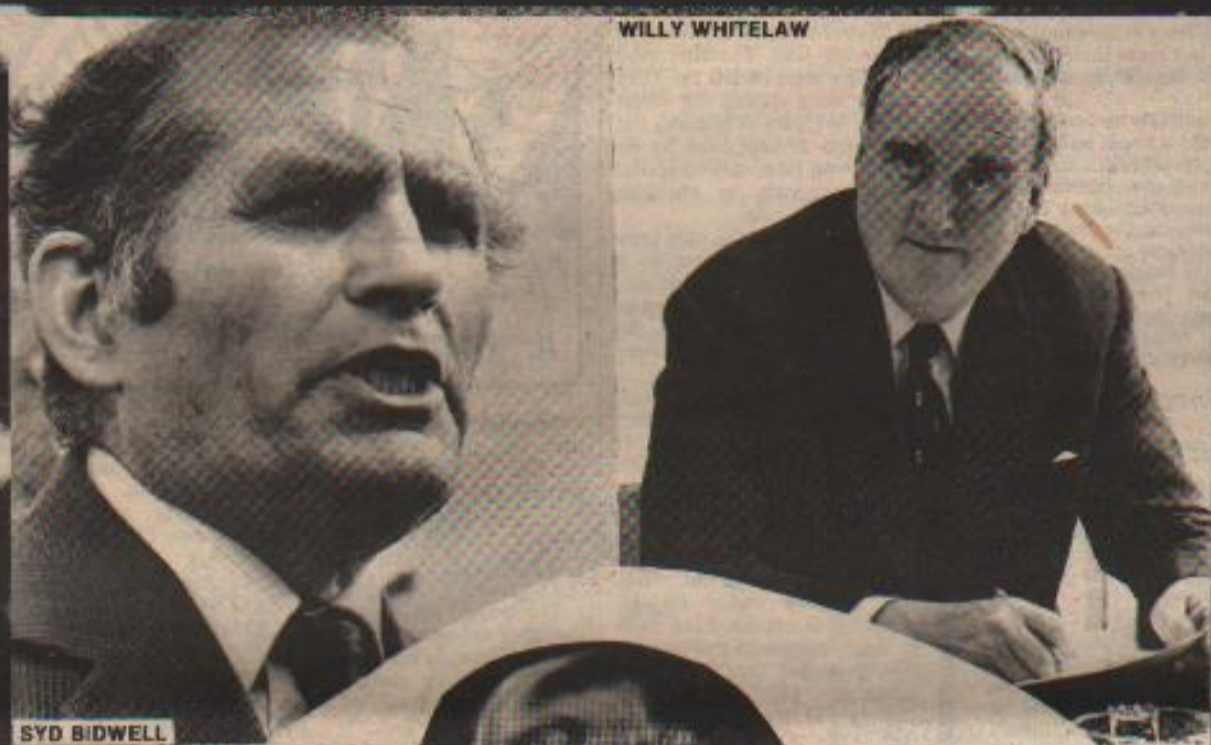


Socialist Challenge

WHITE LAW
PRODUCTIONS
PRESENT

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE RACIST KIND

Certificate W
[whites only]



* A Callaghan/Thatcher joint production
 * Special Effects: Martin Webster
 Guest appearance Enoch Powell

COMING SOON IF WE DON'T FIGHT BACK

'White Horror, never before seen on the screen'
 * Pass Laws
 * Deportations
 * Divided Families
 'The most obscene film ever made'

CARNIVAL!!!! AGAINST THE NAZIS
SUNDAY APRIL 30/EVE OF MAYDAY*11a.m. RALLY/TRAFALGAR SQUARE
MARCH TO VICTORIA PARK* TOM ROBINSON BAND AND STEEL PULSE

ORGANISED BY ANTI NAZI LEAGUE, 12 LITTLE NEWPORT STREET, LONDON WC2, TOGETHER WITH: ROCK AGAINST RACISM, HACKNEY CAMPAIGN AGAINST RACISM, HACKNEY CRG, AND TOWER HAMLETS MOVEMENT AGAINST RACISM & FASCISM

EDITORIAL

Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper Street, London N1.
Editorial 01-359 8180/9. Distribution and
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Garscadden

THE GARSADDEN by-election has become an important arena for political debate and discussions on a number of questions.

Abortion and the democratic rights of women is one issue. Devolution and the right of the Scottish people to self-determination is another. Overshadowing both of these is Labour's sorry political and economic record.

We have been backing the Socialist Workers Party candidate, Peter Porteous. He offers the only socialist alternative. Our supporters have been actively canvassing and working for him.

But we must comment on Porteous' wrong positions on the Scottish Assembly and devolution. In an interview on page 3 he says that socialists should vote 'No to an assembly, and fight against divisions in the working class.' He is also for voting 'No' in the referendum.

A press statement issued by the SWP on 31 March states quite baldly that:

'If working people are to control their own lives, and abolish scarcity and want, then they are going to have to throw off their masters, whatever their accent, whatever their country of origin. To do that, workers on Clydeside need not only their brothers and sisters in Birmingham, Liverpool, Sheffield and London, but more increasingly their brothers and sisters of Turin, Madrid, Lisbon and Santiago.'

'A parliament in Edinburgh will not help us one inch of the way to freedom. It will be as big a sham as the one at Westminster on which it is modelled.'

We also stand for the unity of the international working class. We could add a few other cities to the list: Salisbury, Pretoria, Tokyo, Rio de Janeiro.

But the essence of a Leninist political intervention is to grasp the vital next step. This is lacking from Peter Porteous' comments on devolution. They have such an abstract propagandist ring to them that one could be forgiven for believing that they emanated from the headquarters of the Socialist Party of Great Britain rather than the SWP.

A similar argument could be used on abortion. We could say that we are for abolishing the family under communism. So why all this nonsense about 'Free abortion on demand'?

If we had to choose between a 'first past the post' electoral system and proportional representation we could argue that both were bourgeois and therefore irrelevant to workers. Such an attitude would also exclude raising radical democratic demands such as abolition of the monarchy and House of Lords, and the call for an annual parliament.

Surely the way forward is to vote 'yes' in the referendum and to raise demands which give real powers to the Scottish Assembly, thus weakening the British state. Or is the Glasgow SWP going to line up with the ultra-chauvinist Tories and reactionary social-democrats to preserve British sovereignty? We hope that this disastrous position will be reversed.

Instead call for a Scottish assembly with full powers, elected on a basis of proportional representation and fight for demands that should be brought before it at its first meeting. That is not only correct, but is the only way in which the Scottish Nationalists can be politically defeated.

Margaret and Roddy

THE HYSTERIA surrounding the Margaret and Roddy saga has reached absurd proportions. We are for the abolition of the monarchy, the House of Lords and all else related to it. But the hypocrisy surrounding this matter should not go unchallenged.

First: if it had been a 47 year-old Prince Charles or some Duke who had a relationship with a woman many years younger, we would have had an orgy of male chauvinist triumphalism. 'There's life in the old dog yet' type of remarks would have swept the 'popular' press. The double-standards of the British establishment know no bounds.

Second: Margaret does not have the right to be a Princess and live off the tax-payers money, but nor does the Queen or Philip or the whole lot of them. But she does have the right to live with whomever she chooses. Neither the Church nor Buckingham Palace nor Fleet Street should be allowed to inflict the hypocritical double-standards of British society on her.

Third: newspapers like the Mail, Express and Sun devote acreage of space to this whole affair. The same papers back racism, corporal punishment, SPUC, etc. They claim that Margaret is setting a 'bad example' to the nation. Of course we know that their daily dose of racism and sexism is setting a good example. Ugh!

If you agree with these principles and want to be involved in activities by Socialist Challenge supporters in your area, fill in the form below and send it to us:

I am interested in more information about activities in my area.

I would like additional literature and enclose 50p to cover costs.

[Delete if not applicable]

NAME

ADDRESS

Send to Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper St, London N1.

HOME NEWS

Tory proposals, Bidwell's correspondence, fascists in unions

The politics of racism

IT BECOMES clearer every day that race is going to be an important issue at the next general election. DAVID JONES discusses three issues which dominated last week's news.

THE TORY PROPOSALS

Just as Tory students at the NUS conference were refusing to accept that Thatcher and Whitelaw were racists the Tory leaders were upping the racist stakes. William Whitelaw, the man who is supposed to be 'liberal' on race, delivered the Tory proposals to cheering Tories in Leicester.

They were not the only ones who cheered. Leicester is a National Front stronghold. Loud cheering was reported in the gutters and sewers of the city as well. The Nazis were very happy.

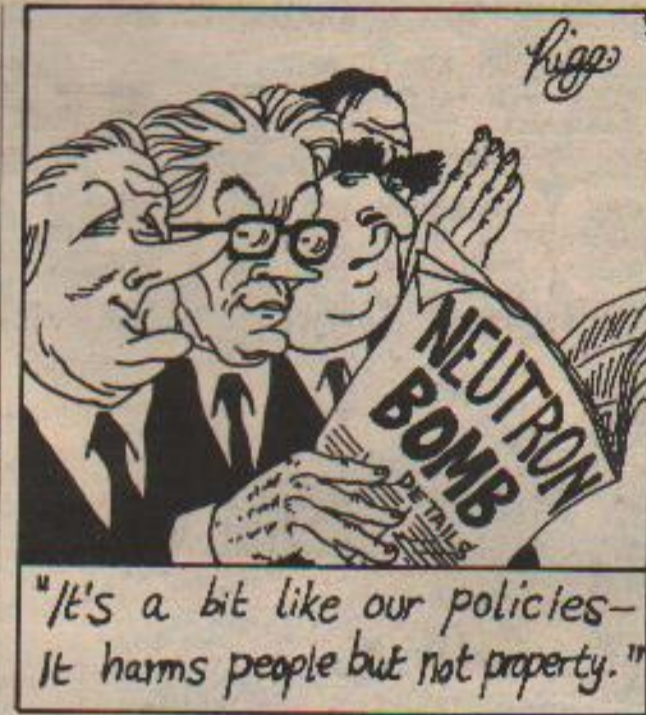
Whitelaw's proposals struck several hard blows against black people in this country. If the Tories are elected they will: (a) prevent parents, grandparents and children over 18 from joining their families in this country; (b) set up a compulsory register of wives and children under 16; (c) women will not have the right to marry men who live outside Britain unless they leave this country; (d) 'temporary' visitors will not be allowed to stay; (e) no more amnesties for 'illegal immigrants'; (f) pass laws to be instituted internally to check immigrants and (g) to encourage 'voluntary repatriation'.

TRICKLE

These indicate the desperate lengths to which the Tories are prepared to go to win votes. We stress this because, apart from the 'pass laws', the Labour Government has already reduced black immigration to a tiny trickle.

ALL OVER the country Socialist Unity campaigns are moving into top gear for the 4 May local elections.

In BIRMINGHAM the Sunday Mercury last week led into its election coverage on the Socialist Unity campaign. Birmingham candidates are: Saltley — Chris Adamson, full time NUPE official and Langbridge Labour Party candidate at the city council elections six years ago. Small Heath — Lawrie White, who has just resigned as ward



The Tories know this, but they feel that they can gain popular support by demagogically outflanking Labour, Syd Bidwell notwithstanding.

CYNICAL

The cynical aspect of this is that they are quite prepared to tolerate growing harassment of black people by racist thugs. That is the net result of Tory policies.

If you want to encourage 'voluntary' repatriation then make life hell for 'them' here. The time is surely ripe for Enoch Powell to return to the Conservative Party!

BIDWELL'S LETTER

Last Saturday the Labour MP for Southall and chief defender of the Select Committee proposals on immigration, Mr S. Bidwell, penned a letter to *The Guardian*. This one-time socialist

wrote: 'It has always been worth a try to take coloured immigration out of the cockpit of two-party conflict in the interests of race relations. If during the next General Election, it appears that a Tory Government would be more realistic on this issue than a Labour Government, I think at this time it could be a major matter leading to Labour defeat.'

'REALISTIC'

Just listen to this language. The Tories are 'more realistic' are they Sydney?

The word 'realistic' has always been used to describe Powell's racist utterances. The logic is clear.

What is Bidwell doing in the Labour Party? How long before he joins the 'more realistic' party?

We repeat: Southall Labour Party should boot out this man. He is an utter disgrace.

secretary of Selly Oak Labour Party.

All Saints — Billie Campbell, former Communist Party ward candidate and NUPE branch secretary at All Saints hospital. Soho — Rughib Ahsan, Rover shop steward and SU's Ladywood by-election candidate. Sparkbrook — Pat Hickey, Rover shop steward and IMG member. Sparkhill — Amirkable Khan, TGWU militant and IMG member. Duddleston — Christopher Puteman — Birmingham Area

NUS general secretary, editor Brum Student. The campaign headquarters is at 76b Digbeth, 021-643 9209.

In BRADFORD the manifesto for candidate Rueben Goldberg is already printed. The campaign, which is backed by one of the two local Indian Workers Associations, can be contacted at 145 Amberly Street.

In LONDON too the manifestos are rolling off the presses. SU is standing candidates in Spitalfields,

FASCISTS AND UNIONS

The national press has talked a great deal about the iniquity of unions booting out fascists. The same newspapers supported the ban imposed on Communists holding office at the height of the cold war, even in unions like the Transport and General Workers Union.

These hypocrites justify bans on the left, but attack unions for being 'undemocratic' when it is a question of fascists.

Socialists should support the ban on fascists holding office in the unions. The reasons are simple.

They cannot represent all the members in their union. They want to repatriate black unionists and they are hostile to Jews.

On the question of booting out all NF members from unions, we believe that it is best to link this to practical activities.

We are in favour of disciplinary action against any union member (regardless of whether he/she is formally a NF member) who discriminates on the basis of creed or race. The same applies to physical harassment and attacks.

CODE

Instead of demanding the expulsion of all NF members, we should institute a code of conduct in every trade union. The National Union of Railwaymen has already done this, making racist activity a disciplinary offence.

This would both be more effective (after all fascists could formally leave the NF to stay in a union) and more educative for the rest of the union.

A simple exclusion, if NF membership were proved, would not work and even if it did it could be counter-productive, switching the debate to one on democracy rather than racism and fascism.

where it ran a by-election campaign last year. Deptford, Hammersmith, and Islington.

The six Islington candidates got a big boost by winning the support of Islington Gutter Press, a local paper with 3000 circulation.

More news next week. Keep us posted on how your local campaign is going. Send us copies of your election literature and news of the campaign.

*Turn to pages 8 and 9 for more Socialist Unity news.

OUR POLICIES

Capitalism is in crisis. The leaders of the Labour Party and the trades unions offer solutions that are in the interests, not of the workers, but of the capitalist class.

Socialist Challenge believes that the two vital tasks confronting revolutionary socialists are: * To build broad-based class struggle leadership in opposition to class collaborationism in the labour movement. These should be non-exclusive in character grouping together militants holding a wide range of political views.

* To begin to fight for the creation of a unified and democratic revolutionary socialist organisation which can, through an application of united front tactics, begin to be seen as an alternative by thousands of workers engaged in struggles.

Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

1 The struggle for socialism seeks to unite the fight of the workers against the bosses with that of other oppressed layers of society — women, black people, gays — struggling for their liberation. This socialism can only be achieved by creating new organs of power and defeating with all necessary means the power of the capitalist state.

2 Our socialism will be infinitely more democratic than what exists in Britain today, with full rights for all political parties and currents that do not take up arms against the socialist state. The Stalinist models of 'socialism' in the USSR and Eastern Europe have discredited socialism in the eyes of millions of workers throughout the world. We are opposed to them and will offer full support to all those fighting for socialist democracy.

