

Join the
Labour
Party

Socialist ORGANISER

Break
links
with
Tories

Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance No.151

October 20 1983

25p Claimants and strikers 10p

THE MISSILES ARE COMING . . .

By Tom Rigby

(editor of the Youth CND paper 'Protest', writing in a personal capacity)

A MILITARY air zone has been declared over Greenham Common for three months: press rumours circulate that ships bearing missiles and warheads are already bound for Europe. Thatcher pledges that by the end of the year US Cruise missiles will be sited in Britain.

They are not welcome. Throughout Europe — in Britain, Germany and ten other countries — there will be massive demonstrations this weekend as men and women of all ages show their opposition to this escalation of the arms race.

What should they do next?

Firstly, with the missiles still not yet installed, there must be a stronger fight for trade union action to block supplies and construction work on their bases. Trade unions have already effectively put a boycott on the dumping at sea of nuclear waste. The British TGWU is on paper committed to support such boycott action against Cruise: we must fight for it to put these words into practice.

Secondly, local-level campaigning by CND and the labour movement must continue to raise the issue and widen support for the anti-war struggle — pointing to the implications for council and health workers of new Tory 'Civil Defence' plans, and building pickets, demonstrations, boycotts and strike action against every aspect of the war drive.

Thirdly, efforts must be made to link this issue to the other facets of the struggle against this brutal Tory government which is closing hospitals, axing services, smashing up nationalised industries, exploiting unemployed youth and planning further cuts in benefits.

And, last but not least, the fight within the labour movement itself must be sharpened up.

Documents published in last Sunday's *Observer* underline the complicity of the last Labour government in the decisions to manufacture and deploy Cruise in Europe. If Kinnoch/Hattersley get their way, the next Labour government will have the same attitude towards nuclear weapons. Kinnoch narrowly failed at the Brighton conference to discard the policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament — the only principled policy for scrapping the Bomb.

In those handful of unions not yet committed to unilateralism, and throughout the workers' movement as a whole, the struggle must be to *defend* this policy and for a leadership prepared to fight for it rather than fudging or abandoning it.

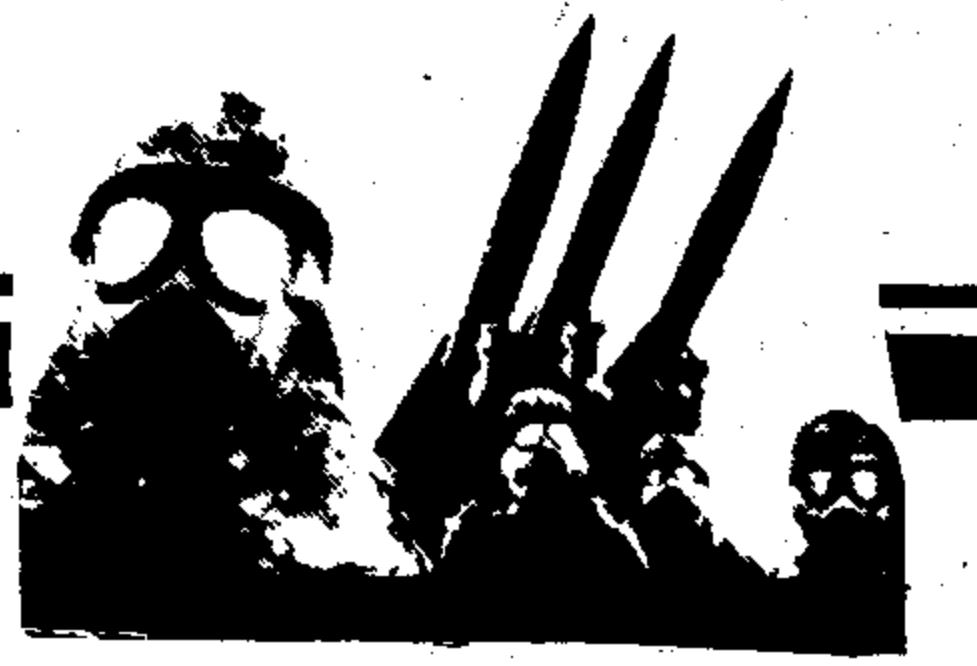


JOHN HARRIS

INSIDE

FOUR PAGES of news, analysis and comment on the fight to scrap the Bomb, PLUS International News, and the latest reports on the Post Office Engineering Union struggle against privatisation (Back page).

STOP THEM!



EDITORIAL

The reactionary task of national defence

WHY IS there a threat of nuclear war?

Most people would never 'press the button' to wipe out millions. Why is it that power rests in the hands of people like Thatcher and Reagan who would?

Many of the scientists who developed the atom bomb were horrified at the result of their work. Why was that work controlled, by people prepared to use the bomb against Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

What makes many people accept nuclear weapons is the doctrine of 'national defence'. Nations must defend themselves, so the argument goes. Nations are threatened by other nations. Britain, for example, is threatened by Russia.

Thus nations must be armed — and armed on the huge scale necessary to take on other armed nations. The whole argument becomes a vicious circle.

But why do nations threaten nations? And is there an alternative? Throughout history, the scramble for advantage amidst scarcity between rival ruling groups has led to war. The modern technology created by capitalism opens the possibility of a world without scarcity, where everyone can have enough on the basis of co-operation in production and equality in distribution.

In fact, however, capitalism has created a highly unequal world. In pre-capitalist societies, most economic activity was strictly local. Peasant families produced almost all they needed themselves; lords lived principally by extracting surplus production from the peasants on their land; only a small proportion of goods were traded across any distance.

To this economic system corresponded a political system split up into local fiefdoms and principalities, only loosely linked together.

As capitalism developed, starting in the Middle Ages, it created larger, more homogeneous nation-states — bound together by their own language and communications, rather than just by the person of an overlord — as the framework for the new economics of the free market.

But the new nation-state unit became out-dated in its turn — long ago. Modern techniques of production and communications make the nation-state too small as an economic unit.

Each capitalist class has developed close ties to its own nation-state institutions. A large part of its profits, its markets, and its power are tied up with those institutions. Thus the capitalists are not capable of making a decisive step forward to world-wide co-operation.

Instead, they have 'internationalised' by means of the big capitalist powers competitively seizing control and influence over the poorer capitalist nations.

The root cause of World War 1 and of World War 2 was the competitive struggle of the big capitalist powers to seize more colonies and wider spheres of influence. 'National defence' for the capitalist rulers, meant defence of their international profits and plunder.

Leon Trotsky concluded nearly 50 years ago: 'The defence of the nation state, first of all in Balkanised Europe — the cradle of the nation state — is in the full sense of the word a reactionary task. The nation state with its borders, passports, monetary system, customs and the army for the protection of customs has become a frightful impediment to the economic and cultural development of humanity...'

'The task of complete national determination and peaceful co-operation of all peoples of Europe can be solved only on the basis of the economic unification of Europe, purged of bourgeois rule. The slogan of the United States of Europe is a slogan not only for the salvation of the Balkan and Danubian peoples but for the salvation of the peoples of Germany and France as well.'

This argument — that capitalism's competitive drive for profit and world-wide plunder is the root cause of war between nations — seems to fall down on one fact. What about wars between socialist states? Even if you disregard the USSR's invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia what about China and Vietnam?

These bureaucratic states are not socialist. Socialism can guarantee peace because it means the free, self-regulating co-operation of people on the basis of 'from each according to his or her abilities, to each according to his or her need'. The rule of the KGB and the privileged bureaucrats is a million miles from that.

The Stalinist states are not capitalist, either. But they are a peculiar mutation of post-capitalist economic forms within which many of the worst vices of capitalism flourish monstrously.

The USSR originated in a genuine workers' revolution. But socialism was never possible in one country alone. When the workers of the West were defeated, and the revolution was isolated in backward Russia, a faction of the revolutionaries (led by Stalin) came together with the careerists and officials of the old regime to create a new bureaucracy. They crushed the incorruptible revolutionaries.

This ruling bureaucracy, and its counterparts in the other Stalinist states, are every bit as rapacious and brutal as any capitalist class.

The different economic basis does make a difference, however. The USSR does not have the same inbuilt economic drive to world expansion as the big capitalist powers.

That (together with the US's technical superiority, of course) is the reason why the West has set the pace in the arms race. Since World War 2 the major cause of war has been the attempts by the big capitalist powers, led and dominated by the US, to prevent further areas being taken out of their grip by revolutionaries which lead those areas into the sphere of or into alliance with the USSR.

Korea, Vietnam, Central America, all fall into this pattern. Diplomatic negotiations, or general efforts to influence public opinion, are never going to stop the drive to war. The answer is to uproot the social causes of war — to overthrow capitalism in the west, and bureaucratic rule in the east, in favour of a democratic, co-operative socialist system.

To organise for that, we need to start by rejecting and arguing against the doctrine of national defence. The 'national interests' of British capitalism — its profit-grabbing activities across the world — are not ours. The only war worth fighting is the class war. The sort of defence that the working class of Britain needs is a people's militia, able to defend us not only against foreign aggression but also against our 'own' exploiting class.

CND leaders step up witch-hunt

THE LEADERSHIP of CND has railroaded through its National Council a series of proposals which are tantamount to the suspension of Labour CND as an autonomous body.

Assisted by the staged resignations of a small minority of the executive of Labour CND, they mounted an attack on the autonomy of Labour CND as a specialist section of CND at the CND National Council meeting on October 15-16.

Members of the majority of the executive of Labour CND were bitterly attacked by CND executive nominees who had previously been 'placed' on the Labour CND executive with the power of veto.

This vicious attack was immediately followed by a call for 'unity' from a CND executive member (sounds all too familiar...)

CND leaders have moved against CND's Labour Party and youth sections. Tim Pilsbury reports

At the same Council meeting a series of proposals on the future of Youth CND presented by an unrepresentative 'YCND Interim Committee' were also pushed through.

No members of the elected YCND National Committee (which has been removed from office by the CND executive) were allowed to speak, whereas in the Labour CND debate one of the resigning executive members (not a delegate) was allowed to speak at length.

As a result YCND structure until the recall conference (if

there is one) is such that the governing body is unrepresentative of the youth in the campaign.

These can be seen as the next steps in the witch-hunt currently being carried out in CND.

It is no coincidence that at the same time CND executive is switching the emphasis in campaigning, retreating from a firm unilateralist stance to advocating a Nuclear Freeze.

YCND and Labour CND were the two specialist sections most vehemently opposed to this switch in policy, and were intent on CND maintaining unilateral nuclear disarmament as its major campaigning aim.

This, we can safely assume, is why the Labour and Youth sections have been crushed by the CND executive.

The 'Agenda' article in Monday's Guardian (October 17) by E.P. Thompson reflects the direction in which the CND executive wants to travel — 'Lord Carrington, where will you be on October 22?', a pursuit of the idea that CND can 'persuade' the Tories to ditch

nuclear weapons.

A more realistic proposition must surely be the organisation of the labour movement against nuclear weapons — the blacking of work on cruise missile sites, for example, which was recently backed by TGWU conference.

Unfortunately the CND executive and many National Council members do not conform to this view.

This can be changed at CND conference in December, where election of 20 National Council members and other officers (including the executive committee) takes place. The regional Annual General Meetings where regional delegates to National Council are elected (five per region), are also important.

If we are to stop the witch-hunts in CND it is important that there is a strong left presence at the National Conference. Then a campaign could be launched to oppose the witch-hunts and to organise the Left in CND to fight within the campaign for the unequivocal retention of unilateral nuclear disarmament as CND's primary aim.

The Times a-changin'



By Patrick Spilling

HAROLD EVANS, former editor of the Sunday Times and former editor of the Times, has his first volume of autobiography published later this month — and it's not going to be a pretty sight.

'Good Times are Bad Times' is being serialised, ironically enough, in the Sunday Times' main rival for Sabbath respectability, The Observer.

The first two episodes shed an almost comic light on the attempts of the Editor to maintain independence from the owner of the newspaper. This was not just any old editor. Harold Evans was the king of the new breed. Youngish, brash, he gave the Sunday Times the reputation of being a campaigning paper — not left wing, but on the loosest of leashes from the establishment.

His most famous battle won the right to publish articles attacking the Distillers Company over its treatment of Thalidomide victims.

Evans did not do anything radical, like publishing and being damned. He fought the case through the courts and eventually won the right for the stories to be printed. It was, to some extent, thanks to the Sunday Times that Thalidomide victims received their inadequate compensation, instead of nothing at all.

Renowned

Nor was it just any old newspaper owner. Rupert Murdoch was renowned throughout the world for interfering directly in the editorial affairs of his publications, which included the bottom of the market Sun in Britain, and half the gutter press across the world.

So when the Times was taken over by Rupert Murdoch and Evans was appointed editor, the stage was set for a fair test of one of the most cherished beliefs in British journalism.

Every journalist has it drummed into their psyche that the whole structure of press freedom rests on the independence of the editor and the editor's right to determine how the paper will be run. It is a principle repeated as if it were self-evident and sufficient to ensure that the newspaper would ever fall under any malign spell — say, like the National Union of Journalists

Times should not give prominence to reports unhelpful to the Government. To spare Evans' susceptibilities, the memorandum was marked private and personal. If Evans had not now published it the fiction could have been maintained that the Editor has editorial control.

Evans was hopelessly tangled in the web, incapable of making a stand against the owners except through dumb insolence.

Evans asked Murdoch to come to dinner. On the way to his house, Murdoch began complaining, because the Times had invited James Tobin, the Nobel Prize-winner, to comment on British economic policy.

'Why do you run that stuff?' — 'Well, it's timely.' — 'And it's wrong! Wrong! What does he know, anyway?' — 'He won the Nobel Prize.' — 'Intellectual bullshit.'

Murdoch exercised his control not only through his direct vocabulary but also through the budget, which insisted that Evans cleared any spending over £1,000 with him. Revealingly, Evans says that £1,000 is rarely spent on one story, even on the Times, but cites as one example where it was necessary to spend more than £1,000 'the story of the Labour Party's unknown activists, who had captured the Constitution.' Disappointingly for the sum of human knowledge he does not tell us where the £1,000 went.

In this week's episode, Evans reports his eventual downfall at the Times, and it should make rivetting reading.

Evans does not seem to realise that his book is a self confession that editorial freedom is worth peanuts.

He continues to protest that the problem here was one bad owner. In fact, if Murdoch has a virtue, it is that he says and does directly what other newspapers do more discreetly. And at least Evans got some happy days out of it. In one scene he describes, at St. John's Wood, he was having dinner at Woodrow Wyatt's house. The guests were Rupert Murdoch, Arnold Weinstock, head of General Electric, and Frank Chapple, Head of the Electricians Union.

Dinner with Chapple, Murdoch and Weinstock — and, presumably, all that for under £1,000. Now that's what I call editorial integrity.

Code of Conduct, or the Campaign for Press Freedom.

There was a honeymoon period in which Murdoch deferred to Evans but it didn't last long. Problems arose when Murdoch's deputy, Gerald Long, began referring to the editing of the Times as a job that 'we' would be undertaking. This was a cue for Evans to demolish him with the cast-iron promises of editorial freedom which had been given by Murdoch when he bought the paper. Instead, Evans contents himself with quoting CP Scott, a famous editor of the Manchester Guardian, 'The Editor and Business Manager should march hand in hand, the first, be it well understood, just an inch or two in advance.'

Evans had the illusion that he remained 'an inch or two in advance' of Murdoch and his henchmen. But it was just an illusion. A series of petty humiliations were inflicted on the old Times management. Denis Hamilton, non-Executive Chairman under Murdoch, had given up his old prestigious office and moved to the seventh floor.

Evans visited him one lunch-time. 'I found his secretary near to tears. She had asked the kitchen for a lunch-tray for Hamilton, who wanted to work at his desk, and it had been refused on Long's orders: lunch-trays were only to be available to the joint general manager on the 6th floor.'

Evans made angry noises, but again consoled himself with philosophy.

Evans recounts that he kept expecting some kind of discussion on the future of the Times with Murdoch. The meeting was indefinitely postponed. He pressed Long for financial figures, but was told that Murdoch was 'funny' about giving them. 'Murdoch's own board meetings were even more cursory than Long's. "Yeah, Yeah, Well, let's all get back to work, there's a lot to do..."'

The crunch came after six months. 'Murdoch sent for me, and when I came into his office he was gauging his ball-point pen through a report on page 2 by Lucie Hodges. "Why do you use these commies?" he said.' (The story was about the Brixton Residents Group, blaming police for the crime rate before the Brixton riots.)

'I replied that it was a good story, and Hodges was a good reporter; in any event it was absurd to call her a communist.'

This was the point in the movie where the Good Guy (Evans) was supposed to throw the Bad Guy (Murdoch) across the room accompanied by a speech about press freedom and interfering busy bodies.

Instead, Evans defended himself by saying that Lucie Hodges was not a communist. One might ask what the position would have been if she had been? Or if Evans himself had not liked the report?

The outburst over the Brixton report was a prelude to a more general attack on the economic reporting of the Times.

At that time, although it's hard to remember it now, the Thatcher government had sunk to the lowest level that any government had faced in its mid-point and was well behind Labour in the opinion polls.

Murdoch didn't like it and had made growling remarks to Evans about Thatcher being the only British politician that was any good and dubbing her wets in the Tory Party as 'those pissing Liberals.'

Evans reports 'He lobbed newspaper clippings across the Atlantic mainly from the American new right. He asked me to note an article contributed to the Wall Street Journal which said there was no plausible alternative to Thatcherism and compared Mrs. Thatcher to war-time Churchill.'

Gerard Long prepared a 2 page memorandum, presumably on Murdoch's orders, saying that the



Will Kinnock get rid of the Bomb?

AT THE Labour Party conference Neil Kinnock tried to get the motion firmly reasserting unilateral nuclear disarmament 'remitted', i.e. taken off the agenda.

He failed, and the motion was carried by a big majority.

But in the same week that the conference knocked back Kinnock's move against unilateralism, it elected Kinnock leader by an even bigger majority. He got 73% of the trade union vote, and 91.5% of the constituency Labour Party vote.

For sure, many of the Labour and trade union activists who voted for Kinnock did so because they thought he would stick by unilateral nuclear disarmament.

When Kinnock argued at the Labour Party national executive for remitting the unilateralist motion, in the very same speech he insisted that he remained a CND supporter of long standing.

Labour's leadership still says that it is unilateralist. At the Brighton conference the national executive pushed a policy of putting Polaris into negotiations (rather than scrapping it) and 'freezing' the nuclear arsenal (rather than getting rid of it). It even had Denis Healey, an avowed opponent of unilateralism, speaking on its behalf.

But the official explanation is that these are merely tactical gambits. The basic commitment remains to a non-nuclear defence policy.

Chimes

The CND leadership chimes in to prop up Kinnock. The executive of Labour CND (the Labour Party section of CND) has been hauled over the coals because its vice-chair, Walter Wolfgang, wrote an article criticising Kinnock.

CND leaders (according to the Guardian) rushed to see Kinnock and assure him that the criticism was not CND policy.

And CND chair Joan Ruddock blandly asserts that 'no-one is seriously proposing immediate and complete disarmament, but rather a unilateral approach towards that policy as helping to stimulate negotiations between the nations' (quoted in CND newsletter 2/83).

So will Neil Kinnock get rid of the Bomb? It depends on whether you believe that a step-by-step, half-unilateral/half-multilateral policy will be effective.

All the evidence is that it won't. Back in January 1946 the



JOHN HARRIS

Kinnock: "less than 50% determined"

United Nations voted unanimously to set up a commission to organise "the elimination from international armaments of atomic weapons". All the summits and disarmament sessions since then have had equally little effect on the arms race.

Just imagine for a minute the situation if a Labour government set about phasing out the Bomb and US bases. It could do some minor things quite easily.

It could cancel Trident: plenty of people in the military establishment think it's not much use.

But if it tried to go further, then it would face huge resistance: from the armed forces top brass; from the military contractors; from the US and other NATO governments; and of course from the media.

If it was 50% determined, rather than 100% determined, then it would end up at best with something like what the present government in Greece has got on its election pledge to remove US bases from that country: an agreement to remove the bases after a period of several years. In the meantime, of course,

the warmongers could manoeuvre, and likely enough a Tory or Alliance government could be elected which would reverse the agreement and bring us back to square one.

There is little sign that Neil Kinnock is even 50% determined to pursue unilateral nuclear disarmament. He is more in the mould of Michael Foot, who led Labour's left wing against the Bomb for many years and then, in the 1974-9 Cabinet, took part in secret decisions which paved the way for Trident.

No: Neil Kinnock will not get rid of the Bomb.

So we must keep campaigning on the streets. But we should not give up on the Labour Party.

