

Socialist Challenge
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ENGINEERING: National fraction Sat 7 February.
MISSILES: National fraction Sun 25 January.
SOCIALIST CHALLENGE: National fraction for all SC organisers Sat 17 January.
POSITIVE ACTION: Day school Sat 31 January.
WOMEN'S LIBERATION: National fraction Sat 7 February.
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Storm signs for '81

TWO election victories should govern the thoughts of British socialists in 1981: that of Ronald Reagan as President of the USA, and Michael Foot as leader of the Labour Party. Both signal changes on the political map that it would be perilous to ignore.

Over a decade ago Republicans and Democrats found common cause conducting the war in Vietnam. They have not been slow to collaborate in promoting the new war drive. The 1980 presidential campaign demonstrated the same convergence in domestic policy. 'Monetarism' was the creed of both the candidates. This unanimity bears witness to a new rightward shift in the politics of the imperialist bourgeoisie as a whole. It was heralded by the enthusiastic support enjoyed by Margaret Thatcher. It was consummated by the endorsement given to Ronald Reagan by American big business.

Game

Reagan's victory will hasten American policy further to the right. The Pentagon's campaign to double US war spending in five years will receive unabashed support from the White House. Her European allies will likewise be called upon to dramatically increase their contribution to the NATO war chest, regardless of the cost to the social services. The efforts of the American ruling class to gain renewed popular support for military adventures in the Third World will be aided by Reagan's 'mandate'.

While Reagan's victory marks a shift to the right in the capitalist politics of the USA (there being no other type of politics for the mass of the American working class), there is considerable opposition to the man who enters the White House on 20 January.

In the USA, small but significant numbers of men and women are beginning to distrust and reject the 'lesser evil' game offered by Republican and Democrat parties.

Enemies

But the principal enemies of Ronald Reagan will be found abroad. Fresh plans for military operations in Iran and El Salvador will face the armed vigilance of the peoples of those countries. Washington is as concerned as Moscow that the workers of Poland do not go too far. Renewed turmoil in Eastern Europe and the threat of political revolution is a high price to pay for the discomfiture of the Kremlin.

Four days after Reagan takes his seat at the oval desk, Michael Foot will doubtless be confirmed as leader of the Labour Party.

The Labour Party's Wembley conference, the third in nine months, will not end the party's present crisis. The ruling class, alarmed by the results

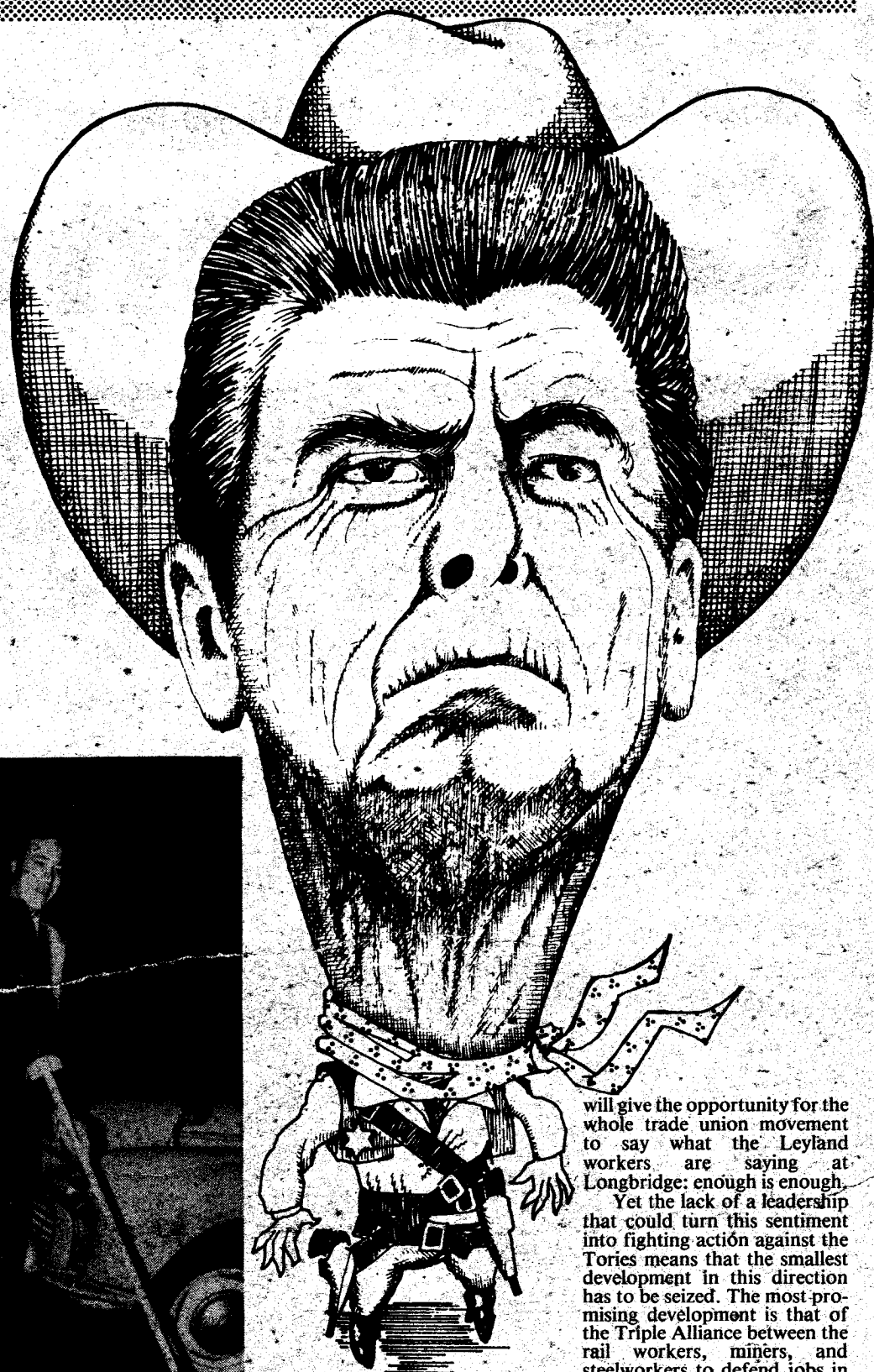


Foot and Reagan — signs of stormy times ahead

of the October conference, frightens the left with the spectre of a split in the Parliamentary Labour Party. But for the time being the trade union leaders are content to see if Michael Foot can claw back the gains made by the left last year. To derail the left, Foot has to head off the movement against unemployment and for disarmament, and campaign to bring down the Tories. Although this has been limited so far to marching at the head of demonstrations, it's a risky game.

But Foot gives such mass mobilisations extra legitimacy, shifting the whole party to the left and undermining the resistance of the right wing in the party still further. He threatens to make matters worse rather than better for the right. Yet Foot is a captive (a happy one) of the PLP, as shown by the results for the Shadow Cabinet elections when the parliamentary clique gave the Party rank and file yet another slap in the face when they refused to elect Benn or Heffer.

Both should challenge Foot in the elections under the broader franchise that will be decided at Wembley. Whether or not they do, the fight in the party will continue, not just against the manoeuvres of the right wing and the trade union



and an indictment of those who would not support them.

Much can be done to build the left wing in the labour movement. Our chief contribution to the world-wide struggle against the new Reagan leadership of the US ruling class can be made by disarming our own ruling class. The campaign against the siting of Cruise missiles in Britain and the replacement of the current Polaris missiles by Trident must hit top gear this year to prevent the installation of Cruise in 1983.

The first priority has to be given to any call for mass action on the streets. But also of critical importance is the need for the labour movement to organise the mighty forces that can bury the project once and for all.

Strength

The labour movement conference called by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, to be held in Manchester on 28 March, will greatly advance the campaign if the thousands of delegates that are expected from the labour movement take the mass action message back into the rank and file.

The slogan of 'Jobs not Bombs' will likewise inform the link that socialists will be making between the weapons drive and unemployment. The TUC week of action called for 4-11 April and the Glasgow demonstration on 21 February will be occasions for an impressive show of strength from the labour movement. They

will give the opportunity for the whole trade union movement to say what the Leyland workers are saying at Longbridge: enough is enough.

Yet the lack of a leadership that could turn this sentiment into fighting action against the Tories means that the smallest development in this direction has to be seized. The most promising development is that of the Triple Alliance between the rail workers, miners, and steelworkers to defend jobs in these industries. Already it has inspired developments such as the Sheffield conference of shop stewards to organise against the first round of the MacGregor closure plans in steel.

Such conferences will determine whether the Triple Alliance will fight or be yet another 'cripple alliance' covering another retreat by the union leaderships.

Genuine

Another challenge may be presented to the labour movement on 14 January when the Private Members' Bills are given their first reading. Once again a known anti-abortionist MP has secured the top slot. Whether or not Sainsbury goes ahead with his Bill, the Tory government will find a way to placate its right-wing base with another anti-abortion measure.

The National Abortion Campaign has planned a labour movement conference for 14 March with the backing of six national unions to commit the next Labour government to introduce positive legislation to guarantee a woman's right to choose.

On these three fronts — bombs, jobs, and abortion — the left can confront the shift to the right by the international bourgeoisie. In addition, socialists can make some steps towards building the type of new left wing in the labour movement which can overcome the problem that although Reagan is a consistent defender of the interests of the ruling class, Foot is not a consistent defender of workers interests.

Ireland

Ireland 1980:

British 'thankful' it is over'

By Geoff Bell,
in Belfast

NO BOMBS exploded in London at Xmas; no British soldiers were shot in Belfast; there were no riots in the streets of Derry.

In other words, the hunger strike by the Irish Republican prisoners ended, just in time to save the life of Sean McKenna, the first hunger striker to approach the brink of death.

The prophesied confrontation between the Republican community and the British state was thereby avoided, at least for the moment. Towards the end of the year came the news that the hunger strike may start afresh on New Year's Day.

In one way that sums up Ireland in 1980. It was a year in which more questions were asked than answered; a year when foundations were laid, but few are clear whether the building will be built, or what it will look like if it is.

Deadlock

Towards the end of the year, justifiably, it was the hunger strike which was the main preoccupation. The following comment from the Unionist *Belfast News-Letter* the day after the ending of the strike indicates the extent of that preoccupation.

'The hunger strike drama in which Republican prisoners were in deadlock with the Government until Thursday night ... reminds one of the Cuba "confrontation" between the USA and the Soviet Union a couple of decades ago.'

To those outside the north of Ireland such a comparison must appear ridiculous, yet there is no doubting the sense of deliverance many in that statelet felt at the ending of the strike.

Relief

As the nationalist *Irish News* said: 'While conflicting accounts of the events leading up to the decision of the Republican hunger strikers to end their fast were being given yesterday, there was no conflict about the almost universal evidence of relief with which the news was greeted by the people of Northern Ireland.'

Note the use in that paragraph of the word 'almost'. Not everyone expressed unlimited glee at the ending of the strike. It depended on how that ending was interpreted.

The Unionists were divi-

ded. Democratic Unionist leader Ian Paisley saw the settlement as 'a considerable weakening' from the government's previous position. Official Unionist leader James Molyneaux disagreed, claiming that the ending of the strike represented 'a rebuff to the hunger strikers'. Another Official Unionist, Enoch Powell, saw the outcome as 'a draw'.

The Republicans were not so equivocal. At a 'victory rally', held in Belfast on the Sunday before Xmas, Gerry Adams, vice-president of Sinn Fein, maintained:

'The British government has been forced by the determination of the men and women in Armagh and H Block to give the political recognition the prisoners deserve. The British government has been forced to outline measures which the prisoners feel meet the requirements of the five demands.'

Message

But Gerry Adams went on to warn that not everything had been settled, that much still depended on a 'responsible attitude from the British government', and 'the message today is to be vigilant and alert. The weeks ahead are the most crucial since the blanket protest began.'

The possibility of another



MAIREAD NUGENT



TOMMY MCKEARNEY



LEO GREEN



SEAN MCKENNA



TOM MCFEELEY

Political status — the struggle continues

THE following is the text of a leaflet distributed by the Irish revolutionary socialist organisation People's Democracy, just after the hunger strike ended.

The ending of the hunger strike represents a limited victory for the prisoners and the H Block/Armagh campaign.

