

# A Socialist ACTION

BUILDING AN ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALISM

## VOTE LABOUR

# END THE WITCH HUNT AGAINST THE BLACK SECTION

THE decision by the April meeting of Labour's NEC to sack Sharon Atkin as parliamentary candidate for Nottingham East was a decisive escalation of a campaign directed primarily at the Black Section in the Labour Party.

The campaign, which has so far culminated in the decision against Sharon Atkin, did not begin after the now-notorious Birmingham meeting. Nor was it sparked off by the particular remarks that Sharon Atkin is alleged to have made at that meeting. The party leadership's attack began in March, following the AGM in Nottingham of the Black Section. A resolution was moved at the March NEC during the report from the finance and general purposes committee, which threatened disciplinary action against the entire Labour Party Black Section.

It was alleged that black Labour candidates intended to run on their own

manifestos outside the decisions and accountability of the party. But this was spurious. All the Black PPCs proposed to stand on the basis of the manifestos drawn up by their CLPs, as do all other Labour candidates.

The March NEC sounded a warning blast against Black Sections as a whole, not at some unfounded fear of black candidates having separate manifestos.

The March NEC was followed by the letter from Hattersley and other Birmingham MPs attempting to tell Black Section members not to come to Birmingham to speak at a public meeting. Birmingham has been the cockpit of the latest attempts by the right to prevent Black Sections getting more organised.

Cllr Phil Murphy, suspended from Birmingham Labour Group, and also facing an NCC hearing to expel him from the party, had already come under attack from the right when he was sack-

ed as vice chair of the equal opportunities committee for being 'too concerned' with the problems of the black community.

The NEC's decision in relation to Sharon Atkin was especially personally vicious, as she was both ill herself, and nursing a very sick husband at the time of the hearing. The decision to replace her as PPC, and refer her expulsion from party membership to the NCC, was taken not simply in her own absence, but in the absence of her lawyer, Keva Coombes. At the time of the vote he had left the meeting to get further clarification from his client, at the NEC's request. The decision to deselect Sharon Atkin was taken by 19 votes to 6. Only Tony Benn, Linda Douglas, Joan Maynard, Jo Richardson, Dennis Skinner and Audrey Wise voted against.

The fact that the action against Sharon Atkin had nothing to do with her alleged remarks in Birmingham is

demonstrated by the totally dissimilar treatment of Frank Field. Reference to his comments supporting an Alliance vote in some constituencies was met by the moving of next business! It was only the same six who voted against this.

The Labour right is utterly opposed to the Black Section because it breaks up the clientism and paternalism which many prominent, white, male MPs depend on to keep their safe seats. The truth is that, especially in the West Midlands, the safest Labour seats are precisely those with the largest black communities — which overwhelmingly vote Labour. For Roy Hattersley this has been the making of his career: 'my Asians' don't want black sections, he has explained.

It is because the Labour Party Black Section is a total threat to this that the NEC is now set upon the course of trying to break it up. There should be no illusions that the attack is aimed at breaking up the Black

Sections.

Firstly by undermining its unity through a combination of threats and crumbs offered to those most vulnerable to pressure. Secondly by an escalating political and organisational attack on its leadership.

Thirdly we will doubtless see increasing attempts to establish an alternative to Black Sections within the party. The first attempt with the discredited Black and Asian Advisory Committee has failed, now attention has turned to building up one or two carefully selected Black PPCs, who will be groomed as the party's 'acceptable' black face.

The attack on Sharon Atkin, Phil Murphy and the Labour Party Black Section is a straightforward attempt to break up the development of black self-organisation in the party. This must be resisted.

# Socialist ACTION

## Drive to smash accountability

### Thatcher, Callaghan and MI5

TWO KEY people are now obstructing verification of the allegations of an MI5 conspiracy against the Wilson government. They are Margaret Thatcher and James Callaghan.

Callaghan's statement, made as prime minister in 1977, following an investigation into allegations against MI5, is being taken as clearing MI5 of the charges Wright has made in the book *Spycatcher*. But Callaghan's statement only explicitly clears MI5 of using electronic bugging devices in Number 10. Thatcher has taken cover behind Callaghan's refusal, so far, to call for an inquiry into MI5's alleged plot to destabilise a Labour government.

Objectively there is only one side which gains from this: the Security Services themselves, and the British state. If the allegations are unfounded and if Callaghan knows this to be the case, then he could present his evidence and sort the matter out. The only reasonable assumption for the failure to do this, is that it cannot be done. Therefore Callaghan should call for an inquiry. This would either expose an attempt to overthrow an elected government, or would expose Wright as a liar.

The only objective explanation for the failure to call for an inquiry by those who could get one set up is that the interests of protecting the Security Services weigh for more than unveiling an attack on an elected Labour government. In the case of Margaret Thatcher this is no surprise. Her record on the Zircon film, the Sarah Tisdall affair, Clive Ponting, and the apparent use of the PM's office in the Westland scandal speaks for itself.

It should come as no surprise in the case of James Callaghan either. Not only is he well-informed on the functioning of MI5 and more generally the dirty role of the British security services in Britain, Ireland and elsewhere. He also is no stranger to the subordination of elected governments to other 'extra-parliamentary' institutions like the IMF, the City, NATO and the EEC. He only objects to 'extra-parliamentary' interference with government when it comes from the labour movement or its allies.

The bi-partisanship of Labour's front bench when the core interests of the British establishment are at stake has been a disgrace. Compare the vigour of the PLP leadership's attacks on Black Section, left Labour councils and left policies with their almost unbelievable inability to take on Thatcher's cover-up of MI5, and before this the sinking of the Belgrano, the Westland affair, the Stalker affair, and Zircon to name just the most recent.

Not only have their witch hunts and right wing policies undermined support for Labour, but their spineless refusal to fight for even the most modest measures of democracy in the British state have fatally hamstrung their capacity to inflict the kind of damage upon Thatcher's government which its most blatant cover-ups and lies have made possible.

Those that have fought Thatcher in parliament and supported those fighting her government outside parliament over the past eight years have unfortunately been a small minority in the Campaign Group linked to the left in the labour movement. It is the left which has been the chief target of the right wing's attacks, and not — unfortunately for Labour — MI5, the IMF, the City, the CBI, the Tory Party and the SDP-Liberal Alliance.

It did not need Wright's book to reveal that the Security Services are a law unto themselves, with no accountability, public scrutiny or democratic controls to hinder their operations. They only exist to protect the establishment, to secure the status quo, and prevent any threats developing to the vested interests in British society. As Wright is quoted by the *Independent* as saying in his book: 'As we always used to say in the office: "Politicians may come and go, but the Security Service goes on forever"'. And Wright speaks from the inside!



THE POLICIES advocated by the right wing in the party, pursued by Kinnoch, are threatening Labour with defeat at the election. As the right wing are in reality conscious of the electoral consequences of their policies they are already preparing their moves for after the election. These are not simply on the field of policy — in particular in abandoning unilateral nuclear disarmament. The right are also moving to smash any elements of democracy in the party that can resist their drive to the right.

The first target in this is to smash the democratic reform achieved in 1979 gaining mandatory reselection of Labour MPs by their general management committees, if this can be overturned the ability of Labour MPs to ignore the wishes of their constituency parties will be greatly strengthened. A 'consultation paper' on this is already being circulated by the NEC. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) has launched a major effort in defence of reselection. We are printing here the introduction to the special broadsheet produced by CLPD.

THATCHER is likely to call a general election any moment now. If the Tories' percentage in recent polls was reproduced in actual votes they would be returned for another four or five years. This is a disastrous prospect, bearing in mind that for the last eight years Thatcher's government has presided over a massive increase in unemployment, a slump in production, and cuts in real terms of social services, benefits and living standards.

Such dissatisfaction as does exist is being expressed in greater support for the Alliance, not Labour. In fact the Party's electoral support — never strong enough during the last three and a half years to be translated into a Labour government with a working majority — has once again declined in recent months. It will require unprecedented effort by the entire party from top to bottom to reverse this trend in time for the election.

Yet just when party and union activists should be making this their all-out priority, the NEC has chosen to reopen the divisive issue of reselection of Labour MPs by holding a consultation on alter-

natives to the present system.

No one should be taken in by the claim that the 'consultation' paper circulated by the NEC to all CLPs and affiliated organisations is meant merely for discussion. Ever since 1982 when the right wing captured control, the NEC has been pressing for a change in the reselection procedure.

In 1983, after two resolutions in favour of 'one member one vote' (OMOV) were overwhelmingly defeated, the NEC rescued a third by asking for remission. In 1984 it produced its own constitutional amendment on the subject, which conference rejected. In 1985 the NEC saved an EETPU resolution on 'OMOV' from defeat by once again asking for remission, and hastily set up a working party 'to examine ways and means of widening the franchise'. Finally, last year Conference decided by 3,549,000 votes to 2,603,000 that 'to reopen the argument over new proposals at this time would seriously damage Party unity and divert the Party's energies from the overriding priority of working for a Labour victory'.

Conference therefore calls on the National Executive Committee to refrain from bringing up such proposals before the next general election.'

Just seven weeks later, the NEC, blatantly disregarding the views of Party Conference, circulated its 'consultation' document. This contains no fewer than ten possible new procedures, eight of which would free MPs from even the minimum level of accountability provided by the present system.

The NEC's initiative during this pre-election period means that many CLPs will not have time to examine all the implications of such changes. Those which make the time will be distracted from working for a Labour victory, and the NEC's options will reopen the bitter disagreements of the past.

Why does the NEC attach such importance and urgency to changing the present system? The reason is that it is determined to regain a blank cheque over policies for Labour's Front Bench. The NEC's calculations seem to be as follows: On the one hand it is relying on most parties being too busy with election work to reply. On the other hand it is relying on parties dominated by right-wing cliques to prioritise their demand for 'OMOV' above election work. Relatively few responses, but many of these in favour of 'OMOV', would allow the NEC to claim that the mood was overwhelmingly in favour of change, and to ask Conference to remove the power of reselection from the ordinary party members who comprise the General Committee. Then once again a Labour Government would be able to abandon unwelcome commitments in the manifesto with im-

#### Composite Resolution 39

This Conference welcomes the National Executive Committee's statement to the 1985 Annual Party Conference that it would not be proposing changes in parliamentary reselection procedures to the 1986 Conference.

It notes that the National Executive Committee has since set up a special working party on proposals for a new system of selection and reselection.

Conference is not opposed to improvements, especially if these further develop the accountability of Labour Members of Parliament, but believes that the rights of trade unions, co-operative societies and parties, and all affiliated organisations, must not be marginalised but maintained in a form which reflects their importance in the movement and in the Party as a whole.

Conference also considers:

- it is essential to maintain accountability of Members of Parliament at, at least, the level provided by the present system, so as to ensure that the Parliamentary Labour Party carries out the policies decided by annual Party Conference;
- the only way this can be done is if reselections are carried out by the same body to which the Member of Parliament reports month by month on the work of the Parliamentary Labour Party in opposition and in government.

At the same time, Conference recognises that the issue of reselection is both complex and divisive, and that to reopen the argument over new proposals at this time would seriously damage Party unity and divert the Party's energies from the over-riding priority of working for a Labour victory.

Conference therefore calls on the National Executive Committee to refrain from bringing up such proposals before the general election.

punity.

CLPs must therefore resist the natural inclination to ignore this consultation. This would only assist those who wish to release Labour MPs from accountability to the rank and file.

CLPD has therefore produced this broadsheet spelling out the implications of the NEC paper, and suggesting how best to respond. We also reproduce the options proposed by the NEC, as it is otherwise unlikely that most Party members will ever see them.

Campaign for Labour Party Democracy  
RESELECTION OF MPs  
CLPD's response to the NEC  
consultation paper on Party Branches

### Defend reselection

Distribute to your CLP and trade union branch copies of the CLPD broadsheet defending reselection. Available free on request from CLPD, 10 Park Drive, London NW11 7SH.

# Right wing steps up tactical voting drive

UNLESS SOMETHING amazing happens in the local government elections on 7 May, a general election is almost certain to be announced in the next few days. In anticipation the right wing is stepping up its drive for 'tactical voting'. Put bluntly, they are calling for a vote for candidates other than official Labour Party candidates.

This campaign had now reached very broad proportions. It started with support from *Marxism Today*, the *New Statesman*, the *Guardian* and *Observer*. That spread into the Labour Party through the explicit support for the formation of the 'Tactical Voting '87' campaign and the support for tactical voting given by Frank Field MP.

By Dick Carter

The Labour Party leadership made clear that no action will be taken against those calling for votes for SDP or Liberal candidates against Labour. The very same April NEC which removed Sharon Atkin as a parliamentary candidate refused to consider a resolution by Tony Benn requiring Frank Field make a public statement calling for a vote for all Labour Party candidates. Not only does this show the dual standard of justice operated by the NEC right wing, but also the implicit acceptance of the tactical voting campaign.

Neil Kinnock ruled out any discussion of the Frank Field case on the grounds it would be 'divisive'.

This also explains the extraordinary new development whereby the Labour Party's own magazine, *New Socialist*, is also now calling for 'tactical voting'. Its editor, Stuart Weir, devoted the front cover and ten inside pages of the May issue to a call for 'tactical voting'.

Weir calls for unions to use their money in support of the tactical voting campaign. Weir argues: 'there is a major weakness in tv87's (Tactical Voting '87) intervention. The campaign at the moment is too thin in resources and too short of money to be effective where it really matters — in the Conservative marginals.'

'Most people in these seats don't know they are marginal, and they don't

know who came second in 1983. A largely national campaign may only stir up more self-defeating tactical voting. To arm people with the information they need, the campaign has to be focussed locally, constituency by constituency.

'The most decisive and dramatic way of overcoming the "information gap" would be to commission opinion polls in the key marginals during the election campaign. This would cost up to about £575,000 — rather more than half the £1 million that NALGO is spending on its admirable "Think Before You Vote" campaign, but undoubtedly more effective. There could hardly be a better way of spending the money.'

