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Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance. No. 121 February 24 1983 25p Claimants and strikers 10p

'WE HAD THE TORIES ON THE RUN' ON THE RUN'

"We had the Tories on the run". That was the feeling among many water workers as their four week strike ended.

The government's 4% hard line was swept aside. But the union leaders ran the whole dispute with the brakes on, and settled for far less than could have been

won.

Sunday's demonstration at ACAS was crucial for what was won. The union leaders went into the inquiry promising to accept the results come what may. But the militant lobby and occupation at the ACAS offices made it clear that the rank and file would not stand for

cosmetic tinkering.

With delegations from Sheffield, Birmingham, Oxford, London and elsewhere, it was the first time in the dispute that rank and file organisation had been able to show its strength and put pressure on the top leaders at national level.

That pressure must have

been the major factor behind the inquiry's difficulty in reaching a conclusion - the long delay and, finally, the report signed only by the chair, not by the union or the employers' representatives.

The problem was that it was only pressure. If an organised, representative committee of the rank and file had existed, able to take the running of the dispute out of the hands of the full time officials, then the setback for the Tories could have been turned into a resounding defeat.

That was on the cards. Activists were discussing a national meeting of shop stewards and strike committees for next weekend. Links were developing fast - in an industry which had no previous network of unofficial organisation at all. But not fast enough.

The organisation developed in the pay dispute will however now be turned to good account in the coming struggles over the scrapping of the National Water Council (and all national agreements) and the threat of job cuts.

The inquiry report gives a 14 per cent increase on basic pay. A chunk of that is not new money, but consolidation into basic of bonus payments. Higher shift rates and long-service supplements, payments for flexible working and a one-hour cut in

the working week, bring the overall increase to between 10 and 12 percent over 16 months.

That's far less than the 15% claim, which in its turn was less than would be needed to restore water workers' real pay to its 1975 level. The trade union leaders had no mandate to negotiate a 16 month deal, yet called for a return to work without even consulting the membership on this offer.

Gas workers' unions have negotiations on February 24, and power unions are talking to the employers on March 3. Both currently face offers of 4% or only a little more. The union leaders can have no excuse now for not going vigorously for the full claim, backed up by strike action.

The water workers have cracked the image of the Tories' invincibility, an image which had been reinforced by repeated sell-outs by union leaders, and spread so much demoralisation and despondency in the working class.

Now the rest of the labour movement, fighting on wages and against cuts and privatisation, can and must turn the crack into a gaping hole in the Tories' credibility, and reawaken hope among millions of workers that we can beat the Tories after all.



JOHN SMITH (IFL)

Scores of striking water workers were met with cheers as they joined a demonstration against the Tories, organised by Hyndburn Trades Council on Friday 18th. About a thousand demonstrators greeted Thatcher with boos and shouts of abuse as she arrived in Accrington for lunch at the Conservative Club. She had arrived from Preston where workers had occupied a factory she was to have visited. Her tour was to include the Rossendale Valley where unemployment is over 25% in some areas.

About a hundred police were needed to protect Thatcher on her visit to Accrington. When asked by the media to comment on the hostile reaction in Lancashire she was reported to have said that she would just have to learn to put up with it. Four thousand unemployed workers in Accrington hope it won't be for very long!

All out to save pit jobs!

DESPITE the ballot defeat and the collapse of the Scottish area leadership over Kinneil, miners are still determined to fight closures.

As we go to press, a special South Wales area miners' conference on Wednesday 23rd is hearing a recommendation from the area executive for an emergency coalfield ballot on strike action. The call is for an all-out area strike from Monday 28th - demanding a halt to closures, and in particular that Lewis Merthyr pit be kept open.

At Lewis Merthyr 28 miners are on a stay-down protest. The other 700 miners struck on Monday when they heard that the Coal Board had decided not to invest money to exploit other reserves of coal when the present seam runs out in July.

An arrogant Coal Board immediately sacked the 28 - including Des Duffield, who is vice-president of the South Wales area NUM and the Lewis Merthyr lodge secretary

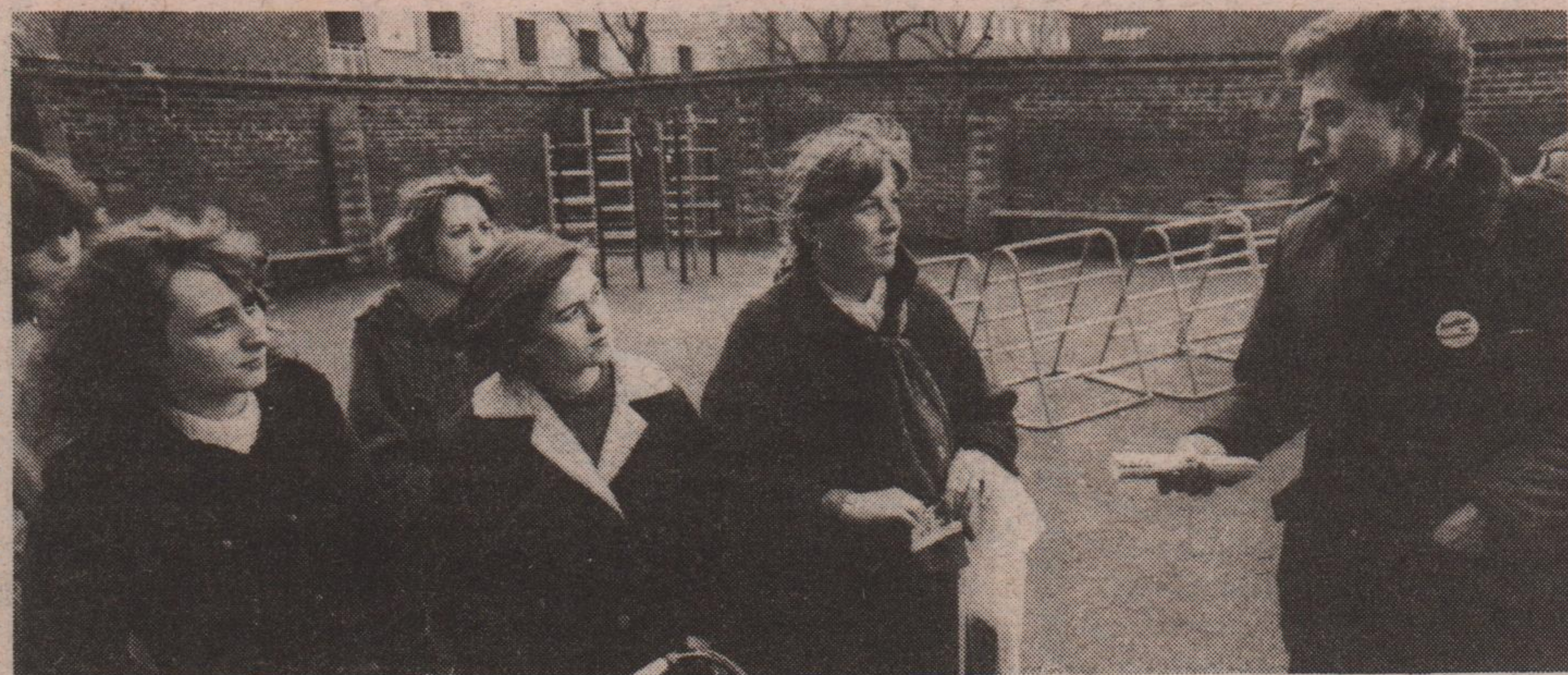
and miners at other pits responded angrily.

On Tuesday 3,000 more miners struck at Maerdy, Tower, Nantgarw, Tymawr, and Penrhiwceibr, and delegates from the six striking pits lobbied the area executive meeting.

The sacking of the 28 poses the issue sharply. Like the move to appoint Ian McGregor as Coal Board chief, it shows that the alternative to a fight back now is not a quiet life, but the Tories and the bosses doing to the pits what they have done to BL and British Steel.

When the South Wales miners discussed action in January - it was postponed after the Kinneil collapse - Arthur Scargill promised that it would spread to other coalfields "like wildfire". This time the Lewis Merthyr strikers are complaining about Scargill's failure to give a lead against closures.

Even if Scargill has ducked out, the NUM rank and file can't afford to.



ANDREW WARD (REPORT)

Vote Peter Tatchell!

WE WILL NOT EXPEL!

This Wednesday the Labour Party National Executive is set to decree the expulsion of the five members of the Militant editorial board. But Constituency Labour Parties are pledged to resist. Jane Andrews, chair of Islington Central Labour Party* reports.

SINCE the Party Conference, Central Islington Labour Party, like Constituency Labour Parties throughout the country, has passed a series of motions against the Register, against the witch-hunt, and against expulsions.

At the General Committee in February we agreed to write to the NEC urging them 'to ensure that, with an election in the offing, the efforts of its full-time staff are fully directed to secure a Labour victory and not to the investigating or expulsion of individuals from the Party'. We called on the NEC not to proceed with the expulsion of five

* writing in a personal capacity.

members of the Militant editorial board.

This motion, like the others, has a particular significance for Central Islington Labour Party since Peter Taaffe and Ted Grant are members of our Party.

Tangles

Month by month we have watched the preoccupation of the NEC with finding ways of expelling Militant. They have become enveloped in legal and constitutional tangles at a time when most constituency activists are concentrating their energies on local campaigning in the lead-up to the General Election.



JOHN HARRIS

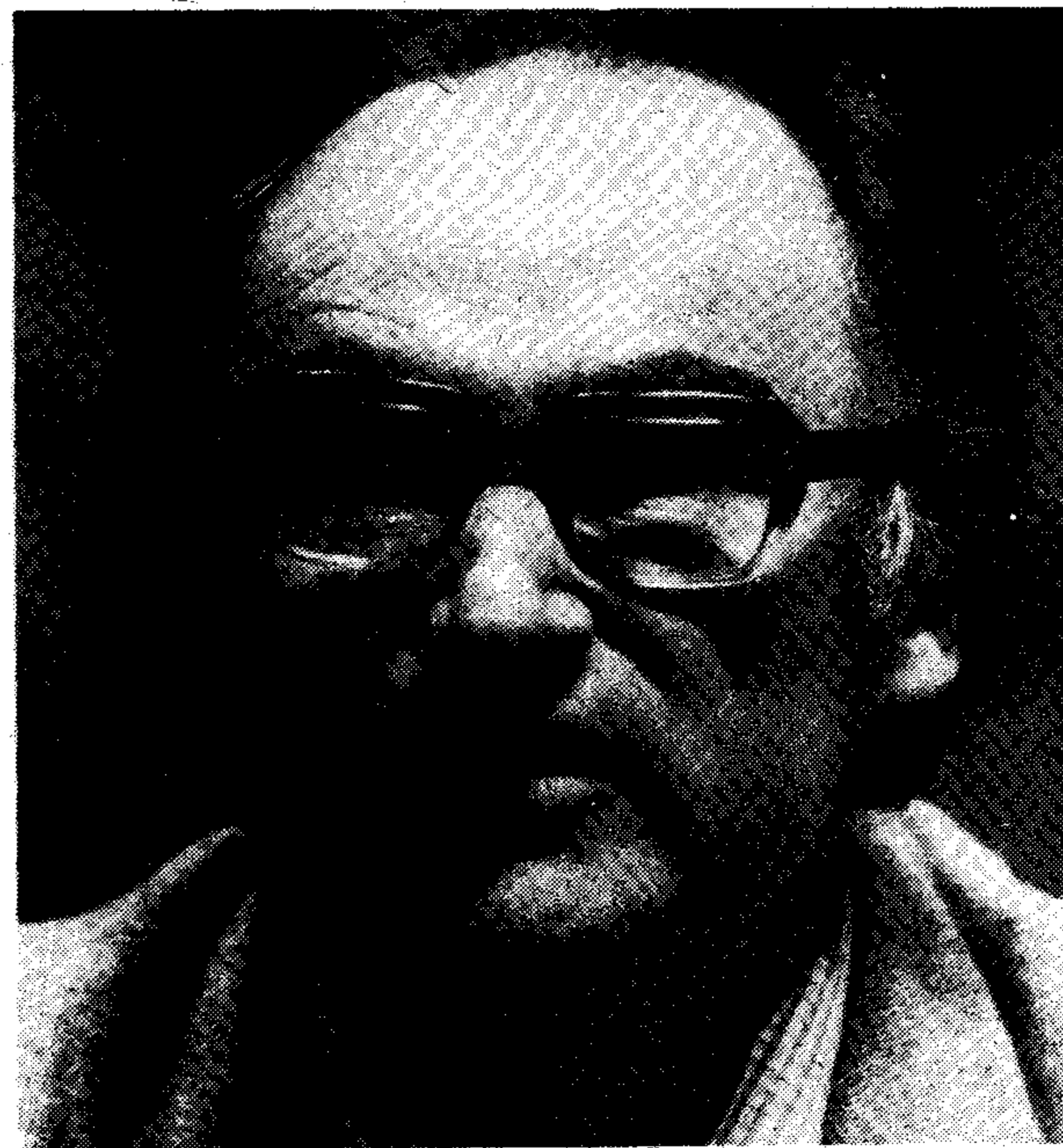
Militant political editor Ted Grant and editor Peter Taaffe: their constituency Labour Party is determined not to be diverted into witch-hunting

The furore created by the NEC over the printing of leaflets at Cambridge Heath press at the beginning of the Bermondsey campaign is further evidence of the NEC's fuelling of division in the party at the expense of promoting clear socialist policies to the electorate.

This Party has members representing a wide range of political views. Our meetings were disrupted in the past by a group of right-wing councillors who finally defected to the SDP a year ago. Our MP also defected. We were a united party last May when we

played a full part in ensuring the election of a socialist council in Islington — the largest swing to Labour in London, winning 51 out of 52 seats.

Members of the party have played an active part in campaigning against the penalties imposed by the Tory government which threaten to undermine our manifesto commitments and electoral credibility. The Women's Section of the Party recently initiated the establishment of a Women's Council — a delegate borough-wide body which will provide a focus for women's action in



JOHN HARRIS

Islington. The Party also took the initiative in launching a mobilising committee for a local Peace Canvass with other local parties, tenants' associations, trade unions, and CND.

So, an active campaigning party, which has worked hard to bring socialist ideas to the forefront of Islington politics, enjoyed massive electoral success in 1982, and is already preparing its campaign for the General Election, finds its very existence threatened by the decision of the NEC to proceed with expulsions which Conference never

agreed to. Most members of the party recognise that if the expulsions go ahead, they could represent the beginning of a much wider witch-hunt against other left activists.

Last month we agreed to support the ad which will appear in Tribune on March 4: "Should the NEC persist with disciplinary measures or disaffiliation we give notice that we will not recognise any such action. We will not expel, nor recognise the expulsion of any Labour Party member or group of members arising from political disagreement with the NEC".

Benn letter blocked

"CALL off this whole squalid business", said a letter on the witch-hunt from Tony Benn to other members of the Labour Party's National Executive Committee, designed to be circulated before this Wednesday's NEC meeting.

But Labour Party chair Sam McCluskie refused to circulate the letter.

The letter was meant to go out with a questionnaire sent by Benn to, and completed by, the five members of the Militant editorial board whose expulsion the NEC majority intends to decree on Wednesday. The completed questionnaire is, in effect, in question-and-answer form, a statement of the Militant EB members' case against the witch-hunt, and the letter sums up by pointing out that "the present NEC... has spent more time on such diversionary attacks than it has in preparing for a Labour victory".

What happened to democracy in CLPD?

by Mandy Moore

AT ITS first meeting following the campaign's Annual General Meeting last month, the new Campaign for Labour Party Democracy Executive Committee blatantly overturned decisions made by its own rank

and file membership.

The EC agreed to support the Hendon South resolution to the London Regional Labour Party Annual Meeting which embodies the principles in the 'Manchester With-

ington Amendment', and calls for a sanitised register of affiliated organisations. 'Manchester Withington' was twice rejected by the CLPD AGM only weeks ago, yet the EC refuses to accept the clarity of the AGM position and says that the decision was 'ambiguous'.

How ambiguous can be seen in the words of the resolution carried by the AGM: 'It would be mistaken and dangerous to incorporate into the Labour Party constitution the restrictions and requirements placed upon groups contained in the Manchester Withington Amendment. Accordingly, this AGM believes that CLPD should not support such proposals, but instead should campaign for and support only those proposals which seek to completely reverse the 1982 decision or which seek to establish and safeguard the positive rights of groups... (e.g. the Greenwich Amendment)'.
Nonetheless, the CLPD EC will campaign in support of Hendon South at the London Region Meeting.

But worse still, the whole strategy of CLPD for An-

nual Conference as decided by the EC flies in the face of AGM decisions. It was agreed to have a 'two-pronged attack' based first on support for the Greenwich Amendment and secondly on a revamped 'fall-back position' (which was what Manchester Withington was called last year!).

But what did the AGM decide?

The AGM rejected a resolution which stated: "This AGM therefore considers that in the coming year CLPD should campaign for two alternative proposals, both of which would replace the NEC's register. One of these to be on the lines of the amendment incorporated into the Manchester Withington resolution put to the 1982 Labour Party conference, the other being the constitutional amendment submitted by Greenwich CLPD to the 1982 Conference".

Pronged

Yet the CLPD EC voted to implement a 'two-pronged attack' based first on Greenwich and secondly on a yet unwritten fall-back position — both of which

would "replace the NEC's register".

It was obvious that such problems would occur when the results of the elections to the EC were known. So many of those elected had consistently opposed policies which were then carried by this year's AGM. However, it is now clear that they just mean to ride roughshod over the democratically decided policies of CLPD.

Co-options

To ensure that this can be done, six co-option to the EC were made on Saturday; all those co-opted have full voting rights and all of them, although on the 'pro-register' slate, were defeated in the elections for the EC at the AGM.

On top of that, the EC also appointed 28 Key Persons — all of whom again have full voting rights on the EC. Now the total of appointed EC members, at 34, exceeds those elected by the AGM.

CLPD is about democracy in the Labour Party — what the hell has happened to the democracy in CLPD?



"That's enough, boys! You can both pretend to be the leader of the moderates."

Labour Against the Witch-hunt is organising an advertisement in Tribune on March 4, with a statement to be signed by Constituency Labour Parties and supported by trade union and Labour Party branches:

'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 disagreement with the NEC.'

Get your CLP, union or Labour Party branch to support this, and write to LAW, 11 Wilderton Road, LONDON N16, by 25 February, enclosing £3.



JOHN HARRIS

The EC has flouted AGM decisions

Tories to ban strikes?

TORY Minister Norman Tebbit told a Parliamentary committee last Wednesday that he was considering legislation to ban strikes in public services.

He said that he was influenced towards this conclusion by the water strike.

An alternative, or supplementary, proposal was to withdraw legal immunities from strikers if they had not followed procedure agreements.

Such moves would transform millions of workers into slaves of the state. But they could become part of the Tories' next election manifesto.

It will be vital for Labour to reply vigorously to this anti-union agitation. But Labour's leadership has been practically silent on the water strike. The National Executive Committee passed a resolution supporting the water workers — and then, on a request from GMBU general secretary David Basnett, left it 'on the table'.

And three weeks ago TGWU general secretary Moss Evans anticipated Tebbit by suggesting that a no-strike agreement for public service workers could be arranged under a future Labour government.



