

Socialist Organiser

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20p



PHOTO: ANDREW WIARD (REPORT)

The miners have defeated the Tories: now...

Cuts: a conference to organise the fightback

Socialist Organiser
Campaign for Democracy
in the Labour
Movement

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Socialist Organiser

DAYSCHOOL:
BUILDING A
MARXIST LEFT WING

10.30am-4.30pm,
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the Trade Union and
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N22.

US: hands off El Salvador!

from the El Salvador
Solidarity Campaign

"Some soldiers and Orden
people gathered children and
babies together, I saw them
throw children into the air
and then slash them with
long machetes. They cut
their heads off and slit their
bodies in two." One soldier
told the mother of a child,
"We are killing the children
of subversion".

The above is an eye-wit-
ness account of a massacre in
May last year of 600 peas-
ants in El Salvador carried
out by the armies of El
Salvador and Honduras as
well as the right-wing para-
military organisation Orden.

Recently there has been a

lot of noise from Reagan and
his friends about foreign
involvement in the internal
affairs of El Salvador.

In El Salvador itself the US
is landing ten Hercules trans-
port aircraft every day
carrying both weapons and
advisers. The US has also
established a military head-
quarters separate from the
embassy to coordinate
counter-insurgency strategy
and have sent a team of US
foreign policy advisers to
the El Salvador Foreign Of-
fice to coordinate internation-
al affairs.

In the Central American
region the USA has been
heavily arming the military

continued on p.8

Break collaboration!

Benn: Labour must cut the ties

by Martin Thomas

THEY USED to spit in our
faces. They used to tell us
that we would just have to
learn about 'economic reali-
ty'.

Not now. Three days of
strike action in the coal-
fields were enough to hum-
ble the Tories. And a few
days later Tory minister
John Biffen admitted:

"What we have seen de-
monstrated over the past
week is the capacity of cer-
tain sections of organised
labour to exercise an extra-
Parliamentary authority..."

By calling the Tories' bluff, the miners saved their jobs. They showed that other organised workers can save their jobs by direct action, too — at Linwood, at BL, and at Firth Brown, for example.

They tamed the Tories, and now the whole labour movement must keep them on the run.

What will the Tories and the bosses try to do now?

Serious capitalist opinion was remarkably unanimous about the surrender to the miners. The Financial Times did a survey of top businessmen; the magazines and newspapers commented.

Nearly all agreed that Thatcher had no choice but a 'sensible retreat'. Most also agreed that the Tories' economic strategy is in ruins.

The new subsidy for the Coal Board comes after pay outs to British Steel and BL — forced on the Tories not by the workers in those industries but by the bosses

themselves.

After laying waste the livelihoods of thousands of workers, the Tories have come up against the fact that their free-enterprise superstitions have no more power to revive the modern highly-integrated, highly-statised capitalist economy than medieval guild regulations. A U-turn of sorts has been forced on them.

But their 'sensible retreat' is only a retreat to another path of attack on the working class. They must rely more and more on the letter A of the capitalist economic alphabet — push down wages in order to revive profits. The six per cent limit in the public sector is a first attempt.

On this front too, like on jobs, the Tories can be beaten.

The water workers were offered 7.9% as a 'final offer'. Then 10% as a 'final final offer'. When water workers started striking, the offer became 12.3% — a 'final final final' formula.

If the water workers now reject this 12.3%, recommended to them by their union leaders, then direct action can win them more again.

But don't underestimate the Tories.

In a straight fight, 200,000 miners, with support from the labour movement, can defeat the Tories.

A general mobilisation of the entire labour movement could beat back the whole Tory offensive.

BRING DOWN THE TORIES

But the Tories know that. Before the 1979 election they decided they should duck confrontations with stronger organised groups of workers (initially, at least), and start instead by beating down less well-placed groups. Steelworkers, BL workers, and civil service workers were the groups they mentioned in their 1979 plans.

The strength of the labour movement lies in mobilisation, solidarity, confidence, momentum. The strength of the Tories lies in the entrenched power of the state apparatus and management, and in the grinding pressure of the economic slump.

the Tories' cuts.

This collaboration should be broken. The labour movement should insist that trade union leaders stop sitting on joint committees and boards with the Tories and the bosses; that Labour councils defy the cuts and rent rises; and that Labour MPs start a policy of systematic obstruction of the Tories' work in Parliament.

Instead of collaborating with the Tories, perhaps vainly hoping to nudge them the right way, the labour movement should be rallying its ranks for action.

The breaking-off of collaboration would turn the Tories' retreat into headlong flight. It would weaken the government sufficiently that the next major struggle or crisis could bring it down.

And a campaign to break labour movement collaboration with the Tories will also be a campaign to make the movement really independent from the bosses' state — from the whole machinery which uses the 'labour lieutenants of capital' as the cogwheels of capitalist policy.

It will be a campaign to make sure that we have leaders who are really accountable to the rank and file, rather than being more at home in the boardrooms and corridors of power.

It will help prepare the labour movement to bring down the Tories — and replace them with a government really accountable to the working class.

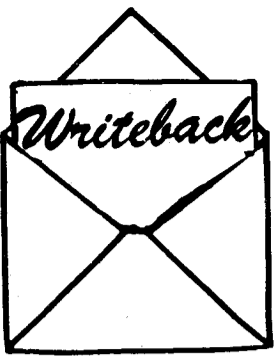
I SEE no point in the trade union movement continuing to involve itself in this Government's policy.

The time has come for the labour movement to disengage itself from this Government, and not to have general secretaries on nationalised industry boards busy selling off what is profitable and closing down what is not profitable.

The labour movement should disengage itself from giving support to a Government, and hence legitimacy to a policy which is fundamentally hostile to Labour and fundamentally hostile to the interests of this country.

If there is a change of government, as there will be, if any effort is to be made in the short run, the preparatory work must begin now.

TONY BENN
15 January



Write back to Socialist
Organiser, c/o 214
Sickert Court, London
N1 2SY.

AFTER THE SPEECHES....

WHILE all socialists should welcome the initiative of the Labour Party National Executive Committee in calling the tremendous demonstrations against unemployment in Liverpool (November 29) and Glasgow (February 21) we should also be aware of certain dangers.

The NEC should not allow the vitally necessary fight against the Tories to be dominated and derailed by the rhetoric of the likes of Michael

Foot and Clive Jenkins (the main speakers at the Glasgow rally).

Foot has huge support among the workers looking to the Labour Party for a lead in the fight against the Tories, and who came to the Liverpool and Glasgow marches, but he is attempting to turn the movement away from a militant fight for the right to work into the blind alley of waiting for the next Labour government. At the same

time, of course, he is attempting to reverse the democratic reforms won by Labour's rank and file.

More and more marches around vague anti-Tory slogans can be used by the fake-lefts and the right wing to divert attention away from a real fight for jobs (involving occupations, industrial action, Labour councils refusing to carry out cuts or rent and rate increases, etc.), and away from the NEC's

failure to lead such a fight.

Massive demonstrations are an important means of expressing working-class anger and solidarity, and they also provide a good focus for campaigning activity. We must be careful that the Labour leadership is not allowed to use them to dissipate militancy rather than to utilise it.

ANDY DIXON,
Liverpool.

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EEC withdrawal: it must be part of our programme

ARTHUR BOUGH (SO 31) and Simon Temple (SO 35) are wrong when they claim that the socialist position on the EEC should be the same now as in the 1970s, and that to support withdrawal from the EEC is to support the view that socialism will be legislated into existence by Parliament rather than achieved by the direct efforts of working people.

Britain outside the EEC could be a progressive alternative to Britain inside the EEC if such withdrawal were to be accomplished by a left wing Labour government or workers' government (not a socialist government), as part and parcel of a programme involving widespread nationalisations and state controls, which was the product of working class pressure and which reinforced direct working class activity.

Fact

We should be raising the possibility of such a government while at the same time pointing to the fact that its measures and indeed its very existence would produce a strong

capitalist backlash so that such a government could only be unstable.

Steer

Such a demand finds resonance with workers today. It helps socialists to steer between the twin sectarian hazards of *Militant* — the next step forward will be the full implementation by a Labour Gov-

ernment of a complete socialist transformation (the working class vanishes as an active creator of socialism) — and *Socialist Worker* — a Labour Government is really irrelevant (although demanded in token fashion at elections); socialism will come through a sudden insurrection once the SWP has enough members. (The importance of Parliament as a stimulator and legitimiser of direct action vanishes).

Both Simon and Arthur seem to underestimate the importance of such a government in carrying the struggle forward. They seem to me to stray towards the *Socialist Worker* position. We need both Parliamentary activity and direct action.

Right

If we do accept the 'work-

ers' government' slogan, then John McIlroy (SO 34) is right when he argues that we should raise the question concretely and as part of a united front with the nationalist and reformist left. He is also right to point out that there is all the difference in the world between a one-off 'Yes-No' referendum and a withdrawal demand as a *consequential* part of a wider programme.

The EEC may be trivial

to Simon. It isn't to Tony Benn, the left MPs, and their thousands of supporters with whom we should be working. Raised with these people as a secondary demand, it is useful as a means of cutting through bluff and evasion while at the same time encouraging unity in action.

JACKIE ANTHONY,
Manchester 19.

Zero per cent or the sack

UNTIL February 20th I was employed as a colourist/laboratory technician at a plastics factory.

Since it is a small non-union company, a handful of us, representing the various sections of workers, met with company directors to negotiate this year's annual pay rise. Much to our surprise, management offered no pay increase at all, and called for '30% more effort to help us pull through the recession'.

I said I would call for an overtime ban and a work-to-rule. Management replied by saying the alternative

would be to pay a 10% rise but make two lower-paid workers redundant. Our line was for a rise in excess of 10% without redundancies, but management insisted that it was to be one or the other.

Finally, at a meeting of workers' representatives and management to which I was not admitted, management announced there would be a 10% pay rise, but they would hold back redundancies for at least three to four weeks.

The feeling of most of the workers at this time was that management had in some way backed down,

but this was not the case. The 10% rise, over the year, will turn out to be an 8 to 10% loss; but most workers were happy to have an increase at all and still have a job.

Meanwhile, I had been campaigning for the setting up of a GMWU branch at the factory, and for equal pay for workers who were taken on in 1980 and employed at a reduced rate.

On February 13th, four days after management promised to hold back redundancies for at least three or four weeks, I was informed that I was being made redundant.

Their justification of this was that the jobs they were doing or had in the 'pipeline' did not need my skills as a colourist and quality control supervisor. This is bullshit! I am the only person in the factory, apart from the management, able to do my job.

This is not an isolated case. If Edwardes can get away with blatant victimisation and intimidation at Leyland under the noses of the TGWU and the AUEW, just think what bosses in non-union firms are getting away with all the time.

We must fight for 100% trade unionism. We must

make it trade union 'law' for every company or association offering employment to have a union run democratically by the workers, independent of the state, and affiliated to the Labour Party.

We must campaign for full pay at 16 and during training periods, with equal pay for women and all workers employed to do the same job.

These simple policies would help bring an end to scab labour, victimisation, and the use of young people as cheap labour.

BOB TOWERS,
Liverpool.

How to avoid another Chile

I WOULD like to make a number of points about Vladimir Derer's reply to John O'Mahony in SO 35.

1. Vladimir Derer appears to ascribe to John O'Mahony — unjustifiably — a spontaneist conception. He states, 'there is no direct causal relationship between the undoubtedly hierarchical features of the workers' organisations and the fact that their leaders eventually jettison socialist goals'. True, but I cannot see where John O'Mahony says there is.

The point made by John O'Mahony — that for the Second International 'day to day activity came to be everything, the goal nothing' — is not that we should therefore abandon the idea of building a working-class party (as for example some of the supporters of the 'Fragments' appear to believe), leaving everything to the masses to spontaneously discover socialism.

It is that if socialism is seen as being brought about by gradually building a well-oiled machine, which goes out to win votes on the basis of taking workers' consciousness as it is, then compromises and ultimately betrayals of socialist principle will follow. Socialism will only be built on the basis of the direct action of the working class, and this direct action needs a socialist party committed not just to building a bigger better machine or winning more votes than the Tories in the election, but to defending

socialist principles, outlining the line of march, and resisting pressure even from the working class to compromise its principles.

If we were to accept comrade Derer's argument that we can only organise people around those demands that they are already prepared to support, we would end up with a party which reflected the racism, sexism, and all the other reactionary tendencies which exist within the working class and which it is our duty to combat.

2. Comrade Derer argues that the experience of post-war Germany has thrown doubt on the belief that soviets are the natural form of organisation of the revolutionary working class. He does not say anything about the creation of similar bodies in Hungary in 1956, in France in 1968, or Poland within the last 12 months.

3. Comrade Derer speaks with some disdain about the 'extra-parliamentary activities organised by sectarian or semi-sectarian political groups...'. But however much one might disagree with the political positions adopted by the ANL, for example, one has to admit that this body, organised by one of these sectarian groups, did succeed in building a mass movement to oppose the fascists. What was wrong with the ANL was not that it was extra-parliamentary, but that its politics were inadequate.

4. Comrade Derer does not anywhere in his reply answer John O'Mahony's question about how he would ensure that another Chile did not occur. All we are told is that the presence of 'hard men' behind Tony Benn would make it more likely that any British Pinochets would end up as Kornilovs.


But comrade Derer forgets that Kornilov was defeated

not by the hard men of the Bolshevik Party but the tens of thousands of workers and peasants standing behind the Bolsheviks. He forgets to tell us that it was the self-activity of those same workers and peasants in the months between February and October which allowed the Bolsheviks to take over the power.

ARTHUR BOUGH,
Stoke.

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A road to left unity?

GIVEN THE general political agreement that exists in the platforms of Socialist Organiser and the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement, and the recent joint work that has taken place between the two organisations, I am somewhat surprised that as yet there has been no formal approach to the CDLM with regard to it becoming a co-sponsor of SO along with the SCLV.