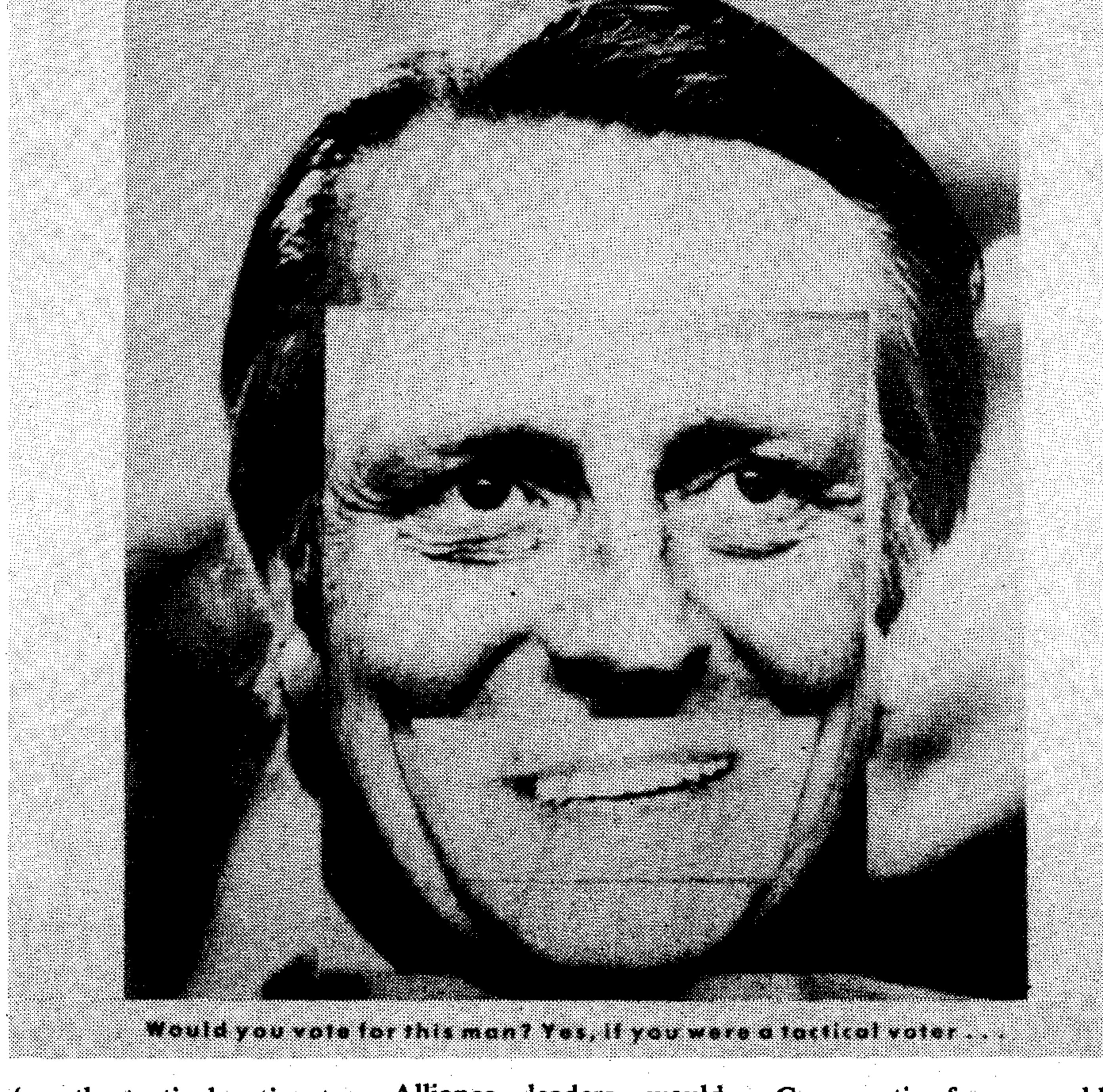
Weir concludes: 'I am for the tactical voting campaign because it seems to offer the only real prospect of stopping Mrs Thatcher. It could of course fail, but its failure would hardly leave Labour any worse off, and could even leave Labour better off.'

## Alternative

Weir can get away with calling for votes against Labour candidates precisely because Kinnock declares that to take it up would be 'divisive' — whereas removing left wing black PPCs is of course 'unifying'.

In any democratically run party Weir would have been removed from his job right at the beginning of the last NEC — not because of a witch hunt but because, as an official appointed by the party to run its magazine, he is bound to carry out its decisions in fulfilling his post.

But the most extraordinary step of all was taken by Hattersley. In a little reported speech, Hattersley publicly opened the door to tactical voting for the first time. Speaking on Saturday 2 May, he called for Owen and the SDP to



'use the tactical option to support Labour and defeat the Tories'.

But isn't there another side to the deal? It is meaningless to call for the SDP to vote for Labour unless Labour intends to give something in return. Hattersley is edging towards making 'tactical voting' explicit. That Labour will not call for a vote for the Alliance unless the Alliance explicitly calls for a vote for Labour. And if it agrees then...?

## Alliance

This is in line with some of Hattersley's previous positions. Ten years ago he described the Lib-Lab pact, the policies of which prepared the way for the disastrous Labour electoral defeat of 1979, as an example of 'men and women of public spirit and practical commonsense who have agreed to work together in the national interest'.

Indeed it has to be seriously questioned whether many of those on the right actually want to win the election. They are certainly indifferent to the electoral damage to Labour done by the witch hunt against Sharon Atkin. An unnamed member of the shadow cabinet told the *Sunday Times* that the Black Section was the political equivalent of AIDS and that he 'didn't care' if seats were lost to the SDP as a result of the action taken against Atkin.

In reality the right wing is acting totally in line with what the bourgeoisie want — which is to force Labour into third place in terms of the vote at the election. This is the goal of both the Tories and the Alliance. The Alliance is not even remotely an 'anti-Thatcher force'.

Peter Jenkins, SDP supporter and columnist in the *Independent*, who has access to the highest levels of the Alliance leadership, wrote in that paper on 7 April: 'What most

Alliance leaders would prefer is to see Labour finish a humiliating third in terms of the popular vote and the Alliance to win the 50 or 60 seats necessary to establish a bridgehead to the future. Such an outcome would be hard to achieve without Mrs Thatcher winning her third majority.'

Peter Kellner, political editor of the *New Statesman*, which is one of the chief journals promoting tactical voting, wrote in the *Independent* on 30 March entreatingly: 'Suppose the Alliance added four more percentage points (from its recent opinion poll standing). If it had the choice, would it prefer to take them from the Tories or from Labour? The calculations of these alternatives illustrate the Alliance's strategic dilemma.'

'If the Alliance takes those extra votes from the Conservatives...it would still have fewer seats than either of the other parties, this scenario would provide precisely the kind of "balanced parliament" that the two Davids say they are so keen to have...'

'In those circumstances Labour would still be down but very far from out. It would have gained both seats and votes since 1983...'

'Alternatively, let us assume that the Alliance obtains those extra four points from Labour... There would be no question of a "balanced parliament" this time. The Conservatives would have an overall majority...The two Davids would have to remain below the gangway for another parliament.'

'But the longer term prospects are surely more exciting for them. They would lead parties that had secured three million more votes than Labour. The tensions inside the People's Party could lead to its disintegration. But the end of Mrs Thatcher's third term it is likely that a realignment of the non-

Conservative forces would have taken place. And both Davids would still only be in their early 50s...'

'If the Alliance is to secure the benefits it claims to see in a hung parliament it must ensure the defeat of at least 80 Tory MPs. It is almost impossible for the Alliance to do this on its own; it needs Labour to gain seats as well. But that would set back any hopes of destroying Labour in the medium term. Which options would the two Davids really prefer? I think we should be told.'

## Voting

In reality the 'two Davids' have already given their answer. Owen stated in his book *A United Kingdom* only last year: 'A fundamental objective of the SDP when it was formed was...to replace the Labour Party.' Steel restated this following the Greenwich by-election: '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 in the next general election...we in the Alliance can win scores of Labour seats.'

Roy Jenkins declared in the *Independent* on 31 March that Labour was destined to 'settle down at around 20 per cent, like the French Communist Party in its good days'. The Alliance 'must transcend the sullen proletarianism of the Labour Party'.

This is the role which the call for 'tactical voting' is playing. It is not a clever manoeuvre for getting rid of Thatcher. It is to participate in a policy to smash Labour as a significant force in British politics. The right wing, by their policies, are actively participating in breaking up and trying to destroy the strength and credibility of the Labour Party.

# When the election comes

WHEN THE general election is called the left in this country is going to be facing a very different situation than the one it imagined.

During the last four years many socialists have concentrated on building a 'left to the left of Kinnock'. Not politics to the left of Kinnock, which are obviously needed, but a left that believed that Labour would win the election and what had to be build now was a fight against the betrayals of a Kinnock government.

By John Ross

That approach was absurdly out of line with reality.

The problem that is faced today is that there is not going to be a Labour government. The left is confronted with a long, bitter fight to defend the Labour movement — and even to defend Labour's vote against workers shifting to vote for bourgeois parties.

The problem that faced, and still faces, the left is not how to build a left to fight a future, hypothetical, Labour government. It was how to build a left to fight against Thatcher now. Without success in that fight there was never going to be a Labour government.

## Fight

The Labour leadership's repudiation of the NGA at Warrington, of the miners, of the Wapping dispute, of Liverpool council, of Broadwater Farm, and now of Sharon Atkin and the black community, was not only a betrayal in itself. But these successive repudiations were the ones that ensured that there was not going to be a Labour government.

Not only was Kinnock's line not a socialist one, it was incapable of defending the labour movement: either the trade unions or the Labour Party.

The result is that since 1979 almost four million members have left the trade unions, and three million workers have broken with voting Labour — not to its left but to its right. These workers have broken from voting for a working class party to voting for bourgeois parties.

The working class today finds itself in a bitter battle not immediately for socialism but to defend its existing gains. Gains which are being broken up by the inability of the bureaucracy to confront and defeat the offensive of the bourgeoisie.

The situation facing the labour movement in 1987 can be expressed in a paradox. *Labourism*, the reformist ideology of the labour movement, is increasingly incapable of defending the institutions of the labour movement.

Whilst combatting every manifestation of *labourism*, socialists have to fight tooth and nail to defend every gain, and defensive institution, of the *labour movement*. The trade unions, Labour's progressive gains in local government, the mass campaigns and movements, the elements of democracy in the Labour Party — everything which Trotsky once referred to as 'the nuclei of proletarian democracy within bourgeois society' — are going to come under attack. And without defending these there can be no advance towards socialism.

The Labour Party's vote fits within that context. There are occasions when a break from a traditional working class party can be a progressive development. In West Germany those voting for the Greens do so as a way of expressing a vote to the left of the SPD.

But, in Britain, there is nothing whatever left wing about workers breaking from Labour to vote for the Alliance. That is a shift to the right not to the left. And, in that given situation, socialists have to defend and rebuild Labour's vote as a matter of urgency.

This is the situation today. It is the left which has the interest in Labour winning the election. Indeed it is its goal that Labour should do so. It is the right which is sabotaging that and preventing Labour from forming the government.

The point that the left makes is simply that winning the election cannot be achieved by the election campaign itself. Labour needed to start by supporting every struggle that has been waged over the last four years. It is because that course has not been pursued that there is any chance of Labour losing the election today.

The central feature of British politics today is that the old ideology and politics of the labour movement is crashing down. It is incapable of defending the labour movement. Socialists have to defend the Labour movement — on the basis of different politics and a different ideology.

That applies to the trade unions. It will apply in the general election campaign as well — whenever it is called.



## Campaign Group News

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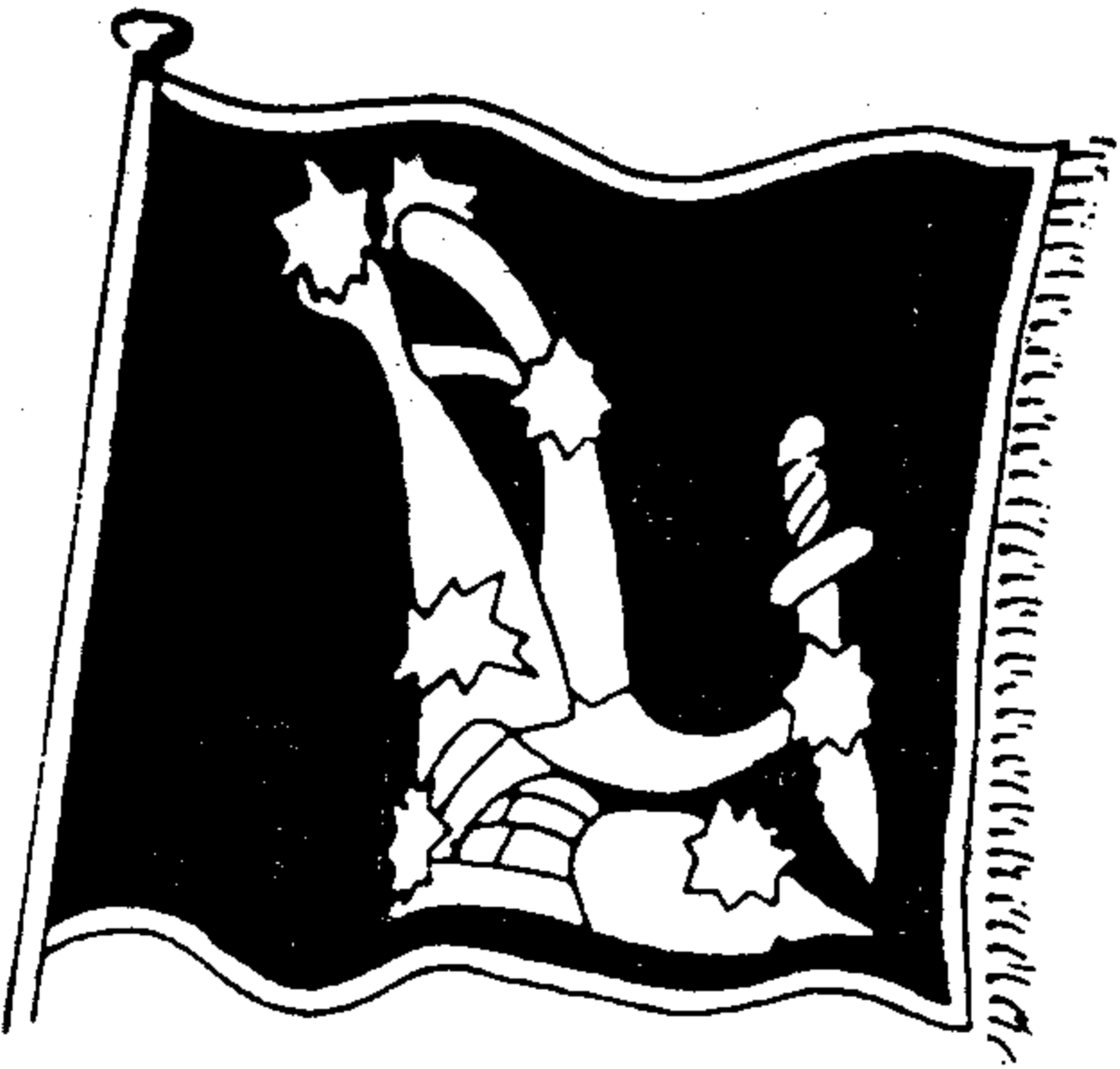
Tactical voting — A strategy for destroying socialism

# Vote Labour in every constituency



New issue of Campaign Group News out. Tor., Benn against 'tactical voting', Linda Bellos on the new witch hunt against the Black Section, Dennis

Skinner on M15. 43p, including postage, from Campaign Group of MPs, c/o Bob Clay MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.



## NUS London's Ireland dayschool

**THE London region of the National Union of Students is jointly hosting with the University of London Union a dayschool on Ireland which will focus on repression in Ireland and the need for British withdrawal.**

**By Polly Vittorini  
NUS London  
executive**

In line with NUS policy adopted nationally at Easter conference 1986, the aim of the day will be to highlight the use of strip-searching against women republican prisoners, of the Prevention of Terrorism Act against Irish people in Britain, of plastic bullets and shoot-to-kill in the North, and to build support among

students for British withdrawal from Ireland and self-determination for the Irish people.

The dayschool, entitled 'Repression in Ireland — the Case for British Withdrawal', will feature among others, speakers from the Guildford Four and Maguire Family Campaign, the Stop the Strip Searches Campaign, the Labour Committee on Ireland and the Labour Party Black Sections.

The event takes place on **Saturday 16 May from 10am-5pm in the Bloomsbury Theatre, Gordon Street, London WC1.** Any students or young people who are interested in campaigning against repression and for British withdrawal from Ireland are welcome.

• **More information contact NUS London on 01-637 1181.**

## LCI youth dayschool planned

**LABOUR Committee on Ireland youth are organising a dayschool on 9 May in Leeds Trades Club, Chapeltown.**

This event will build on the gains of the successful fringe meetings held at regional LPYS conferences. It could significantly help to build support for LCI youth at other Young Socialist and labour movement events.

**By Graham Hellawell**

Speakers at the dayschool include Joan Maynard MP, Sinn Fein, Steve Jomoa of the Labour Party Black Section, Jim Mason, SOGAT, and Sheena Clarke of the LCI. The event has been sponsored by Huddersfield, Colne Valley, York and

## Youth Against Apartheid

**FAREHAM 'Youth Against Apartheid' has recently added its name to the growing number of organised Anti-Apartheid youth and student groups.**

With plans for several party events, FAREHAM has kicked off with a stall and leafletting in the town centre. A benefit gig is planned for 30 May, to be followed by a public meeting for 16 June, Soweto Youth Day.

