

Chartist

SOCIALIST CHARTER MONTHLY NEWS REVIEW

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AGAINST THE 5%, FORD WORKERS ARE FIGHTING FOR EVERYONE



Laurence Sparham/IFL



Picture by E. Hamilton-West.

Ford workers give him something to think about

WHAT PRICE PHASE FOUR ?

SELDOM HAS ANY Government's policy been so decisively rejected. TUC Conference, Labour Party Conference and now the mass action of the Ford and other workers have said without the least room for doubt: No 5%. The TUC conference threw it out despite Callaghan's song-and-dance' act; Labour Party Conference rejected it 2-1, the Ford workers are defying it.

While Callaghan and Healey talked with the TUC in a last-ditch attempt to save some pay guide lines, the avalanche which they hope to avert was already in motion.

57,000 Ford workers are in their week 4 of an official strike against Ford management and the Government's pay guidelines. Already Ford have made offers of 6 and 8½% in defiance of Government pay policy.

Meanwhile, waiting in the wings are thousands of low paid local government workers, whose union, NUPE, has already instructed its area and divisional committees to prepare contingency plans for strike action. Their claim — a £60 minimum wage and the 35-hour week — amounts to a massive 40%.

Other groups of workers are preparing similar claims. At British Oxygen the company has already agreed to negotiate without reference to the pay limit.

Yet what are the TUC and Labour's NEC doing to implement the policy of their respective conferences? In an effort to prove how responsible they are TUC leaders are falling over themselves to patch up a deal with the Government 'flexible' enough to avoid confrontation. Terry Duffy, now President of the AUEW said "We must find a way to restrict price rises and to establish a system which prevents conflict in the wages arena". Whilst agreeing that the 5% must go he added, "(we) must have regard to the weaker sections of the community when they submit wage claims. I can't believe bargaining power should be used for its own ends."

If by this, Duffy means that the might of the AUEW should be placed at the disposal of weaker groups of workers well and good. Unfortunately, this is just what he did not mean. The last few years have shown up the lie that more powerful unions can help the low-paid by restraint. On the contrary, it is the victory of the more

organised sections which strengthen the hand of those less organised. In this sense a victory at Ford's is a victory for us all.

Labour's NEC witnessed a clash between Benn and Callaghan — was this on pay? No, the issue was European monetary arrangements and the conflict between Cabinet responsibility and Conference decisions. Labour's NEC has a clear mandate from Conference — no 5% no wage restraint. Pressure must be on the NEC lefts to take up this decision, to organise support for the Ford workers and to take the fight into the constituencies and the union branches.

The situation is promising, but there are dangers. At Vauxhall Motors, overtime working and inter-plant rivalry split the workforce and the strike weapon was broken leaving union negotiators to face management defenceless. Ford Workers must not be allowed to be isolated in this way.

Callaghan will say this is splitting the movement. He will point to the Tory threat. But Labour Party Conference and TUC Conference have finally made it clear. He is the one who is out of step. If he is not prepared to accept the decisions of the movement, then he must go.

Re-selection — lobby the NEC

IN THE AFTERMATH of the defeat of the 'automatic re-selection' vote (as proposed by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy) at the Labour Party Conference, Chartist spoke to Vladimir Derer, the Secretary of the Campaign: Chartist: Now that the Labour Party Conference has voted down the CLPD's amendment on automatic re-selection—what is your next step? What about the new NEC?

Derer: The will of the Labour Party Conference was frustrated by bureaucratic manoeuvres especially from the top. We must publicise what really took place because far too many people are still unsure about what happened.

There was a shoddy deal behind the victory for the NEC's proposal for the two-stage, optional re-selection plan.

The Campaign proposes a tactical approach from now on by aiming at the new NEC. Local Parties must send resolutions to the NEC appealing to them on the confusion of voting at Conference and asking them to bring the original automatic re-selection amendments to next year's Conference, as the old NEC had promised, but had failed to deliver. The Campaign has only six supporters on the new NEC—it will be an uphill struggle.

Chartist: You admit there are problems with the new NEC, even though it is stronger than last year's. But what about the Trade Union view? Many people are questioning the democracy of Conference and

especially the use of the big trade union block votes. Derer: The Unions want to give the NEC proposals (for optional re-selection) a chance.

The Transport and General (T&GWU) would have supported any of the three proposals! Moss Evans and co. supported our amendments because it came first! But then they applauded the victory of the NEC compromise!

When the confusion of Hugh Scanlon and the AUEW block vote of 877,000 came out in to the open, many wanted to refer back the ratification of the vote, ie. a re-vote. But the TGWU would have voted against us—reference back would have been lost and in the process the NEC plan would have been re-confirmed again—it was not worth trying.

The next thing is to campaign for Constituency Labour Parties to go through the re-selection process on the NEC terms. (Chartist: This means a vote in each Party firstly on the record of the sitting MP and then move on to determine whether another candidate should be selected—this is the NEC compromise). I repeat that many ordinary Labour Party members are still confused by what happened at the Conference.

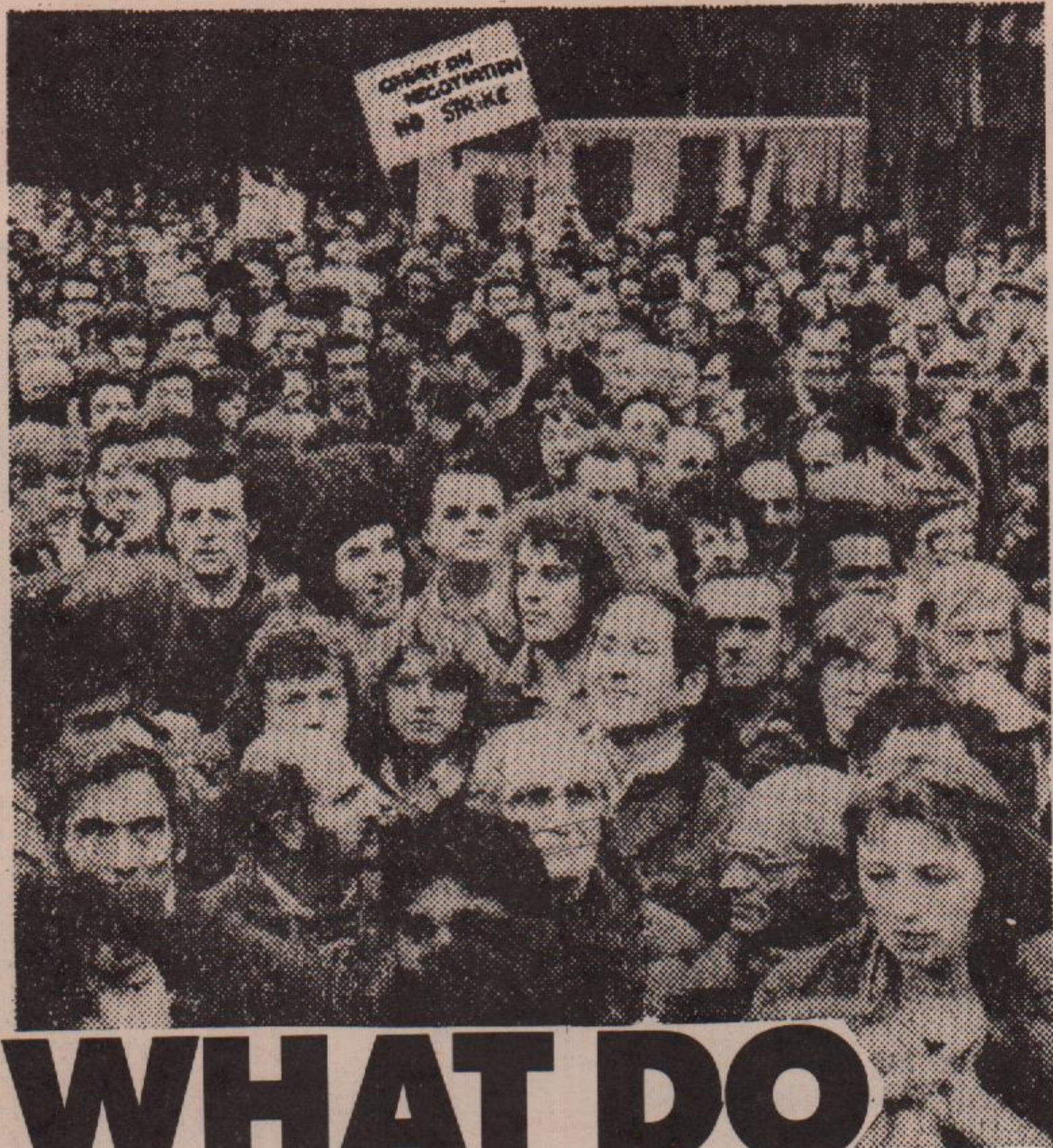
Yes, the voting system of Labour Party Conference needs to be looked at.

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Chartist

SOCIALIST CHARTER MONTHLY NEWS REVIEW

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WHAT DO CAR WORKERS WANT?

BRITAIN'S MOTOR INDUSTRY has always been one of the most sensitive to changes in the tempo of industrial struggle. From the crisis-wracked Leyland to the booming Ford's the mood of the industrial working class finds expression in the demands and actions of carworkers.

The Ford claim is simple in its essentials 1 hour off the day and a £20 across the board wage increase. During 1976-7 Ford's wage bill rose by £48 million. Ford's profits rose by £125 million. The wage bill per car rose by £26 i.e. 5% profit per car by £159 or 84%. It is not surprising therefore that many people have fallen into the trap of defending the Ford claim on the grounds that the company can afford it.

While this is true in Ford's case, the argument has backfired for the Vauxhall workers. As we go to press, two-thirds of Vauxhall's workforce are committed against strike action. This, when the company has made offers which make Ford look generous in comparison.

An average of 4.6% that is between £2.60 and £6.60 a week increase is all the company are offering. How have they been able to win acceptance for such a deal. One of the ways in which this miserable offer has been justified is the claim advanced by the company that this is all the company can afford due to £4 million of production which was lost due to strike action earlier this year. What is more the fact that this action was taken by the Ellesmere Port men who are currently leading moves towards a strike is being used to split the workforce.

One of the ways that such dangerous divisions can be averted is the clause in the Ford claim for a guaranteed wage even when workers are laid off. More important still, to develop the kind of solidarity which can cross and

overcome the existing divisions within the working class is the need for wage claims to be linked, not to the profits of the firm in question, but to rising prices which are faced by all working people. The 35-hour week demand also cuts across many divisions — as long as it is made clear that there should be no loss of pay.

At British Leyland where there can be no possibility of linking pay with profitability the workers have put forward a claim which avoids many of the pitfalls which prevent unity.

- £27 per week on the basic wage.
- Consolidation of all supplements.
- Premiums to be based on full hourly rate.
- Cost of living clause.
- 35 hour week.
- Increased company contributions to pensions scheme
- Sick pay at full hourly rates
- Five days additional holiday.

In the coming weeks and months, as TUC leaders, push the idea of price freezes, neatly inverting the logic of the idea that wage rises cause price rises, it is vital that the idea of a cost of living clause — weighted to take into

consideration those items most important for the budgets of working people — should be incorporated in every pay claim.

For the capitalists, and for our rulers, it is profitability and productivity which count — for us, as working people it is our needs which must come first. In raising the question of a cost of living clause and that of the 35 hour week, not only is the basis for working class unity being laid, but the elements of a socialist approach to wage-bargaining is being laid. This must be our answer to the likes of Sidney Weighell who calls free collective bargaining 'the philosophy of the pig trough'.

FOR SOME IT'S — Wealthier by stages

SINCE JULY 1975 we have had four stages of Government pay policy. Every stage has been designed to cut the living standards of working class families. Living standards of management, executive and many higher paid professionals have received the opposite treatment. This became clear from several recently published earnings surveys.

A recent article in *New Society* details the truth behind the socialist criticisms of pay policy. Under all stages the self-employed (1.8 million) have had no Department of Employment officials scrutinising their pay. In fact the number of self-employed has increased by a quarter of a million from the mid-sixties to the mid-seventies, while the working population as a whole fell by over a million.

