

Break
links
with
Tories

Socialist ORGANISER

Recall
the
TUC

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NEW TORY TRICK TO FORCE YOUTH INTO

CONSCRIPT LABOUR!



A SINISTER new method of forcing young people onto Youth Training Schemes is being pioneered in the Birmingham area. Private training agencies are sending out "mail shots" to 16 and 17 year olds studying at FE colleges under the 21 hour rule (which allows students to claim supplementary benefit so long as their studies take up less than 21 hours per week).

These "mail shots" invite the young person to an interview to "talk about the possible opportunities" supposedly offered by the training centre. The letters do not mention the DHSS policy of cutting benefit by 40% for six weeks in cases where a youth refuses a place on a YTS scheme.

NALGO members in the careers service are refusing to fill in forms on YTS 'refusers' which would then be passed on to the DHSS.

The 'mail shots' get round the NALGO action and open up youth to being penalised by the DHSS.

One young woman, studying at Bournville College in Birmingham received a "mail shot" from the Mosley Training Centre run by "Midland Training and Recruitment Services". Her father, an active trade unionist, immediately contacted the agency to demand an explanation.

He was told by a director, Alan Hinton (a former BL convenor!) that "all the other agencies are doing it as well", and that the MSC "unofficially approve" of the practice.

He claimed that MTRS had obtained their mailing list from the electoral register - but this explanation won't wash: the electoral register (prior to February 15) does not include most 16 year olds.

So where are they getting their mailing lists from? A lecturer at Bournville College

By Jim Denham

rang the same agency, MTRS, over another student who had received the "mail shot" letter. She was told, over the phone, that they couldn't reveal the source of their mailing list because "it cost us a lot of money"!

The most likely source of the list seems to be from somewhere within the careers service.

Or it could be the MSC, desperate to get unfilled YTS places taken up (latest figures confirm that only three-quarters of this year's YTS places are likely to be filled).

Perhaps significantly, Birmingham Education Committee recently voted to instruct careers officers to hand over details of school leavers to the MSC.

But whatever the source of the information, the issues raised by it are very serious. Already, trainees who leave YTS schemes before completion are having their benefit cut, even before the reason for leaving has been established.

In one case, a youth left a scheme because he had been told he would be trained in horticulture, and instead had been used to shovel rubbish about on a building site! He had his benefit cut as a result.

Birmingham YTS Action Group, together with the Unemployed Centre, are launching a campaign on this issue, and will be cooperating closely with the proposed national "Campaign Against Compulsion".

April 5

'Campaign Against Compulsion' day of action to protest against young people being forced onto the YTS



Come to Chesterfield!

TONY BENN said last week in Chesterfield.

"It is the Prime Minister who is destroying the hopes of the youngsters who are on the dole, keeping pensioners

on the verge of poverty, cutting back on the National Health Service and education and pouring billions of pounds into the purchase of nuclear weapons from

America.

It is the Prime Minister who is trying to undermine the essential services provided by the local authorities whom we elect, and destroy free trade unionism, which is the first line of defence of working people and their families.

Chesterfield has a tremendous responsibility to all those whose lives are being ruined by the cruel and divisive policies now being pursued by the Tories".

Benn appealed to labour movement activists to come to Chesterfield and help give the Tories a bloody nose.



INSIDE:

Pages 4 and 5: Health Fight-back 84. resisting the cuts. Centre pages. The Tories' plan to run down the railways. Page 6: Inside Lebanon. Pages 14 and 15. Polmaise closure, BLOC conference.



SOCIALIST ORGANISER

The priorities of the Tories

IN 1978-9 public spending was about the same for health and social services, or for education, as for the armed forces. In 1984-5 the armed forces will get £1.6 billion more than health and social services, and £3.6 billion more than education.

On the armed forces the government spends £6 a week for every child, woman and man in Britain.

In 1978-9 public expenditure on housing was nearly twice that on police and prisons. By 1984-5 the Tories will have neatly reversed the relationship: police and prisons will claim nearly twice as much as housing.

Between 1979 and 1983 the workforce in education went down 7 per cent. More school dinner ladies than steelworkers lost their jobs. Meanwhile police and prison staff increased in numbers by 7 per cent.

Comparing the civil service and the armed forces, you get the same picture. Between 1979 and 1983 civil service numbers declined (despite the big increase in workload at DHSS and Department of Employment offices caused by higher unemployment); the armed forces increased.

Despite all their rhetoric, the Tories have not been rolling back the frontier of the state. Public spending has risen steadily since 1979. What has changed is the direction of public spending, and the contours of the state.

The Tories can find £3 billion to wage the South Atlantic war and sustain 'Fortress Falklands' up to 1986-7. They cannot find £2 billion required to meet TUC proposals for the health service (from 1983-4 to 1985-6), which would maintain the NHS and allow slight improvement.

They can find perhaps £12 billion for Trident. For the same cost we could have 450 new district hospitals. Instead, hospitals are being closed.

They can also find £37 billion a year for social security — unwillingly, but not as unwillingly as all that, because they know that the army of unemployed is helping them pursue their policies.

The other change that the Tories have worked in public spending is to shift the ratio of *capital* to *current* spending. In 1978-9 £16 was spent on capital projects for every £100 current public expenditure; in 1984-5, £9 will be spent.

It is this aspect of Thatcherite policy which has aroused dissent from many capitalists and dissatisfied Tories: slash back further on education or health, they say, and restart the construction projects which offer fat profits to private industry.

Partly, the Tories do aim to reduce public spending (only they have not succeeded). But much more fundamentally their aim is to beat down the working class.

Both increases in public spending (on armed forces, police and prisons, social security snoopers, etc.) and decreases serve that aim.

Measures like privatisation are important for the Tories mostly because they break up large unionised workforces into small vulnerable fragments.

It is this perspective which allows the Tories to look complacently on the galloping decline of British manufacturing industry. To beat down the working class sufficiently will be a painful process, they think — but once it is done, British capitalism can rise again, as a cheap labour area. Britain in Europe can be the equivalent of Mexico in North America or South Korea in Asia.

Dogma? Voodoo economics? Maybe. But the capitalist critics of Thatcherism have not yet found any *capitalist* alternative. It was the Wilson/Callaghan government which pioneered monetarism and public service cuts, not Thatcher; and Mitterrand's regime in France is now set on the same road of cuts.

The real alternative is a working class fightback: to resist cuts now and to win a new sort of state, based on collective ownership of the economy and on workers' control.

The left must back Liverpool!

By John Bloxam

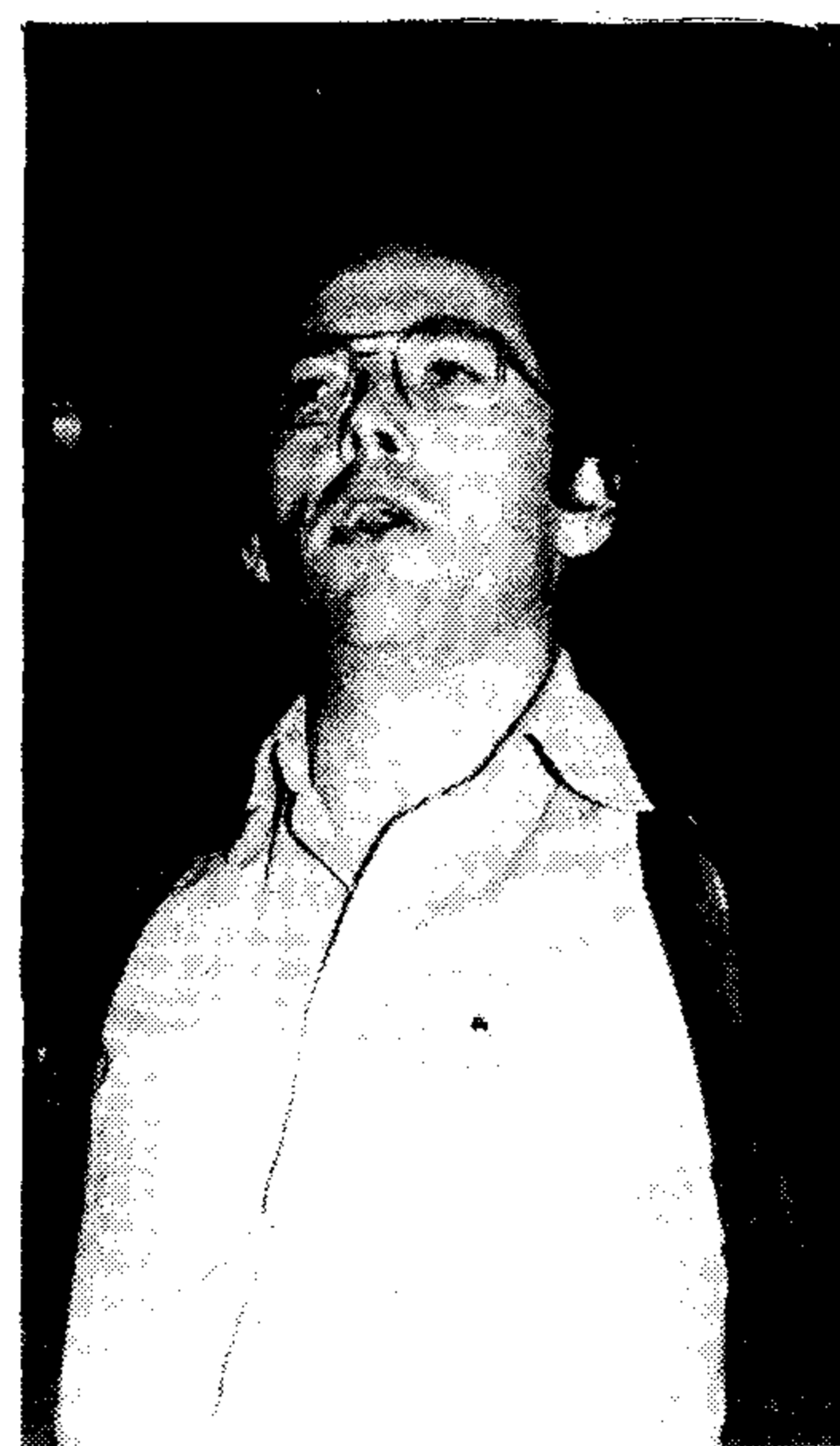
SHAMEFULLY, many on the Labour left are distancing themselves from Liverpool City Council's defiance of the Tory government.

True, David Blunkett and Ken Livingstone have said (quietly) that they will give "moral support". But behind the scenes they have been pressurising Liverpool to back down. They argue that the 'real' fight is not now but next year. Those who want to

fight now are ultra-left kamikazes.

What Liverpool should do in the meantime — double the rates? — hundreds of workers? — they don't say. Many on the Left evade the issue by dismissing Liverpool's stance as a charade.

Some Labour councillors are bound to defect in the crucial council vote, they say, and thus 'save' the



Labour group majority from the consequences of its stance. (They emphasise that possibility, but not the equal possibility that some Liberal councillors will not dare to turn up to vote against Labour).

Many rank and file Labour members probably have much more sympathy with Liverpool's stand than the local government dignitaries, but the infection has spread far on the left.

The main debate at the Editorial Board of the

national 'Labour Briefing', last Sunday, 19th, was on Liverpool. The majority took an unequivocal stand for Liverpool, and saw this as the decisive dividing line now between those who want to organise a fight against the Tories and those who don't.

A minority, however, said: Yes, of course we support Liverpool. But this is not the "big" one. That's next year, with rate-capping and the abolition of the metropolitan authorities!

The 'real' debate is not over Liverpool, but between Livingstone and Kinnock over breaking the law. We have to be 'realistic'. Liverpool isn't going to fight.

Such was the tone of some speakers that Stuart Marshall Clarke from Mersey Labour Briefing pointed out that they seemed to be positively hoping for the defection of some Labour votes on Liverpool City Council.

Ken Livingstone's position got five votes — from London Labour Briefing editor Graham Bash and from four of the five Socialist Action people present.

Save Vinod

AFTER a long campaign dating back to mid-1983, Vinod Chauhan of Ashton-under-Lyne (Lancashire) who has been fighting deportation, met the Minister of State for Immigration, David Waddington, last week.

Vinod, despite the backing he has from Tameside Council, the Greater Manchester County Council, local MP Robert Sheldon, Euro-MP Barbara Castle, and local trade union branches and the community, has since October been faced with the very real threat of arrest and removal to India because of the breakdown of his marriage which occurred last year.

An appeal to an Adjudicator cleared Vinod of any suggestion

(that the Home Office held) that his marriage was "a marriage of convenience" in order to provide a basis, over five years ago now, to come to Britain.

The deportation proceedings have now been temporarily suspended but the fight is still necessary to make sure that Vinod — not to mention the increasing numbers of black women and men who face similar threats from the government — can, as a right, feel secure here in this country.

Further details, offers of support, etc., etc: Vinod Chauhan Defence Campaign, c/o 18 Firs Avenue, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancs. Tel: 061-330 5784 or 061-226 1751).



EETPU job for Grant

THE EETPU has appointed John Grant, SDPer and former Islington Labour MP, to the job of union public relations man.

His job will be to present the EETPU as Frank Chapple (and his successor Eric Hammond) want it seen.

Chapple supported Grant in the general election against Labour candidate Jeremy Corbyn.

Andropov

All sorts of newspapers — even Socialist Action — have been presenting the late Yuri Andropov as something of a reformer.

It does seem that he had more bureaucrats sacked for corruption than for many a year. I'm not sure that says a lot in his favour: after all, no-one purged more bureaucrats than Josef Stalin himself. Not even Fidel Castro makes more outspoken attacks on bureaucratism than did that butchering old Pharaoh of the Russian bureaucracy.

Andropov did manage to push up labour productivity a bit (another fact which the US Militant reports with wide-eyed admiration).

But how? The trick was to send the police round cinemas and shopping queues. They would inspect everyone's identity cards and check to see if they were skiving off work. If they were ...



The family that prays together, prays together... Touching scene as the Thatcher family left Church last Sunday.

US nukes

DURING the Korean war, US commander Douglas MacArthur wanted to nuke China.

That much is widely known. What has only just been revealed, in an official US army history, is that the US army drew up detailed plans for a nuclear attack on Vietnam in 1954.

The aim was to help the French colonial forces then going down to final defeat at Dien Bien Phu.

The nuclear attack was prevented by US top brass who considered Vietnam "a non-decisive theatre".

Woman candidate

The late Soviet President Yuri Andropov has been replaced as a parliamentary candidate in Moscow's Proletarski district by woman machine-minder Nina Motova, a worker in a ball-bearing factory in the constituency. Elections for the 1,500-member Supreme Soviet are scheduled for March 4.

MTRS

Midland Training and Recruitment Services Limited.

Registered Office: Longmore House, Cromer Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham, B12 9QP.

Tel: 021-449 9747

Dear [redacted] Road, Balsall Heath Birmingham 12

20th January, 1984

Moseley Training Centre are presently running a Youth Training Scheme in the Moseley area. The scheme based at Cromer Road, Balsall Heath, has a variety of possible job vacancies in the Birmingham area, and as a result, we have decided to compile a list of young persons who may be interested in securing employment for themselves through the Moseley YTS scheme.

If you are interested in talking to us about the possible opportunities, would you please ring 449 9747 and ask for Mrs. Wedgwood as soon as possible, and we will make all the necessary arrangements for a meeting to take place, for you to come and visit our training centre and meet the staff.

Yours faithfully,

J. Wedgwood
J. Wedgwood

OUR front page story... this is a photostat of a typical letter used to trap young people. Once they have bitten the bait, they are liable to get their dole docked if they refuse a YTS place.

INSIDE: NAB, GLENVIEW PALACE, NEWHAM 8, PAGE 4, THE SWP, PAGE 1, MID EAST WAR, PAGE 3.

SOCIALIST STUDENT

BATTLE FOR THE NGA!

Paper of Socialist Students in NOLS. 10p plus postage from Andy Bennett, c/o DSU, Dunelm House, New Elvet, Durham

MORNING Star, February 16. Candidate? Election? A Russian proverb says it all: 'Paper is patient, it will let anything be written on it'.

Benn's call to jobless

Tony Benn has made this appeal to the unemployed of Chesterfield through a local unemployed paper

IF all those who have been denied work in Chesterfield were to get together you could be a very powerful force for good in the town.

How can you do it?

I would like to propose a five-stage plan to mobilise that strength and make it effective.

First, could you compile a full list of all the skills, interests and experience of those who are now on the dole, so that everyone knew what each person can do, or would really like to do?

Second, using those skills could you then draw up — with the help of others — a list of all the jobs that need to be done in Chesterfield to meet its most urgent needs?

Third, could you then produce a Chesterfield Plan that would fit your skills to meet those needs and make some sort of an estimate of what it might cost to do so?

Copies

Fourth, when you have discussed them together, could you get a few copies typed and duplicated and launch the plan at a press conference, as the start of a campaign to win public support for it, from trade unions and other community groups?

Fifth, could you make it clear that the unemployed have 11,000 votes of their own to put behind that plan and intend to use them to get the plan accepted?

I pledge my full support for

such a project and to help to get it publicised.

It might be called the 'Free Workers Group' and it would have to be organised outside the Manpower Services Commission because they will not allow any serious discussion to take place, on the orders of the government.

Such a plan might capture the imagination of the people of Chesterfield by challenging them to help end the crime of unemployment.

But it could also do more than that.

It would help to build up the self-confidence of those who have become apathetic or hopeless, and do not yet realise what a wide range of talents they have, which are now being wasted.



Tony Benn with Neil Kinnock in Chesterfield.

Bureaucrats poison USSR

In the Soviet Union greatest priority is placed in the industrial sector on the achievement of growth at virtually any cost. Operation within these criteria means inevitably that very little or no weight is placed upon regard for the environment.

Industry is called upon to utilise all its resources to increase production and often making no provision for the safe disposal of the increasing amounts of poisonous wastes

The country has a very serious acid rain problem, estimated to cause \$500 million worth of damage annually in the agricultural sector alone.

In one 160,000 square mile area west of Moscow 15% of the harvest suffers from the effects of rain-washed acid in the soil. Officials claim that most acid rain does not originate in the main from Soviet industry. They claim that prevailing easterly winds bring over their country

the industrial emissions from factories in Europe.

No blame can be attached to the Europeans for enormous discharges of toxic wastes into major lakes and rivers.

About two hundred miles to the east at Zapovozhe on the lower reaches of the Onieper river, farmers complained that toxic emissions from a magnesium-titanium plant were killing their crops for miles around. The February 8 edition

of the Party daily, Pravda, reported that in the river itself fish stocks were severely depleted and pointed to acid rain as the cause.

Apparently Soviet press and public opinion have been stirred out of years of complacency by the poisoning of two of its most important lakes. Lake Ladoga near Leningrad and Lake Baikal in Siberia may have been irreparably contaminated by the discharges of pulp mills on their banks.

TGWU runners line up

BALLOT papers for a new general secretary of the TGWU will go out on March 12, and the result will be announced on June 28.

The main declared candidates are Ron Todd, identified with the left, and George Wright, identified with the right wing.

Others are George Henderson, Mick Martin, Marie Patterson, and Todd Sullivan. John Freeman and Larry Smith have withdrawn in favour of Todd, and Alex Kitson and Bill Morris have also withdrawn.

John Cousins (son of former T&G general secretary Frank) was spoken of as a likely candidate, but has taken a job as general secretary of the non-TUC Clearing Banks Union. He has endorsed Todd.

The contest will be far from a model of lively, open politics. Todd insists that he is not a left candidate, but a candidate of continuity. Wright insists that he is not a right-wing candidate and has no political differences with Todd. Both Wright and Todd have shown themselves well able to sell out struggles.

But it will certainly be a left/right battle. As secretary of the Wales TUC, Wright distinguished himself with a document, 'A Social Plan', advocating incomes policy and cooperation with the employers.

Whether he likes it or not, Todd is the candidate of the left.

Cover-up

A BLACK couple, David White, aged 62, and his wife Lucille, who both suffered multiple injuries after a savage beating when 17 police officers raided their Stoke Newington (North London) house seven years ago without a search warrant, finally received an apology from Scotland Yard last week.

Two years ago in the High Court the judge accused the police of a five-year cover-up of their brutal and savage assault by trying unsuccessfully to bring assault charges against the couple in order to try and escape the consequences of their own brutality.

The High Court awarded the couple £51,000 in damages; but following this judgement when papers were sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions against four particular officers, no case was brought because of the time which had passed since the assault — a delay caused by the police themselves!

And when the four faced the police's own internal disciplinary procedures, three were not disciplined for lack of evidence and the fourth was fined. The police refuse to say how much he was fined

Gee whiz

"US worker, visiting Soviet Union, sees economic progress". This gee-whiz headline comes not from Soviet Weekly, but from the would-be Trotskyist paper Militant (USA).

'Left Press' three weeks ago analysed an article from a small US would-be Trotskyist group, the RWL, which interpreted Leon Trotsky's idea, 'defend the USSR against imperialism' as meaning 'paint a rose-tinted picture of the condition of the working class in

the USSR and "tell lies about what goes on in Russia because deep down in our hearts and high up in our theory we know it is historically progressive."

The RWL is pretty obscure, not to say murky, but the article reflected an approach common to many other "Trotskyist" groups.

