

# A Socialist ACTION

No. 31 28 October 1983 30p

South  
London  
Labour  
Movement  
Rally

Hands off Central  
America!

Friday 28 October, 7.30pm  
Salvador Moncada, FDR/FMLN  
Fennis Augustin, Grenadan High Commission  
Francisco D'Escoto, Nicaraguan Ambassador  
Tony Benn, LP NEC  
Terry Marsland, Tobacco Workers Union  
Alan Sapper, ACTT  
Lambeth Town Hall, SW2

# IMPERIALIST TROOPS OUT OF GRENADA!



The brutal invasion by the imperialists and their lackeys in Caricom should surprise no one. Reagan has declared war on the peoples of both the Caribbean and Latin America for daring to try and determine their own future.

To carry out that war he has used subversion, assassination and now bloody warfare. The labour movement must side unequivocally with the peoples of Grenada and insist that they, and they alone, must decide their own destiny.

That is why the Labour Party and trade union leaders must start a campaign for the immediate withdrawal of all imperialist foreign troops now. To fail to defend the people of Grenada from imperialist intervention is to acquiesce in the crushing of their most elementary rights. If the imperialists get away with this in Grenada then the next step will be Nicaragua and finally Cuba.

## A statement from Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone and Paul Boateng

The assault by US troops upon Grenada on the morning of 25 October represents the direct intervention of imperialism to use the tragedy of recent events in Grenada and the grave errors committed by some of the Grenadian revolutionaries to wipe out the revolutionary process in Grenada and subject her once again to imperialist and neo-colonialist dominance. Imperialism has a proven record of total opposition to and sabotage of the Grenadian revolution since its incep-

tion.

No US military force will guarantee the liberties and the social and economic welfare of the Grenadian people who have struggled to win their freedom in the teeth of a US-inspired economic blockade. The invasion will not secure peace it is a war against the Grenadian people. It is now the urgent task of socialists and progressive forces to halt the invasion and to demand the withdrawal of US and foreign troops from the region.

Below we re-print the early-day motion put in the House of Commons on 25 October, the day of the invasion.

*The invasion of the Caribbean island of Grenada is an unjustified and brutal act of aggression against the people of Grenada.*

*The recent tragic events in Grenada have been used by the United States as a blatant pretext to escalate aggression in the Caribbean and Central American region. United States warships are already stationed off the Coast of Nicaragua and 4,000 US Combat troops are involved in military manoeuvres on the Honduran-Nicaraguan border. The United States invasion of Grenada undermines their claims that this military presence is for routine manoeuvres.*

*It is proof of their preparedness for direct intervention in the region. We condemn the reported participation of British troops in this exercise and demand that Her Majesty's government cease all cooperation with the United States' attempts to distort the independent political process in Central America and the Caribbean. We urge Her Majesty's government to support the initiatives for peace in the region by the Nicaraguan government and the governments of Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Panama.*

*Jeremy Corbyn MP Tony Banks MP Bob Clay MP Dennis Canavan MP*

# Socialist ACTION

## CND's future

Every newspaper seemed to tell the same tale. This was CND's last gasp. Every major European power has committed itself to the new generation of NATO missiles.

But can they really afford to be so complacent? The answer is yes if CND continues along the course Neil Kinnock and EP Thompson want it to go. To go for a freeze now and to adopt demands that mirror opinion polls in The Guardian. If Cruise arrives CND would then let its main focus become demands for a no first use agreement, negotiations towards the reduction of nuclear weapons and opposition to new weapons like Trident.

Such a strategy will ensure a speedy decline in the membership and activity of CND.

You don't need the masses to back up a strategy based on multilateral disarmament talks. After all they've been going on for the last 20 years without a mass movement behind them.

But the answer will be different if Neil and Edward don't get their way. There were large contingents of trade unionists and Labour Parties on last Weekend's demonstration, large numbers of youth and a strong presence from the Greenham Women.

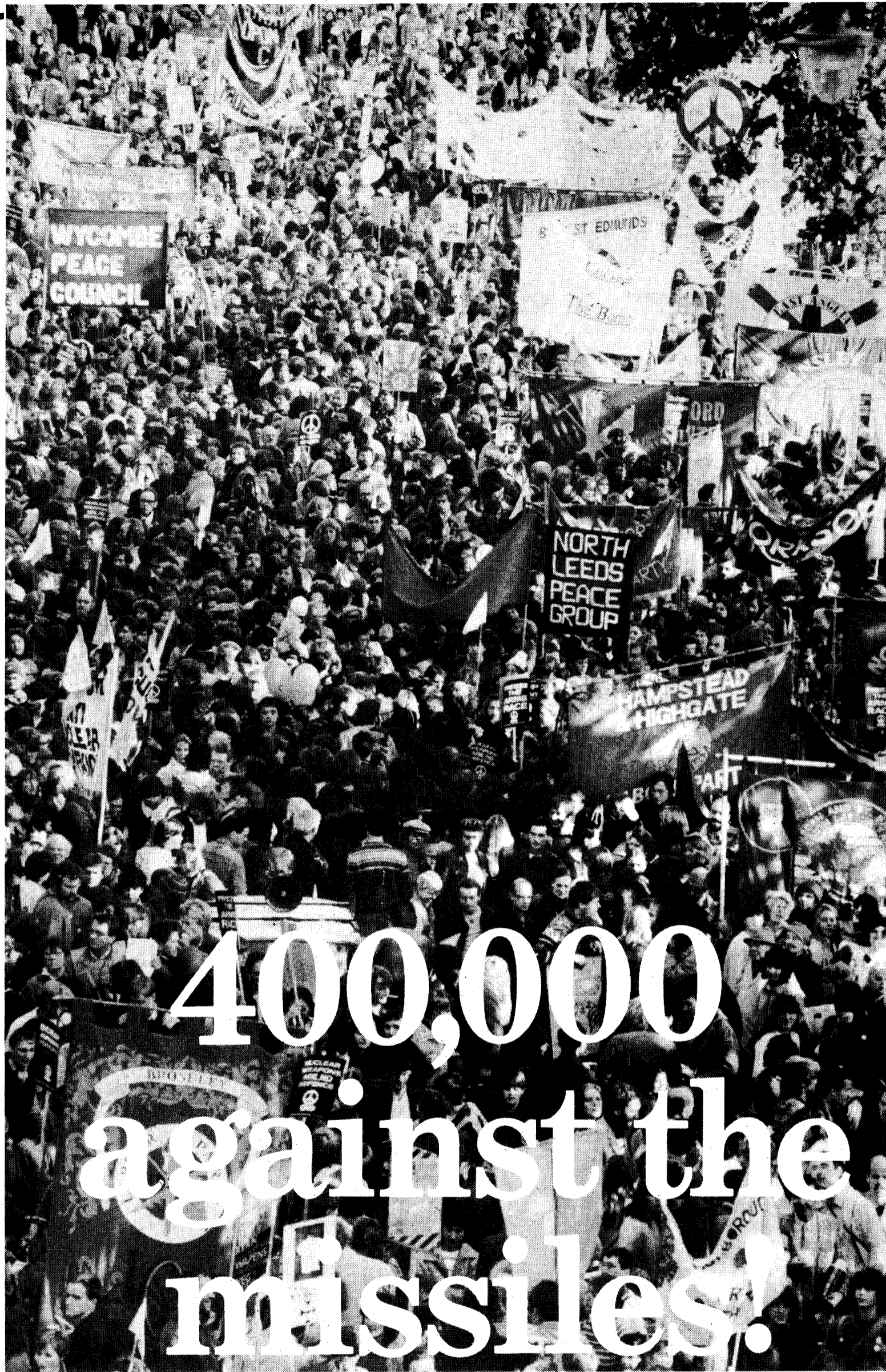
Talk is afoot of some spectacular actions if Cruise arrives at the beginning of November. The planned action by Greenham Women Against Cruise — to set up Peace Camps at all 102 American Bases in Britain — seems likely to focus the debate sharply again.

But the real question for CND activists is what do we do when Cruise arrives at Greenham. The answer is as Tony Benn says on the front pages of the latest National Labour Briefing. We need more politics in CND, not less, to carry on the fight.

We must immediately build the mass assembly against Trident in Manchester in February. Secondly during the European elections, we must organise with all the ingenuity we can to take European-wide action against all 562 missiles. Even if we can't stop the factories in Britain working we should focus on stopping the schools, colleges and the universities.

Thirdly, CND must stop worrying about the 'Soviet Threat' and start worrying about the real threat. The US warmongers and their Western allies who are at this moment threatening the peace of all those who live in the Middle East by their illegitimate interference in the affairs of Lebanese people and have now invaded Grenada.

But to achieve all these things we have to organise in CND to save it from the Neils and Edwards of this world. Now is the time for the left to unite and fight in CND as it hasn't before.



# 400,000 against the missiles!

All pictures by GM COOKSON

## Socialist ACTION

### Join the fight for socialism

Name .....

Address .....

Tel .....

Age .... Union/CLP (if any) .....

If you want more information about Socialist Action or to be put in touch with local supporters send this form to Socialist Action, 328 Upper Street, London N1.

Last Saturday over 2 million people demonstrated against the missiles in Europe. In London the 400,000 turnout was probably the biggest demonstration in Britain since the second world war.

The CND demonstration was so huge that the demonstrators were never all in the same place at any one time. While people were still arriving on the Embankment to line up for the march, others were already going home from Hyde Park.

Once again, the march was dominated by the CND groups. But there was a significant turnout from the labour move-

ment. While many trade unionists will have marched with local CND groups, many trade union banners were carried on the demonstration — the TGWU, NALGO, NUM, NUR and the print unions were well represented.

Dozens of Labour Party banners were carried. Lady Olga Maitland's much publicised 'counter demonstration' in Trafalgar Square failed to

materialise. The small group of right wing idiots who played patriotic music and Margaret Thatcher's speeches from a roof at the end of Whitehall received an appropriate response from the marchers. 'Jump' and 'fascists' were two of the more printable epithets.

Arthur Scargill, complete with miners' band and a praetorian guard of several hundred miners somehow inserted himself in the midst of the huge Scottish contingent, with the national NUM banner. They marched defiantly past the rooftop loonies

drowning out the loudspeakers with the band's music and anti-Thatcher slogans.

## Triumph

Without a doubt the day was a massive triumph for CND. The missiles may come to Britain, but they won't go away as a political issue. Saturday's demonstrators were overwhelmingly young and bitterly hostile to the Tories and their nuclear plans. All the Tories' sour grapes cries that 'you've lost the debate' won't conjure them out of existence.



# Europe: Millions march against the bomb

22 OCTOBER was probably the biggest co-ordinated international demonstration in world history. Apart from the 400,000 in London, half a million people marched in Italy, over a million turned out in West Germany.

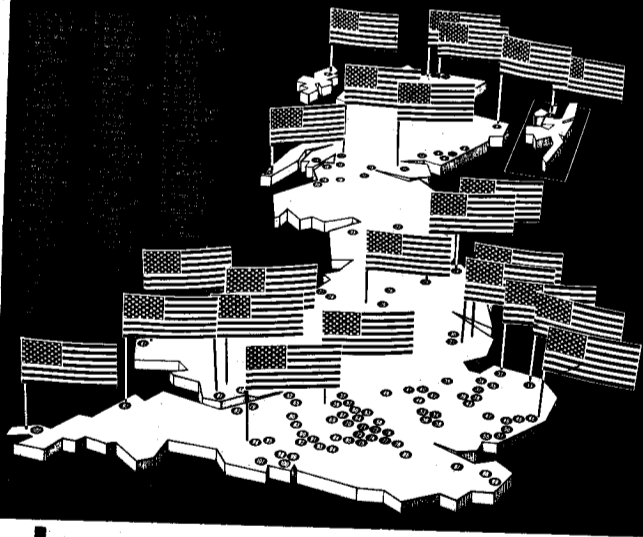
Tens of thousands also demonstrated in the United States and Canada.

Biggest turnout of all was in Bonn, where the nearly half a million demonstrators far outnumbered the population of the city. There were also demonstrations in Hamburg, Stuttgart, West Berlin and at the American base in New Ulm.

In one human chain around US bases, 200,000 people stretched for 70 miles.

Italy's huge turnout — 500,000 in Rome — was only the second time that the peace movement there had managed a really big turnout. The Paris turnout was smaller — only some tens of thousands, reflecting the generally weaker state of the peace movement in that country and its domination by the Communist Party.

9th Nov '83 GREENHAM WOMEN AGAINST CRUISE take President Reagan to Court in the USA



ON 9 NOVEMBER Greenham Women against Cruise take their case against the US government to court in Washington. On the same day 102 peace camps will be set up outside US bases in Britain — one for each base. Following last Saturday's demonstration, the peace camps will be another opportunity for mass mobilisation against the warmongers.

The case against the American government is being jointly filed by women from Britain and US citizens, including a number of members of the Congress.

On 27 September a Federal Judge ruled that the case was a proper one for the courts to consider.

Essentially, the claim is that Cruise missiles — their deployment and the effects of their use — breach numerous articles of international law.

For information on the peace camps, contact your nearest regional office who will give you full information — phone numbers below.

- Sheffield 0742 25079
- Leeds 0532 740197
- East Anglia 0480 300907
- South West 06267 79232
- Northern Ireland 0232 56392
- Manchester 061 445 0998
- Scotland 041 423 1485
- London 01 639 8561
- Wales 0222 45381
- Leicester 0533 702 585



# IRELAND UNFREE

## I was offered more than £80,000 ...

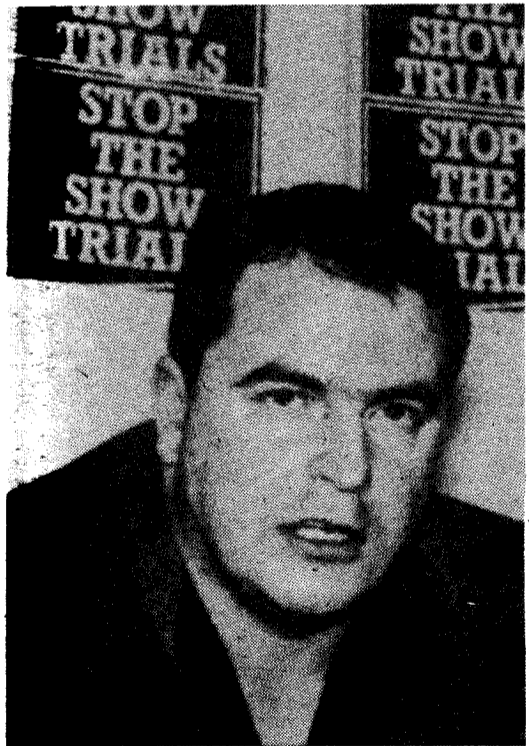
AFTER THE SENSATIONAL escape of Robert Lean, more questions are likely to be asked about the use of informers in the 6 counties. Campaigners in Britain have been successful in winning the support of civil liberties organisations and prominent barristers, who are appalled over this new attack on civil rights.