New Society tells us: "There have been many professionals, not self-employed who have been able to carry on increasing their total earnings, regardless of incomes policy." This is not referring to the 80% to £54,000 for Ford Chairman, Sir Terence Beckett, "but the 2.8 million professional and technical workers who have changed jobs, achieved promotions, won merit rises or obtained other increments through regradings, and have been given increased expense allowances or cars on the firm."

Other inequities of the pay policy have been:

- That 38,520 barristers and solicitors have had no ceiling on their fee increases.

The Inbucon/AIC survey reveals that under Stage One all those earning over £8,500 who should have had no increase in fact did very well. 7,000 executives in nearly 600 companies notched up increases averaging £508. The average company secretary in the private sector enjoyed an £803 increase.

- The New Earnings Survey examining average weekly increases between April 1975 and April 1976 found that non-manual men (who had average earnings of £84 a week in April 1976) received a 22 per cent increase over the year, while manual men (average earnings £66 week) received only 17 per cent.

- Under Stage Two, not so specifically designed to help the low paid, the Inbucon/AIC survey for the year ending July 1977, found that executives—who earned on average £7,600—enjoyed an average rise of £605 (8.7%), compared with the government's ceiling of £208 (£4 a week).

- Under Stage Three (10 per cent limit) the British Institute of Management's own survey shows that during 1977 average managerial salaries increased by 30.6 per cent before tax and 16.4 after tax.

- All stages have allowed managers and executives to increase the money in their pockets by bonuses as well. Inbucon/AIC shows that between July 1976 and July 1977 executives got bonuses, on average, of £120. The average bonus for chief executives was no less than £4,196. Almost half their deputies received bonuses—averaging £2,896.

- Fringe benefits are another way of getting round pay policy. According to the BIM survey of August 1976 company cars are now being handed out more freely in Britain than in any other European country. 90 per cent of company directors and 80 per cent of senior managers have company cars. Since early 1974 to February 1976, 37 per cent of all new car registrations in Britain were in a company name.

- BIM survey discovered under the heading "good-will benefits" numerous goods and services being channelled into management hands. There were medical facilities and free health checks, free medical insurance, subsidised meals, company car parks, company-owned flats, clothing allowances, free travel abroad to conferences and so on.

- All Healey's tax changes since Stage One have helped the rich. For a person earning £25,000 a year in July 1975, the tax changes to September 1977 (including the October 1977 measures) have been

worth an extra £7,226,—equivalent to a pay rise of 28.9 per cent. A worker earning £1,500 would have gained in his/her pocket an extra £103, equivalent to only 6.9%.

- Even on basic issues like sick pay and holiday entitlement, the average manual worker suffers. The BIM fringe benefits survey found that a mere one per cent of manual workers in companies without a unified scheme received sick pay at rates equivalent to full pay or average earnings, compared to 66 per cent of managers. Only in a third of such companies do manual workers get 20 days' holiday or more. A Ford worker, for example, is rewarded by two extra days leave after 25 years' service.

- Special Case' increases under Stage Three for example have seen rises of 28.5 per cent for doctors, 40 per cent for police and average rises of 31 per cent for top civil servants, senior management in nationalised industries, the higher levels of the armed forces (putting field marshals up to £28,000) and in the judiciary. Most of us were pegged to 10 per cent.

Little wonder then that the Low Pay Unit survey show that in 1976 6,300,000 people were on or below the poverty line. In fact, most workers have suffered relatively the worst fall in living standards for 100 years.

All these surveys underline that pay policy always hits the poor and always will under capitalism. As usual its the rich wot gets the gravy, the poor wot gets the blame!

The stages of the policy

July 1974 to July 1975

Original 'social contract'

July 1975 to July 1976

Stage 1: Limit for increases of £6 a week for all except those earning £8,500 a year, who had no increase

July 1976 to July 1977

Stage 2: Limit of £2.50 for those earning up to £50 a week, 5 per cent for those between £50 and £80 a week, and £4 for those earning more than £80

July 1977 to July 1978

Stage 3: 10 per cent limit. Rises limited by £8,500 cut-off in stage 1 now allowed

July 1978 onward

Stage 4: 5 per cent limit proposed, with higher percentage increases allowed where final earnings are £44.50 a week or less

WHAT IS THE LCC?

DELEGATES AND VISITORS to Labour Party Conference, will probably have received a copy of *Labour Activist* — a glossy four-page paper which will, doubtless, soon be appearing at Constituency Labour Parties. This announces the formation of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC).

Now who or what the LCC is supposed to co-ordinate is not entirely clear. The 300 or so people who attended its first meeting (others had to be turned away) were, perhaps, not a great deal wiser. The meeting, on Labour's Priorities for the Next 25 (!) years—heard Alan Fisher, Peter Shore, Moss Evans and Tony Benn trying to outbid each other in empty but left-wing rhetoric. Benn, incidentally, won hands down with Fisher a close second, Evans, third and poor Peter Shore trailing far behind. Audrey Wise passionately pleaded

for everyone present to join the LCC at £2 a throw, but it is still not clear what one would get for one's money. (The LCC, incidentally, already has funding by the Rowntree Trust). The broadsheet lists as its aims 1. to co-ordinate action in constituency parties and trade union branches to strengthen and defend TUC and Labour Party Conference policy. 2. to work closely with various campaigning and pressure groups alongside and outside the party. 3. to strengthen the democratic processes within the Labour Party. . .

No. 2 has possibilities, but in expounding on this LCC chairman Michael Meacher mentions CLPD, Institute for Workers' Control, the Child Poverty Action Group, Shelter, and the Cambridge Economic Policy Group. Not a word about the most significant campaigning organisation for a decade or more—the Anti-Nazi League.

Page 2 of the *Labour Activist* is devoted to a long article on 'Labour's Socialism' by Frances Morrell which explicitly rejects Clause 4 and endorses the mixed economy— "Even in a democracy, total nationalisation combined with centralised planning and the abolition of the price mechanism is obviously (!) unacceptable." Opposite this Francis Cripp argues the need to safeguard 'national independence' while on the back page Stuart Holland argues the need to learn from the French Socialist Party's left think tank CERES and also argues against election of Party leader by Labour Party Conference.

Doubtless the LCC will hold many interesting meetings at future conferences but it is difficult to see it either providing the theoretical ammunition or the organisation for a fightback against the policies of the leaders of our movement and the complete contempt in which they hold Conference decisions.

SOCIAL SECURITY REVIEW MIRRORS SEXISM

LAST JULY THE DHSS published a review of the Supplementary Benefits scheme. Public discussion and debate was to be welcomed in this era of "open government".

The review team noted in its opening chapter that the scheme, which was designed by Beveridge to deal with a decreasing number of claimants, now assisted 5 million people in Britain. Massive changes, it was implied, were required to cater for this situation which was evidently not of a temporary nature.

As Sarah Winter points out the review comprises a pot-pourri of money-saving, labour-saving suggestions. Their lack of coherence suggests a degree of editing, many of the suggestions that remain are appalling enough. Worse than that it ignores or at best shrugs off, all the problems that face a system of social security at a time of mass unemployment and falling living standards.

THE DHSS'S REVIEW of the supplementary benefits (SB) scheme, "Social Assistance", makes disappointing reading for anyone nurturing hopes that the report might herald even marginal improvement in this key instrument of state control.

The limitation imposed on the review that the overall costs of the scheme were not to be increased has resulted in a bureaucratic tinkering with certain aspects of the scheme, rather than any deep re-appraisal. Very few of the recommended alternations constitute an improvement. On the contrary. Many of them, under the guise of saving money or halting abuse (which, incidentally, emerge as two of the main aims of the report), imply an hardening of approach which would have disastrous effects on poor people — i.e. those SB is supposed to help.

For example, the report recommends that school-leavers, many of whom have absolutely no prospect of employment, should not become entitled to benefit until the end of the holiday after they have left school (at the moment they can claim from the end of term), thus forcing young people to be dependent on their parents even after leaving school. Another recommendation is that people who "sponsor" immigrants should be made legally responsible for their upkeep — a



method of cutting down immigration which should appeal to the next (Tory?) government!

However, it is perhaps on the topic of the treatment of women that the report most clearly reflects the lack of political will on the part of those who commissioned the report (David Ennals and Stanley Orme) to even reform the system, let alone radically alter or abolish it.

It comes as no surprise to find that the report itself accurately mirrors the sexism in society as a whole. Apart from the usual semantic oppression (married women are referred to as "the wives of married men", leading to interesting if fruitless speculations on the nature of the wives of unmarried men), the chapters devoted to "equal treatment for men and women" is laden with unsubstantiated assumptions about the role of working women and relationships between men and women. A spectacular example of mind-reading comes in paragraph 11.14, where the compilers of the

report state, "If couples were given a choice, the great majority of them would probably decide that the man should be the claimant" — do not bother to search the report for the evidence on which this assumption is based: it isn't there.

PROBLEMS

Not surprising, either, is the failure of the report to actually tackle the problems caused by the inequality for women built-in to the system. At the moment any woman, married or unmarried, who shares a home with a man is barred from claiming SB in her own right. The report makes it abundantly clear that the Supplementary Benefits Commission is only considering any change in this situation because an EEC directive on equal treatment has forced them to do so, and, this stated, it then goes on to describe how it is going to pay nothing more than lip-service to the idea.

The report outlines 3 options for "eradicating" discrimination:

- "free choice" — all men and women to have the right to claim provided they fulfil the eligibility requirements.
- "main breadwinner" — the person who earns most to be the claimant
- "nominated breadwinner" — the couple to decide who is to be the claimant.

Needless to say, the only acceptable option, "free choice", is rejected outright on the grounds of cost, the need to extend the family Income Supplement Scheme, the increase in the number of women registering; as unemployed (!) and the possibility of abuse. "Main breadwinner" is thrown out because it would not substantially increase the number of women claimants while it would increase the number of DHSS staff needed to administer such a scheme.

CLASSIC TRAP

That leaves us with the "nominated breadwinner". The best that the report seems to be able to say for this idea is that, "it would give spouses a choice which they would not have to exercise if they did not want to." In plumping for this option, the report has fallen (or was it pushed?) into the classic trap of viewing the oppression of women in terms of 'hurt feelings' rather than economic status. Give women the choice to be just like men (at the expense of their male partners, who would have to become just like the majority of women) — provided the men in question agrees, of course — and they will no longer feel discriminated against; but don't, whatever you do, give them real economic equality,

even in the paltry sphere of life on SB, whatever you do!

This tactic of describing options and then choosing one of them is meant to give the impression that the writers have thought about the problem and provided the answers. In fact, the report completely omits to examine such options as a guaranteed minimum wage above the SB level for all working people, which would reduce the numbers dependent on SB and make "free choice" a workable concept. It fails also to admit the possibility of relationships between men and women (homosexuals are actually treated better than heterosexuals — for once — at present!) based on anything other than the complete economic dependency of (usually) the woman upon the man. The report suggests that the "main breadwinner" option would be unacceptable because it would force the DHSS's opinion as to who was boss on the couple — what, one wonders, is it doing now or would it be doing if all its recommendations were adopted?

COMMENT

In the foreword to the report, it states that nothing contained in the report is DHSS or government policy — yet, and it invites comment from anyone interested.

Women's groups, parent/teacher associations, pensioners' groups, the disabled, and many others should be interested and must comment on this report if its worst suggestions are to be thwarted. Copies are available from: DHSS, Government Buildings, Honeypot Lane, Stanmore, Middlesex. Get a copy and send in your comments.

CLPD (contd. from front page)

Firstly, the secrecy business and how millions of votes just emerge onto the Conference floor, from behind closed doors. What union delegations do with their votes is a matter for the Conference. We have to live with their decisions; ex-chairperson, Joan Lestor is completely wrong on this score.

