

Socialist Organiser

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Claimants and strikers 10p

20p

After Wembley Defeat the MPs' backlash

ANDREW WARD (REPORT)



Victory! Conference cheers after the vote for 30:30:40

Rank & file wins at Wembley, but NEC wobbles on re-selection. See pp 5-8

Longbridge sackings inquiry: it's a whitewash

NO LONGBRIDGE worker had any great faith in the management/union inquiry into the sacking of eight workers. But the results, announced on Friday 30th, were if anything even worse than expected.

Six men (including four shop stewards) stay sacked. The bosses have made a small concession which costs them very little — and in return the unions have abandoned a principle by half-giving their approval to six sackings.

So the unions now have to make their minds up definitely. Are they willing to let the bosses get away with sacking people on vague trumped-up charges like 'ringleader of an unruly mob'?

If they are, nobody who opposes the bosses in any way will be safe in Longbridge. The plant will become an industrial police state. Anybody who doubts this need only look at BL's new disciplinary policy document recently leaked to the press, which proposes regular personal searches of BL workers.

The trade unions have to renew the struggle to reinstate the six and to protect the rights of every Longbridge worker.

Longbridge convenor Jack Adams said: "The inquiry was a complete stitch-up. The union officials did not carry out the mandate given them of establishing reasonable doubt in every case. They went along with management". (The problem is — it was Adams himself who recommended 'suspending' the strike on January 4th in favour of this inquiry he now calls a stitch-up.

Roy Orchard, one of the sacked shop stewards, said: "If Longbridge is to learn any lessons from this, it should be: never enter into an inquiry of this nature. Keep the power where it should be, on the shop floor".

See page 12

Camden faces 'surcharge' threat Tories plan a new 'Clay Cross'

by Martin Thomas

THE LABOUR council in Camden, North London, has been picked out as another Clay Cross.

The District Auditor (a government official) is

taking the Labour councillors to the High Court in order to get them surcharged and disbarred from office.

The Clay Cross councillors were surcharged and disbarred for failing to raise

rents in line with the Tory Housing Finance Act. In Camden, the District Auditor's case is based on the council's above-the-odds pay settlement with its manual workers in 1979.

The District Auditor says that the councillors should pay the extra cost of the 'Camden supplement', over and above the 1979 national settlement, out of their own pockets. This would mean bankrupting the councillors with bills for about £60,000 each.

The District Auditor is also threatening to bring another lot of proceedings to surcharge and disbar the councillors for 'financial irresponsibility' if they don't toe his line on three issues this year. He says that they should raise rents by £3, cut 600 of the 1130 Direct Labour jobs, and pay no wage rise to the manual

workers this year (on the grounds that they already have the 'Camden supplement').

The message is clear. Any Labour council trying to defend local jobs, services, or living standards, will be hit with the full force of the law.

Now the labour movement must mobilise to defend the Camden councillors. They must not be isolated like Clay Cross was. Trade unions and tenants' associations should start organising now for industrial action and rent/rate strikes if the Labour councillors are surcharged and disbarred. And the national trade union and Labour Party leaders must be pressed to give official support.

At the same time, we must beware of the councillors backsliding under pressure. The Camden Labour group is meeting on Wednesday 4th. The meeting will be lobbied by local trade unionists, tenants, and Labour activists, but the danger is that it will give way on the rents, the Direct Labour jobs, and this year's pay, hoping that this proof of 'responsibility' will see them right in the High Court on the 1979 pay issue.

The rank and file must call for the councillors to stand firm — and back that call with solid promises of support action on a scale that will force the Tories to back down.

INSIDE

Tony Benn on positive discrimination

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Two pages on the cuts fight

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Polish workers win their Saturdays

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JOIN SCOTLAND'S MARCH AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT
ASSEMBLY: BLYTHSWOOD SQUARE, 11 AM, SAT. FEB. 21
MARCH: QUEEN'S PARK, 1 PM, SUN. FEB. 22

March against the Tories

Organised by the Labour Party

Glasgow, Saturday 21 February.

Assemble 11am Blythwood Square

for march to Queens Park.



Ken Livingstone

Camden councillor Ken Livingstone told Socialist Organiser:

"My view is that we should still oppose the rent rises and pay the wage rises. If we give in on this, there is no point in having a Labour council. We should stand firm on all three fronts.

"But we've got to mobilise a really massive campaign in the labour movement. If we just rely on getting some clever barrister, we won't get anywhere".

Labour's League of Lemmings

ANYONE lying awake trying to think up terrible curses to hurl at the Gang of Three, Four, Thirteen or more can give up. The ultimate in what Alexander Pope called "damning with faint praise", has been penned by a *Daily Telegraph* leader writer.

"The role to which Providence seems to be beckoning the Gang of Three", he writes, "is that of a suicide squad. That role calls not only for courage, but for a kind of courage which does not come easily to natural politicians. Let us hope they will rise to it."

Yes, let's hope so.

Hypocrite of the week award must go to the *Daily Mail* (if they don't already hold it in perpetuity) for the article by Screaming Paul Johnson, the ex-New Statesman editor, on the Labour Party Special Conference.

According to Johnson, "the fascist Left militants" can be compared to Black-shirt Leader, Oswald Mosley. No reference here to the fact that those of the same political persuasion as the Left today were fighting Mosley on the streets, while the *Daily Mail* was acting as his mouthpiece, the only openly pro-fascist daily in Britain.

Today the lovers of the old way of organising the Labour Party are posing as democrats. To some people this awkwardly struck pose might even seem convincing.

There was a time, however, when the right wing



(and the not-so-right-wing) could be a lot more frank. Take Richard Crossman's introduction to the 1963 edition of Walter Bagehot's famed bible of British reaction, *The British Constitution*.

"In order to break down the walls of social oligarchy which surrounded Parliament, a battering ram was required, and the Labour Party was created for this purpose.

"Its structure was determined by three conditions. First, it must have very large funds at its disposal; hence the reliance on trade union financing which led to the sponsoring of trade



Richard Crossman

union candidates by particular unions. Secondly, since it could not afford, like its opponents, to maintain a large army of paid party workers, the Labour Party required militants — politically conscious socialists to do the work of organising the constituencies.

"But since these militants tended to be extremists, a constitution was created which maintained their enthusiasm by apparently creating a full party democracy while excluding them from effective power. Hence the concession in principle of sovereign powers to the delegates at the annual conference, and

the removal in practice of most of this sovereignty through the trade union block vote, on the one hand, and the complete independence of the Parliamentary Labour Party on the other."

Having made inroads into the independence of the PLP, we must now fight to democratise the block vote while strengthening the connection between the Party and trade unionists.

Banking, industrial and press tycoon Sir James Goldsmith has produced his statement to the Media Committee of the Conservative Party as a pamphlet. This idiotic booklet bears the title, "The Communist Propaganda Apparatus and other threats to the Media."

According to its author, the statement is a plea for "the freedom of the press... an essential element for the protection of a free society."

Goldsmith, whose speech coincided with the final stages of the negotiations over who should own the *Times* for which he was a bidder, is the owner of *Now* magazine. In an exhibition of what freedom of the press really means — the freedom of the press barons to influence millions simply because they are rich enough to own a publication — Goldsmith recently stopped all copies of *Now* being sent to France (he was too late to stop distribution in Britain) because of an article in it critical of President Giscard d'Estaing. Goldsmith is a personal friend of Giscard.

Children's sexuality

It is a pity that the article by Gerry Byrne, 'Stop the PIE trial', in SO 32, avoided the issue of children's sexuality raised by the PIE trial, attempting to treat it solely as a case of use of the conspiracy laws.

It is no coincidence that in times of economic/political crisis, reactionary forces seek to roll back the liberalisation of attitudes achieved during previous times of economic boom. Having scored a triumph over an almost universally unpopular group of people, right wing bigots will then be in a much stronger position to launch an attack on the position of women and gays.

In this present offensive against paedophiles, the strength of the right lies in the widespread denial of children's sexuality (even among the Left).

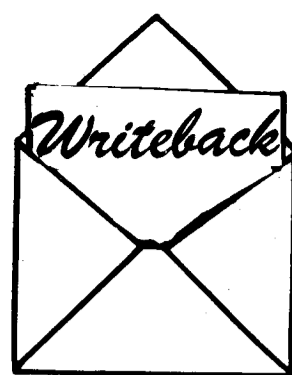
If the Left is to associate itself with the demand for sexual freedom for the young, as it should and indeed does in some cases (as with the age of consent for gay men under 21) then it must take up and discuss the question of paedophilia,

since if given a free choice on sexual matters many children might choose to have relationships with adults. It is certainly a difficult issue but this is no excuse for ignoring it.

As Gerry Byrne points out, it is often argued that present power relationships mean that any adult-child sexual relationship is oppressive, not liberating. But if this is so, then it is even more true of adult male-female relationships, since these are socially sanctioned rather than condemned.

What would be our argument if male-female relationships were illegal and it was proposed to legalise them? I would argue that all male-female and adult-child relationships in this society are oppressive, but I would also argue that as social beings we have a need for parental and sexual relationships.

This means that the oppression inherent in these relations cannot be avoided simply by forbidding them. It is a matter of urgency that there be a full discussion on the Left and in the movements of oppressed groups



on the question of child sexuality and whether/how the rights of children can be protected in sexual (and other) relationships with adults. (Perhaps a good start would be to stop treating children as being in need of protection and to enable them to become involved in running their own lives).

The 'Campaign against Public Morals' have done us all a service by initiating a debate on paedophilia. We must see that it continues.

The title of the CAPM pamphlet is 'Paedophilia and public morals', and it is available at 95p from CAPM, BM 1151, London WC1V 6XX.

Les Hearn

Longbridge: all stitched up

THE COVERAGE of the Longbridge victimisations in *Socialist Organiser* has been one of the few fair and unbiased presentations of this issue. In fact, without the efforts of SO supporters and the SWP in the plant, I don't think the fight to defend these brothers would ever have got off the ground again after the dispute was initially suspended.

The feeling of the ordinary members now is that these men have been stitched up and it is a clear case of victimisation. The trouble is transforming that feeling into action.

The crying need within the plant is for leadership, and it certainly isn't coming from the Works Committee or the union officials. Many workers now feel that the struggle is lost. They say that the CAB 1 workers should never have returned until all the men were reinstated.

But at the January 4th meeting the Works Committee gave an open invitation to sabotage the dispute. The ordinary members at the meeting felt trapped by the complete lack of leadership from the Works Committee and the cowardice of the officials of both unions, especially the AUEW. In that situation, it was not surprising that they voted to return to work.

As for the management's threat to sack the men in dispute, I feel that the minute they sent out a dismissal notice, the rest of the plant would have been out of the gates like a shot.

On the shop floor there have been no illusions in the inquiry. In fact, many ordinary members were predicting exactly what has happened — two taken back and the rest dismissed.

To them, it is quite obvious that there would never be

any real justice coming from this inquiry, and the unions should never have allowed it.

GEORGE MAKIN,
TGWU shop steward, BL Longbridge.

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COMMON MARKET: TIME TO MAKE A REAL CHOICE

Dear Comrades,

The recent debate in these pages on the Common Market has been necessary and enlightening. However, all the contributions tend to treat the question in the abstract as a fixed problem rather than examining it in the context of specific situations. The position socialists take on the EEC may differ according to the concrete circumstances facing the working class at a particular point in time. It is not simply a once and for all question of capitalism versus socialism, as Graham Norwood suggests, nor always a question of working class independence versus class collaboration, as John Bloxam implies.

SCALE

In this discussion where we start from is important. The EEC does not represent, as most of the nationalist left appear to think, a political conspiracy to weaken the workers. The 25-year post-war boom led to major developments in new technology, a shift to new advanced industries and the development of multinational enterprise. The growth in the scale of capitalist enterprise and the increasing centralisation

of capital made the nation state appear increasingly inadequate in its developing role as the manager of capital in a situation where smaller national capital was squeezed. This was particularly the case for the small European capitals in a world market dominated by the USA.

The EEC was an attempt to provide an economic and political framework within which European capital could compete with the USA, the first continental capitalism. The blueprint saw first the customs union, the merging of companies in member states into European companies, complemented finally by moves at state level to provide an integrated European state for an integrated European capital. This ideal agenda was crippled by competing national interests and ideology and particularly the disintegration of the post-war boom. A distinctive European capital, still less a distinctive European state, has failed to emerge. What we are faced with is a minimal framework of rules, a weak bureaucracy, a formal means for member states to negotiate directly in an attempt to reconcile competing interests.

A limited arrangement rather than a business

utopia, the EEC is a capitalist organisation. Barratt Brown is right when he says "... all the economic institutions, rules and regulations of the EEC are designed to achieve just one economic end: that the allocation of resources is determined in the market by the return in profit to private capital." The same is true of the United Kingdom. In January 1973 and June 1975, therefore, the working class was not facing a choice between a socialist Britain or even a Britain in which major steps were being taken in a socialist direction, and the EEC.

