

Socialist Challenge



MINES, STEEL, HEALTH

Take on Tories

'28 October is the most vital day for decision in the history of the mine worker'. In these words, Arthur Scargill, President of the miners union, addressed over 3,000 South Wales miners in the first of the mass rallies to win backing for the NUM ballot for strike action.

The decision of the miners will be vital for the whole working class movement. A spirit of determination is welling up inside the working class. The water workers struck solidly on Monday in their first ever national strike. The strength of feeling that exists resulted in strike action even before the management had made an offer — much to the fury of the Tory press.

Telecom workers followed with a massive turn-out for their one-day strike on Wednesday. They are determined to prevent the Tories privatising their industry.

Meanwhile overwhelming pressure is mounting for all-out strike action by the health unions to bring their five month battle to a speedy conclusion.

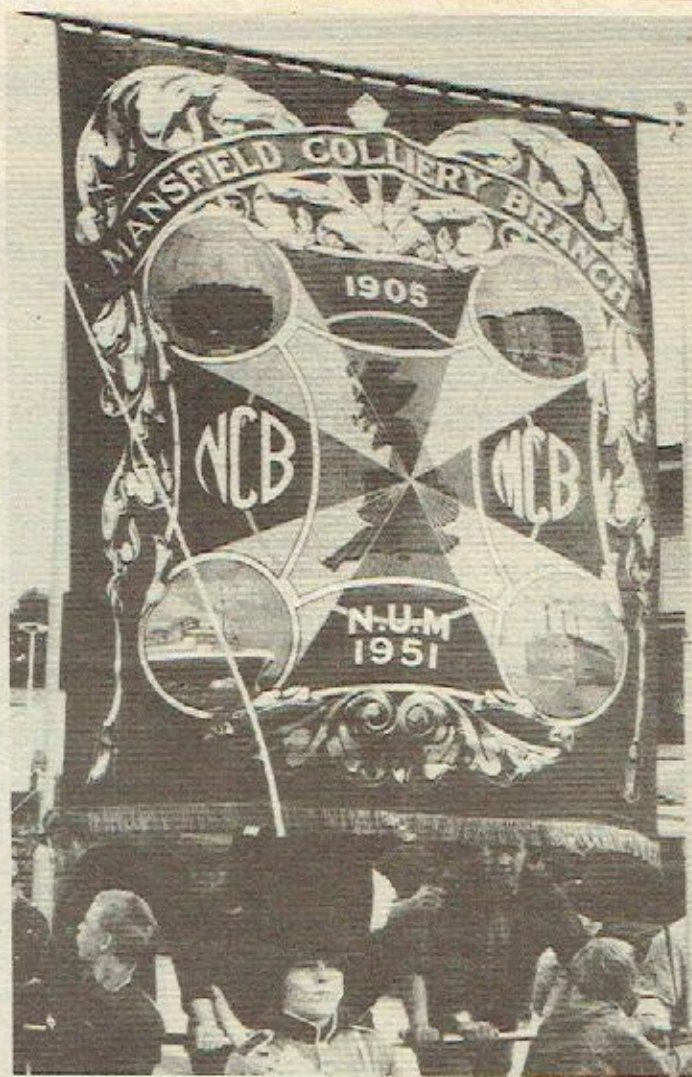
'The British miners can be a catalyst that

can spark off the fight against the Tory government stated Mick McGahey, NUM vice-president at the same South Wales rally. 'The Tories can only chase you if you're running. It's time we stopped running, stood firm and started to fight back'.

Any retreat has been seized on by the Tories. As Scargill put it: 'if you want to avoid the butchery of British Steel and British Rail; if you want to maintain your jobs and those of your grandchildren, then there is only one answer: Vote 'yes' in the ballot'.

This same question is facing nearly all sectors. It faces the steel workers threatened with more redundancies. It faces car workers at British Leyland and Vauxall who have rejected company offers.

This has a meaning for the Labour leaders. Again, as Arthur Scargill put it: 'Our message is that the next Labour government has one prime objective: to show the same loyalty to their class as the Tories do to theirs.'



Mick McGahey, Scottish NUM leader

'The Tories can only chase you if you're running' Mick McGahey



Arthur Scargill

Dear Tony

REPRINTED here is an open letter which was produced and distributed by Socialist Challenge supporters in West London at a public meeting addressed by Tony Benn on 6 October attended by over 800 people. Socialist Challenge endorses its proposals.

Dear Tony Benn,

TWO YEARS AGO your campaign for the deputy leadership of the Labour Party inspired militants in the trade unions and the constituency Labour Parties. Then we were still reeling from the defeats imposed by Jim Callaghan and Denis Healey.

Now, many of the policies we were then fighting for have been won, and the mass movement is finding its feet again at last. Labour is committed to unilateral disarmament, to full employment, to withdraw from the EEC, against incomes policy (just about) and for social justice for women, black people and youth.

The tremendous demonstrations in support of the health workers have shown we have the capacity to fight the Tories. A Labour victory is within our grasp.

Yet with this victory in sight, last week's conference saw a right wing NEC imposed on the party by the manipulation of the block vote; women denied greater representation; leaders like Hattersley rushing to the media to denounce conference policy. And more important of all, a divisive and destructive purge launched against those who defend socialist policies in the Labour Party.

We don't believe that the support exists in the ranks of the Party and unions for these attacks by the right wing. We believe that if they are challenged — and we intend to challenge them — we can unseat the right wing leaders like Sid Weighell and prevent another Healey-type of government.

Moreover, we don't believe that such a challenge can be made hostage to 'confidence in Michael Foot' as a leader. We must begin now to stop the witch-hunt by refusing to accept any expulsions, supporting the Hackney Conference on October 30th and create a national network of parties and unions who will resist expulsions and disaffiliations.

We believe the left must now create a broad alliance, as proposed by the new group of 22 Labour MPs formed last week, between the Labour Parties, Parliamentary lefts and the unions, to defend socialist policies and organise action to secure them. And we believe you should put your whole weight behind such moves.

You have spoken out in favour of them in the past.

But everyone on the left must now decide whether to act on them. If we wait until after the election, by then it may well be too late. The aim of the present right wing offensive is to destroy our gains before the next election, because they are terrified of having to implement the policies to which the party is now committed. We refuse to accept. We're fighting back.

The demand we put to you is this: *join this fight*. The media will say it is a challenge to Foot's leadership. If we succeed, we will be challenging Foot's leadership. But it would be completely, totally insane to allow this fact to deter us from defending what we have won and fighting to ensure that it is put into practice.

When you say, therefore, that the party should fight on its 'existing policies, existing leadership, and its existing membership', we think you are contradicting yourself. This leadership is attacking the membership, and when it has finished with the membership it will destroy our policies. So, which are you going to put first? The membership? The policies? Or the leadership?



He did not fall — he needed a push

By Jeff King

THE KICKING OUT of Weighell means more than the getting rid of an obnoxious trade union leader. Its implications reach into the trade union movement as a whole, and the Labour Party in particular.

Scargill's exposure of Weighell's double dealing came about because the miner's leaders knew that Weighell stood in the way of building a fighting Triple Alliance. But Scargill also knew that Weighell had helped the right wing to take over the Labour Party NEC.

Having been caught out Weighell took a gamble which blew up in his face. And this gives the left inside the union, and inside the Labour Party a chance to start to change things.

Weighell's exodus means that railworkers can

begin to demand that an official NUR delegation is on the lobby of Downing St. The Broad Left should now push forward in the ranks and at NEC level for building a united campaign with ASLEF, which includes joint action against job losses.

The left must now get a candidate to stand for the now vacant secretary's job. This candidate must be prepared to fight against job losses and help to make the union more democratic and responsive to the needs of the membership.

Weighell used his vote

to try to make sure that Tom Breakwell a right-wing EEPTU candidate got on the NEC instead of Clarke, the nominee of the left-wing NUM. Such practices have been all too common, although they are not often discovered as the right-wing union leader's impose their nominees on Labour's executives.

The union members like the rest of the working class cannot afford an NEC dominated by the likes of Breakwell because such an NEC will not fight for policies which serve the interests of NUR members, or NUM.

Although the left on the NEC and in the rail depots was able to organise around a constitutional issue to oust

Weighell there has still not been a significant campaign around jobs and pay. The SGM voted to accept the McCarthy recommendations which will result in massive job loss.

But the vote to accept the McCarthy proposals was much narrower than expected and this shows that if the left campaign and organise, the decision can be turned around.

Past decisions by the AGM have very firmly committed the union to retain the grade of guard and conferences of guards and shunters have come out against one-person operations.

If the NUR is not to be blessed with another right-wing secretary last week's victory must be rammed home. That means an all-

out campaign against job losses and for no worsening in working conditions.

As long as the Labour Party and union leaders let Thatcher forge ahead without resisting her wholesale slaughter of jobs and services or her war mania the Tory vote will stay united; and demoralised Labour voters will not bother turning out.

Moreover if the leadership spends its time denouncing its own members instead of fighting Thatcher it will cause confusion and desertions from Labour's ranks.

Birmingham, Peckham: which way for Labour victory?

By Alan Freeman

28 OCTOBER will see a major election test for the three parties after their recent conferences.

Pundits will be itching to 'interpret' votes for Labour witch-hunter John Spellers in Birmingham Northfield, and moderate left

winger Harriet Harman, legal adviser to the National Council for Civil Liberties, in Peckham.

Of course they'll attack the left whatever happens. If the candidates both do well it will be down to 'Michael Foot's firm leadership'. If they do badly it will be *Militant's* fault. And of course if Spellers does better than Harman, the *Sun* will go

out of what passes for its mind.

But in reality Labour's vote will depend, not on the individual candidates but on whether or not voters are convinced by national events that the Labour Party can implement its promises, and whether the false glow of 'competence and resolve' surrounding Thatcher is dissipated.

That's why the best chance of Labour victory comes from the

healthworkers marching through Peckham this week. The recent modest recovery in Labour's showing dates from the start of the health strike, which made the first dent in the Tories' self-confidence and work millions of people up to what privatisation means in terms of human need.

The Labour Left is denounced by the media and its leaders because it provides a focus for such extra-parliamentary action — particularly around

nuclear disarmament. By defending itself against the leadership's attacks, the left will defend the very methods and policies that offer the best chance of a Labour victory.

But something more needs to be said. If either candidate loses, it will be a defeat for the left. And if either wins it will be a victory. Any defeat will be seen as a vindication of Maggie Thatcher's heartless treatment of the health workers, and will

drive Labour's right wing into even more frantic attempts to throw out hard-won policy gains.

That is why Socialist Challenge urges its supporters to join in and work for a Labour victory in both constituencies: to put the case for a vigorous defence of socialist policies, to persuade other activists to build for a Labour victory by backing the days of action, and to take the next step in turning the tide against Thatcher.



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Solidarnosc calls general strike for 10 November

Solidarnosc lives!



Polish car workers reading the first issue of Solidarity's independent newspaper.

We reprint the 9 October declaration of the clandestine leadership of Solidarnosc, the banned Polish trade union. It was issued in the name of comrades Bujak (Warsaw), Lis (Gdansk), Hardek (Cracow), and Bednorz (Wroclaw) on behalf of the Provisional National Commission of Solidarnosc.

'The dissolution of all Polish trade unions is unprecedented in the annals of civilised societies. With this act the military council recognised it had suffered a defeat.

The military council has failed to destroy the trade union movement, and its attempts to corrupt leading trade unionists have come to nothing.

