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Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance No. 120 February 17 1983 25p Claimants and strikers 10p

As water strike begins to bite

NO BACK ROOM DEAL!



"THE credibility of our movement is at stake, and we've taken some beatings recently. We've got the power to defeat Thatcher," Derek Battison, TGWU convenor at Audenshaw water works, Manchester, told us.

"It's no good other utility workers being sat on their backsides - they've got to come in with us. We don't want arbitration or an inquiry - we want action. We'll be going round the power and gas workers to get their support, and to show them how our claim is linked to theirs.

"If we all came out we'd give Thatcher the coup de grace. But if we lose this one it won't be due to the strength of the Tories - it'll be because of the weakness of our leaders."

From all evidence, the water strike is beginning to bite seriously. The Financial Times, which has no reason to exaggerate the strike's effects, reports (February 16):

"There is growing concern that if the current peace bid fails a rapid decline in supply will force shut-downs and lay-offs. The Association of British Chambers of Commerce, which has been monitoring reports from the regions, said last night that companies were using all their ingenuity to preserve stocks and maintain production. The association said: 'No one is screaming yet. But at the same time there is an undercurrent of serious worry.'"

And water workers are starting to think more and more seriously about spreading the action. Leicester GMBU shop steward Dave Renwick told us:

"When we first came out we thought it would last a week, but now we just don't know. Maybe calling out the gas and power workers is the only way to budge Thatcher. Yes, a general strike."

The top union leaders have chosen precisely this time to back down on their opposition to arbitration. They have:

*Agreed to an inquiry set up by ACAS;

*Fixed terms of reference without making them public to anyone, let alone the

rank and file;

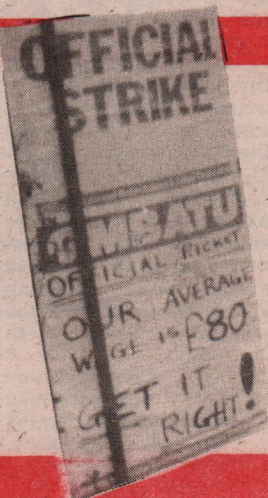
*In the person of GMBU general secretary David Basnett, 'staked their personal honour' on accepting the inquiry result;

*In the person of GMBU negotiator Eddie Newall, said that the membership will not be consulted before a return to work.

There is no sign that the inquiry will give anything worthwhile on the claim for a 15% rise. It may give some vague promises about comparability for the future, but what will these be worth when all national agreements are due to be scrapped soon with the abolition of the National Water Council?

The rank and file pushed the top union leaders into this strike. They have organised the action, manned the picket lines, and gone out to get support. They should decide now.

ISLINGTON Council Workers' Joint Trade Union Committee: March to support the water workers. Thursday February 17, assemble 12 noon at Town Hall to march to New River Head.



At the last Labour Party National Executive Committee, a resolution supporting the water workers got 'left on the table' because GMBU general secretary David Basnett phoned in to say he did not want the Labour Party to 'get involved'.

Yet Labour front-benchers have certainly been 'involved' - not in rallying support, but in engineering a sell-out. Environment spokesperson Gerald Kaufman told the House of Commons on Monday that he had:

"... spoken in the past few hours to all the parties involved. I believe that with goodwill it will be possible to resolve this dispute."

Many local Labour Parties have supported the water workers' strike actively and energetically. But why is the Labour Party allowing our leaders to get away with this?

And why aren't the main figures of the Labour Left, like Tony Benn, speaking out more for the water workers?

Labour Party

Don't let the right wing get a taste of blood!

No move to expel O'Grady

THE LABOUR Against the Witch-hunt National Council on February 12 heard a detailed report on the threatened expulsions of the Militant Editorial Board. There was a summary of a report from the NEC given by Dennis Skinner to the LAW Secretariat; and prominent Militant supporter Bob Labi brought the situation up-to-date.

The 5 Editorial Board members had received a letter at the beginning of the month inviting them to attend the NEC on February 23 where their expulsion would be moved. They had replied saying they were prepared to attend, but protesting at the timing of the meeting before the by-election and at the NEC's refusal to show 'evidence' against them.

On Monday they applied for a High Court injunction to stop the proceedings until they had a chance to see the evidence.

Restrict

The majority on the NEC probably want to restrict the purge to the 5 Editorial Board members for now. This would be in line with the resolution reportedly carried at the EC of the GMBATU last week — that expulsions should be limited to the 5.

They hope this will intimidate the rank and file; and it gives them the precedent they want for a much larger scale blood-letting after the election.

Their problem is that once some right wingers have tasted blood, they are going to want more straight away; and even with 5 they are not going to have the surgical operation they want.

It will be messy. For example, in the case of Keith Dickinson, they will not only be expelling him but also kicking him and his family out of their house. For the past 6 years he has been resident caretaker of the local Party rooms.

It will be resisted. The 3

CLPs directly involved — Islington Central, Norwood, Hammersmith North — have all refused to expel Party members. LAW is in contact with them, with the aim of helping to coordinate and strengthen the resistance.

Hornsey

The National Council discussed practical details. It was pointed out that the NEC has a number of options — not only immediate disbandment, but the more likely options of suspension; non-recognition of decisions (eg Conference resolutions) taken by CLPs; and supervision through Regional Officials.

It was agreed that information and experience about these should be circulated in the LAW Newsletter.

Jeremy Corbyn introduced this part of the meeting and talked about the Hornsey experience. They had taken a firm and unequivocal stand over Tariq Ali, with the fullest involvement of all Party members and affiliates. At each stage they had gone back to the membership and had had 25 recorded on the issue to date.

This, together with the support and solidarity they had received from other CLPs and organisations, produced a GMC which after an 'unsure' start, was more determined than ever after 15 months.

Disband

The NEC had threatened to disband Hornsey by December 31 if they didn't fall into line. John Golding had been in favour of disbandment earlier in December, but had been told by another NEC 'moderate' 'Don't be so extreme, do it at the end of the month'. Because of Hornsey's stand they are still 'consulting' about the situation.

The National Council also unanimously agreed not to try to Register. It agreed to campaign for the constitut-



Give these vampires a pint and they'll take a gallon!

ional amendment in the name of Greenwich CLP.

There was a report on the most recent developments with Silkin's attempt to gut Tribune. And Reg Race pointed out some of the likely problems with the forthcoming Boundary changes — eg that GMC delegates for the new selection conferences would be frozen from the inaugural AGMs, and that delegates from re-formed women's sections and YSs may not have been elected in time.

Unity with the Militant-dominated LSCAW was again an item on the

agenda. The National Council agreed to instruct the Secretariat to immediately approach LSCAW once more to agree a programme of joint work, including the trade unions. But the idea that there should be immediate proposals for a joint Conference between the two campaigns was rejected. In the campaigning that had to be done in the next few months, a Conference couldn't be a priority.

In addition, many delegates rejected Militants approach, which was crude-

ly summed up by Bob Labi in the meeting: 'On the left, Militant has the crushing numbers.'

As well as continuing to try to seek joint work with LSCAW, a number of other practical details were considered.

Reg Race, for the 'Campaign Group' of MPs, said that LAW representatives would be invited to a meeting in the next two weeks. Preparation for Regional YS and TU Conferences was discussed. A TU sub-committee was established to strengthen that area of the work. Regional organisation was beginning in some areas — eg in Manchester there is a Conference in March, which has now been supported by the Manchester District of the Confed; and organisation for the scheduled advert in Tribune was reviewed (for details see below).

New affiliations are vital. As of February 11, 36 CLPs had affiliated to LAW, 20 of which were from 'South and South-East'. At the National Council itself, 20 CLPs sent delegates and only 6 came from outside London (though there were also a number of apologies, and there was a clash with the Labour Local Government Conference).

Time and again LAW has pointed out the connection between the purge and attempts to gut Labour's policies for the forthcoming election.

Some aspects of Conference policy have now been inserted in new drafts of

the Campaign document, but it was pointed out in the meeting that this doesn't guarantee anything. The actual Manifesto is written in the now notorious Clause 5 meeting just before the election.

Jeremy Corbyn proposed that LAW support the meeting called by London Labour Briefing on Monday March 7 to initiate a national meeting of CLPs, unions and campaigning groups in the Party to discuss 'How to fight for a Labour Victory'.

In his view, this planning meeting to discuss the coming election campaign should draw on the experience of the SCLV in the last election, and this time, should concentrate on unilateral nuclear disarmament, incomes policy, nationality/immigration law, women and the EEC.

Wage restraint

The importance of opposing any wage restraint was emphasised by a report from Reg Race. He described a meeting between Michael Foot and the NUPE-sponsored MPs, during which Foot made clear his commitment to flat rate pay increases combined with restraint from higher paid workers — ie an unrepentant Social Contract.

LAW agreed to send 4 representatives to the meeting in March. The meeting closed by declaring full solidarity with the waterworkers.

John Bloxam.

Gay youth organise

FEELING IS strong among gay members of the Labour Party Young Socialists that issues affecting homosexual men and women have been marginalised and neglected by successive LPYS conferences and summer camps.

The Militant tendency's apparent sexism and homophobic paranoia are the primary elements behind the lack of debate and understanding within the YS with regard to gay issues. For this reason gays have decided to organise autonomously within the LPYS.

Initially the GLPYS will be turning their attention to the forthcoming YS annual conference in Bridlington at the end of March. A fringe meeting has been arranged and there will also be a lobby of delegates present.

The GLPYS realise that interventions must occur at many levels, predominantly raising the issues of gay oppression within society as a whole, but with particular emphasis on the labour movement itself.

Gays feel that homosexual rights have been reduced to the level of well-intentioned lip service on one hand, and relegated by the economic determinism of Militant on the

other. Since the working class form the largest section of the population, then the majority of gays are themselves working class.

Minorities

They cannot be written off as a bourgeois vice, or irrelevant to the fight against capitalism.

Clearly socialists have a duty to protect and defend the rights of all minorities, be they based on race or sexual orientation.

As gays and socialists, our response to issues affecting homosexual men and women clearly differs from other more conservative gay groups. However, any failure to respond to gay issues from all socialists alike may make this difference less apparent.

An unwillingness to accept gay people has resulted in their being alienated from the rest of society. Neglecting to debate and take up gay rights issues within the labour movement as a whole may leave homosexuals feeling equally divorced from the socialist cause itself.

Brian West and Gregory Hayman
Gay Labour Party Young Socialists

Support Greenwich amendment!

by Francis Prideaux

THE 'register' has been exposed. As a means of expulsions it has proved criminally divisive, time-consuming and even (so far) ineffectual.

But the NEC can still invoke Clause II(3) of the constitution which outlaws all organisations 'having their own programme, principles and policy for distinctive and separate propaganda.' As it stands, this clause threatens the basic freedoms of speech and association of every one of us.

Established

Fortunately a solution is available.

Greenwich CLP submitted to the 1982 Party conference a constitutional amendment which formally established, for the first time, the traditional right of party members to participate in pressure groups. The Greenwich amendment insists that groups accept the party's objects and do not oppose its official candidates in elections, but it also guarantees a right of appeal to conference to any group or individual deemed by the NEC to be in breach of these conditions.

The Greenwich amendment would thus go a very long way to defend party members from arbitrary attacks by the NEC. Furthermore, it must, under rule, be put to the vote at the 1983 conference.

It does not, however, yet command the necessary committed support within the party's affiliated unions and CLPs. The agenda of union and regional party conferences must therefore be saturated with submissions supporting it.

Greenwich offers the rare prospect of a united way forward. We can't afford to ignore it.

"This conference recognises the overwhelming

need for a government which will defend the interests of the labour movement.

Conference therefore urges Labour's leaders to concentrate their attacks on the Tories and stop trying to expel members of their own party.

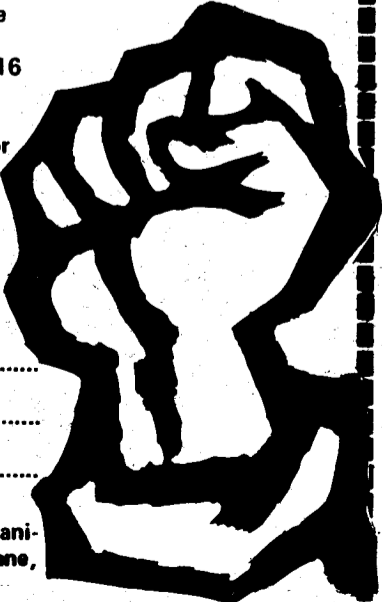
Conference defends the traditional right of Labour Party members to belong to pressure groups within the party, provided that they accept the party's objectives and do not oppose its official candidates in elections. Conference accordingly supports the amendment to this effect submitted by Greenwich Labour Party for decision by the 1983 conference".

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Campaign for Labour Party Democracy

Pickets step up the fight

London water workers have organised mass pickets at Hampton water works to try to stop scab coal deliveries.

And elsewhere pickets have been active seeking support, sending delegations, speaking at labour movement meetings.

The top union leaders, however, have done nothing to help.

AUEW executive member Gerry Russell did start talking militantly about the craft workers coming out... after the inquiry had been fixed up. "We could be on strike next week", he said, "even if the manual workers return to work".

The craft workers have had exactly the same offer - though on a separate agreement - and at local level, many craft workers have come out along with the manual grades. But the union leaders have done nothing to coordinate action.

Scotland's water workers, too, face exactly the same offer - and have not been called out. On Sunday, GMBU Scottish regional secretary James Morrell said that his members would be called out unless the employers agreed to... the inquiry! In effect Morrell had scrapped the union's 15% claim and substituted the inquiry instead.

The GMBU on Monday called on its members in the chemical industry to stop chlorine deliveries if water strikers requested this. And last Thursday TGWU official Mick Martin said he had written to the TGWU's road haulage trade group seeking cooperation in cutting off chlorine supplies.

In both cases, the official move is late and full of loopholes. The real work has been left to local activists, like stewards at Dukinfield, Audenshaw and Davyhulme (Manchester), who have got together to contact workers at ICI Runcorn about chlorine supplies.



JOHN HARRIS



JOHN HARRIS

IN SHEFFIELD, Swinton sewage works has been shut down, and Aldwark and Blackburn Meadows sewage works are close to being shut down.

GMBU branch secretary Ian Drayton told us that the strikers had been round speaking to the District Labour Party, the Trades Council, the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee at the Northern General Hospital, a number of steelworks, Sheffield City NUR branch, and various Constituency Labour Parties.

Craft workers in Sheffield have been out alongside the manual grades from the first day. Sheffield GMBU members have plans to lobby the national union officials over the inquiry.

IN MANCHESTER, NUPE members occupied Denton sewage works on Tuesday morning in protest at scabbing by craft workers. Management backed down and promised to stop using the craft workers for manual grades' jobs.

Dukinfield, Audenshaw and Davyhulme stewards are getting together to send a delegation to Agcroft colliery and to contact ICI

*Reports from Rob Dawber, Pete Keenlyside, Andy Dixon, Phil Hardy, Pat Lally, Tony Gard, Tony Twine.

Runcorn.

In STOCKPORT, the feeling on the picket lines was, "If the miners brought down the Tories, why can't we?" The Trades Council, Labour Party wards, and Stockport South YS have passed resolutions of support.

In OXFORD, a support committee was set up last Friday, sponsored by the Trades Council. A joint strike committee has been formed, by the different sites in the district, and a delegation has visited Didcot power station.

In SOUTH-EAST LONDON, water workers at the Brookmill Road depot in Deptford rejected any idea that a pay rise should be linked to productivity. Local GMBU secretary Percy Jordan pointed out that since there was no question of producing more water, 'productivity' just meant fewer jobs, increasing the already high unemployment.

In fact there has been a massive loss of jobs in the industry already, between 50% and 75% over the last few years at Brookmill Road, which now only employs 100 men.

Even before the strike started management were demanding further job cuts. In line with government cutbacks the water industry in London and the South-East has to save £9.9 million over the next year. Management plans to save £5.9 million on operational costs ('without significantly reducing standards') and £4 million on manning. They argue that for this to be effective the jobs must go as early as possible in the coming financial year.

They have said that 400 jobs must go in London and the South East by the end of March.

They want the jobs to go by natural wastage or voluntary redundancy, starting with men over 59 or possibly over 54. But they have said that they will use 'non-voluntary severance' if necessary.

Clearly the government hopes to use a defeat over pay to soften up water workers for an attack on jobs - as it did with the health service.

The Brookmill Road strikers have had a lot of support from other workers. Members of the strike committee are getting invitations to speak at local union branches and the

pickets are getting friendly waves and hoots from local public service workers, council and British Telecom vans, fire engines, etc.

In ISLINGTON, the local council workers' joint trade union committee has organised a solidarity demonstration, and GMBU members at New River Head report strong support. "It's about time someone took on the Tories", is their feeling. Craft workers there have been out with the manual grades from the start.

At the main SOUTH-AMPTON depot in Civic Centre Road, Stan Bevil, GMBU shop steward explained: "The lads were forced into the ring. They had to fight now because there's going to be no chance once pay and job conditions become regionalised. They want a genuine offer... but not one spread over 16 months."

A spontaneous 48 hour solidarity strike of electricians working at the depot has 'boosted pickets' morale.

However, the related issues of emergency cover and the struggle to escalate the dispute have claimed their first casualty. At least one member of the strike committee expressed anger at the role played by the depot convenor: "He didn't want to take responsibility... said he wasn't for causing health risks to people outside. We told him it was our choice, not his, and that we should stop work and mean it."

"Anyway, he's now resigned and taken two week's holiday. Some of us don't want him back either. Pity, really, he'd been a good steward until now!"

The Trades Council has made a cash collection for the strike fund and Southampton Labour Party has resolved to share its public meeting platform with one of the strikers when Labour leader Michael Foot speaks on Saturday February 12.

Defend Glen Hollomon

GLEN Hollomon is a black community artist from New York, who has done some lecturing on behalf of the "Black Arts Convention" in Midlands Universities and Polys. Now he is being threatened with deportation by the Home Office.

Glen is 26 and a structural engineer, and he came to Birmingham in September 1980 as an exchange student with a student visa. When his visa expired in July 1981, Glen immediately applied for an extension, but waited in vain for a prompt reply.

At no time after July 1981 did the Home Office actually tell Glen that his visa extension had not been granted, but a year later his passport was sent back to him, with a number of dates stamped in it. One of these dates was underlined which apparently means, in mysterious Home Office code, that the visa had finally been terminated on that date by the Home Office. How you are supposed to realise the significance of this cryptic message without being told is a bit of a puzzle.

