

TUC agree political levy deal with King

TUC leaders yesterday met Tory Employment Secretary Tom King to agree to his demands over the payment of the political levy by trade unionists.

King has told TUC general secretary Len Murray that unless unions start a campaign to inform members of their rights to 'contract out' of paying the political levy, then he will introduce legislation.

Yesterday morning the TUC's employment committee, EPOC, agreed to a new set of rules 'for guidance' of unions on the understanding that King would not introduce his legislation.

A copy of the 'statement of guidance' was hurriedly taken to King in the afternoon, when he approved Murray's document.

The new rules will be published today, and will be presented to the TUC

General Council for ratification later this month.

Under the Tories' Trade Union Bill currently going through parliament, the Labour Party stand to lose £500,000 of their annual income.



KING... Saw TUC chiefs

'Biggest military disaster since Custer's Last Stand'

MARINE BASE UNDER SIEGE



NOWHERE TO RUN... US Marines in Beirut are surrounded on three sides by militia and by the sea. Their only way out — by helicopter

BY OUR FOREIGN STAFF

'THIS is the biggest military disaster since Custer's Last Stand,' said a marine sergeant yesterday as Moslem militias surrounded their compound near the Beirut international airport.

Shi'ite soldiers from the Amal movement have set up a roadblock 100 yards to the north of the marines' base, while Druze troops are controlling a checkpoint 100 yards to the south.

By last night Moslem fighters had seized control of the coastal highway dividing the American base from the marine landing-point on the beach. This means that the only escape route for the imperialist forces is to be airlifted by helicopter to the huge war fleet assembled off the coast.

The US sergeant told reporters that the marines had now 'lost contact' with President Gemayel and the Lebanese army. Yesterday Druze fighters inflicted a crushing military defeat on the official army as they swept from their homeland in the Chouf Mountains towards Beirut.

They have now linked up with their allies in the Amal movement which is in control of West Beirut. Asked what happened to the resistance of the Lebanese army, a US spokesman said that morale had collapsed.

'It seems like the officers and men took a powder,' he said.

Collapse

The utter disintegration of the army in the face of the united Moslem forces spells the end for Gemayel's Falangist rule and the collapse of President Reagan's war policy in the region.

Druze leader Walid Jumblatt declared in Damascus: 'There will be no compromise or dialogue with him or the Falangist Party.'

Announcing the formation of a 'patriotic army' to defend Beirut, he said

Crack in Reagan's Mid-East policies

the Lebanese army 'enrolled, trained, helped and backed by the Americans is finished'.

Druze 'Voice of the Mountain' radio declared: 'Even if Gemayel abrogates the May 17 agreement (with Israel), and even if he presents

forces, refusing to carry out the orders of their army commanders.

A Shi'ite Moslem fighter manning a checkpoint on the coast road, 100 yards from the US base, said: 'There was no fighting. The army fled.'

On a side-road, a wrecked two-storey building buttressed with sandbags stood abandoned by the army. A jubilant boy in militia uniform standing in the mud outside said: 'The army went down the drain.'

Remnants

As it was driven out of the mountains, the remnants of the army mined the road leading to villages on the ridge, which was captured by the Druze.

Falangist military spokesman Fady Hayek bitterly attacked the Reagan administration for not maintaining its brutal bombardment of Druze and Syrian positions.

And, while US warships remained silent yesterday, he added: 'We would have expected more from the navy. If President Amin Gemayel wants to refuse Syrian conditions, he has to find an ally more efficient than the American support which has proved insufficient.'

Tories unmoved by MPs report on GCHQ

THE Thatcher government is unmoved by official criticism of its ban on trade unions at the Government Communications Headquarters at Cheltenham.

A statement issued from Downing Street last night after publication of a critical Select Committee report said simply that its findings would be considered, but that the previous decision still stood.

The report had called for a freeze on the ban while the introduction of a legally-binding 'no dis-

ruption' agreement is negotiated with the unions.

Despite the calls for such an unprecedented restriction on union rights, union leaders welcomed the report.

TUC general secretary Len Murray said the report recognised that the government could not

ban union membership by diktat.

'I hope the government will now recognise the need to change course and seek a negotiated settlement which protects national security and the right of workers to be trade union members,' he said.



MIKE BARK... 'Bad for democracy'

A spokesman for the Council of Civil Service Unions said the report vindicated its attempts to find a compromise with Thatcher. The council called for an early meeting at Downing Street.

Local union co-ordinator in Cheltenham, Mike Bark, said it would be 'very bad for democracy' if Thatcher ignored the report's findings.

Trim men stay out

THE 200 striking trim workers at BL's Cowley assembly plant near Oxford voted yesterday to continue their action against a company breach of the 'fair movement of labour' agreement.

The mass meeting decided not to

meet again until Monday. Local union official David Buckle is to seek further talks with the management. Long-serving workers at the trim shop are objecting to plans to return them to the production tracks while younger workers remain in the trim shop.

EMPLOYERS' LABOUR COSTS ARE FALLING

SPEED-UP and overtime are continuing to push the rate of exploitation of workers' labour, government figures on pay showed yesterday.

to December according to Department of Employment statistics, while the government's official inflation figure over the same period was 5.3 per cent.

