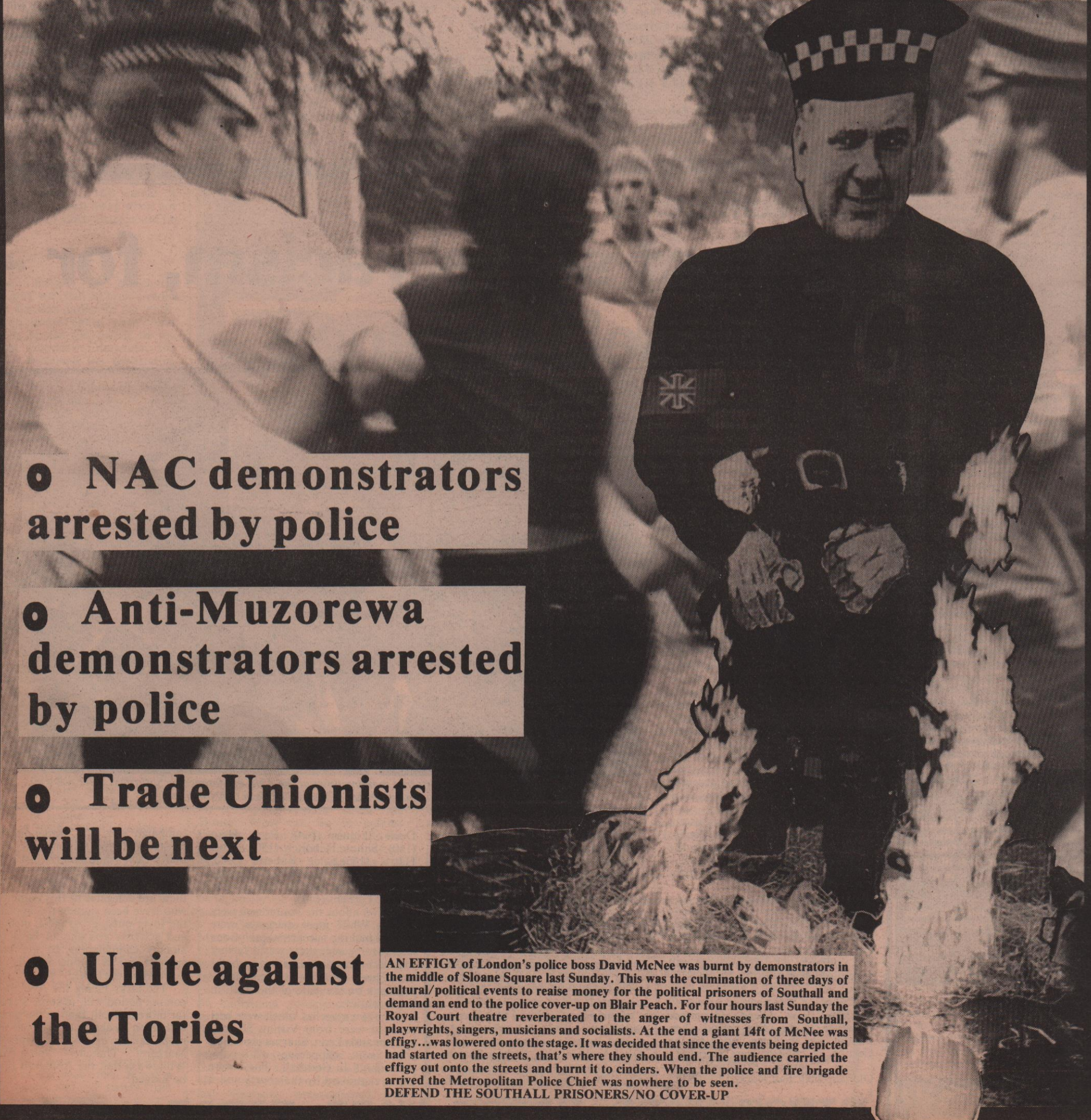


Socialist Challenge

State repression **ANGER MOUNTS**



● **NAC demonstrators arrested by police**

● **Anti-Muzorewa demonstrators arrested by police**

● **Trade Unionists will be next**

● **Unite against the Tories**

AN EFFIGY of London's police boss David McNee was burnt by demonstrators in the middle of Sloane Square last Sunday. This was the culmination of three days of cultural/political events to raise money for the political prisoners of Southall and demand an end to the police cover-up on Blair Peach. For four hours last Sunday the Royal Court theatre reverberated to the anger of witnesses from Southall, playwrights, singers, musicians and socialists. At the end a giant 14ft of McNee was effigy...was lowered onto the stage. It was decided that since the events being depicted had started on the streets, that's where they should end. The audience carried the effigy out onto the streets and burnt it to cinders. When the police and fire brigade arrived the Metropolitan Police Chief was nowhere to be seen.
DEFEND THE SOUTHALL PRISONERS/NO COVER-UP

Photo: LARRY HERMAN

Photo: MANN HUSHER (FL)

+ABORTION+ABORTION+ABORTIC 'We'll be marching shoulder to shoulder against Corrie'

By Dodie Wepler

'IF YOU happen to be a spinster in your mid-fifties, suffer from a terminal disease and are the victim of multiple rape, and have been exposed to German measles, then you may just have a chance to obtain an NHS abortion if Tory MP John Corrie's anti-abortion Bill becomes law.'

That's how Mel Reed from the white-collar union ASTMS described the Bill when she spoke at a packed protest meeting in Central Hall, Westminster, last Friday as the Commons' debate on the Bill's second reading was taking place.

Despite the sweltering heat, several hundreds of us squeezed into the hall to express our anger at yet another attempt to curtail women's right to abortion. Just under a hundred were turned away when not another inch of floor space could be found.

Radio

Rose Knight, a pro-choice campaigner who had an hour's radio time in London earlier in the week, made no bones about what John Corrie is up to. On behalf of the National Abortion Campaign, she carefully explained the devastating effects of the Bill.

'Those who are behind the Corrie Bill are dishonest and liars,' she said. 'They say they just want to "tidy up" the Act. But let's be clear. If this gets onto the statute books, the measures provided for in the 1967 Abortion Act will be repealed.'

Dr Sheila Abdullah from Liverpool asked the meeting: 'If Corrie is merely concerned with tidying up the Act as he claims, then why doesn't he introduce legislation to ensure safe, early NHS abortions?'

'If there are any abuses today, it is the great stress women are forced to bear for weeks on end until doctors, and not women themselves, decide what is best.'

Mel Reed was the last speaker of the afternoon meeting, which was chaired by Reverend Tom Robinson from Liverpool. A round of applause greeted Mel's announcement that the TUC has taken the historic decision to call for an October demonstration on abortion.

Results

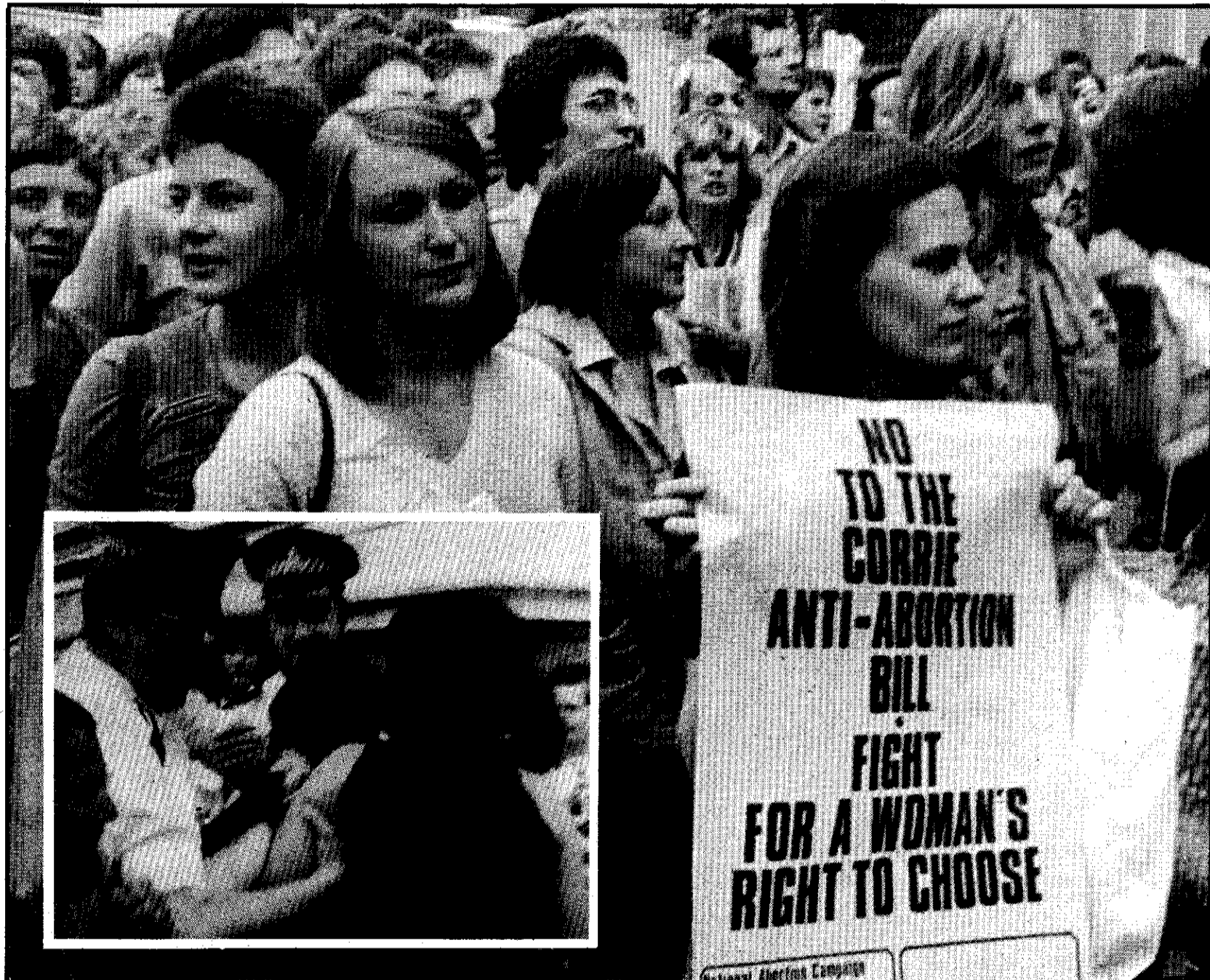
At 4.30pm, after the vote in the House of Commons, we filed outside to hear Labour MP Jo Richardson announce the results.