Jimmy Brown is a prisoner held in Crumlin Road jail on the uncorroborated evidence of 'supergrass' Harry KirkPatrick. He has written about the RUC's use of 'supergrasses' in the non-jury Diplock courts.

'At present I am one of over 200 people who are being held in custody on the sole evidence of a "supergrass". Over 50 people have already been convicted on such uncorroborated evidence, which was heard by a solitary judge with no jury.

'During the last two years, the RUC have been using sophisticated methods: offering inducements, bribes and a wide range of "deals" in return for statements made against people named by them. Following their arrests, suspects are taken to the Catlereagh Interrogation Centre and held in clinical isolation for up to seven days. During this time, they are repeatedly threatened that they will be charged with an offence unless they cooperate, and inducements are made.

'On three occasions I was offered more than £80,000 if I made incriminating statements against people, some of whom are unknown to me. The RUC then told me that they could "leak it" that I was a police informer and have me shot.'



Robert Lean

James Prior, secretary of state for Northern Ireland, defended the use of informers on the radio programme 'World at One', but appeared to believe that evidence used to achieve convictions was based on corroborated evidence.

He said: 'I am not only certain in my own mind that there has been no evidence of a miscarriage of justice, but I'm equally certain that the manner with which the trials have been conducted so far, and the ability of the police to bring forward people and to corroborate their evidence by others has had a marked impact on the nature of terrorism and the strength of terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland. The benefit of that to people as a whole has been simply immense.'

He went on to say that unless evidence was corroborated, 'the whole point of bringing informers forward in this way would break down'.

A case of the left hand not knowing what the right hand was doing, or a major gaff?

• The full text of the letter from Jimmy Brown is available for use in local campaigns by phoning the Troops Out Movement on 021-773 8683 or 01-250 1293.



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

# Carry on fighting the witch hunt

Labour Against the Witch hunt is holding its annual general meeting next month; a must for all who want to fight against expulsions and press bans and for a united and democratic party.

Labour Against the Witch hunt was formed last year after the Blackpool conference which launched the disastrous attacks on *Militant*. It was set up by over 100 CLPs and has proved its worth by defending socialists from expulsion, and in organising Constituency Parties who refuse to expel socialists.

By Alan Freeman

It is democratically-based and controlled by its affiliated Constituency Labour Parties at its regular National Council meetings.

Jim Mortimer told the Labour Party conference there would be no extension of the witch hunt. But conference rejected, by a majority of 5 to 1, every single motion against witch hunts, including an innocuous motion calling only for no more witch hunts. Neil Kinnock's own views are clear. Writing after he was elected to the leadership in the Con-

ference edition of Fabian news, he said:

The decision on the *Militant* editorial board should stand because the political philosophy which they consciously hold requires its own separate programme and principles and is in direct contradiction to the democratic socialism of the Labour Party and the provisions in the Labour Party constitution. As far as the constituency parties are concerned, the decision is the same as for the whole Labour movement; either they are part of the national Party with a national constitution that is intended to be understood and obeyed, or they are not.

This is Kinnock's view. And is the view of the new NEC majority. They may not find it possible to carry this through, because of the resistance of the CLPs — but that makes it essential for this resistance to be organised. Our party cannot be united unless the witch hunt is stopped.

Already, two new crunch points for the new NEC are coming up which will be a test of how far it is now prepared to go.

On 26 October the NEC has invited Tariq Ali to discuss with them and present his political views so they can decide whether or not to implement the conference decision to expel him. If Tariq is expelled and his expulsion is confirmed by the new NEC, it will be the first time in years that a socialist has been expelled for their views.

## Expulsion

It will be a precedent for the expulsion of all those whose political views the new so-called 'democratic socialist' majority do not agree with.

On 4 November, Wythenshawe Labour Party, now suspended by the NEC, will be holding an AGM convened by the national agent, David Hughes, with a promise made by Russell Tuck at the Labour Party conference that 'no-one will be excluded'. Already there are unconfirmed reports that the right wing

are desperately trying to secure right wing trade union affiliations from all quarters — including outside the constituency — to pack the meeting.

Whether the witch hunt can be stopped depends on whether you

help organise against it. Over the last year, organised resistance held the witch hunters at bay. This year, make sure Jim Mortimer is held to his promises. The first step to doing this is coming to the LAW Annual General Meeting.

## LABOUR AGAINST THE WITCH HUNT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

26 November 1983

Camden Town Hall

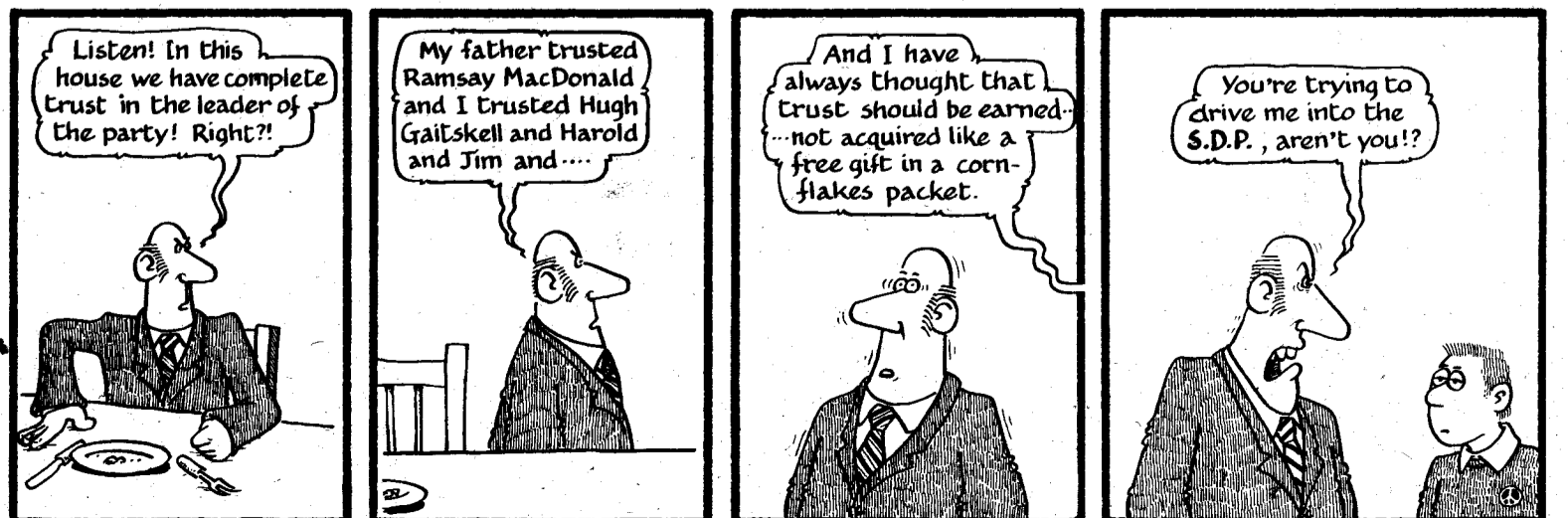
Speakers include: Alf Homes, chair, Manchester Wythenshawe Labour Party  
Audrey Wise  
Jo Richardson MP

Delegation (with affiliation) from CLPs, wards, and all affiliated Labour Party sections, plus individual affiliates of LAW

Apply to: Keith Lichman, secretary, Labour Against the Witch hunt, 11 Wilderton Road, London N16 or phone (01)-802 1709.

## a piece of the ACTION

#30 10/83 BY CORMAC



**POEU must lead the way**

# All out action to beat the Tories

**THE POST OFFICE engineers won a surprising victory in the courts last week against the private consortium, Mercury. CAROL TURNER of the POEU London West branch considers the strengths and weaknesses of the union's selective action strategy.**

BRITISH TELECOM is big business. When Thatcher's privatisation plans were dubbed 'the sale of the century', this was not just a cute quip.

The union of Britain's five most profitable sectors. It represents three per cent of the British economy, and it's closely linked to the fastest growing industrial sector, electronics. If Thatcher's government is to retain the support and confidence of the ruling class, there's no backing down on privatising Telecom.

The figures speak for themselves. *The Financial Times* has estimated that selling fifty one per cent of BT would mean a £300bn a year distribution of profits to shareholders on 1981 figures. The actual sale of shares would bring somewhere in the region of £4bn to the government — that's around half of its current public sector borrowing requirement (the money the government plans to spend on public services).

## Good

Against this background, the post office engineering union has embarked on a campaign of selective industrial action to stop privatisation. So far the results have been surprisingly good.

In June the membership elected a left executive, convinced that these were the people to see the campaign through. It was clearly a vote of no confidence in the outgoing executive, whose main axis has been a publicity campaign to persuade the public and change MPs' minds.

In September delegates to special conference voted two to one to support the NEC recommendation for selective industrial action. Since then the heat's been on.

In addition to the Mercury action, the POEU has called out members in selected areas, mostly international business. Management responded by locking out large numbers of POEU members, with the clear intention of bankrupting the union's fighting fund.

Members were advised to sign a written undertaking to obey management's instructions, and return to work. The advice of legal experts is that such an undertaking has no force beyond an ordinary contract of employment.

Next BT began to bus engineers to the affected areas. Pickets were mounted on key buildings

and members instructed not to cross. In other areas they worked as instructed ... and chaos reigned!

Engineers sent to London from as far afield as Plymouth have spent a considerable amount of BT's time and money discovering they can't do the job without local knowledge.

## Control

The union strategy is designed to retain overall control of how many members are out. Hence full take home pay is paid to members in dispute. This strategy is simultaneously the current strength and future weakness of our dispute.

If the government refuses to back down — which it must — there is no alternative but to accelerate the action. So far, BT has played its ace in a cautious way. Nineteen of the suspended members are under five day notice of dismissal. At the time of writing, that notice hasn't expired, but the union executive is confident they have an adequate response to dismissals on a small scale. But such small scale dismissals could continue indefinitely.

Inside the union, the discussion is whether selective action can win. Some think it can. Essentially this is to believe that the targets selected require an expertise to operate which can't be found among outside engineers, and thus crippling crucial business services will halt privatisation plans.

This is shortsighted. Somewhere — outside Britain? — a determined management will find such expertise. As this happens the selective strategy will be rendered less and less effective.

## Support

Already the alternative to this strategy has begun to appear. Two of the Telecoms unions have pledged their active support — the Union of Communications Workers (UCW) who brought out operators in a one day solidarity action in London, at the end of last week; and the Society of Civil and Public Servants (SCPS) who are currently discussing what form of supportive actions to take.

Public sector unions outside Telecom have also contacted the executive to discuss sympathetic action. For those like the health service unions, badly hit by Tory policy, the POEU action is a ray of

hope for an effective fightback against government austerity plans. Here lies the potential for broadening and strengthening the dispute.

## Alliance

To win the battle, the POEU must go all out to build an alliance with other sections of the trade union movement to take on the Tories. This means action on a scale not seen since the miners tackled the Heath government in the early seventies.

Only united action by the whole trade union movement can stop Thatcher's privatisation. This means preparing the POEU membership for all-out national action, and building for such action throughout the trade union movement. The POEU executive must demand that the TUC and Labour Party fall in squarely behind the fight for a public Telecom system.

There is little time to prepare — this battle Socialist Action readers should start now:

\* Get your union branch to pass resolutions of sup-

port and demand your regional and national union does likewise.

\* Take collections for the POEU fighting fund, and propose a levy of your own membership.

\* Raise the dispute in your Labour Party and propose the Party organises a public meeting in support of the strikers.

\* Organise a POEU speaker for your union and Labour Party meeting, contact the branches involved in the dispute: London North Centre Internal on 01-353 7316, Westminster on 01-633 0080, or London City on 01-236 5159 — or contact your local POEU branch through the Labour Party or Trades Council, or by phoning POEU HQ on 01-998 2981.

Don't forget to let the POEU know that support for the dispute is gathering momentum, by contacting the executive at Greystoke House, 150 Brunswick Road, London W5 1AW. They can also supply you with anti-privatisation leaflets.



POEU members demonstrate against privatisation



## Respectable Red

LOOKING like a couple out of a Soviet 'socialist realist'-type poster, Neil and Glenys pose for the cameras at the recent Party conference.

The Tories meanwhile, still reeling from the Parkinson affair, are

now dreading further revelations of the case at the Old Bailey last week. The Irish newspaper, *Republican News*, has printed the name of the ex-Tory minister who apparently appears in certain photographs.

Eager to take advantage of the Tories' problems, Labour are promoting Neil's 'family man' image for all its worth. Well, let's face it, it's a much bigger vote-catcher than gay rights, isn't it?



## Cancer drugs

MILLIONS and millions of women all over the world have been exposed to an increased risk of breast and cervical cancer through being prescribed the contraceptive pill.

The so-called 'high-dose' brands, taken for several years, increase the risk of breast cancer four times.

But all contraceptive pills involve taking a massive daily dose of hormones — oestrogen or progesterone, or both — and there have never been full long term studies of their side effects.

Doctor Mike Smith from the Family Planning Association says: 'Since breast cancer is such an emotive subject likely to cause alarm in any woman it is important women should not panic and stop taking the

pill without medical advice.

Male Order says: Panic now before it's too late. If you're on the pill stop taking it. Get the men in your life to take responsibility for contraception, and investigate safe methods under your control like the cap.

## True Blue

DID MARY Whitehouse do quite the right thing at the Tory Party Conference?

While wave after wave of sex scandals hit the 'Victorian Values' Party, delegates were watching films of cannibalism, mutilation, beheading and castration at a fringe meeting organised by Whitehouse to show how nasty video 'nasties' can be.

It can only serve to put ideas into their heads.