3 The interests of workers and capitalists are irreconcilable on a world scale. Capitalism has not only created a world market, it has created world politics. Thus we fight for working class unity on an international scale. This unity will be the long run force for defeating both the imperialist regimes in the West and the brutal dictatorships they sustain in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

In Britain it implies demanding the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and forcing the Irish people determine their own future.

4 The Communist Parties in Europe are in crisis. Neither the 'Euro-communist' nor the pro-Moscow wings have any meaningful strategy for the overthrow of the capitalist state. New revolutionary socialist parties are more necessary than ever before. Conditions today are more favourable than over the preceding three decades, but such parties can only be built by rejecting sectarianism and using internal democracy, not as a luxury but as a vital necessity. This means the right to organise factions and tendencies.

Garscadden by-election

'We're out to win people to the SWP and to socialism'

PETER PORTEOUS is the candidate of the Socialist Workers Party contesting the Garscadden seat in the current by-election in Glasgow. **PAT KANE**, Socialist Challenge supporter from Glasgow and an activist in the Socialist Unity campaign, questions Porteous about the SWP's orientation to the Communist Party as well as its views on a Scottish Assembly.

Socialist Unity is actively supporting Porteous while putting out its own campaigning material.



PETER PORTEOUS

What is important about the by-election campaign?

The important thing we are trying to get out of the campaign is to win people to the Socialist Workers Party, to gain membership, and to win people to campaigns of the SWP as well as to the general fight for socialism.

We want to show people there is a fight, and to cash in on the disillusionment that exists. We're out to win the people who are sick of this rotten system.

How do you view the Communist Party's campaign?

The CP are tail-ending the left wing of the Labour Party. Its election material says that Sammy Barr, the CP candidate, is a local man and he 'knows the situation'. But it's politics that counts — it's the fight for socialism. The CP's campaign is just to 'give Sammy Barr a chance'.

Militants need ammunition to fight all the time, not just in this by-election, but in their workplaces, tenants' associations, and in the Right to Work Campaign.

What about the letter your party wrote to the Scottish Committee of the CP (reprinted in 23 March, Socialist Challenge)?

We believe there are militants — socialists — in the CP you can work with. With the CP as a whole, there are areas where our organisations can work together. We can say we want a joint campaign against un-

employment.

On the redundancies in the shipyards, for example, we would be able to sponsor a joint campaign that would help right now. There are ways we can work together. This would help to smash the system.

Do you think that the CP is a socialist alternative to the Labour Party?

No, I see the SWP as an alternative. I think there are various CP members who — because of the particular nature of the CP — will always tail-end the left of the Labour Party. They see themselves as some sort of Eurocommunists, like the Italian CP.

What we are saying is: if that's the situation, then okay, we've got differences. But that shouldn't stop us working together.

Do you think in the electoral arena the SWP can get the same sort of unity with the CP as you can get in the factory?

I think that in elections you should generally state your own policies. You should say 'We are the SWP and we mean this'. We don't believe in parliament, but the elections are a good place to put forward your own policies.

It would be silly to say there are no differences between the CP and the SWP, or that we should paper them over if they exist. What we say is there are certain areas of work where we could campaign together.

Do you think that if the SWP weren't standing in Garscadden you should vote for the

CP?

Well...I think we would be calling for a vote for the left of Labour. But there are particular circumstances where we would call for a vote for the Labour candidate in a parliamentary election.

Given that Donald Dewar, the Labour candidate in Garscadden, is such a right-wing shit, we wouldn't support him if the SWP was not contesting the election.

There may be a general election this year. The CP will be standing quite a lot of candidates. Do you think you should vote for the CP?

I think it will be up to each particular area. In general, our particular strategy is to 'vote to the left of Labour'. But I would say that there are going to be particular circumstances where that's not going to be the case.

In your press release you say

that the Assembly won't solve any problems for the Scottish workers. Can you explain that a little more?

The Assembly is put there to try to stave off the Nationalists, and nationalism. We see that as nothing other than tactics to bring about a division in the working class.

I believe that people should vote no to an Assembly, and fight against divisions in the working class. As far as I'm concerned people in the factories, people in Yarrow's, aren't talking about devolution. They are not saying that this is a big major thing.

What they are talking about is the nationalist arguments. It's very easy to smash the nationalist argument when you are working in a place like Yarrow's. It is part of the international shipbuilding industry. It's easy to smash the argument in Chrysler as well.

Where we've got members, it's easy to hammer down the nationalist arguments because

they lead to splits in the working class.

What we are standing for is the view that people who we want to link up with are the working class in Newcastle, Manchester, Liverpool. That's how to talk about devolution.

A lot of people are seeing the issue as electoral capital, to attract votes. To me it's just lying to the working class.

How do you see the referendum vote?

Well I think that there should be a no vote. But I don't think that it's all that important.

Do you see the fight against the Scottish Nationalist Party solely in terms of the fight inside of the factories? What effect do you think the Assembly will have?

Once there is an Assembly then all the arguments of the SNP will be proven false. The particular crisis that we are in will not be solved no matter what sort of bureaucratic

machinery is put up, or what sort of bureaucracy is set up, whether it's from Edinburgh or Manchester or London. Anything at all is useless.

There is never going to be enough money to go around because this system cannot afford to give the working class what they need. We should be campaigning for socialism, not a new Assembly.

Since the Assembly is going to be set up anyway, do you think that the SWP should stand candidates in the assembly elections?

To be honest, not really. We don't stand in municipal elections because we see them as a nonsense and we don't believe in the parliamentary system. But we can use the parliamentary limelight to get our ideas across to a huge amount of people.

Our line for the Assembly elections would be the same as for the local elections, we wouldn't stand.

ELECTION posters published by the Socialist Workers Party for its Garscadden election campaign.

Women lead struggle Occupation becomes the fashion

TWO HUNDRED workers at the Fashion Design Centre clothing factory in Knowsley are occupying against closure. While labour leaders in Liverpool dither, these workers — the overwhelming majority women — have struck a decisive blow against unemployment.

Everyone in the occupation, which began three weeks ago, says the same thing. 'We have nothing to lose.'

by MARY ROCHE and STEVE POTTER

The modern FD Centre factory was opened only 18 months ago. Owned by a Swiss-based company with factories in Israel, Italy and Switzerland, it was to manufacture clothing for Marks and Spencer's retail outlets.

By 'coincidence', the firm is closing before the workers become eligible for statutory redundancy payments under the Employment Protection Act's two-year rule.

Meanwhile, of course, the firm has taken advantage of Government redevelopment grants to the tune of £20 a week for each worker, and 40 per cent of the cost of the £400,000 machinery in the plant.

The workers occupied three weeks ago to stop the machinery being moved out and sold off to pay the company's numerous creditors. The workers are demanding that, however it is done, all jobs are saved in the plant.

Possible demands put forward include that of a firm taking over, which is what they would prefer, or the formation of a workers' co-operative.

The closure came after a number of lay-offs. A phone call the day the plant was closed was all the notice which the workers received. After a mass meeting which unanimously decided to occupy, workers attended a meeting called by the liquidator in the factory.

The occupation is run on strict democratic lines. The

occupation committee of 10 women and two men reports back to the weekly mass meetings, arranged to allow the maximum number of women to participate. The policy has paid off. Up to 120 of the 200 workers attend the meetings.

Involvement of women with children has been difficult during the school holidays as the factory is difficult to reach. But these women have undertaken four-hour shifts in the occupation, sometimes bringing their children with them.

Young women have been the backbone of the occupation. Many of them volunteer for the night shift.

CRIED

While the few young male workers have been to the fore in representing the strikers' case outside the factory, they are well aware of the problems.

'There is a danger that the women might start to see me as a boss', says John McNally, chairperson of the occupation committee. 'That's why they have to be active themselves.'

He invited the Liverpool Women's Action Group to visit the occupation to discuss with the women occupiers.

Dave Disley, another occupation committee member, is in no doubt as to how the struggle began. 'It was what happened at Leyland and Birds Eye which gave us a kick forward,' he explains.

'We knew we had to take a stand.'

'The occupation has changed a lot of attitudes,' he adds. 'Everybody has good points to raise over what we should do. It's changed my attitude. When I heard about the closure I don't mind telling you that I cried. 24 years old, and I cried.'

Support for the strike has been mixed. The workers have had sympathy from everyone. 'If we could eat sympathy we would be fine.'

Finance is the main problem. After a battle with local social security chiefs, the occupiers who are single are getting supplementary benefit. But not the married women, of course. Money is needed for food and for organising transport to bring women workers into the

occupation. John McNally spent his own dole money travelling to London to see the MP for the Huyton constituency in which the factory is based — Sir Harold Wilson.

ACTION

Now the occupiers want to see action. Plentiful support has come from stewards at the Massey Ferguson factory and some other plants nearby. However, others have preferred to ignore the fight against unemployment.

While the occupiers admit their inexperience, they are determined. 'We are staying for as long as it takes,' say three young women on the occupation day shift. They had been in the plant since 9am, were leaving at 8pm, and coming back shortly before midnight.

It seems a long time ago that management used to organise 'Miss FD' competitions!

Donations to: FD Centre (Liverpool), Randalls Road, Knowsley Industrial Estate, Knowsley.



FDC struggle: 'young women have been the backbone of the occupation'.

Unemployment conference Liverpool general strike on 9 May

A ONE-DAY Merseyside general strike on 9 May and the establishment of a council of action were the two major decisions of the Liverpool Trades Council conference on unemployment held on Sunday.

This was the reply of over 500 delegates to the ever-mounting unemployment crisis in Merseyside writes MARK TURNBULL.

The conference was opened by a whole host of Labour movement officials and time-servers.

Stan Pemberton, president of the Transport Union, Derek Robinson of the Leyland combine committee, local MPs Eddie Loyden and Eric Heffer were all there.

Heffer did say something which few could disagree with when he proclaimed: 'You can't really rely on MPs to fight unemployment'.

The remark was greeted with instant applause, but Heffer went on to insist: 'We've worn out the carpet going to the Prime Minister's office and other offices.' The aim of these endeavours turned out to be pleas for the creation of a Minister for Merseyside.

This reflected the main dividing line in the conference — between those who wanted mass action and anti-capitalist demands, and those who wanted reforms, lobbies, and deputations.

The Communist Party-backed resolution talked of 'a complete change of strategy to get Britain out of the crisis affecting its political, social, and economic institutions.'

This consisted of expanding the economy and pushing the Labour Government leftwards.

CONTRAST

In contrast, Bill Hunter of the Workers Revolutionary Party and the Engineering Union maintained: 'The working class has been imprisoned in wage controls and are being led into the vicious trap of mass unemployment...'

'The only questions that arise with this Government are how to bind the working class to wage controls, bind them to the slump policies of the multi-

nationals, bind them to the IMF and the international banks'.

Derek Robinson was much more cautious. He hoped Leyland would become 'an economic, viable producer of motor vehicles', which were the very reasons that Leyland decided to axe Speke and another 12,000 jobs in the company.

The final resolution that was passed called for nationalisation of firms creating redundancies, a programme of public works and the setting up of action committees in plants threatened with closure.

Yet the platform at the conference was quite willing to give a kick in the teeth to the workers at the Fashion Design Centre whose occupation is in the lead of the fight against

closures on Merseyside.

The chairperson of the conference, Barry Williams, refused to call on the FDC delegate to speak, and a proposal that all or part of the £350 collection be given to the occupation of these clothing workers was turned down by the platform without a vote.

EFFORT

The two most positive features of the final resolution were those calling for the trades council to set up a council of action, and a one-day stoppage throughout the county on 9 May. But as these resolutions were opposed by many in the leadership of the trades council, every effort will be needed to ensure they are carried out successfully.

Teachers' Elections

THE RESULTS of the recent National Union of Teachers executive elections show just why a united, democratic socialist opposition is needed to the present union leaders, writes KEN JONES.

The far left is now represented solely by Socialist Workers Party member Dick North, from Inner London. Why is this?

The main reasons stem from the setbacks teachers have suffered, and the executive's failure to mobilise national action. Fragmentation of the left adds to the problem.

In Inner London, three left candidates stood for two positions; in Outer London, six for four places. Two possible seats were just thrown away by these divisions.

Although it was clear this kind of result was on the cards as long as there were no united candidates, the Rank and File grouping in the union — led by the SWP — persistently refused to organise a joint election slate with the Socialist Teachers' Alliance.

Dick North, in last week's Socialist Worker, openly acknowledged that the Socialist Teachers' Alliance is an important vanguard force. This new stance could help create future united action.

Inner London: North (Rank and File), 1628; Richardson (right wing), 1594; Fisher (Communist Party), 1376; Regan (Socialist Teachers' Alliance), 732; Leon (Rank and File), 332.

Outer London: (left results only) Finch (STA), 259; Foulds (STA), 215; Gerald (R&F), 202; Carr (R&F), 186; Haycock (Workers' Power), 148; Holborow (R&F), 136.

Manchester Cop Out

OPPOSITION is mounting in Manchester to the reactionary campaign being waged by the police under evangelist James Anderton — the force's Chief Constable. MARTIN COLLINS reports.

Anderton's moral crusade against gays and women who have the nerve to demand abortion facilities extends to all areas of community life.

From the pious closure of all night clubs in the city at midnight before Good Friday, and the 'anti-porn' squad, Anderton's activities extend to the 8 October £250,000 exercise in allowing National Front leader Martin Webster to march through Tameside streets.

To ensure the cops are prepared to deal with any emergency, Army and police jointly closed down Collyhurst during an 'anti-terrorist' war exercise last October. This was suppressed by the national media.

Terrified passers-by were amazed as the Army simply stopped life in the community for 12 hours. People were herded around by the Army, and warned to stay in their houses. Local residents — who were not let in on the reasoning behind this war game — thought they had been invaded! And they weren't far wrong.

After the stepping up of Anderton's activity in recent weeks, the International Marxist Group is calling for a full labour movement enquiry into the activities of Manchester Police and for the sacking of James Anderton.

'No islands of responsibility'

Lucas Shop Stewards' Corporate Plan

IF YOU are under 15 or over 45 and live in Birmingham you will not be eligible for a kidney machine, no matter how desperately you may need one.

A portable kidney machine is among the 150 products included in the corporate plan prepared by the combine shop stewards committee in Lucas Aerospace.

In this article, presented by the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science, TOM REILLY, a steward for TASS — the Engineering Union's white collar section — at Lucas, reports in a personal capacity on responses to the plan.

Capitalism is a system in which production is determined by profit rather than social need. It is also a system where workers are employed and discarded in accordance with the whims of the market.

The strategy proposed by the Lucas Aerospace combine shop stewards committee is unique. Anticipating redundancies, the combine committee began in 1974 to co-ordinate the production of a corporate plan.

VOLUMES

The plan, which now runs to six volumes, details a series of alternative products which can be made using the skills of the present workforce. Not only could the adoption of the plan keep all the workforce fully employed, but instead of producing items such as (obsolete) mechanical fuel systems for jet engines, the products described by the corporate plan are all potentially socially useful.

They include transport systems, such as a road-rail vehicle, electrical braking systems, alternative energy sources, medical equipments, telechiric (hands at a distance) machines, and oceanics. Research and development of some of these projects is at present taking place in the recently established Centre for Alternative Industrial and

Technical Systems at NE London Polytechnic.

The stewards, however, do not see the plan as a universal panacea for workers under capitalism.

Indeed they say: 'It is certainly not the assumption of this corporate plan that Lucas Aerospace can be transformed into a trail blazer to transform this situation in isolation. There can be no islands of responsibility and concern in the sea of irresponsibility and depravity.'

Not surprisingly, the response of Lucas Aerospace management has been less than enthusiastic. While most firms these days are only too keen to diversify, Lucas rejected the plan because many of the proposals were 'incompatible' with its current product range.

REVIEW

Yet in the 1977 review for shareholders and employees, the Company chairperson claimed: 'In the front of our minds will need to be the conviction that everything we are doing is being done in the interests of people, and the only ultimate resources we have are human ingenuity and effort.'

