

Fight the
witch-
hunt

Socialist ORGANISER

Break
links
with
Tories

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Unions still
in the dock

NO TIME TO RETREAT!

AT the start of this week, one union stood stripped of its funds, and two unions within days of suffering the same. These measures by the courts were more far-reaching than any for decades, even under the Industrial Relations Act of 1972. They called for a response on the same scale.

The huge mass picket at Warrington on Tuesday night, 29th, and the two-day Fleet Street strike on November 25 and 26, showed the will and the power of the working class to fight back.

Yet the union leaders are trying - successfully, so far, this week - to take the issue off the streets and into the negotiating chamber.

It is the same principle, on a different scale, as the attempts of the Social-Democratic union leaders in Germany to negotiate some compromise with Hitler during the few months between the Nazis coming to power and their move to crush the unions.

A worse example of negotiating from weakness than the NGA's current position is difficult to imagine. All its funds have been seized, and yet it has agreed to call off all effective action as a precondition for the talks.

Last Friday, 25th, it agreed to suspend the picket of Selim Shah's non-union printworks in Warrington for seven days, and talks are now in progress at the government conciliation service ACAS over union rights at Warrington and reinstatement of the six NGA members sacked by Shah from his Stockport office.

Despite a contrary recommendation from its London machine branch, SOGAT 82 on Tuesday 6th decided to obey a court injunction requiring it to halt action at the East Kilbride, Bristol and Leeds printworks of Robert Maxwell's BPCC. The action was in support of SOGAT 82 members locked out at Maxwell's Park Royal, London, plant over a wages and conditions dispute.

The third union under threat from the Tory anti-union laws is the NUJ. Last Friday, 2nd, David Dimbleby got an injunction ordering the NUJ to stop its strike action against his newspapers being printed at a non-union firm in Nottingham, TBF Printers.

The NUJ is refusing to obey the injunction. Dimbleby only has to go back to court and report this, and he can get the NUJ fined for contempt of court. If the NUJ refuses to pay the fine, then it gets its assets seized, though wide-ranging measures to forestall this have been implemented by the union.

There has even been the threat that a court-imposed administrator might be installed in the NUJ

By Colin
Foster

offices to vet its daily activity.

But Dimbleby says he will "pause before taking this step". Obviously he hopes that the NGA dispute will be settled first - and then the NUJ can be picked off separately.

A deal between the NGA and Shah this week will be a severe setback. It is bound to involve a climbdown on the specific issues in dispute at Warrington - and, more important, it will mean that the authority of the Tory anti-union laws is established in a crucial test case.

The NUJ will then be isolated. The NGA itself will face grave risks: the Fleet Street employers' court case against it for damages from the November 25-26 strike is likely to come up in the New Year, and could mean a fine of £3 million.

Instead of the unions presenting a powerful common front to the Tories and the courts, they will have been cut down one by one.

But all is not settled. There is still time for a campaign from the rank and file to get resistance organised.

*Prepare for re-starting the Warrington picket.

*Argue for a national labour movement campaign in solidarity with the NGA and NUJ and against the anti-union laws.

The Merseyside Trade Union and Labour Movement Campaign Committee has made some moves towards this, sending out a letter calling for support to all Trades Councils nationally. But since the NGA called off its pickets, those moves have been left in suspense.

Trades Councils across the country should set up similar campaign committees, and write to Merseyside proposing a national link-up.

*Inside the NUJ, fight for the union to prepare for strike action against any seizure of assets, to call for solidarity strikes with other unions, and to seek a



STEFANO CAGNONI (IFL)

common front with the NGA.

*Inside the NGA, fight for an all-out strike against the seizure of the union's funds, and for a common front with the NUJ.

*Inside every other union, fight for pledges of supporting strike action if the NGA or the NUJ strikes.

The Kings Cross ASLEF branch has sent a resolution along these lines to the ASLEF executive. At Cammell Lairds shipyard, Merseyside, the Confed shop stewards' committee has passed a resolution for a half-day strike in the yard - though putting that resolution into practice, scheduled for Friday 2nd, has now been postponed.

*Demand that the TUC calls a one-day general strike and prepares for an all-out general strike if the government does not back down.

*Inside the Labour Party, fight for support. Get local Labour Parties to leaflet workplaces and mobilise for the picketing. Demand the Labour leaders come out in support of the NGA and NUJ.

December 11: still the Day before!

STAY at home on Saturday 10th and watch TV. At 9.15pm ITV is showing 'The Day After'.

The film shows the effects of a (small) nuclear war. The day after, Sunday 11th, there is a women's demonstration against Cruise missiles at Greenham Common. It should be the biggest yet.

Although the Greenham demonstration is women-only, men are asked to help by organising creches, and there are local mixed actions on Saturday. CND is calling for a 'Refuse Cruise' day, with workplace protests, on Monday 12th.

'The Day After' created a huge stir when it was shown in the US on November 20, though it is soberly factual and even somewhat underplayed.

Defence Minister Michael Heseltine is demanding to appear on TV straight after the film in order to reply.

In the US, Secretary of State George Shultz gained such an appearance, and straight-faced told viewers that the horrors they had seen showed why they should support President Reagan's "efforts to reduce nuclear armaments".



CND conference last weekend voted to step up campaigning for industrial action against nuclear weapons. And last week Rolls Royce confirmed that they have scrapped work on a part for Trident because of a boycott by workers at its Hillingdon, Glasgow, factory.

It's still 'the day before'. We can still stop Cruise.
*CND conference: see pages 3 and 5. For details of coaches on December 11, phone 01-251 3133.

NGA: 4-page pull-out inside

EDITORIAL

Union action against the Bomb

A BOYCOTT of work on a part for Trident by workers at the Rolls Royce Hillingdon (Glasgow) factory has forced Rolls Royce to scrap the project.

Shop stewards' convenor Gavin Keown told the Sunday Times:

"The men voted to black it. We were then called to a works conference and management said it was possible that the Cruise missiles can still be stopped. The nuclear weapon bases cannot exist without supplies and services provided by trade union labour.

If the unions put their unilateralist policies into action, they can paralyse the warmongers.

Another proof of this was the Tory government's decision to dump nuclear waste. Minister Patrick Jenkin said that the decision was in response to 'public concern', but in fact it was forced on the Tories by a boycott of the dumping by transport workers, in the first place by seamen.

Demonstrations, blockades and other protests can help build the mass support that will be needed to make such trade union boycott action possible on a mass scale.

The CND conference last weekend also decided to organise for 'warning strikes' against nuclear weapons. The West German TUC (the DGB) called a five-minute strike against Pershing on October 5 this year.

The nuclear threat depends on the power of the ruling class to deploy and wield nuclear weapons as they wish. And that power in turn depends on passivity and acquiescence of the labour movement.

The ruling classes will never be quietly persuaded to disarm. Even if individual Establishment figures may become sincere unilateralists, the Establishment machine as a whole will never voluntarily renounce the 'ultimate deterrent' supporting its world-wide power.

The working class has to mobilise and take power out of their hands.

To get rid of the whole nuclear arsenal is, of course, a different proposition from stopping work on one part of Trident. It will need action on a much bigger scale than local workplace boycotts. It will face fierce resistance instead of the Rolls Royce bosses' relatively easy retreat.

So we need to be working not only for industrial action, but also for a workers' government — a government of the labour movement which, unlike all previous Labour governments, bases itself on the labour movement and acts against the capitalist class and their state machine.

But the fight starts now, with the campaign for industrial action, road blockades, and demonstrations against Cruise.

SEAWEED by any other name still crackles and pops under the geiger counter on the shores by Windscale — sorry Sellafield — in Cumbria.

The latest debris from the deep will come as no surprise to those who have seen a succession of embarrassing admissions of leaks, cracks and blunders at the Windscale reprocessing plant.

But the blithely predictable government assurances that none of the waste products now finding their way back from the Irish Sea represents a danger to human life and safety carry less conviction each time around.

A month ago protesters dumped radioactive sand from the Windscale shoreline on the pavement in Downing Street: police nervously sealed off the block.

Now, as the weed begins to come ashore, contaminated with between 100 and 1,000 times the normal level of radioactivity, Department of the Environment spokespersons warned the public to avoid "unnecessary" use of the beach and not to swim in the sea.

Tory minister William Waldegrave, however, argued that it would be "too hasty" to curtail operations at Windscale following the latest revelations.

The Windscale plant, of course, is not primarily a power station — but an integral part of the industrial complex that maintains the British nuclear arsenal and reprocesses spent nuclear fuels from power stations around the world both for peaceful and military purposes.

Recognising this, and determined that the military "needs" of the ruling class should override the health and safety of working class people in the vicinity of nuclear plants, the High Court last week fined the

action to halt these nuclear plants and demand a moratorium on atomic power production — while there are still green plants growing that do not glow in the dark!

New episode in the 'Sellafield' scandal

By Harry Sloan

Greenpeace environmentalists a draconian £50,000 for their resolute attempts to stop the dumping of radioactive waste in the Irish Sea.

As an organisation which had — like the NGA — cocked a snook at the employers' "law and order" by defying a previous injunction, Greenpeace was told it was lucky not to face the sequestration of its whole assets.

Unions

No doubt the judge who inflicted this heavy fine was looking with one eye at the increasingly strident opposition to the government's nuclear dumping policy being voiced by some of Britain's main transport unions — the National Union of Seamen, the TGWU and ASLEF.

Last summer joint action by these unions brought a halt to deep-sea dumping of atomic waste in the Atlantic. Now the NUS is threatening to hold up shipments of waste from Dounreay in Scotland to Windscale unless there is a cutback in the outflow of waste into the sea.

This kind of pressure has produced a significant retreat by the government, which has now agreed to suspend the sea-dumping of low-level waste — such as contaminated clothing, laboratory materials and building debris — pending an independent investigation involving both TUC and government participation.

This is important: but the pause in dumping will not halt the flow from the Windscale pipeline. And high level waste continues to accumulate, with the Tories now planning to store it above ground in special containers for the next 50 years.

Leaked

The small-scale accidents that have leaked to the press could yet build into a large-scale disaster, while no safe means of disposing of the lethal wastes have yet been devised. It is high time the labour movement

who want to organise on a class basis have been alienated by the radical separatism of parts of the women's liberation movement; and, not wanting to join the male-dominated heterosexual Labour Party and trade union movement, have become politically isolated.

Women who have braved the cold, often anti-feminist never mind anti-lesbian, waters of the labour movement have often had a hard time.

But on Saturday November 26 women from NALGO, T&G ACTSS, and Labour Parties in London, Reading and Coventry, met at A Woman's Place in London to set up a brand new lesbian organisation called Labour Movement Lesbians. The new group aims to make lesbians more visible in both the Labour Party and the trade union movement.

There was discussion around the need to join together socialism, feminism, and gay rights, as well as the need to organise on all fronts — with women and with gay men in the labour movement, as well as with other lesbians.

It was decided to go all out to draw attention to the group, to



Dumping American nuclear waste — most comes from military projects

action to halt these nuclear plants and demand a moratorium on atomic power production — while there are still green plants growing that do not glow in the dark!

Link up fight on Ireland!

OVER 100 people attended the 'Ireland: Peace Through Democracy' conference in London on November 26.

The Conference aimed in

BRUCE ROBINSON reports on a conference discussing solidarity work in the British labour movement.

particular to begin the difficult work of organising on the issue of Ireland in the trade unions, and, despite the relatively low attendance, the conference had some useful results in this area.

After hearing Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone, and Clive Soley, the conference split up into workshops to discuss the situations in different unions and the possibility of organising caucuses to take up the issue at rank and file level. Among the issues discussed was the effective ban on raising the issue in unions like UCATT, NUPE, and the TGWU which have members in the Six Counties.

In the report-back from the workshops, ASTMS members — who have the only permanent union caucus on Ireland existing at the moment — put a resolution proposing that delegates from the different unions form a committee to coordinate and back up the work. This was carried overwhelmingly by the conference.

If such a committee is set up, and functions regularly, it will be a considerable step forward. None of the existing organisations active on Ireland — including the Labour Committee on Ireland, which remains a Labour Party members only organisation — has the strength to carry this job alone. A broader committee could however ensure that efforts are coordinated.

Reports of the conference are being prepared for circulation to labour movement organisations. They are available from 'Ireland: Peace Through Democracy', c/o Socialist Organiser.

Labour movement lesbians organise

By Kath Crosby

FOR FAR too long lesbians have been invisible in the labour movement.

Where there has been any support, it has been for gay rights, and that usually means gay men.

The demands that gay men make, on issues like lowering of the age of consent or the use of entrapment against them by the police, are often totally unrelated to women. While we support gay men in their campaign in these areas, it is about time that we had some labour movement activity in the area of lesbians' custody over their children, or lesbian rights at work.

Groups such as the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights, whilst not anti-women, do not attract women because they are male-orientated and of course male-dominated. In the early to mid seventies, lesbian women left groups such as the Campaign for Homosexual Equality and the Gay Liberation Front to join the women's movement.

This has meant that lesbians

offer speakers to Labour Parties and trade union branches, and to follow the example set in NALGO and form Lesbian and Gay Groups within other unions.

It is hoped to encourage trade union branches, women's sections, and Labour Party organisations to become supporters of 'Labour Movement Lesbians'.

If you want information on how to join Labour Movement Lesbians, then write to Sara, c/o Feminist Library, Hungerford House, Victoria Embankment, London WC2.

Membership is free to unwaged women. We are asking waged women to pay £5 a year, though maybe not all at once, and there is a donation rate for supporters of £5 for Labour Party organisations and £10 for trade unions. Cheques to be made payable to LML.

The next meeting will be at A Woman's Place, Hungerford House, Victoria Embankment, London WC2, on January 28 1984 at 2pm.

draw attention to the group, to

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Bob Fine

CND says no to 'freeze' slogan

MARTIN THOMAS reports from Sheffield

THE proposal to campaign for a 'Freeze' on nuclear weapons (as distinct from scrapping them) was rejected by a two-to-one majority. The conference decided overwhelmingly to "campaign actively" for British withdrawal from NATO (though it referred to CND council a stronger resolution which called the CND leadership to account for its failure to carry out similar resolutions passed by 1981 and 1982 conferences).

By huge majorities the conference decided to step up campaigning against Trident and work in the labour movement. The labour movement resolution called for CND "to work with trade union organisations, duly encouraged by the recent successful blacking of sea-dumping of nuclear waste, to mobilise the millions of trade union members into practical activity, including effective industrial action, against work connected with nuclear weapons."

The loudest applause in the whole conference was for Jenny Prideaux's speech against the Freeze. "Freeze is a step back", she said.

"It would mean freezing Cruise, US bases, commitment to NATO, and the obscene profits made by the arms companies."

"The trade unions and the Labour Party conference voted for unilateral nuclear disarmament. It's bad tactics to go for a Freeze. We've been calling for endless talks and treaties since 1948, and we know where that has led."

The Freeze was adopted as a policy by the CND Council in April and made a central slogan of the October 22 demonstration. But the people arguing for it at the conference were very shamefaced.

No-one would venture to say more than that CND should support a Freeze campaign as something strictly secondary to its unilateralist stand.

Moreover, those arguing for a Freeze campaign were divided. Neil McKechnie from Scottish CND called for a unilateral freeze by Britain as a "first step in a process of nuclear disarmament."

John Shepherd from South West Region CND suggested that CND should instead call for a Freeze by the two super-powers.



A heterogeneous attendance at the CND conference!

An alternative to nukes?

THE political temper of the conference was well illustrated by the debates on "alternative defence" and "armed forces".

A RESOLUTION calling on CND to develop "non-nuclear, non-aggressive defence" policies was carried about four to one. Those in favour varied from people whose main concern was to convince the world that CND is for "strong conventional defence", to Lynne Jones from Greenham Common arguing for "social resistance" based on the methods of "strikes, boycotts and pickets". Those against ranged from the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers Party to pure pacifists.

The same issues came up from a different angle in a



debate on a London Region proposal moved by Pat Arrow-smith to set up CND groups in the armed forces.

CND general secretary Bruce Kent intervened in debate for the only time during conference to oppose it.

Taking up a clause in the resolution about the role that 'low morale' in the armed forces played in ending the Vietnam war, Kent said: "I don't want low morale among the armed forces, I want such a high morale that they know what their obligations under the law are."

Linda Walker of New Mills CND argued: "We'll only make things worse if we're seen to be infiltrating the forces and lowering morale... We have to change the whole thinking of the services. That cannot be done by recruiting small numbers to CND."

By a majority of five to one or thereabouts, the conference rejected London Region's proposal and instead voted to "acknowledge the valuable contribution made by 'Generals for Disarmament'" and for a perspective of convincing the whole armed forces, generals included, that nuclear weapons are against international law.

Warnings that attempts to organise within the armed forces would open both CND and the soldiers involved to witch-hunting seemed to sway the conference.

Nowhere in these short debates was a socialist perspective put, of a people's militia controlled by the labour movement and working class communities, which will not only be an alternative to nuclear weapons, but also a "defence" against the ruling classes and governments that wield those weapons.

Most of the conference — as far as I could understand — saw the fight against nuclear weapons as a moral issue, to be pursued by changing public opinion and not necessarily

linked to the class structure of society.

Labour movement action was still seen as important. But the conference was responsive to arguments against "sectarianism" and socialist groups allegedly "disrupting" CND's broad, single-issue movement.

Curiously, or perhaps not so curiously considering the mainly middle-class base of CND activists, feminist issues have not suffered the same suspicion as class issues, and have made a big impact in CND. A resolution supporting women-only action at Greenham Common was carried by a majority of at least ten to one.

CND national membership has increased 60% over the last 12 months and new recruits are coming in at about 3,000 to 4,000 a month. Local group membership — which is separate from

national membership — is estimated at 300,000.

There was a 'right wing' at the conference, represented by the platform and by Christian CND, and a 'left wing' represented by Labour CND, Youth CND and some CND regional committees.

The 'left' rallied itself at a well-attended Tribune fringe meeting on the Saturday evening, where Tony Benn spoke.

But Benn's answer was a sort of new Popular Front. "The world peace movement is the anti-imperialist movement of earlier years and the anti-fascist movement of before that... We have got to bring the peace and labour movements in Western Europe, the USA, and Japan together with the Non-Aligned Movement in the Third World... defeat this hideous coalition of mass media, military

men, monetarists and multi-nationals."

Such a perspective is quite different from a steady focus on the working class as the force which can overthrow and disarm the bomb-wielding ruling classes. The left needs to sort itself out politically, as well as increasing our involvement in CND.

Perhaps the most hopeful thing to come out of the conference was a lunchtime meeting of Youth CND activists before the YCND debate. About 70 attended, all committed to continuing YCND's fight for unilateral nuclear disarmament and against NATO.

Many of them will come together again at a YCND activists' meeting on December 17.

Despite the defeats at this CND conference, the fight against the Bomb shows no signs of fading away.

Left gains seats

LEFT-WINGERS won positions in the elections for CND officers and council: Labour CND secretary Joy Hurcombe was elected as one of the four vice-chairs, and Socialist Organiser supporter Judith Bonner was elected to council together with Helen John from Greenham Common, Dick Witcombe (a Socialist Action supporter) and Walter Wolfgang (Labour CND).

Labour CND and Youth CND, however, lost their battles against the CND leadership. Both these sections have in recent months had their committees dissolved by the CND Executive and have been put under "Interim Committees".

Over Labour CND, the knife was put in, scandalously, by one of the few Socialist Workers Party members left after the SWP's recent almost-complete withdrawal from CND.

SWP veteran Nick Howard moved that Labour CND's motion opposing the measures against them be referred to the CND council, and the reference back was carried by 1045 votes to 600.

"Labour CND moved behind the Labour Party's election campaign", he complained, despite the fact that one of the CND leadership's charges against the Labour CND executive had been the fact that they criticised the election campaign. ("A sectarian binge... Attacks on people like Robin Cook and Neil Kinnock," complained Mike Gapes).

Nick Howard further complained that Labour CND had "sullied" the movement with "sectarianism".

