

A Socialist ACTION

BUILDING AN ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALISM

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Thatcher's two nations

THIS WEEK saw the publication of facts which give the most vivid picture so far of the political strategy of the Thatcher government. They were tucked away in the seemingly obscure figures of the Department of Employment job census — suppressed for a year by the Tories, but now leaked in the *Observer* last Sunday.

The scenario revealed was staggering in its clarity. The figures show that a total of 1,546,000 jobs have been lost in Britain since Thatcher came to power. But only six per cent of them have been lost in the southern part of England: the South East, South West, and East Anglia. These counties have lost a

total of only only 89,000 jobs.

Outside the southern triangle — Scotland, Wales, the North, North West, the East and West Midlands — have lost 94 per cent of all the jobs that have gone. That is over 1.4 million jobs.

These unemployment figures confirm what was already known from every other index: on pay, housing, social services. The policy of the Thatcher government has been to increase every type of differential in society.

Youth wages have fallen relative to adult wages. Women's wages have fallen relative to men's. The differentials in pay between black and white workers have increased. The gap between

unskilled and skilled workers has widened.

Now these new and most detailed unemployment figures show just how the dole queue has been used to cut the country in two.

Thatcher's goal has been simple. She has tried to create a relatively privileged, highly paid, relatively secure section of society, including a section of the working class, supporting the Tories and concentrated in the south of the country. And she has financed a large police force to baton the rest of the country into submission. That has been Thatcher's answer for the inner-cities, for the north, for the black com-

munity, for women workers, for the unemployed. She has sought to organise the haves against the have-nots.

The strategy of the labour movement in 1987 — and every year — clearly flows from understanding that. It must start by organising the most direct victims of Thatcher's assault: the unemployed, the north, the black community, the inner-cities, women, the Irish — all those sections of the working class in struggle with Thatcher.

It must build on that to create a unity of the working class against Thatcher's offensive. Even those sections of the working class which have done best

under the Tory government are still affected by the crisis and by the attacks which are gripping the whole of British society.

But Labour must do this on a clear basis. Not by a vain attempt to recreate the 'one nationalism' for which the economic basis has long since passed — like Neil Kinnock's recent ridiculous praise for the Tory 'one nationalism' of Macmillan.

Labour should have its own — very different — two nations. The two nations of labour and capital. Those are the two nations whose reality is so graphically revealed in the figures published this week. That is the basis for socialist strategy.

Socialist ACTION

An election year

1987 WILL BE an election year. The eyes of millions and millions of workers will be fixed on that election. Every socialist, every worker who thinks, wants the defeat of Thatcher in that election and the victory of a Labour government.

But that brings precisely to the fore *how* to win that election, how to defeat Thatcher, what is the relation of the election to the fight that has to be waged for the other four years and 364 days between elections and, in short, what should be the *strategy* of the labour movement. Because an election only makes sense *within* the strategy of the labour movement, it cannot be a strategy itself.

What Labour's strategy *should* be is vividly brought home in the figures which we print on our front page this week. They show that Thatcher's entire strategy has been to create two nations — not simply the two nations of labour and capital that have always existed, but two nations in a much more direct sense.

Thatcher has sought every means to divide the working class. By tax concessions, an oil-revenue fed consumer boom, creating 'core' and 'peripheral' sectors in industry, the use of rate capping, eliminating wages councils, share hand-outs. Thatcher has attempted to create on the one side a relatively secure, prosperous section of society, including a large part of the working class, which will vote Tory (or at least not vote Labour). On the other side she has created a working class of the dole queue and the inner-cities, of part-time women workers and poorly paid public sector workers, of the unskilled and those whose jobs are under threat of privatisation, and of black communities.

Of course Thatcher has difficulty in applying that strategy perfectly. Even the best paid sections of the working class are hit just as much by the crisis in the health service as the poor paid for example. And that is why some of the most explosive crises for the government have come around this type of issue. The economic decline of British capitalism means that wider and wider layers of the working class are progressively hit by the crisis. But that does not prevent Thatcher applying her policy.

The Tory government, and British capital, knows what will be the political price of that strategy. Those who bear the brunt of her attacks will rise in revolt. The miners strike, the struggle at Wapping, the rebellions in the black communities are as inevitable as night following day. Because Thatcher has nothing to offer these sections of society, she demands support for a powerful police force, and increased repression throughout society to hold down those who try to rebel.

That is the reality behind the repression the miners suffered. That is the reality behind the daily assaults on the black communities.

This is the reality that Labour should be explaining. The Labour Party should be saying that with a Thatcher government it is inevitable that the slaves will rise up — and that their rebellion is justified. Most important, Labour must stand with those who do revolt. It must defend the miners who fought for their jobs. It must defend the black communities whose rebellions are inevitable given the daily brutality to which they are subjected by the police.

That is the relationship between elections and what takes place between them. Labour strategy in an election must be a part of the strategy it carried out every day of every year.

And that is what has got to be turned round this year. Because Kinnock stood with the police against the 'violence' of the miners, with 'law and order' against the black communities, with the forces of reaction against 'loonie' councils which showed their 'lunacy' by thinking that women should be given the same opportunities as men or that racism should be fought and not tolerated by a blind eye.

Labour's policy for winning an election has to start *now*. By supporting those who are fighting against Thatcher now. By supporting now those whose votes Labour wants when that election is called.

As we said, an election can be integrated into, and flow out of, Labour's strategy. But an election cannot be Labour's strategy. That is the first lesson the labour movement has to act on in 1987.

NOLS must support Labour's Campaign left

THIS WEEKEND the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) is holding a student council to select its candidates for the NUS conferences at Easter. Given the overwhelming support for Labour students in the NUS the sort of slate that NOLS chooses will determine the next leadership of the NUS.

For the last few years NOLS has been entirely dominated by the 'Democratic Left' — effectively the student wing of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee. Originally formed with the purpose of removing the *Militant* from the leadership of NOLS, this grouping developed positions of support for the self-organisation of women and of black people, for lesbian and gay rights, for British withdrawal from Ireland and support for the objectives of the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

It also developed a deep hostility to all other left groupings — which was carried out in practice by severely undemocratic practices, including excluding them from NOLS conferences. This lays the basis for NOLS support for the expulsion of *Militant* supporters and socialists from the Labour Party.

This year's decision about what sort of politics will be in the effective leadership of NOLS comes at a time when the Campaign left in the Labour Party is consolidating itself, and when Kinnock's anti-working class leadership has been more openly shown to be not only anti-socialist but also not working electorally. NOLS faces a choice between these two paths.

Like the whole of the 'realigned left' in the Labour Party, the Democratic Left in NOLS is in crisis — having to decide between continuing to support Kinnock despite the increasingly clear contradiction between his politics and those of the majority of NOLS, or continuing and extending their support for the struggles of the working class and the oppressed in Britain and internationally. That latter course would bring NOLS into conflict with Kinnock and make it a leading component of the left in the Labour Party.

This crisis for the Democratic Left was clearly expressed by the wholesale rejection of the NUS executive's report to the December 1986 NUS conference. Continued support for Kinnock could mean NOLS losing the

leadership of the NUS. Certainly it means holding back the support for the struggles of women, black people, the liberation movements in South Africa and in Ireland that presently exists in the NUS.

By Polly Vittorini,
NUS London Executive

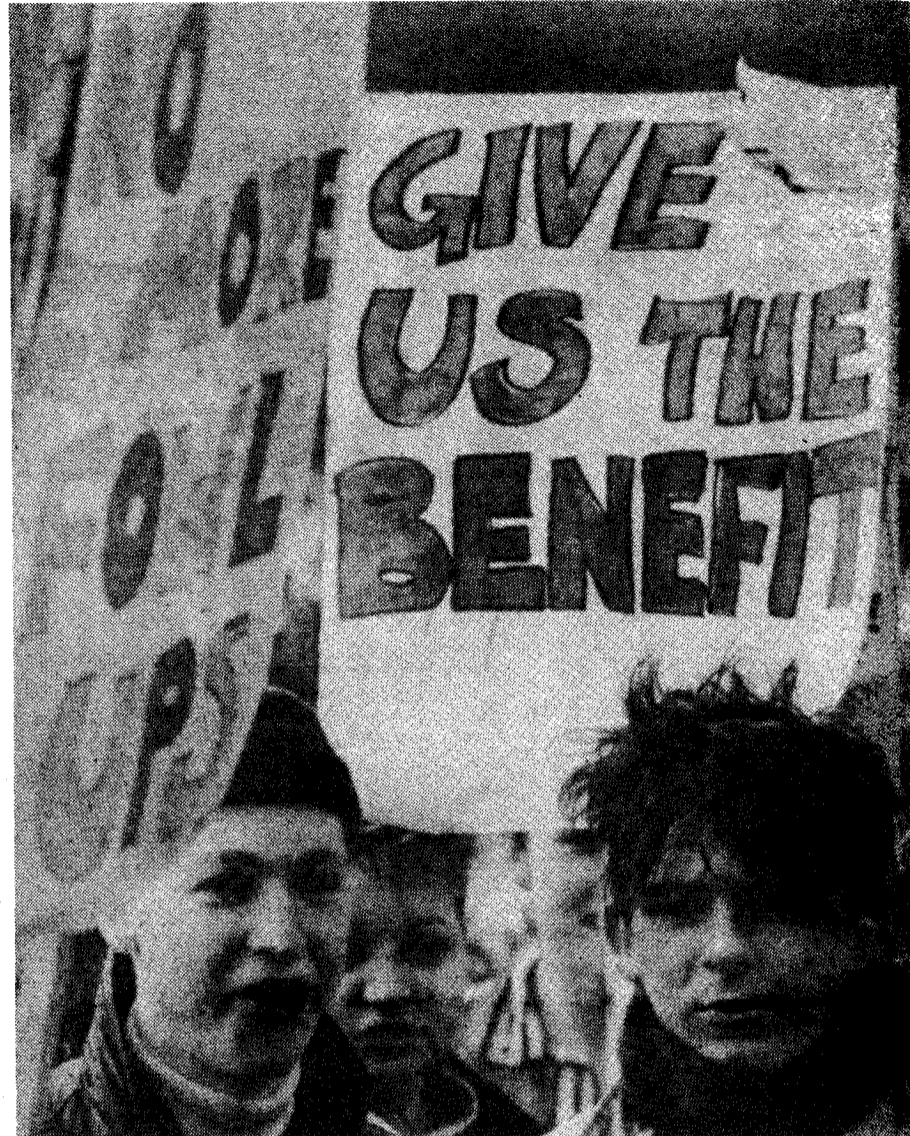
The contradiction in NOLS practice, between supporting these progressive struggles and also supporting the policies of the Labour leadership, is producing widespread dissatisfaction in the NUS.

This dissatisfaction can only be resolved by NOLS starting to campaign consistently in support of the policies it holds on paper. NOLS can either continue in its crisis, and go into decline, or it can give campaigning content to its policies and ally with the Campaign left in the Labour Party.

If NOLS is to take this latter course it must affiliate the the Labour Left Liaison (LLL). The fact that NOLS is already affiliated to the Labour Committee on Ireland is a step in the right direction.

NOLS support for black self-organisation and self-defence will be given meaning by clear support for the Labour Party Black Sections and their demands. NOLS support for women's autonomous organisation in the NUS should be extended to support for the demands of the Women's Action Committee in the Labour Party. Likewise NOLS support for lesbian and gay rights is meaningless unless it supports the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights and its campaign to take a lesbian and gay rights bill to parliament.

The main opposition in NOLS — Socialist Students in NOLS — which claims to be a left alternative to the Democratic Left, was proved decisively to be nothing of the kind at NUS conference in December. Any students who had illusions that SSiN was a progressive challenge to the leadership of NOLS at conference would have had their illusions removed by SSiN's opposition to the right of women



NOLS must ally itself with the Campaign left in the Labour Party and take forward the struggle of students

students to elect a women's officer to the NUS executive, by their failure to call for Britain's unconditional withdrawal from Ireland, and by their opposition to the Palestine Liberation Organisation's call for a democratic, secular Palestine.

It is clear that SSiN cannot resolve the crisis of leadership in NOLS, and that for SSiN to gain control of NUS would be a step backwards from NUS present policies. The way forward for NOLS lies in allying with the campaigning left in the Labour Party: with the Campaign Group and Labour Left Liaison.

Campaign Student, which was established at the December NUS conference, stands to give a platform to these campaign forces in the NUS and is supporting resolutions to NOLS conference in February for its affiliation to Labour Left Liaison and the campaigns in it.

● Campaign Student is meeting to plan for NOLS conference on 24 January at 2pm in UCL Union, Gordon St. For more in-

formation write to Campaign Student, 51 Grayson House, Radnor St, London EC1.

Black section to run candidate for Young Socialist NEC place

LABOUR Party Black Section is likely to follow its successful experience of campaigning in the LPYS last year by standing another candidate in this year's election to run as the LPYS representative on the Labour Party NEC. The candidate will be active in the Black Section's youth committee and the campaign proper will start later in January.

Last year's campaign in support of Kingley Abrams successfully raised the demands of black youth for policy and representation centrally in Labour's youth section. The candidate won the support of *Youth Action* and LCC Youth, as well as sections of the Labour Party left.

Kingsley and other black sections speakers attended a wide range of regional LPYS conferences and addressed a meeting of 200 at YS national conference. The campaign ensured that the argument for recognised black sections was raised in the LPYS more than ever before.