But the Home Office seem to think this is a reasonable demand as one of the reasons being given for telling Glen to leave the country is that he "knowingly overstayed" his visa, and this was the only way he could have known that his visa had in fact expired, since he never received any other official notification of this by the Home Office.

He is also being charged with being an "illegal immigrant", a claim totally contradicted by the fact that Glen entered perfectly "legally" even by the Home Office's own rules, under the student exchange scheme.

Glen's immigration troubles arose out of a civil dispute with some neighbours, who, in the course of the dispute, raised doubts about Glen's immigration status.

The fact that these neighbours were in dispute with Glen and have their home daubed with Swastikas makes them obviously good impartial witnesses as far as the police and Home Office are concerned!

Apart from the usual police harassment such as being held in a cell for 36 hours after being charged,

and being denied a phone call even after he asked, Glen has to report to Birmingham City Centre police every day!

Building support in the black community and in the labour movement has proved to be the key to having a chance of success in anti-deportation campaigns in the past, and a Glen Hollomon Defence Campaign has been set up with this aim.

It can be contacted c/o Upper Flat, 355 Stratford Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham B11.

Irish picket

SUPPORTERS OF Muhammad Idrish will be picketing the Home Office on the afternoon of Thursday February 24th, in protest at the decision to deport him after the breakdown of his marriage to an English woman.

It will coincide with a delegation to see Home Office minister David Warburton, led by Idrish's MP Peter Snape.

The facts of the case were spelt out by Idrish himself at a public meeting called by Sandwell branch Labour Party on Friday 11th.

He came to Britain in 1976 as a student and met his future wife. After living together for 2 years they got married in May 1979. He was given leave to stay for 1 year and in May 1980 he applied for permanent leave to stay.

The Home Office kept his application for over a year and sent officials round to interview Mr and Mrs Idrish separately at work on several occasions. In a straight racist ploy, they suggested to her that it must be strange living with an Asian man, and with a Muslim.

In the autumn of 1981 the marriage broke down and within 3 weeks they ordered Idrish out of the country. He has been fighting for the right to stay ever since.

He stressed that he is not fighting just for himself but as part of the general struggle against the racist immigration and nationality laws.

Disowning Denning?

Officially the water authorities have reacted very sharply against Lord Denning's proposal for do-it-yourself scabbing on the water dispute.

A Thames Water Authority spokesperson said, "Lord Denning is retired and should stay that way". The National Water Council added, "Any customer who may consider taking the law into his own hands needs to be reminded it is a criminal offence to interfere with water authorities' supply pipes or apparatus".

And Severn-Trent water authority has said that it is con-

sidering legal action against some residents in Darley Abbey, Derby, who attempted a do-it-yourself repair to a burst water main.

But the Daily Express has taken up Denning's call enthusiastically. It is clearly a rallying cry which touches a chord with the Thatcherite middle class.

And evidence is growing that in many cases water authorities - having covered their backs by strong formal statements - are turning a blind eye to do-it-yourself scabs. Vigilance by pickets is the only way to beat this scabbing.

Discussing union democracy

THIS SATURDAY, 19th, in County Hall, London, trade unionists will meet at the invitation of the Broad Left Organising Committee to discuss 'Democratising the Block Vote'.

The impulse for this came from recent struggles in the Labour Party. But democratising the block vote means democratising the unions throughout.

A first, smaller, initiative on these lines was a conference called jointly by Socialist Organiser and

London Labour Briefing last April. At this conference we adopted a draft platform for union democracy, which contains some ideas perhaps worth discussing on Saturday.

TUC and Labour Party conference delegations should be bound to follow union policy where it exists, it argued.

There should be democratic control of the block vote cast a Labour Party conference: delegations should be elected and cons-

ist of lay members. Members of all working class parties and tendencies should be eligible for inclusion in the delegation.

Control

But such measures can have little effect unless the whole union apparatus is brought under rank and file control.

All officials should be elected for definite terms [no more than two years] and subject to recall at any

time. Full-time officials should be paid the average wage in their industry.

Union policy-making bodies should be made up of elected lay members only. The same should go for Standing Orders Committees and Appeals Committees.

Full minutes and voting records of policy-making bodies should be circulated.

National delegate conferences should be held every year and should have

supreme policy-making power.

Voting should be at workplace meetings or by workplace ballot. It should not be by postal ballot. We want informed, collective working class decision-making, not ballots manipulated by Fleet Street lie-machines.

Election addresses must be circulated unaltered, and candidates and their supporters must have unrestricted rights to circulate literature.

DEMONSTRATE

Sunday 27
March



12 noon
Assemble
Jubilee
Gardens
near
Waterloo
Station

CAMPAIGN AGAINST RACIST LAWS
 ■ Repeal the Immigration and Nationality Acts
 ■ Stop race checks ■ Stop racist deportations
 ■ Unite the divided families now

In brief

SOUTH Africa's Foreign Minister Roelof Botha last month admitted that there is an agreement between his government and the USA for the stationing of Cruise missiles in South Africa.

The announcement followed on an unsuccessful tour of black Africa by vice-president George Bush, who came under repeated pressure as a result of the USA's staunch support for South Africa and its military aggression in Namibia, Angola and Mozambique.

Reagan has encouraged the apartheid rulers to stand by their insistence that Cuban troops be withdrawn from Angola as a precondition for any negotiations on the independence of the South African 'province' of Namibia.

By planning the introduction of Cruise missiles — with a range of 1600 miles and nuclear warheads — the Pentagon/Pretoria alliance steps up this threat — and brings other black African countries into range.

Far from seeking arms limitation or a restriction of the nuclear threat, the US imperialists are intent upon spreading that threat into the continent of Africa.

TUCKED away out of the limelight while newspapers headlined the plight of the two million foreign nationals expelled from Nigeria was news of more immediate concern to the imperialist leaders.

While penniless men, women and children flooded across its borders to a future of destitution, Nigeria's right wing government was signing a £200 million deal to purchase 18 Anglo-French Jaguar fighter planes.

Competition for the order had been fierce, with the USA, Soviet Union and the French Dassault corporation in the bidding. No doubt the profits from this deal will pile still more food on the tables of British and French bankers and industrialists, at the expense of the workers and peasants of Nigeria and West Africa as a whole.

DRACONIAN provincial decree laws depriving trade unionists of the right to strike until 1985 and cutting public employees' wages by up to 20% sparked a tide of illegal strike action in Quebec last month.

66,000 hospital manual workers came out on strike on January 31, joining over 100,000 other public sector workers already engaged in a wave of strikes which paralysed schools and government services.

On January 29, 400,000 Quebec workers had marched in a resounding show of resistance to the legislation. Every striker faces fines of \$25 to \$100 a day — while union leaders can be penalised for \$1,000 to \$10,000 a day, and unions stand to forfeit \$5,000-\$50,000 for every day of the action.

Last year one union faced a bill of \$4 million following a one-day hospital strike.

The government of Prime Minister Rene Levesque has threatened to sack strikers — exploiting the present 15% unemployment in Quebec.



“On the ruins of the Khomeini regime we can establish democracy”

In the second part of an interview with Mary Corbishley, Hassan Ghazi of the European Committee of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran discusses the National Council for Resistance

What is the attitude of the KDP to other political forces both in Kurdistan and in Iran. In particular, why did you join the National Council of Resistance, especially since Bani-Sadr, a central figure in the NCR, was originally part of the Khomeini regime and responsible for the early bombardments in Kurdistan?

We don't believe in a one party system. As a result of the escalation of the struggle after the Shah's downfall we declared that all different political groupings should present their programme for Kurdistan and it's up to the Kurdish people to decide which one to follow.

As regards our relations with other political groups in Kurdistan, this is shown by our positive approach to a joint negotiating body representing the Kurdish people which was set up in the first round of negotiations with central government in 1979. This committee consisted of KDPI, KOMALA (Revolutionary Organisation of Toilers), and the Fedayeen Kurdish section, and was chaired by Sheik Azzedin Hossein (a progressive cleric who is a leading political figure in the Kurdish movement).

We are prepared to fight

with any progressive force fighting Khomeini's regime and KOMALA has its roots in the Kurdish people. But in our assessment KOMALA don't take into consideration the reality of the Kurdish struggle. They just impose sometimes their subjective analysis of objective conditions and that is why they are not able to establish a correct relationship with KDPI.

In the last offensive around Sardasht we engaged in joint military actions with KOMALA and in some cases the Peshmergas of the KDP were put under the command of the KOMALA Peshmergas, but unfortunately this has not developed into any ongoing joint action. I think it is for the KOMALA comrades to answer this.

Our relationship with the Mujahedeen goes back to before the establishment of the National Council of Resistance. Right at the beginning we thought it necessary to have a broad based front of all progressive forces in Iran in order to fight imperialism and advance the struggle of the Iranian masses. We proposed this to the Mujahedeen and to the Fedayeen before they split (the majority support the Khomeini regime).

The National Council of Resistance was originally based on al programme presented by Bani-Sadr which was not acceptable to the KDPI and we declared this in a letter to Rajavi (leader of the Mujahedeen). It was not acceptable because it was in the context of a constitution adopted by Khomeini. As a result this programme was abolished and a new one adopted, drawn up by the Mujahedeen. This is a transitional programme for the Islamic democratic republic of Iran.

We found out that our demands for democracy in Iran and autonomy for the Kurds can be matched with the principles laid down in the programme of the NCR. That is why we joined it.

I don't know if you have followed the developments of the NCR. This resulted in new amendments to the NCR programme — autonomy for Kurdistan was included in the immediate tasks of a provisional government.

As far as the acceptance of Mr Bani-Sadr by the KDPI and his past involvement in oppressing the Kurdish people, we declared at the beginning when Bani-Sadr was ousted from government that although we have our reservations about Bani-Sadr and we hold him responsible for some of the acts in Kurdistan, this activity in exposing some of the policies of the Mullahs and his refusal to remain in power by submitting to their will and implementing their wishes could be turned to the benefit of the Iranian people because we don't see the problems of such coalitions in a moral sense.

Of course he has been responsible for events in Kurdistan but what is important is the continuation of the struggle in which Bani-

Sadr can play a role. Bani-Sadr has switched sides, not us. We are in the same place. He has accepted our terms, not we his.

What is the role of the NCR in the opposition to the regime in Iran. How can you guarantee that their proposed government will meet your demands?

The present situation for the Iranian opposition is one where the ruling government is in a situation of turmoil and crisis. The opposition has translated itself into the formation of the NCR. At the same time there are forces which have not yet joined the NCR.

We hope that the great majority of the opposition, in order to guarantee the democratic ideals we are all struggling for, can join the NCR so that on the ruins of the Khomeini regime we can establish a democratic regime for Iran.

The Khomeini regime is attempting to cover up internal problems by continuing the war with Iraq, using money from the oil which is sold cheaply on the world market. It cannot last long.

There are other moves connected with foreign powers in the area for example, the monarchists who consider themselves an alternative, but I don't see any chance for them. They have no base in Iran, they belong to history.

The circle of history cannot go back and that is why Khomeini's regime cannot consolidate its grip over the Iranian people.

The NCR considers itself a provisional government to be in power for six months, and during this period preparations will be made for a general election to choose a constituent assembly. This constituent assembly

will decide about the future system and will give people a chance to choose what sort of government they want and what sort of society they want.

The KDP was formed as a result of the demands and aspirations of Kurdish people and as long as their demands are not met the KDP will continue.

Should their demands be granted it may come to a point where the social and political demands of different strata of society can no longer co-exist. I think as we believe in a true democratic system this means that the great majority of the people will take their destiny in their own hands. In a situation where the Kurdish people's demands have been met we are prepared to continue the struggle.

The KDP central committee agreed recently that our tactic now is to strengthen the NCR so that it becomes much more known to the people inside Iran and established as a democratic alternative to the present regime. Practically this means drawing new forces into the NCR and also opening up a new front in Iran to back up the present struggle in Iranian Kurdistan.

The political work of the NCR must be to expose the Khomeini regime. As far as the KDP is concerned we are trying to escalate our military actions. We have now gone onto the offensive and will continue until the end of the Khomeini. Of course our actions alone will not result in the toppling of the regime. It has to be in conjunction with other actions in the rest of Iran.

West Coast plans a welcome

THE San Francisco AFL-CIO Labor Council has endorsed a mass protest rally on March 3 in San Francisco when president Reagan hosts the Queen of England at a state dinner.

The dinner arrangements which are estimated to cost two million dollars will be held in the Golden Gate Park in San Francisco and the FBI and Secret Service are already trying to close off the entire park to any protest organised by community groups and the trade union movement.

The Irish community is also joining and helping to organise the mass protest. They are already making plans to have a naval blockade of the Queen's boat Britannia when it docks at Treasure Island near San Francisco.

A trade union support committee has sent out a letter to over 300 trade union locals to support the demonstration with banners and pickets and in some locals, efforts are being made to support a one-day work stoppage to protest Reagan's policies. In Local 2 of the 15,000 member Hotel and Restaurant Workers, the Committee for Workers Control is introducing a motion at the upcoming union meeting for a large contingent at the protest and a one-day work stoppage of the entire labour movement including Local 2.

The Local 2 members are also supposed to be serving Reagan and the Queen at the State dinner so efforts are being made to make sure they have a "proper" reception. Last year over 6000 people protested Duarte when he was in San Francisco and many of the union food servers walked out of the dinner to protest Duarte's visit to the bay area.

While the local AFL-CIO leadership is supporting the demonstration, they along with the national leadership of the AFL-CIO refuse to support any strike action locally or nationally in opposition to Reagan's attack on the working class.

The Queen will be hosted not only by Reagan but also by the Democratic mayor of San Francisco, Diane Feinstein. Feinstein, who hopes to run as vice-president with Democrat Walter Mondale, is now fighting for her political life after a recall movement successfully got over 35,000 signatures demanding her recall because of her attempt to ban hand guns in San Francisco.

The law was ruled unconstitutional and since that she has vetoed a reproductive rights resolution, a bill giving non-married domestic partners equal rights and has helped to support hotel speculators (she herself is a hotel owner) and condominium speculators from any controls or restrictions.

The Democratic mayor is now faced with the real possibility that there will be a close vote to recall her and that her co-hosting of the Queen of England with Reagan will help the recall movement.

Where the 'reds' torture communists

Bombay strikers fight on

Paraguay's dictator Stroessner recently extended his rule for another five years. A special correspondent describes the background



Stroessner: dictator for 34 years

ON SUNDAY 6th Paraguayans went to the polls to 're-elect' General Alfredo Stroessner for his seventh consecutive term of office. Already the longest-surviving dictator in Latin America, by 1988 Stroessner will have ruled Paraguay for a remarkable 34 years. Only top army Generals and leading politicians of the ruling Colorado Party, many of them immensely

wealthy from corruption and contraband operations, had any say in Stroessner's reselection. The mass of the Paraguayan people went to the urns only to formalise it. The campaign for the 1983

elections repeated the pattern of of previous years. Opposition party activists were arrested, tortured and exiled.

Only a tiny fraction of the Liberal Party, long-rumoured to receive funds from Stroessner, participated in the elections to ensure a democratic facade. The four main opposition parties, the Authentic Radical Liberal Party, the Christian Democrats, the Febreristas and MOPOCO, who three years ago formed the National Accord, have called for abstention.

On December 17 Domingo Laino, one of the bravest critics of the dictatorship, was expelled from the country for the publication of his new book 'The Merchant General', about the life of Stroessner's former friend and political ally, Anastasio Somoza. Somoza fled to Paraguay after the victory of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and was assassinated in Asuncion in September 1980.

Liano's book is reported to have been an account of Somoza's business dealings in Asuncion which may have embarrassed leading Paraguayans. All copies

were confiscated by the police.

Predictably, pressures on Stroessner to liberalise the regime were reduced with the arrival of Reagan's Presidency. At the end of 1981, US military aid was renewed after its temporary suspension under Carter, and in 1982 General John W Vessey, second in command of US Army Staff, travelled to Asuncion to promise an increase in military aid.

Catholic

Paraguay has long been a central member of the World Anti-Communist League, and has always enjoyed close relationships with South Africa and Nationalist China. In a rare interview with a French magazine, Stroessner recently explained that: 'Paraguayans are Catholics and traditionalists; they love and defend their freedom. We in the Colorado Party and the Army interpret those feelings, and with political conviction and a humane sensitivity we fight against Communism.'

But there is routine use of torture for all detainees, including even traffic offenders. Amnesty International reports the case of Margita Baez, an activist in the Peasant Leagues, who was said to have been tortured for 80 successive days. This left her suffering from severe psychological disorders.

When her defence lawyer requested a medical examination, he was beaten and kicked by Pastor Coronel, the Chief of Investigations, reportedly in anger at the suggestion that Margarita had been tortured?

More evidence that nothing has changed in Paraguay is given by the tragic cases of ex-Secretary General of the Paraguayan Communist Party, Antonio Maidana, and the continued detention of Napoleon Ortigoza and Guillermo Ovando.

Maidana was released after 19 years in prison in 1977, only to be re-arrested in Buenos Aires in August 1980. Despite rumours that Maidana had been transferred to Paraguay, it is now thought that he may be another addition to the list of disappeared in Argentina.

Militant

Twenty years ago, Captain Ortigoza and Sergeant Ovando were charged with the murder of a cadet, when, according to the London-based Paraguay Committee for Human Rights, all the evidence points to the two being framed.

Ovando completed his sentence four years ago, while Ortigoza remains suicidal, subject to constant beating and abandoned by his wife and family.

One ray of hope is the possible emergence of a more militant sector within the



labour movement. Ever since 1958 when the General Strike was crushed by the arrest of 300 union leaders, the Paraguayan Workers' Federation, the CTP, has been under the close control of the Colorado Party, with internal elections constantly fixed in favour of pro-government candidates.

After the last of these in April 1981, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions pulled out of Paraguay in protest against the lack of political independence of the CTP and the undemocratic conduct of the elections.

However, in September of last year, the local Coca-Cola company attempted to sack 7 leaders of SITRAPAR, one of the more active and independent unions. Seventeen other unions formed a combined campaign against the sacking by organising a consumer boycott of Coca-Cola, which resulted in a drop in sales of 50%. The company was soon forced to reinstate its employees.