Oxford strikers sent a strong contingent to the demonstration outside ACAS

Lobbying ACAS

CHRIS BUNCE, a member of the Oxford strike committee, was part of the demonstration on Sunday outside the ACAS building, under a banner reading, 'Oxford says no sell out'. He said:

"The lobby was very successful. Nobody there had any misunderstandings about what the strike was for — the full 15 per cent.

"The union leaders all made out that they were in the dark, and that we knew as much as they did. Whether that's true or not is another question.

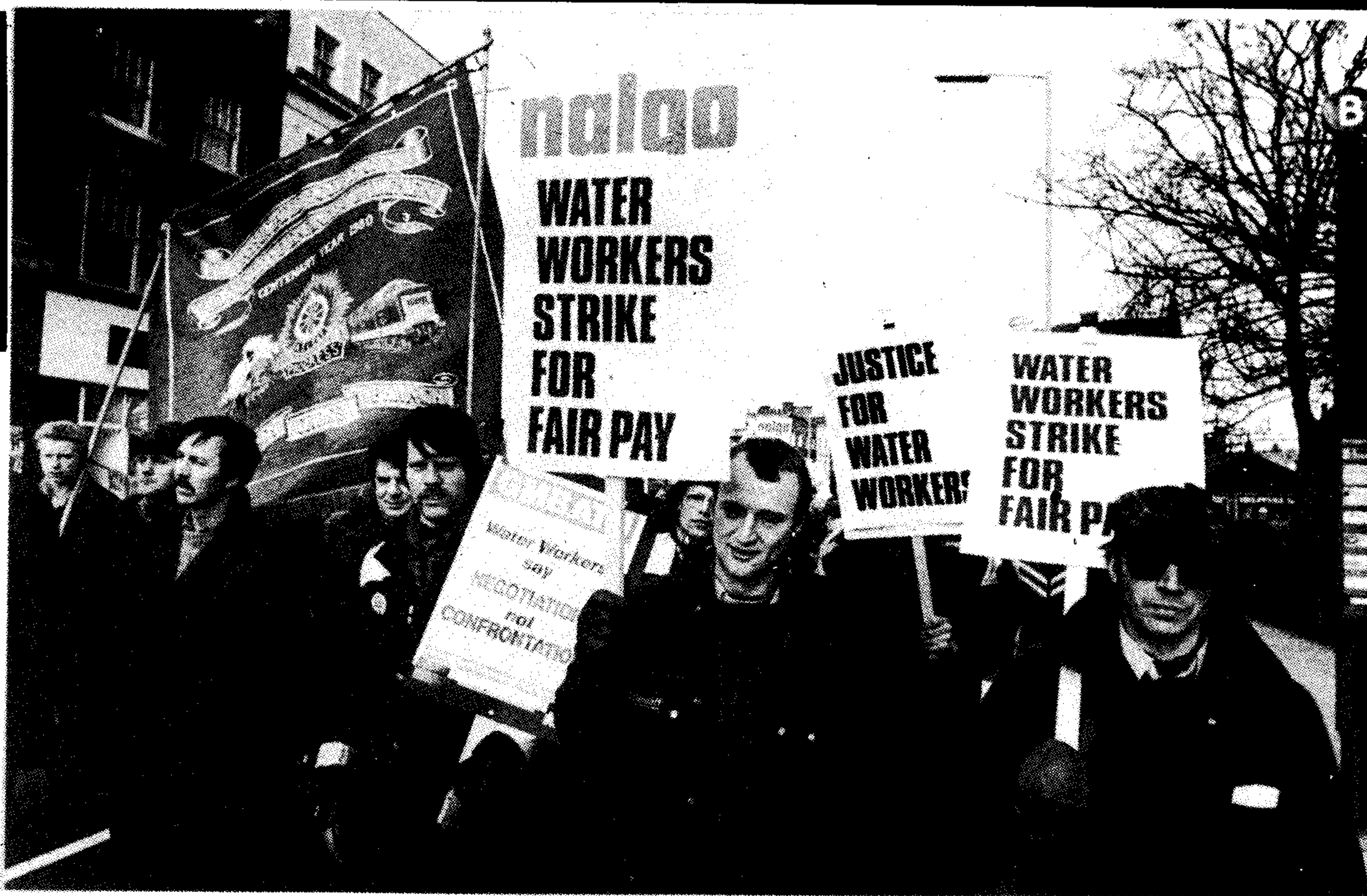
"GMBU national official Eddie Newall refused to talk to us. We tried to stop him, but he walked straight

through the lobby.

"NUPE leader Ron Keating was different. He stopped and said, 'I know what you're out for', and he gave us his support.

"The mood of the blokes was very angry, very confident. We voted to come out, we want a vote about going back. We told Keating that he shouldn't bother coming out of the inquiry unless it was to tell us that we were going to get the whole 15 per cent."

Oxford Constituency Labour Party this week agreed to print and distribute door-to-door 30,000 leaflets supporting the water workers.



200 Islington council workers marched last Thursday from the Town Hall to New River Head, where Dennis Skinner MP spoke at a rally in support of the water strikers.

'We want to bring down Tories'

IN THE Severn-Trent Water Authority, Thame Division, covering Birmingham, there is no emergency cover, but the strikers are making special provision for hospitals, dialysis machines and certain other cases.

Strikers from Edgbaston pumping station attended to the Hagley Road reservoir last week to ensure that supplies continued to Sorrento Hospital. They are therefore particularly angry at the stories being put out by the employers that hospitals and kidney patients are being cut off.

Management is now using contractors in unmarked vans to repair mains, and at the Frankley purification works supplies of chlorine were driven in at midnight

by an outside contractor while the picket line was depleted. This underlines the need for strong 24-hour picketing.

At Minworth sewerage works, the largest in Europe, raw sewage is now flowing into rivers, despite the employers' denial of this.

Pickets at Edgbaston told us of their total hostility to any sell-out. Many of them had been down to Sunday's lobby of the ACAS headquarters, and felt that it had been a useful demonstration of the rank and file strength of feeling.

They were particularly incensed by the suggestion that the deal might be accepted without any further consultation with the membership. Pickets said they did not want to know about any

new productivity deal or any 16-month package.

Most were insistent that they must stay out for the full claim.

A GMBU shop steward told us: "Instead of scratching round for a sell-out deal,

SHEFFIELD GMBU took 40 people down to Sunday's demonstration.

One of the weaknesses of the demonstration, they thought, was the lack of an organised shop stewards' leadership, so that the occupation was allowed to fizzle out. 'Be better organised next time' is their conclusion.

Sheffield GMBU has unanimously passed a resolution saying that there will be no cooperation after a return to work with NALGO

the unions should be organising for spreading the action. The gas and power workers should be out with us. We want a general strike to bring down this government".

Jim Denham

members who have been scabbing.

It has also passed a resolution calling for:

1. No retreat from the full claim,
2. No agreement in advance to the findings of the inquiry, and no return to work until the members have voted on any new offer,
3. Full support for the craftworkers if the manual grades' dispute is settled before theirs.

Rob Dawber

Women in struggle

MARCH TO SAVE S LONDON HOSPITAL!

INTERNATIONAL Women's Day — March 8 — will be marked by many events. One of the most significant will be a picket of the South London Hospital.

The fight against the closure of this hospital, the only remaining general hospital in Britain run by women for women, is the most important fight against women's oppression being waged at the moment in this country.

The hospital is being attacked at a time when more and more women are demanding exactly the kind of services it has to offer — sympathetic, non-sexist treatment, treatment which considers women not as hysterical, second-class patients but as people with genuine complaints in need of real treatment and not a tranquilliser and a pat on the head.

It is being attacked because of the vicious mono-

tarist policies of the Tories, who put the interests of the rich before the interests of the working class, by a Tory government which only considers women as important as long as they stay at home holding the family together and caring for the ill and old.

Their contempt for the working class, and particularly working class women, is highlighted by the attempts to close the South London hospital.

But the plan is not as easy as they may at first have thought. The hospital is being defended by determined workers and supporters, by women and men united to defend the desperately needed services.

A support committee meets regularly and has planned both the picket for March 8 and a march and rally on March 19.

The hospital needs the support of everyone. Build

for the picket and the march. Send donations and messages of support, come to the support committee meetings.

• Picket, March 8, 7am to 10am. Bring banners to S.London Hospital, Clapham Common South Side, London SW4.

• March and rally. Assemble 11am at St Benedict's Hospital, Church Lane, London SW17. March to the hospital.

• Donations to South London Hospital Support Group, c/o S.Meredith, 4 Louvaine Rd, London SW11.

• Messages of support to: South London Hospital Action Committee, South London Hospital.

• Support group meetings every Thursday, 7.30, Balham Food and Book Co-op, Balham High Rd, SW12.

Jane Goss

Hull peace protest

by Leonne Griggs

THIRTEEN women from the Hull Women's Peace Group and two male supporters, including an NCCL observer, were arrested on Saturday 18th.

They were charged with obstructing the highway after 12 women laid down in the road to protest about the Greenham Common jailings. Traffic was stopped for over half an hour outside the RAF recruiting office in Hull's city centre. Over 30 women and some men supporters sang by the roadside and asked passers-by to sign a petition.

The protest was peaceful from start to finish. The women, including two under 16, were arrested after being dragged from the road by the police. They were released at ten minute intervals from 11pm that night, after being held for 10 hours.

A sizeable picket attended the court at 9.30 on Monday morning, and the defendants were bound over on surety of £200, with the prosecution case dropped and no convictions on record.



Cops drag away sit-down protesters

No jail for peace women!

TUESDAY February 15 saw a mass demonstration outside Newbury Magistrates' Court in defence of the Greenham women.

About 600 people picketed from 9am, providing an enthusiastic chorus of support for the women who were arrested on New Year's Day while occupying Greenham Common US Air Force base.

Some trade union delegations joined the picket, including representatives of the NUM and the CPSA. The women's movement and the Socialist Workers' Party contributed a healthy crowd of supporters, but

mobilisation by local CNDs and Labour Parties was by far too sparse.

There were very brief brushes with Newbury police, whose vans were met by dozens of sit-down protesters as they tried to drive through the picket.

The women inside the court who were awaiting sentence received rapturous cheers when they briefly appeared at a window.

The day was a success, only slightly marred by a minority of middle-class women who seemed implacably hostile to socialists and trade unionists (of both sexes) who were chanting

'Jobs not Bombs' and anti-Tory slogans.

Inevitably, if the disarmament movement achieves success, it will be through the united actions of workers — female and male, black and white, employed and on the dole. Socialists must carry these arguments to sections of the labour, women's and peace movements who try to shroud the issue in middle class mysticism and illusions that it is possible to persuade Thatcher to disarm.

Scrap the bombs! No jail sentences for the Greenham heroines!

Cheryl Valentine

Quebec strikers face fines

TRIAL dates are being set for 24,000 public service workers in Quebec charged under the provincial government's ferocious anti-strike laws. The first will come up in court on March 7. Another 50 unions and 15 union leaders are also being charged under the new Law 111 passed through the National Assembly last Thursday, 17th. Penalties under Law 111 and previous anti-strike decrees can include huge fines, sacking, suspension of trade union rights, and loss of seniority.

Last year the provincial government passed decrees cutting public service wages by 20% for the first three months of 1983, freezing them from May at below December 1982 levels, and imposing increased workloads and job cuts.

The unions have retreated a long way in face of this assault. 200,000 hospital, civil service, and school workers struck in January and early February, but have returned to work. The teachers stuck it out longer, but voted on Sunday 20th to return to work for three weeks 'to allow negotiations'.

They have effectively conceded the wages issue, but are fighting on jobs and increased workload.

A minority of teachers opposed the suspension of the strike, and at John Abbott Junior College in western Montreal, there was a picket line on Monday 21st with students and non-teaching staff, and no return to work.

Demands are reported to be growing in the main Quebec trade union federation, the CSN, for a 24 hour general strike against Law 111 and the provincial government's clampdown. A few of the striking teachers are in CSN unions, but most of them belong to a separate federation, the CEQ. There are also a few who belong to unions affiliated to the English-Canada based Canadian Labour Congress.

Jean-Claude Parrot, president of the CLC Union of Postal Workers, has called for solidarity with the Quebec strikers. "If we can't get together to fight something like this, we don't deserve to be called organised labour". The CLC's top leaders clearly don't deserve to be called organised labour - president Dennis McDermott condemned Parrot's call as 'irresponsible'.

The cuts and anti-strike measures are a response by the ruling separatist Parti Quebecois (PQ) to the provincial government's huge deficit.

English Canada has a very feeble labour party linked to the unions, the NDP. But the NDP has never had any base in Quebec. The Quebec unions have generally supported the PQ. Recently reported statements from CSN leaders that 'the CSN must not become a political party' must reflect their response to pressure from the rank and file for an independent workers' party in Quebec.

Spy scandal spotlights Simonstown strategy

by Harry Sloan

THE ARREST in January of a senior South African military official, Dieter Gerhardt, could have repercussions reaching to the British and American governments, which are involved in secret naval plans about the strategic Simonstown base.

Gerhardt is being held under the Internal Security Act, and is alleged to have leaked top secret information to the Soviet Union in exchange for sums of money totalling R250,000 (approx. £160,000).

As head of South Africa's largest naval repair and construction facility - the former British base of Simonstown - Gerhardt had access to highly sensitive military information, including details of the recent stem-to-stern refitting of South African submarines, and maritime defences.

But Gerhardt's high-flying career in the trusted circles of the South African military establishment had also given him access to secret information on the army and airforce.

And while he awaits trial, a top-level review of plans, projects and security measures has begun, with scrutiny extending beyond Simonstown to Defence HQ itself.



South African forces have raided Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, and Mozambique

According to the Rand Daily Mail, among the things affected could be:

- Detailed contingency plans covering everything from an Indian Ocean crisis and the arrival of a Western task force to an attempted invasion of S.Africa;

- Plans for large-scale national or regional mobilisation;
- Top secret codes and cyphers;

- South Africa's preparedness programme in case of a nuclear conflict;

- Weapons projects, which could range from the manufacture of ship-killing rockets to the development of nuclear devices, if any of the latter are envisaged;
- Joint weapons-development ventures with overseas countries, if any;
- Secret 'understandings', if any, with other countries".

There plainly are many, potentially embarrassing, 'secret understandings', while the reference to nuclear weapons again tends to confirm that South Africa now has its own.

The apartheid government has repeatedly urged the imperialist powers to use Simonstown and develop it as an answer to 'Soviet naval expansion'. The dockyard is seen as a keystone in the proposed South Atlantic Treaty Organisation, projected (before the Malvinas war) to embrace South Africa, and the military juntas in Argentina and Chile, with the active

involvement of Britain and the USA.

The Pretoria government is thus seen as a lynchpin of imperialist strategy to contain the Soviet Union, as well as a policeman over the exploited masses of black Africa. It is for this reason that Ronald Reagan's government has sought and secured an agreement for the installation of US Cruise missiles in South Africa. The missiles' range of 1,600 miles threatens

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targets far into black Africa. This makes it an academic question whether or not the apartheid rulers have stocks of nuclear weapons.

Meanwhile, the past year has seen a marked escalation of South African efforts to destabilise the nationalist regimes of Angola, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique.

In a series of incidents:

- 3 white South African soldiers were shot dead on an 'unauthorised' mission in Zimbabwe.

- Seized documents revealed SA backing for the so-called 'Mozambique National Resistance Movement'.

- S.Africa was accused of assisting forces of the 'Lesotho Liberation Army' attacking rural targets.

- Leading ANC member Ruth First was assassinated by a parcel bomb in Maputo

- A car bomb in Swaziland killed another ANC leader, while in Lesotho a man caught planting a car bomb admitted being trained by South Africa.

- South African troops raided Lesotho, killing 42 men, women and children.

- Two major incursions and over 130 raids by S.A. troops into Angola as part of the war against SWAPO guerillas fighting for the liberation of Namibia.

- A S.African raid into Mozambique.

Behind these bare, summary facts lies a daily escalating war on four fronts being waged by the Pretoria government with the objective of keeping Southern Africa under the firm and exploitative grip of capitalism and the Western bankers.

The involvement in these plans of British, American, French and West German imperialism adds to the confidence of the apartheid rulers.

Yet it is in the hands of the labour movement to take action to break this reactionary alliance.

This means forging links with the workers of Southern Africa; imposing trade union boycotts on arms and other goods to and from South Africa; and fighting to expose the links of Western - bankers and industrialists with their colleagues and agents in South Africa.

They stress that the strike will only end when their demands are met.

Palestinian hunger strike

Our correspondent in Haifa reports on the hunger strike at Nafha jail in the Negev

Prisoners bring a long list of complaints but the major problem is the lack of food. They stress the strike is not political but simply for self-preservation. They are demanding nothing beyond the basic diet as officially prescribed by the prison service and as agreed on at a meeting between prisoners and the Nafha administrator on July 1, 1981.

Prisoners are only receiving a portion of their ration, for example: under their agreement a meat portion should be 85 grams - in reality it is 50 grams of meat mixed with bread; the prisoners were supposed to receive 80 kg of rice monthly - they get 48 kg. A similar story holds for fruit and vegetables.

They also complain of dirt in the food and of poor quality fruit and vegetables.

Prisoners have done everything they can to resolve this situation short of their present action. They have complained both to the prison authorities and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

They met Zvi Tamir from the central prisons administration and told him that unless their problem was

resolved they would be 'pushed to the wall'. Prisoners report that Tamir asked Nafha governor, Amran Wachnim, why the food was inadequate in the prisoners' presence. Wachnim replied that 'if he received the correct amount of supplies then the prisoners wouldn't have any complaints'.

The prisoners understand that their food is supplied from army stores and that it is quite possible that the correct amount is not being delivered rather than being due to pilfering within the jail. Prisoners have written to the head of the prisons service, Wertheimer. He has not replied.

After deciding to strike prisoners sent a letter to Wertheimer, January 21, telling him they would stop their protest the moment the correct amount of food is delivered.

There have been reports in the press that prisoners are refusing to eat cooked food. This is incorrect. Prisoners are refusing to eat any item they do not receive in correct quantity. Thus their diet is only one-third of a loaf of bread per day.

Prisoners are also concerned that there be no repeat of the experience of the July 1980 hunger strike when two of their number died under forced feeding.

In the aftermath of that strike, Shmuel Eitan, the

police controller, headed a commission which suggested some changes in the Nafha régime. Prisoners point out that even though his report was made on August 24, 1980 only some of the recommendations were met: Eitan recommended that natural light should be let into the cells during the day. This has not been done.

Eitan recommended an exercise yard to be constructed. It was not.

He proposed an improvement in the food and that it be cooked Arab-style. This too has been ignored.

The desert jail is very cold and prisoners say they do not have enough clothes. They point out that they get less clothes than political prisoners in other jails, and less than the Jewish prisoners in Nafha itself. They do not have enough blankets.

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SLAUGHTER IN ASSAM

ON February 19-20, over 600 people were killed in communal violence in the north-east Indian state of Assam. This brings the total number of deaths to over 1,000 since state elections were called five weeks ago.

In nine constituencies, voting had to be suspended, and polling extended for an extra day. In Gauhati, the largest town in the troubled area, the election was disrupted by bomb attacks.

The seeds for the communal conflict were sown by British colonialism, which brought masses of Bengalis into Assam and placed them socially above the Assamese.

The latest upsurge of violence dates from the Pakistan/Bangladesh war of 1971. That war sent Muslim refugees into poor and

backward areas of Assam. Extreme right wing Hindu fundamentalists and other reactionaries agitated among the 12 million Assamese Hindus against the 8 million Bengali Muslims and other minorities.

