

# Socialist Action

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For a Class Struggle Left Wing in the Labour Movement

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# Support people of El Salvador!

By GARY ERLISKER

Central America and the Caribbean is the most important place in the world today. It's there that the two main forces contending for the future of humanity are in most open conflict.

It's there that the imperialists, led by US Reagan and backed by Thatcher — the forces that want to hold back humanity within the confines of their decayed and rotten system — confront working people determined to fight for and make a socialist society in which meeting human needs comes first.

Today it is El Salvador which is most under the gun from our enemies — Reagan, Thatcher and their class. They want to stop the people of El Salvador winning their liberation. They want to stop the people of El Salvador building a society where wealth is owned by everyone, not by a handful of big companies, for that would set an example to the rest of us and inspire us into struggle.

They also want to roll back the revolutions our brothers and sisters have made in Nicaragua and

Grenada, and they want to bring revolutionary Cuba to its knees.

## THREATS

Reagan is escalating his threats, saying that the time has come to "draw the line" in El Salvador as his press secretary put it on February 23.

A flotilla of more than 40 US warships — including an aircraft carrier — has been assembled in the Caribbean.

The February 25 *Washington Post* said: "These vessels and aircraft clearly could be used for some kind of blockade of Cuba or to enforce some kind of US threat to take action against vessels that cross a certain line off the El Salvador coast."

Under a plan approved on February 27 by Reagan's National Security Council — an unelected body of toadies from the big corporations, military brass and other social riff-raff — Washington will send \$25 million more in military aid to the murderers ruling El Salvador.

On March 2, another \$25 million

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Freedom fighters in El Salvador. They are part of massive struggle to overthrow murderous dictatorship armed and financed by Washington.

## 20,000 say 'No Nationality Act!'



By PHIL EDWARDES

Over 20,000 turned out in London, April 5, on one of the biggest demonstrations yet against the Tories' racist offensive.

Organised by the Campaign Against Racist Laws (CARL), forces from all over the country — particularly the immigrant communities of the Midlands — travelled down by train and

coach to register their protest.

The mood of the marchers was both angry and defiant. This was reflected in the slogans — "Kill the Tory Bill!" and "Racist Maggie — out, out, out!" — which rang out as the march made its way from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square.

## CLIMAX

The demonstration was the climax of a major campaign, launched by CARL, in the previous months. Meetings and regional rallies had been held up and down the country to draw attention to the racist proposals the Tories are pushing through Parliament.

The Nationality Bill is only the latest in a series of such provocative measures. Earlier moves include the decision, last year, to tighten up the racist provisions of the 1971

Immigration Act.

This has already led to a doubling of the number of deportations of Black people, "fishing raids" on factories in search of so-called "illegal immigrants" and increased police harassment of the Black community.

## NATIONALITY BILL

The Nationality Bill — if passed — will deepen this racist attack. Its main thrust is to cut down still further on the rights of Blacks to enter this country — while, at the same time, allowing whites the same free access as before.

Such a colour bar will not only keep Blacks out, however, but will mean that thousands overseas — currently registered as UK citizens — will be rendered stateless.

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## BUILD T.U.C. JOBS MARCH

A GIANT rally in London on May 31 will mark the climax of the TUC's march for jobs from Liverpool to London. Mass meetings are planned in every town on the route.

As Colin Barnett, TUC North-west Regional Council secretary, put it: "Liverpool, like Jarrow, will become a symbol of the nation's rejection of policies that deliberately create unemployment and the desire of the British people for a return to full employment."

The response will be great. Unemployment is now running at the post-war peak of 2,484,000. A million of these have been thrown on the scrap-heap in the last 12 months alone — that's at the staggering rate of 3000 a day.

Tory budget proposals will add

insult to injury. They will mean a further quarter-million workers idle by next year.

## RALLY

The TUC march can become a real focus for the anger and resentment building up in the labour movement against the Tory jobless drive.

Such a move is none too soon. Despite the escalating queues, the TUC's response to date has been one of masterly inactivity.

Their masterly inactivity is to meekly protest the Tory strategy and pin all their hopes on the return of a Labour government — armed with the "Alternative Economic Strategy" — in three years time.

Such a stance has been of little help to workers, up and down the

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# Labour right launch SDP

BY BOB SWART (Streatham CLP)

With all the razamataz of launching a new soap powder, last month saw the formation of the Social Democratic Party.

The twelve Labour MPs who split in March have been joined by nineteen peers and one Tory MP. While most will consider this to be a good riddance, many are still concerned at the damage that might result to Labour in the next election.

The SDP are projecting a confident image. They claim that – if they can come to a pact with the Liberals – they will win over 40% of the votes.

## CAMPAIGN

The capitalist press has boosted the Social Democrats. Shirley Williams and Bill Rodgers, hardly known for their socialist views, are portrayed as “moderates” resisting the “extremism” of the Labour left.

This press campaign is, of course, predictable. After Thatcher's disastrous term in office – in which even Tory economists are slating her policies – the media recognise that the Labour Party could be returned with a landslide victory at the next election.

After all, up to a few months ago, the polls showed Labour with a 24%

lead. The capitalist press are worried sick that, under pressure from a leftward moving membership, a future Labour government could no longer be relied on to do their dirty work, like a Wilson or Callaghan.

This is why the press is backing the SDP-Liberal alliance. They hope that if the Tory vote is drastically reduced, they can prevent Labour gaining control by splitting the vote. After all, the SDP hopes to catch most of its support from discontented Labour voters

## CLASS BASE

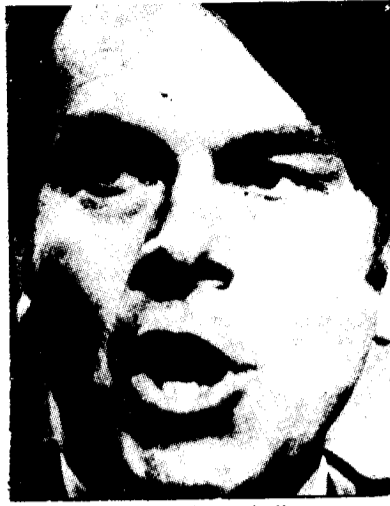
In reality, there is little chance of Labour losing out in the long term. As the recession deepens, workers will be forced more and more towards Labour as a party to fight for their class interests.

It should not be forgotten that the shift left in the party results mainly from growing discontent in the unions and not – as the media like to portray it – from the CLPs alone. Workers are looking for solutions to the problems they face and they naturally turn to the party they built: the Labour Party.

This explains the radical stance taken by recent conferences on nuclear disarmament, women's rights and unemployment – and the growing tend-



Shirley Williams and David Owen (above) may be courted by the capitalist press at present. But they are unlikely to cut much ice with working people who need class solutions to their problems.



ency for Labour to lead mass action in the streets against the Tories.

## ANSWER

The SDP – representing the policies that lost Labour the last election – have no answer to the problems facing working people.

Representing a last-ditch attempt to cling to the “middle ground” of class

compromise at a time when class polarisation is deepening, they are looking for a social base that no longer exists.

This does not mean, however, that they cannot – in the short term – get enough support to endanger Labour's electoral chances next time around.

Beating off this threat will not be achieved by expressing “regret” at the departure of renegade MPs, as Labour

leader Foot has done. It will only occur if Labour moves boldly out as a party which champions the rights of working people and their allies.

Only by showing that the Labour Party is willing to fight for the unemployed, women, Blacks and other oppressed layers will Labour be able to reduce the Social Democrats to the rump they in reality are.

## STRUGGLE

Such a perspective will also mean fighting off attempts by right-wingers in the party – such as Hattersley – to overturn the democratic gains of the last conference.

The “Labour Solidarity Committee”, set up by a wide number of Labour MPs, share the same ideas as the Social Democrats but lack their courage in “going it alone”. If they succeed in imposing their policies on the party – and overturning the democratic gains of Wembley – they will kill the party's chances in isolating the Social Democrats.

Socialists in the Labour Party have to fight tooth and nail to ensure that the gains won are not clawed back. They have to fight to root the party more and more among working people and get it to adopt policies in their class interests.

## Socialist Action opens conference discussion

By TONY ROBERTS

ON March 17, *Socialist Action* opened its pre-conference discussion period. Lasting a full three months, it will afford all members time for serious discussion on the major tasks facing socialists in the period ahead.

The climax will be a two-day conference at the end of June – attended by members nationally – to concretely work out our orientation over the next year. Supporters are also encouraged to attend, and there will be a special session where they can find out more about our ideas and activities and ask questions.

The conference this year will be a vital one for *Socialist Action*. As the class struggle intensifies – both in Britain and internationally – socialists have major opportunities to advance their ideas. Two key issues, which will occupy the pre-conference discussion stand out.

The first is the growing radicalisation in the labour movement. *Socialist Action* members will be concentrating on what concrete steps are needed today to build, in the unions and Labour Party, a class-struggle left-wing that will champion the demands of all the oppressed and exploited.

A key aspect of this will be our orientation towards the unions – particularly the industrial unions which are the backbone of the fight against the Tory government.

## CLASS-STRUGGLE

The conference will, of course, be taking up a number of other issues within this framework – the struggle for women's rights, against Black oppression, etc – which *Socialist Action* members have been active in.

The central task of the conference, however, will be to see how these struggles – which have often been

waged outside the labour movement – can become part of the fight in the unions and Labour Party for a fighting left-wing.

It is becoming more and more evident that only by winning the ranks of the labour movement – particularly the industrial sections – can the rights and gains of any sector of the oppressed be defended.

## INTERNATIONAL

The second major issue will be our response to the international class struggle globe. Unlike many insular political groups in Britain, *Socialist Action* doesn't believe that the struggle in Britain is separate from the struggles of our class around the world.

