

What is the SO Alliance?

THE SHOW must go on! The TUC leaders may have thrown in the towel — but at shop floor level, militants need more than ever to unite around policies and tactics that enable them to fight the employers and beat back the sabotage of full-time officials.

Woodwork

As new figureheads of the right wing — like CPSA loudmouth Alastair Graham — emerge from the TUC woodwork, and bureaucratic dinosaurs battle for territory on the General Council, rank and file trade unionists must organise in determined fashion to democratise and open up the unions for the active participation of the most oppressed sections of the working class — women, black people, youth and the unemployed.

In the Labour Party, as

Kinnock sews the final stitches into his personal election victory, while heading the party away from Conference policies and towards future election defeats, the most committed fighters for socialist policies and for a campaigning party must offer leadership to a confused, defensive and disorientated left wing.

Socialist Organiser is committed to the fight across the whole labour movement for principled policies and a new, fighting leadership. We have waged this fight consistently since 1978, before the election of the Thatcher government. We have always rejected the role of sideline critics of the class struggle. Instead, we have been at the forefront of battles both in the unions and the Labour Party, patiently arguing for

Overturn

The reality is clear. To defeat Tory policies, it is necessary both to defeat the government and to overturn the capitalist system which dictated policies of unemployment, public spending cuts and wage controls to previous Labour governments.

We need not another Labour government like previous timid reformist governments, but a real workers' government, accountable to the rank and file, which can move boldly against capitalist power and property.

To carry through such a sweeping change in society, the labour movement must be mobilised — but it must also be transformed from top to bottom.

It must adopt and fight for new policies and perspectives which can win and involve broad layers of workers; and to do this it must also create democratic forms and structures through which the rank and file can call to account and dispose of the current bureaucratic leaderships whose political conservatism and defence of their own power and privilege hang like a millstone round the neck of the labour movement.

We cannot create our own labour movement from scratch: nor can we halt the daily class struggle while we assemble the forces to revolutionise and revitalise the existing labour movement.

Our struggle for new policies and new leadership must be carried out in the actual conditions of the 1980s — in conflict with the employers, the Tory government, the right wing, sections of the spineless 'left' and the Communist Party, and against a backdrop of recession, mass unemployment and a Thatcher leadership boosted by four years of incessant TUC retreats and betrayals.

This is a harsh — but unavoidable — reality.

But in the fight for a class line and an organised means of fighting for that line in the practical, daily struggles of today's workers' movement, Socialist Organiser offers a lead to every worker.

Included in this booklet are a range of the policies, tactics and positions we are taking up in the latest phase of the battle against Thatcherism: more details of our general analysis and programme can be found in the booklet 'Where We Stand'.

Why not join us? Only by a concerted struggle for the policies we know to be right can we combat the betrayals and retreats by the TUC and Labour leaders which we all know to be wrong. But if we fight simply as individuals, the pressures upon us of setbacks and problems are magnified — while the chances of success are minimised.

The answer? **Get Organised!** Join Socialist Organiser and help build the struggle for new leadership in the workers' movement!

JOHN HARRIS



We have been at the forefront of battles in unions and Labour Party.

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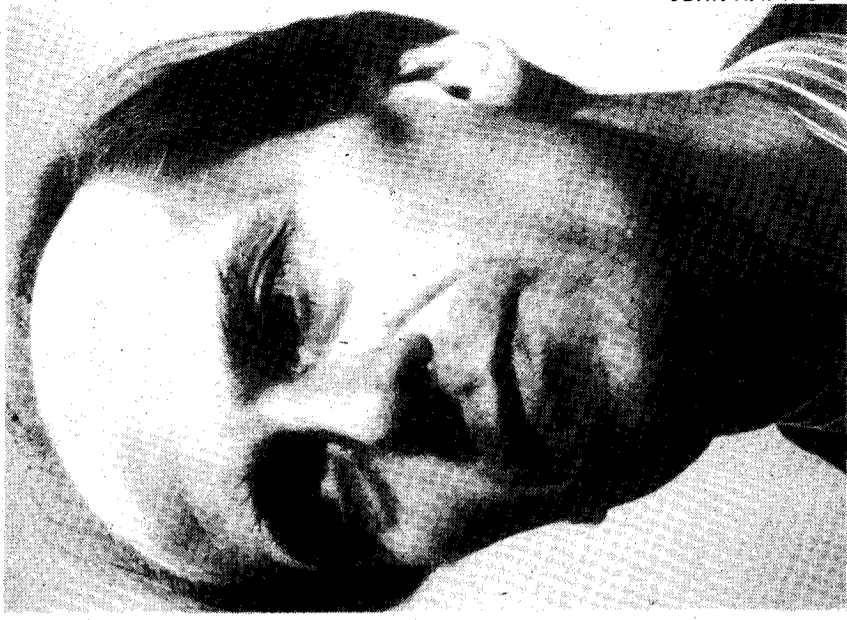
How to fight the Tories

A Special Supplement for the SO 'How to Fight the Tories' Conference



The struggle against Tebbit's "Youth Training" Schemes

JOHN HARRIS



SOCIALIST Organiser argues that the TUC should withdraw its endorsement for the Youth Training Scheme, and end its collaboration with the Tories in the Manpower Services Commission.

Some trade unions — NGA, NUJ, CPSA — simply have a policy of boycotting YTS. Obviously we must support them if they fight to defend that policy against employers, and obviously unions must retain the option of boycotting YTS.

But boycott alone does nothing to *organise* the YTS trainees — and, for socialists, *organising* is always the key to a fight back. Unions must demand full information on where schemes are operating in their area, and set out to recruit the youth involved.

The basic non-negotiable demands should be:

- * Trainees pay to be topped up to trade union rates.
- * Union membership for trainees.
- * Employee status for trainees. (Otherwise they have no legal rights under the Race Relations Act, the Sex Discrimination Act, and the Employment Protection Act; and only limited rights under the Health and Safety at Work Act).

These demands strike at the basic cheap-labour purpose of YTS, and are a starting point for further demands. They can be won. Hackney and Islington councils in London, for example, have agreed to them. Where they are not conceded, the unions should campaign openly and strongly against the schemes being introduced.

The most important other demands are:

- * A guaranteed job at the end.
- * No job substitution.
- * Training to be done in local authority colleges and to lead to recognised qualifications.
- * All trainees to receive a card stating their rights. (This is supposed to be an MSC rule).

* More than the minimum 18 days holiday.
* Positive discrimination for women and blacks.
The demand for guaranteed jobs for youth at the end of the scheme can also be pursued jointly with the rest of the workforce at the end. It should be raised from the outset as an objective of the unions.

What the scheme really means

MANY of those involved with YTS have misgivings about the scheme. No one denies the need for proper training and jobs for young workers. The doubts listed below give some idea of some of the shortcomings that need considering.

1. The YTS trainee allowance of £25 per week will severely depress wage rates for all youth. According to the New Earnings Survey, the average weekly earnings for 16 year olds are £47.50. The rates for electrical contracting apprentices have already been cut from £41.62 to £27.88.

2. The YTS scheme shifts almost all training costs from employers to the Government. In recent years employers have paid some 50% of the total costs of vocational training.

Under YTS, the employers will receive £1,850 per trainee which includes £1,300 to cover the full amount for the training allowance, £550 for overheads and an addition of £100 per trainee if the employer is a managing agent.

3. YTS is accelerating the destruction of the apprenticeship system. YTS comes in the wake of the destruction of 17 out of 24 of the Industrial Training Boards. MSC plans to reduce apprentice support grants next year from £52.2 million to £33 million.

4. YTS will certainly give rise to job substitution. On MSC's own estimates, this took place on 30% of YOP

Continued over

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JOHN HARRIS

In Northern Ireland, 40% of eligible youth have rejected a YTS Scheme already operating there

placements.

