

# **Socialist** **ACTION**

**BUILDING AN ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALISM**

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# **1986: THE YEAR OF SOUTH AFRICA**

# Socialist ACTION

## More repression in Ireland

ANY IDEA that the Anglo-Irish Accord was either about steps to a united Ireland, or even 'democratisation' of the six county statelet, should have been firmly crushed by the events since the Accords signing on 15 November.

First came the Tom King, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, notorious statement that: 'in Northern Ireland now we have signed an agreement in which the prime minister of Ireland has in fact accepted that, for all practical purposes and into perpetuity, there will never be a united Ireland.'

Then there was the sending of 550 extra British troops to the North at the end of the year. Accompanying this was the outcome of the Harry Kirkpatrick supergrass trial — which involved frame-ups so blatant that even the SDLP's John Hume and Southern Irish Foreign Secretary Peter Barry were led to protest. Those trials led to new hunger strikes in Long Kesh prison by those framed-up by Kirkpatrick.

The events of 1985 were then ended on 28 December by a wave of arrests of Sinn Fein election workers and councillors — this being an obvious attempt to disrupt Sinn Fein's campaign for the forthcoming by-elections.

These arrests led to further frame-ups — the most blatant being that against Owen Carron, former MP and Sinn Fein candidate in Fermanagh and South Tyrone.

The charge against Carron is possessing a rifle and ammunition. Given his prominence, and the police harassment against him, even a little thought shows that Carron would have to be a lunatic to be in possession of a rifle. The charge is a blatant frame-up.

Martin McGuinness, Sinn Fein's direction of elections, who was also arrested during the police raids, was quite right when he said in Belfast on 7 January that the police harassment was simply designed to prevent Sinn Fein campaigning for the elections — and therefore to attempt to prevent it showing what support it had among the nationalist population in the North.

Twenty-six County prime minister Garret FitzGerald admitted that 'the (Anglo-Irish) agreement's purpose is to withdraw from them (Sinn Fein) in Northern Ireland whatever vestige of support there may be for them amongst the minority community.'

As the Accord does not even give any meaningful limited concessions to the nationalist population the sole means of 'isolation' which is available for attempting to separate Sinn Fein from their supporters is increased repression.

The details of that repression show just what the Accords are going to mean in practice.

- In Strabane, mother of three Margaret Boyle, a Sinn Fein activists, was taken from her house leaving her young children crying and alone there.

- Dungannon Sinn Fein councillor Seamus Cassidy was charged with possession of an 'explosive substance'. This was a harmless UDR flare which Cassidy had acquired as a souvenir several years previously!

- Hugh Brady, another Sinn Fein councillor, was arrested and ordered to account for his movements during a two day period in November. Brady was detained for two days for questioning before he was speedily released when it was discovered that he had been held in detention during the period in question!

The reality of the Anglo-Irish Accord is clear. It is a charter for increased repression in the North and for cementing British rule in the six counties.

The 13 members of the Campaign group of Labour MPs who voted against the Accord when it was discussed in parliament did exactly the right thing. The rest of the labour movement should follow their example.

# Heseltine plays the European card



THE PUBLIC row between Defence Secretary Michael Heseltine and Leon Brittan, Secretary for Trade and Industry, is one of the most spectacular inner-cabinet battles of postwar years. ALAN FREEMAN asks what lies behind it.

On 14 January Westland Helicopter's shareholders will decide whether to sell out to American or European capitalists. The fury of the dispute, and the social forces lined up around it, clearly show that it involves some of the most decisive issues confronting British capital.

Heseltine has launched total war. The entire staff of his department, together with their vassals in the Foreign Office, are lined up for all the world like a mediaeval baron's retinue. He has mobilised some of the most senior industrial figures in Britain including the heads of British Aerospace and GEC.

His European consortium is only half the story. Most significant are the threats being used to try and get Westland into it. His ministry says it will take away £25 million worth of defence orders for six Sea King helicopters unless Westland accepts the European solution. Westland has been told it will be frozen out of European markets and denied all forms of technological cooperation in European projects. The French company Aerospatiale, which is part of the European bid, has even threatened to withdraw work already contracted to Westland.

## Row

What lies behind the row? The affair is the product of a great sea-change in world politics — the re-emergence of open inter-imperialist competition. It highlights the choice confronting British capital which underlies the 'realignment' now going on in British politics: the

choice between European and US imperialism.

Heseltine has grasped three things. First, the alliance with the USA which has kept Britain in its place as a world power is increasingly in adequate by itself for British capital.

Second, there is now a real price to be paid by British capital for staying outside the process of unification of European capitalist trusts — whose lynchpin is the EEC.

## USA

Third, in certain fields this process of unification now has sufficient political weight, and sufficient objective basis behind it, to offer a genuine alternative for British capital.

Of all these factors, what weighs most are the diminishing returns from across the Atlantic. Margaret Thatcher was already served notice of the increasing price the United States is demanding from its imperialist allies in mid-1985 in the most humiliating way. Having headed the gadarene rush to sign up for Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) — otherwise known as Star Wars — she made a public appeal to Reagan to place £3 billion worth of defence orders with Britain, only to lose the contract.

Reagan's presidency openly ushered in a 'put America first' policy. The US can no longer, as it did after the war, promote the growth of the rest of the capitalist world by flooding it with capital. On the contrary. Reagan took the US economy off the floor after the 1981 slump at the expense of his partners. The erstwhile arch-priest of monetarism

(now officially a dead religion) ran up a government deficit of around \$150 billion — bigger than Spain's annual product — and financed it by borrowing from the rest of the world.

This policy was not a foible of Reagan's. Slowly but inexorably, the US has lost weight within the world imperialist system.

The US began the fifties with a huge technological lead. It could produce everything from corn to cars cheaper than anyone else in the world. This is no longer true. In consequence, the US is being flooded with imports — which it pays for by borrowing. Last year the US imported nearly \$180 billion more than it exported. Even its agricultural surplus fell from \$1.6 billion to \$369 million, while Europe's share of world food markets doubled.

Last year, for the first time since 1914, the USA became a net debtor nation.

## Decline

However the USA is not just going to step aside and let someone else take over. Moreover it begins with a huge advantage: it is the biggest capitalist state in the world.

The US is now resorting to exactly the same tactics that Britain launched into last century when its own decline began, and has used ever since to great effect. It is using its state, its financial weight, and its military supremacy to reconquer what it is losing economically.

The US is increasingly abandoning free trade. Its policy aim is to secure the best trading deal it can for itself by direct, bilateral negotiations with partners. As the departing European Commissioner for Agriculture remarked last October: 'GATT (the world trade body) is

already dead and bilateralism is king. The Americans show about as much concern about GATT as about their first blue jeans.'

To secure such bilateral deals, and to ensure its trading partners cannot secure a competitive advantage, it throws in every single bit of muscle it can muster.

In June last year Reagan designated \$2 billion dollars to subsidise US grain exports alone, which the *Herald Tribune* described as a 'new weapon against European exporters, rather than a means of ameliorating the rural economy in the USA.' No less than 300 protectionist bills have now been introduced into the Congress, and a phenomenal anti-Japanese campaign is under way to force voluntary restraint on Japanese capital.

## Military

US policy came to a head with Star Wars. Star Wars is not simply a military project but an economic offensive. It is designed to confront European capitalists with an offer they cannot refuse. Enter contracts with US capital on US terms, or get frozen out of access to US high technology.

The 10 April issue of the West German *Stuttgarter Nachrichten* explained that 'The Pentagon is trying to deprive Western Europe of the high technology and know-how they need ... German enterprises are more and more often excluded from American basic research projects.' SDI was designed, it said, to 're-establish the supremacy of American technology in the world.'

This is the background to the European response. At the June summit of the EEC heads of state held in Milan a series of counter-initiatives were launched. A project for internal reform aimed at 'political unity' was launched, including the possible removal of single-nation vetoes. Customs barriers were to be scrapped by 1992 to create a more unified internal market. Monetary and banking unification were to be speeded up. The French and German governments launched, and won support, for 'Eureka', the 'European answer to SDI'.

The stakes for European capital were clearly spelled out by Germany's foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher when he explained that 'the need for tight, energetic and decisive European co-operation has never been more urgent ... Our intention, with France, is to seize this great opportunity for Europe.'

The European states are not strong enough to break from the USA. The West German *Handelsblatt* explained West German goals at this stage as 'dealing with the Americans with a single voice'. In contrast US General Abrahamson,

selling Star Wars, specified it should mean 'a great number of very small and very specific contracts': that is, the USA wants to deal with European capitalists one by one, not all at once. The European states want to form a unified, protectionist bloc to prevent their US 'allies' trampling on them by such divide and rule tactics.

Equally, they want to begin building up the military clout which will allow them to challenge the USA seriously for the allegiance of third-world neo-colonial regimes.

This is why the most central projects for European unification are military. The EEC member states have revived a moribund body called the 'Western European Union' which exists to coordinate their military efforts. Joint projects like the Tornado European fighter were stepped up. France, whose nuclear capacity now outstrips Britain's, took the lead.

The difficulty confronting British capital in this increasing US versus EEC competition is the result of its historical position in the world. Britain is, and remains, a classical military, financial and imperialist power. Its ruling classes secure their profits because British military and political clout gives them privileged access to investment and markets in South Africa, the Middle East, and so on. However, the price it has paid for this status is a steadily declining domestic industrial base.

## Junior

From 1945 onwards this situation has meant Britain could only stay a world power as a junior partner of the US. Now, however, the USA increasingly uses this alliance to extract benefits from British capital without giving anything in return. An alliance with the increasing military cooperation of Western Europe is more and more attractive to sections of British capital, particularly its industrialists who are not so worried as the bankers about Europe's still limited military capacity.

Just as significant, the risks attendant on being frozen out of Europe are increasing — for the simple reason that European capital is having to defend itself more brutally against more and more brutal US dictats. The French aerospace firm Aerospatiale is not blackmailing Westland, for example, because Heseltine asked it, but because its own survival is at stake.

But if British capital commits itself to Europe the price demanded by its European partners will be access to privileged British markets — in full proportion to the economic weight of European capital in the partnership. It also means increasing strain between British capital and the United States. This latter price other sections of British capital do not want to pay.

I AM very pleased to have been selected as Labour's prospective parliamentary candidate for Hackney North. It is one of the safest seats in the country, so I imagine I will become the first black woman MP. But I was taken aback by the volume of press coverage this has generated. There wasn't such coverage when the other black candidates were selected.

By treating me as some sort of amazing phenomenon, the press is in fact revealing society's very low expectations of black people in general and black women in particular. It is important to point out that there are lots of terribly talented black women around — it is just that society is so structured that they are not noticed.

At the last general election, Hackney North had quite a low turnout, only 52 per cent. So I hope that one of the effects of my candidacy will be to generate a little more excitement and hence a bigger turnout.

I will be moving to Hackney because I want to get involved on a day-to-day basis with the party. It used to be the case that most innercity MPs didn't actually live in their constituency. They lived in the suburbs and only came in to their constituency from time to time. But people like Jeremy Corbyn have changed that. He lives in Islington, and is much more based there than he is in the House of Commons.

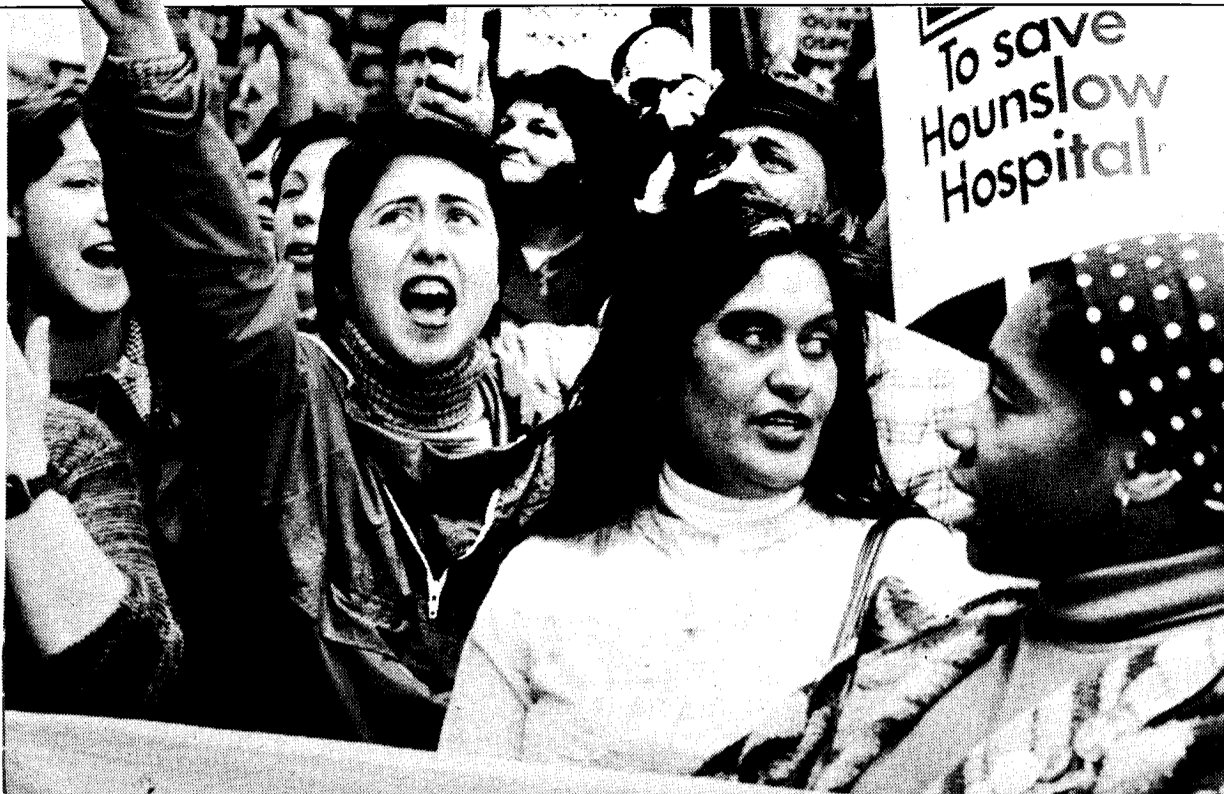
It will be important to make a lot of personal contact with people in Hackney. I remember Tony Benn's by-election in Chesterfield: he got an horrendous press but one of the reasons he had such a successful campaign was that he was able to get around and meet people. He worked meticulously on the doorstep.

