

Socialist Organiser

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ALL OUT FOR MAY 14th

'THE only incentive to trade unionists this Budget provides is to give massive support to the TUC Day of Action on May 14th' was Len Murray's response to the Tories' soak-the-poor package.

Unfortunately the TUC is not calling for a General Strike on May 14th to protest against government policies. Still less is it campaigning for industrial action to bring down the Tories. It is leaving the decision to individual unions as to whether they will strike, march or merely observe a minute's silence to mark the smashing of the welfare state.

But several unions have taken a militant line. The GMWU is urging its members to strike on May 14th for the whole day or part of the day. SOGAT, the main print union, is calling for strike action which will shut down virtually the whole print industry.

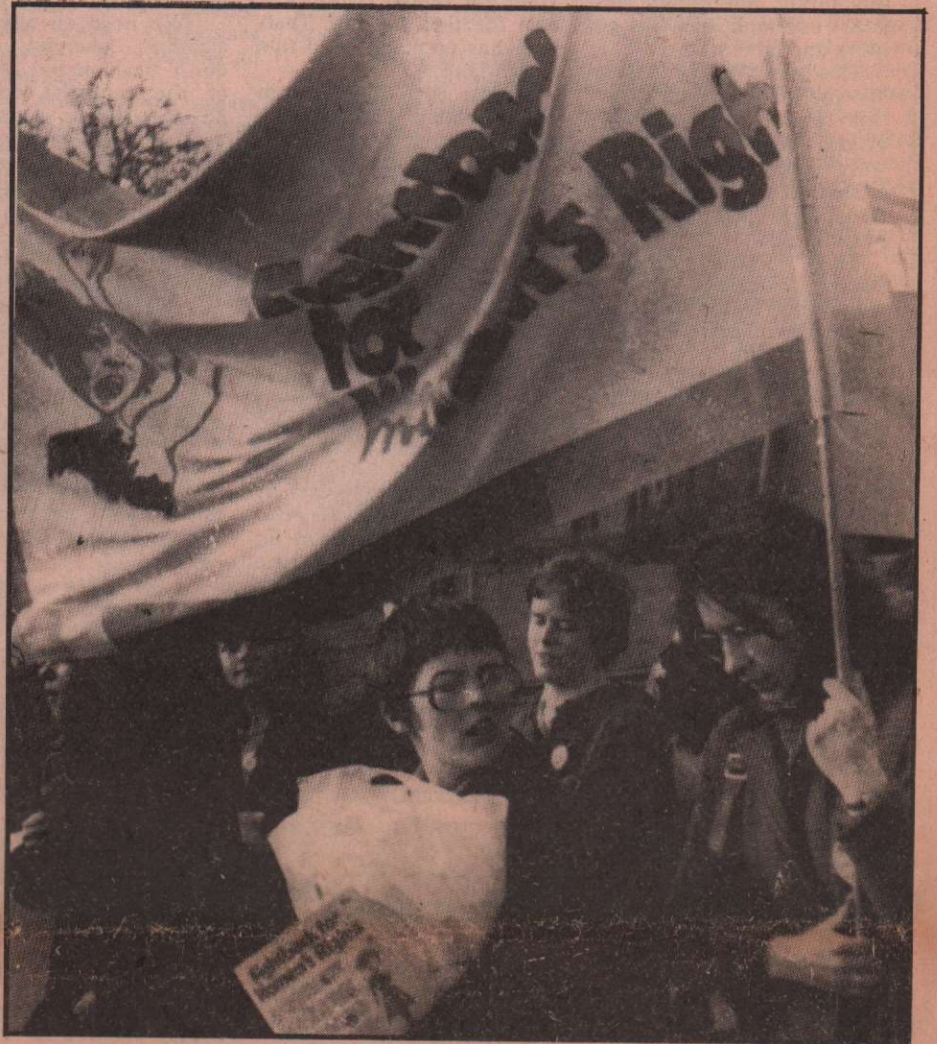
NUPE is calling all its members out — except those working in emergency services. The NUR was one of the first to call on the TUC to make it a one-day General Strike.

Kent miners will also strike for the day. Many workplaces have decided to strike for the day, even where unions have given no clear call.

Every worker should strike on May 14th. That strike and the day's marches and rallies should serve notice on the Tories that we are not going to wait another four years till we kick the Tories out.

The strike call should be discussed in every union branch and workplace. Every Trades Council must make mobilising for May 14th a top priority.

Every Labour Party should combine with local unions to give the strike call maximum publicity and strength, and the Labour Party NEC should be flooded with resolutions insisting that it give full support to the call for a General Strike on May 14th.



FIGHTBACK for Women's Rights, a new women's political campaign initiated by Socialist Organiser, got off to a resounding start at a conference on March 22 attended by nearly 500 women. First plans are for a big

women's mobilisation for May 14th, in which women will be saying to the labour movement: 'this is our movement — fight for our rights'. See conference report, centre pages.

Photo: Nik Barstow

Labour must back the strike

by COLIN FOSTER

PRESCRIPTION charges at £1. That is the starkest expression of the Tory assault on welfare services.

And what is Labour's leadership doing about it?

Nothing much. They are not going out to back the unions' May 14 strike call. And as Socialist Organiser goes to press, James Callaghan is putting pressure on the National Executive to call off the special Labour Party conference on fighting the Tory cuts which was provisionally scheduled for May 31st. Callaghan fears that the conference, organised on the initiative of the TGWU, could swing too far to the left.

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The Labour right-wing and Centre used to tell left-wing socialists that they had a safer, surer, more democratic road to socialist goals. Expanded welfare services would gradually transform capitalism into socialism.

But now Neil Kinnock — who still claims to be a left-winger — is announcing on

behalf of the Labour front-bench that a new Labour government will not necessarily restore the cuts. Roy Hattersley has been trying to make sure that Labour councils do not defy the Tories.

Today's 'social democrats' are not even committed to the defence of existing services, let alone to steady expansion.

Callaghan, Healey and the Shadow Cabinet have not done anything to assist

the strikes and demonstrations against the cuts. And they have not even fought the Tories in Parliament. They did not force a vote on the Budget as a whole. Instead of angry denunciation and Parliamentary ob-

struction of the sort some MPs organised against the Corrie Bill, they have provided... 'loyal opposition'.

For Callaghan, fighting the Tories is much less important than avoiding fierce class struggle now and avoiding left-wing commitments for a future Labour government.

The real explanation of the Labour leadership's no-fight line is that they have, and always have had, not a surer or more cautious road to socialist goals, but different goals.

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Their goal, at best, is to get an improved deal for workers within capitalism. When capitalism is in crisis, that means the crisis must be looked after — at the expense of the working class — and the improvements postponed.

So they introduced and maintained prescription charges too. They made sweeping cuts too, on the orders of the IMF. They paved the way for the Tory cuts. No wonder they won't fight them.

Labour and trade union activists need to fight the

cuts, despite our leadership. If the leaders won't lead, the rank and file must — and the rank and file must get rid of the old leaders and find new ones who will fight.

It is not an issue now of distant political perspectives, but of stopping the destruction of welfare services which the right-wing leaders themselves claim as the greatest gain of the British labour movement.

We must force Labour councils to defy the Tories, and build a mass movement to back the defiance. We must demand that the labour movement at all levels breaks collaboration with the Tories and starts an offensive. CLPs should join forces with trade unions to organise a General Strike on May 14, and demand the National Executive gives active backing.

The special conference could be a chance to call the leadership to account and rally support for a fight. CLPs and trade union branches should slam in resolutions demanding the conference takes place and allows a full discussion with motions from affiliated organisations.



Steel strikers in Sheerness. When workers move against the steel bosses or the cuts, Callaghan is always looking in the other direction.

Photo: Nik Barstow

SCOTTISH LABOUR CONFERENCE

From anger to action?

by GORDON BREWER

IT'S BEEN a bad month for *The Scotsman*. Since the devolution referendum last year, its staple diet has got more and more watery.

The march to the Assembly site in Edinburgh earlier this month was a paltry affair. And roving hacks were even sent down to Wales to revive the Welsh Assembly, for a centre-piece spread.

The Scottish Labour Party Conference gave it something better to go on. By a large majority, the delegates passed a resolution which "reaffirms the commitment to a Scottish Assembly with meaningful powers over the economy of Scotland."

The reference to "reaffirming commitment" is not entirely accurate. In fact, the SLP has never before been committed to an Assembly, with economic powers. It took several heart attacks at Transport House and a special conference to get them in favour even of an anaemic form of devolution, contained in last year's Bill.

So why the change of heart? The argument was most clearly stated by Denis Canavan MP.

Most Scottish people voted for Labour in the General Election, he said. Thatcher has no mandate to rule in Scotland.

So we have the right to an Assembly, and then we could really stop her implementing the government's policies.

But, given there is no way that the Tories are going to set up an Assembly, Canavan's speech was really meaningless rhetoric. It offered consolation instead of plans for a fightback against the Tories.

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It was a similar story in the cuts debate.

A resolution proposed by Pollock CLP and seconded by Lothian BLP argued for a real fight to stop the Tories. Instead of using rate rises as a way round the cuts, councils should base themselves on union mobilisation to prevent the Tories moving against councillors who take a stand in defence of services.

"Lothian Region were

forced to put up the rates this year", said Neil Lindsay, seconding the motion. "But I shudder to think what the rise would have to be next year.

"We need an alternative strategy, whereby workers don't have to pay the cost of the capitalist crisis. If all the Labour councils in Scotland implemented deficit budgeting, we could then confront and bring down the government."

Replying for the Scottish executive, Charlotte Haddow called support for another resolution which proposed no action against the Tories whatsoever. "No local authority ever has, or can, operate like this", she said. "The [Pollock and Lothian] resolution isn't practical and isn't possible... we cannot ask people to risk legal implications, which can hit working people and their families."

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Debate on Party democracy was non-existent. The main composite contained criticism of the union block vote and was remitted after the unions said they would move against it.

Conference did accept a motion on Gay Rights, moved by Ian Dunn from North Edinburgh CLP. The motion demanded an end to the legal and police harassment of homosexuals.

Speaking on this, and on the motions on women's oppression, Jamie Buchan, from the Executive, argued that "to fight discrimination is the heart of being a socialist, and we expect all members of the Labour Party to play a part in the fight against all forms of discrimination."

Despite all the anger against the Tories, the Conference resulted in no specific proposals for action, no attempt to turn outwards, or to gear Labour Parties into the struggles against the Tories going on in the localities.

If the best the Scottish conference can do, faced with a mounting industrial movement, is to flog yet again the dead horse of devolution, it remains up to the activists in the constituencies to take up the real fight against the Tories, a fight which can spill out from the resolutions on to the streets.

Where we stand

SOCIALIST ORGANISER is the paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, an alliance of Labour and trade union activists sponsored by six Constituency Labour Parties, four Trades Councils, and several trade union branches and LPYS: We aim to build a class-struggle left-wing in the Labour Party and trade unions based on a revolutionary socialist platform.

- ★ Organise the left to beat back the Tories' attacks! No to attacks on union rights; defend the picket-line; no state interference in our unions!
- ★ No to any wage cuts. Labour must support all struggles for better living standards and conditions!
- ★ Wage rises should at the very least keep up with price increases. The same should go for state benefits, grants and pensions.
- ★ Start improving the social services rather than cutting them. Stop cutting jobs in the public sector.
- ★ End unemployment. Cut hours not jobs — snare the work with no loss of pay. Start now with a 35-hour week and end to overtime.
- ★ All firms threatening closure should be nationalised under workers' control.
- ★ Make the bosses pay, not the working class. Millions for hospitals, not a penny for 'defence'! Nationalise the banks and financial institutions without compensation. End the interest burden on council housing and other public services.
- ★ Freeze rents and rates.
- ★ Scrap all immigration controls. Race is not a problem; racism is. The labour movement must mobilise to drive the fascists off the streets.
- ★ Purge racists from positions in the labour movement. Organise full support for black self-defence.
- ★ The capitalist police are an enemy for the working class. Support all demands to weaken them as the bosses' striking force: dissolution of special squads (SPG, Special Branch, MIS, etc.), public accountability, etc.
- ★ Free abortion and contraception on demand. Women's equal right to work, and full equality for women.
- ★ Against attacks on gays by the State: abolish all laws which discriminate against lesbians and gay men; for the right of the gay community to organise and to affirm their stance publicly.
- ★ The Irish people — as a whole — should have the right to determine their own future. Get the British troops out now! Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Political status for Irish Republican prisoners as a matter of urgency.
- ★ The black working people of South Africa and of Zimbabwe should get full support from the British labour movement for their strikes, struggles, and armed combat against the white supremacist regimes. South African goods and services should be blacked.
- ★ It is essential to achieve the fullest democracy in the labour movement. Automatic reselection of MPs during each parliament, and the election by annual conference of party leaders. Annual election of all trade union officials, who should be paid the average for the trade.
- ★ The chaos, waste, human suffering and misery of capitalism now — in Britain and throughout the world — show the urgent need to establish rational, democratic, human control over the economy, to make the decisive sectors of industry social property, under workers' control. The strength of the labour movement lies in the rank and file. Our perspective must be working class action to raze the capitalist system down to its foundations, and to put a working class socialist system in its place — rather than having our representatives run the system and waiting for the crumbs from the table of the bankers and bosses.

SCLV News

Bristol debates Afghanistan

ON Thursday 27th March Bristol West Labour Party debated the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Ian Hollingworth reports:

"I moved a resolution which condemned the hypocritical outcry against the invasion by Carter and Thatcher. 'This outcry', the resolution said, 'is not motivated by genuine concern for the Afghan people, but by fear that Russia should be able to extend its sphere of influence without prior approval of the West.'

"The resolution went on to condemn the role of the US and Britain in Vietnam, Zimbabwe and Ireland, and their new arms build-up. Then, rejecting the notion that a progressive social system can be imposed on people by force, the resolution called for the withdrawal of Russian troops.

"The resolution was defeated by 23 votes to 29, with 6 abstentions. The opposition argued that there are times when progressive regimes can be imposed quite rightly by force, that the invasion was a response to a plea to 'defend the revolution', and that if Russia withdraws, then imperialism will triumph (this last one from Militant supporters).