# Military coup overthrows Maurice Bishop



Bernard Coard

Maurice Bishop

## Defend Grenadian revolution

**WE KNOW** of the invasion of Grenada by US imperialism and its allies in the region. This article, by PHIL HEARSE, was written before the news broke. 'Protecting American citizens' was exactly the excuse used by the US for its 1965 invasion of the Dominican Republic. It seems that the peoples of the Caribbean must suffer a repetition of those bloody and tragic events. In these circumstances it is the duty of every

socialist and anti-imperialist to stand with the people of Grenada and to expose the complicity of our own government in the plans of Reagan. The butchery in Grenada will isolate the revolutions in Nicaragua and El Salvador and its success will strengthen the confidence of imperialism and all the forces of reaction in the region. Now we must organise to undermine that confidence.

concerned elections and how quickly to proceed with measures of socialisation of the economy and expropriation of Grenada's small bourgeoisie — with Coard and his supporters advocating more radical measures.

is now in grave danger. Popular confidence in the New Jewel Movement and the PRG is bound to be shaken. The role of the army creates major dangers of a military dictatorship being imposed, or at least of the army developing autonomy from the political leadership.

not an optional extra for revolutions in the 'third world' or under threat from imperialism, but an absolutely vital component of the *defense* of the revolution. Without mass involvement in both political decision-making and military defense, a revolution can be put in grave danger as soon as political differences emerge — which is inevitable.

**THE EVENTS** in Grenada, culminating with the murder of Maurice Bishop and other leaders of the revolution and the seizure of power by the army, are clouded in obscurity. It will be some time before the precise meaning of the seizure of power by the People's Revolutionary Army can be discerned. Nonetheless, an outline of the events themselves and the political disputes which preceded them, is beginning to emerge.

elements will seek to use this opportunity to cause a breakdown in law and order in the country.'

porters. The whereabouts of Bernard Coard are not known.

Let us note that this must be, in a tiny country with few resources of its own, a genuine debate. There are no ready-made textbook answers to how to proceed with the construction of socialism in a nation of 110,000 people.

The Grenadan form of mass consultation, the Parish Councils and the Zonal Councils, in no way amounted to genuine mass participation in decision-making — that remained centred at the top of the PRG. The Parish Councils merely amounted to an opportunity for the Grenadan people to ask questions and make suggestions to others who made decisions on their behalf. Attendance at Parish Council meetings declined greatly in recent months.

The news of a political split inside the People's Revolutionary Government began to come out on Wednesday 12 October. On Thursday 13 October Maurice Bishop was placed under house arrest. By the next day it was reported that Finance Minister, Bernard Coard, and his wife Phyllis, had resigned from the PRG in opposition to Bishop and his supporters. The next day, Saturday 15 October, a demonstration of several hundred people took place in the capital, St. George's, demanding the release of Bishop.

under house arrest for refusing to accept decisions of the People's Revolutionary Government and the New Jewel Movement.

The 'counter-revolutionary elements' referred to were obviously the supporters of Maurice Bishop.

As we pointed out above, it will be some time before we can make a precise political evaluation of the course of the leaders of the *putsch* in Grenada. It is not even clear whether army leader Austin and Coard remain united or whether Coard in turn has been pushed aside. But two things should be pointed out immediately.

Imperialism now has a golden opportunity to step up its economic blockade of Grenada, or even to march in with its own troops. Defence of the Grenadan revolution, against any imperialist provocation, or any temptation to use these events to intervene, is now a number one task for all socialists.

The illusions that this system represented authentic participatory democracy have been proved to be absurd. Whether even this system will survive the army-backed *putsch* lies in the balance.

At the same time Leon Cornwall, a major in the armed forces and the ambassador to Cuba, announced that Maurice Bishop was being held

He said: 'No one man can be above the rules, no one man can be above the majority. The armed forces note that never in its ten and half years of existence has the New Jewel Movement accepted "one manism" in its ranks.'

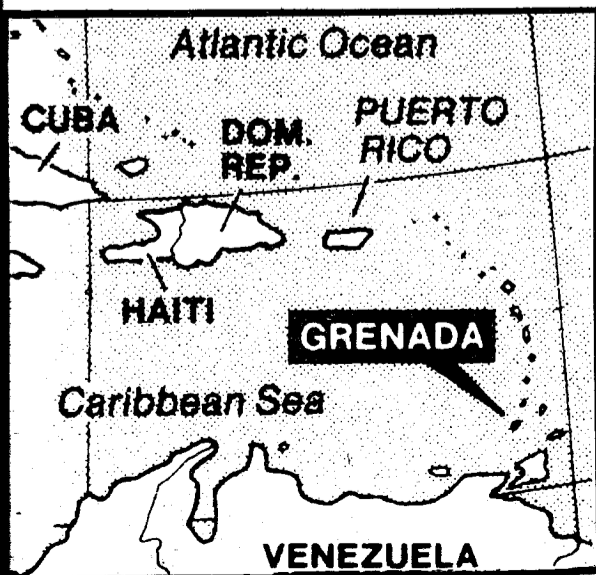
The Armed Forces also on 15 October announced the arrest of Cletus St. Paul, one of Bishop's top aides, for spreading 'vicious rumours' of a plot to topple Bishop.

First, the revolution in Grenada has been under constant threat from imperialism — and these events will in the first instance play into the hands of Reagan and his reactionary supporters in the Caribbean.

### Putsch

Irrespective of the errors of crimes committed during the present events, a consequence of the absence of proletarian democracy, there is no evidence yet that any grouping involved is linked with imperialism, or determined to break with the revolution. Only absolutely decisive evidence that the army or political leadership has gone over to imperialism should cause our solidarity to be broken off.

The task now for socialists in Britain is to use every means to prevent the political and economic isolation of Grenada by US imperialism and to ensure that the solidarity and good will which Grenada has enjoyed in the British workers movement is not destroyed.



The precise facts about the tragic events of Wednesday 19 October, when Maurice Bishop was killed, are still disputed. But again the outline of these events is clear.

Second, it goes without saying that from any revolutionary socialist point of view, the shooting of revolutionary leaders is totally unacceptable as a means of settling political disputes.

But however valid the debate, and whoever was more correct, there is no justification whatever for the methods of army *putsch*. The effects can only be to demoralise the Grenadan masses. Since the political debate had not been taken through any of the mass organisations, it appears very likely that the masses were at least confused about the issues.

But we have to sadly note that these events will make it much more difficult to build solidarity with the revolution in the whole of the Caribbean and Central America.

Other reports speak of the crowd at the barracks — variously numbered between 10,000 and 30,000 — being dispersed and then Bishop and his compatriots being put against a wall and shot. In either case it is difficult to believe that they were shot accidentally. Subsequently there have been reports of further killings of Bishop sup-

A crowd of 3-4,000 people marched to the Prime Minister's residence and released Maurice Bishop and Education Minister Jacqueline Creft.

Despite the paraphernalia of alleged participatory democracy in Grenada, in reality the revolution has been led by a small group of leaders of the New Jewel Movement. This movement has never had a congress: it does not possess the structures of internal democracy in which political disputes can be settled.

Maurice Bishop undoubtedly possessed massive prestige and popularity among the Grenadan people. His removal from power without political debate and decision by the workers and farmers inevitably produced mass protest.

Moreover, the army-backed *putsch* shows clearly that democracy is



The use of the army against party leaders itself produces major dangers. Once a leadership starts to rely on the professional army, rather than mass democracy and an armed people's militia, the road becomes open to Bonapartism and military dictatorship.

The criticisms made by the Cubans of the *putsch* in Grenada, that these methods are unacceptable in any circumstances, is absolutely correct. *The truth is that the revolution*

# NHS cuts: Build a national campaign

**THE TORIES** are retreating on their plans for the National Health Service.

A Tory District health authority, Bromley and Kent, is now being allowed to overspend because 'serious redundancies and substantial cuts' would result from the required restrictions.

Even the Royal College of Physicians is about to call 'enough is enough' and the British Medical Association is seeking an urgent meeting with Social Services Secretary, Norman Fowler.

Almost ten district health authorities up and down the country have rejected the Tory cuts.

This only scratches the surface of a campaign involving ordinary working people in the community and the health service, who are organising mass meetings, lobbies and demonstrations to reject cuts, closures, redundancies and privatisation of the NHS.

The momentum of these campaigns began in the months following the general election, with Thatcher's 'the NHS is safe with us', speech still ringing in their ears. Campaign organisers were already active against the spring 1983 cuts when they heard of Lawson's treasury proposals and the planned redundancy notices.

These further cuts are devastating news for the health authorities. While the regional health authorities rubber stamped the instructions — with one or two exceptions — the district authorities hesitated.

The district health authorities have nowhere left to turn because they have carried through cuts and closure programmes since Callaghan and Healey started it all in the IMF year of 1976.

They have only two options now, closure and redundancy or take a stand, under the pressure of the local community and health workers.

Figures from the four London regions illustrate the absolute savagery and impossible disorganisation the Tory plans will bring.

The inner London borough of Islington suffered a £¼ million annual cut this year. Lawson ordered another £1½ million cut in July and finally Fowler has demanded that 100 jobs go, with another £½ million drop in spending.

Greenwich suffered by £½ million in the 1983 chop, with Lawson now demanding another £1 million and Fowler ordering 150 job cuts with a further £¾ million slice.

All these cuts are to be implemented within four months, by March 1984.

London is hit hard, with a 2.4 per cent net job loss, compared to one per

cent nationally. These cuts affect those in posts on 31 March 1983. But around four per cent of jobs are already frozen with previous ward closures and reorganisation. So district health authorities in Greater London face a five to six per cent loss of established posts in medical, nursing, paramedical and ancillary jobs by March 1984.

**By an ASTMS healthworker**

These job losses will be impossible without hospital closures and compulsory redundancies. Waltham Forest are planning to close four hospitals and Hackney three — St. Leonard's District General, the Mother's Maternity and the German.

After the magnificent local and national strike action last year for a decent living wage, local hospital and community campaigns have been left to fight the government on their own.

## Debate

NALGO and NUPE have had limited publicity campaigns and there have been some good trade union pamphlets against privatisation.

But the national leaders of the TUC and Labour Party are dragging their feet — the TUC being too busy having cucumber sandwiches at Number Ten to organise an adequate campaign of action.

Action to turn the tide against Thatcher is coming from below. Workers at Thornton View Geriatric Hospital in Bradford have been in occupation for eight weeks against closure, and ancillary workers at Barnett General Hospital take part in rolling one day lightning strikes every three days against private tenders.

Union and community boundaries have been surmounted to defend the NHS, with joint shop stewards' mass meetings at Charing Cross, St Mary's and Hammersmith Hospitals, involving hundreds of health workers.

There have also been mass lobbies and occupations of district health authorities, with the disruption of the Hackney meeting grabbing the headlines. The TUC Health Services Committee has organised nothing yet.

Now, under pressure from these actions, and the grass roots initiated GLC campaign, the South East Region of the TUC has organised a sub-committee. Trade union, Labour Party and campaign activists are beginning to demand regional and national action.

In London, a steering committee was elected at a GLC sponsored meeting in County Hall on 17 October. This has delegates from district based health campaigns, hospital joint shop stewards' committees, NHS union sub-committees, the Greater London Association of Trades Councils and the South East Region of the TUC.

Mass action campaigns against cuts, closures, redundancies and privatisation will have to be built from such beginnings. We must mobilise now with a massive national campaign to strike while the iron is hot and the Tories are on the retreat.



# Trained to kill

**LAST WEEK** a jury agreed that detective-constable Finch and his fellow gunman, detective-constable Jardine had been right to shoot an innocent man and then for good measure, pistol whip him as he lay bleeding and wounded on the road.

Finch had gone to Stephen Waldorf's car with a gun at the ready. He fired without giving a loud shout of 'armed police' nor did he give his victim any chance to surrender. This was against the rules. Being a lousy marksman, fortunately his bullets hit the car's tyres.

Then he let fly with his four remaining bullets. Along came Jardine gun in hand and saw Waldorf's wounded body sliding out of the driver's side of the car. Three more shots were then aimed at the helpless wounded man. Fortunately again these would-be killers missed.

But if you can't finish a victim off one way when he is down there is always another, so Waldorf was hit over the head at least three times. Then the guardians of law and order discovered they had got

the wrong man!  
Just for doing their job in the way they had been taught the two over-enthusiastic coppers were charged with attempted murder and attempting to cause grievous bodily harm. But the good judge Croom-Johnson was not having any of that and he explained to the jury that it was quite alright to shoot to kill an innocent man and belt his skull with your revolver as long as you think it is someone else — and of course as long as the thug who is doing it is a policeman.

**By Bob Pennington**

The fact that there were two other people in the car — even the detective constables could hardly claim they thought they were also Martin — didn't seem to bother the judge.



Jardine



Finch

So doing what the judge more or less told them to do the jury acquitted the two gunmen.

The acquittal caused some sharp reactions with the *Daily Mirror* editorial asking did they grant a 'licence to kill'? But for many in the establishment it had been a good trial. The public prosecutor's

decision to charge Finch and Jardine with attempted murder meant that the issue of how the police use their guns could be tested legally.

Mr Justice Croom-Johnson summed up in such a way that the jury were left in no doubt that the police had a right to shoot down the innocent

and the guilty, armed or unarmed, as long as they thought they were doing the right thing.

Jardine and Finch must have squeezed the trigger and dealt out the blows for their behaviour was some one-off departure from the norm of police procedure. That brutality and determination to which they showed in London street last January had been nurtured developed by systematic training in the police force.

They had simply acted like coppers are trained to act. If the Police Bill on the statute books thousands of men and women like Finch and Jardine will be given increased power to harass, intimidate, bully, frame and even murder if their suspicions are aroused.