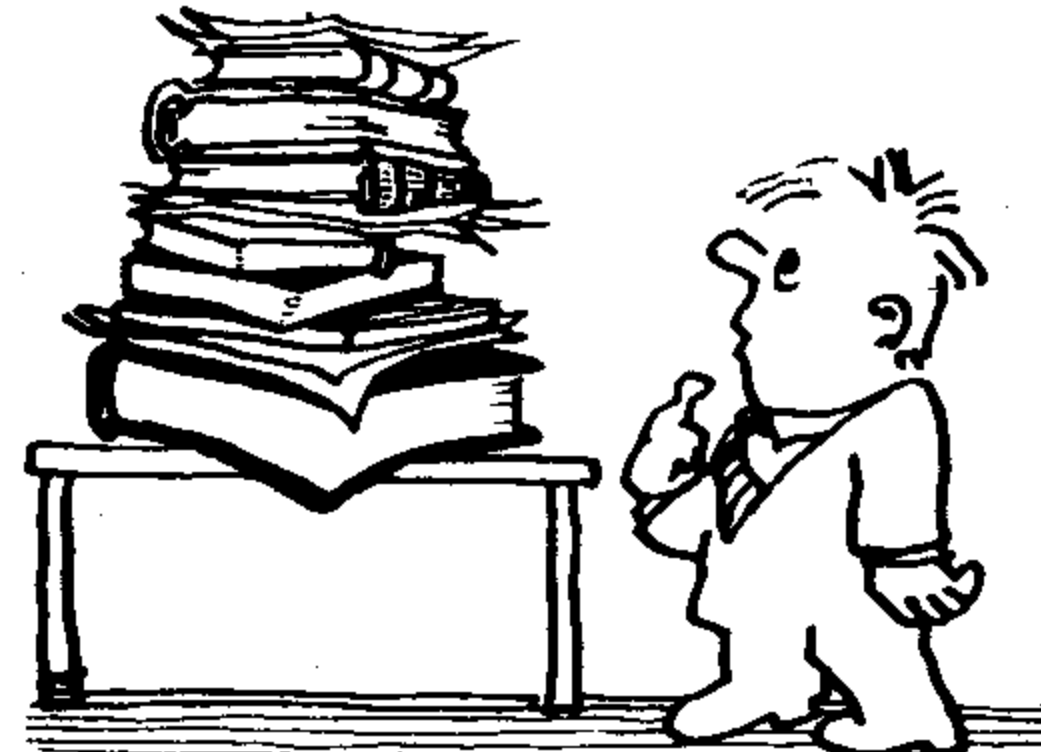
The Militant is far from obscure. And Militant is far from obscure.

Another article on the same page is headlined, "USSR's growth in 1983 impressive" and indignantly rejects "claims in the capitalist press that the Soviet economy is racked by crisis". When you have realised Socialism in One Country you can't have a crisis-racked economy, can you comrade?

In fact, the growth in 1983 was 3% by official USSR figures, about 2% by Western estimates. Militant may think that is good but the USSR bureaucrats are very worried by the continuing slowdown of the growth of their economy.

BENN
FOR
CHESTERFIELD
•
MONDALE
FOR
PRESIDENT

This is from the current front page of the Communist Party/Connolly Association monthly, the 'Irish Democrat'.



FACTS & FIGURES

By Martin Thomas

LAST week I promised some facts and figures on Third World based multinationals. First, however, some preliminary comments.

The figures are for foreign direct investment — meaning the sort of operation where a company in country A establishes a branch, a subsidiary, or a joint venture in country B.

This is by no means the biggest part of capital export. Investors from the oil-rich states of the Middle East, for example, hold some \$35 billion of US Treasury securities, but OPEC direct investments in the US total only about \$3.6 billion.

Direct investments have been specially studied, however, because they represent the development of multinational companies — a higher form of internationalisation of capital than purely financial transactions.

Direct investment has become a much bigger part of international capital flows since World War 2. Overall, direct investment flows are dominated by very few countries.

In 1977-9, the US alone accounted for 50% of the world total export of direct investment, the UK 13%, and West Germany 10%. Add in three other countries — Japan, Netherlands, France — and 89% of the total flow is accounted for.

3rd World multitis

As to the destinations of foreign direct investment — the US, the UK, France, Australia and Canada between them accounted for over 50% of the inflow in 1977-9.

Some 30% of the world total went to Third World destinations — but overwhelmingly to a select few.

Of the 1978 stock of foreign direct investment in Third World countries, 17% was in OPEC countries, 14% in tax havens (like Bermuda), and 45% in just ten other countries — mostly the 'newly industrialising' states.

Direct investment flows from Third World countries to Third World countries are a tiny proportion of the world total flow — perhaps 1% in 1976-8. They are significant because they represent an entirely new — and fast-growing — trend.

Third World multinationals only began to emerge in the mid-'70s. My figures are almost all taken from a UN report published last year. Because of the delays in compiling such statistics, their coverage mostly goes up only to 1977 or 1978. And then there is the general unreliability of most economic statistics (figures for direct investment stocks, as distinct from flows, are especially tricky). But they give some idea.

The two biggest investing countries, by far, were Kuwait and Brazil. Kuwaiti capitalists have invested in the Middle East, the US, Western Europe, and also in Pakistan and Morocco. Brazil's investments are mostly within Latin America.

India is missing from the UN report's world table, but has

also been the substantial foreign investor. The Economist reports:

"The biggest, most successful Indian company abroad is the Birlas' Pan-African paper mill in Kenya. The Thapar group has a paper plant in Thailand, where Indo-Thai Rayon, a Birla joint venture, is also doing well. The Tatas have a successful palm oil plantation in Malaysia..."

Third World foreign direct investment has mostly been within regions: from Brazil, Argentina, or Mexico to other Latin American countries' from India, Hong Kong, Singapore etc. to other Asian countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Sri Lanka; and from the rich oil-exporters to other Middle East states (notably Egypt) and to Morocco.

On a regional scale, such flows are not quite so tiny as on the world scale. In some Latin American countries up to 15% of the total inflow of foreign direct investment, by 1978, was from Third World origins. 32% of the foreign direct investment stock in Sri Lanka was from India; 22% in Malaysia, from Singapore; about 20% of the total in Indonesia and Thailand, from other Third World states.

What does all this mean? Not that any of the Third World states are becoming rivals to the big capitalist world powers. But that the Third World can less and less be seen as a homogeneous whole. There is a hierarchy of unequal development and domination within the Third World, too.

Join the Labour Party.
Write to: The Labour Party, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT.
Subscription is £7 per year, £2 unwaged. 50p OAPs.

Health Fightback 84

Why the rich live longer

THE rich get a better deal than the poor from the NHS. They get less disease and they live longer than working class people. Socialists have been saying this for years. And the Black Report makes it official.

The Black Report was produced by a working group under Sir Douglas Black, set up in 1977 by David Ennals, secretary of state for Social Services in the last Labour government. The group didn't report until 1980, by which time an embarrassed Patrick Jenkin had replaced Ennals at the DHSS. He was so embarrassed that he only published 260 copies of the Report — on an August Bank Holiday!

But this Tory attempt at a cover-up backfired and led to a wide discussion of the Report at union and Labour Party conferences in 1981 and its publication as a paperback a year later.

The Black Report's recommendations now form the basis of Labour's policy for the NHS.

The Report's main finding was not only that 30 years after the NHS was set up to provide equal care for all, the professional and executive classes (i.e. the bosses) were getting a better deal than manual and white-collar workers. Black also found that the gap between them is getting worse.

The best way to judge the health of any society is by the death rate (the number of deaths per thousand of the population). In most of the Western world the death rate has been falling for well over 100 years, and that is the case whether you're a miner or the Chairman of the NCB. What that means is that more people are living longer lives.

But the death rate for lawyers, accountants, managing directors, etc., has been falling much faster than the rate for skilled and unskilled workers.

In real terms this means that the child of an unskilled worker is three times more likely to die before its first birthday than the child of a

By Dewi Lewis

professional. The child of a skilled or white-collar worker is 'only' twice as likely to die.

This tremendous difference carries on well into adult life — working class boys are ten times more likely to die from accidents involving fire, falls or drowning, than upper class boys.

Don't worry too much though — if you make it to your forties and fifties your chances begin to even up. That is unless you're daft enough to be born in Knowsley, Hackney or Salford. It comes as no surprise that, excluding inner city areas, "the healthiest part of Britain appears to be the southern belt below a line drawn across the country from the Wash to the Bristol Channel." (p.57).

For once women get the best deal — men are twice as likely to die at any age. Working class women, though, have more unwanted pregnancies and make less use of post- and ante-natal care.

The Report goes on in horrendous detail to show how working class adults are much more likely to suffer from serious illnesses such as cancer, heart and lung disease and also how they get less out of the NHS to cope with disease: "Higher income groups know how to make better use of the Service: they tend to

receive more specialist attention; occupy more of the beds in better equipped and better staffed hospitals..." (p.76).

They also spend longer talking to their GPs (after all they probably play golf together).

Internationally, British death rates compare badly with Holland and Scandinavia and France and Germany are beginning to open up a gap. This reflects government health spending per head of population — £123 in Britain in 1977, but £280 in France and £450 in Sweden.

What must really have hit home with the Tories was that the Report points the finger at poverty as the cause of this inequality.

Death rates in Europe have reached their lowest point in the history of human society, and this is mainly due to an increase in standards of living and improvements in public hygiene. The separation of drinking water supplies from sewage systems has probably done a lot more than the BCG vaccination could ever do to eliminate disease.

But this doesn't explain the big inequalities that still exist. Part of the answer is that standards of living may have gone up, but we still have boring, low-paid jobs and increasing unemployment, both of which cause stress which has a major effect on health.

And because working class children get a poorer education than the middle class, they are less able to use the NHS to their advantage when they do fall ill.

If every smoker were to give up smoking for example, it would probably cause the single biggest drop in the working class death rate possible. Why don't they? The report points out that they are not likely to unless the stress which leads to smoking (and drinking and taking valium) is removed.

In particular, Black proposes 'an anti-poverty strategy' which would increase social spending by over £300 millions in the first year and more in the following years. Apart from big increases in the level of state benefits, it proposed free school meals, full nursery provision, sheltered housing for the disabled, screening programmes for cancer and heart disease, accident prevention programmes, and an anti-smoking campaign.

A special action programme would take in the ten areas with the highest death rate. Within the NHS budget emphasis would move from cure to prevention.

Patrick Jenkins' response to the Black Report was, predictably, that this level of spending was "quite unrealistic". He was not interested in making life longer and healthier for the working class — why should he when capitalism has a massive reservoir of unemployed labour to draw on, picking and choosing the healthiest specimens and dumping the rest into the dustbin of the welfare state?

The proposals contained in the Black Report are detailed and wide-ranging. They touch on areas such as mental illness, physical and mental handicap and so on which I have not dealt with because they deserve separate discussion. Hopefully we can begin that discussion in Socialist Organiser and broaden it to take in areas such as prevention versus cure, alternative medicine, subjects which have appeared briefly in the Science Column.

Our response as socialists to Tory and Labour spending cuts in the NHS has been far too negative. If we are to convince people that the NHS is worth defending we need to go beyond what we already have and fight for what we need — a socialist health service.



Above: builders' pickets clash with police outside St Thomas's hospital, London. Hospital building has been cut back severely.

Private profit takes a bite

DISTRICT Health Authorities are obliged to submit plans for privatising cleaning, catering and laundry services by the end of the month.

Implementing those plans will take time. But the government has instructed health authorities that they must hive off these services if the private tenders are cheaper than having the work done by NHS staff.

Private contractors will offer cheaper work — by imposing worse pay and conditions on their employees.

In Medway Health Authority, for example, Exclusive Cleaning has won contracts for four hospitals already.

They will employ different staff for weekends, to avoid paying higher rates for weekend work. They'll give four weeks' sick pay instead of six months under the NHS. Holidays will be shorter. It is not clear whether the union will be recognised. The hours in which to do the job will be cut by 53%!

Such methods will also mean a worse service for patients.

Cheltenham Health District did a survey on its privatised laundry services. 84% of pillows were rejected as inadequately cleaned, and 73% of sheets!

As a next stage, the government proposes to contract out specialised operations to private hospitals.

But there are already many ways in which private profit loots the NHS.

Consultants use NHS facilities for private practice. The private medical insurance schemes have had some difficulties lately, but their general trend is certainly upwards. By 1983, 65% of managers in British companies were getting

private medical insurance as a fringe benefit with their jobs, as against 44% in 1978.

Drug companies make about £300 million profit each year from the NHS.

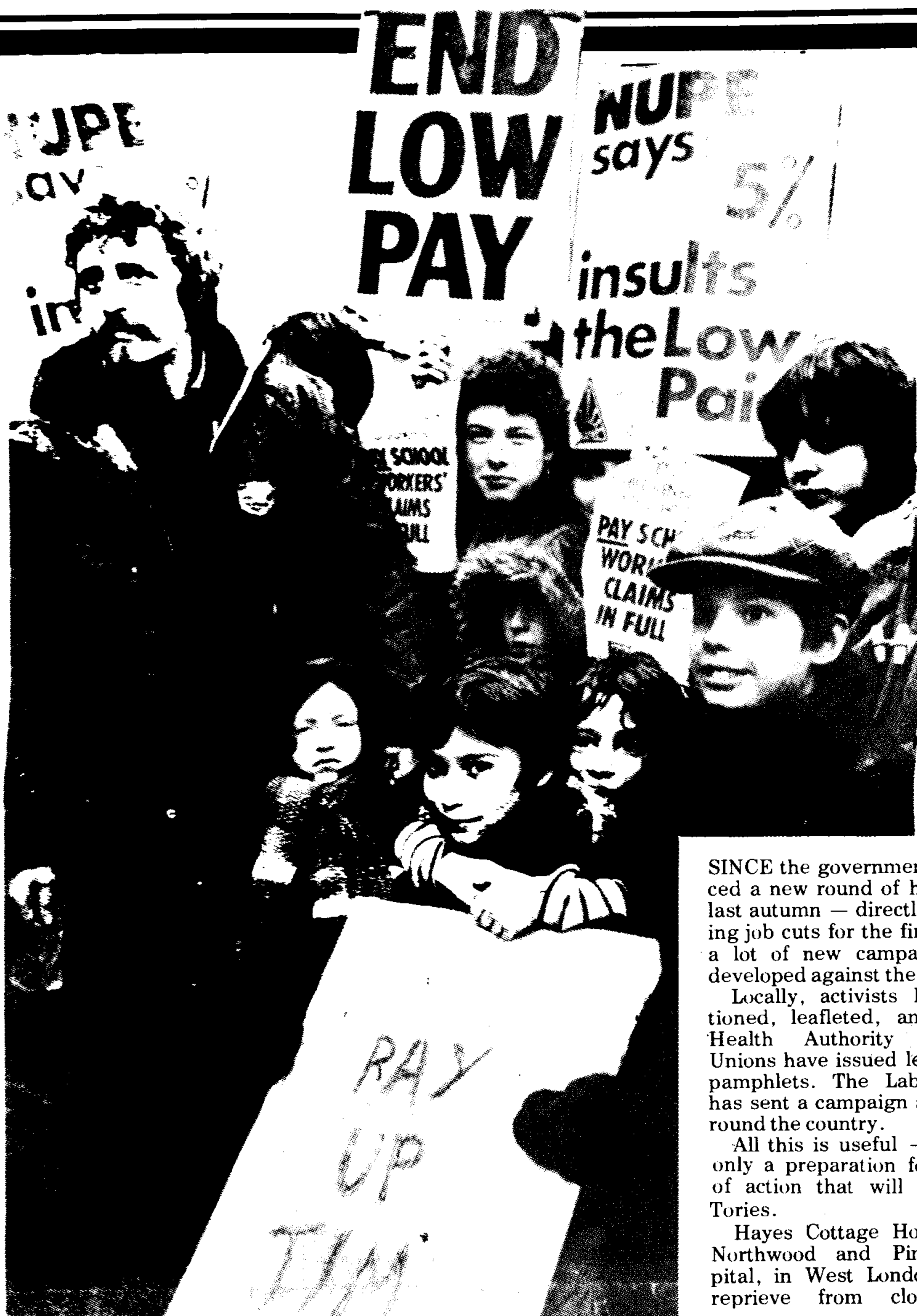
And the principle of a free health service is also undercut by increasing health charges. The Tories have increased prescription charges from 20p to £1.40 and in October 1982 they introduced charges for 'over-seas' patients.



ANNA ARNONE



Organising for direct action



THIS Saturday, 25th, the Health Fightback 84 conference meets in Bradford (Community Buildings, Bradford University, Great Hordon Road, 11am to 5pm). It is open to all health workers and to labour movement delegates.

It has been called by the hospital occupation committees at Thornton View (Bradford), Hayes, and Northwood & Pinner. Its aim is to spread the lessons of those struggles - to help organise real action, not just protest speeches, against the cuts.

SINCE the government announced a new round of health cuts last autumn - directly demanding job cuts for the first time - a lot of new campaigns have developed against the cuts.

Locally, activists have petitioned, leafleted, and lobbied Health Authority meetings. Unions have issued leaflets and pamphlets. The Labour Party has sent a campaign ambulance round the country.

All this is useful - but it is only a preparation for the sort of action that will defeat the Tories.

Hayes Cottage Hospital and Northwood and Pinner Hospital, in West London, won a reprieve from closure last

December. Both hospitals had a lot of support in their local communities - but that is not what decided it.

The reprieve was won by the workers occupying their hospitals.

Workers at Thornton View Hospital in Bradford are also occupying. They have taken control and said they will not budge. They will not allow the hospital to be run down or patients to be moved out.

Occupations are powerful - but they also need back-up through pledges from workers in other hospitals and other industries to strike in support if the occupation is raided.

Privatisation too needs to be fought by direct action. At All Saints Hospital in Medway, domestic staff struck for five weeks last November and December against privatisation.

They didn't win - partly because of an initial weakness in their action. They were fighting for an in-house tender to be accepted as against the private tenders, rather than for full-

scale rejection of contracting.

But shop steward Gary Joyce interviewed in the latest Public Service Action Newsletter drew this lesson: 'We should have done it earlier - then we might have frightened the contractors off'.

What the Bradford conference will do, and no other campaign or conference has done, is to discuss in detail how to organise and extend such direct action.



TORIES PLAN MORE CUTS

ON A FIRST glance at the Tories' public spending plans, published last week, it looks as if the health service has escaped cuts.

According to the Tories, health will get a one per cent per year real increase in spending. But in fact that means substantial cuts.

The true figure, according to NUPE, is a 2 1/2% per year real cut. Their estimate is confirmed by Roy Griffiths, chair of the

government's inquiry into NHS management, who has told the government to reckon on so-called "efficiency savings" of 3 to 4 per cent per year.

An apparent increase in spending means a real cut because the increase in the number of old people, and changes in medical technology, automatically push up the cost of the health service. More advanced methods of treatment mean that people survive expen-

sively rather than dying cheaply.

2 1/2% doesn't seem very much. But in a service where a lot of the costs are fixed, it means severe cuts at what Tories see as "the margin".

Hospitals are closed or run down. In London alone over 50 hospitals are under threat. Accident and emergency services are centralised in a few large hospitals so that patients have further or further to travel. New hospitals are built and then

kept in mothballs because there is not enough money to run them.

Health service workers are kept on low pay. Jobs are cut: the TUC estimates that at least 13,000 jobs will have been lost among directly employed staff between September 1982 and March 1984.

Not only ancillaries, but increasing numbers of nurses and doctors, are left on the dole.

AIMS: BREAK UNIONS, BOOST PROFITS

THE Government's current estimate of the total cost of waging the Falklands war, and maintaining 'Fortress Falklands' up to 1986-7, is £3 billion.

The TUC's proposals for health spending, which would maintain and slightly improve the service, require about £2 billion extra above government estimates between 1983-4 and 1985-6.

So the reason for health cuts is not lack of money. The Tories just choose to spend the money elsewhere.

The aim of their cuts and privatisation programme is twofold.

Firstly, to shift resources from public service to private profit. Already they have perhaps doubled the average rate of profit in British industry. It still remains low by international standards: so they press on.

Their second aim is to break the power of the trade unions. In manufacturing industry, the anonymous forces of economic slump have done a large part of the job for them: with factories

shutting, jobs disappearing, and the dole queue getting longer, shop stewards' organisation has been seriously weakened.

But even in the worst-hit sectors, like shipyards, union organisation is still strong enough to give the Tories a very rough ride.

And in the public services employment has held up relatively well. Shop stewards' organisation has probably increased.

Privatisation opens up the public services workforce to

attacks on jobs, pay and conditions. It splits up a single, unionised workforce into fragments - each with their own separate pay rates and conditions - and thus clears the way to break up union organisation.

It fits in with the anti-union laws, which make practically all industrial action unlawful unless it is against your own employer.

Where some workers in a hospital are employed by the NHS, and others by a variety of private contractors, solidarity action between them thus becomes unlawful.

THINGS TO COME

THE SHAPE of things to come in the health service was revealed by a 'consultative paper' published by the Oxford Regional Health Authority in October 1982.