Cries of 'Shame' went up when we heard that only 98 votes were cast against this disastrous Bill, while 243 predominantly male MPs took the first step towards forcing thousands of us into the hands of backstreet abortionists.

It took only a few minutes for these dreaded, but expected, results to sink in. Spontaneously, we took to the streets to march on Downing Street in disgust. Bearing a huge papier maché knitting needle and a five-foot model of a coathanger, we noisily chanted in defence of our rights to a receptive rush-hour crowd.

Police guarding the gates to Downing Street were showered with scores of hangers when we arrived — a symbol of the backstreet. It was a militant mood, and two sisters from Haringey were arrested.

We decided to regroup, and march back to Caxton Hall where the evening rally was scheduled.



THE anti-Corrie march on Downing Street on Friday immediately after pro-abortionists heard the result of the Commons' vote. Inset: the police arrest two of the demonstrators. Top: the announcement the press overlooked.

There, Jeanne Saint told us about the debate in Parliament. The handful of MPs who defended the 1967 Act included the former Health Minister, David Ennals; Jo Richardson, and Willie Hamilton. Other Labour MPs failed abysmally to defend women's interests.

The member from Workington, D. Campbell-Savours asked the House: 'How can we be against hanging, against fox-hunting, and for abortion?' In his view, this would go against the very 'principles of socialism'. As Jeanne Saint put it: 'Following his logic, socialists should be in favour of women dying in the backstreets.'

Dr Gerard Vaughan, Tory Health Minister, explained the problems of Corrie's Bill at great length. It is badly worded; vague; other measures can be taken first; and so on. Then Vaughan concluded that abortion was a matter of 'individual conscience' and he personally would be voting for the Bill!

His views now coincide with Margaret Thatcher's. She voted for the 1967 Act; abstained on all further efforts to curtail abortion rights, and last Thursday press-released her support for Corrie's measures.

A clear action perspective emerged from the rally. Ann Cesek,

who works for the General and Municipal Workers' Union, stressed in a personal capacity, that while the TUC's decision to call a demonstration in October was to be welcomed, it couldn't be left at that.

'We have to go away from here, united and committed to campaigning for a definite date from the TUC — 27 October is the day NAC favours — and then it'll be up to us to ensure that the march is the biggest yet.'

As Toni Gortin from the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign put it: 'We're thinking of the scale of the

anti-Industrial Relations Act mobilisations.'

One of the most encouraging signs of the evening came from Mike Tait, who successfully proposed a resolution in his Transport Workers' union branch (TGWU/ACTS/1418) calling on his union's executive to join in the mobilising committee for the demonstration; to donate £20 to it and to ensure the union's sponsored MPs abide by Labour Party policy.

A branch sub-committee was set up to take up the campaign. 'It has involved more interest and members

than any other issue taken up in the union in the recent past,' Mike Tait reported.

Judy Watson ended the meeting with one of the strongest speeches we heard all day. 'The fight against this Bill is even more important today,' she said. 'The Tories are attacking all of our democratic rights — the right to picket, the right to demonstrate, the rights of immigrants.'

'We've got the women's movement behind us in our fight. We've got resolutions and a £100 donation from the National Union of Students.'

'The Labour Party and the TUC support our aims. The British Medical Association, the Royal College of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians have made statements. So have the nurses and midwives.'

'The support is there. All we need is the action. No manoeuvres in this Parliament will stop this Bill. So we're going to leave tonight with a pledge that during the summer months we'll be on the streets, in the shopping centres, on the estates, at the union conferences with one clear message — the need to march shoulder to shoulder on 27 October to throw out this Bill and to meet this and every other attack which the Tories are committed to make.'

SOLIDARITY WORLDWIDE

MESSAGES of solidarity with women of this country are arriving in NAC offices from around the world. On Friday, to coincide with the Corrie Bill's second reading, Dutch women mounted a picket at the British embassy in the Hague.

Adela Faccio, the prominent abortion campaigner who went to prison for two months after helping to found the Italian pro-choice movement, sent a telegram of support to Friday's rally.

Spanish women from Madrid said in their telegram that 'No law can force women into reproduction'. Messages were also read out from Portuguese and Amsterdam women.

A campaigner from the West Australia Abortion Law Reform Association attended the rally and gave verbal greetings and support.

Women workers sacked in alleged sexual assault case

Complain and be damned

Complaints against a senior officer of Brent council included sexual assault, forced kissing, fondling, and continual propositioning.

Two union representatives attempted to take up their case. Now read on

By Geoffrey Sheridan

A SECRETARY tells her union representative that she has been sexually assaulted by a senior member of the staff.

He makes inquiries and discovers that two other women have complaints about the behaviour of this member of staff, including allegations of intimidatory behaviour and lewd language.

The union representative raises the matter through the appropriate channels and expects a proper inquiry to be conducted to determine whether there is any substance to these serious allegations.

What he does not expect is: that he and another union official who becomes involved in the case will be sued for defamation by the senior member of staff and that this legal action will be backed by their own union; that both union representatives, along with the women concerned, will be suspended from work while an entirely unsatisfactory form of inquiry is held; and that when this finds for the senior employee, the women are effectively told to quit their jobs.

Unless one has an unusually cynical turn of mind, one would expect none of these things, yet this is what has taken place within the Labour-controlled Brent council in North-west London.

How events took this course, about which the *Willesden and Brent Chronicle* says the council has 'blundered badly'; how a top official of the National and Local Government Officers' Association, the largest white-collar union in the West, came to be criticised by his branch for his handling of the case; and how that 2,200-strong branch is seeking to back the members involved, are what is to be related here.

It was during a conversation with Dr Mike Parks, assistant secretary of the Brent NALGO branch, concerning grievances over the introduction of flexitime working, that a middle-aged secretary alleged that she had been the victim of serious sexual misconduct on the part of Adrian Beckett, the council's director of development.

Lewd

Beckett, whose salary is £12,000 a year, strongly denies this claim, as he does those of two other women employees, one a senior administrative officer. All three complain that Beckett has used 'bullying, intimidatory, and lewd' language to them.

The first report, of alleged sexual assault, was made to Parks on 19 January of this year, and while it was made to him in confidence he considered that its possible implications for other women employees necessitated some form of official union action.

After consulting two other branch officers, it was decided to inform the town clerk, Ken Betts, of the nature of the complaints but not the names of the various employees concerned. Betts, the council's chief officer, responded with the suggestion that the women should go to the police, which Parks did not consider to be the best move.

This meeting, on 24 January, broke up with an assurance from the management representatives present that there would be no victimisation of the complainants, and that the matter would be left in NALGO's hands.

The three union representatives

involved at this stage, which included the branch treasurer, were not happy at this development. They considered that management was simply passing the buck, but they agreed that Mike Parks, who is employed by Brent council as an economist, should obtain written statements from the women and refer them to NALGO's district office.

Evidence

Whatever Parks' reluctance to pursue the issue in this way, the union's handbook offered him ample justification. NALGO's 'Job Guide for Representatives and Stewards' recommends that all evidence is carefully collected when dealing with grievances and disciplinary problems.

But it was then that Parks received the first hint of trouble. A senior member of staff heard what was happening and informed Beckett. Parks, worried by this new development, arranged another meeting with the town clerk.

His fears were not groundless. At a hastily convened meeting with management at which the branch secretary was present, the town clerk intimated that Parks could now face legal action.

Parks reacted with understandable anger. He was the only person who was doing anything about processing what he regarded as serious complaints, and now he was faced with threats. Parks consulted a union colleague, Jeff Lever, a member of the branch executive, and they decided to seek advice from a local solicitor.

Mike Parks' next move was to send to the town clerk a letter asking for confirmation of the assurances which had been offered at the 24 January meeting, in particular that the women would not be victimised.

If Parks had considered that top management was anxious to avoid any responsibility in the case, the town clerk's response now confirmed this view. Betts refused to accept the letter, passing it on to the branch secretary.

The reaction of the branch secretary, Arthur Steer, was a little surprising. He apologised to the town clerk for Parks' letter, and wrote to Parks taking him to task for seeking an 'official assurance'.

His letter added: 'I would point out that an exchange of views or advice sought between union and management is not an infrequent occurrence and rightly so, but in every case the unofficial and confidential nature of the exchange is honoured and is not disclosed by either side.'

Branch members when they later learned of this letter wondered how their branch secretary, who is responsible to the NALGO branch, and the town clerk, who is responsible to Brent's elected councillors, could make such 'unofficial and confidential' arrangements.

Support

Arthur Steer, who in addition to his senior position in the Brent NALGO branch is vice-chairperson of the union's national executive, did not consult the branch or its executive committee about his letter to Mike Parks, nor did he carry out such consultation before giving the support of the branch to the next major development.



IF women workers such as those above were experiencing sexual harassment at work, how confident could they be that it would be seriously investigated and that they wouldn't be victimised?

Adrian Beckett, against whom the complaints were being made, issued writs for defamation against Parks and Lever. These writs, which are still being pursued, have the backing of the legal department of NALGO, of which Beckett is also a member. The union's legal officers have asked the women for an apology and the retraction of their complaints.

Astonishing

It was an astonishing situation. Instead of receiving official union support to ensure that their complaints had a just hearing, the three women were now out on a limb. And the two union representatives who were doing their best to give them support were now obliged to defend themselves against a legal attack funded by their union.

Within a fortnight, events were to take an even more unexpected course. On 22 March, the leader of the council, John Lebor, announced that an inquiry was to be held into the complaints, and notified Lever, Parks, and the two complainants still working for Brent that while this was in progress they were all to be suspended from work on full pay.

The suspensions came into effect immediately, and although Beckett was also suspended, the conditions imposed on the complainants and the two union representatives can scarcely be squared with civil liberties let alone the rights of trades unionists.

A letter from the town clerk informed them that they were not to visit any office of the council; not to communicate with any member or employee of the council, past or present, except for their union representatives whom, it was specified, could not be the two union officials now suspended.