Secondly, the fact that one person be it Hugh Scanlon or Moss Evans, or David Basnett, actually casts the vote of a delegation which may be twice the total vote of all the local Labour Parties in the country; this must be looked into — even if only by the unions themselves.

Chartist: What about the notorious 'three year rule' (the rule which says that no policy can be debated if it has been determined by Conference in the last three years)?

Derer: We are pushing for abolition of this rule — events move so fast that Conference must have the right to re-discuss policy when it thinks fit.

Constitutional amendments have already gone through which will mean that all motions sent in for Annual Conference must be published and distributed, whether they are subsequently ruled out of order or not.

We were not aware of the 1968 amendment which provides that if an affiliated organisation proposes a constitutional amendment it automatically goes to the NEC for them to report back to the next year's Conference with a recommendation which is then voted on.

If, however, the proposing organisation refuses to remit (i.e. accept the consideration of the NEC) then the matter is put to the vote there and then and is, of course, usually defeated.

Some comrades are arguing that we should take up the leadership issue. (Proposals to elect the new 'Labour Leader' by the Conference or a new electoral college were defeated at Conference. Callaghan is safe on this count). But the Campaign still believes that re-selection is the most vital issue — it still retains the most potential for extending democracy in the Party.

We are going to have a General Election before next year's Conference now, and if Labour loses, we can expect the waverers on the NEC to go the other way again, that is, to support our proposals for automatic re-selection. It's because we have an election coming up that the whole issue was sat upon this time round. After the election the question will come up again.

Chartist welcomes the views of Comrade Derer and urges all readers who support the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory to take the arguments back to their affiliated organisations, especially the trade union. In the run up to a General Election the issue of Labour Party democracy cannot be buried — even if the new NEC has increased its socialist strength, it will be up to ordinary rank-and-file members to make the running.

CPSA — the return of the right

Chris Stocker

THE NATIONAL Executive Committee of the civil and Public Services Association, on paper the most left-wing trade union executive in Britain, have been faced with the choice of getting embroiled in a lengthy legal battle with the TRUEMID-backed CPSA right-wing or to resign over the recent decision of union president Len Lever to declare the election of communist Vice-President Peter Coltman invalid. It seems that they have decided to resign rather than be seen to back arch-manoeuvrer Lever's decision.

Since the sweeping victory of the left in the elections at the CPSA's Annual Conference in May 1978, the right-wing — led by defeated Vice-Presidential candidate Kate Losinska — have been building up a campaign, with the help of their TRUEMID cronies to use the new rulebook to find a way of invalidating and discrediting the election of the left to the NEC and Vice-Presidential posts. This campaign culminated in the allegation that, contrary to one of the new rules, certain branches had voted at the conference for other Vice-Presidential candidates than those whom they had originally nominated.



PETER COLTMAN

Ironically, the "offence" implicated mainly a number of right-wing dominated branches but, after juggling with the ballot papers and nominations, Lever (who has increasingly sided with the right since he "defected" from the Left, some years back) declared CP member Coltman's election invalid and Losinska was "elected" in his place. Since Coltman would have been eligible to stand in the subsequent NEC election at the conference (had he not been elected V.P.) Lever ruled that "technically" the NEC were also elected unconstitutionally. However, he suggested that the existing NEC serve until a fresh

(postal) ballot could be arranged — thus legitimising his decisions.

Given that the membership had decisively rejected the right-wing's campaign for a postal ballot at the union's 1977 Rules Revision Conference and opted for an election system based on voting at Branch General meetings and the 1500-s strong delegate conference, this ploy by Losinska and co. will represent a major victory if the postal ballot goes ahead. Instead CPSA members must demand of their leaders that a special delegate conference is called to examine the alleged breaches of the rules and to conduct fresh elections based on the union's existing democratic election system including the post of President.

CPSA members can then take the opportunity to kick out Lever and the right wing decisively. If they fail in this task, then the prospects of a fightback against Government pay controls (which is imperative when Civil Service workers' pay comes up for its annual settlement on 1st April 1979) is doomed if the union is by then led by the right wing as a result of this latest "ballot-rigging" fiasco.

Race debate: real issues faced at last

LABOUR CON

By MARTIN COOK



Police no help in anti-racist struggle.

BY BERNARD MISRAHI

TWO ISSUES dominated the racism debate at this year's Labour Party Conference. Not — "Is racism bad?" Not even — "Should the sus laws be scrapped?" Even the National Executive Committee (NEC) were prepared to accept that. No, the two most contentious proposals of Composite 32 which split the conference were that ALL immigration controls should be scrapped, and that the labour movement should support black self-defence. The discussion was between those who believed that the state was the most powerful racist force in this country, with its repressive immigration laws and racist police, and those who believe that even though these state institutions were racist, that they could be reformed. That there could be drafted a non-racist immigration policy and the police could defend the East End Bengalis.

Catherine Hoey from Hackney North insisted that for these Bengalis, self-defence was a matter of life and death. Several Asians have been murdered this year and hundreds more assaulted. The police arrive too late to apprehend the aggressors and are more concerned with checking the victim's passport and arresting any Asians who defended themselves. In fact the police were as great a threat as the NF.

NOTORIOUS

Tom Torney defended his part in drafting the notorious Select Committee Report. "I'm not a racist" he cried "I've helped secure the release of Asians jailed under the 1971 Immigration Act." But can this Bradford MP get immigrants out of jail quicker than the laws he is proposing puts them in?

"Syd (Bidwell) is not a racist either. We call him the MP for the Punjab." Poor Tom didn't know what conference he was addressing. Maybe he expected delegates to laugh at his racist jokes?

It is all too easy to attack the Select Committee. Even Merlyn Rees, the Home Secretary, has rejected the report, asserting that existing legislation is strict enough. An interesting defence of these controls was made by Alex Lyon who was sacked from his post of Immigration Minister for being too soft. He actually loosened the rules.

He did not believe that controls were designed primarily to keep out black people as much as POOR people. All countries have controls. If Britain unilaterally lifted hers, we could be swamped by millions of poor people who would have now-

here else to go. He gave an example of a village he visited in Bangladesh where everyone wanted to go to Britain. Other delegates had already argued that there was no connection between unemployment and immigration. If they had more time they might have explained that immigration declines spontaneously as the host country moves into recession. It is unlikely that millions of people would want to enter a country where unemployment was so high. But even if all of Lyon's villagers did enter Britain, they should be welcomed. Lyon uses similar arguments as the racists. Yet he is a liberal. You wait till you see what the hard-liners do!

The NEC opposed both Composite 32, which was lost on a show of hands, and, inexplicably, a much weaker Composite 33 which the movers agreed to remit. Readers might remember that in 1976, Conference passed a composite not too different from the one that lost this year. This does not represent a setback. Two years ago, delegates didn't want to be seen to be opposing an anti-racist resolution. They didn't worry too much about the most controversial parts of the resolution. The 1976 resolution called only for repeal of "racist" immigration laws, allowing delegates to favour some form of restriction. But the resolution also supported black self-defence. Unlike two years ago it didn't sink in just what such physical measures meant. This time the main controversies were thoroughly discussed so that no delegate could doubt that a vote for Composite 32 was no much a vote against the NF but against the police and against Rees.

EXPERIENCE

The experience of Grunwick, Lewisham, Hyde, Brick Lane and the two ANL carnivals are beginning to percolate into the Labour Party. The four speakers who supported Composite 32 were from Brent, Brixton, Hackney and Hornsey where the fight against racism has been strongest.

These experiences work both ways. Delegates have seen in practice over the last few months what violent confrontation against the police looks like. They aren't yet convinced that it is necessary. To some extent, the ANL presents a soft option. We are not saying that if this year's motion was passed that the NEC would campaign to implement it, but that delegates this year considered more seriously what they were voting on. There was no chance

of anything going through 'on the nod' in a wave of anti-fascist sentiment. The important thing was that crucial issues were thoroughly discussed.

There is still a long way to go. Daniel Brown of the Bakers Union, the only black delegate who spoke, wondered why there were so few other black delegates. Perhaps he already knew the reason? Few radical blacks see the Labour Party as an ally in their fight against discrimination and police harassment. While their criticisms of the Labour Government are valid, they see little opposition from within the party. Most (white) activists in the anti-fascist committees would agree.

INSULAR

Most Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) are so insular. They might in fact have quite reasonable policies, but few non-party members ever hear about them. My CLP were discussing last August what we should do at the Carnival. The march was expected to actually pass the Party HQ on its way to Brockwell Park. "Carnivals are fine" agreed one party officer, "but if there's an election we'll all be canvassing instead."

Tens of thousands of anti-racist were expected (and did) march through our borough. How many of them would see any connection between fighting the Nazis and voting Labour — let alone being active in the Labour Party — when that party has no presence at such an important event?

Unless CLPs are to take the anti-racist movement seriously and participate in it further than sending a token delegate to a local anti-fascist committee (who would probably have gone anyway) then most anti-racists will continue to consider that the struggle within the Labour Party is irrelevant. The CLP must actually mobilise its own activists (at least) for local anti-fascist mobilisation. It must investigate if the local council are discriminating against blacks — intentionally or otherwise — and organise to try and stop it if they do. Every ward meeting should discuss the main issues involved — rather than making do with a hurried resolution at the end of a General Management Committee meeting. Having agreed a policy, the CLP should do its best to publicise it — particularly with leaflets and open meetings at election time.

When many more CLPs are SEEN to be fighting racism outside their private meetings, then you will see more black delegates at Conference.

LABOUR PARTY Conferences are unique affairs on the left in this country, where respectable Parliamentarians, socialist party activists, time-serving councillors or union officials plus upteen radical pressure groups mingle in and around Blackpool's Winter Gardens for a week of amiable confusion. After 5 days of sharply fought debates, "victories for the right or left, horror stories in the *Daily Mail* about Marxists and extremists, at the end they all listen meekly to the Party General Secretary telling them we're all one big happy family and the platform—"just to show they're still sincere", link arms and sing the *Red Flag*.

Part of the key to the riddle of the Labour Party is the paradox of a "mass party" of 12 million voters and 6 million affiliates in the unions — but a shoestring local organisation with a mere 300,000 paid-up members, only a small fraction of whom are active. The reasons for this lie in history—the formation of the Party as the political wing of the trade unions. Our Movement has, in fact, never wanted or needed to seriously ORGANISE its rank-and-file base, and the division of labour between Party and Unions has been a source of the impotence of the left even at moments of its greatest "triumphs" (1960, 1973 and so on).

Probably only a minority of British socialists are active in our party at present—the radical developments of the last 15 years (CND, Vietnam movement, feminism, ANL, trade union militancy etc.) have largely occurred unrelated to the wards and constituencies. This is not to denigrate the work of the thousands of dedicated comrades who keep the structure going in the face of perpetual kicks in the teeth from the Wilsons and Callaghans. But their commitment often has a 'narrow' and traditional focus: you can see that by comparing the hundreds who pack in to hear 'big names' like Benn and Foot at meetings of Tribune and Campaign for Labour Party Democracy with the usually pathetic turn-out for fringe meetings on Race Relations, Ireland, or Women's Rights (the issues which often preoccupy the 'new left' outside the Party).

THE ELECTION OF Neil Kinnock and Dennis Skinner to Labour's NEC (they came 5th and 6th respectively in the Constituency Section) at what was—despite all setbacks and inconsistencies—the most left-wing Labour Party Conference since 1973 confounds those pundits, such as Tariq Ali in *Socialist Challenge* who, eyes fixed on the *Labour Government*, saw nothing but a steady rightward drift in the *Labour Party*. Conference clearly demonstrated that far from 'the tattered banner of left social democracy' being 'at the cleaners' or in storage it was being given an airing in the Blackpool breeze which attracted the attentions and loyalties of hundreds of constituency party delegates, in the NEC elections and hundreds more to the Tribune rally and 'brains trust' meeting.

