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Labour
Party

Socialist Organiser

Against all bans and proscriptions!

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REAGAN'S TRAIL OF BLOOD

AS Ronald Reagan flew into Guatemala, US security agents checked the rifles of the Guatemala guard of honour to make sure that they were not loaded.

The imperturbable Reagan could see nothing in Guatemala but sweetness and light. Military dictator Efraim Rios Montt, he said, 'is totally dedicated to democracy in Guatemala... Frankly, I'm inclined to believe that they (the Guatemalan regime) have been given a bum rap.'

Rios Montt, unfortunately, is not yet well enough versed in playing the democrat. 'We have no scorched earth policy,' he said indignantly. 'We have a policy of scorched Communists.'

The Latin America Regional Report of September 24 gives some idea of what this 'policy of scorched Communists' means. 'Massacres of guerrillas and their actual or suspected supporters have increased in number, and have been characterised by clinical savagery...'

'The killing is sometimes selective, with community leaders, such as teachers or church activists, and their families being singled out. In other instances whole villages have been wiped out.'

And Oxfam relief workers report (Oxfam News): 'Even in Central America, where political murders and repression are a fact of life in most countries, Guatemala stands out for the indiscriminate bloodshed and suffering inflicted on its population.'

'Already this year at least 7,500 people have been killed... The Catho-

lic Bishops of Guatemala, a conservative body, earlier this year, estimated that as many as a million people had been displaced by the violence, out of a total population of 7.5 million. 200,000 people have fled the country as refugees.'

Reagan proposes to restore US military aid to this terror regime. And, to be sure, it is difficult to see why Guatemala should be left out while the US pours arms and advisers into El Salvador and Honduras.

Honduras is the military lynchpin of US strategy in Central America. On its government an US official, quoted in Newsweek magazine of Novem-

ber 29, commented:

'Being called a tool of the CIA is not a good way to stay in power in Latin America, especially when the charges are true.'

Honduran troops, right-wing Nicaraguan exiles, and US advisers have recently been conducting joint operations on the border with Nicaragua, aiming to destabilise the revolutionary Sandanista government there.

US television reporters visiting the border area in Honduras have found camps of well-armed, well-equipped Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries who referred to 'the big chief' — US ambassador John D Negroponte — for orders on how to deal with

the reporters.

And in El Salvador the US continues to back the civil war conducted by a regime dominated by Roberto D'Aubuisson, a man described by a former US ambassador there as 'a pathological killer'.

Earlier on his tour, in Brazil, Reagan pressed the military regime there to join the war effort in Central America.

But against the millions in military aid there are millions of people in revolt. In El Salvador the FMLN guerrillas have recently launched their biggest offensive yet. Whatever the complaints of the people of Nicaragua against the Sandinistas' resolve to keep the revolution in capitalist

limits, they are by all evidence determined to resist counter-revolution.

And in Brazil the recent elections registered serious, if as yet minority, support for the new, radical Workers' Party, a party which breaks from traditional populist politics and proclaims independent class struggle for socialism.

Millions of working people in the US, though not yet willing to join that sort of open socialist struggle, are certainly becoming hostile to Reaganomics, the US role in Central America, and the nuclear arms build-up.

No number of bullet-proof vests and security agents will protect Reagan from that.



'YOU MUST BE FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT.'

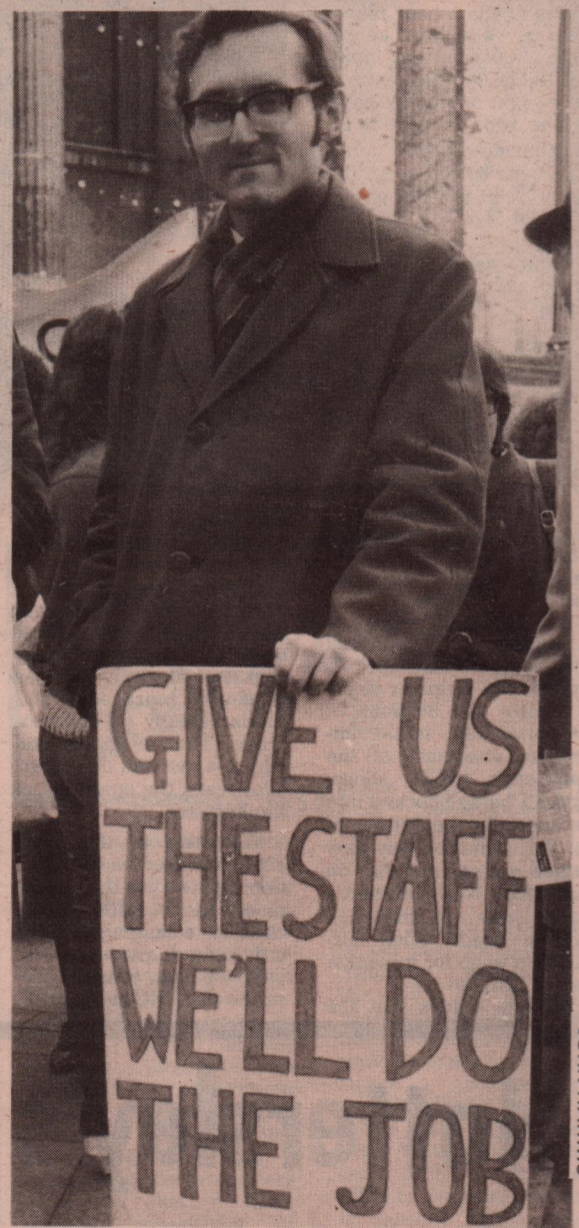
SOLIDARNOSCI

LIVES



The Polish Solidarity Campaign demonstration on the first anniversary of martial law assembles from 1pm this Sunday, 12th, at Speakers' Corner, London, to march to Jubilee Gardens. From 6pm to midnight there will be a vigil outside the Polish embassy.

The demonstration is officially supported by the TUC. Within the Polish Solidarity Campaign Socialist Organiser argued against the PSC's invitation to a Tory MP, Bernard Braine, to speak on this demonstration. We were unsuccessful — but we urge readers to turn out to build the biggest possible labour movement contingent on the march.



JOHN HARRIS

The CPSA section executive has called for a workplace ballot for an all-out DHSS strike on jobs from Jan.17.

LAST Friday's one-day strike, called by the civil service unions CPSA and SCPS, closed well over 400 out of 514 local DHSS offices.

It was in support of demands for more staff to handle the volume of work created by mass unemployment.

The strike was most successful in areas of mass unemployment. In the area round Glasgow, over 90% of members struck. The average turnout for the whole of Scotland, according to Stuart MacLennan, CPSA section executive member for Scotland, was between 85 and 90 per cent.

This turnout reflected the pressure on DHSS staff of the vast numbers of claimants and unemployed trying to survive under this Tory regime.

Between 1979 and 1982, the number of staff has gone down by 1500, and the number of those receiving supplementary allowances has gone up from 1.2 million to 2.2 million.

So staff are overwhelmed, violence against staff and staff turnover increases, and many claimants do not receive correct payments on time — or ever.

Thousands of working class families are appealing against what is paid out to them. In the West Midlands, 4,000 visits in connection with claims have been abandoned, and over 1500 claimants are waiting to have their appeals heard.

DHSS workers in Oxford and Birmingham are on strike for extra staff. Compromises put forward first by the Militant-dominated CPSA section executive, and then by the national executive, have been totally rejected.

Friday's strike was a first step in spreading the dispute. Now the CPSA and SCPS leaderships face the challenge of developing the struggle into an all-out national strike.

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WHY MILITANT ARE WRONG TO USE COURTS

by John O'Mahony

MILITANT'S threat to take the Labour Party to court poses important questions for socialists. Is this threat principled? Is it wise?

That the capitalist courts should not be invited or allowed to interfere in the affairs of the labour movement is, we believe, an important socialist principle. But the issues can perhaps be brought out most clearly by the procedure — logically upside-down though it is — of considering the threat first from a purely practical, tactical point of view.

From this angle it is an irresponsible act of adventurism.

The planned Register is a loose framework which can be worse than the old proscribed list — or become a dead letter. It depends on the struggle in the period ahead. The 'Register' reflects the weakness of the Right and the bureaucrats, as well as the formal strength the block vote gave them over the rank and file at Blackpool.

A determined resistance to expulsions by a united Left could reduce the effects of the Register to nil or almost nil. Sections of the softer Left, in the immediate aftermath of the conference, had shown signs of being shocked into resistance by the attitude of the Right and the way they gained a clear majority on the NEC. Now Militant's legal 'coup' is likely to help the trade union bureaucrats to go for a blanket ban on Militant.

Militant argues that the



Militant's Ted Grant: zig-zag tactics

NEC majority is 'rigged', but this is essentially no more than self-deception. The block vote to stifle the movement for democracy in the Party, deployed against 80-odd per cent of the Party rank and file activists, was of course outrageous and fundamentally undemocratic. That is one reason why it is just and democratic to resist the operation of the Register.

The state of the block vote, however, is a reflection of the state of the unions, and testifies to the need for a campaign in the unions for democracy.

If we can sensibly describe the NEC as 'rigged',

then we must also say that it will remain 'rigged' until we transform the unions, or decisive sections of them. How does going to the courts help that?

It can only blur a number of important issues. Central to the labour movement in the next period will be resistance to what the courts will be trying to do to the unions.

Militant too, of course, will favour such resistance. But its presence course can only create confusion.

The Right can probably get a majority for a blanket ban on Militant at the next conference — especially with the ammunition, in

arguing with the rank and file, of Militant's resort to the courts. So to go to court to counteract the 'rigging' amounts to the incredible position of buying time — and paying for it heavily within a year at latest — or else hoping that somehow the 'rigging' can be undone, that the power of the bureaucratic general secretaries can be broken, within a year.

This is the most senseless ultimatum, which stakes everything on achieving virtual miracles in an impossibly short time. What will Militant do, faced with proscription, when the miracle doesn't

happen to order?

Militant has zig-zagged rather wildly. Faced with the duty to fight the register politically by rousing the Labour Party rank and file to make it unworkable, Militant hedged, and its representatives made declarations that they would go, if not quietly, at least without breaking any furniture — that they would accept expulsions rather than have Constituency Labour Parties closed down by the NEC for defiance.

This could only encourage the Right to maximise the purge and hinder the work of politically fighting the Register and the purge.

At the same time Militant kept itself rather aloof from the broader Left.

Now it threatens to go to court!

Militant's statement on this says that they don't see the courts as a substitute for a political fight. Yet plainly that is what it is. That is how it has developed.

These practical points should illustrate the issues of principle.

Justify

Militant carried an editorial on November 12 justifying its action. Right from the beginning it misstated the issue by asking: "Is it justified for socialists to go to the capitalist courts?"

Only an unusually rigid anarchist would answer no to the question in this form. Militant brings in past incidents as precedent, but they are irrelevant to the case.

Karl Marx wanted to sue a man named Vogt whom he suspected — correctly as it turned out — of being an agent of the French government; Trotsky sued the Hearst press, and so on.

But the principle is not that we do not use the courts. It would be quite

THE RIGHT has a majority on the Labour Party National Executive, but some of the centre are very unhappy with the domination of stone-agers like John Golding.

Labour chair Sam McCluskie of the National Union of Seamen has broken ranks and denounced the NEC majority for going far beyond what Labour Party conference decided. He wants the five members of Militant's editorial board to be expelled, but is outraged by the McCarthyite formula adopted by the November NEC: 'Are you now or have you ever been a Militant supporter?'

McCluskie has proposed a

resolution to the NUS condemning the witch-hunt. "This is a warning shot across the bows of the NEC", he declared, "to say they have gone too far. They have started a witch-hunt".

McCluskie is a Foot supporter. His unease, however, may well be shared by even some of the softer right-wingers from the trade unions on the NEC — if only from fear of what a full-blown witch-hunt will do to Labour's prospects in the coming election.

McCluskie is right: the NEC has no mandate from the last conference for what it is doing.

principled, for example, to sue Rupert Murdoch for libel.

The principle is that we don't bring the courts into the affairs of the labour movement, that we don't set up the judiciary and the legal machinery of the state as arbiter of the affairs of the labour movement.

That would cut across the essential drive for the political, organisational, and ideological independence of that movement from bourgeois society and all its agencies — that is, it would cut across the development and preservation of the ideological, political and organisational prerequisites for the socialist transformation of society.

That is a fundamental principle.

There are cases which seem to be exceptions to it but in fact are not. Leon Trotsky in the late 1930s called on the Mexican police to investigate the leadership of the Mexican Communist Party. He also advocated the use of the courts and police agencies of the USA and France against the agents of the Stalinist secret police, the GPU.

Assassins

Although the GPU nested in the labour movement, it was in substance a gang of assassins functioning as an extension of a force totally alien to the labour movement, the police state apparatus of Stalin. They murdered opponents such as Ignace Reiss in Switzerland, the anarchist Carlo Tresca in the USA, Trotsky's son Leon Sedov in France, and many militants in Spain, such as Erwin Wolf and Andres Nin.

To set the police against them was not to make the capitalist state the arbiter of the labour movement.

Militant could try to square their course of action with socialist principles by saying that the Goldings and the trade union barons are an alien force in the movement, the direct agents of the ruling class.

That's part of the truth, but not enough. They are also of the labour movement, reflecting to a serious extent its present stage of development. They have not been inserted from outside. Their methods are not comparable with the GPU's.

The unions are undemocratic, and the Labour Party constitution that gave the general secretaries the sort of power they wielded at Blackpool is undemocratic too. But who can seriously believe that we can go to the courts and demand a democratic labour movement?

True, the courts in a long-stable bourgeois democracy such as Britain normally dispense a high level of justice and fair and impartial dealing — within the existing laws. But we can see how the courts are now increasingly being used as an instrument of the Tory government and the ruling class to impose their conception of 'democracy' and 'the rights of the individual' in and on the labour movement — such 'democracy' as compulsory postal ballots which help atomise workers and massively increase the power of the ruling-class media to manipulate them, such 'rights' as the right of an individual to disrupt union organisation in a plant...

To appeal to the courts as arbiter against the NEC is wrong in principle. Because in Britain now we have the most brutal ruling class attempt for decades to bring the labour movement tightly under hostile laws and to shackle it to the state, many thoughtful workers will be especially alienated from those who bring in the courts.

The attitude which some on the Left have adopted — if it works, it's justified — is not likely to be the dominant one in that part of the labour movement which should be Militant's natural constituency to go to for support.

And in any case, as we have seen, in any but the shortest term resort to the courts won't work.

It would be indecent and wrong for Socialist Organiser to go on from this to roundly condemn Militant for threatening to go to court. The Right (and for that matter Michael Foot) do not have any moral or political right to condemn Militant.

Responsibility rests with the witch-hunters who have tried to hoist the Militant editorial board on the yard-arm without even a drumhead hearing. Militant is very much the weaker party, and its action is defensive.

That doesn't make its actions right.

Militant has so far only threatened to go to court. It should abandon the idea and decide instead to fight politically and organisationally all the way in every single constituency party against the witch-hunt, the Register, and the purge, organising with the broad CLP left in a united campaign. The threat to rely on the courts is irresponsible adventurism, wrong in terms of socialist principle, and likely to prove disastrous in its practical consequences.

Hattersley's 'anti-racism'

by Abdul Sheir

ON the occasion of the second reading in Parliament of the new Police Bill (Sus revamped and in many respects strengthened), my MP, Roy Hattersley, was waxing indignant again about how this gave police powers which would be "unacceptable in a free society".

He is certainly an expert in blowing up his differences in emphasis from White-

law's approach into a great principled divide, and he did the same over the Nationality Act last year.

Yet a further example of his clever tub-thumping was his much-trumpeted "stand" in favour of positive discrimination for blacks. Quite an anti-racist activist you would think!

Well, hardly. The reality has been slightly different.

A good recent example

of his activity "back home in Sparkbrook" has been his withdrawal of support from the Pino Khan Defence Committee, which was set up to campaign for the dropping of Grievous Bodily Harm and other charges which Pino faces.

Pino is a Pakistani AUEW member (and a constituent of Hattersley's in Sparkbrook), who defended himself when his home was attacked by racists. For this he was arrested and faces trial in the new year.

Hattersley has withdrawn his support for the Committee because the Committee is "not in Pino's best interests" he says. There are numerous sceptics about, however, who believe that perhaps a better judge of this may be Pino himself!

Pino continues to support the Defence Committee and because of this, while it is true that to some extent the Committee has been hijacked by the sectarians of the "Revolutionary Communist Party", the Committee should still be supported.

There is no alternative for those whose aim, in criticising, is to help not hinder Pino.

The reason why the RCP are able, despite their ultra-left politics, to hijack campaigns such as this, is the failure of the left and the broader labour movement.

According to accounts, when Pino and a delegation from the dissident Sparkhill ward of Hattersley's constituency went to see him recently, he stood firm on his position and said that he had done all he could.

In fact, he didn't issue a clear public statement of support for Pino and he certainly hasn't "stirred it" in the press — or in Parliament where all we believers in parliamentary "democracy" think a Shadow Home Secretary could be quite effective.

All good form for a possible future leader of our great party, you think? He'll certainly play an important part in the next Labour government, you reckon?

Ah, you incorrigible old cynic!



4-10-82. The Left has some too little

Hypocrites hound Ken Livingstone

SIXTEEN already dead as we go to press in the latest carnage in the Six Counties, five of them civilians. Over 60 are injured, some hideously. More deaths are expected.

Predictable cries of outrage in the press, which was already baying for Ken Livingstone's blood over the invitation by GLC Labour councillors to two elected representatives of Sinn Fein. They didn't want the Labour GLC to arrange talks with Republicans. Carnage and more carnage is the alternative to 'talking' and finding a just solution to the war in Northern Ireland. But the Derry explosion is the pretext for new howls of outrage that Ken Livingstone and the GLC Left have dared initiate talks with Sinn Fein Assemblymen, dared seek a solution.

The setting off of a bomb in a dancehall crowded with soldiers and civilians can only produce indiscriminate slaughter. Most British workers will react with horror. Understandably, and more honestly and sincerely than the double-dyed hypocrites of the British press.

Yet there is hypocrisy in the labour movement as well as in the press. Take the following contrast. 14 unarmed civilians, half of them children, have died in the last decade from rubber and plastic bullets fired

indiscriminately by British soldiers. From April to August 1981 alone, five people died like this.

The press scarcely reports it. There is no shock and no outcry in the broad labour movement. Just indifference made smug by denunciation of the activities of 'the terrorists'.

We are not hypocrites in Socialist Organiser. We know that the main responsibility for all the deaths in Northern Ireland lies with the British state. Britain created the artificial Six County state with its murderous communal antagonisms. Britain maintains that state. Britain has spent the last dozen years beating down the Northern Ireland Catholics. That is what produces the embitterment of mind and spirit that can set off a bomb in a crowded discotheque. (The bombing has been claimed not by the Provisionals but by people allegedly speaking for the INLA).

The deaths will continue, and can get much worse, unless a democratic solution is found. The only possible solution is some form of federal united Ireland, with as much autonomy for the Protestant minority as is compatible with the rights of the majority of the Irish people as a whole.

Ken Livingstone and the Left on the GLC were right to invite the Sinn Fein Assembly deputies. They will

be right if they refuse to withdraw the invitation under pressure of the hypocrites and of those whose double standards on these matters are a glaring obsecenity in the labour movement.