A key question in 1983 is whether the Stroessner regime can stop the recession in the Paraguayan economy. After 8 years of an annual average GDP growth of 9%, last year witnessed a drop of 2.5% - the worst figures for 30 years.

The elections, on the other hand, were just a cosmetic exercise. In the words of the leading Febrerista, Euclides Acevedo, they are 'just one big yawn. Everybody knows the results beforehand...'

A QUARTER of a million textile workers in Bombay have been on strike for over a year now.

This huge struggle is demanding a 50% wage rise and other concessions, but its main aim is to break the grip of the RMMS - a union controlled by the ruling Congress (I) Party - and win recognition for a more militant union, the MGKU.

Mill committees and strike centres have been set up, creating a real rank and file leadership for the strike. Many of the textile workers have strong roots in the countryside. As the strike has dragged on, more than 70% of them have gone home. This is common practice in India.

But this time the workers who have gone back to the villages have become propagandists. They have formed support committees and sent material aid back to the 70,000 workers and their families who have stayed in Bombay.

In addition, they have spread the spirit of militant struggle into the rural areas by participating in and organising struggles of agricultural workers for higher wages and against corruption in the Maharashtra state government's Employment Guarantee Scheme.

Big solidarity actions have also been organised in Bombay. On October 11-13 one and a half million workers all over Maharashtra state struck for three days. In May, a march in Bombay drew 500,000; in mid-March, and on October 2, public rallies drew 300,000 or more.

No negotiations have ever been held, mainly because of pressure from the government. The strike is still solid, with 60 mills shut down and losses estimated by the employers at £700 million.

Solidarity messages and financial aid should be sent to: Maharashtra Girni Kamgar Union, 252 Janata Colony, Ghatkopar (East), Bombay, 400077, India.

*Information from an article by Amar Jesani and Kunal Chatto padhyay in Intercontinental Press, January 17 1983.

Israel's concentration camps

From our correspondent in Haifa

ISRAEL DOESN'T recognise the Palestinians and Lebanese captured in its invasion of Lebanon as prisoners of war. Nor does it even bring them to military trial as it is doing with resistance militants inside Palestine.

For more than seven months now many thousands have been held, denied any of the human rights provided by basic international conventions, even a full list of names of those imprisoned has not been given to the Red Cross.

The PLO, on its side, has made a point of giving all POW rights to its eight Israeli soldiers captured as it did formerly with others during the harsh days of the blockades of Beirut.

Nor are all the Palestinians and Lebanese held necessarily fighters. Some are political activists, others are doctors, teachers, social workers etc.

Al-Anzar, where some 5000 are held today is not a prison, nor a prisoner of war camp. It could only be called a concentration camp.

On January 18, a manifesto of the Al-Anzar prisoners was published in

Beirut. It tells the story of daily torture, constant hunger, lack of water, cold and lack of elementary medical treatment.

Many prisoners got badly ill and some died, one of them a 9 year old called Imad. The manifesto goes on to describe the repression of any protest at the harsh conditions.

On September 28 many of the prisoners had been wounded as they had been shot at. On December 3 Omar abu-al-gol and Muh-

amed Diab were shot to death.

At the end of their manifesto, the prisoners turn to the world's public opinion and to all well-wishers to act to put an end to save the lives of thousands of prisoners in Israeli prisons and camps.

Villagers from Al-Anzar found a mass grave with the bodies of 15 youth that were imprisoned in the Al-Anzar camp. Israeli occupation forces threatened the village if they disclosed it.

ON JANUARY 22, 80 Palestinian political prisoners at the Nafha jail in the Negev began a partial hunger strike to protest the 'constant hunger' to which they are subject in prison. They say their strike will continue until their demands are met. They are eating bread and drinking water but refusing all other food.

In another recent incident in the camp, guards shot and killed three more prisoners and wounded others.



As the Israeli army occupied Lebanon, they marched off hundreds of prisoners - including many of the few doctors in the country

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.

Ban plastic bullets!

NIALL POWER, secretary of the Labour Committee on Ireland, spoke to Dave Lunts about the 'Ban Plastic Bullets' conference on February 26

The original idea was suggested by Manchester LCI after the Labour Party conference decision last October to launch a campaign to ban plastic bullets.

LCI nationally, and others, then agreed to support the conference.

We soon got a wide range of sponsors, including Ken Livingstone, Tony Benn, and many MPs.

The most important reason for the conference is the refusal of the Labour Party leadership to act on last October's resolution. Just minutes after the vote then, Don Concannon was interviewed on the radio and discounted the result, saying that he as Labour Party front bench spokesperson on Ireland would ignore it.

Since then he has often spoken in favour of plastic bullets.

The NEC, too, has refused even to sponsor our conference.

But there is widespread opposition to plastic bullets. 14 have now been killed by them in Northern Ireland, and hundreds injured. And in Britain they are being stockpiled following the riots in 1981.

Obviously the key target of the conference is trade union and Labour Party activists, but with the emphasis on delegates who can then report back.

We have been able to win a far wider audience for a discussion on Ireland than has been possible before.

NUPE, South Wales NUM, many ASTMS districts and branches, district committees of the AUEW, trades councils, many Labour Parties and union branches are among the sponsors.

We have also tried with some success to link up the Irish community with the labour movement audience, by contacting county associations, clubs, Friends of Ireland groups, etc.

What are we hoping to get from the conference? Firstly, a useful and wide-ranging discussion, not just on plastic bullets. We'll have a unique platform, which includes Sinn Fein, various black organisations, ex-soldiers, even some Greens from West Germany.

In fact, half the conference is dealing with the social and political context of the plastic bullets issue.

It will also provide a useful and positive profile for the LCI. We'll be active at the conference with a leaflet, bookstall, and recruiting desk.

Thirdly, we'll be stressing the importance of report-backs by delegates. This can extend the discussion, and also lead to resolutions to trade union and Labour Party conferences.

Linked to this is the fight to get rid of Concannon, and to build up to the next Labour Party conference.

Speakers will include Owen Carron, Kathleen Stewart (whose son Brian was killed by a plastic bullet), Jonathan Rosenhead of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science, Mary Holland, Clive Soley, and Rosemary Sales. But we hope that the main bulk of the conference will be discussion time.

There'll be a fully equipped creche and a buffet lunch.

Apply for delegates' credentials now: £3 from Plastic Bullets Conference, Box 15, 164-6 Hanging Ditch, Manchester M3 4BN. Observers are also welcome. The conference is on Saturday February 26, starting 11am at UMIST, Barnes Wallis Building, Sackville St., Manchester 1.

Why we must support the Catholics

Last year's Labour Party conference voted for a ban on plastic bullets — but against calls for troops out and self-determination for Ireland. Supporting the Catholic revolt is the only consistent position for socialists, argues JOHN O'MAHONY

SOCIALIST Organiser has consistently — though not uncritically — supported the Catholic revolt in Northern Ireland.

From the 1960s Britain has aimed to create a new set of political structures in Northern Ireland. For now this means beating down the Catholic revolt, and thereby placating the Protestant majority (65% of the Six County population). It involves defending and sustaining the Partition 'settlement' of 1920 which created the artificial Six County state.

For fifty years the Six Counties had a vile, discriminatory and oppressive system of Protestant sectarian rule over the Catholic minority (35% — bigger as a percentage of the Six County population than the Protestants would be of all Ireland). For 14 years it has been in a permanent state of incipient civil war.

Throughout it has been a communal beargarden, in which the Protestant-Catholic antagonisms could only be intensified.

Britain has maintained this state, alternating between 'concessions' to the Catholics (1969, 1972-4) and attempts to throw the full military and political weight of the UK at them — by internment, 1971; by withdrawal of political status by the Labour government, 1976; by the system of permanent harranging of the Catholic population by house 'searches' (wreckings); by special laws; and by beating and torture of the Catholics who actively or passively support the IRA.

British strategy cannot succeed. The Catholics have



"The Catholics are determined that their revolt will not be beaten down, bought off, or cajoled away..."

refused to be beaten down. 50 years as second-class citizens within the Orange-ruled ghetto steeled and hardened the attitude of a large section of the Catholics into an unbreakable determination that their revolt will not subside or be beaten down, bought off, or cajoled away, short of their goal. From this also comes the ruthlessness of their military campaign.

The Protestants refuse to settle for anything less than restoration of Protestant supremacist rule.

The Six County state was custom-built to give a compact Protestant majority permanent rule. But now the old Protestant supremacy has been made unworkable by the Catholic revolt. A modified version of the Six County state is made impossible by the Protestants' rejection of it (and by the hostility to it of a sizeable section of the Catholics).

deliberately drawn by Britain — against the wishes of three quarters of the Irish people — to give a permanent Protestant majority. The only majority rule that majority wants is Protestant sectarian rule.

Since March 1972 Britain has refused to agree to this. It has allowed only one role for the majority — to veto any change in the state unit that broke down back in 1969.

The British government itself has not recognised the democratic validity of the Six County unit for internal Northern Ireland politics. When Ian Paisley and others demand 'democracy' and 'majority rule' in the Six Counties, logic is on their side against the British government — if the Six County unit has democratic validity.

It doesn't. The framework for securing the democratic rights of the Protestant community in Ireland is an all-Irish framework, within which the people of Ireland can arrange their own affairs free from British interference and from the profoundly undemocratic and artificial Six County unit carved out by Britain in 1920.

The armed struggle of the IRA is denounced by many as 'terrorism'. But, whether we would advise these methods or not, the Catholic community, for 50 years imprisoned and kept down by naked sectarian force and then for the last 14 years subjected to the harassment of the British Army, has a right to fight back.

The armed offensive of the Republicans grew out of the mass Catholic civil rights movement when that movement came up against Prot-

estant pogroms and the taking of control by the British Army in 1969. It has had mass support — the recent electoral success of the Provisional IRA probably under-represented that support within the Catholic community.

Without the armed Catholic offensive of the early '70s, the Protestant sectarian system of rule in the Six Counties would not have been destroyed.

The only solution is to break the Six County framework and seek the broader framework of a united Ireland. The Catholics, as well as being the most oppressed, are also the most progressive force in this situation.

The fact that their revolt antagonises the masses of Protestants is something built into the sectarian state at its foundations.

Almost everywhere, oppressed minorities begin with the desire for unity with the surrounding society on the basis of equality and democracy. But that is just what is not on offer. The choice then is to wait patiently or to struggle.

The struggle should — if socialists lead it — be conducted so as to minimise the exacerbation. But when struggles like that of the oppressed Catholics erupt, under whatever leadership and guided by whatever conceptions, they are entitled to the support of socialists and democrats.

For socialists in Britain — the long-time oppressor of Ireland, the main creator of the Six County state, and now the country whose army is in occupation, this is a matter of basic principle.

Justice in Northern Ireland is fundamentally on the side of the Catholics. Withdrawal of British troops, and victory for the goal of the Catholics and of their Republican parties and militias, to break down the artificial Six County framework and to unite Ireland, is the only way to end the conflict.

Whitewashing the Beirut massacre

Tony Greenstein looks at the Kahan report

TO JUDGE by the response of the British media, the Kahan Commission's report on the Sabra and Chatila massacres is living proof of the vitality of Israel's democracy.

Liberals have fallen over

themselves to praise Kahan, comparing it favourably to our own Franks report. They ignore the fact that Thatcher won a complete military victory in the Malvinas, with minimal opposition at home, whereas Begin's invasion, although a military victory in the strictest sense, has been a political nightmare.

Israel's official casualties are 460 dead and over 2,000 wounded. For a country of Israel's size this is the equivalent of 9,000 dead and 40,000 wounded for Britain.

Begin's war has also produced unprecedented dissent within the Zionist movement

itself. Divisions within Israel's ruling class were and are big, with perhaps a majority convinced that Sharon and Begin have, in laying siege to and entering Beirut, damaged Israel's interests, particularly its relations with the US.

Israel's attack on Lebanon, and its encirclement of an Arab capital, tended to, and in some ways was meant to, disrupt the US's relations with the Saudi and other regimes. It ran counter to Reagan's attempt to bring the Israeli state and these regimes closer together.

Nevertheless, the Arab

regimes are not that unhappy about the results of Israel's action in Lebanon.

Kahan must be seen in the context of the contradictions of Israel's relations with the US — without which it could not survive economically or militarily.

Kahan is a creature of the Israeli Labour opposition, aided by the liberal faction in the Likud coalition. 'Peace Now', with its demonstration of 400,000 after the massacres, crystallised that opposition, just as it did when it seemed that the Camp David accords might be jettisoned by Begin and

the Herut right — and Israel's special relationship with the US along with it.

Kahan is in context as much of an establishment cover-up as Franks was.

It offers up a few sacrificial victims as the price of continued US support. But on the crucial question of Israel's intentions and motivations leading up to Sabra and Chatila, the report finds that "no intention existed on the part of anyone who acted on behalf of Israel to harm the non-combatant population".

Kahan 'forgets' the mass bombing of Beirut, Tyre and

Sidon, with napalm, fragmentation, vacuum and phosphorus bombs. And it does not comment on Israel's relation with the Phalangists, nor its policy of using the Phalange and Major Haddad's forces to rid the south of any Palestinian presence.

Even now, the defenceless Palestinian population in the south — who are mainly women and children, as the adult males have been interned in Israel's new concentration camps — are daily falling victim to Phalangist murder squads, as the Israelis stand by.

Kahan portrays Sabra and Chatila as the one blemish in an otherwise 'clean' war. And it picks out three people to take the rap — two military officers, one of them the Beirut divisional commander Brigadier Yaron, and defence minister Sharon — even though Begin and foreign minister Shamir clearly had early knowledge of the massacres.

In naming Sharon, whom the Americans wished to see go anyway, Kahan has in effect legitimised the whole war, and the Zionist state that waged that war.

The irony is that Sharon still retains his position in the Cabinet, and as an adviser noted, his sights are in any case set higher than the defence ministry. He is after Begin's job next, and that is perhaps a fitting epitaph to the Kahan report.

Belgrano: double scandal

THE FRANKS report has come and gone, but Labour MP Tam Dalyell continues his one-man crusade to prise out the facts behind the sinking of the Argentine battleship the General Belgrano by the British submarine Conqueror.

Investigations have shown that the Belgrano was not only outside the 'exclusion zone' but sailing away from the British task force when it was hit without warning by two torpedoes.

But more significant, Dalyell is insisting that there is evidence that the Belgrano was sunk in order to scuttle Peruvian proposals for a negotiated settlement, and after Thatcher had been informed that the Argentine junta had been persuaded to withdraw its troops from the Falklands.

The decision to sink the battleship was taken by Thatcher personally during lunch at Chequers — and took place only after the submarine had followed the Belgrano for 24 hours.

It was a decision to disrupt moves towards a peaceful settlement and embark upon an all-out war. It cost directly

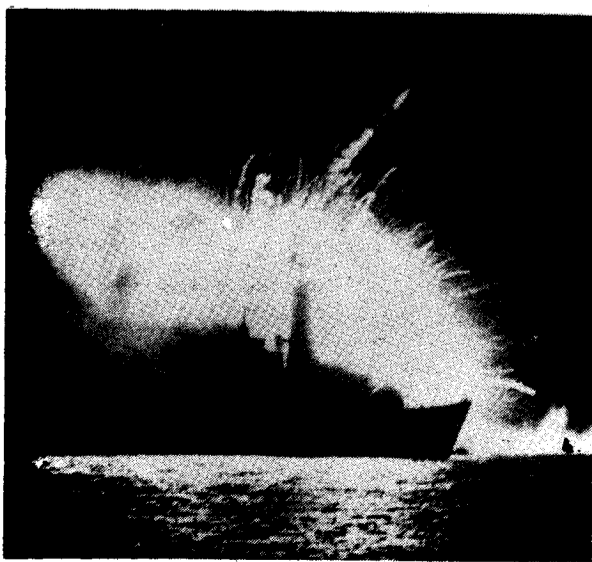
the lives of hundreds of Argentine sailors, and in the ensuing war hundreds more lives on both sides.

In real terms it was a war consciously begun by the leaders of British imperialism — for military and political prestige, and to strike the fear of military retribution into the leaders of government in the 'Third World'.

Dalyell is demanding a tribunal investigate further details of this episode. In view of the massive government cover-up, it is a reasonable demand.

But the labour movement should also be asking rather different questions. While Thatcher launched the war in the pursuit of political power and prestige, the Labour leadership shamelessly fell in behind the jingoism, and — in the case of Peter Shore — voiced opinions even more extreme than sections of the Tory party.

Why have they not been called to account by the Labour Party? And why now is it left to Dalyell (no left-winger!) to fight an almost single-handed campaign to draw out the facts?



Divorce 'reform' is a threat to women

A new change in divorce law will remove women's right to maintenance payments.

Debbie Cameron calls for resistance



When married bliss turns sour, what economic alternatives will women have?

THE LAW Commission, whose function is to see that legislation is kept up to date, recently recommended that the divorce law should be reformed, and a bill will be presented in this Parliamentary session.

Although the proposals contained in the bill seriously undermine the financial position of women, the Labour Party does not intend to oppose it.

Under the present law, you have to be married for three years before seeking divorce by mutual consent. In the settlement, the judge tries to leave both parties in the same position financially as if the marriage had not been terminated: what this means in practice is that men have some obligation to support their ex-wives, as well as to maintain their children.

The new proposals will allow divorce petitions after one year, something which most people will welcome. However, their main effect is to deprive women of their right to maintenance.

Although they may get transitional payments while

they retrain (whatever for, with the economy in its present state?) eventually women will be 'encouraged', ie forced, to support themselves without any help from their ex-husbands.

This particular change has met with widespread approval. A few dissenting voices have pointed out that women, knowing they may

have to face enforced economic independence, might irresponsibly choose to keep on working during their marriages and refuse to be full time housewives; but in general the verdict has been that if we believe in equality, we cannot expect men to provide life-long mealtickets.

And of course, feminists do believe in women's

equality and independence from men. The trouble is, it hasn't yet arrived.

The ex-wife will be discriminated against in the labour market (even without four million unemployed, her lack of skills and experience make her unattractive to employers), restricted by the lack of child care facilities and ghettoised, supposing she can get a job at all, in one of the low-pay areas where women workers are concentrated.

In other words, the Tories expect women to start supporting themselves in an economy where femaleness equals an instant disadvantage. They want to get us out of the home not by providing increased opportunities but by pulling the rug from under us.

We will have to accept any shitty job we can get, and our standard of living will inevitably fall, in some cases to the level of abject poverty.

