

Join the
Labour
Party

Socialist Organiser

Against all bans and proscriptions!

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RESIST THE REGISTER!

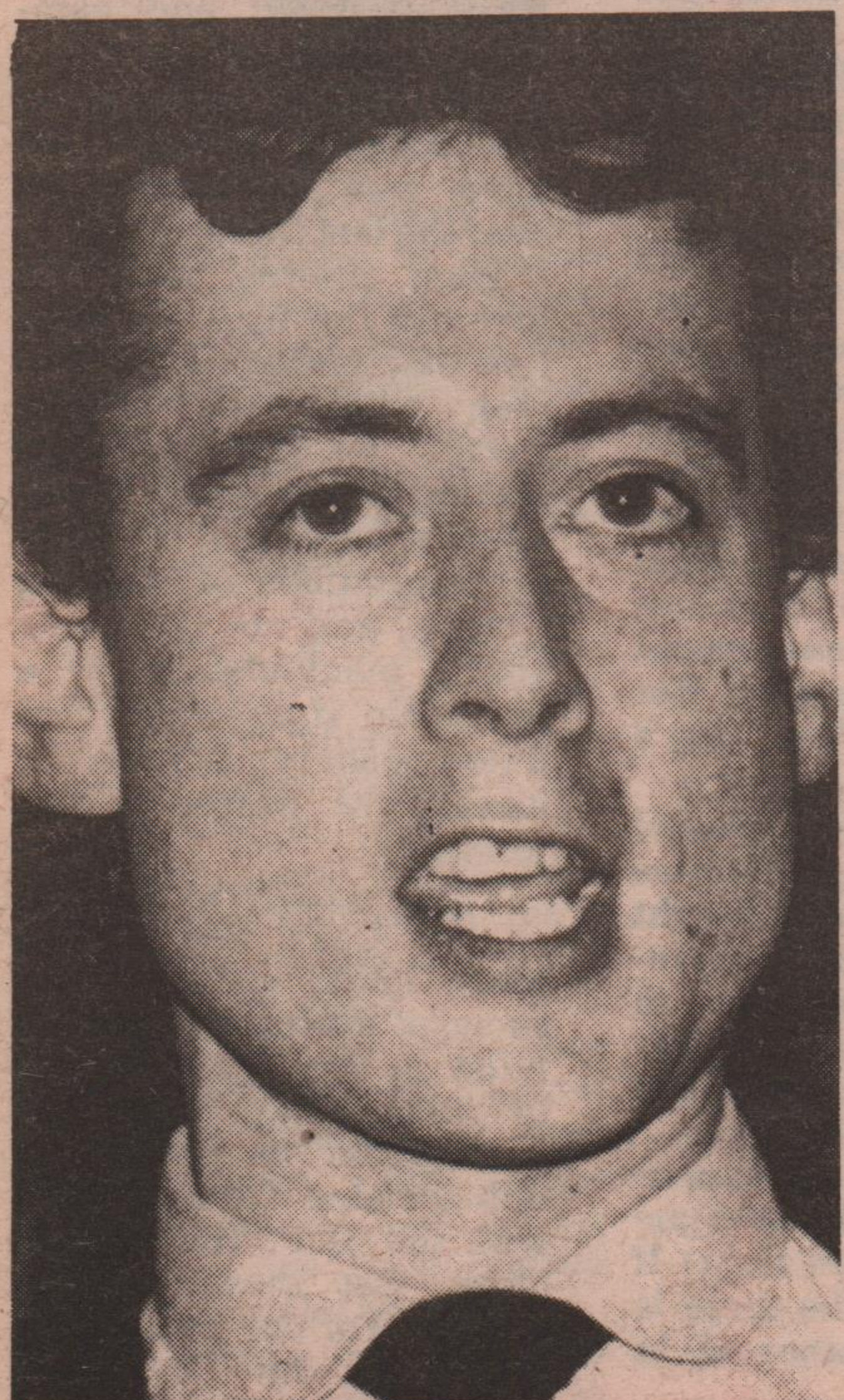
TUC to call transport strike

After Labour conference voted to impose the register and ban socialist groups not approved by the party leaders, PETER TATCHELL writes:

DESPITE the decision yesterday, we've got to keep up the fight for party democracy and accountability, and to reverse this short-term defeat into a longer-term victory. The decision shows the importance of carrying the struggle for

democracy into the trade union movement, to win parallel reforms to those achieved in the party. We mustn't be fooled by those who say we must exclusively concentrate on campaigning. That's important, but we must not block out the need to fight against those who want to roll back the democratic reforms.

I hope that all CLPs will refuse to implement the witch-hunt. People's right to hold and argue for different political perspectives is indivisible, and in a democratic party cannot be removed even by conference vote. Clearly the Right and the media feel so threatened that they have to resort to the public slanders that have appeared in the Sun and News of the World, in the hope of discrediting individual members and the party in general.



A GAUGE of the tremendous head of pressure that has built up within the labour movement for action to win the NHS pay claim is the fact that the TUC has announced plans for a 24 hour stoppage of transport unions to take place in November.

The action would be the most dramatic 'secondary action' ever staged, and amounts to a major challenge to the Prior and Tebbit anti-union laws.

Ironically while TUC lent their block votes to spend the process of witch-hunting advocates of 'extra parliamentary action' from the Labour Party, they felt obliged to take time out at Brighton to announce the biggest extra-parliamentary action so far.

Bluff

No doubt there is a massive element of bluff in the TUC decision: the date, not fixed, is suitably distant to allow time for what they hope will be some form of improved offer to let them off the hook.

But on the other hand repeated hopes for such a reprieve from the Tories have failed to materialise, and the TUC must realise that there is a strong chance of them being called on to put their words into action.

Bear down

Present at the meeting which took the decision was a strange coalition of right and left wing union leaders, plus Len Murray, presided over by Frank Chapple: nothing could more clearly indicate the way the militancy in the rank and file is bearing down upon union leaders.

Now is the time to re-double demands that these gestures be coupled to a full-scale escalation of action in the NHS itself, and demands for a concerted call for general strike action.

The TGWU block vote is cast for the register ... against the decision of its lay executive. GMWU and USDAW votes also went for the register, despite those unions having conference policy against any witch-hunts or purge in the Labour Party. The votes that decided Labour's new witch-hunt were cast by small groups of officials and union leaders without references to the millions of workers they are supposed to represent.

Comment and reports on Labour conference — pages 2-3

Blackpool '82

Dennis Skinner

IT IS quite clear now that the trade union right wing has scored a spectacular win with their block votes. Local Labour Parties generally mandate their delegates in a proper democratic fashion, but in the trade unions the votes for the women's section, for their own section, and for the Treasurership are cast seemingly without a mandate by general secretaries.

A simple look at this year's NEC will show that Dennis Healey commands 16 votes out of 29. It can fairly be described as Dennis Healey's executive.

No longer will John Golding scurry around looking for votes from the soft left. They will be able to have a clear majority on all the committees of the NEC.

There's got to be a more effective Left. I'm fed up with telling people that 12 candidates should be stood in the trade union section for 12 seats, and a maximum of 5 candidates should stand in the women's section until such time as that section changes its voting pattern to election by their own conference.

In the CLP section a slate of seven was agreed and it was almost 100% successful. That's a lesson for the other sections.

Les Huckfield

IT IS a disastrous day for socialists, and a victory for the Right. Despite Michael Foot's and Jim Mortimer's promise that they can limit the number of expulsions, the new elections to the NEC will now mean the witch-hunt is difficult to stop.

In short, Michael Foot no longer has a majority on the NEC that he can rely on. It looks as though there is a majority for Healey.

Ron Brown MP

IT'S a disaster for the party and working class. There is no way there can be unity against the Tories when there is a civil war going on, masterminded by the right wing. The situation is a crisis of capitalism, but also a crisis of leadership. There is a need for the Left to redouble its efforts in the labour movement and especially in the trade unions.

Nigel Knowles

Wood Green CLP and PPC for Hastings

THE RIGHT wing is pushing Peter Shore for leader. It was a fundamental mistake for Tony Benn not to run for leader this year.

On paper the Right looks in a strong position now. But the feeling is strong in the party, and the situation can change quickly. The register will be resisted throughout the party. This makes the October 30 conference very important.

The key to it is the trade unions. We must get into the unions and deal with the block votes.



Would you buy a used policy from these men?

Bureaucracy versus activists

IT WAS like the clash of metal on metal as two gears clash. At the Labour Party conference this week the trade union block vote turned the party sharp right, as the constituency Labour Parties swung more firmly left.

The register — under which no-one can organise for a point of view in the Labour Party without the prior approval of the party tops — went through by 5,173,000 to 1,565,000. Together with NUPE, TUCATT, SOGAT 82, TASS, and a few other unions, the great majority of the constituencies voted against.

In the National Executive elections, the Left gained in the constituency section and the Right swept the board elsewhere.

Division

The division is not between constituency activists and trade union

activists, but between rank-and-file activists of all sorts and the

Bang

At Blackpool Labour activists have finally come up with a bang against the fundamental problem of all the victories for the Left since 1979: that the Labour Party cannot be seriously transformed without transforming the unions.

Alliance

The alliance between block votes and rank-and-file revolt which won mandatory re-selection and other reforms was always unstable. Last year the backlash began. We wrote then: "This year's 'counter-revolution' is like last year's 'revolution' — a prematurely definite description of something still unshaped and unfinished."

The counter-revolution is not yet an accomplished fact. But it has its troops

mobilised, formed into columns, and marching into battle.

The Left still has positions of strength. Even the most stony-faced witch-hunter can be given pause by the fact that the Labour Party can hardly hope to operate well and win elections without constituency activists. The right wing want a purge which will leave the labour Party bloodless and docile — but they can't push it through unless weakness by the constituencies allows them to do.

The CLPs' fight against expulsions will be organised from the conference on October 30. And at the same time the Left needs to hit back at the Right 'from the rear' — through the trade union rank and file.

One veteran Labour activist told us at Blackpool: "The right wing think that they are getting in the saddle. But it's

not on this time. Not with three million unemployed. That's the other fact that the Left must build on — that the Right has no answers to the escalating decay of British capitalism, and can lead the labour movement only to disaster.

They can offer only a re-run of the Wilson/Callaghan government. Only a couple of weeks after the TUC voted down any wage controls under capitalism, Michael Foot was clearly trying to re-float the Social Contract — as well as edging away from unilateral nuclear disarmament.

The working class will fight back — it has no choice. And the Left must be ready to lead that fight.

A veteran Labour woman activist

YESTERDAY I could have wept. I've been in the party since I was knee high, and I was around when it tried to expel Nye Bevan. Then it was as much a crime to sell Tribune as it is to sell Militant today. Then the right wing was in command. Where did that get us? 13 years in the wilderness. I think to myself: not again! After that all the young people left us. We will probably survive that vote, but what they did to Joan Maynard today was something else. The bloke from Brighton yesterday was right. Nobody says on the doorstep, 'What about Militant?' They ask about unemployment.

Unite CLPs to fight!

by John Gardner, chair Luton East CLP

THE RIGHT wing undermined a democratic vote on Monday for the register was a vote against socialist policies for jobs, peace and freedom. By the results of the NEC elections on Tuesday morning, it was obvious the witch hunt had started with a lot of comrades like Joan Maynard, Eric Clarke and Les Huckfield.

We now have an NEC with a majority against public ownership and nuclear disarmament. So the clearest possibility for ensuring that policies such as these are in the next manifesto rests with annual conference.

The tasks for the Left are clear. Firstly, to unite CLPs to ensure there are no expulsions; secondly, to campaign in the unions and CLPs to gain control of the NEC in 1983; and campaign throughout the country to defend and extend the socialist policies we have won at conference over the last three years.

High priority must be given to the fight for positive discrimination for women within the Labour Party. If the women's section of the NEC is ever again to represent the radical aspirations of working women, and not the crude voting manipulations of a few male right-wing trade union leaders, it must be elected at women's conference.

There is majority support in the CLPs and among trade union members for socialist advance. What we must do is organise to win in 1983. The Right are determined to re-unite non-socialist Labour Party with the SDP. That is no clear. But they have no chance. For the hearts and minds of the CLPs are firm in their support for the socialist path.

All groups on the Left owe to the CLPs and trade unionists to organise for socialist control of our party in 1983. So let's start now.

No swing in the ranks

by Maurice Jones, chair Twickenham CLP

THERE HAS been no swing to the right in the membership, as the results of the constituency section election clearly demonstrate.

The changes have been brought about by a caucus of right wing trade union leaders that have got together and used their block vote millions to achieve the desired result.

LABOUR PARTIES AGAINST THE WITCH-HUNT

Conference of delegates from CLPs, LP branches, affiliated trade union branches, women's sections, YSs etc.

Saturday October 30, 10am to 5pm, at County Hall, London SE1. Credentials for delegates from CLPs (two each), LP branches, affiliated TU branches, LPYSs, women's sections, etc. (one each), £1 each from 107 Nevill Road, London N16 0SU. Cheques payable to Hackney North and Stoke Newington Labour Party.

Oppose every expulsion!

Jeremy Corbyn

THE RIGHT wing have engineered a victory for themselves this week.

Those that fought bitterly against all the major planks of Labour's programme have now got an NEC stuffed full of apologists for the last Labour government and yes-people.

It is quite clear that the register is the advance-guard for expulsions. Although the Right differ on numbers and who they want to have

expelled, the purpose is clear. To get active socialists out of the party, and to allow for the election of a Labour government that will not challenge the forces that are determined to prevent us carrying out our policies.

There appears to be some peculiar and perverse belief that if the party 'cleanses' itself of the Militant, then the press will be kind and support will return.

This obvious hypocrisy must be defeated. Support for Labour among the worst-

off people is directly proportional to belief in Labour's determination to provide jobs, houses, and opportunities.

Opposition to the register was almost total among constituency parties. Our job is to organise in defence of socialists under threat, and oppose every expulsion.

The Hackney North CLP/Unregistered Alliance conference on October 30 must be the start in this.

'Lyons Maid us redundant'

by Andrea Campbell

AS THE right wing trade union officials, through block votes, put in a women's NEC section guaranteed to fight against real power for socialist women in the Labour Party, women from Lyons Maid in Liverpool stood outside and showed the bankrupt bureaucrats how to fight.

With placards saying 'Lyons Maid flavour of the month — redundancies' and 'Lyons Maid us redundant'.

Pickets from the factory, scheduled to close on December 3, brought their fight to Labour Party conference.

The story is by now a familiar one. Lyons Maid [owned by Allied Lyons] put a new extension on a factory in London. They now say it will be cheaper to produce in London [i.e. more profitable].

The women have been given 90 days notice. 350 permanent jobs and 150 seasonal jobs will go. The company is 'offering' only fourteen jobs in London — and that with no guarantee of job security.

But the workers are fighting back. The trade union support locally has been good. The TGWU have been supportive so far.

Eunice Downs, a T&G member, said: 'The Liverpool factory makes the most profits. We pulled them out of a lot of difficulty. They plead for output, and then three months later we are on 90 days' notice.' Pam Miao says that, 'Relations with local management have always been good. But today is our first day's strike since 1947.'

This kind of manipulation by large conglomerates must be fought, and fought by the whole labour movement. The demands to open the books to the workers would soon show the truth.

Janice Thompson summed it up when she told me that, 'We have to fight. If we lose these jobs there is no chance of another job in Liverpool.'

The message from the women was loud and clear. They will fight, and they won't accept a sell-out. Lyons Maid are in for a long struggle.

Ken Cameron

THE register is a witch-hunt, and, with a right-wing NEC, it's a disaster for all the Left. The promises we had from Michael Foot that the register was about defending the constitution were not reassuring. The statements at the Solidarity meeting on Sunday night make their intentions very clear.

Bob Wright

Asst. gen. sec. AUEW
IT'S TOTALLY unnecessary, and the Party will live to regret it. There has to be a campaign to reverse the decision. Inevitably there will be a conflict. Parties will refuse to expel. If the right wing get their teeth, they will use every device to attack the Left, and it won't only be Militant. It's going to be a real diversion from the real challenges that face the party.

Arthur Scargill

I am personally against all witch-hunts, bans, and proscriptions. The decision on Monday represents a retrograde step. We should not be pessimistic. We expected the right wing to lie down and fade away. We were living in dreamland.

I am an optimist. They recognise that they have lost the battle on policies, and now we have to ensure they lose the battle on bans and proscriptions. This is just the start.

Tony Mulhearn

PPC Liverpool Toxteth

IT WAS a diabolical vote. The rank and file will resist ferociously any attempt by the right-wing NEC to expel socialists from the Labour Party, and will resist any attempt to expel candidates chosen by CLPs. Obviously after the NEC results the right wing are more confident about their ability to impose expulsions. The rank and file will have to be vigilant.

Ian Harrison

Fulham CLP delegate

I THINK they'd like to suppress the Left without mass expulsions. They'd like to suppress the only policies that are truly socialist, as opposed to those of the PLP leadership. The Right want to win a general election, but are scared of mass working class action demanding they implement socialist policies. They therefore impose organisational norms on the Left. The right wing know that the best way the Left can organise against them is through well-organised, disciplined groups. Foot actually admitted this in his attack on Militant.

Ted Grant

FIGHT, fight and fight again. There's no way they can succeed.

Dave Nellist

PPC Coventry South East

PRIOR and Tebbit are putting an Employment Law through Parliament designed to prevent solidarity action by the working class. Last Wednesday millions of workers showed how little regard they had for that piece of paper. The law has gone through Labour's parliament, only because of three general secretaries defying conference or EC decisions (TGWU, GMWU, USDAW), and opposed by 90 to 95% of CLP delegates. Just like Tebbit, Labour's right wing will find that what's written on paper is not necessarily possible to put through in practice.

Emlyn Williams

South Wales NUM

IT'S A retrograde step. It bloody stinks. Coupled with the NEC election results, it's time the left wing took the gloves off and started fighting.



Peace? Jobs? Freedom? Is this a Militant plot?

'We have enormous support'

NUPE secretary Lesley Fisher spoke to us

THE DISTRICT Health Authority have decided to make panic cuts partly because they are over-spent and partly to finance the pay offer to the health workers as the Tories have told them to.

They decided temporarily close the hospital and wards in other hospitals. The vote at the meeting was six to four, with one Labour member voting in favour of closure, and one abstaining.

In response to this we called a meeting where I proposed a work-in. We decided to carry on because we weren't prepared to have their decision imposed on us by faceless bureaucrats, and because as health workers we are committed to improving the health service, not running it down.

We have got enormous local support because we are a local hospital. We take in old and handicapped people, so their relatives can have a rest. Small hospitals are nicer to be in because people get to know each other.

And we've had all sorts of support from the labour movement. The strike support committee set up to help with the pay claim is totally behind us, and has done a lot of good work with publicity stalls and the like.

A lot of money has come in from trade union branches. The NUT has given £150. There are plans to set up a union-based support committee in alliance with the existing support committee, which is predominantly Labour Party. This should give us a broader base of support,

At Wood Green and Southgate hospital in Haringey, North London, workers are occupying against closure

both in terms of financial commitment and for picketing.

I hope that this will make people realise that it's not simply a struggle for our jobs and wages, but to defend the NHS. We hope that it won't be a one-way struggle, but we in our turn will be able to help other strikers.

The support of the staff is very solid. We have four consultants who support us as well as the GPs, and we have two doctors on the occupation committee. The doctors are pledged to come in the DHA raid us. The nurses and domestics are the mainstay of the occupation.

The District Health Authority claimed that we are under-used: but it was they who closed one of our wards for five months in November 1979, and they have never reopened it, because they won't spend the money to employ four nurses to run the ward.

The figures they put forward about the savings they would make were totally misleading. We need to see the books. They have talked about this over-spend — how do we know? We don't know how much money goes out to the drug companies and the like.

Pressure has been put on the District Health Authority to reconvene another meeting and reconsider their decision. If they don't change their minds, we will carry on the occupation treating patients and dealing with our normal tasks and resist any attempt to run us down or remove patients or equipment.

DAVE AYRTON

Steel: call for sit-in

A PUBLIC meeting to launch a public investigation into the proposed merger of the British Steel Corporation (BSC) River Don works, Firth Brown, and River Don Stampings, was held on Friday 24th at Sheffield City Hall.

The attendance was pretty poor. Bad weather and a bus strike were part of the reason, but so was lack of campaigning.

The campaign committee's decision is however a massive step forward. A clear call for occupation of the

three plants against job loss came from all sections of the platform.

On the platform were River Don convenor Cliff Wright, Firth Brown convenor Reg Walker, Euro-MP Dick Caborn, Sheffield city council leader David Blunkett, and in the chair Labour councillor Bill Michie.

Despite the poor attendance, the meeting was a boost to the fight for jobs while also showing a willingness to discuss the political issues. It must be the start of a real fightback.