The British were forced to make concessions, but these do not amount to a full implementation of the five demands or a full recognition of political status.

This means that the campaign in defence of the prisoners must continue and that those involved in the campaign must examine the hunger strike struggle to develop a more coherent strategy for winning the mass of the Irish people to our cause.

The concessions are a limited victory because changes in the prison regime that the British were willing to concede in the face of mass protest were not available in the previous four years. We can only assume that these concessions are a result of the mass pressure exerted by the campaign.

However, the victory is limited. Concessions made on prison clothing and on association appear

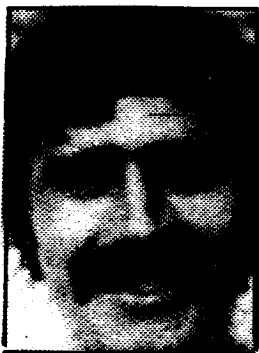
to fall short of the demands, and it is not yet clear if they are enough to enable the prisoners to end the blanket and dirty protests.

Also, the British are able to deny that political status has been granted and are able to turn what is essentially a political problem into a police operation.

The British were able to hold out because the mass of the Irish people were held hostage by the Social Democratic Labour Party and, in the south, the Fianna Fail government.

The trade union bureaucracy was also able to hold in check the organised power of the Irish working class. It must be said that the Smash H Block/Armagh campaign did not have a central strategy of challenging the SDLP and Fianna Fail and building a special campaign in the workers' movement.

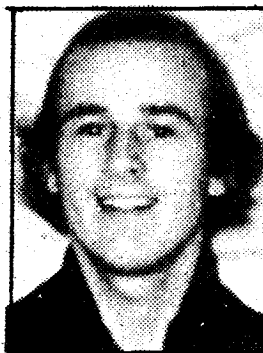
The struggle goes on. We will have to continue our defence of the prisoners. We will have to defend ourselves from the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Ulster Defence Regiment. We will have to defend the whole Irish people from the results of Haughey's and Hume's collaboration with Thatcher.



BRENDAN HUGHES



MARY DOYLE



JOHN NIXON



MAIREAD FARRELL



RAYMOND MCCARTNEY

hunger strike gives those words added importance.

Whatever views are held about the strike that just ended — and the statement from the Peoples Democracy on this page seems the most balanced — there were unquestionable victories in the campaign.

One was the emphasis on mass action; another was the thousands who took part in that action. Not for years had there been such mass protest from the Republican community, and not for years had that community applied such pressure on the British to

make the concessions which, in the end, were made.

Thousands of people marched in the month when the diplomacy game finally came to Ireland, with the meeting early in the month of Thatcher and Irish premier Charlie Haughey. It is now incontestable that important issues were discussed at this summit: the long-term possibility of a British political withdrawal from the north of Ireland; the creation of links, economic and eventually political between the two parts of Ireland; the promise by Haughey to consider

taking Ireland into NATO.

There is little point predicting whether Thatcher will, in the end, endorse such a plan. That she is thinking about it shows the pressure the British government is under, from Ireland and internationally, to come up with a 'solution'.

On the Unionist side, Ian Paisley has said he would fight 'to the death' to avoid a link-up with the south. His recent advocacy of a referendum within Britain on the north of Ireland's future has, behind it, a renewal of an option he has canvassed before

— that of an independent 'Ulster'.

For the present, however, the Unionist population seems too divided to offer a united front on any issue.

Terms

'I am thankful it is over,' said secretary of state Humphrey Atkins, and although he was referring to the (first?) hunger strike, he could well have said the same about 1980. If nothing else, the year has seen Britain grudgingly come to terms with a few of the realities of Ireland.

There is no dismissal now of the IRA as 'Godfathers'; there is no longer any bluster about the south of Ireland having no right to a say in what happens in the north. In that context a measure of victory can indeed be claimed by Irish Republicans and socialists — Britain has finally been persuaded that Ireland will not go away.

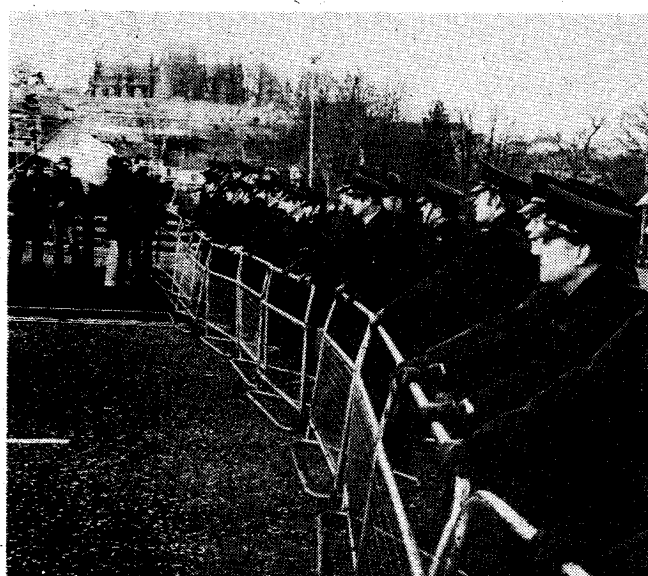
Victory

There are dangers in that victory, for if Britain is now seriously considering a long-term settlement of Ireland's British question, it is certain that such a consideration will only be undertaken if Britain's interests in Ireland as a whole are maintained.

If Britain has re-evaluated what to do about Ireland, it would do no harm for Irish militants to re-evaluate how to square-up to Britain.



Scenes at one of the last hunger strike demonstrations: Bernadette McAliskey speaks to marchers during a sit-down in Armagh (left) after being stopped by police (right). (Photo: Joanne O'Brien)



Local Government in Crisis National Labour & Trade Union Conference

Re-call conference 17 January, Central Hall, Westminster, London W1.

Building workers in the Lambeth direct labour organisation and members of the Transport and General Workers Union in Lambeth have decided to take strike action against local government cuts imposed by the Tory government.

The steering group elected by the successful 1 November anti-cuts conference has called a national demonstration for Wednesday 4 February in London.

Many unions have stated that they are considering similar action against the Tories in the new year. This action would be far more effective if it was taken simultaneously.

Get your organisation to:

- ★ Support the Lambeth re-call conference on 17 January
- ★ Support the week of industrial action from 2 February
- ★ Support the day of action on 4 February

Delegates are welcome from trade union branches and regions, trades councils, CLPs, Labour groups, and shop stewards committees.

Credentials from: Labour Local Government in Crisis Conference, Room 103, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Hill, Brixton, London SW2.

British Steel 1981:

It's fightback or die

By Celia Pugh

TEN years ago, the British Steel Corporation employed 230,000 people. If BSC chairperson Ian MacGregor has his way, the Corporation will in March 1981 employ only 100,000; 52,000 jobs were lost last year alone.

By lowering manning levels and by closures, MacGregor wishes to make the Corporation 'leaner'. But lean is not always healthy. Warnings of summer closures at major plants, and threats to liquidate the Corporation itself, suggest that slimming may turn into anorexia nervosa, and 'slimdown' to a complete wasting away.

The TV and press have presented MacGregor as a knight in shining armour, riding (for a fee, let it not be forgotten, of £2m) to rescue the industry from bankruptcy and to relieve the British taxpayer of the burden of subsidy.

Loss

In 1980-1, BSC, despite a subsidy of £950m, expects to present the government with an estimated loss of £600m. MacGregor claims to be able to stop this £30-a-second haemorrhage by aggressive marketing.

He wants to increase home sales of finished steel to 12m tonnes and exports of finished steel to 2.5m tonnes; to cut capacity to 14.4m tonnes; to squeeze the workforce by productivity schemes and reduced manning, and to cut energy costs by reducing the consumption of coal.

According to the MacGregor plan, price competition will be minimised in agreement with private steel companies. Thus the present BSC closures are in areas where production can be hived off to private concerns like GKN and Dupont.

Plan

But few commentators, left or right, share the enthusiasm and optimism with which MacGregor announced his Corporate Plan. Observers of the steel industry discern only the continuing rundown of BSC. Some pro-

phesy liquidation, for which the unions, if they reject the Corporate Plan, will be held responsible. Here lies the real purpose of the Corporate Plan.

Jobs

Steelworkers will not protect their jobs and conditions if they play by the rules set by BSC and the Tories.

As the capitalist economies dive from stagnation to full-scale recession, steelworkers throughout Western Europe are facing the sack.

World demand for steel has fallen steeply. Uncertainties in the car and machine tool industries, together with government cutbacks in house, school, and hospital building, have played their part.

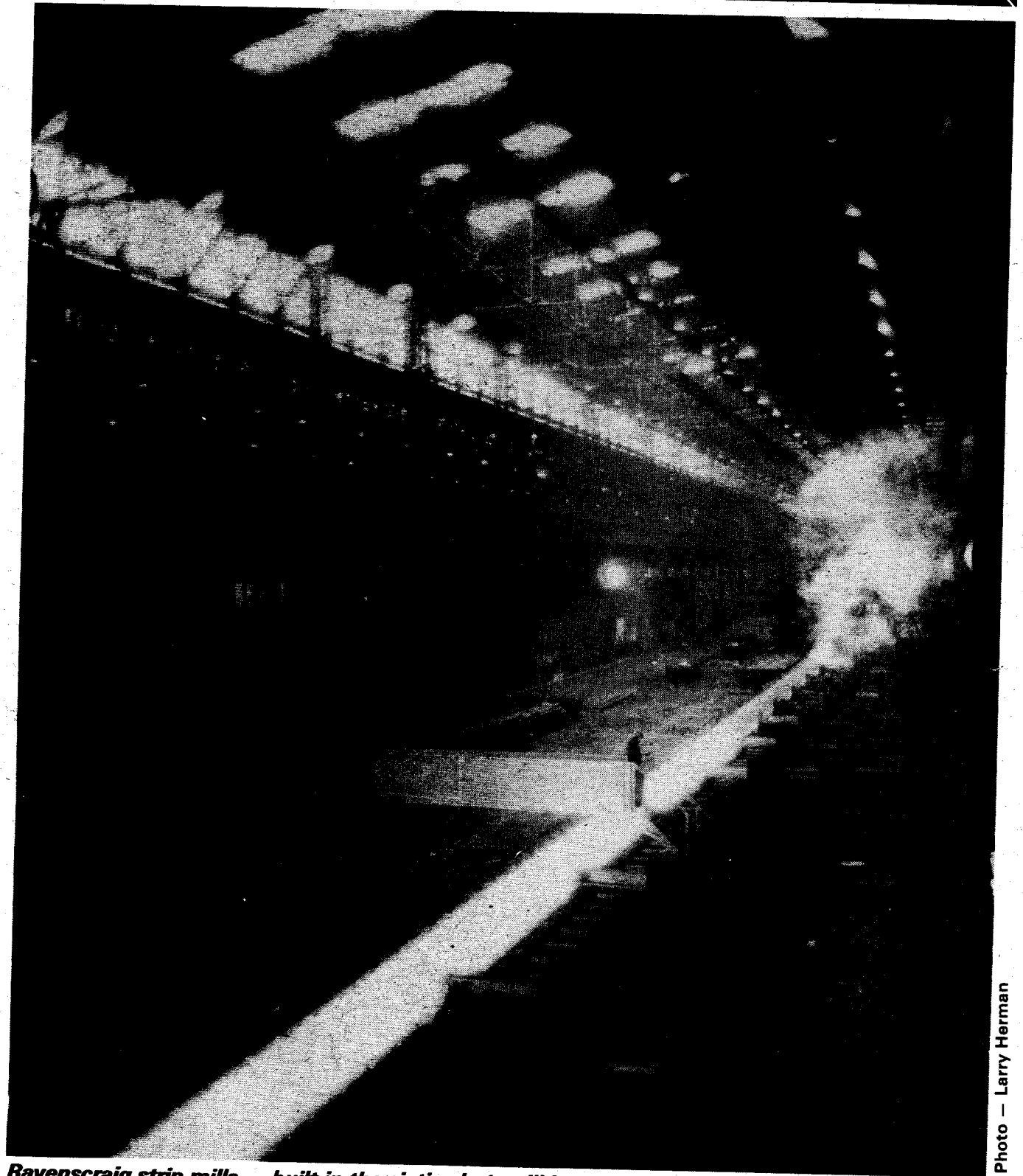
Every European steel producer is desperately seeking to squeeze more profit from each worker and shut down plant.

