

Socialist Organiser

No.37 MARCH 21, 1981 (CLAIMANTS & STRIKERS, 10p) 20p

Join the LABOUR PARTY

Write to 150 Walworth Rd, London SE17 1JT

by Stephen Corbishley

THE CIVIL servants' action has been enormously successful so far. The one-day strike on March 9th was solidly supported all over the country. The follow-up selective action is already hitting government revenue, the war machine and overseas trade links.

But Thatcher is determined to hit back. She sees this as a challenge to her government — and she's right about that! The Tory counter-attack began in Liverpool on Friday 13th, when four low-paid clerical assistants and 17 other civil servants in Customs and Excise were threatened with suspension.

At the same time, the management took two CPSA officers off their facility time. In reply the two barricaded themselves in the union office. At this, the management called the police to break in and evict them.

By the end of the day over 150,000 civil servants across the country had walked out in protest at the Liverpool events.

FUNDS

Thatcher's plan is to force a run on the strike funds (currently about £3 million) and to break the nerve of the union leaders with further provocations and mass suspensions.

The national strike on March 9th was supported by over 450,000 civil servants and marked the start of a campaign of industrial action against the scrapping of the national pay comparability system, and for a claim of 15% with a £10 underpinning minimum.

The Tories have kept up the pressure on the Press barons to keep churning out anti-civil servant propaganda. Myths about index-linked pensions, enormous wage levels and unique job security have been peddled in every paper. But the basic facts have been ignored: the lowest paid civil servants (Clerical Assistants) earn between £59 and £72.60 a week, the average civil service pension is less than £25 and over 60,000 jobs have gone with another 30,000 scheduled to go before 1983.

The civil servants are the last big group of public sector workers to be dealt with by the Tories. And the government is considerably weaker now than when the miners humiliated it earlier this year.

The plans of the Council of Civil Service Unions are for a series of indefinite selective strikes designed to cripple government finance. This involves shutting down the two big tax computer centres in Shipley and Cumbernauld, along with the VAT computer centre in Southend, thus depriving the government of over £2 billion revenue per week.

Other action is organised

Seven per cent won't pay the rent

within the Ministry of Defence, intended to cripple the functioning of naval supplies, naval dockyards and intelligence communication centres. Allied to this is a plan for a series of rolling strikes by Customs and Excise workers across the country.

But civil service workers cannot afford to sit back and leave the struggle to the 'selected' sections. Mass suspensions of those taking action are likely and this must be met with national strike action.

And the Tories have a second line of attack as well. They will attempt to draw the national union leaders into talks about restoring a pay comparability system in return for union acceptance of 7% this year.

Already several leaders — notably from the CPSA — have urged the use of arbitration. Alistair Graham, Deputy General Secretary of the CPSA, has hinted that a settlement on

the comparability system will lead to a quick settlement on the actual pay claim (probably meaning acceptance of 7%).

Rank and file militants need to organise to resist any move to accept a pay settlement of less than the full 15% claim. This means not only pressing for escalation of the action in docks, airports and other areas that will hurt big business, but also organising effective picketing to stop scabs.

The unions need to campaign now for all-out strike action in all areas except the two key benefit computer centers in Reading and Livingstone. And support must be won from other workers and trade unionists. Other union leaders and the TUC must be forced to give support.

A victory for the civil service workers will so undermine the government that kicking them out will become a very real possibility.

HOWE TO ROB WORKERS

"Hard budget for workers". That was the Times headline!

Tax allowances have not been raised in line with inflation, so income tax has effectively been raised by

£2.5 billion.

Petrol was put up 20p a gallon, beer 4p a pint, cigarettes 14p a packet.

The TUC reckons that Geoffrey Howe's budget cost the average working class family £5 a week — while

services were cut.

For many civil service workers, the government's 7% offer is less than that £5. So it's an offer for a wage cut even before inflation takes its toll.



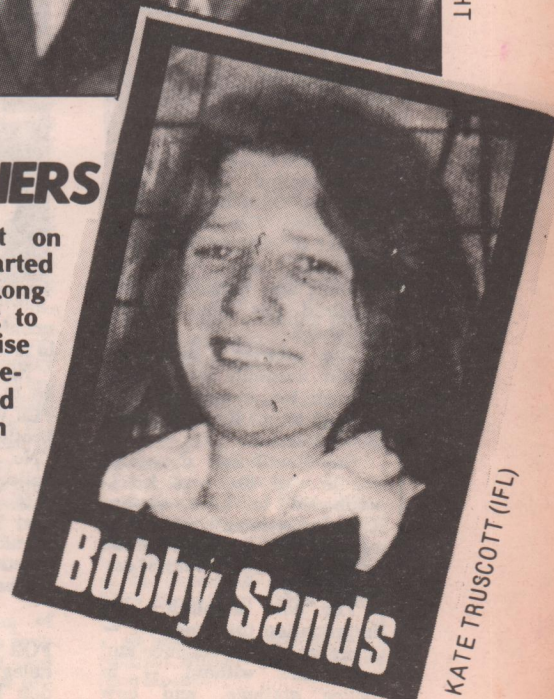
PHOTO: AN PHOBLACHT

YES, THEY ARE POLITICAL PRISONERS

Thousands demonstrated in Belfast on March 1st [above] as Bobby Sands started his hunger strike in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh. Bobby Sands is hunger-striking to force the Tory government to recognise that he is a political prisoner — jailed because, like thousands of Irish men and women over the centuries, he has taken up arms to win freedom for Ireland. The following Sunday, March 8th, many British feminists and socialists added their voice to the campaign for political status, joining an International Women's Day demonstration outside Armagh women's prison.

The struggle continues.

More, page 12.



KATE TRUSCOTT (IFL)

Hit the Tories where it hurts them

THE MARCH 9th strike showed how powerful civil service workers can be.

By disrupting intelligence communications; stopping customs and excise control work; halting tax collections; and closing ports and airports, we can threaten the continuity and organisation of the state services, and disrupt the economy.

But what now? For years activists in the CPSA have debated how industrial action should be organised.

The right wing selective strikes, run tightly by the full-time officers, and secret bargaining. The left has argued instead for democratically-conducted all-out action.

As part of that, we have argued for bringing out the two key computer centres that issue the giro for claimants. In fact Socialist Organiser carried an article recently including this point.

The Broad Left dominated Department of Employment (DE) and Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) CPSA sections both favour strikes at these two centres, but disagree strongly on how they can be organised.

DHSS militants reckon that local offices could continue to provide a service to claim-

ants, but the DE activists calculate that the Unemployment Benefit Offices could not handle the workload manually and would probably close down.

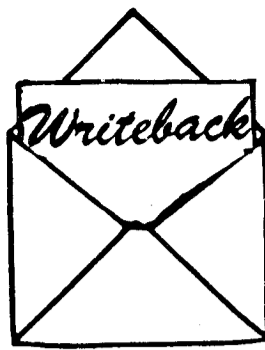
Yet surely March 9th should have shown us that the traditional arguments in favour of pulling out the benefit computers (if they ever had any validity) are now irrelevant.

The argument was that we needed to involve the union's most militant sections, in DHSS and DE. But couldn't we hit the Tories and their big business friends hardest by closing airports, shutting down trade, and closing docks and inland container

depots? Wouldn't the militants from DHSS and DE be best occupied on mass and flying pickets to spread the action in such areas? (The local DE and DHSS offices could strike, bringing out the great majority of the members; claimants would still get their giros through the post, without signing on).

The closure of the Reading and Livingstone computer centres should not be used. With mass unemployment, strike action for any serious length of time would condemn millions to terrible hardship.

The best-organised and most confident claimants could probably get money out



of local authority social services departments. But what about the rest?

To use the weapon of stopping benefits would be to calculate that the Tories would be moved to do something for the plight of the claimants quicker than the unions would be. This calculation is not only un-socialist, it ignores the fact that the Tories would use such action to isolate us from other workers through a dirty press campaign.

Divisions would also appear among the civil service unions' membership, especially those closest to the claimants and the unemployed.

In the same way that socialist dockers would lift a strike to release a ship carrying arms to the guerrillas in El Salvador, miners keep safety men in pits, or nurses maintain emergency cover, so the Civil Service unions should maintain the benefit-paying computers.

The Tories, if local offices were closed, might fear loss of control over the benefit being paid out, and they might try to force a closure of these computers. But then we would appeal for class solidarity, to force the Tories to retreat from their attack on both claimants and civil service workers.

STEPHEN CORBISHLEY



March 9th: civil servants show their power

NICK OAKES (JFL)



Write back to Socialist Organiser, c/o 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

MANAGEMENT at the Gray Dunn biscuit factory in Stanley St, Glasgow tried biting off more than they can chew last week when they tried forcing a 6.7% pay-rise on the manual workers at the factory.

In September last year management admitted to the unions that they were budgeting for a 10% increase in this year's round of pay settlements, but managed to fob off the engineers and electricians with 9.7% and the office staff with 9.0%.

When it came to the shop-floor they thought they could get us to accept a miserable 6.7%. But when our union negotiators (USDAW) saw

how insulting the offer was even they walked out of the pay talks in protest.

Eventually management upped the offer to 7.5% but this was overwhelmingly rejected by a mass meeting. So it was back to the negotiating table, where they offered 7.5% plus a day's extra holiday — provided that the union officials agreed to recommend acceptance of the offer to the shopfloor.

By this time we were getting pretty sick of all the talks, and another mass meeting not only rejected the 7.5% offer again, but also voted to ban overtime and operate sanctions on flexibility, which inevitably meant bringing production to a halt.

We started operating sanctions at 7.30am on the Monday and by 8.00 am we were locked out. Traditionally ours isn't a militant factory and management thought they could beat us with no

problem. But they got a bloody fright when they saw us organising the picketing.

The picket lines were solid, with some shop stewards on the gates 17 hours a day and the women in particular were an inspiration to any trade unionist. The USDAW area organiser, who was officially on holiday that week, also turned up regularly to the picket line because he was so incensed by management's attitude.

On Thursday, the fourth day of the strike, with support still as solid as ever and all the deliveries being turned away on the gates, the USDAW national officers went over the heads of the local officials and contacted the head office of Rowntree-Mackintosh (who own Gray Dunn) in York.

They negotiated a new offer with them, 8.3% plus one extra day's holiday making 9% in all. The offer

was put to us the next day and was overwhelmingly accepted.

Most important of all, shopfloor union organisation came out a lot stronger than it had been before the strike. We virtually had a 100% closed shop before the strike, with only 30 of the shop-floor not in the union. Now 6 of those have joined as well.

The one sour note is that only 72% of the shopfloor came out; the rest allowed themselves to be cowed into scabbing by the foremen and forewomen who told them that going out the gates would lose them their jobs. Let's hope what they saw last week will educate them.

We've gone back the winners and aim to stay on top: the chummy atmosphere that used to exist here is now over and done with.

by a Gray Dunn worker

We aim to stay on top

Morning Litho Ltd. and Vanessa Redgrave

MORNING LITHO Printers Ltd apologise to Vanessa Redgrave for any distress or embarrassment which may have been caused to her by the publication in issue no.33 of Socialist Organiser, of 24 January 1981, misdated 24 January 1980, of an article entitled 'Gaddafi's Foreign Legion to Knight's Rescue', written by Sean Matgamna.

Libel writ will be contested

A writ has been issued by Vanessa Redgrave against Morning Litho Printers Ltd. and Sean Matgamna, alleging libel in respect of the article entitled 'Gaddafi's Foreign Legion to Knight's rescue', written by Sean Matgamna in issue no.33 of Socialist Organiser of 24 January 1981, misdated 24 January 1980. This writ is being contested by Sean Matgamna who will defend the said article.

Facilities have been offered to Vanessa Redgrave to publish an article in reply in 'Socialist Organiser', in exchange for one of the following articles to be published in 'Newsline':

(a) an article by Alan Thornett of the Workers Socialist League, to explain to the readers of 'Newsline' how 20 members of the WRP came to Oxford two weeks ago and made a mass distribution at British Leyland's Cowley plant of a printed broadsheet, which, among other things, implied that he was a police agent;

(b) an article by George Novack, on behalf of the

Fourth Secretariat of the United International, to reply to the WRP's libelous campaign;

(c) an article by the Socialist Iraqi Communist Party, the slaughter of whose members 'Newsline' has publicly justified;

(d) an article by Sean Matgamna, discussing the recent statement by Colonel Ghaddafi calling for the rehabilitation of Hitler and Nazism.

Sean Matgamna has also offered to confirm that he accepts that it is no part of the WRP's objectives to use violence against the state.

And Sean Matgamna has proposed that a labour movement inquiry be set up to investigate the statements made in his article, in the interests of contributing to the continuing public debate on the issues.

These offers were made by Sean Matgamna in a letter dated 26th February 1981 to Vanessa Redgrave's legal advisers, and to date the only response has been the issue of the writ.

See Page 8: defence appeal

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Fill in the form below and return to Socialist Organiser, c/o 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

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Name

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CLP Trade union

'I SAID, "You stole them, didn't you?" He replied, "Yes". I said, "From the same shop?"

'He replied, "No, different ones." I said, "Do you want to make a written statement about what you have told me?"

'He replied, "Yes." I said, "Do you want to write it?" He replied, "No, you do it."

That is what PC Hollowell told the court, and his account was backed up one hundred per cent by PC Wildbore.

The signed confession would normally have been enough for a conviction — enough to put Erroll Madden behind bars.

But Erroll had a receipt for one of the toys he is supposed to have stolen. Counter assistants remember serving him, and a friend was with him when he bought one of the toys.

The case highlights the intimidation that goes on — sometimes with violence and sometimes without — in police stations, and how



unsafe such confessions are in law.

No inquiry has been started to look at the actions of PCs Wildbore and Hollowell. Scotland Yard reply only, "No complaint against the police has been received".

It's the same reply that they gave even after the march to protest at the police inactivity on the Deptford fire where 13 people died.

FOR ABOUT an hour, the delegates at the Greater London Labour Party Standing

Conference on Race Relations discussed a 'draft' press statement drawn up by Party chairman Arthur Latham.

Delegate after delegate attacked the statement for its underestimation of the degree of racism within the Labour Party and for its attitude towards the police.

At the end of the discussion, Arthur Latham summed up. Oddly, he did not deal with the criticisms at all. The delegates wondered why.

All was soon revealed when one delegate asked

whether it was true that the document that they had started discussing shortly after 3.30 had in fact been issued to the press at 2.30.