To this end, the Aerospace division recently announced the closure of the Victor works in Liverpool, with the loss of 1,500 jobs, as well as the sacking of a further 500

workers at the Coventry and Bradford factories. And more jobs are threatened.

This response is not just that of a single employer. Behind Lucas stands the Government, which is Lucas Aerospace's biggest customer and a significant customer for many other parts of the Lucas empire. Lucas' investment programmes have been substantially assisted by the State, with the payment of interest

charges on borrowed capital.

It benefited substantially with state assistance in putting Lucas Aerospace together in 1970-71. The consolidated balance sheet for Lucas Industries last July showed deferred taxation at £56m, 13 per cent of the total capital employed.

Lucas is therefore heavily committed to the Government and it seems inconceivable that the company would attempt

such 'politically delicate' closures without at least tacit support. This, despite various Government Ministers and the TUC expressing sympathy for the combine committees. Aerospace workers are confronting capital with unique demands and at the same time are giving workers generally new hope. They are demonstrating that while the demand for the right to work is of itself correct, it is also inadequate in confronting

capital. Tactically they are treading new ground. Should they win, workers will gain encouragement to go forward for further demands of this type. We should all play whatever role we can in assisting victory.

For further information contact the Centre for Alternative Industrial and Technological Systems, NELP, Longbridge Road, Dagenham, Essex RM8 2AS.

Nursery class stays OK?

'WE ARE on the offensive.' That's the message from the South Oxford Nursery Class where parents and supporters have been in occupation for three weeks against the threat of closure, reports ANITA RICHARDS.

Support has been overwhelming. As the long struggle begins to make the Tory County Council back down on its plan to cut the class, over two thousand people have signed petitions supporting it.

A list of over 50 children needing nursery places has been drawn up to show the need for the class. One trades union branch has given £50, and the district secretary of the Public Employees' Union has called on his members to ignore any attempt to act against the occupation.

The first demonstration since the occupation began was held in a carnival atmosphere and drew three hundred people.

Speakers from the campaign pointed out how the attack on nursery provision is just part of the attack on education standards and jobs through the Government's cuts. Oxford Trades Council president John Power pledged his support and undertook to back a resolution for action at the next trades



Easter party held in the occupied classroom.

council meeting.

It is not only children who stand to suffer by being deprived of a proper start in education. Working parents, especially women, who are driven back into their traditional role as housewives by the lack of nursery places, single parents and others with special needs are all deprived of the chance to build their own lives

by savage cuts.

The Oxford campaigners have rejected the council's compromise offer of a playgroup, which would only be part-time. They say: 'Free state nursery education is the right of every child and provision should be made for all children who want a place.'

Now they plan to build support nationally in the labour

movement, the women's movement and from all those actively fighting the cuts. Meanwhile the task of keeping the nursery open goes on.

Your help is needed to make sure South Oxford Nursery stays.

Donations and messages of support to: Michelle Flood, 35 Alexandra Road, Oxford.

Journalists debate race coverage

DELEGATES representing the country's thirty thousand journalists, meeting in Whitley Bay next week, are in for a surprisingly political conference. New technology and its implications, racism and pay will take up most of the debates and fringe meetings. JOHN THACKARA reports.

New technology represents an immediate challenge for the National Union of Journalists.

But most of the jobs threatened belong to the print unions which have, historically, treated the NUJ with contempt. Faced with such a test of trade union principle, the NUJ is making acceptance of the new technology, and the consequent job-loss, contingent on an industry-wide agreement with the print unions.

While this approach gives journalists some unaccustomed leeway in extracting help from the print unions on other issues, it is shortsighted. The left's response has been to call for work-sharing with no loss of

pay and no job-loss, together with the demand that the vastly increased capacity of the new technology should be used to make the media more accessible — and accountable — to the working class.

On racism, the NUJ executive has put forward an extremely positive motion proposing new guidelines for the reporting of racist organisations. 'The NUJ and journalists cannot be neutral in the face of organisations which seek to spread racial hatred', it argues.

A call also comes from several branches for a campaign against the National Front being given 'air time' for their propaganda at the next General Election.

On pay, the NUJ executive surely creates history in the British trade union movement by proposing no policy at all for the second year running. In this vacuum, several demands for sliding-scale policies are expected to have a considerable impact.

Statement by Socialist Challenge supporters in NALGO

IT IS nearly a year since the first issue of Socialist Challenge went on sale at the 1977 annual conference of the National and Local Government Officers' association at Scarborough.

Delegates attracted to the paper were acutely aware of the need to unite the maximum number of people in struggle against the class collaboration policies of the trade union leaders and the Labour Government. The paper's advocacy of building a class struggle left wing in the labour movement pointed to a solution.

This need became rudely apparent as NALGO conference endorsed the Government's Social Contract policies by a higher majority in 1977 than in previous years.

The failure of the left to build national mass action in support of NALGO's official opposition to the cuts allowed the right-wing leadership to wind down the union's campaign against reduced services and

sabotage NALGO's overtime ban against frozen posts.

Communist Party members — in alliance with the union's left bureaucrats — fostered the illusion that the threatened third phase of pay restraint could be fought later in the year without an immediate campaign against Phase Two. Similarly, their chronic tendency to postpone struggle means that a year later the left is belatedly trying to get a special conference called to reject the leadership's obvious intention of settling quietly for the Government-imposed 10 per cent under Phase Three this July.

DISORGANISED

The sectarian orientation of the Socialist Workers' Party-dominated NALGO Action Group has disorganised the efforts of genuine militants to build a broad-based revolutionary alternative to the passive opposition of the left bureaucrats.

When the reformist Broad Left in London NALGO tried to set itself up as a rival to the

NAG it was left to Socialist Challenge supporters to lead the fight for a democratic conference of the London NALGO left to decide its own future. That fight won broad support and forced the left bureaucrats to call such a conference.

But, it was the inadequate mobilisation of the NAG and the abstention of half the SWP members which allowed the left bureaucrats to set up a 'Progressive Alliance' on their own undemocratic terms.

ALTERNATIVE

The experience of this fight led to the formation of a London NALGO Socialist Challenge readers' group. We have been fighting for an alternative to the undemocratic manoeuvres of the left bureaucrats and the self-defeating separation of the NAG.

This alternative cannot be the setting up of a third narrowly-based organisation claiming to be the sole repository of socialist action.

The real alternative lies in a fight within the left as a whole, including the PA and the NAG, for the formation of a united, democratic class struggle left involving all those prepared to actively oppose Labour's austerity policies.

Readers of this paper have been campaigning along these lines in London, welcoming into our group some who agree with this orientation while not supporting Socialist Challenge.

Now we have decided to organise a national meeting of all Socialist Challenge readers in NALGO to discuss how we can campaign for the policies of the paper in the union, and in particular how to further the fight for a class struggle left wing in NALGO.

The meeting will take place in London on Sat., 13 May. A pooled fare will operate.

All readers in NALGO are urged to write to Socialist Challenge NALGO meeting, Box 50, London N1 2PX. Those attending will be able to contribute to a discussion bulletin, to be sent to participants shortly with further agenda details.

'Historic compromise' suffers severe setbacks

THE BROAD Left leaders were somewhat despondent at the end of the annual conference of the National Union of Students in Blackpool last week.

As nearly a thousand delegates debated racism, cuts in education, Ireland and other issues, it became clear that the alliance between the Tory students and the Broad Left had received a serious battering.

COLIN TALBOT, a member of the NUS executive, reports.

T&GWU

Fight grows against witch-hunt

'HOW CAN you defend something you haven't got?' That was the question answered by last Saturday's Oxford conference called to defend democracy in the Transport Union and the Cowley 9. These militants are threatened with political victimisation by full-time officials reports JOHNNY HAINE.

Nearly 200 trade unionists took part coming from Wales, Scotland, Merseyside, the North-east, Birmingham and London. Members from all regions of the union were present, making it the strongest meeting of TGWU members in years.

Speakers at the meeting explained the background of the victimisations of the Cowley militants. Detailed accounts proved beyond any doubt the McCarthyite nature of the attack.

The seal had been set for the witch-hunt at last Friday's local Trades Council meeting. AUEW rightwinger John Powers, who is laying charges against the militants, issued a statement which had been 'cleared by the TGWU'. Significantly, he also was reported to have said that all the enquiries into Cowley — three in the last four years — were 'designed to curb the activities of certain people'.

Against this background, conference speakers took up aspects of the witch-hunt. One militant is accused of 'shuffling his feet at the back of a meeting'. Evidence against Alan Thornett includes the speech he made at the last Biennial Conference of the union which 'proves' he was against Jack Jones!

Other speakers explained why union officials had felt compelled to launch such a blatant attack on democratically elected members. Their acceptance of the Social Contract and participation in British Leyland's bankruptcy means that, for them, the workforce has to pay; in speed-ups, redundancies, wage cuts and signing away agreements on conditions. Anyone giving an alternative lead has to be shut up — elections or no elections.

'If we're talking about democracy in the union, why isn't district secretary David

Buckle elected?' asked one delegate. He called for an enquiry into Buckle's activities and recounted how Buckle had said to him 'We don't always agree to union rules.'

Some said this issue had to be the beginning of a campaign for real democracy in the TGWU. All officials should be elected; they should be recallable by the membership; and they should get no more in salary than the average wage of their members. Dockworkers explained how they hoped to launch such a campaign and a paper to fight for union democracy.

Others stressed more the need to go out to members and link these attacks with the Edwards' plan which has the full backing of union officials.

The conference adopted two resolutions. The first read:

'This conference notes with concern the continuous disciplinary actions taken against leading members in the Cowley assembly plant and demands that these charges are stopped.'

'It resolves to go back into the branches and committees represented here and obtain the affiliation of these bodies — to extend this campaign within the TGWU and obtain the maximum affiliation to the campaign; to reconvene the conference on the basis of affiliated branches in the event of any disciplinary action being taken against any of the Cowley 9.'

'This conference will decide any further action to be taken in defence of those disciplined.'

The second resolution charged the steering committee to discuss the possibility of building a reform movement in the TGWU with policies for a fightback against the Social Contract.

Socialist Challenge supporters in the TGWU are urged to fight for these policies in their workplace.

The conference was characterised by a number of important decisions. First, a majority in favour of denying racism and fascists a platform.

Despite the pathetic demagoguery of Broad Left member Trevor Phillips, the new President; the liberal outrage of Sue Slipman, Phillip's predecessor; and angry squeals from the Tories, the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) voted with the far left and swung the vote against the Tory-Communist coalition.

This represents an important step forward.

Secondly, the Tory vote slumped disastrously. Their average vote for the 'top eight' executive positions was only 96, and their presidential candidate received only 74 votes. Only one Tory, Stuart Bayliss, reached the executive, with a block of 50 Broad Left votes. Sue Slipman and her friends preferred a Tory on the executive to Marxists!

The revolutionary left increased its standing as a whole, emerging as the major socialist opposition to the Broad Left-Tory alliance. The average combined vote of the Socialist Students Alliance and National Organisation of International Socialist Societies (SSA and NOISS) was 270, compared to 299 for the Broad Left. And it is doubtful whether one Tory on the executive will stop the debate in Tory student ranks about leaving the NUS.

SECOND

The SSA came second in all except one of the eight 'top' executive posts. The exception was vice-president (welfare), where Alison Downey, a SSA militant from Middlesex Poly, won the post.

The SSA gained another two places. Mich Archer (Birmingham Poly) and Colin Campbell (Kent University) are on the NUS executive together with Pat Saek, a NOISS militant from Highbury Tech.

Despite the clear gains by the far left, it would be a mistake to get too euphoric. There was no real discussion on how to tackle the serious problem of racism

Edinburgh

Gas strike gains support

TWO MASS meetings in Edinburgh last week reaffirmed the determination of 1,500 striking gas workers to stay out until Scottish Gas unconditionally reinstates the 14 wages clerks who were sacked while on strike in support of a regrading claim, reports JOHN BRENNAN.

While strike leaders and officials of the local government workers' union NALGO were attempting to persuade

in education, quotas and immigration controls.

UNITY

The Broad Left believes that its 'Unity against Racism' campaign shows the way forward. This envisages an alliance with college authorities, the Church and the State.

The problem is that it is the State which has imposed quotas and the college authorities that are implementing them. The divisions among the far left prevented a serious fight on this question. Unless it does take place the 'No Platform' vote could turn out to be a hollow victory.

The debate on student union autonomy was sterile — all the more so because the executive clearly knew about, and did not report to conference, important Department of Education proposals on autonomy and union financing.

DEFEATS

Despite the defeats suffered by the Tories, there was much confusion on the Left about what these defeats represented and how to go forward.

The Broad Left was showing distinct signs of strain. The Labour students were in open conflict with the executive over the 'No Platform' policy, together with some hard-line Communists.

It was clear, however, that the 'dissidents' have no worked-out alternative to the rampant reformism of the executive.

For the Socialist Students Alliance the Conference marked one year of growing organisational and political strength. While there are still many problems, the SSA showed that a non-sectarian approach to the problems of creating a mass, independent student movement allied to workers in struggle is the only way forward.

The SSA has brought together a significant opposition and shown itself capable of uniting others in the fight for a mass campaigning union.

The next year will see this approach will also hear in the colleges and prove capable of revitalising the mass movement — especially in the face of the proposed attacks on student union autonomy.

Grunwick

AT A PRESS conference on Tuesday 30 March the Grunwick strike committee clarified its attitude to the future of the strike and pickets' outside the Grunwick factory from 17 April onwards.

The strike committee said that Jack Dromey's statement of the previous week predicting the end of the strike in six to eight weeks had been misquoted. The real questions both he and the strike committee were asking said the statement, were directed at APEX and the TLIC.

'Is it not right' said the strikers, that the Government conciliation service 'is a blind alley for our strike.'

'Come clean and admit it if we're getting nowhere. We say again, it is only trade union action on essential services that can win both recognition and reinstatement.'

The statement also called for support for the Grunwick conference on 14 May and the conference on the Garners Steak House strike.

Solidarity greetings to JOHN LOCKWOOD!

Three months in Pentonville on a trumped up charge over 13 August.

S.E. London Socialist Unity.

London squatting victory



ONE hundred and sixty squatters, including 30 children, in Huntley Street, Central London won a victory in the High Court on 7 April when the Department of Health and Social Security were prevented from evicting them, writes PIERS CORBYN.

The ruling arose from the Department's own incompetence, and it may well continue with its efforts.

The case of the Huntley Street squatters provides a practical test of the State's (lack of) duties under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977. It is the first mass

evictions since the 'amnesty' was declared by Greater London Council which led to 5,000 squatters being rehoused.

SACKINGS

The GLC promised a 'crackdown' to follow the amnesty. The resistance shown by Huntley Street squatters has set the scene for further moves in the crackdown.

The London Squatters Union has joined with Huntley Street squatters to force the Health Authorities to negotiate, and to build a community-based enquiry into the plans for Huntley Street.

The example of the British Gas operations branch at Hinckley, Leicestershire, which invited speakers from the Edinburgh strike committee, should be widely copied and collections taken.

NALGO branches should demand that the executive organise an immediate ballot and campaign for full support for a national gas solidarity strike. Weekly mass pickets of the Graniton gas works in Edinburgh are held on Mondays at 8pm.

Contact: Edinburgh NALGO Gas Strike Committee, Trades Council, Picardy Place, Edinburgh. Tel. 01-556 3006.

Trade Union Diary

ABERDEEN Socialist TUC Fringe meetings. Monday, 17 April. Edinburgh National Aberdeen Campaign Meeting. 7.30pm. Aberdeen Trades Council. Tuesday, 18 April: A socialist alternative for Scottish trade unions. John Gasson. Right to Work Campaign. Alan Thornett. Deputy convener. Cowley. Roland Sheriff. Striking Trades Council. Delegates. Pauline Tammy. Edinburgh. Trades Council. Delegates. A. speakers. In general. Capacity. 7.30pm. at Aberdeen Trades Council. Wednesday, 19 April: Fight for the right to work. Right to Work campaign. In the afternoon. 8.15pm.