A major part of the conference will therefore be devoted to the revolutionary struggles in Central America – in El Salvador, Grenada, Nicaragua and Cuba – which are in the front line of

the fight against imperialism and for a just and equal society.

*Socialist Action* supporters will be discussing the concrete steps needed to publicise these struggles in the British labour movement and win support for them.

## PARTY-BUILDING

It is under these two flags – the need to turn to industry and internationalism – that the *Socialist Action* conference this year will take place.

Being able to implement such positions will mean, of course, strengthening *Socialist Action* as a current built around clear policies and extending our influence in the months ahead. A whole session of the conference will be devoted to this task and turning our paper – which is at present a monthly – into a fortnightly.

The conference, while being an important time for *Socialist Action*,

will also afford some time for comrades to relax and discuss informally.

## DEMOCRACY

During the pre-conference period – and at conference itself – all members of *Socialist Action* will be free to write and argue for whatever positions they feel are best-suited for carrying the organisation forward in the period ahead. *Socialist Action* places great store on such internal democracy.

At the same time, supporters of the paper are encouraged to attend the pre-conference discussion sessions – and the conference – in order to get a more rounded view of the positions of *Socialist Action* and the tasks facing revolutionaries both in Britain and internationally.

For further information about the *Socialist Action* conference, write to: National Secretary, *Socialist Action*, P.O. Box 65, London, SW16 1NN.

## Build TUC jobs march! Budget fuels crisis

Continued from Page 1.

country, faced with their region being turned into an industrial wasteland now under the Tory axe.

The TUC decision to promote a series of regional rallies – of which the Liverpool to London march is the climax – was only undertaken because of the groundswell of opinion building up among the grassroots.

## POLICIES

Even these actions have been given no real cutting edge. There has been no attempt to unite workers around a fighting platform that could challenge the Tories head on. Their leaflets have had, as their major thrust, the call for import controls.

Import controls won't protect jobs. They will merely provoke similar action by other countries, creating a trade war in which all workers will suffer, as happened in the thirties.

There is no mention at all of the need to fight for the 35-hour week, even though this has been official TUC policy since 1972 and was reaffirmed at the last Labour Party conference. No call is issued to workers to fight redundancies by work-sharing with no loss in pay. Equally, no call is made on Labour

councils to resist the Tory cuts which have created thousands of redundancies. On the contrary, while deploring the cuts, the TUC advises local government unions to meekly go along with them.

## ACTION

It is the lack of class-struggle policies – and a willingness to fight for them – that gives the Tories the chance to get away with their jobless drive.

The miners' strike, which stopped the pit closures, shows what can be done when a sector of the labour movement takes action in a determined way to protect jobs. It shows the Tories up for the paper tigers they are.

If the TUC were to take a leaf out of the miners' book, there is no doubt that they could stop the Tories' attacks in their tracks. They would be guaranteed a mass response from the grassroots who have turned out in their thousands in the protest rallies in Liverpool and Glasgow recently.

## START

The action on May 31 will undoubtedly attract a mass response again. The TUC must not be allowed, however, to consider this as a one-off protest which can then



On Liverpool unemployment march last November.

carefully be forgotten.

They have to be forced into seeing it as the start of a mass campaign against the government and its insane policies.

They have to be forced to use it as a stepping stone to other actions around clear class-struggle policies that can protect jobs now.

For the 35-hour week!  
No cuts – no rate increases!

By MIKE HOPKINS (Stoke CLP)

MORE inflation and unemployment – these are the fruits of the Tory budget announced last month. They spell another round of belt-tightening for working people.

Tax increases will take about £5 a week out of the family purse. Less purchasing power will mean more factories grinding to a halt. It is estimated that a quarter million more will be added to the dole queues by 1982.

At the same time, the increase in tax on petrol and other consumer goods will push the inflation rate up by two percent, thus eroding pay packets still further.

## HARSH

Howe's budget has, of course, brought forth howls of protest from the Labour leaders who have denounced it as the “harsh” since the war.

Harsh it certainly is but, from the Tory point of view, it is strictly rational. Ever since coming to power, the Tory government has been pursuing one basic aim.

That has been to create mass unemployment so that they can terrorise workers into accepting speed-up and lower wages. The aim of this is to create a new “streamlined” British industry capable of competing overseas. The budget certainly fits in with this strategy.

## INDUSTRY

The net effect of Howe's budget will be to deepen the present recession still further. Whole areas of the country will be turned into industrial deserts to intimidate workers into accepting the Tories' rationalisation schemes.

This is what is worrying big business

who have equally shown a dislike for the Tories' strategy. The CBI is frightened that the attempt to control the unions, through unemployment, could push hundreds of profitable businesses to the wall. In the first two months of this year, for example, over 3000 firms went bust.

Despite the outcry against the budget, however, even from big business, the Tories are pushing ahead with their disastrous policies. Like cornered animals, they are hitting out widely at the jobs and living standards of working people.

Talk by the TUC and Labour leaders of this being the “harsh” budget in memory will not help. It will not help the thousands pushed onto the dole, the thousands pushed onto the poverty line and the millions more faced with a dramatic drop in living standards.

What is needed by the Labour leaders is not rhetoric but action that can defy the Tory policies head-on.

## JOBLESS

Over the past few months, the TUC and NEC of the Labour Party were forced – under mass pressure – to mount a campaign against Thatcher's jobless drive. One hundred and fifty thousand people turned out in Liverpool last December and over 75,000 in Glasgow a few months later.

Next month, the TUC is organising a mass Liverpool to London march. It is building actions such as these that will begin to reverse the tide. Mass action – around real fighting policies – could begin to mobilise the support of millions angry and frustrated by this anti-working class government.

# 20,000 say 'No Nationality Act'

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Moreover, those Blacks presently living in Britain could suffer a serious erosion of their democratic rights. They could, for example, be denied the right to vote or hold office in the Civil Service.

## DIVISIVE

The attempts by the Tories to introduce such measures is not, of course, accidental. They are clearly seeking to set up a suitable scapegoat for their policies of increased unemployment and social service cuts.

They clearly hope that the anger and frustration building up will be turned away from them and onto a scapegoat easily identifiable by its colour.

Such a thrust has already led to a growing number of assaults on

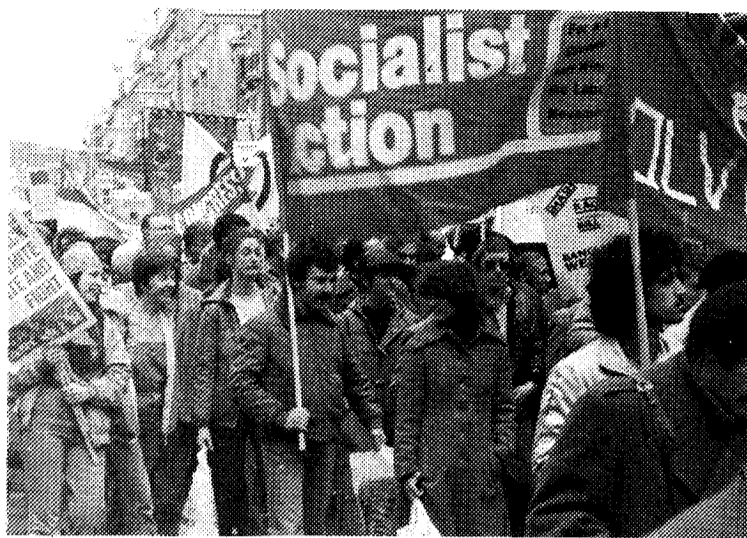
Black people and — as in Deptford recently — to the cold-blooded murder of thirteen young West Indian youth.

## FIGHTBACK

Black people have no intention, however, of becoming easy victims of Tory "divide and rule" tactics. The thousands who turned out on April 5 — particularly the young Black youth — show that they are determined to fight back.

What is urgent is that, in that fight, they should receive the support of the labour movement which was only marginally represented on the demonstration. Only a few trade union and Labour Party banners were to be seen on the miles-long march.

Such support is vital because the Tories' racist campaign is aimed not



Carol Rees/Socialist Action

On April 5 CARL demonstration.

only at Black people who will bear the brunt of it. It is equally designed to weaken and divide the overall

labour movement and prevent it from offering a united response to their anti-working class policies.

This will mean, in the months ahead, building growing support in union and Labour Party branches so that they can add their massive weight to the opposition that is now growing up.

The labour leaders have to be forced not only to oppose the Bill in words but to help mobilise the labour movement in mass action against it. They also have to be forced to pledge to repeal it when returned to office.

## BEGINNING

As Tony Huq (Bangladesh Workers Association) put it at the rally at the end of the march: "This demonstration is only the beginning. We intend to go on fighting until these racist laws are defeated." These words must become the rallying cry of the whole labour movement.

## Labour activists back CARL

By JANE ANSELL (Tottenham CLP)

Members from a number of CLPs turned up to a March 29 meeting aimed at co-ordinating efforts to build labour movement support against the Tories' Nationality Bill.

Chaired by Charlotte Atkins (Battersea CLP), the theme that ran through the meeting was the need for Labour to begin taking a stand on the issue.

## DIVISIVE

CARL national secretary Mike Rodney pointed out that the present Nationality Bill was only the latest aspect of the Tory racist campaign.

Such bills, he suggested, create a climate of racism in which police harassment and thug attacks by the ultra-right are becoming an everyday occurrence. The New Cross firebombing was a foretaste of what was to come.

"We must remember," he went on however, "that this racist offensive is not aimed only at Blacks. It involves us all. Thatcher hopes to divide the workers' movement, to pick us off one after another."