But Walter Wolfgang, for the Labour CND Executive, explained that action had been taken against Labour CND, "precisely because we have campaigned for a strong, uncompromising unilateralist line... Inside the Labour Party there are people who would like to see a less determined campaign. If the words were not so sharp and the commitment not so hard, it would be easier to get the agreement of the leadership."

Youth CND's motion, condemning the CND executive's decision to declare Youth CND conference invalid, was lost on a show of hands by about three to one.

Tom Rigby, moving the motion, argued that the technical reasons given for invalidating the conference did not hold. Membership had been checked, against a CND computer print-out. Ages hadn't, but then they hadn't been checked at previous YCND conferences, either.

The issue, he said, was the CND executive coming down in a heavy-handed way on YCND's militant campaigning for unilateralism and withdrawal from NATO. Youth should have some autonomy, and 90% of YCND activities were organised by groups which support autonomy.

The argument from the CND leadership, as with Labour CND, was based on the charge of "sectarianism". "Youth must not be alienated by small political groupings within our movement who want to campaign on issues which are not the policy of CND," said Annajoy David, referring to the YCND conference decision to support the "No More Chiles" demonstration in September.

Dan Smith launched a bitter attack on left groups in YCND: "Their agenda for YCND is different from the agenda of CND as a whole."



JOHN HARRIS

Bruce Kent



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International news



Sandinista rally — the regime retains mass support

Are Sandinistas playing for time?

By John O'Mahony

On December 4 the Sandinistas called Reagan's political bluff.

In response to the hypocritical US clamour about 'democracy' in Nicaragua, they announced a package which, among other things, demonstrates their self-confidence. It includes the following:

- The state of emergency will be lifted in mid-1984, to prepare for a general election in 1985. (The Sandinistas set 1985 as the date of elections as long ago as 1980).
- Habeas corpus will be restored, and so will
- the right to strike,
- the right of political parties to hold public demonstrations and meetings.
- Press censorship will be brought to an end.
- Within six months control of the two TV stations will be handed over to an independent electoral commission, charged with ensuring access for opposition parties to that medium.
- A general amnesty has been announced for all counter-revolutionaries. They will be free to form political parties and to contest the elections.
- There will be 'dialogue' with the Catholic Church in Nicaragua — whereas recently clashes took place in churches because the hierarchy opposed conscription.

• In a big show of departing aeroplanes, it seems that some Cuban advisers have left Nicaragua — though many remain.

The leaders of the FMLN of El Salvador are shifting their headquarters from Nicaragua to Mexico. There were reports in the press last week that they had been asked to be out of Nicaragua before Interior Minister Tomas Borge was due to arrive in the USA. (He was refused admission).

The Sandinistas also took the latest steps in a process which has been going on for months, to try to 'reassure' the USA about 'the Central American region'. Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega said: "We have decided to discuss all the problems that

Our schedules have been shaken up in the last couple of weeks because we have had to respond to the crisis around the NGA and the law courts. The main casualty has been the third and final part of John O'Mahony's assessment of the recent Sinn Féin Ard Fheis. It will appear next week.

worry the US".

The Sandinistas have already signed a 'peace treaty' jointly worked out with the so-called Contadora countries (Colombia, Venezuela, Panama and Mexico) which commits them explicitly not to "support or assist any group seeking to attack, overthrow or destabilise another state". The Sandinistas have always said that they would not do that anyway.

These moves came in the aftermath of the invasion of Grenada, and are seen by many as a result of it. Some reports say that they are the outcome of long and painful debate within the ruling junta.

The Nicaraguan government's first response to the invasion of Grenada was to harden its heart against the internal opposition and to prepare for invasion. They raised the slogan, "Today Grenada, tomorrow Nicaragua". They called a proposal by some Nicaraguan businessmen to set a date for elections in November 1984, 'an insult to sovereignty'.

Trenches were dug in the streets, air-raid shelters were built, and the drive to conscript everyone between 17 and 25 was intensified.

They had reason to be alarmed.

To the north, on the Honduras border and making incursions across it, were as many as 10,000 'contras' of the Nicaraguan Democratic Front (FDN), many of them ex-Somocistas. There were also 5000 US marines, doing provocative 'military exercises'. The US has built a field hospital there with the capacity to care for big battle casualties.

Congress had seemed ready last summer to stop Reagan's involvement, but it has just voted \$24 million aid to the 'contras'. The US ambassador to Costa Rica said recently in public, "An invasion of Nicaragua is not impossible".

To the South, 1000 US army engineers have been moved into Costa Rica, where the 'moderate' contra guerrillas of the Anti-Sandinista Democratic Alliance (ARDR) led by ex-Sandinista Eden Pastora and bourgeois former junta member Alfonso Robelo are based.

The ARDR talks of the revolution being betrayed by the Sandinistas, and say they oppose a US invasion. They pretend they do not take money from the CIA, but the US press says they do. Most likely they do, but the CIA may just want to discredit Pastora for refusing to

merge with the Somocistas on the Honduras border.

Serious blows have been struck at the Nicaraguan economy by saboteurs — including the loss of 400,000 gallons of fuel and attacks on Managua airport. But the main blows to the economy have come from US economic pressure.

In October the Central American Council was reactivated, and generals from El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama and Honduras discussed a possible invasion of Nicaragua once a 'rebel government' had got even a toe-hold inside the country.

Against this harassment and war of nerves has to be balanced the fact that the USA's own military assessment is that the contras have no chance of overthrowing the Sandinista government. They lack popular support and have little possibility of gaining it — especially the ex-Somocistas on the northern border.

This could of course lead the US government to conclude that if it wants to overthrow the Sandinistas, the only option is invasion.

But the Sandinista army is 25,000 strong and well-armed. The Nicaraguan people would have strong motivation to defend their country, and experience of guerilla warfare. Nicaragua would be no pushover, even for the US.

After the difficulties they had in taking Grenada with 6000 US troops, they will surely think carefully before invading Nicaragua.

What, then, are the Sandinistas doing?

It is highly unlikely that there has actually been a break with the Cubans. In fact there have been press reports that Castro has been trying to reconcile Pastora and the Sandinistas.

The Sandinistas have been committed to elections in 1985 since 1980, even though it is under extreme pressure that they now announce them. Sandinistas like FSLN founder Tomas Borge are known to have long favoured elections. There can be little reason to doubt that they will win them.

Junta member Carlo Nunez said that they will invite observers to the election from the contras, the UN, the International Commission of Jurists, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.

The Economist (November 26) said: "The American occupation of Grenada last month sent Nic-

aragua's Sandinistas running for cover... The Sandinistas are taking the invasion seriously enough to pause in their plot towards collectivism... The Sandinistas may be playing for time. Or they may be discovering that revolution, too, is the art of the possible".

It is not at all clear that the Economist is right and the Sandinistas are scurrying. The Salvadoreans' account of moving to Mexico is that they don't want to be trapped if the US invades. That the move will materially hinder them is not obvious.

It is not in the Sandinistas' power to 'turn off' the Salvadoran revolution. It is not whatever material aid they may have given the FMLN which is their great crime in the eyes of the US. It is the example they set. It is their existence.

The Contadora 'peace treaty' which is due to be presented for signature in mid-December requires not only that the Sandinistas do not support the FMLN and other movements, but also, more importantly, that US troops and funds be withheld from El Salvador and Honduras.

For the US to cut off support to its stooges in El Salvador would be to give up the game, and open the way for the FMLN to win. It is highly improbable, whatever the Sandinistas do, that the US will do this.

Of course, for the Sandinistas even to appear to concede in principle that the US has rights to tell them not to aid the revolutionaries in El Salvador is unfortunate. But Nicaragua is a very small country, living in the shadow of the US imperialist government. Even the Russian Bolsheviks, under pressure from German imperialism in 1918, had to make concessions which seemed in principle to accept outrageous German imperialist claims.

The Bolsheviks had a programme of international working class revolution, while the Sandinistas are nationalists who look to aid from the Mexican bourgeoisie rather than a revolution by the Mexican working class, the most powerful in the region.

But it is too early to say that the Sandinistas' latest move, as such, represents any fundamental concession to US imperialism.

The US has made some welcoming responses. But nothing the Sandinistas have announced will give the US government any of its basic objectives either in El Salvador or in Nicaragua.

Elections are not the US's goal in Nicaragua. The overthrow of the regime is — and they won't get that from elections.

Whatever the genesis of the liberalisation promised for next year, it is good news for working class socialists. Not only the right to strike and the right to fight for the independence of the unions, but democratic rights in general, are important for the possibility of the emergence and free development of a socialist labour movement in Nicaragua.



North and South

by Paddy Dollard

UDR men on murder charges

HOT ON the heels of the massacre in the Pentecostal church at Darkley, and the sectarian attacks on Catholics immediately following it, two members of the British Army's part-time Northern Ireland regiment, the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR), have been charged with sectarian murder.

Over a dozen UDR members from South Armagh were taken into custody and questioned last week about the spate of killings attributed to 'Action Force'. Some are still being questioned.

The sectarian killers of the 'Catholic Reaction Force' claimed that they killed Protestants at Darkley in retaliation for the bloody work of the Protestant Action Force, which, they said, had killed eight men, "operating under the protective umbrella of the UDR". It seems that they were right about that.

The UDR was set up at the beginning of 1970 as part of the then Labour government's efforts to reform and de-sectarianise Northern Ireland. It was to be the replacement for the avowedly sectarian Orange and Unionist 'B Special Constabulary'.

What happened to the UDR is one of the proofs that it is hopeless to try to reform the Six County entity.

Catholics were encouraged to join the new body, to help ensure that its composition would reflect both Northern Ireland communities. In fact a lot of Catholics did join it in the 'Year of Transition' between the British Army's taking to the streets in August 1969 and the Provisional IRA going on the offensive. 16 per cent of UDR members were Catholics. (Catholics are 35% of the Six County population).

But within the year most of them had left. Today there are virtually no Catholics in the UDR, and it is an arm of the Protestant community. Behind the front and veneer of London-imposed non-sectarianism, it is riddled with sectarianism and with organised sectarian groupings like the Ulster Volunteer Force.

Beating down

Why has the UDR gone this way? Because the British Army — including the UDR — has spent most of the last 14 years beating down the Catholics. The Catholics were quickly alienated and left. Protestant militants naturally find the UDR a congenial home.

In places like South Armagh the UDR is nothing but a Protes-

tant militia helping to keep down mainly Catholic territory. What better cover could Protestant sectarian murder gangs desire?

The UDR has from time to time been purged of 'infiltrators'. But such purges — in a force which, in the circumstances, is inevitably, even organically, sectarian — are not much more than cosmetic exercises.

The number of incidents of the UDR being used as a front for Orange intimidation or murder have mounted over the years. The best-known case is the Miami Show Band massacre.

The UDR stopped the Band's mini-van on its way South and killed three men. Two of the UDR men then accidentally blew themselves up.

Of course the Catholics, who meet the UDR face to face, know exactly what the UDR is. The IRA treat its members — all of them — as fair game. Protestants see attacks on off-duty UDR men as sectarian. It is a vicious spiral.

Logic

Now the arrests in the wake of Darkley will seem to justify that terrible deed in the eyes of some Catholics. The investigation and arrests came after Darkley, not before... So the arrests will seem a response to the killing, which will thereby seem to have 'worked'.

The logic of fighting sectarianism with 'counter-sectarianism' is built into the Six County bearpit, which pits community against community within an artificial framework maintained — despite its internal collapse and obvious unviability — by outside force, and which thus murderously intensifies the communal antagonisms.

In his valuable book on the IRA Tim Pat Coogan recalls the attitude of a representative Republican to the massacre of ten Protestant workers at Bessbrook in Armagh in 1976.

"Why?", I asked an IRA spokesman. Looking me straight in the eye he replied, 'Why not? It stopped the sectarian killings in the area, didn't it?'

It had — for a while. (Though of course Darkley didn't).

At a certain level, tit-for-tat sectarian attacks intensify into the rash of reciprocal sectarian clashes, population movements and slaughters, which is communal civil war.

That the foul anti-Republican, anti-nationalist deed at Darkley now probably makes sense to people with the hard-edged narrow communalist realism of Coogan's 'IRA spokesman', and that they will thus in the future be likely to remember it as a model — that is the responsibility of the British government, which imposed the partition of Ireland and props up the Six County unit today.

Denied proper conference Labour women are still on the attack

THE National Labour Women's "Conference" was held, at last, on Saturday December 3, in the form of a one-day rally on privatisation: no resolutions and no voting. But Labour women were in no mood to be fobbed off with a rally — even if it did include Neil Kinnock addressing us on the politically important topic of banana skins (banana skins?).

Everyone agreed that the Labour Women's Conference, originally scheduled for June, couldn't go ahead, given the General Election. But why couldn't it be rescheduled?

Party headquarters argued that the person who is paid to organise Women's Conference now had other work to do.

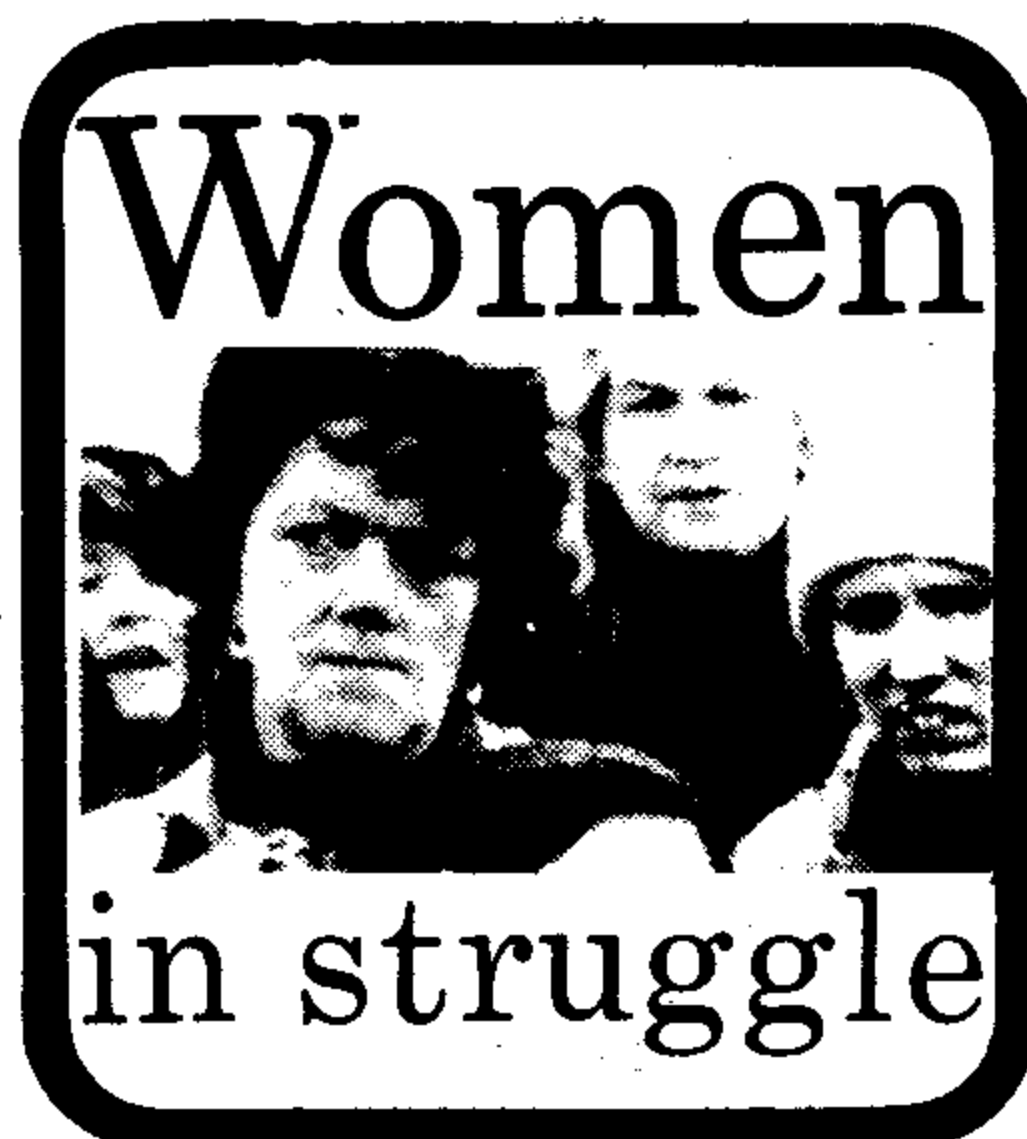
But the 1982 Conference had called for a proper discussion on privatisation at the 1983 Conference and papers for this had been prepared. It was an easy

job to gather them together, and call a one-day school on privatisation — instead of a proper conference of Labour women.

There were two positive elements in the response they met with.

First of all, Labour women organised to protest at this. A resolution from Chipping Barnett women's section was passed at the London Region Women's Conference at the end of November, condemning the NEC and calling for a boycott of the school on privatisation. It called on boycotting delegates to organise an alternative event.

Similar sentiments were expressed at two other regional women's conferences (at least); but it was impossible to get hold of a national women's mailing list, so London decisions were not communicated to other



By Jenny Fisher and Jo Thwaites

regions.

In the event, about 300 women attended the school and the boycotters modified their tactics. London women (some of whom had been mandated to boycott) and others from the regions met at lunchtime to discuss tactics, and what they wanted out of the conference.

Then many women attended all the workshops in the afternoon to make these views heard and collected signatures for a petition protesting about the conference having been cancelled.

The second positive aspect of the protest was that women were not put on the defensive, but remained on the attack.

In arguing that the Conference must be held and that a one-day rally was no substitute, women did not fall into the trap of defending an institution that is in itself normally undemocratic and inadequate.

But they made the points that the Women's Conference should be able to send five of the resolutions it passes to Annual Conference; that it should be able to elect Women members of the NEC, and hold them account-

New cuts hit poorest hardest

WITH Mrs Scrooge herself at the head of the Tory government, a miserable Christmas and winter period have been lined up for old age pensioners and over 11 million people in Britain's lowest-income families.

A report jointly produced by various charities including Age Concern and the Child Poverty Action Group highlights the danger that 44,000 old people and up to 500 young babies will die of the cold before Spring 1984 because they lack sufficient money to heat their homes.

Many of the elderly and unemployed, who spend additional time at home, need to find double the "average" expenditure on heating bills, or three times as much as the wealthy beneficiaries of Thatcher's tax cuts.

Meanwhile the Sunday Times has uncovered details of the impact on low-paid families of the cuts in Housing Benefit announced recently by social services secretary Norman Fowler.

According to a special report commissioned by the Sunday Times, Fowler's cuts will strip

away the whole housing benefit from 500,000 households, while another four million households — containing ten million people — will lose the right to claim as much as £8 per week. In practice anything up to half this number have failed until now to claim benefits to which they are entitled.

Fowler's cuts consist in stepping up the deductions from the benefit, which is designed to offset rates and rents of families on or around the poverty line; and in ruling that in all but peculiar exceptions benefits below £1.50 should not be paid at all.

The prime victims for this savage move will be families with a single low-wage income — though pensioners, too, will be hit by the reductions in benefit. These are the people to whom Fowler cynically referred when he claimed that the cuts would concentrate on "better-off households".

As a result of Tory cuts and tax changes, the Sunday Times points out, these low-paid families by next April will stand to lose 79p in every extra pound they earn through deductions in income tax and other benefits.



Jo Richardson and Audrey Wise on the platform

able; and that, most relevant of all to Saturday's event, there must be a Rules Conference, so that Labour women can take control of their own Conference. 'Legally', under Party rules, the Women's Conference doesn't even exist!

How, one delegate argued, could she be expected to go home, and recruit women to the Labour Party by saying to them: "Women are second class citizens already — come and be a second class citizen in the Labour Party too."?

The organised protest had some effect: Party officials were visibly rattled. Despite their attempts to shackle the day school, they did read out messages of support for Greenham Common and the NGA. On reading the second, Joyce Gould forgot herself and called for a show of hands in favour: a voice from the floor reminded her "We're not allowed to vote at this Conference."

