

Socialist Challenge

No expulsions!

Lobby the Labour Party NEC

Labour Party headquarters, Walworth Rd.

9.0am Wednesday

24 November

Bring Party banners

Called by Labour against the witchunt.

IT'S A SELL-OUT

Says

Calvin Smith, COHSE convenor Littlemoor Hospital Oxford and Dominic Johnson, NUPE shop steward, Churchill Hospital, Oxford. Both of them are in our picture picketing Spanswick at the TUC.

The health service leaders set us up for a miserable sell out.

Three weeks ago they decided to consult the members about all-out strike action. This was obviously so much hot air. Spanswick's idea of a COHSE delegate conference in six weeks time, was nothing more than a cop out, which would make sure that his

members never got the chance to vote for all-out strike action.

The 12 percent has been buried. With no authority from their membership, the leaders are making a two-year deal which means not a penny more this year than we were offered months ago.

If this is rammed through it will be an outright betrayal of our

seven month's battle — a battle which captured the hearts and minds of the whole trade union movement.

At the very time they were talking to the government, our officials called off the one-day strike of transport workers and burned the midnight oil with ACAS in a desperate attempt to strangle the dispute.

The TUC health committee led and epitomised by COHSE general secretary, Albert Spanswick, stands exposed as being utterly incapable of leading a serious fight against the government.

We must now start organising to replace people like Spanswick. The struggle in the NHS is not

over. Once the pay deal has been forced through, the horrific cuts that have been canvassed by the government and the various Regional Health Authorities will start.

The Tories will also start to drive through privatisation in order to destroy the jobs of the ancillary workers and to bust up the health unions.

Only mass action led

by a strong leadership at national as well as local level combined with support from the rest of the labour movement can hope to throw back this assault.

We health workers can have no confidence in the TUC health services committee. They will not organise such a fight.

The whole of the movement must now understand that defence of the NHS is bound up with the struggle to cleanse the unions of these leaders who will not, and cannot fight the Tory government.

That means we must also understand the wretched role played by the right-wing TUC leaders, with Len Murray at the helm, who never fought

for our all-out victory. In fact they quite consciously and deliberately betrayed us.

Such brutal and disgusting disregard for our remarkable efforts and those who supported us is unbelievable.

Along with Spanswick these people must be cleared out of their positions of responsibility in the labour movement. An unrelenting struggle is needed to build an alternative leadership right across the labour movement.

The left leaders like Benn and Scargill must head this struggle against the trade union betrayers and the Labour Party witch-hunters. Otherwise workers' interests will be sold out, again, and again.



Tory mini-budget

- + £622 extra for South Atlantic war
- + £350m extra for the bosses
- + £100m for the police

Smarting from the loss of his trousers, Chancellor Geoffrey Howe has decided to steal the shirt off your back. Encouraged by the TUC's sell-out of the nurses he is offering them nothing.

Alarmed by the industrial catastrophe that his policies have caused he is doling out £350m to the employers in National Insurance Surcharge.

Inspired by the spirit of human kindness that cost us £622m to set up an armed fortress in the South

Atlantic, he is claiming back a pound a week from defenceless pensioners.

And just in case youth start to get uppity, he's spending another £100m on toughening up the cops.

But don't imagine that the industrial handouts will produce any more employment. On the contrary unemployment is going to go up by another half million according to the government's own forecast.

This is Tory Britain. If the TUC and Labour leadership had any guts at all they would drive these vandals from office while there are still jobs to defend.

Health workers ill-served by TUC

By Bob Pennington

TAKING on the Tories is a tough business; ask the steel workers, the car workers, the rail workers and even the miners about that.

So no one expected that the health workers' claim for 12 per cent was going to be an easy ride. But the health workers did have something going for them that the other sections didn't.

Right from the very beginning, strong and well organised sections of workers pledged their support. These other workers knew that for the overwhelming majority of people employed in the NHS

wages were lousy. They thought that people who did a useful and vital job like looking after the sick and the infirm should get a living wage.

They also knew that low wages and a finance

starved NHS could only lead to increased pain and suffering for all working people. Furthermore they knew that health workers could hardly turn off the life support machines, or desert the casualty departments, and go down to the picket lines.

For all these reasons dockers, miners, print workers, steel workers and others were prepared to down tools in support of the claim. On 22 September over two

million other workers took strike action over the 12 per cent.

Despite this massive support the TUC health committee still managed to lose out, unless a derisory extra one per cent on next year's pay award — for some workers after tax this will mean less than 50p a week! — is considered a victory.

The Murrays and the Spanswicks, along with their fellow bureaucrats, have given us an object

lesson in how not to lead a strike. By failing right from the start to call an all-out stoppage with accident and emergency cover only they made sure that the dispute would be long and drawn out.

They did this because they hoped that public sympathy and opinion would sway the Tories.

Such a hope shows that the TUC had no stomach for a fight and had a faith in Mrs Thatcher's intentions shared by very few other people in the labour movement.

Above all else what the TUC wanted was to be consulted. They wanted to play their role as mediators between the working class and capitalism and they saw the health-workers' days of action, and the solidarity strikes simply as a means of bringing Mrs Thatcher and her cabinet 'around the table'.

So instead of organising joint action of health

workers and the big battalions of labour, to bring the government to its knees and force it to pay up, these timid and cowardly leaders, turned the movement on and off like a tap, hoping desperately that the government would just talk to them.

This half-hearted and dilatory approach played into the hands of the Tories and guaranteed that sections of health workers and their allies in the other sections would get fed up. So the dispute that could have turned the tide finished in failure.

But more is at stake than a failed pay claim. The next step for the Tories is to open up their offensive against the NHS itself. They plan to slash the service to the bone and destroy the notion that there should be a free health service based on need. The TUC health committee by its handling

of this dispute has opened the way for that.

The militants in the NHS have got to begin now the slow and painful process of constructing a new leadership. In every hospital and area they must build and strengthen the joint shop stewards committees.

In the unions they must organise left fractions and broad left caucuses. Taking heart from what happened to Weighell the rank and file, particularly in COHSE, must organise to despatch the leaders like Spanswick, to some quiet outback where they cannot do more harm to labour's cause.

If these steps are taken, a movement with new class struggle leaders can be built, which will make sure that the Tories are not allowed to destroy the NHS. It is not an easy, or a simple task. But if the NHS is to survive it is a vitally necessary one.

CBI plans your future in Tory Britain

By Alan Freeman

'AUSTERITY IS PHILANTHROPY IN BRITAIN TODAY', said industry chief Sir Terence Beckett, closing last week's conference of the Confederation of British industry, 'and zero pay settlements should be seriously considered'.

They haven't been very seriously considered by the well-heeled delegates to the Eastbourne conference, who have recently complained that top management salaries rose last year by 'only 27 per cent'.

They had a lot more than that to worry about, though. The conference split over a clearly anti-government motion, moved from the platform by figures as senior as British Leyland's Michael Edwards, and calling for a sharp drop in the exchange rate.

Even though this motion was rejected because delegates 'did not want to attack Mrs Thatcher before an election', it did adopt a further motion calling for — would you believe it? — massive government spending on industry to half unemployment.

Sir Terence explained industry's tear-jerking plight to the *Financial Times* saying: 'Profits in industry are zilch. That's why the aid and assistance to this has got to come out of the national pot. Industry is like a squeezed lemon, absolutely dry.'

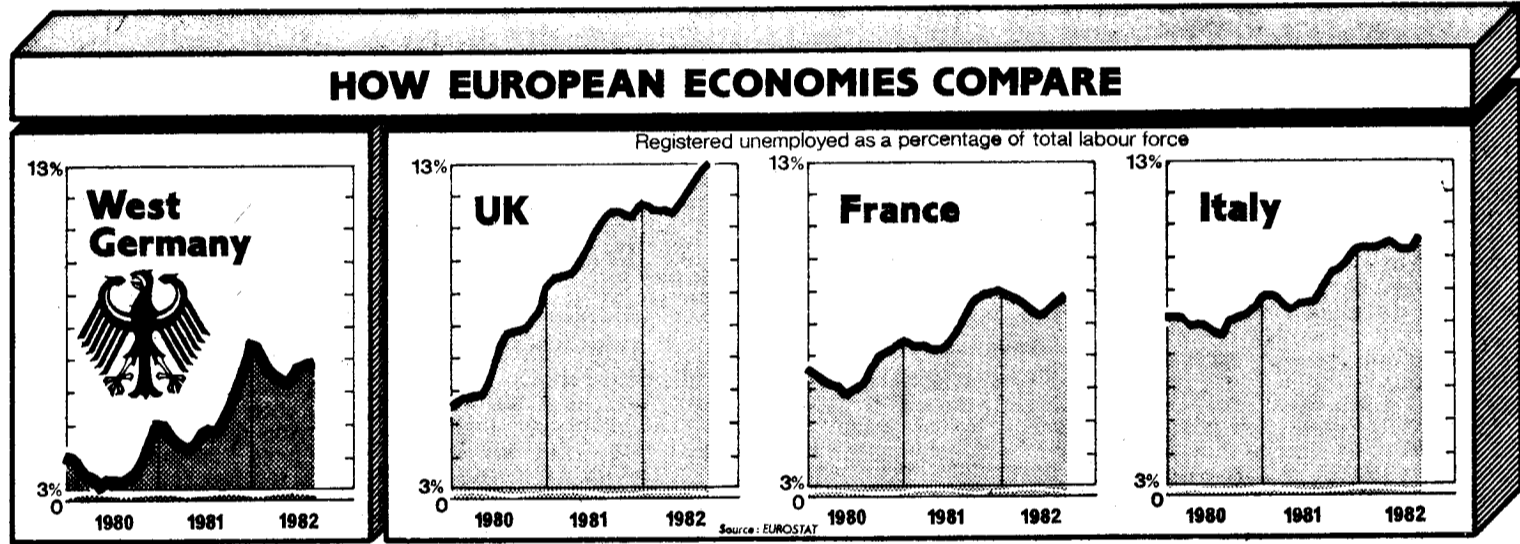
What a confession of bankruptcy from our captains of industry! After

three years of Thatcher's mayhem, applauded by them and explained to us as 'the only alternative' to government intervention, they now plead for ... government intervention!

Britain's economic crisis is qualitatively worse than at any time since the thirties. The *Guardian* reports that the crisis is 'the worst decline in a manufacturing county ever.' Industrial output has fallen by even more than in the thirties. It is now openly admitted that unemployment stands at a real figure nearer four million.

Worse

For Britain's bosses, however, the crisis has been worse in this country than for the rest of the world's capitalists. As our graphs show, the productivity of British industry is bumping along the bottom or even falling in absolute terms, and is qualitatively lower than that of Bri-



tain's rivals.

This is what is causing the squeaks and agonised yelps from the CBI's hounds. They look for every excuse for the crisis except their own rotten system.

Now they focus on pay. The result of the miner's ballot was greeted with an ovation. But what kind of pay cuts would be needed to restore competitiveness? *Thirty per cent* or £50 a week off the average industrial wage, according to CBI spokespeople!

This, in a situation where British wages are virtually the lowest in the EEC. This shows that the real problem lies, not in the workforce, but in the consistent failure of the capitalists to invest in modern productive equipment.

No matter how hard you slave on antiquated machinery you can't compete with modern equipment.

This is why the CBI leaders' second much-discussed 'solution', which was thrown out by a three-fifths majority, also won't work. The defeated proposal called for a substantial devaluation of the pound.

It is argued that this will make British goods cheaper abroad, which is true. But unless British industry is geared up to produce the goods, the only effect would be to bump up Britain's imports bill. This include goods which make workers'

consumption, thereby cutting real wages. In no way would this provide any lasting encouragement for industrialists to invest in new plant. But industrial investment was no higher when governments *did* resort to devaluation. All that happened is that exporters made short-term killings.