"If we in the unions and Labour Party allow her to get away with it, it will undermine our ability to get a united response to any of her attacks on democratic rights and living standards."

## PRESSURE

Rodney was followed by Ian Martin



Bob Swart/Socialist Action

Labour MP John Tilley.

of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants and John Tilley, MP for Lambeth Central. Tilley pointed out that, unlike in the past, there was growing opposition to the bill from Labour's front bench.

Despite this, however, he insisted that the only way to defeat it was by building mass action on the streets. He went on to say that, if the bill was passed, it was only by building up more and more pressure that we could be sure that an incoming Labour government would repeal it.

## DISCUSSION

A wide and stimulating discussion followed on how to involve wider layers

of the labour movement in struggle. Brent councillor Bernie Grant criticised those who sought to tie the campaign to issues such as bad housing, unemployment and the cuts.

"There is a tendency on the left to sweep everything into one basket," he said. He called on Labour Party branches to take the lead in pioneering the fight for Black rights. Such action, he went on, would draw people into the Labour Labour Party.

Councillor Grant also argued for the need for Blacks in the Labour Party to form their own committees to advise the party on the fight for racial equality.

## ACTION

The meeting ended by unanimously adopting a resolution calling for the Labour Party to take the lead in struggling against the Tories' offensive, and to pledge to repeal any new racist laws.

As steps towards winning Labour support for such a perspective, the meeting called on CLPs to:

- \* invite speakers from CARL, Black organisations and other anti-racist groups to speak at party meetings;
- \* affiliate CLPs to CARL and send representatives to the campaign;
- \* pass resolutions opposing the new proposals and calling on Labour leaders to lead the fight against them.

## Labour abortion conference plans action

By CAROL REES (Peckham CLP)

THE labour movement conference on abortion, called by the National Abortion Campaign last month, drew more than 300 delegates from trade unions and Labour Party branches up and down the country.

Faced with the erosion of abortion rights since the 1967 Act, the conference was called to win support throughout the labour movement to extend a woman's right to abortion.

Following the Labour Party conference decision of 1977 in favour of a woman's right to choose, and the massive TUC mobilisation against the Corrie Bill, one aim was to ensure MPs voted according to

party policy and not according to their "conscience".

Speakers Terry Marsland, assistant secretary of the Tobacco Workers Union, and Jo Richardson MP, backed the call for a woman's right to choose.

Here is an opportunity to test out the newly-won rights in the Labour Party. Now that we can reselect our MPs, we must ensure that they are all committed to voting in line with party policy on this issue.

That is, that they support this Labour Party policy to "provide by statute for all women to have choice in termination of pregnancy".

## PREREQUISITE

Abortion rights are a prerequisite to a woman's right to work. As it is working-class women who suffer most from the lack of abortion facilities, because they can least afford to pay, trade unionists must take up the issue seriously.

Conference agreed to support any national rally in support of positive legislation and to take the issue back to trade union and Labour Party branches.

It was agreed that these aims would be furthered by setting up regional conferences in order to get local activities off the ground.

# Grenada after two years of revolution

"A united, conscious, organised, vigilant people can never be defeated," declare billboards throughout revolutionary Grenada.

Two years ago on March 13, the people of this Caribbean island ended the brutal dictatorship of Eric Gairy and began the construction of a free Grenada. Under the leadership of the NJM (New Jewel Movement), the people of Grenada had — for the first time in 400 years — taken their destiny into their own hands.

## ANNIVERSARY

The people's support for the government, and the changes already brought about by the revolution, were clearly expressed at the spirited march and rally held here on March 13.

The march and rally — culminating weeks of celebrations across the islands of Petit Martinique and Carriacou — were attended by delegates from the two other revolutionary governments in the region — Cuba and Nicaragua.

Prime Minister Maurice Bishop, speaking at the rally, discussed the progress of the revolution, the tasks that remain, and its overall political perspectives from the standpoint of wor-

kers and farmers around the world. Bishop began with a look at the crisis of world capitalism.

## CRISIS

"As we meet here today for the second anniversary," he said, "we do so at a time of great crisis in the world, a time of big international industrial crisis, particularly in the Western world."

"We do so at a time, comrades, when millions of people in the industrialised Western world are roaming the streets looking for work. . . ."

"A time in the world, sisters and brothers, when we are seeing daily runaway inflation. A time in the world when we are seeing a worsening of the balance of trade for developing countries. A time in the world when there is a great deterioration of the conditions of the rural poor of the poorest countries in the world."

## BLOOD

Bishop then turned to the response of the Reagans and Thatchers to this crisis. Their "solution", he stressed, was to demand even greater blood from the neo-colonial countries, as well as from their

own workers.

While capitalist countries are in crisis, Bishop went on, Grenada has been able to register real advances for its people. It has been able to do so for one simple reason: the workers and farmers of Grenada run the government — not the super-rich.

## FORMULAS

Because of that, Bishop could confidently state: "We believe in Grenada that it is possible even in the face of these difficulties for progress to be made, that it is possible for the country to continue to move forward in the face of these difficulties. We believe that there are ways of achieving this objective."

Bishop outlined some of the gains made over the past two years. "While others are cutting back on medical care and medical systems for the poor in their countries, we have moved instead to double the number of doctors who are available to add to the quantity and quality of health care in our country. We have moved to triple the number of dentists in our country. We have moved to establish for the first time in our country after 350 years free medical attention for all of the people in all areas of the country today."

"While others are choosing to close their schools, we are choosing to build new schools. . . . While others, brothers and sisters, are cutting subsidies and cutting grants to their schools, we are looking to expand our facilities for our people."

## TREATS

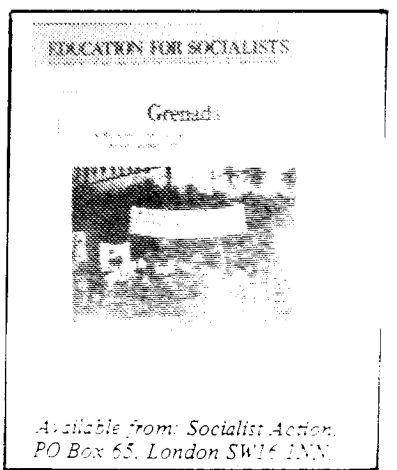
Because of the example provided by the Grenada revolution — and because of Grenada's close ties with Cuba — imperialist powers view Grenada as a direct challenge to their continued domination over the Caribbean. From the early days of the revolution, they have threatened Grenada, sought to isolate it and provided aid and encouragement to local counter-revolutionary elements.

In order to counter this, Bishop explained that the mobilisation of the people in all aspects of the revolution — including the People's Militia — was a primary task.

A second primary task was to develop international solidarity with Grenada. As Bishop concluded: "We ask you to form more friendship organisations, and expand your memberships even further

in America, Canada and England. We appreciate the material support you have given to Grenada. . . . We ask you to answer the propaganda against Grenada. We ask you to push the slogan: "Come and see for yourself. Do not let others tell you about Grenada. Come and see it for yourself."

The above is based on extracts from an article by Malik Miah in the March 30 issue of *Intercontinental Press*.



## Socialist Action Forum

## The struggle in El Salvador



Discussing El Salvador at Socialist Action forum.

By DAVE BELL (Hackney CLP)

THE brutal US-backed dictatorships in Central America are crumbling. The struggles of ordinary people have changed the face of countries like Nicaragua and Grenada. As Reagan sends in more "advisors" and arms, El Salvador too faces a critical point.

Last month, a *Socialist Action* forum discussed the freedom struggle there.

## GREETINGS

The meeting heard Phil Hearse of the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign, who brought greetings from representatives of the Revolutionary Democratic Front of El Salvador.

Tracing the history of the struggle, he showed that since the 1930s the wealth of El Salvador has been concentrated in the hands of a few families. This ruling clique has kept the people in absolute poverty thanks to the unremitting support of US and Western imperialism.

But over the last few years there has been a resurgence in the mass struggle. Revolutionary organisations have grown and formed the FDR-FMLN which has the support of most Salvadorans.

Hearse called for the support of all progressive forces in Britain to join in solidarity with the Salvadoran people.

## INTERNATIONALISM

Gary Erlisker of *Socialist Action* explained why internationalism is a central feature of the struggle for socialism.

The international ruling class, led by Reagan and Thatcher, take El Salvador very seriously. In them, the working people of El Salvador and all countries share a common enemy.

Our support for the struggle in El Salvador is not an "act of charity" or simply a moral duty. It is a totally necessary part of a common struggle to fend off an oppressive class of international rulers.

Erlisker also pointed to the working-class nature and base of the struggle. This has enabled the revolutionary leaders to launch several general strikes.

He pointed to the courageous solidarity of Cuba, Nicaragua and Grenada with El Salvador, explaining how these countries are also on Reagan's hit list.

Also of crucial importance, he said, was the widespread antiwar views of American workers which had made a farce of Carter's registration for the draft and acted as a major brake on Reagan.

Erlisker called for stepping up solidarity in the British labour movement:

"By doing this we can contribute significantly to the victory of the Salvadoran people, we can help lower the cost they have had to pay with their lives in their fight against their and our enemies.

"We can deal a massive blow to the attempt of Reagan and Thatcher to bring us closer to the day when they hope workers of different countries will kill each other on the battlefields created by capitalism, the battlefields only the ruling rich have anything to gain from.

"We can deal a massive blow to Thatcher and Reagan's power, making it harder for them to attack our rights to jobs, to social services, to democratic rights and to human dignity."