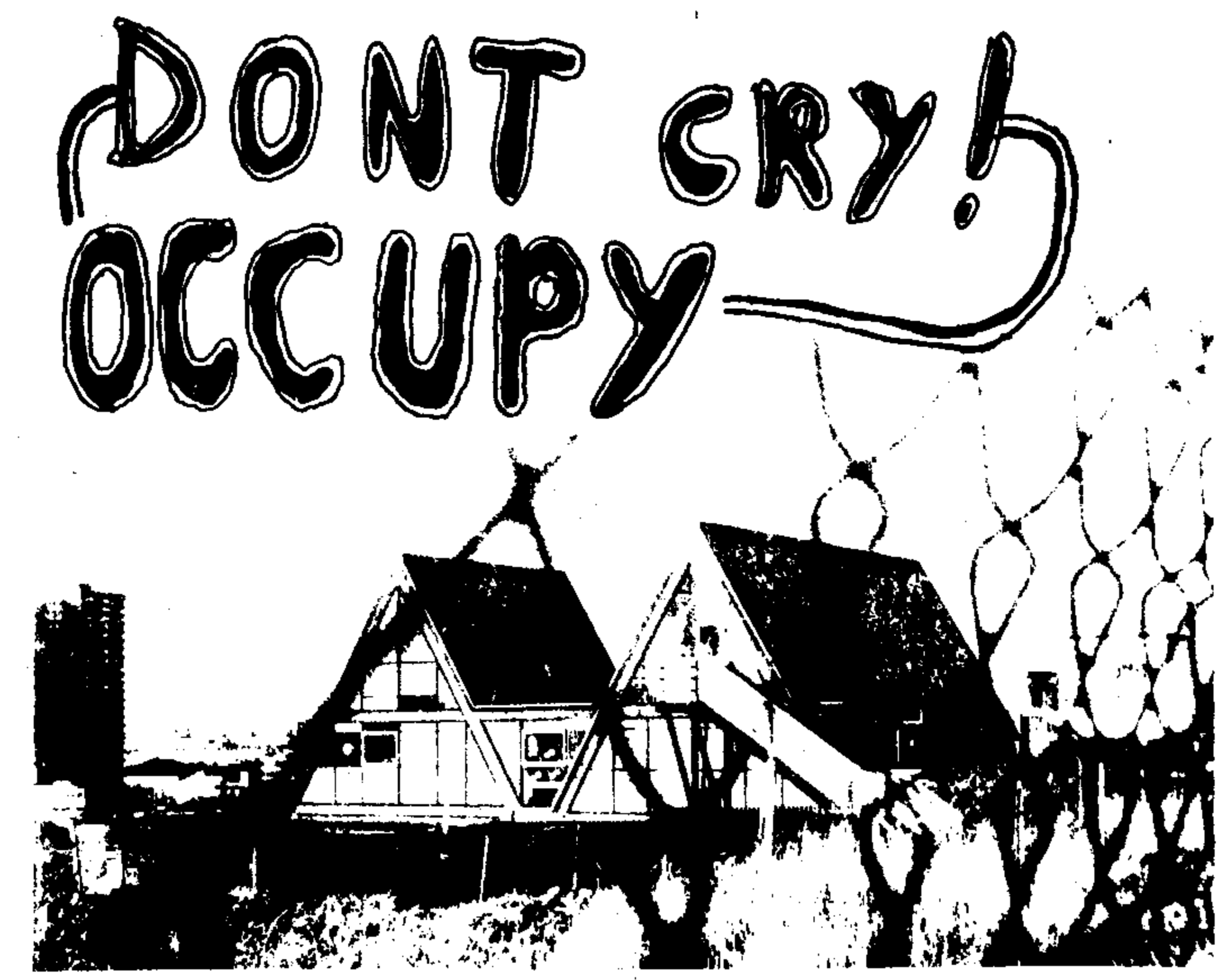
Its proposals included:
*A 'qualifying period' for people moving into the area before they received any but emergency NHS care.

*Charges for staying in hospital.

*Cutting down accident and emergency services so that not everyone would have access to them.

*Closure of all hospital for the mentally handicapped.

*Extensive use of volunteer labour for ancillary services in hospitals.



END THE USE OF PERJURERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND



JOAN Maynard MP said last week that the word 'terrorist' does not accurately describe the IRA.

The vicious outcry with which the press responded proves how much they value the misleading ruling-class propaganda tags with which they colour their 'news' reporting and misrepresent opponents of the status quo.

In truth the IRA are the militia of an oppressed community. Their *central* tactic is neither isolated attacks on prominent individuals, nor the blanket terror against a whole population which the British Army practises in Catholic areas.

Joan Maynard spoke at a press conference (above) to protest at the continuing use of bribed and coerced informers in Northern Ireland to put Republicans behind bars.

Some INLA prisoners say they will start a hunger strike in April in protest at 'supergrass justice' in Northern Ireland.

Left to right: Betty Duggan, Deirdre McManus, Cathy Tohill, Joan Maynard, Helena Kennedy, and Jim Falconer.

North and South
By Paddy Dollard

US, UK sail to the Gulf

HAVING been forced to reconsider their role in one part of the Middle East, the imperialist powers prepare for intervention in another.

The fighting continues in Lebanon and the Lebanese army faces total collapse before rebel Muslim militias.

The fighting has also intensified in the three-and-a-half year old Gulf war between Iran and Iraq. The Iranian Islamic government has threatened to shut the Straits of Hormuz, through which about one-third of all Western

oil supplies pass, if its oil reserves are threatened in the war. With the new turn in the fighting, the chances of Iran doing so are increasing.

It seems that the US and Britain are preparing to intervene in the Gulf if this happens. Both countries are moving ships closer to the Straits of Hormuz.

Hence US recriminations against Britain for supplying military spare parts to Iran.

The labour movement must oppose any such intervention by the US and British governments.

Why Lebanon exploded

By Clive Bradley

LEBANON is a small country with a bewildering variety of religious and ethnic groups - Maronite and Greek Orthodox Christians, Sunni, Shi'a and Druze Muslims, Kurdish and Armenian national minorities.

The political system established with the 1943 National Pact gave a built-in majority to the Christians and was organised in such a way that the only form of representation that existed was religiously based.

The system discriminated against the Muslim communities but especially the Muslim poor. It was dominated by an alliance

between Maronite and Sunni Muslim capitalists as traditional leaders getting rich on the commercial basis of the Lebanese economy.

Huge belts of misery surrounded the major towns, especially Beirut, side by side with fantastic luxury.

Lebanon became a base for the Palestinian guerrillas after the Six Day War of 1967 and became the main base after the guerrillas were driven out of Jordan in 1970.

The Maronites who had a close relationship with French imperialism, saw themselves as different from other Arabs and were hostile to the Arab nationalist sentiment which swept the Middle East in the '50s and '60s.

Consequently they were hostile to the Palestinian presence while the Muslim community tended, if only tended, to support the Palestinians.

After 1969, when the right of the Palestinian guerrillas to exist as an armed force in Lebanon was established, sections of the Muslim community formed close links with the different Palestinian organisations. They were armed and trained by the Palestinians to resist attacks from the gangster-like militias of right-wing Maronite groups of the Falange party of the Gemayel family.

Israeli raids into southern Lebanon forced thousands of mostly Shi'a to flee to the north, swelling the belts of misery.

In 1975 all the central tensions that existed exploded into civil war in which some 50,000 people were killed. It was a war in which the Maronite militias, especially the Falange, were attempting to maintain their domination, or failing that, partition Lebanon along sectarian lines.

The Falange were mostly backed by the Israelis, although the Syrian invasion of 1976 was a deliberate attempt to prevent the imminent defeat of the right wing forces.

Because of the sectarian nature of the Lebanese system, and because of the strength of traditional leaders amongst the Muslims, the conflict became increasingly a sectarian, religiously based one. In 1976 the Muslim-dominated Lebanese National Movement dropped its anti-sectarian programme, unable to see a way out of the situation as it had developed.

Lebanon was effectively partitioned between rival militias and areas of Syrian occupation, with the South run by the right-wing, Israeli-backed Major Hadad who died a few weeks ago.

The Israeli invasion of 1982 as in 1978, was an attempt to destroy the PLO and instal a more stable, i.e. pro-Israeli, pro-imperialist government dominated by the Falange Party.

The conflict now is still communally based. As Walid Jumblatt, leader of the so-called Progressive Socialist Party (actually a capitalist party based on the Druze community) put it last week, "The trouble with our country is that all our leaders are warlords and godfathers and I am one of them."

The unity established between the Muslims and Palestinians, always tenuous, has been severely damaged. The Islamic fundamentalist Amal militia has always been anti-Palestinian.

Right now it is the Muslims, especially Amal and the PSP, who are threatening the aims of the imperialist powers. For an end to the sectarian conflict, a concerted fight against the war lords and godfathers on both sides is desperately needed.

Reagan steps up armaments

THE Reagan administration has just submitted for approval to Congress the annual research and development budget of the Federal government. The total is \$53 billion (£38 billion) of which 60% is allocated to defence.

The huge defence allocation is almost entirely to cover the development costs of the weapons the Reagan administration requires for its latest rearmament drive.

The money is to help finance the MX missile (nicknamed 'The Peace Maker'), the new X-1 bomber and the submarine-launched Trident II missile. Another area to receive huge funding is the 'strategic defence initiative' more commonly known as the Star Wars Venture.

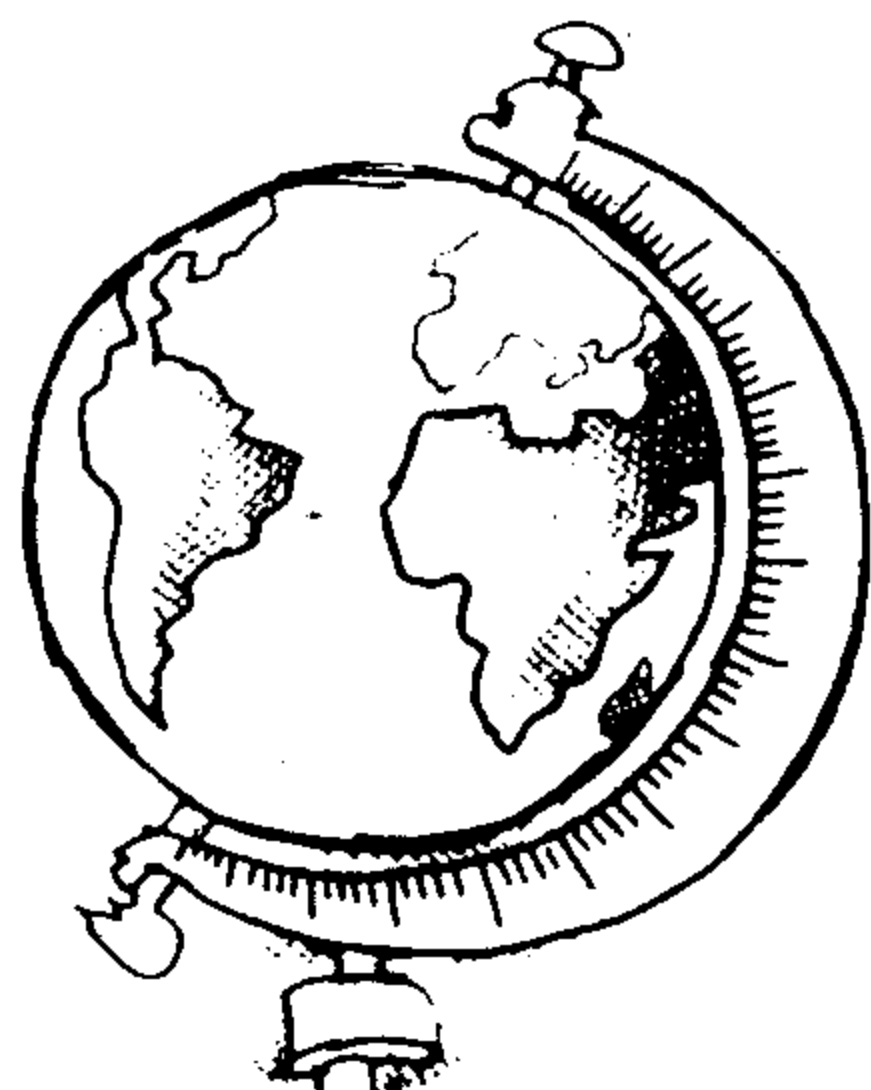
Next year \$1.7 billion is to be spent on laser beam and anti-satellite weaponry. This alone is

twice the money spent on agricultural research and seven times that spent on environmental research.

The construction of the defence allocations will enjoy real growth over and above the inflation rate while the reverse is true for most areas of purely non-military research. The only non-military projects not to suffer serious curtailments are ones of so-called prestige, mainly NASA space exploration and high energy particle physics.

Congress could of course drastically revise the research and development budget but almost certainly it will be content to make a few amendments, leaving it essentially intact. It seems unlikely on its past record to turn off the financial tap for Reagan's war drive.

WORLD



BRIEF

Angola

Sam Nujoma, leader of the Namibian liberation movement SWAPO, has declared that the agreement made between Angola and South Africa last Thursday, 16th, will not halt the movement's struggle.

South Africa continues to rule over Namibia although its authority was supposed to derive from a League of Nations mandate which has been repudiated by the UN. Neighbouring Angola provides bases for SWAPO - but has been harassed by South African invasions and by the South African-backed Unita guerrillas.

Following South Africa's biggest invasion so far, in December-January, Angola has formed a joint commission with South Africa to oversee the withdrawal of the apartheid state's forces from Angola. US diplomatic pressure seems to have played a large part in getting this agreement, and the US will send observers to assist the commission.

South Africa has also tried to secure another flank by an agreement with Mozambique, announced on February 20. It wants Mozambique to clamp down on bases of the African National Congress (a black South African movement). The pressure on Mozambique is the activities of the South African backed 'Mozambique Resistance Movement', and terrible economic crises.

Paraguay

KILLING, arbitrary imprisonment and the torture of citizens is normal police practice in Paraguay under the "state of siege" decree which has been in force since Alfredo Stroessner seized power 30 years ago.

According to reports received by the human rights organisation Amnesty, night torture sessions take place in a police annexe in Asuncion, known as the "laboratory". Political suspects are reported to have been beaten, whipped, given electric shocks with cattle prods, had their heads held under water polluted with excrement, been hung by the ankles, and confined to cramped boxes for long periods.

Amnesty knows of 50 political prisoners now being held in Paraguay.

"Torture and ill-treatment are not restricted to political prisoners" Amnesty International said, "we are increasingly concerned at reports that prisoners held for non-political reasons are being tortured in attempts to force them to sign incriminating statements, which may form the basis of prosecution."

Argentina

ACCORDING to the Observer last Sunday, 19th, "Britain and Argentina are on the verge of an agreement to normalise relations after the Falklands war".

For sure informal discussions are underway. And it seems that the Argentine government has dropped its previous insistence that sovereignty over the islands be on the agenda of any more formal talks. It asks only that sovereignty not be excluded from the agenda.

Argentina's immediate objectives are removal of the 150-mile exclusion zone around the islands, and replacement of British forces there by a UN force, or at least a halt to the British

military build-up.

Britain's first demands will be: normalisation of trade relations and an end to Argentine government supervision over British companies in Argentina, and reintroduction of air and sea links between Argentina and the islands.

Baluka

THERE is no new information from Poland, as we go to press, on the Solidarnosc hunger strikers in four of the country's major prisons.

They have been on hunger strike since December 5, demanding political prisoner status and better conditions.

Among them is the Trotskyist Edmund Baluka, jailed for founding the Polish Socialist Party of Labour.

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I want to become a Socialist Organiser supporter/ I want more information.

Name

Address

Send to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.



Solidarity betrayed

LESSONS OF THE BASINGSTOKE POST OFFICE WORKERS STRIKE

25p

This pamphlet tells the story of the victimisation of Socialist Organiser supporter Alan Fraser and how the fight to defend him was sold out by the union officials. 25p plus postage from 75 Free-mantle Close, Basingstoke.



From an interview with Solidarnosc leader Zbigniew Bujak published in the 'Voice of Solidarnosc' bulletin

Where we went wrong

By Zbigniew Bujak

Firstly, the Union's strategy directly after 13 December 1981 did not include a call for a general strike. Had the Gdansk Shipyard announced a date for a strike for the spring, this would have posed a very great and real threat to the authorities (even though such a strike might not, necessarily, have occurred).

As a consequence, Lech might well have had the opportunity to conduct various negotiations (with the authorities) — particularly because, at the time, everything pointed to the fact that they were eager to negotiate.

Our second mistake was that our performance before the Union's delegalisation (martial law), was too feeble. Actions considerably stronger than those that took place on 31 August 1982 were essential after it became clear in the summer that Solidarnosc would be dissolved. Calls for further activities, including an eventual strike, were missing prior to the delegalisation.

I say that this was a mistake because at the time, a huge mass protest might have saved the Union. And now, what is our greatest weakness?

We are, firstly — a union operating underground; secondly — a union functioning in a situation of economic decline; thirdly — a union existing in an unlawful state; fourthly — a union in a country of limited sovereignty.

As a consequence of operating underground, the Union's basic task has to be to retain organisational and ideological continuity.

The tragic economic situation necessitates an all-important protest in defence of those earning the least, aimed at forcing the authorities to reach into reserves, e.g. to limit their expenses on military aims and on the apparatus of force.

Unlawfulness, in turn, imposes a struggle for the freeing of political prisoners, as well as for an independent judiciary, social arbitration, and press freedom.

Finally — the lack of sovereignty. The imposition of martial law proved finally that an independent union movement cannot exist in an undemocratic state. In order to rebuild the independent union movement, we must, above all, win democratic principles for functioning of the state.

All the states and societies in the Bloc were forced to perform on a stage erected by Moscow but what is played and how still remains largely a sovereign decision. 13 December 1981 proved that the rulers of the Polish People's Republic do not play their own roles, but those ordered on them by Moscow.

It is our task to force them to act in compliance with Poland's interests, and not only with those of the Bloc. The Union can, for example, exert a considerable influence on the cessation of the arms policy.

All this points to the politicisation of Solidarnosc. Is it not, then, time to begin forming political parties?

Under the present circumstances, by existing and operating underground, the Union identifies itself far better with the organisational form of the nation than it did before the imposition of martial law. Now is the time for united activity and common aims.

It's no accident that no important political parties have arisen — the most that has happened is that some programme declarations have appeared. It is, however, probable that different political directions will become concentrated around different parties in the future. That will be



NICK OAKES (IFL)

a time of divisions, since there are many different currents within the Union.

Regarding the most current problems, one period of people emerging from hiding has now ended and another is only just beginning, while the great trials are being put off . . .

The authorities failed in their attempts to induce people to come out of hiding. The amnesty was supposed to have demobilised the opposition; to have smashed the Union and its structures. It was

a political idea that was combined with police methods of intimidation, and it resulted in only a fraction of a percentage of active people actually turning themselves in.

It's obvious that the authorities are afraid to hold the trials now.

I'd like to mention here that the political prisoners have won a great victory, in that prison has ceased to be an effective instrument of intimidating society. This is due principally to the uncom-



Picket at Lenin shipyard in Gdansk

promising stance of the internees — and later the prisoners; to their refusal to sign loyalty oaths and to agree to emigration.

After the price rises, the next highly important matter concerns the elections — if these take place at all. What is the TKK's standpoint in regard to them?

The TKK will announce its official position after the authorities have made their decisions.

I can, however, give you my current personal views on this matter.

The elections both to the Sejm and to National Councils at all levels should, above all, be boycotted. The boycott should be direct; it should not involve any combinations with election card deletions or additions. Quite simply — we don't go to the elections at all.

We must not allow ourselves to be deceived by any democratisation of the electoral law, however superficially far reaching it may be.

When no independent organisation has either access to the media or any possibility of conducting its own election campaign and information actions, no electoral law, however seeming democratic, will provide even the slightest possibility for us to introduce any larger number of independent candidates.

Two things are important in the preparations for the elections. Firstly, we are striving to create our own election campaign. A boycott is not enough — it must be quite clear what programme is supported by those who do not participate in the elections.

Secondly, the control of the elections is an important element of the preparations. These elections, carried out in the current political situation, will figure as one of the most important elections in the post-war history of Poland — as important as those held in 1947. There is no doubt that they will constitute a very refined attempt at duping society. The control of their results is currently the Union's most difficult undertaking.

In this respect, we await help from everyone, including the Church.



'Solidarity Underground: Free trade unionism in Poland today' is a new pamphlet by Magda Zalewska, Henryk Gawinski, and John Taylor, published by the Polish Solidarity Campaign. 50p plus postage from PSC, 186 Avenue Road, London W3.



Above: a Solidarnosc demonstration in August 1981. Left and above left: solidarity demonstrations in London. Above right: Lech Walesa (top) and Edmund Baluka.



The official Serpell report tabulated Tory options for British Rail - the most extreme of which was for a skeleton system linking only a few major cities



ASLEF pickets fighting against the flexi-roster system

— Noel Hibbert writes on

Asset-S British

THE "Omega Project" is the name of the Tory Party's real manifesto. Devised by the Adam Smith Institute, it is the blueprint and master plan for every single privatisation project that Thatcher has and will carry out during her tenure of power.