I believe that such a step would be beneficial to SO's perspective of helping to build a broad revolutionary class struggle tendency within the Labour Party and the trade unions; and, in a more general context, the organisation of a broad revolutionary vanguard around a political platform similar in nature to that upon which SO and the CDLM are presently constituted, can provide an invaluable tool in the struggle to create a mass revolutionary party on the basis of a reconstructed Fourth International.

In so far as it would base itself on a minimally necessary programme of action for the labour movement and at all times seek to further, within a broader united front orientation, joint work between the various groupings that exist on the British far left, such a vanguard could

become a real forum for parity, providing both an audience and a testing ground for the theories and policies of the different groupings and individuals involved.

In immediate terms, I believe that the mere fact of a 'unification' between the forces of the SCLV and the CDLM could have major repercussions both in terms of opening the road to new perspectives and in relation to other groupings such as the IMG. I personally hope that this step will be taken.

STEVE HALL,
Leigh.



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Black protest invades Fleet Street silence

by Rachel Lever

'THIRTEEN dead, nothing said'. The slogan on the New Cross Massacre march summed up the anger of a community.

The Queen and Mrs. Thatcher had sent messages of sympathy about the Dublin disco fire. The thirteen black teenagers who burned to death in Deptford didn't merit such attention.

When a small bomb went off outside a Minister's house in 1972, injuring no-one, police swooped on hundreds of leftwingers for questioning. In Deptford, no such sweep of organised racists has been carried out. And the police are still 'open minded' about there being a racist motive, although there have been several murderous attacks on black people in the same neighbourhood in the past few months.

The National Front, echoed by some Tories such as Jill Knight, has explicitly attacked West Indian parties, such as the fatal one in New Cross to celebrate Yvonne Ruddock's sixteenth birthday. Yvonne and her brother Paul, and eleven other teenagers, died as the house turned into a firebomb in a matter of minutes.

Anger was heightened by police statements that the fire might have been started by a black person. John La Rose, Chairperson of the Massacre Action Committee, commented: 'If a synagogue was burned down, no-one would have the nerve to suggest it had been done by a Jew.'

Up to ten thousand people joined the march, with a core of about 7,000 who went from New Cross to Hyde Park, to bring the message of anger from the

black community into the bastions of white bourgeois power in Fleet Street, the Law Courts, and the opulence of the West End.

The march was unlike the

average white left demonstrations that snake along the side of the road surrounded by the traffic. For much of the long route from New Cross into central

London it went in columns of twelve or more, taking over most of the road. As it roared up Fleet Street, shouting 'Murder in Deptford. Silence in Fleet

Street', everyone there must have felt that, if only for a brief few minutes, power had shifted to the people on the streets.

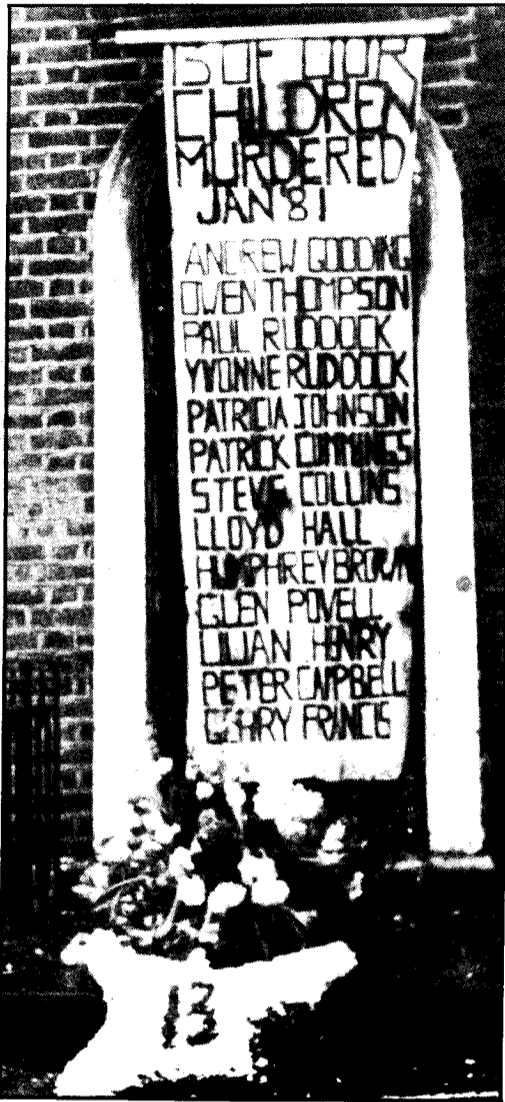
Stewards barred the way into shops and chippies along the way. 'Thirteen people died: we're going to march with dignity.' Three young lads with beer bottles were told to leave them on the ground and rejoin the march. They obeyed.

But as the march came up to the river, it met with a barrier of police. Riot shields, ambulances, SPG, horses and the drone of a helicopter overhead all created an atmosphere of confrontation.

The sequence of events after that isn't clear, but undoubtedly it was the show of aggression from the police which stoked up the anger of some to boiling point. And the press, which would have given the march a few column inches on page four if there had been no 'incidents', was able to go to town the next day with its stereotype of a black riot complete with looting and injured policemen.

The fascist National Front has called a march for Saturday 7th March — to go past the house where 13 black youths were killed.

The Anti-Nazi League has called a counter-demonstration, assembling 10.30am at Clifton Rise, near New Cross Station. Be there!



SPAIN: WHO SAVED DEMOCRACY?

by Alexis Carras

It is five years since the death of Franco, five years in which bourgeois democracy has been established and strengthened in Spain.

Yet the events of the last week, when Civil Guards led by Col. Tejero seized the Parliament, show that fascism retains powerful positions in the armed forces.

The coup was not simply an attempt by a disgruntled fringe of authoritarians to reimpose the glories of Franco's legacy on the backs of the working class.

However comical Colonel Tejero was, with his moustache and three-cornered hat this clown undoubtedly had much sympathy for his actions in Spain's military elite.

In the southern city of Valencia, General Milans de Bosch imposed martial order on the town and brought the troops out onto the streets. General Avandas, a close adviser to the King, seems to have been the main strategist of the coup. Tejero was expecting him to march into

the Cortes and proclaim military rule over the country.

But the coup failed abysmally. In the press the acclaim for King Juan Carlos, as the 'saviour' of Spain's fledgling democracy, has reached ecstatic levels.

Yet the real deterrent was the Spanish working class. Even before the death of Franco they were shaking the 40-year old dictatorship to its very core. The strengthening working class organisation in the last five years would make any attempt to reimpose military rule extremely dangerous for the bourgeoisie at a time when it has managed to achieve political stability with the enthusiastic backing of the reformist workers' parties (so far).

A military coup with all the dangers of a civil war, would further weaken Spain's already vulnerable economy and indefinitely freeze entry into the EEC, the main orientation of the Spanish bourgeoisie since 1976.

Yet the effect of the coup has been temporarily to shift Spanish politics further to the

Right. 1½ million marched in Madrid, and 300,000 in Barcelona, but the Communist Party and Socialist Party seem to have become the most fervent advocates of the monarchy.

A right-wing administration under Sotelo has received its Parliamentary majority. And the King has warned the opposition parties not to rock the boat too much and to leave any purging of the army up to him, so as not to antagonise the armed forces!

The political wing of the Basque separatist movement ETA has declared an unconditional ceasefire. (However the military wing of ETA has continued its bombing operations).

After the coup, the King gave a warning which brutally showed up the illusions of the left parties. He had stretched his authority to the limit, he said, and 'would not be able to' stop another coup. In other words — a more serious coup attempt would now get the King's support.

New Zealand strike to free pickets

by Martin Thomas

NEW Zealand workers have been fighting their own country's equivalent of the Prior clampdown on picketing.

A mass strike wave, bringing in 50,000 workers (New Zealand's total population is only 3 million) developed after February 24th in response to arrests of pickets. The strikers declared that they would not return to work until the pickets were freed from jail and the Trespass Law, under which they were arrested, was amended to exempt pickets.

As we go to press (Tuesday 3rd), there are reports that the New Zealand Federation of Labour has called on the strikers to go back on the basis of no more than 'discussions' with the government. The rank and file response to this return-to-work call is not yet clear.

The workers were arrested during a mass picket at Auckland airport, where Air New Zealand ground engineers were on strike over pay. The engineers' union leader, Jim Butterworth, and five other trade unionists, declared they would refuse to pay fines, and stay in jail until the

charges were lifted: and engineering workers and others, including 20,000 in the country's key meat industry, struck.

The National Party (right-wing) government of Robert Muldoon has been helped in its stand against the strikers by the Liberal-Country Party Australian government of Malcolm Fraser, which sent military planes to move strike-bound passengers and goods.

This move was also a blow against the strike in Australia of Qantas airline cabin crews, who are demanding better manning on new planes.

Socialist Organiser IRELAND

By Bruce Robinson

Bobby Sands, the Commanding Officer of the Provisional prisoners in the H-Blocks, has been on hunger strike since March 1st.

New hunger strike begins

The renewal of the hunger strike is a result of the complete breakdown in the agreement reached by the prison authorities and the prisoners last December which provided for a gradual change in the prison regime that should have led to the eventual satisfaction of most of the prisoners' demands.

At the same time more than 400 prisoners have called off the 'dirty protest' though they will still refuse to wear prison clothes.

They have said they are doing this in order to focus attention on the hunger strike.

The way the new hunger

strike has been organised is clearly aimed to test out the level of support for the prisoners in Ireland, and to test out the response of the Tory government. However there is a danger that the new campaign will not reach the level of the first, and that Bobby Sands will die without forcing the Thatcher government to implement the agreement it made in December.

Socialists in Britain have a duty to initiate and support actions to back up the hunger strike. Bobby Sands cannot take on the British state on his own. His chances of winning depend on us.

The TUC's gag law

by Bruce Robinson

The TUC is threatening to expel the seven Trades Councils (Tameside, Todmorden, Wear Valley, Hackney, Spennymoor, Salford and Islington) which have so far supported a conference on Ireland called by the Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act campaign.

In 1976 the TUC introduced 'Model Rule 14' forbidding trades councils to affiliate to bodies whose policies were not in line with those of the TUC. They forced acceptance of the rule by threatening to disaffiliate trades councils that refused to accept it.

used to accept it.

This rule has been used above all to deter any discussion of Ireland which does not fit in with the TUC's support for the non-existent 'Better Life for All' campaign. Last year Tameside Trades Council was disaffiliated for organising a conference on Ireland and now the TUC want to do the same thing on a wider scale.



The TUC have started a campaign of disaffiliations on the issue of Ireland because they are embarrassed by any

support for the Republican struggle and because they feel it is an unpopular issue in the labour movement (in this they have been helped by the conference organisers' inept talk of 'bringing the Irish war to Britain').

But the TUC will try to use the same bureaucratic methods to silence opposition to other aspects of their policy. We must fight to establish both the principle of free speech within the labour movement (except for open racists and fascists) and to fight for a policy of opposition to Britain's presence in Ireland.

A backdoor assault on abortion rights

by Jo Thwaites

YET another attack on abortion rights has been quietly creeping through the back door in Parliament. Now, instead of getting changes in the 1967 Act, the anti-abortionists are changing the form that doctors fill out when they authorise abortions.

Gerard Vaughn, Tory Minister of Health, put down a 'statutory instrument' to change the form last year. His intention was to gain 'better information' and 'more reliable identification in cases of late abortion.' Or so he said.

In fact the proposal changes the wording of the form so that doctors will be less likely to authorise a late abortion and less likely to authorise an abortion on social grounds.

The wording of the form is also designed to make it difficult to differentiate between the standard of care from NHS facilities and private abortion facilities.

The new form lists the possible grounds for abortion but misses out the 'social' grounds. So if doctors are at all unclear about the 1967 Act (which is not changed by the statutory instrument) they will be less likely to authorise an abortion on social grounds.

There is a new section which asks for explicit details of how the doctor worked out the period of gestation i.e. how far advanced the pregnancy is.

Obviously this is important to know. But in the current climate, it could make a doctor more likely to say no in the case of a late abortion, where he/she could not be absolutely sure that the period of gestation was less than 28 weeks, and might be prosecuted under the Infant Life Preservation Act of 1929.

The current form asks for the name and address of

the place of termination and details of whether there is an NHS agency agreement. With the new form, it will no longer be possible to distinguish between abortions in NHS clinics and abortions done by private clinics for the NHS. And so the shortage of NHS facilities, and the higher rate of complications and mortalities in NHS clinics, will be concealed.

The Labour Abortion Rights Campaign reckons that this is likely to obscure the fact that there has been a drop in the number of NHS abortions.

Although the 'statutory instrument' was put down in November last year, it passed unnoticed until January 19th this year. Co-Ord an umbrella group of organisations for the defence of the '67 act, then put out a mailing explaining the implications.

Since then, Jo Richardson MP and Gwyneth Dunwoody MP tried to collect enough signatures to have a debate (200). They did not succeed, but after a battle Jo Richardson managed to persuade the Tories to have a Statutory Instrument Standing Committee to discuss the proposals. (They haven't even been discussed with the 'experts' of the BMA or the Royal College of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians).

This committee meets on Wednesday 4th March but, as Jo Richardson told Socialist Organiser, "We are in a minority, so it's unlikely that we won't be able to stop it and it'll be DHSS policy by the end of the week."

When asked what could be done at this stage, she said "I don't need to tell you about campaigning against the anti-abortionists. We won't get anything out of the Tories — we need a new government."

Socialist
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Note book

by Rachel Lever

■ The closing date for resolutions to the Labour Party National Women's Conference has now been put back to March 16th, and the new Fightback Labour Party women's newsletter has lots of ideas for resolutions. [10p plus s.a.e. from 41 Ellington St, N7, if you have not already got it].

As far as we can ascertain, the new rules on rights to set up Labour Party women's sections are operative immediately, and women can set them up without needing authorisation from the GMC. At any rate, word is to go ahead, and while a GMC may challenge on the basis that it's still to be ratified, you should have no problem about sending resolutions and delegates to the National Women's Conference.