Liberal conference decides "No more Mr Nice Guy"

SINCE LAST year's ringing exhortation by Liberal leader David Steel to his squads of well and less well intentioned middle class followers to go back and "prepare for government", there have been some changes made.

Diehard Liberal loyalists — almost all of them substantially to the left of their new SDP allies — have been press-ganged and frog-marched into a division of seats which both Steel and SDP leader Jenkins have sternly told them must be accepted.

And with the possibility of an autumn '83 general election heaving up over the horizon, the woolly radicalism of the Young Liberals has been pushed firmly into the background.

No longer can the Liberals permit themselves to remain the 'silly party' of British politics, the party of sandals, wispy beards and good causes. Even with the Alliance opinion poll ratings falling alarmingly,

the Liberals busily 'preparing for government' are now wary of policies which they may be called upon to implement or to press for in a coalition government of the future.

Populist displays of anti-Toryism and shows of concern for the poor and needy however remain part of the marketing of the Liberals as the party of nice non-socialist middle class people.

NHS

Perhaps the best example of this was the conference's antics over the health service pay dispute.

David Steel condemned the TUC's September 22 Day of Action as "inappropriate and illegal", but denounced the Tories' meanness and personally escorted into the hall six non-union nurses from the local RCN.

Cyril Smith from the rostrum began by castigating the unions for calling

strike action over NHS pay — but went on to assert that people had the right to strike in support of health workers, and offered the well-heeled delegates heart-rending tales of his mother buying spectacles in Woolworths (presumably some time before he made his fortune as a businessman).

The performance was capped off with calls for fresh negotiations on pay — or binding arbitration.

From the SDP, Dr David Owen has called for a system of binding arbitration on NHS pay to be introduced at once. This would of course entail intensified pressure for efficiency audits and cost reduction, he admitted. The only alternative was the growth of private medicine.

Indeed, on this as on so many other issues the SDP sets out more crudely and bluntly the reactionary policies also advocated by the Liberals.

On trade union rights,

for instance, there are plainly some differences of opinion within the Liberal Party over the question of the closed shop — while the SDP's stance is one of quite unreserved union-bashing.

On nuclear weapons, while both SDP and Liberals argue against the Trident system (on the 'cost' grounds also cited by Labour's right wing), only the Liberals have come out with a conference policy against the siting of US Cruise missiles in Britain.

However the Liberals have shown their respect for SDP traditions by ignoring this policy. Defence spokesman Lord Mayhew got up to defy calls for his resignation, pointing out that he has argued for all those aspects of policy he agrees with:

"I challenge the questioner to find a single member of the Liberal Party who supports a larger proportion of Liberal policy than I do. If there is such a person he must be a freak".

We can no doubt expect that the Liberals, learning the art of 'preparing for government' from their SDP mates, will similarly give the elbow to embarrassing policies from their conference — including a Charter for Youth, which calls for the age of majority to be lowered to 16.

As one ex-headmaster delegate pointed out, there is little for the Liberals in such a concession.

"Boys and girls of 16 are very rarely Liberals".

If the right to vote was extended on that basis, few areas of the country would have the franchise today!

Of course a lot of 'boys and girls' of 16 are unemployed, and many of them are harassed by the police. They are scarcely likely to be enchanted by the Liberals' recruitment of former Chief Constable John Alderson, or by their unconvincing and complex schemas for the ending of unemployment.

But older people are



Steel tells Liberals: 'Prepare for government'

more gullible, and at a time of furious and unrelenting media onslaught against the Labour Party and against anything remotely resembling a socialist policy, it is far from certain that the chameleon politics of the Liberal/SDP alliance will remain in the electoral doldrums.

Some Liberal delegates may even have believed their leader's lofty announcement that:

"Just as we have brought Liberals and Social

Democrats together in a common cause, we must now bring people and Government together in a new alliance".

But the common careerist interest that has wedded the liberals and the SDP can not extend to the working class: there are not enough quangos, constituencies, and Volvos to go round. Beneath the 'Mr Nice Guy' image, the Liberals, too, are a party of capitalist exploitation and class war.

International News International News International News

CONFRONTATION IN ECUADOR

Last week Ecuador was paralysed by a massive 48 hour general strike, and reports are filtering out of armed clashes between strikers and state forces.

In an unstable region of the world Ecuador is one of the states heading most obviously towards a major crisis. In these articles we trace the background to Ecuador's fifth general strike since 1975.



A demonstration against Uncle Sam - and against local capitalists



The figures

Population: 8 million. National income per head (1980): \$1270 (less than one-fifth Britain's) Main exports: oil, bananas, cocoa, coffee, rice. Labour force: 52% in agriculture. Population: 10% white, 30% Indian, 40% mestizo, 20% mulatto or black. Average food supply per head: 10% below the minimum for health. Infant mortality rate: 82 per thousand (Britain's is 12 per thousand).

A month of crisis

THE GENERAL strike was called by the FUT - Workers' United Front - which consists of the three left-wing trade union federations, CEDOC, CTE, and CEOSL. Between them these three include the majority of Ecuador's organised workers.

Of them, CEDOC is the most interesting and most dynamic, and the political revival of CEDOC over the last year is one of the most important signs of the workers' and peasants' determination to organise against Government attacks.

The Communist Party and the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSRE) led by Telmo Hidalgo operate in the CTE. However, CEDOC is the base of operations for several left-wing parties - the PSRE-Venceremos (which is larger than the PSRE-Hidalgo), the MRT (Revolutionary Workers' Movement), MRIC (Revolutionary Movement of the Christian Left), MRT Cuarta (a sister group of the IMG in Britain), and the MIR (Revolutionary Left Movement).

CEDOC was founded in 1938 as a Catholic movement. But in the early '70s an increasingly militant and class-based movement grew in strength within CEDOC. In 1976 the Christian Democrats lost control and split. Under the leadership of Emilio Velasco, CEDOC developed as a socialist movement.

From 1978 it suffered a period of precarious existence and lost prestige. But at the CEDOC congress in July this year, a unified left opposition succeeded in defeating Velasco.

The opposition was not of a party nature. Velasco himself is in the PSRE, but other sections of the PSRE played a large part in the formulation of the opposition platform and slate for the leadership, together with the MRT.

Pushing for CEDOC to operate more democratic-

ally and be more active, they got a new executive entirely composed of opposition leaders.

New statutes and strategy documents were drawn up, which stressed the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist nature of CEDOC, expressed support for left party unity, supported the FUT and looked forward to a united union movement, stressed the need for internal democracy, stressed the need for trade union action and mutual support, and stated its independence from the parties as such and the state.

Fears

The success of the left at the CEDOC congress was the crucial factor in overcoming hesitations and fears in the FUT - especially on the part of the PSRE - about the effectiveness of the national strike.

IN THE month since Parliament began sitting on August 10, the government of President Oswaldo Hurtado has plunged from a position of apparent security to one of grave crisis.

Before the session began the government spent some time negotiating with the different blocs in Parliament to ensure a majority. As the session got underway, it seemed that this had been achieved.

But the first debate in the present parliamentary session, on the exploitation of Ecuador's oil and natural gas, led to several ministerial resignations. Further debates on economic policies threaten to be just as troublesome.

Ecuador's economy is in

very serious trouble, with a large and growing national debt, rising imports and lack of demand for agricultural exports and oil. The currency was devalued by 33% on May 13 and has fallen drastically against other currencies.

Abolition

The crisis in the economy has resulted in a political offensive by finance, industrial and agricultural capital. Among their objectives are the abolition of the forty hour week and the minimum wage of 4000 sucres declared by the Roldós government in the period following its election in 1979.

The centre-right government of Roldós' successor Hurtado is at this stage not prepared to concede either of these, so there have been large-scale liquidations of factories and redundancies as the bosses try both to protect their profits and to pressurise the government.

Peasants are facing the start of a big clampdown on credit, and a calling-in of existing credits. Harvests in some sectors are also bad.

Public spending and public sector employment are being heavily cut.

The cost of living is rising rapidly, particularly since May, and it seems

likely that the government will soon allow a rise in fares on urban and long-distance transport.

The union movement has been unable to defend its members. Strikes are frequent in the small industrial sector but very rarely really successful, particularly when (as often at present) they are over the liquidation of companies. The central leaderships often stand aside from these

conflicts.

The left and the unions desperately need a successful strike now to use as a base for a serious fight-back.

Similarly, the government sees the strike as vital. Under increasing criticism and with no majority in Parliament, it is trying to hold on to control of a flagging economy and an increasingly polarised country.

Strikers' demands

1. Minimum salary to be raised to s/7000 a month from s/4000; salaries now between 12,000 and 15,000 to be raised to s/15,000; automatic salary and wage adjustments in line with rises in the cost of living; freeze on prices of basic items; freeze on charges for light, water, phones, rent.
2. No rise in fares; state or municipal takeover of transport; free imports of vehicles for public service; creation of state spares depots.
3. Immediate solution of outstanding labour disputes; five years' job security for all workers; a law against fraudulent liquidations of companies.
4. Demands for agrarian reform and a state takeover of the banana, rice, coffee, and cocoa trade; a morator-

ium on peasant debts for 20 years; cancellation of interest on these debts.

5. Immediate attention for the slum areas; installation of electricity, water, and drainage; rejection of the Law of Barrio Organisation; expropriation of land for housing.

6. Increase in compensation payments.

7. Speed-up in Parliament for labour and consumer protection laws, etc.

8. Proceedings to be taken against those responsible for the repression of the telecommunications strike in 1981; reinstatement of the sacked workers; proceedings against those responsible for the murder of workers in the Aztra [sugar workers'] strike.

9. Legalisation of CEDOC.



The September 22-23 general strike was the fifth since 1975

International News International News International News

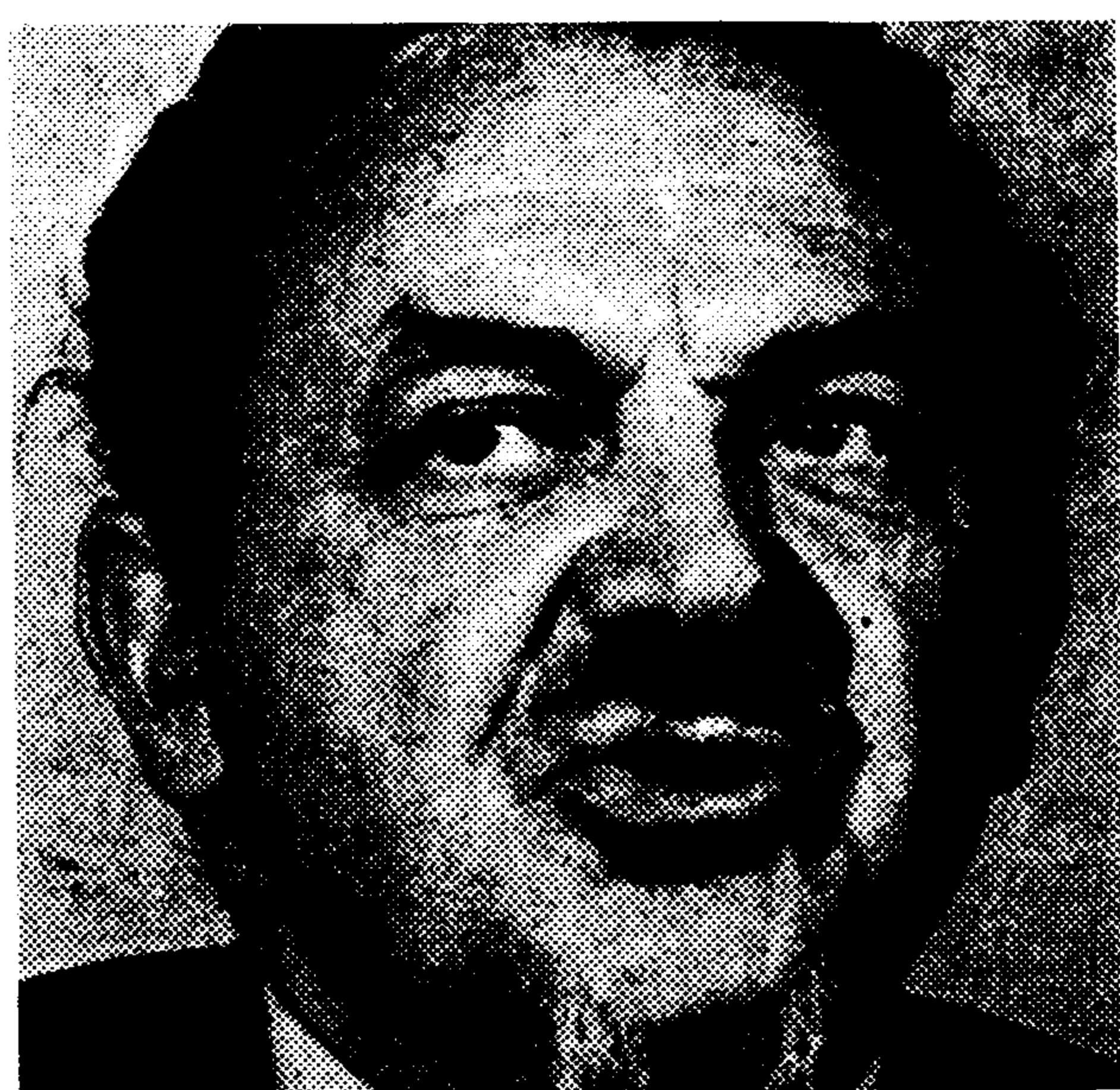
To fight Danish right, workers must drop Anker

DENMARK'S new Conservative-led government is threatening big cuts in public spending and an end to inflation protection for wages.

The government is due to present its economic programme on October 5, and prime minister Poul Schluter has said that it will probably include scrapping most of the cost-of-living protection currently built in to most Danish wage agreements.

The new 'bourgeois coalition' was formed after Anker Jorgensen's Social Democratic government resigned on September 3. Like Jorgensen's, it is a minority government, commanding 66 seats out of 179 in Parliament.

Schluter's Conservative Party is not the main party of the Danish bourgeoisie (it has not led a government since 1894), but a 'moder-



Schluter (right) replaces Jorgensen and promises Danish bosses 'a firm policy'



ate' urban party. The main bourgeois party is the Liberal Party (based on big farming and industrial interests). In addition to the Con-

Behind the political shift stands an economic crisis. Denmark's national income per head is among the highest in the world (60% more than Britain's), but now the prosperity is faltering.

Deficit

Unemployment is about 10%, the central government budget deficit is about 12% of national income, and the net foreign debt adds up to around 28% of national income. (In comparison, the total foreign debt of Latin America's four big debtors — Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico — is about 43% of their aggregate income. But this debt weighs far, far heavier on their much poorer economies).

Jorgensen wanted to cut state spending, reduce unemployment pay, and increase taxes. He resigned because he could not get Social Democratic party support for this.

The Danish monthly 'Trotskyist Viewpoint' comments:

Fiasco

'An election campaign around his (Jorgensen's) plan would have ended in a fiasco — and to have substituted another would have been publicly to capitulate to the pressure of the party members. It could have radicalised the campaign, strengthened the SPP further, and made it hotter for an eventual SD government.

'Better to sling off into opposition and to allow the keen-to-govern bourgeois parties to get in — and then slip in later as 'willing to collaborate' when the bourgeois bloc starts crumbling...

'But this tactical manoeuvre met resistance at the SD annual conference. Resistance to any collaboration with the bourgeois parties was so obvious that Anker could only hint at such a possibility... The demand for 'a clear SD profile' was on the lips of speaker after speaker. The rank and file have had enough of the rightward turn.'

Toppled

Danish socialists now need to launch a thoroughgoing struggle against the Social Democratic right wing, comments 'Trotskyist Viewpoint'.

'The bourgeois parties' government must be toppled! Not to be replaced by a new Social Democratic government which carries out bourgeois policies, but to make way for a workers' government, raised to power by the workers' struggle, and with a programme that can solve society's economic chaos in the interests of the working class'.

IN BRIEF

SPD poll shock

THE transfer of power in West Germany from the SPD/FDP coalition to a new alliance of the CDU/CSU and FDP is not progressing smoothly.

With a last minute campaign by the local party in Sunday's regional elections in Hesse, the SPD lost only one seat. Their 42.8% share of the vote gave them 49 seats.

The CDU, with 52 seats from 45.6% of the vote didn't receive the overall majority they expected. The balance of power is held by the Ecologist Party (the Greens) whose 8% vote gave them 9 seats. The SPD will form a minority administration.

The FDP share of the vote dropped from 6.6% to 3.1%, their worst electoral performance ever, and insufficient to gain any seats.

The right wing parties are seeking a no confidence vote in Parliament on Friday to replace Schmidt while Schmidt wants to go for an early general election. After the Hesse result, the FDP and CDU/CSU don't want that. But their ability to get a majority against the SPD is in doubt. Some FDP MPs have called for the resignation of FDP leader Genscher.

Save David Kitson

A round-the-clock continuous picket is being mounted outside South Africa House by the family and supporters of David Kitson now in his 18th year of jail in Pretoria.

David's health is failing and his supporters are demanding his immediate release. The campaign is officially backed by the NUJ and other unions. NUJ President Jonathan Hammond told us:

"The NUJ has always been actively against apartheid and has continually protested about the imprisonment and harassment of black journalists and the South African authorities' effort to shackle their trade union organisations. It is proud to protest also in the case of David Kitson, a distinguished trade unionist whom it is quite clear the South Africans are trying to legally murder so that he will never emerge alive from prison."

Solidarnosc to be banned?

IN the aftermath of the September riots which marked the second anniversary of the Polish union Solidarnosc, it still is not clear how the Stalinist regime will attempt to move forward from the situation of martial law.

It appears increasingly likely that General Jaruzelski's government will announce plans for a root and branch demolition of all existing unions, and the creation of new structures, firmly controlled by the ruling bureaucracy.

This would fly in the face of what even official research institutes show to

be the views of the vast majority of Poles. A survey by the Marxism-Leninism Institute in May showed 90% of workers wanting a restoration of Solidarnosc.

The government could therefore be on course for renewed bitter struggles — as food supplies further decline in the economic disaster of Stalinist mismanagement.

December 13 marks the first anniversary of martial law. In Britain a labour movement demonstration to mark the anniversary has been called for December 12 by the Polish Solidarity Campaign.

right-wing, anti-communist, anti-union split from the Social Democratic Party) and the Christian People's Party (another right-wing party, whose main hobby horses are nude bathing and sex education in schools).

It excludes, on the left, the Social Democracy and the Socialist People's Party (a 'Tribunite' formation with 20 seats in parliament and a growing influence among disaffected SD members), and, on the right, the Social Liberals (a smallholders' party) and the Progress Party (a populist middle-class party whose main demand is the abolition of taxes).

Because the development of capitalism in Denmark has been largely based on agriculture, the capitalists have so far been unable to create a unified party like the Tories in Britain.



October
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WHAT'S ON

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

NATIONAL UNION of Students (Scotland) women's conference. October 30-31, at Strathclyde University Students Union, 90 John St, Glasgow. Open to all women — not just students. Registration £2, information from Cas Stewart, NUS Scotland, 12 Dublin St, Edinburgh EH1 3PP (031-556 6598).

NOTTINGHAM Socialist Organiser meets every Friday 7.30pm at the International Community Centre, 61B Mansfield Rd.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER student fraction meeting. Saturday October 2, 11am, Labour Club, Bristol St, Birmingham. For details phone Jane, 01-609 3071.

SOUTH EAST London Socialist Organiser forums. every other Thursday, 8pm at the Queen Victoria, Artillery Place, Woolwich.

October 7: 'Fight the witch-hunt'. Speaker John Bloxam
October 21: 'The Tebbit bill' — speaker Wendy Mustill.

ISLINGTON Socialist Organiser, meetings every other Sunday, 3pm at Thornhill Neighbourhood Project, Orkney House, Caledonian Rd. Next meeting October 10. Details: Nik, 607 5268.

NORTH-WEST London Socialist Organiser group discussion meetings. every other Sunday, 8pm (for venue, see SO sellers).

October 10: 'After the Labour Party conference'.
October 24: 'The Tebbit bill'
November 7: 'The Women's Campaign for Jobs'.

November 21: Housing
December 5: Poland.

BLOCKADE Namibian uranium! Public meeting organised by the Socialist Forum for Southern Africa Solidarity. Speakers. Brian Woods, Frances Kelly. Saturday October 2, 3pm-5pm, Caxton House, St Johns Way, N19.

ASSOCIATION of Socialist Councillors conference. Saturday October 9, 11am to 4pm, Camden Town Hall, London. Credentials for Labour councillors and delegates from GCs £5 from Keith Veness, 155C Green Lanes, London N16 9DB.