The labour movement is the major organised force that can bring concentrated social power into the fight against the Bomb. If the campaign against the Bomb cannot win via the labour movement, then it certainly cannot win via general public campaigning to persuade the Establishment.

Winning over the labour movement does not mean winning the bureaucrats. People like Denis Healey or Terry Duffy would sooner go off to the SDP or another split-off than stick with a labour movement which really will get rid of the Bomb.

But the majority of the rank and file already support unilateralism, and they can be won over to the idea that they need to organise for unilateralism and to abandon tolerance for semi-unilateralists like Kinnock. The democratic changes in the Labour Party in 1979-81, despite the setbacks since then, lay the basis for that.

Neil Kinnock will not get rid of the Bomb. But the labour movement will.



Workers lobby the Tory conference. see report, page 5

No to NATO!

NATO was set up in April 1949, in the early days of the Cold War, as a military alliance of the US and Canada with most of the West European states.

It includes all the states of capitalist Europe except Ireland, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria and Spain. France withdrew from the military command structure of NATO in 1966 but in the rest of western Europe there is a huge military establishment, always headed by US top commanders.

NATO's military structure is heavily based on nuclear weapons. In 1979 it decided to base Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe; with these installed, it will be firmly committed to using nuclear weapons first, in

response to a non-nuclear attack.

The purpose of NATO was to rally the major capitalist states, under US domination, into a military alliance against the USSR and Eastern Europe. The motive is not 'defence of freedom', but defence of profits.

Turkey is a member of NATO; its armed forces are part of the NATO structure. The military coup in Turkey two years ago was at the very least given the go-ahead by NATO.

When Portugal was in the midst of revolutionary upheavals, in 1975, NATO forces stood ready to intervene.

These are the reasons why Britain should withdraw from NATO.

"Freeze" is wrong!

By Tom Rigby

'FREEZE the Arms Race' will be one of the major slogans on the CND demonstration in London on October 22.

Yet it is a demand that has little to do with unilateralism, the basic policy of CND. In reality it adds up to little more than multilateralism.

However, the 'freeze' is becoming very important in CND. The leadership (Bruce Kent, Joan Ruddock, E.P.Thompson, etc.) want to see it become the movement's central campaigning slogan, as they try to redirect CND rightwards towards some 'centre ground' of British politics.

When the 'freeze' demand is given any precise formulation it can be seen to be multilateralist. This is how Joan Ruddock put it: "Bilateral agreements between the superpowers to halt the further manufacture, deployment or testing of nuclear weapons".

In the run-up to the deployment of Cruise and Pershing missiles, many people are confusing the CND priority demands of 'No Cruise, No Trident, No Nuclear-Armed Tornado' with the call for a nuclear freeze.

Joan Ruddock has described the two slogans as 'identical'.

But the 'freeze' slogan

accepts the deployment of Cruise and Pershing as inevitable.

CND's National Council has also retreated by redefining direct action: from now on it will be called 'symbolic' action.

CND leaders have specified that the action this autumn and winter is not to be seen as an attempt to stop the siting of Cruise.

The 'freeze' slogan will reach its full prominence only after the deployment of the new missiles.

But, by a strange twist, it will involve CND abandoning its own arguments about the nature of the new generation of NATO missiles.

Bruce Kent has already come very close to suggesting that Cruise and Pershing could be part of talks on the level of 'theatre nuclear weapons' along with the SS20s.

This would mean accepting the NATO apologists' description of Cruise, and underplaying everything that has quite rightly been said by CND from the outset about the 'first-strike' capacity of Cruise.

CND still has unilateralism

written into its constitution.

It is very important that this unilateralism is defended against any move to drop it or play it down because it is less popular than opposition to Cruise and Trident alone.

Unilateralism, though it may cut down the movement's immediate appeal, provides a much firmer political basis to go out and build from.

In particular, unilateralism implies a refusal to 'fit in' with how the media, the government, and the military try to get us to think about nuclear weapons.

Even if there was a freeze in the next three years, it would leave the US with 13,000 more warheads than it had in 1981, hardly a major victory for disarmament.

If the CND leadership are successful, and the Campaign's ranks are purged (see page 2) and its policy revised, then this will give the green light to the right wing in the labour movement. They can then move in to drop the Labour Party's commitment to unilateralism.

Judging from his past record, Neil Kinnock will be prepared to go along with them.

It is vital that the left wing within CND and the labour movement organise to stop this happening.

US 'Freeze' lobby - see article, page 7.

VOICE of Solidarnosc

Voice of Solidarnosc is published fortnightly by NSZZ Solidarnosc. Subscription rates are £8 for six months [UK] and £10 for six months [overseas]. Cheques and postal orders payable to NSZZ Solidarnosc should be sent to the NSZZ Solidarnosc Information Office, 314-320 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP. Tel: 01-837 9464.

OR come to the...

CLASSFIGHTER CONFERENCE

at Camden Tenants Association Hall Peckham High Street, LONDON SE15.

YTS APPLY HERE

Videos all day including ycp's Greenham Framed Youth's The Red + the Blue

- * WORKSHOPS
- * ♀'s SELF-DEFENCE
- * SCAB BOX MEETINGS
- * GUEST SPEAKERS

Bring a sleeping bag - crash accommodation available. Food. Further details from Classfighter, 151 St. John Street, London N1.

26th + 27th November

Costs: £2 waged £1 unwaged

Social with bands on Saturday night 50p with conference ticket.



Behind the 'arms limit' talks

Reagan's one-sided "zero option"

By Harry Sloan

WELL in advance of this year's Halloween festivities, Ronald Reagan has been parading behind weird and uncharacteristic masks.

On two occasions in the last month, Reagan has donned the disguise of a peace-monger, making apparent concessions to the USSR in what he would have us believe to be a sincere effort to restrict the nuclear arms race.

As the winter deadline for the deployment of new US Cruise and Pershing missiles draws ever closer, and opposition continues at high levels throughout

Europe, Reagan is desperately looking for a way to heap the blame onto the Soviet Union.

This is why he used his speech to the UN General Assembly on September 26 to make what were portrayed as new proposals to the Moscow leaders.

Yet at the heart of Reagan's proposals was a major confidence trick: he still persists in claiming that US/NATO deployment of Cruise and Pershing missiles is motivated simply by the need to counterbalance Sov-

iet intermediate-range SS20 missiles.

The public relations ploy is to exaggerate out of all proportion the number, newness and accuracy of these missiles, most of which are in fact deployed along the Soviet Union's eastern borders with China and incapable of striking European targets.

Deployed

The SS20s were developed in the early 1970s and deployed as long ago as 1977 — to replace their ageing predecessors, the SS4 and SS5.

Even Pentagon publications admit that the SS20 is neither particularly mobile, nor particularly accurate.

It is not — unlike Cruise and Pershing — a 'first strike' weapon. It is designed to meet the potential threat to the Soviet Union posed by NATO missiles in Europe — which include the British 'deterrent' — and by the 'independent' (but equally anti-Soviet) French nuclear strike force.

Ever since the USA began the nuclear arms race in the post-war period, the USSR has faced a superiority of numbers of warheads ranged against it by the imperialist US and European governments.

Skimpy

Both Reagan's skimpy 'carrot' of 'arms control' and his grisly 'sticks' of an accelerating arms race focus on preserving and extending that NATO superiority.

For many months the formula used to dress up this demand was the so-called 'zero option' — by which Reagan suggested the USSR would reduce its intermediate missile arsenal in Europe to zero, in exchange for a US agreement to do the same.

But meanwhile British and French missiles would remain pointed at Soviet targets, US nuclear-armed bombers would continue to be based in Europe and on aircraft carriers within easy striking distance of the USSR, and US submarines, too, would remain outside the reckoning.

This one-sided 'zero' has not surprisingly drawn a blank — hostile — response from the Moscow leaders.

Since then Reagan has tried variants of the same deception. In April he offered to 'balance' the number of warheads held by the USA and the USSR in Europe — again deliberately leaving out the French and British nuclear weapons.

Offset

More recently, on September 26 at the United Nations, Reagan shifted his ground on three counts. Firstly, he offered not to offset the whole total of Soviet SS20 missiles in Europe and Asia by US deployment in Europe: some US missiles might possibly be sited elsewhere.

Secondly, he agreed that nuclear-capable medium-range aircraft (in which the USA has a superiority) should be included in the limits.

Thirdly, he agreed that he would cut the numbers of the high-speed and highly accurate

Pershing missiles as well as the slower and less certain Cruise as part of any deal.

But once again the hollowness of the Reagan scheme was revealed when the very next day at the United Nations both Britain and France insisted that their bombs and missiles must not be included in any such deal.

Margaret Thatcher, in fact, has taken a consistently harder line than Reagan, demanding that the USSR must dismantle "all its medium range SS20s" — including those in Asia — if the deployment of the new US missiles were to be halted.

Most recently, on October 4, Reagan came out with his most baffling proposal yet. Described as the 'build down' plan, it suggests that older nuclear weaponry be replaced by fewer, newer weapons.

Lethal

Every two land-based missile warheads should be replaced by only one new, more lethal version, he suggested. As for submarine-launched missiles, every three old ones should be replaced by only two new ones.

This is of course no respite from the arms race: on the contrary, it means that the drive for innovation and increasingly efficient methods of wreaking death and destruction would actually increase, leaving fewer, more hideous warheads.

Meanwhile the US administration has stubbornly refused to echo Yuri Andropov's offer of a 'no first use' pledge on nuclear weapons: this is because NATO strategy for the 'defence' of Europe relies upon a first strike with nuclear weapons.

Similarly, Reagan continues to reject Soviet suggestions of a freeze on new nuclear weapons — claiming that this would allow a Soviet superiority.

The cynical charade of Reagan's 'peace' initiatives will continue right up to the installation of the 572 Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe.

Innocence

But few will be inclined to give all that much credence to Yuri Andropov's protestations of peaceable innocence — particularly in the aftermath of Stalinism's repression of the Polish workers' movement.

The Kremlin leaders, however, unlike the imperialists, do not seek militarily to dominate the world. Their aim is to strike a 'frozen' balance with the NATO rules that offers them some stability and the opportunity to focus their energies on preserving their power and privilege at home.

The main pace-setters of the arms race are the US and British warmongers: it is they who must be disarmed as a priority for the workers' movement.

Settling accounts with Andropov and his military cronies is a job for the workers and peasants of Eastern Europe — not the guns, bombs, and missiles of imperialist leaders who would like to destroy the nationalised property relations of the Stalinist-ruled states and return them to the direct exploitation of the capitalist world market.



NICK LAWRENCE

"THE world can't go on as it is without some fool or maniac or some accident triggering the kind of war that is the end of the line for all of us" — Ronald Reagan, May 1983.

Because of a computer error, the US nearly launched nuclear missiles early in 1980. Reagan said: "If the war had taken place, I would see to it that the computer firm would lose its contract with the US government".

"Socialists" divided Breaking ranks in Europe

THOUGH the Left at the Labour Party conference succeeded [perhaps with the unwitting aid of a blathering intervention by Jim Callaghan] in repulsing the moves to dilute or discard the policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament, such a policy is not by any means universal across Europe.

In France, both the ruling Socialist Party and their coalition partners the Communist Party support the retention of the French nuclear strike-force — though the CP has staged protests against the new US missiles to be based elsewhere in Europe.

French 'socialist' President Mitterrand gave a forthright statement of his loyalty to the weapons of French imperialism in his September 27 speech at the United Nations. Objecting to any link between US-Soviet arms talks and the French Bomb, he declared:

"It is unacceptable to include the central defence system on which the independence and survival of my country rest, with the intermediate-range nuclear forces of the two superpowers".

But while Mitterrand holds the line on this issue, life is less easy for West Germany's Social Democratic Party (SPD) leaders. While they were in government, SPD Chancellor Helmut Schmidt was a dogged defender of NATO and its arms drive.

Since Schmidt was toppled from office, however, and defeated in the elections, the rank and file has increasingly begun to swing the SPD away from this policy as the peace movement has gathered momentum.

It now seems certain that the SPD conference on November 18 will see a break from Schmidt's line — and thus deliver a setback to the Party's leader, Hans Jochen Vogel.

Already eight of the SPD's 11 state parties have categorically opposed the NATO deployments, and brushed aside pleas from Vogel to leave the matter open until negotiations on arms control end on November 15.

USA and the apartheid bomb

By Harry Sloan

A FEW months ago, Socialist Organiser drew attention to plans being made by the USA to site Cruise missiles in the apartheid state of South Africa.

Now a new American pamphlet, 'Stop the Apartheid Bomb', underlines the grim fact that the apartheid rulers have themselves now developed a nuclear bomb, with the assistance of the US government and major US corporations.

It points to the deliberate cover-up by the Carter administration of a South African nuclear test in September 1979, and of the last-minute cancellation of a nuclear test in the Kalahari Desert as long ago as August 1977.

As the force controlling one of the world's principal sources of uranium — the Rossing mine in South African occupied Namibia — the Pretoria regime has not only drawn massive revenues, but also obtained technical assistance from the British and US imperialists and multinational firms.

The allegedly 'peaceful' cause of developing nuclear energy has been the flimsy pretext beneath which the development of the apartheid bomb has gone forward. South Africa's first research reactor, SAFARI I, was completed in 1965, and supplied with weapons-grade uranium by the USA until 1976.

A South African built research reactor, SAFARI II, was completed in 1967.

And in 1975, with US and West German assistance, a pilot uranium enrichment plant was built, amid South African hopes of becoming a major exporter of enriched uranium in the 1980s.

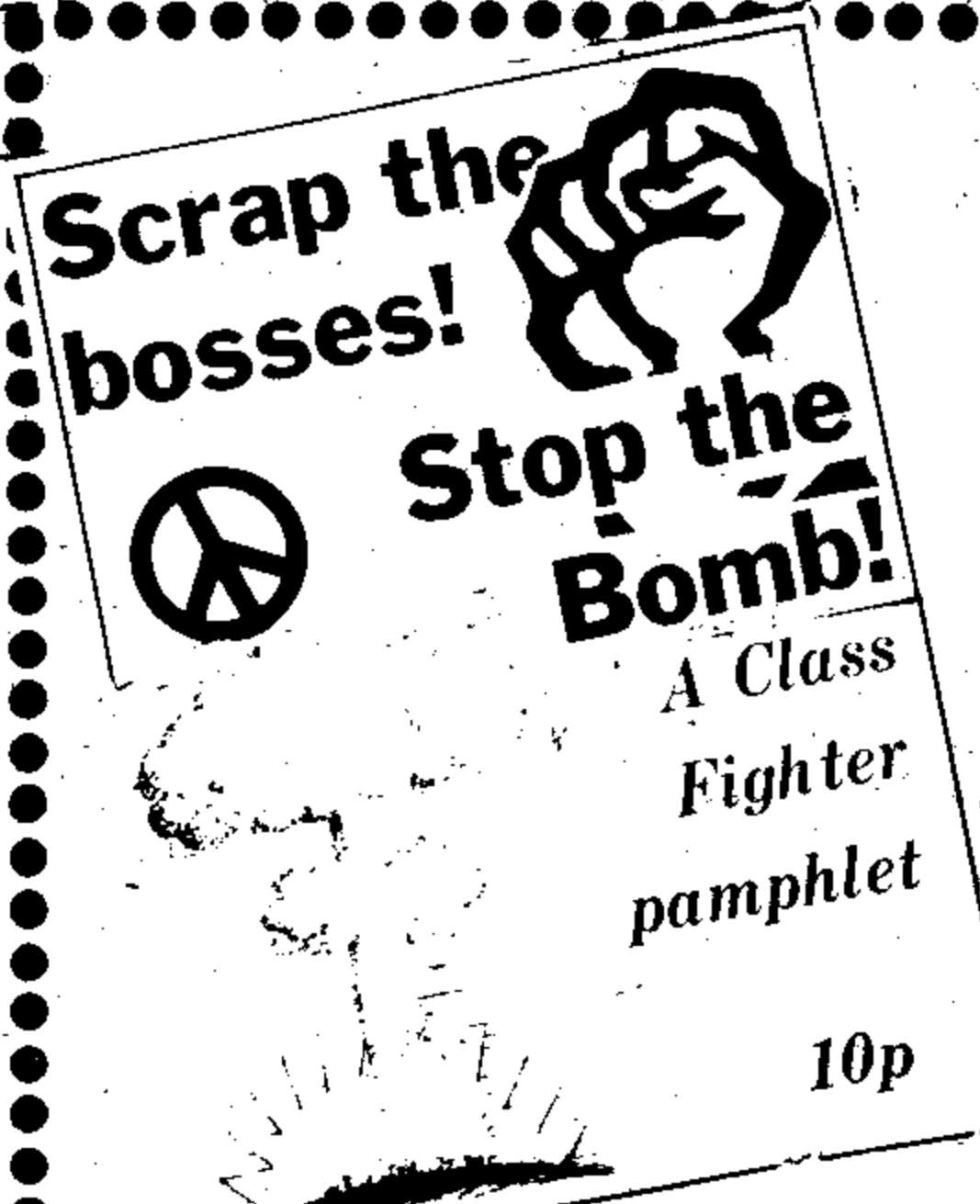
The promotion of these pro-

jects is no error on the part of successive US administrations. They share the Pretoria regime's view of South Africa as a frontline force against 'communism' — the revolutionary struggles of black Africa.

But the episode also underlines the reality of nuclear power programmes. As nuclear critic Amory Lovins points out and the pamphlet quotes:

"Nuclear reactors are essentially bomb factories that produce electricity as a by-product".

The pamphlet calls for action against imports of Namibian uranium, and against firms complicit in the nuclear arming of South Africa. This should also be taken up by trade unionists in Britain.



10p plus postage from 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK
Women won't wait!
Latest issue — 10p plus 12½p postage from 10B Landseer Road, London N19



HOW CAN WE GET RID OF THE BOMB?

HOW CAN we get rid of the Bomb?

By getting a government which scraps it. But that's not as simple as it sounds.

Despite repeated Labour Party conference votes, the Labour leadership is clearly fudging the issue, with talk of Polaris being a matter for international negotiations.

Even if the Labour leadership were 100% committed to unilateralism, there would be problems. The US and British military; and the top ranks of the civil service, would use all sorts of dirty tricks to block unilateral disarmament. The government would need not only a firm commitment to unilateralism, but the will and ability to take on the permanent state machine.

We won't get a government like that unless it is based on and accountable to an active and mobilised working class.

Isn't the surer method, then, to focus on direct action to stop the Bomb?

Strikes, sit-downs, peace camps and marches are vital. But on their own they can't hope to defeat the centralised power of the state machine on an issue of central importance to it unless they achieve general strike proportions.

A revolutionary general strike, arising out of an overall political crisis, might achieve unilateral nuclear disarmament as part of its work. But a special effort to get a 'general strike to scrap the Bomb' makes no sense.

If we could achieve the tremendous organisation and level of awareness needed to make such an enterprise successful, then we would be able to achieve our aims without a general strike.

Neither total faith in direct action, nor pure reliance on the struggle within the Labour Party to commit it to unilateralism and make it accountable, is the answer.

What we need is a strategy which combines these aspects, and links them with every other struggle in which the confidence and political awareness of working class people can be raised, in the perspective of achieving a workers' government, accountable to the labour movement and prepared to take on capitalism.

Isn't this too drastic? What ab-

By Martin Thomas

out countries like Norway which keep out nuclear weapons without a social revolution and without even leaving NATO?

NATO can accept that Norway is free of nuclear weapons precisely because Britain is jam-packed with these machines of death. To keep this or that small country free of nuclear bases is different from disarming the capitalist world's second military power.

Besides, clearing nuclear weapons from a single country is only a start. Really to remove the threat of nuclear annihilation, we have to remove nuclear weapons from whole continents, at least — and also remove from power those people who would want to rebuild the nuclear arsenals at the first opportunity.

To rely on the example of Norway is to fool ourselves. The nuclear arms race is deep-rooted in capitalist society. We won't end the arms race without changing society.

What alternative defence policy should we support?

A people's militia, democratically controlled through the labour movement and local communities, and based on universal military training.

Isn't that conscription?

Yes — in the same sense that a picket rota, or a closed shop, is a form of conscription. But there is a difference between that sort of 'conscription', and conscripting people into a capitalist army as strike-breakers and uniformed thugs.

Is this realistic? Why not go for non-nuclear conventional defence, at least as an interim demand?

What defence policy is realistic depends on whom you're defending against what. The conventional forces of the British Army have been at war continuously since 1945 — defending British imperialism against liberation struggles.

Many of its commanders see the army's main future role in 'counter-insurgency' — defending the British state against rebellion in this country. And former army chief Michael Carver has admitted that "some fairly senior officers" were talking about a military takeover in 1974.

Moves to unilateral nuclear disarmament could well make it not just messroom talk, but serious plans for action. And then we would need defence against the army.