Yet the debate over devaluation uncovered a real underlying split within Britain's owning classes.

Behind the split over devaluation there are real differences of interest. The ruling class as a whole have paid a price for Thatcher's approach — a price they have so far accepted because they have no alternative way of smashing up working class resistance. But sections of the ruling class have fared differently. Some have profited handsomely from monetarism, which results in a high-valued pound and, high interest rates.

High

The *Financial Times* points out that 'finance, oil and service' sectors led the opposition to a lower exchange rate. The banks obviously benefit from a high pound.

Foreigners lend money to British banks because of the high interest rates they attract; the banks in turn invest this money overseas where a high pound allows investors to buy foreign goods cheaply.

Bank profits have mushroomed. Oil industries, mainly multina-

tional, trade in dollars and re-invest mainly overseas.

The so-called 'service industries' break down into two categories, both of which benefit from a high pound. First, the big food chains depend on cheap imports, which they process in Britain and sell in Britain. This is more profitable if foreign goods are cheaper — again, a high pound.

Secondly, the City, insurance and related sectors are really dedicated to extracting interest and dividends from overseas investment.

In short, the policy benefits all those who are tied to overseas exploitation of cheap labour, using Britain's financial domination. But it is disastrous for those who depend on domestic industry, who are starved of investment capital to modernise, and priced out of foreign markets.

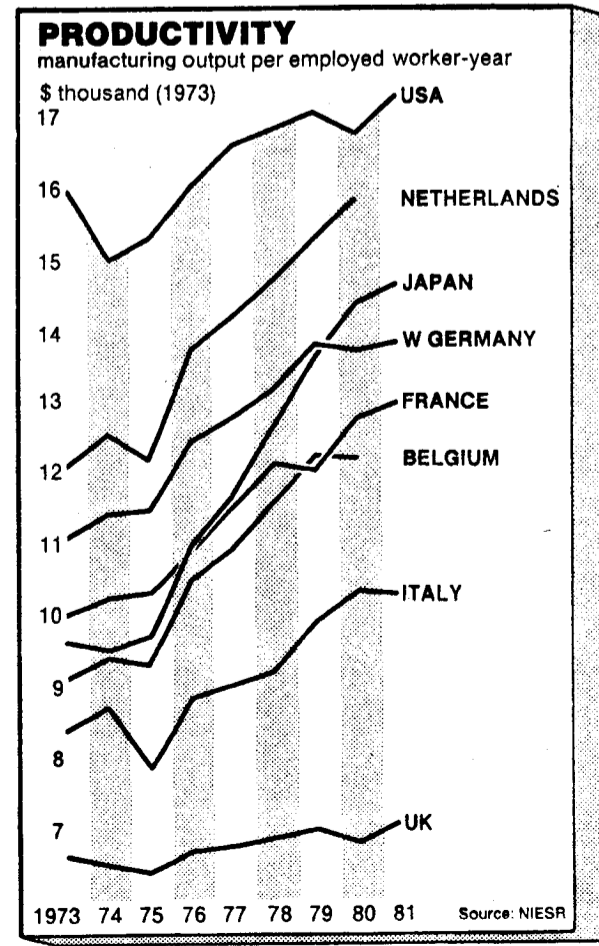
The net result is a further slide down the spiral of decay. For working people this does not mean a lessening of the attacks on their living standards. On the contrary, it means the demands of even the 'wets' who now include such friends of the people as Sir Michael Edwards — become quite extraordinary, because to make up for the effects of Thatcher's mayhem they have to extract the most unbelievable sacrifices from their workforces.

To make a parallel, they are in the same situation as the boss of a nine-

teenth century handweaving enterprise, trying to make his workers toil hard enough to compete with the prosperous steam-driven manufacture down the valley. As they are driven to ruin, they in turn try and drive up the exploitation rate of their workers.

If your imagination can take it in, picture the world the CBI is preparing for you: five million on the dole, no welfare state, starvation wages.

This is the Tory Britain that Maggie Thatcher is going to the polls for in 1983



JOIN THE FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM

If you would like to be put in touch with Socialist Challenge supporters in your area or would like more information fill in the form below

Name.....

Address.....

Age.....

Union/CLP (if any).....\$..

Send to: Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

Steps to unity against the purge

By Alan Freeman

CAN THERE be a united campaign against the witch-hunt? Many constituencies are discussing this after the founding conference of Labour Against the Witch-hunt and the Militant leadership's sectarian response.

Militant spends a full page attacking the conference in its latest issue — hardly the best way to unite with the 100 constituencies who attended, or the 20 MPs who backed it.

The many falsehoods and distortions in their article will stir up animosity and division and weaken all forces who want to fight expulsions. Public wrangling between Militant and its defenders can only discredit the left and strengthen the right, to Militant's own disadvantage.

But unity is still necessary. The rest of the left has to oppose artificial division. Only the right wing will benefit if the battle against the witch-hunt becomes a battleground. So what are the obstacles to unity and how can they be overcome?

Submit

The first obstacle was spelt out clearly on 30 October: you *cannot* expect the Labour Party and trade union rank and file, who do want to defend Militant but don't agree with its policies, to submit themselves to a campaign they don't control.

Why did so many CLPs back the Hackney conference? Not because of a mad sectarian frenzy against Militant, as its

editors seem to think, but because they wanted a campaign which was accountable to them.

They will have to take some very serious actions; they will be threatened with disbandment and many other things. It is wrong for Militant to expect them to accept decisions taken on their behalf by a committee they don't run.

Indeed, if Militant had from the outset established a proper accountable structure on 11 September, there would have been no divisions. The 27 November regional conferences which it is now organising should establish accountable local committees. This will greatly increase the prospects for unity.

But why didn't Militant set up such a structure? Clearly, because they don't want their decisions determined by bodies they don't control. And nobody criticises them for this. If they want a separate campaign to run their own defence activity they have every right to do so.

They therefore misunderstand those

speakers who pointed out on 30 October that the Labour Steering Committee against the Witch-hunt — their body — has a majority of Militant supporters.

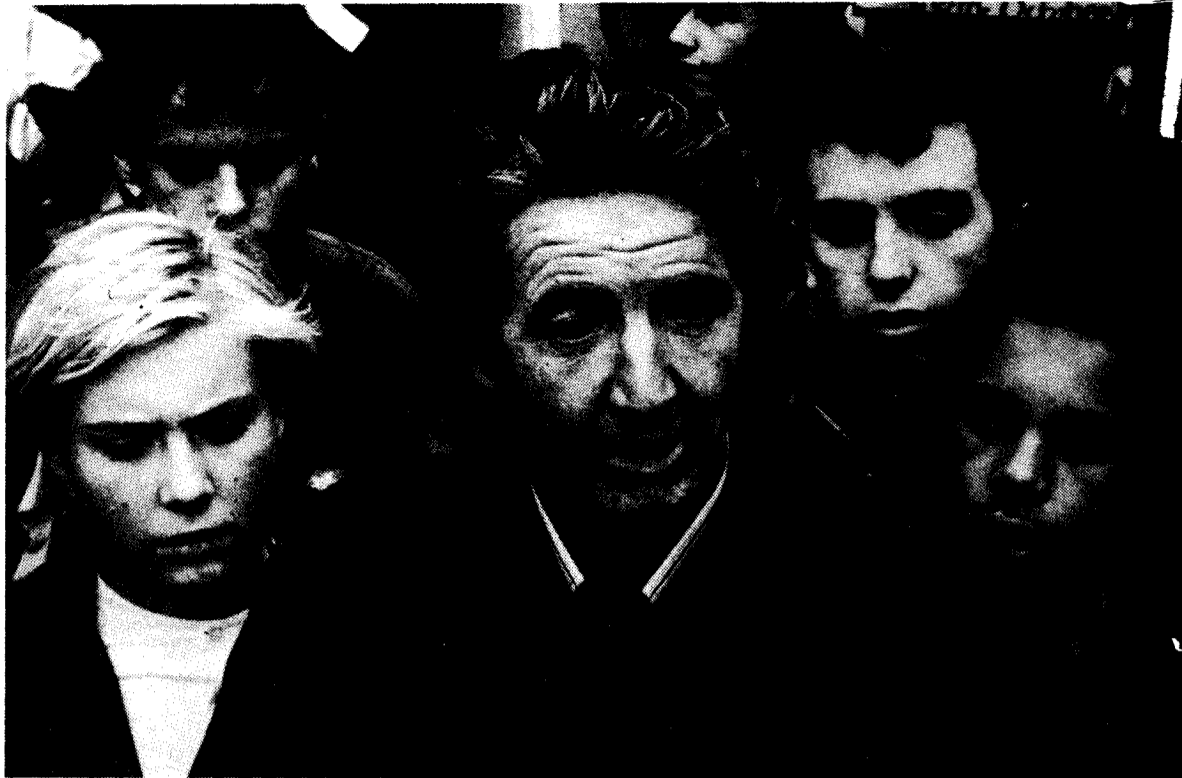
These speakers did not deny Militant's right to have such a committee. All they said was that Militant can't have it both ways. They can't have a labour movement campaign run by them because they don't run the labour movement.

At present, therefore, there are two campaigns: one accountable to the Militant and one to the labour movement.

Does this mean the two should be rivals? Absolutely not. On the contrary, if they now get their forces together — as the 30 October conference proposed — it will *strengthen* unity and add to the forces involved in the fight against the witch-hunt. For a start, the new campaign has the backing of the very MPs whose absence from their campaign is loudly lamented by Militant.

Joint

So the two campaigns should obviously get together, and the first step should be to draw up a plan of *joint action*: a joint campaign of resolutions and hopefully fringe meetings and rallies, backed by both bodies, with



Dennis Skinner



John Speller

speakers from both, around:

- Immediate defence of the Militant supporters to be expelled by the NEC
- A campaign to commit national union conferences to reverse the decision on the register and re-instate any expelled members of the Labour Party.

There is a third area in which unity is vital, but where the Militant rejects the line taken by 30 October conference. This is around the defence of the Young Socialists. The Militant opposed a resolution from Oxford Young Socialists calling on the campaign to support and defend the Young Socialists, on the grounds that this interfered with

the Young Socialist leadership.

But it is the responsibility of the CLPs to support and build the YS, and moreover it is only with Labour Party support, and trade union support, that the LPYS can be effectively defended. A first, and simple step should therefore be to try and get an agreed joint resolution

to make the Easter Young Socialists conference the biggest possible display of strength in solidarity with YS possible.

Unity is possible, and unity is needed. We urge all Socialist Challenge supporters to fight for it by fighting for the labour movement to demand the above measures of Militant and the Labour Steering Committee.



Pat Wall

Mortimer and Militant

JIM MORTIMER's ideas for dealing with the Militant have been published and they're pretty horrifying. Five are to be sacked outright and a political gag placed on the sales organisers and parliamentary candidates. Either they renounce all links with the Militant or they get booted out.

Moreover Mortimer extends his proposals to YS fulltimers and officers, opening the way to an onslaught on the YS.

Much worse, however, are the proposals now being floated by the right wing, which include a wholesale ban on the selling of Militant at YS branches and suggestions that the LPYS should be placed under the direct control either of the CLPs or the Walworth Road bureaucracy.

The witch-hunt, as we said it would, is extending. As Thatcher gets ready for an election, the Labour Party leadership gets ready for a purge.

The newly formed 'Labour Against the Witch-hunt' has begun to get organised. Its first action will be the lobby on 24 November, which we urge our readers to support and build — particularly by ensuring that as many Labour Party and Young Socialist banners as possible are there.

Below we print the campaign's basic leaflet, which should be taken into every Labour Party and trade union organisation possible to win support. Copies are available from the secretary at the address printed on the leaflet.

