

A SOCIALIST ACTION

BUILDING AN ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALISM

- The Alliance threat p6
- 26 Counties election p10
- Tories' scabs charter p10
- Racist attacks p5
- International Women's Day p2

The lesson of Greenwich

When will Labour start to fight the Alliance?

THE LABOUR right claims it was a left wing candidate, and left wing policies, that lost Labour the Greenwich by-election. To avoid such defeats, they argue, the NEC should have the power to impose right wing candidates in by-elections.

Deirdre Wood's vote in Greenwich fell by 1700, four per cent. It was a serious defeat for Labour. But three months ago the right wing did impose a candidate: George Howarth, on Knowsley North. He presided over a fall of 7500, eight per cent, in Labour's vote. By that logic the NEC should be imposing hard left candidates everywhere.

But of course the real disaster is that we are seeing Labour's vote fall in Greenwich and in Knowsley. The comparison these percentage losses are measured against, 1983, was an all-time low for Labour and a catastrophe for the labour movement. We make the point on the two by-elections simply to show the absurdity of the explanations produced by the right wing.

What is taking place has nothing fundamentally to do with local candidates. The situation was summed up by Eric Heffer after the Greenwich poll: 'If we seek to appear little different from the SDP then it is they who gain — not Labour.'

For four years now the leadership has concentrated on fighting — not the Tories or the Alliance — but the left wing. That campaign left Labour defenceless before the vicious press campaign against Deirdre Wood in Greenwich.

A Labour Party that presents a resolutely right wing image to the world will lose votes to its right. That is a law of politics.

Labour is now facing the run-up to an election with its leadership, literally, pursuing a catastrophic political course. It has surrendered the political ground to its opponents, in particular to the Alliance. And Greenwich, like Knowsley, is part of the whirlwind Labour is reaping as a result.

One lesson must be applied straight away. The Labour right is playing with tactical voting and blocking any fight against the main electoral prop of the Tory government and the main electoral threat to Labour: the Alliance.

The reality of what the Alliance is about is now out in the open with Owen and Steel's statement that they would enter a Thatcher cabinet. The single quickest thing Labour could do to take the offensive — and to lift its support — is to launch a campaign axised at showing the collusion of the Alliance with the Tory Party.

This would dovetail perfectly well with the other key step Labour must take — that is, in word and in deed, begin to support those in struggle against the Thatcher government instead of attacking them.

There is a long history of assaults on working class communities by this Tory government, and an equally long history of Alliance support for those assaults. Above all, the history of Labour leadership's failure to defend those under attack has ground down Labour Party support.

Fighting back against the Tories and stepping up the struggle against the Alliance fits together like hand and glove. Always provide, that is, Labour turns its fire against its real enemies and not against its own left wing.



Socialist ACTION

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 1987

Remember the women of the north of Ireland

WOMEN THROUGHOUT the world will be celebrating International Women's Day on 8 March. But we in Britain should highlight one special struggle which demands our solidarity: the fight against the inhuman regime of strip-searching carried out by Britain in the north of Ireland and its own jails. On International Women's Day Socialist Action gives over its editorial space to support the women's delegation to Maghaberry prison.

9AM, SUNDAY 8 March 1987 will see more than 100 women from Britain assemble at Dunville Park, Falls Road, for the beginning of an annual journey to the all-women Maghaberry jail, 12 miles south of Belfast. Yet again the Women and Ireland network is organising a women-only picket against strip-searching and in support of the national liberation struggle in Ireland, to commemorate International Women's Day 1987.

Returning from a previous visit, one Greenham woman wrote: 'After coming back from Ireland it struck me that my experience working in the peace movement has always been a matter of choice. Choice to be involved, and choice about whether to risk arrest or to stay in the background. That choice doesn't exist for the nationalist communities in the north.'

This year, women from Labour Women for Ireland and Labour Committee on Ireland will join Labour Party women's delegations and others from up and down the country for this annual visit to the nationalist community of the north of Ireland. The Maghaberry picket has helped highlight the degrading strip-search torture that nationalist women are subject to as part of their everyday lives in jails throughout the north.

Arriving early evening, women will take up their accommodation with families from the nationalist community and participate in a women-only cabaret being laid on to greet the delegation. The next day, Saturday, events have been organised for the delegation by Sinn Fein's women's department. Workshops go on throughout the day, followed by a social in the evening.

On Sunday evening, after the Mughaberry picket, women will participate in a feedback meeting, to discuss their visit and share experiences. The delegations will arrive home during the course of Monday. Thereafter, delegation meetings around the country are already planned: in London, in Liverpool, in Newcastle, and in Birmingham.

The pre-visit briefing received by women on the 1987 delegation is a stark reminder of why this annual picket takes place. Women are advised: 'You will be staying in a nationalist area bordered by loyalist areas, and it is very easy to wander into a loyalist area by mistake. It is therefore very important to follow directions. If you are told the way to a certain place, then that is the way to go. This is particularly important at night.'

For those who haven't visited the north of Ireland before, daily conditions of life for the nationalist community are hinted at by advice like: 'There are no buses in the nationalist areas. If you are billeted centrally the black taxis are cheap.' And: 'It can be difficult to phone home as there are no public call boxes and many households don't have a phone.'

For one short weekend, women from Britain will experience the conditions that nationalist women from the six counties live under every day of every year. Socialist Action takes the opportunity of International Women's Day 1987 to salute women across the world who are fighting for their liberation and for the freedom of their people. Especially, we salute the nationalist women of the north of Ireland.

End strip-searches!
Self-determination for the Irish people!
Britain out of Ireland!

A new left in NOLS

THE NATIONAL Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) national conference held on the weekend of 28 February-1 March witnessed the establishment of a new left current in the student movement. It was shown in two developments.

First *Campaign Student*, standing in elections on a platform of support for the campaigns and politics of Labour Left Liaison (LLL), for a democratic secular Palestine, and for mass campaigning action for grants,

By Polly Vittorini,
SOAS Labour Club

received only six fewer votes than the candidate from Socialist Students in NOLS — with 18 votes for SSiN and 12 for *Campaign Student*. Although not elected, because of the transfer of the *Militant* vote to SSiN, the vote for *Campaign Student* signifies that this current is here to stay — and that there is already a sizeable current of support in NOLS for the politics of Labour's campaign left. Given that *Campaign Student* has only been established for three months it was a remarkably good vote.

The second development was that 40 students attended a fringe meeting to hear speakers from the Labour Women's Action Committee, the Labour Party Black Section and Campaign for Labour Party Democracy supporting their own campaigns and affiliation to LLL. Commitments were made from a number of Labour Clubs to affiliate to the LLL.

Socialist Organiser and SSiN had attempted to prevent this meeting from taking place by vetoing the proposal for the LLL to have a fringe meeting at the conference. The success of the CLPD, Black Section, WAC fringe meeting however was both a boost for these campaigns and lays the basis to campaign for NOLS to affiliate to the LLL.

An important feature on the left at NOLS conference was the increasing marginalisation of SSiN's politics in NOLS as they move towards the politics of *Militant*. Following up their attack on women's autonomy at December NUS conference, SSiN's main contribution to the women's debate was to propose to delete from the motion the statement 'that women only can define their oppression'.

Since this leaves only men as the other candidate for defining women's oppression we may safely infer that what SSiN meant by their call for 'an objective definition of sexual harassment' at December NUS conference was one which is acceptable to men. Apparently Socialist Students in NOLS now agree with the view that women are incapable of being objective and that only men can be!

The debate on women was a crucial one at the conference. NOLS voted to work closely with and affiliate to WAC and to add its name to WAC's appeal for the women's conference to elect the women's places on the NEC. NOLS will be an important ally for WAC in the fight for representation of women in the Labour Party.

Conference also debated the Middle East — and voted down the national committee recommendation of adopting support for two states in Palestine. This position which is essentially an argument for a smaller Zionist state of Israel, was supported by most of the NOLS national committee and by SSiN. *Militant* called for a 'socialist federation' in the Middle East. But conference rejected the NOLS national committee-SSiN position by 81 votes to 61 and adopted support for the right of self-determination for the Palestinian people and unconditional support for the PLO.

This position, and the practical solidarity called for in the motion, lays the basis for winning majority support in NOLS for the objective of a democratic secular state in Palestine where all can live equally; a policy which would be consistent with NOLS policy of support for the ANC of South Africa, for British withdrawal from Ireland, and for self-determination for the Irish people. It was a major victory that the right wing offensive by SSiN on Palestine was defeated.

In other debates conference decided to give total support to the FSLN and to work closely with the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign. It also voted to



affiliate to the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights and support the Lesbian and Gay Bill campaign.

A debate on racism, the central point of which was support for the Labour Party Black Section, was knocked off the end of the NOLS agenda. This will be an important campaign to mount in the coming year, to ensure that 1988 NOLS conferences takes a position in support of black self-organisation in the party.

Despite the political agreement with Labour's campaign left that these politics show, there is still a majority in NOLS against affiliation to Labour Left Liaison. The

Democratic Left leadership of NOLS puts its political backing behind Kinnock. This leads to the contradiction of having policies which would take NOLS into conflict with the Labour Party leadership if it was to campaign for them. Instead the leadership of NOLS is brought into conflict with the membership of NUS by refusing to campaign for its radical policies.

Campaign Student's call for NOLS to make its alliance with Labour's campaign left offers a resolution of this contradiction: by consistent campaigning by NOLS in defence of those in struggle both in the Labour Party and in society at

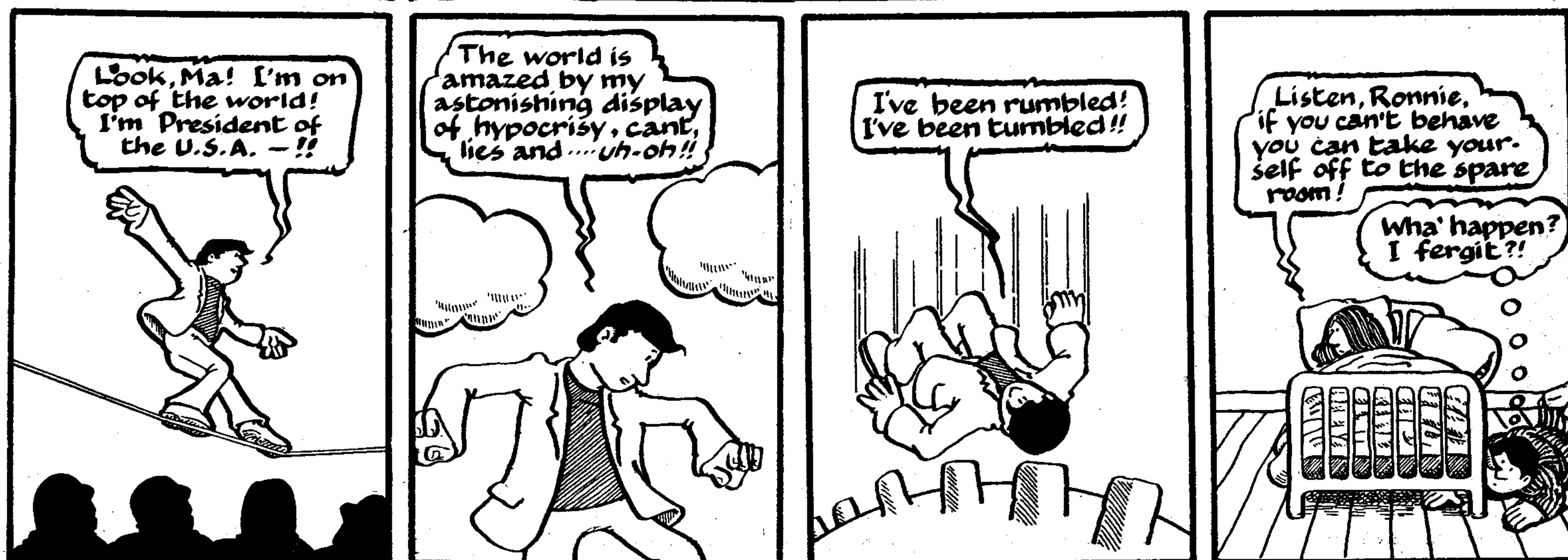
large. The potential of majority support for this course of action is clearly shown by the support for *Campaign Student* after only three months of existence.

In the last year NOLS has been locked in a sterile debate between the Kinnockite Democratic Left on one side and SSiN and *Militant* on the other. *Campaign Student*, linked to the LLL, had an impact in such a short time precisely because it shows a way out of those twin dead ends. NOLS conference was a clear demonstration of that.

Forward to a campaigning NOLS which is part of Campaign Forum's alliance for socialism!

a piece of the ACTION

© CORMAC



Where is British politics going?

THE LEFT is used to being in opposition. Denunciation of the Labour leadership is its stock-in-trade. But that is not enough today. The changes now taking place in British politics are of gigantic scope — larger than anything this generation of the labour movement has ever experienced. Kinnock and the Labour right not only fail to understand them but they are leading the labour movement to disaster. The left must cease to be 'an opposition' and must use every ounce of its resources to turn round the situation in the labour movement. Because only the agenda that the left is beginning to set can lead Labour out of its crisis. JOHN ROSS looks at the changing shape of British politics.

FOR anyone with eyes to see the Greenwich by-election, above all in what it fortells about the general election, shows the emerging shape of British politics. We will try to summarise here its main features in order to see the tasks of the left and the labour movement.

A resurgent SDP-Liberal Alliance, boosted by the defeats suffered by the working class under the Thatcher government, and closely tied to the Labour and trade union right, is threatening to hold Labour's vote down to its catastrophic 1983 level and even, in some cases, to cut into it further. In parallel with this, the right wing of the union bureaucracy is attempting to recast the trade union movement along 'new realist' lines.

The Thatcher government is maintained in office by the Alliance, which siphons off a large part of the anti-Tory vote from Labour. Thereby the Thatcher government, despite its declining popularity, is able to deliver huge blows to the working class.

Conflicts

The task of the ruling class in that situation is clear. It must marginalise and weaken to the utmost the Labour Party and labour movement, before the continuing fall in Thatcher's unpopularity makes it impossible for her to continue in office — whether this takes place at the next general election or the one after. It is by these means, which involve stabilising the Alliance as a permanent feature of British politics, that the bourgeoisie seeks to ensure that the tremendous changes the Tory government has brought about in British society, the economy and politics will be rendered permanent.

The chosen means for the ruling class to achieve this, indeed the only one available, is to seek to split the working class: to split society, to divide the country geographically, to deepen every differential and division which exists.

This process starts in the economy. It creates a core sector of stable, employed, well-paid workers and a 'periphery' of insecure, often temporary or part-time workers with few or no union rights.

It extends into deepening and utilising the sexual and racial divisions in the working class. The bulk of the secure core are white men. The majority of the 'periphery' are the women and black. Beyond even the periphery are the rising ranks of the permanently

unemployed — themselves concentrated among the black community, the young and the old.

These divisions are reflected in the deepening geographical divide in the country. Unemployment and poverty are rising rapidly in the north and the big cities. Prosperity continues to reign, and even increase, in large areas of the south. The increasing geographical divisions of the country, not simply north-south but also between the big cities and the rest of the country reflect that underlying class development in society. British capitalism's goal is to consolidate a relatively more secure and better off section of the working class around itself — and gain their consent to repression aimed against the sections of society for whom capital now has little to offer.

The political mechanisms of the ruling class in that are simple. They are to divide and split the working class and the labour movement — a task made easier because the Labour governments of 1964-70 and 1974-79 already split the working class.

The Wilson and Callaghan governments drove millions of better paid and skilled workers away from Labour with their policies of incomes policies and cuts. Labour's support in the manual working class fell by 23 per cent between 1966 and 1983 — the largest fall among any major social group. Among supervisory workers, technicians and the most skilled workers, Labour's support fell by even more — by 35 per cent.

Rise

These workers moved in huge numbers first to vote for Thatcher in 1979 and then for the Alliance in 1983. Wilson and Callaghan by their policies smashed to pieces the historic bloc of the working class behind Labour created in 1945. Thatcher and Owen are today the beneficiaries of the tremendous divisions introduced into the working class by capital and by Labour's right wing. How to reunite the working class movement, on a line of struggle against capital, is the task that faces the left today.

That right wing is today pursuing a course that does still further damage to the labour movement. Laird, Hammond, Golding — and their allies in the Parliamentary Labour Party — act to reduce Labour to a permanent minority status. On



Above: triumphant Alliance candidate in Greenwich, Rosie Barnes. Below: the campaign Labour should have mounted — this leaflet was produced by HQ only days before the poll

their line Labour would be allowed into office only in coalition with the SDP. The TUC would be converted to a 'business unionism' that would, at best, benefit even in the short term only a few million of the best paid and most secure workers. The great majority of the working class would be left to rot, or more precisely to have their organisation destroyed.

There is no path to the right that will halt the damage to the labour movement. How then is Labour to regain the initiatives and undo the tremendous damage that has been done?

Lead

Given the damage which was done to Labour and the labour movement by the last Labour governments, and by this right wing bureaucracy, several million workers have been broken from Labour and now vote Alliance — as well as a small fraction which vote Tory. A powerful right wing bloc has been consolidated in the trade unions. Labour has been forced back to be very much the party of the innercities, of the north, of the black community, of the council estates, and of the unemployed. That is the real situation Labour faces.

