

Break
links
with
Tories

Socialist ORGANISER

Join the
Labour
Party

Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance No. 163 January 26 1984 25p Claimants and strikers 10p

Housing benefit cut by up to £2 a week

TORIES RIP OFF TENANTS!

£2 is about what Norman Fowler earns in five minutes. For millions of pensioners and low income families it's what they have to feed themselves in a day.

£2 a week, average, is what the government intends to claw back from housing benefit claimants. It will affect two million of the worst-off, tipping some over the knife-edge between poverty and destitution.

By Gerry
Byrne

Some low-paid families stand to lose as much as £8 per week in benefits.

And the Tories show no shame. Brazen as ever, Margaret Thatcher accepted the accusation of robbing the poor without a blink.

She agreed that what the government gave with one hand it took back with the other. She did not dispute that it was the worst off who would be hit by these proposals. She blamed high taxes!

The new housing benefit system has been a disaster since its introduction. It was made clear when the system was brought in that no extra money would be made available to set up the new administrative machinery required. Indeed, one of the bonuses of the scheme for the Tories was that it would lose 2,400 Civil Service jobs.

Claimants who previously got money towards their rent and rates from the DHSS would now get rent and rate rebates from their local councils instead.

But no new jobs were to be created in local authorities, who took on responsibility for running the new scheme. The extra work-

load was to be foisted on a workforce already cut to ribbons by the squeeze on local government finance.

The results were predictable. Millions of tenants were wrongly put into rent arrears by the failure to process housing benefit claims quickly enough.

Council tenants didn't fare too well, but at least the result there was usually a problem for different local authority departments to sort out between themselves.

For private and housing association tenants the picture was bleaker. They weren't getting money from the DHSS - nor (because of delays) from the council.

The National Federation of Housing Associations found that the number of their tenants in serious rent arrears (over eight weeks) rose five times over in the last year.

Nobody knows how many tenants, often elderly, have gone hungry and cold because they made it a point of honour not to run up rent arrears.

Another pernicious aspect of the scheme is that it removes a substantial slice of claimants' income from their direct control. When you're on the poverty line, the ability to juggle bills is essential. Suddenly, along comes housing benefit and a third or



a half of your income is taken out of your hands. Instead of getting cash from the DHSS, you just get a reduction in your rent and rates.

The pay-off was supposed to be that the poorest people wouldn't run up huge rent arrears to pay off other bills. What has actually happened is the bills don't get paid and tenants find themselves with huge rent arrears which aren't their fault!

And now, to cap it all, even that money they can't get their hands on is cut. Norman Fowler has said he's prepared to consider other ways the axe can fall - so as not to alienate Tory backbenchers.

But the £230 million cut is not negotiable.

So for five minutes of Mr Fowler's time, two million people can choose whether to

Who needs 1984?

Neil Kinnock made a speech in Parliament against the benefit cuts - but that, it seems, is about the end of the official labour movement fight against them. Labour MPs will continue to be a 'loyal', cooperative opposition in Parliament; the TUC will continue to talk to the Tories.

Socialists should step up the fight to turn the labour movement round for a struggle against the Tories. Recall the TUC to reverse the capitulation to the anti-union laws - and demand the TUC breaks off its talks and collaboration with the Tories.

Labour MPs should obstruct Tory business in Parliament, using Westminster not as a debating chamber but as a platform from which to mobilise action.

January 24: 20,000 marched against the Tories' plans to abolish the Greater London Council and the metropolitan counties, and many more struck.

NALGO, NUT and NUPE had authorised strike action by their members.

Now the campaign has to continue. The unions and the Labour Party should start campaigning for industrial action - the only effective means of fighting for local democracy and local services.

Inside:

Pages 6-7: Why millions are starving in Africa.

Centre pages: Tamil women in Sri Lanka: a double oppression.

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Page 15: The NGA's road to defeat.

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Plus: reports, reviews, letters...

EDITORIAL

The conditions for left unity

LEFT WING unity is very desirable but very hard to create. Socialist Organiser is for unity. Indeed, Socialist Organiser actually initiated the only successful work of building left unity in the recent history of the British labour movement. The paper itself has, of course, grouped different tendencies together (though some have left us). We initiated the very important broad unity of the Labour Left around the Rank and File Mobilising Committee in 1980-1. Without the collaboration of Vladimir Derer, Frances Morrell, and others, we would not have got it off the ground. But it was Socialist Organiser who saw the opening and moved to take it.

But unity cannot be created at will, or just by 'demanding' it loudly enough. The conditions have to be right. Because unity is desirable the cry for it is popular and bestows popularity on those who raise it. At any given moment, many who would like left wing unity don't understand how difficult it is to achieve, or haven't given much thought to the problems of creating it, or are not acquainted with the history of attempts to secure it. This means that there is usually a receptive audience for *demagogic* cries for unity.

So the cry for 'unity' can become a sectional catchcry — a way of prosecuting the factional war 'by other means'. Perhaps because unifications — let alone successful unifications — on the Left are so rare, the cry for unity is more often than not just such a cynical catchcry.

One grouping — the organisation that used to be the IMG — specialised in a type of appeal for unity which they knew privately as a 'unity offensive'. Peace is war!

Such operations inevitably tend to poison the political atmosphere and devalue the whole idea of unity.

The recent Labour Coordinating Committee appeal for unity belongs essentially to the 'unity offensive' school. The LCC, which was one of the first to break with the Rank and File Mobilising Committee is attempting to use unity as a club in the cause of the Kinnock leadership. They are attempting to exploit the widespread labour movement desire for unity to kick out the Tories to bludgeon the serious Left into disarming itself politically and falling meekly into line behind the Kinnock-faced version of Wilson's, Callaghan's, and Foot's Labour Party.

There must be unity in action to kick out the Tories and put in a Labour government with everyone in the Labour Party, not only with Kinnock, but with Dennis Healey too. But to accept **internal party unity, and ideological unity** with the Kinnock leadership, is to abandon the struggle for a **socialist Labour Party, and, ultimately, to abandon the hope of the labour movement developing a basic and fundamental alternative to the Tories and Toryism.**

That is why Socialist Organiser agrees in general with Labour Briefing's response (in its February issue) to the LCC's 'unity offensive'.

The authors rightly say: "... There is no basis for unity in proposals that give uncritical support to the present Labour Party leadership, a leadership which is still witch-hunting socialists..."

They then list five points (each expanded in more detail) as a political basis for unity:

1. We stand for a working class socialist Labour Party, committed to fighting for a fundamental transformation of society, which would take control of the economy and the state out of the hands of the bourgeoisie and into the hands of the working class.
2. We stand for an internationalist Labour Party...
3. We stand for a Labour Party committed to fighting oppression of women, black people, lesbians, gay men and other oppressed groups...
4. We stand for a democratic Labour Party and labour movement.
5. We stand for a Labour Party which is relevant to the lives of ordinary working people...

It is unfortunate that three of the four in the working party writing the platform (John Bloxam of Socialist Organiser being the exception) voted to include in it a British nationalist position on the EEC (smothered in internationalist phrases and good wishes for working class unity). To call for withdrawal from the EEC cannot in political reality mean anything other than proposing an 'independent' capitalist Britain as our alternative to the bourgeoisies' fumbling efforts at European integration.

But that only goes to emphasise once again that an essential part of working towards left unity — of preparing the ground for it — is the organisation of serious political discussion on the issues that divide us.

Migrant bribes exposed

By Jane Ashworth

FIRST Mark Thatcher's dodgy Mid-East contract and now revelations of a racket in the Department of Employment. Things aren't going too well for a would-be pristine pure government.

Details of a Scotland Yard investigation into the activities of one Reuben Davis are emerging.

Davis seems to have been running a 'service' for people wanting to move to Britain but forbidden by the racist immigration laws.

Davis, self-advertised as an "aid to foreigners who couldn't understand the complex immigration procedures" would, it is alleged, forge documents and pass them on to his hired help in the DE who would then authorise a work permit. Davis is now in America and the police have spent 18 months looking out for his accomplice in the DE.

Alex Lyon, a minister in the Home Office in 1975 first sounded the alarm bells about Davis. He thought he was a danger to immigrants. But it seems no-one, certainly not Roy Jenkins, the then Home Secretary, was very interested. Now that corruption in the civil service is involved the case is being taken up.

Davis does seem to be a racketeer, his running mate Hill appeared in court last week and told how Davis never had a permanent office and would run his business from odd telephones and other people's premises. Hill said he believed Davis's story that he was trying to keep down his client's costs. Hill got a year's probation.

Unfortunately the inquiries at the DE will involve chasing up permits which are thought to be fraudulent, which means harassment of immigrants, some of whom have been charged up to £10,000 by Davis for the privilege.



Bribe-taker Reuben Davis

CLPD AGM In Kinnock's shadow

Ian Swindale reports

THE outcome of the CLPD AGM will not be finally known until after the third part of the AGM has been held in Scotland on February 4. But at the London AGM — the largest of the three meetings — the forces of the left were much depleted this year and the EC looks set to maintain its control of the organisation.

It was sometimes difficult to gauge the views of the 150 or so members and delegates at the AGM. All votes had to be recorded on a ballot paper by each individual so that the votes of all three AGMs could be added together for a final result.

Sessions

Results will not be known until after the third session. Resolutions will be voted on and discussed over again at the second and third session!

The left challenge began immediately with proposals to refer back the Secretary's report and the EC statement to the AGM.

Moving reference back of the EC statement, Walter Wolfgang rejected the suggestion in the EC statement that members on the left of CLPD had themselves been responsible for the setbacks suffered in the fight for democratic reform in recent years by refusing to compromise when the tide began to turn.

Replying, Vladimir Derer benignly argued that it was necessary for CLPD to "learn from its mistakes".

The debate on reference back typified much of the day. The left did most of the debating, while the EC members and their supporters held back for a final reply, safe in the knowledge that they would win the vote. And win the vote they certainly seemed to do. Both motions to refer back were lost on a show of hands.

Benevolent

Consequently, the EC did not whip their supporters into a frenzy over the threat of an 'ultra-left take-over' (as they did last year) and many rank-and-file members seemed more willing, as a result, to listen to the points being made by the left.

Vladimir Derer assumed the role of a benevolently chastising

father pointing out the errors of his 'ultra-left' children.

Priorities

The motions on priorities were based on the EC's assessment that no attempt should be made at present to push for further democratic reforms within the Party with the exception of greater democracy for women. Instead, the priority should be defending gains already won.

The logic of the position argued on this and other issues at the AGM was that since confrontation was now out of the question, compromise and "give and take" were the order of the day.

But as Socialist Organiser supporter John Bloxam pointed out, it has historically always been the Left that has been expected to do the giving. The right wing never give anything away unless we fight for it. If the CLPD had started out with the attitude that it was necessary to compromise and give and take on the issue of Party democracy, we would not even have made the modest gains that we have so far achieved.

Lenin

Inevitably we were all told in reply about the need to know when to retreat. (Lenin was cited as the source of this wisdom on this particular occasion).

Islington Socialist Organiser supporter Nik Barstow moved a resolution on the witch-hunt which sought to commit CLPD to campaign for the right of Labour Party members to organise and sell papers; for the right of Marxists to be Labour Party members; for CLPs to manage their own affairs; and for the immediate reinstatement of those expelled by the purge. The motion further sought to commit CLPD to support those CLPs that had already refused or might in the future refuse to comply with the purge.

The EC sought to amend Nik Barstow's motion to prevent CLPD committing itself to support CLPs that might defy further decisions to expel socialists from the Party.

The EC moved a resolution opposing the "misleadingly named campaign for 'one member, one vote'".

The heavily-reported issue of the voting strength of CLPs at annual conference proved to be another contentious issue with Pete Willsman moving a composite motion supporting a greater share of the vote going to CLPs and instructing the EC to determine the exact proportions on which the CLPD would campaign.

Threat

The EC opposed this proposal on the grounds that it would antagonise trade unionists and that the real division is between the PLP and the rest of the Party, not between the CLPs and everyone else.

Finally a motion moved by John Bloxam argued that the Labour Party Campaign Committee represents a threat to Party democracy because it is not under the control of the NEC and therefore the Party conference. The motion called on CLPD to oppose this development and argue instead for the Campaign Committee to be a sub-committee of the NEC. The motion was lost in the show-of-hands vote.



John Bloxam

In 1983 CLPD declined in size for the first time in its history (88 fewer affiliated organisations and 122 fewer individual members).

And in contrast to last year's hard fought battle at the CLPD AGM, this mood was clearly reflected at the 1984 AGM. But it would be wrong to write off CLPD. The fight must continue both for democratic reforms and for socialist policies if we are not to be pushed back by the Kinnock leadership to a Labour Party of a previous era.

A QUESTION OF SOLIDARITY
Independent Trade Unions in South Africa

90p

Bob Fine

Published by Socialist Forum for Southern Africa Solidarity. Available (at 90p plus 20p post) c/o SO, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Newham Eight win half a victory

SIXTEEN months after the event, the trial of the Newham 8 is finally over.

Last month the eight were found not guilty of possessing offensive weapons and causing actual bodily harm. But four were found guilty of making an affray and were sentenced at the Old Bailey last Friday.

The guilty verdict could have prompted a heavy sentence. But the weight of the campaign and the transparency of the police evidence has resulted in a comparatively light sentence: the four have to do 150 hours of community service.

Lord Gifford, who defended Vipun Pathek and Helen Kennedy, defending Gurgit Hunjan argued that the case was crucial to black people in Britain. Gifford explained that the incident happened in an atmosphere of racial hatred in Newham and Helena Kennedy that there were many groups and publications which would be only too pleased to see the four sent to prison.

So in a sense the sentences represent a victory: once again the courts have effectively found against the police and reaffirmed the verdict on the Bradford 12 — self-defence is no offence.



Thousands marched against the Police Bill in London on Saturday 21st

What the Police Bill means

THE POLICE Bill means:

*The police holding people for 96 hours (four days) without charge,

*Police road blocks round whole areas with power to search everything that moves,

*Police power to search innocent people's homes,

*Police power to conduct 'intimate body searches' of anyone arrested,

*New and wider police powers to arrest people,

*Police power to use force to fingerprint and take 'non-intimate samples' from anyone they arrest,

*Police power to use force to finger-print children of 10,

*New and wider police powers to stop and search people in 'public places',

*New police powers to search and seize confidential information given to doctors, lawyers, priests, journalists, social workers...

The Home Office is pulling out all the stops to convince us that there is nothing new in their Police and Criminal Evidence Bill for innocent people to worry about.

This is like an officer in charge of a firing squad telling those about to be dispatched 'not to worry' because (a) it's all perfectly legal, (b) his squad has done this sort of thing in the past with few complaints from the victims afterwards, and anyway, (c) some of their bullets are blanks.

The new 1984 police-state powers will mean:

*The police will decide the guilt of suspects. They will have the power to keep people in custody for 96 hours without charge.

The so-called right to silence would be a farce. Only people trained to stand up to interrogation will survive four days in a police station without confessing to any crime the police want them to. Even after four days the police will be able to get magistrates to send people back to police cells so that interrogation about 'other matters' can continue.

*People can be held in custody for four days or more if suspected of a 'serious arrestable offence'. The way the government

defines this gives police officers discretion to decide that quite trivial offences fall within it.

*The police will be given new powers to stop and search innocent people all over the country. Their power of stop and search is already too great and much mis-used.

*Innocent people will be treated as guilty. The police will have powers to search premises if they have any connection whatever with a suspect. It will not matter that the person whose home is searched is not even suspected of any offence.

*The police will have the power to harass and pressurise whole areas by throwing road blocks round them and searching everything that moves in them because of the alleged 'pattern of crime' there.

The areas where black people live are the clear targets of this new power.

Seizure

*Whole areas of people's lives are to be subject to state definition and police search and seizure. The information we give to our doctors, priests, lawyers, solicitors or journalists could be read, searched and seized by the police.

*The police will have the power to conduct what are called 'intimate body searches' by force.

This is not the same as the power to 'strip search, which the police will also have. This power refers to forced searches of mouths, vaginas, and anuses by police officers. It will legalise humiliating and dangerous police assaults on people.

*The police will have greatly increased powers to arrest people. Minor offences like dropping litter in the street will cause people to be arrested if the police decide they do not accept the name and address of the offender.

These new powers of arrest also extend to actions which a police officer says are likely to be an 'affront to public decency' (not in itself an offence). This is clearly directed against gay men and lesbian women.

Home Secretary Leon Brittan has also fired off a volley of noisy

blanks:

*New draft codes of practice governing police behaviour. They are no better than the codes which permitted the shooting and pistol-whipping of Stephen Waldorf in the streets of London. They will be totally useless in a court of law, and therefore no one will get any protection from them.

Tape-record

*A promise to tape-record police interviews with suspects in their custody. When?

*A promise to set up a Police Complaints Authority. But this new quango will allow the police to continue investigating themselves.

*A promise to hand over prosecution to a new authority. When?

*Police-community consultative committees... like the one in Brixton which agreed to the police bulldozing the Frontline in 1982.

Such proposals simply distract attention from the abuse of existing police powers which day-to-day experience and each new research report confirms: from the new, dangerous, police-state powers in the Police Bill mentioned above, and from the ways in which the Police Bill seeks to legalise police lawlessness.

Alongside the Police Bill, the state is tooling up a whole new machinery of repression.

Irish

The government has decided to make the Prevention of Terrorism Act run for period of five years instead of one, and to make it apply to other national communities living in Britain... so that they will suffer the sort of harassment heaped on the Irish in Britain since 1974.

New riot laws have been proposed by the Lane Commission. New anti-union laws are being pushed through. There has been a massive re-arming and retraining of all police forces in Britain since 1981, with new riot squads going under the names of Instant Response Units, Distinct Support

Units, etc.

The police have experimented with water cannons, and acquired stocks of CS gas and plastic bullets. We see reinforced police personnel carriers on our streets.

Under the so-called multi-agency approach, the State increasingly tries to make social workers, teachers, DHSS workers, and rent officers perform policing roles.

Police forces

There has been a massive growth in police numbers since 1979, and a big increase in police pay.

The Police Bill has as its central purpose the creation of the legal framework to control

those groups and individuals who mount legitimate resistance to the attack on our democratic rights and our standard of living.

What you can do:

*Join the National Campaign against the Police Bill (c/o 50 Rectory Road, London N16 7QY) and get your organisation to affiliate.

*Set up a local campaign: hold public meetings, get speakers to local community and labour movement organisations, plan street leaflettings and fund-raising gigs.

*Contact your MP and local councillors and get them to oppose the Bill.

(Adapted from a leaflet from the National Campaign Against the Police Bill).

Your diary

Saturday January 28. Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions conference, County Hall, London SE1, starting 10.30am.

Credentials £2 from 148 Glenny Road, Barking, Essex.

Saturday January 28: national seminar on Labour Party workplace branches, County Hall, London.

Saturday January 28: Campaign for Labour Party Democracy AGM part 2, Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham, 11 to 5.

Saturday January 28. London Labour Committee on Ireland day school, County Hall, 10.30 to 5.

Sunday January 29. Bloody Sunday commemoration demonstration Assemble Carlisle Street, off Spitalhill, Sheffield, 12.30 p.m.

Saturday February 4: Campaign for Labour Party Democracy AGM part 3, North British Hotel, Glasgow, 11 to 5.

Sunday February 5. Islington Socialist Organiser day school, Thornhill Neighbourhood Project, Caledonian Rd/Copenhagen St., 10.30 to 5.

Sunday February 5: London Health Emergency strategy conference, for details phone 633-8523.

Saturday February 18/Sunday February 19: Youth CND conference

Saturday February 25. Health Fightback 84 conference, Community Buildings, Bradford University, 10.30 to 5. Open to all health workers and delegates from trade unions, Labour Parties and Health Emergency campaigns.

Saturday February 25/Sunday February 26: National conference for CLP delegates, County Hall, London SE1. Credentials £3 for first delegate, £2 for second (who must be a woman), c/o Islington South CLP, 295 Upper Street, London N1.

Saturday March 24: Broad Lefts Organising Committee conference, Sheffield. Open to delegates from all trade union bodies, credentials from George Williamson, 11 Sutton Place, London E9 6EH.

Saturday April 14. Next Socialist Organiser delegate meeting, in Nottingham.



'Labour's Options for Defence': a day school organised by Labour CND. Saturday January 28, from 10am at Sheffield Town Hall. Credentials £2.50 from K. Edwards, Hammersmith CLP, Greenwood House, 446 Uxbridge Rd, London W5

Fighting health cuts and rent rises in Stoke

TWO councillors on Stoke City Council, Jason Hill and Arthur Bough, have had the whip withdrawn from them by the ruling Labour Group. The two councillors had opposed a proposed rent increase.

Both councillors are now banned from attending Labour Group meetings, so in effect

they have been expelled.

The council's finance officers proposed an increase of 11½% — an average of £1.36 a week. The right wing majority in the Labour Group proposed instead an increase of up to 5%. It is possible the finance officers' proposal was a 'bargaining' ploy to make the increase which they

actually intended appear more reasonable.

Councillors only received the statistics on the Housing Revenue Account two to three days before the Labour Group so it was impossible for the councillors to consult their branches. Nor was there any attempt to have the matter discussed at the

District Labour Party, which is supposed to be the body which determines policy.

The decision of the Labour Group was therefore, right from the beginning, undemocratic.

Both councillors are appealing against their expulsion from the Labour Group.

Elitism or struggle?

By Alistair Scott

THE soft left's attitude on the rent rise has been most instructive.

At the November Group meeting the soft left responded to the 5% proposal with a proposal to adopt the "Sheffield system". This proposal was moved by Mick Williams, a leading soft left, in accordance with the policy of his branch, Hartshill.

The intention of the "Sheffield system" is to achieve a rent freeze for employed tenants by increasing the rents of those receiving Unified Housing Benefit and who thus would not have to pay the increase anyway.

Because of the massive right wing majority in the Labour Group (about 45-12) this proposal was rejected. But instead of then supporting a rent freeze, the soft left proposed an increase of 2½%.

In the case of those councillors from Hartshill this was clearly against their branch policy of supporting the Sheffield system which is designed precisely to have the effect of a rent-freeze.

The 2½% increase proposal was also supported by another long-standing soft left, Jean Edwards, who represents the same branch as Councillors Hill and Bough (Burslem Central). Yet the branch has a long established policy of opposition to cuts, and of mandating its councillors to vote against them at all times.

When even their 2½% proposal was defeated, the soft left surrendered completely. Mick Williams recommended a vote in favour because he said the Housing Chair had stated that it would be a maximum of 5%, and this left it open for the Housing Committee to agree on a zero increase.

Arthur Bough was absent from this meeting which left Jason Hill as the only person to vote against.

In fact, the Housing Committee subsequently voted to increase the rents by slightly more than 5%.

The scene of the dispute then shifted to Burslem Central Branch. The Branch Secretary moved that all the Councillors be asked to oppose the increase in full council. The soft left then proposed an amendment that the councillors oppose the increase, but walk out of the council meeting rather than vote against. This amendment was carried by one vote.

A further amendment was carried overwhelmingly that after the walk out a press statement would be issued saying

why they had walked out and why the branch opposed the increase.

A few days later, however, councillor Jean Edwards wrote to the branch saying she would not carry out the decision — a decision she had voted for! This from a member of the soft left who until then had been berating the right wing for lack of accountability.