Such action was unprecedented even in terms of Brent council's own procedures, which previously only involved suspension of those against whom allegations of gross misconduct were made. Yet it was not opposed by Arthur Steer, the branch secretary.

Suspended

In fact, he informed the branch officials who were approached to represent some of those suspended that they could do so only in a 'personal capacity'. Meanwhile Steer had set NALGO's official machinery in motion by securing backing for Beckett.

The conflict within the branch leadership forcefully erupted at a meeting of the branch executive on 30 March. Steer had convened the meeting to discuss the possible expulsion of Parks and Lever from NALGO.

In the event, a motion was moved which declared the actions taken by Mike Parks and Jeff Lever in pursuing the complaints to be 'unauthorised' and instructed them to 'conduct no further communications on behalf of the branch'.

Steer made no arrangements to ensure that Parks and Lever could be present to defend themselves. In the view of a number of the branch executive members, this was to be a kangaroo court, and 26 of them walked out of the 30 March meeting as a protest against the resolution being taken.

What was left of the meeting passed the resolution by 23 votes, with three abstentions.

The results of Brent council's inquiry into the complaints were announced at the beginning of May.

While the council's chief solicitor had secured statements from two of the three complainants, none was allowed to present evidence in person to the eight councillors who sat in private to conduct the inquiry. The procedures adopted by the inquiry have never been made known.

It is perhaps worth noting in the context of this inquiry and the suspensions which accompanied it that John Lebor, the council leader, is a senior partner in Thompsons, a firm of solicitors used by many trade unions.

The inquiry concluded that the allegations were unfounded. Beckett was allowed to return to work after two weeks, while Parks and Lever were reinstated after a five-week suspension, but the two women senior secretaries who remained in the council's employ (the third had left in disgust for another job) had to accept re-deployment to another department.

If they refused to accept this they were to be sacked at the end of May. They duly refused, on the grounds that acceptance meant acknowledging that they were in the wrong.

But on 16 May the union fightback had at last got underway. A meeting of the NALGO branch executive declared 'null and void' the earlier decision by a rump of its executive to criticise Lever and Parks. The vote was 28 to 15, with one abstention.

This reversal came a day before some two hundred delegates at NALGO's metropolitan district council expressed their concern at the suspensions, and instructed the district council's officers to investigate the handling of the whole affair. The meeting also called for the union to give legal support to the complainants and the union representatives involved.

The threatened sackings brought a furious response from the 800 members of NALGO's Brent branch who attended a special general meeting on 24 May.

Arthur Steer had made no secret of his version of the events. As far as he was concerned, Mike Parks and Jeff Lever, both left-wingers, had gone out of their way to look for the complaints to use as part of the left-right battle within the branch.

It would be wrong, though, to consider that Steer's position was motivated by the fact that Lever had stood against him as branch secretary last year, securing 492 votes to Steer's 513.

The 24 May meeting was to provide crucial support to the two women and the two union representatives who had taken up their case.

There was overwhelming support for resolutions condemning the suspension and the proposed sackings; calling for proper inquiry along judicial lines into the complaints, and noting 'the failure of the branch secretary to act positively in defending the interests of all members involved in the present major grievance case'.

The battle for the branch's demands continues. A defence fund to cover the legal costs of Parks' and Levers' defence has so far raised over £700, part of which was collected at a Rock Against Sexism benefit earlier this month attended by some three hundred Brent NALGO members and supporters.

The address of the fund is: The Treasurer, 42 Pandora Road, London NW6.

A demonstration is to be held outside Brent Town Hall, next Wednesday, 2 July, from 5.30 to 7.30pm in Forty Lane, Wembley, Middlesex (Wembley Park tube).

Sexual harassment at work

WE ARE not in a position to comment on the truth or falsity of the allegations of sexual harassment made by women employees of Brent council, which were the prelude to the course of events detailed above.

Such harassment is, however, common experience for women at work. In Britain, there has so far been little discussion and still less action on this issue within the labour movement. But there have been significant moves in North America.

We publish here major excerpts from a resolution adopted at a convention of the British Columbia Federation of Labor last November. More than 1,000 delegates, representing a quarter of a million Canadian workers, were present. The resolution was submitted by the Federation's women's rights committee.

Sexual harassment is difficult to define. It may range from sexual innuendo made at inappropriate times, perhaps in the guise of humour, to coerced sexual relations.

Harassment at its extreme occurs when a male in a position to confer influence, or affect a woman's career uses his authority and power to coerce the woman into sexual relations, or to punish her refusal.

Because the male is in a position of authority, as a supervisor, a manager, or a co-worker, he is therefore, may be at great risk of objects to the behaviour or result.

Contd. on page 5

overtures. It is this context which underlies the gravity of the problem of sexual harassment.

A woman cannot freely choose to say yes or no to such sexual advances. The fear of reprisal looms formidably for many women when deciding how to react to sexual harassment. To refuse sexual demands may mean jeopardising her future or her career. Like rape, sexual harassment has been a hidden problem, treated as a joke, or blamed on the victim herself.

Because of a long history of silence on the subject, many women feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or ashamed when they talk about personal incidents or harassment. They are afraid that it will reflect badly on their character, or that they will be seen as somehow inviting the propositions.

When women do speak out they are often ignored, discredited or accused of 'misunderstanding' their superior's intentions.

A study conducted on this subject in 1975, showed that in 50 per cent of the cases where complaints were registered no action was taken. In one third of those cases where the complaints were filed, negative repercussions resulted.

Many of these women are organised and we have a responsibility to protect them from this very real threat to their livelihood.

Unfortunately, in many instances they do not believe that anything can be done or that the union would be willing to protect them. The labour movement must clearly demonstrate that it is not prepared to allow any of its members to be intimidated or coerced. To this end the women's committee makes the following recommendations:

Internally — affiliates should adopt policies opposing sexual harassment.

★ Stewards and officers should be trained to deal with this type of problem in an effective manner.

★ The membership must be advised that the union is opposed to sexual harassment and that union officers and stewards are trained to handle the problem.

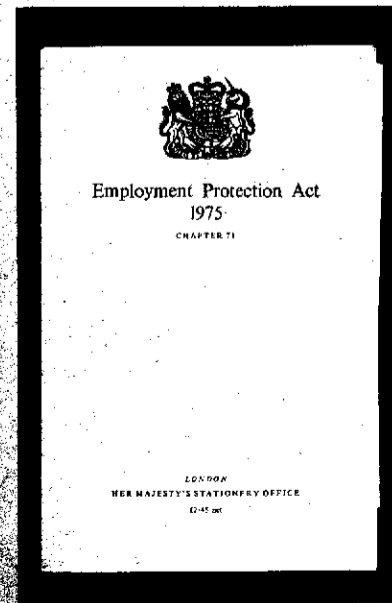
Externally — negotiate language in collective agreements to provide protection against sexual harassment.

★ Develop a separate grievance procedure if necessary for these complaints to ensure protection for the members.

★ Insist that the employer issues a statement prohibiting sexual harassment on the job and post this on bulletin boards.

★ Issue a pamphlet advising women of their rights and warning male supervisors of the repercussions of incidents of this nature.

Sexual harassment is not a joke. It's an issue that will not go away. The labour movement must recognise the seriousness of the problem and effectively represent our members who are its victims.



SECTION 51 of the above Act is meant to protect trade union representatives from victimisation — but not under Brent's Labour council

12 August demonstration

Communist Party say 'Our banners will be there'

By Geoff Bell

CHRIS MYANT, assistant editor of the Morning Star, declared last week: 'There will be Communist Party members taking part on the 12 August demonstration and there will be Communist Party banners present on that demonstration.'

But Myant went on to say that the CP will not be sponsoring the demonstration, which is called on the basis that the British government should 'commit itself to a policy of withdrawal from Ireland'.

Myant explained at a 'troops out' debate at the Communist University on 9 July: 'We don't consider that the demonstration's key and central demand, is the key and central demand which should be raised within the labour movement.'

Nevertheless, the promise of CP presence on the London march is a welcome step forward for Irish solidarity initiatives in Britain.

This will be the first time Communist Party members will have joined with 'troops out' supporters in a joint protest, although CP members will not, presumably, be part of the 'troops out now' contingent on the march.

The CP's youth section, the Young Communist League, has gone one step further than the senior party and agreed to act as sponsors. So has the Connolly Association, which also



has links with the CP, and the New Communist Party.

Individual sponsors of the demonstration now include four

members of the House of Lords, 14 MPs, and Alf Lomas, a Labour member of the European Parliament.

The full list of MPs reads: Cyril Smith, Joan Maynard, Stan Thorne,

David Alton, Ernie Roberts, Frank Maguire, Syd Bidwell, Leo Abse, Frank Dobson, Clive Soley, Jo Richardson, Jock Stallard, Kevin MacNamara, and Reg Race.

Bob Wright, the assistant general secretary of the Engineering Union, is another of the many individual sponsors.

The demonstration will mark the tenth anniversary of the sending in of British troops on to the streets of the North of Ireland, and already it has attracted wider support than any previous initiative on Ireland for a number of years.

There are prominent sponsors from the women's movement, such as the Spare Rib Collective; from the pacifist movement, such as the Peace Pledge Union; and from the labour movement at least seven trades councils have given their backing.

The International Marxist Group has called a national mobilisation of all its members and the National League of Young Liberals has given its full support.

Attention now needs to be concentrated on realising the potential of 12 August, both in the sense of building the demonstration in general and specifically building the 'troops out now' contingent.

*The debate at the Communist University on 'troops out' will be published in a future issue of Socialist Challenge.

International Tribunal finds Britain guilty

By Steve Potter

A LABOUR movement jury has unanimously found the British government guilty of flagrant breaches of human rights in the North of Ireland.

The first hearing of the International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland was held in Paris at the beginning of the year. The final hearing was held in Britain. It assembled in London's Conway Hall on 7/8 July.

The tribunal was launched two years ago to break the 'wall of silence' surrounding British policy in Ireland. The tribunal aimed to lever open the closed doors established by Roy Mason's attempt to cover up the repression in the North, through his policy of isolating the resistance movement by characterising it as 'criminal'.

The Tribunal was chaired by Labour MP Ernie Roberts. Witnesses gave evidence to an audience of a hundred jurors, assessors and observers.