They also seem to have got the point. Next year's conference has been scheduled for just before the European Elections in June 1983. It's been brought forward to 12-14 May, in Swansea.

WAC declares independence

By Mandy Moore

At its AGM last Saturday, the Women's Action Committee agreed to proposals making it an affiliate of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, rather than the sub-committee it formerly was.

This means that women no longer have to be members of CLPD to join WAC — a stipulation which meant that the cost of subscriptions stopped many women joining WAC. WAC is now also more independent and freer to pursue its own policies.

CLPD and WAC are still maintaining close links: WAC will still affiliate to CLPD, pass on a portion of its membership subs; and have access to CLPD mailings and the CLPD bulletin.

Women from all over the country gathered at County Hall for the AGM. Along with the officers' reports and resolutions, they heard Jo Richardson MP speaking on women and Parliament, Audrey Wise on women and

the Labour Party, and Frances Morrell on women and education.

Discussions were had about the battles to implement policies for women on the NEC and Jo Richardson gave an account of her view of her role as women's rights spokesperson in Parliament.

WAC's policies for fighting for constitutional changes for women were reaffirmed, and it was agreed that far more work should be done in the trade unions, both to support the struggles of women trying to make changes within their own unions, and to gain support for WAC's policies for changes in the Party.

For more information about WAC, contact Ann Pettifor, 39 Caldervale Rd, London SW4. WAC subs are now £5 for individuals (£2.50 unwaged), £6 for organisations, and £5 for male supporters (who receive mailings, but cannot attend meetings).

Stop Cruise! Greenham Dec 11

CND has decided "to support the proposal from Greenham Common Peace Camp that in the event of the Cruise missile convoys leaving Greenham Common we will undertake blockades and other forms of direct action on all essential service routes throughout the country."

CND will also be supporting the women-only demonstration at Greenham Common on December 11, organising local actions on December 10, and holding a national day of protest on December 12, "with warning strikes or other workplace action where possible."

The conference decided to ask CND council to consider a big, mixed national demonstration next Easter or (to coincide with the EEC elections) next June.

"We're not excluding men, we're positively including women", explained Lynn Jones from Greenham Common.

Ray Bastin from Greater Manchester CND put the issue of women-only actions at the Cruise missiles base similarly: "It's not discrimination against men, but positive discrimination for women."

Women have always been free to join mixed demonstrations. But these demonstrations would almost always be male-

dominated events in which women were a minority. And when it came to deciding who would stay at home and look after children, and who would go and demonstrate, women generally stayed at home.

To redress the balance, to bring women to the fore, women-only events were necessary. They do not exclude having mixed actions as well. And Greenham Common has shown that they work.



No 28
December
1983

Page of the women's
campaign
Labour
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WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK 10p

The nightmare arrives,
but the fight goes on

New Women's Fightback now out. 10p plus 16p postage from 10b Landseer Road, London N19.

International news

Economy milked by Moscow bureaucrats Causes of Poland's collapse

Voice of Solidarnosc is published fortnightly by NSZZ Solidarnosc. Subscription rates are £8 for six months [UK]. Cheques payable to NSZZ Solidarnosc: send to NSZZ Solidarnosc Information Office, 314-320 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP.

We publish below extracts from a speech by Marian Rajski, a delegate at Gdynia's Civic Party Conference, on May 16 1981:

Comrades! During recent months I have spent a lot of time reading and listening to practically everything that has appeared in Poland concerning the political crisis in our Party and the reasons for our economic collapse.

I wish to broach a taboo subject about the real reasons for the collapse of our economy. These reasons are well concealed from the Party and the nation, and on-one has the intention of disclosing them.

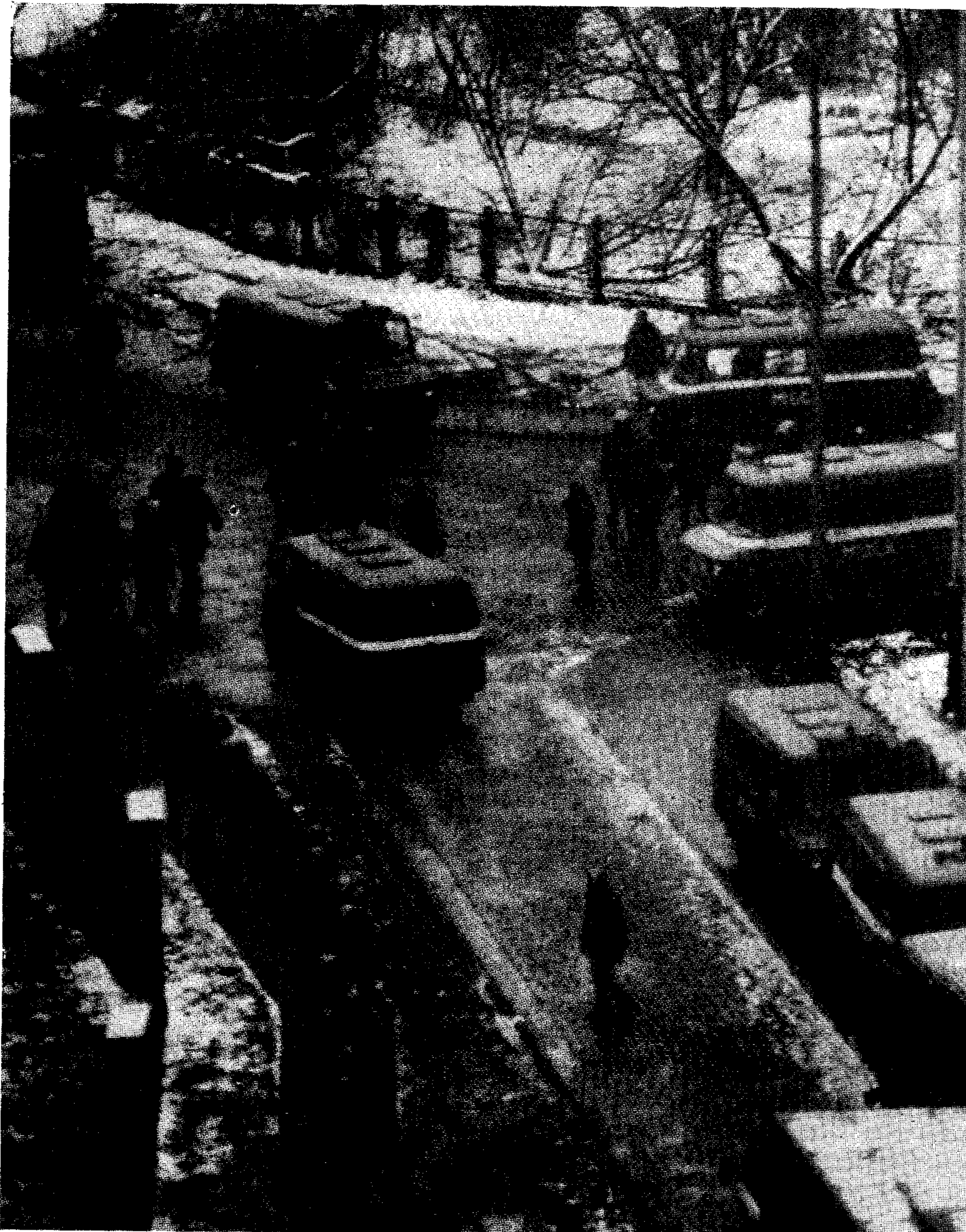
The administration has been doing everything not to reveal the causes and has not the slightest intention of removing them. They will do everything to keep the truth from the nation and forestall discussion on the true causes of Poland's economic ruin.

But the Party must deal with this problem, there cannot be matters which, having contributed to the collapse of a wealthy state, should be forbidden discussion in a Marxist-Leninist Party. If there were matters which must remain a taboo then there is no sense in singing the Internationale.

The reasons for our economic collapse rest in specific conditions of the commodity exchange in our foreign trade, and in aspects of an internationalism uncontrolled by a democratic authority. I am not interested in undermining the principle of internationalism or economic integration, but in establishing reasonable limits within which our nation might develop normally.

I was an ardent advocate of Gierek's economic policies for three-quarters of his term in office, in particular the first five years when a great deal was achieved, more than in any of our five-year plans. Considering that Poland's debt in December 1975 was 3.8 thousand million dollars, while there was a positive balance in the rouble area, is a clear cause for pride.

What happened in 1976, what mechanisms began to steer our economy? The reasons which led a wealthy and industrialised country to economic collapse during two years (1976-77) cannot remain undisclosed. Our economy collapsed in 1977. The following years have been a life of bankruptcy and pretence fed by borrowed money. Vice-Premier Jagielski, responsible for economic matters and the obedient executor of the Comecon, drove us to the precipice.



The scenes two years ago as Jaruzelski's tanks moved in to crush Solidarnosc

In the next stage we will lose our independence; is comrade Jagielski counting on this?

What I shall say may appear controversial or provocative. I venture a public expression of these views after a thorough perusal of year-books and professional newspapers over the last ten years.

I can support my case with percentages and figures relating to foreign trade during the last five years. Our foreign trade is arranged so that we buy the means of production, licences food, and a significant proportion of raw materials and semi-finished products with hard currency while we sell the final product for the so-called "transferable rouble" — which is not a foreign exchange medium of payment.

The procedure was that we counted a commodity, which we had to sell to the USSR according to the quotation of Western exchange, in dollars (and the USSR did the same with its products). Then the dollars were counted into roubles and, where a mutual trade exchange was made, an agreement was signed in "transferable roubles". Fraud was involved but to an insignificant extent. The USSR could acquire certain products

without Western currency and without worrying about licences and technology. A greater fraud began the moment that principles of partnership were disturbed; when we were forced to export railway carriages, ships and aircraft equipment — manufactured products whose parts we had to purchase in hard currency. Our misfortunes took on a larger dimension in 1976 when we changed over fully to the "transferable rouble" as an accounting unit.

The standard of the rouble has an internal, propagandist, and a touristic value. The history of modern money recognises administrative rates of exchange; but these rates must be equivalent to unrestricted commodity cover, from food and raw materials to manufactured articles and technology. If a currency does not fulfill this condition it becomes a means of robbery, and dependence of the weaker partner on the stronger. As the "transferable rouble" is not a currency it does not constitute a medium of accumulation of monetary reserves, and has never been transferable or convertible. We cannot use it to pay our debts in the Peoples' Democracies, even though until 1976 we had a positive balance with the USSR.

The next step was Kosygin's visit to Warsaw in 1975. The subject of the discussions was an analysis of the state of co-ordination of the national economic plans for Poland and the USSR for the years 1976-80. In 1977 Comecon's International Bank for Co-operation began operating fully. It is no coincidence that this date is linked with the first year of our downhill economic slide. Our government and Party leaders believed that one dollar was still worth 69 kopeks. Today the dollar is already only worth 62 kopeks.

During the second half of the seventies, TV news depicted a never-ending pilgrimage of Soviet economists arriving in Warsaw. After every visit the goods, or raw materials, corresponding to the branch of the visiting minister, vanished from our shelves.

His face a mixture of devoted servility and horror, Premier Jaruzewicz just kept on signing. Some of the contracts will remain in force until 1990.

After the visit of the Minister for Energy problems arose over coal. Power stations began to receive impure coal that lowered the efficiency of the stations by 15-17%, the same as present shortage of energy. After the visit of the Minister for the Chemical Industry trouble began in the production of artificial fertilizers and in applied chemistry.

Shortage

After the visit of the Health Minister there was a sudden shortage of drugs. After the visit of uniformed economists the integrated electronics factory in Warsaw and Wroclaw's "Elwro" factory had their original production plans changed. The export of sub-assemblies to the rouble area began, amounting to tens of millions of sub-assemblies per annum.

After the visit of the Soviet Minister for Agriculture, our Agriculture Minister, Barcikowski, began the deliberate dissolution of this department. We became an exporter of grain and meat to the USSR. In the published works of researchers who dared to draw up our grain balance, 4-6 million tonnes per annum is missing.

Transporters carrying grain to East Germany and Czechoslovakia for so-called "milling" return empty.

Continued next week

In Brief Iraq torture

AMNESTY says it has the names of 520 political prisoners reported executed since 1978 and has asked the Iraqi authorities to examine 23 cases of people reported to have died under torture since 1976.

Among the cases cited by Amnesty International, stretching from 1976 to 1981 are:

*A 19-year old Kurd, Reber Mulla Husain, whose mutilated corpse was returned to his family, reportedly with nine nails in the body, one eye gouged out and the penis cut off;

*Hameed 'Ati, a member of the Iraqi Communist Party, who is said to have been beaten with a wire whip while suspended from a rotating ceiling fan and then electrocuted;

*Adnan Abd Al Jabbar, reported to have died in a Baghdad hospital as a result of torture. He is understood to have suffered kidney failure after he was hung upside down, beaten and had a wire inserted up his anus.

In a reply to an appeal by Amnesty for an end to torture, the Iraqi government confirms that verdicts of the country's Revolutionary Court, which can include the death penalty, are not subject to appeal and that hearings are closed to the public.

Holland

ALL INDUSTRIAL action in the dispute between the Dutch government and the unions over proposed cuts in public spending has been called off this week. This follows a week in which the courts have been used extensively to break many more strikes in Holland. As a result, the number of workers taking action was very much reduced, and union leaders responded not by calling for all-out action against the court intervention, but by halting the strikes still in progress.

This retreat is not unexpected. The role of the union leaders throughout the dispute has been miserable: their eventual sell-out has long been on the cards.

THE CAUSE OF IRELAND

104 mins Platform Films 1983



THE Cause of Ireland is the best left wing documentary on the Northern Ireland conflict. Perhaps uniquely among pro-Republican accounts of the Catholic revolt, it does not rely on the gross oversimplifications common to the pro-Republican left. The Cause of Ireland attempts to deal with the complexities and problems for revol-

utionary socialist politics in Ireland created by the Protestant working class's hostility to nationalism.

Hackney Trades Council is sponsoring the showing of the film 'The Cause of Ireland' on Wednesday 14 December at 7.30pm at the Trades and Labour Club, 98, Dalston Lane, London E8.

'The USSR's gain on each dollar is our loss'

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NEWSLETTER

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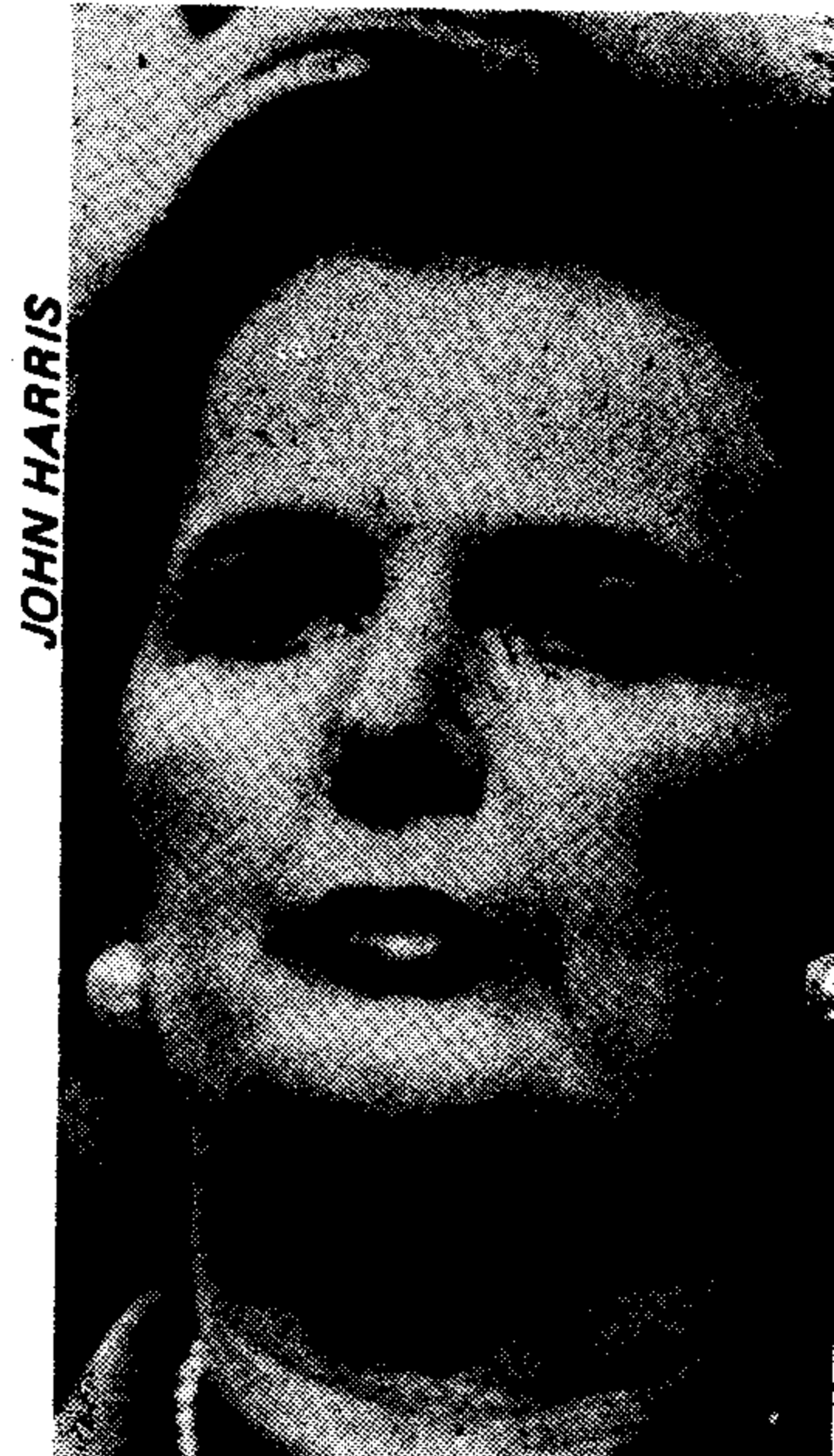
Industrial Special

December 8 1983. 5p if sold separately



Unions versus Tory laws

The hour of decision!



THE BOSSES are queuing up to take on the unions.

The assets of Britain's biggest print union are in the hands of the state.

The NGA has to make special application to the court-appointed commissioners to pay out sickness and unemployment benefit to its members.

Chapels on Fleet Street have been banned from taking action in support of their dismissed brothers at Stockport.

The Newspaper Publishers Association has ten writs out for damages against the NGA totalling £3 million.

SOGAT 82 has been ordered by Mr Justice Sheen to cancel its order to its members in BPCC plants at East Kilbride, Leeds and Bristol not to print the Radio Times.

Resumption

Sir John Donaldson has ordered the NUJ to resume normal despatch of copy to the non-union T. Bailey Foreman printers.

Those who doubted that the decisive weakening of the trade unions and their pressing into a mould of state control was the central objective of the Thatcher government are seeing their illusions shattered.

Judges, like Donaldson who advised the Tories on the legislation, now take over not only the running of disputes but the running of the unions as well.

Lord Denning calls for the arrest of the organisers of the Warrington picket. Home Secretary Leon Brittan congratulates the well-oiled police machine on their destruction of the Warrington picket lines and promises full support for further police thuggery and violence against other picket lines.

Or rather, some have had their illusions shattered. But others, like the leaders of the TUC and the Labour Party, seem to be incapable of learning from experience.