Speakers at the

meeting will include the ANC and local unions which have taken action against apartheid. That includes hospital workers from Portsmouth and dockers from Southampton, as well as Southampton council which has adopted a comprehensive anti-apartheid policy.

Anti-apartheid activity has spread locally with meetings between the local NUR and trades council and Rail Against Apartheid planned.

**For more details contact Mark 0329 235764.**

# How Labour has failed women

**THE LIKELY declaration of a general election will probably ensure that the Labour Women's Conference, scheduled for 16-18 May, does not go ahead. Instead there will be a rally where women party members will declare their commitment to the return of a Labour government. JUDE WOODWARD looks at how Labour has failed women since the last election — and the price it is paying.**

WOMEN in the party will be among the most hard working in the coming election campaign. But infinitely more could have been achieved if the party had paid more heed to the demands that women themselves have been raising within the labour movement.

In fact the party leadership bears the responsibility for having squandered almost every opportunity it has had since the 1983 general election to demonstrate Labour's real commitment to women's rights.

The 1983 election manifesto was already a signal to many women that the hopes they were beginning to hold in the Labour Party were misplaced. Women had campaigned for many years for the party to adopt a position on abortion rights, and had finally succeeded. But the party leadership, unfortunately supported by some on the left, decided not to include it in the manifesto.

The battle for the women's ministry continued in this tradition, with Jo Richardson and a few supporters having to fight for it every step of the way. When the resistance seemed to have been finally chipped away, Neil Kinnock himself came forward to propose that the ministry did not have cabinet status.

The long term opposition, particularly from some trade unions, to the proposal for the introduction of a statutory minimum wage has been

more explicable — although probably even more damaging to the relations between women and the labour movement. The long delay in adopting this policy allowed women like Bea Campbell to spread an argument that the labour movement was inherently anti-female, and therefore women had to look to other alliances for progress — when, in reality, the SDP and Liberals, not to mention the Tories, were even more opposed to a national minimum wage than was Labour.

The arguments against the minimum wage in the unions centred on the contradiction between free collective bargaining and statutory incomes policy. The minimum wage was presented as a threat to free collective bargaining. In fact, as women did not have a problem seeing, the real issue was the defence of existing differentials — and a failure to prioritise the fight against low pay.

The TUC and the Labour Party eventually adopted the policy of a national minimum wage last year. Such a proposal could have been a key axis of Labour's campaign to tap its potential reservoir of support among working women. But since last year's conferences the principle has been given no concrete content, and has only belatedly been given front bench 'approval' as a campaigning policy.

What makes it worse is that party headquarters are aware of the need to orient the party towards women. Its own surveys



have shown that one of the two most important areas of potential Labour support is among women aged between 25 and 40.

However if we look at what has been produced and developed centrally we can get some idea of what the party leadership thinks will appeal to women.

The TV broadcast which launched the *Freedom and Fairness* campaign last year was especially directed towards women. Its key message was addressed to women who fear violent crime, against themselves or their children, and the key image was a large, white, male cop. Women like Cherry Groce and Cynthia Jarrett will not be attracted by this message — nor will the thousands of women, black and white, who suffer from violence in their homes and find no support from the police.

The women labour has to win are working, are low paid, are responsible for children, and have to be convinced that the labour movement is there to represent them, and not

just their husbands or lovers. This is the *majority* of women in work.

It is because of failures like these that women have been fighting for constitutional changes in the party that would give women real power in the formulation of policy and priorities.

Last year a great concession was won with the conference vote that it would be mandatory to include a woman on every short list for parliamentary selection — as long as a woman had received a nomination locally. Even this was too late for the coming general election, where the Alliance gloats over the fact that it will be fielding more female candidates that Labour — only one more, its true, until the deselection of Sharon Atkin made it two.

Labour's entire policy on women has allowed some, like Sarah Benton of the *New Statesman*, to de facto campaign for women to vote for the Alliance on the grounds it is only in the SDP that women have a real say.

Already in the general elections of 1979 and 1983,

continuing a trend of two decades, we saw a shift in the pattern of women's votes. Previously more women than men had voted Tory, and more men than women voted Labour. This trend is now breaking up. In the last two elections the sex difference in votes was negligible.

The basis of the Alliance's appeal has been to direct themselves towards women in professional and higher paid work — Polly Toynbee, newspaper columnist, or Rosie Barnes, legal consultant, are typical SDP women — and to present themselves as the party of the modern, working woman. The policies of the Alliance clearly do not meet the needs of the majority of women, but Labour is offering no clear alternative to them.

This is the challenge confronting women in the labour movement. Women are a majority of the population. Their concerns cannot be presented as a 'side issue' by Labour or if they are they will simply strengthen the Tories or Alliance — as we saw in the 1950s. Constitutional changes to give power to the Labour Women's Organisation would have strengthened the entire labour movement by bringing the concerns of women into the centre of the party. That opportunity has been wasted — and Labour is weaker in the election as a result.

Proposals for strengthening the Labour Women's Organisation are due to come to this year's party conference. It is vital that the mess created before this election, the failure of the party leadership, is not repeated for the struggles that come after the election.

## Anti-deportation demo planned

**FIVE hundred people participated in the 11-12 April anti-deportations conference in Manchester, and decided to call for a national demonstration there on 11 July.**

The conference was organised by the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign (VMDC). Participants included activists from a number of anti-deportation campaigns and local VMDC support groups. The labour movement, however, was not well represented.

The conference's aim was to build support for

Viraj Mendis' right to stay in Britain and for an end to all deportations. Workshops included women and immigration, local authorities and the Labour Party, trade unions, and the role of the immigration laws.

It was decided to launch a campaign in defence of Manchester City Council's appointment of Viraj Mendis as an immigration and nationality officer. This has been under heavy attack from the Home Office and the media.

A proposal to build a national labour movement conference on immigration at the beginning of 1988 was

defeated. Instead members of the Revolutionary Communist Group moved a resolution calling for support for Viraj Mendis and all those threatened with deportation, which was carried.

This counterposition was at the heart of a weakness introduced into the conference by the RCG. They insist upon building a national anti-deportation campaign through the existing Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign groups. In reality this means no serious attempt to take the issues of deportation and immigration into the labour movement.

## Party conference

**LABOUR Left Liaison met on 29 April and decided to help launch a broad-based national defence campaign for Sharon Atkin and Phil Murphy.**

It also decided to circulate a bulletin containing suggested model resolutions for party conference. Whether or not there is a

June general election the *deadline for resolutions to the Labour Party conference remains 3 July.*

The LLL also discussed the left slate for the party's national executive committee. The LLL and the Campaign Group already support Gavin Strang as the left candidate for treasurer.

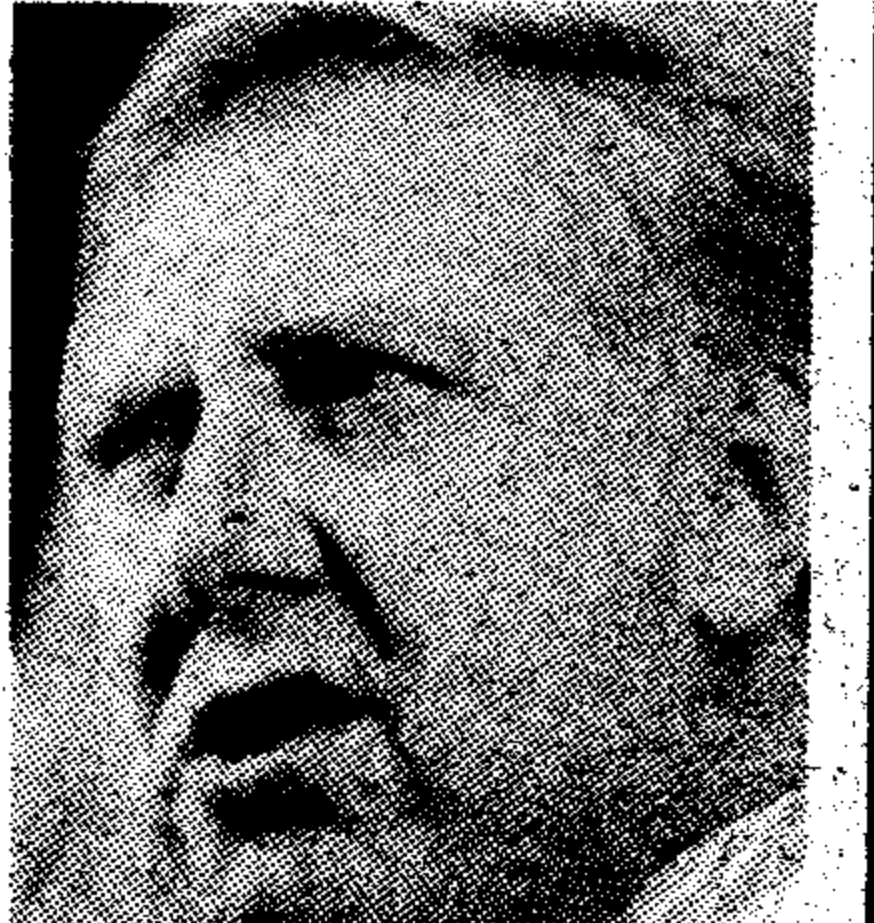
The Labour Women's Action Committee have conducted a ballot to

determine their slate for the women's section of the NEC. The result is: Margaret Beckett, Linda Bellos, Joan Maynard, Ann Pettifor and Clare Short.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy is consulting the Campaign Group of Labour MPs and other left organisations within the LLL on the constituency section of the left's slate.

## Need we say more?

**THIS letter from Karen McCarthy of Selly Oak, Birmingham, appeared in the 1 May issue of Tribune. It speaks for itself.**



'Ken Hulme (*Tribune*, 24 April) has misunderstood the current situation in Birmingham. The fact is that a number of prominent members of the Birmingham Labour Coordinating Committee, having presided over the virtual collapse of that organisation, have now joined forces with the likes of Denis Howell rather than work with their LCC comrades.

The damage this has done to the LCC's reputation has caused great distress to many members in the city. Requests to the national LCC for help have gone unheeded; and now, when we speak out about what has happened, we are branded as ultra-left.'

## Affiliate to Labour Left Liaison

**Campaign Groups: £10  
Individuals: £7.50 (waged) £3 (unwaged)**

Name.....

Address.....

CLP.....

**Please make cheques payable to: 'Labour Left Liaison' and return to: LLL, 10 Park Drive, London NW11 7SH.**

AT PRESS conferences in London, Dublin, Belfast and New York on 1 May, Sinn Fein launched a new discussion paper which spells out the case for self-determination for Ireland and proposes a practical plan to achieve this through British withdrawal within the lifetime of one parliament. We reproduce Sinn Fein's document in full on this page. Sinn Fein's policy initiative sharply contradicts the line taken by the Labour Party's new policy paper on Ireland which endorses the Anglo-Irish Agreement and reaffirms Labour's support for a loyalist veto over Irish unity. By spelling out a practical plan for ending British rule in Ireland Sinn Fein's paper will reinforce the campaign launched by the Labour Committee on Ireland to commit, first the Labour left, and eventually the Labour Party itself, to the policy of Irish self-determination and British withdrawal within one parliament.

THIS document is presented by Sinn Fein for discussion and as an answer to those who claim that there is no alternative to the continuation of British rule. It does not represent the definitive republican position, nor is it exclusive of other proposals dealing with alternative scenarios for a British withdrawal from Ireland.

The first section reiterates the Irish people's right to national self-determination, the second section deals with the question of the loyalists and the final section proposes a way in which the British government could withdraw and transfer power to an all-Ireland constitutional convention and national government.

#### National Self-Determination

The island of Ireland, throughout history, has been universally regarded as one unit. The historical and contemporary existence of the Irish nation has never been in dispute.

The Irish people have never relinquished their claim to the right to self-determination. What has been in contest is the right of the Irish people, as a whole, to self-determination and their freedom to exercise that right.

For centuries, the relationship between the British government and the Irish people has been the relationship between the conqueror and the conquered, the oppressor and the oppressed.

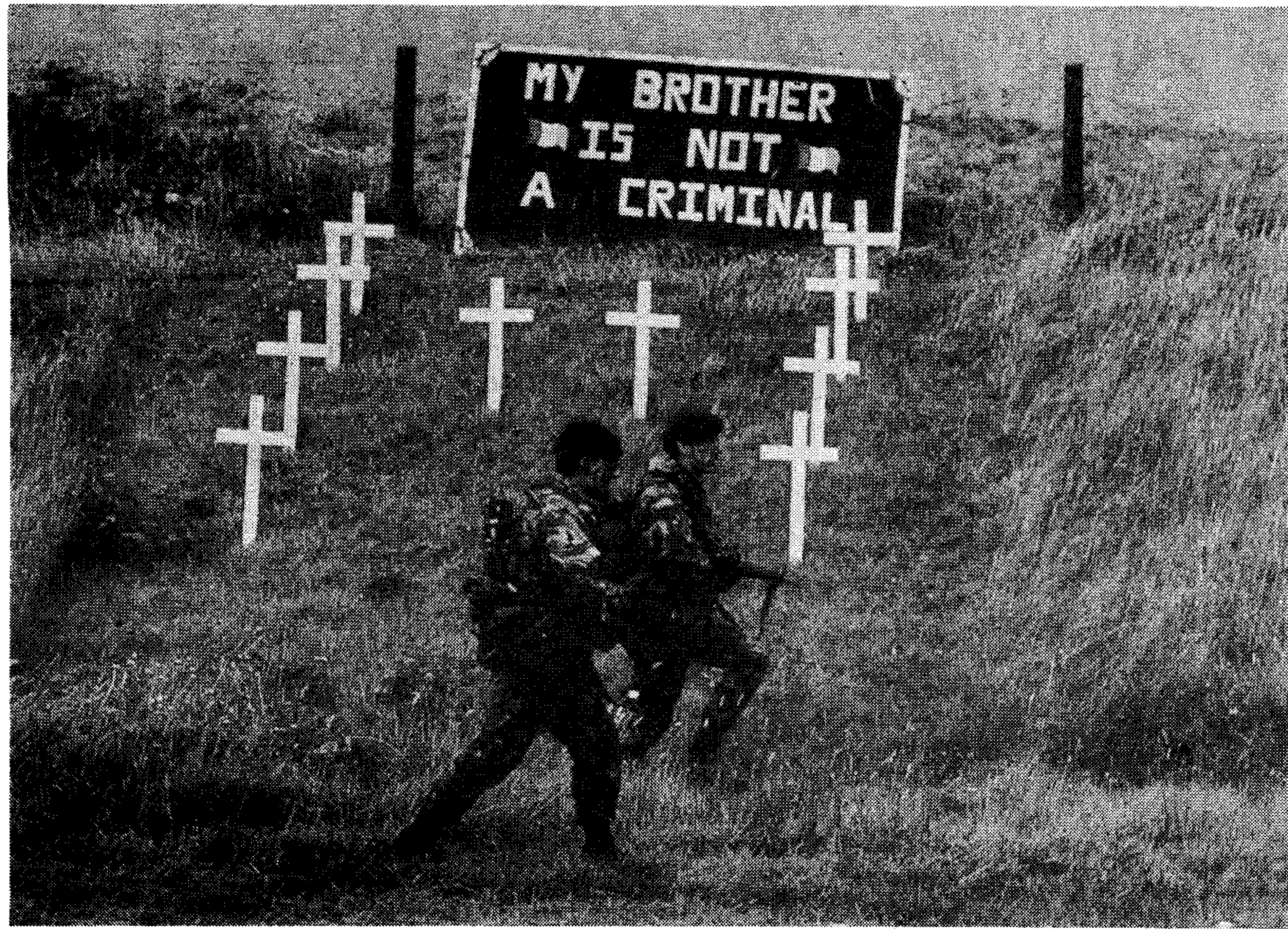
The perennial cycle of oppression-domination-resistance-oppression has been a constant feature of the British government's involvement in Ireland and the Irish people's rejection of that government's usurpation of the right to exercise control over their political, social, economic and cultural destiny.

