

Socialist Challenge

Labour against the witch-hunt

Conference of delegates from CLPs, unions, LPYS branches, LP branches, women's sections

30 October
Country Hall, London
Contact: Labour against the witch-hunt
107 Nevill Rd, London N16.

Sponsors now include:
MPs: Norman Atkinson, Ron Brown, Bob Cryer, Martin Flannery, Les Huckfield, Joan Maynard, Reg Race, Allan Roberts, Ernie Roberts, Dennis Skinner, Audrey Wise
PPCs: Paul Boateng, Hilary Bryer, Jeremy Corbyn, Ian Roxburgh, Chris Smith, Jim Orpc, Peter Tatchell
Unions and broad lefts (in personal capacity):
Alan Sapper ACTU, John Aitken EETPU, Phil Holt POEU, Ray Davies ISTC
CLPs: Hackney North, Bermondsey, Chipping Barnet, Brent South, Southwark/Peckham, Islington South, Islington North, Wood Green, Vauxhall

TORIES OUT

Health

Days of Action

October

4 Merseyside	12 N West
5 Northern reg	13 Midlands
6 Yorkshire	14 East Anglia
7 NI	15 West Midlands
8 S West	18 Scotland
11 Wales	19 S East

National Lobby, London 19 Oct

Transport Day of Action, early Nov



Pits

Ballot 28 Oct

Regional rallies (public/triple alliance etc. Scargill speaking)

October

18 Wales
19 Newcastle
20 Birmingham
21 Sheffield
23 Scotland-Edinburgh (maybe demo too)

Regional NUM conferences — held within next week.

Steel

6 Oct — delegate conference against redundancies Sheffield

Triple Alliance

Scottish lobby (London) 26 Oct

NUR

AGM 12/13 October Birmingham lobby
Lobby Birmingham, AUEW office

POEU/Telecoms

20 October Days strike

Water workers day strike

18 October

FOR A LABOUR VICTORY

DEFEND

SOCIALIST

POLICIES

NOT ONE

EXPULSION

Socialist Challenge calls on all its readers to respond to the call put out by over fifty delegates, fifteen MPs and leading members of five trade union broad lefts at the Labour Party conference, to build the national conference to be held on 30 October at County Hall against the witch-hunt.

This is an essential component of the wave of action now unfolding against the Tories; essential if we want a Labour government committed to socialist policies.

We call for resistance to expulsions to be organised at national, local and regional level. This resistance must organise all the forces of the labour movement as a first step against the attempted hijack of our movement by a right wing cabal whose cowardice in the face of the Tories is outweighed only by their fear of having to implement the policies to which the movement has been committed.

This is not just a fight for the constituencies but for the whole labour movement. Sidney Weighell showed his members exactly where he stood by his breaking of his mandate to saddle them with a Healyite political leadership, and having the barefaced effrontery to defend that action.

This challenge has to be answered. Weighell and the right wing have shown that the trade union left must place the battle in the Labour Party at the very centre of their struggles for a new leadership. The support given to the 30 October Conference by sections of the trade union left during the Labour Party Conference is a welcome step in that direction. We further welcome with open arms the formation of new left group of MPs and the support which their leading members have given to this movement of resistance.

The witch-hunt has exploded in its instigators' faces. Now for the first time since 1969, the prospect exists of a national left wing alliance between trade union, parliamentary and constituency force that can unite, not just around the election of a Labour government and not just around left wing policies, but around an organised struggle to force such a government to implement those policies.

That is why we finally welcome the proposal emerging from the new parliamentary group to convene a national conference in the new year of MPs, trade union broad left and constituencies to join together in a fight for a Labour

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What health policy for Labour?

by Ian Harrison, Fulham CLP
THE HEALTH debate I moved composite 32, which was the only one opposed by the NEC. Why did I move it and why did the NEC oppose?

Composite 32 was the most far-reaching. Most importantly it was the only one which unequivocally called for mass action by the labour movement to force the Tories out of office.

It was the only one which clearly called for the abolition of all health charges, and the only one which set a minimum target for health workers' pay by calling for a £90 minimum wage and a 35 hour week. COHSE's composite said that 'long term pay arrangements would be made for all grades of staff, which would reduce the need for industrial action.'

Our composite also called for inflation-proof protection for health workers' pay. This, and the demand for a minimum wage, are in my opinion the best way and possibly the only way to ensure that any 'long term solution' does not result in health service workers' wages being held down for two or three years, eroded away by inflation and cutting a future incomes policy.

Another point in composite 32 called for the nationalisation of all private hospitals and clinics. The NEC's grounds for opposing this was that 'there is a possibility that we won't acquire private hospitals

and clinics to be nationalised.' Perhaps the NEC hasn't heard of hospital waiting lists!

Composite 32 also called for the nationalisation, not only of the manufacturing side of the pharmaceutical industry, but also of the retail and wholesale side.

In my speech I explained that this did not mean the High Street chemists but the big concerns — Boots, Beechams, ICI and so on. Of course the NEC chose to ignore this and opposed the composite because, they said, of the chemists on the corner. I think their main concern was to limit the extent of nationalisation and limit

them to the manufacturing sector.

Finally the NEC took exception to our proposal for a £90 minimum wage since, they said, this should be left for the TUC to decide. But if it was up to the TUC to decide, why didn't they let trade union delegates to conference vote freely on the matter? Then at least the bureaucrats would have had to go back to their members and justify their refusal to support their interests, instead of hiding behind NEC opposition — while the NEC hides behind TUC opposition.

Earlier I was told by a COHSE full time worker that COHSE would oppose the composite because it would tie union negotiators hands! I think what he meant was that it would make it more difficult for some union leaders to sell out the health service workers.

The composite was defeated by the union block vote but it won a lot of support for a properly funded health service, for an end to private profiteering by private medicine and the pharmaceutical industry and for a socialist health service which pays its workers a decent wage, with no concessions to the

Trade Union and Labour Party hierarchy's apologists for private greed.

That hierarchy, by opposing this composite, appears to be leaving the conduct of the health dispute to the unions alone. They rejected our proposal to throw the whole political and organisational weight of the Labour Party behind the fight for the 12 per cent claim and the defence of the NHS.

But this does not tie the hands of local Labour Parties. They should be doing all they can actively to support NHS workers by joining picket lines, launching a massive publicity campaign on the housing estates and shopping centres, and campaigning for a general strike to bring down Thatcher's government.

That's the way we'll get unity in the labour movement — unity in action. Not the shabby 'We'll scratch your back and you scratch ours' unity practiced by the platform and block vote barons to block the demands of the rank and file. And that's the way to ensure that a future Labour government will implement socialist policies for the health service.



Photo by NEWSLINE

Big turn out in Liverpool

Several thousand trade unionists marched through Liverpool on Monday 4 October at the start of the TUC's regional days of action.

Despite the short notice — less than a week — many workplaces sent delegations. Large contingents marched behind the banners of the health workers. These included dockers, car workers, building workers, printers,

seafarers and tobacco workers.

It was a lively demonstration and its strong opposition to the Tory government was very marked. More nurses, technicians, porters and cleaners from the hospitals

turned out than on 22 September. On that day large contingents had left Liverpool to go to the London demonstration.

The large presence of health workers had a big impact not only on the other marchers, but got a great response from people on the sidewalks, showing once again the tremendous support the health workers enjoy.

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victory, for the defence of the socialist policies so far won, and against any expulsions whatsoever.

Why has the witch-hunt happened and why are we saddled with a right wing NEC? Is it because, as in the fifties, the labour movement is in retreat as capitalism regains its nerve? No! It is because Thatcherism and Reaganism are in retreat as labour starts to fight back.

After three years of retreat, even our timid TUC has had to face up to Thatcher and put its weight behind the health workers. And the response has been massive. Is this a political strike? Yes! Whatever Chapple and Bickerstaffe might like to say, the government's policy — and its future — is at stake in this dispute.

Is it a popular strike? Yes! Whatever happened to the argument that strikes lose elections? This dispute has managed what two years of Foot's leadership failed to do. It has lifted Labour out of the trough into which it was dragged by Foot, it has exposed Thatcher's government and opened the road to a Labour victory.

Nor can the tremendous 5-2 vote in favour of unilateralism just be ignored as in 1960, when Labour supported unilateralism by a narrow majority which was quickly reversed after the vicious right wing organised against it. Not only are the unions far more solidly unilateralist than ever before — even Sidney Weighall's union is in favour — but this vote rests on the actions of hundreds of thousands in Britain. This movement in alliance with millions in Europe will not let Labour betray their hopes.

That is why the sabotage of our movement by its leaders has reached a new and higher stage. It combines open treachery in the trade union struggle with open preparation of a coup in the Party.

What a fine example of leadership has been set by Sidney Weighall and the TUC! What an advert for 'democratic' ideals! At the very moment when the movement has found its balance again, they have saddled us with General Chapple at the head of the unions and Generalissimo Healey at the helm of the Labour Party. How can they claim that they are preparing a Labour victory?

When the health strike prepares the defeat of the Tories they put the strikers' most trenchant opponent in charge of the unions. With unilateralism the most popular policy Labour has to offer they put its lifelong enemy and his cronies in charge of its election offensive.

Frightened as they are of defeat at the Tories' hands, they are even more frightened of arriving in office and having to implement the policies we have forced them to adopt.

They know the resistance they will meet from Thatcher's friends in the Penatgon, the treasury and the CBI and they don't want to fight them. They have two options, both of which they prefer to victory. The first is outright defeat at their own hands; the second is a coalition with the SDP. It is up to us to stop them. It is up to us to win a Labour victory.

The idea that the Militant and the left are an obstacle to Labour victory is a crude and patently false lie. Did Militant's influence stop Labour making important gains in the local elections in Liverpool? Did the cleanout of the right wing prevent a victory in Islington? No: these were the areas where Labour did best.

The purpose of the witch-hunt is absolutely clear. The one thing that stands in the way of their manoeuvres is an organised and militant left wing, linking the party and the unions. This can mobilise extraparliamentary mass action, as Skinner promised an enthusiastic Tribune audience, to force an elected Labour government to fight. Those who remember 1969 know only too well that such a movement stopped the labour right's anti-trade union offensive in its tracks then, and they can do it again.

That is why the fight for socialist policies begins with the fight against the witch-hunt. That is why it goes from there to the creation of an organised alliance of the left, committed to extraparliamentary action against nuclear weapons and in support of the health workers. That is why we urge our readers to strain every nerve to defeat the witch-hunt and organise the left.

But there is one final struggle and one final decision to be won. A spectre haunts the movement: the ghost of Michael Foot, who has become a zombie of the right. Nothing illustrates more clearly how much the right wing are really on the defensive than the fact that they have to hide behind such a pathetic figure, and fall out even amongst themselves when they risk appearing too openly for what they are. The lesson of the Labour Party conference, a lesson which delegates were drawing in their hundred as they left for their own constituencies, is that the fight for socialist policies cannot be held hostage to Michael Foot's leadership.

Why does it matter, therefore, what Tony Benn does? Not because the movement will not organise without him. It is organising without him. Not just because the leading trade union lefts, such as Scargill, are hanging fire in backing this struggle, until Tony gives the word. They can be force to fight, with or without Tony.

No: it is because the left wing, if it is to present a genuine alternative to a Foot-Healey government — or, for that mat-

ter, a Foot-Jenkins government — must have at its head a figure capable of heading a government on its behalf.

In time we shall create the forces for a genuine workers' government, that fights wholeheartedly for workers' interests, that will finish the job Labour hasn't finished, that breaks with Britain's imperialist past, despatches the monarchy, the lords, the banks and their ramshackle state into the pages of history books and creates a new, democratic state accountable to those who work for their living — the first step to a socialist Britain. Indeed the forces for such a government will be assembled in and through the struggle to implement the policies already won in the labour movement.

But the further policies needed to secure such a government have not yet won. They are not yet the policy of the labour movement. They can become its policies if it learns how to face Thatcher's fury when she is deposed from office. But the policies which propelled Tony Benn into leadership of the left have the support of the labour movement. We are committed to unilateral disarmament. We are committed to get out of the EEC. We are committed to oppose incomes policy. We are committed to full employment, social justice for women, blacks and youth and to freedom of information. We can unite in action around these demands.

If the movement is to have the confidence to come onto the streets, not just in hundreds of thousands but in millions, it must have the confidence that Tony Benn will be with them when they get there. And Tony Benn must start to build that confidence now. He can put his weight behind each and every fight against expulsions. He can come to the forefront of every extraparliamentary struggle for the policies he supports.