'Realistically' we would have to organise some sort of labour movement/community militias — against the present state, the basis for our own kind of workers' state.

An 'alternative defence policy' would not just be a blueprint for how to organise the State without the Bomb, but a necessary part of enforcing our anti-Bomb policy against the State.



Tories regroup for battle

By Terry Smith

THE SIGHT of a sleepless Margaret Thatcher floundering her way through a more than usually lame and turgid rallying speech gave a flavour of the unexpectedly confused and desperate circumstances that dominated this year's Tory conference.

Instead of flag-waving triumphant hysteria in the aftermath of the June election victory, the platform struggled from day to day to preserve a semblance of order and confidence under the quizzical eyes of the press.

Not until Friday morning was it confirmed that the frigate Parkinson — which singlehandedly fought the Falklands war and organised the election campaign — had been sunk with all hands after a fresh broadside from Sara Keays.

The confusion of the conference at this sudden turn in events — after Parkinson had bored everyone half to death with his speech the previous day, and survived — was multiplied by the fact that the edition of the Times carrying Sara Keays' statement was not available in Blackpool.

But it must not be forgotten that the Tory Party — as the party of profit and property — is less of a structured organisation than an enlarged club of co-thinkers. The leadership can be

knocked off balance yet still survive — because the differences are on questions of tactics rather than principle, and because there is only really room for one leader at a time.

Though marginal 'wets' like Norman St John Stevas may go round whingeing about 'poisonous ideologues' whose hostility to the NHS gives the Tory Party a bad name, the opposition to Thatcher is soft and lukewarm as well as wet: it has made little impact since Thatcher's meteoric rise in the mid 1970s.

This can be seen from the replacements wheeled in to repair the damage done by Parkinson's destruction.

Boot-boy Norman Tebbit moves up to head the relentless drive towards privatisation and the destruction of jobs in coal and other nationalised industries.

Nicholas Ridley — an original architect of the Tory policy of letting 'lame duck' firms and industries sink — is brought into the Cabinet as an additional tough guy.

Tom King — whose stubborn stand provoked the water strike earlier this year — steps into Tebbit's shoes, publicly pledged to continue the same line of aggression towards the trade unions.

It is over King that the biggest question mark must hang: can he bring the union leaders to heel in the way Tebbit had succeeded in doing?

All photos JOHN HARRIS



His task will be eased, of course, by the headlong political retreats of the last month's TUC Congress, and the evident refusal of the General Secretaries to wage any real fight against the Tories.

But there remain testing times ahead for the patched-together Tory team.

Chancellor Nigel Lawson wants to steer them into a policy of cutting back unemployment and other benefits at a time of chronic mass unemployment.

And Lawson's cash strait-jacket is pushing the NHS into cutbacks and closures which are emotive issues in the working class — and possibly the most explosive single issue to be dealt with in the next year.

Having checked out their own stamina by staying awake through Thatcher's final speech

and surviving the ritualistic minute standing ovation, after allowing their own bloodlust and racialism to run free a delirious week among friends, Tory 'representatives' will now be watching anxiously to check that their government does not run out of steam.

The questions raised by Thatcher's apparent infallibility could indeed be multiplied and magnified in the event of substantial victories by the working class.

Rather than gloating over the Tories' comparatively minor crisis of leadership, our attention in the labour movement should be focused on resolving the much more serious crisis of leadership exposed by this year's TUC and Labour conferences.



TURKEY
INFORMATION BULLETIN

New pamphlet, 50p; latest TSC bulletin, 30p, plus postage. From TSC, BM Box 5965, London WC1N 3XX.

International news

Sectarianism and politics in Lebanon

COULD YOU begin by telling us about yourself.

I have been active in Lebanese politics for more than 25 years. Until it was unofficially dissolved after the Israeli invasion last year, I was a member of the Executive Committee of the Lebanese National Movement, one of the seven 'independent personalities' that sat on the Executive. Now I'm an independent Muslim politician.

To explain what this means requires explaining something about the sectarian nature of Lebanese politics.

When I say 'Muslim', I am not referring to any dictionary definition, less still to any set of religious ideas. Where there is a problem between the majority of Muslims and the majority of Christians in Lebanon, it is not religious in the doctrinal sense. It is a conflict of political ideas and interests.

Understanding this helps us understand the current situation in Lebanon, the political groupings, and how the state has operated since 1943.

The system is based on an unwritten confederation of sects. The loyalty of the Lebanese is not between an individual and the state directly. It has to be mediated through the sect.

The services that an individual enjoys are usually the services supplied by a sect, whether Maronite, Sunnite, Greek Orthodox or whatever. A Maronite baby, for instance, will usually be born in a Maronite hospital and as he or she grows up will go to Maronite schools. The state made no real effort to create national services and foster a national identity.

And it doesn't stop when a child goes to school: when a Lebanese looks for a job, he or she needs the backing of a religious or political leader linked with his or her sect. This job has to be available to the sect, and the backing has to be there.

But this arrangement is not part of the official constitution.

That's right. The National Convention which established the sectarian arrangement in this form was part of the programme of the first independent government in 1943.

At the time — a time when the

Mohammed Kabbani, a left wing Muslim politician from Lebanon, spoke to Andrew Hornung

Muslim communities were already probably in a numerical majority — we were told that we were going to have a sectarian system but that it would only be temporary.

Behind the deepening of sectarianism lie the interests of local Lebanese leaders — both Muslim and Christian — and external powers. You see, these leaders, the sectarian 'princes' as we call them, provide these powers with an easy tool with which to manipulate the situation.

Naturally this leaves its mark on the party system. This is even true of the leftist parties like the Independent Nasserites, Morabitoun, which is predominantly Sunnite, or the Progressive Socialist Party, which is overwhelmingly Druze and whose political coloration is very much a reflection of the Jumblatt family's politics.

How is it then that several leftist groups and unions have Greek Orthodox leaders?

This is because there is an unusually large number of Greek Orthodox intellectuals.

And Amal doesn't seem to fit into this picture: it is a Shi'ite [Muslim] group which has, from time to time, allied with the Christian Right.

The development of Amal is in fact a good example of the way Lebanese sectarianism and class politics interact.

You see, from about 1969 onwards the influence of the PLO grew and pan-Arabist feelings became very widespread among Muslims — particularly after Black September 1970,

when so many Palestinians fled Jordan for Lebanon.

As in 1958 — the time of the last US intervention — the growth of pan-Arabist feeling tended to increase the attachment of the Muslims to the leftist forces.

The majority of the poor are Shi'ites, and they made up the majority of the leftist parties. The leaders of the Shi'ite community therefore feared that class politics would dominate over the struggles between sects. They created a Shi'ite party in order to draw their community back into the sectarian framework.

This party was Harakat el Mahroumin, the Movement of the Underprivileged, which today is Amal.

This is why class politics have not been able to come out clearly in the struggle.

But surely there have been periods when class struggle politics were clearly visible?

Yes, that's true. In certain periods the class struggle was very strong.

In the late 1960s the Arab and Lebanese Left emerged as a strong force. In Lebanon it was able to organise Muslims and Christians alike. There are, after all, underprivileged and underpaid among both.

We have a saying which describes the economic relations of these communities: "A rich Muslim is politically a Christian and a poor Christian is politically a Muslim". The majority of the underprivileged are Muslim.

Then there is the trade union movement. It is one of the great achievements of the Lebanese working class that the trade unions have kept their unity throughout the period of the civil war.

The unification of the nine different federations that previously existed — each of which had its various sections — was one of the most important products of the working class movement of the late sixties.

Services

The unions are, as you might expect, more strongly organised in the larger units of production and services. An indication of their strength is what happened shortly before the Israeli invasion.

Then the government tried to impose its estimate of the rise in the cost of living as the index to be used for wage increases. The General Confederation of Labour's figure was much higher and they threatened to call a General Strike.

Just before the strike was due to take place, the government caved in and agreed to revise its figure upwards.

About six months ago the government was studying a new decree that would unfreeze rents. Obviously this would mean a big attack on the working class and the unions opposed it. Both Phalangists and the leftists were on the side of the unions against the government.

Though the Phalangist Party, the Kata'eb, drew inspiration from European fascism in the thirties and forties, and it is a mass party of the petty bourgeoisie and some workers, not



© 1983 S. Kelley—San Diego Union



Pro-Iraqi Palestinian militiamen stand guard at a Tripoli gunpost

a party of the big bourgeoisie like the National Liberal Party of Chamoun, it is not opposed to trade unionism as such. In this sense it is quite different from, say, Nazism.

Syria's strategy is often analysed as being divisible into two stages, pre Camp David and post Camp David. A recent statement by the Labour politician Denis Healey also lends support to this idea. What do you think of this analysis, and what do you think were Syria's aims?

As regards the relations between the Lebanese left parties, including the pro-Syrian parties, that is true. One day after Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, representatives of all the left groupings met at the Jumblatt family home for the first time in more than a year.

One thing should be stressed, however, in connection with what you call "Syria's aims" in 1976. Syria entered Lebanon in the name of all the Arab countries and with their full support, and also with the full knowledge of the great powers.

At the time Kosygin was in Damascus: the connection is inescapable, whatever criticism Moscow or others might have felt obliged to make publicly.

Moscow did make a sharp criticism and threatened to cut off military supplies. But these supplies were not in fact stopped, despite Syria's refusal to withdraw, and the Communist Party of Syria remained a junior partner in Assad's government.

Don't you think Syria was both trying to prevent the development of any radical or class-orientated struggle and at the same time trying to become the arbiter of the Palestinians' fate, the better to trade them

off in exchange for a return of the Golan Heights?

Whatever Syria's own aims might have been — and you have stated a cogent view — the invasion was not a purely Syrian affair. That is what I want to stress. That is why it was supported by the other Arab nations.

When they created the Arab Deterrent Force, nominally to replace the Syrians, they were clearly lending their support to Syria's actions. This is as true of (say) Saudi Arabia as it is of Libya.

Push

You see, when Syria made its decisive push across the border in 1976, the Lebanese National Movement and the Palestinian forces controlled the vast majority of the country. They were on the brink of taking the rest.

These forces were only two kilometres from Bekfaya. These

two kilometres are a tiny distance geographically, but politically to cross this red line means totally to transform Lebanese political life and destroy the traditional Christian-Muslim balance.

Of course Syria always wanted the Golan Heights back, and its military presence in Lebanon makes Syria stronger and helps to achieve that aim. As for now, Syria wants a 'balanced government' in which its friends like Rashid Karamah would play a leading role.

Perhaps they will try to get a fifty-fifty balance of power instead of the six-to-five pro-Christian set-up which currently exists. They certainly want a government that will revoke the Lebanon-Israel accords.

Most of all, Syria would like the US to declare that "the Golan Heights are negotiable".

To be continued next week.

Solidarity UNDERGROUND

'Solidarity Underground: Free trade unionism in Poland today' is a new pamphlet by Magda Zalewska, Henryk Gawinski, and John Taylor, published by the Polish Solidarity Campaign. 50p plus postage from PSC, 186 Avenue Road, London W3.

Diary of a People's Marcher

and "How politics were kept out of the People's March"



50p for a single copy, 40p per copy for 5 or more, and 30p per copy for 20 or more, from Employment Unit, Southwark CVS, 135 Rye Lane, London SE15. Cheques payable to Southwark CVS. Please add an amount for postage.

International news

10-day countdown

CIA targets Nicaragua's oil supplies

DIRECT involvement of the CIA in the systematic campaign of sabotage and murder inside Nicaragua has been admitted for the first time by the Reagan administration, after the destruction of fuel storage tanks at the Nicaraguan port of Corinto.

This Monday raid was followed up by a further raid on Friday on the port of Puerto Sandino. It is reported that the country now has only 10 days' supply of crude oil.

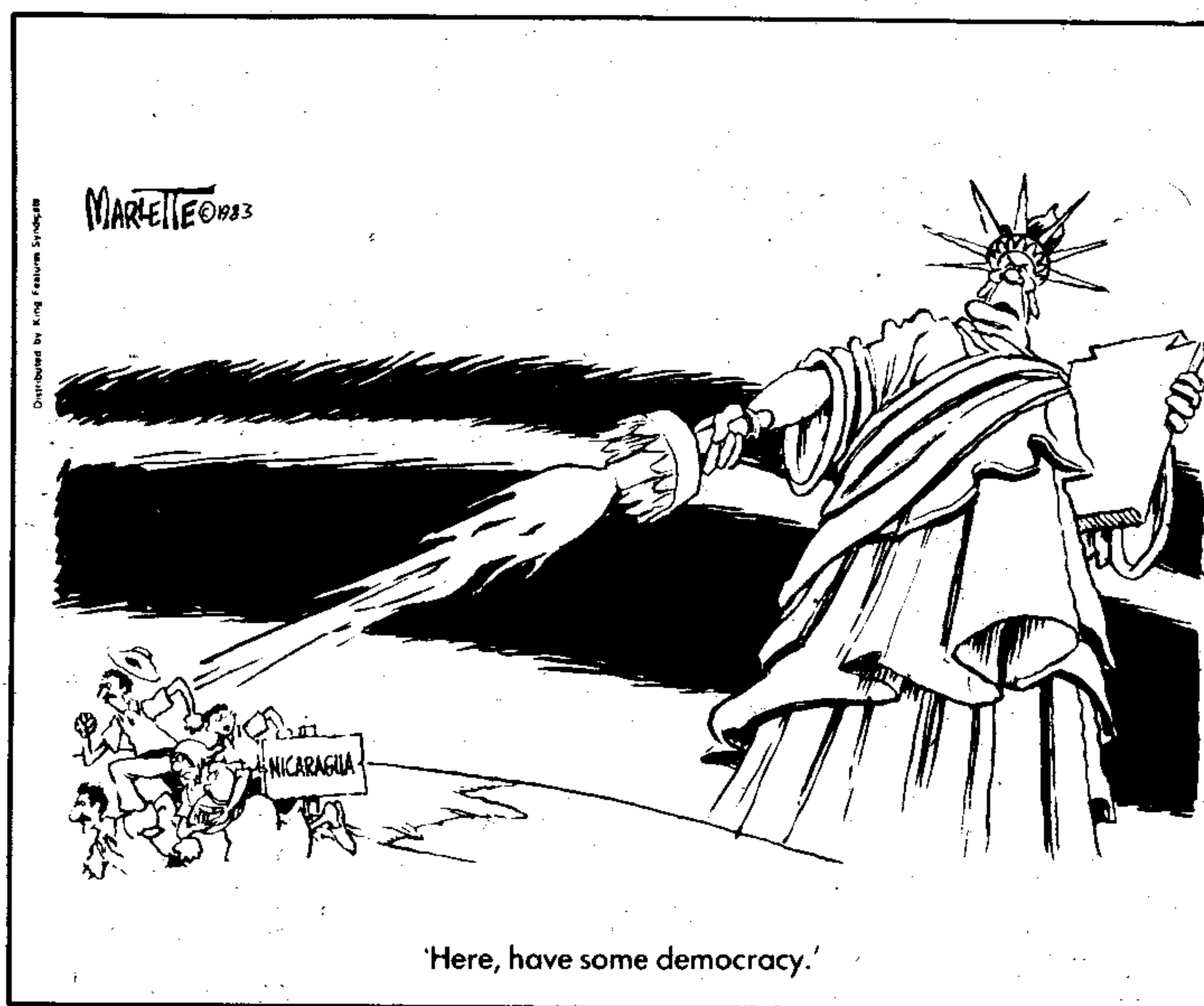
The new strategy adopted by the US and its mercenary band

By Terry Smith

of right-wing 'contra' guerrillas who operate from bases in Honduras is to hit sensitive targets which will maximise the damage and disruption of Nicaragua's weak and beleaguered economy.

The switch to this line of attack arises in fact from the humiliating failure of the much-vaunted 7,000 'contra' forces and their CIA leaders to make any significant military headway or win any popular support.

Still determined to force retreats on the radical Sandinista leadership which toppled the US-backed Somoza dictatorship in 1979, Reagan has sus-



tained a vicious economic blockade, and has now turned to outright economic sabotage.

Two weeks ago the 'contras' publicly claimed that they had mined the access to Nicaragua's main oil port, and that tankers from Mexico (the country's only supplier) could be destroyed.

Following this clear signal, Esso promptly announced that its tankers will no longer carry oil from Mexico to Nicaragua.

The oil shortages that have been created in this way will compound other shortages and dislocations in the Nicaraguan economy brought about in the aftermath of Somoza's plunder and by imperialist pressure.

This attempt to cut the wind-

pipe of the Sandinista revolution is also a test of the professed support for the regime from the Cuban leadership and its Soviet backers.

The 'contras' do not have big forces at their disposal: and Nicaragua's oil needs are not vast. Mexico has been supplying it virtually free of charge. Will the Cuban leaders offer practical support, or merely sit back and watch the Sandinistas fight for life?

In any event the responsibility of the workers' movement internationally is to step up the fight in solidarity with the Nicaraguan workers and peasants and against Reagan's brazen sabotage and military intervention.

US HANDS OFF Nicaragua!

Israel hits the skids

TOKEN strikes broke out in many parts of Israel last week in response to the government's threat to break the link between public sector employees' wages and the rate of inflation.

This attack on Israel's 'sliding scale of wages' or index linking — the workers' chief weapon against the raging three figure inflation of the shekel — follows a crash in the banking system, a big devaluation of the currency and a 50% jump in food prices.

The appointment of a new Finance Minister — replacing Yoram Aridor who resigned following the revelation that he proposed to junk the shekel in favour of going on to the US dollar — will not in itself restore confidence. The bank crash was the result of a long-term deep-going trend in the Israeli economy.

Israel has always lived beyond its means. Without huge remittances from US Zionists and from the West German Government and without millions of dollars worth of grants and waivers from the US government, Israel simply could not survive.

Its military and colonising projects — bigger under Begin than ever before — ate up millions every day.

On top of that, the Likud coalition further scuttled the eco-

nomy when in 1981, in order to win the elections, it unleashed a big consumer spending spree when it cut taxes on many imported items.

The result is that Israel's debt per head of population is 10 times that of Brazil, a byword for Third World indebtedness. Servicing that debt costs Israel \$2,200 million a year — equivalent to all its US aid and accounting for nearly half its export revenue.

Even before the bank crash there had been widespread acceptance that an election would have to be held soon in order to solve the near parliamentary deadlock. Now that election looks even nearer.

The choice between the two main party blocs — the Marach or Labour Alignment based on the Israeli Labour Party, Mapam, and the Likud bloc based on the Herut party — will not mean that the Israeli working class will be able to choose a policy of militarism and settlements or anti-militarism and no settlements.

But it is likely that some workers will see that it is the nature of the Israeli state rather than the spendthrift policies of the Likud that have brought about the present chaos.

That in itself could, in the present situation, present revolutionary socialist with enormous possibilities.

Limits of US 'freeze' lobby

By Tom Rigby

THE 'Freeze' slogan now being pushed by the CND leadership first came to the fore in the USA.

A look at the 'freeze' campaign in the US tells us a lot about the implications that a shift from unilateralism to 'freeze' could have for CND in Britain.

The US peace movement gets most of its support from the middle class. And in an important sense it is not really a movement at all.

The backbone of the campaign is not the local groups, as in Britain. Some active groups do exist in the major urban centres, but the campaign as a whole is built around computer direct mailing techniques. The mailings concentrate on a 'typical' freeze supporter with an average income of around \$25,000, usually non-union, professional, educated, a home-owner. Such people tend to be basically conservative in politics, but radical on a few particular issues.

The freeze campaign gets most of its finance and direction from a small group of wealthy individuals and institutions.

Among the inner circle are the Rockefellers, the Stern fund, and the Field Foundation. By the end of 1982, the major funders calculated that they had already laid out more than \$20 million.

The freeze campaign has chalked up a whole series of successes. It gained 87% support in a nation-wide opinion poll in May 1982; referendum victories in nine states, including California and Massachusetts; backing from nearly half the US Catholic bishops and all the major contenders for the US Democratic Party nomination.

However, this success is very flimsy. It is built up on a weak political basis. Support for the idea of a freeze implies no basic hostility to the foreign policy interests and goals of the US government. So as soon as the

cold war begins to hot up, support for the freeze will melt away dramatically.

This is what happened when the South Korean airliner was shot down. Those freeze supporters in the Senate who had held up the development of the MX missile project caved in.

In a panic they went along with Reagan's response, and voted for his defence package, which included MX.

This kind of internal moral collapse may have been predictable. But it is important to understand its political roots.

The US freeze movement is plainly multilateralist, i.e. the emphasis is placed firmly on the actions of governments and negotiators, first to halt and then to bring about a balanced reduction in the manufacture, testing and deployment of nuclear weapons.

The role of the average freeze supporter in this strategy is minimal: hence the concentration on computer mailings.