From the late seventeenth century onwards, that usurpation provoked both revolutionary resistance and — within the narrowest confines of British constitutional legality — constitutional opposition. In the course of the nineteenth century, British oppression and famine caused the population of Ireland to be halved.

The only occasion on which the people of all Ireland have been permitted to hold free and fair elections to determine their political future was in the 1918 Westminster elections. Sinn Fein, with a political programme demanding complete independence for the unitary state of Ireland, won the election with 69.5 per cent of the vote. Those democratically-elected representatives of the Irish people formed Dail Eireann and, on 21 January 1919, enacted the Declaration of Independence.

The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1922, the partition of Ireland and the Constitution of the Irish Free State were imposed on the Irish people under the threat of 'immediate and terrible war'. They were not submitted to the Irish people for ratification and their imposition represents a denial to the Irish people of the freedom to exercise their right to self-determination.

The pretext for partition — the wishes of a national minority to maintain British rule — holds no validity against the express wishes of the vast majority of the Irish people. Secession is not the same as self-



## SINN FEIN SAYS

# Britain out in one Parliament

determination.

Partition perpetuates the British government's denial of the Irish people's right to self-determination. It perpetuates the cycle of oppression-domination-resistance-oppression. In the words of Sean MacBride, winner of the Nobel and Lenin Peace Prizes:

'Ireland's right to sovereignty, independence and unity are inalienable and indefeasible. It is for the Irish people as a whole to determine the future status of Ireland. Neither Britain nor a small minority selected by Britain has any right to partition the ancient island of Ireland, nor to determine its future as a sovereign nation.'

#### Law

Ireland's right to sovereignty, independence and unity — the right of the Irish people, as a whole, to self-determination — is supported by universally-recognised principles of international law.

The right to self-determination is enshrined in the two United Nations' Covenants of 1966 — the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and the *International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights*. Article 1 of each covenant states: '1. All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they determine their economic, social and cultural development.'

The landmark *Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation Among States in Accordance with the Charter of the United Nations* declares: '... all people have the right freely to determine, without external influence, their political status and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development and every state has the duty to respect their right in accordance with the provisions of the Charter.'

Partition is in contravention of the United Nations' *Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples*. Article 6 of which states: 'Any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.'

The major stumbling block to independence is British colonial interference. However, it suits the

British and the loyalists for the loyalists to be portrayed as the real obstacle to that independence and allows Westminster off the hook, projecting itself as the 'honest broker'.

While we in no way wish to ignore the economic challenge which reunification presents, or minimise the extent of the problem, or the great trauma that will be experienced by the unionist population, we believe that loyalism derives an artificial psychological strength from the British presence, from the Union. Indeed, the relationship between unionist intransigence and past unconditional British support is recognised (though unacknowledged) by Thatcher's government, part of whose strategy, via the Hillsborough Treaty, is to rock the morale of loyalists, split the unionists and force the emergence of a pragmatic leadership which will do an internal deal with the SDLP.

The loyalists are a national minority in Ireland. According to most opinion polls, the majority of people in Britain want to wash their hands of Ireland. Increasingly, loyalists are finding themselves in an untenable position. Their protest campaign against the Hillsborough Treaty has cost them dearly in PR terms and to the British public it has only emphasised the differences between the Six Counties and Britain. Their refusal to enter the dialogue (with anyone) and their disillusionment with the British government is producing a momentum towards disaster where civil war, or a unilateral declaration of independence, or repartition are among the irrational proposals put forward by some of the paramilitaries and politicians.

Sinn Fein seeks a new constitution for Ireland which would include written guarantees for those presently constituted as 'loyalists'. This would recognise present day social reality and would include, for example, the provisions for family planning and the right to civil divorce.

The resolution of the conflict would free unionists from their historic laager mentality and would grant them real security instead of tenure based on repression and triumphalism. We do not intend to turn back the pages of history, or to

dispossess the loyalists and foolishly attempt to reverse the Plantation. We offer them a settlement based on their throwing in their lot with the rest of the Irish people and ending sectarianism. We offer them peace. We offer them equality.

It is only through the process of decolonisation and dialogue that a peaceful, stable Ireland will emerge. Only when independence is restored can Ireland hope to prosper and take her place among the nations of the world. Britain must take the initiative and declare its intention to withdraw. That is the first step on the road to peace. Republicans will respond quickly and positively.

#### A scenario for peace

The ending of partition, a British disengagement from Ireland and the restoration to the Irish people of the right to exercise self-sovereignty, independence and national self-determination remain the only solution to the British colonial conflict in Ireland.

The Hillsborough Treaty and the processes it involves seek merely to camouflage the fact that the Six County state is a failed entity, socially, economically and politically. The Treaty does not challenge the constitutional status of the Union but actually reinforces it.

Sinn Fein seeks to create conditions which will lead to a permanent cessation of hostilities, an end to our long war and the development of a peaceful, united and independent Irish society. Such objectives will only be achieved when a British government adopts a strategy for decolonisation.

It must begin by repealing the 'Government of Ireland Act' and publicly declaring that the 'Northern Ireland' statelet is no longer part of the United Kingdom.

Furthermore, it must declare that its military forces and its system of political administration will remain only for as long as it takes to arrange their permanent withdrawal. This would need to be accomplished within the shortest practical period. A definite date within the lifetime of a British government would need to be set for the completion of this withdrawal.

Such an irreversible declaration of intent would minimise any loyalist

backlash and would go a long way towards bringing round to reality most loyalists and those of their representatives genuinely interested in peace and negotiation. It would be the business of such negotiations to set the constitutional, economic, social and political arrangements for a new Irish state through a constitutional conference.

#### Constitutional conference

Free elections to an all-Ireland constitutional conference would be arranged. The conference would consist of the elected representatives of the Irish people and would be open to submissions from all significant organisations in Ireland (eg the trade union movement, the women's movement, the churches) and would draw up a new constitution and organise a national system of government.

While this conference could have no influence on the decision by Britain to withdraw, it would play an important role in organising the transition to a new governmental system. Should it fail to find agreement on a new constitution, or on any other matter, a British withdrawal would proceed anyway within the fixed time period.

Republicans have consistently asserted that the loyalist people in common with all other citizens, must be given firm guarantees of their religious and civil liberties and we repeat our belief that, faced with a British withdrawal and the removal of partition, a considerable body of loyalist opinion would accept the wisdom of negotiating for the type of society which would reflect their needs and interests. The irreversible nature of a British withdrawal strategy would be a major influence in convincing loyalists that we were entering into a new situation which could not be changed by the traditional methods of loyalist intransigence.

#### British withdrawal

As part of the military withdrawal, the RUC and UDR would be disarmed and disbanded.

The introduction of United Nations forces or European forces to supervise a British withdrawal or fill any alleged vacuum would only frustrate a settlement and must be avoided. Experience in other conflicts has shown that such a 'temporary' presence would become 'permanent' and the deployment would have a political bias. Their subsequent withdrawal would become a point of contention and there would be a re-run of the bloodbath-threat scenario. Similarly, there should be a real effort to avoid the introduction of forces from the Twenty-Six Counties.

The constitutional conference would be responsible for determining the nature and composition of an emergent national police service and the judiciary. There is absolutely no doubt in our minds that, if Britain were to be sincere about disengaging and was committed to an orderly transference of power, this could be achieved with a minimum of disorder.

All political prisoners would be unconditionally released. A cessation of all offensive military actions by all organisations would create the climate necessary for a peaceful transition to a negotiated settlement.

As part of the settlement, the British government must accept the responsibility for providing financial support by agreeing by treaty with the national government to provide economic subvention for an agreed period. Given the disastrous involvement of British rule in Ireland, reparations for an agreed period are the least contribution Britain could make to ensure an ordered transition to a national democracy and the harmonisation of the economies, North and South.

Anyone unwilling to accept a united Ireland and wishing to leave should be offered resettlement grants to permit them to move to Britain or assist them to move to a country of their choice.

The onus is on the British government to ensure a peaceful transition to a united and independent Ireland. The shape of that society is a matter for the Irish people. Only when Britain recognises that right and initiates a strategy of decolonisation along these lines will peace and reconciliation between Irish people and between Britain and Ireland be established.

# RACISM AND THE LABOUR PARTY

**NEIL KINNOCK is attempting to outlaw any expression of the view that racism affects the Labour Party. He is using empty demagoguery against the statements of Sharon Atkin, Linda Bellos and others to prevent discussion of the real, and very serious issues involved.**

On Friday 1 May, following the NEC's decision to deselect Sharon Atkin and refer her expulsion from the party to the National Constitutional Committee, Kinnock was interviewed on *Radio 4 News*. Asked what he had to say in reply to Sharon Atkin and Linda Bellos, he demanded that they 'shut up'.

Neil Kinnock claimed: 'There is the 99 per cent majority of the Labour Party that says there is nothing more important on our agenda than securing victory in order to stop the government of unemployment, of health cuts, of pension cuts, of under-investment in education. And the Labour Party, tolerant though it is, becomes immensely resentful of people who mistake their own individual enthusiasms for mass movements and people who could by their actions impede the possibility of victory.'

By Carol Turner

'They are not willing to put up with that — and rightly so. We are in the serious business of trying to represent the people of this country, and that means that we cannot be impeded by people who represent hardly anyone but themselves.'

'The overwhelming majority of the Labour Party says to people like that: make up your mind which is your greater loyalty — to your own self-indulgence and to your own narrow enthusiasm, or to securing the advance of all the people of Britain by securing a Labour government? And if people in this period find difficulty in making up their minds then the party has the power on some subsequent occasion to assist them in making up their mind.'

In a nutshell, Kinnock is attempting to demand that party members choose between supporting Labour and fighting racism — and that any discussion of racism and the Labour Party be ruled out of order. But jibes and threats are no answer to the issues that have been raised.

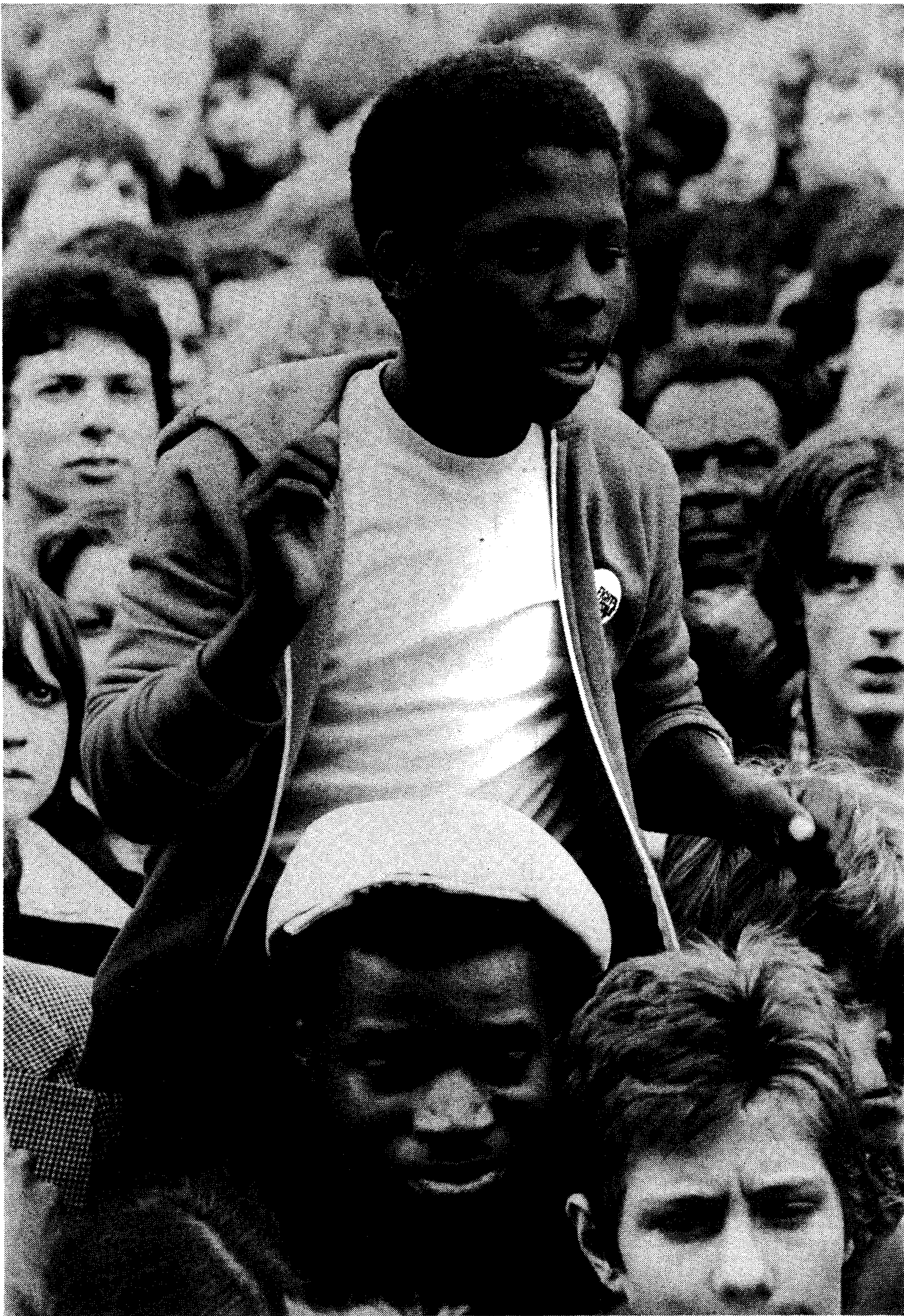
The views expressed by Linda Bellos and Sharon Atkin are those of the black communities of this country. Avtar Joul, general secretary of the Indian Workers Association (GB) addressed a recent executive committee meeting of the Labour Party Black Section and pledged his solidarity. He said that the IWA deplored the suspension of Sharon Atkin and described it as 'a racist act by the NEC'.

Sam Verma, chair of the Asian Society of Wales, has also gone on record with similar comments. Any black newspaper, and any serious black politician, will point out examples of racism. It is vital that these issues are *seriously* discussed.

Kinnock infers that those who believe that Labour is racist encourage support for the party's political opponents. This is absolute nonsense. No one — and least of all any supporter of the Labour Party Black Section — is making the case that whilst Labour is racist, the Tories and the Alliance are not! Any black person who thought that would hardly join the Labour Party. Any damage done to Labour will be caused by the *fact* of racism within the party, and not the *claims* of it.

As Linda Bellos rightly explains in an excellent article in the 1 May edition of the *Independent*, the fact is that racism permeates the whole of British society. That means every single one of its institutions, including the structures of the Labour Party. That is even more true of the Tory Party.

The fight taking place within the Labour Party today, led by the Black Section, is a fight to overcome the institutional racism which exists in British



society. That is why the Black Section is fighting for the *constitutional right* to organise autonomously within the Labour Party and for the representation of black members at all levels of the party.

Fighting racism is not an optional extra. Not something to be cast aside for the purpose of an election. Neither is it a matter, as Neil Kinnock dismissively puts it, of 'individual enthusiasms'.

The truth is, as Bellos explains, recognising the existence of racism is a prerequisite for combatting it. Turning Labour's anti-racist words into action means recognising two things.

First that institutional racism exists within the party, that the Labour Party is not immune to the influences which pervade the whole of the rest of society and

every political party in Britain. Second, black members, who directly experience the oppressive consequences of racism are best placed to lead the struggle against it. Indeed, *only* they can lead it. All white people in Britain, to a greater or lesser degree, are affected by racism.

The attack on the Labour Party Black Section by the party leadership is a refusal to recognise institutional racism and to begin to devise the means of overcoming it.

This truth, which affects all white societies, is particularly crucial in Britain. British society was built on imperialism — and imperialism, par excellence, is the base of racism. Racism was the mechanism whereby British capital justified the exploitation of the peoples of India, Africa and elsewhere, to serve

their drive for private profit.