Greenham Common

This coming weekend, a mass women's demonstration has been called by the Women's Peace Camp at Greenham Common US Air Force base.

The organisers are confident of getting more than the 16,000 women needed to completely encircle the base, where Cruise missiles are due to be installed in 1983.

The Peace Camp women have called for a women only demonstration, and are disturbed by reports that many men intend to come. Socialist Organiser supports the Peace Camp women's call, and urges male readers to go to the Polish solidarity

demonstration the same weekend.

Is the Peace Camp separatist? Is the sort of non-violent direct action it exemplifies diversionary? These are the sort of objections raised on the Left.

Civil disobedience by small groups won't stop the capitalist war machine. But then neither will any action short of trade union boycotts of the war machine and/or organising in the labour movement sufficient to force a new Labour Government to hold to its unilateral nuclear disarmament pledge.

Socialist Organiser argues that the campaign against the Bomb cannot be 'non-political' or 'all-party', but must orient primarily to the labour movement. But to build up to the decisive action, many forms of agitation and protest are useful. The Peace Camp is not necessarily counterposed to mass action or to the work socialists can do in the labour movement. The women are, after all, calling a mass demonstration.

There have been, and will surely continue to be, many mixed nuclear disarmament demonstrations. Women, who have long been relegated to a secondary place in such activities, want also to have their own autonomous demonstrations. Their wish should be respected.

Who needs the Secret Service?

IT makes good sense for Thatcher's stern bunch of 'law and order' devotees and Cold Warriors to feel shaken and angry about the latest epidemic of spy scandals and "security" lapses.

From the Queen's bedroom to the clandestine computer banks of GCHQ in Cheltenham, the most hallowed sanctuaries of bourgeois inviolability have been treated like Liberty Hall.

Hand-picked and seasoned reactionaries have proved to have sexual preferences which fly in the face of Tory social norms.

Prominent and trusted members of the public schools' 'old boy' network have turned out to be sufficiently alienated from the system and the state apparatus to feed information to the Stalinist Kremlin bureaucracy.

Top levels of military intelligence itself appear to have been virtually if not completely run for prolonged periods by agents of the other side. What could be worse for a government hell-bent on policies of cold war, and on witch-hunting the Labour Party as riddled with "entrists" of a much

less spectacular variety?

But while Tory anguish can be understood and enjoyed by opponents of the state forces they seek to preserve, the same can not be said for the position of the Labour leadership.

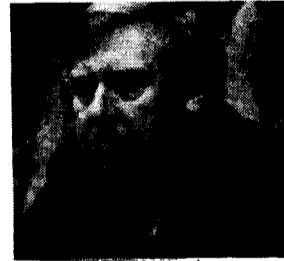
Shadow Home Secretary Roy Hattersley has stepped up pressure for a Parliamentary debate on "security", and called for the secret services to be placed under direct charge of the Home Secretary and monitored by a Parliamentary Select Committee.

Labour MP Robin Cook has applauded the fact that

both right and left wings of the Party are now apparently agreed to support his call for parliamentary supervision of security matters. While the left argue the lack of accountability of the present system, the right argue that the system is "inefficient", and leaves the door open to cover-ups of further "moles".

But who needs a 'security' service anyway? The whole apparatus is opposed to the interests of the labour movement. The "security" it protects is that of the military top brass, with their plans for genocidal nuclear warfare, and the state machine of the capitalist class as a whole, whose crisis-ridden system has brought exploitation and growing misery to the working class in Britain and internationally.

The famous "ABC" Official Secrets Act trial of journalists Crispin Aubrey and Duncan Campbell and ex-soldier John Berry showed beyond doubt that the paraphernalia of surveillance and secrets legislation is not to keep knowledge from "the Russians" (who already know everything worth knowing from other sources) but to keep it from the British public,



Roy Hattersley

The bulk of the Special Branch's vast computerised surveillance network is targeted not at supposed "foreign agents" but at ordinary socialists and labour movement activists. According to a BBC report last week, by 1940 MI5 already had files on 4 1/2 million people. How many are on its files now?

Whether this snooping takes place under nominal cosmetic "Parliamentary control" or continues as at present will not alter this reality.

The demand from the labour movement should be not for tinkering with the secret services to make them more "efficient" in their operations against us, but for scrapping the whole reactionary set-up, and exposing the extent of state spying on trade union and Labour militants.



"I'm sorry, the official statistics say you already have a job..."

Figures of fun?

The unemployed By Harry Sloan

THERE are lies, damned lies, statistics — and lying statistics. The Tory government has succeeded in producing a combination of all four in their latest estimates and explanations of the mass unemployment their policies have created.

Their explanations need not concern us here. But the sheer scale and scope of unemployment is important not only as a tally of the misery created by Thatcher's policies but also as a gauge of the task to be confronted by the labour movement in organising the unemployed and devising policies to create new jobs.

According to Tebbit's latest computerised fiddle, unemployment is some 209,000 less than it would be under the previous system of measurement. The Tories announce that 'only' 3,063,000 are claiming benefit, while the old measure of those registered as unemployed is in fact 3,272,000.

But that is not the only statistical trick involved. The higher figure itself leaves out literally hundreds of thousands — chiefly married women not eligible for unemployment benefit — who are out of work, but not registered as unemployed.

Estimates of the precise numbers involved are extremely hard — and have been made harder by government claims to have 'found' some 800,000 more jobs in the economy than was thought. All of the

related figures have therefore been thrown into doubt. But it is still plain that the figure for people without work and wanting a job is vastly higher than the official unemployment total.

And in this must be included the 400,000 currently 'employed' in cosmetic government schemes designed to hold down the figures of unemployment.

On this basis the leaders point out that a more accurate assessment of unemployment is 4 1/2 million. Meanwhile, unfilled vacancies are static at a ludicrous 114,000.

It is against this background that Peter Shore's ragbag of half-cock reforms and adjustments must be assessed as falling miles short of the necessary socialist policies to create 4 million new jobs.

It seeks exhaustive details of family, previous employment, income, savings and outgoings. Lodgers need to specify where they take each meal of the day. Employed wives or husbands of claimants need to give details of every last item of regular work-related expenditure — meals at work, fares, union dues, etc.

Claimants who fail this 'Mastermind' examination could face prosecution unless they can prove that errors on their forms are mistakes rather than deliberate falsification.

The government claims that the new form will 'save staff' and prove popular with claimants. It should certainly save more money — by deterring still more desperately poor people from claiming benefits to which they are legitimately entitled.



Tebbit: figures-fiddler



SUBSIDISED bomb factories on the rates — that is the programme for London in the '80s put forward by Red Ken Livingstone and his pals.

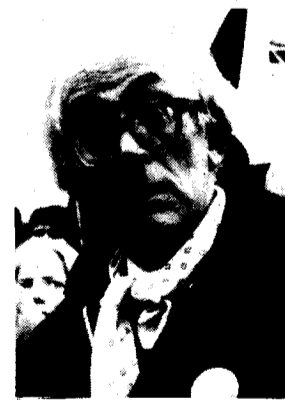
Red Ken and other councillors have ordered a teach-in on terror for a hard core of Labour councillors who plan to bomb, kill and maim their way to the top. On their list for murder and assassination are pensioners, the handicapped, school children and nuns.

This is the only interpretation that can be put on plans by the Labour GLC to hold a meeting with Sinn Fein men behind the IRA bombing campaign.

Furious Tory MPs called today for the arrest of the GLC Labour group. "These men will be even more dangerous if they are allowed to talk to Ken Livingstone", said Mr Eldon Griffiths, adviser to another para-military group — the Metropolitan Police.

Their invitation earned an official rebuke from Mr Michael Foot, leader of the Labour Party, reading a prepared text from Mrs Thatcher's personal office.

He said, "The Labour Party has stood resolute against change through violence throughout its history, and we will remain resolutely opposed to change of any sort while I am leader".



Foot: resolute

Mr Foot went personally to Downing Street to apologise to the Prime Minister. He emerged after a ticking off to remind reporters that it was a Labour Northern Ireland Secretary who had visited a dying Bobby Sands to tell him they were glad he was dying. It was also a Labour Home Secretary who had ordered troops into Ireland in the first place.

"We don't need a lecture in terror from Mrs Thatcher" he said.

Mr Livingstone's claim to be talking to elected representatives of the nationalist population in the North was rejected by Mr Foot and his Tory back-bench colleagues. "We have heard enough nonsense about demo-

cracy from Mr Livingstone. It is exactly this sort of attitude that made him think he could enact election pledges in London.

"These people are even more dangerous when they are elected. If Militant candidates can be expelled for winning elections, why should we listen to Sinn Fein?"

The Home Secretary announced a new plan to beat the Sinn Fein visit. Danny Morrison and Gerry Adams are to be visited by marriage guidance officers tomorrow to be questioned.

If the two men cannot produce love letters, anniversary cards, and witnesses to show they have been happily married for at least two years to women unconnected with Sinn Fein, the Home Secretary will deport them to the New Commonwealth.

This concession is unlikely to satisfy the backbenchers, or Mr Foot, who are demanding that the whole of the GLC Labour Group, as well as Sinn Fein members, be deported from the EEC.

This subject will be top of the list at the next round of GATT talks. Western ministers will demand that Japan take them as part of a new deal for the import of Japanese robots to replace all elected Labour members of the GLC and Parliament.

JOHN HARRIS

JOHN HARRIS

International News International News International News

Why we invited Gerry Adams

Islington Labour parties have joined with GLC councillors in the invitation. Alan Clinton explains why.

FOR many years now the Labour Party in Islington has campaigned against the war being carried out by British troops in Northern Ireland. All three Labour Parties in Islington have passed resolutions calling for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We have also repeatedly opposed the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the use of plastic bullets. It is entirely in line with this that we have been involved along with a GLC member Steve Bundred in inviting elected Sinn Fein representatives to London to speak on their policies. We will be holding a meeting in Islington Town Hall on the evening of Tuesday December 14 to allow their views to be expressed and explained. The invitation to Gerry Adams and Danny Morrison has caused a great deal of frothing at the mouth by the jackals of the capitalist press and the Tories. They have been joined by some leaders of the Labour Party whose connivance in 13 years of war in Ireland is a scandal to the working class movement. The hypocrisy of all these attacks on the visit is

plain to anyone who cares to think about it. They condemn Sinn Fein for 'supporting violence'. Yet when Sinn Fein members put forward their views by standing for election, speaking at meetings and so forth, they refuse even to listen to their arguments.

Where is the much-vaunted commitment to democratic debate and Parliamentary rule? When the republicans look to other means than violence, Foot still attacks those who advocate listening to them.

The fact is that the issue in Northern Ireland is not 'violence' or 'terrorism'. It is the fact that a section of the Irish population has been entrapped in a gerrymandered state for over fifty years.

Any decent socialist worthy of the name in this country has always opposed British involvement in Ireland. In this period British soldiers are used to prop up the illegitimate statelet in North East Ireland.

It is our duty to do what we can to end the war and our part in organising the visit is at one with our efforts to oppose British rule and to support a solution acceptable to the Irish people as a whole.



SLUMP HITS SOUTH AFRICAN WORKERS

by Harry Sloan

EVEN the supposed El Dorado of South Africa is feeling the pinch in the world-wide recession.

One aspect of the economic squeeze now gripping the South African capitalist class hit British headlines recently when they sought and — with British and American support, obtained — a \$1 billion loan from the IMF.

The slump in demand for South African goods and the fall in gold prices had served to plunge the economy into a deficit.

But within South Africa itself the situation facing big business is far from healthy. Bankruptcies (now 200 per month) and impending bankruptcies are running at four times the level of this time last year. Production cutbacks and redundancies are biting in the motor, textile, mining and steel industries.

Though unemployment amongst black workers is officially claimed to be only 406,000, two recent unofficial estimates by researchers at the University of Witwatersrand dismiss this as ridiculous and suggest the real figure is between 2.5 and 3.3 million (24%-32% of the workforce).

The impact of such unemployment is particularly heavy in the industrial centres, producing a knock-on effect in local businesses, additionally hit by high interest rates.

Meanwhile inflation is estimated at 13.5%, and according to the Vice President of the SA Reserve Bank, the government is not hopeful of bringing it down below 10%.

WORKERS



Some 24 to 32 per cent of workers are unemployed

The result is a further attack on the already depressed living standard of the black working class.

Figures from Professor Jeremy Keenan of the University of Witwatersrand show that black workers' wages did not rise in real terms between 1978 and 1980: in 1981 any gains were offset by the rise in unemployment. And now in the recession of 1982, 'employers are using the recession as a means of flushing out trade unionists' and stepping up the fight for speed-up on the shop floor.

Yet even under these conditions and the harsh repression of the apartheid

state, the black trade union movement continues to grow and to wage militant struggles.

The main non-racial union confederations are FOSATU (now claiming over 100,000 members) and SAAWU (claiming 94,000); the Black Allied Workers Union claims 51,000 members and the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA) over 50,000; and there are some 100 other independent unions.

And, in the teeth of the recession in the motor industry, even the Metal and Allied Workers Union (FOSATU) has doubled its membership in one district despite the lay-off and loss

of 2,500 members in the past year.

Strikes — against victimisation, against lay-offs, and for wage increases — continue almost right across the trade union field — from hospital workers to road builders, textile workers and carworkers, who have just concluded a 5-month pay dispute in the Eastern Cape.

Under such conditions, tensions have built up

within the black unions. A report in October's 'Sowetan' reveals that:

'The South African Chemical Workers' Union, an affiliate of CUSA, has called on two executive members to resign because they are 'toothless' and for strongly believing in the industrial council system.

'At the union's general meeting at the weekend, speaker after speaker said the executive had not done anything for the workers and in fact worked "hand in hand" with management.'

Even in the conditions of struggle in South Africa then, there are problems of an emerging bureaucracy within the unions, counterposed to the rank and file.

The task there, as in Britain, is to construct a revolutionary leadership capable of offering a class struggle programme to trade unionists.

The defeat of apartheid must mean the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism in South Africa: and the key instrument for that is the black working class supported by the international workers' movement.

IN BRIEF

USA

IN the USA a mammoth leap in unemployment last month has brought the total to 10.8% of the workforce.

A further 440,000 workers joined the dole queues in November alone in further evidence that Thatcher's policies can be as devastating in the USA as they are in Britain. 12 million US workers are now without jobs.

The 'miracle' economy of West Germany too has plunged deep into the doldrums, with unemployment rising to 2,038,000, some 8.4% of the workforce.

Belgium

A SECOND general strike within one week has hit the Belgian right wing government of Prime Minister Wilfried Martens.

200,000 local and provincial government employees stopped work on Monday, following up stoppages last week by other sectors, demanding a programme of work sharing in place of redundancies and lay-offs.

Mid-East

THE RIGHT wing government of President Gemayel in Lebanon is still earnestly canvassing for more 'peace-keeping' troops to be sent from the USA and pro-imperialist regimes.

South Korea may send 1,600 men to swell the numbers, while US officials are now estimating that up to four or five times the present 3,400 may be needed to bolster the Phalangist dominated Lebanese army.



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S M T W T F S

WHAT'S ON

HULL Socialist Organiser supporters' meetings, every Wednesday. Details from SO sellers.

BROAD Left for Railway Workers National Rally: Saturday December 11, noon to 5pm, at Hampden Community Centre, 150 Ossulton St, London NW1. Contact: Broad Left, 2 Binstead Gardens, Sheffield 6.

NOTTINGHAM Socialist Organiser meets every Friday 7.30pm at the International

Community Centre, 61B Mansfield Rd.

SOUTH EAST London Socialist Organiser meeting: Bob Sutcliffe on 'Spain after the elections'. Thursday December 16, 8pm, at the Lee Centre, Aslibe Road, off Lee High Road.

LABOUR Committee on Ireland, South-West London branch. 'Ireland, the war that Britain can't win' — public meeting with Richard Balfé MEP. Thursday December 16, 8pm at Starr House, 57 Church Road, Richmond, London WC2.

LABOUR Committee on Ireland: Annual General Meeting 1983 will be on March 26. Resolutions to be in by February 27. There will be an extended meeting of the LCI National Council on January 22.

STANFORDS map shop strikers' Benefit. Tuesday December 21, 7.30, Seven Dials Club, Shelton Street, London SC2.

PALESTINE day school organised by the Birmingham Solidarity Campaign with the Palestinian people, including presentations by Moshe Machover on Zionism and George Galloway on solidarity work in Britain. Saturday December 11, 11am to 5pm,

Room 1, Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham. Contact: Heather or Mick on 021-771 7001. Adm. £1, 50p unwaged

NO PASS Laws conference. Sunday December 12, 10am, County Hall, London SE1. Details: 146 Kentish Town Road, London NW5.

TROOPS Out Movement conference — 'Resisting the British state'. Saturday December 11, from 10am at Caxton House, St John's Way, London N19. Contact: Troops Out Movement, PO Box 353, London NW5 4NH.

EDINBURGH Latin American Solidarity: public meeting 'Stop US intervention in Central America'. Tuesday December 14, 7.30, Trades Council. Speaker from FDR-FMLN, film, and discussion.

OXFORD Claimants' Defence Committee invites you to continuous showings of the 'Oxfraud Incident' on video. 11am, noon, and 1pm on Saturday December 11 at East Oxford Community Centre.

GERRY Adams and Danny Morrison speak at a North Islington Labour Party public meeting: Tuesday December 14, 7.30pm at the Town Hall, Upper St. Other speakers: Steve Bundred, Sally Gilbert, Alan Clinton, Valerie Veness. Chair: Jeremy Corbyn.

BAN PLASTIC BULLETS: a Labour movement delegate conference. Saturday February 26, from 11am at UMIST, Barnes Wallis Building, Sackville St, Manchester 1. Sponsors include Labour Committee on Ireland. To sponsor, send delegates (fee £3), or to order leaflets (£6 per 100), contact: Plastic Bullets Conference, Box 15, 164-6 Hanging Ditch, Manchester M3 4BN.

Trotskyist International Liaison Committee (TILC) t-shirts. Hammer and Sickle around map of the world with the initials TILC overprinted. Cost £3.00 plus 50p postage from WSL, PO Box 135, London N1.

FROM WAR in the Third World to World War 3? Dayschool, Saturday December 11, 11am, at Hargrave Hat, Hargrave Road, London N19, sponsored by CND, EISSOC, CAAT.