Maputo raid

THE SOUTH African commando raid into the Mozambique capital of Maputo on Monday was notionally aimed at the African National Congress — the illegal organisation of black South African resistance.

But the arrogant contempt for national borders shown by the apartheid gangsters flows as much from the prolonged and massive campaign of destabilisation by South Africa of its black African neighbour states, Angola and Mozambique.

Guerilla squads of mercenaries, armed, equipped and financed by Pretoria, have been conducting systematic economic sabotage and terrorism against the nationalist regimes of the MPLA in Angola and Frelimo in Mozambique. Damage inflicted in Angola alone totals in excess of \$5 billion.

Now — having seen the impact of such efforts — the CIA has adopted similar tactics in its campaign of disruption in Nicaragua.

Misery on the Shankill

AS THE main political facts of the situation in Northern Ireland remain more or less static, it is easy to forget that the social and economic facts behind them are far from static.

A recent report on the run-down of the Shankill area of Belfast highlights this*.

The Shankill is a major Protestant area in West Belfast. Its backbone, the Shankill Road, runs parallel the Falls Road and the Catholic district round that.

It was in the area between the Shankill Road and the Falls Road that the Protestant sectarian attacks and house-burnings erupted in 1969 which were the immediate background to British troops going onto the streets.

Although the relation between the Shankill and the Falls is not much different in 1983 from what it was in 1969, the Shankill itself is very much changed.

The population has declined by about 60%, and jobs in the area by 71%.

The loss of jobs comes from a decline both of big firms and of small. In 1968 there were four major employers in the area: Mackies engineering (4500), Ewarts linen mill (1340 — it had been 4000 at its peak), Falls Flax (611), and Ladybird clothing (300). By 1982 Ewarts, Falls Flax and Ladybird had all closed, and Mackies was down to 1200 workers.

The report estimates that small businesses in the area employed 5900 workers in 1968, 2466 in 1981.

In one part of the Shankill, there were in 1968 64 small warehouses, scrap and coal dealers, and builders' yards, employing 535 people. In 1981 there were none.

A 1967 map shows the Lower Shankill densely dotted with shops, pubs, small factories and other businesses. In the 1980 map they have all disappeared, bar a few shops and pubs along the Shankill Road itself and just four small businesses elsewhere.

Other major Belfast employers have also been declining. Harland and Wolffs shipyard was already in serious decline by the 1960s, but still employed over 20,000. By late 1982 it was down to 5,500.

The biggest new employer in the Shankill since 1968 mentioned in the report is the Snugville Street dole office.

In the Shankill itself, an official report noted, "nearly all (the houses) lack(ed) any amenities except a cold water tap and outside WC".

The main cause of the drastic decline of the Shankill since then — apart from the worldwide stagnation of capitalism and (a lesser factor) the direct results of the war — has been a botched attempt by the state to 'redevelop' the area.

This was part of a grandiose scheme whereby foreign investors would be brought into Northern Ireland to set up new industries replacing the traditional ones in decline, shipbuilding, linen, and clothing. Despite lavish state hand-outs, it hasn't happened. At best firms have come and gone again after a few years, like De Lorean.

In the Shankill, the plan was for 76% of the population to be re-housed in twelve-storey or six/seven-storey flats. The 12-storey flats were never built, because of public opposition, and the six/seven-storey flats were demolished in 1981.

The general picture is similar in other areas of Northern Ireland, both Protestant and Catholic. The unemployment rate across the Six Counties is 21.7% (October 1982). One striking result is that in Northern Ireland, unlike almost anywhere



North and South

else in the world, the percentage of women in waged labour has declined since the '20s.

In Belfast in 1926, 45% of all adult women were employed — a very high ratio for the time. By 1971 it was down to 40% — not an exceptionally low figure by international standards, but lower than the average for Britain.

Another result of some political consequence is that the economic differential between Northern Ireland and the South has dwindled considerably. National income per head in the South is about 60% of Britain's, in the North about 70%.

The common misery, against which the marginal privileges of Protestant workers appear more farcical than ever, has not yet produced a united class response even of the faltering and temporary sort seen in 1932 and in the early '60s.

The economic pressures clearly do not automatically force their way through to political conclusions. But they do indicate a tremendous scope for agitation by socialists capable of putting forward a convincing programme to show how an Irish workers' republic could provide jobs and decent housing for all.

* The Vital Statistics: Shankill Employment Report. Published by the Shankill Community Council, 93 Shankill Rd, Belfast 13.

TONY Benn, Ken Livingstone, and Clive Soley are among the speakers at the 'Ireland: Peace Through Democracy' conference called for November 26.

The conference aims to build up support for an end to any British presence in Ireland, an end to the Unionist veto on reunification, and the right of Ireland to maintain its traditional neutrality (i.e. not to be pushed into joining NATO).

It has already won support from nearly 30 MPs and a number of trade union leaders such as Ray Buckton, Alan Sapper, and George Guy.

The conference will focus on the situation in the trade unions and the problems of raising the issue of Ireland, particularly where British unions have members in the North. Time will be set aside for delegates from different unions to meet, exchange experiences, and, we hope, keep in contact after the conference.

Speakers have also been invited from unions such as NUPE and ASTMS where Ireland has been raised at conferences over the last few years and where, in the case of ASTMS, an Irish caucus has been set up.

The conference is open to delegates (£3) and observers (£2). Further information and credentials from Box 189, 32 Ivor Place, London NW1. Cheques payable to Labour Movement Conference on Ireland.

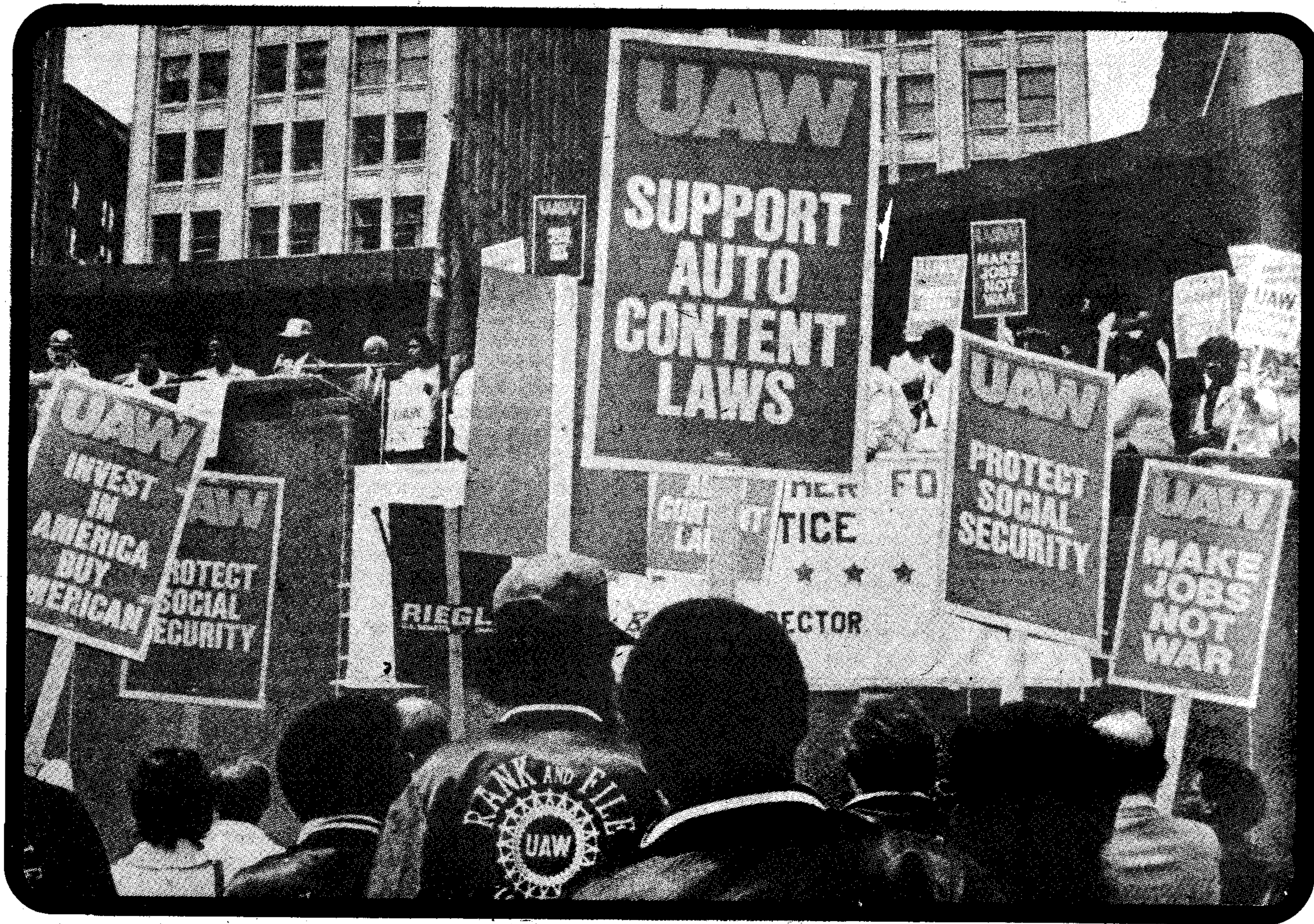
Time: Saturday November 26, 9.30am.

Place: Edrich Hall, South Bark Polytechnic, Borough Rd, London SE1.



TROOPS OUT NOW!

Join the Labour Committee on Ireland.
BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX



'Buy American' — the US unions' explicitly pro-capitalist strategy looks very much like the supposedly socialist AES!



Airline pilots are currently on strike against sweeping wage cuts

As union chiefs back yet another Democrat Wanted: a U.S. Labour

IN THE same week that British trade union leaders stitched up the vote for Neil Kinnock as leader of the Labour Party, a very different type of stitch-up was being accomplished in Florida, USA.

Leaders of most big American unions, meeting at the convention of the AFL-CIO (equivalent of the TUC) voted to endorse Walter Mondale as their choice for a candidate in next year's Presidential elections.

Mondale was leader of the pack of half a dozen Democratic Party hopefuls vying for the support — political, financial, and practical — of the union bosses. The 'choice' before them was the equivalent of choosing between David Owen, David Steel, Roy Jenkins and Edward Heath as defenders of the labour movement.

The Democratic Party is quite unlike the Labour Party. It is — and always has been — a bosses' party, which has nevertheless been able, in the absence of any substantial political party of the US workers' movement, to secure the support of important sections of the trade union bureaucracy — some supporting

IN THE aftermath of the Brighton Labour Party conference, many socialists — notably the Socialist Workers' Party — are arguing once again that the Labour Party is useless and irrelevant. One of the best ways to see that these socialists are headed down a blind alley is to look at the situation in the US labour movement.

There is no Labour Party. But, far from that being a boon, socialists in the US see it as central to fight for the trade unions to create a Labour Party. At the same time, they try to prepare the way for such a Labour Party to be armed with socialist politics, and to be democratically accountable to the rank and file.

If that is necessary in the US, then it is no less necessary in Britain to fight to re-make the Labour Party already formed by the trade unions.

However, the fight for a Labour Party in the US has suffered some setbacks recently. The unions are not only backing the Democrats (as is usual) but (in an unusual move) have officially put their weight behind one particular candidate as the Democratic presidential nominee. Harry Sloan, just back from a tour of the USA, reports on the state of the unions and what US socialists are doing.

Democrats against Republicans on a 'lesser evil' basis, and others simply because the Democrats reflect their own pro-capitalist political positions.

The Teamsters' Union is a notable exception. In recent years it has endorsed Republican candidates.

Though Mondale has assiduously cultivated contacts with AFL-CIO bureaucrats, and worked hard at creating a 'pro-labour' image, as Vice-President he carried responsibility for the anti-union activities and reac-

tionary policies of Jimmy Carter's Democratic administration.

Mondale helped invoke the anti-union Taft-Hartley laws against striking US coal-miners; Mondale was also part of the Carter administration's preparations — later to be implemented by Reagan — for the smashing of the air traffic controllers' union PATCO.

And, lest Mondale's less 'hawkish' stance on Central America should fool anyone, he also stands for the building of a vast fleet of B1 nuclear bombers as part of an arms build-up begun under Carter and stepped up under Reagan.

He is currently sponsored by some of the bigger oil monopolies.

But perhaps the decision of top union leaders to throw in \$2 million of their members' cash and promise the active campaigning of local officials to secure the election of such a capitalist politician can best be understood if we look at the politics of AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland, himself re-elected for a renewed term at this year's convention.

Kirkland is a hard-line right-winger, who recently agreed to serve on Reagan's committee on Central America only on condition that the committee was led by Henry Kissinger, President Nixon's right hand man in the genocidal wars in South East Asia and the 'destabilisation' of

the Chilean government by the CIA in 1970-73.

At the AFL-CIO convention he piloted through a motion on Nicaragua: not defending the Sandinistas against Reagan's CIA-backed 'contras', but attacking the regime's alleged abuses of 'human rights'.

Kirkland's politics are those of many union leaders in the USA: and just as they support US imperialism abroad, their sole object of political involvement at home is to back the Democrat least likely to support anti-union legislation, or most likely to be susceptible to AFL-CIO pleading. They are strongly opposed to any independent political voice for the working class.

Auto

Kirkland told the United Auto Workers convention this year:

"We intend to restore control of the White House and Congress to leaders who will represent all the people [!] instead of the privileged few".

Among Kirkland's favoured leaders were Lyndon Johnson's Vice-President, Hubert Humphrey, and veteran reactionary 'Scoop' Jackson.

In this, he struck the same note as the incoming UAW President, Owen Bieber. Though his predecessor Doug

Fraser had on occasion muttered vague and careful hints that he might support a trade-union-based Labour Party (in order to press for concessions from Democratic Party leaders), Bieber himself linked denunciations of Reagan's policies to calls for active support to the Democrats.

Recapture

"There is a good chance to recapture [!] not only the White House but the Senate. But that means going out now and beginning to work at the grass roots with our members."

According to the UAW journal 'Solidarity',

"Convention delegates cheered the call to political action".

Such limited political horizons are not the exclusive property of the right wing of the US union bureaucracy, however. One left bureaucrat who has spent some time and energy arguing for the launching of a new party is Oil and Chemicals union official Tony Mazzochi. Yet even he has concluded, in an open letter of September 5, that:

"discussions have convinced me that it is too early [!] to organise a full-fledged Labour Party".

Indeed, the only union consistently to uphold the call for a Labour Party in the USA is the Communist Party influenced United Electrical Workers. (The CP itself, however, gives not quite-explicit, but consistent, support to the Democrats).

Deprived of any political alternative to the Democrats and Republicans, the American workers' movement remains in the grip of a union leadership which for the most part actively opposes even the most rudimentary class consciousness.

The AFL-CIO bureaucracy is so steeped in conservative and class-collaborationist routines that it has presided over a steady decline of unionisation in US industry to below 20%.

While rationalisation, closures and lay-offs have taken a heavy toll of unionised jobs, union leaders are profoundly reluctant to take on board the problems involved in organising the vast non-union workforce.

Such a course would involve a continued round of confrontations with the employers over wages, conditions, and job security, and bring into the unions a potentially militant new layer of highly exploited workers, including large numbers of women, black workers, hispanic workers and other minorities currently under-represented in the unions.

The same logic of the 'lesser evil' which brings the union leaders to back outright capitalist parties brings them also to accept the demands of the capitalists themselves that in order to 'save jobs', unions must agree to 'givebacks', 'concessions' involving wage cuts, speed-up, and the destruction of union rights and working conditions won in decades of struggle.

But interestingly such union leaders, while retreating in practice, have also drawn up on paper their 'alternative' policy to Reaganomics. The AFL-CIO line — beginning from an explicitly anti-socialist, cross-class standpoint — is strikingly similar in essence to Labour's 'Alternative Economic Strategy' in Britain, so dearly cherished by sections of the Left.

Borrow

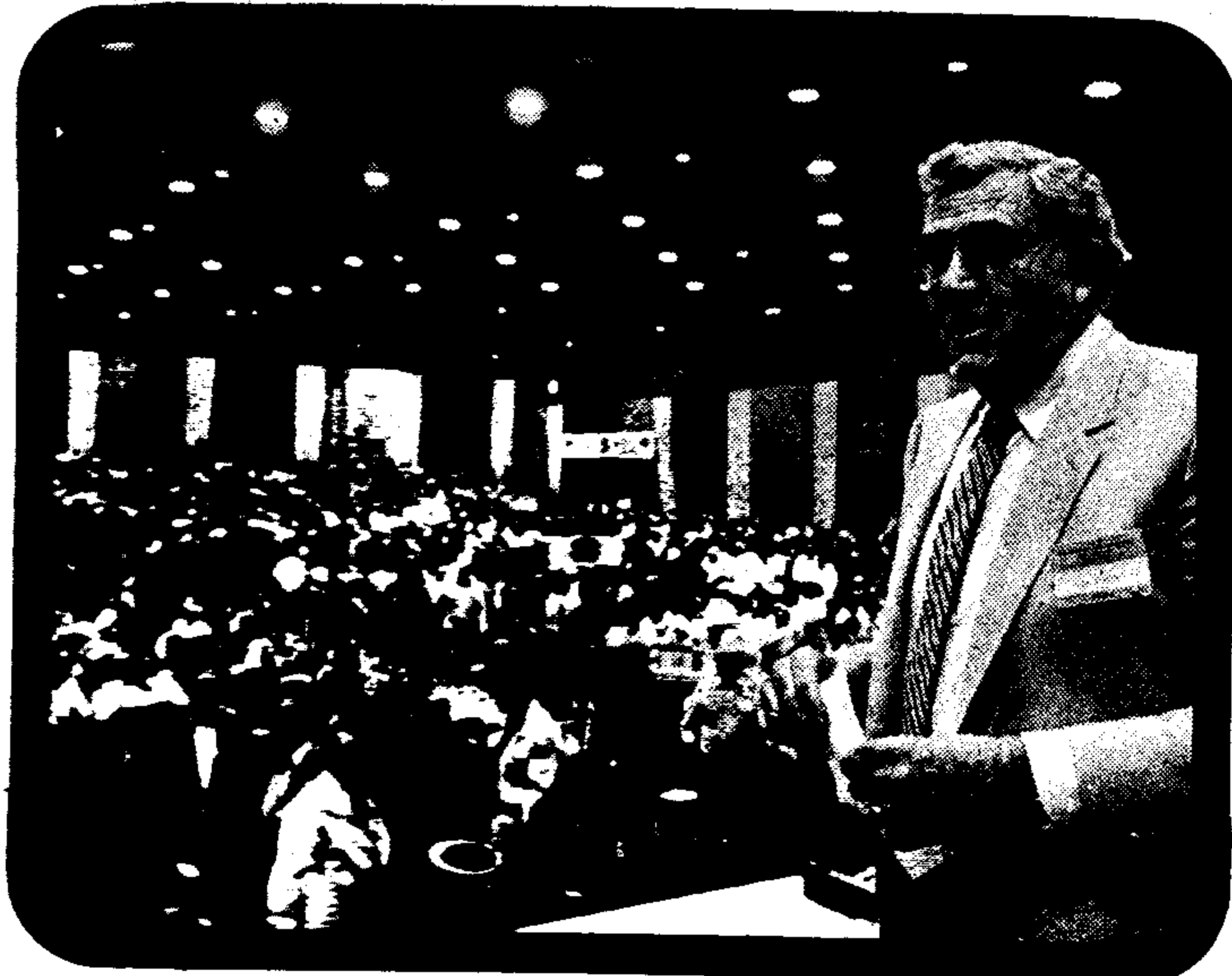
Where the AES calls for a strengthened National Enterprise Board, for state investment to assist the modernisation and expansion of British industry, and for the necessary funds to be borrowed, the AFL-CIO, in a plan adopted this month, calls for:

- Creating a reindustrialisation board of business, labour and government to set industry policy,

- Setting up a national development bank to use loans, loan guarantees and tax incentives to finance new industries and help older industries modernise,

- Spending more federal funds on 'job-creating programmes' and to rebuild public works.

And where the British Communist Party, and other supposedly left-wing advocates of the



Auto workers' president Owen Bieber at his union convention: 100% behind the Democrats



Party!

AES, look to protect 'British' firms and their profits through the nationalistic policy of import controls, this too is the policy of the AFL-CIO, which calls for:

- Measures to 'restrict harmful imports' — including proposals to require domestic parts in foreign cars.

Such tinkering with the structure of capitalism is of course no more a socialist policy in Britain than it is in the USA.

Conversely, the refusal to challenge the 'right' of the employers to preserve and increase their profits at the expense of workers' jobs, wages and conditions leads to betrayals and retreats both by 'socialist' union leaders in Britain and by their hard-nosed right-wing Democrat counterparts in the USA.

