

Join the Labour Party

Write to 150
Walworth Rd.
London SE17.

Socialist Organiser

No. 56 OCTOBER 8, 1981 (CLAIMANTS AND STRIKERS 10p) 20p

Sadat: the death of a stooge

by Andrew Hornung



At the Cowley Assembly Plant, the BL workers' anger has already exploded in a strike over lay-off pay

ANWAR SADAT has been gunned down. Who killed the President of Egypt we do not know at present. Certainly there were enough groups who had good reasons to want him dead.

The Arab nationalists in Egypt and the other states of the Arab world saw Sadat as the man who betrayed the Palestinian people when he signed a peace treaty with Israel. Moslem fundamentalists hate him for that, in addition for his attacks on them within Egypt.

The latest of these attacks last month when Sadat arrested Moslem fundamentalists, leaders of the Coptic Christian church and other political oppositionists.

Imprisonment

The political opposition within Egypt never had many channels through which to express their ideas.

With the recent crackdown it became virtually impossible to criticise the regime's central policies without risking immediate imprisonment.

For the working class in the mass or the urban or rural poor, life had been growing steadily worse since Sadat started asset-stripping Egypt for the benefit of imperialism and the oil-rich Arab states.

His infitah "open door" policy - his critics said should be translated "dismantling" - led to the penetration of foreign capital which destroyed Egypt's market of political and economic independence.

After Egypt's break with the Soviet Union following the 1973 October war Sadat's face beamed up again from the newspapers, and he saw in him the model of what an Arab leader should be - reactionary, servile towards the west, prepared to be the stooge of imperialism.

After his 1977 trip to Jerusalem he became the darling of the imperialist press.

Hollowness

Last month's repression forced a fever of criticism from western leaders who did not criticise his suppression of the big working class rising of 1977 as it exposed the hollowness of his claim that he was a democrat.

No revolutionary socialists shed a tear at the death of Sadat. But who will give whether it leads to progressive development? Egypt depends on whether the working class proves capable of taking initiative and not leaving the next step to the military, fundamentalist right or luke-warm nationalist opposition.

Background: see p. 10



Sadat - death

BL WORKERS DECLARE WAR ON 4%

by Alan Thornett

THE DECISION of BL Cars Joint Negotiating Committee to recommend an all-out strike from November 1 puts BL workers on a collision course with Thatcher's 4% public sector pay limit.

Their call was in response to BL's insulting 3.8% offer, tabled by BL's chief negotiator Geoffrey Armstrong last Friday.

The decision goes much further than the JNC had been prepared to go in the past.

Last year, when they made a similar recommendation, they refused to name the day of the action. When mass meetings followed their recommendation and voted for strike action, they refused to implement it and took a second vote on the same offer with a different recommendation.

Now, they have named November 1 as the date for an all-out strike, which is the day the current BL contracts run out.

Confrontation

The decision is of major importance to the trade union movement as a whole. A strike in BL could trigger a confrontation with the Thatcher government capable of sweeping it from office this winter.

And their decision can have a major effect in other sections of the car industry such as Ford and Vauxhalls as well as the whole of the public sector.

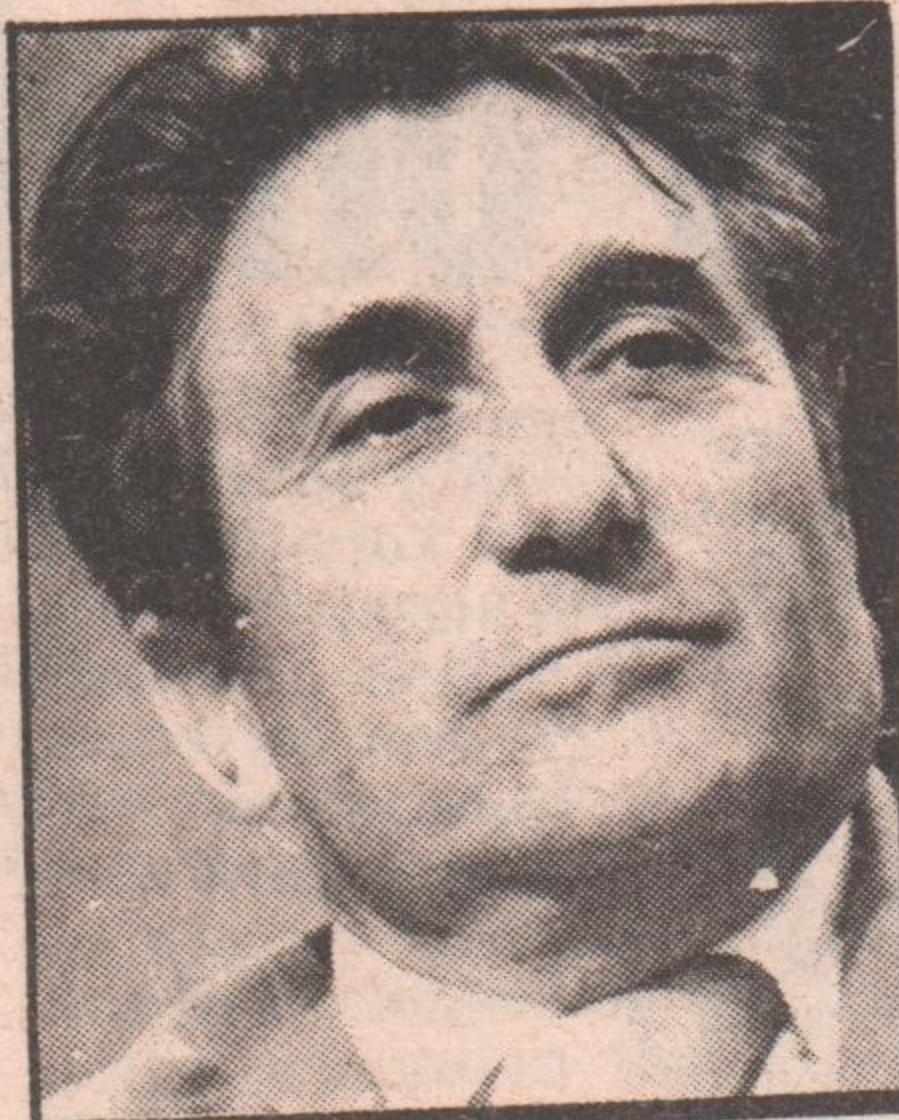
Contrary to the illusions created by the mass media, BL workers are in a very powerful position. They directly control the point of production and the full effects of the strike will be felt immediately.

The effects will go far beyond BL. Once the 58,000 workers in BL Cars stop work, a very large section of the engineering industry covering hundreds of thousands of workers, is very quickly affected.

To implement the strike call, the JNC decided to organise a meeting of convenors for October 9 to seek endorsement of their decision. This is to be followed by simultaneous mass meetings to be held at 8 am on October 16.

Last year, the manipulation of the BL vote and the sabotage of the strike by the leadership was a major blow to the whole pay round and the struggle against the Tories.

The weakness of the JNC moves this year is its time scale. To leave the action until November 1 gives time for the Frank Chapples and the Terry Duffys to attempt to undermine the action.



The JNC rejected a move from Chapple's EETPU to go to a secret ballot

At the JNC meeting itself Roy Sanderson of the EETPU pressed for a secret ballot. When he was voted down, he declared that the EETPU would ballot their own members unilaterally to decide whether to support the action or not.

Similar moves are afoot within the AUEW leadership. But it should not be assumed that because Duffy and Chapple have been successful in sabotaging strikes in BL in the past, that they will be successful this time.

The problem in heading off the strike is the militancy of the BL workforce. This extends as far as can be seen, to every plant and makes a big strike vote on the 16th inevitable.

Clear evidence of the kind of determination which exists is the militant strike of assembly workers from the Princess and Honda Acclaim tracks in the Cowley assembly plant, now entering its second week.

It began as a spontaneous response to the loss of a day's pay and the breach of the lay-off agreement. It quickly became a symbol of defiance against a management constantly on the attack.

The strikers have mounted mass pickets of the plant every day and a very militant meeting of strikers on Monday voted with only six against to continue the action and step up the picketing to 24 hours.

It is one of the most determined and militant actions in the Cowley plant for many years and is closely linked to the pay review.

Last Tuesday, management circulated a letter spelling out their reply to the trade union claim. It has simply enraged

workers even more.

BL unions have claimed a £20 increase across the board, improvements in sick pay and lay-off entitlements, a shorter working week, and additional holidays.

Edwardes has dismissed the claim out of hand. Despite his own recent 38% increase, he has offered 3.8% on the five grades, making the new rates £108.60 for Grade 1 £99.55 for Grade 2, £97.60 for Grade 3, £89.70 for Grade 4 and £81.60 for Grade 5.

He has also offered to raise the bonus ceiling from £22 a week to £30 a week - an irrelevant figure since most workers see only single figure bonuses.

But even such an increase in the bonus ceiling is conditional on the acceptance of a "special team" of super work study engineers to study all jobs.

Shudder

After that a plant might qualify for the mythical extra £8. Having suffered for years at the hands of "ordinary" work study engineers, BL workers will shudder to think what a "special team" of super IEs would do to them.

The BL propaganda machine says it is necessary to be "lean and efficient" in order to survive. Yet on Edwardes' own figures, produced in his six-monthly report to shareholders, efficiency has gone up by 30% over the past two years, and wages declined dramatically.

This is what makes BL workers so determined. They know there will be manoeuvres by their leadership.

They know there will be threats from Edwardes to close down the corporation if there's a strike. This time they are at the end of the road. They are prepared to strike and to organise and to meet the threats as they come with militant action.

They know the strike will not be primarily against Edwardes but against Thatcher.

Once it starts it must not remain isolated. BL workers must fight alongside other workers fighting for wage increases in both the public and private sectors.

Other public sector workers affected by the 4% limit must not sit back and see BL workers fight alone simply because they have a later review date.

The lesson of the steelworkers was that they were left to fight alone.

The engineering pay claim has been rejected and the engineers have been offered 3.1% Their review date is the same as BL - November 1.

Vauxhalls - whose review date is now past - should declare that they will come out with BL. Ford unions should coordinate their action with BL workers and not wait for their review date on 23 November.

If such a fighting unity can be built around a BL strike, it will be very difficult for the Tory government to survive.

No to 3.8 percent offer!

More on BL struggle - p.14

A First Class Party in conference

by John Lister



Capitalism's "cure"

ONE of Australia's richest men, mining tycoon Lang Hancock, has come up with a novel solution to one of the obstacles in the way of his exploiting Australia's vast mineral wealth — genocide: "I'm not talking about mass murder but curing people in a miserable situation." His plan is to encourage all the country's Aborigine and part-Aborigine people to a remote area of North West Australia by making their social security cheques payable there. "When they get there, I would dope the water so that they became sterile

and would breed themselves out."

No doubt his remarks will get a sympathetic hearing from New Zealand's Prime Minister Muldoon who is in Australia for the Commonwealth summit. Muldoon, who is already none too popular for his handling of the South African rugby tour, has shown just where his racial views lie with his comment on Zimbabwe's Prime Minister Robert Mugabe: "When you've been in the jungle for a few years shooting people, it's a bit difficult for you to understand."

Perfect crime

Barry Prosser was beaten to death in his cell in Winston Green prison's hospital wing. The three officers who went to his cell sometime between 5 pm and 7.15 pm, when 12 officers were called in to administer a sedative and found him lying, unresponsive and groaning — i.e. already dying from the previous beating, will not be sent for trial for murder. Birmingham magistrates decided there was insufficient evidence for a jury

to convict, on the grounds that the only eye witness was a fellow prisoner who had previously denied any knowledge of the event. The prisoner pointed out that he decided to give evidence only after being moved from Winston Green where he felt his life would be in danger from prison officers if he spilt the beans.

The case highlights the impossibility of getting a conviction for murders in prison or in police custody, where the only witnesses are likely to be prisoners — therefore "unreliable" or fellow policemen or prison officers who won't testify against their mates. The magistrate's refusal to commit the officers for trial in the Prosser case is not unusual, according to Tom Sargent, secretary of Justice.

Crime writers often toy with the idea of the "perfect crime". Perhaps they're looking in the wrong direction — the perfect setting would seem to be a prison or police cell and the perfect criminal wears a uniform.

THE discovery of a huge void in the middle of the universe — a hole some 300 million light years in diameter — was announced simultaneously with the opening of the Social Democratic Party's first conference.

The hole is so huge that no less than 2,000 galaxies as large as the Milky Way could be fitted into it without touching each other.

Vacuousness

Scientists have described it as "extremely hard to understand", since the density of matter within the hole is about ten times less than the overall average.

The SDP appears to represent a similar void in British politics.

Within the SDP, policies are about ten times vaguer and further apart than in other political formations.

The very existence of the SDP is a novelty — and its substantial size a challenge to its political rivals.

And its range of top 'stars' have so far managed



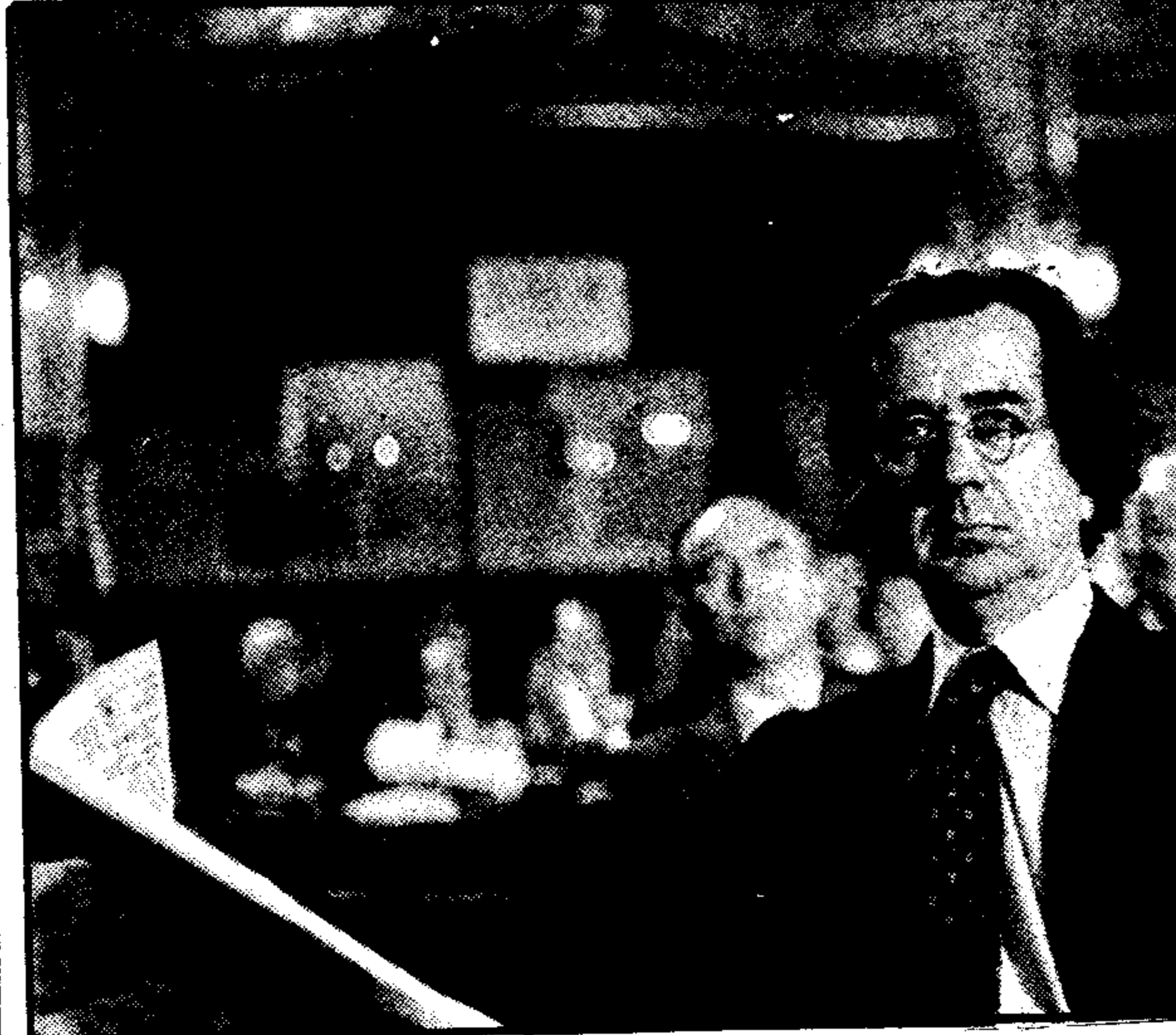
Abortion rights opponent Shirley Williams

to avoid colliding with each other.

Its "policies" so far announced are based more on 'antis' than pros: they are anti-unilateral disarmament, anti-withdrawal from the EEC, anti-nationalisation, anti-socialist and anti-

communist.

But there are signs that the SDP cannot continue to survive simply on the vacuousness of its policies — and that even 300 million light years might not leave room enough in the Party for both Williams and



NATO's friend William Rodgers

Jenkins to make their careers.

There had to be problems in a party built almost exclusively on the personal ambition and careerism of individual MPs, bureaucrats, intellectuals and small business people.

Out of its 66,000 members there can be few who do not have their eyes firmly on an influential post in local or central government — and there appear to be at least two determined would-be Prime Ministers.

Hence the surfacing of disagreements — over the subscription rate necessary to sustain Roy Jenkins in the manner to which EEC high-living accustomed him; over the structure of the party at local level and the need to create sufficient prominent posts; and — most significant — over the means of selecting the party's leadership.

Patronage

Despite the recent opinion poll showing that a large majority of potential Liberal/SDP voters would favour David Steel as Prime Minister, SDPs still regard their chosen leader as the future head of government — with appropriate powers of patronage.

It is this which seems most likely to polarise the SDP in the coming period, with the cronies of Roy Jenkins insisting that the leader be elected only by MPs, while Shirley Williams' hangers-on press for a ballot of the whole SDP membership.

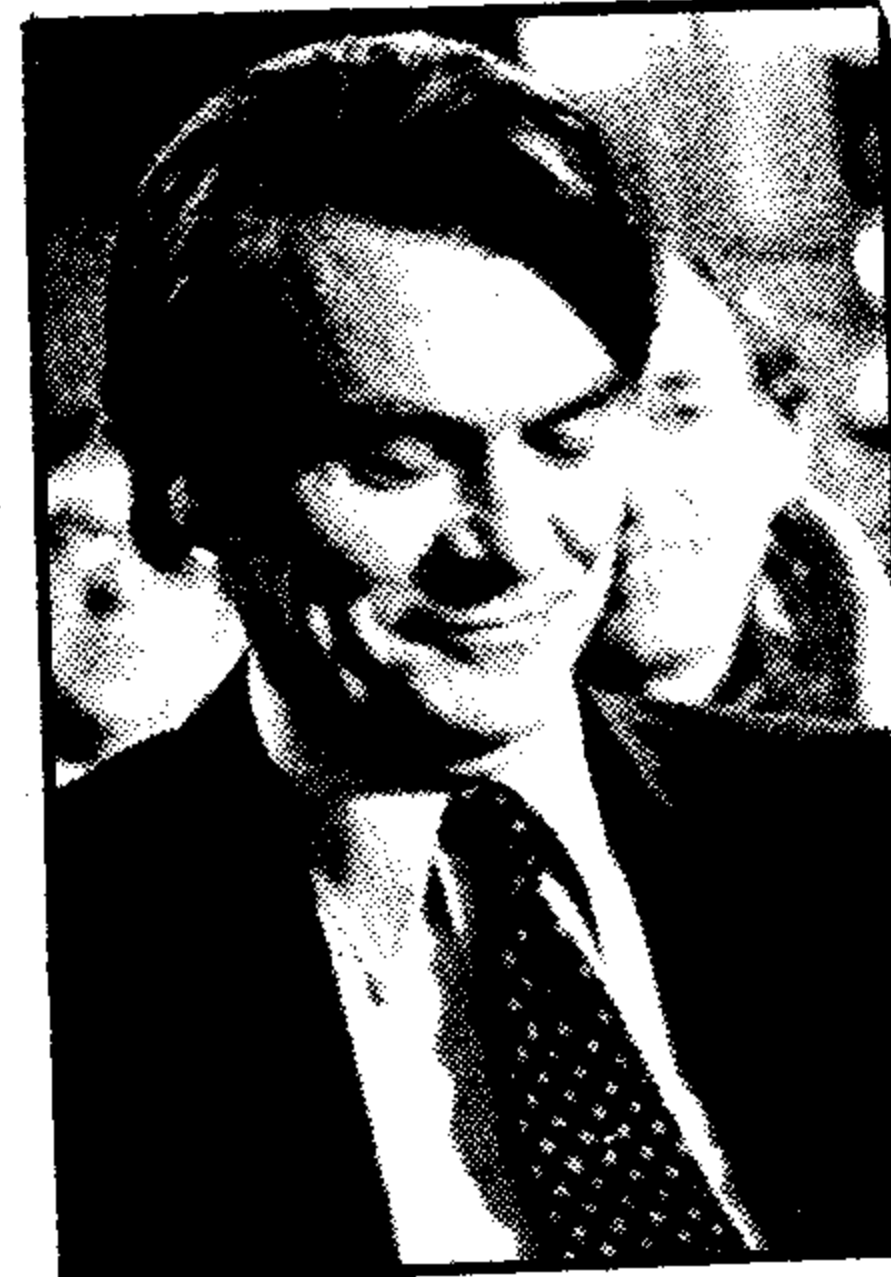
Meanwhile the conference charade continues —

travelling from Perth to Bradford to London in an unconvincing display of decentralisation, while "delegates" from outside London moan that they know nothing of how decisions and policies are arrived at.

Mind you, the politics are an added extra to a week of luxurious living. The special train laid on from London for the tour to Perth and back is First Class throughout: a return ticket was priced at £113.

This price included meals almost up to Roy Jenkins' standards. The menus on the way up consisted of smoked salmon, chicken and ham salad; gateau or cheesecake with cream; mint crisp; cheese and biscuits; and a quarter litre of Malmaison house claret, burgundy or Moselle.

The SDP may not know how to fill the gaping hole where a Manifesto should be — but all 66,000 members know how to fill their own, impeccably genteel, gobs.



Shah's friend David Owen

PRESS GANG



THE Royal Family used its block vote last night to drive a coach and horses through the Government 4% pay policy.

The blow came just as St. Michael Edwardes, the Saviour of British Leyland, had put himself once more into the breach to hold the line against thousands of greedy workers.

Edwardes told the BL hordes that he could not let them steal them bread out of the sick and needy.

Militant

But all the same he was prepared to let them have a pay rise as high as 3.8%.

But just as Thatcher's Cabinet were preparing for victory they were knocked sideways by Royal Family power.

The royals had been expected to back the 4% limit. Soundings had shown a majority in favour in 16 out of 18 branches of the family including the Mountbattens.

But Prince Charles, the most militant member of the family tore up any last vestiges of democracy in that institution.

He cast his 1.2 million votes solidly against the pay limits.

Then he awarded himself a rise of £3,000 a week — nearly 1,000 times that offered to BL workers.