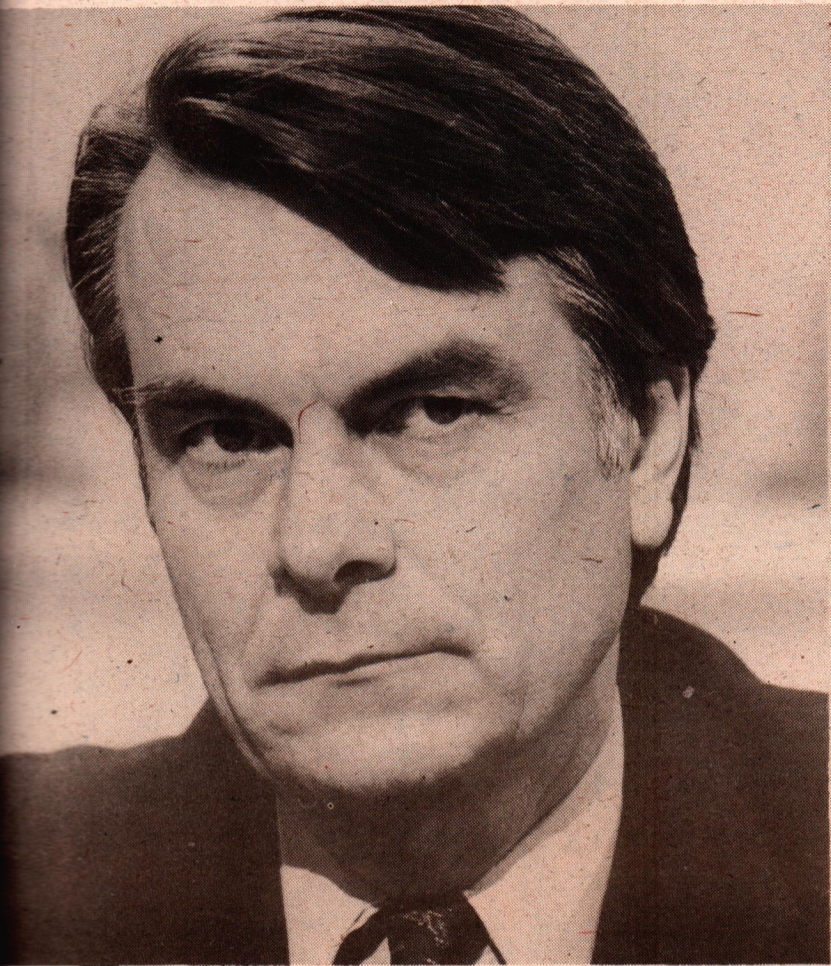
This latest act in a long line of cases of police brutality shows that even move to strengthen police powers must be resisted. We can't afford to render our democratic rights into the hands of thugs and murderers.

IN A LITTLE publicised, but extremely important, move Gavin Laird, the general secretary of the AUEW, agreed at the beginning of this month to become chairperson of the SDP backed 'Campaign for Fair Votes'. This is only

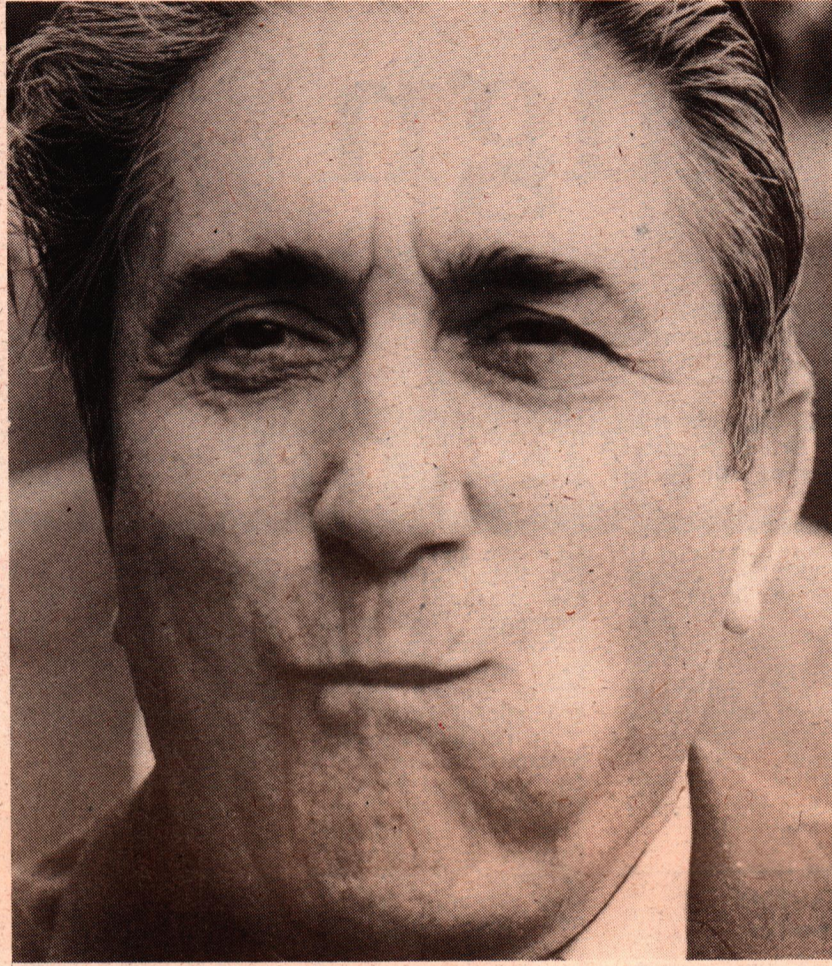
one of a series of new moves by the SDP-Liberal Alliance, their backers and allies. JOHN ROSS looks at the latest developments in the so called 'centre' and 'moderate' forces of British politics.

THE

# Dr Death and the Marxist profes



David Owen



Frank Chapple



Eric Hobsbawm — All boys together?

WILL NOT come as a surprise to many people to find the SDP, Frank Chapple, and the right wing of the AUEW supporting plans for coalition governments and proposals to break up the Labour Party.

But it may come as a shock to find the same line being pushed by the theoretical and discussion journal of the Communist Party — as *Marxism Today* is titled.

For four years now however *Marxism Today* has been ceaselessly campaigning for precisely such a Labour-SDP-Liberal coalition. It is the guiding thread of all the key articles that appear in its pages. The latest stallment comes in the October issue with long articles entitled 'Labour's Lost Millions' by Eric Hobsbawm and 'The Popular Front Revisited' by David Priscott.

## Majority

The key article, of course, is that by Hobsbawm. He argues: 'If, at the next election, Thatcherism is everywhere opposed by two or more candidates competing for each other's votes, the Tories can look forward to being in power well into the 1990s. Some way of uniting the majority of the British

people which is opposed to Thatcherism, must be found.' From this Hobsbawm concludes that, 'the issue of electoral unity will have to be faced'.

The David Priscott article in the same issue provides the 'historical background' to the familiar *Marxism Today* analysis. Priscott supposedly analyses the experience of the French and Spanish Popular Fronts before the Second World War — although somehow he fails to tell us the small facts that the Spanish Popular Front culminated in forty years of Franco's fascist dictatorship and that the French Popular Front collapsed within two years and was followed by the banning of the French Communist Party and the collapse of France amid the Nazi invasion of 1940.

## Legitimise

Hobsbawm's line however now carries the analysis of the Popular Front to even more extreme conclusions. Those forces seeking to legitimise the SDP within the labour movement, to break the trade union's links with the Labour Party, and to put Labour in the coalition trap are not even the 'petty-bourgeoisie', 'middle classes', and 'anti-monopoly forces'.

The firms backing the SDP, and its campaigns, are the monopolies themselves — although perhaps for the Communist Party they are the

'progressive monopolies'. Indeed ICI, Thorn-EMI, Beecham's etc are among the very largest and most powerful companies in Britain.

The *Financial Times* and *Economist* are not journals of the 'middle classes' but two of the most authoritative, and pro-Thatcherite, journals of British capital. The attacks of these journals on Thatcher have not been for going too far but for not going far enough.

All these forces of British capitalism understand that an SDP-Liberal-Labour coalition would be an unimaginable catastrophe for the Labour Party. Its policies would demoralise the Labour movement on a scale that not even the 1974-79 Labour government of Wilson and Callaghan could achieve. It would open the way for an administration far worse and more reactionary even than Thatcher's and under a relation of forces much more unfavourable to the working class.

A Labour-SDP-Liberal coalition would be a defeat far more crushing than anything the labour movement has experienced for fifty years — which is precisely why ICI, Thorn-EMI, and the *Financial Times* favour it as an acceptable alternative to Thatcher.

The CPGB has for long been known to its friends as 'Her Majesty's Communist Party'. Eric Hobsbawm is evidently now in the running as the first 'ICI Professor of Marxist Politics'.

# Where is the Labour Party going?

AT ITS SALFORD conference this autumn David Owen explicitly pledged the SDP to be a 'social market' party. Anyone who follows the vocabulary of politics knows what those words mean.

'Social market economy' was the phrase used by Margaret Thatcher to describe her own economic policies. It is the key term of Sir Keith Joseph's Centre for Policy Studies, the Institute for Economic Affairs. And all the other monetarist organisations and supporters that inhabit British politics.

Owen has lost no opportunity to make his economic views known in the appropriate circles either. This October *Economic Affairs*, the journal of the Institute for Economic Affairs, was relaunched in a new expanded format. The Institute is an organisation set up in the 1950s to campaign for monetarism at a time when even Margaret Thatcher and Sir Keith Joseph had probably never heard of it.

It is the chief publisher in Britain of the pamphlets of Milton Friedman, Friedrich Hayek, and also brings out works of Thatcher's personal economic adviser Alan Waters. The first issue of the new expanded *Economic Affairs* has its central article in its first issue *Competition and Compassion* by none

other than David Owen — his article is then followed by a round table discussion by four monetarists on his views.

*Economic Affairs* however is not the only publication in which a major new 'dialogue' is opening up between the SDP and the monetarist theorists. One of the SDP's principal economic advisers — Nobel prize winner for economics James Meade — has been publishing over the last years a series of books on economic strategy. These have been consistently reviewed in the most glowing terms by the *Financial Times*' chief economics commentator Samuel Brittan.

Brittan is the author of the first publication of Keith Joseph's Centre for Policy Studies and, through his *Financial Times* columns and books, is the man who has done probably more than anyone else to popularise the ideas of Milton Friedman in Britain.

Recently however this commentary by Brittan on Meade's work has become a positive love-in. Writing on Meade's latest book *Demand Management* in the *Financial Times* on 20 October Brittan concluded, 'the Meade research programme is the most encouraging development in British macro-economics at the moment and it dwarfs in importance all the political



# E SDP'S FRIENDS

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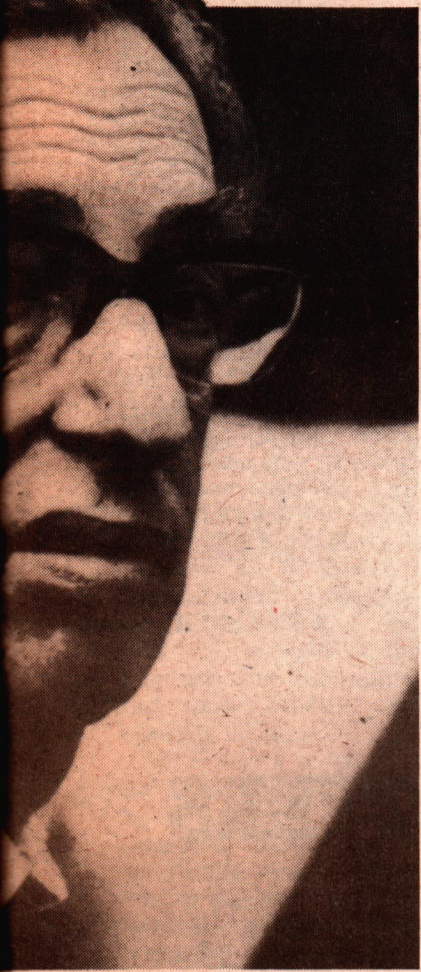


Photo: SOCIALIST WORKER

# Labour ing?

too weakened to keep Labour out of office under the present electoral system a whole series of major firms began to campaign in the mid 1970s for a proportional representation and a non-Labour 'alternative to the Tories'. Companies such as GEC responded by donating money to the Liberal Party after the 1974 election. An 'industrial committee for electoral reform' was established to back proportional representation — this committee met in London at the beginning of this October to decide how to back the SDPs 'Campaign for Fair Votes' which is being launched this autumn.

The Committee's present members and supporters include Sir Adrian Cadbury of Cadbury Schweppes, Sir Graham Wilkins of Beecham's, Sir Richard Cave of Thorn-EMI, Sir Leslie Smith of BOC, Sir Maurice Laing of John Laing, Sir John Sainsbury of the Sainsbury grocery group, Nigel Broackes of Trafalgar House, and two Tory ex-Cabinet Ministers Lord Carr and Lord Jellicoe.

There is a parallel City committee including Sir Robert Clark of Hill Samuel, Mr Ronald Arthus of Prudential, and Roger Gibbs of the National Discount Company.

The chief political orientation of these industrial figures, and that of their individual companies, differs quite strongly as regards immediate tactics. Some, such as Cadbury-Schweppes and Beecham's, are strong financial backers of the Conservative Party. Others, such as Thorn-EMI, at the last election donated money to both the Conservative Party and the SDP-Liberal Alliance.

Their common goal however was explained clearly by Sir Graham Wilkins of Beecham, when he stated to the *Financial Times* on 4 October, 'you have to be realistic and recognise that the Conservatives will not be in power for ever' and therefore it was necessary to ensure 'we don't get back to violent swings of policy.'

More bluntly put this policy means that Labour should not be allowed back into office — or at least not allowed into office without the 'social market' coalition partners David Owen is preparing.

As for the SDP itself it has a more precise and smaller band of supporters among the overall 'proportional representation' industry network which we have looked at in previous issues of *Socialist Action*. At its foundation, and subsequently, the SDP chief supporters were John Harvey Jones (chairman of ICI), Clive Lindley (ICL group), Claude Wilson (Rothschilds), and Edmund Dell (ex-Labour Cabinet Minister and now a merchant banker). The chief executive of the SDP was Bernard Coyle — the former head of Booker McConnell. Roy Jenkins was himself an ex-director of the merchant bank Morgan Grenfell.

What makes the SDP very different to the Tories, for British capitalism however, and gives it a quite different tactical significance to the Conservative party, is that the SDP has real links with important sections of the trade union bureaucracy. Frank Chapple, as

usual playing the role of saying openly what others merely think in private, explained his policy very clearly in an article in the 17 June issue of *The Times* surveying the outcome of the election. Chapple wrote: 'If we had not been so completely tied to the (Labour) Party's coat tails we could have urged our members to vote SDP, or Liberal if they had a chance of winning. Over and over again our loyalty to Labour let the Tories in on 9 June.'

In other words the orientation that Chapple proposed was an 'alternative' to Thatcher in the shape of a Labour-SDP-Liberal bloc. Chapple in fact had already put his words into action by calling for a vote for the SDP candidate against Labour in Islington North in the general election. Roy Grantham of APEX was another trade union leader calling for a vote for the Liberals against the Labour Party in a number of constituencies in June.