Those who are so blind as not to see the racism within the British society, including within the organisations of the labour movement, thereby reveal nothing more or less than their own racism. This is not a matter of subjective understanding, or of conscious racism of the National Front variety. As Linda Bellos explains, pointing out that the Labour Party is racist does not mean 'that individual white people within the Labour Party hate and fear black people and act upon these feelings'.

Racism within the Labour Party is a matter of *fact*. How else do we explain that there are *no* black Labour members of parliament and never have been? How else do we explain that there has only ever been *one* black member of Labour's na-

**THE MARCH** meeting of the Labour Party Black Section — with the suspension of Sharon Atkin and Sharon Atkin deselected as candidate for Notts East. Kinnock has made clear the following. Not surprisingly, the Britain's TV screens and inevitably the media have

**THE SUSPENSION** of Sharon Atkin as parliamentary candidate for Nottingham East marks the beginning of the purge against Labour Party activists. In the face of the fundamental questions under attack we must not lose sight of the fundamental questions by the NEC action. Is it worse to be racist? And what do we stand by racism? I want to see a statement which I repeat, the Labour Party is racist.

I do not mean by this that individual white people within the Labour Party hate and fear black people and act upon these feelings. The arguments are the ways in which institutions, actions and assumptions, consciously or unconsciously exclude or discriminate against black people. The Labour Party is only one of these institutions. I am sure the council is another.

By Linda Bellos,  
Leader, Lambeth Council and  
Treasurer, Labour Party Black  
Section

We on the council acknowledge racism occurs in our practices. On recognising this we have been making changes in our structures, actions and procedures. We have not eradicated racism by first acknowledging that it exists. Some of us within the Labour Party are elsewhere.

What is surprising about the fiasco is that the NEC seems so ignorant of the debates and discussions of racism over the last 20 years. Sharon Atkin herself have been cast as strange, like characters uttering obscure heresies. We may not always be moderate in tone, but what we are saying has been said throughout the black community in Britain for centuries.

Let me give some examples of ways in which the Labour Party cur-

rential executive committee in the party's entire history? How else do we explain that until 12 months ago there was no black leader of a Labour-controlled council, and few black Labour councillors?

It is no coincidence that movements for black self-organisation within the structures of the labour movement emerged in the 1980s, when the second generation of black British people reached working age. Since the 1950s there has been a dramatic change in the composition of Britain's working class population. The increase in the proportion of black people in the workforce is most dramatic in areas like London and the West Midlands, where the Black Liberation movement is also strongest.

And it is no coincidence that

# LABOUR PARTY

launched a campaign to smash immediately, Roy Hattersley took Phil Murphy has now been district council Labour group prospective parliamentary expulsion from the party, and Black Section expulsions will have been blasted across front-page newspaper headlines. The opportunity to further

damage the party's electoral standing. Neil Kinnock claims that it is references to racism with the party that has hurt Labour. But the opposite is the case. On the eve of the election, the right wing has demonstrated that they prefer to see Labour lose the election than witness the growth of support for black self-organisation in the party. LINDA BELLOS, in article reprinted from the *Independent*, elaborates why black people must lead the fight against racism. CAROL TURNER explains that recognising the influence of racism within the party is a precondition for fighting it.

excludes black people. Wednesday's (30 April) party political broadcast did not contain one black person. I read from this the assumption that there are no black people in the country. How can you look at the health service, as the broadcast did, and not even mention the double discrimination black women health workers face, both as workers and users?

A further example of racism is the party's glossy, slick job creation initiative. I want to see a million *real* jobs created, but there is no mention of the steps that will be needed to ensure that black people, who are twice as likely to be unemployed as whites, have a fair share of those jobs.

These examples may seem trivial to those who argue that first we have to get a Labour government and then concentrate on the fine detail. But history and experience suggests that if we do not get these things right now they will never happen.

The GLC looked at the detail of how racism operates and did so, incidentally, by drawing on the experience and expertise of black activists. It took bold and often controversial measures against racism, by first acknowledging that it exists. Some of us within the Labour Party are seeking to do the same. For our pains two have so far been disciplined and there are threats of action against others, including myself.

We have been accused of stridency and militancy but the issues are not pleasant ones to be tackled over a cosy fireside chat. Racism is a daily reality for millions of black people in this country. We face discrimination in employment, housing and education, harassment, violent attacks — even murder — and the separation of our families by racist immigration laws. We have not been negative or bitter about this but constructive. We have come forward with concrete proposals which will overcome racism because the sops and palliatives of liberalism have not achieved enough.

Black people are in the best position to formulate positive proposals to tackle the real issues. It is not racist for us to wish to do so — indeed, specific provisions within the Race Relations Act

## The way to combat Labour's racism

Linda Bellos on tackling the discrimination that exists in all organisations

The suspension of Sharon Atkin as parliamentary candidate for Nottingham East marks the stepping up of the purge against black Labour party activists. Important though it is to defend the individual under attack we must not lose sight of the fundamental questions raised by the NEC action: 'Is it racist to call someone or something racist?' 'What do we understand by racist?' I want to address these questions in order to justify the statement, which I repeat, that the Labour Party is racist.

It does not mean by this that individual white people within the Labour Party hate and fear black people and act upon these feelings. The arguments are about the ways in which institutions, by their actions and assumptions, consciously or unconsciously exclude or discriminate against black people. The Labour party is only one of these institutions; Lambeth council is another. We on the council acknowledge that racism occurs in our practices. Only by recognising this have we been able to make changes in our structures, systems and procedures. We have not eradicated racism, but the progress we have made has been commendable.

acknowledge our need to do so.

Because racism is part of my daily reality I do not react with the alarm and panic of some other members of the Labour Party when it is suggested that the Labour Party is racist. It does not take it personally even though, by inference, it includes me. And if some wonder how I can stay in a party I acknowledge to be racist, I must quote Basil Manning and Ashok Ohri in *Racism: the Response*: 'Britain is a racist society. There is no realm or facet of life in British society in which black people do not experience racism'.

If racism is everywhere in British society, where can I go to avoid it except

the best conditions for beginning to defeat racism. The black communities will lead the fight against racism. The Black Section is organising to create the alliances necessary for that fight within the British labour movement. Any anti-racist must welcome that.

But the Black Section also understands, as Bellos explains in her *Independent* article, that recognising racism affects the Labour Party is a necessary precondition for the Labour Party beginning to combat it. That is also why self-organisation of black members is so vital to the anti-racist struggle within the party — and why the drive to smash the Labour Party Black Section is racist.

A Labour Party committed to the fight against racism would welcome



Sharon Atkin (left) and Linda Bellos: 'What we are saying has been said for centuries'

no mention of the steps that will be needed to ensure that black people, who are twice as likely to be unemployed as whites, have a fair share of those jobs. These examples may seem trivial to those who argue that first we have to get a Labour government and then concentrate on the fine detail. But history and experience suggests that if we do not get these things right now they

formulate positive proposals to tackle the real issues. It is not racist for us to wish to do so — indeed, specific provisions within the Race Relations Act acknowledge our need to do so.

Because racism is part of my daily reality I do not react with the alarm and panic of some other members of the Labour Party when it is suggested that the Labour Party is racist.

— as many have urged me and all black people to go — out of the country. No. I like millions of black people in this country, will vote Labour, and continue to fight racism within the traditions of struggle and solidarity of the black communities, and within the Labour Party — unless, of course, I am thrown out.

I hope I am not, because Labour is the only credible party that at least claims to be anti-racist. I hope I remain within to contribute to a debate on racism that allows the sufferers to define it and how to overcome it.

• This article is reproduced from the *Independent* of Friday 1 May.

black self-organisation with open arms — as the most powerful weapon at its disposal in that struggle. Instead, the Labour leadership is out to smash it.

Anti-racism is not a side issue in the struggle to rebuild Labour's support and to defeat the Tory government. It is a fundamental component of that struggle. Support for the Labour Party Black Section against the vicious attack from the party leadership is absolutely essential.

It would be a disaster if the answer to whether the Labour Party is racist were left to the likes of Neil Kinnock. His method of proving it's not is to expel any party member who says that it is.

## Campaign launched to defend Black Section

FACED WITH a determined and discriminatory attack against the Black Section by the party leadership, backed up by the media, many Labour Party members have already sprung to the Black Section's defence. A recent meeting in Birmingham decided to establish a defence campaign within the Labour Party for Sharon Atkin and Phil Murphy, with Vladimir Derer of CLPD as its secretary.

The campaign will hold its first meeting next week in the House of Commons. Diane Abbott and Ken Livingstone are among those who will be supporting the campaign. Like many other party members, those who are supporting the campaign recognise the discriminatory nature of the attack on Sharon Atkin and Phil Murphy.

The character of the attack on the Black Section was forcefully pointed out by NUM president Arthur Scargill at a May Day rally in Birmingham. Ironically, he was speaking within a stone's throw of Birmingham's city hall. Despite his and the NUM's well-known support for the Labour Party Black Section, Scargill had received no letter from Roy Hattersley or others telling him to keep away.

'Let me make my position absolutely clear,' said Scargill. 'I am in favour of Black Sections. I also make clear that there is nothing sacrosanct about holding a view in our party which is different to that of the leadership or that of the conference — particularly if their view is wrong.'

'Do you remember the fight for unilateral nuclear disarmament? For years we were in the minority. And yet when we passed the original resolution the leader of the party, Hugh Gaitskell, said immediately in the wake of that decision he would fight, fight and fight again to change it. If he had got a right at that time to argue for a change in policy, what's wrong with people in our party arguing to change the policy they think is wrong?'

'I find it strange that the Labour Par-

### Defence campaign resolutions

Sharon Atkin:

This conference regrets the action taken against Sharon Atkin at the NEC meeting on 29 April that she was unable to attend and believes it acted in breach of the principles of natural justice as the NEC:

- 1) based its decisions on inaccurate reports of Sharon Atkin's remarks made at a meeting and disregarded the context in which these remarks were made;
- 2) ignored her undertaking to abide by the requirements for prospective parliamentary candidates and acted before her representative could obtain the clarification which the NEC requested and which would have been forthcoming later in its meeting;
- 3) did not formulate detailed charges which would have allowed her to prepare a defence;
- 4) failed to act against persons making damaging attacks on the party

ty national executive was determined to uphold the rules of party discipline over allegations made against Sharon Atkin when those rules are apparently disregarded when it comes to someone like Jim Callaghan's attempts to sabotage the party in the run-up to the general election. And why is it that no action is taken on allegations made against Frank Field who argues that you should have tactical voting — in other words a vote for another party in a general election?

'And if we want to look at people in our party in parliament who flagrantly disregard the rules, what the hell are we doing about Don Concannon who resigned from the NUM, joined the company outfit known as the UDM and voted against the party in parliament? It seems that we operate double standards within the party.'

Another aspect of the attack against the Black Section is the fact that the Nottingham East Labour Party has been deprived of its right to choose its own prospective parliamentary candidate. Mohammed Aslam has been imposed by the NEC against the wishes of the local party. The Notts East executive committee, which met on the day following the NEC's decision has pledged support for Sharon Atkin and is also supporting the defence campaign. But the media has lost no time in trying to drive a wedge into such a campaign.

Defending Black Section supporters from disciplinary action is an issue which goes broader than support for their right to organise and campaign within the party. The attack on the Black Section opens the door to further attacks on party democracy and on Labour Party members and campaigns within the party. Such attacks will inevitably form part of the right wing's strategy to get rid of policies like unilateral nuclear disarmament after the general election.

Sponsorship for the campaign in defence of Sharon Atkin and Phil Murphy is being sought on a broad basis. The draft conference resolutions reprinted below will be presented to the campaign for adoption when it meets next week.

including refusing to consider action against Frank Field despite his clear breach of Clause 4(v) of the Rules for Constituency Parties by calling for support for candidates standing against Labour Party candidates at elections; 5) violated the democratic right of the Nottingham East CLP to choose its own candidate and gave them no opportunity to be heard.

These actions have damaged the party in the run-up to the election and conference instructs the NEC to reverse its decision.

Phil Murphy:

This conference deplores the decision of the Birmingham District Council Labour council to suspend councillor Phil Murphy from the group because he left a council meeting without permission of the chair. It instructs the NEC to instruct the group to reinstate councillor Murphy and drop any action against him.

emergence of the autonomous black groupings within trade unions, and most especially of the Black Section within the Labour Party, has been coupled with the appointment of the first black deputy general secretary of the TGWU, a spate of black Labour councillors elected last May, and a number of black Labour prospective parliamentary candidates chosen, some for safe Labour seats.

These are the material achievements of the Black Section's fight for anti-racist policies within the Labour Party. They are the living proof of Linda Bellos' assertion that black people must lead the struggle against racism.

Black people have entered the organisations of the working class to fight racism because they have understood that these institutions offer



THE PRESS is announcing it as a great sensation that sections of MI5 had been involved in 'treasonable' activities to oust the Wilson government in 1974. This, and other revelations, are now being printed from ex-MI5 agent Peter Wright's *Spycatcher* — the book in which the voluntarily Australia-exiled former spy has poured his memoirs.

By Colin Robertson

The extent and breadth of the disregard, indeed contempt, for legal procedure which the security services engaged in, is startling. The 'illegalities' included bizarrely a 'discredit Paisley' campaign considered by MI5 during the Ulsters' Workers Council strike in 1974 — including a plan for his assassination. Most importantly the papers reported that *Spycatcher* contains 'information on 23 criminal conspiracies and 12 instances of treason by members of the British security services' and that Wright and a colleague 'bugged and burgled their way across London at the state's behest' while top civil servants 'looked the other way' — and that MI5 operated within the 11th commandment, 'Thou shall not get caught'.

Despite a growing clamour Thatcher has refused point blank to hold a public enquiry. The Attorney General started proceedings for criminal contempt against *The Independent* and other papers that reported details about the MI5 plot against Harold Wilson. Such action, according to the Speaker, made the issue *sub judice* (ie, under judicial consideration) therefore it cannot be discussed in parliament. The High Court has already agreed to the proceedings against the three papers.

James Callaghan has refused to call for an enquiry. The press is stressing that only a 'small handful' of 'nutters' was involved.

## State

In fact the affair indicates why the state exists. So that when the ruling class feels the 'normal democratic procedure' threatens its dominance it resorts to the *permanent* non-elected institutions of the state to ensure the maintenance of its rule. The fact that sections of MI5 were demoted to believe that the 1974 Wilson government threatened capitalism does not alter the essence of the matter — they were simply being over zealous.

MI5 together with MI6, the Privy Council, the monarchy, the Church of England, the Judiciary, the police, the top echelons of the civil service, and the armed forces, among others, are institutions of the British *state* which are unaccountable to democratic scrutiny. This bourgeois state is the machinery through which the ruling class exerts political power over society. As Ernest Mandel wrote in *The Marxist Theory of the State*: 'The power of the state is a permanent power' ... and its institutions 'are isolated from and independent of so changeable and unstable an influence as universal suffrage.'

# Peter Wright and the Marxist theory of the state

The people who serve in these institutions know what they are for: 'Politicians may come and go, but the Security Service goes on for ever' (one of the reported remarks in *Spycatcher*). You just have to replace the 'Security Service' with 'courts', 'army', 'police' or 'civil servants' in the above citation and the real nature of the state institutions becomes clear. The indispensability of such bodies must also be stressed because bourgeois rule *can* be enforced and maintained without parliament and without elections — as in Nazi Germany. But capital cannot rule without these permanent state institutions.

Marxists don't adhere to a particular theory of the state for either ideological or dogmatic reasons, not to defend Marx's sacred scripts. They do so because Marx's theory allows the understanding of the real essence of structures like the state. It is a role quite different to its purely apparent functions embellished by the dominant ideology.