One danger for the left is that it glories in that situation. Ideas of the 'alliance of the dispossessed', of 'empowering the powerless', are a useless mirror image of the business unionism, or support for the SDP, of a Golding, a Laird, or a Hammond. Yes, Labour must be the party of the black community, of the

unemployed, of women, and of the council estates. But it cannot be simply that.

To be successful Labour must represent the whole working class — not only women, black people, and the miners, but also a large part of the membership organised by the AEU, or the EETPU, and many of whom are now voting for the first time ever for Owen.

Course

As we have already seen, Labour cannot do that on a policy of moving to the right — because that will irrevocably split the working class, against millions of its most oppressed members. 'New realism' and coalition with the SDP, is a path even in the short term, for only a few million of the most secure and most 'privileged' sections of the working class.

Labour must cut into Laird, Hammond — and Owen's — base from the left: starting by rejecting the incomes policies and cuts that drove workers to support them in the first place. It is by these means that opposition can be built in the unions which new realists control, and support won back in those constituencies where Labour is threatened by the Alliance. Calling on the working class traditional allegiance to Labour and against the dabbling with the Alliance lies a weapon in the left's favour.

Answer

But to build on this it is necessary to grasp the tremendous changes that have taken place in the working class in the last 30 years, and what is

necessary for Labour to be a class party today.

Rate

It is here that the left is beginning to make the greatest leaps forward in understanding. Since World War II almost three and a half million women and black people have entered the labour force. The working class today is divided virtually half and half between women and black workers on the one side and traditional 'male white' workers on the other. It is among these, above all among women workers, that Labour has its greatest historical weakness — indeed if Labour had won women's support in the way it has won men's it would have been in office throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

To be a class party today, indeed to be more of a class party than it ever was in the '50s and '60s, Labour has to reorganise both its policies and its structure to take account of that reality of the working class.

That is the significance

of what a Bernie Grant is doing in Haringey, or what an Arthur Scargill did in the miners strike. It is not, as the right accuse, the idea of constructing a majority through a 'coalition of minorities' — although the fact that they categorise women as a 'minority' shows just how bigotted the right are. What is involved is understanding the tremendous changes in the structure of the working class itself.

The reality is the majority of the working class in London are women or black. No one advocates the adoption of the exact tactics of a Bernie Grant everywhere in Britain. But the basic idea, that Labour must be brought into line with the working class as it actually exists, does apply everywhere.

Grown

And that is also the core of dealing with Owen, Golding, Hammond and Laird — who in practice form an alliance. Because finally the Alliance and the

new realists have no solution. Alliance councils make cuts with the same alacrity as the Tories. Golding and Laird's policy of selling jobs cuts their own base. There is still strong vestigial support for Labour in wide sections of their base.

Reality

Labour is now faced with a task it has not had to undertake for 50 years. To fight inch by inch to rebuild its support in the working class — and to do so on an agenda which only the left can provide. The path which Kinnock is pursuing, to take Labour to the right, will only lead to disaster after disaster.

This is the challenge that now faces the left. It has to think not like a small embattled minority, but like the general staff of the labour movement. Because only its ideas and agenda can lead the labour movement out of its crisis.

If anyone didn't understand that before Greenwich, they should now.



London WAC gets organised

THE inaugural meeting of the London organisation of the Labour Women's Action Committee was held on Sunday 22 February.

Called with the aim of establishing a campaigning regional organisation of LWAC, the meeting brought together women from several constituencies and women's sections, Labour Party campaigns and other sections of the Labour Party, including NOLS.

Introductions on LWAC's approach to the review of the Labour women's organisation, on the theme of 'Building a powerful Labour women's organisation', were given by Ann Pettifor, LWAC national organiser, and Munira Thobani, for the Labour Party Black Section.

The point was made in the meeting that although the largest regional membership for LWAC is in the London area, until now that membership has had no way of regularly meeting or organising

In Brief

most effectively. As a result, the campaign for LWAC's demands for changes in the structure of the Labour Party to empower women has not been taken up to the fullest possible extent in the London area.

Ann Pettifor explained that strengthening this regional organisation and LWAC's ability to campaign for power for women was especially important this year.

Key to this will be winning unity by women in different sections of the movement for proposals for a women's organisation with power — trade union women, women in black sections, constituency women.

Munira Thobani explained that women in Black Sections have the greatest possible interest in campaigning for power for Labour women. But LWAC must also take on the demands and terms set by Black women.

The meeting was a positive step towards building a campaigning London LWAC, fighting centrally for the changes needed to create a powerful and meaningful Labour women's organisation.

Regional round up

West Midlands TASS attack Black Section

A RESOLUTION calling on the regional executive to campaign against Labour Party Black Sections has been submitted to the West Midlands regional Labour Party conference to be held at Opengate Town Hall, Telford, on 21-22 March. Submitted by TASS No. 12 division, it says Black Sections are divisive, would lead to the isolation of ethnic minorities within the party, and would detract from the unity necessary for a Labour victory. This is only the latest move by TASS. As Socialist Action has previously reported a resolution to TASS conference from South Wales region also denounces Black Section as divisive and unrepresentative.

The Labour Party Black Section will oppose the resolution and fight its implementation if it is passed. Far from Black Sections being divisive the West Midlands conference shows the real problems facing the party.

Some months ago the regional office asked all affiliated organisations to submit resolutions on either the jobs and industry campaign or on the issue of health. For those wanting to take up the plight of black people this was not a problem.

After eight years of Thatcher the situation in the West Midlands is grim:

300,000 jobs have disappeared, unemployment is 15 per cent, and the region has fallen from second to sixth in the earnings league. But among black people things are far worse. In the Midlands as a whole unemployment is 31.5 per cent among Afro-caribbeans, 28.4 per cent among Asians and 10.9 per cent among whites.

By Mick Archer

Even the regional executive recognises the disparity. In the consultative document, *The West Midlands can make it*, the executive argues



that 'expansion will not automatically benefit everyone in the region' and that 'the specific needs of women, the young and elderly, racial minorities and disabled call for special measures'.

However nowhere in the document does it say what special measures for racial minorities would be.

But affiliates who have submitted proposals on

this have met with a predictable response. Instead of their resolutions being included in the jobs and industry campaign section of the agenda they have been given an 'equal opportunities' section of their own. Supporters of the resolutions are concerned that they will never be discussed. After all there is a long tradition of arguing that to even

discuss special measures to combat black unemployment is divisive.

Black Sections were formed to oppose this sort of unity, which ignores the real divisions between black and white workers and discuss effective measures for overcoming them. The TASS resolution is testimony to how effective Black Sections have been in this fight.

Jobs not bombs call from Labour CND

UNILATERALISTS in the party are uneasy following the launch of Labour's defence campaign last December.

That was the overwhelming message of Labour CND's annual meeting in Sheffield recently. Delegates heard guest speaker Peter Heathfield of the National Union of Mineworkers express concern at the nationalistic emphasis of the Modern Britain in a Modern World campaign, and especially at the Labour leadership's pledge to increase conventional armaments.

Those sentiments were overwhelmingly shared by the meeting. Delegates supported a resolution from the LCND executive which committed Labour CND to a campaign within

the party for a policy that all money saved on nuclear weapons would be reallocated to the 'creation of jobs and projects of public works.'

Other policies approved included forging closer links with the trade unions, and a unanimous call for Labour Parties to support CND's national demonstration in London on Saturday 25 April.

Delegates also gave preliminary consideration to Labour CND's model resolutions to party conference. Their themes will be: the reallocation of all money saved on nuclear weapons to be diverted into welfare programme, including building schools, hospitals and homes; Britain's withdrawal from NATO; and the removal of all US bases from this country.

Labour Women for Ireland

LABOUR Women for Ireland, the autonomous women's section of the LCI, held its AGM on Saturday 28 February in London.

It took place in a context of greater potential than ever for broad campaigning action led by Labour women in solidarity with the Irish struggle.

In this context the disappointing figure of 24 voting members present, largely from London, highlighted the failings of LWI's political direction and stimulated debate over LWI's campaigning priorities. Specifically it

must step up its work on strip-searching, with the LCI, and, in London, with Irish women's groups in particular.

Guest speakers included Barbara de Bruin from Sinn Fein, who spoke of increased repression since the Anglo-Irish Accord was signed. She mentioned in particular the banning of women's demonstrations.

A speaker from the Irish Women's Abortion Support Group outlined the support it provides for some of the 4000-plus women forced to come from both the north and south of Ireland to England for abortions each year.

Scottish Party to discuss women's organisation

THIS year's Scottish Labour Party conference (13-15 March, Perth) will consider an important proposal on women's representation in the party.

The Scottish Labour Party executive is proposing that conference

decides that women should elect the five women's seats on the Scottish executive.

By Ann Henderson

If adopted by Scottish conference, it would tremendously strengthen our fight for the same

policy in the current review of the national Labour women's organisation.

A resolution from Stirling women's council also calls for Scottish support for the women's seats on the national executive to be elected by women.

Members of the LWAC in Scotland are

drawing up proposals for Scotland based on parity between women's sections constituency women and trade union women — in line with WAC's proposal for the national women's organisation.

The Scottish Labour Party has placed a very early deadline of 7 June 1987 for submissions on

possible changes to the Scottish women's conference.

Organisations in Scotland are encouraged to consult with WAC, and submit proposals for parity of representation, and a weighted trade union vote within the women's conference based on female membership.

Poor showing for Militant at Scottish LPYS

1987 Scottish LPYS conference was held in Portobello town hall, Edinburgh, over the weekend of 28 February-1 March, and attracted the smallest turnout in many years.

By Brian Kelly, Clydebank LPYS and Fraser Taylor, Dumbarton LPYS

Its size reflected the inability of the *Militant* leadership of the LPYS to politically combat the attacks launched on Labour's youth organisation by the Scottish party leadership.

That same malaise was reflected in the debate on the Sawyer proposals, which attracted 10 resolutions to the conference.

Seven supported the *Militant* position and three supported the views of the Labour Coordinating Committee.

Contributions from *Militant* supporters on the 'tremendous record' of the LPYS and its role as the biggest youth organisation in Britain were obviously fake. The conference address by the national chair of the LPYS, to the effect that any young person attending this conference would be 'filled with enthusiasm' for the Young Socialists, was belied by the atmosphere of conference.

Militant were also on the run on a number of political issues raised, not least of which was the debate on Ireland. Of the six resolutions, two were favourable to the Labour

Committee on Ireland. One of these, from Dumbarton, called for support for the LCI. In a roundabout way, LCC delegates called for support for the LCI and voted in favour of the Dumbarton resolution.

Militant's position, for a 'socialist federation' of Britain and Ireland, was directly counterposed to the LCI position. For the first time at a Scottish LPYS conference, *Militant* supporters openly attacked the LCI.

Despite this and despite an attempt by the Scottish party leadership to ban a Sinn Fein speaker, Aengus O Snodaigh, attending the LCI fringe meeting, that meeting was packed out. The meeting was chaired by Paul Carroll, National Union of

Students Scottish convenor. A woman from the Republican Bands Alliance and a Labour Women for Ireland speaker joined Aengus on the platform.

The debate on Labour Party Black Section attracted two resolutions, from Clydebank and Dumbarton LPYS, which the Scottish youth leadership attempted to subsume under the heading 'party organisation'. Although these resolutions were heavily defeated, *Militant* was clearly on the defensive.

LPYS representative on the Labour Party NEC, Linda Douglas, was called to speak from the platform before the vote was taken. But not once did she refer to Black Section, nor to her own record of

supporting the scab Black and Asian Advisory Committee.

The sharpest contradiction for *Militant* at the Scottish LPYS conference, however, was the ambiguity of their position on the South African ANC. Out of five *Militant*-sponsored resolutions on South Africa, only one referred to SALEP. The disparity between *Militant's* characterisation of the armed struggle in South Africa as 'individual terrorism' and calls in some of their resolutions for arming the ANC was crystal clear.

This is a debate which will inevitably be raised at the LPYS national conference. It is one which will create havoc in the ranks of *Militant's* support.

LPYS Yorkshire conference

THE *Militant* leadership of the LPYS can always be relied upon to turn regional conferences of the Young Socialists into dull non-events with ritualistic calls for the nationalisation of the top 200 monopolies.

The only relief and politics at the Yorkshire region LPYS conference,

held on 7-8 February, came with well attended fringe meetings, the high point of each was the speaker Alan Curran, youth organiser for Sinn Fein.

A lunchtime Labour Committee on Ireland meeting organised by YS members heard Bob Clay and Alan Curran talk about the 'oppression training ground' in the six counties and how police

'techniques' have first been tested out on Irish people before being used in Britain.

Atma Singh, for the Labour Party Black Section carried on the theme by talking about the oppression of black people in this country and the building of black self organisation that is developing inside the Labour Party. Alan Curran also explained the decision

of the ard fheis to stand candidates in the forthcoming 26 County general election.

The evening Youth Action fringe meeting developed the theme of the central role of internationalism in an alliance for socialism, and how, if it is to grow the YS must take on a more internationalist campaigning perspective, and the YS must relate to the actual

struggles that are developing in Britain today.

The centrality of Ireland in the weekend's events moved onto the floor of the conference with a resolution from Colne Valley LPYS calling for withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. Alan Curran was twice denied the right to open the debate, but a statement prepared by him was read out.

Growing police violence against black communities

Clinton McCurbin:

Death at the hands of Wolverhampton Police

BLACK ORGANISATIONS in Wolverhampton are calling a national demonstration on 7 March to protest at the killing of Clinton McCurbin. Clinton died from asphyxia on 20 February after police tried to detain him in a city-centre shop. According to eyewitnesses he was beaten and placed in a necklock after protesting at his arrest.

Bystanders who objected to the excessive force of the police were told to 'mind your own fucking business'. Several were arrested after scuffles which broke out when it became known that Clinton was dead.

Outrage

The killing of Clinton has outraged Wolverhampton's black communities. Within 24 hours of his death a 300-strong meeting was held to discuss action. A larger meeting on 25 February, attended by representatives from black organisations from London and Birmingham, decided on the demonstration.

While the details of the route have to be confirmed the targets of the community's anger are clear: the Next store where Clinton was killed; police; and the local *Express and Star* whose racist reporting of the event has fuelled their anger.

In an editorial on 23 February it argued that the scuffles following Clinton's death were due to 'the assumption among certain

By Mick Archer

black people that the police ought not to arrest or inhibit anyone of their race, no matter what they are doing'. Nowhere did the *Express and Star* ask whether racist assumptions amongst the police might explain the recent spate of deaths and serious injuries suffered by black people at their hands.

No doubt

The black people at the 25 February meeting were in no doubt about this. They saw Clinton's death as the latest in a chain of police assaults on members of the black community, including the killing of Cynthia Jarrett in Tottenham, the maiming of Cherry

Groce in Brixton, and the savage beating of Trevor Monerville in Stoke Newington.

As a statement from the Wolverhampton Council for Community Relations explains: 'The death of black people is becoming a regular result of the process of contact between black people and the police.' Moreover, black people have seen the state's response to these crimes. They have seen the 'unbiased' investigations the *Express and Star* talks about alongside the trials of black youth from Handsworth, Brixton and Broadwater Farm.

Protest

Is it any surprise in these circumstances that black people take to the streets to protest against this violence?

The response of the police to these events has also been predictable. In the immediate aftermath of Clinton's death they issued a statement suggesting that drug abuse was to blame. This racist stereotype was seized on by the gutter press which pointed its finger at the victim rather than the police.

When the post mortem

revealed no evidence to support this allegation the police said this had merely been a possibility and they were sorry they had 'caused any distress to the deceased's family'.

Because of incidents like this the black community is demanding an independent public enquiry and is refusing to cooperate with the police complaints authority. Birmingham District Labour Party Black Section have come out in support of this demand.

Experience

In a statement they argue that the experience of black people leads them to believe that 'the police complaints authority enquiry will not reveal the truth in order to protect the police, will not lead to the prosecution of those responsible for the death, and will not examine police racism and police institutionalised brutality.'

They have demanded that the police officers responsible for Clinton's death be charged with murder and all those arrested for public order offences in subsequent scuffles be released. Black organisations are raising

funds for such an enquiry.

The Wolverhampton Labour-controlled council has also offered financial support. Paul Boateng has taken on the case and Clinton McCurbin's mother has been flown, at the council's expense, from her home in New York. An independent post mortem is expected to be carried out.

The stance of Wolverhampton's Labour leadership has not gone unchallenged however. Local Tory and Alliance politicians are whipping up a racist campaign of opposition to the cash backing that Wolverhampton council is to provide.

Tory councillors claim to have received a stream of calls from local ratepayers and petitions are reportedly being raised. Tory and Alliance candidates in the Midlands West European by-election, to be held on 5 March, have publicly condemned the funding and claim Labour voters support their view.

Campaign

The constituency includes the three Wolverhampton Westminster seats. Labour's candidate is the leader of Wolverhampton

council.

The *Express and Star* has joined in this campaign. In its 27 February edition it printed 11 letters attacking the council's decision, not one defending it. One letter complained that Labour was not working for the white community, while another claimed to speak for an ethnic minority known as CROWS (Caucasian Ratepaying Old Wulfrunians).