This year's campaign can deepen this support for black sections — still opposed by the LPYS — and for other policies and alliances of the campaign-

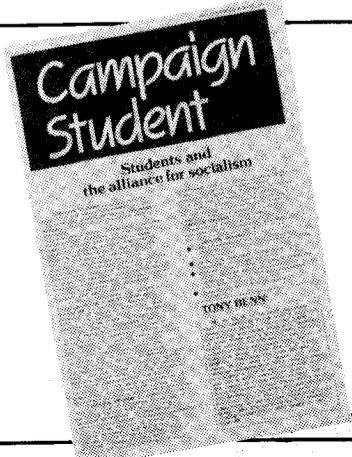
ing left in the Labour Party. Budget cuts, expulsions and the decision of party conference to establish a 'Youth Campaigns Committee' have all limited the role and independence of the LPYS. But in the face of this the LPYS continues to ally itself with the right wing on key issues and isolate itself from the left. LPYS branches can support the Black Section campaign by submitting resolutions in support of Black Sections and against the Black and Asian Advisory Committee, by nominating the candidate, and by inviting the candidate to speak at branch meetings or regional conferences.

● For more details contact: Black Sections Youth Officer, c/o 46 Summerhouse Avenue, Heston, Middlesex TW5 9OA.

Campaign Student is published to help link the student movement to the alliance for socialism which Campaign Forum is building in the wider labour movement.

Campaign Student urges Labour Clubs to affiliate to Labour Left Liaison, promote *Campaign Group News*, and affiliate to *Campaign Student*.

For further information write to Campaign Student at 51 Grayson House, Radnor Street, London EC1.



After the retreat on reselection —

The soft left and unilateralism

IT IS A LAW of politics that it is impossible to stay in the same place. If you do not go forward, you must go backwards. That truth is dramatically confirmed by the response of the soft left to Labour's defence campaign. Launched amid a razzmatazz of nationalism and militarism rarely used so openly by the party, the *Modern Britain* campaign emphasises Labour's commitment to NATO and pledges that every penny now spent on nuclear weapons will be reallocated to increasing conventional arms. But according to the LCC-sponsored *Chartist* magazine, 'we will have to bite our tongues' and support the campaign. *Tribune* was positively enthusiastic: 'It does not compromise Labour's non-nuclear defence policy in any way whatsoever,' said editor Nigel Williamson, and attacked the campaign's critics in the party. CAROL TURNER examines why the soft left, which was campaigning for unilateral nuclear disarmament and a reduction in arms spending in 1979-83, is now prepared to support waving the union jack and clamouring for more tanks.

THE formula the soft left is busy providing to justify support for Labour's defence campaign is the time-honoured argument that the party cannot win an election on its full-blooded programme. Both Nigel Williamson's article in the New Year issue of *Tribune* ('Another left myth bites the dust') and the editorial of the January-February edition of *Chartist* ('Defence and nukes: winning hearts as well as minds') are categorical in their assertion that 'you have to start from where people are at, not where we might like them to be'.

The reason the electorate will not accept unilateral nuclear disarmament, the soft left claim, is because that would 'leave Britain defenceless'. In the words of the *Chartist*, Labour's campaign 'must be confident, outspoken and combative in reassuring people that a non-nuclear defence policy stands for a stronger and more effective defence'.

The conclusion drawn, therefore, is that Labour must support a conventional weapons build-up.

The question of whether or not that is objectively desirable, whether it corresponds to the interests of anyone, is not even considered.

The idea that Labour cannot advocate particular policies because the electorate is not 'socialist' is an old argument of the right wing. This time round it is peddled by the soft left to hide the fact that the Labour Party leadership is attempting to fit support for unilateral nuclear disarmament into a political framework that is wrong and makes it impossible to present that policy credibly.

What is happening is that Labour is slipping into a more and more openly pro-NATO, pro-military spending role. This is not only wrong in itself but it will ultimately undermine the party's unilateralist position on nuclear weapons as well.

The *Modern Britain* campaign is just the latest in a whole series of retreats which started immediately after a two-thirds majority was won at the 1983 party conference, ensuring unilateralism's place in Labour's election manifesto. The first step backwards was contained in the

Defence and Security for Britain document published in 1984. That statement pointed out that savings from cancelling Trident and decommissioning Polaris 'will assist the aim of the Labour Party, over time, of bringing Britain's defence spending towards the average of our major European allies as a proportion of national income. This could not be achieved in the lifetime of a single parliament without major cuts in our conventional forces which we do not recommend.'

This commitment to conventional armaments began the erosion of conference policy. Thanks to a deliberately ambiguous NEC statement to the 1986 party conference, *Defence and Conversion Costs*, this has now transmogrified into a defence campaign which pledges proudly that every penny saved on nuclear weapons will be ploughed into conventional arms. The *Modern Britain* campaign even now commits a Labour government to maintaining conventional weapons spending, in real terms, at the level of the 20 per cent increase it has reached during the last seven years of the Thatcher government.

Other aspects of unilateralism, and opposition to conventional arms spending, have equally suffered. Among the first to welcome *Defence and Security for Britain* was none other than Denis Healey, who pointed out the need to 'define more precisely' what a nuclear base was.

This has been done by the present defence campaign: 'nuclear bases' are now defined as the few that actually hold nuclear warheads, and action on those will only be taken after 'discussion' with the United States. The rest of NATO's nuclear staging capacity and its ability to

fight a nuclear war from British soil, will be left intact.

Mounting a defence campaign based on support for NATO and a build-up of conventional arms has nothing to do with defending nuclear disarmament, despite all the protestations to the contrary by the soft left. The emphasis on militarism and 'defence' is not going to help make Labour's policy more credible — quite the reverse. Nor is it going to be an effective means of Labour winning an election — if militarism is the card to play, Thatcher is going to win hands down.

But this is exactly the road that *Tribune*, the LCC and the rest of the soft left are now travelling down. They are doing so because they pose the issue in a way that is hopeless.

Nigel Williamson claims: 'The simple truth is that Labour cannot be an electoral party and a party of pure undiluted socialism at one and the same time because the electorate itself is not yet socialist' — which leaves aside the small question of whether you really have to be a 'socialist' to oppose chauvinist hysteria and building tanks. The *Chartist's* conclusion that the left must 'bite our tongues' amounts to the same thing. In fact the *Chartist* editorial doggedly contrives to ignore its own advice, that Labour must appeal to the electorate's 'self-interest', in order to arrive at exactly the same conclusion as Nigel Williamson's quote above.

But this argument is wrong at every step. First, and least importantly, far from nuclear disarmament being unpopular and the vote loser that the Labour leadership and the soft left believe it to be, the strength of feeling against nuclear weapons is huge — demonstrated time and again on the streets of Britain and across West

Europe. That is precisely because maintaining nuclear arsenals is *not at all* in the self-interest of the majority of people in this country or for that matter, across the globe.

The great majority of the population of this country have no objective interest whatsoever in maintaining military arsenals of any kind. The military machine does not exist to 'defend Britain' but for quite other purposes — including at present for suppressing those fighting for their liberation in third world countries and for participating in a completely reactionary cold war arms build-up against the USSR. What a state the soft left has been reduced to when it considers that it has to support projects such as 'reinforcing the British army on the Rhine'.

For 30 years the ideology of the cold war has been the main way of securing popular support for military spending. Fighting that cold war ideology is the indispensable condition for a fight against militarism. The rise of the movement against nuclear weapons is precisely part of breaking down that framework.

Labour's *Modern Britain* campaign is incoherent because it simultaneously proposes nuclear disarmament and goes along with that cold war rhetoric. Kinno's emphasis on NATO, trips to see the Berlin Wall, and similar episodes, actually reinforce that cold war framework.

That is exactly what removes any coherence from the policy at all — and opens it up to easy attack. If we are really threatened by the 'Soviet menace' then it is necessary to have nuclear weapons — that is the conclusion the electorate will draw. By adopting a cold war political framework the Labour leadership makes it impossible to mobilise support in favour of unilateral nuclear disarmament. And an incoherent policy undoubtedly is a losing policy.

There is of course a way to appeal to precisely the 'self-interest' which in their other writings the LCC and *Tribune* stress. Socialism, of course, is not something opposed to the self interest of the majority, but is the self interest of the majority. The threat of nuclear annihilation is something very close indeed to people's 'self-interest' — and that is why the movement against nuclear weapons has played such a massive and progressive role. What is needed to de-

fend unilateralism, however, is to make the rest of Labour's policy consistent with it, for Labour to break out of the entire cold war framework that has dominated the party since Ernest Bevin played a key role in setting up NATO. That is what the movement for unilateralism began to achieve in the early 1980s — and it is exactly what Kinno's 'defence' campaign, policies are being supported today which are reactionary and the way is being prepared for abandoning unilateralism tomorrow.

NCC elections: Left romps home in constituency section

THE RESULTS of the election to the National Constitutional Committee, the body established by the NEC to sanitise expulsions, were announced last Monday. The three candidates supported by the Campaign Group and Labour Left Liaison swept the board in the constituency section. But the right won four out of the five trade union places, as well as the two women's and one socialist society slot.

The Campaign Group-LLL slate — Mandy Moore of the Women's Action Committee, Ken Slater of CLPD, Johnny Burrows of Chesterfield Labour Party and treasurer of North Derbyshire NUM — easily won in the constituencies. With 101,000, John Burrows got well over twice the votes of his nearest rival, a right winger, Bailey, on the Forward Labour slate.

But if the left won the constituencies with ease, the right wing swept home in the trade union and women's sections where the trade union block vote dominates the result.

Owen Briscoe, the NUM's candidate in the trade union section, was runner up. He lost to David Brookman of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation by only 174,000 votes. The only left candidate to be elected to the trade union section was Alan Quinn of the TGWU.

Rose Degiorgio of APEX and Dianne Hayter of the Society of Labour Lawyers, both right wingers, swept the board in the women's section.

Among the left wing women standing, Vera Derer of CLPD polled 674,000 votes and Margaret Vallins of Chesterfield CLP polled 330,000.

By Annie Brady

The vote of the Labour clubs ensured that another right winger, Dooley, won the socialist society section seat with a comfortable 27,000 votes.

The constituency section vote is a good result for Labour's left wing — a clear indication that the constituency parties are unwilling to see further witch hunts and of the dominance of the Campaign Group-LLL left. But, while the CLPs result is a good one the overall outcome shows the continuing swing to the right in the unions.

The overall balance of the NCC is predominantly in favour of continued witch hunts — despite the moral victory won in the CLP section. As the *Guardian* of Tuesday 6 January put it: 'Kinno gets his purging group'.

Successful candidates in NCC election:

CLP Section:
Mandy Moore 135,000
Ken Slater 108,000
Johnny Burrows 101,000

Trade Union Section:
Fred Binks (UCW) 5,045,000
Alan Hadden (GMBATU) 5,005,000
Alan Quinn (TGWU) 3,376,000
John Weakley (AEU) 3,076,000
David Brookman (ISTC) 2,962,000

Women's Section:
Rose Degiorgio 4,560,000
Dianne Hayter 3,500,000

Socialist Society Section:
WB Dooley 27,000



In Brief

Black and Asian Advisory Committee

YOUNG Socialist activists are being encouraged to use the forthcoming round of regional LPYS conferences, and national LPYS conference in April, to demand their NEC representative, Linda Douglas, withdraw from participation in the Black and Asian Advisory Committee.

Douglas has involved herself as representative of Labour's youth despite almost unanimous opposition to the committee from the left. The Campaign Group has supported a boycott of BAAC. Former chair Jo Richardson now refuses to serve on it. Even the LCC has condemned it.

This comes sharp on the heels of Francis

Curran, outgoing NEC representative for the LPYS, summing up for the right wing after the black sections debate at October party conference. Kingsley Abrams, Assistant Secretary of Labour Party Black Sections told Socialist Action: 'It is a disgrace that the LPYS is involving itself in the Black and Asian Committee which is undemocratic and unelected.'

'The irony of the LPYS alliance with the same right wing that is threatening its own existence continues.'

'LPYS members should campaign against this betrayal of black youth. Branches should send resolutions to conference demanding withdrawal from the committee and write letters of protest to the national committee.'

LCND responds to Labour defence campaign

THE December meeting of Labour CND discussed the newly-launched Modern Britain defence campaign and unanimously passed the following resolution:

'Labour CND executive committee expresses its grave concern at the way in which the national party campaign is presenting Labour's nuclear disarmament policies, subordinated to increasing conventional arms and to support for the NATO nuclear alliance. We note in particular that, without consulting the NEC nor taking conference policy fully into account, our essential commitment to get rid of nuclear bases is presented as removing only a few of the 100-plus nuclear bases from this country and as subject to 'discussion' with the USA and without a time-scale.'

'We believe that the national campaign plays into the hands of the Tory Party and creates a situation for a re-run of the same political arguments used against us by our opponents in the 1983 election.'

'The Reykjavik

Campaign for Non-Alignment conference

ON 24 January a conference will be held to give the Campaign for Non-Alignment impetus.

'The conference on non-alignment for Britain,' says Tony Benn in the CNA literature being distributed to Constituency Labour Parties early this month, 'marks an important turning point in the development of thinking about British foreign and defence policy.'

summit has clearly exposed the fact that Thatcher, Reagan and the rest of the so-called multilateralists are the world's real nuclear warmongers who are determined to hold onto their nuclear armouries at all costs.

'Labour CND believes that this point should be a central feature of Labour's campaign, together with putting forward the positive and popular arguments in favour of Britain getting rid of all nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons provide no defence. Pointing this out is the best way to campaign for our policies and to convince the electorate to vote for them. It is this policy which should be hammered home in broadcasts, press statements and all election literature.'

The January LCND meeting will be discussing the production of model leaflets on nuclear disarmament aimed at arming constituency parties with the arguments needed for local campaigns. This kit is intended for circulation by the time of the LCND annual meeting, which will be held in Sheffield on Saturday 21 February.

The event will be held in Kingsway Princeton College, Kings Cross. Workshops include NATO and the US bases, Central America, South Africa, Ireland, and more.

• Registration costs £2.50 (unwaged £1). Further details from: CNA, c/o Jeremy Corbyn, Red Rose Centre, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7 7QG.