If the steel crisis is more severe in Britain than elsewhere, the reason lies not in the idle workers of Fleet Street fable, but in the peculiar historical conditions of Britain's steel industry.

First

Britain is paying the price for having been first in the field. Built in the last century, her steel mills were sited on the coalfields of a country whose industry was scattered in a dozen valleys. The Germans and the Japanese industrialized later, using the more advanced techniques then available.

Today, the steel that dominates the world market is made in the vast integrated steel plants that occupy the harbours and waterways of Japan, Germany and America, to which the world's iron ore is carried by giant tankers.



Ravenscraig strip mills — built in the sixties but will it survive the eighties?

In 1950, the Labour Party, eager to modernise steel, took the industry into the ownership of the state. One year later, the Tories returned it to its former owners. This was a tragedy. In the boom conditions of the 1950s, when the industry might have been modernised with less injury to the workforce, the steel masters carried off the profits of the industry but did little to replace its antiquated plants.

In 1967, the Wilson government nationalised steel once more. Now the modernisation programme, all the more savage for having been delayed, would coincide with the end of the boom and a period of falling demand.

Under Wilson, BSC planned to shut down 30 of the most out-moded steel plants and to concentrate production at Scunthorpe, Redcar, Ravenscraig, Port Talbot and Llanwern. But this drastic

surgery has proved unable to save the patient. The recession of the mid-1970s forced even the closure of strip mills built in the 1960s.

Backed by successive Tory and Labour governments BSC decided to cut its losses with further closures and redundancies and planned denationalisation, a project agreeable to the philosophy of Toryism.

Unfortunately the national steel union leaders and their local officers are playing MacGregor's game: viability and profitability.

Corby steelworker, Charlie Keeny spelled it out in these pages a year ago: 'In the two years before the sackings at Corby production records were surpassed in a frantic attempt to become a more viable proposition. "Become more viable," we were told, "and you can keep your jobs."

'At the end of two years they told us, "Too bad, you didn't work hard enough." They presented us with figures about the lack of viability that a four-year-old child could have seen through. Economists from Warwick University told us that BSC's figures were nonsense.

'Corby could produce strip more cheaply than bringing it in, with only a small investment in new plant, much smaller than the amount they intended to buy our jobs with. We tried to make the Corporation see this.

'It was at this point that it finally dawned on us — they didn't want to know, they'd never wanted to know. The whole quest for viability had been a gigantic hoax at our expense.

'We had been fed a thread of hope in a cruel attempt to

keep us quiet until they were ready to give us the chop.'

Steelworkers must stop playing by the rules laid down by BSC. Jobs and steel plants have been savaged because the name of the game is profit at all cost. Steel should be produced according to social need — to build the hospitals, schools, kidney machines, and other amenities which the people are demanding.

Steelworkers could be guaranteed a job in safe and more pleasant conditions through a shorter working week, longer holidays and early retirement with no loss of earnings.

This means preparing for an all-out battle, meeting blow for blow Tory resistance to these demands. There is no other option. In 1981 it's fightback or die.

Banning the bomb
... again.

The rebirth of CND

By Bob Pennington

AFTER years of relative obscurity, and declining membership, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has taken off again.

Memories are revived of those Easter Mondays in the late '50s and early '60s when thousands of people streamed through the streets of West London, numbering over a hundred thousand as the Aldermaston marchers turned down Whitehall and swung in to Trafalgar Square.

The announcement in November 1979 that NATO was sending Britain a batch of Cruise missiles, and knowing that the horrific Polaris is going to be replaced by the even more horrific Trident — the most deadly and destructive nuclear weapon ever known — has roused people into action, once again.

As if they were wakened from a complacent slumber, ordinary people have cottoned on that a nuclear holocaust is on the cards.

The *Daily Telegraph*, that pillar of the establishment, admitted on 24 February 1980: 'The presence of Cruise missiles on British soil... indicates we shall be the target number one.'

The late, but not lamented, *London Evening News*, on 20 August 1980 cynically reassured us that only 15m would survive a nuclear war. It neglected to mention that this means 45m of us will die!

Admit

Home Office officials blandly admit that there is no way a national shelter system can be provided. Lord Belstead, who is in charge of Civil Defence dismissed any idea of providing shelters for the population, by saying it would 'cost billions and billions and billions of pounds.'

Hopes that a nuclear war is too horrible to contemplate and that even capitalist governments and the military will draw back, are being shattered whenever the top brass open their mouth.

General Alexander Haig, when he was Supreme Allied Commander Europe to NATO, said: 'Nuclear weapons must be employed... to convey a decisive escalation of sufficient shock to persuade the enemy that he should make the political decision to cease the attack and withdraw.'

Haig is not just some nutty soldier who will be kept in check by the more astute politicians. He is the

same Haig whom Reagan has just promoted to the US Secretary of State!

In Britain, Thatcher's fingers are hovering over the nuclear button. As the *Times* reported on 26 February 1980, she is absorbed with 'doomsday activities' and explains that she has 'already been through the steps she would have to take to launch a Polaris missile strike...'

Stock

With the nuclear stock — piling reaching unprecedented heights, and the bellicose threats of the Thatchers and Reagans get louder and the face of civil defence becomes more obvious, so the fear of nuclear extermination grows.

No wonder that CND has had a tremendous growth in the last year. In January 1980 it had an individual membership of 3,000; by the end of December it had topped the 11,000 mark. Local groups have sprouted up everywhere; dormant branches have been revived; new ones have been born.

CND estimates that local membership, which is growing faster than national individual membership, is around 22,000 with no sign of it levelling out yet.

React

It was inevitable that CND would grow fast once people began to react to the war drive. But the effects of the war drive have reverberated throughout the labour movement.

Last June the Labour Party took to the streets. Despite lashing rain and thunder, 25,000 people marched against the missiles. Despite the militancy and determination of the marchers only one platform speaker, Jo Richardson MP, called for unilateralism.

She said: 'I am a unilateralist and proud of it', adding 'This government is not only launching an all-out attack on working people it is driving us closer to war.'

Other speakers contented themselves with pious calls for world peace



Party of the eighty thousand strong demonstration last October against Cruise missiles



Photomontage by Peter Kennard

and general disarmament, refusing to make unilateralism the rallying call of the movement and failing to demand that Britain should get out of the war-mongering NATO alliance.

By October, an alliance of the constituency parties and the left in the trade unions had forced a resolution through the Labour Party conference calling for unilateralism. But the resolution for getting out of NATO was defeated.

On 26 October came the biggest turn-out against nuclear weapons since 1961.

Eighty thousand marchers converged on Trafalgar Square, frightened and angry at the threat of nuclear war, and boosted by the unilateralist decision of the Labour Party conference.

The large numbers of youth were on the demonstration, but there was a marked absence of trade union banners. Thousands of trade union members marched, yet they had not been organised by their unions.

The CND platform was a mixed bag. Of the 20

speakers, only Tony Benn from the Labour Party executive and Rod Todd from the Transport Union represented the labour movement. No youth spoke. Instead the platform was dominated by the ex-military, the clergy, and 'personalities'.

The last year has seen a massive growth in the anti-war movement. CND has swelled in numbers. Inside the Labour Party and the trade unions support for unilateralism has mounted, with UCATT calling for a boycotting of work on the sites.

The conspiracy of silence about the nuclear threat, deliberately created by the Tory and Labour leaders, has been broken.

On 24 January last year, the House of Commons discussed nuclear weapons for the first time in 15 years.

All the signs point to the chance of building a large and powerful anti-nuclear movement, which can effectively challenge the war plans of the Tory Government.

The main question is: Which way will the movement go? The present leadership of CND is a combination of Broad Lefts and pacifists who are anxious to build a 'broad movement'. By this they mean basing it on the same social forces that dominated the 26 October platform.

Of course, they are not against an alliance with the trade union leaders, and leave dealing with the unions to their 'experts' who are invariably full-time officials.

Again they see the vote for unilateralism at the Labour Party conference as a big step forward, but assume that the return of a Labour government headed by Michael Foot will ensure we have a unilateralist government.

Stuck

They ignore the fact that Foot and the great majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party are committed to NATO, and as long as Britain remains in that alliance it is stuck with nuclear weapons.

The NATO document DPC/D/74/30 makes this apparent. It states: 'The alliance should plan to maintain an adequate conventional defence as long as necessary to negotiate an acceptable peace. If not successful in achieving its aims with conventional forces,

NATO will employ nuclear weapons as necessary.'

It is highly dangerous to rely on a leadership which supports NATO and which is almost certain to draw back from the brink of unilateralism when confronted with the wrath of the British ruling class and the ire of its American allies.

Recent opinion polls have shown that some 40 per cent of the British population support unilateralism. This shows that a mass base exists for building an enormous anti-war movement.

Such a movement can only achieve its aims if it wins support in the working class and their organisations.

Vicars

No one is against 'progressive' vicars, 'personalities', or even the odd ex-soldier who has seen the errors of her or his military past, but they cannot organise industrial action against the siting of Cruise. They cannot enforce an embargo at the ports and airfields against the importation of nuclear equipment. They cannot build a campaign in the unions and the Labour Party which will mobilise hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people to take strike action against Thatcher's war plans.

Nor can they build a campaign which will fight to commit the next Labour government to get out of NATO and remove those Labour leaders who are not prepared to do that.

The potential is there to build a massive anti-war movement that can stop the Tory government's war plans. To be successful, it has to base itself on the labour movement which is the only way to win and in fact is the best and only way to build a broad movement.

Tyneside for Nuclear Disarmament

Week of Action

Friday 9 to Thursday 15 January

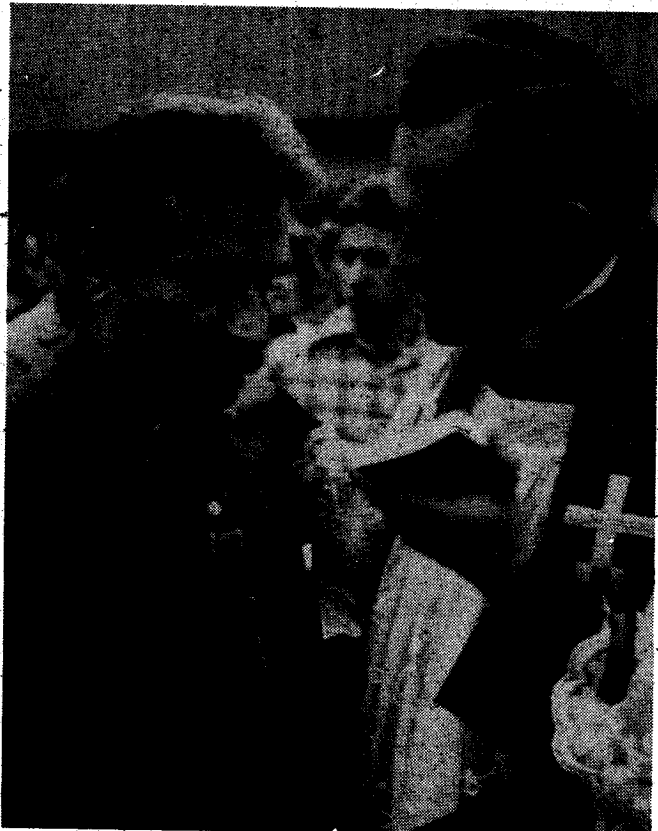
Activities include:

Saturday 10 January — March and Rally in Sunderland. Assemble 11am at Sunderland Civic Centre. March through Sunderland, return to Civic Centre for rally at 12.30pm.

Thursday 15 January — Torchlight procession through Gateshead and Newcastle. Assemble 6.30pm Gateshead Town Hall, rally 7.30pm-Newcastle City Hall.

Leafletting and Postering all week — 3,000 posters and 100,000 leaflets to be distributed.

Further details ring Newcastle 730174 or 633192.



The Catholic Church wants more than a word in Walesa's ear

Poland: the struggle for workers' power

By Oliver MacDonald

THE UNFOLDING drama of the Polish workers' struggle for political rights is the key to the entire development of the class struggle in Europe.