LUDDISM

What was at stake was whether British capitalism should join or remain outside a wider capitalist organisation. Which choice could provide the most efficient conditions for exploiting the workers? For the workers the problem would be essentially the same in or out.

Socialists should not have opposed the EEC any more than they would oppose the entry of one capitalist firm into an amalgamation with another. In both cases the correct approach is to fight the impact by linking up with

workers elsewhere. To do otherwise would be to indulge in Luddism or unpaid management consultancy to intensify sectionalism in one case, nationalism in the other. In 1971 and 1973 the majority of the left participated in a dangerous diversion: the EEC question had nothing to do with the real problems facing the working class. The anti-EEC campaign — inevitably class collaborationist and nationalist — did nothing to help the struggle against the Industrial Relations Act and the Heath government. By reinforcing the ideas of the national interest and uniting the Tory right with the Labour left, it helped in 1974-5 to defuse for Callaghan-Healey the movement which removed Heath from power.

In 1981, however, the situation is different: the Brighton decisions and other developments hold out the possibility of a future Labour government which would act in the interests of the working class. A future Labour government which, for example, took even a minimal step of nationalising 25 profitable monopolies would face an immediate capitalist backlash.

The mainspring of this backlash would not be the EEC. But such a govern-

ment's anti-capitalist momentum would be incompatible with EEC membership. Steps towards a planned economy and state control of foreign trade are an anathema to the free competition enshrined in the Treaty of Rome. Barratt Brown exaggerates but has a point when he says "the system of political organisation in the EEC has just one political



end: to prevent any one of the member states from breaking away from the capitalist embrace."

For a Labour government taking socialist measures to break with the EEC would increase the morale of the workers and constitute a confirmation of its socialist intentions similar to withdrawal from NATO. Such a government would point out that far from deserting the European working classes it was freeing itself from the shackles of their capitalists as it moved against its own. It would argue for Euro-

pean workers to follow its example and would support them in so doing. In these circumstances withdrawal would not as in the 70s strengthen the idea of the national interest and the unity of workers. It would weaken and dislocate UK and international capital. It would not be, as in the 70s, an isolated capitalist decision, but an essential part of a socialist programme.

It is for socialists to argue through today the programme to which a future Labour government should initially be committed. Vagueness gives the right wing room for manoeuvre. We must think in terms of specifics in, of course, the full understanding that immense direct working class pressure will be required for the adoption and even a start on the implementation of such a programme. If we are talking about such a programme then we must talk about withdrawal from the EEC as an ingredient.

We should do so by making clear to the nationalist left that we will fight for withdrawal contingent on the introduction of policies which make withdrawal their natural consequence. It should come second not first. We are only interested in withdrawal as an organic part of a move towards a socialist society not as a substitute or a chloroform for such a move. Raised in this way it becomes a method of attacking their chauvinism and a means of forcing them to put their money where their mouth is.

JOHN McILROY

H-Blocks: British provoke a new confrontation

by Bruce Robinson

THE agreement which ended the hunger strikes in the H-Blocks and Armagh jail now seems to have broken down completely.

The agreement was based on both sides making a number of concessions, one after the other, so that a "step-by-step" deescalation would take place.

To begin with 10 prisoners came off the "dirty protest", moved into clean cells with furniture, washed and shaved and had their hair cut. In exchange, they thought they were to be provided with their own clothes to wear in their leisure time — which was flexibly defined in the 34-page document which laid down the basis on which the hunger strike ended.

On the 23rd, the authorities in the H-Blocks took most of the clothing (except for underwear and socks) that the 10 men's relatives

brought for them. Previously they had refused it. If they had handed it over to the prisoners and allowed them to wear it, the way would have been clear for a complete end to the "dirty protest" and implementation of the next stages of the agreement.

Instead the prison authorities put the prisoners in an impossible position by devising a Catch-22: civilian

clothes are only available for leisure hours to prisoners who conform to prison regulations, but the prisoners were not prepared to conform fully to the regulations until the authorities had made some concessions — that after all was the object of the "step-by-step" settlement. The prison authorities therefore refused to pass on the clothing and justified this by claiming that the prisoners "did not intend to conform" to prison rules.

This meant that the prison authorities had gone back on the "step-by-step" settlement and were demanding complete acquiescence from the prisoners before they would make any concessions. This was at least partly the result of pressure from Ian Paisley, who two days before had written to Northern Ireland Secretary Humphrey Atkins, pointing out the prison rules and challenging Atkins to say if they still held.

The prisoners were naturally not prepared to surrender totally as the prison authorities demanded. On the 29th of January 90 prisoners who had come off the "no wash" protest and been moved to clean cells, smashed up the furniture in their cells. The following day they rejoined over 300 others who had remained on the "dirty protest".

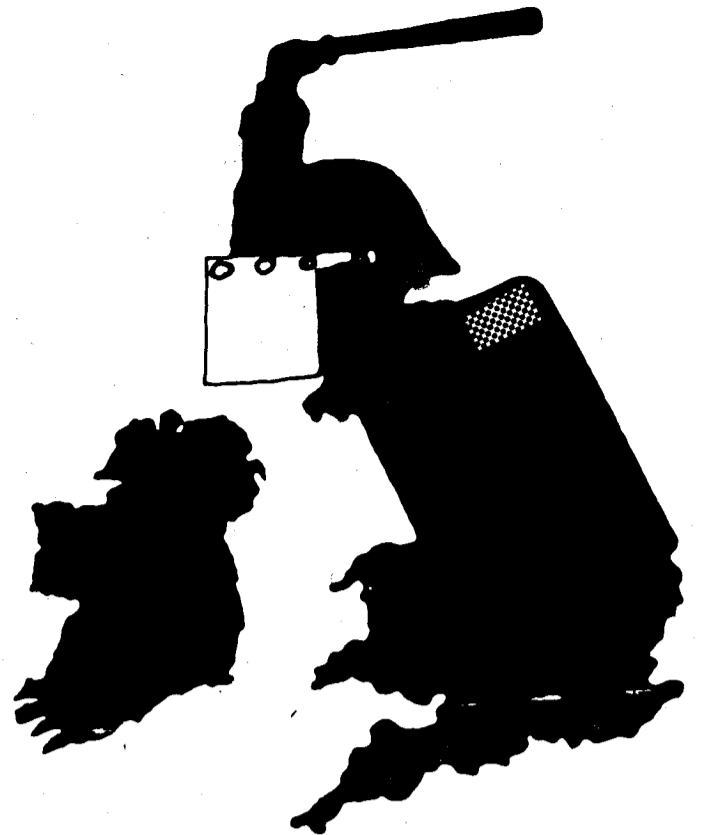
By refusing to implement the agreement reached in December, the prison authorities and the British government have set the scene for another confrontation with the Republican prisoners. Provisional Sinn Fein is already talking about a possible resumption of the hunger strike. It may now be more difficult to mobilise support for the prisoners as the issue has lost some of its impetus, but the principles involved are the same and the prisoners still deserve our support.

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POLAND: New flashpoint over farm union rights

by Alexis Carras

ON Saturday 31st January, the Solidarnosc union negotiators emerged from 13 hours of talks with Polish Communist Party officials and announced that "70% agreement" had been reached on the crucial issue which had concerned working class militants over the last several weeks.

The government had made further concessions on the "free Saturdays". Reversing its previous insistence that only one Saturday in two would be declared free, the government has now agreed to a working week of roughly 41 hours. Polish workers will work three five day weeks in four, and one six day week.

The government also made specific concessions on greater access of the union to the state controlled mass media. Whether these promises will be kept is another matter, given that Solidarnosc's right of access to the television and press was already agreed in Gdansk six months ago, with the signing of the original

agreement between the striking workers and CP officials.

The government negotiations on these two points have led to the cancellation of the one hour general strike which was planned for Monday February 2nd.

However, another explosive issue still has not been settled. The government remains firm on its refusal

farmers have been occupying the old union offices for the last month. They are demanding that the urban workforce support them in their fight for union recognition.

In the early fifties, the Stalinists tried to collectivise the farmlands of Poland forcibly, but after the events of 1956, (which

ings, have suffered from low productivity and inefficiency. The promises made after 1970-1, to improve the standard of living of the farming population, to increase the prices of agricultural goods, had very little effect.

The contrast between the modern urban centres and the still almost medieval conditions of life and production in the countryside has grown ever greater.

Now the Polish farmers have ceased to rely on vague government promises of reform, and are establishing their own organisations to fight the central bureaucracy.

If their demands are not met they have threatened to destroy their produce this coming spring, allowing only enough production to feed themselves and their families. In the strikes of last summer the Polish peasantry supported the striking workers by shipping food supplies direct to the workers in the large cities. Now they have called on the workers to support their own battles for recognition.



to recognise the union 'Rural Solidarnosc' which is now estimated to have a membership of 3 1/2 million Polish farmers. In the far South-East of the country, near the Soviet and Czech borders in the town of Rzeszow, local

brought Gomulka to power) they had to reverse the bureaucratic programme of crash collectivisation.

However both the state farms which remained and were heavily supported by the government, and the small private hold-

S. Africa: black unions gain ground

By Bob Fine

In the face of intense state repression and manipulation, the black trade union movement in South Africa is continuing to make considerable headway. It remains the crucial basis for the development of class organisation among the mass of African and coloured workers.

Its strength can be measured from the establishment of a nationwide federation, FOSATU, with a membership of around 100,000 and a strong shop-floor base; and there is a substantial number of unions not affiliated to FOSATU, representing about the same number again.

The state, unable to suppress the growth of black unionism since 1973, has been forced to yield concessions, in the form of certain legal rights — albeit circumscribed by severe restrictions. (The 'Wiehahn reforms'.) The state's attitude has reflected and reinforced that of some multinationals (especially Ford), and recently the Federated Chamber of Industries has moved toward a recognition of independent black unions and the granting of facilities to them.

These gains demonstrate the enormous significance of

trade union organisation for the liberation struggle.

However, South Africa's ruling class has not lost its confidence and can at any time shift back to naked repression of black trade unionism. Another drawback is the strength of the traditional 'boycott' policy in the liberation movement, which is preventing some sections of the union movement (though not FOSATU) from taking advantage of the legal openings they have won.

It is unfortunate that the black unions do exploit any legal concessions they win and are able to adapt their forms of struggle to changing circumstances. It is unfortunate that most of the solidarity movement in this country is tending to denounce any union that registers with the apartheid government, and restricts its solidarity only to those unions that maintain a 'boycott' stance.

Not only is this bad advice to the unions in South Africa, but it places impossible conditions on our support for them. We should resist the pressure to make such ultimatums and offer our support for all independent black unions, so long as they genuinely pursue the trade union interests of their members.

Their profits kill us

THE DRUGS industry claims high standards of safety for its products, saying that all new drugs are thoroughly tested for ill-effects, any which subsequently come to light being totally unforeseeable. You would think therefore that any evidence that one of the most widely used drugs might promote one of the most common causes of death would be immediately and thoroughly investigated.

However when Dr. David Horrobin of the Chemical Research Institute in Montreal published evidence in 1977 that the tranquilliser diazepam (Valium) seemed to quicken the growth of cancers in rats, not only were government funds for further research refused, but when, in 1979, Horrobin published further evidence, his superior ordered him to have no further contact with the media. When Horrobin refused to abide by this ruling, he was asked for and tendered his resignation.

Since publication of the first evidence, further studies have indicated a cancer-promoting effect of diazepam, while a study of women with breast cancer in

Britain showed that those taking tranquillisers were more likely to have fast-spreading tumours.

This evidence by no means proves that Valium promotes cancer but it at least dictates more investigation. Why has nothing been done? Perhaps the answer is that implications are too vast. Some 42% of US women have taken Valium while up to 25% of Canadian women are taking it at any one time, while cancer (particularly of the breast) is the greatest cause of death in women below the age of menopause in the Western world.

If the cancer link was proved, damages claims in the US alone would probably bankrupt one of the largest drug companies in the world (Hoffman-La Roche). Meanwhile this and other possible ill-effects of Valium continue to be ignored as are the problems that drive millions of women to take it.

FOUR weeks ago there was a fire at the Cap La Hague nuclear fuel reprocessing plant in France which must give cause for further worry to nuclear power workers and



the public alike. What happened was that the graphite coating on spend fuel rods from nuclear reactors stored in an underground silo caught fire and radioactive vapour escaped into the air. According to COGEMA the company running the plant, there was no danger to the local population, buildings in the immediate path of the fumes were and radiation did not exceed 1/5 of the maximum permitted level.

However the true picture was much more alarming. Radiation levels reached maximum permitted levels in parts of the plant while the unions revealed that the plant's medical centre was exposed to radiation 10 times higher than that permitted outside the plant.

Further, some cars belonging to COGEMA staff which

were in the path of the fumes, were allowed to leave the plant without being decontaminated until the next day. One contractor, a painter, received more than the usual dose of radiation, while several firefighters had to be decontaminated.

The lessons of the incident are firstly that the much vaunted safety regulations of the nuclear power industry have once again failed to work. Even if they had worked, the experts don't in fact know what they're doing. COGEMA admits that it doesn't know why the spent fuel caught fire.