For ten months during the state of siege, workers have showed their opposition to the regime of military repression.

illegal

The Diet, the very same which accepted the creation of the military council without protest and in breach of the Polish People's Constitution, which endorsed the illegal Council of State decree which opened the state of siege, has dared against its elector's wishes to dissolve trade unions organising 90 per cent of the adult citizens of Poland. It has thus deprived itself of its social mandate.

The independent self-managed trade union, Solidarity, cannot be dissolved except by decision of its members. Our organisation exists and will pursue its activities to create a self-managed republic.

Solidarnosc's provisional co-ordinating commission calls on all members of the union, on all workers and on all unions to boycott the new fake unions. Refusal to join these unions will constitute a type of national referendum through which

the national will pronounces itself against repression, against the enslavement of the people, against deepening social misery, against thirty-seven years of a catastrophic social and economic policy.

Boycott

Not to boycott the new unions would amount to treachery to the ideals of the independent trade union movement. This referendum will be the first in the annals of people's Poland and our rulers will find it hard to falsify the results.

10 November, second anniversary of Solidarity's registration, should be a day of protest. We appeal to all workers, regardless of trade union affiliation, to protest massively and on a national scale against poverty and the violation of the law.

On 10 November we will launch a protest strike of four hours duration from 10 o'clock in the morning. The strike must be organised so that its leaders are unknown. In every factory, in every workshop and in every section, a secret committee must be set up to prepare the protest on 10 November. The unfolding of the demonstration will trace out the future path of the union's strategy.

'Solidarity exists and will exist, whether you like it or not'

(Lech Walesa, addressing Solidarnosc's first national congress)

Fight the witch-hunt say POEU militants

SUPPORT is growing for the 30 October conference against the Witch-hunt, initiated by Hackney North and Stoke Newington Labour Party. It was reported to the steering committee that applications for delegate's credentials have been arriving at the rate of seven a day — and rising. The last week before conference is a vital time to seek delegations: many Labour Party General Committees and Trades Councils meet during the week. We urge all Socialist Challenge readers to pull out all the stops to build the conference in this last week.

The London South Central External Branch of the Post Office Engineering Union has decided to support the Conference and to call on all POEU branches to do likewise. CAROL TURNER of the POEU spoke to DERMOT HUNT, Secretary of the LSCE branch and London Broad Left, to find out why.

Carol: I understand your branch is supporting the Hackney Conference. Can you tell me why?

Dermot: As you probably know, the National Executive Committee has recently sent a letter to all branches asking POEU delegates to local Labour Parties to support the register.

That same letter came with a pamphlet, by Labour Solidarity, which was a scandalous attack on *Militant*. Our recent branch meeting discussed it and instructed me to write to Head Office ex-

pressing our opposition.

Carol: Was it that same meeting that decided to support the Hackney Conference?

Dermot: Yes. We'd received details from Southwark Trades Council who were asking us to back it. We did, and we decided to write to all POEU branches asking them to do likewise. The decision by the NEC and Golding, the Political Officer, to support the register is undemocratic — no one consulted the members beforehand, no one asked them if they wanted to

support this so-called Labour Solidarity organisation.

We've asked the rest of the POEU branches to support the Hackney Conference and to send delegates because the register is an attack on the democratic rights of socialists in the labour movement to defend their views. The real aim of the register is to roll back the democratic and policy gains at Labour Party conference.

Carol: What's your view of the register and the witch-hunt?

Dermot: Well, I think it's summed up by what was said at our meeting. There are three reasons to oppose the register.

First, the witch-hunt against *Militant* is completely misdirected. It's the left of the party who support the policies of party conference.

Second, an attack on *Militant* is the thin end of the wedge. The rest of the left are next in line.

And finally, its real aim is to get away from the political issues, like the differences between right and left, like incomes policy and unilateralism.

It diverts attention from the fact that Labour Party and trade union leaders don't reflect the views of their members. And that's particularly true of the right wing POEU leadership.

Labour Abortion Rights Campaign refuses

AT ITS Annual General Meeting in June this year, the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign decided to ballot its membership on whether the campaign should apply to be included on the National Executive Committee's register of non-affiliated groups within the Labour Party.

The result of the ballot is now known: LARC's members voted overwhelmingly

against registration, thereby supporting the views of the AGM that registration would render LARC totally ineffective as a campaign.

Sixty seven per cent of the membership returned ballot papers, 87 percent of which were opposed to registration.

The General Secretary of the Labour Party has been informed of LARC's decision.

Lobby NEC against witch-hunt

The Steering Committee of the 30 October Conference against the Witch-hunt have called for a mass lobby of the Labour Party's National Executive Committee when it meets at

the end of November. It asks constituent organisations of the Labour Party to endorse the lobby and send people with banners.

Socialist Challenge asks all readers to put motions to labour movement bodies backing the lobby — particularly Young Socialist branches, General Committees and trade union branches.

Labour against the witch-hunt

30 October
Country Hall, London
Contact: Labour against
the witch-hunt
107 Nevill Rd, London N16.

Sponsors now include:
MPs: Norman Atkinson, Ron Brown, Bob Cryer, Martin Flannery, Les Huckfield, Joan Maynard, Reg Race, Allan Roberts, Ernie Roberts, Dennis Skinner, Audrey Wise
PPCs: Paul Boateng, Hilary Bryer, Jeremy Corbyn, Ian Roxburgh, Chris Smith, Jim Orpe, Peter Tatchell
Unions and broad lefts (in personal capacity):
Alan Sapper ACTT, John Aitken EETPU, Phil Holt POEU, Ray Davies ITC
CLPs: Hackney North, Bermondsey, Chipping Barnet, Brent South, Southwark/Peckham, Islington South, Islington North, Wood Green, Vauxhall

Conference of delegates from CLPs, unions, LPYS branches, LP branches, women's sections

What privatisation means To Telecoms

How much is BT worth?

It has assets of £5 billion but the Financial Times says 'BT will be a difficult animal to price'. It is thought all BT's holes in the ground, ducts and cables are bound to be undervalued in a sale offer. After all how much is a gas filled hole likely to inspire the public imagination?

How much is BT likely to be sold for?

The FT suggests a price based on half the assets '£2-3 billion'. The city institutions are already collecting over BT's starved body like a flock of vultures. They remember the sale of Amersham International for £71 million. The market showed quickly that this was undervalued by £23 million. The profit by the banks and finance institutions came out of our pockets. No wonder the city waits in eager anticipation for the next hand out from the tax payer. 51% of BT amounts to the biggest share issue ever offered to the world's markets and the biggest de-nationalisation in British history.

But won't the money made from the sale be used to cut our income tax?

The assets of BT belong to every worker and government could spend the £2-3 billion it is likely to make by giving us all a 2-3p tax cut for one year. The problem of how BT would then afford to pay its £1.5 billion contribution to the pensions scheme has not been answered. If the government sticks to its commitment to paying this money then it can only cut the standard rate of income tax by 1p for one year.

Yes but the tax payer cannot afford to finance the modernisation of telecoms?

Why not? If an integrated socially useful efficient communications system is going to provide so much profit for private industry can it not improve the assets of workers? The French PTT, a nationalised industry, has been successfully and rapidly modernised within 10 years. After all if we can afford to buy cruise missiles which are neither 'efficient' nor make a profit, we can afford an efficient telecommunications system.

Won't the workforce be better off under private management?

The Financial Times says that in order to privatise BT and reap enormous profits BT's '25 per cent over manning will have to be cut'. A confidential Department of Industry Paper forecasts the axing of 45,000 jobs in BT. That will mean 1 in 4 of the workforce in the next 5 years. The vision of the dole queue will hardly be seen as a good thing for the BT workers or the working class.

The workforce will have a chance to buy shares and therefore control the company, won't they?

What good will £100's worth of shares be if you are on the dole? The interest will not even pay your telephone rental. No person employed in the engineering grades can afford the kind of money that finance houses and the city will use to buy large share issues. After all if the worker could afford to live off the interest from their capital they wouldn't sign on every day.

The decisions about the kind of technology that will invade our homes and mould our society are being taken now. The truth is that private companies are more concerned with their profits rather than the overall efficiency of the telecommunications system.

How can trade unionists get the truth about privatisation?

Socialist Challenge will have regular coverage of the issues involved, the response of the unions and the Labour Party and campaign reports from the POEU areas. To combat the Tory propaganda of the Sun and The Mail trade unionists need to read a paper they can trust to bring them the facts. That paper is Socialist Challenge.

MINERS VOTE 'YES'

By Andy Miller

THE COAL BOARD and the Tories are trying to turn miners against each other. They are frantically trying to drive a wedge between 'efficient' areas and 'loss-making' areas like South Wales or Scotland.

But the decision by the special delegate meeting to fight on the question of pit closures means that it is possible to build a united national front to defend jobs. The divisions that have been created by the bonus system can be overcome, through fighting for the four-day week, early retirement and rate protection.

Last week the Coal Board confirmed that Sherwood colliery in Not-

tinghamshire will be closed in five years time. A number of other collieries in the area are nearing the end of their reserves and are clear targets for closure.

Plans for 'mergers' are rumoured to be in the offing. This shows only too clearly that no area is safe.

'The Crunch' is the front page headline in the *Miner*. The NUM's ballot is a crucial one. If the union fails to win a 'Yes'

vote, there is no doubt that Coal Board boss Norman 'sod-all' Siddall will start wielding the axe. A 'No' vote will mean that it will be an uphill task to fight pit closures. The Coal Board and the Tories will be calling the shots.

Since the February 1981 strike, 14 of the 23 pits on the hit list have been closed. Now 50 to 60 are 'under review'. National action is vital to stop this threat. Victory is by no means assured.

The next week will be decisive. Thousands of militants will be attending rallies taking place up and down the country. But vic-