Mrs Thatcher's adviser Ferdinand Mount is the key man who links the Adam Smith Institute and its Omega Project with the government departments which issue the directives ordering closure and redundancy.

The railways are a major target for dismemberment. In attacking BR in preparation for selling it off, the Tories have adopted salami tactics, chopping off, and closing lines, bit by bit so as to avoid a concentration of opposition forces against them.

Last year they announced the closure of the Swindon, Horwich and Shildon engineering workshops making 6,000 workers redundant. These cuts were carried out against the backcloth of a reduction of 1000 jobs per month within the industry.

What they really intend to do is to privatise the major Inter-City routes and close down as much of the network as possible.

Recently, even the Tory editor of the Railway Gazette said: "The frightening truth is that the government no longer cares whether the trains go on running or not - so long as railwaymen themselves shoulder the blame if they stop."

Blocked

The Tories have blocked every attempt to rejuvenate BR. They are even selling-off the new technological innovations developed by BR Engineering Workshops!

Take the following example. A few years ago BRE Ltd, at the Technical Centre in Derby, developed the radical concept of "cross-braced bogies". This is the mechanism that puts the tilt into the Advanced Passenger Train. But instead of this being developed and put into mass production in places like Horwich and Shildon, the Tories forced BRE to farm production out to the Gloucester Railway Carriage and Wagon Company.

This undermines the long-term future of the workshops and guarantees that any profits obtained from this project will end up not in public funds but in the coffers of private financiers.

The virus of 'denationalisation' is now spreading to the BR wagon fleet. BR executives state quite openly that up to 40% of the total UK rail freight stock will be in

private hands in 1986, compared with 20% at present. It is also thought there will be 25,000 privately owned wagons in the network by 1986, compared with 17,000 today.

So where will the extra 8,000 wagons come from?

Back-hand

You've guessed it. They'll be back-handed to private companies. This is the major factor behind the redundancies in the Engineering Workshops. Hence the Tories are using a number of combined devices to tighten the screw on BR and the unions and prepare the ground for an auction.

Indeed, Sir Alfred Sherman, former Director of the Centre for Policy Studies, told The Guardian recently:

"British Rail mirrors British society. Anachronistic, wasteful, shabby, epileptic, it not only has resisted change but inhibited analysis of the causes of its shortcomings."

"Successful governments have postponed root-and-branch appraisal of the rail problem and instead thrown large amounts of money at it, tens of millions in subsidies and write-offs."

The real roots of collapse, however, stem not from "oversubsidisation" but from under-capitalisation. The story of the Advanced Passenger Train (APT) proves this.

It has had only a measly £43.4 million spent on it over a decade (only 12% of BR investment) and has still to come into service. By contrast, in France the more

perceptive capitalists of Giscard's government spent £800 million on their own "La Grande Vitesse" high speed train. This was conceived after BR thought of building the APT, but it is now operational. BR's APT is six years behind schedule!

Similarly, the Japanese capitalists have been much more efficient. Their "Bullet" trains have been operating for four years and are now being introduced on a large scale into the USA.

British Rail, the tortoise of international railways, is plodding along with a £43 million grant for the APT when a minimum of £286 million would be needed to build the 60 APTs, together with the new track and rolling stock thought necessary for modernising the Inter-City routes.

The absurd fact is that the APT is a more sophisticated high-technology unit than either the Japanese or French trains. The APT, if mass produced, would sell for £1 million less than the bullet trains.

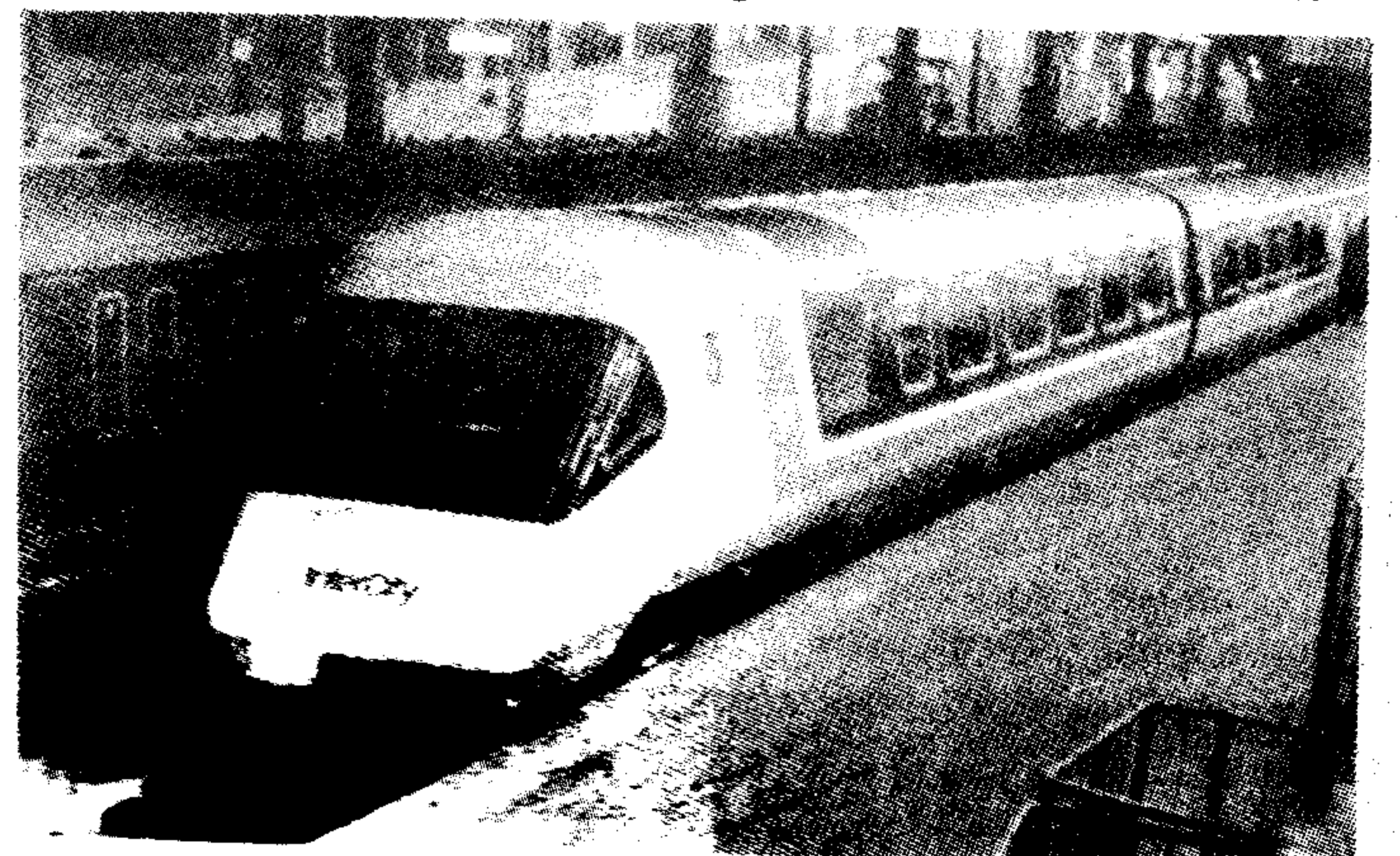
New train

Moreover, Germany is also zooming ahead with its own train and is spending 15.5 million deutsch marks between 1981 and 1990 on building 614 kilometres of new track and upgrading 1970 kilometres of existing track for the new train.

In costs alone, the introduction of the APT plus mass electrification would save 700,000 tonnes of fuel annually. Indeed, it is estimated that if all the Inter-City routes were electrified, BR would receive an extra £30 million a year in improved passenger business.

These figures come from BR itself.

BR says that for every 1% improvement in journey time, there is a 2% rise in passenger revenue. So work it out.



Tory plans for

stripping n Rail

A serious programme of modernisation involving mass electrification and the systematic introduction of the APT on Inter-City routes would start to attract back large numbers of passengers who now use private cars.

The basis is there for a massive job creation programme.

Diesels

The 2,000 diesels built for BR between 1956 and 1963 will be worn out by the mid-1980s. So, leading economists estimate that "BR will need up to 100 locos a year in the medium term." How many locos were built last year? A paltry 16!

Thus, whilst every other major country is increasing investment, building more locos, carriages, and track, the UK is going in the opposite direction.

The Financial Times said recently: "Rail transport in the 1980s is forecast to remain one of the few high growth areas for industrial investment in the non-communist world."

Capital investment in world railways (mostly the USA and Western Europe) exceeded £14.6 billion in 1980 - up by 22% compared with 1979.

The UK was the odd one out - investment went down.

And the Tories and the BR Board tell us "We are in a recession, the demand for locos, wagons and coaches is just not there any more."

The facts give them the lie.

Track

In 1980, the world bought over 1,000 new locos, 4,600 passenger coaches and 41,000 freight wagons. In the same year 2½ billion dollars was spent on new track by West Germany, France and Italy to

name but three countries. In contrast, the UK contribution to the total was derisory:

RAILWAY INVESTMENT IN 1980 (OUTSIDE THE USA).

	£ millions
West Germany	1,129
South Africa	785
France	740
Nigeria	534
Italy	476
Belgium	389
India	370
Spain	355
Britain	310

This diabolical starvation of funds has led to the collapse of rail freight traffic to an all-time low.

The percentage share of freight carried by train has declined from 42% in 1953 to 12% in 1979.

In tonnage terms, BR carried freight dropped from 25 billion kilometre tonnes in 1965 to 19.9 billion kilometre tonnes in 1978.

Europe

This was by far the greatest fall in the whole of Europe.

It is almost as if BR occupied a different planet from the rest of Europe. The total for all European railway freight rose from 433 billion kilometre tonnes in 1965 to 535 billion kilometre tonnes in 1977.

In contrast to the British government's policy, the West German government intends to treble the volume of freight transport carried by rail by 1985. And France spent £317 million on maintenance and new track in 1980. This exceeded Britain's total expenditure on all aspects of railways (i.e. £316 million).

Construct any league table you like on world investment in any aspect of railways, and you'll find Britain is at the bottom.

British Rail is rapidly losing passenger traffic at an alarming rate.

CHANGE IN PASSENGER TRAFFIC 1967-1979

	Change %
USSR	+83%
Denmark	+77%
Italy	+72%
Belgium	+53%
France	+40%
West Germany	+28%
Britain	-7%

A recent report that came out in support of railways stated:

*Less than half of former rail users switch to buses after lines are closed.

*That figure drops to one-third after a short time.

*Only one in three continues to use the main line network after their branch line is closed.

As a result of closures BR has lost "substantial passenger business", the

report says. Indeed, 265 passenger services have been cut by nearly a third.

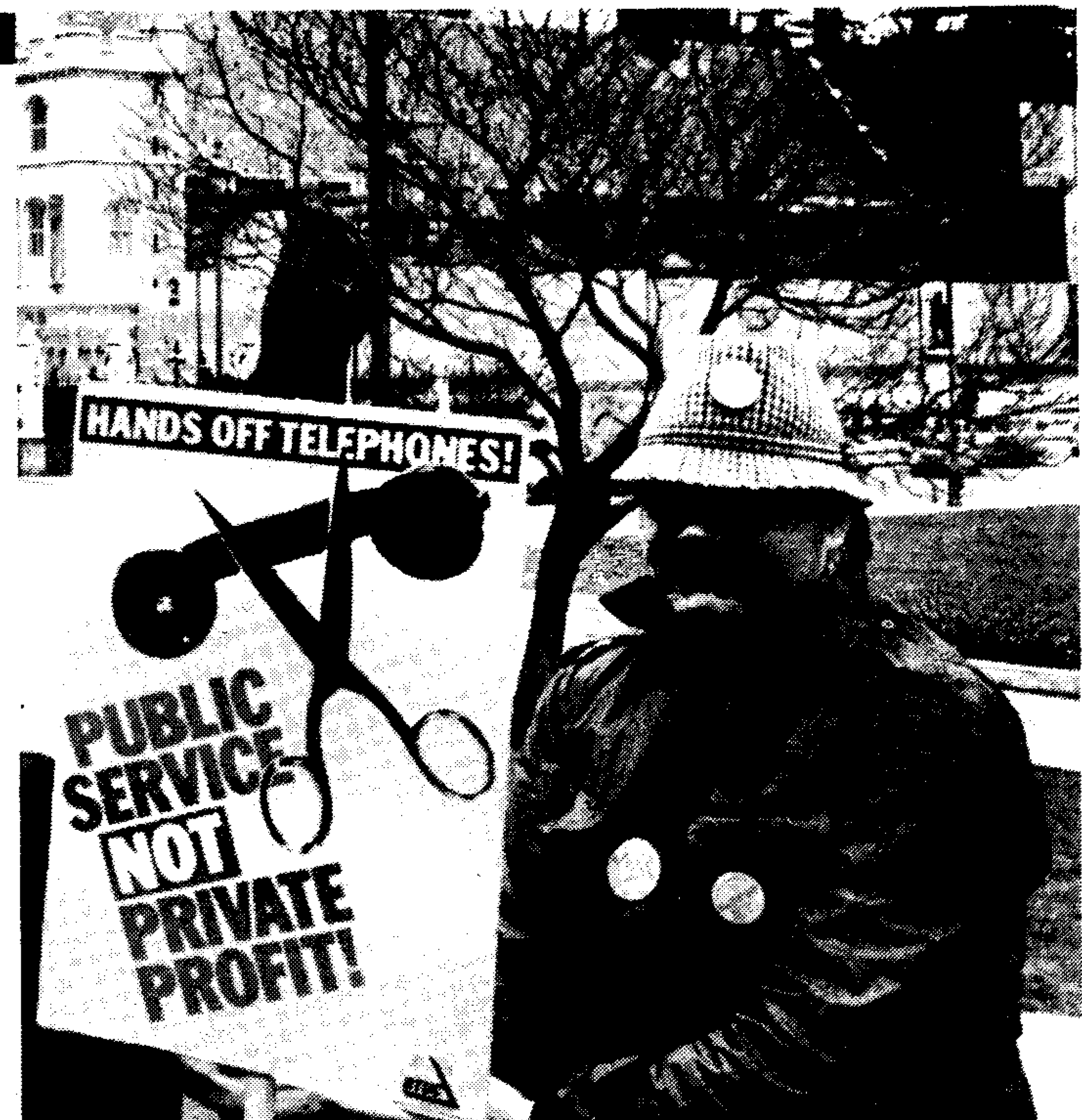
"Inconvenience and hardship has been caused to many people." Car ownership also increased as a direct result of the closures - thus increasing road congestion and accidents.

Yet the lying Tory government argues that high labour costs, "gross overmanning and industrial troubles" are responsible for the decisions to cut the railways.

The Financial Times tells a different story: recent figures show that production lost through "industrial troubles" fell from "486,757 man hours lost in 1978 to 25,328 man hours in 1979 alone."

"As a result, the proportion of repairs called for by the BR Board from BRE which were delayed, fell in the case of locomotives from 7.8% in 1978 to zero in 1980; for wagons from 16% to 5%.

The unions in BR have supported productivity drives, the introduction of flexible, and participated in the



Now it's the same fight in British Rail

processing of redundancy programmes, yet the rail network has seen no new investment.

The Tories still refuse to move on electrification.

1980 EXPENDITURE ON ELECTRIFICATION

	£ millions
France	52.1
Belgium	52.0
Spain	43.0
Britain	11.3

Nobody can deny that the demand for electrification is there. The Railway Industry Association (RIA) has identified 70 major projects for companies in designing technology for electrification. The total value of just 40 of these schemes is reckoned by the RIA to be worth £1.7 billion to UK industry.

In other words thousands of jobs could be created if only the government invested.

But are the financial resources there to be rediverted? Yes.

Last year, £2.5 billion in untaxed profits, interest and dividends was exported by multi-national companies operating in the North Sea oilfields. And that is only one example.

How can Tory privatisation be blocked?

Action

The only way is through industrial action involving all the unions on the railways.

Two lines of action need to be followed. Firstly, union branches, district and regional committees, and national executives need to be committed to backing, paying for and working for a determined struggle to stop the planned collapse of the industry.

Secondly, local action committees need to be formed in those localities where closures are announced.

Action committees can draw in both the workers in the establishment, the wider labour movement and the community of rail-users affected.

If there is another way to stop the jobs drain - then please tell me what it is.



ANDREW WARD (REPORT)

LAURIE SPARHAM (IFL)

WORLD EXPENDITURE ON NEW TRACK 1980

	£ millions
Nigeria	494.6
Italy	167.4
France	101.8
Holland	56.9
Britain	nil

Demonstrate against Reagan



Youth say 'jobs not bombs'

LEFT and Right clashed throughout last weekend's YCND conference in London, which was probably the biggest YCND conference ever. Ninety local youth groups attended.

The conference came at the end of a very difficult period for YCND. The July 1983 YCND conference was declared invalid and the NC elected from it was disbanded. In its place CND set up an interim committee charged with organising the activities of YCND, with working out a structure for the campaign and organising a recall conference.

Joan Ruddock, chair of CND, opened the confer-

ence with a speech knocking down a paper doll caricature of Trotskyism. Then conference discussed two reports on the workings of the interim committee.

The first, from Andrew McIntyre and the right wing majority on the committee praised its work. It got the support of Annajoy David, former vice-chair of CND.

It was full of empty assertions and told some quite obvious lies. Thus, for example: "the last conference we had attempted to create new CND policy on Central America."

This is simply not true. The July conference passed

an emergency resolution which committed Youth CND to supporting a demonstration against US intervention in Central and Latin America. This demonstration was held at a time when there were two US Fleets sailing off the coasts of Central America — both included nuclear weapons in their armoury. Therefore YCND acted completely within CND policy.

The main argument behind McIntyre's report was that what the CND executive had done had been necessary and YCND should be grateful to the CND Executive for

Gerry Bates reports from the Youth CND conference in London last weekend (February 18-19)

stepping in.

With arguments like: "We've got to get away from this ideology of there being a big bad CND executive out there."

But the majority of YCND activists were unconvinced by McIntyre. By a margin of 130-87 the conference voted to back the other report on the interim committee's activities. This came from Socialist Organiser supporter Tom Rigby.

The main argument of Tom's report was that the CND executive didn't need to act as they had done and that the results of their actions had been bad. They had hampered the task of building YCND through campaigning and mass action and had imposed a structure onto the youth campaign without sufficient consultation and involvement from YCND activists themselves.

Coming at the start of the conference, this vote was a major victory for the left-wing within YCND, and for Class Fighter and Socialist Organiser supporters in particular, who have been the most uncompromising opponents of the political witch-hunts within the campaign.

Unfortunately, this victory did not completely set the tone for the rest of the conference. The grouping around Andrew McIntyre and Annajoy David managed to hold on to their considerable influence within the campaign.

But the left won votes on action. In particular, YCND is committed to supporting a major demonstration in June against Reagan's visit to Britain. There will be a week of action around the theme "jobs not bombs". A long march to London by way of the

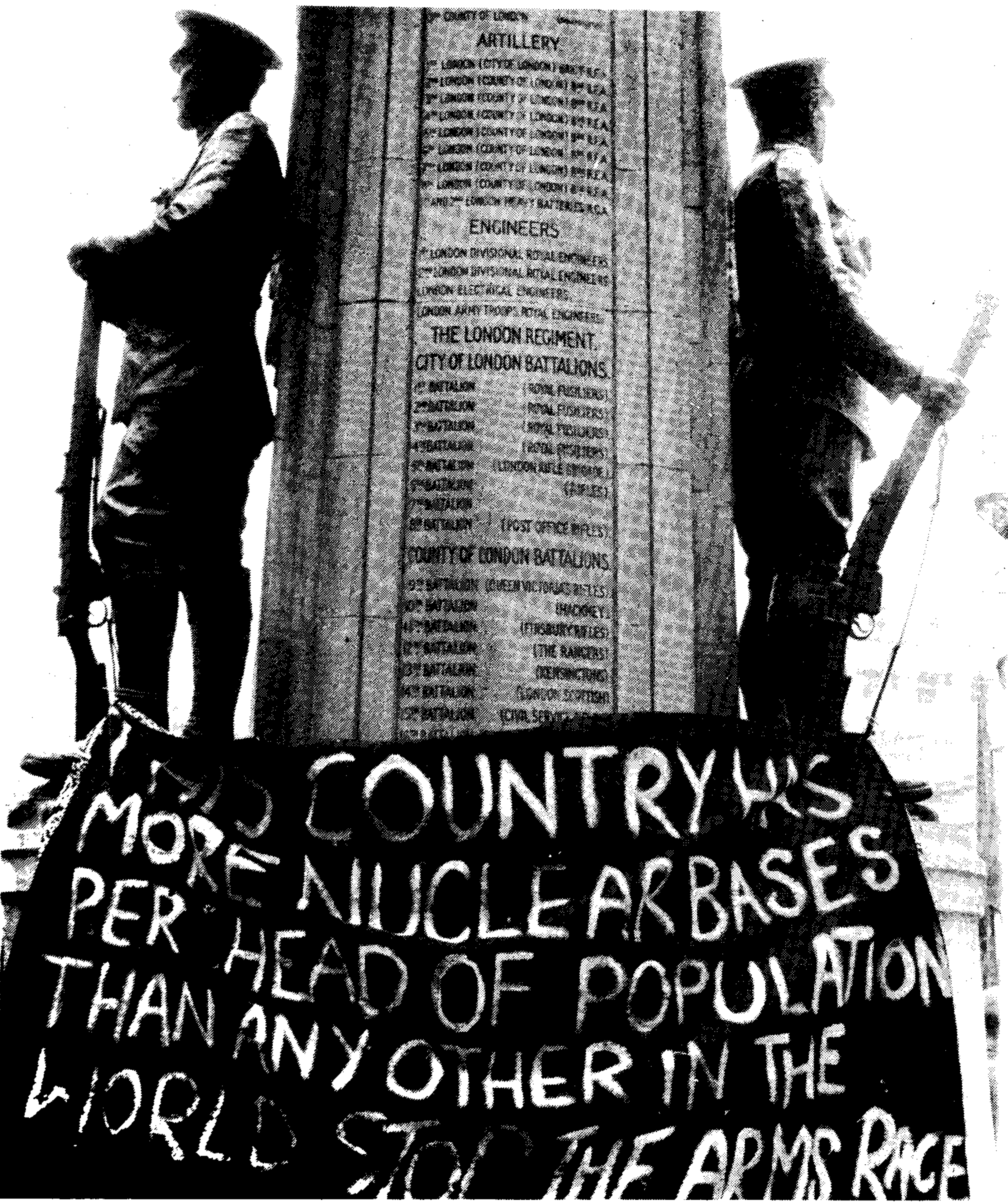
REAGAN is visiting Britain and Ireland in June. On June 7-9 he will join other heads of state for an economic summit of OECD. In attendance besides Thatcher will be Mitterrand, Trudeau, Kohl, Nakasone, Craxi and, representing the EEC, Thorn.