LABOUR Committee on Palestine (Yorkshire Region). Speaking tour on 'The Palestinians and the lessons of Lebanon'. Speakers. Omar al-Ahmed, Barry Turner, Garth Frankland, Roland Rance.

HALIFAX. Friday October 8, 7.30 at AUEW Club, opposite Bus Station.

LEEDS. Monday October 11, 7.30 at Trades Council Club, Saville Mount.

KEIGHLEY: Wednesday October 13, 7.30 at Keighley Library Theatre.

BRADFORD: Friday October 15, 7.30 at Central Library, Meeting Room 2.

POLISH SOLIDARITY
Contact addresses:
Solidarnosc Trade Union Working Group, Acorn House, 314/320 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP. Tel. 01-837 9464.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER
North of England day school on 'The International Class Struggle'. Sunday October 31, 10am to 5.30pm at Manchester University Students' Union, Oxford Road, Manchester. Lots of workshops, speakers, discussions, etc. Registration £1.50 waged, 75p claimants, from 78 High St, Atherton, Lancs. Cheap lunch available, creche provided.

CAMPAIGN against Racist Laws conference. Saturday October 23, 10am, County Hall, London. Details. 56 Edithna St, London SW9.

KURDISTAN News and Comment issue no.6 now out. 50p including postage from Kurdistan Solidarity, c/o Carila, Box 30, 29 Islington Park St, London N1.

Kurdistan solidarity conference: Saturday October 2, starting 11am, at Brabant Rd Trade Union Centre, Station Rd/Brabant Rd, London N22. Details 01-809 1089.

HARINGEY Socialist Organiser: fortnightly meetings at Brabant Rd trade union centre. For details phone 802 0771 or 348 5941.

SPARTACIST Truth Kit. New pamphlet on the politics and practice of the Spartacist League, by John Lister. 70 pages, £1 plus 26p postage, from WSL, PO Box 135, London N1.

Advertisement
Workers' Socialist Review no.2
FALKLANDS — WHOSE WAR?
OUT NOW! 40 pages: single copies 70p plus 20p P&P, 5 copies £3.50 post free. Orders: WSL, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

Blacks protest at Commonwealth Games

Jo Thwaites reports on a protest by Australian blacks for 'land rights, not games'

SEVEN thousand people from all over Australia marched in Brisbane last Saturday, 26th, on the eve of the beginning of the Commonwealth Games.

The march is the beginning of two weeks of protest against the treatment of the Aboriginal people in Australia around the theme 'Land Rights, not Games'.

The Black Protest Committee organised the march and has the support of virtually every Black community in Australia, the Australian Labour Party, and a substantial section of the labour movement, including the Transport Workers' Union, the Build-

ers' Labourers' Federation, the Building Workers' Industrial Union, and the Australian Workers' Union in Brisbane.

Racist

Queensland's right-wing racist premier Joh Bjelke Petersen has responded by rushing through the Commonwealth Games Act. The area round the Games will be made 'notified', giving the police draconian powers of arrest and detention — the purpose being to squash any sort of protest at all.

But support for the BPC

remains undeterred, and Sunday's demonstration bodes well for the rest of the action during the Games.

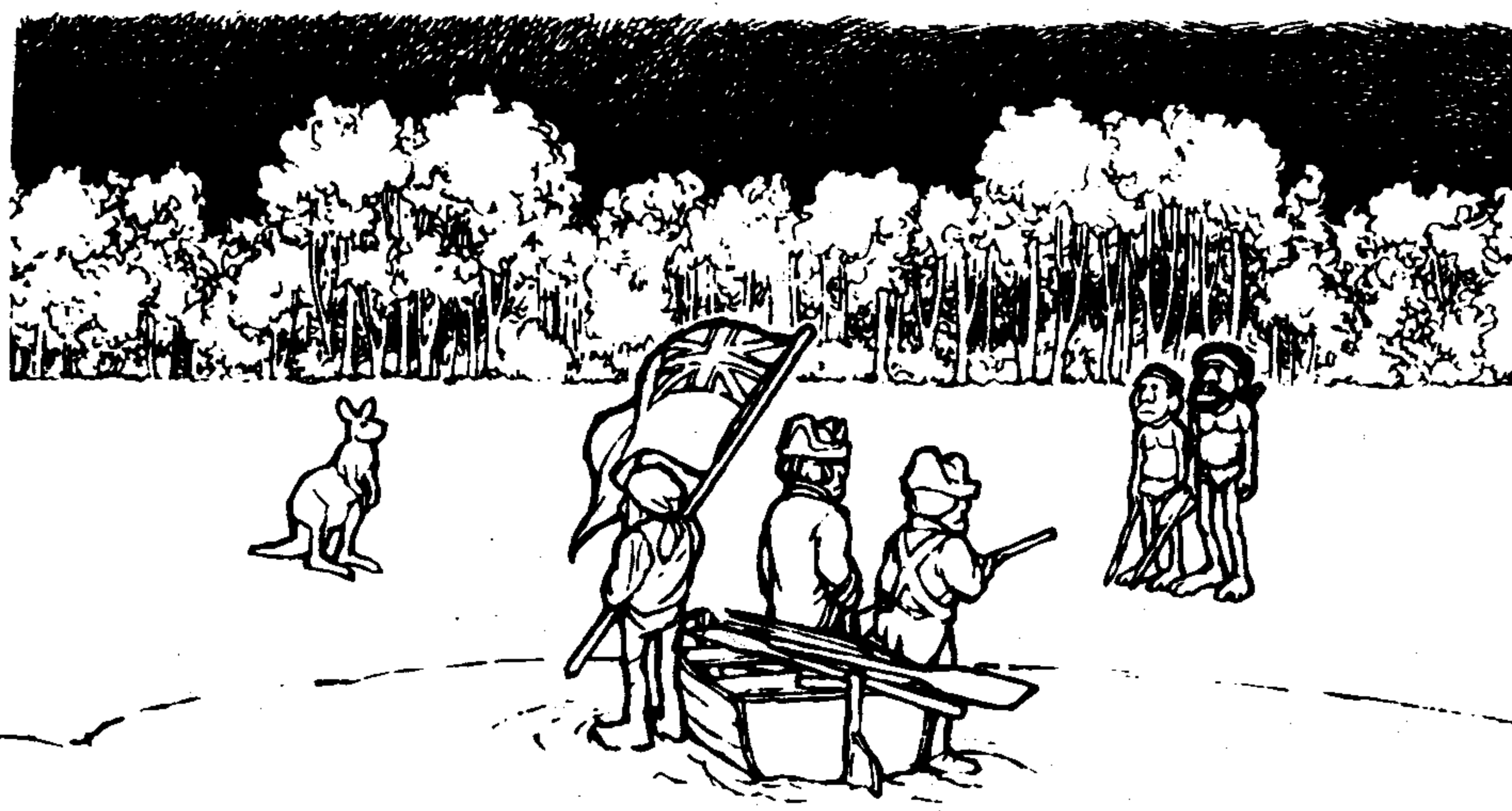
There is a Cultural Revival Festival taking place during the Games as an alternative way of showing what Aboriginal history is. And there's a national day of protest on September 29, the day before the Games begin, for 'Aboriginal land rights, self-determination, and the exposure of injustice and the destruction of aboriginal culture' (Budger Davidson, co-ordinator BPC).

There is also a protest in London. Shorty O'Neill, a



PM Malcolm Fraser

Northern Territory Land Council representative now in London, told us that there will be a picket of Queensland House from 10.30am on Wednesday September 29. Other activities will be announced at the picket.



TRESPASSING



ROBB

Should workers act to boycott the pipeline?

by Ian McCalman

of retaliatory action taken by the American Administration.

Soviet Weekly regards the stand taken by West European governments as a victory for detente.

But an independent class view of the issue is essential, dictated neither by the requirements of Thatcher, Reagan nor the Kremlin.

Reagan claims the embargo is aimed at putting pressure on the Kremlin to set about creating a less repressive regime in Poland. Of course, we are not misled by the hypocrisy of Reagan and we do not believe that the cause of Solidarity is in any way advanced by the policies of the American Government.

But that does not mean that we are against any boycott of trade, by anybody, with the Soviet bloc until the military dictatorship in Poland is removed. Consider — if a workers' government were in power in Britain, would we not be in favour of such a government taking appropriate action to achieve that end?

The answer must surely be in the affirmative. And

for the present? Surely we are in favour of trade unions and other working class organisations taking boycott action where possible and likely to be effective.

On the part of the STUC there is a proper concern with the jobs of the men employed at Clydebank, but it cannot be overlooked that there are also political considerations involved as far as some of the top men in the Scottish trade union movement are concerned.

Those who harbour illusions that the system prevailing in the Soviet bloc is in some way 'socialist' are no doubt relieved that comrade Brezhnev and his

puppet Jaruzelski will be put to as little inconvenience as possible.

When the Glasgow Polish Solidarity Committee first sought the support of the STUC, one of the main objections raised by that body was a reference in a leaflet of the PSC to support for Solidarity's call for a trade boycott of the Soviet bloc. In their reply the STUC highlighted the threat posed to the jobs of the men at John Brown Engineering.

Unfortunately some of the people brandishing the jobs threat have been selective and inconsistent in their approach over the years, for they put a good

deal less emphasis upon that angle when correctly advocating blacking Rolls Royce aero engines and Jarrow built warships bound for Chile.

We cannot be unmindful of the threat to the livelihoods of the workers at Clydebank. Advancing of a boycott in principle cannot be pursued irrespective of the consequences for the British working class which will in fact determine their attitude to a boycott.

The action of the Massey Ferguson employees earlier this year in blacking components from Ursus and compelling management to seek alternative sources was a well thought out and

effective instance of the blacking tactic. More's the pity that other examples of such action have not followed in the wake of the Coventry decision.

No rejoicing

Socialists in Britain, like Solidarity activists in Poland, do not rejoice at the sailing of the 'Happy Worker' with its load of turbines from the Clyde-side. We are well aware that many of those who express concern about job security at Clydebank or applaud the action as a blow to Cold War Reaganism, are more strongly



Brezhnev

motivated by a concern to safeguard what they wrongly believe to be the progressive aspects of Stalinism.

SCIENCE

by Les Hearn

THIS useful book* proves that food is a crucial political issue in the world today — that the satisfaction of that most fundamental of needs is dependant on the barbaric world rule of capitalism.

After describing how the invention of agriculture allowed the development of "civilisation" and class society, with the possibility of want amidst plenty, it shows how capitalism internationalised and made more systematic this crime against humanity.

Cash crops

Colonial powers forced subject countries to produce cash crops or raw materials, reducing the food surplus and so causing more frequent famines after poor harvests. Where capitalism required food from its colonies, famine often raged alongside food exports. (e.g. both Ireland and India).

After colonialism, Third World countries are still dependant on cash crops to get dollars to pay for industrial goods, while the fall in cash crop prices over 20 years together with inflation in the West has robbed them of the expected fruits of independence. Since monopoly capitalism mostly locates its profitable processing plants in the West, producer countries receive only a fraction of the final price of their products.

Capitalism causes hunger in the Third World in several ways — and then blames the victims!

One favourite is the "population explosion", actually a symptom of the problem of insecurity. Other problems, such as bad weather, spreading deserts or soil erosion, are presented as natural phenomena. The book points out that where previously indigenous peoples lived in harmony

with their environment, they are frequently pushed off the best land onto the margins — the hillsides, jungle fringes etc — where they have to "over-cultivate" or "over-graze" simply to survive.

The capitalist money market and inequality in land distribution encourages further inequality. The poor get poorer and become landless labourers, starve or drift to the cities, while the rich can actually get richer during lean times by hiring labour at below its value and selling stored surpluses at over the odds.

Agriculture in the West is not so healthy, either. It is overdependent on chemical fertilisers, pesticides, expensive machinery and fossil fuels, while having a dangerously restricted genetic basis for crop production. Far from recognising this, the West seeks to reduce Third World agriculture to this state.



WHAT ISSUE unites Margaret Thatcher, the Kremlin, and the Scottish TUC?

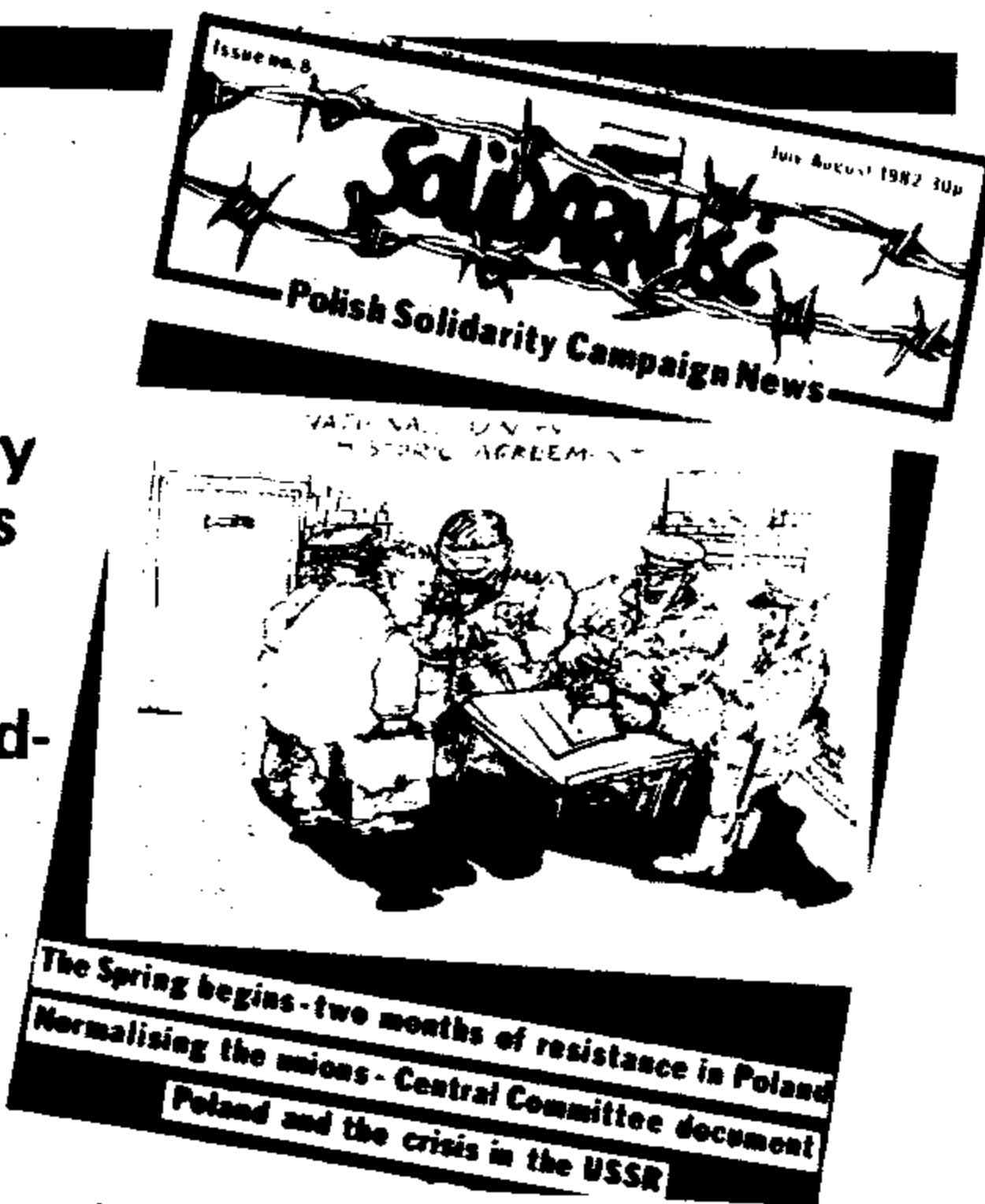
Answer — the decision of John Brown Engineering, Clydebank, to defy the Reagan embargo and sell turbines to the Soviet Union for use on the Siberian oil/gas pipeline.

That curious line-up of forces must surely give us reason to pause and consider the full significance of the decision.

Detente

The sailing from the Clyde-side of the Soviet ship with the six turbines has been greeted with ecstasy by the mouthpieces of the Kremlin. Soviet Weekly has applauded the decision of the Tory Cabinet that they would defy the US government and back John Brown Engineering even to the extent of promising to cover any possible losses which may ensue as a result

Latest issue of Polish Solidarity Campaign News — articles on resistance in Poland and solidarity in Britain and abroad.



Available from SO, c/o 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL. 30p plus 20p p&p.

*Food for Beginners by Susan George and Nigel Paige is published by Writers and Readers at £2.50.

WHO WILL CASH IN ON COIN STREET?

Graham Norwood, Labour planning spokesperson on Lambeth Council, reports on a battle between capitalists and the community.



Will Heseltine open up Coin St. to another 'competition'?

COMMUNITY planners may well know within the next few weeks whether potentially one of the most lucrative land projects in western Europe will be given to the local people for housing and light industry, or over to property speculators who want to build approaching a million feet of offices.

The Coin Street site on the south bank of London's river Thames has been the subject of two public enquiries, more than a decade of wrangling, and occasional direct action in trying to ensure that this area — around Waterloo — has a future for the local people and not for international capital.

Eventually the final decision on how the site should be developed rests with Environment Secretary Mr. Michael Heseltine. Given his recent decisions — supporting demolition of listed buildings and communities in favour of grandiose, profit-seeking developments — one can only pessimistically predict that Waterloo, too, will fall under the iron heel

of massive office blocks providing an easy fortune for those who own them.

The battle really dates back to 1953, when the Coin Street site — previously used for houses, industry and wharves — was purchased by the old London County Council at a cost of £48,000 per acre. The area remained largely undeveloped until 1969, when London Weekend Television was given permission to use part of the site as its headquarters.

Speculative

Planning permission for the 18-storey block was granted on the proviso that it would be entirely used by LWT for television-related purposes — in true speculative style, half of it is now leased by LWT to, ironically, the Customs and Excise department. So public money is spent on renting property built, supposedly, for no private gain!

Throughout the 1970's two separate exercises were going on, both concerning the future of the

Coin Street and Waterloo area.

Private developers were submitting grandiose plans for a hotel and office development, ranging — according to different proposals — from 326 feet to 453 feet in height. A number of planning 'gains' were attached to these proposals — items of

alleged community benefit which would have been built by the private developers to sweeten the pill of massive office blocks. In many cases elsewhere, such planning 'gains' have been dropped or modified to make them worthless. Meanwhile, the public authorities had been drawing up their own

plans. Both the Greater London Council and Lambeth Council had set up consultation exercises and working parties to study the future of the area. Eventually, in 1976, the GLC gave a general guideline for the Waterloo part of London, with 'a substantial emphasis on housing and a severe restraint of further office development'.

Local groups had by this time become a dominant voice in the proceedings, supporting a plan in 1977 for 211 publicly-built houses in the Coin Street site. But that soon disappeared when the Tories took over at the GLC in May 1977 — the private developers, Heron, dusted off their plans for a huge office and hotel proposal, and immediately received the support of their political allies who were then running London.

So by 1977, the developers were supported by the GLC, and the local groups — 24 in all — were combining into a powerful lobby, the Coin Street Action Group, which co-ordinated a campaign against hotels and offices and for homes and a new park.

The situation was now polarised — private developers versus working people. The Labour Party, however, was slow to support the aims of the community. A series of planning spokespersons in the 1974-1982 Labour

administrations were reluctant to listen to the community groups, and it was not until the summer of 1981 that Lambeth Council's submissions on the site fell into line with those of the local people — even though Lambeth had always been strongly against the use of the site for offices.

By that time, the GLC had again become the property of the Labour Party, with a radical administration supporting the call for homes and light industry and a better environment, on the controversial site.

Meanwhile a new developer, Greycoats Estates (50 per cent owned by the builders McAlpine) became the leading private interest in the scramble for the land.

So here we are. Two public enquiries later, with the battle between two completely different interests. The ball now rests, alas, in Michael Heseltine's court. His answer and final decision will have far-reaching consequences — well beyond the Coin Street saga.

Options

So what will Heseltine do? A number of options are available. He could quite simply opt for one of the two alternative plans — either the community's or the developer's. He could,

more likely, try to mix the two with a hotch-potch of offices and houses in what would become a totally undesirable coupling of residential accommodation and office blocks. He could even go for yet another public enquiry, although this would probably be resisted by all contending parties.

Or, in a more sinister way, he could use his powers to effectively 'appoint' someone to develop the site, as he did nearby when he used a so-called Special Development Order on the Vauxhall Cross part of the south bank of the Thames.

Office complex

There, he organised a competition for architects to design a huge office complex — the 'winning' entry has now been given planning permission, much to the delight of the international business interests who are sponsoring it. The fear is, Heseltine could do the same to Coin Street.