He can tell Michael Foot that, Shadow Cabinet or no Shadow Cabinet, he will be there by our side fighting.

He has not done so. He has not committed himself to our struggle: he left his supporters at conference puzzled, angry and bitter. This vacillation must end.

But one thing is for sure: with or without Benn, we're fighting back.

Our fight back starts with the Days of Action against the Tories. It will continue with action to sack the right wing who stand in our way: and for this, 30 October is a first, but vital step.

Kick out the Tories!
For a Labour Victory!
Fight to defend Socialist Policies!
Stop the witch-hunt!

US troops to stay in Lebanon

By Phil Hearse

BEIRUT a re-united city again. An international peacekeeping force to protect the Palestinians and keep order. The foundations being laid for a strong and independent Lebanon. Sounds pretty good eh? This is exactly the impression being given by the media. But the reality is a little different.

The 're-unification' of the city means that the defensive barriers, so long patrolled by Palestinian and leftist militias are being taken down. The Lebanese army, overwhelmingly a Maronite force, will patrol West Beirut, courtesy of the international force.

But two other factors give the whole event a much more sinister ring. First, Reagan's announcement that US marines will stay in Lebanon until 'all foreign troops' are withdrawn. Second, the plans of the new Lebanese government, revealed in the daily *An Nahar*, to expel the overwhelming bulk of the Palestinian refugees from the country. This is exactly what Israel is after.

The Lebanese government plan is to reduce the number of Palestinians in the country from the present 500,000 to around 50,000. All Palestinians would have their status as refugees withdrawn, and would be subject to stringent work permit and residence regulations — designed

to keep them well away from the major cities.

In order to effect such a sweeping expulsion of the Palestinians will require a massive use of force. This force will be provided by the Lebanese army — with the support and protection of the 'International' Peace Keeping Force.

The massacre in the Palestinian camps provided the excuse for the return of the United States forces. This time they have come back armed to the teeth and determined to stay. Reagan intends to make them a credible military force, capable of engaging in combat with any of the armed forces currently inside Lebanon. But their main role will

be to back up and support the Lebanese army — the sole guarantor of a unified state. The creation of a strong and unified Lebanon means the defeat of the Muslim-based left for many years.

The future of the Palestinians is grim. One of the key objectives of the Israeli invasion was to ensure that the whole of the Palestinian population was expelled — first perhaps to Syria, but ultimately towards Jordan. The Israelis regard Jordan as the real 'homeland' of the Palestinians.

Budget

Their programme for the region is for the Jordanians to ac-

cept some Palestinian 'autonomy' on the West bank of the Jordan — in the state of Jordan itself. The bulk of the Palestinians in Israel itself, and all of those in Gaza and on the East Bank will also be transported eastwards into Jordan.

Despite the current conflicts between the United States and Israel, the United States forces and those of the Lebanese army are about to collaborate in ensuring a key part of Israel's war aims.

Paradoxically, the massacre of the Palestinians in the camps is part of the same process as the sending of the American troops — the expulsion of the Palestinians and the handing of all power to the Phalangist-led Maronite state.

Israeli policy means massacre

By Bernard Chandler

MOST PEOPLE were horrified by the recent massacre of Palestinian refugees in Beirut. Faced with the task of explaining how 'civilised, democratic Israel' could be responsible for such an act, the British media laid heavy stress on the personalities of Prime Minister Menachem Begin and his Defence Minister Ariel Sharon.

For a socialist, such a simplistic explanation is clearly unsatisfactory. In fact, the Beirut massacre was the only possible outcome of the genocidal Israeli incursion into the Lebanon, and the invasion of Lebanon was in turn dictated by the logic of current Israeli strategy in the heartland of Palestinian nationalism; the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Israelis intend to expel from the Occupied Territories, all but a pliable minority of Palestinians. In its present phase, the strategy has two prongs. Firstly, an all-out attack on the symbols and institutions of Palestinian nationalism. Then the fostering of a collaborationist 'alternative' to the PLO in the form of the lavishly financed 'Village Leagues'.

The war against the PLO took the Israelis into Beirut with the awful results which we have seen.

For the Palestinians of the Occupied Territories, the outcome of the Zionist strategy is proving no less tragic. Land confiscations have proceeded apace; 60% of West Bank land is now in Israeli government hands. Nine elected PLO municipalities have been dissolved. This year, more Palestinians have been shot dead by the army in the Occupied Territories than in the entire

1967-82 period (contrast the handling of Palestinian demonstrations with the kid glove treatment of Israeli protestors at Yamit).

Racist Israeli hoodlums from the settlements have become increasingly free to terrorise, abduct and murder West Bank and Gaza Strip Palestinians. With government connivance, attacks on Islamic holy places like the Al Aqsa mosque are virtually an everyday occurrence. The Palestinian press is crippled by censorship and banning orders, and Palestinian universities, when not closed by government order, are subject to persistent military harassment.

Failed

Still the Zionists have failed to make any real dents in Palestinian resistance. Nobody has come forward to take the places of the dismissed mayors. Support for the Village League is minuscule, and the influence of the reactionary Muslim Brotherhood, at one time dangerously high, is now on the wane (the collaborationist politics of the Brotherhood have been thoroughly exposed by its refusal to participate in the anti-Israeli demonstrations of the past year, even those in defence of Al Aqsa).



Palestinian militants on the West Bank have made links with the best elements of the Israeli peace movement, such as the Bir Zeit Solidarity Committee. The rising tide of resistance on the West Bank has stirred the consciousness of the beleaguered Arabs within

Israel's pre-1967 borders. A highly successful general strike was held by Israeli Arabs on Land Day (30 March) this year, and the biggest Palestinian anti-war demonstrations took place within Israel.

The Palestinian cause still faces grave dangers as well as great oppor-

tunities. The focal point of Israeli strategy will now switch from the Lebanon back to the occupied territories, and it would be idiotic to think that, in the aftermath of the Beirut massacre, Zionist methods will be any less bloodthirsty.

A state which has been

murdering and dispossessing Palestinians for 34 years is hardly likely to stop now. Future massacres will be smaller, more efficient, and more ably defended, possibly by a Labour Government. To the people on the receiving end the difference will be a somewhat academic one.

intentioned people who genuinely want to see an end to the suffering of the Palestinians.

Socialists must explain that, because of the inherently reactionary and expansionist nature of Zionism, only the destruction of the Zionist state can end that suffering. The Palestinians have already paid a heavy price for the world socialist movement's confusion about the nature of Zionism. Now we owe them our full solidarity in rejecting any imperialist imposed solution in the Middle East.

The author has just come back to Britain after living for several years on the West Bank.

Resolution on Mid-East passed by Labour Conference

This conference, recognising the injustice and oppression being suffered by the Palestinian people under the military occupation and scattered as refugees throughout the Middle East, declares its support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination within an independent sovereign state and calls upon the Labour Party and the British Government to recognise the Palestine Liberation Organisation as the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people.

In addition, this conference condemns the Israeli invasion of Lebanon with its horrific toll of death and destruction. Conference believes that the time has come for the Labour Party to state unequivocally its support for the fundamental rights of the Palestinians and its condemnation of the continuing pattern of Israeli aggression, and calls on the National Executive Committee to pursue this policy through the Socialist International.

Moved by
DUNDEE EAST CLP
Seconded by
THANET EAST CLP

Protest against pogrom in Lebanon

Israeli troops out of Lebanon!

Saturday 9 October
Speakers Corner 12pm

Sheikhs

Meanwhile Arab reaction, in collusion with US imperialism, will try to force the PLO to recognise Israel, in return for some kind of Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. Support for a solution on these lines is not confined to Reagan and the oil sheikhs; it is strong amongst the well-

Railworkers meet in special conference

McCarthy's con trick

By Rose Knight

THE RAILWAY Staffs National Tribunal (RSNT) report states that the British Rail Board should offer a pay increase of six per cent from September 1982 tied firmly to productivity and further massive reductions in railway jobs.

Fifteen thousand jobs went between 1980-82 and the BRB want a further reduction of 27,000 jobs between now and 1985.

To sweeten the bitter pill, one days extra holiday from 1983 and an increase in the minimum earnings level of six per cent from April '82 are also put forward.

Guard's jobs will be the first to go. The Tribunal agreed with the Board that the Bedford/St Pancras line should be operated without guards thus opening the way for driver-only operation of all suburban passenger trains. It also wants three pilot schemes for driver-only freight trains to start immediately.

The National Union of Railwaymen has already agreed to 'a changed role for guards' and accepted that guards are not required to operate the new electric trains. The 313 Electric Multiple Unit (EMU) which are already used on many suburban lines have door buttons in the drivers cabs, presently covered over, but ready for use once the Board has achieved the principle that guards are not required to operate these trains. The Union is arguing about safety procedures, and that guards be retained on the St Pancras/Bedford line for 'commercial duties', but as the report states: 'the NUR is not opposing driver-only operation as such'.

McCarthy very skilfully plays up to this. His report suggests that guards are kept on the St Pancras/Bedford line for a minimum of six months, to be further reviewed by the RSNT.

But since the object of driver-only operation is to cut jobs, there's little chance that guards will be kept on, especially if the open station concept for busy commuter areas is rejected as the report recommends. Ticket collection will be done at stations, so guards 'commercial duties' will not be needed.

'The six months job' is a tactic designed to undercut any immediate opposition to the plan by guards. It also holds out a cherry to platform staff and drivers in the form of extra payments if they take over guards jobs.

The trainman concept which the report recommends for discussion covers over the fact that the guards job, as a grade, will disappear.

Driver jobs are also threatened with the plan for single man locomotives.

Further discussions on productivity is to include cuts in passenger services, work 'reallocated' between depots, cuts in administrative jobs and more cuts in running costs particularly at the administrative level.

Hazel McPherson

JUNE this year the NUR's Annual General Meeting voted to suspend a national strike over pay and productivity. The whole package was then taken to Lord McCarthy's tribunal. His recommendations, which are listed in this week's Socialist Challenge, add up to a massive attack on jobs and working conditions.

On 13 and 14 October a special General Meeting the union will consider proposals. Railworkers who will be ending a lobby of the meeting on the Wednesday will be very clear about their demands. We want a 10 per cent pay rise with no strings attached. The SGM must reject McCarthy and, in the words of the General Secretary's report to the AGM this year "stand and hit" to project jobs and high standards.

Whatever the SGM's decision there is no doubt that the suspension of the strike call despite the massive support it received and the sell out on flexible working earlier in the year have raised important questions in the union concerning the need to democratise the structures and overturn right wing policies on pay, productivity and political questions like nuclear disarmament.

Railworkers should prepare now for mass ac-

tion to defend their industry and get rid of the Tories. 22 September showed the determination of working people to fight this government. The next few months will see a Post Office Engineering strike against privatisation, a water workers strike over pay, the possibility of a miners strike and the ongoing struggle of the health workers. The best way we can defend our industry is to build support in the union for the proposed day of solidarity action with the healthworkers by calling on the NEC to give its support and campaigning in the branches and depots for support and action.

Finally, whilst Brother Weighell has been busy ignoring his mandate at LP conference Eric Clarke (the candidate he should have voted for) has announced a Triple Alliance rally in Scotland and a Triple Alliance lobby of Parliament at the end of this month. This is a



NUR general secretary Sidney Weighell. Far from defending the nationalised industries he's heading up the witch-hunt. He was caught red-handed at Blackpool helping purge the miners from the Labour Party NEC - against his union mandate.

tremendous opportunity to build the Alliance of coal, steel and rail workers into a fighting formation and we should campaign to support these events throughout our industry.

- Lobby of SGM Wednesday 13 October 9.00am onwards AUEW Offices, Holloway Circus, Birmingham.
- Socialist Challenge fringe meeting after

lobby, White Lion pub. opposite AUEW offices.

Triple Alliance: rally in Edinburgh, 23 October; lobby of Parliament, 26 October.

Telecoms: one day strike called

THE TORIES have given notice that they intend to sell off British Telecoms after the next election. The right wing dominated leadership of the Post Office Engineering Union did nothing to prevent the first stage of the privatisation of the industry with the formation of the private company Project Mercury utilising British Rail lines. However, in relation to the present threat, the POEU has called a one day protest strike for 20 October.

