

socialist newsletter

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Battle for democracy paves the way

NOW FOOT MUST FIGHT!

The turn by the Labour Party to electing the leader through an electoral college is an important moment in the political life of the British working class. Since the founding of the Labour Party the Parliamentary Party has fought against any control by the rank and file over its work. The leaders of the party have been left to do as they pleased in parliament. The Leader of the Labour Party, since the Second World War, has been seen more as an institution of parliament, Prime Minister or leader of "Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition", than as the leader of a national working class party. With the coming of the electoral college, that tradition of "untouchability" is being placed in question. That the needs of working people can force themselves, in a roundabout way, even into the bastions of the Labour leadership, is another mark of the political crisis brewing inside the political body of Britain. Certainly, it is a well disguised crisis. There are few signs on the surface that the age old parliamentary system is crumbling. But the threat of a "leader of the opposition" in parliament being challenged by the Labour Party rank and file or the unions, or worse still, being removed and replaced by a left winger such as Benn, this threat is aimed at the heart of the British parliamentary system.

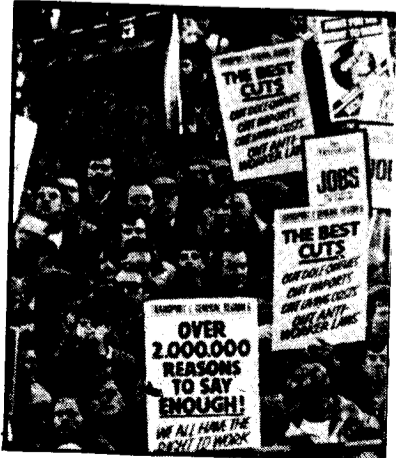
The problem with the electoral college is not so much what it does now as what might be possible in the future.

In the next month or two the cuts fight will erupt around the local councils. Thousands of councillors will be judged by their actions. But it is not only councillors who are being judged. MPs too, have to live up to the needs of those who voted them in, especially active workers in the Labour Party. What is required of MPs? That they save jobs. That they stop cuts. That they prevent repressive laws. How can they now do these things and respect the rules of Thatcher's parliament? Clearly they cannot. They must choose one or the other. Many Labour MPs plead that an elected government should not be brought down. Under the new reselection rules MPs cannot easily retreat into Westminster and plead parliamentary privilege. Neither now can the leader of the party so easily do that.

Just over a month ago more than 100,000 workers and their families marched against unemploy-

ment in Liverpool. They showed on their placards and in their chants how they see the fight against unemployment going - "Bring Thatcher down". Along with them the great majority of working people want Thatcher to go, but how to achieve it? Where to look?

Most of them look to the Labour Party. It was Michael Foot



who headed the Liverpool demonstration. What the thousands who marched and the millions they represent want from Michael Foot



is to get rid of Thatcher. The electoral college opens another door for the pressure of the ranks to reach the leadership of the party.

Of course the electoral college is based not only on pressure from the ranks but on the manoeuvres of the apparatus in answer to that pressure. It is not simply a way for the ranks to control the leader. It is intended by the MPs and the union bosses to bring to an end the rifts among themselves which have dragged on for nearly two years. Even so, the existence of any system of electing the leader wider than the MPs creates a situation with explosive possibilities.

Socialist Newsletter has advocated the election of the leader by Labour Party Annual Conference. But we do not sit on our hands in the discussions over the form of electoral college. We support the 33% for Constituency Parties, 33% for MPs and 33% for unions position. This offers the best chance for the ranks of the party to express their views. Having said that it is necessary to restate the crying need

for union delegations to be freely elected by levy paying members.

The electoral college is painted up by the right wing, such as David Owen, as a means for "communists" and "tories" in the unions to control the Labour Party. What they are really frightened of, since they said nothing about the Tories who came into Newham NorthEast to work for Reg Prentice within the Labour Party, is that militant Labour voting rank and file union members will feel able to exert pressure. The union bosses too don't want that to happen. Most of them are stifling the chance to discuss who should be the leader of the Labour Party in the unions, whilst casting massive block votes at Conference. This question is of interest to the whole working class. It must be discussed in the unions. Just as the councillors, the MPs and the leader are being questioned, so must the actions of union leaders in the Labour Party, on behalf of millions, be open to question. *The block vote system must be democratised.*

The January Special Conference does not end the problems of the Labour Party, which are not just about organisation or just about policies. What is being placed under question is the nature of the Labour Party. Is it simply an electoral machine which separates from its elected representatives between elections? Or can it demand of its MPs and councillors that when necessary they overturn the norms of parliament and council chamber, even to the point of challenging a government's right to govern? Because that is how working people feel today. They don't want Thatcher to continue in office. They want her out as soon as possible. But the Labour leaders don't want to do it. It can be done, but not through polite exchanges in parliament.

Big battles loom ahead. For capitalist Britain this is truly the dark hour of the century. Neither the ruling class nor the working class can face the problems which confront them now in the old ways. In the case of the Labour Party the battle has already opened. Perhaps the discussion over party democracy does not look like it very often, but what is at the heart of things is the working class trying to get to grips with the decline of imperialist Britain. The structures of the Labour Party are partly in decline, partly being stretched to the limit by the needs of the hour. Its programme, divided between socialist tubthumping in opposition and "good management" of capitalism in office, is being dragged out of shape by the rank and file. Not alone is the party being committed to things the leaders don't want to carry out, the leaders are being made to retreat in front of the rank and file. These processes cannot continue indefinitely without further explosions.

Supporters of *Socialist Newsletter* marched in Liverpool. We demand immediate and united action from the unions and the Labour leaders to defend jobs. We demand that the pay cuts, cuts in services and the proposed anti-union laws be fought with all the strength the Labour movement possesses. We call on Michael Foot, on the Parliamentary Labour Party and on the TUC to stop marking time. The working class is looking to its leaders for effective action. *Take that action and take it now!*

The Tories must be brought down and soon. The support for the Liverpool march, the support for the reselection of MPs and for the electoral college, all these things indicate that workers want to fight, that they want to make their leaders march at the head and that they want a say in who the leaders are. Now we must make it clear what the leader of the Labour Party must do - lead the fight to get rid of Thatcher.

REPORTS

In *Socialist Newsletter* No.11 the case of sacked teacher Eileen Crosbie was reported. Since then the recently formed *Charter for Teachers' Unity Against the Tories* called for a lobby of the NUT national executive, demanding that the NUT leadership step-up the campaign to reinstate Crosbie, with national action.

The lobby took place at the Hamilton House headquarters of the NUT on Saturday December 13th and was supported by teachers from Ealing, Bexley, West London, Southwark and Lambeth Associations. The lobbyists were in angry mood because so little had been done to launch a real national campaign against victimisations, highlighted by the Crosbie case.

Their anger turned out to be thoroughly justified as the response of the NUT executive members was nothing but complacent. Even SWP member Dick North seemed less than enthusiastic to entertain the idea of a national campaign to follow up the recent teachers' rally in Nottingham. Other NUT leaders refused point blank to discuss the matter with the lobbyists.

The lessons of this lobby are clear. If teachers are to defend themselves against victimisations and if the main teachers' unions are to successfully fight the derisory 4% pay offer then rank and file teachers must organise now to build maximum unity to make the teachers' leaders fight the Tory attacks.

The *Charter for Teachers' Unity* has made it clear that it intends to take up this fight and its Convenor Paula Breedon says that they will be meeting in the New Year to plan further activities in the struggle to make their leaders fight.

As expected the Labour Party demonstration against unemployment on November 29th was a great success. Reports of its size varied from 80,000 to 150,000. The Labour Party contingent on the march was at least 35,000 strong and was the largest mobilisation of CLPs since the war. Most delegations came from the north of England, Wales and Scotland. It became obvious in the build up to the march that Labour Party HQ was playing down the demonstration, as borne out by the fact that a mere 800 seats were booked on special trains from London.

The mood of the demonstration was unequivocally anti-Government. The most popular chant was 'Thatcher Out!' This proved that all the talk about the working-class not yet being ready to kick-out the Tories, an argument advanced by the SWP and CP as well as the Labour Party leadership, is in fact completely out of step with wide sections of the workers' movement.

At the Pierhead rally Denis Healey was greeted with boos and jeers. On the other hand Tony Benn and, in particular, Michael Foot, were welcomed with expectant cheers. The message from this huge march was clear: Foot must now lead the fight to oust the Tories.

Further marches are now planned in other areas, beginning with Glasgow. These marches must be fully supported and coupled with a call to turn the proposed Labour Party national unemployment march into a great campaign to bring the Tories down.

by Rachel Stein

Frank Irvine

Steve Chesterton

In West London, a well-attended meeting of Hammersmith Right To Work Campaign heard first-hand reports from a number of trade unionists leading local fightbacks against Tory Government policy.

Ian Clovey of Battersea Fire Station reaffirmed London FBU's opposition to their improved pay offer, in view of the threat of cuts and redundancies that has yet to be resolved. Pete Turner, a UCATT convenor, described the struggle at Bayonne Road, Fulham where council flats being sold by the GLC have been occupied in protest. Sue Hunter from West London CPSA argued for a united-front of all public sector workers against the 6% ceiling, redundancies and victimisations.