"These arguments — biased towards Stalinism, in my view — were coupled with queries as to whether the British military presence in Zimbabwe and in Ireland is really oppressive."

Action planned on Ireland

THE Labour Committee on Ireland's conference on March 29th drew about 100 people, including representatives from 43 Constituency Labour Parties.

Amendments were carried to the statement of aims calling for troops out now,

political status for Republican prisoners and the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

There was some disagreement on these amendments and on the nature of the campaign.

We're we to act simply as a pressure group in the Labour Party, by seeing resolutions for annual conference as the major task of the next few months, or were we to take up campaigns in the labour movement on H-blocks, and the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

On the whole, the campaigning orientation was agreed, though proposals for specific action were not fully discussed as they had been left to the end of the conference.

A Steering Committee was elected with representation from outside London.

For copies of the LCI draft model resolution for your June Labour Party meeting, contact 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

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SO supporters are also active in Durham, Glasgow, Sunderland, and other areas: contact the central SO address.

Please send updates and additions for this contact list to SO, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

Sheffield newsletter

The Sheffield Socialist Organiser group has started a monthly newsletter. The first issue — March 1980 — contains pieces on the cuts, local elections, Women's Fightback, the steel strike, and the anti-Militant witch hunt.

Our sponsors

Socialist Organiser is published by the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory. The SCLV's sponsors include:

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Boilermakers' Amalgamation,
Basingstoke branch
ACTSS, 6/522 branch
Royal Free Hospital shop stewards' committee,
and many activists in a personal capacity.

Printed by Anvil Press (TU).

The rich must get richer

KEEP BRITAIN TORY

All profits from the sale of these postcards, produced by a group in Lambeth Central CLP, go to the Party's cuts campaign.

There are two other designs, "A healthy economy needs more unemployment", and "Forward to the 1930s". Twelve for £1, including post and packing, from 'Rhinceros', Lambeth Central CLP, c/o 22c Ferndale Rd, London SW4.

Five ways to help 'SO'

The response to our appeal last month for money to keep Socialist Organiser going has so far been very slow. But prices, and our costs, are rising very fast!

We will be producing leaflets for May 14. Like the leaflets we produced for March 9, they will cost a lot of money, on top of the regular expenses of producing the paper.

You can help by:

- Taking out a SO supporter's card, if you do not yet have one. [Contact your local SO group].
- Getting your union branch or CLP to affiliate and send a donation.
- Getting your union branch or CLP to publish May Day greetings in SO.
- Taking a collection for SO in your union branch or CLP.
- Sending an individual donation.

All contributions to: SO, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

MAY DAY 1980: SEND GREETINGS IN



Rates: one-eighth page £10
One-sixteenth page £5
2 col. inches (40 words max.) £2
1 col inch (20 words max.) £1
Send copy to Socialist Organiser, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16, to arrive before Monday 28th April.

WOMEN'S PICKET BOOSTS ARMAGH JAIL MORALE

A MESSAGE from Republican women prisoners, smuggled out of Armagh jail, reports that the 500-strong picket on International Women's Day (March 8th) was "a great morale-booster". The pickets' shouts and cheers were heard by most of the thirty-odd women protesting for political status, and the sounds of the women banging their cell doors reached the picket.

Relatives and friends of women inside were joined by 150 women from England, and some from France, Italy and Norway. They were addressed by two ex-Armagh prisoners, and by an ex-blanket protestor, who told them that "the H-block men, on hearing of the Armagh protest, find it a great inspiration in their own fight".

Women sentenced for alleged offences since March 1st 1976 have been denied political status. As women prisoners (in England as well) are permitted to wear their own clothes, they did not have to resort to the blan-

ket protest of H-block men, who were denied all clothing when they refused to wear prison uniform.

But on February 7th this year, 40 male warders in riot gear invaded the cells, beat up the women prisoners, and destroyed or confiscated all personal property. Since then, they have had no clean clothes, and have been subject to 23-hour lockup, in an attempt to break their resistance to criminal status. They are allowed out of their cells for only 1 hours exercise each day, and to collect their meals. Relatives on monthly visits are harassed.

When the lockup started, not all the cells were provided with chamber-pots, and warders refused to bring round slop-out buckets, condemning women to conditions approaching those in H-block.

One woman writes: "Our cells are covered with urine and excreta. When our chamber-pots were full, we used to be able to empty them out of the window, but now the windows have been boarded up. Little air circulates in the cells. The

stench is overwhelming."

Women are not allowed access to toilets or washing facilities, and the rationing of sanitary towels to 2 per day is another deliberately degrading measure which altogether exposes women to considerable health risks.

The prison doctor, Dr Coles, is notoriously brutal in his treatment - or lack of it. One woman, who between spells of imprisonment has undergone emergency surgery for a perforated duodenal ulcer, is refused the special diet she needs, and was told to "go to hell". Another, whose weight has dropped nearly 3 stone to little over 6 stone, and who suffers from constant vomiting and dizziness, is still certified 'fit to work'.

The attempt to force these women to accept criminal status, as in H-block, is so far failing, as the women maintain their determination and solidarity. They need solidarity and more from outside.

Political status now!

MANDY WILLIAMS

FREE ZADROZYSKI!

by Andrew Hornung [Hackney North CLP]

"IT IS 25 years now since Stalin was kicked out of the mausoleum, but the ideas of his system are still about", said former Polish shipyard strike leader Edmund Baluka at a meeting in London on March 28th.

The 50-strong meeting followed a picket at the Polish Embassy demanding the release of Edmund Zadrozynski, a Polish campaigner for free trade unions. Zadrozynski was condemned to three years' jail on March 14th, on trumped-up charges of burglary. He is appealing, but may get a further sentence on other similar charges.

Baluka told the meeting

that he had recently phoned Warsaw. There are widespread arrests of oppositionists. Sometimes they are arrested, held for 48 hours without being charged, and then immediately rearrested for another 48 hours after being released.

Robotnik, the opposition magazine on which Zadrozynski used to work as an editor, cannot appear because its editors are in jail.

The bureaucratic regime tried to use Zadrozynski's case as a show trial - to present the opposition as "bandits and gangsters", said Edmund Baluka. But it has not come off. The courtroom heard Zadrozynski's son withdrawing his evidence against his father and telling the prosecutor, "It was you who told me that if I denounced my father I

would go free".

Citing the cases of the Russian miner Vladimir Klebanov, the Charter 77 prisoners in Czechoslovakia (Anna Sabata, Petr Uhl, Vaclav Havel and others), and the H-Block prisoners in Ireland, Baluka called on socialists to unite forces against repression and "against the unholy alliance between the Eastern bureaucracy and Western capitalism".

Stephen Corbishley, a supporter of *Socialist Organiser* and of *Workers' Action*, also spoke at the meeting. He called for a campaign to break British trade unions' links with the police-state official 'unions' of the USSR and Eastern Europe, and to rally their support behind the fight for free and independent trade unions.

Scottish Labour debates Troops Out Now

by GORDON BREWER

BETWEEN 50 and 60 people attended a fringe meeting on Ireland at the Scottish Labour Party Conference sponsored by Edinburgh Central CLP.

The meeting was organised as a result of discussion in the CLP on a document produced by Edinburgh Central Young Socialists, arguing the case for Troops Out Now.

maintain their grip on Ireland as a whole.

Another *SO* supporter, from the YS, Gordon Brewer, spoke on the situation in Ireland today. The central problem, he said, is the very existence of the Orange State.

Any political solution for Ireland which ignores the question of the border is bound to fail.

And so those who argue for abstract 'workers' unity' while refusing to take sides in the national struggle are as irrelevant as the liberals

an issue in the workers' movement. And given the history of the British involvement, the only remaining and as yet untried solution seems to be for Britain to get out.

Speakers from the floor took up various arguments on the nature of the Northern state. One comrade argued that Northern Ireland is culturally part of the United Kingdom and should be totally integrated into the British political structure.

Tom O'Donnell from Perth Labour Party took up this idea. "Suppose the whites in Zimbabwe reacted to the Rhodesian elections by building a wall around Salisbury and then claiming they had the right to seize that part of Zimbabwe for their own. We would not be fooled for a minutes.

"It is the same in Ireland. There can be no solution until the artificial state is destroyed".

Supporters of *Militant* got little backing for their rather cheap attempt to cash in on anti-IRA feeling for their line of "workers' unity against the sectarians on both sides".

Gordon Brewer explained the attitude which socialists in Britain must take to the IRA. We unconditionally support them in their struggle against the British forces. On that basis alone can we earn the right to criticise their political programme, with which we have profound disagreements.

To support the right of Ireland to self-determination does not mean to be Irish nationalists ourselves. The only people on the left who seem incapable of grasping that, said Brewer, are the supposed Marxists of the *Militant*.

In conclusion the Edinburgh Central comrades raised the idea of a Scottish labour movement conference on Ireland, and as a first step they suggested that Labour Parties get speakers from the YS on its document.

For speakers contact Edinburgh Central YS, William Graham Memorial Hall, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh.



Tam Dalyell from the Parliamentary Labour Party spoke at the CLP and suggested a fringe meeting at the conference, with the authors of the document speaking.

Callum McRae, a *Socialist Organiser* supporter from Edinburgh Central, outlined the history of Ireland since Cromwell's conquest in the 17th century. The lesson, he argued, is that the British have never been a benevolent power, keeping apart two sides in a sectarian conflict.

The British ruling class colonised Ireland, with an eye to nobody's interests but their own. They fostered and used Orange sectarianism to

who periodically put out appeals for Protestants and Catholics to be nice to each other.

A socialist policy on Ireland cannot avoid the national question. It must see the fight for socialism as bound up with the fight of the Irish people to win self-determination and to get British imperialist troops out of their country.

The last speaker, Tam Dalyell MP, argued that the British have no role in Ireland. "No British politician has ever met with any success in Ireland".

For too long, said Dalyell, the British labour movement has ignored the question of Ireland. It is time to make it

El Salvador lurches towards civil war

by ANTONIO GERMARO

IN ANOTHER weekend of violence and blood at the end of March, 35 were killed and over 100 wounded by the National Guard in El Salvador.

The people were killed and injured at a huge gathering of 80,000 assembled outside the Metropolitan Cathedral to pay their last respects to Archbishop Romero.

Romero was murdered in the cathedral while saying Mass. Even US government sources assume that the killer was a hired assassin, probably a right-wing Cuban exile.

Romero had taken a courageous stand against the dictatorship as well as the present junta, and supported mass actions against poverty

and repression. Even a liberal humanitarian figure like the Archbishop was too much for the El Salvador reactionaries.

His murder and the subsequent attack on the funeral crowd with scatter grenades and automatic machine guns show the real nature of the "reformist" junta of Gutierrez and Majano. Since taking power in October 1979, it has launched several radical measures such as bank and land nationalisation, but is increasingly incapable of controlling the situation.

The reactionary oligarchy of the 14 families is unwilling to stomach any inroads into their power and domination, which they have built up over the last 45 years under the benevolent eyes of successive dictatorships.

They are preparing for a brutal head-on assault

on the El Salvadorean masses.

However, the workers, the peasants, the students and the slum dwellers, after years of oppression, illiteracy, poverty and malnutrition, are unwilling to be bought off with the junta's few token changes and vague promises of a better life.

The months of struggle, the strikes, occupations of factories and churches, the takeover of the University (which has made a virtual 'no-go' area for the National Guard), the hundreds of dead and wounded, show that it will take more than a few reforms to derail this popular upsurge.

The junta recognises this fact now. The preposterous claim by the Minister of Defence that the massacre last weekend was the result of 'left-wing extremism',

purposely ignores the murderous role that the National Guard played and has played in the past. It was they who bombed and shot into the organised contingent of the Popular Revolutionary Bloc, several tens of thousands strong. They panic was bound to result in many deaths as the stampeding crowds desperately tried to find shelter in the enclosed square.

The junta has tolerated the National Guard and the extreme right wing murder groups of 'Orden' and 'White Warriors Union' partly because it is politically too weak to strike out against them - but also because it may want to turn them loose on the populace when the time comes. 'The final solution' desired by the oligarchy may end up as the junta's only method of survival as well.



A victim of El Salvador's National Guard

by MARTIN THOMAS and JOHN O'MAHONY

Stop Heseltine!

THE TORY Government's clampdown on 'overspending' councils could be tighter even than their present announcements indicate.

Already several councils — mainly Labour councils in worse-off working-class areas: Lambeth, Haringey, Camden, Newcastle-on-Tyne — are in line to have money lopped off their rate support grant from central government for 'overspending'. Now the *Guardian* has revealed that civil service documents are suggesting detailed central government investigation into the costs of 55 separate local authority services, from allotments to education.

The Tories are also planning to do detailed monitoring on council staffing levels in various departments and services.

Penalised

Councils which spend 'too much' on education or on nurseries, on libraries or on old people's homes, will be penalised. Any attempt by Labour councils to provide services to offset the bleakness and poverty of the areas they represent will be up for the chop.

Any council which seeks to protect local authority jobs in a period of escalating unemployment will get short shrift. And council money for community projects, women's refuges, legal aid centres, or radical voluntary groups, will be likely to get Whitehall's blue pencil too.

The framework for this is Heseltine's Local Government Bill currently before Parliament which alters the rate support grant system and gives Heseltine the right to cut off money from councils.

For this year, Heseltine has fixed a standard rate level at 119p in the pound (or less for London) and threatened to penalise any council above it. In fact he will have to put the penalty level much higher, because hundreds of councils are above the 119p level. But the powers he is seeking will enable him to penalise more or less at will.

Speaking in Parliament in January, Heseltine said he would aim at councils that



Michael Heseltine: seeking powers to penalise councils which attempt to fight

"set out to challenge the government", and explained how he would select them. "It will be quite clear, in view of the very restricted number of authorities affected, from the speeches they have made and the decisions they have made".

The Tory policies aim to enforce the cuts by radically reducing the autonomy of local councils. As such they have provoked angry opposition even from Tory councils. But they deserve to meet stronger opposition than the sort of Parliamentary lobbying being done by the Tory councils and by the Labour front bench.