## Coalition

Since the election however the most important step taken by the right wing trade union bureaucracy was the decision of Gavin Laird, general secretary of the AUEW, to become vice-president of the SDP backed 'Campaign for Fair Votes'. Laird is joined in the leadership campaign by Roy Jenkins, Sir Ian Gilmour — the Tory 'wet' ex-Cabinet Minister, and Lord O'Brien — ex-Governor of the Bank of England.

The right wing on the AUEW executive are of course well aware of what is the 'political' purpose of the SDP campaign for proportional representation. The goal is to institutionalise a system of coalition government in Britain.

Frank Chapple puts the coalition issue openly and brutally. Laird and the SDPs backers in industry prefer a less abrasive approach. But the content is identical.

The goal of such a business backed SDP campaign is made quite clear not simply by the forces involved in it but also by the most serious journalistic voices of British capitalism. For on this issue the two most widely read journals of British capital — the *Economist* and the *Financial Times* both speak with an identical voice no matter what their differences on other questions. Both the *Economist* and the *Financial Times* endorsed Thatcher in the June election. But both then went on to conclude by explicitly considering the Alliance.

The *Financial Times*, in the special

editorial it prepared for the election concluded its voting appeal as follows: 'The policies on which the Alliance has fought the election are not exciting but they are appealing. Its main lines of economic policy we can, with one exception (statutory incomes policy — J.R.) largely endorse ... Its approach to defence and major foreign policy issues is attractive.'

'In a more representative voting system, the Alliance could emerge tomorrow as the main alternative to Mrs Thatcher, which we would count as a strong gain. This is highly unlikely under the present system: but it would do nothing but good if the underlying support which the centre party has always claimed were realised in the ballot box tomorrow, if only as a marker for the future and a powerful argument for electoral reform.'

## Dominant

The *Economist* was even more unequivocal in its view. It anticipated Chapple's post-election analysis and quite explicitly called for a 'new division of British politics into two blocs — a dominant Tory bloc and a subordinate Labour-SDP-Liberal bloc. In its chief editorial in the last issue before the general election the *Economist* noted: 'It is important that there should still be a believable and democratic left-of-Tory force in Parliament towards which by-elections and a future general election can then swing. It is desirable that it should be of a sort that can form an effective parliamentary force with right-of-Foot Labour. The Alliance needs to feel secure enough at future by- and general elections to help moderate Labour candidates to capture Tory seats in the cities, north England and Scotland: Labour should feel weak enough to give its help to the Alliance in the suburbs, south England, East Anglia and the west. Such a geographical coalition of a Southern Alliance and northern Labour seems fanciful at present. The worse Labour does in the election, and the better the Alliance does, the more possible such a desirable coalition of the left (and the dismantling of the Labour Party under its present constitution) will become.'

Naturally, however, the *Economist* was not being particularly brilliant in anticipating the orientation of Chapple, Laird and the SDP. After all the *Economist*, like the EETPU and AUEW right wing, simply jumps to the tune demanded by the forces that create and financed the Tories, the SDP, and the campaign for 'fair votes(!)' in the first place.

ICI, Thorn-EMI and ICL turn the handle of the barrel organ, the *Economist* and *Financial Times* play out the notes, and Frank Chapple is the monkey who jumps around on top to collect the money.

As for 'dismantling the Labour Party under its present constitution' there is no doubt what that means. It means breaking the links between the trade unions and the Labour Party. This once more, is the line of both Frank Chapple and the Thatcher government only the means differ.

The way the Thatcher government is trying to weaken the links between the trade unions and the Labour Party is by seeking to smash the unions. For Chapple, in his post election *Times* analysis, it means arguing that 'Both wings of the movement (trade union and labour) should be more independent of each other.'

For the TUC leadership under Murray it meant at this year's Trade Union Congress distancing themselves from Labour. For the 40,000 strong Engineer's and Managers' Association it entailed at its recent conference urging the TUC to weaken its links with Labour and adopt 'realistic and practical policies which can be pursued with any government.' To show that it approved of the TUC's new course the EMA invited Len Murray to address their conference for the first time for eight years. Meanwhile the SDP is stepping up its attempts to gain discussion with the unions and claims members of the executive of sixteen trade unions.

At present, of course, those forces explicitly backing Labour-SDP coalition politics are a minority within the trade union and Labour bureaucracy. But they are now very far from a small minority. The EETPU and the AUEW right wings are powerful forces within the TUC and labour movement.

They have access to capitalist companies with unlimited funds and which have already created one new political party in the SDP.

This drive to force Labour to accept coalition with the SDP-Liberals as its only way forward, and to smash the links between the trade unions and the Labour Party, is the most powerful and concerted political attack mounted on the labour movement for decades. It is simply the political flip side of the direct assault by Thatcher.

## Problems continue for Wythenshawe

THE problems in the Wythenshawe constituency continue, despite the decision of the annual conference to endorse the NEC in their suspension of the CLP.

The National Agent is now calling a re-convened AGM for 4 November. However there are now complaints about the procedure being used to circulate trade union branches to obtain delegates.

The following trade union branches have not received the letter giving the required 28 days notice of the meeting: NUPE Home Helps; NUPE Wardens; UCW Manchester Amalgamated; BFAWU Manor Branch; GMBATU 153 Branch. These branches are affiliated to the CLP

and currently have delegates to the CLP. It may be no more than coincidence that the delegates from these branches have supported the officers elected at the last AGM!

This 'inefficiency' is further highlighted by the fact that the Central Manchester branch of NUPE has been asked to send delegates, despite the fact that this branch has never been affiliated to the CLP.

Clearly the meeting called for 4 November is now out of order, but we are very concerned that the National Agent will decide to endorse this meeting if the result is different to the result of the last AGM, but will have another excuse to suspend the CLP yet again if the result is the same.

As a further example of the lack of fairness being shown the National Agent has made no attempt to get the list of trade union branches affiliated to Wythenshawe CLP; we do not know which list he is using — certainly it is not an official list.

One thing is certain — the Party members in Wythenshawe have no confidence in the National Agent. The only sensible course would be to allow the CLP to continue until the next AGM in February.

If the National Agent continues on his present course we seem doomed to months of further internal dissent.

ALF HOME,  
(suspended Chair of Wythenshawe CLP)  
Manchester

## Covering up for Stalinists?



SOLIDARITY is a genuine movement of the working class and through it the Polish people can take forward the struggle against capitalism and the bureaucracy that is stifling socialist development.

But two negative points need mentioning: firstly, there are probably many reactionaries in

Solidarity and these people may conspire to undermine the socialized property relations in the East. But then there are probably no less a number of dangerous reactionaries in the British Labour Party.

Secondly, the struggles of Solidarity can be used by the capitalist media to confuse people as to the true nature of

class relations within Eastern Europe.

Because of these problems it is a good thing that the WRP's *Newsline* exposed Scargill's views and put the problem of the class nature of the workers' states back on the agenda. They performed a service for workers everywhere.

You are covering up for Scargill and the Stalinists by trying to pretend that the WRP have no place in the labour movement (*Socialist Action* 16/9/83).

I took the conclusion to your editorial to mean that members of the WRP should be hounded out of the trade unions. Please correct me if I am wrong but this is not my idea of 'socialist action'.

The WRP are not above reproach with regard to their less than wholehearted support for those sacked at Cowley but it is a disgrace for you to say that they are equal to scabs and strike-breakers. There is not a shred of evidence to support this and the idea that they held back publication to assist the media is ludicrous.

Scargill's letter is dated 21 July and it was published on 7 September. I am sure the delay was a result of a careful consideration of the importance of the material they were handling and the need to guard against being 'set up'.

If only your publication displayed evidence of such preparation. In your editorial you imply that being against the altering of the balance of forces in Europe is not incompatible with socialism. (Perhaps the slogan 'Carry on Yalta' appeals to some. It does not appeal to me.)

You must think again on this issue because you are talking rubbish. The prevailing balance of forces is advantageous to imperialist moneylenders and deserves to be overthrown. Its overthrow in Europe, East and West, is a precondition for the socialist transformation. Do not spoil your campaign against the witch hunt by persecuting another socialist organisation.

R KINGSBURY, London SE1

## Socialist youth organisations



SINCE Labour polled disastrously among young people in June, trailing well behind the Alliance in securing the support of first time voters, I was surprised to see Socialist Action refer so negatively to the Party and LPYS learning from the advances of the Scandinavian socialist youth organisations.

While there are clearly different specific political and economic conditions, there are at least four good reasons why those organisations are a better guide than *Militant's*

suffocating grip on the LPYS.

The first and most obvious reason is that they are proportionately many times larger than the LPYS and consequently a far more significant force in the lives and actions of young people.

Secondly, they are an invaluable source of support and sustenance for the wider left wing in those parties in criticising the inheritance of right wing social democracy.

Thirdly, they have a track record on women's

issues and on involving women at all levels in the organisation and leadership that puts the LPYS to shame. It is not accidental that my successor but one as president of the International Union of Socialist Youth is a Danish socialist feminist.

Last but not least, they have a rich and active progressive cultural life which should be the envy not just of the LPYS, but of the Party as a whole.

A serious debate on the British left about a socialist appeal to youth and the role of the socialist youth organisation within that is long overdue and a top priority now. Let us begin on a positive note by examining the achievements of other socialist comrades in Western Europe.

HILARY BARNARD  
(President IUSY 1979-81)  
London E3

## Oppose the PIE prosecutions

ON THE orders of the government, three leading members of the Paedophile Information Exchange have been arrested and charged with a number of offences, following the media hysteria around the rape of a boy in Brighton.

They are to be prosecuted for inciting people to have unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 16; inciting people to commit buggery; inciting people to indecently assault a boy under 16 and inciting people to commit an act of gross indecency with or to a child under 14; and for publishing an 'obscene' article and sending 'indecent' material through the post.

All the 'incitement' charges are based on the age of consent laws. These laws say that people under the age of 14 or 16 (or 21 for gay male sex) cannot have sexual relationships — or at least what the police and courts choose to define as 'sexual relationships'.

The reason given is that people under these ages are incapable of making important decisions for themselves. In this way, the age of consent laws uphold the unlimited dictatorship of parents and the state over young people.

Socialists should oppose the laws on the age of consent, and they should therefore oppose

these persecutions.

The proof that these laws are aimed at the repression of young people, not their protection, can be found in the media treatment of the Brighton case and the PIE prosecutions.

These have been used to attack gays, but they have been used even more to put over propaganda for good old-fashioned childhood. A series of articles have preached the need for greater parental supervision and discipline for children, and regretted the passing of Victorian childhood.

In an editorial aptly entitled 'Be a parent, not a friend', the *Sunday People* said that children need 'to be under the jurisdiction of a teenager or an adult at all times'. How would you have felt about that when you were a child?

The government, the capitalist media and the police have never cared a damn about the violence

and oppression meted out to children. The real meaning of their current activity around 'child sex' is to reimpose discipline on young people as part of putting back together the Victorian family.

JOHN INIGO, London WC1

## Scottish devolution to blame?

I FEEL that it was the Scottish devolution campaign that helped the Callaghan government lose its credibility; for while this was going on the unemployed and the health service were being ignored.

Personally, I feel that an independent Scotland would take us back to the eighteenth century war between us and the Scots.

DA PEARCE, Keighley YS.

Jubilee Hall, Covent Garden  
(next to Transport Museum)  
Fri 4 Nov 12.30-6.30  
Sat 5 Nov 11.00-5.00



## Write to us!

This is your page. Send us your comments, criticisms or even congratulations. But please be brief — letters over 300 words will be cut. Write to: Letters, Socialist Action, 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP. (Tel: 01-359 8180)



### The Friday Alternative,

Friday October 28, 7.30, Channel 4  
AS TV Choice returns, *The Friday Alternative* gets the chop. It's no secret that the programme was the IBA's pet hate and it's the latest casualty in the campaign against the 'trendy lefts' supposedly upsetting that all important 'balance'.

Uneven at times, but when it was good, it was very good, so catch it while you can.

### The Battle of Chile

Monday October 31, 11.05, Channel 4  
DEFINITELY worth seeing is Patricio Guzman's excellent documentary shot clandestinely during the coup and smuggled out of the country.

This is the second part of his film and covers the ten weeks up to the military takeover. No ridiculous 'balance' here, as Guzman takes an unashamed Marxist stance and analyses the failures of the left's strategy.

### Aristocrats

Tuesday November 1, BBC2  
In which you can learn all about the hectic life-style of the Duke of Westminster as he struggles to decide which of his two stately homes he should stay at this

weekend. The good duke cites his huge number of licence endorsements for speeding as proof that he gets no preferential treatment.

He also puts up a spirited defence of his recent property deal, when he acquired the prime St George's Hospital site in London for just £23,700 (no, I haven't missed any noughts off the end).

### Mountbatten of Burma

Wednesday November 2, BBC1  
Live coverage as Her Ma-

esty unveils the statue to commemorate the Earl's unfortunate boating accident.

### Open Space:

*The Need To Know*, Thursday November 3, BBC2  
As part of the BBC's 'access' programmes, the Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Disarmament demolish the Tory's civil defence plans, particularly for post-bomb health care. The programme centres on Derby and looks at the local health authority's plans.

# The Great Moving Right Show

**DAVID EDGAR** is well known as the left-wing author of plays like *Destiny*, a sympathiser of the far left who, for example wrote street theatre for *Socialist Unity*. His new play, *'May Days'*, however makes a critical assessment of the far left. Here **TARIQ ALI** reviews the play.

This article first appeared in *Time Out*.

*MAY DAYS* is a mammoth survey of political life in Britain, Europe and America. It spans the period between 1956 and 1980 and is centred around a Nicklebyish hero, Martin Glass, and his move from CND involvement as a Midlands public schoolboy of the early '60s through a period of intense ultra-leftist commitment to a final position as a lackey of the establishment — deciding at the play's close whether or not to evict some anti-nuke demonstrators (including an old and more resilient girlfriend) from his property.

The play's scope is massive: the intellectual debates between far-left groups, the violence of the American draft protestors and the British Angry Brigade, the fate of Russian and Hungarian political refugees, and the increasing awareness of women during the period covered by the action.