Stop the Viraj Mendis deportation

'THE BRITISH government want to deport me to Sri Lanka because of my political activities, because of my involvement in anti-deportation campaigns in the fight against racism and the immigration laws.' That was how VIRAJ MENDIS summed up his own deportation to FINN JENSEN before Xmas. On 18 December deportation minister David Waddington rejected Mendis final appeal. Viraj has since taken refuge in a church in the Hulme area of Manchester where he lives.

THE immigration laws are made in such a way that I can be deported just because I am black. If I had been white there would have been no problem in being allowed to stay. But the government wants to give a warning to all those fighting against immigration laws.

The home office wants to scare black activists. It is becoming a crime to organise against racism. It is a new way the immigration laws are being used against black people.

At the moment 50 black people are deported each week. And the government has tightened the visa controls, which means that the democratic rights of black people are getting undermined. They cannot get visits from their relatives, their parents abroad, for funerals, even if these black people have every right to

live here.

The official reason for deporting me has varied. In terms of the immigration laws I have 'overstayed' here in Britain illegally for 10 years.

Waddington has said that if you have stayed illegally in this country for more than 10 years you have a prima facie case — in normal circumstances you should be allowed to stay. I fall into that category. But then he adds that one's behaviour during those 10 years should be taken into consideration. Other home office personnel have openly used my political activities as an argument for my deportation.

In Sri Lanka I will face persecution and perhaps execution. Even though I am not a Tamil, as a Sinhalese Communist I have for many years supported the



Tamils right for self-determination and their right to use armed struggle in order to achieve that. I am publicly known as a supporter of the Tamil case.

I have applied for political asylum here in Britain. But the immigration minister says that I will be safe to go back to Sri Lanka, even if all the independent human rights organisations like Amnesty International say the opposite.

My defence campaign started two and a half years ago when the home office started the attack on me. I think they wanted to scare

me off all the anti-deportation activities. Instead I started my own campaign not to be deported.

My campaign is not just about me, but directed against the immigration laws.

Now we are planning to hold a conference against deportations here in Manchester on 11-12 April. Some say that we should concentrate on my right to stay in Britain. We have never seen a contradiction between fighting the immigration laws and fighting for my release. We see the conference as a new step in our fight against the home office.

We have also been able to make an alliance with Manchester city council, which has adopted a policy of supporting all black people in Manchester threatened with deportation. The city council gives money, legal advice and political support to any anti-deportation campaign in Manchester. This in turn has encouraged people to get involved, they know they are no longer alone.

Many Labour Parties and trade union branches have already given their support to me. Partly as a

result of the miners strike, people's attitude to the police and the state has changed. They are now willing to listen to criticism of the immigration laws.

The home office will not change its mind unless we have heavy ammunition. The right wing of the Labour Party is afraid of fighting racism because they think they will lose votes.

Others say the labour movement has to stand up against Tory racism. The best way to show it now is to oppose the deportations. We will force the Labour Party leadership to take a clear stand on this and make their stand public — because we have to put our lives above the election of a Labour government.

• The Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign has already collected over 32,000 signatures to a petition demanding he stays, and has published a pamphlet on the case, price 75p. Copies of the petition and pamphlet and further information are available from: Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Manchester M15 5AL (061-234 3168).

Broadwater Farm: 'Time that the falsehoods about black communities are exposed'

THE LIES told about black communities in this country must be exposed said STAFFORD SCOTT of the Broadwater Farm Youth Association, speaking at the Socialist Action Alliance for Socialism conference at the end of November. For defending their community, the residents of Broadwater Farm Estate have been subjected to a series of show trials on frame-up charges. Six youth are currently being tried for murder. But Broadwater Farm is not exceptional. Its experience contains lessons for the whole labour movement.

IF YOU want to know why you should defend the black communities ask a miner. A politically aware miner can tell you the tactics learned by the police and the government when dealing with black communities were used on them. Ask a teacher, ask a printer from Wapping.

My generation was born here. We get educated in a system that doesn't cater for us. We get forced to opt out of that system. Up and down Great Britain people have opted out of the system because the state is not fair, the system is not just.

They say black youth are aggressive: we dress aggressively, we act aggressively. That does not necessarily mean we are directing our aggression against people. It means we find nothing in the present system in which to put our faith.

It means we don't want to be part of a system that spends millions of pounds on nuclear weapons while our people in other countries are dying from starvation.

We can teach people who want Star Wars what life is about. We don't want nuclear. We don't want uprisings in our areas.

Go ask the miners, the teachers, the people at Wapping. Defending us means defending humanity.

Broadwater Farm is not exceptional. If you study the statistics you find out there's nothing

about it. But when black communities came together that's when they took action.

What we have here on BWF is a black community. Nothing happens unless the community representatives are consulted. We make decisions that affect our lives on BWF, and that is something that cannot be tolerated. What happened on BWF was a travesty, something we wished had never happened. I was there and I know. I saw that the police got a bloody good hiding. I do not want to gloat about that. I prefer that society has a bloody good lesson — learned not to oppress black people, not to expect to keep us at the bottom of the pile without us fighting back.

We will fight and we will succeed. There are thousands of black people who should be treated with

honour and respect, and I know there are thousands of black people who can and who will contribute to this society if given a fair chance.

It is time that the falsehoods that which are being told about the black communities are exposed.

Malcolm X was a person the American press treated even worse than Bernie Grant has been treated. Malcolm X once said that the American Republican Party dealt with keeping the niggers down, while the Democratic Party dealt with keeping the black person down.

He was talking about tokenism. That is what we've been coming up against for years.

If you want to defend black communities you have to understand black communities. We are not looking for sympathy. But if you listen then you know

that you have a moral obligation to defend what is right. We who fight the oppressor are right.

• Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign can be contacted at: 12-16 Tangmere, BWF Estate, London N17 (01-885 3752). On Saturday 10 January, the defence campaign is holding a fund-raising dance with Quadrophonic sound-system, in aid of the defendants and their families. It begins at 7pm at the Black Woman's Centre, Lordship Lane, Tottenham, London N17. Tickets cost £4 at the door (UB40s £2).

• The next mass picket in support of the BWF defendants is outside the Old Bailey, The Strand, London WC2 on Wednesday 14 January, between 12.00-2.00 (nearest tube: St Pauls).

Labour MP investigates visa controls in Bangladesh

THE Labour Party's role in defending black people against racist immigration controls came under scrutiny at a recent meeting of the Bangladeshi community in Islington.

Organised by the Islington Muslim Association (IMA), the meeting on 21 December was attended by 30 people from North London, who heard MP Jeremy Corbyn and Islington councillor Talal Karim talk of the operation of immigration controls and of their current visit to Bangladesh.

The history of immigration controls is a history of racial discrimination measures designed to restrict the entry rights of black people

in Britain.

These legal measures significantly reduced the numbers of black people who have rights to be in this country and laid the groundwork for the discriminatory practices that the home office use to further restrict the rights of black people who are able to enter under the legislation.

The introduction of visa controls last October for Nigeria, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Ghana was a further step down this path.

Imposed only on people living in black countries, it is now a requirement to have a visa before boarding a plane to Britain.

Already accounts are reaching Britain of long waits for interviews, which

when they take place are designed to 'catch out' the applicants.

Jeremy Corbyn and Talal Karim are taking a number of cases to examine and will visit families and the British High Commission in Bangladesh to collect evidence on how the visa system is working.

The IMA meeting felt strongly that the Labour Party should be prominent in their defence of black people's rights to enter this country. The Labour leadership should not concede one inch on the question of racist immigration controls.

The material collected by the two-person visit to Bangladesh should be used by the Labour Party to highlight the racist practices of the Tories and the immigration service.

JUST PUBLISHED by Brandon Press is a new book by Gerry Adams, *The Politics of Irish Freedom*. Socialist Action urges all its readers to buy this book which is the clearest exposition there is of Ireland's struggle for independence and the role of Republicanism. As a trailer, we are reprinting here the book's central theoretical chapter entitled 'Republicanism and Socialism'. We will be carrying a review in our next issue.

*The cause of Labour is the cause of Ireland
The cause of Ireland is the cause of Labour*

James Connolly

IF YOU WANT to talk about socialism in the Irish context you cannot divorce the socialist aspiration from the aspiration of national independence. This is the big lesson of the Connolly experience. In order to bring about a socialist society you must have real national independence. To use Connolly's phrase, this requires the reconquest of Ireland by the Irish people, which means the expulsion of imperialism in all its forms, political, economic, military, social and cultural. It means the establishment of a real Irish republic and the organisation of the economy so that all its resources are under Irish control and organised to bring maximum benefit to our people in a 32 county state in which Irish culture and national identity are strong and confident.

Real national independence is the prerequisite of socialism. My understanding of socialism is that it is a definite form of society in which the main means of production, distribution and exchange are socially owned and controlled and in which production is based on human need rather than private profit. Socialism is based on the most thorough-going democratisation of the economic system, side by side with the most thorough-going democracy in politics and public affairs. Socialism includes and is a stage in advance of republicanism.

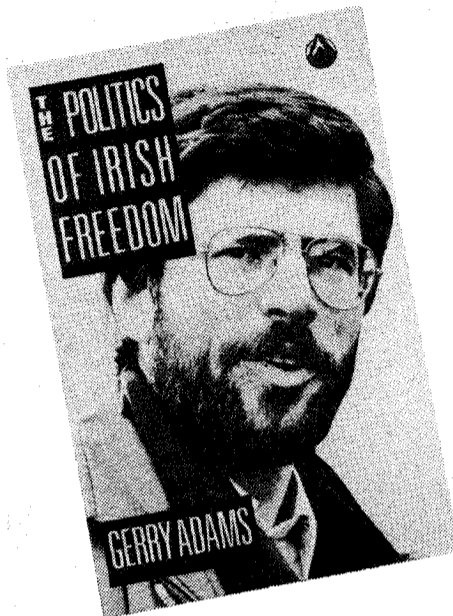
You cannot have socialism in a British colony, such as exists in the 6 counties or in a neo-colony such as exists in the 26 counties. You must have your own national government with the power to institute the political and economic changes which constitute socialism. Furthermore, there cannot be a credible movement for socialism in Ireland while the British connection divides workers in the 6 counties and while partition prevents a unity of working class interests.

One does not become a socialist merely by calling oneself that. After all, Hitler's fascist movement called itself National Socialists, the Nazis. Today such politicians as Neil Kinnock, Roy Mason, Harold Wilson, Fidel Castro, Yasser Arafat and Mikhail Gorbachev call themselves socialists. Nearer home John Hume, Tomás Mac Giolla, Dick Spring and Michael O'Riordan call themselves socialists also. Clearly socialism is what socialism does. It means different things to different people and nothing to most people and is second only to republicanism as the most abused political description in Irish politics.

The acid test of commitment to socialism in Ireland (and Britain as well) is to be found in one's attitude to the issue of Irish national self-determination. The correct socialist attitude to Ireland must be an internationalist one. You cannot be a socialist without being a separatist. You cannot be a socialist if you condone, support or ignore the colonial stranglehold which the British government maintains over this part of our country.

There cannot be such a thing as 'Ulster Socialism'. Those who profess to be 'Northern Ireland Socialists' are involved in mere parochialism of the gasworks and waterworks municipal variety. Neither does one become socialist by abandoning nationalism and republicanism and replacing them with 'leftist' sloganising like the Workers' Party or by becoming anti-national like the Irish Labour Party.

Republicanism & socialism



There are other 'international' socialists who support the legitimate rights of the people of Central America, Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere to engage in struggles for national freedom. They are hypocrites if they do not assert the same rights for the Irish people.

The Irish nationalist movement played a leading role in the development of the world-wide struggle to overthrow colonialism and throughout its history republicanism has been strongly influenced by progressive movements in other countries. The ideas of the American War of Independence and the French Revolution were those which inspired the United Irishmen. Irish emigrants played a leading role in the American War of Independence and in the struggle against Portuguese and Spanish colonialism in Central and South America. In India and Africa the Irish revolutionary tradition was one of the strongest influences in the anti-colonial movements. Even in Britain the Chartist movement and the whole development of British trade unionism owed much to leadership from Irish radicals.

In more recent times internationalism has been an important element in republicanism. Certain liberals and self-proclaimed socialists who are implacably opposed to the struggle for independence in their own country profess a kind of internationalism which engages in long-distance support for revolutionary movements, provided of course that their struggles are in other countries. John Hume, for example, is a sponsor of the anti-apartheid movement, as was Garrett FitzGerald until recently. The anti-apartheid movement, supports the right of the African National Congress (ANC) to pursue its aims by means of armed struggle. John Hume and Garret FitzGerald's views on a similar struggle in Ireland are well known, as are those of Neil Kinnock who applauded and embraced Oliver Tambo, President of the ANC at the British Labour Party Conference when Tambo spelt out the need for an intensification of the armed struggle and the probability of civilian casualties.

Irish republicans, on the other hand, have a natural, instinctive and deep affinity with the ANC and with the black majority who are oppressed in South Africa. The appearance of solidarity slogans or vividly painted murals on gable walls throughout the nationalist ghettos of the 6 counties is but one example of this identification with liberation struggles throughout the world. The indignation of ordinary nationalists in the six counties at Reagan's attempts to bully or undermine the government of Nicaragua, and their obvious sorrow at the forced eviction of the PLO from Beirut, provide ample evidence of the strength of

their anti-imperialist and internationalist instincts.

All socialists must be internationalists and anti-imperialists in a meaningful way. Long distance 'revolutionaries' will not help to free the oppressed peoples of the world if they cannot help to free their own people and class in Ireland.

A free federation of free peoples is the only conception of internationalism worth struggling for. So socialists must struggle for freedom and political power in the country in which they live and give a lead to struggling people elsewhere.