Meanwhile workers and the public bear the risk, admittedly small in this case, but any increase in radiation level carries an increased risk of cancer — there are no safe levels.

Les Hearn

LISTINGS

Socialist Organiser offers free listings for labour movement events. Send copy to Socialist Organiser, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16, to arrive by the Saturday one week before the publication date.

S.E. LONDON youth march against unemployment, organised by LPYS. Saturday 21 February, 12 noon from Welling Corner.

CND labour movement conference. Saturday 28 March, UMIST Students Union, Manchester. 2 delegates each from TU and LP branches etc; credentials £3 from CND, 11 Goodwin St, London N4.

CENTRAL London Poly Students' Union Labour Club. Thursday 12 February: Reg Race MP on the Alternative Economic Strategy. 5pm at Student Common Room, PCL, 32-38 Wells St, W1. Civil Liberties

Society: Tuesday 10 February: Chris Price on Open Government. Same time, same place.

N.W. LONDON Socialist Organiser meeting: Fighting the cuts in Brent. Speakers from Lambeth and local community. Tuesday 17 February, 7.30pm at Trades Hall, 375 Willesden High Road, NW10 (nearest tube, Dollis Hill).

LAMBETH Socialist Organiser forums. Wednesday 11 February: Andrew Hornung and a Lambeth shop steward on 'Action against the Tories: fight for a workers' government'. Thursday 12 March: Bob Sutcliffe on the Alternative Economic Strategy. Both meetings 7.30 pm at Lambeth Town Hall.

SCOTTISH Central Region Federation of Trades Councils: march and rally against unemployment, Saturday 7 February. Assemble 10.30am at Raploch Community Centre, Stirling.



By Anne Kingsbury,
Labour Abortion Rights
Campaign

SINCE THE defeat of the Corrie Bill, LARC has been looking at ways of making

Making abortion rights a reality

progress towards a woman's right to choose.

We regard Corrie's defeat as a watershed in the campaign for free abortion on demand. It was largely unexpected [though not by us], it involved the biggest mobilisations that have been achieved on the issue and it demonstrated the commit-

ment of the labour movement to the principle of choice on abortion.

We believe it is vital to use the energy and commitment shown during the Corrie campaign to continue the fight for our own goals of free abortion on demand — a woman's right to choose.

With the labour movement

conference planned on positive legislation on abortion, LARC has suggested a means by which the campaign can go forward without getting embroiled in arguments about time limits.

LARC doesn't see the time limit as a central problem. But some sections of the right-to-choose campaign do,

the labour movement is divided over it, and the House of Commons can scarcely think of anything else!

We are proposing that the pro-choice campaign should now fight for legislation to make the provision of abortion facilities mandatory on the NHS. This is important because working people must have access to the means of making choices. Also the principle of choice is only established by making the facilities available.

A facilities campaign would express our commitment to maintaining the NHS and it fits in with many other campaigns which women's organisations are conducting around the defence of the social-services.

The 1967 Act, backed up by a facilities Bill, would go part of the way towards giving women an equal right of choice. But it would rest on very shaky grounds as long

as abortion remains a criminal offence with very heavy penalties. So LARC is also proposing that we campaign for the decriminalisation of abortion.

Of course, we are not at all hopeful of succeeding under the present Tory government, but we think it is important to start the discussion on the whole issue NOW.

We're optimistic about the attendance at the conference, as we'd no sooner announced the date than we got 20 applications. Bill Sims of the ISTC is backing it, as is the Sheet Metal Workers' Union. This is quite important as quite often industrial unions don't even discuss issues like abortion.

The conference is on March 14th at Starcross School, Rising Hill Street, London N1. All trade unionists, and delegates from CLPs affiliated to NAC or LARC, are welcome.

by Jo Thwaites

THE London Labour Party Women's Conference generally dismissed as a gathering of doddery old ladies, proved to be nothing of the kind last weekend (31st January).

Over 80 delegates met to discuss the local work of women's sections and pass resolutions for greater representation of women in the Party, for positive discrimination in favour of women, and for the next Labour government to extend National Insurance to cover adults who have to take time off work to look after sick children.

The conference also demanded a three-line whip for the Party policy of free abortion on demand, a woman's right to choose. And it passed an emergency motion endorsing the decisions of the Wembley conference.

By an overwhelming maj-

LABOUR WOMEN PLAN TO LINK UP

ority, the conference approved a resolution from Islington Central Women's Section calling for a special Labour Party leaflet on a women's right to work and a national demonstration on the issue in the next few months.

Jo Richardson brought the conference some welcome news from the NEC: General Committees can no longer veto the setting up of women's sections. There

is now a special women's NEC sub-group. And the Women's Advisory Committee is to have the word 'advisory' dropped from its title.

At the Women's Fightback lunchtime workshop, there were several complaints about how the conference was run. We were given voting papers for each vote, when a show of hands would have been

perfectly adequate. And, before each vote the platform gave a recommendation, taking longer than any floor speaker.

Many women also felt that it would be useful if women's sections could meet more often than just once a year at conference. Fightback is holding a discussion meeting on 23rd February to set up closer links between the sections.

Women in the Labour Party Speakers: Rachel Lever (Women's Fightback), Kathryn Riley (Dulwich Women's Section and London Region Women's Committee) and Christine Bickerstaff (National Women's Committee) in "A Woman's Place", 48 William IV St (near Trafalgar Square). All women welcome. Come and say what you think of the Party's women's organisation.

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

If you're thinking about framing a resolution for your union conference, for Labour's National Women's Conference [deadline for resolutions, February 27th] or, later in the year, for Labour's annual conference, why not write in for a copy of the Report of the Women's Fightback day-school for women in the Labour Party?

Before the conference, half a dozen different specialist organisations contributed ideas. Then the 160 women who came spent the afternoon in workshops on health, education, housing, sexual politics and the law, child care, the media, women and work, race and immigration, and benefits.

The results are a mass of ideas which can be used by anyone wanting to frame resolutions that take women's needs into full account.

It's all in the first of a series of newsletters Women's Fightback is producing for women in the Labour Party. But most of it can be much more widely used in any organisation you're working in.

Send s.a.e. and 10p for a copy. Or £1 to get the newsletter regularly for yourself or your organisation.

And February's Women's Fightback will soon be out — 8 pages for 10p (and 11½p postage), from 41 Ellington St, London N7.

WHERE WE STAND

- ★ 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 curbs. 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 — share the work with no loss of pay. Start now with a 35 hour week and an 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 rent 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 a bosses' striking force: dissolution of special squads (SPG, Special Branch, M15 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 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 should get full support from the British labour movement for their strikes, struggles and armed combat against the white supremacist regime. 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 crumbs from the tables of the bankers and bosses.

Socialist Organiser aims to help build a class-struggle left wing in the trade unions and Labour Party, based on a revolutionary socialist programme. *Socialist Organiser* supporters' groups are being organised in many towns and cities.

Socialist Organiser is sponsored by the *Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory*

Manchester PO workers beat back bosses

by Pete Keenlyside
Manchester Amalgamated
Branch UCW

3,000 Post Office workers in Manchester have won a victory against an attempt by the PO bosses to smash all union control over working practices.

On Monday 2nd, after a one-week strike, the bosses backed down on their attempt to impose unilateral changes in work conditions. The proposed changes will now go to negotiation.

The background to the dispute was the bosses' drive to get local productivity deals.

At last year's UCW conference a motion calling for acceptance of local voluntary productivity deals was passed, but since then the Manchester branch has refused to have anything to do with it. Things came to a head on Monday January 26th in the Parcels Office when, after six months of negotiating, management informed the union section there that, agreements or not, they were going to tear

up every national agreement going on negotiating procedure and implement new working practices on that day. These included a reduction in meal break times, the ending of negotiated concessions and the right of management to move staff to wherever they wanted.

As this move wasn't entirely unexpected, the union response had already been worked out and was put into action. The early shift on Monday were told to work as normal and a picket was put on the trailer park, where articulated trailers filled with parcels are kept before they are driven over to the main office to be unloaded. Management weren't exactly quick at catching on to what was happening. Seeing that the pickets weren't stopping trailers coming in, they continued to send them through. The trouble was though getting them out again! As one picket said, "The Iranians only had 52 hostages, we've got 61 in here!"

The morning shift passed off without incident but half-

way through the late shift, two drivers were instructed to cross the picket and get the trailers out. They refused and were immediately suspended. The UCW members in the building then held a meeting and voted to walk out. The same thing happened on the next three shifts and by Tuesday, the night shift didn't even bother going in.

Meanwhile, back at union Headquarters in London, the official machinery was creaking into action. After advising us to withdraw the picket and return to normal working, Assistant General Secretary Maurice Styles was dispatched to Manchester to negotiate with management and when this got nowhere, the Branch Committee met on Wednesday evening and called out the staff in the main letters sorting office. This meant that no parcels or letters were moving either in or out of Manchester.

On the face of it, it may seem strange that the PO management chose to

take on the largest branch in the country and the most militant section of that branch, the Parcels Office. The truth is though that they've only got until May to get through their so-called "improved working method" scheme. Even those branches that have agreed to it are unhappy about it, with Leeds reported to have pulled out, and the chances are that it will get thrown out at annual conference in May.

So it looks like Manchester was selected for the sledgehammer treatment in the hope that if they could beat us they could ram the scheme through in other big offices.

We won a victory, helped by support from other branches. But the Post Office bosses will not give up. We can be sure they will try it on again, either in Manchester or somewhere else.

We've shown that industrial action can beat them back. We'll have to be ready and organised to defeat any new attacks by the same methods.

by Ian Hollingworth

The recent gains for democracy in the Labour Party will only have a lasting effect if they are backed up by a tougher fight to democratise the Unions — and to win the affiliation of currently unaffiliated unions like the NUT. Far too often, remote bureaucracies and unelected officials take decisions for the mass of union members who haven't had the chance to debate the issues properly with each other.

In the NUT, we are saddled with an executive not only dominated by Head

teachers but also grossly underrepresenting women, who form the majority of our 'profession'.

The fight for democracy in the NUT has been fragmented — with some local success — but on a national level, things have not really gone beyond the standard left motion to annual conference submitted by a few militant branches, which in isolation has almost no chance of success.

We need to take an example from the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and begin a serious struggle throughout the union to

reform the structure of the NUT without which any number of conference motions condemning the cuts, or anything else, will come to very little.

That is why a group of 50 supporters who are teachers are planning to hold a day school on democracy in the NUT. We see this as the beginning of an ongoing campaign to unite classroom teachers around this fundamental issue. The date is fixed for Saturday March 7th. Details of the venue from me at 29 Muller Avenue, Horfield, Bristol BS7 9HU (0272-513141)

NUT
democracy
campaign
planned

Labour after Wembley: a 4-page feature

by John O'Mahony

WE WON at Wembley. But it is now clear that the decisive battle on leadership election is yet to come.

That will take place at the Brighton conference in the first week of October. It is only there that the decisions of Wembley can be clinched and consolidated by defeating the new counter-offensive now being mounted by the parliamentary-elitists and their backers in the trade unions.

A victory like that at Wembley, in which good 'tactics' and the mistakes of our opponents played such a big part, is an unstable victory if a replay can be staged. It looks like it can be, and that it will be at Brighton.

The newspaper headlines have focused attention on the ditherings and meanderings of the Gang of 3, on 'Roy Jenkins and his claret-drinking eunuchs' (T.E. Utley), and on the Tory Fifth Column in the PLP.

These are important. But more important is the fightback launched within days of the Wembley decision by Hattersley, Healey and Shore in the PLP, and by important trade union leaders like Terry Duffy.

Duffy says, "The battle has been lost, but the war can still be won. We hope to put matters right next time round."

Michael Foot has moved to put himself at the head of the counter-offensive.

Foot responded to the Wembley decision with this statement: "The conference has made its decision, and according to our constitution that is now part of our constitution. I certainly accept the vote, and I hope that the whole Party — left, right and centre — will accept the vote as well".

Later

But four days later Foot told the weekly meeting of the MPs that the — right-wing dominated — Shadow Cabinet will shortly put forward an agreed solution proposing that the Wembley decision should be overturned and reversed at Brighton. A statement signed by 150 MPs — including some Tribunites — calling for reversal was simultaneously issued.

It seems that technically it will be possible for them to put the matter on the agenda. Their goal will probably be to give the MPs, 50% of the electoral college, which Foot promised the PLP but proved unable to deliver at Wembley.

As the Observer commented editorially, "Belatedly the fightback within Labour's ranks has now begun."

There appears to have been serious talk of a declaration of independence by the PLP. (This may have been a major reason why Foot felt obliged to put himself at the head of the fightback despite his first reaction after Wembley).