BIRMINGHAM Socialist Challenge Trade Union Conference. Saturday, 1 July, 10.30am. Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham. (Coches provided). Credentials and advertising materials from: SC TU Conference, PO Box 50, London N1 2PX.

LONDON The Politics of Education conference. April 29-30. Organised by the Socialist Teachers Alliance, and sponsored by Radical Education and Teaching. London. Kias. Tickets, including papers for £2 (£1 students and unemployed) from: STA Education Group, 75 Highgate West Hill, London N6.

LONDON Grunwick strike committee conference to be held on Sunday, 14 May, 11am to 5pm. Credentials from strike committee, c/o Trades & Labour Club, 574 High Road, W. Essex, London NW10.

LONDON Socialist Challenge readers in NALGO meet to discuss how to campaign for the policies of the paper in the union, and how to further the fight for a mass struggle left wing in NALGO. Saturday, 13 May. Picketed fare. Details plus discussion bulletin from: SC NALGO Meeting, Box 50, London N1 2PX.

Abortion and the law The right to choose

At the National Abortion Campaign conference on 29-30 April, a day will be devoted to discussing 'A woman's right to choose' and the relationship of this demand to abortion law.

Socialist Challenge supporters active in the abortion campaign explain here the background to the debate, and why they consider NAC must stand for the unrestricted right of women to choose abortion throughout the full nine months of pregnancy.

THE EXISTING LAWS regulating abortion in England and Wales are complex and restrictive. The 1861 Offences Against the Persons Act establishes abortion as a crime. The 1967 Abortion Act lays down certain conditions whereby abortion is not illegal, provided two doctors certify that the woman concerned fulfils these conditions.

After the stage in pregnancy where the foetus would be capable of surviving outside the woman's body were it to be born (so called 'viability'), abortion is regulated by the 1929 Infant Life Preservation Act. Viable foetuses may only be aborted to save the life of the mother. Abortion law in Scotland differs in some respects but is still restrictive.

There is general agreement within the pro-abortion movement that a change in the law giving women a legal right of choice about abortion is a necessary part of achieving free abortion on demand in practice. But there are differences within the movement, and in the National Abortion Campaign itself, on the kind of law which would legally express a woman's right to choose.

Most importantly, should a time limit on abortion — as now exists in the Infant Life Preservation Act — remain? Or should the woman's right to make the abortion decision extend beyond the stage in pregnancy at which the foetus is usually considered viable?

Some people have a genuinely held 'moral' belief that there is a point before birth when the foetus attains a fundamental human right — the right to life. They say that, from that point on, the foetus has the right to be protected by law from any threat to its existence, even against the wishes of the woman who carries the foetus within her body. For the fervent anti-abortionists, the 'right to life' point comes at or near conception.

For many who accept abortion and, they say, a woman's right to choose, this point comes at around 28 weeks in pregnancy, when viability begins. But one of the problems of conceding that foetuses start to have 'rights' at the time of viability is that medical

advances are already enabling foetuses to survive outside a woman's body at increasingly earlier stages in pregnancy.

A woman's right to choose only up to viability will become an increasingly limited choice. Such time limits written into the law are a ready-made target for attack by the anti-abortionists, as we have seen with the White and Benyon Bills, and Government Ministers who favour restrictions by lowering the existing 28 week limit to 20 weeks.

The legal position of the foetus must match biological facts. That is, while the foetus is undeniably a potential human being, it is not yet a human being while it is still dependent upon, and a part of, a woman's body. It therefore has only potential rights which can be claimed at birth.

The distinction between the potential humanity of the foetus and the full humanity of the adult woman is already partially reflected in law. Pregnant women's passports only acknowledge one person travelling, not two. If the foetus is damaged in the womb and therefore stillborn, the woman claims against whoever caused the damage, not as a representative of the dead foetus, but in her own right.

If a foetus of a certain age is given legal rights which then have to be weighed against those of the woman, who decides whose rights take precedence? The doctor? The State? Lawyers? The Church? If we allow that the foetus has rights we limit our democratic right as women to have total control over our bodies and our reproduction. Our right to choose is usurped by the legislature and the courts.

Upper time limits on abortion to protect viable foetuses represent State intervention in our personal lives. We want the state to provide abortion facilities. We do not want it to tell us when we can use them.

Supporters of a woman's right to choose only up to viability claim that they believe women are capable and responsible enough to decide for themselves about abortion before 28 weeks. Who do they believe is better

qualified than the woman herself to decide after 28 weeks? Many of us would not choose late abortion for ourselves, but what right have we to generalise from such personal feelings and prevent other women from choosing to have one?

UNCONDITIONAL

We do not consider that any woman would decide to abort a viable foetus unless there were pressing reasons which only she can assess. If, fully understanding the medical hazards involved in the procedure, she makes this decision, we should support her right to do so. She must also be allowed to choose the method of abortion to be used — the method whereby the foetus is delivered alive (induced birth), or the one where it is delivered dead.

If she chooses induced birth, then once outside her body the baby has full and independent rights of its own to be given every chance of surviving without interference from the mother. For us, the crucial divide in the woman's right to choose debate is not whether the foetus would be viable if it were outside the womb, but whether it is still inside, and part of the woman's body. If so, the woman must have unconditional rights over that foetus.

This is the principle on which the abortion legislation which NAC adopts at its conference on 29-30 April must be based. It is not the job of NAC, an abortion campaign fighting for the interests of women, to take up such issues as the defence of foetuses. NAC should not adopt the proposals of the Abortion Law Reform Association which incorporate a time limit on a woman's right to choose by preserving the Infant Life Preservation Act.

All sorts of excuses are put forward for their position — with good Health Service facilities for safe early abortions, few women would want a late abortion; no doctor would do a late abortion; no MP would ever agree to promote such a Bill. NAC should regard an issue as fundamental as the woman's right to choose as a question of principle, difficult enough though that may be for many people to accept.

PRINCIPLE

Even if today no woman requests a late abortion, or would be able to get one if she did, NAC should still establish now the principle that for us, a woman's right to choose abortion means a right to choose in law and in practice at any stage in pregnancy. When NAC decides to campaign for an MP to take up its Bill into Parliament, this should be on the basis of a non-restrictive Bill with no time limits. As a campaign that stands for woman's democratic rights, NAC must have no responsibility for initiating into Parliament a Bill restrictive to women.

Does this mean that the National Abortion Campaign should never support a restrictive Bill? No. If another campaigning group succeeds in persuading an MP to introduce a Bill giving a woman's right to choose up to, say, 12 or 28 weeks in pregnancy, we would judge that to be an advance on the existing law and a gain for women.

We would argue for NAC to campaign vigorously to get that Bill passed, while explaining the ways in which women's choice would still be restricted. If the Bill was passed the fact that restrictions would still exist would not be the responsibility of NAC, since the campaign had not taken the initiative in proposing such a Bill in the first place. NAC therefore is not implicated in making compromises on women's rights for the sake of 'moral' or tactical reasons.

If the National Abortion Campaign is to truly represent the interests of women first and foremost, then it must stand at all times for no medical or legal restrictions on a woman's right to choose. Abortion must be available as of right for women at any stage in pregnancy. This is the principle on which NAC's proposals for a change in the law must be based.



'We're coming to the Socialist Challenge Conference'

I would like to attend the annual conference of Socialist Challenge supporters and enclose £1 registration fee.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE GROUP (if any).....

Do you sell the paper regularly?.....

Please fill in and send to Socialist Challenge Conference, PO Box, 50, London N12PX.

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE supporters in the North-west will be coming to the national conference of the paper on Saturday 27 May in London, reports ALAN TITCHARD.

That was one of the conclusions drawn at the Socialist Challenge supporters conference in Manchester on 1 April. Although the meeting was small, the twenty supporters who attended came from all over the North-west, and one observer travelled from Durham.

Paul Thompson, who attended from Big Flame, explained that the differences with the International Marxist Group could not be put down to tactics. 'There is a difference over how we analyse the vanguard, and who we think the paper should be aimed at', he explained.

Steve Poster, from the editorial board, argued that Big Flame would be in a better position to change the paper if they accepted the invitation to join the editorial board. Thompson reported that Big Flame would be again discussing the project of Socialist Challenge at its forthcoming conference.

Supporters debated many aspects of the paper — from the poster cover on the French elections to problems of the paper's resources. Everyone welcomed the open approach of Socialist Challenge but one conrade queried, 'Why does it seem to be difficult for supporters to get contributions published, while SWP members appear to have few problems?'

The best way to raise money for the paper was, in one conrade's view, to launch a massive appeal to raise money to buy its own printing press.

Conference made other practical proposals, including a call to the editorial board to organise regular tours by national speakers to promote the paper, and — to improve links between North-west supporters — a monthly newsletter and regular meetings of supporters were discussed.

As well as these suggestions about how to improve the paper, all supporters agreed that in addition to education, local groups should get involved in political activity. Has your local Socialist Challenge group debate the project of the paper and practical proposals to expand its influence? If not, organise one now, and invite members of the Editorial board. We encourage reports on your views leading up to the Socialist Challenge National Conference.

Next week's issue

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE will be printing an in-depth report on the National Women's Liberation Conference; an open letter from dissidents in the Soviet Union; a feature on Cuban cinema; as well as a one-page analysis and review of the Communist Party debate on the Morning Star.

The following issue will be centred on issues related to two major events: the anti-nuclear demonstration on Saturday 29 April, and the anti-racist Carnival the next day. There will be several major 'speak-outs' including one by Rock Against Racism, and another by the Socialist Environment and Resources Association.

In addition, the Surplus Value will raise many of the questions to be debated at 'The Politics of Education' conference in London.

NATIONAL ABORTION CAMPAIGN CONFERENCE 29-30 APRIL



Saturday April 29: Discussion of practical abortionists

Sunday April 30: Discussion of theoretical abortionists

Workshops and Planning Session

10 am - All day

Concessions available

To be held in Conway Hall, 100, Conway Way, Western Bank, Red Lion Square, London WC1E 6BT. For more details contact the National Abortion Campaign, 30, Cannon Road, London E8 3AP. Telephone 01-425 4201, or by post to 30, Cannon Road, London E8 3AP.

OPEN TO ALL WHO SUPPORT NAC'S AIMS

Britain's inner cities

BRIXTON: A CASE STUDY IN CAPITALISM

The bureaucrats who draw up electoral boundaries are masters of understatement. Britain's most depressed inner city areas simply disappear from the electoral map.

The Gorbals becomes Glasgow Queens Park; Splott becomes Cardiff South. And the anonymously genteel Lambeth Central is really Brixton, writes RICHARD CARVER.

Brixton people are fiercely proud of where they live. Few would choose to move far away. But still 'up and down the country Brixton has a stigma', a local black told me.

For fascists, Tories, and even Labour, the stigma attaches to those who live there. Brixton, more than anywhere, is synonymous with the West Indian community.

For local people the stigma belongs elsewhere: with the government administrators of all levels, the property speculators and capitalists who have made 'Lambeth Central' a squalid ghetto almost without parallel.

The area still betrays its origins as a polite late-Victorian middle class suburb. There is a strange decaying elegance in the tall houses and wide streets, many still tree lined. Central Brixton is a knot of narrow streets and alleys, encompassing the station, shopping centre and market.

HUMILIATION

Spend five minutes in Brixton and you can't help but notice the two most obvious symptoms of inner city decay taken to the nth degree: unemployment and homelessness.

The jobless figures speak volumes. Since 1974 national unemployment has risen 50 per cent. In the same period black unemployment in Lambeth borough has gone up 400 per cent.

About a quarter of black school leavers are jobless, and unemployed school leavers in Lambeth make up 30 per cent of London's total. There are 12 young people for every job vacancy.

What these figures cannot say is the humiliation and frustration of young blacks. The only growth industry in Brixton is the labour exchange, where they built a new extension a couple of years back to accommodate the crowds.

Young blacks spend their days on street corners or outside the reggae and soul shops in the covered market, listening to the records they can never afford.

CUTS

The causes are obvious: in the last ten years 169 firms have left Lambeth and only 61 moved in, a net reduction of 25 per cent in factory space. With the largest employer, the public sector, it's the same.

Older West Indians remember with tired amusement the London Transport recruiting campaign in the Caribbean and the visit of a Tory health minister to recruit hospital workers. The minister's name was Enoch Powell.

Recession and the cuts have changed all that. Local hospitals have been chopped: the Weir and South London Women's Hospital have gone and Kings faces closure of its casualty department. London Transport operates with a staff shortage of more than 10 per cent, and has faced savage cuts in its revenue support grant from the

Department of the Environment.

Local people can only scratch their heads: if fares rise and jobs are lost why not take on more workers to restore services? Why continue to pay compensation to the former owners of the transport services? They haven't yet had a satisfactory answer.

LAUGHTER

Anti-immigration propaganda doesn't cut much ice among the white population of Brixton. Transparently it is not blacks who are taking white jobs. Blacks are taking no jobs at all.

I was foolish enough to suggest to a group of blacks that the National Front might try a provocative demonstration in central Brixton. When the laughter had subsided and the tears wiped away, they told me how the blood would run in the gutters.

But it's not just that. It isn't liberal drivel to say that Brixton is genuinely multi-racial. Whites don't share the ignorance on which racism is based. Down the road in middle class Streatham the NF recruits heavily, but in Brixton it is regarded as a big joke. What is not a joke is the fortress on



FASCIST canvassing was disrupted on 6 April when the Anti-Nazi League got word of NF members touring a local estate.

SWP and Socialist Unity supporters followed the NF, who got horribly lost — they'd all been shipped in from outside — wandered through the covered market to jeers and shouting and took refuge in a Wimpy Bar.

When anti-fascists told the manager who his customers were he refused to serve the NF, who were only rescued by the arrival of three vanloads of Special Patrol Group.

Photo: MARK RUSHER (IFL)



VILLA ROAD — a centre of squatter's resistance.

the corner of Canterbury Road and its blue uniformed inhabitants. They see their job like an army of occupation, but after the dramatic failure of the black police recruitment campaign they don't even have quislings to help them.

Like all such forces they are motivated by fear. A quick glance in the Canterbury Arms behind the police station will reveal the largest, most backward and bigoted representatives of a force not known for its enlightenment. But the knots of young blacks on street corners still scare them witless.

Police knowledge of black people doesn't extend far beyond Lord Pitt, Learie Constantine and the Black and White Minstrels. But these blacks aren't smiling and stupid. They don't play cricket because there's nowhere to play. And their music is 'the music of the ghetto', sings Bob Marley. Their music is like them: it is young, black and very angry.

'SUB-CULTURE'

As a white it's not easy to build up a clear picture but in Brixton there is what sociologists disparagingly call a 'sub-culture'. Blacks, particularly the young, have reacted to depression by recreating the Caribbean society their parents consciously abandoned when they arrived on Enoch Powell's invitation.

Whites, especially cops, seem terrified by all night music, clubs thick with ganja smoke, and, above all, the sight of blacks salvaging some enjoyment from their surroundings. In Brixton when the cops tell you to turn down your record player it isn't a polite knock on the door but a Gestapo raid.

The clubs are raided with monotonous regularity. You know it's coming when they drop Junior Marvin on the turntable.

'Police and thieves

In the street...'

The police have special weapons reserved for the young: 'sus' and

conspiracy laws. The most celebrated use of the conspiracy laws was when 18 young blacks from Islington were picked up on 'sus', beaten up, and 'confessions' extracted implicating them in theft at the 1976 Notting Hill Carnival.

