

Socialist ACTION

ON WEDNESDAY 1 May US president Ronald Reagan announced his intention to mount a full economic embargo on Nicaragua from 7 May, to continue for an indefinite period. Reagan's announcement followed the refusal of the US congress to vote \$14 million towards arms for the contra forces fighting against the Nicaraguan government. This embargo has attracted condemnation throughout the world.

Last week there was speculation that Britain's representative at the United Nations would abstain from any criticism of the US action. The truth turned out worse. Instead of the expected abstention, Britain supported the United States and voted against a resolution which reaffirmed the right of Nicaragua to determine its own political, economic and social system — and called on all other states to

to loans to Nicaragua from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank has already been the subject of criticism in the labour movement. Labour's spokesperson on Latin America, George Foulkes, has tabled a series of parliamentary questions on the subject. The revelations in the *Observer* simply confirm what many have believed for a long time: that when it comes to any important issue of foreign

Thatcher backs

refrain from interfering in Nicaragua's internal affairs.

Britain became the only major state in the world to openly support Reagan's attack on the Nicaraguan revolution.

Justifying the American economic blitz on Nicaragua, the *Washington Post*, a so-called liberal paper, carried this recent homilie: 'It is not ignoble or intrusive or bullying for the United States to take a neighbour's interest in wanting to see countries in the Western hemisphere move towards democracy and respect for neighbours. It is legitimate, necessary and right.'

In short: cut out the rhetoric about democracy, for which Reagan cares nothing, and even the liberal voice of American imperialism now justifies US intervention in Nicaraguan affairs. And Thatcher's government agrees.

A Foreign and Commonwealth Office document leaked in last Sunday's *Observer* shows how far Thatcher has gone in backing Reagan. Despite the Tory government's declared public position of supporting loans to Nicaragua on their merits, Thatcher has acted secretly to stop such loans.

The leaked document highlights the government's problem of claiming 'technical grounds' for this policy. Speaking of such technicalities, a civil servant scribbled in the margin: 'If we can find them!'

Britain's opposition

policy, Margaret Thatcher is firmly in the White House's pocket. Britain's opposition to loans to Nicaragua is going ahead despite the fact that there are no grounds under the banking funds' own rules.

Hypocrisy from the Thatcher government is not new. (Remember the Belgrano affair?) The only unusual thing about these disclosures is that Thatcher's lies have been made public so quickly.

When the US congress was considering finances for the contra forces, the Latin America and Caribbean Committee of the Parliamentary Labour Party sent a telegram of protest to the House of Representatives urging congress to reject Reagan's proposals. Labour MPs must now turn their attention closer to home as well.

They must expose this latest Tory lie and demand that Britain increases its financial aid to Nicaragua. A good first step to building a campaign in support of the Nicaraguan people and against the intervention of the United States would be for Labour leader Neil Kinnock to make a second trip to Nicaragua to publicly declare Labour's wholehearted support for the Nicaraguan revolution.

• The Nicaraguan Solidarity Committee can be contacted at: 20-21 Compton Terrace, London N1 (01-359 8982).

Nicaragua blockade

Socialist ACTION

The Tory drips

THE ANNOUNCEMENT by Francis Pym that he is forming a new group entitled Centre Forward is just the latest episode in the 'now you see them, now you don't' history of the Tory wets. We imagine however that Martin Jaques, editor of *Marxism Today*, must now be contemplating his latest coup. Should he, or should he not, interview Francis Pym for the cover story of the June issue of *Marxism Today*?

In order to bring a little light into the sordid history of wets however we will spell out a few home truths. These may come in useful for those in the labour movement contemplating the 'anti-Thatcher alliance' proposed by *Marxism Today*, and now endorsed by Alistair Graham.

The Tory wets are not a cause of opposition to Thatcher but a product of it. The role of the wets, and the Liberals, and the SDP, is to back Thatcher's policy on the decisive points and at the decisive moment, while engaging in a little cosmetic opposition when less fundamental issues are at stake.

The miners' strike was the perfect illustration. The direct organiser of the campaign against the miners was the most highly placed wet himself — Peter Walker. David Owen strategically positioned himself to the right of Thatcher throughout the dispute both from conviction and out of a determination to establish his credentials with the ruling class. Shirley Williams entertained scabs at the SDP conference.

Now that the miners' strike is out of the way however, and as Thatcher is suffering severely in popularity as a result of the strike's impact, the wets consider it safe and necessary to show a little dissent. After all if there is no apparent sign of opposition to Thatcher from within the ranks of the Tories and Alliance, then Labour will pick up all the gains from those deserting Thatcher. Furthermore such public 'criticism' plays the useful role of tying opposition into policies acceptable to the ruling class.

First to pick up the bait of the new moves by the wets was Michael Meacher with his participation in the all-party Employment Institute. Now Alistair Graham has proposed that the CPSA enter talks with both Labour and the Alliance over the future pay policy of a government of the 'anti-Thatcher majority'.

The most serious manifestation of the problem, however, was Neil Kinnock's statement last month that he excluded any agreement with the SDP, but was prepared to consider one with the Liberals in the event that Labour did not win a majority at the election.

The basis of the policy of the wets, SDP, and Liberals is dead simple. They demand that all the essential policies of Thatcher are maintained. This means maintenance of the laws against unions, the denationalisations, and Britain's maintenance of its own nuclear weapons and American cruise missiles in the country. Any changes — in particular a half-hearted economic reflationary policy which would completely fail — would be solely within the framework of maintaining the most essential Thatcherite laws.

A government including the SDP, Liberals, or wets would simply be Thatcherism without Thatcher. That is how it must be regarded by the Labour Party.

The signs of problems in the Tory ranks shown by the formation of Centre Forward are excellent. Anything that weakens the enemy is a step forward. We welcome greater disorder in their ranks.

But the basis for Labour exploiting problems of the Tories is explaining clearly that there is no difference between a Pym and a Thatcher on any decisive issues of politics.

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THATCHER'S DECISION to privatise British Gas so lacks economic coherence, even going by the stated long term policies of the government, that it has attracted widespread recognition for what it is — a crude piece of asset stripping. But more is involved than that. JOHN ROSS looks at how the British Gas affair symbolises the fundamental political and economic strategy of the Thatcher government.

The first motivation for Peter Walker's announcement of the sale of British Gas is the changing shape of the British economy and the profits it is generating. Britain's economy now literally does not resemble that of any other advanced capitalist state.

Nearly one eighth of the British economy, twelve per cent, is now devoted to the production of energy. This compares to around two or three per cent for any other major imperialist economy. Britain has become super specialised as a supplier of oil, gas and coal to the industrial heartland of the EEC.

The energy industries, coupled with finance, telecommunications and electronics, are now the actual, or potential, super-profitable sectors of the British economy. They are also the sectors dominated by the largest and most powerful British firms — the oil companies, the banks, the electrical engineering industry, and the newly denationalised British Telecom.

The privatisation of British Gas, which has profits in excess of £1,000 million a year, will add substantially to that complex of companies. The next stage — if it can be achieved by the government — is breaking up the National Coal Board and the privatisation of the super pits, such as Selby, together with the profitable mines in areas such as north Notts.

This building up of the new profitable sectors of the economy under the control of British capital is accompanied by a continued rundown of the domestic base of sections of traditional industry such as mechanical engineering. The government is clearly preparing the *de facto* sale to Honda of the last remaining mass production British car firm — BL. The Thatcher government has cleared the way for a massive export of capital by British industrial companies.

The second key aspect of the sale of British Gas is as part of Thatcher's political strategy — above all her government's continuing drive to fragment and segment the working class.

Even the Tory press commented on the blatant-

cy with which the sale of British Gas was brought forward to allow Lawson to compensate — in tax cutting terms — for the tremendous losses suffered during the miners' strike. The NUM smashed to pieces Lawson's previous political plan for £3,000 million of give away tax cuts in 1985. Therefore the government has decided to embark with greater speed on the plan of raising £5-8,000 million by the sale of British Gas.

The fact that this sale is against the interests of ordinary gas consumers, against the interests of the workers in the industry, and in the interests of those whom even the *Financial Times* recognised as being motivated by 'the low prices raised for public assets and the large fees earned by the City institutions', naturally does not figure in the government's calculations. The chief Tory need in politics is for a rapid tax cutting budget before the next election.

The urgency of Tory concern on this is reflected in the latest economic indicators — and in the Tory decline in electoral support.

Ever since coming to office the Thatcher government has concentrated on massively redistributing income not simply between classes but also within the working class. The pattern is absolutely consistent. The better off you were before Thatcher came to office the better off you are under her government. The worse off you were before Thatcher came to power the worse off you have become under this government. Table 1 shows this pattern.

Real wages of the bottom ten per cent of male workers have actually fallen marginally — by 0.2 per cent — in the five years of the Thatcher government. The real wages of the top 10 per cent of male earners in contrast have risen by 19 per cent.

For women the pattern is the same. The bottom 10 per cent of women earners have increased their real wages by 5.8 per cent in five years. The top 10 per cent have increased them by 21.2 per cent.

These figures however,



More than just asset stripping

which show the same trend at every income level, actually *understate* the redistribution of income because they are figures for those in work. More than two million people have been pushed out of work altogether and have therefore suffered far greater falls in income than those in employment. This has particularly struck black people and youngsters.

Thatcher's goal, and political strategy, is ex-

The result is the famous, and growing, 'North-South' electoral divide — with the 'North', including the core of the big cities, becoming more consolidated around Labour while Thatcher and the Alliance deal the Labour party real blows in the 'South'. Within the working class the same process saw its expression in a sharp increase of votes for the Tory Party among skilled workers in 1979 and 1983.

the interest rates are now sharply hitting home buyers — the core group Thatcher had built her support among.

The *Economist* calculated in its 11 May issue that during the last two years interest rate increases have forced up mortgage interest repayments by 59 per cent. For new house buyers their effective retail price index has risen by 24 per cent in the last two years — compared to 12 per cent for the retail price index for the population as a whole.

A political reflection of this is to fuel a rapid collapse of Tory support among the key groups on whom Thatcher based her electoral victories in 1979 and 1983. Unless some way can be found of making new economic concessions to these sections of the working class the result will be new Tory electoral disasters of the type suffered in the county council elections. Tax cuts are the only really sure way to attempt to achieve these concessions.

That is why Peter Walker was so keen to get British Gas so rapidly to the market place. It is more than just a little crude asset stripping. It is part of some rather urgent political footwork required by the Tories. Whether it will work is, of course, a very different question!

TABLE 1
% increase in real wages 1979-1984

	Men %	Women %
Top 10%	19.0	21.2
Top 25%	13.6	18.3
Average	8.1	12.6
Bottom 25%	3.4	8.6
Bottom 10%	-0.2	5.8

Source: Guardian 11 April 1985

tremely clear. She bases herself within the ruling class on the largest and most powerful sections of British capital — oil, banking, telecommunications, energy, certain multinational industrial companies — and has attempted to weld round these electoral support among not simply the 'middle classes' but the better paid, and more secure, sections of the working class.

The crisis the Tory Party now faces is that the key sections of the working class they targeted for their electoral strategy are themselves now being more affected by the economic crisis. The North Sea oil revenues, which fed the entire process, are likely to decline from next year onwards. The rise in real wages has greatly slowed down.

Perhaps worst of all for Tory strategy is that



Spain says No to NATO



Reagan with Spanish president Gonzales during his recent visit

OVER HALF A million people took to the streets of the Spanish state last week to protest against Reagan's visit to the country. At the same time a survey in the left wing daily *El Pais* spelt disaster for Socialist Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez in his drive to hold Spain in NATO. The poll shows:

- 54 per cent want Spain to get out of NATO.
- 66 per cent want the US to quit its Spanish bases.
- 64 per cent think that America is not a 'reliable ally of Spain'.
- only 19 per cent favour full Spanish integration into NATO.

There were demonstrations in nearly all major cities. In Madrid the organisers claimed 500,000, while in Barcelona even the police gave a figure of 225,000. *El Pais* reports that 50-60,000 demonstrated in Valencia

and smaller numbers in the Basque country.

Chanting 'NATO no, bases out', 'for a referendum now, without blackmail', 'no blockade', and even 'Indians to power, Yankees to the reservation', the demonstrations included the whole spectrum of Spanish political opinion. In Madrid a discreet contingent from the Socialist Party's left wing marched under the slogan 'Towards a left and socialist foreign policy: disarmament yes, NATO no.'

An internal report by Dutch MP Tom Frinking to the forthcoming NATO assembly, which meets in Stuttgart on 17 May, highlights the headaches this will cause NATO chiefs. The report estimates that 98 per cent of Spanish parliamentary deputies are in favour of NATO. The contrast with public opinion could scarcely be more dramatic.