Reactionary students in the all-Assam students' union have campaigned for the repatriation of 1 million Muslims to Bangladesh, and for all immigrants to be denied the vote.

The students, led by Prallsa Maharta, have received the backing of large sections of the Assamese bourgeoisie and professional groups. In four years they have brought down four state governments and managed to halt all production in Assam, where one third of India's oil is normally produced. Only the inter-

vention of the military restored order.

Similarly, the recent communal disorders have seen the central government in Delhi sending over 100,000 soldiers and paramilitary police to Assam. Assam has been under direct presidential rule since March 1982.

The failure of negotiations between Indira Gandhi's central government and the Assamese to restore political stability encouraged Gandhi's Congress (I) to gamble on a state election.

Gandhi's desperation was increased by serious defeats for Congress (I) in state elections in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh last month. Gandhi was quite prepared to risk inter-communal atrocities in a bid to regain some

credibility and strength for bourgeois Congress rule.

But it is now clear that Gandhi has miscalculated. All the opposition parties, except the Stalinist Communist Party of India (Marxist), have boycotted the election, and national attention on the crisis in Assam has only served to exacerbate communal violence.

The events in Assam should be seen in the context of nation-wide Hindu/Muslim communal violence, and the success of reactionary chauvinist forces in capitalising on popular grievances. It is the parties of the extreme right, not those of the left, that the poor and disillusioned are turning to.

Aly Mir

How management control

Japan's unions

By Bill Peters

This is the first of a series of articles about the Japanese labour movement by Bill Peters, who has recently returned from Japan. The first two articles are an historical sketch of the post-war Japanese labour movement. Later articles will deal with the Japanese motor industry, some of the problems of the trade unions and militant Japanese workers, and the strategy of the employers today.

MILITANT workers in Japan face very difficult conditions. The workers' movement is dominated by yellow unions — particularly in manufacturing industry. These are unions created, built, and controlled directly by management. In many cases they were built in opposition to existing independent unions which they eventually destroyed.

Through these unions, the Japanese capitalist class have tremendous material and ideological domination over the great majority of Japanese workers. Despite the recent stagnation of the Japanese economy and a rise in unemployment, this domination remains intact today, and presents a major problem.

It has important roots in the development of the Japanese labour movement in the immediate post-war period.

Before World War 2, only 10% of Japanese workers were organised, and the unions were very trade-oriented. In 1938 the unions were banned under war regulations.

After the Japanese defeat and the dropping of the H-Bombs, there was a total collapse of society in Japan. The bourgeoisie were in disarray. Absolute control was in the hands of the US occupation forces under General McArthur.

Constitution

The physical conditions created a rapid rise in the militancy of the working class. Mass demonstrations at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo demanded food and the punishment of war criminals.

For their own reasons, the actions of the occupation forces added to the rising militancy.

Motivated by the desire of US imperialism to destroy Japanese militarism and eliminate a powerful imperialist rival in the Pacific Ocean, McArthur imposed a new Japanese constitution which had some progressive aspects. The re-militarisation of Japan was banned (formally, anyway); the land was redistributed to the farmers, and trade unions were legalised.

There was a spectacular development of trade union organisation. The fastest growth of all was by the Confederation of Industrial Unions (Sambetsu), which had 1.6 million members by 1946. By 1948, 50% of Japanese workers were organised.

The new unions were organised mostly on a company-by-company basis — which set the pattern for the post-war movement.

They tended to be militant, both because of the



"Treaties made Japan the USA's strategic outpost in the Far East". Prime Minister Nakasone with Ronald Reagan

extreme poverty and starvation which existed, and because they took a stand against Japanese remilitarisation. Strikes and occupations swept the country.

Socialist

Under these conditions the pre-war political formations re-emerged. The Japanese Socialist Party, a right wing splinter from it, and the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), re-established themselves and spread rapidly.

World political conditions, however, were changing fast. With the onset of the cold war and the imminent victory of the People's Liberation Army in China, the USA reversed its policies in Japan.

McArthur was instructed to throw his 'liberalisation' policies into reverse, and to promote the resurgence of Japanese capitalism as an anti-communist ally in Asia.

The general strike of February 1947, which threatened to reach revolu-

tionary proportions, was banned by McArthur, who proceeded to carry out a purge of tens of thousands of members of the JCP and trade union militants from the factories.

Strikes in the public sector were banned. On the eve of the Korean war, the JCP was banned, and basic freedoms restored at the end of the war were suppressed.

Military

Under these conditions Japanese reaction began to re-establish itself. The USA began a programme of massive military aid. Arms factories closed after the war were re-opened. Military bases were reactivated for the Korean war. A new Japanese army — the National Police Reserve — was established, in violation of McArthur's own constitution.

Sambetsu, which was under JCP leadership, was greatly weakened during this period. Its membership dropped by 75%.

Sohyo, the only progressive trade union federation in Japan today, was born in this period as a reactionary initiative.

As soon as the Korean war began, a movement inside Sambetsu which had been fighting for democratisation against the Stalinist leadership joined together with a number of right-wing anti-communist federations and formed Sohyo.

It joined the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), and declared support for the United Nations/US forces in Korea. Sambetsu was decimated in the process.

Sohyo, however, quickly radicalised, swinging to a militant position and opposing militarisation. In alliance with the JSP, it was to become a major political

"The Japanese capitalist class have a tremendous ideological domination" demonstration against relaxation of import controls

force in Japan.

Sohyo's second conference, in 1951, called for a peace treaty with all the allied powers, including the USSR and the People's Republic of China, Japanese neutrality in the Cold War and the Korean war, removal of US bases, and opposition to rearmament.

The US occupation of Japan ended in April 1952, with the signing of two treaties — the Peace Treaty and the USA/Japan Security Treaty.

The treaties made Japan the USA's strategic outpost in the Far East. They provided for the free use of Japanese military bases by the USA, and the separation of Okinawa from Japan to become the USA's biggest foreign base.

The conditions in the treaties provoked massive anti-American riots in Tokyo on May Day 1952.

The first half of the 1950s were a period of considerable class struggle, as the resurgent capitalist class fought to take back the gains that the independent trade unions had made in the immediate post-war period.

Nissan

Huge battles took place in a number of key industries. Nissan car workers fought pitched battles against lockouts, thugs, and the police, as the employers moved to smash the independent Nissan Workers' Union — the most important union affiliated to the National Car Workers'

Japanese politics for a long time to come. One was the adoption by Sohyo of the Spring Offensive tactic — the Shunto. The other was the emergence of the anti-nuclear movement, triggered by bomb testing in the Pacific Ocean and the memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The Shunto tactic was adopted by Sohyo in 1955 as both a reaction and an accommodation to the defeats of the previous period, and a means to continue an offensive stance in the new situation.

The Shunto is not collective negotiation between the trade union federation, on behalf of the affiliated unions, and the employers — it is the co-ordination of the individual claims from the various company-based unions, from March to May each year.

Unions which were considered to be the strongest in a particular year would be chosen as the spearhead of the campaign. They could get the support of the unions as a whole, and if they won the others would negotiate in the wake of their victory, using it as a precedent.

Guidelines for the claims would be laid down in the early days by Sohyo and later, when other unions became involved, by the Spring Struggle committee.

There was a problem, however, since the majority of Sohyo membership were in the public sector, and in the public sector strikes were, and are, illegal.

This has been overcome by go-slows, work-to-rules, and in some cases very tenacious illegal strikes in sections such as the state railways, postal workers, and teachers.

Although much of its success resulted from the phenomenal and sustained economic boom, the importance of the shunto was that it created an annual confrontation between employers and labour which developed the combativity of the Japanese workers under very difficult conditions.

Domei

The employers were forced to create their own organisation to combat it each year.

Also in the mid-1950s, there was the amalgamation of a number of right-wing trade union confederations to form what is still the main right-wing trade union confederation today — the Japan Congress of Labour, or Domei, unions.

It began immediately to fight to create right-wing pro-management unions by splitting the Sohyo unions. They were particularly successful in industry.

Domei became supreme in steel, shipbuilding, electronics and car production, creating the basis for the yellow-union domination which is the most striking feature of the Japanese labour movement today.

Councils and the fight for gay rights

Islington Labour councillor Bob Crossman spoke to Will Adams about the council's gay rights policy

IN our manifesto promise we had a commitment that Islington wouldn't discriminate against lesbians and gay men in recruitment and employment policy and also wouldn't discriminate in services, particularly in social services and housing.

We also included a promise on staff training, aiming at changing staff attitudes towards lesbians and gay men. That was fine as a commitment, but once we were elected we had to put it into practice.

It was difficult because there was only one openly gay councillor and therefore there wasn't a group of people overtly prepared to push the issue.

I called a meeting about two months after we came in, inviting about 20 lesbian and gay organisations from the borough. There were some problems with the council officers over calling the meeting and very few of them attended it. Those that did seemed quite embarrassed about the whole thing.

From that meeting we set up a working party as a sub-committee of the policy committee. The working party has decided its priority is to look at the way the service departments implement gay rights policy.

The Gays and Housing group have got together with a group of councillors to look at exactly what we're doing about housing lesbians and gay men. We now openly say that the Young Couples Scheme is open to gay couples. Shared singles are now open to gay people as such.

When an application form for the housing waiting list goes out it asks anyone who's gay to let us know — maybe we can make special arrangements for them. That's a step forward.

Life-style

The recreation and libraries sub-group is looking at what kinds of gay literature we've got in our libraries and how it can be promoted. It is also looking at the possibility of a permanent exhibition about gay and lesbian life-style which could be moved around to various places in the borough.

We've got some openly gay workers in the Social Services department who want to do some work with councillors on the social services department. There's a group of lesbians in social services who are now organised as lesbians

and there are a number of individual gay men who are field workers or working in residential establishments.

The fact we set up the working party has meant that those people have been able to come out as gay and wear gay badges at work. Five years ago people were being sacked from the social services department for wearing gay badges. We're making our gay workers a bit more visible.

I'm vice-chair of the employment committee and there we've said to people who've come to us for financial assistance — firms getting into difficulties, new co-ops starting in the borough — that one of the conditions of money being handed over or loans guaranteed is that the firm gives an assurance that they do not discriminate on a number of grounds — race, sex and sexual orientation.

That's one way of trying to affect whether gay people are discriminated against outside the Town Hall.

Is the Gay Working Party involved in setting up the Islington Gay Centre?

No, that's separate. It would be difficult for the Gay Working Party to do that.

The Gay Centre is an idea that came from a group of gay people, mostly I think from the Campaign for Homosexual Equality group in Islington. The Working Party backed it and asked the council for money for it. The council has promised about £100,000 to buy and adapt a building for a local gay centre.

Since then we have had the other possibility of the (GLC backed) London gay centre being in Islington.

Has there been any opposition to the gay rights policy either from other councillors, council employees or residents in the borough?

I wouldn't know if there is opposition from coun-

cillors because they haven't told me. But no doubt the fact that they haven't done anything positive might be counted as opposition.

Some people have expressed interest in helping — people who aren't gay themselves. For instance one member on the housing committee lives on a fairly tough estate and she's got gay neighbours. She can appreciate what they're experiencing and so she wants to get involved in work on gay rights.

There has been resistance from employees. Perhaps they don't understand the issue and don't know what the pressures are on gay people. Some of them have to take quite a lot of stick — like the women on the switchboard

money spent on the lesbian and gay centre has been raised.

When it has been pointed out by the councillors that gay people are about 10% of the ratepayers, the people asking the question have generally been satisfied.

The SDP have now taken it up and they're going to use it to attack us.

But there's generally been very little opposition. In fact I've been pleasantly surprised.

How important do you feel that this development of a gay rights policy by a Labour council is in the struggle for gay rights generally?

I think it's important for the Labour Party because it encourages gay people to become organised.

"I think it's important for the Labour Party because it encourages gay people to become organised."

"It will also encourage lesbians and gay men to join the Labour Party... to get involved in collective action"

who have had a really bad time. We've had to explain to them exactly what money has been proposed for projects such as the gay centre.

I hope more gay councillors will come out, so they spend more time talking to people about the issue rather than it just being me.

There has been opposition from people in Islington. Isolated opposition, nothing organised. For instance, we've been holding public meetings about decentralisation over the last month and at every meeting the issue of the

It will also encourage lesbians and gay men to join the Labour Party if it is seen not to concentrate solely on those dry subjects like economics but appeals to people on terms of trying to work out their own personal politics.

I think it's really important for gay people who feel they're socialists to get involved in left parties, and obviously the Labour Party, which I think is the most effective way of getting things done.

It is also important for gay men — I can't speak for lesbians — to get organised and learn some comrade-



Bob Crossman: "I wish other gay people on the council would come out..."

ship. I've seen lots and lots of gay men get split off into couples and then get very individualistic and consumerist; they have their own little home, a shelter from the outside world. I think being involved in collective action militates against coupledom, which might be no bad thing.

Are there any special pressures on you as the only openly gay councillor?

Yes. I take it all very personally, which I shouldn't. I wish other gay people on the council would come out and other gay councillors in London would be a bit more visible.

What happens is that gay people contact me for ordinary things, like housing problems. When I tell them to go and see their

local councillor they get a bit miffed.

In the first few months after the election, if I went into a gay pub or a disco people would keep asking me what they could get in terms of grants or room bookings or things like that. I feel that those requests shouldn't really be coming to me as the only openly gay councillor.

Because I'm so visible people have unrealistic expectations of me. I get letters from gay people all over the country about a particular bit of discrimination they've been suffering or something they want to plug or something like that. I can do very little about it.

Even if I was working 50 hours a day I couldn't

do it, and we don't have the administrative support to be running a Gays and Local Government centre here.

Also I've got all my other council work. I'm vice-chair of the employment committee and I'm on the housing committee. That takes up a lot of time and a lot of energy.

Having to be the only gay councillor as well as all that means that I get very tired and it does affect your personal life. It has affected my personal relationships. Since last year I haven't always had the time and energy at the right times for the people I like.

I do want to have a social life. I think I'm entitled to one.

February	
Monday	7 14 21 28
Tuesday	1 8 15 22
Wednesday	2 9 16 23
Thursday	3 10 17 24
Friday	4 11 18 25
Saturday	5 12 19 26
Sunday	6 13 20 27

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.

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. Credentials for labour movement delegates £3 from Plastic Bullets Conference, Box 15, 164-6 Hanging Ditch, Manchester M3 4BN.

WOMEN, Immigration and Nationality: meeting to discuss our future as a campaign. Sunday March 13, 1.30 to 4.30pm, County Hall, London SE1. All women welcome. Creche on premises.

LABOUR Committee on Ireland: annual general meeting 1983 will be on April 23. Resolutions to be in by March 19.

CRITIQUE conference: 'Marx after Stalin'. Speakers include Hillel Tickin, Nigel Harris, Chris Arthur, Scott Meikle, Jonathan Ree, David H Ruben, Norman Geras, Roy Edgley, Simon Clarke, Bob Sutcliffe, Mike Davies, Baruch Hirson, Neil Harding, David Law, Paddy O'Donnell, Sandy Smith, and Kate Marshall.

Friday March 4/Saturday March 5, from 7.30 on Friday and from 10am on Saturday, at University of London Union, Malet St, London WC1. To register send £5 waged (£2 students, free for claimants) to Critique, 31 Clevedon Rd, Glasgow G12 0PH.

GAY LPYS first meeting: Sunday February 27, 6pm.

at 'Gay's The Word'. All welcome. Phone 01-263 9484 or 609 3071 for details.

'HOW TO Fight for a Labour Victory': "The call for a national meeting of CLPs, unions, and campaigning groups in the Party came from a conference of Briefing groups on February 5, in view of the threats posed by growing speculation that unilateralism will not be in the manifesto, and continued attempts to expel members of the Party." Monday March 7, 7.30, House of Commons

LABOUR democracy and local government: day con-

ference for District Labour Parties, Saturday March 26, 10.30 to 4.30, at Manchester Poly Students' Union. Sponsored by Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester DLPs. Contact: Frances Done, Manchester City Labour Party, Hulme Labour Club, 1 Stoneylow Close, Manchester M15

SOUTHWARK Trades Council meeting on YTS. Thursday March 3, 7.30, at Walworth Town Hall. Speaker: Clare Short.

Labour Campaign for Gay Rights public meeting: "Gay liberation and the labour movement" Friday March 18, 7.30 at County Hall, London SE1. Speakers include Andy Harris (GLC), a Labour MP, and a NUPE representative.

EL SALVADOR Solidarity Campaign: Labour Movement conference, Saturday May 14, 10am-5pm, County Hall, London SE1. Credentials £2 from ESSC, 29 Islington Park St, London N1.

PICKET the Home Office Support Muhammad Idrish Thursday February 24, 2.30pm.

Free coach from Birmingham (phone Ahsan, 021-551 1846, for details). Coach from Bristol (phone Graham Reid, 0272 667933) Maximum labour movement support, please!

Sheffield Labour movement conference on Ireland. Saturday March 19, Sheffield University Students' Union, 9.30 to 4.30. Sponsored by Sheffield Trades Council, Sheffield District Labour Party, and Sheffield LCI.

Socialist Organiser

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TEBBIT'S GREEN PAPER AND YOU

John McIlroy looks at Tebbit's plans for his next round of anti union laws, the thinking behind it, the response of the top trade union leaders, and what the working-class answer must be.

THE NEW Green Paper produced by Norman Tebbit is a "consultative document". That means that it outlines a broad range of possible changes in the law governing trade unions and discusses which would be most helpful from the point of view of the Tories and the employers.

Comments from employers may be useful, but judging by past performances, Tebbit will go ahead with the guts of his own proposals with only marginal streamlining. Reading between the lines, and taking account of nuances and emphases, you can see which, of the long list of suggestions, are those that the Tories favour most.

It is unlikely that a Bill based on these proposals will be introduced before the General Election. But Tebbit has said it is possible if Thatcher does not go to the country before 1984.

In this sense the Green Paper is an important part of the Tory Manifesto. It would provide a central ingredient of the legislative programme for a second Thatcher government — a programme which could transform the face of British society.

The Green Paper is the third stage in the Tories' attempt to use the recession and the weaknesses within the unions to set them within a permanent strait-jacket. Phases one and two, the 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts, attempted:

□ To weaken the unions' ability to defend their members by severely limiting legal rights to picket and take industrial action.

□ To undermine rank and file controls within the unions by concentrating power at the top where it is more easily moulded and controlled by making unions responsible as organisations if their members break the law.

□ To sap the strength of union organisation itself by breaking the closed shop and giving non-unionists up to £25,000 compensation if they are sacked.

□ To demoralise the membership particularly the weakly organised, by cutting back on basic minimum rights to unfair dismissal, redundancy and maternity protections.

□ To cower the membership and discipline the unemployed by cutting back on rights to unemployment and social security benefits.

Now Tebbit, reflecting on experience since 1979, thinks "It's a piece of cake. Resistance from the unions has been minimal. I'm really on form and Lady Luck is smiling on me. I might as well press on. After all with no sign of an



The Tebbit proposals would replace mass meetings by postal ballots

upturn, right now is the best time for taking candy from a baby."

The new proposals have two main objectives.

Firstly they aim to follow up the 1982 Act by restructuring internal union arrangements so that power is centralised in a leadership which deals over the

heads of the activists with passive members through a system of referenda based on the secret postal ballot. The central target here is, as usual, industrial action.