Socialist Challenge spoke with Phil Holt, secretary of Liverpool internal POEU and secretary of the POEU Broad Left.

Could you say something about the present stage in a campaign to prevent privatisation of BT?

Extremely encouraging. The Broad Left has raised the issue over a number of years that the union should be campaigning amongst the public and amongst its

own membership to alert them to the threat of privatisation.

Part of the first stages of any industrial action to bring home to the government that they face a serious challenge as far as their plans are concerned, should be a one day protest strike.

The Executive after a tremendous amount of pressure around the country have now adopted that, and we welcome this as a serious step forward in the fight to defend our industry.

Obviously over the next period the whole of the trade union movement will be alerted to the campaign of the POEU, and we would hope that every trade union, every branch, every district Labour Party, every local ward Labour Party will be taking POEU literature to distribute amongst the public, and to the general trade union movement, in defence of an important,

profitable, publicly-owned industry.

What do you think of the record of the right wing leadership of the union in organising opposition to the denationalisation of our industry?

The right wing's record has not been particularly glamorous to say the least. We have to be properly alert to the dangers of them not fully carrying out the campaign in the way demanded by the overwhelming majority of the activists in the branches.

But as we have seen, if pressure is put on them they can be pushed along the road of making a stand at certain times. But at

each stage we have to press them further.

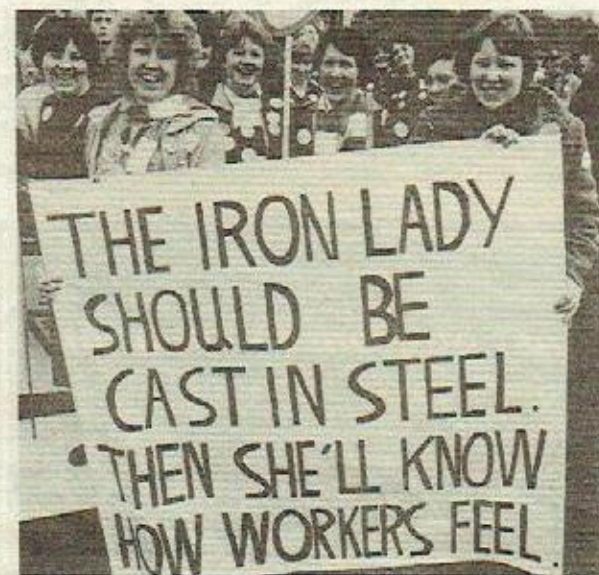
How would you characterise the right wing leadership's strategy and what is the Broad Left saying about that and what is the Broad Left doing?

The basic strategy of the right wing is to hope that the return of a Labour Government will reverse all the measures that the Tories have put in train, or at least that's what they say publicly. I personally believe that the strategy which they outline is not being carried out with the same amount of enthusiasm that it should be.

For instance, our members should be drawn into discussions about what they feel a Labour Government should do with the telecommunications industry when it is returned to power, and then at national conferences plans for the renationalisation of the industry without compensation after that full membership consultation.

Stan Orme informed the National Executive that he didn't want the next Labour government placed in the same predicament as the 1945 government, when they were asked to nationalise the mines, and the miners union had no plans for the nationalisation of the mines.

We need a strategy that can win in all circumstances, not one that is at best just a gamble on the return of a Labour government.



Clydebridge Steel

A GROUP of workers who lobbied the Labour conference chanting, 'Maggie, Maggie, Out! Out! Out!' are from the threatened Clydebridge steel plant in Scotland. Clearie, secretary of the Joint Trade Union Committee the plant explained:

'On October 6th the JC Steel Committee has called a delegate meeting in Sheffield to consider its response to job losses in the industry, including at Clydebridge plant where the BSC has announced 575 redundancies.

We'll be taking people on to lobby that

meeting to ask for not just verbal support but for something hard and tangible. This should be a collective issue. It's not about playing one group of steel workers against another, Scotland versus Wales or England.'

Another Clydebridge lobbyist Jim Craig backed this up, 'We don't want statements that the union will fight future closures. We want a commitment for a fight against redundancies that are happening now. The only way we can really do this is if we come out on strike. We had a 13 week strike for a pay rise the other year, surely the guarantee of any wage coming in by fighting for jobs is more important.'

Convenor victimised

ON 27 SEPTEMBER the joint shop stewards committee convenor of Ferranti Cairo Mill, Oldham, was sacked for supposedly defrauding the company and gross industrial misconduct. The workers held a mass meeting voting for industrial action if their convenor was sacked.

There is no substance to managements charges. They allege that a clocking-in card was incorrectly filled out by the convenor. Seven weeks after the event, they sacked him. Tony Purtill, convenor of Ferranti Cairo Mill, explained the background to Laura Mitchell.

'It is no coincidence that statements from management were put out during the period up to my sacking about redundancies and short-time working. But the company as a whole has increased its profits 100 percent over the last three years.

'We have gone from being the lowest paid in 1975 to the highest paid factory in Ferranti's in 1982. This started with a nine-week strike in 1975. We did well out of that in terms of wages but it also really strengthened the union organisation in the factory. This had a big effect in all subsequent disputes.'

Management's target in sacking Tony is precisely to undermine this union organisation. This came out clearly at the appeal

hearing after the convenor's dismissal on Thursday 30 September. Management proposed that he give up all union credentials in exchange for the offer of a job in a different section. Thus their concern was not to deal with an alleged 'clocking offence' but to remove an effective union convenor.

The dispute is now going through the final stages of procedure with an external conference between union officials and management on Thursday 7 October. The Cairo Mill shop steward have laid the basis for a determined response if the management decide to carry through their attack and this could be extended to the entire Ferranti group nationally.

Stop the missiles

'Jobs not Bombs' march hits Labour conference

By Martin Marriot, youth marcher and secretary, Prestwich YS

WHEN 200 tired youth spilled out onto the Blackpool sands to enthusiastic applause from holidaymakers who lined the streets and from 5,000 strong Labour CND demo which greeted us, our work was not quite over. Our aim was to take our message to Labour's conference and leadership.

A delegation immediately set off to the Imperial Hotel where Labour's NEC adjourned to greet us. We handed them a petition calling for

● a two thirds majority at conference to make unilateral disarmament part of the Labour Party manifesto at the next general election.

● for the Labour Party leadership and TUC to mobilise their members in 1983 with demonstrations and industrial action to stop cruise missiles being sited.

● for the NEC to reject any attempt to remove from the Labour Party the people who support CND's policies.

19 NEC members signed this statement and we lobbied conference delegates with it on Monday morning.

Somehow the NEC members like Neil Kinrock, who signed the

statement but supported the witch-hunt, didn't seem to see the contradiction in their actions. So we issued a press statement pointing it out: we are one hundred per cent against the witch-hunt, which will rapidly lead to expulsions of unilateralists unless it is stopped.

Joan Lester paid tribute to the marchers, from the platform, during her introduction to the debate on nuclear disarmament on Wednesday. It was a huge boost for us when our first demand became a reality: unilateral nuclear disarmament received a five to two majority.

Yet the problems in turning this vote into action soon became clear: Roy Hattersley was on television the same night explaining that even though conference had reached a two thirds majority, the NEC was not obliged to put unilateralism in the manifesto — just to think



about it!

Throughout then next day delegates were coming forward to the rostrum to demand that the NEC repudiate this statement and that the leadership give a clear commitment to put unilateralism in the manifesto.

We think the best way to ensure there is a manifesto commitment — and to make sure Labour carries it out — is by mass action, and that's why we marched from Manchester to Blackpool.

But the Labour Party won't be throwing its

weight behind mass action if the right wing succeed in their demand for a witch-hunt: by Thursday they were calling for the expulsion of the Young Socialists, who together with YCND sponsored our march.

We pointed this out at the fringe meetings. One youth marcher told a New Socialist meeting on Tuesday night that supporting CND was incompatible with expulsions, and no way to inspire youth — and I got a warm response from Thursday evenings fringe meeting of 'Labour

Parties against the witch-hunt' when I told them:

'This witch-hunt is an attack on the policy of unilateralism which conference voted for so decisively. And the further we let it go, the further everything we've fought for will be lost. That's why the marchers are with you against the witch-hunt. But please remember that action to defend youth, and action to defend a unilateralist policy, are the best ways to fight the witch-hunt. I for one will be at the Hackney conference on 30 October.'

Coal industry under attack

By Andy Miller

MINERS will be voting at the end of this month on the Coal Board's 8 per cent offer. The ballot takes place against the background of falling demand for energy, including coal. Coal stocks are at record levels. The Coal Board's annual accounts show a loss of £428 million.

Miners in 'unproductive' pits in South Wales and Scotland were blamed for the losses. The Coal Board are trying to persuade miners that if they accept falling living standards and the closure of pits, then everything will be fine and dandy. They claim that there is no alternative to their policies.

This is the lie that has to be nailed in the build-up to the pay ballot and the struggle against pit closures and job losses that lies beyond.

What are the real reasons for the coal board's losses?

While the press were quick to point the finger of blame at the South Wales miners. But they forgot to mention the massive burden of interest payments — now running at £341 million or over £1,500 per working miner. Nor did they point out that while wage costs increased by 8 per cent per tonne, other operating costs increased by 14½ per cent. So while the miners are being asked to tighten their belts, the private suppliers continue to do very nicely — thank you out of the industry.

Behind the scenes the Tories are continuing to tighten the screws. The Board was only able to keep within the borrowing limits set by the government by increasing the proportion of major investment paid for by self-financing from 20 per cent to 42 per cent — an extra £103 million. Of course the Board

didn't actually have the money for this investment so it was forced to go into the red to pay for it.

A closer look at the figures reveals a very different story from the picture of 'unproductive' miners driving industry into the red which was put over in the Fleet St Press.

'Heads we win — tails you lose' is the attitude of the Board and the Tories to the miners. Heads — they want the miners to bear the burden of the cost of massive programme of investment in the industry through lost jobs and falling living-standards. Tails — that investment won't be used to the benefit of the miners through the introduction of a shorter working week and retirement at 55. Instead it will become another threat to miners' jobs. 'Technological unemployment' is what Coal Board boss Norman Siddall calls it.

The biggest threat to miners' jobs comes from the policies of the Tory government. The Tories' hatchetman MacGregor — boss of

British Steel — is about to launch another jobs massacre in the steel industry. That will mean even more miners' jobs under the axe.

Over the next 18 months, six new power stations will come into operation, three oil and three nuclear powered. They will be able to produce 20 per cent of the Electricity Board's peak capacity and replace coal powered stations. The Tories are pushing for a big expansion of nuclear power, this is despite the fact that coal is 30 per cent cheaper than oil and an estimated 40 per cent cheaper than nuclear power.

If the Tories get their way it will mean a programme of pit closure on a scale not seen since the 60s.

Accepting low pay increases, allowing jobs to be lost will not stave-off this threat. It is a recipe for disaster.

There is an alternative to going like lambs to the slaughter. Industrial action to prevent pit closures and to restore lost jobs. Early retirement on full pay, and a four-day week without loss of pay. Fighting for united action will rail and steelworkers in the light to defend jobs, and united action by the whole labour and trade union movement in defence of the nationalised industries. These are the policies which can stem the tide of the Tory attacks.

Secret FO telegrams reveal...

Britain blocks aid to Nicaragua

THIS WEEK'S *City Limits* publishes a series of confidential Foreign Office telegrams, which accidentally ended up in that magazine's letter box. Already the Foreign Office is taking legal action to prevent publication of any more of these highly revealing and entertaining documents.

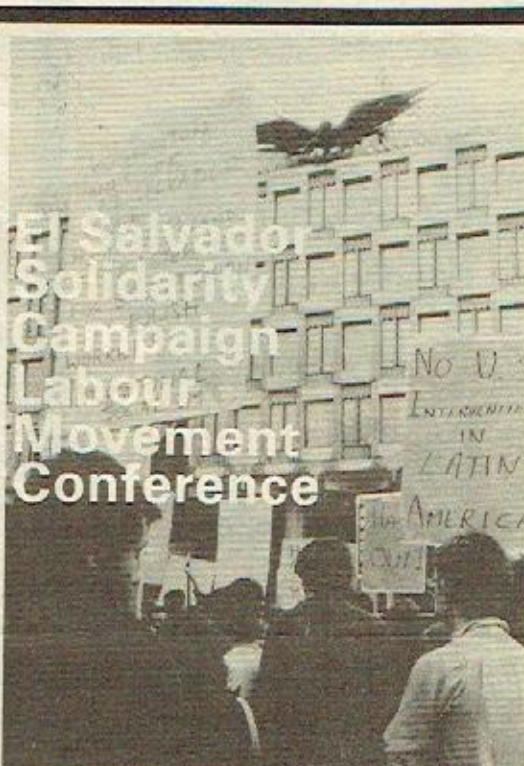
The telegrams and telxes cover a wide range of questions. Among the more controversial however is the revelation that Britain is the only country in the EEC objecting to giving aid to Nicaragua from the community.