Activists in the labour movement and the disarmament movement should organise for a massive event in June. The NUS already supports action. Now we need to win support and sponsorship from the rest of the trade union and labour movement.

The visit comes just before the Euro-elections. We should try and turn the demonstration into part of a Europe-wide mobilisation against the warmongering of Reagan, Thatcher and the rest of NATO.



JOHN HARRIS



JOHN HARRIS

nuclear bases and peace camps is planned, along the lines of the old Aldermaston marches.

The right managed to block proposals for joint work with the Labour Party Young Socialists — but only by a tiny margin.

Yet the left had the edge in the policy debates. We won support for a resolution which stated: "Whilst defending our character as a single-issue campaign, Youth CND thinks that CND should oppose the military intervention of Britain and the US in Grenada, Central America and the Middle East and explain that these interventions are creating wars that bring the danger of a nuclear holocaust nearer."

The new YCND national committee has three recognised right wingers and three left wingers sharing the six directly-elected places.

This is bad but it was avoidable. Almost certainly the left could have got four people elected had we had a unified left slate. But Revolution Youth — Socialist Action youth —

would not agree on such a slate, preferring to let an extra right-winger in.

All in all, the result of the conference was a draw.

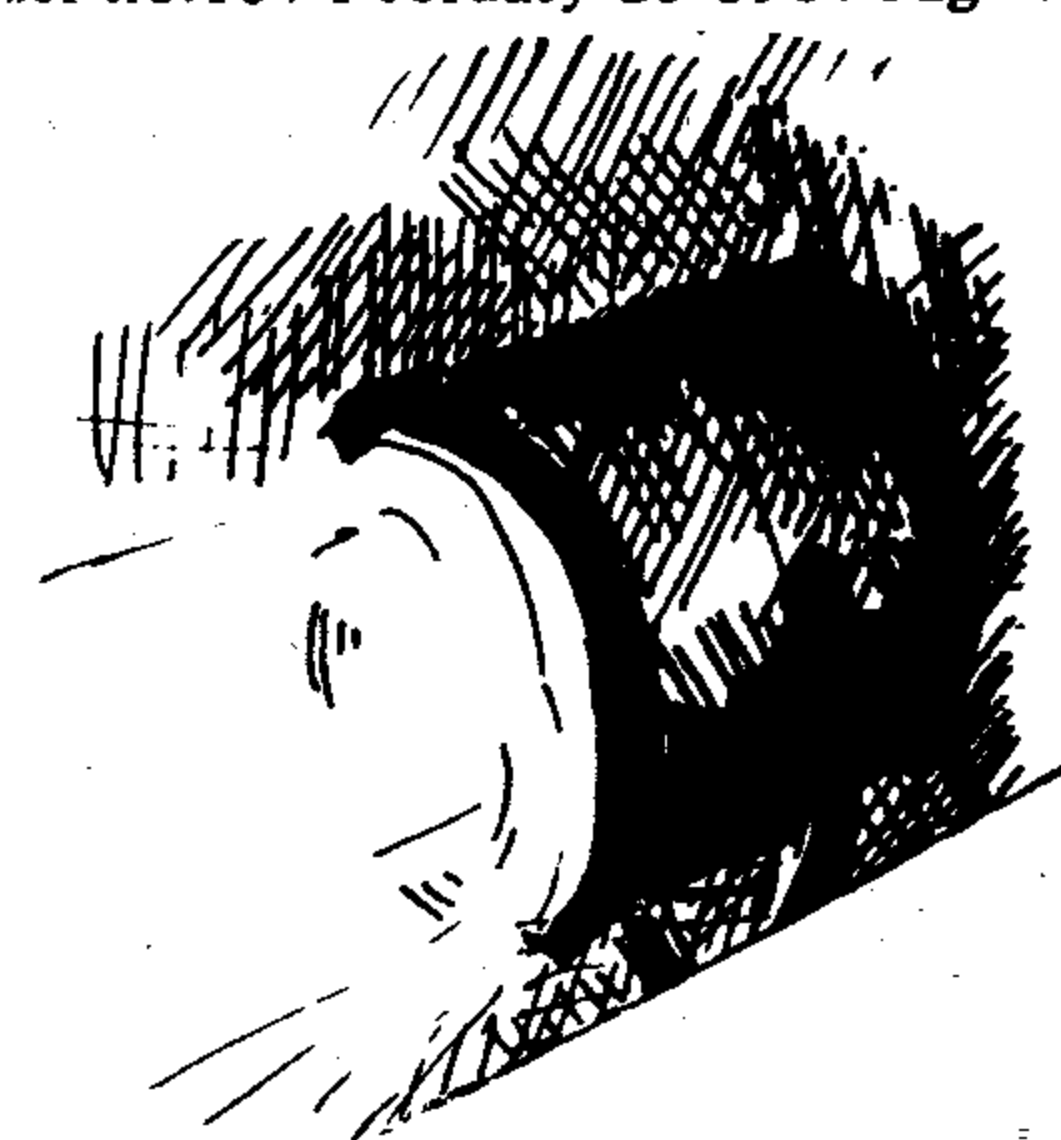
The key political arguments — those about real wars going on now, about trade union and labour movement action and about making links with issues like unemployment — were all won by the left.

But the election results, and the way the conference was organised shows that the right wing still have considerable influence. Leading right wingers were to be heard behind the scenes saying things like "We control the campaign, so we can let them pass whatever they want. It's us that have got to carry it out."

That's a pretty fair comment on the situation now in YCND.

So the fate of YCND will depend on the ability of local groups to go out and build the campaign along the lines of the policy passed at Conference, and on the ability of the NC to act as a real fighting leadership and not a bureaucratic brake.

SPOTLIGHT



Coming up

Sunday 26th, 10.05pm, BBC1: 'Everyman' presents 'the making of a torturer' - Michalis Petrou, who worked for the colonels' regime in Greece.

Sunday 26th, 10.20pm, BBC2: 'My Brilliant Career', film based on a famous novel of 1901 about a young woman's life in Australia.

Sunday 26th, 7.15pm, Channel 4: 'The World at War' covers the Warsaw rising of 1944.

Monday 27th, 7.40pm, BBC2: Third of a series on 'The Stateless Nations' (national minorities in continental Western Europe) - this one is on a French-speaking pocket in Italy.

Monday 27th, 11pm, Channel 4: 'Pictures of Women - Sexuality'.

Tuesday 28th, 10pm, BBC2: 'The Theatre of Dario Fo' - about the author of 'Can't Pay? Won't Pay' and 'The Accidental Death of an Anarchist'.

Wednesday 29th, 6.30pm, Channel 4: 'Flashback: on the means test in the 1930s'.

Wednesday 29th, 10.55pm, Channel 4: 'Artificial intelligence' - can machines think in the same sense as humans, or can't they?



Gene Hackman, Joanna Cassidy, Nick Nolte

"UNDER FIRE"

"I DON'T take sides, I take pictures", says the hero of 'Under Fire', war photographer Russell Price (Nick Nolte).

He is a peeping tom, a voyeur of history not a participant in it.

The film is about what happens to his view of his own place in the world when he finds himself in civil war torn Nicaragua.

By 1979 almost the entire Nicaraguan people were in revolt against the dictatorship of the Somoza family, which had held power for nearly 50 years after grabbing it with US help in the 1930s.

The Somozas used their control of the Nicaraguan police state to treat the country as a corrupt private business concern.

Even the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie couldn't get their snouts in Somoza's trough, so they joined the revolution. What the Sandinistas spearheaded in 1979 was a great national revolt against a regime of stark-naked gang-

sterism and corruption.

Price begins by taking pictures but ends by taking sides. He is repelled by the brutal defenders of the regime. He finds that his photography is not neutral when he learns that photos he has taken of Sandinistas have been used to finger them for assassination by the regime.

When he finally takes sides he puts his professional skills - and his reputation as well - at the disposal of the rebels to make war propaganda for them. He fakes a photo of a dead Sandinista leader to back up the claim that he is still alive.

Price is no longer a voyeur. He says: "Once in a while one has to change history rather than just recording it".

'Under Fire' is, of course, made according to the well-established pattern for popular adventure movies, with a love triangle and so on.

But it skilfully interweaves its fictional story of Price and two other journalists with the real events of the revolution. For example, Price's friend

Alex Grozier (Gene Hackman) is shot dead by trigger-happy soldiers, and Price's photos of the event deal a blow to the international image of Somoza.

In fact trigger-happy soldiers did kill a journalist just like that in 1979 - in front of TV cameras...

People in the US and Europe who could see photos of long lines of 'native' corpses without bothering too much about it began to pay attention.

As a woman says in the film after Alex Grozier has been shot: "50,000 Nicaraguans are dead: we should have shot one US journalist 50 years ago".

This American film - directed by Roger Spottiswoode who is British - takes sides with the people of Nicaragua and with the Sandinistas against Somoza. This brave stand by people who seem to be honest liberals has made it a box-office flop in Reagan's America.

It will be a shame if it is a box-office flop in Britain too.

Orwell's twin

By Mick Ackersley

BRIAN Inglis did the 'Everyman' portrait of Arthur Koestler (Sunday 19th), firmly claiming Koestler for the mystics and the credulous devotees of the paranormal.

Fair enough, since Koestler's will endowed a chair for research into the paranormal and much of his writing over the last decades attacked science, or the conventional wisdom about science.

Someone in the programme thought that these writings of Koestler's "may be a catalyst for a new era in science".

I wouldn't know. But I've always found the political Koestler very interesting.

He is George Orwell's twin, the one who personally wallowed in all the horrors that Orwell turned up his fastidious truth-seeking nose at, and recoiled from, poisoned for life.

A Hungarian Jew in Germany, Koestler joined the Communist Party in 1931, and remained a member for seven years. He went to Spain as a journalist during the civil war, was captured by the fascists, and spent months in jail awaiting execution.

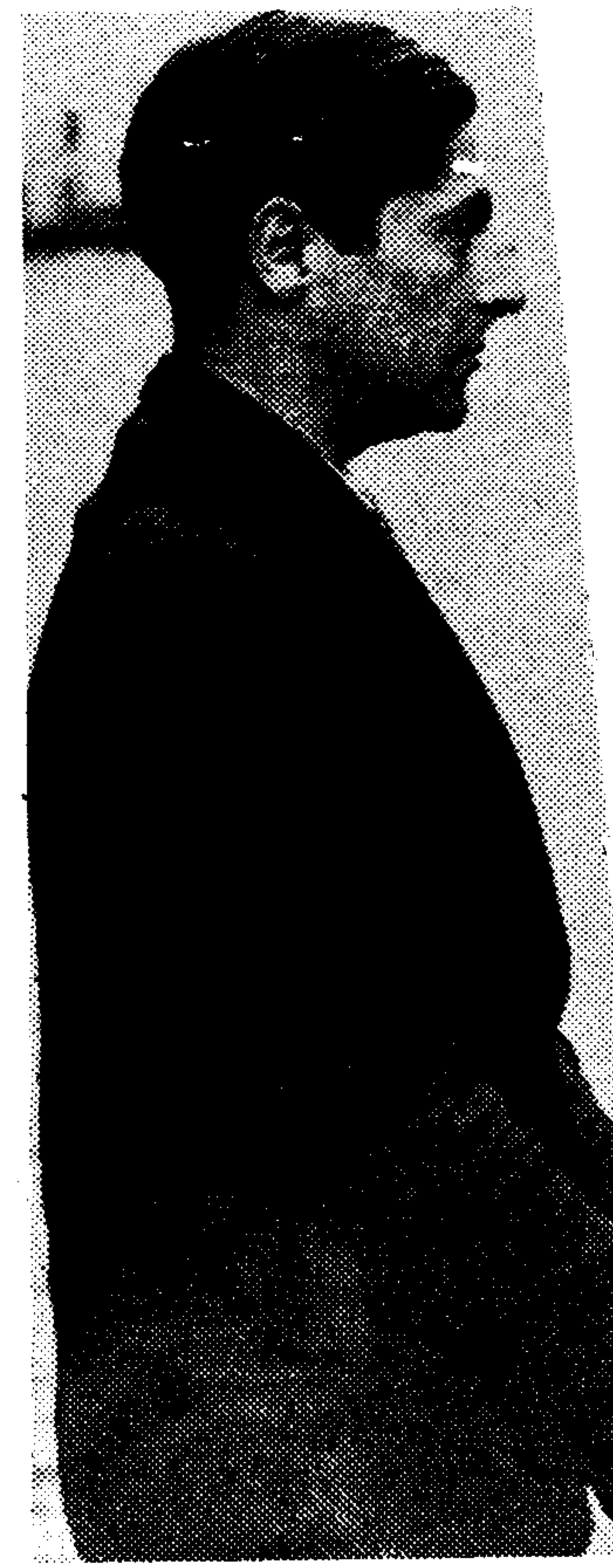
Liberal

Koestler, who worked for the British Liberal paper the News Chronicle, was eventually released. He broke with the Communist Party in 1938, at the time of the third Moscow Trial, in which Bukharin was the chief defendant.

In fact he remained a Stalinist for a long time after he broke with the CP. His first novel, 'The Gladiators', published in 1939, tells the story of the great slave revolt associated with the name of Spartacus which shook the Roman world in the year 73 BC.

His version of the story is a parable on the experience of the Soviet Union. Spartacus is Stalin. The gladiatorial school inmates whose revolt triggers the great movement of slaves are the Bolshevik party.

The slaves found a 'Sun City' and those who rule it are forced more and more to live as the ruling classes around them do. They refuse to aid other slaves... To maintain discipline, Sparta-



They confessed, says Koestler, because they believed in Stalin's party.

The novel is as awash with pseudo-dialectical gobbledegook about the Bolsheviks' alleged philosophy of history as 'The Gladiators' is with romanticism. The hero, 'Rubashov', is a compound figure with much of Bukharin in him, an old revolutionary who confesses.

As an explanation of why men like Zinoviev, Rykov, Rakovsky, and others confessed, it is idiocy. We now know that they were tortured, demoralised over many years, and blackmailed. (Bukharin had a young wife and a baby son...)

Yet history was to do a strange thing to Koestler's travesty: it imitated it. Koestler had anachronistically attributed the psychology of the Stalin-trained apparatchiks he knew in the 1930s Comintern to the old Bolsheviks who confessed in the Moscow Trials. In 1948-52 there were purge trials of loyal Stalinists in the East European states. Some of them did confess for

(in part, anyway) the reasons Koestler attributed to the old Bolsheviks. For example, Lazlo Rajk, former secretary of the Hungarian CP, shouted 'Long live the party' on the scaffold. In the 1940s Koestler became a hysterical anti-Stalinist, and a very influential one. In the early '50s, he left politics for science and pseudo-science.

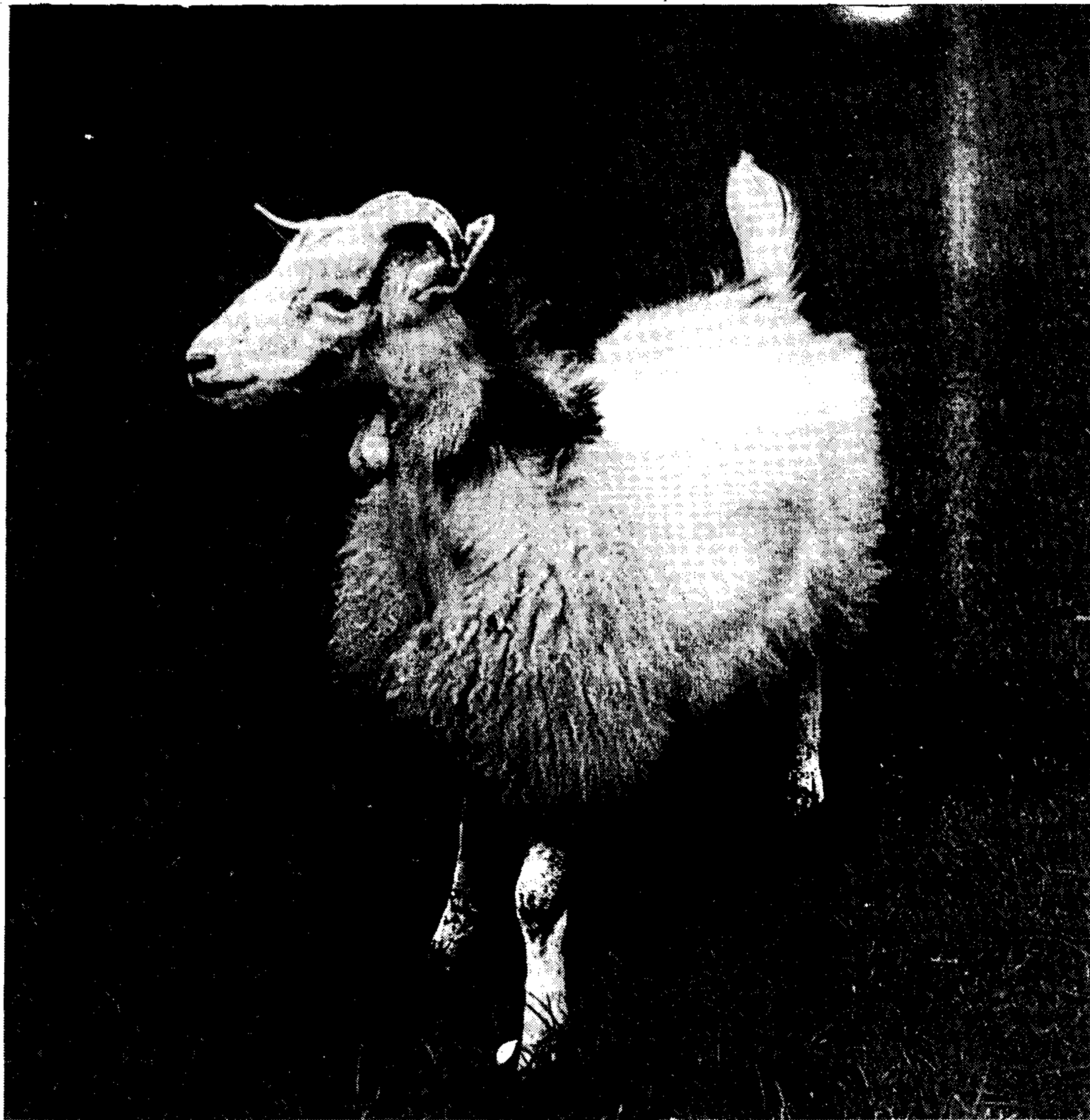
Murk

Much of the driving force that led him to mysticism seems to have been horror at the pseudo-Marxist, pseudo-materialist certainties associated with Stalinism. He himself truly said that he had moved 'from specious certainty to groping in the murk'. He could have shed the specious certainty without sinking as far into the murk as he did.

For me Koestler's political writings, including his novels, are an important part of the spiritual, intellectual and psychological record of a generation who went to Stalin and the USSR for communism, and found such horrors there as maimed them for the rest of their lives.



A scene from 'Up Front'



Half sheep, half goat

All mixed up

IN ancient Greek mythology, the Chimaera was an incongruous combination of the front parts of a lion, the mid-parts of a goat and the hind parts of a dragon. Modern chimaeras tend to be a more random mixture of different types of mouse or, as recently announced, of sheep and goats. And unlike the Greek Chimaera, they actually exist.

Most living things start out as a mixing of material from two parents via the sperm and ovum. The parents are usually of the same species, but may be of different but closely related species, in which case the offspring is called a "hybrid".

Chimaeras are a different sort of mixture. Different embryos are combined so that they develop as one. The resulting creature has the normal number of organs but the cells that make it up will have originated from different sets of parents. The chimaera has at least two sets of parents.