Without having any illusions in the possibilities of 'municipal socialism', and without defending the capitulation of most Labour councils under the Tory pressure (rate rises, rent rises, and usually cuts too), we have to defend the local reforms carried through by some Labour councils — and the autonomy to make such reforms.

We should support any Labour councils which fight to defend their autonomy, while at the same time we oppose their capitulations. We oppose their rate rises but defend their right to raise rates against the Tories.

Careerism, petty opportunism, and often corruption run rife in Labour councils. Nevertheless they are much more subject to control and pressure from the labour movement than the Parliamentary Labour Party is. They can and do make reforms, support workers' struggles, or even sometimes take a lead in class struggle, as Clay Cross Council did in 1972.

Supporters of the policy of no rent and rate rises which *Socialist Organiser* fights for against right-wing (and against most left) Labour councillors, are thus put in a paradoxical position by Heseltine's attack.

Not for a moment or in any way can we drop our

opposition to the pernicious delusion (or treacherous pretence) that rent and rate rises can be combined with a serious working-class mobilisation by Labour councils to fight the Tory cuts — or are themselves anything other than cuts. We must continue to organise in the local labour movement against Labour councillors who raise rents and rates and make cuts.

We fight to get the labour movement to force Labour-controlled councils to adopt a policy of no rent and rate rises, and no cooperation in implementing Tory cuts.

But while thus opposing and fighting the policies of rent and rate rises and cuts which all Labour councils are in fact likely to pursue, we must defend against the *Tory government*, vigorously and wholeheartedly, the right of such councils to carry out rate rises if that is their democratic decision.

The democracy of local government leaves a great deal to be desired and we fight to change and expand it. But the Tories will not be gunning for Labour councils because they break their promises to their supporters.

"Though I disagree with what you say, I'll defend to the death your right to say it", has been a central watchword of democrats for over two centuries. We oppose and fight what Labour councils do against the working class interest: we will defend the established rights of local government against the central Tory government.

Attack

More or less democratic local government, established in Britain over the last hundred years, is a poor thing when measures against the democracy of workers' councils which revolutionary socialists fight for. But today it is under attack, and there is a concerted drive to strengthen central government by an ultra-reactionary government.

The labour movement must defend the rights of local government until such time as we can revolutionise democracy and replace it by an expansion of democratic rights, liberties, and procedures. At the least the existing rights of local government are now a bulwark against the entrenched powers of the central bosses' state.

Or they could be. If the Labour controlled councils adopted the fighting policy which *SO* advocates, those councils would now be a barrier against the mad-dog Tories entrenched in central government.

Checks

Even though the revolutionaries may prove too weak in the labour movement to ensure that Labour councils fight for SCLV policies, we can neither afford to ignore the attack on the rights of Labour-controlled councils nor to leave the defence of those rights to those who naively or treacherously say *rent or rate rises, or cuts, will help beat back the Tory onslaught*.

Those who will not fight the Tory cuts except by imposing their own form of cuts (rent and rate rises) are unlikely to be much use in defending the checks on central government power represented by the traditional powers of local government. If now they think they want to orientate to a fight on a *future* issue, it is because a promise to fight in the future, in better conditions and on an 'easier' and 'broader' issue is in line with their politics and their psychology.

Anything but a sharp confrontation now! The struggle always promises to be easier 'on the other side of the hill'. This only means that the Labour right-wing and the soft left make the struggle on 'this side of the hill' easier now — for the Tory government.

In fact the defence of local government rights against Heseltine is not best

linked with exercising those rights for rent and rate rises, as the soft left say. A probably decisive working class mobilisation to defeat Heseltine could be achieved if Labour councils cleanly counterposed themselves to the Tory government's cuts in their entirety.

If the opponents of rent and rate rises at the same time take up the defence of local government rights, it will cut down the ability of the soft left to fake and go through the motions of a sham fight (to end inevitably with their discovery that here too they cannot risk surcharge and jail, and had better give way). It will diminish the ability of the soft left to confuse the labour movement and sell it on rent and rate rises.

Some soft left-wingers want an alliance with the right-wing to defend local government rights, an alliance that can mean nothing but talk. The real left must demand that the rent-and-rates raising left actually fight on the issue they say is the best arena for a fight, and do not use the Right as an alibi. We can only do that if we refuse to let the defence of local government rights become the exclusive property of the soft left and the right.

Defence

If some supporters of *Socialist Organiser* were to dismiss the question as a non-issue and an artefact of fake-lefts, that would be to make an ultra-left error — which would be a gift the soft left and right are just now in need of.

Above all, we must insist again and again that if there is to be confrontation such as Lambeth Council leader Ted Knight promises and threatens, better it be on a basis of no cuts (whether direct cuts or rent and rate rises) and defence of local government autonomy, than on the basis of defending the right to use local government autonomy to cut the living standards of the working class.

Bristol Labour backs anti-cuts councillors

BRISTOL West Labour Party GMC on March 27th called for a public campaign through the District Party and Bristol Trades Council against the Cuts and in support of the eight rebel councillors sacked from the ruling Labour Group on Bristol City Council for opposing cuts in next year's budget.

This decision followed votes of support for the eight from all party branches in the constituency, bar one which had not yet met. The eight tried to refer back the 1980-81 civic budget to the Resources and Coordination Committee, defying a three line whip imposed by the Labour Group which customarily enjoys a 22 seat majority on the City Council.

In the event, the powers that be in the Labour Group lined up with the Tories to accept the budget by 62 votes to 8. The way in which the whole budget debate has been structured, and in particular the role of the Labour Group, has angered many Party members in Bristol.

Major decisions are rushed

through without adequate consultation or time for discussion. The Labour Group obviously felt that once elected, it was in a position to ignore Labour Party policy whenever it thought fit.

The eight have said that they will boycott the Mayor's Civic Dinner. Support for their stand against the cuts has come from the Avon Branch of the EETPU. Knowle branch of Bristol South East Labour Party has held a public meeting in their support. The next step must be to link up a local campaign with places like Manchester, where an almost identical struggle is already taking place.

To those party members who worry about party differences being made public, it has been clearly shown in Bristol that working people are far more heartened by the sight of somebody on the council actually doing something about the cuts, and far more likely to see the Labour Party as looking after their own interests as a result.

IAN HOLLINGWORTH



Heseltine has praised Avon's 'thrift' and teachers disagree

AVON TEACHERS SAY: Step up strikes against cuts

2000 teachers marched through the streets of Bristol on Thursday 27th March on a half day strike against the cuts in education in Avon. And a NUT members' meeting after the march gave the opportunity for some hard thinking and hard talking about tactics for the Summer Term.

Twelve weeks of struggle against an authority praised by Michael Heseltine as 'top of the thrift league' (i.e. the most enthusiastic cutters of public spending) has failed so far to resolve the deadlock. And the NUT's 'softly softly' approach of chocking off action just because the authority 'appeared' (wrongly, as it turned out) to be willing to compromise has angered many teachers.

Right from the start, it was local union policy that any change in tactics, in particular the calling off of strike action, must be the decision of the membership as a whole. But the union leadership jumped on the first sign that the three day rota strikes were losing effect to announce to the world that strike action was off.

At a mass public rally before the march on the 27th, NUT General Secretary Fred Jarvis 'paid tribute' to our action and told us that the union was 'right behind us'.

But at the NUT members' meeting, there was an angry response. The following policies were carried at the meeting and teachers will be pressing the Union leadership to make them official for next term:

- All out May 14th on the TUC Day of Action, in solidarity with other workers.

- Campaign for a rates strike in protest at cuts in education and welfare services.

- Rota strike action to be changed from groups of secondary schools on a three day basis to wildcat strikes organised by secondary schools linked to their feeder primaries.

A suggestion to set up a council candidate on an education ticket was rejected after *Socialist Organiser* supporters argued that it was better to join the struggle already going on in the Labour Party against the cuts.

IAN HOLLINGWORTH

Why Tories want to break up ILEA

by KEN LIVINGSTONE (GLC member for Hackney North)

A SMALL committee of Tory MPs and municipal bores have published the 'Sherlock' report, which aims to prove that education in Inner London would benefit from the breakup of the ILEA, and from each borough becoming its own education authority.

The report itself is only 5 pages of type and 6 tables of statistics copied from other sources, and is so filled with inaccuracies that when the ILEA first got hold of a copy, they thought it must be a hoax document, and that the original was being withheld!

* The report complains that costs are too high in the ILEA but does not spell out where cuts should be made, nor does the report allow for the extra costs of London weighting or the high proportion of disadvantaged children in Inner London.

* The report doctors existing examination figures; leaves out any which show the ILEA in a good light — and then even gets the remaining statistics wrong.

* In calculating the school populations for the proposed new borough education authorities, the report gets the pupil numbers wrong by 30% to 50% in most cases, and by 1000% in the case of the City of London.

* The report dismisses the Marshall Report of July 1978, which recommended that the ILEA should remain as the single education authority for Inner London. This is not strange, as the Marshall Report was set up by Tory GLC leader Horace Cutler in the hope that it would urge the breakup of the ILEA.

The eventual report, which was accurate and weighty, has since been buried, and its other recommendations for local government are also forgotten, as they did not conform to the views of the London Tory Party.

Nowhere does the report spell out the real motive for destroying the ILEA. The present structure is an excellent mechanism for the redistribution of wealth. The ILEA gets all of its money from the ratepayers of Inner London, of which 75% are commercial and only 25% domestic.

Worse still for the Tories, the office blocks of the city centre contribute the majority of the funds of the ILEA. If ILEA were broken up, boroughs like Wandsworth and Hackney would have to increase their rates by up to £3 a week for the average family in order to provide the same level of service.

Meanwhile, the rates on large office blocks in the City would be cut by up to £200,000 to £300,000 a year each.

This is the Tories' real reason for wanting to disband the ILEA.

Royal Northern workers plan demo for April 16

A local Labour activist reports on the fight to save the Royal Northern hospital

WORKERS AT the Royal Northern Hospital in Islington (North London) will be demonstrating outside their hospital on April 16th to make known their continuing strong opposition to any attempted closure of their casualty department.

The Camden/Islington Area Health Authority took a decision last autumn to close down the Royal Northern's casualty department. But widespread protests among hospital workers and the local community won a temporary reprieve.

After being presented with a petition signed by 60,000 people, Health Minister Gerard Vaughan ordered a delay of the closure — over the heads of the AHA — while an 'independent ad-

judicator' carried out an investigation.

The chairman of the Camden and Islington AHA, millionaire racehorse owner Louis Freedman, was furious, but the workers' sense of victory did not last long. The 'adjudicator' appointed, far from being independent, is in fact the DHSS regional liaison officer, and his inquiry is to be an extremely speedy one. His report will be presented to the AHA at its April meeting.

In the meantime, cuts which the hospital consultants had offered to make in stead of the casualty department are already going ahead.

For example, patients who require long-term prescriptions on being discharged are now only to be given two weeks' prescriptions by the hospital's pharmacy.

The possibility of turning one of the wards into a day ward is being investigated. The cuts already made in the number of student nurses are hitting the hospital, and the casualty department itself is particularly hard hit by the shortage of nurses.

If the AHA goes ahead with the closure of the Royal Northern's casualty department, the hospital will cease to be an acute general hospital.

All the workers at the hospital are agreed that if Freedman tries to close the casualty department, then the hospital workers will take it over and continue to run it themselves. The local ambulance stations have agreed to support a work-in, and so have all sections of the local community. Even the hospital consultants and the British Medical Association have expressed support.

The Royal Northern Campaign has received advice from other hospitals under

threat, and workers from Southwood hospital and from St Benedict's hospital (currently under workers' occupation) have visited the Royal Northern to give encouragement and practical support.

A spokesman from the Royal Northern Action Committee said: "If the government or Area Health Authority try to close our casualty department, they will have to face the total opposition not only of the hospital workforce but also of the local community. People will die if our casualty department is closed down. We will not allow that to happen".

Demonstrate outside the Royal Northern Hospital April 16th. 12.30-1.30 pm



Nurses from the Royal Northern joined an Islington Cuts Campaign march on January 28th. And they are determined to keep up the fight to save their hospital.

THE TORY BUDGETS IN FIGURES

"SINCE the Conservatives came to power, the rich have done very well.... Manual workers have done badly — the home-owning skilled worker particularly. But white collar families and middle managers have also suffered."

It came out like this:

	After Budget	Apr. '77 to Apr. '80
1. Pensioner couple	DOWN 6 ½ %	No change
2. Low-paid manual worker's family	DOWN 3 ½ %	DOWN 2%
3. Semi-skilled worker's family	DOWN 3 ½ %	UP 2%
4. Skilled Manual worker's family	DOWN 2%	DOWN 1%
5. White collar worker's family	DOWN 3%	DOWN 4%
6. Company director's family	Slightly UP	UP 21%

That was the conclusion of a detailed analysis of the Budget and of living standards over the last three years in the Sunday Times of March 30th.

They took some model households from different

social classes, and, on the basis of available data on pay rises and how people spend their money, they analysed the shift in living standards due to the latest Budget, and over the last three years.

The model company director's family analysed will be £60 a week better off after allowing for inflation as a result of the two Tory budgets.

And the analysis does not appear to take into account the effects of higher prescription charges and other health charges, more expensive school meals, and the coming school bus fares — which between them could add up to over £10 a week for some families. While the company directors have been gaining £60 a week, workers have been losing something like £12 or £15.

The analysis does not take into account the benefits which tax cuts for businesses and investors will bring for the wealthy few. It does not allow for the £12 penalty on strikers' families' supplementary benefits, or for the rundown in average working class living standards caused by higher unemployment and lower social security benefits in real terms.

Certainly it does not take into account the cuts in working class living standards, impossible to measure in money terms, which are being caused by the rundown of the welfare state.

Lambeth Left organises against cuts and rate rises

by BILL BOWRING

THE Lambeth Council Meeting of Wednesday 26th March was important for two reasons.

A new grouping within the four Lambeth CLPs lobbied the councillors. Called Lambeth Labour Left, and organising to provide a clear socialist policy to challenge the Tories, it is supported by three Labour councillors: Steve Stannard, Neil Turner, and Bill Bowring.