Yes, replied Latham, that was true.

SCAB OF the week award — a miniature model of a skunk moulded in zinc — goes to Victor Popov. Popov, the Russian Ambassador, crossed the civil service unions' Downing Street pickets to visit Thatcher.

But do not judge him too harshly. Coming as he does from a country where strikes are not allowed and picket lines are therefore never seen, he probably didn't know what the line of protestors was there for.

"THE elimination of injustice has never been held in law to be a charitable purpose", declared Mr Justice Slade of the High Court. No comment.

THE TUC's attempt to gag criticism on Ireland has been

given total support by the Communist Party.

Nine trades councils had sponsored a conference on the TUC and Ireland called by the 'Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act campaign'; and the captains of Congress House had ordered them to withdraw their sponsorship on pain of expulsion from the TUC.

According to Bert Ward, secretary of the Communist Party's Irish Advisory Committee, "the TUC could act in no other way". And according to the Morning Star, "to have kept silent would have seemed to be acquiescing in a conference called to condemn the TUC itself".

So what? Why not have a conference called to condemn the TUC? Why should this criticism bring the threat of disaffiliation?

The tactics of the people behind the conference — members of the Revolutionary Communist Tendency, an extremely sectarian, ultra-left organisation — are

questionable. But their claim that the TUC is complicit with British imperialism's oppression in Ireland is only confirmed by this attempt at gag law.

TOM O'Carroll of the Paedophile Information Exchange was jailed for two years on Friday 13th for 'conspiracy to corrupt public morals'.

Five members of the Paedophile Information Exchange were prosecuted; the four others were acquitted, two at the first trial, and two at the recent re-trial. But O'Carroll was convicted at the re-trial for publishing a PIE contact sheet.

Many socialists would agree that children need protection against sexual abuse by adults. But that does not justify this court decision.

O'Carroll has been convicted on an archaic, catch-all charge; scapegoated because he tried to debate the issue of paedophilia openly; and probably lined up for two years of terrible persecution and brutal ill-treatment.

Dear Geoffrey

ME AND the folks are a bit disappointed. I was watching your Budget in rather illustrious surroundings — there was me, Her Maj, Vestey, and a few captains of industry who shall remain nameless [well, you can't reckon a handle that's been in the family a mere half-dozen generations as a NAME] — lounging on the red plush, chez Windsor.

As I say, we were rather an exclusive gathering — so it would be wise to take note. We are all exceedingly rich. We share an exquisite sensibility and elevated culture. And so far we've avoided paying any tax. [Well, V. got stung for a tanner last year: his ex-accountant is now taking an extended subterranean vacation].

A few minor gripes first. Your failure to raise personal tax allowances rather put paid to a little scheme V's new tax consultant dreamed up for offsetting all V's employees' tax allowances against V's income on the grounds that they're all one big happy family and he's the head of it.

Petrol increases: we were not pleased. But we decided to make the best of a bad job by hiring out our re-

dundant horseflesh to oiling industry, to save petrol. Perhaps you could bring a Special Temporary Employment Subsidy [Knackered Racehorses Project] our way.

Which brings me to the serf problem. The untermenschen are rather disgruntled at the increased cost of fags and booze. Now, we could handle a few revolting peasants, if the expected pay-off was forthcoming.

But what did we find at the bottom of Santa's sack? A cut in employers' NI contributions? A shot in the arm for sickly industry? A pat on the head for the money-spinners?

We looked, Geoffrey baby, but we looked in vain. And as we straightened up from this thankless task, what did we get from you as a parting shot? A kick in the vitals.

Betty [as we who are her social equals know her] nearly choked on her Dom Perignon. Taxing the banks. Geoff, how could you?

Nobody thought you would stoop that low. Does it make sense to clobber the only people who are turning in a healthy profit in this recession? Rumour has it this will set a precedent: anyone who manages to coin it amidst all the depression and despair will similarly bleed.

What are we coming to? Can it truly be you, and not

the evil Benn who will usher in the era of vicious Marxist egalitarianism?

What's happened to good old-fashioned reward for effort, the entrepreneurial spirit?

I know you've got a difficult job, and we're all prepared to pull together and make sacrifices. But we do expect our sacrifice to be adequately compensated. I honestly think you've slipped up a bit here.

Take public spending. We're right behind your effort to lop a few billion off here, but why so slow?

What we wanted was to trim the waste: the NHS [after all, it only duplicates the work of BUPA], state education [what's wrong with Eton? it got us where we are today], nurseries [a good nanny gives the young uns a far better start in life], and local authorities [what do these abominable bodies do with all the money they bleed from us?]

But this persecution of the profitable is a bit off-beam. If it goes on, we may be forced to transfer our remaining assets elsewhere.

We're not threatening you, of course, just a friendly word in the ear. These are hard times, and even the boys with the violin cases are putting in for a rise. [We'll peg them to 6 per cent].

The Mob

First priority: defend Wembley

by Jon Lansman (secretary, Rank and File Mobilising Committee)

THE RANK and File Mobilising Committee lives on. At a recent meeting a new platform was established, whose lifetime could extend beyond this year's conference.

The unity which the RFMC can provide seems to depend much on the adversity it faces. And so the main thrust of the campaign will be to defend the Wembley decisions, but the platform extends beyond that.

To consolidate the gains already made for democracy in the Party and to extend the principle of accountability to other areas of the Party's operation (e.g. the Parliamentary Labour Party and local government).

To ensure that Labour's Manifesto at the next General Election will contain clear commitments to carry out those policies which will have been agreed by Conference.

To ensure that people elected to offices in the Party and selected as Party candidates are committed to carrying out Party policy.

To defend the federal structure of the Labour Party and the important role of the trade unions within it (while not necessarily accepting existing levels of democracy within the unions, or current voting strengths at Conference).

With the exception of Independent Labour Publications and the Socialist Educational Association, this platform has now been accepted by all those organisations which have been involved in the past. Furthermore, stringent conditions of membership have been established, covering support for resolutions and an obligation to sell RFMC broadsheets. We wait to see whether these conditions are accepted in practice as well as principle.

The most immediate activities to be organised are the publication of the broadsheet (by the end of April) and a national series of rallies in September. It has also been decided, as a new departure, to circulate a questionnaire to candidates in any leadership election, as well as to prospective parliamentary candidates, in order to establish their positions on various

items of Party policy.

Although there is at present some disagreement on what to include, when agreement is reached and the result publicised, it can be expected to cause something of a stir.

The Labour Solidarity Campaign have made their first task the reversal of the Wembley decision. Whatever we might want, the Left will be seen to stand or fall on this battle.

And if the Left falls on that, the Labour Solidarity Campaign makes no secret that their next target is mandatory re-selection.

For this reason, the RFMC's aims in the coming year must be:

Firstly, the defence of Wembley,

Secondly, to make the most of re-selection, and

Thirdly, to challenge the existing Parliamentary leadership through the operation of the electoral college.

The fight for democracy in the Parliamentary Labour Party and in local government must not be forgotten, but could be a long struggle. The other battles must take priority. We have no choice.

NO TO NUKES, AND NO TO NATO TOO!

by James Mathison (Agent Organiser, Basingstoke CLP)

THE question facing the Labour Party and the public is whether we can change NATO's aim remaining within the alliance or whether we should out would better serve the



10,000 in Sheffield demand jobs, not bombs

by Oliver Maurer and Rob Dawber

SHOUTING "Jobs not bombs", well over 10 thousand people turned out to show massive opposition to Cruise Missiles and Thatcher and Reagan's warmongering in Sheffield on Saturday March 7th.

Union banners were much in evidence from the AUEW, ASTMS, NALGO and the T&G. There were also delegations from all the local Labour Parties and from the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee at Firth Brown, Sheffield's largest steel producer, recently threatened with 1200 redundancies.

At a rally Neil Kinnock gave a stirring anti-Tory

speech, gaining a standing ovation, but leaving the impression that if we all went to marches, meetings and just voted Labour then everything would be all right.

Jack Taylor, vice-president of the Yorkshire NUM, was more constructive. He stressed the need for mass union support for anti-war activities. He also called for withdrawal from NATO, but only if no arms limitation agreements were signed.

We must ensure that the democracy campaign in the Labour Party succeeds, so that a future Labour government has to carry out party policy on unilateral disarmament.

agreed to stay in NATO, in the firm hope of changing the Alliance.

and many other anti-nuclear groups throughout the country have been struggling with the NATO question too. They say that they are anti-NATO and display the fact in some of their literature; yet they fail to make NATO a major campaigning issue. The reason for this is basically the fear of losing the middle ground of the peace movement.

Both the Labour Party and CND are concerned that an anti-NATO stance may be unpopular to some of their membership and the public at large. Both are toying with the idea that by staying within the alliance, they will be able to transform it.

Now the dangers of this halfway house argument have been dramatically exposed with Thatcher and Reagan and NATO commanders envisaging an extension of the Alliance to embrace the whole world. This has let the cat out of the bag. Even the most convinced NATO-admirer must now see that the true role of NATO is not to protect Western Europe, but to act as imperialism's gendarme wherever it sees its interests threatened. NATO's theatre of action will soon include such world hot-spots as the Gulf and El Salvador.

CND and the Labour Party must recognise NATO's potentially aggressive role and adopt an unequivocal stance on withdrawal. The benefit would be twofold: Labour and CND will gain the support of a broad section of the public who now recognise the dangers, it may stop us being dragged into a world conflagration started at the behest of Reagan or Haig.

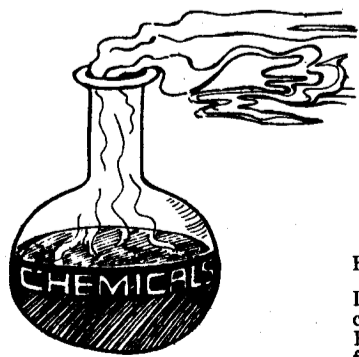
The conference of the Scottish Regional Labour Party, on the recommendation of the Regional Executive, voted for unilateral disarmament and withdrawal from NATO.

A card vote was called, and the vote was close but it was clearly carried.

This is the first time for years that a labour movement body has decisively rejected the pro-war NATO alliance.



Socialist Organiser SCIENCE



If he's black, call it a sickle cell crisis

By Les Hearn

IN 1979 a 20-year old black champion athlete, Steven Pullens, was expelled with five other blacks from the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs on the grounds that

he was a bearer of sickle-cell trait and that his health might be endangered by rigorous training at the altitude of the academy (7000 feet above sea level).

Now Pullens is taking legal action against the Air Force.

Sickle-cell trait, carried by some 10% of American blacks, is an adaptation of the body's haemoglobin (the red stuff that carries oxygen in our blood) which originated in malaria-infested regions such as the Mediterranean and West Africa. It carries oxygen nearly as well as the ordinary stuff but, for some reason, the malarial parasite cannot live in the blood of those with the trait, so carriers have a survival advantage.

Now carriers have one gene for normal haemoglobin and one for the sickle haemoglobin, so half their haemoglobin is normal. Unfortunately, about one in a hundred blacks have two genes for

sickle haemoglobin: all their haemoglobin is abnormal, and they suffer from sickle-cell anaemia.

When there is less oxygen in the blood (during exercise or at higher altitudes) the haemoglobin solidifies, distorting the normally flat red blood cells into sickle shapes which clog up the smallest blood vessels, cutting off blood from vital organs, causing pain, weakness and often death.

The US armed services use the alleged risk of similar crises in carriers to justify their exclusion from all flight crews (and also, ludicrously, from submarines and frogman duties) while the Air Force Academy uses it to exclude carriers from any service at all. And yet there is little or no evidence of any risk to carriers.

For example, a study of black athletes at the Mexico Olympics showed no increased risk of crises with stren-

uous exercise at high altitude. The Academy's policy is based on the case of two blacks who collapsed during training — but they were suffering from a virus infection at the time!

Many other alleged cases seem to be based on faulty diagnosis. The pattern seems to be: 'If he's black and you don't know what's wrong, call it a sickle-cell crisis.'

Studies of pilots who served before the present policy show no health risk and there is no restriction on civilian pilots with the trait. Even the 1973 report by a committee of the National Academy of Sciences, used by the armed forces to justify their policy, advocates exclusion of carriers only from pilots' jobs.

It also called for research to establish the true risk. This has not been done.

Both the chairperson of that committee and the lawyer for Pullens believe that the restrictions have the un-

pleasant look of a policy designed to restrict opportunities for blacks.

HAZARDOUS EXPORTS

ALSO from the USA comes news that Ronald Raygun has reversed a decree by Carter prohibiting US companies from exporting dangerous products. This is on the grounds that it would have been 'cumbersome' to operate and would inhibit American exports.

Carter introduced the original policy after learning that one company was exporting children's pyjamas treated with a cancer-causing flame retardant, after they had been banned in the home market. The same company has recently been discovered to be exporting rags made from these very same pyjamas.

At last free enterprise can flourish without government interference!

Ending the abortion no-go areas

By Mary Corbishley

After defeating Timothy Sainsbury's attempt to restrict abortion rights while it was still on the drawing board, the National Abortion Campaign and the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign are to step up campaigning for better abortion facilities.

The 1967 Act permits abortions under certain conditions. It does not oblige Health Authorities to provide facilities.

This fact makes it possible for anti-abortion gynaecologists to set up 'no-go' areas like Birmingham, for instance. NHS cuts, uncooperative councils, and hostile doctors and consultants, make abortion virtually impossible to obtain on the NHS in these areas.

In Birmingham North, only 7% of abortions are on the NHS; in Birmingham South, 8%; in Birmingham East, 15% (1978 figures). In some areas (Hartlepool, South Tyneside, Gateshead) the NHS proportion is over 90%; the national average is around 45 to 50%.

A NAC/LARC labour movement conference on Saturday 14th mapped out plans for action on better facilities. Trade union and Labour Party representatives on Area Health Authorities and Community Health Councils will be pressed to demand better facilities, in particular day-care clinics.

And conference pledged to support moves to commit the Labour Party to positive legislation on facilities.

The conference stressed the importance of maintaining links between the pro-choice campaign and the labour movement.

Judith Hunt of TASS told conference that Thatcher's ally Reagan is currently backing a bill which not only aims to restrict abortion (there are moves to outlaw it in some states), but also to restrict contraception facilities.

But, she argued, the abortion rights campaign in Britain is unique in having the backing of the labour movement. 'The fact that the trade union and labour movement is fighting for a woman's right to choose is one of the safeguards against what is happening in the US taking place here.'