For those who have an already established right-wing or 'conservative' women's section in the constituency, it may be useful to know that there is virtually no limit to the number of women's sections you may set up, as long as no-one belongs to more than one at once. They can be based on a ward, estate, or workplace. Up to ten members gives you one GMC delegate, 10 to 100 gives you two.

Obviously we don't want to set up rotten boroughs, and in practice there are other difficulties in sending delegates to the Buxton Labour Party women's conference in June, especially the high cost and the fact that it covers two working days.

However, could Socialist Organiser groups put it on their agenda so that we do maximise our potential for resolutions, amendments, and delegates?

■ A special double-workshop at the Socialist Organiser day school on March 22 will be given over to organising a Socialist Organiser women's caucus.

We plan to spend a major part of the dayschool on discussing the role of Socialist Organiser in building Women's Fightback, making plans to strengthen the position of women within the SO groups, and electing a co-ordinating commission.

So a full turn-out of Socialist Organiser women supporters is specially important.

■ NAC/LARC conference on March 14th: this is a big event, and we hope there will be a lot of SO supporters there, to help sell SO and Women's Fightback, to help with our stall, to take part in the conference, and to report back to SO groups so they can play a good part in the abortion rights struggle.

You have to be delegated from a labour movement body affiliated to NAC or LARC. If you haven't taken care of this, you'll have to do it urgently.

Credentials: delegates £4, observers £2.50, from 374 Grays Inn Rd, WC1.

People before profit

by Gerry Byrne

PRESIDENT Reagan has given a sickening new twist to the slogan 'people before profit' with the announcement that the US 'would very probably' want to make use of the neutron bomb.

The neutron bomb, or 'enhanced radiation war-head', developed during the Carter administration, gives out increased lethal radiation with less blast and heat damage. In other words, it fries people alive, but leaves buildings and communications relatively unscathed.

Its supposed use is against a Russian tank attack across Europe. But, given the possibility of tanks impervious to its radiation and its 'advantages' in not destroying buildings, it could just as well be used against insurgent civilian populations.

Carter was forced by the public outcry in Europe to shelve the neutron bomb project. But at the same time General Haig (then NATO Commander) and Carter's National Security Advisor Brzezinski were agitating among NATO officers and European defence ministers in support of the weapon.

Haig, a leading warmonger and advocate of the neutron bomb, is now Reagan's Secretary of State.



Reagan was elected on a 'get tough' ticket, and every indication is that he intends to deliver.

In Central America, he is using military aid, threats of direct military intervention, and threats to blockade Nicaragua and Cuba, in support of the gory Salvadorean dictatorship. He is canvassing support for a multinational force for quick intervention, especially in the Gulf, to guarantee America's oil interests.

For this sort of operation, the neutron bomb fills the bill only too neatly: protection of property, oil reserves, and strategic communications, and massacre for the people fighting to free themselves from the grip of imperialism and its blood-drenched puppets.

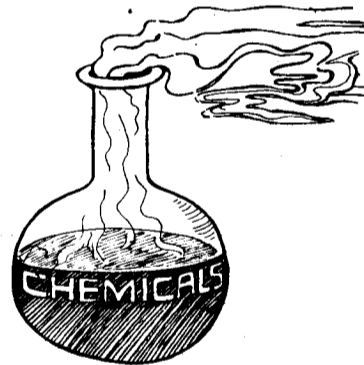
All along the line, Reagan is supported by our own home-grown cold-warrior, Thatcher. On her visit to Reagan this weekend she came out wholeheartedly in favour of US plans in El Salvador and of the Gulf force. She has shown over Trident and the Cruise missile that she will put her iron shoulder to the monstrous wheel of the war machine.

If ever there was a case for unity of workers the world over, this is it. The British working class has scores enough to settle with Thatcher. Let us add this one more.

And, as an act of basic solidarity with the international working class, let us settle this account quickly.

Where life is cheap

Socialist
Organiser
SCIENCE



ASBESTOS, as even the asbestos industry admits now, is pretty unhealthy stuff, causing the crippling and ultimately fatal disease asbestosis as well as a host of usually fatal cancers.

Nowadays, in the advanced capitalist countries, its production and use are controlled to an (inadequate) extent, after pressure from workers and the communities that have to live with it.

But many asbestos firms are multi-national, with interests in countries where working class organisations are too weak in the face of unemployment, poverty, and repression, to have won protection from the killer dust.

Do these companies take advantage of lax laws to reap super-profits, or do their social consciences encourage them to apply those restrictions on asbestos required by the capitalist states of the West (which the companies themselves agree are reasonable)? No prizes for the correct answer!

A report in last week's New Scientist by Barry Castleman shows that the industry falls somewhat short of the high moral standards it professes.

The road to the Shree Digvijay Cement Company factory in Ahmadabad, India, is lined with asbestos-cement waste. Untreated waste water flows into an asbestos-bordered ditch. And the neighbourhood, where many people live, is littered with solid waste, and indeed many houses are built from it.

One photograph in the article shows a child playing on an asbestos dump!

What has this to do with

the US asbestos corporation, Johns-Manville (whose stated policy is to 'refuse to sell asbestos fibre to customers who fail to meet applicable government regulations... In those cases where there are no governmental regulations on asbestos exposure [e.g. India], accepted industrial hygiene practice shall apply'?)

Nothing at all, except that Johns-Manville helped to build the factory and supplied it with 'technical know-how, designs, drawings... and engineering assistance including the erection and supervision of the project'.

Johns-Manville owns shares in the company, Johns-Manville supplies it with raw asbestos fibre, and Johns-Manville is the company's sole selling agent for the Middle East and Africa.

In the factory of Hindustan Ferodo (¾-owned by UK asbestos firm Turner and Newall) in Bombay, only workers in the fluffing and carding areas are supplied with respirators and the asbestos dust is like that 'behind a bus on a dirt road in the dry season'.

Workers are not told of the hazards of asbestos, and hence often do not wear their respirators. They receive an 'inconvenience allowance'.

The firm's exports to Britain have recently been refused on the grounds that they are not triple-packed in polythene as a safety measure!

The report ends with the demand that 'responsible members of the business world... make a commitment not to profit by such abuses'.

But the firms will not do that until they are forced to. Unions in Britain and other western countries could make a start by demanding and collecting full information on conditions in British firms' overseas subsidiaries.

Only six weeks after two reports give the herbicide 245T a clean bill of health, evidence has been produced from Australia showing that the herbicide (or its ever present contaminant, dioxin) can hinder brain and nerve development in embryo chicks at doses probably experienced by much wildlife and some farm workers in Britain. Another study from Australia shows that the number of babies born with defects in brain or spinal cord matches well the amount of 245T used in the previous year by local farmers. This will give new impetus to the Agricultural Workers' union in Britain who have demanded a ban on 245T and who have produced evidence of inadequate protection for workers using the herbicide.

FESTIVAL FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS
AGAINST THE TORY ATTACKS

FIGHT
MAY 9

Details from Festival, 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.

AS WE go to print, the self-styled 'Labour Solidarity' faction is presenting a resolution at a special meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party which aims at reversing the Wembley decision on the election of the leader.

They want the PLP, 'whose confidence and continued support any leader must retain', to have at least 50% of the votes.

Yet at the previous PLP special meeting, the PLP voted 2 to 1 against MPs electing the Cabinet when Labour is in office. In other words, they voted to free the Party leaders from the need to 'retain the confidence and continued support' of the PLP.

And these people want 50% of the vote! They've got 30% too much already.

THE ELECTION of Princess Anne as Chancellor of London University was a vivid public demonstration of the fact that a good bourgeois education does not guarantee even a most elementary sense of human solidarity, let alone a basic concern with democracy.

One of the candidates was Nelson Mandela, a black African nationalist leader who has so far served 17 years of a life sentence in



South Africa. Electing him as Chancellor would have helped the campaign for his release. An otherwise meaningless ritual could for once have served some useful purpose.

Yet 57.4% of the graduates decided to vote for someone whose sole defining feature is that she represents privilege and aristocratic snobbery.

Nelson Mandela got 17% of the vote.

THE TUC is at present host to brother Bogdan Lis, a representative of 'Solidarity', the new independent trade union organisation of Poland.

This marks a welcome change from the TUC's support for Poland's police

state unions — even at the time when 'Solidarity' was fighting for recognition.

But brother Lis's visit will have been arranged by the TUC's international department. Let us hope that brother Lis will point out to the TUC leaders that they would offer a better model of independent trade unionism to the Polish workers if the international department didn't swap staff with the Foreign Office.

THE POPE'S visit to the Philippines must be the civil rights sick joke of the year. President Marcos had to sit through a few minutes of criticism, but his murderous dictatorship will have been immensely strengthened by

the Vatican visit.

The Pope suggested that peasants' wages of about 80p a day were inadequate, and delivered a general reminder — no names, no pack drill! — that human dignity was not served by the absence of human rights.

But Marcos did not miss a trick. Everywhere the Pope went, Mrs Marcos went. Like a bright beetle rushing over rotting leaves, she would rush to where the Pope was expected a little ahead of him.

Then, taking her place in the front row of those greeting the Pope, Mrs Marcos, smiling sweetly in her long pink dress and matching sunshade, made sure that the meeting between the Pope and the Marcos family was re-enacted ritually at every point for all to see.

But perhaps the biggest favour he did the Marcos family was his caution to the Catholic Church to keep out of politics. Again, no names were mentioned, but it is clear that he was warning off those priests and nuns who have played a leading role in the struggle against torture, rape and imprisonment.

In the end the Pope pre-empted the continuation of the official terror — even against the Church itself — to any

disruption of the imperialist system.

THE COUNCIL for Social Democracy has lost its only prominent trade unionist already. Frank Chapple of the electricians' and plumbers' union has resigned from the right-wing rabble splitting from the Labour Party.

Good or bad? What's good is that he obviously feels that he wouldn't be able to get his membership to agree to the union's disaffiliation from the Party.

What's bad is that he has probably been heartened by the formation of Hattersley's right-wing 'Solidarity' faction, by the election in the AUEW of a right-wing delegation for the next Party and TUC conferences, and by moves within the shopworkers' union to reverse their position on the election of the leader.

He no doubt means to add his union's votes to the attempted reversal of the Wembley decisions.

A READER has written in to tell us that Graffiti wronged Führer Frank when we said that after his resignation from the Communist Party he moved to the right. In fact he

moved left before moving right.

The Militant tendency hoped to involve him in their activities. Chapple refused. He said he supported a small left-syndicalist organisation called the Socialist Workers' Federation, of which Eric Heffer [now an MP] was once a leading light.

In line with the thinking of the SWF, he thought it would be right-wing opportunism to join the Labour Party.

SUE SLIPMAN reckons that joining the CSD is a logical continuation of her policies as president of the National Union of Students.

And Helen Connor, current Treasurer of NUS and presidential candidate for the National Organisation of Labour Students, agrees. Last week she said:

'The result of Sue Slipman's policies in the student movement can be plainly seen — a less political approach, a less active NUS, and less of an attempt to inform and involve ordinary students. It is in order to challenge that kind of leadership that NOLS is standing candidates in the forthcoming NUS elections.'

LABOUR'S RIGHT WING

Where they're going

by Jon Lansman

AS THE Labour and ex-Labour Right reorganises after the Wembley conference, it is important to separate the public posturings which have filled so many pages of newsprint from the underlying political facts.

The two new groupings which have emerged, and which can be certain of continued high-profile publicity, are the Council for Social Democracy (CSD) and the Labour Solidarity Campaign (LSC).

The CSD is alleged to be an embryo left-of-centre Social Democratic Party consisting of that section of the Labour spectrum which has been squeezed out of the Party by its move to the Left. The LSC is supposed to be an organisation of the 'mainstream' of the Party which will 'save' it from extremes of Right and Left.

My analysis is that neither of these popular pictures comes close to the political reality.

It may be that the leaders of the CSD actually believe they are about to create a left-of-centre party; why else apart from sheer ineptitude would David Owen still make speeches about 'democratic socialism', thus distancing himself from the Liberals? But with the curious mixture of active support they have got, things are not likely to go that way.

Very little of the old Campaign for Labour Victory (CLV), apart from the careerist full-timers, has actually gone over. Then the CSD has the Social Democratic Alliance, with its hysterical McCarthyism and virulent anti trade-unionism, and there are cases of 'branches' of the new party being set up with the involvement of members of the Freedom Association and ex-members of the National Front.

The oft-quoted policy differences on education between Shirley Williams and Roy Jenkins are just the beginning.

A new party is bound to attract such an assortment of renegades that it will be lucky to turn out even as progressive as the Liberals.

It is certainly unlikely to be the party of young radical fresh-faced intellectuals which Owen might like.

The LSC is also an uneasy alliance of forces, which doesn't even claim to have a single policy position. But its future direction, unlike that of the CSD, is firmly in the hands of its organisers — Roy Hattersley and his cronies.

Its support on the right and centre of the PLP is complete, but even the bitterly divided Tribune group frowns on those few of its members who have become involved. Many of the 'left' MPs among the 150 who originally came out against the Wembley decision have refused to take part. So, despite the rhetorical opposition of the LSC to both Right and Left, there can be no doubt as to who its intended victims are.

- building stronger links with the unions.
- making the District Party the genuine policy-making body.
- building a strong youth section.

tion to defend party policies, the right wing have just launched their own organisation with the stated aim of overturning party policy!

Both local press and local



Denis Healey

which is unlikely, the handful of those who are returned to the next parliament would certainly be willing to make such an alliance. Hattersley's unwillingness to launch a genuine grass-

roots fightback means that he must be relying on this.

The real political realignment is not yet here; the latter-day Ramsay MacDonalds are still within our ranks.

What they're doing

ARTHUR BOUGH reports from Stoke, where 'Labour Solidarity' is organising against the Left under the hypocritical banner of 'party unity'

THE WAY the new Right in the Labour Party is organising under the banner of 'Labour Solidarity', and the threat they pose to the advances made at Wembley and Annual Conference, have been clearly demonstrated in Stoke recently.