LUDICROUS

The charges were ludicrous: 'conspiring with persons unknown to steal property from persons unknown.' But then the law says you don't even have to meet your co-conspirator!

An Old Bailey jury rejected most of these charges, which has forced the police to tone down use of conspiracy, but any young black will tell you he or she isn't safe while the laws are still on the statute book.

And there are plenty of other police powers. 'Sus' proper is arrest under the Vagrancy Act 1824 for 'being a suspected person loitering with intent to commit a criminal offence'.

There is an arsenal of further laws giving the police power to stop and search: the Misuse of Drugs Act, 1971, the Metropolitan Police Act 1839, and a range of local statutes. And they are all used.

The law establishes the right of police to stop, search and arrest simply on the pretext that the suspect might have been going to commit an offence. Since magistrates' minds are well attuned to police thinking, the cops get away with it every time.

UNVERIFIED

The atmosphere in which this terrifying attack on human rights can take place is fed by media hysteria on 'mugging'. No paper has ever seriously challenged unverified police assertions on the 'racial' character of this technically non-existent offence.

One example: about 18 months ago South London police produced a survey on 'mugging' on Peckham Rye

RALLY FOR A SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

with Brixton Socialist Unity

JOHN CHASE, BSU by-election candidate, and local speakers on racism, housing, unemployment, health, education, wages.

plus anti-racist sounds and much, much more...
SUNDAY 16 APRIL, 8.00 pm
St Anne's Hall, Venn Street, SW4, near Clapham Common Tube.



The NF arrives in Brixton — escorted

Common at night. As all good NFers know, this was mainly young blacks robbing old white ladies. Local residents were puzzled.

The section of the common referred to was surrounded by a high spiked fence with gates that closed at dusk.

Only the most athletic old people would try to walk through the park at night! The police report made the front page of every national daily; only one Sunday paper picked up on the truth.

Of course there is petty street crime and in an area like Brixton those responsible will be mainly black. It may be a cliché but of course unemployment, bad housing and



friends. Photo: MARK RUSHER (IFL)

racism are the major causes. This is not because of some spiritual deprivation, but real material poverty.

DISADVANTAGE

Local revolutionaries like the Croydon and Brixton Collective point to another element: the education system puts black children at a disadvantage from the start. The most glaring example is the Educationally Sub-Normal Schools, which have a 75 per cent black intake. ESN is based on the educational theories of Sir Cyril Burt, who originated most of Eysenck's ideas on the racial inferiority of Negroes. When

Burt died last year it was discovered that he had rigged the results of many of his experiments! Burt is academically discredited, the liberal establishment tut-tutted...and ESN schools carry on as before. Less dramatic but just as serious is the streaming system in comprehensive schools. Most blacks are in the lower streams. Since there is almost no change in streaming from year to year this low estimate of their educational ability becomes self-fulfilling. The criteria used in streaming are less academic than linguistic. White teachers often cannot understand West Indian dialect (and the children cannot

understand the teacher). The most convenient administrative description for this lack of communication is stupidity. From there to the dole queue it's a straight line.

Here again local people are struck by the insanity of high teacher unemployment, growing class sizes and cutbacks in educational spending. The solution is obvious, but no-one is about to implement it.

HOUSING

The clearest expression of urban decay, the one you can't miss, is in housing. Those grand Victorian facades are crumbling and houses stand empty, their insides gutted by the Lambeth Council bully boys.

Brixton faces all the usual problems of public spending cuts hitting house-building and rehabilitation programmes. But it has a few extra problems besides.

The story starts in 1968 when a newly elected Tory council set about a redevelopment programme. The aim was to increase population density by building upwards instead of outwards.

One massive error dogged the plan from the outset. Many people in central Brixton were illegal subtenants or tenants who did not figure on any record. Mainly black, they tended to live in premises owned by friends or relatives or simply latter-day Rakhmans.

So council redevelopment programmes created a massive unforeseen homelessness. The Tories responded by encouraging landlords to evict illegally, by paying £3000 extra for empty properties.

EVICCTIONS

Eventually the policy was stopped as a Labour council was returned, the Department of the Environment stepped in, and public spending cuts began to bite. This was not altruism. Far from it. There just wasn't the money to carry on redevelopment.

Nor did the evictions stop. Housing Associations buying up property for rehabilitation still encouraged illegal evictions, albeit unwittingly. The demarcation of much of Brixton into Housing Action Areas with priority on grants for rehabilitation hasn't helped either.

HAA terms mean that the grant must be spent within five years. The usual pattern is for occupants — usually squatters — to be evicted, the house boarded up...and then nothing. There is no money to do the necessary work.

One such eviction happened in a Housing Action Area last week. A black squatter found himself out on the street dosing, leaving an empty house which will probably stay that way indefinitely. The Homeless Families Unit makes insulting offers like accommodation in a hostel for alcoholics and the victim can only look for another place to squat.

ANL/ALARM

THE FIRST joint public meeting of the Anti-Nazi League and the All Lambeth Anti-Racist Movement last week attracted 500 people.

An enthusiastic crowd heard national and local speakers explain the importance of resisting the fascists, while Simon White of ALARM explained that the central issue in this campaign was Labour attacks on the rights of blacks, through immigration laws and further restrictions.

Some 200 responded to a call to stop the NF canvassing in Brixton last Saturday. A predictably large number of police also arrived to protect a handful of combat jacketed thugs.

Local people showed what they felt by tearing up NF leaflets and joining the anti-fascist picket.

An even bigger turn out is planned for 15 April, the last Saturday of the campaign. Be at Brixton Oval at 10.30 to stop the fascists.

In this particular instance Brixton's midnight slogan painters arrived in the Housing Action Area. 'Where's the Action?' they painted on the house. **Where's the housing?**

At the moment, squatting is the main answer. Brixton's squatters are highly

organised. Streets like Villa Road and St Agnes Place are only the best known examples of a movement which spans black and white communities and offers a real, if temporary answer.

A GLC estate in Tulse Hill just about sums up the Lambeth housing situation. 200 flats were emptied in preparation for a modernisation programme which never came. 150 are now squatted with apparent sympathy from the tenants on the rest of the estate.

Again the solution is transparent, when building workers queue up at the labour exchange amid rotting properties and empty unworked sites. Again it is only the people who see the insanity. The bureaucrats and property speculators are happy enough.

Racism in housing allocation is hard to pin down, but it is there nevertheless. Until recently Lambeth Council marked its prospective tenants on a scale of 1-5 corresponding to the grading of the estates.

Black people inevitably figured low on the grading because they were already in the worst housing. Even now the council interviewer has massive powers to sift applicants.

CHAOS

Lambeth's homeless are disproportionately black because they were the majority in illegal tenancies. And the homeless get no choice where they are housed.

Council house applicants have to state their racial origin, which the council admits to be part of its policy of dispersing black communities. It hasn't got very far because the number of homeless is continually rising and almost no-one is housed from the formal waiting list.

It is a picture of utter chaos, compounded by the fact that everyone knows that the money is there. Where's it going?

The money paid in interest rates to loan sharks is more than the total Lambeth Council income in rents, and that doesn't include the £¼m paid annually in false claims and inflated contracts.

The permanent waiting list figures in another of Brixton's many scandals: nurseries. In 1974 a GLC survey revealed only 2751 out of 24,000 Brixton under-5s in full time nursery places.

NURSERIES

It never increased. All nursery provision was cut and the terms of the waiting list narrowed to include only those children reckoned to come from violent homes. Still there were too many on this list so it was cut again.

Lambeth women might have drawn a little relief from the relative ease with which abortions are available in the borough. But there's a sting in the tail.

This is a black woman's evidence to the National Abortion Campaign Tribunal last year: 'I did get an NHS abortion, but I've since found out that my doctor thinks his black patients breed too much. He doesn't give white women abortions or the pill because he wants to keep them in the home.' She also spoke of forced sterilisation of black women after abortions or deliveries, a barbarity that many in Brixton experience.

Nurseries, sterilisation, the closure of a maternity hospital — Lambeth couldn't have done better if it had been waging a conscious campaign against women and children.

Or was it? Local abortion activists are still campaigning for daycare abortion facilities and there are fears that existing facilities may face further cuts. You can't win either way.

WALLPAINTERS

Brixton, unlike most of Britain, has a flourishing army of political wallpainters who give the place the feel of a black American ghetto or a southern European city.

Under a railway bridge in central Brixton is painted: 'Class war, not race war'. Much abused by the fascists this pious sentiment has stayed put for years.

The squatting movement, the abortion campaign, fights on unemployment and increased local involvement around the elections are beginning to give that abstract desire some reality.

Nowhere is it more needed.

IN BRIEF

Brixton Campaign Trail

BRITON Socialist Unity still needs your money. And it still needs you.

The campaign has brought out leaflets on immigration and nationality, women, the problems of young people — and more are planned. The difficulty is: they don't give themselves out...and they don't come for free.

We need help for blitz canvassing and leafletting of the constituency in the last week before 20 April.

Phone 01-274 8848 to find out how you can help. And rush that money to Socialist Unity, c/o 182 Upper Street, London N1. Cheques payable to Socialist Unity.

Swindon Socialists Unite

SOCIALIST Alliance, a broad grouping of socialists, is standing a candidate in the Thamesdown Council elections in May. He is Bob Chorley, a sheetmetal worker who did his apprenticeship at Plesseys in Swindon, writes **MOIRA KELLEY**.

The Labour Party candidate is Councillor David Hobbs. He has a record of supporting the right wing in the labour movement — including speaking out against the bakers' strike at a Council meeting. Socialist Alliance is challenging him to a public debate during the campaign.

A teacher and an active member of the Indian Workers Association in the local community has already agreed to come and speak in support of Socialist Alliance.

SA embraces supporters of both Socialist Challenge and Socialist Worker (including members of the IMG and the SWP). This is a result of much fruitful and often sharp debate.

All decisions and positions of any responsibility within the campaign are subject to voting. For example, Bob, a SWP member was nominated by his organisation at an open election meeting, his candidacy was discussed and put to the vote — which was unanimous. A Socialist Challenge supporter, proposed by an SWP member, was elected as agent.

The open nature of the campaign has also enabled us to reach out to immigrants, especially the Asian community, a number of whom have already indicated interest.

A big turnout is expected when Duncan Hallas (SWP) and Tariq Ali (Socialist Challenge editor) will speak at an eve of election rally on 3 May.

An encouraging sign that SA is on the right line is a comment of Des Moffat, TGWU steward at Plesseys Hydraulics: 'I am a Labour Party member, and have voted Labour all my life. I was very suspicious of SA to begin with but I am backing this campaign because not only does it stand for a real socialist alternative but it is also a democratically run broad front where you can argue your point. And I think it could do well.'

Loughborough ANL

TV ACTRESS Miriam Karlin was the main speaker at the first meeting of the Anti-Nazi League in Loughborough.

Well over 200 people also heard Labour councillors, a member of the AUEW-IASS Executive, the chairperson of the local Inter-Racial Solidarity Campaign, a former president of the local NUS, the secretary of the local Socialist Workers Party and a leader of the Asian community.

Stewards kept out one of a small group of NF members who tried to get in with a camera.

The ANL plans to take up the NF leafletting campaign in local schools and the harassment of the black community. Mention was made of the harassment of an Asian family and a death threat received by one of the platform speakers.

The ANL will also have to counter the probable NF general election candidate through mass leafletting of estates and a campaign to stop the NF using local schools for meetings.

OPEN FORUM

Labour's housing scandal

The Labour Government is keeping workers homeless or in slums, in order to boost the moneylenders' profits. Last year a Government 'Green Paper' proudly boasted that the housing shortage was over. But the facts show this claim is a lie.

by
STEPHEN
BLUM

In Britain today over three million families live in homes that are rotting or overcrowded. And new slums are being created faster than old ones are repaired or replaced. Government figures show that in England and Wales alone over 900,000 houses and flats are officially classified as unfit for people to live in — that means the ceilings are falling in or the walls are in danger of collapse.

A further million homes are lacking a bath, an inside WC or hot water and more than a million in England alone are officially 'fit' but still need over £1000 spent on them. And these figures don't include shoddy council homes which, due to profiteering and shoddy work by contractors, suffer from building defects or damp conditions so bad that tenants refuse to live in them.

Meanwhile over a million families in England and Wales alone are waiting for council housing. As many are sharing accommodation, often against their wishes, because of the housing shortage. In 1976 the official figure for those totally homeless was double the 1971 figure — and four times the 1976 total.

EMPTY

At the same time there are a million homes kept completely empty. These include 185,000 second homes, and properties deliberately kept empty by speculators and landlords waiting for a high enough rent or sale price — though it is true that a number would be empty at any time just through people moving.

Faced with this crisis, the Labour Government is actively working to make it worse — to the benefit of its friends in the City and the International Monetary Fund.

In the five years ending April 1979, the Government will have made an incredible 40 per cent cut in the amount spent on building new houses and buying and repairing old ones. And housing's share in all public spending will have fallen from 10.1 per cent in 1974-5 to 8.6 per cent of a bigger total in 1978-9.

How can this be so when politicians of all parties tell us that the total amount spent on housing is rising too fast and must be cut off? Because less and less of what gets spent under the heading of housing actually goes into providing or repairing homes — and more and more of it goes into paying interest charges to City financiers.

In 1968-9, 74 per cent of all money spent on housing went on building and improving homes. This year the total has fallen to only 38 per cent. The rest goes on repaying debts and paying interest. Labour will do nothing to stop the financiers taking



their ever-growing slice. So cuts in the spending on 'real' housing are made instead.

Every new house built in England and Wales in 1975-6 cost £1642 in interest charges in that year alone. The total amount paid in interest to financiers on money borrowed for housing rose from £570m a year in the mid-'60s to nearly £1500m a year in the mid-'70s. Each year two-thirds of all money spent by local councils on housing goes in interest on borrowed money.

Over one hundred councils in the country pay out more in interest than they get in rents. Newcastle, for instance, paid £16.3m last year, as against £9.4m in rent income. Despite all the talk about 'subsidised tenants' the truth is that council tenants are subsidising the loan sharks in the City.

SLASHED

And these subsidies are not being cut. Far from it; in the two years from April 1975, while real wages were falling as never before, average council rents rose by 40 per cent. And the Government says they must rise by another 50 per cent in the next five years.

Meanwhile spending on repairs is falling because of the cuts, and more and more council estates rot away into slums. In Islington, for example, estates are now repainted only every 14 years instead of every eight. In Liverpool there is an estimated backlog of 50,000 council homes needing repairs. Meanwhile jobs are lost in council maintenance departments and tenants must pay for more repairs themselves.

Money for councils to acquire old

homes in order to repair them has been slashed by 45 per cent this year. So has spending on grants to private owners to repair their homes; the number of such grants fell by 64 per cent between 1973 and 1976, and the number of council mortgages fell last year to a quarter of what it had been the year before. This leaves workers wishing to buy older houses at the mercy of the building societies, who discriminate against applicants in inner-city, poor and often black areas.

The net result was described last year by Shelter: 'The number of houses declining into unfitness or major disrepair each year is now equal to the number of houses being improved and slums demolished.' Meanwhile the building workers union UCATT estimates that 300,000 building workers are unemployed. In areas of high unemployment like Tyne and Wear, 21 per cent of all unemployed males are building workers — 8300 men. And this in an area with some of the worst housing in the country!