LABOUR AGAINST THE WITCH HUNT

Officers: National Chairperson Ernie Roberts MP. Vice Chairpersons Joan Maynard MP Roy Rose MP. Secretary Keith Lichman. Treasurer Jerry Huggins.

Secretary's Address: 11, Wilderton Road, London N16. Tel: 01 802 1774.

Dear comrade,
ON 30 OCTOBER 1982, over 300 delegates representing more than 100 CLPs met in County Hall, London, and formed 'Labour Against the Witch-hunt', a broad-based campaign open to all affiliated bodies of the Labour Party and accountable to those who take part in it. Our aims are:

● to prevent expulsions or disaffiliations under the National Executive Committee's proposed Register of organisations, and to defend the unity of the Labour Party and the rights of all Labour Party organisations and groups of Labour Party members against any witch-hunt under its provisions.

We are asking you to add your support and commitment to that of the large number of Labour Party organisations who have united to form this campaign.

Thatcher is readying the Tories for a General Election in 1983. The Labour Party conference endorsed a series of popular, socialist policies around which we can unite to defeat them. Yet instead of fighting for these policies, the NEC has launched a divisive and destructive purge of the membership and the Young Socialists.

We are fighting this purge to save our Party. There are many differences amongst those who oppose expulsions, concerning the register. But there is complete agreement that Labour Party conference has no mandate for any expulsions. The 30 October Conference therefore passed a model resolution for which we shall be fighting through the length and breadth of the labour movement, which reads as follows:

'We oppose the decision to establish the National Executive Committee's Register of non-affiliated groups of members operating within the Party and will fight for its reversal.
We will not expel nor recognise the expulsion of, nor disciplinary measures taken against, any Labour Party member or group of members nor the disaffiliation of any CLP or constituent organisation, in connection with the operation of the NEC's Register.'

We are now campaigning to:

- secure support for this policy amongst as many bodies of the labour movement as possible, making it impossible for the NEC to proceed with its purge.
- co-ordinate resistance by getting together CLPs and their affiliates at local level.
- head off any attempt to disband or curtail the LPYS.
- campaign in the unions to reverse the decision on the register at the next Labour Party conference and commit trade union delegates to vote against expulsions at the next Labour Party conference.

What can you do?

The purge can be stopped if we unite to stop it. Neither the rank and file of the CLPs nor the Party want it. We ask you to:

- Join Labour Against the Witch-hunt. All affiliates will receive our regular mailing. Every CLP is entitled to a delegate to our regular National Council, established by the conference. We are particularly concerned that CLPs should be involved as they will be the bodies asked to implement expulsions and whose right to choose Parliamentary candidates is under attack.
- Support all local and national activity against the witch-hunt, both by LAW and by the Labour Steering Committee Against the Witch-hunt established at the 11 September Wembley conference.
- Take our model resolutions to your CLP and campaign for its adoption by affiliates.
- Organise local co-ordination to ensure there are firm links between everyone opposed to expulsions.

Join LAW:
Membership open to CLPs, trade unions, Labour Party affiliates and individuals.

Name of Organisation:

CLP/Union/LPYS/Ward/Women's Section/society/other (specify)

Address for correspondence

Fee enclosed (CLPs and unions £10, wards £5, individuals and other organisations £3)

Cowley workers fight back

By Steve Jenkins and Paul Moran
(Cowley Assembly Plant)

COWLEY WORKERS have been through a depressing time over the last couple of years. On top of the forcing through of the two-year BL agreement — despite the opposition of a large minority of the traditionally militant Cowley workforce — the workers have had to cope with the sell out of their struggle last year, together with speed up and a steady deterioration of working conditions and union rights.

Last week however they started to fight back. On Monday 1 November a worker on the Rover Ambassador line was accused by the plant director of denting a car. There were no witnesses and the evidence was flimsy and circumstantial. The worker was abused and threatened with the sack — all this with no representation by the shop stewards (the right to see a steward is rarely granted at Cowley these days).

About 50 workers in his section stopped work and demanded an apology. With no resumption of work by Wednesday evening management agreed to a mass meeting which voted to strike indefinitely.

The day shift followed suit, and a motion was passed calling on the

Cowley leadership and full time officials to discuss the grievances over working conditions with management.

There is no doubt that management was taken aback by the strength of feeling exhibited by the workforce and were forced to make concessions. An agreement was reached including a withdrawal of all proceedings against the worker alleged to have damaged the car, and a promise of no action against the workers who stopped work in his support.

Moreover there was an undertaking from management to discuss ways of improving industrial relations and for a further mass meeting for a report back of these discussions.



British Leyland workers, sold out on last pay claim but still fighting

This agreement was put to the workers at a mass meeting on the morning of Monday 8 November. Many workers have no confidence in the undertakings of manage-

ment, and the return to work call was only narrowly passed after a recount.

However, by the afternoon Cowley was once more at a standstill as the

plant director again attempted to victimise the same worker by taking him off his job. As we go to press it is uncertain whether the Cowley workers will stay out.

Birmingham fights privatisation



The victimised three

PRICE WATERHOUSE is a firm of efficiency scrutineers. Not content with recommending the closure of Debenhams in Birmingham City Centre this outfit won a contract from the new Birmingham Tory council to scrutinise the social work departments.

But Price and Waterhouse and the Tory council got a shock when they decided to sack three NALGO members who refused to be scrutinised.

Rejecting the council's money saving drive, at the expense of services, 9,500 NALGO members walked out in support of their three colleagues. But the strikers were told on 22 October by their union to go back to work.

Now on Wednesday 10 November the NALGO members have booked the Aston Villa football ground for what will probably be the biggest branch meeting ever, so they can discuss the case of the sacked workers.

Socialist Challenge supporters have been heavily involved in campaigning for a yes vote for all out action. But it's hard convincing council workers to come out on strike two weeks after they've been sent back by their union. The NALGO executive seems frightened of the idea of all out action and has stated again and again that it's not going to give official backing to all-out action.

Nor has it been too generous with strike pay for the social workers out on strike, which has meant that after two weeks a small percentage of social workers have started to trickle back to work.

The Social Work Shop Stewards Committee, with SC supporters, Socialist Workers Party members and Communist Party members involved has been able to organise an active strike however. Pickets of Snow Hill House, the central office have been organised, attempts have been made to get mass meetings called in other departments to put the case. The committee has however been continually blocked by the strike operations committee which represents the stewards from the different departments, most of them not taking strike action.

This committee is firmly under the thumb of local NALGO fulltimers who are not calling for all out action and seem more interested in seeking favours from right wing Tory council leader Neville Bosworth.

Socialist Challenge stewards have been urging the social workers to not only campaign for a yes vote among council workers but to lobby the NALGO executive and demand support for all out action.

Stewards have also been urged to speak at local Labour Party meetings and have had resolutions of support coming from Sparkhill and Handsworth Constituency Labour Parties. Socialist Challenge has invited Dave Benlow from the Wandsworth dust dispute to discuss the lessons of fighting privatisation.

It's to be a tough battle to get all-out strike action but the wider the case of the social workers is spread, the more support that is built up in the labour movement for resistance to victimisation, cuts and privatisation the quicker will Councillor Bosworth and his ilk be shown the door.

If the social workers are left to fight this one alone it would be a set back for every other battle against privatisation and we can expect to see plenty of those as the Tories wield their spending axes across the country.

Raindi Textiles

£36 a week — sacked for wanting a rise!

AT RAINDI TEXTILES in the Smethwick back streets, as in many similar 'businesses' in the West Midlands, Asian workers sweat long hours for appalling low wages.

But when the workforce joined the Transport union with their fellow employees at

Supreme Quilting, three members were sacked. Ravinder Singh, senior shop steward explained: 'We joined the union at Supreme Quilting for 17 weeks. Then the union negotiator sent a letter to say he wanted to discuss wages and conditions, and they sacked three of us: Rizwanah, Mehinder and Baljit.'

Their crime was discussing union business in the pub after work. 10 Supreme Quilting workers walked out on the spot and a week later they were joined by 250 women and 50 men after all the Raindi workers also joined the union.

'The first thing management did was to put up a 'For Sale' sign,' explained one

worker. 'I rang the estate agent and he said the company were paying for the board but didn't intend to sell. It was just bluff'.

This company makes trousers and coats sold at C&A stores, Marks and Spencers, and Lord Anthony. They export to Denmark and Belgium. The clothes aren't cheap and the owners aren't

short of a few bob — their twelve family cars include two or three Mercedes and a Lotus.

But the strikers are short of cash. They get no strike pay because they haven't been in the union long enough'.

Rush donations to: P.S. Raindi Strike Committee, Transport House, 9-17 Victoria Street, West Bromwich.

Debate

What did the miners' ballot mean?

IT WOULD appear that the fine rhetoric produced on the front page of the 29 Oct Socialist Challenge has exploded in our faces. Perhaps whoever was responsible for the editorial should have read the inside pages first.

The decision by the majority of the NUM members to reject the NEC's recommendation is a huge blow for all trade unionists. It will do nothing for the morale of health workers, water workers, Britoil, but will boost the morale of Tebbit and the rest of the anti-union brigade.

What went wrong? How did the vote decrease from last year? Is it really the case that the best organised and most militant section of the working class have succumbed to materialism via the pressures of mortgages, cars and holidays abroad? Did the overtime ban on the related questions of pay and closures have an adverse effect or were there other factors?

The NUM's leadership was not at all what SC made it out to be. While the quality was first rate, the quantity left a lot to be desired.

Faced with a horrific deluge of misleading propaganda from the capitalist gutter press, and the National Coal Board — where did they get the money from — how did the NUM leadership respond?

Unfortunately mass rallies for four and five areas at a central venue are inadequate compared to pit canteen meetings at every pit, on every shift. They become a morale booster for the committed

and unfortunately by-pass the majority of NUM members.

Similarly, one leaflet and strike issue of *The Miner* was not sufficient in weight and volume to counter-attack the deluge of propaganda from the NCB.

Even in the more militant areas where canteen meetings headed a spirited campaign, the Yes vote was a lot lower than one would have either expected or hoped for. Therefore we can see that neither the leadership, or the rank and file, or the pressures can be taken in isolation and the appropriate blame proportioned.

If nothing else this temporary reversal has shown the urgent need for the radical democratisation of the NUM from top to bottom.

The NUM leadership, like in all other unions, has over the years become divorced from its own rank and file.

When the basic question is raised of support for either the Board or the union, many miners see the enemy as their union and consequently fail to respond to the progressive leadership's call.

But the truth is that you cannot fundamentally overcome years of misleadership in a few short months. Neither can you reasonably expect one or a small group of leaders to substitute themselves for a healthy and



North Derbyshire miners campaign in support of nurses

democratic trade union movement.

The NUM should not be seen simply as Scargill's union or a place where a privileged few carve out their goodies but as our union. Thus the union day-release courses, weekend schools, branch meetings, must begin to attract the non-activist.

Above all the union must be a campaigning union, week-in and week-out, informing and educating by regular leaflets, bulletins and supplements.

The campaign to stop pit closures must also begin in earnest before the butchery begins. However unpleasant it is to taste defeat, we must

remember the old adage — 'don't mourn — organise'.

DICK HALL
Warsop Main Colliery,
N Derbyshire

MARK HUNTER
Welbeck Colliery,
Nottinghamshire

Railworkers prepare revenge

By Celia Pugh

RAIL WORKERS are seething with anger again this week over another example of TUC leaders' treachery. Support in the depots was building up for the Transport Day of Action, when the TUC called it off.

True, the initial response in bus garages, rail depots and underground stations was muted. This is hardly surprising when none of the national transport union leaders issued a clear directive for all out strike action; when transport workers feel resentful about striking when the TUC Health Committee

refuses to mobilise strike action in the health service itself; and when many are cynical about any directives coming from the same TUC leadership that sold out the traindrivers union, ASLEF.

Despite all this, thousands of transport workers overcame these objections. They came down firmly for action to

back fellow workers in the ranks of the health unions.