But is the play part of the Great Moving Right Show, which reached a sentimental apogee at the Labour party Conference in Brighton? Or are we merely witnessing the detached impartiality of the bystander?

the victory of fascism, one would see hundreds of thousands of defections: a collective renegacy and for different reasons.

Many of those who participated in the forward march of Hitler's legions had at one time been supporters of the Communist and Socialist Parties in Germany. The defections in That-

## Weakness

cherite Britain after 1979 are minuscule in comparison. One could go further back into history when the revolutionary wave of 1848 assumed the dimensions of a continental earthquake. It was repressed eventually, with the inevitable political casualties.

The simple point I am stressing is that the present period in Western Europe is not as startling as the 1930s. Nor is the ascendancy of the Right as stable as it appears.

Despite all this, David Edgar is quite right to try and understand the devastating processes of political demoralisation.

The most powerful characters are the dissidents from the East. One of the most powerful images in the play

real in most cases. The history of the Marxist left is littered with the corpses of tinpot Lenins playing at toy Bolsheviks.

Despite all this, Edgar's vision remains savagely one-sided. There is, as far as the largest groups are concerned, another angle. Their members are dedicated, self-sacrificing activists. It is not easy, especially now, to devote the bulk of your life to a struggle against the system on every level. It is true that membership of the groups can impart a certain siege mentality, but it also helps to insulate the person concerned from the relentless atomising pressures of capitalist society.

James Grain, the leader of the Socialist Vanguard in Edgar's play, is shown as a hard-faced practitioner of dogma and factionalism. I know the type. He/she exists. It is worth remembering nonetheless that factionalism is not confined to the Left. It is a virus that exists in a more serious strain in boardrooms, academia, trade unions, Fleet Street, the Tory Party, the Labour NEC, and, yes, even the women's movement. Nor is it something restricted to the last few centuries.

Wherever men and women with strong personalities gather to engage in collective work of any sort, they impose their will, albeit unconsciously at times, on their colleagues. In-fighting is universal and inevitable.

There is another imbalance. Edgar's concentration on the far left has led to some absences. The major defections have, over the years, affected the Labour and Communist Parties. They have suffered much more than the tiny Trotskyist groups. Yet this is not in the play. Nor is it without relevance. For defections are taking place in the field of socialist theory.

Veteran CP theologians now tell us of the importance of the middle classes and their vital role in helping to preserve modern civilisation. Professor Eric Hobsbawm is Neil Kinnock's favourite Marxist.

*Marxism Today* is promoting a merger of the Labour and Social Democratic Parties, without having the honesty to declare that the Communist Party should disband as well. Half could join Labour, the others the SDP and fight for a fusion within.

All this is called being 'thoughtful'. This process is nowhere to be found in *May Days*. Possibly the dramatic reasons for the omission are sound ones. Politically though, it unbalances the production.

In a recent article in *Marxism Today*, Edgar has written that the role of socialist playwrights as cheerleaders is now defunct. I agree. I never thought it should have been that in the first place. In any case, Edgar was hardly that even in his former persona. *Destiny* was a serious attempt to understand the extreme right. *May Days* is more of a settling of accounts with the far left.

## Strategies

Edgar wants to 'reassess, internally, our whole strategy of change'. Who could disagree? Though the dangers of a rapid drift to a position whereby change is regarded as neither possible nor desirable should not be underestimated. Renegacy, after all, is not simply a monopoly of politics. It has its counterpart in the cultural field as well.

Arnold Wesker is no longer a Labour voter; David Mercer died after ditching all his previous beliefs (and plays?); Tony Garnett, the *enfant terrible* of the BBC, is now happy in LA; Mick Jagger, who sent me a hand-written version of *Street Fighting Man* for inclusion in the *Black Dwarf* 15 years ago, is now settling comfortably into middle age. Numerous others could be added to the list.

In the West, of course, it is the defections from Left to Right that are always celebrated. For those who break with the system there is isolation and abuse. In the '60s, Bertrand Russell, this country's most distinguished philosopher, was regularly attacked for challenging the Labour government's servile pro-American policies on Vietnam.

Here was a case of a movement to the Left, vilified by the media. The

leader-writers in the *Guardian* and the *Financial Times* as the voice of reason. The same men have savaged Benn. Their second cousins on the *Sun* and *Mail* have often called him a 'loony'. Far be it from me to intrude on a writer's privileges, yet this dramatic irony might have, if included, given a sharper cutting edge to *May Days*. It would also have contested the reigning orthodoxies of Fleet Street.

**'It is not easy, especially now, to devote the bulk of your life to a struggle against the system'**

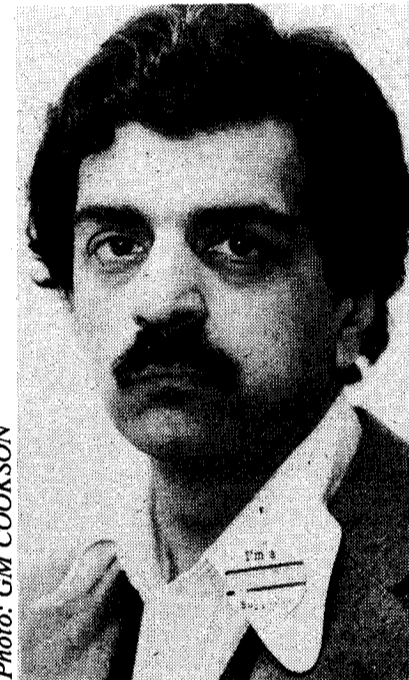


Photo: GM COOKSON

Tariq Ali

What worries me is that Edgar's 'reassessment', however well-intentioned, will tie in neatly with the pre-occupations of Kinnock's 'think tanks'. Think tanks? No! Rather stagnant pools with a fetid smell, determined to drown dissent and debate in the name of a spurious unity.

For all my moans, *May Days* is a play about our times. It captures well the political directionlessness of the children of 1968. The feminist, Amanda, is intended as a counter to the defectors and renegades. Alas, she is not one of the strengths of the play. A good person, she carries on with her priorities. She organises crêches and turns up, inevitably, at Greenham Common with her 15-year old daughter (born in 1968).

History has moved on. The period that began in May 1968 in France and ended in November 1975 in Portugal is over. The multitentacled grip of Reaction can be observed most clearly in Britain and the USA. The masses appear to be silent. Order seems to have been restored. Pessimism and conservatism go hand in hand.

Amanda declares her faith in the rationality of the species. It will carry on resisting till injustices are removed. It is a low-profile approach compared to the heady rhetoric of the '60s. At least she hasn't caved in completely. For this small mercy, David, many thanks.

*'May Days'* is in repertory at the Barbican theatre. See ad on this page for details.

other celebrated example is that of Tony Benn. Who can doubt that if he had played the game, he might well have been elected Leader of the Labour party? He too had moved from Right to Left and has paid the price.

*Marxism Today* is often quoted by

**'The history of the Marxist left is littered with the corpses of tinpot Lenins playing at toy Bolsheviks'**

Edgar is fully aware of the problem. He ripostes: 'Would you call Shakespeare a child-molester just because he wrote "Richard III"?' In other words, he rejects any attempt at identifying him with the renegades who are the central characters in the play. Yet one's doubts are not fully assuaged.

*May Days* is an extremely intense theatrical essay on present-day politics. Trevor Griffiths and David Mercer have written on adjacent themes in the past. John McGrath and 7:84 continue to do so today, but shun the glitter of the big theatres and play before more popular audiences in small Scottish towns and working-class clubs in Wales and England.

Edgar's canvas is broader, his aim more ambitious. He is writing about defeated revolutions, destroyed hopes, battered illusions and demoralised cadres. It is a selective biography of Edgar's own generation.

*May Days* concentrates on the aftermath of 1968, yet the phenomenon is a universal one and should not be restricted in historical time. Despair has claimed many activists in the wake of defeated revolutionary upsurges. Passivity, defections and even suicides have been the unhappy consequences. If one were just to look back at the 1930s and study Germany, Italy and Spain after

is that of the newly arrived Soviet dissident Lermontov refusing to become an instrument of the cold war. At a dinner in his honour he turns on his audience — a glittering galaxy of academics, journalists and royalty — and discards the carefully prepared script by an experienced BBC hand, formerly a Hungarian revolutionary. 'Yours are not gaolers' faces,' Lermontov informs them with quiet dignity, 'but perhaps the faces of people who hire the gaolers.' The dramatic effect is considerable.

It is when the targets are clearly identifiable that Edgar is at his confident best and one is reminded of the way he dissected the Right in *Destiny*, over a decade ago. The play is, however, not just about defectors and dissidents.

There is a concurrent theme. The economic recession has not led to a boom in socialist ideas. Capitalism is in crisis, but so is the Marxist left. Edgar's depiction of the post-1968 Trotskyist groups is not without merit. I'm sure he will be denounced by them for this, but most of his images are accurate reflections.

Who can deny that the gauntlet of competing newspaper-sellers as one enters a left-wing meeting can be an intimidating experience for many people?

The macho rhetoric, the same style of public speaking, the commandist internal regime is, alas, only too

**'The last 150 years have been studied with 'May Days' that didn't quite make it through to June.'**

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## Financial tortures?

THE Guardian last Friday had the headline 'Councils put on the rack to cut spending'. Local government correspondent John Carvel went on to describe how the Tories had unveiled the instruments of financial torture which are to be used to force local authorities to cut services and throw council workers onto the dole.

In another front page article, economics editor Victor Keegan told how Nigel Lawson had 'nailed the government to the objective of a total elimination of inflation'. It is indeed a violent world in which we live, particularly where getting finances sorted out is concerned. We have had our own problems as the computer which was bought to make accounting easier threatened to plunge us back into the dark ages — adding up cheques and postal orders on the backs of envelopes.

At many points over the past weeks we looked upon the Luddites as kindred spirits. Now the machine is spluttering

back to life and we can thank the long list of supporters who sent in their hard-earned cash in the meantime.

Many people wrote in to support us when the press and right wing were in the middle of the Cowley witch hunt.

Two authors of a City Limits article about moles sent us in their payment. New readers wrote to say that although they hadn't read the paper before, coverage in the press had attracted them to it. Not only did they decide to subscribe to Socialist Action, they also sent in donations.

The Labour Party conference made it clear that if the Tories are to be kicked out, the left will have to organise to make sure the right wing are kept in check. Witch-hunting attacks on Militant and Socialist Action benefit no one but the bosses in the long run.

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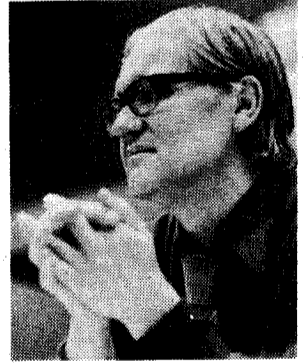
Jeremy Corbyn MP



John Ross



Judith Arkwright



Vladimir Derer

### Saturday 29 October

- British politics: facing 1984 (10-1pm)  
Andrew Gamble, Doreen Massey, John Ross, Barry Hindess
- Rebuilding the Labour Party (4.30-6.30pm)  
Ken Livingstone, Vladimir Derer, Jude Woodward
- Struggle for black rights (2-4pm)  
Jenny Bourne, Unmesh Desai
- Socialist economic policy and the AES (2-4pm)  
John Harrison, Hilary Wainwright
- Strategy on Ireland (2-4pm)  
Speakers from Socialist Organiser and Socialist Action

### Sunday 30 October

- Economic strategy for European Labour (10-1pm)  
Ernest Mandel, Stuart Holland MP, John Palmer
- Socialist foreign policy (1.30-3.30pm)  
Joy Hurcombe, Alan Freeman
- Women and family policy (1.30-3.30pm)  
Judith Arkwright, Mica Nava, Lynne Segal
- Democratising the unions (1.30-3.30pm)  
Kate Holman, John Aitken

Sunday **RALLY: BUILDING SOCIALISM IN THE 1980s**  
3.30pm Ernest Mandel, Steph Grant, Jeremy Corbyn MP

# Is the Soviet economy in crisis?

THE ECONOMIC crisis in the West inevitably raises the question of the state of the so-called 'communist' economies of Eastern Europe and, in particular, the Soviet Union. Does the Soviet economy suffer from the mass unemployment, raging inflation and over-production characteristic of capitalist crisis?

The short answer is 'no', but the Soviet economy is beset by a series of major problems which derive in part from the crisis in the West, in part from natural limitations, but particularly from the existence of a privileged bureaucracy.

The October Revolution of 1917 destroyed the capitalist Russian state and replaced it with a workers' state based on the nationalisation of the land and all basic industry. However, it was not until the late twenties that serious planning was instituted. By then a bureaucratic elite with Stalin at its head had gained control of the Communist Party and the state apparatus as a result of the defeat of socialist revolution internationally and the consequent isolation of the Soviet Union.

By Rick Hellman

Stalin began a programme of rapid industrialisation and collectivisation of agriculture financed by harsh exploitation of the peasantry and working class. Forced collectivisation resulted in a catastrophic decline in agricultural production. In industry, persistent overfulfilment of the plan caused bottlenecks and disproportions. Nevertheless, the industrial growth of the USSR in the thirties revealed the gigantic potential of the nationalised economy at a time of massive crisis in the capitalist world.

This period established the fundamentals of planning which remain unchanged to this day; the working class was excluded from the planning process and became the passive executant of centrally determined orders; planning priorities were determined

by the struggle between competing interest groups within the bureaucracy. These two factors have meant that the economy has continually suffered from a major disproportion between the sector producing means of production (Sector A) and the consumer goods sector (Sector B). It was only in the late sixties that Sector B production grew at a greater but unplanned rate than Sector A.

## Priorities

The Ninth Five-Year Plan (1971-75) was the first to actually foresee a larger output from Sector B than Sector A, but growing problems in the economy resulted in a rapid switch in planning priorities back to Sector A. The bureaucracy's inability to ensure a plentiful supply of good quality consumer goods threatens a major social crisis in the future.

Nor has the bureaucracy's desire for stability been aided by the steady decline in the rate of growth (see Table 1).



Lenin and the bolsheviks establish the first workers' state on the basis of a planned economy

appears acutely aware of the potential disaster of too great a gap between income and the availability of consumer goods. His first priority has therefore, been a campaign to clamp down on 'parasitism' and improvement of the availability of goods and services at the place of work to discourage absenteeism. These measures have already recorded some gains.