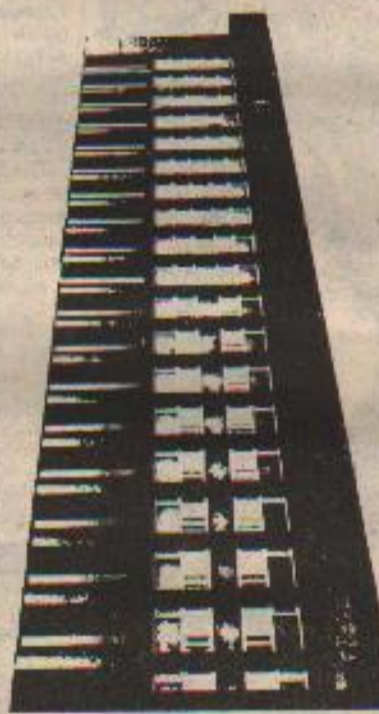
GHETTO

Labour Government policy, welcomed by the Tories, is to make these problems worse by continuing to cut building, while putting more emphasis on building for sale. This means that the available housing will be allocated by your ability to pay, instead of by how much you need it.

And the way owner-occupiers are subsidised, through tax relief, means that the more you can afford to spend on a house, the more subsidy you get. Meanwhile those who can't afford to buy their own homes will be stuck

in the council sector, which will end up as a ghetto for the 'deserving poor', thus helping to divide the working class. Of course, at the moment, most families would prefer to own their own homes if offered a choice. That is partly because successive Government policies mean that it makes more financial sense, and partly because owners have more control over their homes.

But instead of bringing in tenant control, and building estates with proper facilities instead of cheap-jack



concrete barracks, Labour prefers to use the bad name which council bureaucracy has given to public rented housing, as an excuse to expand the private sector, to the greater profit of the loan sharks, building societies, land speculators and professionals.

In the five years 1973-5, owner-occupiers spent £1,257 million in fees to estate agents, solicitors, surveyors and other parasites whenever they bought or sold a house. That money could have built 156,260 council homes.

So if present policies continue the plight of the homeless and ill-housed will only worsen. Waiting lists will grow; what new council housing there is will be of poorer quality; rents will rise; and slums will rot uncleaned. The only ones to benefit will be the builders, land speculators, and financiers.

Clearly this threat to the living standards of all working people must be taken up by the labour movement. But the only action to date at the level of national policy has come from the public employees union NUPE. It has published a pamphlet, jointly with the research project SCAT, called *Up against a Brick Wall*, from which most of the facts in this article are taken. It is a valuable source of ammunition on the housing question for every socialist and trade unionist.

STRUGGLE

But the pamphlet fails to draw the obvious socialist conclusion — that the so-called 'housing problem' is in fact a rent, interest and profit problem, to which the only solution is to take the land, financial institutions and building industry out of the hands of the profit-makers.

Instead it calls for an expanded council building programme and the restoration of the cuts. It also calls for the TUC to call a one-day national conference of affiliated unions to discuss the Government's policy statement: harmless enough, but not exactly a call to set the blood tingling.

The issues raised by tenant and community groups must be taken up by trade unionists at branch and workplace level, and the struggle to improve and democratise housing should be supported by the strength of organised labour. Trades councils could play a co-ordinating role here. Where they are too lethargic to act, unions whose members are involved directly in the housing field can take a lead, as can the anti-cuts campaigns.

Some of these points are hinted at in the conclusions of the NUPE pamphlet, at least in a milder, more 'official' form, and are apparently NUPE policy. So is the idea that trades councils together with tenant and community groups, should monitor their local council's housing investment programme.

How much pressure and encouragement will come from NUPE headquarters to help branches turn these ideas into action is, of course, another question. But rank and file militants can and must raise the question themselves, to point out a way that the labour movement can take up the housing question.

What's Left

REGGAE AGAINST RACISM: benefit for All Lambeth Anti-Racist Movement. With Misty (roots reggae), Marlowe (disco sound), Pleasure Zone (blatant soul), St Mary's Hall, St Aphonsus Rd, London SW4 Clapham Common Tube, 22 April 8pm. Adm. £1. Clements 50p. Bar.

CARF (Campaign Against Racism and Fascism) 4 page SPECIAL — For mass distribution by anti-racist groups to counter the racist and fascist propaganda. The newspaper format makes it a vitally important propaganda weapon in the fight against racism. Order Now. Bulk orders 1p per copy (plus postage). Cash with orders to: Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Co-ordinating Committee (ARAFCC), Box 35, 102 Upper Street, London N1.

OXFORD and surrounding areas: ex-IS/SWP comrades interested in left regroupment work/discussion in line with the recent ex-IS conference on London, phone Oxford 43541.

WBL SPLIT-SPARTACIST League founded. Spartacist League public meeting. Speakers: Joe Copley, Central Committee Spartacist League, ex-member WBL National Committee; Alastair Green, Central Committee Spartacist League, ex-member Socialist Press editors board. 7.30pm, Fri. 21 April, Caxton Settlement House, 129 St John's Way, London N19, Archway tube.

CENTRAL LONDON Anti-Nazi League Public Meeting. Speakers include Jonathan Dimbleby. 20 April, 7pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

ASIAN WOMEN IN BRITAIN: Amit Wilson, a freelance journalist who has written a book on Asian women to be published later this year, will lead this discussion at the Institute of Race Relations on Tue 18 April at 8.30pm. 247/9 Pentonville Rd, London N1.

REFUGEE WORKERS: Hillingdon Women's Aid urgently needs three feminist refugee workers. Salary on local authority scales. Phone 01-841 8640 after 4.30pm for details.

BROADSIDE Mobile Workers Theatre requires versatile socialist musician (full-time). Long term commitment. Acting ability an advantage. Write: 58 Holbein House, Holbein Place, London SW1. Phone 01-540 8962/730 5296.

THE MIDLANDS United Troops Out Movement is planning a regional conference to be held in late Summer/early Autumn. For such a conference to be a success it needs the active support of UTM supporters and sympathetic groups

and individuals throughout the Midlands. Therefore come along to the preliminary planning meeting, support and publicise it. Midlands Regional Planning Meeting, Sun 23 April, 12 Noon, Venue SC Centre, (above Sylvia's Hairdressers) 758 Digbeth, at Birmingham city centre. Tel. 843 8209.

LIVERPOOL MAY DAY Festival. Stanley House, Upper Parliament St, Liverpool 5. 1 May, 10.30—5.30 and 7.30—midnight. Daytime: Leon Rosselson, Unity Theatre, Films (Africa, Reggae etc) discussions, music, printing and photography workshops, poetry, songs, food, drink, bar, exhibitions, bookstall, kids games, creche and lots more.

Evening: Clapperclaw (feminist folk band), Goodtime Charlie (jazz), Bluebeats (soulband), films, dancing and late bar. Adm. Day 50p, Evening 21 Tickets and further info. from News from Nowhere, 100 Whitechapel, Liverpool 1. 051-738 7270.

GLASGOW Socialist Challenge May Day Disco. Sat 29 April, Bar 8pm—1pm, Disco 8pm—2pm. Food on sale. Seams and Sinters, 31 Vincent St, Glasgow. Adm. 90p, claimants 50p. (Available from Socialist Challenge Books, 64 Queens St. Tel 221 7481).

FLAT SHARE in Camden Town. Phone 01-267 6059.

SOCIALIST UNITY Benefit with The Restorers' plus disco. Bush Hotel, Shepherd's Bush Green, Friday 21 April, 8pm, 80p (claimants 40p).

Like A Man, Mo'Am. A feminist feature film in colour from the Red Sisters' Collective of Copenhagen. Includes the famous sextuple reversal sequence. A truly excellent film about women, by women. *Spans Rib*, At 9pm each night (except Mondays), finishes Sun Apr 30.

Available for 16mm hire from May onwards at £35.00. Discounts negotiable. Show it at your women's group or Socialist Challenge group meeting. The Other Cinema, 12-13 Little Newport Street, London WC2H 7JJ. Tel: 01-734-8508/9.

FOUR SOCIALISTS looking for 4 roomed flat/house in North or East London. Phone Mick 01-359 8301.

WOMEN'S DAY School: Socialist feminism and the revolutionary party. Organised by women from the Coordinating Committee for an International Socialist Alliance. 13 May, N London Poly, Holloway Road, London N7. Creche available. Further details from Leel Solinger, 142 Hunter House Road, Shelfield 11.

BENEFIT for 'Save the EGA' Campaign and Hounslow Hospital Occupation Committee. Broadside Mobile Workers Theatre present the cuts show 'Now you see it: Now you don't!'. Also appearing — Clapperclaw, women's music and theatre. Friday 21 April, 7.30pm. TGWU District Office, 203/209 N. Gower St., (off Euston Rd), London WC1. Followed by discussion. Refreshments. Admission 50p.

FESTIVAL AGAINST RACISM Black Solid, Broadside Mobile Workers Theatre food, beer, stalls, exhibitions, entertainment from all over the world. Saturday April 15, 2pm Duskdale Common (Turnpike Lane tube). Organised by Haringey Labour Movement Anti-Racist and Anti-Fascist Campaign and Haringey Community Relations Council.

the other cinema

DESPITE having to close our London cinema, we are pleased to be able to announce The Other Cinema. Distribution is still alive and well! We are now showing at the Institute of Contemporary Arts Cinema, Nash House, The Mall, London SW1. Take it!

WINDSCALE DEMONSTRATION SATURDAY 29 APRIL TRAFALGAR SQUARE 3.00

Assemble Speaker Corner 12.00 for March to Rally, Trafalgar Square 3.00



'FIGHT RACISM' badges, sell them to your local anti-racist committee friends and all anti-racist activists to show Thatcher and the NF what you think of them. 16p each plus 7p p&p or 11p each for orders of 10 or more. From: J Wilson, SC Badges, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Cheques payable to J Wilson.

IRELAND

Terror Act sensation at student conference

THE CRUDE and brutal lengths to which the British Government will go to silence critics of its Irish rule were nakedly displayed last week.

In police and Army operations in Derry and Manchester, two men were arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act on their way to address the Blackpool conference of the National Union of Students.

Victim number one was Jim Gibney, secretary of the Belfast Relatives Action Committee, which campaigns for political status for Republican prisoners in the North of Ireland.

Gibney was due to address a fringe meeting in Blackpool organised by the International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland. He was arrested under the PTA on 5 April as he stepped off a plane in Manchester. As Socialist Challenge went to press, he was still being held in Manchester Detention Centre.

Victim number two was Michael Montgomery. Montgomery was one of the 14 witnesses who testified to being tortured by the British Army and Royal Ulster

Constabulary before the European Court of Human Rights.

He was due to address the student conference on the treatment he received. He was leaving his home on Thursday when he was arrested under the PTA by British soldiers. One is reported to have said to him: 'You don't think you're going to Blackpool do you.'

Gibney has recently been released from Long Kesh prison in the North of Ireland, after serving 14 months on remand. The charge was eventually dropped. Montgomery has had no dealings with the security forces for two years, and has just spent six weeks in hospital.

This latest attack on civil liberties and Ireland has not gone unanswered. The NUS conference sent a telegram of protest to the Home Office, and in Manchester on Saturday a picket was held outside the Detention Centre in protest at Gibney's arrest. Members of the United Troops Out Movement, Socialist Workers Party, International Marxist Group and Big Flame were among those who attended.

Long Kesh



Letter

On trendy types and subversives

EVERYONE in Ireland longs for peace. Interpretations of peace have many vague and varied forms, but as far as those of us in Long Kesh are concerned there can be no peace without justice.

When an imperialist power occupies a country, everything afterwards becomes unjust. In Ireland there have been various attempts to heal or whitewash these injustices, but the basic one of foreign occupation remains.

From partition in 1921 until 1968, the Nationalist people of the North had to put up with the evils caused by this basic injustice while their elected representatives tenaciously worked within the framework of opposition parliamentarism.

By participating in this parliamentary facade, the Nationalist politicians were releasing some of the frustration of the minority through debate and argument. Nevertheless they were getting nothing done, except giving the Stormont Parliament a degree of credibility.

It was argued by some that apart from a few flaws which occur in most western democracies, the North of Ireland system was fair and democratic. What this ignored was that the Nationalists were destined to remain a permanent opposition without muscle or power because of the very nature of the religious divisions at the foundations of the State.

The Brits and various bourgeois politicians often accuse Republicans of being anti-democratic for refusing to participate in elections. But surely even they must realise that Nationalists have achieved nothing in 50 years of politics through normal parliamentary channels.

This would still have been the case if it were not for what these lovers of parliamentary democracy call 'unlawful practices' and 'subversive activities'.

It was 1968 when alleged subversives took to the streets and rejected the orthodox parliamentary democracy they had experienced for 50 years. Even though a few reforms were squeezed out of the Unionists, the basic injustice of occupation remained; indeed, with the British Army in the streets, more so than ever.

Since 1968 a new awareness has been created in the generation who have born the brunt of

the struggle for freedom and national liberation; a generation aptly named 'The children of '68'. Abuse has been heaped on them from many sources: bourgeois politicians, commentators and all shades of trendy type liberals and socialists who are themselves determined to avoid direct confrontation with the State.

These same 'trendy types' point to mistakes and weaknesses of the struggle and threaten to withdraw solidarity with it. They never attempt to rectify these wrongs by participating in the struggle and changing what is wrong from within.

Many who participate in the fight for national liberation recognise there are faults in the way the struggle is being waged, but they also recognise that the struggle must continue until the goal is achieved.

I am convinced that we are a lot better off now than we were in 1968 and that we are correct to continue the armed struggle for national liberation and socialism.

Through our resistance we have given the once downtrodden Nationalist population a sense of pride and we have made the Brits and Loyalists realise that we are no longer prepared to accept discrimination and injustice.

The Brits and their agents should realise that the Children of '68 no longer accept glossy coats of paint at face value. They never will, and the struggle won't cease until the people of Ireland are allowed to decide their own future.

Can the Brits not see that despite all their repression there is still no sign of an end to resistance?

It is time Roy Mason and his associates in the Northern Ireland Office recognised this and removed themselves now instead of prolonging their stay and the suffering of the Irish people. The Children and if necessary the Grandchildren of '68 will oppose British rule in Ireland until they are allowed the right of self-determination.

Yours
Tiofaudh Ar La



NUS conference backs International Tribunal

At the National Union of Students' conference in Blackpool last week, under a banner which read 'Break the silence: Stop the torture', Jane Crawford, secretary of the International Tribunal on British Presence in Ireland, addressed a fringe meeting which swelled to more than two hundred delegates.

All the major tendencies on the left were present, as well as the vast majority of the Northern Ireland delegation. AILEAN O'CALLOGHAN reports.

Pete Ashby of the NUS executive reaffirmed that body's support for the International Tribunal, and supporters of the Militant in the Labour Party announced that they too would fully back the inquiry.

Previously in the week at the conference itself, the executive was censured for its inactivity on Ireland.

A motion from the Middlesex Polytechnic delegates extending the mandate for work on the tribunal was overwhelmingly passed, as was the call to invite one of the Strasbourg 14 to address the conference.

When it came to the stage in the conference when emergency motions were placed on the agenda, a motion which

demanding that the executive translate its sponsorship for the Tribunal into something more concrete by organising a national activists' conference was placed first on the list.

Supported by more than 67 delegations from constituency organisations (the largest ever support for an emergency motion), the motion was unconstitutionally carved up in the steering committee.

It would be facile to suggest that what is happening in the NUS today could be repeated at trade union conferences tomorrow. But it would be stupid to suggest that the Tribunal will not have an impact in the labour movement.

Already trades councils traditionally dominated by the

Communist Party are sending delegates to the planning committee for the Tribunal. Thus established, the Tribunal — whose brief is merely to investigate allegations of British crimes — poses to the entire solidarity movement the question of how they should respond.

The mass movement needed in Britain will only be assembled around the demand 'Troops Out Now'. But experience has shown that such a movement cannot be built without regard to what is taking place in Ireland.

There was no movement in Britain on Ireland until the civil rights explosion in 1968. The period of mass mobilisations in Ireland and 'no go' areas was when the solidarity movement in Britain, in the form of the Anti-Internment League, reached its height.