In the days leading up to the Day of Action, ASLEF and NUR members at Paddington, Kings Cross, Waterloo and Streatham Hill Depots voted for 24 hour strike action. Other rail workers up and down the country were preparing for solidarity action on the day.

Yet again the TUC leaders have stabbed them in the back. But NUR members have recent experience of how to deal with traitors at union

headquarters. With Sidney Weighell's scalp under their belts, they can feel more confident about dealing with a national leadership that fails to act on policies which defend workers against the Tories and who flagrantly abuse union decisions.

In the next 6 months NUR members will have an opportunity to push home the advantage gained with the downfall of Weighell. These will be months of campaigning and voting for Weighell's replacement as General Secretary of the NUR.

In the last year, the NUR has debated vital issues such as opposition to privatisation and productivity carve-ups like one-person operation, which will herald thousands of redundancies; positive discrimination and action to change the conditions of women members in the industry and union; the union's stance on unilateral disarmament and CND.

On many of these issues, years of Weighell's misleadership and manoeuvre has blocked a

positive stance. With the general secretary elections, the left in the union can begin to change this around by building on the growing anger and frustration in the ranks to push forward left policies and actions on these issues.

For this they need to promote a clear set of alternative policies to those peddled by Weighell and make clear a commitment to democracy and accountability.

If the recent record of Labour candidates in by-elections tell us anything,

they show that playing to the centre and middle ground doesn't get very far. Only clear and radical alternative policies, backed by a firm commitment to carry them out can secure solid victories for the left — be it in elections for union leaders or for a Labour government.

These considerations should be seriously debated by every branch and in every depot over the next three months of nomination for general secretary and the three months of campaigning that follows.

Irish Political crisis

Southern Irish election

By Martin Collins

A WEEK is a long time in politics, as the saying goes. A week ago the Irish Labour Party delegates cheered as the coalition policies of the leadership were denounced. Party leader Michael O'Leary quit his position to drop out of politics altogether.

As party hopefuls jostled for election, O'Leary announced he was to join Fine Gael (Labour's right wing former coalition partner).

Meanwhile, Dick Spring, the rank outsider and virtual newcomer who was elected Labour leader suggested that Labour might consider a coalition with the present government party Fianna Fail after the election which has just been called.

The inability of the Tweedle Dee Fianna Fail and the Tweedle Dum Fine Gael-Labour coalition to

solve Ireland's problems has thrown Irish society into a political maelstrom. While some sections of the ruling class speculate on the chances of a coup to resolve the crisis through the formation of a 'national government', big business interests of United States and Britain who have most to lose if things go wrong, wait in the wings.

The biggest obstacle to either of these 'green' Tory governments has been the determined resistance of the working

class to the attempts to impose austerity measures. The last months have seen a whole series of militant strikes.

Small farmers and fishermen play a role as well. In the last fortnight Ireland's ports have been blockaded in a bid to get the release of five union leaders jailed by the government. And a creamery has been taken over to resist 'rationalisation' measures.

These defensive struggles have begun to be accompanied by political moves to link such struggles to the fight for a government which breaks with the multi-nationals and their imperialist backers. The most significant advance in this direc-

tion came as Sinn Fein accepted the wishes of the movement and began to organise in support of the hunger strikers on an all-Ireland basis.

This strategy, most skillfully argued by Bernadette McAliskey and Peoples Democracy, was to use the electoral process North and South to highlight the political issues at stake and deepen the impact of the political status campaign.

In the North the electoral success of the Sinn Fein has temporarily sunk Tory Northern Ireland Minister Jim Prior's chances of involving the middle class Social Democratic and Labour Party to legitimise the assembly. But, as Prior in desperation once more

turns to the southern ruling class to prop up imperialist rule, new deals are on the cards.

The best means to take forward the struggle now is the formation of an anti-imperialist slate to fight the elections in the South. Such a slate, defending a platform against the austerity and against cooperation with Prior, would not only attract the support of the workers and small farmers looking for a government that stuck up for their interests. In all likelihood such a slate would see elected a force which would hold the balance of power in the Dail creating huge opportunities for extending support for such an anti-imperialist alternative.



Charlie Haughey, leader of Fianna Fail. No solutions for working class, or even ruling class



Left advances in Sinn Fein

By Brian Grogan

THE ANNUAL conference of Sinn Fein (ard fheis) witnessed a consolidation of left wing victories in the wake of the tremendous gains in the elections for Prior's Assembly in the six counties.

The previous decisions to put greater emphasis on mass mobilisations and the utilisation of all avenues to develop this, such as elections, was reaffirmed. Accordingly, they re-iterated their appeal for a conference of all nationalist parties (including those in the South) to pursue the challenge to Prior's Assembly.

This approach is now to be extended to an international campaign for political recognition and support. Drawing on the example of the PLO in this regard, Ruairi O Bradaigh explained in his presidential address that those that voted for Sinn Fein in the Assembly elections 'were the real Palestinians of Western Europe'.

Whilst re-affirming the armed struggle as a legitimate tactic to drive out the British occupying force, the ard fheis disassociated itself from the methods of such organisations as the Italian Red Brigades the French Direct Action and the German Baader Meinhof groups.

A historic decision was taken when the necessary two thirds majority was finally achieved to remove the proposal for a 'federal Ireland' from their constitution in favour of a strategy for 'a decentralised democratic Ireland'. In thereby removing any suggestion of a concession to Loyalism, speakers made clear that Protestants would have full rights in a united socialist Ireland.

The ard fheis also re-affirmed Sinn Fein's support for Solidarity in Poland whilst disassociating themselves from such false friends as Margaret Thatcher.

DEFEND THE LPYS DEFEND



Labour's Youth Movements How the bureaucrats stifled the

By Paul Lawson

WHENEVER the right wing of the Labour Party loses the political argument it resorts to organisational attacks on the left. Nowhere is this more vividly demonstrated than in its relations with its youth movements. Youth are always in the forefront of the fight for socialism. And today the pattern is repeated, as the witch hunters in the Labour Party prepare an all-out assault on the LPYS.

Repeatedly, the right-dominated NEC has moved to prevent youth movement conferences, to stifle political debate, to prevent the youth making their own voices heard. Repeatedly these tactics have just further alienated the youth and ensured the domination of Marxist tendencies.

The first Labour Youth movement, the Labour League of Youth, was set up in 1926: it had an age limit of 26, and was promised annual conferences. However it was not until 1929 that the League was allowed its first conference, and it was 1933

have that, can we?' and usually he was right.

The League became more active and became involved in the fight against the fascists and the struggle against the means test, and as a result grew in size.

By March 1934 there were 25,000 members in 440 branches — socialist campaigning paid off. But the political fight over the united front was gathering steam. Inside the Labour Party, the Socialist League, led by Stafford Cripps, was supporting the united front, and a large majority inside the Youth League also supported it. But *New Nation* staunchly opposed it. The result — inevitably — was that the youth began to seek a political voice of their own.

First a duplicated magazine, *Youth Forum*, was produced. Disagreement over political line eventually led to the setting up of two youth papers on the left — *New Advance* and *Youth Militant* — the former sympathising more with the political line of the Communist Party (with Ted Willis as its leading light) and the latter more reflecting Trotskyist ideas.

But the supporters of *New Advance* were much the stronger of the two trends of thought. At the 1936 conference of the League the Na-

rent the Labour Party.

In May 1937 the Socialist League had been proscribed and had dissolved itself. But in 1938 independent Popular Front candidates stood in some local elections, and Stafford Cripps and other left wingers supported the Popular Front candidates. Cripps, Bevan and others were expelled from the Labour Party: and at the same time the LLY was attacked — the NAC was suspended and its conference cancelled. Transport House had in effect crushed the League. Its history in this pre-war period was one of continuous problems in building an effective campaigning youth movement, because of the rigid control and disruption by the bureaucrats in Transport House.

After the war branches of the LLY began to re-form. The 1946 Labour conference formally recognised the League, but its age limit was set once again at 21, to deprive it of any experienced leaders. It was not to have any national or regional structure. This once again conformed to the bureaucrats' ideal: to 'organise' youth as valuable fodder for election time activities but not to allow them any meaningful political role.

At the 1948 conference of the Labour Party a resolution was moved by Ian Mikardo which proposed that the League should become an effective national structure. But very little was done to implement this resolution. In-fighting between the League and the NEC continued, with the establishment of a 'national status movement' to get the 1948 resolution implemented in full.

The Wandsworth branch of the League convened an unofficial conference in June 1950, attended by 300 people. As a result Wandsworth was disbanded, but after protests was reinstated.

Eventually in September 1950 it was announced that the League would be granted its own conference. When it met, it was revealed that the League had 25,000 members in 820 branches. The conference was not however able to discuss political resolutions.

Once again the political debate in-



before it was allowed its own newspaper — *New Nation*.

But — a recurring pattern — the three editors of *New Nation* were appointed by Transport House. The 1933 League conference called for control of the journal and for the right to discuss political matters and not just organisational questions at its own conference.

A political fight broke out between members of the League and the Transport House bureaucrats. Many of the League members were in favour of a united front with the Communist Party and the Independent Labour Party to fight against fascism. *New Nation* was opened to debate on this question, but eventually official disapproval ensured that the letters column was closed. The kind of censorship which was imposed is recalled by Arthur Peacock, one of the editors:

'It was my job to submit proofs of the paper to Will Henderson, chief of the party's publicity department. He was concerned solely with ensuring that nothing was published in opposition to the official policy. He never was a dictator. Now and then he would send for me and talk about paragraphs which he thought offended and say 'Well, brother, we can't

tional Advisory Committee (NAC) elected was dominated by supporters of *New Advance*. This political move to the left was totally unacceptable to the Labour bureaucrats; but it reflected a movement which was alive, campaigning and growing.

At the 1936 Labour Party conference a memorandum was prepared, and passed, disbanding the NAC, closing down *New Nation* and lowering the age limit to 21. The League responded by following the now 'unofficial' NAC and making *New Advance* the 'official' paper of the League.

Eventually a compromise was agreed with Transport House, after the difficulty of operating in an 'unofficial' fashion became clear. While the LLY was allowed to continue in existence, an Administrative officer would be appointed by the NEC and the NEC would appoint an LLY NAC of 'appropriate persons'.

Meanwhile, the debate over the 'united front' had become a debate over the 'Popular Front' — thanks to the rightward moving line of the Communist Party. The Popular Front was to include progressive Tories, the church and other right wingers — anyone who would join in to oppose fascism. This debate now

Build the LPYS 1983 conference

By Richard Rosanski
(Hackney North LPYS)

AS THE witch-hunting proposals to go to the next NEC of the Labour Party are leaked in the press, it's clear that the Labour Party Young Socialists will be in the firing line.

At the first post-conference NEC the right wing took a sudden interest in the Youth Committee. Left wingers Dennis Skinner, Frank Allaun and Audrey Wise were purged. They were replaced by Denis Howell, the new chair, and Anne Davis. Laurence Coates, LPYS representative on the NEC was also thrown off the Organisation Sub-committee.

It seems that there are two sets of proposals circulating the right wing. The first is favoured by Dennis Howell: the closure of the LPYS. The second (and this is supposed to be the 'compromise' position) proposes the suspension of the YS's national organisation without any expulsions, with local branches being put under strict local control.

This 'compromise' also includes the following:

* A ban on sales of *Militant* at YS meetings.

* A ban on attendance of any known Militant organiser at an LPYS activity.

* A ban on collection of money for *Militant* within the LPYS.

* Sacking known Militant supporters from positions of authority in the LPYS. This would presumably include Laurence Coates, and also Andy Bevan, the Labour Party Youth Officer.

Once again the Labour right wing is planning to crush its youth movement for fear of the threat represented to its power and privilege. The only way we can respond is by going on the offensive: Build the LPYS! No closures, no sackings, no restrictions!

