

A SOCIALIST ACTION

BUILDING AN ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALISM

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DEFEAT ALTON'S BILL

ALL OUT



ON 21 JANUARY

DAVID Alton's anti-abortion Bill designed to reduce the upper limit for legal abortion to 18 weeks, is now approaching its second reading in parliament. Already his Bill has provoked the most widespread opposition.

Commitment to fighting it, and supporting the 'Fight Alton's Bill' (FAB) Campaign, has come from the Trades Union Congress, the national organisation of Labour women, and many individual trade unions and sections of the labour movement. Support has also come, even more broadly, from the NUS, Liberals for Choice, and many medical and professional organisations. Even some Tory MPs oppose Alton's legislation.

This must now be used to demonstrate the breadth and strength

of opposition to Alton, and the support for provisions of the 1967 Abortion Act. FAB is organising a Day of Action in London on 21 January, the day before the Bill gets its second reading. This will be preceded by regional actions on 16 January.

The right to decide when or whether to have children fundamentally affects the lives of all women. Women from sharply different social circumstances and political views have opposed this attack on their ability to exercise even the most minimal control over their lives. Attacks on abortion are also seen as related to many other attempts to narrowly define the role of women, to deny women's rights to equal-paid work or to legal equality.

The great strength of the FAB Campaign against Alton's attack lies

in drawing together *all* opponents of the Bill. Every possible means of exerting pressure on MPs in a House of Commons which has a clear Tory majority must be used to defeat the Bill.

Within this, however, Alton's anti-abortion Bill is an issue of fundamental concern to the labour movement. It is essential that the labour movement organisations demonstrate their support for women's abortion rights and for the FAB Campaign — and lead the fight against the Bill.

As with all such restrictions on abortion rights, Alton's would most severely affect working class women. They have the least alternatives if legal abortion is restricted. On them will fall the worst effects of illegal, backstreet abortion, of caring for unwanted and unplanned children, and of caring for children with severe

disabilities while social and health services become increasingly inadequate.

The whole labour movement must identify itself with support for the most basic of women's rights: safe, legal abortion. This was recognised by the TUC when it called a demonstration against the Corrie Bill. Such organised support was crucial in defeating that Bill, and will be again.

Defence of the 1967 Act and support for the right of women to choose is now more clearly established as the policy of the labour movement — including in the TUC and the Labour Party. There is greater involvement both in the leadership and in the ranks of the labour movement of many veterans of previous campaigns.

But the battle to defeat Alton should not be underestimated. Two things are essential for success: that

the TUC and the organised labour movement leads that fight and directly involves itself in the FAB Campaign; and that FAB draws together every possible strand of opposition to Alton's anti-woman Bill behind the campaign.

Support the 16 January Regional Day of Action!

Support the 21 January National Day of Action! — 1.30pm to 6pm, rally in Westminster Central Hall and mass lobby of MPs, followed by women's torchlight demonstration

Support the 19 March National Demonstration against Alton in London!

● See also page 5.

Socialist ACTION

Labour's basic choices

RARELY HAS the disparity between the objective situation and the direction of the Labour Party leadership been more clearly revealed than at present.

In the last six months two developments with great implications for the future of world politics have taken place. The first is the consequences of the stock market crash both for Europe and for Britain. The second is that political developments accompanying the INF treaty pose the whole question of future nuclear and foreign policy. But while capital is urgently discussing these matters, the Labour leadership has nothing coherent to say on them at all.

As far as West European capital is concerned, the INF treaty is a thoroughly undesirable development. The European bourgeoisies are already planning for a massively stepped up conventional armaments spending programme to 'plug the gap' left by the withdrawal of Cruise and Pershing missiles. The rearmament of Europe, in the context of recession and austerity policies, makes for a programme that can be one of the most unpopular ever conducted by the bourgeoisies in Europe.

Already the contradictions and problems of the present situation are becoming clear to bourgeois strategists. A representative of the Institute of Strategic Studies on 8 December was pointing to the 'dangerous trend' in West Germany in support of denuclearisation of that country. Not just in the dangerously radical 'left wing SPD' but even opinions expressed in the CDU were causing alarm.

Left

The INF treaty means that fewer people than ever believe today that there is a 'Soviet threat' to West Europe. Better objective conditions can rarely have existed for the Labour Party to give a radical lead in advocating a totally alternative economic and political strategy in Europe based on 'detente' with the USSR, the denuclearisation of Europe, and the use of the resources released in the economy to create jobs and improve living standards. This provides the framework of an entire economic and social policy for Labour.

Instead the Labour Party leadership seems intent upon leading the party further and further to the right. Gerald Kaufmann managed to appear almost to the right of Margaret Thatcher on disarmament in response to the INF treaty. Rather than taking the opportunity to explain that the Labour Party had been correct on nuclear weapons, he explained the Labour Party's policy was now out of date and could be abandoned.

Campaign

With equal alacrity John Cunningham managed to place himself even to the right of the *Guardian* editorial in his rush to endorse Tory back bench attacks on lesbian and gay policies. While he was explaining that the Labour Party had never really prioritised gay rights, the *Guardian* called for a stand on civil rights and principles.

At the *Beating the Blues* conference organised by the Fabian Society on 7 December, attended by virtually the entire Labour front bench, erstwhile left wingers proclaimed their conversion to the view that Labour was not seen as being to do with 'ordinary people', but with 'women, blacks, gays and the Irish' — a view pressaging the abandonment of support for gay rights later in the same week. We can be sure further Labour retreats on issues such as Central America are in the pipeline.

The failure to respond sharply to the privatisation of British Petroleum following the 19 October crash, the failure to lead a concerted campaign against the poll tax, or the Tories' Housing or Education Bills, the campaign to abandon unilateralism, the urgency with which the leadership is engaged upon distancing itself from the slightest sign of trade union militancy, are all indicators of the failure to respond to the new openings in the political situation. Just at the moment when Labour should be shifting to the left — and would gain popularity from it — the leadership is intent on trying to shift the entire party to the right.

Overcoming the gap between the new openings in the political situation and the rightwing course being pursued by the party leadership is now the chief task of the left in the Labour movement.

The decline of the dollar — round two of the stockmarket crash

THE LAST three weeks have seen the failure of international attempts to 'co-ordinate' a capitalist response to the stock market crash. In the United States the budget deficit cutting package finally agreed between Reagan and the US Congress was cosmetic. It amounted to only a \$7 billion cut this year — with the budget deficit likely to run at \$160 billion next year. It is not even clear if these cuts will get through the US Congress unscathed.

The second leg of the 'internationally co-ordinated' response was the announcement of interest rate cuts in Western Europe and a reflationary package in West Germany. But these were almost as small as the agreement in the US. Spending increases announced by the West German government amount to only \$1 billion over a ten year period. The half per cent cut in interest rates did nothing to stop rise of the deutschmark against the dollar.

By John Ross

This failure of any effective international action led to a renewed fall in share prices in the first week in December. The *Financial Times* put it on 5 December that: 'The market for US stocks has taken on the habits of the bear (a falling market). In the past six trading days, the market as measured by the Dow Jones industrial average has fallen nearly 10 per cent to the levels last seen on 19 October (the day of the crash). There is no panic. The fall has been steadily and orderly. But it is beginning to scare the wits out of Wall Street.'

However, despite individual shifts, the pattern in the fall in the stockmarkets is now obvious. The West European stock exchanges are falling further than the United States. Taking the stock exchanges of the major countries only the stricken Australian one, primarily based on raw material producers, has fallen further than those in Western Europe. The stock exchanges are clearly signalling their conclusion that Japan is going to be least affected by the crash, North America will suffer 'least' after this, and Western Europe will be hit most heavily of all. (See Table 1)

Brunt

The growing capitalist certainty that it will be Western Europe which will bear the brunt of the crash is explained by events in the arena into which the chief index of the crisis has now shifted — the foreign exchange markets. Since 19 October the US has pursued a drastic policy of dollar devaluation as its principal means of minimising the effects on its own economy of the crash.

The consequences were well summarised by Christopher Smallwood in the *Sunday Times* noting the refusal of the United States to take part in the attempt by the West European states, during the first

week in December, to halt the fall in the dollar: 'the Americans did not participate in the rescue operation; they did not lift a finger to prevent the dollar falling further ... The harsh reality is that, for the moment at any rate, currency stability is not an objective which the Americans share with their major trading partners.'

Smallwood then spelt out the consequences: 'The European Monetary System countries, whose currencies are tied to the deutschmark, are becoming desperate to stop the dollar's slide against the mark, which is undermining their competitiveness and condemning them to slow growth and rising unemployment ...'

Flag

'The falling dollar can be expected to reduce the huge American trade deficit, while at the same time proving a welcome boost to an economy which is widely expected to flag next year. The sliding dollar will keep growth going for a while but this will be at the expense of other countries, whose exports will be hit and who will find themselves importing more from America.'

Facing the bleak prospect of the United States crushing its West European partners trade with dollar devaluations, Smallwood piously expressed the view that: 'As the squeeze on European industries intensifies, the hope on this side of the Atlantic must be that the prospect of rising inflation in America causes a change of heart at the American Treasury Department and in the Fed sooner rather than later — and before more damage to Europe's growth prospects.'

But that is not how capitalism functions — as the more serious reactions on the stock exchanges show. The United States will continue to exert pressure on its West European 'allies' until it concludes its interests have been met. It is intent on off-loading as much as possible of the effects of the coming recession to its 'partners'. If Western Europe is going to wait for 'mercy' from the United States it is going to wait a long time.

The dollar devaluation is now reaching acute proportions.

Since its high points in 1985 the dollar has fallen by 47 per cent against the yen, by 43 per cent against the deutschmark, by 36 per cent against the franc, and by 28 per cent against the pound. This year the dollar has fallen by 17 per cent



against the yen, by 17 per cent against the deutschmark, and by 14 per cent against the franc.

Each percentage fall in the dollar puts greater strain on West European exporters — who are not nearly as strong as their Japanese competitors. It also opens up West European and third world markets to US exports. Under the impact of the dollar devaluation Western Europe is heading towards a certain recession.

Even within Western Europe, the load of the trade war is going to be off-set onto the weaker states. West Germany, after Japan, is the country best able to withstand a US trade war. It has also so far resisted all demands, made by the United States that it reflate its economy to suck in US exports. But if West Germany, and Japan, do not take in the coming surge of US exports the burden will fall on other West European states.

Thatcher explained the situation clearly in an interview with the *Financial Times* on 23 November referring to Japan and West Germany: 'no-one is entitled

to have a balance of payments surplus entrenched in the way in which they run their economy ... because if that were to be so, then when the US deficit goes down, it means the rest of us would have to carry a bigger proportion of the can than we should.' But Thatcher is no more going to get help from West Germany and Japan than they are going to get help from the United States.

The mechanism that triggered the crash, the in-

creasing competition between the imperialist states, is now simply shifting into a new arena. The United States has now turned into reality what theory always made clear it would do. It intends to try to get out of its crisis not in cooperation with its international 'allies' but at their expense. The chief weapon it has chosen is dollar devaluation. The chief target it will hit will be Western Europe and the countries of the 'third world'.

Table 1
Decline in world stockmarkets in 1987

	High	7 December 1987	% fall
Tokyo	26,646	22,586	-15
Canada	2,372	3,508	-32
New York	2,722	1,812	-33
London	1,926	1,263	-34
Rome	767	505	-34
Frankfurt	2,061	1,293	-37
Madrid	325	202	-38
The Hague	334	199	-40
Paris	460	272	-41
Stockholm	2,103	3,550	-41
Sydney	2,306	1,247	-47

What next after the INF treaty?

WITH HUGE media fanfare, the treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union to eliminate intermediate-range nuclear weapons from Europe was signed at the White House during Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to Washington which began on Monday 7 December. The event is clearly of major political significance. But it will remove less than three per cent of the nuclear weapons in the world and its political ramifications are far more important than its military ones. CAROL TURNER looks at some of its implications.

THE signing of the INF treaty is a step to be welcomed. Its political significance extends far beyond the strictly anti-nuclear issue. It is an offer from Gorbachev which Reagan simply found he could not refuse.

The first point that should be made is that not all aspects of the political processes surrounding the deal are positive. In the lead-up to its signing, discussions about 'regional conflicts' have obviously played an increasing role. Agreeing to the treaty has undoubtedly meant informal agreements, behind closed doors, on Central America for instance.

Despite the media hype, the treaty comes about not because two 'world leaders' are increas-

ingly committed to 'peace and freedom', but because at this moment in time it matches the material interests of both. It certainly doesn't indicate any change of heart by the United States.

Clear

It is clear that the cost of the arms race places an enormous strain on the economy of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev has obviously decided that the political opening that the INF deal creates, together with the reduced strain on the Soviet defence budget, is well worth the military disadvantages. The USSR will be removing almost twice as many nuclear weapons as the USA under this deal.

