

Socialist Challenge

Cabinet gives go-ahead for £4,500m cuts

IT'S BLUE MURDER

Even before the latest round of Tory cuts the prospect facing the old, the sick and the poor is frightening. Details of what the cuts will mean in practice in just one borough have been revealed in the report prepared by the District Management Committee of the London borough of Hounslow. The Committee says that the health cuts will mean:

- Closure of Hounslow Hospital
- Closure of Hounslow chest clinic
- Closure of 25 per cent of all family planning clinics
- Closure of Perrivale maternity hospital
- Closure of Teddington dental laboratory
- Closure of the surgical unit at West Middlesex Hospital
- Closure of the child psychiatry unit at West Middlesex Hospital
- Closure of the physiotherapy day hospital and the rheumatology unit at West Middlesex hospital
- And many more cuts in services and sackings.



IN TRUE blue Tory style Margaret Thatcher and her ministers have launched a frontal assault on the living standards of all working people.

The Tory message is quite simple: The poorer you are, the more you must suffer.

Cuts in public expenditure will total four billion pounds. This will mean more unemployment, more malnutrition, more deaths for working class families. The effect of the cuts will be made worse by the world recession.

An insight into Tory thinking was recently provided by Brigadier Roger Stretfield, chairperson of Oxford county council's education committee. He told the Oxford Journal: 'A school dinner of just soup and bread should be sufficient.'

The Brigadier further suggested that primary schools should close at 2.30pm.

When it was pointed out to him that this would hit working women, he stated: 'Schools are not meant to be child-minding on the rates. Being a mother should be a full-time job until a child is at least 10 years old.'

The Tories have declared war on working people. Our reply must not be the usual pathetic refrain of 'It's decisive'.

Our reply must be to begin the fightback now. This is already happening locally. But the need is for a co-ordinated national struggle against the cuts.

The annual congress of the TUC in Blackpool this September will be the first major assembly of trades unionists since the Tories came to office. We must mount a massive lobby to ensure that the anger of the rank-and-file percolates the Winter Gardens in Blackpool.

Never mind the Pope, get the troops out

SUDDENLY, after all these years, the ruling class and its media have discovered that the Rev Dr Ian Paisley is not a very nice person.

His outbursts at the European Parliament and now his vow to keep the Pope out of the North of Ireland have brought an avalanche of moralising lectures from all manner of hypocrites and buffoons.

But when Paisley describes himself as 'the leader of the Northern Ireland people' he is not fantasising. The 170,000 votes that he received in the European elections do prove he is the undisputed leader of the Loyalist minority in 32-county Ireland.

Ten years ago, when British

troops were once again sent onto the streets of the North of Ireland, Paisley was no more than a fringe figure in Northern Irish politics.

He has grown in popularity since 1969 because of the role those troops have played; the maintenance of the link between the North of Ireland and Britain; the continual denial of the right of the Irish people as a whole to rule themselves; the murder and repression of those who fight for that right.

Paisley is a British creation, because he is the foremost advocate of the British presence in Ireland by which he is sustained and on which he

depends. There will be no end to Paisley and Paisleyism until the cause he advocates is crushed.

The chief guarantors of that cause are the British troops.

It is they, not Paisley, who are leading the military campaign to defeat the latest stage in the Irish struggle for self-determination; it is they who are the real prop of loyalism, the real enemies of democracy and freedom in Ireland.

Which is why we say demonstrate in London on 12 August, the tenth anniversary of British troops going onto Irish streets. Make it the largest Irish demonstration seen in this country for years. Never mind the Pope, no British troops in Ireland!

Assemble 2.30pm Marble Arch: 12 August, London.

• Join the Right to Work Marchpage 4

OUR POLICIES

Capitalism is in crisis. The leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions offer solutions that are in the interests not of the workers but of the capitalist class.

Socialist Challenge believes that the two vital tasks confronting revolutionary socialists are:

- To build broad-based class struggle tendencies in opposition to class-collaborationism in the labour movement. These should be non-exclusive in character, grouping together militants holding a wide range of political views.

- To begin to fight for the creation of a unified and democratic revolutionary socialist organisation which can, through an application of united front tactics, begin to be seen as an alternative by thousands of workers engaged in struggles.

Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

1 The struggle for socialism seeks to unite the fight of workers against the bosses with that of other oppressed layers of society — women, black people, gays — struggling for their liberation. This socialism can only be achieved by creating new organs of power and defeating with all necessary means the power of the capitalist state.

2 Our socialism will be infinitely more democratic than what exists in Britain today, with full rights for all political parties and currents that do not take up arms against the socialist state. The Stalinist models of 'socialism' in the USSR and Eastern Europe have discredited socialism in the eyes of millions of workers throughout the world. We are opposed to them and will offer full support to all those fighting for socialist democracy.

3 The interests of workers and capitalists are irreconcilable on a world scale. Capitalism has not only created a world market, it has created world politics. Thus we fight for working class unity on an international scale. This unity will in the long run be decisive in defeating both the imperialist regimes in the West and the brutal dictatorships they sustain in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

In Britain it implies demanding the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and letting the Irish people determine their own future.

4 The Communist parties in Europe are in crisis. Neither the 'Eurocommunist' nor the pro-Moscow wings have any meaningful strategy for the overthrow of the capitalist state. New revolutionary socialist parties are more necessary than ever before. Conditions today are more favourable than over the preceding three decades. But such parties can only be built by rejecting sectarianism and seeing internal democracy not as a luxury but as a vital necessity. This means the right to organise factions and tendencies.

If you agree with these principles and want to be involved in activities by Socialist Challenge supporters in your area, fill in the form below and send it to us.

- I am interested in more information about activities in my area.
- I would like additional literature and enclose 50p to cover costs. (Delete if not applicable)

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EDITORIAL

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Patronage, the Labour Party and socialism

THERE IS a curious battle taking place inside the Labour Party. It is a fight to see who can line up the block votes of the unions in order to push through (or not as the case may be) a number of important party reforms.

The National Executive Committee of the party has authorised a re-discussion on the thorny issue of mandatory reselection of MPs, and there is a real possibility that it will be accepted by the party conference.

At the same time, new proposals for electing the leader of the party will also be discussed. This has become Tony Benn's personal campaign. He has concurrently attacked the Prime Minister's powers of patronage and has argued that these should all be curbed.

That reforms in the Labour Party are long overdue is beyond doubt. That they will solve the central question confronting the party, namely what political line it should pursue, is very unlikely. One could be forgiven for believing that the struggle taking place is for positions rather than politics.

Some will argue that the debates on structures and the constitution constitute a major diversion when the workers' movement is beginning to feel the first effects of the Tory government.

Surely the central political campaign which should be waged by the Labour Party is against

the social and economic policies of the present government? Such a campaign would, of necessity, involve industrial action sooner or later. And this is the test for all would-be leaders of the Labour left.

At the first signs of working class action the cry to be taken up by the Tories and the right-wing of the labour movement will be: 'Undemocratic'. 'This is an elected government', etc., etc. The answer to such arguments needs to be carefully thought out.

Tony Benn would, in that respect, have done better to extend his vision of democracy somewhat to incorporate some of the democratic demands of the Chartists such as that for annual parliaments.

If Labour has a lead of 6 per cent today, then by next June this could well be multiplied.

More importantly, the question which is going to be raised every day is the following: What are the real alternatives to the crisis?

There is a burning need for socialist solutions. Now that the Tories have come out in their true colours and are threatening trade union rights, women's rights, and deporting blacks, a fully worked-out socialist counterblast is needed.

There is a real danger that politics will be relegated to the back seat at the next Labour Party conference. Socialists active in the Labour Party must ensure that this does not happen.



Prior's cheeky 'stab at the guts'

By John Ross

THE MEETING of the TUC's Employment Policy and Organisation Committee last week did not make the national press headlines. But for every trade unionist it was an occasion worth remarking. It was at this meeting that the leadership of the TUC unveiled its plans for abandoning the fight against the government's anti-union proposals.

Ever since these were announced, the TUC General Council has had a problem about what to do about Prior's proposed laws. This difficulty was never over whether to oppose the proposals or not.

Despite talk to the contrary, the General Council has never had any intention of fighting against them.

How could they? The laws of Prior — attacks on pickets and strikers, secret ballots and all the rest — are essentially the same as the policies Duffy, Boyd, Chapple, Jackson and others have been pursuing for years.

Prior's laws, in fact, are little different in content to the Concordat which the TUC leadership offered to the Labour government. The problem for the General Council, however, is that while they are prepared to accept Prior's proposals, their members are not.

This has already been a vintage year for defeats of union executives at their conferences. In the UPW, Tom Jackson and the rest of the postal workers' executive were censured for their handling of the last pay claim. The GMWU conference voted for a £65 minimum wage against the policy of its executive.

In the electricians' union, Frank Chapple suffered his most significant defeat for more than a decade with a condemnation of the policy of closure and amalgamation of branches. The NUPE conference voted against Alan Fisher for militant action on pay beds.

The engineering union's national committee has been forced into at least token action on the national pay claim. At the TGWU conference, a

motion calling for automatic cost of living increases to compensate for inflation was defeated by only 89 votes.

This year's conferences have shown the most militant mood among delegates for years — a mood which is likely to be reinforced as tens of thousands of militants, and possibly millions of workers, find their struggles to protect living standards, social services, and jobs directly threatened by the Tory attacks.

In this situation it is clear to even the most right-wing TUC leaders that they cannot openly support Prior's proposals. Their problem is to find a way of appearing to counter the government's union bashing.

The TUC Employment Policy and Organisation Committee revealed the plan that has been formulated. It was leaked to the press even before the committee meeting that it had been 'discovered' that the Prior proposals were much more serious than was commonly thought.

In fact, it was claimed, the proposals would almost totally eliminate the right to strike by making workers legally responsible for losses to companies. The Employment Policy and Organisation Committee voted unanimously to recommend continuation of the talks with the government and to make this issue the centre piece of their campaign.

It was let out that the mood of the committee had been 'very angry' about this dire threat.

Immediately the government, led on this issue by 'reasonable' Jim Prior, rushed to take up the matter. According to the *Financial Times*, 'an official insisted last night that the consultations were genuine and that if the TUC could demonstrate that far-reaching consequences would follow this change (in the law), the government was open to persuasion.'

The meaning of this rigmarole is not hard to fathom. No doubt the Tory government would like to totally ban the right to strike. But both they and the TUC know that is impossible in the present situation.



The aim of Prior's proposals was accurately described by the *Economist* magazine: 'A libertarian flourish, an optimistic feint, then a stab at the guts. That is the measure of the British government's proposed reforms of trade-union law...'

'The key changes the government wants to make concern secondary picketing.'

It is crushing militant union struggle and pushing trade unionists more firmly under the control of the bureaucrats, not the aim of totally abolishing the right to strike, that is the Tory goal at present. It is that real threat which the TUC has no intention of fighting against.

The TUC leadership will launch a verbal and press campaign on the 'threat to the right to strike'. The government will 'clarify' that this is not involved and the TUC will claim it has gained a major concession through its 'fight'. Meanwhile the real Tory aim, of attacking pickets, will go through with no serious TUC resistance.

That is how the General Council

will give the appearance of fighting Prior while in fact trying to ensure there is no serious struggle against his laws. Anyone who relies on the will of the TUC to fight these proposals is in fact already letting them become law.

This doesn't mean that the TUC should be let off the hook. On the contrary, there needs to be the strongest possible fight to demand that the TUC and union leaderships end talks with the government and call industrial action to stop all Prior's proposals becoming law. But no reliance can be placed on the TUC.

This is why the Code of Practice campaign launched from the Rank and File 'Defend our Unions' conference is important. It is small compared to the size of the trade unions or the forces at the disposal of Len Murray and Co.

But it is a real policy for fighting Prior and not for abandoning that struggle. It has the most forces around it committed to that fight. It should be supported and built by every militant and socialist.

'Women do not need a viability limit'

JOHN CORRIE, the MP who wants to send women to the backstreets for abortion, is at least a consistent reactionary.

He voted for capital punishment in the recent Commons' vote. So pro-abortion campaigners are now aware of how much Corrie values human life.

Meanwhile a press campaign against late abortions has developed to further boost the Corrie Bill. ROSE KNIGHT of the National Abortion Campaign disentangles the myths from the realities and answers the anti-abortionists.

HUMAN life begins at conception. Hence all abortion is destruction not of potential life, but actual human life. That is what anti-abortionists believe.

Women see the existence of the conceptus or foetus as abstract compared to the reality of their own lives. So attacks on a woman's right to decide have been concentrated on the later stages of pregnancy when a foetus could be 'viable', and on late abortions.