The courage of Lily Fitzsimmons, a Belfast mother, in coming to Britain to give first-hand evidence of repression in the North, was applauded by Alistair Logan, a barrister who presented part of the evidence to the tribunal.

One of the reasons for the first hearing being in Paris was the fear that witnesses like Lily would be prevented from coming under The Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Lily Fitzsimmons told her story to a hushed tribunal. She dwelt on the case of her eldest son who was interned at the age of 16, released at 18, charged with possessing arms on his 19th birthday, and imprisoned without trial for nine months.

He was finally sentenced to 15 years on the sole evidence of a prepared statement, which he was forced to sign under duress.

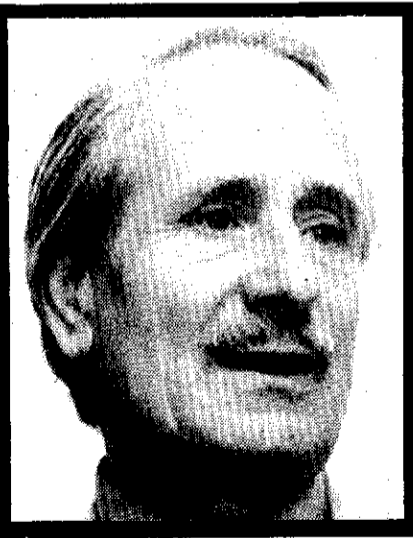
Alistair Logan immediately

ERNE ROBERTS MP is leading a campaign for a special Labour Party conference on Ireland.

He announced this at the International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland.

Roberts, who chaired the first day of the proceedings, spoke of 'the responsibility of the organised working class to speak out on Ireland'.

His own constituency Labour Party in Hackney North has put forward a resolution to the next Labour Party conference which notes the 'wall of silence' surrounding the role of the British Army, the Special Air Services, and the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The resolution instructs the party's national executive committee to call a conference on Ireland.



compared this sentence to those given to members of the Ulster Defence Regiment charged with similar offences.

One UDR soldier, David Stone, charged with the same offence, was sentenced to one year's imprisonment, suspended for two years. As Logan grimly remarked, the British state looks after its own.

Another impressive feature of the tribunal was the evidence given on the historical, social, and economic background to the current British intervention in the North.

In particular Ciaran McNally, a lawyer from Dublin, gave a witty and powerful presentation of the history of British policy towards Ireland over the past three centuries.

A member of the jury, made up of delegates from trade union and labour movement organisations, requested that McNally's speech be published as a service to the whole labour movement.

Similarly thorough reports were given by Micahel Maguire on the economic and social discrimination in the North, and by Eileen Fairweather on the special burden which British

imperialism imposes on women in the North.

Publication of the proceedings and findings of the International Tribunal will be of vital interest to the labour movement.

It closed with a call by one of the organisers for an all-out mobilisation for the 12 August demonstration in London.

As Ernie Roberts noted, repression has not gone away. Since the publication of the Bennet report on police interrogation methods on 28 March this year, 29 further complaints have been registered with the Ulster Office by police surgeons in the North.

The findings of the tribunal mean that there is now ever more reason for the labour movement in this country to say 'Britain out of Ireland now!'.

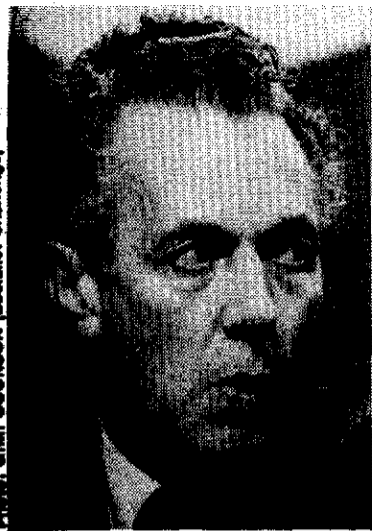
Copies of the findings of the International Tribunal from: 47 Wilsham Street, London W11. Enclose sae. Money is still needed to publish the proceedings.



People's Democracy

NEXT WEEK. The Irish revolutionary socialist organisation People's Democracy has just held its conference in Dublin. A number of important decisions were taken, including one regarding PD's relationship with the Fourth International.

A full report of the conference will appear in next week's Socialist Challenge.



KEITH JOSEPH: Responsible for launching the most vicious attack on the welfare state since.....the last government



JAMES PRIOR: Supposed to be 'soft' on the unions. He is now in charge of pushing through major attacks on the unions. Prior will attempt to give legal backing to Callaghan's Concordat



Photo: G. M. COOKSON [Socialist Challenge]

FIGHTING T

We can defeat Prior

By John Ross

THE PRIOR anti-union proposals are the core of the Tory attacks on the working class and oppressed. Thatcher and the employers know that their policy to increase unemployment, hold down wages, and slash the welfare state and basic rights, will lead to a massive fall in the living standard and conditions of working people.

If the working class has the means it will fight back against these attacks.

The Financial Times summed up this situation for the employers in its editorial on the budget:

'If the problems (of British capitalism) are to be tackled at all... this involves not only a change in attitudes, but a change in the balance of industrial power. Years in which militancy has consistently won money gains have trained people to respond to a militant lead...

'Breaking this psychology — which has in fact been done in some enterprises — means bringing home the realities of risk and reward... Elsewhere it could be a more brutal matter of resisting and defeating militancy. This is the... prospect for the near term.'

Brutal

It is to carry out that 'brutal matter of resisting and defeating militancy that the Tory proposals have been put forward.

These proposed laws constitute a major threat to trade unionism. Every single picket line in the 1972 and 1974 miners' strikes would be illegal under the new proposals. Every single strike which took place to free the Pentonville Five or defeat the Industrial Relations Act would now be against the law. Every act of solidarity with the pickets outside Grunwick would have been illegal.

Any time a trade unionist went down to a fellow worker's picket line that would be illegal. The trade union movement would be faced with the constant threat of literally hundreds of frame-up trials, not dissimilar to those used at Shrewsbury against Des Warren, Ricky Tomlinson and the other building worker pickets.

Every single trade unionist who engages in any serious fight to defend jobs, wages, or fight the cuts is under direct attack from these laws. They are in some ways an even greater threat than the Industrial Relations Act under the last

Tory government.

What is clear is that the fightback against these proposals will be even tougher than that against the Industrial Relations Act. Thatcher is just as determined as Heath and far cleverer.

At the same time, the trade union leaderships are even more reluctant to use union power to smash these proposals than they were in 1972. Callaghan is urging them on by his call to leave opposition to the Labour Party in Parliament, and by his opposition to industrial action for political ends.

In fact, the Duffys, Boyds, Chapples, and Jacksons who dominate the TUC today are the very people who opposed the victorious struggle against the Industrial Relations Act.

Proposals

The TUC put forward many of the same proposals as the Tories in its 'Concordat' with the last government. Secret ballots, attacks on union democracy, opposition to strikers and pickets are the very means by which the self-confessed right wing maintains its position.

Boyd, Chapple, Duffy and the rest will put up no serious fight against these being extended by the Tories. How then can the fightback be carried out?

The first valuable initiative in the fightback is the Code of Practice adopted by the Rank and File 'Defend our Unions' conference held a few weeks ago. While criticisms could be made of this or that point, the Code is a good basis for waging a fight in the unions.

A fight should be put up to get it adopted by every possible trade union organisation from local to national level. Militants supporting its policies should get together in the various unions to fight for it.

But the real problem is how to move into activity those people who did not attend the Rank and File conference. The Code of Practice is a good initiative because it can reach out to these forces. But it can only play a really effective role if it is also part of organising opposition to defend the unions and prevent the Prior proposals being passed.

Lessons

Here real lessons can be drawn from the fight against the Industrial Relations Act, and also from struggles to defend trade union rights such as that against the conviction of Des Warren and others in the Shrewsbury picket trials.

Dozens of local committees were set up to defend the unions. Some were local Liaison Committees for the Defence of Trade Unions but the most effective were those set up through authoritative local labour movement bodies — trades councils, and important shop stewards



An official of the print union NATSOPA is arrested outside the Grunwick picket line in 1977 (above) as mass pickets assemble. Photo: ANDREW WARD (Report)

THIS IS NOW VITAL

TEXT of the Code of Practice for disputes, adopted at Rank and File's 'Defend our unions' conference last month with the objective of campaigning to make the Code official union policy.

1. No crossing of picket lines.
2. For the establishment and defence of 100 per cent closed shop, and for sanctions to be applied against any individuals breaking the closed shop.
3. For full rank and file decision making by traditional democratic procedures — no enforced secret ballots.
4. Strikes to be run by elected strike committees and pickets to be positioned at whichever location necessary to win the dispute, and in sufficient numbers to ensure that the picket line is observed.
5. All appeals for blacking, and financial assistance for disputes to be carried out.
6. Support calls made by strike committees for mass sympathy pickets.
7. No settlement of disputes without full reports back to, and decision making by, the members concerned — no enforced 'arbitration' or enforced 'official' settlements.

committees. These were often set up out of local conferences called by the labour movement. To fight these new Tory proposals the maximum number of such trade union defence committees are needed again. They can help organise action to prevent the Prior proposals being passed and to defend those trade unionists under attack if the proposals do become law.

It is to building these committees that the forces of the Rank and File conference and all other militants should be turned. This can also help provide the basis for the national conference which needs to be called in the autumn, embracing all those prepared to take action against the anti-union proposals.

While the fight against the anti-union

laws has to be based on the rank and file of the trade unions, this is in itself not enough. The weight which is needed to defeat the Tory proposals means that the fight has to get the official trade union movement, up to and including the TUC, to take action.

It was the threat of a general strike which freed the Pentonville Five. It was an all-out strike by the Engineering Union which ended the NIRC. This sort of action is now needed to defeat the Tories' proposals.

Leadership

But obviously this type of action won't come about overnight, particularly with the present leadership of the TUC. How can this be built for effective action waged against the proposals now?

The first fight is to commit party unions to call industrial action against the forthcoming Bill. The five national strikes called by the AEU against the Industrial Relations Act helped build up massive opposition to that Act. They also helped to measures on the TUC, such as for unions to register under the Act.