All this points to one thing: the LPYS annual conference at Easter 1983. It must be a massive council of war against the Tories and their agents in the labour movement. This means not just every LPYS branch, but every LPYS member — and more!

Every union branch with LPYS members must delegate them to the conference. All union Broad Lefts should be invited, along with all Labour MPs

Any attempt to restrict, postpone or cancel the conference by the new NEC must be vigorously opposed. Defend the LPYS! Build the Easter 1983 LPYS conference!



This year's LPYS conference

THE LPYS DEFEND THE LPYS

youth

side the Labour Party started to be reflected inside the League, with the left, under the inspiration of Bevan making advances. But the bureaucratic control by the NEC was kept firmly in place. Even the turbulent 1954 conference was prevented from discussing the issues animating the left — the H bomb, German rearmament and so forth.

Eventually the witch hunt against the Bevanites took its toll on the League. At the 1955 Labour Party conference, the League was disbanded as a result of the NEC report presented by Alice Bacon. Youth sections in the constituencies were to replace the League. There were to be no national structures.

Once again, by witch hunting the left and organisationally strangling the youth, the Labour Party had prevented the flowering of an independent youth organisation.

The youth sections were localised and politically impotent. But the massive political upheavals in the world after 1956 started a wave of restlessness among youth section members. Suez, Hungary and above all the Bomb were the political issues of the day. Moves started again to try to transform the youth sections into something like a nationally structured youth movement.

The moves coincided with something else — a 'turn to youth' among the Labour leaders prior to and in the wake of the 1959 general election. It became widely known that individual membership of the Labour Party had sharply declined since 1953, and the age profile of the Party had deteriorated sharply. In the 1959 general election the Labour Party did particularly badly among young people.

All this combined to convince the party leadership that some radical measures were necessary to recruit young people, and in January 1960 the Young Socialists were established. The constitution gave the Young Socialists more autonomy than previous movements — it was to have a national structure, national conferences which discussed political resolutions, and it was envisaged that



LPYS demo, Liverpool 1982

the organisation would elect its own national committee and have its own youth paper.

But the YS was still to come under the authority of the National Agent's office. There was still plenty of room for conflict over what the YS could and could not legitimately do.

Meanwhile the YS was growing rapidly. The wave of radicalisation around the upsurge of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament was creating a fertile ground for recruitment to a socialist youth organisation — and at the same time solidifying the strength of the left inside the YS.

The first organisational struggle came over the YS's newspaper, the

New Advance. Its editor, Roger Protz, was appointed from the Labour Party's press and publicity department. Its content was flat and non-controversial and its sales flagged. The papers of the left were far more popular.

Any attempt by the Labour bureaucracy to use the YS as a simple vehicle for recruiting young people to the party was prevented above all by the rise of *Keep Left*.

In 1960 Hendon North and Wembley North YS branches started the first issues of *Keep Left*. It was no secret to anybody that *Keep Left* politically reflected the views of the Socialist Labour League (SLL), which at that time was clearly the largest organisation of the far left in Britain. Its organisation was very efficient, but its political style was hectoring and sectarian — which made it very unpopular with other sections of the left. Nonetheless, it won wide support — more than any other section of the left.

The NEC saw *Keep Left* as a threat. In November 1960 they wrote to Wembley North and Hendon North telling them that it was 'not the function' of the YS branch to sponsor nationally circulated papers. YS branches responded to this attack by rapidly coming to the defence of the paper, and the number of sponsoring branches rose rapidly.

The 1961 conference of the YS was extremely successful. Many of the resolutions carried were Marxist in character. But the witch hunt against *Keep Left* had already begun.

Because of the political immaturity of many people in the YS, they allowed a resolution to 'investigate' *Keep Left* to go through: the sectarian style of the journal's supporters opened them up to this, and contributed to suspicions. Many people new to politics were unable to see that the attack on *Keep Left* was the precursor of a wider attack on the whole left.

This attack was being masterminded by the same group of people who were fighting unilateralism in the adult party — the Campaign for Democratic Socialism. A paper called *Counterblast* reflecting their views was set up reflecting the views of the

right wing. At the same time another left paper called *Young Guard* was set up which regrouped the non-*Keep Left* left-wing forces.

By 1962 the YS had about 800 branches. On May Day of that year YS members heckled Gaitskell in Glasgow and George Brown in London, over nuclear weapons and other aspects of the Labour leadership's policy. The NEC used these incidents to move against the YS. As a result, the Glasgow Federation was closed down and Roger Protz and three *Keep Left* NC members expelled.

The atmosphere inside the organisation was soured by bitter infighting between the rival left groups, and by the constant attempts at witch

begin a further round of witch hunting, expelling John Robertson — a supporter of *Keep Left* and chairman of the YS NC.

In 1965, the supporters of *Keep Left* had decided that they could, through the creation of a mass youth movement, lay the basis for a mass revolutionary party and they therefore split to form their own YS.

After the 1965 general election the YS was re-organised as the Labour Party Young Socialists. The betrayals of the Labour government made the LPYS increasingly unattractive. Socialists more and more began to organise among the youth outside the Labour Party — except for the *Militant* tendency.



Tony Benn speaks at 1957 youth rally in Hyde Park

hunting by the NEC, led by the Youth Officer — Reg Underhill.

But still the witch hunters had not yet won major victories. But they went on the offensive again after Easter 1964. That Easter groups of 'mods' and 'rockers' had gathered for the first time to fight it out at various sea-side resorts. *Keep Left* young socialist branches intervened under the slogan 'mods and rockers unite to fight the Tories'.

The NEC took this as the cue to

By 1970 *Militant* had won control of the organisation. Its political influence was to effectively insulate the LPYS from the political developments of the 1970s.

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International

Sri Lankan election setback for masses

By M Soori

THE ELECTION victory of the United National Party candidate JR Jayawardene (JR) in last month's presidential elections in Sri Lanka will undoubtedly lead to further erosions in the democratic rights and living standards of the masses. The UNP government decided to advance the presidential elections (not due until February '84) because the World Bank insisted that it should implement a series of tough austerity measures including a steep devaluation of the rupee and further cuts in social service expenditure especially in education and health. Already the UNP had indicated that the rupee will be devalued shortly and by as much as 50 per cent.

The government also lost no time in taking revenge from those who did not support them at the last election. Thousands have been prevented from continuing their jobs in the government and state corporation establishment. A state of emergency has been imposed in the Jaffna District, the only district in which the UNP was routed at the elections. The Communist Party has been sealed and their offices closed down.

Furthermore JR has now decided not to hold the parliamentary elections due next June but instead to extend the life of Parliament by six years thus ensuring him the massive majority he has in the present Parliament.

His election is a setback for the working class and other oppressed masses. So why was the UNP able to win despite their anti-working class policies over the last five years.

The UNP was able to mobilise the whole government apparatus including two

newspaper groups, radio, television, and the government servants to its advantage.

The police turned a blind eye to the thuggery systematically employed by the UNP on oppositionists — a number of opposition party meetings were broken up by its thugs.

Government patronage — promise of jobs and contracts — as well as bribery was employed on a large scale.

The UNP victory was facilitated first by the largely successful call for abstention of boycott by certain political groups particularly amongst Tamil speaking people.

Tamils

The Tamil United Liberation Front called for a boycott because they did not want to jeopardise its relations with the UNP. Even genuine nationalist and progressive groups joined the boycott chorus and objectively assisted the UNP. Theirs was an emotional response rather

than a well thought out strategy.

Second, the opposition parties could not field a candidate who could mobilise the workers, peasants and oppressed nationals against the UNP. The attempt to field a single candidate of the left despite several attempts by organisations such as the RMP and the Government Clerical Service Union failed.

The pro-Moscow Communist Party which had until the nominations day given the impression that they would support the candidate of the reformist LSSP (extrotyksists) and who claimed that there was no difference between the two bourgeois parties (the UNP and the SLFP) suddenly switched its support to the SLFP candidate on the nominations day stating that the SLFP stood for democracy!

Even more bizarre was the role of the NSSP (the Sri Lankan organisation connected to Militant tendency in Britain), who had stated that they would support the candidate of the LSSP — Colvin R de Silva — on condition he supports their whole pro-

gramme! Ultimately they fielded their own candidate who used his platform to attack the candidate of the LSSP and to ask the people to give the second preference not to the other left candidate but to for the bourgeois SLFP.

Although the British Militant had claimed that their Sri Lankan affiliate was a mass party and much bigger than the LSSP their candidate managed to get only 17,000 votes (0.26%) out of a total of 6.4 million votes, while the LSSP polled 58,000. Finally the SLFP could not decide on a candidate until the very last moment because of internal dissension. While JR was already electioneering the SLFP was squabbling among themselves.

Murky

It was an excellent opportunity to launch Colvin as a common candidate of the opposition although it was sabotaged by the CP and the NSSP.

Even after the SLFP agreed on a candidate some of its leaders notably Anura Bandaranaike did not support

him. In fact his only speech in the election campaign damaged the SLFP because he claimed that the SLFP once elected would restore civil rights to his mother (Mrs Bandaranaike) and then resign.

The JVP ran a particularly murky campaign using Sinhala chauvinist propaganda to win votes from the SLFP and concentrating its main attack on opposition parties rather than the UNP.

In that context the RMP (SLFI) and the class struggle oriented comrades of the NSSP, mainly around the Government Clerical Service Union used the electoral campaign to advance the need for an independent working class axis free from both bourgeois parties and to develop grass root organisations of the workers and the oppressed. They gave critical support for the LSSP candidate advancing a series of demands designed to achieve the above objectives. The only silver lining in this situation is the fact that this joint effort has now paved the way for a unification of the most class conscious elements of the working class movement.

Release Sri Lankan political prisoners Stop the hanging of Kuttimani and Jegen Public meeting

Friday 26 Nov at 5.30pm Friends Meeting House Euston Rd, London

Campaign for the release of Eelam Political Prisoners in Sri Lanka, c/o Grays Inn Building, Roseberry Ave, London EC1.

Bolsheviks and Mensheviks

By John Ross

IN THE LAST issue of this series we saw how Marx outlined the basis for united action between revolutionaries and the working class and other social forces.

Marx posed the need for such a united front in terms of *united action*. He was prepared to engage in common action for goals of the working class even with forces that in their general character were absolutely reactionary. For example, he sided with capitalist forces and the Turkish empire when it was a question of blocking Tsarist Russian expansion in Europe.

This policy of judging the necessity of united action by *deeds*, and not by the character of the forces involved, was followed by revolutionaries after Marx.

Trotsky showed that it was necessary during the 1930s and the second World War to fight on the same side as the mass murderer and dictator of China, Chiang Kai-Shek, against the Japanese invasion of the country.

Recently it was necessary to fight on the same side of a war as the Argentinian military dictatorship to regain the Malvinas from British imperialism. This is the revolutionary position of *unity in action* which comes directly from Marx himself.

In Russia in 1903 however a quite different type of criteria for unity in action was introduced. In 1903 a division took place among Russian Marxists

into Bolsheviks (who remained revolutionaries), and Mensheviks (who later became reformists and abandoned Marxism).

A Menshevik resolution adopted at the Russian Congress of that year proposed to determine united action not on the basis of definite deeds, regardless of who was carrying them out, but on the basis of dividing the capitalist forces into two different groups.

United

The first capitalist group were declared to be progressive bourgeois forces with whom united action could be undertaken. The second group were considered reactionary and united action with them was declared impermissible.

This position of the Mensheviks was to become famous later because the



Lenin with Martov

analysis which divided capitalist forces into 'progressive' and 'reactionary' groupings became the policy of the Communist Parties from Stalin to the present day.