5. Health and safety of trainees cannot be ensured. About 70% of YOP trainees were placed with small, low-paid, non-unionised workplaces — the majority of which were never monitored.

6. CPSA have highlighted their inability to monitor YOP schemes because of low staffing levels in the MSC. Under YOP, the backlog of visits overwhelmed MSC workers and limited targets of likely unscrupulous employers were set. SCPS have stressed that only 30% of these targeted employers were even visited. A huge number of employers had renewals for further schemes without being monitored.

7. The MSC describes YTS as an "employer-led scheme". The MSC is encouraging employers to form managerial consortia for YTS schemes with their grants to managing agents of £100 per trainee. Managing agents will be allowed to monitor their own schemes.

8. YTS trainees are not covered by protective employment legislation, the Race Relations Act, the Sex Discrimination Act. There is no plan to challenge sex stereotyping. There are real fears that since employers in the private sector will be selecting their own trainees, that mode A (private sector) will become the while trainees sector whilst mode B will become the black one.

9. No nationally recognised standards have been set for the training element of the scheme. Five times more money is spent on training programmes on the continent.

10. YTS gives the green light for the privatisation of local authority education. As the former Liberal MP, John Pardoe (Managing Director of Sight and Sound Ltd — the largest private contractors for YOPs and TOPs), points out "it is the first time an organisation has been set up to buy part of the education service on a cost effective basis". Under YTS, further Education

Colleges will have to compete for training contracts with firms like Sight and Sound. The implications of such competition were summarised by one Birmingham full-time union official who stressed that "price means ensuring all the time that trainees are taught in groups which are as large as possible".

11. No allowances will be made to youth who choose to continue in F.E. colleges as full-time students. The Birmingham Careers Service has collected evidence under

YOP that indicates that many students will be discouraged by YTS from pursuing further education.

12. The decision to put some YTS trainees with the armed forces has alarmed a wide spectrum of opinion.

13. YTS has already been in operation in Northern Ireland in the past year. Evidence collected so far shows there has been a massive 40% reduction of the scheme by local youth.

Checklist on 'The Issues' prepared by Birmingham Trades Council

Birmingham policy on YTS

Birmingham Trades Council Policy Statement on the Youth Training Scheme (YTS)

THE Youth Training Scheme is presented as a new initiative to solve Britain's training needs. Yet 17 Industrial Training Boards have been abolished, apprenticeship schemes destroyed, and Further Education cut. YTS is, above all else, a cynical attempt by the Government to remove some 460,000 young people from the dole queue in an election year.

The Role of Trade Unions

Nationally Birmingham Trades Council believes that the TUC and national trade unions should campaign for:

- [a] a totally different approach to the question of unemployment which will mean policies to introduce shorter working time, more real jobs by re-generation of industry, etc;
- [b] the replacement of YTS by a properly funded programme of quality training and maintaining apprentice wages rates;
- [c] expansion of Local Education Authority funded courses

A programme for union democracy

Union Officials and Committees

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 have supreme policy-making power.

Elections

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.

Strikes

Strikes should be automatically official until declared unofficial. All strikes for trade union principles, work conditions or wages should be made official. Strike committees must be elected from (and subject to recall by) mass meetings. Through mass meetings and strike bulletins, they must keep the membership fully informed throughout the strike. There should be no secret negotiations. Every stage of negotiations should be subject to rank and file ratification at mass meetings. Mass meetings should never be presented with package deals unless each part of the deal has been voted on separately by the meeting beforehand.

Workplace Organisation

Shop stewards must be elected at mass meetings held in the workplace, in company time if possible. They should hold regular report-back meetings, also if possible in company time. Joint Shop Stewards Committees should be set up on a plant, combine and international basis. Technical and clerical workers should also be represented on these committees.

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Policies adopted by Socialist Organiser conference, April 3 1982.

Despite the general need for unity, there will be cases where shop stewards disagree strongly with the majority of the stewards' committee and want to put their minority views to the membership. They should have the right to do so, after notifying the committee of their intention, so long as they also make it clear to the membership what the stewards' majority view is.

Union branches should have the right to meet at the workplace and in worktime if possible. If not, creche facilities must be provided to ensure women workers can attend. Labour Party workplace branches should be set up with all the rights of ordinary work branches.

Closed Shop

We must campaign: for 100% trade unionism; for the right of trade unionists to enforce closed shops; for the right of trade unionists to discipline fellow workers who scab or flout democratic decisions; against the check-off system; and against employer-policed agency shops.

Women's Rights

Implement the TUC Charter for Women Within Trade Unions.

Proportional representation for women on national executives, conference delegations (including to TUC and Labour Party conferences, regional, district and divisional, sectional or rules revision conferences) and, where applicable, local branch committees.

The right of all women's committees, caucuses and conferences to bring resolutions to the policy-making bodies of the union at that level.

Recognition that sexual harassment is a trade union issue and that an offence against women is an offence against trade unionism.

Support for positive discrimination as a way of compensating for the extra barriers women face at work, in the trade unions and in politics. Broad lefts should lead the way by practising it in their own structures.

Black and Immigrant Workers

No discrimination against black or immigrant workers in the unions (including in social clubs). Positive discrimination to ensure real equality. Support for the right to form black caucuses.

Campaigns to recruit immigrant workers to trade unions (using leaflets in the immigrants' own language).

A purge of open racists from all positions in the labour movement. Expulsion of fascist activists from the union. A vigorous and sustained trade union fight against racist and sexist job discrimination. Automatic endorsement of all strikes against discrimination.

Youth

Full trade union rights for young workers, including the right to strike. Formation of youth committees.

The Unemployed

Unionisation of the unemployed, with full rights within the unions.

Individual Rights

Right of members to criticise union policy; to meet unofficially to write, circulate and/or sell political literature.

Right of appeal direct to union Appeals Court.

All education or other special qualifications for union officials to be abolished. No member to be disqualified from holding union office on political grounds, other than fascist or racist activity.

Rights of Branches and District Committees.

Defend the rights of trade union branches and district committees against the central union bureaucracy. For the right of branches to take approve industrial action.

Developing Solidarity

Develop links between unions. Expand trade union cells to include representation from the unemployed, tenants and students, and, most important, direct representation from factory committees and other shop floor organisations.

Breaking collaboration

Trade unions should fight for full independence from the state. Total non-co-operation with the Tebbit Law and the Employment Act: state money for postal ballots should be rejected.

The National Economic Development Council and all the other governmental and industrial participation bodies should be opposed and boycotted. Trade unionists must be answerable to the membership, not to joint committees with the bosses.

No interference by the bosses' unions in the internal affairs of the labour movement. Even when an appeal to the courts is motivated by a desire to thwart the right wing bureaucrats, it runs counter to the principles of working class democracy.



JOHN HARRIS

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INSIDE

LIFE WITH YTS

Class Fighter — monthly paper, organising the struggle of youth against the Tories.

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Fighting for gay rights in the labour movement

THE number of local authorities with Equal Opportunities policies providing protection for gays could almost be counted on one hand. (Lothian Region, Greater Manchester, GLC, Nottinghamshire, Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Lambeth.) Only seven out of 517 are known to have added those two important words, 'Sexual orientation' to the attributes listed in Equal Opportunities policies as free from negative discrimination in employment.

On the positive side, all seven are Labour controlled and there are prospects of others amending their policies in the coming year, as a result of the leftward moves in the composition of some Labour Groups following the local elections in May. Manchester City and Islington come immediately to mind.

Nottinghamshire County Council is the latest to approve a new employment policy, and so became the first authority with teaching functions to protect its employees from anti-gay discrimination. In this it is in advance of the Inner London Education Authority where, it is alleged, the lawyers are worried about conceding equal opportunity to gay teachers. Nottinghamshire Tories objected to the inclusion of sexual orientation in the statement of Employment Policy on the depressing familiar grounds that children would be 'at risk' from gay teachers.