A crisis session of the Cabinet last night considered the implications of the 50% pay rise.

Afterwards a spokesman said that the rise fell within the government limits. The Prince had a rise of 100% but was forgoing half his possible increase. It was also pointed out that he had married



recently and had to meet the cost of new clothes for his bride.

But later BL negotiators announced that their claim had been altered to £20 a week plus a £3,000 a week 'marriage allowance'. Single workers are claiming a £2,800 a week 'deprivation of family life' payment.

St. Michael said the claim was preposterous. "Money like this can only be paid when we have achieved our productivity targets. Marriage cannot be permitted by BL workers until they achieve the same productivity that Prince Charles has got."

Flexible working

It takes several days work for each BL worker to produce just one new car. Prince Charles however achieves new cars frequently without working long hours because of flexible working arrangements.

It was also pointed out that Charles' mother was being forced to cut back on social services. Single-handed she has provided a winter fuel voucher to 200 needy people in Windsor.

Now no new names will be added to the list as the current beneficiaries pass away. Mrs. Windsor said last night.

"I would have thought

prudent provision to help out one's mother on whom thousands rely for employment, should not be a source of criticism."

But red stewards in BL seemed determined to jump on the bandwagon. Some of them were ludicrously claiming that if there was money for Prince Charles then there was money for them too.

But St. Michael said, "I am confident that once again BL workers will see sense and that it is better for the whole country that they accept a moderate increase. Prince Charles does not come into it. If he didn't have a rise, his standard of living would fall."

* Is Prince Charles a Militant Trotskyite? See page 17.

Sectarianism on the march

LEADERS of the Trans-Pennine March against unemployment have decided not to link up with the Right to Work march on the final stretch to Blackpool.

This decision by the Stalinist dominated Committee, which is administering this part of the TUC's so-called 'Campaign for Jobs', is plainly motivated above all by an attempt to keep marchers away from the political influence of the Socialist Workers Party.

Cramp

In other words union bureaucrats and Communist Party members are prepared to split and divide the labour movement in order to cramp and inhibit discussion and thus bolster their own political positions.

Socialist Organiser has major political disagreements both with the SWP (who dominate the Right to Work campaign) and with the CP and TUC bureaucracy.

But in order to fight out these differences our supporters will be participating in both marches, and pressing for the fullest possible discussion on the kind of policies and leadership necessary to defeat the Tory government.

It is in the struggle for united class action against the employers' offensive and the Tory government that workers can see political differences in practice and choose the way forward.

It is revealing therefore that the Communist Party — despite their mouthings for "unity" with bishops and bosses during the People's March, have now

emerged as the saboteurs of even a united march against the Tory Party conference in Blackpool.

Such antics offer no way forward to the workers and youth who seriously want to fight unemployment.

Tide

Instead the main attention should be focussed on stemming the tide of redundancies and closures — and combatting those union leaders who obstruct such struggles. The occupations at St Mary's Hospital, London and at Laurence Scotts point the way for resistance to closures — and must be backed up by campaigns for supporting strikes and blacking action.

At the same time unemployed workers must be organised into the trade



Brighton, 1980. Unity is needed for Blackpool 1981

union movement and bring their weight to bear in the fight for all-out action to defeat the job-slashing Thatcher government.

And a patient political fight must be waged throughout the whole labour movement for the adoption of socialist policies and the building of a leadership

able and willing to carry them out.

Neither the CP nor the SWP offer such a fighting perspective to the unemployed.

Socialist Organiser supporters will set out to convince marchers that it is the only way forward against the Tories.

Socialist Organiser EDITORIAL

Feeding the Blackpool

bloodhounds

TORY Conference delegates in Blackpool next week will find precious little to cheer about.

True there has - as Thatcher promised - been no 'U' turn. But neither has there been any let-up in inflation, in the flow of bankruptcies or in the rise of unemployment. The anger of youth on the streets has erupted into riots that have made a mockery of previous years' bayings for 'law and order'.

So deeply is the British economy disoriented that hallowed Tory sacred cows - the naval dockyards - have wandered into Geoffrey Howe's abattoirs: and even those bedrocks of Toryism, the shire counties, are in revolt against Heseltine's latest plans to impose a straitjacket on local authority spending.

On the political front, the upstarts of the SDP have begun to make inroads into disillusioned Tory voters.

Small wonder in the midst of such chaos that a growing group of Tory MPs - in an apparently more and more organised fashion - are beginning openly to challenge Thatcher's rigid monetarist strategy, and call for measures to ease unemployment and stem the tide of closures and recession through increased government spending.

Ted Heath and former Heath government ministers are prominent in this attack - which significantly is gathering strength only shortly after Thatcher's purge of 'wets' from leading ministerial posts.

Thatcher has no intention of changing course. Her cabinet is a demolition-squad cabinet, recruited on the basis of a willingness to mutilate the social services in the pursuit of profit.

But to complete such a task, and to inflict the cut in working class living standards needed to raise the level of profitability, the strength of the trade unions must be confronted, and a defeat inflicted on the working class.

Enter Norman Tebbit, a neolithic Tory who believes himself ordained to smash up the unions. Tebbit's notion is to kill two birds with one stone - prepare the ground for war on the unions, and placate the blood lust of his party colleagues in Blackpool.

Tebbit seems certain to announce a new package of legislation to be introduced by the



government.

Most important is the proposal to strip trade unions of their immunity from being sued by employers for damages as a result of strikes called before procedure is exhausted.

Linked to this is the plan to make it compulsory to hold a secret ballot before a strike is called.

Such measures are an unmistakable echo of the Heath government's Industrial Relations Act of 1972 which confined the immunities that had been extended to the unions since 1906 to the handful of unions that were prepared to register under the Act.

The immunities were restored by the Wilson government in the 1974 Trade Union and Labour Relations Act. But the final two years of the Callaghan government saw growing attempts by employers to find ways of using the courts to prevent strikes or inflict damages payments on trade unionists.

Now Thatcher, egged on by Tory hard-liners and encouraged also by the abject spinelessness of this year's TUC Congress, appears to have decided to launch the Tories once again on a collision course with the organised labour movement.

Closed shop

At the same time Tebbit is likely to propose measures to curb the closed shop - with legislation to enforce hefty compensation to workers sacked for not joining a union and to offer non-union members the chance of a court order to prevent them being sacked. "Union only" labour contracts often used by Labour councils which in particular benefit direct labour departments, will also be outlawed.

To introduce such legislation would be a further 'declaration of intent' by a government whose consistent line has been to confront sections of the trade union movement and rely on the union bureaucracy to prevent an all-out struggle.

But to impose punitive damages payments on unions through the courts would be to go far beyond the selective strategy of picking off one section at a time: if Thatcher is now prepared to press for such legislation, it is a gauge of the contempt she has for the TUC leaders.

For the Tory bloodhounds at Blackpool long fed on a diet of peanuts - the prospect of getting their teeth into some workers will fill them with ecstasy.

But for the working class the latest attack underlines the political task ahead.

A new, revolutionary leadership is needed within the labour movement; a leadership that is prepared to build action to confront and defeat the government and equipped with policies as the basis for a real alternative, a workers' government that will establish a planned socialist economy.

MORTGAGE payments are up. Local council services will be squeezed harder by the interest burden. Higher interest charges will work through price increases everywhere.

Productive investment will remain at rock bottom. The latest business surveys show orders books down and firms planning to cut investment and increase redundancies.

That's the picture after a four per cent increase in bank lending rates over the last three weeks, from 12% to 16%.

It's good news for bankers and financiers. In the working class, it is another indication that the Tory government is still prepared to let this slide go longer and deeper, with no attempt to restrain for the sake of raising the rate of exploitation.

High interest rates and continuing price inflation on one side, and the 4% wage limit on the other are the two jaws of the Tories' squeeze on jobs and living standards.

BL workers have given a lead for a fightback. Now the job of socialists must be to build unity to fight to bring all other sections of workers pursuing wage demands out alongside the first struggle.

Diplock court victim: wife's appeal for support

Dear Friend,

My name is Monica Culbert and for the past three years and three months my husband Michael has been in a Northern Ireland prison.

I am thirty-one years of age. I think I can describe myself as a sensible, practical woman who for the last three years has learnt to cope alone: to adjust to bringing up our two sons, Roy and Michael; to be able to do my teaching job properly; and to visit my husband and work on his behalf. Yet again today I cried after speaking to Michael on a visit.

Maybe it was his sickly pale complexion or his lifelessness or perhaps it was the fact that I sensed he was so upset at more of his friends dying, but seeing him like that today brought back so clearly into my mind all the reasons for the blanket protest and, now, the hunger strike.

Brutality

There are times especially now during the sorrow and trauma of the hunger strike that one forgets why these men took this drastic step. One forgets the brutality, the beatings, the degradation and the humiliation which started from the first moment they were arrested.

These men, including my husband, never received what is commonly recognised as the due process of law. They were denied trial by jury and most of the normal protections enjoyed by the accused in an

American or English court.

Michael was sentenced to life imprisonment on the basis of a single policeman's testimony in a special court known as a Diplock Court. 'Diplock Courts' were set up in the wake of the British government's decision to abandon internment without trial - a decision that was forced by the immense weight of international and internal pressure.

Veneer

Diplock Courts are simply a veneer of jurisprudence to achieve the results of internment by more subtle means. That is, their function is to ensure the imprisoning of political suspects who otherwise - under the normal conditions of a jury and rights to evidence - would not be convicted.

These courts achieve this result by setting aside the right to jury and depending almost completely on the testimony of policemen or soldiers to sympathetic judges. Not only are these courts allowed to accept signed confessions of dubious status (extracted after 72 hours of uninterrupted interrogation at the infamous Castlereagh centre - where torture has been officially admitted in the past), but in some cases

mere verbal statements from police officers.

My husband has been condemned to life imprisonment exclusively on the basis of such verbal testimony from a policeman.

After months of periodic harassment for his outspoken republican and socialist sympathies, Michael was arrested in May 1978 and convicted of alleged involvement in the murder of a policeman.

It was never maintained that he was actually present at the time (indeed, he was teaching a school class at the time!), but that he had somehow been involved in its planning.

The government in its prosecution, however, did not produce one, single shred of evidence: not a single witness nor even the slightest bit of physical substantiation for their charges.

Rather what the judge found so compelling was the police accusation that after five days of interrogation and physical abuse, Michael made a verbal confession.

Farce

Michael denies this vehemently, and in the absence of any written confession it became a matter of his word versus that of one of his interrogators.

Watching all this in the



courtroom, I remember thinking that it was just a farce, that there was no possibility that any judge - no matter how prejudiced or sympathetic to the police and army - could convict a man on the basis of such an allegation without evidence. I was wrong...

When Michael was convicted he immediately lodged an appeal. This appeal will at last be heard on October 5 - after more than three years. After his conviction Michael also immediately went on the

blanket and joined the so-called 'dirty protest'.

Why? you may ask. Basically it was because he and the rest of the men in the H-blocks and the women in Armagh Prison are not ordinary criminals and refuse to be treated as such.

The English government says that it will never grant 'special status' to the hunger strikers, yet all Irish political prisoners have been treated with special status throughout the course of their prosecution.

They alone have been singled out for the special status of Diplock jury-less trials; they alone are prosecuted under special laws; and they alone undergo the 'special interrogation' reserved for political

suspects at torture centres like Castlereagh.

Michael is innocent and denies that he ever made any alleged confession. Perhaps his jailers were particularly incensed at their failure to coerce a written confession from him.

It is a fact that 80% of convictions at the Diplock Courts are secured by 'confessions' obtained under 'inhuman and degrading' interrogation, and that the courts boast a 94% conviction rate!

If this figure seems a little high, it is only testimony to the efficiency of a jury-less court system operated by the police.

Mirror search

Because these men and women refuse to be classified as criminals, they have been for the last four years locked up 24 hours a day, denied physical exercise, fresh air, recreational facilities, association with other prisoners, and are subjected to constant humiliation and brutality.

Because Michael is on appeal, he is allowed a 15 minute visit each day for the sole purpose of discussing the appeal. Until very recently he had to undergo the brutal and degrading 'mirror search' of his body cavities. He is always harassed coming and going from visits, forced to submit to constant searches and questioning.

After several years of the blanket protest the prisoners turned toward their ultimate weapon: the hunger strike.

They took this awesome step because all other roads were closed to them, and because the English government reneged on previous negotiations and refused the

Monica Culbert appeals to the British labour movement for her husband - sentenced to jail for life on the basis of a single policeman's word

reasonable demands with the men and women made for the rights of association, civilian uniforms non-penal work.

'Special status'

Michael's appeal is an important opportunity to demonstrate to the Northern Ireland Office your approval of a 'special status' criminal system that will convict a political dissident to a life term without jury, a confession or a shred of evidence.

Michael's appeal is the conclusion of a long, terrifying struggle by your family - it is our chance to save him and, your help, bring him home. Therefore I urgently ask you to send a telegram of protest and concern to: Mr Michael Allison, Minister for Prisons, Northern Ireland Office, Stormont Castle, Belfast.

Heard

Please drop me a letter after sending the telegram. I would be happy to answer any of your queries, provide more details about Michael's appeal or, in general, explain why we - the prisoners - feel the struggle inside the H-blocks should be of great concern to one who cares about freedom of Ireland and state of democracy in Britain. But, please, use your voice heard to Michael Allison.

Thank you
Monica Culbert
73 Willowvale Avenue
Stewartstown
Belfast

Michael Culbert's appeal due on October 5, but has been postponed without date being set.

Troops out now!

World news

Crushing poverty in imperialism's mineral treasure-house

by Jim Farnham

IN 1979, the 29 million people of Zaire 'owed' a total of \$4.5 billion in loans and 'aid' from the imperialist bankers and governments. Then in May this year, the IMF lent a further \$1 billion.

So Zaire's debts are bigger in relation to income than for any other country in the world. It eats up 40 per cent of the exports produced by working people in the mines, factories and farms, just to pay the interest charges.

Huge profits

The interest payments are part of the huge profits squeezed from workers' and poor peasants by the imperialists, who totally dominate the backward economy of Zaire. Zaire is completely dependent on loans to pay for vital imports of food, oil, and manufactured goods — which raw material exports (overwhelmingly dominated by copper) cannot pay for.

As the world capitalist crisis deepens, exports are being severely hit while import costs are rocketing. So the dependence on loans tightens. And the rise in bank rates adds even more weight to the burden of repayment. To meet these repayments, the puppet regime of Mobutu must carry through greater and greater attacks on the living standards of the masses.

The Zairean masses have always faced crushing poverty under capitalism — both in its old colonial and new neo-colonial forms. The average annual income of those economically active is less than the weekly wage of many workers in Britain — £100.

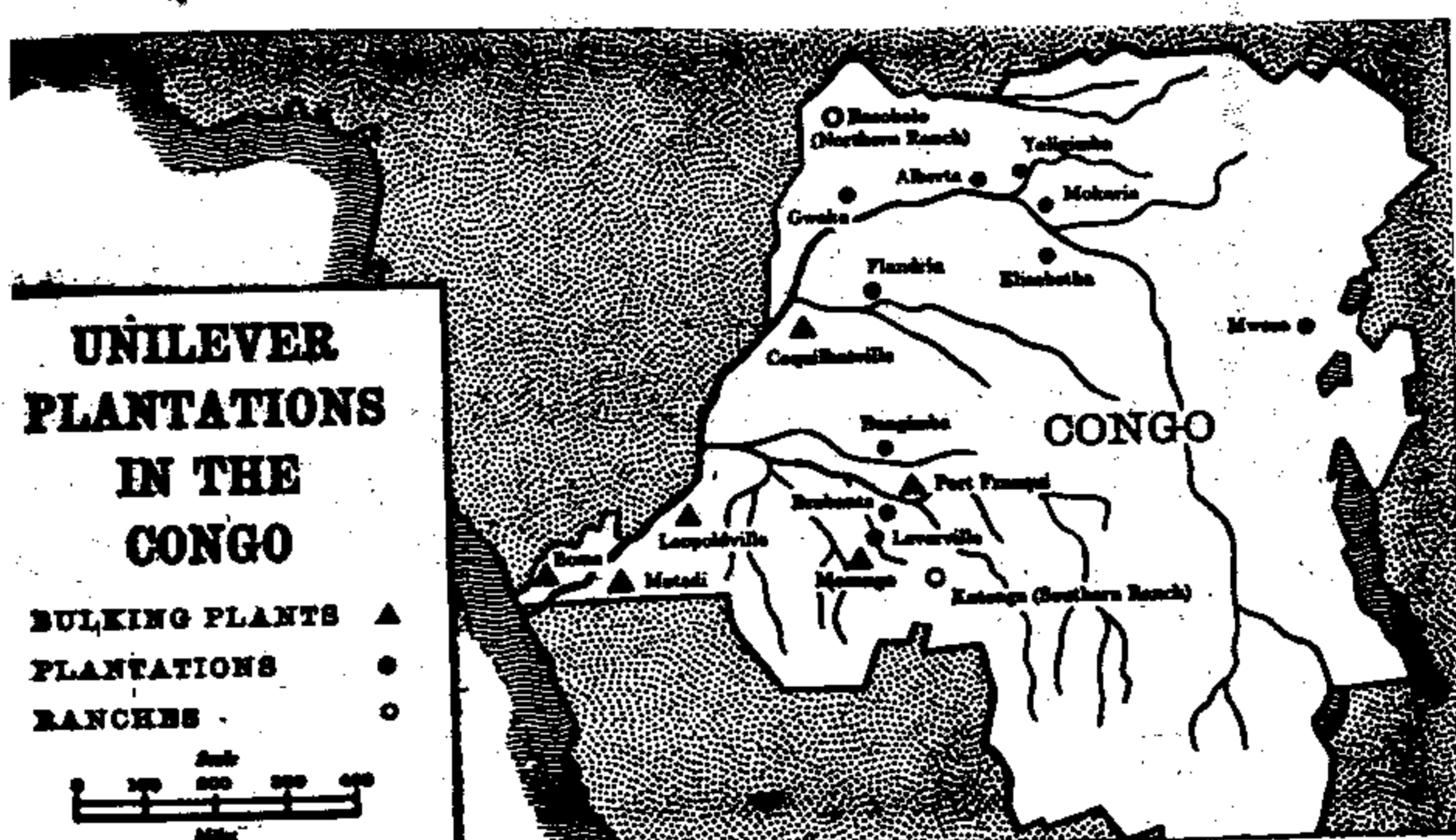
Only 15 per cent of the



Mobutu with troops



French troops to Mobutu's rescue in 1978



adults can read, or write their names. Nearly 60 per cent of Zaireans will never reach the age of 50. For 29 million people, there are 600 doctors.

And the savage reality of daily life for working people is growing even worse. Over the last few years, the number of jobs in mining and large-scale

agriculture has fallen drastically. Food production has been steadily declining — along with food consumption.

This year's wage rises for workers have been kept at 35 per cent, below even the official inflation rate — thus protecting the profits of the imperialist monopolies who (directly or indir-

ectly) control mining, agriculture, and processing industry.

The Mobutu dictatorship, and the bureaucrats and capitalists in Zaire who rely on it, receive handsome rewards from their imperialist masters. Mobutu came to power thanks to the Belgian and UN troops that were sent in to crush the mass anti-colonial movement which had already forced Belgium to grant formal independence. Today this butcher is one of the richest men in the world.

But the regime's terror and the crushing poverty have been unable to smash the courageous resistance of the working people. Militancy and struggle are growing, as shown for example by the mass strikes in January this year.

The strikes themselves were defeated by mass arrests and execution of militants. But the underlying movement of struggle, with the proletariat in the forefront, has not been defeated. The imperialists recognise the dangerous instability of the regime in the face of mass anger and action. They see the threat to their profits, and they are looking for ways of ending this threat.

Already in 1978, they were forced to send troops in to rescue Mobutu from a developing uprising. Now there are signs that they may prepare for the replacement of Mobutu by a new puppet, in a desperate move to head off mass resistance.

Two possible candidates are the exiled ex-prime minister Nguza, and the current foreign minister, Lokumba. For the workers and poor peasants, such a

change of dictators would not alter the daily reality of hardship and repression, would not lessen the burden of repayments, and would not remove the threat of another imperialist military intervention.

The Zairean working people face not only the puppet bosses' government, but the economic and military power of the international capitalist class. They need the support and strength of the international working class to help them in their struggle to overthrow exploitation and oppression.

The labour movements in France, Belgium and Morocco have a special responsibility to prepare and mobilise against any moves by their governments towards military intervention.

And the labour movements in all the imperialist countries need to build links with the Zairean workers, to take action in support of strikes and other struggles, and to take up the question of loans and aid.

The money which the imperialists channel into Zaire is part of the profits stolen by them from the labour of working people throughout the world. That money must be used to help meet the needs of the people — not the greed of the bankers and their lackeys.

Break the silence on NATO'S junta!



THE PUBLICITY now being given to imperialism's nuclear war drive should not obscure the old-fashioned methods of military dictatorship now being practised by NATO's generals in Turkey.

Though Turkey remains a vital storehouse for the West's 'freedom-loving' war machine, the minds of its military commanders have over the past year been concentrated on the enemy within.

General Evren, self-proclaimed head of state, is able to impose his internal tyranny safe in the knowledge that no West European democracy will dare speak out at the mounting repression. Instead they cling to the straws cynically

thrown out by the junta about an imminent return to civilian rule and particularly the inauguration of the National Security Council's consultative assembly set for October 23.

Hand picked

The faith of Europe's governments will not be tested despite the assembly members being hand-picked by the military chiefs. Evren has set them the task of drafting a new constitution, declaring the present 1961 version, itself incorporating openly fascist laws, as ultra-liberal.

Abroad, the Generals are demanding tougher measures by their European neighbours against Turkish

exiles who have been forced to flee and take refuge outside the country. The junta, which has already imprisoned 100,000, has produced a list of 14,500 wanted 'terrorists' and is considering appointing special security attachés to its embassies in London and other European cities to track them down.

This background of closer liaison between the Turkish military and security forces in Britain and elsewhere undoubtedly lies behind the Home Office decision to refuse Turkish political activist Dogan Tarkan political asylum in this country.

The fast-growing campaign in his defence must be urgently extended to

prevent the junta from claiming yet another victim.

Save Dogan Tarkan!
Contact: Friends of Dogan Tarkan, BM Box 5965, London WC1N 3XX.