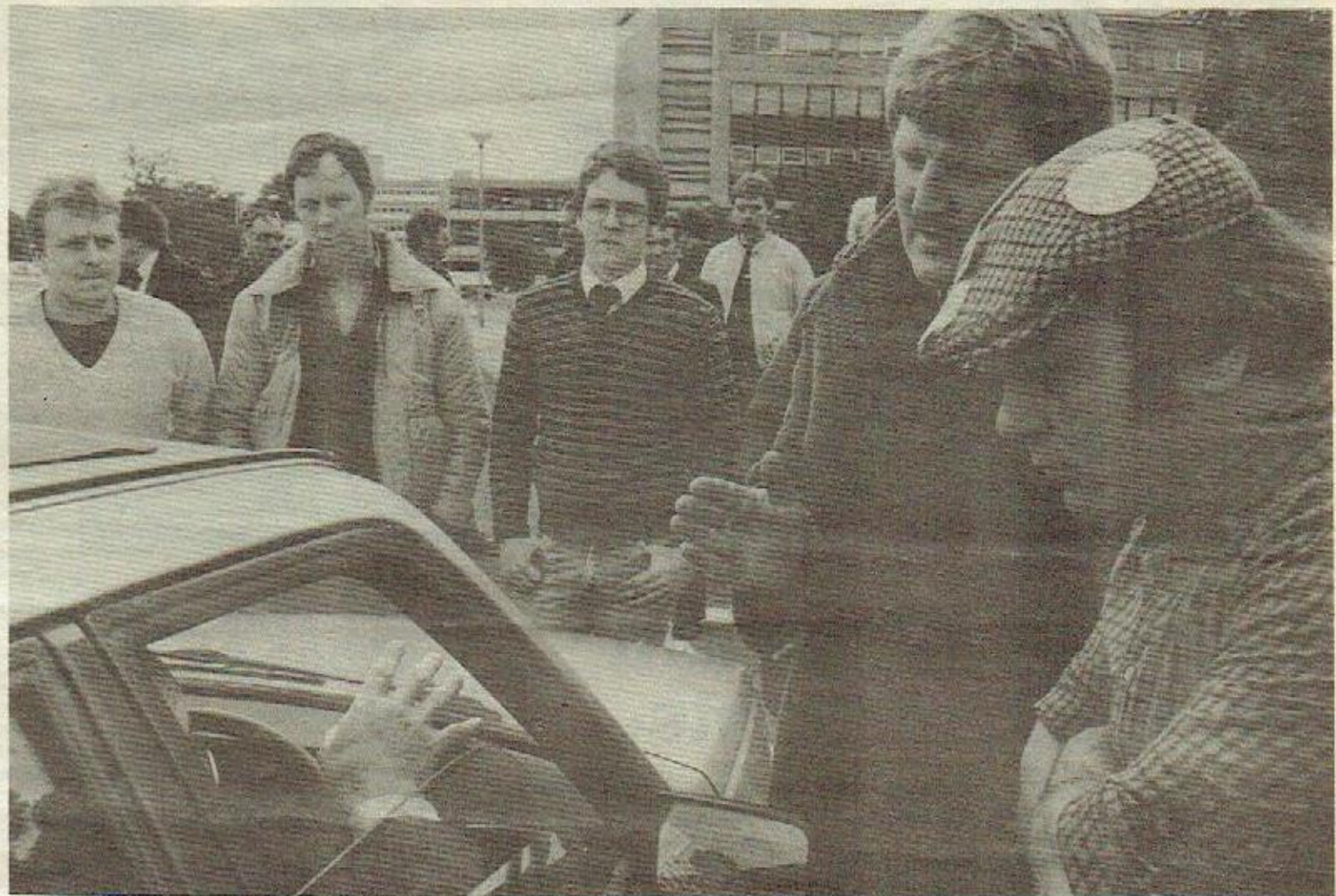
tory depends on the campaign in the pits. It depends on whether the campaign is taken into the less militant areas in a big way. This will decide whether militants can tip the balance.

Last year Gormley allowed negotiations to drag on allowing other groups of workers to be picked off one by one.

Today we are in a different ball game. If the miners vote to take on the Tories over jobs and pay they won't be fighting alone. Steel workers, waterworkers, workers in Telecoms as well as workers in British Leyland

and Vauxhall are going in to action alongside the healthworkers.

The miners' solidarity with the healthworkers gave a lead to the whole Labour movement. A 'Yes' vote by the miners would give a big boost to the growing resistance to the Tories. It could help transform 'days of action' into a movement that could sweep the Tories out of power. That's why, as militants in the pits are working flat out this week for a 'Yes' vote, they won't be just fighting for miners' jobs and for their union they will be fighting for the whole working class.



Tyrone O'Sullivan (second from right) picketing during health workers' 'day of action'

'This is a struggle we can't afford to lose'

TYRONE O'SULLIVAN, secretary of the Tower Lodge of South Wales NUM spoke to Barry Wilkins.

WE ARE campaigning for industrial action over both jobs and wages and this is a struggle that we have to win. It will demonstrate to the working class that the way to win is through strong leadership. It will show that the Tories are not unbeatable, and begin a process of fighting to throw them out.

After a slow start, the campaign for a 'yes' vote in the ballot is taking off. At Tower colliery we have already had six meetings to cover all shifts, and more are planned. I'm confident that in S Wales and other militant areas we will get a solid majority for action,

and that nationally the vote will go our way.

We have lost 37,000 jobs in 7 years and 12,000 in the last year alone. We intend to stop this. This is the first time that a national ballot has linked jobs, closures and pay. This means that it is more likely that we shall win the support of more moderate areas who might have been prepared to accept the eight per cent pay offer on its own.

It is the NCB which has linked the issues of pay and wages. During the negotiations they offered more money if the union agreed to cut production — in other words to accept

job loss.

But the miners have learned from the steel workers experience. Their leadership had the wrong approach. They refused to fight on jobs and pay in the 1980 strike. And now look how many steel jobs have gone.

The miners recognise that new technology in the pits also threatens jobs. At Selby, through new technology, 5-6,000 miners can produce more than 27,000 in Wales. That's why we need a four-day week — so new technology doesn't mean miners on the dole.

The overtime ban will show miners how low their basic wages really are — £64 for surface workers and £84 for coalface

workers.

In South Wales there are already strike committees — basing themselves on the experience of the '74 and '81 strikes. Through these district-based committees every pit is involved in planning for the strike. This is a struggle we cannot afford to lose — so much is at stake, not only for us but for the whole labour movement.

MARTIN HILL talked to Kevin Hallender, a young miner from Bighton Colliery, South Yorkshire

THE MINERS at my pit are for a strike by a big majority. They're realising now that they didn't back the union on last year's strike call. They know

they've got to this time or they might as well pack up. What we get this year will affect our wages for years to come. Different pits get different bonuses. Last year I took home £94. That's with the best bonus I've had for months.

But I'm on top rate. Surface workers average £65. That affects all miners. As you get older, or if you're injured, you have to go on surface working. Then you drop back to the lowest rate.

It's not just wages that matter either. Our pit is a suspect pit. If there are closures, we'll be hit. We know every other industry is being hit by unemployment. Ours is going to be hit soon. A lot of pits are up for the chop. We've got to be ready to fight that.

Health dispute - TUC must act

By Bob Pennington

THE HEALTH WORKERS' dispute has reached a serious stage. After the great display of solidarity from other workers on 22 September, the response by non-health workers to the 'days of action' have been less enthusiastic.

This is partly due to the fact that some of them were called at quite short notice, and that in a number of regions a vigorous campaign was not waged by either the health workers or the other unions.

But these are not the sole, or in fact the main reasons. What is really placing a question mark over the successful outcome of the dispute is the role being played by the TUC in general, and health workers' leaders, like Albert Spanswick in particular.

The dispute is now in its fifth month, and it is clear that the government have staked their all on putting the trade unions in their place. As far as Thatcher is concerned this is a battle she cannot afford to lose.

Nor is it a battle that the workers' movement

can afford to lose. A victory for Thatcher would not only be a blow against the low paid health workers, it would open the door for carving up the whole structure of the NHS.

After the roll backs in steel, cars and rail, a defeat for the health workers would also make other workers less confident about taking on the government.

With such high stakes involved the labour movement can not afford to be anything but decisive. The TUC must stop threatening the Tories with a dispute that could go on into next year, but

organise action that will win the claim *this year*.

The leaders of the TUC must recognise, what most health workers and their militant allies in the other unions already do. Namely that one-day disputes are not enough. Only by an indefinite general strike in the NHS - providing emergency cover only - can the Tories be defeated.

That kind of action would inspire the health workers, making them confident of their victory, and it would make it easier to get solidarity action from other workers, thus making sure the Tories were forced to meet the claim.

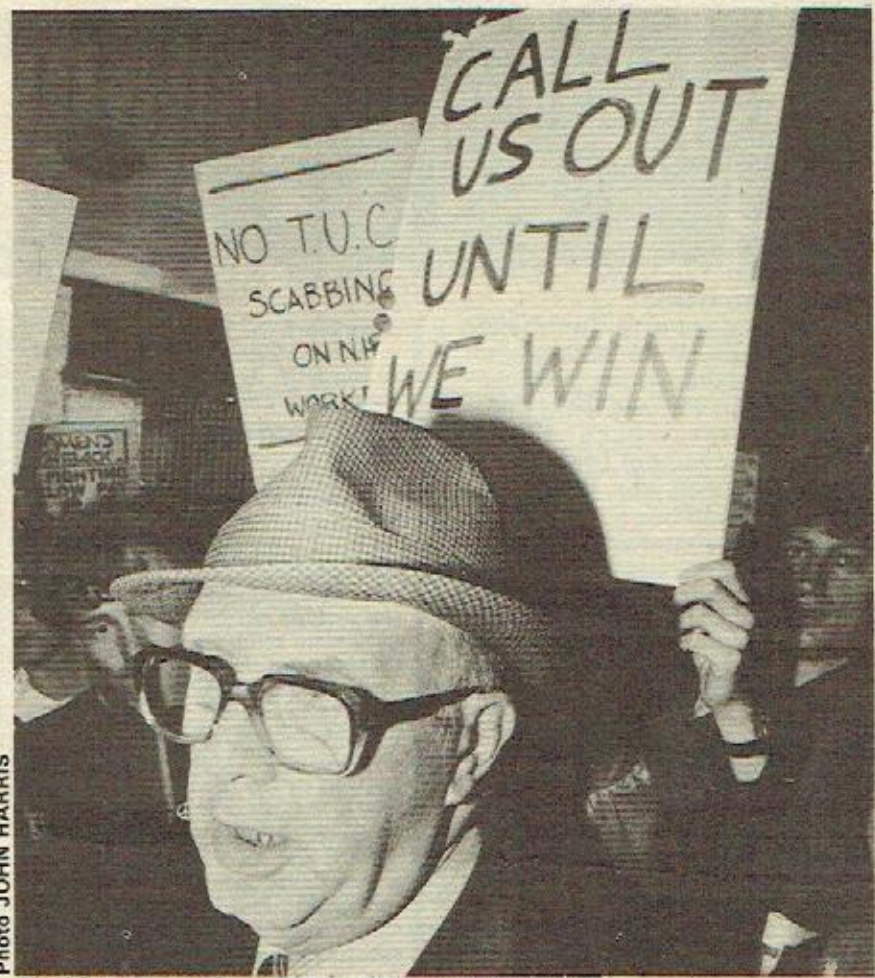


Photo JOHN HARRIS

Health workers show Spanswick the way forward

Import controls won't save jobs

STEEL WORKERS are facing another jobs massacre. Bill Sirs, leader of the main steel union, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, has tried to direct workers' attention to foreign imports as the real root of the problems they face. Waving his 'import control' flag, he has serenely watched nearly 100,000 British Steel Corporation jobs go down the drain in the last three years.

As steel workers once again stir into action against the current threats to close two of the big five plants, Sirs is at it again berating foreign imports. BERNARD CONNOLLY, crafts convenor at Rotherham BSC, explained the real answer to job loss in last week's Socialist Challenge.

This week we reprint an article he wrote against Sirs' ideas in June 1980. The arguments are just as relevant today.

Why do you oppose import controls?

Those who suggest that import controls are any answer to the problems faced by steelworkers are misleading the working class. It shifts attention away from the real enemy, to our brothers and sisters overseas. It takes the heat off the steel management and their Tory backers.

What takes our jobs is not imports, but the ups and downs of the capitalist economy over which workers have no control. In 1973, projected capacity for BSC was 36m tonnes per year. Today the plan is for 15m tonnes. Yet imports have hardly risen in that period! They stand at about 7m tonnes. The massive loss of tonnage is a result of the recession, and not the use of imported steel.

We hardly got out of one recession, and now we are into another. As a result of the last one, shipbuilding was halved; car production was down by over a third; and construction was cut by a half. These and other industries needing steel are taking a nose-dive.

This is where the problem is. BSC would still be declaring redundancies if not another ounce of steel was imported.

Even if the tonnage level was maintained in the British steel industry, and if the entire national industry used only British steel, this wouldn't guarantee jobs.

The bosses are concerned about squeezing more profits from the work of each individual. We can be certain that tonnage increases would go hand in hand with changes in manning levels, producing deals, and so on. This involves more job losses.

Wouldn't import controls protect our industry, though?

