

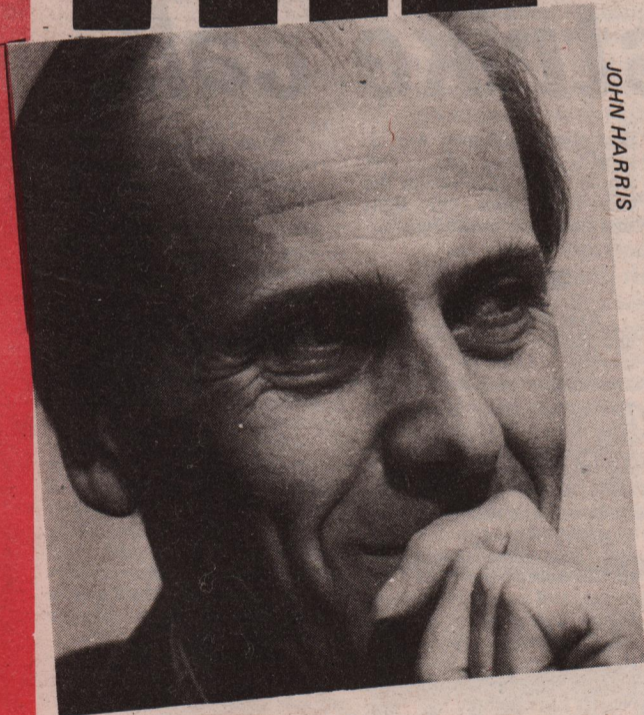
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FLUSH OUT THE TORIES!



JOHN HARRIS

THIS week Thatcher returns cock-a-hoop from the Falklands, bearing a T-shirt with a tiger motif presented to her by troops "to use when you are fighting Tony Benn."

Feeling confident after the wearing-down of the NHS dispute, the collapse of the Scottish miners' leaders, and the sell-out of the DHSS jobs fight, the Tories are planning for an election, probably this year, and new anti-union laws.

But their cries of triumph could be short-lived. Plenty of people are not beguiled but dis-

gusted by the imperialist razzamatazz. And new resistance is brewing on the industrial front.

Arrogantly the Tories told the water workers they could only have a 4% wage rise - though even the employers wanted to offer more! Now the water workers are moving towards strike action, and could link up with gas and power workers also facing the 4% limit.

In the Labour Party the witch-hunt is running into trouble, and Peter Tatchell's by-election campaign in Bermondsey

could be a major demonstration that there is still a left-wing active and fighting for a Labour government committed to Labour conference policy and accountable to the labour movement.

Yes, we can flush out the Tories!

SEE INSIDE:

*Page 2: Water workers challenge cash limits.

*Page 2: Fighting Tebbit.

*Pages 8-9 and page 15: Bermondsey by-election and Labour witch-hunt.

*Page 5: Press Gang on the Falklands.



JOHN HARRIS

Tebbit plans stage 3

THE Tories could go ahead with stage 3 of their anti-union laws before the General Election.

A Green Paper published this week suggests compulsory postal ballots for union leaders as a measure that could be brought in this year. Also proposed more cautiously are compulsory postal ballots before strike action, and a law to change the unions' political levy from 'contracting out' to 'contracting in'.

The postal ballots plan is designed to foist leaderships like the Duffy-Boyd-Laird team in the AUEW on every union. It is nothing to do with democracy.

Postal

If postal ballots were suggested to elect Bank of England governors, company

bosses, High Court judges - or Tory Party leaders - then the Tories' enthusiasm would quickly wane. But in the unions they reckon that postal ballots could replace the real though limited say that members have through the branches and committees with the dictatorship of the Tory press.

Machine

Real democracy includes a chance to hear the different points of view, take part in discussion, and maintain accountability of representatives after their election. The system the Tories favour is one where the Fleet Street misinformation machine mobilises thousands of passive members to swamp all participatory democracy

in the unions.

In the AUEW, the Duffy-Boyd team, elected by postal ballot, has systematically suppressed union democracy, overriding the rights of district committees, sacking dissident officials and blandly flouting the union constitution.

The real purpose of the Tories is vividly shown by the doubts they express on postal strike ballots.

When strike ballots were made law under the 1971 Industrial Relations Act, the one ballot held under that Act gave a resounding victory for strike action by railworkers. In the US, the 163 ballots held under the Taft-Hartley laws show 155 rejections of the employers last offer. As the Financial Times put it: "In short, they do not deliver the required

result."

Here, unfortunately for the Tories, the dictatorship of the media is too often undermined by mass awareness of the real issues - and mass rallying to the union in protest at external interference.

Thus the Tories are looking for a more subtle scheme to serve the aim of thwarting militant action.

Closed shop

The idea of imposing 'contracting in' is also presented as a blow for individual rights and democracy. In reality it is another version of the "scab's charter" which Tebbit has already legislated against the closed shop.

TUC leaders have protested against Tebbit's plans -

just as they protested against the first two rounds of Tory anti-union law, but without doing anything.

Collaboration

They are hardly likely to lead a serious fight against state interference in the unions when they are still daily collaborating with the government and the state on dozens of committees, councils, and nationalised industry boards.

The fight back will have to start from the rank and file, with demands to break collaboration with the Tories, to reject all state interference, and to install real democracy in the unions - regular election and right of recall of officials through ballots at workplace meetings.



JOHN HARRIS

Water, power, gas: Unite to beat cash limits

UNION leaders representing 29,000 water workers meet on Monday 17th to discuss industrial action on pay.

For years the water industry has been building up to a showdown on pay. In a warning shot for this year's struggle, water workers staged their first-ever national stoppage last October 18. They have now voted by an 80% majority to reject the employers' 4% offer.

And the possibility is there - if the union leaders will take it - of a powerful joint fight by workers in the three utility industries, gas, electricity, and water.

The 42,000 gas workers have recently turned down a 3.9% offer in reply to their 13% claim. And 90,000 electricity supply workers who have put in an 8% claim will also face the Tories' 4% public sector pay 'norm'.

The water workers' claim is for a 15% rise. The National Water Council wanted to offer 6% - which would not be enough! - but

the government stepped in and knocked it down to 4%. NWC chairperson Robert Marshall has recently resigned over this and other issues, and describes the offer as "deplorable".

Water workers' present basic rates range from £78.20 to £85.85, and average gross weekly earnings are £133.88 (April 1982). The job of maintaining and servicing the water and sewer systems not only demands skill, but often means working under the worst conditions.

Britain's 130,000 miles of sewers are decaying fast as governments refuse to invest in modernising them. Requiring frequent repair jobs, these sewers are dirty, dank, rat-infested, and sometimes as narrow as the narrowest of seams worked by coal miners.

There is more to the dispute than pay. The Tories plan to abolish the National Water Council as from September 1983, and tear up the national agreements. The

reorganisation, and the bonus schemes which are already being pushed through, can only mean job cuts.

Possible plans for action being discussed include a rolling strike movement round the regions, to be followed rapidly by an all-out national strike. The potential strength of the water workers is huge: within days whole sections of industry could be shut down as water supplies fail, though workers plan to provide cover to maintain services as far as possible to hospitals and other non-industrial users.

But the question mark hangs over the union leadership - for the unions involved, GMWU, NUPE and TGWU, are after all some of the same unions as allowed the NHS workers' pay fight to expire in dribs and drabs. And the one-day strike last October 18 was arranged in a week when there were three other one-day strikes - health, British Telecom, steel - so as not to fall on the same day as any of them!

Journalists up against Tebbit's straitjacket

by Jonathan Hammond (president, National Union of Journalists, in a personal capacity).

ONE OF the provisions of the 1982 Employment Act outlaws secondary action. By changing one of the key factors in a trade dispute from 'workers and employers' to 'workers and their employer', the Act aims to make some traditional trade union action unlawful.

For instance, unions will be acting unlawfully if they take action against an employer whose own employees are not in dispute. This is relevant to a national NUJ dispute that may take place in February.

The Newspaper Society - the employers' organisation in the provincial newspaper industry with whom the NUJ bargains nationally - has offered chronically under-paid journalists a measly 2.2 to 3.2% in this goes ahead, and certain chapels settle with their managements at local level, there is in that newspaper no longer a dispute 'between workers and their employer'.

Even if they were so minded, the bought-off journalists could not lawfully strike in support of their colleagues elsewhere - and would doubtless plead 'reasonable cause' if disciplined for not striking.

The removal of the phrase 'a dispute between workers and workers' could have a sinister significance over demarcation differences (often triggered off by management action) preceding, during or after the introduction of new technology.

The proposition that a dispute must be 'wholly or mainly' connected with listed collective bargaining issues gives the courts more scope for questioning a union's motives for taking industrial action.

Privatised

For example, if the government privatised certain Civil Service functions - such as putting the publicity function out to consultants - and the unions concerned took industrial action in protest, a court might decide that that action was really a disagreement over government policy and not wholly or mainly connected with jobs or other listed issues.

The Act also makes it unlawful for workers in Britain to take action in support of workers in other countries, unless the British workers could be affected by the outcome of the dispute abroad, i.e. unless they can show some direct self-interest.

But even more insidious is the Act's green light to employers to sack union activists in certain circumstances. Under the new legislation, during a strike an employer can 'let it be known' that strikers who do not return by a given date will all get the sack in the hope that the less well

organised, or those under particularly hard financial or other pressures, will cave in and return to work.

The employer can then sack the more militant, better organised workers remaining on strike.

In my own field of book publishing, this could have a significant effect. The NUJ currently has a cam-

paign to end low pay in that area, which may involve individual chapels in strikes at some stage. The Publishers' Association is known to have a secret blacklist of NUJ activists, which it advises its members not to employ or - if they can do it without too much fuss - to get rid of.

I know of at least one

famous book publishing company whose personnel manager has a policy of victimising and harassing union activists with a view to driving them on to the dole queue. It does not require too much imagination to see how companies might make use of this legislation if the campaign gathers momentum.



Militancy is building up again to the levels of the 1978-9 strike

NUJ strike call

MORE THAN 6,000 provincial journalists in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are to be asked to back an all out strike call against a 3 per cent pay offer from the Newspaper Society.

The call - from the Provincial Newspapers Industrial Council - was backed by an NUJ delegate conference in London last week.

Chapel representatives voted narrowly in favour of a strategy of two one-day strikes on January 20 and 26, followed by an all-out strike from February 1. The strike call will now go out for voting to more than 200 chapels [office branches] around the country.

The employers offered between £4 and £6 a week, and less for trainees. They turned down claims for improved holidays, for a guarantee of full insurance cover, and for a streamlined disputes procedure. Maternity and paternity claims and moves towards a reduced retirement age were also rejected out of hand.

Instead the employers warned they were likely to step up the rate of job loss - more than 700 jobs have gone in the provincial sector in the past two years. The chairman of the employers' side announced editorial redundancies in his own head office even while the negotiations were still on.

The PNIC posed the strike over wages as the best way to mobilise the membership against all attacks. Peter McIntyre, PNIC vice-chair, moving the strike call, said chapel leaderships must vote for the only policy that could win the fight. There was no purpose in taking half-hearted action that could lead to lock-outs and to strikes over reinstatement instead of strikes over the main battle.

A fervent debate showed

that the conference was almost evenly split. But among the calls to accept the offer and duck the fight there was one bizarre voice.

Negative

Alan Bott, WRP luminary and NUJ National Executive member, tried to move an amendment to the strike call which was ruled out of order by the conference chair, Linda Piper, as being a direct negative. Undeterred, Bott went to the microphone to declare that the old methods of militancy were finished, and that the membership should accept the offer with regret and regroup in some future existence around the NGA - which, given Bott's stand on amalgamation talks, means regroup around the NGA's bureaucracy.

When his advocacy failed to win the day, he simply voted against the strike.

The narrow majority at chapel delegate level probably means a vote against action by the membership. But if the fight at the conference is taken back to the membership, the vote could be close, and at worst could lay the groundwork for the major confrontation that must be coming.

It is a major turn-round: the demoralisation which has gripped the provincial sector over the past three years now seems to be being shaken off by all the most advanced militants - except of course those stuck in the stultifying politics of the WRP.

Patrick Spilling

Courts threat in Tribune row

TRIBUNE editor Chris Mullin has condemned new moves by John Silkin and Lord Bruce to take legal action in their bid to win control of the paper.

"Mr Silkin and Lord Bruce", said Chris Mullin, "do not enjoy the support of a single member of staff nor, so far as we are aware, of any other member of the Board of Directors."

"Their activities over the last month have been gravely damaging to the paper and, as they must be aware, an expensive court action could destroy the paper. If they sink Tribune,

they will never be forgiven by the labour movement".

The legal action is threatened in order to overturn the employee shareholding scheme agreed at a special meeting of the Tribune Board of Directors on December 23. Silkin and Bruce also criticised as 'improper' a decision of the December 23 meeting to issue Chris Mullin with a three year contract as editor.

They say they will go to the courts 'within seven days' if they do not get satisfaction at a Board meeting scheduled for Thursday January 13.

Seamen must fight flags of convenience

RON BROWN MP (Leith) writes:

AS A result of the "Bulk Trader" incident, the National Union of Seamen and the International Transport Federation, supported by a large number of Labour MPs, have now agreed to raise the issue of flags of convenience with the European Parliament.

Jim Slater, the NUS General Secretary, who recently took the "Bulk Trader" crew to Downing Street, said that this step was necessary in the fight against unscrupulous ship owners.

Arrangements are being made to meet Euro MPs as this was an international

problem.

Flags of convenience are a cover for modern-day piracy which 'justifies' scandalous wage rates and conditions.

As the "Bulk Trader" escaped from Leith carrying a cargo of coal, I will be asking the NUM for support in the campaign to black these 'cowboy' ships.

The background to the incident is:

SHORTLY before Christmas the ship 'Bulk Trader' set sail from Leith - with a scab crew on board, and its original crew left thousands

of miles from home and owed £50,000 in back pay.

The vessel is registered in Cyprus, but owned by UK interests. The crew (Filipinos, Indonesians and Sri Lankan) were not being paid the correct rate for the job, and took strike action. The owners brought in thugs who threatened trade union officials and the crew with violence unless they left the vessel.

Then the case went to the courts. The Outer House of the Scottish Court of Session upheld the right of the crew to take action, but the Inner House took the side of the shipowners on the grounds that the 'balance of convenience' lay with them in getting the ship to sea.

The Forth Ports Authority then made itself an accomplice by assisting the vessel to sail with a scab crew.

Press forward for Peoples' March

READERS who closely scrutinised the press last month may have noticed that the TUC General

Council has been forced into backtracking on its original opposition to the Scotland-London Peoples' March for Jobs in 1983.

Intensive lobbying for the concept of the march won first NALGO and then TGWU official support, and eventually carried the day despite the continued opposition of Len Murray.

Image

Murray's objection, like that of Labour's Parliamentary leadership, is that a mass demonstration of this type in election year could rock the boat by mobilising workers on the streets and thus 'spoiling the image' of the Labour Party.

With the strength of the pro-march lobby confirm-

ed, the only problem now in striding forward on the campaign is that no concrete proposals for the March exist: not even a tentative date has been suggested by the originators of the idea on the North West TUC.

To speed up the process of arriving at such plans, and ensure that the March does take place, union branches, Trades Councils and Labour Parties should carry resolutions endorsing the call for the Scotland-London march, agreeing to set up local campaign bodies controlled by the rank and file members, and insisting that it go ahead regardless of the date of the general election.



New Leyland Action Committee pamphlet, 10p plus postage from LAC, 194 Dawlish Road, Birmingham 29

SERPPELL REPORT

'Taking up where Beeching left off'? Dave Lunts reports

THE END OF THE LINE?

THE long-awaited government commissioned report on the future of British Rail has finally appeared, carefully 'leaked' by a horrified British Rail Board three days before Christmas. Sir David Serpell and his team of three have taken up where Dr. Beeching left off, and where, until now, even the Tories have feared to tread.

The Serpell report roundly criticises the BRB, whom it sees as 'inefficient management', making 'hopelessly inefficient forecasts of future potential. Consequently, it throws out the whole idea of a further programme of electrification and substantial investment. Instead, Serpell seems to be attempting to draw some practical conclusions from the attempt by many associated with the Tory government to undermine and attack the entire idea of a relatively comprehensive rail network.

Serpell puts forward six 'options' for a future rail network, all of which involve cuts in services, track, workers, and subsidy, but mostly sees such contraction in drastic terms.

The most drastic option of all is option 6, involving the slashing of the present 11,000 miles down to 1,600. All branch lines would go: Cardiff would be the only station in Wales, while other towns without stations would include Sheffield, Blackpool, Oxford, Leicester, Sunderland, and Huddersfield.

In Scotland the lines would end at Glasgow and Edinburgh. Inverness, Dundee, Aberdeen and Perth would all lose their stations, while in London, St. Pancras and all routes out of there would close down.

Even Derby, home of BR's research and development centre, would have no railway.