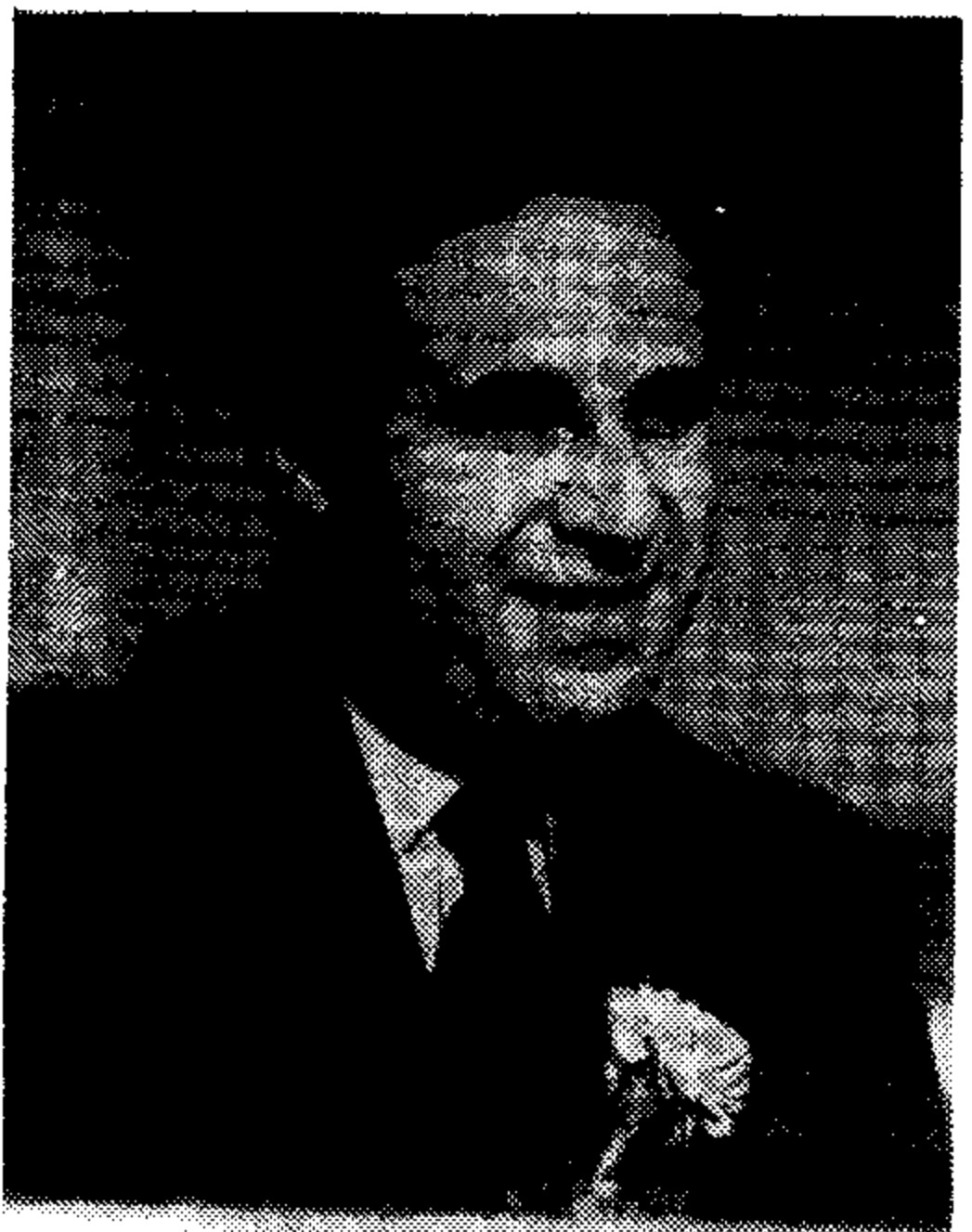
Whilst we see firmness and

By Mark Starr



Len Murray

strategy from the state and employers, behind the labour movement lines the leaders are in disarray. Kinnock, John Smith, Len Murray are crippled by their refusal to break the law. They have not lifted a finger to help those struggling against the Tory laws.



Leon Brittan

Yet the position is clear as day — you cannot organise effective industrial action in 1983 without breaking the law. The law is simply a weapon of the employers.

If the NGA is beaten, every single one of Britain's 10.5 million trade unionists will lose so now is the time to stand up and fight.

In this context, the decision to call off the mass picketing was a mistake.

It will be hard to regain momentum. It will be difficult to close Fleet Street again. In only two workplaces — Independent Radio News and the Celtic Press Group in South Wales — did we see walk-outs in support of the NGA.

Yet any agreement in this week's talks with Eddie Shah — any agreement in accordance with basic trade union principle — looks unlikely. He has stood fast in refusing to re-engage the six printers sacked for striking at Stockport and is now retreating on the closed shop.

Despite the difficulties of the situation, union branches, stewards committees, chapels must prepare now for a resumption of hostilities.

This dispute can only be won if it is spread through the print and to other sections of workers.

We must fight directly in our unions for solidarity action. We also have to reinforce a hundredfold the struggle to get the Labour Party and TUC leaders to stop talking to the Tories and start campaigning for all-out action to restore the state controlled NGA to its members and sweep away the anti-union laws.

They should call a one-day general strike in support of the NGA and go all out to campaign for it in the labour movement. They should prepare the labour movement for all-out industrial confrontation with the Tories.

For all trade unionists in Britain, now is the hour of decision for the trade union and labour movement. We must not fail!



Scots miners fly the flag of solidarity at Warrington

Merseyside solidarity

THE FOLLOWING resolution was passed at a rally of about 1,500 people in Liverpool last Thursday, December 1. The meeting was called by the Merseyside Trade Union and Labour Movement Campaign Committee, which is sponsored by Liverpool Trades Council.

THIS MEETING OF THE Merseyside trade union and labour movement condemns the attacks by the courts on the NGA for carrying out legitimate trade union activity. We believe that not only is the very existence of the NGA at stake, but the existence of the trade union movement as an effective instrument of defending workers against the attacks by the employers and the Tory government is also at stake.

We declare our solidarity

with the NGA and declare our intention of giving all possible support, including industrial action, to print workers taking strike action to defend their union.

Recognising that the support of the whole trade union movement should be mobilised to defeat this attack, we call on the General Council of the TUC to:

*Immediately declare its full support to the NGA in refusing to pay the fines and in carrying out the decisions of the Wembley [Special TUC] Conference.

*Immediately call a 24-hour general strike in order to demonstrate to the employers and the Tory government the solidarity of the whole labour movement with the NGA.

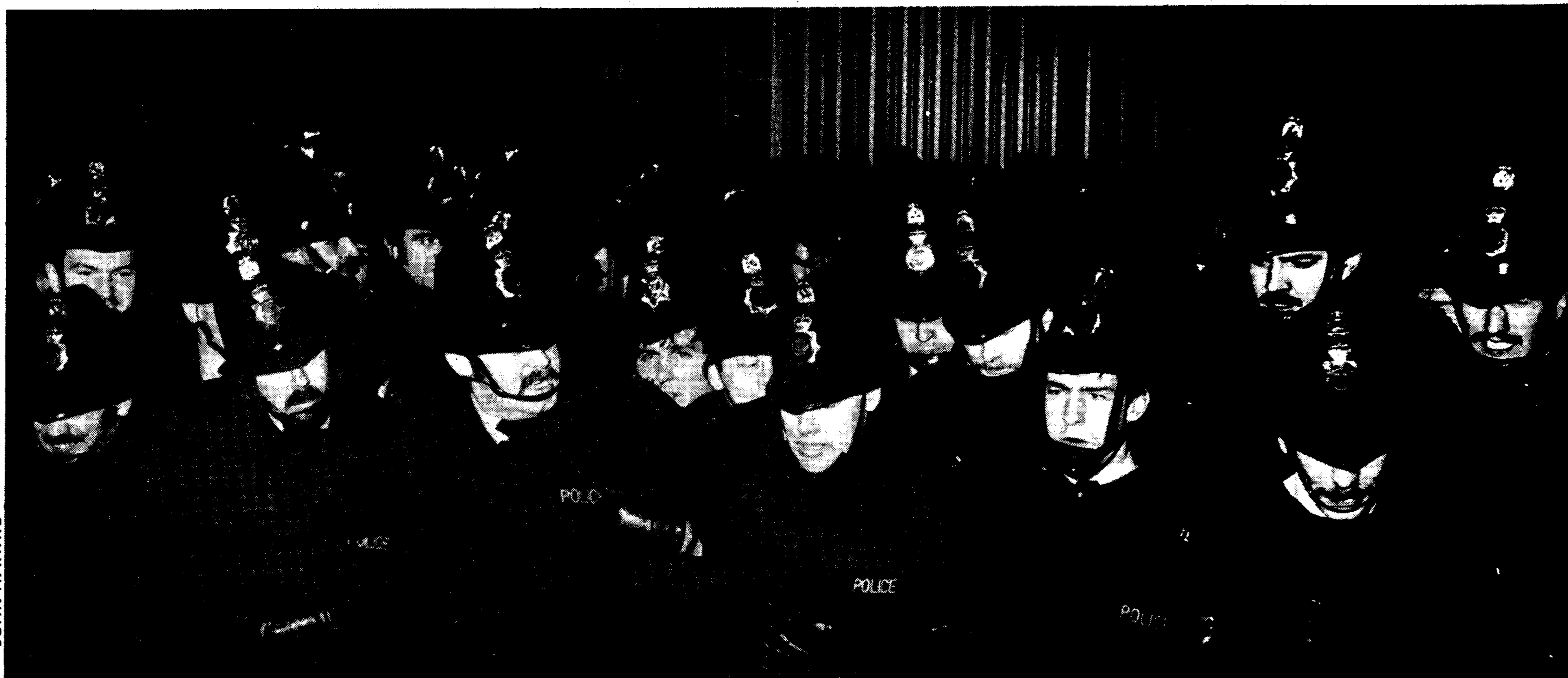
*In the event of such action not resulting in the withdrawal of these attacks

on the NGA, we call on the General Council to prepare the trade union movement for the calling of an all-out general strike until these vicious anti-trade union activities are revoked.

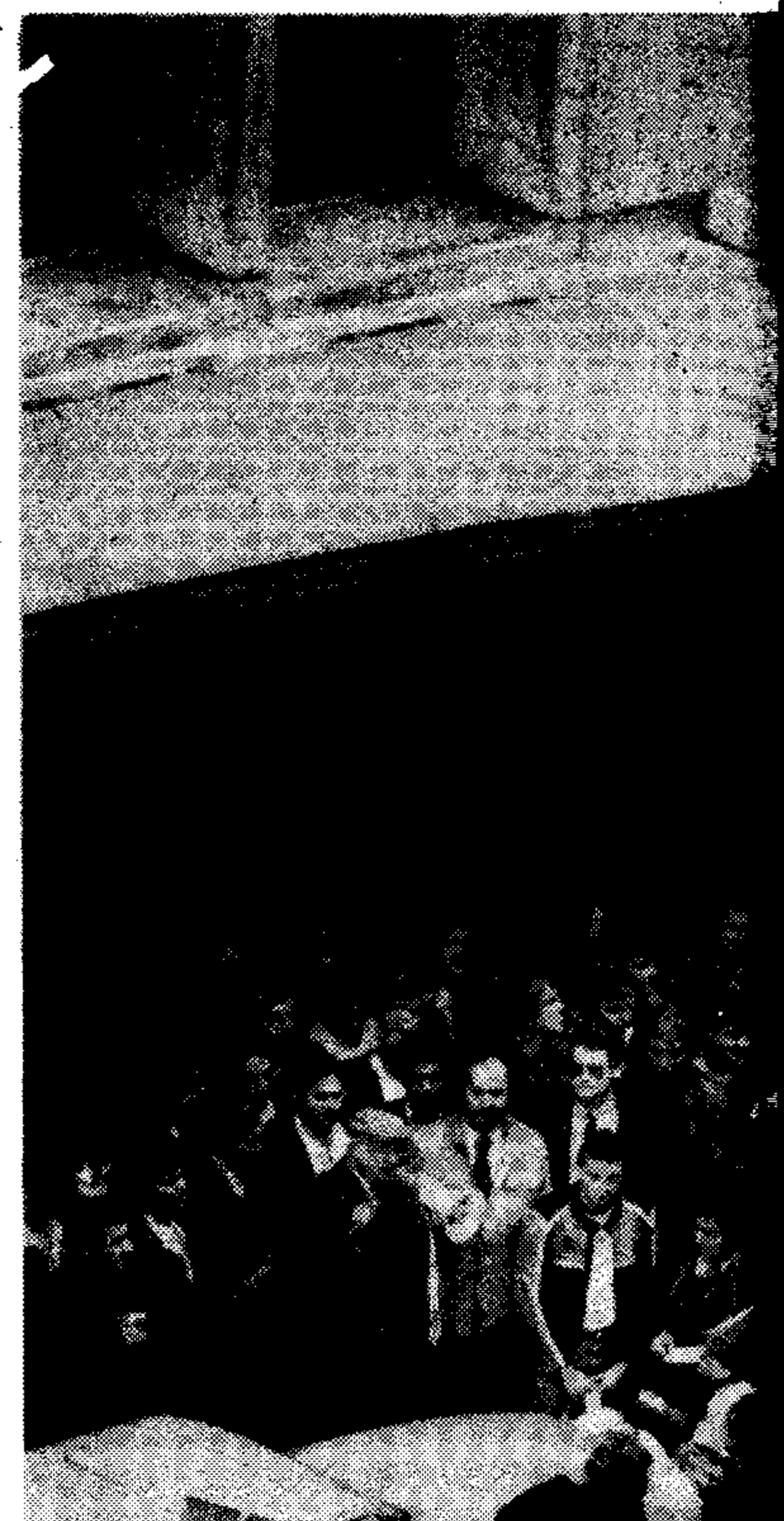
*We further call on the Labour leadership, like the Liverpool Labour MPs, to declare their complete solidarity with the NGA and to defend their right to fight, and denounce so-called laws which are designed specifically to give the employers weapons with which to beat working people's organisations.

We declare our support for the print unions' picketing of the non-union plant in Warrington, and call on all trade unionists to give physical support on the picket line to restore trade union rights and to reinstate the Stockport 6.

TUC: call 24-hour general strike!



Effective picketing and secondary action have now been outlawed: but next year new clauses of Tebbit's law will ban the closed shop



The POEU was told that there was 'no'

The issues at stake affected

THIS IS THE BIG ONE! It is no light-minded exaggeration by the left press to say that the whole future of British trade unionism depends in a very important way on the outcome of the Shah-NGA dispute at Stockport.

The new direct-input technology means that journalists or advertising staff can type their work straight onto computer terminals which then send the final product to a typesetting computer.

The phenomenal growth of freesheets, sprouting from 350 to 600 with a readership of 24 million in the last few years, means that outfits like Eddie Shah's or the union-free South London Guardian can set up free of all union controls.

The employers are absolutely determined to exploit this situation to the hilt. Eighteen months ago the Newspaper Society, representing the provincial press bosses, decided to place an end-of-1984 deadline on reaching agreement with the NGA on direct input. Richard Storey, the chairman of Portsmouth and Sunderland Newspapers, has already declared that 15 newspapers will introduce the new technology unilaterally if that deadline is not met.

In this situation if the NGA is to maintain itself as an organisation then the closed shop, imposing discipline and controlling the supply of labour and the ability to 'black' material from non-recognised sources become absolutely vital.

As the last weeks have shown with a vengeance, the 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts comprehensively outlaw all forms of secondary action. Next year the detonator clauses of the 1982

JACK BUTCHER looks more closely into the NGA dispute at Stockport — and finds wide implications for print unions and the whole labour movement.

Act, making all closed shops illegal unless there is an 80% vote in favour in a secret ballot, will take effect.

This is the background to the firm stand of the NGA leadership.

If Eddie Shah gets away with it, others in both the "run away" and the established sectors will fancy their chances.

A victory for the Stockport Messenger would give the red light for the provincial newspaper bosses, the David Dimblebeys of this world, to uproot the NGA, a move which would then be carefully appraised by the Fleet Street magnates.

This is why musclemen like Tony Dubbins and tailors' dummies like Joe Wade have been prepared to fight.

That is why the predominant right wing leadership of the NGA unleashed a struggle which, rooted in craft conservatism as it is, represents the most progressive move in the four year struggle against the Tory laws.

Defeat for the NGA will be a defeat for the whole labour movement.

The last two years have seen more and more employers using the law as a tactical weapon in industrial disputes.

The cases under the 1980 Act were taken against individual union officers, not as we are



ANDREW WIARD (Report)

NGA — a strength rooted in craft conservatism

seeing under the 1982 Act, against the union itself.

The lesson for capital was that in the prevailing climate with workers looking for a lead to their full time officials, the use of the law against the full-time official provided a pretext for and a reinforcement of that full time official's natural desire to call off the contested action.

When the Act was used against TGWU officials over lorry drivers picketing the docks against cowboy haulage firms or black workers striking for union recognition at Aire Valley Yarns, the officials dissociated themselves from the action.

When it was used against groups of workers already isolated, such as those at Chloride or Lawrence Scotts, the law finished the secondary action off.

This response has encouraged the employers to use the 1982 Act with the Taff Vale clause which makes the union and its funds responsible for damages caused by strike actions which are now illegal. The provisions of the two Acts mean that almost any of the means required to win a dispute in a recession situation constitute illegal action.

The recent spate of cases involving SOGAT, the NUJ and the POEU illustrate this.

The employers are taking action because of the rich potential results.

The POEU shows what can happen. Mercury, which took the union to court, was losing orders and investment between £500,000 and £1.5 million a year and claimed that a further £4 million was threatened. Barclay's Merchant Bank had already declared its intention of selling its stake.

As soon as Mercury moved,

some of the blacking which was seen to be clearly illegal, was called off.

As soon as the injunction was finalised, Ben Hooberman of Lawford and Company, the POEU's solicitor (an SDP supporter and close associate of Frank Chapple) was producing a detailed memorandum stressing the necessity for compliance and stressing the horrors that lay in store if the union did not accept the injunction.

On legal advice the conference discussed the issue in a closed session — the memo's statement that "The punishment can mean imprisonment or fines for the personal defendants by means of bankruptcy proceedings or by means of sequestration of the union's funds."

The Broad Left split and the Executive vote to call off the blacking was carried by conference.

Not only did this provide a backwash in terms of taking some of the stuffing out of the whole campaign against privatisation, but Mercury announced that, not content with the injunction, it would pursue the POEU to court for damages.

This is the future for the whole movement if the NGA is beaten.

*Lawyers being called in to advise on the running of industrial disputes.

*The means which are required to win disputes not being used because they are illegal. Workers consequently fighting with both hands tied behind their backs, dispute after dispute which could have been won, going down to defeat.

*Employers pushing home their advantage by going beyond injunctions to bankrupt unions in compensation suits.

*More employers following this example.

*A weakened trade union movement corsetted in the conservative legalistic practice of the US business union. Lawyers would not only be involved in advising on strikes, they would be sitting at the table, negotiating collective agreements.

Already some are arguing that unions can protect themselves against secondary action by negotiating US-style "hot cargo" agreements so that members would not be called upon to handle certain goods in a strike.

Apart from the fact that this would place interpretation in the hands of the judges, it would lead to the complementary insertion of "no-strike" clauses and a giant step down the road to institutionising strike action.

The Tories and the employers understand that the NGA's struggle is the struggle of the whole movement.

They also understand that it cannot be won by the NGA itself. It is here that the Tories' greatest strength lies.

The TUC have, up till now, succeeded in walling off the possibility of wider support. But without that support the NGA will go down.

The TUC's strategy from 1979 was to carry out a rhetorical propaganda campaign against the Tory laws whilst curbing any moves by trade unionists towards confrontation.

It wished to keep its hands relatively clean of immersion in the Tory law and hoped to achieve their speedy repeal by an incoming Labour government.

The propaganda campaign in itself was totally inadequate. 60,000 copies of the booklet "Hands off Democracy" were

produced for half-a-million shop stewards and ten million members.

Their propaganda was based on the idea that the Tories are destroying the joint interest of the State and the unions.

"Unions can achieve most when they work with government and employers, playing a positive role in moving our country forward, when they can work towards common goals rather than being locked out from influence and involvement."

It was neutered by the TUC's own practice in halting any strike with an anti-government dynamic which strengthened the demoralisation of sections of the ranks in the face of a decisive, hostile government and an intolerable economic situation.