Turkey Solidarity Campaign



Spartacists call to crush Polish workers

by Martin Thomas

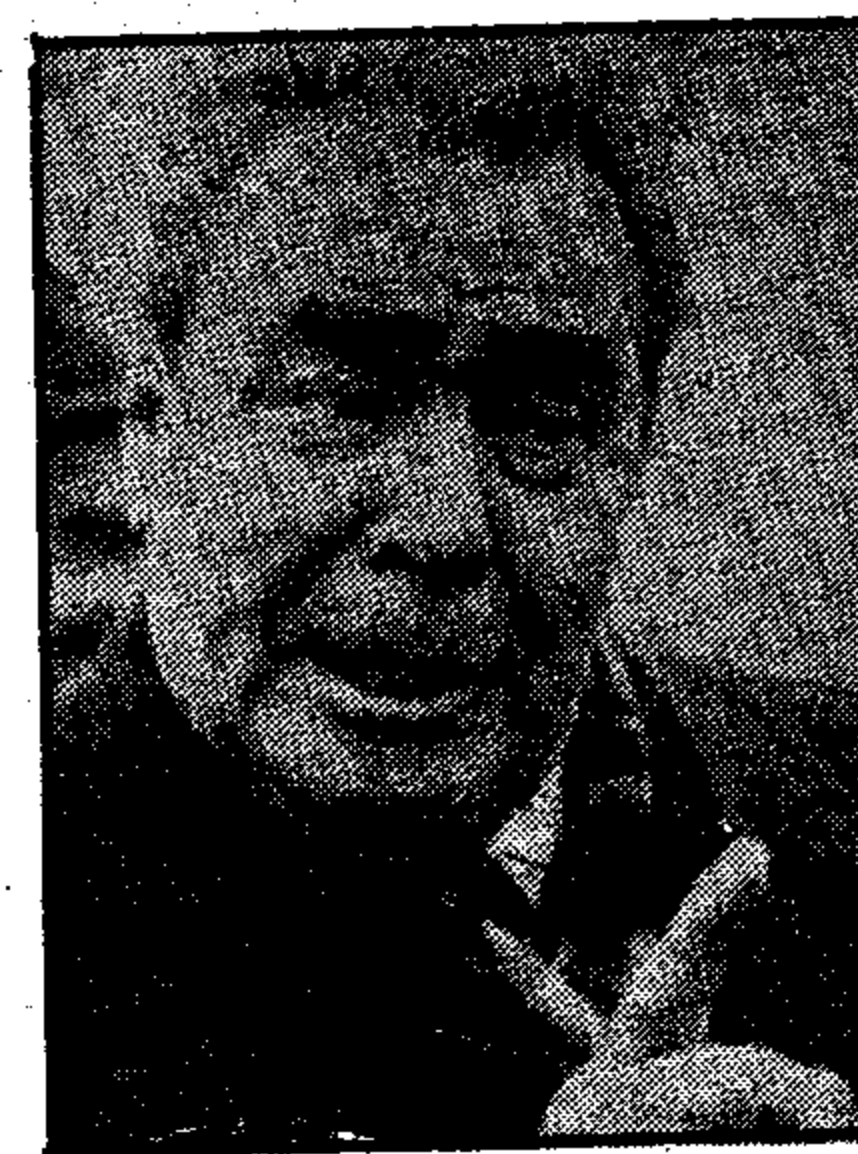
... THE Solidarity leadership has the support of the active majority of the Polish proletariat. Thus, the threat of a counter-revolutionary thrust for power is now posed in Poland. That threat must be crushed at all costs and by any means necessary...

"If the Kremlin Stalinists, in their necessarily brutal, stupid way, intervene militarily to stop it, we will support this. And we take responsibility in advance for this; whatever the idiocies and atrocities they will commit, we do not flinch from defending the crushing of Solidarity's counter-revolution".

Supposedly

This call for the crushing of the Polish working class comes not from some die-hard Stalinist sect, but from the supposedly Trotskyist Spartacist League, in Workers' Vanguard of September 25.

Their argument is that Solidarity's 'open appeal for 'free trade unions' in the Soviet block is both an arrogant (!) provocation of Moscow and a declaration



Brezhnev

of ideological solidarity with Western imperialism". Further, Solidarity calls for free elections, and these, the Spartacists reckon, would give a majority to 'clerical-nationalism'.

In fact the Spartacists give a grotesque and revolting twist to the idea that the general interests of the working class may necessitate repressive action against particular groups of workers (like scabs). In their picture, the Polish and Russian bureaucrats — corrupt police-state rulers, close in their methods and psychology to fascism —

figure as the "defenders of workers' interests", against "the active majority of the Polish proletariat itself", fighting, with whatever confused ideas, for workers' control.

And so, on the pretext of 'tough-guy' revolutionary realism, these sectarians end up on the side of Stalinist counter-revolution, against the developing workers' political revolution.

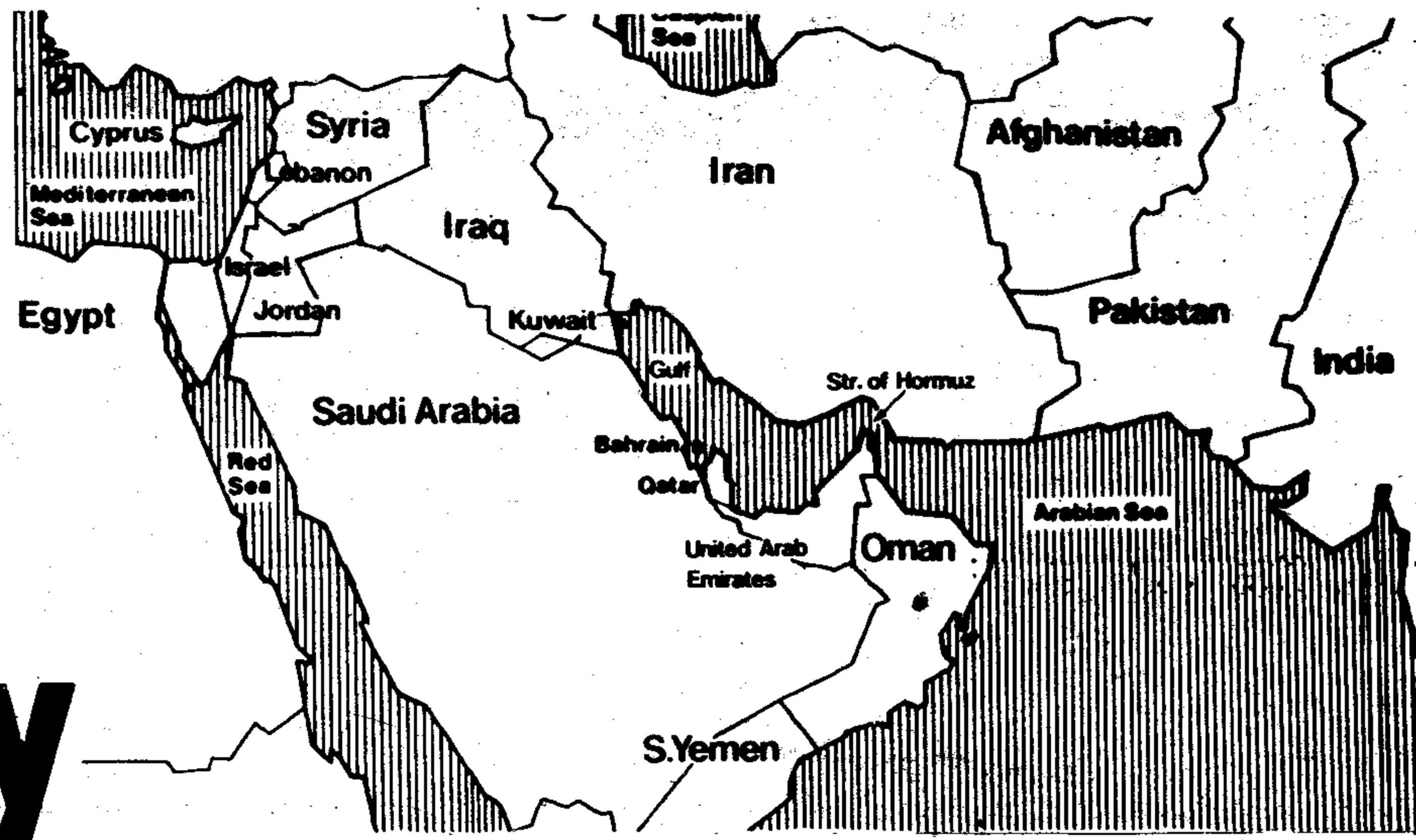
30p plus from Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8



THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM FOR SOCIALIST REVOLUTION
LEON TROTSKY

World news

After setback in Iran US plays Saudi card in new Mid-East strategy



By Andrew Hornung

AT THE end of this month, the US Congress will vote on whether Reagan's proposed sale of AWACS radar patrol planes to Saudi Arabia should go ahead. The outcome of this vote will be crucial for US military strategy in the Middle East, and powerful lobbies are ranged on both sides.

The problem for the American administration is this: the military and politically the US is totally committed to support of Israel.

But economically the US is far more interested in the Arab oil states - who are hostile to Israel. How can one be armed without upsetting the other?

Tripled

In the first half of the 1970s, US arms sales in the Middle East averaged \$3.2 billion per year - nearly one and a half times the total sales over the previous 15 years. Arms sales nearly tripled again from 1975 to 1979 to hit an average of \$8.9 billion a year.

Paralleling this, in the first half of the 1970s, US arms sales in the Middle East accounted for more than half of the total US arms sales, while in the following half decade it rose to close on three-quarters of total sales!

At the same time, the region (which for military-statistical purposes includes Turkey, Greece, Sudan and Iran) received nearly 90% of all US military grants and credits.

Of course, these sales and grants were not evenly distributed.

US imperialism's special relationship with Israel means that it gets huge amounts of arms - always the latest and the best - as well as vast quantities of money in the form of grants, loans, credits and waivers.

The last years for which there are complete figures are the two years 1977-79; in these years Israel received \$5,200 million from the US to finance military sales.

While the US has no bases in Israel, there can be no doubt that they could be had for the asking... and for the right price.

Indeed, Prime Minister Begin has just offered Reagan exactly that in return for his denying the Saudi Arabians the AWACS, and Defence Minister Weizmann has urged an extensive programme of military co-operation.

Israel's military role in the Middle East is well-known and while it is not quite right to say that it is one big American base, it is imperialism's single most important military presence.

Israel's recent attack on Iraq's nuclear plant and her continuing invasion and partial occupation of

Lebanon bring mild reproof from the US administration and even brief hold-ups in arms deliveries, but in reality US imperialism is 100% committed to military support of Israel, including its general policy towards Lebanon.

After the attack on Iraq's nuclear plant it was revealed that that too had been discussed with US experts.

Israel's role is not limited to the Middle East. It extends into Africa too, though this is a relatively minor theatre for Israel at present.

The biggest military political changes in the Middle East have come from the shifts in Egypt and in Iran.

Iran was, until the fall of the Shah, the policeman of the Gulf and a huge arms purchaser. In February 1973, for instance, US Defence Department officials acknowledged that Iran had contracted to buy over \$2.5 billion worth of US weapons, the biggest arms deal ever negotiated by the Pentagon.

In May of the same year, the Pentagon confirmed that the White House had agreed to sell advanced military aircraft to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

At the end of August Iran was invited to place orders for America's newest jet ahead of even America's NATO allies. In October of that year, of course, there was open war in the Middle East.

Decisive

Iran's role was decisive in certain areas: its navy patrolled the Gulf and the Horn of Africa; its troops were largely responsible for the victory of Sultan Qaboos in Oman over the Dhofari national liberation struggle; and its instructors trained troops all over the Gulf.

In addition, of course, Iran was the site of numerous missile bases and surveillance centres threatening the Soviet Union and monitoring developments there.

The fall of the Shah there and, to a lesser extent, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan weakened imperialism's network of alliances and its military power. Imperialism is now doing all it can to make up for this loss.



One of the areas in which the US is developing a compensatory build-up is Egypt.

In fact Egypt now provides the US also with base points for aircraft - it was used as a stop-over point for Carter's abortive attempt to retake the US Embassy hostages in Iran - and surveillance facilities. Egypt is also being developed militarily to enable it to intervene in Africa as America's proxy.

Abortive

There is, of course, also an internal dimension to the strengthening of the Egyptian military. One Pentagon official put it like this:

"We took these steps to enhance Egypt's feelings of security and to provide the conditions under which Egypt may improve economic and social conditions. This combination of measures is aimed at strengthening Egypt's ability to deal with internal strains that inevitably accompany rapid development."

The truth is, however, that the "strains" in Egypt are not the result of that country's "rapid development". Egypt is in fact stagnant and getting deeper and deeper in debt.

In any case, economic benefits of American imperialism's relations with Egypt simply don't exist - unless, of course, you are in the arms business or related to it - because, among other things, interest payments on US loans and other military credit would amount to \$35 million more than the total sum of economic aid.

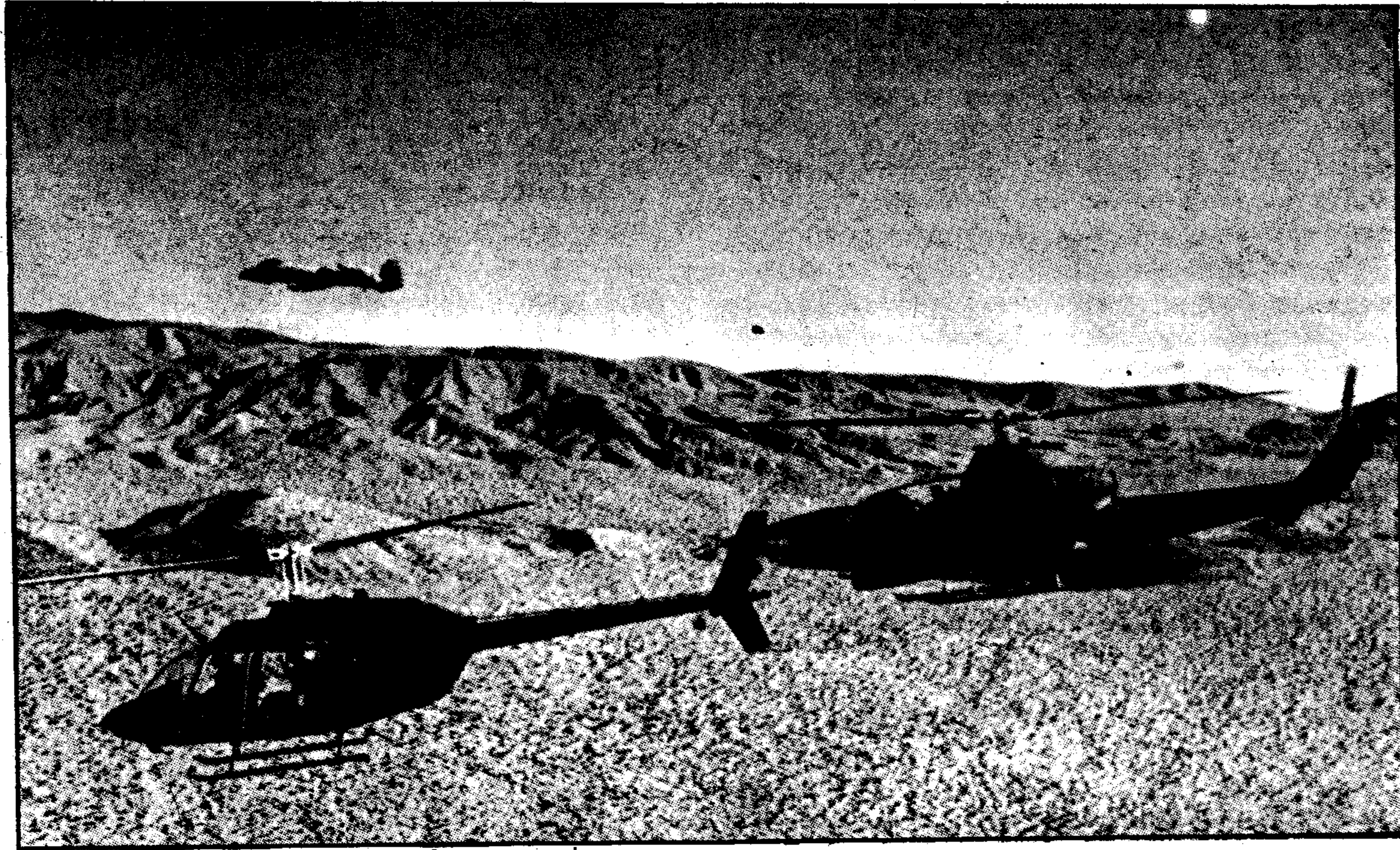
Tensions

The only "strains" that are eased are the tensions between Sadat and sections of the military, whom the President hopes to appease with bigger and better arms and a better life. Egypt's role in Africa will also give these generals something to do after the "peace" treaty with Israel is signed.

When the last phase of the treaty is completed in a few months, Egypt will receive a massive arms transfusion from the US. That's the prize for making "peace".

According to an Israeli official who participated in the 1979 Blair House talks between Israel, Egypt and the USA, the three powers foresaw not a formal alliance "but a loose division of labour", in which the US would supply the military assistance for Egypt to police the Arab world and for Israel to protect the Sadat regime against retaliation.

The Egyptian masses are told that the new "peace" treaty with Israel will lead to



US helicopters escort bomber on desert exercise

prosperity as money is shifted from military to social expenditure. In reality nothing of the kind is happening, and they are being asked to carry the cost of imperialist policy in the region.

Imperialism

Despite Saudi Arabia's deep commitment to imperialism, it has publicly refused US offers of troops and bases.

Nevertheless US military involvement there is considerable. Apart from supplying vast quantities of military hardware of the most modern type - like AWACS - the US is involved in building military bases, training personnel and providing maintenance and technical services.

A House Committee on International Relations report points out the close connection between economic, military and technical aid:

"As programmes move from surveys to sales to maintenance programmes, American involvement increases... and dependence on foreign technical help proliferates. Hardware deliveries are followed by software programmes designed to co-ordinate and inter-relate weapons systems... but software programmes, by their very nature, require more open ended involvement..."

Contract

Since 1965 the US Army Corps of Engineers alone has constructed or contracted for \$12.6 billion worth of military facilities, with another \$9 billion projected by 1985 - according to current plans.

One US company, Hughes, Bendix, Holmes and Narver, of California, has won a contract to run the base and headquarters of the entire Saudi Arabian Royal Navy.

So crucial are American interests in Saudi Arabia and so confident is Washington that Saudi policies will not run counter to the basic drift

of US policies, that Saudi Arabia has been allowed to buy even more of some kinds of advanced missiles than Israel.

Apart from the fall of the Shah, the biggest change in the Middle East in the last decade has been Egypt's sell-out to imperialism.

But even more important changes could come about if Iraq, which is currently courting US imperialism, breaks its ties with the Soviet Union and goes the same way as Egypt.

Iraq's failure to gain a quick victory over Iran has obviously set back this process: if Iraq cannot police the Gulf, it has little use as a bargaining chip with US imperialism.

The US uses bases in the Gulf, in Oman in particular, for refuelling but there are no US bases there.

Outside the immediate area of the Middle East but strategically connected with it are the many bases and surveillance posts in Turkey and the 199 US-NATO bases and listening posts in the Mediterranean.

Washington learned a bitter lesson when the Shah of Iran was deposed: even the most vicious military-police dictatorship might prove unstable.

Thus apart from Israel the US feels it cannot completely rely on the counter-revolutionary forces in the region itself. It has therefore developed its own Rapid Deployment Force (RDF).

The idea is to use jumbo jets to transport huge quantities of men and equipment thousands of miles to operate where there is no US base.

The RDF strategy has been made possible by the most modern technology, but the fiasco of Carter's attempt to free the US Embassy hostages in Iran shows that the kind of military co-ordination and sophistication necessary for even a small operation of this type is still beyond even American capability.

On the other hand, the US's ability to fly in 10,000 tons of weapons to help the Israeli Army in the 1973 war points to the possibility of a very big role for the RDF.

A WARNING TO WALESA

FROM all sides the voices of moderation have been warning, advising and occasionally losing their tempers with the proceedings at the Solidarnosc National Congress taking place in Gdansk at the moment.

Surprisingly enough these voices of calm and moderation include some of the leading functionaries of East European states.

In an interview in a West German periodical - Stern - the head of the International News Department of the Soviet Communist Party came out with endorsement of Lech Walesa and the political line he personifies within Solidarnosc.

Mr Zamiantim said: "Lech Walesa has had some difficult moments. He's the man of moderate positions and is very linked to the Catholic Church. He has become an obstacle for the extremists like Gwiadza, Rulewski and that semi-fascist Bujak. These people aren't part of the working class."

And as if all this praise wasn't enough, to have the head of the Hungarian "trade unions" Sandor Gaspar address you as "Dear Mr Walesa" must surely take the prize.

Suddenly Lech Walesa has become - if not exactly the darling of the Stalinists in Eastern Europe - at least the devil whom they think they know and definitely preferable to the other candidates for the Solidarnosc presidency.

These others - Gwiadza, Rulewski and Jurczyk are so unspeakably monstrous in Moscow's eyes that the epithet "fascist" rolls easily off the hacks' pens, as Pravda tries to convey its full horror to its readers.

Of Walesa's rivals, Rulewski has openly called for Poland's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and at the Congress openly lambasted what he considered to be "our greatest mistake" - to have blown the Soviet menace out of all proportion. This has produced a self-censoring which I

propose to reject since it's impossible to know all of the factors which determine the attitude of Soviet imperialism...

Jurczyk, the runner up to Walesa (he got 24% of the vote) also added a strong element of internal democracy to his candidacy, implicitly criticising Walesa's "dictatorial" methods at decision-making - which on occasions has created much ill-feeling within the movement.

It was never in doubt that Walesa - so identified with the emergence of the new phase of independent Polish working class activity would actually win.

What was surprising was that his margin of victory was not particularly great.

The combined vote of his three radical rivals was about 40%. Walesa's 55% may have assured him victory - but it was also a clear warning by large sections of the movement that past undemocratic and conciliatory practices will not be automatically accepted in future in the name of unity.

Begin (above) and AWACS plane

Fighting for union democracy

TGWU : A SUITABLE



CASE FOR TREATMENT

DEMOCRACY is a dangerous thing. It is described in the Oxford Dictionary as "government by the people". It means that those at the top represent the interests of, and are accountable to, those whom they represent. That sounds innocent enough, so why all the fuss?

Yet, as everyone knows, the democratic reforms inside the Labour Party have rocked the labour movement to its very foundations.

It is because it is a direct challenge to bureaucracy, the system which retains all control in the hands of a privileged minority, who represent their own interests and not those of the working class.

Nowhere is this more true than in the TGWU where the impact of the reforms inside the Labour Party have caused a deep crisis in the union.

It is certainly ironic that the union which cast its 1 1/4 million block vote in favour of the Labour Party's democratic reforms not only defends its unelected army of full time officials, but is completely unable to conduct a simple democratic procedure in its own ranks even when the issue is how to cast its block vote on the new democratic reforms themselves.

Its delegation to the Labour Party conference, with powers to cast 1 1/4 million votes under the new democratic reforms, is unrepresentative in the extreme.

It is filled out with unelected national officers together with regional officials and sponsored MPs.

How they come to be representing the union is beyond comprehension.

This may be ironic, but it is not surprising. The TGWU has never had a democratic structure. Yet its weight and influence in the labour movement is crucial.

It is a vast union of nearly two million members in 16 different trade groups and 11 Regions, making it more like a TUC than an individual union.

Some of its Regions are like large unions in themselves. The London Region has half a million members and the Midlands Region has 350,000 members covering a vast industrial area.

Stand

With such power, the TGWU alone could, if it took a determined stand, decide the fate of governments. But that power has never been used. The union is kept split and divided by a rule book designed to neutralise that very strength.