But there are lesser manifestations of independence than a clear-cut repudiation of the conference by the PLP. One possibility was aired by Philip Whitehead, discussing the situation of Roy Mason. "What happens if Mr. Scargill gets the union and the constituency to disown him? Will Mr. Foot keep him in the Shadow Cabinet or not? If reelected to that body, as he would be,

Gang of 3 moves out, but big guns of the Right are still in place

would Mr. Mason test his popularity in his home town before the general election, offering his endorsement by the PLP against his rejection by the Barnsley management committee?"

But the central danger of a victorious counter-attack lies not in what the PLP does, but in what the unions do. The principle of the electoral college was passed overwhelmingly (by 6,283,000 to 411,000).



I'm puzzled how the Council of Social Democracy will select a leader, although I suppose they could always have a wine-tasting competition.
(BRYAN McALLISTER, THE GUARDIAN)

The 40-30-30 formula however only passed by half a million votes in a situation where the union moving it, USDAW, didn't believe in it, and where the AUEW, bitterly hostile to it, sat on 900,000 votes. As Duffy says there is good reason for them to hope to sort that out if they can get a replay.

There is also the fact that the trade union leaders, collectively, are now committed to laying rough hands on Parliament itself, on its traditions, prerogatives and immunity from direct outside control, pressure or interference. The displeasure of the ruling class at that prospect has been loud and angry and the trade

union leaders are being made to feel that maybe they have bitten off more than they can chew. For the trade unions to have put themselves in this position half by accident and blundering and partly as a result of being outmanoeuvred, must mean that at least some of them will recoil in real alarm, and try to get out of the line of fire.

Their alarm, if the rank and file of the unions allow them to give expression to it, could lead to a serious retreat. And of course the victory at Wembley wasn't only a victory for the radical socialists of Labour's rank and file. The decisive weight in the scale was that of the trade unions led by the bureaucracy.

Add to this the fact that something like a bloc of the non-kamikaze right and the soft left is taking shape on the NEC. At the last meeting Kinnock, Hart, Lester and Short voted with Shirley Williams, etc. to reject a proposal from the Organisational Sub-Committee because it would have ruled out an interpretation of reselection allowing one person shortlists. (Williams seems to have delayed a planned resignation from the NEC to deliver her — decisive — vote on this).

Despite the ballyhoo, the Gang of Three, or Eleven or whatever, are only a small segment of the right. In fact, it is increasingly clear that they are the least serious part of Labour's right. Their choice of sabotage tactics seems to be, by getting out of the Labour Party, to try to make it impossible for it to hope to form a government.

This tactic is probably based on a massive over-estimation of their own potency — probably induced, Narcissus-like, by their own reflection in the mass media. The Hattersleys and Healeys want to stay in and pursue the tactic of gutting and undermining the decis-

ions on democracy. They plus their allies on the soft left are the people who matter in what looks like a formidable counter-attack.

For this reason the cliff-hanging soap-opera of the "claret-drinking eunuchs" is, at least for now, a sideshow. Nothing short of a reversal of the principle would satisfy them and they won't get it now. Some of them sound as if nothing less than a break between Labour and the unions would satisfy them. But they won't get that either. To nullify reselection via the absurdity of a one person shortlist, and to cut down the direct labour movement share in the vote for the Labour leader (and Prime Minister) and maybe to enfeeble the reform by, for example, making it less than annual or inoperative if Labour is in government — that would satisfy the rightists who still have a will to remain alive in the labour movement. And they can hope to gain these things.

That would be a major defeat for the hopes of a political renewal of the labour movement and therefore for the hope of providing a real, working class, socialist alternative to Thatcher and to Toryism, whether of the pink or blue variety.

Antics

In a real sense the media nurtured antics of the Gang, inspiring as it does hatred and disgust in most Labour movement activists, can help the Hattersleys by making them seem by contrast an acceptable right wing and not the formidable enemies of socialism and of a socialist renewal of the labour movement, which in fact they are.

In 1931 the dramatic and open betrayal of MacDonald, Snowden and Thomas drew a sharp organisational, but politically

misleading, line between them and their co-thinkers like Herbert Morrison, who (on MacDonald's advice) had stayed in the Party. The traitors assumed the role of scapegoats for their political co-thinkers and counterparts who remained behind, making them seem a different breed politically, which they were not. They, like Denis Healey and Roy Hattersley today chose to stick to the labour movement as their field of operations. They stayed and shaped the subsequent history of the party (for example, it was primarily Morrison who gave Labour's post-1945 nationalisations the character of bureaucratic state-capitalist corporations without a vestige of workers' control).

Today the Gang issue the threats but it is the 'loyal' right wing which, together with Foot and the soft left, is putting together the forces for a counter-offensive that can derail the process of self-renewal. The main right wing enemy is the one that continues to make its home in the Labour Party.

In fact, it is not at all clear that the Williamsites have much prospects as an independent political force.

The latest opinion polls show that all 11 of the proclaimed CSD MPs would lose their seats if they had to stand against the Labour Party (which should be a knockout blow to the stupid myth, central to the right wing's agitation against reselection — that the voters support not the party but the individual).

The political living-space for their projected party is, essentially, already occupied by the Liberal Party. The polls show that, exactly like the Liberals, the social democrats would take most of their votes from the Tories. In fact, if the projected party didn't move quickly to fusion with the Liberals it would have to compete bitterly with them on the same ground.

The comparatively favourable response to the idea of a centre party in some of the polls no doubt expresses disillusion with the parties, unhappiness with the sharp polarisation between the Labour Party and the Tory Party now, and a wish that things were different.

But what reason is there to think that the process of polarisation, which is a response to the crisis of society, can be reversed, that an organic centre party can be newly cobbled? The

mischievous 'Social Democrat' party could do, including perhaps lost elections for Labour, should not be underestimated or treated lightly. But if they are not to become a cosmetic element in a Tory government presenting itself as a national government (like 1931), which is what Tony Benn thinks they might become, then they are more likely to contribute to a revamped Liberal Party than to do anything else.

If the two-party mould of British politics is to be broken, it is not clear why people who will be indistinguishable from the Liberal Party, in competition with a left-faced (at least) Labour Party operating in conditions of mass working-class deprivation, should be the ones to break it.

There was something symbolically synthetic, fake and unreal about the scene when the three, together with the merchant banker Jenkins, issued their Limehouse Declaration to the TV cameras — rich and good-living people who had made careers in the labour movement emerged from the private upper-middle class lifestyle cocoon that Owen has built for himself amidst the decayed dockside terraces of the East End, in total isolation from the lives and most of the present concerns of the working people in that area.

Media

They were being sustained by the media as by a political life-support system. But the fawning, manipulative media bosses didn't save Dick Taverne.

What must we do now? We must generate the maximum pressure on the NEC to ensure that reselection is not gutted by allowing one-person shortlists.

We must continue the work of the Mobilising Committee. Its work between now and Brighton will probably be more important than its work up to the Wembley Conference. And that was vitally important.

We must turn to the trade union rank and file and rouse a massive barrier of active opposition to any moves by the trade union bureaucracy to retreat from the Wembley decisions. Duffy and his friends think that they will be able to throw the weight of their unions behind Foot and Healey. The rank and file must be mobilised to make sure that they can't.

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WEMBLEY: WHAT THEY THOUGHT

Audrey Wise

AUDREY WISE, former Labour MP, and Broad Left candidate for President of USDAW this year, spoke to Socialist Organiser about USDAW's policy on Labour democracy.

The General Council of USDAW put the 30-30-40 motion on the agenda in November. It was only later that the fallback position of 50-25-25 was adopted — and only as a fallback if the main USDAW proposal was defeated.

So the General Secretary of USDAW has absolutely no authority to say that the union decision should be reversed. It would mean that the USDAW General Council is in fact repudiating itself. It would also mean that the motion was put forward without any honesty of purpose, and thus bring the Union into disrepute.

Union democracy varies

from union to union, but it is highly hypocritical of a lot of people to castigate the union block vote. Shirley Williams and Tom Bradley are on the NEC of the Labour Party entirely because of the block vote — and never spoke out against it before.

But it is important for the union members to be conscious of the importance of the block vote which is cast in their names, and to be involved in the decision making process.

All the people who have been saying that what we should be doing is uniting to fight the Tories and who said that the democracy issue was a 'constitutional diversion' are now going to look very hypocritical. From the start it was obviously not a diversion. And now, when the decision has gone against them, they are taking the matter so seriously.

INTERVIEW WITH TONY BENN

'I would like to see black groups and women's groups affiliating to the Labour Party'

In the second part of his interview with Martin Thomas, Tony Benn discusses positive discrimination.

■ ■ At the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy's recent conference, three new major areas were discussed for party democracy: positive discrimination for black people, positive discrimination for women, and [though they

didn't reach a conclusion on this] the block vote. What do you think?

Inevitably the campaign for Party Democracy is going to be carried through into the trade union movement as a whole. But all these things bear on the use of trade union influence but not on the principle of trade union influence. The "one-man/one-vote" campaign instead of an elect-

oral college for the leadership is clearly an attempt to "cleanse" the Labour Party of its trade union connection and convert it into a sort of Liberal Party. What we want is to develop and strengthen the trade union relationship but to democratise the use of the power locally, regionally and nationally.

On positive discrimination, I'm in two minds. I accept entirely that there



is gross discrimination against women and against blacks in our society. It's built into the language, it's built into the habits, it's built into the practices, it's built into the unions, it's built into the Party. For example, Labour cannot claim to be wholly representative of the people we seek to represent while we only have eleven Labour women MPs. On the other hand, nobody would argue that just having a woman Prime Minister, which should satisfy a radical feminist, has advanced the rights of women. It has not.

You've got to see it as a socialist issue, in collaboration with those who are fighting against other forms of discrimination. That's why the Labour Party has to argue its case for a socialist analysis, not to blank off the issues of blacks and women, but at the same time to relate to them.

You could argue for a percentage of women in the House of Commons and so on. I personally see the advance as being more broadly-based than that. I would like to see black organisations and women's organisations affiliating to the Labour Party as the trade unions do.

Suppose we had a rule that you had to have a percentage of trade unionists on any shortlist. It would be as reasonable as having a percentage of women and blacks. But actually we handle it through affiliation and sponsored candidates. I think that that second route, of trying to make the Labour Party more clearly an umbrella organisation for those who are struggling against discrimination, has got a lot more going for it than simply a rigid percentage.

■ ■ It's also been proposed that the Labour Party

Women's Conference should elect the section on the NEC that it should have to put resolutions on the agenda of Party conference.

There's one problem with the women's conference, electing the five NEC members, and that it disintegrates the national conference. It's true that the YS relative, Tony Saunderson, was elected by the YS Conference. But once the Labour Deputy Leader is elected at Party conference, a member will be elected to the NEC. If a member is not elected at the conference, we have to be careful that we don't turn the NEC into a conference. The total ability of a total conference, to a conference, that it has separate structures, is impossible.

But the national women's conference should be able to change resolutions much more directly through the Executive. Whether we should go to the Conference or direct raises certain problems which we must solve very carefully. The important thing to remember is that we must make up the majority population and the Party must reflect that policy, its work organisational structure and end the present discrimination against

Sup

by Alexis Carr

IN THE LAST right wing of the Party and the new Council for Social Democracy have very off the TV screen

To gauge by created, one would think that the even Wembley conference paved the way for a position of unbridled imperialism over the British champions of had been vanquished the demons of victoriously of satanic fashion.

It was all a rat turnabout, from previous insistence wing that these secondary matters were de Labour Party from and important throw out the Tories. Now over 150 top trade unionists are insisting that

Bob Wright

Allowing for all manipulations, the outcome was surprisingly progressive. What worries me is that a number of union leaders are now trying to reverse the decision.

All those threatening to leave the party (and the sooner they go the better), were quite happy to rely on the block vote themselves.

Chapple's line was the usual thing about every member having a cross and a piece of paper. But how they put the cross on the piece of paper is largely influenced by the Tory press. Ballot democracy is not real democracy when you are surrounded by this propaganda.

Democracy is the control of the leadership by the mass of the members. These leaders are entrenched and privileged, but there's not one of them who could not be replaced tomorrow. There's a wealth of talent in the working class.



The outcome still in the balance when we discussed tactics at the CLPD midday meeting

Reg Race

The defeat of the right wing forces at the special party Conference at Wembley was all the more exciting for being unexpected and lucky.

The major lesson to be learned is that once again progressive forces on the left of the party have put together an alliance of trade unionists, constituency parties, and Socialist Societies sufficiently strong for them to destroy the ability of the right wing leadership of the PLP to get its way on every issue.

Indeed, we have had a string of important victories on both constitution-

al and policy issues which have infuriated the majority of the PLP, who are used to calling the tune in the party with the help of the block vote.

The splinter formation led by the Gang of Four will fail. They will soon leave the party, and they will find it very cold outside the official labour movement, even though they have the support of the press and the merchant banks.

The battle now inside the party will be to defend the Wembley conference decision against those in the PLP who seek to undermine it, and to begin the battle on a full

employment campaign.

The main point to be made about the splinter group of so-called Social Democrats is that their policy is at least 30 years out of date.