The crudely orchestrated stories of 'living foetuses', which preceded the introduction of Corrie's Bill, are one part of this approach; the other insidious aspect, is the use of gory propaganda leaflets showing still births and late foetuses.

The majority of abortions take place under twelve weeks. The foetus is then minute in size and no different in appearance from the foetus of an ape or pig. But the emotive effect of relating all abortions to creatures looking like babies helps to win them support.

The same manipulative technique is used in SPUC and LIFE slide shows, with accompanying tape of a foetal heart beat and the subjective language used to describe the foetus at its very earliest stages: '...by the eighth week you would have responded to gentle stroking of your chin and would have grabbed an instrument placed in your hand...'

Pregnant

Arguments about 'viability' are used by the anti-abortionists to deny women rights at all stages of pregnancy. It is simply a description of the stage when a foetus could survive, with the aid of sophisticated life support systems, independently of the woman.

Before this point, the foetal lungs are solid and it can not breath outside the womb. It is impossible to determine exactly when this development occurs because conception itself cannot be accurately dated. However, it will not occur at progressively earlier stages as the anti-abortionists would have us believe.

What is changing, however, is the ability of the medical profession to resuscitate premature births, and to begin to create the conditions of the womb artificially. Conception can now take place successfully in a test-tube. It may eventually be possible to create an artificial placenta. If women accept that our rights to

abortion are conditional on the 'independent' life of the foetus, then the way that this would be translated into law would be if the upper time limit for abortion was the very lowest age at which a foetus could survive and develop outside the womb. Future developments in birth technology could mean that abortion rights based on this principle would be non-existent.



ROSE KNIGHT

Abortions are performed very late in pregnancy when the possibility of the foetus being viable are rare (0.2 per cent or a total of 164 cases a year at 24 weeks or later).

They are done for women whose lives are at risk or who have severe medical conditions: child incest, rape or monstrously deformed foetuses. There are one or two cases when traumatic social circumstances are taken into consideration. Women do not seek out or late late abortions. Late abortions can never in themselves be a good thing.

They are often the result of factors over which women themselves have only limited control at present: the lack of NHS facilities for early safe abortion uniformly available across the country. This means delays.

The bureaucracy and red tape in the Abortion Act itself, plus the fact that doctors,

not women, make the decision so that women are rejected, means more delays. The lack of reliable tests early in pregnancy to detect gross foetal abnormalities. The absence of publicity about fertility control in public places. There are also other factors, in themselves rooted in a repressive and sexist society: young women have late abortions because of the fear of admitting their pregnancy in a society which does not accept the sexuality of adolescents.

Women do not need a viability limit, or any other restrictions on their right to choose. We need total control over our bodies so that we make difficult decisions late in pregnancy, and so that as far as possible we can reduce the incidence of late abortions.

Being defensive about 'viability' and late abortions is to accept the stunted logic of the anti-abortionists. NAC rejects this. We start from the basis that it is women's rights that matter. We are capable of making informed decisions about all stages of our pregnancies, that state intervention in decisions about own

bodily processes is totally unacceptable, and that human rights are not based on biological facts about conception or 'viability'.

If 'rights' are given to the unborn foetus, then who decides whose rights take precedence? The present Abortion Act, whilst not giving the foetus legal status, allows the doctor to make the decision about abortion. Corrie's Bill begins the process of tightening up the area within which a doctor can exercise his or her 'clinical judgement'.

It does this by changing the grounds for abortion, so that, by implication, foetal development at its earliest stages is seen as qualitatively more important than the rights and needs of the woman concerned. NAC believes that the legal status of the foetus should match biological facts, since it has no social existence.

Whilst the foetus is undeniably a potential human being in its normal state, it is dependent on, and part of, the mother's body. Its rights should therefore be potential rights, to be cashed in at birth.



CAMPAIGN NEWS



BROAD CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

OVER forty people attended a national meeting on 17 July to form a broad-based committee to campaign against the Corrie Bill and build the largest demonstration ever for the autumn.

Present were representatives from the Communist Party, Socialist Workers Party, International Marxist Group, Abortion Law Reform Association, and the National Abortion Campaign. There were also members of many local abortion campaigns.

The committee will concentrate on publicity and propaganda for the campaign from prominent individuals, labour movement bodies, and so on.

The Campaign Against the Corrie Bill will use the offices of NAC at 374 Crays Inn Road, London WC1. The next meeting is on Tuesday, 31 July,

at the University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1 at 7.30pm.

TRADES UNIONISTS AGAINST CORRIE

TWENTY FIVE trades unionists attended a meeting called by the NAC/Labour Abortion Rights Campaign trade union liaison committee to discuss how to organise within the labour movement against the Corrie Bill.

It was felt that while the TUC's call for a national demonstration was very positive, the question was how trades unionists were to be mobilised.

The meeting organised a delegation to visit the TUC before the next General Council meeting to discuss NAC's proposal that the demonstration should be held on 27 October.

Next meeting at NAC offices on 30 July at 7.30pm

FORD WORKERS ACT

THE 1/1107 branch of the Transport and General Workers' Union which organises Ford Dagenham's (all male) engine plant and the paint, trim and assembly plant is to write officially to all T&G sponsored MPs and local MPs urging them to vote against the Corrie Bill.

Branch members will also be encouraged to write in. The motion was carried with none against after being proposed and seconded on the basis that it is a woman's right to

choose whether to have children, and no one else's.

HANG DOWN YOUR HEAD JOHN CORRIE?

A CAMPAIGN such as the one now under way against Corrie's Bill needs a song. Socialist Challenge hereby launches a competition for the best anti-Corrie song.

Send us your songs, we'll print the best ones and the campaigners can themselves decide which they want to sing.

TOWER Hamlets Trades Council public meeting on abortion. Defeat Corrie's Bill. Wed 8 Aug, 7pm, Robert Montefiore Centre, Deal St, London E2.

Nearest tube: Whitechapel. Speakers: Dr Wendy Savage (Mile End Clinic), Dr Berry Beaumont (NAC), Jane Foster (Sex Education for young people).

SHEFFIELD: a public meeting is planned for 23 August. Details from the Sheffield IMG, tel 0742 385 983.

TO ENSURE details of your pro-abortion events appear in this column, ring or write to Socialist Challenge.

Don't underestimate self-help

Dear SC: I have been reading with interest the articles you have been carrying on the abortion debate and in particular 'the butchery of back street abortions' (SC 12 July).

While sympathising with Jean's awful experience of an illegal abortion, I feel that the implication that all illegal abortions are unsafe is mistaken.

For example in Italy where abortion laws are even more repressive than here, many illegal abortions are carried out including by women's self-help health groups.

In fact the menstrual regulation methods used by these women are far less traumatic for the women than many hospital abortions which take place later on in pregnancy and are accompanied by much moral disapproval.

It is important to distinguish between illegal abortionists who perform abortions out of sheer profiteering motives and those women who perform them as part of their commitment to gaining control over their own lives and fertility.

Women learning to do safe and untraumatic abortions is a very important part of feminist political practice. Obviously the state will make sure that this remains illegal as it does with other political activities that threaten its power.

Although I fully support the campaign for abortion on demand on the NHS, I find it difficult to imagine the state ever allowing women the right to choose.

Even while the state permits abortion it gives doctors the right to decide who will have abortions and how they will be done. By learning to do abortions ourselves we are reclaiming control of our bodies from the male-dominated medical profession.

Maria Fubini



The closed shop— 'Everything trade unionism is'

By Adam Turner

'FOR defence of a 100 per cent closed shop and for sanctions to be applied against any individuals breaking the closed shop' — that's how point two in the Rank and File Code of Practice reads, and two local newspaper disputes currently taking place in London are giving a practical example of just how important the closed shop is.

The first dispute involves members of the National Union of Journalists employed by the Stratford Express and the Greater London and Essex Newspapers Group (GLEN).

For some time journalists on the Stratford Express have enjoyed what are among the best pay and conditions in the local newspaper industry.

Earlier this year a successful seven-week strike against threatened redundancies won a promise of a guaranteed staff level of 35.

Shortly afterwards the Express was taken over by GLEN whose own workers suffer worse pay and conditions than their counterparts on the Express. Since the takeover 15 vacancies have been created and remain unfilled.

The crunch came when management started moving non-union staff into the Express and encouraged three senior members of the editorial staff to resign from the NUJ.

These moves were a direct breach of the house agreement between union and management, a clause of which guarantees the closed shop.

This clause has been described by the union general secretary as 'a major breakthrough', and there is no doubting the connection between this closed shop agreement and the other relatively good conditions won by Stratford Express workers in the past.

NUJ members employed by the Express and GLEN groups have been on official strike since 4 July. Eight union members have now been issued with High Court libel writs arising out of strike bulletins issued by the union members.

Management has also threatened that if any other strike bulletin is 'abusive' the entire unionised workforce will be sacked.

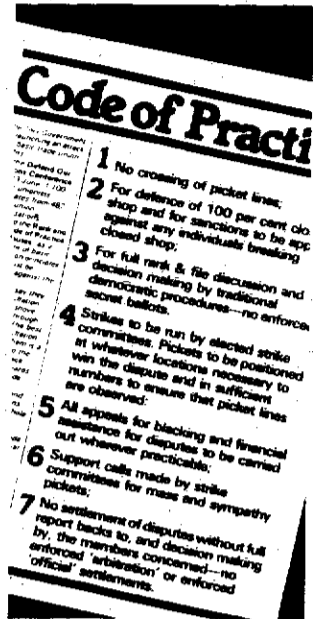
The other London newspaper dispute involves the Camden and Hornsey Journals whose staff have been given the go-ahead by the NUJ executive to issue a 28-day strike notice.

Again the clash is over a threat to the closed shop, caused by the decision of one journalist to leave the NUJ. The individual in question, Peter Brown, has a history of hostility to the union, having scabbed during a strike involving another newspaper in 1974.

Hornsey Journal reporter Sue Landau told Socialist Challenge the issues involved: 'If we lose the closed shop we stand to lose money, jobs and everything trade unionism is about.'

'Our chapel has not lost a single job in six years, and we were one of the first to take a stand against racism in the media — that's an indication of our strength, and that is what is now threatened.'

From both disputes the message is the same: the union keeps us strong, and the closed shop stronger still.



Rank and File Code of Practice: 75p per 100, inc. postage, from Defend Our Unions, 265a Seven Sisters Road, London, N4.

On another crucial aspect of trade union strength, the right to strike, the NUJ is again being treated to a foretaste of the Tories' policies — the secret ballot.

Last week in the Appeal Court, the union was told that the seven-week strike by local and provincial newspaper journalists earlier this year was 'unconstitutional'.

This ruling, by Lord Denning, is in defence of journalists in Coventry and Birmingham who scabbed on the strike, and who have since been disciplined by the union.

Denning, supported by two other appeal judges who sat with him, told the NUJ that according to its rule book a ballot should have preceded the strike.

General secretary Ken Ashton said that the union regarded the decision 'as a threat to the traditional democratic and hard-won right of all trade unions and their members to resort to strike action if necessary'.

Denning's thinking is, of course, in close record with the other Tories now in government.

Courting pickets

By Johann Schweik

TORY-controlled Wandsworth council in South London can't wait for the government's union-bashing laws to go through. It is hoping, probably with justification, that the courts will do the necessary now.

As Socialist Challenge goes to press judgement is expected on a writ asking for a cessation of picketing brought by the council against Lou Lewis, a full-time official of the Union of Construction, Allied Trades, and Technicians.

The problem for the Wandsworth Tories is that they have vowed to axe the council's direct works department, but the council building workers aren't having it. Action by UCATT members halted work on seven sites handed to private contractors last year, in one case for

as long as four months.

The council now wants court backing to stop picketing of two sites claiming that the action is in furtherance of a political rather than a trade dispute, and that even if it were a trade dispute, it would not be furthered by picketing.

'They're trying to narrow the basis of both definitions,' says Lou Lewis. 'If they're successful it will have implications for the whole movement, so we're hoping for broad support on this.'

'As far as we're concerned, there will be no use of private contractors on council land. Injunctions won't frighten us,' he adds.

The council is also claiming damages from Lewis, which he says will not get them very far. 'I haven't got a pot to piss in,' he told Socialist Challenge.

Letter Dissent on NALGO

I WISH to dissent from the letter you published signed by five Liverpool NALGO members (5 July), and support the perspective of Dave Burn's report on the NALGO conference, that NALGO militants should support the Nalگو Action Group.

My position is illustrated by a recent debate in Liverpool NALGO branch, in which Nalگو Action Group supporters put forward an action programme for industrial action under the control of the rank and file to win NALGO's 15 per cent pay claim, against the national executive which proposes to accept 9.4 per cent now with 'comparability' next year.