According to 'Brief no 3' for the recent EEC Council of Ministers meeting Britain 'is not prepared to accept any expenditure on aid for Central America outside existing budgetary proposals'.

According to the brief Nicaragua is 'spending its resources on military build up rather than development. Moreover, the Nicaraguan regime is becoming increasingly repressive and Soviet and Cuban influence there is growing'.

It is natural that the Thatcher government should line up with the United States on this and refuse British aid. But it is an absolute scandal that Britain should be instrumental in halting aid to that country from the EEC.

Labour should raise this in parliament and demand that Britain withdraw its objection. Further the PLP should demand that British aid be sent to help re-construct Nicaragua's economy.



ABOUT 40 DELEGATES of the El Salvador Solidarity Committee (ELSSOC) from all over the country met on Sunday September 26, for their Quarterly National Conference. The questions discussed and the contributions showed a very deep motivation and a high political level amongst all participants.

Through the reports of all local committees, the experiences were shared and the difficulties analysed. Everyone acknowledged the appalling lack of information in the media on events in Central America at a time when the whole region is reaching a boiling point with an extremely preoccupying US intervention.

National and international events have a crucial impact on the running of the solidarity work. The Malvinas' war first, the Middle East now overshadowing the dramatic reality in Central America and in El Salvador.

The Reagan administration is stepping up a gigantic offensive against all revolutionary movements in the region by creating a military alliance between the Honduran, Salvadorean and Guatemalan juntas, and a political alliance through the 'Central America Democratic Community' which has been launched by the State Department for its counterinsurgency plans.

The US Administration is trying to stop the tide in El Salvador and Guatemala, involving Costa Rica and above all Honduras in military actions and air raids against Nicaragua, putting pressure on Panama to enter the political alliance and on Mexico to renounce its support for a negotiated settlement in El Salvador. They heavily rely on Israel, since 1973 almost the sole supplier of arms to Latin and Central America. Israeli military 'advisors' have been seen on the battle fields.

The ELSSOC Conference felt that because of the 'silent invasion' (as Daniel Ortega from the Sandinista government called the US attacks and manoeuvres) and the unbelievable increase in repression everywhere in Central America, international solidarity was more than ever needed.

How to be an active part of the 'World Solidarity Front with the people of El Salvador', how to cooperate with other solidarity campaigns in Britain, how to build an increasingly needed Anti-Intervention Front are going to be the main topics of the next ELSSOC Conference, the AGM in January.

To develop solidarity in Britain, ELSSOC Trade-Union Commission decided to organise a major event for 1983: the Labour Movement Conference. This national conference will gather an estimated 250 delegates from trade-union and Labour Party bodies. Already backed by some of the biggest unions, this day of information and active participation opens tremendous opportunities for the whole campaign. Provisional date has been arranged for 14 May, in Manchester.

All ELSSOC delegates greeted the announcement and are starting to prepare for this national mobilisation. In the meantime, the local committees will continue their educational campaigns, raise funds for the FMLN/FDR and intervene inside the anti-nuclear and anti-imperialist mass movement which fights the same enemies. Give your support!

If you want to get involved or receive information, phone 01 359 270 or write to 29 Islington Park Street, London N1. They will put you in contact with the nearest local committee.



Nye Bevan's conspiracy

By Martin Meteyard

WE ALL know how opposed Michael Foot is to tightly knit groups within the Labour Party. But Foot the party leader has conveniently forgotten what Foot the biographer wrote in 1962 about the rise of his mentor Nye Bevan (*Aneurin Bevan, Vol. 1: 1897-1945*).

Bevan's home town, Tredegar, was run by the local mining company. No real challenge came from the Labour Party. So Bevan and some friends started something called the Query Club in the winter of 1921-22.

Foot notes that, 'Membership was open only to those who had been strictly vetted'. That alone would have kept them off today's register. But there's worse to come. "If we go to meetings and we know what we want, we'll get our way", he (Bevan) urged. Secret signs were arranged so that tactics could be changed and one Query Club member could indicate to another when a resolution should be moved or a barren argument adjourned. Soon their elders were complaining of these youths who pushed and talked and argued to such purpose at every committee meeting.'

Secret signs, indeed. Even Militant have never been accused of that!

The Query Club — 'enlarged to some twenty members on the same strict selective basis enforced from the start' — didn't confine itself to the Labour Party but also carried what Foot calls its 'purposive infiltrations' into the Trades Council and miners' lodge meetings.

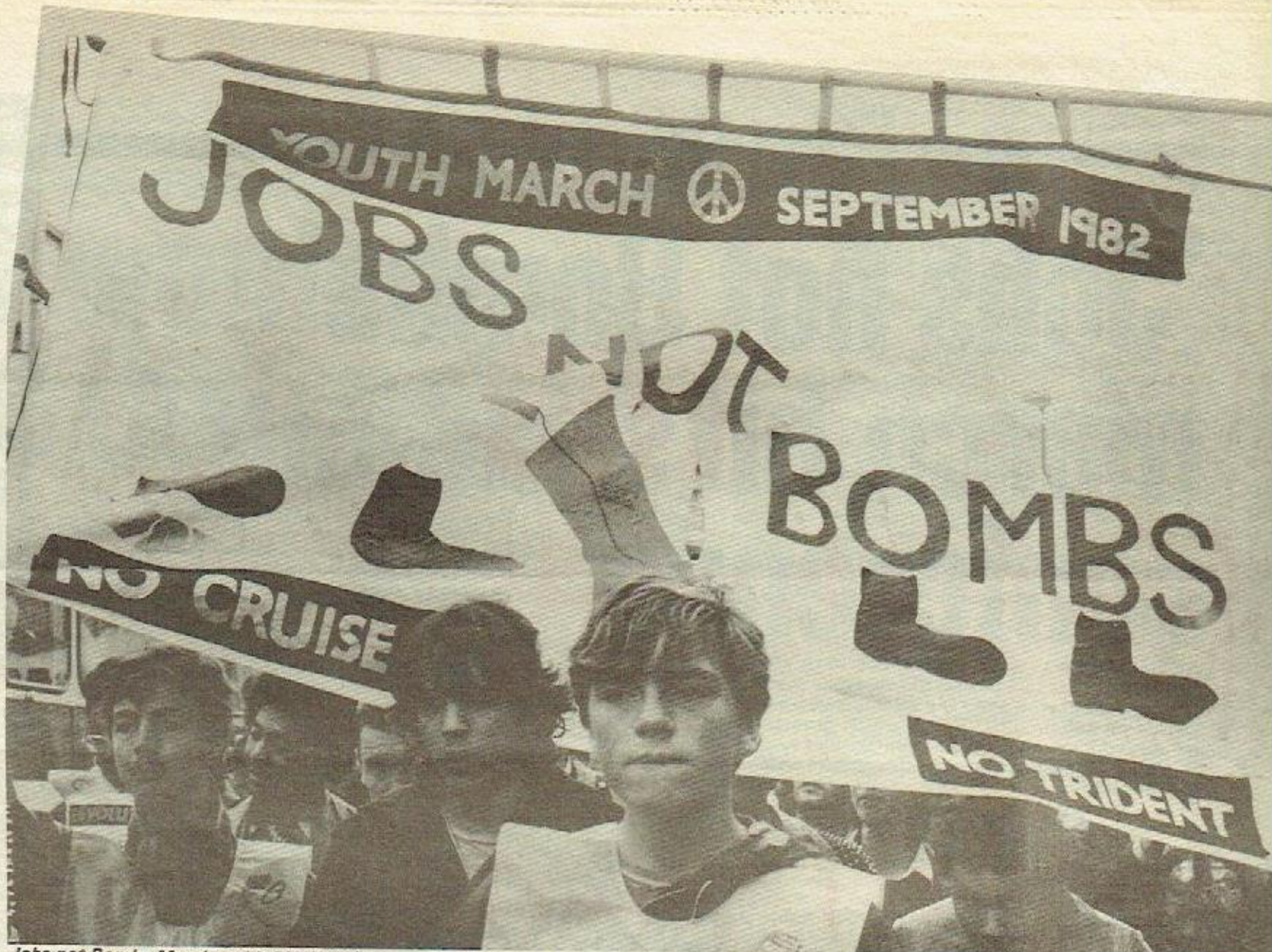
Its existence was not secret, although many of its particular objectives might be. "The people sitting in the best pews", as they described the older Labour leaders, were often outraged by the pressures of the youthful activists. But it never occurred or seemed possible to the older men and women to outlaw them and forbid their manoeuvres.'

One reason why it never seemed possible was because, as Foot points out, Bevan's 'base remained the union'. Which leads us on to another interesting little episode.

How was it that Bevan came to enter the House of Commons in 1929? Yes, you've guessed — he ousted the sitting MP in a reselection process! Worse still, it didn't even come about through the local party machinery — Bevan was simply imposed on the Ebbw Vale party by the miners. It makes Barnsley NUM seem most restrained.

Not that it was at all undemocratic. The sitting MP, Evan Davies, was the nominee of the South Wales Miners Federation; and under pressure they agreed to ballot the miners to see if his nomination should be renewed. The result was a triumph for Bevan — and for workers democracy. The nomination was his on the third ballot with 5,097 votes against 4,336 for the other two remaining candidates.

If it was good enough for the young Bevan — and his biographer — it should be good enough for us. But then 'sitting in the best pews' gives one a different outlook on life. As Foot will no doubt explain,



Jobs not Bombs Marchers hit Blackpool

THE LABOUR PARTY conference we attended in Blackpool was not the Labour Party conference you read about in the press. The delegate who seconded the vote of thanks summed it up. 'I attended one conference: then I read about another one'.

The press reported a conference in which Michael Foot came out as Labour's true leader. The Conference delegates went to was the one at which he lost any shred of credibility he retained with the left, and surrendered himself finally and irrevocably to the right.

The press reported a conference which threw Labour's election chances to the winds by voting for unilateral disarmament only to be rescued by Roy Hattersley rushing to the television cameras and explaining that the NEC could ignore what conference had decided.

Delegates attended a conference in which Labour adopted the most popular election policy going in Britain today. It committed Labour to a gigantic mobilisation of the unions, the party and CND to stop Cruise in '83. The left in particular are determined to impose this commitment on their leaders come Hattersley or high water.

The press reported the quiet and efficient removal of the *Militant*. Delegates sat aghast as their leaders launched a purge capable of destroying the party. The delegates in their majority then determined to get their unions and Labour to resist this witch-hunt.

The press reported a recalcitrant constituency left being brought into line with 'reality' by kindly trade union common sense. Delegates, from CLPs and unions alike, saw conference fixed by a handful of block-vote mongers: and left with the intention of taking the campaign for democracy to the union rank and file.

What really happened? The progress of conference can only be understood in the context of the crisis through which the TUC and Labour leaders are passing.

The contradiction which ran right through the proceedings was this: on the one hand, all factors combined to force the bureaucracy to put up a battle against Thatcher and Thatcherism: yet on the other, they were scared stiff of arriving in office committed to the policies which they *knew* were needed to defeat Thatcher. They had,

therefore, only one choice: to take away, on the field of political power in the party, what they surrendered on the field of Party policy.

They gave in on unilateralism — and elected an NEC with a near-majority against it. They delivered demagogic speeches in support of the health workers — and threw out the only motion committing Labour to action which could help win their fight.

They voted for women's rights — and rejected every motion seeking an increase in women's political power in the Party. Most important of all, they launched a divisive and destructive witch-hunt against those in the Party who championed the very policies they voted for.

And the left fought back. Slowly, inch by inch and day by day, they recovered from the disorientation fostered by Tony Benn's support for Michael Foot, by the failure of the majority of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy to organise resistance to the witch-hunt, and by their own hopes of quick success by electoral means alone.

