

Socialist Organiser

LONDON SAT. NOV. 2

Assemble: Hyde Park 12-1pm; Tower Hill or
Kennington Park 12.30-1.30pm.

Rally: Trafalgar Square 3pm
Anti-Apartheid Movement

No.250 31 October 1985 25p Claimants and strikers 10p

Scandinavian unions boycott S.African trade

THE WAY TO HELP BLACK WORKERS WIN



Finnish and Norwegian transport workers began a boycott of trade with South Africa last week, and a few days later the boycott spread to Sweden.

In Sweden the action will stop trade worth \$245 million a year. But a government official said "in the present climate no company will dare to attract publicity by suing the unions for breach of contract" (Guardian, 24 October).

Danish workers are due to join the blockade soon. According to the Danish socialist weekly Klassenkampen (24 October), the initiative came from the rank and file.

"After first of all dockers discussed an active blockade of

goods to and from South Africa, the SiD (Danish equivalent of the TGWU) sent out blockade notices which covered 5000 SiD members. But instead of backing up this initiative, the LO (Danish TUC) executive got busy about finding out if the blockade notices were in accord with the legal regulations. If not... then the actions would not have LO's support".

The Swedish union has tried to get the International Transport Workers' Federation to declare a worldwide blockade of trade with apartheid, but says it has run into opposition from British and West German affiliates.

Britain is a major trading partner for South Africa, and action by British workers would have a bigger effect than action in any other single country. Doubly so if the action is coordinated with the non-racial unions in South Africa and geared to specific demands raised by those black workers' unions.

That is the way to help black workers win in South Africa.

**More on South Africa:
pages 5, 6, 7, 8**



Victory!

The Immigration Appeals Tribunal has upheld Muhammad Idrish's appeal against deportation. Although the Home Office may still attempt to have the ruling reversed, this marks a major victory, not just for Idrish personally, but also in the campaign against Britain's immigration laws as a whole.

Idrish came to Britain nine years ago, from Bangladesh. In 1979, he married a Scots woman and applied for extension of leave to remain in the UK. In 1980 he applied for leave to settle. By the time his application eventually came up for consideration — two years later — the marriage had broken down. Idrish was therefore served with a deportation order.

From the start Idrish mounted his campaign on an uncompromising political basis, stressing the racist nature of Britain's immigration laws. He took his case into the Labour Party and his union, NALGO, voted at its 1981 national conference to mount a campaign in his defence — the first time that a British union has taken up such an issue at national level.

A series of marches, public meetings and lobbies were organised with the backing of the union, who also took up the case of another NALGO member threatened with deportation, Shahid Syed.

The success of Idrish's four year battle should provide an inspiration and a model for all victims of Britain's immigration laws. NALGO's campaign was not perfect, but it can be used to persuade other unions to take up campaigns on behalf of members faced with deportation.

Contra murders

Over 4,000 people have been killed so far by Nicaragua's right wing 'contras' in their US-backed war against the Sandinista regime.

In proportion to the size of the country, this would correspond to 300,000 people killed in the US or about 70,000 in Britain. The 'contra' forces are estimated at 15,000 — 1.2 million would be the comparable number against the US, or about 250,000 against Britain.

DROP THE CHARGES AGAINST MAIRE O'SHEA!

Demonstration, Saturday 9 November, 11am from Sparkhill Park (Park Rd, by Stratford Rd), Birmingham. Rally 2pm at Digbeth Civic Hall.

Maire O'Shea was arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in January 1985 and has been charged with conspiracy to cause explosions. Sponsors of the demonstration include ASTMS, NUPE, CoHSE, Kent NUM, South Wales NUM.

Contact: Maire O'Shea Support Committee, c/o 448 Stratford Rd, Birmingham 11 (021-773 8683).

ORGANISING THE MINORITY IN NOTTS

Paul Whetton's diary

Paul Whetton is the provisional secretary of Bevercotes (Notts) NUM.

Last Monday, because I was on night shift, I turned up to meet the two day shifts and issue recruitment forms for the NUM, answer any questions, etc. I was requested by management to stop. I was not willing to comply.

About 9.00 am I was again asked to stop what I was doing, and again I refused. At 11.00 am I was fetched in and told to stop what I was doing. Again I refused.

They then told me that unless I complied with their request, disciplinary action could be taken against me so I agreed to stop under protest.

Recognise

The reason they gave was that they do not recognise the NUM. They only recognise the duly elected representatives, i.e., the UDM.

I told them that every single agreement they had on their bookshelves, every single piece of paper on NCB property was signed by representatives of the NUM and that in fact they hadn't got one piece of paper signed by a representative of the UDM.

I said I would continue to press that we were the only union that they would recognise and we would be forming our own branch, electing officers and I would be expecting to meet management next week as Bevercotes Branch NUM in order to introduce branch officials and the committee.

We expected the Coal Board to react to the ballot result very much in the way that they did. We had a branch meeting today at Bevercotes and we had 150-200 members sign up and attend the meeting. In fact I

ran out of forms.

At Ollerton they had 100 or so attend. So while the Coal Board are doing all they can as regards propaganda, and being obstructive, the membership are still showing their loyalty by turning up to their branch meetings.

The main point of contention at the present time is recognition by the Coal Board. On Monday I shall be requesting an office, a telephone, all the facilities that have been afforded us in the past.

I've no doubt what the management reply will be but eventually we will get what we want.

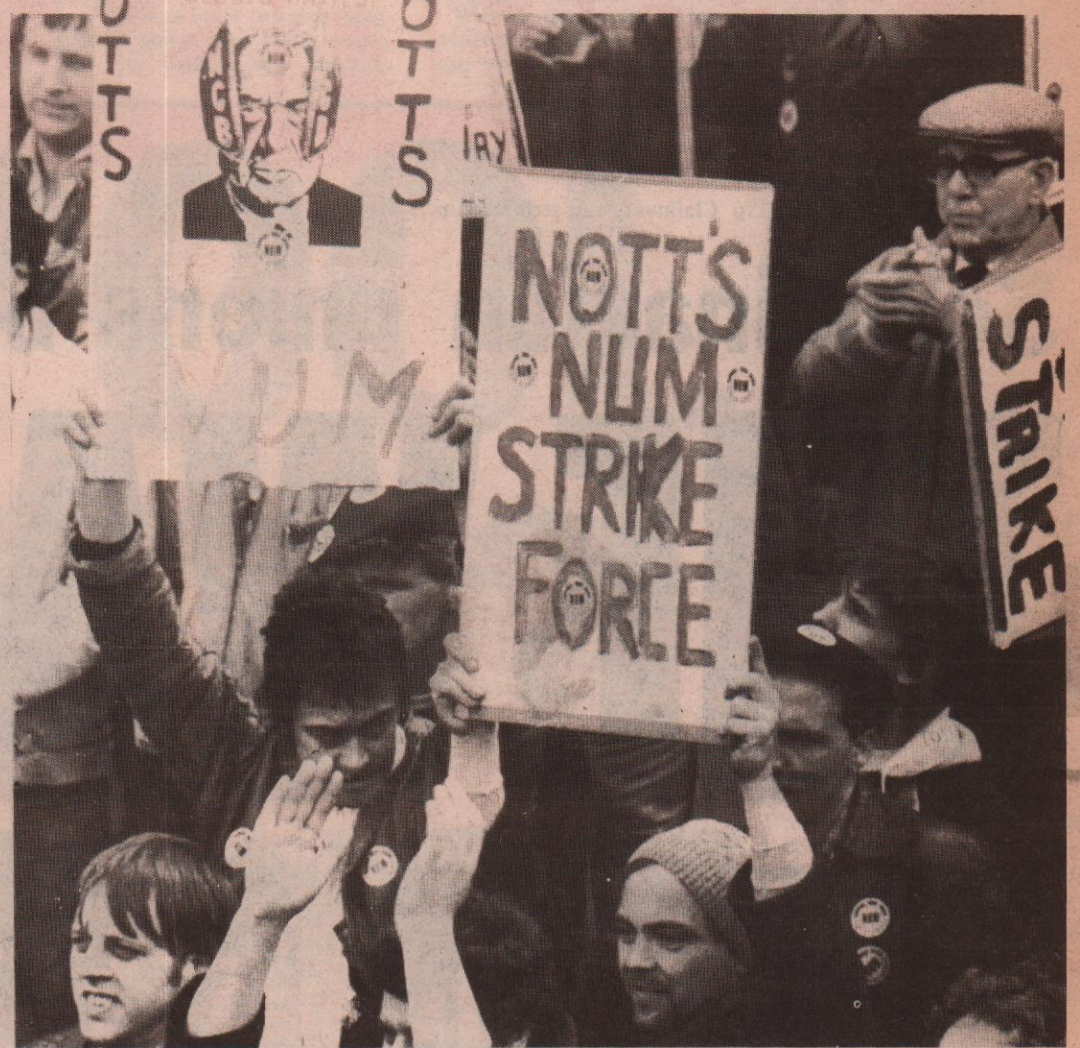
Our subscriptions are still being deducted but they have been frozen. Roy Lynk last week went to court to try and get his hands on them, and the judge knocked him back.

NUM

There has not been a meeting of the Notts Area Council of the NUM yet because we only appointed delegates to that body at today's branch meetings. There has been a meeting of the caretaker Area Executive.

There are still 22 lads here sacked during the dispute who haven't got their jobs back. The special delegate conference meets this week in London to discuss the sacked miners as well as the breakaway.

We asked the branch meeting today if they had any objection to the two sacked Notts miners sitting in as observers and there was no disagreement. A lobby will be going down to the special delegate conference. I think the conference has got to decide on some action to get



Notts strikers. Photo: John Morris.

the sacked miners reinstated.

When you look at the collapse of so many cases against miners in the courts it's time the Coal Board recognised the reality of the situation and began taking these miners back on.

I hope the conference will also recognise the difficulties we have been working under in Nottinghamshire and give us their full support.

During the strike we went picketing in other areas and so on and we were told by rank and file miners that they'd never forget us. Well now we need all the assistance possible to make sure that a Notts Area NUM is

properly established.

As far as the pay negotiations are concerned, I am convinced that at the end of the day there is going to be an equal pay deal all round.

Negotiate

Roy Lynk says that Scargill couldn't negotiate his way out of a paper bag, but it is Lynk who has bluffed his way through the last few months by slugging off Scargill. Now he has got to go in front of the Coal Board and when he fails to deliver the goods, that is when he is going to be shown up for what he is.

I think the conciliatory talk by some leaders of the TUC with regards to the UDM demonstrates that leaders at that level have no idea what is going on.

There is no way that we will enter into conciliatory moves with an organisation that has stabbed us in the back. Notts NUM members are loyal to the union and the Labour Party and the people these leaders are bending over backwards to be conciliatory to owe no allegiance to the Labour Party or the TUC. 3,000 of them withdrew their political levy during the miners' strike.

Don't recognise the scab union

Mary Hailam, from Edwinstowe, Notts, spoke to Jean Lans.

I'm very downhearted about the ballot result. I didn't expect Lynk's vote to be that big.

When our lads were leafleting in the pit, most of the men told them that they were staying in the NUM. I didn't really believe them, you know. But I didn't think they'd get that many.

My biggest worry is that Kinnock will recognise Lynk. He's afraid of losing votes.

But he didn't have their votes in the first place. All the scabs are Tories anyhow. I found that out when I first came to Edwinstowe, trying to recruit members to the Labour Party.

So I can't see how Kinnock's going to lose votes by not recognising them. Whereas if he recognises the breakaway, he is going to lose strikers' votes, and they

are all definite Labour votes.

Vote-catching isn't what he should be about anyway. You shouldn't recognise splits. You have to be united to get anywhere.

I think what'll happen with this scab union is that for a year or two they'll get some benefits they want, until it's got properly organised. And then they'll chuck them down.

I think there'll be a lot of lives lost as well. They're not going to give them the extra money without getting extra work out of them. They're going to have to work their skull-case out.

You can see it already. There was a strike at Bevercotes one night last week. The management wanted a job doing in a certain way and the deputy refused, saying he was going to do the job by the book.

Well, there was a fall. The deputy got the blame, but

he said that if they'd done the job the way the management wanted there wouldn't just have been a fall, there would have been deaths as well.

The management don't calculate on men's lives, but on profit. That's all they're bothered about, profit.

Strike

The deputy got sent home and the men all came out on strike to support him — all of them, scabs, strikers, everybody. When it comes to loss of life they can be united.

Those two MPs who have supported the breakaway, Concannon and Ashton, shouldn't be MPs any more. They don't represent the working class. They represent the breakaway.

I'm very disillusioned with the Labour Party. A lot of the

rank and file Labour people who supported us during the strike are real Labour people who know what it's all about. But, you know, I listen to Kinnock on the television, and I think he doesn't know what it's all about really.

He went and looked round Liverpool, and he saw how people live. But he never even spoke about it when he got on TV. They look at it and think 'Oh this is terrible' and then forget about it, don't they? They don't take enough notice.

I know you can't leave the Labour Party to people like Kinnock. I shall vote Labour, but I shall be bloody reluctant. And I think that'll be the case with a lot — especially strikers — who have been through a lot. They say 'Neil Kinnock did nothing for us during the strike, and he's not likely to do anything now'.