Staggering enough as this may sound, there is more. Serpell stresses that even with such a colossal cutback (the like of which is being discussed nowhere else in the world) fares would have to rise by 40% in real terms, in order to run the railways without a subsidy.

Another, and perhaps most telling, saving that Serpell recommends is cutting back drastically on safety standards, with which BR is supposed to be 'excessive'. The sheer outrageous arrogance of this view, coming from high Tories who know nothing of railway operating techniques, is staggering. It is a view ignorantly shared by the Sunday Times industrial editor, who claims this week that 'cheaper signalling, lower safety standards, could save more than £200 million a year. BR spends over half a billion pounds a year on track and signalling maintenance, and argument that railways are over-engineered from a safety viewpoint is plausible.'

If all this sounds quite incredible, then think again. Although the 1,600 mile option is the most drastic in the report, a minority report presented by Alfred Goldstein argued that Serpell wasn't going far enough, and called for even more drastic action. What's more, it is already common knowledge that some leading Tories share the view that the railways could be done away with entirely — an opinion

NUR executive member Ian Williams told us: "No-one's officially given us a copy of the Serpell report yet. But you couldn't expect anything different from that committee. The remit they were given was to study how British Rail could run at a profit — and in the current world situation of railways, that's like asking how British Rail could defy gravity. It's almost inconceivable that the government will put 40% on commuter fares. But the other aspect is cutting back on the network. If you say no investment, there is no alternative but steady cutbacks. The infrastructure has got to the stage where it needs a lot of money just to keep it going, let alone to expand. The problem is that the unions are not in a very good position to fight after Weighell's record. Obviously we'll be trying. A lot depends on the general secretary election. Under Weighell, the consistent policy was that we collaborated with the British Rail Board, who collaborated with the government. Now one of the candidates, Charlie Turnock, is presenting himself as a continuator of Weighell".

much publicised during the ASLEF strike last summer, and one with which David



How long until the tracks become too old to use?

Howell, the Transport Minister, has more than little sympathy.

Last year, the Centre for Policy Studies (which dreams up many of Thatcher's schemes) published a report which argued for the conversion of rail routes into roads. Further evidence which points to a more than sympathetic hearing for Goldstein's view by the Tories is his close connection with Professor Alan Walters, Thatcher's personal economic advisor. Apart from this patronage, it is hard to see why Goldstein was even asked to sit on the Enquiry Committee. He is a senior partner in R. Travers Morgan, the firm of transport consultants, which specialises in ... roadbuilding!

More dubious still is the fact that Jane's World Railways 1982/3 edition, which

lists all the major railway consultants, doesn't even mention Travers Morgan. Despite this, when Goldstein criticises BR's obsession with engineering and safety standards, he quotes from a £100,000 survey carried out for the report by... Travers Morgan!

Just in case you haven't quite got the message, Goldstein is keen to rub it in. Not only is his minority report glossily and expensively produced, — by Travers Morgan, of course — but it is itself obsessed ... by the need for further studies!

He says 'The Department should ensure a suitable professional expertise, in particular in engineering and operational research, is available to the Department to advise on the Board's progress.'

Get the message now?

Now is the time to launch a huge campaign throughout the transport unions to save the rail network and resist all attempts at closure and cutback. Many commentators are saying that Thatcher will most likely shelve the report, since it's election year, and wholesale line closures won't go down well in the Tory commuter belt.

They may be right — but we can't afford to rely on it. And anyway, the report will quite likely be taken down and dusted off by any future government, even a right wing Labour administration may find it more than an interesting read. After all, last time a similar report was published, its author, a certain Dr. Beeching, was made Chairman of British Rail, by the then Ministry of Transport — and who's to say history won't repeat itself?

LAST year was such a lively one on the railways, that it wasn't easy to keep up with events. There were two stoppages over flexible rostering, the TUC betrayal of ASLEF, the NUR's first national strike for 56 years, and the disastrous sellout after only 18 hours. There was also Sid Weighell's welcome demise after being caught on the fiddle at Labour Party Conference.

Last year also saw BR withdraw closure notices at its workshops at Shildon, Horwich and Swindon, only to be followed up with six thousand voluntary redundancies spread over all BR workshops.

The joint action committee at Horwich loco works has been at the forefront of the campaign to save the workshops from closure — a threat which still looms real enough. Its latest initiative is 'Great Rail Carve-up: the Workers' Response', a 10 page document outlining the chronic investment crisis in BR, and suggesting various alternative policies.

BR is the most under-financed railway in the Western world. In 1980, for instance, £316 million was spent on new investment, compared with £1,219 million in Western Germany, £740 million in France, £476 million in Italy, and £355 million in Spain. In the same year, precisely nothing was spent on new track, compared with £101 million in France, £167 million in Italy.

Not surprisingly, traffic — both freight and passenger — is being lost by BR at an alarming rate. On the passenger side alone, there has been a 7% drop in traffic on BR during the period 1967-79. The same years saw passenger traffic increase in all other major international networks, ranging from 28% in West Germany to 83% in the Soviet Union.

As a catalogue of woe, the Horwich pamphlet deserves full marks. From electrification to rail freight, from new locomotives to management turnover rates: the tables of dismal statistics and lists of facts are useful for anyone interested in understanding the real level of crisis on BR.

It also takes up the arguments of the fashionable school of thought which advocates rail to road conversion: tearing up track and tarmacking the surface to make roadways. This idea has lately found favour with the Centre for Policy Studies — Thatcher's 'Think Tank' — and is now to be a favourite with David Howell, the Transport Minister.

Certainly the central theme of the JAC's document is undeniable: that the starvation of funds from the rail network is leading to a progressively deeper and more urgent crisis, and greater hardship and inconvenience for many who rely on rail. But the weakest section is undoubtedly that which seeks to map out an alternative set of policies. It outlines some specific ideas, such as 'a more progressive tax system', the lifting of borrowing restrictions on nationalised industries, exchange controls, and the general redirection of finance towards public transport.

Horwich unions have produced a 'Workers' answer' to the rundown of rail. But is it an adequate answer?

All these measures are aimed at a future Labour Government.

The railworkers are faced with an unprecedented attack now, and need a real 'workers' response', that can force a retreat by the government. The pamphlet concentrates too heavily on what is happening to the railways as an industry, rather than pointing to the mass job losses (a thousand per month last year), the attacks on basic working conditions (8 hour day, etc.), and desperately low wages of most rail workers.

This aspect of the 'Great Rail Carve-up' is just as important as the lack of new rolling stock, electrification etc. In fact, only by bringing a new confidence to the rail unions rank and file is there much hope of turning the tide on BR. It's no accident that as paltry wage deals have been accepted by the rail unions, always coupled with wide-ranging job losses and productivity measures, so BR management has stepped up the level of its offensive. At no time have productivity commitments from the unions led to more investment; quite the reverse.

It has long been one of the greatest problems that the rail unions, particularly the NUR and TSSA, have seen the railways problems as common to management and workforce alike, and have adopted a corporatist approach to trade unionism.

It's high time this myth of 'common interest' was shattered. Instead of vague hopes of good will and persuasion, railworkers desperately need a campaigning struggle to reverse the present drift, and to fight for a decent living wage, against job cuts, for an end to overtime, and a shorter working week, together with the defence of the closed shop, and an end to privatisation and closures. It's by beginning to seriously fight for these kind of measures that the developing crisis could be averted — and we could force governments to abandoning the policy of cutbacks and closure, be they Tory or Labour administrations.

It won't be easy, especially not since the setbacks of last year, but it's only by the rail unions mounting such a fight and restoring some of the lost confidence that they will be capable of fighting off the drastic attacks on the rail network which seem set to be a favourite thing for Tories this year.

Dave Lunts

ASLEF MUST FIGHT ON CONDITIONS

THE rejection of the British Rail Board's £5 per shift payment for One-Man Operation by the executive of the train drivers' union ASLEF will be welcomed by every ASLEF member who wants to see genuine improvements in pay and conditions with the new technology.

And yet the executive's rejection of the offer is based purely on holding out for a little more. It is widely believed that the EC will accept a payment of between £7 and £7.50 a shift.

With the 6 per cent pay increase (which is still conditional on acceptance of one-man operation, among other productivity items), this would bring the basic rate of pay for one-man operator drivers to a maximum of £148 per week.

King's Cross ASLEF members have put forward an alternative, arguing instead for negotiations to take place on the basis of time-and-a-half for one man operation and time off the job — in other words, 52 hours' pay for a 32 hour week.

This proposal would ensure that the increase is protected, and not eroded by inflation as a flat-rate payment would be. A 32 hour week would alleviate the considerable stress of one-man operation, and save jobs by sharing out the work.

If it is linked also to another item under negotiation at present — the trainmen concept — it could help protect jobs of footplate men and NUR guards.



Pickets in last year's strike: ASLEF still has its fighting strength

Buddy, can you spare 12 million dimes?

The American dream has become a nightmare for millions. Harry Sloan reports

ON official figures, no less than twelve million people — 10.8% of the working population — were unemployed in the USA last month. A further 250,000 are expected to join them on the job queues in January, and even the most optimistic government spokespeople predict unemployment at around the 9% level (10 million) throughout 1983.

The closures and lay-offs are still in full swing. The USA's second biggest steel corporation, Bethlehem Steel, has announced cutbacks at two major plants involving the loss of 10,000 more jobs in an industry which has shed well over 200,000 jobs in recent years. So vast is the unemployment problem that even hard-nosed capitalist politicians of the Democratic and Republican parties are talking of possible jobs programmes — including a \$5 billion per year 'highway jobs' scheme.

But Reagan's economic policies leave little room for expensive new public works programmes. Rather discussion has focussed on how to bridge the yawning budget deficit, currently estimated at \$200 billion, which threatens to engulf

available sources of investment finance and destroy any hopes of an industrial recovery.

The root of the problem is the contradiction between Reagan's determination on the one hand to escalate the arms race at colossal expense, and on the other to slash taxes in the midst of a major industrial recession, thus cutting revenue. At the same time with re-election looming ever-closer neither Reagan nor his Republican colleagues wish to be remembered as those who took the axe to the already pitiful social security system — the costs of which are rocketing with the rise in unemployment.

It now appears that Reagan has offered a compromise on taxation — raising the social security taxes paid by the self-employed — in exchange for a cutback in cost-of-living rises for old age pensioners. Since Reagan's opponents in the Democratic Party have always been willing to concede cuts in benefits in exchange for moves to balance the budget, it would seem likely that some form of deal can be arrived at over this between the twin capitalist

parties at the expense of those on the US poverty line.

A recent report in the Sunday Times has exposed the scale of poverty and its impact on working class families in the USA, where state welfare provision is at best rudimentary and in many cases non-existent.

An article by John Barnes pointed to the growing problem of children pushed out of their homes by desperate and poverty-stricken families, and forced to resort to crime and prostitution on the streets of the big cities of the most wealthy capitalist nation on earth. Destitute groups of unemployed are reported camping out beneath 100 miles of elevated motorways in the West Coast, while homeless camps have incurred the anger of middle class citizens in Texas, Arizona, Colorado and other states.

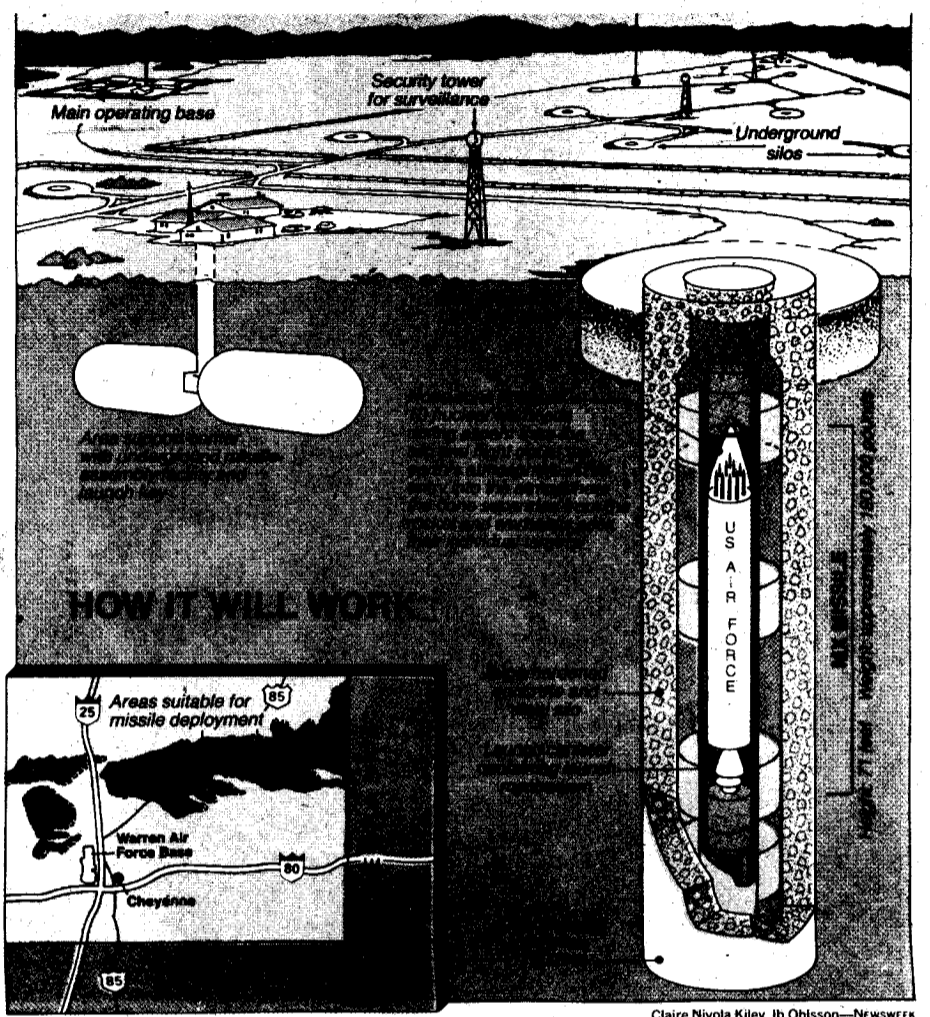
The tensions raised by long-term unemployment and poverty have also helped produce an alarming rise in violence in the home — with recession-hit Oregon registering a 42% increase in child-abuse cases last year. Elsewhere the frustration

and resentment building up amongst the most oppressed and hard-hit sections of US society have taken a more overt form — with a renewed explosion of anti-police riots in the black ghetto neighbourhood of Overtown, Miami, following the shooting of a black man by Miami cops.

With no short-term prospect of Reagan's continually-promised 'upturn' materialising, such eruptions of anger express the acute lack of any leadership from the American trade union movement.

Yet the recent historic rebuff to United Steel Workers union chiefs — whose package of concessions on lay-off pay was rejected last month by a meeting of District Presidents — and the ousting of Miners' President Sam Church indicate reserves of militancy within the trade union rank and file.

The task now is to mobilise that fighting capacity in a political direction, towards a break from the Republican / Democratic straitjacket and the building of a mass Labour Party based on the trade unions, through which the independent needs and demands of the working class can be raised.



Claire Nivola Kiley, Ib Ohlsson—Newsweek

Ultra-right revolt in El Salvador

US puppet-masters seeking to control the extent of overt torture and repression in El Salvador ran into serious problems last week as a prominent and fanatical anti-communist colonel led a mutiny against the Washington-backed regime.

Colonel Sigfrido Ochoa was six years a leader of the country's brutal Treasury Police. Now, as commander of the government offensive against FMLN guerrillas in the Cabanas district, he has

been ordered to leave his post and take up an appointment as Salvadoran defence attache in distant Uruguay, in a desperate effort to 'clear up' the grisly public face of the Salvador regime.

Ochoa's reply has been to refuse the order and demand instead the resignation of the man who issued it, defence minister Gen. Guillermo Garcia. And his stand on behalf of the torturers and executioners of the military elite has drawn the support of

officers of the US-trained Atonal battalion and an estimated total of 4,000 troops.

This poses severe problems for the ostensibly 'moderate' right wing government assembled by President Magana following the farcical 'election' of March last year.

Magana had set out to ensure a continuity of massive US economic and military aid by presenting a more 'acceptable' outward face of the regime while sustaining a ruthless military offensive on the ground aimed at crushing the FMLN guerrillas and the political organisations of the left.

For Ochoa now to dig in his heels and fight the regime could cause damaging rifts in the armed forces of the state — already hard-pressed by the guerrilla forces, which successive offensives have failed to defeat.

The US envoy in El Salvador, Deane Hinton, has done what he can to defuse this conflict, pointing out that Ochoa, even were he to seize control of the country, would be unlikely to secure the scale of support which has

propped up the regime since last March.

There is even speculation that without the removal of one or two ultra-right scapegoats, Reagan might not sign the routine certificate declaring that progress is being made in Salvador towards human rights, and thus effectively block official US aid.