Half

But the amount the employer pays for workers' labour increased only 2.8 per cent — half the level of inflation and the lowest rise since 1968.

The increase in the rates of exploitation of

labour are due to increased levels of overtime — which averaged 11,250,000 hours a week in December — and speed-up on the factory floor.

But the employers' body, the Confederation of British Industry, made it clear yesterday that it is still not satisfied with the fall in real unit labour costs.

And in a statement, the CBI said they were anxious over signs that workers were starting to fight back against the

drastic cut in living standards inflicted in the last decade.

The CBI said average pay settlements rose last year, and in the last quarter they stood at 5.8 per cent.

Pay

The CBI said it would be 'premature to believe that in terms of either working time or pay, these developments are necessarily consistent

with improved international competitiveness

The figures show that despite a real jobless level of 4,500,000, the Tories and employers are failing to drive down real incomes of those in work as fast as they had hoped.

And already, hundreds of thousands of public service workers are lining up to fight against the government's 3 per cent pay limit.

No merger talks says UCATT chief

LES WOOD, general secretary of the builders' union UCATT, yesterday denied reports that he has been engaged in merger talks with the construction section of the engineering union AUEW.

He said his union executive had dismissed calls for talks on a merger with the leader of the construction engineers, John Baldwin.

Wood said the membership of UCATT fell to 270,000 last year, but he considered the £6,000 drop in 1983 a small figure. His union's funds were in a good state, and there were no grounds for merger talks.

Rise

Wood also announced that the 600,000 workers organised in the joint union pay negotiations would be asking for a 12 per cent rise in minimum guaranteed pay this year.

Building workers would also be demanding a third week's holiday in the summer months and a 35 hour week. It was outrageous that building workers only had two weeks holiday in the summer.

He said that UCATT members would no longer tolerate being treated as third class citizens in the building industry.

The current minimum earnings for craft workers in the building industry

are £97.54, and for unskilled workers £83.07.

Asked if he thought the building industry could afford a 12 per cent pay increase, Wood placed his hope in the Tory attempts to increase private sector house building.

Chemical pay fight

INDUSTRIAL action may be used to back up a 25 per cent pay claim for 34,000 low-paid workers in the chemical industry.

The general workers' union GMBATU decided on Tuesday night to press for a £100 a week mini-

mum basic rate across the industry. At present, 34,000 workers are on the current national minimum of £80.18.

Union officials have already started talking about industrial action to secure a big improve-

ment in the minimum rate.

Final details of the claim will be agreed with other unions involved on Monday, and the claim will be submitted to employers on March 2.



TONY BENN has accused the BBC of trying to 'take over' the Chesterfield by-election and alleged that BBC TV reporter Vincent Hanna was seeking to engineer an SDP-Liberal victory.

Departing from a wide-ranging onslaught on the media, Benn singled out Hanna, of the BBC's 'Newsnight' and

that Vincent Hanna is the SDP candidate, he told a meeting at Old Whittington, just outside Chesterfield.

'The BBC think they can take over the election,' said the former Labour cabinet minister.

Attacking the detailed opinion poll by the

vote Liberal to beat the Labour Party.

'That is what it is about. That is what Vincent Hanna is about. He wants a Liberal victory in the way they got Taverne into Lincoln and beat Peter Tatchell in Bermondsey. They want to beat Labour in Chesterfield.'

candidate to stay out of Chesterfield.

Benn said yesterday that people out of work cannot discuss their problems with official employment bodies such as the Manpower Services Commission.

Betty Finch 1922-1984

THE Central Committee of the Workers Revolutionary Party and the Editorial Board of News Line wish to convey their deepest sympathy to the family of Betty Finch (Jackson) who died in the early hours of Tuesday February 14, aged 61.

Betty joined our Party in the early 1950s when she was a member of the Streatham Constituency Labour Party, one of a number of Labour Party members who joined us when Trotskyism had won their political support.

Hatred of imperialism was very real for Betty. As assistant secretary of the Constituency Labour Party she took up the fight to support the colonial liberation movement and worked to establish the Labour Party as a force in the locality.

Real

She was a good organiser and very gifted at needlework. These abilities were combined to make the Christmas bazaars of the Labour Party renowned in south London.

But the rightward development of the Labour Party bureaucracy meant that bans and proscriptions were followed by a vicious and protracted witch-hunt and the Streatham Labour Party was disbanded in order to expel our members.

Betty had joined our Party at a time of great changes which covered practically a whole decade.

Uprising

The post-war revolutionary wave had receded and was followed by the banning and proscription of the Socialist Fellowship and our weekly paper 'Socialist Outlook', the death of Stalin and the ensuing crisis of Stalinism, the East Berlin uprising and the uprisings in the Soviet camps. This was accompanied by the destruction of our press at the hands of the courts and its refounding as Plough Press Ltd.

Then came the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Hungarian Revolution. The political and technical preparations made by the Party saw the launch of the weekly Newsletter — forerunner of the daily News Line.

This work bore fruit in the strong recruitment from the Communist Party and Young Communist League and also from sections of

the trade unions, particularly building workers. In 1959 the Socialist Labour League was founded, with its roots firmly within the working class.

In all this work Betty Jackson played an important role as one of a handful of comrades who took the brunt of that struggle. While they were exciting times, they were not always easy.