The policies are similar: but the context does make a difference. In the US, the trade unions propose policies from the standpoint of being the tail of one or another capitalist party. Anti-capitalist measures are ruled out from the start.

Within a party based on the organised working-class movement, the path is open to challenge such acceptance of capitalism, and to argue for socialist policies.

In the USA, therefore, the question of building a Labour Party as a clear and definitive break by the trade unions from the Democrats and Republicans must be confronted squarely.

The discussion at a 300-strong October 1 conference organised in Oakland by the rank and file organisation 'Labour Notes' underlined the limitations of even militant trade unionism if not linked to a political perspective. Activists reported on an impressive range of struggles, pointing to the scope for rank and file organisation: but, despite the looming reality of the 1984 Presidential elections, no speaker would explicitly address the question of building a Labour Party to give workers an independent voice, and only one platform speaker openly attacked Mondale.

As a result, discussion on

many aspects of the bosses' offensive was restricted entirely to a perspective of defensive struggles. The soaring costs of health care, the cuts in welfare support, the anti-union legislation, all point to the need for a workers' party and a workers' government to implement alternative, socialist policies.

But to issue such a call means to come into conflict with some 'progressive' layers of junior officials and officers of the unions who will take a militant stance on trade union questions but remain either committed to Democratic politics, or reluctant to 'rock the boat' of establishment politics.

Poverty

The problems faced by US workers are enormous. Unemployment under Reagan has risen from 7.4% to over 10%. Over half the unemployed have run out of unemployment benefit and between 25 and 30 million families have lost their health insurance, in a country with no National Health Service and punitive bills for treatment.

The average period of unemployment is five months.

The bare statistics do little to probe the scale of poverty and suffering. Figures show that of the 19 million jobless or underemployed workers, a majority are women. 20% are black — double the percentage of blacks in the US population.

But such a bland average conceals the massive scale of unemployment in concentrated areas of black population in cities such as Detroit — where it can be a rarity for a black youth to have a job.

Likewise, the average figure for unemployment among Hispanic workers — one third above the national average — conceals the astronomical concentrated levels of unemployment amongst the Chicano communities in the South and West and amongst Hispanics in cities like New York.

While the working class as a whole has come under the ham-



"We know that the [charity food distribution centres] are seeing more people, more families", says an official in Milwaukee. "A couple of years ago it was primarily the street people. Now we're seeing the new poor. They are often families who have worked all their lives for a living, but are now out of work".

"I'd rather be beaten", one man told a journalist. "It's degrading... I'm not a freeloader, but we need the food".

mer under Reagan, the most oppressed and exploited have suffered most. The typical black family now earns just over half the income of the typical white family.

No labour movement leadership can succeed which fails to come to grips with these problems, or to wage a concerted and conscious fight against racism and sexism which so severely divide and weaken the working class.

The tide of poverty has other effects. American workers are being turned out of their homes in record numbers — 210,000 in the first quarter of 1983 alone (a rate of nearly one million a year) — as mortgage companies foreclose on those behind with their payments.

In the absence of adequate social security provision, poverty is bringing malnutrition — and queues for charity hand-outs of food by church and government agencies in working class districts. In St Louis alone, a new federal food distribution centre expects soon to serve 30,000 households — comprising approximately 100,000 people.

The director of this 'Human Development Corp.' told the St Louis Post-Dispatch,

"It's an indictment on our current economy. I think it's a shame that there are so many people in need of this kind of food. It's pathetic".

The 100,000 target figure, he pointed out, is:

"better than one-fifth of the population of a city of 450,000 persons. And we know there are a lot of people we won't get to".

Prominent amongst those in the queues were single mothers, unemployed, and low-paid families with several children.

Indeed, the percentage of US families living below the poverty line has risen to 11.2%. Working class incomes have fallen 1% under Reagan.

But the rich have done well — with a 7.3% increase in income even after inflation. While the low-paid \$10,000-\$20,000 bracket gained only a miserly \$220 from Reagan's tax hand-outs, those on \$80,000 or more picked up tax cuts averaged \$15,130.

Though 30% of US factories lie idle and three million workers were laid off by plant closures in 1982, industrialists have coined in benefits from Reagan's policies — with corporate taxes now contributing a mere 6.6% of federal revenues as against 12.5% before Reagan.

Under such conditions, with class divisions opening wider than ever, and the glaring necessity for social provision of health care, housing, unemployment benefits and other protection, the case for the building of a Labour Party, to speak for the trade union rank and file, the oppressed minorities, the down-trodden unemployed and unorganised, is one that must be central to the workers' movement.

The link between Reagan's



savage policies at home and his massive nuclear arms build-up and imperialist war moves in Central America can be made effectively only from a political standpoint which consistently opposes US imperialism and argues for a socialist, working-class perspective.

Compromise with Democrats like Mondale can only blunt the edge of anti-war agitation — though Mondale accurately reflects the cold-war views of the American union leadership.

Equally pernicious are the illusions created in the 'progressive' character of maverick Democrats, such as the black leader Rev. Jesse Jackson.

The main impact of Jackson's opportunist campaigning has been to generate still greater confusion on the nature of the Democratic party, and draw in new votes from sections of the working class who have traditionally abstained or not even registered to vote. As he put it:

"If we increase the number of registered voters by registering blacks, Hispanics and the young, we'll expand the party, not divide it".

Jackson's impact therefore is to expand the populist appeal of the existing racist, reactionary, bourgeois Democratic Party — and, in the process, to further the interests of black and minority businessmen by threats of organised boycotts and other actions to force big employers in cities like Chicago to do business with minority-owned suppliers and banks.

Yet one of the main reasons why Jackson can appear as a radical friend of the oppressed is because the US labour movement has no alternative on offer, no perspective of championing the demands and struggles of black and other minority workers.

In taking up the fight for the opening of the books of the employers to build full-scale opposition to demands for 'concessions'; in raising demands for a free, federally-funded health service, for a crash programme of housing and useful public works to create new jobs; in demanding adequate benefits for the unemployed, financed through taxes on the wealthy and the corporations; in pressing for US troops and military aid to be withdrawn from Lebanon, Central America, and Asian bases, and for a halt to the Carter/Reagan arms drive, militants in the USA must boldly raise the call for a Labour Party based squarely on the American working class, and point to the need for the nationalisation of the banks and major industrial corporations.

That it is possible to make progress in the building of an explicitly socialist alternative is shown by the emergence in California of the Peace and Freedom Party, which is established on the ballot with 49,000 registered supporters and over 100,000 votes in the last elections. The P&FP platform sums up its policies as follows:

- Full employment and a decent standard of living for all, with a shorter work week and a

- ban on enforced overtime,
- Eliminating military spending and using the money to support housing, medical care, schools, child care and other social needs,

- Abolition of all taxes on those at or below the average income level, and taxation of the rich to provide for social needs. End the capital gains loophole.

- An end to all military alliances, and withdrawal of all American troops from foreign countries.

- Total elimination of nuclear fission power.

- Free medical care for all as a basic right.

- An end to all forms of sexism, racism and ageism.

- An end to the capitalist system and its replacement with the social ownership and democratic self-management of all industries and natural resources.

Partly because of this explicit socialist platform, and partly because of its rejection of the Democrats, the P&FP remains largely devoid of official trade union representation, and lacks the mass base in the black, hispanic and minority communities necessary to develop as a full-fledged Labour Party.

It remained at present a radical, largely middle-class party, within which the Communist Party and the remnants of the Socialist Party are beginning to attempt to drive out the militant left wing.

Attempts to replicate the P&FP in other cities across the USA are at an even more embryonic stage of development than in California — and could well run even earlier into similar sabotage from the CP and SP (both of which favour a strategy of pressuring the Democrats).

Yet the very existence on the ballot of a substantial, multi-tendency socialist political formation is a step forward in the backward arena of US politics.

The next period, up to the 1984 elections, will see a major test of the ability of the small minority of revolutionary socialists in the USA to find ways and means to link their programme and demands both to the daily struggle of the working masses and to the general task of building a mass working class party on a socialist programme.



Workers' Review is published by the Proletarian Tasks Tendency, PO Box 40458, San Francisco, CA 94140. Copies available, 70p plus postage, from Socialist Organiser.

Discussing a Brighton balance sheet

Anne Pettifor

I'm angry at the Left

WHERE DOES the Left go from here? I want to answer this question carefully and constructively, and to do so I wish to begin by examining our immediate past history.

I feel extremely angry and critical of the activities of the Left of the Labour Party in the past year. At the Briefing meeting at Conference, I tried to sum up those feelings and to develop an analysis of the inherent weaknesses of Left politics, with a view to preparing the ground for future struggles and our future organisation.

I argued that the Left's preoccupation with division and polarisation, personalities, and a concept of power that is narrowly-based, was and is destructive — especially of Left unity — and inhibited the slow but constructive strengthening of principled Socialist ideas and organisation, ideas and organisation to which I personally am fiercely committed.

What is meant by a preoccupation with polarisation? Let me offer some concrete examples.

First, the polarisation that occurred around that most bungled of bureaucratic interventions into democracy, the Register. The Register was used by influential and prominent figures on the Left — and I refer both to the pro-registrars and the anti-registrars — as a means of shattering a unity that had been built up (however precariously) around the reforms that culminated at Wembley in 1981.

As I sat through the most divisive and destructive political gathering I have ever attended — the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy 1983 Annual General Meeting — I tried to convince myself that this wholesale political genocide had been engineered by the Right.

But I know the people that drafted the plans for the Register. I worked with them. And without appearing patronising or offensive to them, I know that they lacked the political subtlety and political skills needed to bring down and weaken the Left.

No, they could not have done without the agency of some of the Left's most respected strategists.

The consequences of that self-weakening was reflected in last Tuesday's elections to the National Executive Committee. There have been many other consequences — as serious, but too depressing to detail here.

There are other examples of



PHOTOS: JOHN HARRIS

Kinnock: 'a soft left leadership that is open to influence from both right and left'

the Left's inclination to polarise and divide. Recently Briefing attempted to drive a wedge between the Women's Action Committee and the Women's Committee of the Labour Coordinating Committee — 'so that WAC's position as the only genuinely feminist campaign' could be asserted.

Now this is all very flattering and well, but where does such well-defined delineation and division take the feminist project? We need all the unity we can get on the Left, and women on the Left need it more than most.

Another issue ripe for polarisation is the question of council house sales. Are you for or against, comrades? Right, when I blow my whistle, get into your corners. First a left-hook and then a right.

Forget the question of council housing as a whole; neglect the real problem of channelling political, financial and other resources into rebuilding and restoring the central political ground on which we need to fight to regain our working class base. No, concentrate on hooking the left eye.

The inclination of the Left to polarise and divide, and not to construct and build, means that often this boxing takes place in the shadows of political struggle. And such shadow-boxing results in the politics of gesture, a self-indulgent, self-righteous politics that induces complacent self-satisfaction.

We make our little gestures, we stake out our piece of untrammelled, unsoiled territory, and then we sit back and wonder

Anne Pettifor is secretary of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy Women's Action Committee.

where on earth the struggle is taking place and why we're excluded from advancing the interests of principled socialists within that struggle.

The conference issue of Socialist Organiser ('Not Our Dream') reeked of the politics of gesture. Self-criticism was virtually absent. What we were offered was the subtle analysis that the Constituency Labour Parties 'had moved to the right'.

The paper stood aloof from those wicked revisionist activists. It pompously asserted its distance from the whole labour movement, and then argued that the great yawning divide had been created by... the unions, the LCC, the media, etc.

Now we in the Women's Action Committee have had some serious political differences with men on the Left, and we believe that the great divide can be attributed to one or two other things.

Which brings me to the other two major weaknesses mentioned in my speech at the Briefing meeting. The first is the Left's preoccupation with personalities; the second, its concept of power.

The Left has, in this immediate past period, invested a lot of political capital in its male political heroes. The Left expects these Political Heroes to Do Their Duty, and to lead us to Jerusalem's fair and promised land.

When they fail, as they must do — the task, after all, is super-human — despair and disillusionment become rampant. (Members of the LCC — take note).

Worse, the Left's organisational base disintegrates. This is what happened after the defeat of Tony Benn in 1981. A lot of organisational and political capital had been invested; it was simply allowed to evaporate, with the defeat of one charismatic and inspirational man.

When it came to selecting candidates for this year's leadership elections, WAC proposed a different strategy. That we should put up a woman as deputy, and that we should fight

a radically different campaign, which would not have the candidate as the central jewel to its crown. Our proposal was ridden over roughshod. To put it politely.

This faith in personalities; this over-investment in individuals at the top of our particular heap, is reflected in the Left's concept of power.

To large sections of the Left, power seems to be something that can only be wielded (by personalities) in large solid blocks. For them, power lacks the properties of dispersal. Hence the Left's attack on any form of rank-and-file consultation during the leadership election, bar that of the hallowed general management committee.

I fought for the electoral college and automatic reselection of MPs because it would break up the solid block of power controlled by the bureaucratic and parliamentary leadership of our party. It was with some horror therefore that I watched CLPD and other groups bearing down on Stalinist immobility on all those constituency parties that were using their autonomy to devise mechanisms for dispersing that political power.

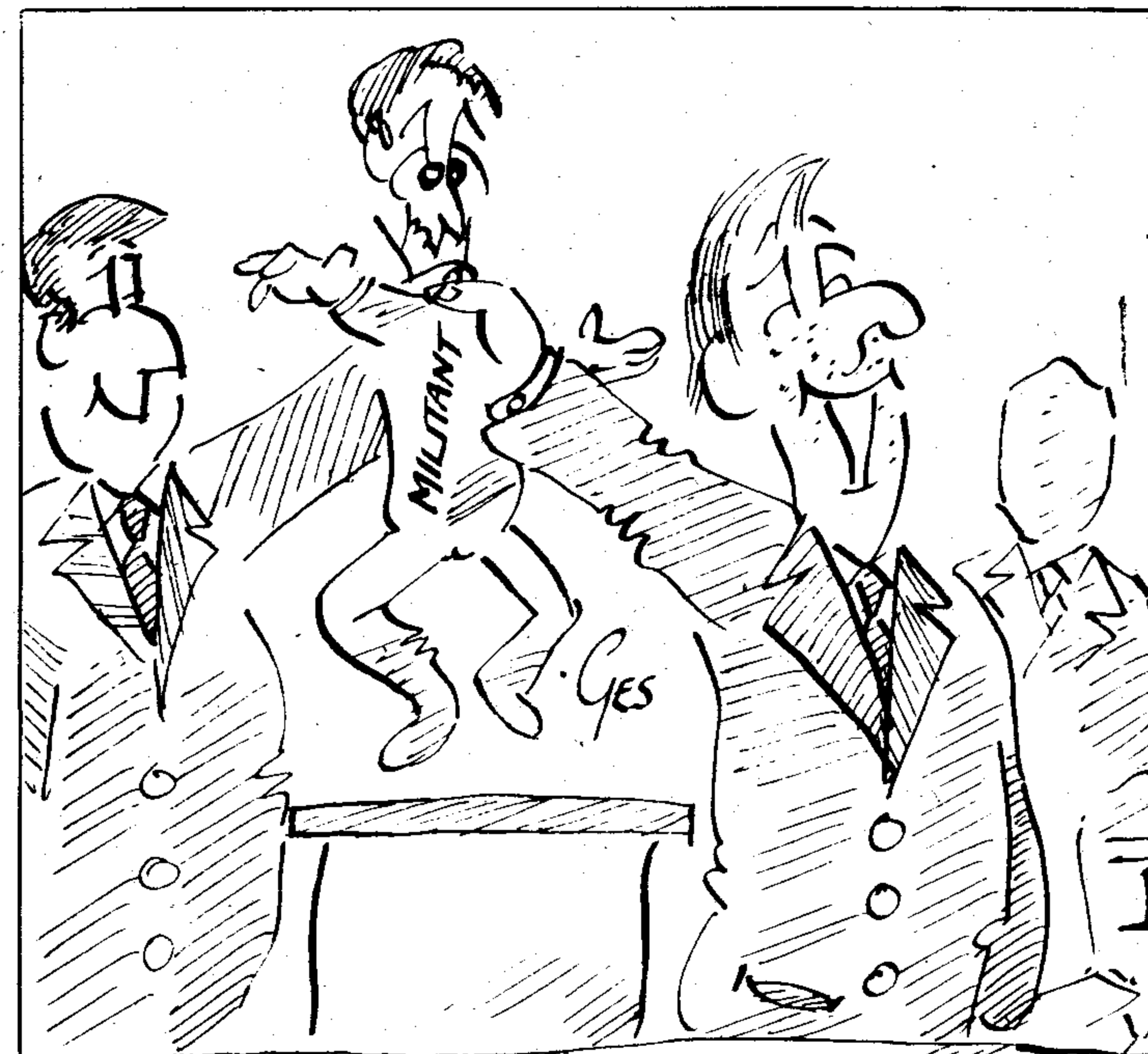
In conclusion: the Left has vital and constructive tasks ahead. It cannot abrogate these by sailing off into the sunset in high dudgeon and sulkily nursing its own self-inflicted defeats.

What are the tasks that lie ahead? First, we need to refresh those parts of the Parliamentary Labour Party that socialism has not yet reached. We must be brutally frank and acknowledge that one of the major factors in our defeat at this conference has been the sheer dearth of left-wing talent within the Parliamentary Labour Party.

And that requires that we also examine closely the records of some so-called left-wingers that we have uncritically sustained in position simply because they too are capable of the odd political gesture. Our hypocrisy in respect to them weakens us.

Second, we have to sustain pressure on the leadership to stick to conference policies. We have a soft-left, centrist leadership that I, unlike the defeatist and fatalist contributors to Socialist Organiser's conference issue, believe is open to influence from both right and left of the party.

We cannot vacate the political space necessary to apply this pressure. We cannot let the right wing win by default, by



"As we see... the new leadership hold hands on many of the fundamental policy issues".

giving up now, by sailing off to our own little island in the sunset.

Third, women within the party need to wake up from their dazed political slumber, and to discover their strength.

To do this, we need to build up the political organisation of women within the party. We very narrowly failed to get conference's endorsement for our proposal that the party's officers be instructed to call a Rules Conference to begin the task. We can say with some confidence that it is a demand that we will win next year.

In the meantime we need to build up the strength of rank and file party and trade union women so that when the time comes, our organisation will be democratically determined, not bureaucratically decreed.

In the light of last week's election of a leadership arrogantly and quite pompously indifferent to the demands of women, a leadership hamstrung by a pre-Victorian ideology that confines men and women to 'separate spheres' of influence and activity, Left men would do well to support women in the building up of their organisational strength.

Sulking

They would do well, too, to stop sulking, to grow up and to stop whining over their injured political pride.

There is an awful lot more to political struggle than winning one leadership election. Women know, because that's one form of struggle from which they have always been excluded.

Ken Loach

Don't be beguiled!

ONE industrial journalist at Brighton said mid-way through the Conference that it was a single issue event. The issue was the leadership election, and that was over by Sunday night. In the sense that what followed was an attempt to present an image, with little political content, he was right.

It was easy to be beguiled by the comparative friendliness of the Press.

The danger is that the Left forgets what it demands of its leadership: analysis, strategic aims, immediate demands and a programme for translating the potential strength of the labour movement into a force that can achieve real change.

It's not surprising that the new leadership shows no sign of this. The Tribune meeting was indicative of what we might expect. There was a large audience of active party members, looking for a political perspective on the current situation.

What they did not need was the rambling rhetoric they got from Kinnock. His attempt to define socialism bore no relation to the class forces that might establish it. His 'definition' was to think of something that sounded pleasant and call it socialism.

It was simply of no use. It said nothing to men and women facing redundancy or cuts in the social services, to those already unemployed, or to those generally feeling the strains of our economic system nearing collapse,

whether upwardly or downwardly mobile. The idea that the Labour movement is engaged in a battle here and now was quite absent.

Faced with this predictable failure, there was a sense of passivity in the hall, a feeling that it was necessary to accommodate to the new leadership and its pursuit of an image acceptable to the Press. There was a mixture of relief, fear and exhaustion, based, as always, on a failure of political theory.

The weakness of the left candidates for the Party leadership, particularly for deputy, further weakened any possibility for resistance.

But the politics of image building will be exposed even more quickly than the last time the Labour Party tried it with Wilson. Massive unemployment just will not go away this time, the system cannot create the jobs, nor maintain the social services, nor avert the drive to war. The hard reality of daily experience will force socialism back on the agenda.

That seemed to me the real issue of the Conference. The journalist was right — it was a one-issue event. He just picked the wrong one.

The saddest sight at the Tribune Rally was to see David Blunkett rise to give Neil Kinnock a standing ovation. David Blunkett's dog had more sense.



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.

John Watts

Make him do as he says!