By the end of the conference the basis for resistance had emerged. Two hundred and fifty delegates on Thursday evening — the one normally reserved for drinking and saying goodbyes — came to the fringe meeting called by 'Labour Parties against the witch-hunt'. They heard Phil Holt of the POEU, Ray Hill of the ISTC; Martin Flannery MP, Ernie Roberts MP, Joan Maynard MP, and Jeremy Corbyn, a parliamentary candidate, support a fight back against the register.

How did the fight develop?

Sunday

Several hundred delegates turned up to the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy meeting, many dispirited and uncertain — perhaps encouraged by the enthusiastic 'Jobs not Bombs' youth contingent at the morning's 2,000-strong CND demo. At this meeting two lines were put forward for dealing with the witch-hunt. From the CLPD platform came a recommendation to fight for a 'fallback' resolution on the register calling for a year's postponement and for a 'democratic' register with milder restrictions, and controlled by conference instead of the NEC.

But from the floor came a clearer alternative. As John Gardiner of

Luton East, and a member of the CLPD executive explained, whatever the outcome of the discussion on the fallback amendment, delegates had to begin *now* to prepare to resist expulsions, and they had to take the issue to the rank and file of the unions to call their executives to account for their support of the register.

Bridget Elton of Hackney North Labour Party then explained that fifteen Constituency Labour Parties had organised a conference against the witch-hunt and urged delegates to build for Thursday night's fringe meeting. A caucus of all those interested in preparing the meeting had been called that night: over twenty delegates and visitors attended, including a handful of trade unionists, to begin the week-long struggle for sponsorship and support.

Monday

Monday soon showed how important this initiative was to be. Delegates got their first inkling that the right wing were not to have it all their own way when an emergency resolution, insisting on a debate around CLPD's fallback amendments, was passed on a show of hands. 'I'm sorry, but I didn't hear any call for a card vote,' Judith Hart calmly assured furious bureaucrats. It was a symbolic reversal.

CLPD's hopes for a reversal were soon dashed when the fallback amendments fell that afternoon by a majority larger than the main composite against the register. But the mood of conference was already changing. Moving the NEC's position, Jim Mortimer assured conference that only *Militant's* inner circle would go and that the register was not a political witch-hunt.

But his attack on *Militant* was consciously political, and delegates were shocked to the core by the ranting speeches from Roy Grantham of APEX and John Spellar of the EET-PU. Both called for the expulsion of *Militant's* 'paid sellers' and argued the case on clear political grounds.

Michael Foot's summary cut little ice when he repeated Mortimer's assurances and claimed that *Militant* were under attack, not for their views but for breach of Clause II. 'What about Clause IV?', Ray Apps asked delegates to thunderous applause.

But it was a speech from Martin Flannery MP that brought delegates

to their feet in an ovation twice as large and long as Michael Foot's. 'This is the first step in an attack on all the policies we have won in the last three years,' he said. 'It was not the *Militant* that lost us the last election but the Cabinet.'

Monday and Tuesday were both days of preparations, set against the background of the electrifying debate on the health service. Playing to the group of uniformed health workers in the gallery, even COHSE's Albert Spanswick promised what sounded like near-insurrection against Thatcher. The main resolutions on health were resoundingly passed but the most militant and intransigent composite, number 32, was defeated on the NEC's recommendation. Did the NEC really want a socialist alternative? Apparently not.

The feelings to which Martin Flannery had given voice came out at the eight-hundred strong *Labour Herald* meeting that same night. Not only did Livingstone and Maynard call for a rejection of the witch-hunt, but Arthur Scargill, NUM and John Aitken of the EETPU Broad Left, called for all out struggle against the Tory government.



No, it's not Mussolini. It's Callaghan

Labour's conference

the fightback begins



By our correspondents

Tuesday



to hear Tony Benn, Jeremy Bray, Michael Meacher, Alan Freeman and Giles Radice debate the future of democracy. Radice echoed a theme taken up by Foot in his second conference speech, in which he tried to claim inheritance of the socialist governments of Sweden, Austria and Greece.

But as Alan Freeman pointed out, there was no mention of Germany where Social Democracy had been in office for many years — as part of a coalition which was now set to ditch it. Could it be that Radice and his friends were preparing a coalition in Britain? How tempting it would be, just to keep Thatcher out! And how tempting it would be for a group of right wing MPs to walk over to the SDP benches to stop unilateralism being implemented!

We want the left to organise now, said Freeman, because this time we don't want a repetition of 1931. We don't want a decade of unemployment, war, and Labour defeat. We want to win — and those who do not want to win should be made to step aside.

Wednesday



It was on Wednesday that the bombshells started to go off. Conference exploded with joy as unilateralism got its two-thirds majority — and within hours Hattersley was explaining to the media that the NEC could not be bound by this decision. Conference erupted with anger as the union block vote was used to crush resolutions calling for women to have more representation in the party.

At this point a differentiation in delegates' reactions surfaced. Some blamed the unions as a whole and echoed calls for an end to the block vote. But another, more dominant view came over: this said we should democratise the block vote. We should go into the unions and fight.

This latter sentiment came to a head with the extraordinary scenes surrounding the NEC election. In front of cameras and delegates alike, first Clive Jenkins and then Arthur Scargill came to the rostrum to protest the result. Was it just a counting error? As one of the scrutineers told us, it was rather hard to find out since the count was organised by the full-time officers! But then it came out:

Weighell had broken both his mandate and his promise to the NUM by casting his vote for the rightwinger Tom Breakell, depriving the miners of a seat on the NEC for the first time in years.

With these revelations a suspicion became a certainty. The new NEC was not Michael Foot's but Healey's, with a 16-13 majority. What on earth did this have to do with the policies conference was passing? Delegates made their opinions clear at *Tribune's* rally. Kinnock got a magnificent standing ovation — from one person.

And he was unfortunate enough to precede one Dennis Skinner in the speaking order. Skinner is a plain man. And in the most popular speech of conference, he ripped Kinnock to pieces in a sustained masterpiece of sarcasm. Kinnock has a reputation for the funny speeches at *Tribune* rallies — but Skinner would have held his own in competition with any stand-up comedian in Britain. The audience loved it.

Yet he finished on a deadly serious note. 'What is the backdrop to all this?' he said. 'Well, there's a big struggle ahead. Twenty-six countries are rescheduling their debts. Half our banks have debts to developing countries equal to twice their assets. I'll tell you why I want to nationalise the banks: I want to save them — for us!'

'There's £636 billion there,' he went on, 'and our bankers are raking it in at 26 per cent on these investments while the economy is ravaged. And can anybody wonder? Why

put money in industry at five per cent when you can get ten to twelve per cent from the building societies?'

'The industrial economy is being flattened,' he told a now silent audience, 'and we haven't even got the guts to pass a resolution so that workers can take over the financial institutions.'

Skinner's forthright speech, his call for a fight, 'all the way down the road and on the left hand side' and his endorsement of class struggle ('let's organise the extraparliamentary action that will refresh the parts the Party fails to reach') got tremendous support.

This was in sad contrast to the lukewarm and puzzled reception given Tony Benn in the closing speech, where he called for 'unity around the present policies, the present membership — and the present leadership'. It was the first time in a few years we actually saw the benches emptying as Benn spoke.

Thursday



But the stage had been set. On Thursday delegate after delegate rose to challenge the NEC to declare it would put unilateralism in the manifesto. Ray Hill, an unemployed steel worker, traumatised the trade union leaders with a vitriolic attack

on Bill Sirs' leadership of the steel strike. Composite 17 opposing the use of plastic bullets was debated — and passed. Sunday's anger had turned to determination.

Only one person could deflect such a mood: and he did. Looking as uncomfortable as could be expected, Tony Benn called for endorsement of the Liaison Committee report on economic strategy with the scarcely-credible claim that it 'did not constitute an endorsement of incomes policy'. Thus Michael Foot will be left free to 'negotiate with the unions' — and we know what he negotiated with the unions in 1976. To set the seal on the confusion Benn explained, in a remark that was clearly intended for the media and was eagerly seized by them, that he would work 'wholeheartedly and unreservedly for a Labour government under Michael Foot'. It was not what delegates wanted to hear. They wanted leadership in the fight against Healey, Hattersley and Weighell — and they didn't get it.

But the momentum of opposition to the witch-hunt and to bureaucratic fixing was not going to be stopped.

That night's packed fringe meeting against the witch-hunt, thrown together as it was even as conference unfolded, marked an important, faltering, first step: a step towards an organised resistance, a step towards organised offensive; a step towards imposing labour's policies on a Labour government.



Labour Solidarity meeting



Old acquaintance: Benn, Maynard, Foot. Who will stand up to the right wing?

All Photos: JOHN HARRIS

Labour women — eyes on the ranks!

MORE WOMEN than ever before came to this year's Labour Party conference. And the Labour Party has turned its eyes more than ever before to the issue of women's rights.

Conference debated women twice: once on policy and once on organisation in the Party.

Labour supported women's right to a job and to abortions. It opposed sexual harassment at work and backed positive discrimination. Yet not one of the proposals for positive discrimination inside the party was passed, because of NEC opposition.

It is difficult to convey the strength of feeling against the bureaucracy to which this gave rise. It symbolised the cynicism of a leadership which was willing to endorse fine phrases and then use witch-hunts, manoeuvres and sabotage with the block vote to avoid any prospect of implementing their policies. When the delegate from Dewsbury called on delegates to 'return to their unions' and fight the 'mister fixers' who carried this through, he summed up this gut reaction.

What Labour Women wanted

ALL RESOLUTIONS on women's rights were passed. But the NEC successfully opposed all resolutions calling for a change in the Labour Party's own practice in relation to women. The main demands were:

- * For the Labour Party women's conference to have the right to put five resolutions, as of right, on the agenda of Party conference.
- * For the NEC members in the women's section to be elected from the women's conference instead, as at present, by a vote from the whole party.
- * For the Women's Executive Committee to be elected from the women's conference.
- * For the short list of prospective parliamentary candidates in each constituency to include at least one woman, if a woman has been nominated.
- * For positive discrimination in favour of women in party appointments, and in particular for women's organisers to be women.

Right-wing dominated trade union delegations struck back by kicking left-winger Joan Maynard off the NEC and ensuring that the Women's section of the NEC was solidly in support of the status quo. As one male delegate from Dewsbury put it, the 'Mr Fixers' in the trade union bureaucracy sat on women who wanted change.

Why did this happen? It was glaringly obvious that the union delegations were male dominated. But it is

far too simplistic to portray the defeat of the women's conference proposals simply as a male conspiracy or even as a trade union/CLP split. Women in the trade unions — including 'left-wingers' like Barbara Switzer from AUEW/TASS — had voiced their opposition to these reforms.

To win real positive action in the unions and the Labour Party it's necessary for women in the Labour Party and the unions to put their thinking caps on. A dialogue must take

place between women active in the Labour Party and those active in the unions along the following lines:

- Women's eyes should be on the ranks, not the leaders. The battles of ordinary women over their jobs and pay in the NHS, struggles against school and nursery closures, abortion attacks, social security attacks are the source of women's strength and ability to transform the mass organisations.

- Pushing forward policy changes to force the next labour government to actually implement positive action and free abortion on demand legislation is the key for women's struggle to be consolidated.

- Looking anew at the constitutional changes. The existing proposals are not sacrosanct. More dialogue with trade union women might produce a more radical proposal on the structure of the women's organisation — one that would really force the trade unions to take the Labour Party women's conference

seriously — and give the ranks of women more power — is to get the trade unions to elect their delegation to LP women's conference and give them a block vote according to the number of women members in their union. This could then mean that both the policies discussed and the votes for women's section of the NEC would potentially be representative of women members of the trade unions

The block vote itself is not undemocratic. It is a question of how it is used. Women active in the labour movement should make a priority of attending the CLPD Women's Action Committee conference to be held on 4 October armed with ideas that unite Labour Party and trade union women in action to fight the Tories and re-launch the challenge to the TU bureaucracy for next year's conference.

To win this battle women in the ranks of the party and the unions need to join together in a common cause. The battle will never be won by a few women entering the corridors of power.

Woman Delegates speak out

JOAN TWELVES, from Vauxhall CLP, who seconded one of the composites in the organisation discussion, spoke to Socialist Challenge about the discussion on women's rights.

Why do you think the NEC opposed the resolutions on women's organisation?

They feel threatened by women's organisations in the Party. They recognise women are aligning with the left — that, for example, women's conference opposed the war in the Falklands and called for Britain to get out of NATO.