Now we all await the decision — dependent on that is whether the Coin Street area will return to a working class and dignified community, or whether it will fall victim to the property speculators who will be lining their pockets at the expense of Britain's housing and environmental needs.

Socialists must grasp nettle of housing

Chris Smith, chair of housing on Islington council and Labour PPC for Islington South, looks at the Labour Housing Group's recent pamphlet.

It was good to see you giving prominence, a few weeks ago, to the Labour Housing Group's recent pamphlet on housing finance. The pamphlet does give some clear guidance through the labyrinth of housing finance; my only complaint is that it probably adopts too much of a 'housing-professional', and too little of a political, approach.

A number of points really need to be emphasised: 1. The Labour Party has for years failed to tackle the existence of gross division and inequality between two classes of housing provision: owner-occupation, and the rest.

housing provision: owner-occupation, and the rest.

It is a far more profound social division than any other — more so even than the division between private and state education. It determines lifestyle, borrowing ability, control over immediate environment, freedom to move, and political allegiance. It divides British society totally, and what's more it balances it against socialism.

Any amount of improvement and expansion of the Council-owned sector — however desirable — will not solve the problem. Any socialist government worth its salt has to tackle the privileges of the owner-

occupier sector, and especially has to begin phasing out mortgage tax relief, and making capital gains accountable for tax too.

2. In one (unpublished) respect the present Tory government has been more progressive than previous Labour ones: simply by holding the upper threshold for tax relief on mortgages at £25,000.

3. The government has also, however, launched a war against the Council sector of housing. The increases they have demanded in rents — and the resultant reductions in subsidy — have been punitive on tenants.

Profit

Most local authorities (fortunately not Islington, yet) have seen their Housing Revenue Accounts move into profit as a result: which means that tenants are not only paying for their own housing, but are actually subsidising ratepayers as well.

4. The government really does seem intent on reducing Council housing

to a residual, welfare-only role. It's up to the Labour Party, and Labour Councils, to insist that Council housing must be available to anyone who wants to rent, rationed on a basis of need alone.

5. All our aims are of course rendered worthless unless we have a proper building programme for public sector housing.

Over the past two years most local authorities have seen their housing investment allocations halved. There are rumours now of a further 20% cut next year. The effects of this — in lost jobs in construction, and in fewer homes for those who desperately need them — are only now really beginning to bite.

Things are going to get worse; and we shall need all of Gerald Kaufmann's promises and more, from the first day of a Labour government, if we're to move forward again.

Housing is too important for everyone, to be neglected any longer as a major political issue — especially by the Left in the Party.

Panic in the bargain basement

AT the most recent meeting of Glasgow District Labour Party, on Thursday 23rd, much of the time was spent in an attack by the leadership of the council Labour Group and the District Party on a recent article in Socialist Organiser. The article was about the sale of the Hutchesontown E scheme in the Gorbals to private builders.

Jean McFadyen, leader of the Group, said that the article was in the hands of the Town Clerk, who was examining it with a view to initiating legal proceedings. Kit McCafferty, chairperson of the District Labour Party, further claimed that the article was disrespectful to the late MP for Queens Park, Frank McElhone, and the author should be expelled from the Labour Party.

What could account for this near-hysteria? The crux of the matter is the determination of the Labour council to proceed with the sale of a large chunk of the Gorbals to private builders for apparently bargain-basement prices.

They have shown no sign of being deterred by the opposition of the local Labour Party.

Jean McFadyen said at

the meeting that there would be discussions, but no consultations, between the councillors and the DLP.

Effective opposition to the sale has however emerged in the Gorbals: the Stop the Sale campaign, with which the author of the article complained about is closely associated.

The SSC has taken the issue out among the people of the Gorbals and the wider labour movement, and they are working towards the formulation of an alternative plan for the area based on the needs of the people who live there.

The leadership of the Labour Group and some people in the DLP are determined to discredit and weaken the campaign.

Whatever is decided about legal proceedings, there can be no question of the expulsion of the author of the article from the Labour Party. Nor can there be any question of abandoning the good work done by the Stop the Sale Campaign.

No-one must be panicked or intimidated into abandoning the effort to build an effective campaign to stop the sale of the scheme.

We apologise

It has been drawn to our attention that unsubstantiated allegations against Glasgow District Labour Group are made in an article in Socialist Organiser no.99 (September 9, 1982.)

The last but one sentence of this article reads: "Although the Hutchesontown E scheme is now virtually empty, many of the problems associated with the decades-long anti-dampness campaign remain: a Labour District Group accountable not to the District Labour Group but only to back-handers from local building firms, a moribund local Labour Party, do-nothing local councillors, and an unscrupulous careerist MP".

While standing by the comment that the District Labour Group is not adequately accountable to the District Labour Party (the sentence as published clearly contains a typesetting error), we accept that the other allegations in this sentence are not supported by evidence. We unreservedly withdraw them and apologise.

THE BIGGEST STRIKE

Martin Thomas rounds up reports from the 22nd

JUSTICE FOR WORKERS

PHOTO: JOHN HARRIS



Take it easy, Albert, or you'll have one of your extraparliamentary turns

SEPTEMBER 22 was the biggest strike since 1926, and the biggest demonstration since the fight against the Industrial Relations Act.

The action was restricted by the TUC leaders' reluctance — calling vaguely for one-hour stoppages, rather than boldly for a general strike. But it still showed a great wave of support for the health workers and anger against the Tories.

Satisfaction at this huge mobilisation seemed to dominate the 120,000-strong London demonstration — sufficiently so to inspire an unduly generous and tolerant attitude to the speakers at the final rally.

EETPU leader Frank Chapple was heavily booed, but when GMWU leader David Basnett — no great militant! — followed him, he was warmly applauded by the same people who had been booing Chapple. Neither Basnett, nor anyone else, said any more than Chapple had said — that the unions would 'continue to take action' — but the heckling was very sparse.

It wasn't that everyone was happy with the TUC's tactics. Talking to individual NHS workers, it came across clearly that they wanted all-out action. But apparently the militants have not yet been able to make this feeling sufficiently sharp, confident or crystallised.

There were many local rallies in addition to the London demonstration. Scotland, South Wales, and South Yorkshire seem to have been the strongest areas.

From Sheffield, ELLEN TAYLOR reports: "About 200,000 workers came out, and there were over 10,000 on the demonstration. I've never seen so many banners from so many different unions. It was marvellous."

Only six pits in South Yorkshire said they weren't going to come out, but we went and picketed them out."

TONY RICHARDSON reports from Swansea: "500 demonstrators marched through Swansea. The biggest contingent was NUPE, with the next biggest being from the women's movement. There were contingents from many other sections, including bus workers who had stopped for two hours, seamen, construction workers, engineering workers, and most public sector unions."

In Coventry, the strikes in the NHS were widespread. Four headquarters of...

London, there were pickets at the three major hospitals in the city, and 2,000 joined a midday rally in the city centre.

Suttons bakery, white collar workers at BL Jaguar and Canley, council manual workers, water, gas, and printworkers, firemen, and some NUPE school workers were out for 24 hours. Those taking lesser action included many teachers and lecturers, the local Job Centre, DHSS and UBO workers, post and telecom workers, NALGO, GEC staff, and bus mechanics and canteen staff."

Hundreds joined the picket lines at Queen Elizabeth and Selly Oak hospitals in Birmingham, reports JIM DENHAM. They included...

firemen, tax officers, post workers, car workers on holiday, social workers and Musicians' Union members. The Welsh National Opera (currently at the Birmingham Hippodrome) did a special performance in support.

One bus in three in the West Midlands did not run. Most schools took some action or another.

MICK JARMAINE reports from Leicester:

"A rolling rally was held from 6.30 am to 6 pm outside the Royal Infirmary. 3,000 workers attended during the day and £1,000 was collected for the strike fund."

Four Leicestershire pits closed all day and six for half a day. Others taking 24 hour strike action included construction workers, printers, gas workers, social workers, and 1,000 teachers and university lecturers. 500 post office engineers were out for half a day with the main post office staff from...

The factories were the weakest area. The Leicester AUEW shop stewards quarterly on the 23rd decided to send a resolution to the Executive, "In the event of further calls for supporting action for any dispute from the TUC, that the AUEW clearly instruct the membership to support."

'Contingents on the demonstration in Liverpool, reports Chris Erswell, inclu-

ded Littlewoods pools workers (USDW), teachers, dockers, seamen, Ford Halewood and Vauxhall Ellesmere Port car workers, NALGO, and bus drivers from the city's private bus companies.

Despite rain, there were over 5,000 on the march and solid pickets outside all the major hospitals."

Took over

'Hospital workers took strike action all over East London,' reports Jenny Fisher. 'The strikers at Mile End hospital mounted a large picket, and were joined by 200 students from Queen Mary's College next door. Together, they went over the heads of the hospital administration and spontaneously took over a room to hold a public meeting!'

There were also strikes at the London hospital with many workers going down to the national march, and at Queen Elizabeth, the extension to the Old Ground St. (London) hospital, which is dominated by doctors.

Support was given by postal workers, with a four hour stoppage, and Council workers, nearly 100% of whom struck for the day.'

MICK O'SULLIVAN reports from Haringey, North London:

"The three hospitals in the area were all shut down, though there were relatively few hospital workers on the picket lines at the Prince of

Wales and St. Ann's. The biggest contingent on the demonstration was from Wood Green and Southgate Hospital, where staff are working-in against closure.

The turn-out elsewhere was generally bad. The biggest exception was the teachers, nearly all the schools were shut. Some Direct Labour sites struck, and some sections of NALGO came out."

In Islington, North London, the biggest non-NHS contingent on the picket at the Whittington Hospital was from the UCW at the Northern District Office, about 40 of whom marched up to the hospital with their banner. Other contingents on the picket, which reached a strength of about 150 before moving off to the central demonstration, included teachers, ACTSS, and council workers, as well as a lot of

COHSE members from the hospital. Most council workers struck."

From Hackney, East London, JO THWAITES reports:

"It was the biggest turnout yet at Hackney Hospital. 2,000 council workers voted to come out at a meeting in the Town Hall addressed by a nurse on the Wednesday morning, and there was a continuous rally outside the Town Hall with reggae bands until 1pm. Nearly all schools in Hackney were closed, and FTAT members came out at the Ukay warehouse."

In South East London, reports TONY GARD:

"Support came mainly from the public sector. Industry in the area is small-scale, and support was generally limited to delegations and donations."

Lewisham, Hither Green and Greenwich district hospitals have been operating selective withdrawals and

accident and emergency only for two months".

For the first time in the Greater Manchester area, every hospital was out, reports DAVE LUNTS.

"Large pickets were mounted, particularly at Prestwich Hospital, and several strikers also went to the London rally or one of the local ones."

Solidarity was shown by bus workers, who stopped Greater Manchester buses for the full 24 hours, and also by workers from Ward and Goldstones, Chloride, Kellogs, the Town Hall and some CPSA members.

Sympathy strikers from Salford Direct Works, which is facing closure by the Council, heard NUPE shop steward Anna Lunts appeal to them to campaign against their redundancies at a Salford rally.

The day was seen as a big success. Now the Greater Manchester NHS shop stewards' committee is inviting solidarity from workplaces

Where next?

TO follow on from September 22, the TUC has called a series of 16 regional days of action, beginning on October 4 in Merseyside. Health workers will be called out on strike and other trade unionists will be asked to take 'at least one hour' of action.

TUC leaders are also talking about another national day of action in November, and TUC Health Services Committee chairperson Albert Spanswick told the press that "the dispute could continue into next year."

Or right through to next year's pay settlement date on April 1?

Many health workers are not so patient and philo-

sophical, and are escalating hospitals to accident and emergency pressure to lead the local escalation needs to national action.

So NHS militants will still

*All-out indefinite strike in the cover under workers' control.

This needs to be coupled for solidarity action and:

*The TUC to call a series of o In the meantime, we mu

Heat Workers' Ed. for the full team

SEPTEMBER 22

Next HWFC meeting: Sunday October 3, 1pm to 5pm, at the Labour Club, Bristol St, Birmingham.

GENERAL STRIKE!

RIKE SINCE 1926



- *75% of coal mines.
- *Liverpool, London, Hull, Tees, Southampton, Bristol, Glasgow, Barry and Swansea docks for the full day, other ports for shorter periods.
- *SOGAT 82 and NGA printworkers, shutting down Fleet Street: and many journalists.
- *Council workers – the Town Hall white collar union, NALGO, reckons that nearly all its members took some form of action.
- *Albion Motors, Glasgow, Ford Halewood, Bridgend and Treforest, and the Sierra line at Ford Dagenham, all stopped for the full day. Vauxhall Ellesmere Port and Leyland Vehicles at Leyland and Chorley came out for half the day. BL cars were on holiday, but white collar workers at Jaguar and Canley struck.
- *Teachers and school caretakers in many areas. Three quarters of the secondary and half the primary schools in inner London were closed.
- *Shipyards workers at Harland and Wolff, Belfast, on the Tyne and Tees, and at Portsmouth dockyard.
- *Steelworkers in Sheffield and elsewhere.
- *Firemen, bakery, water, gas, and post and telecom workers in many areas.
- *The turnout from bus workers was patchy, because the call for strike action from the TGWU had come only a couple of days before. It was strongest, it seems, in Belfast, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Cleveland, and Manchester.
- *Glasgow airport was closed, and a two-hour mass meeting at Heathrow stopped a number of flights.
- *Ferry services were disrupted by National Union of Seamen stoppages.
- *Granada TV and Ulster TV were shut down for three hours by ACTT action. Yorkshire TV workers also struck.
- *Lorry drivers on Merseyside.
- *Despite threats from their management, many civil service workers struck, mainly in DHSS and Department of Employment offices.
- *There were also stoppages in many factories. On Welsh TV, for example, commentators trying to minimise the action interviewed the president of the Welsh CBI, who said that they had surveyed all the major firms in Wales and 50% worked normally. In other words, half had been affected.
- *United Glass in St. Helens struck for 32 hours.
- *And of course there was a huge turnout everywhere from health workers themselves.
- Local demonstrations were 12,000 strong in Dundee, 10,000 in Sheffield, 8,000 in Glasgow, 7,000 in Leeds, 4,000 in Hull, and 2,000 in Belfast.

which took action to join in a broader Health Workers Solidarity Committee”.

“The pace for supporting action in Oxford” reports HARRY SLOAN, “was set by the print unions – where a combined 24-hour strike by NGA and NUJ halted the local paper. Journalists from local NUJ chapels were among the most active supporters of the strong mass picket outside the Radcliffe Infirmary.

No less than ten coaches carrying health workers and supporters travelled to the London demonstration. But in the town itself the support was patchy.

There was a show of militancy from some less expected quarters. Lucy’s, a small engineering plant, where the stewards were reportedly among the handful who defied a strike vote; a 100% stoppage by Telecom operators for four hours, strong support from postal workers and a strike

by NUPE home helps. There was an 8-hour strike by workers at Didcot power station.

But other sections proved disappointing. Buses ran as normal, there were only small-scale stoppages by NALGO and NUPE council workers, and only two schools were closed as the NUT sent a mere handful of representatives to the demonstration.

An unresolved dispute with the council over payment for emergency cover meant that a strike by the FBW was called off.

It was overall an impressive show of support – but also a pointer to the need to develop further the fighting strength in key local unions.”

CARLA JAMISON reports from Basingstoke:

“At the psychiatric hospital, lightning strikes by different sections built up the momentum for September 22. The GMWU developed these tactics when

frustrated at the TUC’s methods began to take its toll of unity.

“At an all-day rally and picket at the hospital there were over 500 secondary pickets, including 80 postmen and 200 Lansing Bagnalls workers who marched to the rally despite the instructions from their Joint Shop Stewards Committee chairman Peter Taylor (who has been so busy providing ‘witnesses’ for management to sack boilermakers’ convenor Keith Maynard).

The GMWU have followed the 22nd by pulling out indefinitely the key washroom operatives of the laundry and their driver (the TGWU will also refuse to handle the work). Feeling is running so high that other sections of the GMWU are queuing up to take action.

This has also meant a rapid influx of people into the branch, and the production of regular information

Heckling Frank Chapple

bulletins. Management have gone very quiet and have not dared repeat the disastrous attempt at victimisation which backfired on them badly in July.

Our tactics may not have been Queensbury rules, but they are a damn sight more effective than the TUC have offered us so far. Workers who had previously scabbed on the action are now joining the union and taking full part.”

Together

“Miners, civil servants, bakers and seamen joined pickets in Cardiff, reports MARTIN BARCLAY. Many Labour councillors donated a day’s allowance.

The Welsh Office has announced 9000 redundancies for the Welsh Health Service, probably through privatisation of cleaning and laundry services, but the

joint shop stewards’ committee set up to fight on the claim is determined to fight this issue together, too”.

The turnout of Labour Party banners on the central demonstration was disappointing – reflecting the failure of Party leaders to campaign for action. Local Labour Party activity was sometimes better.

In Islington the council suspended activity for the day, sent a letter to all council workers encouraging them to strike, met with the unions to discuss action, sent councillors on the picket lines, and displayed a large banner in support of the health workers across the front of the Town Hall. Several other Labour councils also showed support.

In Coventry, some local

Labour Parties, especially Coventry South West, made an organised show of support on the picket lines and at the rally. In Haringey a health workers’ support committee mainly based on the Labour Party has been active.

In Basingstoke, the Labour Party distributed a leaflet calling for strike action at the gates of all the main local factories. Such activity seems, however, to have been the exception.

Socialist Organiser supporters were active everywhere that we have groups, pressing for industrial action in their workplaces, attending the picket lines and rallies, selling Socialist Organiser, and also selling the ‘Health Workers for the Full Claim’ bulletin. Around 1,000 copies of the bulletin were sold during the day.

local action to reduce emergency only. To exert Tories, however, piece- be capped by decisive agitating for: NHS, with emergency with redoubled appeals day general strikes. mobilise to the maxi-

rum for the TUC’s regional actions. That’s the only way the pressure can be built up to get more action.

***Build local action committees uniting NHS workers with other trade unionists, Labour Parties, unemployed, etc., to get maximum mobilisation.**

Significantly, not a single employer dared to try to use the Prior anti-union law against action on the 22nd. But there have been victimisations. And the employers’ caution will not last forever.

***The unions and the action committees must defend workers victimised by the law or by employers for solidarity action..**

DEFEND JIM TOLTON!

HEALTH workers in Leicester are picketing the Fox’s Glacier Mints factory in support of victimised AUEW shop steward Jim Tolton.

Jim was sacked last week from the factory, part of the Rowntree Mackintosh company, for showing health workers the way to the canteen. Management trumped up charges of ‘gross insubordination’.

The AUEW (maintenance) workers at the factory struck immediately. But on Friday 24th management announced that they had

rejected Jim’s appeal; and following the report-back from AUEW district official Bridget Paton, the section voted narrowly to return to work.

The turning point seems to have been when the shop floor workers (USDAW members), who had come out in support of Jim on the Tuesday, were told to return to work by their district official. This return to work took place on Wednesday September 22, the TUC day of action!

The USDAW official said

they would come out again when the AUEW made it official. On the Wednesday evening the AUEW district committee did that, but the USDAW official insisted on waiting for confirmation from the national executive.

On Monday 20th the Joint Health Coordinating Committee had given Jim full support, and on the Wednesday he spoke at the rally outside Leicester Royal Infirmary. 800 people signed a petition supporting him.

Now health workers have

been picketing the factory at 5.30am each morning to try to persuade the engineers to reverse their decision.

Tebbit

The health workers feel strongly that Jim has been victimised just for putting into practice TUC policy in support of the NHS struggle; and that Rowntree are doing retail what Tebbit wants to do wholesale.

Messages of support to 11 Bisley St, Leicester.

**Socialist
Organiser
REVIEW**

Do we want to play fair only to lose?

Alan Clinton reviews the new novel, 'A Very British Coup', by Chris Mullin, editor of 'Tribune'. [Hodder and Stoughton £6.95].

THIS novel sets out a fictionalised account of what might happen if a future Labour government tried to carry out the policies which are now largely supported inside constituency Labour parties. Mullin tries to indicate what might develop if there was a government led by a determined left winger which tried to introduce radical measures, and in particular to force the withdrawal of all American bases.

This is not a novel to read for profound analysis of character or motive. Nor as a writer of suspense does comrade Mullin display the literary panache of a Raymond Chandler or the relentless movement of a Dick Francis.

However, his aims in writing a 'political thriller' are simpler than this. He does provide a well-written yarn, and also the possibility, not usual in such cases, of allowing the consideration of quite profound political questions.

The government of Henry Perkins elected in 1989 tries to carry out

various socialist policies. From the start it is attacked by the bankers and the 'establishment'.