If he recognised the scab

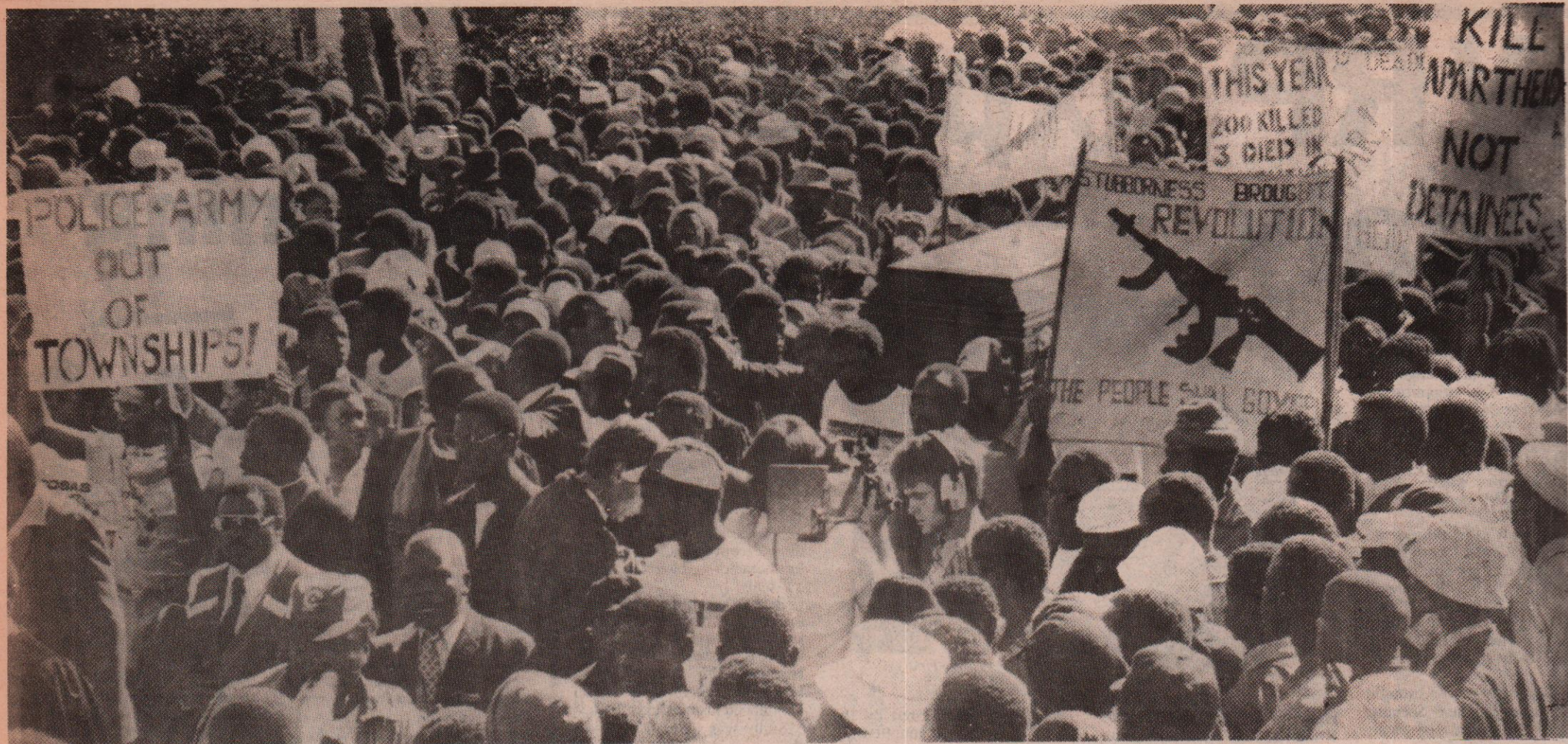
union it would be much worse. I listened to Willis the other day saying the TUC wouldn't recognise them. I hope they stick to that.

I still do collections for the sacked and jailed miners in this area. Over the last two weeks I've extended this to include the Silentnight strikers.

I saw that Diverse Report programme on TV and I thought it was time we did something about it. So what we do is, the things we sell for the sacked and jailed miners, we add on a few pence and that goes to the Silentnight people.

I've also been asking the women in the area for food and clothes for the winter, and we're going to organise a bus to take the money, food and clothes up to them with some people from the villages round here.

* Report on Silentnight strike — page 11.



The funeral of FOSATU trade unionist Andreas Raditsela. Photo: IDAF.

HOW TO BUILD SOLIDARITY

THE demonstration in London on 2 November called by the Anti-Apartheid Movement can be the springboard for a mass solidarity movement.

But what kind of solidarity movement? What forms of solidarity action are best?

The Anti-Apartheid Movement's main drive is to pressurise governments to impose sanctions on South Africa. This campaign, like pickets of Barclays Bank and other companies with investments in South Africa, does a lot to raise awareness of South Africa and of British capitalism's links with apartheid.

But there are two problems. So long as capitalism remains capitalism, and South Africa remains profitable, capitalists will find ways to invest in and trade with South Africa. They will confine sanctions to token measures.

British bosses make huge profits out of black workers in South Africa. 1200 out of 2000-odd multinationals in South Africa are British. Sanctions would damage their profits; and so the British government will take no serious action.

Sell out

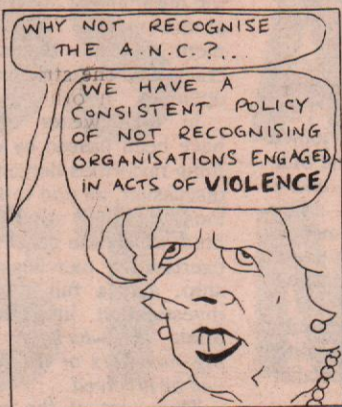
And more. Suppose the sanctions campaign were more successful. Multinationals based in South Africa would sell out to South African capitalists: South Africa's trade would face difficulties.

This would put the South African government in trouble. But it would not positively help any particular alternative in South Africa. It could push the South African ruling class into doing something — but the result would not be real liberation, or even necessarily much improvement on the present situation.

Direct action by workers to boycott South African trade is more effective than pressure on governments — and it can give a particular boost to workers and a working-class alternative in South Africa.

Boycotts are not the only form of working-class solidarity action. Workers in Britain can make direct contact with South African workers — exchange material, swap views, organise speaking tours, raise money for strikers and so on — especially in British companies that operate in South Africa.

British and South African shop stewards can be linked through multinational combine committees. If such direct links are built, then boycotts and other industrial solidarity can be tied to specific



demands coming from the black workers in South Africa — trade union recognition, better wages and conditions, an end to discrimination, repeal of various apartheid laws.

Direct links between women's organisations, student unions, socialist groups, etc., in Britain and in South Africa can also help give positive solidarity to the fight for liberation rather than just negative solidarity against the Botha regime.

Model

The Scandinavian unions' boycott of South African trade is a model. British unions should refuse to touch goods coming from or going to South Africa.

Neil Kinnock has placed great stress on his anti-apartheid commitment, embracing ANC leader Oliver Tambo at this year's Labour Party conference. The Labour Party should campaign against apartheid, locally and nationally.

Unfortunately, the Anti-Apartheid Movement falsely sees the

ANC as the only resistance movement in South Africa: it therefore opposes direct links and looks mainly to government sanctions as

an adjunct to the ANC's military/diplomatic strategy. The ANC is certainly an important part of the movement in South Africa. But only part.

For the ANC, the objective of the struggle now is a 'democratic' revolution by all classes combined. The workers' fight for socialism is put off to a later 'stage'.

But the class struggle is already taking place. Black workers are fighting now for their distinct interests as working-class men and women — for a decent life, for social equality, for control at work. This class struggle is inextricably bound up with the struggle for democracy: indeed it is the living core of it.

More S. Africa, page 5.

Public meeting

Socialist Organiser London public meeting

Workers Against Apartheid

Speaker: Bob Fine, just back from South Africa.

Sunday 3 November, 7.30 at the Cock Tavern, Phoenix Road, Euston.

WORKERS' LIBERTY

Breaking the chains

FROM SO

The first issue of Workers' Liberty magazine is a special issue on S.Africa. 75p plus postage from 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY

WRP expels Healy

By Sean Matgamna

IF YOU live long enough you see everything! After over three decades as the unchallengeable Ayatollah of the organisation now known as the Workers' Revolutionary Party, Mr Gerry Healy has been thrown out in a coup organised by his protegee and long-time pupil Mike Banda, the WRP general secretary.

13 of Healy's supporters on the party's Central Committee have also been expelled, including Alex Mitchell and Vanessa and Corin Redgrave. (They seem to have had the majority on the smaller Political Committee which actually ran the WRP).

Ms Redgrave — who brought a libel case against Socialist Organiser on behalf of Healy and Banda in 1981 for what we said about the WRP's methods and regime — has now turned her lawyers loose on Banda. She is suing the WRP's general secretary and seven of his factional allies for the return of property she says is hers.

Last weekend an emergency WRP conference endorsed Healy's expulsion and decided to 're-register' the party — which means purging everyone considered undesirable by the Bandaitees.

A sizeable chunk of the prominent 'Newsline' writers, people with lots of money in the bank, and other WRP leaders, are with Healy, though the Bandaitees control the press and 'Newsline'. This is a split down the middle of the WRP, not just the lopping off of the old god-father.

It first became public knowledge that the WRP was in serious crisis when the Newsline failed to appear for nearly two weeks in mid-October. It reappeared on 23 October with a front page headlined 'Gerry Healy expelled' and an 'Interim Statement by the WRP Central Committee'. Since then Newsline has published two statements of the so-called International Committee of the Fourth International, a shadowy and semi-fictional International of small clone-groups gathered around the WRP. For reasons so far obscure — but which probably concern Banda's need to have a source of authority against Healy and the majority of the old Political Committee — much is being made of the ICFI.

Insofar as can be established from the public statements of the Bandaitees, there are political questions at issue between the two sides. The Bandaitees accuse Healy of having become "almost entirely preoccupied with developing unprincipled relations with bourgeois-nationalist leaders and with trade union and Labour Party reformists in Britain". Certainly this is true as a picture of the WRP. For many years now the organisation has been uncritically Third-Worldist. It moved from — wrongly — denouncing Libya's Colonel Gaddafi as a fascist in the early '70s to uncritical glorification of him since the late '70s. The general assumption on the informed left has been that the WRP were receiving money from Gaddafi (and, at different times, other Arab governments and possibly the PLO).

The charge about 'reformists' is right too. The WRP gave full and uncritical support to Ted Knight and Ken Livingstone over the last five years. 'Labour

Herald', the paper launched by Knight and Livingstone, is printed on the WRP press on terms favourable enough to allow it to survive as a full-colour weekly with little visible network of sellers: its managing editor, Steven Miller, has been closely associated with the WRP.

The implication of their comments on Healy is that the Bandaitees are different. Critical letters have been published in the post-Healy Newsline, one from the party's long-time hack 'theoretician' Cliff Slaughter criticising Ted Knight, and another accusing the paper of uncritically glorifying the riots in Brixton and Tottenham.

The Bandaitees seem to be reverting to hard-sectarian 'Build the Revolutionary Party' politics and promising to distance themselves from dependence on 'nationalist leaders'.

But the split cannot be explained by the political differences: the WRP isn't that kind of organisation. Politics have always been subordinate to organisational questions and calculations. Differences between the leaders were fudged or resolved on the principle 'Gerry decides'.

The split has to be explained by the disruption of that system: the different political emphasis would come after that, liberated by it rather than coming before it and generating it. And it cannot be taken for granted that a WRP led by Banda will be much different from what it has been in the last decade, on Third Worldism for example.

The Bandaitees charge (in the resolution of the ICFI of 25 October) that Healy "grossly abused his political authority over a protracted period, using the cadres of the ICFI and the WRP for his personal purposes and violating their rights... The practices which he carried out constituted an attack on the historically selected cadres of the Trotskyist movement... In the recent period (Healy) conducted an unprincipled factional campaign within the ICFI, exploiting personal contacts to portray himself as a victim of political conspiracy and to engage in a scurrilous slander campaign against leading members of the ICFI". He is also accused of "acting ever more arbitrarily within both the WRP and the ICFI", attributing their alleged success "not to Marxist principles of the FI" or "the collective struggle of its cadres, but rather to his own personal abilities". "His personal life-style underwent a corresponding degeneration".

Another ICFI resolution (of 27 October; Newsline, 29 October) talks of "the exposure of the corrupt practices of Gerry

Healy and the attempt by the WRP Political Committee to cover them up". It says that "the corrupt practices of G. Healy were revealed in the June 30 letter of comrade A. Jennings". It refers to "evidence of Healy's corruption... including his signed statement acknowledging the truth of the allegations" (of Jennings presumably). It accuses Healy of having cheated or attempted to cheat the WRP's international offshoots out of £82,000, allegedly to help the WRP.

All this, especially the charge that Healy's 'practices' constituted an attack on the historically selected cadres of the Trotskyist movement, suggests that Healy himself may have been driving towards a purge of his present opponents. In any case they struck first, expelling the Political Committee majority.