More precisely the Menshevik resolution of 1903 declared that united action could be entered into with bourgeois forces that, 'clearly and unambiguously declare that in their struggle against the autocratic government they will resolutely side with the Russian revolutionaries,' that did not, 'include in their programmes any demands running counter to the interests of the working class or the democracy generally, or obscuring their political consciousness,' and which supported, 'universal, equal, secret and direct suffrage.' *United action* was stated to be correct with these progressive bourgeois forces but was rejected with others.

Lenin violently attacked this 1903 resolution and demanded its repeal. He stated that the Menshevik resolution, 'confuses two

questions: 1) The exposure of the 'anti-revolutionary and anti-proletarian' features of all liberal-democratic trends, and the need to *combat* these features and 2) the conditions for temporary and partial agreements with any of these trends.'

Lenin denounced the resolution because he said, 'It does not give what it should ... an analysis of the class content of liberalism.' The resolution used vague classless terms such as 'democratic' and therefore, 'It does not define the class content of Russian liberalism.'

This way of posing the question of relations with the bourgeoisie created illusions in the capitalist forces and miseducated the working class as to their character. Lenin said that it was ridiculous to believe that sections of the bourgeoisie, "can resolutely side with the revolutionaries ... That is absurd, and even if the spokesmen of such a trend were to 'declare it clearly and unambiguously' we, the party of the pro-

letariat, would be obliged not to believe their declarations. To be a liberal and resolutely side with the revolutionaries — the one excludes the other.'

As Lenin put it, 'there never have been, nor can there be, liberal-democratic trends which did not include in their programme demands running counter to the interests of the working class and obscuring its (the proletariat's) class consciousness.'

Lenin argued like Marx that united action could be entered into with *any* section of the bourgeoisie for a definite concrete action against Tsarism. He rejected anything which obscured the capitalist class content of 'liberal' or 'democratic' bourgeois forces.

In these differences lay the foundations of the division between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in Russia. It later became one between the revolutionaries and reformists on a world scale.

1 In 1903 the Marxists were known as Social Democrats. Because the word has now taken on a quite different meaning we have replaced it with 'revolutionaries' in all the quotations from Lenin. Lenin's quotes are all from 'One Step Forward, Two Steps Back'.

Workers Party election test

By Jim Baron

NEXT Monday, 15 November, Brazil goes to the polls and the three year-old Workers Party (PT) faces the first major test of its spectacular political and organisational development. Not that the elections themselves will change very much. Local and national assemblies and — for the first time in 18 years — the state governorships as well, are all up for grabs. But the presidency and central government remain firmly in military hands.

Despite frantic manoeuvres by the regime to rig the electoral rules, it seems likely that its own party, the PDS, will be savaged by the opposition in all the major cities. Even if the main bourgeois opposition party, the PMDB (which counts a rapidly growing number of industrialists, as well as the Brazilian Communist Party among its supporters) does win a majority in many areas, its power to do anything will be severely limited: first by its own extremely moderate intentions, and second by the highly-centralised military-technocratic state machine which really runs Brazil.

The PT has always recognised this, and analysed the whole electoral opening as an attempt by the ruling class to recycle its status quo on less unpopular lines. The PT has centred its own campaign less on winning seats (which it may well do) than on building the strength of the mass movement and its own organisation.

The party's advances have been impressive by anybody's standards. Emerging out of the massive industrial struggles of 1978/79, and with a clear emphasis on class independence, the PT now has almost

GENERAL JARUZELSKI'S JUNTA is moving systematically to wipe out every vestige of the gains the workers made in the wake of the August 1980 strike. On 8 October 1982 following the directions of the apparatchiks and the Orgbureau of the Polish United Workers Party (PWUP), the deputies to the Sejm approved a law 'dissolving' the Independent Self-Managed Union Solidarnosc. By this action, the junta trampled on the August 1980 accords and all the agreements signed with the independent workers and farmers organisations in the period from August 1980 to December 1981.

It also dishonoured the pledge made on 16 December 1981, that Solidarnosc and the other unions would be allowed to resume functioning in accordance with their charters.

Today, through such civilian mouthpieces as Rakowski, the junta is trying to convince a terrorized society and international public opinion that since 13 December Solidarnosc has not sought any dialogue or mutual understanding and therefore must now be liquidated in the interest of 'socialism' and 'world peace'.

We want you to know that these claims are abject lies. On many occasions, the members of Solidarnosc and their underground leadership, including our Solidarnosc Inter-Enterprise Workers Committee in Warsaw, have demonstrated their readiness for discussion and dialogue. The only condition we posed was an elementary one, one as humanitarian as political. We asked for the release of

Lech Walesa and the other arrested and interned members of Solidarnosc. We were prepared to engage in such dialogue even in the circumstances of the state of war, under the threat of guns and tanks.

From the end of June to the end of August, we declared a moratorium on strikes and demonstrations throughout the country. At the start of July, in the statement entitled 'Five Times Yes' which was distributed in hundreds of thousands of copies, the underground leadership of Solidarnosc said that it was ready to engage in discussion and dialogue.

Again, in a leaflet drawn up for the 31 August demonstrations, which were planned to be peaceful but were turned into a bloodbath by the police, the Solidarnosc leadership appealed to the junta for a compromise and a mutual understanding.

Four days before these demonstrations, with the agreement of the underground leadership, five



500,000 signed-up members, a leadership firmly planted at the head of the most militant sections of the Third World's largest industrial working class, and a political programme which has developed rapidly in the direction of revolutionary socialist solutions. Many problems remain. In coming weeks SC will look at the PT's election platform, and the implication of the election results.

VITO GIANOTTI is a militant in the opposition of the Sao Paulo Metalworkers Union which represents some 400,000 workers and is controlled by bureaucrats linked to the military régime was recently in Britain, making contacts with trade unionists here. Socialist Challenge spoke to him about the general state of the struggle in Brazil.

Could you give us a brief outline of the main struggles facing the

working-class movement in Brazil at the moment, and particularly your sector in Sao Paulo?

The number one problem at the moment is unemployment. The crisis of the capitalist system is world-wide. But for us, in a country where the working class already live in poverty, unemployment is tragic. We don't have social security in Brazil. There's no unemployment benefit. That's why this is the main struggle at the moment.

This August ten Sao Paulo factories went on strike against mass redundancies. Last year our leadership in the Sao Paulo metalworkers union recommended acceptance of a reduction in the working week with a cut in wages, in order to avoid unemployment. But the workers turned it down.

What we want is a shorter working week *without* loss of pay. We want to see the bosses' profits getting smaller. We don't want to solve their problems for them.

What about more generally in Brazil?

The main problem is the structure of the trade unions. Brazilian unions are not free. They depend on the government which has an extremely severe law to control the unions. The government can step into a union, sack its leadership, and put in their own people.

It has the power to decide how the unions' finances are used. The government prohibits any unification of workers; according to the law we aren't allowed to have our own TUC. In fact, in Brazilian law the unions are set up to collaborate with the state.

This is all part of the trade union structure we want to demolish. What we're fighting for is free trade unions decided on by the workers and completely free of ties with government or the bosses. We want a union based on grass-roots organisation in the factories. And we want a union with a clear class position, not one that seeks collaboration between bosses and workers.

What part do you think the Workers Party (PT) should play in all this?

As a party that aims to be *of* workers, the PT has got to take up and popularise the demands that workers are making: the demand we're making is for free, class-oriented unions, which can open the way to a society free from exploitation.

As a workers' party, which is what it sets out to be, the PT has to put itself at the service of workers, helping them to achieve their true objectives as a class. The PT needs to put all its energies on the side of the workers' independent organisation, working to politicise all their struggles.

Since the PT's stated objective is socialist, it has to be right there where workers are struggling, spreading and

deepening this socialist objective in each and every struggle.

What concrete possibilities do you see for co-operation between the workers' movement in Brazil and here in Britain?

I visited Ford's at Dagenham. The workers there are subjected to the same business of alienation as in Brazil. Of course there are differences. But the struggle is the same.

In concrete terms I think it's important to set up meetings of rank and file workers, of works committees, from the different Ford plants internationally. And not just for a chat, but to organise combined and co-ordinated action. If the boss is the same, then the struggle has to be fought together.

What was the reaction among Brazilian workers to the Malvinas war?

First of all we were surprised to see the British labour movement keeping so quiet — to see it seeming to line up with Thatcher. It reminded us a bit of the French working-class movement during the Algerian war, when for the most part it came down on the side of French imperialist forces.

The Brazilian working class detests the Argentinian military regime. We knew perfectly well that the Argentine military started the Malvinas war in order to hold on to power and keep on killing workers. But in Brazil we are all against any form of imperialism. And the Malvinas are not British; one fine day Britain 'conquered' the Falklands, and it's long since been time for Britain to get out.

At the same time we realise that the main aspect of imperialism today is not its presence on a few remote islands in the Pacific or the Atlantic. It is its presence in the very heart of all countries, through its multinational companies.

Open letter from the Polish workers to the western trade unions and workers parties

Solidarnosc Has Not Perished Signed: Miedzysakladowy Robotniczy Komitet Solidarnosci Warszawa (Solidarnosc Warsaw Inter-Workplace Workers Committee)



leaders of Solidarnosc, together with representatives of the Confederation of Autonomous Unions, addressed a joint letter to Jaruzelski, including an urgent appeal for dialogue.

In Poland today, the authorities see the unions more as a police problem

than as a means for the political and economic emancipation of the working class. To prevent any misunderstanding, we should point out here that the military junta is not fighting to defend socialism. It is fighting to protect its rule and its privileges.

It is for this reason that it has no interest in dialogue with Solidarnosc. If there are any who still believe that what is at issue in Poland is defence of 'people's power' of 'collective ownership of the means of production' they are, if we may be permitted to speak plainly,

'hopeless idiots'. The junta in Poland is endeavoring to maintain at any cost a 'socialism for idiots', a socialism based on the whip, terror, corruption, prisons, despotic factory managers, military commissars, police agents, and apparatchiks. The Polish workers have already had quite enough of this kind of 'socialism' and 'people's power'.

The junta thinks it has 'dissolved' Solidarnosc. So, some of you may be wondering whether there is still any point today in talking about Solidarnosc and supporting it. You should know that Solidarnosc cannot be 'dissolved' since the Polish working class cannot be 'dissolved'. It can be crushed, but that would mean the physical smashing of Polish labour.

This is no exaggeration on our part. You say 'Solidarnosc', we say 'freedom'. You say 'socialism', we say 'justice and self-management'. Ask yourselves: can the workers' aspirations for freedom, justice, a decent life, and control over their workplaces be confined within prison walls? Since they cannot, Solidarnosc has not been, and cannot be, 'dissolved'. Even driven underground and with many of its leaders and activists jailed, and it itself 'dissolved', Solidarnosc still strikes fear into generals and the apparatchiks.

Friends, we are hoping for joint statements and mass actions by the unions and workers' parties in the West in defence of the Solidarnosc leaders

persecuted by the junta. We hope that you will call the military 'gorillas' to account before world public opinion on every possible occasion for their record of violence and terror.

We hope that you will focus attention on the fact that the so-called trade-union law passed on 8 October is in violation of the convention of the International Labour Organisation and that it in fact puts recognition of new unions in the hands of the secret police.

The sort of trade-union movement the junta is projecting for the coming years is nothing but the 'model' followed by Pinochet in Chile. The application of this 'model' involves the transformation of the entire state administration into a kind of 'army of overseers' endowed with special rights and privileges on the model of the old Czarist 'Table of Ranks' (the Nomenklatura).

We are convinced that the unions and the workers parties in the West are prepared to take up a consistent struggle in support of the rights of labour in Poland. We are convinced that in supporting Solidarnosc you will also find an effective way for defending the fundamental interests and rights of workers in the West.

For today and the days that lie ahead, we are depending on you for help and solidarity. That is what we look for most of all from you. From us, there is one thing you can count on — that we will fight on against the junta.