At the full council meeting Councillors Hill and Bough carried out the branch's decision. As a result they were disciplined by the Labour Group at a specially convened meeting on 9 January. Again, the soft left showed their true colours.

There were only five votes against the Group's action. Leading soft lefts like Mick Williams not only voted to suspend, but spoke in favour of it.

Only a couple of years ago some of these same soft-left councillors themselves walked out of a council meeting in opposition to cuts. So what has changed? The answer lies in both local and national developments.

On the one hand these soft lefts acted as uncritical cheerleaders for Kinnock in the leadership campaign, and acted in a crude bureaucratic manner to prevent opposition to Kinnock and support for Heffer being presented.

They have collapsed politically into Kinnock's project of building party unity by watering down Labour's policies. As a result they are opposed to anything, including seriously challenging the Right, which appears to "rock the boat".

Secondly, the soft left have a naive, and mechanistic conception of everything in the party moving inexorably left. This view has been strengthened by the removal of the right wing domination of the DLP, and partial removal of the Right in the Stoke North constituency.

They have a simplistic idea that in the next few years the Labour Group will automatically be won over to the left.

The implications of this for the soft left are two-fold. Firstly, sit-tight now, don't rock the boat and wait for a "left" majority on the Labour Group.

Secondly, Labour Group decisions must be obeyed now because when the left wins control, Group discipline can be used against the Right.

There are a number of things wrong with this. For one thing there certainly is not going to be a "left" majority in the Labour Group for some considerable time. At most two right-wingers could be replaced this year, and then there is a two-year wait for the next round of selections.

Meanwhile real political life and the immediate struggle against the Tories must go on.

Secondly, as recent events have demonstrated, the term "left" is an extremely vague and inadequate term. It is not at all unlikely that some of today's "lefts" will be tomorrow's Right. This is all the more likely the less things are seen in terms of leading a socialist struggle here and now over issues like rents, and the more they are seen in terms of winning Labour Group majorities in the future.

This last point is the main weakness of the soft left. Their

attitude has shown them to have an elitist, administrative view of socialism — give us a Labour Group majority and we'll create socialism for you.

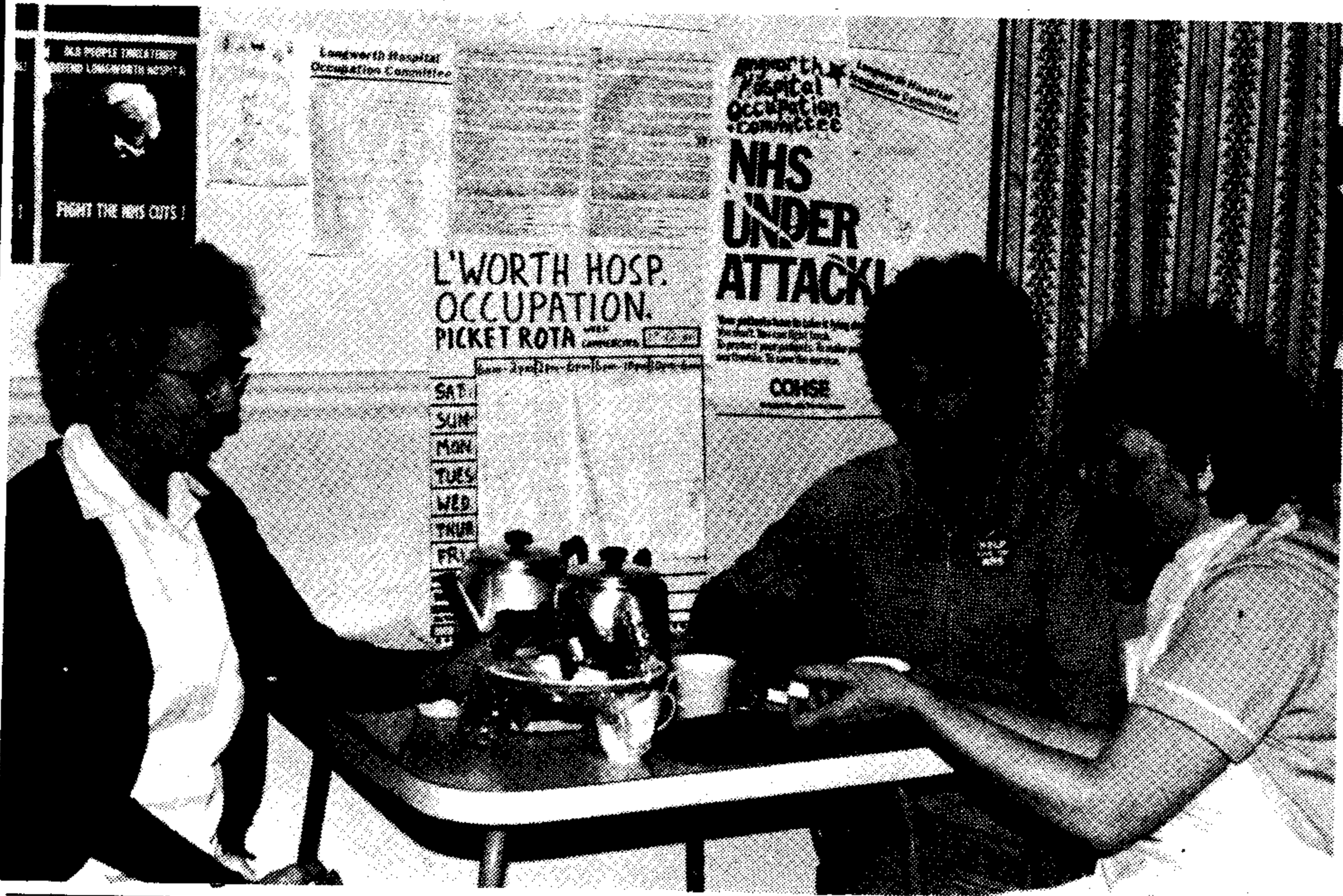
Of course, when the actors in this play don't carry out the parts the soft left have drawn up for them, they have to be brought into line.

At the moment it's only a matter of controlling two councillors, but what when it's the working class who don't conform to the soft left's plans. In essence this view of socialism links the soft left to the right.

Serious socialist politics, however, requires a principled

stand at all times against attacks on the working class and a focus on and attempt to give leadership to today's struggles rather than subordinating them to some vision of a socialist future which will arrive miraculously by some means other than a working class struggle.

Socialists can never see their role as administrators of capitalism. Whether in local or national government, our job is to use these institutions as a platform from which to mobilise the working class to struggle against — and ultimately overthrow — capitalism. That is the conception of socialism comrades Hill and Bough have been fighting for.



The Longworth hospital occupation: showing the way to fight health cuts

"We don't want occupations"

THE STOKE Labour Party's idea of defending the working class from these attacks has been to print 25,000 leaflets advocating that petitions should be sent to the District Health Authority!

The Party leaders bluffed and shammed for a while, but it was plain that they don't want to fight back.

When Socialist Organiser put out a leaflet advocating occupa-

tions to fight closures, Ron Swann, secretary of the Labour group, went to the press and denounced SO and its politics.

"In particular the [Labour] party should not be associated with recent comments made about hospital occupations", he told the press.

A week later the City Council's policy committee came out in support of the District Health

Authority's proposals!

The official Stoke Labour Party campaign has been shown up as crude and empty anti-Toryism. They have no intention of fighting the Tories.

Like all the soft left's politics, it is geared to winning liberal public opinion to moral indignation at the Tories. And nothing more...

Soft left flops on health cuts

ONE might have expected something better from members of the local North Staffs Labour Briefing. Indeed at the December meeting of Briefing there was general support for the idea of a special meeting to discuss the Briefing intervention in the NHS campaign.

At the meeting SO supporters proposed moving discussion on the NHS to point 1. After all, that was what the meeting was supposed to have been called for!

At this point, Councillor Terry Doughty, who must have joined Briefing by some mistake, given his open cringing support for the right wing on the Labour Group, said he didn't know why it was on the agenda at all! After all, he said, Briefing was there to produce a magazine, not organise campaigns. He obviously hadn't read the constitution.

It soon became obvious that the soft-left majority had caucused since the December meeting and decided against Briefing having an intervention.

After all, it might end up criticising their official campaign. The item was kept at number six on the agenda, leaving no time for a proper discussion.

In true bureaucratic manner reminiscent of the old right wing which dominated the local labour movement until a few years ago, they interrupted and harried SO supporters from the Chair.

Even so, they didn't have things all their own way, and an important proposal was won to organise a meeting, and invite a speaker from one of the hospital occupations.

SO supporters had made a number of proposals for action by Briefing:

- *Lobbies of the DHA.
- *Approach health unions for joint meetings.
- *Production of a broadsheet outlining our strategy.
- a) Support for occupations.
- b) Build a national campaign around the February 25 conference in Bradford.
- c) Offer practical support to

groups like Friends of Westcliffe.

d) Circulation of model resolutions for Labour Party and trade union branches.

*Organise a meeting with speakers from hospital occupations.

Every proposal other than the last was defeated.

Clearly feeling themselves under pressure, the soft left have now announced that the official Labour Party committee will meet on 6 February — just one week before the next DHA meeting, when the reorganisation proposals will be discussed.

It is important that everyone in Stoke who wants a serious fight against the cuts attends the meeting on 6 February. The soft left should not be let off the hook. But it is clear from the experiences so far that they will not fight — except against the left.

In which case SO will be spearheading the campaign with future lobbies of the DHA, and attempts to link up with local hospital militants.

Jobs and hospitals threatened

324 jobs and four hospitals are to go in the North Staffs District Health area, making it the worst hit area in the West Midlands in the current round of government health cuts.

The area is already £8 million a year under-financed. Now they call for a further cut this year of £691,000!

Just how poor health care in the area already is was brought out in a recent report by a DHA working group. Wards in the City General Hospital, they said,

were "seriously sub-standard".

The report says that mental in-patient services are currently deprived of about £1.6 million revenue. At the main hospital handling mental patients, St. Edwards, that 70 mentally handicapped patients are scattered in various wards, and it urgently recommends that they be moved to more appropriate facilities.

Opposition to the cuts, closures and re-organisation began on 16 November, when the "Friends of Westcliffe Hospital" launched a campaign to save the hospital.

Westcliffe is an old 146-bed geriatric hospital in the north of Stoke-on-Trent. The DHA says the hospital is in poor repair, and that closure will save money. But 'a state of disrepair' is an argument for making repairs, not for closure.

As the Friends of Westcliffe say in one of their leaflets, "If better care can be given, by spending money on facilities which will take five years to provide, why not spend some of that money now at Westcliffe?"

The hospital, besides being in the local community, also has pleasant surroundings. As their leaflet says "why spend hundreds of thousands of pounds on almost rebuilding old buildings at the City General Hospital (where the patients are to be transferred)? Why, when the best that money can buy at the City General will result in beds for only 100 patients, who will look out of the windows at brick walls. No gardens and views, as at Westcliffe."

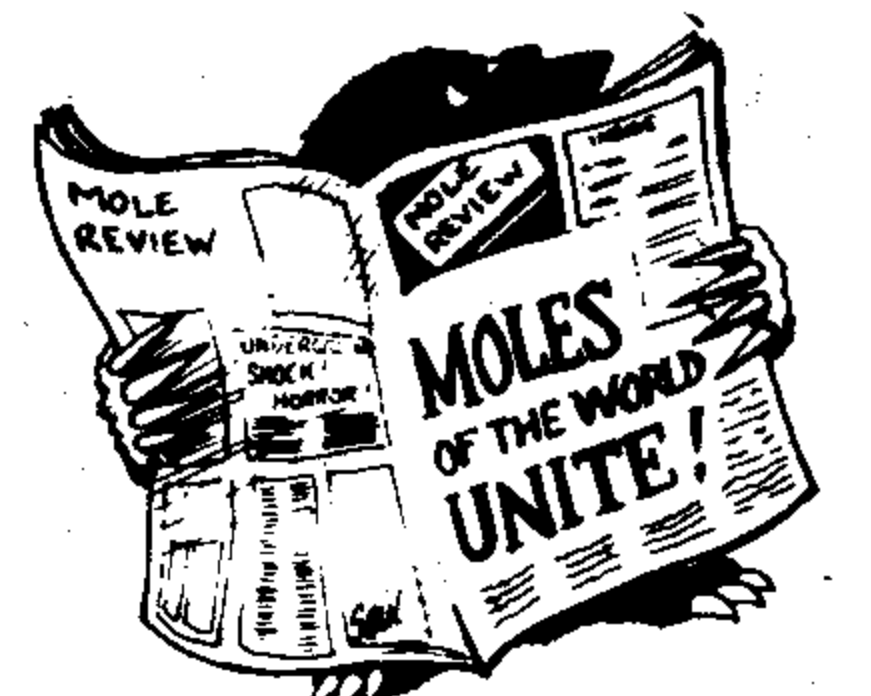
The DHA's proposals for "reorganisation" would result in the loss of four hospitals — Biddulph Grange Orthopaedic (84 beds), Lymewood Geriatric (36 beds), Westcliffe (146 beds) and Leek Memorial (21 beds).

In each case patients are to be transferred to the City General Hospital or other hospitals in the city centre, taking health care out of the local community (which for old people is important). In return for these closures, they propose over the five years to provide just two additional geriatric beds.

Yet, as the Friends of Westcliffe point out in their leaflet, "there will be a 13% increase every ten years in the number of retired people, and many of them will need care."

Leek, whose geriatric beds are to go, has the oldest population in Britain!

At the other end of the age spectrum, there will be an overall reduction of eleven paediatric beds. Amazingly the DHA are passing off these proposals as an expansion of health care in the area.



Official badge of the 'Save the Mole' campaign. 25p or £2 for ten, from N.Barstow 165 Liverpool Rd, London N1.



Two pamphlets for 45p, including postage, from Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Labour front-bencher says GET OUT OF NATO!

SUPPORT for NATO has always made the unilateralism of most of the prominent Labour Party unilateralists somewhat incoherent. Yet most of them do support NATO.

The public repudiation of NATO by Jo Richardson MP, the Labour front-bench spokesperson on women's rights, is therefore an important event. It will help clarify the minds of many Labour Party members who are uneasy about Labour's commitment to NATO.

It will help build support in the party for Labour to adopt the demand: Britain out of NATO.

It underlines the need for CND to campaign boldly for this demand, as its December conference decided, rather than downplaying it, supposedly in order to appeal to the 'middle ground'.

The article appeared in the February issue of the Labour Briefing national supplement, available from 23 Leghorn Road, London NW10.

THE LABOUR Party's position on NATO is quite clear. Annual Conference has so far rejected calls for withdrawal from the organisation.

As a Party member, and a member of the National Executive, I accept that decision, but I am entitled as an individual to put forward my personal, long-held unease at Britain's membership.

I am not one of those who say you cannot have a non-nuclear policy whilst remaining a member of NATO. It is perfectly possible to remain with a conventional arms policy. Canada does, and there is fast-growing support for a nuclear-free zone in Europe.

My objection is a different and a less technical one, and it is an objection which extends not only to NATO but also to the Warsaw Pact.

Firstly, I do not believe that the Soviet Union is intending to invade Britain - or any other Western country. Their build-up of nuclear weapons is as indefensible as that of the Western nations, but it's based on fear rather than on expansionism.

Secondly, it could well be that the debate about NATO and the Warsaw Pact will become academic, because there has been a growing alienation of the satellite states of both the United States and the Soviet Union from the domination of their leaders.

Romania is virtually out of the Warsaw Pact. Poland could hardly be considered a reliable ally. Hungary has been distancing itself for some time from Soviet policy. And Czechoslovakia's adherence to the Soviet Union is threatened by underground opposition.

There is dissension even in the German Democratic Republic, long held to be closest to Kremlin policy.

On the Western side, American reliance on NATO and on Europe is threatened by the growth of the peace movements. Although Cruise and Pershing II missiles are now being installed, the US was shocked at the intensity of opposition within a number of NATO countries to the installation of the missiles, and that opposition is growing.

Even the West German government - hitherto always a compliant partner - has not been keen to play along too readily.

There is an unwillingness throughout European NATO countries to increase their contributions to the Alliance; and there are growing policy differences between the USA and her European allies - on the Soviet pipeline, on Central America, on Lebanon, and on relations with the Third World.

All this could lead to a considerable erosion of NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

I want Britain to have a non-nuclear, non-NATO defence policy: Regional military pacts increase the danger of war, and cause confrontation. They also increase the possibility of accident, since there is no clear line of responsibility.

We have always depended, as a nation, too much on the United States and latterly on Reagan, who would use us cynically for his own ends.



Workers at this small Birmingham engineering plant were locked out after they gave notice of industrial action to improve a 5.5% pay offer. They were then furious to discover that their boss, Mr M. Webb, had given himself a 48% rise in 1982, when they received 4.5%. PHOTO AND STORY: John Harris.

Labour workplace branches meet

THIS conference was organised by a small co-ordinating committee consisting of Paul Cosgrove, Alan Kelly, Lol Duffy and John Ledgerton, representing three workplace branches - the GPO, Cammell Lairds and Dista.

The aim of the conference was to bring together workplace branches from all over Merseyside and anybody interested in forming a branch, for an exchange of ideas and to explain the role of the industrial branch within the Labour Party.

Tony Mulhearn, in opening the meeting, explained why there is a need for workplace branches, and how he saw their future. He also read out an apology for absence from Cammell Lairds workplace branch secretary Lol Duffy, who was attending a Combine Committee Shop Stewards meeting (Shipbuilding).

Geoff Dickson gave an informative and very entertaining speech on what was happening in London workplace branches, the problems he'd encountered and how he'd overcome them.

He recalled how their personnel director was an active member of the Tory Party and did not take kindly to the branch using the name of the company.

Geoff explained the need to liaise nationally and is in fact compiling a directory of workplace branches with a view to a national conference in January.

He said his branch had been very successful in recruiting members, finding that people were more ready to join the Labour Party if they knew somebody - a friend or a workmate - who was already a member.

This was one area where the workplace branches could help the local ward parties.

Mary Greenslade, treasurer of the Dista branch, spoke next on finance and fund-raising, and said how helpful the Coop Bank had been. Her speech had its humorous moments as she explained how at the inaugural meeting of the Dista branch, they had difficulty finding a venue and ended up in the changing room of Speke Rugby Club - the fastest inaug-

This Saturday, 28th, at Camden Town Hall, London there is a national 'seminar' on Labour Party workplace branches. It follows a conference on the same theme in Liverpool last November.

John Ledgerton reports on that conference, which brought together experiences of organising for socialist politics in diverse workplaces - factories, post offices, shipyards...

ural meeting on record!

The meeting also heard how newsletters could play a useful role in reaching the shop floor. Dista's first issue had been 12 pages.

Terry Fields spoke on the broader issues of the problems facing the working class under capitalism. He called for the democratisation of the Labour Party and the trade unions and emphasised that the Labour Party in its present form could not help the working class unless the full implementation of Clause 4 was taken up by the Labour Party.

How could the party be trying to help the working class on the one hand when, with the other hand it was pandering to the capitalists.

Terry went on to say that the creation of workplace branches was an important step in taking politics to the shop floor, a move that can only be applauded.

He finished by reading a pre-statement he had prepared calling for a 24-hour general strike in support of the NGA which the conference endorsed.

The speakers then took turns in answering the many questions from the floor. The consensus was that the creation of workplace branches was the single most important happening in the labour movement for many years and it is up to party activists to promote the idea in every factory and office throughout the country.

Women's conference

THE first conference of the Women's Reproductive Rights Campaign was held in Cardiff on 21/22 January. The campaign grew out of an understanding that there are many issues concerned with reproduction and fertility control that need to be brought to public attention.

The view developed during women's involvement in the National Abortion Campaign (NAC), where through the years a number of women found that abortion was not the central issue for all women. They feel that it needs to be placed in the context of all women's experiences of fertility control and reproductive choice.

Over 150 women attended from all parts of Britain. Workshops were held on Sexuality, Abortion, Contraception, Maternity, NHS cuts, Alternative

By Sarah Bryant

Health, Older Women's Rights, Young Women's Rights, Black Women and Racism, and on the Sunday, on the focus and organisation of the campaign.

The main discussion in Sunday's plenary session centred on racism in the NHS, where abortion is sometimes only allowed to black women when sterilisation or an IUD is agreed to, as well as the racist attitude of some staff.

The wider issues of black women's involvement in campaigns like WRRRC and racism within the women's movement were also discussed.

Young women's right to confidential contraceptive advice also came up.

It was clear that many of the issues on the agenda need full discussion. Many have not been taken up before and the politics of each strand of the WRRRC needs full airing.

There was discussion on getting affiliations from the labour movement but no strategy was agreed.

It seems clear to me that if the WRRRC is to be effective, the issues outlined need to be taken up and that the main focus of attention should be on campaigning among working class women, both black and white.

It is clear that the involvement of trade unions and Labour Party is essential. Because of the depth of discussion needed, the conference will reconvene in Liverpool on 25 February. Contact: WRRRC, 374 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1. Tel: 01-278 0153 for further details.

* The closing date for resolutions for Labour Party women's conference this year is February 10. The conference itself is May 12-14.

CPers fall out

By Jane Ashworth

FOLLOWING last week's four expulsions and a suspension, foment in the Communist Party continues as the Executive Committee have demanded the resignation of Tony Chater and David Whitfield, 'tankie' editor and deputy editor of the Morning Star.

The battle for the Star is the most public expression of the deep division in the CP. The hardline Stalinists are in control of the paper, but the Euro-Communists, supporters of Marxism Today, are the majority in the Party. Until now, the Party has maintained a harmonious relationship with the once nominally independent PPPS who actually own and produce the Star.

Now with the clash of ideas between editorial staff and the Party's committees the PPPS is asserting its independence and the Party is fighting back. In fact the PPPS are trying to ensure their control of the paper by fund raising to buy their own printing press. At present, the Morning Star is printed on the Party's press.

Last week's expulsions, three for refusing to accept that they were wrong to circulate an alternative election slate at Party Congress and the other for publishing a critical pamphlet outside of the normal channels, are part of the Executive's clampdown on the defeated and troublesome minority.

Pamphlet 50p plus postage from Turkey Solidarity Campaign BM Box 5965. London WC1N 3XX.

USSR Peace Groups still growing

By Alex Simpson

NEWS has reached the West of the formation of two new independent peace groups in the USSR.

The cities of Riga and Kiev join eight other places in having a small collection of brave individuals ready to run great risks as the price of organisational independence in the struggle for world peace.

No details as yet are known about these two latest groups, but the public declaration alone of their existence is a great encouragement.

It testifies to the fact that despite the enormous obstacles placed in the way of independent peace activists the Party's desire to maintain a total monopoly on the question of organisation with the official Soviet peace committees has been frustrated.

The same optimistic prospects for survival and growth seem to be at work in Moscow. It is the home of the original and much perpetuated independent group. The Moscow group has sustained the arrest and imprisonment of several of its original members and a near intolerable level of harassment and intimidation against the rest, yet

has managed to attract some new recruits.

The fear of some sympathisers in Western Europe that the peace group would be isolated to a small, isolated and ever dwindling band of beleaguered individuals being picked off one by one has most fortunately not been realised.

The Soviet authorities have been forced to grudgingly tolerate the group's existence at least for the immediate period. It is restrained from the option of wholesale liquidation of Moscow's group and correspondents in other cities because the Russians are aware that the eyes of the Western peace movements are upon them.

Solidarity

It is only the limited international solidarity of Western peace activists that has enabled our Soviet comrades to keep their heads above water in the precarious and persecuted existence they lead.