If the Polish workers are defeated the anti-working class forces throughout Europe will be greatly strengthened. If the Polish workers win and hold power this will create a crisis for the Stalinist bureaucracy and the imperialist powers in the West.

The Polish workers began to move when the enfeebled Gierk regime had become so drunk with its own euphoric propaganda that it thought it could assert some authority by raising meat prices on 1 July. The workers hit back by demanding wage increases.

When strike action won these increases easily, sections of the working class felt confident enough to launch a political offensive, demanding rights that would — and

did — drive a shipyard crane through the Stalinist political system. Above all they demanded and won independent trade unions.

During the course of the mass strike wave, workers struck in over 500 factories in the Gdansk region. They came together in the MKS, the Inter-Factory Strike Committee. Workers in dozens of factories in the Szczecin region created a similar body and the same type of organisation was also created in the Wroclaw

and Upper Silesia areas.

Between 14 August and 1 September over one million workers were on strike for the same central demands (out of a total work-force of 12½ million.)

The Gdansk victory pulled the entire working class, the middle and poor peasants, and the mass of students and cultural intellectuals over to the side of the working class vanguard. The bureaucratic regime lacked any base of popular support. It was deserted by its own working class membership, and the upper levels of the bureaucracy were thrown into turmoil.

Internationally, the emergence of an independent trade union in Poland was seen as a catastrophic prospect by the bureaucracies in Prague and East Berlin: if such a union became established and legitimised it would be a gigantic beacon of hope to the East German and Czechoslovak workers.

In Czechoslovakia the

workers would use a lever like Solidarność to smash to pieces the entire edifice of Stalinist rule. So the Husak regime tried to seal off the country from news of Poland for as long as possible.

This was, however, impossible for East Germany, so Honecker has swung over to a hysterical cold-war line against West Germany to create the right atmosphere for repression.

The rank and file of the East German CP has been told that Lech Walesa, leader of Solidarność, is a CIA agent: in other words, any East German arguing for independent trade unions deserves ten years for spying.

But all this horseplay is only a stop-gap: there is no chance of genuinely independent trade unions in Poland coexisting indefinitely with the Stalinist set-up in Eastern Europe. One side or the other has to give. The basic international Stalinist line is that the union must be crushed either by the Polish government alone or with the help of an

POLAND 1980: A TRIUMPH



Half a million people came to Gdansk to remember the dead of 1970

On December 16th 1970 an unknown number of mainly shipyard workers from the Gdansk/Gdynia area were shot by the police for protesting against price rises. Ten years later the new independent unions held a rally of half a million people to commemorate a 120-foot high monument to those who died.

Along with other worker militants from around Europe, I went to Poland to meet Solidarity members and attend the ceremony. The day before the editor of Socialist Challenge rang me about visiting Poland a routine union/management meeting at work told us we would be laid off over Xmas. So with sponsorship from my AUEW branch this was a unique chance to turn the capitalist crisis in this country to political use.

Our first stop was the Warsaw regional office of Solidarity. Even without speaking Polish the busy atmosphere was infectious. Huge notice boards with people taking notes; small groups of activists discussing; queues for transport to Gdansk; bundles of posters and literature; and the constant coming and going all told us more about Poland today than a hundred articles in the Western press.

Friends

A meeting was arranged in the evening for us to meet 'some people from the union'. These turned out to include the chairperson, secretary, administrative and press officers of the Warsaw regional praesidium.

Celinski, the secretary of the Gdansk based National Co-ordinating Committee, later explained why we received such an important delegation: 'We talk to union representatives differently than to the Press. We want to have discussions but we know the Western press are not our friends.'

Weak

Throughout our visit we were repeatedly told that Solidarity was at the stage of consolidation and organisation. Present membership is already between 8 and 10 million in a population of 35

million. The union has only been established for three months and the level of organisation in some areas is still weak. For example in Katowice only 50 per cent of the miners are members.

Threat

This does not mean the workers will concede any compromise on the original 21 demands drawn up last summer. Last week there were further threats of industrial action in the campaign for workless Saturdays. The working week at present is 46 hours.

On the second day we visited the founding conference of the peasants' union where the crisis in agriculture was clearly exposed. The level of agricultural production has dropped over the last four years. From being a net exporter of foodstuffs Poland is now a net importer.

Failure

The 750 delegates at the conference gave a damning indictment of the regime's failure after 35 years to feed its own people — in one of Europe's most fertile countries where 45 per cent of the population live on the land.

A Gdansk strike leader introduced the conference by pledging the support of the industrial workers in the struggle to register the peasants' union. Non-state employees including peasants are currently forbidden by law from joining a union.

By Rab Bird, AUEW shop steward, Sheffield



Rab Bird

Solidarity with Polish Workers

Messages of support to the independent unions and solidarity messages against any outside intervention can be sent to: MKZ, Hotel Morski, 103 Grundwalska, Gdansk, Poland.

Copies of the British labour movement solidarity appeal, which calls for raising funds to send a small printing press to print the new union journal, can be obtained from: Steve Griffiths, Polish workers' appeal, c/o 137 Digbeth, Birmingham B5 6DR.

Under a huge slogan 'workers and peasants of the world unite' delegate after delegate slammed inefficiency, corruption and discrimination. State and co-op farms are 100 times the size of the average peasant farm but only 60 per cent as efficient.

Everywhere we went self-organisation was a common theme. There is a tremendous

ferment as each factory or establishment draws up its own union constitution. The strike committees from last summer are being replaced by elected local organs. At Warsaw polytechnic where 85 per cent of the 8,500 employees are in the new union we attended a nine-hour meeting, discussing not just organisation but also academic freedom from the state and the right to elect a new Rector.

Bullet

At the Warsaw steelworks we sat in on a meeting of the new union. While the eight leaders of the old union were back working on the shop floor, 240 section delegates representing 10,000 workers discussed the way forward.

The steelworks was known as 'the bullet in the gun' at the time of the recent Solidarity campaign to free its two supporters arrested for publicising the State Prosecutor's plans for harassing the new unions.

Discussing with militants afterwards gave us a good illustration of the present shop floor consciousness. They continually stressed that Solidarity was 'just a trade union'. But at the same time they insisted that there would be strikes if the authorities went back on the agreement on the 21 demands made last summer, and they realise that such strikes take on a political character. It was obvious to us that Solidarity was more than just a trade union.

Solidarity is beginning to come to terms with what democratic organisation means in practice. At a press conference Lech Walesa when asked about a 'Virgin Mary tendency' in the Gdansk union stated that everyone had a right to express their views and stand for election on the basis of those views.

And in the Lenin shipyards everybody who stood as a sectional delegate was expected to present a programme as a basis for election. This would include demands such as narrowing wage differentials, currently ranging from 1,800 zlotys for a woman cleaner to 20,000 zlotys for the most skilled

Photo: RAB BIRD (Socialist Challenge)

Photo: RAB BIRD (Socialist Challenge)

invasion force. When the government signed the agreement in Gdansk on 31 August, the emergence of a new union involving many millions of members was certain. There was bound to be a division of power in the country between the new union with its mass popular base and the bureaucracy with its Soviet military muscle. The question was how both sides were going to tackle that reality.

The bureaucracy divided into three groups — though one was properly organised and internally coherent: a first group opposed to the agreement and favouring immediate confrontation with the new union. They were the sectors who felt sure that the agreement meant their own certain downfall and they were prepared to do almost anything to stay in power.

At the other extreme were a small number of people within the bureaucracy — like Fiszbach, Grabski and Olszowski — hoping for a long-term alliance with Solidarność and for fairly radical technocratic reform, in the interests of restoring bureaucratic rule through

Yugoslav-type decentralisation.

The third grouping, led by Kania, lacks any definite programmatic character, wishing firstly to demonstrate its complete loyalty to Moscow and secondly to attempt to manoeuvre against Solidarność in the political field to avoid a military invasion.

This policy has resulted in a series of lurches from one crisis to the next, with the regime demonstrating its small-mindedness and infuriating the workers in various ways without being able to contain the development of the new union.

Rival

While the more radical technocratic wing of the bureaucracy has failed to harness Solidarność to its own project, another, more powerful force has been trying to use — or, more accurately, abuse — the workers' movement for its own interests: the Catholic hierarchy and the established Catholic intelligentsia.

The hierarchy, prosperous and comfortable

under Stalinist rule, though hungry to extend its influence, does not look kindly at the emergence of a challenger to its own authority. Solidarność could become a direct alternative focus of working people's aspirations, a direct rival to the clergy.

The hierarchy is therefore working to gain influence over the leadership of Solidarność in order to make

the Catholic monthly *Wieża* and a leading adviser to Walesa, has repeatedly tried to prove his usefulness to the regime by urging a capitulationist line on the Solidarność

leadership. First he encouraged the regime in its drive to include in the government/union agreement the clause about the 'leading role of the party'.

Socialist Challenge London Day School
Sat 24 January 10.30-4.30pm

East Europe and Poland

Speaker: Oliver MacDonald
Open to Socialist Challenge supporters. Admittance £1. Venue: St. Matthews, Brixton (2 minutes Brixton Tube station)

the latter do its bidding. It will then be able to use Solidarność as a pawn in its game with the bureaucracy to extract more concessions for itself. It will be able to say to the regime: 'Give us more privileges and we will put a stop to this or that nonsense from Solidarność'.

Mazowiecki, the editor of

Then he fought tooth and nail against the 3 October one-hour Solidarność strike protest against the government's refusal to fully implement the agreement. Lech Walesa went along with these moves and found himself in a minority in Solidarność.

The resulting confrontation

with the regime produced a considerable radicalisation within Solidarność, and by the beginning of December, the conciliationist wing of the Solidarność leadership was in serious trouble with the rank and file.

At this point a crucial new turning point came. Against a background of enormous military blackmail on Poland's borders an alliance was formed between the Kremlin and the papacy against the working class vanguard.

The common interest of both forces lies in preventing the emergence of an independent, working class political force within Solidarność. The Kremlin is happy to see a union tightly under the control of the Church hierarchy, while the hierarchy is evidently prepared to see some political trials of those activists who have been raising supposedly 'irresponsible proposals'.

If the alliance holds, we can expect to see attempts at driving a wedge into Solidarność through the arrest of political activists within it. If

these arrests and subsequent trials are carried out this will mean the government has established its right to decide who can and who cannot raise their voice within Solidarność. This would be but a short step to more overt political controls over Solidarność's activity.

In the West the bourgeoisies have no desire to see 'instability' in Poland: they want to see the workers put down. There are different preferences as to how the workers should be put down.

The workers' leaderships in the West have done precious little to help the Polish workers. They too are frightened by the spectre of workers' power. Socialists in this country should campaign openly and vigorously against Soviet bullying of the Polish workers and for closer trade union links between Britain's unions and Solidarność.

Such solidarity is the best way to strengthen the socialist left within the Polish working class. In the inevitable battles between the bureaucrats and the new-found workers' power, international workers' solidarity can play a decisive role.

FOR SOLIDARITY



Photo: RAB BIRD (Socialist Challenge)

workers. But the idea of different tendencies within the union did not seem to be widely understood.

The Polish authorities are now trying to draw the new unions into taking responsibility for the economic crisis. Local enterprises are to be given more autonomy and the authorities have reintroduced the workers' councils. Solidarity members stressed that they may be elected to these councils but they would retain the right to remain independent of any decisions they make.

Dealing with the economic aspect of the crisis is a central problem facing the union. The shortages are real, even though they are manipulated by the authorities. The outstanding balance of trade

SOLIDARNOŚĆ

deficit is \$25,000m and a further loan from the EEC to buy Western food has just been negotiated.

Nobody in the new union is against central planning but their defensive attitude makes them reluctant to offer criticisms of the present plan

or to present an overall alternative. The opportunities for drawing up such a plan are tremendous as more than 50 per cent of industrial workers are concentrated in 800 plants of over a 1,000 workers.

But there are limited examples of workers' control.