Let's now see how the recently unveiled geep or shoats were created.

The researchers started with embryos at the 4-cell or 8-cell stage. This is when the original fertilised egg has divided two or three times. At this stage, each cell could become any part of the new organism or could even develop into a complete new organism if separated from the others (identical twins form in this way).

They gently disrupted 3 sheep embryos to separate their cells. Then they added a goat embryo and allowed the sheep cells to join up again around the goat

embryo in the womb of a ewe. Normally, a sheep's body would reject goat cells as being foreign but these ones were surrounded by sheep cells. The placenta would have been made entirely of sheep embryo cells, so the mother's body would have nourished the embryo as usual.

The problem of rejection has held up research into chimaeras of different species. Embryo cells of different species get on quite well as they have not yet developed immune defences but the "mother's" body will usually reject foreign embryos causing them to spontaneously abort.

Previous successful chimaeras have been of the same species (mice) or of closely related species (also mice) capable of hybridisation.

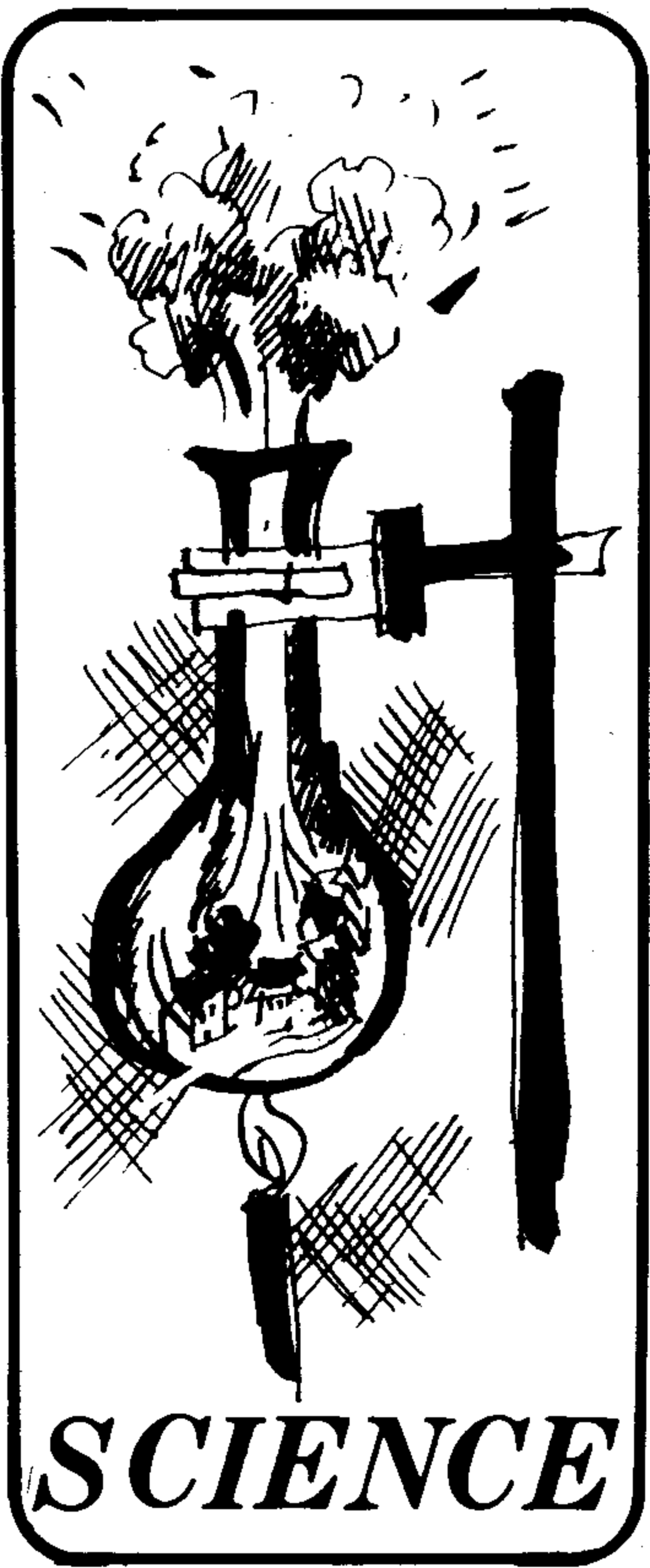
Goats and sheep do not produce hybrids. All embryos spontaneously abort. The current breakthrough seems to depend on the placenta being made of cells of the same species as the "mother" whatever the rest of the embryo is made of.

In the recently reported experiments, sheep gave birth to eleven lambs, one kid and seven lamb-kids, while goats gave birth to three kids, three lambs (of which two were still-born) and one kid-lamb.

In other words, not all the chimaera embryos were born as chimaeras. Most interesting were the cases where a lamb was born to a goat and vice versa, since the placenta cells must have been completely different from the embryo cells.

The chimaeras usually looked like sheep or goats but would have patches of goat hair mixed randomly with sheep's wool. A sheep-like head might bear goat's horns or a goat's head might bear ram's horns.

If the outer layer of the embryo was sheep cells, the skin, brain and nerves would be sheepish, while the guts and other internal organs might be goatish. What implications this might have for the diet of the animal, I don't



By Les Hearn

that one sex organ might produce sheep sex cells while the other goat. One chimaera behaved like a male goat, but its sperm were all deformed. If chimaeras are produced which are fertile, they will parent either lambs or kids. *Chimaera cannot beget chimaeras.*

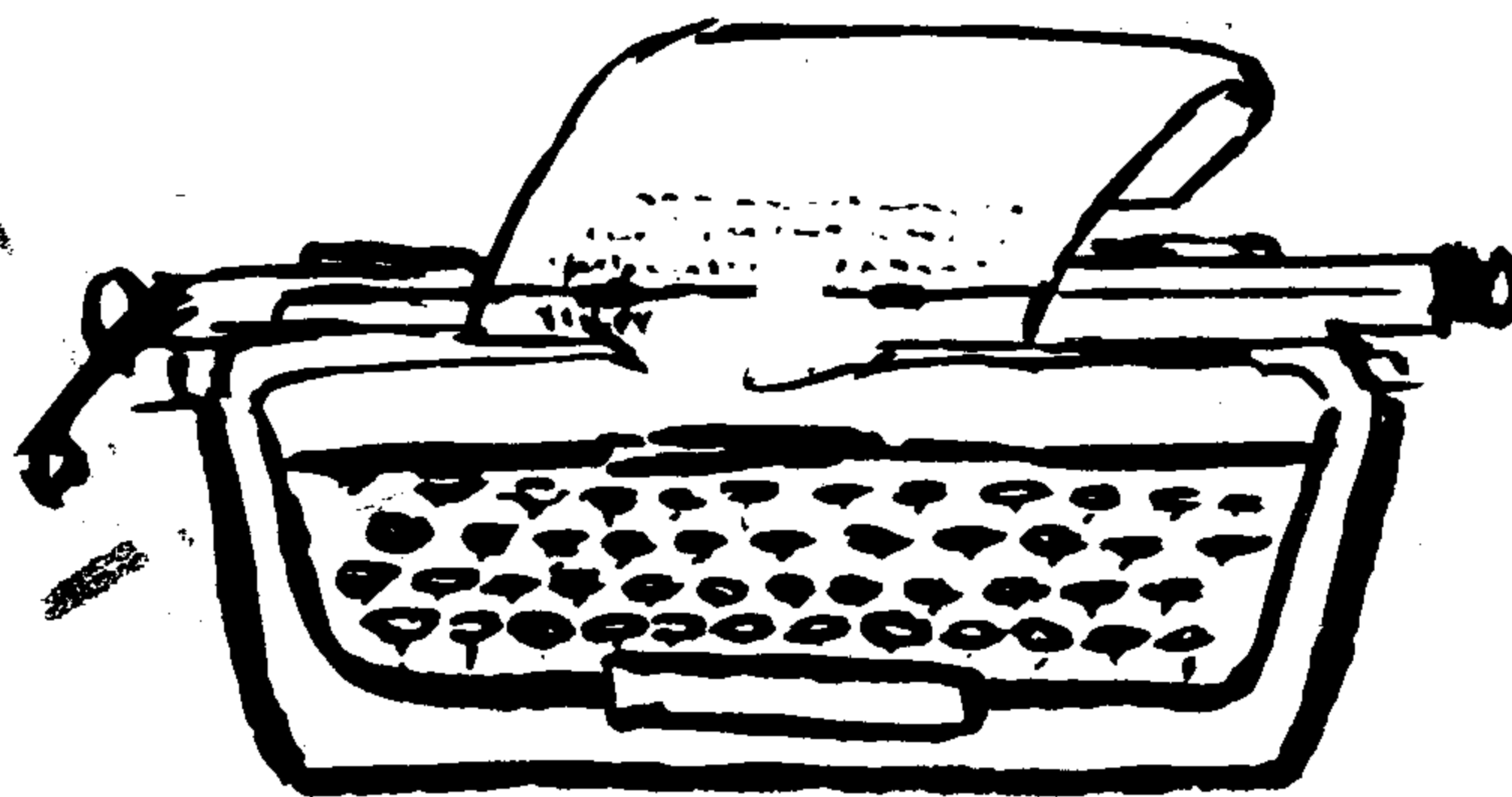
Making chimaeras is impressive but not as impressive as producing hybrid sheep/goats. However, getting sheep to bear goats and vice-versa is important and may have implications for saving rare species whose embryos could be brought to term by foster-mothers of a more common species.

There are also lessons to be learnt about how cells interact during foetal development.

FOOTNOTE
Producing chimaeras is not an example of genetic engineering. I'm still waiting for Russian genetic engineers to clone a mammoth, as was suggested a few years ago.

Worries about human-ape chimaeras are probably unfounded though human-human chimaeras are possible. Indeed, they may occur naturally, if two non-identical twin embryos somehow got stuck together in the womb and developed as one.

WRITEBACK



Send letters to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8. No longer than 400 words please: longer letters are liable to be cut.

Dismissing Labour's Left?

So 'Fergus Ennis' takes exception to Briefing's 'new' slogan, 'Worker Take The Power', and, far from damping it with faint praise bludgeons your readers around the head with it to illustrate just how dangerous this kind of stuff can be.

The slogan is accused of "creating illusions that things in the Labour Party are much better than they are", "softening up a whole layer of the Labour Left for Kinnockism" and much more. Pretty good for four words which apparently nobody can 'really' understand.

Clearly comrade 'Ennis' can't fathom it out at all. He patronises the readers of your paper and those of Briefing by asserting that to them the slogan can only mean 'Labour Take Office' - why should he assume that?

His patronising seems to derive from his own dismissive and sectarian attitude to the Labour Left - they couldn't understand a revolutionary slogan if it bit them.

Why shouldn't those who are exposed to the slogan, bearing in mind the context in which it is placed - that is on the front page of a publication not renowned for its incipient Kinnockism (despite the wide range of positions' it adopts - clearly debate is not something that 'Ennis' is fond of) - be just as likely to interpret it to be addressed to the lieutenants of Labour demanding that they 'Break with the bosses and take the [real State] Power - or make way for those who will'?

In any case Chris Knight makes it explicitly clear in an article in the National Briefing Supplement when he says "The essence of reformism is the refusal to struggle for power, combined with the mistaking of office for power."

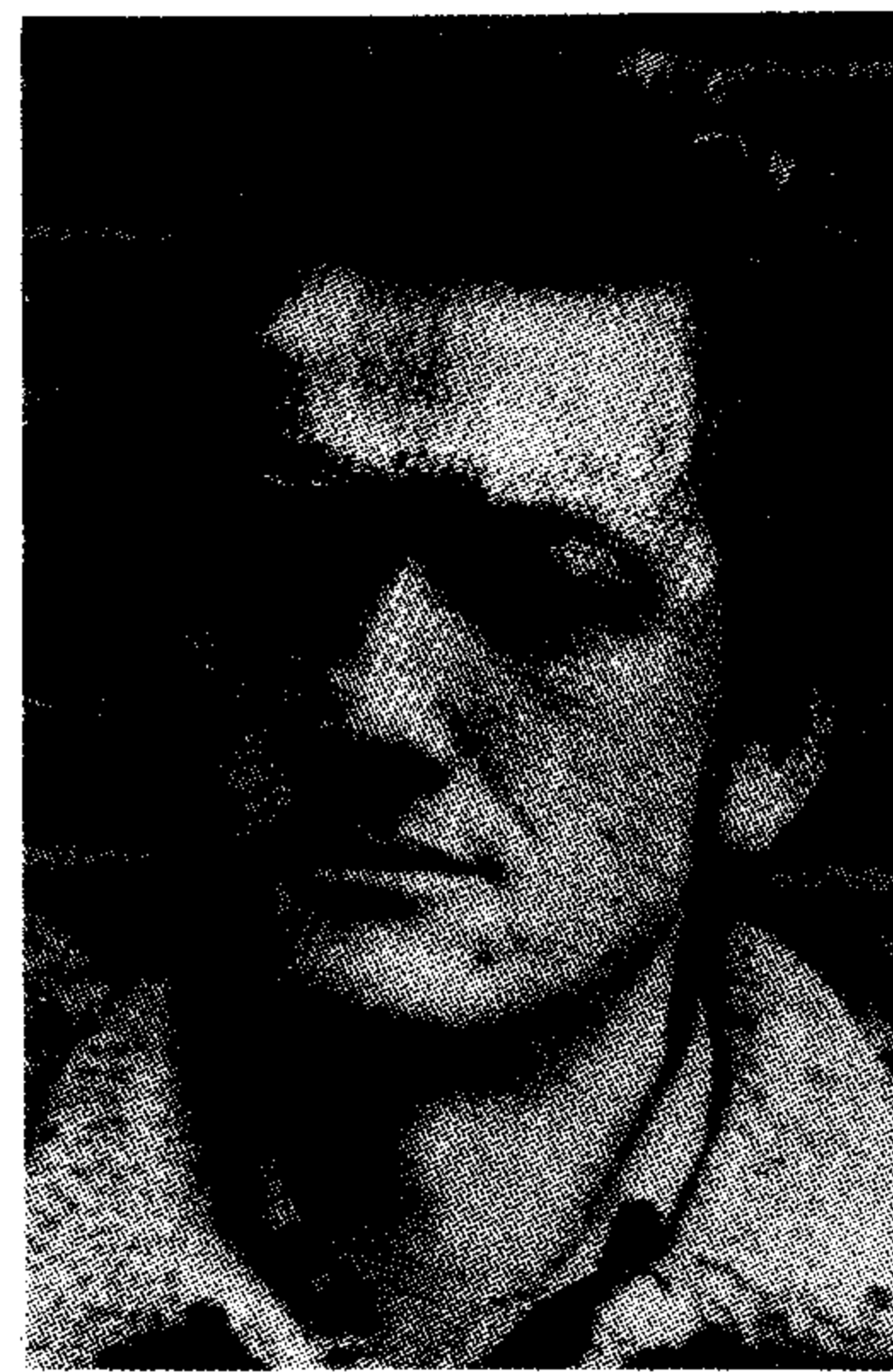
Of course the real meaning of the 'Ennis' article is not to discuss the usefulness or otherwise of the slogan. His main aim is to take a side-swipe at Briefing, hence his attempted satire - suggesting that the adopting of the slogan shows that 'Briefing is still advancing'.

This sort of stuff is damaging. Briefing is 'advancing'. 'Ennis' only needs to look at the increasing number of local Briefings being formed around the country, many with the help of Socialist Organiser supporters. What other focus for the serious left in the Labour Party does he suggest?

Secondly, the article is used to berate the failings of the 'local government left' and to pin the blame for this on Briefing and its slogan.

There is no mention here of the 'objective conditions' which met those lefts who got involved in local government politics to help in practice to mobilise those in struggle against the Tories.

'Ennis' invests 'magical powers' in the slogan for these people. On the one hand it made



Chris Knight

them believe that they really would attain 'power' and yet, on the other it dragged them into 'office'; preparing a new labourism. Either they read the word 'Power' to mean power, or to mean office - but not both!

Thirdly the article is woven around a personal attack on Chris Knight and Graham Bash - whose 'fetish' is the slogan. Strange that this 'fetish' of two people should be adopted by an overwhelming majority at an editorial meeting attended by 30 people.

Fraternally,
STU CLARKE
Merseyside Labour Briefing

PEACE THE

TONY RICHARDSON'S line of argument against the Western left supporting the demands of the unofficial peace movements in Eastern Europe is representative of a whole tradition within Trotskyism which attempts to oppose Stalinism without being prepared to take the risks, which a serious revolutionary challenge to the bureaucracy necessarily involves in terms of disrupting the existing organisations of the workers' states.

This strategy was demonstrated in all its nuances in the period between 1923 and 1945, when the Soviet leadership first crippled the attempts of the international working class to resolve the crisis of the capitalist order and thus avoid the outbreak of a new world war and then took part in that war, drawing on the support of the battered remnants of the world revolutionary movement, in a global popular frontist operation which led to an enormous strengthening of the Soviet state.

While the USSR does not initiate war, the bureaucratic order is deeply dependent on the existence of the war danger and radically hostile to the construction of a really effective peace movement, which would undermine the bureaucracy's reason for existing. Its message to the peace movement is "forget all this crap about international mass action, only the workers' bomb can stop the imperialist war drive."

In reality, however, the danger of war results from the inner needs of the capitalist mode of production which are irrational and thus the Soviet strategy works to destroy the only forces - the forces of the working class movement - which can save the USSR itself from nuclear destruction.

The Soviet leadership, too, puts its own short-term power interests above those of human survival.

What is to be done? Comrade Richardson says there must be a political revolution to replace the bureaucracy in the USSR and Eastern Europe. But for him "political revolution" is an abstract slogan to be counterposed to the real oppositional movements in the Soviet bloc. The real political revolution will grow out of the discontents which permeate these societies, among them distaste for the militarisation of daily life, with all its attendant fear of democracy and sexism.

Material gains

CHRIS Reynolds' article "Fairly tales about Russia" (Left Press, SO 164) involves such serious political errors as to demand a reply.

Reynolds skates over the question: is the USSR, or is it not, a workers' state - however degenerated? He tries to lead his position he authority of Trotsky - but, talking about Trotsky's 'later writings' omits to mention In Defence of Marxism, or Trotsky's 1938-40 struggle with the minority in the American SWP. There he sought to persuade the SWP's US membership, among other things, that revolutionists should fight on the same side as the Red Army against Finland, and that even when partitioning Poland with Nazi Germany the USSR remained a workers' state, an element in the class camp of the working class.

On the social gains of the revolution, Reynolds compares the USSR with the imperialist countries - "the West", "capitalist countries with strong

labour movements and relatively developed welfare services and civil liberties", "advanced non-fascist capitalism".

He even says the USSR is "in many ways further from socialism (my emphasis) than these countries". In reading The Revolution Betrayed, Reynolds seems to have avoided noticing that Trotsky says that the material basis of the rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy is scarcity, mainly attributable to the backwardness ("underdevelopment") of Russia and the imperialist encirclement of the Soviet state.

Trotsky never ceased to point out, on the other hand, that the material basis of the "democratic" character of the imperialist countries (and of the other benefits received by workers in those countries compared to the colonial and semicolonial Third World) is the exploitation of the colonies (Third World) by the imperialists. How is living off exploitation and politically

Scrap the bosses!

Stop the Bomb!

Class Fighter pamphlet

10p

10p plus postage from 214 Sicket Court, London N1 2SY.

AND USSR

Movements against militarism are, of course, risky, in terms of defence. But the choice has to be made. If Czechoslovakia in 1968 had slipped out of Kremlin control, this would have been a huge blow to the strategic interests of the USSR. In military terms the invasion was entirely justified.

Nor should comrade Richardson be too naive about Poland's Solidarity movement. The weakening of the bureaucratic state in Poland would have led to all manner of political forces hostile to socialism taking the political stage. Socialists would have faced a hard political struggle to reassert a working class orientation at the head of the anti-bureaucratic movement.

The movement for political revolution is a movement pointed at the heart of the Soviet Union's strategy of defence and the administrative hegemony of socialist ideology.

Only a genuinely democratic workers' movement, however, can achieve the international and national class unity needed to defeat the new war drive. So the risks must be taken.

This is not to say that everything the unofficial peace movements say and do must be approved of. But we should want, welcome and fight for the growth of anti-militarist and independent peace movements in the East and make every attempt to draw them into the elaboration of a coherent peace strategy in which actions in the East bolster actions in the West and vice versa.

By seeking practical collaboration of this sort, we will be able to have an influence on the political thinking of these oppositional currents which we would forfeit if we spat in the face of the urgent human need for a free and peaceful social environment which they express.

COLIN MEADE
Surbiton

Lenin's party and Stalin's state

CLIVE Bradley's article on Lenin in Socialist Organiser 165 is typical of the hagiography which performs a disservice to the socialist movement in that it obscures rather than clarifies the legacy of Leninism.

Clive concentrates upon State and Revolution, Lenin's anti-statist tract written on the eve of the Russian Revolution, a work so imbued with anti-bureaucratic sentiment that it enjoyed the support of the anarchists at the time.