A number of things are reported by contacts in the WRP. Their interaction and sequence is not yet clear to us.

Aileen Jennings is a long-time WRP official, the daughter of two militants who became Trotskyists in the '30s. She joined the WRP's forerunner, the SLL, at the age of 14 in 1959, and is the wife of Newsline editor Paul Jennings. Her document is said to contain documented allegations of sexual coercion, and apparently there are a lot of people eager to provide similar allegations, including the editor of the WRP's 'Young Socialist' journal, Julie Ireland.

Stories and allegations like that have been commonplace for decades. That they emerge now within the WRP (rather than as stories told by ex-members) is a function of the faction fight.

A Liverpool member of the Central Committee is said to have been badly beaten up. Photographs of his injuries were circulated in the north-west. Apparently some members from Liverpool occupied the printshop (in Runcorn, nearby) and this was one reason for the non-appearance of the paper.

Healy is alleged to have control of up to half a million pounds of party money and to have spent £20,000 from the 'Special Emergency Fund' on a car!

All this is spectacular enough by normal standards of behaviour, morality or decency, and therefore it can be used plausibly to 'explain' the Bandaitees' break with Healy. But it's all old hat. Preparing for the libel case that never got to court, we had no difficulty in lining up an impressive number of former WRPs willing to testify in court about atrocities. For decades Healy has been liv-

ing off the fat of the land, in the style of a pasha or film star (while the average WRP organiser frequently went unpaid and sometimes hungry), and treating the organisation and its members with infant-like egocentricity, as something that existed to satisfy his whims.

Everybody who knows the WRP knows that. For Healy's lifestyle to 'degenerate' in the last period it would have had to get to Howard Hughes standards! Therefore the Bandaitees' public explanation explains nothing except that it is convenient for them now to blow the whistle on Healy.

Banda has been with Healy for over 30 years. As a WRP sympathiser put it: Banda is doing a Khrushchev, denouncing Healy in the same way that Khrushchev, Stalin's lieutenant, denounced his master in 1956.

Stalin was blamed for everything — and nothing fundamental changed.

That not very much has changed is shown by the announcement that the expulsion was 'unanimous' on the Central Committee — after the dissidents were removed!

The rank and file members of the WRP, those whose self-sacrifice and commitment has been abused by the leaders of the organisation — not just Healy — are being forced to think the issues through for themselves. The denunciation of Pope Gerry must destabilise the organisation. The ICFI resolution says: "Now that a decisive split has taken place with the Healyite anti-party renegades the ICFI is confident that all leaders and members of the WRP, whatever their legitimate differences on perspectives and programme, will subordinate themselves to the discipline of our international movement..." A political ferment that the Banda bureaucracy cannot fully contain may open up.

In Manchester resolutions have been passed by overwhelming majorities demanding free discussion, an end to the notorious 'security' stipulations behind which the leadership has exercised a merciless dictatorship, and a full rank-and-file investigation into the Healy affair in which no remaining members of the leadership will be involved.

Thus, out of the mouths of Healy's long-time associates and disciples, comes vindication of what Socialist Organiser has said about the WRP, and vindication too for our refusal to let them bludgeon a lying public apology out of us by their use of the courts.

The SLL, the WRP's forerunner, degenerated into a sectarian semi-religious cult in the '60s. The shape that the post-'68 left took in Britain was determined by this, the disappearance of what had previously been the only Marxist group in Britain worthy of the name and its transformation into a repulsive sect. If the SLL had not degenerated, things would have gone differently and better for the left in the last two decades. Its degeneration was therefore an enormous tragedy for Marxism in Britain.

Now, as the two WRP factions square up for a public battle that can only discredit both of them, it is not a loss for the left but a gain. The WRP — if it survives at all — will never be the same again, and the atmosphere on the left will be all the cleaner and more wholesome for that.

A vague beginning

The first issue of the magazine 'International', produced by the group which recently split away from 'Socialist Action', appeared last weekend. Unfortunately it is disappointing.

Its masthead reads "A journal of Marxism in the Labour Party". 'Marxism in the Labour Party' can mean many things, from co-thinkers of Eric Hobsbawm to Socialist Organiser. But 'International' says nothing about where it comes from — "Published by 'International'" is the only, and scarcely helpful, information on the contents page — or where it stands in relation to existing varieties of Marxism.

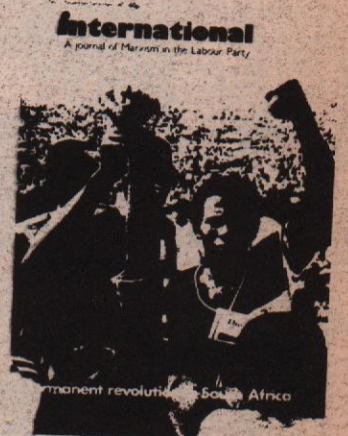
In particular it says nothing about where it stands in relation to Socialist Action! Indeed, the casual reader would probably think the magazine was produced by Socialist Action, only in one of its less manic moods.

Sympathy

Presumably the aim is to appear undisruptive and constructive in the eyes of international associates of Socialist Action, the better to gain their sympathy. However, if Socialist Action is really run by an alliance of 'revisionists and crypto-Stalinists' with 'a clique which systematically puts organisational manoeuvres above politics', as the 'International' comrades said in their polemics before the split, then the labour movement should be told about it. If not, then why split?

The vagueness carries through to the magazine's articles. Central to Socialist Action's recent evolution has been the dropping of historic Trotskyist ideas in favour of full-scale identification with the Sandinista 'revolutionaries of action' in Nicaragua. What does 'International' think about it? "It is possible to agree or disagree with the tactics of the FSLN in dividing the bourgeoisie and in the subsequent establishment of a revolutionary government with bourgeois parties..." they comment sagely; the furthest they get in criticism is to warn against "a schematic application of the Nicaraguan experience to countries such as Brazil, Mexico, Chile or Peru" or El Salvador.

The longest article in the magazine is by Paul Lawson on 'Building a Marxist movement in Britain'. Like Socialist Organiser it stresses the dual tasks of organising the Labour left on a wide scale and within that building a Marxist nucleus. But — in a long review of left politics since the early '70s — it offers no self-critical assessment of the tack of Socialist Challenge (Socialist Action's predecessor) in the late '70s, towards the SWP and the gimmick of Social-



ist Unity, a far-left, anti-Labour electoral alliance.

And an orientation to the Labour Party demands that Marxists combine tactical flexibility with the greatest clarity and sobriety of assessment and principles. The same Paul Lawson wrote an article in Socialist Action's predecessor, Socialist Challenge, greeting Mitterrand's election in 1981, which was far short of the required clear-headedness. And the magazine indicates that the 'International' comrades still have some way to go in clarifying their vision.

In 1981 Lawson wrote that Mitterrand's election was a "historic opening for the French working class", "an historic opportunity for socialism". He warned that Mitterrand's programme was inadequate and that "A strategy for victory must involve using (?) the struggle and vigilance of the masses to crush the bourgeoisie". However, "a massive workers' mobilisation to gain their demands" was "inevitable".

State capitalist

Four and a half years on it reads oddly. But 'International' contains an article by Phil Hearse hailing as "a socialist economic policy for Labour" the recent pamphlet by Andrew Glyn "A million jobs a year".

Glyn's programme is in fact state-capitalist — a programme in which the 'active support' of workers is 'used' to help impose an array of price controls, import controls, exchange controls, nationalisations, and other government controls on the economy. It has no programme for workers' control or a new state based on workers' democracy. Moreover it is a programme for one country alone. These are more than marginal faults for a 'socialist economic policy'.

Nevertheless the politics of 'International' are certainly an improvement over 'Socialist Action'. There should be a basis for joint work between us and them, and in the common work we can discuss the differences.

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SOUTH AFRICA IN REVOLT



Soweto, 1976

TOWARDS A SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

Bob. My main impression, from the trade unionists that I met — in FOSATU, in Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union, in GWU, and others — was the depth of workers' concern with trade union democracy.

They pushed that question in ways you don't usually hear it pushed here — with respect to the accountability of officials, the education of a cadre of workers, what kind of education and what kind of cadre, and what the relation is between that cadre and rank and file workers.

As the new Federation [embracing FOSATU, NUM, and a number of other unions] becomes a possibility, workers are discussing ways in which they will be able to extend the democratic structures that already exist into the new Federation.

A lot of workers drew a close link between the structures of democracy in their own unions and wider questions of democratic organisation inside South Africa. So for example one of the ways in which workers would address the character of the UDF is to ask: what structures does the UDF have? to whom are their leaders accountable? what kind of education does the UDF provide for its members? what possibility is there of recall of their officials?

Bob Fine, a regular writer for Socialist Organiser, has recently visited South Africa. Last week he discussed his impressions and ideas with Charlie van Gelderen, a veteran South African Trotskyist now living in Britain; a black South African comrade, a sympathiser of the Cape Action League, identified below as X; and Martin Thomas from the Socialist Organiser editorial board.

Charlie. I read a report of a UDF meeting where a black trade unionist asked the question: how do we know if you get into power what's going to happen here is not what's happened in other parts of Africa?

Bob. I heard that as well, a number of times. The question of the relationship between democracy and socialism is

often raised. There were a number of discussions in the trade union education about nationalisation. The Freedom Charter [of the ANC] has a clause which doesn't exactly call for nationalisation, but is along those lines — ownership by the people of the monopolies. The trade unionists asked themselves the question: what has nationalisation got to do with socialism unless

nationalisation also means democratic control of industry by workers? There is strong emphasis within the trade union educationals on workers' control in industry.

The problem of Eastern Europe also came up a lot. A lot of workers had followed the progress and defeat of Solidarnosc — there were a lot of articles in the trade union newspapers — and there was a strong belief that socialism without free trade unions was a contradiction in terms.

X. How widespread is this discussion? Is it confined to the top layers, the leaders, the shop stewards, or do you find it at shop floor level?

Bob. My impression is that the discussion is not just among leaders. It percolates further than that. The education programmes in FOSATU and most of the other unions is oriented to building a cadre from shop steward level. Beneath the cadre of shop stewards education is very informal. Some of it percolates, some of it doesn't percolate. But there are a lot of shop stewards, and the structures for electing shop stewards are fairly democratic. So it's quite a broad spectrum that is being educated.

The education is much broader than

trade union education here. All kinds of political issues are taken up. But there's no attempt to counterpose directly the politics being established within the trade unions to the politics of the ANC or orthodox nationalism. There's an implicit counterposing, but no explicit counterposing.

X. How does the education take place?

Bob. In a variety of ways. There are regional schools, some of them lasting two weeks. The union negotiates release for workers for two weeks. Other schools are weekends or just evenings or afternoons. Different unions have different structures. FOSATU's education course is by far the most developed. The sessions that I went to varied from a small group of about eight shop stewards taking a course about the economic crisis to a beginners' course in CCWUSA with maybe 150 to 200 people.

X. What about the criticism often made of FOSATU that it is led by white intellectuals? I don't share this accusation, but it is often said that FOSATU is a white-led movement. Look at its educationals, look at its schools, look at

Continued on page 6

TOWARDS A SOCIAL

From page 5

its newspapers: where are the black workers? What does this talk of shop-floor democracy amount to?

Bob. There are a lot of white people involved in the role of educators. Partly the unions utilise academics from the universities. The scheme — I'm not sure how far it has developed — is that the cadre in turn will become educators.

But the number of whites involved in FOSATU is small, and it's a very big union. I went round FOSATU offices — there are a few whites involved, and they're very influential, but the organisers are almost all black.

Clearly white radical intelligentsia have played, and still play, an important role in FOSATU. But the union as a whole values the work of these whites. That's one of the reasons why the union is very hot on maintaining a non-racial position.

X. Yes. You have intellectuals — they happen to be white — but that's a good thing. It's up to the black workers to reject white intellectuals. Up to now they haven't. But I'd like to see black workers become educators.

Charlie. I think this issue has been overplayed by opponents of the unions — especially by people who shouldn't really throw stones. The fact that they use African names when they write their articles doesn't entitle them to condemn the unions.

A WORKERS' VOICE

Can we move on to the question of the ANC? The impression I get is that though the ANC is not necessarily leading what is happening in the townships, the people there feel inspired by the ANC and look to the ANC, either directly or through the UDF.

Bob. Yes. The symbols of the ANC are very powerful: 'Free Mandela', Freedom Charter, the colours of the ANC. I found a lot of people in the unions who supported the UDF, and many of those support the ANC.

But it's an odd kind of support. It's almost: 'here's a collection of symbols, and we'll give those symbols our own content'. No-one really knows precisely what the ANC stands for.

In some areas there is a lot of fluidity between the UDF and the unions. In Natal both the UDF and the unions face a common threat from Buthelezi's Inkatha movement.

The main point is that workers in the unions will adopt one form of politics or another. And at present there are basically three places you can go: the UDF/ANC circle, black consciousness in one form or another (which a sizeable minority of workers do), or in Natal a lot of workers belong to Inkatha. The trade union movement as such does not have a political voice.

The lack of an independent workers' voice is becoming much more apparent.

X. You say a lot of workers in Natal are in Inkatha. Are these workers in the trade union movement?

Bob. Yes. One of the fears that FOSATU has had about going political was that their own membership would split. In Natal it was a very sharp fear because so many of their members were Buthelezi supporters.