They assume that capitalism has surplus value to distribute, either in the form of concessions to trade unions through the collective bargaining process, or to the labour movement in the form of political concessions. Such a policy is based on a central fallacy.

There is no surplus value to distribute in this way — indeed capitalism is already withdrawing concessions it had made,

such as the level of social security benefits and the National Health Service.

So the policy of the 'Social Democrats' looks back to a capitalism that no longer exists; they are, in reality, the stooges of capitalism who will advocate wages policy and cuts in public spending as a way of emasculating the movement and delivering the working class bound hand and foot to the bosses.

They will fail, as workers see clearly that their interests can only be represented by an active, vigorous, socialist Labour Party.

by Vladimir Derer (Secretary, CLPD, in personal capacity)

ONCE AGAIN a Labour Party conference decision has led to a general outbreak of phoney hysteria. The press, media and the Parliamentary Labour Party are all making their contribution. To be fair to the PLP — their hysteria is partly genuine. But even with that qualification it is clear that the conference result is being misrepresented to harm Labour's electoral prospects.

If we are to believe press headlines and radio and TV news commentators, the decision as to who leads the Labour Party will from now on be taken by the secretaries of 4-5 major unions. By some strange arithmetic the 39% of all votes that in the newly adopted college are allocated to the union have come to a higher figure than the 61% given to the PLP, CLPs and Socialist Societies.

This quite apart from the fact that the union votes cast at Labour Party conference are likely to be predetermined by decisions taken at the unions' own conferences, conferences whose delegates outnumber many times the 268-strong PLP electorate.

In fact the Wembley decision does no more than to introduce a long overdue reform enabling the party as a whole to have a significant say as to who will lead it. The franchise, which up until now was confined to a small parliamentary elite, has been extended to all who actively help to keep the party going: to those much maligned 'activists' who in a purely voluntary capacity give their time and energy to the party, as well as making not an inconsiderable contribution to party funds.

Party

One would have hoped that the party would give a clear answer to these misinterpretations. Above all that it would explain to the Labour electorate that it is an attempt on the part of the ruling class and their flunkies to save the privileges they enjoy under an economic system which is increasingly demonstrating its incapacity to organise the country's resources: its workings have resulted in mass unemployment,

Labour Left must fight the backlash

declining production and a general fall in living standards.

Unfortunately the Party shows little intention of doing so. Its various sections and spokesmen are retreating under the barrage of hostile criticism. This can only provide ammunition for Labour's enemies.



Michael Foot

The response of those about to desert comes as no surprise. The Gang of Three (or Four) and their supporters, having already decided to form a break-away party, now pretend that it was the conference decision in favour of 30-30-40 that finally made up their minds. In fact, on their own admission, no form of an electoral college, even the one that would have given the PLP 50%, would have prevented their eventual departure.

Nor is one altogether surprised that Wembley should have caused consternation among the members of the PLP. After all it is they who, from now on, will have to share their policy-making powers with the rest of the party. We cannot expect a parliamentary 'elite' to be happy about losing some of its privileges. However, the

MPs are, by themselves, quite powerless to overturn this constitutional decision. Unless they wish to follow in the footsteps of the Gang, and few of them show the desire, they will just have to get used to new realities. Paradoxically having repeatedly told us that the party is bored with discussions of constitutional issues and that the time has come to concentrate on fighting the Tories, the MPs now want, as their first priority, to reopen a constitutional issue which has just been settled.

Much more alarming is that the Party Leader himself should back these moves. He had previously stated that he would accept a conference decision on the leadership and he is now going back on his word. Instead of telling the PLP to calm down, he is lending legitimacy to the MPs' outcry. What he should be doing is to explain to some worried trade unionists that, irrespective of what concessions they were prepared to make to MPs prior to the Wembley conference, now that the decision has been taken, the Labour Party will not benefit from continuing this particular debate.

Union

It is understandable that some trade union leaders are annoyed that the body which they feel they ought to control has disobeyed them. However, they have no particular interest in tightening the MPs' battle. 30-30-40 is a decision which is perfectly acceptable to them.

Michael Foot's concern for party unity is, of course, genuine. However, his statements may egg on some trade union leaders to pursue a course which will lead to unnecessary strife. We already see Sid Weighell blaming "it all" on the NEC.

Tribune

The NEC have, in fact, a crucial role to play. They should stand firm on the Wembley decision. Under the present constitution only they can get conference to consider constitutional proposals at any time. Affiliated organisations have to wait for at least one year before their proposed constitutional amendments can be discussed and voted on. All MPs can do, at this stage, is to ask affiliated organisations (Trade unions and Labour Parties) to use their one conference resolution to reopen the leadership issue in 1982.

It is unfortunate therefore that *Tribune*, a newspaper which has the support of several NEC members, should choose to welcome the suggestion that the debate on the relative merits of the various formulae for an electoral college be resumed. Hopefully this does not mean that the NEC members associated with the *Tribune* group (and who, like *Tribune* preferred the 'one-third each' formula, are about to join those of their NEC colleagues who support 50% for the PLP in trying to reopen the whole issue next October.

The fact is that there is no great difference between the 'one-third each'

formula and that adopted at Wembley (the difference boils down to whether unions should be given two-fifths or two-sixths of the votes in the electoral college). Whatever the relative merits of each of these formulae, either of them is infinitely preferable to a return to PLP dominance.

For the NEC to risk the latter for the sake of marginal differences, or because their own formula was defeated at Wembley, would be tantamount to giving assistance to those who are against reform and who, incidentally, are against the NEC itself. Anyone wishing to reopen the issue must accept that they have to go through the normal Labour Party processes by which constitutional changes are made.

The Labour left must get ready to beat off the counter-offensive the supporters of the Establishment have launched. It is already clear that this will be spear-headed by an attack on the Labour Party disguised as an attack on the alleged domination of the party by the unions and their so-called block vote. Unfortunately the Left's case would carry more conviction if its defence of the gains of Blackpool and Wembley would be linked to efforts to secure parity between the voting strength of the industrial and political wings at Party conference.

Socialist

This weakness, however, makes it even more essential that the defence of democratic reforms should be combined with a campaign for the inclusion in the Party's next election manifesto of definite commitments to specific socialist policies. The Gang and their co-thinkers who will stay in the Labour Party oppose not only party democracy but also any socialist changes in the country's economic and social structure.

They stand for oligarchic privileges and for policies which were tried by the Labour governments of 1964-70 and 1974-9 and failed. For Labour to become a credible alternative to Toryism and its Liberal and 'social-Democratic' allies, the party must unite behind a clear programme of democratic socialism.

How we won

by Jo Thwaites

The Wembley victory would not have happened without seven months' hard campaigning throughout the Labour movement, spearheaded by the Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy. The RFMC was set up last June, on the initiative of the SCLV and Socialist Organiser and has united the left in the fight for democracy.

Even at the eve-of-conference rally on 23 January, no-one was complacent. RFMC speakers called for delegates to swing behind the USDAW resolution for 30-30-40. 30-30-40 was the formulation that the RFMC had been campaigning for since Blackpool; more important, it was essential for 30-30-40 to get through to the final run-off ballot in order to keep USDAW on the side of reform. If the NEC's 1/3-1/3-1/3 had defeated 30-30-40 in the eliminating ballot, then USDAW would have switched to 50-25-25.

As many speakers stressed, both at the Mobilising Committee rally and at the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy meeting at the Special Conference, this victory represents only the first stage.

Arthur Scargill told the Mobilising Committee rally, "This marks the start of a united campaign to get rid of the most reactionary government in living memory and elect a Labour government pledged to a socialist Britain". And Tony Benn, paying tribute to the work of the RFMC and the CLPD, emphasised that we must go on until we win, however long it takes.

John Bloxam, Organiser of the RFMC, spoke to SO after the conference. "The result of the conference shows quite clearly what a determined, independent rank and file campaign can achieve. That is an important lesson for the Party on any issue, not just on the question of democracy."

"The immediate focus for the RFMC now must be to defend the victory of this conference against the right-wing, particularly in the unions."

Super-democrats... or super-blackmailers?

is of the gravest importance, and that the decisions reached at Wembley must be reversed at all costs. Suddenly the Gang of Three blossoms into the Gang of Thirteen, and prepares to split from the Party.

The vote in favour of changing the Party's constitution was overwhelming — 5,253,000 to 1,869,000. The vote to accept a 30/30/40 electoral college was clear: 3,375,000 to 2,865,000.

But it was a victory gained in the teeth of bitter opposition from the leadership of the Party and most trade unions, a victory gained despite the deliberate confusion the right-wing tried to sow.

Born-again democrats like Frankie Chapple were plugging the one-man/one-vote system as the only method of ensuring that "communists, fascists and conservatives" did not influence the election of the leader through the block

vote.

Duffy got up and incoherently rambled on about 'democracy' as the reason why the Parliamentarians should have an outrageous 75% of the votes in an electoral college. It would, he reassured us, correspond to the same democratic set-up he was busy creating in the AUEW!

Then David Basnett, moving the G&M amendment for a 50-25-25 breakdown had the cheek to suggest that the G&M's amendment had been arrived at by consultation with the union's membership, and it was the best system so that "one part cannot dictate to the other". Well, tell a lie big enough and people might believe it (in this case they didn't), or perhaps we are being unfair and the man, along with Duffy, is perhaps innumerate.

With 50% of the vote or more going to the PLP it's not parity but a 'fix'.

Realising that all this had

not really cut much ice, Basnett pleaded with the delegates "this is Michael's first party conference as leader. Are we to turn down the system that he favours?" Sections of the conference cried, "Yes".

A comic highlight was undoubtedly Brian Stanley of the Post Office Engineering Union, who made an unashamed bid for more work for his members as he backed an electoral college, not at conference, but by post.

It must have been with dismay that the Gang of Three viewed these incompetents. Early in the morning session Owen had taken up the case for one man one vote. Transporting us back to the days of the radical struggle for universal suffrage, Dr. Owen was "amazed that this principle should have to be argued within the Labour Party of all places."

But just in case the point had not been sufficiently appreciated by the dele-

gates, he finished off with attempted blackmail. "Why vote for a system which you know will split the party?"

Owen's argument contrasted with the procrastination and patchwork tactics of the right wing trade union bureaucrats, wheeling and dealing to concoct a watered-down change favouring the right. It was a far cry from the irrelevancies of Bill Sirs, whose union supposedly "did not want any change at all in the system that had worked well over the years."

Yet if the super-democrats' like Owen had a clear purpose, it was to dismantle the links between the trade unions and their political party, and introduce postal plebiscites instead of any accountability or control over the leaders or representatives. Coming from a man who supported the butcher Shah, the claim to support real democratic reform

sounded hollow.

The right wing for years relied on the block vote to maintain their ascendancy in the movement. So, as Peter Kelley of Salford West CLP pointed out, there is "something very funny about people who are democrats only when they win. Why have these people not objected to the block vote before?"

"The Party will not split over percentages, nor will it succumb to threats from people with an inflated sense of self-importance."

The struggle to maintain the democratic reforms won at Blackpool and Wembley will continue despite the Right, the threats to split the party and the Fleet St. barrage. To the Gang of Three... Thirteen or whatever we say a relieved farewell — the fewer the direct agents of the ruling class in the Party the better.

But above all it was Sid Weighell who showed us the tasks ahead. When arg-

uing against the electoral college at Wembley, he held up his voting card, stating that he personally knew how suspect and undemocratic its power was. For us, this should be an open invitation to fight and to change and democratise the unions, to break the hold of Weighell, Jackson Duffy and Chapple, to ensure that the block vote is democratic, and to do away once and for all with the hypocrisy of the right wing.

In normal times they are quite prepared to be appointed to power on the backs of our movement, but when the going gets rough, when the mood for change is sweeping through the movement, they plead that we should not trust them with such undemocratic power. Trust in them we never had. What we want is to get rid of them and win the power for the rank and file.

By Jon Lansman

THERE is no question that the result of the Wembley conference was a victory for the Left, but it was a victory of tactics rather than of organisational strength.

The tactics, not only those at the conference itself but also the decision to campaign for a larger share of the votes for the trade unions, enabled the Left to use every bit of luck that came its way. But in the vote between the USDAW and GMWU proposals, we lost the support of some unions that had voted to the NEC proposal — though this was partly because lack of time between Blackpool and Wembley had forced us to rely more than usual on the support of members of executives and delegations.

Worse still, we lost the support of many CLP delegates, whose animosity towards trade unions was even greater than towards the PLP.

Calling the MPs to account

Of course the weakness of the Right was even greater. The Left had already won too many arguments and it was difficult for the Right to break through the hypocrisy of their new campaign.

Gains

As a grassroots force, they will now become even weaker with the defection to a Social Democratic Party and the demise of the CLV. In order to defeat the Left, a grassroots organisation would be necessary and may yet be developed. In the meantime, however, the Right can still be a threat to the gains of Wembley.

The first response to that threat must be to maintain and strengthen the unity of the Rank & File Mobilising Committee to defend those gains and extend the democratisation of the party to the PLP and Local Government. The second, and more difficult response relates to the source of the current threat: for it is not from the rank and file that the cry to reverse the decision of Wembley comes, but from 150 MPs and a small handful of trade union general secretaries.