## Quality

Secondly, there is much talk in the Soviet press about reform of the economic mechanism so as to improve the quality of goods produced perhaps through some decentralisation of decision making. However, the reform introduced in 1965, which it partially halted stagnation, was applied only slowly and unevenly because of conflicting interests between the bureaucracy in the central planning agency and the bureaucracy at the level of the factory.

In 1979 a decree opted for a more traditional approach of increased centralisation and strengthened administrative control over production. The latest murmurings indicate possible legalisation of certain of private enterprise operations of the 'second' economy which blossomed in recent years to provide scarce commodities and services at a price.

It is a sad commentary on the bureaucracy's inability to develop the Soviet economy, more than six years after the revolution, that instead of a gradual elimination of the remnants of capitalism it can only serve its own interests by a reinforcement of those elements.

## Impasse

While the USSR's main trading partners are still within Comecon the import of Western technology has increased dramatically within the last ten years and, along with it, Soviet indebtedness to Western banks. It seems if the mineral wealth of Siberia is to be further exploited modern technology will have to be imported leading to a greater and greater burden on the economy. The other great drain on the economy is, of course, military spending which represents an absolute loss of resources.

The bureaucracy is, therefore, in an impasse. It cannot allow the working class to play a significant role in planning nor can it allow too great a degree of private enterprise which would threaten the nationalised property relations and its own privileged existence. At the moment the reemergence of the Soviet working class as a political force appears a long way off, but the continued incapacity of the bureaucracy to deliver the goods may yet lead to a much greater explosion than brought about the birth of *Solidarnosc* in Poland.

workforce in setting production levels with high bonuses for significant increases in output. These practices have achieved some notable results, but they should, in no way, be confused with genuine workers' control — fundamental decisions are still taken centrally — and they appear to be only applicable to smaller enterprises with less dependence on other factories for supplies.

## Population

Agricultural production which is intimately bound up with light industry has not been aided by four successive bad harvests. The Soviet bureaucracy has been forced to import large quantities of grain from the West, particularly for fodder. However, the last five years have witnessed a virtual stagnation of meat production which means, with the increase in population, a per capita decrease in meat consumption.

The bureaucratic character of the management of the collective and state farms has meant low productivity in comparison with the plots of land and livestock in private hands. Despite the high levels of investment an adequate infrastructure has still not been developed: many roads are of poor quality and impassable in the winter; there is a lack of storage facilities for fertiliser and produce and insufficient agricultural machinery and spare parts.

## Losses

Transport throughout the Soviet Union, and the railways in particular, is very inefficient which leads to enormous losses of goods and bottlenecks in production. Soviet estimates are that, if the amount of grain lost in transit could be saved, there would be no need to import any!

So what does the new Soviet leadership intend to do about this sorry catalogue? Firstly, Andropov

This decline is mirrored by the results of the Tenth Five-Year Plan (1976-80) in which plan targets for key indicators have not been achieved (see Table 2).

The falling rate of growth has been accompanied by a drastic decline in the growth of labour productivity (see Table 3).

## Alcoholism

There are a number of reasons for this fall, the most important being the discrepancy between the steady rise in incomes and expectations of the masses and the still very low level of consumption. There appears to be very little tangible benefit for hard work and so absenteeism and job-changing are commonplace and alcoholism is a serious social problem.

Experiments, such as at Shchekino and Aksai, have been introduced to try and intensify the usage of labour and raise productivity. These have normally entailed a certain degree of participation by the

Table 1: Claimed rates of growth of industrial production (per cent per annum)

1971-75	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
7.4	4.8	5.7	4.8	3.4	3.6	3.4

Table 2: Tenth Five-Year Plan targets and achievements (per cent per annum average)

	1976-80 Plan	1976-80 actual
National income utilised	4.7	3.8
Gross industrial output	6.3	4.5
Gross agricultural output	2.9a	1.7a
Investment	4.7a	5.0a
Electricity output	5.8	4.5
Petroleum output	5.4	4.2
Gas output	8.5	8.4
Steel output	3.5	1.0
Coal output	2.8	0.4

a = growth rate between five year averages

Table 3: Annual increase in industrial output per person (per cent)

1971-75	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
6.8	3.3	4.1	3.6	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.1

# NALGO action hots up

By Mark Hackett, Bury NALGO

OVER 300 delegates representing residential workers met on Tuesday 11 October and decided to escalate industrial action in support of a claim for a shorter working week.

The meeting authorised the 24 hour strike which took place on Monday 17 October to support a mass lobby of the negotiations with the employer at the National Joint Council's London meeting.

If no substantially improved offer is made on the claim for a reduction in the basic working week from 39 to 37 hours — the residential staff in children's or elderly people's homes work up to 40 hours a week — branches will be encouraged to step up the action at all levels.

Residential workers will impose a strict 9-5 day, refusing to do clerical and administrative work, banning 'sleeping-in duties' and taking strike action.

Such action has already started. In Sheffield 270 National and Local Government Officers Association members at 23 children's

homes were on strike for one day on 10 October.

In Salford eight NALGO and seven NUPE members at the Park House assessment centre have been on strike for over a month now. In Essex strikes continue at the Boyles Assessment Centre, Westcliffe on Sea.

In Portsmouth 46 members are on strike. Strikes have also occurred in Strathclyde, Coventry, Tameside, Croyden, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, (Leamington, Rugby and Norwich) and in Haringey. Establishments have closed in Barnet, Lambeth and Brent.

Threatened strikes in

Bury and Dorset have forced management to drop admission plans, and in Cleveland strike action has won reinstatement of a sacked union member supporting the national action.

In Kent 230 NALGO members in social services are still on strike and effectively picketing the Kent County Council central supplies depot at West Malling. The Council is still trying to use Tebbit's laws to smash this 'secondary picketing'.

In a fine show of solidarity Kent strikers made up one of the largest contingents in support of the Muhammed Idrish Defence Campaign demonstration in Birmingham supported by NALGO.

Delegates at the meeting discussed motions from Lambeth, Brent and Barnet branches of NALGO calling for a ballot for all-out indefinite



Residential workers fight for shorter hours

strike action by residential workers. Motions from Wigan and South Tyneside called for nationally-called actions like a ban on 'sleeping-in' duties.

Powerful speeches were made calling for solidarity with those already out on strike. But although the limitations of selective action were pointed out, especially the divisions between those taking strike action and

those not, the majority of delegates supported the present approach of the union's national committee. They have promoted a 'shopping list' of tougher actions from which branches can choose.

The residential workers deserve support from other NALGO members and the rest of the labour movement. A national campaign is needed to step up the strikes and publicise their just

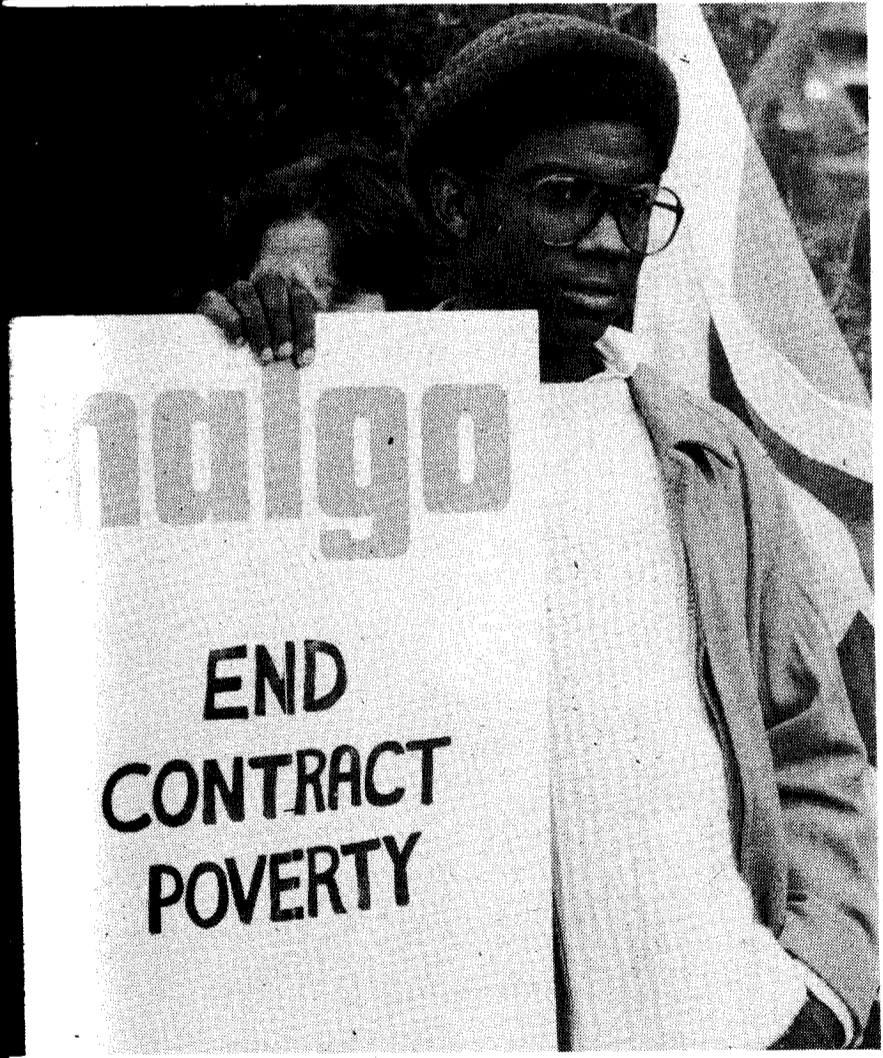
claim.

A victory for them would be a real contribution to building opposition to the Tories' plans for the public services.

● ON MONDAY 17 October, thousands of residential workers took strike action and 2000 lobbied the national negotiations in London, at which no offer was made. On the same day, Bury

social services' management closed three children's homes, locked out the staff and dispersed the children all over North Wales and Lancashire.

Over 50 residential workers are on indefinite strike. Social services' staff will be out on strike on 26 October for the day and the following day a mass meeting will be asked to bring all members out on a series of one day strikes.



## Asian workers fight dismissal

NINE ASIAN workers, callously dismissed by M Plastics, Redditch, mounted a picket of the premises on Monday 10 October. Over 100 supporters turned out, with representatives from Birmingham and Redditch trades councils and the National Society of Metal Mechanics, to which the workers belong.

They are fighting for compensation and reinstatement. Their appeal comes up on Friday 14 October. They were dismissed for joining the union and scabs were recruited to their place. The firm put the workers on an

84 hour week — seven 12 hour shifts.

Although the company invested £500,000 in new equipment and is very profitable, wages are a disgrace.

The NSMM handling of the affair has been a shambles. They applied for negotiating rights, but

when the workers were sacked they equivocated about calling the other NSMM workers out.

They discouraged the nine from mounting a picket and made a hash of the first tribunal. Jack Langford, the district secretary bears most responsibility for this, but he now seems determined to sort it out.

This is a bit late in the day. It's hardly surprising that youth, black and asian workers do not always see the point of joining unions.

## Electrify for jobs

SHEFFIELD CITY Council employment department have produced a pamphlet arguing the case for railway electrification.

Their effort is supported by GEC Traction Sheffield joint shop stewards' committee, and local representatives of the NUR, ASLEF and the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions.

The authors explain, 'Electrification of Britain's main line railways has been under discussion nationally for a number of years.

'It is supported by the Labour Party, the TUC, the rail unions and sundry other organisations from across the political spectrum.

'Public reports in 1981 and 1982 have made a clear case for a programme of electrification. The government has failed to act.

'More than that, it has implemented an outright attack on Britain's railway network through privatisation, cash limits and, most recently, proposals to close engineering works. The recently published Serpell report sounds a warning for further cuts to come.

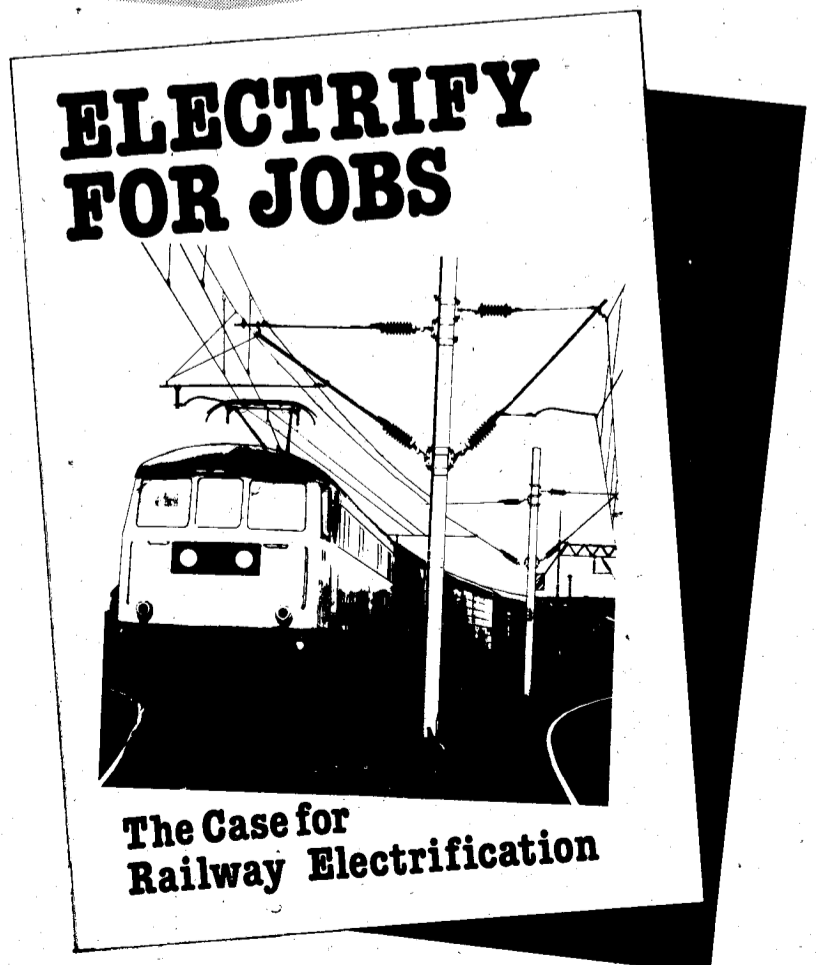
'The purpose of this

pamphlet is to outline the case for electrification; to indicate the barriers the government has placed in the way of its implementation and to look

more widely at the positive effect on jobs of a programme of electrification.'