I THINK you can contrast two significant aspects of this conference. On the one hand there was the 91% vote for Kinnock by the constituencies, which was people who have hopes, I don't think they have many illusions in Kinnock, but they have hopes that he can do some thing to get another Labour government.

On the other hand, you had a very large meeting - up to 1,000 people - very enthusiastically listening to and applauding Gerry Adams.

So you can't put a simple formula on what has happened at this conference. There have been some big opportunities for the left but also some very big dangers.

There's a possibility that if Kinnock really gets a grip on the Party, using this strong feeling that we should give the new leadership a chance, then the left could to a certain extent be isolated as a result.

If in that situation Kinnock is able to push the witch-hunt ahead or moves are made in the direction of one member, one vote, then it could begin to alter the relationship of forces in the Party.

On the other hand, the fact that we have a phenomenon like the Labour Committee on Ireland meeting with Gerry Adams speaking, shows the possibilities of breaking from traditional Labourism.

It was not just a belief in a united Ireland that was expressed by the attendance at that meeting, it was also to varying degrees, a recognition of the legitimacy of the struggle of the Irish people and especially Sinn Fein and the IRA. That, to some extent, is breaking from one aspect of Labourism, the essence of which is support for the ruling class of Britain.

The revolutionary left needs to organise on a principled basis of struggle.

There will be tensions in the Tribune Group. There will be those who are prepared to go along with the Kinnock leadership as we can see from some of the people who voted for Kinnock, people we regarded as being on the hard left like Tony Banks.

On the other hand we see the emergence and consolidation to a certain extent of the Campaign Group of MPs. An important part of the left organising will be to have a good relationship with the Campaign Group of MPs.

Confident

Kinnock must feel very confident that he's got this massive vote, and even encouraged to do things he wouldn't otherwise have done because of the size of the vote, but on the other hand, they ran into so much trouble over the expulsions that they will be reluctant to get



JOHN HARRIS

Kinnock

involved in any general purge in the next period.

On policy I think there will be a tendency for conference to say one thing and for statements in the House of Commons to say something different. It will be necessary to oppose this in a systematic, organised way.

Kinnock more or less launched a crusade on health cuts here and if that sets into motion mass activity in the struggle against the cuts, big pressure to get health authorities not to carry them out, big demonstrations and so on, that could be very dangerous for Kinnock. He has a tightrope to walk there.

We on the left have to make sure that there is no backsliding but we could appear just as shrill critics if we don't take into account the mood for giving the new leadership a chance.

We should take the things that Kinnock says he wants to do, especially anything of a campaigning nature and fight to make sure that he carries it out.

Demand

We should demand that Kinnock helps to build the October 22 CND demonstration by calling for a full mobilisation, by speaking up and down the country and so on.

We should also try to tie him down, use what he says about local government cuts, to force him to clarify his position on whether he will support Labour local authorities who are prepared to break the law in the struggle against the Tory-imposed cuts.

Personally, I don't think he'll touch that kind of approach with a barge-pole, but he'll be telling them in effect to go like lambs to the slaughter if he tells them not to break the law but struggle within the legal framework.

I think that will be understood by rank and file activists, by left council leaderships, if he acts as a brake on them waging a real struggle against the cuts.

Trotsky on Stalinism

The classic Marxist analysis of Stalinism is Leon Trotsky's 'Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Going?' Available via Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8: £2.50 plus 50p postage.



Why residential workers are out

By Michele Raithy, residential worker in a London children's home

SINCE September 12, NALGO's residential workers have been operating an overtime and admissions ban in support of a claim for reduction of the working week to 35 hours, plus payment for working shifts and irregular hours, weekends and public holidays - in other words, what other council workers are entitled to.

Residential work in social services departments covers homes for the elderly, mentally handicapped, disabled, mentally ill and young people in the care of the local authority.

The job means providing cover 24 hours a day, seven days a week, on a rota system. Our current pay system makes no payments for unsocial hours or routinely working weekends and holidays.

This leads to the strange situation that a manual worker in the same establishment as residential care officers will rightly receive such payments, whilst the residential workers get none.

It is a job that has been persistently undervalued, both by the social service hierarchies and by the public in general. Residential care has usually been regarded as a 'last resort' where options like fostering and other 'community' care have not been possible.

Status

This low status is harmful to its workforce and to the residents, and is reflected in low pay and bad conditions. For years Social Services have depended on the good will of their residential workers, who have in effect subsidised the running of the homes by acceptance of insufficient resources and staffing.

From the union's viewpoint, residential workers have been notoriously difficult to organise, being isolated in their workplaces and low in morale. Their plight has not been very high on NALGO's list of priorities in the past.

The acceptance of inadequate conditions takes its toll. Stresses in the job are at a very high level. The people that are in the care of residential staff are amongst the most infirm, dependent and difficult that the social service agencies deal with.

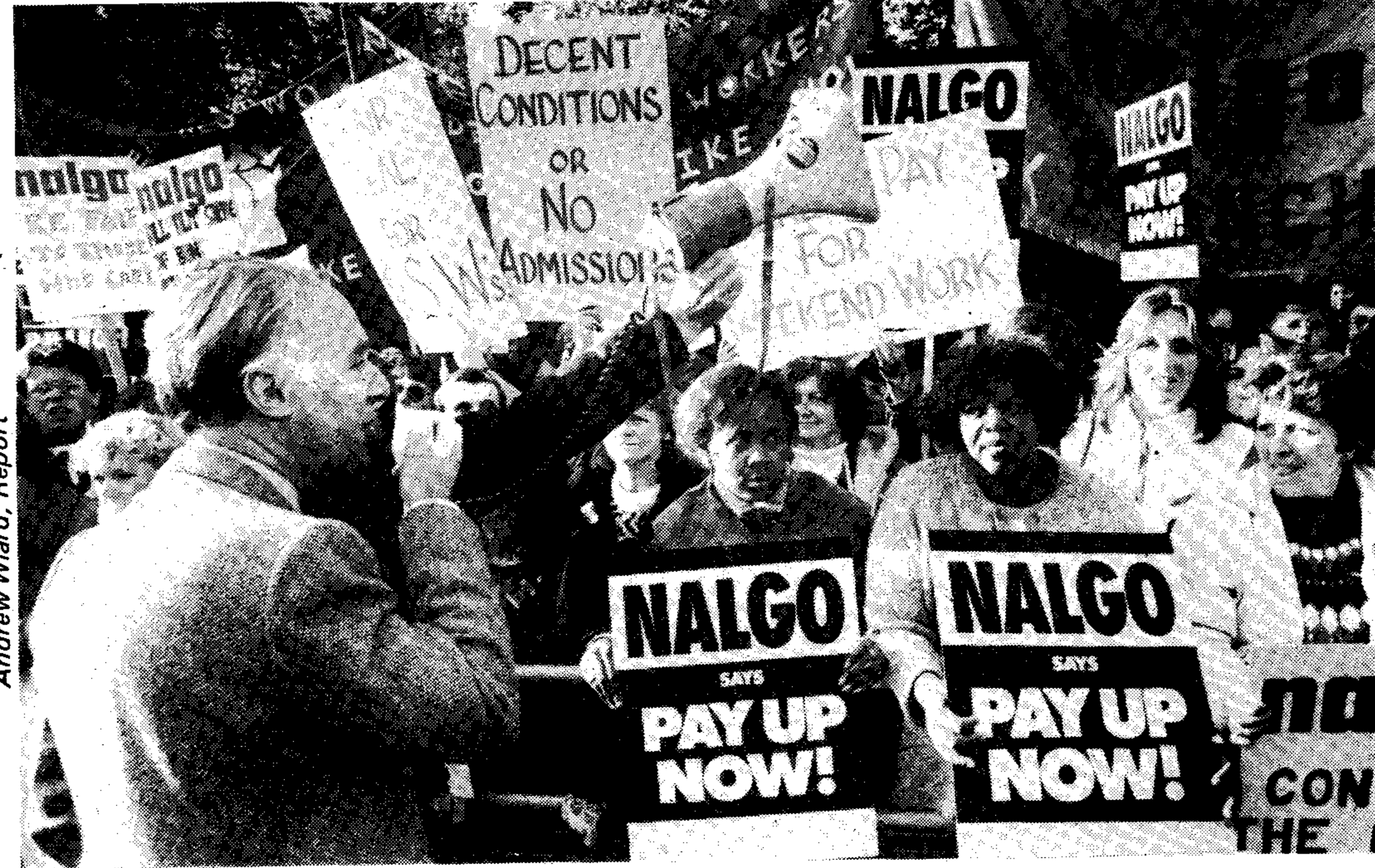
The task that residential workers are asked to carry out involves both looking after their residents' physical needs and helping with their emotional demands - a job that is never 'finished'.

Couple all that with long, irregular hours, a disrupted social life, and lack of support, and the result is staff sickness and a high turnover as staff move out of residential work altogether.

In the end, of course, this affects the quality of care available for those living in the homes. Residential care at the moment provides a vital service for those most in need. It can only be improved by proper funding and recognition.

The alternative is the dream of the Conservative Party - more reliance on coping within the family and through fostering. It is, after all, cheaper to place the burden back onto women at home.

This is the first time that national industrial action has been



Andrew Ward, Report

Despite a 1,000-strong lobby of talks on October 17, the employers wouldn't budge

called for on behalf of residential workers. The responsibility for this lies with the national employers, and the way in which they have conducted negotiations.

By dragging their feet, they have drawn out talks on this claim for five years. Their cavalier approach culminated in their rejection of all aspects of the claim (on June 6) as having 'no merits'.

They must have assumed that residential workers would not respond to being treated with contempt. However, a ballot over the summer resulted in a massive 'yes' to industrial action.

At long last, residential workers were showing their anger and refusing to buckle under moral blackmail.

Since the action began, the national employers have continued to use delaying tactics, refusing to make any new offer at their meeting on September 28. Instead, they proposed an adjournment to an 'early date' for further negotiations. This early date turned out to be October 17! Plenty of time to take in the Tory Party conference en route.

They are acting as though the claim has come as a total surprise, instead of being in their in-tray since 1978.

The admissions ban has meant that no-one has been given a residential place since the action began. This causes a backlog of people waiting for admission, and causes local authorities problems in deciding how to deal with acute cases.

In the original guidelines on the action issues to branches, national NALGO recommended that the use of the private and voluntary sector should be given as an acceptable option to local authorities. They claimed that this would cause short-term extra cost and inconvenience to the employers.

However, many branches found that this option was simply being exploited by their local authority to sidestep the action, and even to place residential care under long-term threat.

Some local branches felt it necessary to tighten up the guidelines to make them effective. The overtime ban has bitten deepest. This has resulted in homes not being staffed because of sickness, leave and poor staffing levels.

In the past, such understaffing has been masked by residential workers doing overtime and sometimes working 70 hours a week.

Now homes are being closed daily because of the dispute. Pressure is being kept up on councils to take responsibility both for their clients and for putting pressure in turn onto those negotiating with NALGO.

Some authorities have seen fit to use direct intimidation against their workforces to try to frighten them into submission. In Cleveland, one residential worker was taken off the payroll after refusing an admission in line with the action.

Over 40 staff went on strike in reply, and the victimised man was reinstated. Other local strikes are occurring because of attempts to break the action.

Other subtle tactics have included Strathclyde's and Barnet's answer to chronic understaffing - to draft in hundreds of 'relief workers' on temporary contracts. NALGO members are refusing to cooperate with these cynical manoeuvres.

Supposedly 'left' Labour boroughs haven't been prominent in their support, either, and

have even been abusive and hostile. In areas where this is happening, support needs to come from local Labour Party wards.

Other workers and Labour Parties can lend their support, which will be vital in the face of predictably vicious attacks by the Press and the employers.

Residential workers already have the support of the people they work with, as the following statement issued by the National Association of Young People in Care (NAYPIC) shows:

"Many young people in care would find their position greatly improved if residential social workers got a better deal.

For example, the staff turnover would not be so great. Staff morale would improve, so making a happier environment in the home.

Residential workers do all the day to day work with the young people in care, but receive little credit or status, either as workers in the child care system, or in society.

NAYPIC understands the issues in this dispute, and does support the staff because our members are affected by their working conditions".

Join the Labour Party

Socialist ORGANISER

Scargill gets it right

BREAK LINKS WITH TORIES!

By Harry Sloan

Join the Labour Party

Socialist ORGANISER

JOBLESS KEY TO WAGE-CUT PLAN

By Harry Sloan

Fight the witch-hunt

Inside

NUM

TCWU

Cuts

Women

Tebbit

Heffer

Kent's appeal to

Subscribe!

Get SOCIALIST ORGANISER each week delivered to your door by post!

RATES: £5 for 3 months; £8.50 for 6 months; and £16 for a year.

Name

Address

Please send me months' sub, I enclose £

To: Socialist Organiser, 28, Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.

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 blocking 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. Racism 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 unity 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 blacked.

*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.



Official badge of the 'Save the Mole' campaign. 25p or £2 for ten, from N. Barstow 165 Liverpool Rd, London N1.

National day school

Saturday October 29 11am to 6pm at Crouch Hill Recreation Centre, Hillrise Road, London N19.



Workshops

Organising an SO group; producing factory bulletins; speaking at meetings; working as a councillor; organising against sexism; building solidarity with Ireland; open forum on Socialist Organiser.

Plenary sessions

Debate: A workers' programme for Europe
The British Telecom struggle - Socialist Organiser and the fight for leadership

Videos

'Carry Greenham Home', 'The Red and the Blue', 'Questions of Leadership' (if available); 'Harlan County'; and a video on YOPs.

Plus

Caucuses of SO supporters in different unions and campaigns, including meetings for Women's Fightback and Class Fighter supporters.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER AGM

Sunday October 30, 10am to 4.30pm at County Hall, London SE1.

Registration £3 (£1.50 unwaged) for dayschool and AGM, £2 (£1 unwaged) for one-day.
Creche available. Cheap food.

SOCIAL

Saturday 8pm to midnight.
At 'The Cock', Phoenix Rd, London NW1.

Two pamphlets summing up the ideas of Socialist Organiser. 'Where We Stand' - 20p plus 15p postage. 'How to fight the Tories' - 10p plus 15p postage. Or the two together, 45p including postage. From Socialist Organiser, 28, Middle Lane, London N8.



Agenda

SOCIALIST ORGANISER AGM and day school: Saturday October 29/Sunday October 30, in London. Day school Saturday at Crouch Hill Recreation Centre, Hillrise Rd, off Hornsey Rise, London N19. AGM Sunday at County Hall, London SE1.

NORWICH/ Cambridge
Troops Out day school. Saturday November 5, from 9.30am at Kings College, Cambridge. Registration £1. Details: Cambridge 881113. Creche provided if booked in advanced, pooled fare.

LABOUR Committee on Ireland: South West London branch meeting. Friday October 21, 8pm at Starr House, 57 Church Rd, Richmond. Speakers: Reg Race, Nick De Marco (secretary Richmond LPYS).

LABOUR movement conference on Ireland: Peace through Democracy. Saturday November 26; speakers include Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone, Clive Soley.

LABOUR group for human rights in Sri Lanka: public launch meeting coming soon. Speakers invited: Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone, Tariq Ali, Jeremy Corbyn. Date to be fixed. Contact: 42 Sickert Court, London N1.

LONDON Campaign for Gay Rights now meets regularly every four weeks at Marchmont Community Centre, Marchmont St, WC1, at 6pm. Next meeting November 6.
Contact: London LCGR, Mike Haran 659 2938 or Chris Beer 785 9515; GYS, Martin Goodsell 263 9484.

LONDON Cuts conference organised by the Southwark Campaign Working Party: Sunday November 6, at County Hall, London SE1. Contact: Southwark Campaign Working Party, Town Hall, London SE5.

BRENT South & East Labour Parties: public meeting on the Caribbean and Central America, with Jeremy Corbyn MP, James Dunkerley, Debbie Delange, Jenny Pearce, and Billy Taylor. Thursday October 20, 7.30 at Harlesden Methodist Church Hall, Tavistock Rd, Harlesden, London NW10.

Where to find Socialist Organiser

SCOTLAND

Glasgow. Contact: Stan Crooke, 34 Garturk St, Glasgow G42. SO is sold at West End bookshop, Rutherglen shopping arcade (Friday lunchtime), Coatbridge shopping arcade (Saturday lunchtime), and Maryhill dole (Tuesday morning).

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

NORTH-WEST
Rochdale. Next meeting Monday October 25, 8pm at the Castle Inn, Manchester Rd.

Manchester. Contact Tony, 273 5691. SO is sold at Grass Roots, Books, Newton St, Piccadilly.

Stockport. Meetings every Sunday, 7.30pm: contact 40 Fox St, Edgley, Stockport. SO is sold at Stockport market, every Saturday, 11 to 12.30.

Wirral. Contact Lol Duffy, 3 St James Court, Victoria Rd, New Brighton, Merseyside.

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

Hyndburn. Contact Accrington 395753.

Stoke. Contact Paul Barnett 151 Broadway, Meir, Stoke on Trent (328198).

YORKSHIRE AND NORTH-EAST

Huddersfield. Contact Alan Brooke, 59 Magdale, Honley, Huddersfield HD7 2LX.

Harrogate. Meets every other Sunday evening. Contact Mark Osborn, 522542. SO is sold outside the market, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday lunchtime.

York. Contact 414118 (98 Hull St). SO is sold at Coney St on Saturday morning, at the Community Bookshop, outside the dole office most mornings, and at the University on Friday mornings.

Sheffield. SO is sold outside Boots in Fargate (Saturday 12 to 1) and at the Independent Bookshop, Glossop Rd. Contact Rob, 589307.

Durham. SO is sold at the Community Co-op, New Elvet. Contact Andy, 64088.

Sunderland. Contact c/o Durham.

Halifax. Contact 52156. SO is sold at Hebden Bridge Books.

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

Hull. Meets every Wednesday, 8pm. Details from SO sellers. Childcare available.

WALES AND WEST

Cardiff. Contact 492988.

Bristol. Contact c/o 28 Middle Lane.

MIDLANDS

Birmingham. New series of discussion meetings starting on 'Imperialism'. Alternate Wednesdays, 7.30 at 169 Barclay Rd, Bearswood, Smethwick. Next meeting Wednesday November 2: 'The New International Division of Labour'. SO is sold at the Other Bookshop.

Northampton. Contact Russ, 713606.

Coventry. Contact Keith, 75623.

Leicester. SO is sold at Blackthorne Books, High St. Contact Phil, 857908.

Nottingham. Meets 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 7.30 at the International Community Centre. SO is sold outside the Victoria Centre (Saturday 11 to 1) and at the Mushroom Bookshop, Heathcote St. Contact Pete Radcliff, 585640.

SOUTH

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

LONDON

SO is sold at the following London bookshops: Collets, Central Books, The Other Bookshop, Bookmarks, Bookplace (Peckham Rd, SE15), Kilburn Books, and Reading Matters (Wood Green Shopping Centre).

Islington. Next meeting on 'Stopping the Missiles', with Tom Rigby (Youth CND national committee, in personal capacity). Sunday October 23, 7.30 at Caxton House, St John's Way, N19. Contact: Linda, 278 1341.

Haringey. Meeting on Central America, with Jeremy Corbyn MP and a speaker from the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign, 8.30, Thursday October 27, at Haringey Grove Community Centre, Denmark Road, N8. Sponsored by Haringey ward Labour Party.

North-West London. Contact Mick, 624 1931.

South-East London. Contact Siu Ming, 691 1141.

Hackney. Contact Andrew Hornung, 76 Carysfort Rd, London N16.

Richmond. SO is sold at Richmond Quadrant every Saturday, 11.30-1.30. Further details, contact Nick De Marco, 876 6715.