The independent Soviet peace movement has demonstrated the ability for survival and even growth and we must correspondingly step up our help and support.

STARVING

Not an act of god but a

24 African nations face severe famine this year, said the UN food and Agriculture Organisation in a report published last week.

Because of a continuing serious drought, the 1983 harvest of staple crops in those countries was 8 per cent down even on the low level of 1982. Food production per head in many African countries had already declined drastically between 1969-71 and 1979-81: 15% in Ethiopia, 12% in Mali, 13% in Zaire, 35% in Somalia, 27% in Mozambique, 26% in Ghana... according to the World Bank.

Many thousands of people are already dying from starvation in Ethiopia, and hundreds of thousands or millions more could die before the drought ends.

Also seriously affected by five years drought and food shortages is Brazil. In its ten north-eastern provinces, where average income per head is only one-third the level in the more developed south, many people face death from starvation. 'If rains do not come this month or next, people will be dying like flies', a Red Cross official has said.

Rats and lizards are hunted as food, people eat cactus to lessen the hunger pangs and women walk more than 10 miles to fetch water from a truck which might be there once a week.

But nature cannot take the major blame for these horrors.



"Help is arriving" - "You've got it all wrong. It's reinforcements for [the war in] Chad". From Lutte Ouvriere.

The stagnation of agriculture in Africa is caused by the policies of international capitalism and of local governments - which mean that resources go into cash-crops, bureaucratically botched 'development' projects, and into militarism, instead of basic subsistence agriculture.

Even now, according to the FAO, it would need only 1.6 million tons of food and £91 million aid to solve the immediate problem of starvation. That's small change in terms of the resources of international capitalism. But the millionaires have other priorities...

NIGERIA'S CRISIS

A MAJOR factor behind the recently announced job cuts in Leyland Vehicles was the loss of markets in Nigeria.

During the oil boom, Nigeria set about massively expanding its industry and infrastructure. It became a big market for machinery, equipment - and trucks.

Imports grew 18% a year between 1970 and 1981, and the share of machinery and equipment in those imports almost doubled.

Now, with the debt squeeze and the slump in the oil market, Nigeria has slashed back imports drastically.

Cancellation of Nigeria's debts would benefit both the people of Nigeria - suffering because food imports have been reduced - and Leyland Vehicle workers, at the expense of the international banks. (It would also benefit the corrupt and vicious Nigerian ruling class: but the answer to that is action by the Nigerian working class).

What did AUEW leader Gerry Russell say? He said the job cuts were wrong because they meant that in the event of a further economic upturn (coming from where?) 'we' would lose markets to 'the French, Japanese, Germans... foreigners'.

STARVING AFRICA

"To give food aid to countries just because people are starving is a pretty weak reason".

Dan Ellerman, US National Security Council.

"Food is a weapon. It is now one of the principal tools in our negotiating kit"

Earl Butz, US Secretary of Agriculture.

Why South Africa invaded Angola

SOUTH Africa's latest offensive into Angola, probably the largest to date, has been described by its UN representative, Kurt von Schirndling, as 'preventing the infiltration of SWAPO guerillas into Namibia'.

But in reality, South Africa aims to prevent the independence of Namibia, which would by their own admission bring SWAPO to power; and to bring about the down fall of the Angolan government with the ultimate objective of replacing it with the proxy South African force, UNITA.

In the same Reuters report quoted above, Von Schirndling went on to say that 'South Africa has no desire to control a single centimetre of Angolan territory'.

In fact, South Africa has occupied parts of southern Angola since August 1981, using as its springboard its massive army presence in Namibia, which it occupies illegally. Time and again it has used force to terrorise the Namibian people and the people of southern Angola.

The present Reagan administration has given the South African regime confidence that its activities remain uncriticised either by the White House or by Downing Street. In Reagan-

speak the US has 'constructive engagement' with South Africa, which is backed by Britain and other major Western investors involved in the illegal plunder of Namibia's abundant natural resources.

The Reagan-Botha axis has given birth to the so-called 'linkage theory' - which makes the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola a precondition for South African readiness to implement UN Resolution 435, i.e. the Namibian independence process. On the basis of 'linkage' South Africa was able, on 15 December 1983, to propose in the UN a 'mutual force disengagement on the Namibia/Angola border as the first step in a peaceful independence settlement for Namibia'.

The proposed 'truce' would begin on January 31 1984 and would last for 30 days or longer, in the words of South African Foreign Minister Botha, 'upon the resolution of the problem of Cuban forces in Angola', a precondition he described as 'irrevocable' (Reuters 16.12.83). He went on to say that South Africa had 'from time to time, conducted operations within Angola'.

When the UN Security Council passed a resolution on December 20 severely censuring South Africa's military occupation of Angola and endorsing Angola's right to reparations,



"The forces fighting for freedom... in Namibia and the very heart of South Africa itself".

the United States abstained. Its UN representative, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, described the South African proposal as 'a major new step in the arduous process of trying to resolve southern African problems peacefully'. Thus the US 'would do nothing that would jeopardise this delicate and, we believe, hopeful process' (Reuters 20.12.83). This position has been endorsed by Britain.

However, as Reuters reported on January 4, 'South African officials have said privately that even if the Cuban troops were sent home, South Africa might

not agree to a settlement for fear of having an "unstable SWAPO government" on their borders'.

For all its Western backing, the tide is turning against South Africa. It will continue to promote the idea that the Front Line states are launch pads for acts of 'terrorism' against it. While remaining blind to its blatant acts of barbarity, South Africa must one day realise that the forces fighting against apartheid, and for freedom and justice, live not outside but in Namibia and in the very heart of South Africa itself.

CLASS FIGHTER

Inside

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NO CONSCRIPTION ON TO YTS!

Issue no.17 out now: This month's Class Fighter's full page on the government's Youth Training Scheme includes an interview with John O'Brien, a 'trainee' from Peckham, and coverage of how the government wants to conscript youth onto the schemes.

We've found a new story writer, Jackie Nory, who in 'Footloose and Skint' describes life on the dole in a small town.

Grahame Smallwood and Peter Crawshaw write about how their Youth CND group in Scarborough is getting on, and Jimi Somerville of the Bronski Beat talks to us about his experience of the Warrington picket line: "They thought I was a wee boy".

Our intrepid concert-goers Simon and Dave finally make it to a Damned gig, only to find that their heroes still didn't play Anti-Pope, and that it's impossible to get back from Oxford to London in the middle of the night.

International correspondent Clive Bradley, who is just back from Egypt, tells us about Syria's part in the smashing of Arafat's section of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and Patrick Murphy from Stockport YS writes about Bloody Sunday, the day when 14 people were killed by the Paras.

The back page explains who we are, ready to sell at YS regional conferences.

Finally, we are pleased to announce that we have a new treasurer, Beatrice, a young hedgehog who is bristling with indignation at our shortage of income.

AFRICA

result of capitalism

Food riots in Morocco, Tunisia

ACCORDING to the Spanish press, 40 or 50 people were killed in the riots against food price rises in Morocco last week.

Machine-gun fire from helicopters, as well as from ground troops, was used against the demonstrators. The towns mainly affected are now being patrolled by tanks and thousands of troops, with security road blocks round the working class districts.

The agitation began on January 5 with student protests against rumours of increases in their fees and further food price rises (on top of the 13% or so announced in August).

It culminated in a demonstration in Morocco's main city, Casablanca, on January 22. A few hours later King Hassan announced on radio and TV that he had ordered the government to drop all plans for price rises.

In Tunisia the government has been forced to reverse food price rises. After repeated street demonstrations in which some 50 people are reported to have been killed, President Habib Bourguiba repeated the rises for three months.

Increases of 70 to 120% in the prices of bread, pasta, and semolina had been decreed in late December.

Behind the price rises in both



PHOTO: ROUGE

Tunisia and Morocco stands the International Monetary Fund. Cutbacks in such 'distortions of the free market' as food subsidies are part of the conditions it imposes for its 'assistance' to debt-stricken states.

In both countries, the regimes combine a brew of populist demagoguery (rather more substantial in Tunisia than in Morocco) with repression of independent working class organisation. Tunisia has a powerful trade union federation, the UGTT, but it is under heavy government control.

That — together with the fact that very many workers are unemployed, semi-employed, or casually employed — is why protests take the form of street fighting.

Over the last 10 or 20 years Tunisia has been one of the fastest-developing countries in the

Third World. Manufacturing output grew 12% per year between 1970 and 1981, and 32% of the workforce was in industry by 1980, as against 18% in 1960.

But that development has gone together with growing inequality, leaving the mass of the people little better off than in Morocco.

Tunisia's populist dictator, Habib Bourguiba.

STARVING AFRICA

New danger from aid cuts

REAGANOMICS has already left two million people destitute and charity food offices booming across the US.

Now it is going to spread that devastation much wider.

The US government has forced a big reduction in the funds of the World Bank's International Development Association, a major organiser of international aid.

IDA needed \$24 billion between now and 1987 to maintain its previous spending levels. Its officials asked for \$16 billion from the contributing governments. All, except the US, would go at least as high as \$12 billion. The US forced the figure down to \$9 billion.

International aid was already stagnant. Aid from the advanced capitalist countries (OECD) was 0.5% of their national income in 1965. Since the early '70s it has gone down to about 0.35%.

Britain

Britain's overseas aid has gone down from 0.52% of national income in 1979 to 0.38% in 1982.

In the mid-'70s, aid from oil-exporting states boosted the total — but that, too, has now begun to decline.

For many of the world's poorest countries, the effect of further aid cuts may be disastrous.

In the poorer countries of Africa, during the 1970s, aid covered 40% of all investment and 20% of all imports. And the international debt squeeze means that those countries are already in trouble with their

import bills and investment projects.

This aid, at the best of times, was far from pure generosity. 'Aid as imperialism' was the title of one book, and that about summed it up.

Most of the aid was not straight grants, but just long-term loans on easier terms. In return for those loans the big capitalist states got fat export orders.

According to the Observer, British companies got £1.40 in export orders for every £1 the government put into IDA.

Profitable

The projects financed by aid were by no means always the most useful for the people of the country being 'aided' — rather, the most profitable for the multinationals. And aid was also used as a political weapon to prop up pro-imperialist governments in the Third World.

But then public sector investment within the advanced capitalist countries was never socialist, either. The cutting-back of it has still had devastating results.

Overseas aid is being cut for much the same reasons as public sector investment: the capitalists, stricken by crisis, have cut back projects offering a long-term return and gone all-out for short-term profit.

Millions will pay the price in malnutrition and starvation. Socialists should be demanding that the rich capitalist governments give millions, not so much in aid as in reparations for the damage they have done in the past, to the Third World.

Police raid on Irish socialists

IRISH Militant is a clone of Britain's Militant, with identical politics.

One of the special tenets of Militant is the belief in the possibility of a peaceful socialist revolution in Britain — and, presumably, in Ireland, both 26 Counties and 6 Counties.

Militant is a very legal-minded organisation. The Irish Militant, like the English, is extremely hostile to Irish republicanism.

Irish Militant supporters in the 26 Counties are members of the Labour Party, junior partner in Garret Fitzgerald's coalition government.

Last week the offices of Irish Militant were raided by armed 26 County police, carrying sub-machine guns. They said they were looking for a fugitive but refused to name him. Some reports say they claimed they were looking for Dominic McGlinchey.

Irish Militant put out a statement on the raid which said:

"For the past 12 years Militant Irish Monthly and its supporters have always made clear our opposition to acts of individual terror. It is our position that activities of this type do not advance the struggle for socialism one iota.

"This well-publicised position of Militant is well known to all political activists in Ireland, and throughout the labour movement". It denounced the raid as a "gross act of harassment by the State of left-wing members of the Labour Party.

Militant Irish Monthly says that the raid is connected with a proposal by the leadership of the coalitionist Labour Party to bar supporters of Militant from membership of the Party.

As Britain's Militant puts it: "... it is more than a coincidence that the leadership of the Irish Labour Party are at this very time trying to start a witch-hunt against the Marxists in the party..."

This will not sound too bizarre in the 26 Counties, which recently lost a minister of justice in the following circumstances.

His brother-in-law was due to appear in court on a traffic offence. The minister of justice had the chief witness detained by the RUC as a very dangerous man during a visit to the Six Counties, so that he could not get to court to testify!

It is not self-evidently impossible, therefore, that the raid was as Militant says inspired by leaders of the Labour Party to create an atmosphere which would help them purge Militant.

But I'm not convinced. The Irish Labour Party purges its anti-coalitionists pretty frequently. What do they need the police for?

And who would believe Irish Militant was involved in what they call 'individual terrorism'? Certainly no-one who knows



North and South

By Paddy Dollard

them — and the Labour Party members do — would credit for an instant.

So far the raid has helped Militant Irish Monthly with the Labour Party rather than harmed it.

In response to the charge that the raid was harassment linked to the proposal to expel the Labour Party leader Dick Spring, said he was now against going ahead with the expulsions, at that action against them would be deferred.

Accordingly, at the meeting of the Party's Administrative Council last Thursday, 19th, the motion to expel Militant 'was not reached'. So the inexplicable raid has brought Militant Irish Monthly a (probably short) reprieve.

What is the most likely explanation for the raid? The police mind works in strange ways, and maybe someone was working according to the principle: if seems utterly improbable, it maybe there is something in it.

Militant, with its strange mixture of ferocious dogmatism and quiet propagandist routine combined with support for the expansion of Stalinism, which considers progressive, by military means (in Afghanistan does take some getting used to).

It is not impossible that someone could become convinced that there is more to it than meets the eye, though in fact there is not.

Or maybe someone in the around the government did set up the raid, and Dick Spring sensitive to the recent scandal such as recent prime minister Haughey's use of the police to interfere with critical journalists — has thought better of and is covering tracks.

Messages of protest should be sent to the Taoiseach, Garret Fitzgerald, Dail Eireann, Dublin.

Pretoria suffers losses

THE SOUTH African invading force consisted of nine battalions or around ten thousand troops, four units of heavy artillery, and tanks, supported by some 100 fighter bombers.

It was probably the largest of the four mounted by South Africa since 1975 (although South African military actions have been almost continuous).

South Africa's operation began in earnest on December 6 1983, but the current fighting can be traced back to August 1983, when a large UNITA force attempting to take the Angolan town of Cangamba was rebuffed by FAPLA and suffered extremely heavy casualties (UNITA, South Africa's surrogate force in Angola, has failed to capture a single important settlement in Angola).

In August 1983 South African troops began attacking front-line Angolan troops under the pretext that they were sheltering SWAPO guerrillas. On November 4, a statement by ANGOP (the Angolan press agency) said that UNITA's continued setbacks 'forced Pretoria to come to defend its proteges (and) use non-conventional weapons' a reference to napalm and chemical weapons employed by the South Africans.

Only after a black Namibian soldier of the South African army and considerable quantities of South African equipment were captured by FAPLA did Pretoria admit its forces were deep inside Angola. According to General Viljoen they were engaged in 'hot pursuit and preemptive raids' against the Namibian liberation movement.

SWAPO.

But there was repeated bombing and shelling by South Africa forces of the towns of Cassinga, Caiundo, Cahama, Mulondo and Cuvetai.

South Africa has discovered to its dismay that its latest military adventure has proved extremely costly. Its official casualties are now 27 dead; at least ten aircraft (including two Mirages) have been shot down; numerous armoured vehicles have been destroyed, and one of South Africa's newest weapons, the mobile 155mm G-5 cannon (developed with US technology) was captured by FAPLA on December 29.

South Africa's claim to have killed 324 SWAPO, FAPLA and Cuban soldiers, made on January 7, can be safely dismissed.

A SWAPO press release coming shortly after the South African announcement of the 'destruction of SWAPO headquarters' near Lubango, states: 'Contrary to the claim of the South African army, the area is definitely not a SWAPO military headquarters. There was neither a single Namibian nor any SWAPO anti-aircraft batteries as claimed by Constand Viljoen at his press conference.' (SWAPO press release, 29.12.83).

South Africa's generals have found themselves involved in battles on a scale they had not anticipated from which they will be able to extricate themselves only with considerable difficulty. As yet the main burden in terms of human life has been borne by the Angolan civilian population, for which Pretoria is directly responsible.

(Abridged from Namibia News Briefing Special).

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Tamil TWWIC



Rajes Balasubramanian (with her son Seran)

VIOLENCE OF THE OPPRESSOR

"If you trace the history back, there were two kingdoms in the island - a Tamil kingdom and a Sinhala kingdom.

But when the British came in the 19th century they unified the island into one state structure. They also brought in indentured labourers, who were Tamils from the south of India, to the plantations. First it was coffee, and then tea.

So you had the traditional Tamil areas in the north and east, and the Tamil plantation workers

in the Central Hills.

When independence came (in 1947), the British transferred power to the Sinhala elite.

This elite built up a Sinhala ethnic consciousness. The first thing they did was to disenfranchise the Tamil plantation workers. And then they started state-aided colonisation of Tamil lands. In 1956 Sinhala was made the only official language.

There's been 35 years of national oppression - discrimination in education, in employment

... But the Tamil people started

waking up to the fact they were oppressed just because they were Tamil. They started with non-violent protest. At first it was led by the Tamil Federal Party, with an ideologically conservative, bourgeois leadership - the leadership of the middle classes.

But against these non-violent struggles, the state unleashed military brutality. People were killed, burned alive...

As always, the oppressed go through non-violence, and the oppressor uses violence.

Then in the Tamil Student Federation some of the activists started saying that non-violence is useless against an oppressor who

uses violence. I think it opened a new era for the Tamil people, who were always told to be law-abiding - always licking the boots of the British and licking the boots of Sinhala.

In 1972 there was the birth of a movement called the New Tiger Movement. In 1976 they renamed themselves the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. They started a guerrilla struggle.

In 1977 all the Tamil middle class parties went into the election in a coalition, called the Tamil United Liberation Front, asking for a separate Tamil state. All the TULF candidates were returned."

Free Nirmala

Nirmala Nithiya-Nandan is a feminist and writer from Jaffna in Tamil Eelam, aged thirty.

She was arrested on November 18 1982 by the Sinhala armed forces and has been held incommunicado ever since, subjected to indignity, harassment and possibly torture.

Nirmala is one of the latest victims of the infamous 'Prevention of Terrorism Act' which denies trial by jury and allows confessions extracted by torture as admissible evidence.

Nirmaia supported the freedom struggle of the Tamil people to gain their right to self-determination.

She wrote and produced

plays, translated literary and political works. Her translations introduced the national and socialist struggles of the Latin American and African people.

One of Nirmala's primary concerns has been the emancipation of the oppressed Tamil women. To this task she dedicated herself fully in actively organising and participating in women's liberation campaigns.

The Tamil Women's League asks for letters demanding the release of Nirmala and the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act to be sent to President J.R. Jayawardene, President's House, Colombo, Sri Lanka, with a copy to 'Repeal PTA Campaign', 42, Sickert Court, London N1 2TE.

WHAT is the situation of women in Sri Lanka?

Tamil women are oppressed because we are Tamils. We face a national oppression which the Sinhalese women don't face.

In all the communal riots since 1956, our women have been raped, burnt alive, persecuted because we are Tamil.

We also have the oppression of cultural norms within our own society - male domination, the dowry system, the caste system.

We have to struggle in both these spheres, and these struggles have to go together.

What scope do you think there is for common struggles between Tamil women and Sinhalese women?

Sometimes you feel the Sinhala women's groups have more in common with the Sinhala men than with Tamil women.

Until they come out, without any reservations and 'buts' and rationalisations, and support Tamil self-determination, we would rather develop our struggle ourselves.

That's why we have some problems with the Sinhala women's groups. Of course, they campaign for the Free Trade Zone women workers [who are almost all Sinhalese]. As a Marxist, I know that those women are oppressed, but I cannot identify with them because they do not accept our position.

Rajes: In Sri Lanka, in the south I could walk on the streets. Of course I shouldn't wear my sari or anything like that - I would have to lose my identity and dress like a Sinhalese woman. But I could walk on the Colombo streets.

I couldn't do that in Jaffna [a Tamil city in the north]. As a Tamil woman I could face the Sri Lankan army any time.

For a Tamil woman in Jaffna, her own home is a prison.

The Sinhalese women have a job, at least, though they work in dreadful conditions. In the Free Trade Zone they have to work 12 hours without a break on the night shift, standing up in the dim light, on assembly work. The employer won't give them a stool to sit on in case they fall asleep.

But Tamil women mostly don't even get a job.

Wouldn't you be in a stronger position to get the Sinhalese Left to support Tamil self-determination if you were able to unite with them on common issues of women's rights and workers' rights?

We are a separate nation. We're in favour of unity - on an international level.

The workers of my nation fight for their rights - and will support the workers in the Sinhala nation to fight for their rights. But it's international unity between two nations, not unity in one nation.

Does the Tamil Women's League see itself as organising primarily against the national oppression of the Tamil people, or the specific oppression of women?

We are tackling a dual oppression. We feel we have common interests with women all over the world, especially with women who fight national liberation struggles in Eritrea or Namibia or Palestine...

How has the feminist movement developed in Sri Lanka?

There's a magazine called Voice of Women. They are middle class women and there are no Tamils left among them now.

They're leftists, offshoots of the [ex-Trotskyist] LSSP and [would-be Trotskyist] NSSP. They came out of the traditional left.

Some women also organise

LAST SUMMER there were pogroms - a quarter of the island's 14 million. The right-wing ruling party, the army, even organised the violence.

The Tamils have suffered discrimination only from the right wing. Sri Lanka 'socialism' has been identified with the Sinhalese and Buddhist majority.

The socialist Left used to defend them later bent under the pressures.

Tamil women suffer a double oppression. The Hindu religion dominates many oppressive customs.

Mary Corbishley and Martin Theobald are another member of the Women's League. Their personal opinions are not necessarily those of the Women's League.

Contact: Tamil Women's League

women's centres with the women in the Free Trade Zone.

And in the Tamil areas?

In the Tamil areas it's like fascism. It is an occupied land, where you cannot protest or organise feminist groups.

It is within the national liberation struggle that we have to organise women.

What is the economic position of women in Sri Lanka?

Are you asking about Eelam or Sri Lanka? For me, Sri Lanka is the southern part of the country.

Both.

In Sri Lanka women work in industry and in the Free Trade Zone. The Tamil women work in the plantations.

They are in the worst of bad conditions. They start work at 5 am and they end after 5 pm. It's

Like a

Rajes: I'm told to behave like a Tamil woman. But I don't want to behave like a Tamil woman! It's like being a cabbage.

We are individuals, we are human beings. We have to fight for equal rights.

But the idea is that once you are married you are the property of a Tamil man, and you mustn't say a word without his permission.

I went against the dowry system when I saw my sister being married.

I thought it was wrong. I started to ask questions of my grandmother and mother.

They said I was abnormal. But



Amidst the rubble: a market after last

Two pamphlets summing up the ideas of Socialist Organiser. 'Where We Stand' - 20p plus 16p postage. 'How to fight the Tories' - 10p plus 16p postage. Or the two together for 45c including postage from Socialist Organiser 25 Middle Lane, London W8



women in Sri Lanka ARE OPPRESSED

s in Sri Lanka. The Tamil minority population - were the victims. ... and the police promoted and

ination for many years. And not in nationalism and state-capitalist exclusive domination for the culture

ity. ... the Tamils' rights, but many of of Sinhalese chauvinism.

pression - as Tamils, and as it in the Tamil community sancti-

mas interviewed Rajes Balasubra-

Tamil Women's League in London. ously the views of the Tamil

23A Sumatra Rd, London NW6.

ould there, but they have no

arm clothing.