Gonzalez has had to commit the Socialist Party to a referendum — on NATO membership. He thinks he can

win. He intends to link membership of NATO to EEC integration — which makes nonsense of the idea that the EEC is a purely economic undertaking and once again proves that support for America's war drive is an unwritten clause of the Treaty of Rome.

By Alan Freeman

But Gonzalez wants to arrange a partial compromise by persuading the USA not to cut down on its bases, the hottest bone of contention. There are four bases and 12-13,000 US troops in Spain. But as the *Financial Times* reported on 8 May, 'Spanish membership of NATO makes little sense from a military point of view if the bases cannot operate efficiently. Spain's importance to the Americans and to NATO is its role as a staging post between America and the potential theatre of war in Europe.'

Not surprising, therefore, that the French newspaper *Le Monde* reports Gonzalez' suggestion of reductions in the American presence in Spain met with a 'frosty reception in Washington.' No wonder then that NATO heads are unhappy about the referendum. It seems that ballots are alright for smashing up union democrats but not such a good idea when it comes to deciding whether to die for Uncle Ronnie.

'Washington is hostile to a referendum because the precedent could serve as a school for other European countries where the pacifist current is strong' reports *Le Monde*.

No referendum

Will the government drop the referendum? Spanish Foreign Minister Fernando Moran has already called openly for general elections instead of a referendum. Since the

Socialist Party already has been bullied by Gonzalez into accepting his position on NATO, since the other major parties are right wing, and since no other parliamentary party opposes NATO except the fragmented Communist Party, this would be a complete fraud with no real opportunity for the people of Spain to impose their will.

Impregnable

As the rise of the German Greens shows, the SP cannot regard itself as impregnable. The growing vitality of the movement on the streets is a sure sign they will not accept this.

'Now our job', explained oppositionist philosopher Javier Sabada to French daily *Liberation*, 'is to ensure that demonstrations like Sunday's can be translated into the electoral terrain as such, favouring a restructuring of the Spanish left.'

LAST WEEKEND'S Bonn summit was marked by the public row over Reagan's visit to Bitburg cemetery — with the graves of Hitler's SS included. The visit had a deep symbolic meaning, and a real political significance.

The Bonn summit itself saw an important split in attitudes between France and West Germany over Star Wars and trade. DICK CARTER looks at the background to Bitburg and the Bonn summit — and at their connection.

From a public relations point of view, Reagan's visit to Bitburg was a disaster for the US president. But it was a necessary price to pay for the fact that Reagan is now prepared to play with one of the most reactionary forces in Europe: of right wing German nationalism.

The Bonn summit itself was dominated by increasing conflicts over trade and the issue of America's Star Wars project. Both these came together for the United States in its relations with West Germany. Between them they gave far more than purely a symbolic significance to Bitburg.

Starting with the economic issues at the Bonn summit, the United States finds itself today facing a crucial dilemma. American manufacturing industry, hampered by an overvalued dollar, is being easily defeated in international competition at present by Japanese and West German industry. But the US still has decisive advantages in the field of agricultural exports and the service sector — above all international finance.

American economic and trade policy is therefore simple. The US wants a rapid liberalisation of trade in sectors other than manufacturing, so it can bring to bear its competitive edge in these fields. In particular this means allowing the US financial sector to penetrate the Japanese market, and using the United States agricultural advantage against the EEC. A chief demand of the US today is therefore a new conference on liberalisation of all areas of international trade.

Bitburg and star wars



Reagan at Bitburg military cemetery

America is threatening to take strong protectionist measures over trade in manufactured goods unless its rivals agree to a liberalisation of agricultural and services trade. This issue is the first source of friction between France and West Germany — a tension the US is more than ready to exploit to its own advantage.

France is the chief agricultural producer in Europe, one with ambitious plans for the future. But France urgently needs the EEC's protectionist policies. So it strongly opposed US moves to liberalise agricultural trade. This is why France at Bonn vetoed the US proposals for the new round of international trade talks.

West Germany, in contrast, is the EEC country which bears the brunt of the cost of subsidising French

agriculture. And it has the most to lose if the US takes protectionist measures in manufacturing. Hence, West Germany supported the American proposals for a new international trade conference.

France and West Germany also found themselves sharply at odds on the other key issue at Bonn: Reagan's invitation to the EEC states to participate in the Star Wars programme.

West Germany has the strongest West European economy, but is blocked from access to nuclear weapons. Participation in Star Wars would give West Germany at least partial legitimate access to the most advanced nuclear weapons research in the world and, for the first time, a foot in the door of a nuclear weapons programme.

Star Wars participation would be aimed to give West Germany a lead in the future nuclear arming of Europe.

For this reason West Germany chancellor Kohl is extremely keen to join the Star Wars programme.

France, in contrast, understands that the anti-ballistic missiles system envisaged by Reagan — which would inevitably be paralleled by the Soviet Union — would render obsolete the independent French nuclear deterrent, the force de frappe, and reduce French political weight in Europe. So Mitterrand is strongly against Star Wars and has refused French participation.

On both trade and Star Wars Reagan seized a major opportunity to get support for US policies at Bonn and drove a wedge between the two pillars of the EEC — France and West Germany. With such high stakes, he was prepared to pay a big price.

The concession Kohl demanded, and Reagan paid, was the Bitburg visit. If West Germany is to be firmly

ensnared in the Star Wars build up against the Soviet Union, then it must be turned once more into a fortress of anti-communism. That means rehabilitating German right wing nationalism and spring cleaning the Nazi period.

If the price of integrating West Germany into US plans is that the butchers of Hitler's SS have now to become 'honest soldiers' then Reagan is prepared to take that decision. That's why he went ahead with his Bitburg visit, riding the storm of world protest.

Stone-dead

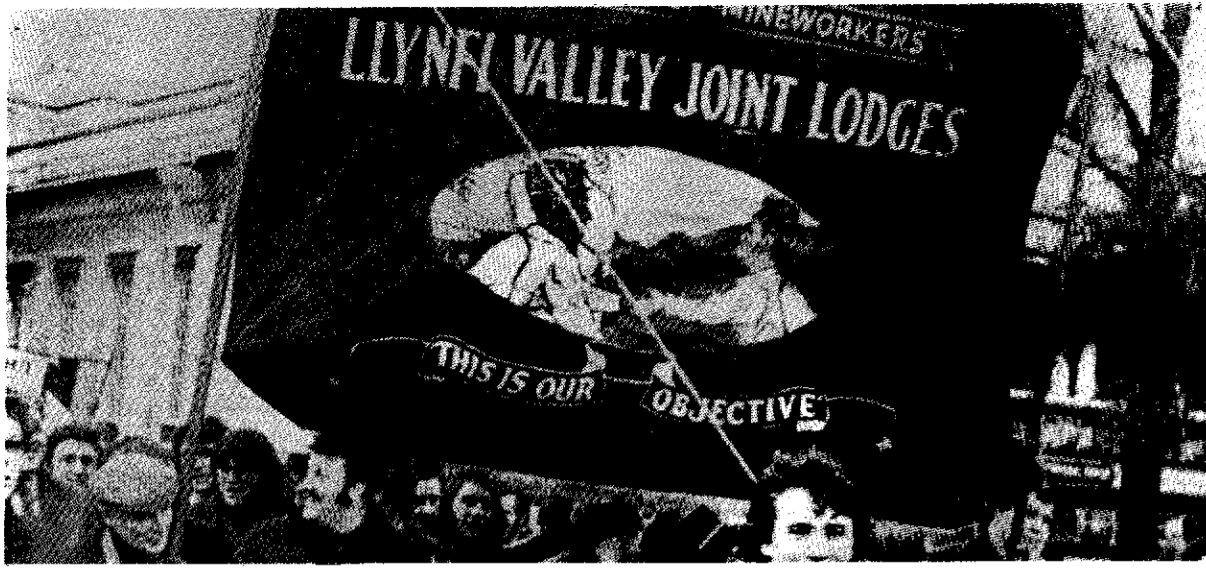
For anyone with eyes to see, this visit should kill stone-dead any illusions that there is anything progressive in the EEC or in European capitalism's clashes with the United States. The real problem for Reagan's plans doesn't come from his stitched-up deals with Kohl, but from the opposition of the West German working class and its allies.

The attempts of Kohl's backers to rehabilitate the Nazi SS has led to a wave of demonstrations throughout West Germany. Encouraged by the Bitburg visit, and the new government policies, Nazi veteran's groups have increasingly openly held their traditional reunions.

In Sunday's elections in Nord Rhein Westphalen, West Germany's strongest industrial area, Kohl's Christian Democratic Union suffered a stunning defeat. The Social Democratic Party (SPD), which had attacked both the Bitburg visit and the moves to rehabilitate the SS, had an electoral triumph — gaining an absolute majority of the vote.

Reagan's visit to the Bitburg cemetery was no error. It was a symbol of the American administration's willingness to work with some of the most reactionary forces in Europe.

Read between the lines of what happened at the Bonn summit, and you'll discover quickly enough why Reagan was prepared to pay homage to the rotting remains of the perpetrators of the most barbarous crimes in the history of Europe.



Wales TUC No plan for sacked miners

IN THE opinion of the *Western Mail*, 'something approaching the new realism crept unnoticed into Wales' at the Wales TUC conference in Tenby. It was, the *Western Mail* continued: 'a sober and common-sense conference where the less said and the less promised the better ... The National Union of Mineworkers gave the Wales TUC its muted blessing and forgiveness. That was sufficient to spare the organisation's general council from all but the minimum of embarrassment.'

In his main speech to the conference, president Emlyn Williams talked about the miners regrouping to fight another day. For the leadership of South Wales NUM that means a policy of reconciliation with those who let them down so badly.

Worse, it means dropping policies which might prevent such a reconciliation. So there was no debate at the congress on the outcome of the strike.

Emlyn Williams was able to direct his fire at a speech by Norman Willis, effectively letting the Wales TUC leadership off the hook. There were no motions calling for an amnesty for sacked miners, none calling for the charges against the 101 miners who occupied the Port Talbot cranes to be dropped.

A controversial debate on the role and accountability of the police fell by the wayside when TASS failed to move it. For the

same reason backers of similar motions had already agreed to withdraw them. The Wales TUC conference continues the steady rightward march of the South Wales NUM.

By Graham Atwell

The deal which led to the end of the strike included an assurance by the Coal Board that most sacked miners would be reinstated. In return, the executive have failed to lead any campaign, either for a national amnesty or in support of their own members still outside the pit gates.

They advised the seven NUM members sacked at the Phurnacite plant in the Cynon Valley for alleged harassment of 'superscab' Paul Watson, to keep a low profile and rely on an industrial tribunal.

Meanwhile the Board have repaid the loyalty of the NUM by closing two pits, South Celynon and Bedwas, without any consultation. In fact it has been left to NACODS to organise a ballot for an overtime ban in protest at the failure to follow the new review procedure.

At St Johns, at Maesteg, the lodge has rejected closure and is taking it to review. Rumours are rife of collieries on the hit-list, with Penrhynwceir widely believed to be next.

With the retirement of area director Philip Weekes, himself a 'valleys man', the Coal Board is expected to bring in an outsider to complete the butchery of the industry in South Wales. As many as 16 pits could be at risk.

The Wales Congress for Mining Communities believe the failure of the strike shows the need for a new strategy to stop pit closures. Turning away from industrial action and mass pickets, they call for a broad alliance of all sections of the community against the Tory government. They hold that Scargill's failed to convince public opinion of the justice of the miners' case.

Left wing members of the South Wales NUM ex-

ecutive have little alternative to offer. They called for the miners to disaffiliate from the Wales TUC, a motion only defeated on the casting vote of Emlyn Williams.

The vital debate is around a strategy which can call a halt to the creeping closures which threaten the South Wales coalfield. It will not come from opposition to the policies of the national executive.

While the Wales Congress is right to stress the importance of the communities, it is only a national fightback — by a national union — which can halt the Coal Board in their tracks.

How to organise such a fightback was amply demonstrated during the course of the strike — by the movement of women in support of the strike, and by the solidarity committees up and down the country.

The South Wales executive's opposition to the rule changes proposed to the upcoming NUM annual conference is a demonstration of their opposition to any real fight against closures. Opinion poll politics of Neil Kinnock or the Euro-communists variety offer no alternative to building a fightback against Tory butchery of the pits.

defence for the ordinary people of Britain.

Meanwhile, support for the continued presence at the peace camps throughout Britain, and especially for the women at Greenham, should be rebuilt and reactivated through a massive campaign of support for Anne Francis, who is currently serving her sentence in HM Cookham Prison, an open women's jail. She has just been transferred there from Holloway, where she was denied many privileges — including access to her lawyer — after refusing to cooperate.