It has equally clear ad-



vantages for the United States economy as well — a fact given little mention in the bourgeois press.

The US spends one-third of its huge military budget on 'defending' Western Europe. Con-

tributions from the NATO allies simply do not compensate America for the amount it spends.

Given the increasing strain on the US budget in recent years, there has been mounting pressure to

cut back the European part of the USA's military spending. This has been increased by the dollar devaluation in the wake of the stock market's crash of 19 October 1987. The issue of cutting the US presence in Europe has been quite openly discussed around the INF treaty.

The dollar devaluation — the primary mechanism by which the US is attempting to bring the crash under control — is also going to increase US-West European tensions. The devaluation lowers the value of West European dollar holdings, makes US exports more competitive and, in turn, West European exports to the US more expensive.

Elements

All the elements are now falling into place for sharply increased trade tensions between the US and Western Europe. Taken together, the dollar devaluation and the INF treaty threaten to significantly 'loosen' relations between the United States and West Europe.

Newly-appointed secretary of defence Frank Carlucci has already made this possibility explicit. America's presence in Europe was not 'immutable' he told reporters at the end of November 1987.

The *Times* editorial of Wednesday 2 December expressed fears of sections of West European capital very clearly.

The 'erosion of the American military presence' in West Europe, it said 'would go a long way towards achieving two main strategic objectives of the Soviet Union: the denuclearisation of Europe and the decoupling of the United States from it.'

Explicit

An article in *The Times* of Thursday 10 December, by Frank Johnson, immediately after the INF treaty had been signed, was still more explicit. It argues that the INF treaty heralds the running down of American military commitment to West Europe: the 'withdrawal of protection may have begun this week.'

But after the signing of

out Europe which led to the Russian and Hungarian revolutions, the attempted German revolution, and to the overthrow of the Hapsburg monarchy in Austria.

Instability in Europe was only halted by the money that the United States ploughed into the continent via the Dawes and Young plans from 1923 to 1926. West European capital expanded in the 1920s only on the basis of capital loaned by America.

When United States money was pulled out of Europe following the 1929 Wall Street crash, the capitalist economies of Europe collapsed again. In the chaos which ensued once more, Hitler rose to power in Germany and World War II was fought.

Support

After 1945, the Marshall Aid Plan represented the same economic support to West Europe by the USA as after World War I — this time on a bigger scale. West Europe's economies expanded again in the 1950s and '60s on the basis of cheap oil. They collapsed in the mid-70s when the USA forced the price of oil up again.

But if the United States calls the shots in a West Europe that has no internal equilibrium of its own, it will certainly have something — unpleasant! — to say about any European policy of détente towards the Soviet Union.

Aims

The argument that the choice for workers in countries like Britain is to line up behind the United States government or behind those of West Europe creates a false and dangerous debate. It is one pursued in this country by Eurocommunists such as Jon Bloomfield, figures such as Frances Morrell and by sections of the leadership of the soft left in the Labour Party, as well as by the labour movement right wing.

Stability

It is not possible for capital in Western Europe to stabilise itself against the United States or embark on any real policy of agreement with the Soviet Union. The only 'European' capitalist solution is a right wing one.

The INF treaty therefore sets up clearly the two basic political dynamics in Europe. One is to respond to the INF deal, and the dollar devaluation, by stepping up militarism in Western Europe itself. The second is towards exactly the 'decoupling of Europe from the United States' and the 'denuclearisation of Western Europe' which *The Times* so much feared — a policy which also means West European socialists increasingly linking up with those fighting for freedom in the third world and those supporting socialist democracy in Eastern Europe. That latter path, precisely because it cannot be undertaken by capital, opens up the way to a socialist solution in Western Europe.

The first of these two paths already is the follow-up of European capital to the INF treaty. The second must be the path of European labour.

Alternative

The second alternative is a policy in Western Europe not based on rearmament but on détente with the Soviet Union, radical reduction of armaments and utilising the economic resources released by this for economic reconstruction. This is the policy being advocated by sections of the European labour movement and its practical demands must be supported. All evidence is however, that it is not a viable capitalist strategy at all.

Since World War I, West European capitalism has not been sufficiently strong to survive independent of the United States. From 1917 to 1923 there was economic chaos through-

Marxism Today's attack on unilateralism

THE central target the Labour right have set for Labour's policy review is to eliminate Labour's pledge of unilateral nuclear disarmament. Hammond, Jordan, Kaufmann and Shore are explicit on this. But now *Marxism Today*, in its usual manner of giving the arguments of the Labour right a 'Marxist' vocabulary, has joined in the fray. JILL JONES looks at Jon Bloomfield's 'Beating a unilateral retreat' in the December issue of *Marxism Today*.

'DURING the period in which no progress was made internationally in achieving such reductions, Labour's non-nuclear defence policy had to be unilateralist,' Gerald Kaufman, Labour's shadow foreign secretary, told a party meeting in North Wales at the end of November. But the INF treaty had changed the basis of the defence debate in Britain, he argued.

Since annual conference in September 1987, the public attacks on Labour's nuclear disarmament policy from within the party have been stepped up. Eurocommunists have now also joined the fray, offering a theoretical gloss for the Kaufman position.

Rethink

Marxism Today editor Martin Jacques wrote in the *Sunday Times* of 29 November that: 'Labour must rethink. It means being less doctrinaire about the unilateral and multilateral options and concentrating on the main objective, the disarmament process. The "ends" remain the same, with international circumstances more favourable; the "means" become richer and more varied.'

Not surprisingly then, the December issue of Jacques' magazine, when it appeared the following week, contained a full exposition of the same theme

by CND's Jon Bloomfield. 'Treating Labour's non-nuclear policy as a "no-go" area and threatening civil war signifies a refusal to examine both the campaigning experience of the last two elections and the changing disarmament scene,' argued Bloomfield. 'New developments require new policies.'

In short, Bloomfield believes that the INF deal, because it 'can produce disarmament', has rendered the unilateralist-multilateralist debate a thing of the past. He says:

'In major aspects of the peace movement's culture, unilateralism and disarmament have become synonymous, while multilateralism has been derided and dismissed. When the Labour left took this issue up again from 1980, this counterposing of unilateralism and multilateralism was exacerbated.'

Legacy

'Given the barren track record of multilateralism and the legacy of the political debate within the Labour Party in the Gaitskell era, this is not surprising. But the effect has been negative.'

'For 30 years it had been impossible to distinguish between genuine and fake multilateralists,' writes Bloomfield. 'But Gorbachev's new thinking exposed the charade.'

In post-INF treaty Britain cruise will be removed, Polaris outdated, and Trident a reality instead of just a promise. Concretely, in these circumstances nuclear disarmament means British and French weapons included as part of Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START), speculates Bloomfield.

And it is here that Labour can take a non-nuclear policy initiative, he believes, by negotiating a bilateral nuclear reduction directly with the USSR. Such an initiative, Bloomfield argues, would expose 'the rift between those who want to cling onto British nuclear weapons at all costs and those who don't, the rift between the fake and the genuine multilateralists'.

But the Bloomfield scenario leaves totally out of account the fact that American nuclear bases remain firmly ensconced in Britain, even after the INF treaty has been signed, sealed and delivered. In fact, US nuclear bases in Britain merit not one single mention in the whole of Bloomfield's 3000 words.

Oversight

The fact that US nuclear bases are absent from Bloomfield's considerations is more than a mere oversight. Ignoring this 'nuclear element' in the British situation is crucial in order to render his arguments superficially coherent. To include it, reveals them for the day dreams they are.

It is undeniable that in a situation where US ground-launched cruise missiles have already been taken out of this country, a Labour policy which places their removal at its centre will seem weirdly out of date. Similarly, if

Trident is on-line, scrapping an outmoded Polaris system isn't the same non-nuclear earthquake as when the commitment was first made.

But all that is still in the future. And neither will the implementation of the INF treaty (which in itself is estimated will take at least two years) render this country non-nuclear. What about the sea- and air-launched medium-range nuclear weapons? They will remain in Europe together with other nuclear weapons outside the limited INF deal. Are we to allow nuclear ships into our ports? And, most crucial, are we to allow US bases with a nuclear capacity — even if not with warheads — to remain on our soil even if, on Bloomfield's logic, British nuclear weapons were to be eliminated?

Threat

Unilateralism means scrapping all nuclear weapons and systems — even when that challenges NATO and threatens US foreign policy interests. That determination is what is so unpalatable both to the Labour leadership and to Eurocommunist CNDers like Jon Bloomfield.

Jon Bloomfield is not arguing simply to update the individual elements of the Labour Party majority's unswerving policy of getting rid of all nuclear weapons and systems from Britain — but to change that commitment. That is why his fire is directed at the Labour left and sections of the peace movement.

Unilateralism is not outmoded. Unilateralists remain the only consistent fighters for nuclear disarmament.

Twenty two Labour MPs call for Britain out of Ireland

TWENTY-TWO Labour MPs have signed an early day motion (EDM) in the House of Commons calling for British withdrawal from Ireland and a united independent Ireland.

The signatories are: Diane Abbott, Tony Banks, J Battie, Tony Benn, Ron Brown, R Cambell, Dennis Canavan, Bob Clay, Harry Cohen, Jeremy Corbyn, Bob Cryer, George Galloway, Mildred Gordon, John Hughes, Ken Livingstone, Alice Mahon, Alan Meale, Chris Mullin, Dawn Primarolo, Dennis Skinner, Andrew Smith, and John Wray.

The EDM 'expresses its horror at the continuing loss of life as at Enniskillen'. It states that: 'the violence and bloodshed in Northern Ireland stems primarily from the long-standing British occupation of that country and the partition imposed by force in 1921'.

It notes that 'neither emergency powers, internment without trial, Diplock courts,

the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the use of CS gas, plastic bullets, strip searching, the existence of the Stormont parliament, direct rule, power sharing, the despatch of British troops or the Anglo-Irish agreement have ever succeeded in bringing peace and justice to Northern Ireland', and that 'the supposed needs of Western defence is one of the reasons why Britain remains in Northern Ireland'.

The EDM also calls for 'Britain to announce its decision to terminate its jurisdiction in the province and to withdraw all its troops within the lifetime of this parliament, to open immediate negotiations between Britain and Ireland to secure reunification on terms that would safeguard all civil and political rights so as to make possible the realisation of the ancient and undoubted aspirations of the Irish people for a united and independent Ireland'.

The early day motion is based on the policy on Ireland adopted by the Campaign Group.

Miriam James Memorial Meeting

The liberation of Ireland and Britain

Speaker: Tony Benn MP

Monday 14 December, 7.30pm

The Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London NW1 (opposite Euston Station)

Organised by Labour Committee on Ireland (London) and Kensington Constituency Labour Party.

Students must reaffirm NOLS Ireland policy

AT NOLS conference in March 1988, the policy of support for unconditional and military British withdrawal from Ireland, removal of the border and self-determination for the Irish people will lapse.

This is particularly serious in the present climate of reaction on the question of self-determination for the Irish people. Opposition is being fostered in the student movement by two factors.

One is the recent decision of the LCC not to adopt support for British withdrawal from Ireland in the wake of Enniskillen, even after a consultative conference on this issue overwhelmingly supported this position. This will doubtless undermine the support that presently exists among their co-thinkers, the Democratic Left leadership of NOLS, for the demand for British withdrawal and Irish self-determination.

The other factor is the series of meetings

that have been set up around the country by 'Socialist' Students in NOLS (SSiN), entitled 'Ireland after the bombing'. They are used to campaign against British withdrawal from Ireland by arguing that a bloodbath would ensue.

Having thus exonerated Britain from responsibility in Ireland, SSiN draw the conclusion from their position of supporting a repartitioned Ireland. Not only does that not mean calling for self-determination and withdrawal, but neither do SSiN call for the troops to be withdrawn.

All Labour clubs are urged to send in policy for discussion at NOLS conference which is pro-withdrawal and for affiliation to the Labour Committee on Ireland: The deadline is 11 December.

Campaign Student and the LCI will be organising to make sure that present policy is defended — don't allow pressure from the media after Enniskillen and SSiN's reaction to sway you from supporting Irish self-determination!

Student conference debates Palestine

THE DEBATE that dominated this year's NUS conference — starting on Saturday evening and not finishing until Monday morning — was the debate on Israel/Palestine. The conference was faced with a choice between two opposing positions. One called for extensive solidarity with the Palestinians, to be co-ordinated by NUS with Students for Palestine (a new student organisation building solidarity with the Palestinians — the first of its kind for many years), and supported the right of the Palestinians to self-determination, to return to their homeland, and to an independent state. It recognised the Palestine Liberation Organisation as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

This position was supported by the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS), Students for Palestine, the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS), Campaign Student, Communist Students, the National Black Students Alliance (NBSA) and the Socialist Worker Students Society (SWSS). It was brought to conference after a speaker tour with Palestinian students organised by Students for Palestine and GUPS.