Betty made great sacrifices and continued this work, with her responsibilities to her family, particularly her son Andrew of whom she was very proud.

Finance

We had a constant crisis in finance and Betty had an obsessive sense of responsibility in her work in these matters. After a number of illnesses she found it necessary to take a back seat.

She established a system of accounting which laid the foundations for the present great developments of the WRP and its associated companies.

In recent years she became very active in the Labour Party and at the time of her death was secretary of South Croydon Constituency Labour Party. Her outspoken opposition to the Falklands War, her opposition to right-wing bureaucracy and her constant campaign against the cuts in the National Health Service won much respect from Labour Party members, trade unionists and the local people.

Betty's courage and selfless devotion to her family when she learned that her illness was terminal was an example to all.

Her funeral will be at 2p.m. Monday, February 20, at the Croydon Crematorium, Mitcham Road, Thornton Heath.



BETTY FINCH

Tory 'streamlining' ignores women

BY PENNY BLOOR

THE Tory White Paper on abolition, 'Streamlining the Cities', doesn't give a thought to women, Valerie Wise who chairs the GLC Women's Committee said yesterday.

The committee, formed 18 months ago, now finances 300 women's organisations and groups. It helps fund nurseries, women's centres and many other facilities.

During its first year of office only 10 women's organisations applied for aid, but within 10 months, 200 applications came in.

'We just didn't know

what to expect, but the reaction has been phenomenal,' Wise told a press conference.

But all these gains are threatened with the GLC abolition plans.

Projects like Bromley Women's Aid, four after-school projects in Wandsworth, the Women's Research and Resources Centre catering for women all over Britain, and scores of other groups could be forced out of existence.

The Women's Committee is currently running a special campaign on transport for women, discussing with London Transport ways of improving safety and ser-

VICES for women. Only 30 per cent of women in London have driving licences.

Thirty two public meetings were held in each London borough to find out the views of women, and scores of individuals and organisations questioned. The committee has produced a document expressing their views.

Wise stressed: 'I've been accused of not representing women, but women not active in politics have been voicing the same views as us. It is not just feminists making these demands but women in the streets.'

Women questioned in the Londonwide survey said they wanted:

- Better-designed homes and housing estates with shops and play areas and other basic facilities;
- Flexible childcare, near home, creches at work and in shopping centres;
- Women's centres close to their homes where they can meet socially;
- A chance for black and ethnic women to see women doctors, get health information in their own languages, and protection against racist attacks;
- Free or concessionary transport, safer transport and better de-

signed for transport with children and elderly;

- Training for
- Tax and Social Security to be calculated independently of husband's earnings;
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Campbell raid a warning

THE RAID on 'New Statesman' journalist Duncan Campbell was a warning about the dangers contained in the revised Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, Press Council director Kenneth Morgan said yesterday.

Police used the Official Secrets Act to seize files and notes from Campbell's home last Thursday. They had found documents and house keys in the panter of his bicycle after he had been involved in a road accident.

His editor Hugh Stephenson said the only likely excuse for the house search was the papers marked 'restricted', the lowest security rating. Campbell had them in his capacity as civil defence policy adviser on a Greater London Council committee, not as a 'Statesman' journalist.

Morgan told journalists

and media students at Highbury College, Portsmouth, yesterday: 'The case of Mr Campbell's bicycle accident demonstrates how right editors, journalists, publishers and the Press Council were to be alarmed at the new powers to search and seize material, including journalists' notes and files, which were originally proposed on the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill.'

'We were right to resist those proposals and I am glad the government understood the concern and amended the Bill. The Campbell case is a striking example of how vulnerable journalistic material is already under existing police powers.'

'It is a warning to the press not to let misgivings about having any special provision in law tempt it into jeopardising its ability to do its job.'

Documents handed back

SPECIAL BRANCH police said yesterday they would be returning documents and personal files seized from journalist Duncan Campbell immediately.

Despite police statements up till Tuesday that the documents had been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions, a threat by Campbell's lawyers to take legal action.

Campbell told News Line yesterday that he would still be proceeding with account

WEATHER

ALL AREAS, except north and west Scotland, will be dry with fog patches, some of them dense in central and eastern England. There will be some hazy sunshine in parts of the south with bright or sunny intervals in northern England, Ireland and

Wales and south east Scotland. The weather will be mild, with cloud and rain, but not normal elsewhere and cold where Outlook: Little change.

★ YOUNG SOCIALISTS ★ YOUNG SOCIALISTS ★ PUBLIC MEETINGS

● Defeat anti-union government ● No nuclear labour! ● Build mass

SCOTLAND

BLANTYRE: Thursday February 16, 7.30p.m. Elizabeth Scott Centre, Logan Street.

Speakers: Chris Corrigan (WRP Central Committee)

EDINBURGH: Tuesday February 21, 7.30p.m. St Ninian's School, Restalrig. Speakers: Colin Yackimie (YS Regional Committee); S Pirani (WRP Central Committee); in personal capacity: Jim Whigham (NUS vice president, West Lothian College of Further Education)

DUMFRIES: Thursday February 23, 7.30p.m. St Peter's School, Howatshaws Road, Bellismyre.