Ways are found around this. Loans are negotiated with — wait for it — Algerians, Libyans and Iraqis. Campaigns are then arranged against individual left-wing ministers, one of whom is driven from office after an affair with a girl who inhabits the same flat as a member of the — wait for it again — Workers Revolutionary Party.

A national strike is arranged by power workers led by a thinly disguised version of Frank Chapple, with the backing of the American embassy. A period clearly resembling the 3 day week of the winter of 1974 follows.

Eventually, the secret service with the help of the press find a scandal which links Perkins with a large company with which he has dealt. He is bundled away out of the reach of friends and political colleagues, and a figure not unfamiliar to Dennis Healey is installed in his stead.

This wins back the confi-

dence of NATO, the Royal Family and the Sun, who are able to return to business as usual.

Now comrade Mullin's starting point was to argue against those in the capitalist press and the media that such things could not happen. Naturally the reviewers in such places have risen to the bait.

No, they have argued, civil servants and secret police would not act like this. They would accept the policies of any democratically elected government, however left wing.

Mullin very effectively demolishes this argument. He does this in particular by inventing very little. The activities of the press, MI5 and so further are so clearly based on things that have happened already that he scarcely needs to invent anything at all.

However, Mullin's concern is to show that it is socialists and left wingers who are the greatest adherents to democratic institutions and ideas. He destroys the arguments of the right, but he does not really deal with those from the left.

Will democratic values and socialist ideas be implemented through the parliamentary and judicial system as presently constituted? The novel does not address itself to this question, but it poses it just the same.

The greatest problem of suspending disbelief lies, in a way, in the policies of the left government. Let us argue that it ought to be possible for left wing leaders to take over the Labour Party in 1987. After all we were not so far from this in 1981.

Will such leaders then hold the line? Will they carry out without flinching the sort of policies (not especially radical, in all conscience) outlined here? Perhaps. But I have doubts.

Even when we have suspended disbelief as far as this, will the next step be the mobilisation of strike action against a socialist government? (Again, there is an assumption that such a government could introduce an incomes policy of sorts. But let that pass.)

There can be doubt that a Chapple-like figure might



The state and its machinery are always with us

be prepared to engage in such an enterprise. But would that be all that the working class would do?

Comrade Mullin does on many such details as the interior of 10 Downing Street and Chequers and of the thoughts of the inhabitants. He is more vague, however, on the political dynamic in the outside world. Does he not think that the development of socialist policies would need to go beyond large CND-style demonstrations?

In the end many of the issues he puts into the rarified world of Downing Street and Whitehall would be settled in the streets and factories outside.

Of course, the novel is a tragedy. 'Our' side loses, because as comrade Mullin realises, this is the logic

of trying to proceed on the 'parliamentary' road that he sets out.

What then would we need to do to win? Would our parliamentary institutions, our civil service, our royal family, our Athenaeum for Christ's sake, still be left as they were before? Would society as a whole, the organised working class, the socialist and trade union movement go on without changing the form, without toppling in any way the institutions of the bourgeoisie?

Only if they did topple those institutions would it be our victory. How else could we get rid of the bases, limit the power of the barons of Fleet Street, and bring key sections of the economy into public ownership?

Nobody could be so

foolish as to argue that there are easy answers to the problems of how to win. Just to counterpose such slogans as 'build the revolutionary party' or 'mobilise the working class' to the serious and hard questions set out in this book could be to deny them the consideration that they deserve. But by setting out the conclusion that he has, Chris knows very well that he has not answered them either.

This novel is certainly to be recommended for raising these important questions. For my part, I wait impatiently for its sequel.

In this, comrade Mullin could employ some of his narrative talent to setting out what would need to happen in order for us to win next time round.

Smiley's Circus of nostalgia



Smiley — no James Bond stereotype

by Harry Sloan

LIKE the series of novels which preceded it, Smiley's People (now dramatised twice weekly on BBC TV) draws heavily on almost universal imagery to evoke its picture of decline, demoralisation and decay.

Unlike his innumerable artless competitors in the field of spy fiction, John Le Carré refuses to construct mechanical plots as a flimsy framework upon which episodes of sexual titillation and brute violence can be crudely hung.

His novels offer no larger-than-life James Bond-style heroes, licensed to kill stereotype enemy agents and slay suitably submissive women.

Le Carré offers us none of the depressingly routine fantasies involving the kidnap of US Presidents or the machinations of megalomaniacs plotting to rule the world with stolen nuclear weapons.

The world of Smiley is one of much more low-key manoeuvres and intrigues, through which the various intelligence networks — with their parallel dispositions of agents, double-agents, hatchet men and

They are supplemented by vast banks of files, endless

scraps of information on the recent and distant past. The past in every way hangs over the present and shapes events — in ways we only gradually come to understand.

Yet there is no hint in Le Carré's novels of the vast array of modern technology now at work gathering information and intelligence — the spy satellites, the vast banks of computers and recorders, the listening stations and electronic bugs which channel an endless flow of information to a host of centres for processing.

In this respect Le Carré's picture is distorted — and lags behind that offered by authors like Len Deighton. But Le Carré's purpose is different, and his anachronisms are deliberate.

Deighton's characters are over-sketched in to lend credibility to his plot: Le Carré's plot provides scope to explore the characters and their world.

The overwhelming tone of regretful, almost nostalgic gloom and comfortless confusion which dominates the novels is no accident: Le Carré is reflecting the crisis and decline of an era of British imperialism and its values.

His main characters know themselves to be doubly outcast: spies and malignant left-overs from the now distant past. They have bravely in daylight, and venture out into our world only with false names and passports.

The background to the self doubt and confusion of his characters is typically cold, dark, decaying or rain-swept. It is with such lingering imagery that Le Carré's novels join a tradition of literature reflecting profound unease at society and morals in periods of transition.

In the midst of the 19th century, Alfred Lord Tennyson voiced his fears of the rapid changes taking place around him and the impending collapse of the traditional straight-laced morality and social structure treasured by the prosperous middle and ruling classes. His lengthy reworking of the Arthurian legend — *Idylls of the King* — sold in its tens of thousands to the Victorian establishment.

Since then there have been other, more pessimistic views of the world and its ways, equally redolent of a nostalgia for some long-gone, imagined 'golden age' of certainty and stability. The symbol of the last survivor, the beleaguered individual at odds with a troubled and decaying world, has been widely utilised.

In Le Carré's novels it is Smiley and his handful of old hands at the 'Circus' who find themselves cast in the role of not-so-heroic last-ditch defenders of the values of British imperialism.

They face mounting odds. They are up against the decline of Britain as a world power in the post-war

period; the repercussions of the moral crisis which drove a whole chunk of the British middle classes into the arms of Stalinist politics in the 1930s — with its real life impact in the Burgess, Philby, Maclean and Blunt affairs; and the passing of a whole generation of old reactionaries from the period of the Russian revolution, whose circles of emigrés have offered suitably murky surroundings for the operations of both British and Soviet intelligence.

In *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, Smiley weeds out the 'mole' artfully placed at the centre of the Circus by Moscow spymaster Karla. The new novel sees Smiley brought out of retirement to face a final showdown with Karla.

Perhaps it is this which makes this novel less satisfying than its predecessors.

Le Carré has said that: "The central theme was already complete before I began. This was to be Smiley's confrontation with Karla that would destroy them both... It was to be a moral Reichenbach Falls with no happy moment when Smiley returns to his bee-keeping" (Radio Times).

But Smiley's strength has been that he was not a super-sleuth in the style of Sherlock Holmes (who had his final struggle with his arch-enemy Moriarty when they both tumbled into the Reichenbach Falls): that the answers he had were never quite complete.

By providing a decisive outcome to his contest with Karla, Le Carré in a way breaks the spell he has so thoroughly woven. For the first time his characters are made obviously to conform to a preconceived 'plot' or moral theme — and become just character in a novel.

Needless to say none of the characters is politically in tune with readers of this paper: nor indeed is Le Carré. But the story is crafted in such a way as to distance the author from all of the pronouncements made: he asks us to experience the characters rather than accept, admire or completely identify with them.

Few will wish themselves to be the plump, ageing, short-sighted, unassertive and emotionally crippled George Smiley — and fewer still will identify with the other characters involved. And if Karla and his Soviet retinue are depicted in slightly more pejorative terms, the Cold War echoes in this novel have no direct connection with political life as we know it.

On TV or in the novel it is great escapist stuff — with plenty to get your intellectual teeth into. And for those who always look for political message, remember the anguish of Smiley and his ilk is in part due to their sense of the slackening hold of imperialist ideology. That should prompt not pessimism but hope for the future!

Breaking the accumulated silence of working women

Deb Baxter spoke to Pat Barker, author of a new novel about the lives of working class women in decaying capitalist Britain



Stoicism for the sake of stoicism?

UNION Street could be any street in any decaying industrial heartland. In this novel, though, it is part of a North Eastern city. It is Winter 1973 — although it could easily be the 1930's — a Winter of unemployment, the oil crisis and the fall of the Heath Government.

Union Street is the lifeline uniting the otherwise disparate snap-shot views of the seven women the novel concerns. From young Kelly, raped at the age of eleven, to old Alice who dies on a park bench, the characters are not merely individuals (al-

though they are that too) but represent the chronology of the life of one woman — of all women even.

This is a novel which raises many questions. What, for example, is its author saying? Is it sensationalised? Is it a social or political comment? Is it a feminist novel? With these questions in mind, I spoke to Pat Barker.

Born and brought up in the North East, the author claims that the book is based on personal experience but that it 'isn't autobiographical'. It took a three-year stint in Lon-

don, where she studied at the London School of Economics, however, for Pat to realise how different the Northern way of life is and just to what extent the working-class, especially working-class women, have been neglected and even misrepresented by literature.

In creating 'Union Street', Pat set off with what she terms 'the accumulated silence of working-class women'. She sees herself as essentially 'a listener', transferring what she perceived into the novel.

It may be this facet of Pat Barker's style which explains one criticism that the book has had levelled at it: that the characters are shallow and their speech oversimplified. The women in 'Union Street', and indeed the men too, have their own modes of speech and, as the author says, essentially their own art. By portraying them as she does, Pat captures that art, which is indeed different from, but by no means inferior to, other forms, and in effect, paints her characters in their own way. They don't analyse their situation or ponder the meaning of life. They rarely discuss the wider issues of politics (i.e. those which go further than the problems of everyday life).

Shallow

This is not to say, though, that the characters are shallow, but rather that such subjects are remote from their lives, or at least seen as such. And indeed, it is the reality of this problem, which active socialists will attest, that stands in the way of what seems to outsiders to be the obvious solution: socialism.

Speaking more particularly about the women in the novel, Pat characterises their main motivating force as 'stoicism' — sometimes even for the sake of stoicism. Union Street women do not, she feels, see their lives as hopeless or meaningless, in contrast to their middle-class counterparts. This is not merely a question of education, but relates also to the different emphasis placed on the women's role and, ultimately, on the importance of the family. Iris King, the street's matriarch, is a case

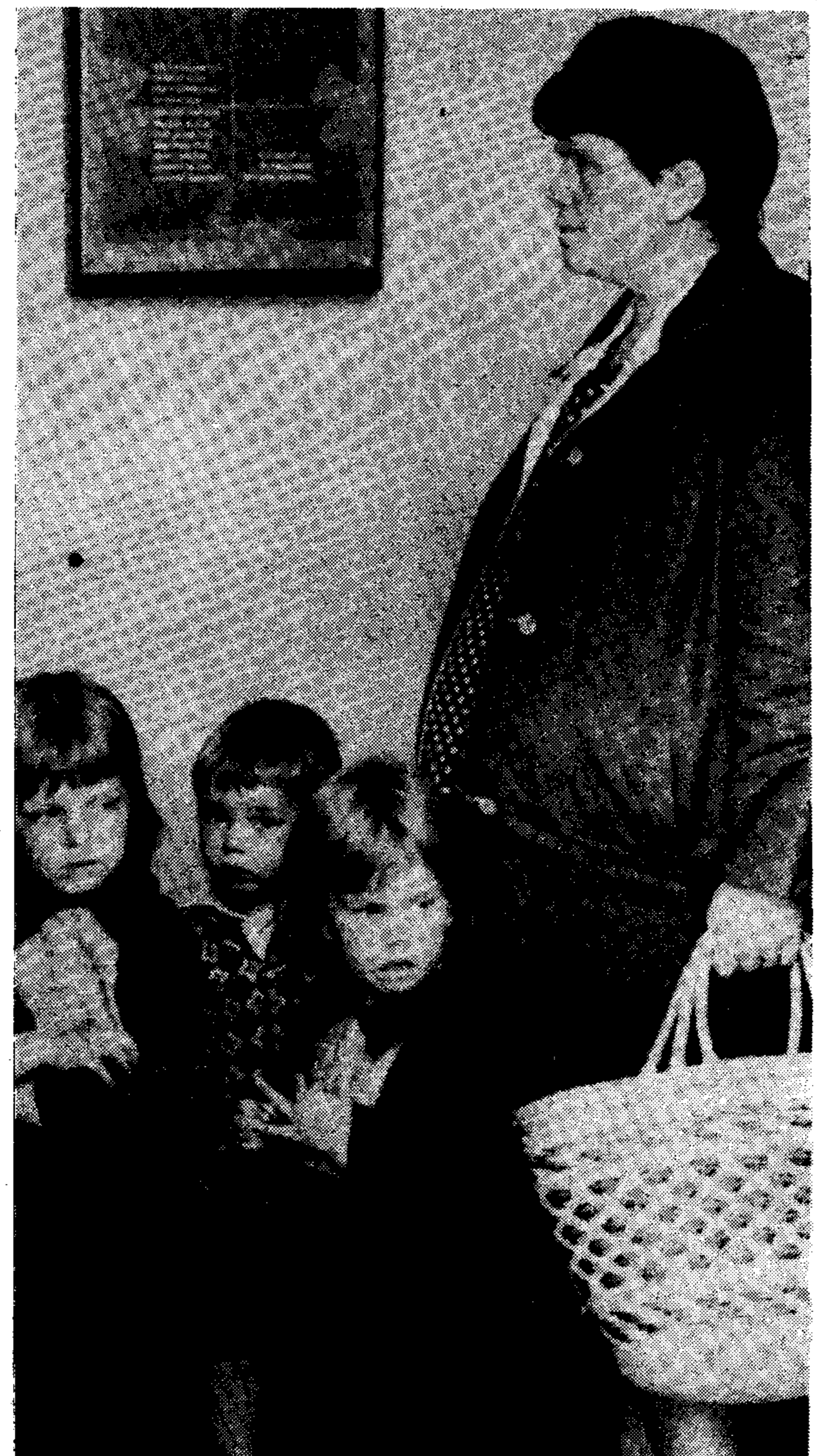
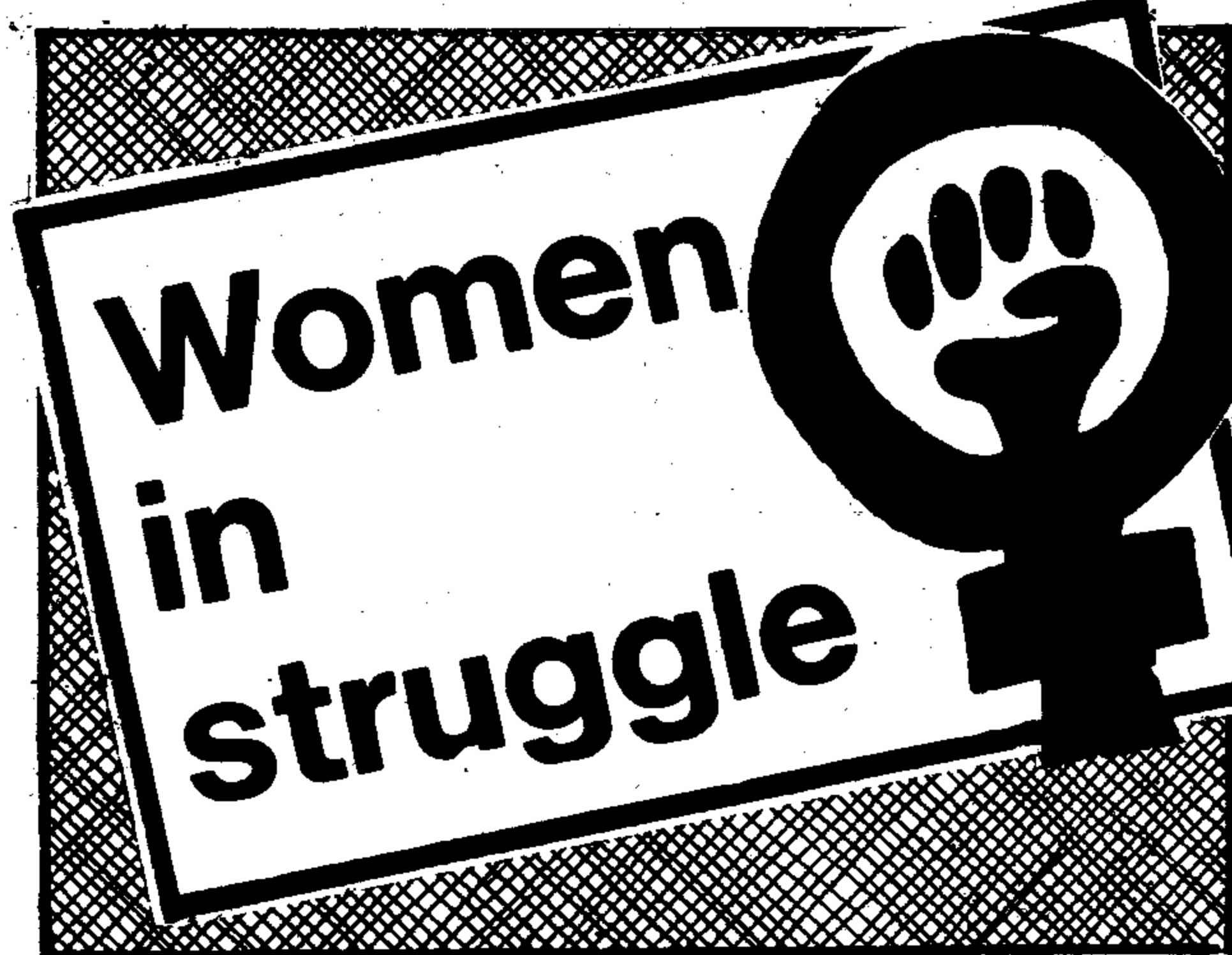
in point.

'Union Street' is a brutal book. For every woman portrayed there is a tragedy in store. But, the author believes that, rather than sordid, the book is realistic. She cites the example of Brenda King's back-street abortion. The aim here is not to portray the graphic details, although Pat adds that this would not necessarily be a bad thing, but to reveal the thinking of Iris King (Brenda's mother). Iris has moral sense, emphasises Pat. In showing this, she attempts to rectify the typical novelist's portrayal, especially in Nell Dunn's 'Up the Junction' and Alan Sillitoe's 'Saturday Night and Sunday Morning', of the working-class casual and uncaring attitude to abortion.

Reality

Does this misrepresentation occur because middle-class writers don't understand the working-class reality of abortion? This would seem to be the case, especially since legal abortion involves little horror and certainly leaves no dead foetus to dispose of.

Raising, as it does, so many fundamental socialist issues, I was a little disappointed by Pat's continuing insistence that the novel is not intended as 'socialist or feminist propaganda', although she does admit to being a feminist and does accept that there may be some 'unconscious' links. The social and political comment is, however, there, most strongly perhaps in the feeling that throughout the book the reader is really in the 1930's. Little has changed, and the feeling is that little will change. Life will go on and the Kelly Browns of the Union Streets will lose their youthful anger (for as Pat points out, Kelly is the only character in the book who is actually angry), soon to become the dying Alice Bells talking to the young Kellys in the park.



A never-ending spiral?

Confronting Pat Barker with this hopelessness, she says that the Union Street situation is not an unending circle, but rather 'a never-ending spiral' and she points to symbolism in the book to prove it. There is always a chance that Kelly will escape her inevitable destiny, but even Pat herself, when faced with the obvious question 'How?' can provide no real answers.

'You don't say something through a book', says the author of 'Union Street'. 'A novel speaks for itself.'

For me, that meaning is infinitely clear: it is an indictment on an uncaring, exploitative capitalist society and a further indication that the road to Socialism (to extend an already extended metaphor) is the only way out of Union Street — but not the easiest route to follow, especially when so many are not thinking of leaving.

'Union Street' is published by VIRAGO, at £2.95.