By Polly Vittorini

The other position, supported by 'Socialist Students in NOLS' (SSiN) and the Union of Jewish Students (UJS), was put separately in two almost identical amendments. It stated that the Israeli Law of Return (which allows Israeli citizenship to any Jewish person but not to a Palestinian who was born there) is not racist. It also said that a democratic, secular Palestine could only be achieved by the PLO 'conquering Israel' and 'incorporating the Israeli Jews into an Arab state against their will'; called for the half a million Palestinian residents of Israel to be expelled and

the establishment of two racist, exclusivist states with the words 'Neither Palestinians nor Jewish people should compromise their separate identities and aspirations by incorporating into either Jewish or Palestinian states'; and condemned Students for Palestine for spreading anti-Semitic myths!

This position, if adopted, would have signified one of the most reactionary steps ever taken by the NUS in its history. It would have meant giving active support for the Law of Return and for the state of Israel, and rejecting the rights of nine million Palestinians.

SSiN, supporting both these amendments, then further exposed the reactionary, racist and pro-imperialist positions they are adopting in a leaflet which defended Israel's Law of Return as 'nationalism'. It stated that 'Israeli Jews have a right to their own state and it is therefore their business who they make citizens of it.'

After a clear, political attack, put forward by Campaign Student, on the Law of Return as the racist basis of the foundation of Israel, SSiN's amendment, against all expectations,



was defeated.

The almost identical UJS position, however, was passed. The UJS claimed that their amendment merely added a Jewish perspective to a Palestinian rights motion. The Democratic Left leadership of NOLS refused to argue that Israel's laws are racist and substituted instead heart-rending appeals for a mini-state for the Palestinians.

The conference then voted support for NUS to co-ordinate vast amounts of solidarity with GUPS and Students for Palestine, and finally voted down the whole of the policy by a majority of 30,000, when reminded that it had just voted support for the Law of Return. So NUS finished by adopting no policy on Palestine.

It was thanks to the interventions and the clearly anti-Zionist politics of Campaign Student and the NBSA that NUS was stop-

ped in its tracks from taking a disastrous and deeply reactionary decision.

It is laudable that NUS rejected the positions put forward by SSiN and by the UJS. The fact that NUS now has no policy whatsoever on the Middle East means that we must prepare to have the whole debate again as soon as possible — and this time to win a clear mandate of support for the rights and the struggle of the Palestinian people.

What must also be clear is that the future of NUS now hangs in the balance. Neither SSiN nor the 'Democratic Left' will be able to carry out the mandate that is needed: SSiN because of its own increasing adaptation to imperialism, and the 'Democratic Left' because its allegiance to the Kincock leadership of the Labour Party means that it hasn't got the politics to defend the interests of students. SSiN was the

largest group at NUS conference and, aside from the Union of Liberal Students and the Tories, the most right wing on the key international issues.

The longer SSiN and the 'Democratic Left' are left to battle it out between them, the more criminal will become the lack of campaigning activity of NUS, in defence of its own students and in defence of the working class and the oppressed worldwide.

A new leadership of NUS is needed, which has the political will to build a mass campaign against the Education Reform Bill, in alliance with all class struggle forces opposed to the Thatcher government, and in particular with the Campaign Group left of the Labour Party. It needs a union which can defend the interests of all its members, including women and black students, and which can be a truly internationalist leadership.

More issues at NUS conference

THE NUS conference on 4-7 December discussed the Alton Bill, the Education Reform Bill and the poll tax. But the conference was dominated by a two day debate on Palestine.

The NUS reflected massive support among students for a woman's right to choose and a campaign against the Alton Bill. A very comprehensive policy was passed giving wholehearted support to the Fight Alton's Bill campaign (FAB), calling for NUS to affiliate to FAB and to support all its initiatives — especially the events planned for the second reading of the Bill.

The only dissent was a single amendment supported by only one university, which called for disaffiliation from the National Abortion Campaign and which was roundly defeated. A speaker from FAB came top in the guest speaker ballot, and in all £1500 was collected or donated to the campaign.

The debate on the 'Great Education Reform Bill', or GERBILL, man-

dated the NEC to call a demonstration against it in the second term, to coincide with its passage through parliament, and to organise a broad campaign seeking the involvement of trade unions involved in education and the TUC.

The conference strongly condemned the poll tax as an attack on local democracy and on the living standards of working people. It also voted, by a margin of 700 votes to 5, for a broad campaign involving the trade union movement, local authorities, MPs, youth

organisations, churches — all those opposed to the poll tax, with a student campaign against the tax based on non-cooperation.

This is inoperable as non-cooperation is not possible until the tax is implemented, which will be in 1990 at the earliest.

The grouping responsible for this sectarian step backwards was 'Socialist Students in NOLS' (SSiN), who did not argue this point politically. No opposition to this was voiced by the taker of the speech against, Adrian Long, national secretary

of NUS and member of the 'Democratic Left' leadership of NOLS.

The mood and policy already adopted by conference suggests that had SSiN been honest about the real reason for this amendment — to oppose a broad campaign — and had it been opposed as such, this amendment would have been overwhelmingly defeated. As it is, NUS is not now mandated to work with anyone else who is opposed to the poll tax, but instead to organise local student action against it, which will be ineffective.

Stop the attack on gay rights

LABOUR MPs have supported a savage attack in parliament on lesbian and gay rights by backing a homophobic amendment to the Tories local government legislation.

Extreme right wing Tory Jill Knight amended the Bill at committee stage to state that local authorities shall not 'promote homosexuality or publish the material for

the promotion of homosexuality'. It further prohibits 'the teaching or the acceptance of homosexuality' and 'any financial assistance' for anyone promoting such policies.

By Peter Purton, LCLGR

The effect of such an amendment will be to make illegal many existing equal opportunities policies. It threatens almost any local government initiative on lesbian

and gay rights including the existence of lesbian and gay units and committees.

Labour supported the first amendment and backed the others with reservations.

This disgraceful position from Labour MPs such as John Cunningham and Jeff Rooker is the logical development of the confused and cowardly retreat by the Parliamentary Labour Party on this issue since before the general election. They are

now vying with the Tories for the support of backwoods bigots.

The direct target of the attack is Labour councils. In carrying out existing Labour Party policy some have adopted so-called positive images policies in education.

That is in order to counter the isolation and prejudice faced by lesbian and gay youth. Labour councils have attempted to present homosexuality as a valid way of life. This is not, of course, the same as

'promoting' homosexuality — whatever that means!

The Labour Committee for Lesbian and Gay Rights is organising a campaign to reverse this shocking retreat by the Labour Party and to fight this disastrous legislation. All Labour affiliated organisations and constituency parties should be letting the PLP and Walworth Road know of their disgust at this attack on the rights of lesbians and gay men.

Abortion law: is Britain out of step?

'NO OTHER country in western Europe allows abortions seven months into pregnancy,' wrote Liberal MP David Alton in the *Liverpool Daily Post* of 6 October this year. 'The norm is 14-16 weeks and in France abortion is only available until 10 weeks.' Alton claims that Britain is out of step in providing for legal abortion up to 28 weeks. This is a major justification for his Private Members Bill aimed at introducing a legal limit for abortion of 18 weeks. But his arguments are simply untrue. CAROL TURNER looks at the range of abortion provisions available in Western Europe.



FAR from being more liberal than many of its counterparts, Britain lags behind when it comes to a comparison of abortion facilities currently available across West Europe. While women seeking an abortion in Britain have to prove their need to the satisfaction of two doctors, many other countries already operate a limited policy of abortion on request.

In the Netherlands, for example, abortion is available on request with no upper limit legally set, although in practice it tends to be between 22-24 weeks. In Sweden abortion is available on request up to 18 weeks of pregnancy. It is also available beyond 18 weeks for 'serious reasons'.

In Austria, Denmark and Norway abortion is legally available on request up to 12 weeks of pregnancy. But in none of these cases either is 12 weeks an upper legal limit.

In Austria abortion is available after 12 weeks on certain medical grounds.

In Denmark it is available for a wide variety of reasons after 12 weeks. And in Norway abortion is legally available after 12 weeks simply on application.

The provisions in France, misquoted by David Alton in his *Daily Post* article, are as follows. Abortion is available on request up to 10 weeks, although the method used to calculate the period of pregnancy means abortion on request is de facto available up to 12 weeks. However, the legal upper limit is 24 weeks. Abortions will be carried out in France between 10 and 24 weeks on medical grounds.

In Turkey abortion on request is also available up to 10 weeks. The time limit will be extended if the life of the woman is in danger or if the foetus is faulty.

In Finland, abortion is available to 12 weeks on socio-economic grounds, and thereafter up to 20 weeks. In West Germany abortion is available up to 12 weeks (14 in practice) on grounds similar to

those in operation in Britain. It is also available up to 20 weeks in West Germany if the foetus is faulty, and thereafter for reasons to do with the woman's health.

In Switzerland abortion is legally available on medical grounds. In the French-speaking areas of Zurich and Basel abortion practice is very liberal.

A variety of grounds will secure a legal abortion in Italy up to 12 weeks. Thereafter abortion is available for reasons of the woman's health or if the foetus is faulty.

In Greece, abortion is available to 12 weeks for mental health reasons. It is also legal up to 20 weeks if the foetus is faulty, if there is a serious risk to the woman's health or in the case of a pregnancy resulting from rape or incest.

Abortion can only be legally performed in Belgium if life is endangered. But in non-Catholic areas practice has become much more liberal than the law would suggest. There is presently a trial of clinic workers taking place, and a new abortion law is being proposed.

Only in three West European countries — Ireland, Spain and Portugal — are abortion facilities clearly inferior to those on offer in Britain. Abortion is allowed by law in Portugal up to 12 weeks for 'grave eugenic, medical and ethical reasons'. But there are no legal grounds for an extension of this time limit.

Abortion facilities are severely restricted in Spain. To be considered for a legal abortion, a Spanish woman's life must be in danger, the foetus she is carrying must be

faulty, or her pregnancy must result from rape.

In the north of Ireland abortion is virtually illegal. In the south its illegality is now enshrined in the constitution. Over 5000 Irish women each year are estimated to come to Britain for a safe legal abortion.

Contrary to the claims of David Alton and his anti-abortion friends, Britain is far from being the most liberal of West European countries when it comes to abortion facilities. One report on West Europe, prepared in 1985, classified this country as 'moderately restrictive'.

In fact, Britain lags behind the abortion on request facilities available in many other countries. Neither is the upper time limit wildly out of line with the rest of West Europe as the anti-choice campaigners claim.

Yet again, on this as on other issues of abortion practice, the anti-choice lobby, including MP David Alton, simply distort the facts to fit their prejudice.

● The majority of the information quoted above is available from *FAB Bulletin* no 2, priced 20p, from 4 Wild Court, London WC2B 5AU (01-405 4801). *Bulletin* no 3, also 20p, contains a selection of local and national press cuttings and is also available from the above address.

Conference against strip-searching

OVER 100 people, mainly women, representing a wide range of organisations, attended the 'Working Together to End Strip-Searching' conference organised by the London Strategic Policy Unit (LSPU) and the Association of London Authorities (ALA) on Saturday 5 December.

They came from campaigns like Stop Strip-Searches and the Labour Committee on Ireland as well as from trade unions such as NALGO, ASTMS, NAPO (National Association of Probation Officers), and the NUR, and from the Labour Party and Labour councils, to discuss and publicise the facts about strip-searching and how to campaign most effectively against this legalised sexual assault.

In the morning session, conference heard that strip-searching is not motivated by 'security' concerns but is increasingly used by the state in many situations to control women.

This point was made in shocking detail by the reports of black women, who had been regularly stripped as a punishment in prisons, and stopped and stripped randomly at customs while returning from holiday.

Conference also heard a CND activist tell how she was stripped in the presence of seven male police officers after being arrested on a nuclear disarmament protest. Particularly strong

support was extended to Brieg Brownlee from the Campaign Against Strip-Searching in the North of Ireland. This technique is used in Armagh, now Maghaberry, prison. It is also used against Irish women in prisons like Brixton and Durham.

The afternoon of conference was used to discuss coordinating our opposition most effectively. The session opened by Anne Gibson from ASTMS, Margaret Stewart from the Scottish Campaign Against Strip-Searching and Isobel Anderson, sister of Martina Anderson.

It was agreed that the degree to which strip-searching had been ignored by the labour movement when it was introduced against Irish women made extension of that policy to many thousands more women — particularly black women, lesbians and politically active women — that much easier.

Many labour movement and other organisations have registered their opposition to strip-searching. Amongst them is the National Organisation of Labour Women, the Women's TUC and the Labour Party.

Conference agreed to call a meeting to establish a coordinating committee against strip-searching. Its purpose is to spread public opinion against and to call for an end to strip-searching.

● Organisations and individuals opposed to strip-searching are invited to attend the meeting. They should contact the LSPU on 01-630 5729 for further information.