Regular readers of the *Chartist* will be well aware that we hold no brief whatsoever for the lame, inadequate and often downright reactionary views of the *Tribune Group* and the majority of its members, however nothing could be more dangerous in politics than to underestimate the strengths of one's opponents. After the defeats and betrayals of recent years it was to left social democracy that the majority of delegates turned, not to any brand of ostensible Marxism.

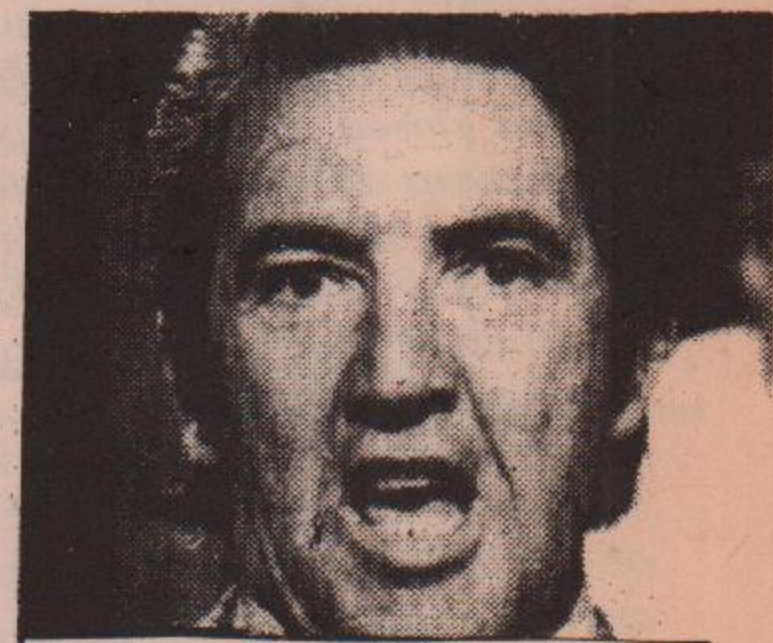
Though the focus for left social democracy remains *Tribune*—their rally had to be shifted to a larger

The impact of a few thousand of the activists from these newer campaigns into the Party could be phenomenal—both at Conference and throughout the year. At present however, the left is often weak and vulnerable on the non-economic, more subtle, 'ideological' issues. Women's rights, particularly gay oppression, scarcely make the agenda, let alone the big debates. Given this background how did the left come out of the 1978 Conference?

Elsewhere on these pages we review the key debates on racism and Labour Party democracy and look at the left's development but unquestionably the issue which dominated all others as far as the media was concerned was the pay debate which ended with a decisive rejection of wage restraint and support for the £60 minimum wage. Seldom, perhaps never has a Party Conference so decisively rejected the central core of its own Government's economic strategy. Yet the following day many of the same delegates who had thrown out Phase 4 were on their feet to applaud Callaghan's low key Parliamentary Report which offered monetarism as the alternative to wage restraint. Though the Liverpool Wavertree resolution called for a clear campaign by the NEC against Government policy the real forces which could challenge it—the trade union leaders—it seems are unlikely to go beyond the conference ballot.

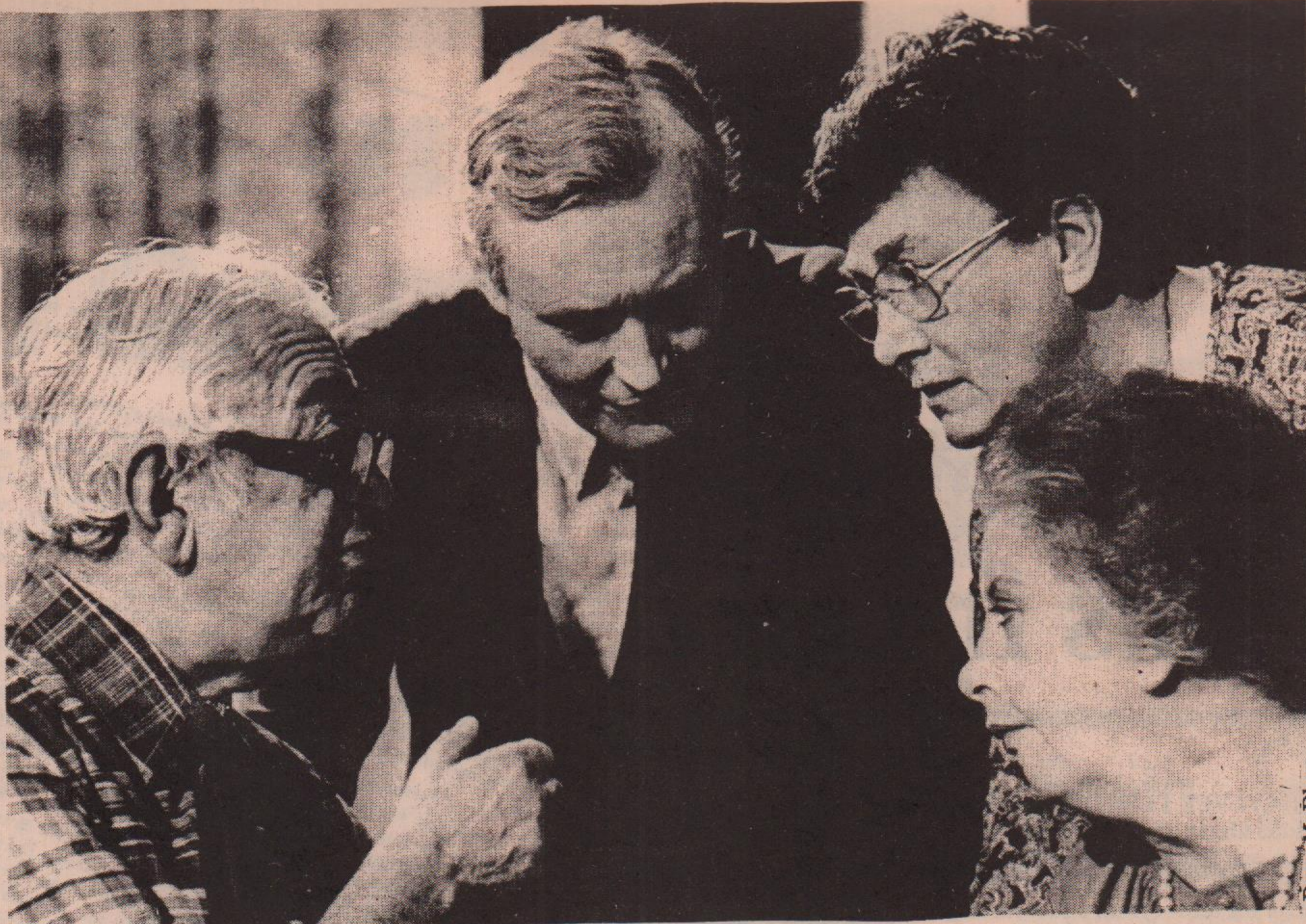
Judging by their performance on other issues during the week and despite all claims to the contrary it is the union block botes which keep Labour firmly in the middle of the road.

For instance, the debate on the issue of the election of party leader. Which of the 'two Labour Parties' should the leader represent? The elected and responsible bodies of the Labour movement, or the unrepresentative caucus of careerists in Parliament? Almost all of the speakers (both from party and the unions) supported the proposals for a balanced electoral college of all wings of the Party, but the vote went against it by more than 4 million to 2 million. Once again the



Dennis Skinner, now on NEC.

venue to accommodate all who wished to attend—the new left mood was not wholly undiscerning. The removal of Mikardo who had stabbed the reselection struggle in the back, on the NEC, from that body, after all accompanied the election of Skinner and Kinnock. The ambivalence, not to say hypocrisy, of the *Tribune Group* is what paradoxically gives it strength—strength to act as a roadblock to the development of the left, as a forum for institutionalising conflict. While Foot lamely pleaded with Conference not to vote against the 5%—placing himself on the far right of the Conference, this did not prevent him from once again gracing the Tribune platform alongside Kinnock and Skinner. This may have made for good entertaining stuff for the hundreds of delegates and visitors who attended the Tribune rally but it did not offer much of a lead to the party members seeking some way of taking the victory in the wages debate forward.



Benn, Maynard, Hart commiserate Mikardo on loss of his seat.

Don McPhee

Party democracy: daylight robbery!

DEMOCRACY IN THE Labour Party suffered a severe setback at Conference in Blackpool thanks to one man—Hugh Scanlon.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CPLD) had worked very hard for 4 long years to achieve their main aim—the mandatory re-selection of MPs. Much painstaking work had been carried out around the Constituency Labour Parties, leading up to the 67 constitutional amendments which went to Party Conference last year. In the past year they have spent considerable time and energy in winning over the key union delegations.

Yet at the moment when victory was in sight they were robbed by the inaction of brother Hugh Scanlon, retiring AUEW president. After many decades and numberless conferences in the Labour movement, brother Hugh was overcome with sudden 'confusion' about how to cast his 877,000 card votes. An AUEW teller who informed him of the delegation's position on the crucial vote was told to 'go away and do his job'. The votes were sat on and the vote was lost.

CREDIBLE

While Scanlon's 'confusion' is scarcely a credible excuse, nor even a new one—remember his about-turn on the crucial Social Contract vote at last year's TUC—the debate was undoubtedly organised in a misleading way. Three mutually exclusive motions were to be debated and voted on at the same time. There were the 67 original amendments from last year, which clearly call for automatic re-selection and the two NEC reports—majority and minority. Despite promises made last year to come back to Conference with proposals providing for mandatory reselection the NEC did not. The NEC minority report called for mandatory re-selection but not earlier than 18 months and not later than 36 months after an MP's election. Thirdly, there was the NEC majority report, which proposed a two-stage procedure, that is reselection only after a vote of no confidence has been passed. All these motions were formally moved and open to debate at the same time.

by COLIN ADAMS (delegate Brent East CLP)

The left clearly won the debate. A major contribution came from Eric Clark of the NUM fully supporting mandatory re-selection. The main speech against was made by Joe Ashton MP who whined that he only had a few minutes to save the jobs of over 300 men and women! He produced a real sob story of the stresses and strains of an MP's life. Government chief whip, Michael Cocks also spoke of the stress, the long hours 'which no union would tolerate' and, directly attributing deaths among MPs to the strains of the job, he pleaded with Conference not to introduce yet another element of uncertainty into MPs' apparently already wretched existence.

These speeches were treated as they deserved to be by the Conference with a chorus of jeers and shouts from the floor. Ashton had left one big question unanswered—if an MP's life was so rough, why continue, why was there a long list of people queuing for a Commons seat, and why grumble about the prospects of the sack?

NARROW VICTORY

The CLPD was confident of a narrow victory when the vote was taken. They knew that the AUEW and NUM delegations were committed to support the 67 amendments and were quietly confident about the T&GWU. The 67 amendments were defeated 3,066,000 votes to 2,672,000. But a quick calculation showed that nearly 900,000 votes were missing. All hell let loose when Hugh Scanlon appeared at the rostrum to explain his abstention.

Several efforts were made to have a re-vote. Scanlon spent time with the Standing Orders Committee explaining his situation. Various delegates attempting to call for a re-vote the following day were quashed from the chair by Tribune Joan Lestor who told them, 'Some people should learn how to be good losers'—it would be more to the point to learn what one has to do to win occasionally.

The NEC proposals are now by default the policy of the Labour Party and it is important to learn the lessons from this defeat.

Firstly, it is obvious that a

struggle for greater democracy in the Labour Party cannot be divorced from the same struggle in the trade unions. Neither can union presidents elected for life, be reliable allies in the struggle to make MPs more accountable. At Labour Party Conference it is the block votes of the trade union delegations which decide policy. Yet it is doubtful if the members of most trade unions know about the issues debated at Labour Party conferences and which way votes are cast in their names.