Pointing to Fidel Castro's call for an emulation campaign of aid to Nicaragua, Erlisker said, "We'd like to take a leaf out of Fidel's book, because we think it's a pretty good book. We'd like to throw down a challenge to all socialists, to all progressive-minded people in Britain.

"Let's see who can do the most to build broad solidarity with El Salvador. Let's work together and compete in that healthy way."

*Socialist Action* supporters will be taking the issue into their workplaces, union and Labour Party branches and putting it up front in the paper, he said. We will be urging the broadest possible campaign.

## Support the people

Continued from Page 1. more in arms and equipment was announced.

Scores of US "advisors" are in El Salvador, giving assistance to the dictatorship's army in torture and murder of working people.

## US HYPOCRISY

At the same time as the Reagan regime — like Carter's before it — is trying to batter to death our working class brothers and sisters in El Salvador, Washington is trying to make out that the peoples' struggle is engineered by Cuba and the USSR.

This is barbaric hypocrisy. When fighting a regime armed to the teeth by Washington, the Salvadoran people have the right to get arms wherever they can. This is what people fighting for their rights have always done, including the American people when they fought for their independence from Britain.

Moreover, as the recent ITN eye-witness report on El Salvador and the arms issue concluded, most of the arms are captured from the dictatorship or bought on the international arms market.

Most of the Salvadoran guerrillas who have any military training, the programme showed, did not get it from the USSR or Cuba. They got it from Washington, and have since gone over to the side of the working people.

## TERROR

Continued television and newspaper reports have confirmed that the bulk of El Salvadoran people oppose the dictatorship and back the Revolutionary Democratic Front-Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FDR-FMLN), which is leading the freedom struggle.

They have shown that the US-backed junta is carrying out mass murder to terrorise the population into submission. They and Reagan know there is no hope of the junta winning the hearts and minds of



the people. The freedom struggle alone has done that.

The junta's terror is so widespread that 53 American congress-people (MPs) have introduced legislation to cut off all US military aid to the dictatorship.

One of them, Rep. Barbara Mikulski of Maryland, who had been on a fact-finding trip to Central America, learned that rape is a "systematic method of terrorism." Women refugees, she said, "told us babies are thrown into the air and used for target practice. Women are quartered, their breasts cut off. Everywhere I went," she continued, "I asked 'Are these atrocities also committed by the left?' 'No' they answered, 'always by the military'."

## CAPITALISM

This is the real face of capitalism. The real face of those who rule over our lives. This is what Reagan, Thatcher and their class is like

underneath the beauty treatment, the posh accents, civilised manners and expensive clothes.

They believe they have a divine right to inflict their miserable rule on the rest of us.

They see El Salvador as "their" property, "their" problem.

But what business is it of theirs to be telling the people of El Salvador how to run their affairs?

What business and what right have Reagan, Thatcher and their class got in El Salvador, torturing and murdering people, people of our class?

All their terror has not defeated the people of El Salvador, however. As a statement issued in late February by the FDR-FMLN said:

"The government of President Reagan cannot impose any position on the Salvadoran people, because they have already had enough of imperialist domination. . .

"For our part, we are open to political solutions which do not betray the interests of our people.

## What We Stand For

Socialist Action sees as its central aim building, within the labour movement, a class-struggle left-wing fighting for socialist policies against those which lost Labour the last election and disillusioned thousands of Labour supporters.

Such a left-wing should support not only policies in the interests of working people but also their allies among the youth, Blacks, women and oppressed national minorities. It is only by showing that Labour champions the rights of all the oppressed and exploited that a really united offensive can be organised against the Tories (and their right-wing allies in the labour movement).

Socialist Action believes that a fighting left-wing should be built around the following demands:

- \* Hands off the unions! No curbs on the right to strike or picket!
- \* For the 35-hour week! End unemployment by work-sharing (with no loss of pay) and introduce a mass public works programme for those already on the dole.
- \* Oppose all wage curbs. For wage increases to be tied to the cost of living to offset inflation.
- \* Open the books of all companies claiming inability to pay a decent living wage or threatening redundancies. Nationalise those that put profit before people.
- \* Tax the rich not the poor. No cuts in social services — for social spending to be tied to increases in the cost of living.
- \* For women's rights. For the right of all women to abortion on demand, free nurseries, equal pay and opportunity. Support NAC.
- \* Fight racism. Repeal all racist immigration laws. Defend the right of Black people to organise as they see fit in the community and labour movement.
- \* For the right of all oppressed nations to determine their own future — Get the troops out of Ireland now!
- \* End the war drive! For unilateral nuclear disarmament.
- \* For a safe environment. End nuclear reactors and base an energy policy on coal. Explore alternative energy resources.

Socialist Action supporters, while fighting for the above demands, seek the widest possible unity of all forces in the labour movement around concrete issues. They also seek to encourage the widest democracy in the labour movement to allow all currents to argue for their point of view and for decisions to be mandatory on Labour leaders.

## Cuba — Revolution



Last May, over 5 million Cubans mobilised in the 'March of the Fighting People'. They protested American threats against Cuba, the propaganda around the emigrants and declared their commitment to the revolution.

By JAMIE McLAUGHLIN (EEPTU)

LAST December, a leading member of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador — Cayetano Carpio — attended the second congress of the Cuban Communist Party in Havana. He was accompanied by representatives of the freedom fighters in Nicaragua and Grenada.

Speaking of the brutal repression launched by the US-backed El Salvador regime — the intimidation, rape and massacres systematically carried out — Carpio explained what Cuba meant to the FMLN.

"At this historic stage," he said, "socialist Cuba, with the daily progress it makes in building a new society, is the bright beam which inspires all the patri-

ots, revolutionaries and democrats on the continent."

## AID

Carpio's speech is no accident. As the Salvadoran masses deepen their struggle for freedom, it is the example set by the Cubans which both inspires and guides them.

The new Reagan regime in the USA has accused the Cuban leaders of "exporting revolution" and are threatening a blockade against them. It is not guns, however, that the Cuban revolutionaries have exported to the freedom fighters of Central America — although that, in itself, would not be wrong. It is a different kind of aid.

Last January Richard Jacobs, a representative of the Peoples Revolutionary Government in Grenada, spelled out exactly what kind of aid this was.

## NO STRINGS

He explained how the Cubans have sent technicians to Grenada to repair their water supplies, doctors to care for the sick and economic aid — such as fishing boats — to help their economic recovery. This fits in with the assistance the Cubans have offered similar fighters worldwide.

Cuban leader Fidel Castro pointed out, at a mass rally in Havana in January, that there are currently up to 50,000 technicians, engineers, teachers and doc-

# People of El Salvador



porations which every day are eroding their rights too.

This mass support for the struggle has forced some capitalist governments to have second thoughts about the wisdom of President Reagan's course. Criticism of US policy has come from Canada and many European governments.

## LABOUR PARTY

The Labour Party has adopted a position in support of the FDR-FMLN. The party's National Executive Committee is sponsoring an April 25 demonstration, along with the T&GWU and El Salvador Solidarity Campaign, in support of the freedom struggle.

By taking this campaign into our factories, unions and Labour Party branches, we can help the people of El Salvador win, and we can help lower the cost that they are paying with their lives for fighting our enemies, Thatcher and Reagan.

Victory in El Salvador won't just help the workers there, as obviously important as that is. It will weaken the capitalists worldwide and weaken their attacks on our right to jobs, social services, democratic rights and human dignity.

The struggle of the Salvadoran people is our struggle:

US Hands off El Salvador!

Victory to the Salvadoran people and the FDR-FMLN!

### US — HANDS OFF EL SALVADOR!

March and rally, Saturday April 25

Speakers include: Michael Foot MP., Ted Sullivan (Nat. Sec. T&GWU), Eric Heffer MP., Dr Salvador Moncada (Representative of the FDR)

Assemble 12.30 Speakers Corner

But we are not intimidated by the threats of the United States. Our people's will to struggle and the solidarity of the peoples of the world will once again defeat unjust imperialist aggression."

## STRUGGLE DEEPENS

Although the junta and Reagan try to make out that the freedom struggle is almost defeated, the opposite is the case. As Swedish socialist reporter Lars Palmgren put it in an eyewitness account in the March 16 *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*: "once you delve a bit deeper 'you see the official stories crumbling before your eyes'".

In a market town, Zacatecoluca, the army reported having killed 150 guerrillas but the only evidence they could show was one Belgian sub-machine gun, one Chinese rocket-launcher and eight grenades.

At San Vicente, a garrison colonel told Palmgren, "The guerrillas are everywhere around here".

Are the guerrillas in control of villagers around here, he asked right-wingers. "Yes, they are everywhere," the rightists replied, saying many people in their villages had joined up with the freedom fighters.

The liberation forces are currently reorganising and preparing for a fresh onslaught against the junta.

## INTERNATIONAL AID

The people of Nicaragua, Cuba and Grenada are rallying solidarity with El Salvador.

Around the world working people — who watch the latest news of El Salvador on TV every night — are in support of our brothers and sisters there.

Most importantly, in the United States there is mass working class opposition to the dangers of intervention in El Salvador.

Young American workers have no desire to die in El Salvador for the US government and big cor-

# onary example

tors serving in countries as far afield as Angola.

And what is significant about this aid, as Jacobs explained, is that there are no strings attached. Comparing it with "loans" from the capitalist West, he went on: "And I think one of the most profound experiences that we have had in our relationship with Cuba is that they never asked us to adopt a position on anything, at anytime."

## EXAMPLE

But the aid offered by the Cubans is not only of the material kind — vital though this may be. Even more important, as Grenadian Prime Minister Maurice Bishop recently pointed out, is the example they have set for all the oppressed in Latin America.

"But most of all," he said, "you have given the world the example of a small country and a small people in number being able to defeat United States imperialism at Giron."