● For further details of the campaign to electrify

for jobs contact: Mick Paddon, Employment Department, Sheffield City Council, Palatine Chambers, Pinstone Street, Sheffield 1.



# Miners national campaign begins

**MINERS BEGIN** a national overtime ban on Monday 31 October. This was the unanimous decision of the special mineworkers' union conference, which rejected the Coal Board's 5.2 per cent pay offer.

The conference, held in London on 21 October, voted to campaign for a substantial pay increase, to oppose closure of any pit unless its coal is exhausted, oppose further rundown of jobs, and to demand full talks with the NCB.

NUM president Arthur Scargill said that overtime makes up between 12 and 14 per cent of the hours worked in the pits and its abolition could create between 25,000 to 30,000 jobs.

He stressed that the overtime ban 'is only the

first step in our campaign to save our industry'.

Most miners understand that an overtime ban only has value if it prepares for more militant action. The NCB and its customers have built up coal stocks of over 50 million tonnes, which could last six months — with miners losing up to £45 a week from already stretched pay packets.

By Celia Pugh

A delegation of 50 miners from the Monktonhall colliery in Scotland joined a lobby outside the conference. They have been on strike for five weeks against the Coal Board's refusal to comply with normal consultation procedures while imposing 300 redundancies.

One of the Monktonhall miners explained: 'We are determined to keep our pit open. We got good support when the Scottish miners went on strike for a day in our support. We want the same from the national union. The whole coalfield should be shut down everywhere'.

After the conference decision, another Monktonhall miner pointed out that 'an overtime ban may be okay for the pay issue, but it won't be enough to save our pit'.

Dai Davies, one of the lobbyists from the South Wales NUM echoed this. 'MacGregor is out to decimate the pits. We could be down to as few as 12 pits in South Wales. My own pit is under threat. I would feel very isolated if I was in the position of the Monktonhall lads who have been out on their own for 5 weeks'.

Alan Cummings, lodge secretary of the Easington colliery in Durham, pointed out that the NCB pay offer is tied up with pit closure strings. 'We always said that the Board were after the pits. It's not bullshit anymore because it's clear in the pay offer.'

'They are tying the 5.2 per cent pay offer to demands to reduce capacity in pits they claim are a burden. They demand that "meaningful talks" should take place over capacity and that "high cost" pits should be eliminated.'

Ian MacGregor the NCB chief reiterated these threats last weekend, demanding more closures. Miners realise that compulsory redundancies could be on the cards by next summer if a stand is not taken.

## Campaign

The miners of Monktonhall have taken a lead and others faced with closure are pushing for a campaign of militant industrial action.

Colin Reynolds from the threatened Horden pit in Durham told Socialist Action, 'It's about time we had a showdown against the government. And it's not just us. We might as well all come out — miners, rail, health, electricity and power workers. The TUC should be backing workers to strike to get rid of the government, not talking to the Tories'.

Lobbying miners felt that the overtime ban gives time to build up a campaign at the pitheads and in the pit canteens. But the Monktonhall strikers are a reminder that this will not be enough.

## Time to take a stand

ONCE A YEAR the National Coal Board and the newspapers suddenly become the miners' best friends.

Funnily enough this happens just when the Board wants to close pits and force through a low pay rise. Right now, MacGregor's lie machine is being cranked up to churn out distortion, half truths and downright lies.

The NCB said that only loss making pits would have to go. But many threatened pits, like Monktonhall have years of coal left.

They make a 'loss' because they are starved of investment. No pit should close unless it is exhausted.

The Board says that the coal industry must pay its way. But £400 million a year — £20,000 per working miner — goes in interest to bankers who have never even seen a pit.

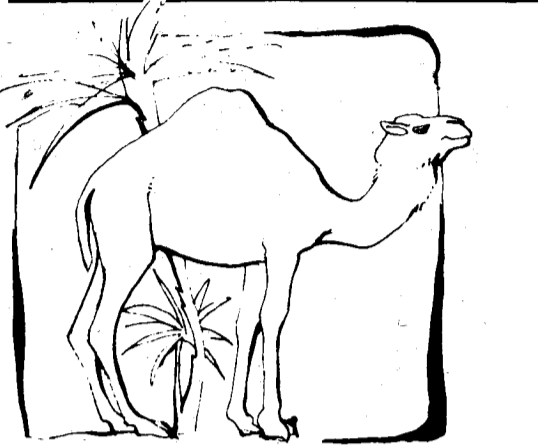
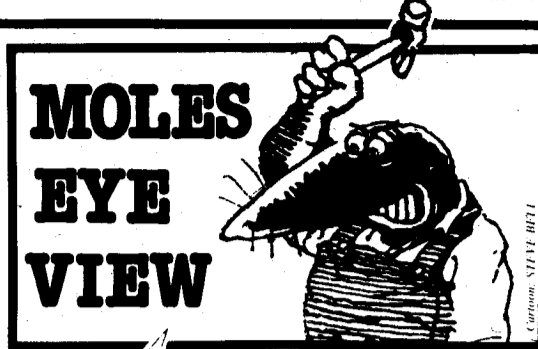
The Board says that we cannot sell the coal. Coal is stockpiled because of the bosses recession. It

could be distributed free to pensioners.

The dangerous and expensive nuclear generators would be replaced by coal-fired power stations.

By Mark Hunter, Welbeck colliery, Nottingham

The Board says that we must work harder. Since 1974 output per face has increased by 33 per cent. Men in their 50's work themselves to death at the coal face because they cannot afford to take a lighter job.



## The Ayatollah and the camel

WHEN IRAN'S 200 universities were closed down nearly four years ago those petulant critics of the all-wise light of Islam thought the Ayatollah Khomeini was against knowledge.

Absorbing such highly specialised knowledge requires a very special type of student so the Ayatollah has reluctantly had to chop the number of graduates at Tehran university from a former 23,000 to 4,000. Women in particular find difficulty in grappling with the idea being taught on the new course that women are 'both weak and dangerous' and need to be kept under control for their own good.

But don't get the idea that the mullahs are against women having the right to meet and organise separately. The authorities have a rule that talking to anyone of the opposite sex is an offence. In the class room women sit behind a curtain to separate them from men which is the mullahs' definition of what a women's group should be! Keen on the idea that women should be seen and not heard regulations forbid women to ask oral questions so they must submit their questions in writing.

This might explain why only 10 per cent of the students are women compared to a previous 43 per cent. Moles Eye View is compiled by BOB PENNINGTON. Contributions should be sent to arrive by Thursday am.

Reduced hours and rate protection would create jobs and make miners' lives safer.

A fight for better wages strengthens the union. So it strengthens the fight for jobs. In the run up to our ballot, the Board, the telly and the papers will whip themselves to a frenzy to defeat us and our union.

The claim is a just one, but justice never wins without a fight.

The NUM must organise now, down the pit, at meetings and in the pub to argue that an alternative exists to the plans of MacGregor and Thatcher.

It must organise now to fight, not just for miners, but for their kids and the future of the mining communities. It's time to take a stand!



Mark Hunter



Durham miners join the lobby of the NUM delegate conference



Dai Davies from South Wales and Alan Cummings from Durham

Photo: GM COOKSON

Photo: GM COOKSON

# A Socialist ACTION

## Out of Lebanon

AS US TROOPS and their allies invade the tiny land of Grenada we should remember the other side of imperialist intervention — Lebanon.

In the wake of the bomb attacks against US and French 'peace-keeping' troops in Beirut you can bet your life that Reagan and his pals are planning to step up their military involvement in Lebanon.

Davy Jones

When some US politicians demanded Reagan withdraw US troops he made a very revealing reply. 'We have to stay because basic US interests are involved.' In other words it is a 'basic interest' of the United States to de-

fend the right-wing Phalangist gangsters who run the Lebanese government!

This weekend foreign ministers of France, Italy, USA and our very own Tory government are meeting to discuss stepping up their 'peace-keeping' role. Their role is about as peaceful in intent as the US invasion of Grenada.

In recent weeks the CIA has launched a major series of actions against revolutionary Nicaragua, including blowing up a large proportion of the country's oil supplies. Now the US has invaded

Grenada to roll back the gains since the revolution overthrew the despotic Gairy regime.

In the Lebanon also the imperialist troops are there to stop the Lebanese people determining their own future. British troops are already in the Lebanon doing American imperialism's dirty work.

### Fight

The British labour movement must not allow what happened in Vietnam to happen again in the Caribbean or the Lebanon. We must shout from the rooftops for the withdrawal of British and other imperialist troops from Lebanon.



The message is loud and clear: no sell out for private profit

Photo: GM COOKSON

# Support the engineers

THE TORIES suffered a rare setback last week, at the hands of the post office engineers. Private firm Mercury confidently appealed under Tebbit's anti-union laws for an injunction against the engineers for boycotting them as part of the anti-privatisation campaign. But they lost, giving a major boost to the fight against privatisation and against all the anti-union laws.

Mercury didn't lose the case because British justice is fair and impartial. They lost it because of the strength of the engineers' action and the growing support for them in the rest of the labour movement.

Already the other unions in the postal services, the UCW and SCPS, are discussing support actions, and solidarity resolutions from other unions and Labour Party branches are pouring in.

The post office engineers are in the front line of the fight against the Tory government. Thatcher's plans to privatise British Telecom are crucial to their economic projects. Selling BT would yield £4 billion and provide a bonanza for the Tories' friends in the city. Thus the stakes are very high for the Tories.

But so are the stakes for the labour movement. Since the election the real meaning of the Tories' 'the NHS is safe with us' pledge has been revealed in brutal plans to cut doctors and nurses' jobs.

The post office engineers' campaign against privatisation has spread the idea that privatisation really means privatisation of public services. It has successfully fought off Mercury's court action and the threat of dismissals by BT management.

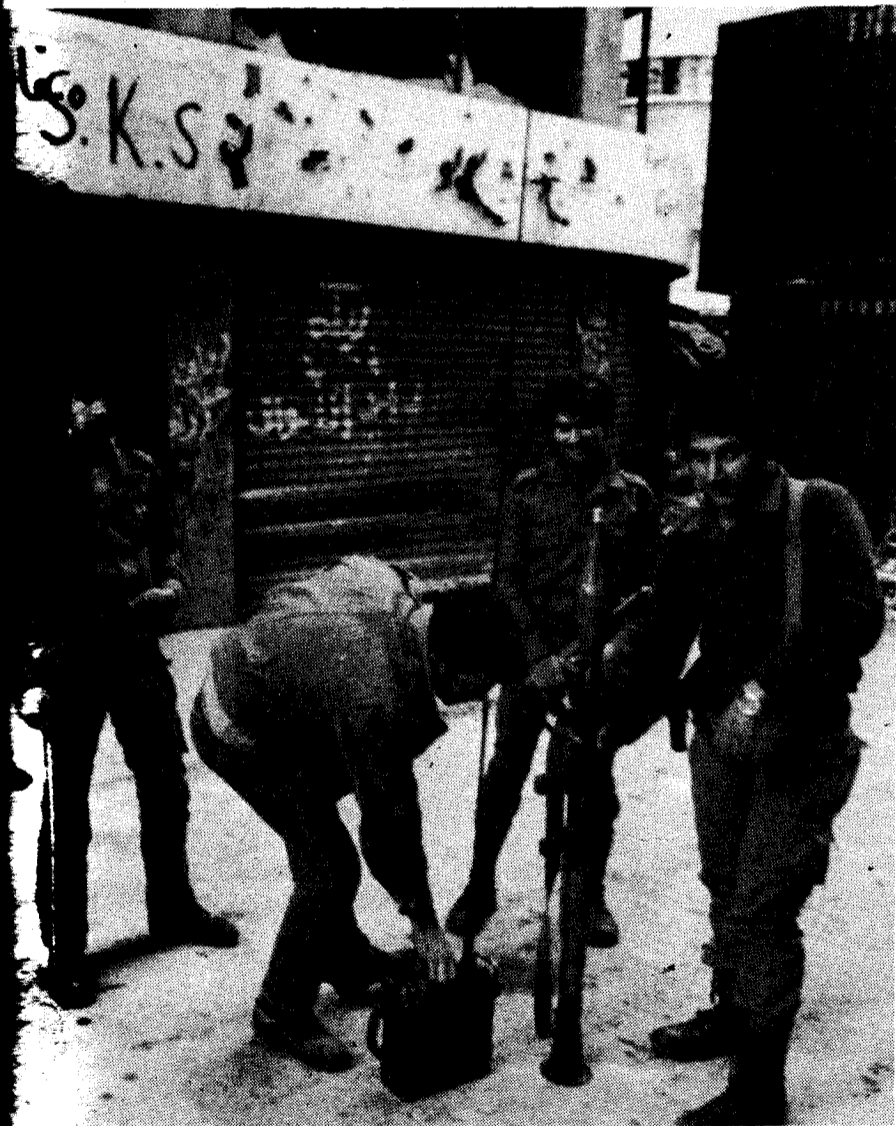
Now is the time for the rest of the labour movement to rally behind the POEU action. The health unions and the post office engineers should draw up a joint plan of action to ward off the Tories' attacks. The other postal unions should levy their membership and prepare a campaign of solidarity action with the Telecom-workers.

And in every locality the trade unions and Labour Party should organise solidarity meetings and collections with the post office engineers. That is the way to escalate the fight into a national campaign of strike action to bring the Tories to their knees.

\* See page five for further coverage of the dispute.



Workers action can cripple Tory plans



Mayel's Phalangist gun men

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## Aberdeen action shows how to fight

By Anne Shirley (Aberdeen POEU)

TWO WEEKS ago Telex engineers in Aberdeen went on strike as part of the POEU campaign against the privatisation of British Telecom. Six engineers struck and two more were suspended for refusing to carry out colleagues work.

On Tuesday 11 October a mass meeting of over 300 telephone engineers from North East Scotland overwhelmingly adopted an overtime ban, and demanded that the union executive should spread this into nationwide action.

The Telex strike proved to be the most effective of the union's selective action yet, when the entire

Telex system operated from Aberdeen collapsed. Some 165,000 customers including oil companies operating in the North Sea were cut off.

Eventually Telex was put back on the air after the two suspended engineers were reinstated. Unfortunately, last Friday the branch also decided to call off the overtime ban.

Bill Loxton, a member of the branch committee, told us: 'The problem facing us now is sustaining action if there is no national action to back us up. Since Telex is back on the air and the overtime ban has been called off, we are in danger of losing the momentum built up in the membership.'