● Messages of support should be sent to: Anne Francis, c/o HM Cookham Prison, near Maidstone, Kent.

Contraceptives for all!

'THERE WILL always be a hard core of silly girls who will get pregnant. They'd be no more able to make contraception work than they can make their brains. Short of physically sterilizing them, there is little to be done.'

This is the view of Victoria Gillick, campaigner for greater restrictions on abortion and contraception for the under-16s.

The high court ruling, in December 1984, in favour of Victoria Gillick's claim that no treatment or advice on contraception or abortion should be given to any of her daughters without her consent represents an attack on the most basic rights of young women to control their own bodies.

The ruling did not simply refer to Gillick's own daughters. Department of Health recommendations on abortion and contraception for the under-16s were declared unlawful.

Since the ruling it has been illegal for doctors to give any treatment or advice on contraception or abortion to the under-16s.

By making 'advice' illegal the ruling also restricts any information, from youth workers, teachers or in publications. Sex education in schools can be declared illegal. Books on sex education have been removed from some shops since the high court decision.

The Gillick ruling is based on the belief that young people should be totally under the control of their parents. It establishes that idea further in law. Although the decision specifies abortion and contraception in particular, it also refers to all medical treatment.

Not only can people under 16 be prevented

from using contraception or forced into unwanted pregnancies, but theoretically all other medical treatment can be forced on or withheld from them at the whim of their parents or legal guardians.

Apart from the right of young people to seek help about abortion and contraception themselves, many will simply not approach their parents for permission.

By Anne Kane

But the ruling will not stop young women getting pregnant or having sex, as Victoria Gillick wishes. It will simply mean more unwanted pregnancies, more backstreet and late abortion and more fear and ignorance. Last year, according to DHSS figures, over 17,000 people under 16 attended family planning clinics in England and Wales, where the ruling now applies.

The dramatic drop in this figure so far this year means that young women are using unsafe contraception or none at all. Many young pregnant women are waiting until they become 16 to seek abortion and some have committed suicide since the ruling.

The Gillick ruling is only the latest attack on women's right to safe, legal and free contrac-

tion and abortion. The National Abortion Campaign, which with other pro-choice organisations, mobilised thousands of people against the White and Corrie Bills, showed that it was possible to defeat such attacks and defend legislation like the 1967 Abortion Act.

The key to reversing the Gillick ruling and future attacks is the rebuilding of NAC and this kind of mass action. The recent anti-Powell demonstration showed the possibility of doing that, but much work still has to be done.

The demonstration against Gillick on 23 June called by the Coordinating Committee Against the Gillick Ruling provides the next focus.

Maximum attendance at this demonstration over the next few weeks is essential to show the massive opposition to the Gillick ruling among young people.

Already the protest has the support of all pro-choice organisations, and many youth, women and labour movement organisations, including the LPYS and the NUS nationally.

New NAC groups and mobilising groups for the Gillick demonstration are being set up, dominated by young women. A youth contingent will lead the demonstration and the day will end with a festival in Jubilee Gardens. Spreading information is now urgent.

● For more details contact: Coordinating Committee Against the Gillick Ruling, Wesley House, 70 Great Queen St, London WC2S 5AX. 01-405 4801.

No more Bradfords!

THE BRADFORD fire was a tragic disaster of human loss and suffering. But it could have been avoided. How the fire started is not the point.

It was no accident that the tragedy happened at a football ground, or that it happened at a place like Bradford. Football is a mass working class sport, part of popular culture. Can you imagine this sort of thing happening at other sporting centres such as Wimbledon, Twickenham or Lords?

The amount of money spent on football in general is paltry compared to the amount of money that actually exists inside the game. It is nowhere near the amounts of money spent for example on other areas of leisure and culture.

By Johnny Haynes

The people who died at Bradford were working class, out for an enjoyable Saturday afternoon to celebrate their team's promotion to the Second Divi-

sion. Why should government money be spent on improving facilities and enjoyment of these people?

Many smaller clubs like Bradford are facing extinction. Faced with mass unemployment and rising costs, thousands of people can no longer afford to go to football matches. Attendances drop, money dries up, facilities can't be improved. Players have to be sold like commodities to raise the necessary money.

But the money is available. For example the government creams off hundreds of millions of pounds from the Pools companies, some of which could be diverted back into the smaller clubs.

Football today is big business. Most of the top clubs are run by business concerns at the level of directors. Increasingly property speculators are moving in on football grounds as very lucrative earners. A number of smaller clubs have had to farm out their grounds to supermarkets, leisure centres and so on.

The Tories response to the fire has been hypocritical. They've ordered an enquiry alright but linked it to the so call-

ed riot at Birmingham on the same day between City and Leeds fans. In other words its really all about crowd control and violence.

If the authoritarians had their way and compulsory fencing was installed at all grounds we'd be talking about thousands burnt to death not fifty. The fire did more damage in human terms in four minutes than a lifetime of so called soccer hooligans could ever do. The law and order brigade who defend the type of society that creates the conditions for football violence to exist should think carefully about where their ideas lead.

Bradford's stand was wooden, coated in tar and 77 years old. Many other smaller clubs are at risk. It will happen again unless the whole of football's structure is reorganised.

A distribution of the wealth the game generates at the top which sees money poured back into the game must take place.

The supporters, who provide the money in the first place through the turnstiles, should be the ones to benefit. Anyone who thought football was not political should think again after the horrors of Bradford.

Support Anne Francis

HOW MANY people have heard of the plight of Anne Francis? Not many we suspect. Anne was recently jailed for breaching the fence at Greenham Common airbase last May.

For criminal damage, her sentence is one year in jail. Other women tried for the same action have been sentenced to the usual one or two weeks in prison.

In the United States an Indian chief and two catholic priests were recently sentenced to between 12 and 18 years in jail for causing \$11,000 worth of damage to a minuteman silo. It is widely suspected that Anne's stiff sentence arises because the Americans are putting the pressure on here too.

In her defence Anne, a minister's wife from South Wales, argued righteous

justification. Would we have as many nuclear missiles, she asked, if they were funded by street corner collections the way famine relief is?

By Carol Turner

Anne's sentence coincides with the announcement of Exercise *Brave Defender*, this year's civil defence manoeuvre to be held between 2-13 September. Focussing on a conventional attack by small Russian commando units invading the shores of Britain, it will be the

largest military exercise since World War II.

More than 60,000 troops, territorial army personnel and police will be involved, with a significant input from US troops masquerading as the Russians! The autumn exercise will be a big opportunity this year for CND to refocus on the nuclear missiles sites — Greenham, Molesworth, Faslane, and so on.

We should demand that peace campaigners are accorded the same rights as TA volunteers: paid leave to campaign for peace and against the missiles. The peace movement must use this opportunity to refocus the opposition to the missiles by pointing out that conventional weapons are no



ON THURSDAY 9 May the Orgreave trial of 15 miners began in Sheffield Crown Court. It is likely to continue for the next four to six weeks.

The Tories want to use this case to strengthen the public order act and to ensure more effective methods of crowd control but they also have to steer clear of making the trial too political. The prosecution is avoiding bringing Arthur Scargill into the court although he was arrested on the Orgreave picket line.

The prosecution opened the case by alleging that pickets charged towards the police line singing the 'Star Spangled Banner', throwing bricks, stones and iron bars.

Pickets had also broken into several workplaces looking for materials to burn and throw. At one firm two owners locked themselves in an office while pickets ran amok through the yard. They tore a blanket into strips, soaked it in diesel oil to make petrol bombs.

At one point, apparently, pickets threw a gas cylinder onto a flaming barricade yet one of the owners of the firm was able to run up and remove the cylinder.

Friday 10 May Tony Clements, South Yorkshire's Assistant Chief Constable took the stand for the prosecution. Clements was asked if any pickets were allowed near the main entrance of the Orgreave works. 'We allowed what can be loosely described as an official picket of eight men'.

Mr Colex, the judge an ex Tory MP, then asked Mr Clement not to get into the politics of the dispute by determining whether it was official or otherwise. Clement described the various protective kits the police were issued with. The long shields were used to stop missiles reaching the police who were not in riot gear. The round shields and batons were for groups of police to disperse the crowd and arrest people for throwing missiles.

He then said that if there were about 200 demonstrators he would deploy a police special unit which is 40 constables, four sergeants and two inspectors.

Asked by the prosecution if there was any danger to pickets and police from the lorries Clement replied that it was his job to ensure the safety of his men and the miners but that it was not in his power to stop the lorries unless they were a danger to other road users. (A sacked miner wrote this report)

The trial of Dean Hancock, Russell Shankland, and Anthony Williams continues at Cardiff crown court. The judge has directed the jury to find Andy Williams not guilty of murder but he still faces two charges of conspiring to damage the taxi driven by David Wilkie taking a working miner to Merthyr Vale colliery. Hancock and Shankland still face the charge of murder.

The howls of outrage from the bourgeois press at the events leading to the death of David Wilkie and their delight at this trial are in direct contrast to their silence over the deaths of five miners while the strike was on. No police chief will face life imprisonment for his brutality in this dispute.

The double standards of the bourgeois press should not deter the labour movement from giving its backing to these class war prisoners.

WOMEN IN the Nottingham Woman's support groups are approaching Women Against Pit Closures to run a national campaign for the sacked and imprisoned miners. 'Everybody seems to want women speakers on this subject. Women seem to be more effective,' explains Doreen Humber from Blythworth.

'Money is desperately needed in Sheffield. My friend Sue's husband has been sacked and he doesn't get anything for himself because they say at the DHSS that he's still in dispute with the coal board.'

They stop him the £16 they stopped us in the strike, which means he gets £14 a week for a wife and two children.

There's a special fund set up now for the sacked and imprisoned miners. Send cheques to NUM Solidarity fund, St James House, Sheffield.

For more information from the Nottingham women contact Pam Oldfield on 0623 20226.



Women at the Chesterfield International Women's Day rally

NUM: Defend a fighting union

A RE-ALIGNMENT is taking place within the NUM. Under the pretext of opposing sweeping centralisation the South Wales leadership has come out against the rule changes proposed by the national executive.

Three camps are emerging within the union. The hard right, led by Nottingham super scabs Roy Lynk and David Prendergast, form one camp. A 'centre', Kinnoch/Communist Party, camp is emerging around the self styled 'realists' on the South Wales executive. The Scargill/Heathfield national leadership remains firm in their resolve to defend the NUM as a fighting, left wing national union. VALERIE COULTAS looks at the arguments behind the rule changes.

The real relations between the three camps in the NUM show up clearly around the changes proposed to the rule book for the July special rules revision conference. The changes involve tightening up the union structure to avoid its federal nature being abused by the right wing led areas. The changes consolidate the NUM as a nationally structured union.

The rule changes also avoid the Tory anti-union laws being used to force a ballot on the NUM to re-

elect its officials, notably the president, under conditions dictated purely by the courts.

What is at stake are some of the same issues involved in the campaign the press have been waging against the TGWU — the issue of court interference in the unions, coupled to maintaining an independent fighting NUM.

In the national press, and the Nottinghamshire Miner, Arthur Scargill is being projected as a dictator, out to impose totalitarian rule on NUM members. The real campaign by the press however is to secure a weak fragmented NUM.

That is why Peter Heathfield posed the issues most clearly when he told the Guardian that 'Either the membership is going to take its advice from Woodrow Wyatt and Bernard Levin or they are going to listen to what members of the union are telling them.'

Breakaway

Heathfield pointed out that the rule changes are aimed at updating the rule book and protecting the union from high court injunctions. Areas will still have the right to consult the membership on any issue they choose.

Lynk and Prendergast have obtained legal advice, and circulated every NUM area, claiming that the changes would 'destroy the essential form of the NUM and of the area union as it has existed since the formation of the NUM.'

Prendergast has also spoken out against women having associate membership — using the absurd charge that they would be used as voting fodder for the left wing. This is despite the fact that the rule change proposed doesn't give associate members the right to vote! The Nottinghamshire Miner has also claimed NUM branches would be overrun by lesbians.

The campaign on the rule changes is being used by Lynk and Prendergast to step up their preparations for a break away union. The question on the ballot paper on the rule changes in Notts states, 'Do you support your Notts area executive committee opposing the national rule changes even if it means being expelled from the union or leaving the NUM?' COSA, the staff section has also been threatening a break away.

Bridge

The Nottinghamshire rank and file miners strike committee expects a large minority vote against the proposals of Lynk and Prendergast. There is a growing feeling in the area against the idea of any split with the national union.

Even those Notts miners who voted against the strike in the area ballot on pit closures last March are unhappy with the area already being flooded with scabs from Yorkshire and every other area of the NUM.

In South Wales the area executive voted unanimously on 23 April to reject the rules revision. Kim Howells argued that the proposed changes were not mere revisions but a re-writing of the union's constitution.