It is to those 150 MPs that our attention is turned by Chris Mullin's pamphlet. Although there remains some dispute on the NEC about the circumstances in which a shortlist of one can

Review of Chris Mullin's pamphlet, 'How to select or re-select your MP', published by the Institute for Workers' Control and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy. 50p.

be permitted, we do now have in mandatory reselection a powerful weapon against the 'independence' of the PLP, to which even some members of the Tribune Group still cling. That weapon can only achieve results if it is used effectively; after all, mandatory reselection of local councillors, which we have always had, has produced no results whatever.

Item

Mullin's pamphlet does much to fill the gap between theory and results. It does not claim to be an exciting new work of political theory; nor does it expand on the already well-

documented history of betrayal of the Labour movement by parliamentary elitism. It is in essence nothing more than a guide to the mechanics of the Labour Party constitution, although it is written with the same wit and authority which makes Chris's column in *Tribune* worth reading.

As a work of reference it is something that no member of a GMC should be without.

Apart from explaining the procedure of selection, it contains in an appendix the hitherto unpublished NEC guidelines which have previously rendered members of the National Agency the fountain of all wisdom and sole arbiter of disputes at selection conferences.

Perhaps it will become a collector's item as a mark of either a turning point in the role of the Labour Party as the political instrument of the working class, or of the Left's greatest lost opportunity.

Reselection is not just a method of getting rid of unwanted MPs, but also a method of influencing those who remain. With or without the removal of individuals, it must be used to change the political complexion of the PLP.

Unless that is done, we will not have a Leader who is committed to conference policies (despite the achievement of a wider franchise); we will have instead a PLP who will use their position to fudge and frustrate the wishes of the movement, and to manipulate and manoeuvre.

Clear

In Chris Mullin's closing words, 'To some MPs the Labour Party, to which they owe everything, becomes an inconvenient pressure group. ... Reselection must be used to make clear to Labour MPs that this elevated view of their role in life has had its day.'

Don't let capitalism set the agenda

by Graham Norwood

PARLIAMENT has never come up with radical ideas. The buildings were set up by and for people opposed to the working class, with customs and rules against the reality of harsh debate and class opposition that exists in society.

What Parliament does do is provide the ideal setting for cosy compromises between Parliamentarians, and bureaucratic delays in progressive legislation.

Because of that Parliament can, as it exists now, be only a part of socialist activity: likewise, any encroachment on Parliamentary sovereignty by the left must be welcomed.

And the success of January 24th, plus last October, will provide rank and file members the chance to be part of a process hitherto reserved only for MPs. That must be welcomed — and defended in the months ahead.

But action must be taken in the industrial wing of the labour movement, too: the political strike undertaken by some unions in Lambeth in the first week in February points the way to how extra-Parliamentary activity can be pushed against the Tories and the ruling class. History shows, very recently, that industrial action can precipitate the electoral defeat of our opponents.

To restrict ourselves to Parliamentary opposition is

therefore short-sighted: and as a Party, we must not restrict ourselves to only those policies already shown support amongst working class people. After all, if we were to use the consciousness of the majority of people as the criteria for our policies, we could well endorse racist measures — because capitalism coerces the oppressed into supporting untrue and irrational ideas.

We should not let capitalism set the agenda for Labour's policies: I would dispute the value of workers' militias or wholesale nationalisation without other, more extensive measures to ensure accountability and democracy, but nevertheless we should not discount ideas simply because they do not immediately command the support of the majority of Labour voters.

However, Labour's first step must be to extend the role given now to ordinary members to elect their representative and leaders, and push that idea through, not only to the unions, but also to the practical pursuit of socialism via increased non-Parliamentary activity — mass demonstrations, support for causes outside the Westminster arena (like the Irish political prisoners), and strong backing for trade union militancy as one weapon in the fight to replace this reactionary government with a Labour alternative under our control.

A Tory on reform and revolution

by Colin Foster

The debate between Vladimir Derer and John O'Mahony, and the interview with Tony Benn, raised the question of whether power can be taken from the ruling class gradually and peacefully.

One thing that has some weight in this matter is what the ruling class itself thinks about it. And in this context an article by Peregrine Worsthorne in the *Sunday Telegraph* just before Christmas is interesting.

Worsthorne, a maverick Tory, starts by recalling the anxiety of many in his officers' mess when Labour was elected in 1945. But their wealth and power survived 1945. And, he reassures his friends, they will survive 'Bennery' too.

"The system in another 35 years' time may well be more Socialist in name... But you and your offspring will still be running it. For,

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short of a violent revolution which physically liquidates those at the top, it is extremely difficult to dislodge a ruling class which has not entirely lost its will to survive.

"Yours, it seems to me, is rather stronger now than it was a few years ago.

Certainly the army and the police force have seldom been more deeply conservative, thanks to their valuably educative experience in Northern Ireland, which has weaned them off any lurking sympathy for radical rhetoric".

Worsthorne equates socialist revolution with Stalinism, and Stalin's murderous brutality (in fact mostly directed against workers and socialists) with 'killing off' the old ruling class. "Lenin and Stalin were serious revolutionaries who knew that... there is no way to kill off a ruling class except to kill it off". But what he does understand is that the power of the bourgeoisie rests ultimately on violence, and will ultimately

ies this really was a revolution, transforming their lives fundamentally, for good or ill.

"But only a foreign army, or an armed insurrection, can bring about that degree of dramatic change..."

"In British constitutional theory any Parliamentary Government with a majority can do what it wants. But this theory would not survive long if it was used in ways profoundly

unacceptable to a majority of the middle class..."

"This is not to deny that many Socialist innovations were introduced by Mr Atlee's Government, which certainly helped to transform the material lives of working people. But the degree of change at the top was not very great. Public ownership did not alter the existing industrial or commercial hierarchy. Those who gave the orders before continued to do so. Bosses and workers did not change place..."

"[And] just as R.A. Butler soon found ways of taking over Atleeism on behalf of the old order, turning the Welfare State into a bonanza for the middle class, so will some future Tory magician do the same to Bennery.

Writeback
Continuing the debate on socialist strategy started by Vladimir Derer, John O'Mahony and Tony Benn

"Of course the hard men of the Labour Left think they know better, as did their counterparts in Allende's Chile, who also thought that their middle class would submit voluntarily to dispossession. That will not happen in Britain, any more than it happened in Chile.

"Either Bennery will be taken over, as was Atleeism, by the middle class, for its own purposes, or, if the hard men behind his Government try to push Leftwards regardless, poor Tony will suffer the British equivalent of Allende's fate..."

... Unless, of course, the counter-revolutionary violence of the British Pinochets is answered by revolutionary violence. What Worsthorne can't see is that this revolutionary violence is not some secretly-organised sudden blood-bath, but just the normal generalisation of workers' self-defence on the picket line — on condition that the labour movement has understood and absorbed the lessons on the nature of capitalist power which Worsthorne offers us.

NOW FOR DEMOCRACY IN THE UNIONS

by Martin Timmins

THE Wembley decision on the Labour leadership is a big step forward. But it could mean little unless union leaderships are also sorted out.

Fight

The efforts of many years by Labour Party members, to make the party serve the needs of the working class people, are being countered by union leaders who obstruct membership control in their own

unions.

We all know that the members of the EPTU have very little say in the policy of their union.. But the AUEW, once among the most open of unions, has also been slowly but surely changing its rules.

The process began with the introduction of the postal ballot. Now many members vote according to the distortions which they read in the press, and not according to candidates' true opinions, which could be argued and questioned before an open

vote in the branches or (better) in the workplaces.

Other changes have included removing much of the influence of working class union members and the latest decision by the union rules revision committee on December 3rd on TUC and Labour Party delegations.

Bluntly

AUEW members now have no direct say in the election of delegates to the TUC conference or the LP conference (yes the same Labour Party which has just

voted to make itself more democratic). Delegates will now be chosen by the divisional committees, rather than elected from the branches.

To put it bluntly, this decision is aimed to make it easier for the President to sell out without any bother from the members.

Remember Scanlon a few years ago having a 'lapse of memory' and casting the union's votes the opposite way to union policy on mandatory reselection of MPs? Duffy's promise to the press last year, when he could not persuade the

delegation to go his way on Labour democracy?

Duffy declared: "It won't happen next year, because I'll make sure our delegates are elected by the divisional committees."

Heavy

The Wembley conference has put the Labour Party on the still long road to being a body that will do something to fight for workers' interests, rather than just being a reserve Tory government for difficult times. For AUEW members who

want to defend their living standards and jobs, these changes are important.

But they are not enough without a similar clean-out in the unions — particularly the AUEW.

Just as the Labour leader is to be elected annually, so all union officials should be elected annually.

It can be done. For years it was said that the right wing could not be beaten in the Labour Party. The war is not over, but they have suffered heavy defeats. We must now build up the same fight in the trade unions!

SCLV sets its plans

by Nik Barstow

"It might not be 1960 all over again, but the threat from the right is real enough.", John Bloxam told the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory Steering Committee on February 2nd. The SC was discussing the situation after the Wembley conference and the tasks ahead for the R&FMC, which the SCLV initiated last June.

R&FMC Secretary Jon Lansman argued that the Right was in disarray, and their attempts to reverse the Wembley decisions could and would be defeated. But he stressed that the arguments for real rank and file control hadn't been won in many CLPs and unions that had traditionally backed the democracy campaign.

To beat back the attack from the 150 MPs and right wing union leaders, the R&FMC would have to keep up its work. Work in the trade unions would be particularly vital.

The SC agreed to press for the Mobilising Committee to continue campaigning in this way, and also unanimously agreed to a proposal from Hackney Councillor Ron Heisler that the SCLV should help launch a campaign against the EETPU or any other unions disaffiliating from the Labour Party.

The SCLV will also propose that the Mobilising Committee campaigns for democratic reform of local Labour groups.

We also decided to produce a draft recruitment leaflet for Labour Party organisations — arguing for people to join and help make the Labour Party a genuinely democratic party that doesn't say one thing in opposition and do another in government.

FUND

£470.50 — that was our final total for January of contributions and donations from supporters and readers. Just short of our £500 target — and it should have been much more, with the special £5 a head contribution we asked for to cover the expenses of our campaigning against the Longbridge sackings. We're only holding our own, not paying off any debts.

So for February let's go well over the £500. Send donations to Socialist Organiser, c/o 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

RALLY

Change of plan: because we have arranged a joint cuts conference with the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement on March 21st, the Socialist Organiser rally will be on Sunday March 22nd.

More details soon: but it is certainly a whole weekend worth reserving in your diary now. There'll be a social on Saturday evening.

by Martin Thomas

THIS IS how the Guardian's Michael White saw the left at the Wembley Conference:

"On the one side, shop steward Fred Kite, who has moved on since Peter Sellers knew him and is now the general secretary of several major unions.

"And on the other side Howard Kirk, the History Man... visible here and there with his radical buttons, his trendy overalls and his leather jacket and jeans..."

Fred Kite was the caricature bloody-minded shop steward in the film "I'm all right, Jack". And Howard Kirk? After a four-part serialisation on BBC2 of Malcolm Bradbury's "The History Man", he has become the standard caricature Marxist intellectual.

For some months the Guardian has been full of fury and disgust at the "revolt of the lumpen-polytechnics" and "paperback Marxism". Now it has found a name for its enemy.

The film does not make fun of Kirk, a sociology lecturer. It does not present him as a head-in-the-clouds utopian. He is branded as evil, ruthless, clear-headed, unscrupulous and dangerous.

Scots week of action against the Bomb

By John Macdonald

ON Saturday 31st January, the Scottish Convention of peace and disarmament, sponsored by Scottish CND and the STUC, concluded a week of intense anti-war drive activity in Edinburgh.

2000 people attended the rally in the Usher Hall following a march through Edinburgh organised by the local CND branch.

The week included a public meeting at the miners' club in Newcraighall, and a joint meeting of Tribune and Lothian Regional Labour Party on Civil Defence.

"Lothian against the War Drive" held a festival which included folk song, poetry, exhibitions, and showings of the War Game, Children of Hiroshima, and Dr. Strangelove.

Another event was a conference to plan action.

At the Usher Hall rally, Eric Clarke of the Scottish NUM said his union intended to organise a world-wide conference of miners for disarmament, and called for a mass movement "such as the one we saw in Iran, or what is happening in Poland now."

When the next day's conference got down to the problems of achieving disarmament, some argued that broad support was the key, while SO supporters argued that we should concentrate our efforts in the labour movement, where lies the potential power to rid us of nuclear weapons.

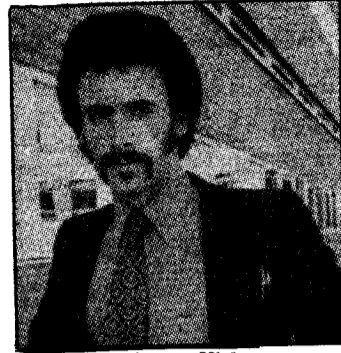
Brian Heron spoke as an organiser of the labour movement Conference against the Missiles (sponsored by CND and the Labour Party). He too stressed the need to organise for trade union blacking and called for a campaign to get the Labour Party to organise a demonstration with the TUC.