Secondly, they are intended to push in the direction of a US-style depoliticised union movement by trying to cut unions'

links with the Labour Party — and in the process to bankrupt that party.

To achieve these objectives the Green Paper is intended to mobilise backward elements in the unions. The Tories will use the right wing regimes in the AUEW and the EETPU as examples of how far it is possible to go in the direction Tebbit

desires and as Trojan-Horses within the ranks of labour. And the Tories also aim to promote a much strengthened Federation of Tory Trade Unionists as a pace-maker for the acceptance of these ideas by sections of the rank and file.

Continued inside

What Tebbit recommends

Election of union reps

□ In the end secret ballots organised by 'independent scrutineers' to be the means of electing representatives "at most levels within a union".

□ More immediately the chief officers of the union (General Secretary and/or President) where they are already elected, not appointed, should stand for election in a postal ballot every five years.

□ At the same time legislation would require that all union executives be periodically elected by secret ballot.

□ No changes are suggested where officials are appointed.

□ Unions might have to register, as under the 1971 Industrial Relations Act and have their rules vetted to make sure they followed these requirements.

□ Alternatively individual members might be given the right to sue a union which did not meet these requirements.

□ A new range of remedies would be needed for unions which did not comply. Union assets might be frozen or the union might be deprived of the very limited rights to take industrial action previous Tory legislation has left it with.

□ Another alternative would be to require periodic secret ballots of the whole membership who would be asked to decide whether the existing union electoral system was satisfactory or not.

Strike ballots

□ The idea of making secret postal ballots the condition for any lawful strike is not given much support, on the grounds that it would lead to a loyalty vote of confidence in the leadership and prolong disputes, or it might lead to unofficial stoppages or more limited action such as overtime bans.

□ One alternative would be a "triggered" ballot which could be held if a certain proportion of union members requested it. "If the demand comes from within the union it cannot so easily be



Democracy is not just voting, but information and participation

turned into a test of union solidarity or so easily be represented as 'external interference' in union affairs".

□ Another alternative would be to give the employer the right to trigger the ballot and perhaps organise it. This "would also have the advantage of ensuring that the voice of non-union employees was heard".

□ The Green Paper is fairly lukewarm on these proposals. Apart from problems such as what sanction to use and the wording of the ballot, Tebbit is worried that any system of enforced strike ballot would blow the gaff and show quite vividly — as the one use of similar provisions in the Industrial Relations Act on British Rail in 1972 showed — that workers are not dragged, kicking and protesting, into a strike by militant leaders. Strikes are often popular and leaders do a bloody good job stopping them.

The aim here is probably not legislation but to get unions to voluntarily adopt secret postal ballots before industrial action.

Unions and the Labour Party

□ Unions which have political funds and are affiliated to the Labour Party have only been able to do this after holding a ballot of all their members and allowing rules on these matters (which have to be in the rule book) to be vetted by the Certification Officer (Trade Union Act 1913, Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974). Tebbit now suggests that unions should hold further ballots at regular periodic intervals to see if support for these objectives should be continued.

□ At the moment a worker who does not want to contribute to her/his union's political fund can fill in a form stating that s/he does not want to pay the political levy. Unions provide members with forms and the law provides for no discrimination against anybody who does opt out.

Tebbit now proposes that the law should be changed so that if you want to pay the political levy, as the vast majority of trade unionists do, you would have to 'opt in'.

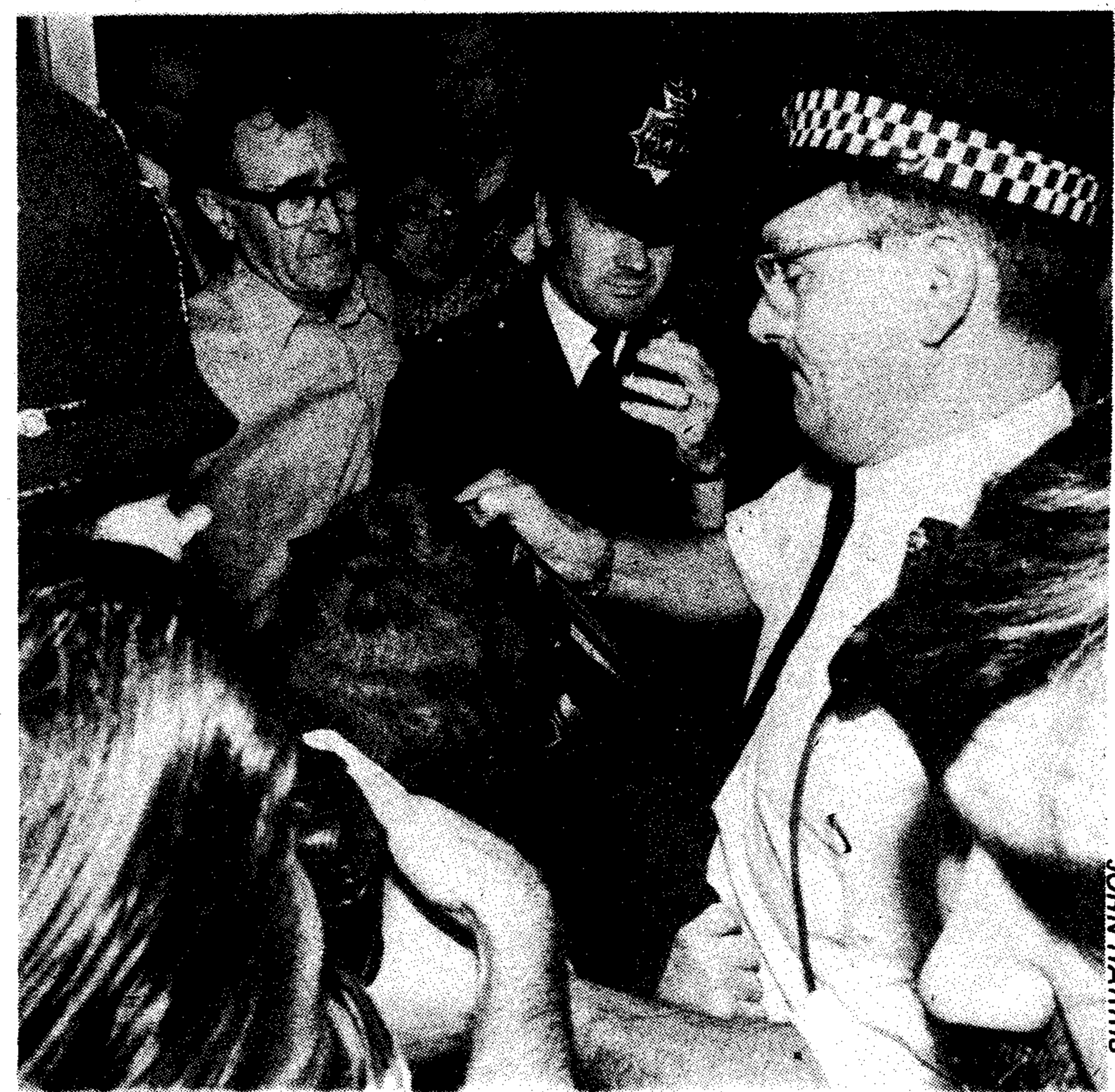
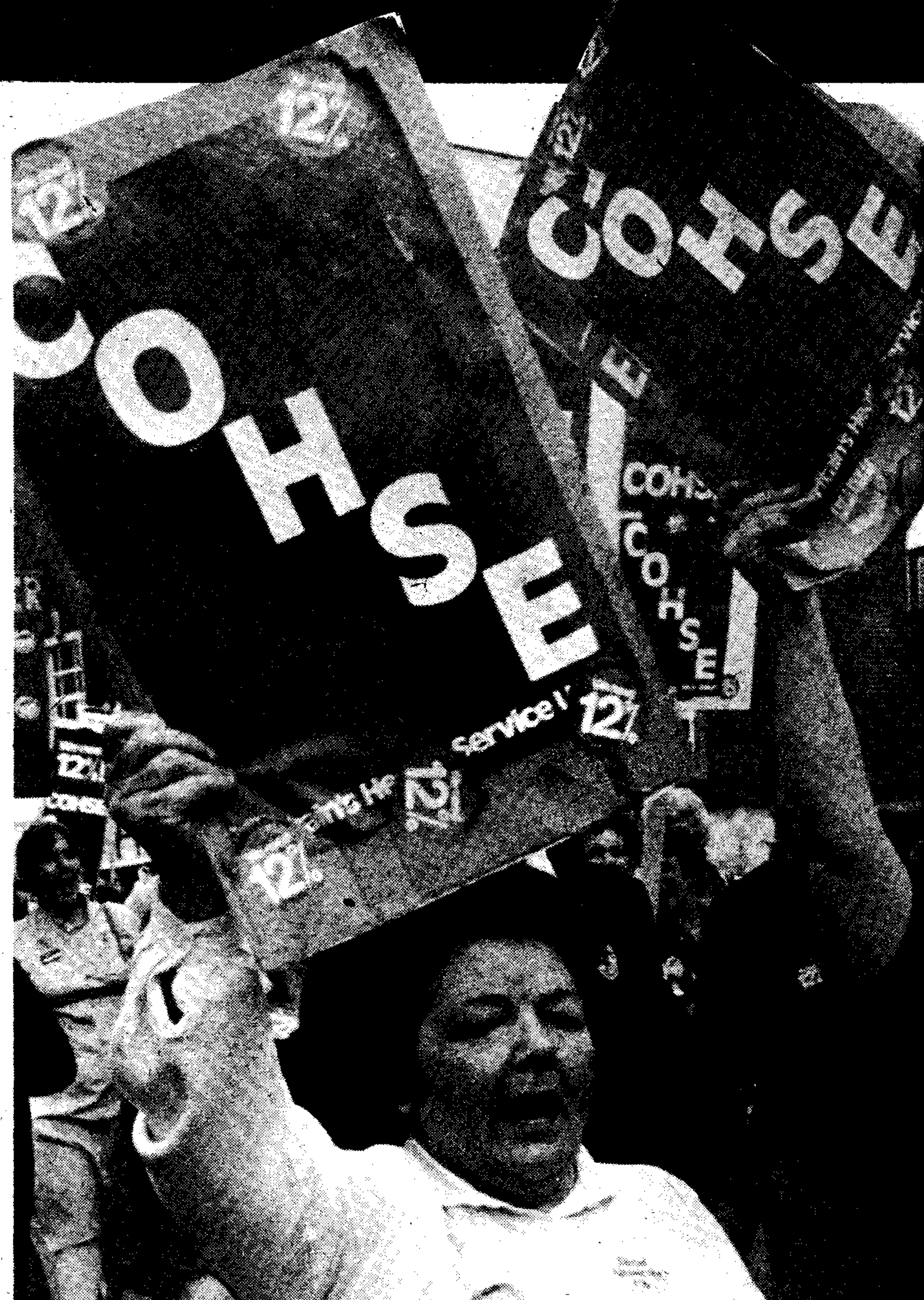
□ Right now unions can make payments from their general funds to organisations which are not involved in financing candidates for Parliament. Donations to organisations which are — like the Labour Party — have to come out of the special political fund.

So your union might make a donation out of its General Fund to Labour Research or the National Council for Civil Liberties.

Tebbit now suggests changing the law so that these donations could only come out of the Political Fund.

□ Legislation should also be introduced to make unions cough up more details to the membership of such contributions to outside bodies and give all members access to detailed accounts.

□ Where your boss deducts your union dues at source, it could be made unlawful for political contributions to be deducted with the rest. Alternatively any deduction of political contributions would have to be dealt with separately.



Not just police lines, but new laws, will protect union leaders from rank and file pressure

Tebbit's ideas

The Green Paper trots out again to justify its case, the same distortions which underpinned previous legislation. "Trade union power" we are told "springs from legal immunities and privileges". Tebbit marvels at "the unique legal status which trade unions enjoy". Yet Tebbit himself has ensured in earlier legislation a reversion to the very, very limited "privileges" and immunities trade unions possessed before 1906.

How can union power be based on 'legal privileges', when you can be sued in the High Court if you stand on a picket line 100 yards away from your workplace and peacefully persuade a lorry driver not to deliver? Trade unionists do not even have the privilege of freedom of speech.

How can union power be based on legal privileges when the union bodies who asked their members to come out on

strike to support the NHS workers could have been dragged before the judges, as Sean Geraghty was, for inducing breach of contract? Trade unionists do not even have the freedom to choose to withdraw their labour.

How can union power be based on legal privileges when if 20 workers take industrial action the law guarantees to the employer the right to sack them? Trade unionists in Britain today do not have even the right to strike.

They do possess a fairly "unique legal status". Trade union rights on such issues as protection against dismissal, redundancy, and lay off, are among the worst in Europe. Provisions for women, such as the Equal Pay and Maternity legislation, have been condemned as inadequate by the EEC.

Tebbit's current proposals are in violation of the International Labour Organisation Convention's very minimal codes to which all civilised governments are expected to measure up.

ILO convention 87, for example, states "workers and employers organisations shall have the right to draw up their own constitutions and rules to elect their representatives in full freedom to organ-



Cartoon: Labour Research Department



JOHN HARRIS

It's difficult enough to get the message through already, without Tebbit's new proposals...

ise their administration and activities and to formulate their programmes."

It goes on to say "The public authorities shall refrain from any interference which would restrict this right or impede the lawful exercise thereof."

Yet Tebbit would walk into union rule making bodies and violate their autonomy by making their rules for them. The ILO Freedom of Association Committee has stated "to impose any obligation on a trade union to base its constitution on a compulsory model (apart from purely formal clauses) would be to disregard the rules which ensure freedom of association."

Yet Tebbit by imposing a central method of decision making — the secret postal ballot — at the expense of the variety of methods unions use now would impose a compulsory model which would involve far from formal clauses.

If Tebbit is confused on union power and legal privileges he is all at sea on internal union democracy.

"Time and again," he points out, "union leaders are seen to be out of touch with the rank and file and often appear to be neither representative of the majority of their members nor directly responsible to them."

But, alas, Tebbit isn't talking about Sid Weighell, who secretly switched the NUR block vote at the Labour Party conference, perverting the democratic decision of his members. He isn't talking about Sid breaking NUR rules by interfering in the present NUR election.

He isn't even thinking about Moss Evans going against TGWU Biennial Delegate Meeting decisions on incomes policy in interviews with the Financial Times, or David Basnett asking the Labour Party NEC not to support the water workers with no regard for the wishes or welfare of his struggling members.

He certainly isn't thinking of unions like the EETPU where the rules state that "whenever industrial action is authorised, the settlement of the dispute shall be in the hands of the Executive Council and the terms of settlement shall be binding on all members of the union. The Executive Council may at any time, in its discretion, direct members to return to work" [17(5)]. Or the AUEW where the executive, in direct violation of the democratic wishes of their members employed at Laurence Scott, tried to terminate their strike and eventually succeeded in breaking it.

Tebbit isn't worried where the unrepresentative nature of union leaders and their lack of responsibility to their members leads to policies of which he approves, crucially an opposition to industrial action.

This is the central point. Tebbit isn't interested in how useful certain changes in the unions might be in allowing the true voice of the members to be heard. He is interested in how useful they might be in producing collaboration at the top and in preventing strikes.

For example, the Green Paper discusses the possibility of allowing a certain group of members to ask for a strike ballot. But it then points out the problems "where union leadership is weak, triggered ballots might be used by militants to force the hand of more responsible leaders".

So now "responsible leaders" are those who ignore the wishes of their members. Weak leaders are those who can't get away with it!

Strike ballots, we are told, "...generally become a test of solidarity and of support for the trade union leadership and policies and so far from bringing disputes to an end may... prolong them".

And that's the whole point. The Green Paper is called "Democracy in Trade Unions". It should be called "How to Stop Strikes and Weaken Trade Unions".

Secret postal ballots

Norman Tebbit dreams about a magical fairy tale world where all union leaders are called Frank and Terry.

Frank and Terry believe in something called 'business unionism'. You join their union to get better wages and conditions but you don't have to do anything yourself. That's the key point.

Frank and Terry and their sidekicks Gavin and Eric do it for you. They are professional business operatives. Their job is smooth-talking the employers and bringing home the bacon. Leave it to them. Don't interfere. You can't do that!

Frank and Terry's operation is like a fruit machine. You put in your 10p and

out comes a flood of 10ps. You are not interested in how the machine runs. That's their job.

Until you realise that the 10ps are ½ps, and that you can't, in the best traditions of text-book business unionism, simply march off to another fruit machine. But that's another story, as the London Press branch are finding out.

Unlike Frank and Terry and Norman, socialists don't want a passive, quiescent membership. Unlike them, we believe that if you don't do things for yourself, you will not only get second best because your leaders' interests may be a wee bit different from yours, but that over time you will forget what first best is and be only too glad to get what you are given.

Socialists believe that the more workers are active, take an interest, and participate together, then the better off they will be. The less workers participate, the less active they are, the less they will be able to control the Franks and Terrys of this world. They will get less, and Frank and Terry will have more power.

Of course it's not only that. The more workers act together collectively, by for example, striking against the boss, the more they will see and understand of how the bosses really are; of the conflict between their own interests and those of the bosses; of how the interests of all bosses are linked; and the more they will be open to the arguments of the socialists that the whole system must be changed.

So it is in the interests of Frank and Terry and Norman to keep the workers isolated and split up, looking after number one, keeping their noses clean, thinking of themselves and, of course, the wife and kids. So Frank's ideal member is Joe Public who lives in a box, drives his own little car, and sits at home watching telly instead of attending union meetings.

But there's a serpent in Frank's paradise. Because Joe doesn't attend his union meetings, the troublemakers who do, start trying to change union policy, start trying to involve people like Joe, and worst of all start organising to get rid of Frank!

This is where, thank God, the secret postal ballot comes in.

What we have to do is get Joe's vote, while keeping him uninvolved and sitting at home, with the six-pack of lager and "Match of the Day".

We'll send him a ballot paper through the post. Joe can still manage to pick up a biro. can't he?

The 'Daily Excess', which he reads, will tell him to vote for Frank. He won't hear the argument against Frank. He'll think about his mortgage and then he'll look up at the telly and see Frank — and he'll vote for him!

And if it's a strike that he's voting on, he's likely to vote against, if we follow this system. It's unbeatable.

Nobody likes going on strike. There are all sorts of fears and anxieties.

Workers left isolated are prey to insecurity. They tend to look at the issue more from an individual than from a collective point of view.

Atomised

In our society, the workers are at their weakest when they are broken up and atomised. They are at their strongest when they are grouped together collectively. When they can vote after meetings, where the issues involved have been explained, thrashed out, debated, workers are in a position to take an educated decision.

When workers vote at work, they are in a better position to consider their collective interests, what binds them together, than when they vote at home.

Democracy is not just a matter of voting. Democracy, real democracy, is a matter of activity, participation, education.

Unions are not fruit machines, they are organisations which, in the end, because they are conflict organisations, fighting machines, depend on the involvement and activity of their members, the ability to mobilise them in combat with the bosses.

There is a warning here for the Franks and Terrys. If you transform your members into passive punters who simply push their automatic cash cards into the union slot you will in the end lose the power to relate to, let alone mobilise the members and the employers will deal with them straight over your head.