Then, speakers from the United Biscuits factory at Osterley, outlined how their opposition to the massive redundancies, due to take effect in the New Year, is being

obstructed by the local union official - who is also a director of the Company!

A supporter of *Socialist Newsletter* pointed out that such actions by trade union leaders were a widespread obstruction to the mobilisation of the working-class against the Tory Government and its class war policies. He called upon those present in the meeting to support the lobby of the Special Labour Party Conference on January 24th in order to unite the various anti-Tory struggles and to demand fighting leadership from the Labour leaders.

A further meeting of the Campaign decided to support a local demonstration on January 24th from the Bayonne Road squat to Fulham Town Hall from where transport will be available to take demonstrators to the Wembley Conference lobby.

Racist Attacks

by Winston Carr

The end of 1980 saw a disturbing increase in police and fascist activity against Blacks and Asians. The long-standing hostility of the police towards the Mangrove Club in Notting Hill once again flared up with full-scale assaults on the Club involving alsatian dogs and vanloads of police, including the Drug Squad. The pretences for these attacks were as groundless as ever.

At the same time the *British Movement* held its first national demonstration nearby on November

23rd. They marched with swastikas on their jackets and chanted 'Sieg Heil'. The march gained wide coverage in the bourgeois press. However what is not covered by the press is the BM's regular violent attacks on Blacks and Asians which has resulted in murder, in a number of cases which the police persistently write off as 'non-racial'.

The deepening of the capitalist crisis in Britain and the policies of Thatcher have led not only to growing militancy in the working-

class but also to greater direct repression by the police.

The need for a labour movement response to the police and the fascists is becoming increasingly crucial. In East London the *East London Workers Against Racism (ELWAR)* was formed with the express intention of mobilising forces willing to physically protect the Asian community from fascist attacks. This approach is vitally necessary. However where the ELWAR completely fails is in its self-imposed sectarian isolation from organised Labour.

The question of workers' self-defence is now on the agenda. But it cannot be based solely on the exemplary action of small numbers of individuals. The battle to mobilise Labour Parties and Trade Union branches in defence of Blacks and Asians must begin now.

This approach should not be counterposed to Black groups, but on the contrary CLPs and Trade Union branches should seek to build genuine united-fronts with Black and Asian organisations, campaigning against specific attacks of the police and mobilising large labour movement forces to drive the BM and co. off the streets.



NUS Conference

by Michael Keene

NUS Conference, held just before Christmas saw the Left Alliance block of Stalinists, Liberals and assorted careerists maintain the confusion and disarray in the student movement. This was done with the open support of the leadership of the Labour Student Organisation (NOLS) and the votes of the Tories.

The contrast between the willingness of students to fight Thatcher's attacks on their education and conditions, which was shown by the massive turn-out on last November's National demonstration, and the stance of the NUS Executive, could not have been revealed more starkly than it was at Margate.

A key issue illustrating this was the debate on Students Union Financing and Autonomy. Changes proposed by Tory Education Minister, Rhodes Boyson, would directly subordinate student unions to the financial control of their educational institutions. This could lead to competition for funds with college departments and facilities and enable college authorities to control union activities by threatening to cut off money. In the context of cuts in education spending this represents a deep attack on the ability of students to organise and on the services and facilities that student unions at present provide. In the Further Education Colleges, it will mean the virtual extinction of unions which already have a struggle to exist.

The NUS Executive's position has been to surrender before the fight has begun. Instead of outright rejection of Boyson's plan and a massive campaign, building on last November's demonstration, towards winning the support of the

Labour Movement as part of a common fight against the Thatcher government, the Left Alliance presented a resolution, with the support of the Tories, which called for a year's delay in implementing the proposals. Meanwhile polite letters would be exchanged with government ministers and "consultation" would take place over cups of tea.



David Aaronovitch

Stalinist President of NUS, David Aaronovitch described this as "our most astute move ever".

Included in the motion was a clause condemning "ultra vires" payments. This means that any union coming under attack for financially supporting "outside" campaigns would get no support from the NUS leadership. The motion also accepted the "principle of accountability", i.e. to the educational institution. This issue demonstrates very clearly the willingness of the Stalinists to take part in reinforcing the subordination of the student movement to a corporatist student union structure which is one of Boyson's objectives.

On grants, under threat from the Tories in the form of proposals for a loans system, NUS now formally has a policy for rejection of loans and for a 20% increase in grants. But as with resolutions on Education, Youth Employment and Economic Policy, the story is much the same. A welter of "instructions" and "demands" but no concerted plan of action to mobilise against Thatcher. Unity with Tory students is the policy of the mis-named Left Alliance - not involving students in the fight to bring Thatcher down.

NOLS (National Organisation of Labour Students) could have played a decisive role in reversing this situation. Despite its formal independence from the Left Alliance, NOLS gave support to every single main motion from the Executive. Its independence proved to be no more than the gloss on a cover-up operation for the Left Alliance's treachery.

NOLS Conference has been postponed until after the Easter NUS Conference at which the Executive will be elected. This means that the NOLS leadership can give itself a free hand to again support the Left Alliance by means of a "safe" independent slate of candidates.

Not a few Labour Clubs and NOLS members are deeply disturbed at this situation and want to organise to make NOLS break with the Left Alliance and fight for a policy of defence of the student movement against the Thatcher government. *Socialist Newsletter* supporters in NOLS should mobilise in the Spring Term for this policy, leading to interventions at the next NOLS and NUS Conferences.

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Public Sector Unity Can Smash 6%

by Peter Lane

The Thatcher government is now getting ready to make a new central challenge to the whole working class, through its 6% cash limit on pay for public sector workers.

This is a challenge not just on wages but also jobs and services, right across the whole spectrum of nationalised industries, local and central government, government corporations (like BL and BSC), health, education and so on. The way to stop sections being picked off one by one, and a weakening of the whole movement, is by the unity of the whole movement in action against the 6%.

The figures below show how unsatisfactory the position is for this government. Comparing Tory intentions for interest, inflation and wage rates with those that have actually prevailed in the current financial year, we get a graphic illustration of how the working class has been able to defend itself.

	Interest	Inflation	Wages
Target:	12.5%	13%	13%
Reality:	15%	17%	20%

To ensure that councils stick to a 6% overall rise in expenditure the government intends to deduct money from the next instalment of

the Rate Support Grant in November after seeing the level of settlements. Any increases in wages above that level will lead to cuts in other areas. Councils can attempt to raise revenue through higher rates — but the biggest spenders, Labour Councils, will provoke a backlash against themselves. We must oppose such rate rises, which only delay the inevitable confrontation that must arise out of Thatcher's anti-working class strategy. Previous attempts at using rate rises to buy time have also produced a further backlash amongst Labour Party members. Already

the Lambeth Labour Parties are voting against the supplementary rate rise being proposed by the Left-dominated council, while remaining firmly against all cuts.

Thatcher's gang of highwaymen are attempting to point a pistol at our heads, with the stark choice: your wages or your jobs. In this respect it is important to understand that we are not talking simply of a 6% pay limit. The Tories are demanding that rises in the total wage bill are kept to 6%. In practice, and not just in theory, this could mean that we may see rises both above and below 6%. The

and Local Government: A... idle gesture. Sections such as... government, the civil service, health and education, will be picked off one by one unless concrete plans for unity against the 6% are made.

This requires a Public Sector Trade Union Alliance against the 6%. Just as it was the alliance of NUPE, GMWU and TGWU in 1978-9 that smashed Callaghan's 5% and sent his washed-out government packing, so such a Public Sector Alliance could be the key to the bringing down of Thatcher.

This is not to deny that Thatcher is a tougher adversary than Callaghan. But it is the nature of the 6% — a challenge to the whole working class — which is a combined attack on wages, jobs and services, that cries out for such a broad Alliance to be built.

The decision by nine clerical civil service unions to take joint action against the 6%, and the setting up of the NUM-ISTC-NUR alliance against redundancies, is a result of the instinctive drive for unity by their members. But if their actions are confined to selective, localised protests and strikes — as proposed in the civil service — Thatcher will not bat an eyelid.

Longbridge On the Brink

by Frank Irvine



The recent strike in a section of the Longbridge plant of BL Cars revealed the complexity of the problems workers in BL are facing. The dispute developed out of a situation where the Edwards management tried to use an outside firm of contractors to supply seats for the Mini Metro. The Longbridge bosses claimed the BL seatmakers were working below capacity.

The Longbridge men refused to handle the outside seats. The management responded by taking disciplinary action against some of those involved in a protest within the plant. The bourgeois press described these incidents as a "riot" in Longbridge. What in fact happened was an expression of the deep seated frustration felt within BL about the 'Edwards Plan' and its effects. The end result was the sacking of a number of men including shop stewards. The solidarity strike by over 1500 Longbridge men, was in solidarity with those victimised and the TGWU was forced to make the strike official.

BL responded with statements ranging from threats of dismissal to the 1500 strikers and the calling in of scab labour, to agreeing to an ACAS enquiry. On the basis of this the strikers have returned to work. However the dispute is by no means over and the strike could well break out again if the sacked stewards are not reinstated by the enquiry.

There are many lessons arising from this most recent experience. After the sacking of Robinson and the imposition of the Edwards Plan there are those who would argue that the back of the stewards movement in BL has been broken, through the joint pressure of the BL management and the treachery of the leaders of the TGWU and AUEW.