The first NAC/LARC trade union conference, held in 1978, led to the TUC calling a national demonstration in 1979 against the Corrie Bill. And on February 5th, 1980, a lobby of Parliament against Corrie was attended by 20,000 people. It was sponsored by the South East Region TUC, and Nalco authorised its members to attend in work time.

Despite this, many Labour MPs still defy conference policy and vote 'according to their consciences' on abortion.

Terry Marsland of the Tobacco Workers Union and Jo Richardson spoke in favour of a campaign to get rid of the 'free vote' and to use re-selection to make sure that prospective Labour MPs support Labour Party policy on abortion.

The Labour Party manifesto should also include a woman's right to work and

a commitment to nursery facilities. 'We must fight for these now' said Terry Marsland, 'otherwise in the priorities of a future Labour government we will see women's issues at the bottom of the list.'

There were several proposed amendments to the plans for action.

A group of women in Bristol wanted to campaign



in two stages: first, for no-questions-asked abortions as part of the family planning service up to 12 weeks, and, once this had been won, 'we could then fight for better and more caring services for the much smaller numbers of women needing abortions after 12 weeks.'

This amendment was overwhelmingly defeated. Any time limit was seen as a concession to the anti-abortion lobby, placing the struggle on the defensive at a time when we needed to be on the offensive.

However, the conference also rejected an amendment which, instead of campaigning merely for legislation for better facilities, would have called for an effort to commit the labour movement to campaign for free abortion on demand and the facilities to guarantee it.

An amendment to link the fight for abortion facilities to the campaign against the cuts was also defeated, as was an amendment to call on the TUC to organise a campaign for industrial action, including strikes, in the event of plans for further restrictive legislation.

But the present attack on abortion facilities is part of an overall attack on the NHS, in which women's health is first to suffer. Campaigning for better abortion facilities is integrally linked to the fight to save and extend the NHS.

Both the amendments seeking a more ambitious campaign (abortion on demand, and industrial action) were unfortunately either badly worded or badly argued, and received very little support. But the overall mood of the conference was one of very cautious advance, and in fact speakers who emphasised their own very defensive situations got loud applause.

The conference will nevertheless have given a fresh impetus at the right time for renewed campaigning in the labour movement, and for an extra push to ensure that the commitment to a woman's right to choose that appears in Labour's draft Manifesto is not dropped when it comes to producing the final election manifesto, and that the promise is then kept by a Labour government.

A mother's right to work

URSULA HURLEY was sacked for just one reason: she's the mother of four children.

A day after starting work as a waitress in Edward Mustoe's Kentish Town bistro in north London, she got the boot. 'Having children makes women unsuitable for employment by people like me', her boss argued, adding that he had nothing against women: 'I keep one at home myself'.

Since men can't be mothers (and Mustoe clearly didn't object to fathers as a category of worker) this would seem to be an obvious case of sex discrimination.

But when Ursula (backed by Camden Law Centre, the National Council for One Parent Families and the EOC) took the case to an industrial tribunal, it let him through a loophole.

He argued that his business might suffer if Ursula, having all those children (or any at all) were to let him down. And, as far as the boss-biased Tribunals are concerned, at all costs a man's business mustn't suffer, must it?

In fact, Mustoe's busin-

ess went into a nosedive with the sackings: pickets (who included Labour councillors and the Mayor, and MP Jock Stallard) told customers that 'mothers can't work here', and within a week his thriving lunch-time trade dried up, and to this day the bistro remains closed during the day.

But the Tribunal's decision was very bad news for working mothers — and that's a hell of a lot of women. More than 300,000 single mothers are working to support their families. Over half of all women with dependent children have jobs.

But for how much longer? Women are being pushed out of jobs at a ferocious rate — far faster than men. And the most vulnerable women are mothers — faced with nursery closures, the emotional blackmail of 'maternal deprivation' propaganda, and the lack of legal or trade union protection for the sort of jobs they have, mostly part time ones.

Ursula's case went to the Appeal Court, and last week she won on every count. Mainly, the Court



found against Mustoe for having been guided by prejudice instead of treating Ursula on her own merits: he had neither taken up her references nor waited to see whether she was 'reliable'.

Nor was the Court impressed by the fact that Mustoe paid his waitresses no wages at all. The implications of the judgment are potentially quite wide ranging — logically it should eliminate questions to job applicants about their existing or planned families.

But while it is a valuable court precedent (and re-

verses the damaging precedent set by the Tribunal), other bosses can get away with exactly the same behaviour as long as they avoid getting taken to court themselves.

And as Ursula says, 'They're not all as crude and loud-mouthed about it as Mustoe. Most of them will just be more careful to cover their tracks.'

Ursula hopes the case, and the publicity it has got, will encourage more women in her position to come forward. She's already had letters from women saying 'that's just what happened to me'.

'We've got to get the Sex Discrimination Act amended, to close the loopholes and include indirect discrimination', says Ursula. But she adds, 'We also need a change in attitudes: I think it reflects very badly on our society that there is no provision for children.'

'It should be an automatic right for either parent to take time off if kids are sick. But at present it counts against you. And this judgment doesn't change that.'

Smarter, tougher, but real

THIS is how the poster advertising John Cassavetes' new film *Gloria* begins: 'a frightened neighbour begs Gloria to hide his son from the mob...'

Wrong. The person who asks Gloria to hide little Phil is not a 'he' but a 'she', the boy's mother. It is perfectly understandable for the publicist to assume that it's the men in the film who make all the decisions — that's how it usually is. But this time it isn't so.

The mistake is a perfect example of the kind of instant sexism the film *Gloria* is trying to fight.

Phil's father is an accountant for some underworld syndicate, and has been talking out of turn. Now the mob is going to wipe him out along with the rest of the family.

As they are waiting for the hit-men to strike, Gloria, a neighbour and coincidentally a friend of the mobsters, calls to borrow something. The situation is explained and although she doesn't like children ('You know I hate kids. Especially yours') she agrees to take Phil out of the flat.

Phil's father hugs him goodbye just as the hit-men begin their siege. He tells the boy: 'Always be a man. Be tough. Don't trust anybody.' Then, 'You're the man. You're the head of the family. You're the man. Can you understand that?'

Phil may only be six, but he understands: he's male, so he's in charge. Gloria is in her late forties (probably), she is tough and self-possessed, she is resourceful and nobody's fool. But this doesn't stop Phil insisting on his male rights, as he sees them. Male chauvinism obviously starts young. Phil even tries out some silly 'love talk' on the unimpressed Gloria.

For all Phil's claims of being in charge, without Gloria he would have been shot on half a dozen occasions. He is saved by her courage and by her coolness. Time and again she gets the drop on the hoods.

After several encounters with gun-men, she decides to go to the source of the problem: she sees the gangster Tanzini who is trying to get Phil killed.

Tanzini, who is an ex-lover of Gloria's, interprets her growing concern for the child simply as proof that 'every woman is a mother'; he sees no threat in Gloria — lovers and mothers don't carry guns... But Gloria is smarter and tougher than Tanzini and



A frightened neighbour begs Gloria to hide his son from the mob.

10 minutes later, the boy is an orphan.

And now the mob wants the boy dead, too.

But first they must deal with Gloria.

his muscle-men. She beats them at their own game, blasting her way out of the gangster's luxurious apartment to meet up with Phil again.

Women have so long been depicted as passive or simply as sex-symbols that it is an achievement to have made a film in which a woman — an unglamorous woman, no femme fatale — is decisive, intelligent and strong. This woman, unlike the Bionic Woman, Policewoman, Wonder Woman and Cleopatra Jones (not to mention the Astounding She Creature or the Fifty-foot Woman) is neither a living action-woman doll nor some extra-terrestrial Amazon. She is not the dehumanized

projection of male sexual fantasy, but a woman whose growing sense of power is accompanied by an extension of her emotional range.

But this achievement is largely undermined by the film's many weaknesses.

Cassavetes' previous films were very concerned with male-female relations. *Husbands*, *Faces*, and *Shadows* were psychodramas of the mutual destruction and self-destruction of marriage. The spiked mask of conventional coupledom is slammed shut on the victims whose lives these films deal with.

These were films of tremendous intensity — stark, storyless and difficult to watch. They made no concessions to easy watching.

Scripts were minimal (much being improvised), plots were almost totally absent, as Cassavetes staked everything on a core group of actors, above all on Gena Rowlands who plays the title role of Gloria.

A *Woman Under the Influence* (Gena Rowlands in the title role again) and more recently *Killing of a Chinese Bookie* marked a slight shift from the uncompromising treatment of the earlier films, though they retained the same basic approach.

The effect of the improvisation and of the centrality of characters rather than events was to reach across the divide between the film and the audience as consumer. Unfortunately the audiences were very small.

With *Gloria*, Cassavetes is clearly attempting to reach a wider audience, and so he has thrown overboard the very things that were strongest in his earlier films. This leaves him struggling with a ridiculous plot which undermines Gena Rowlands' performance and subtracts from the seriousness of the film's aim.

Is it likely, for instance, that Tanzini would not have Gloria searched? How come she can simply get up from talking to Phil in a snack bar and just go over to the next table where she holds up the hoods who are sitting there without even noticing her and Phil a few inches away?

Worst of all there is the character of Phil himself. Because it would in any case be absurd for Phil to take charge, Gloria's self-assertion loses its point. Thus answering his repeated 'I am the man. I am the man' with 'You're not the man. You don't listen and you're driving me crazy' seems less a repudiation of male dominance than an ordinary insistence by an adult that the child should know his place.

Support the fight of the Palestinian people

By Andy Dixon

On the 1st and 2nd of March the port towns of Tyre and Sidon were again bombed by Israeli jets and shelled by the right-wing militias of Major Saad Haddad. Many people were killed or seriously injured.

On March 3rd hundreds of girls at a school narrowly escaped death — they were evacuated the evening

before the school was bombed. Haddad's troops and the people were... the shooting was... with Israeli jets... Haddad's... extreme south... called 'Free Lebanon' (sic), maintained with the backing of Israeli money and weapons. The Israelis have for years launched

attacks on the... Despite their... there is no... an... the... have admitted to... increase in comm... operations in the West Bank and a rise of... in the Gaza strip. Socialists must support and build solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. The Palestinians are defending themselves against the attacks by Israel and

the Lebanese rightists. British Trade Union Friends of Palestine was formed last June to build links between the British labour movement and the Palestinian struggle. Its efforts should be supported by organising solidarity activities, inviting speakers sending messages of support and adopting political prisoners held in Zionist jails.

POLAND: STALINIST GAMBIT BACKFIRES

By Alexis Carras

FIVE years ago the Workers' Defence Committees (later to be known as the Social Defence Committees KOR-KSS) were set up to defend the workers sacked, arrested, imprisoned and harassed by the authorities after the riots against the Gierk regime's attempt to impose massive price rises.

The two major centres of the explosion were in Ursus (outside Warsaw), and in the city of Radom, about 100km south of the capital.

Five years on, the workers of Radom are repaying that act of solidarity.

The workers of Radom have threatened a stoppage this week, with the real possibility of an escalation to a general strike confrontation with the government on March 23rd.

The arrest of Jacek Kuron and Adam Michnik, prominent KOR leaders and advisors to Solidarnosc, has angered the population of Radom.

Kuron and Michnik have been placed under surveillance, obliged to report several times a week to local police offices. They are threatened with re-arrest if they leave the cities they live in (Warsaw and Wroclaw, respectively) and this has been rightly interpreted by the workers as another attempt by the Stalinists to isolate the KOR from the trade union movement which has mushroomed up and down the country in the last nine months.

Significantly this action in Radom has been taken in

direct opposition to the advice of Lech Walesa and the leadership of Solidarnosc.

Coming in the wake of the events in Lodz, it is seriously beginning to shake the new government's pretence of controlling and defusing the social crisis in Poland.

The harassment of Kuron and Michnik was most probably an overture to the Russians, an attempt to show that the Jaruzelski regime could get tough with the working class.

But it is unlikely to have impressed the Kremlin much. And it has provoked the wrath of the workers.

Unfortunately for the

bureaucrats, the unsettled scores of the past continue to re-emerge and plague its attempts at some 'honeymoon' period to stabilise the country's crisis.

Bully

Apart from their solidarity with Kuron and Michnik, the workers of Radom are pushing other demands. First among them is the purging of the local party and security heads.

These worthies, the same people who repressed and victimised the workers in 1976, continue to intimidate and bully the democratic workers' movement, which

they are incapable of coming to terms with.

Also the workers are demanding that a large building complex under construction should be handed over to the workers of the city rather than be used by the police. They want the publication and distribution of the results of an official inquiry into the economic running of the region of Radom, the immediate cessation of all persecution of active trade unionists, a memorial to the workers' resistance of 1976, and participation for Rural Solidarnosc in the decisions affecting agriculture.



Anna Walentynowicz [above] and other Solidarnosc activists have defended KOR against the government's crackdown

Who wields the club in Iran?

By Andrew Hornung

Iran, mired in the bog of an exhausting war with Iraq, is now witnessing a sharp battle between the President and the Prime Minister.

That battle reached new heights early this month with daily accusations by Prime Minister Rajai and sundry notables of the dominant Islamic Republican Party (IRP) against President Abol-hassan Bani-Sadr.

On March 5, 150,000 people marched and participated in a rally organised by Bani-Sadr to commemorate Mohammed Mossadeq, a hero of the secular, republican, anti-imperialist movement of the 1950s. When the rally was attacked by hezbollahis, thugs organised by the IRP, and the police refused to get involved, Bani-Sadr called on his listeners to take matters into their own hands. The result: the attackers were led away bleeding.



Bani Sadr

The next day Bani-Sadr was accused by the IRP of 'clubbing down the just movement of Islam'. Prime Minister Rajai called on Bani Sadr specifically to condemn the violence used against the hezbollahis. Soon Ayatollah Khalkhali was denouncing Bani-Sadr as a 'traitor to the constitution', condemning those who attacked the hezbollahis as 'clubwielders', and comparing them with the 'immortals', the ex-Shah's bodyguard.

Before long the public prosecutor was threatening to put the President on trial for encouraging violence. The next day Rajai was accusing Bani-Sadr publicly of trying to form a parallel government and of collaborating with counter-revolutionaries.

Since his election, Bani-Sadr has been trying to build a base for himself — above all among the merchants and in the army. Without this base he is a captive of the religious fanatics of the IRP, whose parliamentary majority is reinforced by the still huge popularity of Khomeini, by the squads of thugs organised by the Party, by the Party's considerable control of the media and by their base among the merchants.