So this is the real point about the postal ballot. Criticisms are often made of the system in terms of the cost, in terms of the ease with which ballot papers go astray, opening the vote to manipulation, and in terms of the fact that whilst the introduction of postal ballots leads to a big increase in the vote, time leads to a reduction to a level not much above that produced by the previous system.

But even if you get a bigger vote in a postal than a branch or workplace ballot, the quality of the vote in terms of interest, involvement, commitment, the mainspring on which any healthy trade unionism depends for its ultimate survival, is less.

Tebbit is not interested in real democracy. He is aware that the limitation of Parliamentary democracy, going to the polling booth and sticking your cross against one of the three names, has over the years made generations of workers fatalistic and cynical.

Between elections they can do nothing as they have no control over events. Far from involving them the system aims to disinvolve them. They take little interest in politicians. They leave it to the professionals.

Now Tebbit wants to do this to the unions, except this time he'll do the job properly. You won't even need to walk to the polling booth.

You will notice his interest in extending democracy does not run to elections for the monarchy, or the House of Lords, or the judiciary, or to the election of the leader of the Tory Party by all its members.

Even in the Green Paper, the proposals for postal ballots only apply to the situation where bodies and officials are already elected.

If you are appointed that's OK. Only 70% of the membership elected Arthur Scargill. But 0% of the membership elected all the NUPE officials, all the TGWU officials and all the EETPU officials. There are no proposals to remedy this in the Green Paper.

The government's position, like that of the media, the employers and certain union leaders, is in fact one of hypocrisy, not democracy.

The idea behind their proposals is not a concern for democracy but a belief that this technique will help to mobilise a backward majority, isolated from the activists and force fed one side of the case.

In a society where the media are controlled lock, stock and barrel by the employers the postal ballot is a favourable terrain for persuasion in the interests of the employers.

Indeed in any proper election the one-sided interventions of the Woodrow Wyatts and the Bernard Levins would be regarded as illicit abuse of the electoral system.

But apparently, according to some union leaders, illicit abuse is coming not from the harlots of Fleet Street but from the socialists within the unions. Tebbit started last November. "I have taken advice from a number of people on this, and particularly from the man who said for more years than I care to remember that the extreme left have been intriguing, lying, and manipulating the votes of trade unions, Frank Chapple. It is time that we helped him."

Later the Financial Times reported on Frank Chapple's successor:

"Mr Eric Hammond making his first public appearance as general secretary elect of the EETPU yesterday welcomed in advance government support for secret postal ballots for union executives and leading officials..."

Not only is there a strong base which supports Tebbit's ideas within the union leadership; they do not believe in half measures.

"To describe ballots as secret ballots where the Post Office merely acts as carrier is infant gullibility at best, or wicked deception at worst" opines Eric Hammond in the Observer. "The criteria of our union, the EETPU, require that an independent authority, namely the Electoral Reform Society, handles the ballot from the printing stage to the final count".

Not merely do some of our biggest unions already use Tebbit's system, but leaders of our movement are prepared to abdicate responsibility and invite outsiders to control our affairs, which as Tebbit would agree, we are incapable of controlling ourselves.

The EETPU and the AUEW, in other words, concede large parts of Tebbit's argument.

And it is only by arguing against these positions that we can be in a position to argue convincingly against Tebbit.

So we cannot simply close ranks. We cannot simply defend the status quo.

Smashing the Labour Party

The other side of Tebbit's business union ideal is a union which is involved only in economic issues and which accepts a non-partisan political stance. The members should leave the professional trade unionists to get on with the job, and the professional trade unionists should let the professional politicians get on with theirs.

Tebbit's ideal would be the US system where trade unions support individual politicians or parties on this issue, another on that. As a first step he would wish to introduce a greater fluidity into the system, developing the rumbles from APEX and EETPU about disaffiliation from Labour, building on the fact that poll results show that in the past 20 years trade unionists' support for Labour has slowly but steadily declined. In 1964 73% of trade unionists voted Labour but by 1979 this had fallen to 51%.

And that is where Conservative trade unionists come in. First established by Tory Central Office in 1945, this organisation had become moribund by the 1960s.

At the time of the last election there were almost three hundred separate branches at constituency level and today there are 370 — an increase of 30% — concentrated in industrial areas, with full-time officers in Scotland, the North West and Yorkshire.

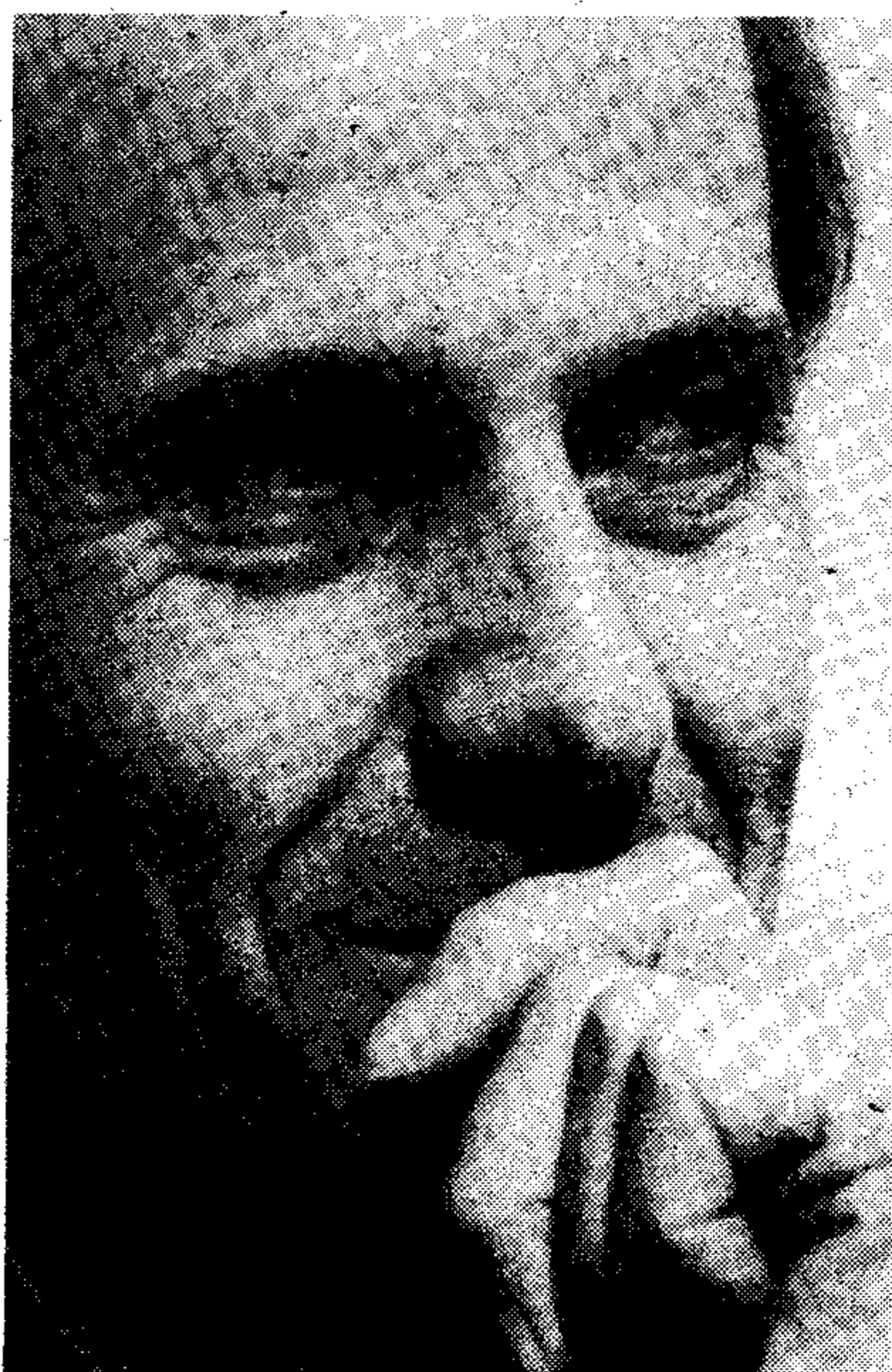
And once again, Tebbit's case is based on distortion and innuendo. Despite his argument that many union members are compelled to pay the political levy against their will, there are under a dozen complaints to the Certification Officer every year.

When Robert Carr, the architect of the Industrial Relations Act, was asked for his evidence after making similar charges to the Donovan Commission, he was unable to produce any detailed evidence and retreated, commenting that he had just been "speaking in general terms".

One suspects Tebbit's response would be a similar one. However, he does make great play of suggesting that the statistics show that something is wrong.

In some areas of the NUM only 36% of members pay the levy, in others the figure is 100%. The reason, however, why only 37% in Durham pay is that the Durham membership includes a large number of permanently sick, retired members, unemployed members and widows. Of the 15,000 eligible to pay the political levy, 99% pay it.

There is no doubt however that if Tebbit's central proposals that contracting-in should replace contracting out,



JOHN HARRIS

"Tebbit's ideal would be the US system" then the Labour Party's already ailing finances would suffer a tremendous setback.

The present contracting-out system has existed since 1946, when Labour restored the initial system established by the 1913 Trade Union Act and replaced with contracting-in by the Tories in 1927.

Before 1927 only 78,000 members of Britain's 32 biggest unions contracted out of the levy. Within a year a million did. By 1943 3.3 million workers were contracting out.

That doesn't mean it will happen again but it certainly gives cause for thought.

For what Tebbit is attempting is the bankruptcy of the Labour Party. He argues that it is wrong in principle that a decision to contribute to a political fund should result from inertia or apathy, rather than from a deliberate and positive choice."

But a deliberate and positive choice to affiliate to the Labour Party and establish a political fund has been made and has been maintained by the members of the union acting as a collectivity. Any union member who objects is entitled to raise the matter at the Rules Revision Conference if s/he can get sufficient support. Once a collective decision has been made, surely it is completely congruent with democracy that those who disagree should at least have to opt out.

There is a class war going on. And just as members should not be entitled to opt out of their union contributions which pay for the essential armaments which protect all workers, so they should not be allowed to opt out of contributing to labour's more extensive fortifications, their political arm.

Such an argument is, of course, dependent on the fullest rights and democracy within the Labour Party.

But if "it is wrong in principle that a decision to contribute to a political fund should result from inertia or apathy rather than from a deliberate and positive choice", what about the gaffer's contribution to the Tory Party?

Union members, we are blithely told, must be given greater access to the accounts of unions on political funding. The Conservative Party does not even publish a central list of who funds it. Labour Research investigates the accounts of the top 2,000 companies but has no means of telling how many small companies also donate.

But if you are a shareholder of a company donating to the Tories, don't you go along with it from inertia or apathy?

If a Michael Ivens of Aims of Industry argues they can go along to the AGM and vote against the proposals what is to stop anti-Labour trade unionists from going along to Rules Revision — although they already have a remedy that shareholders don't.

All they have to do is fill in a form stating that they do not want to pay.



Health workers at Labour Party conference: Tebbit wants to break links between unions and the Labour Party

A workers' answer

The TUC has agreed to boycott talks with Tebbit about the proposals in the Green Paper, correctly describing it as "offensive in principle and a serious interference in internal affairs".

As Bill Keyes pointed out, "there is no point in going along hopefully to make a contribution to a debate when the other person is not listening."

But voices are already raised from the right, questioning this."

"I think the TUC are daft not to talk to mr Tebbit" says Gavin Laird, AUEW General Secretary. "We have given the Conservative government a strong propaganda weapon on a plate. Mr Tebbit is sadly in need of education and talks with him might help him".

Help him! Gavin Laird can't help his own members, yet he thinks he can help Norman Tebbit like the blind beggar helping the millionaire. Gavin has learnt nothing and remembered nothing from the experience of the previous Tory legislation.

And if the Tories win the election, there will be many now marking time on the General Council only too ready to join him, which is why talks with the Tories have been kept going on bodies such as the National Economic Development Council, with the TUC centre led by Murray supporting the right against those like Bill Keyes who pointed out that if we shouldn't talk to Tebbit about the law, what is the logic of talking to him about the economy.

In these circumstances, and given the lack of leadership shown by the General Council up till now, a response to the Green Paper has to come from below. It has to be tied to deepening opposition against the 1982 Employment Act and preparing for its use against trade unionists.

In this context we have to use the Green Paper to argue for our own ideas on democracy and the Labour Party, just as the Chappies and Duffys will use it to generalise their philosophy and methods.

Alongside specific provisions to maximise the involvement of women, black people, and the lowest paid workers, in active union work, and to organise the unemployed, the following general policies should be pursued:

□ Election for short terms of office of, and right of recall over, all full time union officials. This simple demand should be argued out in, for example, all union Broad Lefts.

Now that Tebbit has placed the whole question of union democracy on the agenda, arguments about the time not being ripe (as in NUPE — after last year's industrial action?) or the fact that the executive which appoints is itself elected (in the TGWU — given the tremendous power of the General Secretary and the weakening of shop floor organisation?) are more clearly than ever evasions.

This demand should be supplemented by tying full-timers' salaries to the wages of those represented.

□ Opposition to the postal ballot. The left can win even using this method. But we are interested in developing the deepest forms of democracy, those which involve the workers' most.

□ This means attempting to develop existing forms of decision-making about elections and strikes in each union, taking into account each union's specific situation and traditions, but measuring them against our yardstick.

In many unions, for example, this will mean a move from the branch to the workplace. Often, geographical branches represented the unity of all workers in an area, regardless of job or employer. However, we have to formally take one step back if we are to rebuild that tradition.

The branch in many unions needs to be replaced by the workplace as the basic decision making unit just as the right of stewards' committees to affiliate to trades councils could reinvigorate those bodies.

□ Decisions should be made through open discussion at workplace meetings. All candidates in elections should have the right to full circulation of election material and the right to address such meetings.

Participation in union elections is a problem. If the postal ballot is not to be the answer, we have to find our own solutions.

□ We have to fight to increase the individual membership of the Labour Party to avoid correct criticism of a passive membership used by union leaders in the Labour Party. Two important ways of doing this are regular reports of union delegates to GMCs and more workplace Labour Party branches.

□ Those who hold back progress in the Labour Party are those who oppose a deepening and an extension of union democracy. As these two struggles become increasingly intertwined we have to hammer home the central necessity of rank and file democratic control of the block vote.

□ And once again we have to emphasise "Break off all talks with the Tories! Put all your energy into fighting them!" and "One in, all out" if the Tory laws are used against a single trade unionist.

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



RANJIT MUST STAY!

ABOUT 500 people attended the demonstration in Sheffield on Saturday February 12 against the deportation of Ranjit Chakravorty, a leading member of the Bengali community in Sheffield.

It was part of the campaigns in Sheffield reflecting both increased police harassment and a growing

awareness and confidence in the Asian communities in Sheffield.

The demonstration was organised by the Asian Youth Movement, who mobilised for the event as well as significant sections from the local labour movement.

Problems inside the Asian communities were re-

flected by a counter-demonstration of around 40 Asians of a different religion, mainly reflecting the more right-wing sections of the Bengali community. They were playing right into the hands of state racism by chanting the slogan, 'Ranjit must go'.

Ranjit's case has been taken up by Sheffield Labour MPs Joan Maynard and Martin Flannery.

They have spoken to Home Secretary Whitelaw about Ranjit's case, and brought public attention to it in Sheffield.

Ranjit has been given support from Sheffield City Council and from many trade union branches in Sheffield.

The march ended with a rally at Sheffield City Hall, where the militancy of the Asian community was reflected in speeches indicating that in some respects sections of the Asian communities are becoming far more advanced as regards the role of the state than many white workers.

Despite labour movement support, one of the official slogans of the march was 'Labour, Tory, both the same/They both

play the racist game'.

Yet after the odious record of successive Labour governments, the Sheffield labour movement has at last begun to put its weight behind the Asian community's struggle. Slogans like this — though understandable — will only hinder that process going further into the rank and file of the white working class.

It is the responsibility of white labour movement activists to show their active commitment to the fight against racism from the state and in the labour movement itself, and thus to make sure that the Asian working class are not alienated from the workers' movement.

DAVE AYRTON

DEFEND THE PRECINCT 6!

THE 'Precinct Six Defence Campaign' is organising a delegation to the Leeds City Council meeting on March 9 as part of its protest against the jail sentences imposed on Les Haw and Mohan Pipial.

On February 16 an Appeal Court upheld sentences of six weeks (for Les Haw) and three months (for Mohan Pipial) on charges of 'threatening and abusive behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace'.

Mohan and Les were arrested on July 17 when

they were walking with five other people in Leeds City Centre. Two policemen told the group to split up, and when they protested Mohan and Les were arrested.

The Defence Campaign believes that Mohan and Les have been victimised for their political activity and their support for the paper 'Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!'

Contact: Precinct 6 Defence Campaign, c/o LAP, 59 Cookridge St, Leeds 2.



Whitelaw: deportations suprema

Bristol campaign

ON Saturday 19th, supporters of the campaign to defend Muhammad Idrish, a Bengali social worker threatened with deportation, leafleted and petitioned at the Cenotaph in the centre of Bristol.

Unfortunately there was a poor turn-out and promised media coverage failed to materialise; but plenty of signatures were collected.

The next step in the campaign is a lobby of the Home Office on Thursday 24th, to be led by Bristol MP Arthur Palmer.

For more information contact: (Bristol) Graham Reid, 62 Bedminster Parade, Bristol 3, (0272) 667933; Alok Roy, (0272) 570533; (Birmingham) Ahsan, (021) 511846; Barry Lovejoy, (021) 523 8923.

David Am...

DEMONSTRATE

Sunday 27 March

12 noon Assemble Jubilee Gardens near Waterloo Station



CAMPAIGN AGAINST RACIST LAWS

- Repeal the Immigration and Nationality Acts
- Stop race checks ■ Stop racist deportations
- Unite the divided families now

From strikes and petitions to desperation

Eddie Horner killed a policeman. Fleet Street was quick to rejoice at his jail sentence, not so quick to ask why it all happened. Andrew Hornung investigates

THE biggest selling papers on Saturday February 11 were, of course, the Daily Mirror and the Sun. Millions of workers and their families — maybe 20 million people — will have picked one of these papers up. Of them, several million will have read the court's verdict on Eddie Horner: "20 years for police killer" (Mirror), "Leftie who killed cop is caged for life" (Sun).

The facts, according to the Sun, were simple. Eddie Horner was "obsessed with politics", a "shy chess-playing book-worm", a loner who didn't join his workmates in reading girlie magazines, a "crackpot cop-hater", a weapons-freak "who dreamed of starting a bloody revolution".

Apart from that and extracts from the judge's speech, all we learned is that Horner led two others in a raid on a factory from which he had been sacked: that they were stopped by policeman Jimmy Porter and some members of the firm's management; and that Horner shot Porter dead.

The Mirror offered no alternative: same page, same length article, similar pictures of the widow and children, same picture of Horner and similar praise for the dead policeman ("Cop who cared").

But of course Britain is a democracy. Workers don't have to buy the Sun or the Mirror. They can buy the middle class Guardian. There the story — which, naturally, includes the obligatory obituary to the policeman who "loved people" and "hardly ever lost his temper" — is more enlightening.

On September 22 1981, Horner and 42 other workers took part in a one-day unofficial strike over a new pay deal that would have cut their wages by £10 a week. The employer, Chamberlain Phipps, by-liner factory in Bisnop Auckland responded by sacking the lot.