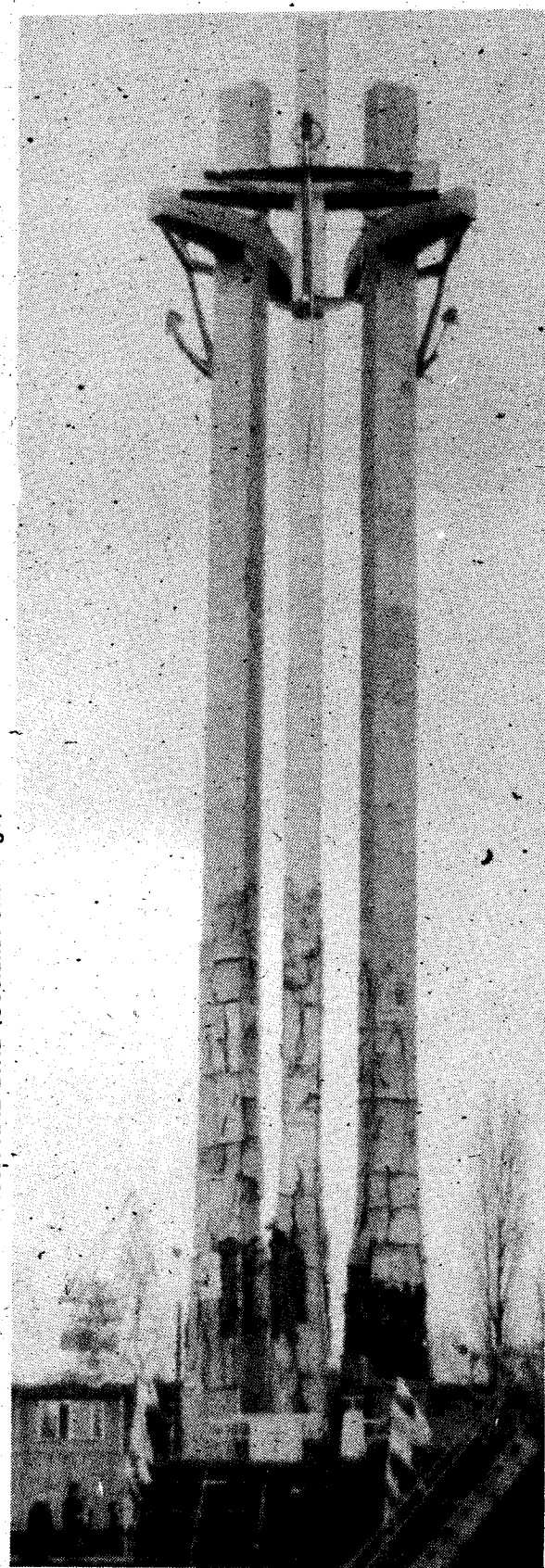
Warehouse and distribution workers have cooperated with the union to expose stockpiling during the recent shortage of meat and butter.

In the Ursus tractor plant the union has won the right to set up a joint committee to examine management waste and

inefficiency. And the control commissions established to implement the strike agreements demand the opening of the books at the slightest obstruction from management.

Because of the shortages there are queues everywhere in Poland. But my lasting memory is of the longest queue I saw — outside the Gdansk offices of Solidarity. Agricultural, industrial, and white collar workers as well as students wait patiently for hours for advice and information. To them Solidarity represents their only hope.

The new union unites all the people in expressing their aspirations for change. Solidarity needs all the support we can give to help it satisfy the demands of the masses.



The Lenin shipyard at Gdansk (above left) was the scene of the commemoration ceremony on 16 December unveiling the 120-foot high monument (above) dedicated to the workers killed in 1970

Photo: RAB BIRD (Socialist Challenge)

WOMEN AGAINST THE TORIES

By Judith Arkwright

THE MOST important event for women in this country in 1980 was the victory over the Corrie abortion amendment Bill in March.

The Tories had given their implicit backing to John Corrie's Bill to restrict abortion rights as part of their drive to whittle away the post-war gains of the workers' movement. The defeat of Corrie was rather significant both as the first big defeat for the Tories, but also because of the momentum and nature of the campaign.

It was the culmination of an alliance between the organised women and labour movements which had been growing over a period of five years, eventually forcing the TUC itself to call a national protest demonstration on a so-called 'social issue'.

The backing of the TUC for the pro-abortion movement was historic. It was the first national trade union federation in the world to call action on women's abortion rights.

It meant that thousands of women and men who might not otherwise have been drawn into action around this issue came out on the streets for the October 1979 TUC demonstration. It meant that many more working people were open to discussing demands like a woman's right to choose and how to achieve it.

Impact

It is undeniable that this labour movement support brought the victory of the campaign. Women standing alone could not have defeated the anti-abortionists and the Tories. We should organise ourselves as women and fight for our own demands but we also need allies to win these demands. Our most powerful ally is the organised labour movement.

This victory for women and for feminism early in 1980 confirmed a growing radicalisation among women and the increasing impact of feminist issues, like the women against violence campaign and the campaigning of young women. In the last few years women have been joining the trade unions at the rate of 164,000 per year and now comprise 28 per cent of workers affiliated to the TUC.

Inside the labour movement there were interesting developments in 1980. Discrimination committees were set up in the TGWU and

the General and Municipal Workers Union; the TUC called a special conference on positive action for women supported by unions like the engineers and the miners; and the Scottish Womens TUC passed a resolution on women and violence.

Campaigns

When you have Tony Benn doing interviews in *Spare Rib* and *Cosmopolitan* and making rash demands for 1,000 women peers in the new year; when women's sections in the Labour Party throw off their traditional role of making scones and organising bazaars to become fighting organisations; and when the Labour Party produces an official pamphlet on sexism, then you realise that something must be up!

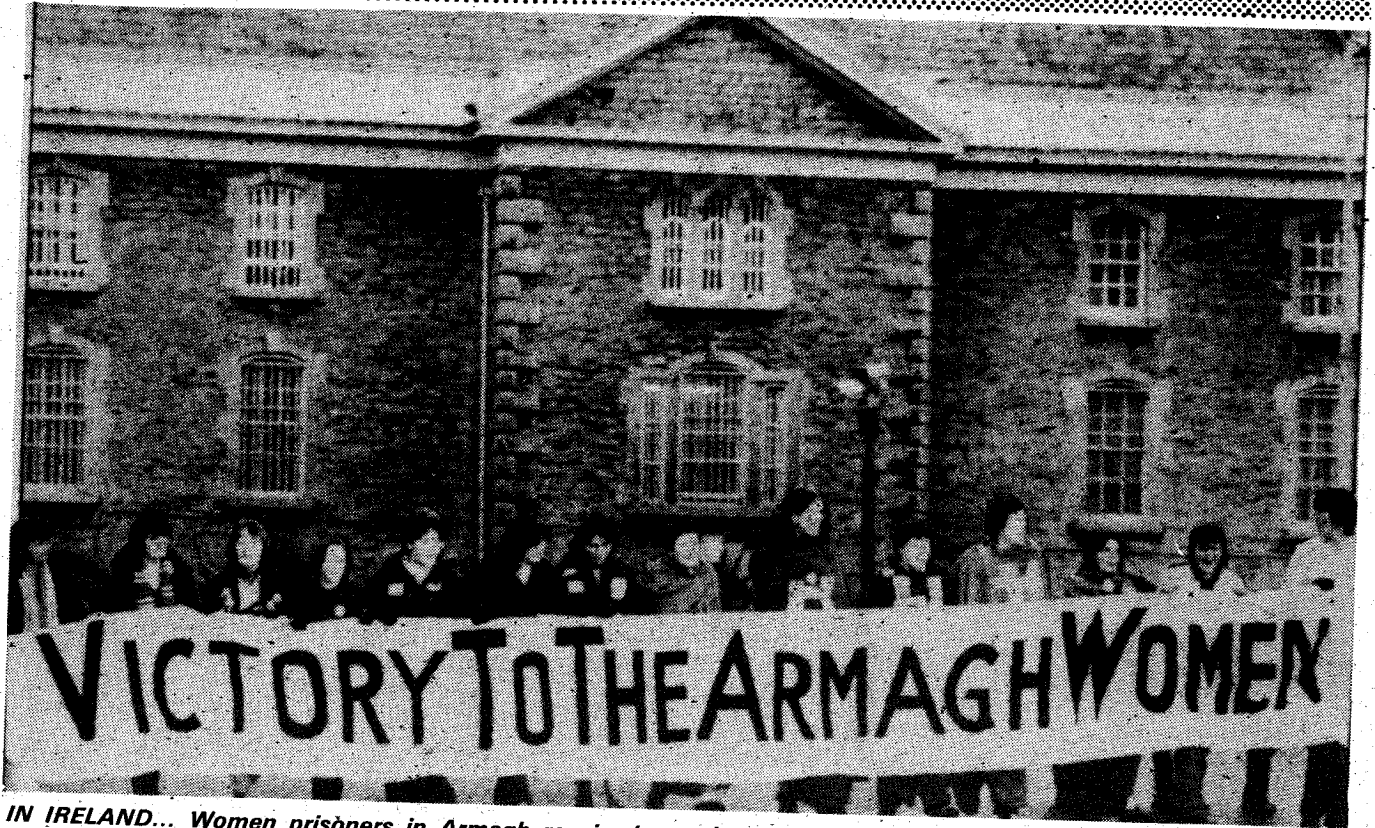
Some feminists are more sceptical and have raised questions about the validity of a campaign on the single issue of abortion because it doesn't include a full 'feminist' programme (*Spare Rib* no. 102). Others feel that the IMG puts too much emphasis on the labour movement.

We are optimistic about building a broad-based women's movement of women fighting for their own demands. The possibilities for raising feminist ideas in the labour movement is more favourable than it has been for a long time.

Though we place no illusions in Len Murray or Tony Benn when they raise these issues — it's their audience that's important. By drawing women into activity around specific immediate issues much broader feminist campaigns can then be taken up.

Gloomy

But 1980 has also had its gloomy side. The menace to women's rights, Margaret Thatcher, intends to drive women back into the family



IN IRELAND... Women prisoners in Armagh received massive support. The UN conference itself was interrupted for ten minutes by one protester who kept on talking about their plight.



IN NICARAGUA... Women played a prominent part in the revolution... the women's association — AMPRONAC now has 35,000 members in 21 groups.

And on an international scale in 1980 there was the United Nations conference on women's rights, and around the world...



IN ITALY... the womens movement collected nearly 100,000 signatures in support of a new bill against rape. They organised an international conference on rape attended by 3,000 delegates.



IN POLAND Anna Walentynowicz was a prominent leader in the strike wave which included demands on women's rights such as three year maternity leave.

Apartheid by Sex



Women are half the world's population



And receive one tenth of the world's income



Women do two-thirds of the world's working hours



And own only one hundredth of the world's property

and turn back the gains of women over the last few years.

- Women's pay is 2.1 per cent lower as a percentage than in 1975 when the Equal Pay Act was finally implemented.

- Women are losing their jobs at twice the rate of men.
- Less than 50 per cent of abortions are now done on the NHS compared to 67 per cent in 1969, and contraception facilities are being cut.

By the end of the New Year holidays it should also be clear whether Timothy Sainsbury MP is to introduce a private members' Bill to restrict abortion rights. Sainsbury is private secretary

to Michael Heseltine and is likely to receive government backing for any Bill he promotes.

Margaret Thatcher gave her Xmas message to the nation in an interview with *Woman's Realm*. She bemoaned the plight of latch-key children: 'It makes me angry if any woman is made to feel guilty because she chooses to concentrate on providing that warmth and welcome for the family instead of having a job.' If only women could find a job!

Her fake concern for children and the quality of women's lives is exposed by the huge cuts in social spending. Where the welfare state

is chopped women should plug the gaps — that's her real message.

Women will have their own answer to Thatcher in 1981. The most important and immediate issue will be winning support for a massive campaign against Sainsbury and the Tories on abortion rights. Fighting for a woman's right to work in the coming struggles around unemployment will be another permanent campaign.

The national women's festival on 9 May against the Tory attacks will be vital to draw together broad sections of women to tell the Tory government that they have

had enough of its policies.

But we want to have our cake and eat it too. In order to fight the Tories we have to work out what we're fighting for as well. The record of the last Labour government on cuts in public spending and other issues affecting women was hardly sufficient to provide a real alternative to the Tories.

Women have to take up their demands in the debates in the Labour Party and the trade unions around positive legislation and positive discrimination. These are the questions around which the emerging women's movement will stand or fall this year and in the years to come.

By Brian Grogan
THATCHER'S policies aren't working; that much is obvious as we enter 1981.