In reality the South Wales executive are echoing the right wing — who have claimed that the key issue involved is that the new rules strip the areas of their independence.

The position on the rule changes however makes crystal clear the orientation of the leaders

of the South Wales NUM. They want to act as a bridge to the right — breaking with Scargill on this and other vital issues. This is in line with the South Wales leaderships manoeuvring at the end of the strike — when Emyln Williams attacked other areas for wanting the strike to go on 'until every drop of Welsh blood has been shed.'

The South Wales NUM, backing the line of the Wales Congress for Mining Communities and the Communist Party, argue that the strike was lost because the NUM alienated public opinion by tactics of mass picketing. The South Wales are now increasingly differentiating themselves from the national NUM leadership around Scargill. On the crucial votes — the overtime ban, the rule changes, the proposal on associate membership for women — South Wales has voted with Roy Lynk and Nottinghamshire.

The 'dictator' Scargill, on the other hand, has stated that the rule change that removes his casting vote is simply aimed at stopping the Tories imposing ballots on the NUM to re-elect its president in conditions dictated by the courts. He is simply against court interference in the union. Periodic election should be taken up by the union, not the courts.

The real issues at stake of course are whether or not the NUM should be a truly national union and what policies should be followed. As a Socialist Action leaflet distributed in Nottingham says, 'Talk of autonomy for the area unions is antiquated. It harks back to dealing with individual, private coal owners. How can local areas go their own way when we are up against a national management, a national government, national courts and a national police force?'

'For Lynk the right of the area to go its own way means nothing more than the right to defy national strike calls and to scab on the national union.'

This is the key issue involved in the rule changes. Should the union go forward on the basis of its experience of the last 12 months and equip itself for the battles to come or should it retreat into the federal, fragmented structure that Roy Lynk and the scabs in Nottingham desire?

Arthur Scargill and the national union have the correct approach on this question and the South Wales area leaders are dead wrong.

Miners, and their supporters throughout the country, should continue to mount a massive campaign to get this message across loud and clear right up to the July conference.

NO POLITICAL PRISONERS REINSTATE SACKED MINERS
Miners benefit social
Sat 8 June, 8pm 'till late
TU Centre, 2a Brabant Road, Wood Green
ARTERY BAND + DISCO
£2/£1 reduced * Organised by Wood Green/Green Lanes Miners' Support Groups

CRYNANT MALE VOICE CHOIR + Brass Band
with guest speaker Betty Heathfield
All proceeds to Miners' Amnesty
26 May, 7.30pm,
Pavilion Hemel Hempstead
Tickets £3.50 Phone: Pavilion/Hemel 212170/
Kings Langley 68103 (Concessions available)

SUPPORT

During the last year the left in Britain has concentrated its attention on support for the miners' strike. That was correct. But across the Atlantic a class struggle which dwarfs the miners' strike has been taking place.

On 19 July 1979 the FSLN overthrew the dictatorship of Somoza and established the political power, the state power, of the working class in Nicaragua. For six years the United States has been waging war against the Nicaraguan government. It heightened that war last week with the announcement of a formal trade embargo of Nicaragua.

ALAN JONES argues that right at the top of priorities for socialists, and the entire left wing of the labour movement, must be building solidarity with Nicaragua against the attacks being launched on it by the United States.

It is the elementary duty of socialists, and of the labour movement, to defend any semi-colonial third world country under attack by imperialism quite regardless of the nature of the government that is running that state. At times that has undoubtedly meant fighting on the same side of the barricades as some really anti-working class regimes.

In the 1930s, for example, socialists had to defend Ethiopia against the attack on it by Italian fascism — even though Ethiopia's ruler Haile Selassie was a literal slave owner. In World War II socialists had to defend China against attack by Japanese imperialism even though China's ruler, Chiang Kai-shek, was the leader of the massacres of the working class in the 1920s. In Britain's war for the Malvinas in 1982 the labour movement had to be unequivocally on the side of Argentina — even though its rulers were a murderous military dictatorship.

In such situations socialists, and the labour movement, have to clearly distinguish between the goals which are being fought for and the regimes involved. At the time of the Malvinas war the Argentinian labour movement popularised a wonderful slogan: 'the Malvinas are Argentine, the junta is not.' This completely expressed the position of socialists.

The struggle of Argentina to regain part of its national territory stolen from it by British imperialism was a completely just struggle. But the junta ruling Argentina were a gang of bloody murderers for whom the working class could only have the greatest hatred.

Brutal

But the case of Nicaragua something far more than necessary support for a 'third world' country under assault by imperialism is involved. Nicaragua's is no government to be opposed but one to be totally supported. The FSLN government of Nicaragua is one of the great examples of liberation not only of that country but of the history of the international working class.

When, on 19 July 1979, the FSLN took power in Nicaragua they overthrew one of the oldest and most despicable dictatorships in the world. For 43 years the National Guard of Somoza, which today forms the core of the counter-revolutionary 'contras' backed by the United States, had a record of bestiality and repression notorious throughout the world. It placed them on the same level as Hitler's SS and Gestapo, or the Shah of Iran's Savak.

The National Guard, and Somoza's government, murdered, tortured and brutalised the country. A former racketeer and forger 'Tacho', the first Somoza, turned himself into the richest man in Central America. He possessed fifty one cattle ranches, forty six coffee plantations, dominated the food processing industry, and air and sea transport, as well as controlling organised crime. His successor in the family continued the tradition.

Somoza's National Guard not merely killed Somoza's enemies but brutalised the entire country. Raping teenage children, pouring petrol over them, and burning them alive were



among their more notorious atrocities. Illiteracy and malnutrition were rife.

For the Nicaraguan people — and for the entire civilised world — the FSLN victory was like a day following deep night. The FSLN, basing itself on the victory of the Nicaraguan people over the National Guard, launched a mass campaign to eliminate illiteracy which taught more than one fifth of Nicaragua's people to read and write. It cut rents by 50 per cent. A mass campaign of vaccination was launched. Land was distributed to the peasants. More than 200,000 workers have been organised into trade unions.

On 4 November 1984 elections were fought in Nicaragua in which the FSLN received 67 per cent of the vote. The turn out to vote was eighty per cent — far higher than any American presidential election.

Beacon

From every point of view Nicaragua's is a regime which stands out as a beacon not only to Latin America but throughout the semi-colonial world. It would be held up as a model by any semi-civilised country or force on the planet. It is this regime which the United States decided to try to smash and to replace with a dark tyranny of the type of Somoza.

To achieve this would mean the literal physical annihilation of tens of thousands of Nicaraguan workers and peasants. It would throw the Nicaraguan people back by decades. To stop this murderous and cynical assault is the task of the entire labour movement, and every elementary democrat, throughout the world.

But for socialists something more even than that vital struggle against US imperialism is involved. Because the successes of the FSLN are not accidental. And they have something to teach every socialist in the world.

The fundamental ideas of the FSLN were stated by Carlos Fonseca — its crucial leader and founder. In Fonseca's words, 'Socialist and national demands are combined in the Sandinista People's Revolution. We (the FSLN) identify with socialism

while retaining a critical attitude to the socialist experiences.'

The FSLN in the struggle against Somoza, in a phrase used by Marx, literally 'placed itself at the head of the nation'. Every democratic, national, progressive and socialist demand in Nicaragua became focused through the FSLN. The FSLN in turn created around the leadership of the working class alliance of every exploited and oppressed layer in Nicaragua. The FSLN succeeded in utilising, on tactical questions, divisions within the bourgeoisie while maintaining a clear strategic line of never at any point subordinating itself to bourgeois forces. The FSLN held hegemony throughout the revolutionary process in Nicaragua.

It is the social alliance which the FSLN created — based on the leading role of the working class, the peasantry, but taking in important sections of the 'popular' classes in Nicaragua such as the unemployed and urban petit-bourgeoisie — which gives such tremendous power and popular base to the government and workers state in Nicaragua.

Popular

The tremendous authority of the FSLN precisely flows from the fact that it is based on the free choice of the Nicaraguan people — a choice above all expressed in the revolution but now confirmed also in the lower form of democracy of elections.

The programme, and method of operation, which allowed the FSLN to gain that support and authority precisely flows from the phrase of Carlos Fonseca that the FSLN 'identify with socialism while retaining a critical attitude to the socialist experience,' — with the 'socialist experience' meaning the bureaucratised states of Eastern Europe.

The FSLN developed completely independently of, and in opposition to Stalinism. The FSLN supports the countries of Eastern Europe against imperialism. It identifies with the Cuban revolution. But the methods and positions of the FSLN have nothing to do

with Stalinism or the bureaucratic monstrosities of Eastern Europe — despite wrong positions it has on issues such as Solidarnosc in Poland.

The FSLN is a revolutionary socialist organisation — one which has made an indelible contribution to the international working class. One from which every socialist in the world can learn. This is a government with which every socialist in the world can identify with pride.

It is indeed for this reason that Reagan hates the FSLN government even more. Any government fighting for socialism and national liberation in Latin America is intolerable for the United States. But one that is *popular* is even more unacceptable. It is precisely since the FSLN won the elections of November 1984 that Reagan has stepped up his assault on Nicaragua.

Defence

Nicaragua today stands out as an example to the entire population of the world. That is why the United States *must* crush it — and why it is already waging relentless war against it.

Nicaragua, and Central America in general, is today the central point for socialist strategy and struggle on a world scale. It is the most important class struggle taking place anywhere in the world. It is a third world country locked in an enormous battle with the greatest imperialist power on earth.

Nicaragua is an example of socialist policies which must be defended throughout the world. Its social alliances, and strategy, are a school for every socialist in the world. To secure the victory and defence of this revolution is the task of every labour movement in every country.

Every trade unionist, every member of the Labour Party, every fighter against nuclear weapons, every supporter of the miners' strike, every fighter against racism, every fighter for women's and sexual liberation, has today urgently to come to the defence of the Nicaragua.

In the 1960s a tremendous movement of international solidarity helped deal a crippling blow to American

policy in Vietnam, secure victory for the NLF in the war in that country, and gain the liberation of Indochina from imperialism. A completely equivalent movement is now needed today to secure victory for Nicaragua.

Socialist Action appeals to every one of its readers, and those they influence, today to come to the support of Nicaragua. We will be opening our

Behind US blo

FSLN COMMANDER Tomas Borge has a good image for Reagan's attack on the Nicaraguan revolution. It is 'an integral battle plan in the military, ideological, economic, political and psychological fields; like the five fingers of a claw that crushes what it does not like.'

Last week it might have seemed that the reverses suffered by the US trade embargo had clipped one of these claws. The western partners gathered in Bonn gave it a cool reception; Reagan had to contradict his Secretary of State and claim that he wasn't looking for their support anyway. Treasury qualms at home obliged Reagan to exempt US firms' existing contracts from the ban. The magnificent adoption of Nicaragua by over a million anti-NATO demonstrators in Spain encouraged wavering socialist premier Felipe Gonzalez to take a tougher line in defence of the revolution than he has done for a long time. In turn, the European socialist group was bolstered in its spectacular 'No Star Wars', 'Hands off Nicaragua' walk-out from Reagan's 'victory' speech to the Strasbourg parliament.

Finally, a Nicaraguan motion to the United Nations Security Council 'regretting' the embargo gained all but unanimous support. The US was forced to use its veto; only Britain abstained. With their usual diplomatic verve

NICARAGUA!



pages in the week to come to anyone in the labour movement, no matter what their positions on other questions, who wishes to call for support to be built for the Nicaraguan revolution and opposes the assault of the United States on that country.

We urge our supporters to contact and build the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign.

the blockade

the Nicaraguans will be following through their advantage with similar approaches to the World Court, to GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs) and the Economic Secretariat for Latin America.

So has the tiger been tamed? Obviously not. The fact is the Nicaraguan economy is already under grave pressure from the contra-war and an informal blockade which Britain and other US allies have long been promoting through their covert interven-

By Stuart Piper

tion against loans from the EEC and other multilateral bodies. The Europeans have their own reasons for not coming out openly in favour of a formal trade boycott, but Reagan's embargo, even if partial, will take a real economic toll in Nicaragua. More importantly, when you look at the kind of toll, you begin to see the political and military objectives that lie behind the economic measures.

Firstly there are exports. The revolution has made great progress in reducing Nicaragua's dependence on the US market, from \$214 million worth of exports in 1980 to \$58 million in 1984. But nobody can transform 400 years of colonial servitude overnight. Those exports still represent 17 per cent of Nicaragua's precious foreign exchange earnings, mostly in perishable

goods like bananas, shrimps and meat. Last week it seemed Nicaragua had found new customers in Belgium, France and Holland, but the price will be lower, the transport costs higher, and in the long run Nicaragua will still have to contend with a trading system dominated by US and British multinationals like United Brands and Fyffes. (Meanwhile West Germany and Britain were dithering on the sidelines, anxiously torn between respect for big brother and capitalist excitement at the prospect of some cheap bananas.)