"They were refused unemployment benefit on the grounds that they might be re-instated and £12.50 a week was docked from the supplementary benefit paid to their dependents on the



Eddie Horner was knocked down by a scab truck on the Laurence Scotts picket line

presumption that they would be receiving strike pay... One of Horner's workmates, Chris Jackman, had £22 a week for his wife and six children."

Maybe Horner was a weapons freak as the Sun suggests; the Guardian reports that he had long been a member of a gun club. Maybe he was a psychopath. I don't know.

What we do know is that he had used his democratic right to strike — while his employer had used his democratic right to sack 43 workers and condemn their families to at least temporary poverty.

We know too that he had appealed to the welfare state (which duly deprived

him of part of his entitlement on the basis of two presumptions, both of which turned out to be wrong).

Nor did Horner pick up the gun then. The strikers put their case to Derek Foster, their local MP. Foster responded warmly and he spoke to the honourable members of the House of Commons on the plight of the strikers. Once again the appeal to democracy proved fruitless.

All this time Horner and other workers continued to act as good democrats: they took part in a series of peaceful protests and pickets of the factory. The courts responded by recognising the democratic

rights of the factory owners — and issued an order banning the protesters from the industrial estate where the factory was situated.

But Horner seems to have been a patient man. "He lobbied his union, the TUC and the Labour Party. The National Union of Footwear, Leather and Allied Trades refused to make the strike official, and the TUC would not back it."

And Horner was a determined man. With another striker, he marched the 288 miles to London to present a petition. In Doncaster, on the way to London, the two joined the picket at the Laurence Scott works, the scene of considerable police

violence. There the peaceful protester from Bishop Auckland was knocked down by a scab truck.

In London he was introduced to Michael Foot. He handed Foot a 3,500 name petition supporting the sacked 43.

What more do you want? Peaceful protest, marches, a petition, working through your local MP, lobbying your union and the TUC, lobbying the Labour Party and speaking to its leader, and even having the matter raised in Parliament.

What a model of democratic activity! Yet... all those closed doors, those polite but arbitrary refusals — or warm responses leading to mockingly hollow

gestures — those smiling but still implacable rejections and all those reasoned but ultimatic noes! All of them, no doubt, with the courtesy of courtiers and the finality of a bullet.

And among the democratic deaf there numbered naturally, all the institutions of our criminally bureaucratic labour movement. In a sense, their attitudes have condemned Eddie Horner to life in prison as surely as he condemned DC Porter to death.

Of course, Eddie Horner did not take the only course left open to him. There were in principle two others possible.

He could have given up, resigned himself to impotence — even comforted himself in the thought that nothing abnormal had happened, except perhaps that he had been daft enough to believe that things could have been otherwise.

The other possibility was to take a much harder road — harder than resignation and harder than terrorism — the road of revolutionary socialist struggle to rouse the working class to overthrowing capitalism. The harder road is the long, patient one of directing the burning hatred of injustice inside millions of workers against its proper target.

Individual terror and the delusions of power that are its customary trappings are the product of an unshakable sense of impotence. The Marxist, the revolutionary socialist, is unshakable in his or her sense of class power.

Without this, Eddie Horner's impotent rage has done nothing but licence the state to make him once again — more terribly than ever — its victim.

How the Protestants came to Ireland

The birth of Republicanism



British troops use a travelling gallows against the United Irishmen, 1798

Irishmen were to find their staunchest supporters.

Yet, as I have already said, none of this is disputed by moderately informed people. What queer theory of Flack's is threatened by exposure to such historical data one can only speculate upon.

Readers of your paper will no doubt draw their own conclusions about the value of a theory based on historical howlers that should make a school student blush.

Yours fraternally,
JOE QUIGLEY
Birmingham

Ireland - which way forward?

Following two discussion articles by John O'Mahony (Socialist Organiser nos. 118 and 119), we are offering space beyond our usual letters length to readers who wish to take up a debate on the question of the Protestants in the context of the struggle for a united Ireland

SOME people on the Irish and British left have argued that the Protestants in Northern Ireland should be seen as a "colon" population, similar to the European settlers in colonial Algeria.

From this assessment clear conclusions follow. Catholic/Protestant workers' unity on any mass scale is not just difficult to achieve, but utopian. Mass emigration by the Protestants is, if not recommended, at least realistically an acceptable solution to the present conflict.

Peter Flack (letters, no. 119) states no clear general theory, but the drift of his account of Irish history seems to be towards the "colon" view.

In the 1640s, he tells us, the English conquest "took place as part of a Protestant crusade against Catholic Ireland".

Flash

The next stopping point is 1912, with these same Protestants "holding the pass for the Empire". Then we flash forward to 1983, and the Protestants — much the same people as conducted the "crusade against Catholic Ireland" in the 1640s, apparently — constitute an "imperialist enclave".

Ireland, in short, is after all "two nations" — only one of these, the Protestant nation, is a bad nation.

The account is so selective as to be completely distorted. "A Protestant crusade against Catholic Ireland" is an odd, and not very materialist, explanation of the 1641-49 war. It started with a rising of the (Catholic) native-Irish, and

then criss-crossed with the English civil war.

The Catholics among the Anglo-Irish, and at times sections of the Protestant Anglo-Irish landowners, sided with the King. The Ulster Scots generally sided with Parliament. And this conflict was interlaced with the drive of the rising English bourgeoisie to subjugate what they saw as the wild, alien race of the native-Irish, and to make sure that Ireland could not be a base for foreign invasion.

Straight

Peter Flack passes without mention over the birth of Irish nationalism and Republicanism in the late 18th Century — a period which surely shows that we cannot simply read history backwards in a straight line to identify today's Protestant community with Cromwell's soldiers of the 1640s.

Republicanism originated as the democratic left wing of the mainly Protestant/aristocratic Irish nationalism of the late 18th Century "patriot" movement. For a period it was so strong that until June 1797 the Orange Order could not hold meetings in Protestant Belfast.

Unite

The most advanced section of the Protestant bourgeoisie formulated the programme, "To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of past dissensions, and to substitute the common name of Irishman in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic and

Dissenter", and linked up with the Catholic masses.

Such also has been the programme of Catholic-led Irish Republicanism, since in the 1840s it separated itself off from the narrow, conservative "Catholic nationalism" of O'Connell!

Such again was the Republican element that the Irish Socialists led by James Connolly integrated into their social programme: "In their movement", they hoped, "the North and South will again clasp hands, again will it be demonstrated, as in '98, that the pressure of a common exploitation can make enthusiastic rebels out of a Protestant working class, earnest champions of civil and religious liberty out of Catholics, and out of both a united social democracy."

The Republicans and Socialists held these views not because they were infected with "lying, pro-English rubbish", but because they saw that the Protestants were not a mere clique of exploiters superimposed on the masses of Ireland — that neither Catholic nor Protestant working people could be free unless both could unite in a fight for liberation.

To evade the defence of the present Catholic revolt in the name of these general aims would be shameful. But it is no less shameful to let our thinking be so dominated by the difficulties and limits of that revolt that we dismiss, abandon, or try to define out of existence the problem of conciliating and winning unity with the Protestants.

COLIN FOSTER,
Islington.

I tried to raise money by fining the Corporation for violating the conditions of the settlement.

Lowlands

The free or private immigration that came to Ulster after 1607 was different in quality and quantity. Overwhelmingly recruited from the Western Scottish lowlands, they settled in Antrim and Down and to a much lesser extent in Monaghan.

Unlike the English who were largely content to live off rent, the Scottish farmers sunk their own labour and capital into tillage and created in Antrim and Down a kind of extension of the Scottish lowlands.

Subsequent attempts by the native Irish to recover their lost lands were predictably met by further repression and confiscations. But the uneven distribution of the Protestant population of the North has its roots in these two forms of colonisation. And the pattern persists to this day.

In the areas of Crown directed settlement, Donegal and Cavan, Catholics constitute a huge majority, while in Armagh and Londonderry Protestants have a bare majority and fall a little short of one in Fermanagh and Tyrone.

Pattern

In the areas of free immigration from the Scottish lowlands on the other hand the pattern is quite different. Antrim today is still 80% Protestant and Down 68%.

Flack's sneering and shallow gibe about Ian Smith is put in its place when we remember that it was from these Scottish settlers on Ulster's eastern seaboard that the United

AS Peter Flack's letter (SO 119, February 10) consists mostly of interperate abuse it is difficult to find anything in it sufficiently coherent to engage with. Ironically, however, the issue that appears to excite him most is one where there is least dissension amongst those seriously engaged in the study of Irish history.

Whatever their many other differences the liberal Kee, the Stalinist Jackson, the Catholic one-time Unionist Buckland and the modern American historian D.W. Miller all agree the manner and consequences of early 17th Century emigration to Ulster.

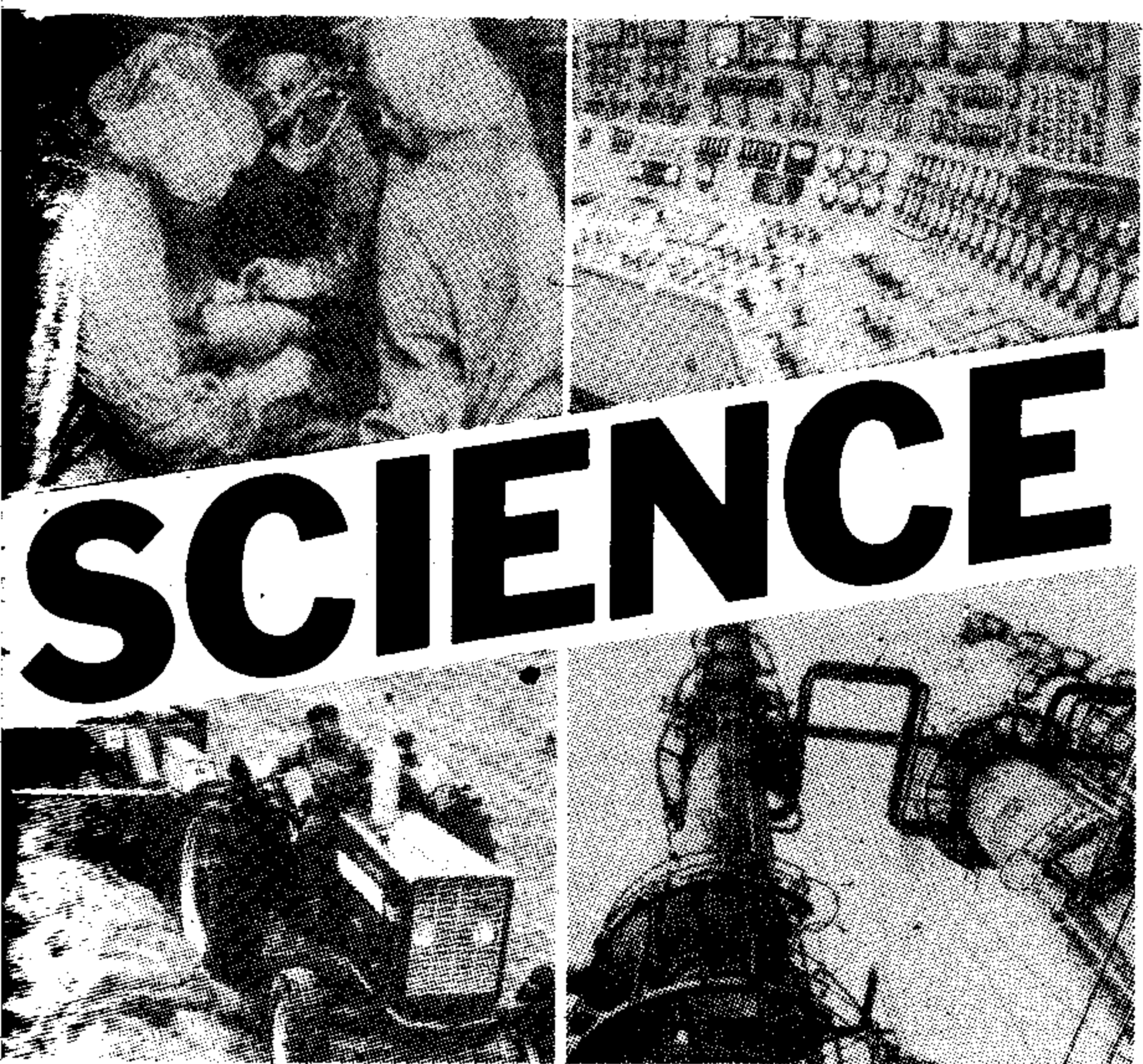
Clan

Following the defeat and flight of the clan chiefs O'Neill and O'Donnell in 1607 the Government of James I encouraged settlement of their confiscated lands. Land was offered by the Crown to under-takers in lots of 2,000; 1,000 and 500 acres on condition that they let it to English and Scottish tenants only.

Letting to the dispossessed native Irish was prohibited. This condition was not observed. Not recruiting sufficient adventurers from England the new owners let their land for rent to the native Irish. Thus, instead of creating as English policy intended "compact islands of civility" British settlers were scattered throughout a population still predominantly Gaelic and Catholic.

The Corporation of London was given Coleraine to settle by James I. They renamed it Londonderry and by 1624 had 4,000 native tenants when they should have had none. Six years later a financially hard pressed King Charles

Throwing light on the coalface



technology (S&T)*, with the case of the Davy Lamp.

This is popularly thought to have been a great life-saver in 19th Century coal mining, but in fact its introduction heralded a period of more explosions from "fire-damp" (methane) and more deaths!

So what caused the problem of fire-damp?

When the veins of coal were mined, pillars of coal had to be left behind to stop the roofs collapsing. The weight of earth above these pillars compressed them and caused them to release methane (a highly inflammable gas) which had been trapped in the coal millions of years before. This pressure also caused the floors to buckle upwards so the passageways of the mine gradually closed-up — a process known as "creep".

Now, miners had been campaigning for adequate ventilation of mines since at least 1662, but that solution would have been very expensive.

So the mine owners refused to see the problem

of fire-damp as one of ventilation. They defined the problem as being one of finding a lamp that would work in methane-rich air without causing an immediate explosion.

And Sir Humphrey Davy, himself a member of the ruling classes, accepted this definition as the basis for his researches.

He discovered that the most explosive mixture of methane was one part to seven of air, but also that it needed a very high temperature to start the explosion. If he lit a one to eight mixture in a long glass tube, it just burned quietly. The large area of glass cooled down the flame so the explosion could not get going.

So he enclosed the flame of a lamp with a fine metal gauze. Methane could enter the lamp and burn but the gauze conducted away the heat so the flame could not spread into the atmosphere outside and start an explosion.

Unfortunately, there were several ways the lamp

could fail, but because they could usually be used safely the profit-hungry owners were happy — while more workers perished in unsafe mines. And the problem of methane explosions still exists now!

Other examples are given of capitalism affecting the direction of S&T development including (an eye-opener for me!) the field of molecular biology (my own field).

The Ford Foundation decided in the '30s to provide grants for research into the chemical basis of life, in the hope of making discoveries that could be exploited by capitalism — just as had happened in the field of basic physics.

The indirect result of this decision was the discovery of DNA, which leads to the new field of genetic engineering.

Also covered in the book are the use of science to bolster capitalist/racist/sext ideologies and the industrialisation and de-skilling of scientific work (with the growth of science

trade-unionism).

A fascinating and useful chapter on micro-electronics demystifies this so-called revolution.

It explains simply the technology behind computers (they are basically just very large and stupid adding machines) and then explains how capitalism is using micro-electronics to restructure industry, deskill and destroy jobs, cut wages, destroy unionisation — and restore profitability.

The final chapter is a critique of labour movement attitudes and policies towards S&T. It also sympathetically criticises the movement of opposition to the excesses of capitalist S&T, from the Luddites to the modern "alternative" groups, which have a tendency to be "anti-machine" and "anti-science". This failing has made it difficult for these groupings to form alliances with working people.

Trade unions and socialist organisations are

attacked for failing to confront a class- and sex-dominated science, with the authors remarking that this has driven away many committed activists (Albury is a former member of the SWP).

This is the result of an attitude common to many Marxists and reformists, that sees S&T as basically progressive but misguided.

(The description of Marxism as "scientific socialism" has had the unfortunate side-effect of making it more difficult to see the shortcomings of science!)

This is a readable, informative, enjoyable book, critical but positive, and refreshingly free of jargon. And you don't need any O levels to understand it. I strongly recommend it!

*"Partial Progress" by David Albury and Joseph Schwartz (Pluto Press, £4.95).

Don't forget your birthday present to the only science column on the Left [see front page].

SCIENCE is often portrayed as the pursuit of truth and knowledge for their own sake. Natural human curiosity leads scientists to investigate nature in an unplanned and unplannable way. Fastidious capitalists and politicians may subsequently misuse scientific discoveries, but this could hardly be foreseen by the servants of science.

Obviously, there is some truth in this view — we

don't know what we're going to find out (or else we wouldn't need to look) — but the questions that scientists ask, the things they are curious about, are not just the products of their individual minds. Scientists are products of class society, and their concerns tend to be those of that society.

A neat illustration of this is to be found in an extremely interesting book on the politics of science and

Letters

Review

'Flat and heavy old cobblers'

IF, as John Bloxam suggests (SO, January 20th), the ILP is such a damp squib, why does it need such a flat and heavy load of old cobblers to douse it?

Could it be that the damp squib has a nasty habit of staying alight and disturbing those who chose to ignore or manipulate historical fact?

The LCC AGM was an unremarkable affair. Much time was taken up discussing what had already become the 'red herring' of the register (as opposed to the serious issue of expulsions about which the ILP has never equivocated), rather than important areas of policy.

The ILP had tabled two such motions. One, on a cuts strategy for local government, was allotted a totally inadequate five minute slot at the end of the meeting. The other, opposing the Tory Youth Training Scheme and raising a major issue on which the left should be campaigning, was not even reached.

As for who voted with whom, on what . . . ILP

members there voted consistently with ILP perspective. The derision with which John Bloxam says that the ILP only voted against the others (i.e. Clause 4/Peter Hain) once indicates that he considers the number of some significance and is incapable of understanding those who vote according to the logic of their own position rather than in support or opposition of one guru or another.

We are concerned with the issue under discussion, not looking round to see who puts their hand up with us. We voted against compromise with the present Labour leadership, which the amendment called for, because we are opposed to such a surrender. If others, including John Bloxam, choose to vote with us, we would hardly suggest a 'grouping', would you?

Less laughable is John's accusation that my letter is 'blatantly dishonest'. What exactly is he suggesting?

My point on the LCC Executive was that voting patterns both for the executive and on the issue of the

register suggested a consistency amongst a majority of the membership. Is John suggesting some grouping manipulated these votes? If so he should come clean and say so; if not, what on earth is he bleating about?

As for Audrey Wise's position: if John was aware of her inability to attend executive meetings, then he was privy to information not available to the executive itself, for she had never raised the matter there.

It may well be that John Bloxam is aware of more LCC executive goings on than are its members.

Certainly the lone ILP representative was intrigued to find himself part of a grouping. He has always pursued an independent line based on ILP perspective which differs both from the ultra-left posturing of Socialist Organiser and the left reformism of many in the LCC.