Two of the signatories of your letter, supporters of the Nalگو Left in Liverpool, put forward another motion which would in effect leave any action in the hands of the executive itself. This was carried almost unanimously, with one abstention. (Could this have been Jack Meek, NALGO's president, who was present?)

The NAG motion was defeated, with Nalگو Left supporters voting against. A fine way to fight for class struggle policies in NALGO!

JOHN STRAUTHER
(Liverpool NALGO)

Brent women humiliated and trivialised

By Geoffrey Sheridan

LABOUR-controlled Brent council has now made it plain how it will treat women employees who allege sexual harassment at work — they will be sacked.

At the beginning of last week, the secretary to the council's director of development received her cards after her pay had been stopped since the beginning of June.

She was among three women who had made complaints alleging sexual assault and other forms of sexual harassment by the director of development, Adrian Beckett. The second woman, who is secretary to the council's chief engineer, is suspended from work, and the third has left her job in disgust.

The sackings have taken place after a secret inquiry by eight councillors in the North-west London borough. The inquiry, the procedures of which have never been made known, concluded that the allegations were unfounded, but placed no blame on the women.

The view taken by the Brent NALGO branch is that the women are being punished for complaining.

The posts held by the complainants are now being boycotted, and a demonstration took place outside Brent town hall last night to demand full reinstatement and an inquiry

along judicial lines into the complaints.

NALGO's law and parliamentary committee, which gave its backing several months ago to writs alleging defamation taken out by Beckett against two local union representatives, has now agreed to pay the legal costs incurred by these representatives who sought to take up the complaint made by the women.

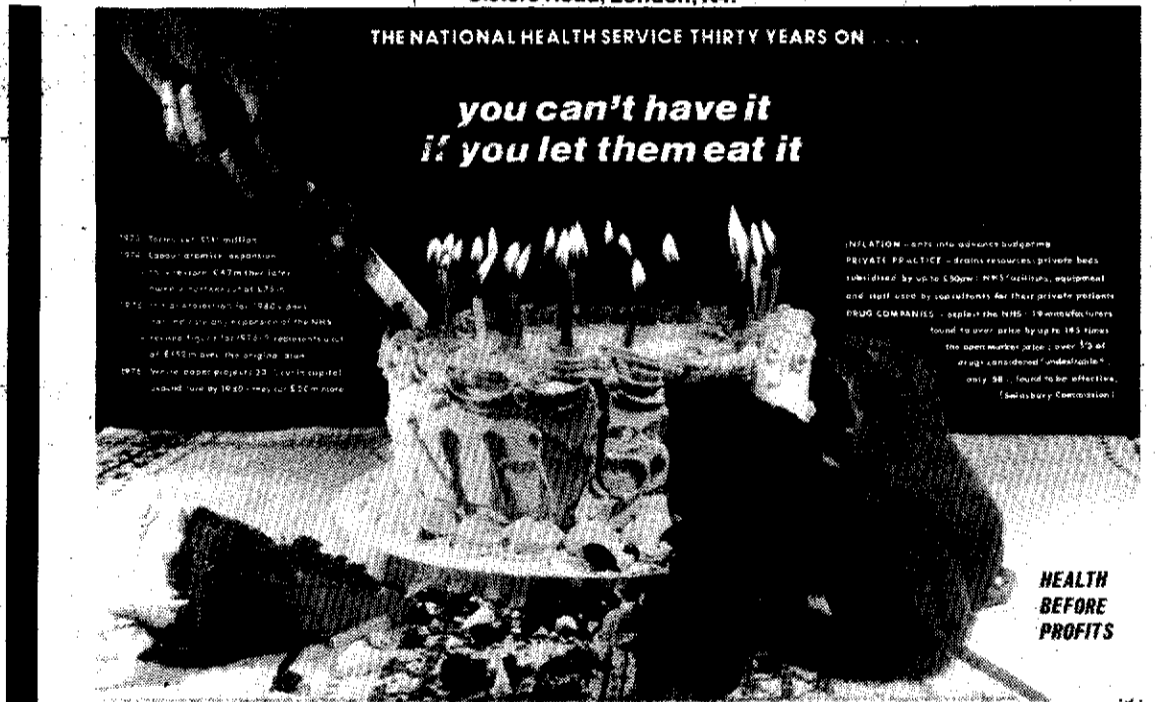
The union at national level thus finds itself in the curious position of supporting both sides in the case.

A leaflet signed by 11 women in the Brent NALGO branch asks: 'Can we as women in Brent NALGO ever feel safe again about making a complaint?'

'Had the complaint been from a man alleging, for example, physical violence or harassment from a senior officer, we feel sure that it would have been treated very differently.'

'There would certainly not have been a slur on the character of the person who complained,' the leaflet adds. The writers say they are angry about the attitudes taken by the council, colleagues, and Brent NALGO. They quote a male member of the branch executive, who is said to have remarked: 'There but for the grace of god go I'.

'These attitudes have humiliated and trivialised all women,' the leaflet states.



Satanic racism in Oldham

By Martin Collins

READERS in the South may have thought that the dark satanic mills had long since disappeared. But for Asian workers in Oldham, working 12-hour shifts with no breaks, they still loom large.

Their union connives and schemes with the mill owners against them — a union whose secretary boasts that there is enough of his members' money invested in Courtaulds (the main employer) to carry on paying its staff if all its members were to be expelled.

It is a union that does not allow the election of black representatives for all-black shifts.

Last week, in a grey schoolroom — adapted for its new use as a community centre only by the addition of social security advice leaflets, carpets, and a typewriter — Asian workers met to organise.

First six, then eight, twelve, and finally over 20 workers arrived to discuss a series of demands that could be used to change their union and stand up to the employers.

'Why must we be forced to work overtime?' 'Why are we sacked without warning?' 'Why are so many men constantly off sick?' — in Urdu,

Punjabi and other languages of the sub-continent.

Questions were asked, grievances aired. A programme began to take shape.

The aim was decided — to organise a mass meeting of all Asian textile workers employed by Courtaulds in Oldham in order to launch a campaign to democratise the union and make it responsible to the membership.

The aim is a campaign which confronts racism by making the union affairs accessible to the workers, and denies the right of management to hire and fire at will.

'It is the union that can make us strong, but first of all we have to control that union.' Black mill workers in Oldham have taken a first step in gaining that strength.

The defence of Abdul Azad, who was threatened with deportation, started in Oldham and has shown what can be done through resisting.

The next phase of struggle involves black workers fighting back against the satanic racism which lurks in the unions and management. The battle begins with the Oldham Provincial Union of Textile and Allied Workers, and the Oldham District Weavers and Winders Association.

Why the bosses aren't breathing heavily over engineers' national strike

By Ron Thompson
AUEW, Sheffield

ON 1 August over two million workers in the engineering and shipbuilding industries will begin a national overtime ban. Three one-day strikes will also be held during August.

The industrial action is being called by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions in pursuit of the national wages and conditions claim.

One might have thought that the prospect of such a huge and decisive section of the working class moving into 'struggle' would have been accompanied by the usual hysteria and witch-hunts in the mass media.

But none of this has happened. The possibility of confrontation has caused little excitement. There have been no special ministerial broadcasts, no emergency cabinet meetings and not even very much publicity.

In fact, large numbers of workers throughout the industry will only just be finding out now that a claim has been submitted at all! How is it that such a state of affairs can arise?

One of the main problems with the national engineering claim — the same problem that arises every year — is that the overwhelming majority of workers would receive no direct benefit from the monetary part of the claim, even if it were won in full.

The central parts of the claim are: an £80 minimum time rate (MTR) for skilled workers with proportional increases for lower grades; a 35-hour week, and two days extra holiday per year.

Minimum

The MTR is a minimum fall-back rate, and would therefore give an increase only to those who are below it. The only other difference it makes is to overtime rates.

It's true that any increase in the MTR could have a 'push-on' effect in the localities by reducing the amount of incentive for pieceworkers. However, this possibility is not immediate enough to motivate the workers to rally behind the claim.

The demand for 35 hours has already been watered down to a weekly cut of one hour this year, with progress to 35 hours by 1982. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that there is not a great deal of enthusiasm amongst engineering workers for the claim.

This situation is not accidental. It has always been the conscious policy of the leadership of the engineering unions to avoid a full-scale confrontation with the employers on a national scale. Even in Scanlon's

day, the claim was always formulated to have the minimum impact on wages.

The one part of the claim which could really unite engineering workers for a struggle is the 35 hour week. That is why the leadership is always so ready to water it down or drop it altogether. This year, as in every other year, this has been done in the interests of 'realism'.



BOB WRIGHT

Apparently, it is 'realistic' for the union bureaucrats to see thousands of workers thrown on the dole every week without lifting a finger of serious opposition, but it is 'unrealistic' to fight unemployment by mobilising the strength of engineering workers to win a shorter working week.

It is this type of weak-kneed leadership that allows the engineering employers to negotiate from a position of strength.

The employers know that if the full strength of the confederation unions was used they would receive a heavy blow. They are also aware that AUEW president Terry Duffy and his like are falling over themselves to make sure that this doesn't happen.

As recently as last week, Duffy was floating the idea of a national productivity deal to avoid any industrial action being taken.

The fact that any action is being taken at all is due to the fact that the recommendation by the AUEW's executive council to accept the employers' latest offer of £10 and refer all other issues to a working party was narrowly rejected by the union's national committee, by 27 votes to 25.

But that victory by the left was not the signal for an all-out struggle against the employers. There is no one on the national committee who seriously believes that an overtime ban and three one-day stoppages will force the employers to concede.

If anything, there is a danger that such ineffectual action will have a demoralising effect on the workers

and actually weaken the struggle. This is exactly what the right-wing is hoping for.

Any sign of wavering of support for the overtime ban or the one-day strikes will be seized upon by Terry Duffy to call off the action and accept the employers' offer.

The ability of Duffy and friends to derail the struggle has been facilitated by the utter inadequacy of the left in the engineering union. The 27 delegates on the national committee who voted against the executive's recommendation to accept the employers' offer was largely a reflection of the influence of the Communist Party and its Broad Left allies.

The problem is that this opposition always stops well short of fighting for an all-out struggle against the bosses.

Strategy

There was never any serious attempt to formulate a claim that would give a substantial and immediate increase to the majority of workers in the industry. The left also went along with the watering down of the demand for 35 hours.

The support for timid industrial action is not a conscious act of 'betrayal' by the CP. On the contrary, many CP militants would like to see a much more aggressive struggle for the claim. The problem is the overall strategy of the CP.

Everything is subordinated to building a broad alliance with 'lefts' of all shades, in particular within officialdom. Majorities on committees are seen as the most important objective.

The whole emphasis, therefore, is laid on giving the union structures a 'left' complexion, even if this means compromises and limiting struggles.

This line of 'compromise for unity' was demonstrated at the national conference of engineering shop stewards in Sheffield on 7 July.

The conference was called by 17 stewards' committees in Sheffield in order to discuss the campaign for the national claim, and over 260 delegates from shop stewards committees throughout the country attended.

But the great potential of this conference was blocked at the start when the CP-dominated platform announced that there would be no resolutions of any sort. The conference thus turned into a talk-shop, with two and a half hours of fiery diatribes against the Tories and the need to work even harder to get 'lefts' like Bob Wright elected to the union leadership.

This was the CP's perspective. It



was announced that a national shop stewards co-ordinating committee would be set-up in the near future.

But it was made quite clear that this would essentially be a pressure group in support of 'left' bureaucrats. The CP has learnt nothing from its disastrous affair with Lord Scanlon (RIP).

Despite the weaknesses of the claim and the inadequacy of one-day strikes as a method of struggle, socialists must be in the forefront of the fight to ensure the success of the actions. A failure of the limited actions would demoralise thousands of militants throughout the engineering industry. The only victors would be the employers.

Whatever the outcome of the struggle, socialists in the engineering industry must begin to come to grips with the more long-term problem of organising to make some impact within the industry.

A useful starting point would be to recognise how weak we are. Engineering Charter and the comrades behind it should recognise that there is no way in which they can pose as an organisational alternative to the Broad Left.

What is vital is that all socialists should organise a collective discussion in order to draw up a serious and constructive political alternative to the Broad Left.

A useful step towards this would be to convene a conference to elaborate such an alternative which would, hopefully, attract a layer of militants beyond our immediate periphery.

Compared to the Broad Left, such a conference would represent tiny forces. But it would be an important step forward for all those who are alienated by the Broad Left yet see no other vistas on the horizon.