Two years ago, **Women's Fightback's** first conference for Labour women stimulated the new growth of women's sections and launched the demands for major reforms. Now we need to get these implemented, and weld the women's sections into a force that can lead women against the Tories, and represent women's interests in the Labour Party. That's what the second **Women's Fightback** conference, on November 27th, will be looking at. **Register Now!**

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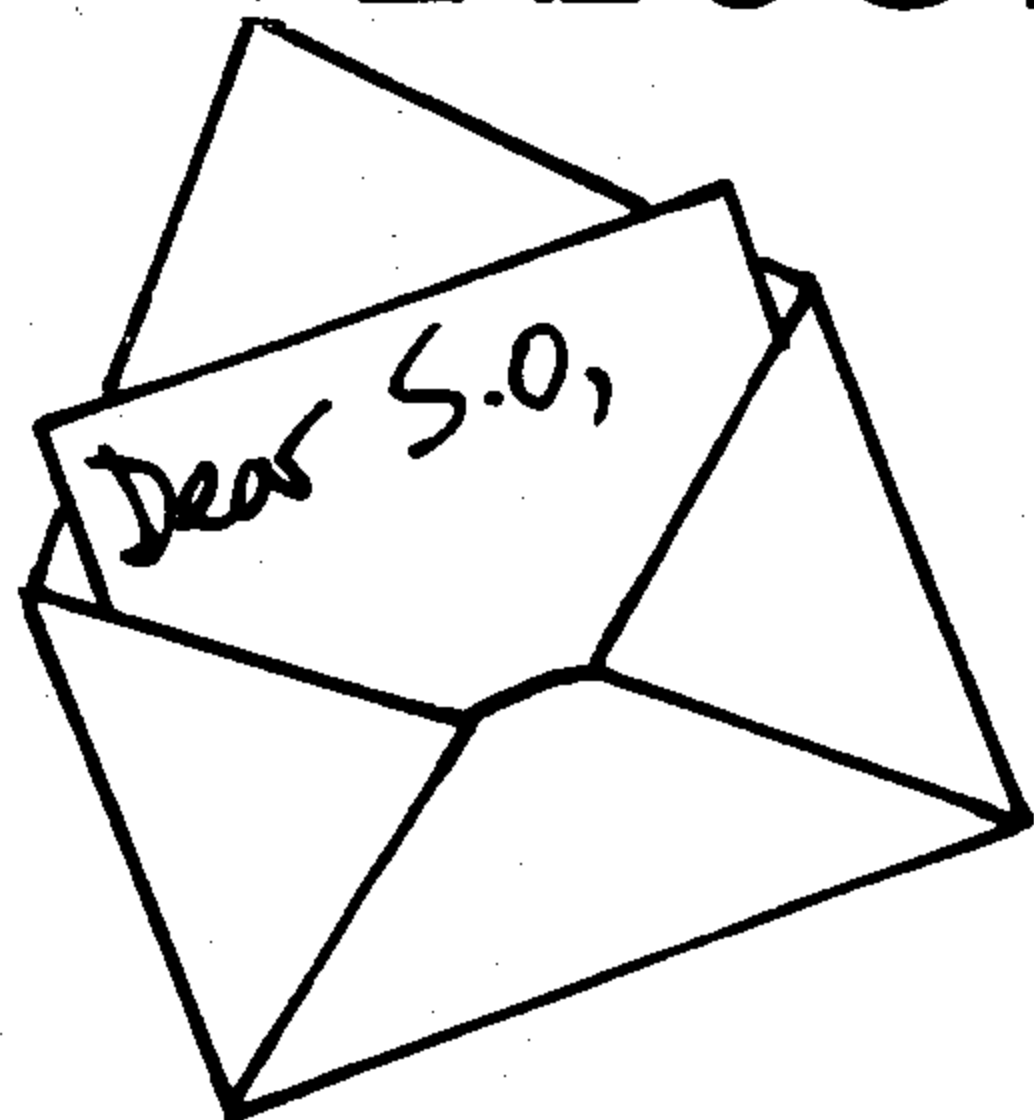
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We invite readers to send us their letters, up to a usual maximum length of 400 words. Send to 'Writeback', Socialist Organiser, c/o 28, Middle Lane, London N8.

Scottish nationalism is a blind alley

ALL OF the options open to the left wing '79 Group' within the Scottish National Party have been closed, bar capitulation or expulsion. Ever since the decision of the 1982 Annual Confer-

ence of the Party that the Group be disbanded, its members have sought ways of evading the inevitable. Their attempt to seek a loophole by establishing the Group outside the framework of the SNP and

open to non-party members has been rejected by the leadership of the 'political kailyard', as Stephen Maxwell has aptly described them. Already leading members of Group, such as Jim

Sillars and Ron Wylie, have sought an accommodation with the right wing fundamentalists. Margo MacDonald has quit the SNP. Others, including Maxwell, have yet to make a decision.

of Gretna is the milder objection we have to the prognosis.

A more fundamental argument against it is that it proceeds from that assumption to advocate a further weakening of the effort to create a united working class movement against the Tories throughout the UK.

The major argument for devolution is that it holds out the promise of weakening of the capitalist state and creates the conditions for a fuller expression of working class hostility to that entity. Devolution not, then, a fall-back response to an abatement of working class struggle, but an optional lever in the struggle against capital.

Seen in that way, socialists may be for devolution in Tyneside or Merseyside as well as in Scotland.

The priority that accords to devolution is not determined by relative levels of working class consciousness and struggle north or south of the Border. That is a recipe for despair, not a strategy for socialism.

Moreover, we must draw a sharp line between devolution and nationalism. The first is a valid strategy for socialists, the priority which is open to debate.

Nationalism, on the contrary, is, whatever its colouration, a reactionary ideology, harnessing Scottish workers to the interests of Scottish capitalism.

This is no academic matter. Jim Sillars was platform speaker at a recent rally in defence of jobs at the Clydebridge works, Cambuslang.

'Save Scottish Steel' has become a rallying cry of the campaign. Socialists must dispel any such illusions.

A campaign to defer steel jobs in Cambuslang can only be successful if it is pursued in alliance with steelworkers in Sheffield, Port Talbot and steel plants throughout the UK.

Nationalism is not just a wrong set of ideas; it is positively harmful to the interests of all workers.

IAN McCALMA
Glasgow

Can Scargill carry through pay fight?

THE ARTICLE on the miners' pay claim (Socialist Organiser no.97) was a timely one, and I would like to make some comments.

It is important for the whole Left in the unions and in the Labour Party to support Scargill and the NUM left. But it is also true that we should have some reservations about Arthur's ability to carry struggle through to the bitter end.

You may recall that in the 1981 struggle, Arthur kept quiet while the Welsh miners were out. It was the rank and file in Yorkshire who gave the lead, and it is in the rank and file that we must place our trust now.

Unless there is a tremendous campaign in the pits, many may use the fact that the claim is so high - 30% - to justify arguing that it is pie in the sky and unattainable, particularly in view of the cynicism engendered by the horsetrading which has characterised negotiations since 1975. The arguments for the full claim must be hammered home.

If it is seen to be justifiable, then the 'no compromise' argument is easier.

It will be a hard fight, given that the miners are still at the top of the pay league, the decline in inflation, and the decline in the wages of other workers.

Some face workers can earn £200 a week.

Such a campaign must not rely on the left, or the

union machine. It must reach the ordinary worker.

This will be the real fight. I do not see the point about stocks being high as conclusive. They were high in the two previous victorious strikes. It is the intensity of the picketing and blacking, and the involvement of other sections of the working class, that is crucial.

Distract

We also have to argue that the pay claim does not distract from the fight against pit closure, and particularly argue that agreement to closure should not be used as a means of gaining more cash.

EDDIE GINLEY,
Liverpool.



30% claim: pie in the sky?

Dear Socialist Organiser,

There was a good discussion at the SO delegate meeting in September about all that's wrong with the paper as regards layout and language, etc. Then Martin Thomas, one of the editorial staff, tried to answer the various points. But I think he was too much part of the problem to be capable of summing it up.

We need a paper which appeals to all those who are interested in political action, to change this society so ordinary people are in a strong position.

We will only get this sort of paper if those who work hard for its production are prepared to step back and realise that you don't convince people by producing a paper jam-packed with preaching to the converted.

We already have well-researched, interesting, factual articles like the one by Stan Crook on the Gorbals damp campaign, and the article on Basingstoke hospital workers and Bagnells. For such articles to be easily accessible they require prominence and space through good lay-out methods.

For the Organiser to organise it has to be totally re-vamped and to foster a style of writing which relates to the actual experience of oppression which is the possession of every working class and oppressed person. We need a lively and easy-going presentation which makes the paper enjoyable to read and inspiring rather than bludgeons its readers, with the aims and objectives of the S.O.A.

John MacDonald

More on industry, unemployed!

IN REPLYING to Rocky Sullivan (Socialist Organiser 99, September 9), and his criticism and comment for improving the paper, I must say that I strongly disagree with his pronounced middle-class liberal view that 'Socialist Organiser has been absolutely abominable in its coverage of what might be called culture or the wider world'.

His nonsensical urging for paper space to be given

to trivia such as 'music, sport, literature and art' on the ground that they are political is the antithesis of what Socialist Organiser is about.

What is he after, interviews with Kevin Keegan? Wonderful. He'd be able to pronounce to the thousands of Geordies unemployed that Shangri-la is down the road at St James Park, always providing they've got the admission price. His team mate Channon could always be relied upon to

give a few horsey tips - might even suggest a giro or two on his own nag!

As for Rocky's call for more film and TV coverage - what bunkum. Worth-while big/small screening already gets included in Socialist Organiser.

The paper could improve with more columns on industrial matters - weekly provision for issues such as chemical hazards, toxic rating, compensation rights, and workers' fight-backs on safety problems.

Also, more space could be given to establishing the rights of the unemployed. Here I imagine a regular spot that would inform/educate readers on the advances made in the setting up of trade union centres like the one in Liverpool, or in the retaining/recruiting of unemployed trade unionists, such as in the TGWU.

Practical experiences of comrades' determination to unite trade unionists in or out of work in the funding

and running of centres would be of immensely more value than, say, an embryonic Joan Bakewell reviewing the arts, which might reach a few trendies, but would be of no value in building a socialist movement.

No, Rocky: the pages of Socialist Organiser are too precious to devote anything less than completely to the struggle for socialism.

TOM HART,
Todmorden.



Youth have taken the lead this week in the 'Jobs not Bombs' campaign, with a Manchester to Blackpool march.

Youth march against Tories

By Mick Liggins

THE Labour Party Young Socialists has called a 'Youth against the Tories' demonstration for Saturday October 16.

By now, Young Socialist branches should be in full swing, campaigning to make the demonstration as big as possible, and therefore a well placed kick up the backside for the right wing witch-hunters in the Labour Party as well as a blow against this Tory government.

Mobilisations of youth around the YOPS issue have gone part of a way to moving Norman Tebbit on the new Youth Training

Scheme from the position of making his cheap labour scheme compulsory.

At its steering committee last week, the National Left Wing Youth Movement of the LPYS urged all supporters of our paper Class Fighter to campaign for as big as possible a turn-out on the 16th.

We also decided that the Class Fighter conference will take place on November 12 and 13. All Class Fighter supporters who hold supporters' cards can put resolutions to the conference.

We also aim to attract new supporters to the con-

ference.

We will be discussing various aspects of the attacks on youth and how we can defeat them. And we are planning a school on young women's oppression in December.

If you would like to become a supporter of the NLWYM, send 25p (if you're unemployed) or £1 (if you are employed or a full-time student).

If your youth organisation would like to sponsor the paper or send observers to our conference, write to us at 214, Sickert Court, London N1.

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"DID NOT WRITE A SINGLE WORD OF THAT STORY"

The Workers Revolutionary Party paper Newsline has been conducting a campaign against Oxford journalist Peter McIntyre, accusing him of helping the police with their swoop on homeless claimants. Peter McIntyre explains why he will be pursuing a complaint against Newsline under the NUJ rule book.

THE day after the police raid on social security claimants in Oxford the Oxford Mail published a front page story under the headline 'our part in the big sting - How Mail reporter unearthed a benefits fiddle'.

That reporter was me. The story, written by the Oxford Mail editor, said DHSS officials were stunned when I began making inquiries about bed and breakfast facilities to claimants.

It said two senior policemen - one of them head of the Serious Crime Squad - had been to see the editor who agreed to withhold publication of my investigations while their inquiries continued.

The effect was devastating. People who know me rang up in disbelief.

It was perhaps the least surprising outcome that Newsline should run a series of articles confidently denouncing me as a police informer. SO readers need not feel defensive on my behalf.

Newsline will be the subject of a complaint through the NUJ rule book and I am confident it will apologise or be forced to make its brand of smear outside the union.

That does not mean the Oxford Mail article does not require explanation, nor does it mean that I am beyond criticism.

I have replayed the events leading up to the raid in my head a thousand times over the past three weeks. It is like a slow motion tape of a car-crash. I certainly feel as though I had been hit by a truck.

First a word about work-

ing as a reporter on an evening newspaper. Newsline might claim it is a through some fault on my part I failed to get an exemption clause in my contract which would allow me only to work on stories considered ideologically sound.

I cannot go to the editor and ask to be excused interviewing conservatives. I once covered a royal visit to Oxford. Police calls are on the daily news diary. If the right combination of people are sick, on holiday or otherwise engaged I am sent to St. Aldates' police station clutching my note book, shown into the duty inspector's office and note down the day's catalogue of thefts, and other alleged crime.

Intake

Those who experience a sharp intake of breath at the thought of a socialist sitting in the same room as a police officer without being under arrest had better give up the thought of being a journalist on a provincial newspaper.

My title as social services reporter sounds grander than reality. Until last year it would have included health coverage. I was removed from that reporting for entirely political reasons and the health coverage is now done by one of only two non union reporters in head office.

Like other reporters I arrive in the morning to find a slip of paper listing my jobs for the day. The level of personal choice over this job or that is extremely low.

However, the sharp rise in homelessness over the past 18 months in Oxford led to me writing a number of stories about the plight of people left without a roof over their heads. A Salvation Army hostel was forced to close when a church withdrew its building and attempts to move it elsewhere foundered on opposition from residents groups and the like.

Plight

It was in that context - of consistently drawing attention to the plight of the homeless - that I began work on a series of features in July.

It quickly became clear that one of the most important areas was the fate of single people in bed and breakfast establishments. A whole industry had sprung up which made a fortune out of homelessness.

Last year I had already written a feature comparing the charges and conditions of single people in bed and breakfast to those with tenancy agreements with the same landlords (identical rooms; charges more than doubled).

But now I was hearing about more and more people being crammed into small rooms, and serious allegations about landlords or their agents taking money off claimants in return for supplying letters saying they were staying there.

These were the 'startling facts' I was trying to collect evidence about - not fraud by claimants.

And trying was the operative word. It was much easier to discover authoritative second hand reports of what was happening than to find people who would talk directly about what had happened to them. The editor says he decided not to publish the articles. There were no articles which could have passed any legal test for publication.

Stages

As one of the routine stages in this inquiry I went to see the manager of the local DHSS supplementary benefits office. I had a list of questions aimed at trying to discover how much was being spent on bed and breakfast



Newsline's "evidence": two front pages of a Tory newspaper!

payments and how much of that money was going to individual landlords. (The city council which has an obligation to house families, publishes figures on how much it spends on bed and breakfast. The DHSS does not.)

My questions met a blank response. And when I mentioned a particular landlord, the manager said that I had called at a bad time, that there was an investigation going on and that the police would be in touch with my editor.

A few days later the editor told me that two senior policemen had been to tell him that my enquiries were cutting across an investigation they were doing. The editor asked me to go to see Det. Inspector Roy Payne.

I took with me another reporter, precisely as insurance against being pumped for information. Payne, who met us in a bare upstairs room at St. Aldates' police station, asked whether I had any information to give him and I said I did not. He knew better than to push the point. The outrageous suggestion that I gave the police any information at all is completely without foundation.

Payne said fraud investigations had grown as a side issue out of a murder inquiry and he said that they had reports of landlords or their agents taking money in return for official letters.

I asked whether the investigation was into landlords or claimants, and he said that it was into the activities of landlords and their agents.

I had no illusions that the police were sympathetic to claimants. It was also clear that since some of the allegations amounted to a form of blackmail that in some cases there had to be some 'fraud' by claimants for the traffickers in homelessness to be able to work their alleged extortion.

But I knew that several groups working with the homeless had complained to the DHSS about the money they were handing over to landlords and the few facts Payne had given (he spontaneously mentioned two landlords whose names had also been given to me) made it plausible that the operation really was directed where he said it was.

I knew nothing of course about the phony DHSS office and 'the Sting'. I

wasn't even aware that the investigation was by the Serious Crime Squad. The prospect of 280 claimants being arrested was so far from my mind that the allegations against the landlords seemed to be the only justification for a special operation.

When I returned to the office the editor said he had agreed that the paper would not question claimants or landlords about the allegations I had heard, which effectively brought my inquiries to a halt.

I won't pretend that I fought the editor's decision. It seemed to me unlikely that I could make the allegations stand up without a major input of resources by the paper - and there was no sign of those.

It is a poor analogy and I don't wish to compare homelessness with drug addiction, but I felt as if I had been told that the police were planning a big bust against major heroin pushers. For there to be pushers there have to be users. Operation Major of course turned out to be an operation against the equivalent of the petty user. But who would shed any tears if the pushers were going to be busted?

I had no further contact with the police. On the day of the raid I sat in court watching one defendant after another being remanded in custody without even being offered a lawyer, and heard that more than 50 places at the overcrowded Oxford prison had been specially cleared for the mass jailings.

The real purpose of the operation sunk on me like a lead weight. That day a grinning picture of me appeared over the report of the raid. I had not in fact written a single word of the story (except for Claimant's Union comment in a late edition). But that was just a taste of what was to come.

That night I collected the reactions of people who had been freed without charge, probation officers, lawyers and civil liberty campaigners and wrote a story about their anger. It appeared (heavily cut) on Friday in the Oxford Mail under the heading 'Bitter reaction of Freed'. Ironically, it carried no byline.

Horror

But way up above it at the top of the page I was given the headlines in full measure. I bought the Oxford Mail on my way to the Claimants Union. I stopped in horror in the shop as I read about my supposed role in 'the Sting'.

The campaign against claimants which this had initiated is far more important than my discomfiture. If there is a Nobel prize for sucker punches I deserve a nomination. But whatever I am guilty of it is not 'grassing' or 'helping the police to harrass the homeless'.

I have been freed to give this account of the events leading up to the raid by my NUJ chapel, who are raising the issues with the editor.

An almost full meeting expressed its contempt for the Newsline articles and said it would protest.

The support of those members means something to me.

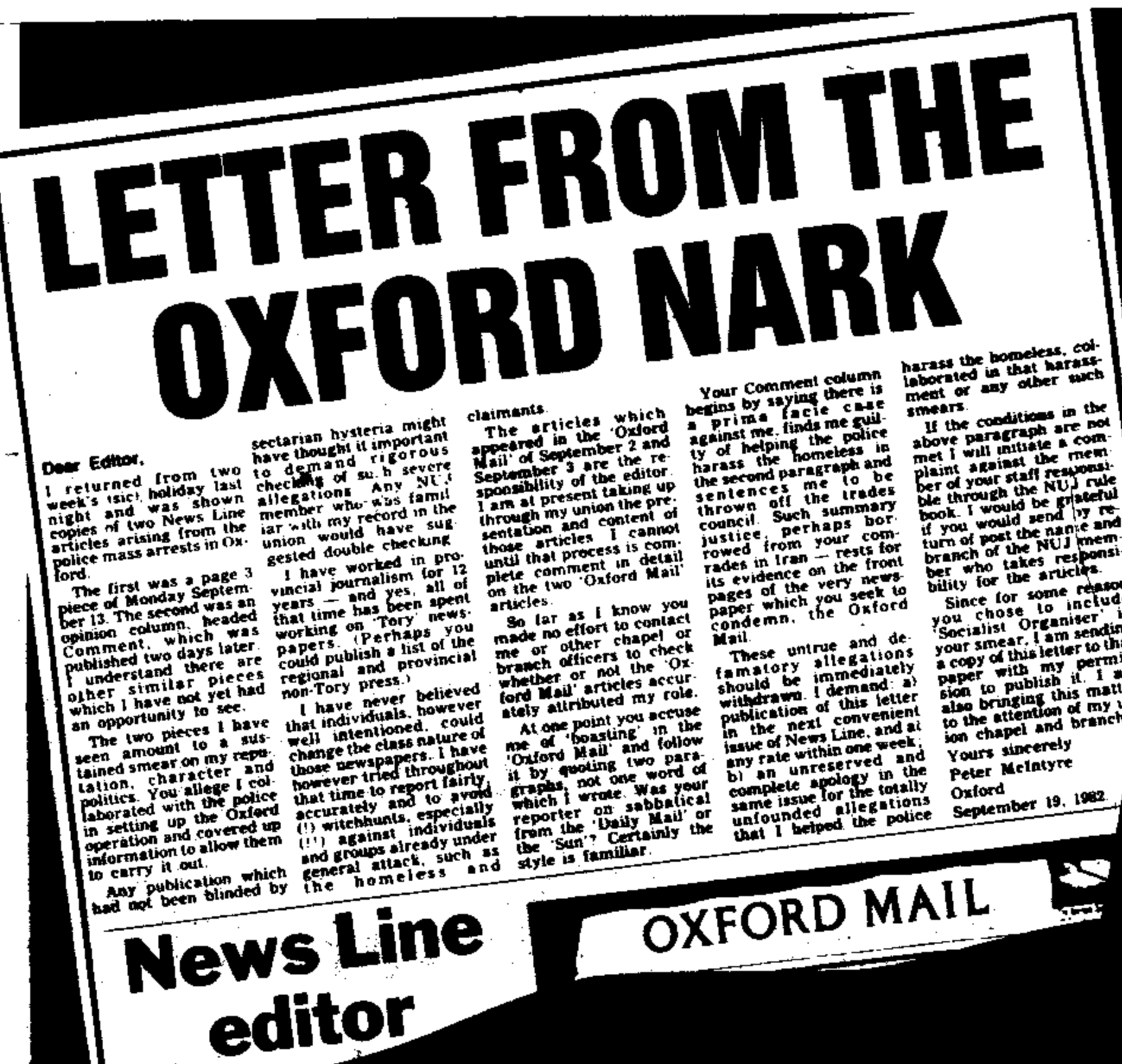
The issue was discussed at a meeting on the eve of the Day of Action when the chapel came out on 24 hour strike 100 per cent. These people are not police spies and neither am I. The problems we as journalists face in gaining any real control over what is published - sometimes in our name - is immense.