In the light of this campaign the task of anti-

racists is clear. The 7 March demonstration must be massive, and it must be supported by labour movement organisations. The stance of Wolverhampton council must be defended and the call for an independent public enquiry should be backed.

As Birmingham District Labour Party Black Section have argued, white socialists must give Wolverhampton's black community their total support.

Broadwater Farm: trial by media

AS THE trial of the six defendants charged with the murder of PC Blakelock continues, the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign is organising a public meeting to get the truth across against a backlash of media racism. Court observers and speakers from the defence campaign and from Broadwater Farm Youth Association will give an up-date on the situation facing the six defendants and Tottenham's black community. In a statement issued to advertise the meeting BWFDC say: THE trial of three men and three juveniles charged with the murder of PC Blakelock in the Tottenham Uprisings of 1985 is continuing. As was feared, the prosecution case has been blazoned across the newspapers and TV screens in an orgy of inaccurate and prejudicial reporting.

In any trial, the prosecution case consists simply of unproven allegations which they seek to prove against the defendants. In English law, a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty. But, in this case, the prosecution allegations have been presented by the media in a highly emotive manner, as 'fact'. For example: 'A mob of youths who murdered PC Keith Blakelock ... planned to cut off his head and plant it on a pole.' (*Guardian*, 22.1.87)

On the occasions where the defence have succeeded in discrediting prosecution witnesses under cross-examination, this has scarcely been reported. For example, one prosecution witness admitted that he is living under 24-hour protection in accommodation provided by the police, and that the evidence he had given against the defendants in court, was entirely false. (Not reported.)

We are calling this meeting to give anyone who is interested our version of what has been said in court to date. The information given will be based on the notes of members of the Defence Committee who have sat in the public gallery.

● *BWFDC public meeting 'Trial by media or trial by jury?', takes place at 7.30pm on Wednesday 11 March, Tottenham Town Hall, Town Hall Approach Road, London N15.*

Questions Stoke Newington police must answer

Trevor Monerville:

TREVOR MONERVILLE sustained horrific injuries after spending some days in the custody of Stoke Newington police. The family and friends of Trevor Monerville Campaign Committee made the following statement.

WE are asking for your support for our family's campaign to find out what happened to Trevor Monerville whilst in police custody. Firstly we would like to explain the current situation. It is as follows:

● Stoke Newington police claim to be ignorant of how Trevor came to get the injuries from which he is now suffering. They say that Trevor was found by a member of the public at 10.40pm on 1 January 1987. They say he was asleep in a car with a broken window. Police claim to have thought he was under the influence of drugs and arrested him for 'criminal damage' to the car. He was taken to Stoke Newington police station to 'sleep it off'.

● Trevor is now convalescing. He has undergone brain surgery. He almost lost his life. When he was admitted to hospital he had bruises from head to toe. Even the soles of his feet were bruised. He had suffered a series of blows to the head. This produced a blood clot and a swelling in the brain which paralysed the left side of his body.

The mystery we want to untangle is how Trevor got into this state. This is what we know:

At 3pm on 1 January 1987 we reported him missing to Stoke Newington police station. They denied any knowledge of his whereabouts. Again on 2

January Trevor was reported officially missing. By this time he had been in police custody for at least 17 hours. Nonetheless the police again denied any knowledge of his whereabouts.

On 3 January the police charged Trevor at Highbury Corner magistrates court. They knew his identity then by his fingerprints. These had been taken forcibly by six officers on 2 January. Still we were not informed of his whereabouts.

Trevor was too unwell to be put inside the court and he was remanded in custody from his cell to Brixton prison for medical reports.

He was only tracked down there due to his father's persistence in finding him. We were eventually able to see him on Monday 5 January, four days after he went missing. If we had not been so persistent he could still be in Brixton prison, or worse, dead.

Attention

Once public attention was drawn to Trevor's condition the police issued a statement claiming that Trevor had a brain tumour. This has proven to be false under medical examination. The police then suddenly dropped all charges against Trevor.

We do not know how Trevor received his injuries. We do know he was in police custody between 10.40pm on 1 January and Saturday 3 January. We

need answers to the following questions if we are to begin to know what happened.

★ Was Trevor in his present condition when the police found him? Did he have bruises and cuts over the length of his body? If so, why was he charged with an offence? Why was he not taken directly to hospital? Why were these injuries not discovered on Trevor's five visits by police doctors and two journeys to Homerton hospital whilst in police custody?

★ If Trevor was NOT in his present condition when found by the police, how did he receive his injuries whilst in police custody?

★ Why, given Trevor's condition, did it take six officers to forcibly take his

fingerprints? Why, immediately after this ordeal, did Trevor see three doctors within six hours? What happened?

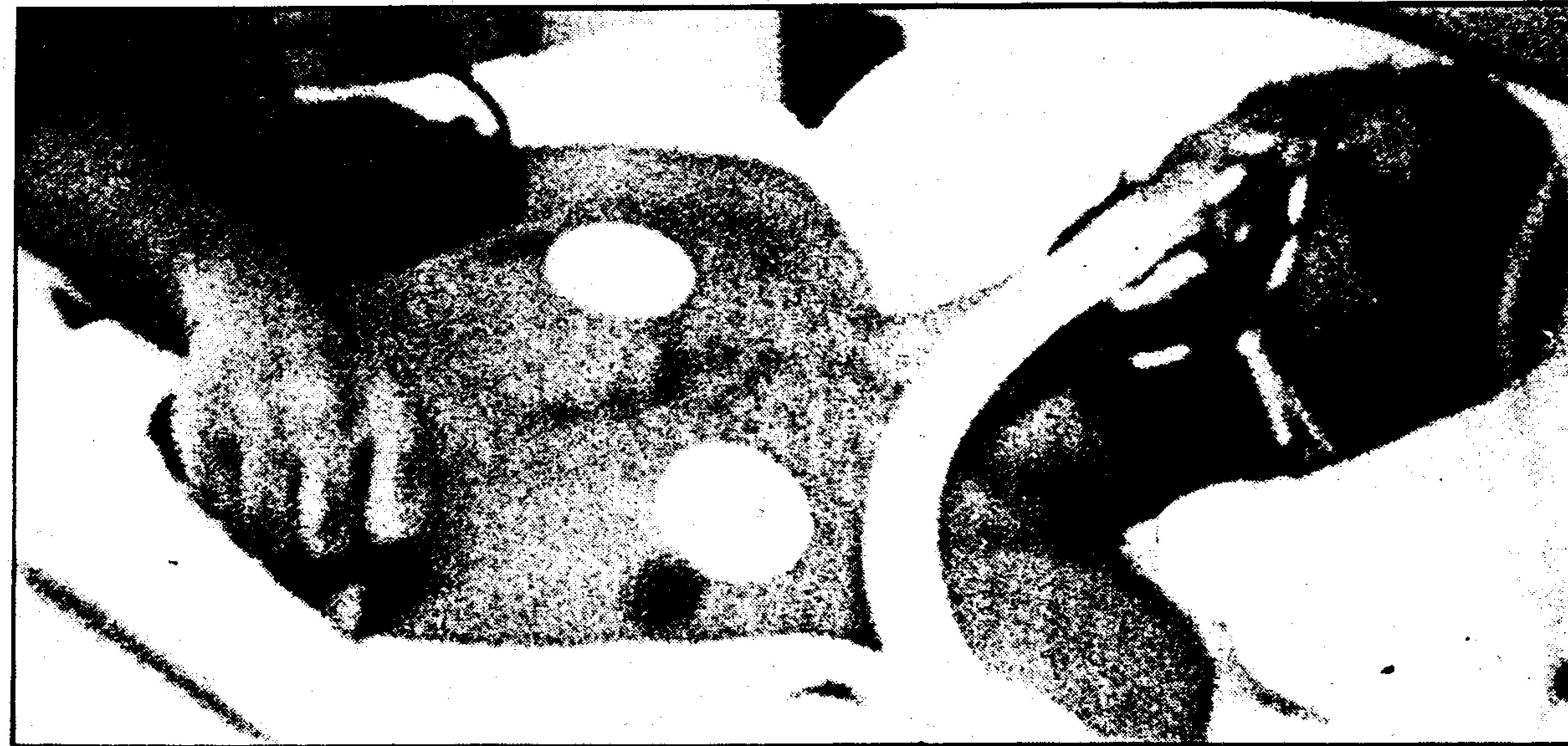
★ Why did the police not inform us they were holding Trevor once they discovered his identity on 3 January 1987?

★ Why did prison officers destroy some of Trevor's clothes?

★ Why did police invent a brain tumour for Trevor?

★ Why did Stoke Newington police suddenly drop all charges against Trevor?

● *Support to: Family and Friends of Trevor Monerville Campaign Committee, 42 Brooksby Walk, London E9. 01-985 6878*



Trevor Monerville lies in a hospital bed after suffering his injuries.

LABOUR PARTY BLACK SECTION STATEMENT:

Police attacks on the black community

THE Labour Party Black Section is appalled at the sharp increase in police violence against the Black community. The list of maimings and killings has been added to in the case of Trevor Monerville and with the death of Clinton McCurbin in Wolverhampton. Raids on our community, like the ones in Brixton, Handsworth and St Pauls based on the racist pretext of 'looking for drugs', are an attempt to criminalise Black people. We are committed to throwing our full weight behind campaigns for justice in the face of these police attacks. If the state and its bully-boys in blue are incapable or unwilling to protect us then we must defend ourselves by whatever means necessary. The police have proved that they are not even accountable to their Tory masters. We reaffirm our demand that they must be placed under the democratic control of the whole community.

The Alliance

and why the right

IN THE six years since the Social Democratic Party was formed, the Labour Party and most of the left has greatly underestimated the political threat to the labour movement posed by the SDP-Liberal Alliance. When Jenkins, Owen, Williams, and Rogers left the Labour Party to form the SDP in 1981 Michael Foot, then Labour Party leader, simply declared: 'those who leave us will become lonely figures in the political wilderness ... Their influence on events will be virtually nil.' Furthermore the Labour Party has carried out no sustained campaign against the Alliance. Kinnock rejected even the advice of his own campaign manager, Robin Cook, who tried unsuccessfully to persuade the party leadership to take up a central campaign against the Alliance. Tony Banks, writing in *London Labour Briefing* when the SDP was formed argued: 'The SDP is essentially a party created from the top downwards and without resorting to force there is no recent example of parties constructed in this way surviving for any length of time.' Socialist Action has been almost alone in explaining how serious is the political threat to Labour posed by the Alliance. After Greenwich surely the left, and the Labour Party, must now realise just how central is the question of the SDP and the Alliance JOHN ROSS looks at the Alliance dagger pointed at Labour's heart — and why militants in the labour movement must take the fight against it so seriously.

TO UNDERSTAND why the SDP and the Alliance is such a deadly political threat to Labour, and why it is capable of gaining such enormous victories as the Greenwich by-election certain crucial historical facts about the British labour movement must be grasped. Above all it must be understood that anti-Toryism, not anything else, has always been the most powerful dynamic of the workers movement.

The fight against successive Tory governments went on when the British working class movement was being created at the time of the French revolution. During the crisis of British society in the late 1820s and early 1830s the working class found itself fighting against the Tories to secure the first extension of the right to vote. After a brief move to class independence during Chartism the great bulk of the working class movement supported the Liberals against the Tories throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century. When the Labour Party rose to become a mass party around World War I the labour movement again found the Tory Party as its direct enemy. For 30 years after World War II an apparently stable two-party system pitted Labour against the Tories. The labour movement finds itself locked in a struggle with the Thatcher government today. In short *anti-Toryism* is built into the bones of the working class movement, and the majority of the working class, by 200 years of struggle.

The consequences of such massive, inbuilt anti-Toryism can be seen over the short term since 1966 — the year of Labour's last real electoral triumph, and the year from which Labour's decline in support is clear. Labour's vote has collapsed drastically since 1966 — falling from 48.0 per cent of the poll in that year to 27.6 per cent in 1983. But none of that loss of votes has gone to the Tories.

Vote

The Conservative vote in 1966, when they lost badly, was 41.9 per cent. In 1983, when Thatcher won by a landslide, the Conservative vote was 42.2 per cent. *Of the 20 per cent of the vote lost by Labour since 1966 half a per cent has gone to the Tories, less than one per cent to the nationalists, and almost 17 per cent to the Alliance.* The division of the fall in the Labour vote can be seen in Figure 1.

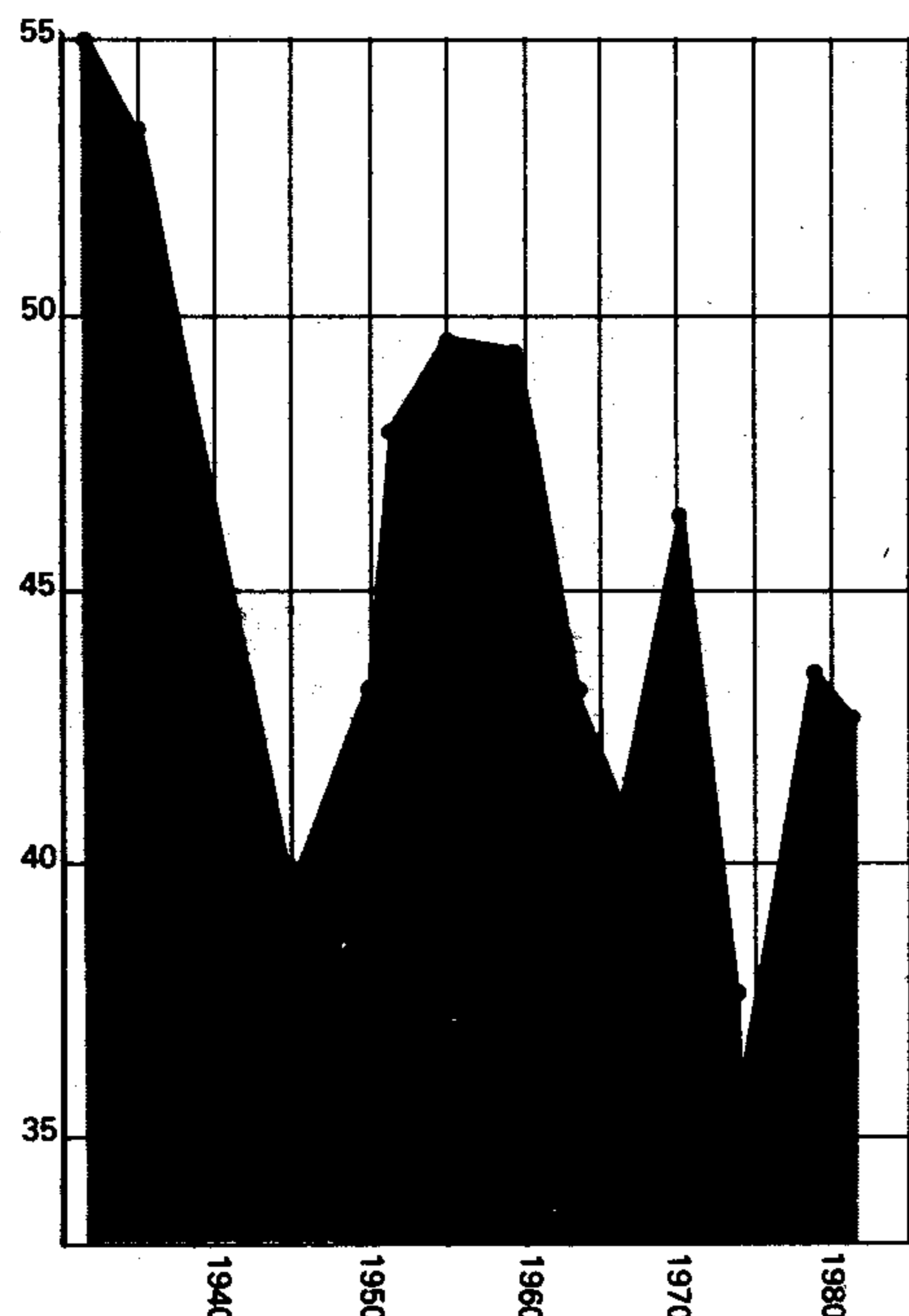


Figure 1 Tory percentage of the vote since 1931

The pattern is obvious — and confirms the historical points we have made. The Tories are incapable of gaining support from Labour even in a period of the most drastic decline of Labour support. It is only a *non-Tory* party that has been capable of cutting into the Labour vote.

Anti-Tory

But if the British working class is extremely anti-Tory it is not extremely socialist or comparably strongly pro-Labour — despite the myths of the Labour Party and the illusions of those who believed in labourism as a powerful and progressive political tradition. Every single *fact* confirms that anti-Toryism is a far more powerful force in the working class than pro-socialism or even support for Labour.

The 27.6 per cent of the vote received by Labour in 1983 meant that Britain had the lowest vote for an independent working class party of any imperialist country in Western Europe. It is only necessary to compare the 28 per cent of the vote for a party of the working class in Britain to the 40-50 per cent of the vote cast for parties of the working class in West Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Sweden or any other major West European country to see the relative historical weakness of elementary political consciousness in the British labour movement.