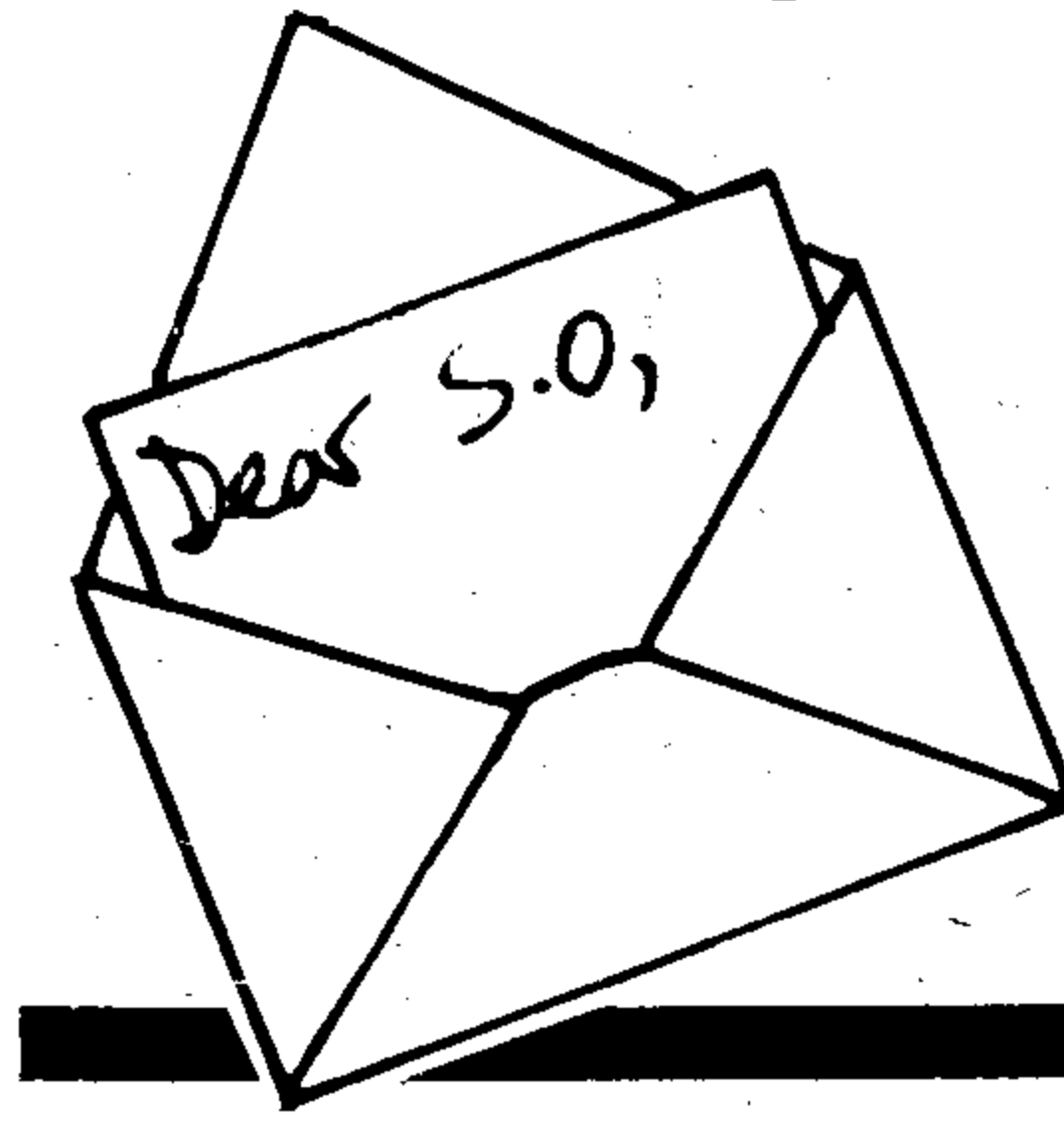
But it does seem that being on the 'right' side is something of a paranoia on the 'left'. Though unity on the left is important, surely what you are united about is paramount.

Back in the days of the Rank and File Mobilising Committee the ILP was similarly derided for not being part of a grouping. But today we might well ask what progress was made by the SO/Clause 4/CLPD grouping in manoeuvring us towards a trade union dominated electoral college.

The ILP's support for positions stems from its perspective and not from a desire to jump on whatever current bandwagon appears to be 'letter than thou'. It's a pity more on the left don't try it.

Yours fraternally,
ANNE-MARIE GRAHAM

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.

Miner's plea

I am 62 in a few weeks' time, and I feel rather sad, When I look at this crisis world, I'm sure we've all gone mad Filthy lucre is the God ruling our Universe. Wealth should be a blessing, but it's turned into a curse.

The leaders we've elected to rule this world in peace Keep us all on tenterhooks, their wranglings never cease. Two world wars and millions dead is not enough, they think How can we blame the young ones who rely on drugs or drink?

We have Reagan in the White House, Thatcher in No. Ten Andropov is in the Kremlin, leader of his billion men Castro is in Cuba, Mitterrand he is in France. The heads of state everywhere have their own war dance.

Take Britain, look around, see what's happened here Four million people unemployed, the workers live in fear Redundancy is on their mind every working day They dread to see their P45 each time they draw their pay.

Tebbit's advice to the unemployed is, Get on your bike, Riots in our inner cities, men die on hunger strike, Nobody worries the Tory gang, not even the CND, The police shoot innocent people. Is this a democracy?

The employers and the unions are now ruled by Whitehall Maggie's team has faced the unions' power and she has tamed them all, Even the militant NUM retreated from the test She's convinced, she says in husky tones, Victoria's days were best.

Please God I'll see a changing world before the day I die To Ronnie, Maggie, all the hypocrites, let us say goodbye, Nuclear power and bombs should vanish, sabre-rattling must cease, Deterrents no longer needed, the world will live in peace.

The arms race should be abolished, then every nation's wealth, Could be spent much more wisely on food, homes and health The common man's voice must be heard to speak in every land

Advising the leaders how to behave and make them understand We're all members of the human race, with a heart, a soul and brains, Please let us live in harmony as long as this world remains.
Danny Hampsey, Yorkshire-NUM

What kind of rebels?

WHILE not wanting to go as far as Peter Flack in arguing with the O'Mahony thesis on Ulster, I would add a question of fact.

While it is true that Irish Republicanism started with the Protestants, and that initially they were the backbone of the United Irishmen, this had ceased to be the case by the 'Year of Liberty' (1798). Also, it

ought to be pointed out that the earlier Republicanism was initially the sons of Cromwell's troops wanting the untrammelled right to treat the Catholics as they wished.

That doesn't alter the O'Mahony thesis that they rebelled against Britain, but is a right-wing rebel an 'anti-imperialist'?

LAURENS OTTER

A blow for press freedom

by Harry Sloan

IN WHAT proved to be a short but highly successful struggle, Scotland Yard has been forced to back down from a ban imposed on press facilities for Newsline, daily paper of the Workers Revolutionary Party.

The ban was introduced on January 24, when a reporter and photographer were barred from a press conference given by Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Kenneth Newman.

The journalists were informed that the police had decided Newsline was 'a political broadsheet, not a newspaper'. And a subsequent letter from Acting Commissioner Kavanagh announced that 'The Director of Information decided to limit invitations to the mainstream press, and in his judgement this description does not apply to your newspaper'.

Not of course would the

description apply to any other left-wing newspaper once such a precedent were established.

Though making no approach to other left-wing publications, Newsline began a campaign, which enlisted swift support from the National Union of Journalists, Ken Livingstone, several Labour MPs and a growing number of trade union bodies. A public meeting was called.

But on Friday 11th Scotland

AN EDITORIAL statement in the last issue of 'London Labour Briefing' supported the proposal for a properly convened joint conference to establish a single Labour Palestine campaign. This is the proposal put forward by the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine. It also described the the WRP take-over of November's LCP Conference as 'regrettable'.

A mild description, and not one the Briefing Editorial Board had originally

Yard retreated and sent a letter assuring Newsline that it would not be excluded from future press conferences.

The outcome is both a victory and testimony to the concern in the labour movement for the defence of democratic rights.

It is ironic in this context that the spearhead of the campaign should be Newsline, whose own readiness to exploit workers' reluctance to use the courts was

agreed. 'Regrettable' was substituted for 'outrageous' after Ted Knight phoned to remind Briefing of his readiness to take legal action. Having helped to pack the LCP AGM with WRP members, Ted Knight has since tried to fix subsequent reports with legal (in reality, financial) threats — just like his friends in the WRP. In the case of Briefing he has had some success. At a further Editorial Board meeting it was agreed to include a

demonstrated in its vicious slander campaign last autumn against Socialist Organiser supporter Peter McIntyre in the aftermath of the 'Operation Major' DHSS raid.

And it is doubly ironic that one of the first trade unionists to issue a statement in defence of Newsline's rights was Jonathan Hammond, President of the NUJ, who is also chair of the Socialist Organiser Alliance and Treasurer of

threat in the next issue. Even this has now changed.

At an Editorial meeting last Tuesday, called to discuss a slate for the London Labour Party Regional EC elections, it was voted to delete even the factual statement.

Fully supporting this retreat, were supporters of 'Socialist Challenge', concerned with maintaining their links with Ted Knight in the LCP.

John Bloxam

'Her People'

Kate Dayus's book reviewed by Wendy Frankland

KATE Dayus was born in 1903 into Camden Drive, part of the slum area of Birmingham. For a few, it was an era of Edwardian opulence and gracious living, for Kate, however, luxury was tuppence worth of fish and chips, and an outing with her father and the two youngest of her five brothers and sisters to the music hall was a rare and memorable treat.

More commonplace for her was a scolding or a blow from her domineering and irascible mother — the photograph of her shows a veritable "battle-axe"! — or going hungry for the day after being late for the meagre breakfast served at her school.

Kate's Birmingham was not that of the civic splendour of Joseph Chamberlain. Her family, together with Gran for a while, lived in a three-roomed dwelling; water was obtained from a stand pipe and it, like the five lavatories, served the ten families around the cobbled courtyard, back to back with dozens similar.

Kate and her family, at least, were not as badly off as many. Work was sporadic, and her father was in more or less regular employment so they could at least afford chairs to sit on. Nonetheless, you grew up to be 'street wise' — to know where you could earn a few coppers by running errands, but woe betide you if Mum got hold of you with the money!

For all the hardship,

however, 'Her People' is not a throughgoing, earnest catalogue of gloom and misery. Kate Dayus is a natural storyteller, with an acute eye for the telling detail that brings her story vividly to life. The disappointment of her Christmas, where her mother cannot resist a cruel punishment for a stocking left undarned, the dire results when all the kids scoff the free samples of ExLax left on the doorsteps by a promoter, relishing the treat and not realising its purpose or effect!

The climax of the story is Kate's hop-picking "holiday" with her Mum and neighbouring families, which results in her eldest brother's appearance in court for alleged pig stealing. This episode is a genuine comic masterpiece, down to the witness — Kate's neighbours — 'dressed to kill' in bedraggled wigs and furs and Gran's search for the lloo in unaccustomed surroundings.

Kate Dayus is still alive today, living with her daughter and son-in-law and playing bowls for Warwickshire. She certainly needed all the wit and cunning she learnt in Camden Drive to help her raise her family of five after the early death of her husband. Kate's story of 'Her People' is a testimony to the indomitability of her spirit.

WENDY FRANKLAND

YOUTH MARCH AGAINST BOMBS

OXFORD Youth CND has announced plans for a sponsored march from Oxford to Greenham Common, to protest against Cruise missiles coming to Britain in 1983. The march takes place on the weekend of March 19-20 and will pass through Abingdon and then Didcot, where the marchers will stay overnight.

Rallies in support of the marchers are being arranged in Oxford, Abingdon, Didcot and Greenham Common, and there will be free food and overnight accommodation on the march. Contact Cathie Brown, 10 Cunliffe Close, Oxford (tel. Oxford 52590).

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Defend S. Yorks fares!

Contractors set to clean up in NHS

THE campaign has got under way to defend South Yorkshire county council's cheap fares policy.

S. Yorkshire county council draws up its budget on March 6, and in the next two weeks activists in the South Yorkshire labour movement will be leafletting, petitioning, and giving out stickers to explain the threat to South Yorkshire's cheap bus fares posed by the Transport Bill.

From a meeting at Sheffield Centre Against Unemployment between unemployed, busworkers' representatives, and a councillor, a public meeting was arranged to broaden the campaign out from the original handful of councillors to labour, trade union and community organisations.

The bus fares policy is massively popular in South Yorkshire, where we have an average adult fare of 7p with children riding for 2p and pensioners free. This

costs an average of only 60p per week on the rates for every ratepayer.

But it has become clear that the wages and conditions of the busworkers themselves are very poor, and industrial relations are at a low ebb.

We cannot run our policy on the backs of the workers on S. Yorkshire Transport. Backing must be given to their calls for better pay and conditions, as the only way to involve rank and file bus workers in the cheap fares campaign.

The first stage of the campaign is making sure that South Yorkshire County Council stick to their guns and don't raise the fares on March 6. But many other actions will be necessary if the policy is to be saved and the Transport Bill defied.

Building a campaign in the trade unions at rank and file level is crucial in such a fight, both before and after March 6.

If protests fail to save the fares, the response of the South Yorkshire workers' movement must be to defy the law, beginning with an outright refusal by the council to increase fares — no matter what threats the Tories may make.

Central

By Harry Sloan

Any attempt by central government to intervene in the running of council business should be met by strikes, boycotts, and, where possible, the running of essential services under workers' control.

The Transport Bill probably won't become law until after the General Election. So in South Yorkshire we can also link the fight to save cheap fares to the fight for the election of a Labour government and the demand that such a government reverse the Tory cut-backs — but we mustn't just pin our hopes on that.

SHARES of leading laundry, dry cleaning and industrial cleaning firms rose on the stock exchange last week at the prospect of rich pickings from government plans to hive off a range of hospital domestic services.

Social Services Secretary Norman Fowler announced that health authorities were being urged to put contracts for catering, laundry, and cleaning out to private tender — and Sir Geoffrey Howe promised to give outside contractors a bonus by exempting such services from payment of VAT by the authorities.



Redundancy payments not to be counted

The potential profits for the larger and small private operators are a slice of an estimated £800 million annual cost of domestic ser-

ices for the NHS. Gains for the Tories include the prospect of striking a heavy blow at the organised strength of the trade unions in the NHS,

and drastically cutting staffing levels while moving further along the road to dismantling the state-run NHS.

Government instructions to health authorities instruct them to accept "the lowest tender", and to ignore the cost of potential redundancy payments in comparing the costs of existing or contracted out services.

But as Fowler was making his announcement in the Commons, it was revealed that North West Thames regional authority had had to sack no less than three private firms last year after their failure to maintain standards, and the attempts of two to substantially increase charges.

NHS union leaders have predictably spluttered their opposition to the plans: but the key issue now is to prepare immediate action to prevent the slide to privatisation.

This means that health unions must jointly boycott any work involved in putting contracts out to tender and pledge all-out action to prevent the hiving-off of existing services or the loss of jobs through cuts in staffing levels.

The shop stewards' organisation which began to emerge and flex its muscles in last year's pay dispute must play a crucial role in this — and the whole labour movement must be alerted to this new threat to the NHS.

* Part 4 of John McIlroy's discussion article assessing the industrial struggle has been held over a week for lack of space.

OCCUPY TO STOP CUTS!

THE IMPACT OF Tory spending cuts in Oxford health provision is already far more devastating than the highest point of last year's industrial action on pay.

The giant John Radcliffe hospital is currently on emergency admissions only. And now further cuts, if imposed, would cripple vital services.

With this ominous warning, Ruth Reid (NALGO) opened a packed meeting convened by the Oxford NHS Joint Trade Union Committee to begin a campaign against the cuts.

Over 80 people — trade unionists, Labour activists, and health workers — crowded into a tiny lecture

hall which had been booked in expectation of a low turnout.

And — to an enthusiastic reception — floor speakers were insistent that the campaign should not restrict itself to pickets, posters and protests, but set its sights on the occupation of threatened facilities and the fight for supporting strike action within the NHS and the broader trade union movement.

Kate White, who had been active in the prolonged occupation of the nearby Longworth hospital, spoke of the need for the same tactics again.

Thanks to that struggle, Longworth is still open, while the much larger and

central Cowley Road hospital in Oxford, where no action other than protest was taken, has long ago been closed.

Ken Williamson (MPU) and Sue Lister (ASTMS) and others drew applause when they stressed the need to call on the kind of solidarity shown by other unions to the NHS workers during last year's pay dispute.

From the chair, Quentin Silas pointed out that the campaign committee is open to non-NHS unions and to political organisations, in the fight for serious action against the cuts.

A broadly representative 20-strong committee was elected.

Unemployed



Fight back with the NUWM!

by Chris Erswell

DID you know that, as of October of this year, newly unemployed persons are no longer required to register for work at a Job Centre? That this is part of a move by the Tories to sell off or close down Job Centres?

When an unemployed person first signs on, the following questions are now asked: "Would you take any full-time job you can do?" If you say "no" you will be asked to fill in an "availability" form. Answers to the questions on this form about acceptable wages, hours and travelling distances should be given in as general and vague a way as possible as the answers may be used to stop unemployment bene-

Special attention is now given to single parents and women with children who will have to "prove" that they have already made arrangements for someone to look after the kids should they be offered a job. While you are filling in this form, the clerk will be looking you over as part of a programme of ethnic monitoring. This is a race check. You will either be handed a card asking your place of origin, or else

visually assessed and colour-coded by the counter clerk. There are five categories — West Indian/African, Asian, White, Other or Refusal. You can insist you are put down as "Refusal" if you wish. You will no longer get an interview at the DHSS. Instead, the Department of Employment will give you an even longer form (a BIPC) to fill in to send off to the DHSS office. The form is eight pages long with 109 questions! If you fill it in incorrectly it will be sent back for you to do again. You will receive no money until it is right. (In a recent try-out, only one person in twenty got it right.) You will be asked about your relationship to other people in the household e.g. if you say that there is a person of the opposite sex who is not a dependent it can lead to endless delays and subsequent reductions in benefit, not to mention snappers, etc.) Over the next few years, the DHSS system, like the police records system, is to be computerised.

Other government departments and the police will have access to it — anywhere in the country. This, together with postal claims, means you will have no face to face opportunity to correct any mistakes in your record. It will all be done automatically, with even less right to get a straight answer, from the bureaucratic machine that "processes" your claim, than you have now. From November 22 of this year, council tenants will no longer receive money for rent and rates from the DHSS. Instead, it will be paid directly to the council. This will affect over two million households who will have that much less ready cash to play with. This will mean that those families that survive the huge winter heating bills by stalling off the rent man for a few weeks, thereby avoiding power cut-offs, will no longer be able to do so. It also means that they can't go on rent strike to force the council to do essential repairs, etc

(neither can a "moonlight flit" be considered as a way of liberating resources for more urgent needs!) Together with taxation of benefits, which means you are no longer likely to get a tax rebate should the impossible happen and you become employed; this means that income is becoming more and more eroded, and not even sufficient for bare subsistence. As if that is not enough, the government has steadily increased the number of unemployment review officers, fraud officers, liable relative officers (chasing "defaulting" husbands or wives for maintenance) and special investigations attached to the local office. These have, however, been snowed under by the sheer volume of claims to be chased. The latest innovation is the Special Claims Control Unit. These are teams of special investigators who move from office to office to "blitz" claims. The idea is that they systematically investigate one in every twenty claimants, looking particularly at women, long-term claim-

ants, people with skills, or trades, or transport that might be doing jobs "on the side". Houses are watched, neighbours questioned, etc. Suspected "fiddlers" are called in for "interviews" (as in the recent TV play "The Black Stuff"). Isn't capitalism lovely? PS. By the way, if you have never had a job, or have been unemployed for more than 12 months, you will be delighted to learn that you are no longer now unemployed — according to official statistics! Only those actually drawing unemployment benefit are counted as of October of this year, with the change over to voluntary registration. Previously registration was compulsory and this was the basis for unemployment statistics; now it is voluntary, only those entitled to unemployment benefit are counted. Clever, isn't it? The solution? Join the National Unemployed Workers Movement. Details from NUWM Secretary, Mick Jarman, 119 Maidstone Road, Leicester.