And perhaps there is more to it than that. Behind the rhetoric of sex equality, if you look closely, there is an ideological as well as an economic attack on women. Men's rights, and the claims of the family, are actually being strengthened in these proposals.

Alimony

The Law commission admits that one major reason for the reform is to make remarriage easier for men. At present they are deterred from it by crippling alimony payments (so we are told; in fact the average alimony payment is rather low, and many men default).

Women, too, will find remarriage tempting, since

their financial position after divorce will be precarious. So although in this imperfect world the family sometimes breaks down, by making men less responsible and women less privileged, you can quietly shore it up, and present this coercion as increased freedom of choice.

It is also clear that husbands will now be able to intimidate their wives with the threat of divorce and poverty. Women's refuges know already that many women are trapped in violent relationships by economic dependence: now many more women are many more marriages will be tainted with this blackmail. The net result: more power to men, more power

to the family.

Finally, seasoned campaigners cannot overlook the presence in this crusade for reform of Leo Abse, the sinister advocate of father's rights who will champion the bill in the Commons. Mr Abse, a notable anti-feminist, must be hoping that women will be driven by lack of money and resources to hand over custody of their children without a fight.

Confusion

After all, with remarriage made easier, men will have little trouble getting a new wife and mother to do the work of looking after their children.

Perhaps the most appalling thing revealed by these proposals is the confusion of the Left. Joan Lestor, who was to have been a sponsor along with Mr Abse, withdrew her support on the grounds that the law would affect the welfare of children. (The implication is that Ms Lestor fears an upsurge in the number of mothers deserting their children for waged work: if that isn't what she means, she had better spell it out!)

Nevertheless the Labour Party welcomes in principle the idea that women should lose their right to maintenance. Only a hardened cynic would dream of asking why, in that case, Labour is not demanding an end to all the other laws which enforce female dependence, such as the tax laws, the Social Security Cohabitation rule and the Nationality Act.

Ordinary women, for whom sex equality has come under successive governments to look more and more like a sick joke, will wonder what world Joan Lestor and the Labour establishment are living in. Ultimately, of course feminists and socialists must work towards women's independence from men and their full participation in the economy (suitably restructured so both sexes can share domestic work and childcare!)

In the short term, however, we must defend what rights we have, and not accept piecemeal changes that worsen our position.

Debbie Cameron



Equality... but who pushes the pram?

Equal pay obstacle course

NORMAN Tebbit's anti-union legislation and Green Paper have attracted a great deal of publicity and rhetoric from union leaders.

But fewer workers will be aware that Tebbit's laughably mis-named "Department of Employment" is

also pressing through proposals for amending the Equal Pay Act.

This follows a ruling in the European Court that existing provisions for equal value claims — requiring them to be based upon job evaluation exercises — are too restrictive

to meet section 119 of the EEC Treaty of Rome.

Tebbit however is proposing not new legislation but a consultative draft order which will be simply put to Parliament for approval or rejection — thus avoiding full debate and the possibility of

amendment.

The result would be a baffling and timewasting obstacle race involving industrial tribunals and bewildering criteria, ACAS and the Central Arbitration Committee, hundreds of pounds in legal expenses and little likelihood of

achieving equal pay.

In criticising Tebbit's proposals, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the TUC have focussed on the fact that it sees the principle of "equal pay for work of equal value" not as a starting point but as a last

The government's proposals.

1) Equal pay claims to be made to industrial tribunals (as at present).

2) Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) to attempt conciliation (as at present).

3) If conciliation fails, case to go to tribunal. If based on like work and fails because of differences of practical importance, tribunal to consider whether equal value claim should be pursued.

4) If job evaluation scheme has been carried out, present procedure would continue unless the tribunal was not satisfied with the validity of the scheme.

5) Case to go to a pre-hearing assessment to check that claim is reason-

able and that there is no obvious genuine material difference between the two cases. If the case is found to be unlikely to succeed the tribunal can warn the applicant that she could face costs if she persists with the case.

6) Case goes back to the tribunal which will recommend the parties to seek assistance of ACAS to establish the value of the two jobs through a job evaluation study of the two jobs concerned plus as many others as the parties consider necessary. Time limit (possibly six months extendable to nine), within which parties must report to the tribunal "whether they have made progress in assessing the value of the job".

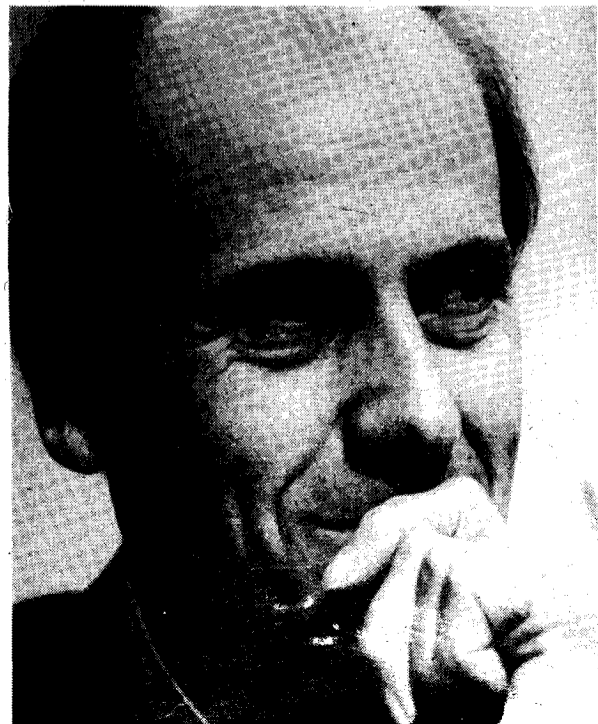
7) If ACAS finds jobs of

equal value, it is hoped that the employer will implement the results voluntarily.

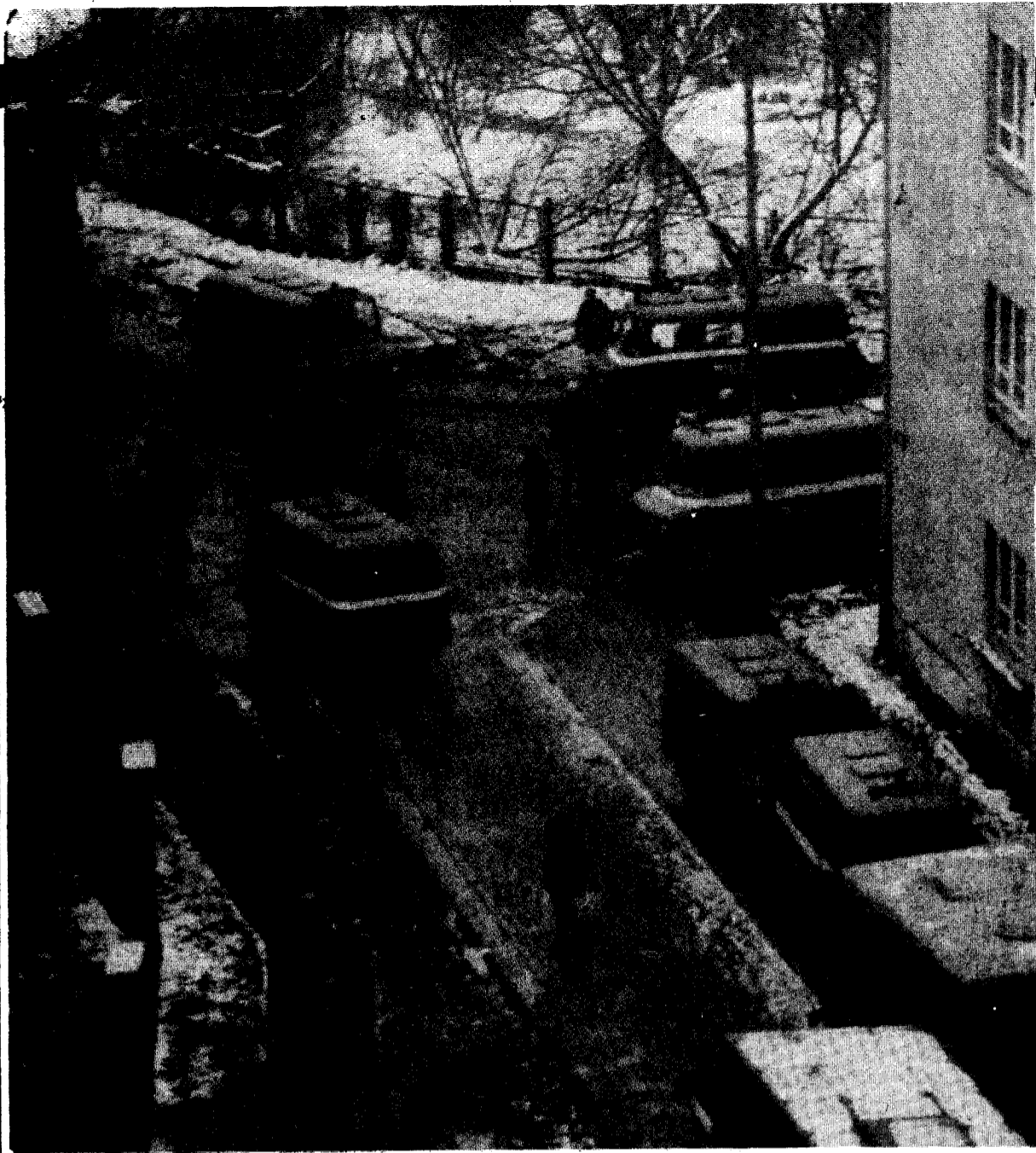
8) If parties not able to agree about the value of the jobs, case goes back to tribunal to decide whether jobs are of equal value.

9) If parties don't agree on the introduction of a job evaluation study, or the study is prevented from being carried out, the parties can refer the case back to the tribunal.

10) The tribunal can refer the case to an Independent Assessor chosen from a panel of names prepared in conjunction with ACAS and/or the Central Arbitration Committee. The tribunal will make a decision based on the assessor's report.



Source: Labour Research



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A POLISH MILITANT

Reprinted from the latest 'Voice of Solidarnosc' bulletin, from Solidarity Trade Union Working Group, c/o Acorn House, 314 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.

TOMORROW my 3-day doctor's note runs out, so I'll have to sit in my office again and count the hours until it's time to go home. Today I simply must take some paper to a friendly printer's, pick up some illegally bought printing blocks and make arrangements with a man who agreed to have a "post-box" for our bulletin at his home, then in the afternoon get in touch with the editors of Fighting Solidarnosc because there is quite a lot of information for them again.

At 7.40 I catch a tram to collect my Fiat 125 from the mechanic's; it started to play up yesterday and I need it for today. A mere 5,000 Zlotys (two-thirds of a month's salary) for changing a cog in the gear box, and then on to the petrol station. Ten litres of "yellow" (dearer) petrol, topped up with "blue" (Cheaper).

I drive along Powstancow Slaskich Street, glancing in the mirror now and then, but there's no-one following me.

A new housing estate, a large block of flats, I park further down the road, take two travelling bags and dive into the cellars. I know my way by heart: three lots of stairs to the left, turn right, and it's the second lock-up cellar.

Padlock

The padlock has stuck, it's still dark, but I don't want to turn on the light. The stock of paper is getting low. Only a week ago there were 35 reams. I fill the bags with 14 packets of paper, choosing the ones that aren't torn. Now we're down to grade 4 typing paper. We could do with the duplicating kind. I'll have to ask Wojtek. Maybe he has some stock left. Wojtek was nominally in charge of printing supplies, but in practice did everything: organised "post-boxes", distributed leaflets, delivered letters, and even did the printing when necessary. He ought to have some paper.

The padlock is on, the bags are full, but now there's someone shuffling down the stairs. I tell myself that I should have put the light on. I pretend that I live in this block and that this is my cellar. I go past an old man and skip lightly up the stairs, feeling that in a second either the handles on the bags will give way or my hands. Out of the door and into the car. Nonchalantly I toss the

bags onto the back seat and the Fiat sinks with a groan.

After a moment I get my breath back and drive off at top speed. In 15 minutes I'm almost at the "post-box" designated by the printers. I park round the corner. A detached house — this is it. I ring the bell in the agreed way, and an elderly woman opens the door. "Is Mr Piotrowski in? I've come to sand down the floors". I give the password. "I don't know anything about that; my son-in-law will be back tomorrow evening" — and the frightened woman shuts the door in my face. I curse through clenched teeth; Piotrowski has forgotten to tell his family the password. I'll have to tear him off a strip. What now? I can't drive around town with this paper until Piotrowski teaches the password to his mother-in-law.

Printer

I decide to take it straight to the printer's. One of them did in fact ask me not to come there, because I would give myself away, but my only choice is taking the paper back to the cellar or risking it and going to the printer's to get rid of this awkward load.

I drive to Lwowska Street. I ring the bell, and the door is opened by a man I don't think I know. I ask for Adam, since there is no password here. The man at the door pretends he is tich, and says I must have made a mistake. "Perhaps Adam left something for me," I try once more. A familiar, tousled head appears from one of the rooms. "Hello, Jurek," I greet him over the confused doorman's shoulder. "Get in here and shut the door," says he in reply. You can already smell ink in the corridor. Jurek, in a stained white overall, introduces his co-printer: Lofty, Adam's brother. He got the blocks three days later than usual, because the "post-box" had to leave for a funeral, and on top of that, Adam's rich relatives came to stay — they are so scared you can't even show them independent publications.

Postboxes

This means the printing is four days behind. The "postboxes" who distribute the bulletin are hopping mad, because the collectors have come a few times for nothing and say they are risking their lives.

I run to get the bags from the car. "Thank good-

ness you brought them here, because Piotrowski brings us paper only when he feels like it," complain the printers.

"Last week Lofty brought us three reams from work himself and saved our bacon, so now we don't have to worry for another three weeks." I want to leave, but the printers keep giving me more information for the editors. I tell them to write down everything they know — I can't memorise who got arrested, the details of R.U.'s interrogation by SB (secret police), the suggestions and requests for future issues.

I draw their attention to the fingerprints on some of the copies of Fighting Solidarnosc. Our gloves got torn, so were we supposed to stop production?" answers Lofty, irritated by my remark. "The distributors don't get us gloves, but if we don't get an issue to the "postbox" on time, it's all our fault.

I don't bother to argue with him, because I know he's right. I grab their notes and run to the car. I was supposed to collect the blocks at 9.30 and it's 10.00 now. I'll have to, arrange to pick them up later. Now to the man who offered his home as a "postbox". At 10.20 I'm knocking on a door in a block of flats — the bell doesn't work. After a good few minutes' knocking, the door is finally opened by an elderly gent in glasses. "Good morning, I've come about the automatic washing machine in the ad." The old gent looks at me keenly. "Yes of course, but it's not under guarantee, you know". After this exchange of pleasantries, I come inside.

Kettle

My host puts the kettle on for tea, and I can see that I'm stuck there for at least half an hour. I begin in a businesslike manner: "You agreed to act as a distribution point, and this would mean Tuesdays or Thursdays from 5pm. The delivery person could use the old password. All we have to agree is a password for the collectors, and a warning sign would be useful, and of course the doorbell needs to be mended." "Just a moment", says the old man, "what kind of publications would they be?" That's all I need — a "postbox" playing at censorship! "Independent publications", I tell him, "The



When the army moved in to the shipyard

Solidarność

the voice of Republic Solidarnosc. But you're not a communist?" I tease him. "God forbid!" he presses himself at the thought, "But tell me how much there will be." "About 500 copies once a week."

Dangerous

"You know", he says, "I'm really very frightened, I could maybe hide 50 somewhere, but 500 is dangerous." I spend some time explaining to him that this type of work you cannot think in categories such as: 50 copies — three cars, 500 copies — 30 cars. "You won't even be able to explain having 10 copies. It's always a big risk, and ultimately you have to be prepared even to do forced labour. Of course, the final decision is up to you," I ended my argument on a somewhat magogic note. The old man starts by telling me that clandestine activity is like in the AK (Home Army in the Nazi occupation) then says that young people nowadays are spineless creatures, and then finally agrees to start the "postbox" from next week.

On my way out I ask him to write down safety instructions for the washing machine and we part with a conspiratorial wink.

I race to my "postbox" contact with the editors of Fighting Solidarnosc. I stop on Grunwaldzki Square for a quick bite to eat — soup with a slice of bread swallowed standing up, by the window. Hello — there's a funny car. Two aeriels of different lengths, civilian registration number WRA2571, parked facing the street, like nobody does, with two bored young men in it.

I search my conscience quickly: what have I got with me, where have I been today, who have I talked to, where is my car . . . and then I notice a bloke sitting on a bench doing nothing, getting cold and bored. There's also the familiar face of the SB man who tried to stop me in August 1980 by the bus garage. He goes up to the bloke on the bench, bends down and says something. After a while both men get into an innocent-looking Fiat on the other side of the street. It's obvious that they are surrounding one of the 13-storey blocks of flats. Who

are they hunting down? I wonder, calmly now, since they must know I'm above suspicion. I'll have to warn the "leaders" . . .

On my way to the car I run into Bolek, who distributes the second print run. We are business colleagues anyway, so I don't have to pretend I don't know him. "Hey", Says Bolek, "I've got two electronics men, they want to start making transmitters, all they need are diagrams and some sort of transistor. They'll do it for 100 copies of Fighting Solidarnosc a week. Will you arrange it?" "If they go buying transistors and distributing the paper, they'll be caught in three weeks. In any case, you can get them copies of the paper yourself. All you have to do is increase your own quota," I dampen his enthusiasm.

Impatient

"But I haven't had any copies for almost two weeks! People are getting impatient, we're losing readers. This won't do!" retorts Bolek. "OK. And when you went away for four days last month without letting us know, what was that supposed to be?" I ask.

"The man came to your place five times in two days, and it was a miracle he didn't get caught, because a patrol checked his identity papers right under your apartment block when he was carrying a batch of bulletins." I reason with Bolek. He calms down a bit and promises to get the electronics men started himself.

I also learn by chance that Bolek has some ink at home, so I drive him to Grabiszyniek. Indoors, he lifts the top of his sofa-bed and pulls out two screw top jars. "Look, mate," I tell him, "Keep this stuff in the larder and not under your bed — it looks more like jam than your bed-clothes".