More false claims from Alton

ONE of the anti-choice lobby's favourite claims is that liberalising abortion law in Britain has led to a rise in abortion. This is repeated by David Alton.

Writing in one of his local newspapers on 8 October, Alton said that since the 1967 Act: 'nearly three million abortions have been undertaken and

with more than 170,000 abortions last year, the trend is moving inexorably upwards. The backstreet has moved to the shop window and we have lost sight of the main objective: a sustained reduction in the total level of abortions — legal or illegal.'

The main purpose of enacting legislation like the 1967 Act cannot be to reduce abortions. Infor-

mation about, and the availability of, safe and effective contraceptive methods remain the primary mechanism for reducing unwanted pregnancies.

Rather the '67 Act ensured that abortions — which have always been procured regardless of what the law says — were carried out in safe conditions. Between 1952-54, 110 deaths from abortion

were recorded, compared with only 6 between 1983-85.

However, even in Alton's own terms, his claim simply doesn't hold up. Britain in fact has a relatively low rate of abortion.

England and Wales has an abortion rate of 12.6 per 1000 women of child-bearing age. Scotland, where abortion laws are more liberal (although in

practice doctors tend to follow the guidelines for England and Wales), has one of the lowest abortion rates in the world: 7.6 per 1000.

This compares with a rate of 26.9 in the USA. Other countries in Western Europe have the following rates: Denmark 21, Italy and Sweden each 19, Norway 16, France 15, Finland 13 and West Germany 8.

Local round-up

Wolverhampton

A WOLVERHAMPTON FAB group has now been established from a meeting of over 60 people and has decided on a programme of action against Alton.

The meeting brought together local labour councillors, students from the Polytechnic, trade unionists, and women activists. Activities planned include weekly petitioning in the city centre, general leafletting, activities and meetings in colleges, and a public meeting is planned on 10 December, 7pm at the civic centre.

A Wolverhampton day of action is being organised for January, and support is being mobilised for the Birmingham Regional Demonstration on 16 January.

For more information contact: Fiza Rashid (women's group) c/o Wolverhampton Poly SU (0902) 712901 or Eileen or Francis on (0902) 772645.

Lewisham

LEWISHAM FAB is holding its public launch meeting on Friday 11 December at 8pm. Joan Ruddock MP and local doctor Barbara Jacobs will be speaking at the Ladywell Play Tower, Ladywell Road, SE13.

For more information about Lewisham FAB contact Amina on 01-463 9400 or Jane on 01-732 1872.

OTHER FAB groups can be contacted as follows: London

Barnet, Lucy on 883 8872; Brent, Rachel on 451 6365 or Jean on 908 7004; Brockley, June on 691 3376; Camden, Jill on 387 8557; Deptford, Sandy on 691 2468; Ealing, Jan on 574 4016; Ealing College, 579 5000; Greenwich, Rona on 856 0296 ext 26 or Wendy on 854 4476; Hackney, Anne on 241 5626; Hammersmith and Fulham,

Charlotte on 747 3919 or Meryl on 603 1438; Haringey, Jane on 881 7714; Harrow, Sue on 863 2294; Hillingdon, Debbie on 0895 59578 or Annika on 01-573 9461 or Helen on 0896 55700; Hounslow, Lucy on 995 1205; Islington, Liz on 263 9545 or Jude on 254 0128; Kensington & Chelsea, Irene on 960 1977; Lambeth, Carol on 254 0261 or Juliette on 671 7285 or Joan on 582 2955; Lewisham, Jane on 291 2907; Muswell Hill, Lucy on 883 9905; Newham, Alison on 472 6652 or Sarah on 472 1430 ext 2336; Tower Hamlets, Carol on 986 7513/981 1131 or Hilary on 987 3938; Bethnal Green, Dave on 521 5591/739 5088; LSE, Amanda on 607 0178.

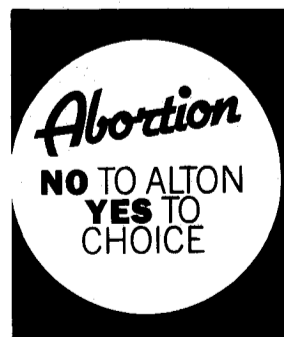
Scotland Ayr, Kyle on 0292 268 284; Dundee, Eileen on 0382 553237; Edinburgh, Susan on 031-357 1018; Glasgow, Ronnie on 041-332 4946.

Wales Cardiff, Women's Centre on 0222 383024 or Andrew on 0222 398567 or Coleen on 0222 385209; Newport, Lindsey on 0633 51479; South Glamorgan, Bronwyn on 0222 492530/485470; Swansea, Kay on 0792 460087 or Marge on 0792 290448.

England Birmingham, Jane on 021-443 2184 or Ruth on 021-472 1841 ext 248; Bolton, Well Women's Centre on 0204 699 673; Bradford, Abigail on 0274 814392 or University Women's Office on 0274 734135; Brighton, Josephine on 0273 699 593 or Student Union Women's Officer on 0273 678555; Bristol, Well Women's Centre on 272 221925 or Ann on 0272 266 031 ext 571; Cambridge, J Hawkins on 0223 313675/61475; Exeter, Mary or Zoe on 0392 210468/263546; Hull, Sue on 0482 219552; Leeds, University on 0532 439071 or Rachel on 0532 741158 or Helen on 0532 446838; Leicester, Debbie on 0533 532111; Liverpool, Linda on 051-733 5166/709 5566 ext 226; Newcastle, Jackie on 091-261 2375; Norwich, Women's Centre on 0603 628130; Nottingham, Alison on 0602 607448; Oxford, Julie on 0865 244983; Plymouth, Helen or Kate on 0752 665994/266182; Sheffield, Emma or Sue on 0742 735028; Southampton, Adrienne on 0703 832391 or Julie on 0703 786235; Stockport, Shelagh on 061-429 6359; Sunderland, Chris on 0783 5677495; Wigan, Lesley on 0942 57096;

Wirral, Jane on 051-645 9395; York, Julie or Sam on 0904 34952/413252.

A full list is available from FAB.



These and other stickers are now available from the Fight Alton's Bill campaign. Black and purple on white, they cost 20p for a sheet of 12 (including postage). Send your orders to FAB, Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London, WC2B 5AU.

Defend abortion rights

**NO TO ALTON
YES TO CHOICE
21 January 1988**

- ★ Rally Central Hall, Westminster. 1.30pm-6pm
- ★ Lobby of Parliament 2.30pm onwards
- ★ Women's torchlight procession 6.30pm assembly, 7pm start

Defend the 1967 Abortion Act
No reduction in time limits

**NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION
19 MARCH 1988.
Assemble Hyde Park 12 noon**

Posters like the one illustrated above, as well as leaflets — both in yellow and black — advertising the 21 January activities are now available from the national FAB campaign. So too are 'Our Bodies, Our Choice' posters in a variety of colours. Leaflets cost £10 per thousand. Posters cost 60p for 10.

Why Britain must withdraw from Ire

ON 2 DECEMBER the Parliamentary Labour Party held a special meeting, exclusively devoted to Ireland. The meeting was called following sharp differences expressed after the Enniskillen bombing. Kinnock had moved even more sharply towards the Unionists — visiting Ireland to attempt to persuade southern Irish prime minister Haughey to

sign the extradition treaty. Ken Livingstone argued that the source of the violence in Ireland was the partition of the country and the maintenance of a sectarian state in the north. This led to a sharp clash at the NEC and the PLP — the meeting being preceded by a statement signed by 22 members of the Campaign Group of Labour MPs calling

for British withdrawal from Ireland.

Ken Livingstone circulated a document to the PLP outlining the case for British withdrawal from Ireland and has produced a background paper. These are abridged here. The editing is by Socialist Action.

The aim of everyone in the labour movement, must be to bring to an end the long history of violence in the North of Ireland, to secure self-determination for the Irish people, and to strengthen democracy in Britain. These goals are self-reinforcing, not mutually contradictory. But they, and in particular an end to violence, cannot be achieved by pious hopes nor, as the history of the last half century shows, through repression. Any investigation of the situation shows that violence can only be brought to an end by British withdrawal from Ireland.

Present Labour Party policy on Ireland is, unfortunately, illogical and therefore does not stand the test of events. There are in fact only two coherent courses.

★ The first is that the union of Britain and the North of Ireland must be maintained. In that case Labour must be prepared to face the real cost economically, militarily, and politically — not only for itself but in terms of denying the right of the Irish people to self-determination.

★ The second is that Britain withdraws — in which case it is in everyone's interest that this withdrawal takes place as rapidly as possible.

Why the second course is the only correct one is clear. The great majority of the Irish people have expressed their desire for independence. Furthermore for more than a century Britain has in fact been in the course of withdrawal from Ireland. The tragedy has been that British governments have failed to take the decisive step of complete withdrawal when this has been possible. They have taken only partial steps — thereby prolonging the agony and losing lives in order to try to avoid an historic process which is finally inevitable.

The job of the Labour Party is not to lag behind events but to bring to an end this episode and get Britain out of Ireland. Furthermore, in addition to its principled character such a policy would command popular support.

The three successive steps to British withdrawal from Ireland are clear. — from 1885 to 1914, after prolonged struggle in Ireland. Home Rule was adopted by the British parliament.

— in 1921 Britain withdrew from 26 out of the 32 counties of Ireland. At that time a golden opportunity to withdraw from the whole of Ireland was missed.

— the Anglo-Irish Treaty, whatever attitude one takes towards its provisions — and I oppose it, now makes it clear that Britain cannot rule even the North of Ireland itself. Furthermore, the British labour movement cannot continue to support a sectarian state in the North of Ireland in which systematic discrimination against the Catholic population in employment and other areas continues unabated.

Separation

Labour's policy allows unionists to veto withdrawal — although some are now trying to make this ambiguous. The choice on separation must of course be taken by the Irish people. But the problem is which political unit is involved.

The Northern Ireland state *cannot* be considered a democratic unit and as confusion on the unionist veto is at the core of many errors in the Labour movement it is worth looking at in detail.

Firstly the border is a purely gerrymandered unit. Its sole purpose was to secure, by hook or by crook, a majority for unionism. The border was drawn in such a way as to secure a majority for a particular political current and not vice versa.

In the historic province of Ulster, comprising 9 counties, the population was divided 54 per cent Protestant and 46 per cent Catholic — which would have

created in the future a vote in favour of Irish unity. To exclude the possibility of a democratic vote for British withdrawal three overwhelmingly Catholic counties were removed from the Ulster in 1921 to secure a safe Protestant/Unionist majority.

Gerrymandered

In a further move against democracy it was decided to include two counties with Catholic majorities in the Northern State — Fermanagh with a 56 per cent Catholic majority and Tyrone with a 55 per cent Catholic majority — as otherwise Northern Ireland would have been economically unviable. The councils elected in both Fermanagh and Tyrone after partition were dissolved because they refused to recognise the legitimacy of the new northern Ireland state and instead offered their allegiance to the Irish parliament in Dublin. These councils, and most of the others where nationalists predominated, were promptly dissolved.

The drawing of the border, in short, was gerrymandered to secure a unionist majority and a subservient Catholic minority. Such a method has nothing to do with democracy.

Independent

This is why a test of opinion in the North of Ireland alone is not democratic. Only the vote of the Irish people as a whole is valid in determining its status. The last such votes on a 32-county basis were the 1918 general election when the supporters of a united and independent Ireland won 75 per cent of the vote, and the local elections in June 1920 when 28 out of 32 counties returned republican majorities. Subsequent opinion polls show a consistent 32-county majority for Irish unity.

Secondly, and equally importantly, the Northern Ireland state is based on systematic discrimination against Catholics.

Following the creation of the Northern Ireland state religious and political discrimination against Catholics and nationalists was institutionalised in housing and employment and buttressed by political discrimination. Gerrymandering, a limited franchise, and a loyalty oath were systematised to prevent nationalist control of local authorities even where the nationalist population were in a big majority — as in Derry for example. Such an unjust and oppressive system could only be maintained by repression of the Catholic and nationalist population.

Internment without trial was introduced six times between 1920 and



Ian Paisley MP, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party and Jim Molyneux MP, Unionist Party, in their sectarian regalia in 1985.

1975. An armed sectarian security force — the B-specials — was established, numbering more than 10,000 and exclusively Protestant in composition.

These were the injustices highlighted by the civil rights movement in 1968 — which won the Catholic population of Northern Ireland worldwide sympathy and again brought the question of Ireland to the attention of people in Britain.