Talking about 'our' industry is just a con trick to make workers take responsibility for the problems of the economy. The only time we hear talk about 'us' is when there are losses, not when profits are mounting.

Once you accept the need for 'our' steel to make profits, you are drawn into accepting slimline agreements, speed-ups and wage rises below inflation. Ford's makes a massive profit but it has just announced redundancies. Profits and workers' interests don't go together.

But wouldn't it give us just a breathing space to get the industry

sorted out?

Sorted out for whom? North Sea Oil was meant to be a bonus, and it could be. But who benefits just now? The oil companies with their record profits.

The only time import controls would be imposed by the government is if the bosses could get a better return that way. This would still mean attacks on workers.

The reason the Tories won't go for this policy just now is because Britain relies on exports so much. Volvo takes more British steel than Fords. A trade war might develop if the crisis gets worse. It happened in the '30s. But the great depression certainly didn't help any workers I know.

Surely accepting imports is accepting super-exploitation of other workers abroad?

British steelworkers are the lowest paid in Europe. Would it have helped us during our strike if German workers stopped British imports on the grounds that we are low paid? What we needed and what we got was solidarity. This is what Indian or South Korean workers need in order to fight their low wages.

I only wish it had been possible for more workers to have visited our brothers and sisters abroad during the strike. They would have seen that the bosses in other countries are trying to sell the same lie to workers there: that the problems they face are also due to foreign imports.

For me, it is a natural progression from organising locally to organising internationally. You can't do that with a policy of import controls.

So what is the answer?

Steelworkers have to start from the need to save jobs. If there isn't enough work, then it should be shared,

with no loss of pay. Overtime should be abolished.

We need a decent wage without overtime, and a fight to force management to take on more workers - especially young workers. Train them. Give older workers time off to study. Lower the retiring age.

But this would bankrupt the industry.

So the government will have to give a subsidy to save jobs. We are in the 1980s, not the '30s. We have a right to a job. We'll have to smash through the cash limits.

But don't forget. Interest payments to the money lenders account for over half the 'loss' made by BSC. This was nearly £200m this year alone. The cancellation of these debts has to be a priority.

We can't stop there. There is a market for steel. But not under this system. Obviously we don't need less steel than we did in the '60s, let alone the '30s. We need more hospitals, more schools, more roads, more railways, and more cars.

Where some things



Bernard Connolly

aren't needed any longer, let's re-tool the industry. Who could argue that Africa has enough tractors or other machinery which idle factories here could produce? We couldn't produce enough steel in society based on people's needs.

We need a government that breaks from the profit system. One that sets unemployed people to work building the roads, hospitals and equipment we need. One that begins to plan the economy in the interests of the majority - the working people and their families.

Ultimatum by GEC

By John Parkinson

AFTER OVER FOUR WEEKS on all out strike, clerical staff at GEC Traction Preston have been given an ultimatum to return to work by Tuesday 19 October or be sacked.

Not surprisingly the decision has generated strong reaction from strikers, union officials and other GEC staff. All have condemned the GEC decision following the refusal of the company to meet with the national union officials of APEX and ACTSS (TGWU).

Yet, despite the condemnation the APEX officials are still recommending a return to work - despite the dispute being official! Clearly the prospect of a fight with multinational giant GEC is too much for APEX chiefs like Grantham who prefer to fight the left inside their own union and Labour Party.

Rejects

Support has been won from other staff at Preston who have voted nearly unanimously to reject any moves to recruit and train scabs. A mass meeting will show whether the 170 strikers feel they can fight their unions as well as giant GEC. Our determination to date has seen high turnouts for the 24-hour a day, 7 day a week picketing of the Strand Road site at Preston.

Following the last mass meeting this has been stepped up to include secondary picketing at GEC Traction in Manchester

with support being sought from plants and the AUEW District Committees in Manchester to enforce the blacking of firms crossing the picket line.

Support

The problems faced in winning support from other GEC sites echoes the problems faced by the shop floor in their June dispute. The call by the Manchester Engineering Research Group for a meeting of GEC Power Engineering shop stewards has been endorsed by the strike committee and the meeting will take place on Saturday 30 October in Manchester.

Support for the strike is likely going to be needed if we are to force Lord Carrington's multinational giant to rescind its sacking threat.

Financial support is also needed and copies of the list of the scab companies can be obtained from GEC Strike Committee, c/o Pauline Haigh, 25 Mersey Street, Ashton Preston Lancashire.

New Socialist

TONY BENN
debates

GIORGIO NAPOLITANO
(Parliamentary leader of the Italian Communist Party)

Which road to socialism in West Europe?

Contributions from the floor
Friday, 29 October, 7.30pm

Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 (Euston tube)
Creche available

Tickets £1 (75p unwaged) at the door, or in advance from: Tickets, New Socialist, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17

Co-sponsored by New Socialist and Marxism Today

Teeside Steelworkers prepare one-day strike

A meeting of 240 convenors and stewards last week in Middlesbrough representing steelworkers throughout Teeside voted with only three against to support the 24-hour strike.

Pickets will be at every plant from 5:30 am. At 11am there will be a mass rally at the main entrance to the Redcar plant, which is being visited by Ian MacGregor that day.

The whole trade union movement in the locality is being urged to attend. A deputation from the Shildon British Rail wagon works, themselves threatened with redundancy, will attend to show their solidarity.

WHICH WAY FOR A

By Brian Heron

The Labour Party Conference and Trades Union Congress clarified the British political situation, summarising the state of the labour and trade union movement following the Malvinas war. Both of these congresses faithfully reflected the same fundamental trends inside the labour movement.

This in itself is a dramatic confirmation of the increasing extent to which the struggle in the unions is producing deep and immediate repercussions inside the Labour Party and vice versa.

British politics, for all classes, is dominated by the issue of government. For the ruling class, the problem is how to align what will become a deeply unpopular Tory Party and the new SDP/Liberal Alliance Parties to prevent an unstable Labour government coming into office under mass pressure.

The Tory Party conference was the occasion for Thatcher to reaffirm her commitment to destroying the social and economic gains won by the working class since the Second World War.

The Social Democratic/Liberal Alliance was reconfirmed by their respective conferences as a vital element in preventing votes of disaffected Tories going to the Labour Party, and to play a role in any coalitionist manoeuvres that would be necessary.

The public sector and health workers, who are now leading the strike battle against the Tories, are the same workers whose 'Winter of Discontent' in 1979 helped to bring about the collapse of the previous Callaghan-led Labour government.

Today those same workers seek a Labour government of a different type. They are looking for every way possible to win a Labour government that would be a total break from a government of the Wilson-Callaghan type.

The relatively short-term prospect of the most important election since the war means that such concerns on the part of both classes will come into sharper and sharper focus in the next months.

In this framework we are seeing a tremendous eruption of working class struggles, which are breaking up the social peace that the Malvinas war was partly designed to create.

The days of action around the hospital workers strike have involved over five million workers in strike action, leading up to November's transport strike.

Post Office Engineers are embarking on strike action to stop the Tories selling off their profitable nationalised industry. Water workers are preparing a national strike.

Steel workers are on a similar course. And now the miners at their conference have decided on a pit-head ballot for strike action in defence of jobs and for a 30 per cent wage increase.

These moves on the whole have been forced on a reluctant and fearful bureaucracy, who are being offered no concessions from Thatcher that could help to guarantee their own stability when they find themselves under

siege from the ranks.

The dismissal of Sid Weighell, by the NUR Special General Meeting is one of the most dramatic products of this pressure.

The bureaucracies' desire to put a shot across the bow of the Thatcher government has given focus to a furious wave of anger against the Tories. Despite the truly massive unemployment, the serious set-backs and the defensive struggle of the last three years, the basic trade union strength of the working class remains intact. Each national focus that emerges underlines the capacity and will to fight of the mass of workers and in the trade unions.

Such conditions are the base from which very important policy advances were registered at the TUC and the Labour Party Conferences. These included a resolution passed at the TUC, and the emphasis placed by many speakers on the need to take forward the wave of trade union solidarity actions with the health workers (which completely transgresses the new trade union laws enacted by the Tories.) The Congress specifically stated their intent to break these laws.

At Labour Party Conference, the battle for unilateral disarmament won a tremendous victory with a two thirds majority of votes registered for the policy — which traditionally guarantees Manifesto status for this policy. Additionally resolutions were passed in solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinians and a big programme of nationalisation was confirmed.

In part, the victory for unilateralism and more specifically the resolution on the PLO was the product of the emergence of new forces that first surfaced in opposition to the Malvinas war and which have begun to construct an anti-imperialist current especially amongst the youth active in the mass movement against the missiles.

The decisions of Labour's Conference not only give a tremendous boost to these new forces in the British labour movement — they further serve to direct the political attention of the vast anti-missiles movement to the problem of winning a Labour government that will implement these policies.

The rise in the fightback against the Tories is one side of the current stage of working class politics in Britain. The other is a big organisational and political shift to the right within the labour bureaucracy as a whole.

The bureaucracy's response to the new stage of struggle is the fight to 're-stabilise' the Labour Party. The message which they wish to issue to their own ruling class is that the Labour Party is on the way to becoming a stable prop for ruling class policies.

Alongside this political fight, which was opened with a vengeance at the TUC and LP conferences, the bureaucracy hopes to persuade the ruling class to begin again to open the door to negotiating and the balancing role in the polarising struggle between the classes.

The centrepiece of the bureaucracy's offensive is the witch-hunt through the weapon



Photo JOHN STURROCK



Boyd



Healey

Photo G.M. COOKSON

of approved (and non approved) groups which work in the Labour Party. Vast numbers of union block votes were cast in favour by trade union General Secretaries despite union conference after union conference voting against any witch-hunt.

While the immediate target of the witch-hunt is the Militant tendency and its constituency Labour Party-adopted parliamentary candidates, the witch-hunt's longer term purpose is nothing less than the break-up of the power of the movement behind Tony Benn and the radical policies with which this mass current is associated and defends. It is this

current that is 'destabilising' the Labour Party from the standpoint of the bourgeoisie.

The right wing offensive took other forms. Despite the vote against incomes policy at the TUC, the TUC and Labour Party Conference agreed a joint document on economic policy which, under the euphemistic title of the 'national economic assessment' includes incomes policy.