X. How much National Forum presence is there in the unions? [The National Forum is a coalition including the black-consciousness-oriented Azapo and the Cape Action League].

Bob. There is a presence, especially in Johannesburg. Talking to workers at the educationals there I found that



Checkers workers who struck in 1983 when a (white) worker was demoted.

many support black consciousness. And I think that some of the very top FOSATU officials in that area are pretty sympathetic to the National Forum. I think the overwhelming political presence, though, for better or worse, is the UDF.

I met almost no-one who thought that a workers' party was an immediate possibility. A lot of people felt that they were in a political vacuum. A lot of people were saying 'we have to do something political' but were not very happy with the options available. On the other hand — and this leads to a kind of paralysis — there's a notion that it's impossible to set up an alternative to the ANC — the symbols of the ANC are too strong, the tradition is too strong — to try to take on the ANC would be big trouble.

Also within the trade union movement there is a very strong current which doesn't give top priority to the question of a party. Top priority is building a trade union movement. I suppose there is a syndicalist element there, which says that the party is important but it can wait — it is always something for a future date.

So in the place where the best human resources for the building of a workers' party are to be found, a lot of those resources are still directed to the trade union movement and not towards a party.

The question of a workers' party is on the agenda, and ought to become more explicitly on the agenda. But there is a danger of a kind of substitutionism. The trade unions at the moment are not willing to go down that road, but it seems to me either a workers' party will come out of the trade union movement or it will not come out at all. If a group of individuals set themselves up as the workers' party, they won't in fact be able to perform the functions of a workers' party.

Charlie. Yes, there is a danger of syndicalism, especially in the GWU, which seems to be very much inclined towards a simple position of just building up trade union strength rather than building a political party. But how do the trade unions relate to the community organisations?

Bob. I think the GWU have changed...

X. Towards the UDF?

Bob. No, towards an independent working-class politics. At the moment the strongest syndicalist currents seem to be in FOSATU.

UNIONS AND COMMUNITIES

The trade unions' relation to community organisations is entirely different in different parts of the country. In Port Elizabeth, in the Eastern Cape, relations are disastrous. Trade unionists are fingered as collaborators. Trade unions didn't support the consumer boycott. When there was a call for a general strike in that area for one day — from Boesak [of the UDF] I think it was — the unions objected. They said you can't just call on workers to do things — it's the workers who decide, not a call from on high.

In other areas relations are much better. In some areas community organisations are based in the unions.

I think the most advanced notion coming out of FOSATU is 'transformative politics'. This means that the structures built up by trade unions in the workplaces — solid, democratic, grass-roots structures — should be extended into the community, so that for the next period of time the unions can be involved in building community organisations. Also that the kind of politics that unions engage in in the workplace — the posing of demands on immediate questions: the right of access to workers, better wages, better conditions, end to discrimination against women — should be extended from the workplace to the community.

The idea is that in this way the unions will be able to develop a solid base in the community, as a step towards developing their own political voice. The problem, of course, is that the development of community organisations is not a substitute for the development of a party.

X. Joe Foster of FOSATU made a very good speech in 1982 about the need for independent working-class politics. But what worries me is that I don't see any effort by FOSATU since then to carry those ideas forward. It looks like a project abandoned by FOSATU.

Bob. I think you're right. The speech was out on a limb, and very little has been done to turn it into reality.

FOSATU was dragged into politics by the rapidly escalating events. Their step-by-step scenario — building up the trade union movement and then stretching out from a consolidated trade union movement at some future

time to political action — was overtaken by events, in particular by the politicisation of their own members.

FOSATU has been drawn into politics on terms not of their own making, precisely because they haven't done anything to establish political organisation. One example was the consumer boycott campaign.

Everyone in FOSATU knew the problems with the consumer boycott campaign. The campaign was against white shops, and everyone knew that, however much you denied this, there was a racial element which the trade unions didn't like.

X. The Unity Movement makes that criticism, too.

Bob. Secondly there was the question of the black petty bourgeoisie charging higher prices. The people being called on to conduct the boycott live on the margins anyway — so that a tiny fare increase can lead to a bus boycott — so you can imagine what a ten, twenty, forty per cent increase in food prices means.

Thirdly, the conditions of the workers in black-owned shops are worse, probably, than those of the unionised workers in the big white stores. The workers in the big white stores were threatened with lay-offs.

And the demands of the consumer boycott were very general — end the emergency, troops out of townships, end apartheid.

All the trade unionists knew the problems. It's one thing to know the problems, another thing what you do about them. The trade unionists in some areas drew the conclusion that they should have nothing to do with the consumer boycott. Trade unionists in other areas drew the conclusion that it was a road they had to go down despite all its disadvantages, because they had to show a concern for what was happening in the townships and that was the only way available of doing it.

It was better to go down this unsatisfactory road than to go down no road at all. What seemed to me to be missing was a conception of what a satisfactory road could be.

UNIONS AND POLITICS

Charlie. I think the difficulties in the way of a workers' party in a way are

analogous to the situation here, where the immediate feeling among workers is to get rid of Thatcher. There the feeling is to get rid of apartheid, and the ANC represents the main force, like the Labour Party does here, for the immediate task.

Bob. Yes. One of the things I learned there was the strength of the ANC's appeal. In a way the analogy with the Labour Party is a good one — to the extent that we have to understand the strength of the Labour tradition here, and also the ANC tradition has important strengths which we need to understand if we're going to relate to it adequately.

X. The ANC has very strong symbols. But are these symbols visible to the population as a whole? Or just to the urban population? And not everyone in the urban population, but only the educated people, the ones who read newspapers?

I think the process by which the ANC is becoming visible to everybody is the mass funerals. The majority of the people at those funerals have come to bury a friend, a relative, a member of the community. But during the funeral — through the ANC colours draped on the coffin and so on — they are brought into contact with the ANC. The majority of these people will be people who do not read newspapers.

But before these funerals, I wonder if the ANC reached the mass of people — the rural people, the farm labourers, the people in the resettlement camps, the migrant workers in the mining compounds...

Bob. I don't know. My impression is that the ANC's popular appeal is growing very rapidly. The organisations that are going to come out of this present period strongest, most unscathed, are not the ANC organisations but the trade union movement. The problem is to translate that organisation into a political presence. At the moment everyone feels that power is on the agenda. And who are the trade unions when power is on the agenda? They chip away — better conditions here, a workers' organisation there — but they don't address themselves to the really central questions of power. And the ANC do.

THE ANC

Charlie. It seems to me that there are only two roads for South Africa, over five or ten years. Sooner or later this regime must give way. The most likely thing at the moment is some kind of agreement with the ANC and the white bourgeoisie. The only other alternative is that even the

Workers at Dunnes St handle South African union policy and refused to go on strike with the market chains in Ireland. In September the market chains in Ireland ever, soon made clear. Early in October it for refusing to pack. The dispute has had workers will not have SDLP-led City Council refuse to purchase. In all council buildings

ALIST MOVEMENT

democratic demands of the Charter can finally be realised only through something completely different — a workers' party.

Bob. Part of the problem with the Freedom Charter is that the means are so disconnected from the ends. There's a loosely-defined democratic vision, but that vision is entirely abstracted from any means of getting there. Without some democratic element in the means of getting there, you'll never get democracy.

Martin. There seems to be a contradiction in the way the ANC conducts politics. The immediate slogans put forward are fantastically militant — 'make South Africa ungovernable', 'no education before liberation', blank opposition to everything. On the other hand, there they are lobbying governments, trying to persuade governments to put on sanctions, talking to the capitalists, and so on. And the social programme they put forward is in fact very moderate.

The explanation, I think, is that the ANC's vision is not one where a new South Africa will be created by the people taking control; but the role of the mass of the people is just to be disorderly and to put the government in a position where the government then has to negotiate with the ANC. The whole thing takes place over the heads of the people.

This approach has dangers, it seems to me, not only in the long term but also in the short term.

Oliver Tambo in an interview with Newsweek said that he could see the downfall of apartheid maybe in ten years, being optimistic. The perspective of making South Africa ungovernable might be a good tactic if you think that the government is going to fall in a few months: but ten years? To pursue that sort of politics cannot but create divisions among your own people: people become exhausted and frustrated by the disorder. The logic of it, despite all the ANC's calls for unity, is to fragment and divide. Which from the point of view of the ANC is not necessarily a bad thing: it ensures that the initiative remains in their hands.

Charlie. If the present situation in South Africa is, as they say, organised by the ANC, then why do these outbreaks of violence take place in different areas at different times and not simultaneously? Why do they allow the people of the Eastern Cape to struggle by themselves, and then it moves to the Vaal Triangle, and then to Cape Town? If they really want to make the country ungovernable, they should be able to prevent the state concentrating all its repressive apparatus on one spot.

I can see a Northern Ireland situation developing, of continuous resist-

ance which the state is able to contain to some extent.

Bob. Yes. I don't think the uprisings take place in the townships because the ANC called for them.

They take place because of the extraordinarily difficult conditions that people in the townships face. The problem with the ungovernability slogan is that it does not offer any sense of what a workers' government would consist of.

When the students and the people in the townships throw their bodies against the police, the ANC doesn't so much try to organise that as to use it as a bargaining weapon.

CAPITALISM WITHOUT APARTHEID

Charlie. Most of us, myself included, have firmly believed that in South Africa capitalism can't exist without apartheid. I'm not so sure that still holds true today, with more sophisticated industry in South Africa.

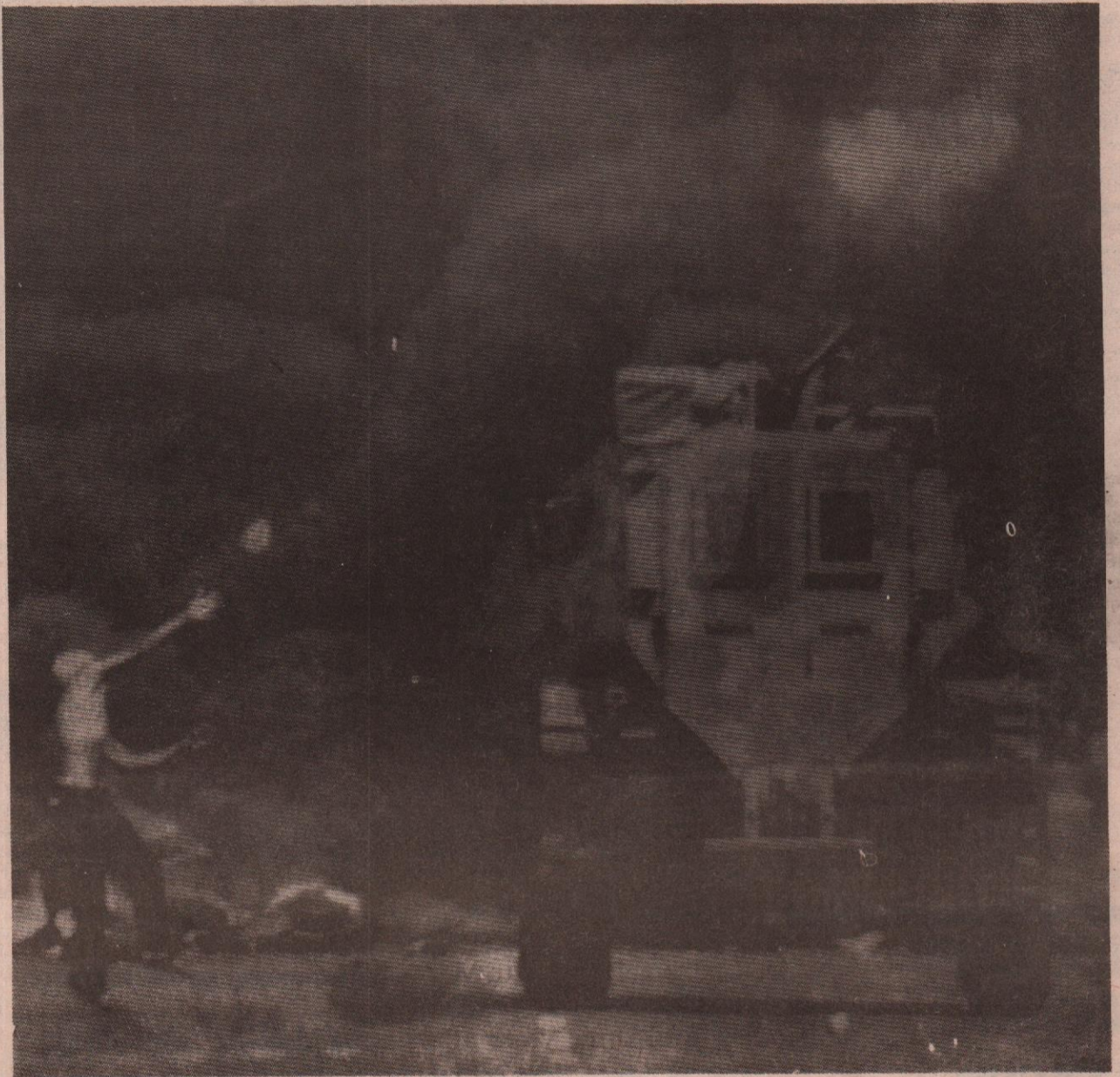
The problem, of course, is the mines. The low productivity of Rand ore still demands cheap unskilled labour to make those mines profitable. But they can create a black aristocracy of labour and still have a mass of unskilled workers on low wages.