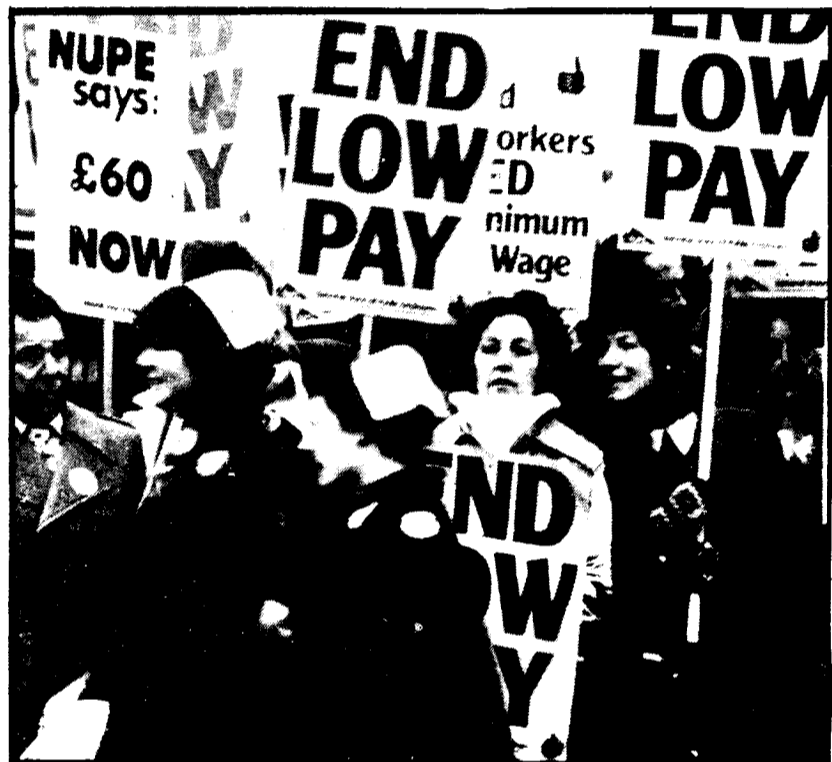
It is true to say that the activity of the national union leaders has been to try to cut out shop stewards from a central role in negotiations. But it was due to the place of the stewards in BL that this strike began and it was the strength of the shop floor movement which led to it being made official.

The strike reveals that the workforce is pushed into fighting the effects of the Edwards Plan and still turn to the shop stewards committee for leadership. The BL workers, in most difficult conditions and under enormous everyday pressure, remain combative and possess a leadership at rank and file level which still wields considerable clout. If this were not the case the strike would not have taken place and the management would have been able to enforce the outside contracts on the Longbridge workforce.

This is not to say that there are no problems within the shop stewards movement. At the mass meeting just prior to the ending of the strike the stewards were unable to propose any clear directive as to the next step in the battle. This showed, not the dismantling of rank and file leadership but the need for greater political understanding and firmness amongst the stewards in the face of management blackmail and capitulation by national union leaders.

To identify the problems that rank and file workers have with the treachery of their national bureaucratic leaderships with a weakness among the rank and file themselves would be to draw a wrong conclusion from a highly complex situation. Certainly the BL workers have suffered serious setbacks in recent years, but the recent strike demonstrated the knife-edge tension within BL which repeatedly breaks out in rank and file action. A tremendous explosion is building up against the effects of the Edwards Plan and in spite of great difficulties with their trade union leaderships the BL workers remain essentially undefeated. The immediate need is for unity of all BL workers against Tory plans. It is necessary to take hold of the shop stewards' movement as a political weapon to overcome the legacy of reformist betrayals at a national level and the work of the Communist Party, which has, for many years, blocked the usefulness of the stewards' movement in BL by making militant speeches and calling "instant strikes", only to patch up behind the scenes "deals" with management and the union leaders. The many uncoordinated strikes which the CP has led at Longbridge led in the end to the chaos surrounding the sacking of Derek Robinson.

It is through the building of a political leadership among the stewards at Longbridge, a revolutionary leadership, that a regenerated shop stewards' movement will arise, which will be able to rally the BL workers against Edwards and against his paymasters, the Tory Government.



rise for civil servants last year, for example, was 16.5%, but still conformed to the 14% cash limit then prevailing. The extra cost was clawed back by the decision to cut the workforce by 2.5%.

To many it will seem that they are being forced into a straitjacket, where the results of their own strike action lead simply to fewer jobs for everyone. It is necessary to demand that Labour and Trade union leaders follow a strategy that will break out of that straitjacket, instead of conforming to it. This was done by Sirs of the ISTC, who kept the steel strike confined to wages, and prevented effective action to stop the decimation of Consett and Corby. Similarly, civil servants leaders in the CPSA, totally contradicting conference policy, are urging the acceptance of massive job loss through the introduction of new technology.

So far the dockers and Firemen have shown the way to resist the Tory onslaught. The dockers threatened national action to save 178 jobs in Liverpool, and the FBU will reconvene a National Delegate Conference to oppose any job cuts arising from their pay claim that broke through the 6%. It is imperative for the full strength of the workers organisations to be thrown nationally against a threat to any section. Shotton, Bowaters and Corby point glaringly to one lesson: the localisation of struggles has to be resisted at all costs. It is clear though that Thatcher is counting on the miners and firemen settlements being exceptions to the rule this year. They have not thrown down the gauntlet of the 6% and passed the Employment

The firemen were enthusiastically supported as a test case by rank and file trade unionists, particularly in the public sector. In departments like Health and social security CPSA members contacted local fire brigades, seeking ways of giving concrete support. Some of them have now set up the Campaign for Civil Service Unity Against the Tories, which will fight for national strike action co-ordinated on the widest possible basis against the 6%.

The civil servants, now amongst those in the front line on pay and job cuts, are holding special pay conferences this month. Talk about being a "special case" has to be set aside, in favour of unity against the 6% through an alliance of the public sector unions. The civil service union leaders can take the initiative by calling for a massive march on Westminster to unite all those against the 6%.

The civil servants, along with NALGO and the NUT, have to face the obstacle of the 6% in the coming months. There is no doubt that irresistible pressure could be heaped upon this Government by a co-ordinated public sector revolt against the 6%, with unions taking action together this February and March. It is precisely this strategy that must be urged on the Labour and Trade Union leaders at the Special Labour Party Conference on January 24th.

NUS Leaders Condemn Hunger Strikers

NUS Conference took place during the Hunger Strike. From the outset, everyone was aware that the Irish debate would be central to the Conference. This was reflected in the opening Presidential address of Aaronovitch who lost no time in equating the men and women on the hunger strike with the fascist bombers in Bologna and those responsible for anti-semitic attacks in France. This set the whole tone of the vicious fight waged in the Conference by the Left Alliance and their NOLS and Tory supporters against the Republican prisoners and in support of Thatcher's policy.

The majority of delegates on the floor were clearly opposed to the Executive. This was shown by the votes which ensured that a speaker from the Relatives Action Committee could address the Conference and that an official collection be taken for the Hunger Strike campaign. Mrs. Nugent, mother of Mairead Nugent, on hunger strike in Armagh jail was given a standing ovation by half the delegates.



Mairead Nugent

The Irish debate took place on the third day. It was prepared by a large amount of fringe activity. A well attended Charter 80 meeting was held. The night before the debate a meeting was advertised, ostensibly to lay the foundations for a campaign called "Students for Peace and Democracy in Ireland". Billed to speak were Gerry Grainger of the Irish Students Union, a speaker from the Northern Ireland Women's Movement, Steve Page, the national Chairperson of NOLS, and speakers representing the Left Alliance and Liberals. Alan Watson, NOLS member of the NUS Executive took the chair.

The purpose of the meeting was soon made clear. The British presence, we were told, was necessary, troops should "withdraw to barracks" but remain on hand to "protect the population from sectarian attack"; Charter 80 was nothing more than a cover for "terrorism"; the hunger strikers should be rejected - satisfaction of their demands would mean political status and they are not political prisoners - but criminals and murderers. Thus ran the speakers.

The Irish debate itself saw a main resolution presented by the Executive and two amendments, one calling for troops out now and the other for support to the prisoners' five demands.

The Executive position expanded on the themes of their fringe meeting.

The hunger strikers we were told, wanted to set themselves up as a "privileged elite" and have the laundry and cleaning done by "other criminals".

This farce was not allowed to continue unchallenged however. A large number of delegates, particularly the bulk of Northern Irish delegates, went to the meeting and sharply challenged this craven support for Thatcher and her determination to murder the hunger



The Response of British Labour

The response of the Parliamentary Labour Party, with a few notable exceptions, could be summed up as wholehearted support for Thatcher and Atkins in the uncompromising stand they took against the Hunger Strikers. Not too surprising, when one considers the role which successive Labour governments have played in propping up imperialist interests in Ireland. It was, after all, a Labour government which sent the British troops into the North of Ireland in the first place, introduced the infamous Diplock Courts and presided over the torture chambers of Castlereagh interrogation centre. It was Roy Jenkins, who as Home Secretary, introduced the Prevention of Terrorism Act - a measure designed to intimidate and harass the Irish community in Britain.