And I am particularly concerned to work with local groups, particularly ethnic groups. To a certain extent until recently the ethnic groups have existed in a kind of client relationship to the party. I want to try and break that down by getting more black people, especially young black people, into the party. And it works the other way: to get the party more involved in issues of concern to black people.

For example, I remember overhearing a conversation during the selection process. Somebody said: 'Of course she's right wing'. Someone else asked: 'How do you know?' The reply was: 'You can tell by the issues she talks about. She talks about education.'

Because it is not a particular preoccupation of the white left at this time, education gets discounted. But it is a terribly big issue among black people. Black people in Hackney tell me that if there is one thing that can get black people out to a meeting it's education.

The point is to get the party to take the issues that concern black people much more seriously. Obviously I would like to see a black section in Hackney. The party has already taken a decision in principle to set one up. But that is a question of working with black people and not of making pronouncements about what should happen and what should not happen.



THE FUSS by the press at the selection of Labour's first black woman candidate reveals the low expectations that society has about women and black people says DIANE ABBOTT, Hackney's new prospective parliamentary candidate. But such prejudices aren't confined to the bourgeois press, she told CAROL TURNER. The white male left is just as reluctant to accept that women and black people are every bit as socialist as men.

## Black people, women and the left

It is very important to say that without the black section campaign probably none of us black candidates would have been selected. It was the black section's campaign that raised the issue of black representation. It's also the case for me that, without the support of the black section and especially black women like Sharon Atkins, I would have never survived the selection process. It was a very gruelling process because I came under tremendous personal attack.

I would like to see women's issues taken as a more serious priority for the Hackney North party as well. And I know that there is enthusiasm in the party to work around these.

A lot of party members were loyal to Ernie Roberts — and quite correctly, because he is an excellent MP. Hackney could have gone for a shortlist of one. But they didn't, they choose reselection and now the party is uniting around that selection.

After the selection conference many people said how pleased they were that a woman had been selected as the candidate. There was a real feeling that they wanted to see women's issues raised.

### Careerism

Having said that, obviously you will find careerism among black people as well as white. But the answer, the check on black-careerism, is the mass involvement of black people in the labour movement. And that's why I

support black sections.

Of course society will concede some token black MPs. Black representation on its own doesn't necessarily change anything. There have been black congressmen in the United States since the '30s. Has that made a difference? No.

Black sections are about black people organising autonomously, and that involves black representation at all levels: constituency GCs, school governors, councillors, MPs. The crucial thing is black people getting involved in the Labour Party. If that involvement exists, then we don't need white people to tell us we shouldn't become MPs because there is a danger of careerism: black people can deal with our careerists.

That is what black sections are about: the full, mass involvement of black people.

I have never said that black people becoming councillors or MPs, or even black people having full involvement in the Labour Party is the end-all and be-all. It isn't.

I believe that black people must have a two-pronged strategy. One part of that is about black involvement in mainstream politics — the other is about building strong, independent black organisations outside mainstream politics.

White people often say that black people aren't interested in politics. But there is a lot of organisation within the black community — it's just that it isn't within the parameters of white politics. Black people organise within churches and community groups, they organise around issues of policing,

for example the Groce Campaign and the Jarrett Campaign.

Independent black cultural and political organisations outside mainstream politics and a strong black presence inside mainstream politics are both necessary. What is more, the one depends on the other. There will not be a strong black presence in mainstream politics without strong, independent organisations outside. And there won't be strong cultural and political organisations outside without a strong presence in mainstream politics.

### Community

Being an active constituency-based MP, linking up with community groups in the area, and taking up black people's and women's issues in a big way are all an important part for me of being a Labour candidate and a Labour MP. I am keen to discuss all this with my constituency so that we can get our campaign underway from now on.

The thing about being an MP is that you've got a platform, people listen to you. Some of the Campaign group MPs, for example, have been able to use the fact that they are MPs to promote campaigns in a way that is just not open to labour movement activists or even to Labour councillors.

Using the access to the media that you have as an MP to promote campaigns and trying to act as a kind of a catalyst is a benefit. But I'm a sort of an adherent to the slogan that if voting would, change things it would be banned!



Diane Abbott

I do think you can go overboard on the notion of what an MP can do. Let me make myself clear.

### Power

One of the things that was brought home to me very early on was the fact that power in this country doesn't entirely lie in parliament. The first job I had when I left university was working for the Home Office as a graduate trainee. That taught me that power in this society lies in the institutions of the state: the police, the immigration service, and so on. And power also lies in the City, in the financial institutions.

It is wrong to imagine that just by taking office the Labour Party, let alone an individual MP, will necessarily bring about far-reaching changes. Far-reaching change in this society is a much more complex process.

So I don't see being an MP as the apex of the political process, only as a part of that process: with opportunities, access, and platforms that others don't have. The job of an MP is working with the rest of the movement around campaigns, rather than seeing themselves as the pinnacle of the process.

That is the first thing to be said about being an MP, and it applies to all candidates. But the issue of black parliamentary candidates has raised other questions. It has created a debate on the left about careerism — and this has brought some sharp contradictions for the white left. There has been a similar debate about selecting women candidates.

I take exception to the assumption that you are black because you are black you're less likely to be politically correct, less likely to be a good left-winger. I've heard that argument for a long time.

For example, I remember Ken Livingstone making such a speech at a Labour Party conference Briefing fringe meeting. He talked about how very dangerous it was to choose candidates on the colour of their skin or their sex, rather than on whether they supported socialist policies. And look what happened to Ken Livingstone!

The people who get upset about black careerists don't seem to think that the same problem applies to white men. The fact is that at the moment there are no black MPs. I wouldn't have thought that the most imminent threat to the party was from black careerism.

People don't give the same amount of worry, concern, and anguish to the notion of white men being careerists as they do to women or black people. What underlies that is a resistance and a hostility to the idea of black people being selected full stop. It is not fashionable or politically correct to say that you object to black people being selected, so

to be elected it an argument about careerism. The white left who are the main members of the Labour Party are black people and black people's relationship to the left. Basically they see black people as clients of the left, and they take serious exception to black people getting involved in politics at the same level as themselves. The underlying adherence to 'clientism' is the problem of the white left — not the problem of black careerism.

### Prejudice

That is my answer to all of the 'discussion' within the party about black careerism.

The national black section movement has met with excessive hostility from sections of the white left. The white left have dressed this up as a concern with ideological purity. Really, it reflects all sorts of subconscious prejudice about black people: almost as if we can't be ideologically pure because our brains are too small to take in the theory. But, at the end of the day, people will be judged by their actions and by what they do.

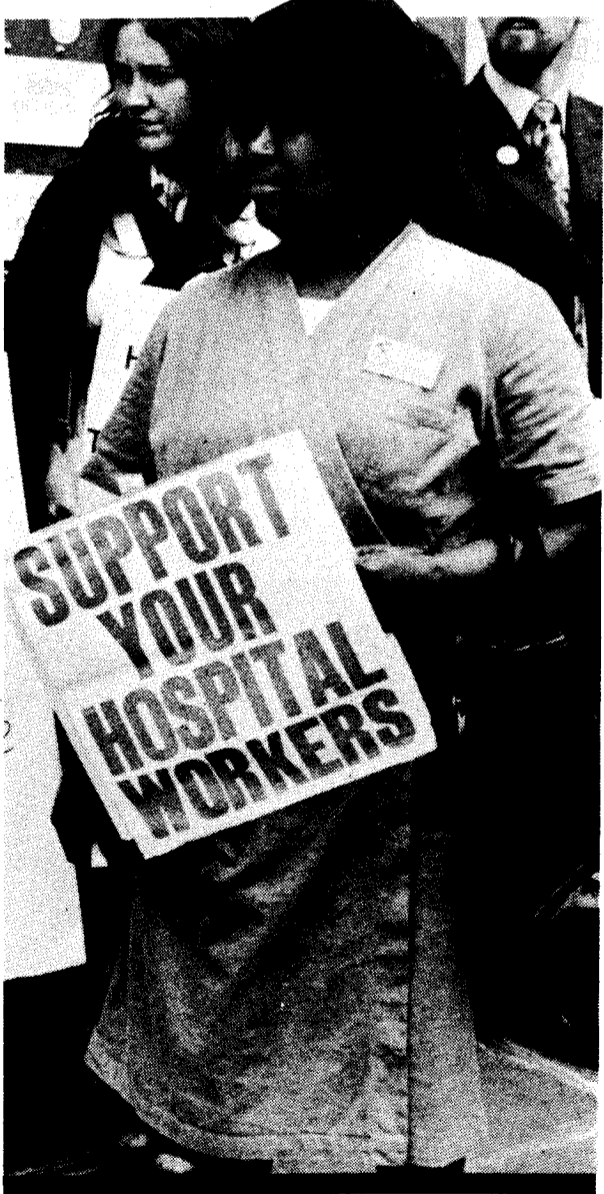


Photo: CHRIS DAVIES

## Labour Women's Action Committee Annual General Meeting

11 January, 10am till 6pm  
Manchester Town Hall, Albert Square

Accommodation:  
WAC supporters arriving on Friday night should meet at the Kensington pub, upstairs room, Newton Street (near Piccadilly)

Registration in advance:  
write to Judy Sadler, 56 Milton Road, London SE24 0NP

# Justice for miners

**THE CAMPAIGN** group of MPs, together with the NUM, Women Against Pit Closures and support groups up and down the country, launched the Justice for Miners Campaign at the end of last year. It will fight for the policy of composite resolution 69, passed overwhelmingly at Labour Party conference last year.

The Campaign group will be introducing a Bill, the Justice for the Mineworkers Bill, into parliament on 26 February to coincide with a mass lobby of parliament which the campaign is calling. This

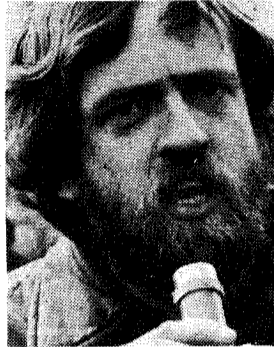


Photo: GM COOKSON

By Jeremy Corbyn, MP

will be followed by a weekend of activities culminating in a mass rally and a concert in the Albert Hall, on Saturday 2 March.

This campaign is vital. If we can't stand by the miners, who can we support?

Eighteen months ago, when the miners were in the front line, everyone was falling over themselves with declarations of support. Now it seems as though a lot of people are rushing to distance themselves from the miners.

But it is the same battle as 18 months ago — nothing has changed. Kinnock's speech, in which he said that a future Labour government would not reimburse the miners, is partially to blame for that lack of support.

But the Campaign group of MPs is unani-

mous in supporting the Justice for Miners Campaign. We are circulating all constituency parties. We are touring the country to build the campaign and speaking at meetings at all the regional party conferences.

We are also fully behind the campaign to defend Notts NUM. On behalf of the Campaign group, I took part in a recent meeting there organised by Notts Women Against Pit Closures.

The campaign against the UDM has much wider support amongst Labour MPs. But the problem is that a 'kid glove' approach has been adopted by the labour movement. So far very little has been done about the people who are



Photo: JOHN CHAPMAN

Defending the NUM and all trade union rights is every bit as relevant today as it was during the miners strike

UDM members in the Labour Party or about de-recognition of the UDM. But the Notts city parties have taken the first steps — even though Clive Jenkins' call for a 'federation of mining unions' didn't help, to say the least.

The UDM is a bosses union, used by the Coal Board to try and smash the NUM. An enormous media effort is going into trying to secure its recogni-

tion by the Labour Party. The UDM is spending vast amounts of money, with Coal Board support. It sends letters all over the place and all MPs get its newspaper free. The aim is to isolate the NUM.