A review of that pamphlet can in no sense, however, be regarded as a substitute for a rounded assessment of Lenin's ambiguous legacy. No such consideration can be meaningful without some engagement with the view of students of the subject, whether it be anti-Leninists such as Leonard Shapiro, or those of a more sympathetic stripe such as Marcel Liebman and Neil Harding.

At least they have attempted to confront the central dilemma that faces revolutionary socialists — did Lenin lay the foundations for Stalinism and, if so, in what ways was this relationship expressed?

To dismiss that question by referring to Lenin's last struggle (Moshe Lewin's phrase) against the growing bureaucratisation of the early Soviet state is superficial. Opponents of Leninism, such as Shapiro, long recognised Lenin's efforts to contain the burgeoning bureaucratism through the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, but have regarded that as a despairing rearguard effort to limit the inevitable consequences of his own earlier policies.

In other words, the growing process of bureaucratisation was the inevitable and logical culmination of Lenin's concept of the party, the consequences of which he recognised too late in the day.

To discuss that point of view

By Ian McCalman

out of hand is to betray an unserious attitude towards the most contentious issue facing revolutionary socialists.

Clive's views are entirely in accord with the tradition of the Trotskyist movement of avoidance of discussion of this thorny question. Aside from the occasional essay by Mandel, there is little sign that Trotskyists are even aware of the debate that has ensued on Leninism and there is even less proof of their willingness to seriously engage in that debate.

Obviously it is not possible to attempt a systematic analysis of the issues involved in a letter to a weekly socialist newspaper. I will therefore only indicate two of the many questions which still require the most thorough discussion if we are to achieve a proper evaluation of Leninism and its relevance today.

Question one: did Lenin even conceive of the Bolsheviks submitting to the will of a democratically elected Constituent Assembly? It is often argued by Lenin's uncritical adherents that by the time the Assembly actually met in late 1917 it had become historically redundant, reflecting a stage of the revolution that had already been overtaken by events.

But, even if we accept that contention, we are left with little proof that he would have accep-

ted the existence of any Assembly that rejected the monopolistic role of the Bolsheviks.

Plekhanov, then on the same side as Lenin, at the 1903 Congress of the RSDLP, summed it up neatly: "If, in an outburst of revolutionary enthusiasm, the people should elect a very good parliament... it would suit us to try and make that a Long Parliament: but if the elections turned out badly for us, we should have to try to disperse the resulting parliament not after two years but, if possible, after two weeks." It was a view from which Lenin did not dissent.

Clive tells us that "Lenin's life was devoted to creating genuine working class democracies." That may well have been Lenin's subjective intention, but was not the whole logic of the kind of party he sought to build pointing in the opposite direction?

Question two: did Lenin ever believe in a plurality of political parties? Did he conceive of the Bolsheviks ever sharing power with even other socialist parties? Perhaps Clive will indicate to us some evidence pointing in that direction?

There is plenty of evidence to the contrary both in his practice and in his political statements, e.g. "Yes, it is a dictatorship of one party! This is what we stand for, and we shall not shift from that position." (July 1919).

Nor did Trotsky break from that position until 1936 when, under pressure from Victor Serge and others, he finally endorsed the demand for a plurality of Soviet parties.

Serge was painfully aware of the contradictory nature of the most contentious subject of the epoch. "It is often said that 'the germ of all Stalinism was in Bolshevism at the beginning'. Well, I have no objection. Only, Bolshevism contained many other germs — and those who lived through the enthusiasm of the first years of the victorious revolution ought not to forget it. To judge living man by the death germs which the autopsy reveals in a corpse — and which he may have carried in him since birth — is this very sensible."

Serge knew at first hand the positive side of Leninism — the devotion to Marxist analysis, the revolutionary elan, the self-sacrifice, the unyielding striving for working class power which are the hallmarks of revolutionary socialism at its best. There was, moreover, the recognition of the need for and the application of a discipline essential to summoning all the strength of the proletariat at decisive points to beat down the forces of capital.

In coexistence with this there was a jacobinical spirit which contained within it the seeds of self-destruction, exemplified in the decisions of the 10th Congress, the use of the Cheka to impose a Bolshevik dictatorship against other socialist organisations, the refusal to accept the demand of the Kronstadters for "free Soviets".

These and other negative features must be subsumed within any attempted characterisation of Leninism. A faithful portrayal can only be painted in Cromwellian style, "warts and all".

It is one of the crucial weaknesses of post-war Trotskyism that it has refused to recognise that the finest service it can perform for Leninism is to continually subject that history to the most searching scrutiny.



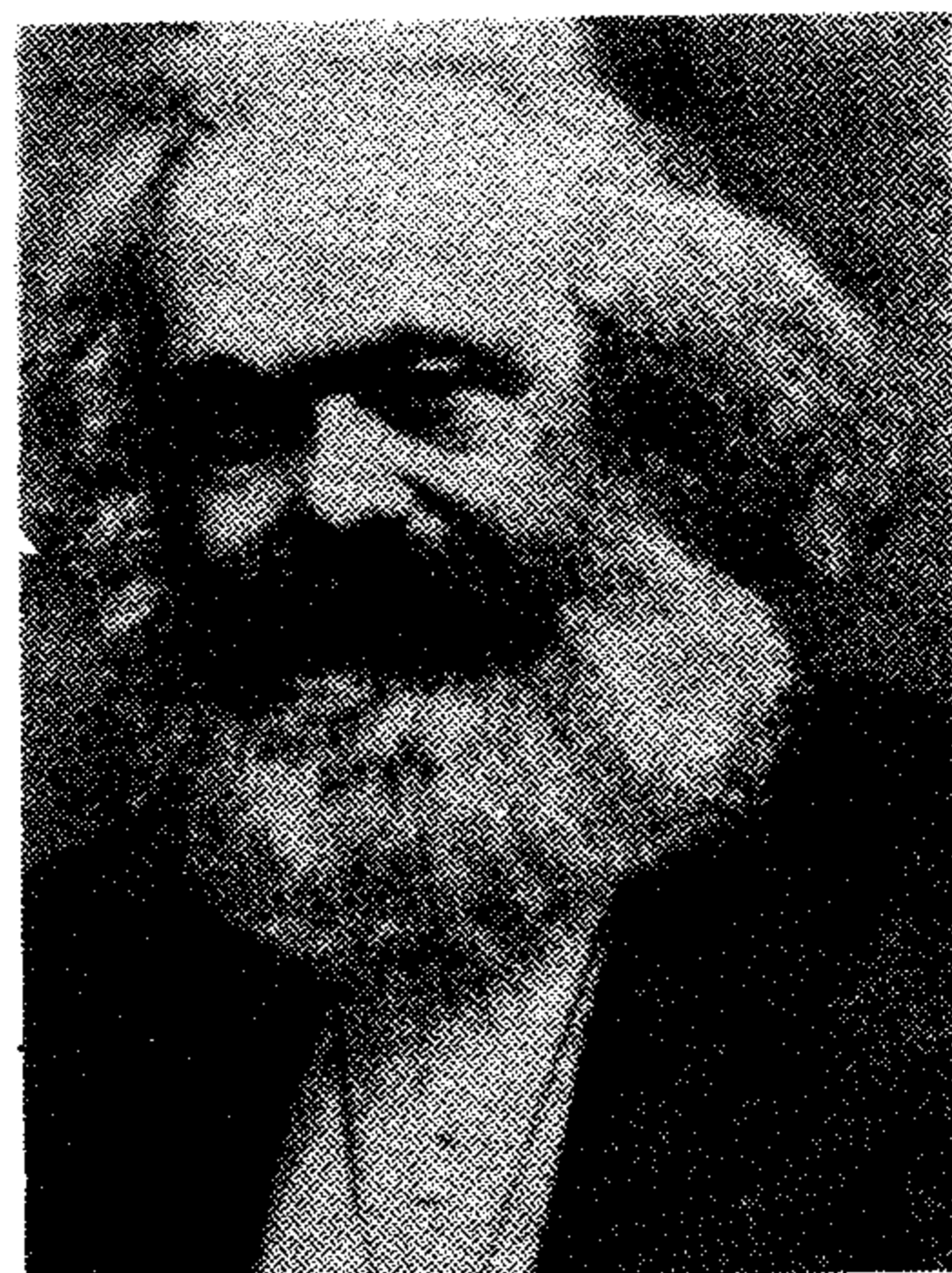
"The hero sunk into the king". Josef Stalin as revolutionary in 1912 (police pictures), with Lenin in 1923; and as the murderous despot who led the bureaucratic counter-revolution against the Russian workers.

Anti-imperialist front?

GARTH Frankland's letters on imperialism conjure up the image of a person floundering in quicksand: the more he struggles to extricate himself from the awful logic of his position, the worse that position becomes.

He claims that his positions "on the struggle against imperialism are quite clear and in line with the standard position held by Marxists since 1917 and before".

Indeed, his ideas are becoming increasingly clear, but the "standard position" that they are "in line" with is that held by Stalinists since 1927 and before.



Marx

No-one denies that it sometimes permissible for revolutionaries to fight alongside the national bourgeoisie — in a struggle against imperialism when what the national bourgeoisie are fighting for advances the interests of the working class and coincides with some specific aspect of the working class socialist programme (most obviously and usually, the struggle for national self-determination).

That was Lenin's position and it was Trotsky's. That is why Lenin advocated defence of the Kerensky government against Kornilov and why Trotsky advocated fighting alongside the Kuomintang against the Japanese invasion of China in the '30s. It is why revolutionaries gave support to Nasser when he nationalised the Suez Canal in 1956.

It is why revolutionaries in Argentina would fight alongside Alfonsín against an attempt by the Argentine military to overthrow his elected government (even if the military leaders put forward 'anti-imperialist' aims of reconquering the 'Malvinas' as the programme of their coup).

It is why the Bolsheviks did not ally with Kerensky against German imperialism.

And it is why it was wrong for Argentine revolutionaries to ally with the Galtieri regime in its drive to annex the Falklands.

Even when the national bourgeoisie is leading struggles which coincide with the interests of the working class, revolutionaries' support can only be conditional, "for specific and limited tasks under certain conditions, the proletariat and peasantry can — without making any concessions in their own demands — wage a struggle jointly with sections of the 'national' bourgeoisie against the imperialist enemy", as it was put in a 1979 document, 'The Transitional Programme in Today's Class Struggle'.

In Garth's letters, the independent analysis of when and why we should sometimes ally with sections of the bourgeoisie is entirely jettisoned. It seems that he would always support the bourgeoisie of a sufficiently underdeveloped state, whenever it came into any conflict with an imperialist state, regardless of the specific issues and conditions involved.

The 1979 document quoted above had something to say about that kind of approach: "But it is wrong to seek to extend such temporary alliances to the level of a long-term political bloc, in which the independent programme and struggles of the working class and poor peasants are subordinated to the political demands of the 'democratic' bourgeoisie in the name of an 'anti-imperialist front'."

No wonder councillor Garth thinks that "the question of a popular or united front is obviously irrelevant under these circumstances"! I rest my case.

JIM DENHAM,
Birmingham.

in USSR

acquiescing in it more 'socialist' than the Stalinist regime.

Conversely, the RWL is foolish to compare the USSR with the USA, the world's foremost imperialist power. A truer comparison is with India, or even with Balkanised semi-colonial Latin America. Which of these countries offers its workers even what the USSR does?

Things should be given their right names. The USSR is not a socialist country, but it is a workers' state. It is not a workers' paradise, but the workers have made real gains there as compared to the alternative, which is dependent, not imperialist, capitalist society. Britain, France, the USA and so on, are not "advanced capitalist" but imperialist countries. Reynolds position is not Trotskyist but Menshevik. It is a capitulation to "Democratic" imperialism.

Comradely,
MIKE MACNAIR
Oxford

Cowley victory: step to build a fightback

By Bill Peters

THE 225 striking trim shop workers at BL's Cowley Assembly Plant returned to work on Monday, 20th.

The strike had closed down the North Works of the factory, which produces the Rover and the Honda Acclaim.

The strike was against a management decision to switch workers onto the new LM11 model, outside of the seniority agreement which management had not recognised for the last two years.

The strike ended with a significant victory for the trim shop workers. Management did not concede the precise terms of the agreement they had previously repudiated, but they did agree to the principle of seniority.

Workers will now be moved on the basis of seniority and the move itself will be supervised by the trade unions. Workers will have the right to return to their original jobs when vacancies arise in the future.

That is a very different situation to the one management wanted and which has become the norm in the rest of the factory outside the trim shop.

It is a significant shift from a management whose philosophy for a long time has been never to make concessions, particularly on something they regard as central as seniority.

They were, however, under heavy pressure since the strike was preventing the start of the new model.

The settlement represents an important step in the development of a fight back against the management offensive, which has done so much damage to the shop floor movement over the last few years.

Dimbleby demo

A joint NGA/NUJ demonstration is to take place on Tuesday March 6, assembling at 11 am at Richmond Green.

The demonstration is in support of the long-running strike at David Dimbleby's Richmond and Twickenham Times.

Discussing Broad Lefts

THE Broad Lefts Organising Committee (BLOC) conference on March 24 will be the biggest rank and file trade union conference for years.

The Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (dominated by the Communist Party) used to organise large events, but its conferences now are very small. Large 'Defend our Unions' and 'Rank and File' conferences were also organised at one time by the Socialist Workers Party, but they have given up on such enterprises.

The name 'Broad Left' used to mean narrow trade union caucuses, often semi-clandestine, dominated by the Communist Party and very much focused on trade union elections. Over the past few years a whole new generation of quite different Broad Lefts has developed.

These new Broad Lefts are much more open, more democratic, and more left wing. The biggest political force in them is usually 'Militant' rather than the Communist Party.

But not everything is different. Like the old Broad Lefts, the new ones have tended to be much better at organising for trade union elections than at organising for direct struggles.

Brake

In the CPSA and the POEU, the new Broad Lefts have won majorities on the National Executive. But the CPSA Broad Left helped to brake, rather than lead, the Oxford and Birmingham DHSS dispute in 1981 [it argued that militants should 'keep their powder dry' for a 'bigger struggle' later]; and the Broad Left majority on the POEU executive fell apart when the POEU came up against the law in its fight on privatisation.

The Broad Lefts Organising Committee was formed in 1981, and has representatives from some 20 Broad Lefts.

The March 24 conference, however, is not based on delegates from Broad Lefts, but on a general appeal for delegates to all trade union bodies.

Conference secretary George Williamson explained the aims of the conference in an interview with Militant on February 10.

"We have now set ourselves on a whole new direction — into building the Broad Left movement throughout the trade unions nationally into fighting, campaigning organisations."

"The BLOC took a decision to launch a campaign around a

Martin Thomas previews the Broad Lefts Organising Committee conference (March 24, in Sheffield: credentials for up to five delegates per trade union body from George Williamson, 11 Sutton Place, London E9 6EH).

anti-union laws. The Socialist Workers Party is also mobilising heavily for the conference. They say: "Many of those addressing the conference... will argue that it is of key importance to get left wingers onto union executives..."

"But in the absence of a strong, well-organised rank and file they can only lead to defeat... The conference will provide the opportunity to convince militants who do want to fight that rebuilding strong organisa-

national rally... with a central aim of demonstrating the collective strength of the left in the unions..."

The word "rally" is worrying: will there be provision for the serious discussion that is needed on the experience of the Broad Lefts? Also worrying is the lack of indication of any future campaigning activity for BLOC. Despite the big possibilities it could have had, BLOC did nothing round the NGA dispute and has made no initiative on the

tion in the workplace is the only way forward."

In line with these ideas the SWP abstains from activity in the Broad Lefts. Its approach is, unfortunately, a mirror image of the trade union electoralism of some others on the left.

The truth is that both a firm orientation on rank and file basics; and a constant struggle to renew the trade unions' leadership at every level; and a fight to sharpen up left wing sentiments into precise policies, are necessary.

As many Socialist Organiser supporters as possible should be there on March 24 to get across this message.

PHILLIPS STRIKERS OCCUPY

THE strikers at Phillips Rubber in Manchester occupied the factory on Monday 20th.

Two weeks ago management threatened to sack the strikers if they did not return to work. By an overwhelming majority, the workers voted to stay out. The 103 strikers were then sacked.

Last week the Manchester Evening News started to carry advertisements for their jobs. It was made clear that to get a job you had to be prepared to cross a picket line.

Management had started to recruit scabs to cross the picket line and reopen the factory.

To defeat this attempt to

smash the strike, the workers occupied the factory.

To back up this action, the print unions at the Manchester Evening News must refuse to publish adverts for the workers' jobs in future editions.

The occupation is the latest stage in the seven week-old strike for an increase on the £48 basic wage. Up till now, management have played a waiting game. They had hoped that as time goes by, hardship and fear of losing their jobs would force the strikers back to work.

The initial threat of mass sackings failed to weaken the strike, and now the occupation has created a further setback

in management's attempt to defeat the strike by strong-arm tactics, using scabs.

Management have taken legal advice and they are applying for an injunction to evict the occupying workers.

Solidarity action by the workers at the company's sister factory at Stranraer is needed to back up the Manchester workers.

The stepping up of the dispute and the publicity that the strike has been given have to be used to build wider support among the local labour movement.

Morale in the occupation is high as they prepare for the next attempt by management to break the strike.

CAROUSEL IN THE BALANCE

AS this issue of Socialist Organiser goes to press, the future of the six month long fight for union recognition and reinstatement at

Carousel in Glasgow's East End hangs in the balance.

Following on from the decision of the last quarterly

meeting of the TGWU Scottish Regional Committee, the strikers appeared before the Union's Scottish Finance and General Purposes Committee on February 17, to discuss whether or not to maintain official recognition of the dispute.

In the run-up to the meeting, however, local TGWU officials had been active in attempting to undermine local support.

TGWU officer David Spark visited local union branches, decrying the content of a Broad-sheet on the history of the dispute (recently produced by the strike support committee) as an unjustified and untrue attack on the union.

And the same official has also written to signatories of a recent statement of support for the strikers, claiming that they'd been conned into signing it and that the broadsheet on the dispute "quite frankly distorts some of the facts to say the least, criticises the TGWU and abuses the signatures obtained."

The purpose of Spark's letter is "to afford you an opportunity to dissociate with the way in which your name has been used in an attempt to give credence to this broadsheet, which was circulated by unknown persons."

In fact, the real purpose of Spark's letter is to undermine support for the strike, misrepresent the work of the strike support committee and pave the way for the union to ditch a dispute which he himself has stated cannot, in his opinion, be won.

Backlash

In fairness to Spark, it should be pointed out that he is only a puppet in this affair. His strings are pulled by Hugh Wyper, Scottish secretary of the TGWU and a well-known Communist Party member. It is Wyper who wants the dispute called off and who effectively runs the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee's verdict on the future of this dispute was decided in private after the strikers had left the meeting. The question now is whether the local union bureaucracy feels confident enough to withdraw support from the dispute, or whether it believes the backlash against such a scabbing decision would be so great that they maintain official recognition.

Mercury boycott is sold out

By Rob Dawber

THE NUR abandoned any idea of fighting Mercury (privatisation of part of the telephone service) because of the Appeal Court instruction to the POEU to call off its fight. Now the NUR has gone on to abandon its own fight against having private contractors install the fibre optic cables.

The union leaders found themselves in a strong bargaining position suddenly when Sheffield and Chesterfield District Council of the NUR organised to take action against privatisation. They extracted from the BR Board an agreement that Signal and Telecoms (S&T) staff and not contractors should fault and maintain the cables. Only the NUR demand that S&T staff should install the cable rather than contractors remained to be won.

We prevented the trains from running on 11 and 12 March (see last week's Socialist Organiser) on the understanding that we were fighting to get rid of contractors. Now the NUR has lifted the ban and we are instructed to let the trains run!

The reason? The BRB has said they will allow eight S&T staff to work in connection with the trains whenever they are running in any particular area. Otherwise, contractors remain.

The BRB has said it will cost them money to break the contract, so the NUR accepted this as enough reason not to fight them.

They have squandered our bargaining position. Contractors are now back in the game. It was only the NUR's decision to refuse to work the trains. The union leaders' decision to call off the fight just when we were winning is going to make our jobs doubly difficult next time.

Tax vote

THE Executive of the Inland Revenue Staff Federation (IRSF) decided last week to accept Inland Revenue proposals for new a new technology agreement designed to end the non-cooperation action by West Midlands members involved in a new computerised Pay-As-You-Earn pilot scheme.

Since January, 438 union members in 14 West Midlands offices have been suspended for refusing to work the system until a no-redundancy agreement had been reached. Despite the failure of a High Court action which eight of them brought against the Inland Revenue in February, they decided to fight on.

Now the Inland Revenue offers to do its utmost to avoid compulsory redundancies and to allow greater flexibility in working arrangements.

But the offer does not contain a cast-iron no redundancy guarantee and does not include any concessions on pay or regrading in return for workers operating the new technology. And the union must still accept 4,000 job losses as PAYE computerisation is extended across the country between 1985 and 1988. By 1988 7,000 job losses are expected.

IRSF members will vote this week at workplace meetings on their executive's decision.



4 1/2% recommended

UNION leaders representing 900,000 council manual workers are to recommend acceptance of a 4 1/2% pay increase, on the grounds that it is the best that can be won in a difficult period.