For quite some time a number of the left groups in Iran, above all the Fedayeen majority, have been waging a stupid campaign against liberalism as the main enemy. Implicitly they saw in the xenophobic obscurantism of Khomeini a guarantee against compromise with imperialism.

These organisations are now reaping the fruits of this foolish line. They find that they have strengthened the most reactionary sections of society and helped a clampdown on the left in the name of 'revolution' and 'anti-imperialism'.

Will Dublin join NATO?

By Bruce Robinson

AN end to partition, and British withdrawal from Ireland, in return for an end to Irish neutrality, and Ireland's entry into NATO: this now seems to have been at least part of the deal discussed by Thatcher and Irish Prime Minister Haughey at their secret talks last December.

There have been big hints from both sides that make this more than mere speculation. Northern Ireland Secretary Humphrey Atkins confirmed on Irish radio that defence was being discussed by the 'study groups' set up after the Dublin summit and added '... we have a common interest in resisting totalitarianism... we have as close an interest as any two other countries in Europe.'

Although the Dublin government responded with an embarrassed denial and by calling a debate in the Dail

(parliament) to disarm opposition pressure, their denials came closer to admission if one reads between the lines.

Haughey said that a pact was 'not an issue at this time' and that he would 'review Ireland's defence arrangements' if there was a change in the position of the Six Counties. Sile De Valera, considered to be on the ruling Fianna Fail party's 'Republican' wing, said that a united Ireland could lead to a 're-appraisal of Ireland's place within the scheme of Western Defence'. She had apparently discussed this speech with Haughey before making it.

Link

Southern Ireland's neutrality has always been based on a refusal to be allied to the UK while partition remained. Neither Fianna Fail nor Fine Gael demonstrate any fun-

damental independence from imperialism in their foreign policy.

Similarly, Britain's interest in Ireland has always had a large strategic element in it, as Ireland commands Britain's western approaches. The 1921 Treaty included provision not just for partition, but also for the British Navy to use a number of ports in the south.

Although this arrangement ended in the late 1930s, on the outbreak of war in 1939 Churchill threatened to invade Ireland to regain access to the ports. If the ports in the North had not been available, such an invasion would have almost certainly have been carried out.

Even in a nuclear war, Ireland would be of considerable strategic importance for NATO. Parts of Ireland would provide a relatively safe refuge for those eminent enough to escape a nuclear war by aircraft. Ireland could also be a useful link between the US and western Europe.

Just as the 26 Counties would not give up neutrality without at least a formal ending of partition, so the UK would not give up partition without military guarantees. Now it appears the two go together.

There remain several obstacles to this. One is that the people of the South would be reluctant to give up neutrality. Haughey knows he can't go too far before the next election, which he is expected to call some time this year.

Plan

The most difficult obstacle remains, however, the Northern Protestant and in particular, Ian Paisley's current 'Carson trail' rousing of the Loyalists against any 'sell-out' to the South. Thatcher cannot go too far too fast, or state publicly what she plans, because of their likely reaction.

The seriousness of their threats can be judged by the re-establishment last week of the Ulster Workers' Council, the Protestant trade unionists' group that toppled the power-sharing Stormont Executive by a general strike in June 1974.

The UWC is obviously preparing industrial disruption to back up a paramilitary struggle — which Paisley has said would include attacks on the British Army — in the event of a 'betrayal of Ulster'.

If Britain does go ahead with a plan to reunite Ireland within NATO — and there are still many bridges to cross — it would certainly go together with a clampdown on the Paisleyites 'balanced' or prepared for by heavy repression of the Republicans and the left.

Socialists in Britain must maintain our solidarity with those fighting for a united and free Ireland.



Where the money comes from...and goes to

OF EVERY pound of state spending, about 10p goes on arms and rather more on interest payments. The NHS gets about 8p.

Of £1 collected in taxes, 24p comes from income tax, 53p from VAT and other taxes on expenditure, 14p from national insurance... and 5p from corporation taxes and taxes on capital.

As a result of changes introduced by Dennis Healey, taxes directly on capital and profits have been reduced substantially since the early '70s. (In 1973-4 they were 15p in the pound of all taxes). But there has been no cut in the working-class tax burden to accompany the cuts in services.

The Tory picture of the state imposing a huge tax burden on dynamic businessmen in order to maintain the feckless is far from the truth.

Many capitalists get a big rake-off from the easy markets provided by the state. The drug companies flood doctors with their advertis-

ing, get them to prescribe their drugs, and make huge super-profits — £125 million from sale of drugs to the NHS in 1979.

Despite all the gains won by the labour movement, state spending is still fundamentally trimmed to the needs of the capitalist class. Moreover, taxes redistribute very little from rich to poor.

Income tax rates are higher for high incomes. But many other taxes (e.g. national insurance, VAT, tobacco tax, rates) hit low-income people as hard as anyone. There are many tax allowances open mainly to the well-off.

The official estimates are that the top 20% have 44% of total income before tax and 37% after direct taxes, benefits, and subsidies. The well-off are also better able to conceal income and have more 'perks' on top of taxable income.

In fact, the redistribution in the tax/welfare system is overwhelmingly from the

young, single and employed to families and the elderly, not from rich to poor.

So a real workers' government would have no difficulty in finding extra funds to expand public services.

It could tax wealth and high incomes. And the £5 billion being spent on Trident is equivalent to half the present health budget for a whole year.

If arms spending were cut by say 75% — as it easily could be if Britain's standing army and its commitment to NATO were replaced by a working-class militia, designed for defence not world destruction — then health and education spending could go up by about 40%.

And the wealth which would be created by giving useful work to the 2½ million unemployed is equivalent to 1½ times the present total spending on health and education.



On Saturday 21st Activists from all over the country will meet at a conference at Central Library, Islington, to make plans for a cuts fightback. MARTIN THOMAS surveys the facts and the issues

MARK RUSHER (IFL)

Starving s

HOSPITAL CLOSURES AND HIGHER CHARGES

130 hospitals closed between 1972 and 1979, and there have been many more partial closures.

Wandsworth Area Health Authority, for example, has recently closed St George's (Hyde Park), Putney General, Wimbledon Hospital, and St Benedict's. The specialist Henderson Hospital was reprieved only after a vigorous campaign.

Capital spending for the NHS was cut 28% between 1972 and 1977, and remains cut, so that old, crumbling hospitals are not replaced or renovated.

Where new hospitals are built, they are often not finished, or not opened, because of the cuts. And hospitals are run way below proper staffing levels.

The Tories claim not to be cutting the National Health Service further.

But: • Because of the rising number of elderly people, the NHS needs about 1% increase in funds each year to keep services steady.

• Each year the NHS gets a cash limit. The Government announces a figure for expected inflation and calculates the cash accordingly. If prices or wages go up more than the Government figure, the difference must be made up in cuts.

• The Tories have raised prescription charges from 20p to £1 since 1979. Dental charges have been increased, too. This makes health services less available — but the Tories don't count it as a cut.

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Programme for a fightback

LAST November, the Lambeth labour movement called a conference of over 600 rank-and-file trade union and Labour Party delegates to debate and decide a policy to fight the cuts.

The conference called for:

• Demonstrations and days of action will not alone force the Government to change course. We must have joint action to bring local government to a halt throughout the country until the government either agrees to provide the money that is needed, or resigns.

And we need to commit the whole labour movement to the following policies:

• Cancellation of debt charges; Open the books of local councils to expose the profiteering by banks and private contractors; nationalise the supply industries, e.g. drugs, food, building, and the financial institutions, under workers' control, without compensation.

• The campaign must involve joint action between local authority trade unions in both the public and private sectors, trades councils, and the CLPs.

• But this should not mean unions, CLPs, or Labour Councils using the inactivity of others to justify implementing or accepting cuts.

Specifically, Labour Councils and Councillors should undertake:

• no cuts in services, no rent or rate rises, no sale of council houses or housing land, a 35 hour week for all employees.

• Where Labour councillors carry out cuts, their Labour parties should fight for their replacement by those who are not prepared to make cuts.

• This conference calls on trade union organisations at all levels [from the TUC General Council to branches and shop stewards committees] to pledge themselves to campaign for all-out strikes and occupations of workplaces as soon as any Labour council faces receivers or commissioners, or is surcharged for taking a stand against the cuts.

• The struggle may centre around the public sector unions at first, but conference calls on other workers, especially the strong sections like the miners and engin-

eers, to join this fight to force the Tory government to back down on the cuts or get out.

• Conference also calls on Labour councils and Labour Parties, in cooperation with local anti-cuts committees and tenants' associations, to campaign for rent and rate strikes as soon as any Labour council is removed or surcharged for taking a stand against the cuts.

• Trade unionists should consider:

• Refusing to cooperate with new government legislation, e.g. sale of council houses. Strike action against victimisations.

• Refusing to cooperate with management whenever cuts are involved, e.g. rent increases, redundancies and closures, etc.

• Industrial action if redundancies are threatened, which could include withdrawal of cooperation, union meetings in work hours, lightning walk-outs, strikes and occupations of premises.

• No crossing of any picket lines.

• A policy of no cover for vacancies and a campaign against voluntary redundancies and 'natural wastage'. Create and defend jobs by stopping overtime and fighting for a shorter working week.

• Where closures are announced, prepare for occupation of the threatened facilities and supporting strike action as soon as the occupation is threatened with eviction.

• Immediate escalation of industrial action should management take disciplinary action against any member involved.

• Non cooperation with members who do not undertake the above programme.

• Non cooperation with non union members

• Trade unionists and councillors should immediately publicise proposed cuts: no secret deals.

• Conference calls on all activists to campaign for complete non-cooperation with the Tory cuts, for full Labour Party and union support for local anti-cuts fights, and for Labour MPs to assist the fight against the Tories by filibustering and obstructing the Tories' work in Parliament.



BLUNTING THE AXE

CUTS can be defeated. Some examples:

• In July 1979 Lambeth Labour Council decided to make 4½% cuts. A conference of the four Labour Parties in the borough condemned this policy and called for no cuts, no rate rises. The Labour councillors bowed to the majority.

• In Islington (North London), the Area Health Authority planned to close the casualty department at the Royal Northern Hospital. It would start with partial closure from March 1st 1980.

Local labour movement activists organised a campaign. A demonstration outside the hospital blocked the traffic in a busy main road. The nursing staff said they

would 'work in' if the closure went ahead. And the AHA backed down.

Now the AHA is proposing closure again. But a strong campaign is being organised around counter-proposals from the Community Health Council, and there will be a demonstration outside the hospital at noon on Wednesday 1st April.

• Markfield Hospital, in Leicestershire, has just been reprieved for a year. An Action Committee had mobilised opposition to the closure from the staff and the community, and collected 26,000 signatures on a petition.

• In Bury, a six-week occupation saved a halfway house for people discharged from psychiatric hospitals. The

Cuts Campaign also managed to save other social services facilities and bus passes for the elderly.

• After a month-long occupation, and a strike in support by 400 NUPE members, linen room workers at the Royal Gwent Hospital won a battle against plans to worsen working conditions.

But victories like these have been partial or temporary, deflecting the cuts to another time and another place.

To reverse the cuts, the labour movement must defeat the Tory government in head-on struggle.

The miners showed how to do that. The November 1st conference mapped out a detailed policy.

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abled; cutbacks or increas- ed charges for meals on wheels; new or increased charges for home helps; closure of children's homes

... Spending on aids to help the disabled live in their own houses was cut 11% in 1980. Plans for houses designed for wheelchair users were down 32%.

Voluntary groups and projects have been hit hard, especially advice centres and law centres which have aroused the anger of Tory and right-wing Labour councils by helping people claim their rights against the council.

Youth services suffered 6.7% cuts in 1980-1, with many youth workers losing their jobs.

LESS FIRE COVER

Lancashire County Council cut more than £500,000 from its fire service last year. In 1979-80, over 18 months, local authorities overall cut 47 fire appli- ances and 676 firemen's jobs.

FEWER NURSERIES

41% of three- and four- year olds had nursery school places in May 1979. The Tories are cutting this to 35%.

CUTS IN BENEFITS

The real value of child benefits has been cut by over £1. Unemployment and other short term benefits have been cut by 5% in real terms, and school leavers have been barred from benefit for 3 months after they leave school.

Earnings-related unem- ployment benefit is to be scrapped altogether from 1982, benefits will be taxed, and the new rules for supplementary benefit have made it much more difficult for claimants to get extra money for cloth- ing.

Meanwhile, 1,000 extra social security 'snoopers' have been allocated to hunt down people who may be getting a few pounds over the odds. Instead of con- fining themselves to the relatively slow procedures for getting proof of fraud and prosecuting, they've developed a new approach.

They try to get claimants whom they suspect of fraud to withdraw their claims. It's supposed to be a big success.

But how many people have been intimidated into

not claiming money that was really due to them? About £340 million in supplementary benefit went unclaimed in 1977.

LOW PAY

Cuts mean low pay, too. 6 per cent is the Tories' "norm" for the public sector workers this year — at least 5 per cent less than inflation.

MORE UNEMPLOYMENT

37,000 jobs have already been cut in the civil service since May 1979, and 65,000 more are to go. NUPE reckons that 35,000 school meals jobs are likely to go with the price rises and the cuts in meals.

One teacher's job in every eight is due to go by 1984.

Women suffer particu- larly from these job cuts — and they also suffer from the cuts in services for the old, the sick, the disabled, and the young, because it is usually women who have to provide the care in the home.

UNION-BASHING

Cuts means the Govern- ment imposing low pay and job cuts on public sector workers; and that means the Government taking the lead in union-bashing.

In 1979 the Tories produced special guidelines for hospital management: suspend staff taking industrial action without pay, use volunteers to break strikes.

Since then, Conway Xavier, NUPE branch secretary at Great Ormond St hospital in London, has been sacked as a trade union militant. And the civil servants have been picked on as a test-case on pay.

SQUANDERING THE FUTURE

The cuts in current spend- ing are mostly 5% here and 10% there. It is often the margin that makes the difference between a service expanding to meet people's needs, and a run- down, decaying service; a margin that makes a huge difference for the most needy.

The casualty depart- ment is closed, and the nearest one is now miles away; the social worker who used to give help has been moved to a more remote office; the day centres are closed; the buses



don't come; the kids' school meals cost £1.50 a week more — these cuts can 'save' a few thousand pounds and cause misery for hundreds of people.