Merlyn Rees was quick to applaud Gerry Fitt when he urged the Tory Government to stand firm against the Hunger Strikers. When on the 19th December, it became clear that the Hunger Strikers has exacted major concessions from the government. Concannon, for Labour, demanded that none of the concessions be implemented until the ending of the "dirty" protest and the acceptance by the prisoners of prison rules. Praising Atkins stand he added: "It would be churlish not to congratulate you on the difficult period you have just gone through".

strikers. The meeting eventually had to be abandoned without accomplishing its objective of setting up a campaign.

The prisoners, the Hunger Strike, Charter 80, were all put in a bag labelled "support for terrorism". So weak in fact were the references to the role of the British army and state and repressive legislation, that the Federation of Conservative Students, including its two Executive members, voted for the main motion.

The final vote, distorted by the large block votes of the Conservative universities, rejected both amendments by a two to one margin.

The fight must begin to prepare for the Easter 1981 NUS conference. The Left Alliance leadership's support for the British state against Irish Republicans must not go unanswered. *Socialist Newsletter* supporters in the colleges must now launch a fight to remove, in particular, those leaders of NOLS who disgraced themselves and flaunted democracy at Margate.

Paying a special tribute to Gerry Fitt, Concannon noted that his opposition to the Hunger Strike and its demands "represents the vast majority view of the minority faith in Northern Ireland". (Guardian Dec. 20th). In actual fact as we've shown elsewhere, the response on both sides of the border in Ireland in support of the Hunger Strikers took on the dimensions of a mass movement.

One expects little else from people like Rees and Concannon. More notable, in view of his initial support for Charter 80, his stated opposition to the division of Ireland and the partition settlement, was the total silence of left leader Tony Benn during the hunger strike. Indeed, of the 11 MP's who signed Charter 80 at its inception, only two Joan Maynard and Ernie Roberts took a principled stand, albeit on humanitarian grounds, all through the Hunger Strike, demanding government action on the 5 demands. Ernie Roberts as Chairman of the Ad-Hoc Hunger Strike Committee launched an appeal in support of the prisoners demands.

On two occasions Joan Maynard attempted to put a resolution to the National Executive calling on the Government to act to save the Irish prisoners . . . and on both occasions it was rejected out of hand. Both times supporters of *Socialist Newsletter* lobbied the members of the NEC - It is worth stating that another of the 'lefts' - Neil Kinnock - said there that not only would he not support the hunger strikers demands but he disagreed with the granting of special category status at the time of internment.

In the closing days of the strike, as an outcome of persistent lobbying of MP's a meeting took place in the House of Commons at which a number of MP's - Stuart Holland, Stan Thorne, Syd Bidwell, Ernie Roberts - agreed to put forward an early day motion on the prisoners five demands. Moved by Bob Parry on the 18th December, the motion was ruled out of order by the Speaker.

The role of the Labour Committee on Ireland (LCI) in the campaign must be noted. The LCI was noticeably silent throughout the hunger strike. Its only action was to call a lobby of the NEC on the 10th December at which not a single member of the LCI was present!

Of the 18 trade union leaders in Britain who signed Charter 80, including Lawrence Daly NUM, Bob Wright AUEW and Mick McGahey NUM, not one of them actively supported the November 15th or December 7th Demonstrations.

At the level of the rank and file in Labour Party and trade union branches, the response, where the issue was raised, was good. *Socialist Newsletter* supporters fought in local Labour Parties, students unions

and trade unions, successfully in many instances, attempting to build on the initiative of the Ernie Roberts Appeal.

The organisation of the Hunger Strike campaign in Britain can be characterised in two ways:

(1) its organisational ineffectiveness and

(2) its lack of strong thrust into the working class movement. Charter 80 which was set up prior to the Hunger Strike had an impressive list of supporters, not only from the Labour and Trade Union movement, but from the arts, the media, the womens movement, the church. However, with a few exceptions, none of this passive support was mobilised in any active way once the Hunger Strike got under way.

The central co-ordinating body from the start of the Hunger Strike was the Ad-Hoc Hunger Strike committee, set up to mobilise for the Dec. 7 demonstration and to co-ordinate activity in support of the Hunger Strikers. It failed to do either. Having secured an Open Letter from Ernie Roberts MP it failed to use this in a consistent and serious way to win support from within the Labour movement, though this was potentially a powerful weapon for so doing. The local ad-hoc committees which developed concerned themselves with activities not involving large numbers of people, such as fasts outside Downing Street, token "blanket" protests, pickets of Amnesty International.

The November 15th demonstration for Withdrawal from Ireland was the first major initiative of the Hunger Strike campaign. It drew a pathetic turn out however - around 4,000 people. Significantly, there were no Labour Party or Trade Union leaders there, and few trade union or labour party contingents, plus a lone but honorable Youth Socialist contingent from Cambridge.

The December 7th demonstration was even more pathetic in turn out than the previous one had been, perhaps 2,000. Any effective national campaign must be brought right into the Labour Party, trade union, student union branches, organising lobbies and petitions of the TUC, NEC and parliamentary labour party.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act has only too well succeeded in its object of intimidating and harassing the Irish community, to the point where it hesitates to be involved in any action relating to Ireland. Without a serious campaign from within the British Labour Movement, Irish militants saw no avenue by which they could voice their full support for the prisoners facing death. This makes a serious campaign by the British Labour Movement for the abolition of the P.T.A. a matter of priority.

For



The Hunger Strike was ended by the prisoners just before Christmas. Up until now the prisoners have not received any concessions in practice from the British government. Despite this it is clear that concessions were given, in a form which would enable the government to save face, but in a form which would give the H Block men substantially all the five demands.

That the Tories were forced, even under the table to concede to the Hunger Strikers, is a mark of the depth of the support actions which swept Ireland, North and South. A real political destabilisation threatened to set in if any of the Hunger Strikers died.

The Tories conceded in principle. This enabled the end of the Hunger Strike. But then the government reneged on its promises. Under these conditions a victory was won, but only in principle. Every concerned member of the Labour movement in Britain must now restart the campaign until Thatcher has been forced to implement the promises. *The five demands, in the agreed form, must be implemented without conditions and without delay.* A dishonourable trick has been played on the Irish prisoners and not for the first time. The possibility was not absent from the prisoners own thoughts. Bobby Sands, the Republican Commandant in Long Kesh, wrote in his statement at the end of the Hunger Strike, that only the actions of the masses could guarantee that the British would honour the settlement. That remains true.

The Fight Political Status

by Vera Bennett, Michael Keene and George White



Clearly, the Tories wanted to concede nothing. That the concessions, if implemented, would be political retreat, has already been clearly stated by Paisley and Powell. Equally clearly, the Tories were aiming to buy time through the concessions, hoping to divide and confuse the prisoners. The way in which the Hunger Strikers have been isolated and, after an initial loosening of restrictions within the jail, a ban has been placed on meetings among the prisoners, shows that Thatcher cannot contemplate granting political status, which would be a blow at the right of the British administration to dispose of Nationalists as criminals, and in that a challenge to the legitimacy of the whole regime. Even the granting of the five demands is not, in itself political status, although in substance the demands would restore all Republican prisoners to Special Category Status.

If the Tories believe that such a cheap trick as they have pulled would demoralize the prisoners and defuse the mass movement they are wrong. Already a section of the men in Long Kesh has called for a renewed Hunger Strike. The Irish National H Blocks Committee has called a delegate conference of 300 local groups for the 18th January. Bernadette McAliskey said that if the British and their supporters in Ireland thought that a mass mobilisation couldn't be done a second time, "they are mistaken, because as and from today we are starting it again. We recognize it is more difficult to do it a second time

but we are going to do it".

The demands of the Long Kesh and Armagh prisoners are political. It is not necessary for socialists in Britain to be drawn into a debate about whether the five demands represent political status or not. There is no contradiction between demanding that the government honour its pledge to the Hunger Strikers and in continuing the fight for full political status. *Socialist Newsletter* supporters were with the strikers in their fight. We stand with the prisoners now. This is not the time to stop the campaign. The Tories were pushed back. Even this stalemate situation offers them little chance to throw back the Irish national struggle. There is no trick solution to the crisis of the British state which has been opened by the Hunger Strike in the Six Counties.

British socialists, standing four square with their comrades in the Irish Republican movement against a common enemy, must not despair in the face of the propaganda machine of the ruling class, which claims the prisoners have been defeated.

The men in Long Kesh and the women in Armagh, those in British jails and those who took to the streets in their tens of thousands — they are not defeated!

The fight must be waged in the unions, Labour Party and student movement for the government to implement its agreements. We can be sure that, whatever their feelings of the moment, the men and women in Long Kesh and Armagh will not be broken by such a cheap manoeuvre.



The Campaign In Ireland

The campaign around the Hunger Strikers in Ireland, North and South, co-ordinated by the National H-Block/Armagh Committee, reached a level and intensity not seen since the aftermath of Bloody Sunday 1972.

The North of Ireland remained in a state of permanent mobilisation. This began on the 26th October, the eve of the Hunger Strike, with a massive 20,000 strong demonstration in Belfast.

The start of the Hunger Strike on the 27th October saw extensive road blockings of the Belfast streets. In the afternoon, construction workers on building sites and local businesses downed tools in solidarity with the Hunger Strikers. Dockers from the Belfast docks walked off the job and marched to the offices of the Northern Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NICTU) to demand that it come out in support of the Hunger Strikers.