International scandal looms for TUC

By a special correspondent

LAST week Len Murray and fellow members of the TUC General Council, Tom Jackson, Frank Chapple and Alan Sapper, arrived back in London after a four day meeting in the United States with the TUC's American counterpart the AFL-CIO.

No statement was issued giving details of the meeting and the TUC press office was unable to provide information of the outcome. And yet behind the meeting was a growing list of charges about the TUC's international work and its collaboration with the CIA and the British Foreign Office.

These charges could well mean that the international debate at the TUC conference could prove one of the most heated for many years. Already the SW regional council of

the TUC has passed a resolution calling on the TUC to answer various allegations of working with CIA labour front organisations in the Third World including one such organisation, ORIT, which helped to bring down the Allende government in Chile.

The regional council, like union branches in other parts of the country who have acted similarly, say they are still awaiting a satisfactory answer to the various allegations first made by the charity War on Want in a booklet published by them last year, *Where Were You Brother?*

Inside the TUC itself the various charges have been debated both by the General Council and International Committee. TUC International Secretary Alan Hargreaves was asked to prepare a reply. The document, about 11 pages long,

astonished members of the International Committee.

Hardly any of the charges, including that of extensive Foreign Office connections, were denied. Instead the reply read more like a precis of the War on Want booklet itself. Hargreaves' document was tabled but not endorsed.

General Secretary Len Murray now seems to have taken over dealing with the criticisms. He has replied to some branches that the booklet was a tissue of innuendo and smears.

Some unionists, however, like those in the South West Regional Council, are refusing to accept this as a reply. 'They will have to answer the specific charges,' one member of the regional council has declared.

The miners, meanwhile, have

made it fairly clear where they stand on the issue. At last month's Congress of the Miners' International Federation in Madrid, delegates unanimously backed an NUM resolution that the International investigate all sources of government funding going into international labour circles and complain at source if need be whether it be the US AFL-CIO, TUC or any of the three world internationals.

And at the recent NUM conference in Jersey one delegate referred to the various allegations and said the miners shouldn't be associated with certain parts of the TUC's overseas work.

President Joe Gormley could only reply that members of the TUC International Committee were all

busy union General Secretaries and didn't have the time to investigate everything that was going on.

But interestingly Gormley was defeated when he stood for the NUM's international delegation.

Co-author of the War on Want booklet, Don Thompson, said this week, 'The heart of the matter is really quite a simple one. The TUC is spending about £600,000 a year — including £180,000 they receive annually from the Foreign Office — on overseas work.

'It is a perfectly proper demand by trade unionists to ask how this money is spent, and who benefits. So far the TUC has failed to make this information available.'

NICARAGUA

The fall of Somoza

By Dave Kellaway

AFTER over 40 years of dictatorship Somoza has crawled away to exile in Florida. In one respect what happened to the Shah didn't happen to him — he was allowed exile in the USA.

His last pathetic manoeuvres to maintain his regime, and to hold off the Sandinistas until 1981, ended up as a comic interlude. Despite appearing to have the technical means to hold onto power, his regime was defeated by the first successful popular uprising for 20 years in Latin America.

Like the Shah's technological, highly-skilled army, the praetorian Somoza National Guard was incapable of defeating a whole nation in arms against it.

How had the political relation of forces changed so drastically? Only 4 years ago Borge and his team of guerrillas in the north were a mere irritant to the regime. Today he is named the new Interior Minister, and the FSLN have the sympathy of the overwhelming majority of the Nicaraguan people.

There are two sides to the disintegration of Somoza's regime: the conflict of interests between the regime and large sectors of the national bourgeoisie and imperialism; and the rise of the mass struggle and consequent growth of the FSLN.

The very nature of the regime — what the Daily Telegraph sanctimoniously called the 'avarice and greed of that abominable man' — excluded the other bourgeois sectors from the most profitable enterprises.

Instead of developing a modern capitalist regime, in which the differences between various bourgeois forces could be more rationally worked out and the economy more logically organised, the regime was totally subordinated to securing quick wealth for the Somoza family.

This simultaneously prevented both the normal functioning of the political process and the integration of middle class and intellectual layers as 'supports' for capitalist development.

This came to a head with the scandalous way in which Somoza lined his pockets out of the 1972 earthquake disaster — rebuilding Managua at great profit on his own land and grabbing the aid money.

It was from this period that business interests began to openly oppose Somoza and later the 'Group of 12' declared for an alliance with the FSLN.

American imperialism also came into contradiction with the regime. Although Somoza loyally supported its interests for 40 years, the regime was storing up trouble for US strategy by threatening the stability of the whole of Central America.

A Somoza-type regime didn't allow a moderate alternative that could head off any mass discontent. A year ago the US stopped arms supplies to Somoza.

The regime also antagonised other 'democratic' or 'progressive' Latin American regimes such as Venezuela, Costa Rica and Panama. They wanted to present themselves as anti-imperialist in front of their people and shared US concern about social explosions spilling over into their countries if the gangrene was allowed to fester in Nicaragua.

Hence these countries supplied arms and materials to the FSLN, particularly once sections of the Nicaraguan national bourgeoisie openly supported the Sandinistas.

On the other side the uninterrupted rise of mass resistance was the decisive factor in the fall of Somoza, culminating in armed insurrection.

Mass demonstrations and strikes greeted Somoza's blatant murder of a liberal bourgeois opponent, Chamorro, in January 1978.

This grew to semi-spontaneous insurrection in Massaya in February and support for the defeated September '78 insurrection.

Although the FSLN played the vanguard role in all these struggles the mass resistance retained its independent semi-spontaneous character.

Even the 10,000 dead, and the bloody reprisals following the defeat of the badly coordinated September adventure, couldn't smash this. The FSLN saw its biggest influx after that defeat.

These actions of the masses moved new tendencies in the FSLN away from the rural 'foco' perspective and towards an urban based insurrectional strategy.

The unity pact signed between all the tendencies of the FSLN, and their support from Panama and Costa Rica rather than from Cuba, further strengthened their forces.

Rejected by imperialism, deserted by other sectors of the bourgeoisie and the middle class, confronted by a mass insurrection, Somoza only had the brute force of the National Guard between himself and defeat.

Once the ammunition ran out and no reactionary regime was prepared to displace the US by supplying him with new arms his days were numbered.

THE fall of Somoza represents a setback for American imperialism. Its impact in Central America will be to 'destabilise' the existing regimes and provide a boost to all those struggling against the dictatorships in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica.

The success of the Sandinista operation will not automatically ensure a transition to socialism. The revolutionary process will, as Iran shows, be far more complex. But the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship has put socialism on the agenda.

DAVE KELLAWAY discusses the likely evolution of the struggle and its impact on the United States.

Will El Salvador go next

THE British press talks about El Salvador only when British businessmen are kidnapped. What exists is a country of 4.5 million people stretching over 21,000 square kilometres.

Over 50 per cent of the population is illiterate; average life expectancy is 54 and rural unemployment is over 52 per cent. The country is ruled by 14 families who own the country's coffee, cotton, maize, sugar and rice and sell it to the USA and Western Europe.

The army controls the country and the President, Ge. Romero, is a butcher in the Somoza mould. A few months ago Western TV viewers saw the army shooting down demonstrators on the Cathedral steps of San Salvador and killing 23 people.

The Sandinista victory will be seen by the Popular Revolutionary Bloc (PRB) as a big leap forward for their own struggle. The PRB is very similar (in politics and composition) to the FSLN in Nicaragua. The Salvador CP is well entrenched in the organised labour movement in the towns.

With the fall of Somoza it is El Salvador that becomes the weak link of imperialism in Central America.



WITHIN the new government and perhaps to a greater extent within the base of the local committees there are two main tendencies, the Group of 12, and the Terceristas (the main FSLN tendency). They will argue for the

Pedigree of the

expropriation of Somoza's property, a land reform perhaps limited to Somoza's holdings and 'inefficient' land, and establishing basic democratic and social rights.

The more Castroist elements — essentially the Prolonged war and Proletarian FSLN tendencies — will argue for a more radical land reform, expropriation of US interests and for links with 'socialist' countries.

This second tendency may not necessarily decisively break with the Terceristas and the 'progressive' bourgeoisie and instead may argue for a prolonged democratic stage of consolidation.

Revolutionary marxist currents will also participate in the debate — such as the Liga Marxist Revolucionaria (Trotskyists).

A victory for the 'social democratic' forces will involve the defeat of the masses insofar as the mass mobilisation and the armed committees will have to end. It will not

necessarily mean social democracy as we know it because of the lack of material concessions that can be permanently made to the masses.

The composition of the Cabinet favours the 'social democratic' solution.

The minister of the economy will be Rivas Casteazorro who is Social Christian and ex-president of the Chamber of Commerce.

New Central Bank Governor will be Arturo Cruz who worked at the World Bank in Washington. Minister of Agriculture will be Manuel Torre who is related to Violetta Chamorro, a junta member and big land owner.

Responsible for land reform will be Ceronel Kautz who is a sugar refinery owner and landowner.

This type of pedigree indicates that socialist measures are not very likely despite the inclusion of figures like Borge (leader of the GPP tendency) as the Interior Minister.

1823: Independence from Spain.
1893-1909: Liberal government. Its downfall in 1909 was brought about by the direct intervention of the US.

1925-1927: Liberal uprising in 1926 caused US troops to be re-called. Liberal leaders signed agreement and surrendered. The only exception was General Sandino who then started a guerrilla war against the US marines and the government.

1930: National guard formed and trained by the US forces. Anastasio Somoza is chosen as its head.

1934: Ending to guerrilla activities is agreed by but General Sandino tricked and assassinated by Somoza after a dinner.

1962: Formation of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN).

1967: Somoza elected president in fraudulent elections.

1971: Conservatives and Social Christians (traditional oligarchy parties) make pact with Somoza which allows Somoza a further period as National Guard chief and President.

1974: FSLN make successful attack in Managua, force release of prisoners and ransom payment.

1977: FSLN attacks barracks in San Carlos and Massaya — Terceristas born.

1978: Jan. Chamorro editor of Prensa and liberal oppositionist killed by regime.

24. Jan. General strike to protest the murder.

Feb. Massaya insurrection.

August. FSLN occupy the National Palace holding hostage 60 MPs, win release of political prisoners and big ransom.

Sept. General insurrection — fails, particularly in Managua, and strongest areas such as Leon and Esteli are brutally repressed.

1979: Jan. Somoza rejects the mediating commission proposals for a transition.

Feb. US suspends arms supply.

April. FSLN take Esteli and then lose it.

May. IMF with US approval lend Somoza 65m dollars.
65m dollars. Somoza says what happened to the Shah won't happen to him.
1 June: New offensive by the FSLN in the north, south and Managua.
16 June: Formation of a provisional government.
17 July: President Somoza leaves.

AFTER SOMOZA



The new regime

The key questions of land, the purging of Somocismo, the formation of the new army and reorganization of production will not be decided solely in the cabinet but will be affected by the relation of forces in the mass movement.

In the northern towns there is a high level of popular organisation. Radio Sandino talks of these committees as 'local expressions of the government of national reconstruction', so the political level of this self organisation, and the terms of the debate going on, cannot be easily assessed.

In the south, in Cardenas, there has already been a distribution of Somoza's land and the organisation of new cooperatives.

Commandate Alvaro, leader in the Southern front, however, talked of only a very limited reform of the land (Le Monde, 18 July). On the other side of the debate are the statements of many of the fighters like Tania, reviewed by the Colombian paper

El Socialista:

'We can only guarantee that the government carries out what we are fighting for if we continue to struggle. A new government which gives us some liberties is not a guarantee for the people. The only way of defending democracy and our liberties is by a government of the workers and only the workers.'

The new government is pledged to call municipal elections and later a Constituent Assembly. The best possible outcome would be if those forces within the FSLN favouring a socialist solution formed an electoral front based on the fight for a workers' government based on the local committees and the armed militias.

What sort of tasks should revolutionaries be putting forward now in Nicaragua in order to ensure the permanent victory of the masses?

*Dissolution of the National Guard, formation of popular militia to defend the revolution.

*Freedom for all the political prisoners.

*Establish full democratic rights — elections, free press, freedom to organise.

*Denunciation of all economic and military pacts with the imperialist powers and the OEA.

*Annul the external debt. Break with the IMF.

*Expropriate all Somoza's holdings, the imperialist interests and of national capitalism.

*Carry out a true land reform.

*For a workers government based on the mass organisations.

Only the winning of the masses to such a programme will prevent a repeat of the tragedy of previous popular revolutions in Latin America such as the Bolivian MNR-led revolt of '52, which defeated a dictator and then degenerated into a pro-bourgeois regime in which the interests of the masses were not met.