Human morals would be debased to the lowest possible

The ultra-positive view is advanced that since they don't discriminate against anyone it is unnecessary to single out minority groups, such as gays, which might consider themselves in need of protection.

To single out groups would, so the argument goes, be a form of discrimination. This was the attitude of Barking Council's Director of Social Services in 1977, replying to a National Council for Civil Liberties questionnaire.

Yet it was Barking's Labour Council which dismissed Care Assistant Susan Shell last year, solely for being a lesbian, and which ignored the approaches of the trade unions and the hundreds of postcard objections sent to the Leader of the Council in a campaign organised by Gay Rights at Work.

Like women and blacks the gay movement has learned from cases like Barking the need for positive written commitments to non-discrimination as an essential first step towards equality in all aspects of employment.

Few of us are so naive as to believe that a small change in the fine print of an employer's policy statement is, in itself, going to make any dramatic change in the work situation and quality of life for gays, but it is a necessary campaign to wage.

Raising the issues becomes an educational event for both sides; often positive responses conceal strong underlying prejudices. In Nottinghamshire the controlling Labour Group recently accepted an offer by the local Campaign for Homosexual Equality to be shown the tape/slide kit 'Homosexuality: A Fact of Life' prior to the monthly Group meeting.

Held early on a Monday morning it was perhaps not surprising that only 15 of the 56 Labour councillors turned up to see it, but the really unfortunate aspect of their response was that so many believed that showing the kit in schools would 'lead youngsters at an impressionable age into a life of homosexuality', to borrow a familiar cliché.

They still saw gayness as, at best, a temporary aberration, or, at worst, an unfortunate accident to be tolerated

among those born 'that way'. And they still believed that homosexuality could be passed on like some contagious and incurable disease to those who were naturally, healthily heterosexual.

Perhaps it is therefore significant that the Nottinghamshire change in policy came about primarily as a result of trade union initiative. Eight years have elapsed since Nottinghamshire gay trade unionists began their campaign for job protection in the County branch of NALGO, which resulted in their Equal Opportunities Committee taking up gay and lesbian rights as a relevant issue.

Gay activists in CHE meanwhile kept NALGO informed of research into anti-gay discrimination at the workplace.

With NUPE also committed by national conference decision to support the rights of its gay members the situation was ripe for a joint approach to the County Council, and this also took place last year in the context of a re-negotiation of employment policies.

The County's policy includes some useful clauses which must be pursued by the gay and labour movement locally; firstly all employees are to be informed of the Statement. Secondly, 'more detailed research in consultation with the trade unions, ethnic minorities and other minority groups' on aspects of employment discrimination is to be undertaken.

Thirdly, the policy is to be monitored, with the likely appointment of a permanent officer to carry out this work. Fourthly, the Joint Education/Social Services/Leisure Committee is to be asked to consider the implications of the new policy.

The conditions should thus be created for permanent access by gays and gay organisations to Council and trade union bodies, and through them gay rights at work can be developed and extended into other areas such as County support for changes to the school curriculum to recognise the validity of gay relationships, support for gay counselling, support for gay self-help groups, including the provision of gay community centres. These are realistic demands that could be repeated within authorities up and down the country.

The fight for non-discriminatory employment policies on the part of local authorities is a tangible way in which both trade unions and Labour Parties can challenge the oppression of gay people.

The article below, from supporters of the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights was first published in Socialist Organiser no.90.

level' declared Tory Councillor Madge Whittaker, during the Committee debate.

And whilst Labour councillors rebutted Tory attacks on this and other points relating to gays, their position was essentially a defensive one. They hadn't mentioned sexual orientation until the Tories raised it.

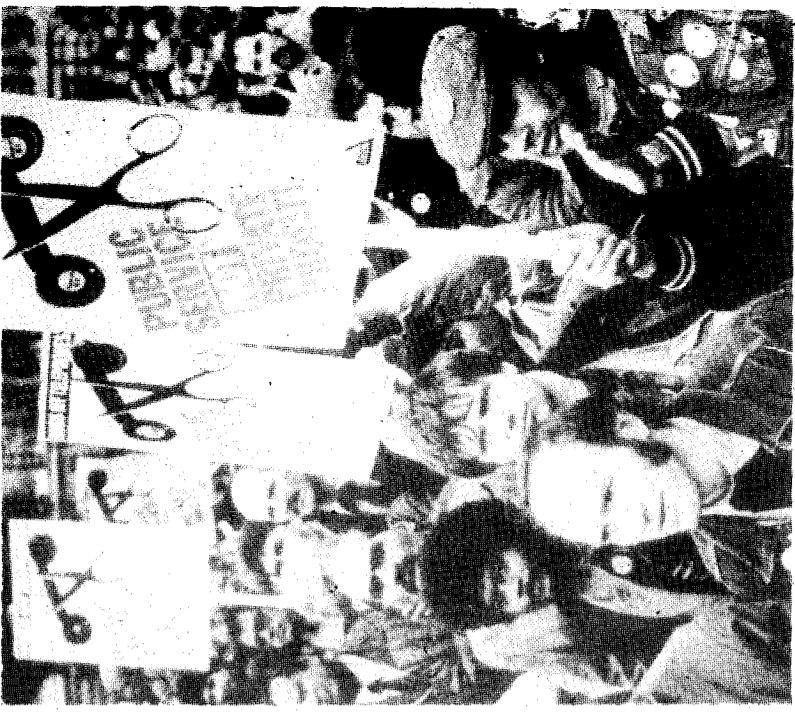
Similarly, Frank Higgins, Labour Chair of the Resources Committee responsible for the Policy, made no reference to sexual orientation when interviewed a few hours later on local radio. More curiously, neither did Tory spokesperson Fred Woodward, in spite of making gays their main target in the half hour committee debate, and despite having said that they would accept an Equal Opportunities Policy - providing job protection for gays was left out.

Tories are not alone in objecting to employment protection for gays. Some Labour authorities have done so too; though, of course, with our own best interests at heart.

Labour Campaign for Gay Rights
Fighting in the Labour movement for lesbian and gay male liberation

To join or affiliate, write to Chris Richardson, 21 Devonshire Promenade, Lenton, Nottingham NG7 2DS. £5 for individuals, or for affiliated organisations, per 1000 members. £2 for low-waged individuals. £1 for unwaged. Add 50p if you want the special issue of Gay Socialist.

Tough fight to defend Telecoms from hiving off



war of propaganda between BT management, the government and the POEU has been going on.

From BT's point of view this is intended to undermine the POEU's industrial action; and from the POEU, to rouse and mobilise its 133,000 members.

This reached a new peak in the BT staff magazine 'Telecom Today', when a special edition was published at the time of the 'Cowley Mole' sackings, claiming that some unions were being led by a 'militant minority' bent on destroying BT.

That particular edition has been replicated in the POEU's Campaign News. The Broad Left's victory was due in a large extent to the lack of faith in the then right-wing leadership's campaign against the Bill, which had concentrated almost solely on parliamentary opposition.

However the effect of the defeat of that campaign in the June 9 election, and the continuation of the campaign by the organised right wing faction can still be seen in a number of proposals to abandon any industrial action against the Privatisation Bill, and a few more propositions which accept that the Bill will be passed.

But the new Broad Left-dominated NEC almost immediately after their election began collecting the industrial action levy.

A weekly sum of £1 per member is building up an industrial action fund to sustain the blacking action that the newly elected NEC sanctioned against connection of the privately-owned Project Mercury to the BT network. This has gone some way to tackling the demoralisation amongst some of the rank and file that the 'old' campaign's failure caused.