Such a state of affairs is perpetuated through the power and influence of the vast network of unelected officials and the lack of any real way through which the membership can express themselves or change things.

The only full time official subject to election is the



T&G delegation at Labour Party conference

General Secretary, and he or she (in reality, he) is elected for life, under the formula "during the pleasure of the General Executive Council". This to an alarming extent concentrates power in a few hands.

There were only five General Secretaries between the founding of the union in 1922 and the retirement of Jack Jones in 1978.

They were Ernest Bevin, Arthur Deakin, Arthur Tiffin, Frank Cousins and Jack Jones.

Since Tiffin was a sick man and held office for only ten months, it was in reality four General secretaries in 56 years.

Ask a TGWU official about this and he (it is 99.5% certain to be a he) will tell you that the General Secretary and all the army of non-elected executive officers, national officers, regional secretaries, regional officers and district officials are in fact responsible to and controlled by their respective constitutional committee, the members of which are elected lay members.

In reality the full time officials effectively run the union and are careful to keep all the levers of power in their own hands.

Full-time

Most committees meet once a quarter and discuss

agendas prepared and controlled by full-time officers. Control of information, apparatus, finance and patronage usually allows a General Secretary, National Secretary or Regional Secretary to mould and control a committee to their own requirements.

Stamp

Indeed they are ready and willing to use their power and authority to stamp on anyone who challenges their control.

The TGWU disciplinary procedure is custom-built for such action.

In November 1977 myself and 8 others of the newly-elected leadership of BL's Cowley Assembly Plant were disciplined by a self-appointed tribunal set up by the Oxford District Committee — with the full authority of the Region.

The tribunal was comprised entirely of those right wingers who had supported the unsuccessful slate in the elections.

It was a blatant attempt to achieve through disciplinary action what the bureaucracy had failed to achieve in the shopfloor ballot.

We were allowed no rights whatsoever. Whilst we were denied even the right to call witnesses in our own defence, the tribunal called witnesses and heard them in our absence.

Then they cross-examined us on the 'evidence' which we had been denied the opportunity to hear!

When we successfully challenged the validity of the District Committee tribunal, we were charged and summonsed before an identical set-up under the auspices of the Regional Committee.

That we remain in the union and in our jobs is no thanks to the democracy of the TGWU but to the consistent support of the members we represent.

We put proposals to change this disciplinary procedure — an ideal witch-hunter's charter — to the union's rules revision conference. Our proposals were voted down — on the recommendation of the leadership!

Rule

The reason such a state of affairs has continued for so long gets back to that nasty word "democracy".

Perhaps the most urgent issue facing TGWU members within their own union at the present time is the reform of the notorious methods by which the Regional Committees, national committees and General Executive Council are elected.

This issue is particularly urgent at the present time since nominations for the current biennial elections

close on October 15 and the "elections" will take place in December.

The rule book allows two methods of election, by so-called secret ballot or by an electoral conference in which a handful of people decide on committee members without the knowledge of the membership.

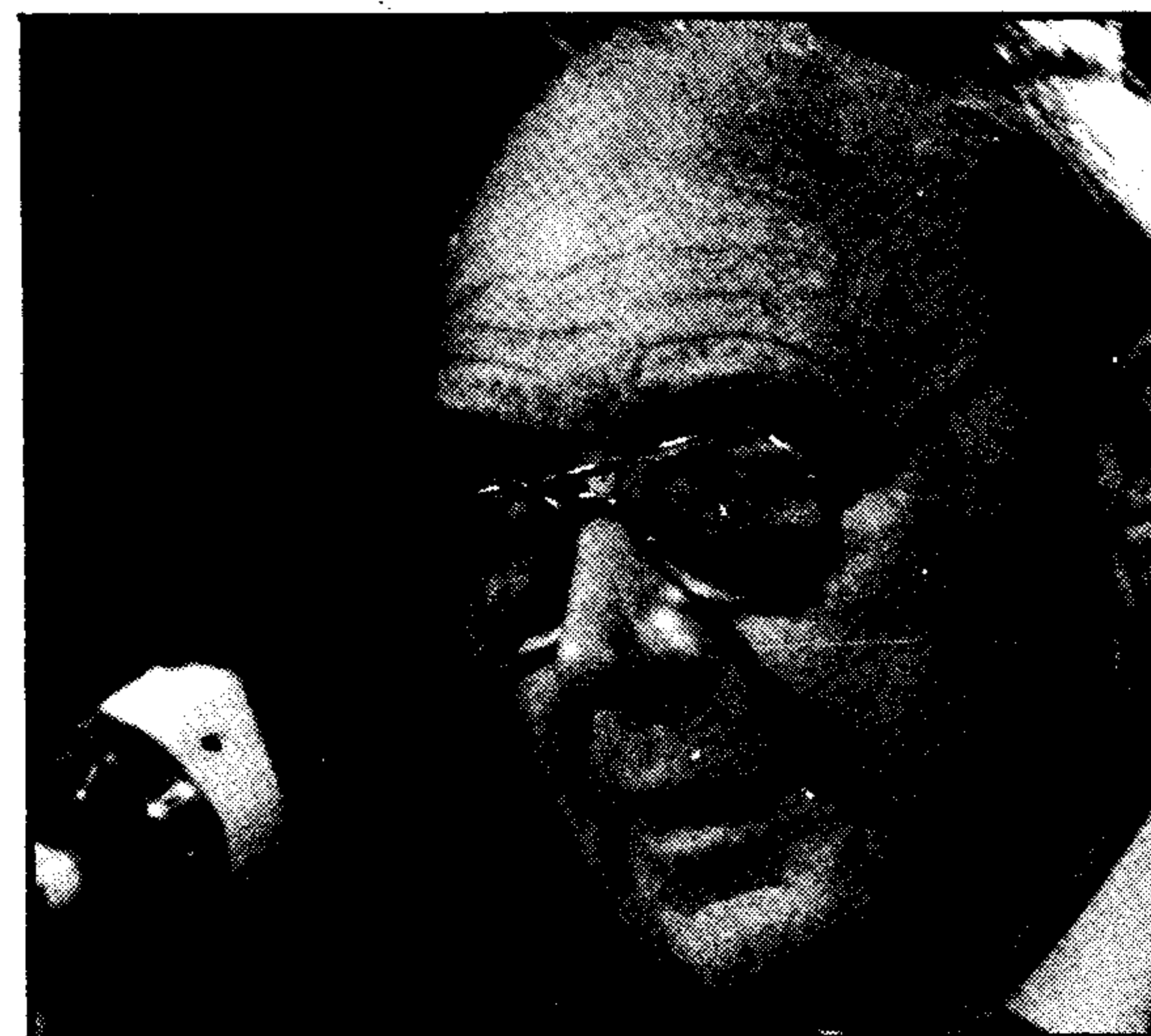
In this way 650 or so delegates are elected to the lay committees in the union. In many cases the membership are not even aware that it is happening.

Ballots are under the control of branches and branch officers, but there is no serious control over them. Quantities of ballot papers are sent to the branch secretary who is required to fill in the results on a return sheet and send it to Region.

There is no counting by Region of either used or unused ballot papers. The ballot papers are unmarked and unnumbered, the only safeguard the rule book calls for is a mark on the membership card — which is no safeguard at all.

The obvious looseness of the system is often taken in the TGWU as backdoor sanctioning of "block voting" — which is specifically barred under rule.

But since the system is tailor made to accommodate block voting rather than prevent it, many branch secretaries probably draw their own conclusions.



Jack Jones

Even the choice of name — "block voting" — shows an attitude. What is involved is not merely block voting but ballot-rigging — casting someone else's vote for them.

Calling it "block voting" almost legitimises it — since actual blockvoting is a legitimate form of voting at many conferences.

Certainly "blockvoting" — or corruption, or whatever — appears to be widespread in the union.

They have no means of knowing even elementary facts about the candidates, where they come from, where they work, how long they have been in the union — let alone what policies they stand for.

The branch of which I am president, the 5/293 BL Cowley Assembly Plant branch, has a long record of fighting for democratic reform, not just in words but in practice.

For the past four years we have introduced ballot procedures into the plant which go a very long way towards a foolproof system.

We used this experience in the resolution which we sent to last year's rules revision conference.

Stubs

We called for a new system based on consecutively numbered ballot papers attached to unnumbered stubs. The member would put his or her union card number on the stub, sign it, and vote with the numbered ballot paper.

The votes cast must then equal the number of signed stubs. This, when added to the number of unused papers, would have to equal the total block of numbered papers allocated to the branch. It is a simple and effective system.

Post

Unfortunately our branch had no delegate at the rules revision conference to press our resolution, — since our ballot papers were "lost in the post" and the replacement papers arrived the day after the closing date!

We were told by Region that since it was so important that rules were adhered to during an election no provision could be made to receive our votes late.

To counter the loss of a delegate we handed a statement to each delegate as they arrived at the conference, urging other delegates to support it.

Now is the time to press these issues again in the union.

Democracy is proving not only to be dangerous but infectious as well. From the Labour Party it has spilled over into the unions

Cast

In the elections in Region 5, four years ago, for Regional Committee, National Committee and GEC, Alan Law, a Regional Officer and Secretary of the massive 5/35 lorry drivers' branch in the Midlands, personally cast all 13,000 votes allocated to his members for the people of his choice.

When challenged by the press he said he had "not had time" to organise a ballot and would do the same again. To Alan Law it was the natural thing to do.

In one of the large cars branches in Cowley, members were able to prove that whilst only 255 members actually voted, the branch secretary had returned about 6,000 votes for each of the three candidates he supported.

Appeals to the Region produced a fresh election, but no action could be taken against the right wing offenders because of a "technicality". The "technicality" was that all the ballot papers, used and unused, had been destroyed — contrary to rule — as soon as the complaint was made!

Everyone knows that ballot rigging is not viewed seriously in the TGWU. The only penalty for "block voting" is the disqualification of the branch vote!

Address

On top of this, even if a proper ballot is taken, no-one else knows who they are voting for, since, apart from the General Secretary election, election addresses are not allowed.

This means that even if the ballot is democratic, the members are confronted with a baffling list of names — most of which they won't know.



Cuts

ST MARY'S SHOWS THE WAY

by Dettie Clinton



All out October 19!

by Alan Thornett (TGWU shop steward, BL Cowley Assembly Plant)

— from who controls the union's block votes to who controls the union itself.

We should take advantage of this. There are a number of practical things which TGWU members can do now.

Find out who has been nominated for the various committees in your Region for the December elections. Check their records and make them known amongst those you work with.

Go to your branch and raise the election. Ask how it is going to be conducted and how it will be scrutinised.

Ensure the rules are carried out. Suggest safeguards to ensure a democratic ballot of electoral conferences and raise any malpractices with Region.

Pass resolutions in your branch calling for democratic reform. The next rules conference is in 1986, but a lot can be done without rule changes. The Regions have the powers to improve ballot procedures. They have powers to produce election addresses if they so decide.

Such changes would change the union from top to bottom. Already the impact of the Labour Party deputy leadership election has politicised the union.

The policy of keeping the union politically colourless is being challenged. Top officials such as Kitson have had to declare where they stand in a way they have never had to do in the past. Others like Ron Todd have shown to be on the left of the union.

Elections in the union would accelerate that process. It would create new conditions to fight for a leadership prepared to defend the interests of the membership in a way which has not been the case before.

THE couple of hundred hospital workers, trade unionists, local people and other supporters who turned out on May 3rd to defend St. Mary's Hospital W9 saw the determination of the workforce to resist the run-down.

The lively demonstration included banners from branches of NUPE, COHSE, ASTMS and CPSA, as well as Trades Council and Labour Party banners. The Hospital Committee banner led the way through sympathetic

shoppers who demonstrated their support.

At the afternoon meeting Ken Livingstone, the GLC member for this area, put the struggle at W9 in the context of the fight against the Tories, particularly over local government cuts. He assured the meeting that he was proud that

the GLC was in the forefront of antagonising the government.

Geoffrey Eastwood, NUPE full-timer, pledged full support to the mass picket and action planned for October 19th when the ambulance drivers are going to defy their management and continue bringing

in patients. As Dave Norman, a steward from the Westminster Hospital pointed out, Bro. Eastwood has never been known to talk about supporting strike action so much as he has in the last few weeks while involved in the St. Stephens Hospital dispute. It will be vital that this talk is

translated into action on October 19th.

Ray Oliver of the COHSE NEC gave his word that he would now strongly recommend that his NEC should back the dispute and Ernie Brooks of COHSE backed this up.

The most powerful contributions, however,

came from those who have already been directly involved in fights to save hospitals, particularly the speakers from St. Benedict's and Longworth, who warned of the role of the union leaders in these disputes and demanded real action to save this vital general hospital.

The day was rounded off with sketches from the Broadside Mobile Theatre and a disco.

The picket hut, which was only put up that morning, was immediately under threat of being dismantled by the police. With the move to real picketing to support the Ambulance Service and to stop the removal of patients, this hut is vital to the successful organisation of the pickets. The stepping up of picketing is now a vital part of the campaign to save W9.

Get your organisation to take one hour a week on the picket line.

Demand that your union gives financial support and works for strike action on October 19th.

ALL OUT ON OCTOBER 19TH!



KICKOUT THE TORIES!

Labour democracy and the fight for a WORKERS GOVERNMENT

A Socialist Organiser Pamphlet

CAP & LAB

40p

Help us make our circulation JUMP!

Take a bundle of 50 to sell!

Many readers tell us they think Socialist Organiser has improved greatly since we went weekly. And our circulation has improved, too.

But it could improve a lot more if some of the many readers who like the paper, but only take one copy for themselves began taking bundles.

We're offering bundles of 5 each week for 80p post free, and bundles of 10 for £1.50

post free. That's £9.60 for three months for bundles of 5, and £18 for bundles of 10.

Regular subscription rates are £4 for three months, £7 for six months, and £12 for a year.

From: Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Please make cheques payable to Socialist Organiser.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

SUBSCRIBE!



40p plus postage from Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8



BRIGHTON - A BALANCE SHEET

Was Brighton a turning point? Has the Right decisively reversed left-wing advances in the Labour Party? JOHN O'MAHONY argues that it depends on what the left does now.

LAST year, the Tory press tagged the decisions of the Labour Party conference as 'Benn's October Revolution'. This year, some of them are insisting that the Foot-Healey-Kinnock counter-revolution has come.

This year's 'counter-revolution' is like last year's 'revolution' - a prematurely definite description of something still unshaped and unfinished.

But the decisions of Brighton can prove to be the point at which the tide turned against the Left - the beginning of the 'counter-revolution'. Whether they do or not will depend on how the Left responds.

Tony Benn said that the vote on the deputy leadership was an enormous victory for the Left. So it was, despite the vote going against us in, for example, NUPE, to draw so many trade unionists into politics was itself a great achievement. Once involved, they will not stop at their present political views.

A decision in principle was made to set up factory branches. Conference decided to fight the Tory cuts by refusing cooperation at local government level. A 35 hour week was voted for. An attempt by Weighell and Sirs to bring back the prescription of political tendencies in the Labour Party was not even discussed.

NEC blow

All these are positive achievements.

But that is not what the fight that focused on the deputy leadership contest was all about. That was about *accountability* in carrying out the new policies.

By standing, Benn stopped the soft left bog closing over the new policies, to digest them, transform them, and gut their meaning so as to accommodate the entrenched Right.

In that struggle, the vote for the NEC was a big blow.

Control of the NEC by the soft-left/right-wing alliance is a major victory for our opponents. It gives them control of one of the commanding heights of the

Party. It could give the stamp of legitimacy to all sorts of dirty tricks against the rank and file and against conference decisions.

We need to face up to that fact immediately, so that we can rally the serious left to face the challenge.

In addition to the defeats on the deputy leadership and in the NEC elections, the Left suffered other setbacks at Brighton.

The decision on the Manifesto means that what the Labour Party will present to the electorate as our alternative to Thatcher will be Party policy as shaped, selected (and rejected) by the people who ran and sustained the governments of Wilson and Callaghan.

Shift

Unilateral nuclear disarmament was upheld, but failed to get the required two-thirds majority to become a settled part of the Manifesto. Foot himself (a founder member of CND) made a speech on Tuesday which sounded very like a first shift away from unilateralism.

The three-year rule was imposed by a 5-to-1 majority, with the NEC, however, retaining the right to make exceptions.

The conference voted to stay in NATO.

After Brighton, the balance sheet of the struggle that began during the life of the last Labour government, and has raged openly for the last two years, would now look something like this.

The local Parties are massively Bennite (83% voted Benn for deputy). Support in the unions for Benn is also tremendous, even where it is not a majority.

Advances

Despite the vicious anti-Labour press, there has been a regrowth of Labour Party membership, by about 25 per cent.

Tremendously important decisions have been taken for democratisation. The electoral college gives the decisive say on who should be prime minister, if Labour has a parliamentary majority, to extra-parliamentary

forces.

On the debit side, there is the fact that the centre-right control the NEC; the Right controls the PLP; and the TUC, of course, is the TUC.

Bureaucracy

The fact that the local government Left has so far shown itself unable to organise a fightback against the Tories - the experience of Lambeth and Lothian - must to some extent depress the movement.

There is, as we in Socialist Organiser have argued, a great political weakness in the Left. The AES does not add up to a credible working class alternative to the Tories, or make possible a new type of 'Labour' government in Britain, a workers' government which really serves the interests of the working class and cuts against the interests of the ruling class.

The Left is not adequately organised. The women's sections remain feeble, though growing fast. The youth remain under the control of lifeless sectarians around the mis-named 'Militant'.

The basic reason for our setbacks at Brighton is clear. The Labour Party, with six million individual and affiliated members, encompasses an enormous chunk of British society: it cannot be easily transformed. Within it, the unions - which mainly means the trade union bureaucracy - wield a decisive role.

But the trade union bureaucracy is one of the basic pillars of conservatism in the labour movement and in British society. As long ago as the 1920s, Leon Trotsky truly said that the British state itself could not stand without the trade union bureaucrats being one of its pillars.

They provided the crucial support for the Wilson and Callaghan governments until Callaghan kicked them away and provoked the 1978-9 winter of union struggles.

Voice

After that, they felt their interests lay in securing an increased voice in the party. And that was central in what

happened in the 1979 and 1980 party conferences.

Unions played a positive role for Labour Party democracy while remaining the opposite of democratic themselves.

But the democratic campaign was only marginally organised among the unions' rank and file.

The established Left in parliament had long been the Egyptian mummy of British politics - dead and hollow. Gestures and speeches and postures, yes - but deeds, struggles, and hopes for the 'ideals' they proclaimed, no.

Fudge

The split in the Left came exactly at the line dividing theory and practice: when Benn stood the issue was not, as they insisted, 'personalities', but that he was making it impossible for them to fudge and compromise.

Instead of a united Left offensive, we got the old Labour Left shattering, and the majority of the Tribune group siding with Healey through either the spoiling candidature of Silkin, abstentionism, or (in the case of 5 MPs) actually voting for Healey.

And the stone-age Right in the unions organised to pull their coup at Brighton.

What will the Right/soft-left alliance do now?

Even Dennis Healey fudged the issues at conference. Today the right that remains in the Labour Party will either adopt left coloration themselves, or let Foot and Kinnock front for them.

The balance of forces among the trade union leaders is such that Foot, Kinnock, etc will basically serve the Right.

Unity

The election due in 2½ years or less will now begin to shape things, and help the Right and soft-left sell the need for 'unity' to the rank and file. They will say that they too accept the policies (AFS, FFC withdrawal, etc).

The manner in which Foot got the conference to overturn its earlier decision on the Manifesto could be

will have to choose either to try to work from inside the left-wing establishment - to go in again to compete with the Kinnocks on their own ground - or to continue to mobilise the rank and file to change the whole structure of the movement.

Foot has been making seductive noises to draw Benn into the establishment. He said in an aside at the Tribune meeting that Benn was probably the only man with a chance of challenging him for the leadership. He has invited Benn to come into the Shadow Cabinet (though he may not be able to persuade the PLP to endorse this).

To justify and explain his own role, Neil Kinnock said in Brighton that the only way we would win the next election - as things stand - was if thousands of Tories died laughing at us. To people who said similar things about the political battles that often convulsed the Russian labour movement, Lenin used a telling story which he took from Leo Tolstoy.

Going along a road, a man saw a figure in the distance, crouched, swaying and moving his body seemingly without sense: 'a madman'. When he came nearer, he saw he was sharpening a knife.

The labour movement now is trying to hammer out a democratic structure and socialist policies so that we can have a real alternative to the Tories. We are sharpening a knife for Thatcher, and maybe for capitalism.

Limit

* Kick the Tories out now! Organise for the Labour Party to play a major part in the fight against the four per cent limit.

* Build an organised Left in the Labour Party and trade unions. Tony Benn has the authority in the movement to issue a call for a conference to set up a broad left capable of regenerating the movement. He should do this immediately.

* We must fight to develop the women's sections into powerful fighting forces. The fact that the trade union bureaucrats could simply use the women's NEC places as pawns in their games at the conference should outrage the women's sections.

* We must make reselection work. We must organise to drive out the careerists.

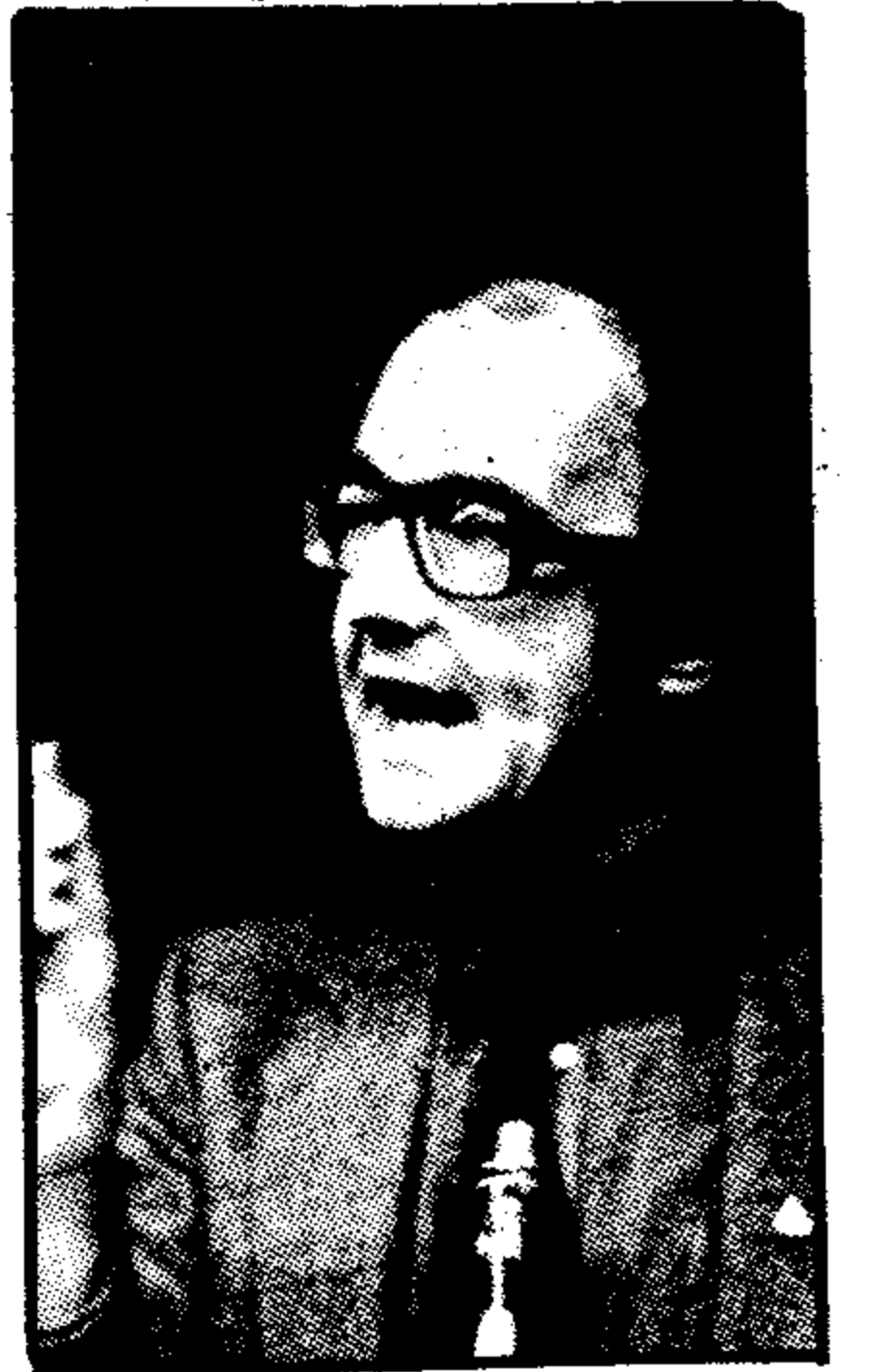
* We must organise for Labour Party democracy in the trade unions in a serious way; at the same time we must organise for trade union democracy.