This threat however may well be taken with a pinch of salt by Ochoa and his fellow torture chiefs after a year in which US aid continued uninterrupted to the Israeli government through the midst of their slaughter in Lebanon.

The US decision last week to resume arms sales to the bloody Guatemalan dictatorship of Rios Montt is a further indication that its threats against the Salvadoran regime lack credibility.

Meanwhile, news has emerged of a renewed wave of strikes by the working class of El Salvador — whose struggles have tended to be eclipsed by the guerrilla battles in the countryside, and whose organisations have suffered the most intense intimidation and repression at the

hands of fascist murder squads and the armed forces of the state.

November saw strikes over wages by civil servants at the Ministry of Agriculture and other ministries, and by textile and construction workers in the capital city.

Any further escalation of trade union struggles will pose the workers' movement with the need to develop their own armed organisations to defend their picket lines, occupations and mass meetings as well as the working class districts.

Such organisations must in turn seek liaison to co-ordinate their struggles as far as possible with the war effort being waged by the FMLN in the countryside.

In the struggle to topple the present military regime and move towards socialist revolution in El Salvador as part of the establishment of the Socialist United States of Central America, the role of the urban working class is crucial — as is the development of a consistent revolutionary Marxist leadership with roots in that working class.

RONALD Reagan's uncertain approach to the latest proposals from Soviet leader Andropov for talks on reduction in stockpiles of nuclear weapons is the outcome of numerous pressures.

On the one hand there remain major technical doubts and worries over the feasibility of the latest plans for the long-range MX missile, coupled with even bigger financial problems in paying for it.

On the other there is the mounting political opposition in Europe to the US escalation of the arms race,

and the siting of Cruise and Pershing missiles in European bases, along with frequent talk of 'limited' nuclear war that will obliterate Europe. Such pressure was indicated during last week's visit to the US of the new German Social Democratic leader Hans-Jochen Vogel.

The indications are that while Reagan may adapt his stance, and make gestures towards talks, the arms spree will continue — and can only be stopped by mass resistance by the working class in Europe and in the USA itself.

Salvadoran troops are resisting US moves to clean up their

Advertisement

NEW!

The Socialist Workers' Party of the USA, an old-established Trotskyist group, has recently and suddenly announced that Trotsky's theory of 'permanent revolution' was wrong after all. This new pamphlet — 40p plus postage from PO Box 135, London N1 0DD — looks at the arguments

Trotskyism or Castroism?

An analysis of the political evolution of the American SWP

Trotskyist International Liaison Committee

International News International News International News

Danish dockers fight cut in benefits

by Paul White of Socialist Fight (Australia) in Copenhagen

We interviewed Kjartan Gudmundsson, a member of one of the strike committees running Denmark's current docks strike, on last Thursday, 5 January. At that stage, the docks strike had been running for 3 weeks.

"The strike is about the government's decision to cut unemployment benefit money from 335 Kroners (about £25) to 226 Kroners (£17). This won't just affect dock workers who work short time. It also affects another 200,000 workers in Denmark.

There are about 300,000 dockers in Denmark, but the new law will affect everyone who has not a full 40 hour week.

"The fight has been bitter. Just before the New Year, a picket was killed at a port in North Jutland, when he was run over by a scab truck.

"There was a picket, and a ship was being unloaded by seamen from the ship, under police protection. A ship's officer signalled for a truck to break the picket line. The picketers jumped in front and one was crushed underneath.

"The dead worker's funeral was a very big demonstration. There were special aeroplanes charter-



6000 workers marched for a picket's funeral

ed from Copenhagen to North Jutland. About 6,000 people attended — with around 300 flags from 300 different workers' clubs and unions. In some

parts of the country, work was stopped for an hour, in respect.

"We're getting a lot of support, from all over Denmark — from unions, workers' parties and individuals. They're sending us money and passing resolutions of support. Also, some workers help us in other ways, like unemployed workers, who help us on our pickets.

"But we don't get much support from the Social Democrats (Denmark's right wing-dominated Labour Party). They write about us in their paper. But they just write straight news reports, like the rest of the media.

"Only the Social Democrat officials of some small unions have given us donations; most leading Social Democrats won't help us.

"Two unions have given us 25,000 Kroners each (£1880).

"The Social Democrats attack the new law in parliament, saying that it will hit the smallest people. But the laws they made themselves when they were the government also hit the smallest people.

"They are proposing alternative legislation to the new government law, but maybe they just want dock workers to return to work, so that their own legislation can attack other workers.

"We are getting support from individual members, who readily buy the stickers we are selling to support the strike and raise money.

"I think there will be some problems for the Social Democrat leaders from their rank and file. But not only because of their attitude to this strike, but because of all their policies.

"Support is also building up internationally. We have got very good support from Sweden, where all Danish goods are blacked.

IMF cracks the whip

LAST week Brazil signed its letter of intent to the IMF. and Zambia suspended payment of principal on its external debts.

In both countries the workers and peasants stand to bear the brunt of the debt crisis.

Brazil's agreement includes cuts in price subsidies on basic goods, devaluation of the currency (which means higher prices of imports), and drastic cuts in state sector investment — as well as a reduction in the tax on profits sent back home by foreign companies.

Measures to bring wages down are also planned, but details have not yet been announced.

In Zambia, the suspension of payments went together with a devaluation which is expected to pave the way for an agreement with the IMF. Zambia has already introduced a number of measures demanded by the IMF, including cuts in price subsidies and lifting of price controls.

The background to the crisis is different in the two countries, but both show how the workers and peasants of the weaker, poorer countries are suffering most of all from the world capitalist slump.

Brazil borrowed enormously in the '70s to finance rapid industrial expansion. Its manufacturing industry has grown, now accounting for over 40% of its exports. But when growth faltered because of the world slump, the debts caught up with it. Now the military-dominated government is cutting back industry drastically in order to reduce imports and improve the balance of payments.

In Zambia, far from rapid growth, there has been according to one estimate a halving of the real gross domestic product per head since 1965.

The economy, seriously damaged during the period of UDI in neighbouring Zimbabwe, has been further devastated over the last year by a sharp fall in world prices of copper and cobalt, on which it relies for 98% of its export earnings.

But whatever the cost the banks will still get their profits...

PRESS GANG

Daily Mail
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SUN

"I've got the trigger sorted out: now line up some Argies in my sights!"

With these boisterous words Margaret Thatcher, Empress of the Falklands, finally melted the hearts of even the most reserved kelpers and bored TV cameramen on her triumphal tour of the largely barren islands.

While the blue-clad Premier peered through the sights of a 105mm gun, the surrounding hillsides were eagerly scoured in search of a target of non-British stock: but, predictably, 15 decades of imperial rule, culminating in the explosive climax of the battles last summer, had driven even the most hardy Latin Americans from the Falklands.

The lack of live targets was compounded by a lack of live heroes: the soldiers who went through hell to preserve the isolation of the islanders and restore British military rule were either firmly underground or back in Britain — some still in hospitals, others on the dole.

Forced to make do and mend, the all-conquering Prime Minister attempted

instead to make friends with the various corpses that deck the Falklands landscape. "Water him well, you should get a nice crop of gooseberries on this grave", she told a crowd at Goose Green, who had been kicked out of their beds at 5 am by the farm manager to form a welcoming party.

"Without people like him we might never stand a chance at the next election", she muttered in awe-struck gratitude at the graves of Colonel "Bonkers" Smith, whose single-handed raid on an Argentine machine gun post had seen him blown to pieces.

And, giving well rehearsed off-the-cuff lectures on British imperial history, she entranced the groups of soldiers drafted in to make up for the shortage of native admirers. Since at least 1770, she pointed out, — even before the invention of the BBC — British warships have been killing, abusing and exploiting the peoples of Latin America. "And if anyone thinks we are going to stop, they'd better think again."

In exchange for such

pledges of unlimited possible future bloodshed, the ruling clique on the Falklands gave Mrs Thatcher the 'Freedom of the Islands'.

But if anyone should think that, hard on the heels of the 150th anniversary of the colonial seizure of the Falklands, Thatcher's visit was intended only as a brutally offensive gesture against the Argentine people, they should think again.

It marked chiefly the beginning of a new offensive against the British working class — in the form of a determined drive for re-election during 1983, in which the 'Falklands Factor' will be as ruthlessly revived as it was bloodily secured.

And, who knows? In this day and age of electronic gadgetry perhaps even the whole election campaign can be run from the Falklands, thus avoiding any encounter with Britain's 5 million unemployed.

Indeed, given the common view that Europe could be destroyed in the outbreak of a nuclear war, perhaps Thatcher may also dream of retiring some time

in the future to the safety of the Southern hemisphere, while the missiles and warheads she and Reagan have commissioned at vast expense put an end to society (and life!) as we know it.

Perhaps some day from a command post dug deep under Goose Green, our great Cold Warrior will press the button that will condemn the populations of Europe and the Soviet Union to deaths even more barbaric than those inflicted by British cluster bombs upon the Argentine army.

In any event the slaughter and mayhem has secured at least one real benefit for British imperialism: though its Foreign Secretary may be unwelcome in the Middle East and the whole of Latin America, there are at least a few hunks of rock in the South Atlantic where he can be assured of a friendly greeting — and where those most likely to criticise British policies are securely buried six feet deep.

Terry Smith

A QUESTION OF SOLIDARITY

Independent Trade Unions in South Africa

90p

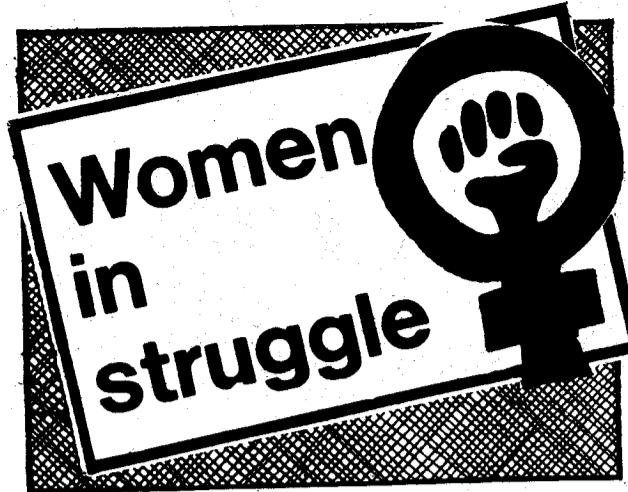
Bob Fine
 Lawrence Welch

New pamphlet from the Socialist Forum for Southern Africa Solidarity. 90p plus 20p postage. available via Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.

Spare Rib

Putting women's liberation on the news stands

Ann Duggan reviews 'Ten Years of Spare Rib'



Polish leaders resort to soft porn

THERE may be little food to put on Polish workers' tables, and the many grievances which prompted the rise of the 10-million strong Solidarnosc union may still be unresolved, but top Polish bureaucrats have found a way to carry a little favour at least amongst a section of the working class — the men. The Communist Party Central Committee's Interpress News Agency has gone into the soft porn business, running off 200,000 nude calendars for sale at \$2 per copy.

Venture

Criticism of their venture has centred upon the looks of the (female!) models, and the fact that a privately owned foreign firm was contracted to print it. Nobody seems to have queried whether peddling degrading images of women is an appropriate means for a 'Communist' Central Committee to raise a few zloty. Readers should not be surprised, however, at this latest cynical attempt by the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy to exploit the backwardness of sections of the Polish working class: the history of Stalinist rule in Poland has been repeatedly darkened by deliberate use of divisive and reactionary anti-Semitic propaganda — resurrected during the high part of the Solidarnosc movement, and correctly opposed by Solidarnosc leaders.

Church

And while the Church leaders might officially frown at the state's nude calendars, the fact is that by careful fostering of mutual relations both the Church and the Stalinist leadership have reinforced each other repeatedly since the overthrow of capitalist property in the post-war period. Whether it is resting upon external forms of backwardness, superstition and ignorance, or merely arguing its political rationalisations for the perpetuation of its own rule as a privileged caste feeding off the working class, the role of the Polish Stalinist Party is not to advance but to retard and repress the consciousness of the working class — men and women alike.



Trico: "Women have been in the forefront of many important trade union struggles"

OVER a hundred articles, news reports and reviews have been selected from 77 issues of the Spare Rib magazine to celebrate ten years of its publication.

Spare Rib was first published in 1972 and grew out of the impetus of the women's liberation movement and the underground press which existed in the 1960s.

It set out to be the magazine which put women's liberation on the news stands and it saw itself as an alternative to the established 'popular' women's magazines.

As an alternative magazine to the established mass publications, it has survived remarkably well and has grown in popularity over the ten years.

Diverse

The articles reprinted in the anthology are a reflection over the last ten years of many of the diverse debates, issues and struggles which have concerned women.

Topics include child-care; house-work; the family; work; education; the arts; sexuality; health; violence; the state and articles on the women's liberation movement itself.

Some of the articles are reports of struggles which have predominantly involved women such as the Trico strike, the Grunwick's dispute, the Oxford City Nursery Campaign, the

Save Bethnal Green Hospital Campaign and many others.

Growth

As they show, there has been a tremendous growth in women's consciousness over the last ten years, and women have been in the forefront of many important trade union struggles.

On many issues of great interest to women, Spare Rib has been often the first and sometimes even the only publication to carry articles. This is particularly true in the areas of sexuality, health and violence.

The anthology reflects the magazine's concern with these issues. There is an article of the opening of the first rape crisis centre in London in 1976. Since then other centres have opened in the country and it is probably through the pages of Spare Rib that many isolated women outside of London became aware of such initiatives.

Articles on battered women, pornography and clitoridectomy (physical removal of the clitoris) reflect some of the other debates on violence against women which have occurred in the magazine itself.

The anthology also reflects one of the great strengths of the magazine, which has been to portray the subjective experiences of women.

An article entitled "defending ourselves"

describes the experiences of one woman waiting on her own at Euston station for a taxi late at night and the continual harassment she receives from a number of men while doing so. This is a common experience for most women day in and day out, so much so that many women hardly ever question it.

But articles like these can bring out into discussion these aspects of men's oppression of women and 'objectify' such personal experiences, so that women begin to feel less isolated and often less guilty about what happens to them.

Other themes include women's experiences of

being in psychiatric hospital or other institutions; and women who are not only oppressed as women but oppressed because they are also black or lesbians or disabled.

These articles, written from personal experiences, have a great deal to say about the oppression of women in our society and leave the reader feeling very angry.

There is far too much in the anthology for me to describe everything. Obviously readers will have their personal preferences. One of my favourite articles is entitled "The breakthrough in male contraception", (p.374).

The article reassures readers that it is intended as a joke! It does make a serious point about the state of contraception in our society, but you will have to read it to find out!

Straddle

Spare Rib, trying to straddle a wide range of interests and readers, is often criticised for being lefty/not lefty enough, man-hating/not man-hating enough, parochial/too international, totally out of touch with feminist debate/too internal to the women's movement and so on.

These criticisms reflect the wide-ranging readership the magazine has, and they also reflect the great need there is for a bigger range of alternative women's publications.

And the anthology, too, reflects all the contradictions, developments and changes in the women's movement in Britain over the last ten years.

As an anthology, the book doesn't cover issues in any great depth, but it should spur readers on to explore further. It should also encourage readers to read Spare Rib itself.



ANDREW WARD (REPORT)

The campaigning women of the Greenham Common Peace Camp have notched up another smack in the eye for local Tories on Newbury Council.

Not only have the women resisted repeated attempts to drive them from their camp on the gates of the US air force base, but nine of them have now succeeded in adding their names to the Newbury electoral register — giving the Peace Camp its own permanent address.

As the women of the camp have done in the past, they will continue to campaign for the abolition of nuclear weapons and the end of the arms race.

register. But then enraged local Tories protested, and a hearing was held on January 11 — in which the presiding official pronounced in favour of the nine women who appeared at the hearing, pointing out that there is no stipulation that a permanent address has to be a building of bricks and mortar.

Furious Tories are now planning to take the matter to the county court.

Locations and messages of support should continue to be sent to the Peace Camp, Greenham Common.

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NO TO RATE RISES!

Labour council groups and Labour parties are debating plans for 1983-4: how to respond to Tory cuts? Martin Thomas looks at some of the issues

FOR OVER three years, 'no cuts, no rate rises, confront the government' has been a major policy plank of Socialist Organiser. In Islington over recent months we have been discussing how to turn the general principled policy into detailed tactics.

This summary of some of our ideas may be useful.

Islington had a pretty democratic discussion on the Labour manifesto for May 1982, culminating in a conference of the three Labour Parties. Socialist Organiser supporters proposed a 'no rate rise' policy and we lost. The majority attitude was roughly that cuts are intolerable, big rate rises are intolerable, and going for bust is impractical.

The council Labour group policy on major issues is, however, decided by quarterly joint meetings of the Labour group and the Local Government Committee (the joint committee of the three Labour Parties for council affairs). This is — as far as I know — a uniquely democratic arrangement, and indeed strictly speaking one outlawed by the Labour Party nationally.