The conference included workshops on practical work to be done to mobilise different sectors. Plans were also made for a public meeting of trade unionists in March.

A flood of applications to join CND was one immediate result of the week of action.

Caricaturing

Dr Kirk



Anthony Sher as Kirk

He sets up a visit to his university by a racist professor of genetics and a student protest against the visit — all the while keeping himself in the background. "I abstained, actually", he says after the sociology department meeting that votes to invite the professor.

But: "Now there'll be trouble, and it will radicalise everyone, and we shall have a good term".

He ruthlessly seduces women. And he gets a right-wing student from his sociology class expelled from the university.

Moral of the story? Left-

wing ideas are just clap-trap used by cynical power-seekers.

At least, that's the moral of the story in the BBC version. For the film angles the story rather differently from Malcolm Bradbury's book.

Bradbury's viewpoint (unless I have misunderstood him completely) is expressed in the self-reproach of the hero of an earlier novel, "Stepping Westward."

"I wanted to work in with the wheels of history. (But) I should have left history alone, passed by on the other side. That's the truth. I'm a people man. The myths of history, these new faiths, they're all myths of dispossession. Take something away from someone and give it to someone else. But I'm for people, people keeping what they've struggled to have. I don't think we can yield up what exists for the possibility of what might. That's my idea of liberalism: kindness to what is, to those who now exist."

So the books — both "The History Man" and "Stepping Westward" (which has an earlier version of Kirk in Bernard Froelich, not a Marxist but a go-getting American academic) — are

written in a spirit of wry commentary rather than polemic. We are invited to identify, in a self-mocking spirit, with Beamish in "The History Man" or Walker in "Stepping Westward" — the victims of the "wheels of history". Kirk is not pilloried but gently dissected.

In the book, Kirk, until his mid-20s, is timid, hard-working, and conformist. Then he discovers he can use sex and politics as means of self-assertion. In the film we only get the end result.

When the book describes a clash between Kirk and a right-wing student Carmody, in a sociology class, it tells us how "dull, dogged, weak" Carmody's essay is, how tolerant the left-wing students are, how diligent and competent Kirk is as a teacher. In the film all that is blanked out: it is just Kirk vindictively crushing Carmody.

So... the constituency delegate with the leather jacket and jeans was not Howard Kirk. But the BBC's producer was probably there at Wembley somewhere, caucusing in a corner with Shirley Williams and some of those other defenders of decent liberalism against left-wing ruthlessness.

SO wins TV time for dole bulletin

by Arthur Bough

DOLE Mirror, the unemployed bulletin which Stoke Socialist Organiser helps to produce, will be featured on BBC TV's "Grapevine" programme on Wednesday 4th.

And we're getting support, locally, too.

We started producing Dole Mirror last November. Our idea was to try to help the unemployed to break out of their isolation and to provide them with information and political ideas. We want Dole Mirror to act as an organiser of the unemployed, so that eventually they will take over production and distribution of the bulletin for themselves.

Just before Christmas some comrades from the Right to Work Campaign approached us and at a joint meeting of Socialist Organ-

iser and the Right to Work Campaign it was decided to organise a meeting to involve a broader section of the labour movement.

On 8th January about 30 people turned up, including Peter Moore, secretary of North Staffs Trades Council. He told us that at the Trades Council meeting the night before he had circulated copies of the Dole Mirror.

Meet

A conference organised by the Trades Council in December had decided that an ad hoc committee should be set up to organise a campaign against cuts and unemployment. So we suggested that this committee meet as soon as possible. A gathering was organised for 14th January. There was an argument over the structure of the comm-

itee. Sam Lomas from the CP argued it should be delegate-only, but the meeting agreed on a structure with both delegates and individual members who won't have voting rights.

Peter Moore was elected joint secretary and said he would look into the Trades Council donating some money. Sam Lomas of the CP bitterly opposed this — and throughout the meeting Lomas' performance was so bad that members of the Left Caucus of the Trades Council are now talking about excluding them in future.

Other union officials, though, showed more willingness to assist. Bill Cawley from the POEU has offered printing facilities for the next two editions of the Dole Mirror, and its circulation has now increased from 500 a fortnight to 2500.

After sorting out the

structure of the campaign we were able to get on and discuss the activities to be organised. Plans are well under way for the setting up of a centre for the unemployed. We hope that the centre will provide not only recreation, but also education and information for the unemployed — and production of Dole Mirror.

Demo

From the centre we hope to organise pickets of firms working overtime, helping out with picketing for workers on strike etc — and a good turnout for the big demo in Glasgow on February 21st. 5,000 people from North Staffordshire went to the Liverpool demo. There is also the possibility of a demo being organised in Stoke itself in March or April.

Water workers can give pay lead for public sector

by Colin Foster

THE National Water Council has backed down on its 'final' pay offer of 7.9%, and has agreed to new talks with the unions.

32,000 manual workers had voted overwhelmingly for industrial action if the offer were not improved. And the white collar unions had decided to refuse to cooperate with troops or volunteers sent in to break a strike.

Water workers currently average a basic rate of only

£60-67 and their claim is worth 30%. But the Water Council's new offer is likely to be only a slight improvement.

Profit

British Gas manual workers have been offered 9.9%, marginally above the current water workers' offer. GMWU official John Edmunds pointed out: "We cannot see any case for workers in this

industry, which expects a £600 million profit this year, having to take an increase 4 to 5% lower than the cost of living."

To maintain or improve their living standards, the water and gas workers will have to go ahead with industrial action. Their strong economic position means that they could certainly win — and give a tremendous boost to all public sector workers, including the less well-placed ones like the health workers.

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*All other areas, contact SO at 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY. [Temporary address: the old address, of Hackney North Labour Rooms, is falling down!]

KICKOUT THE TORIES!

Labour democracy and the fight for a WORKERS GOVERNMENT

A Socialist Organiser Pamphlet

50p including postage from 5 Stamford Hill, London N16

Tory rent-raisers reap the whirlwind

by Alasdair Jamison

Over 100 angry tenants closed down a meeting of the Borough Council Housing Committee in Basingstoke on Monday 26th January.

The majority Tory group were proposing rent increases of up to 80%, while the Labour group held fast for zero rent and rate increases.

Cllr Dudley Keep, chairman of the Housing Committee, called the police as tenants howled down Tory claims that increased rent income would go on housing repairs.

After withdrawing from

the council chamber, a rump Housing Committee decided on a 70% rent and rate rise which will go to the full council on 5th February. Meanwhile in the council chamber an impromptu meeting discussed the ongoing campaign against rent and rate rises.

On Wednesday 28th January the largest constituency GC meeting for years demanded that each and every Labour councillor give a commitment to stand fast against any increase. Between 31st January and 5th February no less than five meetings against rent and rate rises will take place in Basingstoke,

organised by the CLP, the Trades Council and the GMWU Hospital Branch supported by the TGWU and USDAW district offices. All these organisations are giving financial support to the building of tenants' groups, with a view to further resistance and possible rent strikes.

The full council meeting of Thursday 5th promises to be a head-on confrontation. A filibuster is planned by the Labour group, and there will be a mass demonstration both inside and outside the council chamber, with a large number of delegations from unions, tenants' associations and other groups.

Glasgow 1: Gorbals nurseries

by Stan Crooke

'AT PRESENT, there is a substantial over-provision of nursery places in the Gorbals area'. That's the bizarre claim made in the so-called consultative paper produced by the Education Department of Labour-controlled Strathclyde Regional Council which attempts to justify closing two nurseries in the Gorbals.

The paper argues that not all nursery places are occupied at present. But that is because the places offered are only part-time, and therefore useless to mothers in both full-time and part-time employment. At the one nursery in the Gorbals where there is full-time provision, there is a waiting list of 76! But the consultative paper doesn't mention this.

Nor does it mention that one of the nurseries not proposed for closure is in the path of a new motorway and will therefore soon be knocked down.

The Strathclyde councillors have ignored their manifesto promise not to make cuts. Now they claim that at least their cuts won't cost jobs. But the council is intending to sack all the manual staff at the two nurseries and nearly half the nursery nurses.

The council has done everything it can to block any campaign against the closures. The parents were informed just a week before the Christmas holidays. But a campaign initiated by the parents is now well under way.

All the nurseries have been leafleted at picking-up times; a petition has been



organised, and people are queuing up in the Gorbals shopping centre to sign it; a well-attended public meeting was held last week, and a Nursery Action Group was set up at it.

The Glasgow Cuts Campaign and the local Tenants' Association have already pledged their support for the fightback, local community workers have helped in the production of leaflets and petitions, and members of the local Labour Party and SO supporters have also been active in the campaign.

But no lead is forthcoming from local trade union officials or councillors. At last week's public meeting, the only union representative present was the NALGO convenor responsible for nurseries. The local district councillor is a former Conservative who joined the Labour Party because he was bright enough to realise that

you don't get elected councillor for the Gorbals on a Tory ticket.

The local Regional Councillor has been pushing a 'compromise' solution of closing one nursery and keeping the other open at present levels of part-time provision. But the campaign must take up the National Child Care Campaign's demand for comprehensive, flexible, and free child-care facilities. And the fightback over the nurseries must also link up with other anti-cuts fights.

Labour Party branches should affiliate to the campaign; councillors should be forced to carry out their manifesto promises, or get out; and trade unions should use this campaign as a basis for launching the fight for the realisation of the TUC document on nursery education, which remains a dead letter in the hands of the union bureaucrats.

Glasgow 2: Forest Hall home

by John Wilde

A CAMPAIGN has begun to stop the closure of the Dornoch main home at Forest Hall old people's home in the Springburn area of Glasgow.

Originally, Strathclyde Region social work department planned phasing out the home in 1984 with the proviso that at least two other homes be built to replace it. But now Forest Hall is up for closure by April 1, 1981.

The council says the 250 staff will be redeployed and the 100 residents relocated, but it is difficult to see how this can be carried out by April 1st.

And staff at Forest Hall argue that closure would mean the loss of a vital service which will not be replaced in the foreseeable future.

We talked to Duncan McCallum, TGWU convenor and

joint union convenor at Forest Hall, and Alec Stirling, who is a care officer and TGWU shop steward in the Dornoch main home.

'We first heard of the closure through Albert Long's [chairman of the social work department] statement in the Glasgow Herald on 29th December 1980. After initial approaches by the unions, the Region agreed that the Bewley frail ambulant unit would stay open, but the Dornoch main home would be closed.

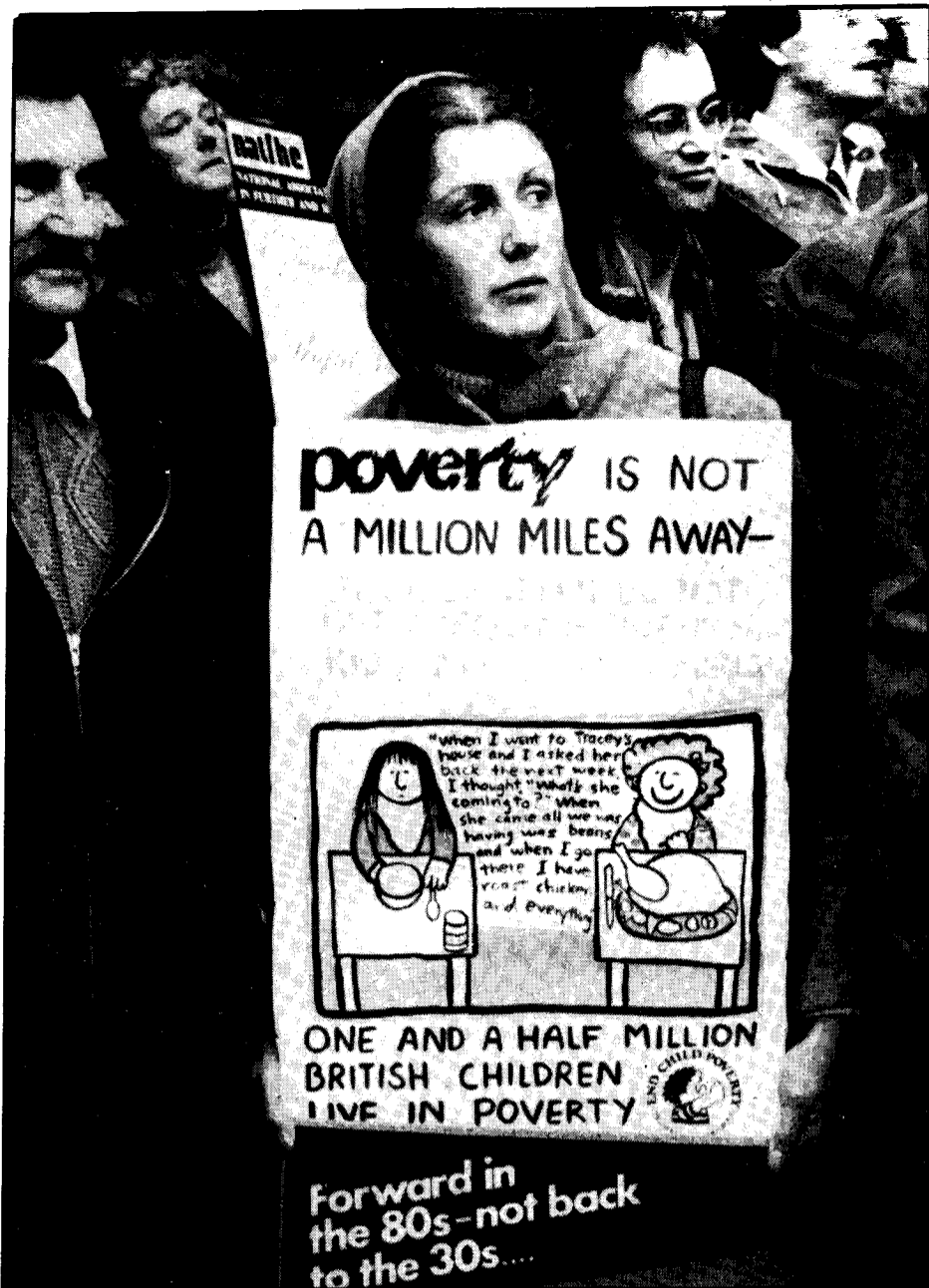
'This also means a run-down of meals on wheels services in this area. Last year we put out 117,000 meals.'