CLYDEBANK: Wednesday February 29, 7.30p.m. The Hub Community Centre, Kibrowrie Road. Speakers: Pat Rice (YS Regional Committee); S Pirani (WRP Central Committee)

NORTH EAST

NEWCASTLE: Sunday February 26, 7p.m. Bridge Hotel, Castle Square. Speakers: Claire Dixon (YS National Committee); Vanessa Redgrave (WRP Central Committee); in personal capacity: Peter Hanson (Chairman UCATT, Crook); Newcastle NGA branch official

NORTH WEST

GARSTON: Thursday February 16, 7.30p.m. Garston Blue Social Club, Window Lane. Speakers: Ray Sinnott (YS Regional Committee); Frank

ST HELENS: Wednesday February 29, 7.30p.m. St Helens Town Hall. Speakers: Wayne Chand (YS Regional Committee); Tony Banda (WRP Central Committee); in personal capacity: Clr Brian Green (Leader St Helens council); Ron Jones (GMBTU branch secretary Pilkingtons City Road works)

LIVERPOOL: Wednesday March 7, 7.30p.m. AUEW Hall, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool 1. Speakers: Wayne Chand (YS Regional Committee); Tony Banda (WRP Central Committee); in personal capacity: Ray Williams (Liverpool NGA branch secretary); Larry Cavanagh (Mersey Port shop steward)

MANCHESTER

MOSS SIDE: Sunday February 19, 4p.m. West Indian Centre, Carmoor Road, M13. Speakers: Wayne Chand (YS Regional Committee); Vanessa Redgrave (WRP Central Committee); Stuart Carter (WRP Central Committee); in personal capacity: Mike Gill (Hyde Road T&GWU bus); Peter Foster (Deputy secretary NALGO-GMC) Followed by disco, 7p.m.

YORKSHIRE

HUDDERSFIELD: Sunday February 19, 7p.m. Brackenhill Community Centre, Longhill Road. Speakers: Paul Walton (Huddersfield YS); Mike Banda (WRP General Secretary); in personal capacity: Frank Gimblett (Chairman Huddersfield Labour Party); Stephen Smith (TAGWU convenor Rowntrees)

BRADFORD: Thursday March 1, 7.30p.m. Manningham Community Centre, Lumb Lane, Bradford 8. Speakers: Chris Marsden (YS Regional Committee); Clr

Nuclear crimes

DEMANDS for the immediate closure of the Windscale nuclear reprocessing plant have been given further weight by the publication of two critical reports by government bodies.

The state-controlled industry was charged by the Department of Environment and the Health and Safety Executive with:

- Failing to consider the consequences of discharging radioactive waste into the sea in November and the options open to dealing with the emergency.
- Failing to notify the relevant government department in the specified time.
- Failing to bear in mind their duties to keep discharge levels as low as possible, and breaching book keeping regulations.
- Failing to abide by standard procedures, and having a system of communication between management that was 'prone to error'.
- Publishing figures on discharge which officials at the department did not believe.
- Telling the public that beaches were safe when they were not.

These grave charges have been met with crusade from the cynical Environment Secretary Patrick Jenkin. He simultaneously declared that the nuclear industry was one of the safest — and that the local beaches were still out-of-bounds on health grounds.

What Jenkin did not mention is the leukaemia rate in nearby Seascale, which is ten times the national average, and the high incidence of other cancers along the Cumbrian coast.

Local people no longer dare buy the fish caught off the coast because the radioactivity is concentrated in the fish.

Dust in local houses contains enough plutonium for even a brief exposure to trigger cancerous tumours in the lungs.

Nuclear pollution from the Windscale plant has recently been found in the Canadian Arctic as well as Siberian ice. And it makes up one-third of the radioactive Caesium intake in the Danish diet.

But despite the alarming suggestions made by the government reports, none of the management of British Nuclear Fuels Limited are to be removed or disciplined, the discharges continue, and the only group to have dared to expose the lethal discharges from the plant — the environmental group Greenpeace — are still struggling to pay off a £50,000 fine to the courts.

Jenkin's performance in parliament was a cover-up on behalf of the state, which is determined to suppress any resistance to its nuclear bomb development programme.

The state has such contempt for parliamentary democracy that the Central Electricity Generating Board has ordered millions of pounds worth of equipment for the Sizewell B pressurised water reactor in Suffolk a year before the public inquiry is due to end.

As the collapse in the US nuclear power industry has revealed, nuclear electricity generation has never been more economical than traditional coal and oil-fired generation.

Ever since the first nuclear reactors were built, they have been designed explicitly for the manufacture of nuclear weapons — electricity was merely a by-product.

Now, following the failure of private capitalist monopoly to provide radioactive material for imperialism's nuclear war drive, the NATO war machine is relying increasingly on the state-run industry in Britain.

The state is knowingly and deliberately responsible for untold death and disease through its actions at Windscale, Sellafield, and throughout the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment.

The struggle to rid mankind of these lethal nuclear time-bombs is inseparable from the struggle by the working class to seize the power and smash the capitalist state.

Only under workers' control can any potential use of nuclear power be developed, when safeguards against accidents and disease will be the priority.

A Workers Revolutionary Government would impose a full and immediate moratorium on the nuclear industry to allow a full scientific investigation of the real hazards of the reactors and the effects of pollution.