Britain's bosses, who went along with Thatcher's policies, are getting worried — they don't see the promised phoenix rising from the ashes, and they fear that only cinders will be left.

The prime minister's economic policies are part of a strategy which she's sticking to. The crude idea behind this 'monetarism' is to restrict the money supply and let the market do its work unhindered.

But the inevitable result of restricting money supply is to provoke a massive drop in economic activity: a slump.

Gobble

The aim of this strategy is to let competition do its work. Weak firms will be pushed to the wall, and stronger ones will gobble them up. Even the strong companies have to take measures to produce more efficiently, by getting workers to produce more so that British capital can compete on the international market.

The flip-side of Thatcherism at work are the millions of workers thrown on the dole. Longer dole queues are intended to weaken working class organisation, push down wages, and thus remove major obstacles to higher productivity.

This strategy is part of an historic attempt to deal with 60 years of capitalist decline in Britain.

It amounts to a recognition that only a major reorganisation of production and a big defeat for the working class can start to change the bosses' fortunes for the better. To push these measures through, a short-term decline in profits is thought to be inevitable.

So far so good for the bosses. They understood Thatcher's plans and welcomed them. But things haven't worked out so well in practice.

High interest rates have attracted speculative funds from abroad, but are crushing British industry. As expected, there have been an historic number of bankruptcies. But even blue-chip high productivity and export-orientated companies like ICI have suffered catastrophic cuts in profits.

Spectre

The rate of profit in industrial and commercial companies (excluding North Sea oil) has been cut to 4½ per cent — a full percentage point lower than during the 1974-75 recession. There is no sign of improvement.

The spectre haunting Britain's bosses is that when the world economy moves out of recession, Britain's industries will be left on the starting line.

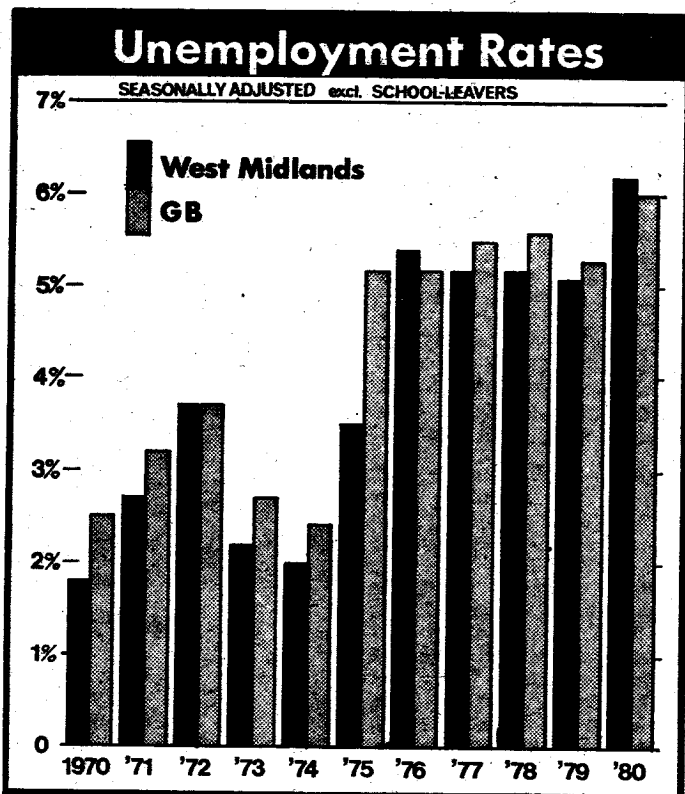
Because of low profits even the stronger companies are having to plead with the banks for massive loans to keep afloat.

High interest rates, far from restricting the growth of the money supply as expected, have had exactly the opposite effect. Companies have had to borrow to pay the interest on previous loans!

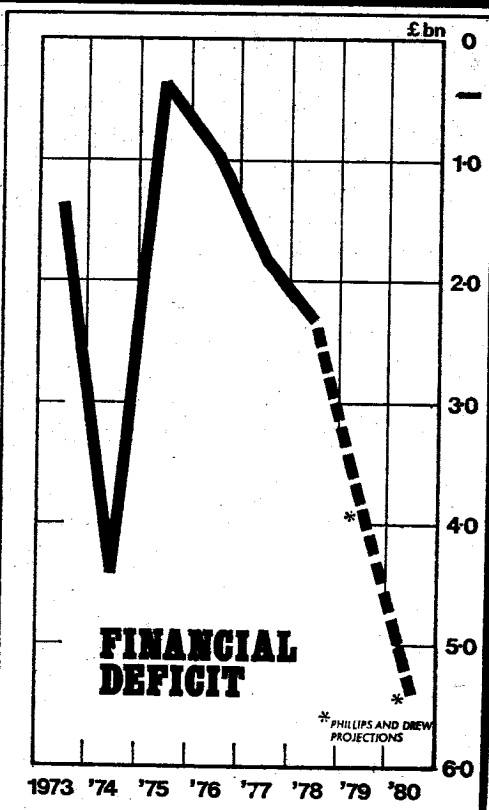
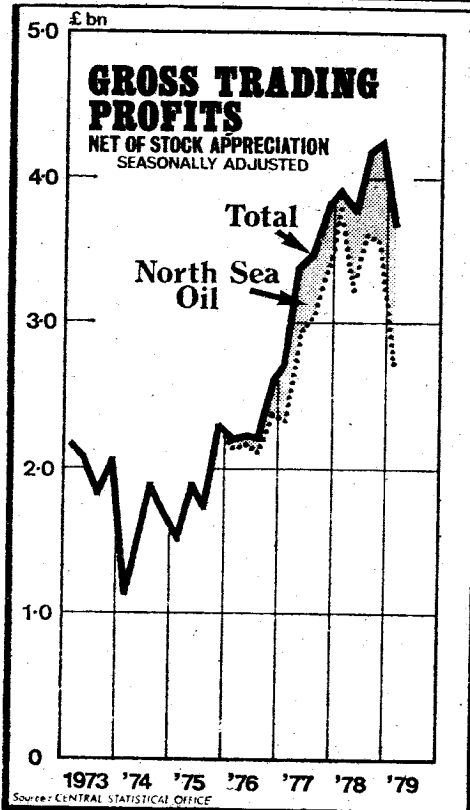
The growth in the money supply by April is likely to be a year-on-year increase of 20 per cent, compared with the

1980 — The economy and the Tories

Does anyone love Margaret Thatcher?



INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL COMPANIES



government's stated goal of 7-11 per cent.

The government claims inflation as its major success story. But even this is threatened.

It has been the borrowing of the big companies which has been primarily responsible for the massive increase in the money supply. But these same bosses are calling for more public expenditure cuts to control inflation.

While the government wanted to limit the public sector borrowing requirement (the difference between government income and expenditure) to £8.5 billion this year, it will in fact be £11.5 billion.

This isn't because Thatcher's gang is wavering over its plan to dismantle the welfare state — far from it! That much is evident from Heseltine's December announcement of a 3.1 per cent cut in council house spending; in his vindictive punishment of 'overspending' councils, and his complete ban on council house building.

The government won't be knocked off course by the need for people to be kept alive and housed! So what accounts for this £3 billion overshoot?

The first problem is that whatever monetarist theory says, the government has had to pump money into na-

tionised industries like British Leyland and steel.

This isn't what annoys the bosses. What they are concerned about is public sector pay. Government plans have overshoot by £1bn here as well. Tory cuts were meant to be different to Labour's; they were to destroy services and hit jobs. Yet the strength of public sector workers has prevented Tory plans from being easily implemented.

Why? First, because of the hard-fought gains won by the public sector in Labour's final days, and secondly because of the pressure they have put on local councils, especially Labour controlled ones. So this led to

another blow to monetarism: the imposition of a six per cent wage limit in the public sector.

A wage limit introduces instability into government policy. It transforms wage bargaining into a political affair. Each claim can become a confrontation with the government, and every breakthrough threatens to become a green light for other workers.

Heseltine has other problems, too, in the shape of Labour councils hostile to his cuts. No wonder the bosses are nervous.

The one apparent success story for the Tories has been the imposition of wage rises

well below the rate of inflation. The CBI's Pay Databank states that pay rises have declined from 16 per cent in July to 10 per cent in October. This trend continued through November and December.

Trend

However, few are convinced that this is a permanent trend. Moreover, this situation has not been translated into any significant increase in productivity.

With 2.24m officially unemployed, it would be miraculous if those in work weren't a bit cautious. So what is happening to workers' organisations, particularly at factory level.

This will determine what will happen in any economic upturn.

Will the bosses be able to take the opportunity of an upturn to massively increase production without any increase in labour costs? Or will the workers be able to regain what they have lost?

The bosses are haunted by the fact that organisation in the workplace will remain intact long enough for workers to claw back their losses, as they did after the last recession in the mid-'70s.

The situation at BL Longbridge indicates the bosses' problems. Here are a group of workers who have been battered from pillar to post by one of the most far-sighted capitalist managements. Yet management has been able to score gains only with the direct and open sabotage of the union leadership and the senior stewards, under the influence of the Communist Party.

Despite the smashing of the combine, the underlying combativity of BL workers remains intact.

Strike

As soon as the Metro light appeared at the end of the tunnel, workers demanded a share of the action. There was a massive majority for strike action against the 8.2 per cent wage offer. Although the union leadership refused to act on this mandate, a major strike in defence of union rights is in the offing as 1981 opens.

Nothing has been finally decided between the bosses and workers. Some major productivity increases have been registered. In British Leyland, for example, Metro output levels have surpassed Michael Edwards' projections. In Rover productivity increases of 30 per cent are being demanded.

This is not the general picture. The Bank of England Bulletin reported in December: 'It does not appear that productivity performance over the past year or so has been significantly different than the mid-1970s.'

In 1980, Margaret Thatcher's government has thrown everything it has at the working class. She has created untold misery for millions of working people. But Britain's bosses are not happy. Everything this vicious government has done has not been sufficient to break the back of working class resistance.

Success

Further punishment is no guarantee of success. Yet such further measures threaten to hit Britain's profitable industries irreparably. This is why Thatcher enters 1981 increasingly under fire and cut off from the realities of the political situation.

By Jean Mackenzie
A TRIPLE album dedicated to the Nicaraguan revolution! That's the New Year offering from the Clash.

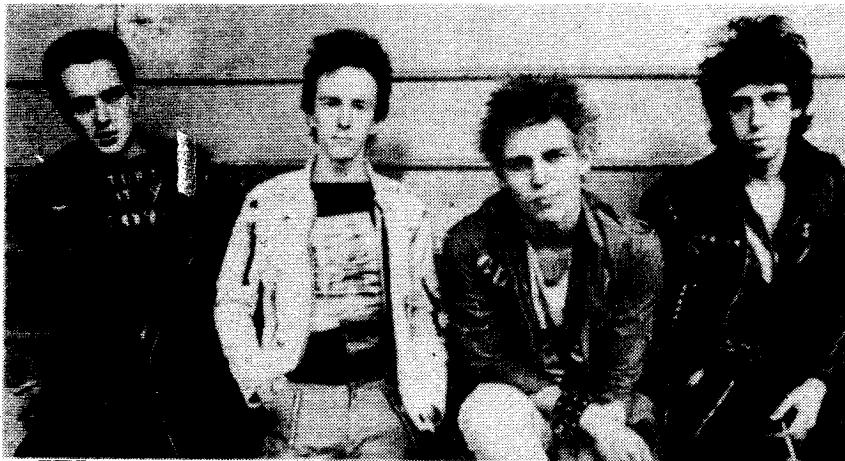
SANDINISTA

Thirty six tracks for £3.99 can't be bad value, so what do you get for 11p a song? I don't often buy records, nor do I spend all evening glued to the radio so I didn't know what to expect.

I bought the album because of the title — 'Sandinista' refers to the FSLN, the Sandinista National Liberation Front, which led the Nicaraguan revolution of 1979 — and because of the rumour that part of the proceeds from the record and a forthcoming tour were going to the FSLN.

My local record shop had a big display in red and black of what looked like Sandinista fighters but was in fact the Clash.

Unfortunately there's the same deal on the songs — only one refers to the FSLN. What could have



The Clash

been a celebration and popularisation of the Nicaraguan revolution is a missed opportunity.