Martin. Isn't it a fact that wages in the gold mines, after declining or stagnating for 80 years, have risen considerably since the early '70s?

It seems to me that the problem for the government in dismantling some of the special features of South Africa and turning it into a more normal racist capitalism is not so much some economic impossibility in the abstract as the difficulty of dealing with their base, the white population.

Bob. 'Is capitalism possible without apartheid in South Africa?' In a sense it's the wrong question. Theoretically we can argue it until the cows come home. What we have to be warned against is that certainly capitalism without apartheid is what a lot of people are trying to establish. Whether it is in fact established will be determined not theoretically but in practical politics.

The Progressive Federal Party and the capitalists are putting forward a definite anti-apartheid position. It's just not pro-socialist and not pro-democratic. They want a kind of federal power-sharing which will guarantee



bricks, bottles and petrol bombs against armoured cars

private enterprise.

A lot of people say that the government is just perpetuating the old apartheid system under a slightly new guise. I think that's probably right so far, but if sufficient pressures are put on the government I wouldn't put it past them to pursue a programme of reforms to a point where the major planks of apartheid are eroded. In its place you'd have a military-bureaucratic dictatorship, partially de-racialised, that offers us nothing at all, no improvement on apartheid.

We have to be aware that there are kinds of 'anti-apartheid' that have nothing to do with democracy and nothing to do with socialism:

X. It is in the context of these changes that a workers' party has meaning.

It seems that capitalism in South Africa is capable of de-racialising

itself. I'm not happy with the theories that say capitalism is inseparable from apartheid. Theoretically, from an abstract point of view, that may be very correct. But in terms of practical day-to-day politics an understanding like that can turn itself into ultra-leftism, where you do nothing because the struggle is not against capitalism.

It is only through a workers' party that you can have a combined struggle, a permanent revolution. In the context of the changes that are taking place you need a workers' party to defend the workers' interests, to carry on the workers' struggle. You're not going to get socialism overnight. If in the context of these changes the ANC comes into power, either alone or as part of a coalition, you will need a workers' party that will stand in opposition.

Charlie. If the ANC comes into power, will a workers' party be allowed?

X. If you don't start organising and thinking about it now, then it may be too late. You'll find yourself in a situation like Zimbabwe, where it is practically impossible to emerge as a workers' party.

NEW UNITY MOVEMENT

Charlie. What did you see of the influence of black consciousness, or the National Forum, or Azapo, and so on?

Bob. Not that much. I met people from the New Unity Movement and went to one of their big meetings and a smaller meeting as well.

I thought the New Unity Movement looked very much like the old Unity

Movement — still very much caught up in the old rhetoric. There were thousands of people at the meeting I went to, and a terrific atmosphere, but what the speakers had to say was entirely in terms of criticising the consumer boycott, criticising the ANC, criticising liberalism, collaborators, and so on. To me it didn't add up to a positive programme. It was a wasted meeting — all those thousands of people, very tense, and the programme put forward was entirely one of negative opposition to what was already going on.

The Unity Movement seemed to me to have some very educated and fine comrades inside it, but as an organisation it belongs to a current of socialism in South Africa that defines itself in terms of opposition to the Freedom Charter and opposition to liberals.

X. My impression is that there is no streak of socialism in the New Unity Movement. As you say, it is very much in the tradition of the old Unity Movement. In the old Unity Movement there was explicit opposition to socialism. A number of people were expelled from the old Unity Movement because they were trying to espouse socialism.

The Unity Movement stood by the Ten Point programme [of democratic demands]. The New Unity Movement also stands by the Ten Point programme. I believe they are going to update it, but my impression is that they are not going to update it by moving in a leftward direction but only making the language more in accord with the 1980s.

The influence of the old Unity Movement in the Cape Action League is minimal. There are a few people in the Cape Action League who were also in the old Unity Movement — Neville Alexander and so on — but the style of politics is very, very different.

Continued on page 8.

pres in Dublin have been on strike for 15 months because they refuse to handle South African goods. The dispute started when one worker, Mary Manning, followed the support of their union, the IDATU.

Minister of Labour, Ruari Quinn, fixed up a deal with all the major supermarkets whereby they would 'phase out' South African produce. Dunnes, however, that this vague promise meant nothing, and the strike continues.

The strike spread to Dunnes Crumlin branch when a worker there was suspended for selling outspan oranges.

The strike had wider effects. A number of Irish stores have made agreements that they will not handle South African goods if they don't want to, and in Derry the council has decided that any body on which the council is represented will not handle South African products or services. Anti-Apartheid posters will be displayed in shops and schools.

SOUTH AFRICA IN REVOLT

From page 7.

The Cape Action League does not agree with Azapo on everything. And yet it was prepared to work side by side with Azapo, to go into the National Forum. The Cape Action League is a left wing tendency in South Africa that is prepared to soil its hands in action, that is prepared to sacrifice its puritanism.

In the campaign against the tri-cameral elections, the Cape Action League was one of the most active groups in the Cape.

Charlie. I think there is a core of truth in what Bob said about the 'anti-charterist' tradition in South African socialism. And not only in socialism — also in the Pan-Africanist Congress and the black consciousness movement. For different reasons people have rejected the Charter movement — the PAC because of the Charter's multi-racialism, socialists because of the popular-frontist approach of the Charter and its incorporation of cross-class as well as cross-racial collaboration. The rejection is not necessarily unhealthy, but they have not yet reached the point where they can put something positive in its place which is acceptable to the people.

Bob. When the PAC or black consciousness talk about liberals or liberalism, what they mean by it is not what Marxists mean by liberalism. Take the black consciousness in its early years, it rejected liberalism, but it did not propose anything socialist. To them a liberal is a white person who they don't agree with, who is against the boycott of state institutions.

Bob. The first question in terms of a workers' party is, what is the political content of such a party? What does working-class politics mean in South Africa?

You need to deal with a tradition — in some ways a very fine tradition, in other ways not so fine — that does define itself negatively in terms of anti-liberalism.

THE CAPE ACTION LEAGUE

Martin. Can you tell us anything about the Cape Action League and what it does in the trade unions? In Socialist Organiser we published an interview with Neville Alexander translated from German in which he argues in favour of a workers' party based on the trade unions. But the picture he gives of the trade unions is to say that they are divided into three groups — the UDF unions on the right, FOSATU and CUSA lumped together in the middle, and the unions linked with black consciousness on the left. That picture doesn't seem right.

X. I remember him making that classification in another document, and I had some disagreements with it.

One thing the Cape Action League has done is to set up Workers' Advice Centres — something very much like



Women workers organising: TGWU meeting

Bob. The Workers' Advice Centres in the early 70s were set up to help with their problems. It could be a death in the family, for example; the Centre will help with cash for funeral expenses.

The Cape Action League does not have a presence in the trade unions like the ANC or UDF have through SAAWU, but they are not divorced from the trade unions. I know that they have been actively trying to organise garage workers, for example.

Bob. A particular difficulty the Cape Action League have got is that the vast majority of the Cape Town trade union movement is dominated by TUCSA

[the main white-dominated trade union federation, which also has black members], and it's very difficult for anyone on the left to get a significant foothold.

X. In the National Forum there are about seven unions, which are now formed into the Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions, AZACTU. My impression is that at National Forum meetings there is a lot of agreement between the Cape Action League and at least two of these unions — the Black Mining and Construction Workers' Union and one other.

Very late in the day the AZACTU unions did try to get in on the new Federation. They were at the last but one meeting but were excluded from the last meeting. But the fact that they went along and complained at being excluded is a step forward.

Bob. I think the exclusion was on the question of a 'non-racial' versus an 'anti-racist' approach, but it's not clear.

X. I've heard that wasn't the real issue. But there are conflicting reports.

Bob. In any case I think the exclusion of CUSA and the AZACTU unions is unfortunate. On the whole most people I met supported the presence of the UDF unions in the unity talks but the UDF unions do seem to be causing a lot of trouble. At one meeting they said the new Federation must have no political voice. Having criticised FOSATU for years for not being political enough, they then said it mustn't have a political voice because the political voice must remain with the UDF! When they said that, Ramaphosa of the NUM walked out of that meeting and so did the representatives of MAWU. The UDF unions withdrew the suggestion later.

not to join. This particular woman — she's a trade unionist — said that first the UWO should be part of the development of this movement if they were going to join it — the UWO should have a say in its policies and its organisation and so forth. But in fact the UDF was imposed from the top down. There was no participation by the women in its formation. So quite a strong women's current that was developing in Cape Town was absorbed by the UDF.

In the trade union movement, however, it's different. Two years ago the slogan in FOSATU was 'One man, one vote'. We criticised that and said it should be 'One man, one woman, one vote', or 'One person, one vote'. They didn't see it as an issue at all. Today that could not be the case. A lot of FOSATU organisers I spoke to are much more sensitised to the issues.

Mainly that's because there are a lot of women entering the workforce and entering the unions. Within FOSATU there are a few women who are beginning to take up women's issues. The question of sexual harassment at work, for example, is a very big issue among women who are forced to give their sexual favours to white employers in order to get a job. Equal pay is very important.

FOSATU has produced a pamphlet on women workers, and some FOSATU women are trying to get women's clauses included in the resolutions or constitution of the new Federation.

It's still a battle. Most of the shop stewards are still men even when women constitute the bulk of the membership.

In CCWUSA I think 70% of the members are women, and the union is quite sensitised to women's particular issues. They made a deal with one of the large chains of shops recently to get extremely good conditions of maternity leave.

WOMEN IN THE MOVEMENT

Charlie. Can you say something about women's organisation in South Africa?

Bob. In Cape Town I went to a meeting of the United Women's Organisation (UWO), which is the UDF women's organisation. I was very struck at that meeting by how little feminism was present. Basically the attitude seemed to be that we need to draw women into the UDF through the UWO but on the basis of general UDF demands, not on the basis of specific issues affecting women.

I spoke to a woman who had been active in the UWO at the time when the UDF was formed. One of the members of her UWO group said that the UDF was being formed and the UWO had to decide whether to join or

demanding 'Africa for the Africans'.

Progressive Federal Party: main white opposition party, formed in the late 1950s. Backed by the big bourgeoisie. Advocates a federal power-sharing system with veto powers for the white minority. Allied with Inkatha.

UDF: United Democratic Front — coalition of some 645 organisations, broadly reflecting the politics of the ANC.

Unity Movement: set up in the 1940s. It had a Ten Point programme of democratic demands, but rejected the 'two-stage' theory and talked of the ten points being realised by a socialist revolution. Placed heavy emphasis on the land question. Insisted on a boycott of all official institutions. Trotskyists worked in the Unity Movement, but were eventually expelled.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Martin. To turn to the question of international solidarity: the main way this question is posed is the ANC's approach, which is pressure on governments to impose sanctions. But what do workers in South Africa think is the best form of solidarity?

Bob. I came across a debate on the disinvestment programme. There was a debate while I was there between Schlemmer, an academic at the Buthelezi Institute for Social Research, and Alec Erwin of FOSATU.

Alec Erwin distanced himself very sharply from people like the Progressives, but he also said that the assets that the multinationals claim to own in South Africa are the product, one hundred per cent, of the labour of

black workers. Ford, for example, have no right to come to South Africa, extract profits, then withdraw their assets when the going gets tough. All the assets that Ford now have in South Africa belong to black workers.

The way Alec Erwin posed it is that FOSATU is in favour of a *divestment* campaign but not of a *disinvestment* campaign. The divestment campaign is a campaign in which foreign shareholders are forced to sell their shares, but the ultimate rationale of FOSATU's approach is not the multinational assets being withdrawn but workers' control, where the factories belong to the workers and the workers run them.

In general FOSATU was in favour of a divestment campaign because it put pressure on the employers and the government, but what they wanted was that that campaign should be run not in isolation but as an adjunct to the workers' movement in South Africa.

Charlie. I don't think a disinvestment campaign as such is going to put any real pressure on apartheid. As long as there are profits to be made in South Africa, there won't be any real disinvestment. What could happen is a change of shareholders.

Such a campaign is mainly a propaganda weapon. Our main efforts should be directed to the labour movement — the sort of trade union boycott of South African trade which happened at Southampton docks, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Dublin...

We should try to establish direct solidarity between the trade union movement here and there — and most



Zinzi Mandela

important between shop-floor and shop floor, for example with Ford workers here sending delegates from the shop floor to South Africa.

We should also go into Anti-Apartheid and try to shift them on direct links.

X. I agree. But we shouldn't spend all our time in a negative stand criticising Anti-Apartheid. We should show ourselves in a positive light by doing solidarity work and establishing direct links — doing what we believe rather than spend our time criticising what we do not agree with.

On the other hand, we've been talking about the emergence of socialist ideas and socialist organisations in South Africa. In the years that I've been in Britain, organisations like the IMG when it was still about have always criticised the ANC for being non-socialist. And just at the time when you have some socialist groups emerging which have a footing in the community, the groups in Britain which have always demanded the emergence of socialist organisations in South Africa are not giving their support to the South African socialists. Socialist Action has swung behind the ANC.