While 1983 was an extreme case, it was only a particularly graphic il-

lustration of the general trend. Even prior to 1983, despite the fact that Britain is the most proletarianised society in the world, the percentage of the British working class voting for an independent working class party was lower than in any major West European country. The extremely late formation of the Labour Party, its extreme historical backwardness even among social democratic parties, was an expression of the same process.

Furthermore Britain is one of the few countries in the world (the United States and Canada being the others), in which working class parties actually receive less votes than the trade unions have members. The British labor movement is historically *organisationally* strong, with one of the most powerful trade union movements in the world, but extremely *politically* weak. The historically strong trade union organisation masked an extremely low level of *political* consciousness — certainly the lowest of any major country in Western Europe. This was naturally not a product of genetic peculiarities of the British working class but of the historical strength of British imperialism.

Level

This extremely low level of political consciousness placed the British working class at an extreme strategic disadvantage compared to the ruling class — as politics will always win over

organisation in the end. Since 1979 the Tories have been able to mount an increasing political assault on the labour movement and are progressively grinding down its organisational strength.

The role of the Alliance in that assault is clear. While the Tories can mount a tremendously destructive assault on working class they cannot, because of the anti-Tory history of the working class, pick up positive support from doing so. That can only be done by a non-Tory party — namely the Alliance.

Political

The basic features of the situation and the extreme political weakness of the labour movement were concealed, and the left could imagine the labour movement to be politically strong, as long as the Tory Party itself was popular. While the Tories historically could not gain any serious support in the working class *movement* they could gain, thanks to the strength of British imperialism, a substantial minority vote in the working class by bypassing the labour movement. Until the 1970s this working class Tory vote amounted to around one-third of working class votes. Furthermore the Tories had strong support among higher and lower paid white collar workers, and also among women.

What has helped precipitate the crisis of British politics, and made so central the tactical role played by the Alliance, is the fact that the decline of

British imperialism means that the Tories are progressively losing their traditional bases of support.

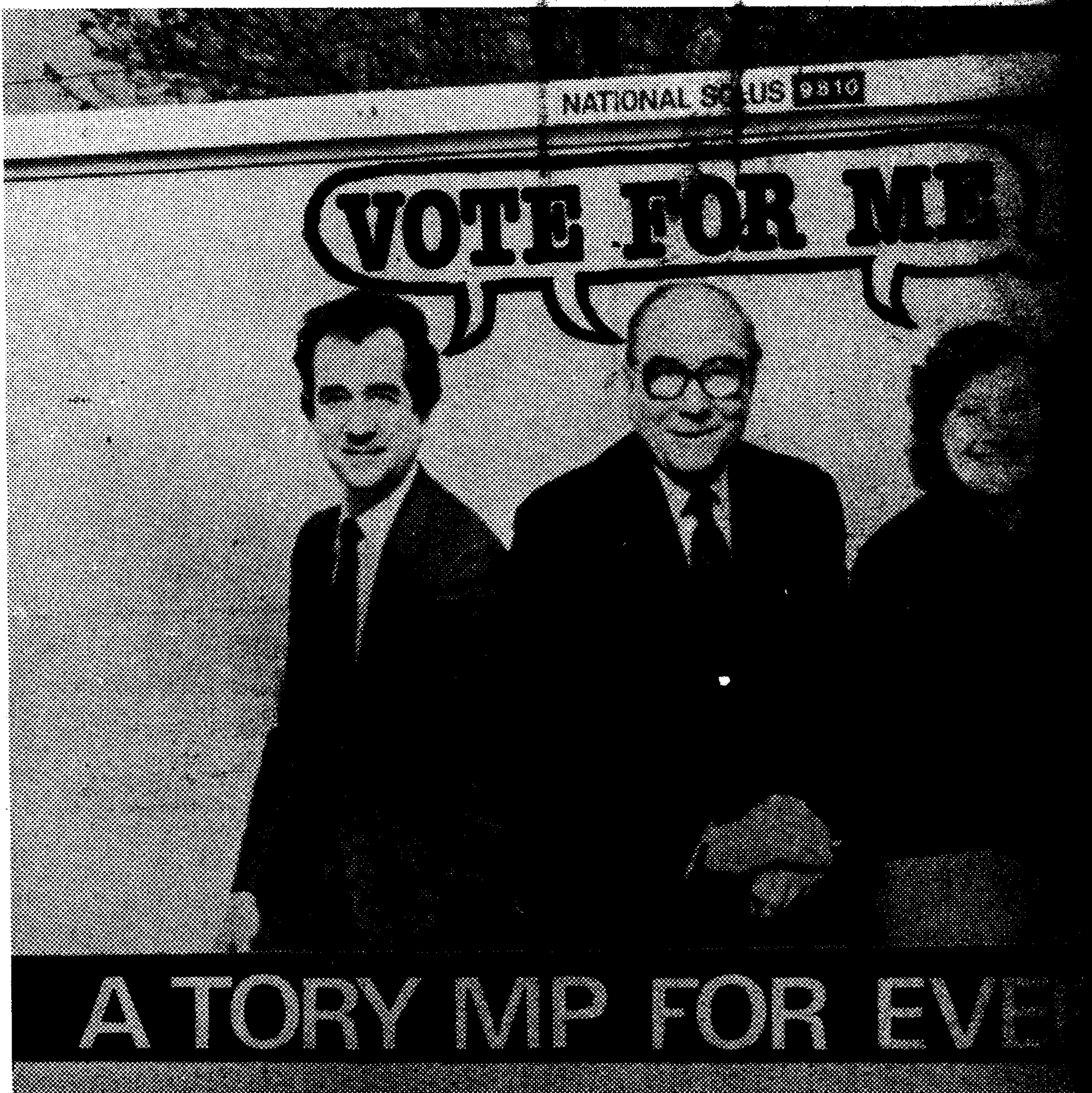
Myth

The myth, peddled by *Marxism Today* and the media — that Thatcher's a tremendously popular government and that the Tories enjoy massive popular support — is not even remotely near the truth. On the contrary the Tories are a party whose popular support has been declining since the 1930s and whose vote in 1983 was very low in historical terms.

Taking simply the post-World War II period, even in elections which the Tories have won their vote has progressively fallen from 50 per cent in 1955 to 49 per cent in 1959, 46 per cent in 1970, 44 per cent in 1979, and 42 per cent in 1983 (see figure 2). Thatcher's vote in 1983 was actually lower than Alec Douglas Hume's when he lost in 1964.

There is no evidence whatever that Thatcher's vote in the next election will be anything except lower than the 42 per cent which was already the second lowest vote ever received by a party with a safe majority in parliament in British history. The Tories are a party in progressive historical decline. That will continue. Left to rest on its own positive support a Tory government could not continue.

It is the continuing decline in the Tory vote that makes the Alliance

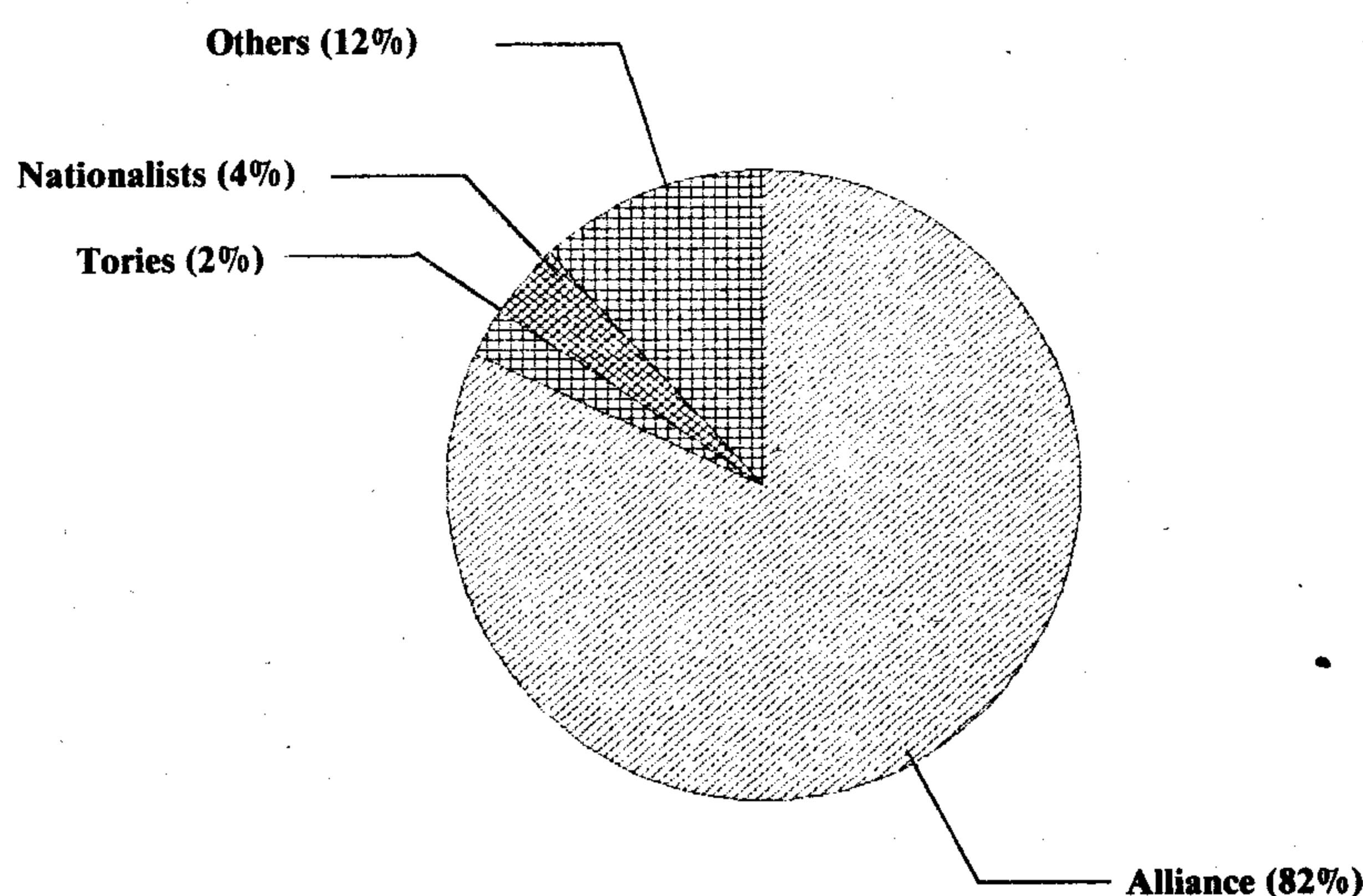


Labour's threat

Labour won't fight it



Where Labour's vote went 1966-83



The total loss of Labour's percentage of the poll from 1966-83 was 20.4 per cent. The divisions show where this vote went.

party could cut into Labour's potential support like a knife through butter. The 'anti-Tory', but not anti-capitalist, tradition of the British working class movement is greatly disarmed in face of that assault by the Alliance.

Result

The result can be seen clearly in working class constituencies in London such as Woolwich, Bermondsey, Greenwich, Poplar, Islington South. It is the Alliance, not the Tories, that is now the main rival to Labour here — and the Alliance threatening these seats. While the Alliance threat is particularly acute in the working class bastions in the South, in the North it is also progressively replacing the Tories as the second force in the cities — while in Scotland the SNP and the Alliance vie with each other to attack Labour at the same time as the Scottish Tory Party is threatened with extinction. Translated into British terms this development means defeats such as Greenwich and disasters such as the 1983 election.

The political role played by the SDP-Liberal Alliance is clear. The SDP-Liberals cannot form a government — only the Conservative and Labour Parties have the institutional strength to form the dominant parts of government in Britain. The present role of the Alliance is to cut deeply into the Labour vote, to prevent the Labour movement from benefitting from the hostility to Thatcher, and therefore to keep Thatcher in power despite her ever-decreasing vote. If, despite these efforts, Thatcher were to be defeated in an election, then the role of the Alliance would be to ensure that the essential structural changes brought about by Thatcherism were maintained through either forming a coalition with Labour, and safeguarding Thatcher's changes within that, or through directly forming a coalition with the Tories to sustain them in office. It is a tremendously effective political strategy as 1983 already showed, and as Greenwich has again graphically confirmed.

This combination of the brutally repressive assault by the Tories, and the cutting into the Labour vote by the Alliance, amounts to the most serious attack mounted on the British labour movement this century.

For itself the Alliance has never bothered to conceal its goals. David Steel, leader of the Liberal Party, writing in this week's *Observer* stated once again: 'The Alliance... is quietly and effectively getting on with its long term strategy of replacing Labour as the main opposition party by defeating Labour candidates. The Conservative Party does not even aspire to win Labour seats at the next general election. On the showing of Greenwich, we in the Alliance can win scores of

Labour seats'.

While *Marxism Today* may entertain the fantasy that the SDP-Liberal Alliance is part of a 'progressive anti-Thatcher bloc' the Alliance themselves have no illusions whatever but that their role is to smash the power of the Labour Party — if not to eliminate it altogether, as that is not possible in the real relation of forces, then to reduce Labour to the point where it has no option but to enter a coalition with the Alliance. That in turn would be a government to still further weaken the Labour Party.

The *Economist* put these goals with crystal clarity in its voting editorial before the last election: 'It is important that there should be a believable and democratic left-of-Tory force in Parliament towards which by-elections and a future general election could then swing. It is desirable that it should be of a sort that can form an effective parliamentary force with right-of-Foot Labour. The Alliance needs to feel secure enough at future by and general elections to help moderate Labour candidates to capture Tory seats in the cities, north England and Scotland; Labour should feel weak enough to give its help to the Alliance in the suburbs; south England, East Anglia and the west. Such a geographical coalition of a southern Alliance and northern Labour seems fanciful at present. The worse Labour does in the election, and the better the Alliance does, the more possible such a desirable coalition of the left (and the dismantling of the Labour Party under its present constitution) will become'.

The *Financial Times*, in a special editorial produced for the last election, concluded: 'The policies on which the Alliance has fought the election are not exciting but they are appealing. Its main lines of economic policy we can, with one exception (statutory incomes policy), largely endorse — a market economy, its attack on the poverty trap, maintaining European links, and seeking to address the grave problem of unemployment... In a more representative voting system, the Alliance could emerge tomorrow as the main alternative to Mrs Thatcher, which we would count as a strong gain.'

Realities

These realities explain why Labour's right wing will not fight the Alliance despite the fact that it is such a threat to Labour. Firstly about half the Parliamentary Labour Party, and a significant part of the trade union bureaucracy, actually agree with the policies advocated by the SDP. There is no fundamental difference between the policies advocated by Roy Hattersley and David Owen or David Steel — and it should be remembered that the overwhelming majority of the shadow

cabinet voted for Hattersley, and not even for Kinnock, in the 1983 leadership contest. The Labour right and the Alliance are all pro-Bomb, pro-incomes policy, pro-EEC, and accept restrictions on the trade unions.

Secondly a whole section of the party, and its bourgeois backers, are actively committed to a coalition between Labour and the Alliance. Within the Parliamentary Party this is openly advocated by Frank Field and Austen Mitchell — and supported in private by many others. Tactical voting for the Alliance at the last general election was advocated by Roy Grantham, general secretary of APEX, and Frank Chapple — then general secretary of the EETPU. There is an SDP member, John Lyons, on the TUC general council and Gavin Laird, general secretary of the AEU, heads up the SDP's 'Fair Votes' campaign for proportional representation. At a lower level John Grant, the EETPU's press officer, will be an SDP candidate at the general election. Outside the party the tactical voting, coalition line is supported by the *Guardian*, *Observer* and the *New Statesman* papers. In short the SDP is intertwined with the entire right wing of the trade union bureaucracy and PLP — as well as the 'left' bourgeois press. Given these links there is no way the right wing is going to campaign against the Alliance.

Refusal to fight against the Alliance however also extends far into the soft left of the party — in addition to the role of *Marxism Today* as a direct Trojan horse supporting a coalition with the Alliance within the soft left. The Labour leadership's own election strategy now relies on a high vote for the Alliance.

The advice presented to the joint meeting of the Shadow Cabinet and NEC on 16 February acknowledged implicitly that Kinnock's policies had failed and that Labour's vote would stay below 40 per cent at the general election. On that basis the only way Labour could win an election is with a high vote for the Alliance. This, naturally, means that Labour makes no real campaign against the Alliance. When Robin Cook, Kinnock's campaign manager for the leadership election, proposed a central campaign against the Alliance he was turned down.

The reality with the Alliance, as with the 'new realists' in the trade unions, is therefore clear. Only the left of the party has the possibility to make a real struggle against the Alliance. But for far too long it has hesitated to do so.

Normal

Labour sections of the left have hoped that somehow British politics would 'return to normal'. That the left could get back to the old routine of denouncing the Tories and slugging off the Labour leadership. That they wouldn't have to undertake the difficult and vital task of fighting a non-Tory deadly enemy of the labour movement — the Alliance.

Greenwich shows once more, for those who had still not drawn the lesson, that there will be no 'return to normal'. That the SDP and Alliance are a permanent structural feature of British politics. And that they are a deadly political weapon pointed at the heart of the labour movement.

The left, every possible trade union, and every constituency that is threatened with the Alliance has to make a central campaign against it. That campaign has to start quite regardless of whether Walworth Road launches such a campaign or not. Because the stakes with the Alliance are far too high to do anything else, and the right will not fight the Alliance.