It is a matter of historical record that the violence of the last 20 years in Northern Ireland was initiated by the Unionists in response to the peaceful civil rights campaign. It was the scenes of peaceful civil rights marchers being beaten off the streets and B-specials on the rampage in Catholic areas of Belfast and Derry which first shocked the world in 1969. The official Cameron Commis-

Table 1: Housing conditions in Belfast 1971

	Catholics as % of males of working age	No fixed bath %	No hot water %	Outside wc %	Households with cars %
Falls	79	51	33	56	17
Dock	62	57	38	53	15
Pottinger	12	38	24	41	51
Shankill	8	48	29	48	35
Victoria	4	30	19	33	53

land

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er of the Official

sion, reporting on the events in the North of Ireland in 1969, clearly stated the existence of this discrimination. In short the situation in the North of Ireland is not 'a religious clash between two communities'. It is one where the Protestant/Unionists discriminated against a Catholic population made a permanent minority by a rigging of the border. This was the price of trying to

prevent the Irish people expressing their majority right to self-determination. No-one but the most discredited bigots today tries to defend the discrimination in Northern Ireland prior to 1972. But the fact is that since direct rule was enacted in March 1972 religious and political discrimination has continued — and it is clear that anti-Catholic discrimination continues to

INTERSECTION CARD Class of placing

MINISTRY OF LABOUR, NORTHERN IRELAND.

ALFRED STREET Date..... Class No.....
 Exchange Phone No.....

[Handwritten signature]

In reply to your request for..... *yes*

I am sending the books, if..... *yes*

Please complete the space below and return this card to the address as possible, through the post, in the enclosed prepaid envelope.

H. G. STEVENSON, Manager.

Have you engaged the services?..... *no*

Date.....

If the employer is not engaged please state overall the reason.....

Signature..... *J. Brothers*

Date..... *25/9 1985*

F.T.O.

IMPORTANT.

Refusal of suitable employment is a disqualification for the receipt of Unemployment Benefit

In the public interest, therefore, you are asked to state fully why you did not engage the applicant.

Religion

G.1224 Wt.848 P.1030 10,000 Op.101 2/36 N.W.144
 G.2026 Wt.1273 1184 10,000 Op.101 1/36 N.W.144

day. The most recent evidence on this has been summarised in the report of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (SACHR) — established under the 1973 Northern Ireland Constitution Act. In September 1987 this published *Religious and political discrimination and equality of opportunity in Northern Ireland* — in tandem with the Policy Studies Institute report *Equality and Inequality in Northern Ireland*.

These found that on all indices of discrimination there had been no improvement in the last ten years. The SACHR concluded for example: 'The unemployment rate for male Catholics is two and a half times that for male Protestants. This has shown no improvement over the last decade' (p41).

The situation existing at the time of the beginning of the 'troubles' in the north of Ireland is clearly shown in table 1.

Deprivation

Male unemployment was twice as high among Catholics as among Protestants, less than half as many Catholics were employers, there were only half the number of managers, well under half as many foremen, and only a third the number of professionals as among Protestants.

Taking measures of social deprivation, shown in table 1, 50 per cent more homes in Catholic than Protestant areas had no fixed bath and no hot water. A third more homes in Catholic than in Protestant areas had no inside WC. Only a third as many households in Catholic areas as in Protestant had cars.

Neither has the situation changed substantially since. The SACHR started its investigation in January 1985. It noted 'In July 1985 the government published statistics showing marked differences between the characteristics of the Protestant and Catholic sections of the community in Northern Ireland. The statistics illustrated differences in such areas as employment, educational background and housing. They underlined the fact that ... substantial differences between Catholics and Protestants continued to exist, notably in terms of employment and unemployment.'

In 1983-85, according to SACHR, Catholic males were 50 per cent less likely than Protestants to be in white collar jobs. Furthermore within social groups unemployment hits Catholics far more severely than Protestants.

Even by the mid-1980s, after almost two decades of supposed action to eliminate discrimination, the unemployment rate among Catholic men was 2½ times the unemployment rate among Protestant men.

As the cause of that the PSI study found that the differences could not be explained by region and that educational differences are not the cause. The SACHR report, which is body established by the

British parliament and not a Republican front, concluded that no other explanation than discrimination could explain the factual situation in the North of Ireland. It concluded: 'when the inter-relationships of the listed factors are taken into account the difference in unemployment rates for ... particular group(s) of Protestants and Catholics ... (shows) rates for Catholics almost double those for Protestants.' (p35)

The detailed PSI study of the North of Ireland concludes: 'After allowing for ... (all other) factors ... the predicted rate of unemployment is nearly twice as high for a Catholic as for a Protestant ...'

- ★ Protestants enjoy a higher standard of living than Catholics for five reasons.
- ★ A higher proportion of Protestant than of Catholic men are in work.
- ★ A higher proportion of Protestant than Catholic women are in work ...
- ★ The larger number of earners supports Protestant families of smaller size ...
- ★ Protestants tend to have jobs at higher levels than Catholics.
- ★ Protestants are more likely to work overtime than Catholics.'

These patterns can only be explained by systematic discrimination practiced on the political and social field for over 60 years. This is the system of discrimination which the British presence in Ireland bolsters.

Sectarian

Over 50 years it is clear the Unionists have refused any steps to overcome the anti-democratic nature of the Northern Irish state. The essentially sectarian nature of Unionism was noted by the Cameron Commission in 1969 when it concluded: 'In certain areas, Dunganon, Armagh, and in particular, Londonderry, the arrangement of ward boundaries for local government purposes has produced in the local authority a permanent Unionist majority which bears little or no resemblance to the relative numerical strength of Unionists and non-Unionists in the area. As we show later there is very good reason to believe that these arrangements were deliberately made and maintained with the consequence that the Unionists used, and have continued to use, the electoral majority thus created to favour Protestant and Unionist supporters in making public appointments — in particular those of senior officials — and in manipulating housing allocations for political and sectarian ends.'

Discrimination

The Unionist politicians are notorious for discrimination and sectarianism. These include open statements of incitement to violence, condoning of expulsion of Catholic workers from jobs and incitement to rebellion. There is no evidence whatever that the Unionists are

prepared to accept eliminating discrimination against Catholics — indeed it is evident that the main tainance of discrimination is for them the rationale for maintaining the existence of the state. All attempts at removing discrimination, and thereby removing the root of the violence, have been rejected by the Unionists. These include their own period of rule through the Northern Ireland parliament, direct rule, power sharing and the Anglo-Irish agreement.

The record of unionist rule is one of sectarian bigotry and discrimination — which is why even Mrs Thatcher cannot today return control of the affairs of Northern Ireland to the Unionists.

Reunification

Only a psychopath could welcome what happened at Enniskillen for example. But the history of Ireland shows that violence is rooted in a discriminatory state in the North of Ireland. The unionists reject all measures to bring discrimination to an end. All attempts to 'solve' the situation in Ireland which are not based on British withdrawal will simply fail. All history shows that attempts to deprive nations of their right to decide their own future inevitably fail.

The politics of two nations cannot be held hostage to the activities of a relatively small number of discriminatory unionists in the North of Ireland. It results in repeated failed attempts to find an 'internal solution' within the borders of the Northern Ireland state. It prolongs the cycle of violence and will not succeed in eliminating its root causes.

Unemployment

Since 1981 the Labour Party has been committed to Irish unity. It has adopted policies opposing the most extreme abuses of civil liberties in Northern Ireland. Acceptance of a Unionist veto on Irish unification is inconsistent with these policies. The reunification of Ireland cannot be hostage to politicians who have a record merely of sectarianism and discrimination.

The will of the majority of the Irish people is clear — they want a united Ireland. The majority of the British people, even, want Britain to leave the North of Ireland. Labour must adopt that policy as its own

Table 2: Unemployment rates for Protestant and Catholic Males

	Protestant	Catholic	Ratio
1971 census	6.6	17.3	2.6
1981 census	12.4	30.2	2.4
1983-85	14.9	35.1	2.4

Anti-Apartheid Movement annual meeting

THE ANTI-APARTHEID Movement held its annual meeting in Sheffield over the weekend of 28-29 November.

Delegates represented the 177 local groups of the AAM, as well as AAM regions and affiliated organisations. The AAM's national membership is 7,200 individuals and 800 affiliated organisations.

The context of the meeting was what the AAM's annual report described as the 'most draconian onslaught ever against their liberation struggle since the epoch of colonial conquest of the region'. This has involved



By Martin Hoare, ASTMS No 3 Divisional Council delegate (personal capacity)

the detention of 750 officials of the Congress of South African Trade

Unions (COSATU) — which has been the backbone of resistance to

the apartheid regime this year. It has also involved the detention, imprisonment or trial of 25 members of the United Democratic Front (UDF), executions, the blowing up of COSATU's headquarters, numerous murders by the security forces and blanket press censorship.

The regime has responded to the growth of the workers' movement in Namibia with a reign of terror aimed at SWAPO and the National Union of Namibian Workers. The third element of the apartheid regime's counter-attack has been stepping up its war against the front-line states.

The AAM reaffirmed its support for the African National Congress and SWAPO, and represen-

tatives of both addressed the AGM.

The AAM conference gave priority to the 'Hands off COSATU' campaign launched by COSATU this year, campaigns against executions and for the release of detainees, defence of the front-line states and solidarity with the people of Namibia. These priorities, responding to the stepped-up repression by the regime, are in addition to the AAM's absolutely central campaigning for 'comprehensive mandatory sanctions and the total isolation of apartheid South Africa', backed up by the mobilisation of 'the people of Britain' to impose 'people's sanctions'.

References to campaigning specifically on Moses Mayekiso, the

general secretary of NUM-SA, COSATU's second largest affiliate, were deleted from a resolution to the AGM. This was a mistake. The case of Moses Mayekiso has become an international symbol of the fight to defend anti-apartheid trade unionists and has thereby contributed to the campaigns to free all detainees.

Rejection of sectarian campaigns should not mean the AAM itself adopting a sectarian position.

Campaigning within the black community and amongst youth and students will have a higher profile after this year's AGM. It was agreed that in future local youth groups will be entitled to delegates to the AGM.

Resolutions on work in

the Labour Party were not voted on.

Last year, high priority was given to campaigns directed to all political parties and there were doubts expressed about the effectiveness of mass action in the paper presented by the NC to last year's AGM. In fact the work along that line in the general election is now acknowledged not to have been effective.

This year's demonstration mobilised 75,000 compared to 200,000 plus in June 1986. This indicates that a clear orientation to the labour movement and, in addition, students, the black community and youth are vital, and that they should be centralised around a mass demonstration as the central mobilisation of the whole movement in 1988.

Poland after the referendum

GENERAL JARUZELSKI has suffered a major setback in his attempt to get the Polish people to vote for their own pauperization in exchange for vague promises of 'democracy on the Polish model'.

More than 57 per cent of them, in the referendum called on the issue, rejected his proposal for economic market reforms which implied price rises and falls in the standard of living on a scale never before seen even in Poland.

By Cyril Smuga

More than 53 per cent also voted 'no' to the crumbs of democracy offered by a regime whose tanks in one night wiped out 16 months of democracy won in the heat of struggle.

It is significant that Jaruzelski felt immediately obliged to acknowledge his defeat in the referendum and began by saying that he had not foreseen it.

But there are other lessons of the Polish referendum. The revolt in Brassovia in Rumania, the first strikes for wage increases in the USSR in the last months, like the readers' letters which the Soviet press has begun to publish, also bear witness to the Polish workers' rejection of austerity and the crisis of bureaucratic domination — a crisis in its ability to make the planned economy work.

The Polish regime, a parasitic caste, cannot cope with the Polish people's social needs. These resurface again and again in every nook and cranny of the system.

In holding his referendum, Jaruzelski hoped to profit from the confusion in Solidarnosc about the economic reform. It is true that Solidarnosc took the referendum lightly. True, it doubted — rightly — the general's democratic commitment. But it was equally convinced that the well being of the Polish people

depended on introducing the market, accepting the sacrifice imposed on the population, and on sharing out this sacrifice among the common people in return for 'political openings'.

Basing itself on this understanding, the leadership of the underground union adopted an economic reform project close, in its general outlines, to the government's project.

Among the rare voices which were raised against this it is useful to note that of the economist Ryszard Bugai, one of the authors of the economic programme adopted by Solidarity at its congress in 1981.

Problem

Commenting on the development of Solidarity's economic positions, he wrote that the market reform proposals were 'more a reflection of the changing views of the elite than of the social base' and concluded that 'this does not leave much chance for the reform'.

The question then under discussion was the 'renewal of the mandate of Solidarity's structures' — re-basing Solidarity's organization in the factories.

It has to be noted that after the referendum this question is posed more forcefully. Especially since, having underestimated the situation, Solidarnosc's leadership persists in the same errors.

Learning of the results, Lech Walesa was unable to call Jaruzelski's power into question again, saying that he was ready to address the people in solidarity in the case of a 'new Poland'.

Though Jaruzelski has suffered a severe defeat, it



day he is not facing a mass movement which can force him to tolerate working class self-organization in the factories.

On the contrary, aware that such self-organization would represent a formidable blow against the economic reform demanded by the IMF and Poland's Western and Soviet creditors, the regime is less disposed to such concessions than ever.