Smear

But it is a problem which I live with day in day out. It is not one which reporters on Newsline face.

They presumably have been in full control of their actions as they set out to smear my name. Once my NUJ complaint is laid I will not make further public comment on their articles until the NEC arrives at its verdict.

I look forward to hearing their defence.



Right of reply, Newsline style

'We don't want lawyers - we want trade unionists'

'MANAGEMENT are exchanging notes: other managements are watching what happens. They know all they've got to do now is to start sending disciplinary letters, suspend a shop steward without a hearing.

Then when we start complaining and say 'go through the procedures', they sack him, refuse to negotiate, deny there is a dispute.

We wait 2 weeks, we wait 3 weeks, and a trickle back to work starts to become a flood. When there are less outside than inside, then they suddenly close the door, and sack the lot outside.

The we're begging to go back in, and they're saying that they will take some but not all.

They only have to take ten per cent off, that's the leadership, and they have broken the union, at least for the next three or four years...

The unions don't see the significance of this madness. It is a precedent which should shake every trade unionist in the country.'

No, this is not a retired trade unionist talking about some dimly-remembered dispute from long ago, but Alroy de Silva, the shop steward whom management at Air India sacked for putting a notice up on a board, talking about a dispute that is going on now.

This is not a straightforward dispute about reinstating a shop steward, or even about getting management to abide by written agreements on consultation about new rosters.

The Air India T&G branch is one of the strongest - if not the strongest - union branches at Heathrow. If it can be broken, this will give a free hand to other airlines, and other employers.

Expense

It will show them that it is possible to solve their financial problems at the expense of the workers. The breaking of the Air India union branch would also show other workers that even the full force of the T&G will not defend workers in the face of an attack from a small employer.

Alroy de Silva explains what the workers think about the role of the T&G, and what they hope it will now do to support them.

'The T&G has shown that it is toothless in the face of an attack from a

tin pot airline. The workers are beginning to feel they might as well leave the T&G and join a Darby and Joan Club.

The T&G complains that it is hamstrung because most of the members have returned to work. If you're all out, you'll win. If you're not, you won't.

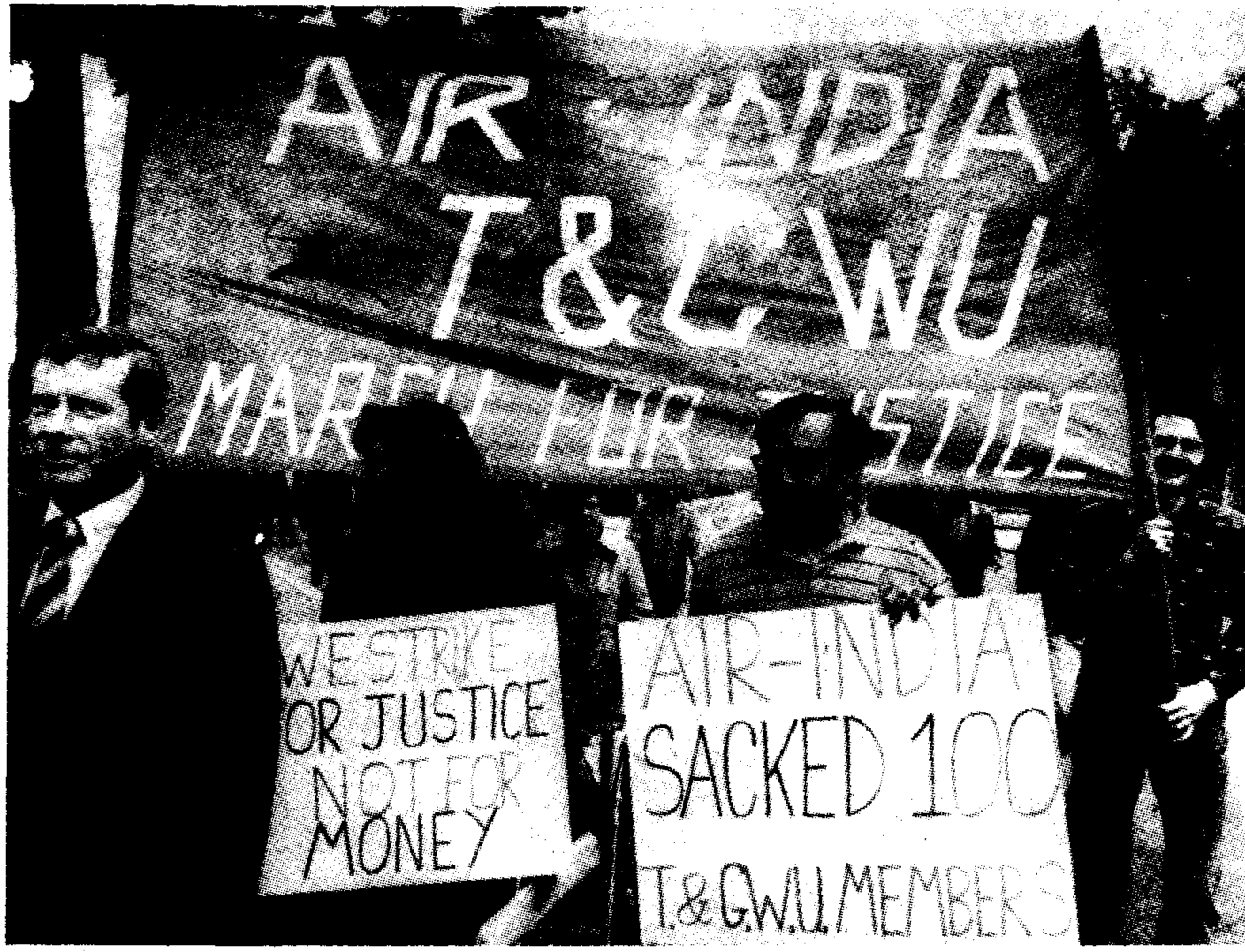
What's the point in being in a union affiliated to the TUC then? Of course it would help if all our members were still out, but why belong to anyone if that's the criterion?

They harp on about the apathy of the trade union movement, but it's up to them to give a lead.

We hear pious statements about going to jail from the trade union leaders. Well, we think that if Moss Evans went to jail, he'd be sitting in a gilded cage, and all the wardens who passed his window would genuflect as they went by.

They say it's not the right time to strike. So are we saying it's open season for management?

We're a band of willing fighters, so what are you going to do? Are you going



Air India strikers complain that the TGWU under the leadership of Moss Evans (right) 'has shown that it is toothless'

to throw us on the woodpile and burn us, and hope that some phoenix arises out of the ashes? Or are you going to help us fight, to encourage other people to start fighting?

The dispute could so easily be won if a small amount of solidarity action was given by other workers. The CPSA could stop renewing ID passes to Air India employees and stop issuing passes to trucks delivering to Air India. The AFS (Aircraft Fuelling Services) workers could have an enormous effect, if they refused to refuel Air India aircraft.

The airport firemen have an agreement which binds them to taking action against the whole airport or not at all: they cannot act against one airline alone. Yet a threat from the firemen to take blanket action would pressurise the British Airports Authority in its turn to put pressure on Air India to settle the dispute.

And the firemen are T&G members! The strikers feel that this

kind of action could be brought about if Moss Evans declared his support for them in public, and even came down to Heathrow to talk to other workers.

'We'd love to see Moss Evans making public statements, calling for a public debate - we can arrange it.'

The Indian government hates bad publicity. They want to appear as an emergent nation. They're sending two men into space in a Russian rocket, they've got their own nuclear bombs, and they don't want to show that industrially they're back to Dickensian times.

Gandhi says that Indians in Britain should organise themselves into strong unions to take on racism and management here. A statement from Moss Evans would make her pressurise the managers.'

But the Air India workers aren't just sitting back waiting for action from their union leadership. They've been busy organising support for them-

selves in this country and on an international scale.

They have had financial support from ASLEF branches (particularly King's Cross), NUR branches, local Trades Councils and many Labour Party branches from all parts of the country.

Solidarity action has also been sought - and given - from fellow workers in India. Alroy explains:

'Here we are, in the T&G, the strongest union in the world, and we have to get an Indian Guild of workers to act to get their London colleagues out of a problem.

Striking is illegal in India, it only needs the rubber stamp of a magistrate on a form, declaring something an essential service, and they could all be sent to jail.

But the Indian Games are starting on October 4. That's a real showpiece for the Indian government. People are coming from all over Asia. They've built a massive swimming pool in Delhi at vast expense - it won't be used once the Games are over, it's just to promote their image.

Air India is the official carrier for the Games, so workers there are beginning a work to rule and disruptive measures on October 4. They're linking it in with their fight for reinstatement of three of their Calcutta comrades.

If we keep going long enough, Gandhi will act.'

While this solidarity action is organised, the sacked Air India workers at Heathrow continue to mount the picket line. They are watched from inside the offices by members who have returned to work; some moderates who shrink from such determined action, but also many workers who have been starved into going back.

Those who have returned to work are facing very severe conditions. Management are implementing new rosters, cancelling shifts, cutting overtime. This restricted workforce is now having to cope with two flights being re-transferred from Gatwick back to Heathrow, and also two new flights to Canada being started. This means an incredible speed up for the workers.



The Air India T&G branch has always been involved in other workers' struggles. They attended the Peoples' March for Jobs rally, the NHS Day of Action on September 22, and the picket outside the courts as Sean Geraghty was being tried.

Mala Dhondy, branch secretary, is worried that the trade union movement is being fragmented, by wage, sex and race differentials:

'I'm not saying the movement will die, because it never dies, but I feel it'll set it back a long way if we're allowed to lose this dispute.'

We are a strong, united branch; we have industrial, clerical and administrative staff all in the same branch. The management were trying to take us on; if we lose, the others haven't a chance.

If the T&G can't win this fight with this feudal management, how can it go back to the workers and claim to be a union? It will add to the cynicism of black workers: you can belong to the T&G, but ultimately you rely on your own strength, as always.

Grunwick

Grunwick established clearly that you can hope for the sympathy and moral support of the trade union movement, but not the active and practical support.

So while you had thousands on the picket line at Grunwick's, the electricity and water still flowed, and the post was delivered, because the Union leaders were worried about losing money on a court injunction.

We won't go on hunger strike outside the TUC, or anywhere, but we'll have established that the trade union movement in this country won't respond to the needs of immigrant workers, and must rethink.

If the aviation industry, which is high up in the hierarchy of immigrant labour, we, a strong organised branch, which came together through struggle, if we have to fight alone, what about the women who are cleaning Heathrow? How divorced are they from the trade union movement?

We need active support - an end to lip service.

We don't want bloody legal advisors - we want trade unionists. Their forefathers won trade union rights in the street, not behind desks. They're all worried about secondary picketing, and whether it's legal. Who the hell cares?'

LAST Saturday the Air India offices at New Bond Street were broken into, and a computer and telephone installation were damaged. Management are publicly claiming there was £100,000 worth of damage, yet both installations were obsolete and shortly to be replaced - they weren't even insured.

The police have charged one of the strikers with the offence. Although there is no evidence to link the action with any of the other strikers, individually or collectively, management suggested to the police that the picket in front of the Bond Street offices should be removed.

This suggestion has not been pursued through legal channels by either the police or management.

Since the incident, Alroy de Silva has been receiving phone calls, and finding on answering the phone that there's no one there.

More alarmingly, there has been trouble at the picket line. With lack of funds to assist strikers in travelling to the picket line, there have only been three pickets on duty. Last Tuesday, three men entered the Air India building, and went up to the fifth floor. They came out again, and hung around the area.

Just after two of the pickets had gone to make a phone call, the three men approached the picket line (of one) and tore up a placard. When the picket shouted at them to stop, they attacked him, threw him against the railings, and then tore all the placards up.

This attempt to intimidate the picket line hasn't worked, but had the opposite effect. Workers are now making sure that there are 10 or 15 pickets on the line.

However, help is needed. The picket is mounted daily, outside the offices of Air India on New Bond Street, between 8 am and 6-7 pm.

IMPORT CONTROLS - BY ANY OTHER NAME!

LAST Friday, 24th, the TGWU announced plans to impose import controls by direct action.

General secretary Moss Evans said that dock and road transport workers would be called on to block the General Motors (GM) 'S' car. The aim was to save jobs in the British car industry.

Astra

This blocking is planned to start next March. The 'S' car is already under production in Spain, GM has no plans to assemble it in Britain - the TGWU threat is designed to persuade it to locate some production in this country.

At the same time, TGWU stewards at GM (Vauxhall) Ellesmere Port are calling for immediate blacking of the Astra.

Astras are made in Britain, but also imported from

Germany. Three months ago Vauxhall managing director John Fleming promised that imports would be reduced to zero (from 55% of those sold) by October, and Ellesmere Port production would be increased to 40 per hour.

He has reneged on this. Still 33% of Astras are imported, and Ellesmere Port stewards are calling for imports to be blacked in defence of jobs.

Import controls are nothing new in TGWU policy. But the call for direct action is. The usual method of pushing import controls is joint talks with the bosses and appeals to the government in the 'national interest'.

So one of the usual socialist criticisms of import controls - that they mean unity with the bosses instead of working class action - is disarmed.

Problems, however, remain with both Evans' policy and the Ellesmere Port stewards.

In the first place, if successful, they would hit directly at Spanish workers' and German workers' jobs.

This is no socialist answer, any more than boycotting cars from the Vauxhall factory at Luton would be an answer to a threat to jobs at Ellesmere Port, or vice versa.

Surely what the TGWU should be proposing is links with the Spanish and German GM unions to work out a joint alternative workers' plan to safeguard jobs in every country - instead of leaving workers of different countries in a competitive scramble to grab jobs.

When?

There's a more immediate problem, too. Will the policies ever be implemented?

Vauxhall bosses are talking to the TGWU about the proposed ban on the 'S' car, and told the Financial Times that they are 'confident that

the issue could be resolved amicably long before the first S cars arrive in the UK next March.'

It's easy to see how Evans could hail some promise for a few 'S' cars to be built in Britain (in return for TGWU concessions to GM?) as a great victory.

Sabre-rattling

And as for the Astra blacking - can the Ellesmere Port stewards really expect dockers and road transport workers to put their jobs at risk by action to stop imports, while Vauxhall workers themselves are doing nothing?

Vauxhall jobs can only be protected by Vauxhall workers' action. Once they take that action, blacking of imports will of course be a vital part of the battle - and can be explained as such to dockers and to German and Spanish GM workers.

As of now, it is sabre-rattling.

Black workers in struggle S&K workers out again

ON THE same day as the nationwide strike in support of the health workers, Asian workers at the Sandhar and Kang cash and carry warehouse went on strike in Coventry. They are demanding the unconditional withdrawal of redundancy notices and the recognition of their union, the TGWU.

The struggle really began in May, when the 30 Birmingham S&K workers struck against appalling wages and working conditions, and against the victimisation of union militants. When pickets were sent from Birmingham it inspired confidence among the Coventry S&K workers, who began to organise a union for themselves.

Victimised

Two Coventry workers were then given redundancy notices, the management claiming that declining business made the sackings necessary. However, the real reason was the bosses' intention to victimise those active in the union.

Union members immediately decided to resist. After negotiations between the shop steward, Manjit Singh, the local TGWU official, Dennis Adler, and the S&K management had failed to gain any of the workers' demands, the union members decided to come out on strike.

As the strike has continued and as the picket has be-

come more effective, other workers at S&K have gradually joined the initial six strikers. Of those still at work, many have union sympathies but are still afraid to come out. The bosses are trying to get them to sign no-strike agreements.

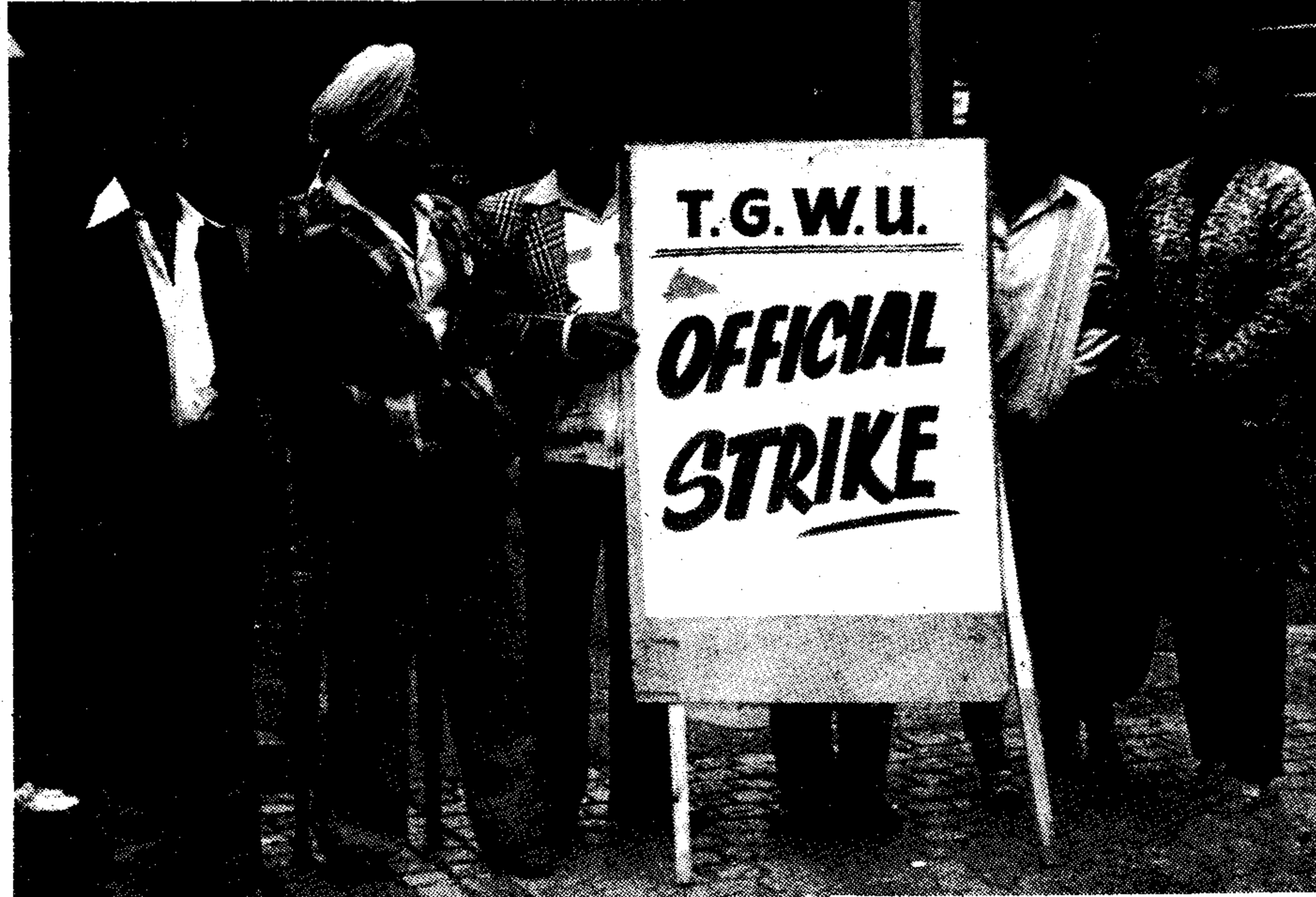
Bureaucrats

However, all along the S&K workers have not only come up against the bosses, but the local T&G bureaucrats as well.