Notts NUM loyalists urgently need support and wider recognition from the labour movement. The Campaign group of MPs wants to campaign for non-recognition, speaking at lodge meetings in Notts area and in support meetings.

**THERE** are seven weeks to go until the Justice for Mineworkers concert and rally in the Albert Hall on Saturday 2 March.

Sixteen bands are already booked including Style Council, Elvis Costello, the Annie Baldwin band and the Flying Pickets. And Scargill, Benn and Heathfield, among others, will address the rally.

The rally comes at the end of a week of activities

for sacked and jailed miners and will follow a march from the Jubilee Gardens, County Hall, via the Coal Board headquarters in Victoria.

On the previous Wednesday sacked miners will lobby parliament when it is presented with the Campaign group's Bill.

The build-up for the week's events starts now. In mid-January sacked miners from all over the country will arrive in London to start organising it. They will be based in Greenwich and working from the Labour Party rooms there, using it as an organising centre.

In every area of the country Labour Parties, trade unions and support groups should be arranging broad-based meetings in support of the Bill, for the release of jailed miners and for the reinstatement

of sacked miners. You can help by:

★ Get your Labour Party to organise meetings in support of the campaign.

★ organising to sell tickets for the rally-concert and get people to the march

★ organising meetings to build for the event

★ contacting the Central Miners Support Group in Greenwich for speakers and further information

★ helping sell the campaign's pamphlet, which will be launched at the same time as the Bill.

● The Central Miners Support Group can be contacted c/o Greenwich Labour Party, 32 Woolwich Road, London SE3 (phone: 01-858 1013).

## Justice for Mineworkers Campaign

The campaign can be contacted via the London office (details on elsewhere or this page) or by contacting: Durham Mechanics Office, Group No 1 Area, 26 The Avenue, Durham DH1 4ED. Cheques for the campaign should be made payable to the 'Justice for Mineworkers Campaign' and sent to the Durham address.

Labour movement organisations can affiliate to the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign at the following rates: national organisations — £50; districts — £25; local bodies — £5.

# Pit women plan conference

**WOMEN FROM** the mining communities are gearing up for the second national conference of Women Against Pit Closures, likely to be early in the spring. And this time it's definitely a voting affair.

There was strong concern expressed at the first conference last September that the structure and

By Carol Turner

direction of the national movement must be decided with the maximum involvement of the women from the local groups. This time round the WAPC national committee is recommending that conference consists of coalfield area delegations, on the basis of one delegate per pit still in existence.

'That doesn't mean that each delegate has to come from that pit,' explained Kim Young, WAPC's national coordinator. 'It's up to the area to decide whether their delegates are close relatives of miners or not.'

But it does seem likely that the conference will be a closed one. 'It's not that we don't want women from outside the mining communities involved in our movement,' said Kim. 'We don't want to give that impression — women who aren't miners relatives are involved in WAPC groups. The 75-25 per cent formula is working well in the areas.'

But having said that, we also don't want people from outside organisations disrupting our conference, which is what

happened last time. It is important that the feelings of the areas about the direction of our movement, its structures and campaigns, are looked at thoroughly at this conference.

Resolutions have already been submitted and circulated to all groups. The closing date for amendments is 20 January, to allow them to go to the national committee meeting of 25 January and on to the standing orders committee which will arrange the agenda and other conference details.

The weekend of 5-6 April is under discussion, but the final date for the weekend may be later. But, whatever its date, conference will be held again in Sheffield.

## Unity

Judging from resolutions, this second conference will witness a mood of unity and determination to continue fighting on the issues facing the mining communities. The April conference, too, will take some clear decisions on organisation, such as what membership and affiliation structure for WAPC and how to widen representation on the national committee.

The thorny question last September, about the



Women Against Pit Closures in conference last September

role of ex-officio members of the national committee has occasioned a flood of resolutions in support of the work done by people like Ann Scargill and Betty Heathfield. One from North Yorkshire is typical. 'Recognising the loyalty of ex-officio members', it calls on conference to place a vote of confidence in them and their work.

Many of the resolutions, in fact, concern themselves with structure and functioning of the WAPC movement. But policy isn't absent. Neither is the determination to continue fighting for affiliate status of the NUM.

Not surprisingly, Notts WAPC lead the way on the fight in defence of the national union. One Notts resolution demands the Labour Party leadership

implement the party conference policy of reinstatement for dismissed miners and the return of NUM money. A second urges WAPC to campaign to ensure that the non-recognition of the UDM is fully upheld by the Labour Party.

A third resolution from Notts calls on all WAPC groups to support Notts women in their campaign to stop the spread of the breakaway. While a fourth calls on conference to remember the international solidarity shown during the strike and to affiliate to the Anti Apartheid Movement.

## Way forward

'Notts women have put forward resolutions on the way forward for WAPC,'

said Pam Oldfield, Notts delegate to the national committee. 'We want to campaign around amnesty for the sacked miners and to make sure the union's funds are reimbursed. And we must continue our overall campaign, at all levels, against the closure of pits.'

'Important too is the fight against the breakaway. This is a top priority in Notts. It must be in other areas too.'

'Many areas don't realise just how dangerous the breakaway is. It's not just a matter of stopping any more miners from joining the UDM. Even if not another single one joined, the management still have that organisation as a stranglehold over the national union.'

'Sadly, the Labour

Party — and the TUC for that matter — have done little to help the NUM since the end of the strike. The electricians and the engineers are openly supporting Roy Lynk. We need more publicity and a massive campaign in the labour movement against the breakaway.'

## International

'International solidarity played a terrific role in the miners strike. Affiliating WAPC to the Anti Apartheid Movement is just one way of showing how valuable those sort of links are to us.'

Women Against Pit Closures, however, aren't waiting till conference to take action. Nationally two campaigns are already underway: in support of

sacked miners and against the breakaway. Two leaflets have been produced for use in the areas.

North Derbyshire Women's Action Group for one has already set to work distributing them. They handed leaflets out at an Xmas vigil in support of sacked miners in Chesterfield's market square.

'The original idea for a vigil came from the Barnsley group,' Betty Heathfield told us. 'We want to encourage all the areas to do as much as they can.'

'And we have to get the money in, not just for the women's groups but also for miners families. It is more difficult to come by now than it was during the strike. We know that other areas are working just as hard on this too. For many families, it will take the next three or four years to get out of the debt that the strike created.'

● Information on Women Against Pit Closures conference and donations to WAPC, contact: Kim Young, Women's Office, National Union of Mineworkers, St James House, Vicar Lane, Sheffield (phone: 0742 700388).

● All money collected for the NUM should be made payable to the 'Miners' Solidarity Fund', and sent to the NUM, at the above address. Details for standing orders: Sheffield Coop Bank, Account No 30000009, Bank Sorting Code 08-90-75.

# The hidden witch-hunt



Kinnock and Hattersley: the ones who are really bringing the party into disrepute

## Liverpool

### "Rally to their defence"

**FORTY-EIGHT** Liverpool City councillors will shortly be appealing against surcharge and disqualification from office in the High Court. The proceedings are due to start on the 13 January. Contrary to previous assurances, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA) has shown distinct reluctance to help with raising funds from other local authorities to pay for their defence. Unless funds are raised from other sources the councillors face surcharge, disqualification and possible imprisonment.

The Liverpool District Labour Party is unable to organise an appeal for funds because the party's national leadership has seen fit to suspend it just at the time this initiative is

By Vladimir Derer  
(personal capacity)

urgently needed. Unless £100,000 is raised or guaranteed by 12 January the case of the Liverpool councillors, which is a good one, will be lost by default.

Fund-raising on their behalf by other bodies has not been made any easier by the Labour establishment's denunciations of the council. This they did even before the allegations of irregularities, into which the NEC is now enquiring, have been found to have any substance.

Only recently the movement has responded magnificently to appeals from the miners in their fight against pit closures and the Thatcher government. It did so despite the dragging of feet by the Labour and trade union leadership. Labour's rank and file must show the same solidarity with the fighting Liverpool councillors.

The issue of support for the Liverpool councillors should not be identified with support for the *Militant* tendency. It is important to make this point as both the bourgeois media and Labour's leading parliamentarians have done their best to confuse the issue.

Supporters of *Militant* may be influential in Liverpool, but are not the majority on either the

council or the District Labour Party executive.

The council and the Liverpool party have done no more than follow the decision of the 1984 Labour Party conference. A resolution carried at that conference states: 'Conference believes that the duty of Labour councils, and the centre of their fightback, should be defence of jobs and services and of local democracy. Conference salutes the stand taken by Liverpool city council and calls on other councils, as well as the national leadership, to take an equally unequivocal stand in defence of the working class. Conference supports any councils which are forced to break the law as a result of the Tory government's policies.' (1984 Conference Report p 298-299)

## Bad laws

Whatever reservations we may have about the tactics adopted by the Labour majority on the Liverpool council, the stand adopted by them in refusing to 'balance the books' is entirely consistent with the Labour Party conference decision.

In any case, the question of whether socialists are prepared to 'break the law' is not one of principle — bad laws can be rendered ineffective provided sufficient numbers of people decide to ignore them. The question is therefore one of tactics, that is whether a successful defiance of the law is feasible in a given situation.

In our judgement, even if the present situation did



Vladimir Derer

not lend itself to successful defiance of law, it would be most difficult for the Liverpool council to accept cuts in welfare services and reductions in the workforce. The consequences of the almost complete collapse of the main source of Liverpool's income — the port economy — makes Liverpool a special case even amongst deprived inner cities. Unemployment increasing at a rate three times the national average, years of neglect of the housing problem by a Liberal administration, and the city's declining revenue have made the council's task of maintaining services almost insurmountable.

The council's decision therefore to defend the people of Liverpool by not cutting expenditure should surprise no one in the labour movement. It would have been almost impossible to go back on the councillors' election pledges without at the same time discrediting Labour for many years to come.

The Thatcher government and the whole of the victorious ruling class is out to punish them for their stand. The rank and file should not allow the party to abandon them. They must rally to their defence.

● Please send donations immediately to: Cllr Tony Hood, Room 42, Municipal Buildings, Dale Street, Liverpool L69 2DH. Cheques and POs to be made payable to: 'Liverpool Fighting Fund'.

**A WITCH-HUNT IS developing in the Labour Party. Organisationally it is directed first and foremost against the supporters of the newspaper *Militant*. Politically it is being orchestrated by Fleet Street, the Tory government and the right wing of the labour movement against those leaders and organisations who have stood and fought the Tory government: Arthur Scargill and the NUM, the Liverpool city council, black leaders like Bernie Grant, Sinn Fein, and the Campaign group of Labour MPs.**

This much has been clear to the readership of this and other socialist newspapers for some months. What is not clearly understood — because it has been concealed — is the extent of the organisational attacks on activists within the party, expulsions, suspensions and other disciplinary actions.

Alongside this, fostered by Kinnock's threats of expulsions in Liverpool, a series of other expulsions and disciplinary actions are being carried out. In many cases moribund, local right wing cliques are taking advantage of the atmosphere whipped up by Kinnock to settle old scores and dispose of left wing opponents.

## Pandora box

Those, like the Labour Coordinating Committee and the *Tribune* newspaper, who welcomed Kinnock's suspension of Liverpool District Labour Party are finding that they have opened a Pandora's box to the advantage of some of the most corrupt forces in the labour movement.

The Labour Left Coordination and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, in cooperation with the Campaign group of MPs, have found no less than 28 cases of witch-hunts and expulsions over the last 18 months. No doubt there are more.

What is most disturbing is that many of these have been concealed from the party membership thus making them more difficult to fight.

The Labour Party constitution obliges the NEC to report to national conference disciplinary actions which it has sanctioned. This is being ignored. For example the NEC report to 1985 conference omitted nine appeals against expulsion heard and rejected by the NEC.

## Threat

As a result opponents of the witch-hunt were unable to challenge the expulsions by challenging the relevant parts of the NEC report. Most delegates were oblivious of the extent of disciplinary action.

The charges on which people are being expelled are also a threat to every activist in the party. In the Isle of Wight, Stevenage, Cardiff South and Penarth, Rhondda, Newcastle-under-Lyme, and Wrexham a main charge appears to have been selling the *Militant* newspaper in public. In all cases the local party voted to expel those charged.

In a series of cases, activists have been expelled on the basis of the vague

charge of 'bringing the party into disrepute'. Nothing better reveals the double standards of the right wing.

By Redmond O'Neill

Neil Kinnock was able to go to the press and denounce the Liverpool party at the height of their fight with the Tory government. He was able to unleash a Fleet Street witch-hunt by threatening expulsions and describing Labour Party members as 'maggots'.

Robert Kilroy-Silk MP was able to use the gutter press to whip up lurid tales of gangster methods in Liverpool without a shred of proof.

Neither of these have been charged with 'bringing the party into disrepute'. Yet, when two long-standing members of Hattersley's Sparkbrook constituency give specific evidence of improper recruitment, they are expelled for exactly that.