When this demoralisation produced a Tory electoral victory, the TUC decided to drop its anti-Tory rhetoric and deepen its collaborative practice. Talks were resumed with Tebbit.

When the POEU asked for advice from the TUC on compliance with the injunction, they were informed by Len Murray that "Congress has not yet decided that any union obeying an injunction would be contravening Congress policy... and that Conference had pointed out on behalf of the General Council that there was no question of the TUC setting out to break, or encourage members to break, the law."

This represented a complete reversal of the 1982 special congress's 12 points which, hedged around with qualifications as they were, gave the TUC the power to call industrial action in support of a union threatened by the law. It also

Two pamphlets summing up the ideas of Socialist Organiser. 'Where We Stand' — 20p plus 15p postage. 'How to fight the Tories' — 10p plus 15p postage. Or the two together, 45p including postage. From Socialist Organiser, 28, Middle Lane, London N8.





question of the TUC setting out to break the law . . .

ANDREW WIARD (Report)

It us all



completed the isolation of the POEU.

In the present conflict the TUC has acted to firm up this position. It has not only assumed throughout that organising solidarity action is simply not on the agenda. It has even sunk to the level of having its craven communiques vetted by lawyers.

The Employment and Organisation Committee and the General Council itself have met no less than five times over the NGA situation. They have helped the dispute not on hair's breadth of an iota.

They have stressed all along that nobody should do anything illegal, such as picket at Warrington, or strike in support of the NGA, anything that is that could conceivably win the dispute.

"The General Council agree urgently to inform all affiliated unions of the dispute and ask each union to identify areas where support or assistance may properly be given by the union to the NGA."

Meanwhile, the "Fighting Fund" that at Wembley, 18 months ago, was to be used to take on the Tories, is to be used to pay the union's fines.

We should be grateful for one thing. Faced with the determination of the NGA and the failure of the same tactic during the Financial Times dispute, Murray and his gang have not sought to instruct the NGA to call off all action and pay the fines. At least, not yet.

Perhaps it's a bit unfair to blame it all onto Murray. After all, Brothers Scargill, Rodney Bickerstaffe, George Guy and Ken Gill have hardly been prominent in attacking his stand and attempting to organise solidarity action.

The decision of the NGA to call off the mass picket for seven days, whilst understandable, is a heavy blow to the dispute. It will be very difficult indeed to recapture the dynamic that had built up. The cooling off period also provides the opportunity for the TUC to work on the "uncivilised" and relatively unintegrated NGA.

It is clear from Len Murray's statements that the present dispute will have no influence at all on the talks with the government.

The TUC is now absolutely determined to accept the Employment Acts in return for the most limited of concessions over the political levy and the new trade union Bill. That the TUC wants to use this dispute to strengthen their links with the Tories, not allow it to disrupt them.

The mass picketing constituted a powerful focus which could have provided the dynamic to take the dispute forward. But in the face of a sophisticated and powerful police force, the mass picketing was incapable of stopping Shah.

And of course we not only have to stop Shah, we have to stop the judges and Thatcher.

The key to success is spreading the dispute through rank and file solidarity action.

We must argue for this in the context of reimposing the mass picketing.

Defeat for the NGA would not be terminal for the struggle

against the Tory law. But it would make that fight a thousand times harder. It would spread and increase the demoralisation at all levels of the unions which even now is holding back a fight against the Tories and against betrayals of our leaders which help the Tories and strengthen them against the labour movement.

For these reasons as well as for reasons of elementary trade union solidarity, militants must move heaven and earth to ensure the NGA is not defeated.

But we can expect little from the labour movement's official leaders. The relatively low numbers of pickets last Wednesday, 30 November, shows what we are up against.

Nonetheless, militants in both the unions and the Labour Party should look for ways to come together to organise resistance to these laws.

Broadly-based 'Defend Our Unions Committees' are required. We urge militants in all areas to come together to form such committees capable of fighting for independent action as well as pressuring the leadership on the central demands.

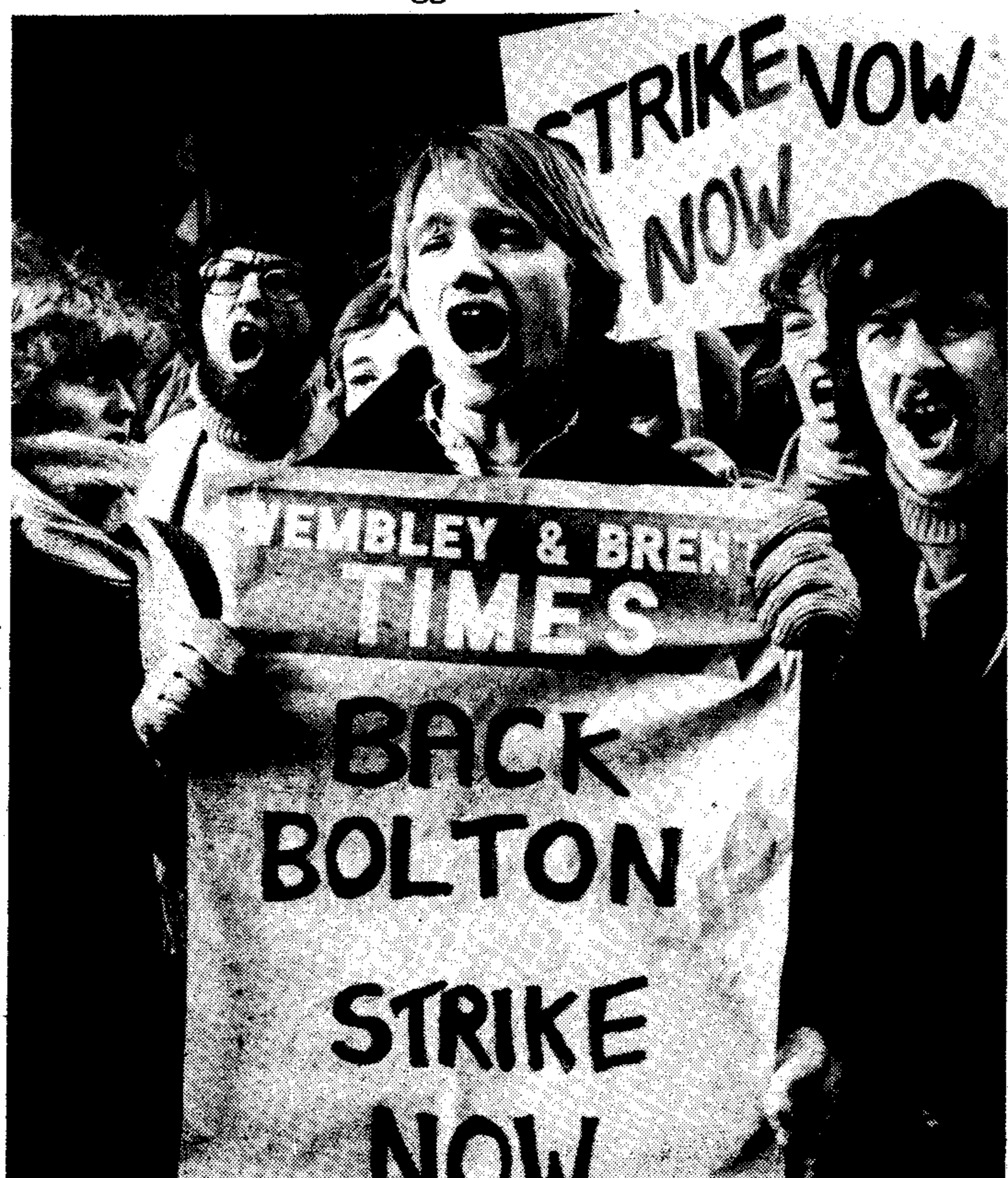
*Break off all talks with the Tories. Don't talk, organise.

*Immediate solidarity action with all those threatened by the Tory laws.

*No payment of fines.

*No collaboration with the courts.

*Make the TUC fight!



LAURENCE SPARHAM (IFL)

NUJ strikers in 1978: the Union often depends upon secondary action for hope of victory.

Hidden clauses of King's new anti-union Bill

HARRY SLOAN reviews the new Labour Research pamphlet 'Unions Attacked'.

BY NOW, in the shadow of Warrington, many trade unionists are waking up to the danger of the anti-union laws already placed on the statute books by the Tories with minimal TUC opposition.

Some will be aware of the main lines of the additional package of measures being steered through Parliament by Tebbit's successor, Tom King, in a Bill which could be law within seven months.

But the new Labour Research Department pamphlet, 'Unions Attacked', provides a much-needed detailed breakdown of the implications of the Bill — some of which may have escaped your notice in the laundered Tory press coverage.

For instance, did you realise that one clause of the Bill — Clause 2(10) — appears to be deliberately opening the door to witch-hunting of Communist Party members or supporters of left wing organisations?

Under a general statement that no member should be "unreasonably" excluded from standing as a candidate, the Bill makes the specific exception of members who "belong to a class of members all of whom are excluded."

According to LRD, the use of the word "class" is intended by the Tories to sanction the prescription of members of certain political parties.

Did you know that the King Bill's move to impose ballots will leave unions in a Catch-22 situation on spontaneous strikes?

If they refuse to lend official support to such strikes without a ballot having been held before the walk-out, they risk the prospect of losing their immunity from claims for damages — with the real danger of being driven into bankruptcy; but if they refuse to give support, they leave their membership to their own devices and run into conflict with the rank and file.

The LRD pamphlet judiciously skirts around the argument developed against this aspect of the King Bill by the right wing of the TUC. These bureaucrats attack the legislation as a "trots' charter", because its threats and sanctions all apply specifically to official strikes: so long as the action remains unofficial, the union as a whole retains its immunities.

Warhorses

This, argue the right wing, makes it more difficult for seasoned old collaborationist warhorses to move in and make strikes official in order to take control and sell them out in the time-honoured manner!

Did you know that under the King Bill, ballots will also be needed not only before strikes, but before any industrial action where a person is induced to break a contract of employment?

It is important to remember that the definition of each of these provisions is to be made not by any impartial body, but by the courts — which have consistently leaned against the trade union movement.

In the hands of a judge, "breaking a contract of employment" could be interpreted to



JOHN HARRIS

Tom King with Sir Geoffrey Howe

mean a work-to-rule, an overtime ban or a refusal to cover vacancies. If a ballot had not been held, and an employer sought damages, unions could again face hefty bills.

Another potential Catch-22 arises over the scope of the ballot. King's Bill states that "all those whom it is reasonable to believe will be called upon to act in breach of, or interfere with their contracts, must be balloted, and no others."

Picketing

This may at first sound fair enough: why should workers not be affected by industrial action have a vote? But if a strike gains in strength — pickets successfully — or becomes drawn out, other sections may be forced into action. Yet the fact is that the unions could lose their immunity from damages claims if they cast their net too narrowly, or too widely!

The pamphlet effectively exposes the naked political motive of the Tories in their moves to destroy trade union political funds.

It points out clearly that a central element in the Bill is the imposition of regular ballots to confirm the existence of a political fund: this is quite separate from the additional proposition (about which King has said he will "negotiate" with the TUC) changing the "contracting-out" rule for the political levy to "contracting-in".

LRD point out that the imposition of ballots applies only to those unions which currently have a political fund, and not to the "non-politicals" like NALGO, NUJ and NUT. And it underlines the fact that under the King Bill nearly every union with a political fund would be required to hold a ballot on whether to retain it or not within 14 months of the law reaching the statute book. This would provide ideal conditions for the Tory press to stick its knives into the finances of the Labour Party.

Tory Party

Meanwhile, of course, companies are free to donate vast sums to the Tory Party without anything resembling a ballot or consultation with workers or shareholders. The Tories get more than twice as much from big business as Labour receives

from the unions.

Even non-affiliated unions like NALGO could be hit by the Bill's new definition of "political objects", which could outlaw the spending of union general funds on virtually any campaign against government policies whether or not the campaign was in furtherance of union objectives.

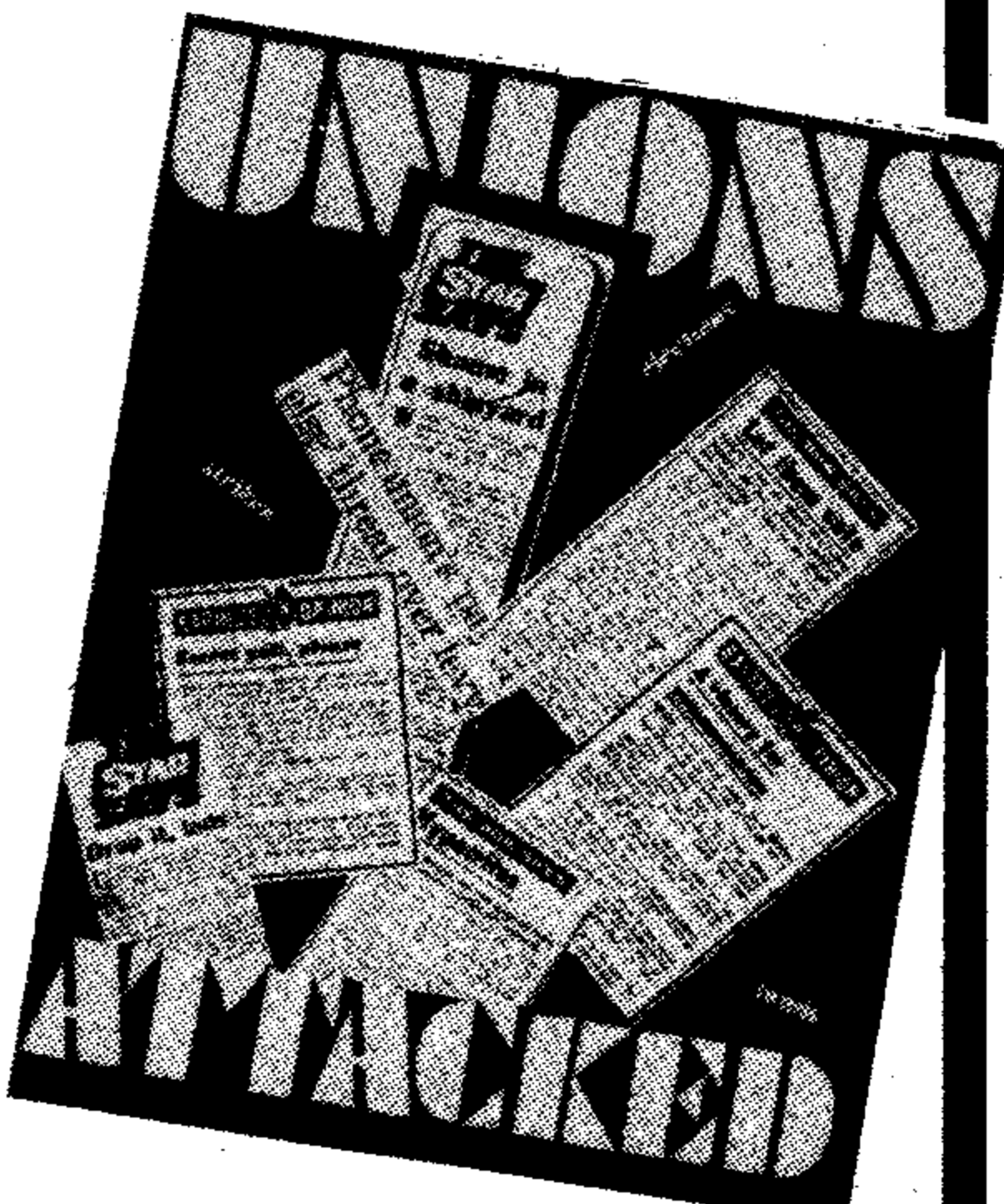
The pamphlet has a clearly defined purpose: it is produced to educate trade unionists on the main contents of the Bill. It makes no effort to criticise the present level of democracy in the unions (though a suggestion on page 3 that union meetings in working time would be a benefit for democracy could be read as an implicit critique of the status quo).

Valuable

It stands aloof from the right wing critique of the Bill — but it does not draw out the cynical way in which the Tories have singled out union executive committees (already chiefly composed of lay members) rather than full-time officials and general secretaries for regular reelection.

Nor does it offer any hint as to how this new, potentially explosive, legislation ought to be fought by the trade union and labour movement.

But the pamphlet is valuable: it should convince every class conscious worker of the reasons why the Bill has to be stopped.



'UNIONS ATTACKED' — 45p plus postage from LRD Publications Ltd, 78, Blackfriars Rd, London SE1 8HF.

Socialist ORGANISER

Industrial Special

The bosses who daily flout the law

I DIVED into my local last Friday and picked up my pint and my Manchester Evening News. Having swiftly scrutinised the City formation for the following day's tourney at Chelsea, I was mightily relieved as any god-fearing citizen would be, to see that Len Murray was all over page one, aggressively telling the world that he was giving the NGA all the support he could short of breaking the law of course.

For Murray, breaking the law is unthinkable. We all know that!

I nearly choked on my Bod-dingtons bitter, however, when on turning to page 15 of one of the most reactionary reads north of the Trent I beheld, large as life, right above the names of 23 more villains charged with offences arising out of the Warrington fracas the bold headline 'Gas Tragedy Firm Fined'.

I swiftly scoured the story. Three men had died in a vain attempt to save a workmate, dying in a gas-filled manhole, whilst at work on Carsington reservoir, Derbyshire, last May.

The magistrates were informed that there was no air-testing equipment or breathing apparatus available.

Three partners in the company, Peter Eccles, Derek Ormerod and John Massey each admitted "two very serious offences of contravening health

and safety regulations." Breaking the law, and unlike the NGA, breaking the criminal law. Also unlike the NGA, guilty of offences leading to three deaths.

If you were Woodrow Wyatt, you just might call it murder. Yet when these employers broke the law, they were each fined just £1,000 a piece. Cost of mass picketing which loses employers production? £150,000. Cost of criminal negligence? £1,000 a life.

Robert Colclough, aged 26, Mark Hughes, 20, Peter Haynes 26, and Anthony Meakin, 20, will all no doubt rest easy in their graves knowing just retribution for their unnecessary deaths has been enacted.

Of course — and somebody ought to tell Len Murray this — when I thought a little bit about it I realised that employers break the law every hour of every day. Any factory inspector will tell you that when he or she enters almost any workplace they can immediately spot three or four breaches of the criminal law.

A study, a decade ago, of 200 randomly selected employers found that out of 630 enforcement decisions, 198 involved offences detected for the second or third time.

Less than 3% of these decisions, by the way, actually involved prosecution. In the rest of the cases, the employers committing criminal offences were simply sent warning letters.

Today, serious criminal offences at work are on the increase. Yet whilst factory deaths are up from 127 in 1981 to 140 this year and whilst the government is spending millions on the enforcement of its anti-union legislation, it is directly weakening the enforcement of its anti-employer legislation.

The staff at the Health and Safety Executive has been cut from 4,250 in 1979 to 3,600 today.

Of course it's not only in this area that employers break the law. Every year hundreds of bosses commit breaches of Wages Council legislation by paying lower levels of pay than

those laid down by law — and go unprosecuted.

Over 12% of firms inspected by Wages Council staff fail to keep adequate wages records and nearly 50% adequate time records. What about the rule of law here?

Woodrow Wyatt's newspaper, the News of the World, described the results just a few Sundays ago. "Britain's economic depression has led to a new slave trade with thousands of women risking their lives in backstreet sweat shops to help boost family budgets. They are desperate to earn money — even as little as 10p an hour. But the women are being exploited by unscrupulous employers who laugh at the law . . . The perils were tragically highlighted last weekend when three women and three children died in a blaze in Gravesend, Kent. An illicit shoemaking business operated from the basement. Five other people died when an unlicensed clothing factory burned down in Stepney, East London."

Rogue employers. But what about the very well-known firms?

The 1967 Companies Act makes it a criminal offence for the directors of a limited company not to disclose company political donations.

The Observer on 28 November last year carried a small story detailing violations of the law by a number of large building firms such as Wates and Costains.

