

Socialist Organiser

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Labour, TUC: isolate the splitters

SINK THIS SCAB UNION!



Notts scabs at NUM conference refuse to applaud women's groups. Photo: J Harris, IFL

Paul Whetton, Bevercotes NUM

ON SATURDAY July 6 a meeting of Notts area officials and committee men decided to break away from the NUM, and this was later endorsed by the area council.

This is a tragedy for the trade union movement.

But having said that, many of the ex-strikers were delighted that we now know exactly where we stand. The scab leaders have now done what we've said they've been planning to do for a long while.

This is not something which has been forced on them as a result of NUM conference. It has been a long-term plan, very carefully thought out in cahoots with MacGregor and the Tories.

Now it's out in the open and we will begin the campaign.

Many people in the Notts coalfield, whether they worked or they were on strike, will not deny their loyalty to the National Union of Mineworkers. That will be reflected, we believe, in the large numbers that will refuse to have anything to do with Lynk's breakaway.

Now there is no way that

they can say that they were kicked out or expelled. Notts took part in annual conference. It took part in the review of the rule book. It voted on it.

They lost, but they are bound by democratic decisions. They say that because they lost the vote they will opt out. That has exposed their arguments about democracy and all the rhetoric that they've been pouring out for the past months.

Money

The story goes that Lynk was frightened that the national union would put people into area HQ at Berry Hill and get hold of the money box. In order to head that off they had to break away. But they have dropped a clanger in rushing to that decision.

It is quite clear from the NUM conference that this great alliance with forces in other areas which Lynk talks about does not exist. The Notts delegation could not even get a seconder for its amendment condemning the National Executive's handling

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Background to the scab breakaway

Roy Lynk's move to get a breakaway union in Notts has been long prepared. John Bloxam outlines the history.

ONE OF the main differences between the 1984-5 strike in Notts, and the 1926 strike, is that at no time in 1984-5 were there more than 50% of the Area's 28,000 miners on strike.

In addition, this time a key section of the officials openly encouraged scabbing from the start. By June 1984 they had captured the official machinery of the Area.

All the indications are that these people had the clear intention, from an early stage, of organising a breakaway company union in the area.

These are the key events and the crucial stages in their campaign to turn the solid support for scabbing in the area into a base to break out of the NUM.

MARCH-APRIL 1984: The Notts Area voted 20188 to 7285 against taking strike action. But two things were decisive in determining that a majority went from voting against a strike — South Wales voted the same way — to scabbing, was the vacillation of Richardson and Chadburn, the two main area officials, during the first month of the strike, and the success of the police in walling off the coalfield from the majority of the pickets.

The number of strikers reached its high point (between 12 and 14 thousand) in the month after the Area Council made the strike official on April 20.

But the scab leaders were organising openly to change this decision and to undercut the strike's support.

MAY. On May 1st, with the help of the police and the Coal Board, the scab leaders organised an anti-strike demonstration of 7000 outside the Area HQ at Berry Hill, Mansfield.

By the end of the month they had won a High Court injunction overturning the official strike call, and they openly declared the formation of the 'Notts Working Miners Committee'.

This Committee was closely linked to the NCB. MacGregor had even put them in touch with union-busting lawyers.

JUNE. With police harassing some strikers to stop them vot-

ing, the anti-strike slate put forward by the 'Working Miners Committee' swept the board in the branch elections. Now the courts ruled the strike unofficial, and the numbers out steadily declined.

By August, 80% of Notts miners were scabbing.

JULY-AUGUST. The NUM leaders introduced, and the delegate conference carried, the long-prepared and scheduled new disciplinary rule 51. The scab leadership in Notts, with plenty of help from the media, screamed that it was aimed against them.

The NUM leaders said it wasn't, and in fact they never used this Rule against the scab organisers.

Shortly after the NCB started sacking strikers, the 'National Working Miners Committee' was set up on August 17 with the help of David Hart, a businessman and an associate of Margaret Thatcher.

DECEMBER. The Area Executive recommended a series of rule changes in Notts, which was overwhelmingly endorsed by the Area Council on December 20. They rejected calls for an Area ballot on the changes.