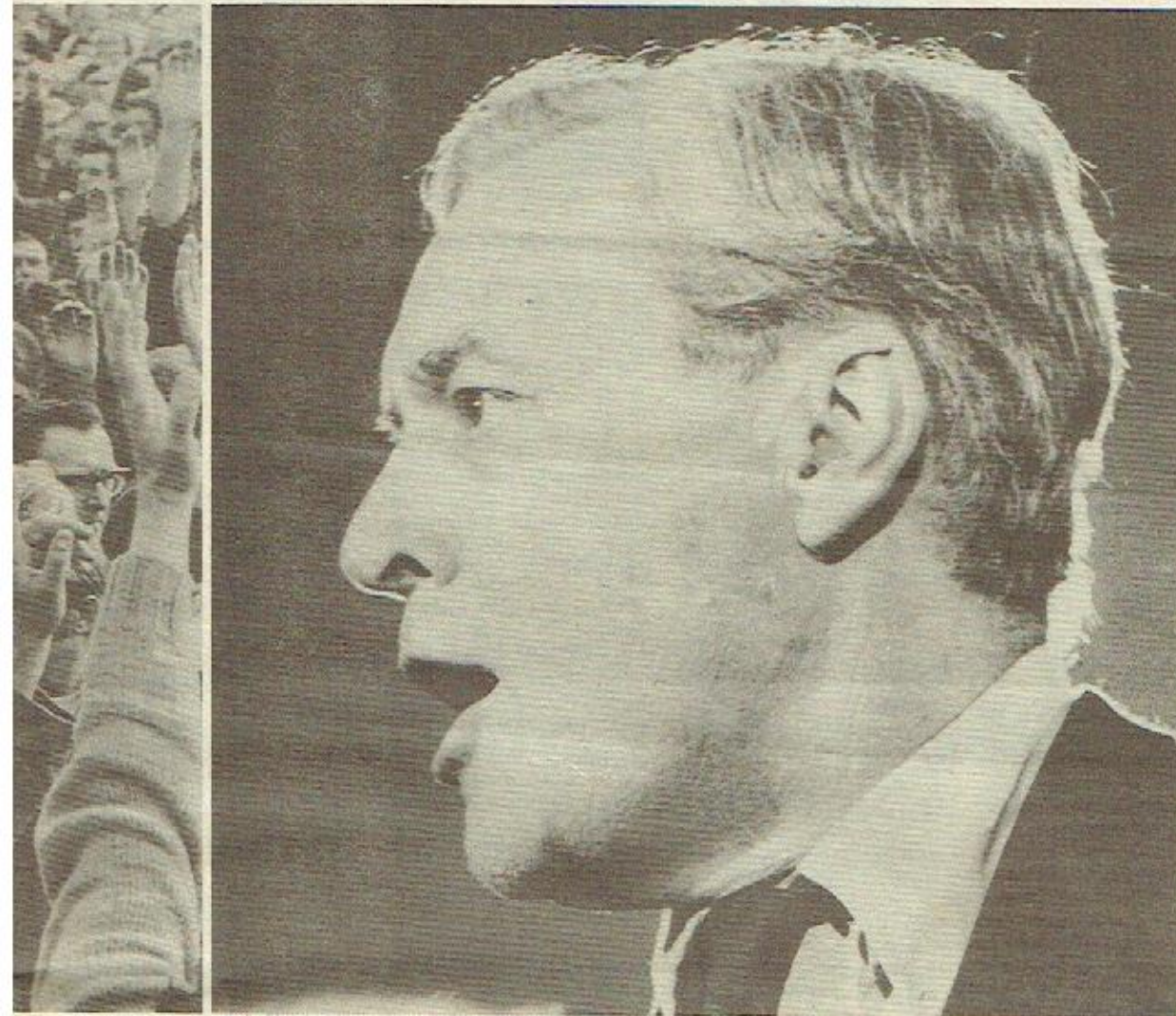
The document was passed virtually unanimously at Labour Party Conference.

Secondly the TUC General Council has shifted to the right around a technical manoeuvre reducing the representation of

smaller unions. The National Executive Committee of the Labour Party elections were worse. Benn supporters on the NEC have been whittled back — especially in the women's section — where the bureaucracy was determined to block the radical impact of Labour Women's Conference on Labour Party as a whole. But this has not benefited the 'centre' of the party and Foot, the party leader. On the contrary, the right wing leader Healey now has an NEC majority. This has important consequences.

There is now a majority of Labour's extra-parliamentary leadership (as well as amongst

LABOUR VICTORY?



Benn

Photo Graham Cookson.



Chapple and Duffy

Photo JOHN HARRIS

membership, the same policies and the same leadership.'

Terrified of the right's campaign to blame the left in the party for Labour's disastrous showing in the opinion polls (the latest shows Labour trailing the Tories by ten points), Benn wants to break his isolation by building further links to the labour bureaucracy. In this process he is giving little lead to those prepared to fight the Foot leadership now.

But the pressure building up for such a lead was graphically shown by the announcement of a new left wing parliamentary group which broke away from the old 'Tribune' group, of which Foot is still a member. Benn supports the break-away. But what will it do?

Several of the MPs involved are for the calling of a national conference of the trade union, party and parliamentary left. But such a course is completely out of the question in Benn's current perspective. 'Why should we', he asks, 'minoritise ourselves?'

The witch-hunt now in progress in the Labour Party is beginning to bring together all of these trends. Every possibility of winning a leadership and policies in the Labour Party that will begin to reflect the big struggles underway against the government is threatened. In that sense, the witch-hunt strikes a blow directly at the mass movement.

The right wing in the Party intend to start with the leaders of the Militant tendency. They will continue with the eviction of the Bennites from all of the key policy committees in the leadership of the Labour Party. Protracted war will break out in many constituency parties, as the right wingers demand the 'registered credentials' of left wingers.

The witch-hunt is already well underway in some unions. Weighell in particular has been prominent in leading an attack on socialists' activities in his unions that is aimed at breaking up the leadership of the reform movement that arose in response to his spectacular sell-out of the other major rail union, ASLEF, in their recent strike.

In this respect, Tony Benn and other leading left wingers at Labour Party Conference, consistent with their approach to the party and union leadership at this stage, gave out the line that we should not seek confrontation on the witch-hunt. Rather they propose that the left should concentrate on the policy advances registered at the Labour Party and TUC Conferences. In reality, without fighting the witch-hunt, such a line neither protects those policies nor mobilises the left for the battle it will certainly face.

The line of advance for the left in the unions and the party today demands a frontal challenge to Foot and his allies in the trade union leadership. Naturally this is not a question of demanding immediate leadership elections in the party.

Rather the witch-hunt, led by Foot, must be fought, and socialist policies defended. This stand, together with deepening joint Labour Party and trade union action to kick out the Tories can ensure a labour victory in the coming election.

Today it is the right in the party and the unions who are

proving by their massive disruption that they are more frightened of a Labour victory with the present policies than of losing the next election.

The perspectives for the labour movement in the coming months in Britain flow in part from the upsurge of the mass movement against the Tories, and in part from the right wing offensive opened up at the Labour Party and TUC conferences. These two have to be brought directly into collision.

Mass forces at the base of the unions, amongst youth and in the anti-missile campaign are more than prepared to fight. They are coming up against the rightward shift of the labour leadership, and, on the crucial question of the witch-hunt, the immobility of the left leaders.

Such conditions are guaranteed to increase the differentiation and divisions in Benn's base. Such divisions are inevitable when Benn's base is already coupling the prospects of a Labour victory with their own capacity to lead mass and industrial action against the Tories.

Over the past three years, support for Labour within the working class has been whittled back to that section of the movement which associates the Labour Party, however abused by previous leaderships, as the only serious prospect of any radical solutions to the crisis which they face.

One third of the working class has traditionally voted Tory in Britain. At the 1979 elections one third of trade unionists were polled as supporting the Tories. Traditionally the only alternative to the Tories has been Labour.

For the last two years, as the Tories drove home their attacks, sections of the workers detached their support from the government, became politically de-stabilised as the SDP/Liberal Alliance emerged as an alternative to voting Tory; were re-centred briefly by the Tories around the chauvinism whipped up by the Malvinas war, and today remain undecided as to their political direction.

Labour has been pushed back to its basic working class bastion, and, even in today's conditions, trail the Tories in the polls. It is from this point of view that a fundamentally new development within the workers movement is beginning to emerge.

The only perspective for a Labour victory and for driving forward the reform movements in the party and the unions is for the minority of the workers movement around Benn and his counter-part in the unions, Arthur Scargill, president of the National Union of Mineworkers, to take the lead inside the working class movement as a whole. And it is precisely that which is beginning to be posed by the current upsurge of the mass movement and the trade unions.

Whatever the manoeuvres of the labour bureaucracy, thousands of workers no longer believe that vigorous industrial struggle disrupts the prospects of a Labour victory. On the contrary, in however unformed and confused a way, the mood is gaining ground that only the bitterest fightback against the government has any chance of changing the political relation of forces within the working class itself.

members of parliament) who are opposed to unilateral nuclear disarmament and other major policy gains won by the left at Labour's conference over recent years.

These gains for the right were sufficient for Labour right wing leader Roy Hattersley, who appeared on television immediately following the historic decision for unilateral disarmament, to confidently announce that the decision would never be applied by a Labour government.

The deep contradiction in the labour movement, which has unfolded around the TUC and Labour Party Conferences between the evolution of its leader-

ship and the big upturn in struggle against the government, has had immediate and dramatic effects.

The strain of trying to drive to the right and at the same time deal with the growing force of the gathering mass movements against the Tories produced the most anarchic and disorganised Labour Party Conference for years.

If one person could be said to have summed up these contradictory pressures it was Tony Benn. After the deputy leadership campaign of 1981 which brought Benn a few fractions of a percentage point from the deputy leadership of the party, Benn

has insisted that he will not open the fight against the Foot leadership unless certain conditions applied.

These included the opening of a witch-hunt, or the attack on established Conference policy by the leadership of the party. Both these conditions now apply with a vengeance. Yet in the face of mounting frustration of his base within the labour movement, Benn has adopted the policy of reaching out to support the Foot leadership.

At one of the biggest meetings on the fringes of Labour Party Conference following the defeat on the register and the victory on unilateralism, Benn said: 'We stand for the same party

Socialist Challenge FUND DRIVE '82

Rally for the paper

THREE THOUSAND POUNDS — that's the figure we've received from our supporters for the first two weeks of this fund drive quarter. That's quite a flying start! But much of this money has come from our regular supporters' groups contributions, very little from fund raising events.

Our next big target for raising money is this weekend's Socialist Challenge/Revolution Rally in London commemorating the 65th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. We hope to raise a bumper collection for your paper at this event.

So local supporters and readers of the paper, bring your cheque books and cash. The spirit of the Russian Revolution is still alive and well, championed by Socialist Challenge and Revolution, but we need your cash to help us keep going.

Our thanks this week to the following who have contributed:

Manchester	£165
Southwark	280
Portsmouth	22
Islington	70
East London Banquet	550
Bristol	100
Brent	241
Barnet, Vokes	100
Leeds	134.50
Anon	8.89
Cardiff	109.50
Swindon	30
Birmingham	50
Blanco White	40
Hackney	103
Liverpool	50
Newport	66
Warrsworth	139
Camden	110
Huddersfield	25
Middlesborough	41
Coventry	40
Oxford	121
Hemel	32.20
Edinburgh	67.50
Southampton	60
Lewisham	10
Glasgow	2.50
Brighton	5
Haringey	17
Sheffield	10
Newcastle	50
Outer West London	100
Lambeth	5
Exeter	30
Ferris	5
Pietrasik	3
Dunn	8
Coulson	4
Total	3005.09

Plastic bullets Conference on the way

THE USE OF plastic bullets in the North of Ireland has continued unabated. Indeed a recent attack by the RUC shows an escalation in their use.

The RUC arrived at a crowded disco in nationalist West Belfast claiming to have received a 999 call which said there was 'trouble' inside. There was no disturbance in the disco and the management told this to the RUC. 'The police insisted in going up in force to the function room at some speed', the owner said. 'They fired at least twelve plastic bullets and from the marks on the walls must have been aiming at chest and head level.'

Most people were on their way out when the police arrived. Some patrons were assaulted and arrested.

Father Denis Faul called the events 'a sectarian attack by the RUC' and a 'vicious escalation of the use of plastic bullets'.

For us in Britain it points to the vital importance of the National Ban Plastic Bullets Conference to be held in Manchester in February, recent sponsors for which include; Ken Livingstone, Reg Race, Jo Richardson, Ernie Roberts, Geoff Bell (author of *A Troublesome Business*) and Michael O'Riordan, the general secretary of CPI.