Bishop was referring to the Cubans smashing a US-organised invasion of their country in April 1961. The attempted invasion came after the Castro leadership, armed with a burning desire to end poverty and corruption, had overthrown the Batista dictatorship and the US corporations and established a workers state in Cuba.

It is that example which served the Sandinistas when they toppled the

Somoza dictatorship in 1979 and which, today, is guiding the FMLN in El Salvador.

## GAINS

The Cuban leaders showed that only a revolutionary path — a path of standing up to the US-backed regimes, arms in hand — could free the people from poverty, repression and exploitation.

The gains of the Cuban revolution, compared to the rest of Latin America, are only too obvious. Despite being a small country with limited resources, the Cubans have been able to erode all the vices that cripple US-dominated regimes from Guatemala to Chile.

As Maurice Bishop pointed out: "Over the past 21 years, you have wiped out illiteracy, you have removed drug-taking as a problem, you have built a strong system in education and health care, and you have expanded and diversified your economy."

This is the attraction of the Cuban road.

## INTERNATIONALIST

Another thing that marks out the revolutionary leaders of Cuba is their internationalism. Unlike the Kremlin bureaucrats, the Cubans actively support and encourage anti-imperialist struggles around the world.

Cuban troops fought alongside the government of Angola to beat back a South African invasion. Cuban troops

backed the Ethiopians in fighting off the US-backed Somali invasion.

The Cubans have supported and given mass aid to the new revolutionary regimes in Grenada and Nicaragua.

This is because the Castro leadership knows full well that, if the revolution in Cuba is to go forward, then it must link up with workers around the world fighting imperialism. Castro has re-introduced, after 50 years of Stalinist degeneration, the real principles of socialist internationalism.

## PRINCIPLES

And, far from waning, those principles are today being applied with more vigour than ever before. As Fidel told the Second Congress of the Cuban CP, on December 20 last year: "Our revolution's prestige derives from our loyalty to principles. And more important than the prestige is the confidence that all the world's revolutionaries must have that Cuba can be counted on..."

"Principles are not negotiable. There are people in the world who negotiate with principles, but Cuba will never negotiate with principles."

It is Cuba's refusal to negotiate with principles which is why it has won the unbridled hatred of the imperialist bosses in Washington. It is also why it should win the unbridled respect and solidarity from workers the world over. Its fight is our fight.

# Tories launch nuclear offensive

By TERRY VINEY (Ravensbourne CLP)

THE Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has grown rapidly over the past year and may make unilateralism Labour Party election policy by the autumn.

Clearly worried by CND's growing impact, Tory Defence Minister John Nott is to launch a "spring offensive" to build support for his expensive nuclear arms policies.

The "offensive" will not only take the form of open argument, backed up by ministerial speeches and news items.

It will use all the tricks of the media: constant repetition, reminders that the Soviet Union is an "aggressive enemy", and the use of trivia to offset concern over expansionist policies.

## PROPAGANDA

The aim of this propaganda is to restate the argument for nuclear deterrents and support for NATO programmes such as US cruise missiles.

We can expect the propaganda to be subtle. With their new weapons, MX missiles, Trident II, Cruise and Pershing, for instance, the US is planning a first-strike capability in which they can hope to win a nuclear war. Meanwhile they complain that the Soviet Union has developed a "killer satellite".

In fact, the only things it will "kill" are other satellites sent to obliterate Soviet cities.

## CIVIL DEFENCE

Closely linked to Nott's programme are plans recently issued by the Home Office. These plans put Britain on a 48-hour missile alert. They have been issued to local authorities, the police and the fire service.

Doubling the grant for civil defence in the coming year to £9 million, the Home Office says "... it should be assumed that there may be as little as 7 days warning of attack; and the basic essentials of plans should be capable of implementation within 48 hours".

Part of the plan is to carry out surveys to identify "areas like car parks suitable for use as communal shelters".

Leaving aside the callousness of such directives, the object of these proposals is to make us "think nuclear".

The only alternative conclusion is to assume the Tories don't have any confidence in their own "deterrent" arguments.

## US RECORD

That may be so. Western powers never have seen their nuclear weapons as defensive. Just look at the record. The US

- \* dropped two atom bombs on Japan four years before the Soviet atomic bomb came into being.

- \* had a delivery system 12 years before the Soviets.

- \* had its first medium-range missiles six years before the Soviets.

- \* had its first intercontinental ballistic missile two years before the Soviets.

- \* had its first nuclear submarine 6 years before the Soviets.

- \* had its first submarine-launched ballistic missile 9 years before the Soviets.

- \* had its first multiple targeted warheads 5 years before the Soviets.

Current US expansion of arms expenditure can only make the Soviet Union follow suit.

## ARMS RACE

By backing this war drive the Tories are accelerating the arms race.

Reagan's administration plans to spend an extra \$32.6 billion on defence. It wants to establish a military presence in



John Sturrock (Report)

the Gulf area, in El Salvador and Angola. Already assistance and military equipment have been promised to Saudi Arabia and Israel.

All this reflects the statement of US Defence Secretary Weinberger when he stressed the determination "to regain the strength we have lost".

Such a view lies at the heart of the recent US arms build-up and the Tory determination to back it.

Until the end of the Vietnam war, the West was happy to carry out "detente" with the Soviet Union while dominating Third World countries.

The victory of the guerrilla army in Vietnam dispelled all that. A spate of uprisings and revolutions followed.

The US were thrown out of Iran. The white settler regime was dismissed in Zimbabwe. Nicaragua's tyrant Somoza fell and a successful revolution took place in Grenada.

Now the butcher government in El Salvador is struggling to defend itself against a massive popular uprising.

## DOMINATION

For the US it means one thing. Its objective of world domination is threatened. A new programme to expand nuclear weapons is designed to regain the initiative for Western imperialists.

There is nothing in this war policy that will benefit working people. It will only mean further cuts in welfare services.

Every cruise missile the Tories put in Britain is a nuclear target. Every Trident means 4000 less homes.

## CONFIDENCE

CND has never been so strong before. Not only should Labour Party leaders like Foot be held to their word on unilateralism. The campaign now has the forces to win layers of support among trade unionists.

Last month's labour movement conference must be built and acted upon. Unilateralists should gain confidence from the fears shown by the Tories in their propaganda campaign.

## New from Pathfinder:

"Revolt in El Salvador" gives both a background history of El Salvador and traces in depth the current freedom struggle which is shaking the Duarte regime — and its backers in Washington.

Available from: Socialist Action, P.O. Box 65, London, SW16 1NN.

## Revolt in El Salvador



## Letter from H-Block:

# 'Our struggle is your struggle'

This letter, originally written on two pieces of toilet paper, was smuggled out of the H-Blocks in March. *Socialist Action* received it from the Manchester Women and Ireland Group. It has been abridged for reasons of space.

"...I address this to your organisation as my comrades and I are well aware of your work for freedom and justice.

Firstly, I will briefly outline the history of our prison struggle so that you may be able to look at the situation objectively and judge for yourselves the merits of our cause.

In June 1972, after a prolonged hunger strike by Republican prisoners, the British government was forced to concede to their demand to be treated as political prisoners. This was the status they held until March 1976 when the Brits, who at that time were trying to depict the Republican Movement as criminals, decided to once more break their promises and to withhold political status from any future political prisoners.

But as you know, we refused to be "criminalised" and since 1976 my comrades and I have been kept in solitary confinement, naked but for a blanket.

### FAST

Last year, having explored and exhausted every possible alternative, we, the Blanketmen and women decided to hunger strike to the death in a desperate effort to regain political status and to bring an end to our miserable existence in these jails.

So, on the 27th of October last,

seven comrades within these Blocks commenced a fast and were soon joined by three women in Armagh and finally by another thirty prisoners. . .

As the fast progressed, support for our cause snowballed and pressure on Britain increased – so much so that Thatcher, after her meeting with Haughey, stated that she believed the situation could be resolved without loss of life. This could only mean one thing (since) there had been no weakening in the resolve of the prisoners on hunger strike: an offer was imminent.

### SCABBED

On the 53rd day of the hunger strike, when Sean McKenna was only hours away from death, a document was presented to the original seven men on hunger strike. This document, prepared by the colonial Northern Ireland Office, contained detailed proposals from the government concerning changes in the prison regime.

On detailed examination of the document, the hunger strikers found that it satisfied our demands for political status and, with time running out for Sean, an end was called to the hunger strike. . .

As a gesture of good will, we de-escalated our protest which would also facilitate the transition; but there was no transition – we waited, and waited and waited. As time went on, anticipation turned to suspicion and finally to anger. We had been conned, and



though it is hard to admit, outmanoeuvred by the treacherous British politicians who are renowned for their double-dealing and backtracking. . .

### PROTEST

When we were absolutely sure that the Brits had reneged, we discussed the situation and what to do about it. We decided that there were only two alternatives open to us.

We could either continue our protest as it was before the hunger strike, in the faint hope that Britain might finally find it in her heart to treat us fairly, or we could once more commence

a hunger strike.

To have opted for the former would have, we believe, shown weakness on our behalf, so we unanimously elected for another hunger strike.

### FREEDOM

On March 1st, the fifth anniversary of the withdrawal of political status, Bobby Sands, a personal friend of mine, began a hunger strike to the death. Bobby, like the vast majority of his 500 or so comrades in these blocks and Armagh jail (on the blanket), was only a teenager when he first came into jail. He has spent the last nine Christ-

mases inside this camp, four with and five without political status. When he was outside, Bobby was a tireless worker for freedom. He fought for the freedom of all oppressed people of Ireland. . .