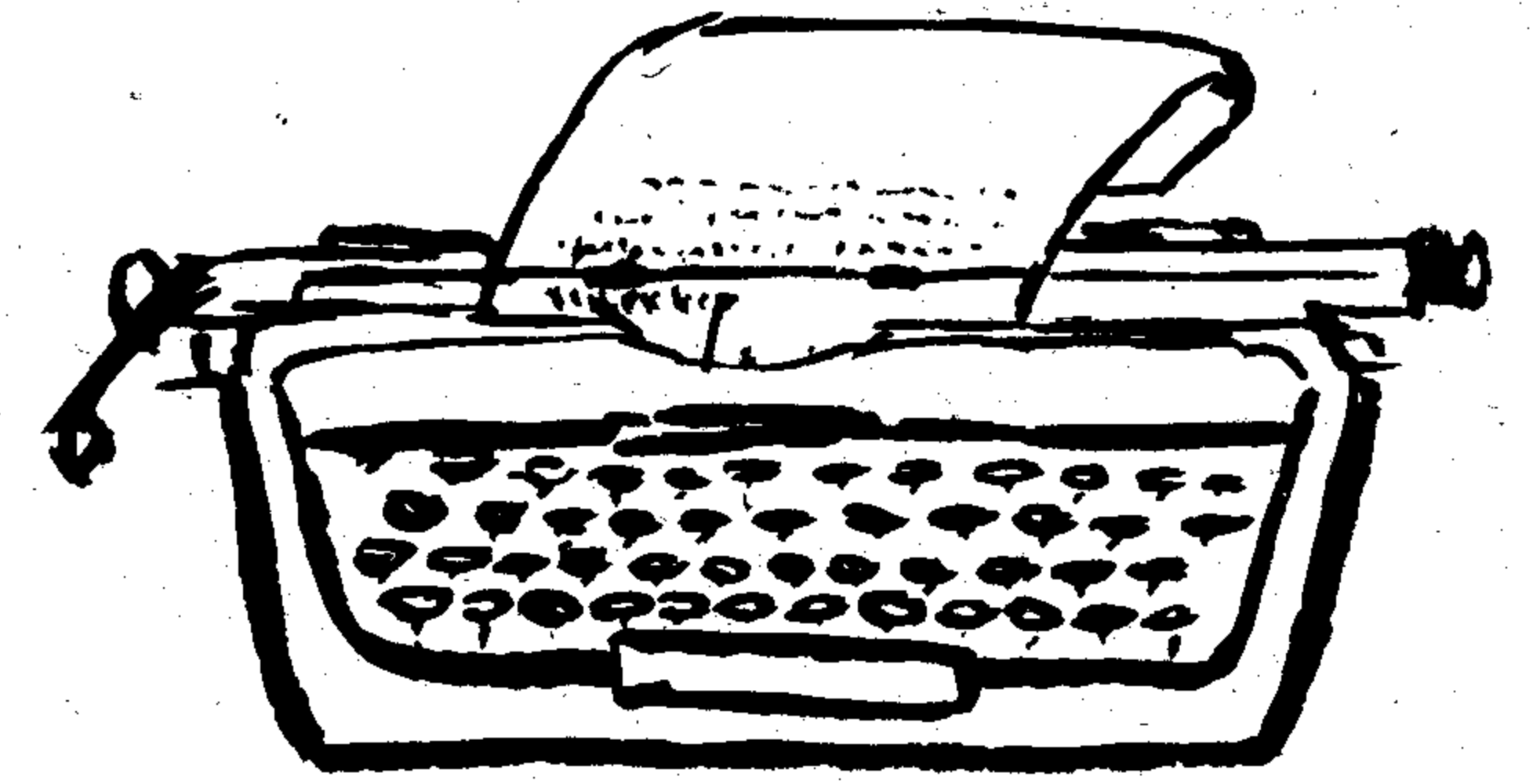
Southwark/Lambeth. Meets every other Wednesday at Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, London SE5.

Orpington. Contact c/o South East London.

Hounslow. SO is sold outside All Saints Church, Hounslow High St, Saturdays 10.30 to 12. Contact Chris, 898 6961.

Harlow. Contact c/o 28 Middle Lane.

Writeback



Send letters to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8. No longer than 400 words please: longer letters are liable to be cut.

Significance of BL's Cowley witch-hunt

JACK Cleary (in SO149) seriously distorts my article on the recent Cowley sackings. He does so to such an extent that I can only conclude that he does so in order to more easily polemicise against me.

He claims that I predicted 'a purge in every industry and every area of society' as a result of the sackings. And he claims that I see the sackings as a part of a campaign to 'smash the labour movement'.

Exaggerating your opponents' arguments until they are incredible is a very destructive way of conducting a polemic.

In fact I made no such sweeping statements, although I think the sackings were very serious. The nearest I came to such statements, which I stand by completely, was to say, "Such comments from someone like David Buckle show how deep were the dangers for the workers' movement that had developed at that time."

"Thatcher and Tebbit were sitting waiting to see what they could utilise for their own anti trade union ends".

I think that is a cool assessment. I think the Cowley sackings and the witch-hunt around them was one of the factors which has created a significantly new situation in industry. This can be seen in the pits, was seen in the Stockport Messenger, and now in the hardening of BT management and their injunction against the POEU.

I don't intend to respond extensively on the matter of SL. My article was written in the spirit of fraternal solidarity with a far left group who were being witch-hunted by the media at the time by forces which posed a danger to the labour movement as a whole.

Jack Cleary is clearly incapable of comprehending such an approach, since the logic of his comments would be to provoke a discussion, which even if it did



Top BL managers Musgrove (left) and Armstrong. "the single most important industrial asset the capitalist class have".

not have sectarian intent could be damaging to the far left.

Therefore I will go no further than to defend the criticisms I made of Stephanie Grant for the Monday press conference. It is just not true to say that the media can whip up a national witch-hunt at will. Why did they pick on Scargill's ill-timed visit to the USSR, for example?

They need the right kind of things to hang it on and they need the right things to keep it going. We should not give them those things at the time they need them if we can avoid it.

There are no timeless rules on this, we have to take the concrete situation.

In my view, having followed it in detail, the media had a problem after a few days in the Cowley situation and needed a fresh angle to keep it going. In parti-

cular they needed personalities and the press conference gave them that.

As a result we had another four days of damaging witch-hunting. That is why I made my comment.

There is, however, another worrying aspect to Jack Cleary's letter. That is the way he sets out to play down the role of BL management in Britain today.

He says for example that, "The Cowley management is not the whole capitalist class". I assume we can accept that he means BL management rather than Cowley management, who clearly would not have had the authority to do this.

Well, it is certainly true that BL management are not the whole capitalist class, but it is the single most important industrial asset they have. More-

over someone in Jack Cleary's position could not possibly make a chance remark on it, and any playing down of the role of BL management in the current situation is seriously politically wrong.

In fact very few people in the whole labour movement today would deny the central role of BL management over the last five years, or see their actions as a local affair.

Take Tony Benn's speech at the Labour Party conference last week as an example; or the recent events at Vauxhall. Even the right wing would not deny it, since they cannot deal with them in the same way.

That is part of the reason for David Buckle's attitude to both this and the hand-washing strike.

The very fact that it was BL who sacked the 15 in this way was absolutely not by chance. It may have come up in a 'haphazard' way, but it was not dealt with as such.

It was dealt with with all the authority BL management has amongst the employers, and they were all strengthened by

it. (Not enough to smash the labour movement at a stroke, of course, but significant just the same. Certainly enough to tell the difference if you are a militant in a key industry).

Perhaps I could ask Jack Cleary if he could name a few more managements who might have taken such an initiative as this in this period? Is there a parallel to BL's 1979 survival plan and the way they implemented it? What kind of effect did that have on the national situation?

Is there a parallel to the sacking of Derek Robinson and what effect did that have on the national situation? Would any other management have carried through the sacking at Longbridge two and a half years ago so effectively?

Has any other management achieved even half of the

speed-up of BL? Has any management broken down a powerful shop stewards' movement to anything like the same degree?

For all these reasons it is wrong to see it as just another management acting for its own local interest. Michael Edwards' book has been such a big seller for all of these reasons. It now plays the role of an employers' handbook on how to fight the unions.

On top of this Cowley has another significance which should not be played down. It is the only major factory in manufacturing industry with a significant and long-established tradition of Trotskyism within it, and which has played a significant role in the situation.

Jack Cleary should be playing up the significance of BL, not playing it down.

ALAN THORNETT; Oxford.

Progress on Ireland

SOCIALIST Organiser no. 149 provided a welcome, clear antidote to the empty rhetoric of Labour's new 'Haddock' leadership. From Healey to Hattersley, Foot to Kinnock, the old Callaghan gang ruled the Conference roost through stitched-up block votes and a Stalinist chair. 'Unity' speeches received ovations while five socialists were physically booted out: in short business as usual and the fight goes on.

As usual, SO contained a

great deal to aid and lead that fight, but I found parts of Frank Higgins' review of the 'Cause of Ireland' highly questionable in the light of other recent SO articles on Ireland.

He asserts that the failure of the 'left' to mobilise the labour movement in support of a just settlement with Ireland results importantly from poor propaganda and simplistic explanations. This is no doubt true, but where is this left that talks as if one million Protestants don't exist? Furthermore, I recall that Workers Fight explained the Northern Ireland state as a 'garrison' of imperialism, and I think rightly so, as British interests have shifted from economic-exploitative to strategic ones for overall control of Ireland's 'defences'.

Unique

If 'it is the complexities of the Irish situation (unique features, real problems) and the difficulties of seeing a way out of the impasse that has defeated the left', why they are British involvement in Ireland condemned by the entirety of world opinion, presumably through the same type of simplification, poor propaganda, ignored complexities, jargon, etc. by people 'in tow to the republicans'? That is, the entirety of world opinion except in Britain.

May I suggest that whatever these problems, the principal obstacle in Britain remains the deep-seated chauvinist respect for Unionism, with its concurrent deafness to the repressive and discriminatory nature of the six county state, aided by the deliberate falsification of the Republican struggle in all classes of society and its media, including the labour movement. For example, the conference remit of Composite 15 for the organisation of the Labour Party in the six counties is testimony to the poison of economism and de-facto Unionism of the Morning Star and the Militant. The central argument must be that the struggle for the unification of Ireland rests not on the division of the Irish working class, but provides the only likely precondition for its unity. Partition was and is a device to

preclude Irish workers' unity.

Frank Higgins suggests that the Provisionals may be 'unintentionally preparing the way for a bloody repartition of Ireland' - which I fail to distinguish from a reshaped 'blood-bath' theory. Earlier, he states "What the Provisionals stand for in fact is incorporation of the Protestants into Catholic Ireland". This is a serious slander against the explicitly secular programme of Sinn Fein, and I challenge the author to substantiate his view.

While a federated united Ireland might be conceded as a reform in response to republican pressure, it would be unlikely to solve the twin 'garrison' and discrimination problems. Therefore for British Marxists to advance federation as a prior demand seems to me concessionary to the 'two nations' theory, which seems to creep into the article.

Whatever the serious reaction of the Constitutional Anti-Abortion Referendum, 300,000 Protestants in the 26 counties do not appear to suffer discrimination in the terms of the Catholics of the North. Protestant opposition to a united Ireland is entrenched, but not absolute in the longer term, and has tended to whither under the impact of economic crises.

The Conference meeting of the Labour Committee on Ireland was the largest fringe meeting event of the week and as a steward, I was pleased to exchange messages of mutual solidarity between Gerry Adams MP and the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights meeting next door. Tony Benn's speech to the Conference Ireland debate was his most advanced statement to date, without his previous fudging.

To the difficult but real progress being made, I found the article dismissive and sour. Improvements in propaganda, political scope and vocabulary should be part of building LCI branches in every region, that take LCI policies into the trade unions. Critical support is a type of support.

Yours comradely,
TIM SUMMERS
Richmond, Surrey

Finding Black Holes

SCIENCE

By Les Hearn

LAST WEEK was announced the nearest thing to a positive identification of a black hole, using a satellite-mounted telescope.

So what are black holes, and how do they form?

If all the matter and energy of the universe were evenly spread out, there would be a very thin gas, more like a vacuum than anything we can achieve on Earth, at a temperature only a few degrees above Absolute Zero (minus 273 degrees Centigrade).

However, matter and energy are not evenly spread out. Purely by chance some parts of space would contain more matter than others, and this is where gravity comes in.

Gravity is a weak force but affects everything. When matter 'crystallised out' into hot gas soon after the Big Bang that started our universe, gravity soon caused the gas to accumulate in gigantic clouds.

Gravity made the clouds shrink and get more dense. The pressure made the gas hotter (like air in a bicycle pump).

Eventually, the density and temperature of the gas (mainly hydrogen) got high enough for nuclear fusion to start.

This process converts hydrogen into helium with the release of vast amounts of energy. The enormous heat generated post-

pones the complete collapse of the gas cloud, or star, under its own gravitational pull.

Eventually, when the hydrogen starts to run out, the collapse of the star starts again.

A star as big as the Sun would stop collapsing when all the atoms were touching each other, making an object the size of the earth but as heavy as the sun. A matchbox-full would weigh about 5 tonnes.

If it was twice as large as the Sun, the star would keep collapsing until the atoms had been crushed. Electrons and protons would be squashed together to make neutrons. This neutron star would measure about 20 kilometres across. A matchbox full would weigh a million tonnes.

But if it was more than three times the mass of the sun, then the collapse of the exhausted star would end only when all the matter was concentrated at a single point.

The gravitational pull of this concentrated matter would be so great that not only would it suck into it any other matter

that was nearby, but it would also suck in any light that came nearer than a certain distance.

Hence the name, 'black hole'. 'Black' because no light could ever leave it, and 'hole' because things fall into it.

The certain distance is known as the 'Event Horizon'. Anyone outside a black hole cannot look beyond this horizon. We can get no information about anything that happens inside it.

For a black hole with three times the mass of the sun, the event horizon would be about 18 km across.

Though we can't see black holes, it should be possible to detect them. As matter was sucked into a black hole, it would be accelerated at a fantastic rate, giving out radiation and disappearing in a burst of ultra-violet and X-rays.

If we can detect gas spiralling into an object of great mass and tiny size, giving out radiation, then we can be sure that we have found a black hole.

And now a telescope on the International Ultraviolet Explorer satellite has detected

ultra-violet rays from just such gas clouds. These vast hot gas clouds are rushing into the heart of galaxy NGC 4151, some 50 million light years from us.

Calculations from the speed and temperature of the gas suggest that there is an object more than 50 million times heavier than our sun, squeezed into a region only one-thirtieth of a light year across. Such a mass can only be a black hole.

Theories abound about black holes and what they can do. For example, large ones at the centre of galaxies are thought to account for the massive energy output of NGC4151 and quasars.

Galaxy

Smaller ones probably exist in our galaxy, masquerading as the 'X-ray bursters'. Miniature black holes may have been formed during the Big Bang, and one imaginative suggestion is that we could trap one of these and use it as waste-disposal unit and power station.

Rubbish could be thrown in and the radiation used to generate electricity. If it escaped, though, it could be nasty.

Some people have suggested that matter collapsing into a black hole in our universe could be emerging into another universe, from a 'white hole'. We cannot test this theory, but the Big Bang might be an example of just such a White Hole.

NUM setbacks affect the whole movement

IAN MacGREGOR is now in control of the National Coal Board and is programmed to do to jobs and conditions there what he has already done in BL and the steel industry.

Even before he had taken office, however, the success of the management offensive and the virtual collapse of the Scargill leadership in the face of it has been a very major and central gain for the Thatcher Government, a collapse which has a serious effect on the whole working class.

For this reason it needs looking at in more detail.

After 1972 and 1974 the miners were seen by workers as by far the most powerful section of the working class. Many saw them as invincible. They rightly created this respect because in 1974 they had removed a Tory Government.

Scargill's election extended this and had widespread support in the working class.

Workers would often hope when things got tough that the miners would come along and sort everything out.

The Tories feared this possibility as well. At first they handled the miners with kid gloves giving them bigger than average wage increases to avoid a confrontation whilst following the strategy worked out by newly promoted Minister Nicholas Ridley — they concentrated their fire on industries like BL, Steel and Rail.

IN THE FIRST part of a discussion article on the struggle in the pits. Part 2, dealing with other industries, next week.

The image, however, was not the whole picture. The miners were more vulnerable then they appeared. Up to 1972 the miners had fought very little for years.

The new generation had little experience of local struggles and the Stalinist/right-wing leadership at national level had allowed massive pit closures to take place without resistance while wage levels fell well below most organised workers.

After 1972, of course, the NUM became much stronger at all levels and Scargill personified that. But there were still very few local struggles. The main experience remained the national strikes of 1972 and then 1974.

One of the problems of the 1974 settlement was a bonus scheme which was designed to divide the miners. This helped management at a later date to weaken the miners



Scargill, incapable of rising above the conditions around him

at the 'profitable' pits and isolate them at the more antiquated 'loss-making' pits.

It was a successful exercise. After first retreating over closure at Deep Duffryn, the Tories began to take a firm stand.

The NCB won the 1982 ballot on wages and closures, through a mistake of the leadership of the NUM — who made the miscalculation of tying the jobs issue to a vote on wages — and gained an important advantage.

Then came the Kinneil colliery betrayal in the New Year of 1983, and the cracks were wider.

The crunch came, however, with the decision of the NCB to close Lewis Merthyr in

South Wales which was met by an all-out strike in South Wales and an explosion of militancy.

A crucial developing national strike movement, however, was turned back by the failure of the NUM left and Arthur Scargill to confront the right-wing on the NUM executive, thus allowing them to block the fight for spreading the action and to turn the tide towards a national ballot.

In a demobilising situation the ballot could not be won and it was not. After that things got rapidly worse. Pits were left to fight on their own.

Cardowan miners were offered only 'moral and financial support' by a national conference of the NUM and the Scottish Area Executive. This was under conditions where the pits facing closure do not on their own have the basis to defend themselves.

It was the same at Monktonhall, which struck when miners were sent home after being 5 minutes late on shift after a NUM meeting to discuss 300 redundancies. Miners had been out on strike for two weeks before they were told that their case for support would be discussed at a national conference of the NUM to be held on Friday of this week — October 21 — i.e. 4 weeks later! Even then they were only offered 'moral and financial support'.



Welsh miners lobby for national action to save Lewis Merthyr — but without success

But the national conference has been upstaged even before it has taken place. The Scottish Area NUM Executive has organised a £2 per week area levy (which starts on the day of the Conference) and yesterday's Scottish one-day protest strike.

There is therefore no serious prospect of the national Conference organising anything else. The danger therefore — since a £2 levy suggests that all other miners remain at work — is that Monktonhall will be left isolated and hung out to dry.

Scargill has presented the one-day strike as a major development. But in the context it is taking place this is far from the case. A year ago the NUM leadership was looking for strike action. Over the last 6 months they have increasingly avoided it.

It is hard not to conclude for the Monktonhall experience that NCB propaganda that strikes will be very difficult has got through to the leadership of the NUM, and that as a result strikes are now being sabotaged.

Worse

Recently things have got even worse. The NUM leadership now seems to be going out of its way to isolate strikes. The latest closure at Crontop colliery in the North West saw a 24 hour strike which could lead to nothing. Thus the post election period and the arrival of Ian MacGregor has seriously compounded a previously existing problem. Now nearly every area of the NUM has at least one pit closure on the agenda. As the situation has changed in their favour, the NCB have got bolder in their actions.

The sacking of NUM militant George Marsh in Barnsley was no chance event.

Miners in Scotland have received letters about their individual time keeping and in other pits they have been threatened about productivity levels.

The Monktonhall strike started after miners were locked out for turning up to work only five minutes late, after a NUM meeting to discuss 300 job losses: this is a typical Edwardes-type move.

The management at Polmaish did exactly the same to the

miners there who went to a meeting to support Monktonhall. Despite this there was no move made to use an obvious opportunity to spread the strike and take on the management.

The strike in defence of George Marsh spread to 15,000 Barnsley miners and was taking place at the same time as Monktonhall; yet the strikers were sent back to work by the Yorkshire Area executive on the basis of an inquiry which was completely biased in favour of management.

The inquiry team consisted of a representative of George Marsh, a foreman and a manager (i.e. two management and one union).

In spite of this bias the Yorkshire NUM are insisting that its findings will be carried out!

These details of current struggles in the pits are necessary if we are to understand the situation; if local struggles are repeatedly sold out and defeated the power which the miners have had for the last ten years, and which has been so important to the working class will be frittered away.

In that sense these betrayals will be historic betrayals which will affect the whole balance of power between the working class and the employers and the Government.

Scargill in all this is showing himself seriously incapable of leading the fight, while his henchmen, the Stalinists of the Communist Party, centred in Scotland, are doing his dirty work.

It is not that Scargill does not want to fight. His call after the election was genuine in a very general sense. He is, however, incapable of rising above the conditions prevailing in the labour movement and labour bureaucracy as a whole, and taking on the fight with the right-wing which that would involve.

He can make generally correct statements, but cannot put his words into practice in his own industry which is now a front line target for the Tories.

THE ARTICLE on the Pay Review Body for some NHS staff in the October 6 issue of Socialist Organiser should have carried the by-line of George McLean. We apologise for the mix-up.

How miners could win

THIS Friday's special conference of the NUM has to face up to hard decisions on the questions of pay and jobs.

On the wages front, even right wing dominated areas have been rejecting the NCB's miserably 5.2% pay offer — and along with it the implicit blackmail on jobs embodied in the blunt statement by Coal Board deputy chairman James Cowan that

'the final offer is based on co-operation in eliminating uneconomic capacity'.

In other words even the crumbs on offer come with strings — the acceptance of NCB plans to axe up to 70 pits and at least 70,000 jobs.