In Liverpool one of the charges against the District Party is rigged delegations. But when charges of failure to carry out Labour Party rules are made by individuals on the left — for example in Central Fife CLP — they are expelled for 'bringing the party into disrepute'.

## Abuse

In addition to expulsions, the right wing are also abusing the procedures for transfers between Labour Parties and for recruitment to exclude political opponents. In March 1985 the NEC upheld the decision of Birmingham-Yardley to reject three transfers and refuse two more membership applications on the grounds that the five supported *Socialist Action* newspaper.

This device has the advantage of circumventing the party's disciplinary procedures. It harks back to the days when applicants for Labour Party membership were told they couldn't join because the party was 'full up'. The Yardley case was not reported to conference.

In some cases the rules have been flouted so openly by the right wing that even the present NEC majority have had to call a halt. In Sheffield-Attercliffe five activists were suspended for a year, from July 1985, without even having been properly charged. After national officials had advised that Attercliffe's action was unconstitutional, the next GC meeting expelled three party members for, amongst other things, organising a campaign against their previous unconstitutional expulsion

from the Labour Party!

An element of the witch hunt now taking place which recalls the 1950s is the suspension of entire parties. Following Liverpool, three more Merseyside parties were suspended by the December 1985 NEC: St Helen's North CLP, St Helen's South CLP and St Helen's District Labour Party.

Both CLPs face parliamentary reselections which will be disallowed if they are not started by June this year. In Knowlesley North and Stoke on Trent North the selections have also been frozen by the NEC.

These facts demonstrate the serious escalation of administrative and disciplinary action to suppress left wing views and maintain right wing control in local parties. Kinnock's attacks on *Militant* will further fuel this development.

These facts also show the need for the membership of the Labour Party

to be informed of what is taking place. To facilitate this the Labour Left Coordination and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, in cooperation with the Campaign group of MPs, have established a sub-group of the LLC to gather information on the various witch hunts, to make this available to the membership of the party and to help defend individuals facing unjustified attacks.

## Information

A newsletter will be published monthly as a service to Labour Party members. To make this service effective it is most important that all possible information about witch-hunts be sent to the sub-group and that individuals and organisations order copies of the newsletter to circulate within the Labour Party.

● Send information on witch-hunts to: Kevin O'Reilly, c/o CLPD, 10 Park Drive, London Nw11 7SH.

## An open letter on the Birmingham witch-hunt

56 Phipson Road,  
Sparkhill,  
Birmingham B11 4JH.

4 January 1986

Dear comrades,

I wish to appeal through the pages of your paper for the support of every Labour Party member in ending the divisive witch-hunt taking place in the Birmingham-Sparkbrook constituency, and for the reinstatement of Councillor Amir Khan and Kevin Scally, a long-standing Labour Party activist, who have been expelled. As membership secretary of the constituency's Sparkhill branch and the wife of Amir Khan I have first-hand experience of the events of the last few months. What has happened has come close to destroying my faith in Labour Party democracy and, in my opinion, should concern every member of the Labour Party.

Amir Khan and Kevin Scally have been expelled for trying to challenge a long-established system of patronage and corruption within the constituency of which Asian members have been the victims. Despite serious allegations of bogus recruitment etc it has proved impossible to secure any real investigation within the party. Consequently the facts were made public in a Channel 4 TV programme and Asian members, no longer prepared to tolerate these abuses, sought to establish a black section to discuss these matters and air their grievances.

The response of the established powers within the constituency was to expel the individuals involved. Other members of the constituency who have protested at these acts have been threatened with similar action.

In Sparkbrook thousands of Asian voters are watching these events with alarm. Where is the democracy in democratic socialism when hard-working and loyal members of the Labour Party are thrown out for challenging such practices?

I appeal to comrades in the Labour Party to raise this matter in their wards and CLPs and to send resolutions or messages of support to the NEC of the Labour Party. Copies should be sent to Cllr Amir Khan at the above address. Both Amir Khan and Kevin Scally are prepared to speak about their case at any Labour Party meetings.

Yours sincerely,  
Gul Zarina Khan

THE COLOSSAL impact of the miners strike, and its outcome, has reshaped the left wing of the Labour movement almost beyond recognition. The effects of this reshaping are now beginning to work themselves through beyond the initial emergence of the 'realigned left' of Meacher, Sawyer, Hain, *Tribune* and others. The reshaping now takes in virtually the entire left wing of the labour movement.

One of the aspects of this has been discussion on the left concerning the launching of a new paper. JOHN ROSS looks at the current state of the left and the specific question of what type of paper the left needs.

THE OUTCOME of the miners strike, and its aftermath, saw the previous left wing of the labour movement divide into three different parts — or more precisely the strike and its outcome brought to breaking point the divisions which already existed. These three currents which emerged were fairly clearly defined despite the inevitable overlapping and uncertainty as regards individuals and cross-crossing on specific issues. These three currents are beginning to acquire and must be given, distinct organisational and political form.

The first current is most correctly defined as the *Kinnockite left* — although it prefers to refer to itself as the 'realigned left' or 'broad left'. Its most typical representatives are Meacher, Sawyer, Blunkett, the Labour Coordinating Committee, and *Tribune*. Ken Livingstone is part of this current — although, as we will see, there are some important individual differences on this.

At the level of tactics this current is defined by the view that Neil Kinnock can be persuaded, or won, to pursue a course which is in the interests of the working class and oppressed.

As it was put in a front page article in the new year issue of *Tribune* by Nigel Williamson. 'We need to start talking about the kind of socialism we want to create — and then to promote specific policies in the context of bringing that society about.'

'No one is better qualified than Neil Kinnock to recapture that crusading spirit.'

Williamson's eulogy to Kinnock then reached its height in the final paragraph which concluded: 'It would be a tragedy if that vision and inspiration, which was why he was elected leader by such an overwhelming majority of the party, were dropped in favour of over-cautious statesmanship.'

'As Neil Kinnock himself once wrote in this newspaper: boldness be our friend.'

Kinnock did indeed choose that week to be very bold indeed — and in fact 'caution' has not at all been a Kinnock hallmark. Kinnock announced for the new year that a chief step towards the socialism Williamson advocated would be that Labour no longer even seriously intended to renationalise the industries denationalised by Thatcher. A Labour government was going to operate in an economy whose basic structure had been decided by Thatcherism — let alone take any steps towards socialism.

## Boldness

In fact Williamson fails to do Neil Kinnock justice overall. Kinnock's leadership has been marked by extreme boldness. Even before coming to office he junked Labour's commitment to withdraw from the EEC. He condemned 'violence' by miners with great determination. He has launched a witch hunt on a scale Wilson and Callaghan never did. The commitment to full employment has been openly abandoned.

Far from Kinnock being winnable to socialism a starting point of any realistic socialist strategy today must be a firm understanding of the fact that Kinnock is a totally committed enemy

# The paper the left needs

of any socialist advance in the party. Any serious defence of the interests of the working class and oppressed must start with a clear understanding that there will probably be an anti-Labour majority in the next parliament, and there will certainly be an *anti-socialist* majority. How the working class and oppressed can advance in that situation, not entertaining illusions in Kinnock, is a central question which must be addressed.

But in reality, underneath the tactical choices, the Kinnockite left is a *reformist* left not just ideologically but in the most direct sense that it directly limits struggle of the working class and oppressed to what capital is prepared to afford now. That is, the Kinnockite left in practice accepts that the working class can only advance with the permission of, and subject to the profitability of, the bourgeoisie.

## 'Alternative'

To give him credit, Ken Livingstone understands this much more clearly than most of the Kinnockite left. The example which is always held up by the Kinnockite left as their 'alternative' to Scargill, the NUM, Liverpool, and supposedly 'fundamentalist' forces is the example of the GLC.

But, as Ken Livingstone pointed out in an interview with Bea Campbell in *Marxism Today*, the specific policies of the GLC were made possible by the huge rates base of the council. Undoubtedly Ken Livingstone to his credit made intelligent creative use of this huge financial base — unlike the preceding Labour administrations which had made bureaucratic ignorant misuse of it. But the GLC's *tactics* for creating the social alliances which supported it are simply not available to anyone who does, or did, not have the massive financial room for reforms that the GLC did.

That is why an article such as Anthony Barnett's 'Whistling in the Wind' in the latest issue of *New Socialist* is so irrelevant to the real decisions on socialist strategy today. Barnett launches a diatribe against Arthur Scargill, and holds up the model of the GLC against the NUM, on the basis that the GLC made creative use of advertising and the NUM leadership did not!

But the *real* basis of the difference between the GLC and NUM was that the government was prepared to spend £6 billion pounds savaging the NUM while the GLC was able to use its rates base to carry through reforms. The GLC experience was very important from the point of view of showing the necessity of creating social alliances — and having a conscious goal to create them as part of a socialist strategy. But the material base for the particular tactics the GLC used are only available to those who have an equivalent financial base for reforms. These, needless to say, are not available to the NUM, to a council like Liverpool, and, most important, will not be available to a future Labour government!

## Representative

The practical outcome of the policies and views of the Kinnockite left were spelt out with crystal clarity in last week's issue of the *New Statesman*. The journal's new year editorial declared, 'the scope for reducing unemployment and re-expanding the economy in the short-term is distressingly limited... Labour's programme must include a whole range of other positive policy objectives that are not narrowly economic and industrial.'

Cut away the sophisticated

phraseology and the meaning of that policy is quite clear. The next Labour government is going to preside over mass unemployment because capital won't accept anything else. If you are a man or woman in a well paid job, or you are a civil servant who wants their civil liberties increasing, then Labour may have something to offer you. But if you are unemployed, or live in an inner city, or are a black youth, then forget it. You are going to get it in the neck just as much from Neil Kinnock as from Margaret Thatcher. Neither is going to give you a job. This is then described as a 'socialist' perspective!

This Kinnockite left however has a contradictory base as parts of its support, such as sections of the trade unions leadership, are under pressure from their membership — as was seen over the miners at the TUC Congress and Labour Party conference.

The reality of the choice facing the Kinnockite left is quite simple. If what is to be demanded is only what *capital* is prepared to afford then entire sections of British society — not to mention the working class abroad — are going to be consigned by Labour to the scrapheap. That is the logic, faithfully carried through by the *New Statesman*, of the Kinnockite left — the logic, carried through in today's conditions, of a policy of left wing class collaboration: the idea that that the problems confronting the working class and oppressed can be resolved on the basis of collaboration with the bourgeoisie or by the reformist means available to the GLC.

## Clarity

The second current which has emerged out of the pre-1984 left, unlike the Kinnockites, is most accurately entitled the *class struggle left*. Its most representative forces and leaders are the Scargill wing of the NUM; the Campaign group of MPs; Women Against Pit Closures; the black section; the demands, although not all the forces, of the Women's Action Committee; the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy; the Labour Committee on Ireland, and a series of individual forces in the trade unions, local councils, Constituency Labour Parties etc.

Ideologically this emerging class struggle current contains everything from left reformists, who are its vast majority, through classic 'centrists', to Marxists. But what defines this left is its attitude to the living class struggle. It is *not* prepared to subordinate the interests of the working class and oppressed to what the bourgeoisie — internationally or in Britain — is prepared to afford or accept. The forces in it are prepared in practice to defend today — whatever ideological reason they give for it — the interests of the working class and oppressed.

## Demand

Scargill and those who supported him in the NUM, *were not* prepared to subordinate the defence of jobs and the mining communities to the profits of the NCB. They have also supported the black communities, the black section, the formation of Women Against Pit Closures and its affiliation to the NUM, the struggle in local government, and the demands of the Women's Action Committee.

Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, and others in the Campaign group of MPs, did not simply give verbal support to the miners but went out and directly supported them *in action*. They followed this up after the strike by helping lead the struggle to support the miners through the amnesty campaign and

other means.

Since the end of the miners strike the Campaign group, or various of its members, have deepened their position by defending the black communities, supporting black sections, opposing the witch hunt, producing *A Million Jobs A Year*, and voting against the Anglo-Irish Accord.

Women Against Pit Closures, in collaboration with the NUM, forged the key social alliance in the miners strike — and one not created on the financial base available for reforms to the GLC, but on the base of a brutal struggle against the NCB.

## Convergence

The black section originated on the basic issue of the right of self-organisation of black people inside the Labour Party but has rapidly deepened its politics. The black section actively supported the miners, defended the black community against the police riots, denounced Kinnock over South Africa, and have come out strongly against the witch hunt — despite *Militant's* attack on the black section.

An important development has also taken place in the lesbian and gay community with the formation of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, and the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

On international politics, in addition, a clarification and deepening of the positions of this class struggle left has taken place. The most important step on this of course was the vote of 13 members of the Campaign group against the Anglo-Irish Accord. This followed a developing dialogue between sections of the Labour left and Sinn Fein — a dialogue particularly organised through the Labour Committee on Ireland.

But strong support has gone from NUM leaders, and others, to the FSLN and FMLN in Nicaragua and El Salvador and the ANC in South Africa. This is in addition to the unanimous demand for unilateral nuclear disarmament.