That fight against the SDP-Liberal Alliance has to go right to the top of the left's agenda.

crucial for the ruling class. When Thatcher commenced her attacks on the working class after 1979 this was accompanied by a dramatic rise in Labour support as voters repelled by Thatcher moved to vote Labour. In 1980-81 Labour was regularly gaining 45-55 per cent in the opinion polls and won crushing electoral victories in the local government elections in 1981. If the SDP had not split from Labour then, despite the Falklands war, the Tories would almost certainly have been defeated in the next general election after 1979. Indeed despite the bonus of the war the Tory vote still fell in 1983 compared to 1979. A Labour government elected at that time would have been relatively left wing in that it would have been pledged to try to reverse most of the changes brought about in British society by Thatcher.

Policies

To maintain the essential policies of Thatcher, policies to which the British ruling class are totally committed, it was therefore absolutely imperative for the ruling class to prevent Labour winning the election. That meant drastically cutting into Labour's support and preventing those disillusioned with Thatcher voting Labour.

For reasons we have already seen the Tories could not achieve that task — the working class cannot be won to support the Tory party. It was therefore necessary to reduce Labour's

vote, and prevent Labour picking up votes, by a non-Tory alternative. This was the significance of the split from Labour to form the SDP — which was followed by the creation of the SDP-Liberal Alliance.

It is still not widely enough appreciated on the left just how stunningly successful that ruling class operation was. The creation of the SDP was among the most successful ruling class attacks ever mounted on the Labour movement.

Elections

Between the election of 1979, with the SDP formed in 1981, Labour's support fell by over three million votes. Not a single one of these votes went to the Tories — on the contrary the Tory vote declined by almost 700,000 votes. The entire loss of votes by Labour in 1981-83 was to the Alliance — whose vote increased by 3.5 million in 1983 compared to the Liberal vote in 1979. It was this Alliance vote, cutting into Labour, which played the decisive role in ensuring the re-election of Thatcher.

The consequences of this role of the Alliance could be seen clearly not only in 1983 but in a by-election such as Greenwich — and in a whole series of other areas like it. There is no possibility whatever of the Tories ever winning a seat like Greenwich from Labour. The non-Tory vote in the Greenwich by-election was 89 per cent and the Tories have not held the seat for 50 years. But the Alliance, a non-Labour non-Tory

The new trade

PRESSURE FOR trade controls, protectionism, are building up rapidly in the United States. They are accompanying a US trade deficit which is now running at almost \$200 billion a year. Last month the US threatened to impose 200 per cent import duties on EEC agricultural exports to the United States — a move only averted by the surrender of the Common Market countries. Moves to free trade were a cornerstone of the post-war economic boom of the

1950s and 1960s and of the Atlantic Alliance between the United States and western Europe. A turn to protectionism by the United States would mean a change in the entire world political situation. ALAN FREEMAN looks at how protectionism is being fostered by the decline in competitiveness of the US domestic economy — and how the United States is using its political and economic muscle to turn the screw on its competitors.

EXACTLY ONE hundred years ago, the Birmingham manufacturer and radical social reformer Joseph Chamberlain embarked on a course which was to overturn the most sacred canon of nineteenth century English capitalism — its unshaken commitment to the doctrine of 'Free Trade'. The policy of trade protection with which he proposed to replace it, known as 'Imperial Preference' was destined to turn British politics upside down.

With all due allowances made of the enormous historical differences between both the centuries and countries involved, the choices now being imposed on US capitalism seem destined to work changes as profound, as long-lasting — and as dangerous for humanity — as Chamberlain's. Step by step, US capital is deserting the commercial policy on which it sailed to leadership of the capitalist world, opening a new and unstable period of inter-imperialist rivalry. It is abandoning the flagship of free trade.

Talks

On 9 February this year, the latest round of talks under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) reopened in Geneva following a chilly start in Uruguay last September. GATT, when founded in 1963, was a vital institution of postwar economic cooperation. Its stated aim was the gradual dissolution of all barriers to trade. This objective of US capital after the war was dictated on their part by an obvious motive: their goods were cheaper than anyone else's. The less their rivals could restrict their markets, the more profit they would make.

For the US's partners the *quid pro quo* was simple: vast sums of US capital had been made available to rebuild their shattered economies. The imperialist countries set out in 1945 to build a stable economic world order on the foundation of superior US technology, estimated by 1950 to be nearly three times as productive as its European rivals. The US would export capital to the world to buy its products and acquire its technology: with the profits of trade, it would maintain reserves sufficient to back this capital. By tying the dollar to the gold standard the dollar, 'as good as gold', could become the trading currency of the world and the repository of its wealth. And, finally and most convincing, the marines and the nuclear umbrella were on hand to back up the whole new order against any untoward accidents.

GATT's proceedings were dominated by two issues which illustrate more clearly than anything the crisis into which this world order has fallen: the dollar, and agricultural trade.

US agriculture has for decades been the most prodigious in the world. As late as 1981, US farm exports at \$44 billion made up 19 per cent of all exports. Thirty per cent of its farm produce was exported and it was even able to engage in 'corn politics', using its vast grain surplus to try and extract political concessions from the other countries. Its 1981 trade surplus was \$26.6 billion.

In May, June and July 1986, for the

first time in modern history, the US imported more agricultural goods than it exported. Its 1986 output at \$26.5 billion has fallen 40 per cent in five years, and its share of the world market from 59 per cent to 41 per cent.

US reaction to this was an indicator of the shape of things to come. Three months before the GATT preliminary discussions began it threatened a *two hundred per cent* tariff on a range of spirits, food and drink from Europe. It went to GATT demanding that Spain and Portugal agree to US quotas of 2 million tons of corn and 300,000 tons of wheat respectively, and for Portugal to drop its policy of buying 15 per cent of its grain imports from the EEC. It won its demand.

For several years now the Reagan administration has gradually been raising tariff barriers against its rivals while at the same time demanding that they drop their own trade barriers against it.

Originally this crusade took the guise of a 'liberalisation' campaign, protesting against other countries' barriers and threatening retaliatory action. The latest proposals from the Democrats, now the hawks on trade protection, drop this mask and simply call for barriers against any country having a trade surplus with the USA. This covers almost every country in the world.

The case of the GATT negotiations show that this process has now reached a new stage: The 200 per cent tariff was an instrument of economic blackmail to acquire the trade terms which US capital needed, regardless of who else got hurt. The administration's four-year drive for 'trade liberalisation' against its commercial allies — all of whom are its political allies — has turned into a more or less naked drive, through political force and economic blackmail, for terms of trade favourable to US capital.

Muscle

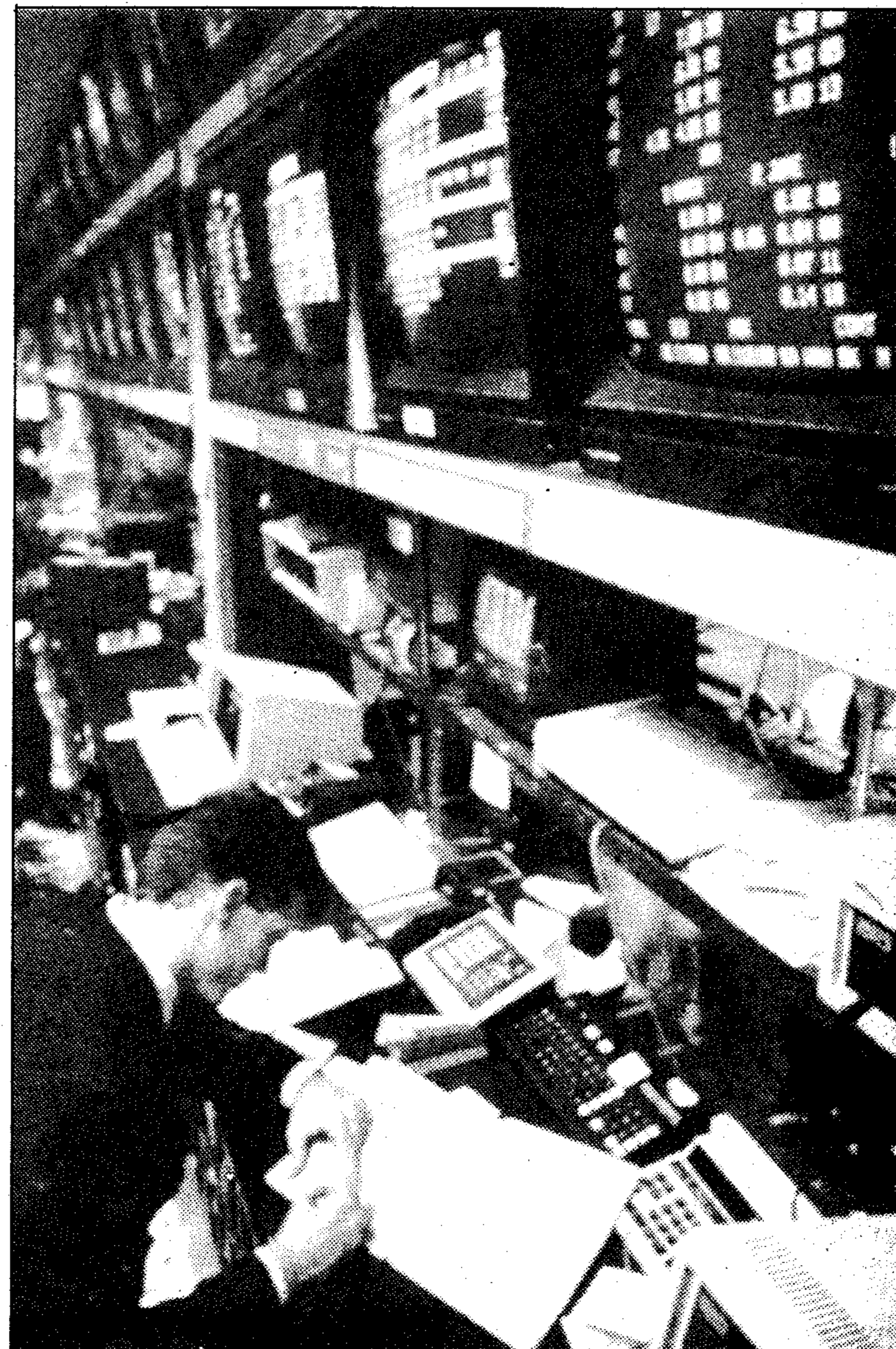
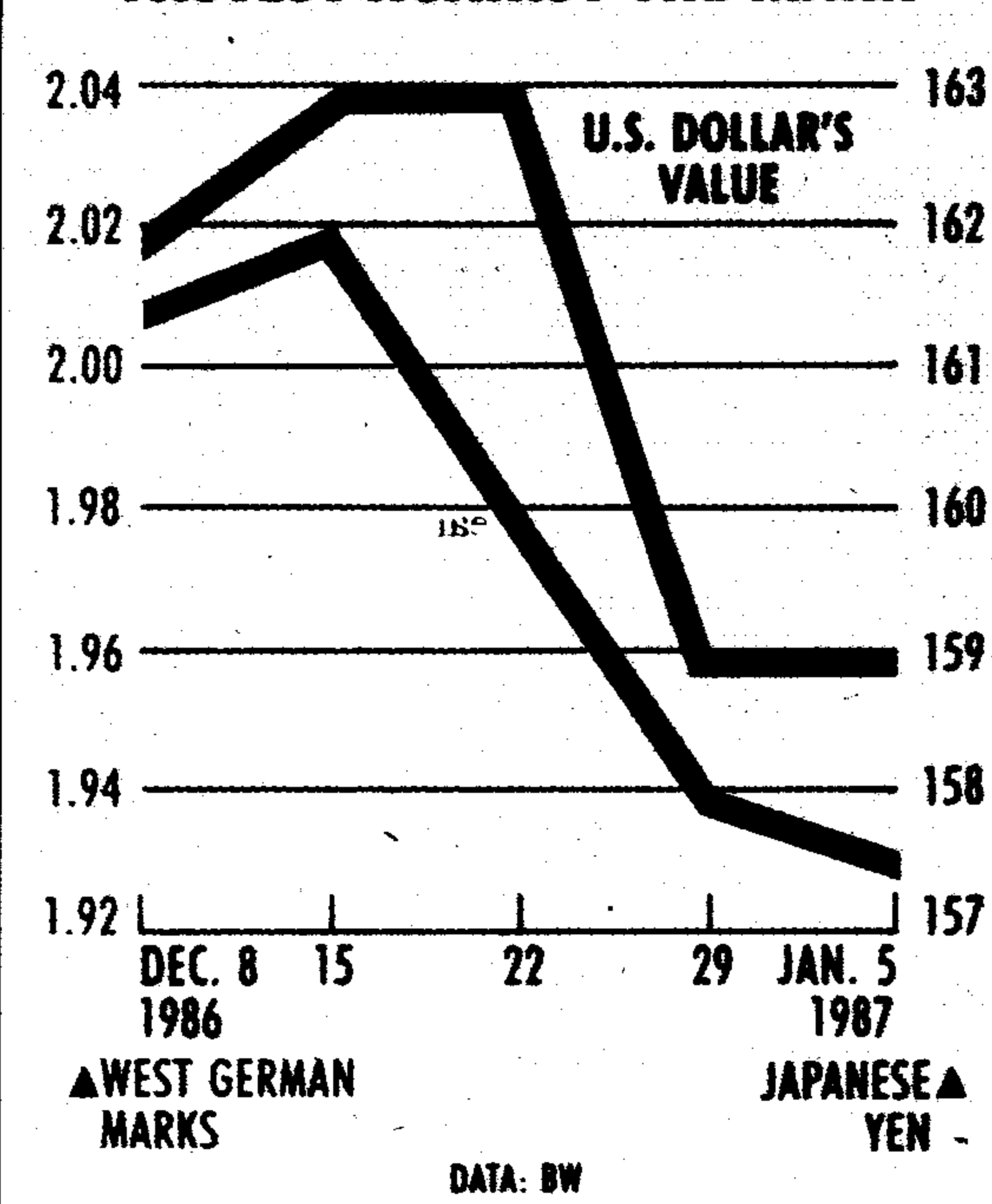
This doctrine is, in effect, Imperial Preference by another name. It is an attempt to use the financial and political muscle of US capital to conquer, and retain by *political* means guaranteed markets and spheres of influence which are slipping from its economic grip. This means that the previously economic rivalry between the USA and its imperialist partners is being shifted to the political sphere — with incalculable consequences.

Agriculture is not an isolated case. All areas from the highest to lowest technology are affected. Only last year the US concluded a trade pact with Japan to stabilise the price of silicon chips because its own producers were literally being driven out of the market. *International Business Week* on 13 October reported fears that 'the entire US semiconductor industry, not just memory-chip producers, will sag into second-rate status by the early 1990s. A \$2 billion deficit in high-tech trade is forecast for 1986.'

In traditional staple industry the story is the same. By 1990 nearly 5 million US cars — nearly 50 per cent — will have Japanese engines and transmissions. Were it not for trade protection, the figure in completed cars would be the same. In mid-1986 the US

war

THE DOLLAR IS FALLING FASTEST AGAINST THE MARK



forced the Canadian government to impose a 15 per cent export tax on lumber and paper and the government recently revived an 1891 law to prevent US publishers putting out work overseas, where 'costs run an estimated 20 per cent below those in the US'.

The previous US surplus of \$45 billion in capital equipment trade has vanished in five years, following a doubling of foreign imports. Imports of manufactured goods exceeded exports by a record \$12.7 billion last November. Imports of machine tools now account for 43 per cent of the US market. Five years ago they were 25 per cent. During the past four years a quarter of all US machine-tool companies have gone out of business.

The accumulated expression of all these weaknesses is, of course, the dollar. In 1982 the US ran its first trade deficit. This deficit trebled in 1983, doubled in 1984 and by last year is estimated at the staggering total of \$175 billion. This is what lies behind the six-month slide in the dollar's value, which has now fallen 42 per cent against the Yen and 48 per cent against the D-Mark. It has been financed by one simple means: foreign borrowing.

Why is US capital able to do this? The dollar is a unique currency. It is the trading currency of the world. That means the US possesses unique financial power, because the fate of every capitalist, throughout the world, is tied up in one way or another with the value of the dollar.

Blackmail

It also permits a unique financial blackmail which we can understand by looking at what Reaganomics actually did. Far from turning its back on Keynesian policies of pumping money into the economy, it pumped more money into the US economy to achieve the explosive growth of 1981-1984 than any previous government.

But instead of financing this with government income — taxes — it financed it by foreign borrowing. In short, it got the rest of the world's capitalists to finance its own expansion

— the exact opposite of what happened during the postwar years. Now, however, it can force the rest of the world's capitalists to pay the price.

According to the *Economist* of 7 February, every dollar's worth of dollar-dominated debt purchased by the Japanese since 1985 has lost 36 per cent of its Yen value. If the US debt was denominated in foreign currencies, that debt would now be \$580 billion. It is actually valued at \$410 billion. The devaluation of the dollar, without any change in trade relations, has made the United States \$170 billion — almost an entire year's trade deficit.