This loss of foreign currency earnings will aggravate Nicaragua's more serious problem of imports, \$109 million worth of which still came from the US. Several key sectors will be hit. A lack of pesticides will hit agricultural production both for export and home consumption. A lack of chemicals and other intermediate inputs will affect factories producing medicines and consumer goods like soap and toothpaste. Finally, the dependence on American-made spare-parts places a potential stranglehold on three absolutely basic sectors of the country's infrastructure: the telephone system and energy plants, both reliant on American technology, and the only oil refinery, run by Esso.

All of these are highly 'military' targets.

Here Reagan's strategy becomes clear. Disrupt agriculture to reduce further foreign exchange earnings, alienate sections of the peasantry and increase shortages of basic foodstuffs; undermine the manufacture of consumer goods (60 per cent of which is owned by private capital) in order to alienate middle-class consumers in the towns and make increasingly unworkable the Sandinista's 'mixed economy'; prepare to paralyse resistance to a military invasion by knocking out the country's oil, energy and communications systems.

More than ever, these economic measures show that Reagan's objective has nothing to do with 'restraining' the Sandinista's march towards 'Marxist-Leninist totalitarianism' and 'international subversion'. It has everything to do with militarily destroying the second free territory of the Americas. With this perspective the Nicaraguan private sector becomes wholly dispensable. So do even pragmatic hawks in the US administration like Langhorne Motley, who quietly left his job as Undersecretary of State for Inter-American Affairs for 'wholly private

reasons' just before the blockade was announced, to be replaced by yuppy super-hawk Elliot Abrams, who has made no secret of his eagerness to have a go at the Sandinistas.

Can Reagan succeed? The answer has two parts. Firstly, not whilst the Sandinistas maintain their exemplary response of combining mobilisation of their mass support at home with a devastating skill at winning friends and influencing people in the most unlikely quarters abroad. Secondly, and this is the crucial point for us, not whilst the international solidarity movement can make it clear to Nicaragua's wavering 'friends' amongst the western establishments that their own people will not stand for Reagan's only other option: annihilation of the Nicaraguan people and their revolution.

The Spanish peace-movement has given us a magnificent example in this direction. Now it is down to all of us.

● Contact the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign at 20/21 Compton Terrace, London N1. Phone 01-359 8982.

Reagan's Plan

Just one day before the blockade was announced, the Nicaraguan paper *Barricada Internacional* published the following analysis of Reagan's options for rolling back the Nicaraguan revolution.

According to a classified report presented in Congress and published in *The New York Times*, the Reagan administration has not dismissed the possibility of armed intervention in Nicaragua. The document states that although the White House publicly claims that negotiations are of the 'very first order,' it really believes that only direct pressure, by expanding the counterrevolutionary forces on Nicaragua's northern and southern borders, can force Managua to bow to Washington's demands. The principal task, in Reagan's vision is the 'removal' of the Sandinistas from power.

According to US political analysts, at this moment, the government could very well be studying the following options as steps prior to an intervention:

- continued financing of the contras through third countries;
- breaking off diplomatic relations with the Nicaraguan government and imposing an economic blockade, as recently advocated by US Secretary of State George Shultz in an interview with *The New York Post*;
- recognition of a 'government in exile' made up by counterrevolutionary leaders and 'civic' opposition figures;
- intensification of the activities aimed at destabilising Nicaragua's domestic situation;
- increase of US military manoeuvres directed against Nicaragua;
- increase in military assistance to Nicaragua's neighbours;
- activation of the mechanisms of political censure in the Organisation of American States, aimed at the application of the 'collective self-defence' provisions of the Rio Treaty;
- fabrication of an incident or mounting of some provocation that would serve as a pretext for aerial attacks (surgical strikes) against strategic targets in Nicaragua;
- intensification of Washington's pressures against the Contadora countries so that they include points in the negotiation process unacceptable to Nicaragua, which would then be blamed for the eventual defeat of the peace efforts;
- an international pressure campaign advocating 'dialogue' between the Sandinista government and the contras, and the holding of new elections.

IRELAND UNFREE



Personation fraud!

VOTING FOR District Councils takes place in the Six Counties on 15 May. Already new rules supposedly introduced to prevent personation are confirming the worst fears of Nationalists. Personation, or unlawful voting in the name of a person absent, abstaining or long since dead, has been an institutionalised part of elections in the North.

Only when Sinn Fein stepped into the electoral stage did the British start to complain about misconduct. It was a convenient lie to explain away Sinn Fein's vote. It skipped over a denial of democracy by which Britain continues to rule in Ireland through partition and the gerrymandered Loyalist enclave in the Six Counties. It skipped over the denial of democracy through the construction of electoral boundaries within the Six Counties which gave a Loyalist majority in cities like Derry which have an overwhelmingly nationalist electorate. It ignored the struggle for one person — one vote which had been led by the nationalist civil rights movement and tried to pretend that it was Sinn Fein who were responsible for electoral fraud. It was a lie which fooled few in the nationalist areas but gave credibility to the claims of middle class politicians like John Hume that the SDLP or Dublin government could speak for the North's nationalists.

Danny Morrison, himself a victim of Loyalist personation, which he says cost him victory in the Mid-Ulster constituency at the last general election said he would welcome genuine moves to prevent electoral fraud. But that is not what the direct rulers have done. Their whole attention has been directed towards minimising the Sinn Fein vote. Republicans have consistently been the subject of large scale intimidation of electoral workers, candidates and supporters from the Army and police. The new electoral rules will handicap them still further. For the well off it might be no problem to produce a passport or new style driving licence with the owners photo as proof of identity. In nationalist areas like Ballymurphy where unemployment has gone up to 80 per cent it is very different. Excluding UB40s as a means of identification has disenfranchised thousands of unemployed youth. Only post 1972 medical cards will be accepted, disenfranchising many older voters. It has not 'proved possible' to meet the demand for new medical cards over the last 6 months.

The British rulers are determined to prevent the legitimising claim of Sinn Fein to represent the nationalist minority in the Six Counties. When hunger striking prisoner Bobby Sands won a landslide vote in Fermanagh and South Tyrone they claimed it was 'an emotional response'. But with all party support they quickly amended the so called Representation of the Peoples' Act so that no other prisoner could take his place.

In the local elections the Unionists are campaigning on an 'annihilate the IRA' platform. Whereas the SDLP have been afforded every cooperation in publicity, including the second ever visit by a Free State Taoiseach to the Six Counties. On April 16 the RUC arrested Sinn Fein representative Owen Carron and stole the names, supporters and election agents of each of Sinn Fein's 91 candidates. No longer is it the case that representatives of the political parties may scrutinise and challenge voters suspected of personation. Under the new electoral rules, the RUC will assume this role. It's a rotten system. Rotten to the core which will only be changed once the British are sent home and partition is removed.

Nevertheless electoral harassment is a weapon used to demoralise the nationalist community and effectively prop up the SDLP. The Labour Committee on Ireland is expressing concern about the conduct of the elections and has asked the Labour Party representatives to observe the procedure of the ballot and accompanying harassment. The response of the government has been to use the PTA to intimidate LCI members and supporters. Manchester police chief James Anderton described the arrest of LCI leader and Sheffield councillor Sheena Clarke as a random check. As she herself commented 'It was a random check which just happened to single out the two Sheffield Labour councillors on two separate flights from Belfast.'

Trade Union Friends of Palestine Conference

Friends of Palestine meet

THIS WEEKEND Trade Union Friends of Palestine (TUF) holds its conference to discuss with leading trade unionists in Britain building solidarity for the Palestinian cause.

Socialist Action looks at the history of the TUF and how the conference can be built on in the labour movement.

Trade unions in Palestine have a long and distinguished history and are among the oldest trade unions in the Arab world. In 1922 the first Palestinian trade union was formed by the Haifa Railway workers and by 1926 the Palestine Arab Workers Society (PAWS) had been established.

During the 1930s, when Palestine was ruled by a British mandate, the unions were active in winning benefits for their members and challenging exploitation. The greatest threat to the livelihood of Palestinian workers came from accelerated Zionist colonisation.

In 1936 the Palestinians staged a six month general strike which paralysed large sectors of the economy. The main reason for the strike was workers' resistance to illegal Zionist settlement on Palestinian land.

As a result of the occupation of Palestine in 1948 and the establishment of the State of Israel, the majority of Palestinian trade union activists became refugees. After more than a decade of confusion and disorganisation the Palestinian workers began to rebuild their trade unions. In 1965 the First Congress of the General Union of Palesti-



nian Workers, now renamed the Palestine Trade Union Federation (PTUF) was held in Gaza. Since then the organisation has established a world-wide movement, a consequence of the dispersal of Palestinian refugee workers to many countries.

The PTUF plays a prominent role in improving the social and economic conditions of Palestinians in exile, particularly in the refugee camps. By 1982 eight Palestinian co-ops servicing the refugee camps were in operation. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 destroyed five of them.

By Graham Topley

Workers in the West Bank and Gaza territories seized in 1967 are both exploited and unprotected. There are 36 syndicates operating in the occupied territories, none of their bargaining rights are recognised by the occupation authorities and membership of the PTUF is prohibited.

The destruction of the West Bank and Gaza economy, particularly by the seizure of land, has forced numerous Palestinians to find work elsewhere. Over one third of the Palestinian workforce are now bussed into Israel on a daily basis to do menial jobs which Israeli workers will not do. They are denied union representation, tenure of work and the right to strike.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that Palestinian workers from the occupied territories earn up to 50 per cent less than their Israeli counterparts. They are denied basic health, unemployment and family benefits, however, all of which are available to Israeli workers. The parallels with apartheid in South Africa are clear.

Support

It was not until 1966 that Palestinian workers were allowed to join the Histadrut, 'the General Federation of Hebrew Workers in Eretz Israel'. Even they were administered by a separate 'Arab Department'. An 'Arab section' was opened inside the Hevrat Odium (the Histadrut investment company) and to this day not a single factory has been opened in the Arab sector by or with the Hevrat Odium.

Despite the 140 unions active in the West Bank, only 28 have been given official permits. The situation in the Gaza Strip is even worse. All unions were dissolved in 1967 and only allowed to reform in 1978 after the ILO intervened. No new unions have been allowed to form since then.

There are also legal restrictions. Military Order 825 in 1980 gives the Military Governor auth-

ority to approve lists of candidates for union office, remove candidates or annul the result altogether.

Between 1981 and 1983 delegations from PTUF attended the Scottish TUC and toured Britain. At the same time trade union delegations went from Britain to Lebanon, Syria and Jordan and in May 1984 NALGO sent an official delegation to Jordan and the West Bank. In 1982 both the TUC and LP conferences passed resolutions supporting the rights of Palestinian people to self-determination in an independent sovereign state, and recognising the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

These were followed up by other resolutions at trade union conferences of NALGO, Sogat 82, NUM, ACTT, FBU and the STUC among others.

After years of unquestioning support for Zionism these decisions represent a significant advance for the Palestinian cause in Britain. These are the gains on which the TUF conference should build.

Information in this article is taken from Palestinian Trade Union Rights available from PTUF c/o 52 Green Street, London W1. Tel: 01-491 8872/629 8394. Affiliations to Trade Union Friends of Palestine at 21 Collingham Road, London SW5 0NU.

Trade Union Friends of Palestine Conference

Saturday 18 May

'British Labour and the Palestinians, Which Way Forward?

Holborn Central Library Hall, Theobalds Road, London WC1 (nearest tube Chancery Lane or Holborn).

Trade Union Friends of Palestine can be contacted at PO Box 196 London WC1X 0AT.

Apocalypse n-n-now!