SPARTACIST Truth Kit — a 68-page analysis by John Lister, published by the Workers' Socialist League. £1 plus 25p postage from WSL, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

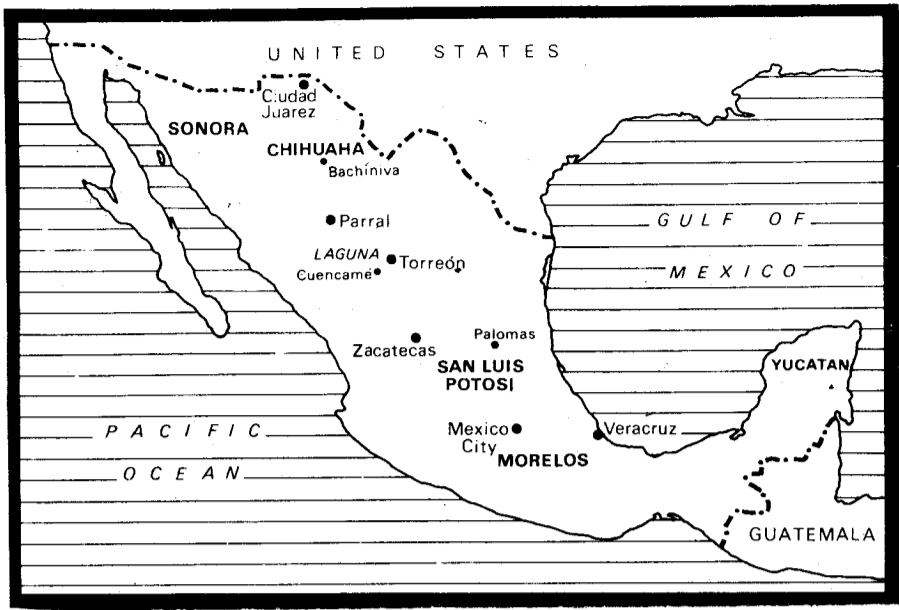
MIDDLE East Solidarity night: Strathclyde University Students Union, John St, Glasgow, Monday December 13, 7.30. Speakers, slide show, discussion: jointly organised by International Solidarity Front for defence of Democratic Rights in Iran, General Union of Palestinian Students, and Turkey Solidarity Campaign.

HULL Labour Movement Polish Solidarity Campaign demonstration, Saturday December 11, assemble 11am, Victoria Pier.

LONDON Workers' Socialist League educationals on basic Marxism. Next one: 'The roots of women's oppression'. Friday December 10, 7.30pm. For details of venue write to WSL, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

CLASS FIGHTER Steering Committee: Saturday December 11, 12 noon, Keski-dee Centre, Gifford St, London N1. Details phone (01-) 609 3071.

International News International News International News



General strike hits Argentine junta

by Martin Thomas

INDUSTRY and services throughout Argentina were stopped on December 6 by a one day general strike. The strongly-supported strike highlighted the crisis of the decaying military regime, under which strikes are still supposedly illegal. Its demands included wage rises and restoration of trade union rights. Originally called by the formerly pro-regime CGT-Azopardo union federation,

the strike was swelled by support from the more independent CGT-Brasil and other groups. The conditions that provoked it — the dramatic decline of real wages and jobs in the last year or so — are shown by the recent estimate that some 30,000 abandoned children are now living on the streets of Buenos Aires. The junta has tried to damp down the opposition by bringing forward the date for which it promises

elections, from spring 1984 to late 1983. But the pillars of the regime are crumbling. Last weekend, the Financial Times reports, 'A military parade near Buenos Aires in commemoration of the Argentine fallen during the Falklands war, and attended by some of the country's top generals, was disrupted when hundreds of conscripts shouted anti-government slogans and staged an unprecedented sit-in...'

strike, and Buenos Aires police have threatened similar action for a wage rise. In late November, middle class suburbs of Buenos Aires took to the streets in protest against ruinous tax increases.

The bourgeois opposition parties have rejected proposals from the junta for a social pact, and have scheduled a joint mass rally on December 16.

For the regime to be discredited by its defeat in the South Atlantic is, of course, one thing; for the Argentine working class to be able to take advantage of that discredit is another. But one hopeful sign, if only a negative one, is that despite the rise of discontent the traditional populist parties, the Radicals and the Peronists, are reported to be having trouble with recruitment.

The demonstration... reached a climax when the conscripts booed and insulted General Juan Carlos Trimarco, the head of the country's key First Army Corps, forcing one senior officer to draw his pistol and to threaten some of the protestors'.

Last week police in Cordoba staged a sit-in

Mexico: the revolution from above

In the second article of his series, Bas Hardy traces the path from revolution from below to the 'revolution from above' in the '30s

IN socialist history 1917 is associated with the triumph of the working class revolution in Russia. It was also the year of the constitution which enshrined the social and democratic gains of the Mexican peasant revolt.

Today, the Soviet Bureaucracy 'celebrates' the 65th anniversary of October 1917, although the conservative Kremlin oligarchy have drowned the socialism of Lenin and Trotsky in blood. The state bureaucracy in Mexico have a similar record of repression against their revolutionary movement.

During the Mexican revolution one million people lost their lives to secure democratic rights and land reform. The Liberal President Francisco

Madero was one of the first to be assassinated, as he tried to play off the interests of the poor peasantry against the old landowners, church and regular army.

His death began a new phase in the Mexican revolution. The right wing forces, led by General Victoriano Huerta, set out to exterminate the popular rebellion. This campaign was tantamount to orchestrated genocide against the Indian population.

Within a year, however, Huerta was defeated by the revolutionary generals with their superior mobile forces and guerilla tactics. Huerta was forced to flee the country and Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata entered Mexico city at the head of a vast revolutionary army in Decem-

ber 1917. Although the majority of the revolutionary masses in both Russia and Mexico in 1917 were peasants, one major difference between the two countries lay in the role of the industrial working class.

In Russia the small working class was highly concentrated and organised into a socialist political party. Its presence meant that the Russian middle class would not drastically break with the old order. The power of the working class in Russia transformed the democratic half-revolution of February 1917 into the Socialist October.

In Mexico, however, the working class was not concentrated into vast factories but instead organised into small workplaces. It also lacked a strong socialist leadership, and came under the sway of the middle class politicians.

In 1915 General Obregon managed to establish 'Red Battalions' of workers to fight against the revolutionary peasants. By granting labour reforms he was able to get the trade union leaders to recruit for him — though left-wingers, such as the Electricians' Union, remained in opposition.

The Mexican capitalists had less to fear from the workers and were in a better position to live up to their claims as 'revolutionary democrats'.

The triumphal procession of Villa and Zapata into Mexico City was the high point of the popular revolution in Mexico. From that time on the peasant armies essentially revealed their political weakness.

The leaders had support in the local states and could not build a national organisation. Their followers began to drift back to the land once victory celebrations were over. The mass peasant armies disintegrated.

There is a colourful story that Zapata once held a Winchester rifle to President Carranza's head and said 'Change this law or else.' But the day to day running of the state was left to middle class politicians

who built up a national professional army to crush the local movements.

This was done through a combination of the stick and carrot. Land was redistributed to the villages, neutralising the peasants and Zapata was tricked into an ambush and shot in 1919.

Villa was given an amnesty by the central government following his invasion of the United States. Although he hung up his guns he was shot as he drove through the streets of a northern town in 1923.

From the twenties onward the revolution was controlled by the state, first of all through an army successively remodelled to eliminate the power within it of the old hierarchy (Mexican presidents — Obregon, Calles and Cardenas were Generals), and later by the civilian Party the PRI (Party of the Institutionalised Revolution).

Limited but very important revolutionary changes continued. The state was anti-clerical (see Graham Greene's 'The Power and the Glory') and sought to break up the power of the church. President Obregon was shot by a religious fanatic but this did not stop the secular state from being very firmly established.

President Lazaro Cardenas was the last of the

Mexican Presidents who sought genuine mass involvement in revolutionary change. He massively extended the land reform; he nationalised the Mexican oil industry; and he built up workers' militias to defend the country against possible military attack from Britain in reprisal for the expropriation on BP's Mexican holdings.

This was a real advance for the Mexican people in an area of the world where phony 'anti-imperialism' was common coin for the nationalist demagogues of last week's coup.

Yet even this mobilisation was orchestrated by the state. It was similar to the way Vargas and Peron used the politically and socially immature working class to build up nationalist state capitalism in Brazil and Argentina.

After the Second World War, when the USA became the dominant imperialist power in Latin America, all of these new capitalist regimes moved into a position of accommodation. In Mexico this did not involve a change in the political system.

The Mexican state has had remarkable stability over the last 60 years. That stability appears now to be breaking down under the twin pressures of international finance and popular discontent.



Revolutionary peasant leaders like Pancho Villa were unable to combat the middle class politicians

BRAZIL'S US 'QUIDS PRO QUO'

IN return for help with Brazil's crushing debt crisis, the US is demanding political-military cooperation.

After President Reagan's visit, US Secretary of State George Shultz announced that the two governments would be establishing a series of joint working groups, including a military working group.

According to the Financial Times, 'He said restoration of the two countries' joint military commission, ended in 1977, was also possible'. US training for Brazilian soldiers, and deals for Brazil to manufacture US military equipment under licence, are likely.

Guardian correspondent Bernardo Kucinski reported that the US was also pressing for Brazil to join the US military effort in Central America, but the Brazilian government was reluctant. Soon after the military coup of 1964, Brazil sent a contingent to

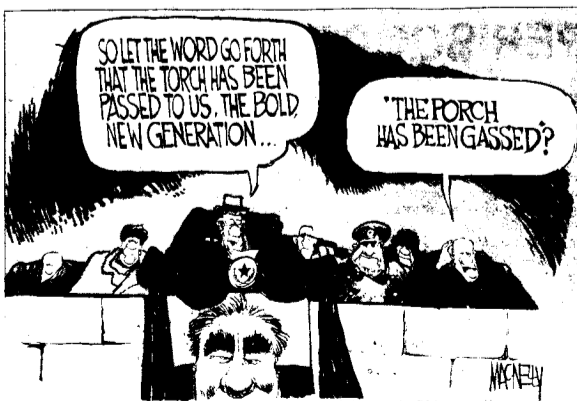
help the US intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965, but over the 1970s the Brazilian military moved to a more nationalist line.

Brazil faces a daunting economic crisis. The government's plan to deal with the huge foreign debt, announced on October 25, involves cutting imports overall by 17%, and imports of the state sector by one third.

With industrial output in 1981 already 5% down on 1980, these further cut-backs mean collapse for whole sections of Brazilian industry.

Brazil has secured a \$1.23 billion short-term loan from the US, and is negotiating with the IMF. Terms for a deal with the IMF are likely to include the scrapping of Brazil's system of six-monthly wage increases in line with a cost of living index — and this at a time when inflation is at about 95 per cent per year.

Brezhnev's 'last words'



The winner of a copy of Trotsky's 'Revolution Betrayed' in our 'Brezhnev's Last Words' competition was Geoff Lumley of Paddington: "You don't mean I'll spend eternity listening to Mikhail Suslov?"

Advertiser ent

NEW!

The Socialist Workers' Party of the USA, an old-established Trotskyist group, has recently and suddenly announced that Trotsky's theory of 'permanent revolution' was wrong after all. This new pamphlet — 40p plus postage from PO Box 135, London N1 0DD — looks at the arguments

Trotskyism or Castroism?

An analysis of the political evolution of the American SWP

Trotskyist International Liaison Committee

MODEL RESOLUTIONS

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy has suggested two model resolutions on women's rights for the forthcoming Labour Regional Conferences.

On Labour women's representation: "This conference deplores the consistent under-representation of women at all levels of society, and in particular in Parliament, where less than 5% of Labour MPs are women, although women constitute more than 50% of the population.

Conference therefore calls on the National Executive Committee to submit to the 1983 Annual Conference an amendment to the rules of Constituency Labour Parties which would make it mandatory for every Constituency Labour Party to include at least one woman on the shortlist for the selection of its prospective Parliamentary candidate, providing a woman or women have been nominated by a branch or have applied to the Constituency Labour Party seeking such nomination".

On Labour women's conference: "Conference supports proposals for positive action to end the second class status of women within the Labour Party, and in particular the demands agreed by the 1982 Labour Women's Conference for: 1. the right of the Labour Women's Conference to submit five resolutions to the Annual Party Conference, so that the Party's organised women can have a voice in major Conference debates.

2. the election of the Women's Division of the Party's National Executive Committee by women themselves at the Labour Women's Conference, thereby giving women the same right as every other section of the Party to elect their own National Executive Committee Division.

Conference accordingly calls on the Labour Party's National Executive Committee to formally constitute the Annual Conference of

Labour Women with the same right to elect its own executive as that enjoyed by all other Labour Party sectional conferences. Conference considers that such steps are essential to enable women to play their rightful part within the Labour Party, and calls on the Labour Party's National Executive Committee to give a lead by putting forward these proposals to the 1983 conference".



Labour women's conference has moved left - but the gains are fragile

CLPD women call for block vote

by Ann Pettifor

AT its Annual General Meeting held last Saturday at County Hall, in London, the Women's Action Committee of CLPD reaffirmed its major objectives - to strengthen the women's organisation and increase the representation of women at all levels of party life.

However, in setting its campaigning priorities for the coming year WAC determined on a strategy designed to win the confidence of trade unionists

who at this year's Annual Conference overwhelmingly rejected WAC-sponsored proposals to give women a greater say in party policy and decision-making.

The meeting, attended by delegates from every Labour Party region bar Scotland and Wales kicked off with a report of WAC's successes in regional elections to the new National Labour Women's Committee.

Five new members of the committee were elected on manifestoes committed to WAC's demands. They are: Brenda Wilkinson (Southern Region), Dawn Primarolo (South West), Liz Mercer (Eastern Region), Madeline Long and Lynette Savings (London South and North respectively).



Gwyneth Dunwoody used the block vote to steamroller feminist demands at Labour's annual conference

In the debate on strategy and priorities for the coming year a resolution from the Islington South Women's Section proved the most controversial.

Controversial

It called on the AGM to reaffirm one of its major commitments - the election of the Women's Section of the NEC by the National Conference of Labour Women - but in doing so to campaign simultaneously for the introduction of the trade union block vote, based firmly on female membership, to that Conference.

The resolution had been amended by the WAC Committee to add the stipulation that each trade union delegation to Women's Conference should be elected and mandated by a Women's Conference of that union.

In speeches supporting the resolution, delegates argued that the powerlessness of the Women's Conference lay in its failure to formally extend and develop its links with women in trade unions.

Opposed

The resolution was vigorously opposed by delegates who expressed the fear that WAC was handing power to the right wing machine that already effectively controls the Annual Conference. The men that manipulated this right-wing machine, they argued, through the operation of the block-vote, were only too anxious to take control of the women's conference and to stifle its increasing militancy in demanding rights for women.

After a long debate the resolution was carried overwhelmingly. This paved the way for the acceptance of a motion calling on

Fighting on to win control

Gerry Byrne reports

THE second Women's Fightback conference for women in the Labour Party, which took place on November 28-29, was a much smaller affair than the one two years ago, reflecting both a certain complacency in the organising for it and how far Labour women have moved on.

The first took place in an atmosphere where women, many new to Labour Party structures, were desperate for an aid to organising and were eager to share experiences and learn the ropes.

Those two years have seen the stupendous growth of the women's organisation, the 'takeover' of the women's conference by radical activist women, and a sense of self-sufficiency among women who gained experience in that struggle.

But it's a shame if that leads to a feeling of having outgrown the need for getting together outside the official structures. The women's conference can for the moment boast quite radical policies, but judging from muttered threats at the Newcastle National Conference of Labour Women, those gains could be quite fragile.

At that conference, a division, largely engineered by the platform, opened between women from the Constituency Labour Parties and local Labour women's sections, and the trade union delegates. There was more than a suggestion from the trade union section (many of them not particularly representative of rank and file women trade unionists) of "we'll be back next year -

but with the block vote". So it was no surprise that the best-subscribed workshop was on 'trade unions and the block vote'. Should we be in favour of/campaign for trade unions to have a block vote at Labour women's conference?

It's a question that needs addressing urgently, involving considerations both of principle and tactics.

In principle, I think we should favour votes weighted according to how many women delegates represent - but only if they are truly representative. We don't want a situation like at annual Labour Party conference, where half a dozen general secretaries can decide the outcome in their trade-off meetings in posh hotels.

Tactically the question is complicated. Realistically, we won't win any of the demands to give more power to Labour women's conference without giving a block vote to trade unions. But how to ensure those votes actually represent the views of women in those unions?

We can campaign for block votes to be given only where delegates are elected by and accountable to conferences of women in the respective unions. In practice, however, we are not in a position to impose such conditions. We could only demand them as a propaganda exercise.

But the propaganda exercise would be of some use. If the block vote comes in willy nilly, at least we would have an angle to agitate round, rather than letting the right wing paint us as anti trade union or anti-democratic.

It would also offer a perspective for women in the unions to organise round - demanding women's conferences where they don't exist, demanding their democratisation where they do.

Indeed, one happy by-product of this workshop

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A QUESTION OF SOLIDARITY
Independent Trade Unions In South Africa

90p
Bob Fine
Lawrence Welch

New pamphlet from the Socialist Forum for Southern Africa Solidarity. 90p plus 20p postage. available via Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.

Step up fight against witch-hunt

Martin Thomas reports on the Socialist Organiser delegate meeting

THE main discussion at a well-attended Socialist Organiser delegate meeting in Sheffield last Saturday, 4th, was on the witch-hunt in the Labour Party.

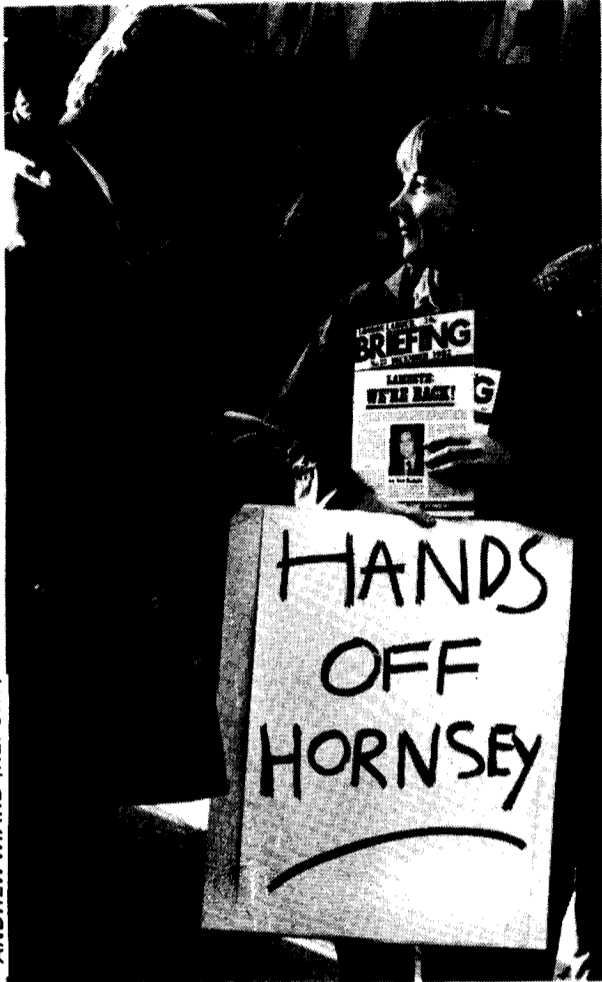
John O'Mahony reported that the shift in the National Executive Committee's tactics caused by Militant's threat of legal action mean that the register is no longer so central — but the witch-hunt could be broader than expected. Every 'member' of Militant, and perhaps also of other left groups in the Labour Party, is at risk.

Socialist Organiser has two tasks: to mobilise the broadest possible left-wing defiance of the witch-hunt, but also to maintain tactical realism. If the bulk of the Left concedes ground — and that's possible — SO has to stand firm on our principles but also avoid rhetorical gestures which, for the sake of some moral satisfaction, would help the right wing to exclude us.

John O'Mahony also reminded delegates that SO originated in an effort to create a distinctive left-wing voice within the Labour campaign at the last general election. With the current moves by Labour's right-wing leaders to ditch left-wing conference policies, a similar effort on a broader scale should be necessary and possible for the next general election.