But the cuts in spending for the future are far more drastic. Local authority capital spending is already 50% down on 1974-5. Over- all government capital spending is scheduled to be half the 1973 level by 1983-4.

Of the cuts planned for the next four years, two- thirds are in housing. Building, renovation, and maintenance have already all been cut drastically. The result, by 1984, will be an average of 21 years on the waiting list to get a council house or flat.

Spending on new schools and hospitals has been cut, too — which means a steady deterioration in standards, as the existing buildings get older and older.

Spending on roads is half the level of the early '70s — and, far from these cuts being made up by ex- pansion of rail services, British Rail is now reduced to advertising in the press to ask the government for money for new engines and rolling stock. Bus serv- ices in most areas are going downhill fast, under the twin pressures of increased fares and reduced invest- ment.

One of the most dramatic cuts affects hardly anyone immediately.

In London the existing 19th-century sewer system is beginning to collapse. In the North-West it's even worse.

The total cost of renewal nationally is estimated at £28 billion over 11 years. (No-one knows exactly. 40% of the country's sewers are unmapped, or no-one knows what condition they are in or even where they are).

Practically no money is being set aside for renewal.

THE CUTS mean hardship now and real crises in com- ing years. The Tories, in their monetarist zeal to revive free enterprise, and the last Labour govern- ment, in its equally monet- arist zeal to satisfy the IMF, have seen no option.

But for the working class, this sort of trade-off — hardship and misery to prop up a decaying system of profiteering and privi- lege — makes no sense. And it's clear now that the economic chaos of capital- ism is not a passing phase. These cuts are for good.

Meanwhile, those who can buy better services are doing so. Private health services are flourishing with Government help. They cover 3.3 million people already: it was 1.8 million in 1971.

With the council house sales and the huge slump in house-building, council housing will be more and more dominated by run- down estates.

What it all means, over the coming years, is the downgrading of the public services to something like the US system — minimal, squalid provision for those not wealthy enough to get what they want in the private sector.

We need more, not less!

WORKING class babies are twice as likely to die in the first year of life as the babies of the wealthy classes.

The risk of death before retirement is 2½ times greater for unskilled manual working-class people than for professional people and managers. The rates for "long- standing illness" are twice as high (for men) or 2½ times as high (for women) among unskilled manual workers as among the well-off.

These inequalities in health are increasing, not decreasing. They were in- creasing even before the cuts.

The number of people be- low the poverty line — de- fined as supplementary ben- efit plus 40% — increased from 10 million in 1974 to 14 million in 1977. And the benefits which provide the main source of income for most people below the poverty line are now being cut in real terms, and made more difficult to get.

There is already a waiting list of 1.2 million for housing, and 3.2 million dwellings are in serious disrepair. Over 280,000 occupied dwellings are officially 'unfit for human habitation'.

A much smaller proportion of young people in Britain reach higher education than in other countries — 20%, as against 43% in the USA, 37% in Japan, or 29% in France.

The public services don't just need to be defended. They need to be greatly ex- panded.

They also need to be re- organised. Most of the serv- ices are much more acces- sible to, and much more heav- ily used by, the middle class than the working class. They all have authoritarian, bur- eaucratic structures.

We need services demo- cratically controlled by the workers and the communi- ties, moulded to the needs of the majority.

Labour's leaders fail to fight

THE OCTOBER 1980 Lab- our Party conference voted for the National Executive "to coordinate a united fight ... on a firm no-cuts po- sition", and added that in- dustrial action would be needed to defend jobs and services.

But both Labour and trade union leaders have fallen far short of this policy.

At a conference called by the Lambeth labour move- ment on November 1st last year, 600 delegates worked out a more detailed fighting policy. But that policy, too, has been shelved by the established leaderships — even those who voted for most of it.

Of the public sector unions, NUPE has been the most militant against the cuts. Yet at the November 1st conference Ron Keating, for the NUPE leadership, argued that the unions could do practically nothing until 1982. Until then it was all down to the Labour councils to stave off cuts by raising the rates.

And when NUPE members barricaded St Benedict's Hospital in South London to stop it being closed, the NUPE leaders offered no industrial action in support. Instead, general secretary Alan Fisher condemned "the use of force to prevent patients being moved out of the hospital". This after 23 pickets had been arrested during daily smash-and-grab raids by police and a private ambulance company!

While NUPE shrugs off its responsibilities onto Lab- our councils, the best of the Labour councils pass the buck to the unions. Most Labour councils have passively obeyed the Tories' instructions to cut. A few have attempted some re- sistance and then ducked out, saying that a real stand must wait until the unions are mobilised against the Tories.

Some have gone for rate rises as an alternative to cuts. But they are at the end of that road. Not only middle- class people and shopkeep- ers, but also working-class tenants and house-owners, now see rate rises as a real cut in their living standards.

Lambeth Council, which for a long time argued for rate rises as the alternative to cuts, has now gone for 10% cuts — in order to reduce its rate rise.

Labour's National Execu- tive has gone along with the councils, telling them they must pursue whatever policy they find best... as long as it's not no cuts, no rate rises!

And Labour's Parliamen- tary leadership has been worse. Every time they con- demn the Tory cuts, the Tories can reply, truthfully, that it was Labour's leaders who started the cuts, on a massive scale.

And the Labour front bench has refused to pledge itself to restoring the Tory cuts when returned to office.

Many local Labour Part- ies, union branches, and cuts campaigns have been organising and agitating for a real struggle against the cuts.

At the November 1st con- ference last year they came together and worked out a common platform. What we need now is an organised network which will fight to put that policy into effect, in spite of and if necessary against the official leader- ship.

ANDREW WIANU (REPUH)

...to feed profits

ayor of West- reception last 0. Meanwhile, Council was 'saving' worth eals-on-wheels o 45p.

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welfare serv- ed through de- gle by the lab- But they also n for capital-

the 19th cen- trict the work-

ing day, Karl Marx wrote: "Apart from the daily more threatening advance of the working class movement, the limiting of factory labour was dictated by the same necessity as forced the man- uring of the English fields with guano".

And fundamentally the same applies to the 20th century measures designed to produce a moderately healthy and educated work- force.

Now, driven by crisis, the bosses have decided to do without 'fertiliser'. They will turn our communities into dust bowls — if we let them.

Behind the economic chaos, and behind the cuts, stand the inbuilt contradic- tions of capitalism.

increase his profits by increasing his capital. The proportion of dead labour (machines and raw materials) to living labour tends to rise.

But profits come only out of the new value created by living labour. So even if profits rise somewhat (rela- tive to wages) as a share of that total new value created, they tend to fall relative to the increasing mass of cap- ital.

Moreover, productive cap- ital tends to accumulate faster than the consuming power of capitalist society can keep pace with — until a crisis abruptly halts accu- mulation for a while.

A long-term fall in the rate of profit in Britain, over the last 20 years or so, has led to recessions becoming more

and more violent. And now the Tory government has set the revival of profits as its no. 1 aim.

In modern capitalism, the division of new value created between profits and wages is modified in an important way. A major chunk of the value is taken by the state, via taxes.

Thus in times of crisis the bosses can try to restore prof- its by reducing the state's share.

The first serious cuts came in 1973. When Labour was elected in 1974, at first it increased public spending.

But in July 1975 the Lab- our government started on the road of cuts. And in March 1976, on instructions from the IMF, it cut £5 million. More cuts followed

in July and December 1976.

In 1978-9 some of the cuts were restored. But in May 1979 the Tories got to work.

The cuts raise many prob- lems for the bosses them- selves. State spending cuts can make a recession worse. They also, specifically, hit the many capitalists who en- rich themselves from the state — for example, the construction industry.

So there are different views within the capitalist class about public spending. The CBI, for example, wants less current spending and more capital spending.

But they all agree on cutting the services most vital to working-class living standards.

London Labour calls for accountability

by Nik Barstow and Fran Brodie

"It's like 'The Empire strikes back', with Labour establishment figures all competing to wear Darth Vader's helmet", is how Frances Morell described the right-wing assault on Labour democracy at a CLPD fringe meeting at the London Labour Party conference on March 8-9.

But Michael Foot made an unlikely arch-villain when he spoke at the conference. London executive member Tony Banks asked Foot why he was attacking the Wembley conference decision to get the reply "no conference is infallible" — and that was that.

The conference itself did tackle the issues. A resolution calling for the Parliamentary Labour Party to be made more accountable was carried overwhelmingly.

A resolution aimed at bringing London Labour councillors under democratic control was passed too. GLC candidates were committed to signing a pledge to abide by the party manifesto and subsequent conference decisions.

But from then on the rot set in. First, the executive opposed a resolution calling for the decisions of the current conference to be included in this commitment.

Second, there was no lead given in the fight against the Tory attacks on councils, their workers and tenants.

Ted Knight, Lambeth council leader, did make a strong and vital call for Labour's leadership to commit the next government to overturn any surcharges or bans from office imposed on Labour councillors. Michael Foot — when pressed — refused to answer that call.

Even Tony Benn at an LCC fringe meeting backed off. He was asked time and time again for the NEC to give a lead in the fight against rent and rate rises and the cuts.

Benn's reply was that the NEC will not tell local councils what they should do, as the members of the NEC would not be the ones who would be surcharged.

It was left to trade unionists like Mick Martin from North London AUEW to raise the real answer, industrial action to defend council workers or councillors threatened by the government.

The policy of no cuts and no rate rises won about 1/3 of the conference in a card vote against the executive's recommendation. While Labour leaders like Knight from Lambeth and Kotz from Hackney were prepared to say that they didn't want this sort of fight, a growing body of rank and file members do.

Even when the executive supported resolutions, like one on council employment policies put by Militant supporters from the LPYS, they hedged around the democracy

issue. One resolution carried called for Labour councils, including the new GLC, to implement a 35 hour week and an £80 minimum wage linked to the cost of living. The executive supported the resolution but stated that they would interpret the very specific calls as being the same as the much vaguer policies already in the GLC manifesto.

The Left succeeded in winning a sweeping victory again in the elections for the London executive. But a 'left' majority that is prepared to interpret Labour democracy on its own terms can only undermine the fight that is needed by the whole left against the attack launched by Foot and Labour Solidarity.

"Labour Solidarity" held a fringe meeting at the London Conference. Those who attended — mainly left-wingers — were subjected to a flood of vitriolic hatred and witchhunting rhetoric from Roy Hattersley. His only policy seemed to be a call for a 'proper' Labour government with 'proper' policies.

Though they attempted to put themselves forward as a left-wing movement, Labour Solidarity's meeting showed up their hatred for the left wing and their contempt for the rank and file. One small illustration was the presence of ILEA Labour leader Ashley Bramall on the platform — when there was a debate in Tower Hamlets Labour Party over Peter Shore's support for the right's campaign. Bramall



John Bloxam called for the NEC to give a lead on the cuts

couldn't even be bothered to tell his fellow party members he was a supporter but a chance to get on a publicity platform with 'big names' is another matter.

"Labour Solidarity" is mainly concerned with witch-hunting CLPD, the Mobilising Committee and 'Militant', contemptuously believing that the rank and file

were just 'conned' by the organisations that have fought for more party democracy — it's the right wing who are conning themselves though.

ANDREW WIARD (REPORT)

SO appeals for funds in WRP libel case

A STATEMENT FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

WHEN JULIAN Lewis and Paul McCormack tried to use the law courts as a weapon in their fight to control Newham North East Labour Party, they were condemned throughout the labour movement. The act branded them as aliens within our movement. Ultimately it did them more harm than good.

The WRP's attempt to use the courts against SO is an attack on free speech, on free comment and on free debate in the labour movement. It shows how little confidence the WRP has in its ability to make a political response to our comments on them (SO 33). It shows the WRP to have as much contempt for the principle of keeping the bourgeois state out of the affairs of the labour movement as the mysteriously-funded Lewis and McCormack.

Why does the WRP choose this course of action? Because SO's outspoken comments on them threaten their central project of the moment.

They are making a concentrated effort to rebuild support for the WRP in Lambeth. In an effort to regain some credibility they have entered the service of the right wing and of Ted Knight, who leads a big section of the Left in Lambeth.

Attack

They swung what weight they have behind Ted Knight's foredoomed policy of trying to fend off the Tory cuts drive by hiking up the rates and rents. Now they support Knight's 10% general cut — the proof positive of the bankruptcy of Knight's 'anti-Tory' policy.

Meanwhile Newsline, snarling at the left, makes its characteristic contribution by spitting the slander that we are "Thatcher's people". A Newsline editorial seriously

equated the Socialist Workers Party with the NF because both oppose rate rises in Lambeth. And with the impudence characteristic of them, the Newsline carried an immediate public attack on Cllr Bryn Davies for daring to vote against Knight's policy! In this coin they pay for their alliance with Knight and his right-wing allies.

Ted Knight and his comrades have views on how to fight the Tories which we emphatically disagree with. We have discussed the issues many times in SO. But Knight and his politics is one thing. People who brand the left as the equivalent of the NF for opposing Knight are clearly something altogether different.

The WRP has set up one of their so-called Youth Training Centres in Lambeth (the other is in Liverpool). These offer night-school style training and facilities to youth on a very broad and supposedly non-political basis, ask for money from businessmen, etc, appeal for volunteer instructors and so on, without any reference to politics other than 'anti-Toryism'.

Network

But the Youth Training Centres are run by a political party, a party which for the last 20 years has gained its only (transitory) successes from recruiting politically raw young people to its ranks.

Its purpose for the Youth Training Centres is as a means of drawing young people into a network at the centre of which is the WRP.

Politically the WRP is today an unknown force to most labour movement activists, who would naturally incline towards toleration of it. The SO article argued against toleration of the WRP, especially as people fit to offer training to vulnerable young people.

The result was a writ against the printer and against Sean Matgamna (who usually writes for SO under

the anglicised version of his name, John O'Mahony).

Why not make a formal tongue-in-cheek apology? For a number of important reasons. In the first place, SO values its own reputation as a responsible and serious non-sectarian socialist paper. We do not lightmindedly attack or condemn socialists, or those who call themselves socialists (or anyone else!). SO can and will defend Sean Matgamna's article on the nature and character of the WRP.

Conflict

In the second place, it is an important matter of principle for a working class newspaper like SO not to allow itself to be bludgeoned into silence by Ms Redgrave's money, which is being used on behalf of the WRP leadership, even though her money gives her an enormous advantage in litigation.