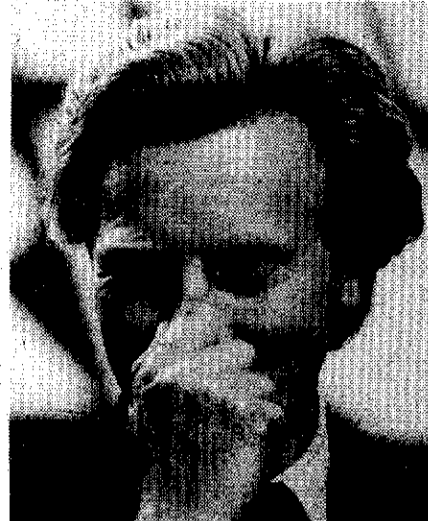
The TGWU conference has voted for 'maximum trade union resistance' to the proposals. This needs to be put as a specific call for the and every other union to call for action to prevent the Bill being

MARGARET THATCHER: Her speechwriters are inclined to utilise quotations from Shakespeare and CS Lewis to soften the blows, but to no avail. She is determined to push through social, legal, and political measures which will bring her into conflict with the most oppressed sections of British society.



TIMOTHY RAISON: Minister for Deportations at the Home Office. He spends most of his time avoiding phone calls from MPs who discover that their constituents are being deported.

Photo: G.M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)



MICHAEL HESELTINE: It is his job to push through plans which will make environmentalists yearn for the days when Peter Shore was in office.

THE TORIES



Photo: ANDREW WIARD (Report)



at Grunwick factory (right).

What the CP thinks

By Mick Costello, Industrial organiser, the Communist Party

THE TORIES have decided to take the teeth out of any industrial action taken by the workers. They want to ban solidarity action, interfere in the unions' internal procedures, and destroy the basis of closed shop agreements.

Industrial and trade union practices will be regulated by the police, magistrates, and the High Court. A Certification Officer (remember Heath's Registrar of Trade Unions?) would vet trade union balloting.

Tory leaders will draw up 'codes of practice' to back up the series of laws they have proposed. These codes will condition the decisions taken in the High Court to which more disputes would be referred.

The Tory proposals for new labour laws are designed to turn the clock back to the beginning of the century. This is the true meaning of the gently-worded 'Working Papers for Consultations on Proposed Industrial Relations Legislation' published by the Conservative Employment Secretary on Monday of last week.

Any tolerance of these opening shots would be followed by more laws to remove workers' rights and hamstring their trade unions.

Yet the Tory documents actually have the nerve to invite the TUC to 'formal consultations' on how to bring about these objectives. The main thrust of the proposed legislation is clear. The union leaders are only invited to join in talks with the Tories on the dots and commas.

It should be obvious to everyone that these Tory proposals are only the first steps toward implementing the Tory aim of shifting the balance of power decisively in favour of the bosses.

No wonder it has been welcomed by the employers' Confederation of British Industry. TUC general secretary Len Murray is correct to describe the whole thing as 'a major challenge to the existing rights of workers and their unions.'

That being the case, there can be no justification for going into 'the consultations' with the Tories about the wording their laws will have on the statute book.

The TUC General Council, based on repeated past decisions to reject anti-union legislation, has a mandate to refuse to enter into discussions to chain down the unions.

*This article is taken from the Morning Star.

The gravy train which never stops

By Tom Marlowe
EVERY reason any worker ever wanted to defend the ability of trade unions to fight effectively for higher living standards was spelt out last week in a soberly worded government-commissioned report entitled:

'Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth. Report No 7. Fourth Report of the Standing Conference.'

The report received some coverage in the national press because of its conclusion that during Labour's period of office the rich were getting richer and the poor poorer.

But equally striking were the figures which testified just how unequal a country Britain remains. Indeed of the many countries for which figures are available only one — the South of Ireland — had a less equitable distribution of wealth.

The figures dealing with the last Labour government cover the period 1974-76, but the suggestion in the report is that the process which started during these first two years accelerated during the last three years

of Labour's administration.

By 1976 the Commission found that the top one per cent of the population held almost a quarter of the country's wealth, to be precise 24.9 per cent, compared to 22.5 per cent two years previously.

If this trend is continued — and the Tory budget is one guarantee that it will — this means that by 1984 the top one per cent will own one third of the country's wealth.

In strict money terms, from 1974 to 1976 the top 20 per cent increased their wealth by the tidy sum of £51 billion, and this is repeated whichever page of the Commission's report is turned to.

For instance, as far as land ownership goes, just one per cent of the population owns 52 per cent of all land; and as far as company shares are concerned, the top five per cent own 80 per cent of all shares, listed and unlisted.

There are sections in the report which also display the ineffectiveness of Labour's equal pay legislation. According to the estimates reproduced, the average earnings of women

workers in 1978 was £51.8, compared to the average male earnings of £82.

But either average is chicken-feed to that which the managing directors received in the same year. The 'median total remuneration' of a managing director last year was £40,990, an increase of over £10,000 in just three years.

The Royal Commission agrees that its figures are not complete, nor are its estimates exact. A number of tax dodges, 'fringe benefits', hidden ownerships and undeclared assets mean that the inequalities listed in the report are an underestimation.

Even so, the report points to two unchallengeable conclusions — how much wealth is produced in this country, and how few benefit from it.

This is perhaps why one of the first acts of the Thatcher government was to disband the Royal Commission and prevent it issuing further evidence.

Given the growth of inequality under the Labour government, Jim Callaghan won't be offering many protests about that particular cut in public expenditure.

TGWU conference's militant sounds

By Patrick Sikorski

IT SEEMED as if the Transport and General Workers' Union's 28th biennial conference last week had taken the slogan 'Unite to Fight the Tories' to heart, such was the unanimity of the delegates' decisions on the resolutions presented to them.

But to look at the voting figures would only tell half the story. Delegate after delegate found themselves speaking to resolutions which they said did not go far enough. All calls for action had been composited out of the resolutions. This was almost entirely due to the strategy of the Communist Party whose position is that the Moss Evans' leadership is 'progressive' and who therefore waged no fight in standing orders.

Clearest

The clearest fight against the platform, on a resolution for the adoption of the sliding scale of wages, showed both the potential for building a class struggle opposition in the union and the willingness of big sections of the membership to mount a real fight against the Tories on the basis of policies which give a clear socialist alternative.

This resolution was moved by Alan Thornett from Leyland, Cowley, who is a member of the Workers Socialist League.

For the first time in the memory of many delegates the chair was forced to concede the use of tellers. The proposal was lost by only 89 votes.

As well as the fact that a consistent fight for the sliding scale has been waged by the WSL for several years at TGWU conferences, another crucial factor was that the left was united against the platform.

Countered

Mike Eaude from Bristol Hospitals, a Socialist Challenge supporter, and Tommy Riley of the SWP both countered the Platform's arguments that the sliding scale was incompatible with the restatement of the unions commitment to unfettered free collective bargaining.

They pointed out that all wage claims are based on an estimate of the rise in the cost of living and that the platform did not say that the demand for a 35-hour week would cut across free collective bargaining.

On pay, Moss Evans' determination to maintain unfettered free collective bargaining was matched by his firm refusal to set any figure for pay rises, even for the low paid. No doubt the Tories are thankful that the TGWU leadership shows no inclination to mount a national campaign to protect members' living standard.

Relaunch

The fight to build against the Tories and the union leadership will be greatly helped if the proposed relaunch of a rank and file bulletin *Off the Record* by independent militants and supporters of the IMG, WSL and SWP goes ahead.



Tories say cuts for all — except the rich

By Bob Pennington

THE TORIES have calmly and coldly set about the destruction of the welfare state. That is the only conclusion to be drawn from the mounting information about their plans for cuts in social expenditure.

The latest to get in on the act is Health Secretary Patrick Jenkin.

His plan is simple and straight forward; the National Health Service will no longer be subsidised to provide medical aid for all. Instead, Jenkin says, the NHS will go into partnership with private health schemes.

Patients

The exact details of the proposals have yet to be worked out, but it could involve patients being charged for the treatment they receive, and it almost certainly will mean faster, better treatment for those who can afford it.

But the Tories are not just out to destroy the NHS.

The Whitehall bureaucrats estimate the Cabinet's proposed cuts — which vary between 5½ to 7½ per cent — will mean the loss of up to 13,700 residential places for the elderly and the physically handicapped.

Home-helps

Some 72,000 people who are dependent on home-helps will have to get by as best they can. To make sure that they do not 'pamper' the poor and aged, the Tories will cut 'meals on wheels' by £4m.

If these 'savings' are introduced it means thousands of older people going into hospital — a difficult thing to do when the NHS is being run-down! Other services for the elderly and the disabled will also be cut back, including sheltered housing.

The Association of County Councils, which is dominated by the Tory shires, wants to start statutory schooling at six and get rid of pupils at 15 if they

have a job.

That's not all. The Association also wants changes in the law to allow libraries charge book borrowers, and a relaxation of fire precaution regulations, including the postponement of the more stringent rules being proposed to cover homes for the elderly.

But the axe is not coming down on everyone. Maybe your grandparents won't get looked after. Maybe your children won't get educated. Perhaps your house will burn down before an understaffed, underpaid fire service can reach it.

However, you might receive an invite from GLC chairperson Robert Vigard to County Hall for the evening of 26 July.

Cheer

Just to introduce a bit of cheer in our drab lives, the Tories have brought back their annual 'do' for 200 guests at £100 a head, which of course is paid for by the rate payers.



THE TARGET for Sir Keith Joseph is 100,000 assorted jobs in industry.

Hit hardest will be the areas in which unemployment is already highest — Merseyside, the North-east, and Glasgow.

According to 'leaks' published in the national press, Joseph aims to:

- Cut — 20,000 jobs in shipbuilding. The yards most likely to be either drastically run down or closed entirely are those in Glasgow, Belfast, and Newcastle.
 - Cut — a further 80,000 jobs in shipbuilding support industries will be gone by the board if the shipbuilding industry is pruned as Joseph is demanding.
 - Cut — regional aid to depressed regions. Joseph wants to slice approximately £200 million off job creation budgets.
- Hardest hit will be the temporary employment subsidy which one estimate reckoned saved 200,000 young people from the dole queue. Again it will be areas of highest unemployment which will suffer. Total job loss will be 100,000 plus.