John Bloxam stressed that a fight to block the register is still possible. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy's decision in its current ballot and its January AGM can be crucial.

SO supporters should help build the 'Labour Against the Witch-hunt' campaign, getting affiliations from Constituency Labour Parties and especially from trade union bodies. SO, said John Bloxam, has argued for united action by LAW and the rival Militant-dominated 'Labour Steering Committee Against the Witch-hunt', but Militant has been uncooperative, even



The Delegate Meeting also discussed reports on the mushrooming of local Briefing groups. The West Midlands, Merseyside, Nottingham, Brighton and Strathclyde have followed the example of London.

trying to get CLPs to disaffiliate from LAW.

Local reports revealed different attitudes by Militant supporters — in some areas cooperative, in others extremely sectarian. Another important political item was police accountability. A resolution calling for SO to campaign for accountability was submitted to our AGM in the summer, but remitted for discussion in the local groups.

That discussion bore fruit in an unanimous vote at the delegate meeting for the resolution moved by Neil James from Nottingham SOA.

The resolution also warned against illusions that accountability could be the means for peacefully transforming the police force from an arm of the capitalist state.

The finance report from Martin Thomas painted a grim picture of mounting debts. The delegate meeting decided to call on supporters to pledge the equivalent of a week's wages to the paper by December 31 — preferably by public fund-raising, failing that by direct personal donation.

A proposal moved by Tom Rigby from Lambeth-Southwark SO of an optional £1 'supporter's price'

for the paper was put out to local groups for discussion. The proposal is based on experience in Spain, where most left papers have three prices — unwaged, regular, and supporters'.

Other items discussed included:

- Proposals for SO to put more energy into building unemployed groups;
- Amendments to the constitution, updating it in line with the development of SO. In future at delegate meetings groups will have a vote for every 5 members or part of 5, rather than just one vote per group;
- The libel actions brought by Vanessa Redgrave of the WRP against SO writers;
- Building the new Labour Movement Campaign on Palestine set up after the Labour Committee on Palestine was hi-jacked by members and collaborators of the WRP; and
- Sales of the Leyland Action Committee pamphlet on the recent victimisation of Cowley shop steward Alan Thornett.



New Leyland Action Committee pamphlet, 10p plus postage from LAC, 194 Dawlish Road, Birmingham 29

From ill treatment to no treatment!

NOT content with insulting the health workers with a disgusting pay offer, Norman Fowler has launched a nasty attack on NHS users.

His new regulations 'NHS Treatment of Overseas Visitors' order hospitals to question the residency-status of patients. Officially this is to catch and charge the tiny number of tourists who supposedly use 'our' health service for free. In reality the regulations are a pincer-movement of creeping privatisation and legalised racism.

The fight against them is going to be hard.

Fowler's final document is called HC(82)15. The real purpose of the legislation becomes clear if you wade through the 29 paragraphs of regulations, the 3 Annexes, the 2 Appendices, and the four full-page flow-diagrams.

Accident and emergency treatment is exempt from charges. VD caught outside the UK used to be chargeable, but as foreign clap is indistinguishable from British clap both are now exempt. Communicable diseases are exempt too — obviously if we British can catch a foreign disease it's worth treating for free.

If you go into hospital you'll be asked if you've lived in the UK for at least nine out of the last 12 months. Even if you haven't you'll still be eligible for free NHS treatment if your spouse or either parent has shown this degree of commitment to our nation.

If you fail this test you will still be eligible if you intend to live here permanently. Again, eligibility can be gained through the loyalty of your spouse or either parent.

Those people answering Questions 1 and 2 in the negative (or those refusing or unable to answer) are then asked the date they, their spouse, or either parent arrived in the UK. 'Enter earliest of these dates in box'. The Stage Two Officer is now called in — at my hospital this is the Medical Records Officer.

Here begin the four flow-diagrams and the 78 paragraphs of exemptions. It is assumed that the patient (still wanting treatment) is not 'ordinarily resident'. We 'ordinary residents' are OK.

Unfortunately, no court has been able to define what 'ordinary residence' is.

The exemptions tell their own tale. If you're here principally for work, the State will make sure you're fit. Healthy bodies mean healthy profits.

Incidentally, overseas students here on sandwich courses with not less than 12 weeks industrial employment are exempt — other students aren't. Your au pair will have to pay... unless she or he has also been recruited as a spy — UK Crown Servants are exempt.

On the totally bizarre front, imagine an overseas visitor who has her baby here and is then discharged while the baby stays in hospital. The baby is still chargeable as an overseas visitor!

Complex

Because of the complex exemption clauses and the already-established reciprocal health agreements the catchment population is minute. So why did anyone go to the ludicrous lengths and expense of preparing these regulations?

It would be interesting to know if hospitals would refuse to help someone who wouldn't answer the questions or who couldn't pay for treatment. I am awaiting an answer from the DHSS on these points.

It is the view of the Manchester Race and Health Group that there is a potential danger in this unprincipled move. Britain is a racist society, and the nationalism in the Tories' policy is a reflection of this.

It is not unthinkable that in some hospitals — whether through pressure of work or some less acceptable motive — only patients suspected of being foreign will be questioned. This means the differential treatment of black and Asian patients.

Already the Manchester Law Centre and Brent Community Health Council have catalogued examples of racism in the NHS.

Further, the bureaucracy set up to isolate and charge patients is ideal for running

a health service funded by private insurance. Remember that Think Tanks only report on what the Prime Minister wants to know.

And, for example, some black families may prefer to take out private health insurance now rather than go through the indignity of having their residency-status questioned.

Very little is being done either locally or nationally to fight the regulations. NALGO is the union representing the clerical staff who will have to ask the questions.

At Oldham and North Manchester Hospitals these eligibility checks have not been implemented, but this seems to be more a hang-over from the pay dispute than an organised campaign. Here in the North West Region NALGO have opposed the regulations, but on the national level 'legal advice' has said that no refusal to implement can be made, and the level of attack is stuck at 'give us more money for the extra work'.

Comrades in NALGO in Manchester are pressing for a positive line at their forthcoming Annual General Meeting. NUPE and my own union ASTMS have opposed the charges, and though we aren't in the front line we can lend support to NALGO's battle.

Also, the Race and Health Group and hospital workers have mounted regular Friday lunchtime pickets of the Royal Infirmary, and we hope that the idea spreads widely. The press have taken an interest, as have anti-racism groups in Oldham, Preston and Sheffield.

Our group has begun monitoring the impact of the regulations, and we would welcome hearing any experiences from users and staff. Please send any information to me at Pathology, St Mary's Hospital, Manchester. Finally, we are launching a six-part course on Racism and the NHS in the New Year.

P.S. Hurry, hurry, while stocks last! Buy 'From Ill Treatment to No Treatment' from the Manchester Law Centre, 593 Stockport Road, Manchester 12. Only £1.50.

GEORGE McLEAN
Manchester Race and Health Group

George Box

It is with great sorrow that we must announce the death of George Box, from renal cancer at the age of 40.

George was a Marxist and revolutionary from the early '60s. For most of those years he was a member of IS/SWP, and more recently of East Nottingham Labour Party, for whom he was a delegate to the Labour Party annual conference in 1982.

His selfless devotion to the class struggle, sardonic humour, and fortitude in the face of personal hardship, were an example to us all. He will be sadly missed.

Nottingham Socialist Organiser supporters

Disputes briefing

The strikers at Stanfords map shop, Covent Garden, have been getting support on their picket line from staff at several London bookshops and from Blackwells in Oxford. Business at the shop is well down on the normal level, but management have taken on extra staff and seem determined not to take back all the strikers. Help on the picket line is still needed, as is finance.

The strikers have organised a second benefit social for December 21 at the Seven Dials Club, Shelton Street, London WC2. Messages/money: strike committee c/o ACTSS, 173 Clapham Rd, London SW9 0QF. Cheques to J A Cook & R P D Hobbs, Stanfords Strike Account.

FUELLERS at Heathrow have voted to take action in

support of the Air India strikers at the airport.

This week they boycotted Air India flights for one day. They plan to increase this week by week to total boycott.

It seems as though catering and cleaning staff will also be taking solidarity action soon.

Messages/money: Air

India TGWU, c/o Transport House, 7-9 South Road, Southall, Middlesex.

TGWU members on strike at the Sandhar and Kang cash and carry in Coventry still need donations and support within the TGWU for their call for the dispute to be made official.

Contact: strike committee, c/o 88 King George Ave, Foleshill, Coventry.

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



ANATOMY A JUGGERNAUT

An industrial giant, a leading profit-maker, a pioneer in chopping jobs and increasing exploitation... Noel Hibbert and John McLroy look at Arnold Weinstock's GEC and how workers are organising against it.

GEC is the largest and wealthiest manufacturing employer in the UK.

The recession's roll call of industrial fatalities has left its financial position virtually unscathed. With over £1 billion in the bank and a £584 million profit for 1981, the company stands as a rock solid bastion of UK capitalism.

Its recent development is a tremendous morale booster for Britain's rulers - and an important lesson for all trade unionists.

Lord Weinstock's empire

reached its present size in the early 1970s, following mergers with AEI and English Electric orchestrated by Harold Wilson's Industrial Reorganisation Corporation.

Its foundation had been the old Metropolitan-Vickers company which owned the 22,000-strong Trafford Park site in Manchester (where Hugh Scanlon sprang to prominence as AEU convenor in the 1940s).

During the 1970s the company implemented 77,000 redundancies in streamlining its operations.

Meanwhile profits continued to rise and are expected to reach record levels in 1982 and 1983.

The response of stockbrokers like Rowe and Pitman has been to enthusiastically recommend shareholders to buy GEC!

Whatever new Chairman Lord Carrington might say, GEC is doing OK. Ironically, it is benefitting from his own incompetence on the Falklands by gobbling up contracts from the new bonanza on defence and telecommunications spending.

A recent report on the company has noted: "... one or two signs of improvement in UK business activity and the export order books continue very strong. The establishment of Factory Automation Systems Technology to coordinate the activities of GEC companies in automated factory systems and robotics is a further indication of the broadening range of activities that will be achieved from GEC's strength."

Weinstock has been extending his tentacles abroad and in the UK whilst at the same time embarking on rationalisation programmes within his 169 subsidiaries.

Schreiber Industries is an example here. Phil Davies, recently sacked convenor of Schreibers in Manchester said: "The relationship of my gaffer, Chaim Schreiber, to Weinstock, is like Uriah Heep's relationship to his boss. Weinstock told Schreiber 'jump through hoops and close plants' and Schreiber clambered through those hoops and we ended up on the dole."

Moreover, GEC is structured into product groups which are supposedly decen-

tralised and autonomous. In reality, Weinstock operates on a "commandist" basis, presiding personally over rationalisation and new investment programmes.

Over the last few years the company has bought a substantial number of firms.

The Tories tell us that high wage demands make companies like GEC unprofitable. This is why they support Arnold Weinstock when he offers peanuts for a wage increase.

The US Congress, however, published last year a 1,200 page report on a price rigging cartel, named the International Electrical Association. This disclosed that leading UK engineering companies had been involved in defrauding Third World governments of up to £250 million a year through overpricing goods by 40%.

GEC have a director on the IEA General Council and are a driving force behind the cartel.

The cartel's activities have incensed the Americans. Reagan is now considering imposing a ban on GEC imports to the USA because of their cartel activ-



ities. GEC management, along with other company bosses, have connived together to

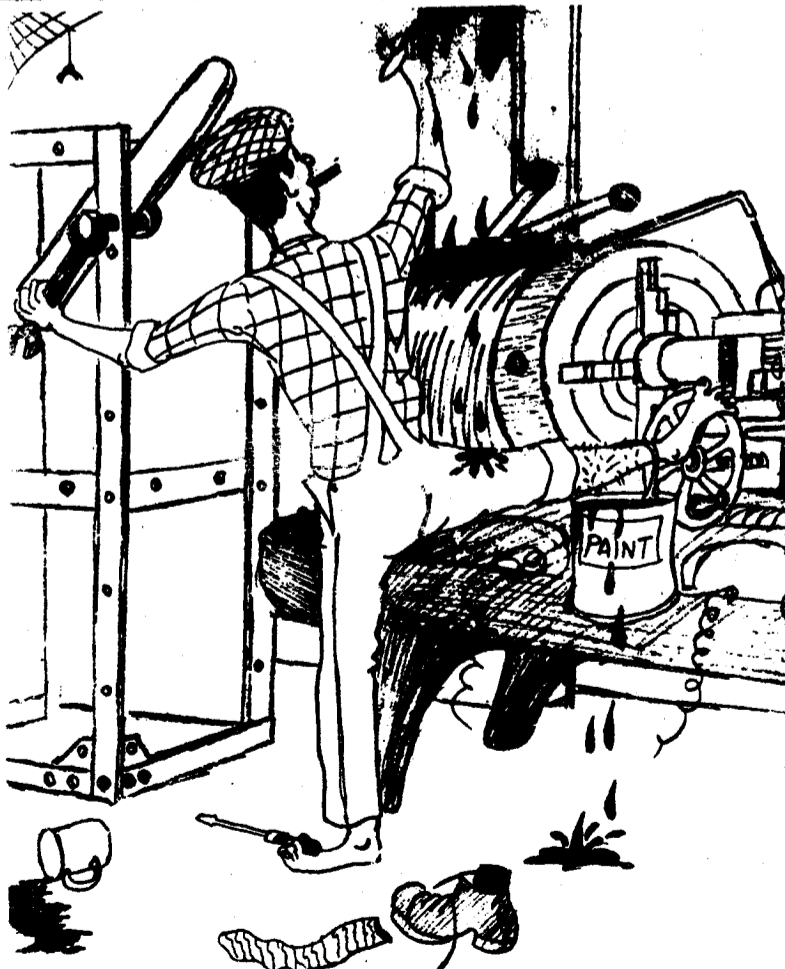


"We try in GEC to steer clear of involvements which have as their object to bring about solidarity, that is to behave in common with others simply to exert pressures..."

"There can be no settlements in Stafford on the basis of across-the-site negotiations... we have enough experience to know that this is not the way to get the most productive and most efficient working."

Arnold Weinstock

Getting rich quick?



"People are like elastic, the more work they have to do the more they stretch" Sir Arnold Weinstock, Financial Times, 27.5.69

GEC management have pursued a policy of "product diversification".

This means that by buying companies in different industries you ensure that if a market collapses in a particular sector, you can marginalise the effect on your operations as a whole.

This has been one factor that has relatively insulated GEC from the cold winds of the recession.

The company has also applied a "get rich quick", short-term profitability strategy and steered away from a long-term investment orientation. Hence, though its present profits are very high, its chances of holding on to its market share over the next fifteen years or so begin to look bleak given the fact that its principal competitors, especially in the engineering and electrical sectors, are pumping huge sums into devising new technology and new product lines for monopolising any future expansion.

Quick

Indeed, this "get rich quick" approach and disdain for long term planning is a characteristic of UK capital as a whole, and reinforced by high interest and exchange rates, will entail that Britain's economic decline will be further accelerated in the 1980s.

A simple comparison of GEC with Japan's largest company, Matsushita, highlights the differences in approach. In 1980 Matsushita (who own Hitachi) employed 12,000 people alone on the Research and Development side of their activities compared to a pathetic 160 for GEC. Similarly, the Japanese spent more money on R&D in the same year than the turnover for GEC's whole electrical engineering division!

Japanese

We are not arguing for the introduction of Japanese management strategy into Britain! Far from it.

We are saying two things. Firstly the historical divorce of Britain's finance institutions from the UK industrial base, and the consequent export of capital on an enormous scale, have set the parameters in which Weinstock and Co. have had to operate.

And secondly that only with a workers' government that took the whole economy into democratic, popular ownership, and that rationally planned investment in new technology, new product lines and the growth of Britain's industry, could this country stand a cat in hell's chance of not dropping down the economic plug hole.

DIVISIONAL PROFITS OF GEC (1981)

	Power Engineering	Industrial	Electronics, Telecoms & Automation
Turnover	£531m	£366m	£1235m.
Profits	£61m	£41.6m	£159.5m

	Profit before tax	Average wage per employee	Retail Price Index
1972	£77m	£1,297	83.6
1981	£475.8m	£4,686	281.0

	Pre-tax Profit	Shareholders Dividends
1976	207.2	2.75p
1977	278.3	3.62p
1978	325.3	4.04p
1979	378.4	6.25p
1980	415.0	8.25p
1981	475.0	10.25p
1982*	575.0	12.50p
1983*	670.0	15.00p

*estimated

Pre-tax Profit in £ million. Dividends in pence per £.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Oct. 1978	51% shareholding in Electric Machinery Industrial Controls Corporation USA.
April 1979	GEC buys AB Dick office equipment manufacturers.
Nov. 1979	GEC buys Averys, a leading manufacturer of weighing and testing machines.
Dec. 1979	GEC buys Hall Automation who make automatic machinery for painting and welding.

WAY OF RINAUT

deliberately underprice their tenders for US contracts — hence undermining the US competitor's position.

The "immutable laws" of free enterprise" obviously do not apply when there is a fast buck to be made.

Hence, whilst fleecing underdeveloped countries of their meagre savings, GEC bosses have pleaded poverty to their domestic workforces in the annual wage negotiations. Consequently, shop stewards in the North West plants intend to bring these disreputable activities to the full attention of the media and every GEC worker.

State

An AUEW-TASS member from GEC Trafford Park, put it well: "In many ways GEC is a state within a state. It sidesteps national laws and economics when it feels like it; it rifles other countries' tills when it feels like it; it tells bare-faced lies about its true financial position to its workers when it feels like it.

"In other words, because Weinstock has managed to divisionalise the company, splitting plant from plant, white collar from blue collar, men from women workers, he knows he is in an invulnerable position to prosecute his fight against the unions."

On top of this Weinstock has just given himself a 141% wage increase, resulting in a salary of £141,000 a year! What does the average employee get per year for his hard work? A paltry £5,541 per year.

Price-fixing

GEC's extraordinary profitability is assisted by a lack of competition in most of its product areas, which enables it to push up prices to its customers. Significantly, GEC price-fixing activity is not just reserved for foreign activities.

Along with BICC, Deza and Pirelli, "Weinstock incorporated" have a long tradition of price fixing in insulated cable goods for their chief customer in this sphere, the Post Office, as do the three manufacturers who

supply British Telecom with telecommunications equipment, GEC, Plessey and STC.

So whilst Thatcher and Howe berate the unions for "disturbing the free laws of the market" through collective bargaining, they openly support companies like GEC which unceremoniously trample such "laws" underfoot. Moreover, loyalty to the Tories isn't based on any naive patriotism or emotionalism about Britain. Far from it, for it is based on hard cash.

The Financial Times said recently, "Defence shares are all the rage on the stock market again following this week's outstanding figures from Ferranti and GEC as the government steps up defence spending after the Falklands war."

"There is agreement that GEC's 1982-83 profits will continue to grow strongly to around £650 million with super-optimists looking to around £690 million. Total dividend payments are expected to be raised from 10.25p to 12.5p."

Goliath

So what strategy has Weinstock utilised to build this goliath?

Firstly, when amalgamation took place he inherited particularly with AEI, a relatively powerful shop steward organisation that carried out negotiations on an inter-site basis.