It reflects the more radical position of women as a whole, because they are under such heavy attack.

Sylvia Jones, from APEX, argued against your resolution on the grounds that she got to her position on her merits. The implication was that special measures in favour of women, and women organising together, should not be supported.

Women are forced to organise because it is the only way to combat male domination.

Who denies that women have merit? Then why aren't they represented in proportion to their abilities? Why is the bureaucracy dominated by men? We demand representation that accords to our contribution.

Is there a conflict between the unions and the CLPs on this issue?

The issue has been discussed more in the CLPs. Until this year the women's conference didn't have trade union delegations.

At the base of the unions women confront the same problems. And Sylvia, for example, is in a big contradiction because the unions support positive discrimination against the employers — but not in the Labour Party.

Every Labour Party member is also a Trade Unionist. We have to take the issues into the union branches. We also have to use campaigns, such as the Abortion Campaign, to reach out to union members. Then we can ensure there is a discussion in affiliated unions.

What do you think of the proposal for a block vote at the women's conference?

I support it. The union delegates threw it into the discussion to try and

deflect the argument for women's conference to have more say; but it would force the unions to discuss their policy women and it would wake up rank and file women to what male bureaucrats are doing on their behalf.

And we're not just talking about women's issues. I would be very happy if the unions had to discuss the resolution we passed on the Falklands.

But we would have to ask who elected the delegates. We don't just want male wheeler-dealing in smoke-filled rooms. Women in the unions would have to organise to enforce their views

We spoke to CHRISTINE BUTTERY of Birmingham Ladywood, who moved composite 40 proposing election of NEC women's section delegates from women's conference.

IT'S A QUESTION of political power in our movement. Who controls it — the rank and file or a couple of blokes with two million block votes in their hands? If the women's conference chose the NEC delegates you wouldn't have been saddled with Gwyneth Dunwoode, judging by the heckling she got.

We want representation because we want power: we've been passing resolutions on women's rights for years.

I wasn't attacking women trade unionists — I would like to see more activity from rank and file women trade unionists in the Party. I don't want a split between CLPs and unions. I think there is a split between the rank and file as a whole and the controllers of the movement.

In fact there's a problem in the unions with some women who get a career in them and think that's equality. My experience in USDAW is that the attitude on the shopfloor is different.

I don't want to attack women who struggle in the unions. It's the attitude that says 'I've made it so everyone can't that gets up my nose.'

Can women in the CLPs link up with those in the union branches?

Not just women! The problem with the Labour Party is that it's too oriented to parliament and elections. We should spend much more time on the picket lines. We'd learn a lot more in struggle than in some of these meetings.

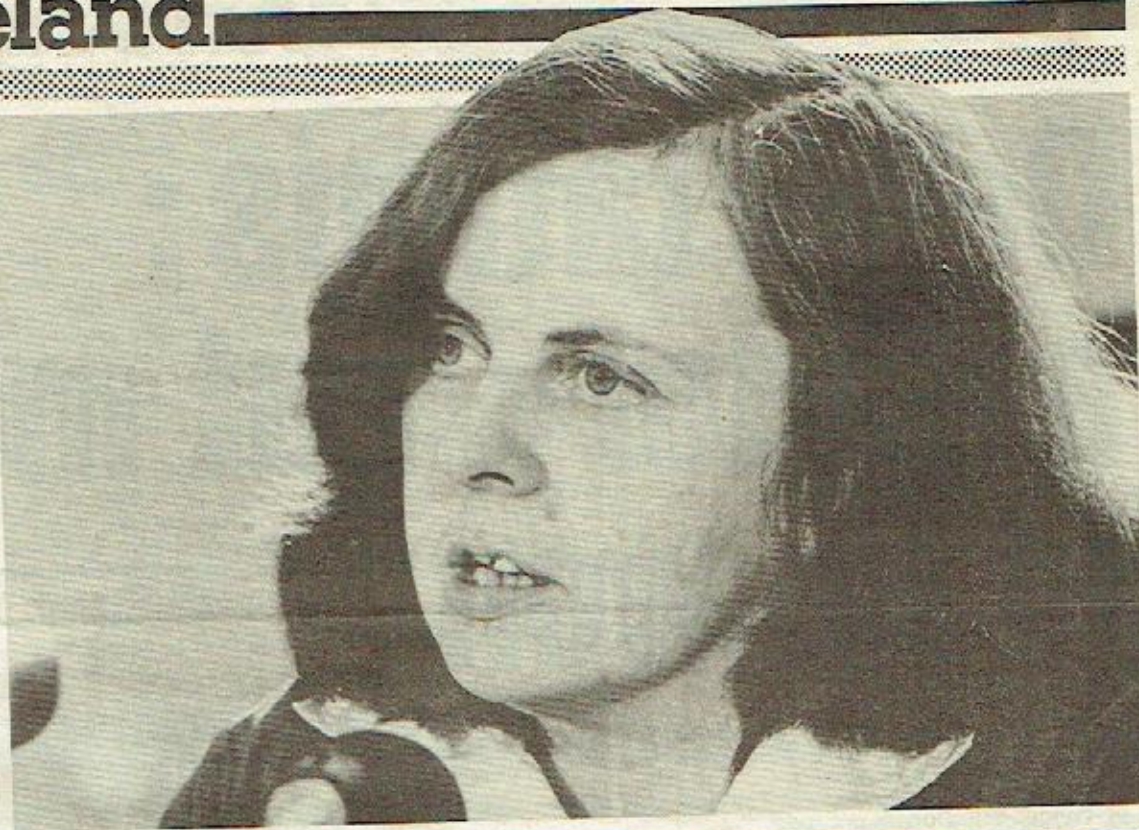
But at the same time if you want to involve the shopfloor we've got to have a political programme. Trade unionists should get involved in the Party because the unions aren't political parties — in theory anyway!



Women taking a lead in struggle must also be brought into leadership in the Labour Party and trade unions

Photo by JOHN HARRIS

Interview with Bernadette McAliskey



TWO IMPORTANT breakthroughs for Irish freedom were scored at conference. First, composite 52 opposing the use of plastic bullets was passed by an overwhelming majority, with a small group of bureaucrats — notably Terry Duffy of the Engineering Union and Frank Chapple's Electricians — voting demonstratively against.

Second, the debate on Labour's Irish policy was given a huge boost when *Tribune*, recognising the strength of feeling on the issue, gave a platform to Bernadette Devlin McAliskey at its 2,000-strong fringe meeting on Wednesday night.

Socialist Challenge asked Bernadette, who also spoke at a well-attended meeting organised by the Labour Committee on Ireland, what she thought the British Labour movement's response to the demands of the Irish people.

I'VE BEEN to Labour conference several times before and it's obvious there have been changes. One change is that Ireland is being recognised as an issue for the labour movement. This is the first time I've been sponsored by a part of the labour movement — the Co-operative Party — and this shows the issue of Northern Ireland is being seriously discussed.

It will launch a further cycle of frustration. Participation in Northern Irish elections is normally very high — 80 to 90 per cent. But this time I have never seen less enthusiasm. People feel they are being used in a game by Prior to put a facade of normality over what is going on. The level of violence — and I mean state violence — is raised daily.

There is a deterioration

'A United Ireland by consent is like abolishing Apartheid by consent. No-one will consent to give up privilege'

Front bench opposition has hardened: and that is why, thirteen years after a gigantic upheaval in what is supposed to be a part of the United Kingdom, we are still fighting for a hearing.

But there is an obvious move forward, particularly in the Constituencies. There is a gut feeling that the only realistic policy is a United Ireland.

The problem is that as yet there has been no realistic discussion of the process by which the working class will achieve this age-old dream — which, after all, we've been after for 900 years.

Can you say what the effect of the new Assembly will be on Northern Irish people?

of any standard of justice or fair play. For example the police have, without retribution, taken into custody and 'persuade' them, by threat and inducement — really by threat — to turn Queen's evidence.

They remove them

'Don Concannon is seen in Ireland as the man who offered vinegar at the crucifixion'

from the community for months — one man has been under house arrest in Guildford for a year with two RUC men in the police cadet barracks. A hundred and seventy people have spent twelve months in custody on the evidence of twelve people under this kind of house arrest.

Yet out of six who have returned, the first five refused to testify and in the sixth case the cops refused to produce evidence until the day of the trial, with the result that 60 lawyers have now threatened to withdraw

'People in West Belfast say 'what would happen without the IRA is what happened to the Palestinians without the PLO'

from the courts.

This is just one example.

The facts are that to 'protect the peace' civilians lose their rights and kids are shot up in the streets with plastic bullets.

And this isn't driving people away from the Republicans. You see, only in West Belfast was the murder of 1,700 Palestinians greeted without surprise. With horror, yes; but no surprise. People say, simply, 'What would happen to the us without the IRA is what happened to the Palestinians without the PLO'

A 'United Ireland by consent' is no excuse. This is like saying abolish apartheid by consent. No-one will consent to give up privileges. Therefore the labour movement has to understand that the border issue is the vital issue.

Now, this is essential because you must convince Catholics who now think there is no difference between the British

Labour and the British ruling class. At present, next to Margaret Thatcher, the most hated person in Northern Ireland is Don Concannon. He is seen as the man who offered vinegar on the crucifixion. He came to Bobby Sands' deathbed to say he doesn't support him.

The experiment of partition has failed and must be abandoned. What we should be discussing is how, within the framework of a united Ireland, the rights of British citizens in Northern Ireland can be pro-

tected. Now there's a way forward: the problem is, you see, not that the Protestants are frightened of reactionary legislation in the South. They fear, like the white Rhodesians, that they will get the same treatment they are now handing out to the nationalist population.

Can you tell us how the anti-imperialist movement is dealing with the elections?

There has been some disagreement. I take a minority view: I think there should have been a united anti-imperialist boycott. I think this would have made it easier to win the confidence of the mass movement, even though the SDLP is standing.

Sinn Fein has changed its views on elections and it is now standing in many seats. But I think they've only learned half their lesson: they now think you should stand in all elections, whereas I believe we should judge each election tactically.

Sinn Fein are standing, but only in key areas. The Independents are sticking with a boycott. And the SDLP reap the benefit.

I say, however, that we should now, and can now begin preparing for a united boycott after the election, by Sinn Fein, People's Democracy, and the Independents — and demand the SDLP hold good to its promise, so that we can stop this Assembly working.

Conference passed

PLASTIC BULLETS

This Conference noting:

- that plastic and rubber bullets have killed 14 people in Northern Ireland, 7 of them aged 15 or under;
- that since July 1981 plastic bullets have been made available in their thousands to police forces throughout Britain;
- the European Parliament resolutions of May 1982 calling on member states to ban the use of plastic bullets against civilians:
 - condemns the Government for refusing to implement a ban on plastic bullets;
 - instructs the National Executive Committee, the Parliamentary Labour Party and our Parliamentary spokespersons on Northern Ireland to campaign for the withdrawal of plastic bullets from the Royal Ulster Constabulary and army in Northern Ireland and from the police in Britain;
 - calls on the next Labour Government to ban the use and production of plastic bullets (or any other baton round) throughout Britain and Northern Ireland.

Moved by
DEPTFORD C.L.P.

Seconded by
SHEFFIELD PARK C.L.P.

Conference rejected

This Conference notes that the continuing war in Northern Ireland is the inevitable result of the economic domination of Ireland by British rulers and its occupation by British armies, and that:

- the Northern Ireland state is inherently repressive and structurally incapable of democratic reform.
- the division of the Irish people can only be overcome by the removal of the British interests that have created and maintained that division, and by the end of Partition.
- British workers have nothing to gain from the continued occupation of Ireland and that indeed, repressive 'security' legislation such as the use of the Diplock courts, the Emergency Powers Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the use of plastic and rubber bullets introduced in Northern Ireland will increasingly be used in Britain.

Conference therefore supports the Irish people's struggle for self-determination, and resolves that an incoming Labour government will:

- withdraw from Ireland, without conditions being imposed by the Unionist minority;
- implement a comprehensive Bill of Rights.

Conference resolves that this should be a major part of Labour's electoral strategy, and a key priority for the next Labour Government. Conference believes that the formulation of an alternative policy must be informed by close co-operation and dialogue with democratic sections of the Irish people — particularly the Labour and trade union movement and representative community organisations which are also campaigning for the re-unification of Ireland.