Rivals

The value of the dollar, once 'as good as gold', has thus become an weapon in the armoury of US capital against its rivals. *Business International* explains it pithily: 'A statement by US Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige last week makes it quite clear that the US is not satisfied with efforts to date... the markets will have to endure a continuing series of economic minisummits — long-distance phone calls where Baker says "You guys had enough yet?" If the answer is "No", then boom, another five or ten pfennigs.'

The forces involved are not just economic but directly political. That is, it is the *state policy* of the governments concerned which increasingly influences economic relations between the major political powers. According to David Hale of Kemper Financial Services, foreign governments bought fully 40 per cent of US securities — ie, debt. 'It is hard to believe this is simply the invisible hand beckoning Japanese investors to a safe haven of steadily declining dollars,' comments Robert Kuttner, Economics correspondent of the *New Republic*. 'More likely, it is the guiding hand of the Japanese Finance Ministry, desperate to avert a collapse of US markets for Japanese exports.'

It is an ironic epitaph to Reaganomic philosophy, which co-authored a world assault on government spending, that the administration is now, with a

new world slump setting in, crusading to force West Germany and Japan to spend money to reflate their economies in order to stimulate demand for US exports.

West Germany and Japan, unsurprisingly, have so resisted the US demand that they prop up the ailing United States economy not simply by donating their savings but by sucking in US goods. The US has therefore decided to wield the big stick. It threatens, first, a devaluation of the dollar that will force West Germany and Japan out of the US market and US goods into theirs, and then, if that does not work, trade protectionism that would cut down Japanese and West German exports, 'Squeeze them until the pips squeak' is the current philosophy of US trade officials.

The danger in all this for the US, Japan and West Germany is that the free trade system which marked the international capitalist economy since 1945 will collapse. And if that happens there will be a recession which would make the present level of unemployment look like an era of prosperity. It would also threaten to bring crashing down most of the inter-imperialist alliances that have been built up since World War II.

What is now taking place is like a deadly game of poker. The United States threatens its rivals with a degree of protectionism sufficient to make them submit. On the other hand if it is actually forced into full-blooded protectionism the entire capitalist world order as it exists will disintegrate. The stakes are literally enormous.

Pressures

Worse still the entire mechanism is under no one's control. Huge competitive pressures, not rational calculations, dictate the positions taken by imperialist governments. Indeed nothing in the world today shows the deadly logic of capitalist competition as clearly as the looming trade wars across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. They threaten to throw capitalism into the greatest crisis in its entire history.

Support Gorbachev's proposals

THE SOVIET UNION'S latest proposal, that all intermediate-range nuclear missiles be removed from across Europe as a practical first step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons worldwide, is to be wholeheartedly supported. In an unexpected announcement on Saturday 28 February, Mikhail Gorbachev said that the USSR and USA should implement an outline treaty reached at Reykjavik and that a separate agreement on eliminating medium-range nuclear weapons from Europe could be concluded 'without delay'.

In essence, the Soviet programme would mean:

- within five years the Soviet Union and the United States would clear all intermediate SS-20s, cruise and Pershing out of Europe.
- each would keep 100 of these warheads within their own territory, that is sited in the Asian part of the territories of the USSR and in the USA respectively.

Gorbachev said: 'The Soviet Union still considers it highly important to reach an agreement on substantial limitation and then elimination of strategic arms. Of course, the conclusion of such an agreement, as had been repeatedly emphasised, should be conditioned by a decision on preventing the deployment of weapons in outer space.'

However, he made clear that an intermediate-range nuclear force (INF) agreement by the Soviet Union would not be made conditional on reaching agreement on Star Wars. At the Iceland talks last autumn, president Reagan used SDI research and development as the excuse to turn down Soviet proposals for the total elimination of all nuclear weapons.

Western reaction to these latest proposals has been mixed. France and Britain, the so-called independent nuclear powers, have so far taken

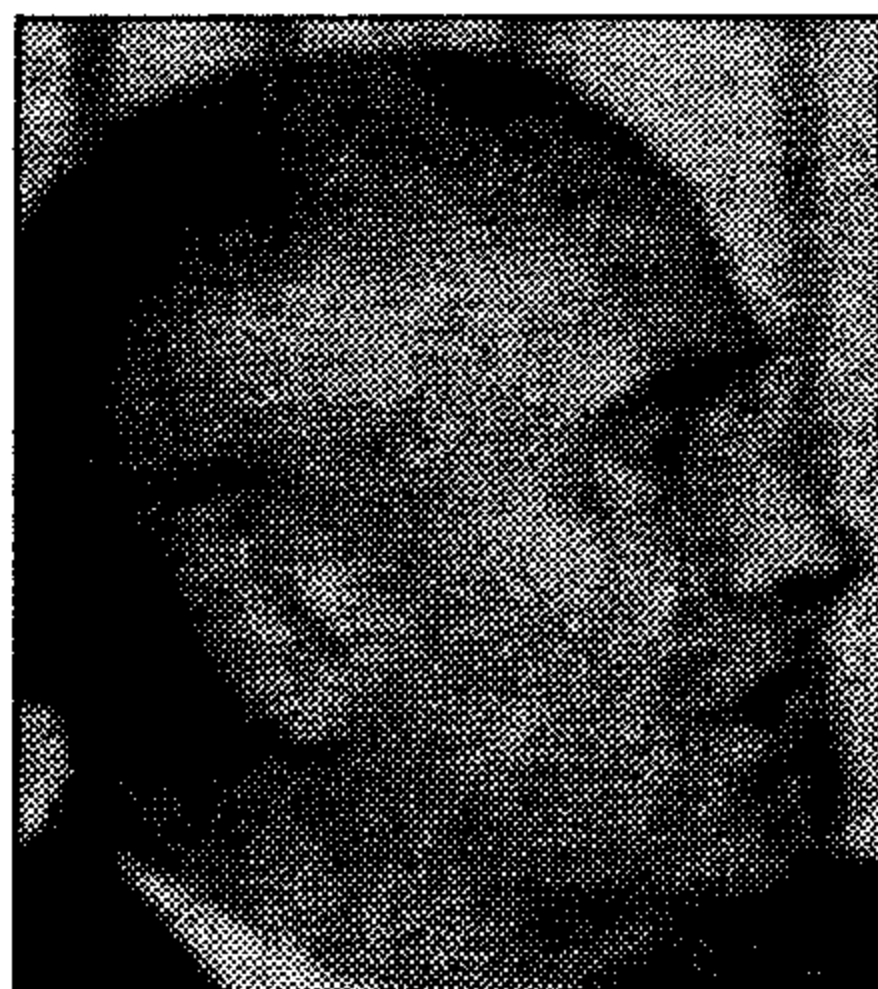
diametrically opposite positions. French foreign minister Jean-Bernard Raimond expressed 'deep reservations'. Interviewed on French television he said that the proposals contained 'nothing new' and stressed that any agreement made should not upset the 'military balance in Europe'.

By Carol Turner

A French foreign ministry statement was quite explicit. It said: 'bearing in mind the lack of balance in conventional and chemical forces in Europe, the objective must be to avoid a de-nuclearisation of Western Europe' (our italics). Thus France is maintaining the same openly pro-nuclear stance it adopted in response to Reykjavik.

This position has been backed up by General Bernard Rogers, out-going NATO commander-in-chief in Europe. Rogers rejected the Soviet proposals which, he said, could not be taken in isolation from issues such as short-range missiles and conventional forces without weakening NATO's position in Europe.

Both Margaret Thatcher and Geoffrey Howe have taken a different line in public. Howe declared that an INF agreement 'could transform for the better the whole atmosphere in which arms control talks and relations



between East and West are conducted'. Thatcher too has chosen a publicly positive attitude, expressing 'cautious optimism' at the Soviet proposals.

However, the British government's response should not be taken as representing any real differences with the French. Downing Street has already made clear, according to *Guardian* reports, that 'Mr Gorbachev's proposal to remove cruise, Pershing and Soviet SS-20 missiles from European soil would not in the end be acceptable without parallel progress on short-range chemical and conventional weapons.'

Margaret Thatcher is quoted as saying: 'I think there are quite a lot of things to be worked out, because, as well as the intermediate-range ones, there are the short-range ones in Europe and they have the majority of these. And then you have to look at the conventional balance, because they have superiority in those.'

Clear

The Labour Party however, has taken a clear position. Defence spokesperson Denis Davies said on Monday that 'Mrs Thatcher must not try to link any agreement to other issues'.

David Owen for the Alliance 'warmly welcomed' the Soviet proposals. But like the Tory

Party, Owen also claimed that the Soviet proposals result from the West 'keeping its nerve in front of the unreasonable position adopted by Gorbachev last year. He took the opportunity of a Truro by-election visit to call on Labour to reconsider its position on defence in the light of the latest USSR offer. On a *Panorama* TV programme both he and David Steele stressed that any coalition deal with Labour would be conditional on settling the issue of nuclear weapons in favour of the Alliance.'

Summit

In the aftermath of the Iceland summit, Thatcher, Mitterrand and Chirac, together with West German chancellor Kohl, all made clear their opposition to any 'zero option' deal which might follow. The British and French spelled out their intention to keep their own 'independent' nuclear arsenals.

At the end of November last, and following Thatcher's Camp David discussions with Reagan, she and Mitterrand held an Anglo-French mini-summit of their own. At a press conference that followed Thatcher and Mitterrand stressed their unity on the matter.

'We also agreed', said Thatcher, 'that nuclear weapons can't be dealt

with in isolation and that there must be a stable overall balance at all times ...' Margaret Thatcher is not about to make a volte face in the light of the latest Soviet proposals. She is merely judging the best way to fend off pressure to accept these proposals.

With one eye on the forthcoming British general election, Thatcher is already claiming that her cold-warrior stance after Reykjavik has helped produce this latest Soviet offer. Of course, she is backed in this claim by the bourgeois media.

Opinion

There is no doubt that Gorbachev himself has made these proposals with a view to winning West European public opinion to his side, and to exploiting divisions both between European and US capital and within the European bourgeoisie. After Reykjavik, the Soviet Union cannot have failed to appreciate that no immediate movement on the question of eliminating nuclear weapons was forthcoming from Reagan and the United States. The current proposal to remove the INF from Europe represents a way out of the impasse that was created after the Iceland talks. It cannot fail to attract an even broader layer of public support than already exists across Europe for removing the missiles.

All and any combination of excuses will be used by Thatcher, Mitterrand, Kohl and the rest of the West European political leaders to try and turn down the third offer by the Soviet Union in 12 months to take steps in eliminating nuclear weapons. Socialists must support Gorbachev's proposals.

World in action

Syria in Lebanon

WHEN SYRIAN TROOPS rolled into West Beirut on 22 February, Syrian president Assad claimed it was to establish 'order'. But the 'order' it was designed to establish is that of Lebanese forces opposed to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). The new Syrian 'political solution' announced on 2 March, reduces the role of the traditional Christian forces in Lebanon and gives a greater role in official Lebanese politics to parliamentary Muslim forces and to Amal — the pro-Syrian Shi'ite organisation under the leadership of Nabih Berri.

Supplied with arms and equipment including tanks by Syria, Amal not only prevented food and military supplies from going into the camps, but also subjected them to a bombardment which continued well after the Syrian intervention. It wasn't this 'camps war' that worried the Syrian government, but the fact that Amal was losing and a new pro-Palestinian coalition was taking shape.

The last time Syria intervened in a similar way was during the Lebanese civil war eleven years ago. The protagonists then were the ruling Christian Maronite forces on one side and a coalition of forces representing the overwhelming majority of the population on the other. In April 1975, when the civil war broke out, Syria gave support to the Palestinians forces, who were under assault from Israel, and its allies. However when this broad coalition looked to be winning the civil war Syria intervened on the side of the Maronites.

But Assad's objective of a 'balance' between the Christian-Maronites and the Muslim-Druze forces, in which the PLO under Yasser Arafat was to play an entirely subordinate role has proved unachievable.

The Syrians were first pushed out of Maronite East Beirut and then, in 1982, Israel intervened in Menachem Begin's attempt to inflict a total defeat on the PLO.

Within four years, the PLO were back, weaker than in 1982 but growing in strength as they defended the Palestinians in the refugee camps. At the same time, Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank renewed their struggle and gave clear support to the Arafat leadership of the PLO.

Fearing the emergence of a similar coalition with the Palestinians to that of 1976, Syria's intervention today is designed to establish a more permanent political solution which would allow it a place at any Middle East peace talks. Syria's hope is to negotiate the return of the Golan Heights, occupied by Israel since the 6-day war in 1967. Its aim is to bring the PLO fully under control and use it as a bargaining chip in any negotiations.

Imperialism has fully backed Syria's intervention. Israel declared it would support it as long as Syria did not threaten their stronghold in south Lebanon. It has now been revealed that a US envoy was in Damascus the weekend that Syrian troops went into West Beirut.

The problem for imperialism is that the new 'political solution' is no solution at all. The Syrians have been unable to disarm the vast majority of the militias, especially the radical pro-Iranian Hezbollah organisation which competes with Amal for hegemony over the Shi'ite community. Hezbollah led a demonstration of 30,000 people in southern Beirut suburbs on 25 February following the massacre of 23 Shi'ites by the Syrian troops.

Syria is an ally of Iran in the Gulf War and receives cheap oil from Tehran. Top Iranian officials have been in Damascus throughout this period and seem to have negotiated a 'non-aggression' pact in which the Syrian troops will stay out of the southern Beirut suburbs.

Although Druze leader Walid Jumblatt has given support to the Syrian initiative, the Druze forces are certainly no reliable partner of Assad's.

The Christian Phalange will oppose any diminution of Maronite influence contained in the plan, whatever Gemayel might say about his support for Syria's proposals.

Most important of all, no political manoeuvring can resolve the demand of Palestinian people for a homeland, for a democratic secular state in Palestine. It is that which gives the continuing support to the PLO leadership in the camps. If a full-scale assault by the Israelis couldn't eliminate the PLO from the country for more than three years, then no Syrian imposed Maronite-Muslim power-sharing scheme is likely to do so.

Conference pledges support for Central America

THREE HUNDRED and forty people assembled in the TUC's Congress House in London for the labour movement conference on 'peace, self-determination and reconstruction in Central America'. Six unions were nationally represented at the conference, along with the Labour Party, the TUC and the Parliamentary Labour Party.

The delegates came from across the labour movement, with the strongest delegations from local Labour Parties, NALGO, TGWU and the NUM. They heard speeches from Jose Lopez of the Nicaraguan trade union federation, the CST, from Hector Oqueli of the political-diplomatic commission of the FDR-FMLN of El Salvador, from Peter Heathfield of the NUM and from Labour's front-bench spokesperson on the region, George Foulkes. Audrey Wise, a member of the Labour Party NEC chaired the conference.

Jose Lopez explained the two priorities of the Nicaraguan unions were defence of Nicaragua against US-backed military aggression, and a campaign to boost production and to defeat US economic aggression and trade embargo.

'We stress US aggres-

sion,' he said, 'because it is the fundamental factor hindering the economic, political and social development of the Nicaraguan people.' Lopez detailed some of the consequences of the six-year long contra war: 38,580 killed or seriously wounded, 250,000 peasants forced to be resettled, an economic cost of nearly \$3 billion.

By Jon Silberman

He pledged that 'with our sweat and blood' the Nicaraguan people would continue to deepen their own revolution and contribute to the worldwide revolutionary struggle. He said that their endeavours had brought great progress in health care, education, agrarian reform and a new constitution 'in whose drafting we all had the opportunity to participate'.

Lopez explained how the workers movement had grown 'in strength,

with 90 per cent of the working class organised in 5763 local unions in the industrial agricultural and service sectors.

Lopez concluded by calling for a major campaign to stop further US funding of the contras and explaining how gains for Nicaragua were gains for the entire region and the world working class: 'if Nicaragua overcame, so El Salvador will overcome'.

The regional character of the conflict was taken up by Hector Oqueli. 'The Central American region came to be rediscovered with the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua,' he said. With the build-up of US forces, US economic and military aid to repressive regimes and the invasion of Grenada: 'It is clear that the present Central American conflict has reached a regional character.'

He showed that the Duarte regime in El Salvador was not only conducting a civil war against the people of his country but is also: 'something more than accomplices of a direct policy against self-determination and peace

which the Nicaraguan people long for.'

In El Salvador itself, Oqueli explained that over 60,000 people have been killed in six years of civil war. 'Unable to solve the most elemental problems of the country the Duarte government has submerged the country in the worst political crisis' in 20 years.

He detailed how the tragic earthquake — 5 seconds in which over 1500 people were killed, 10,000 were injured and 250,000 people made homeless — added to the 600,000 persons already displaced as the result of the war, and to the 60 per cent unemployment or under-employment.

Oqueli gave an optimistic message for the struggle — with the establishment and growth of UNTS, the one year old Salvadorean trade union federation representing over 300,000 workers, and with the military successes of the FMLN which inflicted 6151 casualties on the 60,000-strong Salvadorean army last year.