For all these reasons and because I am a socialist I continue to be a republican. Republicanism is a philosophy in which the national and the radical social dimensions are the two sides of the one coin. While the national dimension has, for historical reasons, been the most dominant tendency within the republican movement, Irish republicanism has consistently been a radical political philosophy.

Republicans have persistently, against great odds and often alone, struggled against imperialism. The republican movement has many inadequacies but it remains the major, many would say the only, anti-imperialist force in Ireland today. Despite the best efforts of the Fianna Fáil, SDLP and Fine Gael leaderships to distort its meaning republicanism is a concept easily understood by the majority of Irish people to mean national independence, unity, sovereignty and an end to foreign interference in our affairs.

You cannot be a socialist and not be a republican. Socialists will want an independent republic because it is a good thing in itself as an advance from today's situation and because it is an essential step towards socialism. This will only be achieved, however, if the struggle is led by the most radical social groups and in particular by the working class — without whom it cannot succeed in developing the conditions for the establishment of a democratic and socialist state.

Such a struggle for national independence needs to encompass all the social elements in the nation which are oppressed or held back by imperialism. Independence struggles which are led by the conservative or middle classes, as in Ireland in 1921, tend to compromise with imperialism because their leading sections benefit from such a compromise. That is why those on the left in Ireland who regard themselves as socialists and as representing the working class should be the most uncompromising republicans.

In all of this the question of socialist republicanism or republican socialism is an important one for

radicals in Ireland today. The term 'republican socialism' has been used by some, for example the now almost defunct IRSP (Irish Republican Socialist Party); but strictly speaking it is a misnomer. If you say you are a republican socialist you are implying that there is such a thing as a 'non-republican' socialist; but of course there is not and cannot be, at least if socialism is used in the classical sense of the term defined here.

One cannot be a socialist and not be a republican. Connolly, as usual, indicated what the correct term was when he called the party he founded in 1896 the Irish Socialist Republican Party. It follows that if a republican wishes to use the term 'socialist' in defining his or her political position today, the proper term is 'socialist republican' and 'socialist republicanism', in order to distinguish oneself from non-socialist republicans. This is perfectly valid. However, the republican struggle should not at this stage of its development style itself 'socialist-republican'. This would imply that there is no place in it for non-socialists.

Irish republicanism is not and never has been a static concept; it is a living and developing ideology. The first declaration of its principal elements is contained in the 1916 Proclamation, which has pride of place in many Irish homes.

Later, with the emergence of the Young Ireland movement Fintan Lalor gave Irish republicanism a new base. He wrote: 'The entire ownership of Ireland moral and material, up to the sun and down to the centre, is vested in the right of the people of Ireland. They and none but they are the land-owners and law makers of this island, that all laws are null and void not made by them and all titles to land are invalid not conferred by them.' The Young Irelanders also reawakened a sense of national consciousness and awareness of national identity.

The next influence was the Irish Republican Brotherhood, or the Fenian movement, whose rise accompanied a great national revival and the foundation of national sporting and cultural organisations such as the GAA and Conradh na Gaelige. This nationalism was not chauvinist — it was not the nationalism of imperialism — but was progressive nationalism expressing a belief in culture and identity as well as in political independence.

Although there was a progressive social element in the writings of all the generations that have influenced Irish republicanism, and although in their own time these were radical revolutionary movements, James Connolly's writings on the social and economic aspects of the struggle for Irish independence were to have the most

significant effect not only in its literature but on the thoughts of other leaders.

All of these elements were crystallised in the Proclamation of the Republic in 1916 and developed further in the Democratic Programme of the First Dáil. These documents have neither been implemented nor updated to meet modern conditions, yet they are as relevant today as they were when their basic principals were conceived.

All of the movements and leaders that shaped the republican philosophy were also internationalist in outlook and considered and engaged in physical force as a means of advancing the struggle. If we compare the political positions of those politicians and political parties that pretend to be republican with all the elements of Irish republicanism we discover how shoddy and superficial their pretence actually is.

In Ireland until partition is got rid of and a united Ireland established, being genuinely left-wing is to be an out-and-out republican. This was the lesson of James Connolly for socialists in Ireland. That is why he was led, as a socialist, to join Pearse and the other radical republicans and democrats in the fight to establish an Irish Republic.

If that fight had been successful Connolly and the socialists would have been in the best position to advocate the economic and social changes which constitute socialism. They would have proved themselves by their leadership of the independence struggle. That is why it is a political mistake to counterpose republicanism and socialism in Ireland as if they were opposites or antagonistic.

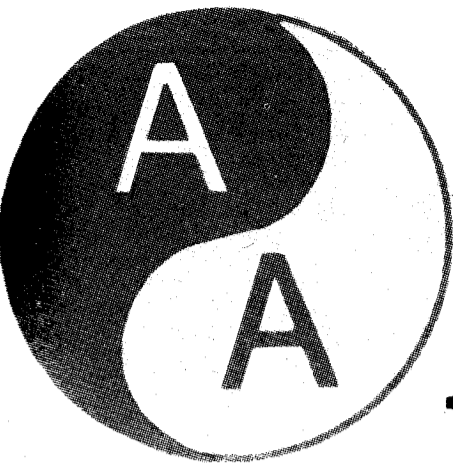
The true socialist will be an active supporter of the republican character of the national independence movement. She or he will realise that unless this character is maintained and unless the most radical social forces are in the leadership of the independence struggle then inevitably it must fail or compromise. This classical view of the matter contrasts with the ultra-left view which counterposes republicanism and socialism and which breaks up the unity of the national independence movement by putting forward 'socialist' demands which have no possibility of being achieved until real independence is won; the result is that one gets neither independence nor socialism.

To ignore these lessons of history is to repeat the mistakes of the past. What is needed in Ireland, especially in the 26 counties, is the development of an anti-imperialist movement. Such a movement cannot be built around the slogan of socialism until socialism comes to the historical agenda, until a distinct Irish form of socialism is developed to meet our needs and conditions and until a majority class in Ireland, the working class, actually understands that this is in their interests and is what they want.

If such a mass anti-imperialist movement, with an appeal to all major sections of Irish society, could be developed, and this is the urgent task of all socialists, nationalists and republicans, it would fuse together all those whose interests are adversely affected by imperialism and would show people the connection between their localised and special grievances and the imperialistic domination of Irish society.

The programme for such a movement would appeal to all those capable of taking a national stand and would require a multi-sided campaign of national regeneration — a new Irish Ireland movement to offset, especially in the 26 counties, the neo-colonial ethos and anti-national mentalities which exist there. And such a programme would, by its very nature, be to the left of what passes for 'socialism' in Ireland today.

Connolly held that the national revolution was the pre-requisite of the socialist revolution. All of us who profess to be republicans or socialists would do well to study his writings. As Desmond Greaves has written, Connolly held that the political and economic aspects are the two stages of the democratic reorganisation of society each involving economic change which it is the function of political change to promote. We who attempt to follow in his tradition must recognise that truth.



What alliances for Anti Apartheid Movement

THE Anti-Apartheid Movement AGM meets on 11/12 January. It comes at a time when the attention of the world is fixed on the struggle in South Africa and Namibia. REDMOND O NEILL looks at the choices facing the AAM

WHEN THE Anti-Apartheid Movement AGM meets its chief task will be to map out a programme of action against apartheid, and British support for it, in 1987. For this it will be necessary to extend even further the huge mobilisations which the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) was able to lead in 1985 and 1986. The demonstrations of 1985 and 1986, inspired by the rising struggle in South Africa helped transform the AAM into a mass movement.

In 1987 the AAM can be extended still further by building the already massive support for it, and for action against apartheid, in the trade unions and labour movement and by developing alliances with the black communities, the student movement, local Labour councils and youth. These are the key areas for building the mass action needed to deliver support to the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. They will all be subjects for discussion around resolutions at the AGM.

Manifesto

The growth of the movement against apartheid has been reflected in increasing support for the AAM. There are now nearly 200 local groups. Around 8.5 million trade unionists are affiliated. It is the development of the AAM over the last two years into a mass movement which is summarised in the AAM's National Committee document *Challenging Apartheid*.

This explains how the movement plans to reorganise its membership structures in line with its growth. In place of a national AGM — where every one of the AAM's 10,000 national members can attend, contribute and vote — the document proposes representative delegates be elected from local groups and affiliated organisations.

ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT AGENDA FOR ACTION IN 1987

JANUARY: Launch of a Manifesto for Sanctions
JANUARY/FEBRUARY: Local Sanctions Co-ordinating meetings
MARCH: Month of Action for Peoples Sanctions
MAY: Week of Action against British companies in Namibia
JUNE: National Convention for Sanctions
OCTOBER: National Demonstration for Sanctions.

tions. In place of the system where members of local groups are not national members of AAM the document proposes an integrated system for national and local members.

A further step being considered by the AGM is extending initiatives by local groups to organise youth and students. In Birmingham and Manchester youth sections of the AAM have been set up. In London students have coordinated across the colleges.

In the last year there has been more trade union action — starting with Portsmouth health workers boycott of South African products. Miners in South Yorkshire are organising against coal imports from South Africa and car workers at Ford's Dagenham plant have called for a boycott of any components from South Africa. AAM groups have played a key role in supporting these actions.

Unions nationally have taken important steps — such as the NUR, through its 'Rail Against Apartheid' campaign, in aiding its equivalent in South Africa — the South African Railway and Harbour Workers Unions. The NUM has taken steps to secure agreement through the International Miners Organisation for an international embargo of South African coal.

Inspired

Last year's TUC conference reflected this movement by agreeing to defend boycott actions against apartheid in the workplaces.

Central in winning active mobilisation by the labour movement is the need of the AAM to deepen its links with the black community. In the workplaces and unions it is black workers who are most inspired to isolate apartheid. The black community in the St Pauls district of Bristol have launched an effective Apartheid Free Zone to clear the goods of apartheid out of the shops. Strengthening such steps will be key to the AAM's future.

This dramatic organisational growth poses the question of what political perspectives the movement should have. Here clear choices must be taken.

The AAM's national leadership is proposing to knit the year's perspectives together around a document appropriately called *A New Offensive for Sanctions*. This outlines an agenda for action in 1987 culminating in the excellent proposal for a mass demonstration in October. The political proposals for the AAM, including in the general election, however still combine the proven success of a priority of a mass action, and the mobilisation of the labour movement, with an approach centring on lobbying individual candidates 'of all parties' around a *Manifesto for Sanctions*.

The stated aim of this is to win a 'parliamentary majority committed to the policies outlined in the manifesto' — which in the Manifesto's first draft are ending the British veto on UN sanctions, for Britain to carry out essentially those sanctions already agreed in August last year by Commonwealth leaders, and to implement the sanctions agreed by the EEC.

A campaign around a 'manifesto for sanctions' as a way of mobilising the movement — especially if it called for the British government to break all links with apartheid — is something that local groups will respond to in the coming year. But the political perspective which is behind this 'parliamentary majority committed to the policies



In 1987 the AAM can be extended still further by building the already massive support for it, and for action against apartheid, in the trade unions and labour movement and by developing alliances with the black communities, the student movement, local Labour councils and youth. These are

outlined in the manifesto', at least on the basis of the first draft, can only be assumed to be the code words for the orientation to the SDP, Liberals, and even sections of the Tory Party, which is espoused by the Communist Party. It is deliberately designed to be ambiguous on the crucial question of the attitude to the Labour Party.

Labour is the only party with policies even remotely approaching effective measures against apartheid. The only useful vote by an opponent of apartheid

would be a Labour vote. Support for individual politicians in the SDP, Liberals and Tories is hopeless as their parties have no interest in meaningful action to destroy apartheid. The central political orientation of the AAM should be towards the Labour Party, not lobbying the SDP, Liberals and 'progressive' Tories.

A manifesto for sanctions could be a useful tactic if it called for a British government to break all links with apartheid — and thereby exposed the

the key areas for building the mass action needed to deliver support to the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. They will all be subjects for discussion around resolutions at the AGM.

reality that the Tory, SDP, and Liberal Parties have no intentions whatever of serious action against apartheid. But there must not be illusions in the role these parties will play.

Challenging

Even with Labour it would be a foolish mistake, contradicted by the shameful record of every Labour government, to believe that Kinnock would honour his anti-apartheid

For the movement?

...ges. A government led by Kinnock did not take even minimal steps about gigantic pressure from the labour movement, its allies in the black communities, the student movement, and elsewhere.

British capital and the British state with the United States, the single decisive props of the barbaric system of apartheid in the world. Challenging this source of immense profits will require a colossal mobilisation of social forces in Britain.

The responsibility of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement is necessarily to create the broadest and most popular possible alliances for action to Britain's decisive support for apartheid. But that requires alliances with those prepared to fight apartheid not those who profit from it — including the ruling class, and in some cases the companies, who finance the Tory Party, the Labour Party, and Liberals.

The first such alliance for the AAM was formed with the trade unions of the Labour Party — but above all those, like the miners, prepared to take action through these organisations. Secondly, the decisive role of the black community has been under-estimated in the AAM in the past.

The black communities of Britain have already demonstrated their determination to fight racism in this country. They are the section of British society which most easily and immediately identifies with and supports the struggle of their brothers and sisters in South Africa. The 2½ million black people in Britain are a vital part of the anti-apartheid alliance.

Instinctive

Thirdly, young people, including in particular the one and a quarter million strong student movement, can and must be directly mobilised to translate their instinctive moral hatred of apartheid into action.

Fourthly, the British state operates its own systematic form of discrimination through the sectarian structures of the artificial statelet in the North of Ireland by which Britain maintains a colonial toehold, and domination, over the whole of Ireland. The nationalist communities of the North of Ireland naturally understand and support the anti-apartheid struggle and are beginning to move one of its most consistent allies.

Radical Labour councils have started to turn a little of their resources to educating and mobilising against apartheid. They too can be part of the anti-apartheid alliance needed in 1987.