Further information from Plastic Bullets Conference, Box 15, 164/6 Corn Exchange Buildings, Hanging Ditch, Manchester M3 4BN.

Labour Party

NORTHFIELD BY ELECTION

Why we say 'vote Labour'

By Phil Hearse and Valerie Coultas

ON 28 OCTOBER two crucial by-elections take place — in Peckham and Birmingham Northfield. But for socialists, the by-election in Northfield presents some problems. The Labour candidate, John Spellar, is a notorious right-winger who opposes all the socialist advances of recent years in the Labour Party. And he is being challenged by a Communist Party candidate, Birmingham CP secretary Pete Sheppard.

That Spellar is indeed a right winger of the worst sort is not in doubt. He once boasted to *Tribune* journalist Nigel Williamson that he was 'well to the right' of his union boss Frank Chapple. He was a founder of the Social Democratic Alliance, a precursor of the SDP which was expelled from the Labour Party for its intention to stand candidates against Labour.

Author of the witch-hunting document, 'The Mutation of Labour', he is on the steering committee of the right wing Campaign for a Labour Victory. He was censured by his local Bromley constituency Labour Party in 1980 for statements to the press 'calculated to produce a split in Bromley Labour Parties'; and he organised a meeting for Bill Rodgers in his local Labour club just days before Rodgers left the party.

Recently he has been an editor of the 'Democratic Socialist Bulletin' which bemoans the exit of the SDP from the Labour Party.

Rogers

Such credentials as these leave no doubt about Spellar's political views. He wants a Labour Party which is pro-capitalist with the bureaucracy firmly in control. This is natural from someone who is head of research in Frank Chapple's EETPU.

Spellar makes no secret that he is opposed to unilateral nuclear disarmament and opposed to

withdrawal from the Common Market. Ranged against Spellar, the Communist Party candidate Pete Sheppard has campaigned for unilateral nuclear disarmament and British withdrawal from the EEC, and has championed the struggle of the health workers.

In the by-election the CP has presented itself as the pro-working class, internationalist, unilateralist party. Why then do we say 'vote Labour'?

Bans

The tactics of socialists in elections have to be judged concretely. The two by-elections on 28 October will be a crucial test of the popularity of the Tory government, and will have a significant political impact. Birmingham Northfield is a marginal constituency, where Labour MP Ray Carter was ousted by a few hundred votes in the last election.

Whereas it is odds-on that Labour candidate Harriet Harman will win Peckham (she has a big lead in the opinion polls) a Labour victory is not at all certain in Northfield.

With a Tory government in power, and very confident, the question of whether it wins by-elections can become an important factor in establishing the morale of the contending political forces.

A vote for Labour in Northfield will be a vote against Tory monetarism and Thatcher's plans to dismantle the welfare state. It will be a class vote

against the Tory government, quite irrespective of the right wing politics of Spellar.

In this situation, the intervention of the Communist Party has the effect of disrupting class unity against the Tories. Its only conceivable result will be to win away a few hundred Labour votes, making a Tory victory more likely. This divisive tactic is utterly irresponsible; a cheap party building exercise at the expense of working class interests.

There is no doubt, of course, that the CP have been able to politically capitalise on Spellar's right wing line. The CP support the health workers unequivocally, whereas Spellar gave vigorous support to the EETPU's plans to introduce a BUPA private health scheme for some of its members.

The local CND have called a meeting of all the candidates on unilateralism, where the CP will be able, if the



John Spellar — 'well to the right of Frank Chapple'

other candidates turn up, to present themselves as the 'only unilateralist party'. And the CP have the strong backing of Longbridge convenor Jack Adams — the Longbridge plant is in the constituency.

Spellar has made himself even more unpopular with his refusal to let supporters of Militant canvass on his behalf, ensuring that all potential canvassers are 'vetted'.

If left wingers let themselves be drawn behind the campaign of the Communist Party they will fall into a trap prepared jointly by Spellar's right wing policies and the CP's sectarianism.

Socialists should judge what attitude to take towards this election by its overall national effects. Workers who vote Labour to defeat the Tories show a correct class instinct.

The Tories will be overjoyed by saving Northfield at this stage.

It will be interpreted as a vindication of Thatcher's anti-inflation policies and her 'Falklands spirit' national unity line.

If Labour win the election it will be their first by-election victory in a Tory-held seat since 1971. While not of course in any way decisive, two by-election victories will be a step on the road to a victory in the general election. That's why Socialist Challenge supporters will fight for a Labour victory in Northfield, while at the same time continuing to argue the case for socialist policies and opposition to the witch-hunt in the Labour Party.

Fighting for a Labour victory puts us in a better position to fight against the right wing, not a worse one. And if by any misfortune the CP were to actually lose the by-election for Labour, it would be a political gift to all those who hold the political views of John Spellar up and down the land.



6000 people marched through Liverpool last Saturday on the LPYS 'Jobs for Youth — Kick out the Tories' demonstration

BAD TASTE

BY GORMAG



Stop the Hanging of Kuttimani and Jegan — release all political prisoners.

Socialist Challenge publishes below a statement from the United Secretariat of the Fourth International calling for the release of political prisoners in Sri Lanka.

THE death sentence imposed by a Sri Lankan court on two young Tamil nationalists — Kuttimani and Jegan — who were tried under the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act is yet another in a long series of attacks on the Tamil nation by successive Sri Lankan governments. The oppression of Tamil speaking people over many decades resulted in the emergence of a movement calling for the establishment of a separate state of Eelam in their traditional homelands.

The continual harassment and virtual occupation of the Tamil areas by the state security forces as well as frequent racial pogroms unleashed on the Tamil speaking people resulted in the growth of a resistance movement which recognised the need for self-defence against state sponsored violence.

Kuttimani and Jegan have been singled out for execution in order to intimidate and terrorise those who support the right of self-defence and

advocate the right of self-determination by the Tamil nation in Sri Lanka.

The trial itself was an obvious frame up. They were denied the jury trial which is officially opened to every person charged with a serious crime in Sri Lanka. Moreover their convictions were entirely based on 'confessions' extracted while they were being held in an army camp and by means of torture.

At their trial witnesses gave detailed evidence of the manner they were tortured by the army and the police. They were repeatedly beaten, hung by their feet, metal rods inserted in their anus and forced to inhale choking

powder etc.

Even the trial judge, however, admitted that these youths had been held in a 'secluded and lonely place', without 'access to friends, relations or lawyers' and 'amongst armed and unarmed soldiers, without knowing how long they would be held in custody'.

He went on to say whether those facts themselves would not make the alleged statements of the accused inadmissible in evidence. But he concluded that the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act does not permit him to make that ruling.

Tamils in Sri Lanka

have been subjected to a long series of repressive measures. These began with the disenfranchisement of the 1.2 million plantation workers in 1948, and the imposition of Sinhala, the language of the majority, as the official language. In recent years the frequency and the intensity of anti-Tamil pogroms have increased. Twice within the last five years — in August 1977 and June to August 1981 — Tamil people have been brutally attacked and their property looted by racist mobs organised and encouraged by the ruling United National Party leaders.

The Revolutionary

Marxist Party, Sri Lankan section of the Fourth International, has consistently opposed the racist policies of successive capitalist governments in Sri Lanka and stands for the self-determination of the Tamil nation up to and including secession. Furthermore it defends the right of oppressed Tamil nation to take whatever steps necessary to defend themselves against racial violence.

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International condemns the death sentence imposed on Kuttimani and Jegan and calls upon the Sri Lankan government to stop the hanging immediately, to

release all political prisoners and to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The Tamil bourgeois parties and politicians such as the Tamil United Liberation Front, has been proved to be bankrupt in the face of the continued repression of Tamil speaking people also to have sacrificed the interest of Tamil masses to their narrow parliamentary ends.

People in Britain are urged to get their labour movement organisation to send telegrams to the Lanka Embassy demanding that these two young people shall not be hanged.

Germany's coalitions — Healey's dream

By Alan Freeman

'THE EMERGENCE of a Christian-Democrat/Liberal coalition in Bonn will put paid to any lingering doubts that West Germany will accept its share of the 572 cruise and Pershing missiles that NATO wishes to deploy in Western Europe next year'. With these words John Palmer of the *Guardian* explained as succinctly as possible why the Social Democratic — Free Democrat coalition in West Germany came crashing down last month after sixteen years in office.

The West German coalition's fall must have been on Michael Foot's mind when he addressed Labour's conference on 28 September. For some strange reason he kept talking about the 'SPD' instead of the 'SDP'. The SPD is the German Social Democratic Party, Labour's sister party in the Second International. The SDP is — well, we all know what the SDP is. What do the two parties have in common? Coalitions.

Threat

If Labour finds itself in a hung parliament after the general election, or even if it secures a majority but is then threatened with desertion, then Healey will argue, with Foot beside him: why not go into coalition with the SDP/Liberals, because at least it will keep Thatcher out?

What has the experience of the German SPD been in coalition? Not a very happy one. It took office in 1981 with over fifty percent of the vote and by autumn 1982 was showing 31 percent support in regional elections.

It demoralised its supporters by backing NATO in the teeth of hundreds of thousands of young demonstrators who have been trying to stop cruise missiles; its austerity policies have brought unemployment within reach of two million; it has cut unemployment benefits and real wages.

The German bourgeoisie judged that

the moment had come to ditch the Socialists — and what a wonderful demonstration of parliamentary democracy in action it was. The deed was done by a group of four people: the FDP ministers in the cabinet.

At their instigation a group of MPs representing at most five per cent of the German people were able to unseat a government elected by 53 percent of the voters! Moreover SPD leader Schmidt was unable even to force a new election: the Christian Democrats introduced a motion for a 'constructive vote of no confidence' which unseated Schmidt but did not oblige the incoming government to seek an immediate mandate.

Suicide

If Labour were in coalition with the SDP it would be subject to exactly the same manoeuvres — and you and I, if we relied on parliamentary action alone, wouldn't be able to do a thing about it.

Moreover the coalition was itself the instrument by which the SPD was induced to commit suicide. It fell when FDP economy minister Lambsdorff presented a 'dossier' demanding the reversal of everything the coalition had ever done — basically, the introduction of monetarism in Germany.

But in the last three years the SPD has been paving the road to such policies, approving stringent austerity budgets in 1982 and for 1983, often using the excuse that it had



Helmut Schmidt architect of defeat by policies of coalition

to keep the FDP in the coalition. As a result it demoralised its own voters, lost support and encouraged the German bosses' federations, through the FDP, to put the boot in.

All that has happened is that the bosses now want

to go farther, and they can't rely on the SPD because the demonstrations and resistance to austerity are starting to have an effect inside its ranks.

However, there is a good chance the manoeuvre can be made to

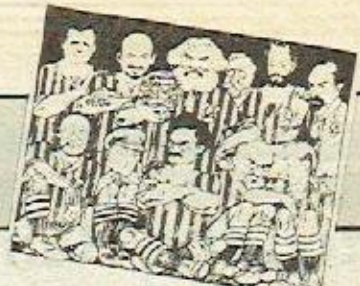
backfire. Already the SPD's support in the local Hesse Land elections has shot up as workers realise what the FDP-CDU government might have in store for them.

The GIM, a German revolutionary socialist group and the German sec-

tion of the Fourth International, has called for two measures to deal with the new threat: first, a campaign of demonstrations and extra-parliamentary protest around an action programme to save jobs and stop cruise missiles; second, a joint slate in the

elections from the Communists, socialists and the 'ecological party'.

Labour voters good cause to carefully at what is penning in Bonn: if Healey has his way, it be our turn next.