It is not the first or last time that the masses in Latin America have fought an armed struggle side by side with their own bosses and then allowed the latter to control the new situation — neighbouring Guatemala went through a similar experience in the 1940s and the masses lost the second round.

A disaster for Imperialism

AFTER Angola, Vietnam and Iran, Nicaragua appears to be another bungled foreign policy disaster for US imperialism.

The American press speculates on the faulty intelligence reports or other subjective errors. But the fundamental cause of the US malaise is a growing structural weakness caused by the recent anti-imperialist victories of the colonial masses.

Added to this is the growth of competing imperialist powers, such as Germany or Japan which — while not breaking with the overall interests of imperialism — will support certain popular front liberation movements in order to later gain lucrative development contracts at the expense of the US.

Social democracy often plays a key role as a 'relay' for this imperialist alternative. West German social democracy has been instrumental in trying to resuscitate social democratic tendencies in Latin America.

Kissinger

It is no longer possible for the US to send in troops whenever it wants — it would have to contend with massive internal and world wide opposition. Similarly it can't so easily remove unco-operative dictators in covert CIA operations after all the recent exposures.

Kissinger as usual expresses succinctly the dilemma of US imperialism in a recent Guardian interview:

'I could have understood a decisive move to replace Somoza with a moderate element, but this would have required the kind of covert action so much decried today... My impression is we did enough to unsettle the existing government but not enough to put over a moderate alternative if there is one...'

Whirlwind

'If the sole alternative to Somoza is the Sandinistas, we may reap the whirlwind. If the radical left becomes dominant in Central America, even Mexico will feel the pressure.'

'We should not define our alternatives by platitudes like 'sticking to Somoza'. We have no mission to change every unpalatable ruler; but if we attempt it we must assume the responsibility for an outcome compatible with our values and our international responsibilities.'

The dilemma for the US is that it is very difficult to implement their human rights policy and to get moderate alternative that can hold down social explosions when it cannot intervene freely, when it is competing with other imperialist powers, when the colonial masses are moving, when dependent capitalist regimes can oppose particular US plans and when the world recession means the money for reformist experiments is just not there.

Unstable

The experience of Nicaragua revealed all these problems. The US stopped arms sales a year ago when the regime became unstable as far as US interests were concerned, but then it supported Somoza's crushing of the September 78 insurrection because no

adequate alternative was available and it was advantageous for the mass resistance and the FSLN to be weakened.

In fact the defeat had the reverse effect. The US redoubled their efforts to split off the more moderate opposition forces like the FAO (Broad Opposition Front) from the FSLN but this failed mainly because of Somoza's intransigence.

Faced with the June insurrection the US attempted to get the Organisation of American States (OEA) to impose a ceasefire and force Somoza out, preventing an FSLN victory by the intervention of an OEA army.

Cuba

For the first time in its history the OEA decisively defeated a US plan and voted for the unconditional resignation of Somoza.

Unlike when the OEA voted for a boycott of Cuba it is no longer a complete lapdog of the US. It shows that the national bourgeoisie in dependent capitalist countries will still from time to time take positions against US imperialism.

This is the case particularly where there is populist pressure within their own countries to stand up to the gringos and where the liberation movement they are supporting is not clearly socialist and therefore not a threat to their own regimes.

Finally the US were forced to negotiate directly with the Provisional government and the FSLN. This didn't stop them privately welcoming Somoza's genocide in Managua which prevented a rapid and dangerous FSLN victory.

The original US proposals, for extending the provisional government with the inclusion of several moderate figures, was rejected. A day later it was reported that there was now an agreement. The US appears satisfied that the new government does not represent an embryonic Cuba, and they intend to back up this agreement with significant aid — the lessons of Cuba was that the boycott helped push the Cubans into the arms of the Soviet bloc.

Ramirez, a member of the Junta has said that either the US gives aid or they go to other countries.

The US intervention will not be restricted to aid. Their hopes about the 'social-democratic' credentials of the new government are not guarantees that the process of permanent revolution can be halted.

Results

The US navy is off the coast and there is still great danger of intervention if the inevitably split between the pro-socialist and the social democratic forces threatens US interests.

Intervening to defend a 'social democratic' government against a Cuba inspired revolt is much easier than intervening to save Somoza.

But will the new government drift toward a Cuban solution or will it stabilise a new bourgeois regime...?

Right to work march

By Sylvia Bliss

UNEMPLOYMENT has gone over one and a half million according to the official figures. And over half a million school leavers will swell that number even further by the end of the summer.

Two million unemployed by the winter is no longer an uneasy estimate but a fact.

The Tory government's cuts will make this situation even worse as local authorities, the civil service, and health authorities are forced to make redundancies and limit jobs.

The Tories are aiming to cut between 150,000 and 200,000 jobs in education alone.

High unemployment is an enormous danger to the whole working class, not just those who are out of a job. Traditionally it has been used to push down wages and weaken it by creating a reserve army of labour.

It splits, divides, and hence further weakens the working class by playing off one section against another.

Even in the labour movement, people seriously argue that jobs should be taken away from women rather than men, blacks rather than whites, young workers rather than older workers with responsibilities.

The whole approach of last in, first out, discriminates against younger workers.

The Tories thrive on these arguments, playing off one section of the work force against another. The trade union leaders who accept voluntary redundancy and 'natural wastage' fall into the same trap, and simply help create a situation where more and more young workers cannot find jobs at all.

These divisions must be confronted head on. Positive discrimination in the employment of women, blacks and young people is the way to take up these divisive responses.

We also have to fight for demands like a 35-hour week and nationalisation of all firms declaring redundancies, which ensure that the work available is shared out between as many workers as possible.

But we also have to build a movement, linked to the trade unions, that will fight for a plan to defeat unemployment as a whole.

The Right to Work campaign is a good place to start building such a movement.

As in previous years, there will be a march and lobby of the TUC at the beginning of September. This year the TUC meets in Blackpool, so the march will be going there from Liverpool.

Campaigning for local branches of trades unions to sponsor marchers helps build the necessary links between the unemployed and the labour movement.

We need an unemployed workers' movement that fights for a place to meet, has clear demands, and which breaks the isolation of the dole queue by seeking to unite the unemployed with the trade unions.

This is what Socialist Challenge supporters should be arguing for on this year's Right to Work march.

For details of the Right to Work march, on 1 to 5 September, sponsorship forms for local trade unionists, collection sheets and letters appealing for support write to: Right to Work Campaign, 265 Seven Sisters Rd, London N4. Registration for march: 50p.

LIVERPOOL TO BLACKPOOL
MARCH
FOR THE
RIGHT TO
WORK
SEPT 1st - 5th

Teachers conference

Education under attack

A FEW weeks ago the Socialist Teachers Alliance and Rank and File organised a conference on education in the Midlands. It was attended by over 40 people and marked a solid beginning to the fightback which will be necessary in education over the next year.

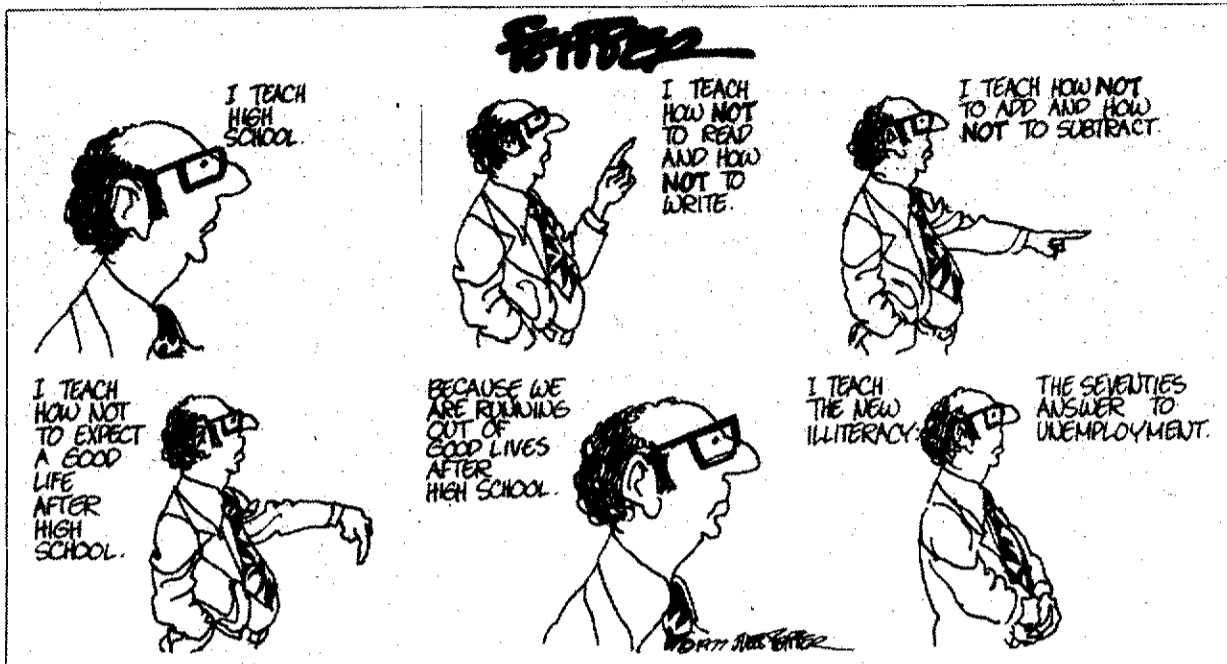
Ken Jones (STA) argued that Tory education policy is not just a programme of cuts. It is an attempt to turn back the educational clock, and to attack the advances of the past few years. The ideas of 'equality of educational opportunity' are now a dead letter.

Positive governmental support for selective education, the likely introduction of widespread testing, the educational effect of the cuts—all these point to an educational policy in which the schools play a role as the legitimisers of success and failure.

Glyn Ford (Labour Councillor and member of Tameside Education Committee) spoke about ways in which selection can be introduced through the back door. The pattern in areas which were already comprehensive was unlikely to be a head-on assault to re-establish grammar schools and the eleven plus.

More likely we will see through the publication of exam results and use of 'parental choice', the gradual development of a hierarchy of schools, grading down from well-resourced suburban schools which are grammar in all but name, through to inner-city 'sink' schools which are essentially secondary moderns. He argued for a massive public campaign to explain the comprehensive ideal and to win positive support from working class parents.

Throughout the conference a number of themes were evident. Firstly we have to combine defence



and attack. Defence of existing educational gains, and attack—continuing the fight for a socialist alternative in education. For instance it is not sufficient merely to oppose cuts. We must demonstrate that the implementation of the cuts affects working class children and their education disproportionately.

Secondly, the severity of the attack over the next period will cause huge problems for the leadership of the NUT. Their traditional ideas and methods of struggle will prove inadequate. Already, there is a large layer of teachers who are highly dissatisfied at the outcome of the 'action' over salaries.

There are major opportunities for the left to put forward demands and tactics which can command wide support. This will have to stress that

only effective collective action can defend education, and the need for a fight based on working with other trade unions.

Thirdly, there is going to be a massive working class response to the policies of the Thatcher government. Our task is to make education an issue in that fight back. This means a constant policy of taking educational issues to the working class both through the unions and through propaganda aimed at parents and the community. There is often a naive belief among working class parents that the grammar schools system provided opportunities for individual working class children to 'make it'.

This can lead to opposition to comprehensivisation and progressive methods in general. Socialist teachers have a special task to develop and

explain educational objectives which can provide a real and useful education for working class children.

The next major step will be national conference 'Education Under Attack' being organised jointly by the Socialist Teachers Alliance, Rank & File, Socialist Education Association on 10/11 November. The main speakers will include Stuart Hall and Caroline Benn. The conference promises to attract over 500 teachers and be a real forum in which to discuss and organise the fightback.

• For more details of conference contact: Education Conference Organising Group, c/o 13 Bloomfield Rd, London N6.

Transport leaders — big words, small actions

By Pat Sikorski

DURING the biennial delegate conference of the Transport and General Workers' Union earlier this month, two incidents illustrated the present strategy and tactics of the Communist Party in the trade unions, and the way in which those tactics neatly dovetail with those of the union leadership.

In response to the Tories' anti-union proposals, five branches had put up motions to protect the right to picket. The TGWU's general secretary, Harry Urwin, payed a special visit to standing orders.

His message was this: withdraw your resolution in favour of the general executive council's emergency motion on the defence of trade union rights so that 'we' will be able to go to Prior and say that there is no case for special legislation. 'We' have our own codes and can police 'our' rank and file.

The result was that these branch motions were withdrawn in favour of the executive's call to 'urge the TUC to mobilise maximum trade union resistance' to attacks on basic union rights.