Women have been to the forefront in every struggle in the 1980s. This can be so in the fight against apartheid.

It is a strategy of broadening mobilisation of the labour movement, the black communities, youth and students in mass action against apartheid which is the way to carry out the AAM's responsibility to fight for government sanctions — whoever wins the government. Any government action against apartheid will only be a by-product of mass action and pressure.

Disaster

The alternative perspective to mass action was pursued by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament leadership in the last general election. It proved to be a disaster for CND — contributing to determining the mass action approach which had built it into the largest mass movement since World War II.

Politically the key orientation for the AAM is to the labour movement and its allies — including taking up the policies of the Labour front bench.

The Labour Party must be organised from top to bottom in active support of the campaign for sanctions — including support for the national demonstration in October. This has to be combined with a campaign to secure a clear manifesto commitment that Labour, if elected, will break all links with the apartheid regime, last year's Labour Party conference focused on the responsibility of the UN, the EEC, and Commonwealth to support such steps without a mention of what a Labour government would do itself. This is not acceptable.

Vegetables

This is also the perspective which must lie behind the campaign for sanctions. The movement for 'People's Sanctions' is not an end in itself, but a lever whose goal is full government imposed sanctions against South Africa — including the withdrawal of all financial loans and assets as well as a complete trade and diplomatic embargo. Trade union action, or workers sanctions as some like to term them, as well as consumer boycotts and the like, cannot in and of themselves be fully effective. The goal must be government sanctions — and trade union action will be necessary to police these.

In Ireland for example the heroic action by Dunne's workers to boycott South African goods did not in itself harm South Africa economically. But it acted as a powerful focus for a campaign which finally forced the Irish government to ban the import of all South African fruit and vegetables. This is the type of political perspective the sanctions movement must have.

Finally, increasing attacks are being launched by imperialism on those leading the struggle in South Africa and Namibia — the African National Congress (ANC), the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). For example, while the US Congress passed a bill for limited sanctions against South Africa last year the bill was also part of a campaign to undermine the ANC and aid alternatives to it. Whilst in Britain last year's TUC agreed to recognise the new mass non-racial union federation, COSATU, the TUC international department continues to bolster alternatives to COSATU. These attempts to build up a 'pro-western' alternative to the ANC, SWAPO and COSATU must be opposed.

Chimera

The struggle against apartheid in South Africa, and the international solidarity movement with that struggle, continues to rise. A general election year can be an occasion to reach a much wider audience with the campaign for sanctions. It can be an opportunity to harden out the Labour Party's policy commitment to sanctions — including the demand that a Labour government break all links with apartheid. It can build the AAM.

Pursuing the chimera of an alliance of Labour the SDP, Liberals and Tory wets against apartheid won't achieve any of those things. Most important of all, it won't do anything to help those fighting and dying for freedom in South Africa today. Formulas such as 'a parliamentary majority' for action against apartheid, which misled the movements should be dropped.

Mass action, an orientation to the labour movement, an orientation to the black communities, to youth and students, must be the basis of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in 1987.

Campaign Group and Black Section call rally

THE CAMPAIGN Group of Labour MPs and the Labour Party Black Section are working together to build what will be the first public rally of the Campaign Forum established at Chesterfield in September last year. Taking place at Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton, on 16 February the rally will be chaired by Linda Bellos, Vice Chair of the Black Section and leader of Lambeth council, and speakers will include Arthur Scargill, President of the NUM, Bernie Grant, leader of Haringey council, Campaign Group MPs Tony Benn, Eric Heffer and Dennis Skinner, and speakers from the Black Section and the Labour Women's Action Committee.

A central theme of the meeting will be the defence of the black led London councils, the leaders of two of whom will be on the platform, who have faced a vitriolic attack from the press and Tory government.

The meeting follows the close links established between the NUM and the black communities during the miners' strike. It also follows on Arthur Scargill's defence of the black communities against police and the NUM and the Campaign Group's support for the constitutional demands of the Labour Party Black Section. It will represent a step in the fight against racism by the party and taking up the job the Labour front bench should have been doing in defending Labour councils under attack.

The rally follows the January edition of Campaign Group News which took on the Tories' racist attacks on Bernie Grant and Brent council with a front page article by Bernie Grant and a piece by Merle Amory defending the stand of Brent council in the McGoldrick case. This contrasted with the silence from much of the left — and the capitulation of the front bench to the Tories' attacks.

Bernie Grant spelt out in Campaign Group News: 'In London Ministers have targetted the councils which have black Labour leaders. The Tories have a clear and overtly racist strategy of trying to isolate black Labour leaders, and trying to make them appear unfit for high office.'

He also explained 'These councils are singled out for attack because their policies of fighting low pay, defending jobs and services, and tackling areas of grave disadvantage like pensioners, black and minority ethnic groups, women and lesbians and gays are genuinely popular and build up support for Labour.' Grant pointed out that by refusing to defend Labour councils Kinnock and Cunningham are: 'doing a tremendous disservice to Labour councils and the whole party. The Tories tactics are to frighten people. The party should reply with the truth. They should tell people the good things we are doing.'

Grant explained that despite a vile and racist local campaign against him personally the Labour majority on Haringey council had increased at the last local elections from 13 to 25 seats. 'We found that those who were not



prepared to vote for us were more than equalised by new young voters, by black people who had never voted before, by the support of all minority ethnic groups — Afro-Caribbeans, Asians, Cypriots, Irish, Jewish people and so on — by lesbians and gays and all of the people who make up a majority in this part of London.'

Grant summarised the position very

clearly 'People want a radical socialist Labour Party. And, of course, that is also what the Tories are frightened of. We are under attack because it's what we represent.'

Drawing together the Labour Party Black Section and the Campaign Group on a principled basis the Campaign Forum rally will be a major event for the labour movement.

Campaign Forum Rally

Speakers include
 Tony Benn MP • Bernie Grant leader Haringey Council • Eric Heffer MP •
 Arthur Scargill • Dennis Skinner MP
 • Labour Party Black Section • Women's Action Committee

Chair
 Linda Bellos leader Lambeth Council

Lambeth Town Hall, 16 February

Photo: IDAF



Marx on

hegemony



"SO ONE army lines up in one place and says, "We are for socialism", and another, somewhere else and says, "We are for imperialism", and that will be a social revolution! ... Whoever expects such a "pure" social revolution will never live to see it. Such a person pays lip-service to revolution without understanding what revolution is." — Lenin, The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up.

SOCIALIST ACTION gives tremendous emphasis to the international class struggle, the struggle of women, the black community, and all sections of the oppressed as part of working class politics. But it does not treat these simply as individual questions — vital as each is separately. Socialist Action seeks to integrate them in a hegemonic strategy — that is one in which the labour movement champions the demands of all the exploited and oppressed. Such an emphasis is not a peripheral question of socialism but at the core of Marxism. JOHN ROSS looks at the origins of the idea of hegemony in the views of Marx and its place in socialist strategy.

It was Lenin who first made the issue of hegemony a dividing line between political strategies. He wrote: 'The proletariat is revolutionary only insofar as it is conscious of and gives effect to the idea of the hegemony of the proletariat. The proletarian who is conscious of this task is a slave who has revolted against slavery. The proletarian who is not conscious of the idea that his class must be the leader, or who renounces this idea, is a slave who does not realise his position as a slave; at best he is a slave who fights to improve his conditions as a slave, but not one who fights to overthrow slavery.'

Lenin violently attacked those who counterposed the idea of 'class politics' to the fight of the working class for hegemony. He wrote: 'the famous formula of one of the young leaders of our reformists ... who declared that the Russian Social-Democratic (Marxist) Party must represent "not hegemony but a class party", is a formula of the most consistent reformism. More than that, is a formula of sheer renegacy.

To say "not hegemony, but a class party", means to take the side of the bourgeoisie, the side of the liberal who says to the slave of our age, the wage earner: 'Fight to improve your conditions as a slave, but regard the thought of overthrowing slavery as a harmful utopia!' To preach to the workers that what they need is "not hegemony, but a class party" means to betray the cause of the proletariat to the liberals; it means preaching that Social Democratic (Marxist) labour policy should be replaced by a liberal labour policy.'

Lenin insisted that as long as the working class did not fight for hegemony it had not developed a class position at all — it was simply a collection of trades or guilds: 'From the standpoint of Marxism the class, so long as it renounces the idea of hegemony or fails to fight for it, is not a class, or not yet a class, but a guild, or the sum total of various guilds.' He stated: 'it is the consciousness of the idea of hegemony and its implementation through their own activities that converts the guilds as a whole into a class.'

These concepts of Lenin, of the hegemony of the working class, were



Barricades in the French revolution of 1848

however completely rooted in those of Marx — although it was Lenin who attached the specific term 'hegemony' to them. Marx stressed from the beginning that a revolution never develops in the simplistic form of 'one class against another' but through a process in which one class leads all the progressive developments of society. In Marx's words in *The German Ideology*: 'The class making a revolution comes forward from the very start ... not as a class but as a representative of the whole of society, as the whole mass of society confronting the one ruling class.'

To be victorious a class must necessarily represent not merely its own but wider interests of society: 'No class of civil society can play this role (of leader of the revolution) without awakening a moment of enthusiasm in itself and in the masses: a moment in which this class fraternises and fuses with society in general, becomes identified with it and is experienced as its universal representative; a moment in which its claims and rights are truly the

rights and claims of society itself and in which it is in reality the heart and head of society.'

This poses the universality of a class in terms of its ideology and of social reality. In terms of its ideology: 'Only in the name of the universal rights of society can a particular class lay claim to universal domination.'

This universality of a class, however, is not simply, or mainly, a question of ideology Marx stressed: 'each class could actually overthrow its predecessors only by liberating the individuals of all classes from certain chains which had fettered them.' As regards the great bourgeois revolutions for example: 'Liberation from the standpoint of the bourgeoisie, i.e. competition was, of course, for the eighteenth century the only possible way of offering the individuals a new career for freer development.'

To achieve a social revolution a class must therefore not simply present its ideas as liberating all progressive sections of society from bonds which bind them. It must in material reality aid

their liberation. Thus for example: 'Liberalism, ie liberal property owners at the beginning of the French revolution ... were compelled not only to give the mass of the French (rural) population the right to seize property, (but also) to let them seize actual property.'

A class can put forward universal goals only if its interests in reality coincide with those of wider strata of society. To complete a passage above: 'The class making a revolution comes forward from the very start ... as the representative of the whole of society ... It can do this because initially its interest really is as yet mostly connected with the common interest of all other non-ruling classes ... Its victory, therefore, benefits also many individuals of other classes which are not winning a dominant position.'

The specific role of the working class is arrived at by Marx through this concept of the universality of a class. Marx noted at the level of ideology that each of the class views put forward in history is of increasing universality. Posed purely in terms of ideology one could analyse the development of society through increasingly universal ideas: 'If ... in considering the course of history we detach the ideas of the ruling class from the ruling class itself and attribute to them an independent existence ... then this conception of history ... will necessarily come up against the phenomenon that ever more abstract ideas hold sway, i.e., ideas which increasingly take on the form of universality ... Every new class, therefore, achieves domination only on a broader basis than that of the class ruling previously.'

It is this fact that every new class comes to power on a broader basis than the one previously which gives practicality, as well as legitimacy, to the drive of the working class to socialism. Posed in material terms each previous revolution had stopped because of its limited, that is non universal, social base. For example, replying to Bruno Bauer's cynical idea that all revolutions necessarily fail, Marx noted in *The Holy Family* that: 'The interest of the bourgeoisie in the 1789 (French) Revolution, far from having been a "failure", "won" everything ... The Revolution was a "failure" only for the mass ... whose real conditions for emancipation were essentially different from the conditions within which the bourgeois could emancipate itself and society. If the Revolution ... was a failure, it was so because the mass within whose living conditions it essentially came to a stop, was an exclusive, limited mass, not an all-embracing one.'

If the Revolution was a failure it was ... because the most numerous part of the mass, the part distinct from the bourgeoisie, did not have its real interest in the principle of the Revolution.'

The working class is the most universal class in history because its goals cannot be the liberation of one class, and the continuation of the oppression and exploitation of another, but the liberation of the whole of humanity. The working class is therefore in the terms developed later by Lenin, the class capable of the greatest hegemony.

Marx outlined this in the very phrases in which he announced for the first time his view of the proletariat as the bearer of a future society. Integrating the tasks of the developing German revolution he faced at that time Marx noted: 'where is the positive possibility of German emancipation? This is our answer. In the formation of a class with radical chains, a class of civil society which is not a class of civil society. A class which is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere which has a universal character because of its universal suffering and which lays claim to no particular right because the wrong it suffers is not a particular wrong but wrong in general; a sphere of society which can no longer lay claim to a historical title, but merely to a human one, which does not stand in one-sided opposition to the consequences but in all-sided opposition to the premises of the German political system; and finally a sphere which cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from — and thereby emancipating — all other spheres of society, which is, in a word, the total loss of humanity and which can therefore redeem itself only through the total redemption of humanity. This dissolution of society as a particular class is the proletariat'. The victory of the working class is, in Marx's words, the necessary step in universal human emancipation.'

These phrases of Marx, in which are contained the entire core of the hegemony of the working class, have nothing to do with empty sentimentality. They directly guide the working class. They mean, in the words of Lenin in *What is to be Done?*, that: 'Working class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse no matter what class is affected.' And in the equally famous phrases of the same work: 'The Social Democrat's (marxist) ideal should not be the trade union secretary, but the tribune of the people, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects.'

It implies also the relation of Marxism to the whole of human culture and civilisation. Again in the words of Lenin: 'Marxism has won its historic significance as the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat because, far from rejecting the most valuable achievements of the bourgeois epoch, it has, on the contrary, assimilated and refashioned everything of value in the more than two thousand years of the development of human thought and culture.'