Leaflets were handed out, signed by several other active Party workers, including some comrades in the Trades Council. They said:

"We believe Lambeth Council must not carry out Tory policies by making cuts in services or jobs. Nor should we make working people pay more for the same services by increasing rates."

"The Council tenants must not be doubly punished through rent and rate increases. It is not a stand against the government to pass on cuts in the form of cuts in living standards already under attack by 20% inflation."

Inside the council chamber, left wing councillors Paul Moore and Steve Stannard moved a reference back of the housing committee's decision to increase rents by an average of £1.60. They proposed no rent increase.

The Tories voted with the majority of the Labour Group against the reference back; regrettably, only six Labour councillors, including the Lambeth Labour Left supporters, voted in favour.

Although Norwood CLP had passed an emergency resolution calling on its councillors to support such a move, at least until there had been full discussion within the Parties, only one Norwood councillor (out of eleven) voted for the reference back.

Very late in the meeting, the leadership motion proposing a 49.4% rate increase was voted through: three Labour councillors spoke against the policy of high rate increases, rent increases, and cuts in growth, and at least that number abstained in the vote.

But it was a "rebellion" by two right wingers who wanted cuts, but still voted with the leadership, which got publicity in the local press.

The fight goes on in Lambeth; on Monday April 14th at 8pm, in Lambeth Town Hall, the Lambeth Labour Left is holding a meeting at which all Labour Party members who support a policy of No Cuts, and No Rate or Rent Increases, will be welcome to discuss the prospects for October-November when more cuts, penalties and rent increases are threatened by the Tories.

Looking Ahead



Photos by Susan Glen



A measure of the success of the conference was that almost one in ten of the women who came volunteered for a planning committee to organise a further conference and immediate activity. And new volunteers came forward after the conference.

The first meeting of the National Planning Committee will be on Saturday April 12th from 12 to 4.30, at Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, NW1. There will be a pooled fare. A creche will be organised if there is an advance request for it.

fightback action sheet 5

THE CUTS A WAR ON WOMEN

Quite frankly, I don't think mothers have the same right to go out to work as fathers. If the Good Lord had intended us to have equal rights to go out to work, he wouldn't have created man and woman.
PATRICK JENKIN, Social Services Secretary

When you've got male unemployment, how much better that women, who more naturally incline to a community-based life, do this sort of thing (looking after household old people for £15 per week).
NICHOLAS STACEY, Director of Kent Social Services

WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO LIVE

For the first time since the war, there is an open and determined attack going on against the Welfare State. Women, in their roles of wife, mother, sister, housekeeper, cook, neighbour and friend, call on the services of the Welfare State more often. Women as workers are the main source of labour for those services. This attack on the Welfare State then is a direct attack on women. And it is coming in every area — health, housing.

Fightback Against Health Service Cuts have produced an Action Sheet on women and the cuts. Copies are 20 for £1 (plus 26p postage), or 5p each (plus 10p postage) from Fightback, 30 Camden Road, London NW1. Phone 485-8610

COUNTERACT

ONE of the big attractions at the Women's Fightback conference was the play by CounterAct, **Little Helpers**. They also have three new plays coming up: 'Danger: Women at Work', about women's right to work, is available from 25th April. 'Short, Sharp and Shocking' is a show for youth clubs and schools on the police, starting from 1st August. And from 20th September, a play about the Employment Act, 'Never Mind the Ballots'.

More information from Will Ashton at 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1 (01-251-4977/8)

FESTIVAL

WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE UNDER ATTACK: women's groups, trade unions, student groups and campaigns all welcome.

a meeting to plan a national festival/demo in September aiming for a united show of strength against all current attacks on women. Individuals, local

Monday 14th April at 7pm, 374 Grays Inn Road WC1 [Kings Cross tube].

ON MARCH 22 nearly 500 women attended the first Women's Fightback conference. The aim was to bring together labour movement women and women from various campaigns and groups in the women's movement. Fightback secretary Rachel Lever reports.

FIGHTING BACK against the Tories — and fighting for our place in the labour movement. These were the twin themes of the Fightback for Women's Rights conference on March 22nd, and they indicated the main lines of action for a Women's Fightback campaign.

Mary Corbishley, opening the conference for *Socialist Organiser*, explained that SO fights to renovate the labour movement for a real response to the Tories: "And it's no use talking about democracy and accountability as long as women are made to feel outsiders in the movement".

From the first call for the conference last autumn, Fightback said it wanted to 'stimulate the growth of dialogue and common work between women in the labour movement and the women's movement, and those in specialised campaigns for women's rights'. It approached nearly thirty campaigns for support and participation as well as trade unions, Labour Parties, and women's groups.

As the conference approached, we began to see that the labour movement focus could be more than just an orientation: the response and the ideas that were coming forward gave us the hope that it was going to be possible to actually *organise* in the labour movement for all

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK: LINKING THE MOVEMENTS, BREAKING THE BARRIERS

the things that had been slogans or isolated pockets of resistance up to now.

We went down to the TUC women's conference at Brighton to do a fringe meeting, and were impressed by the spirit of that conference: there was uproar when Angela Phillips came to the rostrum to warn that the Corrie Bill, in compromise form, had got extra time the next day in Parliament.

Sensing that the Fightback conference might be some

sort of landmark, we produced a 16-page magazine to introduce the issues and the participants, and giddily invested in a print order of 8000. By the end of the conference, all but a couple of hundred had gone.

On March 9th, we took the banner on the mammoth TUC demo against the Tories' Employment Bill and the cuts. But for us, as it must have been for so many women there, the dignity and impressiveness of that

march were marred by the constant reiteration of sexist slogans.

In the absence of a single politically inspiring slogan from the TUC, the march seemed to resound with taunts and insults against Margaret Thatcher as a woman instead of slogans expressing a class opposition to her as the political leader of the capitalist class in Parliament.

We came away all the more determined to tackle the labour movement.

Clearly, other women felt the same way. Of the nearly 500 women who came to the conference, 170 were primarily active trade unionists, many representing the nine trades councils and 35 union branches and groups who sent delegates.

145 were Labour Party members, and the rest centred their activity on women's groups and campaigns. And they came from every corner of the country: most of the big cities, and other

centres — wick, Wakefield, Chelmsford..

In the ser relations bet the labour the women such a gather start of a ne it could be y for the re-o wounds. As everyone ha really good s tion and frien and if anythi erred on the

WHAT WOMEN THOUGHT OF THE CONFERENCE

"I would like to have seen debate on whether women should be putting their energies into the Labour Party. But the labour movement workshop was interesting, and the age-range and geographical balance was good. I'm not sure what the conference achieved — I think its success will be determined by what Fightback does now."

Terry Gibbons, ACTSS

"There were some very good speeches. It was exciting to hear what people are doing. There seems to be a new confidence among women: a few years ago women were much more nervous at such a conference. I was impressed that there were so many good speakers."

Judit, Notting Hill

"The workshop we went



to, on legal rights, was too one-sided. We chose it carefully and expected to discuss all the themes. But I'd be interested in future events. The play was excellent"

"It was a very good turnout. It's a pity we didn't come to some conclusion

but the time was too short. It's a good thing to link up the different campaigns, but I'm not sure it's a good thing to have a campaign that tackles so many issues."

Carol, South London

"My only criticism is that it was a bit vague — but

of course if there'd been lots of resolutions there would have been complaints that it was too guided. For a continuing campaign we'll need much firmer guidelines, and from the attendance, obviously a lot of people are looking for co-ordination.

It would be worth-

while to or action befo conference Everyone had some o all in a pos that if we' clusions it been even

Helen,

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WHAT CONFERENCE DISCUSSED

LABOUR WOMEN

FIGHTING THE CUTS

Despite the labour movement's emphasis on the Labour Party as such didn't figure much in the advance publicity for the conference. But it got tremendous interest from women in the party, and we were overwhelmed by the eagerness to start organising.

Altogether, 145 Labour Party women came, including delegates from 45 ward and constituency parties.

Sixty women crowded into a tiny room for the workshop on Labour Party women's sections. We heard experiences of starting up and running both women's sections and councils; discussed the relationship between fighting for an active, political women's organisation and positive discrimination, and the fight for Labour Party democracy. We talked about the problems of recruiting women who are brought up their whole lives to think politics is for the men; and looked at the relationship of the younger, feminist women starting to organise, and the women whose political lives were at their height half a century ago and who now simply wanted to get together socially.

Two big initiatives were suggested:

□ The drafting of evidence to the NEC inquiry arguing for

a new structure and political framework for the women's organisation, to make it more democratic and more open to the women's movement and community struggles; and a campaign in the party to get support for it.

□ And an enlargement of the workshop into a full day conference for Labour Party women, which Fightback would invite other campaigns in the party to join in calling.

A last-minute idea for a workshop for women in the Young Socialists, which didn't even appear on the timetable, attracted 25-plus women.

As far as the Militant-dominated YS is concerned, the women's movement never happened and doesn't exist. They haven't had a new thought since the first automatic response 'don't divide the labour movement'.

Women at the workshop were bursting with frustration and anger at Militant's old-fashioned cloth-cap white/male preaching, and delighted at the first chance to organise as women in the YS.

A special leaflet was planned for the Easter YS conference, and there is a plan for a women's caucus — with Militant's male hacks firmly kept out.

THE CUTS workshops in the Small Hall was the scene of a lively discussion on self-help, which spilled over into the plenary when Kath Caulfield, reporting back, spoke of a nursery in Nottingham that kept going after the Social Services Department kicked it out into the cold with a derisory grant of £8000 as a sop to the anti-cuts campaign. 'I don't call that a victory' was her verdict.

But the women from Nottingham pointed out that whether one called it a victory or not, by keeping the nursery alive they hoped to get it restored to Social Services after the Tories were kicked off the council.

Spare Rib's reporter Sue O'Sullivan pointed out that self help itself is important to women's self-organisation; and many felt that it was a false polarisation to make between state aid and self-help.

But Kath Caulfield's other point, echoing a paper for the workshop by Pat Longman, got general support.

She said: 'I am sure, and I think most women agreed, the money's there. It's there for defence. Who gets the profits that we make? It's there in the pockets of the bankers and the financiers.'

'Why can't we have it for our services. Why can't we decide what it's spent on? Why should we pay the rate rises when at least half our rates go

straight to the bankers?'

In a discussion on the problem of organising women against the cuts, Julie Gordon of Scarlet Women reminded the workshop that women have very little political confidence, but tremendous depths of strength and endurance. 'If we are to tap that strength, we must support women in their early political experiences — be prepared to seek them out and go with them to the meetings.'

One problem with fighting to save this or that facility is that women's experience of these is so often negative. There is little loyalty for a lousy, run-down, callous local hospital.

The workshop heard how defence can turn to positive demands, as in the fight to save the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital for women in London. The EGA campaign did a questionnaire on what women really wanted, and a campaign for a well-woman clinic grew up and linked itself with the EGA fight. Now the EGA is to have such a clinic.

The London Nursery Campaign called for support for a national nursery action workshop. [Contact Shirley Frost, 61 Chalcot Road, London NW1]. And a member of the Fightback Planning Committee is interested in forming a Labour Party nurseries group.

Salisbury, Ipswich, Ely, Aberdeen, Keynes,

in not having any resolutions for voting.

The atmosphere was relaxed, and the seriousness of the business was relieved by CounterAct's play and a unanimously acclaimed lunch in the extended break.

For most people coming, the conference was a tremendous success. But a conference is not just a coming together of experiences, such as at the enormous labour movement workshop in the morning.

Ultimately, the importance of this conference will have to be judged by what sort of a campaign it has initiated.

Can it really make an impact on the labour movement? Can it really tie together the threads of women's struggles and mount a real women's fightback against the Tory government?

The important thing now is to pitch into the initiatives that came out of the conference and involve new forces. Time is short: the second Fightback conference is due for June, planned not just to have another get-together

but to make policies for the campaign and to delegate certain responsibilities for its functioning.

We cannot do that just on the basis of the March conference; discussion then will have to be based on our experience as a campaign in the three months between the conferences.

In a number of areas, Fightback groups are being formed. Public meetings will be held at the end of April in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Our major activity immediately will be towards the TUC's day of action on May 14th, and this will be a dual campaign: to mobilise women for that day, making sure that the clauses of the Employment Bill especially affecting women's rights (other than our rights as workers and trade unionists) are widely known; and to campaign in the labour movement against the re-appearance of the sort of sexist slogans that were so prevalent on March 9th.

THE CONFERENCE

Feminist Education Group came to the conference. One commented: 'It was terrific, there was a really good atmosphere. It was very strong — I had a tremendous impression of strength from the women there, a feeling of optimism, of people fighting.'

I was pleased there were so few men, given it was a mixed conference, and that they didn't try to dominate it.

I've steered clear of left politics for years now but I, and others in my group, found it a very positive experience.'

I was impressed by the numbers and the distance people had come, and that so many were obviously non-aligned women. You could buy magazines and papers if you wanted to, but it wasn't like some conferences where it's pushed at you from all sides.'

Emily Grundy

A Labour Party member

active on abortion said: 'The most valuable thing was the exchange of views. It's clear people don't know what all the campaigns are doing: in the abortion workshop, a woman came up with what she thought was a new idea, and we've been doing it for three years. You can't assume people know what you're doing.'

We must see how to use the campaigns and organisations that exist, especially in the Labour Party. We've got to go into there and throw out the whist drives and get the politics in.'

And another told us: 'I've been in the Labour Party for about a year and I'm still feeling my way around. I was tremendously excited by the conference and the possibilities for action from it. I reported back to my party, and it shook them up a bit. Some women came up to me afterwards and suggested forming a women's section.'



AFTER CORRIE

THE Corrie Bill will try a comeback, Jo Richardson warned when she spoke at the opening plenary of the conference. We can't rely on manoeuvring in Parliament — we must build on the links with the trade union movement and work for massive support in the labour movement for women's demands.

And we must press forward in our demands: she called for support to amend the NHS Act to make it a statutory obligation on health authorities to provide day-care abortion facilities.

Jo Richardson went on to vent the anger she felt over the constant misrepresentation of women. In the media, women are almost always shown in the home or at the shops. This may be the advertisers' dream, but it's not the reality. 'When I was pressing for a Social Security advisory committee to have at least three women members, I was told: then we'd have to have three members from every other minority. Not a bad idea — but women are not a minority! We are 52% of the population!'