At the July 1982 joint meeting SO supporters made detailed proposals for a campaign for money from central government — and won. These proposals implied a policy of no rate rises.

(Or rather, no high rate rises. In truth it makes no difference whether we say 'no rate rise, not a penny', or 'no rate rise higher than inflation', or any similar formula: the issue is whether Labour is going to balance the council budget at the expense of domestic ratepayers and small shopkeeper, or

not. We have found that we get our essential argument across much better by not appearing to be abstract dogmatists).

Since our July victory, on the one hand the campaign has gone ahead — with various delays and obstructions — and on the other there has been something of a backlash against the 'no rate rise' implications.

Labour Party members have been campaigning door to door with letters demanding the Tories give Islington more money, and doing it enthusiastically and with success. Some work — not enough — has been done in the council unions.

But most Labour activists understand the campaign's aim not as actually getting the money from the Tories, but as showing the people of Islington that we have tried to get the money, and that rate rises are the Tories' fault, not Labour's. Even among Labour activists who would vote with us on rate rises, there has been little confidence about a showdown with the government. There is a self-confirming pessimism.

At the last LGC-Labour group meeting, in December, a 'no rate rise' resolution was heavily defeated and a resolution was carried opposing cuts, opposing any rate rise over 25%, and also rejecting a deficit budget. This latter policy is arithmetically impossible: according to current estimates, Islington will need a 43% rate rise (£4 per week for the average domestic ratepayer) just to stand still.

On a cold calculation, the most probable outcome is that after some massaging the figures a budget proposal will come up offering no cuts and a 30-odd per cent rate rise, and its supporters will be able to convince the Labour Parties that this is after all not much over 25%.

Returned

In London, at least, many of the activists who last year were saying 'no more rate rises' have now returned to back rate rises. There is a feeling that new Labour councils like Islington must have 'more time' (though what they're supposed to do in that time that will improve their prospects for defiance, is not clear).

If we're in a minority, if all we can do is make a propaganda stand against rate rises, then we should make a stand — patiently explaining our case, without bluster, pointless self-isolation, or declamatory poses, but with-



Islington's labour Group and Local Government Committee in session: debating how to fight Tories

out sinking into the mush of 'do better next time' leftism.

However, it had previously been agreed that the decisive LGC-Labour group meeting would not be the December one but February. Also, the 'no rate rise' motion was (in our view) a particularly badly worded one. So the policy of defying the Tories is by no means lost.

It all depends on our ability to convince. The problem can be put like this: if the council goes for defiance, the result will be just that it has no money to pay its workers. So the council collapses and the workers are alienated. What is gained?

There is no answer to this problem within the sphere of council action as such. A council has very limited powers to do anything. Socialists should obviously use those limited powers, such as they are: but for a policy of direct defiance of the government, the council can serve only as a platform.

If we ask 'what should the council do', we pose the question askew. The question is, what should socialists do in the labour movement, including on the council?

Socialists should fight to mobilise for defiance both of the cuts in jobs and services imposed by the government and of the indirect cuts in services imposed by the government through rate rises.

We should propose alternatives which point in a socialist direction: nationalisation without compensation of the banks and financial institutions, millions for public services not war.

As part of that we argue for the council to formulate an unbalanced budget — on the one side, minimal necessary expenditure, on the other, a zero rate rise. On the expenditure side we should be as conservative as possible: it would be tempting to throw in the whole manifesto and many other desirable things, but the point is to convince people that defiance is a bitter necessity rather than a whim of utopian enthusiasts.

On the income side, the figures should be published showing that a 5% or 6% rate rises would not balance the budget. Figures should also be published showing what cuts would be necessary to balance the budget with a zero rate rise.

This is not just an alternative administrative decision for the council. The policy must be fought for by us, and also, we should argue, by the whole Labour group — in the local labour movement, in the community, and in other local working class organisations like tenants' associations. Islington's current campaign could be a useful start on this. What it needs to strengthen

it is, I think:

a) — if we can get it — a firm call from the council and the Labour Parties for no rate rises.

b) talk of direct action to back up defiance,

c) more effort directed to the council unions. (A precondition for this to be effective is that the council should be seen to back the council unions on issues like the current pay claim. Islington should fight publicly and vocally for Labour councils to make a collective break from the Tory-dominated negotiating machinery and negotiate separately, granting the unions' claim of about 8 per cent).

As the culmination of this fight, a local labour movement conference should be called (involving tenants' associations and community groups as well as orthodox Labour/trade union organisations: indeed Labour should fight for new tenants associations to be formed); and the Labour group should bind itself to follow its decisions.

It is, of course, not certain that such a conference would vote for our policy. For example: the council unions know very well that whatever happens the council will not go for job cuts next year. Yet they will have to be in the forefront of any defiance of the government.

To vote for our policy

they will have to vote to take the risks of struggle, not on immediate trade union interests, but for the sake of the immediate interests of the ratepayers and the more long-term interests of themselves (and others).

We must certainly argue for a policy of defiance — otherwise we abandon the basic principle of a class, not purely sectional, outlook — and we can base ourselves on the fact that many council workers are Islington ratepayers, and all of them face the effects of Tory local government cuts, whichever borough they live in: but success is not certain.

What should we do if a different policy is carried? It depends. If one section — whether council tenants, or council workers — is willing to fight, but has been voted down by the rest, then I think it is the duty of socialists to side with the fighting minority, even at the cost of having to resign official positions.

If there is a majority decision which implies a direct attack on such a section, then socialists would not be able to act as representatives of the majority.

But if the local labour movement simply decided that it wanted to duck a fight this year and raise rates instead, then that would be wrong, but not a decision as to make that labour move-

ment one in which socialists could not accept mandates. (Our own views on rate rises would have been expressed loudly to the whole local working class in the conference and in the run-up to it).

It is more important, though, to work out what we can do if a defiant fighting policy is carried. What happens next after the council takes a decision for defiance?

a) The officers could refuse to draw up the unbalanced budget, and make their own budget decisions. Legally they can do this.

b) The district auditor (a government official) could order an extraordinary audit and bring a legal action to get the councillors surcharged and disqualified. If he did this the officers would take over while new elections were held. It is no longer legally possible for the government to send in commissioners.

c) The banks could refuse to lend money to the council. Because councils' rate income is bunched at the beginning and end of the year, while expenditure is evenly spread, councils depend heavily on credit for day to day finance. Apparently the GLC and Lambeth have already faced short-lived credit collapses.

c) Then the council would be unable to meet current expenditure — of which the biggest item is wages.

Theoretically, it is possible that the officers, the government, and the banks could all hold off and wait until the council ran out of money for wages. If so, then when that point nears the council should stop paying debt charges (which are about 30% of current spending). That could only preserve the possibility of paying wages for a week or so — but it could ensure that the crunch is council vs. banks, not council vs. workers.

In practice it is almost certain that the officers would intervene at the start. What then? The council and the Labour Parties should call on trade unionists, tenants, and householders to stick by the elected council, not unelected officials — to refuse to implement cuts, and to refuse to pay rates or rent. Such refusal would have to escalate quickly into strike action by the council workers.

Much the same conclusion would be reached if the crunch comes a different way. Then struggle decides.

Obviously — and especially in view of the industrial weakness of the labour movement in Islington, where we have 26.5% unemployment — support must be sought outside Islington. After a successful local conference the next step should be a national conference such as called in 1981 by Lambeth.

The hard fact is, though, that no defiance of the Tories will happen in 1983 unless Islington takes a lead without any guarantee of others following. Also, the strength that even one local authority can mobilise should not be underestimated. Clay Cross did get the Housing Finance Act wiped off the statute book. When the Labour council in Lambeth — a borough scarcely more industrial than Islington, and much less solidly working class and Labour — showed signs of defying the Tories and called protests, there was a big response.

The Tories are not invincible!

LONDON ASSEMBLY: the second London Assembly will take place on Saturday January 29 1983, from 10 am to 1.30pm at Friends

House, Euston Rd, London NW1. Called by the Greater London Council and other groups to 'bring Londoners together to discuss how we

can defend, extend and improve our services'. Organisations are invited to nominate up to two representatives.

trades council policies. At Architectural Association, 10 Percy St, London W1: details 602 6734.

Hand-printed silk-screened T-shirts:

- Socialist Organiser: paper masthead with option of local group's name added at 20p per T-shirt extra.
- Solidarnosc logo, red on white.
- Labour against the witch-hunt.
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£2.50 each except SO T-shirts, £3. Postage 50p. T-shirts come in white or yellow, please state preference. Also individual designs undertaken, cost £6, must have details of design and idea. Allow 14 days for delivery. Send orders to Kevin Glover, 19 Ranton Way, Leicester.

NICARAGUA: exhibition of Susan Meiselas' photographs showing the life of the Nicaraguan people from 1978 to 1979 closes January 15. 11am (Saturday, noon) to 6pm at Camerawork, 121 Roman Rd, London E2.

UNEMPLOYED Rights — an eight week course, starting January 11. Tuesdays 10.30 to 12.30 at Bethnal Green Rights Shop, 296 Bethnal Green Rd, London E2. Fee £1.

REGIONAL Planning: day conference organised by Conference of Socialist Economists on current TUC, Labour Party and

IRELAND

BAN Plastic Bullets: a labour movement delegate conference. Saturday February 26, from 11am at UMIST, Barnes Wallis Building, Sackville St, Manchester 1. Sponsors include Labour Committee on Ireland. To sponsor, send delegates (fee £3), or to order leaflets (£6 per 100), contact: Plastic Bullets Conference, Box 15, 164-6 Hanging Ditch, Manchester M3 4BN.

BLOODY Sunday commemoration demonstration — Sunday January 30 in Leeds. North London mobilising committee meeting, Monday January 10, John Barnes Library, Camden Road, London N7.

LABOUR Committee on Ireland: annual general meeting 1983 will be on March 26. Resolutions to be in by February 27. There will be an extended meeting of the LCI National Council on January 22.

On Fridays at 8pm Channel Four is showing a six-part TV series on the Spanish Civil War.

The second part is this Friday, 21st. Socialist Organiser will be carrying a review of the series so far next week, but one thing we can tell you already: don't miss it!

WOMEN'S MARCH for Jobs: National Planning Meeting. Saturday January 15, 11.30am, County Hall, London SE1. All women welcome. Details: Women's Campaign for Jobs, 41 Ellington St, N7.

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WHAT'S ON

SPARTACIST Truth Kit — a 68-page analysis by John Lister, published by the Workers' Socialist League. £1 plus 25p postage from WSL, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

THE BATTLE FOR B



Bermondsey activists help lobby NEC against witch-hunt

Ian Swindale reports

THE Bermondsey by-election will become a focus of national attention as the Tory press intervenes in an effort to secure the defeat of Peter Tatchell and strengthen the position of Labour's right wing.

But for the working class of this solid Labour constituency, it will be local issues that are likely to predominate. The closure of the docks and virtually all industry means that Bermondsey, like so many inner city areas, faces large scale unemployment with little prospect of new jobs being created.

The ratio of flats to houses is higher than in any other part of the country and cuts in the rate support grant make it difficult for Southwark Council to maintain properties or build new houses.

Half the constituency is now under the control of the London Docklands Development Corporation which continues to increase the amount of land under its control.

The LDDC is responsible directly to Environment Minister Tom King and elected councillors have no say in how the area under LDDC control is developed.

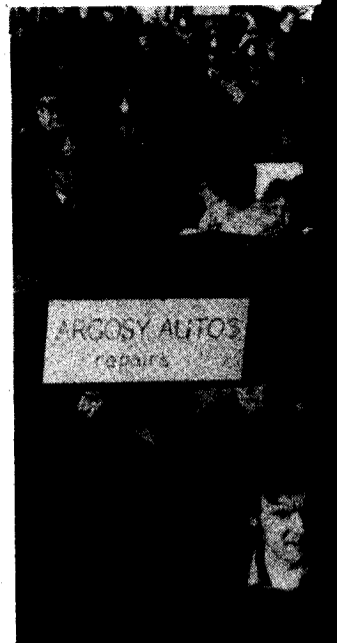
The riverside will be developed as offices, luxury homes and leisure facilities for the rich while the local communities are left to suffer poverty, unemployment and bad housing.

The appalling record of the right wing Labour Council, led for the last 14 years by John O'Grady, and finally replaced by a left Labour Council last Spring, means that as in the Peckham by-election last November, it will be the record of Southwark Council that is put on trial in this by-election.

O'Grady

O'Grady is standing as an "Independent Labour" candidate, backed by the former Labour MP for Bermondsey and now Vice-Chair of the LDDC, Bob Mellish.

They will hope to repeat their success of last Spring when 3 "Independent Labour" candidates — right wing Labour councillors who had failed to be re-elected — stood in the Riverside ward in Bermondsey and defeated the official Labour candidates.



Local Labour Party members

They argue that they represent the views of decent, honest Labour voters in the area and that the left-wing Bermondsey CLP is an unrepresentative minority.

O'Grady, the only one of the 16 candidates likely to challenge Tatchell with any chance at all of seriously undermining the Labour vote, will certainly receive the support of the Tory national media and local press. The media will no

Revive the Chartist heritage

David Harris looks at the real traditions of Bermondsey labour

IN justification of their opposition to the adoption of Peter Tatchell as the Labour parliamentary candidate for Bermondsey a lot has been said about the need for a "traditional" Labour candidate by opponents of the Labour Party's objective of securing for workers by hand and brain the full fruits of their industry on the basis of "the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and ex-

change". But what are the best traditions of the labour movement in Bermondsey? Let us look at the movement there during the Chartist period (1838-48) when the struggle of the working class for the right to vote in elections to the House of Commons (the Charter demanded manhood suffrage, etc.) was in a vital formative stage.

In April 1848 the Chartist leader Robert Wild stated

what he saw as the objectives of the movement in words which still have a burning relevance today. "It was" he said (Manchester and Salford Advertiser, April 22 1848), "not political power alone that they wanted; they wanted the control of the national resources, for what good would a vote do a man if he was locked out from the factory and the land."

At the time he said this Wild was living at Mot-

tram, but earlier he had been active in Bermondsey.

When the Bermondsey Chartist "locality" (branch) met at the Horns Tavern, Crucifix Lane, on September 26, 1842 (Northern Star, October 1, 1842), it voted six shillings to Wild, "late member of this locality, and now in Chester Castle for speaking the truth".

And at the meeting of the Chartist Metropolitan Delegate Committee held

on January 8, 1843 (Northern Star, January 14, 1843) a Bermondsey delegate raised the case of Wild, "late an active member of the Bermondsey locality, now an imprisoned victim, and pressed upon the delegates the propriety of raising a subscription in their several localities to assist his wife and family."

Robert Wild had been imprisoned for his role in the near-General Strike of August 1842 which erupted during a severe crisis when there was widespread distress and unemployment and the employers sought to impose more and more wage-cuts.

At his trial soon afterwards the judge Lord Abinger said before sentencing him to two years in prison (Hansard, Third Series, vol. 66, col. 1059): "It seems that you, Robert Wilde, was appointed a delegate to sit at Manchester, at which about three hundred were present. The question of the Charter was there discussed, and put to the delegates; and the great majority were for making the Charter a national question."

Illegal

"Why I know not what is to become of the constitution of England, if the people are to be allowed to hold illegal meetings, appoint delegates, and exercise the right of legislating — if not for the nation at large, at least for the portion of it that is willing to submit to them."

The body to which Wild had been elected, the Great Delegate Trades' Conference, which declared its aim to be to maintain and spread the strike until the

Charter was granted, i.e. until the working class had political power, was a central organ of working class struggle and power composed of delegates of the striking workers, or as a similar body in Russia at St. Petersburg in 1905 in which Leon Trotsky was prominent was later to be described, a soviet. The 1842 insurrectionary strike was in a sense Britain's "1905".

Release

Nearly three years after his release from prison Wild was elected on March 29, 1847, a member of the society closely associated with Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, the Society of Fraternal Democrats, the international workers' association founded in September 1845 which on 13 December 1847, elected a Russian secretary in addition to its secretaries for Britain, Germany, France, Poland, Switzerland, Scandinavia and Hungary.

The Society not only advocated the Charter, all its British members being members of the National Charter Association (many Fraternal Democrats however called for the vote not only as the Charter demanded for all men but also for women), beyond this it maintained that "the earth with all its natural productions is the common property of all" and affirmed that the existing state of society was "essentially unjust" (Northern Star, January 16, 1847).

So whilst its British secretary Julian Harney welcomed the February 1848 revolution in France he advised the new government that if the rich con-



JOHN HARRIS

Left-wing Chartists were linked internationally with such militants as Marx and Engels

BERMONDSEY



Protest against the old right-wing Southwark Council

doubt continue to witch-hunt Tatchell as they have done for the last 12 months in an attempt to frighten workers with the prospect of a foreign, Marxist and possibly gay MP.