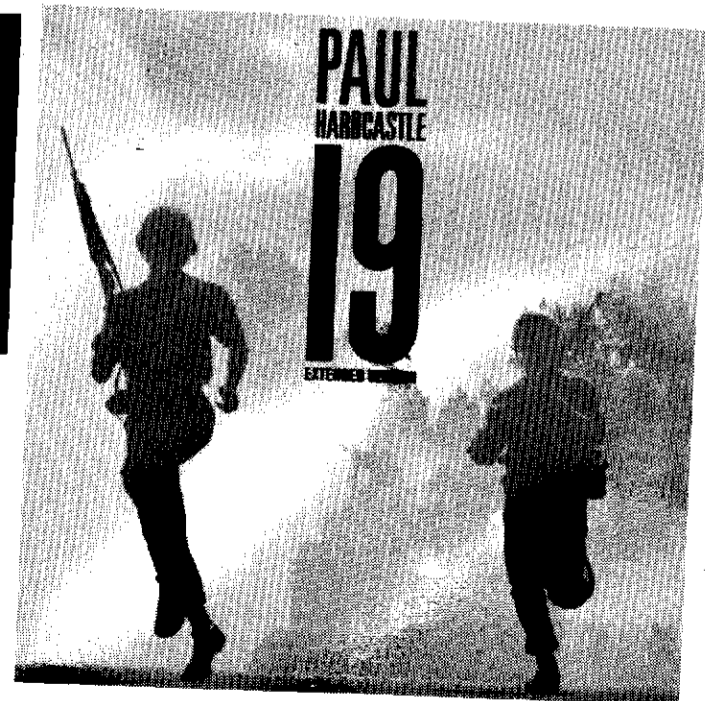
EXACTLY TEN years after the liberation of Saigon, a lethal electro-funk single stormed to number 4 in the British charts — in its first week of release. Paul Hardcastle's *Nineteen* is timely indeed. 'In World War Two the average age of the combat soldier was 26, in Vietnam it was 19'. Interspersing 'facts' like these with war veterans' comments, the music moves compellingly to its conclusion 'none of them received a heroes welcome'.

Yet it is difficult to sort out the intention of this record. In the US its release has been embargoed due to the record company's fears of

the disapproval of veteran's associations, sensitive to musical trivialisation of their experience. This is a remarkable decision in many ways as Paul Hardcastle's previous stateside release the instrumental *Rainforest*, sold half a million copies.

By Nick Robin

Seemingly in the tradition of recent beatbox political classics such as 'No Sell Out' and 'Strike', I think *Nineteen* ultimately owes more to another, more powerful tradition. While it may appear perverse to say of a record that talks of people's brains being blown on to their neighbour's shirts as sanitised, *Nineteen* is precisely that. It is the latest



cultural artefact in the new history of the Vietnam war, the one that doesn't include the Vietnamese. It is in the tradition of *Apocalypse Now* turning genocide into spectacle.

While *Nineteen* is a fearsome aural spectacle we should be ask-

ing ourselves 'what was the average age of the Vietnamese killed in the war?' and how many indo-chinese people were killed in the 'longest war in American history'? Considerably less than 19 and over 4 million. Verdict: great sound but unsound.

WE ARE printing this week the second part of DON ROJAS's sixth anniversary open letter on the lessons of the Grenadan revolution. Rojas was the press secretary to Grenadan prime minister Maurice Bishop. The editing is by Socialist Action.

THE RICH history of working class struggles worldwide has taught us that revolutionaries act on principles and selfless convictions, not on personal ambitions; that they honestly accept responsibility for their actions; and that they possess the moral courage to defend and die for their convictions if necessary.

Let us here briefly reexamine the 'joint leadership' question. This proposal was introduced at the central committee plenary in September 1983, by Liam James. James's proposal was not intended to improve collective leadership within the NJM. As chairman of the central committee and political bureau, Bishop never overruled collective decisions. But his guidance, his political experience, his grasp of strategy and tactics, and his skill at synthesising various points of view could and did influence the direction of discussions and hence decisions that arose therefrom.

This is how collective leadership worked in Lenin's day. This is how it works in the Cuban Communist Party led by Fidel Castro. And that is how it worked in practice in the New Jewel Movement while Bishop was chairman.

'Joint leadership', as proposed by James, would not and could not have meant an equal sharing of leadership responsibility and authority between Coard and Bishop. Coard, in effect, would have taken the day-to-day leadership of party and state, with Bishop's role relegated to mere ceremony. If implemented, it would have led to serious polarization of the entire NJM membership and leadership into two camps. It was not only impractical but inherently divisive, since it was aimed at consolidating the Coard faction's takeover of the party leadership and government.

Counter revolution

Deliberate crimes such as those committed by the Coardites — crimes against the Grenadian people that robbed them and the Caribbean masses of a genuine revolution and of a bright future, crimes against the entire world revolutionary process — must never be allowed to be explained away as 'errors' or 'mistakes', as the 'double-blame' theorists are wont to do.

It was Lenin himself who emphasized that honesty and integrity in politics are an immutable law for revolutionary parties.

The Coardites' uncontrollable ambition for power at all costs led them to resort to a counterrevolutionary coup. Driven by their greed for power, drunk on misunderstood theory, misappropriating the ideas of Marx and Lenin, Coard and his minions offered up the revolution to Washington on a platter at a time when imperialism is especially aggressive and expansionist in the Caribbean and Central America.

The 'double-blame' theorists, in their shrewd attempt to discredit Bishop, are today claiming that he violated democratic centralism by refusing to accept the NJM Central Committee's decision in September 1983 to establish 'joint leadership' with Bernard Coard.

As historical 'evidence' of these charges, Coard's apologists have elevated the dubious NJM Central Committee minutes to the level of sacrosanct papal edict, and have proclaimed the Coardite Central Committee majority to be infallible. They even intimate that Bishop provoked his own murder (like the reactionary judges in the USA and Canada who



Don Rojas on

Maurice Bishop

The Grenadian revolution

argue that rape victims seduce the rapists).

The maneuvers of Coard's central committee had nothing to do with democratic centralism as it was practiced in Lenin's Bolshevik Party or the Cuban Communist Party today. What the Coardites labeled 'iron Leninist discipline' was actually blind mechanical obedience to the dictates of a faction that had maneuvered behind the backs of the party to replace the central leadership that had been tested by a decade of struggle in building the NJM and in leading the workers and farmers to power.

The majority of the Coard group came out of a study group led by Coard in the mid-1970s called the Organisation for Revolutionary Education and Liberation (OREL). With little or no links with the masses, OREL in 1976 joined with Maurice Bishop, Unison Whiteman, Kenrick Radix, and George Louison of the NJM, which had been formed a few years earlier.

Masses

Henceforth, the OREL people secretly fancied themselves as the natural heirs to leadership of the Grenada revolution because it claimed to be more ideologically developed than Bishop and the "petty bourgeois democrats" who had founded the NJM. And they began their maneuvers to put this perspective into practice.

In such a climate, therefore, dogmatism, sectarianism, and intolerance were promoted by the Coard gang among many inexperienced individuals in the ranks of the NJM instead of creative thought, open debate, and individual initiative. The hijacking of the NJM, hiding behind a fake centralism, was carried out under the credo, 'The higher organs subordinate.' Their capture of the NJM leadership bodies was facilitated by the very small size and the class composition of the party.

In 1983, after four and half years at the head of the revolutionary government, the NJM counted among its ranks only about 300 members, with less than 100 full members. It had all too few workers and farmers who had proven their leadership capacities in the unions, organisations of rural producers, and in the National Women's Organisation and National Youth Organisation.

During the Central Committee meetings of September and October

1983, the Coardites claimed that the revolution was facing a social, economic, and political crisis of monumental proportions — a crisis, as Coard's supporters warned, that would destroy the party within six months and was in fact manufactured as a pretext for Bishop's removal.

The crisis that actually *did* bring down the party, the revolution, and the government of the Grenadian people was the one that had been created by the Coard gang over the years, and that came to a head in the fall of 1983. Real problems facing the revolution, and the steps to solve them, were the last thing on Coard's agenda.

At the September 1983 meeting where the Coard group made its open bid to complete their replacement of the party's tested leadership, they offered absolutely no new proposals to advance carrying through the national democratic stage of the revolution, the policy of agrarian transformations, the creation of national industry, the further democratisation of social life, and the deepening of economic and cultural cooperation with the socialist countries.

Perhaps the most fundamental lesson we have learned from the overthrow of the Grenada revolution is one that the magnificent Cuban revolution continues to teach us: that it is not possible to seize and hold on to power only *in the name of* the working people. The workers and farmers must be led to take power themselves. This is what Bishop's NJM did on March 13, 1979.

The mobilisation and organisation of the masses is the sole motor force capable of guaranteeing the conquest of power, its preservation, and its advance through the democratic revolution toward socialism. This critical lesson Maurice Bishop understood, and Bernard Coard consciously rejected.

The historical role of Marxist-Leninist parties as the political vanguard and collective leader and organiser of the working people is a colossal responsibility that can only be effectively carried out by understanding the class interests of the working people and learning from them.

Lenin taught that the gravest danger for any revolutionary party is for it to become divorced from the worker and peasant masses, for it to grow self-centered, disregarding the will of the people, or — worse still — holding them in contempt while hypocritically speaking in their name, as the hijacked NJM Central Committee did in late 1983.

Infantile leftism and sectarian phrase-mongering, that verbal disease Lenin called "the itch," grow out of a misunderstanding by petty-bourgeois radicals of the objective laws of social development. It leads to adventurism, bureaucratic abuses, and brutality, as in the case of the Pol Potists of Kampuchea and the Coardites of Grenada.

The "double-blame theorists" are today arguing that Coard and his followers contributed much to the Grenada revolution and to the NJM as if to call for a softening of the condemnation of these architects of the revolution's demise.

For revolutionists there is no room for sentimental attachments. We must emulate the leadership of the Cuban revolution in accepting the objective truths that Coard, Austin, Strachan, and others in and out of prison are morally and politically responsible for the murder of Bishop and other Grenadians October 19 and for the overthrow of the revolution and subsequent Yankee invasion.

Still, the Coardites (with no moral right to speak in the name of the NJM after murdering the founders and leaders of the party) arrogantly refuse to accept the verdict of the world revolutionary movement, and since September 1984 have begun issuing press releases in the name of the NJM. In one of these short statements, they speak about "errors" they committed in October 1983.

Internationalism

In other statements, they condemn the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement for naming its party after the slain leader of the revolution and for participating in the December 3, 1984, elections. They hypocritically try to reclaim the political mantle of Maurice Bishop, whom they labelled a right opportunist in October 1983, by now calling him 'an outstanding revolutionary democrat.' (The designation of 'brilliant Marxist-Leninist strategist and tactician' is still reserved for Coard).

What of the Coardites' leftist criticism of the MBPM's participation in the elections as giving legitimacy to the U.S. imperialist occupation? The boycott alternative advocated in the Coardites' statements, if heeded by the MBPM, would have played into the hands of imperialists, who would then have argued that the revolutionary movement in Grenada was a dead force, with no credibility, unable to utilise public platforms,

afraid of showing its face to the Grenadian people.

Despite the stated call for a boycott, some prominent Coardites in Grenada actually campaigned for the NNP, the Reagan-backed capitalist party that won 14 of the 15 seats in the rigged bourgeois parliamentary elections. They justified this opportunistic stand with the argument that the NNP would build capitalism in Grenada and that this would help create a larger working class that at some later stage they would organise to seize state power.

Such convoluted logic serves only to confuse the democratic forces in Grenada. It is akin to Bernard Coard's explanation to George Louison a few days before October 19, 1983, that while Maurice Bishop's house arrest might throw the revolutionary process back five years, such so-called Leninist staunchness would somewhere down the road catapult the process 10 years forward.

As proletarian internationalists, one of our main duties on the occasion of this sixth anniversary of the Grenada triumph in 1979 is to continue standing firm with the militant, fighting people of Nicaragua, and with their vanguard Sandinista party, as they valiantly defend the dignity and sovereignty of their homeland against the gangs of Somocista terrorists and bandits unashamedly supported by Ronald Reagan and his warlords.

The Sandinistas have time and again diplomatically outmanoeuvred the bellicose US government with wise tactics that never compromise their principles or their integrity. They continue to successfully mobilise the patriotic Sandinista people to defend their revolution while simultaneously entrenching their revolutionary democracy. If the Sandinistas had pitted themselves against the masses, as the Coard gang in the NJM did in 1983, the stars and stripes might well be flying over Managua today, as they do over St George's.

So we must now and in the coming days militantly reaffirm our solidarity and support for the Sandinista revolution, resolve to defend it with all our capacities, and urge our friends in the United States to participate in the planned 20 April demonstrations for peace, jobs and justice in Washington DC, and San Francisco.

Victory

The struggle to liberate Grenada from the imperial stranglehold will be long and difficult, and it will necessitate marshalling the best fighting qualities of all Grenadian patriots at home and abroad. But victory is certain, and the second Grenada revolution is inevitable. The Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement, the only genuinely anti-imperialist force in Grenada today, has already demonstrated its maturity and potential, and it will continue to hold aloft Maurice Bishop's proud banner of freedom, independence, dignity and social justice.

In the coming months and years the struggle for a free and peaceful Caribbean will intensify. The contradictions created by imperialism's increased military and economic penetration of the region in the wake of the Grenada revolution's demise will also intensify. Thus all Caribbean revolutionaries must be prepared to confront these new challenges with determination, maximum unity among our ranks, political clarity and utmost fidelity to the working people of our region.