The album consists of ten tracks about the daily grind of capitalism — housing, poverty, corruption; six

on war, imperialism and the nuclear holocaust; the police and 'sus' laws get five; the workers star in one and feature in four or five others; youth and unemployment score twice and there are two in-

strumentals. It all makes a change from unrequited love!

The first track sounded like the Tom Robinson Band, the second like 'Rock Follies', followed by third rate disco, Elvis and Bowie.

It sounds like the Clash impersonating someone different each time (free sub to Socialist Challenge for anyone who can provide a list of the 36 sound-alikes).

After the first track I listened with half my mind on TRB Two and the Clash suffered by comparison. They have neither the 'tunefulness' nor the raw edge of Tom Robinson.

Chants

There's a combination of over-slick production and the odd feeling that the words and music were written without reference to each other. However, some of them are great even if they do sound like chants dubbed over self-indulgent music.

I enjoyed listening to 'Sandinista' on a quiet Sunday afternoon, and it would sound just as good turned up loud at a party. Since only my best friends approve of my music tastes, don't let me put you off buying it.

Any band that sings about the living revolution should be supported. Buy the album and enjoy it, and encourage the production of records at prices that youth can afford.

WASHINGTON BULLETS

Oh! Mama, Mama, look there!
Your children are playing in that street again,
Don't you know what happened down there?
A youth of 14 got shot down there...

The kokane guns of jamdown town
The killing clowns, the blood money men,
Are shooting those Washington bullets again.
As every cell in Chile will tell,
The cry of the tortured men.

Remember Allende, and the days before,
Before the army came.

Please, please remember Victor Jara.

In the Santiago stadium,
Es verdas — those Washington bullets again.

The Bay of Pigs — in 1961,
Havana for the playboys in the Cuban sun,

For Castro is a colour,
Is a redder than red,

Those Washington bullets want Castro dead.
For Castro is the colour...

...That will earn you a spray of lead.

For the very first time ever,
When they had a revolution in Nicaragua,

There was no interference from America,
Human rights from Amerika!

Well the people fought the leader,
And up he flew...

With no Washington bullets what else could he do?
'N if you can find an Afghan rebel

That the Moscow bullets missed
Ask him what he thinks of voting Communist...

Ask the Dalai Lama in the hills of Tibet,
How many monks did the Chinese get?

In a war-torn swamp stop any mercenary,
'N check the British bullets in his armoury...

Que?
...SANDINISTA!

Earthquake shatters Italian government



FABRIZIO BURRATTINI and ELETTRA DEIANA of the Revolutionary Communist League in Italy told Socialist Challenge about the recent earthquake and the political implications.

The earthquake hit three provinces in the south of Italy, Potenza, Salerno, and Avellino. These comprise one of the most underdeveloped and backward areas of the country. A film was once made about the area, *Christ stopped at Eboli*, and the story goes that Christ has not yet arrived in this country because it's so backward.

The earthquake hit the small mountain villages, which made rescue work very difficult. But still the government tried to cover up the seriousness of the whole thing.

Army

The earthquake happened on a Sunday, and right up until Monday evening the government was saying it was not so serious, even though the media were proving the opposite. The army and the civil protection (rescue) services were not sent in until the Wednesday.

Between three and 12 days after the earthquake people were found who were still alive — a hundred were discovered in all. Many of the victims died of cold while waiting to be rescued.

Some people were still living in temporary accommodation from the 1962 Avellino earthquake when the recent disaster struck. It brought down most of a recently completed hospital at San' Angelo Dei Lombardi, where government building regulations for earthquake regions were ignored.

Crisis

The rescue services had no equipment, such as the special instruments needed to detect bodies under the rubble. Only 15 helicopters were sent, and the officials said that all the troops were needed on the eastern border.

Even ten days after the earthquake there were areas that hadn't been visited. The mayors of these tiny villages were to be seen along the motorways trying to stop the army cars and begging them to come up to

their rescue.

The episode has deepened the crisis of confidence in the government, especially in the south which was a stronghold of the ruling Christian Democrats.

The crisis began with a petrol scandal involving senior Christian Democrat ministers, who pocketed something like £1 billion — quite incredible!

Aid

Often, though, the mistrust is not political — people just think the government is inefficient. For example, lots of organisations from trade unions to religious organisations, arranged their own aid.

Even individual workers and students went down south to help out. In some factories in the north the workers had big struggles for the right to leave their

factories and go south to help.

The government of Christian Democracy is discredited but it will hang on.

Loyal

In Italy the Christian Democrats are not just the government; they are the state itself. The two — party and state — are intertwined. So when people begin to question the Christian Democrats, they begin to question bourgeois democracy.

This is the danger and the Communist Party is as much afraid of this as anyone else; it has gone to great pains to try and prove itself as loyal to the bourgeois state as anyone.

Communist

But the right is strengthening itself in this crisis, by campaigning in the south trying to get support from those who are disillusioned with the government. There have even been

demonstrations of property owners protesting at the requisitioning of their holiday homes for use by the victims — they were denouncing the commissioner in charge of operations as a communist.

The trade unions have been organising as well, so there's a real social polarisation going on, though it is not expressed in terms of a political way forward.

Corrupt

Recently the Communist Party has made a turn away from supporting the Christian Democrats, and it now argues for a coalition of Socialists and Communists. But it's all words.

In practice, they don't want bourgeois democracy to lose its credibility, so their chief demand is that the government should get rid of the most corrupt ministers.

The government may survive for a while longer, but the earthquake and the austerity won't go away. The situation is like a time-bomb at the moment.



The crushing burden of religion

STEVE Cohen (letters, 3 Dec) seems to have overlooked the existence of an excellent IMG pamphlet entitled *Zionism - What It Is and How to Fight It* by Nigel Ward.

He has obviously studied the subject and so should be aware of the Marxist analysis of Zionism, which is mainly to be found in the shape of a book by Abram Leon, a Belgian Trotskyist of Jewish birth who died in a German concentration camp aged 22.

His book *The Jewish Question - A Marxist Interpretation*, traces the history of Zionism, as Marxists should do, through the development of society. Using this method it becomes clear that Zionism was a product of its time. It originated in Eastern Europe with the Russian pogroms of 1881 and grew with the Dreyfus affair in France.

Zionism interpreted the prevailing capitalist thought in relation to the persecution of Jews - the resulting ideology was nationalist and proposed the colonisation of underdeveloped continents. Steve Cohen should know the distinc-

tion between Zionism and Judaism well enough; I have been called an anti-semitic by too many of my Jewish relatives to accept this same criticism from a comrade.

As for Steve's extolling of the 'mysticism of the Kabbala' and the 'spirituality of the Hassidic movement', one might as well try and defend the mysticism of Islam, the spirituality of Roman Catholicism, the progressiveness of the Non-Conformist religions?

All religions ultimately repress and oppress, and by urging people to accept and believe in the will of one individual, hold back the formation of socialism.

It has taken me years to escape the crushing burden of the religion I was born into; it oppressed me as a woman and as an individual. Rather than deriving support from mysticism or spirituality, Steve Cohen would find greater support in the strength and traditions of Trotskyism and the socialist movement.

ERICA BARNETT, Huddersfield

hold views incompatible with our view of socialism.

Socialist Challenge has consistently defended and explained this position, from its total support for anti-Nazi and anti-fascist groups and alliances, through its explanation of the Shi'ite Moslem opposition to the Shah, to its description of the attitudes of Catholic workers in the Irish struggle.

In the struggle against all forms of oppression, including anti-Semitism, the IMG and Socialist Challenge have proved themselves to be among the best of working class fighters.

But in the fight against oppression there are no special cases. Just as we encourage the dissolution of Christian culture by persuading people to abandon the oppressive roles of the bourgeois family, so we will be happy to persuade people to 'assimilate' along the road that Marx and Trotsky took away from their Jewish traditions towards the socialist revolution.

If Steve Cohen finds that incompatible with calling himself Jewish, perhaps he should consider why he calls himself a socialist.

JOHN NOLAN, Liverpool

Religion and socialism

STEVE Cohen says that he derives cultural support from traditions of 'mysticism' and 'popular spirituality' (letters, 3 Dec).

Good luck to him! Those of us who were brought up in the Christian tradition call on all manner of mystical and spiritual traditions if we were looking for cultural support. However, we wouldn't be calling ourselves socialists or making special pleas in a socialist paper if we did.

Christianity is a reactionary creed that underpins bourgeois ideology, as do all the major religions including Judaism. The cultural traditions that these religions produce include the elevation of the family, the subjugation of women, and many other forms of sexual oppression.

As such, they are incompatible with socialism and socialists work actively for their destruction.

This is not incompatible with our defence of oppressed groups - even if they

Paddington Campaign Against Racism and Anti Nazi League Defence Campaign

AS YOUR readers are aware, during and after the anti-British Movement demonstration held on Sunday 23 November, 66 of the anti-fascist demonstrators were arrested, roughly half by the notorious SPG, who were brought in late in the afternoon to 'mop up'.

The PCAR/ANL Defence Campaign was set up immediately after the demonstration to maintain and build on the anti-racist, anti-fascist presence in the area, and to provide the maximum legal and financial assistance to those arrested.

If any of your readers were witnesses to arrests or mistreatment by police, or if they have any photographs which could help in the defence of those arrested, please contact Paddington Law Centre, 439 Harrow Rd, London W10.

And we are appealing to anti-racist, anti-fascist sympathisers and organisations to make generous donations towards the defence of those arrested. Please send donations to: Treasurer, PCAR/ANL Defence Campaign, 29 Croyley Road, London W9.

Peter Cannel, PCAR/ANL Defence Campaign

Needed: a firmer political approach

SINCE Socialist Challenge's relaunch in September we have watched for dramatic changes of style and gradual development in content. But it appears that the problem with our revolutionary press is not to be solved by a chattier style and a new typeface and logo.

What needs a firmer foundation is SC's political approach. Issue 173 (20 Nov) brought this to a head. According to the front page the firefighters won a victory, yet the TV and an FBU

report at Glasgow Trades Council questioned this.

Eight FBU regional representatives voted against the deal and the recommendation was only accepted by the FBU executive on the chair's casting vote.

We subscribe to SC and sell it to fight for political leadership - should we tell the members of Strathclyde FBU they voted the wrong way!

The same problem arose over the Gardner's dispute - wonderful regular coverage, good commenting reports, but surely the workers won a partial victory: only the bosses' first option was thwarted.

Where was the explanation of our programme to win the struggle and point the way to workers' control or even some reserve about

the loss of the jobs for the youth of the future?

On Benn the paper is prepared to print interviews with this insidious left-facing misleader but it does not pose a challenging or critical question. This is reinforced weekly by dangerous pandering to 'his' projects, almost counterposed to 'Thatcher's'.

There is no harm in encouraging the debate in the labour movement - some might say comrade Benn has a large platform already - but we should have an indication of the working class, revolutionary Marxist, socialist alternative.

When civil servants' picket lines were threatened in Brixton it was a front page political event (quite right) but the 40-odd arrests of Ayrshire Marine pickets

at Hunterston got 150 words.

Here is some of the most vigorous practical opposition to the class collaboration of the STUC bureaucracy today - perhaps SC could turn that experience into part of the nucleus of a class struggle left wing in Scotland.

Where is the paper leading us? Comrades, we need a polemical paper that builds our political programme and party. Why can't debates with the Socialist Workers Party on Poland, workers' states, socialist democracy, and the Marxist struggle for power be easily digested reading, to say nothing of its powerfully stimulating immediacy?

C ENDELL and TINA LEA, Glasgow

John Lennon in America

IN AN otherwise quite moving tribute to John Lennon's radical past, Socialist Challenge and Tariq Ali did a disservice to the truth.

Tariq claimed that Lennon's 'departure to the States heralded a flight from politics'. And yet the same issue of Socialist Challenge proved this to be rubbish. You reprinted five songs, three of which came from 'Some Time in New York City', his most political album.

Besides the songs you reprinted - 'Woman is the Nigger of the World', 'Luck of the Irish', and 'Bloody Sunday' - the album contains tributes to the Attica Prison rebels and to political prisoners Angela Davis and Anarcho-hippie John Sinclair, and contains Yoko's 'Sisters, O Sisters'.