Beaten

Beaten in the referendum, Jaruzelski cannot forever postpone the price rises. He will have to turn to his creditors and ask them to take the 'objective difficulties' into consideration — but they will want proof that he can honour his obligations.

Moreover, the question of a reorientation of Solidarnosc is posed today, and those at its heart who have been arguing for a line of action inside the factories will have the wind put back in their sails.

Whatsoever the positions of Solidarity's leadership may be, and whatever confusion reigns in the social movement, the latter has emerged strengthened from the referendum. The result has increased the masses' confidence in their own strength and willingness to undertake the struggle for a new Poland.

Weakness

A new phase of struggle is opening today in Poland. Its result will depend greatly on the conduct of the two great protagonists — the Jaruzelski government and Solidarnosc. Those in power have betrayed their political weakness. Poland's recent history shows that such a profoundly rotten regime cannot flaunt such weakness with impunity.

Confidence

A new phase of struggle is opening today in Poland. Its result will depend greatly on the conduct of the two great protagonists — the Jaruzelski government and Solidarnosc. Those in power have betrayed their political weakness. Poland's recent history shows that such a profoundly rotten regime cannot flaunt such weakness with impunity.

ARTICLES FROM ROWEE

Statement to the Arusha Conference

THE CONFERENCE organised by the ANC in Arusha, Tanzania at the beginning of December was attended by 500 representatives and delegates from all over the world. The attendance was itself a refutation of the statement by Margaret Thatcher that the ANC is no more than a 'typical terrorist organisation'. The following statement was read to the conference by Bernie Grant MP on behalf of the British delegation.

NDUGU Salim Ahmed Salim, deputy prime minister and minister of defence and national service, United Republic of Tanzania, chairman of the ANC international conference. We, British participants at the Arusha conference, 'The world united against apartheid — for a democratic South Africa', representing a wide range of anti-apartheid, trade union, black, religious, women's, youth, professional, local government and campaigning organisations, pledge our solidarity with the people of South Africa and Namibia in their struggle for a non-racial and democratic South Africa, and for genuine independence in Namibia.

We have been inspired by the addresses made by the presidents of the ANC and of SWAPO, who, together with the contributors from within South Africa, have given us all a new insight into the situation in Southern Africa. We were similarly inspired by the thoughtful and profound contribution of Mwalimu Julius Kamearage Nyerere.

We were also impressed by the representative character of the conference which was accurately described by the ANC president as a 'world parliament against apartheid for a democratic South Africa'. Moreover, the participation of many commonwealth governments underlined to us the extent of the British government's international isolation.

We wish to disassociate ourselves totally from the policies of Mrs Thatcher and the British govern-

ment towards Southern Africa. We in particular condemn the statement made by Mrs Thatcher following the commonwealth conference in Vancouver in which she described the African National Congress as a 'typical terrorist organisation'.

Indeed we fully acknowledge the legitimacy of the struggle being waged by the ANC including the armed struggle against the apartheid system which represents a crime against humanity.

We pledge on our return to Britain to work unrelentingly to secure an end to British complicity with apartheid; for a fundamental change in British policy; for the recognition of the ANC and SWAPO as the legitimate representatives of the people of South Africa and Namibia respectively; and for the total isolation of apartheid South Africa, including the disinvestment of all foreign companies and the imposition of comprehensive and mandatory sanctions against South Africa and illegally occupied Namibia.

Mike Terry, AAM; Brian Filling, chair, AA Scotland; Simon Fanshawe, chair, War on Want campaigns; Pete Kennedy, NUM; Horst Kleinschmidt, IDAF; Ann Harper, WAPC; Jeff Revel and Doreen Wepler, NUR; David Kenwyn, chair, AA London; John McFadden, NALGO NEC; Al Cook, IDAF; Cheryl Frazer, NCP; Ken Gill, TASS; Clive Jenkins, ASTMS; BJ Kelly, STUC; Victoria Brittain, Harare Working Group; Bernie Grant, MP; Sharon Lawrence; Mike Siefert, Haldane Society.

The 'regional dimension' of the INF treaty

THE INF AGREEMENT which will remove a small proportion of the approximately 60,000 existing nuclear weapons is a small step in the right direction. In terms of popularity, it is Gorbachev in particular who has benefited greatly from the initiative. However, there remain many problems in the world: 'Can't we join, pool the enormous might of our countries' economic and intellectual capacities to resolve these problems?' asked the Soviet leader, speaking on US television on 30 November.

The real character of the Gorbachev leadership is becoming increasingly clear: one which is prepared to give a sharper right-wing twist to the Soviet bureaucracy's perennial policy of peaceful coexistence with imperialism. Despite the positive elements involved in both glasnost and the disarmament initiatives — which ought to be supported — there should be no illusions about Gorbachev's foreign policy.

By Colin Robertson

If anything it is much worse than the one implemented thus far by the Soviet Union vis-a-vis the semi-colonial revolution. The regions which must have figured prominently in the undisclosed agenda between the US and USSR are troublespots in Central America, the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

Pressure

In Afghanistan, Gorbachev is trying to satisfy US pressure for withdrawal by giving Pakistan — from where the reactionary Afghan mujahidin operate into Afghanistan — a decisive role in finding a solution. He is also pursuing a policy of 'national reconciliation' with the feudalists. Gorbachev is prepared to go as far as asking Zaher Shah, the Afghan king deposed in 1973, to bring 'the different Afghan parties together' into a mutually acceptable 'interim

government' within a framework provided by the UN.

Clear

On Vietnam the Americans have made clear to the Soviet leadership that so long as the USSR continues to back financially and militarily the Vietnamese in their present occupation of Kampuchea, little progress could be made on reduction of nuclear missiles overall. On this the Americans count on the support of the Chinese bureaucracy, and both support the murderers of the Khmer Rouge.

Almost immediately after the success in the INF negotiations was announced, the Vietnamese stated their intentions of withdrawing over a 100,000 of their troops from Kampuchea. Also, Prince Norodom Sihanouk began talks with Hu Sen, the Kampuchean prime minister.

Project

Sihanouk has made apparently clear he would not accept a 'People's Republic of Cambodia' or a 'Democratic Republic of Cambodia'. He expects a future Kampuchea to be 'neutral'.

It is not yet clear whether such a project will succeed, but the meeting between Sihanouk and sections of the Khmer Rouge — including Pol Pot — and Hu Sen was encouraged. It was endorsed by the US and USSR.



Angola dominates the proceedings as far as Africa is concerned. The reason is simple. It is here where Soviet influence in Africa is greatest.

Mozambique is distancing itself fast from the Soviet Union and its government has preferred to bring into line its actual status of neocolonial state with its foreign policy. It is strengthening links with the US and Britain and, domestically, it is stressing pro-capitalist economic policies.

Significant

US officials have said there is a 'graspable situation' in Angola, the issue of which is linked to the UN plan for the independence of Namibia. The significant new element is the fact that the Soviet leadership is prepared to discuss South Africa's precondition of withdrawal of all Cuban troops from Angola prior to any discussions on Pretoria ending its illegal occupation of Namibia.

It is highly significant that the US is very keen on trying to involve the Soviet Union in the Middle East peace negotiations, including the Iran-Iraq war. The US position has been adamant: 'the Soviet Union has no legitimate role or vital interests which justify participation in any peace negotiations.'

According to US analysts, the Soviets are

showing 'remarkable sophistication and flexibility,' (*Financial Times*, 4 December). Very pragmatically — Gorbachev style — the Soviet government has been re-establishing relations with the most reactionary regimes in the region (such as the United Arab Emirates and Oman).

It is trying to mend fences with Egypt by rescheduling its debt, and it played a central behind-the-scenes role in the reunification of the PLO under Arafat's leadership. It is also exerting its influence on Syria to moderate the latter's interventionist policy in the region, and to top it all, the USSR has been courting Israel through diplomatic channels.

In a nutshell, the new Soviet leadership is trying to convince the local reactionary regimes, as well as imperialism, that it attempts to play a stabilising role in the region.

Policy

The right wing twist of Gorbachev's policy as a result of the summits has been at its sharpest in Latin America. The USSR now: 'wants closer ties with bourgeois regimes in contrast to the previous emphasis on links with individual Latin American Communist Parties, revolutionary movements and those countries closest to the Socialist Bloc: Cuba

and Nicaragua.' (*Financial Times*, 4 December).

The USSR has drastically reduced oil supplies to Nicaragua at a moment when the threat to the revolution is at its highest and economic difficulties are at their gravest.

Willingness

Simultaneously, Gorbachev has adopted a pragmatic approach to doing trade with countries like Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Uruguay, and has indicated his willingness to tour these countries in the near future. The aim is the same as everywhere else: to show imperialism and local bourgeois regimes that the Soviet Union is a 'responsible' superpower, not bent on fostering 'subversion', but a regime committed to help bring about stability through the agency of its influence on radical regimes throughout the world.

It is highly doubtful, in the event of any direct US intervention in Nicaragua, that the Soviet Union would become embroiled,' reports the *Financial Times* of 4 December. That means Gorbachev is not prepared to help radical or revolutionary regimes anymore. This is probably the gist of the message Gorbachev is going to convey to Fidel Castro in his scheduled visit to Cuba.

World in action

Trotsky in Moscow

Leon Trotsky appeared on stage in Moscow for the first time since 1929. The occasion of the unusual event was the play *Brestsky Mir — The Peace of Brest* by Mikhail Shatrov — which is about the discussions in the leadership of the Bolshevik party on the onerous terms of the Brest-Litovsk treaty with imperial Germany in 1918. It was performed at the Vakhtangov theatre, where a staged representation of the Brest-Litovsk drama showed actors playing not only Trotsky and Lenin, but also Bukharin, the first and the last unmentionable in Russia until very recently. This is glasnost in operation. More significantly, for the first time — in almost 60 years! — Bukharin and particularly Trotsky were not referred to as German spies, agents of imperialism, or similar Stalinist fabrications.

This is all good and well, however the question is: will the bureaucracy go so far as rehabilitating them (and the other Bolshevik leaders) to their rightful place in history from the heap of lies, slanders and calumnies which Stalinism put them under. Rehabilitate all the Bolsheviks unjustly prosecuted and assassinated in the 1930 Moscow trials!

Chile

A right-wing death squad has issued death threats to 28 Chileans — all theatre personalities, actors, directors and playwrights. Over a month ago the same death squad listed 78 theatre personalities, giving them 30 days to leave the country or 'face the consequences'. Leaders of the actors and theatre professionals have responded with a rally in the national stadium in support of the threat victims. The rally was attended by American actor Christopher Reeve and other foreign delegates.

The death squads have become increasingly active lately in Chile. They target opponents of the regime and not only work closely with the 'official' security forces, but it is widely suspected that the latter actually 'staff' the death squads — part-time as it were! Defend the Chilean actors, send your protest to: Sidarte, Lira 5, Santiago, Chile.

The Chilean left wing guerrilla organisation, the Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front, has freed the Chilean army colonel they kidnapped three months ago. Colonel Carlos Carreno was freed unharmed in Brazil. The release came after Carreno's family paid US \$50,000 worth of food, clothing, medicine and building materials to be distributed in 13 Santiago shanty-towns.

France

Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the French National Front, was humiliated in a trip he undertook to the French Caribbean colonies of Guadeloupe and Martinique. He led a 40-strong National Front delegation which could not even touch Caribbean soil. They were received by a mass demonstration led by left wing and independent black groups. Many of the demonstrators lay down on the runway to prevent the plane from landing. Hotel workers had already said they would not serve Le Pen and the cronies of the National Front.

Le Pen's plane attempted to land five times unsuccessfully and eventually had to land at Point a Pitre — a neighboring island. The passengers, mostly French tourists, protested they were being taken hostage by Le Pen and the NF delegation. The police tried to persuade Le Pen to leave the plane, but, scared of the demonstrators, he refused. A sharp exchange broke out between the National Front members and the passengers, the latter accusing Le Pen of making life difficult for West Indians in mainland France.

Eventually, a senior government official ordered the plane (carrying the NF delegation) back to France and refused to provide Le Pen with a police escort. Air France had to send an empty Jumbo from Paris to transport the abandoned French passengers, including Le Pen, to their original destination. The plane was forced to land in Paris. The passengers were then taken to a hotel. The police tried to persuade Le Pen to leave the plane, but, scared of the demonstrators, he refused. A sharp exchange broke out between the National Front members and the passengers, the latter accusing Le Pen of making life difficult for West Indians in mainland France.

Haiti — army crushes elections

AS BELEAGUERED Haiti was to hold its first election in over 30 years — which the bourgeois press insists on labelling 'free elections' — the sinister forces of Duvalierism, still entrenched in the government and especially in the army, waged a brutal opposition to the election. Gangs of Tontons Macoute, the Duvaliers' Praetorian Guard, armed with machetes and machine guns attacked queues of voters who gathered outside polling stations early on Sunday 29 November in Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital city.