They face the highest infant

mortality and maternal mortality

rates, malnutrition, anaemia ...

When Mrs Pandarainaike

brought in her land reform, they

took plantation land and gave it

to the Sinhalese peasantry - not

to the people who had worked

and died on those plantations.

The Tamil women were just sent

away.

During the 1983 pogroms it

was very bad in the plantations.

So the Tamils either wanted to go

back to India, or to go to the

north and east of the island.

What about the trade unions in

the plantations?

The main one is a sort of

business union. There is also a

small Maoist group, the Red Flag

union and a [Sinhalese chauvin-

ism]

ist] SLFP union.

This business union became

strong because the left groups

betrayed the plantation workers.

Then the workers thought that

the business union leader was

going to deliver the goods,

because he came from among

them. But he is a millionaire. He

owns his own estates! And he is

with the UNP government.

What are the aims and activities

of the Tamil Women's League?

We started because of the

racial riots and the feeling of the

Tamil women here in London

that we have to campaign.

Rajes: And we also fight against

the racism in this country. Most

of the Tamil Women's League

members are socialist feminists.

Although financially we are

better off here than our sisters in

Sri Lanka and India, socially in

some ways we are more oppressed

than them.

The oppression of women, as

women, in Eelam is as bad, or

worse, than here - the oppression

of caste, the dowry system ...

At least here there is some

sort of recognition of women's

rights. But everything is a lie

here, too.

Rajes: The main thing we are

campaigning about here now is

the fact that the British govern-

ment is helping the Sri Lankan

government to kill Tamil people

in Sri Lanka.

We don't identify with a

particular political group - we

campaign on the general issues. If

we can stop money going from

the British government to the Sri

Lankan government, we should

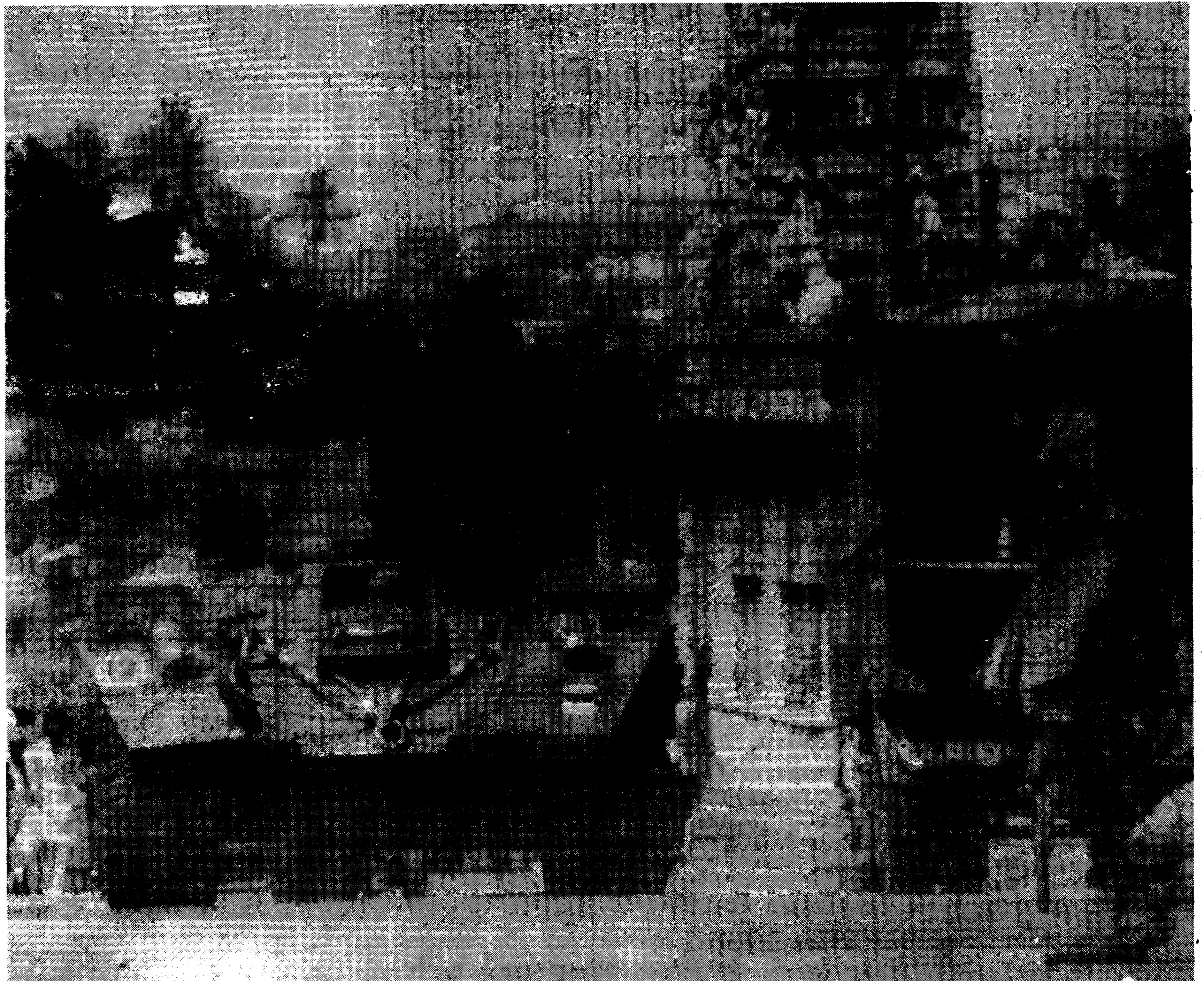
do it.

The Sri Lankan government

could not do what it is doing

unless it was backed up by the

Americans and British.



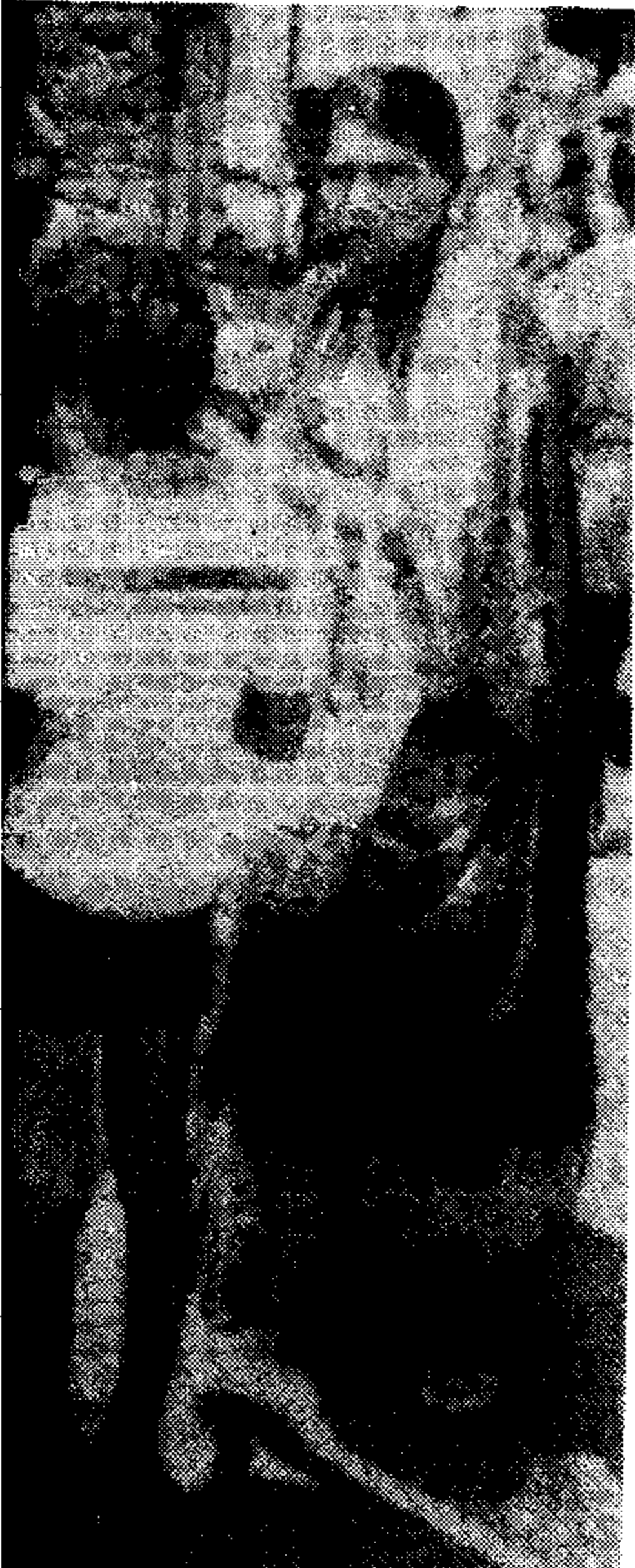
Tanks in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo

woman

I thought it was wrong. Women sometimes bring the husband a dowry. Think of it - marrying a man whom you never knew before, and then loads of money to him, and giving you've got to work for him and cook for him. You have to work in the kitchen all day - and my beautiful sister had to give money for this!

When they told me that I was going to be like that, I said no way!

I am an easterner, but I went to Jaffna to train as a nurse. In Jaffna there are a lot of strongly conservative people, who are very strict with their caste system. There are half a million Untouchables. That's why the TULF never made progress - they are only higher-caste Tamils.



's pogroms

Women for sale

TOURISM is now a part of a development strategy of the developing countries within the pattern of open "foreign led development."

It is now a major source of foreign exchange for many Asian countries, including Sri Lanka. And for the governments has far outshaded the harmful side-effects of tourism.

Peter Holden has observed: "By cheapening culture for a quick show or for sale, tourism tends to destroy what it claims to enhance but worse than that it deludes people into believing that what is destroyed is still alive, and they are forced to act like animals in a zoo, performing a culture which is just not possible to live anymore. The result is the building of a pseudo culture which has been stripped of life and power."

Prostitution and child prostitution are also part and parcel of the tourist industry. Inducements including night clubs and massage clinics are openly advertised by travel agents and tour conductors.

The destructive cultural effects of tourism are taken to the extreme by sex tours.

Prostitution tourism has spread throughout the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand, Taiwan and more recently into Nepal and Sri Lanka.

The availability of "feminine" Oriental women is advertised together with the sun and sand, reducing countries like Thailand, Singapore, Manila and Hong Kong into the brothels of the East.

In Thailand, prostitution was developed on a huge scale by US forces' "rest and recreation" during the Vietnam war.

In South Korea, Kisaengs (prostitutes) are included in the price of tours.

Women's groups in South Korea denounced the Kisaeng Tourism with demonstrations at the airport in 1973 against the Japanese. This stirred the Japanese women who also demonstrated and carried out massive campaigns. In September 1980, the Christian Conference of Asia sponsored an International Workshop on Tourism in Manila.

It is ironic that traditionalists and anti-feminist bodies, who condemn Women's Liberation as aimed at the desexing of women or granting them freedom to indulge in sexual licence, have not come forward with any protests so far. Only women concerned with women's liberation have come forward to attack this system.

The mother image and the image of the virtuous woman of the East are torn to pieces by the advertisers of sex tourism. The



When you're traveling to foreign lands, a little gentleness goes a long way. Especially on Philippine Airlines.

Our beginnings go back over 40 years.

But our tradition of Philippine hospitality goes back 1,000 years!

traditionalists have registered no protest!

Studies have revealed that in Bangkok and Manila a prostitute receives only one-fifth to one-eighth of the money paid for her 'services'. The rest of the money is shared proportionately among the bar-keeper, massage clinic proprietor, hotel, pimps, tour guides, taxi drivers and corrupt policemen.

Prostitution

In Sri Lanka prostitution is becoming a highly developed branch of the tourist industry and exists on different levels according to the nature of hotels and the amount of money the tourist has in his or her pocket.

Women adopt this profession because of dire poverty.

vice."

Japan Airlines assumes that passengers who travel are all males. Their advertisement boasts that "He (the passenger) didn't expect her to sew his button but she did."

Korean Airlines speaks of the hostess's resplendently buoyant yet prudently tender smile, uniquely modest, traditionally oriental.

Thai International emphasises the 'gentle art of service and courtesy'.

We are not told that the women are efficient. We are not told that they can rise to any occasion. We are not told they can cope with any emergency. We are not told they are trained as nurses or baby sitters.

Exotic

All the air hostesses are shown smiling seductively, standing idly, looking glamorous and shy and beautiful in very exotic settings such as gardens and ultra-modern living rooms.

Yet the average air hostess does the work of a waitress, very hardworking, standing on her feet all the time, at the beck and call of passengers.

At the end of the flight she is a tired, worn-out young woman.

(Adapted from the Sri Lankan feminist magazine, 'Voice of Women').

Review

Slowly but surely to socialism?

GAVIN Kitching is a British academic Marxist who has written some important and penetrating work on the Third World, including an enormous and brilliant study of Kenya.

Now he has ventured into the realm of 'practical politics' with a book on left strategy in Britain.

His major argument is this: the whole of the British (and for that matter international) socialist movement is 'wasting its time'.

The ideas of socialist orthodoxy are wildly out of tune with the ideas and aspirations of the people socialists are claiming to be fighting for, and whose support socialists are supposed to want.

Worse, socialists today have failed to understand the nature of contemporary capitalism and so have failed to base their strategies on reality. And worse still, socialists are in general psychologically incapable of putting their ideas across to their audience.

Kitching's solution is "to reinstate an evolutionary and gradualist perspective at the centre of socialist politics and thought about socialism."

In case you wonder why such a perspective needs to be reinstated, it should be added that Kitching does not mean by this 'reformism'. He believes "very firmly that socialist transformation does involve class... 'struggle' of a real and sometimes nasty sort." He accepts the Marxist analysis of the capitalist state (that is that it is a class state which cannot be transformed by the working class), and, presumably, accepts the basic revolutionary programme for the destruction of that state.

But he argues that to get from here to there would take, literally, hundreds of years, and that in particular he revolutionary left has failed to understand the nature of the preparatory work necessary. That, at least, is what I take to be the point of his argument.

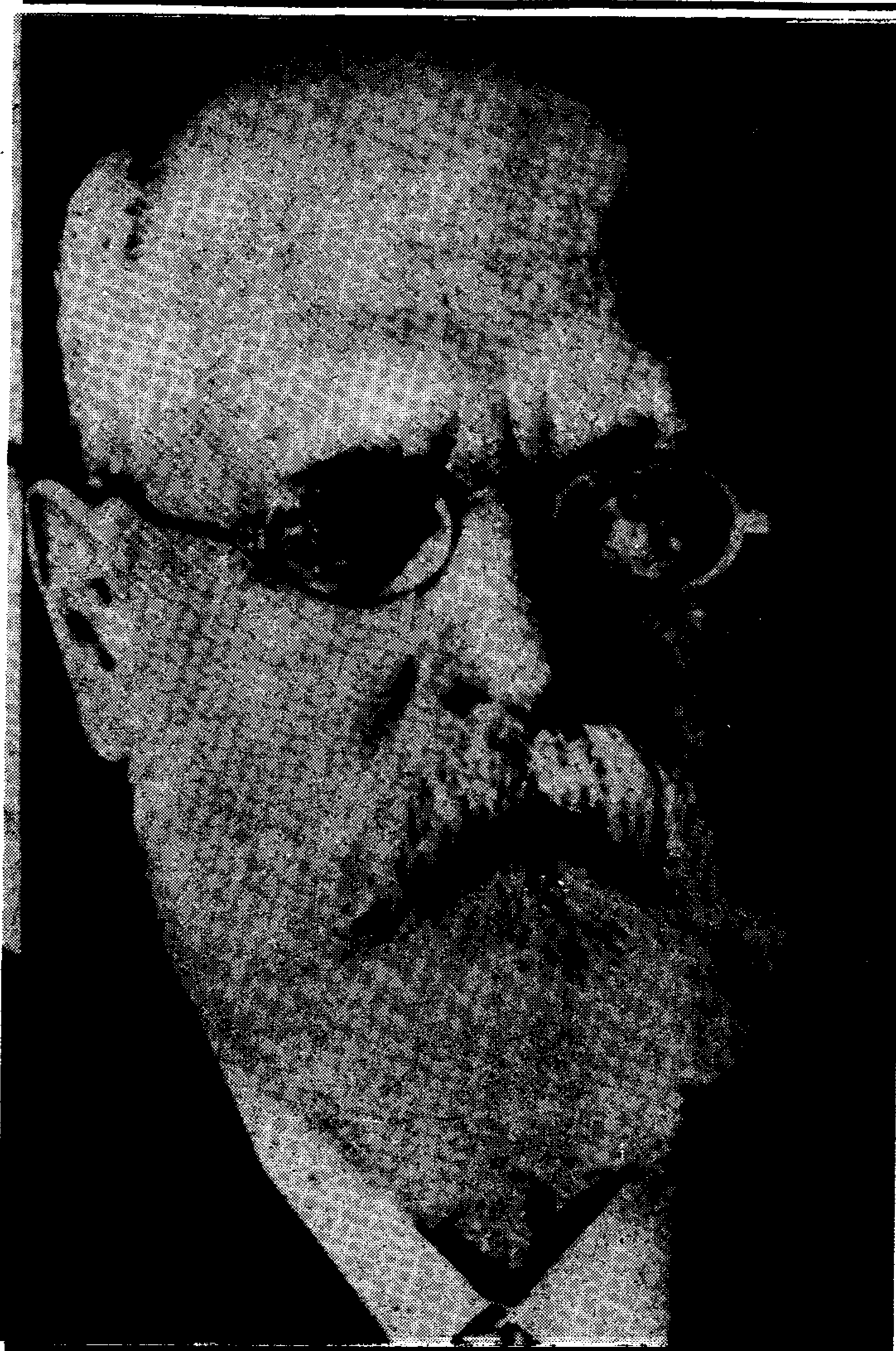
Kitching accuses the left of a number of serious weaknesses.

1. It has failed to register major changes in the composition of the working class itself.

The numbers of educated workers (the 'middle class in non-Marxist terminology) have grown; the traditional manual 'working class' has declined, at least numerically. This has changed the actual and potential 'constituency' of the Left.

Instead of recognising this fact and building on it, the Left has been stricken by guilt about

Clive Bradley reviews 'Rethinking Socialism: A Theory for a Better Practice', by Gavin Kitching (Methuen).



Some of Kitching's arguments are very similar to the later writings of Karl Kautsky (above), the 'Pope' of social democracy. Kautsky wrote in 1927: "The more prosperous and expansionary the capitalist mode of production, the better are the prospects for the social system that will succeed it... This may sound paradoxical to those who believe that socialism will arise from a 'collapse', from the 'failure' or the 'bankruptcy' of capitalism. But it does not conflict with the conception that expects the victory of socialism not from the economic decadence of capital, but from the growth of numbers and the increase in moral, intellectual and political strength of the proletariat".

its 'petty-bourgeois' social base and tried, against the tide of history, so to speak, to build support amongst an increasingly irrelevant section of workers.

2. This therefore leads to knee-jerk support for the economic militancy of 'industrial' workers. But such militancy is not necessarily progressive at all.

3. This is compounded and/or

caused by a 'cataclysmic' conception of the transition to socialism, which sees capitalist crisis (i.e. economic collapse) as the 'moment' of revolutionary transformation.

For Kitching, on the contrary, socialist advance is easier in times of capitalist boom (more on which in a moment).

4. In general, therefore, the left is good at knowing what it is against, and bad at knowing what it is for. This 'romantic anti-capitalism', particularly bad because it has no economic theory beyond liberal Keynesianism, collapses in the face of the ideological offensive of monetarism and so contributes to the isolation of the Left and the 'ideological domination' of the working class.

5. The Left has failed to understand how to make socialist advance within capitalism. According to Kitching, particularly in a situation in which increasing differentiation within the working class makes a common 'class consciousness' very difficult, the left needs to develop workers' conceptions of themselves as citizens.

That is, socialists need to develop any and every tendency towards the active involvement of people in public life, regardless of whether it is specifically socialist. Failing to understand this, the Left has been trapped in its sectarian ghetto, not influencing anybody.

Who is the 'Left' whom Kitching criticises? Sometimes he refers to the Labour Party as a whole, sometimes to its mainstream left, and sometimes to 'Leninist' organisations.

Some of Kitching's criticisms are just against some sections of

the Left, but that does not make the whole argument valid against the whole of the Left.

But in any case his argument against 'cataclysmic' socialism seems wrong to me.

Kitching's arguments hinge around the assumption that socialism is only possible in societies which are a) wealthy, and b) have a working class (defined broadly) which is educated, self-disciplined, materially well-off and (his term) imaginative enough to sustain it.

Consequently socialism is not possible if a) the society is poor, or b) the working class is none of those things.

According to Kitching, the problem in Britain today is lack of education, self-discipline, imagination, etc., in the working class. Before we can fight for socialism, we have to provide the basis for such a fight. One example of how to do this, Kitching believes, is provided by the Lucas Aerospace Alternative Plan.

In other words, the crucial component of the fight now for democratic socialism is to deepen the democratic involvement in all spheres of life under capitalism, where possible at the expense of the capitalist, so weakening the institutions of capitalist power, and undermining the mass passivity upon which capitalism depends.

And since conditions of capitalist crisis make this more difficult, Kitching argues we should "quite consciously offer whole-hearted cooperation with capitalism but in return demand concessions which aim quite consciously to change the fundamental nature of capitalism."

The argument that socialism requires abundance is hardly new, nor the idea that 'socialism' properly speaking is incompatible with underdevelopment. But the idea that therefore there are no limits to the 'progressiveness' of capitalism (in the sense of continually laying the basis for socialism) or that socialism 'matures' within the womb of capitalism 'virtually forever' — and can only do so if capitalism is flourishing — is something else again. (And its antecedents are not encouraging: it was a central theme of Karl Kautsky in the 1930s).

Kitching does not at all consider the point that so long as capitalism can deliver the goods, workers are unlikely to want to think about or fight for an alternative world order.

It is precisely in conditions of crisis that workers need answers more and more desperately about how to fight and win, now. Piecemeal bargaining becomes more and more utopian and revolutionary answers more and more relevant.

For a Marxist to argue that at such a time we have nothing to offer but a programme to shore up the system because it is in our interests for it to solve its crisis is self-defeating.

Socialists cannot simply ride out the crisis in the calm knowledge that the following boom will help the advance towards socialism. By any definition of the working class, or of which section of it is most important, the following boom can only come about if the working class is seriously defeated.

We are today in the middle of a serious international class war which our class is not winning. The crisis facing the Left is not that it isn't gradualist enough: it is that it hasn't worked out the answers as to how to reverse the retreat now, or at least in the relatively short term.

Consequently the problem which Kitching views as primary — the isolation of the Left — is only a problem because the working class as a class, internationally, does face the prospect of a serious defeat. Otherwise we could simply rely on the isolation being overcome by the

onward march of capitalism, which brings an ever more cultured and 'imaginative' working class which is ever more potentially socialist.

In fact it is difficult to understand what real function Kitching sees for the left.

Kitching claims that all radical movements — not only socialists, but also the women's movement — have a conception of bringing the tablets down from on high, which alienates potential support.