She concluded that the lesson from the anti-Corrie fight was that women could organise for the labour movement to take up our rights — and organise successfully.

In the workshop on abortion, it was revealed that the anti-

abortionists were trying to get a lot of the Corrie Bill in through the back door, without legislation. Sara Roelofs of NAC told how pressure was being put on PAS, one of the big charities that Corrie tried to cripple, to drop the word 'abortion' from its posters, under threat of non-renewal of its licence.

And there were hints of a Government Bill for a 24-week time limit, which one woman suggested mightn't be a bad idea, to scotch the anti-abortion lobby. Peter Huntingford, of the Mile End day-care clinic, replied: 'We mustn't compromise on a woman's right to choose'.

Members of the International Campaign on issues around fertility control took up this issue of the right to choose, reminding the workshop that though the issues might change from country to country according to whether motherhood was encouraged or not, the central question was that no-one should dictate to a woman that she had to continue a pregnancy or had to be sterilised.

The same theme dominated a separate workshop on Depo-Provera, a contraceptive drug which once injected left a woman with no choice but to endure its side-effects for up to six months.

LEGAL WRONGS

THE LEGAL rights workshop had been billed as dealing with taxation, social security, the equality laws and immigration. In the event it settled on the last of these for detailed discussion, which inevitably disappointed some.

The new immigration rules were explained by Emily Grundy of CAIL and Kate Francis of AGIN. Personal stories and local campaigns were related, and through them certain similarities were drawn with other areas.

For instance, Nasira Begum is threatened with deportation because her husband deserted here and it was claimed that the marriage wasn't 'genuine': just as in all the other areas of legal rights, the issue — other than blatant racism — was dependence. Nasira Begum was being treated as a mere appendage of a man, not as a person in her own right.

Another thing about the immigration laws was how they are shrouded in mystery, with all sorts of secret instructions to immigration officials, secret codes stamped in passports, and ever increased powers of 'discretion' — and this was all too reminiscent of the Social Security system with its secret lists and instructions.

The workshop didn't produce any breakthrough ideas for action, but recommended that Fightback mount a speaking tour on immigration.

Since the conference, ITV's London Programme has publicised the cases of nearly 200 Philippino women: brought over to work

in hotels in the early '70s, they were forced by the work permit system to endure a five-year serfdom tied to one job, unable even to seek promotion from backbreaking dawn-to-dusk labour for a pittance.

Housed by their employers in tiny hostel rooms, they were expected to have no family ties, and a recruiting agency filled in their papers stating that they were childless.

One woman, having worked for her 'freedom' and the right to permanent residence, applied to the Home Office for permission to bring in her five children, and was told she could if only she had somewhere to house them.

So she set about buying a house, working in two jobs from 7am to 12 midnight, seven days a week, to save the money: only to be told that she was due for deportation as an illegal immigrant, on the technicality of having made a false declaration on her entry papers, even though she would have had just the same rights of entry if she had declared that she had children.

It was a harrowing story of personal suffering, and in every one of its aspects highlighted what women are up against: capitalist low-wage super-exploitation hand-in-glove with a state that's all for motherhood — unless you're a migrant labourer.

Some women who saw the programme have suggested that Fightback should take up the case of these women, publicise it throughout the country, and run a campaign for their rights.

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THE LABOUR

THE TRADE union leaders of the Trade Unions for a Labour Victory campaign are no doubt laughing on the other side of their faces now... if they are laughing at all.

At last year's Party Conference they proposed a Commission of Inquiry into the running of the Labour Party in the hope that, if Conference accepted it, discussion of the motion on mandatory re-selection of MPs could be side-stepped.

But Conference supported the idea of mandatory re-selection and agreed to have an Inquiry under the aegis of the National Executive Committee (NEC). What started as a ploy to prevent the introduction of greater democracy into the Labour Party has ended up stimulating discussion on democracy throughout the party.

The existence of the Inquiry has meant that Labour Parties all over the country and campaigns within the Labour Party — and, we hope, in some places, trade union and workplace organisations — are thinking about the way the Party is run. The pressure for reform could thwart moves on the Inquiry to reverse or nullify the democratic reforms decided last year, or even force more reforms.

The SCLV has been discussing the issue too. And recently its Steering Committee met to discuss proposals from a Working Party for a submission to the Inquiry.

The Inquiry's terms of reference are very broad. They cover finance, membership, election activity, organisation and structure, political education and policy-making. The Committee had neither the time nor the knowledge to contribute on all these items. We concentrated on the issue of Labour Party democracy — the issue that relates directly to the question of power within the Party.

Of course, there were disagreements on detail and often the Committee was split down the middle, but there was a remarkable degree of unanimity on the central problem. We all saw the central problem as being how to make the Labour Party a broader and more active *working class organisation*.

Essentially this is, of course, a political question. But it cannot be divorced from the immensely important organisational questions that are at the centre of the current battles inside the Party.

Organising in the factories

IF THE Labour Party is to be a working class party in its membership, then it must not only get more trade union affiliations, but also recruit many more active trade unionists as individual members. The creation of workplace branches would make this much easier.

Politically it would make a change too. It would bring the concerns of the shop floor more into the Party, and make it less hypnotised by council and Parliamentary affairs.

There are three conceptions of what a workplace branch should be. One — which conforms to present Party rules — is nothing more than a Labour Party caucus in a workplace. This was tried and seen to fail at Rover, Solihull. Why did it fail?

According to Tony Banks, speaking at a recent Labour Coordinating Committee meeting, the branch was weighted down by a huge amount of administration

and book-keeping — members belong to 30 different CLPs — and there was no direct link between the branch and the CLP in that area.

There is a somewhat bolder conception put forward by Bristol West CLP, saying that workplace branches should be related to the local CLP (which would issue membership cards) in the same way as Women's Sections and Youth Sections.

This is a half-way house proposal; by not making workplace branches the equivalent of wards, their delegation to the General Committee is limited. This proposal also includes a complicated relationship to the CLPs of the areas where the members live as well as to the local one.

Why not the simple provision of having workplace branches with the same status as wards? Members could be a member of a workplace branch, or a ward (where they live), or both.

Yes to trade union control, no to bureaucracy

ACCORDING TO the press, the Labour Party is in the pockets of the trade union movement. And they ask with mock innocence, "Isn't this a case of the tail wagging the dog?"

If only the accusation were true. Actually the Party is in the hands of a few leaders of the Parliamentary Labour Party. How else could you get a situation like the one that led in large part to Labour's last election defeat? The unions wanted Callaghan to go for an earlier election and not to impose the last round of wage freezes, but Callaghan did what he and the capitalists wanted: he hung on, did the Tories' dirty work and ended up losing the election.

What is progressive about the Labour Party is that it represents the intervention of the organisations of labour into the political life of the nation. To strengthen the Labour Party we must maintain and strengthen trade union control.

Rank

On the other hand, much of the trade union weight in the Party is in reality the weight of the trade union bureaucracy, not of the rank and file. It is the weight of a group much the same as the parliamentary leaders: the differences between the trade union leaders and the Party leaders is essentially a difference in the field of work, not in the nature of the work.

Both groups function as brokers for capitalism within the working class movement, and both groups rely on lack of democracy to perform this role.

We need to make the trade union control *rank and file* control.

Because we don't want to detach the Party from the

influence of the trade unions, we are not in favour of abolishing the block vote at Annual Conference. Nor are we in favour of downgrading it relative to the votes coming from constituency parties.

The SCLV Steering Committee considered two proposals. The first was to break up the block vote by admitting regional and district level delegations from unions rather than national delegations. This would preserve the weight of the trade union vote but allow it to reflect the wishes of the rank and file more. This was narrowly defeated.

Fees

The real answer, we felt, must be to fight for democracy in the trade unions, and democratic rank and file control over the block vote. A fight for democracy in the Labour Party cannot win without a parallel fight for democracy in the unions.

A second proposal was narrowly approved. This was to give CLPs an extra delegate at Conference if the number of trade unionists affiliated rises above a certain number. This would act as an incentive to getting affiliation, but more importantly it represents a way of increasing trade union influence *through* the CLPs rather than against them.

The suggestion was also approved the affiliation fees for trade unions and other bodies should be the same as the CLPs. If, however, things stay as they are on this score, the higher affiliation fees of the CLPs should not be an argument for upgrading their vote.

The affiliation to Labour Parties of other workers' organisations — like trades councils and shop stewards' committees — would also,

along with the creation of workplace branches, boost the working class voice in the Labour Party without increasing the power of the trade union bureaucracy.

It was agreed the SCLV should push for a return to the structure of Trades and Labour Councils, to increase the unity and strength of the working class.

Recently there have been examples of the block vote being abused at Conference by a union leader (Hugh Scanlon did it twice) casting votes against the mandated position of the union.

To eliminate this, before a trade union's card vote can be accepted for voting purpose, this card vote must be endorsed by the signatures of a simple majority of the elected delegates of that union.

Bristol West CLP, which has been working on a submission to the Inquiry since last November and has produced many interesting suggestions, has a different approach. They argue for increasing the CLP voting strength to 40% or 50% of the total votes at Conference and for an advisory Code of Guidance for delegates — including trade union delegates — which would advise that "delegates should always vote in accordance with a mandate".

Party

Trade union sponsorship of MPs is older than the Labour Party itself — unions sponsored Liberal MPs before. In a sense, sponsorship became outdated with the creation of the Labour Party, because from then on the unions as a whole had a whole party to represent their interests.

To insist now on sponsorship would be to counterpose the interests of a particular

union to those of the unions as a whole. And making MPs answerable to their sponsoring unions cuts against a clear structure of accountability to the CLPs.

If Roy Mason could be dumped in Barnsley by the NUM Executive giving him the thumbs down, this would conflict with the rights of Barnsley Labour Party and there would be no incentive for NUM branches to affiliate locally. As it is, they have been forced to participate in the fight in the local Party — and a good thing too!

But doesn't sponsorship bring money with it? Yes, but it would be better for this money to go to regional or NEC funds rather than to buy an MP — particularly if in a safe seat.

And doesn't the sponsorship system help workers — in particular manual workers — and experienced trade unionists — to get into Parliament? Yes — though only very imperfectly, because unions often sponsor candidates who are not activists in the union. When was Prentice a militant in the TGWU?

Worker representation could be better guaranteed by there being a list of experienced trade unionists (or trade unionists having the moral endorsement of their unions) hoping to enter Parliament. There could also be a system of positive discrimination in favour of manual workers.

In the submission of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, for instance, there is the proposal that "among the nominees to be considered (for selection as an MP) there must be at least one manual worker and one woman provided such nominations have been made by any Affiliated and Party organisation entitled to appoint a delegate to the General Committee or by the Executive Committee."

OPEN THE DOORS TO SOCIALISTS

RIGHT NOW the Labour Party ought to be doing all it can to fight the Tories tooth and nail, to mobilise the working class against its enemies and to build up a big active membership. Instead, there is a witchhunt atmosphere directed against the revolutionary or would-be revolutionary left — the very people who are doing most to fight the Tories, organise our class and build the Party.

So long as the Societies Section remains closed to further affiliations, the Right will always be able to

stoke up the inquisitorial fires.

All socialist organisations, including parties like the Communist Party should be able to affiliate to the Labour Party — so long as they do not stand or campaign for candidates opposing the Labour candidate at elections.

It should also be possible for local organisations to affiliate either where there is no national organisation (as in the case of a tenants' association of a local Black people's organisation) or where the national organ-

isation will not affiliate (for instance, a trade union branch should be able to affiliate locally even when its national body has not affiliated).

The CLPD is putting forward a similar suggestion, noting that in principle this could be done within the framework of the present constitution (Clause III, Section 2, Paragraph f). It rightly points out that the Party Rules should be related "so that any group broadly sympathetic... with the aims and programmes of the Labour Party would be permitted to affiliate to CLPs."

But it places the right to decide which organisations should affiliate in the hands of the NEC. It would be better to give this right to the CLP with the NEC at most being referred to as a court of last instance.

If the Societies Section were opened up, there would be no problem about organisations delegating people who are members of other working class parties.

CURBING THE MPs "PARTY WITHIN A PARTY"

THERE WAS A time when the NEC was firmly in the grasp of the right-wing. Since the rise of a sizeable left-wing on the NEC and the NEC's insistence that it is the guardian of the will of Annual Conference, the flagrant abuse of democracy by the Parliamentary Labour Party has become more obvious.

Thus the debate has arisen over the relative powers of the NEC and the PLP and over the composition of the NEC.

The SCLV is firmly of the opinion that the PLP's status as a "party within a party" should be abolished. What purpose does it serve? It merely creates a completely spurious source of authority over and against the only two that should count, the local party and the national party, the General Committee and the National Executive Committee.

The MPs constitute together a Party fraction, that is, a Party group carrying out activity of a similar type. Their

activity should be monitored by the NEC as the representative of the Annual Conference and the activity of an individual MP should be monitored by that person's constituency Party.

The NEC ought, as decided by last Conference, to have sole responsibility for the Manifesto as for all other Party matters between Annual Conferences. Wouldn't this make the NEC very powerful when Labour was in power? Yes, it would. Why not?

But should the Committee's composition be changed? The Right is presently trying to reduce the representation of the Women's Section. And many left-wingers are arguing for an enlarged constituency section, fearing that the trade unions are about to turn to the right by the next Conference.

There was agreement among members of the SCLV Steering Committee that, whatever the size of the constituency section, it should be divided in two. There should

be an "A Section" for which all delegates could stand and a "B Section" where ex-officio delegates to Conference (MPs) could not stand. This would ensure that Conference elected at least some NEC members who are not MPs or trade union officials.

Of course, ordinary grassroots activists don't have the notoriety of MPs and the like: they are not really national figures unless they are well known as writers or campaign leaders. It is therefore essential that provision be made for campaign statements and biographies of candidates for the Constituency Section to be circulated in advance by the Party.