British doctors reveal Israel's massacre lies

By Paul Lawson

TWO BRITISH DOCTORS — Paul Morris from Ealing and Dr Swee Chai Ang — revealed last week in their evidence to the Israeli commission of enquiry on the massacres, that most of the killings took place at the time when Israel claims that they had stopped the massacre.

Both the doctors were working in the Gaza hospital, near the Sabra and Chatilla refugee camps at the time of the killings. They confirmed that the majority of the killings had in fact occurred between Thursday night September 16 and Friday noon, when it was supposed to have been halted.

An American nurse, Ellen Seigal, saw Israeli bulldozers demolishing houses on the Saturday morning. The houses were demolished to cover up the extent of the massacre, burying hundreds of bodies beneath them.

Ellen Seigal revealed that the houses were identified by a Hebrew letter painted on their side. If this is true, it represents at least some evidence for the proposition that Israeli soldiers were driving the bulldozers.

Dr Ang said that she was operating non-stop from Thursday morning until Friday. Her first patient had been brought in on Thursday morning with a bullet wound from a high velocity gun.

But during the afternoon the casualties were more and more suffering from wounds inflicted at close range by grenades and mortars. Dr Ang said that women and children had told her that the Phalangist militia men had begun breaking into houses and shooting whole families.

This was still during the hours of daylight, although according to the

Israelis the militia men had not gone in until 6pm.

Neither doctor had known that a wholesale massacre was going on outside the hospital. Dr Ang said: 'The first time I saw video-tape of people being shot, and dead bodies lying in the streets I cried. Here we were, a meagre team of 22 foreigners, trying our very best for 72 hours, without sleep, to save the lives of 30 or 40 people and they were dying by their thousands. If I had known that they were dying by the thousands, I would have stopped operating immediately, and gone out into the streets and done something about it'.



ISRAELI Prime Minister Begin himself answered questions in front of the commission of enquiry last Monday. He testified that at the cabinet meetings which approved the decision to send the Phalangists into the refugee camps they had been told by the Israeli chief of staff that some form of Phalangist massacre was possible. Begin said that he knew that there had been massacres in the past 'but after all the Phalangists were trained by us'. Exactly!

El Salvador prisoners need our aid

By Toni Gorton

THE NEW Spanish prime minister, Felipe Gonzalez is expected to join the governments of Sweden and Greece in trying to get an end to civil war in El Salvador which has claimed almost 40,000 lives so far. There is a growing movement in Europe to persuade the Reagan administration to get the Magana government to the negotiating table with the liberation movement headed up by the FDR, the Revolutionary Democratic Front.

The swing to the Democratic Party in the US's mid-term elections last week is seen to hinder Reagan's ability to carry out his strategy in Central America with his Caribbean Basin Initiative which throws billions of dollars to the governments he supports in the area.

In Britain the names of the FDR members recently arrested by the El Salvador

security forces have reached the El Salvador Committee for Human Rights and it is urged that an immediate effort is made to get them released.

They are all members of the MNR, the equivalent to the British Labour Party and leaders of the trade unions. The last big round-up of MNR leaders was conducted in November 1980 which culminated in their badly

mutilated bodies being discovered by a roadside.

The following persons were arrested on 18/19 October and the British equivalent to their trade union is indicated in brackets:

- Carlos Molina, head of economics dept., National University (AUT)
- Mauricio Domenech, manufacturer
- David Elias Guadron, age 34, pharmacist or health visitor (ASTMS)
- Jorge Herrera, (NUM)
- Raul Antonio Castro Palomares, Sugar Workers union, FUSS trade union federation
- Silvestre Ortiz, Treasurer, Sugar Workers union
- Berta Alicia Costa (or Castro) Textile workers
- Vincente Ortiz Hernandez, Dockers Union
- Pablo Ramirez Cornejo (TGWU)

- Pedro Ramirez Esquivel (TGWU)
- Daniel (or David) Avalos (TGWU)

What you should do:
 ● Write to the Salvadorean President: SE Don Alvaro Magana, Presidente de la Republica de El Salvador, Casa Presidencial, San Salvador, El Salvador.
 ● Get your nearest Labour Party and trade union to take up the cases.
 ● Write to the British government asking it to intercede on behalf of the prisoners. Write to: RT Secretary of State, The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Downing St, London SW1.

The El Salvador Committee for Human Rights can be contacted c/o 21 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN Tel: 01-359 1836 or 226 6747 ex.36.

Stop the frame-up of the Newham 8

By Chris Guthrie

ON FRIDAY 5 November hundreds of school and college students went on strike to protest against the lack of action over growing racist attacks and against police harassment.

Over 300 of them, mostly Asians, picketed West Ham Magistrates Court where 8 Asian youth were appearing on a series of serious charges including the possession of offensive weapons and actual bodily harm to a policeman.

The 'Newham 8' were arrested after being attacked by plain clothes police after a series of racist attacks in Newham schools in which Asian youths defended themselves.

Since the arrest of the Newham 8 police and authority harassment of Asian people has increased. Two of the 8 and a friend have been held illegally in Forest Gate

police station on suspicion of a minor theft. One was in the police station for nearly 2 days before anyone knew where he was.

The response to the school strike has been equally vicious. Asian kids at one school were threatened with expulsion if they struck. On the day of the strike school gates were locked after the

youth had gone into school and there was a police presence at the schools that had been attacked by the racists.

The Newham 8 have got local trades union and Labour Party support — with trade unionists, councillors, MPs and prospective MPs attending the recent public meeting which attracted 250 people. However the local NUT Executive overwhelmingly voted not to support the Newham 8, and in particular the school strike.

For the Newham 8 campaign to be successful national support is vital.

Messages of support and donations should be sent to the Newham 8 Defence Campaign, 285 Romford Road, London E7.

Privatisation — a lousy deal for workers and users

By Ann Fiander, a member of London City branch of the POEU.

'PRIVATISING British Telecommunications will only put the finishing touches on the government's plan to turn telecoms over to private capital' says the Counter Information Services report.

The 'Queen's Speech' which put privatisation near top of the list of the Tory government priorities, should they intend to give the benefits to private capital and the consumers and workers will come a poor second.

Investors can look forward to a bonanza from the huge profits that will come out of the merger of computer and microchip technologies in telecoms.

The CIS Report shows how the government, in tandem with management is setting about to smash the unions and how their policies are geared towards divide and rule.

When the post was split from telecoms the Post Office Engineering

Union gave this their approval, but it was opposed by the Union of Communication Workers.

The right-wing dominated NEC of the POEU justified this on the grounds that telecoms would be more profitable and therefore it would be better for its members if it split from the postal service.

The Tories are interested in the profitable bits of public services, but their interest lies in how

they and their friends can cash in, and the public can finish up with the parts that do not pay off.

Now the axe has started to swing in the postal side. Speed up and job losses are hitting the workforce organised by the UCW. Even in the telecoms the UCW members are being hit by the way the Tories use new technology. The 29,000 telephonists — most of them women — are threatened with a total job loss in the next ten years.

The POEU is slowly waking up to the fact that profitability does not mean more secure jobs and a better service. George Jefferson, British Telecom's managing director is making clear

that to get profitability 15,000 jobs must go and in time 45,000 jobs will have to disappear.

The competition has meant that 60,000 business extensions have been lost since the British Telecoms monopoly was broken so that competitors could supply phones and other equipment, residential rates have shot up by 50 percent.

The results of all this has been big business has got a hand out from public funds of £56 millions. There has been a serious decline in British Telecom's business, showing in the 11 percent drop in the demand for new telephone lines. At the same time management is putting plans into practice

to raise productivity by 25 per cent.

The CIS Report spells out why privatisation will mean the end of a national telephone service which serves the whole community. It also shows why privatisation has become so attractive explaining that now adequate new technology can change the nature of the industry and lead to record profit levels.

The Report also shows how the government intends to get its way by breaking down the national bargaining structure built up by the POEU and replacing it with local bargaining based on the newly organised profit centres.

The great strength of the CIS Report is its information and its explanation of what Jefferson and the rest of management are up to in telecoms. In that sense it does a real service to both POEU members and the rest of the public.

The Report is however pessimistic about what can be done. It tables the misleadership of the POEU executive over the last few years and is quite rightly very critical of their role. However, it does not point out that the workforce are in a strong position to fight back, and are also willing and ready to do this.

The fight against privatisation in telecoms means a fight to replace

the present right-wing leadership of the POEU. It means replacing that leadership with one that is prepared to campaign for industrial action in the POEU and also makes every attempt to build solidarity with other trade unionists.

The whole labour movement — the unions and the Labour Party — has to resist the threat of privatisation which will lead to bigger profits for private capital, job losses for the workers, and a decline and growing expense of services for the users.

The CIS Report can be widely used in the labour movement to build such a resistance and in that sense we owe it a big debt.

'The power of sound'

An interview with Frankie Armstrong

FRANKIE ARMSTRONG, perhaps best known on the Left for her campaigning against White and Corrie's anti-abortion bills, and for her benefits for NAC and Anwar Ditta, has been a singer since 1957. She is particularly interested in anti-war songs and in songs which reflect women's experiences and has been singing these songs with Leon Rosselson and Roy Bailey all over Britain and the USA during the past year. She talks here to *Jenny Flintoft* about how she sees music and politics.

What are you doing at the moment?

Leon, Roy and I have just made recordings for 2 new records. One is Brecht material, the other is a mixture, with songs like 'The Millworker's Song', 'The Jute Mill Song' and feminist songs. And then there is one song nobody's done before — a poem by David Craig, the Marxist poet and critic, about people trying to wrest a living from the soil in harsh conditions; it shows that great poetry can also be direct and powerful, and accessible.

We're also doing CND concerts, with the 'No Cause For Alarm' show. This started off primarily as an anti nuclear power show, but then when CND took off, we made it more anti-war.

We attack militarism, authority, the attitude that life is simply expendable in the interest of profits and power. We feel it's still important to oppose nuclear power, as the same mentality underlies to two, and in any case there's the Sizewell enquiry coming up — the enquiry into the

PWR-type reactor, the kind that almost blew up Three Mile Island. Because of course the government wants to build 10 more of these.

And you're also doing a show called 'Love, Loneliness and Laundry'?

Yes, it's about love, marriage and sexual politics. And Roy and I are doing some work with school children in Belgium, also around sexual politics, and the anti-nuclear/anti-war theme as well.

I'd like to know something about the voice workshops you do, too.

The idea of them is to help people to free their voices — this is an extremely liberating thing.

Do you see this as particularly valuable to women?

Yes! The constraints on the way women use their voices are much greater than for men. The voices of many women are high



Frankie Armstrong

and tight — they're afraid to let go. Or else they're striving after prettiness. I want women to realise their voices can have authority and power. Many women are afraid of making an uninhibited loud noise — it isn't 'pretty', it isn't 'feminine' to shout and make a loud

noise. I want women to realise the strength, the aliveness, the power of sound.

The capitalist system has reduced people's sense of being at the centre of their own lives — they are acted upon, they aren't actors in their own lives. People need to feel a sense

of self-worth, or they won't bother to challenge external structures.

Not only will they not feel strong enough, they won't think it really matters that much. So they won't strive for a better society.

And the collective singing we do is important —

you feel truly yourself, but you're not on your own and you're not ego-tripping or competing. Singing shouldn't be a 'look at me' ego-trip.

I love listening to some of the old traditional singers. Their songs get their power from passing through the voices of millions. The singer is a vehicle for the song. I believe one's voice is like land, morally you don't own it — it belongs to everybody.

Do you see pop music as primarily a capitalist product?

Yes, I do, although of course some artists have transcended this. And of course folk music isn't free of it. But I love going to some folk clubs where there is a genuine respect for the material and the people who sing it, even if they aren't absolutely polished performers.