The old Metro-Vickers inter-site committee in Manchester was probably the most formidable shop stewards grouping in the engineering industry. It had been formed from the concrete application of left-wing trade union tactics during the inter-war period. Its watchwords were "strike as one man, negotiate as one man, for all engineering workers in the company."

It marshalled 22,000 workers under its banner; it provided the power-base for Scanlon to become convenor in 1946, AUEW Divisional Organiser for Manchester in 1950, and later AUEW President.

But during the spate of wages struggles of the 1950s, the phrase "Scanny will show 'em" was a frequent

call of craft workers as they battled both to increase wages and their differentials from other grades.



Scanlon

Weinstock intuitively grasped that in breaking up shop floor organisation in his company he should consciously utilise pre-existing divisions within the workforce that had not been resolved by the inter-site committees.

He divided up the old amalgam into separate companies (GEC Switchgear, GEC Scientific Instruments, GEC Traction, for example) and then argued that they should all negotiate separately.

He similarly encouraged independent negotiating procedures for white collar sections, as well as attempting to fragment Confederated (CSEU) stewards' committees on particular sites.

Hence, trade union organisation within the GEC

empire has been atomised, parochialised and demoralised over the last decade. Workers on one site, in say the Power Engineering Division, know little of wage rates, working conditions, new technology, etc., experienced by workers doing the same job at the sister plant down the road.

However, some light can now be seen at the end of the tunnel. Two important strikes have taken place in the last three months at the GEC Traction Plant in Preston.

In the 1982 wage negotiations GEC Traction Management offered 850 Preston shopfloor workers 5% and demanded the introduction of three shift working. The shopfloor workers, mostly AUEW, rejected the offer and voted for immediate strike action on June 23.

Bitter

On July 5, after a bitter campaign that included mass picketing of other GEC plants in the North West in calls for solidarity action, management came back with a much improved package in total worth 9½%. The package included:

*A general increase for all grades of hourly paid piece workers and time workers of £6.50 a week.

*A lump sum of £25 for all adult hourly paid workers.

*Improved sickness pay scheme — waiting days reduced from two to one.

As the strike had developed, Weinstock and his surrogates had threatened to close the plant and move production to South Africa. They also stopped the payment of sickness benefit to those members who were ill before the dispute began.

Workers even had regular Weinstock bulletins sent to their homes using Edwardes-style brow-beating tactics.

Indeed before the strike began, Weinstock summed up his philosophy on industrial relations with a quote to the Financial Times — "People are elastic, the more work they have to do the more they stretch".

However, because of the rock solid action of the workforce, his Lordship decided to cut his losses and concede the essence of the



GEC's new chairman: former Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington

CHAIRMAN: Lord Carrington

MANAGING DIRECTOR: Lord Weinstock
Wage: £144,000. Shareholdings: 2,779,441 — value £8 million. Pay rise 141%.

DEPUTY MANAGING DIRECTOR: Sir Kenneth Bond

PRINCIPAL SHAREHOLDERS: Prudential Corporation 6.3% Directors Interests 2.1%

Power Engineering	Industrial	Electronics Telecoms & Automation	Components Cables & Wires	Consumer Goods
1981 Turnover				
£531m	£366m	£1235m	£464m	£290m
Profits				
£61m	£41.6m	£159.5m	£38.7m	£13.4m

strikers' demands.

A weakness of this struggle had been the lack of involvement of white collar workers. But only a few weeks later 200 clerical staff in APEX and ACTSS came out after rejecting the same offer management had initially placed before the manual unions.

The outcome of this struggle was the diametrically opposite of its predecessor. After a month of picketing during which TGWU drivers had crossed picket lines, the white collar workers were railroaded back to work by national APEX officials.

Roy Grantham ordered the summoning of a mass meeting of his members and made it absolutely clear that if there was no immediate return to work, even without an improved offer, then suspension from the union may well be on the cards.

An APEX member extracted the lessons of these strikes:

"If there's one lesson that's been hammered into our heads by these strikes, it is that we are going nowhere if we try going it alone. We have to build up a powerful coordinated combine organisation that can strike in unison against Carrington, Weinstock and the others."

"Unfortunately, drivers from the transport union continually crossed our lines. We have to correct these lapses in solidarity in the future.

"Let's face it. Some people can turn around and say 'you've not got support from other GEC workers' and there's substance to this. We need to organise along the same product lines as Weinstock himself does. We need a combine organisation for the Power Engineering Division.

"This is the only way forward. Either these multinational managements are going to mould the workforce like a piece of plasticine, making it into anything it likes, or we are going to have to physically impose our economic and social priorities on the governing of these companies.

Buoyant

"As our strike was going on, national APEX leaders were petrified that a successful outcome might translate itself into a new buoyant mood amongst the activists in the union. They played an outrageously pro-management role during our strike by forcing the members back to work, with no improved offer.

"They might have had an argument that 'there was no more money' if we'd all worked for British Steel, but GEC is awash with money."

GEC does have a National Shop Stewards Committee which has met regularly since 1979 with the aim of developing unity and comradeship among workers

in all of GEC's 169 companies. However, plant attendance at the National Combine meetings is patchy and some shop stewards feel it is too broad and diverse a company to expect one combine to be able to develop effectively.

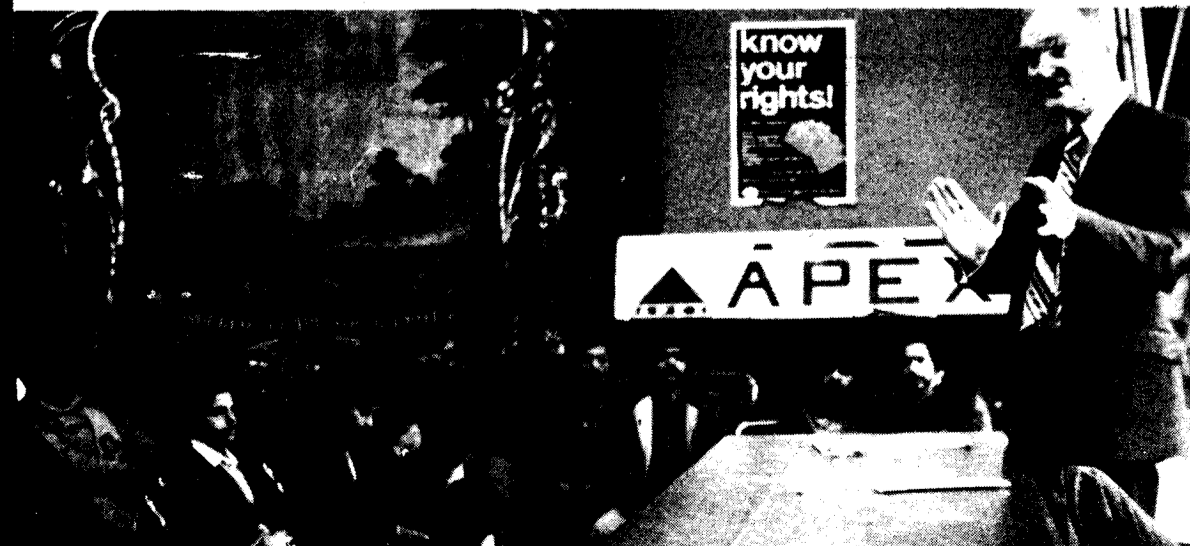
Some stewards have argued on the basis of the Preston strikes that combine organisations could be made more effective by organising around GEC's Divisional Structure, thus ensuring that when a strike occurs within say, Traction, then all Power Engineering Division shop stewards could easily be contacted.

Unfortunately the present National Combine excludes white collar unions, including AUEW-TASS. In this way, it is decisively crippled from really coming to grips with the Weinstock mafia.

What is needed is a combine organisation that embraces manual and staff unions and that builds up a political culture of solidarity between both work grades and plants.

Further discussions on these issues are now being made a priority by shop stewards in the company.

CONTACTS: GEC Traction Works Committee, Preston. C/o TGWU, 228 Strand Road West, Preston. GEC National Shop Stewards Committee, 40 Capital Road, Higher Openshaw, Manchester 11.



Roy Grantham — 'petrified of a successful outcome'

ANDREW WIARD (REPORT)

HOW WE BUILT OUR WORKPLACE LP BRANCH

Workers at Cammell Lairds shipyard, Merseyside, have set up a Labour Party workplace branch. Lol Duffy, secretary of the branch, spoke to John O'Mahony of Socialist Organiser.

WE HAVE 46 members already, though we only needed 10 to set up the branch.

How did you go about setting it up?

We had been trying to get something started for a couple of years, even before the Labour Party national conference decided for factory branches.

We tried various things, a 'Broad Left' for example. Through inter-union rivalry, at leadership level mainly, we failed.

Now the convenor of the G&M and myself have initiated this Labour Party branch.

We went round to everyone we knew was in the Labour Party and we got a leaflet out inviting people to join and help us set up a Labour Party branch. We linked it to the question of closure and the threat of denationalisation, and things like that.

The G&M convenor is chair and I'm secretary.

So are all Labour Party members you know of at Lairds now in the workplace branch?

No. One Labour councillor isn't. There is an antagonistic element. In general our members are on the young side, rather than the old Labour Party traditionalists.



'Workplace branches can draw normally passive Labour supporters into political questions'

But we've only had two meetings. We meet fortnightly, at dinner time, in a pub over the road.

We will alternate between a business meeting and a political discussion meeting with invited

speakers. We get a reasonable attendance.

We got 22 at the inaugural meeting — only 11 at the second, business, meeting, but we should get good attendance at the political discussion meet-

ings, which we will advertise.

What do you plan meetings on?

The next one is a Labour Party conference delegate's report. This is important

because not many of the members are involved in their local Labour Party wards.

What is your relationship with the local Labour Party structure?

We are a recognised part of the Labour Party. The regional official attended the inaugural meeting, after the G&M convenor approached the regional office.

Workplace groups are on a rather similar basis to YS groups. We are allowed one delegate to each constituency if we have 10 members who live in it. If you don't have 10 in any one constituency, then you send a delegate to the one where you have most members.

Are there any other Labour Party factory groups locally?

Yes. One is in Liverpool City Council housing department, and one in a post office. There is a plan to set one up in Birkenhead Tech. I haven't heard of others.

Have you any advice for people setting up workplace Labour Party branches — what to do, how to do it?

First get out a leaflet explaining the need to link up the unions and Labour Party, and issues affecting the workplace. Put a form on the bottom, saying get in touch. Take it from there. We found it was dead easy. There was a demand which we met.

You often find that people who are industrial militants are not necessarily in the Labour Party, and that those who are in the Labour Party, or willing to join, are not necessarily the workplace militants. How does the membership of the

Labour Party group compare with the trade union militants at Lairds?

I think it is pretty much the same people. We managed to get round and recruit people not previously in the Labour Party. A few of the stewards were Labour Party members already.

How about other political formations in the shipyard? Is there a Communist Party branch?

There is — but it's dead. It used to be quite sizeable, but is now perhaps a dozen nominal members. It doesn't meet regularly as far as I know.

SWP, or anything like that?

No, though they sell papers outside.

Is there any influence of Militant?

Only a couple of people.

And Socialist Organiser?

We have been putting out a bulletin more or less regularly for 4½ years.

Will the Labour Party branch discuss trade union affairs?

Only in so far as this supports the work of the unions in the yard. We are not allowed to take up trade union affairs directly where it cuts across the sphere of any constituent trade union. But there is no doubt that we will be the ones who will do the linking up between any struggles going on in the yard and struggles outside the yard.

Are all the unions involved?

It's mainly the G&M and my own union, the Boilermakers, which is merging with the G&M. I suppose this reflects who it was that initiated it. But we hope to change this. We will have a drive to recruit. People are coming up to us all the time.

Any action from management?

We plan to ask them for a place to meet. I don't suppose we will get it. There are no canteen meetings here, and management is very much opposed to outside speakers. We may try to get some 'big name' labour movement speakers — Benn, perhaps. He was involved in bailing out Lairds in the '60s.

The traditional separation of the industrial and political sides of the labour movement has always been one of our great weaknesses. Do you think workplace Labour Party branches can help tackle this?

Yes. If the Labour Party is even in part rooted in the conditions of day-to-day working class struggle, this can greatly boost the work of trying to make the Labour Party itself into an instrument of working class struggle.

Workplace branches can draw the party directly into industrial struggle, and draw working class Labour supporters who otherwise are normally politically passive into the affairs of the party. This in turn, I hope, will help them begin to think more about the political questions.

Propaganda and other activity by committed socialists is of course essential if this development is in the end to be a positive contribution to the work of self-renewal we have seen the political labour movement engaged in over the last three years. But that's what Socialist Organiser is all about.

I urge all readers of Socialist Organiser to consider initiating a workplace Labour Party branch. As I said above, we have found it surprisingly easy — so far!

Socialist Bookshelf

Daughter of the Earth is an autobiographical novel. The experiences of the fictional Marie are parallel to those of Agnes Smedley, which makes the account all the more fierce.

Reject

The novel traces Marie's attempts to reject the traditional role for women living in the poor section of pre-war Mississippi and to resolve political and personal conflicts in her work in New York.

In New York Marie joins the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a revolutionary trade union movement. Her early involvement with socialism confuses her. She goes to the Socialist Party meetings where she is intimidated by the theoreticians

who dream of themselves as great revolutionary leaders.

After she receives the news that her brother George has been killed digging a sewer ditch while working as a day labourer, she rejects the academics' idealisation of the workers.

While she is at university she meets Sardar Ranjit Singh. She begins work as his secretary, typing his manuscripts on Indian history. Through Singh she becomes active within the Indian liberation movement. Her loyalty and strength for the principle of Indian Liberation is tested during her imprisonment in the Tombs.

Distant

She is criticised by the Socialists for working for a purely nationalist and distant revolution. Marie sees the socialists as focused on

Daughter of the Earth

Julia Garwolinska reviews 'Daughter of the Earth', by Agnes Smedley

Russia, a land of revolutionary struggle as distant as India.

She analyses her motives for fighting with the Indian Liberation Movement. She guards against confusing her love for a homeland not hers with romantic yearnings for the Indian men with whom she works.

Later she marries Anand Singh. She saw their marriage as "The blending of love and intellect of two working for the liberation of a nation."

But there is treachery in the movement. A Portuguese

Indian tries to split the movement. He once coerced Marie into sleeping with him.

He uses this. He breaks their promise and exposes their one night affair to the conference.

Marie's feelings and political reputation are dismissed in an encounter of the double standards of Indian culture. Her husband suffers jealousy, possessiveness, betrayal and humiliation. He had trusted that his wife had not been touched by one of his countrymen.

The two men resolve their situation to Marie's cost. She leaves for Denmark.

Daughter of the Earth mirrors and grasps something within all of us who are struggling for socialism and women's liberation who encounter time after time contradictions and betrayal in our personal lives.

Shore enough

THE lead article in Socialist Organiser no. 110 denounced Peter Shore's new economic policy statement in angry tones, and some readers might have thought we were exaggerating.

So let's check against what the capitalist press said. The Financial Times was sceptical but not unsympathetic: 'All of these arguments [from Shore] can be shot down, up to a point... At the same time, however, there is sufficient in most of the arguments for them not to be completely dismissed.'

The statement's main merit in the FT's eyes is its distance from Labour Conference policy: 'this is no longer quite the Labour Party of those turbulent party conferences of the past few years.'

The FT also focused on Shore's shift towards incomes policy. 'Again, recent statements by Mr. Peter Shore ... have indicated an increasing awareness of the need for wage restraint... the idea of the National Economic Assessment ...



contains the germ of an interesting development.'

The Guardian also gave Shore's statement the sort of sympathy that should convince Labour supporters that there's a lot wrong with

it. It called it 'a sensible and heartening programme which bears a distinct family resemblance to the proposals of the SDP-Liberal alliance...'

Under the influence

THE Daily Mirror on November 29 summarised an official report on alcoholism and drink in Britain.

Three quarters of a million workers are alcoholics. One person in every four who goes to hospital has alcohol problems.

These figures don't show the worst of it. Drink problems are worse in Scotland than in England, worse still in Ireland, and worse in France too.

A Mirror editorial asks: 'What's to be done?' Its answers — stricter laws against drunken driving and against selling to under-age drinkers, and a government publicity campaign.

As if such measures could do anything serious to deal with the effects of a system where poverty, insecurity, anxiety, and alienation drive people to destroy their health for the sake of a few hours' false consolation.

PALESTINE CONFERENCE WAS RIGGED!

Former Labour Committee on Palestine secretary Andrew Hornung writes

An Open Letter to Socialist Challenge

* Socialist Challenge has refused to print this letter, but agreed to take 500 words from Andrew Hornung in return for 500 words in SO. While protesting at the principle that SO should have to 'buy' his individual right of reply in this way, Andrew Hornung has accepted this and a reply from Socialist Challenge will appear next week.



Ted Knight

Party members was attended primarily by non-Labour Party members - by people who are not even electoral supporters of the Labour Party, who stand candidates against Labour (as many as possible to impress their friends in high places in the Middle East), who in the last election managed thereby to lose one seat for Labour (Arthur Latham's), who do not support the return of a Labour government, and who spend a good deal of their time denouncing militants in the Party and trade union movement as being police agents.

No comrades, there is no witch-hunt. The clear implication of the suggestion that in denouncing the action of Knight, Cole and others we are feeding a witch-hunt is to say that so long as the Right keeps up its attack, the honest militants of the Left will have to permit corrupt practices in their own ranks. If that is the conclusion you have come to, you had better say that clearly.

Those who walked out of the rigged LCP Conference immediately set up a Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine. We will fight for the continuation of what the LCP was set up to do. We are supported by the branches of the LCP, we are supported by many of the LCP's former affiliates. The future will soon show whether our campaign will prosper or the LCP with its much vaunted "broad committee" . . . which at its first meeting did not even have the independence of spirit to ask Knight for an explanation of his actions!

Of course the division is regrettable. I did not help found the LCP to desert it after a few months. Unfortunately the LCP of Ted Knight, abetted by yourselves, have squandered the chance of restoring unity by your rejection of the proposal to hold a re-call conference on an agreed basis.

My letter is long; still, I ask you to publish it if full. The need to refute the many falsehoods and slurs of your original article and to confront the arguments surrounding the future of campaigning on the Palestine question imposes its own requirements. I believe, comrades, you have a duty to publish it.

Contact: Labour Movement Campaign on Palestine, 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmleigh Rd, London N16

Help us fight!

A LABOUR INQUIRY, NOT THE COURTS!

The Labour Movement Press Defence Fund is appealing for donations to help to defend free comment in the labour movement.

Name

Address

Amount: £.....

Send to: Labour Movement Press Defence Fund, 214 Sickert Court, London N1.

The article (SO Nov. 26) by Ros Kaplan on the Conference of the Labour Committee on Palestine was as scurrilous as it was inaccurate, as wrong-headed as it was evasive.

Let us begin with the facts. Ted Knight organised a contingent of mainly WRP members and supporters to come to the Conference to vote his way. I have shown you the registration forms from the Conference; you have seen the evidence.

Now without ambiguity and evasion, will you say whether your dispute this fact?

In last week's article you say - and it is dismaying to hear you say it - that "whether or not supporters of Labour Herald or the WRP or both packed the Conference was irrelevant". I don't agree, but will you now say clearly that that is indeed what did happen?