Goodbye

He admits I'm right and, on my way out, says he knows where to buy 200 reams of paper. "Where and when?" — I ask. "We have to arrange it in the next three days, or the deal's off." I sigh heavily. In that time I just can't arrange for the transport and storage. So Bolek will have to sort that one out. I say goodbye to him and run.

Wieczorka Street. I check the number again, and ring the bell. "Does Mr Rogacki live here?" "He lived above us until a year ago, but please come in, I happen to have his new address," the dark-eyed woman in a half-open housecoat says her longish piece with a sigh. "We can't talk on the doorstep," she shows me in.

I trip over the doormat, and on my way into the room start telling her what information I've got for the editors. In the room there's a surprise: sitting on the carpet, chewing a matchstick is Kornel Morawiecki himself.

Next to him is a bundle of papers, leaflets and newspapers, and a typewriter. His co-editor Staszek is also there. I'm pleasantly taken aback, say hello and decide to tell them about the distribution problems.

"Wherever I go, people shout at me for the delays in getting copies of the paper," I start to complain. Kornel interrupts me, "Stop bullshitting, just write an article. Something really good. Tell people that Fighting Solidarnosc isn't a train they have to catch, or the midday time signal . . ."

Piotr Kiminkiewicz, Solidarnosc Walczaca 28

ON October 13, the following text announcing the militarisation of the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, was displayed and repeatedly broadcast over the internal communications system at the shipyard.

Extracts from Order No. 1 of the Military Commissar of the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk regarding full militarisation of the shipyard.

In accordance with the Instructions concerning the militarisation given by the Minister of Steelworks and Machine Industry, the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk has become a fully militarised unit.

The contracts of employment of all employees are hereby suspended and, at the same time, new terms of employment are established by force of law on the basis of conscription to a militarised unit [Official Gazette No. 18, entry No. 111, section VII, 1979].

Those in service in the shipyard may not unilaterally terminate their employment with the shipyard.

In accordance with the militarisation of the shipyard on the basis of the Council of State Decree of December 12 1981 on the State of War, and also on the basis of the Act of November 21, 1967 on the public duty to defend the PRL [Polish People's Republic], I hereby introduce the following:

Ban

1] A strict ban on strikes and protest actions.

2] A strict ban on spreading any information, by means of radio, leaflets,

posters and other publications without my written permission.

3] Instructions from superiors to their direct or functional subordinates are to be executed as a military order, with full consequences for not carrying them out.

There is no appeal against a given order.

At the same time, I give warning that persons on duty are, according to Article 234, para. 1 of the Act of Public Duty to Defend the PRL [Polish People's Republic], liable to criminal prosecution according to regulations concerning soldiers in active military service, and therefore:

1] Anyone who is conscripted to active military service during the State of War, and fails to report for duty is liable to deprivation of freedom of not less than 2 years [Article 230, para. 1].

2] A soldier who fails to, or refuses to, carry out an order, or who obeys it without conforming to its content, is liable to deprivation of freedom of up to 5 years [Penal Code, Article 309, para. 1].

3] A soldier who refuses to perform his duties, or obligations arising from those duties, is liable to deprivation of freedom ranging from six months to five years [Penal Code, Article 305].

4] A soldier who wilfully leaves his military unit or an appointed place for a period longer than two calendar days is liable to deprivation of freedom of up to two years [Penal Code

Article 303, para. 1].

5] A soldier who uses violence or unlawful threat to impede his superior in the course of his duties or to coerce him into undertaking or relinquishing them is liable to deprivation of freedom from six months to five years. [Penal Code, Article 312].

6] Anyone organising or leading a strike or protest action is liable to deprivation of freedom of up to five years. [Decree — Article 46, para. 2].

7] Anyone taking or using a vehicle with the intention of using it in the organisation of a strike — is liable to loss of freedom of up to three years. [Decree — Article 46, para. 3].

8] Anyone who, as a means of propagation, prepares, stores, carries, transports or sends messages, leaflets, recordings, or films containing information liable to provoke public unrest or affecting the defence preparedness the PRL is liable to deprivation of freedom of up to 25 years [Decree — Article 48, para. 3].

The provisions of this Order come into force forthwith. My deputies, each within his field of action, will supervise its implementation.

Signed: Military Commissar of the Shipyard, Stanislaw Zaczak MSC.

IN the neighbourhood of Konin [near the Czechoslovak border], on the high voltage cables linking the town's electric generator with the 'Comecon' network, Solidarnosc flags are still appearing which hang for several days. The flags can only be taken down after switching off the power supply, for which the agreement of the central dispatcher's office, in Prague, is needed. Tygodnik Mazowsze, no. 34

WORKERS in one of the departments at the 'Jagiellon' University, unable to prevent the disappearance of leaflets and flowers placed under the 'Solidarnosc' noticeboard, started to soak the leaflets in a weak explosive substance, and sprinkled the flowers with powdered paint. After the unexpected explosions, the anti-leaflet campaign subsided.

Captain Szulc, of the MO [Civil Militia], a famous commander of the May 3 action in Torun, broke his leg. It was put in plaster while he was under anaesthetic. When he woke up, he saw his leg on a sling, and on the plaster were written the words: "For Solidarnosc".

Collaborators in the South East region of Poland were sent letters containing copies of 5 Zloty banknotes, with a Solidarnosc stamp and portrait of Lech Walesa, together with a text stating: "We enclose an advance instalment. Payment will be made in the future." Tygodnik Mazowsze, no. 33

DURING a "surprise" visit to the Rosa Luxemburg Factory in Warsaw on 10 November, Jaruzelski was whistled at by the women workers. The TV had to withdraw the showing of pictures of the factory hall. Tygodnik Mazowsze, no. 33



Rates 'option' means a retreat without a fight

Last week Brent Labour councillor Frank Hansen argued the case for rate rises as the best realistic way for Labour councils to defend jobs and services against central government cuts. Pete Firmin replies, arguing for Labour to mobilise against the government on the basis of 'no cuts, no rent or rate rises'.

FRANK HANSEN argues that the only 'serious' option for the left on Brent council [and presumably other Labour councils too] is to push for high rate rises to cover no rent rises, no cuts and slight growth.

Hansen's main defence is that rates actually redistribute income. This is wrong on two basic counts.

Firstly, the only redistribution of income taking place when rate rises are used to cover Tory central government cuts is from the ratepayers to central government and the banks - hardly a socialist concept!

In addition, it is only half true that rates are a progressive tax. While it is true that a significant proportion of rates comes from businesses, within that small shopkeepers are hit harder than large firms, and within the domestic section many lower paid pay proportionally more of their income in rates than do the better-off.

Workers

Rate rises do hit the working class. So what is Hansen's argument for accepting them as a lesser evil?

'There is no evidence to suggest that [a policy of confrontation] would even get the support of its [the council's] own unions, let alone the public at large'.

True, but there is also no evidence to suggest the contrary! In Brent, like most other labour authorities, there has been no attempt in the last three or four years to mobilise a campaign to demand more money from the government [leaving aside deputations of a few councillors], and no attempt to involve council employees and tenants in the discussion of how the Council should fight back.

Hansen merely assumes that confrontation would 'almost certainly lead to a crushing defeat and a Tory administration which would inflict massive cuts'.

Demagogy

And he dresses up this assumption with emotional demagogy against those of us who argue for a confrontation on the basis of 'no cuts, no rent or rate rises' - 'purist propaganda', 'sheer adventurism', 'socialist



JOHN HARRIS

Rate rises will undermine a fight against cuts

fantasy' and so on.

He even knowingly misrepresents the arguments against him, writing 'the argument that rate increases and cuts are exactly the same is nonsense'.

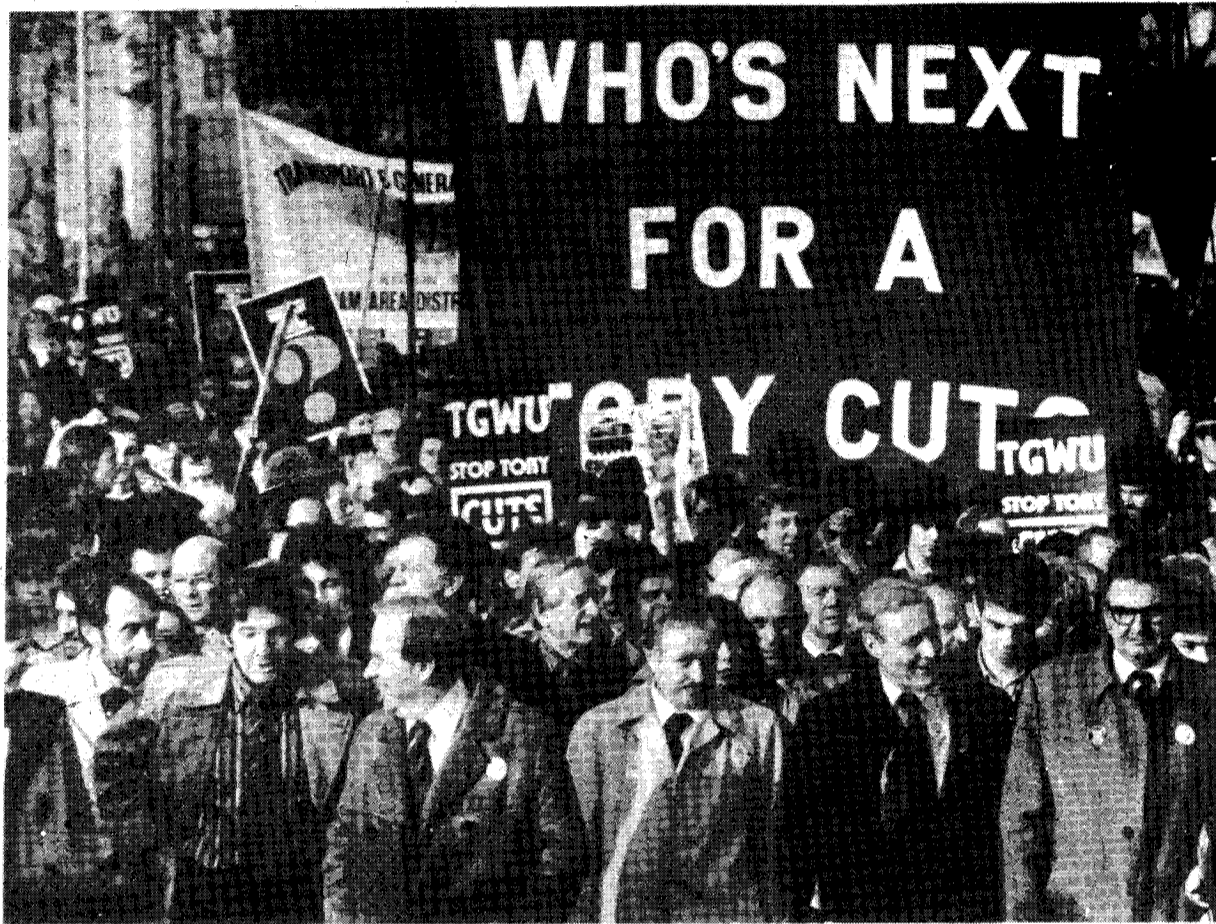
True, but who says they are? Cuts are a direct attack on jobs and services, an increase in unemployment and social deprivation. Rate increases, as an attack on living standards, are a lesser evil than cuts, but an evil.

Opposing the use of rate increases to offset central government cuts does not mean we are always opposed to labour councils increasing the rates. No-one on the left, to my knowledge, opposed Clay Cross increasing the rates in their fight against the Housing Finance Act. The GLC was justified in using rate increases to bring down London Transport fares [the problem was that these increases were interwoven with those used to offset cuts].

Alternatives

In these circumstances rate rises were used to improve services and in a fight against central government - not as an alternative to such a fight, which is what Hansen is proposing.

Hansen has to argue that a fight is impossible: 'after nearly four years of Tory attacks and numerous betrayals by the Labour leaders, the working class movement is on the defensive', but seems blind to the fact that despite these massive betrayals large sections of the working class have shown themselves willing to fight back



[health workers, train drivers, water workers, the largest strike since 1926 on September 22, 1982 etc] and clearly avoids the crucial point that he himself [as a Brent councillor] is in a position to give a lead. He is not just observing someone else's struggle.

Discards

He discards this responsibility totally when he resorts to the time-honoured argument of the labour movement bureaucrat that 'the reality is that the Tories will not be removed this side of a general election, and Labour authorities must make the choice of defending the worst off at the expense of the middle class and small businesses.'

'At the same time we must use our position on the

Council to campaign for more resources from central government and for a Labour government which will inject millions of pounds into the inner city areas and actually reduce the rates burden.'

The Tories certainly won't be removed as long as we duck the fight against them. Socialists often have to accept that the support is not forthcoming for a fight, but that is after attempting to get that support, not assuming from the start that we will fail.

Talk of campaigning for more resources from central government rings hollow when no proposals for such a campaign are forthcoming, nor ever have been.

If such a campaign simply means a few posters and delegations to King, then it

is laughable. The only type of 'campaign' to get more money from the government is building for confrontation.

Buying time

In the end all talk over the last three years of 'buying time' for a fight by using rate rises comes down to one thing - 'for the election of a labour government'. Yet the way to ensure a commitment from a future labour government of restoring cuts [something the present leadership have not even promised on paper] is by fighting those cuts now.

A labour government will use the same argument as Frank Hansen - 'the time is not ripe', 'pressure from the IMF' etc etc.

Lastly, Hansen says, probably correctly, that a

section of the right of Brent's Labour Group have indicated that they will not vote for a high rate increase. On Brent Council [Labour by way of the mayor's casting vote] it will only take one labour councillor to vote against the Labour Group [always assuming that the Group adopts Hansen's strategy] for cuts to go through.

Question

Does Hansen then want us to build a campaign amongst tenants to get them to fight for higher rates? Just to pose the question shows how ridiculous Hansen's position is.

It will leave the left in no position to take up a fight against cuts and redundancies.

February	
Monday	7 14 21 28
Tuesday	1 8 15 22
Wednesday	2 9 16 23
Thursday	3 10 17 24
Friday	4 11 18 25
Saturday	5 12 19 26
Sunday	6 13 20 27

WHAT'S ON

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.

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. Credentials for labour movement delegates £3 from Plastic Bullets Conference, Box 15, 164-6 Hanging Ditch, Manchester M3 4BN.

WOMEN, Immigration and Nationality: meeting to discuss our future as a campaign. Sunday March 13, 1.30 to 4.30pm, County Hall, London SE1. All women welcome. Creche on premises.

NOTTINGHAM Campaign Against Rayner conference: Saturday February 19, 10.30 to 4.30, at Nottingham Centre for the Unem-

ployed, Hounds Gate. Creche and lunch available. Morning includes speakers from CPSA NEC and Child Poverty Action Group, and a Labour MP; afternoon workshops on ESSP, job centres/ethnic monitoring, new supplementary benefit legislation.

Open to all unemployed people and delegates from trade union and labour movement organisations.

Labour Campaign for Gay Rights public meeting: 'Gay liberation and the labour movement' Friday March 18, 7.30 at County Hall, London SE1. Speakers include Andy Harris (GLC), a Labour MP, and a NUPE representative.

GAY LPYS meeting: Sunday February 27, 6pm, at

'Gay's the Word' bookshop, 66 Marchmont St, London WC1. Nearest tube, Russell Square. All LPYS members and non-members welcome

'HOW TO Fight for a Labour Victory': 'The call for a national meeting of CLPs, unions, and campaigning groups in the Party came from a conference of Briefing groups on February 5, in view of the threats posed by growing speculation, that unilateralism will not be in the manifesto, and continued attempts to expel members of the Party.' Monday March 7, 7.30, House of Commons

LABOUR democracy and local government: day con-

ference for District Labour Parties, Saturday March 26, 10.30 to 4.30, at Manchester Poly Students' Union. Sponsored by Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester DLPs. Contact: Frances Done, Manchester City Labour Party, Hulme Labour Club, 1 Stoneyclose, Manchester M15

Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine public meeting: THE FIGHT FOR PALESTINE Speakers: Tariq Ali, Ron Brown MP (Leith), Moshe Machover, speakers from Women for Palestine and Lebanese National Movement. Wednesday February 23, 8pm at County Hall, London SE1.

EL SALVADOR Solidarity Campaign: Labour Movement conference, Saturday May 14, 10am-5pm, County Hall, London SE1. Credentials £2 from ESSC, 29 Islington Park St, London N1.

PICKET the Home Office Support Muhammad Idrish Thursday February 24, 2.30pm.

Free coach from Birmingham (phone Ahsan, 021-551 1846, for details). 551 Coach for Bristol (phone Graham Reid, 0272 667933) Maximum labour movement support, please!

Sheffield Labour movement conference on Ireland, Saturday March 19, Sheffield University Students' Union, 9.30 to 4.30. Sponsored by Sheffield Trades Council, Sheffield District Labour Party, and Sheffield LCI.

Defeats like the miners' vote against strike action last October cannot all simply be put down to bureaucrats' manoeuvres, argues John McIlroy in part 3 of his article. The bureaucrats are not something completely external; their demobilising role is part of the overall situation of trade unionism



JOHN HARRIS

PRESSURES ON THE UNION RANK AND FILE

What was going through the minds of miners in October, to varying degrees and with varying coherence and with varying coherence was the knowledge that they were not doing too badly wages-wise, compared with other workers.

Millions have settled for less than 6%. Millions have no job. We are lucky in many ways. The country is in trouble. There is an economic crisis. Look around you. The money isn't there.

Thatcher is a determined and confident enemy. Coal stocks are high. Any strike would be long and bitter. Other strikes are being defeated. We can't expect any help from the TUC, look at what happened to ASLEF. We can have 8.5% now with no sweat. That is not bad going. There is a time for striking and a time for not striking. These were the basic arguments miners will have come up with for adopting the position they did.

The press campaigns, particular tactics, are all important. So is the role of the trade union bureaucracy in defusing struggle. But again we have to avoid explaining all defeats in terms of the cowardice, manipulation and betrayal of union leaders in terms which simultaneously glorify and diminish ordinary workers.

Crudest

At its crudest, this view — in the hands of Gerry Healy in years past, for example — implies that the consciousness of ordinary workers is always fixed. Workers are always militant, always ready for a fight, always straining at the leash — like the mindless muscle in a Mafia movie restrained from beating the living shit out of the opposition only by the capo. The red hot militancy of the workers is switched on and off by the evil bureaucrats.