Today, limited but important steps have been taken to revive the mass resistance in the Six Counties.

If street mobilisations in Ireland develop, so will the potential for reconstructing a Troops Out Movement in Britain. This is not to argue

that the level of propaganda by Troops Out supporters should drop as activity for the Tribunal increases — quite the opposite.

In the context of developing united action with forces who don't support the immediate withdrawal of troops, it is necessary to set up propaganda and use it to explain that the only way to defeat repression is to end forever Britain's role in Ireland.

For that line to gain credibility, Troops Out supporters need to actively build the Tribunal and go through the experience of the Tribunal with those forces who do not yet hold a 'Troops Out' position.

Building the Tribunal is not the only way support can be won for Troops Out in the coming months — but it is the best way. Already it has taken the issue of Ireland into areas where before it has barely been whispered.

The events last week at the NUS conference showed both the need for the Tribunal and the enthusiasm it can generate.

INTERNATIONAL

UN troops in Lebanon

'We're still soldiers'

As a massive debate is unfolding in Israel about its recent invasion of South Lebanon, and a growing tide of opinion is forming against the traditional 'seige mentality' of the Zionist state, UN troops are taking some of the heat off the Israeli Government by replacing its forces in South Lebanon.

Among these so-called 'peace-keepers' are contingents of blue-bereted French paratroopers, whose operations from Vietnam to Zaire, via Algeria, are hardly known for their neutrality or benevolence.

SIMONE HAMELIN, a correspondent of the French revolutionary daily, Rouge, recently had an opportunity to visit these forces in their positions. This is her account.

WITH shaved heads under their blue berets and pistols on their hips, the French paratroopers set off for town in groups of two, three or four: it was an open barracks. Some of them even carried machine guns; they knew that they were not very welcome here, even if, as they said, 'the population started to return when we

arrived'.
At the gate, which an orderly outfitted in a bullet-proof vest locked and unlocked with a flick of the wrist, there was a procession of jeeps and trucks. In front of the gate hawkers had set up in business, not missing a trick, selling tins of beer by the dozen — at exorbitant prices.

The NCO's I met at the entrance were 'veterans' of Chad and Gabon. They exchanged hints about the intentions of the soldiers who 'are doing a tour of the town': 'There are only men in here'. For one, 'the problem will be a month from now'. For another: 'It's now. The legion is well organised — they have their own brothels.'

Admiring glances were cast at a close-shaven soldier: 'That one, he has already screwed three of them, right in the eye...' Which didn't stop one soldier from thinking that 'all Lebanese women are ugly, short on legs and not at all tasty.'

CLAIM

Even though he claims to be keeping the scales balanced between the two camps, this NCO nevertheless had his own sympathies: 'The Israeli army, that's a real army, not like these cunts', he said, pointing out the fedayeen, 'who don't even know what they want. The Israelis have been defending themselves for 30 years.'

'And these kids of 14 who play with Klashenkovs. Today they fired on the town hall. Luckily they didn't hit any of us.'

Suddenly, remembering who he was talking to, one said: 'Listen, you're going to say in your paper that we're rapists and murderers. You don't know what you want. When we're in France you demonstrate. When we're here it's the same. In Lyon there was a huge demonstration.'

And what are your jobs? 'In the barracks we clean, repair the armoured cars. There are piles of them that the others (the Lebanese Arab Army) left here. We stack up shells. The rest of the time we are in our positions, between the two



camp.'
'Just like a holiday, isn't it. But wait until it gets going! Gets going? Well, sure, we're still soldiers!'

Colonel Chatillon, who finally arrived, is responsible for public relations. He took out the map of the region and showed me the six points held by the French, 200 to 300 yards from the Israeli lines, on 6 or 7 of the roads which converge on Tyre.

The region of Tyre is in a hollow, with the Israelis encircling it on the surrounding ridges.

'In fact', he told me, 'the Israelis couldn't occupy this region. It would cost too dearly; the ground is unfavourable to a traditional army. The Palestinians could

ambush them from the orange groves, and with their Soviet RBC's not an armoured car would survive.'

This technical analysis nullifies the declarations of Weizman (commander of the Israeli forces), according to which the Zionist troops didn't occupy the region out of a humanitarian concern for the population.

FACTS

The aim of the French forces being to 'separate the combatants', it might seem surprising that they are trying to control the Khasmiye bridge — where there is no one to separate.

For Colonel Chatillon its simple: 'The region is over-

armed. So over-armed that anyone who walks about without arms is considered abnormal. If we want to reestablish peace we must cut off the source at the Khasmiye bridge...'

He added incidentally that Israel demanded no more. Implicitly he took as his own the Israeli conditions on the neutralisation of the South.

The regimental chaplain asked me 'not to make an analysis which distorts the truth? The facts, then, are these: an imperialist army is occupying one-sixth of the country. The UN provides the blue helmets.'

They are setting out, as their very first task to ensure the evacuation of the 'pockets of resistance'.



Big Brother watches Iranians

In Leeds...

Leeds University Iranian Students write:
AN Iranian student at Leeds University has been secretly

trying to set up a branch of the Rastakhiz Party, the single part of the Iranian dictatorship. The evidence is testimonies



taken from other Iranian students in the presence of a solicitor. These people attended small private meetings organised by the student where setting up a Party branch in Leeds was discussed.

According to the Shah: 'A person who does not enter the new political party... is either an individual who belongs to the outlawed Communist Party, or in other words is a traitor. Such an individual belongs in an Iranian prison... he is not an Iranian, he has no nation.'

The Iranian Prime Minister said in 1975: 'Failure to vote would be accounted for, and would be a breach of discipline.'

PROTESTS

The most important aim of the Rastakhiz Party has been to mobilise the Iranian people forcibly in the interests of imperialism and its local puppet, the brutal military dictatorship of the Shah's regime.

The reaction of the Iranian people to this effort was clearly demonstrated in mass protests in Tabriz recently, when the chief target was the Rastakhiz Party headquarters.

In Europe, wherever pro-Shah societies have been formed they have acted as covers for SAVAK, the Iranian secret police, who spy on Iranian emigres and students and disrupt the work of anti-imperialists. The lives and

freedom of Iranians abroad are thus endangered.

To back this up we have a document passed on by the Iranian Embassy in Geneva on 'Constitution of Pro-Shah student societies abroad.'

Any attempt to set up such an organisation in this country poses a serious threat to Iranian students.

The Iranian students abroad, as part of the Iranian people's movement against the Shah's regime, will stand out against any such activities and won't let a single pro-Shah society be set up in any part of the world.

...and Cardiff

CARDIFF college authorities have released names and details of Iranian students for non-academic purposes.

Socialist Challenge has received computer print-outs containing these details, given to the Safety Services Officer of University College Cardiff in January 1977.

The officer, whose duties include security, claims he wanted to speak to students about slogan painting. He says he contacted the student union president about this.

Phil Gray, then union president, confirms this, but adds: 'But I found it strange that to my knowledge no

Iranian student was ever contacted about the slogans.'

SURVEILLANCE

This revelation was first made in the paper The Cardiff Link. It's the latest in the discoveries of surveillance of Iranian students, prompted by Socialist Challenge's revelation of Iranian Embassy surveys of students at the end of last year.

The Cardiff print-outs give

details of students by name and faculty. They state the course, some information on educational background and their classification for fees.

Most of this information is not necessary if the problem was simply slogan painting.

One Iranian student commented: 'I think it is wrong data should be collected on the basis of our nationality. Such information can be put to dangerous uses.'

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FRENCH ELECTIONS

'Petty bourgeois routinism'

French CP dissidents grow bolder

The meaning of the left's election defeat is beginning to sink home inside the French Communist Party (PCF). MARTIN METEYARD reports.

Two days after the second round of the elections, on 21 March, a statement by the PCF Political Bureau was published in the party daily, *L'Humanité*. This stated clearly that the PCF 'bears no responsibility' for the defeat of the left.

Just over a week later, Charles Fiterman, the secretary of the PCF Central Committee, made a report along the same lines to a meeting of the party's federal secretaries. He stressed that the Socialist Party (PS) 'bears the full responsibility' for the defeat.

SWALLOW

Few PCF militants have found it easy to swallow this line whole. At a meeting of party members in the 5th district of Paris, for instance, the speaker outlining the themes of Fiterman's report started to insert his own criticisms. This met with growing amusement until

finally the speaker himself joined in the laughter!

RESPONSE

Such a response is not surprising. Jean Rony, a member of the editorial board of the party's main weekly, *France Nouvelle*, made the point in a short article in *Le Monde* on 24 March. 'After a defeat', he wrote, 'shouldn't a party examine if something isn't amiss in its strategy and/or in its day-to-day application? The PCF Political Bureau excludes this possibility straight away.'

Rony's article was the first in a series of public criticisms by party militants, most of which have been published in the liberal bourgeois daily *Le Monde* or the far left weekly *Politique Hebdo*. They have surfaced here because the party regime offers no channels for extending the discussion beyond individual party units.

PCF leader Georges Marchais has predictably seen in this a 'campaign of the big bourgeoisie supported by television, radio, and the press'. But as the dissidents have pointed out, the answer

lies in the leadership's hands: open up the party press to this discussion.

Instead, however, all that *L'Humanité* carries is veiled replies by PCF leaders to unnamed critics — a ridiculous spectacle which satisfies no-one.

The demand for real party democracy is indeed at the heart of this discussion. In the last three years a series of major turns in policy have been carried out without any prior warning.

TELEVISION

Thus the proposal to drop the reference to 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' was first announced by Marchais on television! The same method was adopted when the leadership decided to support France's nuclear strike force in May 1977.

The last straw came with the elections. Throughout the campaign, the PCF ranks were no more than stunned spectators of the leadership's twists and turns. But this time the hopes of the entire working class were at stake. And when these were shattered, the



CP has 'no responsibility' for defeat.

doubts could no longer be contained.

The PCF leadership claims to be quite happy that there is a discussion going on inside the party. Indeed, they cite it as evidence of their break with Stalinism. But as six PCF intellectuals — including well known philosophers Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar — have pointed out, the insistence that this debate must

base itself on the leadership's analysis can only lead to 'the parody of a discussion'.

Two other dissidents, Gerard Molina and Yves Vargas, go even further in a recently published book, *Dialogue Inside the French Communist Party*. They argue that 'Stalinist routinism has been ousted by petty-bourgeois liberal routinism'.

Party militants still have no control over their leaders. The only difference is that now Marchais and Co. bow to bourgeois 'public opinion' instead of to Moscow.

FUTURE

Molina and Vargas point out that 'revolutionary democracy is the freedom of militants to discuss the future, while bourgeois democracy is only the freedom to discuss the past'. What more and more PCF members are demanding is the right not simply to discuss but to decide the party's policy.

For this time it is not a case of a few 'isolated intellectuals'. Many of those who have publicly expressed their opposition are members of PCF sections or even federal committees. Leaders of predominantly working class federations such as the North and Meurthe-et-Moselle have also criticised the crude 'workerism' of the party's election campaign.

ECHO

In any case, the debate is only now beginning. A sustained campaign for revolutionary politics can find an increasing echo inside the PCF as the leadership tries to cover its tracks. Already an opposition current which emerged in January, the 'Max Pierrat collective', has proposed a debate with the Trotskyist LCR in the latter's paper, *Rouge*.

Such discussions, together with the firmest unity in struggle against the government's austerity measures, will be decisive in shaping the future of working class politics in France.

South Africa's missing Marxists

In this instalment of his series on South Africa, SAM MHLONGO compares the 1976 uprising with the protests of 1960 and the Sharpeville massacre.

Quite unexpectedly South Africa woke up on the morning of 16 June to a black pupils' and students' revolt. The issue was the enforced teaching using Afrikaans (South African Dutch).

Within days there were enormous marches of black students in Johannesburg's South Western Townships (So-we-to) and Pretoria. The movement snowballed. By 17 June young militants in Cape Town took to the streets.

Destruction against hated individuals and government property became common. Beer halls, shebeens, municipal buildings, some school buildings, homes of police and those of civil servants directly linked with oppression were targets for petrol bomb attacks.

KILLED

A remarkable feature of the young militants' revolt is the high number of people who were killed by the police and army. Even conservative estimates agree on the figure of 1000 dead.

The number of people killed during 1976 was thus ten times the number at Sharpeville in 1960. This is not because Vorster's regime is more trigger-happy than that of his predecessor Verwoerd.

When the Pan African Congress in 1960 made its call for blacks to march to their nearest police station in defiance of the pass laws, a great many of those who took part were workers. In those areas where the response was good industry was paralysed.

When news of the shootings at Sharpeville and Cape Town reached other ghetto areas more and more workers staged demonstrations and stayed away from work. The flight of capital after Sharpeville was therefore not surprising considering the mood of the workers.

IGNORED

In the pupils' and students' revolt of 1976 the workers were not involved from the start. The young militants ignored the workers and only belatedly brought them in September. Black workers in Johannesburg and over 80 per cent of Cape Town's Coloured labour force stayed away from work.

The young militants' mistrust of the workers grew out of a number of factors. Political repression and oppression had deprived this generation of the few Marxists that blacks had. Many of them are in prison or have fled the country.

This vacuum has been filled by the black petty bourgeois intelligentsia from the colleges and religious bodies. Black consciousness, black power philosophy and absolute black nationalism are the dominant trends of these new movements.

DEPRIVED

The South African Students' Organisation and the Black People's Convention are the representatives par excellence of these trends. Deprived of any international Marxist connections they took on the

Sharpeville and Soweto

easily assimilated Black Power philosophy and in so doing rejected Marxism.

Another strong influence was the ideas of Frantz Fanon — themselves a petty bourgeois trend. Fanonism fitted well in their general scheme of things since it dismisses outright the working class as a force for social change.

The African working class is a privileged class in distinction to the ensemble that makes up the petty bourgeoisie. Fanon's conclusions naturally have an immense appeal to the African petty bourgeoisie.

SCIENTIFIC

Marxists need to demonstrate to these young militants the clear distinction between mere black radicalism and scientific socialism.

There were, however, gains

for the young militants' movement of 1976. The regulation requiring them to be forcibly taught in Afrikaans was rescinded.

OPPRESSION

In the urban areas the blacks were given more power to run their own affairs, but because real authority remained in the hands of the urban municipal council (a white body) this counted for naught.

The Government restated its proposal to allow urban blacks to buy their own houses on a thirty year lease.

And more recently the Government dropped the much hated and derogatory term Bantu. But again this concession does not touch the real basis of race and class oppression.



Soweto 1976



This rubbish was put out by the Communist-backed Workers Commissions in Salamarcá.

Catalan Communists challenge Carillo

THE SPANISH Communist Party's proposal not to describe itself as Leninist has been the main theme of a series of regional congresses in preparation for the 9th Party Congress on 23 April.

Opposition to the leadership position has gone furthest in the PSUC, the Catalan party, where the 'Leninist' tendency has won a majority. The PSUC has a quarter of the total party membership and nearly half its parliamentary deputies, so the decision will be a big worry to the leadership.

In Madrid and Asturias, two of the other working class strongholds, the leadership positions was carried against sizeable opposition.

But in Asturias nearly a quarter of the delegates walked out in protest at the decision and attempts to stop their representatives speaking. All

the major town branches in Asturias opposed the leadership.

In Malaga, in Andalusia, the local press published a statement by party militants attacking the lack of democracy in the debate.

The Andalusian party congress had approved the abandonment of 'Leninism' but had raised other headaches for the leadership by its criticisms of the party's line on women, which it attacked as 'paternalist', and its call for the expulsion of foreign military bases.

In a press interview which was generally seen as angling for a coalition government, general secretary Santiago Carrillo said last week that Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez was 'the only guarantee that Spain will not again be divided into two irreconcilable camps.'



Saturday Night Fever

Q: Spot the odd one out — Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly, John Lee Travolta and myself, writes TONY GRAHAM.