The training of an officer of the Salvadorean army in Britain was strongly attacked by all

26 Counties — "an election without answers"

THE SOUTHERN Irish general election saw Charles Haughey's Fianna Fail just fail to win an overall majority. The outgoing prime minister Garret FitzGerald's support fell massively and the election war was marked by the emergence of the 'Progressive Democrats' — a split from Fianna Fail. All the major parties were determined to keep discussion of Sinn Fein out of the election — and Sinn Fein is banned from broadcasting and television under Section 31 of the southern Irish Broadcasting Act. MARTIN COLLINS assesses the outcome of the election — in an article abridged from *Labour and Ireland*. In our next issue we will be covering Sinn Fein's campaign.

Charles Haughey leader of Fianna Fail (translated: Soldiers of Destiny) asked the electorate to give his party a clear overall majority so that he could 'raise morale', 'provide leadership', 'harness talent', and 'chart a firm direction'. 'There is a better way' promised the posters.

Newspapers and television found it hard to drum up enthusiasm for the four week election campaign caused by the final break up of the Fine Gael-Labour coalition.

At last, said a Channel 4 commentator after the showing of a televised debate between the two main party leaders, 'the Irish election has an issue'. The issue was not the Anglo Irish Accord, which the establishment had agreed should not be an issue in the election; but the shock discovery that in their allotted four minutes to deal with the matter, the absentminded professor, Garret FitzGerald had managed to wrong-foot the wheeler-dealer, Mr Fix-it, Charles Haughey.

Issues

This was not an election without issues, but an election without answers. It didn't even have the off-

the-cuff answers that Charlie Haughey can normally deal out like there was no tomorrow.

The 26 County economy is in debt to the tune of £23.1 billion — one of the highest per capita national debts in the world. Unemployment stands at a quarter of a million — 20 per cent. Another 46,000 youngsters are on training schemes. 40 per cent of the population are now on some kind of welfare.

Dublin is watching the rise of the money lender — specialising in the short-term high-interest loans that reduce the poor to the destitute. The beggars and the homeless walk the streets.

Wonder

Is it any wonder that given all this, an election whose watch-word was 'fiscal rectitude' got treated with scepticism? Was it any wonder that the electorate did not rush to return a Government whose collapse was presaged by a budget proposing a £210 million cut in public spending? Was it any wonder that they did not rush either to put their faith in Fianna Fail's 'better way' when its election campaign made a virtue out of trying to say as little as possible about financial plans?

When the US government announced 10,000 entry visas available by lottery to applicants from anywhere in the world, there were 200,000 applications from Ireland. People who had never in their lives considered moving, let alone emigrating, suddenly thought they had a chance of a 'better way'.

Event

So it was not for lack of issues that the election failed as a media event. But rather politicians had decided that the issues were so serious, they were much better left until after the election was over. In recent years, there have been referenda on abortion and divorce which succeeded in maintaining the grip of the Catholic hierarchy, and the Constitution over women's bodies and women's lives. Politicians had become used to dealing with issues of sex and pretending they were talking about something completely different. Perhaps they might say something constructive to prevent the spread of AIDS? The Bishops weighed in with the novel



theory that since condoms promote promiscuity (so says the Pope), then they must also promote the spread of AIDS. Charlie Haughey said he was going to take advice from the doctors.

But they all agreed it would be much better to leave it until after the election.

Of course, the reason why the bishop's views on AIDS count so much, and the national debt has reduced an 'advanced' capitalist economy to Third World poverty, as every socialist should know, owes a lot to the partition of the nation. It was not so long ago that Garret FitzGerald launched a constitutional crusade, that Charlie Haughey said the British had a lot to answer for, or for that matter the British embassy in Dublin was burning.

Partition

But partition was hardly an issue for an election either.

That Fianna Fail consider the Anglo Irish deal to be contrary to the Constitution does not necessarily mean that the party leader should be taken at his word when he says he is going to renegotiate it.

After all, Fianna Fail is the party of the people, and if the opinion polls seem to indicate that the Coalition government has managed to package and sell the deal quite successfully, it might be better

to leave the details (like sectarian attacks, discrimination, plastic bullets, strip searching, shoot-to-kill policies etc) ... until after the election.

Well, if there was no debate to be had about the policies as such, perhaps the news angle could be focussed on the emergence of new mould-breaking parties. The Progressive Democrats certainly had promised to do for the Irish what the Social Democrats were doing for the British. Their leader Dessie O'Malley (election slogan: 'Dessie's the one!') was certainly the most popular in the polls. If only they could have stuck to promoting him.

Instead they insisted on spelling out how they were breaking the mould. Gone, they said, are the tired old economic policies of Fianna Fail and Fine Gael; gone were the Civil War politics of the past. Here was a party that was going to back the Anglo Irish and not rock the boat with the Brits. Here was a party that aimed to reduce income tax through cutting spending on welfare, education and health, and selling off state industries. Put like that, it didn't seem quite so mould-breaking at all.

Vote

The Irish Transport and General Workers' Union took out a large advertisement in the *Irish Times* to recommend the working classes how to vote. They had written to

all parties asking ten questions about how their policies would affect tax rates, unemployment, health, education etc.

The Labour Party, Workers Party, Fianna Fail and Sinn Fein replied. Fine Gael and the PDs probably put the letter straight in the bin. On the basis of the answers given, the union recommended a first preference vote for Labour.

This is the party that had participated in coalition government raising taxes, allowing unemployment to rise to unprecedented levels and slashing public expenditure.

Party

This is the party that had participated in coalition government raising taxes, allowing unemployment to rise to unprecedented levels and slashing public expenditure.

As if to compensate for the peculiar logic of this proposal, the union went on to counsel workers to give their lowest preference to Fine Gael or Progressive Democrat candidates and suggested that: 'Candidates from other socialist parties are worthy of consideration for your (after Labour) next highest preferences'.

Since (by the process of elimination) this must mean the Workers' Party and Sinn Fein, the ITGWU has made a point which Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act denies.

Inside the unions

The scabs charter

AT THE centre of the green paper, *Trade Unions and Their members*, is 'the right of the individual to choose to go to work despite a call to take industrial action'.

'Every union member' the paper goes on 'should be free to decide for himself (sic) whether or not he wishes to break his contract of employment and run the risk of dismissal without compensation. No union member should be penalised by his trade union for exercising his right to cross a picket line and go to work'.

The green paper proposes that this so-called 'right to cross picket lines' be enshrined in law. Unions would be unable to take any discipline against members who scabbed during a dispute. Individual members would have the legal right to seek compensation against unions:

By Jon Silberman

Potential scabs would be given legal redress even before the union took action. Under the 1984 Trade Union Act, unions lose their immunity from civil action unless they ballot their members over strike action. What the green paper proposes is that union members would now be given the right to prevent their unions taking industrial action if a ballot has not taken place.

As *Financial Times* labour editor, Philip Bassett commented on 25 February, this is the 'key issue on which many of the legal actions brought by union members in the 1984-5 miners strike rested'.

The green paper is peppered with references to the NUM. The CBI described the green paper as 'clearly' aimed at action such as that in the 1984-5 miners strike. It underscores how the government and the employers are determined to try to exorcise from the labour movement's memory the lessons of that strike and to prevent similar action in the future.

A specific set of proposals — to stipulate that the election of union presidents and general secretaries must be held by secret postal ballots — is explicitly aimed at Arthur Scargill. Workplace ballots, or pithead ballots in the case of the NUM, are opposed by the green paper, despite their legal imposition having been enacted by a previous peice of Tory government legislation.

The green paper also proposes controls on union trustees, referring to the NUM leadership's taking the union's money out of the country to avoid sequestration.

The principle of 'scabs' rights' is also applied to the closed shop. The closed shop was already targeted by earlier Tory anti-union laws in 1980 and 1982. The impact of the employers' and government attacks combined with the closure of branches of industry where the closed shop was more prevalent has cut the number of workers covered by closed shop agreements from its high point of 5.2 million in the mid-'70s to about 3 million today.

Now the government intends to go a huge step further: to legally protect individuals who refuse to join a union even where closed shop agreement operates!

Last month a sit-down strike in the Stockport engineering firm of Simon Engineering needed just one-hour to ensure the removal of a 'man with a conscience' who left the union. Under the proposals specified in the green paper, the industrial action would have been illegal and the individual legally entitled to his job.

Just in case aspiring scabs don't feel sufficiently self-confident to proceed with legal action, or in case they haven't secured financial backing from such upholders of democracy as the misnamed 'Freedom Association', the green paper has a solution to this one too.

'The time has come' it states 'to consider the need for a public authority to play a role in observance of the law'. The proposed 'public authority' would be a new commissioner who would have a statutory duty to support complaints, including underwriting the plaintiff's legal costs. The commissioner could also act in his or her own right.

If the new proposals are a 'scabs charter' — and they are — then what's needed from the TUC and Labour Party leadership is a clear commitment of support for any unions that come under the legal hammer and a pledge to take the unions out of the hands of the courts and to return them to their members.

Every union which goes into struggle today now faces a veritable legal minefield constraining effective action, summarised by Eric Heffer as a 'new industrial slavery'.



International Viewpoint

carries news, documents and analysis of working class movements from around the world and is indispensable reading for all socialists.

International Viewpoint is

available from most left book shops or by post from Other Books, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Subscription rates: 6 months £9.50 (120FF); 1 year £18.00 (200FF). Make cheques payable to PEC and send to IV, 2 Rue Richard Lenoir, 93108, Montreuil. Postal orders to PEC, CCP Account no 2-322-42T Paris. Bank transfers to PEC, BNP Robespierre, Account 230179/90, 153 rue de Paris, 93108, Montreuil, France.

TGWU recruitment drive must link up with black self-organisation

THE TGWU has launched a national 'link-up' campaign aimed at recruiting temporary and part time workers. It is an important development in the union's politics. Women's and black organisations in the party have particularly welcomed the campaign — as the overwhelming majority of part time and temporary workers are women and many are black. This campaign is going to force the TGWU to face up to the fact that it remains resolutely opposed to women's and black self-organisation in the union and the Labour Party — a position which weakens the ability to campaign among women and black workers. The Labour Party Black Section, which is calling for full support to the TGWU campaign, produced the following statement for the opening rally of the campaign — which was addressed by Ron Todd and Neil Kinnock.

THE Labour Party Black Section welcomes the TGWU's 'link-up' campaign aimed at recruiting into union membership temporary and part-time workers. Many of the six million people who are trapped in this highly-exploited part of the workforce are black people and women. Some of them work in oppressive sweat shop conditions. The T&G leadership must

build on their important initiative by recognising the 'link-up' between the temporary and part-time workers' campaign and the right of an oppressed group of the working class to self-organise.

Currently the (TGWU) leadership is opposed to Labour Party Black Sections. But this position has been reached as a result of views expressed on the general executive council

without any debate at rank and file level. The TGWU's ill thought out position on the subject is littered with contradictions. For instance, despite being a big supporter of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, which has championed the 'right of reply', the union leadership have refused to print the Black Section's response to a big article in TGWU Record about our issue.

A NALGO motion in support of black caucuses was backed by all the large unions, including the TGWU, at the TUC in 1984. This encouraged all affiliates to set up appropriate structures — like black members groups — to adequately represent black workers. In the same year, the TGWU delegation to the London Labour Party regional conference voted in favour of black sections. And, later at national party conference, the Agricultural Workers

and Dyers and Bleachers trade groups supported us. The TGWU executive has since imposed its will on the huge block vote wielded by delegates against Black self-organisation.

Resolutions in favour of black sections were on the agenda of the last biennial delegate conference (BDC). Yet the leadership did not see fit to get them debated. This decision could not be defended by new deputy general secretary Bill Morris. He admitted the union's position on black sections lacked 'moral legitimacy' until it had gone before a BDC.

Bill Morris's reverse, when he failed to get on the TUC's General Council, despite the backing of TGWU general secretary Ron Todd, proves that if you are black you cannot build a base on an all-white union executive. You must have a base among black workers who

are the lowest paid and least represented and you must fight for a mechanism called black self-organisation which gives them a voice and a means of articulating their grievances.

The TGWU has advisory committee structures for women and youth but nothing for black card holders who make up 20 per cent of the membership. NALGO Black Workers conferences prove that large unions are finally waking up to the need to help their members defeat racism. Indeed, TUC general secretary Norman Willis told a special black workers conference that unions should not see 'unofficial black members groups' as a threat to their constitution. He warned that if black workers felt unions did not care about their problems they would turn to other organisations.

NUM Vote Sammy Thompson

'I CAMPAIGNED for Scargill as compensation agent. I campaigned for Scargill as Yorkshire president, and as national president. I'm standing as vice-president to work with Arthur Scargill, not to control him' declared Sammy Thompson, Yorkshire Area, NUM secretary, at a meeting organised by Hatfield Main NUM on 20 February.

Eric Clarke, Scottish Area NUM secretary and Eric Lippitt, a sacked miner from Staffs shared the platform. The ballot for NUM vice-president takes place on 17 March for the post that becomes vacant with the retirement of Mick McGahey in July.

Thompson was responding to a question from a retired miner who demanded that Eric Clarke, the other leading candidate, respond to articles in the *Glasgow Herald* and *The Observer*, which stated that Scottish Area leaders in alliance with Neil Kinnock were trying to marginalise Scargill.

Clarke claimed that he was 'not anti-president or anti-general secretary. I don't care what the press are saying. I am not a right winger, and anybody who thinks that I am living in cloud cuckoo land. If the right wing want to vote for me, that's up to them.'

Neither of the right wing's past two leading candidates for national office, Trevor Bell and John Walsh, have stood in this election. The right wing dominated areas such as Leicestershire and the clerical section COSA have backed Eric Clarke.

Arthur Scargill has argued against 'accommodation' or 'attempts to placate' the employers. 'The only effective action is to mobilise and fight', he stated at the 1986 NUM conference. 'Only a regeneration of basic trade union principles — embodied so magnificently in the miners' strike — can combat and defeat the attacks mounted by the Tory government against the people of Britain.'

Scargill took up the alternative to this strategy that had been advanced by

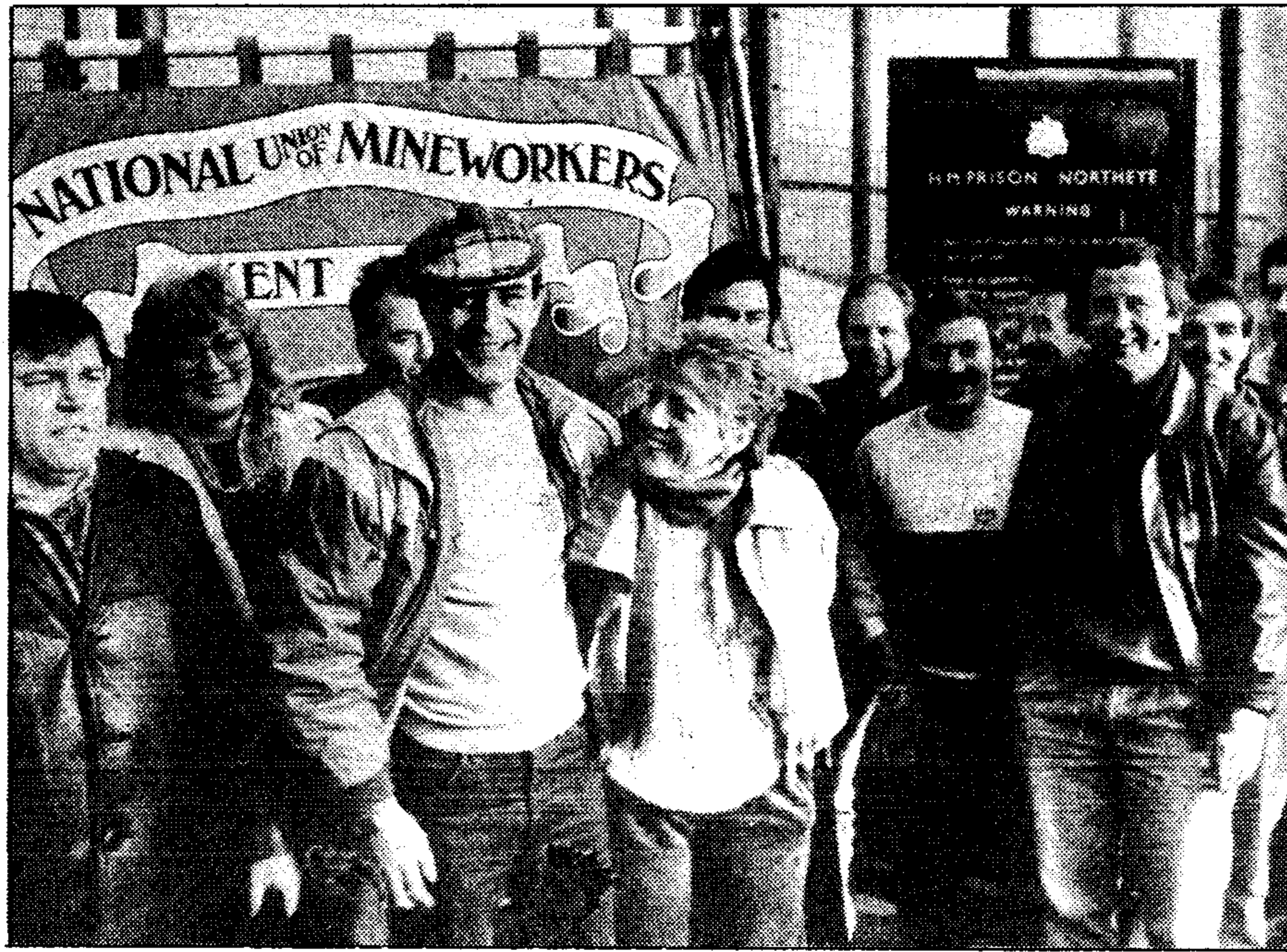
the Eurocommunist CP leaders in the Scottish NUM, George Bolton and Mick McGahey.