Yes, there are sell-outs

— such as those in British Leyland over the past decade — and they obviously demoralise and disillusion workers. But the result then becomes one part of their consciousness, a consciousness which at the moment shares the view of the bureaucrats that a fight is not on.

When, for example, Alan Thornett was victimised in 1974 the manoeuvring of the union apparatus was, if anything, far more of a problem than in 1982. Workers will always have to face such manoeuvring. The point is that at one time they overcame it, at another they don't. Overall, at the moment, the bureaucrats who don't want a fight take the workers with them against the militants who do.

This is not simply because of trickery, but because in today's conditions the rank and file share many of the ideas of the bureaucrats. The miners who were given leadership and rejected it are not some special case. The same pressures are acting on them as on millions of other workers and with the same impact.

The real pressures that operate inside the working class operate on both full time official, shop steward and members. Of course the bureaucrats' stance reinforces and develops the rank and file view that it is best to sit tight, but unless we recognise that the bureaucrats' control is to a great extent political control, and that the failure of the militants to take the workers with them when faced by opposition from the full-timers is a political problem, we will not be able to come up with the answers to deal with today's defeats. We will not be able to grapple with the

way groups like the miners are thinking.

It is not a question of blaming the workers. Do we wait, like the SWP, for the inevitable upturn or do we confront this problem which exists within the rank and file? Do we accept that crucial political weaknesses exist within the rank and file and work out strategies to confront them? Or do we continue to simply blame the bureaucracy, a conception which can blind us to the real problem and the real solutions?

Look at this example of sectarian lunacy. "Some rejected it (Scargill's appeal) because they had become sick of Scargill's manoeuvres and his acceptance of massive job losses, they had no confidence in him leading a strike to victory in the circumstances of November 1982. These workers were looking for a real alternative to the bureaucratic dealing and the illusory alternatives of Scargill" (The Next Step, January 1982).

Ultra-leftism

If one meaningful explanation for Scargill's defeat was "left wing resistance to the union leadership", the fact that a substantial section of Scargill's members were to the left of him, then (despite their ultra-leftism in voting no) our task would be relatively easy.

But the fact is that the consciousness of even the advanced sections of the working class lags far behind the needs of the situation. How many struggles have we seen aborted by the idea that the employers have shown us they can't pay? How many anti-redundancy fights have been impaled on the capitalist logic — 'we are



Were miners to the left of Scargill?

not making a profit, there is no alternative to closure?"

Fear and lack of confidence provide a fertile seedbed for the sprouting of national interest, chauvinism and Thatcherite commonsense always present in our movement.

We have seen the stewards at Vauxhall Ellesmere Port state that they could not mobilise over wages, as the struggle to stop imports must take precedence. We have seen steelworkers picket ports to stop foreign steel when they wouldn't picket closing workplaces. We have seen stewards in strongly organised factories collecting for the South Atlantic Fund.

In a period of retreat it would be remarkable if this did not happen. To recognise it is not to succumb to it. It is an essential prerequisite for a fight against it by specifically taking up these ideas in the context of the fight for action.

A concentration on denunciation of the trade union bureaucracy rather than an attempt to break the rank and file from its ideas, is often rooted in a failure to start from the question of trade unionism in capitalist society rather than from the secondary categories bureaucracy and rank and file.

Unions are essential organising agents and defenders of the working class, but they fight only the effects of the capitalist system. Because they fight the employers, they are schools of war in which all workers can learn and develop. Because they fight within capitalism, bargaining over the price of labour rather than attempting to abolish the wage labour system, they legitimise that system.

When capitalism can afford it trade unionism dictates aggression. When capitalism is in crisis it dictates retreat and sacrifice. But always bargaining over the price dictates compromise within the realism of the maintenance of the system.

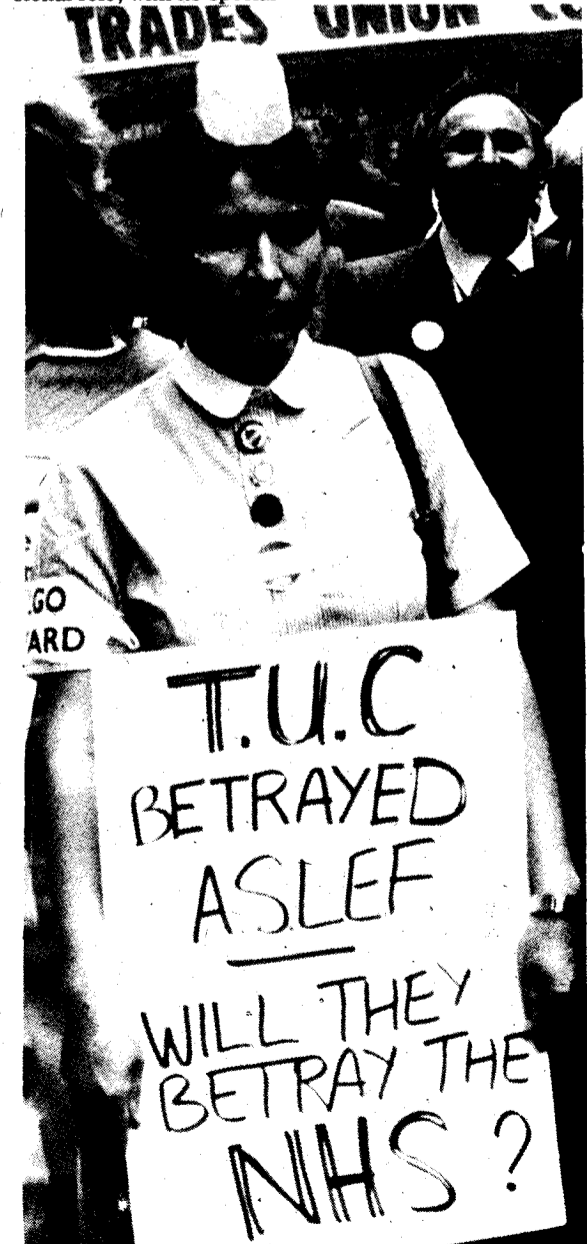
Whilst unions are essential, trade union consciousness is reformist consciousness. Whilst trade union struggles provide the essential preconditions for the development of socialist ideas, whatever the level of struggle, the ideas trade unionism itself generates are insufficient if capitalist society is to be transformed.

Consciously

Socialists need to be involved in all trade union struggles, but we need to consciously fight to develop and transform the ideas that those struggles produce if society is to be transformed.

The union bureaucracy

is the product of trade unionism's central mechanism bargaining. Its conservatism arises from its function, from its professional role, with its special-



Yes, they did. But why did they get away with it?

JOHN HARRIS

isation and isolation and the reaction of the state to this — not, as is often thought, from the fact that this body of personnel is rooted in a privileged labour aristocracy.

If we see the limits of trade unionism we can better understand the problems of rank and file consciousness. The bureaucracy are the purest carriers, the reinforcers of reformist consciousness and the most susceptible to it, structuring its development by the state.

But trade unionism cannot be broken down into two distinct watertight groups, rank and file and bureaucracy, living almost in two separate worlds. The ideas and pressures the bureaucracy feel are also felt by the rank and file, and rank and file bargainers like shop stewards, whilst distinguished from the professionals by the fact they work in the plant and are subject to recall, are also subject to "bureaucratisation".

Concluded next week

Pensioners and the unions

YOUR article (February 3) on the elderly by Anne Marie Sweeney is welcomed by the politically representative pensioners' organisations as a contribution to the struggles of the pensioners.

The pension for a single person is only £32.60 per week and the heating allowance they receive is as low as £1.90 per week. More than 3 million elderly people are living below the poverty line.

The Thatcher government has withdrawn 'special needs' benefits (grants for clothing, bed-linen, blankets, etc) and the cuts in rate support grants to the boroughs mean less home helps, meals on wheels, etc.

The Charter of the Greater London Pensioners and Trade Union Action Association demands among other things that the pension should be paid to both male and female at 60 and that

one pension of 50% of the national average gross male earnings apply to both male and female, whether single or married.

On heating we demand that the Government should pay 75% of the two winter quarter bills. Travel on all forms of transport should be free throughout the UK. Also, television licences and the installation and rental of telephones should be free.

The Pensioners' Movement does receive support from many unions. The TGWU Retired Members' Association has branches all over the UK and a central office at Transport House, with a full-time staff of a research officer and a typist. The Greater London Pensioners' Association has more than thirty trade union branches affiliated and many of them send delegates to our monthly meetings.

However, we get very little support from the national offices of such big unions as AUEW, NALGO and the Municipal Workers, etc.

The interest of Labour Party activists in the pensioners' struggle leaves much to be desired. They should remember that one in five of the voting population is a pensioner.

CECIL SHARPLEY, vice-chairperson, London Joint Council for Senior Citizens.

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.

Policy for Ireland

Engels on Ireland

SOCIALIST Organiser no.116 continues the discussion on the relevance of Trotskyist ideas in an Irish context. Permanent revolution has never been something in the revolutionary cookbook for which the peasantry was the main ingredient, but a means of looking at how to make a revolution in countries where capitalism had thoroughly distorted any 'natural' or 'national' economic development.

Trotsky, unlike John O'Mahony, ruled out any purely democratic programme for dealing with questions of national independence, saying instead that you needed a socialist programme that fought national rulers at the same time as foreign ones.

Is this not applicable to Southern Ireland today? Surely when the Fitzgerald government is doing its best to carry out the kind of austerity offensive that other European governments have; is doing a deal with the British over 'condominium' status which would exclude any independence that the South has left; putting anti-abortion laws into the constitution and being dragged into the NATO alliance, it is more than confirmed. Is it really just phrasemongering to suggest you need a socialist programme to deal with these issues?

Ireland is not an advanced capitalist country, but one dominated in every aspect of economic and political life by imperialism.

The big problem for the Irish working class is not the fears of Protestants of clerical reaction, which threatens all workers, but the division of the working class into two separate reactionary states. It is that unity that can be created by a party fighting for a socialist programme throughout the 32 counties.

Loyalist workers will only break from their bosses when the working class as a whole looks like it stands a chance of winning and when the unity of the British ruling class gives the Unionist bosses their backing is under threat.

These are not the bizarre conclusions of the so-called Trotskyist sects. This is the only possible way to win in Ireland.

Martin Collins, Levenshulme, Manchester 19



LABOUR Committee on Ireland: annual general meeting 1983 will be on April 23. Resolutions to be in by March 19.

PETER Flack in his letter in Socialist Organiser no.119 accuses John O'Mahony of 'lying' and rewriting the history of Ireland. This seems slightly imprudent if we examine more closely some of the assertions that Peter Flack makes.

He asserts that British conquest in Ireland remained only 'a conscious policy' until the 1640s, and had not

taken place in the 1590s. In fact, Elizabeth I, motivated by a fear of the Spanish using Ireland as a stepping stone in war against England (5,000 Spanish soldiers did in fact land in 1601) destroyed the last bastions of the Irish chiefs, the O'Neills, in Ulster, by 1602.

Peter Flack also ridicules the idea that 'it was James



The 16th century: English soldiers return from a clash with the Irish, bearing a prisoner and heads of the Irish dead

I and Charles I who violently imposed the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity in Ireland'. Engels, in notes for his history of Ireland, states the following:

'1603: ... Elizabeth died. All Ireland was subjugated for the first time.

'James I: Everybody expected him to restore the Catholic religion... James however demanded that all officials, barristers and graduates of universities gave the Oath of Supremacy, and also restored the Act of Uniformity. He at once purged the Dublin Council of Catholics'.

The religious beliefs were in fact secondary to the financial and political interests of the Crown.

In the reign of Charles I an Irish equivalent of Star Chamber was set up to implement the Oath of Supremacy and 'to bring the people here to a conformity in religion and in the way to that to raise perhaps a good revenue to the

Crown'.

Perhaps most importantly for the subject at issue, Flack misdates the plantation of Ulster, which in fact took place from 1608 under James I. He seized 800,000 acres in six of the nine counties of Ulster — not including Down and Antrim, the counties which now have the largest Protestant majority, and were also colonised, but not under the compulsion of the British crown.

None of this would be worth bringing to readers' notice if not for accusations of 'rewriting history' and so on. Nobody in this discussion disputes that the British conquest and rule in Ireland was brutal, and is maintained by repression today.

All of the argument in Peter Flack's letter is aimed at proving that the Protestant population is 'pro-imperialist', a settler population like that in Rhodesia, and inhabits an

'imperialist enclave' — though they settled there before imperialism in the Marxist sense existed!

This raises a few questions. Firstly, is there a Protestant working class? Yes — though the letter never acknowledges this.

Uniting

Are we in favour of uniting the Protestant and Catholic workers in Ireland, while recognising that at present this is not possible? The answer must be yes, though Peter Flack's letter strongly implies that we can simply consign the Protestants to the 'dustbin of history' or the next boat to Stranraer, as 'pro-imperialist'. This is merely a policy of Catholic nationalism carried to its logical conclusion.

Are we in favour of measures to promote class unity, while making no compromises on the question of partition, which underlies

the present disunity? Again the answer must be yes.

The Provisionals' recognition of federalism until recently expressed this wish. We can have a fruitful discussion on whether federalism is the best means of ensuring the Protestants' rights within a united Ireland, but it is indisputable that it is both desirable and permissible for Marxists to favour such measures as promote Protestant/Catholic class unity and allow the Protestants rights within the framework of a united Ireland.

Plea

One final plea: we should be able to discuss this without accusations of 'lying' (unjustified, as I have shown), being 'pro-English', etc., and keeping to the political points of the discussion. Demagoguery can only obscure the real issues under discussion.

BRUCE ROBINSON, Islington.

O'Mahony: in a time warp?

AS I AM usually impressed by John O'Mahony's realistic grasp of the British political scene, I was all the more startled, on reading his recent writing in Socialist Organiser on the nature and history of the Soviet Union, to discover in these matters he is the prisoner of a time warp.

The recent casual exchange of views on the nature of the Soviet Union suggests that O'Mahony believes the controversy on that subject to have been closed by the Trotsky v. Burnham/Schachtman debate of 1939/40.

Another 40 years of history and a mountain of literature on the subject goes unheeded. There is no cognisance of recent debates on the subject, such as in the pages of Critique.

To encounter such a curiously closed mind on the question that has most vexed socialists for nearly 60 years is rather disturbing.

Not that I believe it is possible for such a discussion to be fruitfully pursued through a series of brief letters to a socialist newspaper. The matter requires more extensive and thorough treatment than such a medium will allow. But the exchange was instructive in that it confirmed the impression that the claim that the Soviet Union is a workers' state is 'not Marxist theorising in search of a correct these; it is merely defending a position' (Tickten).

The same naive dogmatism was again revealed in the series of articles on Leninism. Apart from

sections of the final article, there was little in the series that would not have found space in publications of the Soviet Academy of Historical Science.

Many who have been in the socialist movement for a considerable period will have read similar turgid pieties over and over again. There was no attempt to encounter the thorny questions — contemporary socialist criticism of Lenin's concept of party building, the justification for the decisions of the 10th Congress, the ambiguity of Lenin's position on political pluralism — these and many more questions which have absorbed socialists and bourgeois historians of the period.

Relevance

Nor had the authors anything to say on the relevance of the Leninist concept of the party to the British political scene in the 1980s. This is even more curious when we consider that in one of the issues of Socialist Organiser containing these articles there were forthright attacks upon democratic centralism by left wing members of the Labour Party interviewed about their views on the current offensive by the right wing.

What is the relevance, if any, of Lenin's concept of the party to the British labour movement today? Let us have an open and honest debate on the matter.

JOHN CAMPBELL, Glasgow

Women for Life on Earth

LAST week the 'Women for Life on Earth' group held a round-the-clock vigil for the week outside the Royal Ordnance Factory in Cardiff.

Methods for making parts for bombs and bullets at this — one of the largest ordnance factories in the country — are a closely guarded secret. But information has come to light that the factory processes deadly radioactive uranium-238 and beryllium (a highly toxic heavy metal). These substances are being released into the atmosphere or flushed down the drains.

'Women for Life on Earth' have been leafletting the workers in the factory and the area around.

The factory is next to a government building com-

plex where thousands work, and in a mainly residential area.

Apart from the possible dangerous pollution, the presence of the Royal Ordnance Factory makes Cardiff a prime nuclear target in the event of a holocaust.

The local CND group and Labour Party have been making inquiries about the ROF. They should follow the lead of 'Women for Life on Earth' and start taking some action.

Tony Benn has asked a question in parliament about the nature of the processes and the danger to the area. No reply has yet been given by the government. Cardiff Trades Council has promised to keep trade union branches

informed, but the response from the workers in the factory has been just about nil so far. They are obviously worried about their own job security.

CND supporters in the labour movement must pose real alternatives for employ-

ment for all the workers in the nuclear/arms industry.

CND is organising a march to the ROF on Saturday March 5. We must demand that the facts about the secret processes in the factory are made public.

Sarah Bryant



After Greenham Common, women are taking the initiative in Cardiff, too

Background

'WE HOPE THIS TIME TO BEGIN REAL DISCUSSION'

Talk of 'unity' and 'fusion' is in the air once again on the British left, following the surprise proposal six weeks ago from the Socialist League (formerly the IMG) for immediate fusion with the Workers' Socialist League.

Some contacts and supporters of the SL have been speculating that talks are well advanced, or even that a fusion is imminent. What are the facts?

To find out, Socialist Organiser reporter Harry Sloan questioned John Lister, a member of the WSL executive committee.

How long have talks been going on?

They have not really yet begun. In fact, though rumours were rife that the SL might take the decision to issue a call for fusion from their December conference, the first we heard of it in concrete terms was when we read the account of that conference in Socialist Challenge.

Only later did we receive a very brief note from the Socialist League proposing an initial explorative meeting, and stating that after that meeting they would send us 'a document explaining our proposals'.

The first meeting took place only last Wednesday, February 9. We are still waiting for the SL's written proposals. So really the whole discussion has yet to get off the ground.

How did the WSL respond to the fusion proposal?

Well of course we are in favour of attempting to build the widest possible unity within the Trotskyist movement: but we have to establish a political basis for such unity if it is to represent a step forward rather than a lurch into confusion.

We are obviously in

favour of discussions with the SL, and with the international tendency — the USFI — of which it is a section, to clarify questions of agreement and disagreement and see if it is possible to establish a principled basis for unity.

Some very important disagreements will need to be discussed and clarified. One particular major area of difference between ourselves and the SL has for years been how to analyse and combat the political role of Stalinist parties and Stalinist leaderships both in Britain and internationally.