Every day of the Hunger Strike saw demonstrations and pickets involving hundreds and thousands of people, not only in Belfast and Derry but in Strabane, Newry, Coalisland, Dungiven, Stewartstown. In addition, church gate meetings were held on Sundays. On the 12th November there was a total work stoppage in Derry City, with the workers there putting out a call

community. Particularly significant was the number of youth involved in Youth Committees against the H-Blocks, also the Housewives Committees, the Students Committees. It seemed that all the anger, the bitterness and frustration built up in nationalist areas over the years of violence, of the harassment by the British Army, the nightly raids and searches, burst forth and found its concentration in the struggle in support of the Hunger Strikers.

In the South too, the movement in support of the prisoners grew apace from day to day, organised by the National H-Block Armagh Committee.

Following the one day strike in Derry, several hundred workers in Tralee, in the south-west corner of the country, went on strike. Hunger Strike Committees grew up in many places throughout the South. On the 22nd of November, a big demonstration took place in Dublin, involving 20,000-25,000 people, not only large contingents from the North and from all the four corners of Ireland. Again, very significant were the large numbers of youth involved, predominantly working class youth. Indeed, all of the demonstrations involved by and large, a working class composition.

The week following this demonstration, several hundred construction workers walked off a number of building sites in Dublin and marched to the British Embassy. A half day strike also took place in Waterford, involving about 600 workers in Waterford Glass. About 20 journalists signed a petition in



to workers throughout Ireland for a General Strike in support of the prisoners.

All during the four-year campaign for political status in the H-Blocks, numerous demonstrations had been organised, but never since the Civil Rights marches in the '60's had such numbers come out on to the streets. Not only that, but the Hunger Strike campaign involved all sections of the nationalist

support of the Hunger Strikers, including Vincent Browne, Ulick O'Connor and Benedict Kiely.

Despite the opposition of the Party leadership and of the Conference, a number of prominent members of the Irish Labour Party, including members of the Dublin Regional Council and Louth Constituency Council, expressed their support publicly for the Hunger Strikers, in a letter to the

Irish Times.

Throughout the country as well, many local councils and councillors supported the prisoners, including many from the Labour Party.

On December 6th, the largest single mobilisation of the Hunger Strike Campaign took place with a march to the British Embassy, involving about 40,000 people. Despite the silence of the ICTU, there were many trade union banners evident. The march was halted about 200 yards from the Embassy in gardai in riot gear obviously fearing a repetition of 1972 when angry crowds razed the Embassy. But the stewarding of the march was so tight that no violence ensued.

The Trade Union Sub-Committee of the National H-Block Committee called for a Day of Action, including work stoppages, workplace meetings, pickets etc on 10th December. The response of the working class throughout Ireland on the Day of Action, indicated the strength of support for the prisoners. While the leadership of the trade union movement, opposed work stoppages, workers throughout the country, in direct defiance of the leadership demonstrated their solidarity. Indeed, the Communist Party of Ireland, which has significant strength in a number of Dublin factories, refused to support industrial action when asked by the H-Block Committee!

Some indication of the widespread nature of the stoppages can be shown. In West Belfast, there was massive support. Places affected included Bass Brewery, Deep Sea Docks, Eastwoods. About 60 workplaces were represented at a rally attended by 5,000 workers. In Derry, there was a general strike, with 12,000 people involved in a rally. Castleblaney, Clones, Donegal suffered almost complete stoppages and Monaghan was closed for half a day. In Cork, 600 workers marched from the ITGWU offices to a meeting in the city centre. The largest contingent was from the Irish Steel Mill, where workers there and from the Irish Steel, Construction went on a half day strike — about 1200 men. Stoppages occurred also in Dunganven, Fermanagh, Dundalk, Limerick, Cavan, Sligo, Athlone — to name but a few of the important places. In Dublin about 1500 attended a rally at the GPO, with construction workers, dockers, Corporation workers represented.

Thames Poly

At the start of the Hunger Strike, a Charter 80 Society was set up in Thames Polytechnic

It began to build support for the hunger strikers with an initial meeting and weekly meetings to co-ordinate activity. It invited a speaker from the Relatives Action Committee and organised a collection of £40. It put out numerous leaflets, including one produced by members of the teaching staff, showed the film on the hunger strike, held a display of posters, leaflets and pictures and set up a stall in the college to gather signatures to the prisoners' five demands.

This activity provoked a large amount of discussion and at the same time a violent backlash. In a college not noted for the presence of an organised right wing, the Irish question galvanized every bigot.

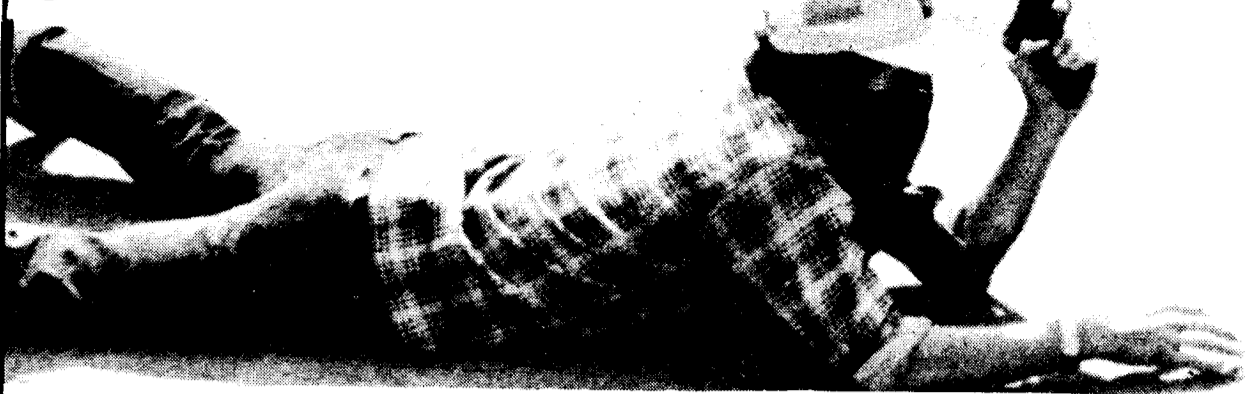
A motion was presented to a Student Union General Meeting banning Charter 80

In a matter of hours over 120 signatures were gathered for an emergency union meeting to overturn the ban and this was held three days later on 10th December. Labour Club members and supporters of *Socialist Newsletter* took the lead in the fight to mobilise for the emergency meeting.

The EGM was attended by nearly 400 students and the ban was thrown out by an overwhelming majority.

CIVIL WAR

by Alan Bridges



IN EL SALVADOR

On October 15, 1979, a group of young army officers staged a "preventive" coup d'etat in El Salvador to oust General Romero. They hoped to block a rising revolutionary movement by denouncing Romero's corruption and, following the line of Carter, by promising reforms and human rights. They formed a Cabinet in which the Communist Party's front organisation, the National Democratic Union, took a seat.

This Junta spread the illusion that they were "democratising" the political life of Salvador, in order to isolate the revolutionary groups. They announced price controls, restrictions on land sales and banning the right-wing murder gangs.

The powerful plantation owners however, whose interests would be affected by this programme, obstructed the government and allied with a group of officers to organise massacres of workers and peasants.

With the real power remaining in the hands of the officers, the promises of the "liberals" did not impress the masses at all. The Junta was covered in blood from the start. The masses' experiences led to a wave of strikes and demonstrations, which were violently repressed. The Junta was forced to resign and the first of the democratic reaction and the mass movements, and collapsed at the end of 1979.

Soon, steps were taken towards forming a united mass guerrilla organisation, to defend the masses against the right-wing terror. The Revolutionary Co-ordinating Committee of the Masses brought together four separate groups, representing trade unions, peasants' organisations, guerrilla fighters and the Communist Party of Salvador. This movement answered the need of the masses for united self-defence. It was welcomed by a demonstration on January 22nd 1980 of 200,000 people. That Committee was ultimately succeeded by the Farabundo Marti Liberation Movement (FMLM), which wages war on the military regime today. But the FMLM is not a proletarian revolutionary leadership. Its main components have programmes, not for expropriating the bourgeoisie but for collaborating with the "democratic elements of the bourgeoisie", and with "progressive officers", against the ultra-right. Only the Trotskyists raise the demand for a government of workers and peasants.

Lenin's pre-conditions for a revolutionary situation can be clearly seen in Salvador. The ruling classes can no longer maintain their rule in the old forms. The oppressed try to use the divisions among their rulers. Their poverty has become intolerable. They are no longer willing to go on as before.

Early in 1980 a new Junta was formed from the military elements of the old Junta behind a precarious facade provided by two civilian ministers from the Christian Democratic Party, who continued unconvincingly to promise "democratic reform". The coalition of four in the Revolutionary Co-ordinating Committee at once raised the slogan, "Down with the Junta", rejected confidence in the "progressives" and posed the perspective of insurrection against the regime, without developing the question of what regime was to replace it.

The political factor of the greatest importance in 1980 was that the unified military leadership of the guerrilla movement launched an offensive to defend the masses against the brutality of the C.I.A. trained forces of repression. The P.S.T. (Socialist Workers' Party) of El Salvador, section of the Fourth International (International Committee) in Salvador works very closely with the military leadership of the coalition of guerrilla groups, which in the last few months have been intensely active both militarily and politically.