The blacking action against Mercury has been confined almost solely to the London area, where Mercury aided

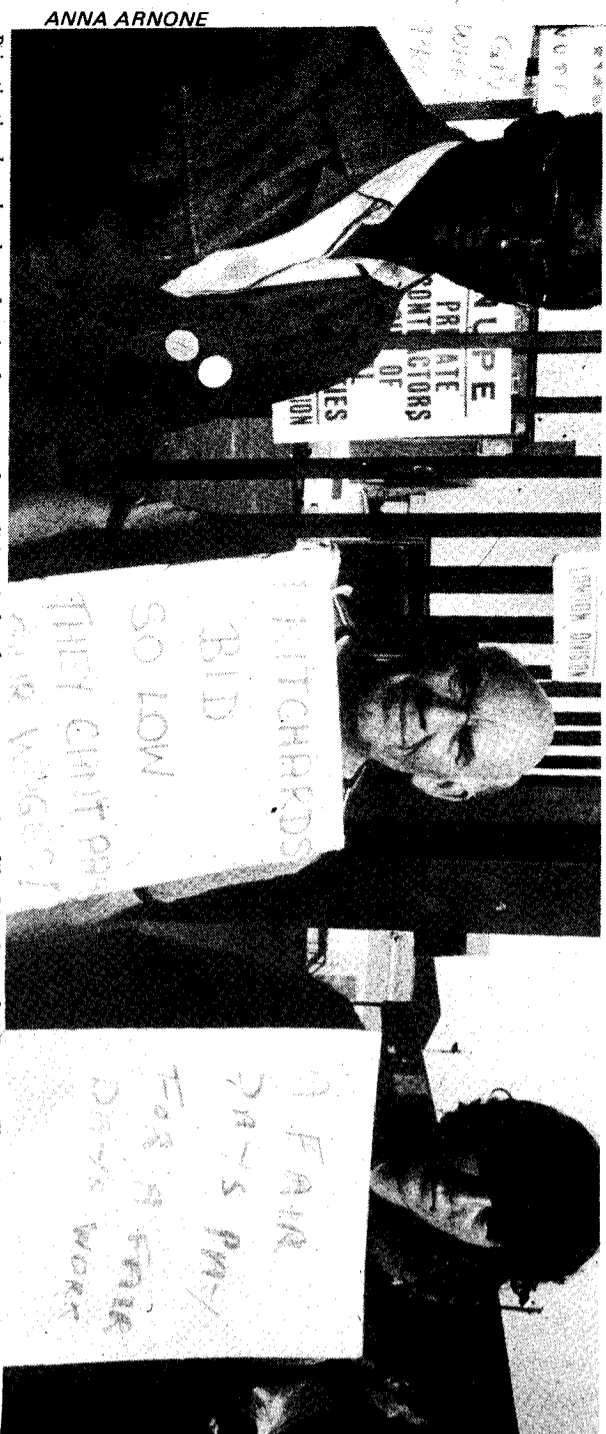
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ANNA ARNONE

Privatisation has already undermined wages and conditions in local government services like Wandsworth (above); will BT be next?

BT management, have attempted interconnection but in the last month this has been extended beyond London by initiating selective blacking action against Mercury's backers — BP, Barclays Bank and Cable and Wireless.

Extending the blacking action has led some of the areas now involved into taking a more militant line at the conference. One example is Aberdeen branch, which covers major BP North Sea Oil installations. They call for an escalation of the present action (which only blacks package switching in major offices) to blacking all equipment in all the offices and other buildings occupied by Mercury's backers.

The majority of propositions and amendments which call for industrial action both against the Bill and Project Mercury call for selective action against government lines and those financial institutions, which was a fairly successful tactic employed in the shorter working week fight of 1978.

Some POEU branches not surprisingly noticed this was occurring and have propositions recognising it. Tyburn branch notes the ineffective National TUC-co-ordinated efforts to date against the Government attacks on the Public Sector Services. This was especially true in

both the ASLEF fight last year and the Health Service pay battle, which brought forth solidarity action through-out the labour movement, including some POEU branches, only to be strangled by Len Murray and assorted friends.

Tyburn further calls for the setting up of Public Sector alliances at area and regional levels to complement the POEU's proposition to the TUC conference which calls for a national public sector alliance to co-ordinate public sector industrial action.

The POEU alone is taking industrial action at present, but there are a number of propositions urging the BTUC, the umbrella body for all BT unions, to organise solidarity action of all the unions representing BT's 245,000 workers.

The most important and detailed proposition being put to the conference comes from London City Branch, one of the largest branches in the country and one of the branches that has been directly involved in the small scale selec-

tive action against Project Mercury.

It complements a proposition from Westminster Branch which calls for the industrial action overwhelmingly endorsed by the POEU's Annual Conference three days before the General Election.

A motion was carried then which instructed the NEC to immediately begin a campaign of industrial action if Thatcher were re-elected. The NEC notes that the NEC have delayed carrying out this proposal.

London City's motion addresses itself directly to the enormity of the threat to the POEU faces both from the earlier liberalisation Act passed in 1981, and now from the Privatisation Bill.

The proposition details a strategy of industrial action leading up to a national strike by Spring 1984 to defeat the present Bill and also 'invites' other public sector unions to join in a national strike against privatisation in Spring 1984.

This proposition points the way forward for the Union to build for a national strike which the POEU has never undertaken before except in one day stoppages (the most recent in October 1982 against the last Privatisation Bill, which fell as a result of the General Election date).

The building for the strike is to take the form of escalating industrial action both against the Bill and Project Mercury, in discussion of strategy with other public sector unions, and ensuring that strikers and suspended members form picket lines and tour other branches, leafletting the public, other workplaces, and spreading the industrial action.

London City's proposition faces up to reality: POEU engineers will have to fight in the most determined way to win and defend the jobs and conditions that are theirs within the nationalised British Telecoms monopoly.

How we built our IP Workplace branch!

The idea of workplace Labour Party organisation sounds fine: but how to set about it in practice? Last December LOL DUFFY, secretary of the workplace branch at Cammell Lairds shipyard on Merseyside, spoke to JOHN O'MAHONY.

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

How did you go about setting it up?

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

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

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

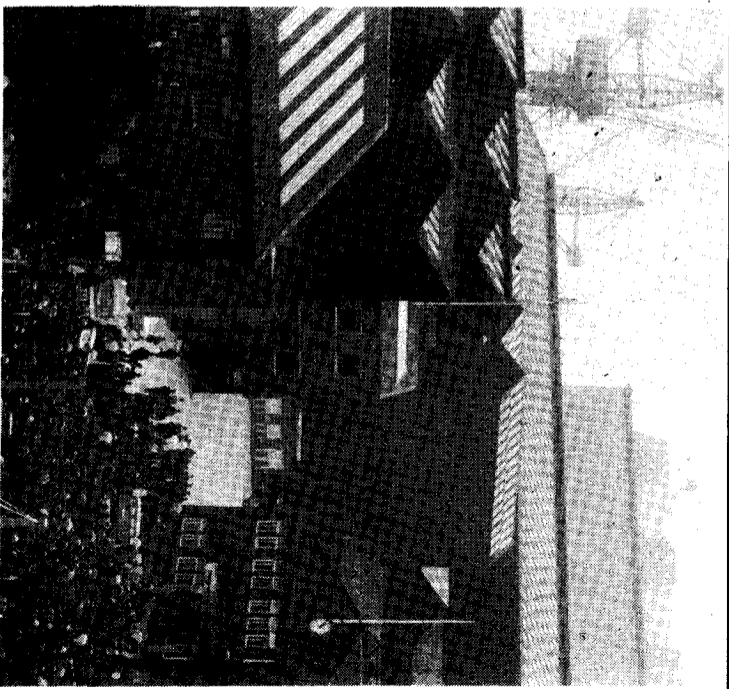
We went round to everyone we knew was in the Labour Party and we got a leaflet out inviting people to join and help us set up a Labour Party branch. We linked it to the question of closure and the threat of denationalisation, and things like that.