Redgrave and ourselves are, of course, equal before the courts. But the libel laws are a rich person's option. No libelled striker or victimised shop steward ever has, in reality, such an option, though it does exist in law. It is part of the general problem of formal equality under capitalism encapsulated in Anatole France's apt description: "The law in its majestic equality forbids the rich as well as the poor to steal bread, to sleep under bridges and to beg for food".

Free speech and free comment are vitally important for the labour movement. They are irreplaceable where its own affairs and the affairs of those who claim to be part of it are concerned.

Thirdly, the original article was a blow in a necessary and unavoidable political conflict with the WRP arising out of the struggle in Lambeth. That conflict continues: the political health of the labour movement in Lambeth and perhaps other areas will be affected by whether or not the point of view of SO can be expressed and heard by the labour movement. We are not prepared to abandon

our viewpoint or be silenced because the WRP is richer than we are.

And while a tongue-in-cheek apology would provoke a cynical wink from those in the know, it would add considerably to the problems of the uninitiated — young people in the Youth Training Centres, for example — in getting to know what's what. They are the people who most need the benefits of free comment in the affair.

Fourthly, given that our real opinion is that SO should in honesty defend the article in court, to make an insincere apology would be to allow ourselves to be forced to tell lies under the compulsion of Ms Redgrave's wealth.

We are not prepared to tell lies to the labour movement or to the youth. That is in general a rock-basic rule. It is urgent to preach it and to live by it because for fifty years deliberate and systematic lying and other falsifications of truth have been a major part of the labour movement.

Spreading outward from the totalitarian Stalinist state via the Stalinist parties, the politics of lies and double-talk, of the double standard or none, of 'anything goes' for my organisation or for my faction, the politics of the numbed or dead conscience and of the supple spine, have wreaked havoc with the political consciousness and the political morality of the labour movement. These are not the sort of politics SO exists to promote.

Not for nothing did Leon Trotsky preach and insist again and again that one of the first principles of revolutionary politics was 'to tell the truth to the labour movement and to the masses'.

We subscribe to Trotsky's principle. And we will fight for it.

Fifthly, while the WRP uses the courts and the threat of bankruptcy to present SO with the option of paying out a lot of money or denying its opinions by issuing a formal apology that would be a lie, the WRP's own press spews out libels against its socialist opponents of such a volume and at such speed as

to deserve at least a nomination for the Stalin prize for mendacity.

With utter lack of scruple it uses the libel laws to inhibit its critics and relies on the scruples of those it libels to keep it out of court. It has used the threat of the courts against working-class newspapers before. Yet it is not uncommon for Newsline to accuse its socialist opponents of murder or complicity in murder!

To give one of many cases: A youth who supported the US WRP (the Workers' League) was shot dead in October 1977. For three years there were no arrests — a common occurrence in New York. Newsline commented:

"While the police investigation has never begun... the International Committee of the Fourth International [the WRP's international self-projection] have exposed [they mean repeatedly made groundless allegations about] the FBI agents who control the leading positions in the revisionist SWP [not connected to the British SWP] as the ringleaders of this political murder..." [emphasis added]. "[The vicious killing did not stop a struggle to unmask and drive out the agents of counter-revolution in the workers' movement]" (Newsline, October 16th, 1980).

Defence

Three or four days later a suspect was arrested and Newsline rushed its editor, Alex Mitchell, to New York. His report carried the ritual attack on the SWP (USA) — but not quite as strong as before. Now the charge against them was that: "The agent-led revisionist SWP refused to support the campaign and fought against it wherever possible" (Newsline, 20.10.80).

The 'campaign' which the SWP (USA) would not join was the campaign of the US WRP to get the police to arrest the killers, whose 'ringleaders', they insisted, were the SWP's leaders! This is typical Newsline fare

Reading the WRP's press reminds SO how important Trotsky's principle about revolutionary politics and the fight for the truth is. It does not suggest to us that we should apologise to the WRP.

For all these reasons we have decided to fight the case. SO would not choose to spend time and effort on this. There are many far more important things. But we do not consider the only alternative to be an option for us.

Merely by taking out the writs, the WRP has already drawn us into a costly process that now strains our usually stretched resources. So we are starting a fund to pay for our defence.

We ask our supporters to send us a supporting donation. And we ask the SO groups to discuss what they can do to raise money to cover the costs of the case.

★ The printers' apology: While SO's concerns are political, the printers' are commercial. Morning Litho Ltd have chosen to apologise to Ms Redgrave. Not wanting to embroil them against their will, SO prints their apology in this issue. Obviously it does not in any sense detract from our own position.

LABOUR MOVEMENT PRESS DEFENCE FUND

Send donations to Jonathan Hammond [Hon. Treasurer], c/o 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY. Cheques payable to 'Labour Movement Press Defence Fund'.

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The SWP and the Labour Party

JOHN McILROY poses some questions

HAVING MANY years ago administered the last rites to the Labour Party and excommunicated socialists who were still members on the charge of necrophilia, the Socialist Workers' Party has been struggling mightily of late to keep Lazarus safely entombed.

If you relied on Socialist Worker for your knowledge of events, you wouldn't have known that there was a Wembley Conference. The action-packed bumper issues of January 10th and 17th carried not even a whisper.

The 23rd January issue contented itself with the statement that, "... whatever plan is adopted, Michael Foot will win hands down".

Even for a periodical not exactly renowned for its successful punditry, this was splendidly wide of the mark.

Neglect

But since then the Socialist Workers' Party has valiantly attempted to compensate for past neglect. You can see the increased relevance of the Labour Party for socialists from, if nothing else, the spate of long articles in the SWP press by the likes of Duncan Hallas, Chris Harman, and Paul Foot, all of course reminding us that the Labour Party is irrelevant.

Now the purpose of this article is not to emulate the SWP and waste valuable space by scoring cheap points off socialists of a different persuasion. There are many committed activists in the SWP and other groups, as well as many more outside the SWP but influenced by their ideas, who are now looking towards the Labour Party, who could make an effective contribution to building the left therein, but who are held back by wrong political ideas. It is our responsibility to take up the argument with these people.

"To put it quite simply", a SWP member said to me recently, "we are socialists who believe in workers' power. The Labour Party is reformist and believes in the mixed economy. All Socialists should join us".

There is a major point here which underlies more sophisticated arguments.

The SWP is a small grouping of about 3,500 members. Its influence inside the trade unions, the central sphere of its work, is minimal. It has a handful of members on union executives, as full-time officials, as stewards, or as convenors, and then largely in the white-collar organisations. It is not in a position to lead or strongly influence strikes or union policy-making.

Minimal

It has minimal power and minimal influence — probably less than in the early seventies, after a decade of frenzied party-building.

Anyone who doubts this should examine, for ex-

ample, its influence on the direction of the Gardiners occupation. Cheer-leaders, organisers, purchasers of pints, yes; policy-making, no, that is for the broad left.

Pygmy

Now look at the Labour Party. We are not only looking at an organisation whose membership makes the SWP look like a pygmy shrew; an organisation to which those who are in a position to lead strikes and determine policy largely give their allegiance; an organisation for which every class-conscious worker, including the entire membership of the SWP, votes at each election; an organisation which at Glasgow and Liverpool could mobilise more workers in a day than the SWP in a year.

Crucially, we are looking at an organisation to which the vast majority of major unions are affiliated, with decision-making powers at every level from GMC to annual conference, an organisation which is the political expression of the trade unions.

People who are in no position to form an alternative are in no position to dismiss what already exists.

Clogged

Of course, the Labour governments of the '60s and '70s were right wing. This represented the weakness of the left in the unions and party, and the resultant ability of MPs, cabinet and government to escape democratic control. The importance of the present fight for Labour Party democracy is, of course, to unblock the obstructions which have clogged up the



Right to Work marches — a useful but miniscule response

open valves between the trade unions and the Party, so that the Labour Party will more directly reflect the level of struggle within the unions.

A future Labour government then might not follow the path of its predecessors.

The comparison we are making is not simply, therefore, a quantitative one between a flea and an elephant. It is a qualitative one between a groupuscule largely outside the labour movement, and a mass party which is a major

organic part of that movement, and whose ideas are a major influence on the direct industrial struggle.

To fail to take advantage of this organic link between the unions and the Labour Party is to fail to use a vital weapon.

A group of socialists, active in their shop stewards' committees and union branches, will attempt to use ALL the levers and ALL the avenues that are open to pursue working class interests. One goes to the District Committee, another to the Trades Council, another to the GMC of the local Labour Party.

Develop

Resolutions moved at the branch can be taken to the GMC as well as the union bodies. A whole set of avenues are opened up which can aid and develop the industrial struggle, influence and mould councillors, mps, Labour Party policy, and the programme of a future Labour Government.

The tragedy is that the right wing understand this only too well. The Chapples and the Duffys have a clear understanding that today, as reflected and reinforced by the 40-30-30 decision, there is a unity between the struggle inside the unions and inside the Labour Party.

The SWP do not. They abstain from a central channel of furthering working-class aims. They take the fight against the Duffys and Chapples halfway. The increase in Labour Party membership reported recently in Labour Weekly shows that thousands of workers are rejecting this self-imposed limitation.

"But the Labour Party is too right wing. You'll never

make progress".

Wembley, Liverpool and Glasgow show the possibilities. Is the right wing nature of the EETPU a reason for not participating in it?

"You cannot organise freely inside the Labour Party like you can outside". Nonsense. Look at Socialist Organiser, Militant, Labour Leader.

Bans

It is true that at times bans and proscriptions have made life impossible



Liverpool: a call from the Labour Party and 150,000 march

for the left. This is not the situation today. (Unlike within the SWP itself, by the way, where there is no freedom for groups opposed to the policies of the leadership to organise).

Pick

The basic error made by the SWP is to believe that you cannot fight within the trade unions AND the Labour Party.

They see it as an 'either/or'. It is, in fact, an inextricably interlinked process. You cannot just pick one.

In Lambeth, for example, many Labour Party members are active in the trade unions arguing like the SWP against the Tory government and what they regard as the mistaken policies of Ted Knight. They work together.

When the Labour Party members then point out that another crucial area for changing the policies of the council is in the wards, branches and GMCs, the SWP stop. "Sorry, we can't help you there".

Now the joint work approach suggested by Duncan Hallas is all very well, but what kind of joint work is it when the Labour Party council worker who has been on the picket line with the SWP says, "Right, let's now take this up on the GMC. Let's move discipline of Councillor X, instruct the MP to attend the picket, make Labour Party premises available to strikers, call a Labour Party demonstration. All of this will help the strike" — and s/he is met with a stark, incoherent and irrational negative?

It is ineffective joint work, completely on the SWP's sectarian terms. The SWP and others who think like them thus leave the Labour Party to the

right wing.

But their abstention here is part of a wider problem. It is based on a syndicalist underestimation of Parliament.

Just as the socialist sees no contradiction between trade union and Labour Party work, he or she sees no contradiction between furthering the direct struggle against the Tories here and now and looking to the possibilities that the pressure of that struggle can exercise on a future Labour government.

They argue for the return of such a government, debate its possibilities, and attempt to ensure that it will carry out a programme of demands stemming from today's struggle, such as the 35 hour week, nationalisation of bankrupt enterprises under workers' control, the repeal of anti-union legislation, and so forth. They agitate, educate and organise in the course of the struggle to help the working class develop beyond such a government.

Once again, the SWP abstain.

Change

Parliamentary government cannot, of course, as the Militant tendency believe, replace the direct activity of the workers in building socialism, or in the immediate struggles. But what happens in Parliament is important. We saw in France and Spain in the '30s how the fact of the election of Left governments could trigger the taking over of the factories and the occupation of the land by workers and peasants.

Unlike the SWP, we do not see the impossibility of any change between now and a complete socialist

transformation. What we say is that we will support a Labour government in so far as it moves in a socialist direction. But we warn the workers that such moves will be crippled by that government's own reformist and constitutionalist ideas, and the reaction of the capitalists and the state. We argue that the workers therefore must rely only on themselves. And we organise the serious left — within the labour movement.

We hope that SWP members will think about these very basic points. At the moment their organisation is on a one-way ticket to nowhere.

In a recent article in International Socialism, the SWP's theoretical journal, Alex Callinicos argues that, "Circumstances where the influence of revolutionary socialists is confined to a small minority of the working class promote the transformation of Marxist organisations into dogmatic sects. This is especially so because there is a tendency inherent in capitalism for the class struggle to become separate into distinct economic and political struggles".

He is criticising sectarian groupings such as the SDF which got nowhere. The tragedy is that he is also describing the method of today's SWP.

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PETER BAIN (LINWOOD T&G SENIOR STEWARD) SPOKE TO JOHN WILDE

WHEN THE announcement of the closure came four weeks ago, we'd had short-time working and two lots of redundancies in the previous 15 months.

The bosses were clever, they put out a leaflet to the workforce within 15 minutes of the announcement. It said the redundancy terms would be £4,000 tax free and six weeks holiday money.

This defused much of the anger, and started people thinking about their individual entitlements.

After some hesitation, the stewards called a mass meeting for the next day, recommending opposition to the closure. I was running about with some of the other stewards, talking about the chances of an immediate occupation, but it wasn't really on the cards at that stage.

We had to accept that the only possible strategy at that point was to go for blacking, and get support from the dockers and transport workers.

A second mass meeting was held on 24th February. At first, the shop stewards committee planned to ask the meeting for authority to initiate immediate action if PSA tried to run down the plant. But the next day, just before the mass meeting,

Will Linwood occupy?

there was a climb-down.

Scurrilous rumours and demoralising stories were being circulated among the workforce. In some cases, management were behind this, but there was also a hard core of workers who were determined to sabotage a fight and grab the redundancy money.

So the stewards' committee decided to temper the resolution, to the effect that a further mass meeting would be called before any action was initiated.

The meeting on the 24th was a rowdy, 1½ hour, ev-

ent, with those who wanted to take the money and run keeping up a barrage of abuse. But in the end the vote was 70%-30% in favour of the stewards' proposals.

However, the negotiating committee was badly shaken by the 'Gle us the money' brigade, and made the mistake of trying to 'play it cool' for a while, instead of going onto the offensive against the traitors.

But militants have been arguing strongly for occupa-

tion and blacking. The T&G convenor, Jimmy Livingstone, has given a clear commitment for action, and the shop stewards' committee is fully committed.

There's a strong minority — maybe 30% — in the plant who are determined to fight. And I'm convinced there's an overall majority who want to save their jobs, and who would be prepared to fight if they were confident of their chances. So the question of action involving the mass of the membership is vital.