The CP mounted no opposition to this, either in standing orders or on conference floor.

It was two days later, on the last day of the conference, that Mick Costello, the CP's industrial organiser, wrote in a full-page article in the Morning Star that 'the lessons of the fight against previous such laws has shown that more than voicing demands on the TUC is needed.'

Correctly, Costello argues that there must be no repeat of the 'dillying and dallying' that the TUC



exhibited around the Industrial Relations Act.

'To make sure of this,' he wrote, 'individual unions and organisations at every level must go into battle right now.'

'Battle', however, means giving 'notice' of 'non-co-operation'. 'Resolutions calling for resistance must flood into head offices.'

There are no calls for mass solidarity now with the members of the National Union of Journalists on strike to defend their closed shop or for mass action to defend the EGA

and other hospitals from closure. We are left simply with putting demands on the TUC.

Only by a decisive break with the present tactics of the trade union leadership, together with those of the CP which provide the former with a 'left' cover, can the rank and file start fighting back.

A decisive break certainly means building the most massive lobby of the TUC but it also means a lot more.

Every fight against speeds up, job loss, closures, for more pay, against attacks on trade union rights comes

straight up against the Tories. Each and every one of these struggles has to be supported by the maximum solidarity by way of picketing and industrial action—locally, regionally, and nationally.

For example, an occupation against closure of an unprofitable firm under the Tories rules out the intervention of the NEB or any individual entrepreneur. It must mean production under workers' control and a fight throughout that section of industry for workers' control.

In the TGWU conference's discussion on pay, Moss Evans reaffirmed the union's commitment to unfettered free collective bargaining, but refused to fix any figure of percentage to the claim in order not to tie the hands of the negotiators.

Get what's possible, in other words, but without the kind of fight needed to ensure that it's not little or nothing.

Instead of a real fight against redundancies and unemployment and for the 35-hour week, the CP supported the adoption of 'strict selective import controls'—thus exporting unemployment abroad in the national interest.

Similarly on the cuts in public expenditure, the CP puts forward no strategy for a fight now.

It will be up to the rank and file militants to organise the broadest possible, democratically-run trade union based bodies to start the fight back and give a lead to the tens of thousands of shop stewards who are looking for a way to fight but are getting no lead from the 'left' bureaucracy and their friends in the CP.

Tory cuts Where the Joseph axe will fall

By Tom Marlowe

WALES has narrowly beaten Scotland as the top priority for the Tory axe.

In the cuts in regional aid announced last week by Industry Secretary Sir Keith Joseph, 44 of the special development areas and development areas to be downgraded are in Wales while 41 are in Scotland.

But Scotland could still come out on top, thanks to the Tories' plans announced on Monday for cuts in the shipbuilding industry. These cuts will also hit the North of England particularly hard.

Over a quarter of all unemployed shipbuilding workers are already found in the North-east, and the North as a whole had 25 areas downgraded in the regional aid cutbacks.

Of all the regions, the North has already the highest unemployment rate, with a June figure of 7.8 per cent of the population unemployed.

The idea of special development and development areas is to bribe industrialists to set up factories in the areas concerned. Under the schemes, government money is available for companies' new buildings or new plant and machinery.

For special development areas, 22 per cent of the cost of these items is available. For development areas the figures is 20 per cent.

In addition, removal grants of up to 80 per cent of the costs incurred are

available to companies moving an undertaking into assisted areas.

And if the company wants to use a government factory then it can do so free in a special development area for the first five years, and in a development area for the first two.

The Tory cuts means that in over a hundred areas these bribes are now being withdrawn.

It is difficult to calculate exactly what the effect on employment will be as a result of the downgrading; certainly the hopes of the previous Labour government that these assorted grants would reduce employment in the areas concerned to the national average have proved unfounded.

Many of the grants went to small businesses employing relatively few people and the incentives had more of a beneficial effect on private sector profitability than they had on employment.

Nevertheless what the cuts do ensure is that the areas chiefly affected are now openly being thrown to the wolves by Joseph.

The hope of attracting new industries to replace the old declining ones like shipbuilding in areas such as Scotland and the North-east is finally being abandoned.

Joseph's message is a return to the capitalism of the 1930s; these areas, he is saying, must sink or swim by themselves. And without a determined fightback, sink they undoubtedly will.

2. North
Unemployment: 7.8%
SDAs downgraded: 17
DAs downgraded: 8

4. North-west
Unemployment: 6.5%
SDAs downgraded: 1
DAs downgraded: 4

5. Wales
Unemployment: 7.2%
SDAs downgraded: 20
DAs downgraded: 24

7. Yorkshire & Humberside
Unemployment: 5.2%
SDAs downgraded: 0
DAs downgraded: 3

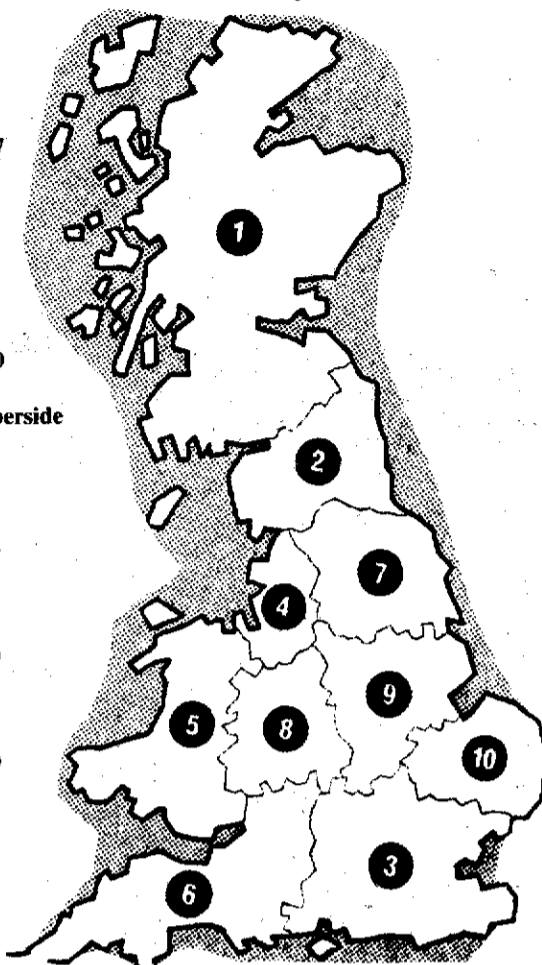
8. W.Midlands
Unemployment: 5.0%
SDAs downgraded: 0
DAs downgraded: 0

9. E.Midlands
Unemployment: 4.5%
SDAs downgraded: 0
DAs downgraded: 0

10. East Anglia
Unemployment: 4.1%
SDAs downgraded: 0
DAs downgraded: 0

6. South-west
Unemployment: 5.4%
SDAs downgraded: 0
DAs downgraded: 2

1. Scotland
Unemployment: 7.3%
SDAs downgraded: 1
DAs downgraded: 40



SDA = Special Development Area

DA = Development Area



PIERS CORBYN — KEEP HIM OUT

THE appeal of housing militant Piers Corbyn against a 28-day prison sentence passed on him for his part in the Huntley Street Defence Campaign will be heard at Knightsbridge Crown Court, Hans Crescent, Knightsbridge on Tuesday, 14 August.

Piers' co-defendant, Jim Patton, has his trial on 2 August at Marylebone Magistrates Court.

Strong pickets are required to stop one jailing, and possibly another, under the infamous 'Criminal Trespass Law'. Both pickets start at 10am.

...and don't forget the Labour axe

By Tom Litterick
Former Labour MP for Birmingham Selly Oak

NO ONE has been impoverished — yet — by the Tory government and however confident we may be that many people will be I suggest we wait until it has happened.

In the meantime we have quite enough to discuss of the Labour government's record on poverty to keep us fruitfully occupied for some time to come.

For example, in 1974, there were 2.67m people on supplementary benefits in Britain. These were people who, in official terms, are poverty stricken and we can reasonably take that figure of 2.67m as part of the inheritance of poverty received by the Labour government when it took office.

In 1979, there are more than 4m people claiming supplementary benefits, which is one way of saying that during the Wilson/Callaghan administration, something like 1.42m people became, in official terms, impoverished.

Impoverished

We could reasonably ask ourselves who these newly impoverished people are and how they became impoverished and what the connections are between their poverty and the policies pursued by the Labour government.

Secondly, in 1974 there were, approximately, 500,000 people unemployed. In March 1979, there were almost 1.52m people unemployed, which is one way of saying that during the Wilson/Callaghan administration, a million people were made unemployed and, presumably, poorer.

Thirdly, we know that during three of the five years of the Wilson/

Callaghan administration, real wages fell, which is to say that during most of the life of the last Labour government the standard of living of the working class — and particularly that of the low-paid working class — was reduced. They got poorer.

We know that this was a deliberate result of policy decisions made by the last government.

However bad the Tories may be, they have a long way to go yet before their contribution to the sum total of human misery equals that of the last Labour government.

Crime

Nor should we forget that every time we accuse the Tories of some unspeakable crime against the working class they can now simply point to the record of the Labour government by way of reply. 'Me-too-ism' is a double edged weapon and it will be brought into play against us.

If we allow our energies to be diverted into simply Tory bashing we will damage ourselves in several ways. In the first place the public, who are not stupid, will recognise it for what it is; the kettle calling the pot black and they will properly despise us for it.

Secondly, we will, by default, allow the right wing — who, let us not forget, controlled the last government — to represent themselves to the movement and to the people as the friends of the down-trodden and the exploited.

Reidentify

This, in turn, will enable them to reidentify themselves with the Labour Party, whose policies they emphatically repudiated when they held office.

It will prevent us examining the

record of the Wilson/Callaghan governments and of the individuals who made up those governments. It is only by subjecting the Labour government's record to rigorous scrutiny that we stand any chance of understanding our mistakes and taking steps to prevent another repetition of these mistakes.

If we allow ourselves the brainless indulgence of 'ya boo' politics while we are in Opposition we will certainly go into the next election with a programme dictated by the leader, whoever he or she may be, which is to say we will be going into the next election unarmed and hoping against hope that the Tories will win it for us, with nothing to offer the people but a variation on the clapped out theme of 'Jim Will Fix It'. That is not good enough.

Pathetic

Having fought one election as a candidate apologising for social democrats and being forced to use the pathetic argument that it would have been worse if the Tories had been in power, I have no wish to repeat the experience.

It is time the party woke up to the fact that most of its unelected leaders do not have the courage of the party's convictions. If the party is not prepared to do this it must be prepared to accept that Labour's next victory, when it comes, will be as big a disaster as its defeat.

• This article is taken from 'Labour Weekly'

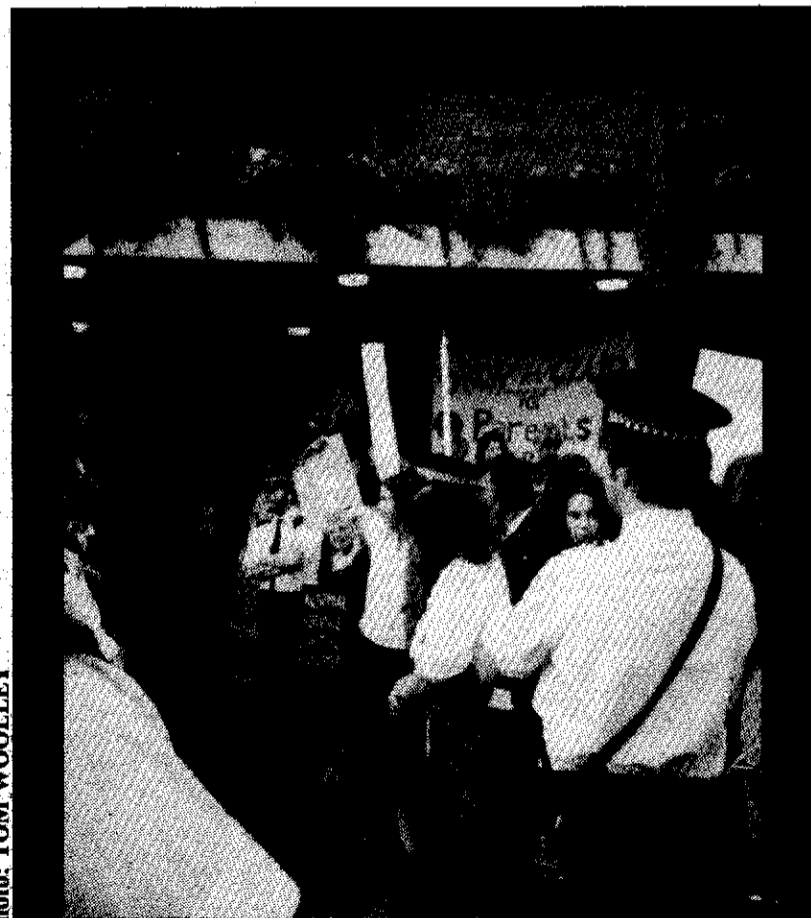


Photo: TOM WOOLLEY

SEVERAL hundred people demonstrated against government cuts outside Brent town hall in Wembley, NW London, last Friday, writes Tom Woolley. The Labour group on the council was due to meet to discuss how it would respond to central government pressure to cut local authority spending and as each councillor arrived they were greeted with chants of 'No cuts'.