* We must turn the decision of the Labour Party conference to boycott the Tories at local government level into the starting point of a big drive for Labour councils to stand up to the Tory government and rally the local movement.

The role of Socialist Organiser must be to help spearhead the organising drive, but also to argue for our political positions.



'We want to get together an organisation that can beat the right-wing'



REG RACE MP, speaking at Socialist Organiser's Labour Conference fringe meeting last Thursday launched the call for a new movement of the Labour Left.

As Margaret Beckett so eloquently and correctly said last night, the attitudes of the abstainers who are members of the Tribune Group, let alone those five people in the Tribune Group who voted for Denis Healey himself, those people, in my view, cannot be excused.

Those people handed the election to Denis Healey on a plate.

They were prepared to do that rather than to have the first left-wing leadership in the Labour Party ever.

People like Neil Kinnock have got a lot to answer for.

I say to Neil Kinnock and to the abstainers that their actions enabled the right wing to maintain a tenuous grip on power in the leadership.

And we don't want to see that ever again because we want a leadership in this party that is committed to conference policies. Denis Healey, as we all know is committed to thoroughly sabotaging Labour Party policy because he has said he is going to sabotage Labour Party policy.

Fudge

He told us that he would not enter a Labour government if that government was committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament.

He's also made it perfectly clear that he wants to fudge the issue on the Common Market, on jobs, on the Alternative Economic Strategy, in fact on the whole range of Labour Party policies.

And how on earth can people in the Tribune Group abstain when the choice is between a man like that and a left candidate like Tony Benn?

The only answer that I can come up with is that perhaps some of them are looking for jobs in the next Labour government.

The wriggling and the squirming that we have had from them is like nothing I have ever seen in my life.

The real question we now face is where we go from here.

I don't think anybody ought to feel worried or think that we've been defeated.

Growing tide

We have not had a major defeat. What we have seen in Labour Party over the past 4 or 5 years is a growing tide in the rank and file, for democracy and left wing policies. And that tide has not stopped. The decisions of the conference this week on policy matters have been even more favourable to us than at the last two Labour Party conferences.



Can you tell which ones are the Tribunites?

Although the right wing can mobilise, through Terry Duffy's block vote, support for individuals, for Denis Healey, or for right wing members of the NEC, they cannot win the arguments about policy and about the direction of the Labour Party.

They are consistently failing to do that and they can't exercise policy choices by wielding their block vote.

We should not be worried about where the Labour Party is going on policy matters because the tide is still with us.

What we should be concerned about, however, is in the new-found temerity, the new-found organisation, the new-found strength of the right in the trade unions to put together an electoral alliance to unseat people from key positions on the NEC.

Flack

Now the real question arises - how can we prevent that from happening again and how can we ensure that the ideological battles that we have been winning inside the Labour Party - and we haven't gone nearly far enough on many issues - are carried through by people we can trust, by a leadership that is committed to party policy.

Over the last few days I have had a little flack from other members of the Tribune Group who have been worried about what I have said about forming a new group in the PLP.

The first home truth is that the Tribune Group in Parliament consists of a very wide diversity of people - an even wider diversity now than before.

It ranges from people like Comrade Skinner to people like Alec Jones - I thought nobody would recognise that name - who has never as far

as I know been to a Tribune meeting and what some of them actually do is pay their £50 into Tribune every year because they know that a list of the Tribune MPs is published in Labour Weekly and Tribune at the time of the Labour Party Conference and the Trades Union Congress.

Doing things

There is of course now a group of Denis Healey supporters in the Tribune Group.

It's been the case that a small group of us within the Tribune Group have tried to push the Tribune group into doing things like organising conferences where constituency party delegates and trade unionists can come together and argue about policy and the way the left should direct its attentions.

I produced a paper for the Tribune Group on the relation between the trade unions and Tribune and on the day it was received by the Tribune members one of them leaked it to the press and a copy was sent to every member of the TUC General Council.

Therefore you can see the great difficulty of working with a diverse group of people who have very widespread political opinions.

Now I don't mind being in a group where there are a wide range of political opinions. Indeed it has been said that the Tribune Group is a cosy chat shop and that is just about what it is.

Absurd

A majority of the Tribune Group has always resented any attempt to try and make the Tribune Group reach out into the wider labour movement to contact CLPs and trade unions and I think that in the present circumstances where the

right wing are organising in the party, where the block votes are being used against us, when we need to ensure that the ideological changes and the constitutional changes that we have made survive, it is absurd to say that the Tribune Group could possibly perform the kind of role that is necessary.

I don't want to go off into the wilderness on my own - be a one-man group. I want as many people to support the kind of policies and politics that I stand for as possible from the Tribune Group. But I say this. We need a group of left people in the PLP, the Broad Lefts in the trade unions and left forces in the trade union movement and constituency party delegates, and the people who have been supporting us in the CLPD and the Rank and File Mobilising Committee, and we want to get them together in an organisation that can beat the right wing.

Embryo

What I propose that we should do - and I shall be trying to persuade my parliamentary colleagues of the logic of this - is to set up such a group.

Indeed we have had such a group in embryo very recently. We've had the Rank and File Mobilising Committee, we've had the Benn Campaign Committee, around which there have been a group of sympathetic MPs who have been using that campaign to talk to the constituency parties and trade unions.

What we now need is to formalise that as far as we can to put wheels on it, to get more people to support it and to ensure that we don't get defeated next year.

That doesn't mean to say that we go all out to

smash the Tribune Group.

A lot of Tribune MPs have said that they don't want to see the Tribune Group smashed to smithereens by a group of 35 or 40 people withdrawing from it and going to join a new socialist group. My own view is that it is not necessary to do that. I am quite content to remain a member of the Tribune Group and go along to their discussions and if we can get their support, that's fine.

But I am clear that what we do need is a group that is actually going to put wheels on our organisation and make the link that has never been made before between Parliamentary action and extra-parliamentary action.

Support

There is no purpose in the Labour Party forming a government, implementing the Alternative Economic

Strategy, and having a policy for full employment, and nationalising the banks and insurance companies, if it hasn't got a party organisation that is capable of getting the support of working people to support those policies, because the first thing that will happen is that the press, television, the employers, will unite together to try and split away our grass roots support from what the Labour government is trying to do.

It would be madness for us to believe that there is any longer a distinction between what we do inside Parliament and what we do outside it.

Action

It is quite clear that every trade unionist in this room cannot guarantee the success of his or her trade union policies on full employment by collective bargaining because collective bargaining cannot win full employment. Full employment can only be achieved by governments taking action. So any trade unionist wanting to defend his or her members' jobs has got to be involved in politics and therefore the traditional breakdown between the industrial wing of the labour movement and the political wing of the labour movement has got to be broken down by the inexorable logic of what we are doing.

Further, for the first time we face a situation where women are coming into the Labour Party and wanting equality and rights.

Organisation

Is parliamentary action alone going to win women over to the kind of positions that the women's movement wants to take?

I don't believe that parliamentary action alone, or collective bargaining alone can actually win those women who are active in the women's movement into the Labour Party. I don't believe that it will be possible unless

we build that organisation, to win women who haven't yet become part of the labour movement to the fight for socialism and equal rights.

Link up

We are talking about continuing to win the ideological battle that we all face against capitalist society and against those right wingers in our own party who want to try and stem the tide of progressive thoughts and ideas within the Labour Party.

The kind of organisation we need must bring all sections of the labour movement together and link up with those people who are outside the traditional divisions of the labour movement in the campaign for progressive policies and a leadership in the Labour Party capable of carrying out conference policy.

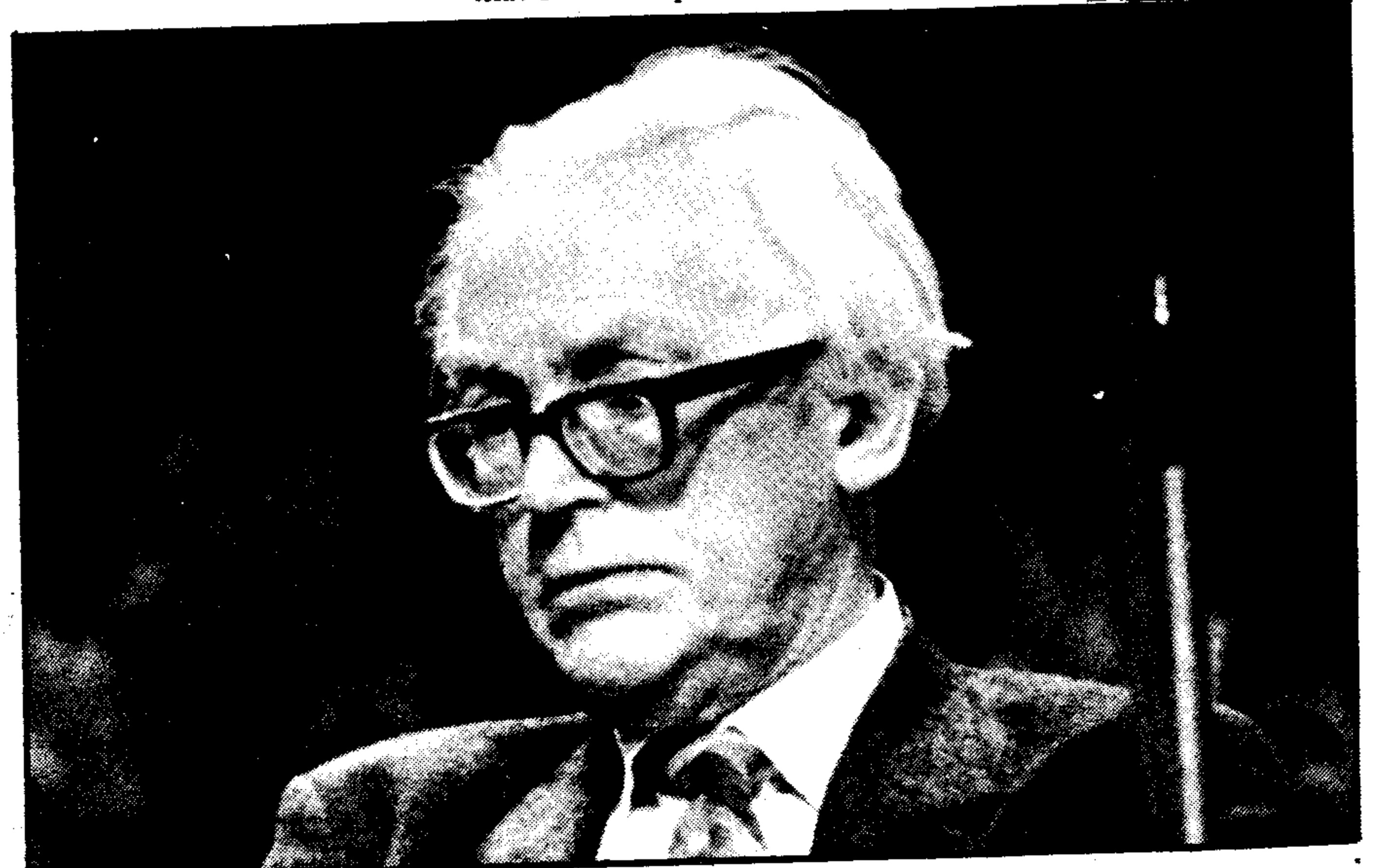
And if we do all that, then I am certain that we will continue to win in the Labour Party. The right wing majorities are not substantial - they are paper thin.

Vote split

The opportunity for us to overturn them is very substantial indeed. Gone are the days when a triumvirate of trade union leaders could destroy the constituency parties, could destroy the small progressive forces in the trade unions, by linking up their block votes together.

Those days have gone. We have ensured by our actions that the block vote in the trade unions is split. And we've got to make sure that our allies in the trade union movement like the TGWU and NUPE who come with us on most issues support us over the kind of changes that we want to see in the future.

We've got to ensure that we have discussion about our priorities now and about what that organisation is going to do. I look forward very much to hearing what you have to say about that.



Foot: for Tribune and Healey?



Film review
by
Alexis Carras

WHEN Andrzej Wajda went to the Lenin shipyards last summer with occupations and strikes sweeping across the entire coastline, one of the workers - faintly thinking that he recognised the film director - asked him whether he wasn't the creator of "Man of Marble".

Wajda replied he was, whereupon the worker, without further ado, suggested he continue the story in a new film to be called - "Man of Iron".

In a sense, the confidence of that worker that Wajda would be able to make such a film and furthermore that it would be shown in a Stalinist state is perhaps indicative of the mood of the entire Polish working class.

Enough was enough - they had come out on strike, they had occupied their factories, they had forced the government to the negotiating table and above all - they were going to win!

The story of how that determination amongst millions of workers was forged now had to be told.

Wajda's new film is dedicated to that struggle which has unfolded in Poland since 1968 - and the film is indeed worthy of the trust that was shown in the director by the shipyard worker.

Unlike "Man of Marble" which portrays the dark and scarring period of Stalinist brutality with its fake and grotesque mythology of the Stakhanovite worker - the "shock worker" expending every ounce of muscle and energy to "build the Socialist Fatherland", "Man of Iron" is a eulogy to the gravediggers of that horrendous political system.

It is a mixture of drama, on-the-spot film of the momentous events of last summer in Gdansk, and secret police film shot during the riots of December 1970.

Through Winkel, a TV reporter - a genial alcoholic blackmailed by the secret police to work for them - the stories of different individuals are pieced together - to give an overview both of the political struggle of the previous 12 years - but also a profile of Maciek Tomczyk.

The irony here is of course that Wajda consciously uses that figure - the media reporter, a representative of the universally hated government-controlled (dis-)information network - to bring out of clandestinity and obscurity the histories of a whole layer of Polish working class fighters.

Maciek Tomczyk represents the type of worker militant forged during the 1968 student disturbances, the Baltic uprisings, the

massacres of December 1970 (which led to the fall of Gomulka) and the disturbances of Radom and Ursus in 1976.

Tomczyk is "the second line man" who maintained in him that flame of hatred against the regime - the cadre that built up the embryo organisations of the Polish working class - (the KSS [Social Defence Committee] is alluded to in the film as the Free Trade Union movement).

Tomczyk is that militant who would not be broken nor bought off. As Agnieszka the woman he later marries says - "You stopped struggling for success and at once saved your integrity."

Within Tomczyk the character are compressed the personal tragedies of countless militants. Death, harassment at the hands of secret service creeps, unemployment, imprisonment, detention in psychiatric hospitals - these were the only constants in an otherwise uncertain existence.

Applause

Some of the most superb moments of the film are of the Gdansk occupation itself - as the camera weaves its way in and out of the massive crowds around the Lenin shipyards.

We witness interviews with housewives, old women outside, denouncing the bureaucracy - their privileges, their well-fed stomachs, with workers demanding new trade unions - with "new people elected by the workers to negotiate."

And we see the negotiations - Lech Walesa talking with Jagielski - Solidarnosc radical Gwiadza warning the Prime Minister that "We don't want a country coerced into unity by the police truncheons."

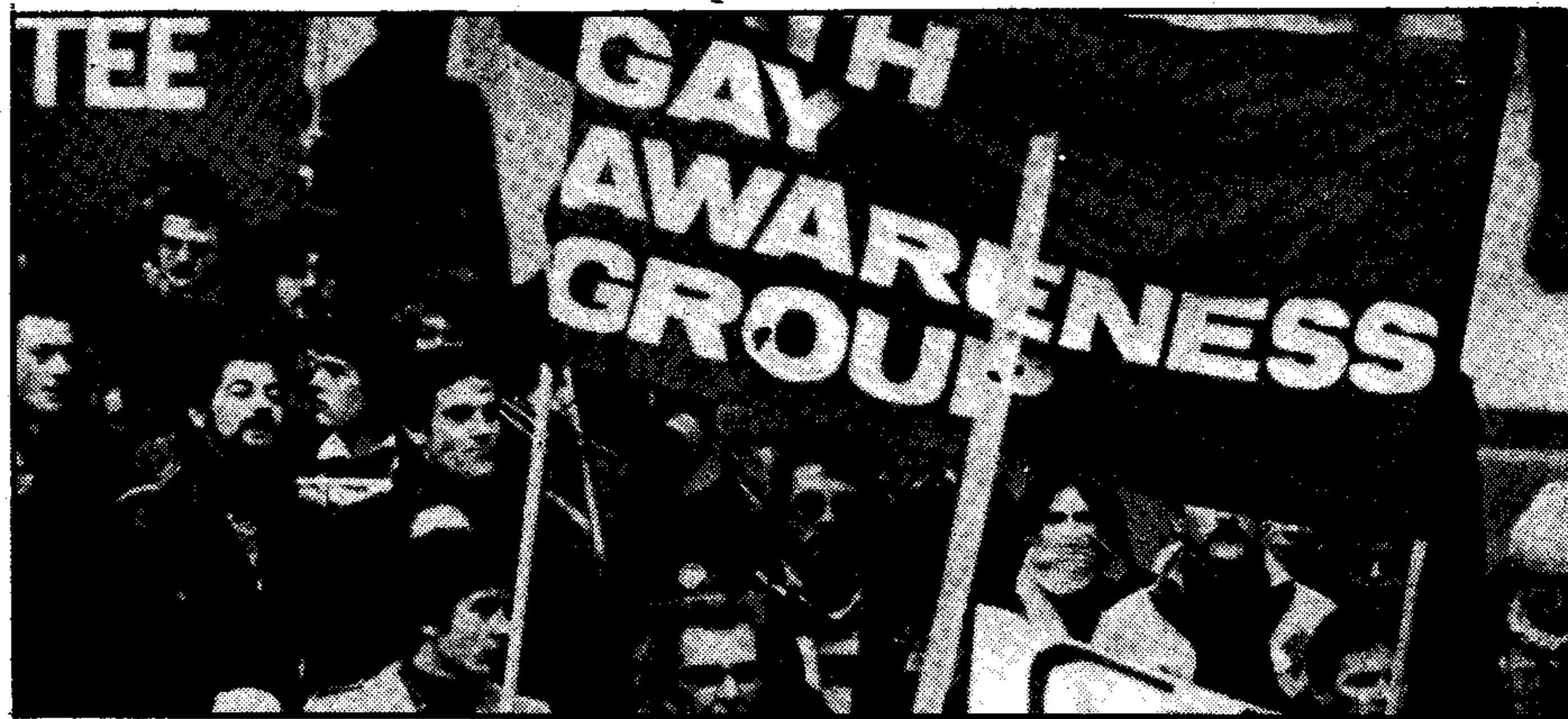
And we see the final historic moment when the Gdansk Agreement is signed in front of thousands of workers with Jagielski - in a desperate move to preserve some of the bureaucracy's tattered clothing - hollowly declaring: "There are neither winners nor losers - victors or vanquished."

But the polite applause belies the fact that there are winners; the Polish workers and militants like Maciek Tomczyk whose sheer determination and dedication have led the Polish working class at last out of the long cold night of Stalinist oppression.



Gay rights as part of a socialist programme

THE Labour Campaign for Gay Rights has agreed to contribute a regular column for Socialist Organiser. This week, CHRIS BEER introduces the campaign



"WE ARE not here as a minority group asking for greater toleration. We are here as part of the labour movement demanding that gay liberation is recognised and implemented as an integral part of a socialist programme".

This is how we in the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights introduced ourselves to delegates at our fringe meeting of the Labour Party conference last week.

LCGR has existed as an internal pressure group for a number of years, but underwent a radical change at June this year. At a conference attended by 80 lesbians and gay men, we rejected the idea of just seeking equality with heterosexuals, for this is merely to argue for acceptance within a capitalist state. In itself this changed the nature of the campaign, for we no longer aim primarily to influence kindly MPs to put in a good word for us in 'the House'.

We are far more concerned to carry the broad struggle into CLPs, trade union branches and the dole queues, to win active support for gay liberation in a socialist context among the rank and file.

This was the message we put across to the 60 or so people who came to our meeting at the Labour Party conference. As one speaker put it, the kind of society we want to see must comprehend sexual politics.

As it is now, men hold the reins of power, and this

is as true of the labour movement as of other parts of society. Too often, workers' power is equated with a sort of macho workerism. LCGR rejects this approach.

We see a strong affinity between our aims and feminist currents in the movement - we agree for example with Christina Goodwin's letter in Socialist Organiser no.54. Sexual politics can and must correct the deformation of so-called socialism into the preserve of white heterosexual men.

How do we start to fight for these aims? The theme of Maureen Colquhoun's contribution in Brighton was the National Executive Committee's discussion document, 'The Rights of Gay Women and Men'.

Adopted

The bureaucracy in the Party did not seem keen to publicise this draft policy: our first job must be to ensure that the movement does indeed debate the document, modify it where it is inadequate, and get it adopted as a firm commitment for the next manifesto.

This year a motion from Oxford CLP calling for the

adoption by Conference of the document as policy was placed last but one on the order paper but no time was allocated for debate. Maureen of course knows well the opposition within the Party to gay rights, having had to fight to retain her seat (which she lost in the last election) when she came out as gay.