In response to this, most area leaderships have been voting to reject the offer and many for a policy of a national overtime ban in support of demands for a rise of up to 25%.

In what appears to be deliberate confusion, Scottish area leaders have been mixing talk of such an overtime ban in with their calls for limited protest actions in support of the Monktonhall miners on strike in defence of their jobs.

Last year saw the mistaken tactic of linking a ballot on defence of jobs with a decision on a pay offer miners were not prepared to strike against. This year it appears that wages are seen as the main issue — while action on jobs has so far been voted down in a spring ballot setback.

There must be a fight to increase the 5.2% offer and no agreement on any pay deal involving closures: but there must also be strike action to prevent the threatened redundancies.

While it is true that a national overtime ban is the most that can be called by the NUM leadership without yet another pithead ballot, the policy is inadequate to deal with the problems facing miners.

With coal stocks estimated sufficient to last six months, an overtime

ban could go on almost forever without having any real impact on the NCB or the Tory government.

This makes it an inadequate tactic to pursue either the jobs struggle or the pay fight.

The reason it is being proposed so eagerly is that NUM leaders have retreated from the fight for all-out strike action.

Yet the only way Monktonhall can win; the only way the jobs issue can be confronted successfully; and the only way the wages issue can be won is through the fight for national strike action.

The topic that should be central on the agenda of Friday's conference is how best to create the conditions to achieve such a strike.

In particular the Scottish area should be called upon to reconsider its partial, protest action around Monktonhall and go for an indefinite area-wide stoppage.

The promised solidarity of the 'Triple Alliance' of coal, steel and rail unions should be invoked, and calls issued to other transport unions to halt the movement of coal from NCB stocks.

Backed by mass picketing in defiance of the Tory anti-union laws, such action could make a nonsense of the NCB's six-month supplies — and set the stage for the spreading of strike action on a national level.

The spreading of strike action should also be prepared by the immediate publication, in popular form, of the extensive information already possessed by the NUM's research department on NCB closure plans and their implications for the various coalfields.

The demand must be raised for the opening of the NCB's financial books — to enable elected lay committees of miners to uncover the network of banks, suppliers, distributors and industrial consumers who profit from their sweated labour.

The answer to the current level of overproduction is not the bosses' vandalistic axing of pits containing workable reserves of coal, but to raise the level of wages to ensure a decent basic rate and cut the hours worked by miners, to share the work available with no loss of income.

The demolition-squad tactics of MacGregor and his henchmen at the NCB underline as clearly as anything could the need for miners to challenge the whole hierarchic control of the industry by a caste of management answerable only to the Tories and the bankers.

Although formally nationalised, the mining industry has never been controlled by the workers: and though the union has made gains on health, safety and other issues, the latest drive towards speed-up and productivity carry dire threats for the future.

Miners must open the books of the NCB not only to discover the hidden Tory plans which they must fight in the current battles but also to acquire the information on which to develop a workers' plan for defence and development of the mining industry, and the fight for workers' control.

Armed with such an approach, and encouraged by the successful mass picketing of several recent strikes, NUM delegates could go back to their areas with real hope of victory over the Tories.

And — as we near the tenth anniversary of the Tories' strike which toppled the Heath government — such a victory is sorely needed and long overdue.

LABOUR PARTY AGAINST THE WITCH-HUNT!

JOIN LABOUR AGAINST THE WITCHHUNT
 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.

New attack on shipyard jobs

A LAY delegates conference with representatives from all British Shipbuilders yards will be held on October 28 in Newcastle. The Conference is being called to decide on what action is going to be taken against British Shipbuilders' announcement that 2,000-3,000 jobs have got to be shed by January 1984.

British Shipbuilders made their announcement at a meeting between the Shipbuilding Negotiating Committee, which represents the unions, and themselves in Newcastle on Wednesday, October 12. They also reaffirmed that there would be no pay rise this year, except for those yards which accept productivity deals and British Shipbuilders Survival Plan, which are aimed at doing away with all trades, creating a fully flexible, mobile workforce, ready to jump at the bosses' command.

Lobbied

The meeting was lobbied by hundreds of shipyard workers from around the country, demanding no enforced redun-

By Lol Duffy

dancies and no wage freeze. At Cammel Lairds, stewards have been told that there will have to be 650 redundancies by January 1984, whether or not there are any more orders. The Boilermakers' stewards have been informed that 384 of their members will be made redundant, and have responded by formulating a recommendation to be put to a mass meeting later this week, which says if British Shipbuilders does not withdraw their threat of enforced redundancy, then from October 28 no vessels will be handed over until the threat is withdrawn. The stewards also reaffirmed their support for a previous lay delegates meeting decision to take over the yards if there is one enforced redundancy, or a pay freeze. If this recommendation gets the support of the mass meeting, then the Boilermaker delegates to the October 28 conference will be urging other yards to take the

same action. BS have also said that a further 2,500 jobs are at risk by March 1984. There is no doubt that the gloves are off and BS aren't pulling the punches. If the yards do not reaffirm their previous decision to take over the yards in the event of redundancies or a pay freeze, then management will walk all over us. BS intends to decimate the workforce in order to get a full return to casual labour that will then create the right climate for privatisation, with yards going for a song.

Blame

The Tories and their management are telling us that we should lose our jobs for their inability to secure future work. We have now got to put the blame fairly and squarely where it lies with the Tories and BS management. They have proved incapable of running the industry. We have now got to show that we can. We either make the Tories redundant or they do it to us. The choice is simple.

Chloride hold out

LAST Wednesday, 13th, the management at the Chloride factory in Manchester attempted to use the threat of the sack to end the strike by 550 workers.

The strikers refused to be bludgeoned back to work. Only a handful of workers crossed the picket line.

The next day management issued dismissal notices to all the strikers, but even this failed to

dent support for the strike. The dismissal notices were ignored. The dispute is now entering its seventh week, after the workers, on September 7, overwhelmingly rejected a productivity deal. The workers estimated that the deal would have meant half the production workers being made redundant within 18 months. It would also have destroyed the parity pay system. The deal would mean an increase in production per worker of 63%. The workers are aware that this would inevitably mean redundancies.

Also, management intend to reduce canteen staff and put office cleaning out to contract - causing still more redundancies. The workers have said, enough is enough. As they said, 'Could you work 63% harder?'

The sacking threat is the second attempt by management to go over the head of the union to end the strike. Earlier in the dispute management directly balloted the strikers, asking if they wanted to stay on strike and lose their jobs. The vast majority of strikers boycotted the ballot. But despite everything the strikers have held firm. The dispute has now gone to negotiations at a national level. Some strikers are understandably worried at the involvement of Evans and Duffy.

A mass meeting is being called to discuss the outcome of the negotiations. Donations and messages of support to: 6/153 branch dispute fund, c/o R. Butcher, 8 Ethol Ave, Pendlebury, Salford.

Progress at last at Carousel

AFTER nearly 3 months on strike things are starting to pick up again for the Carousel strikers in Glasgow, fighting for reinstatement, union recognition and better working conditions.

TGWU members in the docks have blacked Carousel products, with one container-load of them already prevented from being shipped out through the Liverpool docks. And TGWU members at the containerisation depots have also pledged blacking for all Carousel products, to make sure they never get as far as the docks anyway.

After one of the strikers addressing their branch meeting, drivers in a Glasgow TGWU commercial branch are blacking Carousel products too, as well as demanding that the Co-operative Wholesale Society, for which some of them work, stops selling Carousel wafers.

Increased support for the dispute is being organised in the local community by mass leafletting and holding public meetings, whilst Saccomando, the factory's owner, has come in for heavy criticism in the Daily Record, the Scottish equivalent of the Daily Mirror.

Problem

The major problem at present is the weekly mass picketing. Although the strikers themselves have maintained the daily picketing of the factory, there has been no growth of support for the one day a week mass pickets. If anything, the turnout is now starting to decline again, after a period during which it was steadily growing.

In order to boost support for the picketing, the strikers are calling for a West Scotland shop stewards conference to organise mass support for the picket line. Union and Labour Party members should be taking up this demand in their respective branches, as well as continuing to build support for the picketing in the meantime, and sending solidarity messages to those trade unionists carrying out blacking of Carousel products.

For speakers/further information about the dispute/dates of the weekly mass pickets, phone Carousel strike headquarters, (041)-763 0922.



NHS: don't cry, occupy!

By Ted Dowd

THE THORNTON View hospital occupation and work-in in Bradford is still strong.

It needs to be. In this most difficult of arenas in which to take industrial action, the staff are operating genuine workers' control.

In a period of onslaught and pessimism, Thornton View hospital is an example to us all.

By working in the staff are running the hospital themselves to the very highest of standards. The support group, drawn from friends, relatives and other organisations, runs the support system and supporting action. Such a solid front cannot allow the press to drive in the wedge of guilt between staff and patient care.

This mutual support is going

to be the key to success in other Health Service stands - health workers must have the active support and participation of other trade unions, labour movement organisations and community bodies.

Success at Thornton View depends now on:

- Turning paper support into yet more active participation in the occupation itself,

- Committing other health workers and non-health unions to pledge strike/disruptive action, in the form of a threat should the Health Authority plan eviction.

Active support and firm commitments must be secured now so that the Authority is faced with the prospect of Bradford grinding to a halt.

The NHS is our service and we need it. It is up to us all to defend and extend it in united action.

Brent DHA holds out

By Mick Woods

A STORMY and well-attended District Health Authority meeting on Monday October 17 saw attempts by the Tory Chair, Lena Talmage, to reverse last month's decision not to implement £250,000 cuts and to cut 110 staff defeated.

In the last month Minister of Health Norman Fowler has attempted to gerrymander the District Health Authority by putting 4 new appointees onto it, but Monday's vote held up at 9-7 against implementing spending cuts and 11-6 against the cuts in staffing.

Last Tuesday, 10th, saw a successful 1 hour strike at Central Middlesex Hospital in Park Royal by over 200 staff; a similar action at Shenley hospital; and a public rally at Harlesden Methodist Church that evening attracted about 400 members of the public.

Since the District Health Authority vote, staff at the threatened Lampton Park Geriatric Hospital have expressed more confidence in fighting the DHA's decision last December to close the hospital.

Since Brent took its stand last month, 6 other health authorities have followed suit and many others have deferred cuts. Tory Councillors, appointees and hacks on the DHA were in no doubt as to the mood of the 200-strong audience who attended the meet-

ing. Many Tories were heckled into silence, and a standing ovation was given to the DHA rebels when the vote was won. The hospital workers and local people are showing a resolution to fight the mauling of their local services.

Legal action

Legal action taken by two District Health Authority members, Councillor Laurie Nerva and the Rev. David Haslam over a Regional Health Authority letter which clearly points out that those members opposing central government dictat will be legally removed from the Authority by the DHSS show one possible line of action for Fowler. Simply keep pumping in Tories until the DHA becomes a government puppet. The other option open to him is to sack the whole authority and implement the cuts centrally. Either way, Brent health workers and the working class as a whole are hard behind the District Health Authority.

The Campaign started by the rebels, the Community Health Council and the unions will only succeed if the promise of strike action and occupations to defend every job and bed is taken up by the workforce. Already Labour members on DHAs around London are trying to organise a cross-London Health Emergency Campaign giving central focus to the fight against the cuts which are mauling central London.

Fight Standard Bigotry!

ANTI-GAY prejudice is nothing new for readers of the Standard, London's evening newspaper.

The Bermondsey by-election, Islington council's anti-discrimination policy, the GLC's grants to gay groups, and the new London Lesbian and Gay Centre, have all produced anti-gay articles from the paper.

On Friday October 6, a cartoon by Jak got back at those of us who had been laughing at Cecil Parkinson's lack of concern for Thatcher's family policy. It showed a man going into M15 saying, "You can cross Cecil Parkinson off the queer list".

Several members of the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights produced a leaflet in response, calling on Standard journalists to dissociate themselves from their editor's anti-gay stance; and on the following Monday about a dozen people, members of LCGR, the 'Outrage!' magazine collective, and the Campaign for Homosexual Equality, went to Fleet Street to give the leaflets to Standard journalists.

The protesters got into the newsroom at the Standard, and were giving out their leaflets and trying to contact the National Union of Journalists chapel officials before security realised what had happened.

About eight security men came down, dragged two of the protesters away, and persuaded the rest to leave with promises that the editor or his deputy would come to the foyer to hear their complaints. (They didn't, of course).

What did this action achieve? Directly, not much. The NUJ chapel officials all said that what went in the paper was up to the editor.

But it lets the Standard know that we aren't prepared to accept their gratuitous bigotry. And it shows the NUJ members that they'll have support if they start to oppose the editor.

LCGR

AT last, week's Labour Party conference, the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights fringe meeting sent a message of solidarity to the Labour Committee on Ireland meeting next door and Gerry Adams MP personally sent his greetings to us.

100 people heard Jeremy Corbyn MP and Reg Race talk about their attitudes and how they had changed, and what LCGR should do to raise gay visibility in the labour movement. Brian West (LCGR) spoke of the campaign's successes, for example at the Scottish TUC. Jane Connor from Gay YS talked about our invisibility in that movement, due to its domination by a certain group, and the triple oppression of lesbians.

We therefore need support, especially this year. We need sympathisers to:

- affiliate your trade union, CLP or Women's Section to LCGR (£5 per 1,000, YS branches, £1).

- join yourself (from £1).

- send us donations from your union.

- ask for a speaker for your group.

- send resolutions (models from us) to regional, local government, trade union and women's conferences.

- consider now sending a Gay Rights resolution to next year's Labour Party conference as part of our push, and a lesbian/gay delegate.

LCGR national office and membership, 21 Devonshire Promenade, Nottingham NG7 2DS.

Get ORGANISED!

Become a supporter of the Socialist Organiser Alliance - groups are established in most large towns. We ask £1.50 a month minimum (20p unwaged) contribution from supporters.

I want to become a Socialist Organiser supporter / I want more information.

Name

Address

Send to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.



Challenge from High Court, sacking threat

Socialist ORGANISER



The tactics that served the POEU in 1978 are not sufficient now



When the troopship Canberra returned from the Falklands in July last year, banners over the side said, 'Maggie Rules OK' and, 'Call off the rail strike - or we'll call an air strike'.

15 months later, and the jingoism is turning sour. When the ferry Rangatira arrived in Devonport on Tuesday 18th, the welcoming Royal Marines band were faced with banners put out by the civilian crew saying, 'Maggie welcomes us back to the dole' and 'Margaret Thatcher - 20th century vampire'.

Seaman Gary Rimmer told the Morning Star, "We work hard, keep our noses clean, and all we have to look forward to is the dole".

POEU MUST PICK UP THE GAUNTLET

THE HIGH COURT is expected to grant an injunction under Tebbit's anti-union Act against the Post Office Engineering Union in its dispute with British Telecom, as we go to press.

But this ruling will be immediately followed up by another challenge to the POEU and its fight against privatisation.

BT management at Walton on Thames yesterday hauled in four POEU members who have been refusing to cross picket lines in the dispute, and gave them four days' notice that if they maintain this stance they will be sacked.

It is not yet clear whether this victimisation is a case of "selective action" by management, or whether it is simply the first reported case of a new attack on a national level.

But in either case such a move is a fundamental challenge to the

By Ricky Houston

POEU. It must pick up the gauntlet and call an all-out national strike if and when the first member is sacked for honouring union picket lines: if not the fight is doomed.

In any event, the situation is sharpened by the impending High Court injunction, which could threaten the POEU with fines, seizure of assets, or - if defied - with the imprisonment of its leaders.

A number of union leaders have repeatedly pledged support to the POEU if they defy Tebbit's law, and the TUC policy is to support defiance of Tebbit's law, provided the union first approaches the TUC.

The stakes are high for BT workers: up to 100,000 jobs are

at risk, both from the Tories' privatisation plans and the growing competition arising from the 1981 Telecoms Act.

At the moment, 2,000 engineers are suspended as a result of the work to rule at international service exchanges and blacking action against the interconnection of Project Mercury to the BT network.

The membership who are out are solid and look likely to remain so: repeated attempts by BT management to undermine the strength of the unions' campaign at the rank and file level have failed up to now.

Locked

The membership who have been locked out are being paid their average earnings out of the Union's strike fund, and so remain solid.

But the attitude of the Broad Left-led Executive to the dispute appears to be fixed rigidly on the notion of selective action sustained by a levy, while most members remain at work.

This has been recognised by management as the Achilles heel of the dispute. In what has become known as "Operation Black Hole", they put the POEU leadership to the test by escalating the number of suspensions - and thus threatening to bankrupt the dispute fund.

Sooner than come to grips with the problem and prepare for an escalation to all-out action, the Executive retreated in the face of this attack. In some places picket lines were lifted, in others POEU members were told to do work which was "not officially blacked".

Lawyers

Lawyers for Project Mercury said that the POEU's blacking work had already cost the private consortium £1 million, and that the POEU's action was strangling the firm at birth. There is little doubt that the success of the secondary action against Mercury's financial backers, Barclays

bank, Cable & Wireless, and BP, was also a major factor in the injunction served on the POEU last Monday.

But on the Thursday preceding the hearing of the injunction the POEU Broad Left-dominated NEC called off all action against Mercury's financial backers. Although the interconnection of Mercury is still blacked, this sign of weakness will be noticed by BT management, Project Mercury and the Tory government.

The NEC, embarrassed, and obviously covering themselves from the mass membership, stated in the industrial action bulletin issued on the Thursday that Mercury's backers 'might still be hit' by industrial action that was still being continued.

In fact the separation of the two forms of "blacking" - that against Mercury itself and that against its backers - appears to be purely in the heads of the POEU Executive.

If the Court declares the POEU action unlawful, then the ruling will apply to both forms of blacking. The POEU will have either to defy the law - and go all out for victory - or be the first union to climb down before the Tebbit Act, and abandon any real fight against privatisation.

Tough job

There is no doubt that the Broad Left-dominated NEC faces a tough job as the union's membership have never faced such a threat before, and neither does the POEU have any tradition of militancy. For years, the union's leadership have been central to the right wing in the TUC and Labour Party. BT management and the Tory government realise this but they also realise the potential strength of the union if it does come out to fight.

But the problem is that the Executive, sticking rigidly to a formula restricted to selective action backed by levies, is not preparing to mobilise that potential strength.

The tactics which the POEU have adopted were developed in the shorter working week fight of 1978: a fight which did not achieve the full 35 hour working week it was begun for.

The stakes are much higher now, and the opposition much stronger.

The appointment of Tebbit to take charge of privatisation shows how much the whole Tory economic policy turns upon it. BT is the first of the whole of the public sector facing privatisation.

At the moment the NEC is still thought to be considering calling for a national overtime ban. The time for such an intensification was last week: it is already overdue. It is essential that this step is now taken, to begin to involve the whole membership in

a dispute crucial to their union.

No doubt, as a result of an overtime ban, further mass suspensions would follow. BT management's recent threats to sack any engineers not obeying any management instruction will almost certainly begin in that event. But it is essential that the Broad Left NEC breaks from the limitations of the present campaign, which BT and the courts can easily exploit, and begin to build for all-out action.

If management do carry out their threat, the Executive would have no alternative but to go for an immediate nationwide all-out strike, irrespective of the certainty of the response. The only alternative would be complete collapse of the fight.

Monthly Fund

THREE quarters of the way through October, and the Fund stands at a miserable £169.50.

This week's donations come from Terry Connolly (East London), £4; Gerry Byrne (Putney), £6.50; and John Harris, who, despite having his name in the paper most weeks, has chosen this week to appear in the Fund Column, with a huge donation of £93.

Our thanks go to this week's contributors, and to the other groups who've sent donations this month: Cardiff, Glasgow, Manchester and Barnsley.

We don't have the Murdoch millions to print a weekly Socialist Organiser with, and we don't have pages crammed with advertising. To raise the money we need to print Socialist Organiser we have to rely on support from our readers.

So which groups haven't sent donations this month? One look at this list shows why our total is so low: Edinburgh, Liverpool, Rochdale, Stockport, Wirral, Durham, Halifax, Harrogate, Huddersfield, Hull, Leeds, Leicester, Sheffield, York, Birmingham, Coventry, Northampton, Nottingham, Stoke, Basingstoke, Oxford, N/W London, Hackney, Haringey, Hounslow, Islington, S/E London and Southwark.

Of these groups, Islington and Southwark have fund-raising plans in the near future.

What about the rest of you?

There's just one week left for the October fund; and ten days till the AGM, where we'll publish the fund-raising results in full.

So RUSH donations - first class! - to:

214, Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Dayschool and AGM

Annual General Meeting, Sunday October 30 at County Hall, London SE1. Day school on organising for the politics of Socialist Organiser, Saturday October 29, Crouch Hill Recreation Centre, Hillrise Road, London N19. Details from SO, 28 Middle Lane, London N8