AUEW DELEGATES

A glance at the elections of AUEW delegates show that, district by district, an average of 4% of members bothered to vote. The AUEW delegation voted at Blackpool to support mandatory re-selection, but this did not stop President-elect Terry Duffy from reconvening a meeting to try to overturn that decision, breathing threats about what would and would not happen when he takes over. That meeting voted 26 to 19 to stick by their original decision. But to no avail. While Duffy fumed Scanlon turned years of struggle, bitter debates and effort into so much wasted time *simply by not voting.*

END IN ITSELF

Secondly, the issue of mandatory re-selection must be seen for what it is: not an apolitical constitutional reform but a highly charged political issue. Too often re-selection has been seen as an end in itself. It has not always been seen as a part of a much wider political fight against the representatives and leaders of the Labour Party and the system they defend. What it poses is the democracy of the workers' movement *against* the democracy of Parliament where an MP can appeal to the 'electorate' as the people from whom his authority derives against the party and the movement who've put him in the position to make such an appeal in the first place. The CLPD Briefing meeting at Conference for delegates required a genius or at least a trained lawyer to understand all the constitutional details and niceties. Without a political basis for the re-selection struggle—the fight will always find itself out-manoeuvred, diverted and defeated.

The overwhelming passing of a resolution calling for a Repeal of the Official Secrets Act and its replacement by a proper democratic Freedom of Information Act. Comrades were no doubt aware of the stepping up of a paramilitary role of the police, their role at Grunwick and Lewisham, not to mention the repressive anti-civil liberties record of the present Government (who on these issues stand way to the right of the Liberal Party!) Yet, still for most delegates the problem of the state—of the police and army, of unaccountable civil servants and Whitehall chiefs—is seen in terms of democratic reforms and the ending of 'excesses' rather than in terms of its replacement by the organisations of the working class themselves.

It should also be noted that attention to International issues this year was even more pathetic than usual. A predictable call for Rhodesian 'sanctions-busters' to be hung, drawn and quartered, the usual Little Englandist denunciations of the EEC... full stop. What about Iran, the Middle East, Nicaragua, Argentina?—not to mention Ireland!

Also missing from the agenda was the questions of women's rights. After last year's defeat for the call for the end of the free vote on the abortion question the three year rule kept the issue off the agenda. To further compound the neglect of the issue, Conference once again failed to provide a creche while even the leftish 'Original Briefing' referred patronisingly to 'the ladies, bless 'em' and attributed Joan Lestor's popularity, in part, to her looks!

The new NEC indicated a clear left shift, with Skinner and Kinnock on and Jack Ashley off—but then the NEC has had a left majority for years yet (as the re-selection issue showed) this has not meant a clear socialist lead on most issues. Just *what* have Castle, Benn, Lestor, Heffer, and co. been doing, we might ask? **Clearly, there remains no substitute for building up, re-vitalising and opening Labour's rank-and-file organisations to the new radical and progressive movements of the last four years.**

Militant supporters who were delegates to the conference—and there were about 50 of them—curiously failed to catch Joan Lestor's eye during the racism debate where the supporters of the SCLV made all the running against both the old-style unconscious racists like Torney and the ex-Home Office, ex-liberal, Alex Lyon.

Lastly, the SCLV which is supported by the *Chartist* failed for various reasons to make the impact it might have done. *Socialist Organiser* sales were good and interest was expressed in the paper but a public meeting held on the one night Blackpool was deluged with torrential rain did not attract many delegates. Nevertheless a briefing was produced three out of the five conference days raising issues which other publications did not, in ways they did not and SCLV sponsors—Colin Adams, Ted Knight, Paul Moore, Ken Livingstone, and others spoke in the debates of the conference. The SCLV intends to be back next year having overcome its teething troubles to establish a hopefully permanent presence on the left of the party on a clear political basis.

by GEOFF BENDER

traditional weakness of the left in terms of the big unions, and the CLPs due to their narrow activist base, lost the day for us. It cannot be doubted, however, that pressure for democratising the Party structure will continue. The attitudes of many union chiefs to the leadership issue no doubt reflects their desire to avoid any hint of public responsibility for picking the leader/Prime Minister.

Confusion in the ranks on the 'ideological front' was shown most sharply in the debate on 'law and order'. Once again, a see-saw effect seemed to operate. On Wednesday delegates had applauded as the Hackney North delegates pointed out that the police were 'as bad as the fascists' as far as the Asian population of the East End were concerned. Yet the following day conference passed a resolution—a Composite 1—which while watered

down from some of the 'hang 'em and flog 'em' resolutions called for support for the police force, investigation of tougher penalties and the smashing of 'criminal sub-cultures'. Despite its vagueness, this offering (supported by the NEC) was supported by a majority of 2 to 1. In vain did delegates from Hornsey, Richmond (Surrey) and Honiton point out it would have been more appropriate to the next week's Tory beano at Brighton. In vain did they argue that only better housing/leisure/education facilities, jobs for youth etc. could stem the escalation of street crime and vandalism, and that the rotten and selfish ethics of capitalism were to blame. The right-wing authoritarians pleaded the cause of the old age pensioners saying it's all

very well talking about the long term but what do we do here and now?

This is a genuine problem. Not that court sentences, however draconian, are likely to protect our communities from vandalism and violence. But practical schemes for the Labour movement to take in the here and now against crime and violence must be forthcoming, or else Merlyn Rees will continue to come to the rostrum and extol the virtues of the Boys in Blue.

... and on the left

After all, this conference saw, not only the apologia for the Labour Government by a political bankrupt like Foot, but also Joan Lestor's refusal to re-take the reselection vote, a left speech by Renee Short on racism and fascism which committed the NEC to nothing, and, worst of all, Eric Heffer's summing up in the 'law and order' debate

MILITANT

1978 was a good year for the *Militant* supporters at the conference who clearly intended to make the most of it by shoving their newspapers under the nose of every casual stroller in the corridors of the Winter Gardens. Not since Pat Wall moved the Shipley nationalisation resolution at 1973 Conference has one of their speakers been so much at the centre of debate. The unfortunately-named Terry Duffy, mover of the successful Liverpool Wavertree resolution against pay restraint made the most of his success with TV appearances and *Militant* and YS meetings followed a familiar pattern, whilst the meeting of the *Militant* front campaign on Ireland, CSSI, organised to coincide with a meeting on the Tribunal flopped.



Dr. Owen defends 'his friends' in Iran

By GEOFF BENDER

"WHATEVER ELSE they may be divided about, they are all united about one thing: that is getting rid of the Shah". So said Russell Kerr MP on his return from a fact-finding mission to Iran. This was but one day after David Owen, Foreign Secretary had told Brian Walden on the *Weekend World* TV programme that Callaghan had been right to send a letter of support to the Shah at the height of recent anti-Shah protests. Branding the Shah's opponents as more reactionary than the barbaric incumbent of the 'Peacock Throne' Owen said that if the Shah fell he "would be toppled initially by a very Right wing government which would soon be disrupted by the Left. And the Left is really communism, the Soviet Union and terrorist groupings in the Middle East".

LABOUR AND THE SHAH

So this 'Christian Socialist' and author of a recent volume laughingly entitled *Human Rights* - has, it seems revised his previous estimate that 'the concept of the Shah is rooted in history'. Just as well, since the only history in which the present Shah rule is rooted is the history of the CIA-funded and US Army-organised coup which brought him to power in 1953 and the 25 years of torture, repression, religious and national oppression, and extreme exploitation which

has been the inevitable accompaniment of his rule. A look a little further back in history will show that the father of the present Shah was removed at the end of the war for his pro-Hitler leanings.

The new reason presented for the continued support from a Labour Government for this blood-stained dynasty which our ambitious Foreign Secretary presents is rather more curious. Owen asks 'Can you just take their money sell them tanks for strategic interests, sell them cars, persuade them to hold down oil prices in the interests of the world, generally exert influence with them and then, when they they come under attack, just back off?' Rather than question whether a Labour Government should be selling arms to a regime whose sole use for them is the suppression of internal dissent, Owen makes it a point of pride, to stand by the Shah as his army and police use their British-made weapons to slaughter thousands demanding basic democratic rights and a share in the wealth Iran has accumulated.

The extent of the British arms trade with the Shah is made clear in a small news item by Christopher

Hird in the *New Statesman*, "During the last few months the Department of Trade has granted export licenses for the export of the following items to Iran: 8,000 anti-riot guns; 26,000 CS gas cartridges; 26,000 CS grenades; 20,000 mini smoke grenades and 2,000 screening smoke grenades. In addition clearance in principle has been given for 20,000 anti-riot helmets;



20,000 respirators; 20,000 anti-riot shields, 20,000 baton rounds and 5,000 anti-riot guns, Iran has, however, apparently asked for delivery of the following items to be speeded up: 2,000 anti-riot guns; and 25,000 rubber bullets.

As Owen was giving his interview Iranian police were opening fire on students and teachers demonstrating in Hamadan, 240 miles to the west of Tehran. Five weeks since the recent upsurge and the introduction of martial law began, with thousands dead and imprisoned, and an earthquake disaster to contend with there has still been no slackening in expressions of hostility to the Shah's rule.

A mass strike wave is now giving the lie to the myth that Owen and others would like to propagate that the movement is nothing more than a reactionary clerical reaction to



DAVID OWEN

the Shah's 'liberalisation'. In the state steel mills of Isfahan to the agri-industry of Karun in the south west workers' strikes have raised wage demands of between 40 and 100% alongside political slogans - against martial law, for free trade unions, SAVAK out of the factories an end to arbitrary sackings and victimisations. As the centre of gravity of the opposition shifts the Iranian working class will increasingly find themselves in the forefront of the struggle. Then Owen will replace - as he is already beginning to - the cry of 'Islam traditionalists' with warnings of the 'red peril', 'communism' and the 'Soviet threat'.

The Labour Party and the Labour movement must decide Whose side it is on?

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL
LABOUR PARTY



INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT
ID/1977-78/111
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London SW1A 2AH
7 February 1978

Thank you for your letter of 11 January asking for my comments on a resolution about Iran remitted via the Standing Orders Committee of the Party.

The resolution is based on a questionable premise. It seems to me a gross exaggeration to say that Iran has an international reputation for "ruthless political repression and torture". If I may quote myself, answering a question on this subject in a television interview last November, "I think you have to look at the culture, the tradition, the history, the whole business of the authority of the Shah in its origins in Persian history, if you are going to really take a balanced view". In so far as the description in the resolution has ever been applicable to Iran in modern times, it was more true of the dictatorial regime of Dr Musaddeq which was overthrown following the uprising in 1953 (not 1951).

However that may be, Britain's relations with Iran are conducted today on the basis that the two countries share a wide range of common interests and responsibilities. Iran plays a key role in promoting security and stability in the Persian Gulf/Indian Ocean area which is of vital importance to Western oil supplies and to our trade. In this connection Britain has certain obligations to Iran as an ally in the Central Treaty Organisation, which we regard as an important force for stability in the Middle East. In recent weeks the Iranian Government have taken up a moderate and statesmanlike attitude on a number of current issues of major concern to us, including the price of oil, Rhodesia and other African questions and the Middle East problem.



Although the above comments do not apply to Britain alone, Iran's importance to us may be judged by the facts that in 1977 she took over £650 million of British exports and supplied over a quarter of our crude oil imports. Thousands of jobs in this country are attributable to contracts in Iran.

None of this affects the deep concern I feel and have expressed about the human rights issue in Iran and elsewhere. I have discussed it with the Iranian Government at the highest level, and I believe that there have been certain, if limited, improvements in this field over the past year.

All these factors are taken into account in reaching decisions about the provision of defence equipment, which is the subject of the resolution. I do not believe that the policy advocated in the resolution would promote Britain's best interests as I have described them or would further the extension of human rights in Iran.

David Owen

(DAVID OWEN)

'Chips' with everything...

by John Pollard

IT WOULD be difficult to find an area of modern life that has not been affected in some way by the advent of the micro-electronic processor; commonly known as the 'chip'.

In 10 years time we could see a transformation of employment structures and conditions. It is vital that we understand what has been described by the 'Advisory Council for Applied Research and Development' as: "... the most influential technology of the twentieth century".