They shot people at random and hacked to death those unfortunates who could not escape, leaving behind horrific scenes of carnage. The number of dead is estimated in dozens.

Attacks

Originally it was reported that army units had followed the Tontons Macoute at a discreet distance and did not intervene while the attacks on unarmed civilians, including children, were carried out. Later on, however, it became known that the army itself had contributed with about 50 'executions' of civilians who had been previously arrested during the day in a suburb of the capital.

What to many may have looked like the desperate action of displaced Duvalierists was quickly seen for what it was: a coldly calculated and synchronised action by Duvalierists inside and outside the army. The carnage of 29 November came as the climax of three days of arson, assassinations, bombings, shootings, mortar and grenade attacks against radio stations, polling stations, garages, churches and individuals. It was carried out by gangs of Tontons Macoute clearly with the assistance of the army.

Cancelled

The objective also became clear: at 8.40 am — roughly two hours after

the massacre at the polling stations in Port-au-Prince — the president of the provisional electoral council (CEP) phoned the press to break the news that the elections had been cancelled by the army. General Henri Namphy, Haiti's military ruler, had ordered the elections stopped, dismissed the CEP and called on 'various interest groups' to nominate members for a new electoral council. The members of the dismissed CEP have now gone underground to avoid arrest or the Tontons Macoute.

Boycott

The anti-Duvalierist opposition is calling for a boycott of the army attempts to hold elections with an army-nominated supervisory council. The Autonomous Central of Haitian Workers said in a statement that: 'it declares null any election that is not organised by the CEP.' Christian Democracy is calling for the immediate resignation of Namphy and threatening total civil disobedience. Leaders of the radical wing of the Catholic church called for a boycott of any election

organised by the army and urged Namphy's resignation.

Complicity

To the widespread calls in the US for far-reaching action to stop the Tontons Macoute-army atrocities in Haiti, the American state department has adopted a combination of posture and complicity. It has suspended much of its \$100 million annual aid to Haiti, and adopted a hands-off approach. Moreover, Namphy's plans of installing a puppet president under tight army control, by rigging the election of course, which would not have been easy with the dismissed CEP supervising the 29 November election, suits American imperialism well. A democratically elected president would dangerously destabilise the rotten and highly weak Haitian bourgeoisie. American imperialism has quietly, albeit solidly, supported Duvalier and Duvalierism for the last 31 years. Nothing has changed in this regard.

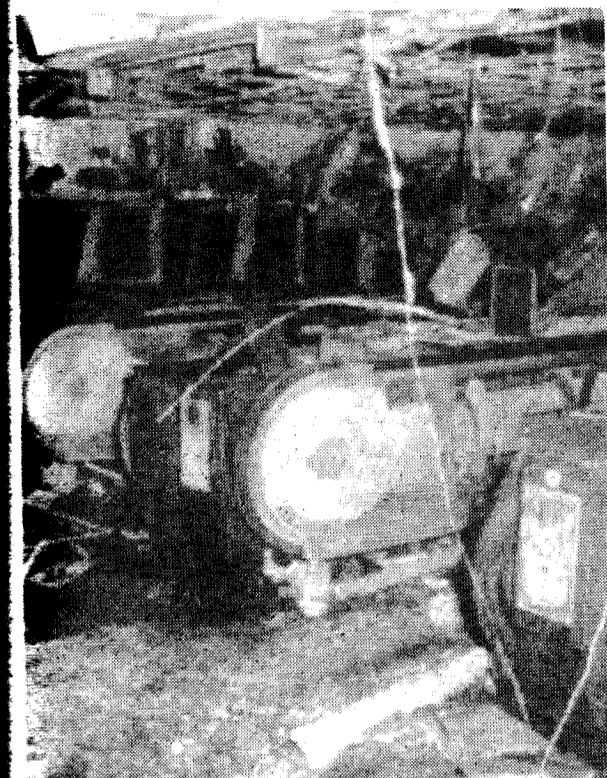
It is clear that the uprooting of Duvalierism (*déchoukage*) touched only the surface of the ex-

isting power structure when Baby Doc was forced out. The present military regime, put in place by the US, has the task of ensuring — by any means — that there is no *déchoukage*. To put the same point from the viewpoint of the Haitian peasants and workers: there will be no *déchoukage* until the army — the backbone of Duvalierism — goes. Namphy, in alliance and with the backing of the US, will try to keep things as they are.

Poor

Haitians are desperately poor: 80 per cent of the children suffer from malnutrition and nearly half die before the age of five. The rate of illiteracy is 70-80 per cent. To get rid of Duvalierism is not just a question of bringing about justice, social equality, freedom and democracy for Haitians, it is literally a question of life or death. Either they get rid of Namphy and the Duvalierist army and the people of Haiti will have a chance of living which have been denied the country for 31 years, or they will remain in a state of subhuman standards.

Behind the Kings Cross fire



AN INCREASING number of tragedies and disasters are bringing home the reality of government cuts. Attention was focussed on the health service by the death of baby Barber. Little publicised, but very significant, are the statistics showing a sharp increase in industrial accidents. Capitalist speed up is increasing its toll of people killed and crippled. But most dramatic of all is the Kings Cross fire disaster. Doubtless, as with the cover-up on the Townsend Spirit of Free Enterprise disaster, the inquiry will try to scapegoat members of staff or explain it was due to 'accidents'. But the reality is that cuts kill. OLIVER NEW, a driver on British underground, looks at the background to the Kings Cross disaster.

TALK about missing the issue and misinformation. To suggest that the inferno at Kings Cross underground station was caused by a lighted cigarette is like blaming the soldier who fired the first shot for World War II. It's so much baloney.

It has already been said that the Kings Cross fire was a disaster waiting to happen. It only remains to add that now we are waiting for the next one.

But we have to look beyond the last few years cuts to see what's wrong.

Barbara Castle once described the road lobby as the strongest in Britain and she wasn't joking. The whole system of transport in this country is anarchic, having suffered from years of piecemeal addition to the road building programme and neglect of the public transport system.

Bottleneck

Two hundred thousand passengers a day pass through Kings Cross underground station. Like the rest of the underground system, it simply was not designed to cope with it.

As a transport system, London, and especially central London, is one enormous bottleneck. Only a long-term plan to restructure transport along socially productive lines can sort out the mess.

Instead Labour as well as Tory governments over the years have consistently dodged the problem. The cost in human terms is of course enormous. Simply in terms of accidents, the disaster at Kings Cross is dwarfed by the terrible toll of deaths on the roads.

Unscathed

Women, old and young people as well as the disabled are trapped in their homes by the lack of a proper public transport system. Then there is pollution and the huge waste of social resources devoted to our crazy transport system.

If anyone ever asks you how we could pay for socialism, changing the system of transport in Britain would be a pretty big start!

Will they get away with it this time? The fact that the management of Townsend Thoresen seem to have escaped unscathed is not lost on underground workers.

Broken

What's more, the record of investigation of fires on the underground to date gives no cause for confidence. There have been 17 serious fires on the underground since 1980. And that's just the ones we know about. But unless the government changes course its a safe bet there will be plenty more to come.

Safety

After the government took London Transport away from the GLC, they appointed a rag-bag of capitalist biscuit manufacturers, accountants and such like, with firm instructions to cut and privatise. And this is what they have done, starting among other areas with cleaning and the lift and escalators department, progressing throughout the system.

'The cleaners looked like a collection of bloody tramps,' a train driver commented to me a couple of weeks ago in a discussion about the over-worked and under-paid privatised cleaners who wander about the stations nowadays. The fact that the speaker also looks like a tramp was irrelevant. We knew what he meant.

As London Underground Limited traps back on staff in the operations, cleaning and maintenance departments, so they cut back on safety procedures more and more.

Worry

We used to have whole sets of procedures for dealing safely with different contingencies. Many of these have now been revised.

The publicised cause of worry was of course the introduction of one-person trains in single-line tube tunnels. Imagine a fire on a train packed to the gunnels during the rush hour with 1000 passengers stuck down a hole in the ground. But management have been told to cut and cut and they will.

'We're not dealing with railwaymen anymore,' said one frustrated union official. 'This lot didn't take time out to run a railway after making one set of cuts. They just look for more cuts.'



TASS-ASTMS merger victory

THE four-to-one ballot vote in favour of merging TASS and ASTMS represents a victory for the left. It is an important decision which strengthens the unions in general, and the left in particular, in an area of the economy which is expanding.

The right wing of the labour movement opposed the merger. Nonetheless, despite some initial opposition by Hammond and the EETPU, they failed to campaign openly against it, reckoning that the result was a foregone conclusion.

By Annie Brady

The political enemies of labour, the Tories and the Social Democrats, were equally unsuccessful. The promised Tory-SDP campaign against the merger never got off the ground.

TASS members voted approximately five-to-one in favour of joining with ASTMS, ASTMS members voted approximately three-to-one for the same proposition. Turnout in the ballots was 30 per cent, which is said to be the largest-ever for a merger vote.

Broken down by union, the figures were as



follows: Tass members — 51,809 in favour (83.1 per cent) and 10,569 against (16.9 per cent); ASTMS members — 57,657 in favour (74.1 per cent) and 20,113 against (25.9 per cent). Overall, the 'yes' vote in both unions amounted to 78.1 per cent (109,466) and 21.0 per cent voted 'no'.

The new union will be Manufacturing, Science and Finance (MSF). Ken Gill and Clive Jenkins will continue as joint general secretaries.

The two national

executives will meet together for the first time in January. This will become the MSF's new joint executive committee.

With 700,000 members, MSF becomes the third biggest trade union in Britain, after the transport workers and the engineering workers. Whatever disagreements exist with the leadership of TASS or the ASTMS, it will be the strongest left union both in the TUC and in the Labour Party. Its creation is an important victory.

Why postal workers must say no to the settlement

THE POSTAL workers dispute reached a critical stage at the beginning of December with the first wave of strike action being carried through in a number of cities. But the Union of Communications Workers (UCW) executive has now reached a settlement which will divide, not unite, post office workers.

Following a successful UCW ballot for industrial action Post Office management resumed negotiations they had abandoned in August. In these talks the executive council have allowed for a

By Steve Bell

whole range of issues to be tabled outside of the union's claim for a three-hour reduction in the working week for all grades.

Breakdown

After two weeks of continued talks a new breakdown occurred on Wednesday 2 December. As a result the executive instructed a number of branches to begin 24-hour strikes.

That afternoon Glasgow and Southend branches struck. This prompted an immediate resumption of talks by the Post Office.

A further round of strikes were due to begin with the nightshift. The executive moved to avert this extension of the strike movement. However the preparation in a number of branches was too far advanced by this time.

Official

Consequently the EC was pushed to support strikes in Edinburgh, Southwark and Cardiff. Although the general secretary was calling for a resumption of normal working whilst negotiations continued, behind the scenes the EC was extending official support to these actions.

The impact of these strikes was substantial. Despite many public announcements by the Post Office on its contingency plans, these totally failed to materialise. A major disruption of the postal network occurred.

A clear demonstration of the power of strike actions had been given. But the EC has used this power as a bargaining counter rather than to guarantee the victory of the claim.

Productivity

The Post Office has attempted to force through concessions on productivity, based on changes to the existing bonus schemes. If yielded, these concessions result in postal workers paying in part for their own reduction in hours.

The agreement accepted by the executive council is a classic case of selling the membership short. It divides the grades where the conference claim united them.

The claim was a three-hour reduction for all grades. The settlement is a one-and-a-half-hour reduction for some grades

in the letters and parcels division. Catering workers will receive only a one-hour reduction; clerical and counter workers will receive no reduction at all, despite their involvement in the industrial action.

The changes to bonus schemes are close to those the PO sought in the first place — though the price may be higher. These changes could have been negotiated outside of the shorter working week claim. Instead the EC now touts them as part of a wonderful settlement.

Rather than lead a fight, the executive council has accepted a paltry extra half-hour whilst splitting the grades.

Minority

The possibility of such a problem has already been discussed by the Broad Left in the union. At a well-attended meeting on 14 November it was agreed to seek all-out strike action in pursuit of the reduction in hours without strings.

At present all-out action has only minority support amongst postal

workers. Nevertheless, the Broad Left recognised that such action was the only sure way to unite the membership and restrict the possibility of a sell-out.

Selective

During the special conference of the UCW, on the weekend of 21-22 November, a further Broad Left meeting was held. Ken Livingstone addressed over 100 delegates, supporting the campaign for a shorter working week and taking up the meaning of the crash on the stock markets.

At this same meeting, discussion was taken on the need to challenge the executive council's strategy of selective action on the shorter working week. Whilst a position of all-out action might represent only a minority point of view, it has some real influence in the union. The success of the recent actions is an argument in itself for escalation rather than selection.