Representatives of many local organisations spoke from the town hall steps about the need to fight this latest attack on local services which will hit the old and young hardest.

Represented were the NUT, Brent Pensioners, Task Force, the Drop in Club (a pre-school group), Brent Campaign Against the Cuts and many others. The Labour group agreed to meet a deputation, but NUT and Brent Trades Council refused to allow anyone from the Brent Campaign Against the Cuts (BCAC) to accompany them.

Next meeting of BCAC, Monday, 30 July, 4.30pm at 28A Fortunategate Road, NW10.

EVENTS

DURING the summer, while Socialist Challenge remains at 12 pages, SC events only will be advertised in this column. Deadline: 5pm Friday before publication.

HACKNEY SC group meeting: 'Defend Charter 77', with speaker from Labour Focus on Eastern Europe. Thur 26 July, 7.30pm. Britannia pub, Marc Street, E8.

OLDHAM SC group meeting Thur 26 July at 8pm: 'The struggle in textiles'. The Gardners Arms, Middleton Road, Westwood.

NALGO — National meeting for all IMG members and Socialist Challenge supporters (by invitation) in the union. Manchester Sat 15 and Sun 16 Sept (till 2pm Sun). Pooled fare. Venue to be arranged. Further details in National Briefing, or ring the Centre.

NUPE NATIONAL Aggregate — for all IMG members, including Scotland. Sun, 9 Sept, noon at National Centre. Pooled fare. Further details in National Briefing or ring Centre.

NORTH EAST coach to 12 August Irish Demo: depart Newcastle central station 6.30am (phone 735979 for bookings). Depart Middlesbrough Teesside Poly 7.30am and Stockton Odeon 7.40am (phone 87699 for bookings).

REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST Tendency public meeting: 'The Irish War In Britain — Fight the Prevention of Terrorism Act'. Friday 3 August 7.30pm. Speaker: Alan Harding. Dalston Labour Club, Dalston Lane, London E7. Adm. 20p

WOULD anyone interested in forming a radical photographers' club or association with a view to building a conference to discuss how we use photographs in the class struggle, contact Dave Swingle on 021-784 8896, or c/o 76b Digbeth High Street, Birmingham 5.

IMPOVERISHED radical photographer requires work to enable him to finance other non-paying left-wing type jobs. Anything from photographing social events to weddings considered. Contact Dave Swingle (021-784 8869)

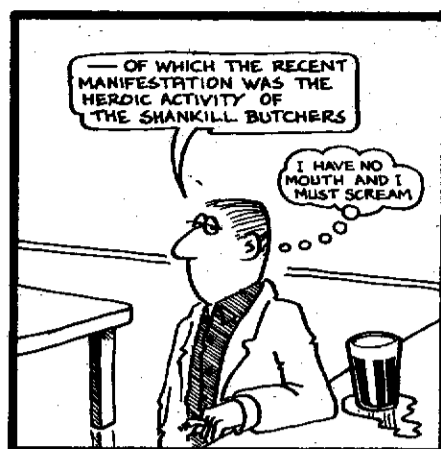
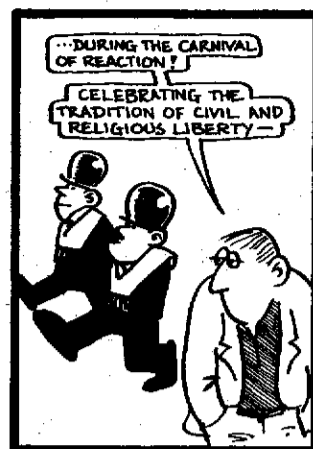
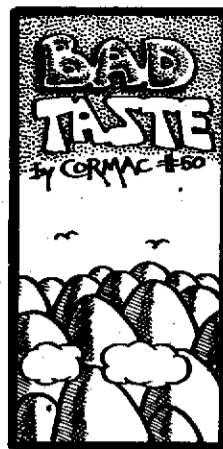
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S Forums: Fri 3 Aug: 'The Corrie Anti-Abortion Bill and its Implications'. Fri 7 Sept: 'International attacks on Abortion Rights'. Fri 5 Oct: 'Who Are the Anti-Abortionists?'. 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Organised by International Contraception, Abortion and Sterilisation Campaign.

'PATRIOT GAME' Thurs 9 Aug, Clapham Common Library (Clapham Common North Side) 7.30pm. Adm: 75p. Organised by South London UTO.

ROOM AVAILABLE in North-west London from 13 to 28 Aug (inclusive). Reply to Box 1866, Soc Chall.

BOOKS for Southern African comrades — money desperately needed for this vital field of internationalist activity. Or send any books you can spare. Books for Southern Africa, Box No 102, c/o Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1.

ENTRIES 5p per word. Display £2 per col inch. Deadline: 5pm Friday before publication. Payment in advance.



All out 12 August

British Army morale at a new low

By Geoff Bell

ON 12 August tens of thousands of demonstrators in Ireland, London, and elsewhere will be marching through their respective cities demanding the British troops to get out of the North of Ireland.

For the troops themselves, the tenth anniversary of their being sent on to the streets of the North of Ireland will be marked by the greatest crisis of morale yet experienced in those ten years.

This is underlined by a report in the Daily Telegraph on 18 July written by the paper's defence correspondent, Clare Hollingworth.

Defence correspondents of the Daily Telegraph always have a particularly close association with top military thinking, so at one level Hollingworth's article can almost be taken as an unofficial statement of British Army chiefs.

Indeed the article in question deals with the recent appointment of General Sir Edwin Bramall as the new Chief of the General Staffs. Bramall, notes Hollingworth, needs to 'get to grips with the number one Army problem — Northern Ireland'.

The Army's problem is twofold, says Hollingworth: 'First, Nato allies in Europe are slowly raising their voices in complaint because Britain is not fulfilling its commitments in the central sector — Western Germany.

'Indeed, Britain's contribution to

Nato is short of anything from 11,000 to 14,000 men absent on duty in Northern Ireland'.

'But another factor is that the troops, and even more important their discontented wives, are reportedly growing tired of serving in Northern Ireland....

'There are now men who have made as many as eight tours to Northern Ireland and they are not happy about going yet again.'

So 'unhappy' about the prospect of visiting the North have some soldiers proved that they have gone to extraordinary lengths to avoid the posting.

An example is Lance-corporal Michael Parkinson who in December last year demanded to be sent to jail for a string of motoring offences so that he would be thrown out of the Army.

Parkinson's lawyer explained that his client 'had two more years to serve but could not face another spell in Ulster'.

There are also increasing signs of individual soldiers cracking up while on duty in the North of Ireland. At the end of June, for example, an 18-year-old member of the 1st Battalion the Kings Regiment was taken into custody after going absent without leave in Belfast's Andersonstown and shooting at random at a group of men, one of whom was badly injured.

Another soldier was arrested only



I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE...THE BANK JOBS...THE BREAK-INS...THE HIT-JOBS ON THE RUN ALL THE TIME...JOE, YOU'VE GOT TO QUIT THE S.A.S., AND JOIN THE HOUSEHOLD CAVALRY.

last week after a 12-year-old-girl was shot dead in her home during a visit by the soldier.

The most famous case was the death in March this year of Trooper Edward Maggs who was shot by fellow soldiers after he had gone berserk and fired round after round on his own men, killing a corporal in the process.

Maggs' father commented: 'I only know that this would never have happened if my son had not been sent back to Ulster.'

To add to the Army's problem, the recent large pay increase has not proved the incentive they had hoped for recruitment. Last month Lord

TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND!



SUNDAY AUGUST 12 SPEAKERS CORNER 2.30PM

SELF DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE!

Strathcona, the Tories' Minister of State for Defence, admitted the Army was still experiencing 'serious shortfalls' in manpower.

All this re-emphasises the importance of the 12 August demonstration in London.

A large turn-out on the march would not only increase the pressure on the Tory government and those in the Labour movement who continue to back Britain's presence in Ireland, it would also add to the growing demoralisation in the Army itself by showing that there are significant number of people who are now willing to take to the streets to demand that they get out of Ireland.

Peoples' Democracy to join Fourth International

By Steve Potter and Tim Mohun
THE IRISH revolutionary socialist organisation Peoples Democracy is to seek membership of the Fourth International.

This unanimous-supported decision was one outcome of PD's conference held in Dublin at the beginning of the month.

It is just nine months since the new PD organisation was established as a fused organisation of the old PD and the Movement for a Socialist Republic, the then Irish Section of the Fourth International.

Since the fusion, PD has played an important role in a whole series of activities both in the North and South of Ireland.

It was an initiative of the organisation which led to the establishment, at the turn of the year, of the United Burntoller Committee whose main activity was to organise a march which coincided with the tenth anniversary of the civil rights protest.

The march and the committee attracted support from the majority of anti-imperialist organisations in the Six Counties.

The RACs are the main focus for the campaign for political status for the H-Block and other prisoners.

Building the RACs was one of the main objectives of the Bernadette Devlin-McAliskey candidature in the

EEC elections. PD was the only political organisation to sponsor the campaign, although many activists from RACs as well as individual Republicans and socialists gave their support to the anti-repression platform on which Bernadette was standing.

Unfortunately Provisional Sinn Fein vigorously opposed Devlin-McAliskey, advocating a boycott.

Despite this, new RACs were established out of the election campaign and this, plus the 34,000 votes received, did more than anything to establish PD as a force to be reckoned with in the anti-imperialist movement.

The election activities also gave a powerful boost to the PD campaign for an all-Ireland conference against repression.

This 32-county perspective was one of the main themes running through the discussions at PD's own conference, particularly in relation to the women's movement.

The organisation has fought for a mass action response to the attempt of the government in the South to cripple the activities of the family planning clinics in opposing severe restrictions on contraception facilities. PD has also argued for a 32-county wide federation of the women's movement.

This 32-county approach has also been marked in PD's attitude towards the student movement, in which the Student Campaign against Repression had scored significant advances in all the major Irish colleges.

PD members have significantly contributed to this development.

A major discussion at the conference was on the economic crisis. The main theme of this was the need to challenge the working class's reformist leadership.

The main area single out for increased attention by PD was building an alternative in the unions to those who supported national wages agreement with the Fianna Fail government.

This priority was not confined to the South. A rise of militancy was noted among Northern workers, particularly those in the public service.

Speaker after speaker stressed that work in the unions had to be on a 32-county basis and had to include, in pride of place, the anti-repression campaign. The absence of activity around such a campaign was the main critique at the conference concerning the Socialist Labour Party.

This party, established two years ago as a split off from the Labour Party by a number of people including MP Noel Brown and trade

union leader Matt Merrigan, had promising beginnings.

Supporters of PD's paper Socialist Republic had tried to win the party to an active role in building action against repression, on the women's movement and in support of trade union struggles.

While some of these positions had been formally adopted, in practice the SLP leaders had sabotaged such activity in favour of vote-catching stunts. This strategy failed dismally.

It was noted that Socialist Republic supporter Joe Harrington, standing in Limerick, scored qualitatively higher votes in the recent local government elections than other candidates who had adopted the SLP leadership's approach and who had all received dismally low votes.

Accordingly, shortly after the PD conference the Republican Socialist Tendency in the SLP, led by Socialist Republic supporters, resigned from the SLP and joined PD.

Peoples Democracy has increased its size and geographical implantation since the fusion, and although the organisation continues to face problems it also faces the type of opportunities which the confidence and unity displayed at the conference suggest the organisation is well equipped to take.

AFRICAN STUDY GROUP VOL 1 NO 4



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THE FI DEBATES INDOCHINA:

GET YOUR COPY NOW Has Ernest Mandel strayed away from the camp of the working class on the question of Indo-China? Mary-Alice Waters, Gus Horowitz, Fred Felman and Steve Clark think he has. Why not find out for yourself.

Read the special issue of Intercontinental Press in which Mary-Alice, Gus, Fred, and Steve reply to Mandel's polemic which appeared on 9 April.

Send 30p plus 15p p&p to: PO Box 50, London N1.