COMPUTER DEVELOPMENT

Although there were working computers before 1948, these were severely limited in their reliability by their dependence on the valve. The invention of the transistor in 1948 was the breakthrough that permitted the development of modern computers, substituting highly reliable and compact transistors for the old valves.

For some years computers were used mainly to store, manipulate and organise large stores of data; a good example of this is a payroll system where the calculations are fairly simple, but there are many

thousands of employees and a number of different rates of pay and tax allowances.

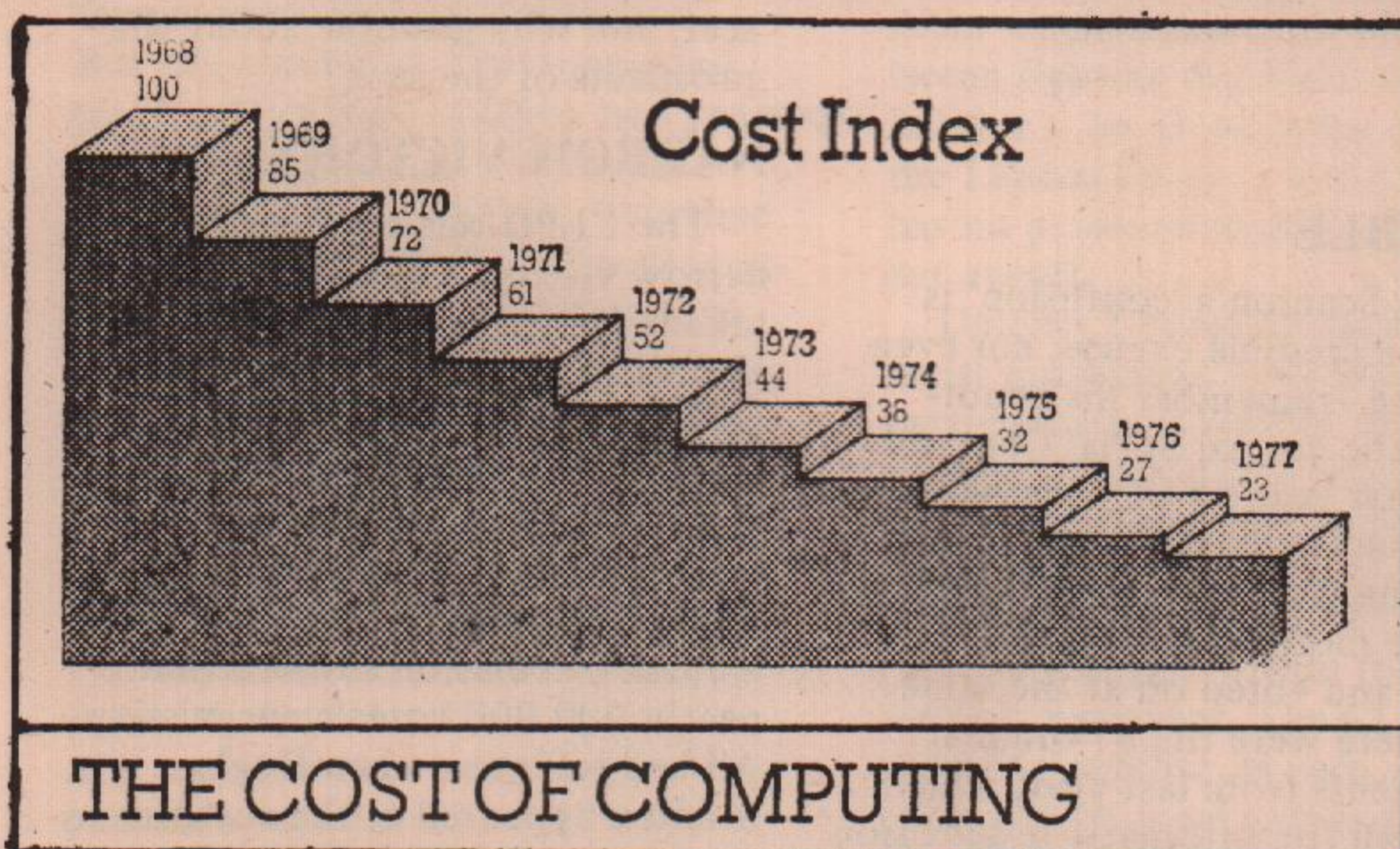
During this time, there was a constant drive to miniaturise the components used in computers. Since the transistor itself is the basic building block, efforts were concentrated on 'shrinking it'. These attempts were spearheaded by the United States military who were well aware of its potential uses in 'intelligent' guided missiles, fighter planes, submarine guidance systems and other weapons. Another wealthy research facility was in aerospace, which was con-

cerned with size and reliability.

The end product of this research was the micro-electronic processor, or chip, which had the same processing capability as an entire computer used to have.

Physically, the chip is a small piece of silicon covered with a maze of tiny circuits consisting of up to a quarter of a million transistors.

Chips are cheap to make—about £5 each, but to get any useful work out of them, they must be connected to a number of other devices (such as memory devices) which brings the price up sharply.



THE COST OF COMPUTING

EMPLOYMENT EFFECT

The advent of chips has widened the application of computers in at least two ways:

- * The scale has been reduced to a tiny fraction, and
- * The cost has fallen enormously.

This means that micro-processors can be introduced by small firms which hitherto had neither the physical space or the money to use conventional computers.

Examples are: telephone switching, office work such as typing, welding and paint spraying in the car industry and electronic cash registers.

To examine the effect, let us consider the word processor.

The secretary types in a letter and it appears on a visual display unit (VDU), which is like a television screen. Any mistake can be corrected by moving a cursor along the screen vertically and horizontally to the mistake and re-typing the correct letter.

ICL International Computers
Profitable growth is our business.

Moreover, the role of computers has changed from that merely of organising vast stores of data to that of controlling, monitoring and regulating what were formerly human jobs.

When it is complete, a button is pressed and the entire letter is automatically typed out at high speed. Standard letters, such as legal forms, can be stored and instantly recalled. If necessary, whole paragraphs can be moved up



Socialism in Red...and Green

ORTHODOX SOCIALIST politics has come under serious attack in the past 10 years. In this year, the decennial anniversary of the re-birth of revolutionary socialism, we are still failing to meet the challenge of women's liberation and multi-racialism.

Now we are under challenge from the 'ecologists', the 'Green Alliance' and those who accuse us of 'anthropo-centrism' (the bias of human supremacy over the animal and natural world). Can we begin to acknowledge, accept and integrate their criticisms of patriarchy, racism and industrialism into Communist politics?

'*Ecotopia*' (Pluto Press, 1978) presents this combined challenge to the many economic socialists who abound on the Left in Britain today.

'A novel about ecology, people and politics in 1999', its author, Ernest Callenbach has constructed a 'society of balance' between humanity, its urban context and the imperatives of the natural environment. What are its features?

CO-OPERATIVE COMMONWEALTH

Firstly, it is a co-operative commonwealth covering the three Pacific board states of California, Oregon and Washington on the western border of the United States. Callenbach has judiciously picked the wealthiest region of the world in which to place this new utopia. Secondly: it is in a state of secession from the capitalist west and the rest of the U.S. it is a society led by the women's party—the 'Survivalists'. They incorporate the radical Feminist impulse of 'eco-topia' together with a programme of libertarian de-centralism and sexual freedom. The 'opposition' is the 'Progressive Party' which surprise, surprise, is led by men and argues for commercial and industrial expansion and the re-introduction of the 'best slices of American life... thereby having the best of both worlds'. This the 'extremists' of the Survivalist Party and radical fringe 'ecotopians' reject completely with popular support to back them up. There is more than

a hint of Maoist messianism in their political debates!!

What is important about '*Ecotopia*' is that it is a work of 'faction' although it may be described as a 'novel'.

Science fiction is fast becoming the most interesting form of bourgeois literature, as with all authentic cultural forms its parameters represent a semi-conscious challenge to the prevailing culture. So with a work like '*Ecotopia*'—which by the way is Greek for 'the place of the household'.

It predicts the inevitability of the extinction of the automobile and its universal replacement by: bicycles and mini-buses in the urban centres, and light rapid transit rail across the countryside—a cross between our Underground/Metro trains, old-style trams and the Advanced Passenger Train (APT). All non-degradable materials were abolished by decree—to be replaced with two types of biodegradable plastics manufactured from plants, one type being short-life, subject to 'death' by ultraviolet rays from the sun. The other basic material, a durable plastic, had become the building block of all medium term constructions, from the 'Provo' bicycle to the modular piping with which all housing was made. A classified chemical structure being built into these components which enabled it to decompose when buried in soil!

SOLAR POWER

All energy requirements were provided by harnessing the thermal power of the Pacific Ocean by constructing giant 'refrigerators in reverse' which suck huge quantities of sea water through a system which extracts its embodied heat energy. This energy system, being, of course, completely non-pollutant, is only a variation on Eco-topias' other main power facility—namely solar power. Huge banks of parabolic mirrors and photo-cells built onto the mountain ranges of the western Rockies capture the energy of the sun and transport it to the city districts. In the last analysis, all our future energy will come from the sun.

And why not? The natural universe is maintained by the sun, then so can the human universe! It is a prediction of the future that all socialists can make with a certain degree of infallibility.

STABLE-STATE ECO-SYSTEMS

The principle of eco-topian life is that of the 'stable-state'. It had taken twenty years to come to fruition (ie. a generation), and upon it were founded the agricultural, industrial, commercial and domestic modes of life. Simply, stable-state means that all inputs into a system must be 'recycled' to equalise the outputs of the system. The stable-state is planned to create, most critically, an ecological balance where nothing is wasted, including waste!

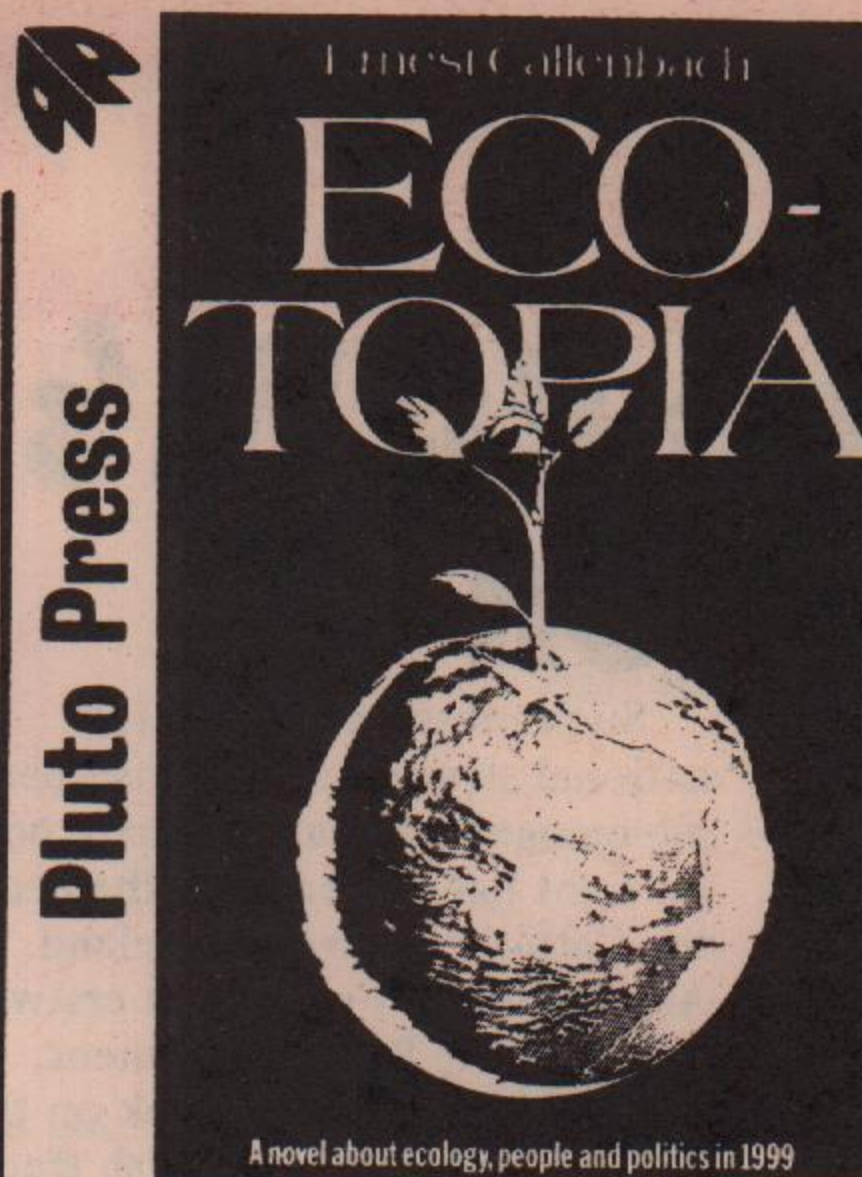
Waste and sewage under capitalism, according to the Assistant Minister for Food in San Francisco could only be considered in a 'disposal system'.