Unfortunately the sexism in many folk clubs alienates women, especially younger women.

I'm glad I can reach younger women at the CND concerts. And older women too — the over 50's don't go to folk clubs much. I'm also glad that some folk clubs — especially outside London — have been revitalised by being linked with CND. The same people are involved in both. It means that the clubs are attracting a new, more politicised

audience.

How do you see the role of folk music in struggle?

Well, I don't think singers and musicians are going to make the revolution, although music can help to change ideas.

What I would really like to say is that through my involvement in the women's movement, and doing voice workshops, I've become aware that the whole way of thinking about change in our society is very male-dominated.

I don't want us to lose touch with the insights, born of women's experience, into the power of people's inner resources and strength. This is linked with the importance of feeling as well as theorising.

It's possible to be just so active and busy you lose touch with your feelings. In political action, head and heart must be integrated. Theory is important, but it must be based on experience, rooted in life as it is lived.

Records by Frankie: *Lovely on the Water (Topic) Songs and Ballads (Topic) Out of Love, Hope and Suffering (Bay) and the Music Plays so Grand (Silence) My song is My Own (with Kathy Henderson, Sandra Kerr, Alison McMorland) a record of women's songs (Plane Label) Nuclear Power No Thanks (with Leon, Roy and others) (Plane Label).*

'Fela Fela this bitch of a life' by Carlos Moore

By Phil Waterhouse

THE BOOK IS DESCRIBED as the first ever biography of Fela Kuti, the Nigerian musician and political dissident. In fact it is a transcription of extensive interviews with Fela, his musician colleagues, and each of his fifteen wives.

As a serious biography of an important political and cultural figure in contemporary Africa it is not a successful book. The book is worthwhile, however, as it introduces this extraordinary individual and his music move widely to a British audience.

Where Fela is known in Europe it is primarily through his music, though this side of his life cannot be divorced from his wider political activities and opinions.

The close attention paid to him by the Nigerian authorities over the last dozen years, and his subsequent reputation as a dissident, bears witness to this fact.

His own assessment of his role is: 'my aim is to use my music to awaken people to the higher quality of life that should be theirs; to fight back the monster of war, oppression and racism with a new revolutionary outlook'.

That these are not merely the hyperbole of a radical-chic musician can be seen from a brief outline of his career since 1970.

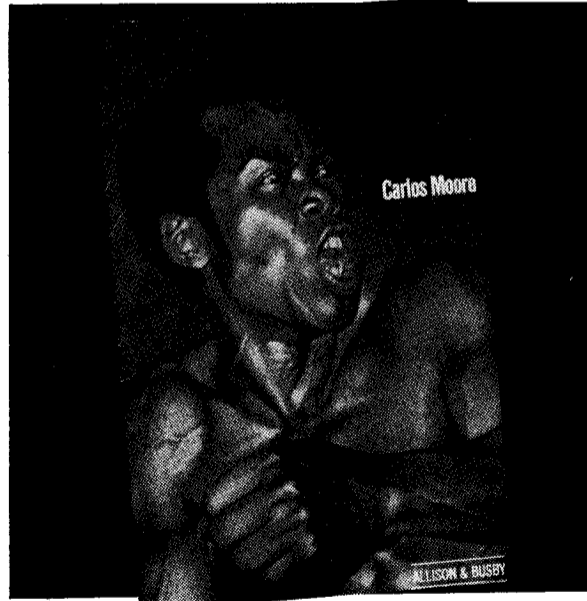
In that year he became politicised in the USA as

the result of a friendship with a member of the Black Panther Party, and his exposure to the ideas of Malcolm X. He returned to Nigeria to put into practise his new ideology of Pan-Africanism or Blackism.

Through his music, on record and at his own club, he set out to denounce the 'colonial mentality', all the 'shit and corruption' of successive Nigerian governments, of their role as political and cultural stooges of imperialism.

His home, named the Kalakuta Republic, became open-house for all Africans escaping persecution.

The still-running battle between Fela and the Nigerian state commenced. Since 1970 he has been arrested and tried for drug offences, for abduction of the women living with him, for rebellion,



sedition and armed robbery. His home has been constantly raided, and in 1977 attacked by the army and burned to the ground. The residents were severely beaten and raped. The injuries inflicted on his mother in the raid resulted in her death shortly afterwards.

This repression was countered politically, through his own newspapers and youth organisation (the Young African Pioneers), through the courts (acquitted on all charges) and through his music. His LPs are a catalogue of his fight with the state, ('Kalakuta Show', 'Coffin for Head of State', 'Sorrow Tears and Blood') and a vivid denunciation of the crimes of neo-colonial government in Nigeria

('International Thief ITT', 'Upside Down', 'Colonial Mentality', 'Black President').

It was his opposition to the government organised festival FESTAC in 1977, which led directly to the brutal army assault on his home. In front of 60,000 people attending this festival in Nigeria Fela denounced it as a sham in which the 'cultures of Nigerian people were being treated trivially', which failed to involve the 'participation of the people'...

The struggle goes on today. The Kalakuta Republic exists still in the poorest section of Lagos, and is a haven for all African dissidents, and still a constant irritant to the Nigerian state. He now plans to run for President in the next election.

An extremely negative side of Fela's philosophy is his attitude to women. In the name of rejecting western cultural and religious values he has embraced polygamy. He upholds the supposed traditional African female virtues of passiveness, obedience and submissiveness against modern European ideas; being against women who refuse to cook, and who insist on eating at the same table as men.

The great irony here is that his mother was the pioneer of the Nigerian women's movement, and a leading figure in pre-independence Nigeria.

Fela may or may not be Africa's leading musician but he must surely qualify as one of its leading chauvinist pigs.

As for the music itself. Perhaps it is best described as an amalgam of the various styles of the African diaspora, from jazz to soul; but its heart-beat is pure Africa. Modern African music is slowly becoming popular in Britain and Fela's recordings are more readily available. His position at the very forefront of this process is unassailed.

Read the book if you want to, listen to the music. The music is marvellous. This bard is something else: 'an extraordinarily well-oiled, well-groomed, precise and devastating "war-machine", dedicated to fighting war with music.'

Fela Fela this bitch of a life, published by Allison and Busby, £4.95 pbk.

Abortion — steps forward in France and Portugal

By Penny Duggan

THE Mitterrand government in France has been forced to take steps towards fulfilling its promises to women. Before it was elected, and recently as 8 March this year, the Socialist Party promised to reimburse the cost of abortions. But in August members of the government began to backtrack — giving both the economic difficulties and 'respect for the religiously committed' as its reasons.

A national demonstration demanding fulfilment of this promise was then called for 23 October by many women's organisations, supported by political groups and some local sections of the trade union movement.

Just two days before the demonstration the government announced that it would introduce legislation before the end of the parliamentary session to give sixty per cent reimbursement of the cost of abortions, which totals between 800 and 1,000 francs — £70 to £80.

This is an undoubted step forward. However the abortion law in France remains restrictive — abortions are only allowable in certain conditions up to ten weeks — hardly enough time to find out that you are pregnant. Neither will this new concession apply at all to young women, or immigrants who are not entitled to social security.

The government will

also be paying for these reimbursements — which still leave the individual women paying about £30 — through a special fund. They will not be paid from the central social security funds because it is considered that those who do not agree with abortion should not have to pay for it through their social security contributions.

Thus, French women must still be ready to fight to achieve the aim of abortion being treated like any other medical operation.

In Portugal, for the first time in history, the parliament is being asked to vote on a law to legalise abortion. This bill has been presented by the Communist Party to replace the present law which does not allow abortion under any circumstances, and carries sentences of between two and eight years in prison. As a result it is estimated that 200,000 backstreet abortions take place each year, causing 2,000 deaths.

The bill is supported by most women's organisations, trade unions and left political parties. Although it does not guarantee women's right to choose it would represent a big step forward for women in Portugal.

The bill will come up on 11 November. Portuguese women ask all those who support them to send telegrams of support to: Presidente da Assembleia da Republica, Palacio de Sao Bento, Lisboa, Portugal with copies to: Campanha Nacional pelo Aborto e Contracepcao, Rua do Paraíso 217-3-Sala 6, 4000 Portp, Portugal.

Socialist Challenge

Mines - no closures

THE COAL BOARD intends to close 95 pits in the next five years. This revelation, forced on the Coal Board by miners' union leader Arthur Scargill, is a total justification of the call for all-out strike on the linked question of pay and closures defeated in the miners' ballot last week. The Board's hit list contained in documents submitted to the Monopolies Commission accounts for a wacking 46 per cent of the 207 pits.

Top of the Board's list is the Snowdon colliery in Kent followed by Kinnail in Scotland. According to the Board, these are amongst those pits which produce 12 per cent of total capacity at a 'loss' of £250m. Such losses could be compared with the £341m paid out by the NCB in interest repayments alone last year.

Yet thousands of miners and their families are to be thrown on the scrap heap when the real

reason for the 'loss' is the total lack of investment in such pits. Both in Snowdon and Kinnail, the union has drawn up plans which reveal exploitable reserves which would last into the next century.

In all the threatened areas, miners are prepared to fight to prevent closures. A national ballot on the closure issue would now undoubtedly back a fight. In any event, it is extremely unlikely that any miner would cross the line

of any flying picket sent out from any one of the pits individually threatened.

The Board have tried to play down the significance of their hit list. But the smooth words of NCB chairperson Norman Siddall have to be weighed in light of the fact that after these documents had been drawn up, he gave an explicit denial in a meeting with the NUM on 24 April that anything of the sort existed.

Clearly, defence of miners' jobs cries out for a plan for expansion. This requires a rational energy policy and a reversal of Tory reliance on nuclear power. Part of the battle to ensure victory must be the development of such a plan by the NUM and committing the next Labour government to it.



Kent miners picketing the NCB against threats to Snowdon colliery

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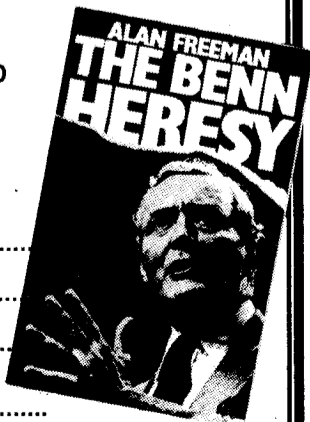
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FUND DRIVE '82

Howe's trousers — new revelations

LAST WEEK a 'thief' stole Chancellor Geoffrey Howe's trousers — from his overnight train compartment during his trip from Manchester to London. Later his trousers were found on the track, but the £100 in them was missing.

We can exclusively reveal that both the growing band of Socialist Challenge supporters who work on the railways, and our supporters in the red fortress of Manchester, have disclaimed responsibility — although we did get an anonymous £100 in the post with a Euston postmark.

But the whole episode reveals the lies and hypocrisy of the Tories.

First, the police put out the lie that Howe's £100 was stolen by a 'professional thief' — an obvious lie. Anyone not completely befuddled by the media's lies will recognise the work of a valiant anti-Tory fighter when they see it.

This action was obviously designed to reveal the fact that Geoffrey Howe, eagerly taking money off the pensioners and claimants, regularly walks about with £100 in his pocket — and that doesn't include what's in his jacket.

For Tory ministers the odd hundred quid here or there doesn't matter — it hardly buys a good dinner at Mirabelle's nowadays. But for the hospital workers, the pensioners and the unemployed £100 is a fortune. And for Socialist Challenge.

Like the valiant anti-Tory fighter we plan to rob the rich to gibe to the poor. Only ours is not a one-off plan — we intend to do it for keeps. To do that we need money. So if any of our readers have by

chance found the odd wallet around on a railway track — you know what to do with the contents.

Our thanks to:

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Blanco-White	40.00
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Lomax	6.00
Bristol	58.00
Hackney	104.50
Total	£1961.64
Total so far	£5726.21