Bermondsey CLP, since its shift to the left, have already begun to rebuild a moribund Labour Party on the basis of campaigning to mobilise the local community against hospital closures, and against the property speculators and

profiteers.

On the basis of the work carried out over the last couple of years — Tatchell has personally visited 20,000 of his constituents — the Labour Party will now have to convince its Labour supporters that it is O'Grady himself and the old right wing council that he led which is responsible for their plight

The evidence for this case is overwhelming and with three mass leaflets

planned before the by-election date is announced, the working class of Bermondsey will be left in no doubt about the betrayals of the right wing. But will this be enough to pull out Labour supporters on polling day?

Labour's past record in the borough was certainly a factor, last November, in the very low turn-out in the by-election at Peckham, to the south of Bermondsey.

Peter Tatchell argues

that it will be necessary to link these local issues to national issue if Labour supporters are to be convinced. He points out that even with a left wing council in Southwark, prospects for tackling local problems are severely hampered by a Tory government hell-bent on further cutting public expenditure.

Throughout

But if the concerns of the working class in Bermondsey are likely to be the local issues, for Labour Party activists throughout the country, this by-election will, as Tatchell pointed out in his speech at Peckham LPYS have a crucial importance.

A resounding win for Labour will weaken the right wing counter-offensive within the Labour Party. It will make it that much harder for the right-wing to obstruct the endorsement of left wing candidates selected by local CLPs and reinforce the right of CLPs to choose their own candidates without interference.

A victory for Tatchell could also lay the basis for a long-overdue fresh offensive by the left in the lead-up to the next General Election to extend the democratic gain and fight for Party control of the

Election manifesto.

Bermondsey CLP welcomes active support from Labour Party members throughout London (for details, see box). The campaign is already underway and it is essential that Labour Party activists respond to the call if we are to combat the enormous propaganda campaign which the ruling class will direct at Bermondsey and get a large Labour vote for Peter Tatchell.



'A big majority will be a blow at right wing'

Page!

continued to fail to provide employment for the masses "must do what perhaps would have been well to have done within 24 hours of the proclamation of the Republic — take possession of all banks, railroads, mines, fisheries and gas works, and all closed factories and workshops, in the name of the nation." Northern Star, March 25, 1848).

But let us return to the 29th meeting of the Society. At this a Chartist who was still living in Bermondsey, John Gathard of Page's Walk (Northern

Star, July 31, 1847) — earlier he lived at 5 Grange Walk (Northern Star, September 5, 1846) — was proposed as a member. For some time Gathard was the "sub-secretary" (secretary) of the Bermondsey Chartist locality meeting at the King of Prussia (Northern Star, December 16, 1843).

At the December 13 meeting two other leading Bermondsey Chartists were elected as members of the Fraternal Democrats: Joseph Chapman, a delegate from the Bermondsey locality to the

Chartist Metropolitan Committee, and John Millward, the locality's "sub-treasurer" (treasurer) who was also a delegate to the Metropolitan Committee (Northern Star, March 6 and November 20, 1847).

The Bermondsey Chartist William Dunnage of 11 Webb Street (Northern Star, September 5, 1846) was already active in the Fraternal Democrats in 1846.

At the same time these Bermondsey Chartists were active the bad effects of capitalism were showing

themselves in a devastating way. Capitalism was then however still comparatively young. Now it is in a dangerous state of decay.

It is now more than ever urgent that the objectives struggled for by Bermondsey Chartists like Robert Wild, objectives reaffirmed in the Labour Party's Constitution, should at last be carried into practice.

Let the descendants of the Bermondsey Chartists of the 1830s and 1840s do all they can to ensure that in 1983 Peter Tatchell is elected as their Labour MP with a massive majority!

SPEAKING to a meeting of Peckham Labour Party Young Socialists on the day that the Organisation Sub-committee of the Labour Party NEC agreed to endorse his candidature for the Bermondsey by-election, Peter Tatchell outlined the basis of the local party's campaign.

"We want to revive a plan drawn up 60 years ago by Dr. Salter, the pre-war Labour MP, to transform Bermondsey into a 'Garden City' of new industrial estates and low-rise houses surrounded by gardens and tree-lined streets.

We want to see all derelict land and buildings taken into public ownership to stop property speculation which is forcing up prices and preventing Surrey Docks and riverside sites being used for the benefit of local people.

Sites

So long as these sites are privately owned and on the property market, Southwark Council will be outbid by the developers. If the price of land in North Southwark was not so artificially inflated, the Council could afford to build a lot more low-rise houses with gardens and new industrial units to create local jobs.

We want the Council to refuse planning permission for any further office development as it is largely speculative, does not create local jobs and many of the offices already built still remain unlet.

The developers are using North Southwark as an overspill from the City of London. Rampant office development is destroying the local communities in Waterloo, Elephant and Castle and Borough High Street.

We also want the Council to stop building flats and exclusively build low-rise housing with gardens. Bermondsey has too many flats and too few houses. It is not the right environment for families and elderly

folk.

We are strongly opposed to the undemocratic London Dockland Development Corporation and its plans for the Bermondsey riverside and Surrey Docks.

It is an unelected body only accountable to Michael Heseltine. It has stolen planning powers from the Southwark councillors and elected to represent the interests of local people; and stolen 264 acres of riverside land.

Since Bob Mellish has been Vice-Chair of this Corporation, it has worked hand in glove with the Tory government and property speculators to carve up Bermondsey for the rich and squeeze out local people.

It has supported the Kuwait scheme to build the equivalent of 14 Centrepoint office blocks on Hay's Wharf. It has backed the building of luxury flats on Corbett's Wharf which will sell for up to £170,000 each.

Now the Corporation is pushing plans for three yacht marinas in Surrey Docks and forcing 546 industrial jobs out of the area.

We are opposed to this profiteering and want to see the LDDC abolished.

The riverside and Surrey Docks should be developed for the benefit of the local community. That means a mix of low-rise council houses with gardens, light

industry, extension of the Jubilee Line and a good sized shopping centre.

Ultimately none of these policies will succeed without a Labour government that is prepared to challenge the power and privilege of capitalism.

The problem with successive Labour governments is that they have failed to do that.

It is not enough to have good ideas if you don't have the will and determination to carry through the challenge against the multi-nationals, banks and insurance companies, the drug industries and so on.

We will be making these points to people in the course of our election campaign.

Crucial

What happens in this election will be crucial to the future of the left in the Labour Party. If we win with a big majority it will be a slap in the face for those who said that the policies we are fighting on can't win mass support.

The result in Bermondsey could also be important for the next General Election. If we can win a massive majority in Bermondsey it will show that we can win an election on socialist policies while if we do badly the press will feed on that."



For the Chartists, extra-parliamentary action was the only way — even to win the vote!

Bermondsey Labour Party are anxious to lay the groundwork for the election campaign before the date of the by-election is set. Mass leafleting of the constituency and canvassing has already begun and will continue throughout January. If you would like to help the details are as follows.

Sunday 16 January at 11am. Meet at 79 Balfour Street, SE17.

Sunday 23 January at 11am. Meet at 156b, Union Street, SE1.

Sunday 30 January at 11 am. Meet at 133 Lower Road, SE16.

Problems - and Policies

A real alternative defence policy

Arthur Bough looks at a debate in CND

AS THE Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has gathered support, CND members have been discussing what kind/s of alternative defence strategies should be developed, and whether we should concern ourselves with defence at all.

The recent Labour Party political broadcast talked of transferring resources saved from nuclear disarmament to building up conventional weapons.

But two important questions have to be answered when we are talking of alternative defence. Firstly, what are we defending, and secondly, under whose control is the defence?

The vast majority of British people gain nothing from Britain's colonies and imperialist interests overseas, and have no reason to support the British Navy against the oppressed and exploited people of the third world. North Sea Oil belongs to multinational companies, many of them American, and certainly not British workers. We have no need, therefore, of a Navy to defend that.

Does this mean that there is nothing worth defending? No. British workers have a right to defend material interests and political rights (such as they are under the existing system).

But the present military apparatus is not much use for that.

The British state uses it against British workers to break strikes and to repress people in other countries — like Ireland — with conventional weapons.

Control

A real alternative defence strategy therefore, cannot be for conventional weapons instead of nuclear, but must be based on removing the capitalist state's monopoly of violence. We must ensure that our defence is under our control.

Defence against whom?

The current campaign being waged by the British state and NATO is just a forewarning of the kind of opposition that would be mounted in the event of a Labour government seriously attempting to get



German workers with arms, 1918 — would they have been safer leaving the guns under the control of the generals?

rid of nuclear weapons. The example of the threats from the United States to destabilise Italy and France, just a few years ago, if the Communist Parties in those countries were to win in their elections, are a clear example of what could be expected.

So 'defence' is more likely to be needed against British equivalents of Chile's General Pinochet, or against people who are the current allies of Britain, rather than the USSR.

In the unlikely event of the USSR invading Britain, we would have no need to defend these factories and means of production from nationalisation. But like the Polish workers we would need to fight against bureaucratic tyranny and ensure that nationalised property is brought under our democratic control.

In 1968 fraternisation by Czech workers with Russian troops forced the Kremlin to replace the forces in Czechoslovakia because of the effect it was having. And it wasn't nuclear weapons that held back the USSR from invading Poland. Clearly, though, fraternisation alone is insufficient. We need military means to defend our rights against

the capitalist class or against Stalinist bureaucracies.

We need a workers' militia. Such a militia would need to be democratically controlled to ensure that criminal and fascist elements could not undermine its operation.

Militias

Such militias were used successfully by Cuba against American-backed insurgents, and militias (though not workers' militias) form part of the defence preparations of Sweden, Switzerland and Yugoslavia. Britain, too, in the Second World War had its own militia — the home guard which arose out of a popular and spontaneous response to the news of the German parachute landings in Holland in May 1940.

An article by Michael Randle gives some interesting details about the Home Guard. It frequently employed democratic procedures in the early phase, such as election of officers, and took some months for the War Office to bring it under control.

"It continued thereafter to have a radical thrust and

was strongly influenced by the thinking of the socialist and Spanish Civil War veteran Tom Wintringham who established an unauthorised Home Guard Training School at Osterley Park — a school which the authorities tried to close down but were later forced to accept."

Clearly therefore the concept of a workers' militia is not totally alien to "the British character" as some have suggested. But are there any recent grounds for believing that a workers militia could be developed?

Fascist

Over the last few years fascist organisations like the NF and British Movement have diverted their attention from marches to attacks on individual members of the black communities. Petrol bomb attacks like those in Deptford and elsewhere, together with a refusal by the police to do anything about them, have led black communities in many areas to develop their own self defence organisations, training their members in martial arts.

And at the recent trial of the Bradford 12, the jury

effectively decided that the black community had a right to organise its own self-defence including the production and use of petrol bombs.

The last ten years has also seen the growth of strong arm hit squads like the SPG, the use of CS gas in Toxteth, and reports that some police forces have plastic bullets.

As confrontations with the state escalate, especially with the Tebbit laws, these strong state methods will be brought into use against workers.

Just as the mass picket and flying picket were rediscovered during the miners' strike in 1972, so this time round workers will need to develop their own workers' defence squads if they are not to get their heads broken.

Both the above forms of defence squads are small examples of the sort of force which, organised and democratically controlled by the mass labour movement, could defend our interests against a foreign oppressor — and against the British bosses and their military machine.

What are the objections to such a strategy? The main one is that it would

lead to anarchy — people using their weapons to commit crimes, shoot each other, etc.

It would be best, of course, if weapons of death were scrapped completely. But in the meantime, why suppose that the generals and colonels are uniquely qualified to wield armed force. Why is it safer for the guns to be under their control rather than ours?

The argument about 'anarchy' stems from a middle class elitist view of the working class as being just a bunch of riff-raff incapable of self-discipline, whose only political role is to support middle class politicians at elections and on demonstrations, etc.

And what the opposition to the idea of a militia comes down to, politically, is a desire to keep the working class unarmed while the capitalist state i.e. armed to the teeth.

There is no way we can control the capitalist state's war machine. It must be broken up and replaced, for as long as it exists, it will be used against us and to fight imperialist wars around the world which may escalate to nuclear destruction.

The Battle of Algiers

Martin Thomas reviews Gillo Pontecorvo's classic film 'The Battle of Algiers', now showing at the Gate Cinema in Bloomsbury

THE leaders of the French army speak at length. Colonel Mathieu of the paras explains his scientific methods of counter-revolutionary warfare; and tells journalists who criticise torture that if they want France to retain Algeria, then they must accept the necessary methods.

The leaders of the nationalist FLN behave more in line with the words which one of them, Amar Ali, carried as a tattoo: "Shut up".

About the longest speech from any of them is Ben M'hidi's explanation to Ali — who wants above all

to use guns — of why the FLN is calling a general strike and suspending armed actions for the duration.

Laconically, Ben M'hidi concludes: "To start a revolution is difficult; to keep it going is harder; but your problems really begin only after you have won."

Terse

More over, the French win militarily. Sweeping again and again through the narrow streets of the Muslim district of Algiers, smashing down doors, searching, beating, arresting, and torturing, they finally destroy the FLN's command structure.

But among the Muslims fear and sullen resentment has turned to bitter fury and conscious revolt. Terse but passionate like the FLN

leaders it portrays, this film shows why and how.

The parallels from the film for Northern Ireland are plain enough, though the scale and proportions of the Algerian war were different — up to one million people were killed (3,000 European civilians, 17,000 French troops, the rest Muslims), and maybe 3,000 Muslims died under torture during the Battle of Algiers alone. In colonial Algeria, the one million settlers had an average income per head 30 times that of the nine million Muslims, many of whom lived on the edge of starvation.

Algerian nationalism first developed in the 1920s. In 1945 the Setif massacre — when anything up to 45,000 Muslims were slaughtered by settlers on the rampage in revenge for

a Muslim riot — set events moving towards the launching of a war of independence by the FLN in 1954, just a few months after the defeat of French imperialism in Vietnam.

"Battle of Algiers" was made in 1966, four years after Algeria's independence, by the Italian Marxist Gillo Pontecorvo together with Saadi Yacef, former FLN leader in Algiers, who plays his own part in it.

Bombs

It is concentrated on the years 1956-7 and the city of Algiers. On June 19, 1956 two FLN leaders were guillotined. The execution rallied thousands of Muslims to the FLN and was the signal for serious FLN military operations to start in Algiers.

On August 10, 1956, right wing settlers, with the cooperation of the police, bombed 8 rue de Thebes, in the Muslim district, killing 70 people. In retaliation Yacef organised bombings in European cafes and the battle escalated into war between the FLN on one side, the settlers and the army on the other.

On January 7, 1957, the army was given full powers in Algiers. Between then and October 8 — when Amar Ali was cornered and blown to pieces by a French army bomb — the 'Battle of Algiers' raged.

The French won that battle. After October 1957 the FLN's military action was mostly confined to the countryside, where the French army tried to combat it by moving over a million peasants to barbed wire encampments.

The army became concerned that weak, vacillating French governments would 'sell them out' by negotiating with the FLN. In May 1958 they helped to organise a coup in Algeria, to bring De Gaulle to power in Paris.

Machine

But the FLN was reorganising. On December 11 1960, as De Gaulle visited Algeria, thousands of Muslims poured into the streets of Algiers waving flags and shouting FLN slogans. This mass revolt could not be defeated as the FLN's 1956 terror campaign had been.