The Carter administration, before Reagan's victory was known, strengthened military aid and intervention in support of the government of El Salvador, and put pressure on the FSLN regime in Nicaragua. Reagan had called for a military blockade of Cuba in reprisals for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. It was expected that the efforts of US imperialism to "contain" the revolutionary movements in those areas would take more direct and brutal forms.

But there are also those, such as Torrijos in Panama, who recognise only too clearly the risk that direct military intervention could provoke a total revolutionary flare-up.

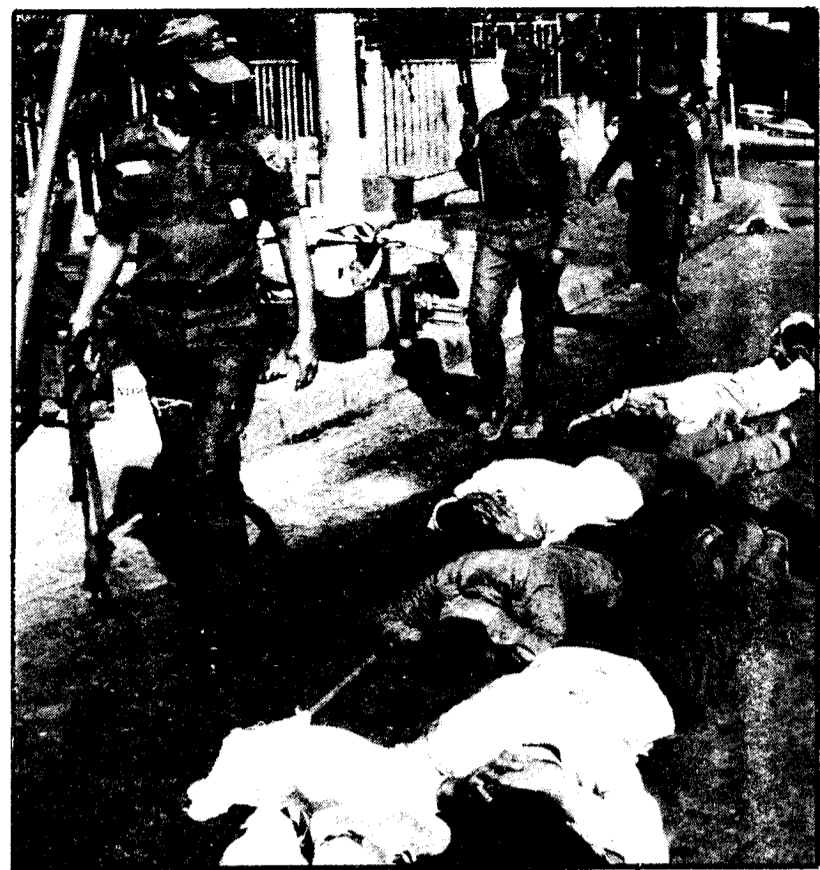
The stakes are enormous. If the guerrillas can destroy the repressive military apparatus in El Salvador, what are the prospects for the military dictatorships in her neighbours, Guatemala and Honduras and for the imperialist hold on all Central America? The proletarian revolution in Nicaragua has provoked a shock-wave with incalculable consequences for every regime throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. The guerrillas face superior armaments, but are not badly armed themselves with rifles, automatic weapons and rocket launchers. Their strategy is to hit the army at several points at once, and it has been followed by mass popular uprisings in several places.

Washington faces the dilemma that the forces on which US im-

perialism has to rely to avoid direct intervention cannot be kept in hand. The ultra-right gangs, working with the military, killed upwards of 10,000 people last year.

Guerrilla war in Salvador is one of the forms of struggle which the mass movement has adopted to defend the masses and reply to violence with violence. These guerrilla activities are part of the revolutionary movement of the oppressed and assume a mass, proletarian character, because the insurrection and general strike which they lead to, through the destruction of the bourgeois state, pose the necessity for a workers' and peasants' government.

Yet, as in Nicaragua, the leaders of the guerrilla movements are petty bourgeois nationalist in character. They do not consciously pose before the masses the task of the



socialist revolution. That is the historic task of the Trotskyists. The leadership of the FMLM tends to seek alliances with international social democracy and Stalinism and receives aid from these forces.

Nonetheless, these mass movements are generating guerrilla methods of mobilisation and the guerrilla war is being transformed into proletarian civil war. In the early stages the aim of the guerrillas is to bring down the military dictatorship. The petty bourgeois leaders are trying to use this fact to present the whole revolutionary

movement as being no more than national and democratic.

The Trotskyist organisation in Salvador unconditionally supports the struggle of the guerrilla forces and the mass organisations to bring down the Junta. At the same time it asserts its opposition to programmes of political class collaboration and calls upon the petty bourgeois leaderships to break with the bourgeoisie. It links the slogan "Down with the Junta" with that of "The Workers, Peasants, Mass and Guerrilla Organisations must rule".

'End my exile' says Edmund Baluka

On the 8th October last, Edmund Baluka, former President of the Strike Committee of the Warski Shipyards in Szczecin in 1970/71, sent a letter to the Polish authorities and to the MKR (Inter Union Workers Commission) of Szczecin. In this letter he demanded the right to return home and to reinstatement in his old job in the shipyards.

His letter said:

"To:
MKR,
Inter-Union Workers Commission-Szczecin
UL. Nocznickiego 42 - Poland.
Copy to:
Council of State of the Democratic Republic of Poland.
Brussels 8/10/1980

On the 28th November 1972, at 14.00 hours, I was summoned to see the head of the A. Warski Shipyards in Szczecin. At Gate 1, the security guard confiscated my pass giving me right of entry into the shipyards.

The technical director of the A. Warski Shipyards, engineer Malewski, demanded I leave the premises immediately.

Fearing other repressive measures against me, I left Poland in February 1973 and obtained political asylum in Belgium.

I had worked in the shipyards since 8th September 1962. It was because of the role I played as President of the Strike Committee of Szczecin in December 1970 and January 1971, that I was sacked.



BALUKA

This is why there is a reference to me in Point 22 of the demands accepted by the government commission, in the persons of deputy Prime Minister Kazimierz Barcikowski, Secretary of the Central Committee of the POUP (Polish Communist Party), Andrzej Zalinski and the First Secretary of the Regional Committee of the POUP, at Szczecin, Janusz Brych.

I appeal to the MKR (Inter-Union Workers Commission) of Szczecin to support my demand for reinstatement in the Warski Shipyards, in my previous position in the TRM 2 workshop, as a specialist mechanic in the repair shop.

I have sent a copy of this letter to the Council of State of the Peoples Republic of Poland through its embassy in Brussels in order to obtain the necessary official documents to get back into my country.

You may send any correspondence on this, to my lawyer, Roger Lallemand, 38, Rue Klauwaertz, - 1050 Brussels.

Edmund Baluka."

As a Pole, Edmund Baluka has a right to return to his own country. However, up to now, the Polish Government has refused to respond to the letter. In a statement on the 1st November, Baluka noted that the delaying tactics used by the authorities against him were the same as those used for many weeks, on the issue of recognition of "Solidarity". He appealed to all labour and democratic organisations, parties and trade unions to support the demands in his letter and convey their support to the Polish authorities. This would indicate the scope of international working class solidarity with the gains won in struggle by the Polish workers, in the course of the August strikes.

Already, Baluka's letter has been distributed widely in Poland. It was read out over the loudspeakers in the Warski Shipyards and received a massive response from the workers there. A meeting of the MKR (Workers Commission) of Szczecin decided to mandate its President to organise a delegation to Warsaw to demand Baluka's return and assurances for his safety, when in Poland.

On the 21st December, a mass meeting of 50,000 workers in Szczecin was called by "Solidarity". Baluka's letter was read in the course of the meeting. Immediately, everyone rose to their feet, shouting: "For Baluka's return to the shipyard"!

Baluka's appeal has also been supported by many trade union and labour organisations throughout Europe. This campaign must be taken up in Britain. Take this letter into your trade union, Labour Party branch, into your student union; ask that letters, telegrams, messages of support be sent to the Polish Embassy, 47, Portland Place, London W1.

The TUC has expressed its support for the struggle of the Polish workers to form their own free, independent trade unions and written to "Solidarity" to this effect. If this support is to mean anything, the TUC should now come out and demand the Polish authorities allow Edmund Baluka to return and get his old job back.



WORLD CONFERENCE

The World Conference of the Parity Committee for the Reorganisation (Reconstruction) of the Fourth International was convened in Paris from the 18th to the 27th of December 1980. More than 80 delegates from 40 countries were present, representing the majority of those on a world scale claiming to be Trotskyists. The two largest organisations in the history of Trotskyism, the PST of Argentina and the OCI of France, were strongly represented. Both of these have a history going back to the founding of the Fourth International and both have long records in the fight against revisionist attempts to destroy the political and organisational basis of the Fourth International. Militants from France, Argentina and Britain were present with records of struggle for the Fourth International over 30 years. Not alone were the majority of Trotskyists represented but the political continuity of the fight for the programme of Trotsky since 1938 and before.