On Thursday 19th Feb-

ruary, at the Stoke Central constituency meeting, the right wing launched an all-out attack on the Stoke group of the Mobilising Committee, SLAM (Stoke Labour Action Movement). Accusations of working outside the Party and threats of expulsion were hurled at the Left like balls in a coconut shy.

The basis of the accusations was a letter we circulated to members of SLAM and other Labour Party members who were believed to be sympathetic to our aims. On the one hand, they objected to the letter being sent only to selected individuals, saying this made us a clandestine organisation. On the other, they claimed (wrongly) it had been distributed on dole queues, and we had damaged the party by openly proclaiming our existence.

The letter just gave notice of SLAM's next meeting, and outlined four of our aims:

- building a mass party,



Roy Hattersley

Each one of these is party policy; and at the same time as we are being attacked for having an organisa-



Peter Shore

radio have given lavish coverage to the setting up of the 'Labour Solidarity' campaign, which aims to

reverse the Wembley decision and change the make-up of the NEC.

'Labour Solidarity' in Stoke has also been able to recruit a number of people previously reckoned to be soft leftists. The hard-core Right has fudged the issue of Solidarity's aims, hiding behind the facade of wanting party unity and saying as little as possible about the fact that they only want party unity after they have overturned party policy.

Despite the pressure that SLAM has been under, with the rumoured new threat being that left councillors will be removed from the Labour Group, almost every member has been hardened in their determination. In fact, the Right's attacks have won us new support from people who now see the need to organise.

The attacks of the right wing have not just been confined to the Labour Party. In Stoke the link between party and unions has always been strong —

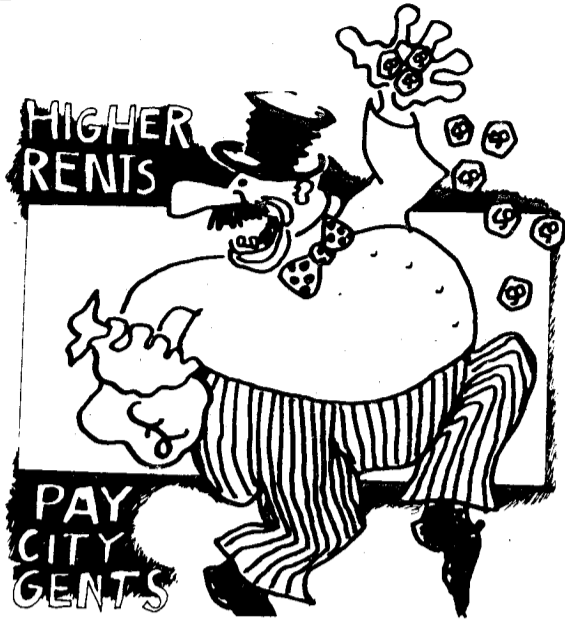
with both the Party and the major union in the area, the pottery union CATU, controlled by the Right.

As the pottery industry has declined, so the influence of the right-wing CATU has dwindled. New unions have grown in importance, and the balance of forces on the local Trades Council has moved leftward.

At the Trades Council AGM on 25th February, CATU mobilised 40 delegates (out of 127 at the meeting). The Left still made more gains in the Executive Committee elections, but by procedural manoeuvres the Right were able to block the re-election of Trades Council secretary Peter Moore (a SLAM member). After the wrangling the Trades Council ended up with no secretary at all!

Peter Moore is to get a ruling from the TUC, but whatever the outcome we are more determined than ever to make sure that the right wing is SLAMmed

TORIES' PLAN FOR HOUSING



Sell council houses

THE TORIES are forcing councils to sell off council houses.

So far, 76,000 council houses have been sold, out of a total of six million. But these houses are usually the best of the lot, with gardens, no damp, windows that fit, in 'nice' areas. And that means a further deterioration in the council housing stock, and even less chance for council tenants of a transfer to a decent house.

Smash Direct Works

DIRECT Labour Organisations (or direct works) were set up to service council tenants and build local authority housing. They were never meant to make profit.

The very thought turns the Tories blue. Heseltine's Local Government & Land Act is designed to smash direct works. The Act demands that normal bourgeois accounting methods are used for direct works. If it's making a loss, or not enough profit, then the direct works is inefficient and will have to go, at Heseltine's discretion of course.

Since direct works do most maintenance and repairs, yet another chance to get decent housing goes down the drain — as do the jobs of thousands more construction workers.

WE CAN WIN— WITH INDUSTRIAL ACTION

WHAT MOST people remember of the 1972 rent strikes is the lone stand of Clay Cross councillors in refusing to implement the Tories' 'Fair Rent' Act. They were surcharged and disbarred from holding office.

Not so often remembered is the fact that, in the end, Clay Cross actually defeated the Act.

Clay Cross's defiance aroused the labour movement so much that repeal of the 'Fair Rent' Act was one of the first measures of the Labour government in 1974. And it so discredited the Act that the Tories made no effort to stop the minority Labour government repealing it.

The tens of thousands of council tenants who went on partial or total rent strike are also often forgotten.

Tenants' Associations sprang up in estates all over the country. Commando squads were sent out from existing tenants' associations to help build new ones elsewhere.

Regional conferences were held to coordinate and extend the rent strikes. In one area in Liverpool, rent collectors were refused access to the estate.

The rent strikes played a

big role in making sure the 'Fair Rent' Act could not stick. But they did not succeed in stopping the increases in 1972.

Why not? One major reason was the weakening of the movement by the desertion of the Labour councils. At first, 42 Labour councils refused to implement the Tories' rent-raising Act. But gradually all except Clay Cross caved in, fearing the surcharges.

What was most lacking in the 1972 struggle was solidarity action from the trade unions and the leadership of the Labour Party.

Compare the Glasgow rent strike in 1915, which won. Over 25,000 tenants went on rent strike against the rack-renting private landlords. The rent strikes spread throughout Scotland and to London, Manchester, Liverpool, Coventry, Newcastle and many other places in England.

18 Glasgow tenants were taken to court by their factor (landlord's agent) on 17th November 1915. Thousands left work all through Clydeside, and marched on the Court, stopping on the way to pick up the revolutionary leader John Maclean from the school where he worked.

Rent rises

THE TORIES want to put up the rent in every council flat and house in the country by £2.90-£3.25.

Most councils, Tory and Labour, are obliging. And most intend to go that little bit further, bumping up the rates and the heating charges too.

In Basingstoke there is to be a 66½% increase. In Renfrewshire the Labour council planned for a 50% increase, but after a tenants' outcry revised it to 35%, with a 60% rate increase.

In Cambuslang (Glasgow), it's 31%. In Wandsworth (London), around £7 a week. In Manchester, heating charges will be upped by £3.50 on top of the Heseltine rent increase and 37% more on the rates.

In Edinburgh £2 will go on the rates, plus the Heseltine increase on rents. Leamington rents will be up £3. And so on all over the country.

And why are the Tories doing this? Pure greed for profit. Most rent money goes as interest into the pockets of moneylenders. Two thirds of all local authority expenditure on council housing goes in interest payments!

While private house owners get a subsidy from the Government in tax relief on mortgage payments, council tenants are having their subsidy from central government cut and are paying more in rent.

Since the Tories came to power, 75% of all the public expenditure cuts have been made in housing. The Tories' thirst for profit comes before anything else. Housing for those with little money doesn't figure in their list of priorities.

Cut building and repairs

LAST October, Tory minister Heseltine ordered a freeze on all new housing projects for six months.

Even before the freeze, the number of council house starts in 1980 was 27,000. Compare that with 67,637 starts in 1978 and 110,335 in 1975.

Council waiting lists are soaring. There are well over a million families on the waiting list, and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities estimate that by 1984 there will be almost three million. You'll have to wait an average of 15 years before you have a chance of getting a council house.

The Tories calculate that cuts in housing are the least visible cuts. If a house is not built, no-one can point to it and say: look, there's a cut. The council waiting lists just get longer.

The millions slashed from the housing budget also mean that less and less is being spent on repairs and maintenance. In Edinburgh tenants have been told that they'll have to do their own repairs, as the Council won't, even to the extent of repairing a broken window.

About a quarter of council housing needs major repairs, and some 70,000 houses each year become unfit to live in.



DON'T

Reports from:

Cambuslang

by Ian McLeish

TENANTS throughout Glasgow are fighting Glasgow District Council's proposed 31% increase in rents and 37% increase in rates. One of the strongest areas is Cambuslang, where all the tenants' associations have decided on a rent strike.

In one area where there is no tenants' association, an anti-dampness campaign is being turned into the campaigning body to organise the rent strike.

Lightburn tenants' association held an emergency public meeting last week to discuss action. "We've got to show some action this time, or it'll be worse in October and next year. We've laid down before and accepted everything, but we won't take it this time", said Mrs Chapman, the chairperson.

Over 70 people attended the meeting and unanimously decided on a rent strike.

The meeting was pretty low key until our district councillor, Liberal Mike Kibby, appeared.

He said how 'sad' he was to have to implement such large rent and rate increases. The only thing he said he

could do was make sure that next year the Council would spend its money wisely.

This only angered the tenants, who shouted: "But what are you going to do now?"

He replied with the question, "What can one do?" The loud answer was "Stand and fight!"

"What about the miners? It only took the Government 48 hours to change their mind there, so the situation certainly isn't out of our hands", said the treasurer.

THE MAJORITY of tenants who turned up to lobby the meeting of Glasgow District Council to decide the rate increase [Thursday 26th] came from the Cambuslang area. Activists from the tenants' associations, from the Labour Party, and from the Trades Council, were all there.

Unfortunately much of the attention was drawn away from us by the hundreds round the corner who had come to cheer Prince Charles, but of course that didn't stop us leafletting and shouting at councillors as they drove in.

About 20 of us got into the meeting to hear the deputations from the Glasgow Tenants' Association. Mrs Iris McDonald told the chamber, "Enough is enough. Let's fight them back for a change".

All the Labour group could offer us was a resolution which said that the Council identifies with the Glasgow Tenants' Association, but can do nothing.

Paisley

by John Wilde

WITH POLICE protection, Renfrew District Council met on Thursday 26th for the second time to discuss the rents.

Under pressure from tenants they have been forced to reduce the rent increase from 50% to 35%, with 60% on the rates.

Tom McNamara is a leading militant in the Ferguslie Park tenants' movement, which has been at the forefront of the tenants' struggle in Paisley. He told us: "The fight will go on, as far as I'm concerned."

"The councillors claim that they cut the increase because of the imminent closure of Talbot at Linwood, and not because of what they referred to as 'mob rule'. We know this small concession was the result of pressure from the tenants alongside the labour and trade union movement in the area."

"In my opinion, the committee leading the struggle against rent increases will not accept the 35% increase, but will go ahead with the rent strike".

Leamington

by Jenny Long

CHAMPIONED by Labour councillor and tenants' action group chairperson Roger Grenville, tenants filled the gallery at Leamington Town Hall last month to make their protest against the proposed £3 rent increase.

FEA



The tenants' action group work in revealing there were reductions in subsidies, the money was to remain. The council therefore su... housing. Roger Grenville announced

OUR ANSWER

Rent rise equals wage cut

Rent strikes

WE HAVE a right to a decent house to live in! Council housing was won through the struggle of the working class after the First World War. We cannot let it be whittled away by the Tories.

Tenants' Associations, along with trade unions, Labour Parties, and Trades Councils, must say: Not a penny on the rent.

Labour Parties should insist that Labour councils refuse to implement the Heseltine increase, and support tenants against evictions. Labour councils were elected to represent the interests of working people, not to do the Tories' dirty work for them.

Expand Direct Works

House-building must be done for need, not profit. Direct works departments should be expanded to do it — not the rip-off merchants who have done most house-building so far.

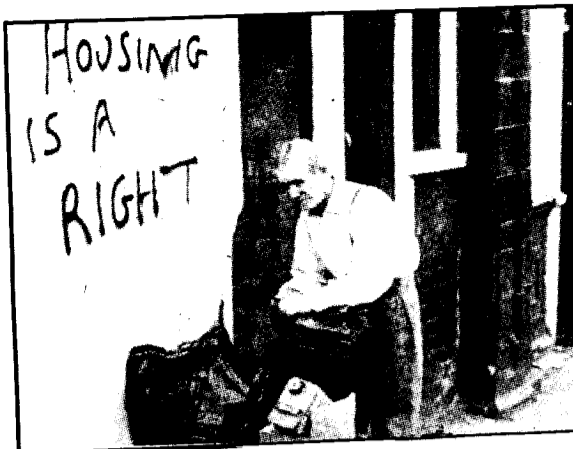
Direct works standards are higher because they are not in the business of making profits and cutting corners.

Seize the houses of the rich

IF NEW houses can't be built quickly enough, then we should seize the houses of the rich parasites. Heseltine himself, the man who says we should pay more for worse housing, has recently acquired a modest little house with a garden of 400 acres, 'enough for all the animals'.

He treats his animals better than he treats council tenants! Most of the bankers making a mint out of our rents already have second and third homes.

The homes of the rich were seized and squatted after the Second World War. We can do it again.



Nationalise the banks, building and the land

Moneylenders, landowners, and building contractors are the people who get rich from the housing crisis.

Nationalising the banks would free money to be used to expand housing programmes. Nationalising the land would free the councils from having to hand over huge sums of money to already wealthy landowners. Nationalisation of the building industry would open the way for it to be operated for need, not profit.

Nationalisation should be carried out without compensation for the money-grubbing sharks who have made millions out of us already.

And housing should be under workers' and tenants' control. We know where the houses have to be built, and we have to live in them.

How to organise a rent strike

1. Central public meetings and demonstrations inside and outside Council meetings, to rally support against the rent rises. Get media coverage from local press, radio and TV.
2. Estate meetings, to build local contact lists.
3. A local steering committee of tenants' groups, trade union branches, Labour Parties, and Trades Councils — with a right of veto for the tenants' representatives over committee decisions.
4. Financial appeals from the steering committee to the local labour movement.
5. Form estate committees.