## Reason

But there is a much more fundamental reason for adhering to the Marxist theory of the state. The state affects people in very real ways: it kills them, it imprisons them, it represses them. The state acquires a most vivid expression when somebody is hit in the head by a cop's truncheon — or worse. It manifests itself in all the acts of violence of class rule such as in the sequestration of the NUM funds during the 1984-85 strike, in the killing and maiming of ordinary people by the use of plastic bullets and in the strip searches against women in Northern Ireland; in the bailiffs and cops harassing Greenham Common women; in the daily police harassment and violence against blacks and gays. The marxist theory of the state explains the reality, as well as the essence of class rule, and thereby arms the working class and progressive movement against its class enemies. Marxist theory has/should have very practical implications: it is a guide for working class action.

Anyone who believes either that parliament rules, or that to be in government amounts to holding actual power, suffers from delusions that in key moments of the class struggle prove lethal. The widespread

theoretical misconception among reformists, socialists, Stalinists, and liberals that confuses who holds governmental office with who holds state power has led the working class to disastrous and tragic defeats.

Engels wrote in the introduction to the Communist Manifesto that: 'One thing especially was proved by the (Paris) Commune, viz that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes'. The proletariat, in order to succeed, has to destroy the bourgeois state apparatus and build a new one to enforce working class rule. The murderous defeat of the Chilean working class in 1973, and what it showed about the state apparatus illustrates this point rather convincingly — as well as showing a rather more advance case of the activities described by Peter Wright.

## Parties

During Allende's Popular Unity government in Chile from 1970-73 the parties of the ruling class in Chile lost control of government to a coalition led by Communists and Socialists. However, the bourgeoisie never lost control of the indispensable permanent institutions of the state, especially the armed forces. The key lesson to be drawn from Chile is that the ruling class when it feels that formal democratic rule is not working for its interests, does not hesitate to break its own legality and engage in activities which range from campaigns to 'discredit' through assassination plots to a bloody *coup d'etat*.

The Chilean ruling class had its power entrenched in all the non-accountable institutions of the state apparatus — the legal system, judiciary, secret services, top civil servants, the police and the armed forces. It hatched plot after plot and engaged in endless obstruction and sabotage throughout the period of Allende's government. From the moment its parties lost the election, the bourgeoisie began to plot. The day after the election a campaign of phone calls organised by the outgoing Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Christian Democrat Rafael Zaldivar began urging people to withdraw their bank deposits.

This was followed by the kidnapp-

ing, and eventual assassination of General Rene Schneider, the chief of staff, before Allende was sworn in as president — Schneider was considered not hostile enough to the Allende government. This assassination involved generals from all three branches of the armed forces and the police.

## Conspired

Simultaneously with the moves in the armed forces, the right wing, and some Christian Democratic parliamentarians, with the support of president Nixon, conspired not to ratify Allende as president in parliament and thus force a new election. Sections of the army, police, special services and politicians in conjunction with the CIA, State Department and ITT, drew up contingency plans to impede Allende's accession to office. These plans included a wave of sabotage and planting of bombs by extreme right wing paramilitary organisations aided by members of the military.

The more far-sighted elements of the ruling class also went in extracting political capitulations from the Allende government. Rather as if they had been reading Marx they exacted the written commitment from Allende's Popular Unity that: 'The public force is constituted *only and exclusively* by the Armed Forces and the Carabiniro Corps (the police) institutions essentially professional, hierarchical, disciplined, obedient and non-deliberating'. And 'in no case can (popular organisations) attempt to exercise powers which belong to the authority of the state'. Meanwhile, safeguarded by this, the 'professional, hierarchical, disciplined, obedient, and non-deliberating' armed services got on with their plots.

The three-year period that Allende lasted in office was a nightmare of legal injunctions, special rulings, and pronouncements invariable against Popular Unity from the judiciary. This was coupled with open hostility from the officer corps of the armed forces and overt resistance to carrying out government decisions by the police. Similarly the government had to contend with obstruction and open sabotage by top civil servants to government plans and policies.

Obviously, the situation facing the British working class today is nowhere near those faced by its Chilean counterpart in 1970-73. The MI5 plot against Wilson was merely a fringe foretaste of what would happen here should a left wing government threaten the interests of the ruling class.

Nevertheless, the Peter Wright revelations do get to the core of the matter. The unaccountable institutions of the state have to be placed in their proper context — that of being part and parcel of the totality of bourgeois rule. That applies both here and in Chile. The revelations concerning plots to overthrow Wilson, and other reported MI5 activities, have once again *concretely* exposed the true essence of the state.

## Belief

The widespread belief the state stands as an 'impartial arbiter' above the selfish claims of diverse interest groups, or claims of particular classes, is simply false. Equally false is the view that the state is a class structure presiding over a pure democracy based on the consent of the people.

Lenin, following Marx and Engel's footsteps, defined the state as 'the organisation of violence for the repression of one class by another.' It is for that reason that bureaucracy and the standing army are the most characteristic institutions of the state.

This does not mean that the capitalist state is exclusively and solely an instrument of armed repression. It plays an important role in the reproduction of the entire system of relations of capitalist production — including educating its workforce, maintaining its family system, and sustaining its ideology. But in the last analysis all these rest directly on the ruling class's domination of armed force — armed force organised to protect capitalist relations of production.

Peter Wright's revelations listed just a corner of the veil normally drawn over that reality. They showed that the marxist view of the state is not a 'dogma' but an accurate guide to its reality. It is to prevent that reality being seen that Thatcher, and reformists such as Callaghan, are doing everything possible to prevent the publication of that book.





Students and staff at the University of Cape Town in a campus protest against the fake white elections

South African rail workers

# 'Organisation through struggle'

**AFTER SEVEN** weeks on strike, South Africa's railway workers have faced the full power of the racist apartheid state. Six workers have been shot dead. Sixteen thousand workers have been sacked for refusing to accept the company's deadline for a return to work. Hundreds have been detained, including 40 officers of the South African Railway and Harbour Workers Union (SARHWU). These officers join the union's general secretary, Ntai Sello, who was imprisoned earlier this year. The Botha regime has made its intentions clear. No effort will be spared to break this strike and smash up the union.

The strike was sparked off on 13 March when a worker, charged with an alleged late paying-in of a R40 (£13) delivery charge, was sacked six months after the event. However, the strike wave has much deeper roots. It is part of a broader reaction of South Africa's black transport workers to their history of poverty wages, intolerable living and working conditions, and to a refusal of the regime to extend even the limited 1970 labour laws to the railways, making their union illegal. Workers have seen their leaders detained, and continual attempts by the state to break the union as it begins to organise, grown numerically and take action to defend its members.

The strike has involved two attacks on the Johannesburg headquarters of COSATU, the major non-racial union federation in South Africa. The first came the day after SATS sacked 16,000 workers.

Police armed with rifles and machine guns surrounded COSATU House.

By Mike Colley

In the attack which followed, trade unionists in the building were beaten and arrested and three workers were shot dead. Three other strikers were killed in Germiston, when police waded into a meeting declared unlawful under the State of Emergency.

A week after the first attack on COSATU's offices armed riot police returned to break up a meeting of SARHWU strikers. Police smashed their way into the building and attacked 1,000 assembled rail workers with tear gas grenades. The area around the building became a battleground as police with dogs batoned the demonstrating crowds. Streets were barricaded off and

armoured vehicles and troop reinforcements were brought in.

The Botha government clearly recognises the significance of the rapidly growing organisations of black workers in their trade unions and the threat that poses to the apartheid regime. The brutal assaults made by the police shows the crisis of Botha's strategy today. His so-called reform programme is put on the shelf as he is forced to employ brutal repression to quell the strike wave and launch an offensive against COSATU.

This strike wave is exactly the type of development Botha wanted to avoid in the run-up to the election. In the townships, a mass stay-away by Soweto workers continues in protest against evictions, after a ten months rent boycott. And even students have been drawn into the battle. At Johannesburg's Witwatersrand University, police viciously attacked students protesting the COSATU raids.

## Strike

The railway workers' strike is escalating every day. New layers of trade unionists are extending solidarity action. The Postal and Telecommunication Union (POTWA) has been on strike in the Johannesburg area for four weeks and are conti-

nuing to spread their action to surrounding areas.

After the killings and the storming of its offices, COSATU held lengthy talks on their strategy to extend support for SARHWU. A call was made for a show of maximum resistance and solidarity on May Day and a two day stoppage to coincide with the racist elections.

Botha reacted to this announcement by banning all outdoor meetings and rallies on 1 May, after previously announcing that May Day would in future be declared Worker's Day — a national holiday. Last year two-and-a-half million workers stopped work on May Day. Rather than face a repeat of this in the present tense situation, the government ordered a ban. Despite heavy police presence a number of towns staged rallies, many held literally under gunpoint.

The action called by COSATU on 5 and 6 May marks the growing organisational strength and combativity of black workers even under the pressure of heavy repression from the state. The crucial leading role of COSATU and the relationship with those forces within the United Democratic Front is maximising the resistance to Botha's attacks.

SARHWU's history itself is a good indication

of the growing role of unions in the anti-apartheid struggle. It is a non-racial union with the majority of its members being black, reflecting the composition of the SATS workforce of 107,000 black workers.

The re-launch of SARHWU last year has been made easier as a result of the assistance given by COSATU. At its October 1986 conference, the union elected a new leadership and drew up a new constitution. This put SARHWU which only reappeared in the early 1980s, on a national footing. Now SARHWU has well over 20,000 members. Its national office reports that during the present strike, 200 members are signing up daily.

## Founded

SARHWU was founded over 50 years ago. Since that time it has been forced underground. It has even disappeared due to the repression. However, today it has been able to organise the largest public sector dispute ever seen in South Africa. This is testimony to the growing confidence and fighting spirit black workers are gaining. They are following the lead of their union to resist the inhumane conditions they have suffered for so long, and are joining in the broad movement against apartheid rule.

# Chronology of struggle

**October 1986:** Conference of the South African Railway and Harbour Workers Union (SARHWU) in Port Elizabeth is attended by 180 delegates. The union was first established in 1936, but has been crushed by apartheid repression on several occasions. The conference launches an organising drive to double the membership by campaigning for mass resignations from the Black Staff Association, the company 'union'.

Compiled by Chris Morris

**3 November, 1986:** A mass meeting of railway workers at the Kaserne Compound, a single sex hostel which houses this migrant workforce, presents demands to the South African Railway Services (SATS) to improve their conditions. They want a light switch in every room, hot water for washing, visitors' accommodation for their families, and the use of normal quality mielie meal (maize flour) in the canteens.

**3 December, 1986:** Kaserne workers close the kitchen and start cooking for themselves, but pay deductions for food continue.

**15 January, 1987:** The security police raid the union's head office. Ntai Sello, SARHWU's general secretary and other officials are arrested. Thousands of members' resignation letters from the company union are stolen by security forces.

**February 1987:** The food boycott spreads, involving over 20,000 workers.

**11 March, 1987:** Lorry driver Andrew Nendzanda is sacked for an 'offence' committed six months earlier. He states what had happened in October after he had delivered a container: 'When I arrived back at the depot (City Deep), I found that the cashier's office was closed ... I paid the R40 (£13) in first thing on Monday'.

**13 March, 1987:** His sacking sparks a massive strike wave. Within two weeks, it grows to include over 55 depots and over 20,000 workers. The Jan Smuts airport is closed by the strike. The 30,000-strong Postal and Telecommunication Workers Association (POTWA) pledges full support.



**30 March, 1987:** Police use tear gas, sjamboks (leather whips) and dogs to attack strikers in Johannesburg. Only hours later a bomb explosion destroys railway lines near Dube, Soweto.

**4 April, 1987:** The government bans meetings 'aimed at organising certain kinds of strikes'. SATS threatens to evict more than 400 railworkers from a hostel in Kokstad near the Natal-Transkei border.

**7 April, 1987:** The POTWA strike spreads from Soweto to Johannesburg and Randburg.

**12 April, 1987:** A second bomb blast disrupts train services. The Municipal Workers Union of South Africa threaten to strike if the rail dispute is not settled. COSATU's offer to mediate is turned down by SATS.

**22 April, 1987:** Six strikers are shot dead in two demonstrations. At Germiston, the security forces surround the COSATU offices, and chase marchers inside. Over 800 union officers and strikers are dragged from the building and over 400 are arrested, including 40 SARHWU officials. At Doornfontein station in central Johannesburg, three more workers are shot.

**27 April, 1987:** Over 9000 POTWA workers in Soweto vote to continue their 25-day old strike in support of SARHWU and against the imprisonment of two of their own members.

**29 April, 1987:** COSATU officers are under attack for the second time in the week. A meeting of 1000 workers face tear gas and armed police. Over a dozen unionists are arrested, including a 12 year old boy. Students at Witwatersrand University are in a running battle with police who try to break up their rally in protest against the attacks on COSATU and in solidarity with the railway workers.

# Railing against Apartheid

**THE PRESENT** focus of all activity of anti-apartheid activists in this country is to mobilise massive solidarity for the strike wave sweeping South Africa. As soon as details of the current unrest reached this country, both the Anti-Apartheid Movement and Rail Against Apartheid, a campaigning group within the National Union of Railwaymen, moved into top gear. Both stress that a top priority is to raise funds for the unions involved. Rail Against Apartheid, in consultation with SARHWU in South Africa, has established a special fund to this end.

Rail Against Apartheid, which has the full backing of the national executive committee of the NUR, was quickly able to focus its activity on the needs of SARHWU. It has had twelve months of activity since its formation in April 1986, developing links with the liberation movement in South Africa including the South African Congress of

Trade Unions and fraternal relations with SARHWU.

By Rose Knight, NUR member.

Following a meeting with SARHWU last summer, RAA officers launched a campaign to raise £2000 to fund a full-time organiser for the South African union. This pro-

ject, based on hundreds of small donations from rank and file railworkers, has now been completed and the campaign is now using every opportunity it can find to step up the drive for funds for SARHWU.

The response has been magnificent to date. The national CND demonstration on 25 April was a major focus for both RAA and the Anti-Apartheid Movement. RAA raised a full £2,400 for SARHWU and railway workers joined the picket of South African Airlines called by the AAM. RAA also collaborated with the London AAM in getting out fact sheets and collection sheets to all affiliated groups.

This kind of rapid response has been duplicated in many areas of

the country. Trades councils, Labour Parties, Black community organisations, student unions and youth groups have all been approached to give generously to the fund for SARHWU and to join in solidarity activity. In Nottingham, for instance, activists in the Tailor and Garment Workers Union will be doing factory collections in the next two weeks. In East London, RAA will be approaching the shop stewards at Fords Dagenham plant to arrange collections. Doncaster AAM has circulated all its affiliates with an emergency appeal, and activists in Sheffield have ensured the Trades Council is aware of the urgent situation.

the venue of the next action called by railway workers. This was originally proposed by the South London workplace branch of the Labour Party to protest at the arrest of the general secretary of SARHWU. RAA has given full support to this action, and Jimmy Knapp has agreed to address the rally and hand in petitions which have been circulating amongst railway workers in recent weeks. The general secretaries of the other rail unions have also been invited to attend.

● Speakers and more information from: RAA, Unity House, Euston Road, London NW1. Donations payable to: Rail Against Apartheid (SARHWU Fund).

South Africa House is



# Inside the unions

## After NUT conference

**THE NATIONAL executive of the NUT have set out on a clear course following the union's conference in Eastbourne last month. Their two-pronged perspective involves pretending that the extremely limited level of action they proposed would be adequate to defeat Kenneth Baker's pay and conditions law.**

But the inadequacy of their proposals for fighting Baker had been exposed by the union's inner London division, ILTA. The union's appeals committee voted to expel and suspend ILTA officers for organising unofficial strike action in support of union policy against Baker.

**By Ray Sirotkin**

In opposition to prosecuting a militant strategy for fighting Baker along the lines of the ILTA campaign, the NUT leadership brought forward arguments about financial difficulties, threats of sequestration and other excuses to prevent escalation of any action. They equally opposed other proposals for action, notably ILTA's resolution that teachers should refuse to cover for absent colleagues, ensuring its defeat.