The Parity Committee, bringing together the three tendencies which fought revisionism in the Trotskyist movement, arose out of the struggle against the treacherous actions of the United Secretariat, led by the pro-Castroite leaders of the SWP, at the end of 1979. It was, at first, a defensive united front by Trotskyists against the attempt by the pro-Castro leaders of the SWP, with the United Secretariat of the Fourth International tailing behind them, to politically and physically liquidate the Trotskyists in Nicaragua into the petty bourgeois nationalist FSLN. The Trotskyists, organised in the Simon Bolivar Brigade, fought Somoza arms in hand, in alliance with the FSLN. When the FSLN moved to repress them the USec leaders not only reneged on their comrades and supported the FSLN they said Trotskyists had no need to organize in Nicaragua and that the FSLN itself was enough to

a revolutionary leadership, in the tradition of Marx and Lenin. They went even further. The USec established an office in Nicaragua and condoned and took part in the repression and torture of Trotskyists. This has never been denied. It was to defend the Fourth International against this wholesale liquidation that the Parity Committee was formed.

After its formation the Parity Committee moved forward to agreement, not alone on the need for Trotskyists to organize in every country, but on the necessity to bring to a conclusion the long struggle to drive revisionism from the ranks of the Trotskyist movement. A clear link was drawn between the struggle of the International Committee after 1953 and the work of the Parity Committee. As well, the Parity Committee reached unified positions in relation to a series of major events in the class struggle - Iran, Afghan-

istan, Salvador, Peru and on anti-repression work. Sections in various countries moved into common activity and in a number of cases fusions took place. In France the Unified OCI has now reached 5400 members.

Thus, the Parity Committee represented a principled and thoroughgoing regroupment of Trotskyists, able to deal a major blow at revisionism, which had for many years blocked the road to Trotskyist parties with mass influence. The Parity Committee, although regrouping the majority of Trotskyists, did not claim to be the finished Fourth International.

The forces of the PCRRFI were able to develop extensive Theses as the basis for the holding of the World Conference. These not only drew balance sheets on the long battle against revisionism, but strengthened the understanding of Trotskyists on crucial questions of revolutionary theory and practice

in the living movement of the class struggle. They deal with such topics as the place of guerilla warfare in mass struggle, the anti-imperialist united front, the link between the political revolution in the bureaucratic workers' states and the social revolution in the capitalist countries and the relation between principles, strategy, tactics and slogans.

On the basis of this work, theoretical and practical, the World Conference was held.

The United Secretariat participated in the Conference. On their behalf Daniel BenSaid made a contribution of over two hours in length, in which he took up many points and recognized the solidity of the forces represented.

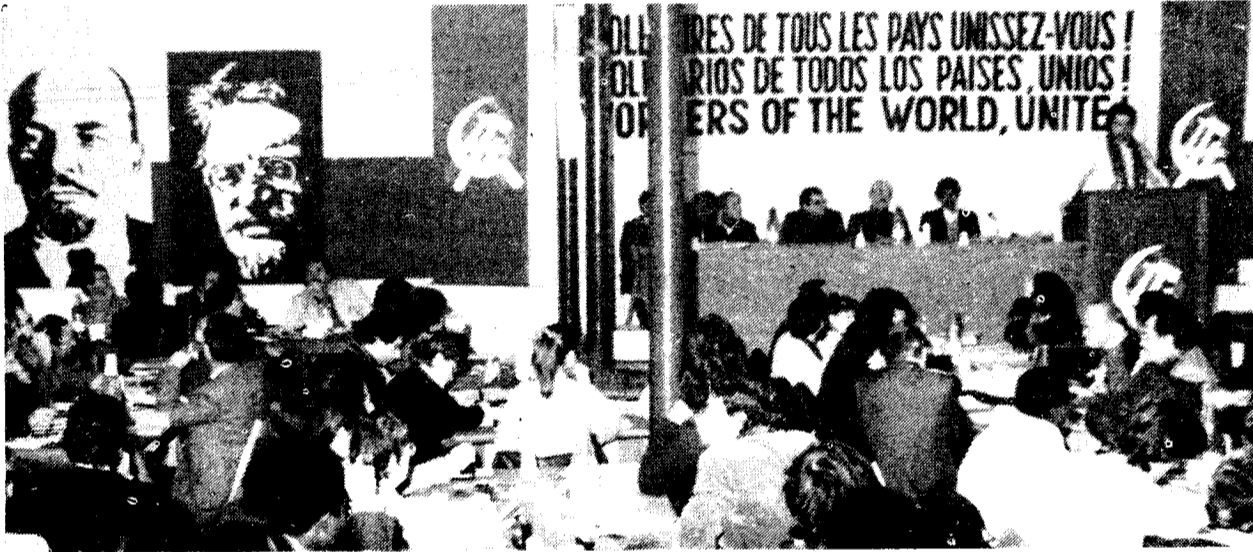
An open and free discussion followed all the main reports. On the struggle against Pabloite revisionism, on the Theses, on the decision to dissolve the three components of the Parity Committee

and form a united organisation and on the revolutionary nature of the world crisis. It emerged clearly that not alone had the experience of the Parity Committee led to common political positions on current events but that the traditions of the PST of Argentina and the OCI of France in the International Committee of the Fourth International after 1953, underlay a common approach to the construction of the Fourth International as a World Party with mass influence.

The World Conference enacted the dissolution of the three tendencies of the Parity Committee and the establishment of the Fourth International (International Committee), representing the majority of those claiming to stand as Trotskyists in the world. Leading bodies were elected, and a publications programme agreed. The Theses were agreed in substance and will be published in final version after amendments have been taken into account, for discussion among all those claiming to be Trotskyists.

The establishment of the FI(IC), of which the SLG is the British Section, will have important consequences in Britain, where not alone the legacy of Pabloism in the IMG and Militant Tendency, but the 'national Trotskyism' of the SLL/WRP, have created a long crisis in the struggle for a principled Trotskyist party with mass influence. The old section of the OCRFI and the comrades of the Bolshevik fraction are now fused into the SLG. The SLG calls on all those in Britain claiming to be Trotskyists, to study the Theses of the 1980 World Conference which established the FI(IC) and engage in full and serious discussion, opening the road to regroupment on a principled basis.

The February edition of *Socialist Newsletter* will carry a special four page supplement with a more detailed report of the proceedings of the World Conference.



PORTUGAL - STALINIST PROVOCATION AND SOME QUESTIONS TO SOCIALIST CHALLENGE

In the last issue of *Socialist Newsletter* we reported on the campaign of our comrades of the POUS-PST in the recent parliamentary elections in Portugal.

Following this, the POUS-PST put forward Aires Rodrigues for the Presidency. The theme of his campaign was workers' unity against the bosses and the generals.

This meant a hard fight to gain the 7500 signatures which were needed to put Rodrigues on the ballot, a campaign which had to be conducted in the teeth of opposition from the CP and SP leaders who did everything possible to prevent Rodrigues standing as a workers candidate.

But opposition to Rodrigues came also from the PSR (Section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International) which had

previously refused to form a common slate with the POUS-PST in the legislative elections. After playing with the slogan "a worker against the bosses and generals" the PSR threw in its lot finally with the candidacy of the celebrated military figure, Major Otelo de Carvalho. Carvalho stood on a minimal six-point platform which had nothing to say on the central question of fighting for a CP/SP government, against the policy of division by the leaders of these parties.

Socialist Challenge, newspaper of the PSR's cothinkers in Britain, the IMG, had the following to say in its issue of December 10th, 1980:

"The other left wing candidate was Aires Rodrigues who was backed by two small Trotskyist organisations associated with the

international 'Parity Committee'. The PSR did not support Aires because of his record as a Socialist Party deputy and because of the scandal around his candidature."

"It is alleged that his supporters obtained numerous signatures to get Rodrigues on the ballot by asking people to sign for a competition to win a free colour television, or alternatively by posing as investigators in a survey about cigarette smoking."

"Otelo is the best known leader of the Portuguese far left. His candidature provided the best opportunity for the working people to express their opposition to austerity and to the cowardice and timidity of the workers parties."

Let's speak plainly about this. The PSR and the IMG not only demonstrated the most crass opportunism but declared themselves openly against the principled Trotskyist battle of Rodrigues and the POUS-PST. The PSR and the IMG then lent themselves to the service of a provocation by the Portuguese Stalinists aimed at disqualifying the Trotskyist candidate.

No one up to now has denied the serious political character of the POUS-PST campaign. Indeed in *Intercontinental Press* reports appeared following the legislative elections which described the POUS-PST campaign as "based on the programme of the Fourth International". Faced with a real "worker against the bosses and generals" (and a Trotskyist one!), the PSR and IMG have clutched at the line thrown to them by the Stalinists - "the scandal around Rodrigues' candidature" - they take filthy Stalinist calumny as good coin!

For the PSR and IMG, Carvalho the military man is preferred to the candidate backed by not "two small groups" but by the large majority of Portuguese Trotskyists.

Rodrigues is supposed to have a dubious record. Let us state the facts:

★ Like many other Portuguese youth, Aires opposed the colonial wars in Africa and refused illegally, to be conscripted to the army of Salazar and Caetano. On this score Carvalho was a loyal officer in the army which butchered and murdered Africans for decades.

★ Rodrigues, in and out of the Socialist Party was a consistent defender of the rights of the Portuguese workers and of democratic rights. He was an opponent of all attempts to give an institutionalised place to the bourgeois officer corps in opposition to the democratic rights of the masses, through the Armed Forces Movement after the 1974 Revolution.