There was no agreement on the size of this section. Suggestion varied from keeping the numbers as they are numbers as they are numbers as they are (the trade union predominance ought not to be fought — the fight should instead be to democratise the unions and turn them to the left) to making the "A Section" 7 and the "B Section" 5.

PARTY INQUIRY

Organising Labour women

by RACHEL LEVER

STRUCTURE AND SCOPE

THE oppression of women in society is mirrored in the Labour Party. Women are consistently under-represented, and issues of direct importance to women are downgraded.

Both in national policies and especially in local struggles and activities, the Labour Party is far from being seen as a champion of women's rights, despite some progressive legislation by the last government.

The separate organisation of women in the party can begin to overcome this, provided it is given the opportunity to influence the policies of the party as a whole, and the freedom to organise together with all other women's rights activists.

Labour does have a women's organisation, but it is all but invisible to many party members, let alone outsiders. Its workings are confused and mysterious relics, and its membership a legacy of old struggles, while its affiliated organisations, which decades ago were vehicles of struggle, are almost totally moribund today.

The major struggles for women's rights, involving many thousands of women, are taking place outside the party. Many women in the party also join these actions, but have no means to connect this with their party activity.

The party women's organisation should do this. But it needs to be overhauled and refurbished. It needs to bring up to date the range of affiliated organisations to encompass community and women's movement bodies, and to reorganise its structure to improve democracy and to give it more weight in the party.

The basic unit should be the women's section, a Labour Party individual membership organisation (on the same basis as the YS) set up by five or more women in a ward, or ten or more women in a constituency, whether or not the constituency party agrees to its existence. (At present a majority-male GC can block the formation of women's sections). They should be called Labour women's groups, to distinguish them from the women's section of the NEC. They may send delegates, proportional to their membership, to the GMC and to the women's conference.

They may also send a delegate to the WOMEN'S COUNCIL, a delegate body, whose powers and functions would be comparable with the old Trades and Labour Councils. Its function would be to act as a centre and powerhouse for women's struggles, either on a constituency basis or by city borough etc.

It should also take affiliations from trade unions, trade union women's groups and caucuses and women's committees, workplace women's groups, all organisations currently affiliated to the party, as well as be open to affiliations from all groups fighting for women's rights, single-issue campaigns, anti-cuts campaigns, tenants' groups, homeworkers, strike committees etc.

Councils would have delegates to the GMC, EC and LGC of the local party/ies, which should have a regular slot on their agendas for women's rights. If they cover several constituencies, they may send a delegate to each GMC so long as that delegate lives in the constituency of the GMC.

REGIONAL CONFERENCES of women's council delegates should elect a regional women's committee; the NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE should become a conference of women's council delegates and should elect a NATIONAL COMMITTEE. The conference of women's council delegates should also elect the five women's places to the party's NEC.

Where no women's organisation exists, a CLP may send women delegates to the regional and national women's conferences.

Women's councils would

women's conferences. Only a woman may be women's organiser at any level, and must be elected and recallable. Only women may vote at any level of the women's organisation, and only women may be involved in the running of conferences.

The participation of men will be at the discretion of the particular women's organisation, but it is noted that joint meetings should be specially organised from time to time to involve the men in the fight for women's rights: this task cannot fall exclusively on the women's organisation.



send delegates to the Party's annual conference in the same ratio to affiliated membership and on the same basis as other affiliated party or trade union organisations. Where no council exists, a CLP may send an extra woman delegate to the annual party conference for each 1500 individual and affiliated women members.

All regional and national committee members should be recallable between elections by their electing body.

It will be for the women's organisation itself to decide the scope of its discussions and of resolutions for the

this. This principle should also apply to all party meetings, especially conferences, day schools, regional meetings, etc.

The party should also insist on these facilities at all meetings of public bodies (including local authorities and parliament), and that they should be held and finish at reasonable times.

Many women do not have independent control of their finances. With membership dues rising steeply, this may be a bar to membership. There should be provision made for exemptions in the case of a woman who cannot afford to join or whose husband will not permit her to pay the membership dues.

The party should campaign internally against sexist attitudes and behaviour. Our women are treated as equal and perfectly normal comrades, as long as they are subject to patronising attitudes, sexist innuendoes and other forms of intimidation by party men, women will not feel at home in a party that still acts as if it belongs to the men. The party should also do all in its power to put a stop to the discrimination against women in Labour clubs, bars and social centres, which at present are virtually a "men's section".

The women's organisation should be kept informed of all available material from the labour movement and women's movement that can be used for recruitment drives. Plays, films, cabaret etc should be used to attract women to recruitment meetings.

FUNCTIONS

The party, spearheaded by the women's organisation, should set out to fight for real and substantial gains for women. This is the key to recruitment and to a successful and lively women's organisation of the party.

The national women's committee should advise on the Manifesto, which should include action to ensure: full and free health, childcare and nursery facilities with extended hours; equal opportunities for women and positive discrimination starting in early childhood; maternity and paternity leave modelled on the best agreements (eg Sweden); reversal of all recent (including Labour's) public expenditure cuts and expansion of all social facilities; abortion on demand and adequate day-care and other abortion clinics; positive dis-

crimination to bring women onto all public bodies and to break up all-male occupations.

The women's organisation should fight for the implementation of these rights and facilities by the party, and support and initiate struggles for them nationally, regionally and locally, whether or not Labour is in government. It should aim to recruit women to active party membership, and to connect the Labour Party to the struggles of women at work, in the communities and in the women's movement.

Regional committees should coordinate and lead activity, link with other regions, relate to party policy at regional level, and organise wider solidarity for local struggles. They should organise schools for women's studies, especially on working class women's movements in our history and abroad, and on the part played by women in the development of the labour movement.

The National committee should undertake research, and information for the whole party and its women's organisation, issue leaflets, pamphlets and a newspaper [whose editorial board should be elected at the women's national conference], and organise national actions both on its own initiative and in conjunction with such campaigns as the National Abortion Campaign, national nurseries campaigns etc. It should relate to party policy at national level, and ensure that adequate time is given at the party's annual conference for issues of direct concern to women. These should be prioritised by the women's national conference for consideration by the party conference.]

The women's national committee should draw up a parliamentary panel of women, and support the requirement that each parliamentary shortlist should contain at least one woman. The same should apply in local government elections.

At all levels, the women's organisation should liaise with trade union women and with women's caucuses and committees in the unions, using the Councils' delegate structure. It should give special priority to organising assistance and solidarity for women's trade union struggles; approach local unions for joint work on unionisation drives among women; and work with wives of men on strike in support of their struggle.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION, AND THE RECRUITMENT OF WOMEN

Recognising that women are still burdened with the family's major responsibilities, meetings should be held at times which make it possible for women to attend, and at convenient locations. Creche facilities must be provided, and extended to include supervised play, sport etc activities for older children. Men in the party should be urged to help with

The Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory's Working Party on the Labour Party Inquiry included John Bloxam, Mark Douglas, Ron Heisler, and Andrew

Hornung. This summary of the conclusions of the Working Party and the SCLV Steering Committee's discussions was written by Andrew Hornung.

MAKING MPs SERVE LABOUR

THIS IS THE issue that has got the right-wing press freaking out with stories of 20 — or is it 40, or 60 or perhaps even 80! — MPs ready for the chop for going against their CLP's wishes.

The SCLV thinks that once someone stands for election, that person should have to sign that they will observe Conference policy and its continuation through the NEC except as mandated otherwise by their CLPs. Not fulfilling this provision should entail loss of Party membership [the structure of Parliamentary representation does not allow for the direct recall of MPs].

All Party officers and MPs

should be paid no more than the average industrial wage. Again, because MPs are not paid by the Party, it would be a matter of getting them to sign an undertaking that they would hand to the NEC money in excess of that. Expenses should be paid as such.

The successful proposal on mandatory reselection at last year's Conference was very limited. If it is not supplemented with these provisions, little will change.

Is all this an unreasonable imposition on an independent-minded MP? The simple answer is that it is not an unreasonable imposition for an

MP loyal to the working class and loyal to democratic principles.

It should be added, though, that an MP could disagree violently with his or her party and say so publicly in a personal capacity. What he or she must deliver in line with local or national party policy is the vote in Parliament.

If, of course, a CLP is led up with an MP campaigning systematically against its own line, it can simply vote no confidence in the MP. Given the MP's signature to resign under these conditions, that would mean the end of the MP's parliamentary career.

INCREASE THE POWER OF CONFERENCE

CONFERENCE MUST remain the highest body of the Labour Party. It should not only decide on policy, but choose the Party leader and deputy leader.

Conference ought to elect the Cabinet/Shadow Cabinet and the Party's national officers, including the General Secretary. These elections should be regular annual elections, prepared for just as a democratic trade union would arrange its officers elections.

The immediate battle is likely to be over the election of the leader and deputy leader. The last Conference narrowly voted to leave the choice with the PLP. If at the next Conference the alternative to this is to have an "electoral college" to choose the leader, this should be supported.

But it would be much better to have Conference elect. Conference is bigger, more directly in touch with the membership and is the policy-

making body. Having a different body choosing the person from the body choosing the policy makes accountability more difficult.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy seems to have started off with this idea, but more recently dropped it in favour of the "electoral college" notion. Certainly people like Benn favour the "electoral college" — they even talk of it being so obvious that it is not worth arguing about. This seems like a bid to keep the choice heavily weighted in favour of choice by MPs.

Both the Bristol West submission and the CLPD submission make many useful proposals about the conduct of the Conference, about its standing orders and the way its agenda is organised.

The CLPD submission rightly attacks the present form of Parliamentary Report. The parliamentary report

should be critical and Conference should be able to debate it, proposing changes and so on.

The Report should be critical and should be given by someone nominated by the NEC to do so. Even the CDLP, which is in favour of keeping the PLP, believes that the NEC should be responsible for the Parliamentary Report. Anything would be better than the mixture of lies, evasions and mindless flannel that we get now.

If the Report is debated, then, of course, it would have to be circulated earlier.

At present Conference has the power to recall the Party's General Secretary on grounds of poor performance. Instead, this and other national officerships should be submitted to annual election as a democratic trade union would — with nomination dates, circulation of addresses by the Party and so on.

NOT MOLES BUT WEASELS

by
BRUCE ROBINSON

"DIVIDE AND rule" is the motto of those who have devoted so much effort to witchhunting. Militant recently. As Frank Allaun put it in "Labour Weekly", "They are out to remove the National Executive Committee because on some issues it has a left-wing majority." The right want to force the left onto the defensive and split it. As part of this, the witchhunters have been careful to distinguish between Militant and other 'moles' and what they call the 'legitimate left' around Tribune.

Their main argument against Tribune and the 'legitimate left' on the NEC is that they have not come out clearly enough against Militant and joined in the witchhunt.

Tribune's editorial responding to the publication of the Underhill Report shows that Tribune, despite a verbal opposition to witchhunts, is not prepared to come out clearly to defend Militant's right to be in the Labour Party.

While one sentence at the end of the editorial says "We must never fall into the lazy, intolerant and anti-democratic idea that bad arguments can be driven out by disciplinary methods", the whole of the rest of the article is dedicated to showing that Militant does not 'belong' in the Labour Party and to distancing Tribune from Militant.

The first half of the article is a general attack on Trotskyism, pointing to Militant as "entrists", who are "using the Labour Party for their own purpose." As so often, when Tribune wants to attack those to its left, it relies on gossip and differences among the far left to make their arguments sound less right-wing than they really are. Thus a large part of the article is devoted to



Jimmy Reid

explaining that "the other sects" consider Militant to be "reformist". They write, "one can understand why, when militant [sic] supporters accuse those who sympathise with this paper of being 'reformist' they are laughed out of court. For they themselves espouse the idea of public ownership through Parliamentary methods and what is clearly a 'reformist' trade union demand for a reduction in the working week to 35 hours."

Why then does Tribune so object to Militant if they have the same aims? Tribune quotes "the other sects" opinion of Militant not because it agrees with their analysis particularly, but because it provides a good

smokescreen for retailing a more sophisticated version of the justifications for the witchhunt put out by the right-wing and the capitalist press.

Tribune nowhere has the courage to argue openly that Militant should not be in the Labour Party. Instead there are all sorts of hints and innuendos, so that readers can draw their own conclusions. Militant, we are told, has "a Stalinist organisation which makes the British Communist Party look like the Liberal Party at prayer." After a reminder of Michael Foot's description of Tribune as "the most open conspiracy in the world", we are



Frank Allaun [above], Reg Underhill [right]

asked rhetorically "Is Militant and 'open conspiracy' or a 'closed' one?" The clear implication is that Militant is somehow a conspiracy of sinister plotters, though no evidence is offered beyond the circumstantial statement that if Militant didn't have its own "central committee and an internal membership which takes decisions to which the wider membership are not privy", then "it is the first Trotskyite group which has been run in this fashion".

Tribune is at pains to distance itself from Militant and establish itself as the 'legitimate' left as opposed to Militant. In reply to Ted Grant's claim that Militant is no more a secret organisation than Tribune, the editorial writes, "...we will make one thing clear: Tribune does not 'organise' within the Labour movement. This newspaper has no organic link with the Tribune group in the House of Commons or with the Tribune Groups which have formed themselves in the constituencies".

In other words, we are good, well-behaved boys and girls, not nasty "democratic centralist" plotters. Michael Foot is free to be in the Tribune Group of MP's even if he opposes democracy in the party and supports the Social Contract. Stan Orme has "no organic link" with us while applying repression in Northern Ireland. We can live and let live with them, but Militant... they're a bit too much to take.

Warning

As well as its editorial on Militant, Tribune devoted a full page to an article by Jimmy Reid entitled "A warning to the left in the trade unions". Nowhere does Reid state exactly who

is being warned about whom and again it is left to the reader to draw their own conclusions. He appears however to be arguing against the revolutionary left.

The theme of his article is the following: "To think that all instance of sectarianism, pseudo-militancy, sloganising and posturing, adventurism and reckless gambling with the lives and destinies of workers as if they were just pawns, were merely the whim of fate and isolated individuals is hardly logical. They all have a common philosophical basis: leftist dogmatism". Reid nowhere gives a specific example of what he is talking about so that this assertion remains an assertion on which Reid bases all sorts of conclusions.