I'm on the Negotiating Committee, and sometimes in a minority of one. A lot of senior stewards seem not to want to involve the mass of the workforce.

Everyone knows a decision will have to be made soon. I believe the bosses will send out individual notices of redundancy payment soon, and we have to have another mass meeting to be ready for that.

We've had tremendous support from workers everywhere. We've had a letter of support from the French CGT Auto Section, and a Spanish brother came over to give us solidarity. The West of Scotland Shop Stewards' meeting gave us 100% support, and the T&G will make any action we take official.

Evans has said he'll instruct members to black PSA built-up products (though total blacking would be better), and the dockers have been in touch with all the ports and report that there'll be 'no problem' with picket lines.

All this has helped us to push back the 'Gle us the money' brigade in the plant. I've never seen so much support before a dispute has even started!

The example we need to follow is the Lee Jeans occupation. We've been in touch with them, and raising money for them from the start. Now's the time to follow their example, and occupy!

Hoover: 100pc work and 100pc wages!

by Ian McLeish

"If the Hoover undertakers try to make Cambuslang a corpse because of their policies, then we'll make history by being the first corpse to bury the undertaker", said Convenor Eddie McAvoyn, summing up the determination of the workers at the Hoover factory in Cambuslang.

At a mass meeting on 11th March, the vote was overwhelmingly for rejection of the bosses' plans, which include the continuation of short-time working which started last September.

Since 1975 Hoover have closed three factories in Scotland and chopped the labour force by 2,700. In Cambuslang alone the workforce has been cut by 55%.

The workers (including the staff employees) will report for work in full on Monday 23rd, when the next "down" week is due. They will insist upon 100% wages for 100% work.

SACK THE PROVOST, REINSTATE THE WORKER

by Ian McLeish

ON FEBRUARY 21st Dumbarton's Labour Provost, James McKinley, joined Glasgow's demonstration against unemployment. But only the week before he himself had added someone to the swelling ranks of the unemployed.

Heating engineer Tom Monaghan had been sacked by Nu-Way Heating of East Kilbride after Provost McKinley informed them that Monaghan had used a company car while canvassing for a rent strike against Dumbarton District Council's 46% rent increase.

Now a campaign has started, with over 4,000 signatures already collected on a petition and a call from Dumbarton District Tenants' Federation for the Provost to be sacked.

Fighting Mr Cube's jobs axe

by Kevin O'Hagan

TATE and Lyle workers in Liverpool are determined to stop the closure of the Love Lane plant and the loss of 1600 jobs.

They have voted to picket distribution depots in the North West to stop scab drivers moving Tate and Lyle products. Support from dockers, rail workers and other unionised transport workers is excellent.

Workers at the Scottish Tate and Lyle plant are refusing to allow any sugar to be sent across the border. The only weak spot is the London plant which has not shown any real support so far.

The union bureaucrats have been blocking calls for occupation of the plant, but more and more of the workers are seeing the need for such direct action to win the fight.

Women fight for their union

by Anna Twentymann

ON 27th February, the workers at Royal Pride furniture factory in Manchester (mainly women) went on strike because management refused to pay the 1981 nationally negotiated pay award.

For three years the workers have not received a full pay award and holiday and sick pay are well below the statutory minimum.

The management have said that they will close the firm down before recognising the union and have sacked all the striking workers. But no machinery or stock have left the premises, so it may be that management hopes to smash the strike and start up again with non-union labour.

The women are unanimous that they will fight to the end rather than let management get away with not recognising the union.

At the moment, nothing is getting in or out of the factory due to enthusiastic picketing. Help win this strike by coming to the picket line from 7am onwards, mass pickets every Monday, or send a donation to Mr. J. Davidson, Flat 37, Anson Road, Victoria Park, Manchester 14.

Bitter struggle at Ansell's

by Joe Bond

ANSELL'S brewery workers are now in their 10th week of strike action to force the re-opening of the Aston Cross Brewery and the reinstatement of all 1000 workers.

However, the militancy and determination of the strikers has not been matched by the TGWU officials. Regional Secretary Brian Mathers and Divisional Officer Doug

Northern Ireland
AND THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT
A DAY SCHOOL / CONFERENCE
on Saturday 28th March at
Boroughmuir Junior School
WARRENDER PARK TERRACE, EDINBURGH (Near to Bruntsfield Links)

Fairbairn have made it clear that they don't want to fight for all 1000 jobs, and would be only too happy if the strikers accepted the management's 'compromise' offer of alternative work for 400 and "ex gratia" redundancy pay for the other 600.

And Fairbairn has allowed the TGWU-organised pub managers to call off their support action and blacking.

The strikers have not been helped either by the intervention of local MP Julius Silverman and various right-wing Labour councillors, who have been holding talks with management. Silverman was largely responsible for calling off a support demonstration on March 14th — so that his cosy talks with the bosses could go ahead in a friendly atmosphere!

And City Council leader Clive Wilkinson announced after meeting the Allied management that he was convinced that they would never accept the terms.

So much for Clive Wilkinson's help, commented Dickie Murphy. "But at least it's cleared one thing up for all of us — only we can win this dispute. It's no good relying on anyone else — officials, MPs or councillors."

Messages of support, donations etc to: Joe Bond, 23 Barnet Road, Erdington, Birmingham 29.

Save the Camden Journal

by Jonathan Hammond

THE Camden Journal dispute is now in its fourth month. Just before Christmas the paper's owners, Heart of England Newspapers, announced that they planned to close the paper and make its staff redundant with immediate effect.

The paper was one of the few left of centre local newspapers, and justly famous for its anti-racist stance.

The paper is popular, and has a big following in Camden, but has never been properly marketed. It seems that the owners were embarrassed by the paper's anti-racist stance.

There is a strong whiff of victimisation as well. Many of the paper's NUJ chapels are well-known activists. The FOC Howard Hannan and the editor Eric Gordon, both played a prominent part in last autumn's provincial papers strike.

Last weekend the NUJ

LISTINGS

NATIONALITY Bill: All-London Labour Parties conference. 2pm, Sunday 29th March, Trade Union & Community Centre, Brabant Rd, London N22. Further information: Charlotte Atkins, 675 3874. All Labour Party members welcome.

NO CUTS, no rate/rent rises, no council house sales! Lambeth Labour Left is calling an all-London meeting: all Labour Party members welcome. 8pm, Friday 3rd April, Lambeth Town Hall, Acre Lane, SW2.

BRISTOL Socialist Organiser forum. EEC withdrawal: a blind alley? 8.30pm, Wednesday 25 March, 29 Muller Ave, Horfield.

SHEFFIELD Socialist Organiser discussion meeting. 'The Triple Alliance'. 8.30pm Wednesday 1 April, 'Brown Cow', The Wicker.

Executive received threats to sack journalists from the Hornsey Journal and the Islington Gazette who had come out in solidarity. The union has countered by calling out the Heart of England chapel at Nuneaton and putting other chapels on standby.

Morganite fight for worksharing

by Pete Cashman

21 EETPU, AUEW and Sheetmetal workers in the engineering department at Morganite Ceramic Fibres of Bromborough are in dispute with the management over redundancies.

3 of the 21 workers in the department were made redundant. Immediately the department called a 24-hour strike to save the jobs. The company's reply was that they have to go because of the costs. The men then worked out how much it would cost to keep the three at work for at least a year. When the men agreed to work-sharing with a cut in pay the company refused, saying it is not company policy.

CENTRAL LONDON Poly Students' Union Labour Club. Jeff Rooker MP on 'The Two Welfare States'. 5pm, Thursday 26 March, Student Common Room, 32-38 Wells St, W1.

EL SALVADOR solidarity demonstration. 2.30, Saturday 4 April, The Plains, Oxford.

HANDS OFF WORKERS' POLAND. Demonstration, Sunday 12 April, 2pm from Speakers' Corner.

ISLINGTON Socialist Organiser meeting. Thursday 27th February, 8pm, 'The Florence', Florence St, N1.

STOP THE NATIONALITY BILL!

Demonstrate, Sunday 5th April. Assemble 1pm, Speakers Corner

Organised by Campaign Against Racist Laws.

The men then walked out again and said they will not go back until the three men get their jobs back. Since the men came out, they have had three letters saying they have broken the terms of employment, and that if they do not return within 24 hours their employment will be terminated. The men refused to be intimidated by the threat. Since the letters were sent they have been told that they are still employed.

Their fight is being hampered by scab wagons (from Southwoods and Gopsill) crossing the picket line. Another problem is that two of the three blocks in the plant are still working (mostly TGWU members who are frightened of losing their jobs).

The men say that if scabbing continues that they will have to picket the MCF plant at Newston.

The men are in good spirits, but need money to continue the fight.

Messages of support and donations to: E. Jackson, 11 Bakers Lane, Nescot, Woking, Surrey GU24 0JF. Or by cheque payable to MCF Engineers.

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Camden Trades Council leads cuts/rents fightback

by Mick O'Sullivan

CAMDEN Trades Council will be calling a conference of Labour Parties, trade unions and tenants' associations on April 1st to plan action against the cuts and rent and rate rises.

This move changes the picture after a series of setbacks in the council workers' unions.

The Labour Council is pushing through a drastic package of cuts and rent/rate rises after being threatened by the District Auditor with prosecution and a surcharge.

The direct works is in line for 600 job cuts. But a mass meeting rejected the convenor's proposal for all-out indefinite strike action. No fall-back position was put to the meeting and NUPE Branch Secretary John Suddaby was not given permission to speak and call for support for the planned day of action on 4th March.

This result of the convenor's late and ultimatic response to the redundancy threat had a predictable effect on the Day of Action. NALGO had already rejected action after the intervention of a full-time official, though the NALGO Branch Executive resigned and is seeking re-election on the basis of no cuts, no redundancies.

NUPE members who stand to lose the 'Camden Supplement' on their wages, were the only section to stay solid. In the light of this and Heseltine's demand for a further £2.1 million cut, the ten rebel Labour councillors agreed to compromise with the majority of the Labour group on a cuts budget.

But the Trades Council has now decided, as well as calling the conference, to organise a lobby of the next council meeting and to send a letter to all tenants advocating action against the rent and rate rises.

No fight from NHS unions

by Charlie Sarell

THE NHS ancillary workers pay claim continues to drag on into its fourth month without any industrial action or even threats from the unions.

The latest idea to be floated by management is not a 7.5% increase in line with the local government workers' settlement, but a 15 month settlement within the 6% limit which would roughly add £4.65 to the basic rate.

The union negotiators seem to be quite pleased with the idea and will no doubt claim that it is the best that they can do under the circumstances. They base all this on the idea that the rank and file of the union will not take action.

The NUPE officials have

consulted the regional committees of NUPE and asked if the committee members felt that the members would take action. The committee members said no. The rank and file haven't been consulted but it seems that that is irrelevant!

With rent and rates going up, not to mention food prices, the ancillary workers are becoming painfully aware of their falling living standards. One NUPE shop steward at my hospital has accepted that his family will have to leave his council maisonette because the rent is now 2/3 of his wage.

The ancillary staff have never been strong on unofficial action. They like to know that the full weight of the union is behind them, especially in a national wage claim, before they take

action. At the moment, the rank and file are waiting for the union leadership to lead them. As a result of the union's inactivity, the rank and file are becoming disillusioned and are waiting for another sell-out.

It is vitally important that militants get resolutions through their branches calling on the Executive Committee to start a campaign of industrial action over our wage claim and to explain to the rank and file exactly what the leadership is doing.

As the situation stands at the moment, the Tory government must be laughing all the way to the bank. One of the leading sections in the 'Winter of discontent' is being sold out, without a glimmer of a fight, by their union leadership.

Water workers - leaders turn off the tap

THE leaders of the water workers have accepted the Water Council's 12 1/2% offer. While this beats the 7 1/2% that the majority of public sector workers have been held down to, it is far short of the 20% claim.

Prior to its acceptance over 1000 workers had taken unofficial action in the London area against the union

negotiators, who, they felt, had presented the offer as an ultimatum which the shop floor would have to accept.

The unofficial action clearly represented a groundswell against acceptance, which the G&M were eager to head off. The implications of a water workers strike would have been a direct

confrontation with the government. Whatever the Tories may say in public, they must be well pleased that the unions (at least the G&M) have such pliable leaders, rather than real

fighters from the shopfloor, who want a union that represents them and a wage that they can live on.

Child care workers fight cuts

by Pete Kenway and Steve McArthur

EIGHTY residential care workers in the London Borough of Islington have walked out in opposition to the Council's attempts to reduce staffing ratios in the borough's children's homes. Tension has been building up since the right-wing Labour council announced plans to close up to five homes, introduce pre-packed meals on wheels and split shifts. NALGO has now declared the strike official.

The strike was sparked off when a home superintendent was suspended for refusing to take a child into an already overcrowded home. While allowing Social Service management to keep the homes running, the NALGO pickets have prevented att-

empts by the Council to bring in paid scabs. Support for the care workers has come from the kids who have been hostile to the Management volunteers. Police have constantly been on the picket lines. On one occasion kids barricaded themselves inside a room because they feared that an attempt was about to be made to remove them to a home outside of the borough.

The Council's decision to attack the quality of care, and to cut jobs in residential homes follows the recent defeat of its attempt to close local social service offices. The residential workers had never taken industrial action before and played little part in the social workers' struggle. The Council clearly hoped that these latest cuts would go through without

resistance or publicity allowing it to claim them as 'savings' which do no harm to services. The widely publicised industrial action has blown this apart.

SO supporters are in close contact with the strikers, offering support on the picket lines and assistance in publicising the struggle. The workers see this as a political fight against cuts, and some have been successfully encouraged to join the Labour Party. The Labour Left hopes to win the support of the Constituency Labour Parties for the strikers this week and are calling for a local Party inquiry into the Council's conduct over residential care.

Messages of support and offers of assistance, ring 01-263 1533.

Hackney homeless: "We won't move"

THE GLC people occupying the Sherry's Wharf development in Hackney are setting up a blockade to prevent the police and bailiffs to come and evict them.

When they do come, they will be faced with determined resistance. "Most of us have been through evictions before", said one of the occupiers, "we wouldn't move until our aims have been met."

The Sherry's Wharf development was built by the GLC which promised sheltered blocks for elderly people and which also promised many tenants on the adjoining Kingsmead Estate new homes when the work was completed.