Kitching's chapter of feminism is considerably more strident in tone than the rest of the book, and deals at great length with how people ought to dress. But that aside, if Kitching is so opposed to socialists

presenting their own ideas as 'truths' (which is separable from the issue of improving how we communicate those ideas) then I wonder why he has written 178 pages himself. Doesn't he believe that what is written in these pages is true?

Presumably he does want to win 'converts' — he won't like the term, but anyone trying to convince anyone else about anything can be characterised in this way. But he identifies no actual role for socialists in the unfolding development of democratic citizen control.

The book is well-written and readable, and it raises some real questions. Unfortunately the answers, such as they are, are wrong.

SCIENCE

By Les Hearn

It's an ill wind..

LAST week, I wrote about the killer smog of 1952 and also about the role of ammonia from wet nappies in causing cot death.

As a follow-up, 'Ariadne' in New Scientist wrote about the deaths of animals from smog during an agricultural show at Olympia in 1952.

Many prize animals died, but the pigs were not affected. Unlike the other animals, they were kept overnight at the exhibition hall, bedded down on straw. Not being house-trained, they peed and pooped copiously on the straw. The bacteria in the latter broke down the urea in the former, making clouds of the smelly alkaline gas, ammonia.

Now, the gases in smog are things like nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide, both acidic.

When they met the alkaline ammonia, they combined with it, making solid particles of ammonium nitrate and sulphate. This cleared the air (and incidentally made excellent fertilisers).

Human kindness

NOT only does human milk contain just the right mixture of nutrients for a baby, it also contains antibodies that protect babies from bacterial infections.

But that's not all. It has recently been discovered that human milk also contains chemicals that kill parasitic protozoa.

Protozoa (things like the amoeba), though microscopic, are actually more similar to animals than bacteria. So chemicals that kill bacteria usually have no effect on disease-causing protozoa.

Now a highly potent substance has been found in human milk that kills a protozoan called Giardia Lamblia. This protozoan causes giardiasis, a common gut disease affecting children. It causes a debilitating and even life-threatening diarrhoea. Some children become chronically

infected for years.

The chemical that kills Giardia is therefore very important for protecting babies. It is not formed in cow's milk, further support for critics of the baby-food companies trying to spread bottle-feeding in the Third World.

The drug of choice for treating giardiasis has some nasty side-effects (even if it can be obtained).

Bombs to excavate

UNDER the US Freedom of Information Act, documents have been released showing that the US seriously planned to set off 173 Hiroshimas-worth of A-bombs to excavate a highway.

The project was deemed "technically feasible" and was due to take place in 1966. Luckily it was called off.

The feasibility study thought that little damage would result since the site was in the Mojave desert. But recent research into "nuclear winter" scenarios suggests that the 20 ground-bursts would raise enough dust to cause a significant drop in temperature in the Northern hemisphere, with several severe winters (but some spectacular sunsets). This is on top of an increase in cases of leukaemia, etc.

Three years old

Next week marks the third anniversary of the SO Science Column, still the only regular science column on the Left.

Elsewhere in this issue you will notice appeals for more effective fund-raising to keep SO going. I would like to suggest to readers that, if you have enjoyed reading the Science Column over the last one, two or three years, you might like to show your appreciation by giving a little extra for your SO next week, either to your SO seller, or to me, c/o Science Column Birthday Prezzie, 214 Sickert Court, London N1.

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No. 25 December 1983

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK 10p

Page of the women's campaign Labour Movement Fightback for Women's Rights

The nightmare arrives,

The latest Women's Fightback — 10p plus 16p postage, from 10b Landseer Road, London N19.



Malaya: one of Britain's many colonial wars

Alternative foreign policy

The attack on detente, and the acute worsening of the arms race persuade us of the need to develop a more specific approach to an alternative foreign policy as well as continuing work for ultimate non-alignment. The European Nuclear Disarmament Conventions, first in Brussels and then in Berlin, have helped to arouse a European-wide discussion on the implications of the bloc-division of Europe, as well as much closer communication between peace movements.

Here in Britain, the Labour Party policy is for the simultaneous dissolution of both NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. CND, for its part, has flatly opposed British membership of NATO since the early 1960s.

Recent events make it necessary for us to look again at this entanglement. Although there have in the past been frequent failures of communication between the United States and its allies, it is doubtful whether there have ever been so many failures as have taken place during the last months.

The invasion of Grenada was a particular affront even to conservative opinion in Britain. All over Europe there is widespread support for the Sandinista government of Nicaragua, but in spite of specific appeals from such statesmen as Willy Brandt, an open CIA war has been carried on against this tiny country.

The confrontation in the Middle East is especially dangerous, and it is quite clear that the American decision to carry through direct attacks on Syrian forces was announced without any prior discussion, to the consternation of the European allies.

Unfortunately, there are, around the world, numerous other war zones in which this kind of forward policy by the United States' government could easily drag those associated with it into conflicts which

they do not want. As the new missiles are placed in Western and Eastern Europe, it is quite clear that the main danger to this continent is that war could spread from one of these other zones of battle.

It is for this reason that we are proposing a weekend study conference on British Foreign policy, in an attempt to create workshops which can help to devise a realistic policy for greater independence.

This conference will be held at Nottingham university on Saturday, April 14 and Sunday, April 15 1984.

Among those participating

will be Tony Benn, Stuart Holland and Michael Meacher from the Labour Party, and leaders of the European peace movement as well as trade union disarmament campaigners.

The cost of participating in the Conference will be £5. Those who wish to reserve overnight accommodation in the University, with meals included, may do so at a further cost of £20.

Further details can be obtained from the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, Bertrand Russell House, Gamble Street, Nottingham, NG7 4ET.

KEN COATES

Nation and class

GARTH Frankland upbraids me for allegedly implying that Argentina "is some kind of imperialist nation", and goes on to generously concede that this view "does have a certain logic for those who deny the right of nationalist governments to struggle against imperialism" (SO, January 12).

In fact, comrade Frankland's indignation is caused, in part, by a typesetting error: what I actually wrote in my letter was, "This sort of pseudo-internationalism has nothing to do with Lenin and Trotsky, who started from a world overview but invariably focussed on the class struggle within both imperialist nations and oppressed nations". Somewhere along the SO production line the last part of the sentence got lost, thus causing comrade Frankland fifteen different kinds of hernia at the thought that I was suggesting Argentina was imperialist. I don't think that, although Argentina clearly is not an "oppressed nation" in the sense that Lenin used the term, either.

But the good councillor's disagreement with me is not

simply the result of a typographical error. His letter vividly illustrates my main point: that to elevate the relations between nations ("imperialist" vs. "oppressed"; "metropolitan" vs. "periphery" etc) above class divisions, has an inevitable class-collaborationist logic. Comrade Frankland's emphasis is entirely upon what Argentine capitalists and workers supposedly have in common: "both ... are victims of the big banks." So what does he propose — a popular front?

Compare this with Lenin: "Very often — even in most cases, perhaps — while the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries does support the national movement, it is at the same time in accord with the imperialist bourgeoisie, that is, together with the latter it fights against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes ... we, as communists, should and will support bourgeois liberation movements in the colonies only when they are genuinely revolutionary." (Discussion on the National and Colonial Question, 1920).

So, far from denying "the right of nationalist governments to struggle against imperialism," my concern is simply to bring Lenin's criteria to bear on the question of under what circumstances and within what limits we should support the national bourgeoisie.

But in the case of Galtieri's invasion of the Falklands, all this is beside the point, anyway. Argentina is not an "oppressed nation", the Junta were not "genuinely revolutionary", and the invasion was not a "liberation struggle" in any way at all!

In fact, comrade Frankland gets it wrong on every score: he bastardises Leninism by making the question of which category ("imperialist" or "oppressed") a nation slots into, his main criteria for deciding whether or not to support the national bourgeoisie; and in the case of Argentina he slots the nation into the wrong category, anyway!

JIM DENHAM

Learn from Sinn Fein

JOHN O'Mahony's article on the Sinn Fein Ard Feis (SO 155) raises several points, but one theoretical howler in particular is symptomatic of his approach.

Equating Sinn Fein and the Labour Party in the context of attitudes to the Euro-parliament shows little regard for concrete analysis. There is no comparison between the nature of the two parties, the character of the struggles in which they are involved or their historical relationship to parliamentary politics in general or the European parliament in particular.

For the Labour Party, committed as it is to parliamentarism, representation on the EEC body is a logical conclusion. The contradiction comrade O'Mahony alludes to lies in the fact that the Labour Party is ambivalent about the EEC organisation as a whole on the basis of economic nationalism rather than of socialism. While condemning the EEC for eroding the autonomy of the British parliament, Labour's Euro-MPs claim to be fighting for a better deal and unity with European socialists by participation in the Euro-parliament.

Sinn Fein has an entirely different relationship to the British Parliament, the Dail and the EEC. Both Parliament and the Dail are seen to have, in their different ways, legitimised British imperialism's oppression and partition of Ireland. To take seats in these bodies would be to condone their existence and right to rule.

Although Sinn Fein is opposed to Ireland's full membership of the EEC it is not seeking seats in order to negotiate a better economic deal or to reform the Euro-parliament in Ireland's favour. Sinn Fein's motive is to win support in Europe for the national liberation struggle and to increase political recognition for the republican movement as the representative of the nationalist people of Ireland.

That is why the abstentionist principle has been abandoned vis-a-vis Europe. It is not indicative of "confusion and self-contradiction" but of the maturing orientation of the Republican Movement towards political struggle.

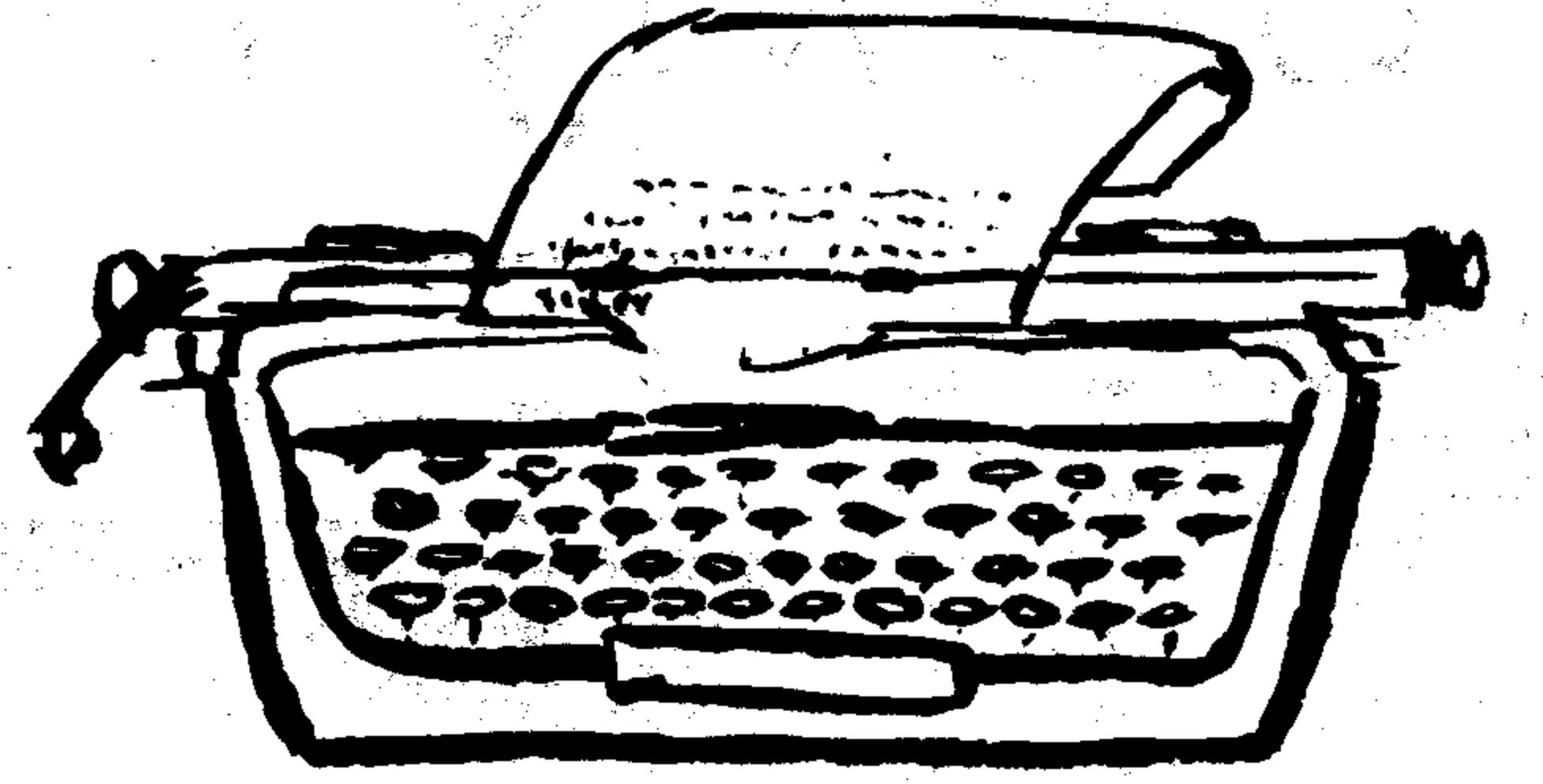
It is the responsibility of socialists in this country to help the progress of Sinn Fein and its transformation into a mass socialist party by explaining clearly the evolution of Sinn Fein policy, not by making superficial criticisms. The left in Britain has a lot to learn from the growth of Sinn Fein and we should concentrate on forming closer practical links, assimilating the experiences of their successes and putting them into effect in the labour movement in Britain.

A "turn to social and community politics" modelled on Sinn Fein Advice Centre principles and adapted to the struggle for socialism in Britain could provide the vehicle for turning the Labour Party into a campaigning working class party.

It is essential that the Trotskyist movement succeeds in reappraising its own history and mistakes, recognises the obsolescence of many of its old practices and responds to the demands of the real life movement and the needs of working people as Sinn Fein has done. It is this which constitutes a Marxist approach, not the ability to quote the correct text or win insulated debates on points of theory.

ALAN BROOKE
Huddersfield

Writeback



Send letters to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8. No longer than 400 words please: longer letters are liable to be cut.



IRA salute at a Volunteer's funeral

Right - but wrong too

I AGREE with the politics of John O'Mahony's analysis of Sinn Fein, and in general I agree with what Socialist Organiser says about Ireland.

Agree with you or not, I also think that Socialist Organiser provides the most comprehensive coverage of Irish affairs to be found in the British left press. It is especially useful that Socialist Organiser allows political tendencies like Sinn Fein and the IRSP, and individuals like Dominic McGlinchey, to speak for themselves in its columns.

Nevertheless, I think it is wrong for Socialist Organiser to publish the criticisms of Sinn Fein and the IRSP that it does. That is not the job of a British publication. It is the job of Irish Marxists.

Sinn Fein and the IRA are leading the fight in Ireland. Even if we would like it done differently, our main job is to back them up.

British socialists do not have the right, living as we do in the oppressor state, to tell Irish revolutionaries what to do. That's an old principle, and a basic one.

The criticism lends entirely the wrong tenor to the paper. Its main message to the labour movement and to the left should in the first place be that of solidarity with the Catholic community, and in the second place solidarity with those (whatever their faults, inadequacies and limitations) who are leading the struggle that is going on right now.

The proper approach on the issue of federalism, for example, would have been to hold fire despite the possible sectarian implications of Sinn Fein's change of policy.

Yours for socialism,
CARL GRIMSHAW,
Manchester.

Too long, too dull

I AM dismayed that the policy to attempt a degree of innovation in the paper's style and content seems to have been all but abandoned of late.

All the priority appears to be given to overlong and obscure discussion pieces. Little priority or none is allotted to features which are genuinely lively and informative. Where did the poetry and rock columns go? When did we last have an entertaining film or television review?

As a supporter of SO I would like it to increase in both readership and political influence. To do this it will have to attract more people.

A publication that gives all its space to those who want to engage in long, esoteric discussions or sectarian diatribes will not be able to increase its following.

I would like to submit a few ideas towards discussion about how Socialist Organiser could improve on its quality and readability.

The poetry and rock columns should be restored as regular features. Proper priority should be given to Les Hearn's excel-

lent and informative science column. I believe the proposal floated earlier in the year for a supplementary theoretical bulletin to carry the longer articles should be seriously considered.

Whatever the outcome of such discussion I believe the editors could start the ball rolling by giving encouragement and proper priority to the sort of input Socialist Organiser really needs.

Yours fraternally,
ALEX SIMPSON
Cambridge CLP



SO badges 25p each, or £2 for ten.

Does it deter?

ONE particular point stuck out in Tony Richardson's article on disarmament of the Stalinist states. He seems to support the theory of nuclear deterrence!

Whether nuclear weapons "defend the Soviet Union" in a Trotskyist sense is a contentious issue. I believe, however, that Tony was correct in describing the defensive role of Soviet rearmament in the 1950s; the US would have undoubtedly attacked China without it.

Where I part company with Tony is in his trust in leaving nuclear weapons in the hands of the bureaucracy. Precisely because the bureaucracy is unstable, as Trotsky analysed it, there remains a very real chance of the weapons being

used. Now nuclear conflict is a qualitatively different form of warfare to conventional conflict. One hesitates to see even Tony battling through the radiation clouds, turning imperialist war into civil war!

Whichever states are involved — and I share Tony's view on the class nature of the Stalinist states — we have to recognise the existence of a highly volatile nuclear arms build-up, which could possibly wipe out all existing property relations, whether nationalised by a workers' revolution or not.

A little more serious thought about the threat of nuclear annihilation is in order, I think.

RICHARD BAYLEY,
York.

Socialist ORGANISER

Where we stand

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Freeze rent and rates.

*Scrap all immigration controls. Race is not a problem: racism is. The labour movement must mobilise to drive the fascists off the streets. Purge racists from positions in the labour movement. Organise full support for black self-defence. Build workers' defence squads.

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

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

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

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

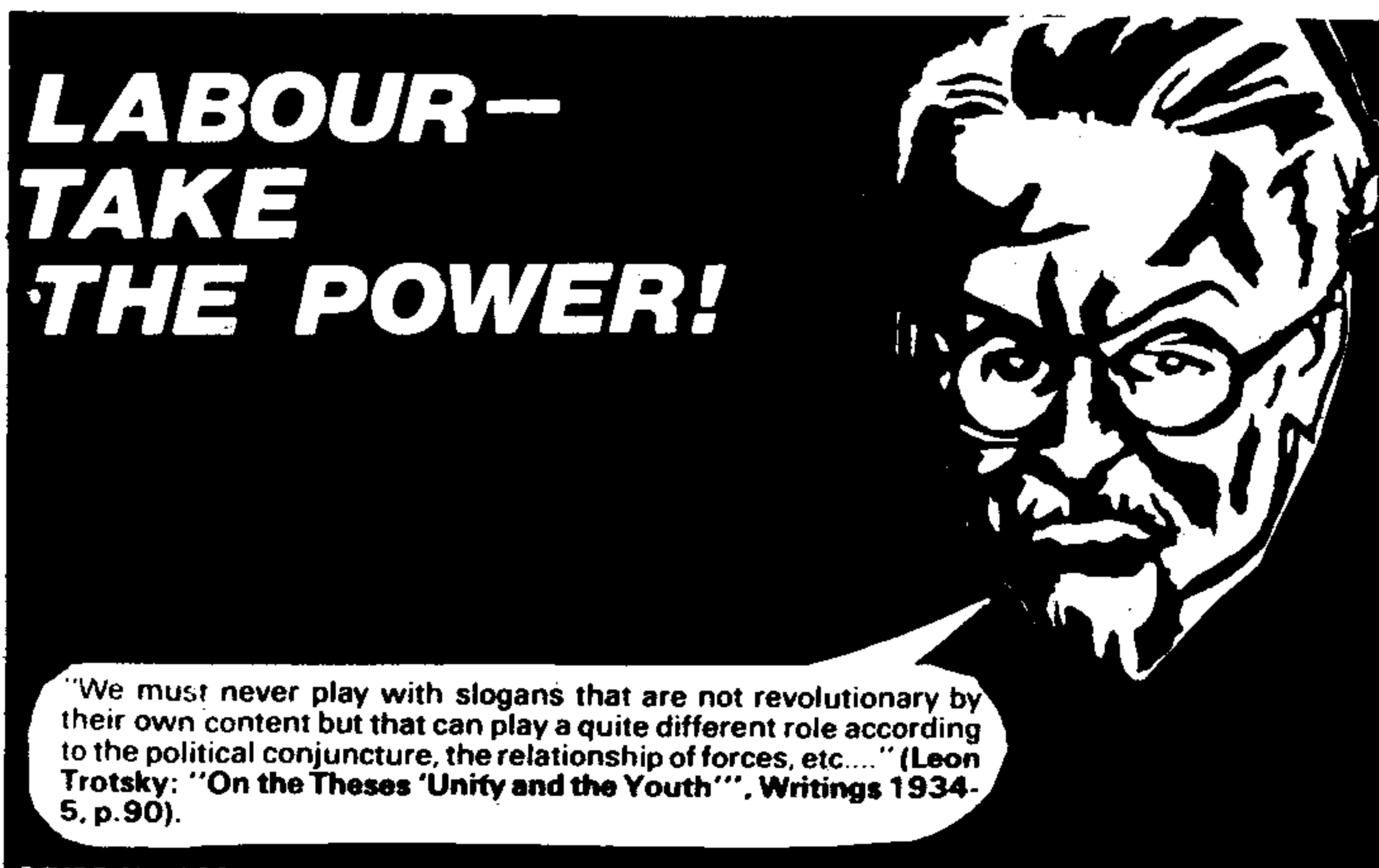
*The black working people of South Africa should get full support from the British labour movement for their strikes, struggles and armed combat against the white supremacist regime. South African goods and services should be blacked.

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

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

Briefing's new slogan

By Fergus Ennis



The Chartists misquote Trotsky to justify raising an ambiguous slogan which is completely in step with the demagogic campaign for unity serious Labour Left. Trotsky had something to say about this type of sloganising.

DON'T let the pessimists kid you that these are times of universal defeat and retreat for the Left.

Briefing is still advancing.

Last November the editorial board of Briefing's 'national supplement' decided by a large majority to adopt as the supplement's masthead slogan, 'Labour take the power!' It followed in the footsteps of London Labour Briefing, which has long proclaimed this slogan.

In the February issue of Briefing, Chris Knight announces this new advance for Briefing in an article decorated with a picture of Leon Trotsky and a quotation from his 1938 document, 'The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International' (the 'Transitional Programme').

... the demand, systematically addressed to the old leadership — 'Break with the bourgeoisie, take the power!' — is an extremely important weapon...

Now, Trotsky notwithstanding, in the Labour Party right now this slogan is altogether pernicious.

In fact Chris Knight has no right to attribute the slogan to Trotsky. Trotsky's observation generalises from the experience of 1917 in Russia where the Bolsheviks addressed the demand 'take the power' to organisations which based themselves on the masses — the soviets — which had tremendous social might but whose leaders entered coalitions with the bourgeoisie.

The workers', soldiers' and peasants' soviets already had most of the power: the old system was paralysed and collapsing, propped up mainly by the coalitionists. The old order retained only the unerasable shadow of its former power. It was 'dual power'.

The demand to the workers' parties to 'take the power' in conditions of crisis, dual power, and mass revolutionary organs of workers' rule (soviets), would certainly be a useful and important weapon in helping the masses to break from those of their leaders who did not want to 'take power'. That was Trotsky's idea. That is why he included the idea in his comprehensive 'Transitional Programme'.