Let us resolve on this sixth anniversary that through our revolutionary practice we will reverse the negative public image, especially in the English-speaking Caribbean, of socialists and communists as people who kill, maim, and deceive while screaming ultra-left rhetoric. Our challenge is to put dignity and honour back into the name communist, and to once again wear that lofty badge with pride.

US occupiers out of Grenada! Let us together move forward *over* our feet, never on our knees!

Sheffield sets a rate

SHEFFIELD'S STAND against rate-capping was ended on 7 May by 20 right wing Labour councillors. By voting with the Tories and Liberals to set a rate these renegades ensured that the first round went to Thatcher by default.

Although this is a setback, the campaign has opened up a new situation in the Labour Party in Sheffield, and resulted in important links between the Labour councillors, the Party and the council trade unions.

A week prior to the 7 May council meeting the District Labour Party (DLP) voted by a decisive 81 to 48 to instruct councillors not to set a rate. This was despite an intensive campaign by David Blunkett, in favour of setting a legal rate and deficit budgeting. Such a major defeat for David Blunkett was the result of a number of factors.

The majority of the council trade unions were opposed to setting a rate. Their resolve was a clear result of the campaign in the workforce over the last six months. Workers were convinced that a fight was needed and expected Labour to fight. A growing coordination of the left in the DLP and the left in the Labour group joined with the voice of the trade unions and succeeded in carrying the day.

The emergence of a significant wing to the left of David Blunkett is new. It is a result of his 'firm left' stand being tried and found wanting when the

crunch came. Despite his defeat David Blunkett followed DLP instructions making 38 out of 58 Labour councillors who voted not to set a rate. But dissatisfaction with his stance may well have been increased by his unsuccessful attempt to reintroduce a deficit budget position in the council chamber after the vote to set a legal rate was carried.

By John Kirby, Sheffield Heeley Labour Party (personal capacity)

This produced a split of 22 councillors who correctly argued that the DLP had given no mandate for such a position. The day after the council meeting shop stewards and representatives from the 30,000 council workers met to decide how to continue the fight. They reaffirmed their commitment to defending jobs and services. Committees are to be formed in each department to monitor any at-



Photo: JOHN CHAPMAN

tempt at cuts by the officers or by the council.

Unions

In addition full meetings of all representatives are to be reconvened to campaign against cuts in services or jobs. There is some confusion over the budget agreed on 7 May. It provided for £30 million less spending than

Labour's no cuts budget. Original spending will probably be restored at the next council meeting, and the shortfall made up from reserves.

But to stick to a no cuts budget the council may have to resort to deficit budgeting. The focus for defending jobs and services will now switch to the council unions. The credibility of the Labour group and the Party has

not been irreparably damaged, but it will now be tested in two ways. First, in supporting the trade unions to keep a no cuts, no redundancies position against certain sabotage by those who voted to set a rate and by officers. Second, in dealing with the 20 scab councillors in preparation for renewed battles in the future. As councillor Tony Tigwell said in debate: 'They have 10 months to get out of council and make way for those who will fight the Tories.'

In spite of the defeat in the council, winning the DLP and majority of the Labour group to the no rate position was an important step forward for the left in Sheffield. It is now necessary to organise to ensure that there are no cuts or redundancies over the next year and to prepare for a renewed fight.

PUBLIC MEETING What future for Hackney Schools?

Hackney Free and Parochial School, Paragon Rd, E9. Creche provided.
Thursday 23 May, 7.30pm



Photo: MARK SAMMON

LT union leaders pretend it isn't happening

By Patrick Sikorski NUR (personal capacity)

THE VAST majority of union leaders on London Regional Transport have put up the 'business as usual' signs. Having warded off the threat to their own power that the success of the miners' strike would have brought about they are now re-adopting the 'new realist' approach to the impending loss of 16,000 jobs.

During the strike the leaders of the rail unions had to tread a very delicate path. On one hand was the enormous pressure of the media and the judiciary against implementing the resolutions of the TUC and Labour Party conferences.

On the other was the growing pressure until the beginning of this year for action in support of the miners from those in the transport unions like the workers at Coalville.

Now the chickens are coming home to roost. LRT want massive job cuts through one-person operation (OPO) on the buses and the tube, combined with a shake out in all other grades over the next three years.

At the London Transport Trades Union Congress annual general meeting on Saturday 27 April there was no specific discussion of the attack on jobs in general. There was not even any discussion on the next round of implementation of OPO on the tubes and buses. This was compounded by a meeting of the Rail Federation on Thursday 2 May which did not even have on the agenda the threat by LUL management to unilaterally impose OPO on the East London and District Lines on 13 May.

Disunity

To date the determination of the London Transport District Council of the NUR to fight job loss has carried the national executive of the union with it.

There can be no doubt that the majority of the ranks of ASLEF and the NUR are totally opposed to OPO and the rest of the job cuts. But the growing disunity of the union leaderships has steadily been strengthening the hand of those in the union and workplaces who are anti-strike.

It was this question of unity and how to fight for it that was at the centre of

what limited debate there was at the meeting.

The overwhelming majority of the conference was composed of full-time convenors, fully supported by the Communist Party led by one Kevin Halpin, who emerged from self-imposed hibernation during the miners' strike. They argued that the problem was the disunity being displayed by the membership who, just like the Notts miners, were listening to the siren voices of the Tories and believed their jobs were safe.

Inaction

Delegates from the LT District Council argued that of course there were sections of the membership fooled by such a line, but that the role of the unions and their leadership was not to capitulate to this Tory offensive and use it as an excuse for inaction.

To rebuild unity needed a leadership which fought for the jobs and conditions of the members, not one which reflected the disunity sown by the Tories.

During this week the National Executive Committee of the NUR will have to call all-out indefinite strike action in defence of jobs and against the imposition of OPO on the East London line. Otherwise its majority will have been a party to maintaining a useless bureaucratic unity with the leadership of ASLEF at the expense of thousands of jobs.

The situation on the London underground has very severe implications for workers on British Rail. If ASLEF continue refusing to oppose OPO drivers could well sign up for it when it is introduced.

Then it will be crunch time for the ASLEF executive. Will they instruct their members to respect picket lines or leave them to individually choose between an extra £30 a week or victimisation by management?

Reports of our death have been greatly exaggerated

'RATES REVOLT set to crumble' said the Guardian last Saturday. In a report written by someone described as a groupie of a major interviewee of Marxism Today the impression was given that save for Hackney the ratecapping revolt was all but over.

A special conference of councillors, trade unionists and Constituency Labour Parties called by the Association of Labour Authorities the next day, showed this for the lie it is.

Though there is still some crumbling in some councils and no guarantees can be given for all time, nevertheless most of the councils hope to stay without a rate for a while longer. Unfortunately the situation is not helped by the fact that the GLC has rescheduled its precept demand so that interest is due a week earlier than expected. As one delegate said: 'Why should the GLC threaten us?'

It would be wrong to say that everything is 'hunky dory'. What the conference showed was that there is a crisis of perspective in some

quarters. This comes from two directions.

On the one hand the crisis is seen in a further falling away of councillors with Sheffield making a rate and Southwark on the brink of doing so. On the other hand it is getting harder to mobilise for yet another council meeting which may do nothing.

This has led to demands for somehow stepping up the ante. Sheffield show the problem from both sides. As their delegates pointed out a resolution for deferring a rate would have been passed by Sheffield Council. The resolution presented

for refusing to set a rate and 'going illegal' may have sounded more pure — what it did was ensure it would be lost, as some who supported that option undoubtedly knew and probably counted on.

By Greg Tucker (chair, Lambeth Local Government Committee)

The only answer is to stay cool and stand firm. The government's strategy is to try and keep things out of the courts and away from the district auditor for as long as possible. In doing so they have banked on councils one by one falling by the wayside. At the same time they have shown they are afraid of a direct confrontation.

The signs are now that the government is running out of time. The district auditor has begun the process which will lead to sur-



Ted Knight

charge and is said to have indicated he will act at the end of the month.

There is no need of any special tactic to force something to happen. What is needed is to continue the job of preparing the groundwork for when surcharge certificates are filed.

Auditor

Islington Council workers showed the way to do this last week when 2000 mobilised, including jamming the streets with council vehicles, in order to greet the district auditor who had come to discuss with and threaten Islington councillors. It was

the DA who left feeling threatened.

For a focus of action after the council meetings on 15 May, two things were discussed. The Hackney Council meeting on 21 May is to be the next focus of activity on the streets.

Because of the special situation of their court case a national call for support of the lobby of the meeting was made. Liverpool councillors pledged that coaches of their council workers would come down that day. All London activists should see the 21st as a priority. London Bridge joint unions also pledged to mobilise their forces.

Behind the scenes the other important aspect is raising financial support. In most boroughs, parties and shop stewards committees have set up fighting funds in order to be prepared to defend long legal actions against surcharge. But that must only be seen in the context of London Bridge's other pledge that if councils continue not to set a rate then when surcharge certificates are issued, they will organise action across London. When asked about the role of the trade union leadership they stressed they aimed to act irrespective of what they are told to do nationally.



SOGAT 82 victory on political levy

THE VOTE this week by Sogat 82 on the political levy, by a majority of 3-1, is a clear triumph for the Labour and trade unions. It is also a big blow to the Tories, whose Trade Union Act 1984 requires unions to ballot their members on retaining a fund if they have not done so in the past ten years.

Last, but by no means least, it is a slap in the face for the SDP who seized on the Sogat 82 political fund ballot as an issue with which to beat the unions by calling openly for a vote against it.

This was cynically coupled with its jumping on the bandwagon of the allegations against the TGWU. Both these issues expose the SDP as the anti-union, anti-democratic force they really are.

Owen, in typically pathetic style, argued that Fleet Street had reached an undercover agreement with its print unions not to write about the Sogat 82 ballot! The conspiracy theory is always the last resort of the failed politician. As Brenda Dean the Sogat 82 president said, 'It is quite clear that union members resent outside attempts to interfere with their legitimate right to maintain a political fund'. Sogat 82's method of organising the ballot was in many respects a model of how to campaign for a 'yes' vote. Instead of press advertisements or thousands of leaflets, Sogat actually took the advice of the Tories and went back to its members.

A serious campaign was waged throughout the union, by organised

meetings and well directed information. Most important of all it was topped off with a lay union officer at each workplace to follow through the campaign.

By Graham Topley

It wasn't that the campaign, as Brenda Dean said 'was not low key' — it was that it was a *different* sort of key. Branch officers approached Graham Allen, full-time co-ordinator of the union's campaign in Britain, and ordered material which they wanted and then passed it on to the membership.

The union is now free, ironically with the blessing of Tory legislation, to carry on its political activities and maintain its relationship with the Labour Party. The whole purpose of the ballots is to break that link, to neutralise the ability of trade unions to be politically effective.

Sogat 82 went first in the ballot because it was

hoped to trigger off a domino effect: exactly that was borne out by the result of 91,760 in favour and only 25,947 against. The union also possesses two qualities which will be essential to win this fight — strength of organisation and a high degree of political awareness.

Clearly in the case of Sogat 82 the ballot has rejuvenated the union and injected a political issue around which it could campaign. The exact opposite of what the legislation is intended to do. However, it had to be organised at workplace level, a clear lesson there for other unions in the firing line.

A major weakness of the campaign though is that the balloting timetable deliberately misses out the TUC and Labour Party conference season. Rather than see them as a central focus for the campaign, the sight of the TUC and LP leaderships having an impact on the voting is seen as too much of a problem.

But the campaign is off to a good start. Sogat 82 was seen by some would-be commentators as one of those unions most at risk. The campaign to secure Labour's financial base should now go on the offensive. In 1964-79 trade union affiliation to

Labour increased by 18.3 per cent compared to a 45.7 per cent increase in affiliations to the TUC. In 1983 only 39 per cent of trade unionists voted Labour.

The Labour Party has only damaged itself with the leadership's attitude to the miners' strike. For the campaign on the political levy to be successful, Labour must campaign openly on the side of workers in struggle, pursue policies in their interests and win the confidence of the working class to support it. It undermines that campaign and its very own future if it does not do that.

If the link between the Labour party and trade unions is broken it will be a massive blow to the entire labour movement. It will be a decisive step in permanently minoritising the Labour Party and preventing any possibility of the formation of a majority Labour government.

The Labour Party should build on the words of Bill Keys, the ex-president of Sogat 82, who said: 'The result is a blow to the Conservative Government who have tried very hard not only to shackle the trade union movement but now want to silence it. The result is a victory for democracy and the whole union movement.'

Challenge faces UCW conference

THE 1985 conference of the Union of Communication Workers (UCW) takes place at a time when both British Telecoms (BT) and the Post Office (PO) are introducing sweeping changes into the conditions of employment in the communications industry.