6. Get clear legal information on evictions.
7. A weekly newsletter: this is especially important during the rent strike for keeping tenants informed and confident.
8. A total rent strike is better because it is easier to keep solid and will bring the council to its knees quicker. But the tactic decided must have the widest possible support from tenants and the labour movement, and that may mean going for partial rent strike

9. Keep the rent strike solid. Organise a system of tenants checking each others' rent books. Picket the rent offices. Maintain regular demonstrations, meetings and public events.
10. Organise through the Labour Party to force Labour councillors to support the rent strike.
11. Keep up the pressure on rent-raising councillors, whether right-wing Labour or Tory. Lobby their 'surgeries', demonstrate outside and inside council meetings.
12. Build regional links.

13. Get trade unionists pledged to support the rent strike, especially through strike action against any evictions. Send tenants' representatives and deputations to trade union branches, shop stewards' committees, etc.
14. Make a special appeal for support to NALGO council workers. Ask them to black the rent increases and to refuse to process any warning letters or eviction notices.
15. Prevent evictions. Organise tenants and workers to be ready for immediate mass pickets as soon as any tenant is threatened.

Basingstoke tenants versus the Council

by Carla Jamison

ROUND TWO of the Basingstoke tenants vs. Basingstoke council took place at the Civic Offices on Monday 23rd February.

The Council hurriedly reconvened to re-take their decision to raise rents, following a court injunction which made the previous vote void.

The first two items on their agenda, moved by 'independents', were to 1. raise rents by 66½%, and 2. to transfer the nearly £1 million surplus thus created from the Rents Account to the General Rate Fund.

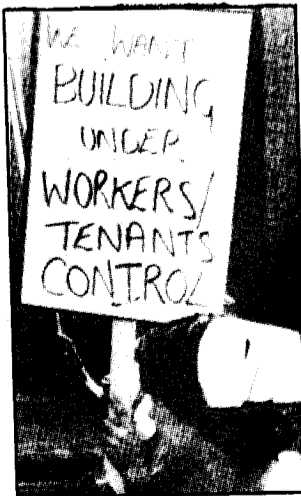
Again, hundreds of tenants, armed with whistles, fog-horns, saucepans, and even a hunting-horn, were outside in deafening opposition.

Despite this, and to nobody's great surprise, the worthy councillors voted to pass both motions. One Tory voted against the first motion then left the chamber, and the Liberals in true form split down the middle on their vote.

Labour councillors and the public gallery left after showering the Tories with shredded agendas, and joined the

demonstrators outside.

The Tories — partly to celebrate their good work and partly to steady their nerves in case they had to run a gauntlet when they came out, held a celebration party in the members' bar!



That evening the crowd had once again been encouraged and addressed by Len Smith, a district official for the T&GWU. His fiery speech, telling the crowd that, like the miners and water workers, we had the unity

and strength to bring down the Tories, was to be his last.

In the early hours of Tuesday 24th, while driving to his work at Billingsgate, Len suffered a heart attack and died.

His militancy, personality, and big, big voice had done so much for the campaign, and his loss will be greatly felt.

On Tuesday evening the Rent and Rates Action Committee meeting at the Town Hall was silent for a minute in memory of Len — many people deeply shocked.

But the meeting resolved to continue the struggle, now outside the Council chambers.

Meetings on the estates will form their own committees with representatives from each street coordinating leafletting, and keeping people informed by means of bulletins etc.

A standard letter will be printed to send to the council stating that the tenant will not be paying the increase in rent from 6th April and listing the various outstanding repairs to their house. This has the effect of making a counter claim on the council.

A sample survey of council house tenants shows a massive 82.6% in favour of withholding the increase.

Rent strike posters will be produced and tactics to keep the bailiffs away will include emergency telephone lists to gather people around threatened tenants.

Legal advice and support has been offered by the legal department of the GMWU and the NCCL.

Further plans include a march and rally through Basingstoke on Saturday 14th March.

Trade union branches are also being urged to write to the local NALGO branch asking them not to process these rent rises.

The Tories, meanwhile, continue their attack, this time on council employees. At a Policy and Resources meeting, some Tories argued that the council workers' pay rise this year should be 1% — and if they didn't like it they should all be sacked!

It is vital now that we link in the rent struggle with industrial muscle. Selective strikes in support of threatened tenants will ensure that no evictions take place.

Andy Babbin, secretary of Roehampton Labour Party.

“We need a Labour government and councils that will stop milking council tenants to protect the rate-payers from the effects of government cuts. Immediately, at the very least, token withholding of rent is a good idea.”

If tenants are sufficiently organised, complete rent strikes should be considered, but that needs fantastic solidarity.

Labour Party activists, especially tenants, should be getting involved in tenants' associations, and if there isn't one helping to set one up.

Marlene Heron, Lennox Tenants Association.

“I can't see any justification for being asked to pay over £43 a week for this rabbit hutch I'm living in.”

One West Indian girl at the meeting said, ‘I ain't got it, I can't pay it, I won't pay it. Come and visit me in prison.’

Edinburgh

by John Macdonald

EDINBURGH District Council got a noisy reception from a demonstration, organised by the All-Edinburgh Tenants' Action Group, when it met last week to set the level of council rents from April.

Edinburgh already has the highest rents in Scotland, and they have now set back tenants by another £2.50 a week for a 3-roomed flat, £3.75 for a 5-roomed flat. This comes on top of a £2 rate increase.

This District Council is also closing area rent offices and withdrawing rent collectors, forcing tenants to pay through the few and far-between sub post offices.

The All-Edinburgh Tenants' Group, which consists of tenants' associations and delegates from the Trades Council, is discussing possible forms of action, including a rent strike.



PAY!

PICTURE BY JO THWAITES



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would support any move by tenants to launch a rent strike; that strike methods were the traditional and most effective weapon working people have.

All the Labour councillors then cheered the tenants as they were escorted out of the gallery by the police to cries of 'Tories out'.

We have made a start!

Justice Tory style: The Royal Commission

THE ROYAL Commission on Criminal Procedure was supposed to offer a 'balanced' package of recommendations on police powers. They saw themselves as restoring a 'fundamental balance' between, on the one side, the 'interests of the community' and, on the other, 'individual liberties'.

They equated police power with community interest. They counterposed defendants' rights to the interest of the community, as if these defendants were not members of the community.

And the Commission declared that the 'existing balance' had been disrupted not by the hardening of state power (they raise this issue only to drop it), but by the growth of crime and the danger to the public of 'criminals getting the better of the law'.

It was as if the deaths of Blair Peach and Jimmy Kelly, the SPG, the Special Branch, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the arming of the police etc. had never existed. The Commission seemed to exist in a different world from the citizens of Lambeth, for example.

blamed the police for creating 'extremely grave' relations with the community. They cited such practices as 'provoking blacks by shouting obscenities at them from cars', taking it upon themselves (with no law to back them up) to set up road blocks, to stop and search people at will 'to prevent crimes', and so forth.

As one black bus driver put it, 'They don't

approach you like they are police officers; they're more like war officers'.

Yet the Commission's claptrap about 'balance' has still been enough to win the faint hearts and muddled minds of liberal commentators from the Guardian and New Society. They were just thankful that the report was not worse than it turned out, and had not gone whole hog for Metropolitan Police

Commissioner David McNee's police-state demands.

They even succeeded in persuading themselves that the Commission had not recommended a loss of rights for defendants, despite the fact that it was quite explicit about it (it restricts rights of defendants to see a lawyers, eliminates the right of silence, extends police powers of arrest, stop and

search, and generally brings the legal situation into line with existing police practice).

In fact, as Harriet Harman from the NCCL, Tony Gifford from the Legal Action Group, and Michael Meacher from the Labour Campaign for Criminal Justice have seen and brought to light, the package offered by the Commission is a rotten deal.

In return for a loss of

rights, it offers us 'increased safeguards' over the police. And these safeguards prove in fact to be no more than reliance on the internal disciplinary proceedings of the police themselves!

No external accountability. No control by independent democratic bodies. Just 'trust' that the police will police themselves.

So much for balance.

Socialists and Democrats

'DEFENDANTS' rights' are one of the few ways we have of policing the police.

For example, the police are restrained from dragging false confessions out of people by the rule that unsupported confessions are inadmissible as evidence [except in Northern Ireland!]

These legal controls over the police are often very ineffective. But we should not forget that they are not meaningless, and do provide some — albeit very insufficient — form of independent control.

We should be campaigning for the strengthening of defendants' rights. For example, by giving the Judges'

Rules, on police treatment of suspects in custody, the force of law.

But this is not enough. It is also vital that direct forms of democratic accountability be imposed on the police.

The more serious civil rights campaigners are calling for measures like giving teeth to police authorities and increasing their representativeness; disbanding the SPG; repealing the Prevention of Terrorism Act; granting local authorities powers to restrict police activity in their areas; opening up the inner sanctuaries of police stations to public representatives [or to the public themselves].

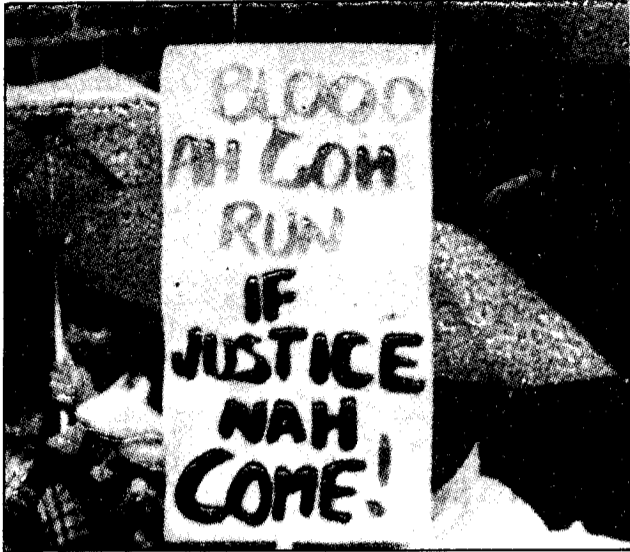
These are elementary democratic demands that we

should totally support.

It is vital that the left does not restrict itself merely to exposing the police for lack of democracy and for acting as an increasingly vicious arm of the ruling class. Exposure is necessary but not enough.

We also join the fight — alongside the serious democrats — to enforce democratic accountability on the police and to resist the attacks on those small pockets of accountability that currently survive.

At the same time we attempt to convince democrats of the need to completely replace the existing police system.



Mugabe uses the old army against the guerillas

by Lawrence Welch

DURING THE second week in February, Zimbabwe experienced the most intense political violence since independence, leaving more than 300 dead and over 1,000 homeless.

Fighting broke out within the 12th Battalion of the new national army at the Ndabazindana Barracks, comprising half ZANLA and half ZIPRA forces. Ironically, this Battalion was commended for the role it played in subduing the fighting between the guerilla forces in November.

By Wednesday the clashes had spread to include the 13th Battalion and the 41st Battalion, and, by Friday,

the guerilla forces in Entumbane near Bulawayo were drawn in.

When ZIPRA guerilla forces moved out of their heavily fortified headquarters at Gwaai River, Mugabe ordered out the white airforce. The jets returned to base without opening fire when the column halted.

The fighting was finally quelled by the 3,000 strong 1st Battalion — the new name for the former Rhodesian African Rifles, which is still under white officer command.

Throughout, the violence has been contained to the guerilla forces, despite their proximity to the urban centres of Salisbury and Bulawayo. Indeed,

people living in the area are reported to have condemned the fighting.

The frustrations and uncertainty of the transition from war to peace appear to be the main cause of the conflict, linked with long-standing rivalries between ZANU (PF) and the Patriotic Front (ZAPU), which have been exacerbated by the leadership. Some 11,000 guerillas have been integrated into the new army, but 24,000 remain with an uncertain future. With two million unemployed out of a population of 7.5 million, few guerillas are persuaded by the 4-month demobilisation pay.

Mugabe has come out of the conflict with a much stronger position. He will



Mugabe & Nkomo

use this to move strongly against the ZIPRA forces. Already an agreement has been signed which cuts off all military aid to ZIPRA.

His programme of integrating the new national army has suffered a setback, but his response has been to accelerate it.

US: hands off El Salvador!

continued from p. 1

regimes of Guatemala and Honduras. Both of these armies have been involved, under US coordination, in operations inside El Salvador as well as committing atrocities against refugees.

The USA has suspended all aid to Nicaragua including loans to buy wheat which means there will be no bread in Nicaragua next month. They have also been training and arming the late Somoza's National Guard who fled after the revolution and who now have bases in Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and in Miami.

During the last two months these National Guardsmen along with the Honduran army have attacked border areas inside Nicaragua 26 times killing many Sandinistas.

In the region as a whole the US has threatened to blockade both Cuba and the Pacific coast of Central America. Apart from the option of using the regional armies of Guatemala and Honduras, the US is also attempting to raise support in the Organisation of American States for intervention using a 'peace-keeping' force. This option has been proposed as it avoids the

international repercussions of a massive US intervention.

There has also been a statement from the Pentagon announcing the resumption of joint US-Chile naval exercises in the Pacific. At the same time President Duarte, head of the junta in El Salvador has sent secret delegations to various Latin American countries, which included a visit by the El Salvador foreign minister, Alejandro Gomez, to President Videla of Argentina.

But for the British people our friends are not the death squads and the US military advisers. They are not the international bankers and Salvadorean landowners living in Miami. Or the military junta that murdered 13,000 Salvadoreans in 1980. We ask you to do everything possible to stop the US intervention in El Salvador, to support the Salvadorean people, the FDR and the FMLN in their struggle for social justice and democracy, and to oppose the position taken by the Tory government.

US: hands off El Salvador!
Demonstration,
2.30pm, Saturday
4 April, 'The Plains', Oxford.



Guerillas in El Salvador

A debate on socialist strategy was started by Vladimir Derer in SO 32; his article, 'The First Task of the Left', criticised John O'Mahony's perspective in 'Half a revolution?' [SO27] and 'We need a workers' government' [SO28].