The army and the settlers became more and more aware that De Gaulle was in fact going to negotiate independence for Algeria. In April 1961 the army

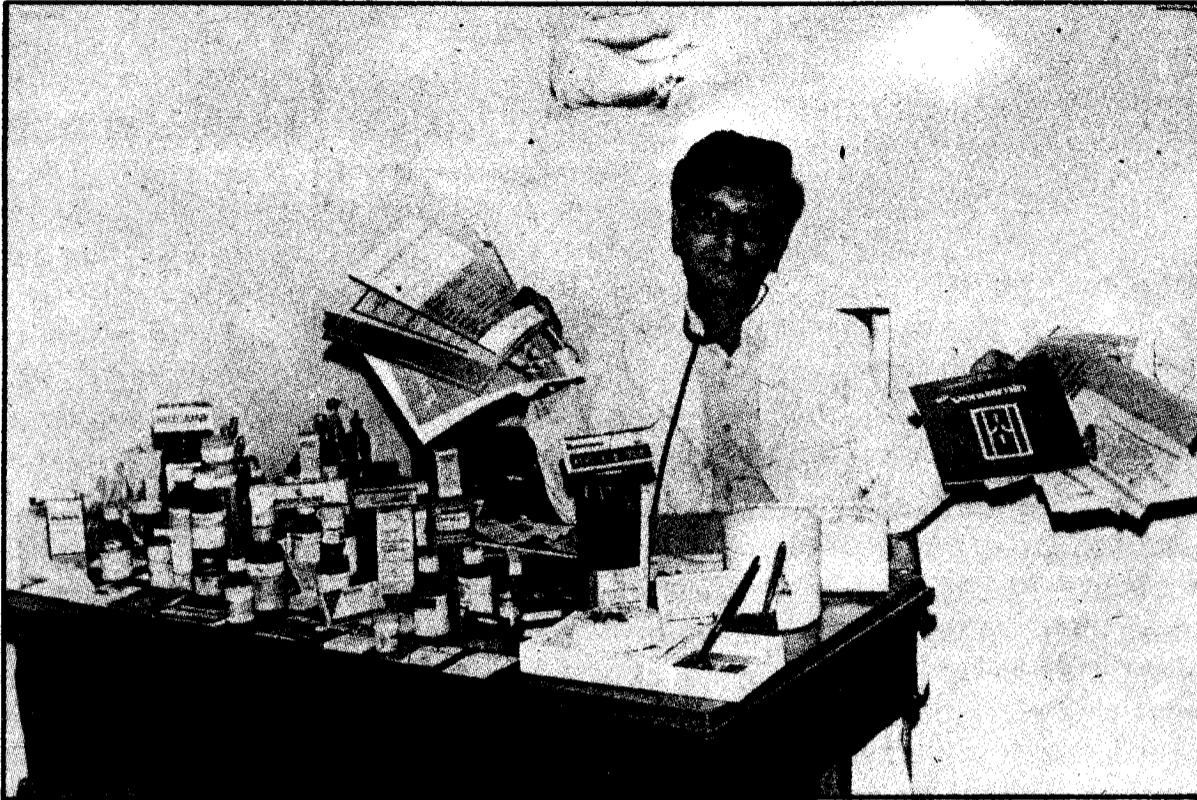
attempted another coup in Algiers; and after its failure, many of the para colonels — from whom Mathieu in the film is constructed as a composite figure — joined the die-hard fascist OAS, which slaughtered some thousands of Muslims in a campaign of terror in the months before independence in July 1962.

But, as Pontecorvo put it in an interview, "we tried to present the paratroopers as normal — not maniacs, sadists, or exceptional cases, let's call them products of rational, super-civilised France — because we meant our condemnation to reach beyond them to the political machine itself."

"It becomes a historical condemnation of the men behind the paras — of colonialism itself."

SCIENCE 'Bitter pills'

Les Hearn reviews Dianna Melrose's book on Medicines and the Third World poor (£4.95 from Oxfam, 274 Banbury Rd, Oxford)



Two weeks' free samples to one doctor!

THE drug companies have been posing recently as saviours of the nation's balance of payments, as well as being the foundation of all health. This timely book shows in forthright terms just how little right they have to make such claims.

Dianna Melrose starts by showing that the majority of the health problems of the Third World stem from malnutrition, poor public hygiene and lack of knowledge. In curing these problems, medicine will play a minor (though important) role, just as they did in the West over the last 150 years.

Companies

A coordinated attack on several fronts will be necessary — an example of this being found in the Left-governed Indian state of Kerala. Kerala has the best health statistics of the 14 Indian states, even though its health budget is the second lowest in India. This is because of its greater social and educational development, the higher status of women, greater rates of literacy, etc.

The activities of the multinational drug companies, however, only hinder this task. Their production is geared solely to the demands of local markets, with the result

that, instead of the few essential drugs necessary to combat diseases of the poor, third world countries are flooded with useless vitamin and mineral tonics, cough and cold preparations, health "restorers", digestive aids, tranquilisers and anti-depressants.

Frequently, drugs are supplied in wasteful or dangerous doses or in irrational mixtures. Lack of control in prescribing antibiotics is leading to the development of bacteria resistant to all available antibiotics.

Tonics

Examples: In Nepal, out of 2,000 drugs on the market in 1980, 733 were "tonics", while out of 160 plus brands of cough suppressant on sale in the Philippines, only about ten were based on codeine (the only drug recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO) for this purpose).

In India, only 2.7% of

drug production is accounted for by drugs for leprosy and tuberculosis, though there are four million and eight million victims of each disease respectively.

Dapsone, the basic and very cheap drug for treating leprosy is always in short supply.

Starvation

Third world patients are frequently prescribed non-essential as well as essential drugs. If poor, they then have to either choose some items from the list (with the "help" of the drug vendor!) or go into debt (with potentially disastrous effects on the health of their families as starvation follows).

The costs of drugs in the third world are frequently astronomical in relation to incomes. A course of the antibiotic Bactrim in Mexico costs as much as food for a family of four for a fortnight! Also in Mexico, the Vitamin C preparation Redoxon costs about ten times as much as the equiv-

alent in oranges, while a popular tonic contains calcium (to promote healthy bones and teeth) which every Mexican gets more than enough of from tortillas, traditionally treated with limewater (calcium hydroxide).

There is a trend in the third world towards the use of generic names when purchasing drugs. This practice which can result in savings of one-third to nine-tenths, is predictably opposed by the drug companies (just as it is in Britain at the moment). The companies say that the higher cost of branded products is justified to recoup the costs of research and development — but only 1% of R&D is specifically directed towards third world needs.

Information supplied with drugs is often quite different from that supplied in Western countries — either much reduced, exaggerated or actually untrue.

One anti-diarrhoea drug, Lomotil, is "to be used only

with caution in young children" and not at all in children under one year — in Britain. In the third world dosages are recommended for babies under 3 months!

Solutions discussed include:

□ Intelligent integration of traditional medicines with modern practices of proven value.

□ Community health projects, tackling all aspects of ill-health, including

Help the child to grow with

Orabolin



A child's world is full of fun and laughter, love and care of parents. And that is what all children need to grow healthy and sturdy. But it is not always so. Unbalanced diet, poor appetite and frequent illness often interfere with the normal growth of children.

Orabolin

Ensures normal growth

Stimulates appetite

promotes optimal weight

GROWTH IN EVERY DROP STRENGTH IN EVERY TABLET

ORGANON (BANGLADESH) LIMITED

Through advertising such as this, Third World families are conned into buying expensive medicines — leaving them no money for ordinary food

poverty. □ Setting up locally-controlled drug production (as in China, Cuba, India and Bangladesh).

□ Education schemes to show the causes of ill-health and to place drug use in a wider context.

□ Lists of essential drugs, safer prescribing practices, and use of generic names to reduce costs.

Such solutions have met and will meet with the

opposition of the drug companies and their governments. Already, Bangladesh has been threatened by the US government for refusing to supply rare monkeys for drug-testing in the US.

As far as the British Labour Party is concerned, its Science and Technology Study Group should digest the contents of this book when considering priorities for a nationalised drug industry!

This tonic cost 35 Rupees (£1.95) in India in 1981. For the same price an Indian family could have brought all the nutritious food shown here.



Health worker in a Bangladesh village

Zionism and anti-Semitism

JEREMY Green (SO December 9) of the Jewish Socialist Group tries to whitewash the role of Zionism in its dealings with anti-Semites. He also attacks my pamphlet on Zionism and anti-Semitism as "bad" without even having read it!

He accuses me of ignoring those left Zionists who fought with the Bolsheviks in 1917, yet on the first page of the section on Socialist Zionism I explicitly refer to the Borochov Regiment.

Green forgets, though, that the Zionist leadership under Weizmann urged that the Balfour Declaration (Britain's concordat with Zionism) be issued in November precisely in order that Russian Jews might oppose the Bolshevik

revolution.

He mentions Hanna Senesh, the woman parachuted into Hungary, as proof of the Zionists' interest in organising Jewish resistance against the Nazis, and to excuse their collaboration with them. But it was the Zionists in Hungary, under Kastner, who betrayed her and others to the Gestapo, and who didn't lift a finger to save them. This was the testimony of Hannah's mother in the Kastner trial in Israel.

The Kishinev pogroms, incidentally were in 1903 not 1882. Green mentions those in the British labour movement who opposed the immigration of Jewish refugees from Europe, forgetting that it was Theodore Herzl, founder

of Political Zionism, who appeared before the 1902 Aliens Commission arguing that Europe's unwanted Jews could be diverted to Palestine!

Of course it is no coincidence that Zionism arose after anti-Semitic outrages; the point is, what kind of reaction to anti-Semitism is Zionism? Does it seek to combat it or accept anti-Semitism as the natural reaction of Gentiles to the Jews in their midst?

If the latter maybe Green can answer why:

1) Did anti-Semites from Leese, Class, Fritsch to Heydrich welcome Zionism?

2) Why did Zionists such as Katzkin, Prinz, Goldmann, Herzl see in anti-Semitism a force for good and speak of the Jewish

diaspora with the same contempt as the anti-Semites?

Because without anti-Semitism there is no Zionism. Even today Israel arms the Phalangists, who in turn supply the European Nazis, who then attack Europe's Jewish communities. This is the logic of Zionism: that, far from being a haven for Jews around the world, it actually endangers them.

It is a pity that the Jewish Socialist Group is reverting to its traditional role of apologists for left Zionism.

But since Green is keen to lecture anti-Zionists on the need "to fight hardest against real anti-Semitism" perhaps he can explain why JSG members Pottins and Heiser sided with the

Workers Revolutionary Party at the recent Labour Committee on Palestine conference. The WRP distinguishes itself by refusing to condemn Ghaddafi's statements exonerating Hitler.

I am quite happy to debate with the JSG anytime, anywhere, concerning Zionism and anti-Semitism.

TONY GREENSTEIN
Labour Movement
Campaign for Palestine

Writeback



We invite readers to send us their letters, up to a usual maximum length of 400 words.

Send to 'Writeback', Socialist Organiser, c/o 28, Middle Lane, London N8.

Weak on Ireland

I have become extremely concerned at the inadequacy of Socialist Organiser's coverage of the North of Ireland during recent weeks and months. Comrade O'Mahony's article (SO 113) is a useful reference point in this respect.

Comrade O'Mahony rightly criticises the basic impracticability of Militant's Irish strategy, combining his often-stated critique of their crass economism with a general statement of the basic elements of an alternative based on a need to recognise the central importance of the 'constitutional' question whilst also recognising the importance of trade union struggles. So far, so good.

What is disturbing is

the inadequacy of SO's response to, and comments on, both of these questions. Whilst stating its general commitment to building a united working-class on the basis of an end to partition, SO has both largely ignored important industrial struggles, with the partial exception of the NHS dispute, e.g. the fight to save jobs at DeLorean involving occupation of the plant, the victimisation and personal surcharging of a trade union official in Newry, and, more explicitly, failed to respond to important developments in the Republican struggle in anything other than a cynical and detached manner.

The victory of Provisional Sinn Fein candidates in

the recent Assembly election, standing on a platform giving unequivocal support to the armed struggle, combined with a focus on social issues such as bad housing and unemployment, as faced by Catholic and Protestants alike (consistently expressed throughout their limited media coverage), provides an opportunity for republicans and socialists to begin to develop a more effective political campaigning strategy.

There is clearly a split within the Provisional movement between the 'old-style' militarists and more politically aware, socialist-inclined activists such as Gerry Adams. Surely Socialist Organiser should be attempting to influence the debate (or at

least be informing its readers of it) and be giving at least qualified political support to Adams and co. Instead SO's coverage of the election and its aftermath has been pitiful.

O'Mahony's article makes no mention at all of Provisional Sinn Fein, merely dismissing the more sectarian IRSP in a single paragraph. Seemingly the political representatives of the republican communities of West Belfast, Derry, Armagh and Fermanagh, in their fight against a brutal army of occupation, are of little importance.

Do the comrades in Islington, involved in the admirable attempt to allow those representatives a platform in London, agree?

PETER JONES
Manchester



The point is not that judges never grant a fair hearing, in their own terms - but that the labour movement should not look to the 'fair hearings' of its class enemy

Why Militant is wrong on courts

BOB Fine (letters, SO 114) is demagogic about what I said on the administration of justice in Britain, but misses, or least ignores, the main point I made against Militant's use of the courts.

In referring to "a high level of justice and impartiality - within existing laws", I was in fact giving Militant the strongest case possible so as to focus on what is wrong with their whole approach.

'A high level' does not mean adequately high.

But does Bob deny that the existing British system generally gives - by the standards of what has existed in history so far, and what exists in most of the world today - a high level of impartial administration of existing laws?

To tell that to the Brixton youth is not to tell them that they have had their fair share of it, but to help them identify precisely what is unjust in their treatment - from violent policemen who lie through their teeth in court, to biased and unfair interpretation of the law by judges, and to the class bias and content of the law, the role of the state as instrument of the capitalist class - and define a programme of working class action to change it all.

Our job is to analyse the system, show the links between the different levels of its operation, and then to criticise it both rationally and concretely.

Criticise

To define what exists is not to glorify it: on the other hand, if we want to improve it (or to go about revolutionising it), then we must criticise what really exists and not some caricature image in our heads of a regime in Britain now of lawless arbitrary rule and courts which merely rubber-stamp what the government decides.

Bourgeois rule is, for now, more subtle, and 'revolutionaries who can remain revolutionaries only by closing their eyes to reality' will be ill-equipped to fight it.

Too often they fall into a mish-mash of populism, nihilism, etc. which, because it leads to political blind alleys, actually helps to perpetuate the injustices.

Bob would not draw such conclusions: but many who would automatically agree with him, as an expression of alienation from the existing system, would also have little time for the idea of the rule of law (working class law) after a socialist revolution.

Many on the left fail fully and consistently to condemn Stalinism or to defend dissidents because of a confused notion of the regime after a socialist

revolution as a 'dictatorship' in the common sense of the word, the permanent rule of a Committee of Public Safety.

Bob does not take up the main point I made, which is not that it is unprincipled to go to court, or even always to take other socialists to court, but that it is unprincipled to make the courts the arbiter of the affairs of the labour movement.

Authority

I doubt that Lenin would have supported socialists who tried to bring in the courts in such a role. Without knowing exactly what Lenin was referring to, Bob's quote is (uncharacteristically) just an appeal to 'authority', useless as an aid to thinking about the issue.

JOHN O'MAHONY,
London.

The Protestants and British imperialism

I AM writing to take up and disagree with John O'Mahony's article on Ireland in SO 113.

The article is supposed to be dealing with Militant's politics but in reality, presents O'Mahony's own views on Ireland.

In this I think he shares an erroneous view with the Editorial in issue 112, which talks about the solution in Ireland being "some form of federal, united Ireland (since when was this SO policy?) with as much autonomy for the Protestant minority as is compatible with the rights of the Irish people as a

whole."

First of all, quite obviously, the only solution is a socialist, united Ireland.

But as O'Mahony correctly says, on the road to that are other demands: I don't think any form of autonomy for the Protestants should be one of those demands.

Of course they should have freedom of religion, etc. But insofar as they are a 'community' they identify themselves through their pro-imperialism.

As long as this distinct, pro-imperialist base.

organised as such, exists, with full or limited autonomy, then it will be impossible for the Irish-people to begin to solve their problems.

The fact is that the Republican movement is anti-imperialist, as is most of the Catholic population.

Comrade O'Mahony tries to minimise their strength, but this is not the really important point.

Northern Ireland is dominated economically and militarily by imperialism. The starting point for us must be the struggle to end that.

Of course, within that struggle we attempt to give it a class content by fighting for the Permanent Revolution. In this we oppose the solely nationalist illusions of the Provisionals and their conscious antagonising of the Protestant working class.

Connecting

This means connecting the anti-imperialist struggle with the need for the working class to take power through a socialist programme.

This means that within united class struggles, like the NHS, we raise the connection of anti-capitalism with anti-imperialism.

Trade union struggles are not "sub-political"; they are spontaneous, but contain within them the possibilities for developing the consciousness of the more reactionary elements in the working class.

But the starting point of this is to break down the pro-imperialism of the Protestant workers.

Softens

Britain is an imperialist country, specifically the country oppressing Ireland. It is the duty of socialists in Britain to prove their anti-imperialism. The stress on "democratic" solutions, in an imperialist "democracy", the dissolving of defence of the Republican movement in a mass of words defending the Protestant community, I think only softens the principled approach to the liberation struggle.

Comrade O'Mahony may say that the Provisionals are for a federal solution. But the PLO also want a state in the West Bank. We do not tail-end these movements. The only solution is a united Ireland which we fight to be socialist, as we fight for the smashing of the state of Israel.

TONY RICHARDSON



Protestant workers demonstrate against Catholic housing estate

Lesson from climbdown on Tatchell

STAND FIRM TO BEAT THE WITCH HUNT!

L.A.W. plan of action

IN THE end only John Golding voted against endorsing Peter Tatchell as Labour candidate for Bermondsey at the Labour Party organisation sub-committee meeting on Monday 10th.

Michael Foot's attempt to claim the episode as a victory for himself could not disguise the bloody nose that he and the right wing had got after Bermondsey's overwhelming re-selection of Tatchell on Sunday 9th. Peter Tatchell and Bermondsey were, after all, one of their first listed targets in the witch-hunt.

Endorsed

Only just over a year ago Foot told us: "Mr Tatchell is not an endorsed member of the Labour Party and as far as I am concerned he never will be".