The Windscale plant, the 'dirtiest' nuclear plant in the world, must be closed down immediately.

UNION BAN 'HAM FISTED'



Len Murray and CPSA general secretary Alex Graham confer during the mass meeting in Cheltenham on Tuesday night.



The 1,500-strong meeting lauding the call for continued defiance of the government ban on their unions.

Tories criticised over GCHQ moves

BY JOHN SPENCER
Our parliamentary correspondent

THE COMMONS select committee on employment yesterday sharply criticised the government's handling of the ban on trade unionism at the Cheltenham spy centre (GCHQ).

Labour home affairs spokesman Gerald Kaufman described the committee's report as 'a devastating indictment of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe'.

But the committee of six Tory and five Labour MPs unanimously urged the unions to accept whatever legally binding assurances the government may require to prevent any future industrial action at the centre.

And they have nothing to say about the threat to the rights of all trade unionists involved in the ban. Instead they accept without question Sir Geoffrey Howe's assurance that the Cheltenham ban is an isolated matter concerned solely with 'national security'.

Observe

Their proposals would allow trade unionists at the centre to maintain their union cards, but lose most of the benefits of membership including the right to take grievances to industrial tribunals.

Thatcher's office made

Withdraw

The committee makes six criticisms of the government's approach, described by chairman Ron Leighton (Labour) as 'hamfisted and inept'.

● The government claim they were seriously disturbed by the effects of the civil servants' industrial action between February 1979 and April 1981, but they took no action publicly until January 1984. The official explanation for the delay — that the purpose of GCHQ was a secret until the Prime Minister in May last year — is not accepted by the committee.

● The committee also complains about the lack of consultation, not only with the unions but also with the Cabinet and the staff affected.

● 'Information,' they say, 'was released in instalments.' Details of the

alleged disruption of GCHQ during the civil service dispute came out some time after the original announcement, as did the fact that workers who refused to accept the alternative posting offered would be sacked without compensation.

● The deprivation of union rights — an unprecedented step — as Howe himself admitted — led to outrage among the GCHQ workers while the £1,000-a-year offer for forfeiting their union rights provoked indignation, the report says.

● The government's actions have 'soured relations with the staff affected' and 'lowered morale, as well as resulting in damaging public controversy, and widespread and unwelcome publicity for GCHQ'.

Doubled

● Summing up their criticisms, the committee say: 'We do not wish to add further to the criticism that has been made by others; we would simply observe that the handling of the issue could not be described as a model of its kind.'

The committee recom-

ment should examine thoroughly the concessions offered by the unions to satisfy itself that they meet every security requirement.

The unions in their turn should offer whatever legally binding assurances the government may require to make these arrangements totally effective.

Any precedents which are set by these moves should be applied solely in matters relating to national security at GCHQ.

It also wants representatives of the TUC and the civil service unions to accept the Prime Minister's invitation to talks.

Lose

'In the event of a satisfactory agreement being reached which will maintain both the essential continuity of operations at GCHQ and also freedom of association and the right to membership of a trade union, the government should withdraw the proposal to prohibit employees at GCHQ from belonging to a trade union,' says the committee.

'In the meantime all action consequent upon the certificates issued by the Foreign Secretary should be suspended together with the requirement to sign option forms relating to new conditions of employment and the offer of £1,000 ex-gratia payments.'

More social service cuts on the way

— says Fowler

THE government will make cuts in other parts of the social service budget after its concessions on housing benefit, Social Services Secretary Norman Fowler told the Commons on Tuesday night.

In the first of a series of votes covering housing benefit regulations, one Tory backbencher voted against the government and several abstained.

BY OUR OWN STAFF

Another Tory MP, Alistair Burt (Bury, North) said Fowler's cuts would entice people into the poverty trap.

Labour spokesman Michael Meacher described the cuts as 'nasty, mean, spiteful and unpopular'. The changes had been made merely to save Fowler's face.

Inept

Meacher pointed out that since 1972/73 housing interest tax relief had almost doubled in real terms and was now costing £2,750 million — 'not much less than housing benefit'.

Winding up for the opposition, Labour MP Max Madden said the cuts would cause 'further distress and administrative chaos'.

They were 'yet another indictment of this mean and nasty government which is again forcing the poor people to pay for help for the rich people of this country'.

Junior Social Services Minister Rhodes Boyson claimed that spending on household help had increased in real terms in the last ten years and the cuts being made would not hit the poorest.

He defended against Labour hecklers the government's decision to count the earnings of teenage children living at home against their parents' housing benefit. 'Surely they can put something into the kitty or are they going to be main free-loaders for ever more,' Boyson asked insultingly.

Tory chairman 'blackmailing BBC'

LABOUR home affairs spokesman Gerald Kaufman yesterday accused John Gummer, the Tory Party chairman, of blackmailing the BBC over the recent Panorama programme which linked a number of Tory MPs with fascist organisations.

Kaufman told a parliamentary Press Gallery lunch at the House of Commons that up to this morning no writ had been received by the BBC from any of the MPs who said they were going to issue them.

'Since then several BBC journalists have been doing nothing but working on it and later today Mr Gummer will be back asking Mr Milne what he is doing about it.'

Kaufman said Gummer's latest statement — that his remarks did not imply any threat to the BBC or anyone else — far from allaying fears, if anything, had given rise to even greater anxiety.