John O'Mahony replied in SO 32 ('Now or Never'). In SO 33 Martin Thomas interviewed Tony Benn. In SO 34 Colin Foster and Graham Norwood contributed

to the debate.

SO 35 contained the first part of a second article by Vladimir Derer ('Optimism or wishful thinking?').

Here we publish the second part of that article.

A letter from Arthur Bough on page 2 this week also contributes to the debate. And we have in hand another contribution by John Watts, which we have had to hold over for lack of space.

Comrade O'Mahony, having dismissed the method of the ballot box, backed by force if the ruling class state was used to stop the party committed to a socialist transformation of society as leading to a "situation where in fact the goal of socialism was forgotten and reform became everything..." puts his faith in another method.

Let us therefore examine some of the assumptions behind comrade O'Mahony's conception of how the struggle for socialism should be pursued.

He states: "The struggle for reform should be linked to a struggle for socialism. Reform demands should not be formulated as a minimum programme drafted to be compatible with capitalism..."

As pointed out in the first part of this article, I have never suggested that reforms must be kept within what is possible under capitalism. There is no disagreement about the need to link the struggle for reform with the struggle for socialism.

In fact, any consistent struggle for reform is impossible without an eventual break with the capitalist environment. It is precisely this which gives reform demands their 'transitional' character.

Under the present conditions any genuinely reforming government attempting to implement its programme is bound to come into fundamental conflict with the forces of the status quo. While it is just feasible that any one single demand for a parti-



Lenin: lead the broad masses to the real struggle

cular reform may be accommodated within the capitalist framework, it is quite impossible to accommodate in this way a whole range of measures based on a broad programme of reforms.

The distinction Comrade O'Mahony draws between demands 'formulated according to the needs of the working class' and 'demands drafted to be compatible with capitalism and therefore not attached to the goal of socialism' is therefore wholly artificial.

The problem is not the intrinsic character of the demands — in the present context they are all 'transitional' — but the fact that the working class believe that these demands can be satisfied without major changes in

Mobilising the masses for reforms

by Vladimir Derer

longer applies today. For the present political impotence of the Left in Britain is not rooted in an isolation imposed by external conditions. The Left's today's isolation is entirely of the Left's own making.

In fact numerically the Left in Britain amounts to a sizeable force. What prevents this force from becoming politically effective is its fragmentation.

Each group or grouplet pursues purely propaganda activity. Each tries to convince members of the other groups of the correctness of its own particular position and at the same time each tries to by-pass the mass political organisations of the working class in a vain effort to reach the masses.

The only thing that unites them is their common failure to recognise that, at this stage, genuine political struggles can be waged, and masses can be reached, only within the framework of existing political institutions. Without this recognition the Left remains condemned to political impotence.

Exaggeration of the importance of the relatively small differences between the various groups is the inevitable by-product of the abstention from genuine political struggles. The unifying forces arising out of the struggle against a common enemy is missing.

Relate

How can these difficulties be overcome? Not by Comrade O'Mahony's prescription.

According to him the Left, at present, cannot relate to the masses. But, of course, the Left does relate to the masses.

What else is the Labour Left doing when it strives to commit the next Labour government to a programme of a radical social reform; or when it seeks to ensure Labour's electoral victory; or after that victory when it seeks mass support for the implementation of these reforms?

The fact that it can only relate to the masses through the existing mass organisations does not mean that it is not doing so.

What has been demonstrated already in relation to mandatory re-selection and the method of electing the Labour Party leader is that if a systematic, sustained and concerted effort in support of demands that are central to Labour Party policy and to Labour Party politics is mounted within the existing labour movement organisations, results can be achieved and definite political advances made.

In pursuit of such demands support can be gained (and, in fact, must be gained if these demands are to be met) from sections of the party and the trade union movement which are by no means committed to the Left. Consequently, the demands must be so chosen as to be compatible with the present level of consciousness of individuals and organisations whose support is sought.

It would be fatal to combine acceptable, or potent-

ially acceptable, demands, with others which go beyond this limit. (The demand of the Militant tendency for the nationalisation of 200 monopolies being a prize example of this kind of tactical error).

If the Left plays a leading part in such struggles, it will attract support from among the non-committed by virtue of playing that role, and not as the result of its socialist propaganda (which of course it would continue to disseminate).

Capitalism would not rest on mental slavery if it were possible to convince the masses by rational argument and political education. Mass support for socialist policies will not be gained by socialist propaganda, but by socialists winning the trust of the working people through being the most consistent fighters for their demands.

Thus Comrade O'Mahony fails to clearly differentiate between these two ways of gaining political influence: one resulting from propaganda, the other from winning the trust of the people whose political class interests socialist represent. He seems to be afraid that unless 'day-to-day' demands are explicitly tied to socialist demands, the socialist goal will somehow be lost.

The point was made in the first part of this article that the reason for the abandoning of socialist aims should not be sought in the bureaucratic features of the working class organisations, but in their leadership. Equally no amount of combining 'day to day demands' with socialist ones will prevent a sell-out by a leadership lacking the determination to carry out a socialist programme.

Nor will the omission of continuous references to socialist demands, for that matter, prevent a really determined leadership from carrying out a socialist programme.

Perhaps because Comrade O'Mahony does not fully acknowledge that there are two distinct ways in which socialists must win support, he is suspicious of the idea of winning support through winning trust. He seems to hint that what I am proposing is some kind of manipulation.

The idea is emphatically not that socialists manipulate. We say who we are and what our goal is...

What childishness. What exactly do we say and to whom? Are we not to differentiate between the various levels of consciousness depending on whom we are addressing ourselves to?

Active

Under a totalitarian dictatorship socialists are obliged to support any form of opposition which has potential or actual mass support. This does not mean merely a declaration of support (e.g. distribution of leaflets 'Socialists support you') but active participation in such movements.

Take movements for freedom of religious worship in Nazi Germany or today's Soviet Union for example. Should socialists in these circumstances 'declare themselves'?

I have not in mind clande-

stine circulation of socialist propaganda but actual participation in movements whose semi-legal existence the regime only just tolerates. 'To declare oneself' in such circumstances would be the quickest route to prison, or worse, for among the 'supporters' there would inevitably be informers.

But not just because of that. Among those genuinely involved in such movements there would be many who would be deterred by the presence of people whose declared aim is the overthrow of the existing political or social regime. They would conclude (in line with the official propaganda) that such people are merely using their legitimate demands for their own subversive ends.

Lead

Should socialists in these circumstances forgo their participation and possibly a leading role in the struggle for religious freedom just because such a participation would require them not to 'declare themselves'? Would they be 'manipulating' if they meet this requirement?

Comrade O'Mahony describes his approach as a Marxist one. Yet Lenin was presumably also a Marxist. This is what he had to say on this subject:

"The immediate objective of the class-conscious vanguard... is to lead the broad masses (who are still, for the most part, apathetic, dormant and convention-ridden) to their new position... To be able to seek, find and correctly determine the specific path or the particular turn of events that will lead the masses to the real, decisive... struggle... such is the main objective... in Western Europe and in America today' (Lenin, Wing Communism — An Infantile Disorder)

Succeed

Comrade O'Mahony concludes that the Left must organise itself on a real socialist programme. This is to beg the question. The dispute is not about whether but about how.

On a number of points one can only agree with him. We must indeed 'add radical political content to the Labour Party as it renews its structures and procedures'. Certainly, 'if we start a serious campaign for reforms in the present situation, it will escalate way beyond what we start with'.

But whether socialists will succeed in preparing the movement politically will depend on the Left's willingness to shed its old sectarian habits and adopt a strategy appropriate to the present situation.

The SCLV has gone some way in that direction. Many defects, which basically stem from the association of its leading members with a particular political tendency, still remain. Notably the overestimation of what workers can learn from the experience of struggle in which there is no intervention by a politically effective Left ('bowing to spontaneity').

To quote Comrade O'Mahony: 'The movement grows in consciousness by way of its escalating mobilisations and struggles and through interaction with more or less stable groups of revolutionary socialists' (my emphasis)

More or less stable groups? Is that all that is required? Comrade O'Mahony reminds us of the French events in 1936-7 and again in 1968. 'More or less stable groups' existed then. But despite the 'escalating mobilisations and struggles' the working class appears to have learnt very little. It still blindly follows the CP.

The other major defect is the still insufficient realisation of what is involved in full participation in the political struggles under the existing conditions, as I tried to outline in this article.

WHERE WE STAND

- ★ Organise the left to beat back the Tories' attacks!
- No to attacks on union rights; defend the picket line; no state interference in our unions!
- No to any wage curbs. Labour must support all struggles for better living standards and conditions!
- Wage rises should at the very least keep up with price increases. The same should go for state benefits, grants and pensions.
- ★ Start improving the social services rather than cutting them. Stop cutting jobs in the public sector.
- ★ End unemployment. Cut hours, not jobs — share the work with no loss of pay. Start now with a 35 hour week and an end to overtime.
- ★ All firms threatening closure should be nationalised under workers' control.
- ★ Make the bosses pay, not the working class. Millions for hospitals, not a penny for 'defence'! Nationalise the banks and financial institutions without compensation. End the interest burden on council housing and other public services.
- ★ Freeze rent and rates.
- ★ Scrap all immigration controls. Race is not a problem; racism is. The labour movement must mobilise to drive the fascists off the streets.
- Purge racists from positions in the labour movement. Organise full support for black self-defence.
- ★ The capitalist police are an enemy for the working class. Support all demands to weaken them as a bosses' striking force: dissolution of special squads (SPG, Special Branch, MI5 etc.), public accountability etc.
- ★ Free abortion and contraception on demand. Women's equal right to work and full equality for women.
- ★ Against attacks on gays by the State; abolish all laws which discriminate against lesbians and gay men; for the right of the gay community to organise and affirm their stance publicly.
- ★ The Irish people — as a whole — should have the right to determine their own future. Get the British troops out now! Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act, Political status for Irish Republican prisoners as a matter of urgency.
- ★ The black working people of South Africa should get full support from the British labour movement for their strikes, struggles and armed combat against the white supremacist regime. South African goods and services should be blacked.
- ★ It is essential to achieve the fullest democracy in the labour movement. Automatic reselection of MPs during each parliament. And the election by annual conference of party leaders. Annual election of all trade union officials, who should be paid the average for the trade.
- ★ The chaos, waste, human suffering and misery of capitalism now — in Britain and throughout the world — show the urgent need to establish rational, democratic, human control over the economy, to make the decisive sectors of industry social property, under workers' control.

The strength of the labour movement lies in the rank and file. Our perspective must be working class action to raze the capitalist system down to its foundations, and to put a working class socialist system in its place — rather than having our representatives run the system and waiting for crumbs from the tables of the bankers and bosses.

Socialist Organiser aims to help build a class-struggle left wing in the trade unions and Labour Party, based on a revolutionary socialist programme. Socialist Organiser supporters' groups are being organised in many towns and cities.

Socialist Organiser is sponsored by the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory

the present institutional structure.

It may well be that even such a modest demand as a 35 hour week is 'inconceivable' 'without mass industrial/political mobilisation of the working class'. The question is how are we going to convince Labour voters of this.

Comrade O'Mahony tells us that the Left's programme should not correspond to the existing level of consciousness. What should it correspond to?

Is it possible to influence people without actually communicating with them? And can we communicate if we speak on a different wavelength?

Clearly a different approach is needed for the prospective readers of Socialist Organiser as distinct from 'the average' Labour Party member or 'the average' Labour voter. But there is a contradiction here in Comrade O'Mahony's argument.

On the one hand, he advises the Left 'to explain (and develop) a socialist overview, goal and criticism of society', 'to educate the people with whom (the Left) is active on specific issues to see those issues in that framework'. On the other hand Comrade O'Mahony also says: 'The Left organises first as a minority'.

It does not relate to the masses. It relates to individuals, groups, and only by first organising them can it acquire levers to reach, let alone organise, the masses'.

To whom then is the Left to explain a socialist overview? To the average Labour Party voter, to the masses?

But they do not want to be 'educated' in this way. Socialist propaganda groups, under different names and banners, have been trying to do this for donkey's years — without much success.

Masses

The only thing that will convince Labour voters, the masses, and indeed many Labour Party members, that their mobilisation is necessary, is when they have the concrete experience of a reforming government, which they have elected, being prevented by extra-parliamentary forces from carrying out its programme, even though (unlike recent Labour governments) it is determined to do so.

Or is 'a socialist overview' to be addressed solely to the prospective readers of Socialist Organiser? Is it they who need convincing on this score?

Unlike in the distant past when the Left was entering virgin lands, Comrade O'Mahony's prescription no

A WORKERS' post-mortem on the last Labour Government has made a devastating indictment of Labour's industrial policy, and of the TUC's failure to fight for working class interests against the Wilson and Callaghan governments.

The post-mortem was conducted and published by four trades councils from Liverpool, Coventry and Tyneside. It exposes the fraud of catchphrases like 'National interest', 'state neutrality', 'free competition', 'voluntary planning agreements' and 'industrial democracy'. And it details the conservatism and insulting bureaucratism of many trade union organisations, and their refusal to learn from the bitter experiences of defeat.

At the end of February, Coventry Trades Council hosted a conference based on the book. But as Colin Lindsay, Trades Council President, told the 200 delegates, its purpose was to move on from the 'post mortem' to a debate on strategy, and 'Building Working Class Power'.

The trades councils' inquiry had clearly made an impact on those involved in the conference. By contrast with most left wing gatherings discussing industrial policy, speaker after speaker opposed import controls as thoroughly reactionary.

Dick Jones of Coventry Trades Council insisted 'We cannot go to Detroit and argue for import controls. They cannot be the panacea for both the American workers and the British workers.'

Alex Doswell, a docker who is secretary of Liverpool Trades Council, told me in the break: 'I'm not in favour of import controls.'

From inquiry to workers' control

Andrew Hornung reviews the report on 'State Intervention in Industry' prepared by four Trades councils, and a labour movement conference which discussed that report.

Maybe it's just a gut reaction.

And delegate after delegate attacked the assumptions and proposals of the *Alternative Economic Strategy*.