But that programme was a tool to be used by Marxists who would deploy its slogans and proposals

according to what was appropriate in a given situation. Revolutionaries have to use their political judgment.

The slogan 'take the power', like any other single slogan or combination of slogans from the 'Transitional Programme' or similar documents, is useful or otherwise, helps us advance or confuses the issue, depending on whether those who select it and try to use it are able to make a correct assessment of the situation and the given stage of development.



That is the rational, Marxist, way to use slogans, programmes, and the heritage of Marxism in general.

'Labour take the power' is the peculiar fetish of Graham Bash, Chris Knight and others who initiated Briefing. They have been known variously over the years as 'Socialist Charter', 'the Chartist minority', etc. The slogan has been their fetish since Chris Knight broke with Militant back in 1967.

While Trotsky's version was a weapon to sharpen consciousness, distinctions, and awareness, the 'Chartist' slogan conflates different goals, concerns, conceptions, and definitions. Instead of separating out ideas, it binds them together in a sticky political portmanteau.

The slogan binds together people who are politically disparate on the basis of burying the difference in ambiguous words.

The slogan means different things to different people, and therefore nobody can know quite what it 'really' means.

To Chris Knight and his co-thinkers it means: Labour, smash the bourgeois state and set up a workers' state! To the overwhelming majority of those who encounter it on page 1 of London Briefing or the national supplement, it will mean: Labour take office.

In the national Briefing, now, the slogan is raised outside of any consideration of immediate political realities or issues — six months after June 9!

For its initial advocates, the slogan means out-and-out revolution. For the broad movement it can only mean 'Labour take office'.

— a slogan which slots into the increasingly-prevalent idea that the central goal must be to get Kinnock to Downing Street irrespective of politics — and (as the LCC puts it) don't rock the boat with your ultra-left obsessions and delusions.

Trotsky talks of using such a slogan as the Bolsheviks did, against the leaders of vacillating parties based in the masses, in conditions where sharp social crisis puts such parties up against the gun and destabilises them. In the decisive experience, 1917, the slogan was used by an openly competing independent party, the Bolshevik party.

The Chartists use it now when none of these conditions exist.

British society is not in a revolutionary crisis. The slogan is used for the Labour Party as it is, from inside the Labour Party, by loyal members of the Labour Party. It is something for the existing Labour Party to do, perhaps after shedding some more of its leaders.

To use such a slogan outside of its time, place, and the proper configuration of social and political forces, is harmful: rarely more so than now. To raise the idea that government office (for that is what 'power' will mean to all but the initiated few) must be central for this Lab-

Wilsonism and Callaghanism.

The slogan is not just a piece of amiable nonsense given a home by the hospitable Briefing, which finds room for a wide range of positions. Some may have voted for the slogan in this spirit, but it does have implications.

For the Briefing Chartists play a role in the local government Left. They split from SO in order to rationalise, glorify and cover Ted Knight and Ken Livingstone. They spin consoling cant for the hundreds of rank and file activists who have followed these gentlemen into municipal socialism.

The slogan doesn't just mean 'Kinnock take the power'. It means take power locally. Or, as they sometimes put it, take some of the power.

It is incontestable that the local government left is in a massive crisis. The idea that this crisis is just caused by the Tories has plausibility, but it isn't the truth.

The local government left should have taken account of the Tories. They should have fought the Tories. Instead they opted to be local administrators, and to bank on rate rises to counteract a government which could make up the rules as it went along.

Central to the crisis of the local government left is the delusion that they could 'take power' locally.

And the Chartists' slogan serves only to glorify the grubbiness — to cover humdrum municipal socialism with the sheen of a 'struggle for power'.

To be sure, the ideas of the Briefing Chartists have had little independent influence on what happened: they have provided an ideological rationale for the development of the 'municipal socialist left' rather than shaping it. But that obstructs drawing lessons from the development.

A whole layer of the Labour Left has been drawn into municipal politics — into creating a refurbished local machine for the Labour Party status quo, into adopting a basically right wing posture of administrators counterposed to the local working class and local government unions, even while continuing some leftism in other arenas, especially foreign policy. Throughout the country, layers of would-be leftists have in their turn been educated by the local government leaders to accept administering the system as a goal fit for socialists to pursue. They have been softened up for Kinnockism.

A refurbished version of the old Labour Party machine — that will be an ironic result of the struggles triggered by the proven bankruptcy in office of the last Labour governments.

The political fate of many in the Labour Left depends on what lessons they draw from the experience of municipal socialism. The first and irreplaceable step is to recognise where we are now and where the Labour Party is.

Consoling cant is best left to those who are willing to live peacefully with the status quo. Those who are going to continue fighting it cannot afford to indulge in fantasies.

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To join or affiliate, write to Chris Richardson, 21 Devonshire Promenade, Lenton, Nottingham NG7 2DS.

Stalinism, sepia and sentiment

Mick Ackersley reviews Sidney Lumet's new film 'Daniel'

SIDNEY Lumet's 'Daniel' is an emotional and powerful account of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, CP USA members who were victims of a legal lynching in the early '50s, and of their children.

Many thousands of victims were ruined, blacklisted, driven to an early grave or to suicide by the 'McCarthyite' witch-hunts. The Rosenbergs were the only ones to be literally burned alive - in the electric chair at Sing Sing prison, on June 19 1953.

Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were arrested in 1950 and charged with 'conspiracy to commit espionage'. Linked by the testimony of others with Klaus Fuchs, the spy arrested in England in 1949, they were tried in March 1951 at the height of the hysteria generated by American reverses in the Korean war.

They were convicted on the testimony of people who thereby bought clemency for themselves, including Ethel Rosenberg's brother David Greenglass and his wife.

Whether or not the Rosenbergs were spies, there is no reason to doubt that it was the anti-communist hysteria that determined their sentence and its carrying out. Even the judge sentencing them could not restrain himself from accusing them of having 'given Russia the Bomb and thereby encouraged Russian aggression in Korea, where 50,000 Americans had so far died'.

The Rosenberg case is thinly fictionalised for the film by E R Doctorow, who made the screen play out of his 1971 novel, 'The Book of Daniel'.

Daniel, according to one of the Negro spirituals sung on the soundtrack by Paul Robeson, was 'a witness for the Lord'. Lumet's and Doctorow's Daniel is the son of 'Paul and Rochelle Isaacson', electrocuted as Soviet spies in 1953.

It is the mid-'60s and in the US the anti-Vietnam war movement is gathering force. Paul and Rochelle Isaacson's youngest child, Susan, is an activist, but at 20 she is neurotic, suicidal, withered up. In fact she is dying.

Daniel finally decides that she is simply *inconsolable*.

Disturbed from a self-protective immersion in private life by Susan's breakdown, Daniel sets out to seek 'the truth about the Isaacsons'.

The film weaves together two separable strands - the story of the children, working backwards from the '60s, and the story of



the parents, working forward from the '30s.

Much of it is in sepia flashback to 1953 and earlier, tracing Paul and Rochelle's road to the death house at Sing Sing.

One theme is what it means to two children (the Rosenbergs actually had two boys) to have their parents killed by the State. This is what gives the film its main power and force. Such questions as whether they were guilty or railroaded, which take up much of the film, are in fact irrelevant to it, and essentially weaken it.

The other strand in the film traces the life of two members of the Communist Party of the USA during the '30s and '40s, until they get picked up during the McCarthyite witch-hunt and railroaded to the electric chair.

Typical of a generation, the Isaacsons meet during a street fight with police trying to break a picket line.

At college they trade polemical punches with a Trotskyist, discussing Stalin's German policy which let Hitler to power. "We grant you your virtue", they say. You were right, but we are the movement.

Political life is possible *despite* the Party's politics. The Trotskyist is a 'simplistic sectarian'. They are - they naively think - 'real politickers'.

They talk romantically about 'the masses' and 'men who work with their hands' - and about Stalin's Soviet Union.

We hear a lecturer at a CP camp defend Stalin's 1939-41 pact with Hitler. What is not in the film is the CPs all over the world, and in the US too, making pro-Nazi propaganda; down across the border in Mexico, the Stalinists embracing anti-semitism and denouncing the 'Jewish Trotskyists'; in German-occupied Paris, on the eve of Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union, the CP negotiating with the authorities to publish a legal daily.

A large part of 'Daniel' is made of convincing - but uncritical - pastiche recreations of the mental and emotional world of the CP USA in the '30s and '40s - not only in sepia, but saturated with music, sentiment, and high romanticism. It is, finally, a glorification of what it depicts.

Colourful, enthusiastic May Day marches, with the YCL singing 'We shall not be moved' and adding their own lines: 'Stalin is our leader, we shall not be moved'.

The camaraderie of CP camps. Students fighting police to defend union picket lines as the modern American trade union movement

is being created.

The famous 1949 Peekskill open-air Paul Robeson concert, in defiance of witch-hunt and blacklist, after which gangs of thugs attack parts of the audience as they are leaving.

Music does much of the work to evoke the emotional world of the CP. A coachful of people singing a moving song from the German concentration camps of the early '30s, 'The Peatbog soldiers'.

Numerous Paul Robeson songs on the soundtrack, mainly Negro spirituals, do more than evoke the time. The spirituals are appropriate to the Party members' outlook.

For this is a closed-in world, the world of a special tribe, of a sect. Lumet and Doctorow re-create it and enter into it very well.

The members have 'dipped light' vision, but the main beam - like a large part of their minds and the critical intelligence that made them communists in the first place - is switched off, dispensed with, surrendered to Pope Stalin.

'The Peatbog Soldiers' is sung at Peekskill in 1949, when indisputable proof of the existence of Stalin's own slave labour camps is already available and widely known. Many of the CP members are Jews, spiritual refugees from fascism: but Stalin's anti-semitism is already raging openly in the Czechoslovak and other East European purge trials, disguised as a campaign against 'Zionism'.

These CP members have gone through the war as American chauvinists, advocates of strike-breaking for the war effort, pioneers of the witch-hunt against anti-war Trotskyists, anarchists, etc. that will finally engulf and shatter their own seemingly imposing party. (It had 100,000 members in 1945).

The most moving thing in the film is the plight of the children.

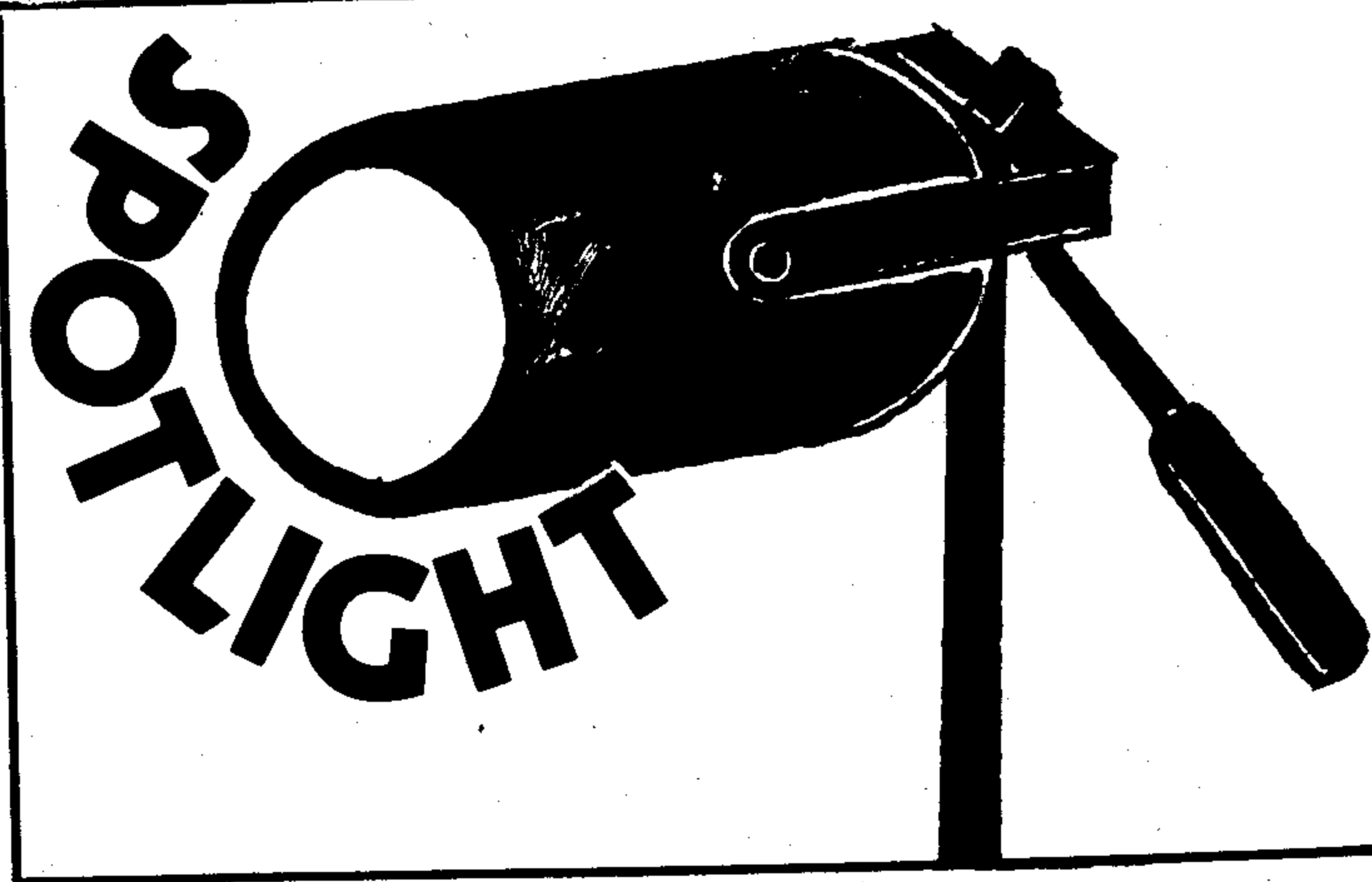
The children's visit to Paul and Rochelle, who come to the prison waiting room one at a time, is scarcely bearable. Paul barely keeps control of himself, desperately trying to avoid looking the children in the face. Rochelle has to cope with the question from eight year old Susan, 'When are they going to kill you?'

The ten year old Daniel tells his mother that he won't let them kill her. "I'll kill them first". But the State is as powerful as nature itself, and when we meet the grown-up Daniel a dozen years later he is dormant and quiescent.

'Daniel' is centrally about family feeling, about childhood loves and ties brutally ruptured, and about childish bewilderment and

helplessness in face of the death of parents. It is an example of the universal experience of a child's horrors and fears - intensified sometimes by 'suppressed wishes - about the inevitability of the death of its parents - not in the form of fears of natural death, but through the sepia-tinted nightmare of the slow, inexorable closing of the State's deadly grip on Paul and Rochelle Isaacson, until it jolts the life out of them in the electric chair.

'Daniel' is a left-wing movie, not just a study of leftists. It tries to convey a sense of a movement with continuity and, maybe, development. The last shots show Daniel and his wife with their baby marching against the Vietnam war and a woman's voice-over sings a 1960s version of one of Paul Robeson's songs from the



'sepia' soundtrack. The movement continues.

So 'Daniel' must be judged as a left wing movie.

It has critical intelligence, and makes 'distancing' observations about the movement. 'The Party' is criticised for being slow to defend the Isaacsons. The film portrays the 1940s CPers accurately up to a point, as blinkered zealots. Someone says: 'They had the faith'.

Yet ultimately 'Daniel' winds up glorifying them and uncritically incorporating their myths into its own lightly fictionalised saga.

It is reasonable for Lumet and Doctorow to appropriate the CPers' conception of themselves, their myths, much celebrated incidents like the Robeson concert, and such a marvellous thing as Robeson's music, to evoke and portray the world of 'Paul and Rochelle Isaacson'. But they do not just use this culture to create colour, atmosphere and verisimilitude. They accept it uncritically, outside of any other political framework, and almost entirely on its own terms.

The film winds up recycling and peddling a version of CP mythology, albeit with a certain backward-looking knowingsness.

For example, the Isaacsons' sympathy and involvement with America's savagely oppressed blacks is stressed and deliberately used to add a sympathy-creating patina of virtue to these 'typical CPers'. Hatred of 'Jim Crow' runs through the movie.

Such attitudes and concerns were certainly typical of such people. Paul Robeson's voice and spirit properly sets the emotional tone of much of the film.

Yet all this is shot through with lies.

The American CP - which had a proud anti-racist record in the '20s, and even in the '30s - sold out the blacks, demobilised what it could of their movement after 1941, subordinated them to the war drive, cashing in its large (and deserved) credit with the blacks as a donation to the political treasury of Stalin's wartime alliance.

But the film-makers are not obliged artistically to 'say everything'.

They are obliged to include such facts... unless they want to concoct and project a re-burnish-

ed piece of CP mythology. And unless they want to miss much of the point about the Rosenbergs.

The fate of the Rosenbergs was bound up with the fate of the American working class movement in the '30s and '40s and with what the CP USA did in that movement.

The savage right wing reaction within the labour movement in the late '40s was prepared for by that movement's inability to develop independent politics, away from reliance on capitalist politicians like Roosevelt and Truman (who initiated the witch hunt in 1947).

The CP's politics shaped - perhaps decisively - the evolution of the labour movement. The real US Marxists and communists of the '30s and '40s - those who were persecuted and jailed in the early '40s, with the CP trying to whip up a lynch mood against them - the Socialist Workers Party of James P Cannon and the Workers Party of Max Shachtman, who fought for independent working class politics in the USA, had no doubt about it.

The history of the CP USA in that formative 15 years of the US labour movement needs to be understood, not mythologised.

'Daniel' has been hailed as a 'revival of radical Hollywood'. But you can't build anything solid on a quagmire.

The international labour movement is still too far from having broken with Stalinism for Stalinism's myths - shot through with lies and the echoes of treacheries - to be other than poisonous. They cannot be appropriated and used artistically as harmless antiques.

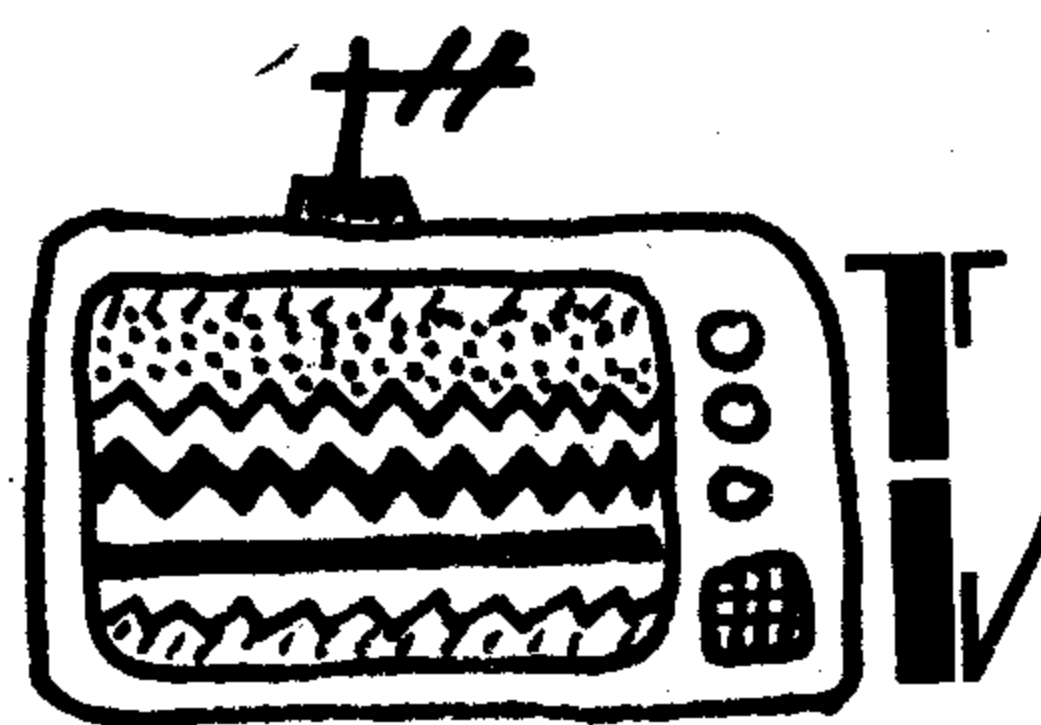
They are not just a matter of history and ancient memory - sympathetic sepia notwithstanding.

For in the last analysis those like the Rosenbergs/Isaacsons were not automatons and cyphers, beings of a different kind to ourselves. They were thinking people who made wrong political choices. That they paid dearly as the Rosenbergs did cannot retrospectively ennobel of justify their cause or their Party's deeds.

For the serious Left, our attitude to the poisoned mythology of Stalinism is a vital indication of what we intend for ourselves - and what we commit ourselves to.

Profession: revolutionary

By Martin Thomas



PROFESSION? "Proletarian" replied Auguste Blanqui, hauled into court for his activity in the French revolution of 1830.

In unconscious imitation, 'Katherine', heroine of last Saturday's Channel 4 TV film of that title, tells her jailers - 'Profession? Revolutionary'.

But Blanqui had been active as a revolutionary for six years already in 1830, and remained dauntless until his death in 1881. The 'Weathermen', the US revolutionary group to which Katherine belongs, disappeared without trace within a few years.

Some of its members - like Katherine - destroyed themselves in their attempts to wage terrorist war against US capitalism. Some just faded away. Any still active today are more likely to be found in the ranks of left reformism than in revolutionary

politics.

Blanqui represented the direct link to Marxism from the earliest forms of working-class socialism (which thought in terms of revolution by armed conspiracy only because, at that primitive stage of development of the working class, reality showed no other possibility). The 'Weathermen' existed alongside a powerful working class, in a mature capitalist society.

The film depicts the split in the US radical student movement which created the 'Weathermen'. A speaker from the opposing faction tells them that they are trying to skip the necessary hard slog of convincing people.

And he is right. The 'revolutionary impatience' of the 'Weathermen' was fated to flip over into defeatist impatience (since an immediate assault doesn't defeat the old order, all is hopeless), or reformist impatience (get what you can in the short term).

The self-sacrifice of the 'Weathermen' deserved better.

The rottenness of all 'established wisdom' - including the 'established wisdom' of the labour leaders and the Stalinist-dominated Left - and the terrible weakness of authentic Marxism were to blame.

The film shows very little of that. US construction workers marched to support the Vietnam war at the same time as young radicals were most angrily fighting against it. That, and the general state of the US labour movement in the 1960s, clearly helped shape the 'Weathermen'.

The opposing faction to the Weathermen in the radical student movement went for a naive Maoist 'serve the masses' workerism.

But none of that enters the film. The story is of individual combat between Katherine and the US ruling class from which she comes and against which she rebels.

That story - the development of a generous spirit from concern for civil rights to blazing fury against the whole system - is, however, told well and sympathetically. In the mean-spirited Britain of 1984, where commitment free of 'ifs' and 'buts' is so unfashionable, I found it refreshing.

New!

Solidarity betrayed

LESSONS OF THE BASINGSTOKE POST OFFICE WORKERS STRIKE

This new pamphlet tells the story of the victimisation of Socialist Organizer supporter Alan Fraser and how the fight to defend him was sold out by the union officials. 25p plus postage from 75 Freemantle Close, Basingstoke.