Drawn up with the help of lawyers, these changes deleted all reference to the Area rules being subordinate to the national rules. It was a decisive move in breaking with the national union.

JANUARY 1985. In response to the Notts rule changes, the NEC began proceedings to expel the Notts area at its meeting on January 10. At the left caucus meeting before the NEC, Arthur Scargill is reported to have argued for suspension rather than expulsion. South Wales argued strongly for expulsion, and Scargill was in the minority. The NEC decision was followed up by a campaign in the Area by the strikers to recruit rank and file scabs back into the NUM.

Two Notts branches, Linby and Moor Green, voted to stay in the NUM. Pye Hill branch voted to drop its delegate and voted, against the insistence of its branch delegate, leading



Notts strikers. Photo: John Harris

scab organiser Colin Clarke, to invite Arthur Scargill to address the branch. Clarke and other scabs then walked out of the meeting.

Later in the month, strikers distributed thousands of national NUM leaflets entitled, 'No return to Spencerism; stay with the NUM'.

Outside Notts the scab leaders also suffered setbacks. Forms for Lynk's company union were rejected even by scabs in other areas, despite help from the police.

On January 23 the TUC publicly declared that it would not recognise a breakaway, the Labour Party NEC likewise (despite assurances to the scabs from Mansfield MP Don Concannon).

But the campaign in Notts, aimed at the rank and file scabs, petered out when the NUM delegate conference, called to consider the NEC's recommendation, was postponed.

Also in January, proposals (again long-prepared) to change the structure of the NEC were brought forward — and then hastily dropped, in a move to stop South Derbyshire and Leicestershire following Notts.

The *Observer* disclosed the existence of a secret 'Spencer fund' run by the Notts officials to which the NCB had been contributing a million pounds a year.

David Hart wrote an article in the *Times* spelling out the scabs' perspective: "Whatever happens to the strike the NUM will continue to break up... [the working miners] want to destroy Scargill. Their dream is to so organise themselves and the other areas that the breakaway union will eventually reunite,

embracing the entire NUM membership" (emphasis added).

FEBRUARY. The scab leaders in Notts voted to suspend Henry Richardson, threatening to sack him for the 'crime' of supporting the strike. They started a campaign against the overtime ban in Notts, despite the fact that the ban was a democratically binding decision taken by a delegate conference 16 months earlier.

They continued to boycott all the delegate conferences being held during the strike.

The strikers in the area, with national NUM support, organised a 'Keep Notts National' campaign.

The press reported that scab leaders were pressing the NCB to remain intransigent and to drag the strike out, to give them more time to organise.

MARCH. The scab leaders sacked Henry Richardson and kicked out all those at Area HQ who had supported the strike. It refused to take part in the national ballot on the 50p levy for sacked miners, and it unilaterally lifted the overtime ban.

They established links with the tiny breakaway union formed in the North-East (the Colliery Trades and Allied Workers Association) and established the 'Democratic Alliance' within the NUM with South Derbyshire, Leicestershire, and the clerical section COSA.

They still publicly claimed that they had no intention of breaking away, and Lynk said he would stand against Mick McGahey for NUM vice-president.

Arthur Scargill went to Durham to persuade miners there to halt expulsions and "stop driving scabs into the arms" of the breakaway CTAWA.

MAY. The scab leaders took the move towards a breakaway a significant step further when they put the following question to an area ballot: "Do you support your Notts Executive Committee in opposing the new national rule changes even if this means being expelled from the NUM or leaving the National Union of Mineworkers?" The ballot was taken before any chance to discuss the details of the rule-changes or even consider amendments.

Ex-strikers and others campaign for a 'no' vote, with a new paper, 'The Notts Collier', published by the Notts Miners Forum. Pit management frequently harassed miners distributing the Collier.

The scab leaders won a major victory in the ballot — 15,000 to 6,500. It was a clear indication of a secure base for a breakaway.

But tactically they kept stringing the process out, hoping all the time to provoke their expulsion.

Right-winger Greatorex won the ballot for a new area official; ex-striker Geoff Peace came a respectable third.