### SUPPORT

The British government believes that, having defused the last hunger strike, they are now in a stronger position and can now much more easily afford to let prisoners die.

Bobby Sands and those who will shortly join him on hunger strike are under no illusions about the compassion of the enemy. They are prepared to die and very likely will die unless that massive pressure directed at Britain during the last hunger strike is once more applied. . .

You too are involved in a struggle and you know that at times of crisis, those who are not for you are against you. There can be no sitting on the fence.

It is hard for me not to become emotional when the lives of our friends are hanging in the balance, but I ask for your support, not as a friend of the comrades in question, but as a brother of yours in struggle. Our struggle is your struggle, our victory is your victory. . .

Struggle and Solidarity  
Jackie McCullan  
H-Block 5, Long Kesh

# Why 'Reclaim the night' is no answer

By LIZ EASTON (Tottenham CLP)

Last Christmas, the National Union of Students (NUS) conference passed a motion requiring the union to organise a national "Reclaim the Night" march.

This was in response to the growing sexual attacks on women and the barrage of films and adverts glorifying violence against women.

The aim of the march was to assert the right of women to walk unmolested at night in the streets. As such it was a direct and understandable reaction by some to what was happening.

### DANGER

While understandable, however, demonstrations like Reclaim the Night, which have hit the news recently, have a dangerous logic.

Some sections of the women's movement, who have promoted such actions, have raised a number of demands which include harsher penalties on sexual offenders and a curfew on men.

Such calls are dangerous because they suggest that men – and not society – are

at the root of violence against women. In this way, they actually play into the hands of the Tories who are seeking to split working people, Black and white, men and women.

### ALL MEN?

It is true, of course, that women are subject to physical attacks by *some* men, just as Blacks are subject to harassment from *some* whites. This is no excuse, however, to see the enemy as men in general, any more than for Black people to see their enemy as whites in general.

How can such an attitude be justified when it was the "male-dominated" labour movement which was instrumental, last year, in fighting off the Tory-led attacks on women's abortion rights.

Calling for actions against "all men" are not just impractical. They lead to seeing the labour movement – which is the main ally in the fight for women's rights – as an enemy. This can only please the Thatchers of this world who are seeking to divide up workers and take them on sector by sector.

### CLASS JUSTICE

Moreover, the demands raised by these layers of the women's movement actually help the class enemies in their attacks. They must rub their hands in glee when they hear people calling for harsher penalties and curfews.

After all, prisons and borstals exist to contain the most fighting elements of working people – often Black youth. Their function is to enforce on working people the laws devised by the ruling class.

If harsher penalties were introduced as fit punishments for rape or other sexual offences, it will not be male members of the ruling class who are sentenced. The men so punished will be working class, particularly Black workers. It would do nothing to eradicate rape.

### CURFEW

As for the imposition of a curfew, the idea is not only impractical but reactionary. Calling on the state to deny democratic rights to working class men would

turn society into a ruling class paradise.

It is not hard to imagine what use the cops would make of such increased power in places like Brixton or Southall where they already operate vicious harassment against young Black people.

Giving the cops these powers would enable them to crack down not only on Blacks, but on any sector of the working class involved in struggles for their rights – such as strikers or pickets.

### REACTIONARY

In this sense, the demands of the Reclaim the Night supporters are reactionary and should be thoroughly opposed inside the labour movement.

They pose the outdated stereotype that women are "natural victims" of men who are "natural aggressors", stereotypes which the earlier women's movement set out to challenge.

By posing men as the aggressor, they turn their backs on the labour movement and call on the Thatchers of this world to take away the democratic rights of workers generally. Is it any wonder that

figures like Mary Whitehouse, hardly a radical, has been to the forefront in supporting such a campaign?

### ANSWER

This doesn't mean, of course, that violence against women isn't a real problem. It is. Women are abused – much more often in the home than on the street – by individual men warped by present capitalist society.

The way to end such violence is not to call on the ruling class which creates it to crack down on working class men. It is, on the contrary, to extend women's rights and our full participation in society.

By fighting key struggles such as for the right to abortion, to nurseries, to a job and so on, we can challenge those prejudices which are at the root of the abuse of women.

In this fight, the ruling class is our enemy. Working class men, on the other hand, are our allies. Both of us together have everything to gain by uprooting this system which exploits and oppresses us.

# EDUCATION FOR SOCIALISTS ~ What is Internationalism?

For those who do not yet identify themselves with a socialist tendency, the left can often appear to have dissolved into a plethora of splits. Misinterpreting events, left groups have invariably lost sight of the Marxist method as set out by Trotsky when, with others, he formed the Fourth International nearly 50 years ago.

Below, Mike Rodney explains the principles of internationalism.

Every month in the pages of *Socialist Action*, there are articles about the struggles waged by working people to liberate themselves from the injustices and exploitation we all face. Notably, we have covered the crucial struggles taking place in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Poland and Ireland.

Our desire to put the spotlight on these struggles is not simply that we find them "interesting" or "exciting". International issues are key because they lead to a basic understanding of our society and the means through which we can change it.

### DIVIDED

The world is divided into different countries or nation-states. Each has its own language, culture and law. But in the majority of these countries, poverty, racism, sexism and unemployment form

the largest problems for the vast majority who have to struggle for the basic necessities of life.

More specifically, the world is characterised for the most part by a system by which people have to supply profit to the bosses who make up a tiny minority of the population.

The differences which exist between working people in different countries are more than outstripped by these fundamental similarities which they all face.

Recognising this, Marx stated over 100 years ago that the system which creates all these inequalities, the capitalist system, is the first truly international socialist order.

### INJUSTICE

Like the great socialists who followed him, such as Lenin and Trotsky, Marx appreciated that, despite its interna-



Trotsky, like Lenin, Marx and Engels before him, fought for international perspective.

tional nature, capitalism was responsible for war and the massive social injustices confronting millions of people.

To resolve these problems, the whole system has to be replaced by a more advanced order, a socialist order, which would enable working people to live in harmony, peace and freedom. This involves a world-wide struggle by working people against the ruling rich.

This struggle goes on all the time, though its form, speed and intensity vary from place to place. For example, while the workers in Britain or France struggle mainly around the issues of wages and working conditions, the people of El Salvador and Iran are rising up against their bosses and imperialist masters to kick them out.

### JUST SOCIETY

No matter where these struggles take place nor what form they take, they are all part of the process wherein working people seek to create a just and free society. No matter where they are, socialists and workers must express solidarity and support liberation struggles taking place across the world.

Failure to do this can be critical. If, for instance, workers in Britain fail to

support the struggle in El Salvador, it is because they have capitulated to the nationalism which the bosses, through Reagan and Thatcher seek to encourage.

If British workers support the struggle in El Salvador, not only are they helping the uprising itself. They will have dealt a blow at Reagan and Thatcher who are holding down workers in their own countries.

### SOCIALISTS

Unfortunately, in this country many socialists fail in practice to understand the importance of having an internationalist perspective. For example, the *Militant* groupig traditionally has given scant coverage or support to the liberation struggles in Central America.

*Militant* and other groups are characterised by an inability to grasp, in practice the internationalist tradition forged by Marx, Lenin and Trotsky with whom they so love to try to identify themselves.

Internationalism must form the central pivot for all socialists in the struggle ahead.

# Militant ~ will it meet the challenge?

By JANET ALSOP

THERE is a growing radicalisation in the labour movement. As Thatcher's attacks bite home, increasing numbers are being forced into action to defend jobs, wages, democratic rights and the right not to be a victim of the Tories' nuclear insanity.

It is this fight-back which explains the deepening turmoil in the unions and Labour Party. Workers are coming into conflict with the pro-Tory policies of the leaders, some of whom have already moved house and others of whom are busy trying to barricade the Parliamentary Labour Party door.

In this situation, *Militant*, a large Marxist current, has some distinct advantages. Well-rooted in the CLPs and some unions, it is uniquely placed to lead this radicalisation into a real fight for socialist policies. How is it living up to the challenge?

## CND

The remarkable thing is, that while being uniquely placed, *Militant* is being by-passed by the radicalisation. Far from being involved in the struggles erupting in the labour movement, it has either ignored them or lined up against them.

A clear example of this is with CND. A mass movement has erupted against Tory plans to turn Britain into a nuclear graveyard. Thousands of union and Labour Party members have taken part in actions on the streets against Thatcher's policies.

While being led by a confused number of pacifists and multilateralists, such mobilisations reflect the instinctive hostility of thousands of workers to Tory attempts to boost the arms race at the very time they are axing social services.

## ATTACK

What has been *Militant's* reaction to the growing anti-war movement? Has it



The fight for socialist policies in the labour movement takes more than resolution-passing at conferences and branch meetings.

identified with the feelings of thousands and got involved and built the campaign? On the contrary, their attitude was summed up by Rob Sewell in the March 29 issue of the paper:

"Those in the leadership of CND who imply that the struggle for peace must take precedence over the fight for socialism are completely misguided. Without the overthrow of capitalism, there can never be a lasting peace."

Sewell is correct, of course, to pinpoint the confused thinking of CND leaders. But what Sewell does – and what *Militant* always do – is to counterpose the fight for socialism to that growing up against nuclear missiles in Britain. It leads, in practice, to *Militant* standing on the sidelines talking about

socialism while thousands are involved in real struggle.

## GENERAL

There is nothing new in this sectarian stance, of course. It can be seen in *Militant's* attitude to other struggles that have emerged in recent years in the labour movement. Another clear example is that of the fight for women's right to abortion.

In 1979, under the pressure from women in the unions and Labour Party, the TUC was forced to launch a mass 60,000-strong demonstration against Corrie's anti-abortion bill. The action was so large, it forced the government to back down and the bill was finally shelved.