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

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

No. One Labour councillor isn't. There is an antagonistic element. In general our members are on the young side, rather than the old Labour Party traditionalists. But we've only had two meetings. We meet fortnightly, at dinner time, in a pub over the road.

We will alternate between a business meeting and a political discussion meeting with invited speakers. We got 22 at the inaugural meeting — only 11 at the second, — business, meeting, but we should get good attendance at the political discussion meetings, which we will advertise.



The Lairds yard

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

Are all the unions involved?

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

Any reaction from management?

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

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

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

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

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

JOIN

Membership of National CND is £6 (adult), £9 (couple), £3 (student) and £1 for Youth CND (under 21). Send to CND, 11 Goodwin St, London N4.



MARCH

ON

OCT.

22!





JOHN HARRIS

Women's concern with hours of work and the service they provide can strengthen the fight on cuts and privatisation.

of smaller struggles shows no sign of letting up. NALGO residential workers — hardly conceived of as the shock-battalions of the working class, like the nurses before them — have been drawn into industrial action.

No doubt other groups of women workers will follow, forced by their very need for survival into conflict with the Tories.

Women have traditionally been scorned by chauvinists (especially in the bureaucracy) for their concern with 'fringe' issues such as conditions, hours of work and the service they provide, rather than 'real' money issues.

Yet, with privatisation and the break-up of the welfare state, these are precisely the issues that are coming to the fore.

Public sector workers faced with the sack or living-off to private firms can only defend their own jobs if they take on board the concerns of the consumers of those services — largely working class people themselves.

The lack of division in women's lives between work and community, motherhood and public service, far from being a break on militancy (as has been traditionally argued) enables women much more easily to make the link between the Tories' attack on all fronts.

Within the Labour Party the same disparity appears between official torpor and rank-and-file activism, as is shown in the TUC Day of Action.

The Election campaign, despite radical Manifesto commitments on women which had been strenuously fought for over the years, fell back on cosy stereotypes of the

'family', an all-male public face and timidity in presenting what could have been electoral assets.

Yet, on the ground, more women were involved more actively than in previous elections. And the record number of women's resolutions to Labour Party Annual Conference shows these women are not going to be content to be pushed into a back seat.

Despite attempts by Labour militants to back-track on commitments to 'unpopular' or 'fringe' groups, black and lesbian women are far from accepting this marginalisation.

The formation of a Labour Party lesbian group, the growing strength of black trade unionism, the demands for fairer representation, and the increasingly vocal black feminists all indicate that the most oppressed sections of women are no longer prepared to heed appeals to unite behind hetero-sexist, white men.

Socialist ORGANISER

Where we stand

*Organise the left to beat back the Tories' attacks! No to attacks on union rights; defend the picket line; no state interference in our unions! No to any wage curbs. Labour must support all struggles for better living standards and conditions.
*Wage rises should at the very least keep up with price increases. For a price index calculated by working class organisations, as the basis for clauses in all wage agreements to provide automatic monthly rises in line with the true cost of living for the working class. The same inflation-proofing should apply to state benefits, grants and pensions.

*Fight for improvements in the social services, and against cuts. Protection for those services against inflation by automatic inflation-proofing of expenditure. For occupations and supporting strike action to defend jobs and services.

*End unemployment. Cut hours, not jobs. Fight for a 35 hour week and an end to overtime. Demand work-sharing without loss of pay. Organise the unemployed — campaign for a programme of useful public works to create new jobs for the unemployed.

*Defend all jobs! Open the books of those firms that threaten closure or redundancies, along with those of their suppliers and bankers, to elected trade union committees. For occupation and backing action to halt the closures. For nationalisation without compensation under workers' management.

*Make the bosses pay, not the working class. Millions for hospitals, not a penny for 'defence'! Nationalise the banks and financial institutions, without compensation. End the interest burden on council housing and other public services.

*Freeze rent and rates.
*Scrap all immigration controls. Race is not a problem: racism is. The labour movement must mobilise to drive the fascists off the streets. Purge racists from positions in the labour movement. Organise full support for black self-defence. Build workers' defence squads.

*The capitalist police are an enemy for the working class. Support all demands to weaken them as a bosses' striking force: dissolution of special squads (SPG, Special Branch, MI5, etc), public accountability, etc.

*Free abortion on demand. Women's equal right to work and full equality for women. Defend and extend free state nursery and childcare provision.

*Against attacks on gays by the state: abolish all laws which discriminate against lesbians and gay men; for the right of the gay community to organise and affirm their stand publicly.

*The Irish people — as a whole — should have the right to determine their own future. Get the British troops out now! Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Political status for Irish Republican prisoners as a matter of urgency.

*The black working people of South Africa should get full support from the British labour movement for their strikes, struggles and armed combat against the white supremacist regime. South African goods and services should be blocked.

*It is essential to achieve the fullest democracy in the labour movement. Automatic reselection of MPs during each Parliament and the election by annual conference of party leaders. Annual election of all trade union officials, who should be paid the average for the trade.

*The chaos, waste, human suffering and misery of capitalism now — in Britain and throughout the world — show the urgent need to establish rational, democratic, human control over the economy, to make the decisive sectors of industry social property, under workers' control. The strength of the labour movement lies in the rank and file. Our perspective must be working class action to raze the capitalist system down to its foundations, and to put a working class socialist alternative in its place — rather than having our representatives run the system and waiting for crumbs from the tables of the bankers and bosses.



Right wing CPSA General Secretary Alastair Graham

CPSA Broad

Left: time to stop the rot!

By Stephen Corbishley

OXFORD and Birmingham DHSS workers spontaneously struck in 1982 in a struggle to not only defend the staffing levels in local Social Security offices, but also the structure and operations of the Social Security system itself.

After 3 months struggle a compromise was struck that saw some extra staff being assigned to the Midlands offices, and a review of the numbers of staff required to work the service.

In May of this year the Liverpool DHSS CPSA members struck — again in defence of jobs and the benefits service; but were forced back to work by a combination of threats from CPSA HQ and concern at the size of the Tory majority in the General Election.

It is now widely accepted that in the attack on both Civil Service staffing levels generally, and the DHSS/DE Benefit Service operations in particular, a fight on jobs

is not far off. And this position in the best organised sections of CPSA (i.e. DE and DHSS) is the key background to how the CPSA Broad Left is developing.

The CPSA Broad Left founded in 1976 is now the largest Broad Left in the country, with over 500 members; its is an open and democratic Broad Left, with dominant influence over CPSA Conference, and holding the leadership of the best organised sections of CPSA.

It is a Broad Left in which the left and the militants freely debate strategy, and have the real possibility of leading struggles not only in their local offices, but also nationally.

Yet in many ways the Broad Left is crumbling from its previous authoritative and dominant position within CPSA.

The roots of this crisis lie firmly in the inadequacy of

(Continued over)

SUPPORT LABOUR'S POLICIES **NO CRUISE, TRIDENT, BASES.** **JOBS NOT BOMBS**

Nuclear Weapons ARE NO DEFENCE

March

SUNDAY OCT 2ND

AT THE LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

ASSISTED BY 130 - THE LEVEL, B'N

RALLY 2.30 - SEATRON (METROPOL)

UNITED STIVERS AT RALLY INCLUDE

TONY BENN, KEN LIVINGSTONE, HELEN JOHN, CATHY ASHTON, RICHARD BALFE, LIZ FREUTHAL, KEN CAMERON & OTHERS

EL SALVADOR

News Bulletin No 20 May-June 1983

REAGAN'S VIETNAM

El Salvador Solidarity Campaign

El Salvador Solidarity Campaign: affiliation £5 for individuals and £10 for organisations, from 29 Islington Park St., London N1. (01-359 2270)

JOHN HARRIS



the Broad Left to ever assert itself beyond the limits of Conference, the elections for the National Executive Committee, and the meeting of the various committees that run the different sections of the Union.