'The home is unique: we have a special unit for the mentally defective, and it's taken eight years to build up the expertise in this area.'

'Support for the campaign

against closure is solid from the three unions involved: NALGO, TGWU, and NUPE. The joint unions here are asking for the support of the membership to refuse to cooperate with the Region in the destruction of the caring system here at Forest Hall. Other homes have agreed not to take in staff or residents if the Region attempts to move them. Our sisters and brothers in NALGO have decided to defy official directives to cease admissions to Forest Hall, and the TGWU membership in Strathclyde will be asked to refuse to transfer residents elsewhere.'

Financial and other assistance is needed, and should be sent to Duncan McCallum, TGWU convenor, c/o T. Leishman, Senior Administrative Officer, Forest Hall home, Springburn, Glasgow.



Cuts conference planned for Sat. March 21

AS LABOUR councils make their budget decisions for 1981-2, the Tory government is still pressing home its attack both in the local government arena and in health, education, and social services.

Labour councils now face a stark choice: to become tools of Tory policies, thus devastating services and cutting living standards; or to help lead a fight to beat back the Tories.

Rent

Camden Labour councillors now face a £2 million surcharge for settling above the national rate in the 1979 'low pay' dispute. In June and September this year, councils that have refused to carry out the Tories' dirty work will face a clawback of part of their government grant. Direct Labour organisations face massive cuts as government funds are withdrawn. Bigger rent increases are planned for April. And all of this is backed up by Heseltine's Local Government Act.

In many areas, Labour councils dominated by the right wing have already made their choice. They will meekly administer Tory policies, with only a few words of protest. In these areas, the Labour Party and trade unions, together with left-wing Labour Group minorities, will have to decide how to deal with these 'Labour lieutenants of the Tories'.

Two major labour movement conferences, last November and this January, have debated the cuts fightback. 600 delegates in November voted for no cuts, no rate rises, no rent rises; for no council house sales; for Labour and trade union mobilisation to defeat the Tories; and for a fight for socialist policies, including nationalisation without compensation of the banks and industries like drugs and building. 400 delegates at the January conference confirmed these policies and called for regional labour movement conferences to take the fight forward.

But Lambeth council Labour group, who sponsored the Conferences, have flouted the Conference decisions. They have raised rates and rents. They are talking about 'widespread savings'. They have agreed to sell council houses. Other left wing Labour Groups have been no better.

Fight

The lesson is that militant policies are no good unless there is an organised force to fight for them. The efforts of local groups like Lambeth Labour Left must be supplemented by strong national organisation for militant policies.

The retreat of the national public sector union leaders from organising a fight against cuts, closures and sackings, can be checked.

The Longworth hospital occupation shows how closures can be fought.

That's why Socialist Organiser and the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement have come together to jointly organise a conference on March 21st. It will hear reports on local struggles against cuts and closures in the NHS, education, nurseries, etc; against rent rises; and against sackings in local government. The conference will discuss the crisis in local government, looking to the examples of fightback by some councillors in Coventry, Camden, South Wales, and Lambeth, as well as to the Clay Cross councillors' fight against the Tory Housing Finance Act in 1972.

It will help organise support for fightbacks against the Tory attacks, and examine the lessons. It will plan national campaigning activity. And it will construct the framework for a strong left wing capable of seeing that the decisions of the broad conferences in November and January are implemented and defended against backsliding.

★ Saturday March 21, from 11am at Central Library, Fieldway Crescent, Islington. Admission £1.50 (claimants 75p). For details (including coaches from outside London), contact Stephen Corbishley, 66 Brookesley St, London E3.

Socialist Organiser

DEFENCE CONFERENCE CALLED FOR FEBRUARY 14

from the Longbridge defence committee

ON 21st November 1980, 500 workers at Longbridge protested against the company's vindictive lay-off policy. The protest was the result of extreme management provocation and some [relatively minor] damage occurred. Throughout the events of the 21st, shop stewards attempted to maintain calm and urged restraint.

On 3rd December, 9 men [including 4 TGWU shop stewards] were sacked. Most of the men were not accused of causing damage — the company's accusation against them was that they were 'ringleaders', a charge that is almost impossible to prove or disprove.

As a result of the sackings [reduced on 15th December

to 8 after a farcical appeal hearing], workers in the Metro finishing and assembly areas struck demanding full reinstatement of the 8. The strike was suspended on 5th January to allow an inquiry to take place.

Neither the sacked men nor the majority of the strikers had any illusions in the inquiry, but they felt at the time they had no alternative. On 30th January 1981 the inquiry reported its findings. 6 of the men [including all 4 shop stewards] remained sacked. As we write is unclear whether or not further industrial action will occur.

The Longbridge Defence Committee has called a conference for Saturday 14th February 1981 on the victimisations. It will be between 2 and 5 pm and the venue will be Dr Johnson House,

Colmore Circus, Queensway, Birmingham.

The aim of the conference is to organise support for any further action at Longbridge; to examine the lessons of the victimisations; and to ensure that the labour movement is made fully aware of the facts and implications of the case. Speakers will include some of the sacked stewards, victimised workers from other industries [including Conway Xavier, victimised NUPE branch secretary at Great Ormond St Hospital] and prominent labour movement figures. Tony Benn MP and Les Huckfield MP have already sponsored the conference, together with Selly Oak CLP.

* Inquiries to: Defence Committee, c/o Selly Oak CLP, 10 Greenend Road, Birmingham 13.

LONGBRIDGE: WHAT THE SACKED STEWARDS SAY

"AS FAR as I am concerned", sacked shop steward Jim Denham told SO, "the inquiry should never have taken place."

"The sackings were clear cases of victimisation, and the T&G should have called out every member in BL if necessary to secure reinstatement. Instead we were lumbered with this inquiry, and now it's over it will be all the more difficult getting a strike off the ground again."

"But that's what we have to do. We have to tell every Longbridge worker — indeed, every BL worker — this affects you. If Edwardes gets away with this, you'll all be that much weaker, and no-one on the shop floor will be safe."

"On the T&G steward's card it says, 'The steward should receive full support and protection from the union'. I think we need to ask the T&G leaders why four of their stewards at BL Longbridge did not receive much support or protection."

Roy Orchard, another of the sacked shop stewards, also told us what he thought of the verdict: "It was no more than I expected from an inquiry of

that nature, because it was not an independent inquiry in the true sense of independence. It left BL management the opportunity to maintain their credibility and integrity to the public in general."

"BL management", Roy Orchard continued.

Seneffe shows the way

Time and again Michael Edwardes has threatened BL workers with shut-downs. Now Belgian BL workers at the Seneffe plant, recently scheduled for closure, have shown how to reply. They have occupied the plant and are not letting any cars out.

Support from the British unions is urgently needed now.

"should now change their attitude of muddling along from one crisis to another, and attempting to survive by threats of closure and intimidation of the workers. They should now drop their blackmailing techniques and seek to obtain the good will of the trade union organisations and the cooperation of its workforce in a more realistic manner."

"The industrial relations at Longbridge are terrible, and the management had the chance of sitting down and talking about a module system that would have averted that demonstration."

But what about the unions?

"The trade unions and trade unionists must never again fall into the trap of this type of inquiry, unless it is of a completely independent nature."

"The trade unions now have a moral obligation to take the issue back to the members who suspended their strike for the inquiry to take place. If they want to work with dignity, not with slavery, with the company dictating to them, then there is only one real democratic decision they can come to."

Sea farers step up the fight

by Les Hearn

THE seafarers' struggle is still escalating. The National Union of Seamen, with backing from the TGWU, has blacked all Townsend Thoresen ferries, including those under Norwegian flags. And in Liverpool three non-union ships are being held up by NUS pickets which the TGWU refuses to cross.

Townsend Thoresen provoked the blacking by sacking crews. Other companies

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have stopped the pay of seafarers taking industrial action, and the employers have cut off the 'pool payments' normally made to and over 300 were affected by overtime bans, delays in sailing, or lightning strikes. Altogether this represents over 50% of the UK-manned fleet. Further lightning strikes are planned on the ferry services.

The employers' organisation, the General Council of British Shipping, is trying to appeal to seafarers over the head of the union to accept its 12% offer. But the bosses, not the seafarers, are breaking ranks.

Canadian Pacific, the sixth largest employer, with 800 NUS members, has signed a separate deal — and been forced to re-

sign from the GCBS. However, the CP deal falls considerably short of the union claim for a 'substantial' rise in basic pay. It is for 9.4% on basic (the same as the GCBS offer), and time-and-a-half for all overtime from April 1st (the GCBS has offered time-and-a-half for Sundays only).

The union leaders' approach here reflects the same half-speed method of waging the struggle as their offer to call off action if only the bosses will agree to go to arbitration at ACAS.

The current 'guerilla' tactics help to conserve union funds. The problem is that they conserve the bosses' funds too.

The Financial Times reports: "Judging by the performance of shipping shares over the past fortnight, the stock market is not unduly worried about the financial impact of the seamen's dispute on major British shipping groups...". After calculating the employers' probable revenue losses, it concludes, seafarers between voy-

ages. Union figures on Monday 2nd were that 210 ships were on indefinite stoppage

"The big shipping groups may be well cushioned to withstand further industrial action".

An escalation which shut down ports completely and stopped foreign-flag ships too would hit employers

throughout the economy much harder and faster, and make speedy victory more likely. That is why many rank and file seafarers are calling for all-out action.

But the key to developing

the action lies with the local democratically-elected dispute committees. With effective national and regional coordination, they can resist all the bosses' threats and guard against all the union leaders' backsliding.

'The support is tremendous'

MUSA NOGAN of the Cardiff dispute committee told Geoff Williams about the seafarers' pay battle and his views on the way forward.

THE NUMBER of ships held up at home and abroad is changing daily. We know that over 500 ships have been involved. Some have been held up for 24 or 36 hours, and others have been held up for longer periods.

Many deep sea vessels are being held in British ports indefinitely, and in some instances seamen have been paid off.

On the continent, employers have paid off some crews, and the ships are now standing idle — blacked by unions on the continent while the employer still has to pay berthing/port charges.

Across the country, ferries have been stopping on lightning 24 or 36 hour

strikes. Stranraer, Holyhead, Fishguard etc. have all been affected.

There has been tremendous support from other workers. In Britain the T&GWU operators have been fantastic. In Holyhead and Fishguard the NUR lock-keepers have also supported us.

Internationally, the support has been overwhelming, too. The International Transport Federation has blacked ships throughout the continent, and the Australian unions have also been very supportive. We also have officials throughout the world organising and coordinating the action.

Many other unions in the UK have been supporting us, and the General Secretary is speaking in Scotland on the same platform as Mick McGahey of the NUM.

■ ■ The GCBS is refusing

to pay pool-pay [part wages while seafarers are waiting for ships]. What is the feeling of the members?

Our members now have to sign on the dole and go to the Job Centre for work; and the Job Centres have no facilities for seamen.

As far as the members are concerned, the GCBS have broken the agreement on pool pay and virtually put us on strike. We have responded by breaking off with the General Council.

■ What do you think about all-out action?

At this time it is not being considered. We are in a better position with this type of guerilla action than we were in 1966. Some seafarers are still working, so there is little drain at present on the union's resources. The struggle is going to be protracted, but the ship-owners seem to be cracking.



Musa Nogon [2nd from right] and other members of the Cardiff dispute committee.

PHOTO: NEWSLINE