The inquiry had also brought out clearly that the role of the trade union bureaucracy was not just a local matter. Pooling their experiences, the four trades councils concluded that hand in hand with the employers and the state, the union leaders had acted as a brake on workers' ability to mobilise, and done more to demoralise workers than to organise them.

Greg Anderson, a POEU delegate to Newcastle Trades Council, said workers lacked confidence not so much in themselves as in their leaders. 'People are not prepared to go into struggle when they know that their leadership is already selling them out.'

Brian Salisbury's account of the obstructiveness of the Birmingham District CSEU (Shipbuilding & Engineering Confed.) tells the same story: 'There are five Lucas sites in Birmingham and there are eight unions, so we set up a local combine committee as part of the national combine.'

'The CSEU refused to recognise the committee. We got round that by setting up five local CSEU committees on each site and then setting up a liaison committee. We were always fobbed off if we made a request to the District.'

'It's a farce, the District Committee meetings only take about 20 minutes.'

In Liverpool, the inquiry recalls that the first time in two years that the Confed. secretary had stirred himself was to find out what was up when he heard that local MP Eddie Loy-

don was campaigning to include the ship repair yards in the nationalisation legislation.

The idea of a committee to make sure the yards were included met with outright hostility from the CSEU.

The book details how 'The Confed. secretary wrote to Harold Wilson complaining about the involvement of MPs... The CSEU kept preparations and consultations for nationalisation in the hands of a few national officers. There was not a single lay representative of the shipbuilding workers on the joint working party of the TUC, the Labour Party and

the CSEU which drew up proposals for nationalisation.'

And when Industry Minister Tony Benn wanted to talk to shop stewards' committees about it, the CSEU 'asked him to go through the proper channels in the future, and sent out a memo to all CSEU district committee reminding them that all contact with government ministers should be through the CSEU Executive.'

In many ways the inquiry conducted by these trades councils is testimony to the way that, as Trotsky put it, such investigations can be 'a school for workers' control'.



KEN TERNENT of Newcastle Trades Council, opening the Conference, spoke of the 'reign of terror' that has begun in industry, with the employers trying to break shop steward organisation.

Brian Salisbury, a Lucas Aerospace steward, told SO what this meant for his fellow workers.

The present attacks by the employers highlight the weakness of shop stewards' organisation. The CBI and the EEF are circulating letters advising their members on how to sack shop stewards.

In Lucas Aerospace we've seen the same, particularly at Willesden, where Ernie Scarborough and Mike Cooley were the targets.

The Willesden site is small and there is a rift between manual and staff workers. Scarborough and Cooley only represent about 40 members, and they've been put under constant pressure.

First Scarborough's work was taken away from him: they starved him of work and tried to move him from his base. These moves were resisted, as was an attempt to demote him.

Now management are trying to control him by giving him that much work, it's difficult for him to get away.

Management's new get-tough attitude can be seen in other things too. Now, when you take action, the firm doesn't lose a minute before it takes you off the clock.

That's what they did when we refused to work overtime in support of Lucas-Girling.

The combine organisation was crucial then, because the company's attempt to starve out one site by taking it off the clock could only be beaten by levying the rest of the combine.

Burniey, for instance, was sending £1200 a week.

Strikes could stop the tax computers

by an IRSF member

INLAND Revenue staff have voted overwhelmingly, 24,993 to 3,153, in a series of mass meetings, for action in support of the 15% civil service pay claim.

The proposals are for a campaign of selective industrial action and a one-day all-out strike, plus voluntary membership contributions to ensure selective strikers receive 85% of pay.

In the computer centres at Cumbernauld and Shipley likely to be most affected, support for action is even more overwhelming.

The membership voluntary contributions have already started, and the vast majority of members are contributing enthusiastically.

The only thing in doubt is the union leadership's willingness to fight for the full claim now and not to accept some derisory increase now with a Government undertaking to restore the Pay Research system of 'fair comparisons' for future years.

The members are not contributing their hard-earned cash for some undertaking for the future, but for 15% in April.

Longworth: the struggle goes on

By John Lister

THE threat of a resumed occupation at Longworth hospital hangs over the head of the Oxford Area Health Authority.

In the aftermath of the savage AHA raid which snatched four patients from the hospital and closed down the top floor, the staff have temporarily suspended their three-month work-in and 24-hour picketing.

But they have issued a warning that these policies will be re-imposed at the first sign of a further attack on the hospital.

Although the staff voted to maintain the occupation immediately after the raid, the

continued inaction of their union COHSE on a national level left them with little confidence that they would get the kind of supporting action that they need to re-open the top floor.

And instead of working to strengthen the staff in the wake of the raid, Cohse official Ernie Brooks proceeded with negotiations with the AHA. Management responded by declaring that they intended to go over the heads of COHSE to send a planning team to meet the Longworth staff. Effectively this meant withdrawing recognition from the union.

A section meeting was called to discuss this situation,

at which Brook proposed, with no advance warning, that the work-in be suspended so that he could carry on talks with the AHA 'without duress'.

The majority of the small meeting were persuaded that there was no alternative - while Occupation Committee members walked out in disgust.

Since then the Occupation Committee has resolved to pursue the campaign: to meet regularly, and to maintain and strengthen the many links now established with unions and supporters in the area. They feel it won't be very long before the AHA moves again to attack what's left of the hospital.

The closed top floor has been turned into a campaign committee room, as the struggle goes on.

Messages of support to: Myra Bungay, 13 Bowbank, Longworth, Nr. Abingdon, Oxford.

Meanwhile angry Oxford ambulance drivers are continuing to withhold cooperation from the AHA as a protest against the way in which two NUPE drivers were manipulated by management into crossing the Longworth picket lines in the absence of their steward. They have mounted their own inquiry into the incident.

STOP THE COMPUTERS!

By Pete Knight

'Nalگو have got to escalate this industrial action now or else call the whole thing off', was the view of one computer operator in Lothian Health Board's computer room last week.

The nationwide industrial action by the Health Service computer staff is becoming a test of strength between the unions, mainly Nalگو, and the Health Service management faced with tight government cash limits.

The computer staff are seeking pay scales comparable with staff in other industries. But under Treasury directions, Health Authorities are only willing to offer a set of 'allowances' to be paid for within the cash limits.

In pursuit of their claim, the staff are refusing to process accounts and blocking payments to suppliers, as well as taking part in selective one-day strikes and banning overtime.

Support for the action has been less than 100%, however, and there has been hes-

itant leadership nationally. This weakness has encouraged management to adopt an aggressive stance.

In Manchester the management raided the computer room and carried off millions of pounds worth of cheques which the computer staff were withholding. In the South West, staff are facing a lock-out on Mondays and Fridays.

In Lothian the computer operators have refused to allow payment of suppliers by computer and have stopped payment of fees to GPs, chemists and dentists. In response, management are trying to organise other admin. staff to do the work manually, and have cut the wages of the computer staff by 6%.

Instead of providing positive leadership, the negotiators have tried to force the management side to go to ACAS as a means of escaping from this dispute. My own branch, angered by this lack of leadership, sent a telegram to Nalگو's National Health Committee calling for an escalation of the action by

pulling out key staff on indefinite strike.

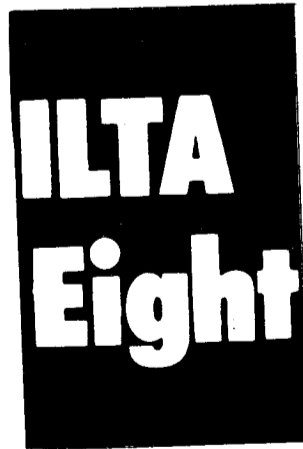
Faced with stalemate, the Committee has now been forced to support our motion, and is now seeking approval for a ballot for strike action.

The effects of strike action would be to disrupt the payment of wages to Health Service staff, so it is imperative that we draw on support from other unions to bring this dispute to a quick end.

With the pay claim for all Health Service admin. staff about to be submitted, and the present negotiations underway on the re-organisation of the Health Service (which threatens thousands of jobs) this small dispute takes on added importance. A defeat for the computer staff would weaken the bargaining position of Nalگو in both sets of negotiations.

A victory, however, would be a significant boost to the confidence of the normally passive Health Service branches of Nalگو.

Send messages of support to Ada Maddox, NHS Nalگو Officer at Nalگو House, Euston Road, WC1



THE CAMPAIGN to reinstate the 'ILTA 8' teachers suspended from the National Union of Teachers for supporting the Lambeth February 4th march is in full swing. Both the NUT National Executive meeting, and the first day of the disciplinary hearing on Saturday 28th were picketed strongly. The hearing is due to report on Thursday 5th.

Rush donations and messages of support to the ILTA 8 defence committee, 12 Albion Drive, London E8.

Hostel workers oppose selling off

by Mike Brown

WORKERS in St. Margaret's House, Edinburgh have just occupied the building in order to stop the charitable trust which runs the hostel from selling it off.

The hostel is the only facility of its kind in Lothian providing accommodation for 12 young women aged between 14 and 18.

Robin Martin, an Edinburgh lawyer and Trust treasurer, was planning to put the building on the open market, so that the charity could capitalise on this valuable piece of real estate in a fashionable part of the city. This was despite repeated offers by Lothian Council to increase cash support to cover a small deficit and to provide extra staffing.

The six staff are all in NALGO Lothian Region Branch and met with NALGO Action Group members last week to discuss how to fight the closure. A deputation was sent to speak at a branch executive meeting on 26th February.

They received unanimous support for their decision to occupy the building.

An Occupation Committee has been set up to support the workers' sit-in, to campaign for the re-opening of the hostel and to raise money to continue the fight. National NALGO backing is being sought. Meanwhile messages of support and donations are urgently needed.

Send to: Occupation Committee, St. Margaret's House, 3 Saxe-Coburg Place, Edinburgh 3.

The ETU: tragedy as soap opera

by John O'Mahony

The origin of the present EETPU regime in the notorious ETU ballot-rigging scandal was the subject of Tony Perrin's play 'The Union' on BBC TV last Tuesday, 24th February, exactly 20 years after the High Court ruled that the 1959 election in the ETU had been rigged by the incumbent leaders, secretary Frank Haxall and president Frank Foulkes.

Both Haxall and Foulkes were leaders of the Communist Party's electricians' group*.

Catholic Actionist John Byrne was declared to have been the victor in the 1959 election. The grip of the CP was shattered, and a new leadership around Byrne took control.

In fact, Byrne had been the candidate of a coalition which included a group of recent ex-CPers, especially Chapple and Les Cannon. Members of the CP were banned from holding office (they still are). Before long the 'regime' became the Cannon-Chapple regime; then, after 1970, the present Chapple regime.

The hero of 'The Union' is Les Cannon (Frank Chapple scarcely appears).

We see him first in Wigan in 1948, 'lining up' an ETU branch. Then in Czechoslovakia, marrying Olga. Then in not too well-defined or explained conflicts with the CP ETU machine in the early '50s.

This Cannon is a bit of a Joe Lampton, personally ambitious and disgustingly petty bourgeois in spirit. We see him complain to Olga in the early '50s that he can't, because of differences with

Haxall and Foulkes, get enough 'committee work'. His income has gone down and down, so he will have to go back on the tools.

We see him, after the break with the CP, debating whether to take a job 'with management'. One purpose of this scene is to tell us that he could do that, if he did not choose instead to stay and fight the CP. Later, confronting a suspicious John Byrne to propose an alliance against the CP machine, he grimly contrasts his own situation, wages, and conditions, as an electrician 'taking home peanuts' with Byrne's as a district official. To be a mere member of 'the union' is made to seem a lowly and wretched fall from caste.

There are such people, of course, who mistakenly drift into the socialist movement. The 1940s CP, especially, maybe, in the ETU, would attract such people. (Between 1941 and '47 the CP opposed strikes, and CP secretary Harry Pollitt raised the slogan: 'It is the class-conscious worker who crosses the picket line').

Perhaps Cannon was like that then. But the general crudity of the play gives us no reason to think that the picture of Cannon is deliberately drawn for either truth or artistic purpose, or meant to shed light on what his fate was to be.

Cynical

In 1956 comes the crisis of the CPs after Khrushchev's speech denouncing Stalin at the 20th 'Congress' of the CPSU and then the bloody repression of the Hungarian workers.

Cannon breaks with the CP. He is shown confronting Harry Pollitt, then CP chairman.

Like most things in the play, it just does not ring true. Cynical Pollitt must have been: but he would scarcely be reduced to resisting Cannon's 'proposal' to dissolve the CP (and have

its members join the Labour Party) with the openly vicar-like refusal to deprive the Party's members of the consolation of his 'communism'.

The play has a curious thread running through it of a sort of sympathy for the ideals of the 'communists' (Stalinists). (Though the usual quotation from Lenin about using subterfuges is trotted out in the usual false sense — as if Lenin were talking about tactics to undermine democracy, rather than tactics to fight bureaucratic repression.)

Dramatically, of course, it had to make its hero as sympathetic as possible. That may be why the sympathy is for the religion-like consolation the CP offers and the loss of which Cannon has to face. This is true to part of life, certainly. But to see Pollitt and the younger Cannon thus, through the haze, and to put impossible words describing it in Pollitt's mouth, is not to see them in their reality at all, and not to see their tragedy.

After his break with the Stalinists, Cannon is shown at war with the CP's 'machine'. (He was). He is sacked

from his job at the union's college, banned from holding office, perhaps cheated in an election.

This too is badly done, even lugubrious. Cannon is 'built up' by way of us seeing him do the details of any trade union/political militant's activity.

Scab

For example, we, together with Olga in nightdress, find him at a table, early in the morning, writing a short letter. Coming off the night-shift, he just had to get off his chest a 'letter to the TUC' about the iniquities of the Stalinists.

Olga draws the curtain and lets the light in on unshaven Les, stretching in his tiredness, and lectures him on his health!