Conference calls upon the National Executive Committee to establish the closest possible links with such organisations in order to facilitate debate in this country.

Moved by
HACKNEY NORTH AND STOKE NEWINGTON C.L.P.

Seconded by
NOTTINGHAM EAST C.L.P.

BAN PLASTIC BULLETS

NO to the PREVENTION OF TERRORISM ACT

CAROL ANN KELLY 12
STEPHEN GOSTON 10
JULIA MCGONAGLE 10
NORMAN MCGONAGLE 10
WHILEY MCGONAGLE 10
DUFFY MCGONAGLE 10
HENRY MCGONAGLE 10
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Deportations: a victory, but more to be won

By Chris Guthrie

A VICTORY has been notched up against the Home Office in its attempt to deport Najat Chafee, a 22-year old Moroccan woman.

Najat has been told that she can now stay in Britain on compassionate grounds.

Najat left her husband because of his persistent cruelty, but when he was deported by the Home Office they said she also had to go. The fact that she had a British born son, and had built her own independent life here seemed of no concern to the civil service bureaucrats. They simply assumed that she was just an appendage of her husband.

A big campaign called the 'Friends of Najat Chafee' was organised and eventually as a result of its activities the Home Office had to call off her threatened deportation.

This is great news and shows what can be done by organised action. But there are still a lot more like this to be won. In 1980 970 people were deported from Britain, an increase of over 50 percent on the 579 deported in 1979. Then last week *The Guardian* reported that 50 Ghanians who had arrived at Heathrow Airport on three flights had all been sent back. To carry out this summary deportation, immigration officers commandeered 50 seats on a regular flight to Ghana, and ejected the passengers who had booked these seats.

Fortunately the resistance to the growing deportations has begun to build up recently. In Bradford a joint committee against deportations has been set up to oppose 18 threatened deportations in the city.

One case concerns Reggi Yates. Although his wife Felicia is British, this does not qualify him to stay in Britain. The state is using the fact that Felicia was not born in Britain to deny him permission. This rule denies many black women the right to marry non-British men and stay in Britain.

Whilst the rule allegedly concerns all people irrespective of the colour of their skin, it is essentially aimed at blacks who are far more likely to have been born abroad than whites.

Activists

Anti-deportation campaigns now exist in most of the big centres like Leeds, Manchester and Birmingham. But there remains an urgent need to unite all these individual campaigns into one massive campaign against the Immigration Laws. The Bradford Joint Committee has suggested that such a campaign could unite behind the demand for an immediate amnesty for all illegal immigrants.

This is an excellent suggestion. It places a immediate, and achievable demand on the government and we should demand that the Labour Party pledges itself to carry out such an amnesty on the day it takes office.

A demand such as this would draw new forces into the fight against the im-

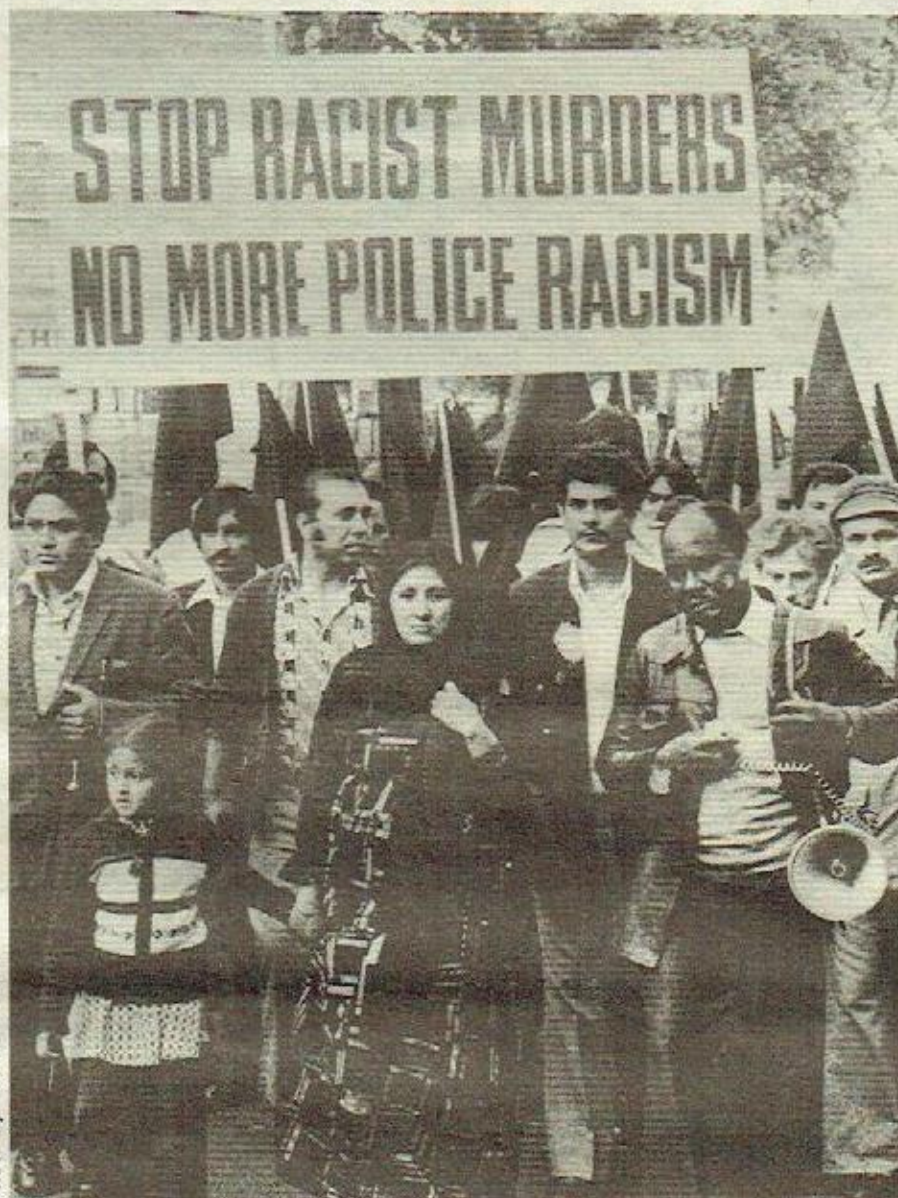


Photo by GM COOKSON

Black people take to the streets against racist violence and the police.

migration laws as it could be placed in the context of a campaign for the repeal of all immigration laws.

A step in the direction of uniting the campaigns is being made by the calling of a conference by the Campaign Against Racist Laws (CARL) on 23 October. CARL is a broadly based organisation which brings together many black and labour movement bodies. It includes in its ranks the Indian Workers Association and last year it called a 10,000 strong demonstration against the Nationality Bill.

The conference aims to highlight four particular points:

- Opposition to internal passport checks in hospitals, education, employment and housing.
- Ending the waiting lists of dependents and UK passport holders.
- Ending the ban on foreign husbands and fiancés.
- Stopping all racist deportations.

It will discuss calling a national demonstration next spring and will call on local councils to declare themselves against passport checks and will ask the trade unions to oppose and refuse to implement such checks.

CARL Conference
Saturday 23 October 10-5pm.
County Hall London
Details and delegates credentials from
CARL, 56 Editha St
London SW9 8JP

Newham

THE HARASSMENT AND RACIAL ATTACKS on the Asian children at Little Ilford School reached a climax on Friday the 24 September when 8 Asian youths were arrested in Dersingham Avenue, Manor Park.

One week 15 white youths armed with sticks, iron bars, bottles, one with a knife, went into the school playground and threatened an 11-year old Asian boy. Fights developed, and this resulted in the arrest of 3 Asian youths.

On Monday, 20 September, an Asian boy was so badly beaten up at morning playtime in the playground by white youths from a different school that he had to be taken to hospital.

The Asian youths then heard that the white youths would be lying in wait for them outside the school on Friday, 24 September.

About 15 Asian youths were waiting outside to protect the school children. This was effective and no white youths turned up. The Asian youths were afraid that the white youths would be lying in wait somewhere near the school. They went out to circle the vicinity to ensure protection for the children as the police were not present, although requested by the school. They were followed by quite a lot of school children, curious to see if anything more would happen.

Suddenly a car drew up and 3 men got out and attacked some of the Asians while other Asians dispersed. The 3 white men had weapons in their hands and a fight developed.

Almost immediately a police dog van arrived and suddenly the area was teeming with police, about 40 in all turned up. The Asian youths were glad to see the police arrive because they wanted the attackers, whom they thought to be the white youths, to be stopped. But as the 8 youths were arrested it appeared that their attackers were plain clothes policemen.

The Asian youths were kicked, punched, and subjected to racial abuse, in the police vans and in the police station, and one was slapped and punched and called a 'fucking cheeky bastard' in the enquiry room in the presence of the other 6 youths.

One Sikh youth with a turban was particularly subjected to racial abuse. All the youths were told to say that one of the older youths was responsible for

hitting a policeman with an iron bar and smashing a police car window but the youths refused.

After this the Asian youths, accompanied by their solicitor, informed the police of the abuse. The solicitor threatened to press charges against the police. Although the police sergeant requested the youths not to pursue charges and apologised the youths rejected this.

All of the youths have been charged with serious offences ranging from threatening behaviour to actual bodily harm. One is still in hospital recovering from his injuries.

Youth

A meeting of the community on Sunday, 26 September 1982, attended by about 150-200 people representing a host of ethnic groups, and in the presence of several councillors, expressed anger at the treatment of the youths and the way in which policing in Newham is carried out. It was decided to organise a defence campaign on a major level, to write to the police and the Home Secretary asking for the charges to be dropped and the meeting also heard from a solicitor connected with the Bradford 12 case. A committee of 15 was elected by the meeting to help the Newham 8 in their defence.

This latest incident is part of a wider scene involving continual attacks and racial harassment of black people in Newham.

The community is resolved in its determination to defend the 8 youths arrested, and a number of activities are being planned to mobilise the community. A public meeting will also be called. The campaign also intends to organise a picket of the Court hearing at West Ham Magistrates Court (West Ham Lane, Stratford), on 5 November at 10am and is calling for the widest possible support.

Police frame-up fails

ON TUESDAY 28 September, a major victory was won by the Precinct 8 Defence Campaign, when Mohan Pipial and Charlie Stuart were found not guilty at Leeds Magistrates Court of 'threatening and abusive behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace'.

They pleaded guilty to a second charge of 'posting on public property' and were fined £40 each plus £9 each compensation for 'damage' to a bus shelter.

Mohan Pipial and Charlie Stuart were arrested on 17 August. They were putting up posters announcing a coming demonstration against police harassment when they were approached by two drunkards who shouted racist abuse and threats at them.

A policeman, PC Greenwood (1313 Milgarth police station) refused to arrest the drunks. M Oxley, one of the

drunks, then assaulted Mohan Pipial who defended himself. When PC Greenwood finally intervened and restrained Oxley, Mohan and Charlie went on their way but were then themselves pursued and arrested.

The prosecution interrogated Mohan and Charlie about their political beliefs and their attitude towards the police, accused Mohan of looking for a fight and accused Charlie of joining in.

Bitter

In his summing up the defence barrister, Henry Blaxland, exposed the way in which PC Greenwood left the attacker, Oxley, in order to pursue the victims of the attack and showed that Mohan and Charlie were detained for over five hours while the police invented a stronger case against them. He suggested that in fact it was

Mohan and Charlie's political views which had brought them to court and that the police had pressed more serious charges because of their political objection to the contents of the posters.

In another serious attack on the right to picket, the police forced picketers outside the court to move on under threat of arrest, claiming that they were 'causing an obstruction'. The real reason for this harassment was that the picketers were clearly receiving too much support and money from sympathetic members of the public.

Three more cases against the Precinct 6 will be heard at Leeds Magistrates Court on 4 and 5 October. The Precinct 6 Defence Campaign is again calling for maximum support both inside and outside the court when Chas Andrews, Les Haw and Tony Lally appear on those days.

Scottish Labour Backs Polish Demo

THE SCOTTISH Executive Committee of the Labour Party is to back a demonstration in Glasgow on Saturday 11 December to mark the anniversary of martial law in Poland.

Its chairperson, Jim McCafferty of the National Union of Mineworkers, will also speak at the final rally.

Another speaker will be a member of Solidarnosc. The conference of the Scottish Council of the Labour Party last March committed the party to organising a tour for a Solidarnosc member, and it is expected that this will now take place immediately before the Glasgow demonstration.