But the executive did not get their way on all questions. Though not widely reported in the press, some of their own amendments were not carried by conference and they suffered defeats on the issues of the City Technical Colleges, the Tory government's privatisation of education proposals, and on the question of active opposition to Tory proposals to test youngsters from the age of seven upwards. Moreover, the executive only released their 'guidelines' as to how they proposed to 'fight' Baker after an outcry by the delegates over their attempts to keep the guidelines secret for the duration of the conference.

This broad opposition to the executive, and the clear alternative strategy being offered by the left-wing Socialist Teachers Alliance and others has prompted an executive-led witch-hunt, their second 'prong'.

This witch-hunt had already started prior to the conference, with the suspensions and expulsions of the ILTA officers. It continued with attacks on the STA by the union's treasurer and president who alleged STA 'treachery' because socialist teachers had told the truth about NUT membership figures. The executive went so far as to draw up a proposed rule change preventing branches affiliating to any bodies not previously agreed by the executive itself — with the threat of their own disaffiliation from the union hanging over the branches' heads.

This witch-hunt campaign was aimed at shifting the relationship of forces within the union. At present, the executive can rely on a solid base of conference support of about 55 per cent. They would like to bump that up to around 80 per cent. But they failed in their efforts at conference. Delegates refused even to discuss their proposed rule change concerning branch affiliations.

But the executive did succeed in laying down a framework of retreat which lays teachers open to attack by the employers and the government following Baker's act of parliament. This is a serious challenge to the left. The attacks on ILTA will be repeated on any association not complying with executive's wishes, if the national officers think they can get away with it.

How then can the STA and others respond? Part of the answer was given during the conference itself. Support given at various conference fringe meetings by allies outside teaching was important. Dennis Skinner MP, Billy Etherington, secretary of the Durham mechanics of the NUM, Marc Wadsworth of the Labour Party Black Section, and Sarah Roelofs of the 'positive images' (for lesbians and gay men) campaign, gave an indication of some of the forces who will stand and fight with teachers.

Unity in action with the NAS/UWT will also take our campaign forward — though here again, the executive have been keen to limit the degree of united action to a minimum.

Refusing compliance with Giles Radice's call for a moratorium on action at least until the general election will be vital. Action by teachers is the only basis for appeals to the wider labour movement for support.

The tasks of the left have been made more difficult as a result of the conference. Even the narrower-than-desired victories of the executive will lead to demoralisation as the impact of the defeats mounts up. This should be the occasion for stepped up activity around defence of the victimised ILTA officers and the broadest possible mobilisation, including of the wider labour movement, around the key issues confronting teachers and education.

## Support for union conference on Ireland

**GROWING support is being registered for the trade union conference 'Ireland: the cause of labour?'. The conference was initiated by the Labour Committee on Ireland and will be held in London's Camden Centre on 28 November, and has now won broad sponsorship. JON SILBERMAN reports.**

THE theme of the conference will be employment discrimination and its context in the North of Ireland. Catholics are heavily discriminated against in all kinds of employment in the Six Counties. A Catholic is two-and-a-half times more likely to be unemployed than a protestant. Catholic women, one-and-a-half times more so.

In the most heavily unionised sections of the economy, the advice given to employers by Lord Brookborough fifty years ago to wherever possible employ 'good protestant lads and ladies' is still followed.

Compared to a 40:60 ratio of Catholics to Protestants in the population

of the Six Counties, the employment ratio is 12:80 in the car industry, 16:77 in general and mechanical engineering, 20:74 in instrument engineering and 22:70 in other metals. In textiles, the ratio is 24:69.

A fringe meeting at the recent AEU National Committee was told by Ernie Walker, president of the Sheffield district, that such statistics had been in the past considered a 'hot potato' and discussion around them had been stifled. West London district president, Mick Martin, told the same meeting that beneath such bare statistics lay real people's lives. 'Unemployment is very high for all workers' he said, which meant that

such discrimination gives unemployment rates for predominantly Catholic areas such as West Belfast as high as 80 per cent. Mick Martin reminded the meeting of the situation in the aerospace firm of Short's which had been highlighted recently in the media following exposures in the US.

In Short's, overwhelmingly the largest factory in the Six Counties, and, where British unions like the AEU and TASS have substantial membership, the employers permit Orange parades and loyalist regalia to be displayed. The work bays at Short's are dominated by a huge orange arch.

In the publicity material for the conference the organisers explain that religious discrimination is getting worse, not better, despite the passing of Fair Employment legislation more than ten years ago. This is because the

'background to religious discrimination is the 1922 partition of Ireland imposed against the wishes of the Irish people'. They continue that when 'the civil rights movement of the sixties was batoned off the streets by a notoriously bigotted constabulary, a majority of Catholics saw Irish re-unification as the only way justice and equality should be won. This view is shared by the majority of Irish trade unionists.'

The conference will provide an opportunity for Irish trade unionists, north and south, to speak out, and for British trade unionists to consider what action this situation demands.

The AEU National Committee fringe meeting was highly successful, attracting the participation of a quarter of the delegates. Fringe meetings are planned at other major union conferences this summer. Speakers from the con-

ference organising committee addressed two fringe meetings at the NUT conference and a meeting at the Scottish TUC attracted 60 people.

A wide range of trade union leaders have sponsored the conference: Peter Heathfield (NUM), Ken Gill (TASS), Inez McCormack (NUPE), Alan Sapper (ACTT), the entire membership of the NUR executive including its president, Alan Foster; additionally, the conference has been backed by the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, Labour Coordinating Committee, Labour Party Black Section, Labour Left Liaison, Communist Party, Communist Campaign Group, and a range of Labour MPs.

● Literature, and other information, from 'Ireland: the cause of labour?'. BM Box 5335, London WC1N 3XX.

## FUND DRIVE

**WITH A general election in the offing Socialist Action is appealing to all of its readers to step up their efforts to raise funds and expand the circulation of the paper.**

Readers in East and South East London have recently given excellent examples of what can be done.

East London readers organised a fund-raising 'dinner and cabaret' on 4 April which raised over £800. Over 100 people attended. They heard speeches from local Labour candidate Diane Abbott, Jaime Lopez of the FDR of El Salvador, the Broadwater Farm Defence Committee and George Johannes of the African National Congress. There were also speakers from the NUR and NCU.

The evening was rounded off by James Phillips, a veteran of the 1946 South African miners' strike, who sang African freedom songs in which those present heartily participated.

Readers in South East London have produced a badge calling for the removal of both Cruise missiles and the Thatcher government — which is ideally suited for selling during the general election campaigns. £100 was raised through sales of the badge on the CND demonstration on 25 April. Reduced rates are available for those who want to take badges to help raise funds for Socialist Action.

We urge our readers in

other areas to take up these examples and to contribute what they can individually as well as aiming to organise one collective fund-raising effort before the end of June.

This is all the more essential because Socialist Action's publication fund target of £10,000 has so far raised only £4,617 — after the deadline for closing. In some areas readers have pledged to donate a day's wages to this campaign and we want to remind them to rush in their contributions as fast as possible.

Finally, in the event of a June election, Socialist Action will consider, finances permitting, weekly publication. Evidently, a general election will require the maximum effort to get out the political line and analysis which have made Socialist Action such as effective organiser within the left. And a general election should offer our readers and supporters unique opportunities for new sales.

Therefore we are both asking for support for a regular fighting fund whose target is £2,000 per quarter and, if we decide to go for weekly publication during the election, will also be asking every reader to make a special effort to make that possible.



1-50 badges: 25p each.  
50-100 badges: 20p each.  
100 plus badges: 15p each.  
For orders and other info contact 01-254 0128  
01-254 1261 PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

FUND DRIVE (including days wages)		Target (£)	raised (£)
Aberdeen		120	0
Birmingham		600	0
Bristol		320	84
Cardiff		480	24
Coventry		160	0
Glasgow		280	0
Huddersfield		400	100
Leeds		480	46
Leicester		240	0
Liverpool		200	0
Manchester		920	230
Newport		400	328
Nottingham		440	106
S Yorks		640	0
E London		1200	1275
NW London		520	235
SW London		360	203
OW London		760	130
SE London		440	346
N London		480	118
National		5600	1392
TOTAL		10000	4,617

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# TGWU facing the crisis

**IN JULY** the TGWU is holding its biennial delegate conference (BDC). We will be printing a series of articles in the run up to the conference. The first looks at the way the TGWU has responded to seven years of Tory rule and the deep social crisis that has accompanied it.

Seven years of Tory rule means much more than 'just' four million on the dole. Thatcher set out to 'break the mould' through aggressive and interventionist social policies. The Tories' key aim was to radically change relations between employers and the labour force.

Every active TGWU member ought by now to be fully aware of the 'two tier society' strategy behind the thinking of capitalist politicians. Educational, discussions at all levels, and union publications have all been aimed at raising that awareness.

Ron Todd's election as general secretary coincided with the whole 'new realism' debate, and the pressure has been on the TGWU to define where it stands. Much is in fact changing in the TGWU. It would be an exaggeration to talk about 'new unionism' as opposed to 'new realism'.

The TGWU is more pragmatic, and there are pressures within the T&G itself to adopt the fully fledged new realist course.

**By Lewis Emery**

Nevertheless the underlying approach has been the attempt to extend basic principles of trades unionism — organisation, collectivism, independence — into 'new' areas. The TGWU's forthcoming conference will indicate what differences, if any, there really are between these two courses.

The new 'Link-Up' campaign, launched at a rally in Wembley in February, is today at the centre of the union's public activity. Its aim is to break new ground in unionisation.

Employers have been using their new-found muscle, under Thatcher, to split the labour force. Temporary

labour, short term contracts, agency labour, casualisation and 'self-employment' have become increasingly widespread in all areas of employment. Those in permanent, secure employment, often with well-established union organisation, have been in many cases cut down to a more vulnerable 'core'.

Threats, coercion, and 'employee-involvement' have all been used to gain greater flexibility and further reduce employment within the 'core'. The crucial 'middle ground' in the labour force — the 'periphery' of unorganised and 'disposable' workers and staff — have been expanded.

The philosophy of the 'Link-Up' campaign is, officially at least, to extend union organisation to these temporary and part-time workers, to fight against their exploitation by employers, and also stop the undermining or replacement of permanent workers. Compare this with the cynical acceptance of no-strike deals and the total surrender of trades union independence mastermind-



ed by the EETPU leadership at Wapping (not to mention the organised, premeditated scabbing). Just how different the TGWU's approach will prove to be when measured against less clear-cut issues, however, remains to be seen.

Opposition to the Link-Up campaign, from the left, will undoubtedly surface at the 1987 conference. Two years ago, against the recommendation of the general executive council, conference decided to halt union efforts to unionise agency labour.

Spearheaded by the road transport section, that

vote indicated a deeply held desire by members to hold back and stem the tide. The employers' schemes to destroy collective bargaining patterns established in the '60s and '70s had to be stopped!

The miners strike had seen the role of agency and self-employed lorry drivers, owing no allegiance to organised labour, rise to new heights of importance. Conscious planning by the Tory government to create just this effect had been seen and understood. The reaction was instinctive — 'such labour can never be organised', as one resolu-

tion to this year's conference still sees it.

And yet the horse had already bolted. The facts of the expansion of temporary employment etc will not be ignored. Are these workers to be left at the mercy of the employers, or the EETPU leadership?

There can be no doubt that this year's conference will back the 'Link-Up' campaign, and that one way or another the anti-agency labour resolution policy of 1985 will be overturned.

The 1987 conference will continue the discussions about the new role for the unions. New plans to organise the unemployed will be discussed, following on from the radical decision of last year's rules conference to admit unemployed school leavers for 10p a week. Building on the role of the 'TUC centres', and fighting the new range of 'Special Employment Measures' (compulsory YTS, low pay, the 'restart' scheme) need discussion.

ACTSS activists in the so-called 'voluntary sector' will be pushing for the organisation of home-workers. The new genera-

tion of cooperatives will continue to lobby for union backing. The TGWU will finally endorse the need for a statutory minimum wage, with the traditional left hostility to this policy providing a useful barrier against any incomes-policy strings. More far-reaching proposals for a union-run employment agency and pension scheme are on the agenda. The agricultural trade group will continue to raise issues of development in the countryside and environmental issues.

Many of these proposals are double edged. With the break down of social democracy in Britain (collective bargaining plus caring capitalism) there are obvious dangers in the idea that the labour movement can provide a substitute social 'safety net'. But equally, if socialism is the target, challenging the capitalist set-up must involve spreading the collectivist approach to sections of society currently outside and/or hostile to the labour movement. It means learning to exercise sovereign control over the broad range of social issues.

## Caterpillar occupation ends

**THE CATERPILLAR** factory at Uddingston in Lanarkshire resumed production on Monday, 27 April, after a 103-day occupation by the workforce. The occupation, led by the AEU stewards representing the 800 hourly-paid workers, had won the whole-hearted support of the Scottish people.

**By Ann Henderson**

The return to work is no victory. Some concessions have been won from management — including a delayed closure date for the plant and better redundancy payment terms — but there is no guarantee that the 1200 jobs, so badly needed in Scotland, will eventually be saved.

Tremendous pressure was put on the occupying workers to call off their action. In the first place that pressure came from the government, highly embarrassed by the withdrawal of Caterpillar from Scotland in January of this year after they had invested £62 million in October of last year. It came from the courts, which declared the

occupation illegal and granted the company an interdict against the workforce.

It came from the media which, despite crocodile tears about the loss of jobs, gave voice to all those like Jimmy Reid, a former leader of the famous 1971 sit-in, who argued for a return to work.

It also came from the AEU leadership, and latterly from the Scottish TUC.

In March, threatened with the court interdict, the workforce voted by a narrow majority to continue the occupation. Media calls for a secret ballot were

rightly ignored.

Then, fresh-foot from London came AEU executive member Jimmy Airlie — himself a leader of the UCS sit-in in 1971 — to the plant to convey the message that the union leadership was withdrawing official support. The executive, he told the stewards, could not support 'illegal action'.

Despite this, the occupation did not become isolated. Support increased from the Scottish public and more pressure was brought to bear on the Caterpillar management to meet the shop stewards —

something they'd refused to do from day one of the occupation.

As a result, meetings were held involving ACAS and the STUC. These resulted in an agreement on an immediate return to work and a rundown of the factory from October 1987.

A factor in the agreement was the establishment of a working party, involving the CBI, STUC and the government, and the Caterpillar workforce, to find an alternative buyer.

Whilst maximum pressure should be brought to bear on the working party to deliver a satisfactory

solution, it is clear that, in ending the occupation, the focus and strength of the fight to save jobs has been greatly weakened.

In the face of tremendous difficulties, the Caterpillar workforce won wide support. Workplace and street collections and other donations were bringing in £15,000-£20,000 weekly. An international combine brought them European support. Dockers refused to move equipment. A big campaign developed around the 'pink panther' tractor the occupying workers built and donated to Nicaragua.

They deserved the total support of their own union and the STUC in the tactics they had chosen. It was because of the occupation that they were able to build such a campaign.

Speaking at the STUC conference in Perth last week, AEU convenor at Caterpillar, John Brannan, defended the militant tactics of the workers.

The hard-fought campaign to save the jobs at Caterpillar will not be forgotten in Scotland and the AEU leadership and the STUC have great responsibility now for whatever will be the final outcome.

## Scottish TUC in congress

**HELD AS** it was in a pre-election period, the accent was on unity at the 90th Scottish Trades Union Congress at Perth on 21-24 April.

Nevertheless, as early as the Tuesday morning, the STUC did break ranks with the TUC over the Job Training Scheme.

The JTS, one of Lord Young's latest wheezes to disguise the true unemployment figures, involves 18-24 year-old 'trainees' working for firms in return for an 'allowance' that must not exceed their previous dole money or DHSS benefit!