There was little hue and cry and, as far as we know, no follow up. Yet the Tories and employers are so incensed about alleged abuses of the political levy that in the face of a mere 15 to 20 complaints a year, we now have an anti-Labour bill going through Parliament.

But that's the essential difference between capital and labour. If capital doesn't like the laws in a particular country, it can get out, close factories, cause a run on the pound.

Political strikes by workers are illegal — as illegal as can be.

For Len Murray they are even more unthinkable than ordinary "law-breaking".

Yet capital, too, can go on political strike. It can, with impunity, bring down governments.

"Business strike may be last shove for Schmidt"; headlined the Sunday Times on 12 September 1982. "A determined campaign by West German big business against the government it has come to despise was a major factor behind the crisis that is expected to topple Helmut Schmidt's eight year old coalition . . . The industrialists trace the roots of the "investment strike" that is pushing unemployment towards two

million to the deceptive euphoria that followed Schmidt's 1980 victory."

And if capital cannot achieve its ends by breaking laws or bringing down governments by peaceful means then it can resort to force, as it did in Chile in 1973.

Most of the time, of course, it doesn't need to. Because the law is there to guarantee the rights of those who own and control the means of production, the goose that lays the golden eggs. The law is made for these people. Its administration is in the hands of those, the Sir John Donaldsons and Lord Dennings, who share those interests.

Law in our society is class law. Even though, at times, it restrains or limits the rights of capital, according to the tempo and necessities of class struggle, it does so ultimately to maintain the existence of capital.

90 years ago a prominent judge, Lord Lindley, commented "You cannot make a strike effective without doing more than is lawful". That very obviously is the position today. And from the point of view of the trade unionist, any law which says that you are acting illegally if you attend another workplace to help workers in dispute there or that you cannot have a closed shop unless you get an 80% majority of the workers involved is law which, if it works, will destroy trade unionism.

It is law which those who believe in trade unionism simply have to break.

And again, that is nothing new. Trade unions came into being outside of and in defiance of the laws made by governments elected according to the system operating then. If that was imperfect democracy, so is our system today — the system which elected the Tories with a vote of less than one-third of

the electorate.

If the Tolpuddle Martyrs had not broken the law in their day, we would not have any unions today. And if we are not prepared to break anti-union laws today, unions, certainly independent, militant unions won't be around very much longer.

Yes, perhaps somebody ought to tell Len Murray about this. But I've got a feeling Murray already knows.

It was, after all, only eleven years ago that the TUC called a 24 hour general strike to support dockers who had been sent to prison for law-breaking.

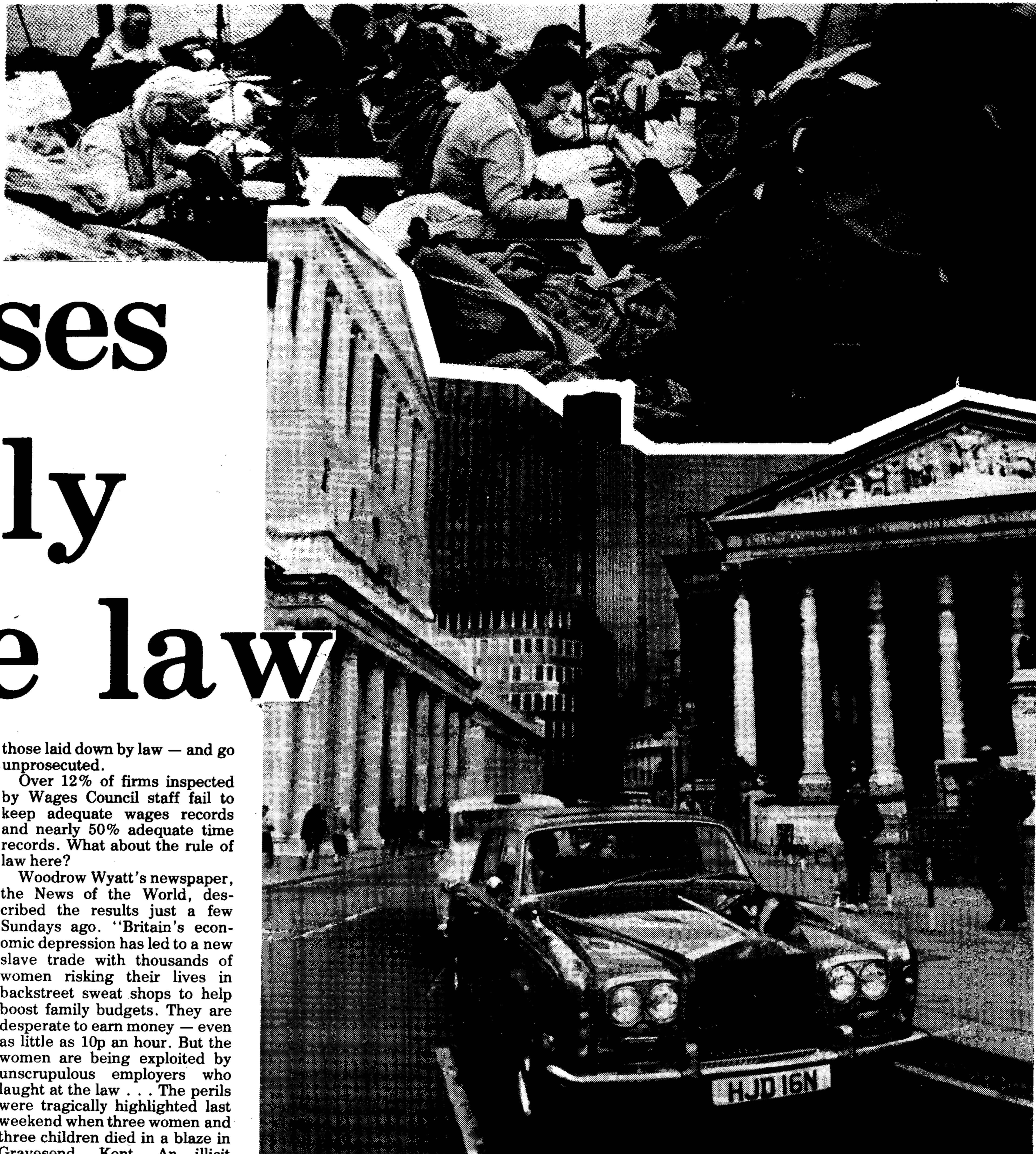
Murray broke the law then,

even though the five dockers were, according to the law, criminals.

Eighteen months ago, Murray supported the TUC NHS committee in asking for secondary action from other groups of workers. For a law-abiding citizen he's got a bit of a record.

He'd break the law now if the rank and file had the power to push for a repeat of the spontaneous strikes that greeted the jailing of the Pentonville Five.

Faraway as that seems now, we have to strain every sinew to put a re-run on the agenda in the period ahead.



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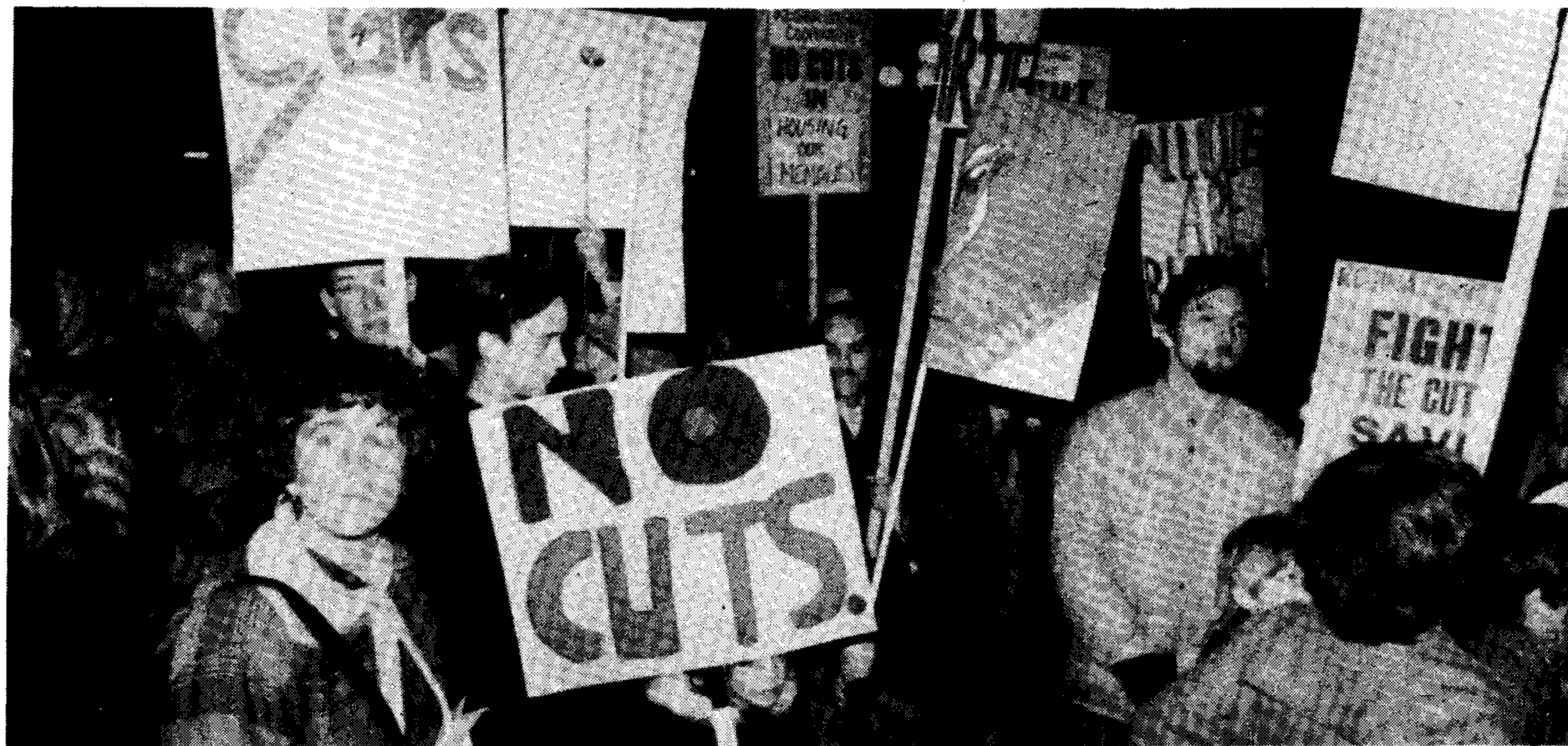
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JOHN HARRIS



Islington council has made stands on Ireland and gay rights, and maintained services – in contrast to its SDP predecessor



Lambeth leader Ted Knight

Discussion:

A balance sheet on the Left councils

The left councils have done many useful things. In Islington, for example, the council has made important stands on Ireland and on gay rights (though the council leadership is now trying to play down the latter). Its record in relation to the council workers, though not brilliant, is much better than that of its SDP predecessor.

It has involved tenants, quite successfully, in planning rehabilitation work on their estates. It has frozen rents. It has maintained services.

It has given a lead for the struggle against YTS by paying its own trainees over the odds. It has actively supported the health workers and other workers in struggle.

But for Marxists such records of municipal administration have to be less decisive than the political record in terms of organisation, confidence and awareness of the working class generally, of the labour movement, and immediately of the left in the labour movement.

That political record is bad.

IN THIS third and final part of his discussion article surveying the experience of 5 years of the Labour Left in local government, **MARTIN THOMAS** moves on to look at alternative policies and the prospects for the period ahead.

An article in London Labour Briefing by Jan Wallcraft, the woman imprisoned for fares refusal, eloquently describes the dialectics of it:

"I am a working-class housewife . . . After years of cynicism and confusion about politics . . . I was attracted to the Labour Party in 1981 by the clear, progressive, sensible policies of the GLC . . . It didn't sound like the lies and claptrap I was used to hearing from politicians. So

that when the GLC came under attack, I felt that there was something there worth defending, and that I would do whatever was necessary to fight for a cause that was clear, simple, and just, as the fares issue then was.

"Unfortunately, the issue did not remain so simple. By the time the GLC had voted through the Budget approving the fare rises, it was hard to see clearly any more who or what we were fighting.

On the one hand, Ken Dave and Valerie and the rest were campaigning vigorously and wholeheartedly for resistance to the fare rises, and on the other hand, they were allowing themselves to be made responsible for implementing the Law Lords' ruling.

" . . . To cooperate with injustice, however tactically advisable it may seem at the time, must be self-defeating in the end, because it obscures the issue, and confuses potential supporters. It shows a lack of faith by the elected councillors in the labour movement, and can be seen as a cynical betrayal of the powerless and dispossessed."

Worse

Looked at from the angle of the development of the Left, the position is even worse. A whole segment of leftists, who could have become an educating, organising, inspiring force for broader sections of the labour movement, have allowed themselves to be captured by the bourgeois structures of local government.

The problem is politics. In every case, the left councils went into office with no perspective for fighting or at best (in the case of the GLC) with a fudged, half-measures perspective. This political inadequacy was not something imposed on the labour movement from above by this or that clique, but a reflection of the movement's general

ideological condition.

But the reflection has become more than a reflection. The inadequacy, rather than being remedied through the enlightening effects of experience and the educational efforts of the most conscious revolutionaries, has become a spreading infection.

The left, having got into council positions, has adapted itself to the limits of the established structures (because it had no clear idea of how to fight them), and then become a force trying to educate the rest of the labour movement to accept those limits.

AN ALTERNATIVE POLICY

In the Islington Socialist Organiser Group, in particular, and through the paper, we have developed an alternative perspective. We have argued the issues through in more detail than any other current on the left.

It was summarised as follows in the resolution drafted by us, in consultation with other comrades, for the Islington budget debate:

"This Joint Meeting (of the council Labour group and the Labour Parties' joint Local Government Committee) agrees the following Programme of Action to resist the Tory Government's attempt to destroy jobs and services in Islington, through their cuts in Rate Support Grant and penalties on Council spending.

"That at the Council meeting on Tuesday March 8 the Labour group shall submit a motion refusing to make a budget at that meeting and demanding that the government restores the full level of Rate Support Grant required to meet the needs of the borough.

"That the Labour Group shall make a 'Statement of Intent' (see below) at the meeting to implement a budget for 1983-4 which fulfills the Party's manifesto and other immediate needs of the borough without increasing the financial burden, through rent or rates, on the people of Islington.

"That the Labour Group calls a Special Meeting of the Council for Tuesday March 29 at which, in the event of the Tories refusing to increase Rate Support Grant, it will submit this statement of intent as the basis of the 1983-4 budget.

"That the Labour Group shall, at the March 8 Council, call a local Labour Movement Conference to which it will invite delegates from council trade unions, other union branches in the area, local Labour Parties, tenants' associations and community groups. The conference, to be held on March 26, shall be called to win support for the Statement of Intent and its application. This conference shall determine whether and how to proceed with the course of action it outlines.

Prior to the Labour Movement Conference the Labour group and Local Government Committee shall re-launch the 'Make the Tories Pay' campaign that was begun at the end of 1982 (door-to-door canvassing).

"We shall seek to involve the council trade unions in this campaign and produce a further protest letter on the theme, 'We Won't Pay the Tory Surcharge'.

"We shall attempt to organise borough-wide canvassing with this material in order to build support for the March 26 conference.

"The March issue of Islington Focus shall reprint the Labour group's 'Statement of Intent' in full and carry as much supporting material as is possible.

"The Local Government Committee and the Labour group shall press strenuously at the London Regional Conference of the Labour Party for support for our plans, through an emergency resolution declaring London Labour's full support to Islington, through financial aid for our campaign, and appeals for help with mass canvassing.

"The Labour group shall approach Labour groups in other London boroughs and on the GLC to get them to provide assistance to Islington and to follow a similar course of action.

"The Labour group shall appoint a full-time legal adviser, with specialist knowledge of local authority finance and legislation and sympathetic to the campaign, to investigate the various tactics needed to best pursue the course of action decided.

"Plans shall be made for dealing with resistance from senior officers. These plans shall be made in detailed terms which would allow members to assume direct control of all Council affairs, and shall be in hand by the Special Council meeting of March 29.

"Plans shall be made to ensure that contingency funds, lodged with other Labour Authorities or other sympathetic institutions, are in hand by the March 29 Special Council meeting in order to be able to continue paying employees for as long a period as possible after the banks refuse to deal directly with the Council."

This is the Statement of Intent referred to:

"Islington Council's Labour Group plans, together with the labour movement of the borough, to press forward with its plans for improving housing, jobs and services in Islington.

"We intend at a Special Meeting of the Council on March 29 to present a budget for the Council in 1983-4 which will mean:

"1. Keeping up the present level of all our services. That will cost £77.3 million this year.

"2. Improving and expanding some services – by decentralising our housing, repairs and social services, increasing the wages of our lowest-paid workers, increasing support to registered childminders and improving services for the old and disabled, at a cost of £4.2 million.

"3. Freezing council rents. "We therefore plan to spend a total of £81.5 million on maintaining and improving the Council's services. But that figure has been made artificially high because the government is 'penalising' us for spending money to help the old, the disabled, mothers and the low paid.

"The real cost of the increased services we plan for this year is only £1.6 million, but the government has added a penalty of £2.6 million to the cost . . . making it 2½ times as expensive, at £4.4 million.

"The Tories have done the same to our main budget. Without the 'Tory Surcharge' the cost of 'no cuts' would be £71.3 million, not £77.3 million. Another £6 million taken away.

"This means the total Tory Surcharge on Islington is £9 million. The government want us to force you, the people of Islington, to pay that difference through higher rent and rates. We refuse to force you to pay this Tory Surcharge. It would be an impossible burden at a time when real wages are falling and unemployment soaring.

"They are cutting back the money they give to Islington and want you to pay. To balance the council's budget after the Tory Surcharge we would have to increase our total rates bill from £40 million last year to over £50 million in 1983. It would mean a 30% rise in rates.

Real cost

"But the real cost of our extra services, and inflation on existing services, only adds up to £2.5 million, and it should only mean a 4% rise in rates if the Tories paid their share.

"The Tories owe us the £9 million we need to keep the Council's services running. We demand they pay up!

"The Tories will not admit they are trying to rob us. They will accuse your Council of 'overspending' despite the fact that Islington's problems are getting worse. The only thing we can do, if we are not to make you pay the 'Tory Surcharge', is to run an 'unbalanced' council budget in 1983-4.

"The Tories will use this as an excuse to try and take control of the Council away from your elected councillors. They will try to hand the Council over to unelected officials who they will order to carry out their robbery for them by cutting services, slashing jobs, and increasing rents and rates. We will, together with our workers, fight to stop

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JOHN HARRIS

Will Liverpool council be the first to take on this Tory government?

the Tories trampling on democracy in this way.

"The banks will act for the Tories too. They will try to freeze the Council's finances and force all the Borough's services to grind to a halt and leave our workers unpaid. We will fight them too. We will make it our first priority to find ways to continue paying our workers and keep our services running when the attack comes.

"We do not propose to embark on this course of action without consulting and involving those most affected by the fight to stop the Tory Surcharge: the Council's workers, council tenants, and the users of our services. That is why Islington Council's Labour group of councillors is calling together a local Labour Movement Conference on March 26 to win support for our policy of refusing to pay the Tory Surcharge, before we take the final decision."

Such a campaign would have to go together with more general demands:

- *Denunciation of the burden of interest charges: demand cancellation of the councils' debt burden, interest-free loans from central government, and nationalisation without compensation of the banks and finance institutions. (Interest charges are often 30% or more of councils' current spending).

- *Denunciation of the inequitable features of the rates system (e.g. the fact that, since housing is a bigger part of the budgets of the poor, it bears more heavily on many low-paid workers than on the well-off). Defend existing local democracy: demand increased powers for local authorities to levy whatever taxes they decide on. Put the burden of taxation onto the wealthy.

- *Take the whole building industry into public ownership, without compensation and under workers' and community control. Launch a national crash house-building programme.

- *Workers' and community control of housing and education.

If the council adopted the policy outlined above, then various things could happen next.