"In it sewage and industrial wastes had not been productively recycled but merely dumped, in a more or less toxic condition, into rivers, bays and oceans. This, he maintained, was not only dangerous to the public health and the life of water creatures, but its very objective was wasteful and unnatural." (page 17)

Only repeating again the lesson of the sun and it's energy, nature has its own built-in recycling system: 'in nature, no organic substance is synthesized unless there is provision for its degradation; recycling is enforced'. The key word here is 'organic'. Capitalism has built an industrial hell where the inorganic, the inert, dead capital rules and dominates over the organic, the naturally dynamic, and above all living capital/labour.

The cause of labour must therefore be, once more, allied with the cause of the natural world—a world in which we, only in this century, have begun to fathom, to learn from and to re-integrate. We can be quite certain that capital is incapable of doing this.

There are several problems with



The most dramatic vision of a possible future since William Morris's *News from Nowhere*.
£1.20 paper £3.60 cloth

by Andrew Smith

'*Ecotopia*' though. Firstly, this society has, in its secessionist mood, not only seceded from the United States, but within its own territory, the entire black population has established its own social and cultural order—apart from the San Francisco government and the rest of the people. It is an 'apartheid' system resting on consent and mutual self-determination. '*Ecotopia*' appears to have accepted the inevitability of 'black self-rule'. A question we may still need to ask ourselves is: Can humanity, in the white and the black, share the same cultural and social aspirations without formal 'separateness'? Even under a future socialist order?

VIABLE ECONOMICS?

The one outstanding problem with '*Ecotopia*' is the viability of its economic system. It's a 'mixed economy'. What economy is not? You may ask. But they admit that controls are such that its 'mixture' is more like 'state socialism' than old 'state capitalism'. Its fundamental feature was determined by the take over of all firms and industries by their workers—workers control is the norm and most manufacture groups less than 300 workers together. Surpluses and 'profits' are re-invested... recycled!

"The prices of clothes and shoes outside the core stores... are sky high and draconian tariffs are used to keep out the sweat shop... products from Asia..." (p.93)

'ECO-TOPIA', by Ernest Callenbach is available from the publishers; Pluto Press Ltd., Unit 10 Spencer Court, 7, Chalcot Road, London NW8 8LH, price £1.20; or from all good bookshops (inc. Brixton Books, 60 Loughborough Road, North Brixton, London SW9)

Readers may also be interested in a N.E.C. paper from the Labour Party, 'Labour and the Environment' one of five topic papers to the 1978 Labour Conference, price 45p.

For more information on 'ecopolitics' contact:
Friends of the Earth, 9, Poland Street, London W1
or
Socialist Environmental and Resources Association (SERA), also: 9, Poland Street, London W.1.

The impression given is that there is no labour exploitation because social forces prevent this from happening. Its all rather vague. Similarly, although private enterprise is extremely varied and wide spread, all needs somehow are met... there is no suggestion of actual planning anywhere. Even education has become a private initiative of local groups where parents and students hire their own teachers and furnish the premises (many in woodland areas) within which learning takes place.

SCIENCE FACTION

'*Ecotopia*' is an affirmation of the future. Nearly all science fiction/faction is doomed, with continual reference to 'eco-catastrophes' and the more or less annihilation of humanity.

Much of this current writing cannot escape from the inbuilt despair of bourgeois thought—this is one book that has.

'Green is the most important colour in your life'—we hear this imperative more and more. Chlorophyll is the green of the plant world which produces all oxygen for life on this planet; haemoglobin is the red of human blood which renews the oxygen for the human world.

We have begun the process of synthesizing these two most primary of colours with which both the natural and human worlds will be re-constructed.

'Chips'...continued



The New Technology: so neat, clean, and capital-intensive

and down in order to facilitate deletion or insertion of new passages.

The secretary, who was trained to type both quickly and correctly, now only needs to type with speed—mistakes are the work of the machine. The volume of typing is less, because standard letters and forms are stored; so one secretary can now do the job work previously done by up to two or three.

This example highlights the way that chips accentuate the the division of skill still further. Work for the majority is made less skillful while a small elite of computer personnel grows more ingenious and knowledgeable.

This contrast with the way that socialists would utilize new technology—we would be able to cut the working week and widen knowledge for all.

TRADE UNION RESPONSE

Some unions are now beginning to see the dangers of micros—for example, the Post Office Engineering Union, which recently 'won' the 37½ hour working week with no loss of jobs.

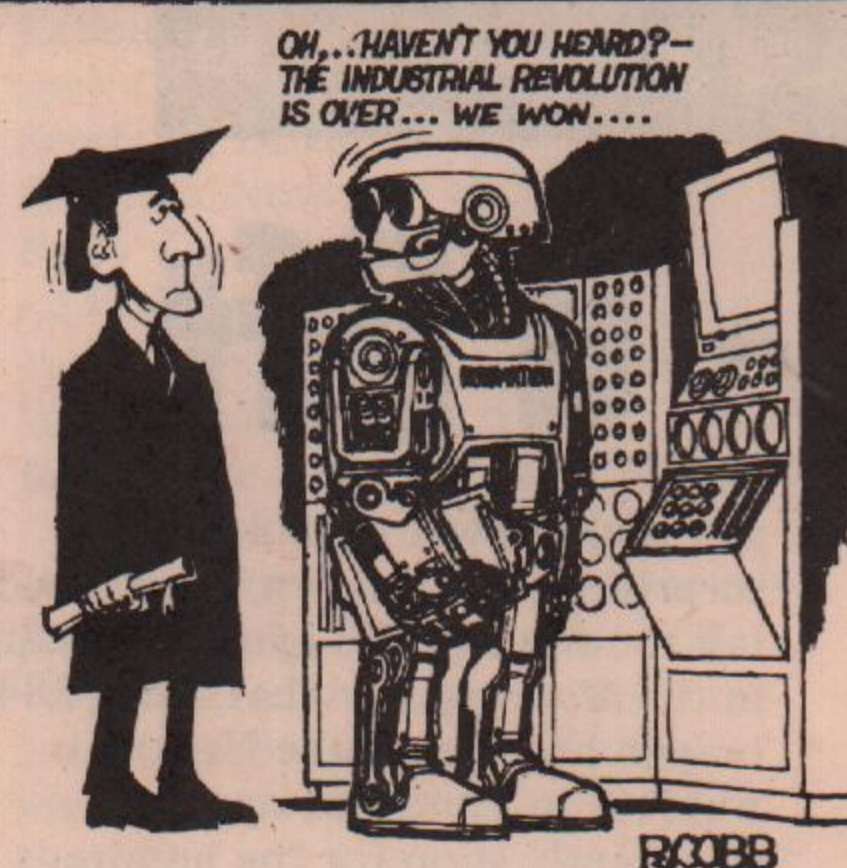
Their general secretary, Bryan Stanley, successfully moved a composite motion at this year's TUC which called for a Royal Commission of Enquiry to look into the effect on jobs and conditions created by the introduction of the microprocessor.

The C.P.S.A. (civil servants) in the Post Office has imposed a ban on the introduction of any new word processors until a study of their effects has been made.

SOCIALIST STRATEGY

Firstly, we cannot refuse to allow any new technology—such technology could be of immense benefit in a rationally planned economy.

What we must seek to do is to turn the introduction of chips to our advantage... more easily said than done! In general, we must refuse to allow new labour saving equipment until we get guarantees from management that there will



be no loss of jobs, but instead a cut in hours with no loss of pay. This will take a struggle to achieve.

Secondly, we must be on the alert for possible health and safety hazards in the new technology—management will try to cut corners in order to minimise costs.

Thirdly, we must learn to anticipate changes before they affect us; then we will be able to plan a strategy to cope with specific changes and not just react in an ad-hoc way to new technology.

Fourthly and finally, we can use the publicity around the introduction of chips to demonstrate that there is no need for unemployment, waste, overtime

etc., given our level of technological development. The only barrier to a full live for all lies in the present unplanned and profit oriented economic system.

The Labour Government has spent millions of pounds in recent months in an attempt to bribe American experts to build up a 'British' micro-electronics industry in competition with the U.S. West Germany and Japan. Meanwhile, International Computers Ltd (ICL) the only computer company in which 'British interests' are involved (and which gets millions in public subsidy) is having to scrap it out with IBM, Honeywell and other multi-nationals in the scramble for ever more lucrative contracts in the 'defence', 'auto', audio, and business machines industries.

The idea of actually planning publically controlled sectors of the micro-electronics industry, now being pushed by trade unions involved, has received the usual brush off by the Labour Cabinet.

Once again 'private enterprise' will be left to ride on the gravy train without any challenge by a Labour Government. It will be left to the trade unions and working class movement to fight for an alternative strategy to harness technology in the lasting interests of society.

Chartist

Republican P.O.W.'s Fight On

FOR THE PAST four months, the 'Chartist' has carried details of the current campaign for political status by Irish Republican prisoners in the jails of the 'Northern Ireland' statelet. Socialist Charter has given full support to the Prisoners Aid Committee solidarity campaign in this country and urges all 'Chartist' readers to attend the November 26th march.

STATUS

Over three hundred men in Long Kesh and Crumlin Road and twenty women in Armagh are currently engaged in a protracted battle to have their status recognised as prisoners of war, a status granted up to September 1976.

There is perhaps no other country in the world in which the brutal treatment that is being meted out to these prisoners would be met with such deafening silence by British trade union and labour leaders.

Even at the 'fundamental' level of human rights no protest is heard against these prisoners' denial of the right to exercise, to associate, to receive visits etc. for which Britain is yet again being taken to the Strasbourg courts.

IMAGINATION

However, like previous struggles by Irish prisoners, they have captured the imagination and support of large sections of the half million strong nationalist population of the six counties with, for example, 20,000 marching behind Provisional Sinn Fein banners in August and a similarly large march in Derry on October 8th. An equivalently sized demonstration in Britain would be two million strong!

Such pressure to have the national struggle of the Irish people recognised as a legitimate political fight has forced even the head of the Catholic Church in Ireland, Archbishop O'Fiaich, and erstwhile leader of the Peace Movement, Ciaran McKeown, to speak on their behalf. Sections of the Irish trade union movement, via the Trade Union Campaign Against Repression, are also entering the struggle against Britain's presence in Ireland, particularly against the methods used to harass, detain, 'fit up' and even murder radical trade unionists such as Willie Gallagher and Brian Maguire.

MINIMAL

Yet solidarity actions in Britain have been minimal. The calls by the *Daily Mirror* and John Pardoe for withdrawal neatly sidestepped the actual forces involved in fighting for it! The Communist Party, which has 'expressed its condemnation of all forms of torture, repression and discrimination' in the North (letter to the Prisoners Aid Committee) refused to support the 5,000 strong demonstration on July 9th organised by the PAC.

This protest march, supported by ten British trade union branches and trades councils, was in itself a considerable achievement, given the hostility in Britain to the Irish struggle. Yet it must be built on.