All this happens at a time when you have socialist consciousness emerging in South Africa. Part of international solidarity should be to make links with those socialists. We may disagree with them. We may think it is wrong for them to be outside UDF or inside UDF. But we should make links and discuss these things with them, and give them as much support as possible.

There's so much money going into UDF and ANC — no money going into the socialist groups that are emerging in South Africa. In some cases I think what is still between those groups and the mass movement is lack of international support.

Who's who in SA

ANC: African National Congress. The main nationalist organisation. Dates back to 1912 — has been very closely allied with the South African Communist Party since the 1950s. Illegal.

Azapo: Azania People's Organisation, the main black-consciousness movement.

CUSA: Confederation of Unions of South Africa. The other main black-based union federation besides FOSATU. A black consciousness background, but generally not as political as FOSATU.

FOSATU: Federation of South African Trade Unions, the largest of the non-racial (mainly black) trade union groups which have developed since the early '70s. Negotiations are well advanced for a merger of FOSATU with other unions into a new Federation.

Freedom Charter: manifesto adopted by the ANC and some other organisations in 1955, codifying the SACP strategy of a 'two-stage revolution': first a cross-class alliance for democracy, then at a future stage class struggle for socialism.

GWU: General Workers' Union, based mainly in the Cape and Durban.

Inkatha: conservative movement, based mainly among Zulus, and led by Gatsha Buthelezi, Chief Minister of the KwaZulu bantustan in Natal. Allied with PFP.

National Forum: coalition including the black-consciousness-oriented Azapo and the left-wing Cape Action League.

NUM: National Union of Mine-workers.

Pan-Africanist Congress: 1958 split from the ANC, rejecting the ANC's multi-racial approach and

The Poundswick strike

Don't attack teachers! Unravelling the issues

The way the Poundswick dispute has developed will be a disappointment to trade unionists and socialists alike. The Tories and some right wing heads and deputy heads have made the dispute into a reactionary one about standards and a return to discipline in schools.

However the article in SO 248 has done little but antagonise all concerned and blinded us to the initial issue involved and the immediate response of the teachers.

The classroom teacher's job has become increasingly difficult in recent years. In a society where hope is running out for the young, school has become another focus for their anguish and opposition to a system which is undermining their future.

Teachers, on the other hand, are faced with cutbacks in all kinds of equipment and resources.

Inner-city

Increasingly teachers, particularly in inner city areas are confronted with an intolerable nervous pressure, one which comes home with them at night and which can make their lives a misery.

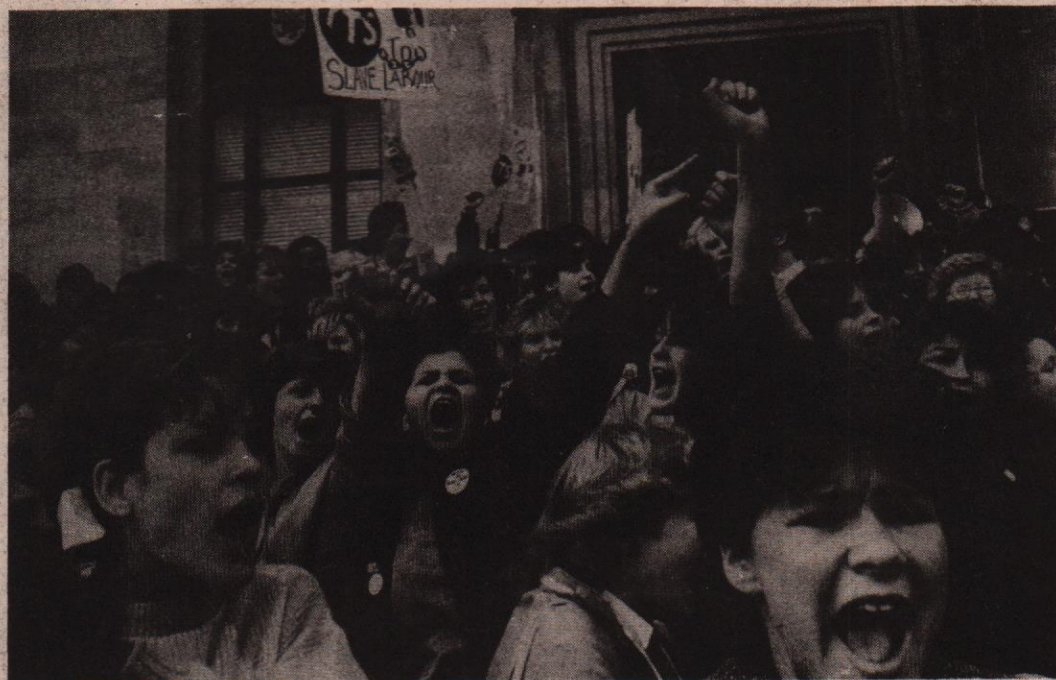
No socialist can claim that workers ought to put up with that kind of pressure in the name of defending a broader argument against a return to reactionary standards, especially when they have suffered gross personal insults of a racist and sexist nature.

Indeed it is misleading to equate the actions of teachers whose sensibilities have been severely attacked with the right wing 'standards' backlash peddled by the Tories.

The refusal of the Poundswick teachers to teach the five was a simple gut reaction, a feeling that 100 yards of school wall daubed with obscene graffiti involving sex between named teachers and their partners, was about as much as they could take. It was not a cry to reintroduce caning, uniforms, or any other Victorian educational values.

Children attacking teachers in this way is no more justifiable than teachers caning pupils.

Manchester City Council sent the teachers home without pay, sacking them in



The school students' anger must be focused. Strike against YTS, April 1985. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni.

Rallying to authority?

Ian McCalman casts aside his anti-Stalinism as casually as a teacher tossing away a failed exam paper to rally to the cause of authoritarianism in the shape of the Poundswick High School dispute (SO 249).

Why he rides in on his habitual hobby horse of the teachers' "18 month campaign" for a pay rise is far from clear — unless he shares the SWP's syndicalist fantasies that strike action in itself suffices to sweep away ingrained prejudices.

effect. It would be an odd situation if a socialist council sacked bus drivers for refusing to drive late-night buses because of physical attacks.

Difficult

But according to the article in SO 248 it was "difficult to see what other action could be taken" in the case of the Poundswick teachers.

His endorsement of summary lynch-law "justice" — it has not even been proven that the youths committed the acts attributed to them — is itself an endorsement of the original article's reference to the evaporation of liberal values amongst teachers.

Ian's authoritarian leanings are clearly the product of childhood repression. It would therefore be wrong to be too hard on him. Personally, I blame his teachers.

STAN CROOKE

Accepting the principle of sending teachers home who refuse to be grossly abused seems a rather strange way of developing a broad-based class struggle which must include teachers as workers.

The simple solution with this logic must be to reinstate the pupils and return them to a situation where they have nothing but negative feelings for both school and teachers.

But if they are transferred to another school it will be seen as a victory for reaction, even if the other school provides a less intimidatory atmosphere.

This kind of thinking reveals a complete misunderstanding of the classroom situation. It assumes that teachers are always oppressive and pupils always oppressed. This is not true. Even socialist teachers are the target of some pupils, particularly those who are overtly racist and sexist.

In any case, to transfer the fight to another school is not necessarily a recommendation that they be whipped, imprisoned or have their character and personality further condemned.

This last being a distinct possibility if they remain where they are.

The way forward is not for one section of the working class to attack another. The task of making teachers into a working class force will only be done through consistent principled work inside the teaching unions and the labour movement generally, not through veiled attacks on teachers as the weak link in the class struggle.

LIAM CONWAY
Nottingham

There are, I think, several issues to be unravelled in the Poundswick dispute.

First, justice for the five boys whom the teachers want removed from the school. Removing a child from school often means throwing them on the scrap heap educationally. It is no small matter, and it seems to me quite right that some public body outside the school should pass the final verdict and do so with great concern for the students' rights.

Manchester council says that it's not proved that the five boys did the graffiti complained of. Even if it were, and however disgusting the graffiti, being thrown to the margins of education is a drastic punishment.

And it would be a pretty hypocritical one. A big part of everyday life in many schools is abuse and insults against students by teachers who, relative to those students, are in a position of wealth, power and security.

Parents

But we need to have more to say to the teachers, and the parents and students who support them.

To want orderly education of a good standard is not at all reactionary. Students who are violent and hurtfully abusive to teachers will often act the same way to other students. This may be rooted in class oppression, but it's not progressive. It is a fact that two or three alienated and frustrated students can transform a class from a more

or less effective educational group into a high-stress exercise in child-minding. Most students find that oppressive, as well as teachers.

Throwing out disorderly students — except in the most extreme cases — is no answer. Carried through as a policy, it would lead to mass purges in many schools. Quite substantial numbers of black students, in particular, already get removed from some schools.

Both teachers and students face an impossible situation. Enormous youth unemployment; an education system entirely geared to exams, but offering only a small minority success in those exams; ill-designed curricula, and an education structure alienated from everyday life; inadequate buildings, educational materials, and numbers of teachers — all blight the spirit.

To support teacher authoritarianism is no answer, but neither is celebrating school disorder as working class protest. We should try to direct teachers and students towards a common fight for a better system, and in the first place for more resources and facilities.

As for the SWP: articles in Socialist Worker argue something similar, as far as I can see, to what I've suggested above. But comrades in Manchester tell me that the SWP's practical attitude on the ground is different.

MARTIN THOMAS
Islington

Narrowminded

The article on the Poundswick teachers' strike (SO 248) was both ill-thought out and narrow-minded.

Anti-sexism and anti-racism is the issue: the typical macho shit which tends to feature in graffiti is offensive, to condone this graffiti is to condone the attitudes held by those who write it.

For socialists the issue is not so-called "morality" or "saving

standards" (as some see it) but a clear case of combatting racism and sexism.

In the past Socialist Organiser has condemned racism and sexism, so why should a dispute over these be considered "reactionary"?

To brand striking over racist, sexist graffiti as "whipping the working class back into line" is wholly wrong.

GILL STEEL

The beginnings of movement

Sluggishly and patchily, the British trade union movement is beginning to move against racism. But this slow progress is being much outpaced by the worsening of racial discrimination and division due to the economic crisis.

Such is the picture presented by a new Labour Research Department pamphlet, 'Black workers, trade unions and the law' (LRD, 78 Blackfriars Rd, London SE1 8HF, £1).

"In the economic recession of the 1980s black workers have been hit worst by the impact of unemployment. In 1974 the unemployment rate for both black and white workers was 4%. By 1982 when white unemployment had risen to 13% for men and 10% for women, for West Indians it had risen to as much as 25% and 16% respectively and for Asians to 20% for both sexes".

Discrimination is a major factor here. A recent survey by the Commission for Racial Equality showed that all other things being equal white applicants were four times as likely to get a job as blacks. A Policy Studies Institute investigation had similar findings — and concluded that despite laws, race-relations committees, and rhetoric, discrimination is just as bad now as in 1973.

As the slump brutalises the inner cities, racial attacks have increased. The police are becoming more heavy-handed. Black people suffer worst from

the cuts — especially the most severe of the Tories' cuts, those in expenditure on housing.

As of 1982, nearly 60% of white households were owner-occupiers. At the other end of the scale, nearly 60% of West Indians and Bangladeshis were council tenants (though some other groups of Asians include a lot of owner-occupiers). Black tenants tend to be concentrated on those estates most needing expenditure to repair and rehabilitate them.

What have trade unions done? The TUC officially encourages black caucuses in the unions, and a few unions now have them.

TASS

TASS has produced leaflets specifically for black members; the TGWU and the GMBU have produced pamphlets and articles in union journals in Asian languages; the Bakers' Union prints its rule book in all the major languages used among its members.

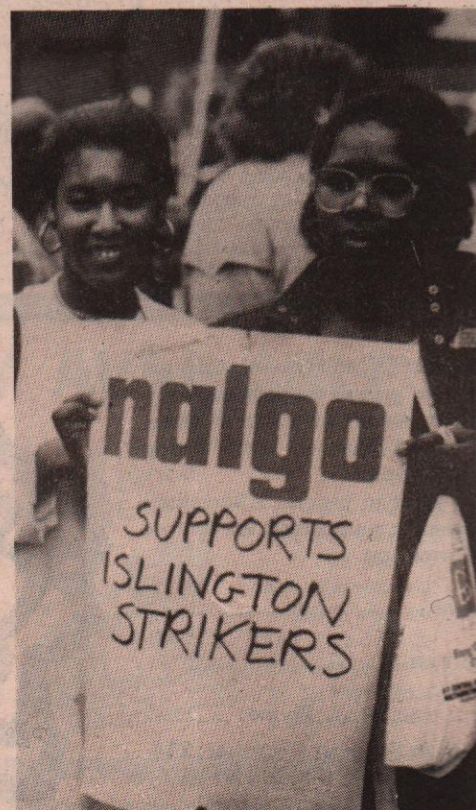
Many unions have official anti-racist policies. The Bakers' Union policy is to expel any member guilty of racist propaganda. Unions have frequently negotiated equal opportunities clauses — though the LRD points out that these are often just words on paper — and supported individual members fighting unfair dismissal, racial discrimination and deportation cases.