Last month an offer of 3% (in line with the government's 3% public sector pay guideline) was rejected, and as a result, for the first time ever, the employers' negotiators went back to consult with the councils over the offer.

Council building craftsmen have already refused an informal offer of about 4% and gone to arbitration.

Buses offered £3

BUS workers are considering national strike action because the wage rise they've been offered is a miserable £3 a week.

London and Metropolitan counties bus workers have already turned down a 3% offer made by their employers. Workers from the National Bus Company and Scottish Bus Group have rejected a 3.6% increase.

Unions are looking for "an early and substantially improved offer."

School meals

ABOUT 2,500 NUPE women school meals staff met in Birmingham last week and voted unanimously to reject a city council attempt to tear up long-standing nationally negotiated pay and conditions agreements.

Birmingham's Tory-controlled council is attempting to push through a package of cuts totalling £1.5 million at the expense of the city's lowest paid workers. They are trying to force the school meals workers into abandoning their agreed right to receive half pay during school holidays.

The women are being offered payments ranging from £14 to £100 to surrender their negotiated rights. They are threatened with dismissal if they refuse.

TUC women

THIS year's TUC women's conference is in Torquay on March 15 and 16.

Motions before conference will deal with housing, homelessness, assistance for working parents, the health service, and social and welfare payments to women and their dependents.

A new document by the TUC, "Women and New Technology" is to be presented to the conference. 1984 has been designated "WISE Year" (Women into Science and Engineering).

'Democracy Day'

THE TUC have called for a "democracy" week of action for March 24-29 aimed at highlighting the effects of Patrick Jenkins Rates Bill which gives unprecedented powers to central government to impose rate levels on individual local authorities.

The planned official activities will culminate in a national march and rally on Thursday, March 29, designated by the TUC as Democracy Day.

Correction

In Socialist Organiser of February 9 a sentence seemed to say that ASLEF has agreed to scrap Kings Cross local agreement 4691. ASLEF has not done this. The point the article made is that the effect of the ASLEF executive shying away from a clear-cut fight is to undermine and destroy local agreement 4691, and others, which the executive says it will defend. Sorry about the ambiguity.

February	
Monday	6 13 20 27
Tuesday	7 14 21 28
Wednesday	1 8 15 22 29
Thursday	2 9 16 23
Friday	3 10 17 24
Saturday	4 11 18 25
Sunday	5 12 19 26

Socialist Organiser

Friday February 24: Health workers strike in London. 700 at Stratford City Theatre. Check B.L. Secretary include Dr. Richardson. Organiser in Stratford, Devonshire and Stratford & See women's services. Circle 4691.

Saturday March 31: Socialist Organiser on school in Sheffield. 11.30 to 4 at the Mount Pleasant Community Centre, Stratford Lane, off London Rd. Waged £1, unwaged 20p.

Saturday April 14: Next Socialist Organiser delegate meeting, in Nottingham.

Why the Scots miners didn't strike

SCOTTISH miners are in the middle of a prolonged struggle with the National Coal Board, which so far has taken the form of guerrilla warfare.

Since Albert Wheeler took over in 1980 as Scottish area director for the National Coal Board, the pits closed have included Bedlay, Kinneil, Cardowan and Monktonhall.

Arthur Scargill has correctly warned that the NCB plans to shut half the pits in Scotland and axe 7,000 Scottish mining jobs. Top of the list at the moment is Polmaise, in the village of Fallin. Since July of last year miners at the pit have seen management take the offensive repeatedly. Last July, the workers were locked out for refusing — successfully — to accept trammers from Cardowan, itself fighting closure at that time. Lockouts took place again in September and October after pithead meetings were held in support of the then threatened Monktonhall colliery.

In late October-early November, development work was stopped at Polmaise, and machinery removed from some of the shafts, "for an overhaul". In fact the machinery was transferred to Castlemill and Frances pits, where it was immediately used again, without any overhaul.

Bogside

Then, in January of this year, the NCB announced its intention of closing Polmaise.

A second pit to face the NCB's offensive is Bogside. Miners there went on strike in January over a downgrading dispute.

Management responded by switching off the power, thereby flooding the pit, and refusing miners access to the colliery to provide emergency cover over an entire week-end — and then blaming the miners for its own act of sabotage!

Although miners' president Mick McGahey has declared his intention of linking up the fight for retention of Bogside as a fully working unit to the campaign in defence of Polmaise, it has not received even the publicity which Polmaise has, never mind active support.

And last week — the week during which pithead meetings were being held to discuss the call for an all-out strike — another four pits found themselves bearing the brunt of the NCB offensive.

Report by
Stan Crooke

AS the National Union of Mine-workers overtime ban grinds on, the Coal Board is forcing the pace on pit closures — especially in Scotland.

But, on Monday 20th, a Scottish NUM delegate conference voted not to strike in support of Polmaise colliery, though it did declare an official strike at Polmaise itself.

At the Seafield pit in Fife, miners walked out for what was meant to be a 24-hour stoppage in protest at the disciplining and downgrading of a miner.

The meeting to conclude the stoppage was due to be held in the canteen. But at the time of the meeting, the colliery manager insisted — for once — on having his lunch in the canteen, thereby preventing the meeting from being held. So the 1,650 miners stayed out on indefinite strike.

The NCB then used the dispute at Seafield as an excuse to send home the 400 miners at the Frances colliery (Frances coal is wound up through the Seafield shaft) despite an NCB-NUM agreement that any stoppage at Seafield should not mean a stoppage of work at Frances.

Simultaneously with the strike at Seafield, 1,750 miners were on strike at the Killoch pit in Ayrshire, where management has been picking and choosing the men to do maintenance work at the start of each week contrary to the union's demands.

Killoch

And the Killoch strike, too, was used to justify laying off workers at another pit. Coal at the Barony colliery is wound up through the Killoch shaft, so the non-operation of Killoch was used as an excuse to lay off 544 miners at Barony.

Thus, the background to last Monday's meeting was: the threat of closure hanging over Polmaise and Bogside, strikes at Seafield and Killoch, lay-offs at Frances and Barony, and a union leadership which had constantly sought to evade any real confrontation with the NCB and the Tories over the future of miners' jobs in Scotland.

Plainly this is class struggle

on a broad front — the threat of closure hangs over Polmaise and Bogside, there are strikes at Seafield and Killoch, layoffs at Frances and Barony. The bosses have a strategy and they go all out to win.

By contrast the heavily Communist Party-influenced Scottish Executive of the NUM has been very ineffective, meandering and weak. The response of the Scottish Executive to each blow from the NCB has been to either accept closure outright (e.g. Bedlay) or offer a timid, token and ineffective resistance (Cardowan).

In January, when the NCB said Polmaise would be closed the NUM's Scottish Miner made a rallying call to action: "Stand by to take action for Polmaise . . . at pithead meetings at every colliery . . . the call will be for a series of stoppages throughout the Scottish coalfield in support of Polmaise."

But in fact when the special delegates met in Edinburgh on 13 February, the leadership's call was for no more than a one day stoppage.

The Polmaise miners had called for an immediate all-out strike. They are right. Nothing less than all-out strike will stop the Tory government-inspired NCB offensive.

Decimate

At every retreat or surrender of the Scottish Executive the NCB's aggressiveness has increased. It will go on increasing until the miners use their muscle to put a stop to the NCB's attempt to decimate the Scottish coalfields.

Polmaise men jeer leaders

By Stan Crooke

crowded in the corridor and either threw out all the press and cameramen present or shut them in a side room.

Hotel staff called the police who looked on helplessly.

As delegates filed out of the meeting, they were jostled, booed and denounced with cries of 'Judas', 'Scabs' and accusations that they had 'sold us down the river' by the miners. The meeting had rejected an all-out strike, whilst agreeing that the Polmaise strike should be made official, and empowering the executive to take industrial action "as and when appropriate".

At the press conference following the meeting, the Scottish NUM president Mick McGahey expressed his "disappointment" at the result and put it down to: fear of isolation; the dirty tactics being used by the NCB; and the effect of mass unemployment on miners' morale.

McGahey also stated that the question of the closure at Polmaise and Bogside would be raised at the next meeting of the union leaders in the Triple Alliance but did not say what action the NUM would be looking for, nor did he explain what kind of campaign the Scottish NUM would be mounting in support of Polmaise.

The meeting's decision was obviously a setback for miners at Polmaise and everywhere else too, since it will only encourage the

NCB to scrap more jobs. And the politics and track record of Scottish NUM leaders McGahey, Bolton and Clarke shows that, unless the leadership of the cam-

paign against closures is taken out of their hands, then Polmaise and other pits in Scotland will end up falling victim to the NCB's offensive.



Miners at Polmaise

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



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Strike on February 28

Socialist ORGANISER

By Stephen Baxter

JOHN SMITH (IFL)

Workers defend NHS

THOUSANDS of workers on Merseyside struck on Monday 20th to defend the health service.

The initiative came from the docks, who were all out on the day, and seafarers, Crosville busworkers from the Edge Lane depot, and the Imperial Metals Industries factory (the largest on the Kirkby industrial estate) also struck.

The feeling behind the strike was summed up by Dennis Kelly, chair of the Merseyside Port Shop Stewards Committee. Referring to the NHS he said, "It's ours. We'll do the fighting for the hospital workers. They do the dirtiest jobs and they are the worst paid".

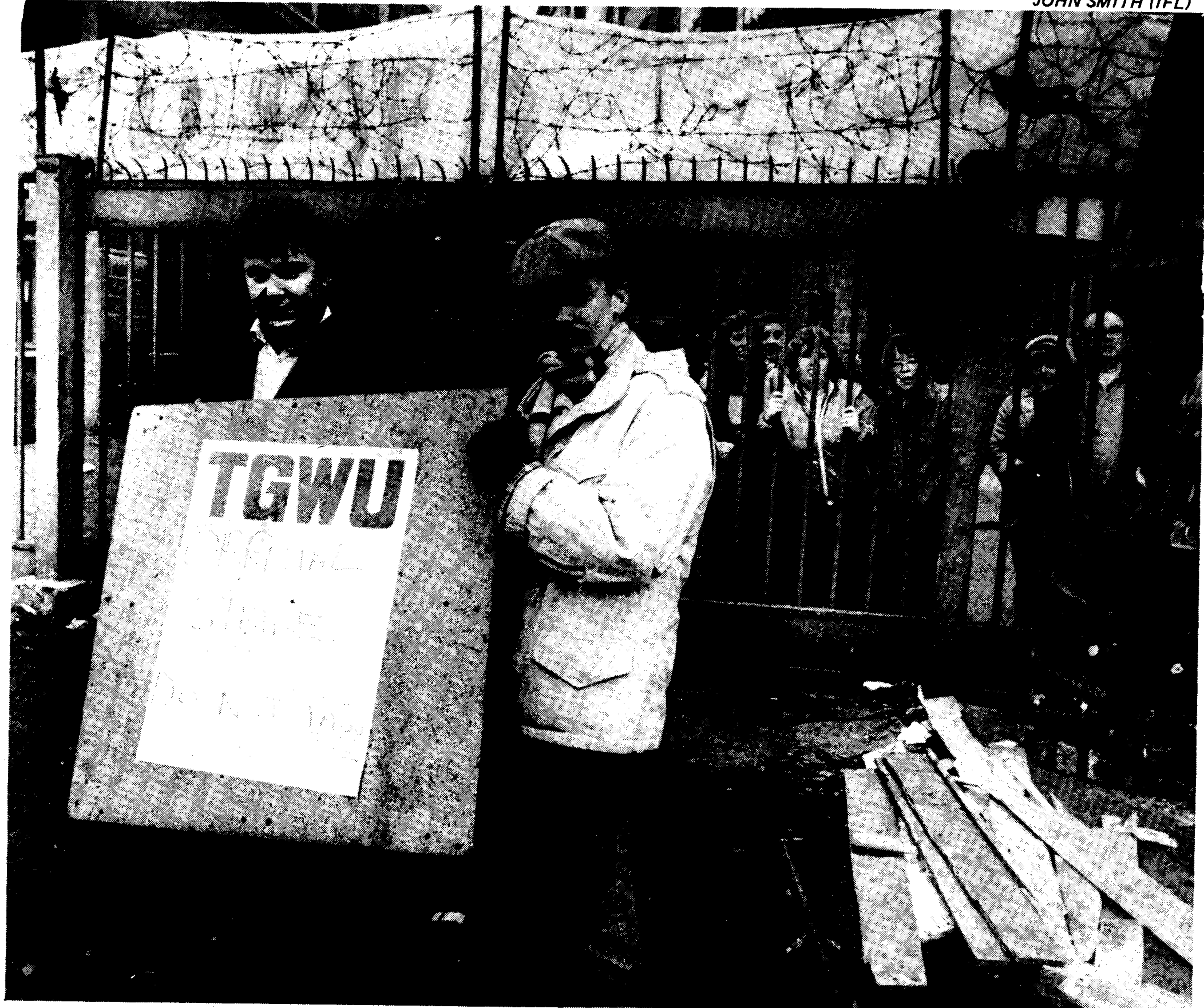
Strikers organised an all-day picket outside the Liverpool Women's Hospital and the Children's Hospital, and their immediate demand was the opening of the Duchess ward in the Women's Hospital.

Heswall Children's Hospital has been closed, and Princes Park and Newsham General hospitals are under threat.

As well as strikers, the picket lines also included delegations from other workplaces and hospital workers during their breaks.

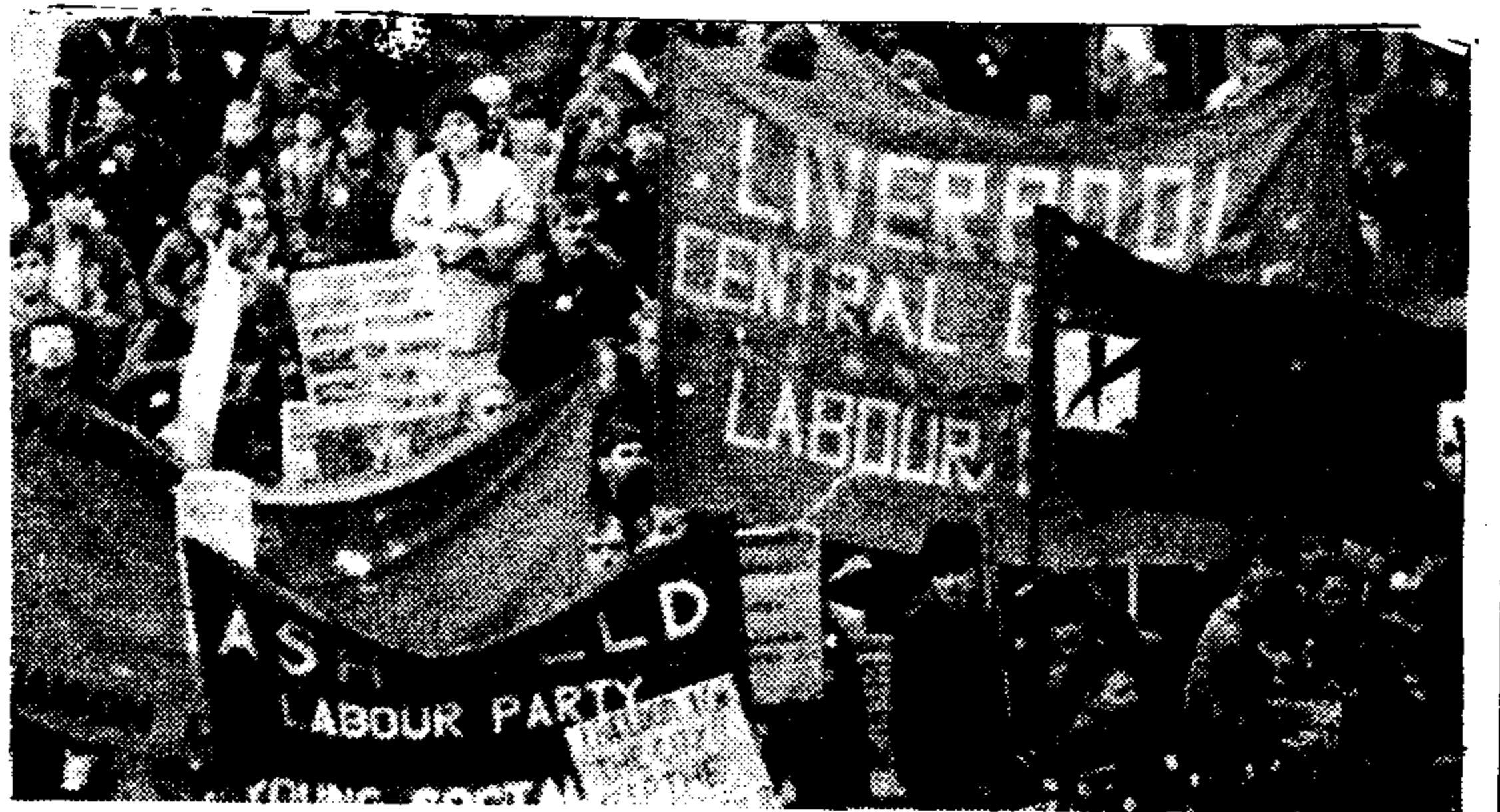
Dennis Kelly handed cheques for £500 each from the docks to both the Women's Hospital and the Children's Hospital.

He said: "What we have done today is only the beginning of our campaign against the Tory attacks on our health service".



Phillips Rubber strikers in Manchester have occupied their factory. STORY INSIDE, page 14

Liverpool: front line for cuts fight



•Fund•••••

A donation of £14 has come from Hector MacNeill in New Zealand. Patrick Spilling writes:

"Hector MacNeill has set a new record for the furthest-travelled donation to the Fund Column ever. Unless Brent supporters are prepared to take up the challenge, and take copies of SO up in the Space Shuttle, he stands no chance of being beaten."

From closer to home, regular contributor Bev Wood writes: "The paper is excellent value and is making a worthwhile contribution towards the

debate at present going on in the labour movement", — and sends a donation of £1.

Other regular contributors who've sent donations this week are Brent supporters, who've sent £17, including £7 from Christine McKimmie.

Thanks also to other contributors this week: Reader in South East London, £5; Siu Ming Cheung, £5, the first sponsor money collected from completion of the "sponsored sit-ups" event; and Northampton suppor-

ters, who follow the donation sent last week (proceeds from a social) with a donation of £6.50, raised from sales of literature and collections at 50 public meetings.

But that leaves a lot of "parts" that Socialist Organiser doesn't seem to be reaching at the moment!

With only £166.93 raised so far this month, we need a lot more donations in the last week of February.

Post your cheques and postal orders NOW to: 214, Sickert Court, Essex Road, London N1 2SY.

CIVIL service union branches and committees across the country are organising hard for a one-day strike next Tuesday, 28th, against the banning of unions at GCHQ.

The London Council of Civil Service Unions coordinating committee is calling for a strike and a demonstration from Temple Place, WC2, at 12 noon.

Only such action, and not sweet talk, will shift Thatcher.

But Alistair Graham, the general secretary of CPSA, is doing all he can to stop strikes on February 28.

Speaking on Channel 4's "Face the Press" programme, on Sunday 19th, Graham apologised for any disruption caused at Cheltenham during the 1981 Civil Service pay campaign and reiterated his offer of a "copper-bottomed guarantee" that no such thing would happen again.

Opinion

Then, in a circular to Branch Secretaries dated February 20, he stated categorically "During the next few days it is crucial that we do not put a foot wrong. We must keep the government on the defensive as this dispute will be won by the force of public opinion rather than by industrial force."

He reminded us that "we are not concerned to hit the general public or government by strike action". What we are about, it seems, is winning the support of rebel Tories, Liberal and SDP parties "and even churchmen".

Meanwhile, many managements are refusing annual leave to staff on February 23, when a lobby of Parliament is taking place.

Clause

Union leaders are meeting again with Thatcher on the 23rd, in the desperate hope that she will accept the "no-disruption" clause favoured by the House of Commons Employment Select Committee's report.

CPSA activists are putting motions to the union conference in May that will stop the bureaucracy offering and signing this sort of deal in the future.

All union branches must now make a big final push to get their members out on the 28th. And if the Tories don't back down, more industrial action must be planned until they do.

THE Tories are talking about special legislation to put Liverpool under the control of government commissioners; troops to take over services if council workers strike; and scrapping the May elections for the city council.

They have been thrown into this agitation by the Labour councillors' intention of refusing to act as administrators for the Tory cuts. The councillors say that they will not make cuts in jobs or services, and they will not make ends meet by levying higher rents or rates from the local people, either.

A special Merseyside labour movement conference will be held this Monday, 27th, to plan the battle, and council shop stewards have already called for a one-day strike on budget day, March 29.

Liverpool Labour does face internal problems. Its 51-48 majority over the Tories and Liberals on the city council is very slender, and some Labour councillors say they may not vote for the confrontation budget.

But if the whole strength of the labour movement were rallied behind Liverpool — and other Labour councils with a stronger position also went for confrontation — then the doubters could be pulled into the struggle, and the scene set for a major challenge to this service-slashing government.

Two pamphlets summing up the ideas of Socialist Organiser. 'Where We Stand' - 20p plus 16p postage. 'How to fight the Tories' - 10p plus 16p postage. Or the two together for 45p including postage. From Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8