Not so Carvalho. He was the head of the COPCON military police and was involved with the army occupation of factories engaged in strikes in the spring and summer of 1974. As Military Governor of Lisbon, he sent the army to break up a big demonstration of workers at Lisnave on 12th September 1974. He obliged the strikers at the TAP (Portuguese airlines) to return to work with guns at their backs. He was one of the main authors of the famous documents called "People-MFA", which proposed the liquidation of workers commissions of elected delegates and their integration into the state apparatus, under the guise of "peoples' power".

Is all this what the IMG mean

when they say he "played an important role in the revolutionary events of 1974/75"?

★ Rodrigues has an honorable record of opposition to the austerity measures of Soares in government and to the SP's support for Eanes. He was expelled from the SP for this!

Carvalho has no such record. He served Eanes, he served Spínola and he served Caetano and Salazar before. He has never stopped demanding his reintegration into the military hierarchy.

Despite the radical phrases in his six-point platform, Carvalho had this to say at the time of the legislative elections about his own presidential candidacy:

"If I am elected and if the legislative elections result in a majority for the right in the Assembly, I will work with (our emphasis) the government resulting from this majority".

What more needs to be said about the "workers" character of Carvalho's candidacy?

The SLG puts some points to the IMG and to the Trotskyist militants within it:

1. Will you now denounce the Stalinist provocation against Trotskyism and against the Fourth International aimed at Rodrigues and the POUS-PST?
2. Will the IMG publicly withdraw its groundless insinuations against Rodrigues?
3. Is it not contrary to the programme and principles of the Fourth International to paint up a man who points machine guns at strikers and will "work with" a capitalist government as "a worker against the bosses and generals"?

Socialist newsletter

INTERVIEW
WITH LAMBETH
COUNCILLOR
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FEBRUARY 4TH:

NATIONAL ACTION TO DEFEND LAMBETH!

The battle against the Tories' public expenditure cuts has for many months centred on Labour-controlled Lambeth Council in South London. This fight is now reaching the crunch. Lambeth is already £12 million pounds in debt. But as from April the Rate Support Grant for inner London boroughs will be cut by 5%. This could mean a cut in Lambeth's budget by anything up to £10 million.

It is in the face of this massive onslaught by the Tory Government against local councils that the Direct Labour workers in Lambeth have called for industrial action in February. Lambeth Council leader Ted Knight has backed this call along with the Steering Committee which was convened from the large anti-cuts Conference last November.

This strike has a great national significance. It is in fact the first real showdown between a local Labour Council and the Tories. All eyes are on Lambeth. If Lambeth is driven into a corner and forced to make cuts it could well start a process of retreat for all Labour Councils trying to resist the Tories' attacks on the services these councils provide for the working-class. It is therefore crucial that maximum support is mobilised behind Lambeth Council's stand against cuts and behind the proposed strike action of the Lambeth workers.

The situation today is all the more difficult because the policy of Ted Knight has been in effect to postpone the showdown. For months now he has proposed large rate increases, rather than make cuts. Knight's firm stand on cuts has therefore been undermined because now Heseltine is clearly not prepared to permit such large rate increases and secondly these rate increases are an attack, if indirect, on the Lambeth working-class, which growing numbers of workers are not prepared to put up with. Ted Knight's tactics of postponing the battle has even led him to take the decision not to fight the sale of council housing. These incorrect tactics have now brought Lambeth to the brink in far less favourable conditions than would have been the case if Ted Knight had sought to build a united-front of all Labour Councils on the basis of refusing to implement any Tory



attack whether by cuts, rate or rent increases. Ted Knight's surrender on rates has provided less progressive Labour Councils with an excuse not to enter into struggle. In turn Knight has used the cave-in of other councils to argue that Lambeth must postpone a showdown with the Government until more support was won. As a result the national anti-cuts fightback by Labour councils and local government workers stands on the brink of suffering a series of setbacks at the hands of Heseltine.

This hesitancy of Labour Councils is not matched by rank and file workers. The predominantly rank and file November 1st Conference voted overwhelmingly against rate increases. Ted Knight has overlooked this decision. In Knight's own borough Streatham and Vauxhall Labour Parties have voted clearly against any more supplementary rate increases. Inside Knight's own council apparatus the NALGO branch has voted overwhelmingly to resist council house sales. Knight has forgotten these council workers.

In failing to unite and build on this rank and file hostility to rate increases and council house sales Knight and Lambeth Council have left themselves in a very tight corner. The strike call by the Lambeth Direct Labour workers is

tremendously significant in that it is a political stand by a section of the workers' movement against the Tory Government. It must be supported to the hilt. However the nature and extent of this strike is at this moment somewhat ambiguous. The Direct Labour workers have talked about a two week strike. Others have discussed one week. The NALGO workers have discussed a day of action. It is crucial that this confusion be brought to an end.

It would be far better to stage a successful national day of action rather than an isolated two week strike. The question of leadership is absolutely crucial. The November 1st Steering Committee has unfortunately acted as little more than a body to exchange information. It has left preparations for the strike and Lambeth's looming crisis up in the air. At the centre of this whole problem is the cowardice of the Labour Party NEC, which, rather than support the genuine rank and file Conference on November 1st, staged its own conference in December, which was 1/8 the size and far less representative than November 1st and refused to take a resolution from Lambeth. Now that Lambeth Council is on the brink, the NEC and TUC are not lifting a single finger to support them. This is the

root of the problem. It is only the criminal policy of the NEC and TUC which provides arguments for Ted Knight to justify his tactics of retreat.

As Ted Knight correctly said on November 1st, it is the NEC and TUC who should have called that conference and it is they who should be leading the fight against the Tories. The situation has reached such a point where unless the TUC and NEC launch a national campaign in defence of Lambeth, Knight and Lambeth Council will feel justified in making huge cuts before Summer 1981.

The Steering Committee has called for a demonstration on February 4th. Every Labour Party member and trade unionist should raise the demand that the TUC and NEC sponsor this march, actively seeking to mobilise the whole movement behind Lambeth. At the same time, the TUC and NEC must be made to support the strike action in Lambeth. Militants in CLP's and trade union branches should move resolutions and organise lobbies of MP's, regional and national trade union committees and the NEC, demanding that they call a day of action on February 4th in solidarity with Lambeth. Delegates to the recall "Lambeth Conference" on January 17th should direct their fire at the TUC/NEC, again demanding that they mobilise forces nationally in support of Lambeth and against the Tories.

The lobby of the Special Labour Party Conference on January 24th, which is supported by Ted Knight, will be demanding that the NEC/PLP/TUC lead the fight to bring down Thatcher.

Heseltine's determination to smash rebel councils like Lambeth, and as a secondary but vital component, Ted Knight's persistent attempts to avoid a showdown by conceding on rates and council housesales, now leave Lambeth in a grave position which, however, can still be overcome if the official labour leadership uses all its power to mobilise the movement to defend Lambeth and begin a direct fight to bring down the Tories.

What are the consequences for Lambeth of Heseltine's recently announced Rate Support Grant Settlement?

The recent RSG announcement means a cut of possibly as much as £10 million, in addition Heseltine has cut loan sanction for Housebuilding/Conversion by approximately £16 million! The effect of this second cut means that apart from building and conversion already in progress there will be no new building or rehabilitation started in 1981/82 and probably none in 1982/83 either. Within the next 5 years there will be the worst housing crisis since the end of the last World War. The £10 million RSG cut alone will require a rate increase in April of 15%.

Can Lambeth survive Heseltine's cuts by balancing the books?

Only by cutting beyond recognition many services such as Housing, Social Services and Environmental Health. Only through rate and rent increases totalling at least £10 per week on average can Lambeth 'balance the books.'

What are the consequences of government cuts for council tenants?

Government cuts will have a particularly devastating effect on Council tenants and would-be tenants since not only has Heseltine and the district Auditor demanded rent increases of approximately £5.00 the standard and speed of general repairs is rapidly declining, major repairs and modernisations such as new lifts, rewiring etc have been put back 5 years and more. Over a thousand properties are standing empty and will continue so because the cuts mean there is no money to rehabilitate them.

What is being done to build support for the February Week of Action?

Ted Knight, leader of Lambeth Council, is proposing that we raise a supplementary rate averaging £4 which will wipe out the 1980/81 deficit of £12 million. Another option being proposed by several centre and right wing members of the Labour Group is for an immediate freeze on all staff vacancies, in addition to a supplementary rate increase. Vauxhall Labour Party has called on the Council to refuse to raise a supplementary rate or cut. This position has strong support among activists in Streatham and Norwood CLPs. In addition both the leadership of the Labour Group and the right-wing minority have said that if the February Week of Action fails to change Government policy then Lambeth may have to retreat on its policy of 'No Cuts'.

The fact of the matter is that the leadership of Lambeth Council have done very little to build support for the Week of Action. We shall have to fight hard at the Recalled Lambeth Conference or January 17th to get some positive proposals to begin building support.

What future do you see for Lambeth labour left?

The outcome of the Recalled Lambeth Conference and the policies to be adopted by the Labour Group will have a great bearing on the future of LLL. If, as is likely, Lambeth Council raises a supplementary rate and big rent increases in April LLL will have to be more aggressive in fighting in the Lambeth working-class against these attacks on its living standards.