What was *Militant's* attitude on this issue of direct concern to millions of working class women? Did they, like others, seek to mobilise the labour movement to kill the bill? No, once again, they abstained. They counterposed the fight for "socialism" to the real struggle under their noses.

## METHOD

Such a sectarian attitude can be seen on a number of issues – from the fight against the cuts to that against the Tory racist offensive. It was only under pressure that they joined in the CARL action on April 5.

How is it that a so-called Marxist tendency can stand aloof from struggles involving thousands in defence of their rights? The answer lies in their mistaken view of how socialist policies can be won in the labour movement.

For *Militant*, the fight for socialism does not come out of these struggles. They do not grasp that workers, involved in action to defend their rights, will increasingly see the need for socialist solutions. On the contrary, they see these struggles as a diversion away from the "gospel" they are destined to "preach".

Thus it is that they continually abstain from them or, as in the case of CND, actually line up against them.

## ADAPTATION

In many ways, of course, this almost fear of action stems from their adaptation to the arid traditions of the labour bureaucracy in Britain. Constant years in CLPs has bred an inward-looking attitude which finds itself more at home in resolution-passing than building struggles on the streets or in the workplaces.

Moreover, it is this adaptation to the arid traditions which explain its backward attitude to the fight for women's, Black or other national minorities' rights.

*Militant's* refusal to support the fight for abortion rights, to back CARL or the struggle to get the troops out of Ireland smacks of accommodating to the prejudices that exist in certain sections of the British labour movement.

This is particularly true on the question of Ireland where the *Militant* current, refusing to recognise the national struggle in the North and opposed to the Marxist position of oppressed nationalities' right to self-determination, have consistently refused to support the struggle to get the troops out now.

## INTERNATIONAL

This chauvinist attitude – and that is what it is – is part of a broader inability of *Militant* to view the class struggle on an international level. It is the most insular of the insular left groups in Britain.

Their refusal to support the struggle of the Irish freedom fighters, a fight championed by Marx and Engels, parallels their refusal, at the time of the US invasion of Vietnam, to become part of the mass movement fighting for the Vietnamese people's right to self-determination.

Today, that insularity can be seen yet again in their refusal to support the solidarity actions occurring with the struggle in Central America – in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Grenada – which is under fire from US imperialism.

## BY-PASSED?

It is a rare occurrence for a Marxist current to, when the mass movement arises, actually abstain from it or feel threatened by it.

That is unfortunately the case with *Militant*. In the years ahead, as struggles continue to develop, either it will begin to lose its sectarian policies and adapt to the mass movement. Or – and this is the only alternative – it will be bypassed in action.

## NUT ~ Defend ILTA eight!

By MIKE SMITH (Southwark NUT)

THE disciplinary panel of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) has decided to get tough. Five officers of the Lambeth branch have been suspended from the union for six months. National executive member Dick North has a twelve-month sentence.

They will be unable to hold office for a further 18 months and must undertake not to "break the rules" after this time.

The move follows a decision of Lambeth NUT to support the Lambeth day of action against the cuts last February. Despite Lambeth branch voting overwhelmingly to take on the Tories, union leaders have chosen to victimise its officers.

## PRESSURE

All industrial action of the NUT has to go to an "action committee" and be approved by the NEC. This rule 8 was adopted under right-wing pressure in 1974 to prevent militancy on a local basis. As a result, any official action is ponderous and firmly in the hands of

the leadership.

Even so, the suspended Lambeth officers tried to secure support from the union's action committee. Instead, General Secretary Fred Jarvis instructed them to withdraw the call to action. This was before the action committee had reached its decision.

The three left candidates for elections to ILTA – NUT's London body – have also been reprimanded. This is because they gave support to Lambeth's call for action while carrying out their election campaign.

## CLAMPDOWN

This is clearly an attempt to discredit the left and shows why the NEC felt it important to clamp down on unofficial actions while an election was on.

These disciplinary measures coincide with two significant events. First, the ILTA elections, where the three left candidates came within 200 votes of winning while over 300 votes were declared null and void.

Second, it coincides with the capitulation of the NUT executive to the government on pay, by accepting a 7½

percent wage settlement. Fred Jarvis had predicted confidently that the union would accept this increase and defended it as "the going rate".

For months the union executive has been talking about joint action with other workers and has now turned its back on the rest of the public sector, by taking an offer that most have refused.

## FIGHT

Preventing militants from holding office is a novel step by the NEC. It will have the effect of suppressing grass roots activity and will keep policy-making firmly in the hands of union bureaucrats.

We need to fight against these actions. Widespread support for the suspended six has come from many sectors of the labour movement and resolutions of support should be sent from all organisations to the NUT.

In addition, the defence campaign needs funds. Donations and requests for information to: 'Lambeth NUT Defence Committee, 27, Wheathill Road, London SE20.

socialist revolution. Power was taken out of the hands of the big US corporations and Cuban parasites and put in the hands of working people.

This enabled the Cubans to eradicate hunger, illiteracy, poverty, unemployment and all the other social injustices inflicted on the Third World. Racism was uprooted, and Black Cubans gained an equal place – both in practice and in law.

Big steps were taken in the fight for women's equality. These included a massive increase in jobs, the breakdown in job discrimination, guaranteed rights to abortion, child-care provision and other services. Women were no longer bound to the home.

Health, education and other social services are now the best in Latin America and – in many areas – are ahead of the United States. The average Cuban life expectancy is now longer than for many working people in the US, the wealthiest and most advanced capitalist country.

These gains by the Cuban workers – as this book shows – struck horror into the hearts of the ruling classes of the world.

What horrified them even more was that the Cuban people and their revolutionary leaders believed in sharing their good fortune with workers in other countries. They provide not just an example but a voice for the oppressed of the world and massive material assistance.

Cuban doctors, teachers and technicians help people of many countries overcome disease and illiteracy. Cuba gives more aid than the United Nations bodies in these fields!

Cuban troops helped the Angolan government defeat an invasion by the South African racists.

*Cuba for Beginners* tells the story of Cuba and how the revolution was made. Because it is done in cartoon and humorous form, it is an excellent place to start exploring Cuba, before going on to read more in depth studies.

## Stoke Socialist Action Forum

By JASON HILL

THE trade unions and the Labour Party will continue to be the central arena for the struggle to build socialism in Britain. That was the conclusion of a *Socialist Action* public forum held on March 23 in Stoke-on-Trent.

Discussion at the forum was led by Bob Swart who explained, "Wide layers are being drawn into struggle. The Black population is only one example. The mass demonstrations against unemployment, the cuts and nuclear weapons all represent attempts by workers to defend their rights and living standards."

## UNITY

Not only were these demonstrations increasingly made up of ordinary working people, rather than the "radical left", but also more and more of those workers are realising that the Tories cannot be stopped except by a united response, across all sectors of the working class.

"These workers now going into action are demanding that their unions and the Labour Party show their mettle. They're not content with the do-nothing approach of the labour bureaucrats," Swart commented.

## LABOUR PARTY

This could be seen in the radical shift left of policy at Labour Party conferences. Moreover, the NEC has also been

pushed into actually mobilising on the basis of these policies. Secondly, big gains had been made in democratising the Labour Party.

This is vital if the unions and Labour Party are to implement class policies, and not those of the bosses. It is this that has forced the gang of twelve out of the party – they couldn't face the thought of being held accountable for their actions.

Swart also stressed the importance for socialists in this country of having real solidarity with workers and peasants around the world who are engaged in their own struggles.

## DEMONSTRATIONS

The talk provoked a lively response from the meeting. One person pointed to the many huge demonstrations which had been organised by the labour movement in recent months, such as at Liverpool and Glasgow against unemployment and in London against nuclear weapons. These were concrete evidence of Swart's observations.

A fund-raising speech by Ann Westcott raised £8 for the *Socialist Action* fund drive.

The forum is the first in a new series to be held in Stoke-on-Trent. For details of further forums phone Jason at 0782-813401.

## Review:

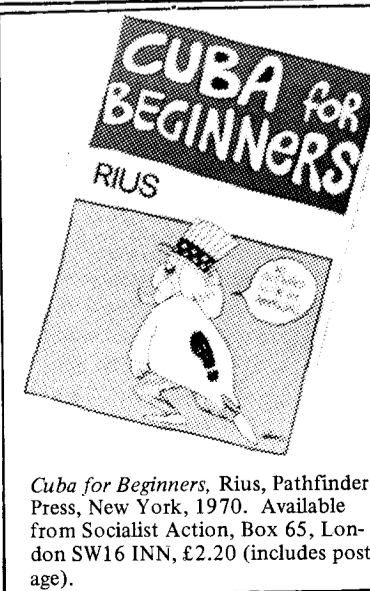
# Cuba for beginners

Today, Cuba occupies a central place in world politics. US President Reagan sees Cuba as being behind every fight waged by people for their rights in the Caribbean, Latin America and even Africa.

How can this small country be such a massive problem for Reagan and four previous presidents over the last 20 years?

And how can it be such an inspiration to literally hundreds of millions of toilers around the world?

As *Cuba for Beginners* explains, the answer is simple: Cuba carried out a



*Cuba for Beginners*, Rius, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1970. Available from Socialist Action, Box 65, London SW16 INN, £2.20 (includes postage).

## EVENTS

### LONDON

Support the hunger strikers! Socialist Action public forum: Thursday April 16, 7.30 pm, Room 7, Friends Hse, Euston Road.

Revolution in Central America. Socialist Action day school: Sunday April 12, 10.00 am. For further details, ring 01-769-1160

### STOKE-ON-TRENT

Socialist Action Public forums, held bi-weekly. Contact: Jason, 281 3401.