What is Trotskyism?

Stalin attacks permanent revolution

By John Ross
IN EARLIER ARTICLES in this series we saw how Marx first developed the theory of permanent revolution from the experience of the European revolutions of 1848. We also saw how one of the fundamental bases of this analysis, that the bourgeoisie no longer plays an historically progressive role, has been fully confirmed since.

But of course there lies a whole historical epoch between the time of the analysis of permanent revolution was first put forward by Marx and Engels, and the time of figures which are discussed such as Nasser and Khomeini.



ment at the time.

But on the second point Stalin was absolutely right as to what was at stake. The Russian Revolution of 1917 did confirm both Marx's views of 1848 and Trotsky's theory of 1905. Trotsky applied that analysis to world politics until the end of his life. As the United States revolutionary Joseph Hansen wrote in 1966, 'In tribute to Marx, who formulated the general idea, Trotsky named this theory, which permeates all his writings and guides all his activities from 1905 on, the theory of permanent revolution.'⁽⁶⁾

In the next weeks we will look at how this theory was developed by Trotsky and applied to Russia.

- (1) Trotsky — *History of the Russian Revolution Appendix 3*
- (2) Trotsky — *Permanent Revolution p32*
- (3) Trotsky Writings 1939-40 p55
- (4) Stalin — *On the Opposition p147*
- (5) Stalin — *On the Opposition p133*
- (6) Hansen — *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution p330*

August 1939, in an article entitled *Three Conceptions of the Russian Revolution*, 'It may be said that the whole of Stalinism, taken on the theoretical plane, grew out of the criticism of the theory of permanent revolution as it was formulated in 1905'.⁽³⁾

Stalin however put forward two fundamental charges against the theory of permanent revolution which have been repeated by his followers down to this day.

The first charge was that Trotsky 'underestimated the peasantry'. As Stalin wrote, 'We shall not dwell at length on Trotsky's position in 1905 when he "simply" forgot all about the peasantry as a revolutionary force.'⁽⁴⁾

The second charge was that Trotsky held that the Russian Revolution of 1917 had confirmed the theory of permanent revolution as he had put it forward in *Results and*

Prospects from 1905 onwards. Stalin wrote, 'The new Trotskyism does not deem it necessary to openly uphold the theory of "permanent" revolution. It "simply" asserts that the October Revolution fully confirmed the idea of the "permanent revolution".'⁽⁵⁾

As regards the first of these charges, that of 'underestimating the peasantry', it was simply a lie. Furthermore, as we shall discuss later, it was a ridiculous lie because Trotsky's position on the peasantry in Russia were actually widely circulated by the Bolsheviks themselves with full agree-

Highjacking is a nasty crime

By Bob Pennington

LIKE YOU READERS I am getting more and more worried about international terrorism and crimes like plane highjacking that are done for political ends.

A real shocker took place last week, when a sinister international mob 'nobbled' the pilot of a chartered plane on the West Indian island of Mustique.

The pilot left stranded a group of British journalists who had chartered the plane and whisked off a guy who is thought to be one of the up and coming young men in the 'Family'.

The extent of the influence of this mob, known to some as the 'royal mafia' can only be appreciated when it is known that the guy was helped to get on the plane by one inspector Geoffrey Padgeham and security men, who even wrestled with the journalists, who were trying to get on a plane their papers had paid for.

Even here the fix-up does not stop. Surely you would have expected those Fleet Street newspapers whose plane had been robbed, to demand that the conspirators be prosecuted for piracy. Again you would have thought London's new police boss — Sir Kenneth Newman, who I can reveal knows the name and address of the man — would have taken the SPG round to his pad and 'nicked' him.

But there was no clamour from Fleet Street. Sir Kenneth, like the airline pilot, the security men, inspector Padgeham and all the Fleet editors and owners are all in the pockets of the 'mob'.

When you set up an operation on that scale and 'fix' that many people, you have got real clout and the poor old law abiding citizens that the press keep speaking for, had better look out!

In this hundred and thirty years the history of the class struggle and of Marxist theory and politics are inseparably connected.

Nowhere is this more true than in the case of the theory of permanent revolution. At one time this theory of Marx and Engels, and its later development by Trotsky, was given its full prominence by revolutionaries.

Results and Prospects, the fundamental work in which Trotsky first developed at length the application of the theory of permanent revolution to Russia, was published by the Communist International in both Russian and other languages.

In the new introduction which he wrote in 1919 for the book Trotsky noted, 'The fact that it is possible for us now to re-issue without alteration this pamphlet written in 1906 and conceived in its fundamental lines already in 1904... (shows that) the final test of a theory is ex-

perience. Irrefutable proof of our having correctly applied Marxist theory is given by the fact that the events in which we are now participating, and even our methods of participating in them, were foreseen in their fundamental lines some 15 years ago.'⁽¹⁾

The first collected edition of Lenin's works, published during his lifetime, stated that Trotsky, 'even before the revolution of 1905 advanced the original and now especially famous theory of Permanent Revolution, asserting that the bourgeois revolution of 1905 would go directly over into a socialist revolution and prove the first of a series of national revolutions.'⁽¹⁾

As the degeneration of the Russian Revolution took place however a tremendous attack was launched by the rising bureaucracy on the theory of permanent revolution. As Trotsky wrote in

El Salvador revolutionaries launch new offensive

By Phil Hearse

GUERRILLAS of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) have launched a huge new offensive against the military dictatorship in El Salvador. The offensive was announced by Radio Venceremos and Radio Farabundo Marti in propaganda broadcasts which could be heard in the capital San Salvador.

During the offensive, which started at the beginning of last week, the FMLN revolutionaries captured two towns in Chalatenango province — Las Vueltas and Jicaro — both about 50 miles from the capital.

They also overran San Fernando and Torola in Morazan province, and are besieging the major government garrison in Perquin.

At the same time the FMLN launched a series of diversionary attacks in San Salvador itself, ambushing a national guard patrol leaving seven wounded and bombing electricity sub-stations throughout the capital — including one just two blocks from the presidential palace.

Radio Venceremos has warned people to stay off the national highways until Saturday since it intends to carry out concerted at-

tacks on military vehicles. Most crippling have been the FMLN attacks against electricity, water and telephone communications in the country. Last Friday 1,300,000 of the country's 4,800,000 people were without any of the basic services.

Radio Venceremos announced: 'Within the framework of our campaign against the Rightist and fascist armed forces high command we will continue to cut electric power and call on the people to take the necessary measures when electricity is off'.

In response to the offensive of the revolutionaries 5,000 of the junta's 'elite' troops have been thrown into the battle. Radio Venceremos claimed that in two days fighting 83 government soldiers had been killed and 116 captured. One Huey helicopter has been

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PUBLIC MEETING on the appointment of Sir Kenneth Newman. Wed 27 Oct at 7.30pm. Room 119, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton SW2. Speakers, J Underhay (TOM); J Rosenhead (BSSRS); Brixton Defence Campaign. Organised by S London TOM

NUJ women's conference. Sat 30 Oct. Kingsway Princeton College, Sidmouth St, WC1. Registration 50p.

CARL Conference Saturday 23 October 10-5pm.

County Hall London Details and delegates credentials from:

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PORT TALBOT: McConville's Newsagent, Station Road.

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PALESTINE DAY SCHOOL. Sat 23 Oct 12-6pm. University of London Union, Malet St, WC1.

Speakers from Palestine, Lebanon and Anti-Zionist Israelis. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign, c/o THIS, Oxford House, Derbyshire St, E2.

OUT NOW — 'The Degenerated Revolution — the origins and nature of the Stalinist States.' A new book from Workers Power and the Irish Workers Group. £2.00 plus 40p postage from Workers Power, BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX.

Neil Williamson IN MEMORIAM Friend, comrade and revolutionary. from his friends

CABLE TV:

Media made for monopolies

By Phil Hearse and Kathy Kirkham

LAST WEEK'S Hunt report on the introduction of cable television into Britain heralds a major change in the structure of the media. The technology of cable TV makes it very versatile — and absolutely tailor-made to reinforce the tight grip of big business on communications.

The Hunt report recommends the introduction of cable TV with virtually no restrictions of the kind which apply to the BBC and ITV. The list of things which are not controlled is formidable: no restriction on advertising time, no vetting of programmes or advertising, no requirement for any sort of balance or variety, no requirement to cater for minority tastes or to even pretend to put minority points of view, no rationing of films — no restrictions on anything.

Far from being some sort of 'liberation' of broadcasting from authoritarian controls, the net result will be an endless flood of trash and huge profits for the cable companies.

The experience of cable in the United States (where there are more than 15 million subscribers) and Canada shows the danger of unregulated cable TV.

Cable TV is what it sounds like — new television channels broadcast via overground or underground cables from a local broadcasting centre (the 'head end'), via trunk and feeder cables direct into the home.

Cable TV was invented to service hilly areas which found difficulty in receiving normal TV signals but the advantage soon realised was that a single cable can carry over a hundred channels. In the USA most systems have 12 channels but new ones must have a capacity of over 20.

At its inception cable

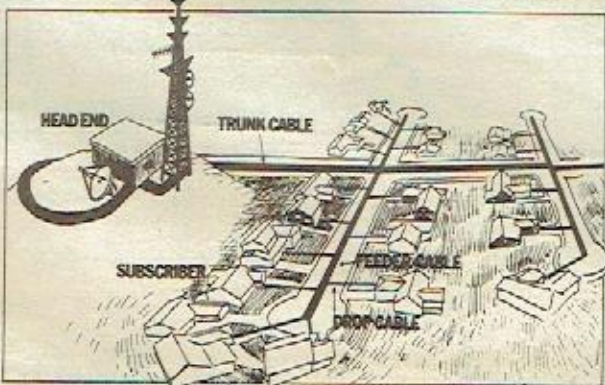
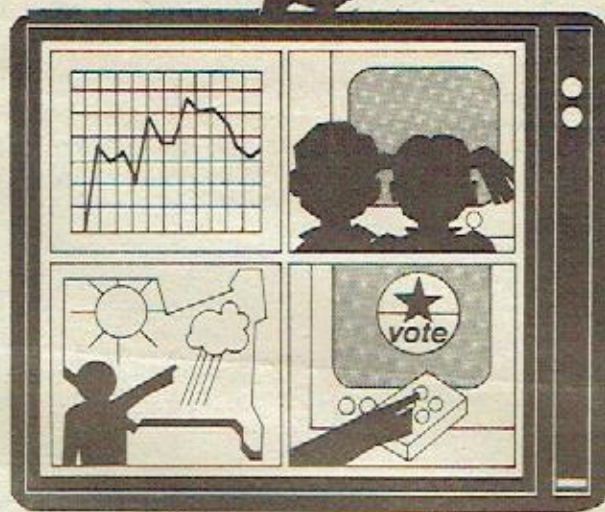
TV was considered a 'local' service because of the necessity to relay TV programmes via the head end. Many hopes were therefore raised that cable, being locally networked, could offer local variety and access for local interest and community groups. The franchise for cable networks in the US is controlled by the local authorities, and generally they insisted on 'access' clauses in the contracts. Because of the smallness of many of the local systems, advertisers did not express a great interest.

Change

An important technological change altered this general picture, however. Gradually the industry realised that by transmitting from satellites to the head ends, the cable system could be linked up nationwide. Cable thus is gradually losing its local character and becoming a system of nationally networked programmes. This is leading both to a steep rise in advertising interest, and the edging out of local access.

Another result is that cable systems are gradually being taken over by the big communications monopolies.