At the end of the month the High Court overturned the attempt to fine and thereby exclude the ex-strikers. It ordered that the money be paid back.

JUNE. The NEC summoned Lynk and Prendergast to hear charges about openly organising against the NUM; the NEC recommended that the July conference should sack Lynk as a full-time official and reprimand Prendergast.

Lynk, Prendergast and Chadburn took out new contracts of employment with the Notts area.

In the branch elections, the ex-strikers won some significant victories — gaining a majority on the Ollerton committee, and kicking out super-scab Liptrot at Sherwood — but the area was still overwhelmingly controlled by the old scab leadership.

JULY. The Notts delegation arrived at the NUM conference every day in a bus with police outriders. They announced they would vote against everything. Some even voted against a resolution condemning apartheid.

On the Monday they tried to condemn the national leaders for their handling of the strike, and couldn't even get a seconder. On Tuesday they voted against supporting sacked miners. On Wednesday, after a seven-hour closed session, both Lynk and Prendergast were sacked as full-time officials. They remained on the NEC.

On Thursday the Notts scab leaders voted against a resolution bringing in the new rule-book. When they lost, they walked out.

On Friday night the Area EC voted to recommend a breakaway. An area delegate conference on Saturday approved it by 228 votes to 20.

On Monday July 8 they took the name 'Nottinghamshire Union of Mineworkers', and that same night got a written undertaking from area director Wheeler that they would be recognised.

The NCB knows its own.

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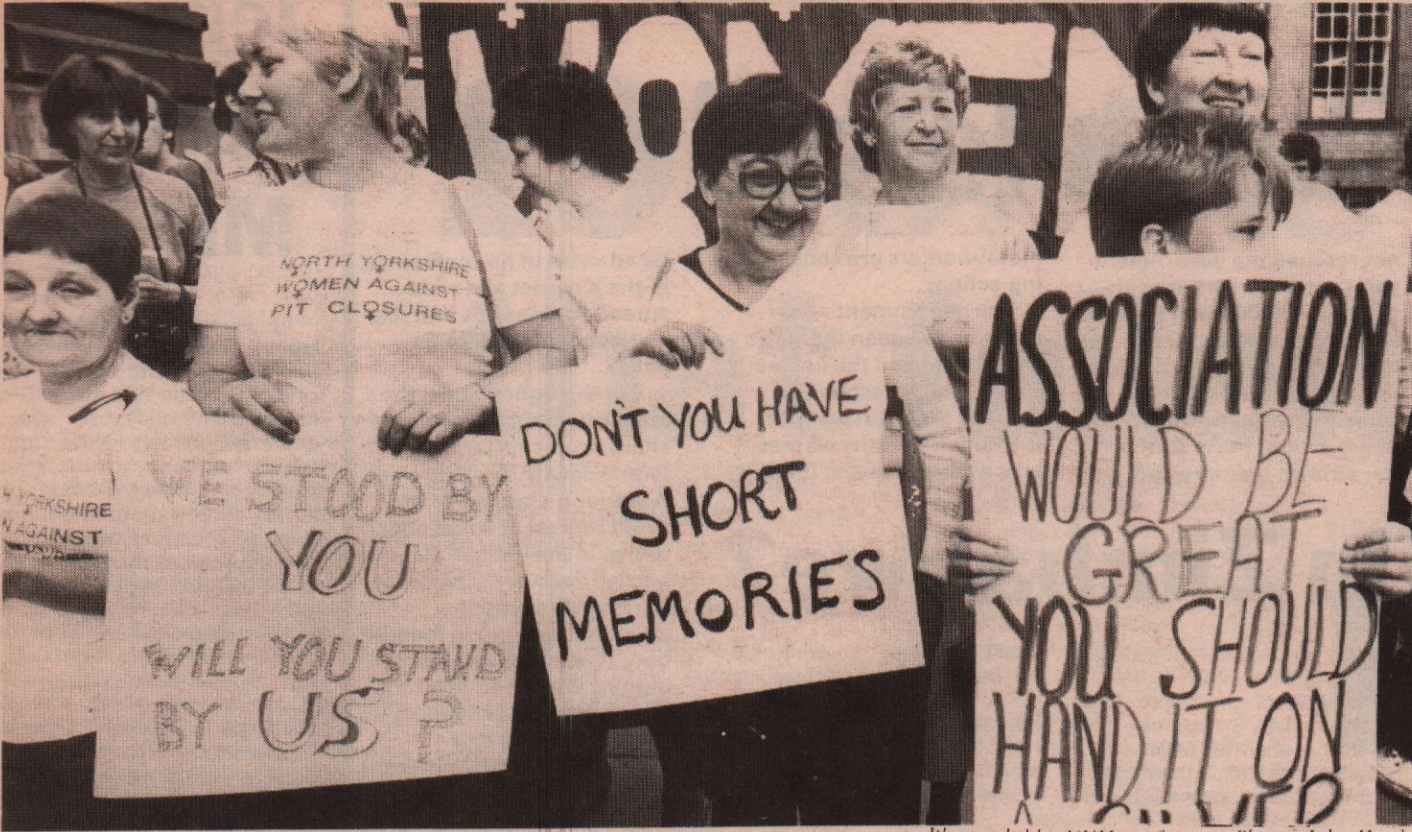
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Miners fight on