The WRP's known connections with the Libyan government, their support of the Iraqi butcher, Saddam Hussein, and their present contacts with Gulf rulers, mean that our attitude to the WRP cannot be the same as it would be towards some other tendency. Their record in the British labour movement, not least their instant resort to the courts against criticism from within the movement, ought to teach us to treat the members of the WRP as pariahs.

You know that this contingent of mainly WRP members and supporters was able to come into the Conference and vote only because their names appeared on a list of paid-up members held by Ted Knight, who until November 20 was the LCP's treasurer (and is now its chairperson).

List

You know that this list first made its appearance two hours before the Conference; that Knight claimed that these people had come into the Labour Herald office and paid for membership or given him the money personally; that the Herald office was never given an address for the campaign; that Knight could produce no receipt-carbons, no receipt stubs, letters of application, membership slips filled in or any other corroboration of his story.

Will you then now say without evasion that no labour movement body would tolerate such a state of affairs? And, further, that this story of Knight's is simply incredible?

In Ros Kaplan's article she says "members of the WRP would have been able to attend as trade union delegates anyway." Certainly: but the key word is "would" . . . and then only if their union branches were affiliated, and they had evidence they were dele-

gates. Will you now agree that only about a dozen claimed to be delegates from union branches; that these union branches were not affiliated (unless, of course, the affiliations were also being channelled through the Herald office and being kept a secret by Ted Knight!). It goes without saying that the overwhelming majority of the people of whom only Knight had knowledge and with whom the LCP had neither direct personal contact nor indirect contact through a labour movement organisation were not members of the Labour Party, and a considerable number could be identified as WRP members.

When you wrote last week's article you already knew that Knight was claiming that no written treasurer's report could be given because the relevant documents had been stolen in a break-in at Lambeth Town Hall - a break-in at his office and at the Tory office. Odd that Knight did not inform any of the officers of the LCP at the time. Odder still that there is no record of the break-in. When the Guardian asked the local CID, they said they could recall no break-in. The Town Hall's official response is that there has been no break-in and that Knight is now saying the documents were lost "in transit" between his old office as opposition leader and his new office as majority leader.

Will you end the evasion and say clearly that Knight's story is unbelievable?

Let me now correct a few of the incorrect statements in your article. Your headline talks about the Conference as "forming" or "founding" the LCP. Knight's very words! The LCP was, of course, founded and formed in June of this year at a meeting called by Tony Greenstein and myself. I take it that this fact is not in dispute.

You then write that "the recent invasion of Lebanon - and the massacres of Palestinians - ensured a good attendance at the Conference, with over 200 delegates and observers from Labour Parties, trade unions, and Palestine solidarity organisations". Would that it were true!

Half

In fact, as you know, more than half the number you mention did not come as delegates or observers and did not come from the kind of organisations you refer to. In my view there were no more than 80-90 bona fide members and delegates.

The reason for this is that the dreadful events you mention do not guarantee big meetings. Successful events come through hard work and



'These dreadful events do not guarantee big meetings'

organisational thoroughness, and Knight's stooge on the old committee, Penny Cole, the publicity officer - voted by the rigged Conference as secretary! - did not place an advertisement in the Conference in a single newspaper . . . except, of course, her second home, Labour Herald.

Pledge

It is true that the final political resolution did "eventually" as you put it, include a "pledge to fight Zionism". But why did you not report that this was vigorously opposed by the supporters of the WRP, Labour Herald and, more naturally, the Jewish Socialist Group, and then suddenly adopted on Knight's say-so as chair without discussion or dissent, but after the original vote to exclude such references was greeted by the Palestinians in the audience with whistles and boos.

To record clearly the sheep-like support to exclude these references and the sheep-like switch a minute later to include the gist of them is simply to describe the obvious external evidence of Conference rigging!

You do not record, of course, that shortly after all the Palestinians walked out in protest at the rigging.

Once you get these facts in focus and apply to them the norms of working class democracy that we are fighting for throughout the labour movement and in the Labour Party in particular, certain things follow: firstly that it is scandalous - what-

ever your tactical or other political disagreements with Tony Greenstein, me, Briefing or Socialist Organiser - to make us the villains of the piece: secondly, that whether you break with Knight or not, you say clearly and openly what happened - otherwise you are simply covering for Knight, Cole and the WRP.

It follows too that the claim that what was "behind this row was an attempt by Socialist Organiser to get the Conference to adopt a platform which included very detailed positions on the reactionary Arab states . . ." is false. What was "behind the row" was a fight for the norms of workers' democracy. I thought Socialist Challenge was shoulder to shoulder with Socialist Organiser, Briefing and other leftists on this question. Perhaps not!

Factual

Incidentally, this judgement of yours contains three - only three! - factual errors: there was no Socialist Organiser resolution but one from me and Tony Greenstein who is not a Socialist Organiser supporter, there was no "detailed position on reactionary Arab states" but a cursory reference, and thirdly there was no decision as to how much of that political resolution would become a platform defining membership.

Let us now turn to the contemptibly scurrilous and venomously factional part of Ros Kaplan's article.

It says: "Labour Herald supporters (did not) try to exclude Socialist Organiser supporters from the steering

committee which was elected. It seemed (!) however (!) that Socialist Organiser were not happy with a committee which was not in their own pocket."

The tone is clear, Labour Herald supporters (some of whom rigged the conference) are open and democratic, while Socialist Organiser (whose few supporters there refused to tolerate this kind of practice) are the despotic wheeler-dealers. What marvellous r-revolutionary logic! What political norms can one attribute to a mind that can justify this?

What are the politics behind such remarkably contorted reasoning? You apply the general idea that lots of underhand things are done in the Labour Party and trade unions and you can't just walk out of these organisations because of that.

True enough. But the LCP is not a wing of the labour movement with a mass following (and more's the pity!): it is a campaign from which the key activists walked out when they saw the shake-down in progress, from which the branches have already withdrawn and from which some of the sponsors and affiliates have already withdrawn.

Argument

The other argument I hear is that to expose the rigging of the Conference is likely to feed the witch-hunt going on in the Labour Party.

When I first heard this, my mind flashed immediately to those facing the show trials conducted by Stalin in the 1930s: the argument that

they should not expose Stalinism for fear of weakening the Soviet Union . . . Tell me, would you have condemned an honest ETU member who decided to expose the CP ballot rigging in 1960 and fight for a proper re-ballot?

It would be a witch-hunt if we were saying that so and so who is in the Labour Party was really a member of some other organisation. I do not say this. To speak of Knight's collaboration with the WRP is to speak of a criminally unwise course of action which itself can only help the witch-hunt in the Party.

Nor am I saying that non-Labour Party members ought not to have been admitted to the Conference. On the contrary, I have always argued that the LCP should be able to draw into its branches individuals who are not in the Party (I hope we would convince them to join) but are active on the Palestine question, that the LCP should welcome delegates from affiliated Labour Movement bodies irrespective of the delegate's affiliation, that the LCP should seek affiliations from student bodies, immigrant and women's organisations and so on.

Yet, for all that, the LCP should maintain its character as a Labour committee. A recent leaflet stated: "The LCP has been formed to commit the Labour Party to a policy etc . . ." and it ended saying, "The LCP has already won support from many branches and CLPs etc . . ."

Now is it witch-hunting to say that a meeting intended primarily for Labour

Zionism and anti-Semitism

COMRADE ANDREW HORNUNG'S review of Tony Greenstein's pamphlet 'Zionism - antisemitism in Jewish Garb' was almost as bad as the pamphlet itself. Both present a picture of Zionism as an evil conspiracy rather than as tragic illusion; their accounts have more in common with demonology than with Marxism.

The version of history they offer is of Zionism as a consciously reactionary group, seeking actively to promote antisemitism, work together with antisemites, and suppress Jewish resistance in order to achieve their aims.

For Greenstein and Hornung, Zionists have always lined up with anti-socialist forces. Any indication, any evidence that there were contradictions in Zionism, that there was any more to it than this, are resolutely ignored. Thus, from Greenstein we don't learn about the left Zionists who fought side by side with Bolsheviks in the Russian Civil War [mentioned by Trotsky] or the Zionists who went from Palestine to fight in defence of the Spanish Republic.

And while we are told a lot about Zionist 'collaboration' with the Nazis, we hear nothing of the Zionists who organised Jewish partisan groups in the forests and ghettos of Poland - including Zionists from Palestine like Hannah Senesh who were parachuted into Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe specifically to organise Jewish resistance.

The argument about Zionist 'collaboration' with Nazis is based on:
1 Quotes from Nazi sources [hardly reliable on Jewish matters anyway], all some years before the Nazis decided on extermination as the 'final solution to the Jewish problem'.
2 The desperate behaviour of Jews faced with mass extermination. To argue that this is evidence of sinister conspiratorial deals between antisemitic Nazis and antisemitic Zionists is quite simply sick.

Moreover, there is hardly an indication as to the origins and mass appeal of Zionism.

Both Greenstein and Comrade Hornung seem to want to obscure the fact that Zionism grew up among Jewish communities of Eastern Europe faced with a degree of murderous persecution almost unique to European history. Fifty years before Hitler, mass slaughter of Jews was a regular occurrence in Eastern Europe.

Thus Pinsker's 'Auto-Emancipation', quoted by Greenstein as evidence of Zionist racism towards non-Jews, appeared in 1882, as a response to the Kishinev

and Odessa pogroms, in which literally thousands of Jews were murdered. Greenstein ignores this. In the absence of this context, Zionism must indeed seem like a conspiracy.

Greenstein ignores the way in which the failure of the labour movement to fight antisemitism, and the support given to immigration controls by socialists anxious to prevent Jewish refugees from coming to Britain, lent plausibility to Zionist arguments.

Finally, Comrade Hornung takes Greenstein to

task for ignoring the last ten years of Zionism. A similar complaint might be made against his own account of antisemitism.

Over the last few years, Jewish people have been killed all over Europe, sometimes by so-called 'communist' groups, acting in the name of anti-Zionism. Fascist antisemites have made 'Zionist conspiracies' a central part of their world view, and argued that anti-Jewish racism must be balanced against 'Jewish racism'.

In order for socialists to

convincingly claim to Jews that we are anti-Zionists and not antisemites, we have to fight hardest against real antisemitism. We have to purge our writing of comments which have the rhetorical flavour of antisemites. We have to understand sympathetically the Jews and aspirations of Jews. In his review Comrade Andrew Hornung fails to do all these things.

Jeremy Green
[member of the Jewish Socialists Group]

Writeback



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

Puzzled by interview

THE NOTTINGHAM Socialist Organiser group would like to dissociate itself from the article entitled 'NHS dispute opens way to unity' which appeared in SO 109.

We were rather puzzled by the article and would like an answer to the following questions:

- Why was it printed?
- Why was there no criticism of the content of the article?

- Why was it unsigned by the interviewer? As signed articles are the view of the writer, then unsigned

articles are the policy of the SOA.

- Who interviewed Micky Duffy and why?

- Why do we give over sections of our paper to hostile political organisations? This was not a genuine legitimate debate with a section of the Labour Left (a tactic we support), but a propaganda piece for the national chauvinist politics of the Militant.

As these were the unanimous views of our last Socialist Organiser Nottingham group meeting, we would like this letter published

and replied to in the next issue of the paper.

Nottingham SOA.

- THE headline on the interview was a mistake - caused by doing things in a rush. Clearly we should have had a headline implying a more sceptical attitude to the interview.

For all that, we don't think that any regular reader would get the idea that the opinions of the interviewee were those of SO.

The interview was done by some SO comrades in the NHS at the Sheffield NHS stewards' meeting. Northern Ireland has been one of the most militant areas of the NHS struggle, and you don't have to believe in the schemes of Militant to see the unity of Catholic and Protestant workers in this struggle as important.

That's why we thought it was worth asking the Northern Ireland stewards their views on the political importance of the struggle. And the fact is, though maybe not many would accept the theories of Militant, the general drift of Micky Duffy's interview is not untypical.

That Militant's line on Ireland is a chauvinist one for British socialists to take, we would agree. To describe these Irish workers as chauvinist seems absurd. (The Royal Victoria Hospital, where Micky Duffy works, has a majority of Catholic workers, and has struck to expel the British Army from the hospital).

That the views are those

of an important section of class-conscious workers does not, of course, make them necessarily correct. Micky Duffy's favoured solution - a Labour Party in Northern Ireland - has attracted sizeable numbers of workers in the past, but always failed to create the sort of working class unity that could successfully tackle the issues of the Border, the British presence, and the Protestant/Catholic antagonism... or to make those issues sink into insignificance.

For a forthcoming issue of SO we've commissioned an article on the history of the Northern Ireland Labour Party which, we hope, will explain this point and take the discussion further.

Thanks Eddie!

I MUST apologise for not understanding that the 'working classes' are exclusively male. Thank you Eddie Moonman [Writeback, SO110] for pointing out my female error. Have you thought, though, that all these men have sisters, mothers, aunts, nieces, etc? All in a different social strata!

Sisterly,
Jane Hore,
Hanworth.



Northern Ireland has been one of the main centres of the NHS struggle

SCIENCE

Science for people

by Les Hearn

AFTER last week's report of a conference of socialist scientists, I want to look at two recent publications of the socialist science movement - the latest issue of Science for People (SFP) and the pamphlet 'Science on our Side' (SOOS)*.

SOOS is subtitled 'A new socialist agenda for science, technology and medicine' and on the agenda are Health, Food and Agriculture, Transport, Energy, Environment, Defence, Internal Security, Science Education and Research, Production and New Technology.

The authors state that the pamphlet is 'for activists in the socialist and trade union movement, the Labour Party, the women's liberation movement, and community groups...'

The authors criticise the use of 'a remote jargon and a painfully impersonal tone' in public scientific discussions, but fall into the same trap themselves. In fact, their language will sometimes be remote from most scientists, let alone their intended audience.

For example, the idea of 'dead labour' will be understandable only by those versed in Marxist economics, while 'VCM' will be recognised only by regular readers of SFP or workers in the field of polymers. ('Dead labour' the past labour of workers locked up in machinery materials. 'VCM' - vinyl chloride monomer - a sub-unit of PVC and of a rare liver cancer.

...you've got past the ... of an introduction ... of the items on the

agenda are dealt with quite well. E.g.:-

Food and Agriculture - has quite a good analysis of how production for profit distorts the industry. Food is processed and poor diets encouraged solely to increase opportunities for profits.

Energy - this section demolishes the argument of the CEBG about an energy gap which can only be filled by nuclear power, and shows how many safer alternative sources of energy could be used.

Other sections are shakier.

Health - is rather bland, but contains this statement, which I am still puzzling over - 'Ultimately, people's health interests should be met by generalist community workers at the front line of health care'.

Science Education, Research, Production and New Technology - are loaded with jargon. For instance, did you know that 'the way work is organised prevents us from conceptualising and controlling our own labour process'? While on New Technology, women are not mentioned once!

Women are pretty much ignored throughout, as is the Third World (see SO 100 for some issues involving development in the Third World and women's role). This may be a result of 24 of the 28 writers being men (mostly white middle-class academics?) - writing for a similar audience!

Their language is dense and difficult to read and information is presented in an unimaginative way. Nevertheless, it has its

good points and I would recommend SOOS to SO readers who are already interested in science and socialism.

SFP no. 53 has just come out, with a socialist analysis of information technology.

This consists of:
1. 'Who's (Whose?) Information', a rather confusing article on Cable TV. It does include the ideas that the labour movement should actually decide a communications policy and that an information network serving workers could be set up (a Workers Information Service).

2. 'Cops and Computers', and 3. 'Micro Networks', which suggests ways of putting computers at the service of local communities and groups of workers (I'm now thinking of launching a Science Column

Computer Fund!).

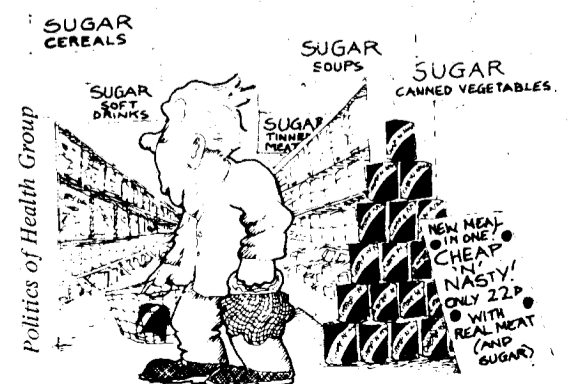
Anyway, SFP is well worth reading (as is the Hazards Bulletin that BSSRS also publishes).

And at least they are doing something, instead of just writing about it, like me!

*Both available from BSSRS, 9, Poland St., London W1V 3DG.

SOOS - £1 plus sae 15cm x 22cm.

SFP - quarterly magazine of BSSRS - 85p inc. postage for single copy, £4 for a year's subscription.



Politics of Health Group

Lenin and the Russian workers' Revolution

THE RISE OF BUREAUCRACY

Did Stalin continue Lenin's work? Continuing their series, John O'Mahony and Andrew Hornung argue that in fact Stalin negated all that Lenin fought for.

THE VICTORY in Russia in 1917 had been very easy, almost bloodless. The difficulties began afterwards.

Civil war erupted. From 1918, to the internal enemies in arms against the revolution were added the armies of intervention sent by no less than 14 states to extinguish the proletarian revolution in Russia.

The Soviet state was forced to defend itself and to build up from scratch a new, Red, Army. This was accomplished under the leadership of Trotsky, Commissar for War, and the workers' state fought a long war in which civil war was inextricably linked with war against intervention.

In July 1918, the Left Social Revolutionaries, a peasant-based party which had initially formed a coalition government with the Bolsheviks, organised a rebellion. An SR militant, Dora Kaplan, shot Lenin, failing to kill him but injuring him very seriously.

In response the Bolsheviks launched a Red Terror. A special organisation, the 'Cheka', a revolutionary police, was set up to fight counter-revolution. No mercy was shown to the enemies of the workers' state.

The Bolsheviks, who had begun by abolishing the death penalty, now did not hesitate at summary execution of counter-revolutionaries. Steeped in the history of revolutionary struggles, they understood that the proletarian revolution, in those conditions, though it meant a building a society where violence against people would be unthinkable, a socialist society, needed arms and ruthlessness to prevent a counter-revolutionary bloodbath.

Writers on Stalinism today, as for example Solzhenitsyn, confuse the ruthlessness of the revolutionary working class with the later counter-revolutionary butchery of Stalinism. Thus in 'The Gulag Archipelago' the list of crimes begins in 1918 and runs all through the Stalinist period. In reality there is no continuity.

Whatever mistakes may have been made, the Red Terror of the revolutionary years was the violence of workers and peasants in revolt against capitalism, directed against the bourgeoisie and their



After Lenin's death the Stalinists made an icon of him

agents and presumed agents. The Stalinist terror was the violence of an uncontrolled and self-serving bureaucratic caste, in defence of its own privileged position, against the working population in general and genuine Communists in particular.

There is as much difference between the two as between the violence of a slave against his or her master, and the violence of the master against the slave.

In March 1919, the work bore fruit which the Bolsheviks had begun when the Second International collapsed. A new, Communist, International was founded in Moscow.

Russia, the burning heart of the world proletarian revolution, the object of hate and fear on the part of the world's bourgeoisie, combined its attempt to break out of encirclement with the attempt to establish a world party of the proletariat on firm political foundations.

In the fire of the revolutionary upsurge then flaring in Europe, the new International attempted to build revolutionary parties out of the debris or hulks of the old Second International Parties, and, more importantly, out of the newly revolutionised proletarian masses.