'But of course, the BBC can be subjected to the kind of blackmail that is encapsulated in Mr Gummer's unexplained phraseology. "Very serious action will have to be taken".'

Kaufman said Gummer's latest statement — that his remarks did not imply any threat to the BBC or anyone else — far from allaying fears, if anything, had given rise to even greater anxiety.

Secretary of State for

Don't hide NHS cuts

A LAMBETH councillor challenged the secrecy surrounding a series of cuts planned by the West Lambeth district health authority.

The main items to be decided were contained in a paper which the meeting chairman insisted should be discussed in closed session.

Cllr Stephen Bubb, who represents the council on the authority, deplored a threat to report him to the Secretary of State for

publicising the details of the cuts to the town hall authorities.

He said after Monday's meeting: 'I issued a challenge to the chair that these items should be discussed in the open before the public.'

'They contain some of the most damaging cuts yet proposed, including a recommendation of a policy of compulsory redundancy.'

'In all, about 100 jobs are threatened. This is disastrous — for a

borough like Lambeth to have to add yet more people to the huge number already unemployed.'

● The cuts, totalling some £2.4 million, include £1.3 million from the acute unit at St Thomas' hospital, £222,000 from treating on adult mental illness, £132,000 from the provision for the elderly, £118,000 from child and family services and £400,000 from district services with a saving of £78,000 from St John's Hospital.

News
Line

Theatre

Hastings unveils a well-kept secret

BY KATE PHELPS

MICHAEL HASTINGS has written a powerful new play, 'Tom and Viv', currently showing at the Royal Court Theatre in London.

A riveting story, wonderful script, fine acting and haunting set — and still the whole is even greater than these parts for the piece penetrates the very rich fabric of Edwardian England leaving us thoroughly entertained, shocked, disturbed and hungry for more.

Tom and Viv are T.A. High and Virginia High Wood, the American poet and the daughter of an upper middle class English family.

And the story of the play is the story of these decidedly hostile marriage, dominated by her illness, modern auditors would put it down to a bourgeois melodrama and his drive to become European.

Simply put, they marry, he gets a job at the father-in-law's bank, they get about with the Bloomsbury set, he becomes a famous poet, she becomes a problem, and as Edith Sitwell said, at some point in their marriage Tom went mad and eventually committed suicide.

There is plenty here to intrigue modern audiences — if not outrage them. Mr Hastings has unveiled a previously well-kept secret and brought a certain disgrace to the left in Britain. 'Tom and Viv' is a title which is very private, very intimate, very private his Christian name.

And the writer has already disturbed a few critics who, like those at 'The Guardian', need to establish that there is, of course, no need for all of this and we should remember that the play is a farce.

It is, yes, but Elia's life was not, and Hastings has taken us into the very heart of this man's journey from the American mid-west to a young writer on a \$100-a-year grant from Harvard.

The young man who wrote vicious little ditties against the establishment, became a most respectable banker. The poet and socialist of later years joined the Anglican Church and spoke on fascist platforms against the possibility of large numbers of free-thinking Jews being allowed to settle here.

Elia's wife was away in Northumberland. 'Tom and Viv' is the story of the last year of her life (during which she died) — which paid to keep her incarcerated — and her son as much as a son.

It is likely that the became quite sane after the biological debut of her son, while he became quite sane — or at least immersed completely in his spiritual inner-self.

All of this provides the Edith-like horror of the story. But the play, as I have said, is so much more.

For Hastings has such a talent for unrelenting humour, using the audience's euphemisms of the time to fit up his characters in pain and frustration. The whole is seeped in the gently under-stated, which exaggerates the enormous tension of the piece.

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Julie Covington (Viv) and David Haig (Maurice) in 'Tom and Viv' at the Royal Court

The setting is superb. Julie Covington plays Viv. Bravely and deeply, without ever sinking into mad-woman acting, and drawing us in — so much so that we can see the perfect answer to her behaviour, and the fun of it, like when she pours melted (Bourneville) chocolate into the letter box of her husband's publishing house (I don't know if this is true) because he likes chocolate. And we see her intelligence when discussing her illness with her mother.

ROSE: How often does Granny visit you?
VIVIANNE: I thought Granny was dead.
ROSE: Very well — how often do you get the cure?
VIVIANNE: Two or three times.

ROSE: Is a month?
VIVIANNE: Yes. But it isn't like Granny. It's a pinkness. A little pinkness. I call it my pinky little flowers. The more things get frightened, the more often there is a flower or two.

ROSE: You... have a lot of off-days?
VIVIANNE: Yes.
ROSE: You have a plentiful supply of S.T.?
VIVIANNE: Yes, I have.

There are Haig Woods buried as far as the Alberts or Nepal. In unmarked graves. Unfashionable, yes. Fine for a snigger behind Bloomsbury shutters. We have magistrates and councilors.

First an academic, Jeremy Crowther, who in 1945, is a leading youth in the Young Communist League, leaves the Stalins after Hungary 1956 and ultimately settles for the lush pastures of Oxford, anti-communism and a platform with the ultra-right wing.

His student, Martin Glass, son of a vicar, passes through 1960s anarchism before becoming a full-time official for a supposedly Trotskyist group.