In short the 'class struggle left' is beginning to carve out more clearly defined positions on the key issues of the British and international class struggle. It has started to develop from purely defensive struggles, reflecting its social base in the mining communities, the black communities, the big cities, and among women to having more clear and offensive positions.

## Basic issue

The effect of these common positions is that the different components of this left are tending to converge. This could already be seen in the miners' strike for example with the cooperation of the NUM leadership, the Campaign group Women Against Pit Closures and virtually every other major section of the left. In the fight against the Anglo-Irish Accord the Labour Committee on Ireland and the Campaign group of MPs have taken the initiative. In defence of the black communities against the police attacks clear support came from the black section, Scargill, and leaders of the Campaign group. This class struggle left has also come together against the witch hunt.

Something of a common analysis of the situation is also beginning to develop among this left — although different words are used to express it. The analysis can be summed up in Tony Benn's phrase that what the struggle is about at present is 'creating a popular majority for socialism.' It could be put in 'Leninist' terms that what is involved today is a fight for the conquest of the

masses not a struggle for power — can be expressed in CLPD's view that today the left finds itself in a defensive situation.

But whatever the different language used the content is exactly the same. It is that the left today is a *minority* not only in the labour movement but in the working class. It is not faced with an immediate or short term 'struggle for power'. It is faced with a task of winning a majority to a socialist perspective — a majority which does not exist today.

Two conclusions immediately follow from this analysis. The first is the emphasis on mass campaigning. The second is that these class struggle forces must be both organised and clarified themselves, and that they must take the initiative on specific issues to draw in far wider forces on questions which correspond to the needs of the class struggle.

This approach can be seen clearly on the miners amnesty campaign — where the initiative of the NUM drew forces from the base of Kinnock to the vote at the TUC and Labour Party conferences. The same approach can be seen on Ireland where Ken Livingstone has maintained his clear position of opposition to the Anglo-Irish Accord — and where the Labour Committee on Ireland and the Campaign group have rightly, acted together with Livingstone. The same approach can be seen on the witch hunt where some of those forces who voted in favour of the enquiry into Liverpool District Party may nevertheless finish up opposing the expulsions which will be proposed out of it.

This approach is not a sectarian one at all. It flows from the needs of the class struggle and the attitude of the class struggle left to Kinnock.

## Main enemy

The main enemy in the class struggle today is not Kinnock, it is *Thatcher*. Kinnock has to be fought against when, and that is most of the time, he obstructs the struggle against Thatcher. But it is an 'anti-Thatcher left', not an 'anti-Kinnock' left, that is being built.

It is this class struggle left which Socialist Action identifies with. Socialist Action believes that the central strategic slogan which corresponds to the line and needs of the class struggle today, and these forces, is precisely that of 'building an alliance for socialism' — that is constructing the social alliances, internationally and nationally, which the working class needs to create a real majority for socialism in this country. Such a majority is the key, a prerequisite, to the strategic goal of the working class taking political power. It is a *prolonged* struggle to create such a majority.

The third force which has emerged out of the left wing of the labour movement may be correctly defined as *ultra-left* in terms of tactics — although it is not at all ultra-left as regards its general politics. The most characteristic forces of this are *Labour Briefing*, *Socialist Organiser*, and *Socialist Viewpoint*.

The basis of the tactics of these currents is the view that somehow the working class in Britain is engaged in a short term struggle for power, and for socialism. The slogan emblazoned on the front of *Labour Briefing* 'Labour Take the Power' sums up this orientation very well. But *all* components share this ultra-left view of the situation that somehow a short term struggle for power in Britain is posed. Politically it accommodates to British imperialism to varying degrees.

This ultra left however is only really strong, and has its social base, in Lon-

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don and areas of the country where the right wing almost totally dominates the labour movement. The right wing majority in these areas breeds ultra-leftism as a response.

The common views of these groupings are the positions such as that we face a 'revolutionary crisis' in Britain in the next four or five years; that tactically Arthur Scargill disastrously failed to confront the trade union bureaucracy at the 1984 Trade Union Congress; that the central organising line of the class struggle today is not the fight against Thatcher but 'organising the anti-Kinnock left'; that Tony Benn, or another leader of the Labour Party, should have run against Neil Kinnock for the leadership of the Labour Party following the miners strike; and that views that are both wrong in themselves and would chiefly succeed in getting the left in the party smashed.

These ultra-left views on British politics are generally coupled with ultra-left, and sectarian, views on international politics. Views such as that the FMLN is trying to preserve capitalism in Nicaragua, the FMLN is trying to build a popular front in El Salvador, the programme of the UDF in South Africa is wrong because it is based on democratic demands against apartheid and not explicitly socialist demands,

that Sinn Fein's politics cannot be supported etc.

But as regards British tactics it is the view of a short term struggle for power and socialism, the failure to understand the prolonged task of creating a majority for socialism, and a series of suicidally wrong tactics which flow from this analysis which characterise the views of this ultra-left current.

### Trends

Having outlined the existence of these three basic trends — the Kinnockite left, the class struggle left, and the ultra-left — this does not of course mean that these forces are totally separate on all issues or internally homogenous. Differences within these broad trends, exist among all of them.

These different sections of the left can, and should, work together on different issues. A loose form of collaboration already exists between a section of the class struggle left, and the ultra-left, through the Labour Left Coordinating Committee — which started off with an ultra-left line of the necessity to run a candidate against Kinnock for party leader but which is now quietly dropping this.

The class struggle left, sections of the Kinnockite left, and the ultra-left are working together fruitfully in the

Justice for Mineworkers Campaign. The class struggle left, at least Ken Livingstone from the Kinnockite left, and part of the ultra-left are working together against the Anglo-Irish Accord. The final set of forces that will work together against the witch hunt is not yet clear, but should be as wide as possible on a principled basis.

But despite the overlap and cooperation, and currents such as *Militant* which stand outside all of them, there are three basic currents on the left wing of the labour movement today.

- A Kinnockite left which limits itself to what the bourgeoisie is prepared to afford, and which capitulates before each serious bourgeois assault. It is a left however which contains contradictory trends on particular issues as it does have a mass working class base which is not prepared to go all the way with Kinnock.
- A class struggle left whose base is the mining communities, the big cities, the black community, working class women and other sections of the oppressed, but which has thrown up a leadership which has shown it is prepared to fight against attacks of the bourgeoisie. It is a left which knows 'which side it is on'.

This class struggle left also recognises that it is a minority today,

and is fighting on a perspective which could be summarised as 'creating a popular majority for socialism.'

- An ultra left which refuses to understand that the working class today is engaged in a fight for a socialist majority — and not a fight for power — and therefore proposes ultra-left and sectarian tactics and politics both in Britain and, for somewhat different reasons, internationally.

While these different currents can, and should, cooperate where ever it is in the objective interests of the working class and oppressed, they do constitute distinct currents. They therefore need to be organised distinctly — which of course does not at all preclude cooperation.

It is out of this that the discussion on a new paper on the left arises. The class struggle left is acquiring distinctive organisations and policies it supports — the Scargill wing of the NUM, the Campaign group of MPs and Campaign groups which develop locally, Women Against Pit Closures, the black section, the demands of the Women's Action Committee, CLPD, the Labour Committee on Ireland, people who have fought in local government and others. But since *Tribune* openly went to the Kinnockites this class struggle left does not have a distinctive paper

which seriously draws together, and is based on, these forces.

There is of course a precondition for the success of such a paper. That is that it must be *really* based on, and under the control of, the forces which lead this left. Papers produced by small grouping which pretend to be the Campaign group, for example, are no use at all. Papers such as *Socialist Action* cannot possibly play such a role because they have a quite different function and views which are an extreme minority in the class struggle left which is developing. Nor can smaller forces claim to be the mouthpiece of this current.

The acknowledged leadership of this class struggle current, the people who have the overwhelming majority support among it, are people like Arthur Scargill's supporters in the NUM, the Campaign group of MPs, Women Against Pit Closures, the black section, and others. A paper of the class struggle left would have to be under *their* control. Others could, and should, express their views but the real majorities, and real relations of forces, which exist in this class struggle current have to be expressed in such a paper.

But such a newspaper of the class struggle left, organised on that basis, is urgently needed today. *Socialist Action* would strongly support it.

ON 1 DECEMBER a gigantic step forward was taken by the black majority of South Africa in the struggle for its liberation. The formation of the nearly 500,000 strong non-racial, overwhelmingly black, Confederation of South African Trade Unions

(COSATU), created not only the largest organisation of black workers in the history of South Africa but the most powerful organisation of workers on the African continent.

Since its formation COSATU has been rapidly defining its political

orientation. DICK CARTER looks at the political development of COSATU in the first month of its existence — and in particular at COSATU's increasing move towards united action, with the African National Congress (ANC).

## COSATU's first month

THE OVERALL political line of COSATU was spelt out clearly at the closing session of its founding congress by its newly elected president, and former mineworkers union vice-president, Elijah Barayi. Speaking under banners bearing the slogans 'One Federation, One Country', and 'Workers Unite', Barayi called on the South African president Botha to go and instead to 'make way for the real leader of the people Nelson Mandela.'

Mandela is of course the imprisoned leader of the African National Congress (ANC). Barayi was characterised by the *Financial Times*, in reporting the congress, as a 'stalwart' of the ANC before it was banned.

COSATU's constitution declares that, 'We ... firmly commit ourselves to a united democratic South Africa, free of oppression and economic exploitation. We believe this can only be achieved under the leadership of a united working class.'

Barayi demanded that the state of emergency imposed by the South African government in July be lifted. He also demanded that the ban on the Congress of South African Students be ended.

COSATU's president stated that the union's demand was for one person one vote in a unitary state. He rejected

Botha's 'reform' parliament in which two segregated and powerless chambers were set up for collaborators from the Indian and Coloured sections of the black population.

The COSATU congress passed a resolution condemning the apartheid regime's system of Bantustans — the 10 rural areas for Africans that are designed to create a migratory labour force and deepen tribal and language divisions. The Bantustans, COSATU stated, are intended to thwart the 'just struggle for one person, one vote in a unitary South Africa.' The Bantustan leaders were accused of practicing 'extreme forms of oppression.'

### Passes

Barayi called for the abolition of pass laws within six months or threatened that the regime would face direct action.

It is illegal in South Africa to call for trade or investment sanctions against the regime but COSATU, Barayi stated at the rally, 'is in full support of disinvestment.' Referring to the US and British governments, Barayi said, 'They tell us they are against disinvestment because the black people would starve, but black people have been starving here since the first white settlers arrived in 1652.'

The COSATU congress also took up the position of women in South

Africa. COSATU adopted a resolution calling for a fight 'against all unequal and discriminatory treatment of women at work, in society and in the federation.' It called for equal pay for work of equal value and 'for restructuring of employment so as to allow women and men the opportunity of qualifying for jobs of equal value.'

COSATU's founding resolution on the subject said that the union must fight 'sexual harassment in whatever form it occurs' and would struggle for child care and family facilities and for full maternity rights, 'including paid maternity and paternity leave and job security.'

The resolution also stated that 'women workers experience exploitation as workers and oppression as women and that black women are further discriminated against on the basis of race.'

Two other resolutions adopted at the founding congress attacked the policies of foreign and South African corporations. One said that such corporations exploited workers in southern Africa 'by reaping huge profits and exporting them to Europe and America.' The other resolution charged that companies operating in South Africa paid workers only 'starvation wages.'

COSATU stated that it would demand a national minimum living wage adjusted to compensate for inflation. It

called for company books to be opened for inspection 'so that workers could see exactly how the wealth they have produced is being wasted and misused by the employers' profit system.'

Barayi repeated the demand, which is included in the ANC's *Freedom Charter*, for nationalisation of the mines.

### Politics

These developments in COSATU's politics, as well as its mere existence, were used by the apartheid regime to launch an immediate attack on the union federation. The government declared it to be a surrogate for the banned ANC. South African government radio declared on 4 December that 'This organisation (COSATU), with its declared aim of standing in for the ANC is, under the guise of a trade union movement, intent on furthering the aims of a banned organisation, namely to make the country ungovernable. The question is whether it can be allowed to do so.'

The ANC itself openly hailed the formation of COSATU. The broadcast on the ANC's Radio Freedom on 2 December declared: 'The formation of this trade union federation was greeted with much jubilation by the entire struggling people of our country because it lays the main foundation stone for the unity of the working class in South Africa, the main force of our national liberation revolution ...'

'Fellow countrymen, COSATU has been born. The giant has arisen.'

The United Democratic Front (UDF), supported by the ANC, was present at the founding congress of COSATU with a banner pledging support to the new union. The South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), allied to the ANC, issued a press release enthusiastically welcoming the formation of COSATU.

### Delegation

At the beginning of December COSATU itself sent a delegation to the conference of the World Council of Churches held in Harare, Zimbabwe. This delegation included COSATU's general secretary Jay Naidoo and Cyril Ramphosa, the president of the South African National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

At the Harare conference Naidoo met with leaders of the ANC and SACTU. According to a COSATU statement this was in order 'to exchange views on the present crisis in South Africa.'