The working class is the most universal class in history, that capable of the greatest hegemony. Simultaneously without taking up every demand of the oppressed and exploited, without in Marx's words coming forward 'as a representative of the whole mass of society confronting the one ruling class,' the working class is itself incapable of victory.

That necessity for a hegemonic strategy for the working class is the core to its politics. It is why Socialist Action gives such emphasis to international politics, to the demands of women, of the black community, and of all the oppressed. In Lenin's words: 'the class, so long as it renounces the idea of hegemony or fails to fight for it, is not a class, or not yet a class, but a guild, of the sum total of various guilds,' it is the consciousness of the idea of hegemony and its implementation through their own activities that converts the guilds as a whole into a class.'

1. Lenin Collected Works (CW) 17 p56-58
2. Marx and Engels Collected Works (MECW) 5 p60
3. Marx and Engels Early Writings (MEEW) p254
4. MECW 5 p60
5. MECW 5 p290
6. MECW 5 p410
7. MECW 5 p208
8. MECW 5 p60
9. MECW 5 p60
10. MECW 4 p82
11. MEEW p254
12. MEEW p253
13. CW 5 p 412 and 422
14. CW 31 p317

South Africa's mines

MANNE DIPICO is a South African National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) regional organiser. He was the second member, with union president James Modatsi, of the NUM's delegation to the International Mineworkers Organisation conference in London at the end of November. Dipico vividly explained to Socialist Action the conditions in South Africa's mines and the strategy of the NUM. We are printing the first part of the interview this week. It will be continued in our next issue.

THE situation in the mines in South Africa is worse than any other country. When the minerals were discovered — particularly gold and diamonds — the people who went to mine the minerals in South Africa were not South Africans. They were imperialists who went into our country to exploit our people, to produce these minerals.

The indigenous people of South Africa were allowed only to do manual labour — they were never trained to use the machines or to run the mines themselves. The imperialists imported mining experts from their countries. So there was a perpetual state of leaving the South African people knowing nothing, forcing us to be dependent on foreigners. There was no investment in education by the mining houses — all they were interested in was the recruitment of labour for the mines.

They recruited the youth at a very early age. By the time they were 15 everyone was rushing to the mines. There was no alternative source of income. The mines were the only source of employment.

In going to the mines, men had to leave the areas where they and their families lived. Labour legislation was introduced to ensure that the men

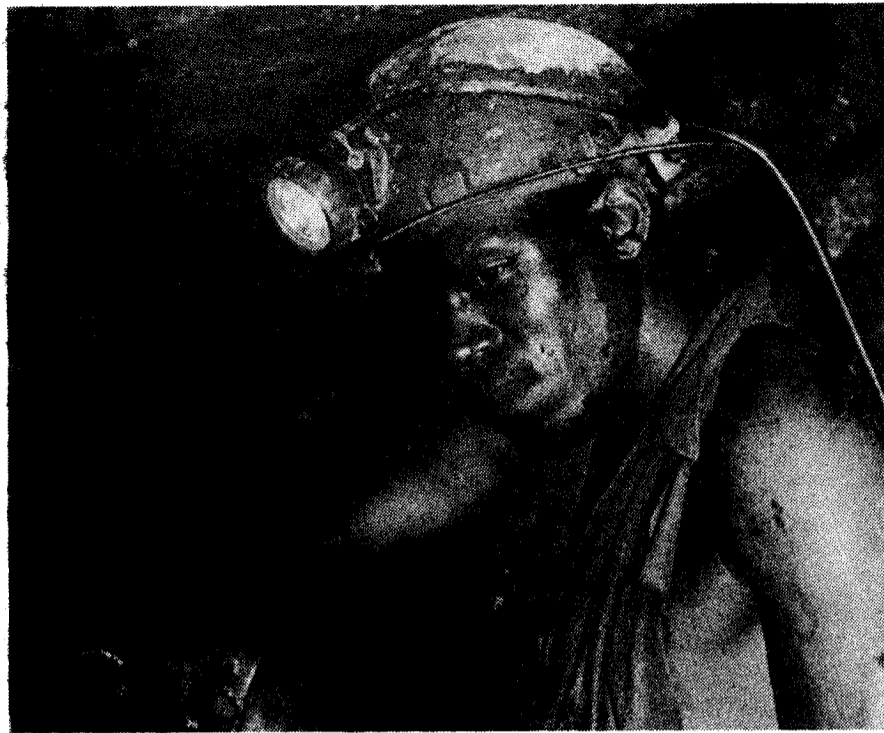
stayed as long as possible in the mines to produce while sending nothing back to their homes. The government introduced the migrant labour system and 'influx control'.

They also developed the 'compound system'. They built compounds where the men were locked in, refusing to let the men have contact with their families. Men were taken hundreds of miles for a 12 months contract.

This was a political measure. The imperialists and the capitalists knew that the indigenous people were so numerous that the effects of their plunder was bound to boomerang sooner or later. So they destabilised the family system, limiting the population growth and undermining the threat of children who learn about the system through the knowledge of the experience handed down from their fathers.

The conditions in the compounds are so bad that it's difficult to explain to you — from another country — just how bad they are. They're not even fit for a dog or an animal. I really mean that.

Between twenty and forty people are packed into a single room. There is no privacy whatsoever. The health situation is terrible. Diseases are not even treated. Epidemics are very easy under such conditions.



The only way to describe the food is 'junk'. People eat just to fill their stomachs not to get any nourishment. The food is such low quality.

With such appalling food and non-existent medical facilities, disease and ill-health are common.

The working conditions are equally bad. On safety, most of the accidents are never recorded. People didn't know the channels through which to take them up. Even very serious accidents were unrecorded. If you said you were injured, the employer would take you somewhere out of the way to keep you quiet. If you said you were not satisfied they dismiss you. It's as simple as that. The employer had total control and kept the mines closed to

anyone outside.

Close to 600 people die in the mines every year. That is on average. In 1983 the figure was close to 980. This year the figure is already 600 because of the accident at Kinross — the figure will probably end up around 800.

These are deaths, not minor accidents. Minor accidents don't get reported. Even if you lie in hospital for a number of days the accident doesn't get reported. Such accidents will never be reported until the miners nationalise the mines and the mines are under their control.

The living standards of the miners are also intolerable. The mining houses make the miners pay for their place in the compound. They have to pay for

their protective clothing. They have to pay for that not very hygienic food.

In fact the miners are supporting two homes. They're supposed to send money back to their families and at the same time they are forced to pay for everything in the compound.

In reality, the man is not in a position to feed his family at home. So after 12 months he's very scared to go home. What's he going to say to his children? Why has he not sent enough money home? So the situation he faces is really bad from both sides.

With no way to express their feelings in any way, with nowhere to turn, men get beaten into submission, to accepting their lives as they are.

Democracy demonstrations in China

For four weeks students across China have gone into the streets to express their demands for 'democracy' and 'press freedom'. The protests started in Hefei on 9 December. They spread to Shanghai — where tens of thousands took to the streets — and to eight other cities. On 23 December 3,000 marched in the country's capital city, Beijing, shouting 'Long live liberty, long live democracy' and 'Solidarity with our Shanghai colleagues'. Some wall posters put up in Beijing originated in Hefei, suggesting a degree of coordination between quite distant centres.

The student movement has been criticised by the Chinese Communist Party newspaper, *People's Daily*. The authorities in Beijing and Shanghai introduced restrictive regulations aimed at stemming the tide of the street actions.

He Donchang, vice-minister of the Education Commission, appointed to lead an investigation, told a press conference on 30 December that most of the students who had taken part in demonstrations had been patriotically showing their enthusiasm for reform, that no students had been arrested and that none had violated the constitution. Twenty-four students who were arrested in Beijing on 1 January were soon released, though nine non-students are still being held.

The background to these events is clear. The present upsurge has its roots in the shift in economic policy adopted by the new Chinese government leadership under Deng Xiaoping, ten years ago.

This provided for opening the Chinese economy to market forces, especially in agriculture. Central government investment in agriculture has been reduced by 50 per cent since 1978 and private production encouraged. During the same period there has been a 35 per cent increase in grain production.

In October 1984, associated measures were introduced into industry. Statistics for the first half of 1985 indicate a 23 per cent increase in industrial output over the equivalent period in 1984. Simultaneously with this the government opened China up to foreign investment, expanded trade and accompanied this with an openly reactionary foreign policy — which included support for Thatcher and the EEC, for a period for the Pinochet regime in Chile, and included China's brutal invasion of Vietnam.

Internally, the economic measures were accompanied by a certain controlled 'liberalisation' and justified with claims to 'democracy'. The moves were resisted by sections of the bureaucracy which favoured more centralised planning. There is also evidence they were far harder to apply in industry — where their consequences would be unemployment, and increased differentials within the working class.

The student protests have expressed their support for the 'reform' measures and for Deng himself. According to John Gittings in *The Guardian*, 3 January, the early protests at Hefei were actually encouraged by college authorities associated with Deng's trend within the Party. What then clearly happened was that the demonstrations got out of control.

In addition to pro-Deng slogans the students have demanded that the democracy be real. They have also raised demands against the system where they are placed in employment and demanded freer choice in the matter; opposed special privileges which, they say, block the economic reforms; and called for press and academic freedom.

Deng's opponents are openly fighting within the party, pointing to popular dissatisfaction caused by increased wage differentials, corruption, and bureaucratic privileges associated with Deng's policies; to the massive \$7.6 billion trade deficit, caused by the influx of foreign consumer durables. They also point to the problems in the previously successful agricultural sector which for the first time is seeing a decrease in grain production as peasants switch to more profitable produce, a decrease in central investment which has taken its toll on irrigation channels, reservoirs, dams and canals, and the decrease in mechanisation as smaller household allotments become basic production units. 'Conservatives' have been prominent in opposing the students in the press — which has prompted the ritual newspaper burnings.

Both wings of the privileged government bureaucracy are looking to the CCP's thirteenth party congress in October of this year, which will assess the last ten years successes and failures and plan for the next decade. Both certainly oppose street mobilisations which escape their control — and most of all demonstrations which may link up with wider forces.

Why Reagan is in crisis

FORGET THE rhetoric that the Reagan administration has suddenly been plunged into crisis by revelations about the illegal supply of arms to Iran, or the illegal funding of the Nicaraguan contras. The US ruling class has its own way of dealing with that type of everyday scandal if it wishes. The world already knew the contras were being funded illegally anyway — it has been in every newspaper for five years. A few heads could have quietly rolled over the revelation of the Iran arms sales.

If the US government is plunged into its biggest internal crisis for six years it is for quite different reasons than the officially publicised ones. If sections of the US Congress and press are now making scandals around the Reagan administration — and they are — it is not because they are shocked about manoeuvres with sections of the Iranian government, or because of illegal arms supplies to reactionaries fighting the Nicaraguan government — anymore than Watergate was about the fact that US politicians were shocked by the fact that Nixon bugged his opponents phones or carried on illegal cover ups.

The real strains now wracking the US administration may be seen by looking at how the crisis developed — because it is clear that the political crisis broke out before the revelation of the arms sales to Iran.

The crisis was already clearly registered in the

mid-term congressional elections. In these Reagan staked his personal prestige and campaigned across the country. The outcome was that the

By Dick Carter

Republicans totally identified with Reagan, suffered their worst electoral defeat for six years — being reduced to a minority not simply in the House of Representatives but in the Senate. The crisis over Iran then blew up in the month following the election.

The unpopularity of the Reagan administration's policies in other words preceded the revelations over the Iran arms sales. Iran was the occasion for the crisis rather than its cause. If there had not been the crisis over Iran some other pretext would have been found.

The most powerful development now weighing down the administration, feeding the



measures for a trade war with Europe, and underlying the severe mid-term electoral defeat is the rapidly deteriorating international position of the US economy. The Reagan years have seen the greatest period of economic adventurism in US history. The economic chickens are now coming home to roost. It is that which is now provoking a crisis of the Reagan administration.

The driving force in the expansion of the US economy under Reagan has been the rapid rise in military spending. Following the disasters of the Nixon, Ford and Carter years — with the defeat in Vietnam, the overthrow of Portuguese rule in Southern Africa, the overthrow of the Shah of Iran, and revolution in Nicaragua — Reagan set the US on a course to try to revive its political position by a massive increase in its military might. The problem was that neither the

international nor the domestic situation gave the economic leeway for that to succeed.

The relation of class forces in the United States did not permit the military build up to be paid for by increased taxes — that is by still further cuts in the living standards of the US working class. The result has been a US government budget deficit which rose to \$221 billion last year. The US national debt has tripled — the interest payments on it placing a strain on government spending for decades to come.

To finance the budget deficit the US has borrowed massively from abroad — last year the US became a net debtor nation for the first time since World War I. To persuade foreign lenders to leave their capital in the US the dollar had to be maintained at a high rate of exchange — which in turn made United States exports uncompetitive and sucked imports into the US. By last year the US was running the largest trade deficit of any country in history — \$170 billion. Large sections of the US domestic industry are being crushed by international competition.

The result has been rising demands for a protectionist trade war with Europe, for reductions in

military spending to reduce the budget deficit and similar measures. For the first time for six years significant internal divisions in the US ruling class have opened up — and the popularity of Reagan's policies have plummeted. All these were developing before the latest exposures. The revelations over Iran and Nicaragua, which were also symbols of Reagan's foreign policy, provided a perfect pretext to cut Reagan down to size.

There should be no illusions about what is likely to come out of the present crisis. The financing of the contras will go on legally or illegally — no section of the US ruling class is in favour of cutting it off. Arms will be supplied either to Iran or anyone else when it suits US foreign policy needs.

But the economic crisis starting in the US is deadly serious. Its consequences are going to dominate world politics for years to come. Their immediate effects are going to give an inch of extra breathing space to the Nicaraguans and all those fighting the US ruling class. For that reason the 'Reagagate' scandals now taking place in Washington are of real significance. They are only the first act of the drama which is now going to unfold.