Untrue

We are told that the "left dogmatists" have a contempt for democracy in the trade unions — something that is patently untrue if it is the revolutionary left he is attacking.



Reid has obviously not forgotten the lessons in how to slander political opponents he learnt in his long years in the Communist Party. Though he now devotes his talents to another cause, he still uses the same tricks. For example, he writes, "The left sectarians are objectively the allies of the far Right in the trade unions as elsewhere. If the CIA had been really clever, it would have funded their activities and make them even more vocal. There is no better way of strengthening the extreme Right".

Distance

The main practical conclusion he draws is that "no narrow Left shall meet, preceding Broad Left meetings." "...we should not allow dogmatists and sectarians to create such trouble by using the mantle of the Broad Left. Out in the open and on their own they haven't got a snowball in hell's chance".

Just as the editorial is grist to the witchhunters' mill, so Reid's article opens the way for the 'broad' left to drive the far left out of the main left organisations in many unions.

Tribune has recently devoted a large amount of space to attacking Trotskyism and anyone to its left, who it usually contemptuously dismisses as irrelevant.

Tribune's concern is to distance itself from the far left and assert its position against 'extremists' of left and right in the Labour Party. This leaves the road open for the right to win back the ground lost at the last conference. Only by organising a hard left, unwilling to bend to the right's pressure as Tribune has done, can we ensure that the left remains on the offensive.

The minimum demands of the Left

by FRANCES MORRELL



MANY LABOUR activists believe, like SOCIALIST ORGANISER, that "the strength of the labour movement lies in the rank and file". They would endorse your criticism that the narrow 'election machine' philosophy of the Labour Party has separated it from the mass of working people, while its elitism makes it unable to respond to the upsurge of rank and file feeling when it happens, for example, in the women's movement. They would agree with your that the first task of socialists today is to work to build anew a working class movement demanding socialist change.

Where I would suspect many activists would criticise your position, as set out in 'Where We Stand', is that your full employment programme, which is perfectly properly linked with demands for massive public expenditure increases, contains no real indication of how it is to be financed and maintained.

Labour Party members campaigning among working people against the Conservative government and for the return of a Labour government have a responsibility to present a set of workable proposals for dealing with people's most immediate needs, for jobs, homes, services, and a decent standard of living.

The campaign, which you support, to ensure that Labour MPs carry out the policy of the Party, is based on the assumption that the Party will decide what that policy should be.

THE NEXT Labour Government could be returned to power sooner than we expect, and in circumstances of unprecedented economic collapse.

Unless this Conservative

Government drastically alters its policies it could fail to complete its term despite its majority because it will be in open conflict with virtually every group except the City and multinational management whose interests monetarism exists to serve.

Many of Labour's Parliamentary leaders who under present circumstances will dominate the next Labour Government are virtually the same people whose policies were responsible for the million more unemployed and the £8 billion cuts in public spending between 1974 and 1979.

Their political views have not changed: their strategy is to survive the period of opposition, holding off changes in the policy and organisation of the Labour Party so that the mass movements of protest now growing amongst working men and women will sweep them back to power on the same terms as before.

Such an outcome would neatly fit the political analysis of the SWP. It would not help working people. It can and must be prevented. The left in the Labour Party should be unitedly campaigning throughout the labour movement around a set of minimum demands — minimum in two senses.

All the demands have to be met, and quickly, if the immediate needs of working people, men and women, for jobs, homes, public services, a decent standard of living, and equal rights and opportunities, are to be satisfied.

Second, the demands only represent objectives broadly held in common by different groups on the left, and amongst trade unionists. They do not represent the total programme of any individual or group, nor seek to supply one.

The demands will be opposed by a section of the Parliamentary Labour Party, the Conservative Party, Whitehall and the British Establishment, the press and international financial and industrial management.

Only the most concerted and uncompromising struggle can achieve them, a struggle involving large numbers of working men and women creating a shift in consciousness towards socialist values, mass pressure for institutional change and the organisational capacity to insist on it.

The left within the Labour Party should campaign and organise within the labour movement and among working people for:

- 1 The Return to Full Employment through public expenditure, public ownership, and trade planning.**
 - Full Employment should be named as the first priority of the next Labour Government
 - An explicit plan for the return to full employment should be formulated within the labour movement, involving an increase in public spending of £3,000 million a year on hospitals, schools, social services.
 - Trade should be planned to peg the growth of imports to the level of the growth of exports, and reflect agreement, particularly with Third World countries.
 - The full employment programme should be protected and sustained by exchange controls, trade planning and a major public re-industrialisation programme.
 - Labour's manifesto should reflect agreement within the labour movement on the economic plan, allocation of public spending and a plan for re-distribution of income and wealth which deals with unduly high and unduly low incomes.
 - The NEB should have the power to acquire big companies wherever necessary for re-industrialisation, which should be based on public investment and public ownership.
 - Proposals for workers' control and greater public accountability of industry should be seen as inseparable from this programme.
- 2 The creation of a Parliamentary Labour Party accountable to the labour movement, and serving its needs.**
 - Abolition of the House of Lords and creation of a single chamber Parliament.
 - A shift of power from Whitehall and the Cabinet to the PLP by requiring annual election of the Cabinet by the PLP, and all major proposals to be voted on by the PLP in a public vote at PLP meetings before being put to the House of Commons.
 - Every would-be Parliamentary candidate to give an official, signed undertaking before nomination to abide by Party policy.
 - PLP standing orders to include the same commitment.
 - The PLP report and NEC report on the work of the PLP to be put to Labour Conference and voted on, section by section.
 - Mandatory re-selection of MPs.
 - Election of the Leader and Deputy Leader by the labour movement.
- 3 Control of our resources**
 - Nationalisation of the North Sea Oil province at book prices.
 - Direction of all pension and banking funds into socially agreed objectives.
- 4 Equality for women**
 - Equal pay and equal opportunity objectives to be backed by tough positive discrimination programmes with quotas, special facilities and training schemes to bring women into every aspect of public political life and working life, and protect and extend their rights.
- 5 Democratic Control of the Police**
 - Committees of local councillors to be responsible for the overall conduct of the police in their area (including London).
 - Committees to have the power to appoint senior officers down to Superintendent, and scrutinise the operational workings of the police.
- 6 Freedom of Information**
 - A Freedom of Information Act whose provisions should apply to all public bodies, local as well as central government.
 - Provisions giving the individual right of access to information regarding him or her held by a public body.

Who won the great debate?

BRUCE ROBINSON reports on the big debate between the Labour Coordinating Committee and speakers from the revolutionary left.

OVER 2,500 people attended the 'Debate of the Decade' in Central Hall, Westminster, on March 17th. Tony Benn, Stuart Holland and Audrey Wise spoke for the Labour Coordinating Committee, and Tariq Ali of the IMG, Paul Foot of the SWP and Hilary Wainwright (co-author of 'Beyond the Fragments') were the speakers for revolutionary socialism.

A SCLV leaflet pointed out that the real alternatives were not represented in the debate:

"Tonight is a debate between revolutionaries who are outside the Labour Party and reformists who are in it. But what about revolutionaries in the Labour Party?"

"Do revolutionaries have to be outside the Labour Party, leaving the field open for the reformists to dominate the political horizons of most working people?"

Predictably but disappointingly, both the LCC and the speakers from the revolutionary left assumed the answer 'yes' to that question.

Tony Benn made a spirited defence of reformism in the Labour Party, arguing that 'reform has not failed, it has not been carried through'. All the LCC speakers argued that the next Labour government will not be like the last one, but hardly gave a convincing explanation of why or how.

Paul Foot and Tariq Ali both concentrated on attacking the records of past Labour governments and the strategy of a Parliamentary road to socialism. They were convincing when they argued that we cannot achieve socialism without destroying the existing state and replacing it with one based on workers' councils, which would be a hundred times more democratic.

But both Ali and Foot dismissed the Labour Party as if already today there existed large, independent parties able to compete directly with the Labour Party.

Ali referred to Labourism as "sickly and weak". The rhetoric hardly glosses over the fact that by failing to fight in the labour movement as it exists now, the IMG and SWP leave the arena open to the reformism they denounce.

Audrey Wise was able to deal with Ali's rhetoric easily. She emphasised that "the arena of struggle is the labour movement itself", adding, "Who got rid of Prentice? Not the SWP".

But then she went on to try to justify the 'Parliamentary Road' by confusing the use of Parliament (insofar as it is possible) to aid workers' struggles, with a strategy for winning socialism through Parliament.

"The revival of the Labour Party and the Labour left that has begun", the SCLV leaflet said, "can either be part of the same old cycle of 'left wing in opposition, right wing in office', or it can be turned into the start of putting class struggle politics firmly into the centre of working class life".

The debate showed that the LCC are paving the way for it to be 'the same old cycle' — and many of the revolutionary left are content to wait for the cycle to go through and then say, 'we told you so'.

by MARTIN THOMAS

BL CAR WORKERS, and Longbridge in particular, have long been reckoned to be one of the most militant and best-organised sections of the trade union movement.

Over the last two years, these workers have suffered a series of blows and defeats. Certainly they are no longer particularly well-paid. But the organisation is still comparatively strong.

Longbridge has some 800 stewards, making up a Joint Shop Stewards Committee which is coordinated by a small works committee and six unit committees in different parts of the works. The stewards are linked up across BL through a Combine Committee.

After 1975 the stewards' power seemed to have reached a peak with "participation". At unit, works and national level they were regularly consulted by the bosses over dozens of issues.

But the appearance of consultation was illusory. On February 1st, 1978, BL boss Michael Edwardes put his plans for BL to a conference of convenors, senior stewards and union officials. The bamboozled 'representatives' gave him a standing ovation.

Two weeks later Edwardes ripped up 'participation' by announcing the closure of Speke no.2 plant without any prior consultation.

It took some time for the message to get through to the senior stewards and convenors. But with the sacking of Derek Robinson last year and the bosses' current drive to impose their 92 pages of 'strings' without trade union agreement, it has become clear to anyone that the days of peaceful coexistence are over in BL.

Not just the illusory power of 'participation' is at stake, but also the real power of shop stewards' organisation. In the coming struggles — perhaps even in this immediate struggle — either Edwardes will be routed, or the stewards' organisation in BL will be shattered and strangled.

BL: Why the stakes are so high

In the car firms which step-by-step amalgamated to create BL, as in engineering generally, the shop stewards' movement gained strength mainly during the Second World War and in the relatively prosperous years of the 1950s and '60s.

During World War 2 trade union organisation was allowed to expand, in return for and together with trade union cooperation in keeping 'class peace' in wartime. After the war, demand for cars boomed, and the manufacturers could easily sell cars as quickly as they came off the line.

It made more sense for the bosses to hand out concessions than to risk damaging strikes. So the stewards were able to gain real strength through bargaining over piece work rates and other shop floor issues.

In Longbridge, 100% trade unionism was established around the end of the '40s. In 1953 the bosses made an attempt to check the growth of trade union strength.

It was common then for car firms to sack workers during seasonal downturns in sales, and take them on again when sales picked up.

In 1953 they sacked John McHugh and would not re-employ him.

McHugh was secretary of the Longbridge joint shop stewards and chairman of the Austin-Morris Merger Committee of shop stewards. His union, the NUVB (now amalgamated into the TGWU), struck in his defence. It was one of the biggest car workers' strikes of the 1950s, but it was eventually broken when the bosses forced a piecemeal return to work by saying that everyone who stayed out on strike was sacked.

With the industry still expanding fast, the 1953 defeat was overcome. After a big strike against sackings in 1956, Longbridge management began to have informal meetings with the works committee, and finally recognised it formally.

As late as the Ryder report of 1975 (which brought in 'participation') the bosses were still thinking of expansion. But world capitalism was stumbling into crisis, and the car industry into acute crisis. Soon the projections in the Ryder report looked like science fiction. Cutbacks were the order of the day.

There are always two basic ruling-class responses to growing working-class militancy and organisation. They are usually combined in various proportions. One is to try to beat down the workers by direct assault. The other is to divert and blunt the workers' militancy by doling out concessions, drawing the workers' lead-

ers into the philosophy and practice of class collaboration, and helping to establish those workers' leaders as a bureaucracy separated from the rank and file.

The 1975 'participation' scheme in BL was the high point of the class-collaboration approach. Giving time off and office facilities to the senior stewards, and organising negotiations with them in plush hotels, are all part of the same approach. But — in periods of crisis, at least — this collaboration approach is always a temporary tactic for the bosses.

Trade unionists like Derek Robinson may be 'pleasantly surprised to find that Lord Ryder would phone him up' (as a Longbridge steward reported it to *Socialist Review*). They may imagine that a new era of industrial democracy has arrived.

But for the bosses it is just a matter of using the class collaboration schemes to demoralise the workers and weaken their organisation — and then sweeping the schemes aside when they have served their purpose.

Once the workers' organisation in BL had reached a certain strength, its leaders had two options: either to make their organisation a focus and a centre for a reorientation of the whole labour movement, taking a lead in solidarity in every major struggle, making its own struggles models of democratic organisation and advanced militancy — or to accept the bosses' class-collaboration approach.

The stewards' leaders, dominated politically by the Communist Party, took the second approach. Instead of building up militancy and awareness in the rank and file, they have built up cynicism, disillusion, and confusion.

Now the need for a sharp turn is urgent. With the car industry tobogganing into slump, there is little chance of a big defeat being surmounted as easily as 1953's.

BL workers need a drive for democracy in their organisation, and a new policy based not on making the firm 'viable' but on fighting for workers' control in BL as part of a fight for workers' power in society.



EAST END NEWS

Cracking the Tory press monopoly

by KATE HOLMAN

WITH THE majority of Britain's daily newspapers owned by five or six major companies with broad business interests in fields like shipping, oil and restaurants, and with local newspapers falling under the control of mammoth news groups such as TRN, the Press is clearly serving the interests of a narrower and narrower section of the community.

If the much-publicised concept of 'Press Freedom' draws a hollow laugh from socialists, trade unionists, women, racial minorities and other people, the difficulties inherent in producing an alternative voice to counter the bias of the existing Press have at the same time been awesome.

The production of a daily newspaper is enormously costly — at least £3 million to launch it — and there is 'advertiser resistance' to any publication that doesn't bolster the capitalist status quo.