1. Probably the council officers would refuse to implement the 'unbalanced' budget,

and would prepare their own rent/rate rises and cuts. Legally they can do this. The councillors should then call on the council unions and tenants to take action against the rent/rate rises and cuts, following the policy of their elected council rather than unelected officials.

2. If the officials cooperated, the next hurdle would be the banks. Councils depend heavily on short-term borrowing to run their current affairs. It has already happened that the money markets have frozen out, or imposed astronomical interest rates on councils like the GLC and Lambeth for short periods.

Faced with such measures, the council should:

a) Demonstratively stop payment of outstanding interest charges and precepts.

b) Use all available funds, current incomes, etc., exclusively for paying its workforce.

c) Call for industrial and rent and rate strikes to demand that the government grants finance.

Unlikely

3. It is unlikely that both the senior officials and the banks would cooperate with an unbalanced budget. If they did, however, the next step would be intervention by the District Auditor, a government official, who could take the council to court and have it removed for financial irresponsibility. The councillors would be disqualified and surcharged, and the running of the council handed over to the officials pending a new election. (Under current law the government cannot send in commissioners).

Again, the council should respond by calling on tenants and workers to fight for the policy of their elected council, against the intervention of the courts and central government.

4. It is logically conceivable, but in practice very unlikely, that the senior officials, the banks, and the District Auditor could all sit back and wait for the council to run out of money on the basis of its unbalanced budget. If so, the council, when it comes close to running out of money, should stop paying interest charges and thus precipitate variant 2, above.

All this discussion of what the council should do in this or that eventuality has its importance. In a sense, however, it is beside the main point.*

The answer to the question: 'What strategy for councils to fight the cuts?' is: No such strategy is possible. Councils do not have the power to fight the cuts. Local labour movements do. What we can develop is a strategy for local labour movements to fight the cuts, within which councillors can use their position to help the struggle and give a lead.

Labour councillors must see themselves primarily as a part of this labour movement effort, rather than of the municipal machine — as fighters, not administrators. That is the basic principle by which all tactical issues such as rate rises are determined.

Left councillors often say that they would love to lead a fight, but there is no sign of the council unions budging, so what can they do? In fact whenever a council has given a lead for a fight, however faltering, as in Lambeth or Lothian, the working class response has been excellent. It is the councillors who eventually have been found wanting.

There is, of course, no guarantee that a lead from councillors would bring a response, still less a guarantee that it would bring victory against central government. But it is a thousand times better for the left to remain true to itself and go down fighting than for the left to take responsibility for those options that exist in the absence of a fight.

If the condition of the working class makes a real fighting council impossible, then so be it: it is the job of serious socialists patiently to argue from a minority position to change the condition of the working class, not to make themselves a reflection of it and thus, inevitably, a factor in perpetuating it.

Historically, local government has been a machine for corruption of the labour movement — parallel to, and probably just as important as, the trade union bureaucracy. Just as the shop-floor militant gets drawn into the world of committees and time-off-for-union-duties, then up into officialdom, at each stage getting more and more drawn into the business of managing industrial relations in partnership with the bosses; so the Labour Party activist gets drawn into the municipal structures.

There are differences. Some councillors develop a close relationship with the working class in their wards, but most don't. Their constituency is an aggregate of individual citizens, not the relatively compact body of organised workers which forms the constituency of a trade union representative. Moreover, councillors are employers, or rather they are attached to a bureaucratic apparatus which is an employer. The corrupting effects of the council hierarchies are therefore usually

even more devastating than those of the union hierarchies.

Just as the answer in the unions is not to do away with any permanent machinery or system of paid officials, but to fight for the rank and file to exert control, so also in local government the answer is not to leave all the councils to the Tories but to win control over councillors by the local labour movement and to make the councillors fight against the system.

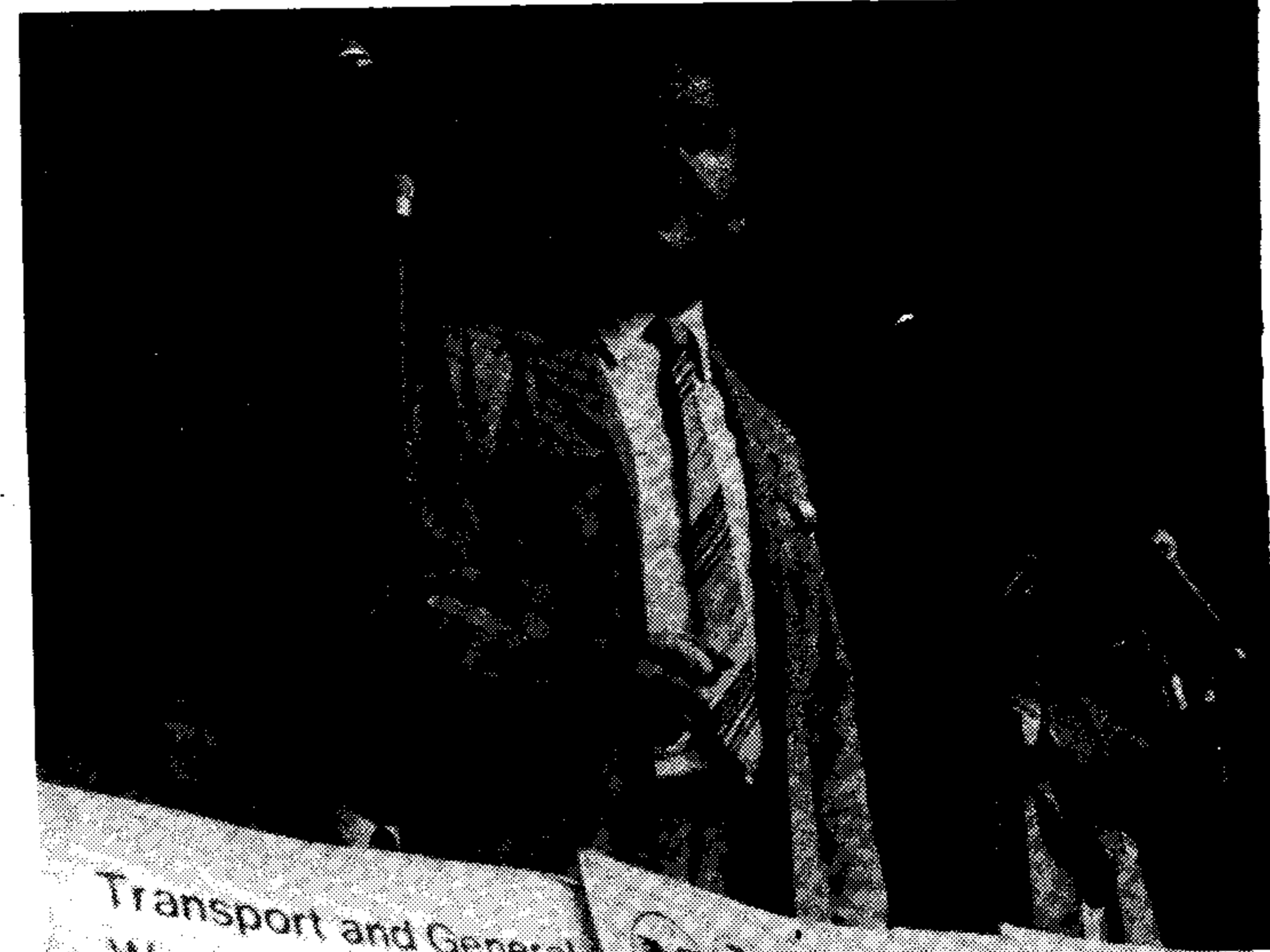
The 1880 programme of the French Workers' Party, in an introduction drafted by Marx, defined the aim of the socialists in relation to universal suffrage as to transform it "from the instrument of deception that it has been up till now, into an instrument of emancipation."

Such should be our attitude to local democracy.

This differentiates us both from the mainstream local government leftists and, at the other pole, from the Socialist Workers Party.

The SWP has made many criticisms of the left councils — some rather hysterical, some very telling. Even their valid criticisms, however, are made sterile by the fact that they are all used to promote the argument that socialists should abstain from the political struggle within the Labour Party (and, increasingly, the struggle within the unions too). Thus the SWP ends up worsening the insufficiency of active Marxist engagement in the labour movement, leaving an even greater vacuum to be filled by the 'municipal socialists'.

Their attitude is no better than that of syndicalists who (very correctly) denounce the shams and corruption of parliamentary politics, but conclude that they should turn their backs on the whole arena and concentrate exclusively on industrial organising. Since the reality of



JOHN HARRIS

Transport and General Workers' Union

HANDS OFF LONDON TRANSPORT

OUR LIFELINE! PENSIONERS KEEP BUS PASSES FOR PENSIONERS

Ken Livingstone: the GLC became responsible for implementing the Law Lords' ruling that increased fares.

parliamentary politics does not disappear when the syndicalists turn their backs on it, their abstention only strengthens the parliamentary reformists by freeing them of potential opposition. Likewise with the SWP and municipal politics.

Socialist Action has followed a strange hybrid policy — rather servile towards Ken Livingstone, not very different from the SWP in areas like Islington.

IMMEDIATE PROSPECTS

The immediate prospects are not good. The labour movement generally is in a depressed state, the local government left even more so. There are signs of a serious fight over the 1984-5 budget at present only in Liverpool, and Liverpool may well crumble before the crunch.

We may be wrong in our estimate on 1984-5. Liverpool may fight. Other councils may. And in 1985-6 the local government left will come into head-on collision with the Tory government: sections of it may well fight.

So long as this remains so, the job of Marxists must be to prepare for the future by patiently arguing for a fighting perspective. We will, necessarily, be in a fairly marginalised position — arguing 'from the

back of the hall', as it were.

But we should beware of sectarianism. Despite everything said in the previous sections, the local government left is not played out yet. It has not separated off from the general labour movement left to become a crystallised elite, immune to any processes of discussion and struggle within the labour movement. While being very clear in our minds about the seriousness of the issues between us and the local government left, we must put across our arguments in such a way that we are trying to convince the local government left (and the general Labour Left, from which it is not much differentiated), rather than just denounce them.

This concludes Martin Thomas's article. In the New Year, we will be opening the pages of Socialist Organiser to responses to this assessment of the local government left's experience.

Model resolutions



against the witch-hunt

Model resolution for trade union conferences from Labour Against the Witch-hunt.

1. This Conference recognises that the Labour Party will only achieve power for the benefit of our members if it unites together against the Tories and their allies and stops witch-hunting its own supporters.

This Conference therefore calls for an immediate halt to all witch hunts and defends the traditional right of Labour Party members to belong to pressure groups, provided that they accept the Party's objectives as defined in Clause IV part 4 of the Party's Constitution and provided that they do not stand or campaign against Labour's candidates in public elections.

2. This Conference recognises that it is in the vital interests of

our members to see a Labour Government returned to power at the earliest possible opportunity.

Conference therefore calls upon the Labour Party's NEC and full time officers to spend more time on promoting Labour's policies and campaigns against the Tories, and less time intervening in the internal affairs of Constituency Labour

Parties. This Conference believes that since CLPs are generally quite capable of conducting their own affairs democratically and efficiently, the Party's NEC and paid organisers should not intervene to limit an individual member's activities without a formal request from his/her CLP.

Diary of a People's Marcher

and "How politics were kept out of the People's March"



by Satvinder Singh and Tony Purtil
Introduction by Jeremy Corbyn, MP

50p for a single copy, 40p per copy for 5 or more, and 30p per copy for 20 or more, from Employment Unit, Southwark CVS, 135 Rye Lane, London SE15. Cheques payable to Southwark CVS. Please add an amount for postage.

Cowley ballot

BALLOT ELECTIONS are taking place this week at BL's Cowley Body Plant.

Workers will vote for a new TGWU senior steward and secretary of the 5/60 Branch as well as other officers.

But a question mark is hanging over the election, the conduct of which is entirely in the hands of supporters of the present right wing leadership. They have all 14 scrutineers: the five challengers to the existing leadership have been denied even one.

The 14 scrutineers have also refused to have the ballot papers numbered as a precaution against fraud. Needless to say this has only been allowed in the teeth of complaints because of the leadership's right wing credentials.

The contest for the senior steward position is between the former deputy senior steward, JP Alec Morton, and Socialist Organiser supporter Tony Richardson.

Unemployed bolster Warrington pickets

Carve-up

A NEW report, drawn up by Roy Griffiths, the managing director of Sainsbury's, is an attempt to bring some of the new, hard-headed style of British management to the NHS. Incredibly, only one year after 'Patients First' re-organised management in the NHS, Norman Fowler calls in a grocer to beef things up!

Griffiths proposes to draft in managers from private industry to the top level of NHS management. A new Supervisory Board and a Management Board will push aside the top bureaucrats in the DHSS and hand things over to the hard-headed new boys.

It will be the job of the Boards to make sure policies on staffing and spending are actually carried out and not left to drift. Locally they will rely on Health Authorities picking out budding Michael Edwardes from their ranks. These new 'general managers' would do for the Authorities what the new boys will be doing for the DHSS.

There have been attempts, particularly by Brian Walden when he interviewed Norman Fowler on Weekend World a few weeks ago, to pass all this off as an effort to bring consultants' spending into line.

If this were the case it would take power away from the medical hierarchy and would drastically transform the NHS (though it would not be any more democratic). What is more likely to be about is that Fowler is making sure that proposals for cuts and privatisation don't get bogged down by local management opposition and get carried out as quickly as possible.

Breaking the law

STATISTICS published last week in the Department of Employment Gazette show that the Government's first piece of anti-union legislation, the Prior 1980 Employment Act, which severely restricts trade unions' ability to take sympathetic industrial action unless related to a company's first customer or supplier, was 'considerably flouted last year.'

713,000 working days, involving 986,600 workers, were lost in Britain last year through sympathy strikes. Most of them, 672,000 days, were from the eight-month-long NHS dispute, and all were unlawful.

UNEMPLOYED activists have played a prominent role on the Warrington picket throughout the NGA dispute. The Birmingham Unemployed Workers Association, for instance, has been working closely with the local NGA in organising coaches up to Warrington, and mobilising support throughout the Birmingham labour movement.

A special leaflet produced by the BUWA summarises their attitude to this dispute:

"It is in the interests of all workers, employed and unemployed together, to see a strong and effective trade union movement, free from legal interference.

"That is why unemployed people must support the Stockport Messenger dispute. That is why BUWA is fully behind the NGA."

We spoke to two unemployed activists who went up to Warrington with the BUWA last Tuesday.

BOB SMITH, a member of the Birmingham NGA unemployed chapel, told us:

"We need maximum unity between the unemployed and the employed to resist the Tory

JIM DENHAM reports on the solidarity activity being organised by Birmingham unemployed workers.

onslaught. Both are facing the same fight. Wages, conditions, jobs and benefits are all under attack. The unemployed have as much interest as all other workers in defending the unions.

"In Birmingham the NGA and its local officials Alan Jordan and Frank Harvey, have done an excellent job. They saw the need for building support as widely as possible, and encouraged the unemployed to get involved from the start. Relations between the local NGA and the Unemployed Workers Association have been enormously strengthened as a result of our joint work around this dispute.

A general strike is what's needed to win the Messenger fight. But it's obvious that the TUC, with their track record of scabbing on ASLEF and the



NGA mobile picket HQ, wrecked by police thugs

JOHN HARRIS

health workers, are going to back away from any serious escalation of the fight. And Labour leaders like Hattersley are spouting treacherous nonsense about the necessity to uphold the law. So they expect us to just sit back and take it while the Tories slash our living standards and emasculate our organisations?

Unemployed workers should mobilise support for the NGA on the dole queues, in the unions, in their Labour Parties and in whatever unemployed groups they're involved with. We should condemn the scab role of people like Hattersley and Alastair Graham.

We must demand that the Labour leadership and the TUC get off the fence and give unconditional support to this struggle.

The unemployed — and especially youth — must play a full part in defending our unions and in building for all-out action to smash the Tory's legislation."

GEORGE MANKING, an unemployed ex-BL shop stew-

ard said:

"I've been an active trade unionist since I was 17. The last few years at BL were very demoralising. We suffered a series of sell-outs by the union leaders who simply gave in to the management offensive. Thousands of jobs were lost, while wages and conditions deteriorated.

I see the Messenger dispute not just as a matter of six jobs, but as a life and death struggle for the future of effective trade unionism. It's a chance to reverse all the set-backs of the last few years.

Hundreds

"I went up to Warrington with hundreds of other Birmingham trade unionists — employed and unemployed alike. The police laid into us up there, with fists, boots and batons. I was nicked when the cops surged forward and knocked me to the ground.

"Before I could get up, I was grabbed by members of the

Tactical Support Unit, dragged away by two of them and finally taken to Widnes police station.

"There I was held, along with many others, until Wednesday afternoon, when we were taken to Warrington Magistrates Court.

Smashed

"People were being brought in in a terrible condition. One had his face smashed in after being arrested, another picket had to be taken from the cells to the hospital, because he had a blood clot in his leg caused by the beating he'd received.

Incidents like that teach people just what is at stake in a dispute like this — it's the working class versus the state, not just one employer versus a particular union.

"The unemployed have even more interest in winning this fight than other workers. We should put ourselves and our organisations at the disposal of the NGA and smash the Tory laws."

Priests let loose on Scots jobless

"The management committee consists of the Community Minister, the local Church of Scotland Minister, a representative of the Social Work Department, two local teachers, and a trade union representative. The users are not represented on the committee.

"The management committee has representatives from the trades council, the District Council, Welfare Rights and the Marriage Guidance Council . . . the centre users are not represented on the committee."

"The District Committee has a majority on the management committee and an official of the council is responsible for running the centre — many decisions which would be made by the centre workers have to be referred to him."

"The management committee has representatives from the Trades Council, the Regional Council, the Manpower Services Commission. The users are not represented on the committee . . . The main activity of the centre appears to be an Unemployed Workers Sailing Club. There are plans to purchase dingies and to build a larger boat. Most of the energies of the centre appear to be concentrated on this."

"The management committee has representatives from . . . a wide range of local groups including the Rotary Club and the Police. The users are not represented on the Committee."

The above quotes do not refer to centres for drug users, searching for ways to mend a

While Scottish trade union bureaucrats hold back on organising the unemployed, the churches and other anti-political groupings are moving in, reports Dan Hook.

broken marriage, in need of moral support from the Church, seeking reintegration into society through useful recreational activities and constantly under the careful scrutiny of the police to prevent any moral relapse.

They refer to various Scottish Unemployed Workers Centres (UWCs) included in the 22 surveyed by the Industrial Studies Section of Dunfermline Technical College for a recently produced report commissioned by the Scottish TUC.

Save for those with a penchant for bland reports about even blander UWCs, the report makes pretty grim reading. Every page is an indictment of the STUC for its failure to back up the UWCs, every page an expose of the low level, if not complete absence, of real campaigning by the UWCs.

Funding of the centres by trade unions is virtually non-existent. Most of the funding comes from Regional/District Council grants and the MSC, with all its consequent restrictions on activities permitted for the UWCs. Only one centre, in

Aberdeen, was mainly funded by union contributions.

And the full-time staff in the centres too are virtually always MSC-funded as well. Moreover, whilst staff had given up a lot of time to do welfare rights courses etc to provide advice for the unemployed on their "benefits" they had not been chosen for their campaigning abilities, nor given any training in this respect.

Management committees of the UWCs, as the above quotes illustrate, often did not contain any representatives of the unemployed themselves. And when they did, it was unclear whether or not they were in a nominal majority over councillors, priests, police, marriage guidance councillors, etc.

The UWCs are used to a disproportionately high extent by the male unemployed. "Because of the activities provided in the centres, the vast majority of users of recreational facilities are young men in the 16-25 age group," states the report.

Specific examples are Aberdeen ("the recreational facilities . . . are used by a group of some 20 or so young men.")

In only one case is reference made to a UWC (Dalkeith) running a creche.

On the question of campaigning, six of the 22 centres surveyed do not carry out any campaigning at all, nor is there any encouragement from the centre staff to do so. And for the other sixteen, campaigning was a very low priority and came in a low-key approach.