We should recognise in this context that at the same SL conference which voted for immediate fusion with us, one-third of the delegates supported the Castroite political positions argued by the American SWP — positions which we would consider to be neither revolutionary nor Trotskyist. In essence, theirs are Stalinist positions.

We think there are echoes of this in the SL's line — for instance in their failure to call for strikes and blacking action in Britain in support of Solidarnosc after the declaration of martial law.



During the Leyland Vehicles strike (above), the IMG pulled out of the Leyland Action Committee, preferring to work with CP convenor Mick Coyne (below).

On all the major international issues (Portugal, Iran, Nicaragua, etc) in the last period we have argued positions which have been sharply at variance with those of the IMG/SL, reflecting real differences in analytical method, orientation and political programme. To fuse without confronting such differences would be foolhardy.

It would be a step forward if the SL will now begin to discuss these questions which in the past it has avoided.

Campaigning

I should also point out that the proposal came as quite a surprise given the recent tense relations between the IMG/SL and the WSL on a range of campaigning issues in the British workers' movement.

Our supporters have clashed — sometimes extremely sharply — on work in BL, the health service pay dispute, Poland — in each case the IMG refusing to work in broader campaigns which we have supported — and Palestine.

I think there is a general difference in the unions: the SL has focused less on developing rank and file groups, and more on getting close relations with people in established positions (like Mick Coyne in Leyland), than we would consider permissible.

Our attempts to involve the IMG in a broad campaign of mobilisation against the Tebbit laws resulted only in Socialist Challenge producing a centre page article proclaiming their own 'campaign', which never seems to have got off the ground.

The door for joint work has been wide open, the SL comrades have not chosen to come through it.

In other words the practical work of the two organ-

isations does not appear to have been moving closer to a common method: the same political problems have recurred time and again.

This does not rule out any prospect of eventual agreement: but it does show that "immediate fusion" is not a serious suggestion.

Did the SL say what led them to the conclusion that they should propose fusion?

They told us that the two factors they had taken into account were on the one hand the change last autumn in the WSL's position on the Malvinas war — in which we adopted an Argentine defencist position — and on the other the fact that both organisations were taking an active interest in developments in the Labour Party.

This, they said, indicated that both organisations were drawing politically closer together.

We felt that this was a less than honest statement. Firstly we have made no secret of the fact that our change of position on the Malvinas war was carried by a small majority, and the WSL is known to be still divided on the issue. The SL plainly hope that the 'Argentine defencists' among us will be more responsive to their political positions.

Programme

Secondly, when we are discussing the fusion of revolutionary organisations, and the establishment of a common Bolshevik-type organisation, we need to base such a step on more than this or that common tactic.

We do not define the WSL in terms of our tactics in relation to the Labour Party, but in terms of our overall orientation to the

working class, to all existing organisations of the labour movement and to its various leaderships, and our fight to defend and develop a programme and method of work adequate to the tasks of the present period.

The very least that would be required to accomplish a real fusion is a prolonged period of joint work, coupled with detailed discussion and political clarification — involving also an assessment of the SL's international parent body, the USFI, and the participation of our own international co-thinkers in the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee.

Only in this way could we ever hope to break down the mistrust that exists between organisations whose mutual relations have been for the most part prickly or hostile for nearly 20 years.

Why do you think the SL made the proposal?

I think it has always been true that the call for 'unity' can be very popular among sections of the British left who are understandably irritated at the divisions amongst those fighting the right wing.

It is unfortunately the case that these divisions for the most part reflect genuine political disagreements which must be resolved rather than ignored.

It is also true that within the SL, and among its supporters are many who look with some respect towards the work done by the WSL and our supporters in the labour movement.

I think the call for immediate fusion is designed to attract uncommitted forces from the left towards the SL, as the campaigners for unity, to give their own supporters the impression that real strides

are being made towards fusion, and to put the WSL on the spot — making it seem as if we, and not the unresolved political questions, are somehow a barrier to instant fusion.

There is some evidence of this "playing to the gallery" by the SL. In a number of areas their branch leaderships and supporters have plainly been led to believe that fusion talks are well under way — or even near completion, even though we only met at leadership level for the first time last week!

The very fact that the proposal was first floated in the pages of Socialist Challenge rather than making a direct approach to our leadership also indicates that the fusion call is aimed at the left in general rather than as a serious proposition to the WSL.

Does this mean that you have ruled out talks on unity?

On the contrary. We have always been more than willing to begin a process of discussion on



Castro: one third of SL support his politics

the bigger political issues to determine whether or not a political basis can be established for fusion.

We hope that this will respond to such a discussion which we have sought in many years.

Meanwhile, we will be discussing with the SL proposals for joint work in the unions, and — broadly — collaboration in the broader labour movement in the key period between now and the General Election.



Coyne: new vanguard?

Advertisement

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



BL convenor attacked People's March date

450 AJEW workers at BL Land Rover, Cardiff, walked out last Thursday, 9th, in protest when management attempted to discipline the plant convenor.

The Cardiff workers are fighting the extension of BL's attack on shop steward organisation — already well advanced at the main sites — to their factory.

AUEW official Ken Cure met the stewards on Monday and unsuccessfully pressed for a return to work. On Tuesday he put the same recommendation to a mass meeting, and it voted to return to work.

The disciplinary action had been suspended — though management proposals to restrict the convenor's facilities have not been withdrawn, and will be the subject of negotiations involving national union officials.

The Cardiff workers will have to watch Cure carefully and be vigilant.

The struggle is a vital one for union organisation.

For the last 18 months, the convenor, Geoff Stockham, has been doing union work for 20 hours a week on

a flexible basis.

Management initially refused to recognise him and have tried to remove his facilities a number of times since then.

On Friday 4th he was presented with a 'code of conduct' saying he could only be seen by members by appointment through the head of department.

On Monday 7th, the foreman and head of department went to the stewards' office and instructed Geoff to go to his workplace. He refused. After 30 minutes he was told he was in dispute with the company.

On Thursday 10th management said they were suspending Geoff for five days. After another stewards' meeting, a mass meeting voted overwhelmingly to walk out until all threats of disciplinary action were withdrawn.

Pickets were mounted, but there were no scabs. The EETPU members on site also supported the dispute.

The Cardiff factory has a strong position, since the gearbox produced there is irreplaceable for the Rover SD1, the Range Rover, the Jaguar, and the Taxi.

THE PEOPLE'S March for Jobs 1983 will set out from Glasgow on April 23.

The TUC announced plans this Monday. The march will go from Glasgow through Carlisle to arrive in London on June 3, with a festival on June 4 and a rally on June 5.

The TUC, under pressure from the Labour front-bench, initially opposed the march for fear that it would spoil Labour's image in election year. Now it is sure to try to keep the march

very 'respectable' and strictly-controlled.

Unemployed and labour movement activists need to move quickly to take the initiative in setting up local People's March committees on a democratic basis, and demanding that the march is controlled by the unemployed themselves, not by the Stalinist-minded union full-timers who dominated the 1981 March.

The West Midlands TUC has even now voted to call on the TUC to withdraw its

support for the March — a move which underlines the need for independent rank-and-file organisation in that area.

The TUC will also probably try to keep the march small. We can best combat this by not waiting for the TUC to send out circulars, and instead getting union branches to sponsor marchers now and to write to the TUC, Congress House, Great Russell Street London WC1.

Edwardes tactics in BR

KING'S CROSS was stopped by a 24 hour strike last Friday. It was a protest against increased management harassment and disciplinary pressure over recent months.

In the last two weeks the situation had become even more acute with the sacking of a driver and a foreman, and a spate of disciplinary actions involving quite trivial offences.

The strike is seen as the opening shot in a battle to defend strong trade unionism at King's Cross. On

Sunday, at a lunchtime meeting of striking drivers, it was decided to withdraw all cooperation with management and to implement a policy of work-to-rule.

Many militants see the Area Manager's personality as the root of the problem. But this is a consciously worked out attack on local conditions and union organisation, sanctioned by higher management.

Last year when Steve Forey, a local union rep, as suspended, it was an ill-conceived action taken by

the same Area Manager in a fit of anger. Divisional management intervened to discipline the Area Manager and have Steve Forey reinstated.

This time, however, divisional management have sided 100% with the Area Manager, and he is clearly doing the job of reasserting the control of management over the running of the job.

No better example of how conscious this disciplinary offensive has been can be pointed to than the sacking of one of the foremen. As

soon as the sacking took place, all the foremen felt intimidated and began to crack down on the drivers and guards.

BL management's offensive on union organisation in the company also started with the sacking and disciplining of foremen.

Workers at King's Cross are up against a sustained attack by management and it will require determination and further industrial action to beat it back.

The attack on union organisation in BR lags behind that in BSC and BL, but BR now have the national agreements they want, and they will try to put teeth into them locally.

Speaking to the Chartered Institute of Transport last Wednesday, 9th, British Rail chairman Peter Parker declared his intention to change existing procedures because they are 'too damned slow'.

Norman Tebbit has stated that he intends to make the railway a public showcase for is attack on the closed shop. Local struggles such as the one at King's Cross have a lot more at stake than a straight-forward battle against management intransigence.

Longbridge walkout

ALL production at Longbridge was stopped last Wednesday because of a strike which started over lack of heating but developed into a dispute over supervision doing hourly-paid workers' jobs.

Last Wednesday, in CAB2, where the Ital is produced, storemen complained about the cold and held a meeting together with drivers. They refused to start work until the heating was improved, and gave management until 9.30am.

However, foremen and superintendents had mean-

while begun driving forklift trucks. This was not the first time that supervision had scabbed in this way, and the forklift drivers refused to start work even when the heating was improved.

The storemen gave them full support.

When the forklift drivers in CAB1 (the Metro assembly tracks) heard about it, they struck in solidarity. Later that morning, at about 11.30, the track workers in CAB2 met and decided to black materials that had

been handled by supervision. They then went home.

Drivers in the North Works and Trentham also struck in solidarity. As a result of the action, virtually everyone in Longbridge was laid off, apart from power and train workers in the East Works.

Although the next day work resumed after convenor Jack Adams told the strikers that they had made their point and had no choice but to return, the incident does show an increased mood of militancy despite all the setbacks at Longbridge in recent years.

Bus leaders retreat

ABSOLUTELY according to form, the one day national bus stoppage, on February 4 has been called off by TGWU leaders.

The National Joint Industrial Council for municipal buses met again last Friday, 11th. The employers made a revised offer of 4½% on the basic plus an extra day's holiday for workers with over five years' service — a retrograde proposal which would propel workers back to the divisive days of long-service productivity (read slavery) — and sick pay for the first three days.

IGWU Passenger Transport leaders were so impressed by this generosity that they suspended the call for

February 4 while they discussed these proposals.

All is now set for the fifth and final act of this annual farce. The delegates, some of them still unelected, will soon gather in London to be told that 'this is the best we can get'.

Unless there is a positive movement from the rank and file to demand that the offer be voted on at mass meetings up and down the country, and to go all out for the full claim, then the curtain will fall on yet another sell-out by our so-called leadership. Busworkers will continue to work long hours under immense pressure, in highly polluted inner-city areas,

Phil Hardy

'No nukes' top of NUT list

FOR the second year running NUT members have voted a motion calling for unilateral nuclear disarmament top of the agenda for the union's annual conference.

The motion, which was initiated by the Socialist Teachers' Alliance, was backed by sections of the Communist Party and its allies (though opposed by other sections).

This is a major victory for the Left in the NUT because the officials and the right wing have spent the last twelve months attacking and negating last year's conference vote for unilateral disarmament.

It is almost certain that the President will rule the motion out of order, but there is clearly the basis for a successful challenge to his ruling. A unilateralist victory for a second year running would be an important advance in the politicisation of the union, and could lead onto a campaign to affiliate to the Labour Party.

It would also be a victory for union democracy and delegates will be able to strengthen this by supporting the rule amendment to reinforce the supremacy of conference decisions.

Norman conquest

A VILLAGE half in quiet and picturesque Basing, Hampshire, was the surprising setting for the wealthy, privileged, influential and Tory businessmen of Basingstoke to hear Norman Tebbit last Friday.

The poor chaps had had to manoeuvre their Porsches and Rovers down narrow, snowbound lanes because of a last-ditch attempt to protect Tebbit from the public. The venue had been changed three times, and each time the Basingstoke Labour Party and Trades Council reception committee found out.

Out of the 90 Tories invited to the luncheon last

Friday, only one third turned up. And 50 or so demonstrators from local unions, Labour Party, and unemployed, were there too.

Police herded the demonstrators into a field. When Tebbit arrived, over an hour late, he was greeted with snowballs, eggs, and tomatoes.

The village of Basing will return to normal. The owner of the small business next to the hall, having had it shut for the day by the police, will open up again. And the local Tories are now looking for a more secluded allotment shed for their next visit from a government Minister.

Unemployed

TUC backs Tebbit's 'training' scheme

"THE TUC is committed to helping unions to make YTS work".

The TUC justifies its total support for the YTS by stressing the need for employed and unemployed people to receive training.

"The YTS will be particularly important for those young people who in the past have been left untrained, unskilled and unqualified — and are now taking the brunt of unemployment."

YOPS, the forerunner of YTS was, and still is, blatantly used by the employers as a source of free labour to replace semi-skilled and unskilled workers.

Now with the introduction of a training element these schemes become totally acceptable and negotiators are urged where the employer has not intended to run a scheme to "press for one to be run".

The allowance remains the same as YOPS, but only after fierce opposition to the government suggestion that it should be about £15 per week and that youth who refused a place, would not be entitled to benefits.

A reduction in the current rate and the compulsory element could still be enforced at a later date when the YTS is fully established.

This method has already been used to reduce the allowances paid to Community Enterprise Programme workers (based on trade union rates of pay) to a level midway between Supplementary Benefits and low paid workers' rates, by changing the scheme to the Community Programme.

Will the importance of training young people override the allowance reduction and compulsion

element in the wisdom of the TUC?

Despite the claim "However this scheme is not intended as an answer to the crisis of youth unemployment. That is why the TUC is pressing the government to introduce a wide range of other measures to provide real jobs for unemployed young people," the TUC's only answer to unemployment is to collaborate with the government and employers in supporting the Tory aim of getting all young people, under 19 years of age, on to training schemes and off the unemployment register.

In order to accommodate the YTS, some craft unions are prepared to reduce first year apprenticeship rates to a level similar to the YTS allowance. The EETPU have already made such an agreement, others are preparing to do so. These con-

cessions will destroy apprenticeship training altogether, further diluting the status of skilled workers.

Guide

The guide states, "on status, pay and conditions negotiate with the employer about whether, and what proportion of young people recruited have employee status [and be paid a wage or salary at the agreed rate] or trainee status [and be paid an allowance of £25 per week]".

What employer is going to employ young workers when they can take all youth on as trainees with the allowance paid by the Manpower Services Commission?

YTS will continue to be more beneficial to the government and employers than to young workers.

For the employer — free

labour plus the hand-outs from the government in the form of training subsidies.

For the government — a measure to control youth through compulsory training/education making them work for an allowance at first not much higher than dole money, later at a reduced rate or none at all, whilst removing them all from the unemployment figures.

Create

The TUC will continue to support these shortsighted solutions to mass unemployment, playing into the hands of the Tories and employers, as this presents a soft alternative to fighting the cause of mass unemployment and fighting to retain existing jobs and for policies such as workshoring, a shorter working week and stopping of all overtime, to create jobs.

MICK JARMAINE

Problems - and Policies

Preparing the struggle for socialist revolution

Jenny Fisher reports on a recent debate between the Communist Party (John Grahl) and Socialist Organiser (Martin Thomas) in Newham, East London

JOHN GRAHL, speaking for the Communist Party, saw a socialism which would bring common ownership, a planned economy which would guarantee people's needs, and an end to exploitation. It would be democratic, with a plurality of parties, taking nothing from the rights of the individual. What strategy to achieve this? He stressed "broad democratic alliances", on "demands that sometimes

seem very minimal". The Socialist Organiser speaker, Martin Thomas, argued that a workers' state will have to be a totally different form of organising society. The existing form of government, where there is an elected Parliament, but where the state is run by a virtually independent state machine, is fashioned for bourgeois rule. The working class needs directly elected bodies - the

workers' parliaments (or councils or soviets), as in previous revolutionary situations across the world - with instant recall of the elected. These bodies should run things directly, without an autonomous state machinery, to give people direct control over their own lives.

This was very different from the CP view, which called for common ownership but neglected to mention how common control would be organised - which promised an end to exploitation was seen, but did not say who was to define exploitation.

John Grahl looked to a range of "social movements" like the women's movement, the peace movement, and movements for civil and democratic rights.

Together, these movements could mobilise millions, and strengthen the socialist movement, even to the stage where we would be so strong that we'd be able to neutralise any attempt at a bourgeois counter-coup, and achieve socialism without a civil war.

Martin Thomas argued that we need to dismantle the existing state structure to replace it with a new one - and that in any case the state machine will resist any serious change, ultimately with violence.

The state has resisted even very limited measures e.g. the attempt by the GLC to implement its election manifesto pledges.

Even changes far short of socialism - like for example a Labour government trying to implement unilateral nuclear disarmament - would probably meet resistance from the military: abolishing the House of Lords or sacking the Governor of the Bank of England (technically appointed by the Queen) would meet resistance from the courts or monarchy, which could provide a chance for the army to intervene as 'defenders of the constitution'. The labour movement needs to be prepared.

Mass revolutionary struggles cannot be called into being by propaganda. But they will develop. The job of socialists is to prepare ourselves and the labour movement - to democratise and revolutionise the organisations of the working class, the Labour Party and trade unions, through organising a left wing.

Outside

John Grahl felt that the Labour Party was controlled by the enemies of socialism - the NEC and PLP - and too preoccupied with Parliament. He admitted that the Labour Party was important as the political arm of the labour movement, and welcomed the fight to change it - but defended the CP remaining outside it.

Yet after all the struggles to secure the endorsement



Councils of action were formed in the General Strike

of Peter Tatchell in Bermondsey as a left candidate the CP are standing a candidate against him!

The struggle has helped strengthen the left against the right wing - those who stay outside the Labour Party aren't weakening, but strengthening the control of the 'enemies of socialism'.

There were 40 people in the room, but what about the rest of the working class of Newham?