The right wing difficulties do not stop at Bermondsey. In other areas too the witch-hunt has slowed down.

Just before Christmas the National Executive Committee (NEC) cancelled a meeting they had arranged with officers of Hornsey Constituency Labour Party, and lifted the threat to disband the Party if it didn't comply with their diktat and exclude Tariq Ali by December 31. They told Hornsey that they needed further consulta-



Not court action but the organisation and agitation of the rank and file have stalled the witch-hunters.

And on Monday 10th the organisation sub-committee voted by a significant majority to defer any decision on Militant until the full NEC meeting on January 26. Any proposals would have had to go to the full meeting in any case,

but the absence of any recommendation is a clear indication of disarray.

Labour Party general secretary Jim Mortimer had been sent away over Christmas to work out a witch-hunter's definition of 'membership' of Militant. His reply was reportedly a

tortuous and lengthy document which proposed a retreat from expelling Militant supporters. If Militant would agree not to be 'a Party within a Party', then that would be all right. Mortimer wanted to proceed 'cautiously and properly'.

The stated reason for deferring a decision was that there was new legal advice, and a new letter from Militant's lawyers. Does this justify Militant's threat of legal action?

No. It is wrong in principle to appeal to the capitalist courts as arbiter of the affairs of the labour movement; and it won't work. Militant's resort to legal threats has led to the witch-hunt plans being expanded from selective expulsions to wholesale proscription. And their attempt to get an injunction before the December NEC meeting was thrown out by the High Court.

We should not be surprised that the Party establishment has emphasised the legal problems. It is unlikely that they would put down their difficulties to fear of widespread resistance in the Party — though Mortimer privately warned the November NEC, "Labour cannot afford to alienate large numbers of its activists or to come into collision with a significant number of Constituency Labour Parties in the approach to the General Election".

In addition to the threat of legal action, widespread solidarity and defiance are common features of the Hornsey and Militant affairs — and Bermond-

sey. Neither Peter Tatchell nor Bermondsey CLP ever threatened to take the NEC to court. What defeated the witch-hunt was the solid support in the constituency, and the massive solidarity beyond it. As Peter Tatchell said on Monday:

"The NEC decision to endorse my candidature is not a personal victory, nor even simply a victory for Bermondsey Labour Party. It is a victory for all in the labour movement who have fought to uphold the democratic right of CLPs to choose their own parliamentary candidate".

The whole rigmarole of the register is a testimony to the right wing's lack of support in the Labour Party. They couldn't just boot people out, because they would never have got away with it. Indeed, they had to say that the register was nothing to do with a witch-hunt to get it through Party conference.

This is the root of the disarray and difficulties of the right wing and the Party establishment.

But they haven't given up. When Dennis Skinner proposed on Monday 10th that the witch-hunt be dropped, he was defeated by 12 votes to 5.

Bermondsey has shown the only way that it can still be beaten.

FRINGE meetings at all Labour Party Regional Conferences; local meetings with speakers from the Campaign group of MPs; a letter to trade unionists from Ernie Roberts, Reg Race and Joan Maynard — these are some of the activities spelled out in the latest mailing from Labour Against the Witch-hunt, which will be circulated at the end of the week.

In addition, there are details of an advert to be published in Tribune on March 4, signed by Constituency Labour Parties committed to resisting the right's purge and labour movement individuals and organisations prepared to support them. Signatories will be asked to contribute £3 towards the cost of the advert, which reads:

We are committed to a Labour victory at the next General Election on the basis of the policies agreed by Annual Conference. Any witch-hunt would endanger the Party Unity required to achieve such a victory. We therefore call on the right-wing majority of the National Executive Committee to halt all disciplinary measures against Party members, groups of members or Constituency Labour Parties.

Should the NEC persist with disciplinary measures or disaffiliations, we give notice that we will not recognise any such actions. We will not expel, nor recognise the expulsion of any Labour Party member or group of members arising from political disagreements with the NEC.

The aim and importance of the advert is to indicate publicly and clearly to the right wing the extent of resistance to any expulsions. This is a message that also needs to be sent to any waverers in the trade unions.

The mailing also invites delegates to the next LAW National Council meeting on Saturday, February 12 in County Hall, London SE1.

JOIN LAW
Affiliation to LAW entitles CLPs to a delegate at the meeting.

Membership open to CLPs, trade unions, Labour Party affiliates and individuals.
Name of Organisation:.....

CLP/Union/LPYS/
Women's Section/society/
OTHER (specify).....
Address for correspondence.....

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

Defend democracy in CLPD

So far as we are concerned, the AGM votes on registration... on the Manchester/Withington proposals... on the Regional Key Persons' EC membership... on the freedom to have one's views circulated... on keeping to constitutional channels to bring about change... are votes of confidence. It would also be quite impossible for us to work together with an EC, the majority of which would be opposed to these policies. If the AGM effectively rejects the policy advocated by the majority of the retiring EC, our resignation would become not only justified but the honest thing to do. We feel we owe it to all our supporters to make our position clear.

"Vladimir Derer, Victor Schonfield, Pete Willaman".

THIS statement by three of the leading officers of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy of intent to split if they lose certain votes at the campaign's AGM has just appeared in the December issue of the CLPD Bulletin.

It makes the continued existence of the CLPD in its present form probably the major issue at the AGM, in just over two weeks' time.

The kind of organisation that the three officers are now proposing is summed up in their description of the procedure they object to: "Having secured the control of the AGM and the EC, all that needs to be

done is to order those officers on whose contribution CLPD work depends 'to carry out majority decisions'.

The officers referred to are, of course, themselves, and their complaint is that they will be asked to carry out majority decisions if they lose at the AGM. Labour Party conference might be 'sovereign', but for them the conference of the CLPD certainly shouldn't be.

The idea of the officers of the Campaign being bound by majority decisions is portrayed not as democracy but as bureaucratic dictation, treating "CLPD offi-

cers" as "a-political paid staff". The similarity is striking between this argument and those used by MPs and the Party establishment against the democratic reforms championed by the CLPD.

Resign

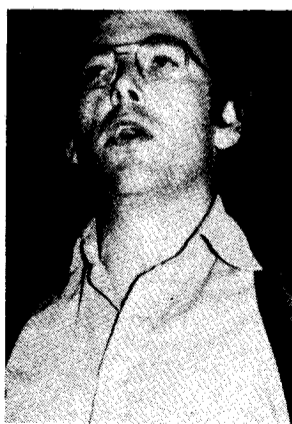
The three also threaten to resign if resolutions are passed which call for an end to the use of CLPD mailings to circulate personal attacks and personal views in a way that makes it seem that they are semi-official statements of the campaign.

On 'key persons', what they are threatening to resign over is a proposal to change a system which allows for unlimited co-optation of voting members onto the EC.

And what of those who criticise? "Of course it is perfectly legitimate for some (!) socialists to oppose from outside what CLPD stands for..." (emphasis added).

The three officers, in the name of "the CLPD EC majority", present all this as "basic questions of strategy and tactics and the kind of organisation CLPD is — or, more precisely,

by John Bloxam



John Bloxam

The statement by Vladimir Derer, Victor Schonfield and Pete Willaman is presented in an exaggerated and sensational way as a 'Reply to Anonymous Critics', the better to support their picture of 'the EC majority' defending itself against clandestine and unscrupulous plotting.

It makes a good story, but unfortunately the truth was easy to discover — and not so dramatic. The 'anonymous appeal' was, in fact, a draft shown by myself to a few other members of the CLPD executive as a possible response to the threats

what it should become".

A split in CLPD would be severely damaging, and a boon to the right wing and the Party establishment. It would threaten to wreck the work of the CLPD as the major organisation with widespread support fighting for democracy in the Party. And it would be criminal, because it is not necessary.

There are important political differences in the CLPD. But everyone ac-

cepts that the most contentious item at present — whether CLPD should register — is tactical, whatever importance we attach to it.

And opposition to the new EC implementing the decisions of the AGM would not be a good basis to split to form a new campaign for democracy!

What is labelled "the EC minority" will be arguing a different case: That the CLPD should remain in the forefront of

from the three officers in the previous bulletin to split the campaign. It was never circulated, as far as I know.

The widespread opposition to the methods represented by the threats has been expressed in four resolutions to the AGM, including one from the campaign's president, Joan Maynard.

No sensation, alas, but there is one useful result. Thanks are due to Vladimir, Victor and Pete for now widely circulating my original draft.

the fight for democracy and democratic rights in the Labour Party; that it would be a serious and very damaging mistake to split the CLPD; that the present differences are containable in a united and effective CLPD; and that democracy within the campaign is absolutely necessary. Majority decisions must be loyally implemented by those responsible; the rights of minority viewpoints must be respected.

EALING NALGO BALLOT ON ACTION AGAINST

CUTS

by Nick Driscoll (senior steward, Ealing NALGO, in personal capacity).

AT THE beginning of December a special branch meeting of Ealing NALGO voted overwhelmingly to condemn Ealing Council for threatening compulsory redundancies in order to conform to government spending cuts. The branch meeting also opposed attempts to cut services or privatise council work.

NALGO has a policy of all-out strike action in cases of compulsory redundancy. Ealing branch resolved to ballot members on implementing this policy.

Already in Ealing seven schools have been closed, a mother and baby home, five children's homes, and public baths and a library.

Drastically

Council house building has been drastically cut, and there has been an almost complete stop in housing people from the waiting list.

Increased charges on services like meals on wheels, school meals and luncheon clubs for the elderly have seriously affected their use.

Staff cuts aren't new, either: in 1979 the staff in Technical Services was cut 7%. Posts have also been cut from education administration, lab technicians in schools, and field social workers.

Part-time non-teaching staff hours have been cut, and part-timers have been put on 'flexible' contracts which enable cuts in hours to be made automatically when pupil numbers fall.

Over the past few years Ealing Council has reduced its workforce by 600.

The council now aims to slash its budget by 4 per cent — about £5 million. Proposed cuts include the elimination of all grants to playgroups and mother and toddler groups.

Parks

Play centres in the parks will cease to offer any provision to under-fives, and provision for over-fives will be drastically reduced. School meals throughout the borough will be put on a snack basis only. Eight pri-

Defend Newham 8

THE NEWHAM 8 — black youth recently arrested by uniformed police after being set on by plain-clothes officers — appeared in Newham magistrates' court on December 17. 100 supporters picketed the court.

The eight were remanded to Snaresbrook Crown Court where the case will probably come up in late May. Most significantly, a new charge has been added to the charges which does away with the immunity of essential services workers. This is similar to charges brought against the strikers in

many schools are to be amalgamated into four, one high school closed, and six further schools amalgamated into three.

Ealing council is regarded throughout London as a hard-line Tory administration, and we are conscious of the fact that unless we defeat compulsory redundancies here it may well set the pattern for other boroughs. NALGO district officer Andrew Jacks told us at the December meeting that Ealing is the first borough in London to face compulsory redundancies.

Sexist Isle of Man

THE LONDON Legal Workers' branch of TGWU-ACTSS has passed an unanimous motion opposing the TGWU's decision to hold its Biennial Delegate Conference in the Isle of Man.

The Isle of Man was chosen as an alternative after the TGWU rejected Blackpool because of the local Tory council's privatisation moves. But for gay members of the TGWU the shift is a bad one. Homosexuality is still outlawed in the Isle of Man.

TGWU branches and members are asked to write to the General Executive Council at Transport House, Smith Square, London SW1, calling for a change of venue. Further information about the campaign from [01-]737 5798.

Free Phil Robins!

PHIL Robins, a young black football player, was shot twice by the police with Ferret CS gas shells during last year's rebellions in Toxteth.

Phil was severely wounded and only emergency surgery saved his life. The injuries which took six months to heal, took his colour and his career as a footballer.

Phil and Ken Anderson were shot in the same time last August and were taken to hospital for treatment.

In April last year Ealing NALGO switched to a new shop steward system of representation based on union reps where possible in each workplace.

This has made the flow

of information through the branch much better than under the old system.

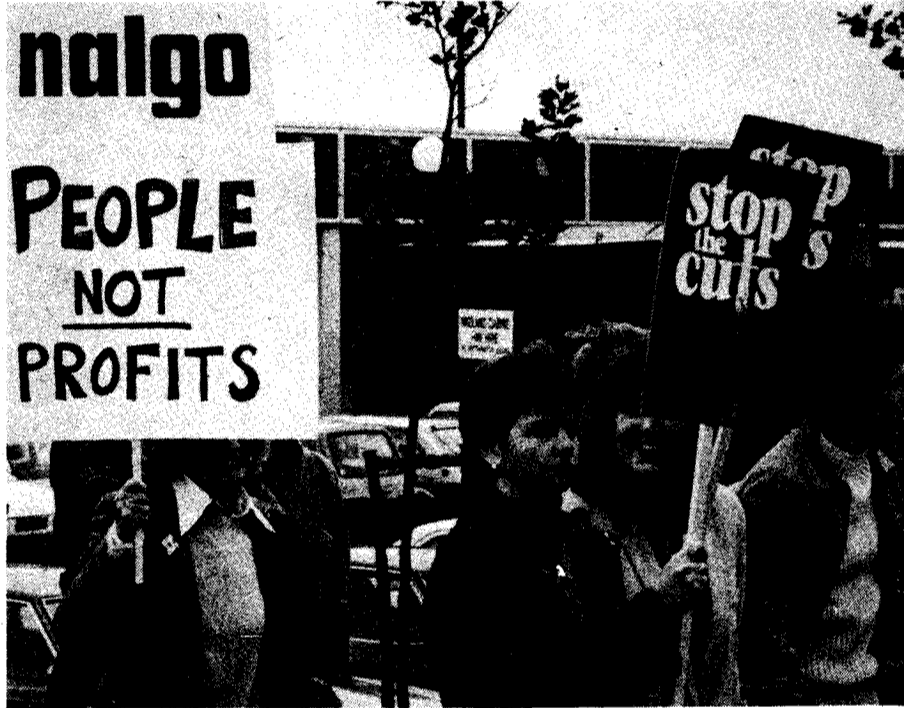
An important part of this has been to involve the new stewards as much as possible and to hold meetings in each workplace — quite an organisational feat in a branch with over 2500 members scattered across the borough!

In the week of the ballot on strike action — starting January 17 — we plan to join a lobby outside the council meeting on January 18, organised by Ealing Trades Council and the Labour Party.

Already teachers and parents have had an impressive lobby of the education sub-committee, and play-group staff and parents of the Policy and Resources committee.

Spiral

The choice that faces us in the ballot is either to accept the continuing spiral of cuts and redundancies, or to stand firm and united to protect our jobs and services now and in the future. Vote for all-out action!



The options are: fight cuts now, or see jobs dwindle...

Stanfords danger

IT APPEARS that moves could be made within ACTSS to force a settlement on the ten strikers at Stanfords map shop, London. A senior ACTSS official met with a management representative on Christmas Eve and they discussed a settlement of the dispute which involves management paying off the strikers instead of reinstating them.

The amounts paid — roughly equivalent to redundancy pay — would

be about £150 each, with some of the workers getting nothing. There would also be no agreement about union recognition in the shop, which was the cause of the strike.

A settlement on these lines would be unacceptable to the strikers and to the ACTSS official handling their case, and they would oppose it being forced on them.

Moves to cut Stanford's trade are continuing. As well as picketing the shop,

the strikers have approached the Inner London Teachers' Association (NUT) and the Association of University Teachers to get orders to Stanfords from school, college and university libraries stopped. Already the ILTA has agreed to the boycott.

Money is desperately needed — the strike fund is very low. Send donations to ACTSS, 173 Clapham Rd, London SW9 0QF, with cheques payable to Stanford Strike Account.

Petition

A Free Phil Robins campaign was organised shortly after his imprisonment. It has collected a 1000 name petition, got 500 MPs to take up his

case, and organised street meetings, benefits, pickets and leafletting regularly.

Since his imprisonment Phil has faced further harassment. For asking for a proper medical examination he was put in solitary for 14 days and he has also lost remission.

Phil has not lost his resolve, and is continuing his civil action against the police.

*Free Phil Robins Campaign, PO Box 52, Liverpool L69 8AT.

Everton Williams



Broad Left fight for democracy

THE 'Broad Left Organising Committee (Trade Unions)' is calling a conference about 'Accountability of the Block Vote' on Saturday February 19, with Tony Benn as main speaker, at County Hall, London (10.30 am to 6pm). The chairperson and secretary of the committee are circulating the following statement:

'It is our intention that the conference shall be as representative of the Left in the trade union movement as possible. Consequently we are extending invitations only to genuine Broad Left organisations within the unions and to trade union official organisations.

The main aim of the conference will be to discuss the whole issue of how the block vote is cast within the TUC and Labour Party on policy and the election of the leadership of our movement. It is quite clear to our committee that it is vital that the Left arrive at a correct view on how we can extend democracy within the unions.

The last TUC and Labour Party conferences have both raised the issue of trade union voting at these

conferences. We are in danger that undemocratic practices will deprive the rank and file of hard-won gains but these same practices will also bring discredit to the whole working class movement.