After the Royal Court Theatre benefit Facing the audience of the future

IF YOU were at the Royal Court Theatre in Sloane Square on the evening of 15 July, you would have been watching some rather unusual goings on.

A reggae band, theatre groups, teachers, militants, residents of Southall, writers and poets took the stage to express their anger in words and music at the death of Blair Peach and the behaviour of the Special Patrol Group.

You would have been forgiven for thinking that the theatre was under occupation rather than that a cultural evening was in progress.

The evening presented a rather different kind of culture than we are used to. Debate, theatre and music interwove resulting in an exhilarating political event, which culminated in a headlong rush from the theatre to burn an effigy of McNee, police commissioner, on Sloane Square.

As the police sirens began to converge on central London we knew we were fighting back.

GAVIN RICHARDS, director of Belt and Braces theatre company, had a lot to do with the success of the evening. JUDE WOODWARD talked to him about the significance of the event.

“The whole thing started when some people in the Royal Court theatre, who were obviously sympathetic towards the issue, approached the management to offer the theatre for a benefit for the Blair Peach Memorial Fund.

They were persuaded to offer it to us for one evening free of charge, and the 'Friends of Blair Peach' accepted the challenge.

Basically there were two views about what to do with the evening, though they weren't completely contradictory.

We could have done an Amnesty International-type benefit, where you get lots of prestigious people to come and do turns.

The night would be used to draw in the liberal intelligentsia. The Royal Court is a theatre with a strong following in that layer.

We could have done it as a straight money raiser, charging £10 a seat, and playing on the consciences of a rich audience to give more money.

But I think the death of Blair Peach has had a real effect on the people in the ANL. Lots of famous people weren't coming forward to do it. And I thought a lot of other people were really angry.

The effect of his death has been good and bad, making people show where they stand and shocking the liberals.

I wanted a unifying evening to bulldoze through the contradictions. There were some well-known people but they had to understand the need for radical change, not just be humanitarian.

I thought that the main support for the evening would come, not from the liberal intelligentsia, but from working class people drawn by Blair Peach's death into taking part.

And people did come from Southall to watch and take part. Misty, the reggae band, brought some of their following. We got support from Hackney and the East End, where Blair worked.

Also we brought events more in line with the concerts at the Rainbow on Friday and Saturday, so it stood as a whole weekend rather than a one-off cultural evening at the Royal Court. I think that was important.

What we did in the end ran right across the spectrum. It became an event rather than a traditional theatrical evening.

The importance of this is that it demonstrated that normal definitions of culture break down as the political climate heats up.

You find writers, musicians, actors responding together and mixing forms to generate the energy required by the situation. They can't do that on their own at home being a writer, or in a jazz club just playing jazz.

And you find that a building that for years has had a very elitist following can suddenly be expropriated and used by people that you would never normally find there.

In Paris, in '68, Barrault's theatre was thrown open to the students and demonstrations emanated from it. It became a cultural meeting house.

Culture and debate can cross over and the debate determines culture. When it is not determined from on high it becomes a democratic forum. The most democratic forum you can find.

It's how self-expression happens among the mass of people there. It's culture not packaged and presented, but coming out of the situation.

That was there in embryonic form on Sunday night.

Those companies that are basing themselves among sections of the community in active



Misty at the Royal Court. Inset Gavin Richards.

opposition to all kinds of oppression have to break down definitions of culture.

We're just artists and we have to respond in the forms we can best communicate in because there's a demand for us.

When the demand isn't there and we are left isolated to define our own forms of self-expression obviously we find those forms defined for us by bourgeois forces.

So on Sunday night there was Lynn Farleigh — a very accomplished actress — performing an intense dramatic monologue requiring silence and concentration. It came after a very witty and uplifting speech by Paul Foot, coming after six minutes of film of the police at Grunwicks.

That had followed 20 minutes of fantastic reggae from Misty. And there was no feeling that there was a jolt. Those things belonged together.

A highly regarded writer like Edward Bond was speaking his own poetry after a 13 year old from Ealing. Again that appeared to be natural, which of course it should be, and is, but generally it wouldn't appear so.

I should mention the contribution of the witnesses from Southall. 20 people or so sat on a stage relating things that had happened to them and describing, more articulately than any trained speaker, what it's like to be living in the centre of an aggressive, military encampment.

Who can tell me whether that was theatre, news, propaganda or what? What you must say is that it was what we needed to know and again it didn't appear unnatural in the context of the evening.

Politically it was also important as an evening as it signalled the end of the mourning

for Blair Peach and brought forward the demands for the disbandment of the SPG and an end to the show trials of the Southall residents.

It's all part of the fight back against the terrifying growth of the strong state in this country — the speed of it.

Blair Peach won't have died in vain if the fact of his death helps to mobilise people sufficiently for a few victories that stem that tide.

A £1000 of conscience money is not so important as raising political demands in a cultural context.

If culture is pushed aside as part of our general response it's of great assistance to the growth of Stalinist forms of struggle. That's because culture is the chief guardian of real socialist democracy.

It's value should be recognised by the left. In the future we'll be fighting a massive battle against the Tory anti-union laws. In this context culture must be used.

Culture can tell the truth much less guardedly than in a straight political context. It can be controversial and yet much less alienating.

For Sunday night a lot of friends got together to help organise it. It was a real collective thing. It was mainly people around Belt and Braces and connections through that.

We contacted the writers, who'd also been contacted by the Committee. Collectively we decided on what kind of political issues and demands we wanted to cover and take up.

People were left to make up their minds about what they wanted to do — skits, serious

drama, music.

We settled on a strong finale, with Mike Carver doing his song about Blair Peach with the Belt and Braces band. They hadn't met before, but they got on and gave it a strong end.

Basically I decided to give a lot of time to the witnesses, to let the whole thing run over time, I made all kinds of decisions which you don't normally make, giving the audience a hard time, disregarding style and expertise. It was an event rather than a neatly constructed theatrical evening.

In a way that comes from my experience with this company and other companies before. We've played to a whole lot of different kinds of political audiences and situations — a trade union, trades council, a women's group.

You realise how narrowly defined normal political theatre is. It's a real shock to come up against other forms of self-expression like rock music.

We have to use people who have more experience in 'Variety' more than people with experience of straight theatre.

When you put yourself in opposition to capitalist society those categories become meaningless, and when your audience is in opposition too they make big demands which conventional theatre can't meet.

If you face the audience of the future you have to have a whole different set of skills. You are not talking to a roomful of specialists but large numbers of people. You have to have the skills to meet this.

You end up thinking about circus and rock concerts — the politics of spectacle — rather than introspective thoughts about psychology.

Spectacles — that's the path that so many have gone down. That was the early training of Brecht, the German producers of the 20s, the Russians. Joan Littlewood — she finally came unstuck, or at least her company drifted into the West End.

She came at a time when the working class movement was at its lowest ebb in the fifties. What she succeeded in doing at that time was monumental when you set it in context.

So it's a well trodden path when you're facing large conscious audiences.

It's ten years since Alan Plater and Alex Glasgow (who was at the Royal Court on Sunday) put on *Close the Coal House Door* for coachloads of miners.

That movement is more disparate now but is still widespread. It depends on whether the political movement picks up and gives that disparate movement some cohesion.

There's a real sense of flux going on in the touring companies because the energy that brought them into existence was the energy that brought down Heath.

Five years of demoralisation under Labour virtually drained that energy away. But small groups, particularly of women are making the running in this area. And Black theatre groups doing plays about Sus, and the PTA. That's the energy now.

It's appeared in music too, notably in Rock Against Racism.

The burning effigy of McNee in Sloane Square, that stunt showed that theatre can carry on beyond the walls. I think people felt really liberated when they got outside. We weren't determining things anymore, it was theirs. We gave them the props and they did the acting.

MURDER OF BLAIR PEACH

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Socialist Challenge

Southall show trials- should the defendants boycott the courts?

THE man who killed Blair Peach roams the streets a free man. He wears a police uniform and continues to defend 'law and order'.

The British state, with a centuries-old experience of cover-ups, is soon going to say that it can't identify the murderer. Or, if the going gets rough, name the killer and talk about 'rotten apples'.

But for the people of Southall the agony they experienced on 23 April 1979 seems to know no end. The trials of the Southall 340 have been transferred to Barnet. The Defence Committee is convinced that scores of people will be sent to prison and fines and costs will total £75,000.

This is Hammer McNeen's way of teaching the Southall blacks a lesson. Meanwhile many defendants and their lawyers have been totally shocked by the way the magistrates court operates. Most of the political prisoners have never seen the inside of a court. Some of them had a few illusions about British justice. These are now being rapidly dispelled.

The magistrates virtually ignore the evidence of the defence lawyers. They are there to punish the defendants. The total lack of publicity by the mass media helps them to get away with murder.

If the *Daily Mirror* and *The Guardian* were to send reporters to cover the trials and simply report the arguments of both sides it would make some difference. But the media is closely linked to the establishment and more often than not, prefers to keep quiet.

Meanwhile, a whole group of defendants are seriously discussing whether it makes any difference to hire lawyers and go to the trouble of getting witnesses.

There is a growing feeling that a boycott of the courts might well be a useful tactic to draw attention to magisterial tyranny and police-court collaboration.

At the same time money is desperately needed by the Defence Committee. Speakers can also be provided to speak at meetings. For details ring: 01-574-4920.



Vishnu Sharma, President Indian Workers Association Southall — wants the trials stopped.

OUR FUND DRIVE 'Lilo' Galante and your money



It's your money or our life.

Who dares now to doubt that the Western World faces an economic depression the like of which hasn't been seen for 40 years?

The final, conclusive, overwhelming proof came last week in the US of A. No, not the creeping insanity of the peanut president, not even the news of impending crisis in the Florida tomato industry; no, the final proof came in the death of Carmine 'Lilo' Galante, slain with a cigar in his mouth while lurching in a backyard of a Brooklyn restaurant.

Our first reaction to the death of the Mafia boss was that the armed struggle had finally arrived in New York and that justice had caught up with Galante for his killing in 1943 of the anti-fascist newspaper editor Carlo Tresco. But all such ultra-left fantasies have now been dispelled enabling a more conjuncturally correct analysis to be drawn.

This being that, as we all know, from watching old movies, such killings were a trademark of the years of the last depression and that accordingly history is repeating itself: Mafia killings = depression.

And if that doesn't strike you as scientific enough, well you have only yourself to blame.

Those of us on the paper who attempt to explain the ways of the world to our audience are suffering from an acute, even desperate lack of resources.

We need money like we have never needed it before, not least to assure our relaunch as a 16 page paper in a couple of weeks. So here's looking at you kids, make us an offer we can't refuse.

Our thanks this week to:

Teeside SCG	£ 5.00
Hemel Hempstead IMG	25.00
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D. Plowman	3.00
Brighton SC sponsored walk	53.65
P. Sterin	10.00
Aron	5.00
Camden IMG	31.04

Week's Total £187.09

Cumulative total £10,692.35

Defend Bosco Fernandes!

BOSCO is a member of the Socialist Workers Student Organisation (SWSO). He is also an official of the Overseas Students' Society at Stirling University. For both reasons he has been victimised.

The following letter has been sent out to all student unions by Gareth Allen, Overseas Students Officer at Stirling University:

"I am writing to you because I urgently need your help in a particularly disturbing case that has deeply shocked the students and many academic staff here at Stirling University. The last term has seen an unprovoked victimisation by the University authorities, of a prominent overseas student, Bosco Fernandes, which has resulted in his expulsion from the Honours Degree Programme and therefore effectively from the University.

The implications of this case are all the more worrying in the light of the University's decision not to admit any overseas students for the next two years.

The disturbing racial overtones revealed in the University's decision regarding Mr. Fernandes and the circumstances surrounding his case are a national scandal and will certainly be a major issue in the coming academic year.

Mr. Fernandes' case will play a critical role in

the national overseas students campaign and is a vital test case with regard to overseas students rights. Therefore, it is imperative that we win this case.

It is now clear that the campaign to get Mr. Fernandes re-installed can only be successful if it is waged on both a national as well as local level. NUS has taken up this case but we cannot win without the help of individual colleges.

It is vital that you help us apply pressure on the University and I therefore urge you to either send a telegram or write to: The Principal, University of Stirling, Stirling, FK9 4LA to express your condemnation and concern about the University's barbarous decision on overseas students:

1. Not to admit any incoming overseas students for the next two years.

2. The disturbing implications and unacceptable circumstances surrounding the expulsion of Bosco Fernandes and to demand his immediate re-installment into the Honours Degree Programme.

It now does appear that in the coming year Stirling will become a focal point, a test case, as far as the overseas student issue is concerned. I will keep you informed of any developments."

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