Support the march on November 26th. 2:30 pm Speakers Corner 'Prisoner of War' status for Irish political prisoners! Troops Out Now! Called by the Prisoners Aid Committee



Troops out demo in Barnsley

REPUBLICAN NEWS

ISR 3 now out

OF SPECIAL INTEREST to Labour Party members, the latest issue of *Ireland Socialist Review* reproduces the 1920 Report of the Parliamentary Labour Party Commission on Ireland. Arguing the case for a limited form of Irish self-determination, the Report reflects the concern felt in the British labour movement about Black-and-Tan excesses during the War of Independence and the general suppression of Ireland's democratic right to full nationhood. An introduction by Colin Kennedy places the Report in the context of the broader campaign against Britain's role in Ireland.

The new book by Belinda Propert, 'Beyond Orange and Green', is extensively reviewed by Chris Davies. In many ways the main argument in the book, that the Republican struggle is not anti-imperialist,

underpins a current campaign in the Labour Party in favour of accepting partition and organising the Party in the North. Chris Davies examines the reasoning behind this position and the implications it has for the working class movement in Britain and Ireland.

Two trade union reports are included in ISR 3; one from Chris Connor, an active member in Dublin of the Trade Union Campaign Against Repression. She explains the progress made by this 32-county organisation that has won important ground in the Irish trade union movement and forged links with Republican-led campaigns against British repression. The other is by Mike McDaid, branch secretary in the Civil and Public Services Association, who examines the debates and activities of the Broad

Left in that Union that led to important resolutions on Ireland on the 1978 annual conference agenda being ruled out without discussion.

Finally, the journal contains a review of 'Home Soldier Home', an anti-recruitment film produced by members and sympathisers of the United Troops Out Movement.

Ireland Socialist Review No. 3 is available from ISR, 60 Loughborough Road, London SW9 for 30p + 15p p&p.

For those who wish to sell ISR, 5 or more copies can be obtained post free from the above address.

Subscriptions are available at £1 for 3 issues (Nos. 1, 2 and 3 are available in a combined offer at 80p post free). Individual copies of No. 1 and 2 are 40p inclusive of postage.

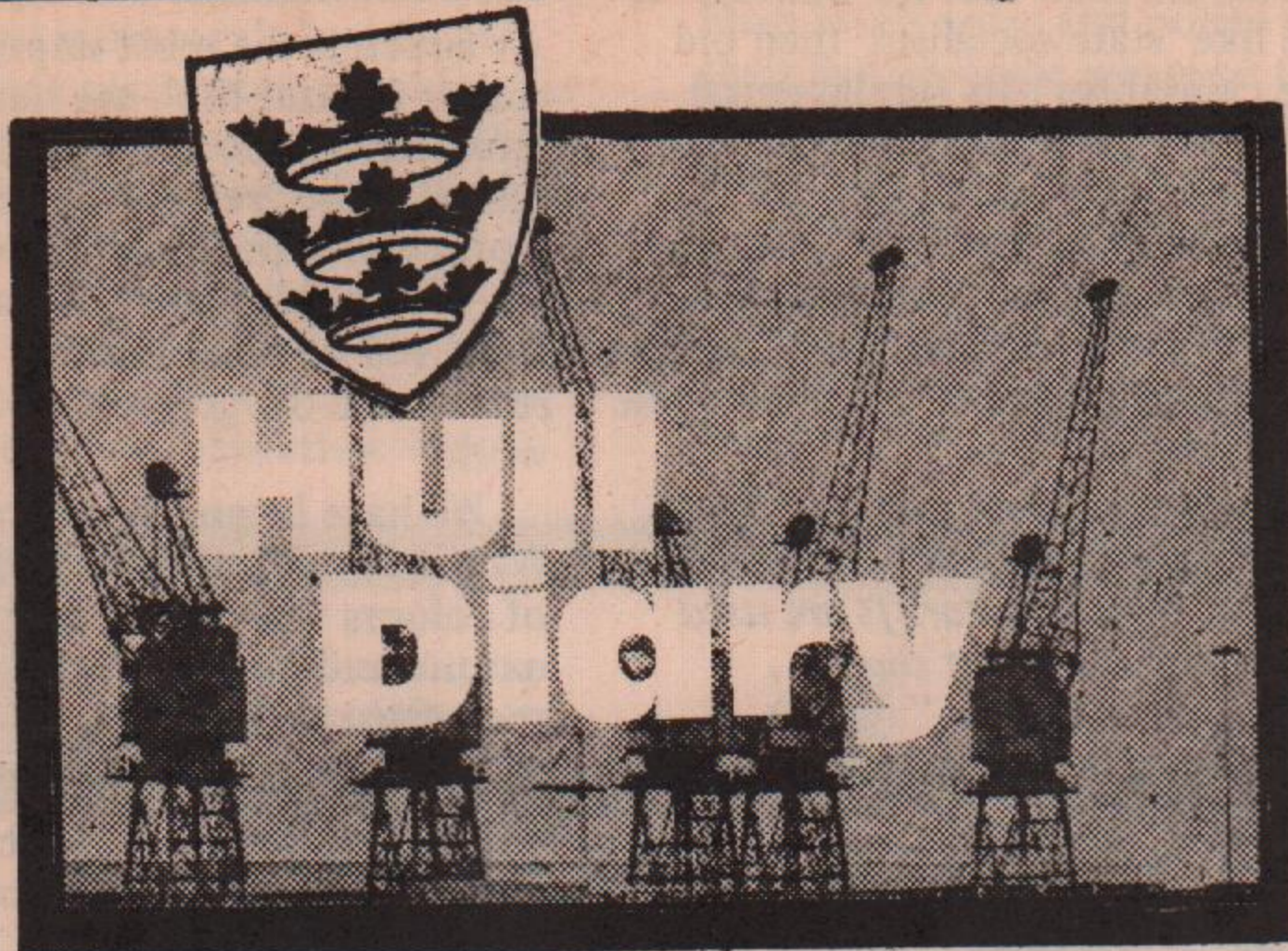
IRSP appeal

On Sunday 10th September 1978 three members of the London Support Group of the Irish Republican Socialist Party were arrested at the all party rally against racialism in Trafalgar Square. They were carrying a banner drawing attention to the appalling conditions of the prisoners in H Block, Long Kesh where a campaign for political status has been going on. The three, Jimmy Scanlon, Tony McNeill and Corn Powell have been charged with an obstruction offence. By its constant denial of

Trafalgar Square to those protesting against its repressive policy in Ireland, the Labour Government has shown its determination to silence those opposing the role of Britain in Ireland. The IRSP Support Group is making an urgent appeal for witnesses to come forward for the court case which will take place during the next few weeks. Names, addresses and telephone numbers of

those witnessing the incident, donations towards the cost of the defence campaign should be sent to IRSP. c/o Box 6, 182 Upper St. London N1.

NOTICES



SANDERSONS

needed - a lift

EVER SINCE RETIRING Transport Union secretary, Jack Jones, was crowned "The most powerful man in Britain" by Fleet Street, the press and TV have put a lot of effort into persuading us that over-mighty union barons have got drunk on their power. Even a native cop series, I think it was *The Sweeney*, recently served up a surrogate Moss Evans (who in real life inherited Jack Jones' job) being suitably despotic in a country mansion. It's true, the Transport Union

can wield power capable of surprising even its own. Who could fail to raise a proud eyebrow reading in the *Morning Star* that the 5/384 branch had forced the National Exhibition Centre to operate a union-only shop for the hundreds of (very) temporary extra workers taken on for the Motor Show rush? But, like the impressive new TGWU offices springing up all over the country, all this is of very obvious benefit to the union's hierarchy and leadership.

If they cared to use some of this power to bring a quick and ruthless victory to the protracted recognition disputes involving small groups of their own members, they might begin to deserve some of the hyperbolic venom which Fleet Street reserves for its working class opponents. Until then, we take it as seriously as the one-time Tory theory, mentioned in the *Chartist* last month, that Britain was hurtling towards an East European-type state.

by BRYNLEY HEAVEN

Such thoughts were brought on, twisting through Lincolnshire roads in the small hours—for the second time in a year—with the Hull dockers delegation, in the familiar hired blue and white corporation double decker bus, to lend a morning's support for the Sanderson's Forklift TGWU strikers.

You may have seen their banner "Pride—Integrity—Guts" at the Garners dispute or elsewhere. For *seventeen months* they have been out for elementary justice supposedly granted in the first flurry of this Labour Government's legislation.

Now, down to a determined hard core, they face another winter outside Sandersons, an incongruous cowboy riding in an unending sea of cabbage fields, four miles from Skegness. "We'd have won if this was the middle of Birmingham" convenor Phil Gillat readily admits. They *have succeeded* in stopping most production. Mr Sanderson, whose opulent mansion sits provocatively opposite the factory as in olden days, is getting help from such as NAFF or an employers' federation. Match their solidarity, if you can, to win!

Contact Region 10 TGWU Local appeals office, 24 High Street, Burgh-le-Marsh, Skegness. 0754 83779. Donations made payable to Sandersons Strike Fund.

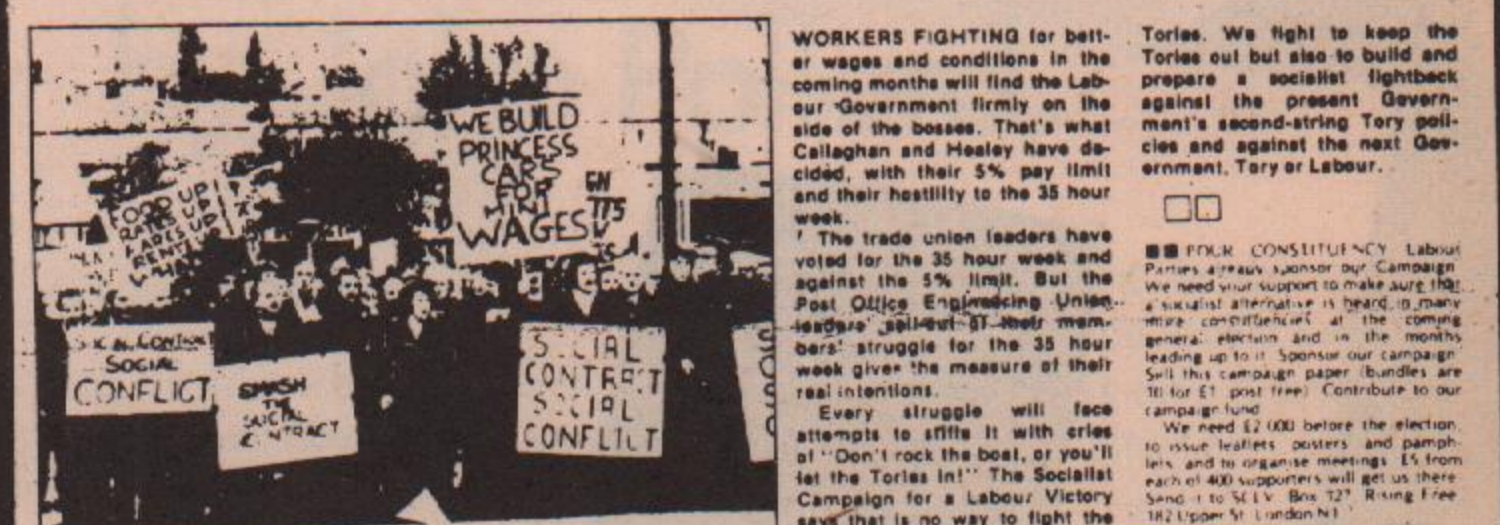
Socialist Organiser

Paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory

OCTOBER 1978 15 pence



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Conference

The National Abortion Campaign and the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign are organising a trade union delegate conference on November 25th at Caxton Hall to exchange ideas and discuss ways of extending and coordinating the campaign. Speakers include Alan Fisher (NUPE), Marie Patterson (T&GWU), Terry Marsland (Tobacco Workers), Mel Read (ASTMS). Get your union branch to sponsor the Conference and send delegates. Details from 30 Camden Road, London NW1.

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