A motion calling for a policy of non-cooperation with the JTS was carried overwhelmingly. So the STUC joins the Labour Party in Scotland in blanket opposition to the JTS.

Already Scotland's two largest local authorities, Strathclyde and Lothian regional councils, have rejected the thousands of JTS placements offered to them by the Manpower Services Commission.

The STUC restated its traditional opposition to incomes policy by passing a motion from TASS (Tobacco Workers) which said in part: 'Congress determines to reject any form of wage restraint ... it sees a high

wage economy as being fundamental to recovery.'

Last year's congress,

**By Charlie Gordon, Glasgow Trades Council (personal capacity)**

just a few days before Chernobyl, had rejected narrowly an anti-nuclear composite on energy from the miners' union, so this year's energy debate was eagerly awaited. But behind-the-scenes horse-trading and stage-management aimed at stifling controversy spoiled the debate.

A composite from the NUM, and backed by, among others, the AEU, was carried. But this merely called for a moratorium on new nuclear power plants and the phasing out of the 'Magnox' type.

Some delegates expressed disappointment that the NUM did not sustain their previous publicly-held view

that the new Torness nuclear power station near Dunbar should be decommissioned and converted to coal-firing.

Whatever assurances the EETPU leadership had give behind the scenes on supporting the composite, in the event they still moved their blatantly pro-nuclear composite, which was heavily defeated.

Rank and file sentiment re-asserted itself in the succeeding debate when, against the general council's recommendation, and in the only card vote of the whole congress, delegates voted to oppose the European demonstration nuclear waste reprocessing plant at Dounreay.

In debates on Thursday morning on a ministry for women and on the Scottish assembly, congress heavily endorsed the concept of the ministry for women as an engine for positive action in both a UK and a Scottish context.

International issues featured highly. A composite from APEX on Northern Ireland called for an end to plastic bullets, Diplock courts, strip-searching, supergrass trials, and the Prevention of Ter-

rorism Act. However, part of a constituent motion from Falkirk Trades Council which called for ultimately a united Ireland, was omitted from the composite.

A fringe meeting on Ireland was jointly organised by the Labour Committee on Ireland and the Campaign for Democratic Rights in Northern Ireland.

Tom Redmond, of Trade Unionists for Irish Unity and Independence, and Noel Harris of ACTT, welcomed the increased discussion of Ireland by the British labour movement, and for such discussion to face up to the question left out of the composite — Irish self-determination, ie British withdrawal.

On apartheid, and on the day after the massacre of striking black railway workers by the South African police, NUR general secretary Jimmy Knapp roused the congress with his call to step up the boycott and for an end to British complicity with Pretoria.

There were also debates on Poland, on Central and Latin America, and fringe meetings on Chile and Namibia.

### BT sack striker

**FOLLOWING** their campaign of post-strike victimisations in the London City area, BT management have now sacked a striker, John Treadaway. Treadaway's alleged 'crime' was to have referred to someone as a 'scab' in a private telephone call to the man's wife.

**By Jim Gordon**

NCU members in the area had feared that management intended to escalate their victimisation campaign. Previous discipline had involved the movement of activists off their traditional jobs, and out of the area, and for the disciplinary action to go on their record.

The union branch adopted a policy of building strike action in the event of any sackings, and the workplace representatives committee had initiated a defence campaign for those already victimised. Pledges of support had been won from local Labour MPs and other branches of the union had sent letters of support.

Rather than build on this support to forge a united response to the sacking, six of the officers took the occasion to resign. These resignations were then used to extend a management witch-hunt of selected branch activists, initiated at the time of the branch AGM in March.

A management letter, distributed at the time and seeking to alter the outcome of the AGM, has now been quoted extensively in the 28 April issue of the *Evening Standard*, under the headline 'Extremists plot BT union coup'.

The resignations have played into management's hands, and their attempts to drive a wedge into the unity that was being forged against the victimisations, and against the increasing attempts by management to impose their unfettered right to manage since the strike. They should be withdrawn.

# A Socialist ACTION

Fake white elections as

# Strikes shake apartheid



## Civil servants step up action

ON THURSDAY and Friday, 7 and 8 May, all 65,000 members of the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) and the Society of Civil and Public Servants (SCPS) in London and the south-east will be on strike.

The action is the latest in the joint campaign by the two unions over pay and hours. The campaign began at the beginning of the year with the submission of a claim for a wage rise of £20 or 15 per cent, a minimum wage of £115 and a 35-hour week.

The unions issued over a million leaflets and thousands of workplace meetings were held leading up to the ballot for industrial action. Following the government's offer of £5.75 or 4.25 per cent, the members voted massively in favour of the initial six-week campaign of industrial

action; the CPSA recorded 60 per cent in favour and the SCPS 70 per cent.

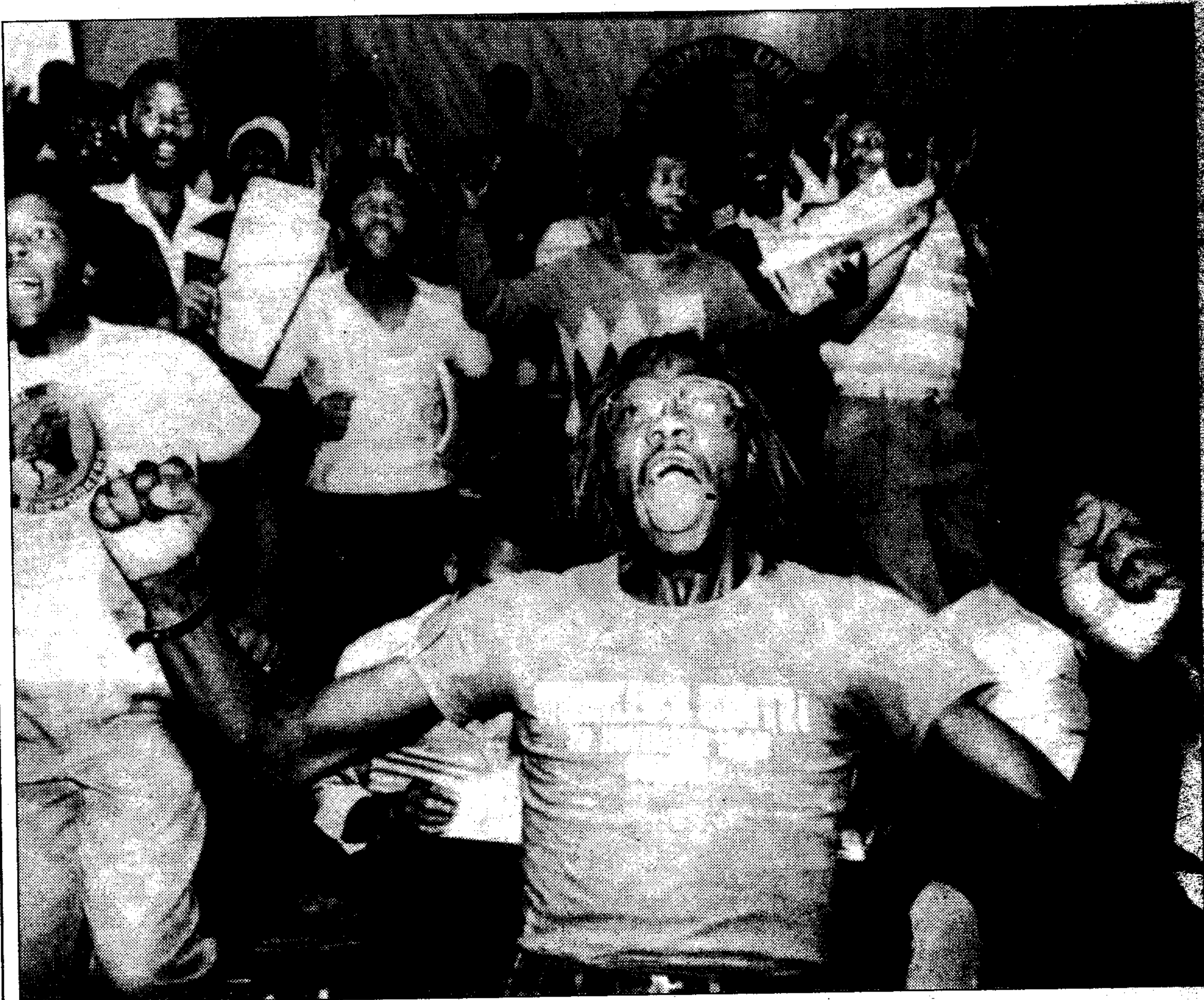
The votes reflected deep-felt opposition to the rundown of the civil service over the last seven years. In that time 'we have lost 140,000 jobs and seen workloads double' SCPS general secretary Leslie Christopher, told a mass meeting in London's Old Vic theatre last month.

The same period has seen civil service pay decline by 20 per cent compared to equivalent pay in the private sector. A fifth

of civil servants earn less than £115 per week, leave alone the Council of Europe's 'decency threshold' of £125. The CPSA estimates that up to 40 per cent of its members may be claiming state benefits to supplement their low pay.

This week's strike action will involve the remaining trade unionists employed at the GCHQ communications centre. Since the government banned trade unionism from the centre, all but 37 of the 4000 union members have been forced out of union membership.

Next steps in the campaign of industrial action, which has now been extended a further three weeks, will be considered by the unions who meet in conference next week.



HUNDREDS OF thousands of South African workers joined the stay-away from work on Tuesday and Wednesday. The call for the stay-away, which coincided with the 6 May whites-only elections, was made by the United Democratic Front, the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the National Education Crisis Committee. The massive response has added to the most severe political crisis experienced in South Africa since the state of emergency was imposed last year by the Pretoria regime.

Police dogs, whips, tear gas, armed police and even the South African army itself has been unable to halt a wave of strikes and protest actions. Furthermore, contrary to what many Fleet Street editors would have us believe, Wednesday's election was irrelevant to resolving the crisis of apartheid rule in South Africa. Even the recent brutal vote-getting raid into Zambia, where the ruling National Party heralded the death of four people, who were made out, in a deliberate lie, to be ANC members, cannot affect the political reality today.

The railway workers, potentially one of the most powerful sections of South African labour, are leading this wave of struggle. They have already paid dearly for their resistance to apartheid rule.

But the spark which started the transport strike didn't come out of the blue. An important feature of the present tense situation is the way rail workers in struggle are providing the focus for a more general upsurge involving other unions, campus students, as well as community organisations.

Thousands of post office and telecommunication workers have been on strike for over a month in solidarity with the railworkers, but using their action to put forward their own demands against discrimination.

Last year's imposition of the state of emergency seriously affected township

organisation. Thousands of community organisers remain in apartheid jails today. Students went back to school as the army moved into the classrooms.

By Ray Varnes, NUR member

People's committees were forced underground as the occupation forces arrived. But today's upsurge gives the lie to suggestions that the resistance has been crushed. The mobilisation of the Soweto township has demonstrated that despite the repression it will not allow its two year rent strike to be crushed by forced eviction.

The background to the current strike wave is the victory scored after three months strike by over 10,000 shopworkers employed by OK Bazaars stores across the country.

The rail strike developed just as the miners union started to move families and girlfriends into a number of Anglo American-owned mining compounds in open defiance of the migrant labour system.

It also occurred as thousands of miners took part in separate strikes to protest their conditions and continuing deaths from mining accidents in apartheid pits. And COSATU, the largest non-racial union federation in South Africa has just launched its living wage campaign.

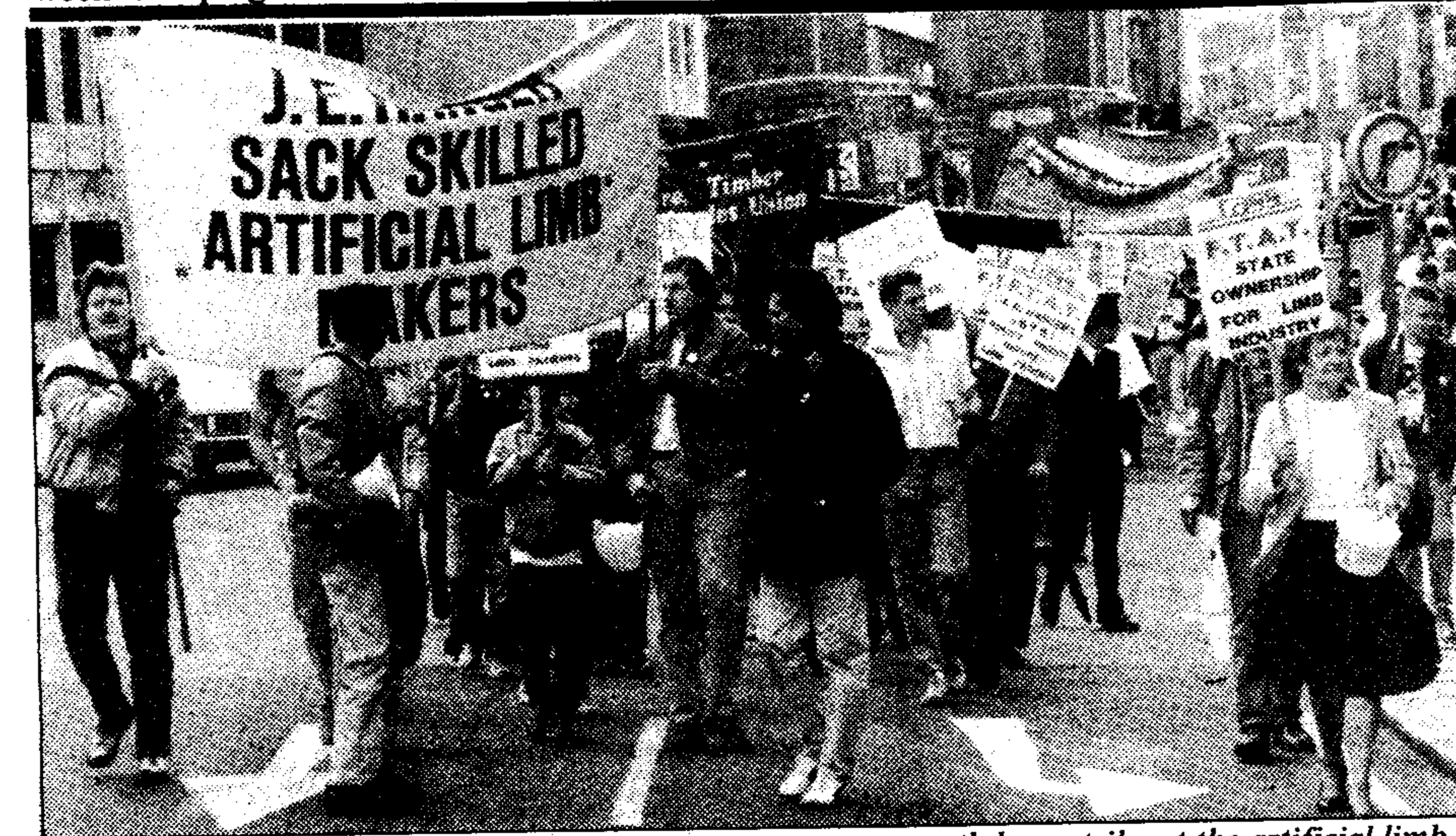
All this takes place in the wake of recent strike ac-

tion by chemical workers and paper workers. South African workers are increasingly turning to their unions which have not only survived the state of emergency, but have grown in size and in their capacity to organise in conditions of severe repression.

This powerful strike wave has given confidence to even broader layers of South African people. Running battles have occurred between students at Cape Town and Witwatersrand. Hundreds of students have been detained.

At Cape Town, live ammunition was used for the first time against a predominantly white student body. On both occasions, students were successful in protecting their invited speakers — a railway worker at Cape Town, and Winnie Mandela at Witwatersrand. Hundreds of students have been detained.

South African rail workers 'organise through struggle', page 9.



Six hundred people marched through Roehampton in south-west London on the weekend to show their solidarity with the

seven month long strike at the artificial limb-making firm, J E Hanger.

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