The major threats used by the government have been those of breaking the Post Office's letter

monopoly and of privatisation. The Post Office has echoed these threats. Yet they are more apparent than real.

With a network of over 23 million delivery points and a staff base of over 160,000, the Post Office represents a massive organisation. The existing private firms competing for postal traffic can do no more than scratch the surface of such an operation.

Monopoly

The government is offering no guarantees of maintaining the monopoly should postal workers not take action. Already a press lobby has been built up calling for the monopoly to be lifted anyway. The only defense of the monopoly lies in the strength of the postal unions and the support they receive from the rest of the labour movement.

On privatisation, the picture is the same. The government announced on the weekend of 28-29 November its intention to privatise National Giro Bank.

The verdict of this set-

tlement? Just two days after the EC meeting, Kenneth Clarke, the trade and industry minister, indicated that he was still considering the Post Office monopoly.

A special report is being mailed to branches giving details of the settlement. Branches will then be balloted on whether or not to accept the terms.

Resistance

Without a fight now on the shorter working week there will be a weakening in the resistance to this or any subsequent attempts to privatise any of the three divisions of the Post Office. In the context of the crash a well-organised postal workforce is not an attractive proposition for serious investors.

The guarantee against a sell-out and against the government's various attacks is the action of postal workers themselves. What is required now is a vigorous campaign to ensure that a 'no' vote is registered in the forthcoming membership ballot. All out for three hours with no strings!

Around the areas Scargill's presidential campaign

THE CAMPAIGN to reelect Arthur Scargill as president of the National Union of Mineworkers is well underway and already going strong. A *Mail on Sunday* poll, published on 6 December, predicted he would win a two-thirds majority over his right wing opponent John Walsh, also from Yorkshire. Walsh is trailing in virtually every NUM area.

When Walsh ran against Scargill as president in 1981 he received only 27 per cent of the vote. But more recently, at the beginning of 1984, Walsh stood against Peter Heathfield as general secretary of the national union and lost by only two per cent.

Report compiled by Dick Withecombe and Carol Turner

Much, of course, can change in the remaining period of the presidential campaign. Undoubtedly, the media will step up its 'bogeyman' campaign against Arthur Scargill.

But the support he has already won in traditionally 'moderate' areas such as Lancashire and North Wales reflects the deep fear that many feel about the prospects of six-day superpits and about privatisation of the industry.

Meanwhile, early in December, the situation in the areas is as follows:

TO DATE John Walsh has only received nominations from COSA and Leicester NUM. However support for Arthur Scargill has been won from some surprising places.



At the Point of Ayr colliery, the only one remaining in North Wales, the NUM branch has nominated Arthur Scargill.

It is now fairly sure that the Lancashire area will nominate Scargill at its delegate meeting on 12 December. The Lancashire branches which have nominated him so far — Bickershaw, Parkside, Golborne, and Sutton Manor — account for 49 out of the 75 area delegates.

In Scotland the two branches which have nomina-

ted to date, Monktonhall and Billston Glen have both backed Scargill against the advice of their area executive.

The campaign to reelect Scargill in Scotland is headed up by Mick McGahey's son, Eric Clarke, Scottish NUM secretary and Labour NEC member who was defeated in the vice presidential election earlier this year by Sammy Thompson, is quoted by the *Morning Star* as supporting Scargill in the election despite having earlier argued against his nomination.

Mick McGahey's son has now called on the Scottish area executive to revise its position and nominate Scargill.

South Wales will soon be holding a special delegate conference to decide who, if anyone, to nominate. It is widely rumoured that the executive may well make no nomination.

None of the South Wales NUM branches have publicly declared their position, but delegates will be mandated in advance of the special conference. Traditionally 'moderate' collieries like Merthyr Vale, Lady Windsor, Abernant, and even Six Bells, are all tipped to be supporting Scargill. Merthyr Vale recently sent a letter of protest to the area executive after anti-Scargill reports attributed to them appeared in the press.

By a vote of 16 to 1, South Wales Women

Against Pit Closures have decided to support Arthur Scargill's candidature. They will be helping organise one of the three January meetings in support of Scargill's campaign which will take place in Swansea, the Gwent area and Abercynon.

There is a lot of optimism that Arthur Scargill will win a clear majority in the South

Wales coalfield for his reelection as NUM president.

Northumberland, which has traditionally supported the NUM leadership, continues to show strong support for Scargill.

Six out of seven Durham Mechanics branches that have so far nominated, have backed

Scargill. Only one Durham NUM branch, Hetherington, has failed to nominate him.

Seven out of the eight branches in North Derbyshire's coalfield have backed Scargill.

Laurence Knight, leader of the Kent area, has also backed Scargill's campaign.

The *Mail on Sunday* poll also predicts five to one backing for Scargill in his own Yorkshire coalfield.

Yorkshire, which has one-third of all the NUM membership, will be one of the two major battlefields in the presidential campaign. South Wales, at the centre of the political fight against new realism and the six-day week, will be the other.

Don't leave them out in the cold!




Sacked miners Christmas appeal 1987

The 326 sacked and victimised miners and their families are facing their fourth Christmas without a wage.

Our photo shows Christmas during the miners' strike of 1984-85.

The families and the community banded together to make sure the meagre resources went a long way.

But this Christmas will be different for those miners and are still locked out as a result of the strike.

They will be feeling isolated - cut off from the rest of the community who will be enjoying the Christmas spirit.

That is why the National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign has launched its Christmas Appeal.

The NJMC aims to raise enough money to give each sacked miner a decent Christmas.

We do not feel that the children of sacked miners should have to be told they cannot have the presents they wanted because their father stood by the picket line.

● Please donate to the JUSTICE AGAINST PITS

Write cheques payable to NJMC and send them to: The National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign, 111, The Avenue, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 3JF.

A Socialist ACTION

BUILDING AN ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALISM

The Tories new racist immigration law

THE FIRST immigration legislation since 1971 is about to become law. It is even more racist than its predecessors. Its main provisions will impose even greater restrictions on black people seeking to come to Britain, including opening the way to a future quota system. In addition, the new law all but abolishes the right of appeal against deportation and introduces a fees system. And, to top it all, it criminalises those who 'overstay', introducing direct police interference. Margaret Thatcher claims that the Act will 'plug some gaps'. Those so-called gaps in fact are the limited rights which presently exist. ANNIE BRADY looks at its effects.

THE new Immigration Act abolishes the limited right of a spouse from abroad to join their partner living in this country. The provision which existed before was subject to tests which de facto prevented 50 per cent of husbands from the Indian subcontinent joining their wives. This law goes even further.

The Tories' justification for repealing the existing provision is the height of hypocrisy. They argue that it was sex discriminatory (which it was). But as the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) briefing paper on the new immigration legislation comments:

'It is virtually unknown for a government to respond to a decision that its laws breach human rights by removing rights from one group of people rather than extending them to the aggrieved group or individual. Any change should level up women's rights, not break a promise given to some men.'

According to the JCWI briefing, Bangladeshi families will be the hardest hit. 'If their sponsors here become unemployed, or are homeless, they may lose their right to enter. In some local authorities, there is a catch-22: men whose families are not here cannot qualify for council family accommodation; yet they will not be able to bring their families here

because they are not eligible for a large council house'.

The JCWI points out that in 1986, 74 per cent of Bangladeshi wives and 95 per cent of Bangladeshi children were protected by the existing law. Tens of thousands of people waiting to join their families already in Britain will now be prevented from doing so.

The fact that certain categories will escape this new net will only further split families up. For example, Bangladeshi children whose fathers became British before they were born aren't affected by this new legislation. Some children from one family will be allowed entry, others will be excluded.

The provision will also have a further, longer-term effect. British men who want to marry women from abroad will be subject to marriage or other tests that the government decides to impose. There have already been indications that the Tories are considering introducing a quota system.

The second major restriction contained in the new legislation is to further reduce the right to appeal against deportation. At present those who 'overstay' in this country can appeal against deportation, citing special compassionate circumstances — for example, because members of their family are already living here or,

as in cases like Viraj Mendis', being a political refugee.

Under the new law those who have been in Britain less than seven years can no longer claim compassionate grounds for being allowed to stay. The JCWI points out that this effectively removes the right of appeal against deportation from this category.

The home office will also be able to institute criminal proceedings against overstayers, regardless of how long they have resided in Britain. Criminalisation, of course, allows the police to become directly involved in immigration matters. It is a recipe for an inevitable stepping-up of racial harassment.

Not surprisingly given the main clauses of this Act, the new law further extends the already-pervasive powers of immigration officers. And the home office is given the right to charge a fee for processing applications to come to this country.

Permission to stay here will not be granted until this is paid. This will create 'a significant barrier to poorer, especially large, families seeking reunion in Britain' according to the JCWI.

The overall effect of this pernicious piece of Tory legislation is clearly racist. Yet Labour, in line with its shameful past record of support for or the introduction of racist immigration laws, has put up little fight against it.

That situation must be reversed. The labour movement must begin campaigning now to ensure that the party commits itself to repealing this and the other racist immigration legislation when Labour next comes to office.

• Further information is available from the JCWI, 115 Old Street, London EC1V 9JR (01-251 8706).



NUM ELECTION ROUND ONE TO SCARGILL

THE CAMPAIGN to re-elect Arthur Scargill has won the first round of the election campaign for the presidency of the NUM. Scargill has secured a massive majority of the branch and area nominations. A poll for the *Mail on Sunday* predicted that Scargill will win three times the vote of his right wing challenger John Walsh. The same poll showed an even more massive five to one support for Scargill in the Yorkshire coalfield — which includes a third of the total membership of the NUM.

Branch and area nominations show that in Yorkshire 52 out of 54 branches have nominated Scargill and so has the Yorkshire Regional Council. Six out of seven branches

By Redmond O'Neill

of the Durham Mechanics have nominated Scargill. Only one branch of the Durham NUM has failed to nominate Scargill. The Lancashire area is virtually certain to nominate Scargill with 59 of the 75 votes on the area council already committed to Scargill. In North Derbyshire, despite an area recommendation that no nominations should be made, seven out of eight branches, representing 85 per cent of the area's membership, have nominated Scargill. Scottish area general secretary Eric Clarke has been forced to support Scargill.

The media hype for the right wing candidate John Walsh has so far produced little results. Only the tiny Leicestershire area, COSA — the white collar section

— and the power group have nominated Walsh.

Of course, enormous media efforts will be devoted to turning this situation around between now and polling day.

The stakes are shown by the fact that the Tory government actually introduced a law whose sole aim was to remove Arthur Scargill, one trade union leader, from office. Within the coal industry what is involved is the government trying to secure a NUM leadership prepared to accept the destruction of the gains of miners over the past 40 years. This starts with six day working and massive pit closures and its aim is the eventual privatisation of the coal industry.

If the Tories could defeat Scargill it would be taken as the green light to move ahead with this programme.

The so-called soft left and Community Party leaderships of the South Wales and Scottish areas have played a disgraceful role in this. On the NUM

executive they have blocked with the right-wing against Scargill and Heathfield. Des Duffield and the South Wales leadership are fighting for the introduction of the six-day week. Neil Kinnock is openly working to try to defeat Scargill. Even the soft left *Tribune* has given favorable coverage to Walsh and none to Scargill — editorial choices of that sort always have a clear political purpose.

By submitting himself to re-election Arthur Scargill has allowed the issues to be clearly presented to the NUM's membership.

But the South Wales leadership also considered desperate legal moves to prevent a contest — after spending months giving press briefing claiming that Scargill is out of line with the majority of the NUM they are now afraid to put that to the test. The soft left is, in practice, giving support to Walsh. But it is difficult for them to do so openly because it puts them out of line with the NUM membership in the Scottish and South Wales areas.

Mick McGahey's son accurately characterised the area leadership's recommendation for no nominations as: 'Failure to nominate Mr Scargill would amount in practice to support for the right wing candidate, John Walsh.' Two Scottish branches have already nominated Scargill

and more may follow.

In South Wales four lodges have nominated Scargill and it is possible that he may secure the nomination of the South Wales area delegate meeting against the area executive's advice. Wales Women Against Pit Closures have overwhelmingly supported Scargill.

If the stakes in this election are enormous for the mining communities it will also have a major impact on the wider labour movement and on British politics. Under Arthur Scargill's leadership the NUM has been the vanguard of the British labour movement. The 1984/85 miners' strike was the longest mass strike in the history of any advanced capitalist country and the single greatest battle against the Thatcher's government's assault on the trade unions. The NUM has been the champion of women and black people's rights in the TUC and Labour Party. A defeat for Arthur Scargill would be a defeat for every single progressive cause in Britain.

The first round has been won by the campaign to re-elect Scargill. But the fight is by no means over and big resources indeed are going to be committed to defeating Scargill.

The tactics in this fight will be decided by those directly involved. But every single activist of the labour movement must do everything they are asked to help ensure Scargill wins.

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