The ANC had already outlined its views of the politics of the new union on Radio Freedom when, commenting on the formation of COSATU it declared it is 'vital that unions should be deeply involved in the mass activities being launched by organisations like the United Democratic Front.'

The demands of COSATU, in particular its demand for 'a united democratic South Africa, free of oppression and economic exploitation,' in fact do sound exactly like a rehearsal of the chief demands popularised in South Africa by the ANC. Evidently equally important are the moves to establish direct legal contact, and practical collaboration, between COSATU, the ANC, and the UDF.

The question therefore evidently arises firstly as to how this convergence of COSATU and the ANC took place? Secondly, what should be the attitude of the labour movement towards it?

# The politics



Funeral of Andries Raditsela, FOSATU

## COSATU

DESPITE THE claims of the apartheid regime, and an evident convergence between the line of COSATU and the ANC, there is not the slightest evidence that COSATU is directly controlled by the ANC. Nor is there any evidence whatever that the ANC created the key unions that went to make up COSATU.

On the contrary all the evidence is exactly the opposite. What is occurring in South Africa is a convergence of originally independent forces on an increasingly correct political line — that of a united front of all the exploited and oppressed against apartheid. The evidence shows that it is political development, not organisational control, which is leading to the line of the ANC, and the key forces that created COSATU, converging on common proposals.

This process can be seen particularly clearly by studying the development of the key founding component of COSATU — the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) — which waged a long battle for non-racial trade union unity in South Africa.

### Report

FOSATU was formed quite independently of the ANC. ANC member Ben Turok, one of the authors of the economic section of the *Freedom Charter*, speaking in London recently, referred to FOSATU as having been formed by a 'workerist' current. The general secretary of FOSATU, Joe Foster, in a 1982 report adopted by the union federation, also spelt out extremely clearly the disagreements of FOSATU with the ANC at that time.

Foster characterised the ANC as 'one of the great liberation movements of Africa.' He stated that 'The role of the great political movements such as the ANC and the Congress Alliance has been to mobilise the masses against the repressive minority regime.' Foster argued that FOSATU must not place itself 'in opposition to the wider political struggle or its major liberation movement.'

But Foster's report went on clearly to state that the working class must be organised *independently* within this





# of COSATU



er killed by police, June 1985

## U and the ANC

liberation struggle. Foster stated 'Where virtually all the population is voteless and oppressed by a racial minority then a great alliance of all classes is both necessary and a clear political strategy. Furthermore, building such an alliance was a great task.'

'The ANC had to overcome racial division so as to rise above the divisive racism of the oppressors. They had to deal with opportunistic tribal leadership, to organise thousands upon thousands of people and they had to do all this in the face of harsh repression by the state. In achieving this there is little wonder that the ANC rose to be one of the great liberation movements in Africa.'

### Movement

But Foster went on to argue despite this that 'these movements cannot and have not in themselves been able to deal with the particular and fundamental problem of workers. Their task is to remove regimes that are regarded as illegitimate and unacceptable by the majority.'

'It is, therefore, essential that workers must strive to build their own powerful and effective organisation even whilst they are part of the wider popular struggle. This organisation is necessary to protect and further worker interests and to ensure that the popular movement is not hijacked by elements who will in the end have no option but to turn against their worker supporters.'

Foster concluded his survey of the question by stating that 'workers must strive to form their own powerful and effective organisation within the wider popular struggle.'

Chris Dlamini, at that time president of FOSATU and now vice-president of COSATU, made a similar point regarding Zimbabwe. He declared that in Zimbabwe some people were liberated but the workers were not. According to Dlamini 'Worker liberation can only be achieved by a strong, well organised worker movement.'

In the initial period of its development, and particularly following its official constitution as a federation in 1979, the conditions of existence of FOSATU meant that it placed its stress

on building up its workplace and industry organisation. FOSATU's tactical choices in fighting for trade union organisation were undoubtedly correct against the ANC dominated SACTU and other unions decisively influenced by the ANC at the time.

In June 1977 John Gaetsewe, general secretary of SACTU, was still writing that 'Repression of trade union activity, (in South Africa) means that in the long term, meaningful advances can only be made on an underground basis.'

As late as June 1982, in a major statement of position entitled 'SACTU's Present Role', SACTU argued that: 'SACTU was forced underground. And there is nothing to suggest that the apartheid regime will ever tolerate a strong, progressive and open trade union movement for very long. It would be a mistake to act on this basis.'

FOSATU however took exactly the opposite tactical line to that being urged by SACTU. Using the type of tactics which, if they had been theorised might have been described as 'Leninist', FOSATU utilised to the full the legal openings which began to emerge in the 1970s.

FOSATU decided to take the tactical decision to legally register, on a non-racial basis, under the proposals of the Wiehan Commission recognising black trade unions in South Africa. FOSATU also allowed its affiliated unions to participate in the Industrial Councils in South Africa — provided that plant based bargaining and recognition rights were not lost.

### Mass

Far from being opportunist these tactics were an extremely intelligent use of legal openings by FOSATU — and were totally vindicated by the results. FOSATU built a mass, relatively strongly centralised trade union structure — far more strongly centralised than any of its rivals — with its decisive base in the heavy industrial manufacturing and transport sector. Car workers, metal workers, food manufacturing workers, and transport workers were the core of FOSATU's membership. FOSATU also specifically adopted the organisational form of industrial unions — the organising

basis now accepted by COSATU as one of its five founding principles.

FOSATU also developed a far higher level of militancy than its rivals. In 1982 for example FOSATU affiliated unions were involved in 145 strikes with 90,000 workers taking part. This compared to, for example, 13 strikes, with 10,000 workers participating, for Council of South African Unions (CUSA) affiliated unions and 6 strikes, involving 2,600 workers, for the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU).

The relation of forces established by FOSATU's tactics was seen clearly at the creation of COSATU. FOSATU alone had 120,000 paid up members at the time of the formation of the federation — exceeding even the 100,000 paid up members of the NUM, although the latter claims a total membership of 250,000.

COSATU's general secretary Jay Naidoo, and COSATU's vice president Chris Dlamini, were members of FOSATU affiliated unions. The principles of organisation, and politics, adopted by FOSATU — notable non-racialism, organisation on the basis of industrial unions, representation on the basis of paid up membership — dominate the new COSATU federation.

### Miners

The FOSATU affiliated unions, together with the NUM, form the core of COSATU, and make it easily the totally dominant union of black industrial workers in South Africa.

The initially UDF affiliated unions — the SAAWU, the General and Allied Workers Union, and the National Federation of Workers — as well as the previously SACTU affiliated Food and Canning Workers Union were, in contrast, minority currents at the moment of the formation of the FOSATU and NUM dominated COSATU. In the struggle over orientation to building the unions between FOSATU and the SACTU influenced and dominated unions, FOSATU was thoroughly vindicated.

But while the tactical differences which existed between COSATU and the ANC and SACTU dominated unions were very real — and were differences over which FOSATU was proved correct — they obscured the much more fundamental, and therefore in the long run much more decisive, similarities in key political principles between the ANC and FOSATU. It was this agreement which, despite the earlier tactical differences, provided the basis for the decisive step forward, including in politics, of the creation of COSATU.



The issues involved in agreement between FOSATU and the ANC were not just questions of Joe Foster's glowing historic references to the role of the liberation movement. They in particular applied to the decisive issue of non-racialism — the cardinal point of political difference which divided the ANC off both from the Pan African Congress (PAC) in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and from the Black Consciousness Movement in the early 1970s.

It was this point of non-racialism which had exactly previously divided off FOSATU from its CUSA rival. FOSATU had insisted on non-racialism as its fundamental principle right from the very origins of the trade union movement.

The principle of non-racialism also provided the obvious point of convergence between FOSATU and the UDF affiliated unions. SAAWU president Thozamile Gqwetha explained his union's position, for example, as being that 'we believe the country has a non-racial future and therefore we must be totally non-racial.'

The NUM split with CUSA in August 1985 equally was because of the mineworkers union support for the principle of non-racialism, which was already being written in as one of the founding principles of COSATU — and formed a basis of the united front federation which the NUM supported.

The agreement of FOSATU with the ANC on the fundamental political principle of non-racialism meant that despite the sharp tactical differences on how to organise the unions the political way was always open for a convergence between the union federation and the ANC.

A tactical convergence between the ANC and FOSATU was also evidently strengthened by the cooperation between FOSATU and the UDF in organising the Transvaal general strike of November 1984 — the highest point of the mass movement in South Africa so far.

The ANC had also earlier begun to shift its positions on the unions from the earlier line of SACTU. A 1983 statement called for 'flexibility' on the part of all unions to achieve unity. Differences of tactics 'must not be used as an issue to militate against unity.'

ANC president Oliver Tambo declared that while power 'would not be achieved without armed struggle ... it would be equally disastrous to say the armed struggle has no need of any other form of struggle. Organisation of the workers is most important.'

Following the formation of COSATU the ANC called on the black consciousness influenced unions to join the new united federation. The ANC Radio Freedom, commenting on the formation of COSATU, declared 'It is

### Unity

important for us to continue discussing and thrashing out the differences that still lead to the abstention of these new unions, because members of these unions form part of the South African working class. It is therefore very vital that they too be drawn into this mainstream of the struggle for liberation.'

Unfortunately however the black consciousness influenced unions have pursued a sectarian course. Earlier, in 1984, the main black consciousness organisation the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) unsuccessfully boycotted the Transvaal general strike — the action in which FOSATU and

the UDF had first decisively secured united action and achieved the most powerful mass action so far in South Africa. CUSA, and the Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions (AZACU) refused to participate in the formation of COSATU.

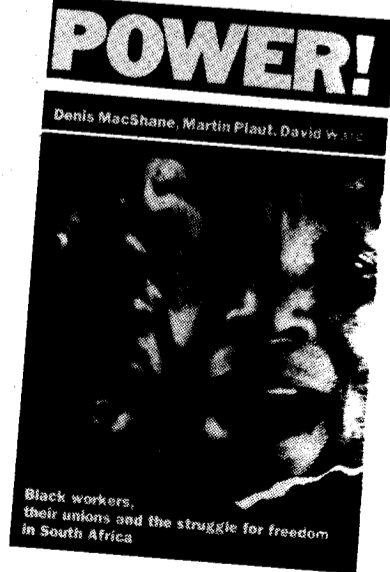
The political processes which occurred with the founding positions and formation of COSATU is therefore absolutely clear. At the level of tactics and organisation FOSATU won out completely. The organising principles of COSATU — organisation by industrial union, representation on the basis of dues paying membership, non-racialism — are completely unmistakably those of FOSATU.

FOSATU, together with the NUM, supplied the leadership personnel for COSATU. FOSATU supplied the key industrial base which, with the NUM, provides the membership and power of the new union federation. The other main union federation, CUSA, split with the majority of the federation staying out of COSATU but the largest CUSA affiliate, the NUM, leaving CUSA to join COSATU. FOSATU in contrast joined COSATU in a totally united fashion. The earlier ANC/SACTU aligned unions were a minority in the new federation.

But while FOSATU had correct tactical positions on how to build the unions, as against the ANC/SACTU dominated unions, its fundamental political positions, above all the total insistence on non-racialism, inevitably led to a convergence with the ANC.

The victory of the trade union tactics of FOSATU, the common position of FOSATU and the ANC on the issue of non-racialism, the agreement on the necessity of united action on the basis of struggle against the apartheid regime, is the decisive combination which has been expressed in the political positions of COSATU — and explains the key positions it has adopted.

### The road to COSATU



Power! by Denis MacShane, Martin Plant, and David Ward explains the background to the formation of the independent non-racial unions in South Africa that led to the formation of COSATU.

Available from Other Books, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. £4.95 plus 46p postage.

# Nicaragua faces the United States

**FOR NICARAGUA 1985 ended as it began — with a continuing war being waged against the country by the United States.**

In his weekly national radio broadcast on 14 December, Reagan declared that 'more effective help' was needed for the contras fighting the Nicaraguan government than the \$27 million in 'humanitarian aid' voted by the US Congress last July.

Referring to the contras Reagan declared 'should not the forces fighting for liberation (sic), now numbering more than 20,000, be entitled to more effective help?'

Almost simultaneously with Reagan's appeal the Pentagon an-

survive. How far can this contradiction persist and how can it be resolved?

Some people think that a mixed economy and political pluralism are the road to capitalist change in our country. It isn't so. The mixed economy and political pluralism exist in capitalist countries and in our own. But they are not the same in a traditional capitalist society as in a revolutionary one.

In capitalism, in general, a mixed economy and political pluralism imply definite concessions which the bourgeoisie makes to the workers. The bourgeoisie accepts the existence of workers' organisations, and some of their publications; it makes economic concessions, for example wage demands.

In our society it is the other way round. The working class, the workers in power, make concessions to the bourgeoisie in the political and economic sphere. But the fundamental force is the society, the fundamental owner of its economic resources.