Arguments

"The hierarchy would be delighted if we lesbians and gay men would shut up and go away", she said, "but we're not going to". And as Ian Dunn, organiser of Scottish LCGR's national conference to be held in a month's time, said, "The Party bureaucracy may not support us, but the grass roots of our movement can - and they will if we take the arguments to them. More than half the unions which have specific policies on gay rights adopted them in the teeth of opposition from their national executives and officials."

"In the Party we have the NEC on our side: our job now is to work in our CLPs and union branches to get the policy through with solid grass-roots support".

We were encouraged last week by the spontaneous support given to us by people like Tony Benn (who has made a major policy statement in his foreword to NCCL's booklet 'Gay Workers: Trade Unions and the Law') and Joan Lester. But more important was the very positive response of rank and file delegates, many more of whom stopped to talk to us when we were leafletting than were able to come to the meeting.

And our own organisation is growing rapidly: in the last four months LCGR has virtually tripled its membership, and this is just the start. We will be writing about some of the issues comrades raised at Brighton in the next few weeks here in Socialist Organiser. Meanwhile here is what you can do to support the struggle for a socialist gay liberation:

Discuss

- Get a copy of 'The Rights of Gay Women and Men' from Walworth Rd and discuss it in your CLP at Branch and Constituency level and in your trade union branch.

- Get your CLP/Branch/

union branch to invite a speaker from LCGR.

- Pass the following resolution and send it to the NEC: "That this CLP (etc) welcomes the publication of the (Labour Party) NEC's discussion document 'The Rights of Gay Women and Men'. It supports its recommendations to abolish all discriminatory laws affecting lesbians and gay men. It calls:

- (a) for the NEC to send a copy of the document free of charge to all CLPs and affiliated organisations.

- (b) for the NEC to send a copy of the document free of charge to all CLPs and affiliated organisations.

- (c) for its recommendations to be included in the Manifesto of the Labour Party at the next General Election".

- Affiliate, as a CLP, to the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights. The affiliation fee is currently £2 per annum and this entitles you to one voting delegate at our AGM and any EGMs which might be called, and to our journal, Gay Socialist.

Scotland

- Comrades in Scotland - sponsor and attend our Scottish conference. Saturday 31st October, 10.30am in Queen Margaret Union, University Gardens, Glasgow. Speakers from Scottish Council of the Labour Party, NALGO and LCGR: sponsored by Socialist Organiser, STUC, LCC Scotland, Robin Cook MP and Scottish Homosexual Rights Group. £1 waged: 50p unwaged. Details from Ian Dunn, 52 Broughton St, Edinburgh 1.

More information on LCGR from: LCGR, 61a Bloom St, Manchester M1 3LY.



TRY TO imagine a sort of combination between Pigbag and the (now deceased) Gang of Four, and you will have a very vague idea of what Cabaret Voltaire sound like.

Red Mecca, their third album, which has just been released, is their best so far.

There has always been a 'radical fringe' of groups, an undercurrent that doesn't seem to fit into any convenient category. They have tried to develop something different from either the white orientated rock beat or the black orientated reggae beat which invariably all pop music is structured on.

But the big record monopolies aren't interested in these 'experimental' types of groups. They are too

much of a commercial risk. The vacuum has been filled to a large extent by the independent record labels - the best known ones being Rough Trade, Human and Factory. Each label has, in time, come to be associated with a certain style of music, just like everybody knows a Tamla Motown record.

Abstract

Cabaret Voltaire's music is very abstract - what I would expect a Kandinsky painting to sound like (if it could sing).

Each track starts with a basic pattern which the group builds upon.

Red Mecca - despite its name which is apparently something to do with

Sheffield, the city the group come from - isn't directly a political album in the same way as is, for example, Ghost Town by the Specials.

Politician

However, two members of Cabaret Voltaire did name the left Labour MP Denis Skinner as their favourite politician in an interview with New Musical Express.

You have to give their music time to grow on you (as with Pigbag). Everytime I play the album it sounds better. This is because Cabaret Voltaire employ about a dozen different instruments and use many special effects added in from tape recordings. This makes the music very sophisticated. Once they used to share

the same studio, called the Western Works, with the Human League, who have since achieved fame with their single 'Love Action' - a massive concession to commercialism compared with their earlier work.

Cabaret Voltaire plan to release shortly both a 7 inch and a 12 inch single. Hopefully they will gain the same recognition as the Human League without selling-out musically.

Chop

In the States the US equivalent of the Clash - the Dead Kennedys - have released an interesting EP.

During the French Revolution (the first one) Marie Antoinette said to starving peasants who couldn't afford

to eat bread - 'Let them eat cake'. Fortunately she got the chop.

Jelly Babies

Winston Churchill took up the theme a century later when during a House of Commons debate he reacted to the plight of striking South Wales miners after the defeat of the General Strike by saying 'Let them eat grass'. He should have got the chop.

A fitting title therefore, for the Dead Kennedy's EP in Reagan's America "Let them eat Jelly Babies!" which unfortunately is only available in this country on special import.

Andrew MacDonald

RED
ROCK

...it scares
the hell out
of me ...
Daily Mail

Women in struggle What kind of childcare do we want?

THE differing views of academic, socialist and feminist circles on childcare and the state were brought out in discussion at the first Research Conference of the National Child Care Campaign.

Perhaps one practical disagreement that sticks out most of all (but was not apparent until the last session of the weekend) was that the young women running the creche were not actually being paid for their services by the Co-op Union (whose college - Stanford in Loughborough the conference was held at) but were on 'work experience' and would receive only expenses.

Throughout that day, (Sunday) many had been agreeing in theory that anyone who undertakes childcare should be paid proper rates - unaware we were part of exploiting these women: or was it the Co-op exploiting us? The fees were £37.50 if you were sponsored and £28 if not. The whole issue is to be discussed at the next National Steering Meeting in Bristol on October 3.

Wide range

While the Conference was very wide-ranging in its programme, the agenda was found to be too tight and as a result the Conference only split into workshops on one occasion instead of three.

This was thought to be a shame by some of the 60 who attended the Conference.

Those attending came from a wide range of backgrounds - campaigners, academics, professionals (teachers, social workers, a nursery inspector), child minders, nursery workers, researchers, trade unionists, socialists and feminists. The workshops reflected this diversity.

There was also an international flavour to the Conference. *Hermione*

Ann McKinley reports on the NCCC Conference.

Harris, recently returned from three years in Nicaragua, gave an example of Third World childcare and its relevance for us.

The example given was Big Mother and Little Mother, a History Workshop pamphlet. In pre-capitalist societies and those where capitalism has not totally eroded those cultural values, women have a major role in agriculture while the men are absent a great deal.

The biological mother is known as the Little Mother and the Big Mother who could be a grandmother or an older aunt rears the children.

While the biological mother has no choice over her role - being released to do agricultural work - the children can choose who they can relate to. The biological mother can eventually become a Big Mother but selfishness and ownership of children is discouraged.

In pre-capitalist societies children are not regarded as different kinds of people but as a total human being which accounts for these societies and their young not suffering adolescence.

Hermione at the start of her brief paper warned against taking 'ideas' and practice from other cultures and thinking they will work here - there was and is a great misuse of anthropology.

The other 'international' discussion was from a woman from the Grenada Women's Organisation. Since the Grenadan revolution women have opened their first nursery - which is being financed through a local bar!

The role of women is being looked at differently and the government is to give three months maternity leave with pay.

The opening papers of the Conference by Sheila Rowbotham and Miriam David asserted that the 'left' had a disregard for children whereas the 'lefts' of the Owenite and Chartist days did incorporate children into the socialist movement.

The Socialist League gave free dinners to children (which the ILP took up later in government) and child care clinics were provided by socialists and feminists like Sylvia Pankhurst who turned the Gunners Arms into a clinic called the Mothers Arms.

Miriam's paper addressed itself to what kind of childcare we want and how we are to get it. Yet both questions remained unanswered at the end of the weekend

Left open

She outlined policy, research and discussion on childcare; she questioned the role of the state in provision and pointed to the problems this creates: she queried whether we should campaign for state funding; and left open questions on how to exercise control.

Where mother born

	Assessment		
	0	1	2
Britain	36%	54%	9%
Abroad	16%	53%	31%

	Assessment		
	0	1	2
Child left	7%	36%	57%
Child still with minder	64%	23%	9%

Yet the following day Linda Challis played 'devil's advocate' in her paper on whether the organisation of day care services was a conspiracy or chaos.

The two World Wars were the only two periods when the State was clear what they wanted - to free women for war work.

The way questions had been answered after the war is the reason we're in this muddle now!

Linda ended by stating that the state could not afford daycare. It had to have an organising role rather than a providing one.

Andrew Bebbington's paper on variations in local authority provision came up with very up-to-date statistics (unavailable for campaigners from official resources).

Much worse

Despite these figures the general picture is much worse. Those authorities where there was generally 'better' provision were inner city areas, where there are more one parent families.

Andrew Bebbington made no bones that childcare services were beginning to contract for the first time since 1956 and stated quite clearly that we must fight to maintain state day care or we would have nothing.

Pat Petrie from the Thomas Coran Institute presented some recent research on childminding - the prevalent form of childcare.

The numbers of child-minders have increased to match the drop in state provision since the war.

Local authorities' responsibility is only as a registering agency; any arrangement or disputes between minders and parents is a private contract.

In a recent case where a child died in the care of a minder a court ruled that the local authority had no responsibility and that it was a private arrangement.

The research carried out by Pat looked at childminding from the criteria set out by DHSS guidelines - the number of children cared for per adult, the availability of equipment, and the premises.

A high proportion of minders - 38% - were unwilling to take babies, and one-third of 66 minders in the Inner London area were unwilling to take babies/children from another culture or language.

The assessment of the conditions for childminding was broken down firstly to where the mother was born - in Britain or abroad and then graded 0-2. 0 was good, 1 average and 2 very bad.



Labour Party Women's Conference

Women fight for Labour democracy

by Rachel Lever

AFTER a long and spectacular fight to win a debate on positive discrimination for women, a fat package of measures was remitted to the NEC.

The substantive motion had confined itself to the simple proposal that the women's conference should have the right to table five motions to annual conference. And an amendment asked for a working party to look into other forms of positive discrimination that could be adopted.

But, after Monday's slaughter of the NEC, the major demand in our minds came to be that the five women's section places currently fixed up between union barons should be

elected instead by women.

This year saw the election of leading abstainer Judith Hart, lowest common denominator on the NEC with the highest vote (6.3 million); Betty Boothroyd, Shirley Summerhill and Gwyneth Dunwoody, ultra right-wingers who are to women's rights what Cyril Smith is to hang-gliding.

In no way does the present women's section represent women. It is neither elected by women nor accountable to them, but is subject instead to the threats and pressures of Duffy, Chapple and Bassnett.

Every other section of the NEC is elected to represent a section of the party. Thus the LPYS elect one place, the clubs and societ-

ies elect one, the trade unions have 12 and the CLPs have seven.

The women's section is elected by conference as a whole, that is, effectively by the trade union block vote. It might make some sense if it were elected by women trade unionists and women in the CLPs. But how would that be arranged?

The simple answer is that the Women's Conference already exists, bringing together delegates from women's sections and councils, CLPs, and trade unions (with individual, not block votes).

Women's Fightback and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy are campaigning for the five women's places to be elected from the women's conference.

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

Trade union conference call

THE small NALGO women's caucus held as one of the events of the National Festival for Women's Rights in May produced astounding results.

A fringe meeting was planned for NALGO conference the following month; regular meetings of women in NALGO have taken place in London; and on November 14 there is to be a nationwide conference for women in that union in Leeds.

Other trade union caucuses at the Festival, competing with a mass of other workshops and entertainments, were too small to get anything off the ground. But we believe the NALGO experience can be repeated for many other unions, given a day-conference devoted to the task.

At our AGM in August, Women's Fightback determined to make a big push to help establish nationwide women's caucuses in a number of trade unions.

Day school

We also decided to run a day-school on New Technology, its effects on women, and what if anything the relevant unions are doing about it.

The two events will take place on a weekend early in February.

The main conference day will probably spend some time in subject-centred workshops (e.g. fight-

ing sexism, fighting for jobs, against cuts etc), and the bulk of the time in separate union workshops laying plans for future work to build up fighting links between women, to make our mark at union conferences, and to support the struggles of women for equal rights in the unions.

Landmark

We aim to make this a very big, landmark conference, drawing together enough women in major unions to form the basic framework for ongoing work. To do this will require the active work of all our readers and supporters in their own unions - to publicise the confer-

ence and prepare for it; to get sponsorships and delegations; to bring along all the women they have already been working with in their own union; and to be involved in the planning and preparation of the conference itself.

To get the ball rolling, there will be a first planning meeting, open to all readers and supporters, on Wed. October 14 at 7 pm at County Hall, near Waterloo. (Ask at the desk for room number).

If you can't make it to the meeting but want to know more about the conference or help to work for it, take leaflets, etc., write in to 41 Ellington Street, London N7, and we'll contact you as soon as we know more details.



Nursery places per 1,000

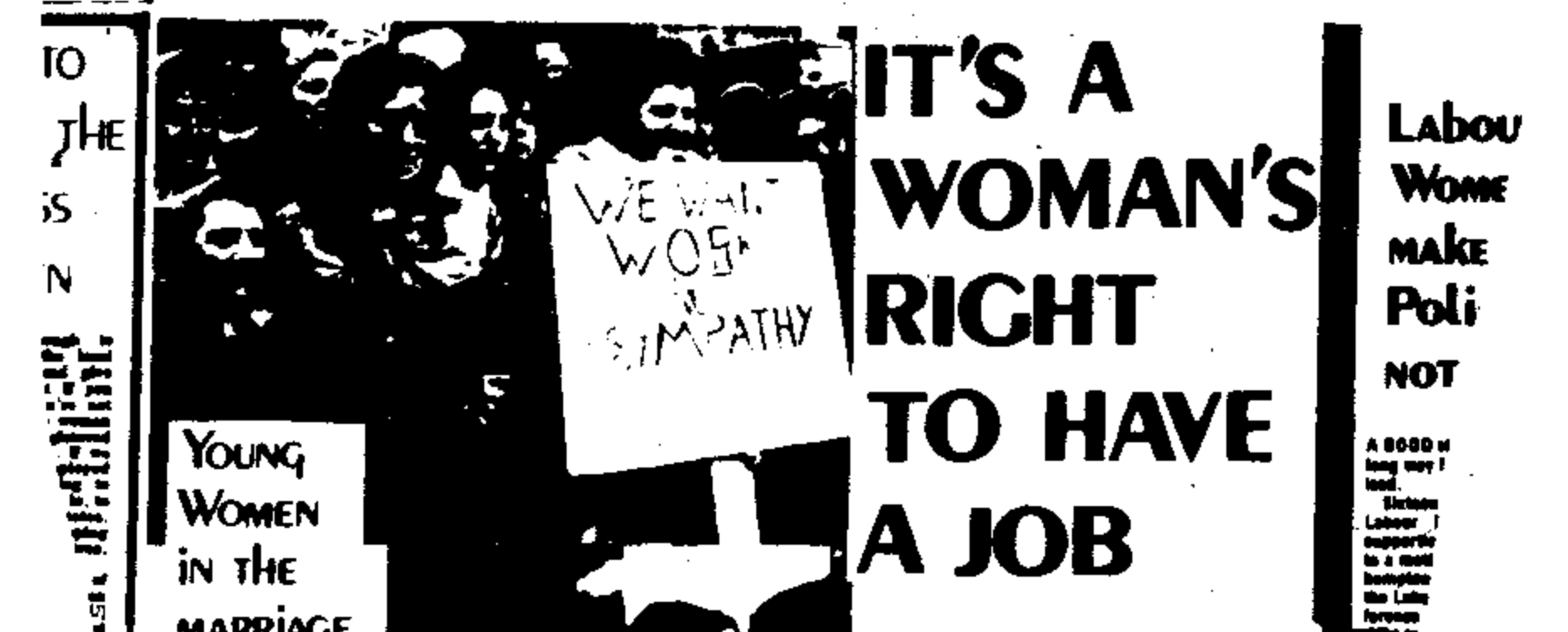
	1979	1980	1981
Day nurseries	9.93	10.13	10.18
Nursery schools*/nursery classes*	72.2	75.9	77.3

(*Just over 1/4 are full time)

RATIOS

	1979	1980
Day Nursery (care)	5.10	5.13 to 1 adult
Nursery school and classes (education)	22.4	22.0 to 1 adult

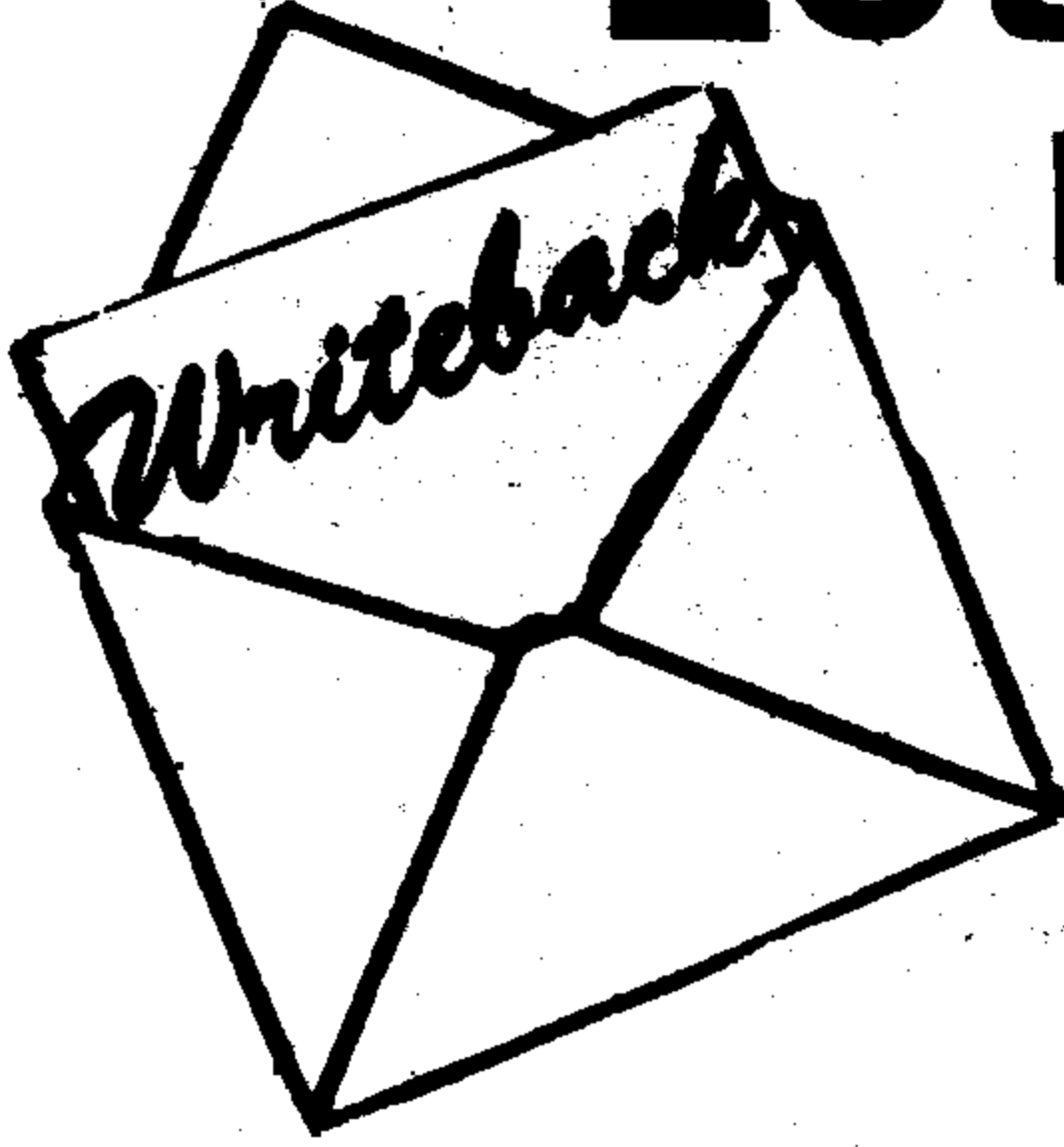
WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK



The new Women's Fightback 10p plus postage from 41 Ellington St, London N7.

Labour Women Make Politics Not

Letters



Writeback to
Socialist Organiser
28 Middle Lane
London N8

Thatcher, Mitterrand join forces against USSR

Dual power in Poland



OVER the last few weeks, the coverage of Solidarnosc has been good. But there are a number of points that I feel haven't been raised.

The first point of these is the nature of Solidarnosc. It is assumed that Solidarnosc is a trade union in the same categories as either British trade unions or French trade union confederations like the CGT. I would like to dispute this.

I think that if Solidarnosc is to be compared with any "union" then the comparisons should be with the IWW or the Spanish CNT. It is of course difficult to compare accurately the revolutionary anarcho-syndicalist unions with Solidarnosc but I think that important parallels can be drawn.

Firstly, it is a class movement rather than a sectional union. It is concerned with running society rather than reforming certain aspects such as wages.

Solidarnosc, even under Walesa's leadership, is involved in dual power relationships with management of factories and with the Stalinist bureaucracy, even to the extent of organising the distribution of material to factories so that production can carry on.

Why did Solidarnosc arise in its existing form rather than as workers' councils which Trotskyists have mistakenly looked for as signs of developing organs of a workers' state? This is clearly explained by the lessons that the Polish working class learnt after 1956 when the workers' councils were incorporated into the official Stalinist state.

It was highly unlikely that workers' councils would re-emerge. Instead the working class would create a new form of organisation - and Solidarnosc is that.

How should Trotskyists relate to Solidarnosc? Socialist Organiser focusses on the struggle between the centre around Walesa and the left around Andrzej Gwiazda, and over estimates the influence of the Catholic church (whose role as a focus against oppression in Poland is similar to that in Ireland).

But the question that Trotskyists should be raising is not whether Walesa is going far enough, but that Solidarnosc should actually start to replace the Stalinist state as the force in Poland. The struggle of "All power to Solidarnosc" should be the slogan of the Trotskyist wing of Solidarnosc, aware that the leadership at the moment is unwilling to take power.

On such a basis the possibility of winning the Polish working class to international socialism is possible. Comradely greetings,
CHARLIE SARELL
Leicester

THE Socialist Organiser editorial of 24 September entitled "Organise for a General Strike" was a serious political error and only serves to continue the confusion about this demand which has plagued the revolutionary left for too long.

Your editorial put forward the following strategy:

1. There should be united strikes against the Tories' 4% limit. In this way the strong unions will help the weak.
2. Strikes against the 4% limit must be generalised with the TUC calling a general strike.
3. Such a general strike will be led by local action committees who will develop the strike so that it a) breaks the 4% limit; b) wins the rising scale of wages; c) brings down the Tories; d) has the potential of raising a workers' government.

In order to show the danger of such a strategy in the present period we must first realise precisely what a general strike is.

There is a world of difference between a national strike or one day stoppage and an indefinite general strike.

The reality of a general strike is that even if it is entered into for limited demands (e.g. break the 4%) it creates a position of dual power between the working class and ruling class. It would (as your

editorial points out) pose the question of state power. The result of a situation of dual power is either the working class replaces capitalism or the working class retreats, which would certainly result in years of demoralisation and confusion - like the period after the 1926 General Strike.