At the first Congress of the Communist International no major party was re-

presented except the Russian. The real founding congress was the Second, in 1920.

The organisation had gained mass support in Italy, France and Germany. It was becoming clear that there would have to be a long struggle and not, as sometimes appeared in 1919, a quick victory throughout Europe.

The International turned its attention to the task of remoulding and rebuilding the European labour movement on revolutionary organisational and political foundations. All the great issues of communist politics were discussed at the Second, Third and Fourth Congresses (those held before Lenin's death).

The national and colonial question, the revolutionary party, the question of the united front of workers' organisations, trade unionism and revolutionary politics, and the question of women... Far from Moscow issuing orders, as it was to do later, the future and conduct of the Soviet state itself was seen as a subject for discussion and deliberation by the world communist movement.

The struggle for Bolshevism had meant an irreconcilable battle against all those tendencies weakening the proletariat as a revolutionary force. The new world party of the proletariat was to be built in

the same way — founded on a Marxism now enriched with the fundamental experiences of the struggle against Bernsteinian revisionism, social chauvinism, and the Kautsky centre, and enriched also with the experience of the victorious workers' revolution in Russia.

From the Second World Congress in 1920, an increasing part of the basis

of the Comintern was the analysis of the experience of the defeats suffered by the revolution in Europe.

The complex interaction between revolutionary victory in Russia, whose precondition was the existence of Lenin's party, and the defeat of the European revolution, because of the absence of such parties, now manifested itself within the victorious revolution.

During the years of civil war and intervention, the Russian economy had been devastated. The working class, always a small part of the population, had been virtually uprooted from its social role and transformed into the personnel of the new state and the new army, or dispersed to the villages to try to avoid starvation. The soviets were reduced to shells during the civil war and the Red Terror.

A system known as War Communism had been in operation. Essentially this had been a system of direct state seizure and distribution of goods.

The peasantry were willing to allow the direct state appropriation of their produce so long as the threat of counter-revolution and the resurgence of the landlords loomed over their heads. But the end of the Civil War inevitably led to intensified frictions and tensions, and to peasant rebellions.

The peasants' ambivalence towards the revolution which gave them the land, but also appropriated their produce, was well expressed in the widespread peasant support for the 'Bolshevik' Trotsky, military leader against the landlords' armies, and hatred of the 'dirty Jew' Lenin, leader of the 'Communists' who sent out the expropriation squads from the towns.

Market

In 1921 the Bolsheviks reacted to this, and to the prospect of a period in which the Russian workers' state would be an isolated revolutionary outpost, by introducing the 'New Economic Policy'.

This was essentially a policy of limited restoration of free market relations under the strict regulation and control of the workers' state. But this in turn led, by the middle '20s, to a large scale degeneration of the state itself, raising it to a degree of independence in which it balanced between the newly licensed merchants and traders and rich peasants on one hand, and the working class on the other.

The harmful effects on the Bolshevik party of these developments, rooted as they were in the extremely backward conditions of Russia, made worse by civil war, were already visible by the early '20s. They took the form of growing bureaucratism within the Bolshevik party — the transformation of an increasingly dominant section, which had a power base in the state apparatus, into a stifling bureaucracy. J.V. Stalin, a second-rank leader of the revolution, and from 1922 holder of the newly-created position of general secretary of the party, personified this bureaucracy and led it to mastery of Soviet society.

The bureaucracy of the Soviet state crystallised from a section of the revolutionary party and demoralised Russia's isolation. It grounded itself in material privileges, and the preservation and extension of those privileges quickly became its first rule of existence.

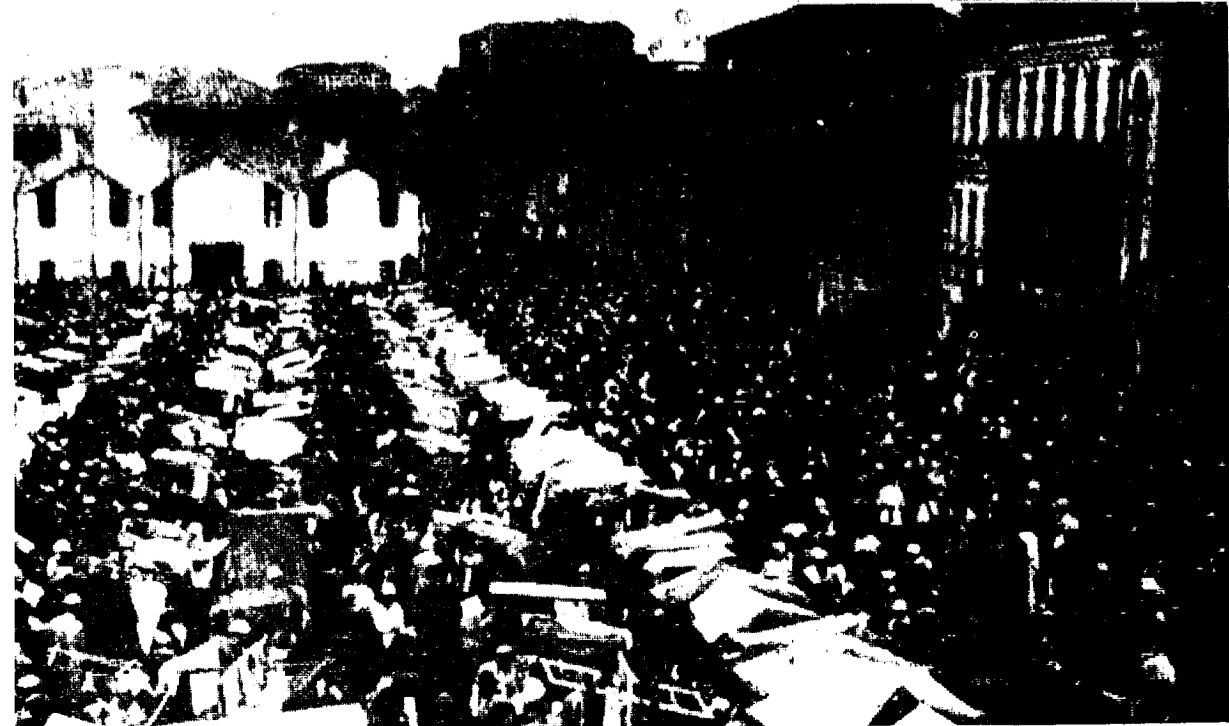
Its domination was made easier because at the 10th Party congress in March 1921 party democracy had been severely curtailed and organised factions banned. Simultaneously all parties were banned, even those like the Martov Mensheviks who now accepted the revolution and were a Soviet opposition.

Intended as a temporary measure to aid the party through the dangerous period of transition to the New Economic Policy, it became permanent and ultimately shaded off into the Stalinist ice age in which nobody but the 'Great Leader' himself dared utter an independent word.

In opposition to the bureaucracy there crystallised out of the old Bolshevik party a determinedly revolutionary section, dedicated to maintaining the revolutionary perspectives of the party and fighting for a restoration of party democracy and later of soviet democracy.

Lenin was one of the first in the field against the bureaucracy.

Continued next week



Street market in the early '20s... the NEP fostered a new merchant class

Build NOLS in the colleges!

Jeff Evans reports on the National Union of Students conference and on Socialist Students in NOLS [SSIN]

MANY delegates had great expectations of NUS conference since the leadership of NUS has been very recently rescued from a coalition of Stalinists and Liberal students by the National Organisation of Labour Students, under the control of Clause IV supporters. This was and should be seen as a positive development for NUS, because for the first time NUS has links with the labour movement, NOLS being the official student wing of the Labour Party.

The run up to conference was clouded and dominated by the NUS staff strike during which the majority of the NUS Executive, including NOLS, crossed the picket-line and scabbed by using office equipment.

The strike was an obvious embarrassment to NOLS — even the opening remarks of the President were interrupted by heckling, and the issue was raised several times before the full emergency debate. The NOLS line of full support for the Executive did hold, and Alan Watson, the Executive member with responsibility for staff, managed to escape censure.

Rough

But the NOLS caucus gave the Clause IV leadership a rough ride, with even a member of NOLS National Committee supporting the position of

hostility and disgust at the Executive's strike provoking and scabbing.

Major cracks did appear in NOLS over the report-back of the meeting of the European NUS's. This was a controversial issue at the last Conference earlier this year, but in Margate it blew up. Marek Garztecki, Solidarnosc representative in Britain, spoke to a SSIN fringe meeting the evening before the debate. He described how the Stalinist governments had used the presence of NUS UK to suggest its seal of approval for the actions of the Eastern bloc and in Poland in particular. Marek explained how the gesture of a walkout at the end of the meeting had been a waste of time, because of the censorship of the reports given back.

Solidarnosc

In the British report-back there was even a suggestion that NUS should host the next European meeting in London. SSIN organised for a referral back of the report. And even after a statement from Solidarnosc and NZS was read out to conference, supporting the reference back, the NOLS still supported acceptance. The vote was very close indeed — 312 for acceptance; 305 against. The number of people around the SSIN bookstall visibly increased after and during the

debate.

The fight against the Tory-inspired National Advisory Board cutbacks in higher education came up from Manchester Polytechnic which has had great success in its recent occupation. It became quite apparent that the NUS leadership was unprepared or incapable of working at grass roots level against the NAB. Manchester Polytechnic took the initiative by calling a caucus which had the full support of SSIN.

By the close of conference on Monday it was quite clear to socialist delegates that the NUS turn to NOLS was overall beneficial but that the present leadership must go and be replaced by a leadership that is prepared to fight against this Tory government and any other government which is against educational expenditure. And a leadership prepared to fight from not only behind a desk but also by organising support for college initiatives.

The only way NUS will triumph is by building links with the labour movement, building NOLS within the colleges and replacing the current leadership with one prepared to fight on socialist principles and policy and involve the full membership of NUS.

Jeff Evans
President, North Hulme
Community College

Tatchell slams TUC!

Speaking to Socialist Organiser this Tuesday, Bermondsey Labour candidate Peter Tatchell con-

demned the decisions by the TUC General Council and the TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee

to drop demonstrations and street protests. Tatchell, whom Michael Foot attempted to

block as Labour candidate because of his call for 'extra-parliamentary action', said:

IT IS disgraceful that the TUC is refusing to support the proposed Glasgow-London People's March for Jobs. Their whole attitude towards the rights of the unemployed has been appalling.

We urgently need a much stronger and more vigorous labour movement opposition to unemployment both inside and outside of Parliament, and in particular we need to be mobilising the unemployed to fight for their rights and to demand jobs.

Far from driving people away from the Labour Party mass marches against unemployment will give the unemployed and their families a hope that the labour movement is prepared to do something to defend their rights.

If the TUC and the labour movement don't start organising extra-parliamentary action to demand the right to work, then millions of people on the dole are going to feel disillusioned - convinced that the labour movement does not care about their plight. That will surely do more to lose an election than a mass march demanding jobs ever could.

The TUC/Labour Party decisions have also been opposed by the North West regional TUC - which is organising for the Glasgow-London march - by NALGO, and by the TGWU.

But the message from top labour movement leaders to the unemployed and militant workers is: stay off the streets, or you'll give the labour movement a 'negative image' and frighten the voters.

Despite eviction from their rooms in the hostel (right), strikers at Arlington House in Camden are still strong. They are calling for a mass turnout on a solidarity demonstration this Saturday, 11th, from 9am outside the hostel in Arlington Road, London NW1. Contact the strike committee c/o Camden Labour Centre, 8 Camden Road, London NW1. (Tel: 485 1100)



ANDREW WARD (REPORT)

Depressing LCDTU

THE more intense the Tories' attacks on the unions, the weaker the response of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions.

Proof of this CP-dominated campaign's failure to compensate for the TUC's passivity was last Saturday's conference. It was a depressing affair.

In the week that saw Tebbit actually become law,

only 200 or so attended, and though the meeting was short, many of these left well before the end.

There was not much to keep them there. What criticism there was of the TUC was not about its inaction over the anti-union laws, still less about the sell-out of ASLEF, and the NHS workers. In the eyes of the conference the TUC's biggest crime was its refusal to back

another People's March next year.

Stark confirmation of this desire to avoid taking up the trade union leadership was the organisers' response to a request to speak from Alan Thornett, victimised BL shop steward. Despite scraping around for speakers, they demanded as a condition an assurance that he would not criticise the TGWU officials. He would not give it and he didn't speak.

Problems and Policies

by Harry Sloan

Here come "The Professionals"

UNDER intolerable management pressure, the tension on the shop floor finally erupts into an unofficial strike; sensing their own strength, or determined to maintain their dignity and agreements won in decades of struggle, the rank and file take action and look for guidance and support.

Instead they are all too often met by a sinister band of mafiosi. Immaculately suited and well-heeled, the strangers climb out of new cars, financed by the strikers' subscription payments. The old-fashioned gangster's violin case has been replaced by their black attache cases.

Calculating eyes and stony stares confront the strikers: in place of their militancy and deep-felt grievances they are presented with a catalogue of their own weaknesses, the

government's strength and the employers' financial problems. They are told to get back to work. The union officials have arrived. The 'Professionals'.

Though every section of workers feels that they are the first to encounter them and the worst betrayed, the union bureaucracy is not new, nor are its betrayals limited to local level. Your unfriendly arrival — be he an Area Official, a National Officer or General Secretary is simply part of a long chain of command reaching up to the top echelons of the TUC, and stretching back well over 80 years in time.

The rise of a trade union bureaucracy as a distinct element within the labour movement dates back to the turn of the century.

The emergence and expansion of trade unionism had begun in the mid

nineteenth century among the most self-confident and regularly employed sections of the working class — the skilled workers in the mushrooming industrial workshops of British imperialism.

While their readiness to organise jointly in their own defence was a major step forward, their relatively privileged position in relation to unskilled workers meant that there were many ways in which they and their leaders could be drawn into seeing their way forward through persuasion and collaboration with the employers rather than independent struggle.

Even in its most radical form, this trade unionism tended to remain firmly rooted in the workplace, seeking reforms and improvements from their own employer rather than any broader transformation of



The AUEW's top men: John Boyd, Gavin Laird, Terry Duffy

society as a whole. As the craft unions began to develop a hierarchy of full time officials, these in turn reflected the same politics of gradualism and reformism.

When the drive began in the 1880s to unionise the vast layers of unskilled industrial and other workers, many of the new leaders who emerged at the head of that movement offered a very different style of leadership, often influenced by socialist ideas. The early leaders of the Gasworkers Union; for instance, forerunner of today's GMWU, included Eleanor Marx.

But during World War

I the capitalist class made deliberate (and widely successful) attempts to draw trade union and Labour leaders into the war effort. Labour leader Arthur Henderson joined the Cabinet, engineers' leader G. N. Barnes became a minister, and the TUC leaders called for an industrial truce. The consolidation by the mid 1920s of the big general unions as stable organisations and the defeat of the General Strike helped to hurry on the emergence of a leadership of full time officials whose politics and methods increasingly fell into line with those of the craft unions.

By the time of World War 2 the union leaders were a sufficiently dependable and useful component of capitalist stability for TGWU leader Ernest Bevin to be brought into Churchill's war government. Since the 1940s union leaders have become regular participants in government committees, nationalised industry boards, and even boards of private companies.

The pressures which came to bear upon the full time officialdom of the unions are many: and virtually all tend to push them towards an accommodation with the capitalist class and the system as a whole.

Separated from the rigours of daily shop floor exploitation, and frequently receiving guaranteed salaries higher than the less certain rewards of their membership, union officials discovered for themselves a role not so much as the representatives of the rank and file, but as influential 'middle men', mediating between the demands and the strength of the shop floor and those of the employers.

Subtly

Subtly or less subtly bought off and undermined by the financial power and confidences of the bosses, and seeking to protect their own power and privilege, the officials increasingly began to play the role of containing and limiting the demands and struggles of their members in order to secure what they saw

as a satisfactory balance of forces with the employers.

Central to these limiting techniques is the exploitation of the political backwardness of the spontaneous rank and file movement. The early craft union leaders reflected and reinforced the elitist sectionalism, the national chauvinism and the sexism of their membership.

The bureaucracy in the labour movement to this day continues to utilise these same weaknesses to divide and limit the working class — leaning almost exclusively on the most privileged sections; largely excluding women and black workers from the life of the unions and from their leading ranks; playing off one section of workers against another; restricting demands to the issues of wages and conditions; and upholding the principle of deference to the economic plight of the employer concerned.

Presiding over and feeding off the organised ranks of the most powerful force for social change, the union bureaucracy is a profoundly conservative force, preoccupied with its own power and privilege.

The development of today's trade union movement to the point where it is politically and organisationally equipped to do battle against the employers' offensive is first and foremost a struggle to break this bureaucratic stranglehold.

Continued next week

DHSS staff show will to fight

by Stephen Corbishley

THE SUCCESS of the strike on Friday 3rd gave the lie to arguments that rank and file DHSS workers do not want to fight.

Now the call for all-out strike action - which realistically must be from January 1983 - needs to be coupled with a drive to convince the rest of the civil service trade unions that this fight is not a mere sectional battle for extra staff to make the welfare state benefit system work, but a confrontation with the government and the cuts.

There should be no talk of this strike cutting across preparations for the 1983 pay campaign. The fight against cuts and for jobs is not an optional extra.

The national executives of CPSA and SCPS should go to the rest of the trade union and labour movement and ask for support. Cash is

needed to sustain this dispute - even though the present very high rates of strike pay cannot reasonably be continued. (SCPS members in Oxford are already redistributing their strike pay to help worse-off CPSA members).

The TUC and Labour Party should also declare and organise support for any call for all out action that may be made by the CPSA leadership.

Extension

Extension of the strike throughout DHSS is only a beginning. The civil service unions should also prepare to call out their most strategically placed members - at airports and docks for example - and to tie the DHSS staff issue to the general demand for no job loss.

The dispute so far has

shown that the official leaderships, left though they call themselves, cannot be relied on. The potentially powerful CPSA Broad Left ducked out of any criticism of the CPSA national executive at its recent conference. Elected strike committees, established locally and linked up nationally, can call the official leaderships to account,

pressurise them, and provide an alternative if necessary.

They can also do the much-needed work of local liaison with unemployed and claimants' organisations, and of linking up with unions in local government social service departments and in post offices to make sure that the interests of claimants are protected.

JOHN HARRIS



2000 demonstrators in Birmingham booted Alistair Graham

Birmingham success

by STEVE BATTLEMUCH, BEC CPSA DHSS South Notts Branch (in personal capacity).

"The day of action was a resounding success in Birmingham with up to 2,000 strikers marching through the centre of town. The march was very vocal, and

leaflets were well received by the general public.

At the mass meeting, Jeff Rooker, Labour MP for Birmingham Perry Barr, who brought fraternal greetings from Birmingham Labour MPs, got a standing ovation. But CPSA general secretary Alistair Graham was greeted

with boos before he even started to speak. Strikers remembered his attempt two weeks earlier to force through a National Executive Committee recommendation for a return to work.

Graham said that CPSA was now committed to escalating the action and would be discussing ways and means with DHSS branches immediately after the Special Pay Conference on December 9.

However he then went on to talk of a spirit of co-operation in time for Christmas and the need for goodwill on both sides!

The pay debate

THREE of the key unions in the Civil Service are meeting in the first and second week of December.