All this should not be underestimated. LRD quotes Edith Akwei, a cook supervisor in Southwark who won her case against deportation of her daughter Lovelace with the help of her union, NUPE: "I am so astounded by what the union has done for me that it leaves me wondering whether the subscription is really enough".

And it has had some effect inside trade unions. Unions still reflect society around them in having a very small proportion of blacks in leading positions. Black workers are more unionised than white — 56% are in unions, as against 47% of whites — and despite problems (more shiftwork, meetings held in places like pubs where some Asian workers cannot attend for religious reasons) they attend union meetings just as often as whites. But only 4% of black trade unionists hold any union post, as against 11% of whites.

Only 13 out of 33 major unions have any black full time officials — though that is an improvement on 1983 when only eight had any.

But it is all terribly, terribly slow compared with what is going on in society around us. The evidence is that the labour movement cannot become anti-racist just by adopting anti-racist policies, however good they are. It can become effectively anti-racist only by becoming socialist and fighting to change society.



A strike against racism — Islington 1985. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni.

Will Labour go green?

As part of its Jobs and Industry Campaign, the Labour Party has produced 'Labour's Charter for the Environment' (LCE**). Naturally, I was interested to see what this glossy but slim pamphlet had to say.

Is it just an attempt to jump on the Green bandwagon? After all, we have witnessed the grotesque spectacle of the Conservatives claiming to be the party of conservation (which they are — the conservation of poverty and profit and of that most endangered of species — the capitalists).

The Liberals have always had a better claim to Greenery. For instance, in Liverpool they were so attached to the environment that they refused to spoil it by building any council houses. The tough and tender SDP are also adding green to their red-white-and-blue.

All this has the Green (formerly Ecology) Party spluttering with impotent rage as their clothes are stolen by all and sundry.

The LCE gets off to a bad start with 'Labour's commitment to the environment is well known'. Quite! Furthermore, 'It is Labour governments, and local authorities, which have built our current framework of environmental protection'.

This is true as far as it goes. However, two of the most important measures were only enacted by the last Labour government, namely the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Control of Pollution Act. Many important provisions of the COPA have still not been implemented despite the five years of Labour rule that followed its passage.

Joke

The pamphlet is on firmer ground in criticising Tory, Alliance and some EEC policies. The Tory Wildlife and Countryside Act is a sick joke. Where sites are due to be protected for being of 'special scientific interest', the owners are given three months notice. After that time there is usually nothing left to protect! Indeed, under the EEC's Common Agricultural Policy, farmers are encouraged to plough such sites to grow crops for the various food mountains.

Cuts in public expenditure have taken the teeth out of health and safety laws as there are just not enough Factory Inspectors to go around.

The Charter has three themes: to promote sustainable growth; to prevent pollution and environmental damage; to increase democratic control over

the environment.

It is Labour's intention 'to bring environmental concern into all areas of policy'. This is linked to a campaign to increase jobs through energy conservation, waste disposal, recycling, developing safer replacements to asbestos, etc.

LCE raises the new (for Labour) concept of *sustainable* growth, which does not squander valuable resources which are difficult or impossible to replace for a short-term gain. This is the opposite to the North Sea policy of both the Tories and previous Labour governments.

Another idea is that of 'democratic involvement' in the planning of development, a far cry from the *control* of society by the working class sought by serious socialists. However, it may be an improvement of the change-of-name-only nationalisations of previous Labour governments.

Source

New technologies are mentioned as a source of employment in the environmental sector with the example of the Greater London Enterprise Board being quoted. A better example of what is possible was described in the Guardian recently.

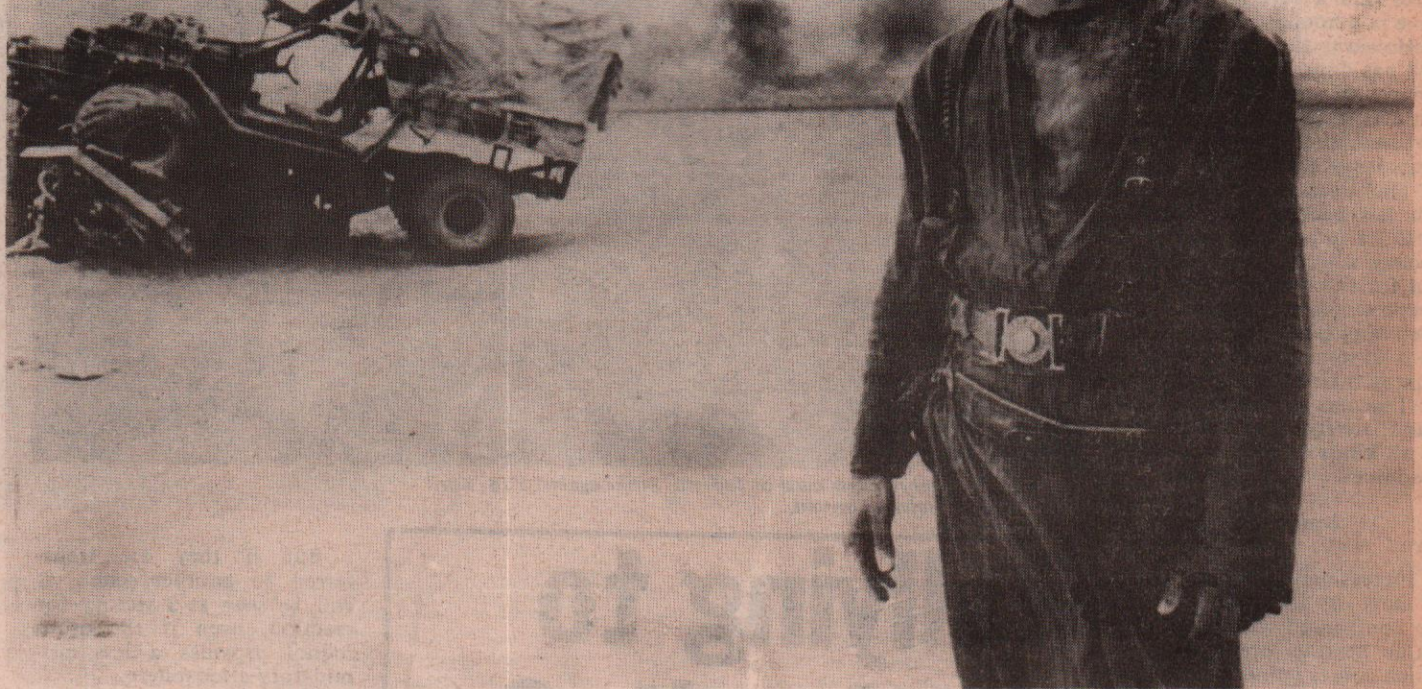
Research funded by Greater Manchester Council and UMIST has come up with a method that can transform rubbish into fuel oil. Not only is it as cheap as North Sea Oil but it is free from the sulphur and nitrogen that cause acid rain.

Private capital has been unable or unwilling to develop similar processes. With the abolition of the Greater Manchester Council, GLC and other strategic authorities responsible for waste disposal, municipal enterprise will also be incapable of such developments in the future.

LCE's strategy for dealing with pollution is weakened by its failure to say anything about nuclear power. After all, radioactive waste is an inevitable by-product of nuclear power.

The LCE's weaknesses are linked to Labour's economic strategy, essentially that of capitalism with a human face. Undoubtedly the cynics who see Labour jumping on a popular bandwagon have a point. It is up to us to see that the Labour movement carries out the policies of the LCE and of Labour Party and TUC conferences, both locally and nationally.

*Price 35p, or send 50p to Labour Sales, 150 Walworth Rd., SE17 1JT.



Mad Max in the Australian desert

Apocalypse and adolescence

Edward Ellis reviews the film 'Max Max Beyond Thunderdome', currently on general release

'Mad Max II' was one of the most gloriously camp films to reach our cinemas. And 'Beyond Thunderdome' is no disappointment.

Set in the aftermath of a nuclear war, the stories trace Max's transformation from desert speed cop into a sort of futuristic Indiana Jones. Driven 'mad' by the murder of his wife and child, Max is in fact the only person in post-holocaust Australia who shows no visible signs of

insanity at all. But what's in a name?

Gallantly played by the striking Mel Gibson, Max beats off hordes of nasty, grease-painted punks armed with chain saws, axes and fixed snarls, maintaining throughout his grim look.

Repeat

Tina Turner plays the strutting, growling self-appointed ruler of Barbertown — in an identikit repeat performance of the Acid Queen that she played in Ken Russell's dreadful 'Tommy'. Auntie Entity, as she is oddly

named, employs Max to get rid of the thug half of Master Blaster — an individual consisting of two separate people, one of whom — a clever dwarf — turns out to be a goody after all, although it is never quite clear why.

Max has to face Blaster in 'thunderdome' — a sort of huge upside down tea strainer with elastic bands and electric saws tied to it — in a fight to the death. Anyway, he gets banished by Tina to die in the desert (it's not very important to know why) where he is rescued by a tribe of pigin-English speaking children.

For no important reason at all, it all ends up with the same fight-cum-chase sequence that provided the climax for 'Mad Max II'.

This is all splendid over-the-top stuff, replete with bizarre-looking baddies and weird-looking children of the holocaust.

The two directors, George Miller and George Ogilvie, have gone further in the direction of 'Conan the Barbarian' style epic fantasy in this adventure; and this raises an interesting point.

It is as if Armageddon ushers in not only the brutalised remnants of society doing their best to survive, but also a rebirth of the classical hero. Mad Max is Odysseus, or Hercules, or Thor, or Superman. The collapse of society releases new potential, and provides the vital catalyst that produces great men, like Max, who rise above the obscenity and mediocrity around them.

And, of course, the hero is a great man, positively radiating good masculine qualities: strength, courage,

skill, wit and nobility. At this level, the Mad Max films appeal must mostly be to adolescent (or overgrown adolescent) boys, who in some secret way aspire to be like that.

I dread to add, because someone might want to rip me to bits about it, that what makes Mad Max III so much better than all those dreadful 'sword and sorcery' films to which it is stylistically so similar, is the extent to which it breaks the rules of adolescent fantasies.

Celibate

Mad Max himself, so far as we know, has remained completely celibate since the death of his wife in the first film. He is apparently asexual. Max's character has none of the rapine aggressiveness of a Conan.

And compare Auntie Entity to Grace Jones' animal-like, stereotyped, hypersexual character in 'Conan the Destroyer'. Tina Turner is all high melodrama, ham-acted camp. But she is, I think, a genuinely strong woman; and the film avoids all the usual heterosexual male masochism that you get with strong women in films.

Moreover, the film is crammed with homoerotic images in the tradition of the video for 'Relax'. This was obvious in 'Mad Max II' but 'Beyond Thunderdome' has half-lit scenes of glistening, rippling muscle aplenty.

What this adds up to is that 'Mad Max' is a genuine parody rather than just kitsch. Anyway, I think it's a good laugh, and recommend it wholeheartedly.



The Crack in the Earth children

Socialist Organiser has local supporters' groups in most large towns. We ask £5 a month minimum (£1 unwaged) contribution from supporters.

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Stop the transport bill!

By Tom Cashman

On Tuesday 29 October unions called on all public sector bus workers except Scottish Bus Group and London buses to strike, in the first of a series of one-day stoppages over pension guarantees.

The strike was solid in the north, with odd exceptions such as Southport and Chester but patchy further south. Buses moved in Oxford, Cambridge, London Country and most of the South West.

At present Public Transport Executives and municipal bus workers are members of the local government superannuation scheme. Under the Tories' new Transport Bill local authority or joint authority bus operations must be converted to

limited companies and sold off. The Bill makes no provision for guaranteeing that employees whose companies are sold retain any rights at all, and in particular does not make provision for them to stay in the pension schemes.

Workers in National Bus Company subsidiaries at present have guaranteed index-linked pensions in the National Bus Pension Fund and the Bus Employees Superannuation Trust.

As the NBC is to be not only privatised but broken up into small units for sale, the only possibility of retaining the existing pension rights is for the state to establish a residuary body to administer the schemes.

The minister has absolutely

refused to do this. In reply to many thousands of letters sent to Tory MPs about pensions, bus workers have received a duplicated letter which is simply a pack of lies.

It is such a dishonest document that the National Bus Company management felt compelled to blow it up as a poster and point out in detail the lies it contained.

Action

The strikes over pensions are the first serious sign of a fight after a year's grovelling in a feeble campaign of joint action with the usual array of bishops and Liberal MPs which has produced such a low level of public

awareness that most people do not even know the Transport Bill exists.

The patchiness of the strike reflects the weakness of the campaign in the same regions and also the lack of preparation nationally.

The decision for a series of one-day strikes was taken by the TGWU national passenger committee on 9 October. This was not communicated to branches until the date was set on the 21st to strike on the 29th.

A telex from Bill Morris sent to District Offices at 5.28 pm on Monday 21st could not be assumed to be in the possession of branch officers until Friday 25th — giving the weekend and Monday to organise for Tuesday.