Industrial

Scott Lithgow 'works on'

Ballot result queried

SHOP stewards at Vosper Thornycroft have raised serious questions about the recent EETPU postal ballot on British Shipbuilders' survival plan.

According to combine committee delegates, some 9,000 ballot papers were distributed throughout Vospers just prior to Christmas. Of these, approximately five thousand were returned and counted under the auspices of Electoral Reform scrutineers during which process many voting papers, allegedly spoilt, were declared invalid. While unsatisfactory, this at least retains the probable virtue of being human error.

How then does EETPU head office account for posting ballot forms and thereby offering voting facilities to unemployed and retired members simply on the basis that they had been former employees at Vospers. A simple exercise in computer malfunction? Maybe.

But what possible explanation exists for the voting fiasco that occurred at Vosper's Woolston yard in Southampton. Here, out of a shop of 280 electricians, at least fifty-one didn't even receive their voting forms.

Incredibly, scores of ineligible EETPU members as far afield as Esso's Fawley Refinery (not noticeably part of BS) actually took possession of ballot papers and voted.

The result was a tiny majority against the scheduled stoppage. Given the way the ballot was conducted, many union members have little respect for this result.

Without doubt a great reservoir of anger exists in the shipyards due to recent events. Shop stewards still have time to channel rank and file militancy into fresh mass meetings throughout Vosper Thornycrofts, and push hard for total rejection of BS's disastrous blitz on jobs.

They must re-instate the strike and fight for the full claim. They surely have no alternative.

Miners mustn't retreat

PETER Heathfield, the left-wing candidate, is reported to have won the National Union of Mineworkers' ballot for general secretary by a narrow margin.

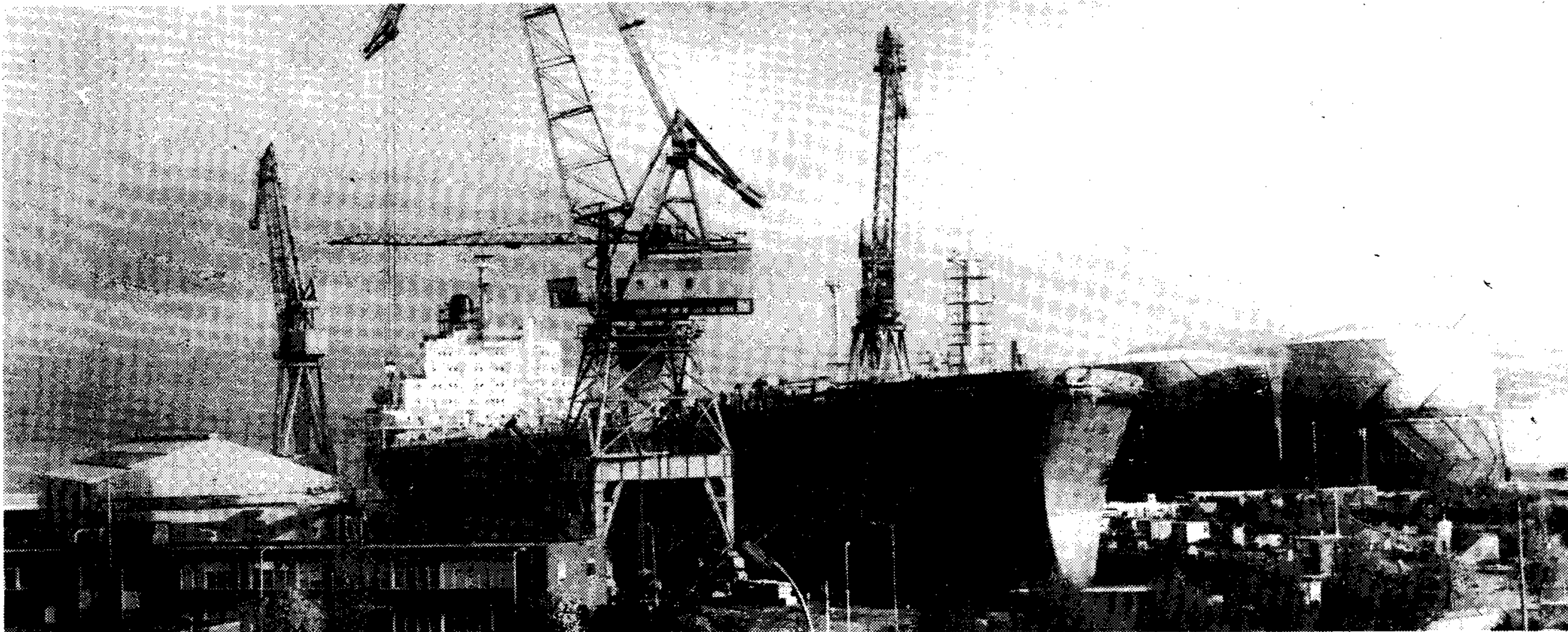
After the votes for the third-placed candidate, Les Kelly, were redistributed, Heathfield beat the right wing candidate, John Walsh, by about 74,000 to 70,000.

"The close finish", reported the Financial Times, "has put the NUM's executive under its first real pressure to call a ballot on its overtime ban." Walsh had campaigned against the overtime ban.

This conclusion, however, may be too sweeping. Despite the impression given by Arthur Scargill's victory in the presidential election against a right wing in industry, consistent left-wing majorities are not the norm in NUM ballots.

Heathfield was reckoned to be a strong candidate, but the effects of the Scargill leadership's repeated attacks on the issue of disputes are quite sufficient to explain a shift to the right without assuming that there is necessarily a widespread revolt against the overtime ban.

Moves by the leadership to develop from the overtime ban towards strike action could win back the lost ground.



RICK MATTHEWS (IFL)

Scott Lithgow: over 4000 jobs at stake

LAI-D-OFF workers at the Scott Lithgow shipyard on Clydeside "worked on" on Monday January 23.

This action is obviously designed as a 'respectable' version of occupying the yard. But until the mass meeting on Friday 20th, it looked like there might be no action at all.

The shipyards are threatened with closure — at the cost of 4,500 jobs directly and another 4,000 indirectly — due to Britoil cancelling its contract for an offshore oil-rig. The unions had hoped, in vain, that at last week's talks they would persuade BS to renegotiate the contract with Britoil.

After the abortive negotiations, BS announced that 3,000 jobs were to be axed by mid-February and that the yard would be completely closed by late summer. 800 workers would be laid-off on Monday January 23, though this would be reduced to 300 if the unions agreed to the introduction of 3-shift working on one of the two remaining contracts.

The Scottish TUC reacted to the BS announcement by

demanding — an immediate meeting with the Prime Minister!

To back up the demand for a meeting, the STUC would be "involving all sections of the Scottish community in a massive all-Scottish campaign which even Mrs Thatcher will not be able to ignore," as STUC General Secretary Jimmy Milne put it.

A concrete example of this "all-Scottish campaign" was provided three days later by the local District Council, when it announced a meeting in opposition to the closure involving Roy Hattersley, David Steel, Gordon Wilson (chairperson of the Scottish National Party), Archbishop Winning from Glasgow, "a senior representative of the Church of Scotland" and "the heads of industry".

This class-collaboration bandwagon still entertains faint hopes of persuading the government to intervene and provide further subsidies for Scott Lithgow, but their major goal is now to find another buyer for the yards, in spite of the unions'

commitment to oppose privatisation of the nationalised shipyards.

But some union leaders have already thrown in the towel completely. After the collapse of last week's talks, Jim Murray, former general secretary of the Boilermakers Union (now merged with the General and Municipal Union), declared that "the closure of the Scott Lithgow group is inevitable."

But Alec Ferry, secretary of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU), declared: "BS sees Scott Lithgow's closure as inevitable. That is not the trade union position."

And Duncan McNeil, convenor at Scott Lithgow's, pledged no-cooperation with any attempt to close the yard.

Joe Brown, chairperson of the Clyde CSEU, pledged an all-out strike by all the Clyde yards if the plan to close Scott Lithgow was implemented. The Clyde CSEU is a heavily bureaucratized body, and previous pledges of strike action have failed to materialise. Even so, pressure

should be mounted to ensure that this latest pledge does not meet the fate of its predecessors.

The class collaboration strategy runs directly contrary to any militant tactics to prevent closure. If the goal is to attract new layers for the shipyards, then trade union militancy must be prevented lest it "frighten off" potential buyers.

A successful strategy for defence of jobs must be based on appeals for class solidarity from fellow workers, not on vague calls for mobilising "Scottish public opinion". And it must rest on working class struggle, not attempts to persuade the government as to what is "really" in the "national interest".

The rejection of three-shift working by the mass meeting last Friday January 20 is evidence that management may not have an easy ride. The task now is to build upon this initial advance and to win solidarity action for Scott Lithgow's survival from shipbuilding workers throughout the country.



A series of one-day strikes hit Ford's car plant at Halewood last week when workers at one of the two long-distance delivery companies which distribute Escort and Orion models to dealers decided to stop work.

100 drivers, employed by Tolmans, are in dispute over the annual wage negotiations. So far more than 1,000 cars have been stockpiled in the plant's compounds; a figure increasing by 300 cars a day.

TRADE union leaders representing 900,000 council manual workers rejected a 3% pay offer made on Monday January 23 by their local authority employers.

The pay negotiations — one of the most important in the public sector wage bargaining season — were due to have been completed last November, but unions feel that political intervention by the government is delaying the deal and giving support to the ruling Conservative group on the employers' side in sticking to the 3% cash-limit provision for public service wages.

Further talks probably won't take place for about a month, thus pushing back even further a settlement date.

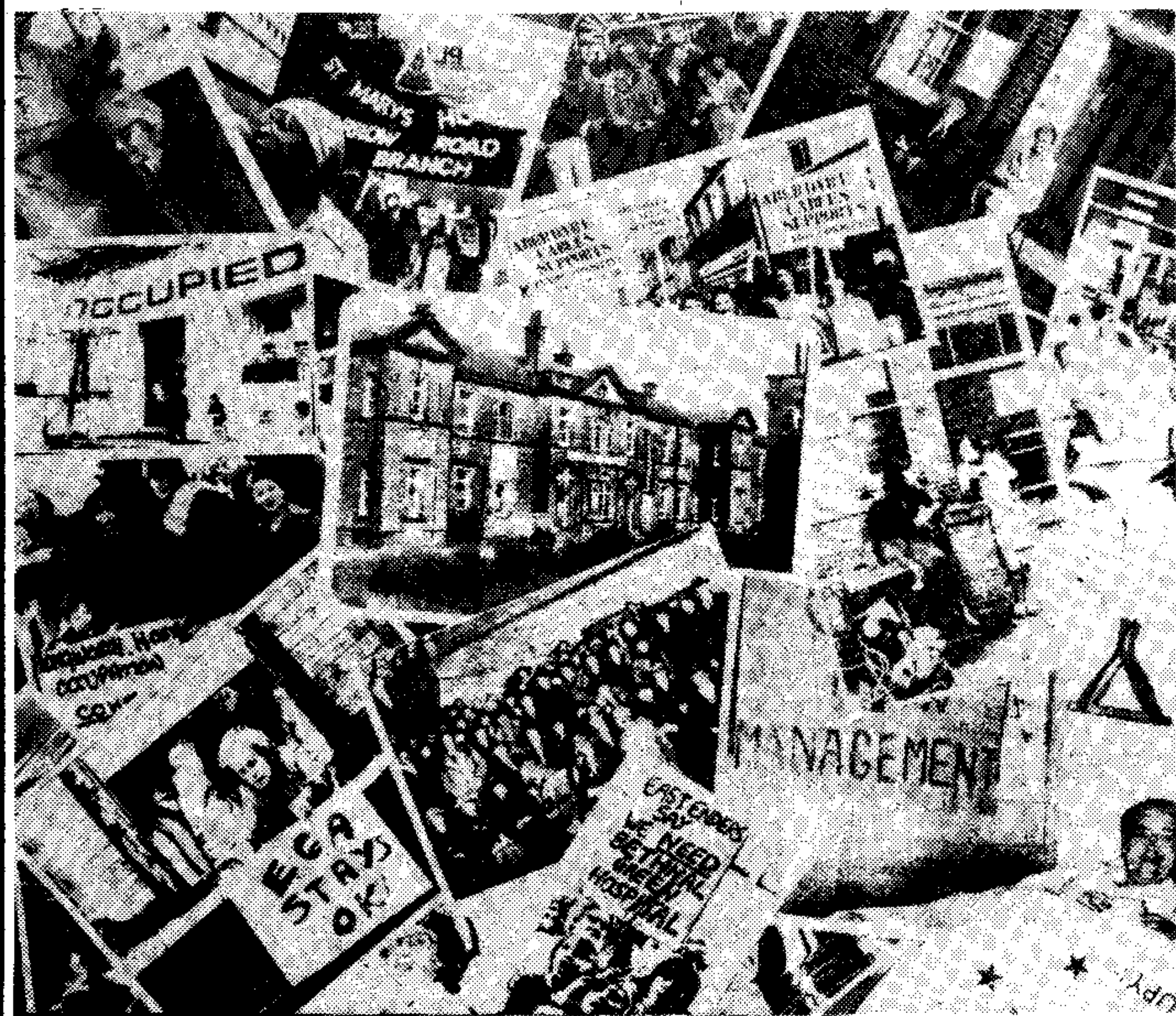
IN an important test case in the High Court which began last Monday, brought by eight tax inspectors, the Inland Revenue faces court orders to stop the unilateral imposition of "sweeping and far-reaching" working practices without consequent guarantees of job security.

The eight, members of the Inland Revenue Staff Federation, are among 438 staff sent home without pay from 14 West Midlands tax offices for refusing to cooperate in a pilot programme prior to the introduction of a £200 million nationwide computer tax assessment throughout Britain by 1988.

The tax inspectors contend that the Inland Revenue has broken their terms of service agreement by trying to compel them to accept an essentially different job — substantially that of computer operators — from the job they have been employed to do.

Initially staff had co-operated conditionally with the installation of the computer equipment, but when safeguards of no consequent redundancies or deterioration in working conditions were sought from the Inland Revenue and not given, then staff refused to continue using the new equipment.

Health Fightback 84



'Health Fightback 84' conference: at Community Buildings, Bradford University, Great Horden Rd, Bradford. Saturday February 25, 11am to 5pm.

Workshops on: • Occupations: how and why you should occupy,

- Law: How to get the law on your side,
- Health authorities and CHCs: how you can use them,
- Nurses: organising nurses in a campaign,
- Publicity/media: how to get your views across,
- Privatisation: how to fight it,
- Campaigns: how to set up an anti-cuts campaign,
- Creeping cuts, ward closures, unfilled vacancies: how to fight them. Also: Thornton View occupation video.

A crèche will be available.

Open to all health workers and to delegates from health campaigns, CLPs, and trade union bodies. For credentials send £2.50 to Health Fightback 84, 12 Shiplake House, Calvert Avenue, London E2.

HOSPITAL occupations are not new. The first was in 1922 at the Radcliffe Hospital in Nottingham.

In the late 1970s, however, the Labour government, under pressure from the IMF, began a round of cuts in the National Health Service, and this prompted the modern round of occupations. Hounslow hospital paved the way and was quickly followed by Elizabeth Garrett Anderson.

A whole series of occupations then occurred — St Benedicts, Longworth, Bethnal Green, Etwell, Princess Mary and others.

There was then a lull, although the cuts continued to bite. Yet in 1983 the tactic of occupation was used again to defend threatened hospitals.

In August workers at Thornton View in Bradford occupied their hospital following a Regional Health Authority vote to close it. They provided a real boost for workers nationwide who were determined to fight the Tory rundown of the National Health Service.

Following the Bradford lead, workers at Hayes hospital and Northwood and Pinner hospital, both in Hillingdon, occupied the week before their scheduled closure date. Both have since been reprieved and are still open.

During an occupation the workers take control of their hospital, particularly monitoring and controlling admission and discharges.

Many workers do not know exactly what is entailed in an occupation. Does it mean that they will not get paid? Do they have to sleep at the hospital? What about their families? Will they be sacked? Will nurses be struck off? Should management be barred?

In fact, unlike in industry, during NHS occupations the workers continue to receive their pay. This is a major advantage.

As long as there are patients in the hospital the District Health Authority are required by law to ensure that treatment is provided and supplies are maintained. Workers cannot be locked out or lose pay.

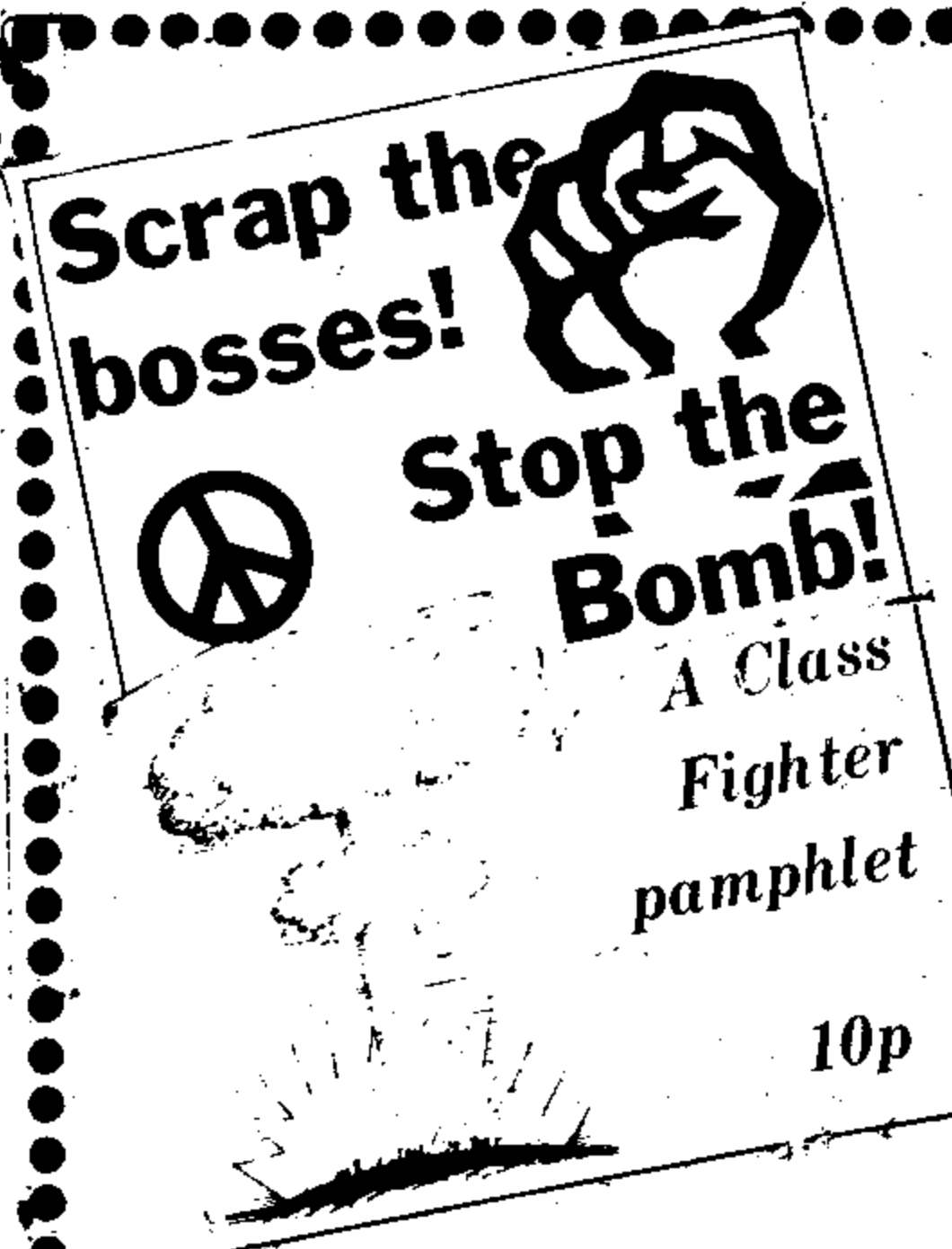
Questions such as banning management will vary according to the circumstances and are decided by the workers themselves.

The call for supporting strike action from health workers and other trade unionists is, however, essential.

A lot has been learned about occupations and defence of services in the past few years. With the increased attacks on the NHS under Thatcher's government, the need to organise a coherent fightback is essential. That is why this conference has been called.

The conference has been convened by hospital occupation committees with the intention of covering a whole range of methods and tactics for fighting health cuts. The lessons that health workers have learned must be shared and consolidated.

This conference will hopefully be a beginning for nationwide links which will ensure the future and continued development of the National Health Service.



10p plus postage from 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

The NGA's road to defeat

1980: Eddie Shah, whose free papers were originally typeset and printed by the Cumbrian Newspaper Co. in Carlisle, opens his own typesetting company, Fineward, in Stockport.

He hires eight NGA members, four of whom are from the Carlisle company and signs a closed shop agreement.

March 1982: Shah informs the NGA he wishes to start another newspaper and typesetting operation in Bury. He agrees to a closed shop, but informs the union that rates will be £40-£70 a week below those paid at Stockport.

March 1982: Dispute about new house agreement at Stockport.

April 1982: Shah writes to NGA to revoke Bury agreement.

September 1982: NGA discover that Shah has recruited non-union staff for Bury and trained them to operate typesetting equipment. Negotiations continue but are unproductive.

February 1983: Shah follows the Bury pattern at Warrington. A printing press is installed at Winnick Quay and non-union staff are recruited.

April 1983: Shah is still refusing NGA free access to his employees but agrees they can come in for one recruitment meeting — which is unsuccessful.

June 1983: Shah holds secret ballot of employees at Bury and Warrington on whether they vote to join the union. They vote 'no'.

July 1983: The NGA's patience is exhausted. They call their eight members at the Stockport Fireward plant out on strike. Six complied with the instruction and were sacked by Shah.

July 8, 1983: NUJ NEC instructs journalists on the Stockport Messenger to hold mandatory meeting to vote on industrial action in support of NGA. Chapel vote against.

July 1983: NGA attempts to get Northern Counties Newspapers, a Reed International subsidiary

and a shareholder in the Messenger Group, to put pressure on Shah to agree to closed shops at Warrington and Bury. This is unsuccessful. But industrial action on Daily Mirror leads to Reed selling its shares in the Messenger Group.

July 1983: NGA puts pressure on advertisers not to deal with Shah.

August 18: NUJ General Secretary Ken Ashton, who possessed contingency strike authority from the NEC, instructs Stockport chapel not to supply any material to non-union personnel from August 29.

September 6: High Court in Manchester grants Eddie Shah an injunction under the 1982 Employment Act ordering NUJ to lift its blacking instruction. Blacking continues.

Penalty

September 16: Eddie Shah returns to High Court which finds the NUJ guilty of contempt for refusing to accept the injunction. No penalty was imposed, as the NUJ NEC was meeting the following day.

September 17: NUJ NEC takes the historic decision to defy the law.

September 19: Stockport chapel vote to return to normal working and obey the injunction after Shah agrees to drop all action against NUJ in return. Show-down averted.

September-October: NGA decides to step up picketing at Stockport, Warrington.

October 6: NUJ members at Stockport vote not to cross NGA picket lines.

October 14: In response Shah returns to High Court where an injunction is granted against the NGA.

November 10: Picketing is building up to mass proportions at Warrington.

November 18: In response, Shah returns to High Court claiming NGA are violating the injunction. NGA fined £50,000

for contempt of court.

November 21: TUC Employment and Organisation Committee reaffirm support for NGA objective and welcome ACAS attempts to solve dispute.