All these promises have been broken. The special fittings for the elderly

have been removed and the blocks have been turned into ordinary one-bed flats at £31 a week. But to get on the estate you have to be earning at least five times the rent, that is, over £250 a week for the three bedroom flats.

Even the GLC has privately admitted to tenants' leaders that this is an insult to the people of Hackney, one of the poorest local authority areas in the country.

The Sherry's Wharf occupiers, who numbered between 60 and 70 to begin with, have received a lot of encouragement from other groups. Within hours of the occupation, messages were already flooding in, with offers of help and support.

James Davies

Cambuslang tenants combine for action

by Ian McLeish

TENANTS in Cambuslang have formed a Tenants' Action Combine to fight the proposed rent increase. The Combine is made up of the Executive members from each Tenants' Association in Cambuslang. They are holding a public meeting on Monday 23rd March to involve as many people as possible.

A demonstration through the area is also being discussed but hasn't been decided on. Hundreds have already signed the Scottish Tenants' Organisation's petition against the increases and the Action Combine now plan to go out with the petition to gauge support for a rent strike, even though support for this has fallen at present.

500 on march in Basingstoke

by Carla Jamison

AS THE skies cleared and the sun shone for the first time in over a week, over 500 tenants marched through Basingstoke on Saturday 14th March.

There were banners, every colour of the rainbow, from estate groups plus the regional USDAW banner and local banners from the Labour Party, GMWU, Trades Council and Socialist Organiser. There were kids, and prams, and even dogs. Everybody yelled, sang and chanted through the busy market and shopping centre.

The message to the Tory Council who upped the rents by 66 1/2% was clear on a

placard saying 'Up Yours Too!'

At the rally afterwards there were speakers from estate committees and unions. There were groans and cheers as James McAllister, Labour Party organiser, read from the Tory manifesto from the last local election which made Basingstoke sound like the promised land.

The next stage is consolidation of the estate committees and the distribution of fact sheets containing legal advice and the start of a weekly bulletin. Further action at the Civic offices is being planned over the next couple of weeks.

"DON'T attack the under-fives - pick on someone your own size", "We need nurseries, not motorways", "Save our nurseries" read the demonstrators' placards outside Strathclyde House in Glasgow last Thursday (March 12th) as members of the council's Schools Sub-Committee turned up to discuss the closure of two nursery schools in the Gorbals.

The closures were first proposed in a so-called "consultative paper" produced by the council's education department last November, although the parents themselves were not informed about the proposals until the end of December.

The parents immediately set up a campaign, Parents Against Nursery Education Cuts (PANEC) to fight the closures. They have already won considerable support, on paper at least, from Glasgow Labour Party branches, especially in Queen's Park constituency (where the nurseries are located) and the neighbouring Rutherglen constituency and also from local tenants' associations, cuts campaigns and the Trades Council.

Public meetings against the proposed closures have taken place, 1500 have signed a petition against the clo-

GORBALS NURSERY CAMPAIGN REACHES OUT

ures and a survey carried out by the parents showed a clear need for an expansion, rather than cutbacks, in local nursery provision.

But a document produced in answer to the parents case by the Education Department, which was discussed at the Schools Sub-Committee meeting, shows the department's ruthless determination to press ahead with the closures and their refusal to listen to the parents.

Socialist Organiser spoke to Marie Coyle, one of the parents involved in PANEC about the campaign, the meeting of the Schools Sub-Committee and what PANEC plans next.

What are the main obstacles encountered by PANEC in its campaign?

For a start there was the timing of the announcement of the closures just before Christmas. This meant we didn't have time to form a group and prepare our case before the issue was discussed by the local Schools Council.

Also the nursery teachers have been unsympathetic to us. At the Schools Council meeting two of them spoke in favour of the closures and thereby influence the council to vote that way as well. And one teacher has stuck up a wall-poster in her nursery attacking our campaign.

Most of the people involved in the campaign are mothers and find it difficult to get along to meetings.

We have the usual problems that most mothers have: our husbands - they're just a bunch of chauvinists.

And then there's the Education Department. They don't give a damn. They're only interested in sitting on their rear ends in plush surroundings. They haven't consulted with us - they've just turned up to say no.

How much support has PANEC received from unions with members at the nursery schools?

None really. The NALGO rep has turned up to meetings and been reasonably helpful. But apart from that they don't seem to be interested really. When we phoned the EIS we got nothing from them.

How much support have

and angry about the result. Like Wray said after the meeting, the people on the Sub-Committee are just 'lackies of the Tory government'.

What's PANEC's attitude to the council's argument that they're opposed to the cuts but are being forced to make them because of Tory government policy?

Disgust. They ought to be supporting the people who voted them in. Why don't they follow the example of Dundee? The councillors will soon need to work shifts to get through all the closures they're proposing. Outside Strathclyde House there's just one lobby after another, yesterday there were three in an hour. It's getting to the stage that cuts aren't news any more, just like all the job losses going on.

What's PANEC going to do after the result of the vote at the School's Sub-Committee meeting?

We're carrying on with the campaign. We're linking up with other anti-cuts campaigns in the area and are also encouraging campaigns to be set up outside of the Gorbals to fight for better nursery provision. It's a waste of time trying to be reasonable with the Education Department; we need to be as hard and underhand as they've been.

Socialist Organiser

Why Bobby Sands is going for

POLITICAL STATUS OR DEATH

by Jim Denham

On March 1st Bobby Sands, the former commanding officer of the Republican prisoners in the H Blocks, went on hunger strike. On March 16th Sands was joined in his action by Frankie Hughes, and other Republican prisoners are expected to join the protest over the next few weeks.

Meanwhile the so-called "dirty protest" by over 400 other Republican prisoners has been called off. The prisoners say they have done this in order to focus attention on the new hunger strike.

Socialist Organiser believes that the demands of the hunger strikers are just, and that they should be given maximum support throughout the British labour movement.

WHY HAS THE HUNGER STRIKE STARTED AGAIN?

The last hunger strike, at the end of 1980, ended when an agreement was reached between the British government and the prisoners that should have resulted in the "step-by-step" introduction of most of the prisoners' demands. It is now clear that the Government and the prison authorities have reneged on that agreement.

WHAT ARE THE DEMANDS OF THE PRISONERS?

Last year's hunger strike was for five demands:

1. The right to wear their own clothes.
2. The right to abstain from penal labour.
3. The right to free association within one's own prison area.
4. The right to organise their own educational and recreational facilities.
5. Full restoration of remission lost through non-cooperation with prison regulations.

The granting of these demands would have amounted to 'political status' for the prisoners, in all but name.

In the new hunger strike the hunger strikers are demanding political status itself.

BUT WHY SHOULD THEY BE TREATED ANY DIFFERENTLY FROM COMMON CRIMINALS?

In fact, the British government itself recognises that republicans are 'different'. They're sentenced in special no-jury Diplock courts; often the evidence against them consists only of a

'confession' extracted by the Royal Ulster Constabulary at one of its notorious interrogation centres like Castlereagh (the European Court of Human Rights described the treatment meted out by the RUC to obtain these confessions as "inhuman and degrading").

The Republican prisoners have stressed time and again that they support better conditions for all prisoners. The point of their protest is not to get privileges, but to assert a *political principle*: that they have been jailed for their fight against Britain's military occupation, not for civilian crime.

BUT THESE PEOPLE ARE TERRORISTS AFTER ALL.....

The British Army (often in league with Protestant paramilitary groups like the UDA and UVF) have terrorised the whole Catholic population, shot civil rights marchers, repeatedly raided Catholic homes and beaten up innocent people.

The Republicans are fighting this violence. It's a war.

What right does the British state have to indict the Republicans?

The Republicans are fighting for the liberty of their country, against a foreign army of occupation. The British press, along with Thatcher and Reagan, openly sympathise with the Afghan rebels fighting the Russian occupation of their land.

Some of the Afghans' methods against the Russians and their collaborators are not very pretty but that doesn't worry Thatcher and Co.. They call the Afghan rebels "freedom fighters", but attempt to label those fighting British occupation of Ireland as terrorists.

As socialists we reject the hypocritical humbug about 'terrorism', and take a side in the Irish war. That side can only be with those fighting the army of 'our' ruling class.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Put resolutions supporting the hunger strikers through your union branch and the Labour Party. If you can't do that straight off, invite a speaker from the Labour Committee on Ireland to explain the issues.

Start a campaign of letters to the local press and trade union journals. Organise rallies, demonstrations, leafletting and petitioning in your area.

February's final total was £523.45. Just over our £500 target — but, with responses to our appeal for an extra fiver a head from SO supporters still coming in, it should have been much more.

The regular contributions by standing order have increased in March — over £200 this month, as against £150 in February. But we have had very little else coming in.

Our monthly £500 — as a

FUND

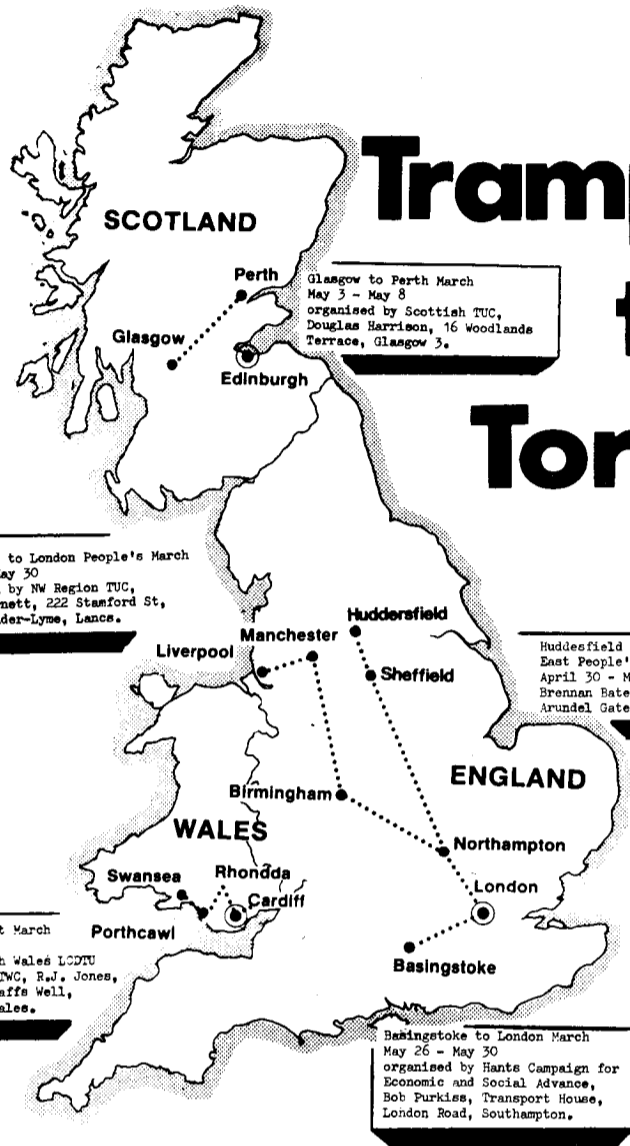
bare minimum — is vital, and we must make sure that it doesn't lose out to the equally vital Labour Movement Press Defence Fund we've set up for our defence against legal proceedings by Vanessa Redgrave of the WRP (see p.8)

Really we need much more than £500 — because we need to expand. In this

issue once again, we've had to chop down, cut out, or leave over lots of articles — and the pages are still more crammed and indigestible than we'd like.

There's only one answer — we need a bigger paper and/or a weekly. But for that we need more money and more resources.

Send contributions to: SO, c/o Martin Thomas, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY. Cheques payable to Socialist Organiser.



Trample the Tories

MAY MARCH: LIVERPOOL TO LONDON

by Jim Denham

The "Peoples' March for Jobs" in May is likely to be the biggest demonstration against unemployment in many years, indeed, many decades.

Feeder

Organised by the North West Region of the TUC, the march will set off from Liverpool on May 1st and arrive in London May 29th. There will also be a number of "feeder" marches to link up with the main body along the way or in London. Trade unionists and Labour Party members must ensure that the marches receive maximum support in every village, town and city they pass through. Factories along the route should be encouraged to

stop work and join the march for a few miles. Dole offices should be leafleted, and Labour Parties and union branches should offer to sponsor anyone — especially unemployed kids — who want to take part.

Unfortunately the organisers of the marches appear to be concerned with fostering a "respectable" image and involving CBI malcontents and Liberal MPs not with forging unity between employed and unemployed workers. Even red banners are being discouraged because, according to the organisers, red is a "narrow" colour, whereas the official green is a "broad" colour! And the major activity of the official reception committees in every Cathedral city the march will pass through, has been to arrange for the bells to be rung and special

services to be held for the unemployed!

On the other hand, it has been made very difficult for unemployed kids to join the march because each marcher has to be sponsored to the tune of £100 in advance.

Success

Nonetheless, socialists must make sure that the march is a success, and that it is used to build fighting unity between the employed and the unemployed, around demands for a shorter working week and for direct action against redundancies. Let's take the spirit of the miners' victory onto the "Peoples' March", and to hell with the bells and prayers!

NUT hits the six

by Mike Loooseley
(President, ILTA, in
personal capacity)

THE officers of Lambeth NUT, John Esterson, Vanessa Wiseman, Jackie North, Gary Jones and Hilary Tarr have all been suspended from the NUT for six months, and banned from office in the NUT for a further 18 months by a union disciplinary panel.

Dick North, who is an officer as well as a member of the union's National Executive has been suspended for 12 months.

Their 'crime' was to have carried out Lambeth NUT's decision to support the demonstration against the cuts in Lambeth on February 4th. In the NUT all industrial action has to be approved by the NEC. This infamous Rule 8 is designed to discourage local militancy and to keep the NEC firmly in control of any action, whatever local circumstances might be like.

While voting was still in progress, the union's National Officers sent a circular to all London schools describing the election address as "an unofficial document" and making it quite clear that the union would not be supporting the demonstration. This was before the union's own action committee had taken any decision!

This was clearly designed to discredit these election candidates; in the past, many unofficial actions have been ignored by the union (they did not occur during election time!).

The best way these suspensions can be fought is not to be intimidated, but to show that the fight against the cuts will be continued. For a start we should mobilise for the South East Region TUC demonstration against cuts on April 8th, leaving Tower Hill at 1pm.

Apart from the thousands of signatures collected among teachers at very short notice, there had already been massive support from the Labour and trade union movement.

Please send messages to the NUT National Executive, Hamilton House, Mableton Place, London WC1 and rush money to "Lambeth NUT Defence Committee", 12 Albion Drive, London E8.