The right wing will organise behind closed doors to formulate and hatch their plans and conspiracies. Our conference must fully discuss and decide if possible a policy that will make trade union voting more open and accountable to the ranks. Just as important, we must ensure that a wedge is not driven between the Constituency Labour Parties and the unions because of the recent disappointments.

On the agenda will also be a discussion on the need for a real drive for workplace Labour Party branches. Could you please give the conference publicity and inform me of the number of credentials you will need?'

PHIL HOLT
JOCK McPHERSON
QUINN

108 Prince's Boulevard, Bebington, Merseyside L63 7PE [051 645 1375].

National Day of Action
STOP THE DEPORTATIONS!
Suspected 'illegal immigrants' are facing not only threats by the Home Office to deport them, but refusal by the DHSS to pay them supplementary benefit and child benefit. The Khan and Kaur Defence Campaign has called for a protest on Monday January 31.
PICKET YOUR LOCAL DHSS

Michelin bosses seek speed-up

Michelin is planning to cut 1300 from the 4500 workforce at its Stoke factory. Arthur Bough spoke to a TGWU branch committee member at the factory.

Throughout the UK a total of 4,000 job losses are planned, not taking into consideration 1,000 jobs already gone due to early retirement.

They are made up as follows: 2,300 - Belfast factory closing; 1,300 from Stoke; 400 from the rest of the UK.

The 1300 from Stoke are divided equally between staff and hourly paid. It is feared that there will be compulsory redundancies for staff. 250 hourly paid are to go by the end of January, and another 400 by early retirement and natural wastage.

Due to the closeness of the announcement to Christmas there has been no official TGWU policy yet adopted. But it is the feeling of the officers of the branch and the full time officer that the real reason for the announcement on the hourly paid is to disguise the true situation on the company's intentions to completely alter the working practices and patterns of shift working.

From statements made to the press, however, it would appear that the situation is being accepted by the full time officers of the AUEW and EETPU.

There is no joint works committee. However, there is constant liaison between the shop stewards of the hourly paid and I expect that there will be discus-



French Michelin workers: joint action needed

sions between the factories after the holidays.

It would appear that there is going to be no reduction in total production, but a rationalisation of work. This could lead to conflict as it is against the policy of the TGWU.

At the present time there is no compulsory redundancy. However, if the required numbers are not forthcoming by January 31, then compulsory redundancy will be introduced.

Don't you think voluntary redundancies amount to selling jobs which could go to future generations, and that therefore no matter how good the deal workers have no right to accept? I fully agree.

Michelin is a French firm.

There has been some speculation that these cutbacks are to enable work to be transferred back to French plants. Doesn't this illustrate what is wrong with the call for import controls? If it is right to protect British jobs by protecting British firms, you can't blame the French for doing the same.

Personally I consider that import controls can help the worker for a period of time. In the case of Michelin, France was chosen as the factory to remain open due to very poor unionism and efficiency at the particular plant.

Wouldn't it be useful to contact the unions in the French factories to get them to block the transfer of work? Contact will be made

through the national officer. From 1970 to 1978 there were good international relations between France, Italy, Germany and the UK. Problems arose in 1979 which led to a breakdown in communications.

However, a world Michelin conference was held in Geneva in 1982 with delegates from Stoke attending.

Shortly after the redundancies were announced, leaders of the Labour-controlled city council went on record in the local newspaper and radio saying what a responsible firm Michelin was.

Our response is to severely condemn the leaders of the council for such actions. We intend to send the necessary motions to the various constituencies and to the City Party.

The downturn in tyre demand is obviously related to the drop in demand for cars, which is part of the slump affecting the entire capitalist world. Does Labour's Programme in your opinion provide any solutions to the problem?

Though the majority of production goes to the car industry, this is not the problem. Demand there has held up. The problem is the fall off in truck demand. Fodens and ERF, both of which were reasonably close to Stoke, have cut back massively. Of course, the fall-off in truck demand is part of the recession.

I agree that just nationalisation is not the answer - look what's happening in the mines - but I think the commitment to reducing unemployment will help by increasing demand. Also, the proposal to establish a National Transport Agency and give more support to local public transport could increase demand for truck and bus tyres.

My feeling is that the only real solution is through the nationalisation of the entire car, truck, bus, tyre and components industry under workers control and the development of a plan for the industry.

The present government is not going to agree to that, and if Golding and Co. get their way nor would a Labour government: so workers throughout the car and components industry have to get together to draw up their own plans like the Lucas Aerospace workers did, to organise work sharing without loss of pay, to black transferers of work, to occupy to stop closures, and to link up with workers in Europe.

What do you think about such a strategy?

A lot depends on the type of Labour government we put into power - whether it is left or right. Hopefully a left Labour government would introduce a planned strategy for the economy.

In the meantime there's got to be a lot of discussion in the labour movement as to how these problems can be overcome, and then to take whatever steps are necessary, including blacking of work transfer and occupations if necessary.

Where to find us

NEXT Socialist Organiser delegate meeting: Saturday January 15, 11am to 5.30pm, at the Students' Union, Coventry Technical College, The Butts, Coventry. For details of creche and/or accommodation, phone Coventry 75623.

THERE ARE Socialist Organiser groups in most major towns and cities. See below for details of your area - and if you want more details, or there is no group listed for your area, fill in and return the 'Get Organised' form.

• SCOTLAND.

Glasgow. For details of meetings contact paper sellers or Stan Crooke, 114 Dixon Avenue, Glasgow G42. SO is sold at Maryhill dole (Tuesday mornings) and Rutherglen shopping arcade (Friday lunchtime).

Edinburgh. For details of meetings ring Dave, 229 4591. SO is sold at Muirhouse (Saturday 10.30-12) and the First of May bookshop, Candlemaker Row.

• NORTH-WEST

Wallasey. Contact Colin Johnston, 1 Wellington Rd, Wallasey.

Liverpool: Contact 733 6663. Next meeting: Thursday January 20, 7.45pm at the Swan Hotel, London Rd: '1983 - what prospects for capitalism?' SO is sold at Progressive Books, Berry St, and at News from Nowhere, Whitechapel.

Manchester. Meets every Sunday evening, 7.30pm, Lass O'Gowrie, Charles St. SO is sold at Grassroots Books, Newton St, Piccadilly.

Stoke. Contact Arthur Bough, 23 Russell Road, Sandyford (84170).

Accrington. Contact 395753. SO is sold outside Woolworths, Town Centre, Saturday 11-12.30.

Rochdale. Contact 353 Rochdale Old Rd, Bury. Group meets second Monday of each month, 8pm, Castle Inn, Rochdale. SO is sold at Metro Books, Bury.

• YORKSHIRE AND NORTH-EAST

Durham. Meets every Tuesday, 6.30pm, Students Union bar, Durham university. SO is sold at the Community Co-op, New Elvet.

York. Contact c/o 28 Middle Lane.

Leeds. Contact Garth Frankland, 623322. SO is sold at Books and Corner Books, Woodhouse Lane.

Bradford. Contact Barry Turner, 636994. SO is sold at the Starry Plough bookshop.

Sheffield. Meets alternate Wednesdays, 7.30pm at the Brown Cow, The Wicker. Next meeting Wednesday January 19. SO is sold outside Boot's, Foregate (Saturday 12 to 1) and at the Independent Bookshop, Glossop Road.

Hull. Meets every Wednesday, 8pm: details from SO sellers. Childcare available. SO is sold at the Prospect Centre (Saturday 11-12).

Halifax. Contact 52156.

• WALES

Cardiff SO. Contact 492988.

• MIDLANDS

Birmingham. Meets alternate Fridays, 7.30, the Labour Club, Bristol St. Next meeting Friday January 14. SO is sold at the Other Bookshop, Digbeth High Street.

Coventry. Contact Keith White, 75623. SO is sold at the Wedge Coop, High St.

Leicester. Contact Phil, 857908. SO is sold outside Supasave (Friday 4.30 to 6), the Co-Op, Narborough Rd (Saturday 11-12.30), and at Blackthorne Books, High Street.

Northampton. Meets alternate Mondays. Next meeting: January 10, 'Women and socialism'. For details contact 713606.

Nottingham. Meets every Friday 7.30pm at the International Community Centre, 61B Mansfield Rd. SO is sold outside the Victoria Centre (Saturday 11 to 1) and at the Mushroom Bookshop, Heathcote St.

• SOUTH

Oxford. Meets alternate Thursdays. For details ask paper sellers. SO is sold at the Cornmarket (Saturday 11am to 1pm).

Basingstoke. Meets every other Tuesday, 7.30pm, Chute House. Next meeting, January 25.

• LONDON

North-West London. Meets fortnightly: contact Mick, 624 1931. SO is sold at Kilburn Books.

Islington. Meets on Sundays, 3pm, Thornhill Neighbourhood Project, Orkney House, Caledonian Rd/Copenhagen St. Next meetings: January 23, 'Decentralising council services', and February 6, 'Council budget 1983'. For childcare phone Nik 607 5268.

Haringey. Contact 802 0771 or 348 5941. Meets every other Sunday, 6pm, Trade Union centre, Brabant Rd. Next meeting January 16.

Tower Hamlets. Contact 790 4937. Meets fortnightly on Fridays, 6.30 to 8.30pm. Next meeting January 14.

Newham. Socialist Organiser/Communist Party debate, 'Which Way to socialism', Thursday January 27, 8pm. For venue phone 555 9957. Speakers: John Grahl (CP), John O'Mahony (SO).

South East London. Contact 691 1141.

Lambeth / Southwark: meets every other Wednesday, Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, London SE5. Business 7.30 to 8.30, open forum discussion 8.30. Next meeting January 19.

Hounslow. Meets fortnightly on Sundays, 8pm. For details phone 898 6961.

Hackney. Contact c/o 28 Middle Lane.

SO is sold at the following London bookshops: Colletts, Central Books, The Other Bookshop, Bookmarks, Bookplace (Peckham Rd, SE15), and Reading Matters (Wood Green Shopping City).

SO GAY CAUCUS: meeting Sunday January 16 in London. For details phone 01-609 3071.

Ford sackings part of speed-up plan

THE announcement by Ford that it plans to axe 1,300 jobs at its Halewood Plant appears to be related first and foremost to a renewed drive for increased productivity on the shop floor.

In addition to the Halewood move, management are currently refusing to supplement the near-exhausted fund to finance lay-off pay for other Ford workers on short-time - due to run out next month.

Halewood management have proposed a voluntary redundancy scheme to cut 1,300 jobs by April: and in its supporting arguments has referred to the different levels of output from its Halewood workforce compared with that at its other plant producing the top-selling Escort - Saarlouis in Germany.

A review of labour costs and efficiency at Halewood is to be held, and unions

have been told that 'changes in attitudes' are needed at the plant.

"Even if Halewood was producing at full capacity it would require a manpower reduction of about 3,000 in order to match the production efficiency of Saarlouis", announced operations manager Ted Rayment.

And to crack the whip for speed-up still more loudly he stressed that "What we are talking about is Halewood's survival."

Ford is the only British motor manufacturer to have made a profit last year, and is plainly intent upon sustaining its lead both by raising prices and by tightening the screws on the shop floor workforce.

Such cynical attempts to play off one plant against another - in this case a British workforce against a German plant - must be combatted by the trade union movement through

the fight to expose the company's real plans and the actual figures on which they are based.

This means that stewards in Halewood should seek direct links with those in Saarlouis, and take up the fight for the opening of the books of Ford's giant multinational operations to the inspection of elected trade union committees.

In the meantime attempts in Halewood to cut manning levels through the voluntary redundancy scheme must be fought by all-out stoppages, linked, in the event of threatened closure, to occupation of the plant.

It is not only the motor industry which is the scene of the latest drive towards speed-up. Pay talks covering thousands of fuel tanker drivers have ground to a halt as a result of management insistence on including productivity clauses in their 6.5-7% offer.

Socialist Organiser Alliance

Get Organised!

Socialist Organiser is not just a paper. We fight to organise workers in the struggle for a new leadership in the labour movement.

If you agree with what we have to say, you can help. Become a supporter of the Socialist Organiser Alliance - groups are established in most large towns.

To 'Get Organised' in the fight, or for more information, write at once to us at 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Name

Address



ITALIAN

Socialist Organiser

A government package of tax and price rises has provoked a movement developing towards a general strike. Harry Sloan reports.

WORKERS STRIKE AGAINST AUSTERITY PLAN

IN THE biggest political movement since the mid-1970s, millions of Italian workers have taken part in strikes, occupations, demonstrations and mass meetings in protest at a government package of tax and price increases.

Monday saw the second major stoppage in four days, as a joint action by all three trade union confederations spilled over beyond the planned two-hour workplace meetings into mass demonstrations, the blocking of motorways, stations and airports, and, in Milan, an attempted occupation of a police headquarters.

In Naples, Alfa Romeo workers occupied the station for an hour. In Bologna a huge demonstration was supported by metalworkers, textile workers, and students. Milan workers called for a nationwide general strike, while in Genoa workers are proposing to go it alone with a generalised stoppage on Thursday.

In Rome, metal workers have taken the lead — one of them telling a TV crew, "You keep on doing programmes on workers in Poland: how about workers in Italy?"

Nervous

Franco Grisolia of the Italian Trotskyist group LOR told us that the mood and militancy of the workers was far in advance of the guarded and nervous response of the leaders of the three main trade union confederations — and spilled over beyond the immediate issue of the rises in income tax and charges (costing an average £8 per week per family) to express a generalised hostility to the Christian Democratic coalition government.

This is despite the fact that the austerity package has been supported by the Socialist Party representa-

tives in the government, though the more right wing coalition party, the Social Democrats, seeking to exploit the widespread unpopularity of the govern-

ment and its policies, has declared its opposition. The position of the powerful Communist Party has been to declare its complete opposition to the wage-cutting proposals, while in the unions CP officials struggle to keep control of their angry members. In Milan it was CP members who blocked attempts to occupy the

police headquarters. But workers' anger has been fuelled by the pressures of 16.3% inflation, while talks have now been dragging on for a year between bosses and union bureaucrats aimed at cutting back the measure of protection to wage levels given by the 'scala mobile' inflation escalator clause.

Inflation

On the other side, the Italian ruling class confronts the worst inflation rate among the industrialised countries, and a colossal budget deficit which compels it to take stern action against the working class despite the weakness of successive governments.

A four-hour national industrial stoppage has meanwhile been called for next Tuesday, January 18, as the various union leaders attempt to contain the militancy of their members and avoid a direct challenge to a right wing government which — for a variety of reasons — they do not wish to see toppled from office.

Franco Grisolia told us that the policy of the LOR is to build on and raise the developing consciousness of the working class, fighting for the demand not of further sapping partial and



Shipyard workers march through Livorno



Mandelli: author of the austerity plan

'guerilla' stoppages out of concerted, united, all-out general strike action to bring down the heavily discredited Christian Democrats.

Demands

The fight must be for a government of workers' parties, while the working class — employed and unemployed alike — needs to organise to fight for its own demands of anti-capitalist policies to meet the crisis, and for a genuine workers' government.

Renault strike spread

A STRIKE by paintshop workers in the state-owned French car firm Renault has paralysed its Flins plant and spread to Billancourt.

The paintshop workers came out on January 6 calling for a wage rise of 200 francs (£19) a month, improved conditions, and a bonus of 300 francs (£29) for all production workers. The unions have also called for a review of all pay grades in Renault.

Renault management — complying with the wage freeze ordered by the Socialist-led government — have refused even to dis-

cuss the pay demands, saying they will talk only about increased shower time and other work conditions.

On January 10, 10,000 of Flins' 18,000 workforce were laid off, and the Billancourt paintshop came out on the morning of the 11th. But the CFDT — the Socialist-leaning union which is leading this fight — has taken a less than aggressive line in this confrontation with government pay policy. "We are currently in a waiting situation", a CFDT spokesperson told the Paris daily Le Monde.



Metal workers march through Rome

Let's make it £1,000!

WE arrived this morning to find the treasurer in an advanced state of delirium: running round the office, and jumping up and down with glee. The reason? This week's post brought in a wonderful total of £459.05 — bringing the January total to £646.55, exceeding our cautious £500 target in the first half of the month.

This week's money was all personal donations, and we know of many SO groups up and down the country who are holding jumble sales, socials, and other fund-raising events. So there's no reason why we can't double our target.

Let's have a thousand pounds for January! Send money to: The Treasurer, 214-Sickert Court, London N1.

Thanks to the following: Paul Clift, £2; Stockport SO supporters £2.55; Sheffield SO supporters £1.50; Ian McCalman £20; Steve McArthur £100; Ann Duggan £100; Abdul Sheir £2; Sarah Bryant £90; Mike Grayson £60; London supporter £20; Barry Turner £20; Jim Denham £2; Phil, Birmingham £2; Lynne Gregory £20; Helen Flack £25.