Production and political hegemony are in the hands of the workers, and this is the substantial difference. It is a basic characteristic of the Nicaraguan revolution.

In other revolutions political pluralism has disappeared. In ours it exists. Moreover in other revolutions it disappeared in spite of the desires of the leaders of those revolutions. The mixed economy has survived in some revolutionary processes but has diminished in proportion to the shrinking of political pluralism. There is an interrelation between political pluralism and the mixed economy.

In the concrete case of our country, political pluralism guarantees the mixed economy and vice versa, but there is a context: here there is a revolution and we are not going to abandon it. It will proceed with the resistance of the secondary classes of this country, the classes who now struggle for power after having lost it.

The workers of this country fought for power and won it. Now the classes which were dislodged from power fight to get it back, even though they have a definite economic and political space.

In the past the workers had very little political space — one could say none at all. There was virtually no political pluralism and no mixed economy. The economy was in the hands of the Somoza family and the bourgeoisie. The workers never had access to economic demands and could never own anything at all. They were not allowed to express political demands, and they were denied publications in which to put forward their ideas. They were not allowed to organise. There were no trade unions, much less workers' political parties.

The Sandinista front, which emerged in the '70s, began to fight for these rights, but arms in hand. It took power, leading the workers through armed struggle and not through any political space conceded it by the Somoza dictatorship.

Thus in our country there was never a mixed economy or political pluralism. They were conquered by the revolution. This reality differentiates us from other historical experiences.

**What are the main features of the politics of the USA towards Central America and Nicaragua?**

The policy of the North American government towards Central America is the same as its world policy: it wants to recuperate its imperial authority. It wants to stop revolutionary expansion in Central America. It wants to destroy the Nicaraguan revolution. They do not want just to limit our revolution, stop it helping the Salvadoreans or penetrating Honduras, or prevent our revolution being too attractive, or restrict its radicalising influence, or substitute one Sandinista for another. They want to destroy the revolution.

They cannot tolerate us in any



shape or form. I believe they would not even accept us if we sold out and prostrated ourselves. We aren't going to, but even if we did they wouldn't accept us. We are a foreign organism in imperialism's body. They simply don't accept the Nicaraguan revolution. Everything they do turns around this.

**What perspectives do you see for revolutionary and democratic struggle in Latin America?**

The existence of the Nicaraguan revolution is the life insurance of the Latin American democracies. There has without doubt been a rush of democratic changes of the liberal type, with social democratic aspirations. APRA's victory in Peru is, we could say, the culmination. It might even happen in Chile, because the Pinochet dictatorship has become really insupportable. This might also move towards a liberal democracy — though perhaps with other characteristics because of the influence of the revolutionary movement in Chile itself.

These kind of quantitative changes will provoke contradictions within imperialism. This contradiction expresses itself at present around the problem of international debt, but also in the existence of the Contadora group of states. Contadora is like a piece of grit in imperialism's eye.

These contradictions will grow bit by bit without becoming antagonistic

— unlike the antagonistic contradiction between the USA and Nicaragua, between the USA and Cuba, or the USA and the peoples of Latin America. This latter contradiction will become sharper and sharper to the point where conflicts will arise which can produce qualitative changes. That is to say, the future is one of struggle.

We believe that North American conservatism is going to last at least a decade more and that it may presage a return to open aggression — which implies a terrible and bloody struggle for our countries. But if this leads to the direct invasion of Nicaragua, there could be unforeseeable changes in the struggle against imperialism. It could lead to the USA's military strength being sapped, which in its turn could have very serious political consequences which would qualitatively weaken yankee imperialism.

**The United States has conducted a world-wide campaign against the revolution based on the errors the FSLN made on the Atlantic Coast. What were these errors and how do you evaluate them in your treatment of the region?**

Nothing in the world teaches better than mistakes. I think that our errors made possible the violence on the Atlantic Coast, which imperialism and the counter-revolution were able to benefit from. The Miskitos in particular, who did not take part in the struggle against Somoza, had very

high expectations in the revolution which it did not satisfy correctly.

The comrades who arrived on the Atlantic Coast wanted to transplant mechanically the solutions we had applied on the Pacific Coast, into a very different situation. This provoked irritation, leading to a vicious circle of unjustified violence which US imperialism was able to exploit.

Though unfortunately this cost the Nicaraguan people of both Atlantic and Pacific Coast much blood and much grief, I think that it has raised the status of the inhabitants of the Atlantic Coast. The war has been very negative and the conflict could have been resolved without bloodshed. This has now begun to happen, though it will take a long time to heal the wounds on the Atlantic Coast.

I think that the high level of mistrust which existed in an important sector of the Miskitos is now receding quite noticeably. The very fact that the fighting has stopped shows some element of confidence. Moreover, we have granted their request for autonomy and converted the region into the property of its inhabitants, a highly democratic and revolutionary decision, the recognition of a democratic demand. The fact that there are only shades of difference between their demands relating to autonomy and the demands of the revolution, indicates a certain identification with the principles of the revolution in this respect.

We believe that in time there will be mutual confidence between us and the sectors who rose up in arms on the Atlantic Coast, including those who have recently come into conflict with the Contras. Whatever their reasons for distrusting the Frente Sandinista, they have many more reasons for distrusting the Somocista national guard. The reasons why they mistrust us are artificial, without a justifiable basis, while the reasons for their mistrust of the Contras have an objective basis.

**The Miskito organisation, Misura, has laid down various conditions for autonomy: the existence of a Miskito government and an assembly of representatives of the various ethnic groups, their control of the natural resources of the coast and of the troops in the region, as a part of the Sandinista popular army.**

We have to begin from one fundamental: there is only one Nicaragua. Decisions on the form of government and the placement of armed forces are central decisions, so that any autonomous powers have to be strictly defined by the laws of this country. We propose, in our statute of autonomy, that the local authorities must be chosen by the inhabitants of the Atlantic Coast.

The use of woods and water, as natural resources of the Atlantic Coast, have to be exploited as a function of the interests of the nation, but taking into account local interests. This includes the forms of exploitation, which have to be decided by the inhabitants of the area.

There will be two types of statute: local and national. National ones, by law, will have to dedicate an important part of the Atlantic Coast's resources for reinvestment there. But one cannot think that such a national statute would be exclusive to the Atlantic Coast, any more than a statute concerning the Pacific Coast would be exclusive to the Pacific. This would mean dividing the country into two halves.

If we find oil in the Pacific, it would be absurd to invest the fruits only in the Pacific Coast and not on the Atlantic Coast. Strategic resources such as hydroelectric power and minerals have to be exploited in the interests of the whole nation, privileging in some sense the local areas from where these resources come. At the same time we have to develop important projects with a local character, for example the African palm project, which would fundamentally benefit the Atlantic Coast.



Tomas Borge: 'Nothing in the world teaches better than mistakes'

nounced a new round of US-Honduran military exercises to begin in January. These will include an extensive programme of road building for military manoeuvres. During similar manoeuvres in the past the US armed forces have set up in Honduras an extensive military structure — airfields, supply depots, surveillance posts, roads etc — capable of sustaining a full scale US invasion of Nicaragua.

In Nicaragua itself, for the first time, contras have used surface to air missiles to shoot down a government helicopter. US Secretary of State George Shultz's comment on this was: 'Thank goodness that they did get hold of some weapons that can knock these choppers down ... They have gotten ahold of missiles and figured out how to use them ... and I say "Fine, I'm all for it."'

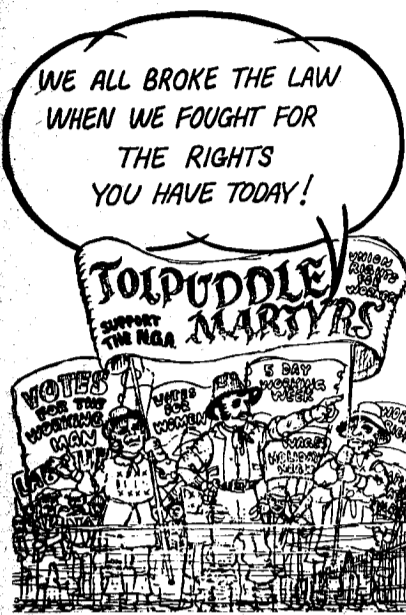
Losses to contra action in Nicaragua are now 4,000 dead, 4,000 wounded, 5,000 kidnapped, and 250,000 homeless out of a Nicaraguan population of 3.5 million. This is the equivalent of 130,000 dead and wounded, and four million homeless, in a country with a population the size of Britain.

But in Nicaragua itself the FSLN has been both strengthening the defence of the country and correcting errors made earlier in dealing with the problems of the Atlantic coast region of the country. It has also been taking steps to deal with the economic problems facing the country.

The Central American review *Panorama* interviewed FSLN leader TOMAS BORGE on the problems now facing the Nicaraguan government. We are printing an edited version of the interview.

With the overthrow of the dictatorship a new national state began to develop in Nicaragua in which power was in the workers' hands. But this state does not appear to correspond to Nicaraguan society — in the sense that capitalist production relations

# TUC and state funds



**THE TUC has called a special conference of union executives in February to 'discuss' and almost certainly reverse its defiance of government cash-for-ballots legislation.**

The move is backed by Norman Willis, Ron Todd and Communist Party member Mick McGahey. It follows an eight to one vote in favour of accepting cash-for-ballots in the AUEW. Although down from the twelve to one majority recorded in the engineer's first ballot, the

vote was conclusive. In a 34.9 per cent turnout, 239,875 voted for and 31,569 against. The EEP-

**By Jon Silberman**

TU has recorded a similar large vote.

The votes have significantly strengthened

the right's position in the TUC.

Some union leaders seem to think that if there is going to be a split, then the sooner the better. David Williams, president of health union COHSE, has said the AUEW and the EETPU should be suspended. The *Morning Star* took the same position on 18 December.

But a split on this narrow issue, after thousands of EETPU members have registered their votes, would completely disorient the labour movement.

The problem is that the AUEW and EETPU leaderships are themselves leading a drive to split the TUC around much broader issues. The responsibility for this has to be laid at their door.

## Scab

Their goal — at Tory instigation — is to promote scab outfits, such as the UDM, to substitute 'no-strike' deals for trade union rights, and to throw away trade union independence by subordinating the unions to the courts. This in turn means open war, in collaboration with management, on the existing trade union movement.

Later this month the EETPU has organised a joint conference with the UDM with which it already collaborates through the right wing organisation *Mainstream*. It is entering 'no-strike' scab agreements with Rupert Murdoch and union-buster Eddie Shah.



Murdoch has already announced he will be making a separate agreement with the EETPU concerning his plans to print the *London Post* at his new Wapping plant. EETPU members have already helped ship equipment in against SOGAT and NGA opposition.

## Nissan

The AUEW is trying to exclude the TGWU and GMBATU in a similar deal with Nissan ('Imagine a company where nobody strikes') for their new North Eastern plant.

With such moves any pretence of trade union unity ceases to exist. The right wing is creating instead a unity between themselves, the bosses and the government against the trade union movement.

Tory policy clearly focusses on building up such scab alternatives. The increasing role of bodies



Eddie Shah is big mates with Margaret Thatcher...

such as the Federation of Professional Railway Servants, and the formation on 3 January of FUMPO, an anti-TUC organisation of managers in NALGO, is evidence of the future they have in store for the unions.

## Liverpool

Neither the TUC nor the Labour leaders are doing anything to fight this split drive. Neil Kinnock's entire energy is centred on Liverpool Council for their crime of implementing Tory Party policy,

while the wreckers of the AUEW, UDM, and EETPU receive not a mention.

Nothing is even being done to campaign for official TUC policy. On the contrary, the purpose of the special TUC conference is to reverse that policy. During the AUEW ballot there was a deafening silence from the TUC leadership. In Manchester where all the local AUEW District Committees came out for a 'No' vote and backed a local meeting to campaign for it, try as we might we could not get a single member of the General Council to speak on the platform.

The problem is that the TUC leaders are against the only real alternative to the right-wing's policy, which is to stand up for their members' rights no matter what it takes.

The two real options facing the TUC are to tag along two steps behind the right, or follow the policy of union solidarity and class struggle which Arthur Scargill projected in the miners' strike. If it was clear that the print unions could rely on real TUC backing to picket Murdoch out, the EETPU leadership would be isolated and its split drive pushed back.



## Silent Night in Huddersfield

**Huddersfield trades council joined the growing list of labour movement organisations actively supporting the Silent-night strikers before Xmas.**

Local meetings organised included ones

**By Paul Perkins**

with shop stewards from local factories and TGWU busworkers. Already £250 has been raised and a further £50 a month pledged from Hopkinsons workers.

The Huddersfield Polytechnic Labour Club also raised £50 and more money was collected at a *Youth Action* meeting in Huddersfield.

Trevor King of the Silentnight strikers explained the lessons of the strike. 'We are not only fighting for our right to work,' he said, 'against Tom Clarke the owner of Silentnight. But we are also fighting the courts, the Tories and the whole state.'