Bloody Sunday Commemoration

FIFTEEN years after the massacre of Bloody Sunday in Derry when paratroopers shot dead 14 unarmed demonstrators, most of the simple demands of the civil rights' movement remain unfulfilled. Nationalists still face discrimination in housing and jobs. The North of Ireland still suffers a perverse system of justice known as the Diplock system.

Since 1972 repression has greatly increased — the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the Emergency Provisions Act, the use of plastic bullets, stripsearching, and shoot-to-kill operations, to name but a few.

In the last year the number of soldiers operating in the North of Ireland has increased. The number of sectarian killings has increased. Along the border with the rest of Ireland fortified watchtowers are being built at an alarming rate.

Alongside this, poverty has worsened. The number of jobs available for all sections of the community has declined. The economy is almost non-existent.

It must be clear from the above that Britain has no positive role to play in Ireland. The restoration of some sort of normality in that country begins with the withdrawal of all British troops whether soldiers, the Ulster Defence Regiment or the RUC; and self-determination for the Irish people as a whole.

We urge you to support the demonstration we have called on 31 January in Sheffield by coming, sponsoring, and sending money to cover the costs. Leaflets, posters and details of buses for the demonstration are available from CBWI, Box 353, London NW5 4NH.

John Campbell,
Committee for British
Withdrawal from Ireland



Student rebellion in France

IN *Socialist Worker* 13 December 1986, Mike Simons wrote:

'Unfortunately France's revolutionary organisations are still virtually invisible to most students.

'The two main far left organisations, the LCR and Lutte Ouvrière, are actively involved in the student movement but neither has an independent presence. Neither had paper sellers on Thursday's demonstration, nor were they present on Saturday's memorial march.

'The LCR publish a daily strike bulletin. It contains information about the movement but never argues what is to be done next. Even after the vicious attacks by the CRS (the riot police) it made no attempt to explain the nature of the state.'

In order to encourage and help discussion among European revolutionary organisations, we think it is useful to send you the following remarks for publication in your journal.

Several years ago, the LCR set up an independent youth organisation, the Jeunesse Communiste Revolutionnaire (JCR) which regularly and actively intervenes in the different social movements of young

people. The student and school student movement was a huge movement that was independent and united. It was a whole new generation that abruptly entered into mass political activity. Certainly it lacked experience but it clearly mistrusted the traditional political organisations. Among other things, this movement strongly defended its unity and its democratic functioning.

In this context, an organisation like the JCR which was very active in the movement, which had several members in the leadership of the movement, could not behave exactly like an organisation intervening in a simply propagandist way from the outside. The JCR was part of the movement, its members in

Letters

local general meetings and in the national coordinations were obviously not visible to those who only saw the street demonstrations. Nevertheless there was an 'independent presence' in the sense of independent practice.

Throughout the movement the JCR distributed a daily newspaper, 50,000 copies of which were printed, which was the only regular journal to appear throughout the movement, which is another example of its presence.

On Wednesday 10 December, the LCR itself also published a special issue of its newspaper for the demonstration that day.

We do not know what Mike Simons means by 'to argue what is to be done next'. You are obviously not unaware of the problems posed for an organisation with real responsibilities in a mass movement of this size.

In every local and national structure of the movement, the members of the JCR daily gave their position on how to continue the mobilisation. This is obviously infinitely more useful than what Mike Simons describes as the need to explain 'the nature of the state'. The youth movement learnt in practice what was the apparatus of repression. To help it reach this stage the priority was to talk 'concretely' every day on the objectives and actions of the movement. The result is something quite different from what abstract propaganda would have been.

Hoping that you will transmit our remarks to your readers, please accept our best revolutionary greetings.

Claude Gabriel (for the International Commission of the LCR)

This letter to *Socialist Worker* has been sent to socialist newspapers in Britain by the *Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR)*.

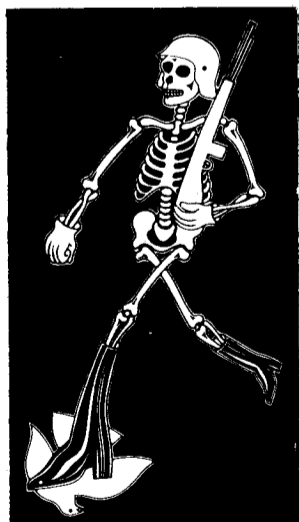
Pete Evans

Ducking the issue?

THE article in *Socialist Action* before Christmas by Carol Turner entitled 'Why NATO needs the bomb' was unfortunately marred in not placing the question in the framework of a working class response to the bosses war drive. Whilst correctly calling for unilateral nuclear disarmament, it incorrectly argued for it within the framework of an implicit neutralism.

A socialist reply must begin from an understanding that the cutting edge of the warmongers offensive is their attempt to throw back the colonial revolution and prevent any extension of the socialist revolution. This not only involves the biggest imperialist power, the United States, but also the second biggest, Britain.

The armed forces of Britain, both conventional and nuclear, play an active part in this process. It is the 'conventional' forces that hold in subjugation the risen people of Ireland. It is the nuclear forces that act as a threat, hanging over the heads of



all those fighting for freedom, of the lengths the imperialists will go to to defend their interests. Over both Cuba and the Middle East they have shown they are prepared to bring the world to the edge of the precipice in defence of their right to exploit.

The task of socialists consists of organising opposition to the actual wars launched by imperialism today, whilst patiently educating our class in the basic questions involved, illuminating, not obscuring, the line of

march against the bosses. This the Turner article fails to do. The colonial revolution is absent from the article. Instead we are told that the imperialists have nuclear weapons because they are cheaper!

Instead of explaining that the threat of war today does not come from the Soviet Union because of the nature of the social system that exists there following the overthrow of capitalism, which unlike imperialism has no inherent need to expand, the lack of a threat is made contingent on the policies of the bureaucrat Gorbachev.

Instead of explaining that the Soviet Union has nuclear weapons to defend itself from an aggressive West, we are told, incredibly, that 'the Soviet Union has no need of a nuclear arsenal because it is in no position to launch a conventional attack on the West!'

And in the summary, instead of explaining the nature of 'defence' policies under imperialism — that they are but a subterfuge for a war policy — we are told 'Reykjavik gave Labour the opportunity to expound a wholly coherent defence policy, starting with full support

Socialist Action fund drive

With the conclusion of our Xmas raffle, all energies of Socialist Action supporters need now to be directed towards achieving our £10,000 fund.

Our East London supporters have decided on a mixture of initiatives to raise their £1200 target. Every supporter is being approached to donate a days wages. A fund raising badge has been produced. A dinner and dance is planned with the aim of raising a substantial sum and also renewing contacts with those they have collaborated with in struggle, like the Wapping printers, the miners, anti-apartheid movement activists, those involved in the defence of Nicaragua and active in Irish solidarity. The rest of the target will be achieved through a number of socials and similar projects. A Xmas party has already raised £67.

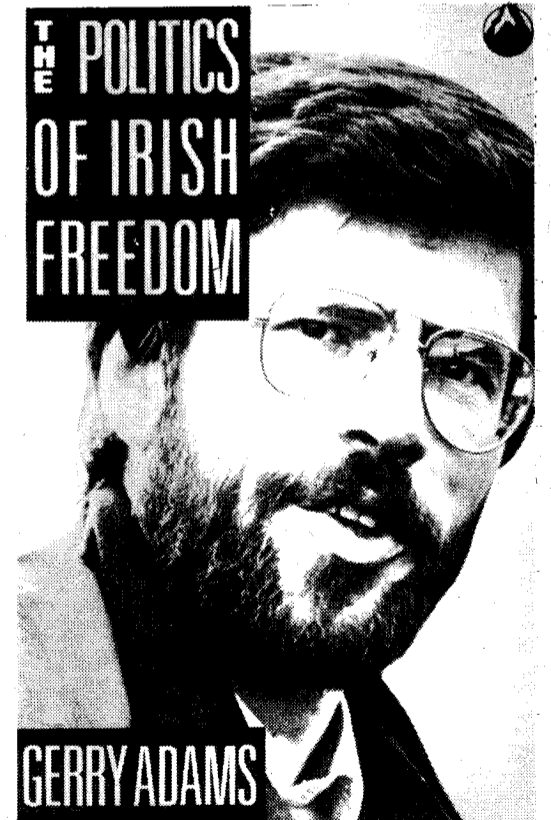
Nationally to date, £1384.50 has been donated to the fund drive. A full break down of this will appear in the next issue of *Socialist Action*.

Raffle winners

Gill Crozier from Bristol won the first prize of an Amstrad computer or video in our Xmas raffle (ticket number 01280). Eve Turner from Southall won the second prize of a subscription to *Socialist Action* and a book of her choice (ticket number 09264).

£1400 was raised in the raffle from which we need to find the cost of the prizes. All profits will go to the running costs of *Socialist Action*. Our goal had been to raise £1500 in profit so we made about two thirds of our target. In general the ticket proved easy to sell given the first prize. However as it was the first time we had run such a raffle some supporters started too late in the day. Congratulations are in order, however, to Leamington who made 100 per cent and our North West London supporters who made 108 per cent of their target. We will print a full break down next week.

OTHER BOOKS



The politics of Irish freedom, by Gerry Adams, Brandon, 176 pages.

Available at £3.95 + 30p p&p from Other Books, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Cheques payable to 'The Other Bookshop'.

'This book is neither an autobiography nor a statement of Sinn Fein's political programme. It is an expression by Gerry Adams of his politics. As President of Sinn Fein it falls to him to articulate party policy, but in this book he has set aside the narrow role of official spokesperson in order to be able to explore more widely and freely his politics as a republican.'

(From the introduction).

Wapping - all out 24 January

FOR TWELVE solid months the sacked printers at Wapping have been doing battle against News International boss Rupert Murdoch. On 24 January they have called an anniversary march. Leaving from the Temple at 5pm, the march will be an occasion for a huge demonstration of solidarity by the labour movement, writes JON SILBERMAN.

Speakers at the demonstration will include Brenda Dean, Tony Dubbins, Ron Todd and Tony Benn. One of the invited speakers has been denied the opportunity to attend.

SOGAT executive member Mike Hicks was jailed for 12 months, eight suspended, on a trumped up charge. Hicks has been closely associated with the Wapping dispute from the beginning. His jailing was a political act, pure and simple, as evidenced by the choice of prison. To prevent protest demonstrations Hicks has been moved three times from more accessible prisons — from Brixton to Wormwood Scrubs to Thetford in Norfolk and now to the Isle of Wight.

Resolutions and declarations of solidarity calling for the release of Mike Hicks have come from all corners of the labour movement, including a unanimous resolution adopted by the Labour Party NEC. The 24 January demonstration will be an opportunity to turn these sentiments into action.

A big 24 January turnout would be the best anniversary present to the printers whose resilience and determination has deepened in the course of the dispute. Ever since they overwhelmingly rejected Murdoch's 'final, final offer' in the October ballot,

the pickets and twice weekly marches have increased in size. Since the arrest of Mike Hicks the regular Saturday marches have been consistently over 2,000-strong, a quite extraordinary achievement for a year-old dispute.

The strikers' resilience has also begun to tap support from the ranks of the labour movement. Financial support and solidarity tours expanded towards the end of the year and, in particular, the dispute received a boost with the establishment of WAM — Women Against Murdoch.

WAM has organised a consistent presence at the picket and on the marches to the Wapping fortress. They raised thousands of pounds for the Christmas appeal, have established links with Women Against Pit Closures and led a very successful women's leg of the solidarity demonstration on 13 December.

The printers have also extended their own strike organisation. The 24 January demonstration was called by a special mass inter-union meeting of activists on 11 December.

The basis clearly exists



for extending the dispute into Fleet Street — from where it can be won. Support for the sacked printers

from within SOGAT was shown last year by the election of Mike Hicks and Bill Freeman to the union's na-

Policing gets heavier

FOUR people, including a SOGAT FOC, had been arrested as early as nine o'clock on Saturday's march to Wapping. This is just the latest example of a noticeable increase in police heavy-handedness over the last few weeks.

They even did their best to spoil the New Year's celebrations held outside by the sacked printers in a symbolic

'picket' outside the Wapping fortress. Even by the police's own declared standards of allowing the newspapers to be distributed, the New Year's eve arrests were completely unwarranted — no papers were printed that night!

On Sunday 28 December, police tactics involved trapping marchers at Tower Hill to prevent a second march that evening. The marchers took the only way out they could — the tube to Aldgate East, where the

tional executive.

The Dean leadership — which recommended acceptance of the last offer — followed its rejection by balloting the membership over a 58p levy in support of the dispute. The results of the ballot will be out next week. SOGAT in association with the NGA have announced 27 January as the date for a national lobby of parliament. Brenda Dean has called on the TUC to 'get off their knees' and mobilise solidarity behind the printers.

The fight must now be extended to get leadership backing for the mobilisation of Fleet Street behind the Wapping dispute. Such a course would also provide the opportunity for Fleet Street printers to fight against their own attacks — like the recent *Telegraph* decision to get rid of 1200 workers.

And it would be hand in hand with the campaign launched by the printers for a recalled TUC congress to ensure the implementation of the Brighton congress resolution which the general council refused to carry out by a 2-vote majority.

police renewed their heavy-handed behaviour.

The police action is an answer to the resilience of the printers. There's also been a noticeable increase in the number of women arrested since the launch of WAM.

Arrested marchers and pickets report serious harassment in the vans. The cops attempt to intimidate those they've arrested with boasts of how many arrests they intend, and anti-red and anti-Irish jibes amongst their favourites.

Teachers raw deal

FOLLOWING individual ballots in all 3 major teacher organisations conducted in December last year, it is now clear that the majority of teachers are opposed to the deal agreed at ACAS between the employers and the unions.