A: Travolta — all the rest are dancers.

However, disco aficionados who go to see *Saturday Night Fever* may well feel, like I do, that the bigger the lie the more people will believe it.

In this case, the Robert Stigwood Organisation has manufactured such a whopper that not to see the film would be tantamount to social leprosy. Rivalling *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters* in its publicity treatment, the new 'disco spectacular' threatens to bring in equally huge dividends.

Saturday Night Fever is not so much a story as a collection of clichés from better films.

Set in the sleazy zones of New York (like *Taxi Driver*), Tony (John Travolta), a 19-year-old Italian Catholic and his pals (like *Mean Streets*) find little meaning in their lives except through fighting Puerto Ricans (like *West Side Story*) and Saturday night discos.

GLITTER

He falls in love with Stephanie (Karen Lynn Gorney) who is trying to exchange the humdrum existence of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn for the glamour and glitter of Manhattan. Their relationship is an apparent watershed in both their lives.

Tony, in particular, promises to be less infantile in future. A clumsy script suggests that this romance would be less nauseous in its natural habitat, namely comic-strip fantasy.

The main trouble with the film is that nowhere is its aim of revealing the 'reality' that lies

behind disco fever realised. This reality is fuelled by the frustration of working class youth living dead end lives on the rag end of American capitalism.

Much of the film is haunted by the same mass produced images that flit across Tony's life. His poster heroes are Al Pacino, Rocky and Farrah Fawcett-Majors; he eats White Castle hamburgers; he grooves to the Bee Gees and so on.

TENUOUS

Yet, apart from a tenuous exploration of the modern American dream, *Saturday Night Fever* falls apart as it loses sight of its subject. We are not witnessing the despair of a young worker so much as the rise of yet another petty-bourgeois superstar.

Such a ghostly transition leaves it earthly traces behind. In its effort to be realistic, the film portrays Tony and his fellow machos lashing out at blacks, gays and women in a torrent of backward behaviour.

Apart from a feeble moralising that trickles through the film, this behaviour comes dangerously near to being legitimised through the lack of an alternative vision. Tony's cry of anguish — 'Everybody's dumpin' on everybody' — is not the most useful critique of what has gone before in the film.

Like most people, I went to be dazzled by nimble foot-work and catchy track music. Which brings me back to where I started — frankly it's not a patch on *Top Hat*.

Saturday Night Fever is presently showing at cinemas throughout the south of England. It goes to the Midlands and West Yorkshire next week, and then on to the rest of the country.

Feminism on the big screen

The pros and cons of 'Julia'

FEMINISM IS A saleable commodity. This has been realised not only by bra manufacturers and book publishers, but now even by Hollywood.

Julia — and the Oscar for Vanessa Redgrave's aristocratic performance — show that the film industry is willing to make use of or create the demand for 'films about women for women', writes VALERIE COULTAS.

Fred Zinnemann, the director, claims his film is a human document. And indeed it is. Two adolescent girls from different social backgrounds (although not widely different) meet and make friends at school.

Julia is rich, confident and widely read. Lily is more tentative and is fascinated by Julia's knowledge and decisiveness. The relationship develops as the girls reach womanhood.

Julia's political consciousness is awakened at an early age. Lily's develops much later but with great emotional intensity when she experiences the

horrors of travelling through Nazi Germany carrying money for anti-fascist activity.

Opposition to fascism is portrayed through its effect on the relationship between the two women. This gives the film a rather nostalgic quality. Fred Zinnemann is quite right to say that *Julia* is not political propaganda but a human document.

The roles that are played by the two women are interesting. Jane Fonda plays Lily as emotionally submissive. Vanessa Redgrave as Julia is calmly heroic. They clearly express their affection for each

other, aided as they are by their friendship in the real world.

Some might argue that the roles are stereotyped: one passive, one dominant. I don't think that this is the whole truth. The friendship portrays an equality and unpossessive commitment that many relationships lack.

This is most clearly expressed when Sammy, the brother of an old school friend, implies — naughty, naughty — that Julia and Lily's friendship is based on nothing more than an adolescent sexual attraction.

SPECIAL

Lily responds to this trivialisation of their relationship by slapping Sammy's smug chops and pushing the table on top of him.

Commercialising feminism has its pluses and minuses. *Julia* has helped popularise the notion that women can have

very close emotional ties with one another — something that the women's movement has been encouraging for a number of years.

More top actresses will be able to demand parts in films that portray women as independent human beings rather than bodies to decorate male stars.

But the very popularity of the film and the 'special' nature of the relationship between Lily and Julia, Vanessa and Jane will make many women ask: 'But what on earth has it got to do with me?' See it first and worry about that afterwards would be my answer.

Julia is presently showing at: Odeon, Haymarket, London W1; Studio 6, Manchester; Odeon 3, Renfield Street, Glasgow; Odeon 1, Brighton; Odeon 2, Nottingham.

From the following dates it will also be showing at: 16 April, ABC2, Cambridge; 23 April, selected London suburban cinemas and ABC, Oxford; 30 April, ABC, Southampton, and Odeon 3, Liverpool; 4 May, ABC2, Bournemouth; 18 May, ABC, Cardiff.

Papering the community

On 15-16 April many community and alternative newspapers will be meeting in York for a conference. Its aim is to exchange ideas of a practical nature, as well as to discuss the role of what is rapidly becoming almost an institution, writes PATRICK O'NEIL.



Typing in columns.

Well over 60 papers exist around the country ranging from the immensely successful *West Highland Free Press* to papers that come out once every six weeks and are put together with entirely voluntary labour.

While papers linked to political groups and specific campaigns abound in every country where they are allowed, it seems that only in Britain is there such a large number of papers that pose themselves as straightforward alternatives to Fleet Street and its subsidiaries.

They seek to bring information and news to communities that are starved of it by distortion, insensitivity to local problems, and the belief that the world is centred around London.

VARIETY

No single political label could characterise the variety of political opinions community and alternative papers represent. What they share, however, is the desire to involve

their readership in political and social action; to supply the news that the local press cares to forget; and to provide a platform for those who would be heard nowhere else because their opinions have been deemed irrelevant or undesirable.

SECTARIANISM

These newspapers act as focuses for local campaigns, be they for the restoration of cuts, against racists and fascists, against fare rises, or for the provision of better facilities for the community. While many papers will not act as a platform for sectarian groups or publish party propaganda, they are usually anxious to give representation to people based in the locality who are taking action over issues that concern everyone in it.

It needs to be emphasised, though, that sectarianism has been the downfall of many community and alternative newspapers — most recently the *Manchester Mole Express*.

The majority of those involved see it as vital for their papers to be aimed at the unconverted and not taken up with debates that concern only a small section of their potential readership.

The idea of the York conference is not to formalise definitions of what such papers should be. The main emphasis will be to exchange information that can help this phenomenon gain popularity and help the papers themselves to be better organised in terms of production, writing and finance.

WORKSHOPS

The workshops will be dealing with: the law; how to report and deal with racism and fascism; how to obtain official information; sexism (both how to report it and deal with it in the collectives of the papers); and how to liven up the papers. There will also be a teach-in workshop to help newly-started papers and those who want to start them.

Anyone can take part in these newspapers, and any group of people can — given the will — get together a community paper. It is to be hoped that the conference will encourage people to do both these things.

Details of the conference can be obtained from: York Free Press, 73 Walmgate, York. Tel: 0904-29736. Or from Peoples News Service, 182 Upper Street, London N1. Tel: 01-359 3785. PNS can supply details of your local papers and who to get in touch with.

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1968 and After by Tariq Ali (cover price £5.25)

1968 was the year that the barricades went up in Paris and Prague — it was the year that revolution came back on to the agenda in Europe. Tariq Ali looks at the lessons of that period and its aftermath, and reviews the debates that have taken place on the left since '68.

Harry McShane: No Mean Fighter (cover price £2.95)

This book is the autobiography of Harry McShane, whose life is the story of Red Clyde itself. He served his political apprenticeship in the anti-war struggles of 1914-18, becoming a leader with a national reputation in the unemployed worker's movement and the hunger marches of the twenties and the thirties.

Harry McShane survived the post-war years of political apathy to participate — in his eighties — in the resurgence today.

This selection (No 1) will cost £5.30 plus 25p postage (Post free if books picked up from 329 Upper Street, London N1)

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WE'VE BEEN FIREBOMBED

A FEW minutes before midnight on Sunday, the Socialist Challenge offices in Islington, North London, became the latest target for the fascists' terror campaign.

Police have confirmed that arson was the cause of the fire which destroyed journals, newspapers, and storage equipment in a basement room at 328/9 Upper Street.

They have removed for forensic tests a half-brick and rag found in the store room, near to a window which overlooks a passage way at the rear of the building.

PHONE CALLS

At 1am on Monday, the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express* received phone calls claiming that the fire-bombing was the responsibility of 'Column 88'.

This is the same 'organisation' that has now been linked to the parcel bombs sent earlier

this month to the Communist Party HQ, a Socialist Workers Party member in High Wycombe, and to the Public Employees' Union.

WELL VERSED

Britain's fascists are evidently well-versed in the terror tactics perfected by their mentors in Nazi Germany.

The physical attacks that have become an everyday experience for black people in Britain, are now being systematically extended to all those identified with the fight against fascism and racism.

By including NUPE on their mailing list, the parcel bombers have shown what socialists

have always argued — that no workers' organisation can consider itself safe from the terror that accompanies racism.

It was the prompt action of a guard on over-night duty in our offices which helped to ensure that the fire damage was restricted to the store room. When fire fighters arrived within moments of the alarm being raised, the smoke was already extremely dense.

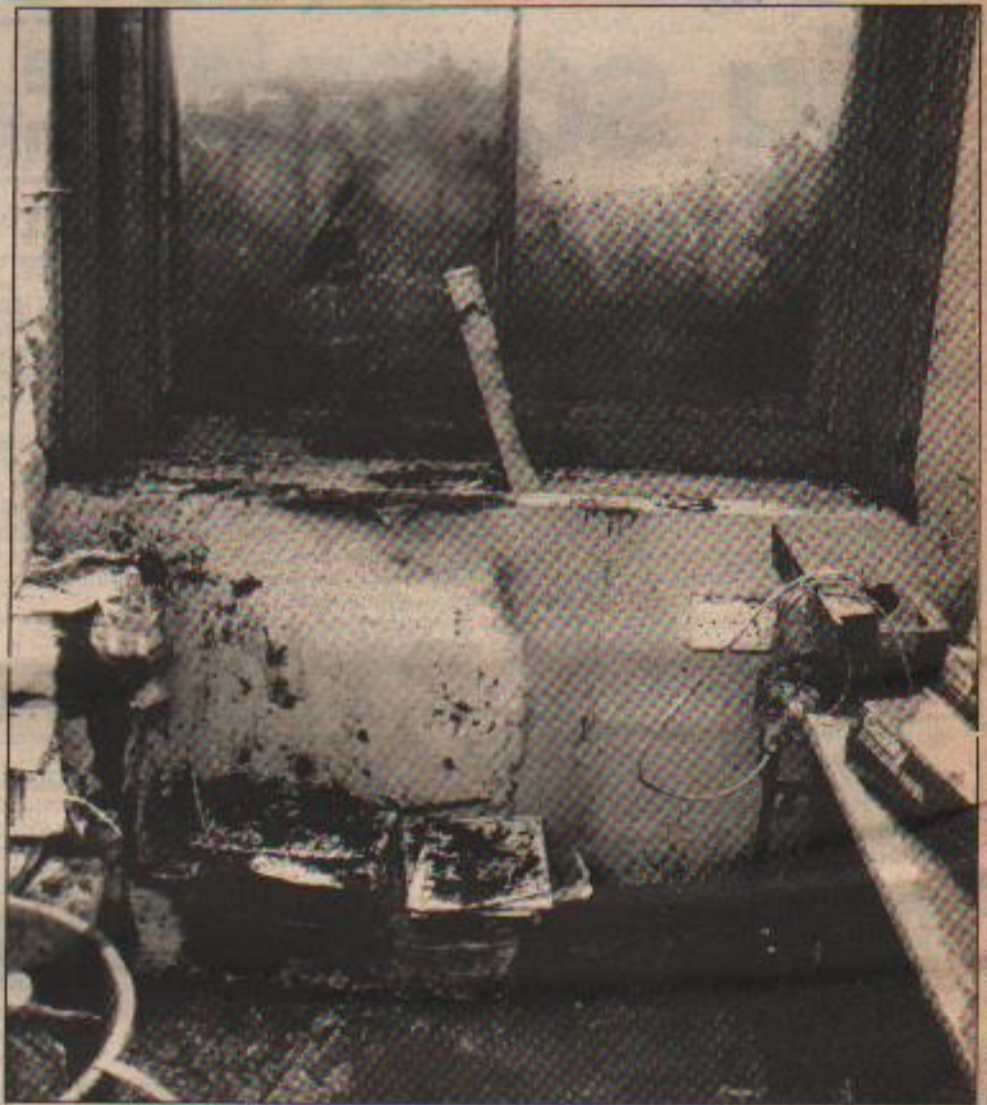
Another five minutes or so and the Other Bookshop, type setting equipment, litho cameras, and our design department would all have been lost. It was that close.

SAFEGUARD

It is a very serious lesson. Initial estimates of the damage to thousands of copies of *International* and other journals is put at four figures.

The guard on the building has already been stepped up. But we must now take measures to further safeguard the security of the building, and this will not be a cheap business.

To safeguard the existence of your newspaper and help meet the cost of the blaze, we appeal to our readers to donate generously to the fund drive.



THE SCENE after the fire.



JOURNALS destroyed by the fire.

OUR FUND DRIVE

A NEW idea for the fund drive sent in by one of our readers. Rather than build a wall we intend to dismantle one. However as the bricks are chipped away a well-known phrase or slogan is revealed.

This first week has enabled us to start revealing what lies beneath the bricks and mortar. In the first week £132.40 rolled in. A good start. But this will have to be maintained and even stepped up if we are to

reach our goal of £2000 by the end of June.

Every avenue should be sought to raise money for *Socialist Challenge*. The Manchester supporters had a regional meeting and by making sandwiches made a small surplus for the paper.

Other local supporters have been systematically collecting stamps. Our Preston Group suggest that 'philatelists should help stamp out capitalists.'

In case you are wondering what has happened to the outcome of the trial run in 10 branches of Smiths in London, then you are in the same boat as we are. We hope by next week to reveal Smiths' decision.

Our thanks this week to the following:

M.B.	15.00
York readers	3.00
L. Carville	2.00
South East	
London supporters	13.00

Hull readers	33.00
P. Forbes	2.00
Camden supporters	2.50
Anon	13.50
Southampton readers	4.00
Norwich reader	5.00
G. Irwin	1.00
C. and M. Gardner	5.00
Anon	20.00
Manchester reader	10.00
Manchester sandwiches	3.40
Total	132.40

Below we re-print a short piece from the Irish Post. As a

consequence of this small article we have received over 50 requests for that issue.

CONGRATULATIONS

Finally, I urge you to acquire a copy of the March issue of the newspaper *Socialist Challenge*, price 15p. It has an excellent article by Liz Curtis and Alastair Renwick on anti-Irish jokes. The article draws heavily on the Letters Page of *The Irish Post* and it should certainly be

read by anybody who is concerned about this so-called humour.

Congratulations to the article's authors. They have clearly done their homework and in doing so have rendered the Irish community in Britain a distinct service. If you are having difficulty getting a copy then write to *Socialist Challenge*, 328/9 Upper Street, London N1 and enclose 10p extra for postage.

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

Domestic: 6 months, £5; 12 months, £10
Abroad: Airmail, £16.50. Surface, £10 per annum.

Name _____
Address _____

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, 328/9 Upper Street, London N1.