Most had been involved in some form of campaigning for concessionary fares and concessionary admission fees to recreational facilities. Nine of the centres had also been involved in national union campaigns.

But, as the report points out, "in most of them this meant little more than informing those using the centre of the activities which were taking place and encouraging those interested to participate . . . there was a strong impression that in most centres only a very small number of users became involved because of their contacts with the centre. Most would have been involved in any case because they were already active in the community."

Youth

Another particularly marked theme in the report is that of the lack of support from the trade unions for the UWCs. This manifests itself both in the lack of union funding for the centres and also in "the almost complete lack of support for the centres from full time officials and senior lay officials of individual unions."

As a remedy for the malaise suffered by UCWs, the report advocates recognition by sponsoring bodies of campaigning as a legitimate activity for UWCs; involving campaigning abilities as a criterium for the selection of staff; and more trade union involvements.

But what the report really fails to get to grips with — and hardly

surprisingly, given who commissioned it — is the extent to which the union bureaucracy itself is concerned to stifle any campaigning by UWCs.

The clearest current example of this is the way in which the Communist Party-controlled Glasgow Federation of UWCs was instrumental in splitting the Castlemilk Unemployed Workers' Group and then expelled the group which wanted to campaign (and had the majority of members) whilst handing over control of the Castlemilk UWC to a minority, non-campaigning group.

More trade union support is certainly needed for UWCs. At the same time though, the demand for increased support must be coupled with a campaign to free the UWCs from the deadly grip of the STUC bureaucracy (and priests, police, marriage guidance councillors, etc).



Labour Campaign for Gay Rights

To join or affiliate, write to Chris Richardson, 21 Devonshire Promenade, Lenton, Nottingham NG7 2DS. £5 for individuals, or for affiliated organisations, per 1000 members; £2 low-waged individuals, £1 unwaged.



THE National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers said last week that it wants to reopen negotiations affecting some 200,000 clothing workers with the British Clothing Industry Association. The union has rejected the employers' initial offer of a 4.5% increase on basic pay, coupled with moves for a one-hour reduction in the 40-hour working week.

A NEW Treasury document to be presented to the National Economic Development Council shows the drift of the Government's current thinking on labour relations.

It calls for a fundamental shift in attitudes and practices in the labour market (including greater willingness to move to jobs), lower relative wages for trainees, the unskilled and service workers; much greater flexibility in hours and shift working, coupled with new forms of employment contract; and an end to 'artificial' entry barriers to trades and professions.

Another idea floated by the Government recently is that there should be much wider regional variations in pay, so that areas like Scotland, the North East and Merseyside would have markedly lower wage rates than the South East.

In its long-term forecast, the Treasury document sees manufacturing and public sector jobs declining, and new jobs most likely to appear in the private service sector.

It reports that: "The disappearance of jobs in declining industries is rarely followed as quickly as we would all like by the creation of new jobs in industries that are expanding, and rarely are they in the same place".

ONE AREA of expansion under the Tories has been the armed forces. Overall recruitment was 77% higher in the last quarter than in the corresponding period of 1982. Total strength has risen by 3,500 during the last quarter, and is now 2,200 up on a year ago.

THREE DAYS of talks between civil service unions and the Land Registry appear to have produced a formula to be put to meetings this week. A three-week dispute has brought almost 500 civil servants, at 12 of the 13 district registries, out on strike.

The proposed settlement in effect gives the go-ahead to the changes in working practices which management wants to impose, and against which the unions struck. It is understood to provide for a two-month trial for the changed working practices. At the end of the two months, management have said that they will reconsider the extent of their cost-cutting plans.

SO YOU thought that the spirit of capitalist enterprise was dead in Britain? Well, you were wrong. It is not dead. It has fled to Stockport and made its home in the fat carcass of Mr Eddie Shah.

The history of Shah's Messenger Group of free advertising sheets is one of the great success stories of post-war British entrepreneurship. If Shah goes down before the picketing hordes of print worker luddites and their subversive Red auxiliaries it will be a bad day for British industry.

Shell strikers divided

By Bryan Edmonds

AS WE go to press shop stewards of the two manual unions — TGWU representing 1,400 process workers and the AUEW representing 1,000 craft workers — involved in the eight week strike over pay at Shell UK's largest refinery, Stanlow (Cheshire) are divided over the company's latest and "final" offer.

TGWU stewards voted by 21 to 18 on Tuesday (December 6) to reject the offer and continue the strike; a recommendation to be put to their members at a mass meeting on Thursday.

However, AUEW stewards are recommending acceptance today (Wednesday) of a similar

package made up of a 4.5% basic pay increase over 15 months, plus a £100-a-head lump sum, consolidation of £4.30 in weekly allowances, and a restructuring of other allowances worth up to £415 a year. The TGWU seem to have agreed on the same basic pay rate increase, but are divided over a lump sum offer totalling £225.

These developments follow the acceptance by over 300 TGWU members at Shellhaven (Essex) last week of an offer by Shell made up of a 4.5% increase on

basic rates, a £50 lump sum, consolidation of allowances worth £2.50 a week, and restructuring of other allowances.

A return to work on Monday (December 5) by the remaining strikers — 170 AUEW craft workers who accepted the same deal at the weekend with consolidation of allowances amounting to £2.30 a week — brought an end to the four-week strike at the Shellhaven refinery.

Meanwhile, although the pay claim by the 1,750 TGWU Shell oil-tanker drivers and depot workers was settled two weeks ago, legal snags still bedevil the issue affecting the included consolidation of long-service pay-

ments which the union considers would be in breach of employment contracts.

Isolated

The pressure on the workers at Stanlow who are now isolated in their action, for a return to work, will be increased, but with determination to continue picketing company depots together with calls to tanker drivers not to cross picket lines then the company can be forced to return to negotiations and to alter (as has happened during the course of the strike) their "final" offer.

Carousel rota needed

OVER five months ago, workers at the Carousel ice-cream waf factory in the East End of Glasgow began their strike for union recognition, better working conditions and reinstatement. They are still not anywhere near winning the dispute.

The strikers have maintained their picket throughout the dispute, but support for the week mass pickets has been declining recently.

The TGWU and Strathclyde Federation of Unemployment Centres should arrange a ro system of support for the pick line, to ensure a greater number of pickets each day as well as the weekly mass pickets.

Our mistakes in Michelin strike

ARTHUR BOUGH spoke to a senior TGWU Branch official at Michelin.

"Since the five week long official strike and magnificent victory of the production and verification workers at Michelin, Stoke, tremendous problems have been faced by the workers.

In January 1983 the company announced that there would be no pay negotiations until at least Spring 1984. Because the membership was intimidated by 250 redundancies which had just been made, no action was taken.

Then in April, the Company announced proposals which would have removed uniform shift allowances, and replaced them with allowances based upon a worker's own average rate; reduced the day-workers working week without compensation, and imposed a commitment to seven day working on a compulsory basis.

But centre stage at Michelin was occupied by a fight to stop the company imposing four-set, seven day working in the car tyre production and verification sections. The pay negotiations became of secondary importance to the membership.

In the August strike Michelin workers won a complete victory over the company who had to abandon the attempt to impose seven day working.

Now the pay negotiations are back again at centre stage. In September the convenor and full time official started negotiations with management on the strings management wanted to attach to the pay increase. They got no improvement in the compensation for the reduction in hours or over the new basis of calculating shift allowances. But management was forced to withdraw their proposals for compulsory seven day working.

Clause

These negotiations were the result of a clause in the return to work agreement that ended the five week strike in August, which stated that negotiations would commence on the need for greater efficiency within the plant by the introduction of a seven day working week.

In October a mass meeting of all the workers rejected the whole deal until an amendment was added that "should anyone

be compelled to work at weekends then the whole factory would come out on strike". With this proviso the deal was finally accepted.

Michelin management, however, continued to insist on the need for seven day working and made threats that the plant would close if seven day working was not conceded. Eventually in November the union negotiators obtained acceptable proposals.

Compare the Company's attempted imposed conditions with the final proposals:

The company's desired four set rota would have meant workers working two week-ends out of three. As compensation they were offered an increase in pay of approximately £10 a week. After negotiation the following clauses were obtained by substituting five set working for four set working.

*Working hours reduced from 40 to 34 on average i.e. a four day week with additional rota day every fifth week. This reduction in hours to take place without loss of pay.

*Full working of only one weekend in five, and either the complete weekend or Saturday or Sunday off, on the other four weekends.

Holidays

*Guarantee of holidays in line with the area.

*Right of members over the age of 53 to opt out of the system after six months.

*The employment of approximately 200 new workers.

A mass meeting of the membership rejected these proposals.

Then the company asked for volunteers to work the new shifts, and there was a 90% agreement in the affected departments. This situation was accepted by the union officers and the proposals have now been accepted on a voluntary basis.

The company now realise that they made a mistake in attempting to impose the new shifts. Management now say that in future the union will be fully consulted. The five set rotas started on Sunday 20 November.

It is my opinion that we as union officers failed the membership on the important points. We should never have accepted any clause which reduced the working week without compensation. We should have totally rejected the clause which returns different

his work to regenerate British industry and return the trade unions to the days of good old Queen Victoria.

SHAH'S PHONE NUMBERS:

Tele Ad numbers: Bury, 061-797 5600; Stockport 061-477 4270 and 061-477 4600; Sale, 061-969 8411; Altrincham, 061-928 5799; Urmston, 061-747 5988. Typesetting: 061-480 5507 and 061-477 2945; Distribution: 061-941 2340 and 061-941 4445; Editorial: 061-477 5636 and 061-969 8416.



Michelin workers vote to end strike

shift allowance payments according to a worker's ability to earn bonus payments. There was an obvious lack of leadership amongst the shop stewards in failing to recommend total rejection of the whole package at the October meeting."

ARTHUR BOUGH COMMENTS:

Whatever the weaknesses of the branch leadership, some of which were outlined by the

branch official I spoke to, workers at Michelin have again demonstrated that the bosses' offensive can be turned back. There are some important gains made by Michelin workers in the final package.

Firstly, they are probably the first group of manual workers to break through the 35 hour week barrier. By so doing they have confounded the view expressed at the recent CBI conference. As a result, 200 more workers will

have to be recruited to the workforce of 6,000.

The other lesson from Michelin is that they were clear in their minds earlier this year that they won their strike not because some clever union bureaucrat negotiator but through their own strength. That is why they were confident enough to reject the advice of their union officials to accept the original versions of the deal.

That feeling of confidence must be built throughout the labour movement by organising the rank and file for action in defence of pay and jobs. If other workers throughout Britain had the same self-confidence in their strength as Michelin workers do have, Thatcher could be removed from office tomorrow.

There is one final lesson though. That the final deal arrived at can be seen as an advance in many ways a sign of the positive state of the labour movement, and in particular of the TUC leaders. For the last ten years the TUC has been calling for a four hour week — and that's all it has done, called for it.

The message from Michelin, Stoke, to the TUC is clear — you really want to cut unemployment organise industrial action for a 35 hour week not better still for a sliding scale of hours so that hours worked are reduced in line with what is needed to give every worker a job

No move on Ford pay

FORD workers last week voted on the company's 7.5% pay offer, or an all-out strike from January 3.

Of the 24 Ford UK plants, 13 accepted the offer, 10 were against, and the Langley vote was recorded as split.

In the past the votes have been tallied by plants. But the plants vary greatly in size, and according to union officials the vote showed a majority of workers against acceptance.

"Sharp end"

Rejection was heaviest among those at the 'sharp end' of production, with the hardest and most demanding jobs, in the body and engine shops and on the assembly lines.

Union officials are, however, making no move for action. They are meeting management again on Thursday December 8 to attempt to get a further improvement on the wage offer, an improved pension scheme, and a reduction in the working year.

Defend Thornton View Hospital!

AFTER THE excitement on the Warrington picket line last week, going back to the picket line at the Thornton View hospital occupation in Bradford may seem a little dull.

However, supporting the occupation and maintaining the picket is more important now than ever before. The District Health Authority has already given the go-ahead for the hospital to be closed. All that is needed now is a Ministerial decision, and after that the

hospital can be raided at any time.

Plans are being drawn up to defend Thornton View, and a constantly being strengthened. The workers are fighting to protect their patients, to save part of the Health Service in Bradford, and to save their own jobs.

And, after four months occupation, they are fighting to see that their efforts are not in vain. They deserve our support now and when the crunch comes.

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SOCIALIST STUDENT

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BATTLE FOR THE

New issue of Socialist Student, paper of Socialist Students in NOLS, now out, 10p plus postage from Andy Bennet, DSU, Dunelm House, New Elve Durham. Take a bulk order to sell!

Socialist ORGANISER SHIPYARD STRIKE CALL

By Lol
Duffy

TALKS between the Shipbuilding Negotiating Committee of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions and British Shipbuilders ended in deadlock on Wednesday November 30.

British Shipbuilders refused to withdraw their plans to close yards, make redundancies, freeze wages, and use their so-called survival plan to eliminate trade boundaries. The executive of the Confed are now calling for an all-out strike from January 6.

Ballot

Not much detail has come down to the yards at the time of going to press, but it has been rumoured that the Confed executive is calling for a ballot on this strike. Some of the Confed unions' rules require them to conduct a ballot anyway.

Why the strike has been called for the 6th, and not the 3rd, we don't yet know. But one thing should be pointed out. The call for an all-out strike is a historic step. But strike action in itself cannot protect those yards facing closure.

The original call for occupation of all the yards has to be taken up by all British Shipbuilders workers, especially those threatened with the closure of their yard, to prevent the removal of vessels, plant, and machinery, and also to focus attention on a fight to save jobs and improve wages.

The call by the Confed executive is a complete turnaround. Murray, the chair of the Shipbuilding Negotiating Committee, and Ferry, the secretary, had come out of talks with British Shipbuilders on November 2

Sheffield City Branch of the National Union of Railwaymen passed the following resolution on Tuesday December 6:

'This Branch calls on the NEC to:

1. Declare its support for the NGA in its fight to reinstate six sacked members and against the Tory anti-union laws.
2. Offer the NGA financial and industrial assistance, and,
3. Call on the TUC to organise a 24 hour general strike against the Tory



JOHN STURROCK (REPORT)

Cammel Laird workers occupy their yard during a 1974 dispute: the tactic must now be used throughout British Shipbuilders

Occupy to stop the closures!

shaking hands with Graham Day (the chair of BS), and saying that

attempts to hamstring the trade union movement. This in preparation for a full-scale general strike if the Tory government does not back down'.

The resolution was moved by Rob Dawber and seconded by Mick Sidaway. Initially there was a feeling in the meeting that it was unrealistic, but after discussion a big majority in the meeting became convinced that it was necessary and therefore should be fought for.

they had achieved an agreement on the survival plan and would be working out the finer details before December 15.

Their smiles soon changed when the reaction from the yards came back to them, opposing the deal.

There is no doubt that British Shipbuilders and the Shipbuilding Negotiating Committee will be looking for ways to divide the yards by trying to negotiate yard-by-yard deals, directing orders to some yards and starving others. All British Shipbuilders workers must stand together, no matter what carrots are offered.

There is a large number of yards where the work has run dry and lay-offs are taking place. This makes it urgent for the unions to work out some way of sharing out the work available.

Redundancies

If we are to strike, we have to strike to win our full claim on wages, salaries, and conditions, and to oppose redundancies.

It's no good going out on strike to win a wage rise if it takes you a year to make up the money you've lost, because of some compromise deal worked out by our mis-named leaders. Pressure has got to be kept up to see that there is no more backing down by the SNC. Links have got to be forged between yards, not just at steward level,

but also at rank and file level, to overcome the years of distrust and rumour, encouraged by management to perpetuate divisions.



Reagan: what will he bomb next?

US clashes with Syria

By Harry Sloan

IN YET another crude exercise in US six-gun diplomacy, President Reagan last weekend unleashed the biggest American air strike since the Vietnam war.

After Israeli planes knocked out a Syrian radar station, US bombers from the Sixth Fleet struck at Syrian troop positions in Lebanon. Two were shot down.

State Department representatives declared that "Syria is an obstacle to peace in the Lebanon, and through pressure of every sort we intend to surmount that obstacle." Caspar Weinberger told reporters that the USA was defending its "right of unimpeded aerial reconnaissance" in the Middle East.

This is the blunt voice of imperialist rulers who are as determined to assert their will by force of arms thousands of miles away in the Middle East as they were when, much closer to the USA, they crushed the independence of the people of Grenada six weeks ago.

But the escalation of US military intervention in Lebanon is by no means as simple as was the invasion of the small Caribbean island. Syria has been impressively rearmed with the latest Soviet weaponry, and has declared its determination to resist the USA in a "just war against wrongful aggression."

40,000 Syrian troops are firmly entrenched in the North of Lebanon. By backing the "rebel" PLO forces in their bloody war against the leadership of Yassir Arafat, they have consolidated control over powerful Palestinian forces.

There is no evidence that Reagan's Israeli allies — who are still counting the social, military and economic costs of their invasion of South Lebanon last year — are committed to

support moves to oust Syria from the North.

Indeed the Lebanese President Gemayel, whom the Israelis helped instal in office, and who was engrossed in talks with Reagan last week, has been looking for some kind of deal with the Syrians.

Meanwhile other US partners in crime — the conservative Arab Gulf states, and the European governments with troops in the multinational "peace keeping" force — have all expressed reservations over the latest US military moves.

For Reagan to step beyond the present level of hostilities and seek through military force to subdue and defeat the Syrians would therefore be an enormous undertaking, requiring a vast increase in the US forces on the ground, currently numbering only 1,500.

The Israeli regime, though eager to trumpet its even closer working relationship with the USA after Shamir's talks with Reagan, is highly unlikely to seek even a subordinate part in an all-out war with Syria.

But there is no doubt that every clash and air raid makes the world a more dangerous place: and nobody after Grenada can be quite sure what the USA will do next.

Caught between the barbarism of the Israeli invaders and their Phalangist allies in the South, and the Syrian forces in the North, and under the guns of the US Sixth Fleet, the people of Lebanon and the dispossessed Palestinians face a future of bloodshed, oppression and suffering.

The demand for the withdrawal of all troops from the Lebanon — imperialist, Israeli and Syrian — must be taken up by the international workers' movement.

FUND

THE following groups of supporters have made no donations to the Socialist Organiser Xmas/New Year Fund in the last six weeks: Basingstoke, Birmingham, Bristol, Durham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Huddersfield, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Northampton, Oxford, Rochdale, Stockport, Stoke, Wallasey, York, Camden, Hackney, Harringey, Hounslow, Islington, Putney and Richmond.

It's not surprising then, that, half-way through the fund drive, we've achieved not half our target of £3,000 — but only £406.64 or 14%.

£1.00 a month isn't much to ask, to produce a weekly socialist newspaper, with hundreds of supporters.

Our fund targets are concentrated on groups of Socialist Organiser supporters, but many of our donations have come from readers and sympathisers. This week our appeal goes to every reader; every seller; and everyone who supports the existence of a weekly Socialist Organiser.

All donations are welcome: £1s, £5s, £10s, £50s . . . whatever you can afford.

And a reminder to groups who have organised Xmas events; please send the proceeds in quickly.

Rush all donations to 214, Sickert Court, Essex Road, London N1 2SY.

GROUP % OF TARGET REACHED

Brent	107
Chelmsford	33
Cardiff	21
Southwark/Lambeth	19
Sheffield	16
Nottingham	15
Harrogate	13
Hull	13
Leeds	13
SE London	8
Tower Hamlets	7
Halifax	6
Coventry	1

Thanks for donations in November to: Basingstoke supporters, £6; Geoff Williams, £4.30; Roger Welch, £10; Ellen Taylor, £3; Nottingham supporters, £5; Brent supporters, proceeds from food-stall, £15.

Thanks this week to: Pete in Harrogate, £1; Harrogate supporters, £3; Steve Battlemuch, £10. Total this week: £14.

Total so far: £406.64 (14%).