By Bernard Regan

The biggest vote against the deal was registered in the National Union of Teachers where 42 per cent of those voting rejected the sell-out despite a massive campaign by the union's Kinnockite leadership in its favour. Right in the middle of the voting the officers of the NUT, without any reference even to the national executive of the union, spent an estimated £60,000 on adverts in the *Guardian*, *Daily Telegraph*, *The Independent* and *The London Standard*. The alleged purpose of the

adverts was to attack Baker's anti-teacher legislation. Its real objective however was to try to drum up support for the discredited deal.

The most significant vote is that of the NUT which closely followed the vote at the union's special conference held in November. Despite pathetic attempts by the leadership of the NUT to say that the opposition to the deal was minimal and that it was limited to areas influenced by the Socialist Teachers' Alliance, this vote clearly demonstrates that many more teachers are prepared to fight.

The Burnham negotiating committee, due to be scrapped under legislation now on its way to the House of Lords, meets on Wednesday 7 January when it is possible that the Labour-led local authority employers could come up with some

further deal in an effort to persuade the Tory government to drop their bill. Such a deal is bound to be worse than the one already agreed. The NUT leaders know that they have virtually no room for manoeuvre — the members will be watching their every move.

A special conference of the union should be called to formulate a new wage claim for April '87 and a joint campaign should be built with the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers.

Teachers in Inner London and Leicester have called for strike action on 13 January to begin the fightback. The right wing leaders however have done everything to scupper such a move and could well launch an attack on the left in the union as a cover for their own lack of leadership. Other trades unionists and Labour MPs are being invited to the rally which will take place in Central Hall, Westminster at 1pm and other areas are being invited to send expressions of solidarity.

The Local Association Pay Action Conference will be reconvened on 31 January at University of London Union to discuss the next stages of the campaign.

	ACAS deal ballots	
	FOR	AGAINST
NUT*	60,912	44,216
NAS/UWT*	5,178	41,994
AMMA	32,871	16,747
TOTAL	98,961	102,957

*TUC affiliated

Inside the unions

Storm clouds on the tube ...

IN THE face of continued government attacks on jobs, conditions and services in the rail industry, industrial action is planned by drivers in the Southern Region, by guards at Waterloo station and on the London underground. NUR members, CHRIS MORRIS and LARRY HERMAN explain the background.

Workers on the London Underground will be taking strike action on Wednesday 14 January. This follows their four to one ballot vote in favour of taking industrial action. It follows a successful boycott of canteens last month, the vote expresses the deep-felt opposition to management privatisation and other cost-cutting proposals which threaten the jobs, wages and conditions of service of its employees.

The NUR predicts that they will also mean deteriorating safety conditions as well. The old London Transport has been divided up into separate units with the stricture that each must be economically viable.

In their thirst for profits and higher productivity, hundreds of workers in the building department have been made redundant, contract cleaners have been brought in and catering staff are threatened with changes to their conditions which could mean wage cuts of £30 to £50.

Management have a policy of attacking the weakest sections first. Meanwhile they are refusing to negotiate.

Vernon Hince, the assistant general secretary of the NUR, said 'Underground workers are being placed in the unreal position of having to tender for their own work'.

Jimmy Knapp, the General Secretary of the NUR, called at a rally for tube workers for 'a massive YES mandate to bring LRT management to their senses and strengthen our hand at the negotiating table.'

... and in rail

Drivers on Southern Region are planning industrial action against the Easement of Manning Agreement. As well as abolishing the grade of Drivers' Assistant, this agreement increases the number of miles and hours a driver can work each day, and weakens the entitlement to a meal break. This would mean worse working conditions and more accidents, and will lead to the loss of drivers' jobs.

ASLEF first said that BR's proposals were totally unacceptable. BR replied that they would impose them without agreement if necessary. ASLEF's NEC then discarded drivers' hard-won rights without a fight, by agreeing to the proposals.

The guards in Waterloo NUR are planning an unofficial one day strike in protest against the imposition of trials for driver only operation of empty trains. Management deceitfully claimed that empty movements were included in the existing DOO agreement, which was adopted after the loss of a ballot.

The local actions on rail are a response to major attacks launched by BR in a process which is designed to decimate jobs on the railways, undermine the wages and conditions of the remaining workers, deunionise the industry and prepare for privatisation — and to obstruct the right to travel around the country for all but the wealthy. The government has announced a twenty-five per cent cut in the 'Public Service Obligation' grant to BR.

Meanwhile the January issue of BR's company newspaper *Rail News* announces that BR is intending to merge the grades of guard and driver's assistant into the new grade of trainmen/trainwomen. Staff in this new grade will compete for promotion to conductor and senior conductor or driver.

The action by the Waterloo guards and southern drivers shows that railworkers are not willing to accept these plans.

The government's legislation on ballots aims to undermine these actions by undemocratically giving a veto to sections of the workforce who believe that they are not immediately under threat. A strategy of repeated ballots is not a way to defeat management's plans.

Rather it will be determined action by rail workers backed by the labour movement which will be key. East London District Council of the NUR have submitted a motion to the London Labour Party's regional conference calling on the next Labour government to legislate for a guard on every train. Such motions can be very useful in broadening labour movement support, but fighting back now will be the best way to ensure the best possible measures by any future Labour government.

Telecom engineers start action

ON MONDAY 5 January British Telecom's 117,000 telephone engineers started a policy of 'non-cooperation' as the first step in a campaign of industrial action. On 12 January they start a national overtime ban and work-to-rule. They join 40,000 clerical workers who have been taking action since early December. They are fighting against management's proposals to impose far-reaching attacks on working practices as part of their 1986 pay deal.

By Ian Grant, NCU

The proposals will increase 'flexibility', boosting productivity and accelerating job loss. They will open the door to direct attacks on the engineers' 37½ hour week, won through industrial action in 1978.

It is the first time that engineers have taken action nationally since the 1983 campaign against privatisation which collapsed after the union was faced with legal action under new Tory trade union laws.

BT have recently announced half-year profits of over £1 billion and awarded their chairman, Sir George Jefferson, a pay rise of 55 per cent. Since privatisation, BT have doubled the amount

of profit extracted per each employee and shed over 15,000 jobs.

Management pressures to boost productivity have led the 1986 company report to note a steep increase in accidents at work.

The response of BT's workers to the 1986 'pay offer' has been unpromising. In ballots in November and December, clerical and engineering workers voted by four to one to take industrial action. But the aim of NCU general secretary, John Golding, is to do a deal with BT far short of the members' aspirations.

In the NCU's September journal he bleated 'it's in no one's interest to have a disgruntled, demoralised staff.' In fact BT want nothing more than to inflict a demoralising settlement which could act as a springboard to further attacks on jobs and conditions. The limited campaign for industrial action the Golding leadership has launched is unlikely to dent BT's confidence that the NCU leaders are unwilling to translate their 80 per cent vote into determined action.

Engineers involved in the defeated 1983 campaign against privatisation are well aware of the dangers of such half-hearted action. Waging a serious fight against BT's latest attacks means starting now with a campaign in every union branch and workplace to prepare for a national strike.

Socialist ACTION

Railworkers shake France



Silentnight strikers 'won't go away'

AFTER ALMOST two years the Silentnight strikers at Barnoldswick and Sutton in Lancashire have been kicked in the head by the national leadership of FTAT. The kick came just before Christmas when the general executive council under the leadership of the new General Secretary, Colin Christopher, declared the strike unofficial.

This is the same Colin Christopher who stated 'From the beginning, our general executive council has supported our members in what is clearly a just struggle'. And the same Colin Christopher who stated, just last November '... the strikers are suffering extreme hardship. It is essential that the entire movement rally around and provide the maximum support.'

The reasons for declaring the strike unofficial were given in a burst of correspondence to the strike committee in the week before Christmas. The Silentnight strike was a 'drain' on the finances of the union, it 'took up too much time' at national meetings and was 'unwinnable'.

So for the first time during the whole dispute the executive have written to hundreds of Labour Parties, trade unions and trades councils letting them know that the strike is officially off. Most of these bodies hadn't even been officially notified that the strike was even on.

In an attempt to 'sweeten' the bad news, the

general executive council had even released money from London that had been donated to the strike fund, but 'held up' for several months.

By Paul Perkins

These welcome gifts nevertheless left a rotten taste. The remaining 88 strikers were understandably sickened by the decision, but remain as committed as ever to carry on and to win.

As Trevor King of Silentnight said 'we don't want a union that packs in when things get tough. We have made tremendous sacrifices, not only for ourselves but for all trade unionists. People up and down the country have supported us all the way, now our leaders drop us. They want us to go away so they can get on with business as usual. But we won't go away. We will use all the influence and contacts we have made to launch an appeal to reverse the executive's decision. Once they sell out one group of workers it becomes much easier to sell out others, like at Hanger's or Morris's'.

As another Silentnight striker said about the disputes at Hanger's and Morris's 'our solidarity with these workers has started to develop. The best thing we can do for them is to let them know about the lessons we have learnt and not to trust the national leadership.'

The strike committee at Silentnight will be circulating their own letter to Labour Parties and trade union bodies in the new year to counter the one of the general executive council. It will call on people to reaffirm their support for the strikers and ask for practical action.

One spontaneous move came from FTAT members at Bouyart Upholstery and G-Plan factories in Nelson, Lancashire who are holding back monthly dues to FTAT to show disgust at the leadership's actions.

Practical actions for all trade unionists include the raising of funds, stopping the sale of Silentnight beds and an increase of the picket lines at Barnoldswick and Sutton. The regional Labour Party conferences in the spring must be used to full advantage by ensuring that emergency motions for support for the strikers are passed and acted upon.

● Silentnight strike fund, c/o 9 Frank Street, Barnoldswick, Colne, Lancs. Tel: 0282-816709.

JUST TEN months after it was elected the government of Jacques Chirac has suffered its second big crisis. Last month it was humiliated by a massive wave of student mobilisations which defeated the proposed attacks on education, the Devaquet Bill. Now the railworkers have taken up the gauntlet, frontally challenging the government's three per cent public pay ceiling. JON SILBERMAN reports.

Following his defeat at the hands of the students, Chirac cancelled January's emergency session of parliament and froze measures such as privatisation of prisons and the new racist nationality rules (which would deprive children of immigrants of their present automatic right of French nationality).

Writing in *The Observer* on 14 December, Robin Smyth explained: 'Chirac hopes that three quiet months on the political front will act as a firebreak against the resentment of the student demonstrators'.

But the government's hope for a peaceful new year had already exploded by Christmas — which many train drivers across France celebrated in signal boxes they'd occupied.

Railworkers have huge prestige in France. Their reputation stems back to World War II where they played a significant role in the resistance struggle. They were rewarded for their efforts by a pay structure quite abnormal for industrial workers. Like that of civil servants this included a strong service element — pay increasing according to the number of years employed, and promotion based on seniority.

But years of government austerity have cut into the wages of railworkers. Added to this, they face excessive hours — long distance drivers can often expect to do a 160-hour fortnight — while their stop-over hostel arrangements are unsatisfactory. The long and unpredictable hours mean that workers in the rail industry have the highest divorce rate in France and railworkers have an average life expectancy of just 58 years.

The movement started when the workers proposed a 35-hour week, increased rest days and holidays, improved stop-over ar-

rangements, pay increases, restoration of a £30 weekly bonus which they'd lost, and a number of other demands.

The SNCF — the French equivalent to British Rail — responded by offering 2.8 per cent and a complete restructuring of pay, including replacement of promotion according to seniority with what they call promotion according to 'merit'. The workers have said that 'merit' is simply another name for favouritism. As one rail worker put it 'the little chiefs already decide who get the bonuses. What do you think they'd have done if they'd got their hands on promoting their favourites?'

The determination of the strikers forced the management to back down on its restructuring proposals at the end of December. The government and SNCF management called on the workers to go back to work in return, at which time further negotiations on conditions could continue. But transport minister, Pierre Méhaignerie emphatically ruled 'there is no possibility of negotiations on pay'. The railworkers refused to return to work.

The government is presenting its case as a fight against its version of Thatcher's 'enemy within' — in this case, the target is the CGT, the French Communist Party-led union federation.

But the strike was by no means initiated by the CGT.



CRS riot police move in on rail strikers

Quoted in *The Guardian* on 3 January French industrial specialist, Henri Vacquin, commented 'For the first time since the war, a desire for grassroots organisation on a national scale has appeared. The unions are being forced to support a protest movement by workers, not the other way round. There is pressure for a new type of trade unionism'.

Certainly the strike started spontaneously, led by drivers at Paris's Gard du Nord (North Station) and rapidly spread to involve the whole of the northern region — which remains the centre of the now completely national strike. Many of the workers who initially walked out were not even members of trade unions — in France a significantly smaller proportion of the workforce is unionised than in this country.

The strikers established a strike coordinating committee involving the CGT, the trade union federation aligned to the Socialist Party — the CFTD, the Autonomous Federation (FGAAC) and non-unionists. Comparisons have been made with the local coordinating bodies that led the student upsurge. National negotiations are organised by representatives of the three

union federations which represent 82 per cent of railworkers.

There are other parallels with the student struggle, notably the government's use of the CRS riot police — who were responsible for clubbing student Malik Oussekinne to death — against the railworkers.

Also like the students' mobilisation has been the popularity of the railworkers' struggle. Try as they might, the media have been unable to whip up a serious campaign of irate travellers against the strikers. The support from industrial workers won by the students when significant work stoppages accompanied the mass demonstrations has been mirrored in the extension of the strike to other sectors.

This week, workers in the Paris underground, seafarers, workers in the gas and electricity industry will all be taking strike action in a mounting movement against the government. 'Enough is enough' is a growing new year sentiment in France.

● Messages of support and financial assistance to: Coordination des Agents de Conduite, Gard du Nord, 75010 Paris.



Seafarers take solidarity strike action

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