Cable systems are extremely expensive to build. It requires huge capital resources to produce the programmes and broadcast them via satellite.



Therefore a process of company concentration is going on with companies like American Express, Warner Brothers and the Westinghouse Broadcasting Corporation becoming the field leaders. Control is in fewer and fewer (capitalist) hands, and the priorities and values of cable networks reflect that fact.

This is especially serious since cable has the potential to become the major means by which we receive news, information, education and conduct

business transactions. By linking a pocket size keypad to your TV set, and by linking the head end to computers, cable enables the viewer to vote in televised opinion polls, order goods from shops, ask for bank statements and so forth.

Virtually any sort of information can be broadcast to the viewer by cable. One recent innovation on one of the United States' biggest cable networks was a soap opera, the story of which was controlled by opinion polls among the

viewers. At key points the viewers would be asked questions like: 'Does this show now need a) more sex b) more violence c) an admixture of both?'

Home burglar and fire alarms can be fitted to cable TV, and two-way terminals will enable conferences to be held via cable.

The Hunt Report now proposes to have no restrictions whatever on this extremely versatile technology. However, the real restriction on cable will be that it is extremely expensive. The idea of 'free' cable stations, like Italy's free socialist radio stations, is a non-starter.

In the United States

there has been a long battle over access to cable TV; a whole 'access movement' has developed in the localities. It is gradually being defeated by the stranglehold of big business. For example in New York, there are 37 channels on the cable network, and 36 of them are given over to programmes made outside the area. All the rest — public information, education etc. — is crammed into the one remaining channel. Local community programming gets two hours per week.

But the Hunt Report makes no reference to such considerations. Cable will be handed over to the monopolies lock, stock

and barrel.

The response of the established TV channel and in particular the BBC has been very weak. Alasdair Milne, director general of the BBC, made the quite extraordinary statement that the Hunt Report 'had gone a long way' to meeting the BBC's fears — apparently on the basis that cable TV won't get the big sporting events like the cup final!

The Tory motto 'private industry knows best' is being applied to cable TV with a vengeance. The monopolies, and in particular, the big American monopolies, will have field day.

DEBATING SOCIALISM 23-24 October

JUST ONE WEEK to go to the International Debating Socialism weekend. You can hear Ernest Mandel on the international monetary crisis, a debate between Bea Campbell and Valerie Coultas on women's liberation, Ken Livingstone on the lessons of Labour's GLC, Frances Morrell and Alan Freeman on the new Labour left, and much more!

This weekend event, packed with discussions on a programme for the British crisis, will be held on 23/24 October at Kingsway Princeton College, near Kings Cross in London. For just £4 you can attend all the sessions, or spend £2.50 to attend for one day. Snacks will be available, and a creche which must be booked in advance.

This is an educational event you can't afford to miss. Fill in the order form below for your tickets.

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Ernest Mandel on the international monetary crisis

Lunch Break 1-2pm
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a) Ken Livingstone, Hilary Wainwright & Tessa van Gelderen on the lessons of Labour's GLC
b) Bernadette McAliskey on the Irish revolution
c) John Ross & Duncan Hallas debate entrism and the Labour Party
d) Ernest Mandel on Poland and workers' self-management

Break 4-4.30pm
4.30-7 Plenary session in main hall
Frances Morrell, Labour Briefing & Alan Freeman discuss the new Labour left

Sunday 24 October
9.30-10 Registration
10-12 Plenary session in main hall
John Ross on the British political crisis

Lunch Break 12-1pm
1-3 Workshops
a) Pat Hickey, Alan Thornett & John Deason on the tasks for socialists in the unions
b) John Harrison on the British economic disaster
c) Paul Gilroy on black crime and law and order
d) Julian Atkinson on Labour's youth movements
e) Mike Davis on Exterminism and the Cold War
3-5 Plenary session in main hall
Bea Campbell & Valerie Coultas discuss Sweet Freedom and women's liberation

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Abortion rights under attack - from left and right

By Jude Arkwright

THE IRISH GOVERNMENT is committed to holding a referendum before the end of this year which would, in the words of its supporters, demand an amendment to the constitution to 'guarantee the right to life of the foetus from the moment of conception'. In other words abortion could become classified as murder — never mind the right to life and to a decent life of the mother. Abortion could be illegal under any circumstances.

The irony is that abortion is already illegal in Ireland and all political parties are opposed to decriminalisation.

Women are again the pawns in the game of politicians and the church. Garrett Fitzgerald of Fine Gael originally suggested the referendum and Charles Haughey of Fianna Fail jumped in to back it in an attempt to curry favour with the Catholic Church.

The referendum could be passed since ninety seven per cent of the population are Catholic. But that doesn't mean it

reflects what women want and need — it only means that the Catholic Church says they need. Some 3,500 Irish women go to the backstreets despite what the church tells them and undoubtedly feel guilt and misery as well as going through unnecessary physical suffering.

Bernadette McAliskey spoke to a packed meeting at Liberty Hall in Dublin to launch a campaign to get the referendum dropped. The campaign will try to stop this reactionary action and get women to fight it. It can help Irish women to demand their

rights and not walk around in fear and trembling at the edicts of the Catholic Church.

The power of the church is also weighing down on women in France and this time it is a Socialist Government which is bowing before it. This government had promised before and after coming into office that it would reimburse women who had paid for their abortions before ten weeks. Not a huge concession, but a step toward ensuring that rich and poor women alike have the right to determine their lives.

Ethics

On 2 August Pierre Bérégovoy, Minister of Social Security announced that this promise could not be met. He claimed this was for 'ethical reasons' and reasons of respect for religious families.

What about respect for

women? and for their right to control their own lives and make their own decisions? Sixty-seven per cent of French people in a recent poll think reimbursement should be made. No respect for their views is shown. But the opinions of the Catholic hierarchy are widely reported by the media.

We must give our support for women in these countries where the forces of reaction are on the offensive. Petitions and postcards in support of the anti-amendment campaign in Ireland are available from NAC at 374, Grays Inn Road, London WC1 — watch this space for details of solidarity action.

Their fate is our fate eventually and their struggle is ours — we must stop once and for all the control of the Catholic Church and the politicians who try and dominate our lives.

We must fight for all women's right to choose.

Socialist Challenge

For a free, united Ireland

By Brigid O'Mally

IN THE RUN UP to the 20 October elections for a new Assembly in the six counties James Prior, Tory Minister for Northern Ireland, promised that the Assembly will be able to solve the problems of the economy! Considering what the Tories have done to Britain with record unemployment and the wholesale destruction of industry there is a big credibility gap somewhere.

What is really at stake is that British imperialism through the new Assembly is trying to strengthen the division of Ireland, strengthen the power of the Loyalist population at the expense of the nationalist Catholic minority; and prepare the way for a new 'Stormont'.

Peoples Democracy, the spearhead of the '60s Civil Rights Movement and a revolutionary socialist organisation affiliated to the Fourth International ran two candidates in the election, Fergus O'Hare and John McNulty, after first trying to win the anti-imperialist forces to organise a boycott of the elections. Stating that PD considered the key question was unity of the mass movement that brought down the old Stormont, PD promised that its candidates would:

- refuse to take their seats in the Assembly
- campaign for the holding of elections to an All-Ireland Assembly representative of all the Irish people.

● campaign for the forming of an anti-imperialist government of workers and small farmers to lead the fight for British withdrawal, to win genuine independence for the country and create a real peace based on democracy rather than repression.

For O'Hare and McNulty, the fight for a united Ireland is also a fight for jobs, decent housing and proper living standards. But calling on the working class not to wait for a united Ireland they promised to fight for:

- the creation of tens of thousands of jobs by shortening the working week to 35 hours without loss of pay
- one-third of all industrial jobs to be set aside

as a quota for catholic workers to offset past discrimination

● the demolition of all slum housing and a massive public works programme to provide decent housing for all

● building militant rank and file organisations in the trade unions and communities to force the implementation of this programme.

PD rejects the claim that 'majority rule' in the six counties is democratic Loyalist rule. It argues, has created the most backward, reactionary society in Europe. Opposing all forms of repression, be they political, economic, social or sexual, PD calls for:

- the right for free nursery provision
- an end to the scandal of low wages for women workers and equal opportunity in employment
- positive steps to end sexual harassment

People's Democracy have used the election campaign to help build a united mass movement to bring about a united Ireland. Help them by contributing to their election fund.

Donations to: PD account no. 03514129 with the Allied Irish Bank, 159-160 Andersonstown Road, Belfast BT11 9DU; or PD, Connolly Bookshop, 6 Avoca Park, Belfast 11.

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People's Democracy

FERGUS O'HARE



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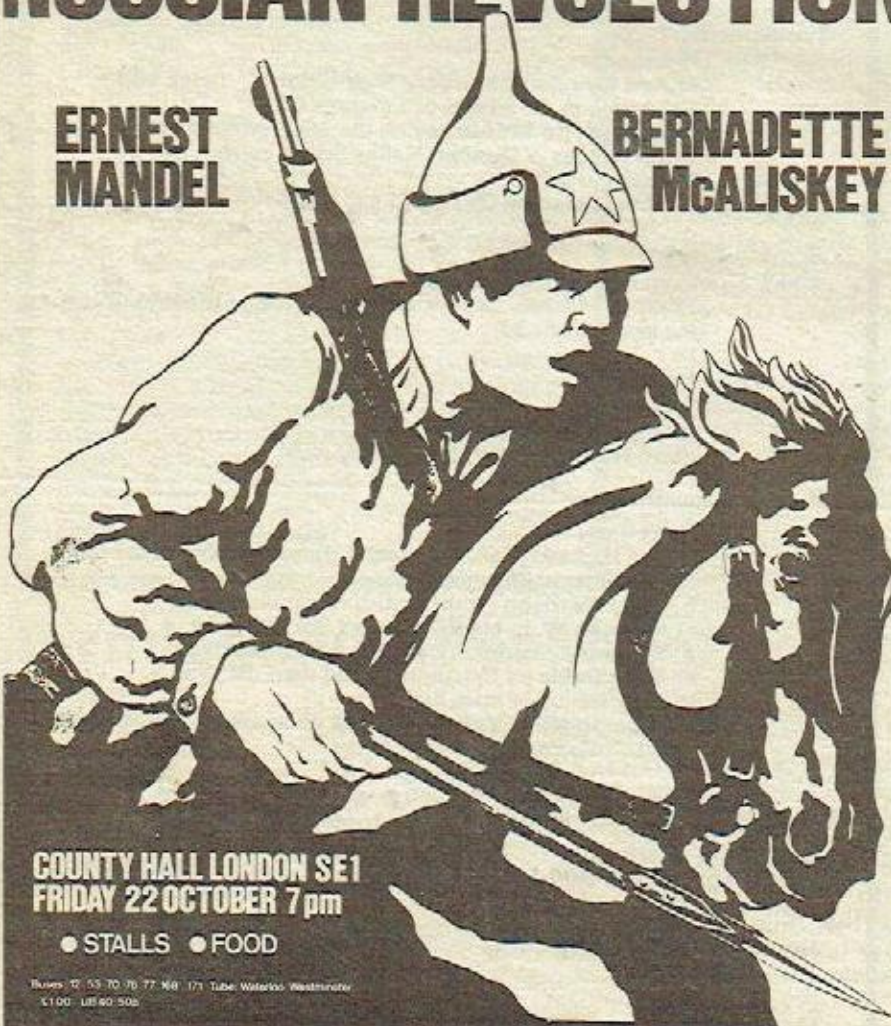
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