Occasionally the potential of the Broad Left is revealed (most often this happens when the NEC is in the grip of the right wing), e.g., the fight around the Britton Unemployment Benefit Office to defend the jobs of 2 union activists; the ability of the Broad Left to raise over £15,000 in donations towards the Liverpool DHSS strike earlier this year; and its ability to force the pace in the abortive 1981 strike, even though too late and with too little vigour.

The usual record of the Broad Left is that it attains its height of activity around the National Broad Left Conference and CPSA Conference; fails to use the committee positions to break out of sectional limitations and organise branches and rank and file members independently; and does quietly nothing from the Broad Left National Committee in between times.

However the integrity of the Broad Left is now threatened by, two important developments.

The first was the crippling failure of the Broad Left-dominated CPSA Conference to deliver any policy on women, women's rights, or the struggle for abortion rights, or the fight to involve more women in the affairs or activity of the union.

The slap in the face for over 70% of CPSA members was the direct result of the failure of the Broad Left to prepare, campaign and fight for these issues within the branches and the membership.

It is this struggle over women's rights which now poses a serious threat to the Broad

Left continuing peacefully in its passive state between the high points of an activist's life in CPSA.

The central political responsibility lies with Militant, recognising in the Broad Left influence in the 1982 National Broad Left Conference they had a majority of support for some of their positions, and electoral nominees.

They have failed to develop or even take up policies argued by women for women's rights within CPSA.

In response women have turned towards a new grouping of Labour lefts, and given it an authority and support which is being used for other purposes.

Many women are also questioning the value and use of the Broad Left as a campaigning vehicle for women.

The other development stems from the sharp electoral defeat in the 1983 NEC elections. In a dishonest and dirty way, General Secretary, Alastair Graham, assisted the right wing grouping of Tories, SDP, mavericks and careerists to win, by using his personal column in Red Tape to which-hunt Militant and the Broad Left.

The attack coupled with considerable assistance afforded to the right wing by some full time officers covering MOD and Metropolitan Police, gave the right a convincing majority on the NEC.

The reaction from some of the Left has not been to critically examine the role of the Broad Left NEC, or to look at the way the Broad Left itself collapsed throughout the whole of 1982-3 when it controlled the NEC, but to extend the which-hunt into the Broad Left itself.

A new political formation, sprung from the loins of left full time officers and defeated maverick left NEC members,

has coalesced around a platform of Smash Militant.

The real danger now facing the CPSA Broad Left is that in the struggle for places on the various lists to go forward for the 1984 elections, the BL itself will decline into little more than a coalition of groups intent on hammering out electoral pacts rather than organising around the real problems that face CPSA members.

And the central question that faces CPSA is the battle over jobs. The level of confidence on pay is extremely low; the Tories have yet to bring forward any plans for a new bargaining system, and are almost certainly planning a near 'zero option' for its own employees in the 1984

Yet on jobs, particularly as it links into the defence of the real gains of 1945 (a social benefits system that plays some role in defending the working class from the worst excesses of capitalism and its recession) the BL can

Without a resolution of the internal squabbling within the BL, the considerable opportunities that now exist to build a real rank and file struggle on the issues facing CPSA will be lost.

And the key to that is that no matter how the BL list for the NEC elections is balanced for 1984, unless a future BL NEC rests on a solid foundation many of the weaknesses that have been highlighted will be exploited by the full time officer cadre to break up the democratic and open BL that now exists.

Socialist ORGANISER

LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE MEETING

Socialist Organiser's Labour Party conference meeting this year will be on building Labour Party workplace branches and the fight against the Tories. Speakers will include activists who have had direct experience of building workplace branches.

TUESDAY OCTOBER 4, 5.30PM
KING'S HOTEL, BRIGHTON

right of recruitment amongst trainees:

- [7] minimum of 13 weeks off the job training in public sector educational establishments;
- [8] training to provide recognised skills and qualifications;
- [9] equal opportunities regardless of race, sex, creed, sexuality or religion;
- [10] provision for the disabled;
- [11] employee status for all trainees with proper grievance, disciplinary and complaints procedures;
- [12] a minimum of 5 days off-the-job training for all trainees on trade unionism and health and safety at work organised by the TUC Education Service;
- [13] trainees shall have all the rights afforded to full employees under health and safety legislation;
- [14] a complaints procedure whereby all trainees can express their feelings to the Careers Service and the appropriate trade union representative;
- [15] each trainee to be given a card outlining rights;
- [16] suitable training for trainers and supervisors in public sector institutions;
- [17] a strategy for dealing with job substitution, e.g., a shadow skilled worker present wherever a trainee is engaged in production.

1. Birmingham Trades Council shall not take on YTS trainees and will support any trade union branch which decides to oppose the introduction of trainees at its workplace.

2. Birmingham Trades Council will send the following model letter to any scheme agents seeking Trades Council approval:

"Birmingham Trades Council opposes YTS for the reasons given in the enclosed general statement. We feel that Trades Council has no way of assessing the scheme outlined or of monitoring schemes once in operation. We have therefore decided that we cannot sanction, approve or disapprove of any schemes.

However we would like a trade union representative to speak to the trainees and trainers on your scheme.

3. Trades Council should lead a campaign amongst trainees, trainers and union branches. Leaflets stating the initial political opposition and the demands for YTS in operation should be drawn up.

4. Trades Council should sponsor events which will draw trainees towards the labour movement, expose the blatant abuses of YTS, and support campaigns to improve the status of trainees.

5. Trades Council should organise a conference to discuss YTS developments and to formulate an alternative policy for education and training.

6. Birmingham Trades Council should, in conjunction with Trades Union Resource Centre, keep detailed information of the development of YTS in Birmingham and Solihull.

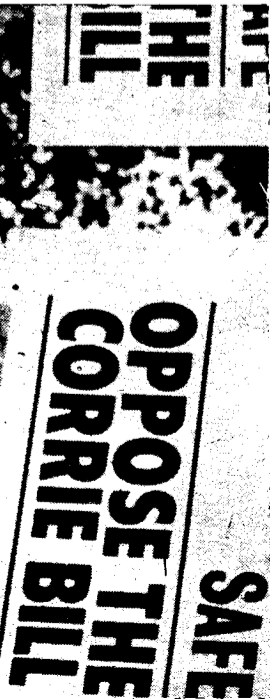
7. Trades Council should give the Education Advisory Committee the specific brief (with the Trades Union Resource Centre) of monitoring the development of schemes and considering reports from trade union branches.

8. Trades Council should arrange a meeting of College Governors to inform them of this policy.

9. Trades Council should campaign with the Centre for the unemployed in pursuit of this policy.

10. Trades Council believes that until the TUC as a body withdraws its representatives from MSC/YTS advisory bodies its representatives should continue to attend these bodies and to seek to defend young workers from the danger of crude exploitation inherent in the scheme.

11. Trades Council recognises the scheme is likely to involve thousands of young people who had the 'choice' of a YTS scheme or the dole queue. We call on all young people to join trade unions to inform the trade union movement of their experiences on YTS schemes and to support Trades Council's campaigning on YTS.



The TUC's march against the Corrie anti-abortion Bill was a big step forward in the fight for union action on women's rights.

Women in the unions

By Gerry Byrne

THE calling by the TUC of a Women's Action Day on October 29 is a significant pointer to the problems and prospects for women under a renewed Tory government.

In its organisation, the TUC has risen to the occasion with typical sluggishness and inertia. The Day has been ill-publicised and left belatedly to local organisations to initiate activities.