Women lobby NUM conference. Photo: John Harris.

NCB threatens fifty pits

50 PITS to be axed — half of them mines with admitted reserves — and 50,000 jobs to be slashed within four years. That's what MacGregor and the NCB now plan to inflict on Britain's heroic miners and their families!

On Monday July 8 the Financial Times gave the game away when it spelled out the details of the NCB's new 'Plan for Coal'.

The main part of the programme will be pushed through within two years, taking advantage of the union's weakness. MacGregor's Tory masters also want to get it all over and done within before they have to face the voters in the next general election.

The NCB says that the FT report is 'speculation', but it doesn't deny it.

The announcement of the scab breakaway in Notts could not have come at a better time for the Tories and the NCB.

Smashing up the NUM has for a long time been a central part of the Tory drive to decimate the pits and ulti-

By John Bloxam

mately prepare the way for privatisation. Certainly the dominant MacGregor faction in the NCB, strongly backed by Thatcher, has directly helped the developing breakaway from the early days of the strike.

It took the NCB just 48 hours to give the scabs a written assurance of recognition! 'Recognition'? Lynk's union is their own creation!

Bonus

Nor have they been slow to offer Lynk area-negotiated wages with a much higher bonus element related to productivity. Indeed, this will be implemented rapidly — together with an extra 'loyalty bonus' for the Notts scabs, to further cement the divisions and boost Lynk's company union.

The Financial Times also reported that the NCB 'will be likely to soft-pedal closures in Nottinghamshire... Nottinghamshire will be relatively unscathed, at least for the immediate future'.

What the NCB will now try to do was predicted and spelled out time and again by the leaders of the NUM, as they urged the miners to fight before and during the 1984-5 strike. Now every miner will know that Scargill speaks the truth.

The NUM is faced with plans for the rapid and savage slashing of nearly one third of the existing jobs and pits within 24 months, and with an attempt to destroy its militant strongholds in the so-called 'peripheral coalfields'.

The NCB dreams of profitable coal-mining in the central coalfield, split up and privatised, and dominated by a tame company union.

Already there is talk of Lynk's yellow union trying to organise in the profitable North Yorkshire coalfield, where the right wing has historically been strong.

But the process is not inevitable.

There is still a lot more fight in the NUM than MacGregor reckons on. The rest of the labour movement may now be got to see the scab union of super-scab Lynk for what it is — a threat to genuine trade unionism everywhere in Britain, and persuaded to act vigorously to isolate and undermine it.

How much the scab leaders can continue to assist the NCB and Tories depends on whether they can consolidate in Notts and begin to spread to other areas.

A central part of resistance to the NCB's plans must be to stop the breakaway in its tracks.

On Monday night July 8, while the scab leaders were meeting Albert Wheeler and getting assurances of recognition, the Executive of Nottingham North Constituency Labour Party decided to make a public statement against the scab union and for the NUM, and to refuse any scab delegates admis-

sion to their GC.