THE TORIES are aiming to eliminate between 150,000 and 200,000 jobs in education. This is a consequence of the cut in educational spending of £550 million, outlined in Geoffrey Howe's budget.

The National Association of Head Teachers has said the cuts are 'the most damaging attack on educational standards perpetrated by any government since the Second World War'.

The National Union of Teachers' view is that a cut of the magnitude now being proposed 'would destroy attempts to maintain a reasonable education service'.

All levels of education face the axe, but the most favoured targets could be nursery schools, secondary schools, and polytechnics.

There will be one exception — state aid to public schools. The government is committed to spend £60 million on these training establishments for the ruling class.

The job losses break down this way: 70,000 teaching posts will disappear through 'natural wastage'; 15,000 teaching and non-teaching posts in higher education will go the same way; and 50,000 teachers will be sacked.

Rail cuts — higher fares, less jobs

By Martin Eady, NUR London No. 7 (personal capacity)

LONDON Transport fares will rise by 20 per cent this year to cover their paltry 10.3 per cent offer for rail staff and an already agreed increase for bus workers. The rise in fares is part of a deliberate strategy to split the workers who operate the service from the workers who use it.

London Transport chair-

person Ralph Bennet made this clear in LT News of 22 June. He claimed that meeting the rail workers' full claim of 17.3 per cent would mean a further 10 per cent increase in fares.

The Tory government and the Greater London Council have pledged to phase out all operating subsidies to London Transport in the next five years.

A vital element of this plan is to drastically reduce the

number of jobs — particularly on the Tube. This is why the National Union of Railwaymen's agreement to discuss a productivity deal is an ominous sign.

The unions are seeking a business performance scheme similar to that which operates on British Rail. Under this scheme, passenger mileage would be related to the number of staff employed and bonuses paid for any 'improvement'.

Workers are therefore encouraged to associate themselves with management's attempts to improve profitability and are set against their fellow workers — whether as passengers or as unemployed.

For management, productivity deals mean one-person operation of trains. While most LT workers oppose this, the willingness of the union leaders to discuss the possibility can

weaken their resolve in the face of a strong management offensive.

A fighting lead means explaining that workers should unite against the Tory and management offensive with a policy against productivity deals and fares increases, for maintaining living standards, and for an immediate reduction in working hours without loss of pay.

Repression in Iran

By Saber Fallahi

REPRESSION against the left is now a major political issue in Iran. Two weeks ago 200,000 people demonstrated in Tehran against the kidnapping of the Mojahedin guerilla Sadati by members of the Imam committee.

The Imam committee accused Sadati of being an accomplice of the Soviet Union. He was kidnapped two months ago. For 20 days there was no news of him whatsoever. Then news started to leak out. He had been severely beaten, and was being held in a secret place.

At first, the Mojahedin tried to get Sadati released through negotiations with the liberal Ayatollah Taleghani, and then through representations by lawyers and the like. All failed. So they turned to mass street action.

The massive public meeting took place in Tehran University. As usual with demonstrations of the left, harassment by armed gangs of right-wing Islamic thugs took place. But this time it was different because the demonstration was mainly composed of people from the Islamic movement.

The Mojahedin are strongly Islamic. Formed in the early '70s, they were among the main fighters against the Shah. Hundreds of their militants were imprisoned and tortured. Many were executed.

So when the right-wing thugs injured the sister of the most famous martyrs of the Mojahedin, the four Rezaei brothers, there was a mighty surge of anger in the crowd.

The mother of the Rezaei brothers spoke condemning the actions of the Islamic thugs, saying that they were a stain on Islam and went on to condemn the repression being carried out by the new Islamic republic.

This demonstration was doubly significant since it coincided with a change in line by the Mojahedin towards the Bazargan government.

Previously they had not criticised the government. Now, after the case of Sadati, they have come out with strong criticisms of the role of Bazargan.

Meanwhile, international action is still growing for the release of the 15 members of the HKS (Socialist Workers Party) in Karoun jail in Ahwaz.

Both the Mojahedin and the People's Fedayeen, the other main guerilla organisation, have cautiously supported the call for the release of the HKS 15. This is a major development because of the lies and slanders that have been heaped on the Trotskyists inside Iran.

It is in stark contrast to the actions of the pro-Moscow Tudeh party, which joins with the Imam committees in attacking the left, and fully supports the repressive actions against the rest of the left in Iran.

The 15 were imprisoned as a result of their support for the rights of the Arab-speaking national minority in Iran. One result of the international campaign is the release of Hojrabr Khosravi.

However, the other comrades are still being held without formal charge. Telegrams calling for their release and an end to the repression against the workers' movement and the left in Iran should be addressed to Mehdi Bazargan, Prime Minister, Tehran, Iran; and to the Islamic Revolutionary Council, Tehran, Iran.

PICKET IRAN-AIR
Saturday 21 July
73 Piccadilly, London W1
10.00-12.00am
Defend Iranian Left!

After Somoza. austerity or Socialism?

By Dave Kellaway

'WHAT happened to the Shah won't happen to me' — Somoza, May 1979.

Sitting in his bunker, the cornered dictator complains about the failure of his right-wing neighbours to support him. His praetorian National Guard desert in droves, and his business cronies head, with as much loot as possible, to Miami.

Either Somoza will accept a US/Sandinista approved transition plan, or the FSLN will defeat him in a week. Unlike the Shah, Somoza did provide one last bloody service for imperialism.

His genocide prevented an early victorious Sandinista insurrection. This made the social conditions for a radical solution more unfavourable and gave the US State Department vital time to change its policy and negotiate some sort of agreement with the provisional government.

Complete details of this agreement are not yet available. An earlier US proposal to include several more conservative figures in the government was rejected but concessions have been made in this agreement.

Partly in exchange for aid commitments, there are guarantees on limiting reprisals against the National Guard and on forming a regular army, as opposed to allowing full rein to the armed committees.

Other probable concessions include maintenance of a mixed capitalist economy and 'restrained' relations with Cuba.

Of course, written agreements are not the same as the political relation of forces on the ground, and if Somoza's latest reported bravado is to be believed and he does fight to the end (or at least to the last man but himself) the outcome might be very different.

An alternative variant might be a US-inspired junior officer coup to impose this agreed transition.

As this first victory draws near it is important to know more about how the new government will meet the expectations of the masses who have done the fighting to get rid of Somoza.

Kemel-George, Colombian Trot-

skyst leader and co-ordinator of the Simon Bolivar international brigade, interviewed three members of the provisional junta — Sergio Ramirez, Violeta Chamorro and Robelo — on 21 June.

You recognise that there is a massive economic crisis and the people are in great need. How is your government going to deal with these problems?

VC: With a great 'austerity'. This is very important for Nicaragua. We are at the bottom of the barrel and we have to reconstruct the economy with total austerity.

Will the people support this austerity?

R: It is important to make a distinction. It's one thing to have austerity within a national crusade of reconstruction and another to have poverty without a corrupt regime.

The basic elements in this task are: austerity, efficiency in the administration of the resources of the Nicaraguan people, and the unity of all sectors — in order to avoid all

sectarianism that in a given moment may ruin a process that has cost so many lives.

We are going to take over a destroyed country. We will have to begin at zero... But there is one advantage, despite everything — we will be able to build right from the foundations and give it a new physiognomy, to build a new Nicaragua.

We will need all the prestige won by the people's revolutionary struggle to obtain massive aid to stave off hunger. To carry forward this plan it's important to maintain the prestige and honesty of true unity that we find in this government.

Are you going to pay Somoza's external debt?

R: Yes, we recognise international agreements. However, in our case we will need a certain restructuring.

Will the government permit free collective bargaining and the right to strike? Will it convoke a sovereign, democratic, and popular assembly?

**'I FEEL NOW A MILITANT OF THE WORLD REVOLUTION'
'IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT NATIONALITY YOU ARE AS LONG AS YOU HATE SOMOZA'
SIMON BOLIVAR BRIGADE**

On 12 June, the Colombian Trotskyists of the PST (Socialist Workers Party) initiated the formation of an international brigade. Nearly 700 Colombians have since volunteered from many different tendencies.

Forty fighters have been in Nicaragua on the southern front for several weeks. Here is what one of the young volunteers thought of this form of solidarity:

'I feel that there, further north in our continent, there are comrades fighting — it doesn't matter if they are 'Nicas' or Hondurans. I feel it is necessary to support them...

'It's not worth thinking whether one is a little Nica or a little Columbian. What's certain is that any nationality is okay as long as you hate Somoza.

'It's strange. You feel like any ordinary fighter, like any Nicaraguan peasant or student, and because of that it doesn't worry me too much if they kill me like they have killed so many others...

'But at the same time you feel important because you know that the fate of the world revolution depends just a little on you.

'After I took the decision to go to Nicaragua I felt for the first time really Trotskyist. I now know seriously what it is to be internationalist, to be a militant of the world revolution.'

The Fourth International has called on all its supporters to build all forms of solidarity with the Nicaraguan people.

SR: Yes, definitely, we will accept these labour rights. As for the assembly, it is a necessary step we must take in the process of a return to democracy in Nicaragua. But this requires an electoral infra-structure.

Our people have a profound lack of confidence in what elections have meant before. Part of the process of reconstruction will be to get back confidence in democracy to Nicaragua. It will take time and hard work.

Once the provisional government is set up, what will happen to all the hundreds and thousands of armed fighters? What role will they have?

VC: These young people are fighting for one ideal and that is to overthrow Somoza. After that each one has the right to follow their career — to return to their schools and universities, to the studies that they have lost. Those who are soldiers can remain in the army.

Will you establish diplomatic relations with Cuba?

SR: We would like to establish diplomatic relations with Cuba, but we don't want to give excuses to Honduras and El Salvador to attack us. For this reason diplomatic relations are not the first priority.

The form of national 'austerity' proposed and the willingness to pay debts to the same imperialists who helped to destroy Nicaragua in the first place express the 'social democratic' solution favoured by the majority of the junta.

The Constituent Assembly is vaguely supported and the youth in arms are patted on the back and told to go back to their studies.

Whether the youth, particularly in the northern towns controlled by the more socialist FSLN tendencies, will passively accept that advice is uncertain. The economy's dislocation and the need for foreign aid doesn't necessarily impose an all-class 'national unity'.