Yet it's very existence is testimony to the fact that not even a TUC committed to lying down under the attacks of Tebbit (indeed, inviting them) can afford to totally ignore the interests of women.

A third of trade unionists are women, and even within public sector cuts and job losses, the proportion is increasing.

The growth in women's employment, now drastically reversed, fuelled demands within the unions for women's needs to be taken seriously,

for greater representation and special literature, courses and structures aimed at increasing women's involvement.

This is a process which shows no signs of being stopped in its tracks. Originally confined to white collar/public sector unions with a large female membership, the drive for positive action has spilled over, for example, into the TGWU, where motions for widening women's participation in the union were carried this year against the opposition of the Executive.

The striking militancy of women workers demonstrated in the NHS dispute and a howl

(Continued over)

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

Women won't wait!

Latest issue - 10p plus 12½p postage from 10B Landseer Road, London N19

Defending your hospitals

Workers will constantly be putting their jobs on the line in fighting the cuts and closures. Any action will be in contravention of the TEBBIT legislation. Workers will be fighting managers, their trade union leaders and often the police.

They risk massive fines and imprisonment. The very least the Labour party and trade union members on the district health authorities can do is vote against closure.

Yet at meeting after meeting we hear them saying that they must stick to the cash limits (because Norman Fowler says so) and they must make the cuts. Let the Tories make their own cuts. Labour should be defending the working class.

Smoke them out!

District Health Authorities should not be allowed to make their cuts in a quiet room with only a few people there. Members of the public are allowed into the meetings. Many people do not know this.

Make sure that there are a lot of people at the meetings where the cuts are being discussed. You are technically not allowed to speak: but why should a totally un-elected and unaccountable body be able to ruin the health of the community in silence?

The impact of DHA meetings has proved valuable in the past and shows the advantage of industrial action. There will be an easy time trying to close the hospital.

But the real way to win and to save hospitals. There will be several militant hospital occupations since 1977.

Cynthia argued that they have not and therefore not worth the problems involved. The NIA closure was postponed for three years through an occupation. St. Benedict's occupation was ten months long and was only broken by massive police force and private ambulances. Every fight to save a hospital makes it harder to close another one. Every occupation involves the issue of workers control. Suddenly the workers find that they are making the de-

but their real sympathy is with their careers. Don't trust them.

A regular picket is necessary to prevent the removal of equipment and patients, and to keep track of who is coming and going. Most areas have law centres who will give advice on legal rights etc and it is good to involve them from the beginning.

It is true that an occupation cannot win on its own. It needs the support of the community but particularly it needs the support of other trade unionists in the area.

Because of management's 'divide and rule' tactics and because the trade union officials are hostile to occupations there has not been the necessary level of supporting strike action in other hospitals and in other sectors.

Supporting strike action

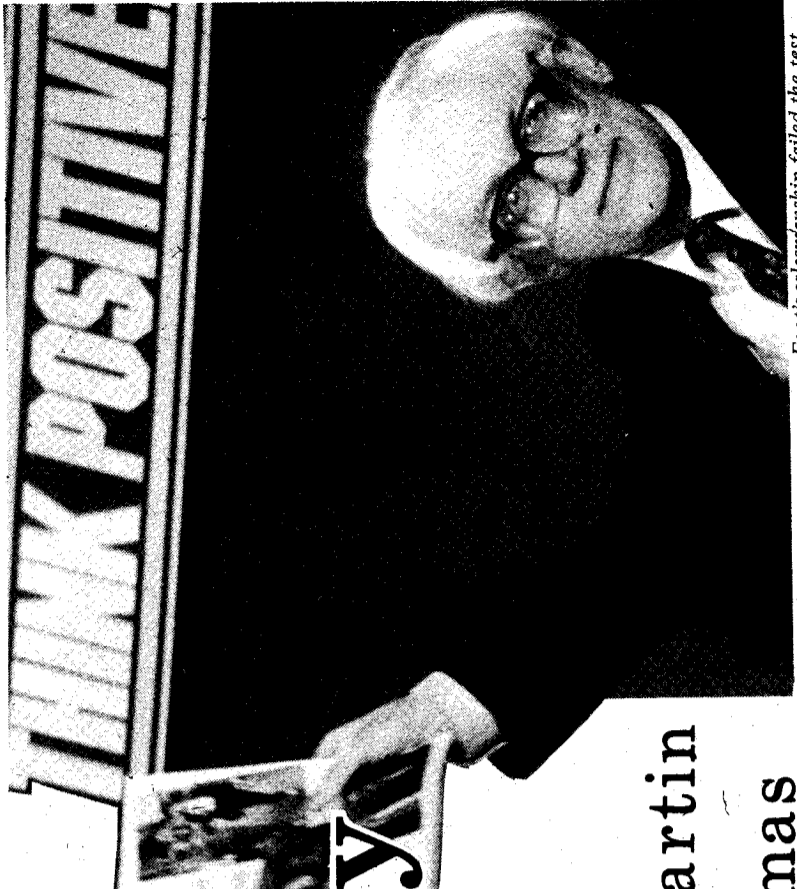
During the St. Benedict's occupation the workers committee went around to all the hospitals speaking at meetings and asking for supporting strike action. Many of the stewards and members were prepared to come out if the officials had approved the

Don't trust the bosses

In some cases management is banned. This is a difficult question and depends on the strength of the occupation and the size of the hospital. A good rule from the beginning is to ban any senior managers who do not normally come to the hospital.

It is best to ban management completely at some stage. They may be police and pretend that they really do not

Why workers won't buy the AES



By Martin Thomas

WHY didn't the Alternative Economic Strategy convince working class voters? Certainly it didn't. If Labour's plan for jobs had won their confidence, no amount of media attacks and diversions could have produced the big swing away from Labour that actually took place.

Not too much weight can be put on opinion poll figures, but they confirm this conclusion. The first reason for working class voters not to believe Labour's promises was the record of the 1974-9 Labour government. Unemployment was 600,000 in 1974, 1.5 million in 1979 - even though the 1974 manifesto contained much the same promises as 1983's.

So talk of 'tried and tested' policies rang hollow. Yet the national leaflet 'What Labour offers you', read:

"We'll invest in Industry, Transport, Housing, New Technology. It's a tried and tested way to create new jobs and reduce the debt bill. With jobs again, people can buy things again. To produce them, industry takes on even more people. We'll also help the economy to grow by spending more on Pensions, Education, Health, Child Benefits.

And we'll help firms take on extra workers. Even if voters were prepared to forget about 1974-9, this was not very convincing.

More state spending? But that means increased taxes, or more public borrowing. More public borrowing tends to mean more inflation. More demand for goods? That means more imports, more balance of payments problems. The leaflet also promises lower interest rates - which tend to mean money flowing out where it can get better rates. The leaflet doesn't mention these difficulties or try to answer them directly. It does, however, answer them indirectly by including promises of price controls and import controls. (Exchange controls were also part of the manifesto.)

will get that money invested. Planning and new public enterprise will channel the investment to where it's needed the most.

We will also control the way that firms use the money through growth plans agreed with workers and management."

The problem of nationalism arises again: if investment by British capital is a Good Thing, why shouldn't other countries have the benefit of it as well as Britain?

Aside from that, some questions are begged. How will the Labour government enforce these controls? What if the big banks are not swayed by mere 'pressure' from a Labour government? What if management doesn't 'agree' the 'growth plans'?

More fundamentally: can capital be controlled by labour without ceasing to be capital? Capital is not machines and equipment: it is the accumulated profits of past exploitation, constantly seeking to expand as far as possible through new exploitation and new profits.

No wonder Labour wasn't convincing.

Foot's salesmanship failed the rest. The means of production and distribution are forms of capital only so long as they serve the purpose of profit-making. If they are owned and controlled by the working class - and that is the only way that the economy can really be planned and decent jobs for all secured - then they are no longer 'capital'.