'Let us look at the example of "new realism" in the campaign to save Gartcosh in Scotland — a vital component in the steel industry.' Scargill noted how 'the broad based campaign' even involved 'several leading Tories playing a prominent part in a strategy portrayed as the "effective" alternative to industrial action.'

He concluded that the defeat of the Gartcosh campaign 'did not attract any of the lengthy and exhaustive analyses that all aspects of the miners' strike did. One crucial lesson, surely, is that with this Government, no amount of "new realism", persuasion, or silent protest will shift it from a strategy of destruction.'

McGahey was quoted in *The Observer* article cited above: 'It was the first time I have ever felt unable to applaud a presidential address.' A remarkable first for someone who had sat through speeches by Sir Sidney Ford and his successor, Joe, later Lord Gormley, who beat McGahey for the presidency in 1971.

The contrast between the Scargill wing of the NUM leadership and the leading Scottish officials was demonstrated again



Kent miner Terry French was released from jail last week after serving two years inside

two months later in September 1986. The Coal Board axed 2,000 jobs reducing the total Scottish workforce to 5,000 at nine pits. Instead of denouncing this savage blow and campaigning against it, George Bolton, Area vice-president, called for a 'positive attitude'.

Eric Clarke is also being backed by the South Wales Area leadership which led the call for a return to work in 1985 without a settlement of the strike. Sammy Thompson reminded the Hatfield Main meeting how that had further undermined the NUM's position. He pointed out that the Yorkshire Area had also opposed lifting the national overtime ban shortly after. This could have been used, Thompson argued, to defend the victimised miners and secure 'the return to normality' that the Scottish and South Wales Area leaders wanted.

Both Clarke and Thompson took up the need for all mineworkers to be united in one union. Whilst Eric Clarke concentrated on the threat posed by the UDM, Sammy Thompson underlined the importance of the Yorkshire Area supporting the Notts NUM in winning UDM members back to

the national union. This was one of the factors in the Notts and De byshire Areas supporting his nomination for vice-president.

Clarke and Thompson warned of the dangers facing miners from the Wheeler Plan, drawn up by Notts NCB area director, Albert Wheeler. This includes further job losses, new more divisive bonus schemes, nine hour shifts six day working, less safe mining methods, and more private contractors.

Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield have led a vigorous opposition to such proposals, to such an extent that a recent *Financial Times* editorial concluded: 'Given that the prospects of reaching some form of enabling agreement at national level look poor, the management may have to concentrate its efforts on persuading miners at local level that their interests will best be served in a modern profitable industry, making flexible use of new technology and equipment. The more British Coal can decentralise its negotiations over wages and productivity, the better.'

This is exactly what the NCB is trying to do. Plans to invest £90 million in a new pit at Margam in South Wales are being

made dependent on the NUM agreeing it be run on six day working.

Arthur Scargill denounced the condition as 'unacceptable blackmail'. 'We want the Margem development' he explained on BBC radio, 'and we want it desperately. But we don't want to be blackmailed into unfair working practices in order to get it. What we want to see is a reduction in the working week from five to four days with no increase in the number of hours worked per day.'

Instead of welcoming this clear re-statement of the union's national policy, Des Duffield, South Wales Area president, stated that there would be a meeting with local management and, according to *The Guardian* that: 'It might have been better if the national president had remained silent until then.'

In this meeting on 'They Way Forward' for miners it was only Sammy Thompson who pointed to the sort of action that was necessary to defeat the employers offensive. He explained how 3,000 miners in the Selby complex in North Yorkshire were on strike that week against the Coal Board's breaking agreements on bonus payments.

Teachers strike ballot

BALLOTING is currently taking place in the National Union of Teachers and the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers for joint half day strike action against the Baker Bill. The Bill will remove teachers' right to collectively bargain over wages and conditions. Indications are that there will be a massive vote in favour of the action.

It is the first time that joint strike action has been organised between the NAS/UWT and the NUT. NUT general secretary, Fred Jarvis, stressed its importance at a 2000-strong joint lobby of parliament on 26 February.

Labour's education spokesperson, Giles Radice has pledged that a future Labour government would

repeal the Bill. NUT executive member Bernard Regan said 'it is important that this opposition is seen to be more than just promises of better days to come. Teachers will be faced with the realities of the Bill long before any general election.'

The left-wing Socialist Teachers Alliance, he said, 'will be arguing that Labour-controlled local education authorities give a commitment now that they won't implement the new law, and that refusal to cover for absent colleagues in schools and refusal to work outside of school hours and in the lunchbreak be generalised and built nationally by the union. The united 1/2-day strike action gives us the opportunity to launch this campaign.'

Caterpillar

A MASSIVE lobby of parliament in support of the Caterpillar occupation has been called for 5 March. It follows on the highly successful local demonstration on Saturday 28 March.

International contingents from Caterpillar plants in France and Belgium will be on the lobby of parliament it was pledged, as part of the move to build a strong

international combine. The French plant is considering solidarity strike action on the day.

Convenor John Brannan has declared his determination to go ahead with plans to give a 'Pink Panther' tractor to famine relief. The company has threatened Bob Geldof with legal action for 'receiving stolen goods' if he accepts the tractor built by the occupying workers.

Unions against apartheid

UNIONS in Ford's, Britain's biggest car maker, have forced the company to phase out all trade with South Africa.

Shop floor workers at Dagenham have stopped production on several occasions when they discovered they were using South African-made parts.

In January, mass shop floor meetings decided to black all supplies to the KD export plant until trade with South Africa

was stopped. All meetings were unanimously in favour of the action which involved some workers stopping overtime.

The NUM has launched a national campaign 'Miners united against apartheid'. Over 100,000 copies of a special pamphlet have been produced and distributed — one for every NUM member. The union has also issued a poster.

Manchester engineers

A SPECIAL meeting of shop stewards has been called by Manchester-based district of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, writes MARTIN MARRIOTT.

The meeting on Monday 9 March will hear calls for action in support of the seven week-long strike at Senior Colman in Sale.

Ninety workers took strike action in response to the dismissal of four workers who refused to fill out new time-sheets in line with union policy. The company promptly sacked all the strikers and has recruited a scab workforce.

Wide backing has been won from local engineers and from miners as far away as Durham and Northumberland.

Strikers' wives have initiated SWAG, the Senior Women's Action Group, who are organising street collections, sending speakers to labour movement organisations, and accompanying strikers on delegations.

Striker Tony Lowe called for 'maximum solidarity' with the strike. 'We've seen for ourselves what the miners and Wapping strikers went through' he said.

CPSA ballot victory

BY 57,553 votes to 21,497, the CPSA voted to establish a political fund. The union will now go on to vote on proposed Labour Party affiliation.

The CPSA is also involved with three other unions in the civil service — the SCPS, IRSF and NIPSA — in a joint campaign for a

flat-rate increase of £20 a week, a £115 minimum wage and a 35-hour week.

The combined union membership of 300,000 will be balloted in the week beginning 23 March. Industrial action plans include withdrawal of goodwill, an overtime ban and selective strikes.

A Socialist ACTION

20 years of the '67 Act ... Abortion rights under attack

THOUGH THE courts ruled against the legal action brought to prevent a young woman terminating her pregnancy, anti-abortion rights organisations were not entirely downhearted. The publicity surrounding the case, they said, had brought to the fore the centrepiece of their present campaign — the use of an obscure law, the Infant Life Preservation Act of 1929 to outlaw abortions.

Just days before the court action, Bishop Montefiore of Birmingham was admitting defeat for his attempt to amend the Act through the House of Lords: a one-word change would have cut the time-limit for legal abortions from 28 to 24 weeks.

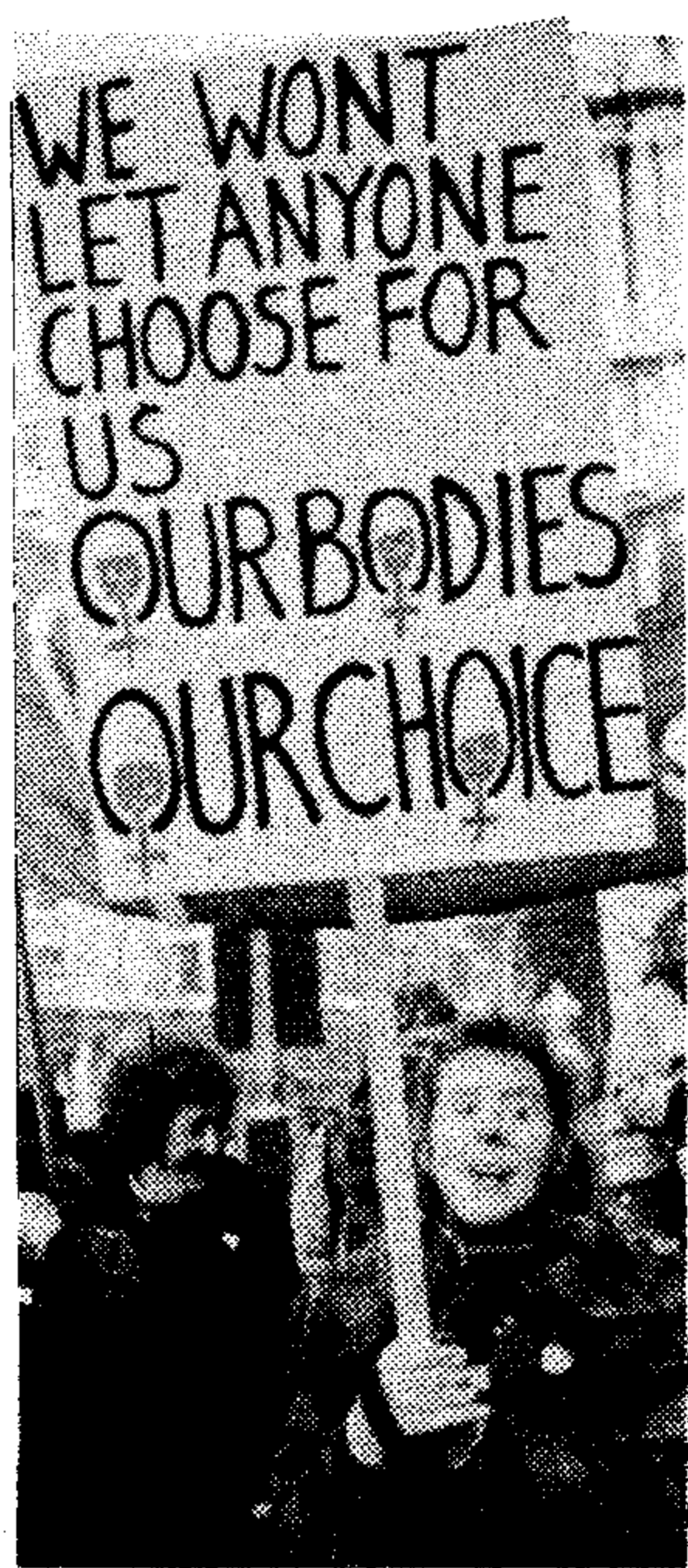
The case of the Oxford student's litigation brought the issue from the relative obscurity of the House of Lords to the front-pages of every tabloid.

The headlines descended below even their usual miserable gutter standards into the sewer. Readers were sensationally told that the foetus was really a live baby with all its functions in tact, just waiting to be saved from 'death' by a loving father.

The real object was a far cry from mending the broken heart of an agonised father. It was a well thought out campaign to undermine the 1967 Abortion Law Reform Act.

If it had been successful the court action would have established in law that the foetus (in this case of an 18-week pregnancy) was capable of being born alive; and to establish the precedent that a third party (in this case, the father) could take legal action on its behalf.

The litigation was financed by the anti-abortion rights organisation, SPUC. The prosecuting lawyer, Gerard Wright, QC, was a founder member of 'The Association of Lawyers for the Defence of the Unborn'. Wright first came into the public eye when he



acted on behalf of Victoria Gillick who sought to make it illegal for doctors to give contraceptive advice to the under 16s.

Wright gave the game away when he declared after the final judgement that the decision had been 'a setback for our campaign'.

The 'campaign' will not go away. Last year a Norwegian man, Robert Hercz took a similar case to the European Court after the Norwegian Supreme Court rejected his attempt to stop his partner from terminating her pregnancy. The case is still pending.

In the US a mother who gave birth under a commercial surrogacy deal and who now wants to keep the baby is facing

litigation by the 'father'.

Rulings in these cases will inevitably be accompanied by a further wave of banner headlines targeting the right of women to chose.

The campaign to reduce legal time-limits has already had its pay-off in the form of a voluntary agreement which effectively prevents abortions after 24 weeks. The Department of Health has made it a condition of granting licences to clinics that they do not perform abortions after this time. Statistics reveal that there were just 31 such 'late' abortions in 1985.

'Late' abortions are never of course the choice of the woman. They are the product of hostile social pressure especially on young women who are overwhelmingly the largest group to have late abortions. Bureaucratic delay is also responsible. Here the NHS is particularly at fault — there are far fewer 'late' abortions in clinics.

The time-limits campaign has nothing to do with the number of such abortions let alone an attempt to rule out further attacks on right of women to 'early' abortions. It is a campaign aimed at restricting — through legally defining the foetus to be a 'baby' — the right of all women to decide for themselves.

Whether the attack takes the form of Powell's bill on embryo research, Bishop Montefiore's amendment to the Infant Life Preservation Act, or a father's dragging his 'loved one' through the courts in the midst of media much-raking, the object is the same.

And labour movement leaders should end their deafening silence and defend labour movement policy in defence of the democratic right of women to decide.

Tories unveil scabs charter



THE NEWLY published Tory anti-union proposals are literally a scabs charter. If implemented they would:

- Legally indemnify and protect strike-breakers,
- Empower individual union members to prevent unions calling industrial action without a ballot,
- Effectively end the closed shop and outlaw industrial action to enforce one,
- Prevent unions protecting their funds from sequestration,
- Eliminate workplace ballots and replace them with postal balloting for all union elections.

Previous trade union legislation enacted by the

Tory government in 1980, 1982 and 1984 have all been justified on the pretence of 'democratising' the unions.

Under the veil of 'returning unions to their members' the government

By Jon Silberman

has taken significant steps to legally curb effective action, striking especially hard at the movement's ability to take solidarity action, weakening the closed shop, imposing pre-strike ballots and opening up the unions to extremely heavy court penalties.

The new green paper lifts the veil of 'democracy' altogether

and exposes for all to see what unions like the NUM, SOCAT and the NGA have already discovered the previous laws to be: part of a wholesale and cumulative assault on the trade union movement.

At the centre of the paper are measures to prevent the sort of militant class struggle unionism used by the miners in their historic strike of 1984-5.

No longer will it be up simply to individual union members to take civil action. The green paper provides for a new commissioner who will underwrite the financial burden of legal action or act where members have taken no action at all.

The green paper im-

mediately won the backing of SDP-Liberal Alliance who legitimately claimed that many of its provisions stemmed from their own proposals. The Alliance has consistently argued that the Tory government has not been sufficiently forthright in its trade union 'reform'.

The paper has received universal condemnation from labour movement representatives. Labour's employment spokesperson, John Evans described it as 'petty, vindictive and miserable attack' on trade unionists adding to the scabs charter introduced by the government 'over the past eight awful years'.

Scabs charter in detail and how to fight it, page 10.

SUBSCRIBE

RATES

Inland	Overseas
24 Issues £10	(48 Issues only)
48 Issues £20	Europe £24
	Airmail £34

(Double these rates for multi-reader institutions)

Name

Address

Enclose cheque/PO payable to Socialist Action for £

Send to: Socialist Action Subs, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

A day's wages for Socialist Action

IT IS AT times like the present that our newspaper is most valued — when it is necessary to get out the truth about what is happening.

The latest Tory green paper on trade unions proposes further and more drastic restrictions on working people's right to organise and protect themselves.

Union leaders like Brenda Dean have helped sabotage the struggle at Wapping and John Golding worked to defuse the NCU's struggle. Neil Kinnock's line led Labour to disaster at Greenwich — and is preparing another defeat at the general elec-

tion. Yet the press, including the supposedly 'pro-Labour' press, explains that this is all due to ... left wing extremists! It is always the logic of capitalism to blame those who have never had power, and not those who do have it.

A paper which tells the truth and analyses the real situation facing the working class in this country is at a premium.

The attacks at home are part of the broader attacks that are taking place against the working class and their allies internationally — in South Africa, in Central America, in the Middle

East, and elsewhere. Socialist Action is a paper that tells the truth about workers struggles across the world — a paper that arms its readers with the analysis that is necessary to organise the fightback at home and solidarity with workers struggles internationally.

Maintaining our fortnightly schedule of production is indispensable. To do that Socialist Action is launching a special appeal to all our supporters to give a day's wages to help us meet our publication fund target of £10,000.

We believe that this is a sacrifice that will be well repaid in the years to come.