'We have to make a stand like the miners. Yesterday it was them; to-

day it's us, tomorrow it could be you.'

One of the activities in the area was an afternoon's leafletting of the Night and Day shop in Huddersfield town centre, owned by Clarke's son John. Worried by the possibility of leafletters turning away potential shoppers, the manager came outside.

'We are not the only shop selling Silentnight beds,' he said, 'so why leaflet here? Anyway, business is slow before Xmas, so why not try someone else?'

Trevor King gave the answer: 'But yours is the only shop owned by Clarks,' he said. 'And, yes, you're right about the business. So we'll be back for the January sales!'

Huddersfield trades council plans to turn that promise into action by building support for further leafletting of Night and Day in the New Year.

● All Information and donations for Silentnight strikers, contact: FTAT, Cravendale 92 Branch, Strike Fund, c/o Ann King, 10 Rainhill Crescent, Barnoldswick, Colne, Lancs. (phone: 0282 813662).

## Forgemasters: step up the solidarity!

**STEELWORKERS at Sheffield's Forgemaster's Atlas site are preparing to step up their 12 week old strike.**

All 700 strikers received letters of dismissal a week before Christmas, after rejecting a management ultimatum to return

**By Martin Hill**

to work or face the sack. Now they have been told they can only return as 'new starters'. This would mean that workers with years of service would lose their seniority and pension rights.

The steelworkers have not been deterred. Pickets burnt their dismissal notices at the factory gates. Their mood is one of determination. They have held out for 12 weeks, and defied moves by ISTC and AUEW officials to force them back to work.

The central issue in the strike is the right to centralised trade union representation and an elected convenor. Management have 'reorganised' the site into five separate companies, and refuse to negotiate at site level any more. The strikers know that to accept this would mean an end to any effective organisation and a green light to management to tear up agreements.

An immediate response to the dismissal notices came from the neighbouring River Don works, also owned by Forgemasters. The 700 workers there voted to join the strike after the Christmas break. On 2 January the plant

was closed by pickets from both River Don and Atlas sites. Now moves are under way to set up a single trade union structure for both Sheffield sites.

The campaign for solidarity will be stepped up as well. 'We have now changed our approach from purely fund-raising,' said convenor Ron Ward, 'and we are now appealing for the blacking of all Forgemasters products. The company will try and use non-trade union firms to get its products finished, but the companies that use them are trade union organised. The gloves are off now.'

Already fund-raising has been a big success. Regular street collections are being held. Stickers reading 'I've supported the steelworkers' are now a common sight.

Labour Party and trade union branches have organised collections, with particular support coming from the mining and engineering industries. One collection at Silverwood pit raised £500; £3000 was raised at Shardslows engineering works. A further gesture of solidarity was the invitation of strikers' children to miners' Christmas parties.

Other areas have contributed too — a tour of Manchester and the North West brought a particularly good response. Now the extension of the dispute makes solidarity still more vital.

● Donations to: Ron Ward, Shop Stewards Committee Secretary, Dispute Centre, AUEW House, Furnival Gate, Sheffield.

## Other Books

The following selection of books on South Africa is available by post from Other Books:

**South Africa: white rule, black revolt,** Ernerst Harsch, Monad, 352pp, £6.25 plus 69p postage

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**Heart of My Soul** Winnie Mandela, Penguin, 159pp, £2.95 + 25p postage.

**To honour women's day: profiles of leading women in the South African and Namibian liberation struggles,** IDAF, 56pp, £1.00 plus 22p postage.

**Nelson Mandela: I am prepared to die,** IDAF, 48pp, 50p plus 18p postage.

**Nelson Mandela: The struggle is my life,** IDAF, 208pp, £1.85 plus 46p postage.

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# Socialist ACTION

## US/Israeli terror in Middle East

IN A SHOW of gunboat diplomacy more reminiscent of the nineteenth century than the last quarter of the twentieth, the United States armed forces are parading the Mediterranean threatening military action against Libya. The US aircraft carrier *Coral Sea* has started to cruise off the Libyan coast. Other military threats made against Libya include B52 bomber strikes from bases in the United States and F1-11 attacks from US bases in Britain.

The Israeli regime meanwhile has let it be known that it plans renewed military action. But it is not stating against whom this will be directed.

By Joe Green

The alleged reason for this military activity were the attacks at Vienna and Rome airports. But the real reasons are the problems facing US and Israeli policy in the Middle East.

When the Israeli army invaded Lebanon in the summer of 1982 it was seen as a logical step in forcing Arab acceptance of the existence of the Zionist state in the Middle East. Egypt had already concluded peace with Israel in the Camp David agreement. Israel's aim was to install a regime favourable to it in Lebanon. This would in turn permit Jordan's King Hussein to come to an agreement with Israel.

But events turned out very differently to the way the invaders had planned. The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), under Arafat, was forced out of Lebanon. But Israeli attempts to create a client Christian regime in Lebanon completely failed. Syria emerged as the dominant force in the country.

Having been defeated in their immediate plans in Lebanon the United States and Israel next turned their attentions to Jordan. The aim was to force the PLO to accept the United

Nations resolutions recognising the state of Israel and allow Hussein to completely subordinate the Arafat-led PLO to his government.

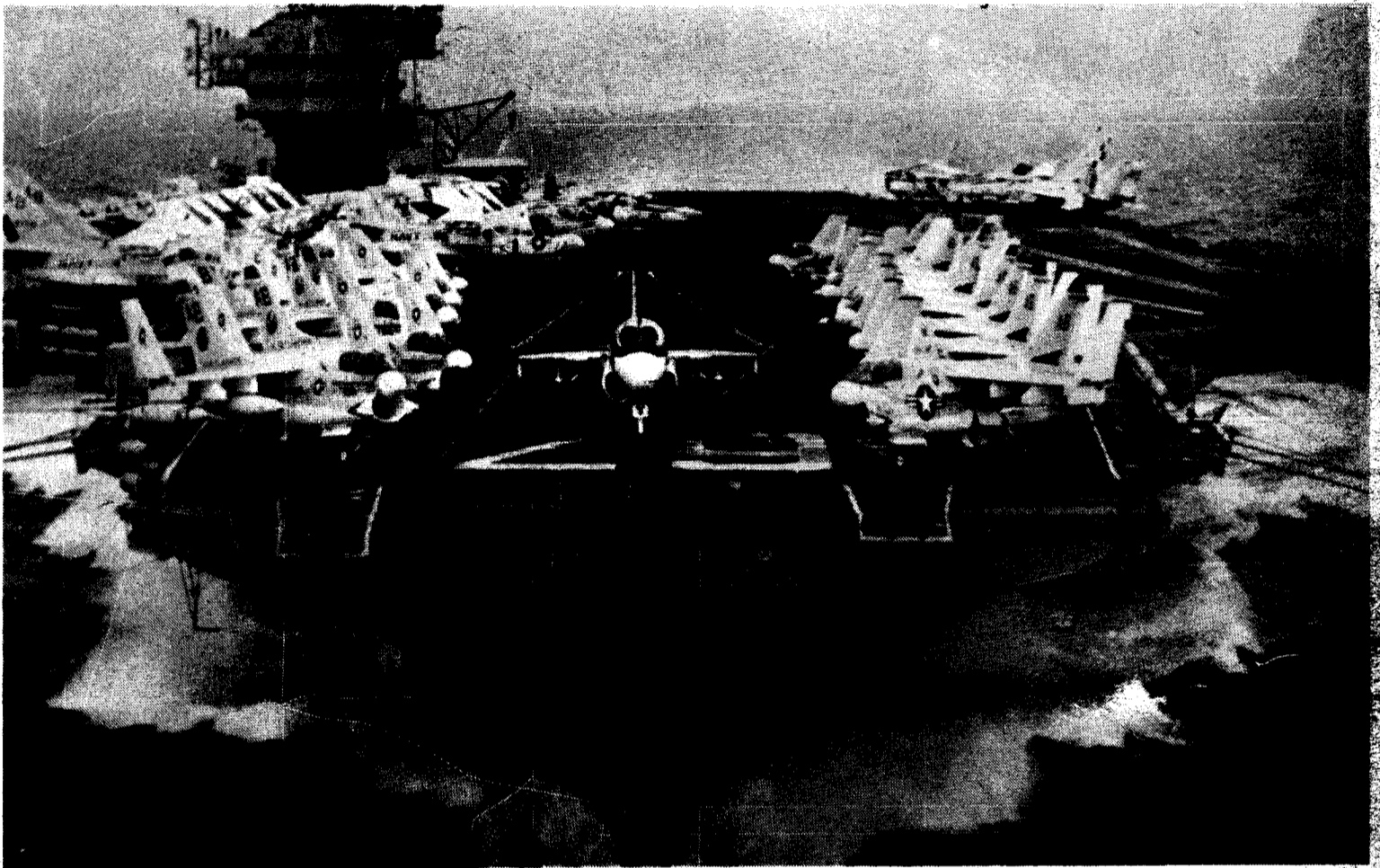
But, for this plan to work, either Syria and the PLO had to be totally broken, so that Hussein was safe to carry through a complete sell out, or at least some concession had to be offered to Jordan and the Palestinians. In the event Israel failed to smash Syria in Lebanon and it had no concessions whatever to offer to the Palestinian people. On the contrary Israel has been stepping up its policy of colonisation and repression in the occupied West Bank.

### Syria

The result was that the PLO has refused to accept the UN resolutions recognising Israel and Hussein has been forced to attempt some reconciliation with the Syrian government.

Facing this impasse Israel and the United States are contemplating a way out through renewed military action. Strategically, Israel needs to strike a new blow against Syria. This, however, would involve a major new war.

First, therefore, Syria must be isolated. If this cannot be achieved by diplomacy then military attacks on other Arab states which refuse to fall into line with US and Israeli policies may be called for. Libya is one such



US aircraft carrier at sea

state.

This is the real reason for the US and Israeli military threats. It has nothing to do with the struggle against 'terrorism'.

The Israeli government is easily the biggest terrorist regime in the entire Middle East. It is part of US and Israeli plans for new wars in the Middle East.

The entire labour movement should understand the reason for any US or Israeli attacks on Libya or any other Arab country in the region — and op-pose it.

## Defend Liverpool!

**THIS COMING** week sees the beginning of two court cases against Liverpool and Lambeth councillors, all of whom face possible surcharges and disqualification from office. These trials are political stitch-ups, brought by stooges of the Tory government with the full complicity of Neil Kinnock and the rest of the Labour Party misleadership.

Kinnock signalled by his speech to Labour Party conference that he had no intention of lifting a finger to defend councils like Liverpool, conference policy or no conference policy. And he put his money where his mouth was last month when he unleashed a mammoth witch-hunt against the District Labour Party.

Liverpool councillors have already been tried and found guilty: by the ruling class and the Tory Party, by their cronies in the media, and by the right wing leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions.

Kinnock is hell-bent on making sure that the conditions for building the much-needed solidarity with Liverpool across the labour movement are the worst he can create. The NEC has now decided that no more public sittings of the Liverpool enquiry will take place before the court case which begins next Monday.

But that enquiry has not been called off. And neither has the District

Party been reconstituted. Kinnock is still determined to wipe out the Liverpool party and its councillors.

By Annie Brady

'Liverpool councillors are being victimised precisely because they have fought for and carried out the policies adopted by Labour Party conference,' Eric Heffer told us. And he's dead right.

'The reason why every single party member should support Liverpool council,' he said, 'is because that are carrying out the party policy of strict non-compliance with the government's cuts. The entire labour movement must organise to give them all the financial and other support that they are going to need.'

Following Eric Heffer's advice is the best way of ensuring that the Tory government's attacks are thwarted. Rallying to the support of Liverpool

council is the best way to let Neil Kinnock know that party members will not tolerate witch-hunts against those whose 'crime' is defending the interests of the working class.

● See page 4 for details of the Liverpool council fighting fund, and for more information on witch-hunts up and the country.

### ... and Lambeth

LAMBETH councillors, too, face a court case beginning the day after Liverpool's, on Tuesday 14 January at the High Court in the Strand.

Although Lambeth has set a rate, they are facing charges of 'willfully' delaying setting it and hence causing 'additional expense' to rate-payers. The case is likely to last for at least two-three weeks — and the outcome for Lambeth councillors, too, is possible surcharge and disqualification.

Town hall unions are organising an all-night vigil outside the court. At 8.30am, trade unionists and Labour Party members will march from County

Hall's Jubilee Gardens to the Strand, to picket the court during the first day's hearing.

Activities begin this Sunday when the Lambeth Labour Parties are holding a rally, 2pm at Lambeth Town Hall. The two-hour rally will hear Arthur Scargill and Dennis Skinner speak in defence of the council's stand against Tory cuts. They will be joined by Bernie Grant and Sharon Atkin, chair of black sections and herself a Lambeth councillor, as well as Lambeth leader Ted Knight and Hazel Smith, housing chairperson.

● For more information contact Lambeth council on 01-274 7722, or the town hall unions on 01-674 9844 ext 180.

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