In BT whole sections of the workforce are faced with loss of security of employment. For telephonists a major restructuring of their grade has led to job losses. Meanwhile, auxiliary grades such as cleaners, bookkeepers, and general assistants are facing their jobs being put out to contract or casualised.

In the PO a comprehensive package is before the sorting office and delivery staff which will see job-cutting productivity schemes, casual and part-time labour plus the introduction of a new generation of technology. Counter staff face continued closures in the crown and sub office network.

Will conference face up to the challenge or will it register a retreat? At the centre of the problem will be the position taken by the executive on the proposals for sorting office and delivery staff. The package is presented by PO management as the 'deal of the century'. Certainly if conference accepts the package the PO will have got a wonderful bargain.

It will have Optical Cypher Recognition machines in 20 offices with at least 300 jobs made redundant. It will have a further round of job cuts through productivity dealing. It will have 20,000 part-time or casual workers introduced. And all this without taking an hour off the 43 hour working week that sorters and delivery staff are at present working.

For the union the deal of the century looks less attractive. There will be higher bonuses while the

basic wage stagnates and continues to fall behind inflation. New divisions will undermine the unity that must be forged to fight privatisation. There will be divisions between part and full time workers, between high and low bonus offices, between older workers seeking redundancy payments and younger workers seeking job security.

By Steve Bell UCW (personal capacity)

The package is essentially the same as that presented to the special conference in March and rejected. Since then, not



Northampton postal workers on strike

750 jobs to go at BP Llandarcy

MANAGEMENT of the British Petroleum plant at Llandarcy, near Swansea, recently announced the axing of 750 jobs out of the 1,133 jobs at the plant. If these jobs are lost it will be another nail in the coffin of an already high unemployment area.

Socialist Action spoke to MALCOLM GUNTER and others on the newly formed Action Committee for the following details.

The 750 jobs will be lost as a result of BP selling the distillation and cracking capacity of the plant to Texaco. This will leave the plant with the capacity to produce lube oil, which is profitable at the moment but has an unsure long term future. The Action Committee believes that in two to three years BP will declare the whole plant unviable and close it completely.

It is thought that Texaco are withdrawing from Rotterdam in exchange for this deal — yet another example of how workers suffer at the hands of the multinationals. The action committee believes that the deal may be in contravention to Article 85 of the EEC Convention, which decrees that you cannot transfer jobs around the community.

Not only will the loss of jobs be a huge blow, the knock-on effect could be

By Ceri Evans

even more serious. Researchers for John Morris MEP have estimated the loss of four more jobs for each lost at the BP plant. Another BP plant at Baglan Bay, which receives products from Llandarcy, could be jeopardised. This is along with a gas bottling plant in Aberdulais and rail jobs at the Llandarcy depot. Swansea Docks, whose capacity has already been cut from 160 to 60 ships a month, will also be at risk.

The loss of these jobs, with no prior consultation with the unions, also shows up an often repeated Tory myth. When the government sold off

shares from BP in 1981 many workers took advantage of the 'two for the price of one' deal offered to them. Yet these small share holders had *no say whatsoever* in the decision to close the plant. So much for owning shares giving you a say in the business!

On hearing about the plans the four unions at the plant formed a joint Action Committee. This committee will put alternative proposals on the future of the plant to an International BP board meeting on the 30th May. They have also been canvassing support from local MPs, councillors and the local community. If this fails they will consider further action.

Local people have put up with the vile smelling, carcinogenic emissions from the plant for one reason — it provided jobs. Now 750 of these jobs are to go and the BP workers are understandably bitter. ● Send messages of support to Joint Action Committee, BP Llandarcy Works, Neath, West Glam.



Over 3000 people answered the Newham 7 Defence Campaign's call to assert the right to march and organise against racist attacks one week after violent police disruption of the 27 March demonstration. At the

end of the march police again attacked the marchers and 14 arrests were made. The trial started on 13 May. There will be a picket at the Old Bailey each Monday while the trial lasts, at 9.30am

Socialist Action

Solidarity with the Capenhurst women

LAST YEAR women protested at British Nuclear Fuels Ltd (BNFL) uranium enrichment plant at Capenhurst. They were drawing attention to the illegal plundering of Namibian uranium ore for use in Britain's civil and military nuclear programmes.

For demonstrating solidarity with the Namibian workers who mine the ore in the most inhuman conditions imaginable, they were arrested, convicted and fined.

However the women, some of whom are experienced campaigners from Greenham Common, refused to pay the fines to the courts. Instead they sent the money to the South West African Peoples' Organisation (SWAPO), adding that this should be regarded as merely the first of many repayments due to the Namibian people. For as the women point out, it is British companies and the British government who benefit from the illegal mining of Namibian uranium ore.

The mining of uranium ore by British owned companies such as Rio Tinto Zinc (RTZ) has been declared illegal on the basis that it contravenes the United Nations Decree No 1, 1974, which makes it illegal to mine or export raw materials from Namibia while it is under military occupation by the South African armed forces. Under the terms of the United Nations Decree, Namibia is entitled to compensation from the companies and countries who benefit from their illegal mining activities. The Capenhurst women are being jailed for carrying out, to the letter, the decisions of the United Nations!

Support for the women is extremely important. So far the women have received support from the United Nations Council

for the Namibia conference, but need moral and financial support too. On 13 and 14 May the women were due to appear in court for non-payment of fines. They will be sent to Risley Remand Centre near Warrington. The picket at Risley on 15 May will be the first of many acts of solidarity with them.

Labour Party, LPYS, trade union and CND branches should all be approached to send messages of support and money to help sustain the campaign.

Verbal condemnation of the South African apartheid regime is cheap and we certainly seem to hear enough of it from the leaders of the labour and disarmament movements.

Just as Greenham acted as a focus of protest against cruise missiles, the internationalism being shown by the Capenhurst women can and should be used as a rallying point for the natural allies of the Namibian black masses in this country; that is, those in the labour and disarmament movements who understand the need to support the struggles of the workers and oppressed the world over.

● Messages of solidarity and donations should be sent to: CANUC Office, PO Box 16, London NW5 2LW.

FUND DRIVE

WE ARE still slogging away to get the fund-drive target. Recent welcome donations include £80 from Birmingham, £40 from Middlesborough and £15 from Swansea, plus a bankers' order for the same amount.

Swansea readers confirm that they are going to reach their target of £250 which is good news and should, we hope, act as a spur to other readers' groups who are still lagging behind. They report that they are planning a social and a jumble sale. These have been in the pipeline for some time but money raising for the miners' strike

naturally held these events back. Now dates are fixed and they are going ahead.

They are also planning stalls at local summer fêtes and with this in mind they write 'we should easily reach our target'.

We urge all our readers' groups and supporters to donate money, take collections and plan events like socials, jumble sales and summer stalls.

Events like these not only raise money, they also get the paper better known, so you win both ways. We look forward to a flood of urgently needed cash and we are sure that, as always, you won't let us down.

Anti Apartheid calls national demonstration

The Anti Apartheid Movement's national committee has decided on a programme of action, ending in a national demonstration on Sunday 16 June. The theme will be an end to the police killings and a demand for the British government to act against the apartheid regime.

South African police murder union leader

THE DEATH, two days after being released from police custody, of Andries Raditsela, — leader of the Chemical Workers Union and executive member of the strongest independent body of trade unions, the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) — recalls the deaths in police custody of earlier martyrs of apartheid Steve Biko and Neil Aggett.

The South African police have launched a 'high level enquiry' into the death. The situation was then made significantly worse with the announcement that the student leader, Siphosiso Mutsi, had died in police custody from an apparent brain haemorrhage. No doubt there will be another top level enquiry into this latest death. There have been several such enquiries following deaths in suspicious circumstances of people while in the hands of the police. But to date not a single policeman has been charged with any offence or even disciplined as a result of these investigations.

Andries Raditsela was arrested outside his home in Tsakane township on the East Rand, originally on suspicion of being involved in a car theft. This

was subsequently changed to charges under the Internal Security Act. These charges were withdrawn on Monday May 6 only hours before Mr Raditsela died at Baragwanath hospital, near Soweto.

By Charlie van Gelderen

The death is another sign of the unrest which is sweeping South Africa. Now no longer confined to the Eastern Cape, there have been clashes in 'coloured' townships in the Western Cape and now, more ominously for the authorities, in Soweto. These take place only a few weeks before the anniversary of the explosion which shook the apartheid regime in June 1976.

Andries Raditsela is the first prominent trade union leader to die in the

current wave of unrest, though others were arrested after the elections to the Botha parliament in January. His death will undoubtedly draw the trade unions into the arena of conflict. In the words of Dr. Alex Boraine, a leader of the white opposition Progressive Federal Party it is going to 'make labour peace more difficult ... it was like putting a match to dry grass.'

Even before the pathologist's verdict on Siphosiso Mutsi, black trade unions and community organisations called on workers to strike for two hours on Tuesday. This has now escalated with the demand by FOSATU for a full day's strike coupled with the demand for employers to pay striking workers on Tuesday. They also warned the police that workers would stay on strike for an extra day for every black worker shot.

These types of demands show the way forward for the fight against the apartheid regime today. This, plus the turn taken by the

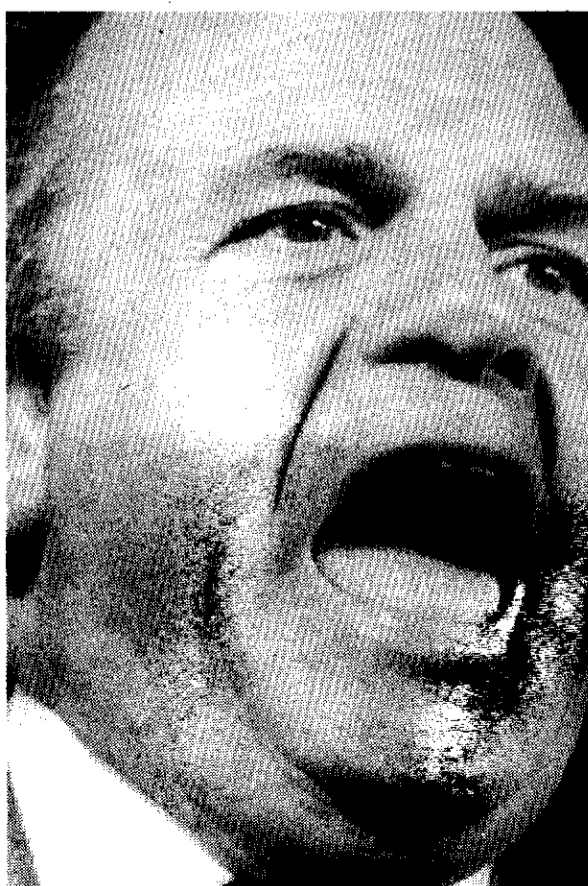
African National Congress towards combination of the armed struggle with mass mobilisations of black workers through strikes, indicate the direction the campaign should now take.

There can be no question that from the beginning the arrest of Andries Raditsela was a put up job. The original charge was so obviously a spurious one and he was kept in custody only long enough to be beaten up.

When Neil Aggett died in detention on February 5 1982 workers all over South Africa came out on strike for 24 hours. Andries Raditsela's death has similarly roused the fury of the working class.

In Britain we must mobilise the widest possible opposition to the killings and to the continued rule of the racist regime. As each day goes by, the need for international solidarity and opposition to apartheid grows. Build now for the biggest possible mobilisation on June 16 and Anti Apartheid's demonstration.

Vote Todd



WHEN TGWU members vote in the rerun ballot for general secretary, which started on Monday, they should be reminded of George Wright's words in the first election. Then Wright's election statement concluded with the words, 'While requesting your vote and support in this election, I wish to record my total support for the Union whoever is the winner'.

That address has been reissued for this election. But Wright's actions since

By Pat Hickey

Ron Todd's victory last year have in practice allied him with some of the most rabid anti-union sections of the media such as the Daily Mail. He has also opened the door to the new court case facing the union on the releases of branch voting figures.

Declan Hughes who is pursuing this case refuses to release the source of finance for the action. There is little doubt that as the campaign against the union continues there will be more such cases — and growing involvement of bodies such as the National Freedom Association.

The fight now is to win a decisive victory for

Todd. This will be the best answer to the attack on the union, and will undermine the campaign against it. The defeat of this campaign is the decisive question at this stage.

It is necessary also for Todd to present a positive way forward for the union. The membership must be prepared for the attacks which lie ahead. As Todd put it in a speech to TGWU shop stewards in the North-West, 'It is great armies not gifted individuals that win battles'.

Such armies however need clear leadership. Simply endorsing Neil Kinnock as leader of the Labour Party will not be sufficient for that.

But the decisive question now is defeating the anti-union activities of the right. The left must put its entire weight into winning the vote for Todd.

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