Lynk talks about retaining the Labour Party affiliation, and many of the scab organisers are active in the North Notts CLPs. So the move must be repeated in all the other CLPs in the area, and backed up by resolutions from CLPs elsewhere.

There is scandalous talk already of balancing between the NUM and the scab union because there are a number of Labour 'key marginals' in the area. The pressure must be kept up to hold the Labour Party leaders to their pledge not to recognise a scab union and to insist on clear Labour support for the NUM.

Wavering

Any wavering, weaseling or trimming will boost Lynk and help him and the other scab-herders to build MacGregor's 'union' in Notts. Labour must isolate and quarantine the scabs, and help strangle their company union.

In January the TUC declared that it would not recognise a breakaway. Soon after the announcement of the new scab union on Saturday 6th, Basnett repeated that TUC policy is not to recognise such 'unions'. It is in the interests of the bureaucrats to stop a break-up of the NUM. But they need to be pushed to make their support for the NUM unconditional and vigorous.

In 1927 the TUC extracted a price for refusing to recognise the scab 'Spencer union' in Notts. They got the miners' national leaders to support their version of 'new realism' — the Mond-Turner talks — in return for non-recognition.

The TUC is likely to try a similar game now. Any attempt to do this must be immediately denounced and resisted by the NUM and by the whole movement.

Sink this scab union

Continued from page 1

of the strike.

The biggest danger that I personally fear now is not to do with the numbers that go with Lynk or who stay with us — it is the numbers who withdraw from the national union and go nowhere. As happened during Spencer's time [after 1926, when there was previously a breakaway union in Notts], we will have pits with non-union labour.

It took 11 years to defeat the Spencer union, and it was a very hard and bitter battle. But we have got that history to point back to.

In the first year of that breakaway, the coalowners gave the Spencer faction everything they wanted. But shortly after that the miners in the Spencer union began to realise that it wasn't a free ride. People like Spencer and Lynk will extract a price. And that price, in the present situation, means that there is going to be mass privatisation.

There will be huge bonus incentives, and I have no doubt that in the short term faceworkers and heading and development workers will benefit. The pit-top workers and the outby workers will be left behind. All those years of trying to consolidate the rate and bring the differentials down are now going to be thrown out of the window.

It's going to be a hard battle to convince people. There was a meeting in Sheffield with Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield, with representatives from every branch in the Nottinghamshire coalfield but one. People went into that apprehensive, and they came out greatly relieved, having seen that the campaign is really going to get off the ground now.

There will be rallies and open meetings. The national officials have assured us that if anybody wants them to come and talk to the men, they'll be down.

We also heard that there will be no recognition of Lynk by the Labour Party, by the TUC, or by the national organisation of miners' welfares.

When Kinnock says that a 'Scargill factor' lost Labour the Brecon by-election, that is a load of bullshit. Kinnock has been trying to please everybody.

There's a sort of parallel with Ray Chadburn's position in the Notts coalfield. Ray Chadburn [former area president] has been sitting on the fence and trying to appease both sides.

I understand this morning that they're trying to kick him out of Berry Hill [area HQ]. He has said that he's stopping until he has seen a legal adviser, which for once shows some fighting spirit.

But he's still trying to please both sides. If he goes with the scabs, the first thing they'll do is sack him. If he comes with us, the first thing we'll do is sack him. In fact he's finished up by pleasing neither side.

And the same can be said of Neil Kinnock. Neil Kinnock is sitting on the fence, and he is going to finish up pleasing nobody.

I'm sure there will be arguments about getting the TUC and Labour Party to stick to their previous commitments

and not recognise the Lynk union, but I think the TUC leadership and the Labour Party leadership will see that they cannot possibly recognise a breakaway union. If they do, they are opening the door to destroying their own organisations.

We're asking our lads, and we would appeal to all other rank and file trade unionists and Labour Party members, to push through resolutions declaring that only the National Union of Mineworkers will be recognised. Let's make it quite clear to the leadership of the Labour Party and to the TUC that scab unions, management unions, will not be tolerated in any way.