Hugo Blanco and the FOCEP electoral bloc, based on independent working class solutions, won mass support for a detailed refusal to pay foreign debts.

The Cubans didn't tell the youth to go back to their schools, and they set up armed committees for the defence of the revolution. Fidel also gained support from the workers' states to rebuild the economy.



Solidarity notes: An appeal for funds for relief has been set up. Send donations to Central American Human Rights Committee, PO Box 134, London NW1. For speakers, film, copies of Nicaragua Libre, tel. 01-226 6747 or to: Nicaragua Coordinating Committee, 21 Compton Terrace, London N1.

AN+IRAN+NICARAGUA+NICARAGUA+NICARAGUA+NICARAGUA

WOMEN ORGANISING+WOMEN ORGANISING+WOMEN ORG.

'Although the women's workshops at the National Theatre were technically an exercise, we rapidly discovered the most amazing togetherness and ability to organise.'

We explored female role playing, how we experience male role playing, our fears and joys at being a women, the myths and fantasies we shared.'

Margaret Ford on how women in the theatre are combatting male supremacy.

She has performed in a wide range of plays, including 'The Madras House' and 'Brand' at the National, 'Oh, What a Lovely War!', and the film 'Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair' made by the Women's Film Co-Op.

She is presently appearing in 'A Quieter Sex' at the Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond. The play, by Sheila Yeger, has an all-women cast and is directed by a woman.

WOMEN WORKING in the theatre, or indeed in almost any area of the media, have been overtly operating double standards for many years.

The job allows us to live our own lives in a socially, sexually, and financially more liberated way than the large majority of our sisters; while we actively participate in propagating views which help to ensure that our sisters remain tied to the family, economically dependent, intellectually stifled, and firmly in the usually romanticised role of second class citizen.

Since this article is mainly subjective — my conception of women in the media from an actress's view point — I have less authority to comment on the role of a woman writer or journalist, although having shared a flat with one of the latter, I can vouch for a similar duality of roles.

Financially, the working actress more or less has parity with the working actor, and often — particularly if she is in the 'star' bracket — greater earnings than her male counterpart.

However, when it comes to equal opportunity acting is a non-starter; not due to prejudice, but to lack of material. For centuries authors have been predominantly male with a 'male eye view' of the world. With few exceptions they see women in a subordinate role, and quite definitely as a minority in a male-dominated world.

When I was at drama school 20 years ago there were seven male students for every three women — a ratio that was supposed to reflect the sexual division of parts in the average play or television drama. Since 'art' is generally thought to be a reflection of the real world and its attitudes, that is a revealing statistic.

The other statistic that was bandied about was that for each vacancy for a woman in the drama world, there were a hundred actresses; and for each man's job, 16 actors. What price equal pay when the vast majority of actresses are on the dole queue? When it comes to the issue of home and children versus work outside the home, in many ways the actress has advantages over women in more rigidly structured jobs or professions. Because work is spasmodic and the hours irregular, an actress can often spend a lot more time with her children and enjoy both them and her job, but because of lack of child-care facilities compromises have to be made.

You can't tour with small children unless you can afford to take a childminder with you, and you can't work a 12-hour day in a major theatre company or in repertory unless there are nursery facilities and a childminder at home. While there is union pressure to reduce these working hours, it's women with childcare and home responsibilities who suffer most, and it's women members of Equity who are fighting the hardest on such issues. The union has a working party on childcare, of which I'm a member.

Sadly, it is the political touring companies which are least able to employ women with children, although Monstrous Regiment, a feminist company, pays a touring childminder — a big step in the right direction. In the major companies, of course, there should be nursery

Actress at work Upstaging men



facilities, which is what Equity has called for.

It's the roles that actresses are asked to play and how a casting decision is finally made which show most clearly how this society views women.

To play a romantic role you must have good looks and a good figure; you mustn't be too small, too fat, too thin — and certainly not too tall, otherwise you might dominate your male counterpart. I was once told by a director that I'd never be able to play romantic roles as I was much too tall and therefore not really 'feminine'.

To be funny and acceptable as a woman you must not have any of the attributes of the 'romantic' female; you have to be a 'character lady', in the manner of Hatti Jacques or Beryl Reid.

To play a housewife and mother you need to look homely, and not exotic or off beat in any way; whereas to be cast as the 'other woman' you must not look homely. Unmarried, sexually free women present a threat to a society which demands that the 'good' woman be primarily a wife and mother, firmly ensconced in the bosom of the nuclear family.

While men, too, are stereotyped in this society, the structure is nothing like as rigid as it is for women, and this is reflected in the media. Male 'hero' figures are extremely varied in terms of looks and physique, but whatever their looks they are nearly always portrayed as having an amazing ability to dominate women.

At the National Theatre, where I worked for two years up to last January, a group which for the first time 12 months ago marked the beginnings of theatre women organising in their workplace.

The National at that time was presenting the public with some very interesting and dynamic plays. There was Granville Barker's *The Madras House*, a fascinating study of the economic and sexual repression of women in 1910. Edward Bond's *The Woman* examined the male myth and how far it is responsible for war-mongering capitalist societies.

Planned for last winter was Barry Keefe's *Chorus Girls*, a virtually all-female production concerning women's powers — spiritual,

intellectual, and physical — and why these powers have so often been relegated to 'also rans': chorus girls.

It was mainly through a series of workshops on the latter that the seeds of a National Theatre women's group were sown. These workshops, organised by Bill Gaskill, the director — strictly on a woman-only basis for those working at the National — proved to be imaginative drama workshops.

We explored female role playing, how we experience male role playing, our fears and joys at being women, the myths and fantasies we shared. The grand finale of the series was a five-hour workshop (three hours of which were unscheduled — they couldn't stop us!) on how we were going to occupy the National to demand the right to perform *Chorus Girls*.

This was the play for which the workshops were being held, but which its author secretly planned to be performed by an all-male cast!

At this last workshop I was elected as chairperson and I had to eject Bill Gaskill and Barry Keefe when the women overwhelmingly decided that we couldn't possibly have men as witnesses to any decisions we might need to take. Eventually we decided to allow Barry Keefe back in — as a hostage.

After all, we had every intention of performing his play, and if we had him and his script...

Although the workshops were technically an exercise, we rapidly discovered the most amazing togetherness and ability to organise quickly and efficiently. Politically, we couldn't have been more disparate, but we were all women, and women who were being oppressed and fighting back with an efficiency and tenacity that would have left most revolutionary groups open mouthed.

At one point, a dozen of the theatre's 'heavies' walked in saying that Bill Gaskill had invited them to come to our workshop as observers. Politely but firmly we asked them to go. Belligerently, they refused. The result? We simply vacated the room and continued our planning elsewhere. Barry Keefe's reaction: 'But surely you've given in to the men. You didn't even attempt to defend yourselves.'

Derisory laughter. 'Nonsense,' we told him. 'That's a typically male attitude, possession of territory at all costs. That room couldn't have mattered less, but time to organise did, so we left.'

And organise we did. Even though some of the women were appearing in *Macbeth* that afternoon, and often had to disappear to do a scene, they then rushed back to the meeting. The staff director of *Macbeth* became somewhat frantic and was heard to say: 'But they're still all talking, and I've got three of my witches in there!'

The result was a delay in starting rehearsals on *Chorus Girls*. Barry Keefe was so excited by the last afternoon's workshop and the women's detailed planning for the occupation of the theatre that he went away to do a major re-write of his script.

That, unfortunately, continues. In January, six months after our workshops were held, most of the women involved were made redundant, including me. The reason the National didn't renew our contracts? It was because the theatre was producing several heavily male-cast plays, such as *Dispatches*, the current play on the Vietnam war.

Although the actresses' consciousness had moved by leaps and bounds when we were discussing ideas, it is quite another matter to persuade them to take a militant stand when it comes to defending jobs. In a situation of 80 per cent unemployment, there is — ironically perhaps — an extreme reluctance to take any action which might prejudice future job prospects.

But the seeds of the women's movement at the National Theatre and elsewhere in the entertainment industry have taken root. Equity's women's sub-committee has battled on, researching both the amount and quality of work available to actresses; attempting to fight for workplace nursery facilities; opposing sexual stereotypes in the industry, and calling for free abortion on demand. And all this in spite of growing opposition from the union's right-wing executive.

The monthly meetings of the Feminist Theatre Group gain increasing support, and women from this group and elsewhere in the media are organising a Women in Entertainment conference to be held in November.

Women in the media need to be involved in the women's movement because as long as we continue to allow ourselves to portray women who are degenerated either sexually or intellectually, or simply absent from a 'male world, we provide a justification for the large majority of women to accept themselves as second class citizens, never challenging the supremacy of a white, male, heterosexual, capitalist society.

Feminist Theatre Group, c/o Julie Hollidge, 95 Barnsbury Street, London N1. The Women in Entertainment conference is on 25 November at the Architects Association, Bedford Square, London WC1.

If you know someone — perhaps yourself — who you think might make a good subject for Socialist Challenge's At Work series, do let us know.

TRIES 5p per word. Display £2 per col inch. Advertisements: 5pm Friday before publication. Payment in advance.

MEET TODAY, Hackney Tomorrow? Hackney Campaign Against Racism public meeting at Dalston Library, Dalston Lane, at 7.30pm on Mon, 23 July. Speakers from Southall Defence Committee and Hackney Black Artists' Organisation.

WORKERS Group/Workers Power public meeting. Revolutionary perspectives on Britain and Ireland. Fri 27 July, 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., London WC2 (above Tube). Adm: 20p.

HEALTH Community Law Centre (Birmingham) requires a solicitor. 3 years' post qualification experience preferred but not essential. Preference in one of the following areas: housing; welfare; immigration; employment. Applications by 31 July to: 477 Edgbury Road, Small Heath, Birmingham 10. Enquiries to Jeanette Daly, tel. 091-4821.

JEWISH SOCIALISTS' Group: London branch being formed. Those interested contact Ruth by telephone at 0268 554105 (eves), or write to: A. Lewis, 3 Wood Grove, Whitefield, Manchester M75 7ST. A socialist group within the Jewish community; an autonomous Jewish group within the left.

DEFEND the arrested anti-racists! Leicester 21 July, assemble Victoria Park 1pm. Drop the charges! Release the jailed anti-racists! Disband the SPG! Called by Leicester 21 April Defence Committee.

REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST Tendency public meeting. 'No to all state attacks on the working class! No Nationality Act! Smash immigration laws!' Speakers Keith Tompson, Dipak Basu (Newham Defence Committee), B. Chatajee (in a personal capacity). Friday 20 July, 7.30pm Fairholt House, City of London Poly, Whitechapel High Street. Aldgate East tube. Picket Harmondsworth Detention Centre! Saturday 21 July. Assembly 2pm Hounslow West tube. Evening: Social with Mighty Supertone Sound System. John Marshall Hall,

Christchurch Industrial Estate, 27 Blackfriars Road, London SE1, 8pm. Adm: £1; food and drink available.

'PATRIOT GAME' Thurs 9 Aug, Clapham Common Library (Clapham Common North Side) 7.30pm. Adm: 75p. Organised by South London UTOM.

'TOWARD an information service on microprocessors' — BSSRS day school for people interested in working on a trade union monitoring service similar to BSSRS Work Hazards groups. Sat 28 July, 10.30am, Industrial Sociology Unit, 53 Princes Gate, Exhibition Road, London SW7. Inf: BSSRS 01-437 2728.

ROOM AVAILABLE in North-west London from 13 to 28 Aug (inclusive). Reply to Box 1866, Soc Chall.

BIG FLAME Summer School 28 July — 4 August. Theme: 'The Socialist Alternative'. Speakers on Alternative Health/the Media/Alternative Technology with workshops, films, socials. Cost £30 adults, £15 under-16. Details: BF Summer School, 122 Vassal Road, London SW9.

BOOKS for Southern African comrades — money desperately needed for this vital field of internationalist activity. Or send any books you can spare. Books for Southern Africa, Box No 102, c/o Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1.

FILM 'The Patriot Game', 7.30pm, Thur 26 July at the West Indian Centre, Carmoor Rd (off Hathersage Rd), Manchester 13. 60p (40p unwaged). Organised by Manchester UTOM.

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE EVENTS

DURING the summer, while Socialist Challenge remains at 12 pages, SC events only will be advertised in this column. Deadline: 5pm Friday before publication.

HACKNEY SC group meeting: 'Defend Charter 77', with speaker from Labour Focus on Eastern Europe. Thur 26 July, 7.30pm. Britannia pub, Mare Street, E8.

OLDHAM SC group meeting Thur 26 July at 8pm: 'The struggle in textiles'. The Gardeners Arms, Middleton Road, Westwood.

EVENTS+EVENTS+EVENTS+EVENTS+EVENTS+EVENTS+E

Socialist Challenge

TUC backs October pro-choice march

By Steve Potter
RESPONDING to an appeal by the National Abortion Campaign, the Trades Union Congress has issued a call for a demonstration against the Corrie Bill in October.

In a statement to the press last Friday, TUC general secretary Len Murray said:

'The proposals before Parliament today will seriously reduce the ability of women to influence their own lives. As it is, the availability of abortion is heavily dependent on where a woman lives, how much money she has and whether she is fortunate enough to see a sympathetic doctor.

'No women contemplate terminating her pregnancy lightly. Nonetheless it is essential for women to retain the ultimate right to refuse to proceed beyond the 28th week with a pregnancy that may produce a handicapped or unwanted child.

'The TUC firmly supports the Abortion Act 1967 as it now stands. With the present inadequate provision of NHS abortion services in many areas, the effects of Mr Corrie's proposals may well be a return to the horrors of backstreet abortionists for many women'.

The decision of the TUC to call for a demonstration is absolutely unprecedented. Nowhere in the world has a major trade union confederation called mass action in defence of a women's right to choose.

However, much work will have to be done to realise the tremendous potential in the TUC call. The first signs of this came when the TUC call was greeted with a deafening silence by the mass media.

Moreover, despite many of the excellent paper positions the labour movement has taken on defence of women's rights, the gap between these words and action has been marked.

NAC has understood this and has called for a 'sympathetic lobby' of the TUC General Council meeting next Wednesday, 25 July, to ask for the date for the demonstration to be set for 27 October.

NAC has also put out a call for all those who want to make the demonstration a big success to join a

national mobilising committee. The call came at a rally called last Friday to oppose the passing of the Bill's second reading (see page 3).

If Corrie's Bill is to be defeated, it will require mass action of tens of thousands of people on the streets. It will need a fight for every Labour MP to adhere to party policy against any restrictions on the 1967 Act.

The TUC pledge now means that the possibility of defeating the Corrie Bill is a reality. But only if every

pro-choice militant fights to realise that pledge into the action of thousands.

Join the lobby of the TUC General Council on Wednesday 25 July. 9am, Congress House, Great Russell Street, WC1. For information on the October Mobilising Committee write or phone the National Abortion Campaign, 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8BB. Tel: 01-278 1053.

What Corrie's Bill would mean

CORRIE'S BILL passed its second reading last Friday in the House of Commons with 243 votes cast for it and 98 against. If it secures a successful third reading it would change the 1967 Abortion Act by:

- Restricting the grounds for abortion. It will be almost impossible to get a doctor to do an abortion unless: the woman's life is in 'grave' danger, or there is a 'substantial' risk of 'serious' injury to the woman's physical or mental health, or that of her children.

These three words will make it practically impossible for the majority of women to obtain an abortion.

- Reducing the upper limit to 20 weeks. The present time limit is 28 weeks. A 20 week limit would mean that doctors would not perform abortions after the 16th week to allow for error.

A woman would literally have to be dying after this stage to get an abortion; the only exception will be if the foetus is 'severely handicapped'. This means that, allowing room for error, abortions will not take place after 16 weeks.

- Smashing the abortion charities. Corrie says that there can be no financial link between the referral agencies and the clinics where the abortions are performed. This will paralyse the charities. A quarter of the women presently seeking an abortion have to go to the charities.

Women's centres will also be hit by the provision which says you will need a government licence and a doctor on the premises to perform pregnancy tests or give abortion advice unless you can afford to offer this service free of charge.

- Widening the conscience clause. There is no evidence that doctors or nurses are being forced to perform abortions. After Corrie, health authorities may use 'unsympathetic staff' as an excuse for inadequate abortion services.

Hang whom?

By Bob Pennington
THIS WEEK, egged on by M. Thatcher, a large group of Tory MPs will vote to re-introduce hanging.

The idea of tying a rope around someone's neck to judicially break it, will be preached as a deterrent to violence.

In well-bred, plummy accents, the hanging brigade will give chapter and verse on how hanging will save the lives of the innocent and the unprotected.

These humanitarian homilies will be uttered by the same people who support Pinochet and Videla.

They are the ones who will defend the gentlemen of the SPG against the outrage over Blair Peach's murder. None of them ever called for the hanging of those paratroops who gunned down unarmed demonstrators on that Bloody Sunday in Derry.

But the hanging brigade is not inconsistent. They want the state —

their state — to be given the right to legally murder their opponents.

Capitalism is based on force. Behind every law stands the means of its enforcement, be it the police officers with their powers of 'sus', the deprivation of liberty, or the rope.

I am not sure whether it is 'better' or 'worse' being incarcerated behind bars for life, or being hung. What I am sure about is that we must oppose giving our exploiters the power to hang us.

There is no doubt that they will use that power — like they use all their other powers — to terrorise and intimidate the exploited.

Today, they will argue that they want that power to terrorise the Irish people who have the audacity to fight for their freedom, although they won't quite put it that way. Tomorrow they will want to use it as a class weapon against many other militants.

OUR FUND DRIVE

A FEW weeks ago we sent out a questionnaire to the paper's local groups of supporters. We wanted to know how and where you sold the paper, what political use you made of it, whether you organised around it — and in general what you thought of it, politically, journalistically, stylistically.

Mostly we're still waiting to find out. We've only had five replies so far, from groups in Middlesbrough, Preston, Swindon, Wolverhampton, York. There's a pattern which emerges from them, but it may be a misleading one.

For Wolverhampton, York and Middlesbrough, students were a big part of their sales during the term. But for all five groups the bigger part of their sales were elsewhere.

Preston, for example, sells up to 25 copies each week in pubs, which no one else was doing on the same scale. Labour movement meetings were another source of sales.

Everyone agrees that Socialist Challenge is a more popular and accessible paper than its predecessor, Red Weekly, and easier to sell.

But the five groups had criticisms of the relation between the paper's Editorial Board and the localities. What some comrades appear to realise less is that the resources that go into making Socialist Challenge a more accessible paper and that are needed to increase liaison between the Editorial Board and the localities depend on the money coming in.

All the comrades who've replied so far pay for their papers regularly. All of them sell well above the national average. But only Swindon

had organised regular fundraising activity — a bi-monthly social.

What emerges most sharply is that even groups which sell a good many papers only organise round the paper to a very limited extent. SC groups seem to be mainly limited to discussion circles.

The potential of local Socialist Challenge groups to organise activity to build the paper, to develop new sales, to raise funds, to discuss round and send in articles about local events to the paper, doesn't seem to be being realised in practice.

In our view this is the same problem as those of sales and fund-raising. The replies to the questionnaire show in their diverse way the things that can be done, the potential that is waiting to be tapped.

Our thanks this week to the following contributors to our combined fund drive:

Anon	£10.00
PJV	30.00
Coventry IMG	20.00
S. Smith	2.00
Paul Philbert (Denmark)	1.00
J. Lyst	5.00
Outer West London IMG	2.50
P. Atkin	0.50
D. Power	1.00
W & L	2.30
LP Supporters	1.30
Anon	50.00
Swindon IMG	10.50
Middlesbrough IMG	18.00
Alan Freeman	12.00
Hemel Hempstead IMG	25.00
Week's total	£182.90
Cumulative total	£10,505.26

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 Abroad: Airmail, £16.50. Surface, £10 per annum.
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I enclose a donation for the Fighting Fund of

Cheques, POs and Money Orders should be made payable to 'Socialist Challenge'.

Complete and return to: Socialist Challenge, 328 Upper Street, London N1

NATIONAL ABORTION CAMPAIGN

FIGHT THE CORRIE ANTI-ABORTION BILL

ROSE KNIGHT speaking at the NAC rally last Friday (see page 3).

Photo: LARRY HERMAN