The success of the strike must be built on, not only to win the pensions battle but also to create a solidarity among busworkers and overcome the company chauvinism which has led to unions supporting and in some cases initiating schemes for survival under the new law by poaching work from 'competitors' and conducting a dutch auction for wages and conditions.

The strike must also be used as a platform to build a serious labour movement campaign against implementation of the Act and its effect not only on wages and conditions but also on safety and, via deregulation and the abolition of subsidy, on services.

London Labour Party Consultation meeting for workplace branches. 2.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. November 9, County Hall. A briefing note will be sent to comrades and those who are definitely/might be going should contact Nik Barstow, 278 1341 (h) or 226 1234 x 4192 (w).

S & N Breweries

The strike at the Scottish and Newcastle Brewery in Moss Side, Manchester, is now in its fifth week.

The strike is solid among the 40 TGWU members who are fighting management attempts to introduce a new shift system without paying the workers extra money.

The support they are getting from other brewery workers, local Labour Parties and trade union branches is growing.

Last week there was a good turn-out by local Labour Party members to picket. This support must be built on. The next step must be to organise weekly mass pickets.

One blow to the strike is the decision by the engineers to go back to work.

This is a setback but the core of the strike — the TGWU members — are determined to stay out until victory.

Silentnight fight for recognition

Over 400 workers are still on strike at the Silentnight factories in Barnoldswick, Lancs., and Sutton, Yorks.

They are demanding recognition for their union, FTAT, and reinstatement in their jobs. They were all sacked in July.

The factories are working with scab labour, but the strikers are campaigning for trade union boycotts. Seafarers and dockers have agreed to stop imports for Silentnight.

Donations are needed, to: FTAT Cravendale Branch no. 92 Strike Fund, c/o Ann King, 10 Rainhill Crescent, Barnoldswick, Colne, Lancashire.

Demonstrate against racism! Shamira Kassar, eight months pregnant, and her three sons were killed in an arson attack on their home in Ilford, East London, in July.

A demonstration has been called to 'remember the Kassar family', on Saturday 9 November — 11 a.m. from Seven Kings British Rail Station.

NUM: Sacked miners will organise

On Monday 28th the NUM executive voted 11-7 to do anything necessary to purge its contempt of the High Court in a bid to try to regain control of its funds.

Scotland, South Wales and North Derbyshire voted with the right wing against Arthur Scargill, Peter Heathfield and the Yorkshire area.

This vote completely overshadowed the special delegate conference immediately after the NEC meeting. The conference, called in the summer to review and strengthen the campaign to reinstate the 615 miners still victimised by the NCB eight months after the end of the strike decided only to call a mass lobby of Parliament and to organise the sacked miners nationally.

Those on the NEC who advocated a blank cheque to concede to all the judges' demands argued that this is the only way to get the funds back. Scargill and Heathfield, it seems, argued that the blank cheque won't necessarily help. The union has already accepted many court conditions — only to receive further demands to grovel.

Judge Mervyn Davies summed up the court's attitude last week: "Conscience does not affect the matter — the law rules..." The court has hinted that the NUM's three new trustees will be required to prosecute and bankrupt the three national officials! The judges are out for revenge, not justice.

Argument

The argument seems to be between those who wanted to continue the existing tactical approach and those who said the union has no option but to accept all the consequences of defeat now, whatever they might be.

Whatever the merits of the argument on legal tactics, for sure the right wing and soft left are using the problem to scapegoat Scargill. Scottish vice-president and Communist Party chair George Bolton says that the union 'shouldn't be tied up in court', but should be out campaigning. Yet a lot of the weaknesses in NUM campaigning are due to Area leaders like Bolton rather than to the legal problems.

South Wales purged its contempt and regained its funds soon after the end of the strike, but has done no great 'campaigning'.



5000 people marched in London last Sunday, 27th, on a TUC demonstration against the Fowler Reviews, the Tories' plan for cutting social security and pensions. It would have been a lot more if the TUC had campaigned properly. But time is running short: a White Paper based on the Reviews is due before Christmas. Photo: Jez Coulson, IFL.

11 pits have been closed in the area and over 5000 jobs slashed since the end of the strike. The latest response of the Area Executive, however, has been to invite Neil Kinnock to address them — less than a month after his notorious Labour Party Conference speech attacking the NUM. Neither the South Wales nor the Yorkshire Area leaders have given any lead or serious support to pits under immediate threat of closure.

The situation now would be difficult even with the best leadership. Recently, for example, miners at Keresley, near Coventry, voted 3:1 against an overtime ban to pressurise management to obey an Industrial Tribunal order to reinstate five sacked strike leaders. A number of miners who supported the 1984-5 strike to the end voted against the overtime ban. But the difficulties have been made much worse by the paralysis of the area leaders.

The situation is still not hopeless. St Johns, Darfield Main and Bold are resisting closure, and there is a similar commitment from Betteshanger and Tilmanstone in Kent. The national organisation of sacked miners — decided at the delegate conference — creates the framework for a much more effective labour movement campaign on the issue.

Willis's reaffirmation that the TUC will not recognise the scab breakaway provides an important weapon for a rank and file campaign to isolate Lynk's outfit.

And the increasingly blatant vindictiveness of the courts against the NUM and Arthur Scargill in particular could pro-

voke a backlash of sympathy for the union — in the same way as the government and NCB's actions did towards the end of the strike.

But if the opportunities are to be built upon, then a broad, fighting left in the NUM urgently needs to be created.

Monday's NEC vote underlines what has been clear for a long time — the secret left 'Forum' that played such an important role in the NEC is now dead. A new, open Broad Left — democratically organised and fully involving its rank and file — needs to be built.

'STOP PIT CLOSURES'

Conference
Saturday 9 November
12.30-4.30
Carrs Lane Church Centre
Carrs Lane
Birmingham City Centre

Neasden Hospital

Workers at Neasden Hospital have taken over the hospital and declared an occupation in order to prevent closure. Administrators have been locked out, and the hospital is being run by a staff committee.

144 workers at the hospital, mostly in NUPE and CoHSE, look after 83 geriatric patients. They are being supported by a 24-hour picket organised by Brent Health Emergency, and ambulance workers have pro-

mised that they will not obey Health Authority instructions to remove patients from the hospital.

NUPE shop stewards at six other hospitals in the Brent district have pledged to strike if the Neasden occupation is broken by dirty tactics.

At other occupations private ambulance firms and considerable violence have been used to remove patients and break the workers' resistance to closure.

Contact: 459 2251 bleep 107 for the occupation committee, and 459 8388 for Brent Health Emergency.

Laings builders lock-out

WE ARE a seven-man bricklaying gang and members of UCATT. On Friday 18 October we were sacked by a brickwork sub-contractor on the instructions of John Laing — the main contractor on the job.

We have fought on site for basic trade union and working class principles. Because of this and of our record of fighting for decent wages, conditions and organisation in the past, John Laing have decided (no ballot?) that they will refuse us the right to work and organise.

They have decided to put us back on the blacklist, which is like being in an open prison. But we have democratically decided to stand up and fight.

The dispute has been made official by the London Regional Committee of UCATT. But as in any other struggle we cannot win on our own. We need the support of our brothers and sisters in the trade union and labour movement to assist us on our picket lines and to have collections to sustain us financially. Please give generously.

Jonroy is the name of the sub-contractor who sacked us. They were formerly G. Whites. The same firm were on site when two UCATT bricklayers were bludgeoned to the ground by a thug with a hod at the Crouch job in Shirley, Croydon!

We are fighting against: 1. The Blacklist; 2. The use of lump labour by Laings.

We are fighting for direct employment. The Workers United Will Never Be Defeated!

Laings Lock-Out Committee,
Glenbuck Rd, Surbiton.

All donations and enquiries to: Lock-Out Committee, c/o 135 Hayward Gardens, London SW15 (789 8283).

The locked-out men are now picketing Laings site in Church Lane, Tooting, and have called for mass pickets at 7.30am. They are due to meet stewards from Laings Hays Wharf site, and intend to escalate the dispute to all Laings sites.

Scottish boycott

Secondary school members of the main Scottish teachers' union, the EIS, have voted to boycott examinations next April and May.

They have been in dispute for 15 months over pay. Selective strikes and other action have so far failed to budge the government. Scottish teachers are demanding an independent pay review, rather than the straight £1200 increase claimed by the NUT in England and Wales.

87% of EIS members voted yes in a ballot on the exam boycott, which is an action never taken before by teachers in Britain.

NOW AVAILABLE



Two pamphlets available from SO "The fight for union democracy" 20p & p&p and "The Broad Lefts" 35p & p&p. From 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Socialist Organiser

Police indicted

THE SIX men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings in 1974 may well have been innocent, according to a World In Action programme on Monday 28 October.

The men were certainly beaten by police after being arrested, top experts say, invalida-

ting confessions that they made. And a forensic test, said to prove that the men had been handling nitroglycerine, in fact may only have proved that they had been handling playing-cards!

Without these two pieces of evidence, the whole prosecution case would fall to the ground.

So six men have been in prison for ten years for a crime they did not commit.

Roy Jenkins, who as Home Secretary at the time helped to whip up anti-Irish-Republican hysteria by rushing the Prevention of Terrorism Act, a dragnet law, through Parliament, has admitted that there may be reason to reopen the case. Even John Farr, Tory MP for a Birmingham constituency, is convinced of the six men's innocence.

Lord Denning was quoted in the World In Action programme as justifying the imprisonments on the grounds that if the men were now proved innocent, then too many questions would have to be asked about the actions of the police in extracting confessions.

Indeed. Meanwhile allegations of torture have been levelled against the Royal Air Force police, who extracted confessions from the seven servicemen acquitted this week of spying.

Use of violence by police to force prisoners to 'confess' to alleged crimes is in fact widespread in Britain, and even more in Northern Ireland.

Amnesty International has indicted the British government in detail for torture in the interrogation centres of Northern Ireland. The European Commission for Human Rights confirmed this verdict in essence, though it preferred to say 'maltreatment' rather than 'torture'. This torture has been part of a whole system set up under the 1973 Emergency Provisions Act based on the report of the late Lord Diplock — together with no-jury courts and provision for convictions on the basis of confessions alone.

That system — supplemented since 1974 by the Prevention of Terrorism Act — is designed to beat down the oppressed Catholic community and to maintain sectarian and artificial Northern Ireland state.

Justice?

By the time you read this report it is likely that the trial around the racist murder of Eustace Pryce will be over.

Eustace was stabbed to death in November 1984 on the streets of Newham. Five white racists and five black youths have been on trial at the Old Bailey. One white youth is charged with murder and the other youths, who remain on trial, with affray.

Recent developments in the trial are that three of the white, and one black youth have been discharged. Under pressure, two black youths have changed their pleas to guilty.

The court has been picketed daily by the Justice for the Pryces Committee, who have received abuse from the murderer as he leaves the court. Family and friends have been called 'coons' and 'niggers'.

The Pryce Committee feel he has been able to get away with this because of the lack of vigour and determination with which the prosecution have pursued the case against the racists. They feel that the murderer has had an easy ride in court.

LIVERPOOL RESCUED? AT WHAT PRICE?

By Martin Thomas

As we go to press, on Tuesday 29 October, Liverpool District Labour Party is due to meet to discuss a financial rescue package for the City Council.

Expert

The package has been devised by a team of finance experts from other Labour councils. According to the Guardian (29 October) it will get the council through this

"Rescue package"? Who are the Labour local government finance experts out to rescue, from what?

The way that Neil Kinnock and the Labour leaders have presented it, they're out to rescue the people of Liverpool from the left-wing policies of the Labour council. The Labour Party National Executive statement calls as point 1 for "every possible step to balance the City Council budget", and makes no clear demand for the Tories to return the central government grant taken away from Liverpool in recent years. It suggests only "pressure on the Conservative government to accept the need to sit down and negotiate an acceptable financial solution".

National trade union leaders have given no support to their local shop stewards' attempts to organise for a strike for more money from central government.

Such attitudes undermine the whole fight for local government jobs, services and democracy, and give grist to the mill of right wing groups like 'Liverpool Against Militant'.

financial year without cuts and without compromising future house-building. The trick is done by accounts-book juggling, by borrowing from other Labour councils, and possibly by re-setting the rates at a higher level.

If no scheme of this sort is agreed then — according to council leaders — Liverpool will run out of money within a few days. The Joint Shop Stewards Committee, dominated by the Militant-led GMBU, has called for an all-out strike in that event, demanding extra money from central government. Local NALGO leaders have also advocated a strike. However, after the disarray caused by the council's "legal device" of issuing redundancy notices, the unions are not strongly placed for action.

Frontline

Liverpool's basic strategic position is still strong, or at least would be if the council leaders put themselves on the front line for a clear struggle instead of messing around with "legal devices" and so on. Last week the hard-headed big-business magazine, the Economist, called for more central government cash for Liverpool: "though a lot of extra Whitehall cash has gone into Liverpool since the riots of 1981, no big city needs it more. Mr Hatton is a trouble-maker, but he is not a trouble-maker without a cause. Nor, indeed, without



local public support . . ."

The big unknown at this point is the strings and hitches attached to the rescue package. Will Labour leaders use it as a lever to bring about a coup by the right wing and soft left in Liverpool and to try to ensure that the council plays by Tory rules in future?

FUND
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