Expelled from that for 'right-wing deviation', he discovers in order his own 'humanism', cynicism and ends up on the same neo-fascist platform as his former tutor, via a lucrative job on the 'Sunday Times'.

It goes about its business. Is quiet about it. Becomes the soil of the field. Quite unexceptional. As unmarked soil. But there it is. And you've never heard me mention our close kinship with Earl Haig, the great soldier.

The Virginia's and the Gloucesters. It is not such an accolade to marry an industrialist's son and write a story about one's friends or such a prize to lower yourself to a Liberal MP who's large among beer barrels.

Tell a Liberal from his residence about his private income any day. I resolve an American in search of an even greater.

Haig Woods were the Dukes of Northumberland before the Percys were a full tribe. One great world rode the length of the Argentine on a pony until he found his tract of perfect land.

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A pitiful attempt to cheat on history

BY BRIAN MOORE

DAVID EDGAR's 'Maydays' is back in the Royal Shakespeare Company repertoire at the Barbican centre in London.

Lavishly directed by Ron Daniels and spectacularly designed by John Custer, 'Maydays' was first performed last October and was acclaimed by Michael Billington, drama critic of 'The Guardian' as an important contribution to political theatre.

Well that's as may be for Mr Billington. Certainly reformist circles in Hampstead and other regions will find in 'Maydays' a mirror of their own political disarray and political pessimism.

For it is, without qualification, a catalogue of political defeat and despair whose author has neither the acumen nor proletarian position to comprehend or evaluate.

Whining

Not for David Edgar a materialist outlook, grappling with the real movements of history and the clash of classes from the standpoint of the proletarian revolution, rather the fastidious whining of the petty bourgeois in search of immutable moral abstractions and clerical formalism.

He recognises only that which suits his own brand of pessimism. His words and tortuously long three-and-a-half hour epic that purports to chronicle the history of the left in Britain and a good deal of the rest of the globe from 1945 to 1981 when his typewriter stopped, turns out to be nothing more than a tired and predictable parade of anti-communism of the Hattersley/Kincock ilk.

The play focuses on three principal characters.

First an academic, Jeremy Crowther, who in 1945, is a leading youth in the Young Communist League, leaves the Stalins after Hungary 1956 and ultimately settles for the lush pastures of Oxford, anti-communism and a platform with the ultra-right wing.

His student, Martin Glass, son of a vicar, passes through 1960s anarchism before becoming a full-time official for a supposedly Trotskyist group.

Expelled from that for 'right-wing deviation', he discovers in order his own 'humanism', cynicism and ends up on the same neo-fascist platform as his former tutor, via a lucrative job on the 'Sunday Times'.

It goes about its business. Is quiet about it. Becomes the soil of the field. Quite unexceptional. As unmarked soil. But there it is. And you've never heard me mention our close kinship with Earl Haig, the great soldier.

Disgrace

And I might add — never has one of us been carried off in disgrace to a lunatic's house. On you swore to us you'd look after Vivie for always. But in between has fallen these long years.

It's what you didn't do. So now you're famous on a bookshelf. What more? What else can you learn? What is there left we can give you?

Hastings has given us a captivating look at society, and the finest kind of theatre.



Anthony Sher, left (Martin Glass) and Malcolm Storry (James Grant) in a scene from 'Maydays'



David Edgar in rehearsal for 'Maydays'

But like it, there is a shared intention — to demonstrate the lunacy of the revolutionary left, the catalogue of freaks, who are completely and utterly outside the main thrust of British politics.

'Lads, it's hopeless. The Governor's the governor, you can't beat him. Lie down and give up. That's the so-called mature message of the former (fringe playwright who has tasted the dizzy heights of the RSC and Broadway).

'Maydays' is a fraud from start to finish. If you set out to cheat history, you become deformed creatively.

Life

Edgar can't write a living character, because he can't grapple with contradiction and life and movement is a contradiction.

That's what he might have learned from Charles Dickens when he adapted 'Nicholas Nickleby'. That book teams with life and passion and outrage and feeling and humour of the old Victorian moralist.

Edgar fills the stage with paper chess pieces, clichés, moved around to demonstrate his weary, stale, flat but presumably profitable thesis.

The play ends with the Greenham Common women. Through some innate wisdom they have learned the emptiness of revolutionary Marxist theory and have their base in the profounder values of love and caring and, according to Mr Edgar, a total disregard of discipline or leadership.

Without at all deriding the courage and conviction of these women, it

has to be said there is a limited political action. It is the familiar politics of protest, however original its form, a blind alley of pacifism and reformist illusion.

The revolution is not determined by the pessimism of middle-class salons or even the confines of the green room of the RSC, but by the insoluble nature of the crisis of world imperialism.

as an objective fact.

That's what determines our epoch. That is the basis of our revolutionary optimism.

And, at the centre of the crisis, is the refusal of the masses throughout the world, under imperialism or Stalinism, to be driven back, whatever the temporary setbacks.

That's the real history of 'Maydays' since 1945.

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INSIDE
STOP WRU's
APARTHEID
LINKS
— PAGE 14



TODAY

ENGLAND'S
NEW LOW
— PAGE 15



BOYCOTT 'THE SPY'

GEOFF BOYCOTT would be a 'spy in the camp' if he was elected to Yorkshire's general committee, claimed committee chairman, Ronnie Burnet, yesterday.