November 22: NGA refuse to pay fine.

November 24: TUC General Council again gives only general "support". Murray says — no blank cheques for NGA and he cannot condone "violent" picketing.

November 25: High Court orders £150,000 fine and seizure of total assets of NGA.

November 26-27: National newspapers fail to appear as Fleet Street printers walk out in support of the NGA.

November 28: Six national newspapers fail to appear and state they have sacked NGA members. The rest publish and mop up sales.

November 29: Differences within Newspaper Proprietors Association — Fleet Street employers organisation — papered over by a compromise. They will all publish but sue NGA for damages for loss of production.

November 29-30: Biggest mass pickets since Grunwicks at Shah's Warrington plant. 4,000 attend but are out-manoeuvred by massive police presence. Nearly 200 arrests.

Injunction

November 29: TUC EPOC states it will give NGA all support possible within the law.

December 2: TUC General Council spends 20 minutes unanimously approving recommendation from EPOC giving qualified support to the NGA as long as action keeps within the law.

December 2: Shah returns to High Court to make third contempt charge against NGA. But agreement reached to suspend hostilities and allow talks. Picketing and legal action to be lifted.

December 9: Talks have failed.



JOHN HARRIS

The picket line at Warrington

Shah returns to the High Court which fine NGA another half a million pounds.

December 10: NGA National Council calls for one-day national print stoppage set for Wednesday December 14.

December 12: In face of avalanche of injunctions against the strike from national and provincial newspapers the TUC EPOC votes 9-7 to adopt "a sympathetic and supportive attitude to the entirely predictable official

decision" by the NGA to strike. Decision publicly condemned by Len Murray as against General Council policy. He states he will seek to reverse it.

December 13: NGA decides to suspend the strike.

December 14: TUC General Council votes 29-21 to endorse Murray's position.

December 6: NGA National Council votes not to take further action in the dispute until it has held consultation with those

unions which were prepared to support it.

Defeat

January 18: NGA national council votes to 'purge its contempt' and thus implicitly accepts defeat. Shah sacks seven NUJ members for refusing to cross NGA picket line.

LCDTU meets

THE CONFERENCE called by the Communist Party controlled Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions this Saturday is on typical LCDTU lines.

There is no indication of what the conference is designed to achieve except for a vague reference to the anti-union laws.

As usual the 'discussion' is to be around a 'declaration' which will not be seen before the day and will not be open for amendment.

My branch, TGWU Cowley Assembly Plant 5/293 sent a resolution for the conference agenda calling for a campaign for a recall TUC. The branch received a letter back saying

By Alan Thornett

that resolutions will not be taken and therefore it will not appear in the agenda.

The resolution reads: "This conference calls for an emergency TUC conference to discuss support for the NGA and the situation concerning the Tebbit and Prior legislation. At that conference we would campaign for:

- Full financial, moral and industrial support to the NGA, including support for strike action in their defence, and

- For the TUC to withdraw from talks with the government".

Leyland cuts more jobs

AFTER a four week strike in February 1982, Leyland Vehicles workers lost 4100 jobs. The reluctance of the strike leadership to spread the struggle to the BL cars division led them to defeat.

But those 4100 were not the end of it. Now Leyland has announced a further major job-cuts programme.

1057 will go in Glasgow, Leyland (Lancashire), and Watford, plus probably more at the Bathgate (Scotland) plant.

Since 1978 Leyland Vehicles' workforce has gone down from 28,000 to 15,000. Output has declined in parallel, from 31,000

vehicles in 1977 to about 11,000 in 1983.

The most dramatic decline has been in exports. Leyland used to export half its annual output. Last year it exported only 25%. Exports are barely a quarter of their previous level.

Nigeria used to be Leyland's biggest market, taking 1300 trucks in 1982. In 1983, hit by crisis, it took 100.

Everything points towards Leyland continuing its rundown.

Mick Coyne, strike leader at Leyland in 1982, commented. "We put in the extra effort as requested but we have been kicked in the teeth."

More left gains in BL

The Left have consolidated their advance in the Cowley TGWU Convenor's election by having their entire left slate elected to Deputy Convenors positions in the Assembly Plant.

Last month, Tony Richardson ran the traditional right wing leadership in the Body Plant very close in the convenor's election, and Ivor Braggins, the left candidate in the Assembly Plant elections, defeated Bob Fryer for the position.

Last week it saw the elections for deputy convenors in the Assembly Plant. They cover the night shift and stand in for the convenor when he is absent or at meetings, and form the TGWU delegation on the Works Committee.

These elections are traditionally held separately from the convenor's election in the Assembly Plant.

The election of a full left slate was a remarkable achievement. It was the first time that a

full slate from either left or right has been elected since secret ballots for the position were introduced in 1974.

It was also a very decisive victory, with over 200 votes between the lowest vote on the left slate and the highest on the Right slate.

The results were: Andy Brown 674; Tom White 657; Jack Fry 608 votes; Bernard Moss 536; Robert Cullen 528; and Perry Cullen 527.

The unsuccessful candidates were: Peter Boyles 318; Albert Paintin, 293; Frank Corti 267; Tony Whalley 246; Roy Brough 197 and Bob Mortimer 169.

Perry Cullen and Andy Brown were two of the four stewards victimised by British Leyland who withdrew recognition of their positions in 1976. They were eventually successfully defended.

Tom White was on the right wing slate as well as the left wing slate.

Ford meeting Feb 4

SHOP stewards representing all manual and staff workers at Ford's Dagenham complex voted last weekend (Sunday January 20) to give full support for a strike called at all 24 UK plants from February 13.

This decision is likely to be put to a mass meeting of all Dagenham workers next Sunday to back the unions' action to fight for the jobs of 2,000 foundry workers threatened with the sack by 1985, coupled with the need of saving jobs at other plants.

Ford's labour force has already been cut back by 23.8% from 76,000 to 57,900 between 1979 and the end of 1983, with unions fearing even more job losses over the next two years as Ford reveal investment plans that pose a threat to car manufacturing generally in Britain.

To help coordinate the indus-

trial action if the strike plans do go ahead, an initial meeting of all Ford joint workshop committees has been called in London for Saturday February 4.

Ferries

SEAMEN on ferry services from Dover, Felixstowe and Liverpool struck on Monday 23rd against the closure of the Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital in Greenwich, South London.

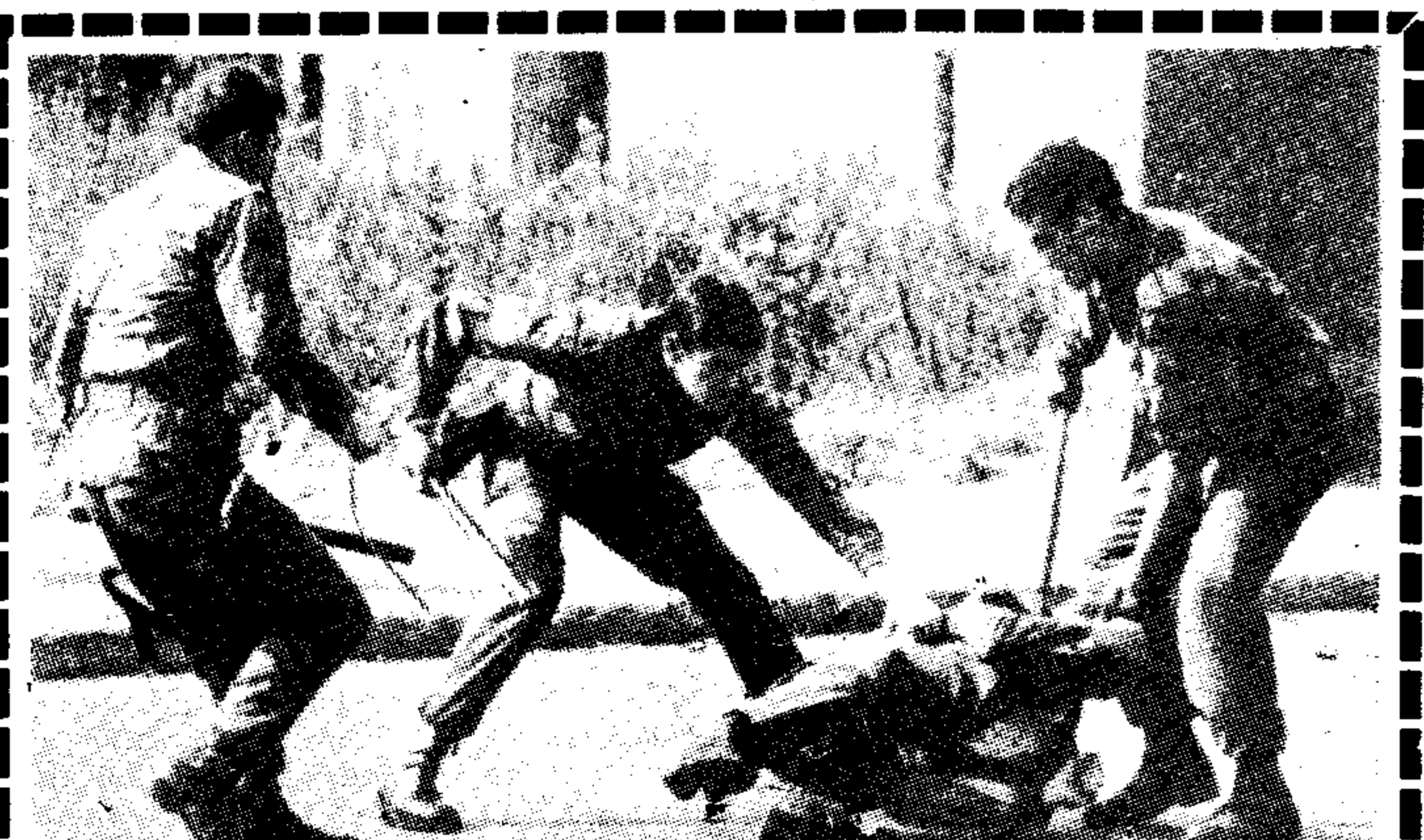
The Dover seamen are reported to be planning a continuing series of strikes against the closure.

Undoubtedly this is the best action so far in Labour's campaign to save the health service. But it was unofficial, and has been publicly condemned by the union leadership, who have agreed to the local health authority's plans.

Diary of a People's Marcher and "How politics were kept out of the People's March"



by Satvinder Singh and Tony Purtil Introduction by Jeremy Corbyn, MP



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50p for a single copy, 40p per copy for 5 or more, and 30p per copy for 20 or more, from SUPA, 83 Peckham High Street, London SE15. Please add an amount for postage.

Anti-union laws NGA leaders climb down

ON WEDNESDAY 18th, the leadership of the NGA print union voted in effect to accept defeat in its fight with Messenger Newspapers and its union-busting boss Eddie Shah.

The national council voted to 'purge its contempt of court'. This means that the union will pay £675,000 in fines (and more in costs), apologise to the court, and undertake to withdraw any unlawful action.

The NGA must not only drop any plans to restore the mass pickets at Shah's scab printworks in Warrington, but even withdraw the NGA's appeal to local advertisers not to use the Messenger freesheets.

Formally, the dispute with Shah is still on. Formally, the NGA and unions supporting it hope to reverse the TUC's policy at the September congress. But they have shied away from any action to pursue the dispute here and now, such as campaigning for a recall TUC.

The shameful decision came just one day after Shah sacked seven members of the National Union of Journalists at his office in Stockport for refusing to cross the NGA picket lines. These NUJ members who stuck by basic trade union principles have now been left high and dry by the NGA.

According to the Financial Times, "Some left-wingers argued strongly that mass picketing should be restored and that the union could not allow a breach of the closed shop at a time when new technology was threatening the whole union."

"The majority view was that the union needs to maintain its strength for those new technology fights and the Messenger would have to be 'mothballed'."

The NGA leaders would like to forget Warrington. But the print employers won't forget it. Shah's victory will encourage other bosses to try to switch to non-union operation. The NGA's only defence against such moves is boycotts and secondary pick-

By Martin Thomas

eting — action unlawful under the Tory anti-union legislation.

Once the NGA has submitted to that legislation, it stands wide open to decimation.

Decisions by the NGA to take a harder line on computer type-setting are thus largely empty words.

The NGA's other tack now seems to be trying to poach members from the NUJ. It is negotiating deals to have sub-editing (NUJ work) including in NGA members' jobs. The other side of this is that typesetting (NGA work) is included in NUJ members' jobs.

This seems to mean accepting a squeeze on the total of NUJ and NGA jobs and trying to make sure that the NGA gets as much as possible of what's left.

But new technology poses a threat to all the unions in the print industry. They can hope to fight back effectively only with solidarity.

To accept a law which bans solidarity and then to try to make up for it by poaching from other unions, is the worst way to go about it.

NGA scabs on SOGAT

CONTINUED production of the Radio Times by Robert Maxwell, despite the SOGAT dispute at Park Royal, is being made possible by NGA scabbing.

The major part of the production division at Pergamon Press in Oxford has been given over to work for the BBC since November 24 — work channelled to Pergamon by BPCC to get round the dispute at Park Royal.

According to one scandalised NGA member in London who talked to Socialist Organiser about it, NGA members at Oxford are coining scab money with enormous quantities of overtime.

Last December the NGA took a bitter lesson in the meaning of

Inside, page 15: The NGA's road to defeat



Expel this scoundrel!

THIS is not Norman Tebbit. The scoundrel in the photo above is Robert Maxwell, the former MP and boss of the print company BPCC.

Maxwell took the printworkers' union SOGAT 82 to court. Under the Tory anti-union laws he threatened to have the union's funds confiscated. For the moment he has drawn back from going ahead with this.

Mr Maxwell is a former Lab-

our MP. He is still a member of the Labour Party. He was, until recently, on the General Committee of Oxford East constituency Labour Party.

Mr Maxwell is also a trade unionist — a member of ASTMS!

This is not ridiculous. It is outrageous.

Would we let Norman Tebbit join the Labour Party? Should a millionaire employer who uses the anti-union laws and the bosses' courts to threaten the very existence of one trade union be allowed to continue in membership of another?

Mr Maxwell should immediately be expelled from both ASTMS and the Labour Party.

Recently Maxwell's ward, Headington, moved the following resolution at the GC, which voted unanimously for it:

"The Oxford East Constituency Labour Party finds the recent actions of Robert Maxwell, namely:

- a statement made concerning the party in the period leading up to the May 1983 local elections, and
- his attitude to the trade unions inside his organisation, incompatible with those of a Labour Party member.

"Further we instruct the Oxford party agent to write to Robert Maxwell informing him of the Party's concern on this matter, asking him to reconsider his position within the Party".

Drive this scoundrel out of the Labour Party.

NUJ: Unclear decision

LAST Saturday's Special Delegate Conference (SDC) of the National Union of Journalists closed without a decision to restore official backing to the chapel at Dimpleby Newspapers in Richmond.

The ten members there have been on strike for three months, boycotting the anti-union Nottingham printers T. Bailey Forman.

Last month, the NUJ's Emergency Committee in a 4-2 vote agreed to call off the official strike and appeal to the House of Lords over the interpretation of company law.

Official NUJ statements from the conference make it clear that delegates rejected calls made from some branches to act only within the law and ballot all members before any action is taken outside the law.

NUJ policy on the issue is not to comply with any legislation that erodes basic trade union rights.

But if the policy remains intact, the decision on whether to implement it has been left in the hands of an Executive with a right wing majority. Rather than the conference issuing a clear call for the Executive to reissue the strike instruction immediately after the Lords decision, those on the Executive who are determined not to confront the courts have the opening they need.

This opening was created by the Executive's Emergency Committee decision in December,

was adopted by the Executive and has not been closed off by Saturday's conference.

To counter this danger NUJ members must continue workplace collections and redouble demands that the Executive give official support and declare a plan of action and campaign for it immediately after the Lords decision.

It is necessary to organise in chapels and branches for campaigning meetings that report the Special Conference and prepare mandatory meetings, strikes, pickets and occupation of the union offices immediately the courts impose fines, sequestration or other interference.

Local action committees should be set up by members of the NUJ and other unions who have been attacked or threatened by the state or who know that they may be next in line for such treatment if the employers succeed in the print.

A joint campaign for action with other unions must also include the early recall of the TUC to reverse the scandalous decision, taken last December, not to back the NGA.

Such calls should be jointly made in public and provide a rallying call to all trade unionists seeking a way forward to defend their own organisations.

*Rush donations to: Dimpleby NUJ Dispute Fund, c/o Roger Hailey, 202 Vicarage Farm Road, Heston, Middlesex, TW5 0DP.

SOGAT off the boil

THE confrontation between the print union SOGAT and Tory anti-union law went off the boil last Wednesday, 18th, when the BBC and Robert Maxwell's print firm BPCC announced that they would call off their contempt of court proceedings against the union.

But it could heat up again this week when the BBC tries to get the Radio Times distributed in London.

SOGAT has been enforcing a trade union boycott on this distribution. The BBC has got a

court order instructing the union to lift the boycott, and the SOGAT executive has agreed to comply. But London SOGAT members are still stopping distribution.

The contempt of court proceedings last week were to be about that, and about the refusal of SOGAT to allow BPCC plants outside London to scab by printing extra copies of the Radio Times to cover the 600,000 otherwise done at the the dispute-bound Park Royal works in West London. Another court injunction has told SOGAT: scab — or else!

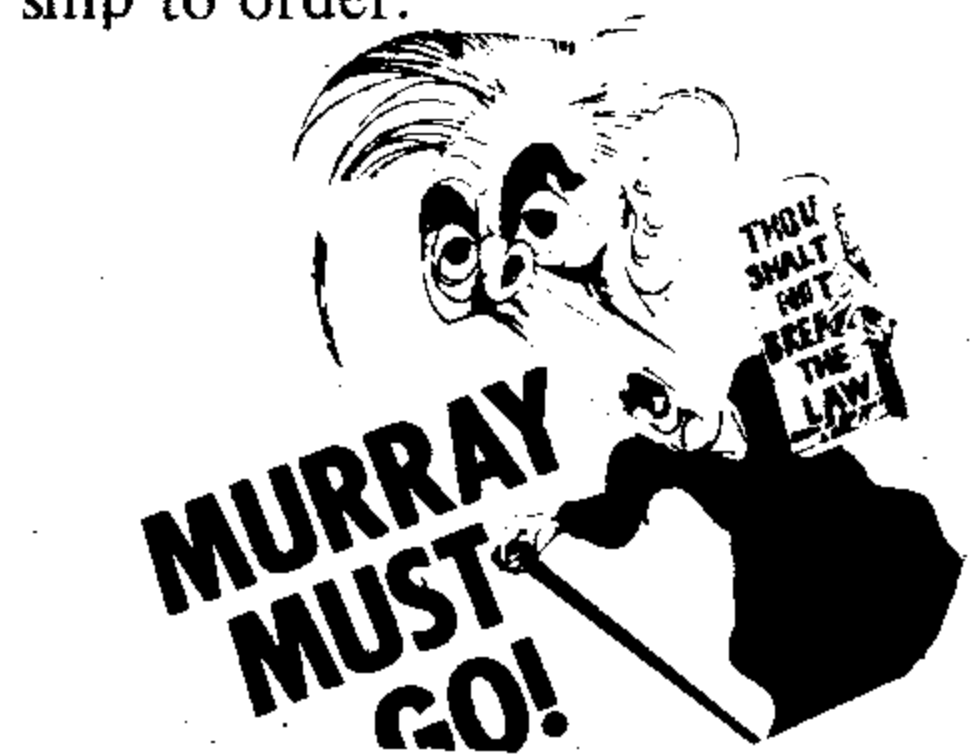
Proceedings were dropped because the BBC had found

another printer, Hunter Print of Peterlee and Corby.

SOGAT has failed to instruct its members at Hunter Print to refuse this job. But the BBC still faces the problem of getting the copies from Hunter Print distributed.

The original dispute is over pay, conditions and jobs at Park Royal — where the electricity substation is still occupied. Now Maxwell says he will not reopen Park Royal.

The issue, as in other battles over the anti-union laws, is whether trade union solidarity will continue or be banished by the Tories.



'Murray Must Go' — from 'Mole Badges' c/o 28 Middle Lane. 25p each.

Kinnock's message for a million

NEIL Kinnock had a message for one million unemployed people this week.

He told them what the new, glamorous, businesslike, realistic Labour Party would mean for them.

Staying on the dole queue. Labour's promise at the 1983 general election to bring down unemployment to one million

within five years was miserable enough at the time. On TV on Sunday Kinnock declared that even that was now too ambitious.

Socialism (Kinnock-style) now means two million unemployed.

Why must Labour's vision of socialism constantly become meaner and drabber?

The crisis, says TV statesman Kinnock. The damage done by the Tories' capitalist policies.

The worse capitalism gets, the more it drags Kinnock's version of socialism down with it.

Perhaps that is because Kinnock's version of socialism is so very little different from capitalism. Neil Kinnock went off of his way on Sunday to remind viewers that he had long ago clashed with the Labour left by telling us that to restore all Tory cuts in education was a wild, excessive, utopian programme.

Neil Kinnock has not yet explained why a real socialist programme — bringing major industry and finance into common ownership under workers' control, and reducing the work week without loss of pay — should have any trouble in ending unemployment and expanding education.

Real socialism can only start once such measures — barely an advance on civilised capitalism — are way behind us.

Dreams? Vapid idealism? That's what Neil Kinnock would have us believe — and what the Tories tell us too.

It's not realism. It's slavish submission to the status quo.

Mercury delayed

By Rob Dawber

BRITISH Rail have stepped back from confrontation again over the laying of fibre-optic cables for the Mercury telecommunications firm, the first private competitor to British Telecom.

They originally planned to run a cable-laying train from Chesterfield to Sheffield on Monday January 16. Faced with opposition from the rail union NUR, they

postponed it for four weeks.

Then on Wednesday 18th they rescheduled the train for Sunday 22nd — only later to call it off and claim that this run had never been authorised and must have been a mistake by lower management.

The issue is now in national negotiations between the NUR and the British Rail Board. Local NUR members have shown their determination to boycott this train. It is up to our union leaders to pursue the NUR policy of protection of jobs and opposition to privatisation.

FUND

THIS week's donations, although the total is small, show the support for Socialist Organiser that exists among our readers.

"Please accept a small contribution of £1.35 towards the SO Fund", writes Bev Wood. "Keep up the good work, it's a good paper". Gerard Kirk, a Glasgow Socialist Action supporter, sends us £1. We've also had £1 from John Brown, and a £5 donation from Cllr Derek Sawyer.

"Here's another contribution to the fund from York supporters", writes Carolyn Lord, sending us a cheque for £10. Leicester supporters have sent us £1, to bring their total up to 98% of target. From supporters in Oxford comes £5, to add to £45 donated so far this month. And, not to be outdone, winging its way from the Essex marshes, comes a cheque for £10 from Brent supporters.

With this week's total of £34.35, our Xmas fund stands at £1997.65, and our thanks go to all supporters who sent donations.

Meanwhile, our fund stands open until January 31 for all groups wishing to improve on their targets. Send donations to: 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Group	Percent
Brent	176
Tower Hamlets	130
Leicester	98
Cardiff	54
Leeds	44
Chelmsford	33
Sheffield	32
Harrogate	30
Nottingham	30
Southwark	29
Islington	26
York	15
Hull	13
S.E. London	8
Halifax	6
Putney	3
Coventry	1