"Well, let's be realistic..." said one member of the CP, speaking from the floor. "Romantic fantasies about workers' councils are no good. We can't do it all at once. We'll just have to carry on doing our work, convincing people..."

One answer came from an older member of the CP who remembered the Councils of Action after World War 1 and in the General Strike. Picking up a copy of Socialist Organiser with a front page on the water strike, he said that the working class would

fight.

Martin Thomas, summing up, said that socialist strategy could not be based on convincing people one by one. We're fighting a bourgeoisie which has much greater resources than us in putting its ideas across.

Our strategy must be based on the way the working class develops through struggle. Rather than the CP line of waiting for a series of left governments to bring us socialism by piecemeal reforms (hoping nobody stops them), socialists must intervene in working class struggle, and integrate our ideas in the working class movement, striving to develop the maximum of class consciousness and class organisation from each battle.

In this way the working class will be fighting for socialism as a class - not merely as part of a broad alliance of movements - and will be prepared to defend the gains they will make.

Where to find us

THERE ARE Socialist Organiser groups in most major towns and cities. See below for details of your area - and if you want more details, or if there is no group listed for your area, fill in and return the 'Get Organised' form.

• SCOTLAND

Glasgow. For details of meetings contact paper sellers or Stan Crooke, 114 Dixon Avenue, Glasgow G42. SO is sold at Maryhill dole (Tuesday mornings) and Rutherglen shopping arcade (Friday lunchtime).

Edinburgh. For details of meetings ring Dave, 229 4591. SO is sold at Muirhouse (Saturday 10.30-12) and the First of May bookshop, Candlemaker Row.

• NORTH-WEST

Wallasey. Contact Colin Johnstone, 1 Wellington Road, Wallasey.

Liverpool. Contact 733 6663. SO is sold at Progressive Books, Berry St, and at News from Nowhere, Whitechapel.

Manchester. Next meeting Thursday February 17, 7.30

Next Socialist Organiser delegate meeting: Saturday March 5, 11am to 5.30pm, Co-op rooms, 57 Micklegate, York. (Phone 0904 425739 for accommodation or creche). Please make plans to choose and mandate your group's delegates now.

at UMIST students' union. Business meeting and discussion on 'The Capitalist State' Public meeting: Thursday February 24, 7.30 at the 'Millstone' pub: 'Why is Thatcher winning?' SO is sold at Gas.roots Books, Newton St, Piccadilly.

Rochdale. Contact 353 Rochdale Old Rd, Bury.

SO is sold at Metro Books, Bury.

Stockport. Contact c/o 38 Broadhurst St. Meetings every Sunday, 7.30pm: phone 429 6359 for details. SO is sold at Stockport market every Saturday, 11 to 12.30.

Hyndburn. Contact Accrington 39573. Meetings weekly - see SO sellers for day, time and venue. SO is sold at Broadway, Accrington, every Saturday from 11.30 to 1pm.

Stoke. Contact Arthur Bough, 23 Russell Road, Sandyford (84170).

• YORKSHIRE AND NORTH-EAST

Durham. Meets every Tuesday, 6.30pm, Students Union bar, Durham university. SO is sold at the Community Co-op, New Elvet.

York. Contact: 425739. SO is sold at Coney St on Saturday mornings, at the Community Bookshop, outside the dole office most mornings, and at the University on Friday mornings.

Leeds. Contact Garth Frankland, 623322. SO is sold at Books and Corner Books, Woodhouse Lane.

Bradford. Contact Barry Turner, 636994. SO is sold at the Starry Plough bookshop.

Sheffield. Meets every other Wednesday, 7.30pm at the Brown Cow, The Wick. Next meeting Wednesday February 16: 'The Tories and the Falklands Factor'. SO is sold outside Boot's, Foregate (Saturday 12 to 1), and at the Independent Bookshop, Glosop Road. Contact: Rob, 589307.

Hull. Meets every Wednesday, 8pm: details from SO sellers. Childcare available. SO is sold at the Prospect Centre (Saturday 11-12).

Halifax. Contact 52156. SO is sold at Halifax Wholesale, Gibbet St, and at Tower Books, Hebden Bridge.

• WALES

Cardiff. Contact 492988.

• MIDLANDS

Birmingham. Meets alternate Fridays, 7.30, the Labour Club, Bristol St. Next meeting Friday February 25. SO is sold at the Other Bookshop, Digbeth High St.

Coventry. Contact Keith White, 75623. SO is sold at the Wedge Co-op, High St. Meets on first and last Thursday of each month, 7.30 at 'The Queen', Primrose Hill St, Hillfields. Next meeting: Thursday February 24, 'Armageddon', a video made by the BBC about the effects of a nuclear attack on London.

Leicester. Contact Phil, 857908. SO is sold outside Supasave (Friday 4.30 to 6), the Co-op, Narborough Rd (Saturday 11-12.30), and at Blackthorne Books, High Street.

Northampton. Meets alternate Mondays. Next meet-

ing February 21. For details contact 713606.

Nottingham. Meets every Friday, 7.30pm at the International Community Centre, 61B Mansfield Rd. SO is sold outside the Victoria Centre (Saturday 11 to 1) and at the Mushroom Bookshop, Heathcote St.

• SOUTH

Oxford. SO is sold at the Cornmarket (Saturday 11am to 1pm) and outside Tesco, Cowley Rd (Friday 5pm-7pm). Also at EOA Bookshop, Cowley Road.

Basingstoke. Business meetings February 25, March 11. Public meeting, March 10: 'Is Marxism obsolete?' All meetings 7.30pm, Chute House.

• LONDON

North-West London. Readers' meetings first Sunday of month. Phone Mick, 624 1931, for details. SO is sold at Kilburn Books.

Islington. Next meeting Sunday February 27, 3pm at Thornhill Neighbourhood Project, Orkney House, Caledonian Rd/Copenhagen St: 'The struggle in Zimbabwe'. For childcare phone Nik, 607 5268.

Haringey. Contact 802 0771 or 348 5941. Meets every other Thursday, 7.30pm, Trade Union centre, Brabant Road. Next meeting February 21.

Tower Hamlets. Contact 790 4937. Meets fortnightly on Fridays, 6.30 to 8.30pm. Next meeting February 25.

Newham. Contact 555 9957.

South-East London. Contact 691 1141.

Lambeth/Southwark meets every other Wednesday, Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, London

SE5. Business 7.30 to 8.30. Open Forum discussion at 8.30pm. Next meeting Wednesday 2 march on 'Lesbian and Gay Rights'. Speaker to be confirmed. SO is sold at Brixton tube, 5-6pm, every Thursday. Estate sale every Monday, meet at 6.30pm, Lansbury House.

New Southwark SO bulletin. First issue out 24 February.

Hounslow. Meets fortnightly on Sundays, 8pm. For details phone 898 6961.

Hackney. Contact c/o Andrew Hornung, 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmleigh Rd, N16.

SO is sold at the following London bookshops: Colletts, Central Books, The Other Bookshop, Bookmarks, Bookplace [Peckham Rd, SE15], and Reading Matters [Wood Green Shopping City].

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



Trade union Broad Lefts Organising Committee conference: Sat. Feb. 19, County Hall, London SE1, on 'Democratising the Block Vote'.

Credentials for delegates from trade union bodies and Broad Lefts from Phil Holt, 108 Prince's Boulevard, Bebington, Merseyside L63 7PE (051 645 1375)

Colin Roach FOR A WORKERS' INQUIRY!

Socialist Organiser

THE march demanding an independent public inquiry into the death of Colin Roach went ahead last Saturday, 12th, in spite of police harassment and provocation along the route.

Marchers were picked on, pushed and shoved by the police, but resisted the provocations and marched peacefully, as had been the intention, from Hackney Town Hall to Stoke Newington Police Station and back to the Town Hall again.

Shouting 'We want justice now' and 'Hackney police — racist police', the 500 marchers were joined along the route by local black youth and shoppers. People hung out of windows, shouting their support.

Several people were arrested, however, and there were fears for their safety as witnesses reported to the rally at the end that they had seen the police beating them up in the cop vans.

The police had followed one marcher, Gabriel Noor, who they were obviously picking on till they got him.

In the end the police came off worst — as when they harassed the march van-driver for the umpteenth time the crowd decided enough was enough. The cops were surrounded, told to get out in no uncertain terms, and

Jo Thwaites reports

SOCIALIST Organiser supports the call for an independent inquiry.

But experience has shown that such inquiries take a long time to achieve and are often turned by the state into a white-washing exercise.

The Hackney labour movement can and must act now to combat these dangers, establishing all the available evidence on the Colin Roach case, and publicising its findings, while pressing the demand for official action.

forced to retreat through the crowd.

James Roach, Colin's father, held by the police for three hours under interrogation before the police told him that his son was dead, told the marchers: "My son was happy — he did not commit suicide. He left the house that night in a happy mood, he did not kill himself."

James Roach was clearly shattered by his son's death, and the crowd paid tribute to his and the Roach

family's courage for standing up and fighting the police cover-up.

Many local people think the police murdered Colin. The record of Hackney police is one of harassment and racism towards black people in the borough.

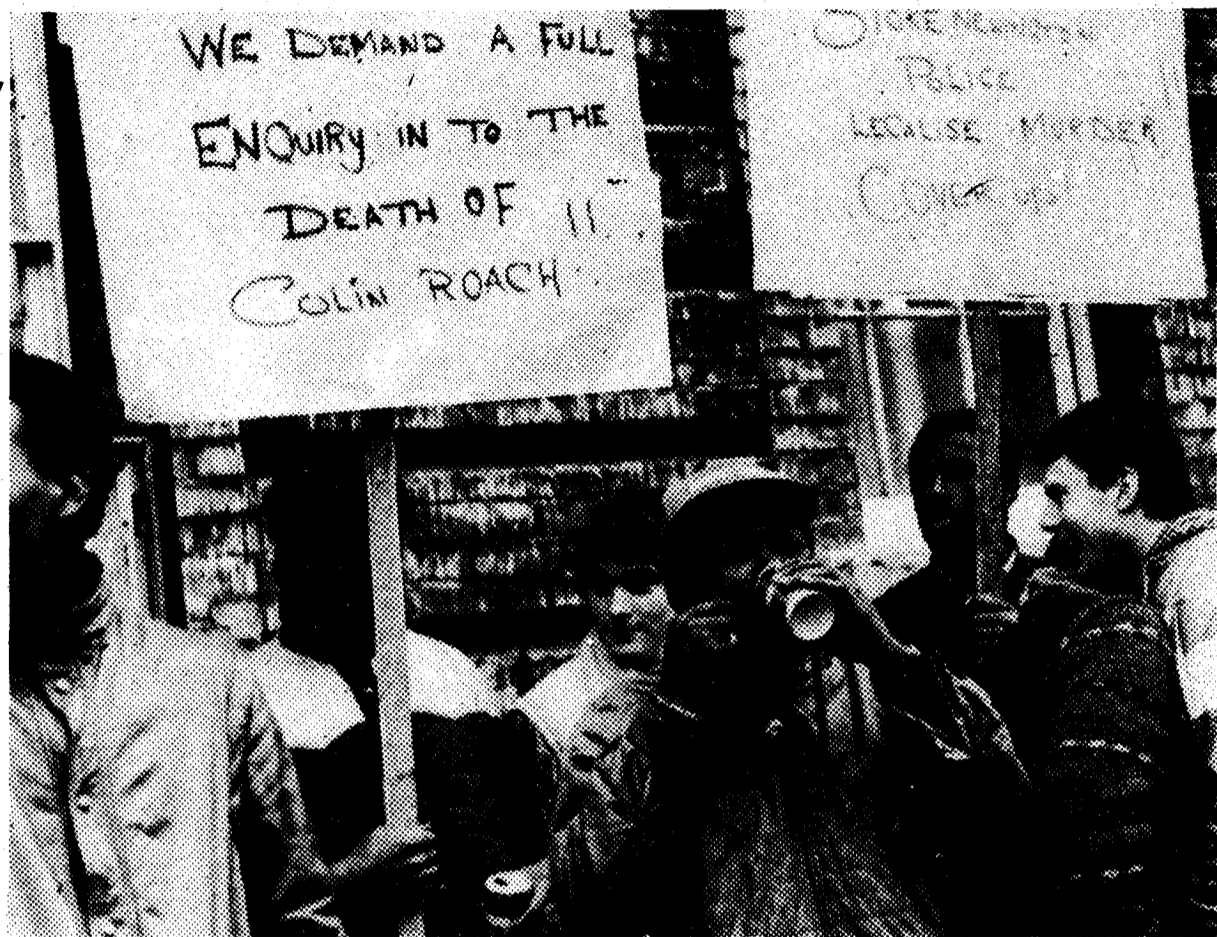
As the support committee emphasises, the only way to find out is to have an independent public inquiry, not a whitewash operation by the police themselves.

This call has been supported by Hackney Trades Council, by Hackney Council and by Tower Hamlets councillors, though, shamefully, not yet by the Tower Hamlets Council itself.

The GLC supports the campaign and has pledged to provide a grant of £1,500 for the campaign to have a worker. The Tories on the GLC are trying to block this. Banners on the march last Saturday included Hackney Central and Tower Hamlets CLPs, but there was nothing like enough labour movement support for it.

The campaign had made several steps forward in gaining support for an independent inquiry. Keith Scully, the friend who drove Colin to Stoke Newington the night he was found dead in the police station, has written to the Standard to say that he was horrified and disturbed to see headlines in their paper saying that Colin had killed himself.

Keith had eventually agreed to speak to the reporter after continual pestering, against the advice of the Roach family's solicitor, Gareth Pearce (who was involved in the Bradford 12 victory). Virtually everything he said was distorted and twis-



HUMPHREY NEMAR

ted by the newspaper article. To date, the Standard has refused to print Keith's letter.

Forty-two MPs have signed a motion calling for an independent inquiry into the death of Colin Roach. Yet two Hackney MPs, Ron Brown (SDP) and Stanley Clinton Davis (Labour) have refused to sign it.

Hackney Council's Police Committee has passed a motion of no confidence in Stoke Newington police.

They have also recommended that the Council should not collect the police precept from Hackney rate-payers until the Home Secretary sets up an independent inquiry into Colin's death.

London's black newspaper, The Voice, is offering a £1,000 reward for information leading to the conviction of any person or persons responsible for the death of Colin Roach. They insist that the truth of what happened at Stoke Newington Police Station on the night of 12 January must be uncovered.

Dolores Williams, a youth worker in Hackney, was arrested and taken to Stoke Newington Police Station on January 26.

She swore an affidavit afterwards. While she was there, "One plain clothes

officer said, 'We killed Colin Roach because he would not give us the information we wanted'. His colleagues laughed at this remark.

'Ian McNeil (also arrested with Dolores) replied 'It's no laughing matter'. The same officer said 'We shot him with a sawn-off shot-gun'."

The pressure for an inquiry is building up, but there needs to be more. There has to be more support from the local labour movement, and the councillors themselves, on the marches and pickets of Stoke Newington Police Station every Saturday.

Over 50 people have been arrested on marches and pickets demanding a public inquiry, and all those who have supported the inquiry call should now support the Roach Family Support Committee for the charges against these people to be dropped.

Send messages of support and donations to: The Roach Family Support Committee, 50 Rectory Road, Stoke Newington, London N16.

* Apology: We should have credited the Colin Roach demo picture last week to Humphrey Nemar

Turn out for Tatchell!

OVER 300 LONDON Labour activists turned out last Saturday, 12th, and even more on the Sunday to campaign for Peter Tatchell in the Bermondsey by-election.

As the Labour campaign gathers momentum, the working class of this South London constituency is shaking off the effects of the year-long press witch-hunt against Tatchell.

The transformation of Bermondsey CLP into a campaigning party fighting strongly on local issues in defence of working class interests has clearly enthused Labour supporters who had lost interest in the Party during the decades when Mellish was MP and John O'Grady [the 'Real Labour' candidate] leader of Southwark Council.

Pensioners who have benefitted from Bermondsey CLP's active campaigning on their behalf are no less enthusiastic for Peter Tatchell.

The campaign by the right-wing 'Real Labour' candidate John O'Grady seems to have made very little impact in the areas outside their base in the Riverside and Dockyard wards, not least because their campaign has centred not on policies but on attacking Peter Tatchell as an individual.

Their latest stunt has been to write a song about Tatchell's private life to the tune of 'My Old Man's a Dustman'!

It is important that Tatchell gets a big majority on February 24. Bermondsey Labour Party has fought the by-election on a left-wing programme. Peter Tatchell has become a standard-bearer for important issues over the last year — opposition to the witch-hunt within the Labour Party, extra-parliamentary action, and gay rights.

Every vote for Tatchell is a vote against the Labour right. Labour activists throughout London can help win a big Labour vote by joining the canvassing teams during the last week of the campaign and by helping to get the Labour vote out.

DETAILS: phone 703 6511

Labour Against the Witch-hunt is organising an advertisement in Tribune on March 4, with a statement to be signed by Constituency Labour Parties and supported by trade union and Labour Party branches:

'We are committed to a Labour victory at the next General Election on the basis of the policies agreed by Annual Conference. Any witch-hunt would endanger the Party Unity required to achieve such a victory. We therefore call on the right-wing majority of the National Executive Committee to halt all disciplinary measures against Party members, groups of members or Constituency Labour Parties.

Should the NEC persist with disciplinary measures or disaffiliations, we give notice that we will not recognise any such actions. We will not expel, nor recognise the expulsion of any Labour Party member or group of members arising from political disagreement with the NEC.'

Get your CLP, union or Labour Party branch to support this, and write to LAW, 11 Wilderton Road, LONDON N16, by 25 February, enclosing £3.

FUND

£332.75 this week brings us over the half-way point towards our £1000 February target. But it's three-quarters of the way through the month!

And it would only have been £82.75, but for a single donation of £250 from an Oxford SO supporter.

We've had some very generous individual donations this year — but we also need a steady stream of smaller donations to boost them up. We can't rely on someone giving us £250 every week!

Only a few SO groups have made dona-

tions this month: we need a donation from every group which hasn't contributed yet. Reaching our February target depends on you!

Thanks to: Oxford SO supporter £250; Islington reader, 75p; SO supporters in Brent £3.50; Mark Starr £25; Steve Hall, £6.50; Mike Jones £2; Terry Connolly £15; Siu-Ming Cheung £20; Brighton SO supporters £10. Total so far £555.25.

Send money to: The Treasurer, 214 Sickert Court, Essex Road, London N1.