He said he was speaking because the committee, having resigned, had no way of answering publicity which had promoted the Yorkshire members' 1984 group's manifesto and Boycott's ambitions.

Papers

Yorkshire members will tomorrow receive ballot papers to vote in a new general committee at the club's annual meeting on March 3.

Burnet slams Yorkshire rebels

Burnet said in a statement: 'The rebel's manifesto contains nothing except the ridiculous suggestion to disband and do away with the cricket committee.'

'We cannot avoid the assumption that the rebels are taking this line because they have not one single person in their number capable of serving on the cricket committee, and they know it.'

Burnet continued: 'I view with alarm Boycott's statement that if he got on the committee he would be an ideal link between the captain David Bairstow and the committee.'

Calculated

'I can think of nothing more calculated to destroy team spirit and

undermine the captain's position than to have such a "spy in the camp".'

'One of the main reasons for Boycott losing the captaincy was that he was quite unable to divorce himself from his own performances to help the side as a whole.'

'I cannot see, therefore, how he could possibly manage the even bigger stride between another

captain and the committee.'

Burnet said that members ought to realise the danger that leading 1984 group members saw Boycott as the future supremo of Yorkshire cricket with themselves as 'worshipping followers'.

Loyal

He went on: 'The rebels have caused two very honest and loyal Yorkshire officials, Norman Yardley and Michael Crawford, to resign, and expressed no regrets. It is up to the members to see that they go too.'

'Boycott should withdraw his nomination for the committee, and at the members' request, play in his testimonial season, and then go.'



GEOFF BOYCOTT... Burnet critical of his election bid

'My only regret' — Keegan

FORMER England captain Kevin Keegan revealed his biggest regret in football when the Newcastle striker formally announced his retirement from the game at the end of the season at a press conference on Tyneside yesterday.

Charles moves back

QUEEN'S Park Rangers' striker Jeremy Charles has been named as a central defender in the Welsh squad for the British Championship match against Scotland at Hampden Park on February 28.

Charles, a £100,000 buy from Swansea last October, has been a regular member of QPR's attack and helped his new team reach fourth place in Division One on Tuesday night.

But Wales manager Mike England said yesterday: 'I still see him as a centre-half. I think that is his best position.'

Crystal Palace midfielder Peter Nicholas and Southampton striker Alan Curtis, who both missed the European Championship game against Yugoslavia because of injury, return to the squad.

Andrew Dibble, Cardiff's 18-year-old goalkeeper, is called up for the first time.

'Andrew has had an outstanding season and I wanted to give him a taste of international football,' said England.

Keegan said: 'I wish I had been with Newcastle four years ago and quite truthfully this is my only regret in football, as the public here are second to none.'

'I don't regret leaving Liverpool or going to Hamburg, or even not playing for England in the World Cup in Spain. At least I was out there.'

Keegan said he had turned down the chance to sign a new contract with Newcastle but added that he was prepared to help the club find his successor.

'I would be glad to go on an end of season tour and play in a few exhibition games to help raise the money to buy a new player.'

Delighted

'In fact I'd like to be a part of that and I would be delighted to stay for an extra two or three weeks to help set up next year.'

Keegan said he would not be lured back to football next year.

'No amount of money will help me change my mind or I could have been involved in a Dutch auction at the end of the season.'

'This has been an easy decision for me to make because I knew it was the right decision. I would be lying if I said I was the same player now as I was



KEVIN KEEGAN... Sorry he wasn't at Newcastle four seasons ago

when with Hamburg and at my peak.'

When asked which players had had the greatest effect on his

career, Keegan said: 'Nobody has taught me more than Alan Ball — and he was 37 when I teamed up with him.'

Keegan has no definite plans for the future — 'but I have no doubt there is a whole new world waiting for me,' he said.

Stiles and Hunter join Giles' back-room team

JOHNNY GILES returned to West Bromwich Albion yesterday, after an absence of seven and a half years, with two famous names as his assistants.

Giles, reappointed manager at the Hawthorns on Tuesday — he was there for two seasons as player manager between 1975-1977 — has been joined by his brother-in-law Nobby Stiles, and his former Leeds United teammate Norman Hunter who lost his managerial job at Barnsley less than a week ago.

Giles, the 43-year-old former Irish international, and his two equally experienced England colleagues, got down to business right away with West Brom's home FA Cup tie against Plymouth very much in mind.

Said Giles: 'My first objective is to get to know the Albion players again, and to get the side in the right frame of mind for Saturday's tie.'

Giles, Stiles and Hunter undoubtedly constitute a formidable managerial trio, and Giles added: 'I always said before going into management that my first choice staff would include Norman and Nob-



JOHNNY GILES

by, but they were not available.

'It is mine, and West Brom's good fortune that they are now free. From my point of view, Norman's sacking at Barnsley last week could not have been better timed.'

Giles, who has a two-and-a-half year contract, said that Stiles and Hunter will share the coaching responsibilities with Hunter having the extra task of scouting for new players.

Commenting on Saturday's Cup tie, Giles said: 'The time limit is not the ideal preparation, but sometimes it can work in your favour. If we win, that will give us some breathing space.'