Reaction

In fact a failure to move forward from a general strike to seizing power could well lead to the triumph of reaction like in Italy in the 1920s.

Clearly then a general strike is the ultimate weapon of the working class this side of taking power. The demand should not be lightly used and is only relevant in a pre-revolutionary situation when the working class is everywhere challenging the authority of capitalism. It is meaningful to agitate for a general strike in a period of growing dual power, in any other situation it is irrelevant.

The first duty of revolutionary socialists is to look the facts in the face. The reality of the present situation is that the working class movement began to suffer from considerable confusion and demoralisation under the Callaghan government. This developed into a major defeat with the election of Thatcher. Now on the question of jobs and prices the working class is in retreat. Struggles against unemployment have been in isolated factories with the exception of the miners. The TUC has been able to defuse the enthusiasm built up during the People's March and sidetrack it into vague ideas of unemployment centres.

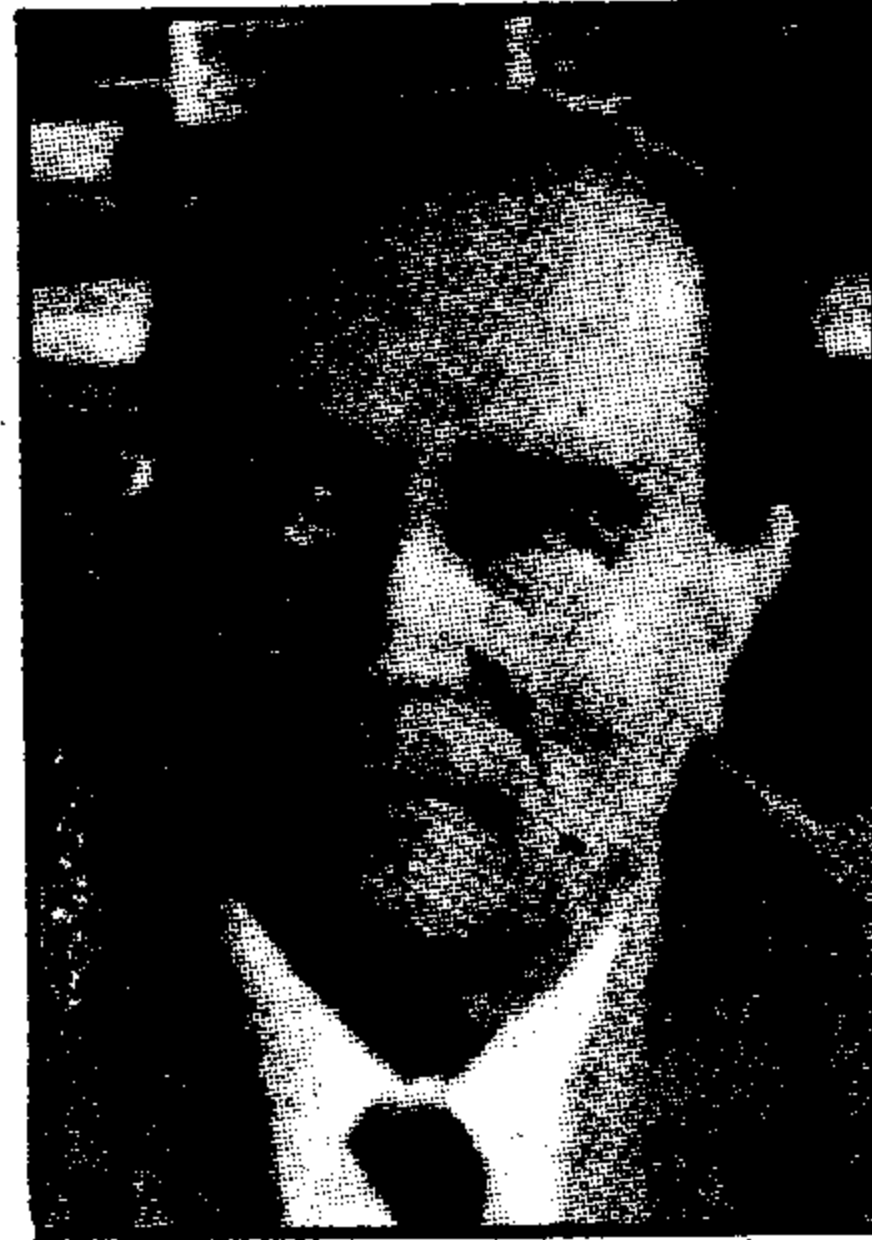
Rightward lurch

There is no nationally co-ordinated fight against the cuts, and now even trade union membership is declining. The period is characterised by the inability of the rank and file to take struggles beyond the confines of their leaders. This was true in the civil servants dispute and steel strike. The latter failed to develop into a fight to retain jobs.

THERE HAS been a singular lack of comment in the British left wing press on the subject of the recent Thatcher-Mitterrand talks, and the degree of unanimity expressed by both participants. This wide area of agreement covered not only economic questions such as the projected Channel Tunnel and discussions on fishing rights but extended to the domain of foreign policy.

It was in fact on that issue that their agreement was most striking.

Yet it should hardly be surprising considering the anti-Sovietism which is the hallmark of both Mitter-



and's and Thatcher's foreign policies. While maintaining the traditional French

governmental stance of a relative independence from American State Department positions, as compared to the slavish bootlicking of successive British governments, Mitterrand has shown a greater willingness than previous French Presidents to come under the American nuclear umbrella, as in the deployment of Cruise missiles.

This relative independence allows the Mitterrand regime a greater leeway for opportunist manoeuvres than is afforded to other European regimes, as is exemplified by the stance adopted along with Mexico towards the dictatorship in El Salvador.

Hopefully few on the left would be so naive as to accept French ploys in that area as a "logical and positive" response to the repressive policies of the El Salvadorean regime, a description penned by the Secretary of the Chile Solidarity Campaign in a recent issue of Socialist Challenge.

Sophisticated

This common response of Mitterrand and Thatcher towards the Soviet Union has distinctive characteristics in each case. Mitterrand's anti-Sovietism is arguably more sophisticated in that it is within the framework of giving the EEC a specific foreign policy independent of the two major superpowers in terms of making its own initiatives on the world arena.

Thatcher's response rises little higher than the conditioned reflex of a blue rinse Tory backbencher.

Yet, whatever their distinctive features, it is this common hostility to the Soviet Union that draws them together.

This development should also be set within the context of the moves presently proceeding within the EEC on the questions of "security" and defence. The search for common policies and initiatives in these areas has moved forward recently with a paper presented by the German Foreign Minister Genscher, and discussions which are reported to have taken place "in a stately home in Hertfordshire".

Genscher strongly believes that agreement on

these issues is essential to hold the Market together. Recessionary pressures can only mean increased in-fighting threatening the existence of the EEC farm policy and budget.

A greater degree of unanimity on the political issues, defence and "security" become the cement that holds the rotten edifice together.

Whilst a good deal has been written in the bourgeois press about the essential elements of a common foreign policy (e.g. East-West relations, the Middle East, etc.) little has been revealed on what is meant by "security" policies, a field not specifically covered by the Treaty of Rome. That this is now moving further up the agenda suggests not just more cooperation in suppressing urban "terrorism" but also a growing awareness of the necessity to cope with working class unrest.

As these political aspects of the EEC become prioritised, it is all the more surprising to find John O'Mahoney in a recent issue of Socialist Organiser (in a review of Tony Benn's article "Britain as a Colony") referring to EEC membership as a "formal relationship". This is then countered to the "real" question which is the economic crisis of capitalism, the determinant of the course of the class struggle in Britain irrespective of membership of the EEC.

This is economic reductionism with a vengeance.

To highlight the growing political role of the Market is not to depict it as a "conspiracy" but is to draw attention to the very real political handcuffs being shaped for the European working class.

The possibilities now emerging of the election of a Papandreou-led left wing government in Greece on an anti-EEC platform, strengthens those forces in Britain campaigning on a socialist programme for British withdrawal and the break-up of the EEC, not as the prelude to a retreat to a "siege economy" mentality but as the essential precondition for a true internationalism.

IAN McCALMAN

We're not ready for a General Strike

Added to this sad story is now the rightward lurch of the leadership of the Labour Party and some major trade unions. Revolutionary policies have gained no serious hold over the mass of workers.

Comrades, this is hardly the situation to be demanding a general strike.

The most worrying thing about your editorial was the call for the TUC to call a general strike. For weeks Socialist Organiser has rightly been slamming the TUC for its inability to lead any kind of fight. To now wish to place the fate of the labour movement in their hands by calling on them to start what would be a struggle for power must confuse many of your readers.

I am all for calling upon those in a position of leadership to lead so that their shortcomings can be exposed through the experience of struggle, but let us not attempt to do that in such a dangerous manner.

Fixed ideas

Perhaps you believe that once a general strike is underway the working class will in the course of events be won to a revolutionary position. Unfortunately history has shown this does not happen.

The working class rarely, if ever, changes horses in mid race. They go into battle with a fixed set of ideas, any rethinking is done after the fight. To ask workers to go into a general strike with all its implications, when there is no revolutionary party, nor sight of one, is irresponsible.

As there is no revolutionary leadership any general strike would have to be led by the present reformist leadership. Defeat would be certain, unless you seriously believe that a revolutionary party would be born during the strike.

For a successful general strike the working class must be capable of creating soviets, and have realised the necessity of seizing power. This is not the case at the moment.

The demand is relevant only at a specific stage in the class struggle. We must learn not to use the demand inde-

pendent of the political situation. One organisation who were for ever guilty of such an offence was the Workers Revolutionary Party.

Their ritualistic demand for a general strike (usually every May Day!) could only result in workers seeing the demand as irrelevant or mistaking its fundamental revolutionary character. The demand is only worth raising in a period when workers will fight for it.

Ritualistic

Please do not misunderstand what I am saying. I am in favour of strikes against the 4% and hopefully such strikes would spread. But I hope that I have explained why a general strike is an entirely different kind of strike and a non-demand at present.

Your editorial debased the general strike demand and was a collapse into syndicalist politics.

Yours fraternally,
V. O'BRIEN

YS reply

AS AN ex-member of the Militant Tendency I would like to put my ex-comrade David Herincx right on a few things.

The fact is that Ware and Hertford Class Fighter supporters were told that they could not sell their paper on YS activities because it "did not represent the majority of the YS opinion". True, this was later retracted and an apology given - nevertheless, it was said.

Comrade Herincx has never attended our YS (Welwyn and Hatfield). Yet he is not averse to telling outright lies about us. Militant speakers have never been banned. Also sales of the Militant paper have never been banned while there have been any Class Fighter supporters in Welwyn and Hatfield YS.

True, over two years ago Welwyn and Hatfield YS voted not to allow copies of Militant to be sold on one day of action, but I was a Militant supporter at that time and it was after a long feud between us of Militant and the rest of the YS.

There were no Class Fighter supporters in Welwyn at the time.

We have made objections about Militant supporters coming over to disrupt our YS, but we would welcome any Militant supporter coming to our YS to constructively argue Militant's opinions.

SO has proved their democratic principles, let's see Militant prove theirs.

CHRIS BRIND,
Chairperson,
Welwyn and Hatfield YS

It didn't come off

CAROL Hobbs' report from Laurence Scotts last week 'set the scene' by describing Openshaw as 'Coronation Street country'.

Obviously she was trying to give some colour to the report - but I think it didn't come off. Instead, it came across like a condescending outsider's view of working class Manchester as a quaint place, like something seen on television. Some LSE workers, I know, found it irritating.

Let's try to make strike reports interesting, but take more care.

FRAN BRODIE



Discussion

COMMON MARKET - A WORKERS' ANSWER

THE WORKERS of Western Europe face as opponent a capitalist class united in the EEC. We face the same bureaucratic EEC apparatus, operating to integrate and homogenise rules, laws and national government policies affecting the workers of ten countries.

Go-it-alone national solutions, such as that which the majority of the British Left proposes, are simply not adequate to the situation: little-Britain socialism is not a possibility.

There is only one alternative to choosing to try to perpetuate the national division of the working class, which is increasingly absurd (and reactionary) in face of the evolution of capitalism in the EEC and the common front of the EEC capitalist states. That alternative is unity of the European workers.

We must appeal to the workers of Europe, and unite with them to hammer out a common workers' programme for a Socialist Europe and for common action in the class struggle now.

The basic ideas which express this belief are these, spelled out for brevity (and, I hope, clarity) in the form of 'yes' and 'no' statements.

NO to the bosses' Market: NO to bosses' Britain. YES to the Socialist United States of Europe.

NO to the reactionary utopia of an independent Britain. NO to the delusion that there is or can ever be a purely British solution to the historic decline of British capitalism.

YES to a workers' government to replace Thatcher and begin to reconstruct society in the interests and according to the needs of the workers — a government which will cut through the vested interests of the British ruling class and, as necessary, defy and repudiate the rules, dictates and institutional and constitutional constraints of the IMF and the EEC, etc. This workers' government should appeal to the workers of Europe over the heads of their rulers for a common programme and common action against the capitalist class in the entire EEC.

YES to the economic and social reconstruction of Britain as part of the Socialist United States of Europe.

NO to all variants of — unconditionally reactionary — British nationalism, insularity, and isolationism; and war on their malignant manifestations in society and especially in the labour movement — on chauvinism, xenophobia, and racism.

NO to import controls — the core of the Left's 'alternative' to the EEC — and to similar reformist ideas which point away from the struggle for socialism, because they necessarily

point away from international working-class unity. These policies are retrogressive and reactionary even within the post-war development of capitalism. YES to the economic and social reconstruction of Europe in the interests of the working class — by way of building on the post-war integration of the West European economy, seizing control of it rather than

seeking to unscramble it. It is neither possible nor desirable to reverse the inadequate steps already taken by the capitalists towards realising one of the prerequisites of socialism — the integration of the European economy. NO to the suicidal British-nationalist policy of pitting worker against worker by seeking an advantage for one section of the European

working class (via import controls) that can only be had at the expense of another.

It is nationalism that blinds the British labour movement to the fact that in socialist working-class terms, pitting Welsh against Ruhr steelworkers (for example) is not seriously different from setting Yorkshire steelworkers to compete with Welsh. In

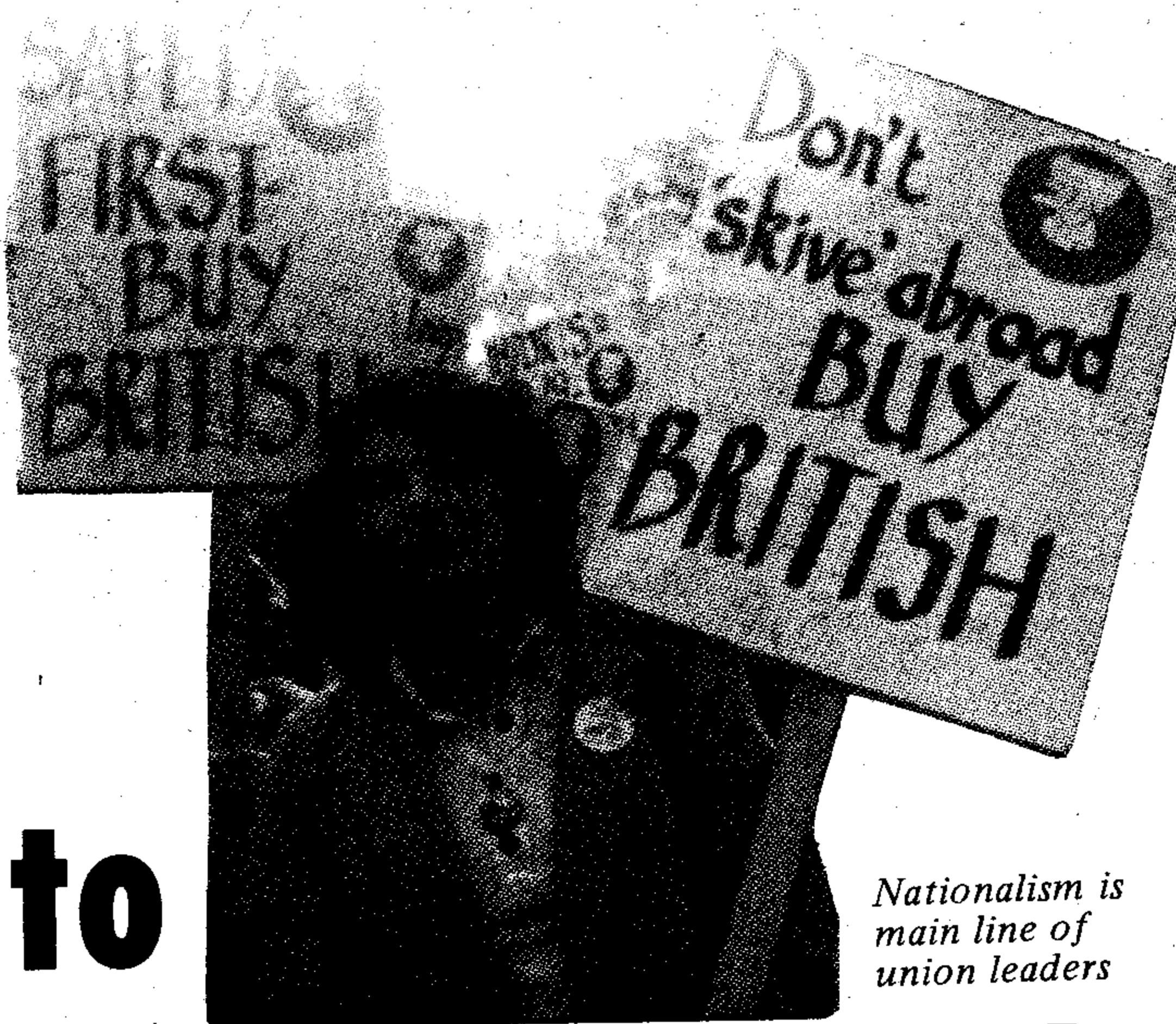
Europe as inside Britain, any advantage thus gained — in living standards or jobs — would be paid for ruinously by a massive destruction of class solidarity without which no overall working-class political action can emerge.

The central concern of socialists is to promote and develop that class solidarity and class identity within and across state bound-



'Our united Europe can only be a united workers' movement to fight the bosses' EEC and national governments'

CONCLUDING his discussion article on Tony Benn's analysis of 'Britain as a Colony', JOHN O'MAHONY suggests a political platform of ideas and slogans to allow the British labour movement to fight for a socialist alternative both to EEC capitalism and to British capitalism.



Nationalism is main line of union leaders

An action programme

AN ACTION programme for the workers of Europe will have to include the following points:

- Internationally-coordinated action to defend jobs through occupations.
- A Europe-wide campaign to eradicate unemployment by winning work-sharing at full pay.
- A Europe-wide workers' movement to beat inflation by the sliding scale of wages. Unite the European labour movement to fight for a price index calculated by workers' organisations as the basis for clauses in all wage agreements to provide automatic monthly rises in line with the true cost of living for the working class.
- Defend all jobs. Open the books of those firms that threaten closure or redundancies, along with those of their suppliers, bankers, linked companies, and branches throughout capitalist Europe.
- Nationalisation without compensation under workers' management, and the beginning of planning and integration in our interest.
- For the trade unions in cars, steel and other industries to prepare for a European workers' government by working out their plans to develop and reorganise their industries throughout Europe. Build and develop international combine committees.
- Immediately, our united Europe can only be a united European workers' movement to fight both the bosses' EEC and the bosses' national governments.

The West European labour movement must develop links with Solidarnosc, the pioneer labour movement of the Stalinist states. At present no real labour movements exist in the Stalinist states apart from

Poland: they were destroyed by the ruling bureaucrats who inhabit their shells.

The West European labour movement should use its strength to support the call from Solidarnosc's recent congress for the creation of real labour movements in the Stalinist states.

The first act of fraternal and sororal solidarity must be to break off all collaboration with the police-state 'trade unions' of the Stalinist states, and to express support for the real — savagely persecuted — trade unionists in the Stalinist states: with, for example, the USSR's 'psychiatric' political prisoner Vladimir Klebanov.

Unity

That is the way to prefigure the unity of all Europe, east and west, which will only be achieved by overthrowing both capitalism and totalitarian bureaucratic rule.

Against the existing institutions of the bosses' EEC, which bring the general irrationalities of capitalism to the level of murderous absurdities, bureaucratically administered (for example, food mountains amidst poverty), we must fight for the creation of Europe-wide democracy and public accountability, at least such as exists in the component parts of the EEC. Equal political rights for all workers in the EEC: full voting rights for immigrant workers.

For a labour movement campaign to expel all US bases and remove all nuclear weapons from Western Europe.

For a workers' government in Europe and the Socialist United States of Europe.

aries. We must oppose and fight everything in the labour movement that undercuts it, repudiates it, or works against it.

Delusory

The 'option' of the restoration of Britain's 'independence' is delusory. It necessarily points the British labour movement away from facing up to the fact that no working-class policy today can be a solution to Britain's problems if it does not pose the working class reorganisation of the European economy (at least), and build European working-class unity to achieve it.

YES to the maximum solidarity and organic political

and industrial integration and coordination of the European labour movement, which means mainly collaboration and integration of the labour movement of the EEC (since, outside of Solidarnosc, there is no labour movement in Eastern Europe). YES to labour movement unity in Europe, as the prefiguration of the Socialist United States of Europe and the replacement for the EEC. For the elaboration of a common programme of action by the European labour movement — initially by its left wing — for a European workers' government.

Industrial News

The BL strike that doesn't exist!

by Bill Peters



October
S M T W T F S
1 2 3
4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11 12 13 14 15 16 17
18 19 20 21 22 23 24
25 26 27 28 29 30 31

WHAT'S ON

"BUILD A FIGHTING LEFT!"
Socialist Organiser Public Meeting
Tuesday October 20 at 7.30 pm
Speakers
Alan Thornett
(TGWU Deputy Convenor, BL Cowley Assembly Plant in a personal capacity)
Rachel Lever
(Secretary, Women's Fight-back Campaign)
Dr Johnson House
Colmore Circus, BIRMINGHAM

LABOUR AND THE FIGHT FOR JOBS
Thursday 22 October 7.30 pm North Islington Library, Manor Gardens, off Holloway Road
Speakers include Laurence Scotts (invited) Alan Thornett Mick Woods (St Mary's Hospital Occupation Committee) Maureen Leigh, Islington North CLP
Sponsored by Socialist Organiser and local labour movement bodies

NATIONAL UNEMPLOYED WORKERS MOVEMENT
National Conference 31 October-1 November Goldsmith College Student Union
New Cross, London
Full details available from Leicester U.W.U., c/o 52, Wyville Row, Leicester
Tel: 0533-898324

Anti-Apartheid Movement
Conference: Sunday November 1, 10 to 5.30 at Westminster Cathedral Conference Centre, Morpeth Terrace, SW1.
Open to all AAM members: details, AAM, 89 Charlotte St, W1.