The LP concludes with the lines from *New York City*: 'So we decided to make it our home/ If the Man wants to shove us out/ We gonna jump and shout/ The Statue of Liberty said "Come!"'

Jump and shout they did. Despite the tactically safer course open to them of sitting quiet, John and Yoko appeared on platforms at anti-war demonstrations and rallied popular support in their fight to stay in the US.

In fact the edition of 'Some time in New York City' had a petition in it for their detence campaign. And you will find this note on the cover of the recent LP 'Double Fantasy': 'With special thanks to all the people, known and unknown, who helped us stay in America, without whom this album would not have been made.'

As one of those 'unknown' I would like to pay tribute to Lennon and Ono's contribution to the US anti-war movement, to its radicalisation, and to the ongoing struggles for the democratic rights of those invited by the Statue of Liberty and harassed for their political views by the US government.

SKIP LASZLO

What's Left

RATES for What's Left ads. 5p per word or 24 per col. inch. Deadline: noon Sat. prior to publication. Payment in advance.

SOC FEM theatre company requires musician performer. Phone Kings Langley 68103

STATEMENT
Pat Jordan
We wish to inform readers of Socialist Challenge that Pat Jordan is no longer a member of the IMG but was expelled on 4 October 1978.
IMG Political Committee

THE ASSOCIATION of Radical Nurses Second National Meeting, Sat 31 Jan, 11am-6pm, Sheffield. Venue to be confirmed. Please send s.a.e. for further details to: 20 Melrose Rd, Sheffield 3, Yorkshire. National Newsletter: we welcome contributions - on pay, conditions, the role we fulfill as women and workers, how we can begin to change things, etc. Address as above.
EAST END NEWS This new alternative weekly newspaper for East London, run as a co-operative, will launch on 13 March. We are looking for paid and voluntary staff to help with reporting, features, photography, selling advertising, paste-up and lay-out, cartoons, and general administration. Test-runs and training sessions are being organised. If you want to be a part of this exciting project, send details of your skills, interests and experience to: EAST END NEWS, 17 Victoria Park Square, London E2 9PE. Tel: 01-961 1221.

80th Birthday Lectures
CLR James, Marxist historian lectures on:

'Socialism or Barbarism' on 6 Jan from 7-9pm
'Britain and America: Two English-Speaking Democracies', 9 Jan from 7-9pm
'Immigrants to Britain: Formerly Colonial Peoples', 12 Jan from 7-9pm

At the Main Hall, Kingsway-Princeton College, Sidmouth St, London WC1. £2.50 per single lecture, £7 for three lectures.

Tickets in advance from: Race Today, 74 Shakespeare Rd, London SE24 0PT. Tel 01-757 2268. Only a limited number available. Send SAE.



MERSEYSIDE firefighters show their feelings about the 1978 pay deal. Is the 1980 deal a victory or are our correspondents (see below) more correct in calling it a sell out?

'Victory' - no it's a sell out!

I WOULD have thought your front page article on the firemen's pay agreement (3 Dec) was a little premature to say the least.

It gave the impression that we firemen had scored a victory after the so-called 'agreement'. I can assure you that the majority of firemen in my area - not to mention London, Glasgow and elsewhere - are calling it a sell-out rather than a victory.

The fact is that the FBU leaders'

decision to walk out of the meeting with a '16.3' per cent compromise has probably thrown away our best chance of winning - our proposed strike action, full TUC backing and so on.

I think you will agree with my assessment and I hope to see much better coverage of our dispute in subsequent weeks.

CHRIS COOPER, FBU Kings Norton

Flying in the face of rational judgement

THE FBU won because of... the solidarity shown by the working class movement... This stirring of power has sent the Tories cringing. Socialist Challenge, 3 December. If only you were right!

However such an assessment seems to fly in the face of rational judgement, and has to be regarded as, at best, wishful thinking.

The Firefighters' victory is, of course, only too welcome. Nevertheless, it is more an assessment of Tory paternalism than the product of working-class anger and threats of militancy.

The government and its supporters may well be none too happy at the moment. They have clearly been shaken by the impact of certain policies which they have pursued. However, the pre-

sent average level of pay settlements and the Tories' ability to withstand comparatively savage criticism from important sections of big business seems to suggest that far from 'cringing' they are quite capable of maintaining their commitment to the reshaping and restructuring of industry.

Demagogic and illusory statements in Socialist Challenge will do little to halt this project.

EDDIE ASHBE, Nottingham

Victories still to come

LEICESTER IMG discussed the 'Victory' headline on the firefighters' article (3 Dec) and agreed that it was over-optimistic in its outlook.

The FBU has not inflicted a 'humiliating defeat' on the Tories and firemen are confused and divided on the issue. The Wales regional committee of the FBU voted to recommend acceptance while Mersey and Cheshire regions unanimously rejected it.

Merseyside's Terry Fields pointed out that the 1978 pay agreement had been breached and that there were cuts and productivity deals involved in the total package. Scotland has also opted for rejection.

Our line should be that this is a phoney concession by the Tories and we should be calling for rejection of this 'victory' at the mass meetings that take place on the issue.

The working class cannot be fed illusions. The defeat of the miners in the same week was mostly due to the large coal stocks caused by the recession, and to productivity deals which have left most regions in a cautious mood.

In our opinion 'victories' are still to come.

LEICESTER IMG

Socialist Challenge

Xmas Day in the occupation

By a BPC occupier

OCCUPATIONS don't stop for Xmas. Eight journalists spent the festive season on the sixth-floor of an office block in Central London, communicating with the rest of the world via a bucket-and-rope hoist.

They are among 65 NUJ members fighting redundancies imposed by the book publishing division of BPC, Britain's largest printing company.

Those who remained locked in their office for five days over Xmas were not entirely alone. Bottles of Scotch and radical literature were among the donations hoisted up to the sixth floor. An Xmas Day turkey was donated by Hackney Trades Council, and the NUJ pro-

vided two pheasants.

The publishing industry's profits are being hit hard by public spending cuts and the recession. BPC management's solution is speed-up.

Capacity

It wants to sack nearly a quarter of the editorial staff at one of its companies, Macdonald Futura, with those left behind expected to pick up most of their work. Union activists have been selected for redundancy.

The NUJ chapel is unimpressed by the claim that redundancies are the way to 'save the company'. However, management appears determined to retain what it calls the right to manage — by which it means the capacity to enforce any decision, no matter how damaging to its workforce.

The occupation by the 65 NUJ members is a response to management's attempt at a lock-out, which took place when the chapel contested the issuing of redundancy notices on 10 November, by holding meetings in working time.

The occupation of one of the offices provides a focus for the chapel at a time when the management would like to see it disintegrate. Support for the struggle has come from BPC print chapels, book and magazine journalist chapels, and local trades councils.

Fund

Most of the 65 occupiers have not been paid since 21 November. Although they are now receiving £20 a week official dispute pay from the NUJ, many of them have to rely on support from the chapel's hardship fund.

Contributions and messages of support should be sent to the BPC Chapel, c/o NUJ Book Branch, 314 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1 (cheques payable to Macdonald Educational NUJ chapel). Speakers are available.

** The Camden Journal in North London is being shut down by management. The eight journalists on the newspaper — one of the very few local papers to support Labour in elections — were handed redundancy notices just before Xmas.*

The result is a strike by NUJ members in the North London News group, which includes the Islington Gazette and Hornsey Journal.

The editorial staff on the Camden Journal regard management's action as retaliation for their militancy in union disputes. Management claims that the paper, with a weekly circulation of 7-8,000, is unprofitable, yet for years it has done nothing to promote its sales.

A hundred local people attended a support meeting two days before Xmas, and they set up a Save the Camden Journal Defence Committee. Michael Foot, a local resident, and Tony Benn are among the sponsors. A demonstration is planned.

Donations and support c/o Labour Party, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

LEYLAND BOSSES FORCE SHOWDOWN

By Pat Hickey, TGWU shop steward, Rover Solihull

BL's refusal to reinstate the eight Longbridge workers who have been victimised for protesting against arbitrary lay-offs shows management's determination to press ahead with its latest round of attacks on the unions.

This is management's next step in pushing through the provisions of the 92-page 'Slave's Charter' which the union leaderships imposed in 1980.

The sacking of the eight, including four shop stewards, will prepare the ground for further victimisations if the workforce resists the speed-ups.

Pathetic

Michael Edwardes and his team have been encouraged in their anti-union plans by the refusal of the union leaderships to fight the 6.8 per cent wages deal imposed towards the end of last year.

In the current dispute the pathetic response of the union leaders has encouraged management in its tough line. Instead of calling an immediate official strike, the union leaders have done everything possible to avoid the issue.

First they suspended any action pending the outcome of the appeals, which only



resulted in the reduction of the number of sackings from nine to eight.

When more than 1,300 workers walked out, Edwardes has typically threatened to sack all the strikers if they do not report for work on 5 January.

The AUEW has instructed its members to report for work while the TGWU has called for an independent enquiry. Thus the right-wing leaders openly condone management's victimisations, while the 'left' leaders ask for an 'independent' outsider to tell them what to do.

No section of the leadership has responded to Edwardes' threat of sackings and closures — the umpteenth time we've had such threats — by calling for an all-out strike.

At Longbridge there has not yet been a mass meeting. The answer to Edwardes is mass meetings throughout the company to support the Longbridge strikers.

If Edwardes does carry out his threat every BL plant in the country should be occupied. So far the leadership show every sign of losing another vital battle, despite the lead given by the members.

Oxford Labour Party witch-hunt

By Mike Picken, Oxford CLP

'LABOUR crack-down on Socialist Challenge sellers' — that was a recent front-page headline in the Oxford Star.

It was reporting the decisions of the general committee of Oxford Labour Party last month which refused membership to Peter Grant solely because he sells Socialist Challenge and backed the Oxfordshire County Labour Party's GC decision to remove Anita Richards from the panel from which county council candidates are chosen.

Anita Richards was dropped from the panel because she sells Socialist Challenge (wrongly describ-

ed as a 'proscribed newspaper') — a fact which was well known when she was put on the panel some months before.

Anita is a SOGAT shop steward working in the health service. She had stood for Labour in the 1979 city council elections.

The moves against Socialist Challenge supporters are the latest step in the witch-hunt against socialists in the Labour Party in Oxford.

Just over 18 months ago Ted Heslin, a Transport Union branch chairperson and supporter of Socialist Press, was expelled from the party. The Oxford party continues to defy the NEC's order to reinstate him.

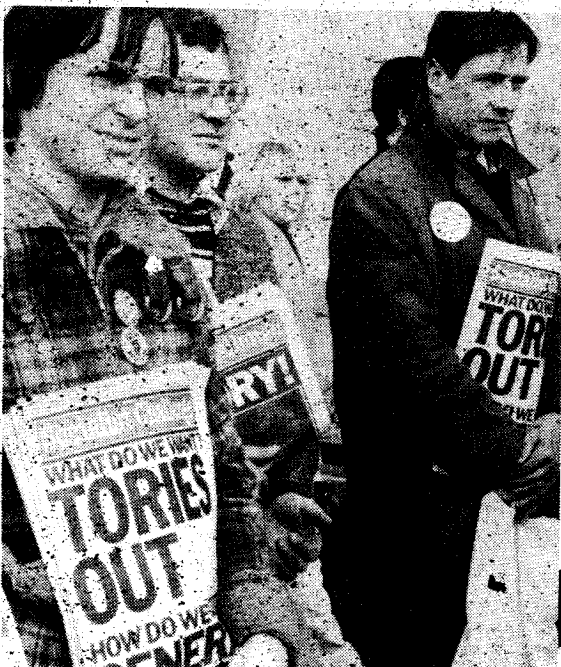
Socialist Press and Socialist Challenge supporters are still refused membership, despite the

NEC upholding two appeals.

The right wing of the Oxford Labour Party will not stop here. The threat of expulsion hangs over Anita Richards and other socialists in Oxford Labour Party. What is happening sets a dangerous precedent which could be used by right wingers elsewhere.

Witch-hunts, bans, and proscriptions can only help the Tories by dividing the labour movement. It is imperative that the right of Labour Party members to sell Socialist Challenge and other left papers is established.

The NEC must take a stand on this issue and instruct Oxford CLP to reinstate Ted Heslin and uphold the appeals of Peter Grant and others for membership.



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