### BRIDLINGTON

LPYS Conference. Socialist Action public meeting. Saturday, April 18, Southcliffe Hotel (opposite conference centre), 6.30 pm.

Poland:

No Soviet intervention!

By ANN WESTCOTT (Salford CLP)
Solidarity, the independent Polish trade union federation, won another important victory on March 29.

Threatening national strike action, they forced the Stalinist government to back down on the use of repressive tactics against Solidarity members and Polish dissidents.

In particular, the government agreed to hold an investigation into the police action at Bydgoszcz which led to the severe beating up of union activists involved in a sit-in of the provincial Assembly Chamber.

SAMPLE

The Bydgoszcz action was only one of a series of thug-like tactics launched by the government.

Making use of the 90-day no-strike period which had been agreed with union leaders, the Polish authorities had begun to arrest and intimidate union activists and launch a scurrilous anti-Semitic campaign to divide workers.

As Warsaw Solidarity spokesperson Janusz Onyszkiewicz put it, on March 7: "It looks like pressure is building up at all levels, starting at the lower level with the harassment of our activists and ending at the higher level with the detention of Jacek Kuron."

SLANDER

Kuron - a leading Polish socialist - was detained by the police on March 5 for so-called "slandering the state" and ordered to report twice a week to the local police station. Another leading dissident, Adam Michnick, was also threatened with arrest in Wroclaw.

Other reports of thug tactics by the police on trade union activists had become known. In Radon, four youths were beaten up on March 10 for telling a man not to tear down Solidarity posters.

Even more scurrilous was the distribution - obviously under government super-

vision - of anti-Semitic leaflets.

RACIST

Such leaflets and posters called upon the Poles to rise up against "Jewish chauvinists" attempting to "usurp power" through Solidarity. They were either unsigned or signed by a previously unknown organisation calling itself the "Generation Always Faithful to the Homeland".

Calling on workers to "stand firm against this attempt at anti-semitic action", Solidarity indicted the government for it. Some CP members had been seen sticking up the posters and distributing the leaflets.

There is nothing new in this. In March 1968, the Stalinist leaders sought to suppress a mass student struggle for democratic rights by carrying out a vicious anti-Jewish witch-hunt which forced thousands to leave their country.

RESPONSE

The Polish Stalinists' despicable actions, however, only served to alienate more and more sections of society. Solidarity members responded to the racist attacks by launching a 3000-strong demonstration on March 8 in Warsaw to commemorate the student struggle.

In Lodz, Radom and Wroclaw, workers in Solidarity called strikes in protest against the victimisation of local union members and the attacks on leading dissidents such as Kuron.

Most important of all, the events at Bydgoszcz in which three Solidarity members were beaten up, unleashed a national protest. Threats of a national strike were made unless the government was prepared to back down on its repressive tactics.

PROVOCATION

There are two main factors behind the Polish Stalinists' provocative actions. The first is that they know that their



Polish workers fight for full democratic and political rights is under threat from Soviet bureaucrats.

jobs and special privileges - their better housing, food and country homes - are at stake. No doubt they also know they might end up in jail for their crimes if workers win control of the country.

Their existence as a privileged caste is incompatible with true workers' democracy and this is why they are driven to try and crush the workers' movement. It is a question of self-survival.

The second factor is the continuing pressure from Moscow officials who are frightened of the implications for their own country should the workers in Poland win. The Moscow Stalinists have called for "urgent action" against what

they call "imperialist and reactionary forces" and have held Warsaw Pact army manoeuvres on the border as an intimidating threat.

ANTI-SOCIALIST?

Articles in the Soviet media have presented Solidarity as little more than a front for "anti-socialist" conspirators. But nothing could be further from the truth. Solidarity brings together the most class-conscious Polish workers - the best defenders of socialism and democracy.

This was summed up by Brosniko Gernik recently. As one of Solidarity's advisers, he said: the Polish system was

being challenged "not because it is socialist, but because it is insufficiently so."

Workers in Poland do not want to go back to capitalism. They want to go forward to a situation in which workers themselves democratically decide how the country should be run.

GAINS

This is why Solidarity's growth has been so rapid - taking in, according to the Economist of March 14 about one million of the three million CP members themselves.

Solidarity has grown because more and more sectors of the population - workers, farmers, students and intellectuals - see it as a force to fight arbitrary arrests, censorship and the privileges of a small bureaucratic elite.

They identify with it against the anti-socialist forces of the Stalinist leaders who are prepared even to use the worst racist filth to protect their own perks.

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

In an interview with Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci which appeared in the March 8 Washington Post, Solidarity leader Lech Walesa pointed out: "If the government says 'This is a mess, we resign', Solidarity should take the responsibility and I should take the situation into my hands."

Fallaci, wanting to make sure she had understood him, asked: "Did you really say that should the government fail, Solidarity should govern and you would take the situation into your own hands?"

Walesa replied: "Yes, I said it." This is what frightens the bureaucrats in Poland and their mentors in Moscow - the idea of workers taking over society and running it in their interests as they have in Cuba and are doing in Nicaragua and Grenada. It is an idea which workers in the West, faced with growing attacks on our rights, should identify with totally.

GLC elections ~ Vote Labour

By JANE ANSELL (Finchley CLP)

THE GLC election on May 7 will give Londoners the chance to show the Tories what we think of their policies.

Over the last four years Horace Cutler has led a Tory council and the capital has been in rapid decay.

Along with government policy nationally, the GLC has engaged in a vicious onslaught against the services of working people.

Cutler boasts, for instance, that "the present Conservative administration has cut the pre-1977 (Labour) programme of 6,500 annual housing starts to almost nil."

And that's not all. The best housing owned by the authority is being sold off so that those on poorer incomes have no hope of moving into better accommodation.

TRANSPORT SLASHED

The Tories are slashing transport services too. At a time when more and more railway stations are working part-time, bus services are facing cutbacks. For this deteriorating service, bus users have forked out for four fare increases in two years.

For those using the tubes, it's even worse. Since coming to office four years ago, the Tories have raised underground fares by 300 percent.

SCHOOLS

Nor are the Tories too worried about London's school children. While they



Tories wanted to break up the Inner London Education Authority - which would have led to large-scale redundancies among teachers.

buy privileges through private education, the state education system which all workers' children must use is going to the dogs.

Not only do they want to hold back schools' spending power. They planned to break up the Inner London Education

Authority and turn over to local councils the job of running the schools.

Had this been allowed to happen, richer boroughs like Kensington and Chelsea would have offered far better opportunities than poorer boroughs such as Lambeth or Southwark.

That time they were stopped in their tracks by the Save ILEA Campaign.

JOBS

Labour's dockland is now a disaster zone. As profits fell, big business interests stripped the docks of its jobs. Although the area represents one of London's greatest assets, with opportunities for housing, jobs and industry, the Tories have done nothing.

All this means less jobs. One in ten of the country's unemployed is a Londoner.

With a purposeful programme to revitalise housing, transport and the services generally, all that could be changed.

CONFERENCE

No wonder that at Labour's Greater London conference there was overwhelming support for a policy against the cuts. Its manifesto plans to reinstate all cuts in the bus, underground and British Rail services. A 25 percent reduction in London Transport fares, modernisation of tubes and a "lorry ban" are called for.

Labour will refuse Tory plans to hand over 70,000 council houses to local boroughs and to carry out a programme to build more council houses and to modernise council estates. Labour opposes the sale of council houses.

Most working people have had

enough of Toryism. They want a party that will defend their jobs and services.

But the Tories have one trump card. Labour councils have aroused doubt and mistrust by the way they have pushed up the rates. At a time of government stringency measures, it is working families who can least afford such massive rate increases.

Labour councillors have isolated workers from the struggle against Heseltime's cuts. Instead of leading mass protest - through the unions and Labour Parties - Labour councillors have substituted the class for themselves.

Since councillors cannot replace the working class in the fight against the Tories, they have effectively turned on working people instead.

TIGHT CONTROL

That is why Labour Party members have to keep a tight control over the actions of their representatives on the council.

All those elected onto the GLC must be made to understand that it was not simply the electorate who put them there.

Because they stood as Labour candidates and not as independents, they must carry out party policy.

That means sticking to conference decisions. It means accepting re-selection if necessary. It means sweeping London clean of Tory wreckers and winning back our hard-won services.

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Women workers occupy

By LEN WAGSTAFF (Salford CLP)

WORKERS at Royal Pride furniture factory in Manchester took bold action last month to try to force their boss to recognise their union, the Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades Union (FTAT).

After four months of negotiating for wages to be paid at the nationally agreed rate for their work, the workforce - mostly women - have been on strike since February 27, and briefly occupied the factory in March.

Royal Pride boss Robert Nowak has tried numerous tricks to break the struggle for recognition.

Dismissal notices were sent out. A section of the workforce was offered a rise just before a secret ballot took place, and finally, the strikers were offered the full pay agreement, including back pay and improved working conditions - providing the union was not recognised.

But the workers know that the right to organise is vital if they are to defend their right to jobs and decent wages. They have refused to budge.

Nowak managed to obtain a court order to end the occupation, but the picket remains solid and no stock is leaving the factory.

Labour movement support for the Royal Pride workers has grown steadily.

Mass pickets are held outside the factory every Monday, and donations are flooding in.

Labour MP Frank Allaun spoke at a meeting to support the strikers, which was well attended.

Donations can be sent, payable to "Royal Pride Strike Fund", FTAT, 37 Anson Rd, Manchester M14 5DB. Delegations to help the picket, can help from 7.30am, Royal Pride, New Bridge St, Salford.