The most radically false section of the play is this one, where Cannon is shown in cliché terms fighting the machine, David against Goliath. But this David has the help of a gang of giants who dwarf the CP ETU machine — the press and TV, the Catholic Action machine

(including Vic Feather, then an assistant general secretary of the TUC, who wrote anonymous articles in the press), rich backers like Woodrow Wyatt, and, ultimately, the law courts.

Cannon is shown, ludicrously, blocked from taking the 'job in management' option because the power of the CP and the ETU machine frightens off prospective employers!

In fact the sustained press and TV campaign against the ETU, aimed at prising the CP grip loose, pre-dated the 1959 ballot-rigging by some years. (In 1957 the Trotskyists published a pamphlet appropriately entitled 'Defend the ETU against Fleet St and King St'). There was nothing heroic about Cannon.

The weapons he chose to fight the corrupt Stalinist bureaucracy with — the millionaire press, the Catholic Action machine and the law courts — amounted to a declaration of his political programme. The tightly-policed ETU of the last 20 years, much much worse than it ever was under the corrupt Stalinists, is the realisation

of Cannon's programme.

'The Union' takes us as far as Cannon's victory in court. There is a voice-over updating of the story to tell of Sir Leslie Cannon's death in 1970. There is not a word about Cannon and Chapple, in the '60s, destroying most of the democratic structures of the union. Whereas the CP bureaucrats rigged the ballots, Cannon, like Alexander cutting through the Gordian knot, abolished most of them.

The tragedy of the ETU was that the degeneration and corruption of a group of would-be Marxist militants led to the politically criminal behaviour of using trickery and ballot-rigging to keep a bureaucratic control of the union. And this allowed the bourgeois state to step in and help Catholic Action and a turncoat like Cannon to take control and make this key union safe for the right wing and for capitalism.

The members of the ETU (now EETPU) were the victims then. They are still the victims.

'The Union' turned the story of how and why this happened into a coarse-grained soap-opera-level drama about the scab Les Cannon.

It was, among other faults, full of trade-union and pidgin-Marxist jargon — the play was waterlogged with it, as distinct from using it to establish and define character. And then close to the end film was shown of an interview between Frank Foulkes and John Freeman — and Foulkes was at least a dimension above the level of mindless jargon which was the language of the play itself!

This tragedy deserved better and more serious treatment.

* The CP denies that it knew about or was responsible for the ballot-rigging. It expelled Haxall and Foulkes, and Peter Kerrigan resigned as industrial organiser, though he remained a party member.



Jeering Chapple: today's regime reflects the methods of 1960-1

Camden: union unity is vital

by Mick O'Sullivan

CAMDEN council's Labour majority may well find this year's budget voted down by the Tories (who want more cuts) and the Labour Left, who oppose the majority's proposal to cut 600 jobs in the direct works and give the council's workers no pay rise this year.

However, the united front of the local unions has suffered a setback.

UCATT, NUPE and NALGO all oppose the cuts

and rent/rate rises.

But UCATT, the union affected by the 600 job cuts in direct works, decided at first not even to contemplate any strike action. The NUPE mass meeting voted for a one-day strike on the rate-making day, March 4th.

But the NALGO mass meeting passed (by 700 to 400) a resolution from full-time officer Mike Blick, rejecting strike action and calling on the branch executive to ne-

gotiate redeployment, voluntary redundancies, and early retirement.

The majority of the NALGO branch executive has resigned, and is seeking re-election on a mandate for a no cuts policy. But NALGO's and UCATT's failure to move has obviously had a bad effect on the NUPE members' morale.

Last week, however, UCATT stewards did an about-face, and are now calling for all-out strike action at a mass meeting on Tuesday 3rd.

LAMBETH GOES FOR 10pc CUTS

by Cheung Siu Ming

LAMBETH Council could be implementing cuts of £11 million from April — 10% across the board off its existing services. A document by Council Leader Ted Knight for discussion by the borough's 4 CLPs also proposes a rate rise of 37½% and two rent rises — £2 in April and £2 in October.

Current services could be maintained by a 57.9% rate rise, but the document states that "such an increase would be unacceptable to Labour voters and would continue the opposition generated by the supplementary rate." Belatedly, the damage done to Labour's support by Lambeth's huge supplementary rate rise has been admitted. But how can that support be won back from the Tories by rent rises and cuts?

The document claims

that the cuts are possible while protecting "essential services and existing job holders." They are made by paring-back exercises, including £½m from the rent rebate and allowance scheme; £1m from housing repairs; £0.3m off grants to voluntary groups in community and social services; £0.7m by leasing all council vehicles; £2.5m off buildings, equipment and general expenses; and £3.3m by reducing overtime and not filling vacancies.

But these measures do mean job cuts. And they do mean cuts in services — unless Ted Knight is telling us that the Tories are right and until now the council has been running with a 10% for "waste and mismanagement".

It will be even more difficult now for activists to fight cuts made by right-wing Labour councils. It will increase uncertainty

and division amongst council workers. It will open the door to bigger cuts next time.

The rent and rate rises are also biting into living standards. There is no light at the end of this tunnel. Even if Lambeth and other Labour councils survive the 1982 council elections, they can only offer more of the same medicine to working people, unless the Tory government is confronted.

Lambeth labour movement must oppose this package and fight for no cuts and no rent or rate rises... It must side actively with the tenants and workers of Lambeth, and demand the council does the same.

The confrontation with the Tories and their banking friends will require massive mobilisation of the labour movement. The stakes are high, yet the alternative is more cuts, and compulsory redundancies next time.

Flying pickets stop the beer

A THOUSAND workers from Ansells brewery at Aston Cross in Birmingham are standing firm as they enter the second month of their strike for jobs.

They started the action in a struggle against 96 forced redundancies and changed working practices. Then last month Ansells announced that they were going to close down the whole brewery.

The strikers have remained 100% solid, despite attempts to divide them with the offer of 400 alternative jobs at depots and, most recently, a proposed redundancy payout worth several thousand pounds to most workers.

As one of the strikers told Socialist Organiser, 'we are fighting for our jobs and our organisation, not for redundancy pay. The T&G officials want us to accept some kind of deal, but we're all quite clear. We won't accept anything short of the re-opening of the Brewery and a satisfactory settlement of our other grievances.'

The strikers are now organising flying pickets to pubs and hotels that are bringing in alternative beer supplies. Money is urgently required and contributions can be sent to: J.H. Bond, Secretary TGWU 5/377, 23 Barnet Rd, Erdington, Birmingham 23.

£300
in 24
hours

By Gareth Caley

On Tuesday 24th February about 40 students occupied the Registrar's Department at Manchester's Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST) in a campaign to stop further rises in overseas students' fees.

Last year the fees were massively increased, from £1,200 a year to £3,500. The government said this was the 'full cost level'.

This year the government put the minimum cost at £3,600, and UMIST gave assurances that it would not charge more. But only 24 hours later they decided to put this year's fees up to £3,900.

During those 24 hours a petition was organised, and signed by 450 students. A picket was organised outside the meeting that was to decide the fees.

When it became obvious that the college would go ahead and charge £3,900, students occupied the Registrar's department.

The next day at an occupation meeting it was decided to go out and widen the campaign by lobbying staff. This will be combined with further lightning occupations.

Several other colleges are taking up the issue of these racist fees, and it looks likely that wide scale actions and occupations will take place in the near future.

Socialist Organiser

AFTER FEBRUARY 21 Fight for jobs

by Andrew Hornung

THE defeat of Thatcher by the miners, coming as it did after years of TUC paralysis and many months of pessimism about the possibility of fighting unemployment, will act as an inspiration and a lesson to millions of trade unionists.

The basic lesson is clear. It was the miners' willingness to fight that forced the Tories to retreat — that and the threat of the miners linking up with other key sectors of the trade union movement. No big-name delegations of skilful negotiators can substitute for that.

But there are still 2½ million unemployed, and a slight shift in government allocations won't solve that problem.

To fight for the 'right to work' we will need to combine class-wide militant action with a programme of far-reaching political and economic measures.

The aim to "Kick out the Tories" isn't enough on its own. It must be linked with

a fight to commit the labour movement to a series of radical measures making inroads into the political and economic privileges of the capitalist class. Otherwise it simply means waiting for a Labour government to solve the problem — and being disappointed.

What measures does the working class need to fight for, to stop the employing class — unemploying class — from solving their crisis at our cost?

We need firstly to counterpose to the capitalist principle of "if there's less work, we'll have fewer workers" the working class principle of "if there's less work, we'll work less".

The capitalist principle divides our class, keeping some at work and plunging millions of others into the poverty, insecurity and demoralisation of life on the dole.

By dividing our class the capitalists weaken our organisation and our capacity for struggle. Those sections of our class who are already

discriminated against — for instance, women and blacks — bear the heaviest blows.

Only by cutting hours instead of jobs can we absorb the army of our unemployed brothers and sisters into the ranks of the employed.

Of course, if this meant short-time working and short-money for everyone the capitalists would still be laughing. In fact in some factories the bosses are proposing that solution themselves: it still means workers paying the cost of the employers' crisis.

Work-sharing must be on full pay. It needs to be linked to a sliding scale of wages, that is, automatic monthly wage increases to keep pace with inflation. Working class organisations need to keep constant check on living costs, not relying on the official figures that don't reflect the spending patterns and problems of working class life.

We also need a serious struggle for a 35 hour week and no loss of pay, and a fight in the unions and on the shopfloor to end overtime working — and to go on the offensive to raise basic wages to make up for the loss in income.

Absorbing the unemployed into the ranks of the employed is impossible without embarking on a huge programme of public works.

Hundreds of thousands of building workers are on the dole while council waiting lists grow longer and longer. For other workers a vast scheme of training and retraining must be developed under workers' control.

The workers' inquiries and plans for alternative production at Lucas and Vickers revealed many real needs that are not being met because of the dictates of the profit-motive. A big programme of public works under the democratic control of the workers' movement could wipe



PHOTO: ANDREW WIARD (REPORT)

50,000 marched against unemployment on Feb. 21

out unemployment and at the same time provide decent housing and attend to other working class needs.

But where's the money going to come from for all this? To begin with the huge resources currently being squandered suicidally in the cause of war could be used to finance such a programme. If more money is needed it can be raised by taxing the capitalists.

This would have to be combined with the development of workers' inspection of the accounts of the capitalists.

In short, we need a planned use of public resources.

Dozens of Labour Party conferences have demanded that sort of planning.

And the Labour Government promised it in 1974 — at least half-heartedly. Why was it such a fiasco? Benn and others wanted to 'plan' in cooperation with capitalism. The capitalists promptly and predictably replied: hands off!

And because the official Left was as much in awe of the majesty of private property and the power of the ruling class as the right wing, Wilson and Callaghan were able to convert the Bennite 'plans' into a series of feeble gestures... and sack Benn.

Their measures — the NEB, the inquiry into the

activities of the City, and the voluntary planning agreements — were calculated not to assert working-class control over the economy, but to try to patch over the chaos of capitalism.

For an effective national plan, the banks, the finance houses, and the companies whose activities and fortunes dominate economic life must be in the hands of the state. And for that plan to meet working class needs, the state must be in the hands of the working class: the whole apparatus of top civil servants, administrators, judges, police and army, which would otherwise neutralise or prevent any serious threat to profiteering, must be cleared out and replaced by working-class power.

The most radical proposals are of no use if the working class cannot control those who are supposed

to carry them out. We must deepen the present struggle for Labour Party democracy and supplement it with a struggle to democratise the trade unions so that the labour movement can take on the capitalist state and impose a government accountable to the movement — a workers government.

The next Labour government must not be another one which manages capitalism in the overall interests of the capitalists.

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Royal Wedding: A letter from the Earl Spencer

THERE is a definite pale blue tinge to the air in the bar tonight. Loyal toasts are being flung around like dud halfpennies. The conversation is spattered with 'our Charlie', and 'As I was saying to Di'.

The whole Windsor tribe has been adopted as proxy in-laws.

How have we become so transfused with all this royal blood? Will we be singing the Blue Flag at chucking-out time?

Wherefore all this familiarity? You what? She's a local girl. Must be, why else would they name the pub after her dad? Years of

loyal service to the brewing fraternity? This is greeted with a sour look.

We will all have our hour of reflected glory. The girls at my son's nursery were delirious: all the kids were shunted into the TV room on the pretext of *Playschool* to watch the Announcement. Now that Di has bagged the big one, they've got their eyes on the younger brothers.

It's not worth it girls, a lifetime of stuffing caviar won't compensate. It's only a gilded cage. And what about a woman's right to work huh? Huh indeed!

The girls in the bar are

similarly unmoved by this line of reasoning. 'I'm glad he's made an honest woman of her. No more skulking about in railway carriages late at night.'

Several dishonest women nod their purple locks at this. They know all about railway carriages, bus shelters and the like.

Not that I've got anything against the girl personally. She seems pleasant enough; but I dare say I could be pleasant enough too, were I not being slowly deranged by malicious communications about the electric, gas and rent.

She doesn't have such

worries — nor indeed will she have to wait ten years for her council house.

Still, I probe this mysterious local link that makes us all kissing cousins to the Spencers and at one remove the Windsors.

Nobody can actually recall going to school with her or seeing her playing on the streets as a kiddy. No, that wasn't her mum you saw down the laundrette — just some local drunk in a jumble sale fur coat.

But she must have roots here somewhere. It stands to reason.

The local paper reveals the ghastly truth. No, this

pub isn't named in honour of her Dad's drinking capacity, great though that may be. But he is Lord of the manors of Wandsworth, Wimbledon, and all the Ws hereabout.

He's what?

Eyes narrow and jaws drop a fraction.

'Suspicion creeps into the corners of the conversation.

It's true, it says it here in black and white. Her ancestors were given all this for miles around by some ancient Queen in perpetuity.

A deep republican gloom descends on the gathering.

It's bad enough the Queen of England quaffing the local brew in Wandsworth High Street. But a feudal lord on your own doorstep — that takes on the aspect of a personal affront.

Us proud and penniless folk, mere vassals and serfs! To be donated like small change for some dubious service rendered.

The royalist spirit has now evaporated entirely. Roll on the peasants' revolt.

GERRY BYRNE