Obviously the Lynk union will go for negotiating rights, and the Coal Board will accommodate them. The Coal Board will in the first instance give them everything that they want and anything that they want.

There will be sweetening on the pill in order to make Notts miners go with Lynk. Pound notes will be flying about. But we have to combat that with the arguments about what the price at the end of the day is going to be.

After the meeting with the national officials, we had an open meeting in our welfare, and it was very well attended from several branches. One of the questions raised was what's going to happen to those individuals who took a high profile during the strike and since? Are they going to be picked off by the Coal Board?

Danger

I think there is a danger of that. We have to make sure it doesn't happen, not by taking a low profile, but by ensuring that we take the arguments to the rest of the men in the pits.

Most branches have meetings fixed for this coming week. It is vital that we get all our lads out — and I'm not just talking about the strikers, I'm talking about people who have got that loyalty to the national union.

As we see it, we are members of the National Union of Mineworkers Notts Area, and we remain such. We don't have to reapply or anything. If there is any physical action taken, it must be by Lynk; he must go to members and they must sign to withdraw from the NUM and sign to opt into the new organisation. We just tell our lads to stand fast. We haven't got to go round with bits of paper.

I would urge everybody to turn up at their branch meetings in the Notts coalfield — and I would make a much broader appeal to the rank and file throughout the length and breadth of this country. They cannot allow this scab bosses' union to survive. In order to strangle it at birth we need the assistance of the rank and file throughout the country.

We call for messages going to Labour Parties and right up to the National Executive, demanding that the Lynk organisation be isolated. If we don't stop it, scab unionism is going to spread to other organisations throughout the country.

Conference decisions summed up

- To congratulate the leaders on their handling of the dispute.
- To call a special delegate conference in October to consider further action for the sacked miners, if no substantial progress on reinstatement has been made by then.
- To call for a substantial pay rise and the progressive consolidation of the incentive bonus. If the NCB refuses this, to withdraw from the incentive scheme in November.
- To sack Lynk and Pendergast as national officials.
- To agree the new rule

book proposed by the NEC (a 75% vote), but to delete the proposal for 'associate membership' (deletion carried by one vote).

Before the conference the NEC agreed a resolution for the TUC and Labour Party conferences on sacked and jailed miners.

The original draft called for all jailed miners to be freed, but this was amended (reportedly by George Rees from South Wales and Eric Clarke from Scotland) to call simply for a review of all the cases by an incoming Labour government.

General strike in Israel

THE ISRAELI government's announcement last week that it was to introduce emergency decrees imposing wage cuts and the sacking of 10,000 public sector workers, produced a wave of strikes. A one-day general strike paralysed the economy, and

forced the government to reconsider. At a meeting with the Histadrut, the so-called trade union federation, the government decided to postpone implementing the emergency decrees. But the postponement has

not rescued the government yet: protest strikes are continuing. 400,000 civil servants are to stage a three-hour strike as we go to press; telephone and electrical company workers are to begin action; Ports Authority, aircraft industry and

metal workers are considering action. The government — a coalition between the right-wing Likud and the Labour Party, which despite its name is the main party of the Israeli wealthy classes — is in a serious mess. It has

faced votes of no confidence in the Knesset and widespread accusations that it is a prisoner of US foreign policy. But the fight against the austerity programme poses sharp problems for the Israeli Jewish working class. A working-class party that could represent a real alternative to the Labour Zionist parties does not exist. Even the Histadrut is not a genuine trade union federation; it is the country's biggest employer, after the state, and also a big force in banking. A fundamentally different kind of labour movement needs to be built — one that fights for workers' economic interests independently of the state and the employers, and for the rights of the Palestinian Arabs.

One party state in Zimbabwe?