Another problem is control.

Last year at the TUC conference the Campaign for Press Freedom was set up, sponsored by well-known trade unionists, journalists,

and MPs, with the object of investigating the feasibility of a national labour daily. Apparently the investigations go on, and as yet there is no unified media response to the hardships inflicted on many people in this country through current Tory policies.

But in the meantime, while a replacement for the *Daily Herald* remains an alluring ideal, a number of local initiatives have brought an excited response.

One of these, the *East End News*, has been planned on a more ambitious scale than the rest, and already adopted as a 'pilot project' by the Campaign for Press Freedom.

New

The *East End News* is a new, and in many ways crucial experiment in newspaper production. Its aim is to provide a weekly focus for opposition to cuts in public spending and other attacks on living standards in East London.

The *East End* is an area with more than its share of

problems: poor housing, unemployment climbing steeply through the run-down of the docks, inadequate health, education and leisure facilities, plus the complexities of differing racial groups learning to live together. Yet it is areas like this that are being hit hardest by Government policies.

Stance

The *East End News* will be political in that its news coverage will take the stance of support for working people, but it will not deal in political theories. Its editorial policy will exclude discrimination — whether on grounds of race, sex, or sexual orientation. But in format it will not be very different from the traditional local newspaper, with plenty of emphasis on local events, cinema, TV and sport.

What makes the *East End News* different from earlier 'alternative' newspapers is its administration structure. The paper will be run by a 'consumer' cooperative. In other words, the members will include not only the workers but also

the readers, combining a broad collection of local organisations and individuals in East London.

They will become members by purchasing a minimum of five £1 shares. The paper will be run by a management committee elected from among the shareholders; and frequent general meetings will try to achieve the widest possible community control of the format and direction of the paper.

Already about £6,000 has been raised from donations and membership fees.

Appeal

But £25,000 is the target that must be met before the *EEN* can launch with any confidence of surviving for at least three months. An appeal has been launched to the trade unions, and if the Campaign for Press Freedom's pilot project is to get off the ground, they must back their nominal support for the Campaign with hard cash.

East End News has been formally backed by the TUC,

as well as Labour MPs including Ian Mikardo.

It was the takeover and closure of the *East Ender*, a conventional local paper but one with a national reputation for campaigning against racism, which left the Greater London and Essex Newspaper group with a monopoly in Tower Hamlets for the right-wing *East London Advertiser*. This in turn was the spur to local journalists, trade unionists and residents to launch the *East End News*.

Comparable projects throughout the country have had mixed fortunes. The *Dundee Standard* is going strong on a limited basis, while the *Hull News* folded within two weeks.

But if the struggles of people in East London to resist the most savage attack on their living standards for years are not to be trivialised and distorted, the *East End News* needs strong support. With the backing of the community that will run it, the *East End News* could provide an invaluable foundation for a labour movement press.

For further information, contact 102 Western Road, London E13.

Socialist Organiser

As Sirs and Co sell out, S Wales stays on strike for jobs

ON TUESDAY April 1st the ISTC negotiating committee voted to accept the 15½% plus strings formula of the official Committee of Inquiry.

Many rank and file steelworkers were furious. In South Yorkshire the news was received bitterly, with Ted Thorne of the Yorkshire and Humberside Strike Committee saying he was 'disgusted'.

Earlier the same day shop stewards at a national TGWU docks delegate conference had voted overwhelmingly for a national strike to extend the Liverpool dockers' battle over the blacking of steel. The steel unions could have won more.

South Wales steelworkers announced that they would stay on strike to save their jobs, whatever the national union leaders said. The 'strings' in the official formula are just a way to see that the 52,000 jobs which BSC want to axe go quicker.

Steel workers at Shelton Bar said they would not cross a picket line to go back to work, and expect a flying picket to come up from Wales. Calls have also been made from rank and file steelworkers for a national recall conference while Bill Sirs has cancelled the ISTC conference, saying the union can't afford it!

The day before the negotiating committee vote — Monday March 31st — JO THWAITES went to the picket lines at Ipswich docks and talked to steelworkers about how they saw things in the 13th week of the strike.

In the last week of March T&G officials from London Docks came up to Ipswich to speak to the dockers there about blacking all steel. On Thursday 27th at lunch-time they held a meeting in Cliff Quay of all the dockers and agreed no steel would be delivered from Ipswich docks to anywhere around the country; the steel would be put into storage instead.

'Great', said the steel pickets at the dock gate. 'At last this place will quieten down.'

'Till the steel strike started, Ipswich was a fairly quiet port with cargoes like food, flour and fertiliser going through. But since January steel has started flooding through the little ports and Ipswich was one of these'.

But next morning lorry after lorry came out of the docks loaded with steel. Each was stopped and asked not to cross the picket. One of the Rotherham pickets takes up the story.

'The bosses were obviously making a last ditch attempt to get all the steel they had in the dock out. Practically all the drivers were T&G members, but they just carry a card so they can work — they don't know what being in a union means. We took their numbers, though.'

Another picket went on: 'They said they were taking it into storage, but in Birmingham! Some chance! It was going straight to Aston; the GKN plant there. That's where its going. Some of the drivers had the nerve to say they were taking the steel direct to Vauxhall Motors in Luton.'

'And one of them turned round to us, saying "Who's Moss Evans?" when we reminded him about the T&G instruction'.

One of the other men added, 'Yes, but he was just being cheeky. He knows perfectly well who Moss Evans is. He was trying to make a joke out of it, but he was a scab, same as all the rest.'

It started to rain, and the pickets decided it was time for a cup of tea. We all piled into the mini-bus they'd come down from Rotherham in. Across the road, the local cops decided to have their tea-break too.

'See, the problem has been that we've not been getting the solidarity we needed. If the dockers, like in Liverpool, had come out from day 1, we'd have won by now.'

'If Moss Evans had been clearer in his advice to members, we wouldn't have had to argue with T&G drivers about what was a finished product, as they seemed to think it was OK to move finished products.'

'To me, a finished product is something like a washing machine, but they were saying that finished products were billets, so that meant they thought they could move anything without going against Moss Evans' advice.'

'Advice like that we can do without...'

At this point news that the Committee of Inquiry had reported came over the radio. The van erupted with shouts of 'Rubbish! It stinks! Who are they to recommend anything — what do they

The Rotherham Red Army speaks out 'We should have had a General Strike'



This was the 'independent inquiry' that didn't give the steel workers what they wanted: Marsh, the ex-Labour minister [now a Tory] sat as the bosses' blue-eyed boy, Lever the millionaire former Labour MP now in the Lords was the 'independent' chairman, and Bill Keys, leader of SOGAT, represented the union side. No wonder the Tories said they didn't need to intervene.

know about it!

One picket went on, 'If we have to go back we'll be going back under pressure. I want to make that quite clear. The way this strike has been run makes me really angry.'

'It's not so bad in Rotherham, but the No. 3 Division is famous for being the most militant. We're not called the Rotherham Red Army for nothing!'

At this point the others told him to shut up, but he went on, 'No, we've been alright in Rotherham, we've had branch meetings every week, and we've all had our say on Saturday mornings.'

'We've had a joint strike committee and mass meetings, but it's not been like that everywhere. And even we don't know what's going on in the rest of the country, except from what we hear on the news.'

One of the pickets who hadn't said anything came in: 'Yes, that's one of the things I want to say. It's alright for the leaders at the top to call us out, but we get no say in who decides when we go back.'

'What do they know about what it's like on the picket line? When have we ever seen Bill Sirs on a picket. We should have a delegate meet-

ing with men from all over the country to vote on this Inquiry, then we'd see about going back

'But if it's just the leaders, I reckon we'll be back at work after Easter!'

The other picket came back: 'No, I think we can go on for a bit yet, if we stick together. The problem might be the craftsmen. They could well accept this inquiry.'

'But to get back to the organisation of the strike, we should have better communication between the plants, then we wouldn't feel so isolated in Rotherham, we'd know what was going on in S. Wales and in Teeside and in Scotland and we'd be more united on the jobs question.'

'It's not much of a problem for us now but in places like Shotton and Corby and South Wales it is. We know what solidarity means now and we should be united on the jobs.'

Another picket looked up from his newspaper. 'So much for Sirs' concern about the jobs. I'll tell you what he's worried about.'

'If 52,000 steel jobs go — that means the membership of the union goes down. When it goes down below 100,000 he'll lose his seat on the TUC General Council. That's why he's

sandwiches, they've got mustard in them?' Pulling a face, he said 'But the TUC have been worse than that, they've helped to split our ranks. They should have called everyone out together, they could have done it, but they were scared. They don't know what solidarity's about.'

'But I can tell you after this is over, we'll support any workers out against the Tories. We know what it's all about now.'

'Another thing, look at the way the BSC sharks and the private sector bosses have lied their way through this strike.'

'First they said they couldn't afford anything more than 2%, then they upped it a bit. Now they say they can afford 15%, though it's not really that much, it's more like 10% plus 4% if we cut our throats.'

'Then what do we hear from big Dan Norton, he's got enough to be able to buy bits of Shotton to save the jobs. And you know where he got that money from, he was getting all our work, wasn't he? He's done it on our backs.'

'Then in comes Keith Joseph, the quiet man, we never hear a word from him till GKN in Birmingham was threatened. He owns half the shares in it. And from the noise he made about Norton buying Shotton, it looks like he wants it for himself.'

'It just shows how much money they're losing. They've made money out of us, by scabbing, all through this strike.'

'We should have had a general strike. I hope they do it on May 14th.'

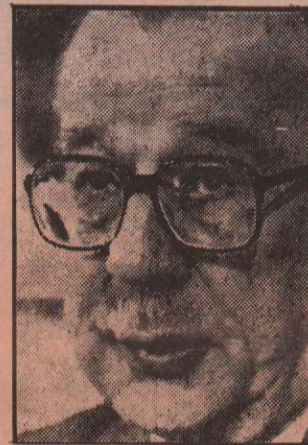
One of the pickets who'd been on the gate came into the van. 'We could do with your mouths out on the picket, you know.'

The picket who'd complained about the sandwiches said as we got out of the van:

'I just want to say one more thing. The Tories are out to smash us and the bit in the Budget about strikers getting £12 before we get any dole proves it. We should have a general strike about that on its own.'

'But if Sirs accepts this inquiry, we steel workers should march on his cosy office in London and kick him out of his comfy chair and get someone in who really will fight back at the Tories.'

'We must all stick together and we will boot them out.'



British Steel chief Charles Villiers says steelworkers can't get a pay rise without boosting productivity. On the day the 'independent inquiry' sold the steelworkers short, he got a pay rise of £7,000, bringing his pay packet up to £48,500... for presiding over the rundown of British Steel. On the same day the Boyle Report came out, recommending that industry chiefs get another 20% on top of that again.

worried about the jobs, that's what he's concerned about.'

Tea-break over, about half the pickets went outside back to the dock gates and the police appeared again. The other pickets poured another cup of tea.

'What the Tories are out to do is to split the workers. They want to split our ranks. And just now the TUC are letting them get away with it.'

'Who made these egg

BY striking after Easter, BL car workers can defend their jobs, their working conditions, and their organisation. They can help the rank-and-file steelworkers fighting against Bill Sirs' efforts to sell them out. And they can block the Tories' rampaging offensive against the working class.

But the executives of the AUEW and the EETPU are trying to sabotage the strike.

The all-union Joint Negotiating Committee called for strike action, but the AUEW and EETPU executives have instructed their members to work.

AUEW President Terry Duffy said that 'soundings of opinion' had shown that AUEW members in BL were two-to-one against a strike. He was just inventing figures to justify his betrayal.

There was no vote by AUEW members across BL. At most plants there was neither a

mass meeting nor a ballot. At Longbridge there were 'soundings of opinion' — but some AUEW sections never had their opinions asked.

Where there were votes, they did not go Duffy's way.

AUEW members at Cowley Assembly plant, Jaguar Browns Lane, and Llanelli voted for a strike. Swindon and Cowley Body plant voted against.

The whole Longbridge Joint Shop Stewards Committee

(AUEW stewards included) at a well-attended meeting voted with only three abstentions to back the strike call, and unions at Jaguar Browns Lane gave the bosses five days notice that they would strike whatever happened nationally.

Certainly it is clear that the big majority of all BL workers wanted a strike — and even if AUEW members were against it would be the AUEW's duty to go along with the majority.

BL is at a crossroads. If the workers do not strike, the

bosses have said they will consider their ultimatum of a 5% pay rise and 92 pages of strings to be accepted.

The 5% pay rise (10% for skilled workers) is bad enough.

It could mean a 15% pay cut in real terms. But the worst of it is the 92 pages — and the BL bosses' threat that they will take disciplinary action against any worker organising opposition.

Last November the AUEW executive sabotaged the rank

and file strike movement against the sacking of Longbridge convenor Derek Robinson. Their treachery now is an open invitation to BL bosses to start a wider purge of militants.

The 92-page document would hit shop floor organisation hard, too. It calls for total job and shift mobility and flexibility, and proposes to cut shop stewards out of the process of bargaining over standards for particular jobs.

The bosses and the Tories are out to wreck union organisation at BL, turn the car factories into hell-holes of exploitation and speed-up, and probably break up BL too.

There is no way of getting round that. Some people have suggested accepting the 5% and fighting the 'strings' section by section. That would just help the bosses to divide and rule, picking off and probably victimising militants.

Ducking a fight now and

hoping to fight later is no answer. Defeat without a fight is the worst sort of defeat.

The right wing executives of the AUEW and EETPU seem to believe that they must accept all the strings and avoid all strikes because that is the only way to stop factory closures on a huge scale. No doubt BL boss Michael Edwardes will react to a strike by threatening closures. But for BL workers the AUEW/EETPU line just means going for death by slow (or not so slow) poisoning as the alternative to death by the guillotine.

The only answer is:

- All out after Easter
- Send out flying pickets to cover all depots and to make sure all BL plants are out
- If Edwardes threatens closure, occupy the plants. Fight for the reorganisation of production under workers' control, and work-sharing without loss of pay.

SABOTAGE!

AUEW and EETPU back BL bosses