Class Struggle The economy can be democratically planned, or run for profit - but not both simultaneously.

Moreover, not even the 'control of capital' was put in terms of class struggle - workers' power against the power of the bosses and bankers. Almost every voter I spoke to while canvassing who gave a positive reason for voting Labour said something to the effect that s/he regarded Labour as the party of the working class. Yet neither the official leaflet nor the more left wing local material even used the words 'working class' or 'class struggle'.

Labour Against the Witch-Hunt! Join Labour Against the Witch-Hunt Membership open to Constituency Labour Parties, trade union organisations, Labour Party affiliates, and individuals. Fee. CLPs and unions £10, wards £5, individuals and other organisations £3. Write to LAW, 11 Wilderton Road, London N16.

Under the Tories funds are being invested overseas, at the rate of £1,700 million a year. A Labour government will keep those funds in Britain. By setting up a National Investment Bank and by putting pressure on the big banks, we



The officials did not move. They will be less likely to laws the rank and file must be convinced to come out on strike whether or not it is official. Administrators will be less likely to act in a heavy-handed way if they know that there will be district wide strike action in support of the threatened hospital.

The Tories' plans for the decimation of the NHS can be wrecked. The labour movement has thwarted governments before, and it is strong enough to do it again.

The NHS has the sympathy of nearly every worker in Britain. The strength of feeling was shown during the dispute in 1982. That strength must be harnessed to save the NHS and to stop the Tory destruction of the welfare state.

Saving hospitals is not easy. But we have learned a lot in the past struggles and we can win with united action.



How to defend your hospital

While the TUC and union conferences pass motions against the cuts or even calling for 'resistance', the task of organising a real fight falls invariably to the rank and file. These articles reprinted from Socialist Organiser offer guidelines on how to do it.

THE Tory attacks on the NHS need an organised and militant fightback. There is no sign or likelihood that the trade union leadership will fight — it is up to the rank and file to build action against the cuts and closures.

This action will be linked with opposing privatisation and the contracting out of services. It is much easier to close a hospital which employs domestics on contract and a lot of agency nurses.

Once management decide to recommend the closure of either wards or an entire hospital the rundown begins. The rundown has not been authorised by the District Health Authority (DHA) at this point — it is being done by an entirely unaccountable group of bureaucrats.

Over the last five years there has been an almost identical scenario for closures:

* ancillary and nursing staff who leave are not replaced;

* conditions for both patients and workers deteriorate;

* it becomes almost impossible to get routine health and safety work done, old obsolete equipment is not replaced;

* then, suddenly the administrators announce that the hospital is becoming unsafe.

No cover

They create the conditions which make the hospital unsafe and then use the conditions to justify closing the hospital.

These 'creeping cuts', nearly always preliminary steps in the closure process need to be resisted.

COHSE, NUPE and NALGO all have policies of no cover for unfilled vacancies.

Shop stewards should ensure that that policy is implemented. At St. Mary's, Harrow Road, the domestics were told to clean floors when they had never done it before. Management were preparing the rundown and did not want to hire new people. The domestics refused this addition-

al job and provided a focus for other workers in the hospital who wanted to oppose the closure.

The trade union bureaucrats will constantly try to sell out and sabotage this sort of action. It rocks their pleasant relationship with managers.

This kind of obstruction from the full-time officials to determined action by the workers will continue right through the fight to save beds and jobs.

The battle for hospitals is not just about fighting the Tories — it is just as much about fighting the trade union leadership.

Build Joint Stewards' Committees

The most effective way of organising to save the NHS is through joint stewards committees. Most hospitals had them during the 1982 dispute. In some areas they are still functioning, in others they collapsed. But, if we are to fight and win they must be built again.

Opposing the coming onslaught, particularly in London, will need just as much coordination and support as we saw in the fight for wages in 1982.

Health and safety committees are particularly important — at the South London Hospital the Health and Safety Committee has forced management to make major repairs that they were hoping to leave to use as fuel for their arguments about the hospital being 'run down'.

As soon as word leaked out that a hospital is threatened (we know of 53 in London alone) the workers and community must organise. It takes time for the implications of closure to sink in. Most workers, although they are aware that other hospitals have been closed think it can never happen to their hospital.

All health service facilities are threatened by the Tories: thinking that if another hospital in your district closes yours will be okay is disastrous.

CHRISTINE CADIN



In Wandsworth five hospitals have closed since 1978 and now the South London is earmarked for closure. Management use the fear of closure and the false hope of saving one place at the expense of another to try to pit worker against worker.

In Wandsworth they have said publicly that if the South London Campaign succeeds then something else will close. This tactic is one of the most vicious and has to be squashed immediately.

Unity essential

It is vital that workers fight the Tories and the axemen who chop for them as a united force.

All work necessary to close hospitals should be blocked. Stewards should oppose three and six month contracts which make it easier to assimilate people from the hospital about to be closed.

Usually a district will only issue 'temporary' contracts for a whole year's run-up to a closure. So, new staff are effectively sacked in order that workers from the closing hospital can be slotted in.

The whole process undermines trade union activity and militancy and makes some workers wary of even joining a union in case they jeopardise the renewal of their contract.

Workers in the threatened hospital must refuse even to discuss alternative employment with management. They should ignore any letters or demands that they get from supervisors telling them to attend meetings (usually on their own) to have preliminary discussions.

Meet in the hospital

Health service managers are now experienced in the techniques of closing hospitals. They try to do it quickly and quietly through administrative measures and intimidation.

They do not like well organised campaigns with experienced people who know their tactics.

It is sometimes hard to convince workers just what rotten and unprincipled tactics managers will use. Yet, in every fight against closure there are intimidation, victimisations, dirty tricks. Only a strong and coordinated campaign can effectively oppose this kind of operation.

The most successful fightbacks — EGA, St. Benedict's, Longworth, St. Mary's — have involved workers and supporters meeting together either weekly or fortnightly.

Meeting in the hospital is best because the workers will see people coming in every week to support them and the supporters will feel part of the hospital (and know its layout).

It may seem too frequent at first — but managers work very quickly and things can change on a daily basis. There is no need to ask permission for these meetings — management will almost certainly refuse.

Just pick a room and have the meetings. It is unlikely that administrators will make an issue of it as they do not want to provoke action early on! A public profile is essential. Everyone in the community should know that their hospital

is threatened. Leaflets, posters, petitions, pickets and demonstrations are all good for attracting interest.

Workers who are a bit frightened about fighting management and are not sure about the levels of support they will get can be bolstered by seeing a large demonstration or a lot of people turning up to picket outside the hospital.

It is important to challenge management at every step in the campaign. The administrators and consultants will constantly be putting out statements about the terrible financial conditions, weeping crocodile tears that they have to close the hospital, and saying that they really have no choice and that there is no money available.

Workers should be reminded of last year when we were given the same arguments about why we could only have a 4% increase. There was no money then, but suddenly billions were found for the Malvinas war, extra money was found for the judges and the police.

The money is there

The fact is that there is money available for the NHS — but the Tories do not want to spend it on health. Workers should challenge the District's financial figures and demand to open the books and see just how the districts spend their allocations. We should use figures showing the huge profits made by the drug industry and by other suppliers.

Lobby Health Authorities

HEALTH Authorities are weighted in favour of the wealthy and the ruling class — Norman Fowler sees to that. However, in several districts in London there is a real possibility of the DHA's rejecting the cuts — if only the Labour party representatives on the DHA's would vote against.

Labour party activists should get the GMCs to adopt a position that members of the party on authorities must oppose closures which are made for economic reasons. In Wandsworth recently two women labour party members voted for the closure of the South London.

STOP THE CLOSURES AND CUTS