Support for the march and rally is also anticipated from the Scottish TUC, though this has still to be confirmed.

The demonstration is being organised by the Glasgow Polish Solidarity Committee, which earlier this year coordinated several workplace tours for exiled Solidarnosc members. Further details of this and other activities can be obtained from its secretary, Gordon Morgan, 59 Durward Avenue, Glasgow G41 (tel. 041-649 8958).

'God speed cooperation'

By Judith Arkwright

IF YOU MISSED IT this time make sure you see the repeat of BBC TV's showing of *God Speed Cooperation* — the story of working class women in the Women's Cooperative Guild (a very different organisation than it is today!).

In history books today all you read about is the suffragettes and their more spectacular campaign for the vote — never about the thousands and thousands of working class women who campaigned for birth control, for free school meals, maternity benefits and around all aspects of women's lives.

'I've had nine children in seven years and I've only

one left now,' stated one of the many hundreds of women members of the Guild who wrote letters telling of their experiences as part of the campaign for £5 maternity benefit for married and unmarried mothers.

The misery and terror of being on a conveyor belt of compulsory childbirth, miscarriages, infant mortality, ill health and exhaustion is powerfully

portrayed. 'Family restriction' then as now was a key issue in the fight for even a glimmer of equal rights for women.

In those days cure was used rather than prevention. As one woman remarks in her letter: '... it's not prevention that women use. It's much cheaper, you see, to go out and get those drugs at the chemists, hikey pikey, gin and gunpowder, iron and aloe, turpentine and washing powder.'

For these women brought up in the belief which they soon found out to be false that 'God never

sends a babe without the bread to feed it', discovering the Coop Women's Guild must have been truly a liberation — opening the door to knowledge and understanding and the means to fight back (as well as the divi on the shopping!).

Founded in 1883, by 1915 the Guild had 30,000 members and by 1933 — 90,000 — mainly working class women.

Mrs Layton, the main character in the TV story

(which is partly based on her book 'Life as We Have Known It' published by Virago) is a typical example of the women who joined. One of fourteen children she went into service at the age of ten. When she started to get involved she had to walk six miles to conferences and back because she couldn't afford the transport.

The courage and determination of such women is truly an inspiration to us all and is part of the heritage of the modern women's movement as the suffragettes are.

The Guild was one of

the first organisations to demand legalised abortion and also in 1913 came out in favour of divorce by mutual consent after two years' separation — for which outrageous idea they had all their funding from the Coop cut off for four years.

Women were seen as key to the Coop because the idea was to have a 'peaceful revolution' based on women's 'marketing basket' — wealth being redistributed through the dividend paid out to members. Fortunately the women members did not restrict their campaigning

to this rather utopian idea.

We may think we've come a long way since then but you really do sometimes wonder whether Maggie Thatcher and her cronies aren't trying to send us back to those days — when you see things like the funding for Brook Clinics (which provide funding for young people) are withdrawn and abortion is being hived off into the private sector.

The issues which our sisters raised before us are still vital today and we have a lot to learn from them.

Further down on Maggie's Farm

A SECOND book of the cartoons of Steve Bell, 'Further down on Maggie's Farm and other stories' has just hit the farmyard's bookshops. Before the noises of several thousand assorted creatures rolling in the mud reached the ears of the farm's management, HILARY DRIVER managed to review a copy.

If you are a *Guardian* reader, you'll appreciate that the best features in a newspaper where most of the coverage has been moving rightwards at a rate of knots, are the cartoon strips 'IF ...' and 'Doonesbury'. Londoners have been enjoying the delights of the 'Maggie's Farm' cartoon strip in *City Limits* (and formerly *Time Out*) for several years. Both IF ... and Maggie's Farm are written and drawn by Steve Bell, who must certainly rate as one of the best political cartoonists around.

The cartoons cover a cross section of some of the more memorable political happenings of the last year, from the real causes of the riots to some behind-the-scenes glimpses of the Malvinas war. Although the cartoons are consistently good throughout, for me the best are those on the war. They

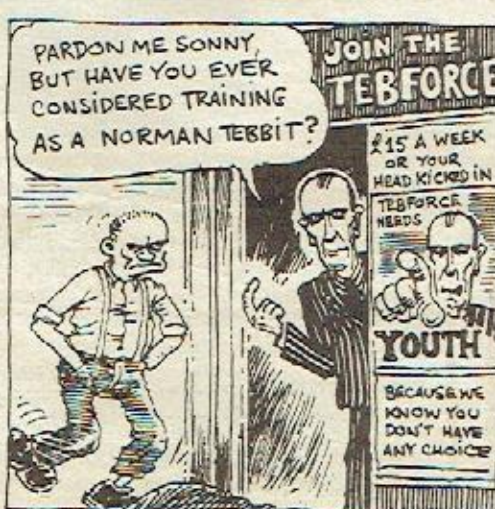
feature what must be one of the most obnoxious cartoon creations — Harry Hardnose (news editor of the *Morning Mule*) — and one of the most likeable, Kipling, only crew member of the nuclear-powered armoured punt HMS 'Incredible'.

Hardnose combines together all the attributes that make the British press the scummiest in the world. Interviewing an Argentinian prisoner he shows no compassion: "Ask the damned cowardly gaucho whelp what he does in Civvy St."

"He says he hauls freight on the River Plate." "AHA!!" says Hardnose, "so you're an ARGY BARGEE!!!"

As the introduction to the book says: 'Unlike Jaws Two, Godfather Two, Superman Two and Leviticus Two, this is possibly even better than Maggie's Farm One.' A must for those boring moments before demo's move off, or before the fund-raising party gets going, 'Further adventures ...' also makes an ideal present.

'Further adventures on Maggie's Farm and other stories' is published by Penguin Books at £2.95, and is available from The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP (enclose 50p for p&p).



Socialist Challenge



MINERS PREPARE FOR BATTLE

Tory plans exposed

THE ROW in the Conservative Party over the report of the 'Think Tank' — the Tories Central Policy Review staff — shows the ultimate objective of Tory policy. The report suggests a complete dismantling of the welfare state, and in particular the health service and free state education. The health service would be replaced by private medicine, and free state education would be replaced by education 'vouchers' — purchased by the parents.

Without doubt the report was leaked to the press by a secret 'wet' in the cabinet — to the fury of Thatcher and her supporters. In the run up to a general election, the proposal to completely dismantle the health service is about as popular, as one newspaper put it, as a proposal to nationalise beer.

Thatcher and her supporters had hoped to keep the report secret and use it as the basis of Tory thinking for a re-elected Conservative government.

Certainly a plan to be implemented, but not a plan on which to fight an election.

Now the 'wets' have blown the gaffe. The first person to rush to dissociate himself from the report was the health minister Norman Fowler.

For Fowler the leaking of the report came at a particularly bad time. Already Britain's most unpopular man, fronting for the Tories in their war against the health workers, Fowler was anxious not to have to fight a war on two fronts at once.

Tory Party chairman Cecil Parkinson and Thatcher herself have suggested that the report has been 'shelved' and had not even been discussed by the cabinet. But the report had been more or less openly defended by treasury minister Leon Brittan and Rhodes Boyson. With an absolutely impeccable sense of timing Edward Heath has denounced the proposals, and called for Thatcher to openly reject them. Thus a major row on the issue is bound to be created at the Tory conference.

The proposals to completely dismantle the welfare state are proposals to be implemented by a future Tory government. They could only be pushed through on the basis of new defeats for the working class. But what the Tories have in store for us all should be shouted loud and clear throughout the election campaign.



Terry Duffy votes against the resolution on plastic bullets passed at the Labour Conference. The delegate from North Hampstead holds up a plastic bullet — responsible for the deaths of 14 people.

Ban Plastic Bullets A Labour Movement Delegate Conference

The Labour Party conference voted last week for a ban on plastic bullets. So far 14 people, seven of them under 12 years of age have been killed by 'baton rounds' in the north of Ireland. The conference will be held in February of 1983 to urge the banning of these vicious weapons. For further details contact: Plastic Bullets Conference, Box 15, 164/6 Corn Exchange Buildings, Hanging Ditch, Manchester M2 4BN.

By Celia Pugh

MINERS THROUGHOUT BRITAIN have begun an overtime ban against threatened pit closures and the derisory 8.2 per cent National Coal Board pay offer. This is a prelude to a ballot on 28 October which 'gives the NUM National Executive the powers to call industrial action if necessary against pit closures and at the same time to find a solution to the wage demand'.

This decision was taken by an overwhelming vote of 134 to 2 at a special NUM conference on 4 October, with all the NUM areas voting against Tory attacks on the industry.

After the conference, Miners President Arthur Scargill explained: 'The NUM annual conference voted overwhelmingly to stop pit closures and the run down of manpower and to get early retirement and negotiations for a four day week.'

Cuts

The NCB have tied the question of jobs and pay together. They have told us we have to accept 'technological unemployment' and efficiency as part of the deal. This can only mean pit closures, they are inextricably linked.

In the last six years we have lost 37,000 jobs. The Board have told us they want to cut capacity by 12 per cent and we work out this is the equivalent of at least 30 pits. When the jobs were lost in recent years it was because the leadership did not accept

my view to fight closures and job loss. From this conference we are now committed to this.'

The principle of the overtime ban is the same as in 1971 and 1973 which was a build up to a national strike. Rallies have also been called around the country to build support, 18 October in South Wales; 19 October in Newcastle; 20 October in Birmingham; 21 October in Sheffield and 23 October in Scotland. I will be speaking at all these to get the support we need.

Miners from the Kinneil Colliery in Central Scotland will be well pleased with this decision. They lobbied the special conference to push for just such a battle on closures.

Kinneil NUM delegate Jim McCallum explained to Socialist Challenge: 'Our pit employs 300 people and it's threatened with closure. There are still vast reserves but the NCB won't invest. We're lobbying to impress the need to tie up the wages and closure issues. If we accept the 8.2 per cent offer we're accepting closures. We're very confident about get-

ting a vote for action at the end of October.

'Within a week of today's conference there will be a Scottish conference of branch officers and committee members throughout the coal field. This will organise pit head meetings with speakers from the Scottish Executive and a massive leafletting campaign.'

We're calling for support for the rally on 23 October in Edinburgh where Arthur Scargill will be speaking. Then we're hoping to take a lot of miners from Kinneil to the Scottish Triple Alliance lobby in London on 26 October. This will be a massive lobby'.

Action

Bill Snedden, NUM Group 2 member of the Scottish Colliery Engineers, Boilermakers and Trades Association echoed this, saying: 'Wages, a shorter working week, early retirement and investment are all intertwined. You can't separate them out. That's why our fight at Kinneil is so important. We're going ahead with the Triple Alliance, we're uniting with steel and rail workers at our Edinburgh rally because we are all in this together.'

But we're faced with the likes of Sirs and Weighell. The issue must be to mobilise the rank and file of the Triple Alliance'.

East London Socialist Challenge raises £1100

By Megan Martin

More than 150 Socialist Challenge supporters packed into an East London hall on Saturday night for a 'banquet' in celebration of the revolutions in Central America and the Caribbean.

Socialist Challenge supporters from as far afield as Glasgow, Manchester, Sheffield and Mansfield came for the occasion. Supporters from North, South and West London added to the crowd.

There were railworkers, London Transport workers, carworkers from Fords, Dagenham, teachers and a whole contingent from East London Metal Box.

There were CND activists, Labour Party activists and youth active in everything.

After forcing down double and in some cases

triple helpings of trifle and chocolate cake, the assembly listened to Jaime Lopez from the FDR-FMLN representation in Britain.

He explained the need for renewed solidarity with the people's of El Salvador. Jaime highlighted the role of US intervention in Central America and emphasised the threat of the civil war in El Salvador growing over into a regional civil war.

A message from the Nicaraguan embassy underscored the imminent threat from imperialist inspired intervention there.

A speaker from Socialist Challenge explained the role of the paper in bringing the truth about the struggles in Central America to workers in Britain. The speaker explained, too, the commitment of Socialist Challenge to provide a platform for these workers in Britain to link up with all workers in struggle.

The banquet guests gave £500 to the Socialist Challenge fund drive. They followed this up immediately with £300 in an auction of posters and photographs from Cuba, Nicaragua and Grenada. At the end of the evening Socialist Challenge had raised £1100.

Donations to Socialist Challenge: PC Box 50, London N1 2XP.

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