DEMONSTRATION
"Stop the deportation of Nasreen Akhtar"
Saturday 17 October Assemble 2 pm at Church Stile, behind Town Hall
Rochdale

Scrap the Bomb!
CND demonstration, London, October 24



LAMBETH SOCIALIST ORGANISER
Educational Programme
October 25: Labour Theory of Value
November 29: State and Revolution.
December 20: The Russian Revolution
January 31: Stalinism.
February 28: The Origins of the Labour Party.
All meetings start at 7.00 pm. For further details phone 609 3071.

LAST December 12 workers and shop stewards were sacked by Michael Edwardes at the Longbridge plant. The Metro was brought to a standstill in their defence and every national newspaper made it headlines for weeks.

The TV screamed that militant workers were once again about to bring BL to its knees.

The media was openly used to undermine those victimised, strengthen Edwardes and hopefully, break the strike.

Today in Cowley, the production lines of the two new models, the Honda

Acclaim and the Morris Ambassador have been at a standstill for well over a week with hardly a mention in the press or on the TV networks.

After a week on strike a few paragraphs have begun to appear tucked away somewhere inside the papers, just about registering that the strike is taking place.

Why is this? The strike is actually more damaging to BL than last year's Metro strike. The Honda Acclaim is a major new model and it involves the Ambassador as well.

The answer is that the Acclaim launch is actually

this week. This causes acute embarrassment to BL. How do you launch a new car when the production line is at a standstill?

Fleet orders, which they hope will come with the publicity surrounding the launch are difficult to obtain if the cars aren't being produced.

Customers are unlikely to get enthusiastic about a car which is impossible to obtain.

It is true that 6,500 Acclaims have already been produced, but that only amounts to a handful in the hands of its distributors.

Now, for a change, BL

doesn't want publicity for this strike. They want the launch to go ahead and potential customers to be unaware that the production lines are at a standstill and the plant surrounded by pickets.

So Britain's 'free press' who normally produce BL headlines as a reflex action goes silent.

The strings have been pulled, the briefings have taken place and BL policy is effective and uniform throughout all sections of the media.

Unfortunately for BL, influence at this time in the opinion-forming media is not

enough to resolve their problems.

The plant is still at a standstill, it is still ringed by pickets and they still can't

supply their customers even if they mislead them into placing orders.

Jobs face axe

by Jim Denham

AT THE end of March 1982 Allegro production at BL Longbridge will be halted. This will mean the closure of the CAB 2 area and the end of 'E' series engine production in the Cofton Hackett area.

BL say that the 1500 jobs affected will be cut through voluntary redundancy and 'natural wastage'. Many workers at Longbridge fear that BL's real plan is to close down all engine and transmission production at the plant and bring in imported units from VW and Honda.

What is certain is that the so-called "slimming-down" operation will continue throughout the company until the unions take a firm stand and fight for a policy of work-sharing on full pay to defend jobs.

BL workers are increasingly willing to fight in defence of jobs as unemployment rises, and a successful fight on the wages issue this year would give workers the strength and confidence to turn the tide.

Mobilise to win at Glencroft

by Stan Crooke

IT IS now over two months since the workers at Glencroft Knitwear were sacked for joining a union.

The labour movement should have been able to win the dispute long ago.

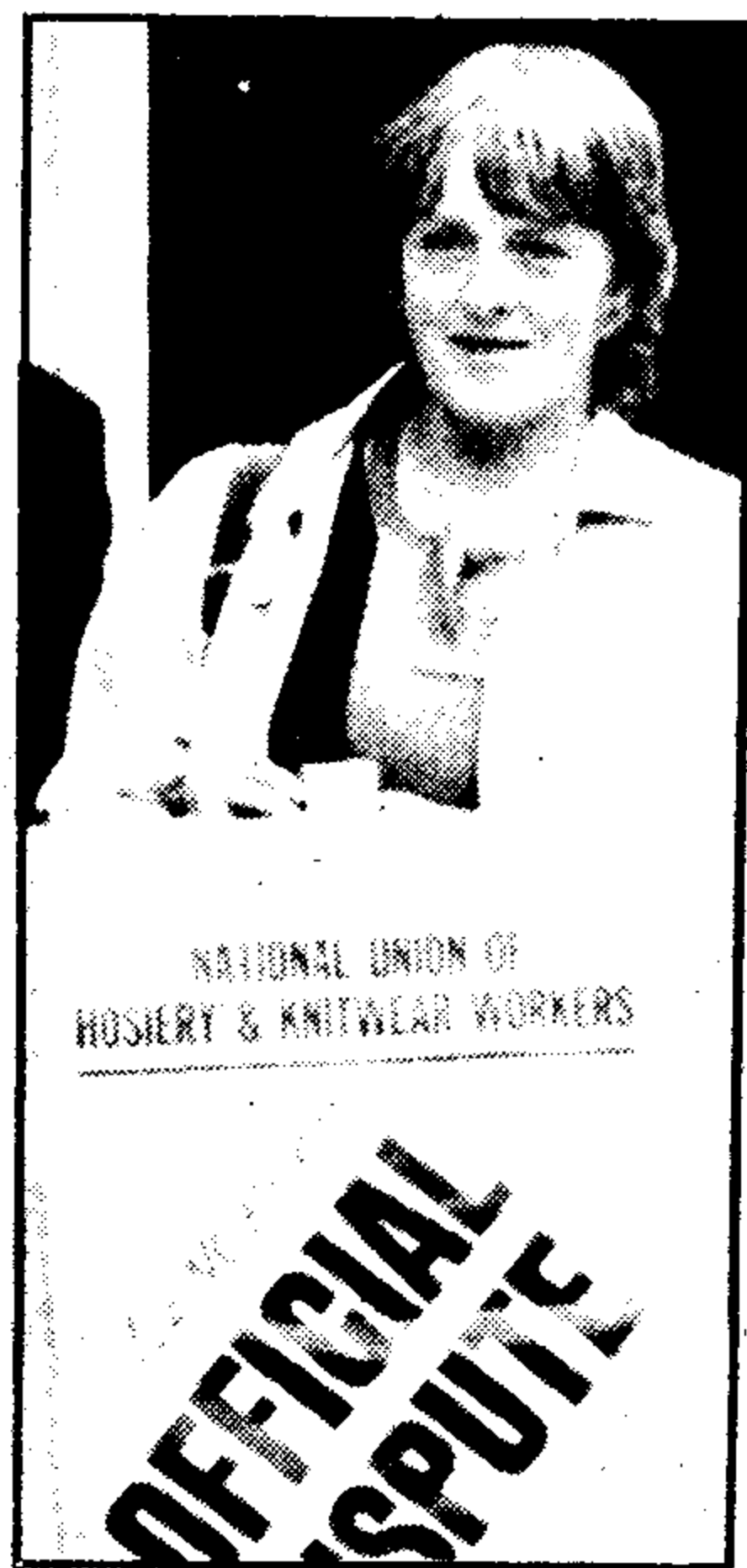
In fact there is still no end in sight to the present stalemate.

Newman, the firm's owner, seems to have been maintaining normal levels of production.

Scab drivers

Although pickets have stopped some supplies from going in Newman's nephew and scab lorry drivers have ensured a continuous supply of raw materials for the firm.

The Glasgow labour movement has not been mobilised into supporting the picket lines. The Right to Work Campaign has called "mass pickets" each Tuesday



which has attracted 20-30 extra pickets, but this is only

a drop in the ocean compared to what could be mobilised if the Trades Council and Labour Party Scottish Council were to take the lead in calling on workers to join the picket lines.

Organised blacking of Glencroft products at the airport still hangs in the air. One of the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers (NUHKW) full time officials told Socialist Organiser:

Keep quiet

"Blacking at the airport has been stepped up. You can draw your own conclusions on what I mean by that."

Presumably he means that blacking is being organised but the union wants to keep quiet about it since it would contravene the Tories'

recent anti-union legislation. But if the blacking is carried out, how do you keep quiet about it then?

Reserve army

Newman has again been able to advertise for workers. A month ago the West of Scotland branch of SOGAT passed a motion blacking all adverts for Newman. Despite this, the Glasgow Evening Times, on two separate days last week, contained adverts for applications to work at the firm.

A number of applications were made on the following days but none were taken on. Newman told them that there were no vacancies at the moment and took their names and addresses for future reference.

So apart from the scabs now keeping production

Where we stand

* Organise the left to beat back the Tories' attacks! No to attacks on union rights; defend the picket-line; no state interference in our unions! No to any wage curbs. Labour must support all struggles for better living standards and conditions.

* Wage rises should at the very least keep up with price increases. For a price index calculated by working class organisations, as the basis for clauses in all wage agreements to provide automatic monthly rises in line with the true cost of living for the working class. The same inflation-proofing should apply to state benefits, grants and pensions.

* Fight for improvements in the social services, and against cuts. Protection for those services against inflation by automatic inflation-proofing of expenditure. For occupations and supporting strike action to defend jobs and services.

* End unemployment. Cut hours, not jobs. Fight for a 35 hour week and an end to overtime. Demand work-sharing without loss of pay. Organise the unemployed - campaign for a programme of useful public works to create new jobs for the unemployed.

* Defend all jobs! Open the books of those firms that threaten closure or redundancies, along with those of their suppliers and bankers, to elected trade union committees. For occupation and blacking action to halt the closures. For nationalisation without compensation under workers' management.

* Make the bosses pay, not the working class. Millions for hospitals, not a penny for 'defence'! Nationalise the banks and financial institutions, without compensation. End the interest burden on council housing and other public services.

* Freeze rents and rates.
* Scrap all immigration controls. Race is not a problem: racism is. The labour movement must mobilise to drive the fascists off the streets. Purge racists from positions in the

labour movement. Organise full support for black self-defence. Build workers' defence squads.

* The capitalist police are an enemy for the working class. Support all demands to weaken them as a bosses' striking force: dissolution of special squads (SPG, Special Branch, MI5, etc.), public accountability, etc.

* Free abortion on demand. Women's equal right to work and full equality for women. Defend and extend free state nursery and childcare provision.

* Against attacks on gays by the state: abolish all laws which discriminate against lesbians and gay men; for the right of the gay community to organise and affirm their stand publicly.

* The Irish people - as a whole - should have the right to determine their own future. Get the British troops out now! Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Political status for Irish Republican prisoners as a matter of urgency.

* The black working people of South Africa should get full support from the British labour movement for their strikes, struggles and armed combat against the white supremacist regime. South African goods and services should be blacked.

* It is essential to achieve the fullest democracy in the labour movement. Automatic reselection of MPs during each parliament and the election by annual conference of party leaders. Annual election of all trade union officials, who should be paid the average for the trade.

* The chaos, waste, human suffering and misery of capitalism now - in Britain and throughout the world - show the urgent need to establish rational, democratic, human control over the economy, to make the decisive sectors of industry social property, under workers' control. The strength of the labour movement lies in the rank and file. Our perspective must be working class action to raze the capitalist system down to its foundations, and to put a working class socialist alternative in its place - rather than having our representatives run the system and waiting for crumbs from the tables of the bankers and the bosses.

GET ORGANISED!

Socialist Organiser Alliance

To make **Socialist Organiser** a real campaigning paper that can organise the left in the movement, it needs its own organised activist support - and money.

Local supporters' groups have been established in most big towns to build a real base for the paper.

Supporters are asked to undertake to sell a minimum of six papers an issue and to contribute at least £1 a month (20p for unwaged). So becoming a supporter helps build our circulation and gives the paper a firmer financial base.

If you like **Socialist Organiser**, think it's doing a good job, but realise that it can't possibly do enough unless you help, become a card-carrying supporter.

Fill in the form below and send it to: **Socialist Organiser**, c/o 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

I want more information I wish to become a **Socialist Organiser** supporter

Name

Address

Phone

CLP TU

Industrial News

Inquiry call a step forwards at Scotts

by John McIlroy and Noel Hibbert

TUESDAY 29th September represented a small but important step forward for the Laurence Scott strikers, now 28 weeks into the fight to keep their factory open.

This evening the Manchester North District Committee unanimously supported a resolution demanding the establishment of a Labour Movement Inquiry into the affairs of Laurence Scott and related companies.

Discussions

After discussions between ourselves, Laurence Scott convenor Dennis Barry and District Secretary Duggie Daniels, the resolution from Manchester 15 AUEW was moved at the District Committee by Brother Daniels.

Divisional Organiser John Tocher told us, "I fully support the resolution."

Dave Douglass, NUM Delegate, Hatfield Main Colliery, told us

"I'll be backing this to the hilt". Dave is now taking the resolution as a first step to the Doncaster Area NUM committee, which represents ten pits.

Important

It is certainly important that this initiative should be taken forward as a means of strengthening the struggle at Scotts. We urge all trade union and Labour Party activists to raise it in their wards, branches and committees.

In itself, however, this demand is insufficient. The view of the Scotts stewards is that the Final Appeal Court on October 12th will find that Boyd, Duffy, and the Executive were in violation of the AUEW constitution in



making the dispute unofficial without placing the settlement before the Manchester North District Committee for acceptance or rejection.

The committee would, of course, have rejected it.

They feel that such an overturning of the Executive will provide the means for renewed support and the reimposition of picketing on Mining Supplies Doncaster, Arthur Snipe's main plant.

This reimposition of picketing in Doncaster is vital. In our view, even a token presence there now could put the question to the workers there and in the mines and docks and provide the start of a fight-back.

Despite the difficulties the Scotts workers would face, we think this effort would be worthwhile.

Meanwhile Gardiners' convenor Tommy McAfee

told us "I agree with the philosophy underpinning the demand for a Labour Movement inquiry and I now propose to take it up at the Confed."

"We have of course our own problems once more at Gardiners and what affects the Laurence Scott workers affects us.

"The closer the links between all of us who are fighting redundancy the better the chances we all

have of giving Margaret Thatcher a good going over."

CORRECTION

Dennis Barry would like to dissociate himself from any implication or insinuation in last week's Socialist Organiser report that the stewards at GEC Openshaw have not from the outset given the fullest moral and financial support to the Laurence Scotts dispute.

AUEW District Committee calls for swindles to be investigated

RECENT revelations in the press have established a disturbing set of circumstances surrounding the financial affairs of Laurence Scott and Electromotors and the companies to which it is linked.

In particular, it is alleged that two directors of a Laurence Scott subsidiary PPD Engineering, conspired with prominent merchant bankers Hambro's to take over another company for personal gain to the detriment of Laurence Scotts as they allegedly utilised their dual position to seduce PPD customers and workers to provide orders and staff for the advancement of their own company.

Not only did these activities potentially provide an opportunity for Arthur Snipe through a "dawn raid" and other similar methods to purchase a company for one third of its market price.

It is further alleged that the activities of the PPD directors were also financed by Coal Industry Nominees Industrial Investments, a wholly owned subsidiary of the National Coal Board's Pension Fund.

Moreover, throughout the present LSE dispute it has been convincingly argued that the employers applied to the government's Temporary Employment Subsidy in the full knowledge that a date had already been established for the closure of the Openshaw factory, and that the subsidy was simply a weapon in the hands of Arthur Snipe allowing a satisfactory timing to the redundancy which would provide the smallest opportunity for a fightback by the workers.

These type of machinations are nothing new.

Behind closed doors for private profit the livelihood of thousands of workers are gambled for private gain, whilst the sweat of thousands more are used to finance the operation. In this situation, 650 workers have been made redundant by Laurence Scotts at Manchester, now 400 more workers have been thrown on the dole queues.

We therefore call for the establishment of a Labour Movement Enquiry into the affairs of Laurence Scotts and related companies, its relationship with the National Coal Board and its use of the state TES.

Such an Enquiry could consist of representatives of the Laurence Scott workers, the Manchester North AUEW District Committee, the National Union of Mineworkers and relevant Labour Party MPs.

Co-opt

It could co-opt relevant experts committed to the interests of the labour movement, and it would investigate in particular:

1) The use of pension funds in tying workers to the employers' interests and throwing their brothers and sisters onto the dole queue.

2) The use of state subsidies as a tactic used by the employer in redundancy struggles and the conditions attached to these handouts.

3) The dealings of LSE as an important supplier to nationalised industry and the possibility for such suppliers to be brought into public ownership by the next Labour government.

We call upon all labour movement bodies to take the call for such an enquiry into their representative bodies.



Workers at Barnes Flexible packaging, in North Manchester, have been occupying since August 28 to save 236 jobs. Donations and messages of support to: Len Hughes, 163 Argyle St, Heywood, Lancashire.

Solidarity for typists

AT LAST the Liverpool typists, out on strike for the past four months, have won solidarity strike action from three sections of Liverpool NALGO. Five sections were balloted last Wednesday and three are now on official strike with the other two being held in reserve in the meantime.

This means no rent or rates are being collected in Liverpool.

The strike action is a boost to the typists but money is short. Many are the sole breadwinners in the families and strike pay of £20 a week doesn't go far. Donations etc, c/o NALGO branch, Duchy Chambers, 24 Sir Thomas Street, Liverpool 1.

Advertisement



RALLY: 'Bring down the Tories! Fight for a workers' government! Build a revolutionary leadership!' Saturday October 10, from 10am at Digbeth Halls, Digbeth, Birmingham

10am-noon and 1-2.30: workshops. 2.30: rally session, with speakers including a representative from Solidarnosc, a Trotskyist just back from Poland, Dennis Barry (Laurence Scotts),

Tickets £1 (50p unwaged). Transport available from most areas.

More details: WSL, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

After the hunger strikes ...

Socialist Organiser

LABOUR MUST MOVE FROM WORDS TO ACTION

by Martin Thomas



Reagan's deadly shopping spree

WORKERS throughout the world have reason to fear Ronald Reagan's announcement last week of the biggest arms shopping spree in history.

The US government, already equipped with enough bombs and missiles to exterminate civilised life on earth, is to build up its arsenal still further.

New missiles

Reagan unveiled a \$180 billion programme including: *3,000 new air-launched Cruise missiles - on top of those ground-launched missiles already destined for NATO bases in Britain and Europe.

*100 new 10-warhead MX missiles, to be based in strengthened silos. This replaces an even more ambitious scheme for 200 MX missiles to rotate between 4,000 shelters spanning vast tracts of Utah and Nevada. But it still represents a major increase in the US strategic arsenal.

*The cancelled B-1 bomber project is to be revived and 100 built by 1986, while work begins on a new radar-evading 'stealth' bomber for the 1990s. *Back-up communications and command systems are to be upgraded.

Intimidate

The US imperialists have a motive in such colossal spending. As the economic ravages of capitalism bite home, increasing poverty in 'Third World' countries, the masses are driven to resist imperialist rule.

Through its vast nuclear arsenal and build-up of conventional forces US imperialism hopes to intimidate such

struggles, and to threaten outright use of force against the Soviet Union and deformed workers' states should they lend them support.

For the world's working classes, this offers a prospect of growing deprivation - overshadowed by the threat of war and nuclear annihilation.

Latest NATO analysis underlines the fact that US strategy now consists of using nuclear weapons in Europe within five days of any confrontation with the USSR.

Small wonder that in Britain, the USA and the continent of Europe anti-war movements are growing, not only among middle class "peace freaks" but also in the organised labour movement.

A test of this will be the October 24 CND demonstration in London. It will be an important venue for socialists to argue the need for action to defeat the war-mongering Tory government and thus deal a blow at Reagan.



Reagan

TRADING on the agony and distress of the prisoners' relatives, the Tories have finally faced down the H-Block hunger strike.

The British government's denial of political status to the Republican prisoners in H-Block and Armagh was a calculated political option. Special status existed up to 1976, and many prisoners in Long Kesh still have it.

The prisoners are clearly political - arrested under special laws, taken to special interrogation centres, convicted in special no-jury courts with special rules of evidence... and prepared, one after another, to face slow, terrible death in a political protest for their rights.

Inflexibility

Yet silence and inaction by the British labour movement have allowed the Tories to maintain their stand of arrogant inflexibility, while ten men died.

All over the world - in France and Spain, in the USA and Australia there were big demonstrations in support of the hunger strikers. In Poland, the leader of the workers' movement, Lech Walesa, expressed his support for hunger striker Bobby Sands.

In Britain, no prominent leaders of the labour movement spoke out. The Scottish TUC passed a resolution calling for concessions to the hunger strikers, but did nothing about it. The demonstrations and meetings have been small.

But often before it has



been a false triumph for a British government when it has beaten down Irish protest, killing republicans or allowing them to die. And likewise now.

International pressure on Britain to make some political move in Ireland has increased. In the South of Ireland, nationalist feeling has been revived and two hunger-strike MPs have been elected.

In the North of Ireland, a huge, terrible pool of bitterness and fury has been built up in the Catholic community, and will pour out over the coming months and years.

And in Britain a jolt has been given to the labour movement. When Labour front bench Irish spokesperson Don Concannon told the dying Bobby Sands that Labour would never support his cause, thousands of activists were disgusted and outraged.

Over 50 resolutions supporting 'troops out' went in for this year's Labour Party conference. The trade union block-vote beat them down, but from all evidence the majority of constituency Labour activists now support a solution based on British withdrawal and a united Ireland.

Back in 1976, when a Labour government withdrew political status, there was hardly any protest from the ranks of the labour movement. In September 1976, the Republican prisoners denied political status began the 'blanket protest'. They refused to wear prison uniform, and in retaliation they were denied clothing, exercise, free association, books, remission and normal rights to letters and visits.

No response

The labour movement still remained passive. Britain was deaf to the prisoners' protest. In the face of increased harassment from

prison officers over such matters as visits to the toilet, the prisoners went on to the 'dirty protest' - refusing to wash or slop out.

Still no response. So, last October, seven H-Block prisoners started a hunger strike. They were joined by three women in Armagh before, in December, they ended the strike in return for some British government concessions.

The government reneged on the concessions - and there was little protest in Britain.

So on March 1, the second hunger-strike started, demanding the right not to wear prison uniform, the right not to do prison work, free association, the right to organise their own education and recreation, and full remission.

The death of Bobby Sands MP on May 5 finally

shocked the British labour movement into some response. The resolutions started coming in. Tony Benn came out for withdrawal of British troops (though saying they should be replaced by the UN).

But our movement's response was too little, too late.

The next stage in the bitter history of the prisoners' struggle is not clear. But there certainly will be a next stage, whatever limited concession the Tories now grant.

Our job in the British labour movement is to stir the Labour Parties from resolutions to action, and to extend the spread of support for Irish self-determination from the Labour Parties into the trade unions and workplaces.

*Political status now!
Troops out now!
!Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole!



On the streets of Northern Ireland: still troops, still tension

CASH NEEDED!

Well, the well-heeled 'delegates' to the SDP travelling circus or is it conference, may be able to splash it about on smoked salmon and fine wines, but here at Socialist Organiser, we need every penny we can get in order to keep our heads above water.

That's why we depend on our readers and supporters to come to our aid each month with donations to our £2,000 Monthly Fund.

We recognise that it is quite a sacrifice to make, parting with hard-earned cash when bills have to be paid, the kids have to be fed and so on. But without your money we could not bring you a paper which fights each week to give leadership in the struggle against the Tories.

The October Fund has got off to a good start and stands at present at just over £400. But it's still a long way to go to that £2,000 target so send us a donation today and help us on our way. Our address is:

Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8