The first is the SCPS (middle grades) in Birmingham, but the most significant will be the one day conference on December 9 of the civil service section of the lower grades' union, the CPSA.

The Broad Left-led CPSA Civil Service Executive Committee (CSEC) motions dominate the order paper, and it is a foregone conclusion that the conference will vote for the claim formulated by the EC: £12 increase and a minimum wage of £85.

The real conflict will come over the official Megaw report on future civil service pay bargaining. The CSEC asks for a continuing free hand for talks with the Tories with 'no commitment'. Presumably they hope the Tories will expose themselves in some way and this will lay the basis for a radical development among rank and file members.

The problem with this manoeuvre scenario is that the Tories' plan is already clear. They are talking about a 3½% cash limit, and the linking of a Megaw-type pay bargaining arrangement to a 'no strike' clause.

The clearest lead against Megaw comes in a motion from the British Library (London) Branch that calls for no more bargaining based on 'comparability' and a focus on a Trade Union calculated price index.

The other major debate will be on how industrial action is organised, and whether CPSA should enter into a joint claim with other civil service unions if they demand a percentage element in it (i.e. bigger increase, for the higher paid). There is strong feeling among CPSA members that CPSA should insist on a flat rate claim for all unions.

If there is no fight on pay in 1983, then after four years of defeat civil service trade unionism could enter a serious decline.

Oxford pickets repel scabs

AN important step forward on the Oxford DHSS picket took place on the national strike day - December 3.

Over 60 DHSS strikers and supporters succeeded in turning away three of the DHSS scabs' cars by weight of numbers and determined action. This is the first time this has been achieved and shows that determined picketing brings results.

Delegations from Oxford Unemployed Workers and Claimants Union, Ruskin College Trade Union Support Committee, the Claimants Defence Committee, Oxford LPYS and many individuals, including Andrew Smith (Labour Prospective Parliamentary Candidate), Peter Moss and other Labour City Councillors, were on the picket line.

Smith told the Oxford Mail that "The strikers had intolerable pressure put on them. It was the government's economic policies that had created the unemployment and poverty".

Attempts were made to persuade workers in other government departments on the site to respect the picket line, as this was a national strike day. Most took the latest strike bulletin, although none refused to cross.

Throughout the dispute there has been very little police presence, but as soon as the scabs were stopped, two police arrived to clear a way through the picket.

Their future attendance is assured after Friday's success.

Another welcome boost to the strikers' morale occurred during the week when four Clerical Assistants joined the strike. Other people who have so far been

working, are also expected to shortly come out.

Formal picketing is the way forward in escalating the strike in Oxford (and in Birmingham). The Monday and Friday morning mass pickets have to become massive shows of support for the strikers, especially over Christmas and into the New Year.

An excellent way to develop this should come from the General Committee meeting of Oxford City Labour Party on December 13 where the Executive Committee will be recommending taking a speaker from the strike committee and urging all GC delegates to attend and build delegations for the mass picket on Friday December 17.

Nationally, the next initiative in moving towards an all-out strike will be at the SCPS and CPSA Special Pay Conferences.

Pete Cliff, CPSA Branch Chair, told Socialist Organiser:

"We will be sending two delegates and four observers, maybe more, to the CPSA Special Pay Conference on the 9th.

"I want to see a commitment to increased action on a national level in the DHSS section. We've got to push for an all-out strike - that's what I want to see discussed, because as far as I'm concerned it's all-out or bust."

Support the Oxford mass pickets Monday and Friday, 7am to 9.30 am. Take a delegation from your workplace or organisation. Donations, wood, coffee, all welcome.

Messages of support and donations to: M. Robertson, 24 Beechcroft Road, Oxford.

Tony Allen looks at the EETPU election

Who will take Chapple's place?

THE EETPU proudly boasts of being the most "independent and progressive force in the British labour movement".

After all it does run its own technology training programme, at its own electronics workshop, at its own trade union college... while the employer laughs all the way to the bank!

The EETPU Executive was one of the first to recognise Polish Solidarity. Back home, however, it has consistently championed wage controls imposed through collaboration with the TUC, CBI and Labour right wing, and has pioneered American-style wage-cutting deals in key sections of the electrical industry.

Until 1956 the (then) ETU was held under bureaucratic sway of the Communist Party. Then the brutal Stalinist suppression of the Hungarian workers' uprising also shattered the British CP - thousands of activists resigned.

Some moved to the left, others to the right. One of the latter, Frank Chapple, resigned in 1957 after first securing a seat on the ETU Executive. Later Chapple joined up with Leslie

Cannon (also ex-CP) and a right wing activist John Byrne, and this unholy trinity began its exposure of the undemocratic internal regime run by the CP.

Four years later they successfully accused CP bureaucrats of ballot-rigging offences during the 1959 General Secretary election. Byrne, Cannon and Chapple were installed (under High Court patronage) as the ETU's top three.

Chapple instantly turned on his former comrades - the CP became a proscribed organisation.

Far from "giving members control of their union" the Chapple era has imposed a bureaucratic stranglehold.

Election

As recently as 1969 all 141 national and local full-time officers faced election by their members, thus giving significant independence from head office; today all these officers are appointed by the EC.

Until 1965 an Executive comprised of ordinary lay members was elected every two years, again allowing for a strong 'grass roots' influ-

ence. Now they are full-timers holding five-year terms of office.

Area Committees have also been eliminated, and the 'rank and file' appeals committee abolished.

The fear of accountability is such that the union's delegate conference has been transformed into a purely consultative exercise. An amendment moved at 1977 rules revision conference called for policy decisions to be made binding on all members. Declared Chapple, "To accept these amendments would remove the ability of Executive councillors to carry out the function for which they were elected by the members (sic). I do not believe that it is the wishes of the membership to turn the executive into some kind of post-box for conference decisions."

Resolutions passed at policy conferences are openly flouted or ignored. For example, last year's conference re-affirmed by a 2-1 majority its support for the NHS and an end to all private medicine. Only months later did the EC reveal that 13% of members were actually covered by private health deals negotiated by the union.

Again, left-wing motions calling for election of officials have won widespread popular support - then delegates have been victimised for fighting them through, and the branches that delegated them (like London Central and Midlands) have been 'rationalised' out of existence.

Militants like Billy Williams and Marc Mellor (both Socialist Workers Party supporters) remain fined and banned from office.

Clearly the present leadership has no intention of mobilising for political or industrial struggle; while Chapple sponsored the openly capitalist SDP, EETPU bureaucrats strangled working class

actions against Thatcher.

Chapple broke ranks with the 1979 Confed engineers' pay strike, threatening to ballot members back to work. Health workers, Isle of Grain strikers, TUC Days of Action - all such solidarity struggles have faced sabotage.

The EETPU's block vote in the deputy leadership fight was used to endorse Denis (IMF) Healey, without any prior consultation with union members.

Tony Benn was not invited to speak at conference, but Healey was. The architect of that particular coup was Chapple's own protege, Eric Hammond. As Chairman of the EETPU's Political Committee, it was Hammond who launched the witch-hunt against Labour's democratic reformers.

Special 'Political Officers' flooded up to 30 CLPs (especially in Scotland) with right wing union delegates in direct contravention of the union's branch autonomy.

Membership has fallen by 25,000 over one year, while EESA (white collar) recruitment has in the same period risen by 8,500. The decline in branch activity and the absence of democratic local organisation, is a direct result of the above stated policies.

The Broad Left candidate fighting the present election, John Aitkin, stands on a ticket that can reverse this downward trend and breathe life into the movement. His election address includes the following demands:

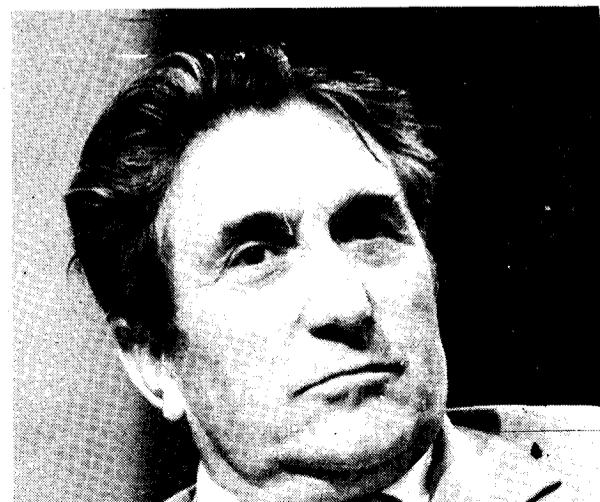
*Election of all full-time officers.

*Delegate conference decisions binding on all members.

*No bans or proscriptions.

*For national industrial conference decisions on wages and conditions to be ratified by the members concerned.

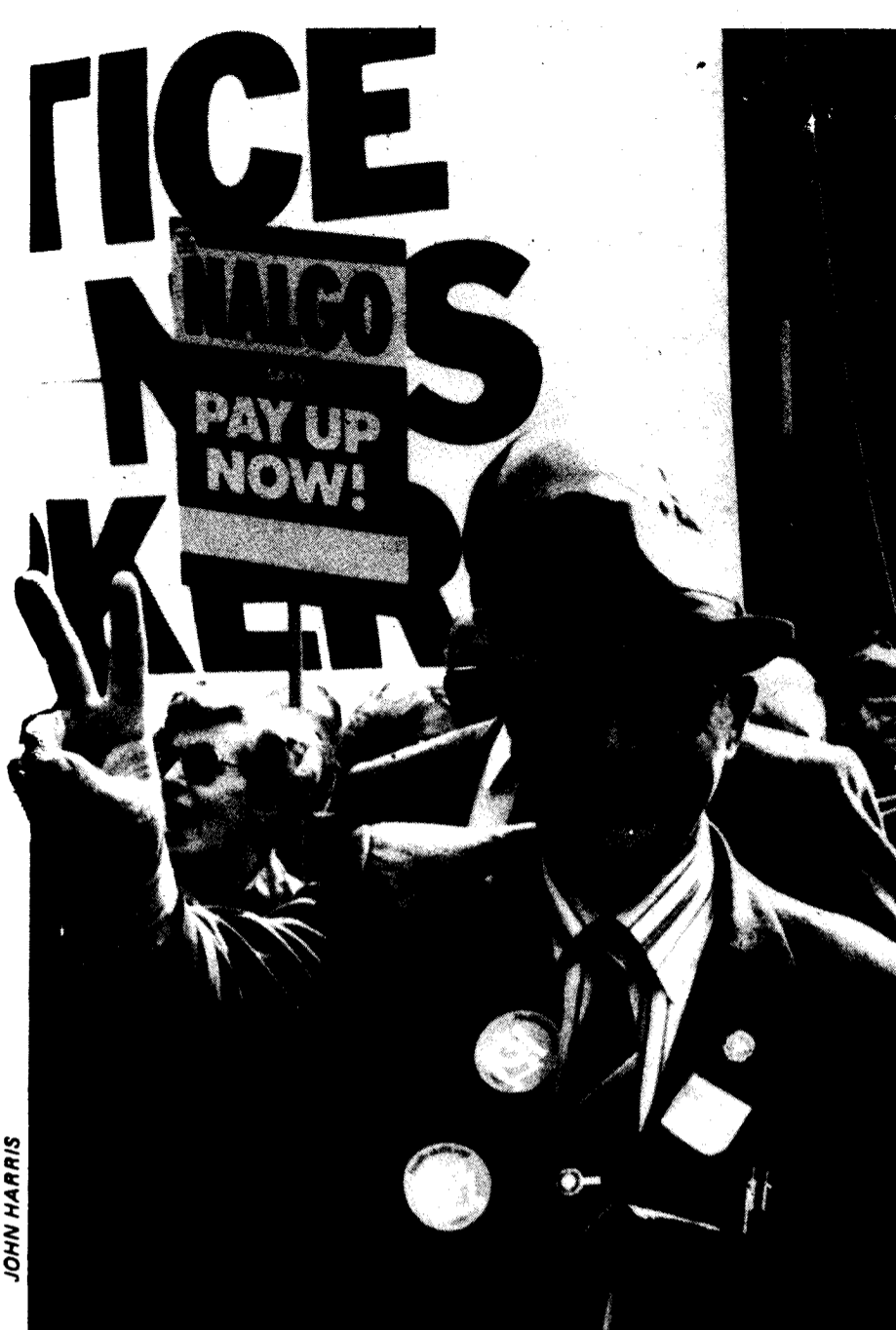
*A 35 hour week and an end to the two-year contracting industry agreement.



Chapple supports workers' democracy - as long as it's hundreds of miles away in Poland



The DHSS strikers are fighting not only against cuts, but for more jobs to deal with more work



JOHN HARRIS

Spanswick has been a brake on action. And his successor?

Socialist Organiser

Campbell for COHSE!

As CoHSE conference meets on December 14, election addresses have gone out for a new general secretary. Jo Coxhead (Oxford CoHSE) reports.

ANYONE who has followed closely the health service pay dispute, will know how crucial the role of the General Secretary of CoHSE has

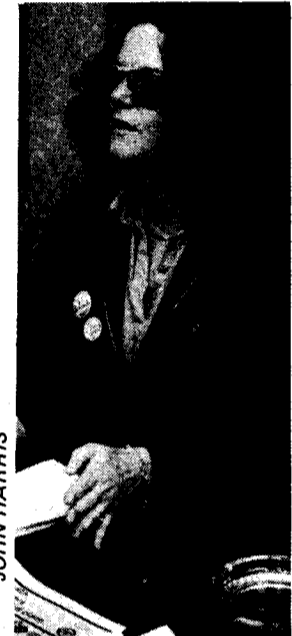
been in holding back the fight that would have won — and could still win — the campaign. The job is now up for election — the winner to succeed Albert Spanswick when he retires in ten months' time.

The nine candidates' statements make enlightening reading. It was with a groan that I read the statement from David Williams, the current Assistant General Secretary. He has been a full-time official (unelected) for 27 of his 34 years in the union. He says he hopes to occupy the 'high office' of CoHSE General Secretary 'for the next 8 or 9 years' until he retires (without any re-election).

There are five candidates who present a 'radical' image but only two — Haddu Mohamed and the Broad Left 'Group 81' candidate, Andrea Campbell — who are not full time union officials.

Let's examine what's behind the images. Rose Lambie 'As the only female national officer, I have helped to shape the Union's equal opportunities policies.' What policies? The creche at conference?

One wonders why the excellent ideas for local child-minding facilities arranged by local branches, the 'Local/Regional Women's Advisory Groups', and the National Women's Advisory Committee have never been heard of in CoHSE before, when a long-standing woman national officer says she supports them. One wonders too why sister Lambie voted against having a women's national officer at Annual Conference.



JOHN HARRIS

Andrea Campbell

She spells out what we've all experienced: 'This Tory government is viciously anti-working class. They do not negotiate. They attack. Precisely! And this observation is matched with policy for action. Andrea Campbell is the only candidate to draw on her practical experience in fighting the cuts which everyone says are dismantling the NHS. Her record as steward of the emergency bed service branch in organising continued Elizabeth Garret Anderson hospital under the threat of discipline, on the occupation committees at St. Benedict's, Longworth and St. Mary's hospitals stands head and shoulders above the other candidates.

Failure

The failure of the present CoHSE leadership to represent the needs and wishes of the membership and to give recommendations for the kind of action that will win the 12% she gives as one of the two main reasons for standing for General Secretary. The other reason is 'To try to broaden out the union to take more account of the needs of the members most oppressed — women and black people.'

She looks to the large non-white membership of CoHSE, and pledges to fight for their rights, needs and jobs, and for those of the 75% women membership. What about re-elections in the union? Well, three of the candidates say they are in favour of five-yearly re-election for General Secretary. Andrea Campbell is the only one of them to call for election of *all* full-timers, including regional officials.

Labour

A clever careerist? Judge for yourself. 'My view is that full-time officials should earn no more than the average pay of the membership, and if elected I will accept no more.'

On CoHSE's role in the TUC and the Labour Party, Andrea Campbell is again the only candidate with much to say. Only she mentions the fight in the Labour Party to ensure that policies proclaimed by many of the candidates, like 'reversal of cuts' and 'social control of the economy', are stuck to.

'The interests of CoHSE members will be served only by a Labour Party which will eradicate private medicine, increase public spending and promise policies which will lead to full employment; not by a party which spends its time trying to expel members'.

Last chance for NHS pay fight

AS THE NHS workers' consultation on accepting the latest pay offer or taking all out action draws to an end, election statements have been published for the candidates for general secretary of the major NHS union CoHSE. And in the statement from Broad Left (Group 81) candidate Andrea Campbell comes a bold call for an indefinite strike. 'Many of us argued from the beginning of the

pay campaign and at Annual Conference in June for indefinite strike action with emergency cover only. We believe that, had we taken that step, then, with supporting strike action, we would have won by now. 'By the end there can be very few who will not agree that indefinite action is the only tactic that will win. Delegates to Conference were misled and pressurised by the whole leadership and voted against it. Five

months later we are still fighting'. It was Andrea Campbell who moved the resolution for an all-out strike at the June conference. On December 14 CoHSE is holding a special recall conference to decide on the current two-year pay offer, just before the TUC Health Service Committee meeting on December 15. Andrea Campbell explains: 'This year's pay dispute

nas brought together for the first time all the NHS unions and all groups of workers. Unity is essential in this struggle. And so is strong leadership. 'But, our leadership has failed to represent the needs and wishes of the membership and has failed to give recommendations for the kind of action which will win the 12 per cent. That failure is one of the main reasons why I am standing for General Secretary'.

FUND

Last chance to order Manchester Socialist Organiser's Christmas cards — the design on the right or a 'Happy Xmas' design — at 10p (plus 20p post) for single cards, £1 (plus 20p) for 15, £2 (plus 40p) for 35, and £5 (plus £1) for 100, all with envelopes. Send orders to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Other local groups are also organising and raising activities this month — jumble sales, socials, raffles. The Socialist Organiser delegate meeting last Saturday made a call to all Socialist Organiser supporters to guarantee to raise, by such activities or by direct personal donation, the equivalent of a week's wages by December 31.

'Week's wages' this week include: West London supporter £50, Jeff Snee £40, Roger Welch £150, Nik Barstow £90. Other donations: David Welch and Carolyn Lord (York) £4, Arthur Bough (Stoke) £10, Bryan Edmands (Coventry) £30, Leeds SO £10, Dave Hughes (Bermondsey) £5. Total: £389.

Send money to: Treasurer, c/o 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

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JUMBLE, FATHER CHRISTMAS PLANTS, CAKES, TOMBOLA, CRAFTS, GOOD AS NEW

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Oxford Socialist Organiser
GRAND CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

At 44b Princes St, off Cowley Road. Gifts, cakes, bottle stall, books and other goodies.

Saturday December 18, from 2pm.

The one black candidate in this election, Haddu Mohammed, is unfortunately the vaguest of all the left on policy. He advocates that the General Secretary could visit as many branches as possible and says, 'It is imperative to ensure that CoHSE embarks upon an immediate and vigorous campaign to defend the NHS, and in doing so, our members' jobs.' But not one word about how.

Indefinite

Suffice it to say that this candidate opposed indefinite strike at CoHSE's summer conference, saying that the selective strikes would achieve the same objective.

What of the final remaining left candidate, Andrea Campbell? She is supported by the Broad Left in CoHSE Group '81, and stands on their principles.