Hosiery workers fight sackings

by Rob Johnstone

WORKERS at Daleside Hadden, a Nottingham textile firm, are into the 5th week of a round the clock picket after being sacked for refusing to accept the imposition of a 168 hour continental shift pattern.

The new shift system would involve tearing up previous agreements.

It would mean the arbitrary alteration of shifts, compulsory weekend working (3 weekends out of 4), increased hours and effectively lower pay.

But this was just the straw that broke the camel's back. The company boss had already implemented the following:

1. Tops and bottoms of toilet doors cut off to allow management to 'see who is in there'.

2. Continuous sacking threats to workers who have the temerity to refuse overtime.

3. No wage increase for four years!

4. 14 YOP 'trainees' out of a workforce of 100, doing shift work on production.

5. The immediate sacking of three cleaners and three clerks who refused to operate machinery during a lock-out.

The strike is solid among the 60-odd sacked workers, and they are all helping out on the 24 hour picket, which

has also been boosted by delegations from the Nottingham Trades Council and Unemployed Centre.

The unemployed have been particularly useful in persuading would-be recruits to go away and, in some cases, even join the picket line.

The management have advertised (in the scab local rag, which is blacked by the trade union movement) for 20 production operatives, who should be 'company-oriented people'.

The Hosiery and Knitwear Union has made the strike official, but some of the workers feel that the union full-timers could be doing more. The district secretary's chief boast is: "What other union would have got you a cabin this quick?"

One of the stewards has been charged with burglary and theft of company property. Magistrates have remanded him on bail and ordered him to stay away from the picket and any negotiations.

The attitude of the workers remains very positive, and they are looking to the rest of the movement for support, financial, moral, but particularly bodily, on the regular mass pickets.

Donations and messages: to Daleside Hadden Strike Committee, Martin Lawson, 1 Eugene Gardens, The Meadows, Nottingham.

OVER 100 delegates from Broad Lefts in nearly 20 unions, meeting in London last Saturday, were told by Tony Benn that raising the question of the block vote was not an attack on the role of trade unions in the Labour Party, or on the block vote as such. The issue was one of accountability.

The conference on democratising the block vote was held by the Broad Lefts Organising Committee, which was set up from last year's meeting of Broad Lefts initiated by the Labour Coordinating Committee.

The secretary, Phil Holt, of the POEU, said that one reason for holding the conference now was the need to make the work of BLOC better known and to establish firmer contacts.

Phil Holt stressed that it was not just a matter of

right wing general secretaries defying their own unions' policies. Even where the vote is cast rather more in line with union policies, there is still considerable room for criticism and improvement.

He criticised the failure of most union delegations at Party conference to report back to their members, or to allow minority reports. When he had made a minority report on the use of the POEU vote in favour of wage controls, against union policy, he was told he would never get on the delegation again.

However it was just those people who did make minority reports who had been re-elected time after

time. Benn argued that democratising the block vote was part of the fight to politicise the unions. Too often, even when under direct government attack, trade unions did not see their struggles as political. The left had to get far more union affiliations at Constituency Labour Party level.

We should also take on the task of setting up workplace branches of the Party; these could provide political leadership, but they could also build workplace organisation in many places where the amalgamation of union branches into larger and larger units had made them very remote to the rank and file.

Trade Unions for a Labour Victory' also came under attack from Benn. TULV had now been set up as a limited company, with a group of right wing general secretaries as directors. There are no elections and no report backs but they collect in the affiliation fees and drip feed the Labour Party according to whether they approve particular actions by the NEC.

The general secretaries themselves do not usually bother to attend meetings, but send their research staff who make the detailed decisions.

Benn call to democratise the block vote

by Tony Gard

In discussion activists from a large number of unions gave accounts of the experience of the left groupings. In some like EETPU and UCW the left operated under a tight bureaucratic regime which repressed discussion, tried to prevent groups from campaigning in the union and threatened suspensions and expulsions.

A delegate from UCATT described the success they had had revising the rules to ensure that their delegation to the Labour Party conference should be bound by union conference decisions. But as another UCATT member pointed out, there is still a lot to do before genuine accountability is won.

A member of the 18-month old NUR Broad Left emphasised that the present left groupings should not just become electioneering machines; they must base themselves on concrete demands.

Pat Byrne of the CPSA, which has one of the largest, most open and so far most successful Broad Lefts, though in a union not affiliated to the Labour Party, described the situation at the TUC.

In many large unions the general secretary alone decided how votes were

cast. Some delegations never met, in others only the full-timers met, or only officials were allowed to speak. It was essential to tie the general secretaries firmly to internal democracy in the union.

A speaker from another non-affiliated union, Betty Bell of NALGO, described how the right-wing witch-hunt in the Labour Party had undermined the campaign to affiliate NALGO to the Party.

The right wing in the union had been able to point to the 'disunity' in the Labour Party as an argument against affiliating.

The conference was clearly an important advance for the Broad Lefts which have grown up in many unions over the last few years. Though the organisers were at pains to point out that they did not want to interfere in individual unions, it is clearly essential that the Left in the different unions should link up, and that they should raise the political questions bound up in their relationship with the Labour Party.

As one speaker argued, we need today to recreate something like the Minority Movement of the 1920s.

TONY GARD



Benn. attacked TULV

Where to find us

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 if 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 Croke, 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 Johnstone, 1 Wellington Road, Wallasey.

Liverpool. Contact 733 6663. SO is sold at Progressive Books, Berry St, and at News from Nowhere, Whitechapel.

Manchester. Public meeting, Thursday February 24, 7.30 at the Millstone pub: 'Why is Thatcher winning?' SO is sold at Grassroots Books, Newton St, Piccadilly.

Rochdale. Contact 353 Rochdale Old Rd, Bury. SO is sold at Metro Books, Bury.

Stockport. Contact c/o 38 Broadhurst St. Meetings every Sunday, 7.30pm: phone 429 6359 for details. SO is sold at Stockport market every Saturday, 11 to 12.30.

Next Socialist Organiser delegate meeting: Saturday March 5, 11am to 5.30pm, Co-op rooms, 57 Micklegate, York. (Phone 0904 425739 for accommodation or creche). Please make plans to choose and mandate your group's delegates now.

Hyndburn. Contact Accrington 39573. Meetings weekly — see SO sellers for day, time and venue. SO is sold at Broadway, Accrington, every Saturday from 11.30 to 1pm.

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

• 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: 425739. SO is sold at Coney St on Saturday mornings, at the community Bookshop, outside the dole office most mornings, and at the University on Friday mornings.

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.

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

Sheffield. Meets every other Wednesday, 7.30pm at the Brown Cow, The Wickier. Next meeting Wednesday March 2: 'A Socialist

Campaign for a Labour Victory'. SO is sold outside Boot's, Foregate (Saturday 12 to 1), and at the Independent Bookshop, Glossop Road. Contact: Rob, 589307

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

Halifax. Contact 52156. SO is sold at Halifax Wholefood, Gibbet St, and at Tower Books, Hebden Bridge.

• WALES

Cardiff. Contact 492988.

• MIDLANDS

Birmingham. Meets alternate Fridays, 7.30, the Labour Club, Bristol St. Next meeting Friday February 25. SO is sold at the Other Bookshop, Digbeth High St

Coventry. Contact Keith White, 75623. SO is sold at the Wedge Co-Op, High St. Meets on first and last Thursday of each month, 7.30 at 'The Queen', Primrose Hill St, Hillfields.

Next meetings: Thursday February 24, 'Armageddon', a video made by the BBC about the effects of a nuclear attack on London; Thursday March 3, an Islington councillor on 'Can councils fight the cuts?'

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 March 7. 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. SO is sold at the Cornmarket (Saturday 11am to 1pm) and outside Tesco, Cowley Rd (Friday 5pm-7pm). Also at EOA Books, Cowley Rd.

Basingstoke. Business meeting March 11. Public meeting, March 10: 'Is Marxism obsolete?' All meetings 7.30pm, Chute House.

• LONDON

North-West London. Readers' meetings first Sunday of month. Phone Mick, 624 1931, for details. SO is sold at Kilburn Books.

Islington. Next meeting Sunday February 27, 3pm at Thornhill Neighbourhood Project, Orkney House, Caledonian Rd/Copenhagen St: 'The struggle in Zimbabwe'. For childcare, phone Nik, 607 5268.

Haringey. Contact 802 0771 or 348 5941. Meets every other Thursday, 7.30pm, Trade Union Centre, Brabant Road. Next meeting March 10.

Tower Hamlets. Contact 790 4937. Meets fortnightly on Fridays, 6.30 to 8.30pm. Next meeting February 25.

Newham. Contact 555 9957.

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 at 8.30pm. Next meeting Wednesday 2 March, on 'Lesbian and Gay Rights'. SO is sold at Brixton tube, 5-6pm, every Thursday. Estate sale every Monday, meet at 6.30pm, Lansbury House.

New Southwark SO bulletin: first issue out February 24.

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

Hackney. Contact c/o Andrew Hornung, 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmleigh Rd, N16.

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

EDINBURGH day school on the struggle in Central America. Saturday March 5, 10am to 4pm at The Pleasance, with Jenny Pearce, Robin Cook, and video and workshops. Organised by ELASC.

RAILWORKERS' Broad Left rally: Scrap Serpell, no to all productivity deals, for a fighting NUR leadership. Speakers: Tony Benn, Derek Fullick, etc. 1pm, Saturday March 5, at County Hall, London SE1.

Vauxhall jobs offer

AFTER 12 months of organising a campaign to gain more work for Vauxhall Motors UK plants by using the backing of the Spanish-built S-car and the threat of the first ever united strike of Vauxhall's three major plants, Luton, Dunstable, and Ellesmere Port, the unions have finally won some concessions from the parent company, General Motors.

From August 1983 two shift working will commence at Luton, with voluntary transfers from Dunstable and Ellesmere Port required in the short and long term to meet new manning levels.

The following year, in August 1984, two shift working will also start at Ellesmere Port, with production of the new T85 car (a new body shell on the old Astra).

The Dunstable plant (which since January 1 1983 has no longer been part of Vauxhall-Opel, but a new company, 'Bedford Ltd', based around commercial vehicles) has been more or less mothballed until market demand improves.

The company (GM) say they have new models planned and they will improve the plant in the meantime.

No guarantee

Workers there have been offered work at Luton, but as yet have no guarantee of sustained earnings or job status.

At the same meeting Vauxhall-Opel announced an increase in their share of the car market from 8.5% in 1981 to 11.7% in 1982 — a

43% increase. A £9 million profit after tax figure did not include a massive profit made on imports of Cavaliers and Astras from Germany.

To ensure that things didn't look too good, they added that the £9 million profit was a loss after they paid interest payments on loans totalling £46 million!

The unions have not accepted the figures (especially the interest payments) on the grounds that they were refused access to the company's books and accounts when they requested it.

Noted

Since that meeting a mass meeting of the TGWU at Ellesmere Port (the factory where the S-Car ban started from) has passed a resolution noting the offer, but deciding to seek guarantees of no loss of jobs or wages before and after the introduction of the T85 and the start of two-shift working, in August 1984.

The unions are meeting the company again at national level on February 21 to seek these guarantees, and it now looks likely that they will be given by General Motors.

If so, the ban on the S-Car and threatened strike will almost certainly be called off, leaving the way open for the import of the Vauxhall Nova (the Spanish-built S-Car) with the consent of the unions.

In the meantime Vauxhall have put back the launch of the Nova from March to May.

Socialist Organiser

'THINK TANK' OPENS FIRE ON WOMEN

By Harry Sloan



"I don't know, lady, somebody just said you had a new load of policies for collection".

WOMEN and youth will be the main victims if sinister Tory proposals leaked in last week's Guardian are implemented by a returned Thatcher government.

Among the notions thrown up in a clutch of discussion papers from Thatcher's 'Policy Unit' are plans which would aim to turn back the clock to the social conditions and moral climate of the 19th century, so admired by Thatcher and Tebbit.

They include:

- The abolition of the state's earnings-related pensions scheme — forcing workers into the arms of private schemes and denying many an adequate retirement pension;

- A draconian pruning back of the welfare state provisions to the level of a minimal 'safety net' — with

particular hostility being shown to the 'professional' care offered by social workers, probation officers and other specialists.

The introduction of Sir Keith Joseph's 'education voucher' scheme to give a boost to private education;

- Measures to encourage women to stay at home rather than seek paid employment — which many have already been denied by Tory mass unemployment.

- New moves to force conservative religious values and 'morality' down the throats of school students;

- An intimidatory propaganda campaign to deter teenage girls from sex, in place of adequate contraception or abortion facilities.

The common factor be-

hind the deliberations and suggestions of Thatcher's Policy Unit is to engineer a reinforcement of Tory morality by strengthening the family unit.

The family is an ideal unit in Tory eyes because it offers a means of dividing up society as a whole — and in particular the working class — into the maximum number of supposedly 'self-reliant' individual, atomised units.

Insofar as working class men, women and children can be persuaded to look to the family as a means of resolving their daily problems of poverty, unemployment, sickness and education, they can be diverted away from the collective, class action, through unions and the Labour Party, which alone can lay the basis for a progressive solu-

tion through socialised state provision.

The Tories have never concealed their cynical reliance upon the exploitation of women in the home as the lynchpin of the family unit.

In the Tory conference of 1980, then Social Services Secretary Patrick Jenkin pointed out proudly that:

"More elderly people are being looked after by their families than ever before in our history. Out of some 700,000 elderly people suffering from dementia, only 13,500 are being cared for in hospital. Overwhelmingly the rest are being looked after by their families".

The sheer burden of such unpaid labour on hundreds of thousands of working class women can be imagined: and since 1980

the further decimation of facilities and health care for the elderly has increased this toll of misery many times over.

Now the Tories are looking for ways and means to heap still further tasks upon the shoulders of women in the home, while seeking through stepped-up religious propaganda to indoctrinate new generations of young women to accept with resignation such oppression as their 'moral duty'.

The sum total of Tory thinking — which could take shape in Green or White papers for a future Tory government, or even manifesto pledges — is, as summed up by Labour spokesman Neil Kinnock:

"A flag-day health service, raffle-financed schools and social provision that is

mainly dependent on the charity and convenience of the rich".

Certainly the values of "self-help, self-reliance and personal responsibility" are intended to be promoted not among the sponging, idle circles of bankers, speculators, landowners and spivs who back the Tory party and staff its cabinet, but solely among the most exploited, downtrodden and poverty-stricken sections of the working class.

Organising

Working class women alarmed at this prospect can take steps to fight back — organising in their unions and Labour Parties the broadest and most thorough exposure of the Tory plans and a full-scale fight

not simply for the defeat of Thatcher at the coming election but also for an adequate series of socialist policies to meet the problems of women in the home.

Jobs

A crash programme of public works, including provision of expanded health care for the elderly and childcare facilities, could provide vitally-needed jobs for the unemployed and begin to lift a mighty burden from the shoulders of millions of women.

A campaign now on such policies can lay the basis for the fight that must be waged to secure them from a re-elected government, or to confront a new spate of Tory attacks.

Socialists must answer Healey's challenge

LAST Sunday (20th), Dennis Healey told London Weekend Television what he expected to see in Labour's manifesto.

He would accept opposition to the introduction of Cruise missiles (but would he be for their removal if the Tories introduce them before the election?). He was against Trident.

He would accept the scrapping of Polaris if the USSR would make parallel cuts in SS-20s (and if not...?)

US bases

On US nuclear bases in Britain, "I would like to negotiate with the Americans about the presence of the bases in Britain, subject to the fact that if the Alliance (NATO), which we overwhelmingly support, should feel that it was absolutely essential they should stay for the time being, then I would take that view very seriously".

In other words, Healey — who has said plainly that he would refuse to serve in a Labour government committed to Labour Party policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament — will accept nothing definite beyond opposition to Trident, a view shared for technical/military reasons by the SDP

and some of the armed forces top brass. (What he wants instead of Trident is more conventional weaponry).

Yet he had the gall to say that he expected this 'compromise' — slightly modified overkill — to be the basis of the manifesto, and to satisfy 95% of the Labour Party.

Meanwhile Fleet Street has been mounting a campaign to dislodge Michael Foot from the leadership of the Labour Party.

Few activists would be sad to see Foot go. But the 'Dump Foot' chorus is coming not from rank-and-file disgusted at Foot's witch-hunt, but plainly from the most determined witch-hunters themselves. The plan is evidently to get Dennis Healey in place — as deputy leader he automatically succeeds Foot if he resigns suddenly — well before Labour Party conference, and thus to try to pre-empt the electoral college.

Left campaign

Both developments underline the need for the rank and file Left to organise independently for the coming election campaign.

A statement by London Labour Briefing in its

latest issue outlines Briefing's views on the planning meeting on 'How to fight for a Labour victory' which it is calling for Monday March 7 (7.30 at the House of Commons, room booked in the name of Ernie Roberts).

Voice must be heard

"The Left must launch a socialist campaign for a Labour Victory. The first step in this must be a campaign for the manifesto to be based on full implementation of conference decisions, in particular unilateralism. But whatever the decisions on the manifesto the voice of the Left must be heard in the run-up to the election.

"A socialist campaign for a Labour Victory can maintain and extend the alliance between the Labour Party and CND and Greenham Common supporters, militant trade unionists, women, black people, youth and the unemployed. It is the next necessary step: we hope the planning meeting on March 7 will help the left to take it".

The Socialist Organiser Alliance will be represented at the meeting — and so should be as many Labour Party, trade union, and campaigning organisations as possible. That is the way to answer Healey!

FUND

NEARLY! At last our supporters have rallied round, and we've had £369.90 in donations this week. This brings our February total to £925.15: not too far short of our £1,000 target.

But we mustn't be short in March! It's a long month, and we'll have five papers to print and send out, and our running costs will be that much higher.

It is vital that every group sends us a donation for March. Make your fund-raising plans now; and send us contributions quickly to: The Treasurer, 214 Sickert Court, Essex Road, London N1.

Thanks to: SO supporters in the West Midlands £113.40; Steve Hall £3.50; Terry Connolly £2; Steve McArthur £5; Les Hearn £25; John Macdonald £10; Bob Sutcliffe £10; Martin Barclay £10; Peter McIntyre £3; Pete Keenlyside £20; Anna and Dave Lunts £10; Nik Barstow £5; Mick O'Sullivan £5; Judith Bonner £5; Roger Welch £20; Bob Fine £10; Amanda Barnes £20; Ross Catlin £5; Callum Macrae £20; Will Adams £5; SO supporter in East London £2; Tony Dale £2; Clive Bradley £36; Peter Flack £12; Paul Muddle £2; Fred Hessler £5; Bob Towers £2; Mark Alexander £2.