The Birmingham S&K strike four months ago was undermined by the denial of strike pay, even though the militancy of the workers had forced the TGWU to make the strike official. Consequently, when union recognition was gained, the recommendation of TGWU district official John Partridge for a return to work was accepted, without the reinstatement of two union activists.

Also, when two Coventry S&K workers were victimised for union activity in May, local T&G official Dennis Adler did nothing to help them, simply saying that the management had every right to sack them.

The Coventry workers refused to accept Adler's compromise scheme of arranging with the management to delay the redundancies for a further six weeks. They had already seen the S&K management break the pay agreements



S&K pickets during the last strike

made in June to end the Birmingham strike.

Adler refused to support the workers' decision to strike, and subsequent discussions about official backing have failed to achieve anything.

The management have been able to cite the official's views as justification for a sackings. The officials have refused to endorse the action on the spurious grounds that not everyone at S&K is in the union.

This refusal to make the strike official has delayed solidarity strike action from the Birmingham S&K work-

ers, and so undermined the dispute. Most seriously, when the bosses started legal action with a High Court injunction against the strikers, the officials, with more than a hint of racism, showed either indifference or hostility to those who sought advice.

The strikers, faced with possible imprisonment, decided to call off their picket for a day on Monday 27th while the case was heard, and to go to the Coventry T&G offices to pressurise the officials for official backing for their strike demands and for legal defence and costs.

The appalling conditions and pay - £1.40 an hour - the redundancies and the denial of union recognition, have aroused the anger of local militants, who are raising the issue in the labour movement.

Against the background of the Tebbit Bill, it is essential that the legal actions against the S&K strike are resisted by all workers and that the picketing continues, to force union recognition and the withdrawal of the redundancies.

Messages/money to: S&K Strike Committee, 88 King George's Ave, Coventry.

Defend Afia Begum

Afia Begum, whose case was reported in last week's Socialist Organiser, is still under threat of deportation.

The tragic death of her husband in a house fire having removed her right to come to Britain with their young child, Afia was allowed a visitor's passport to attend the funeral. Now the campaign to reverse the Home Office's intention to deport her back to Bangla Desh, to isolation from her family, is gathering momentum.

The campaign, initiated

by Tower Hamlets Labour Party Women's Section has now been given support from fifteen Labour councillors in Tower Hamlets borough, including the Deputy Mayor.

As we go to press, the Bangla Desh Welfare Association has called a public meeting to co-ordinate local support.

Your help is still needed! Please contact Sue Carlyle, 36 Bradmore House, Jamaica Street, London (tel: 01-790 4937) for details of petitions, resolutions, etc.

Heathfields battle on for union

ASIAN workers at Heathfields, Slough, have been in dispute since July.

After a go-slow in pursuit of wage demands, 21 workers, members of the GMWU, were sacked on July 15. On July 26, all the other GMWU members in the factory were called out in support. They have now been sacked, too.

The (Asian) union mem-

bers have been replaced by (white) agency labour.

The GMWU are calling for blacking of Heathfields, assistance on the picket line, and contributions.

Messages/money to: Heathfield Dispute Committee, c/o GMWU, 105 Greenford Ave., Hanwell, London W7. Details of mass pickets from 01-567 8462.

Aftermath of swoop on Oxford claimants

Landlords appointed as paymasters!

THE landlord at the centre of the Oxford attack on claimants has appeared in court at last - but not in the dock.

Jeremiah Cronin, the 50-year old owner of four Ifley Road houses which are packed with up to 75 homeless men a night, appeared as chief prosecution witness for Thames Valley police.

After two days in the witness box, his public credibility and that of the police who called him, was in tatters. The first four cases in which he gave evidence all ended in acquittal.

Cronin was supposed to prove that claimants had not been staying at his bed and breakfast lodgings. Under sharp cross-examination his

testimony collapsed like a pack of cards.

His guest house register often referred to, was never produced in court, and eventually he admitted that it would not show who was staying at the house.

His receipt system was a sham and he admitted that he could not say who had stayed and who had paid.

Asked by one defence lawyer to say how many people exactly stayed on any one night, Cronin was lost and a long and stunning silence developed in court.

He revealed that he had never been asked either by Oxford City Council or by the fire service, to give accommodation figures.

Two more cases have now been withdrawn by the prosecution, rather than watch Cronin take another hammering in court.

The landlord even had his expenses claim for £18 thrown out by one court. Questioned in another court case how he had lost earnings by coming to court he said "I couldn't rightly say". The prosecutor leapt to his defence, explaining that the police had filled in the form on his behalf.

Witnessed

That was not all the police were filling in if the New Statesman is right. The Claimants Defence Campaign obtained a copy of a form in which Cronin gave evidence against claimants. The form, already filled in, was signed as having been witnessed by a Detective Constable. The only snag in this system was that Cronin himself hadn't signed it.

An embarrassed Chief Constable, Peter Imbert, announced an enquiry into this curious form of clairvoyant witnessing.

The police have operated their usual variation of Catch 22 over complaints. Where no-one has laid a complaint,

the police refuse to comment upon allegations. Where a complaint has been lodged, the police then refuse to comment until it has passed through the labyrinthian corridors of their internal white-wash procedure.

Cleared

If the cloud of sub judice hangs over such allegations, it has obviously vanished from over the heads of Cronin and the other major landlord whose properties were involved, Patel.

Not only has the prosecutor cleared Cronin in a statement from any involvement in criminal acts, but the DHSS have announced that in future they will be sending bed and breakfast money to the two landlords for them to distribute to the claimants.

Meanwhile, John Minshall, the head of fraud investigation at the Oxford DHSS office, said his office had suspected fraud for about a year, but had done nothing to stop it.

Explosive

This has led to the potentially most explosive defence - one which so far has been rejected by the courts. One defence lawyer claimed that the prosecution should fail because counter clerks who paid over the money knew they were part of a set-up.

He produced a case law to show that for a deception charge to stick, the person

paying the money must have been led to do so because they believed the truth of the statement made to them.

Since counter clerks in this case had already been told they were part of a mass arrest system and that the majority of claims were false, it followed that the reasons for handing over the money were not because they believed the claim.

It was one of those nice legal points that leave most people scratching their heads but had the police sweating. If it worked in one case it would work in them all.

But they need have had no fears about their bench of worthies. A couple of long delays by the magistrates and another defendant bit the dust for 30 days.

Meanwhile on Monday,

Contact the Claimants Defence Committee 'B' Block 44b Princes St., Oxford.

DHSS staff at Marston Road finally had enough of conditions they were facing as a result of job cuts. After hearing that a claim for 25 more staff had been rewarded with two extra people instead, they walked out, and planned further disruptive meetings.

Socialist Organiser Alliance

Get Organised!

Socialist Organiser is not just a paper. We fight to organise workers in the struggle for a new leadership in the labour movement.

If you agree with what we have to say, you can help. Become a supporter of the Socialist Organiser Alliance - groups are established in most large towns.

To 'Get Organised' in the fight, or for more information, write at once to us at 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Name

Address

MOBILISING COMMITTEE IN DEFENCE OF TRADE UNION RIGHTS

Organise against the Tebbit Bill with the new broadsheet from the Mobilising Committee for Trade Union Rights. 10p plus post from MCDTUR, 28 Middle Lane, London N8

BEIRUT:

Socialist Organiser

THE BLOODY REALITY OF ZIONISM

by Harry Sloan



Begin

THE barefaced lies of Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon, denying their complicity in the hideous Beirut massacre, have been submerged in an avalanche of evidence of their guilt.

With crowds of up to 400,000 on the streets of Tel Aviv demanding his resignation, Begin has been forced to concede an inquiry into the bloody events at the Sabra-Chatila camps.

There is no doubt what an honest inquiry could reveal. We know now for certain from the British press not only that the Israelis armed, equipped and transported the squads of fascist killers to the camps, but that they fired flares throughout the night to provide light for the murderers and gave them food rations to speed their work along.

We know that Israeli soldiers watched the

slaughter from observation posts through night vision telescopes, and reported back to Israel on the scale of the killings by 11pm on the Thursday night - though nothing was done to stop them until Saturday. We know that the Israeli forces decided not to send a liaison officer with their fascist friends because they were told 'irregular conduct' would take place inside the camps.

We know that the squad

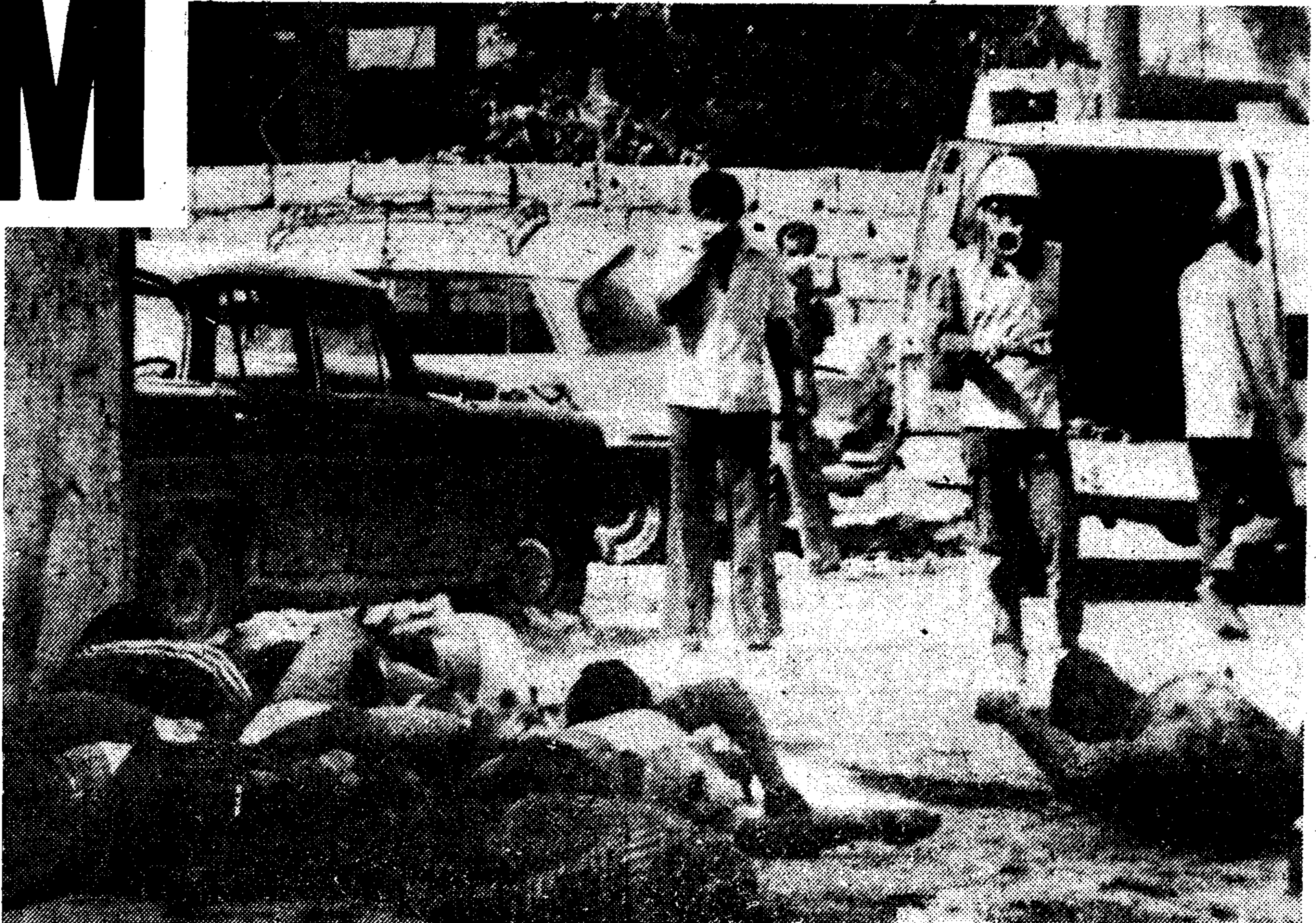
that was sent in comprised forces from the Phalangist militia run by the murdered President Bashir Gemayel, together with some from the Israeli-financed Southern militia of Major Saad Haddad. We know that the Phalangist leader was Elias 'Eli' Habaika, one of the right hand men of the so-called 'peace-maker' Gemayel.

Small

We know that at least one Phalangist officer has admitted going in with orders to shoot every male over the age of 12, and arguing in self-justification that:

"You must kill Palestinians while they're still small."

And we know that even after the full horror of the massacre perpetrated by these fascist 'friends of Israel' was known, the Begin government has lied, stonewalled and tried every possible means to deny responsibility and block an investigation.



"You must kill Palestinians while they're still small"

Begin himself of course is no stranger to cold blooded killing. It was his Irgun terrorists who slaughtered 243 sleeping Palestinian men, women and

children in the notorious Deir Yassin massacre of 1948. Sharon, too, led a similar raid on the village of Qibya, killing 75 unarmed civilians.

These early slaughters formed the base of terror upon which the Zionist state of Israel has rested since its foundation: they have since been multiplied many times by the institutional terror of the Israeli military machine.

Only through sheer intimidation of the oppressed peoples of the Middle East can the Zionist state, built through the physical dispossession of the Palestinian people from their homeland, maintain its existence as the guardian of imperialist interests in the Middle East.

Israeli Labour leader Shimon Peres may shed crocodile tears for the dead of Sabra and Chatila, but the same Labour Party also shares a squalid record of intimidation, repression and slaughter of the Palestinian people.

The barbarism of Begin's invasion of Lebanon - 17,000 killed, 30,000 maimed, countless people driven from their homes - is no accidental feature of Zionism. And Israel's chief military sponsors, the USA, realise this.

Side

That is why Reagan's government has stood side by side with Begin in the onslaught on Lebanon, and it is why even now, with the massacre having disrupted Reagan's own "peace plan" for the Middle East and prompted international outrage at Begin and Israel, no steps have been taken to cut the flow of US arms supplies or cash aid.

Perhaps surprisingly Begin's rickety coalition, with its wafer-thin majority in the Knesset, is still standing. Plainly concern for their own prospects in a general election moulds the thinking of government ministers more than any professed concern over the massacre.

But it is far from certain that under the stresses and strains of popular revulsion at the Beirut slaughter Begin and Sharon will successfully resist the demands for their removal.

withdrawal of the 'peace-keeping' forces, he is in effect calling for a long-term imperialist presence in Lebanon.

In this, Arafat, like the leaders of the Lebanese left who have sought a peaceful coexistence with Bashir and now Amin Gemayel, is in practice drawing from the defeats and setbacks the conclusion that the struggle against Zionism is hopeless, and that the best that can be hoped for is wheeling and dealing with the imperialists

THE TGWU Executive has called on fellow TUC unions to join in a boycott of all Israeli ships and aircraft until such time as troops are removed from Lebanon.

This important step should be welcomed and taken up in every trade union and Labour Party. But urgency should be added to the call by implementing action at once by TGWU members in docks and airports.

Boycott the Israeli war machine!

Meanwhile in Beirut, the so-called "peace-keeping" force sent in by Italy, France and the USA takes up the positions vacated by the Israeli troops in West Beirut. They are notionally protecting the now disarmed and defenceless Palestinians and Muslim left wingers from the Phalangists, but in fact obstructing any moves by these communities to organise their own armed defence against a ruthless and heavily armed enemy.

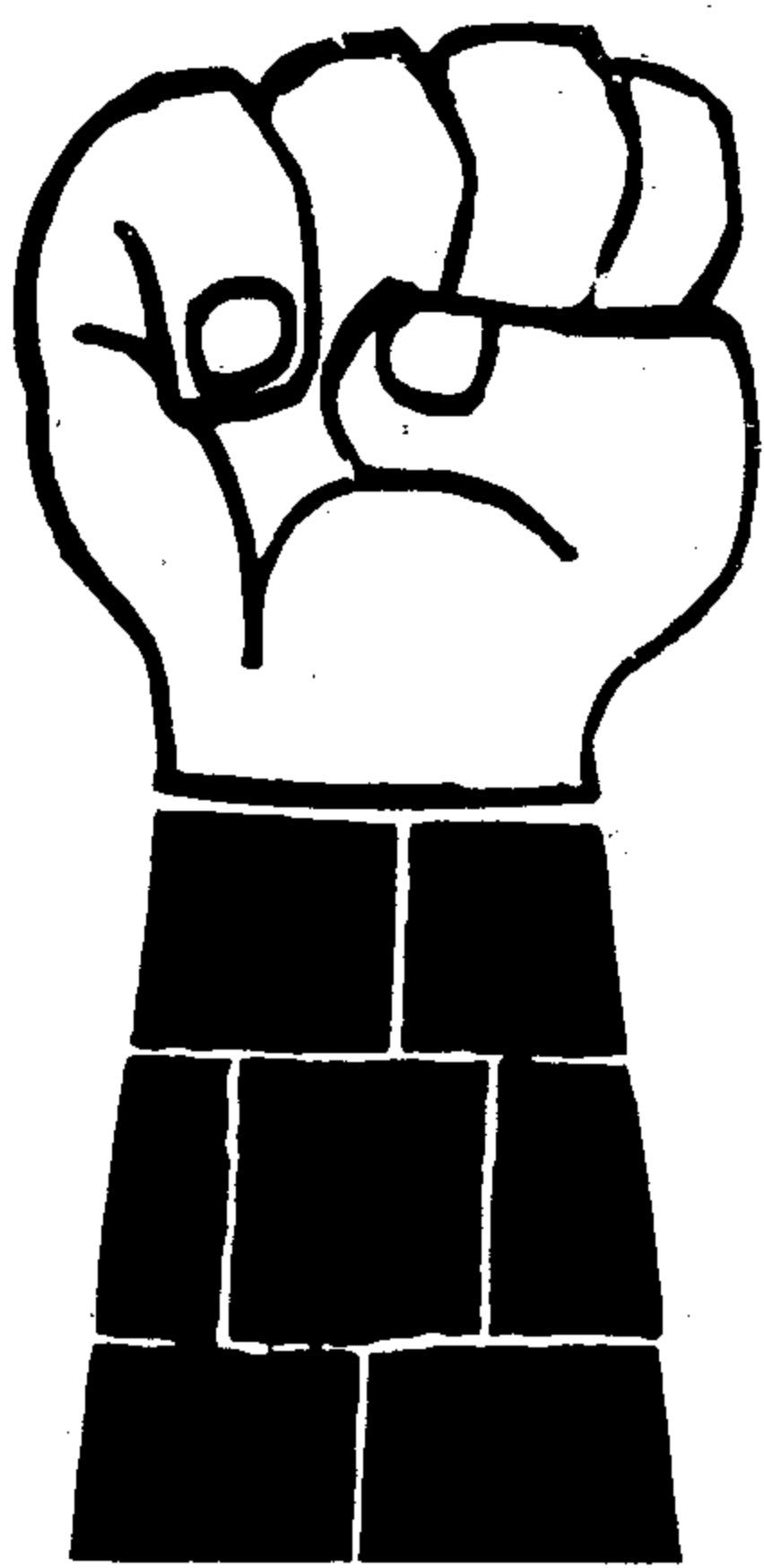
Yet significantly, PLO leader Arafat, far from exposing the fraud of this "peace keeping" mission, has blamed neither the Phalangists nor the Zionists but the USA, France and Italy for the massacre. By condemning the 'premature'

and their right wing proteges.

But for the downtrodden and dispossessed people of Palestine and Lebanon such a policy opens up real dangers of further suffering, further massacres.

The answer lies not in supplicating appeals to the imperialist leaders of Europe or the USA. Nor does it lie in the reactionary Arab rulers - but in the struggle to mobilise the Arab working masses against those rulers and in the struggle, alongside the best elements of the Jewish working class, for the destruction of the oppressive and exclusive Zionist state and the establishment of a Socialist United States of the Middle East.

£6000 fund



At last the fund has started to pick up! We were just about to draw lots to see whose body should be sold for vivisection, when in came £159.40!

We've had £5 from a Leeds supporter, £35 from Sheffield SO group, £10 from Leicester and £85.50 from Brent supporters.

This amount from Brent is a healthy boost to London's target: but London still lags behind, bottom of the league.

We've also had the news that our gallant 'Merseyside Three' have broken all the known rules of medical science and human endurance, and have all completed the 26 miles of the Merseyside Marathon. So if you sponsored them, please do your own feat of utmost human endurance, and send them the cash.

Fund total. £3819.52 63%
*Only £2180.48 to go!

Rush donations to:
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