of 'difficulties' over membership.

An extension and consolidation of the check-off system is presented as an answer to the problems of the unions in maintaining 100% membership.

The document ends all full-time positions for senior shop stewards and their deputies, except in the case of senior stewards in certain large plants. This clause has already been implemented in most plants in advance of the signing of this document.

Joint plant-level negotia-

ting committees are to be established, and a national joint negotiating committee of 37 members — 18 seats for the TGWU, 9 for the AUEW, 2 for the NUSMW, and one each for the other eight unions.

This is claimed as a continued page 15

Fund

HOUNSLOW £1.50; Hull £10; Oxford £3; Coventry £32; Newport £1.50; Lambeth £18 — total £66. That's the sorry record so far this month of contributions and donations towards our regular monthly fund. More will have come in on bankers' standing orders without the statements yet reaching us, but it still leaves a long distance to go to our £1000 target.

Last month's final total was £527.50. Let's make sure that our special fund does not bleed the monthly fund like that again!

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