LAST week Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF party won a convincing victory in the first elections since Zimbabwe's independence in 1980. Winning 63 out of 80 'common roll' seats in the House of Assembly, it massively defeated the other main black party — Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU. This follows a big win for the white-supremacist Conservative Alliance of ex-Prime-Minister

Ian Smith in the elections to the 20 seats reserved for whites. Mugabe has made it clear that he intends to do away with the constitution agreed at Lancaster House under a British chair in 1980. It is that constitution that guarantees the seats for whites. The white bloc, Mugabe said, "must go, and must go immediately. We cannot wait". If the West does not accept the

change, he added, "it can go hang". Abolition of the white bloc constitutionally requires the agreement of all 100 MPs — i.e. including the whites themselves — if it is done before 1987, and only 70 after that. Doing away with special seats for whites in itself is clearly a democratic move. However, it is going hand in hand with proposals to turn Zimbabwe into a

'one-party state', so democracy has little to do with the business. The ZANU-PF government has become notorious for its repression of opposition elements, especially in Matabeleland where ZAPU is based. Mugabe's aim is to concentrate power in his own hands; and this will not be good news for the working class.

Jeremy Corbyn MP

It is important that the labour movement continue the battle for the miners, because it seems that there is a deliberate policy in some quarters of the party and trade unions to rewrite history — forget about the strike, forget about the hardship, forget about the sacked and imprisoned miners. It would appear that a very large number of miners in Nottinghamshire and in other areas where there was not 100% support for the strike are still going to support the National Union of Mineworkers. No accommodation should be offered to the scab union that has now been formed by Lynk and Co.

GLC

On Monday night the GLC abolition bill finally completed all its stages, in an eight-hour sudden death. The future is obviously a little unclear for thousands of employees of the GLC and the metropolitan counties. It is important that there be the maximum resistance to the government and their plan to destroy so much of what has been achieved in the metropolitan counties and the GLC.

The fight now goes directly from parliament to the trade union members in the GLC and the met counties.

The issue of a revision of Labour Party policy on council house sales has been raised some time ago by Jeff Rooker, and now by the Labour Housing Group. Anyone who lives in or represents an area of high housing stress must recognise that any sale of council housing is completely contrary to the principles that the party should be holding to.

The proposals from the Labour Housing Group have a very serious flaw. They accept the principle of the sale of council houses, and even if that is done on the basis of all the proceeds from the sale going to building new houses, it is at best replacement.

They're proposing the sale of council houses in areas where there is a housing surplus but not in areas of high housing stress — forgetting that the motive for an individual to buy a house is exactly the same in an area of high housing stress as in one of housing surplus.

Houses

The policy is a ridiculous attempt to appease the motive of buying one's own house, to appease the Tory press, instead of facing up to the fact that the appalling housing shortage can only be met, not by the sale of council houses but by a massive house-building programme.

Indeed, there should be a house-purchasing programme by local authorities to meet the needs of their people.

In Islington our council waiting list is around 10,000 families. Nowhere near that number of properties are likely to be built. Sale of council houses will only exacerbate the situation. What the council needs is the resources to enable it to buy on the open market and to rehabilitate houses.



Trying times

THESE are trying times for Socialist Action.

Socialist Action supporters have just had their AGM, and the reports show the situation to be grim.

Two years ago — when the tide had seriously begun to turn against the Labour left — Socialist Action was launched with much fanfare and many boasts that it was going to 'organise the Labour Left'. Socialist Action claims to have around 500 supporters, but paid circulation of the paper was reported at

the AGM to be only 1800. Most supporters believe even this sad figure to be an exaggeration. The paper failed to come out for several weeks last summer at the height of the miners' strike.

The tendency has been chronically faction-ridden for 13 or 14 years, only now it is worse than ever. A large minority of SA supporters have become convinced in the last few years that Fidel Castro's Cuba — where workers do not have the right to organise independent

trade union or political parties, nor the right to speak, read or write as they choose, nor sexual self-determination — is a model socialist state.

This minority's views do not get much of an airing in Socialist Action. The same people think that Khomeini's Islamic Republic in Iran is a 'progressive' and 'anti-imperialist' regime.

Others — the grouping led by Socialist Action editor John Ross — go part but not all of the way with the out-and-out Castroites. Yet others are strongly attracted to London Labour Briefing and on a number of questions are close to SO, and there are other groupings and sub-groupings.

The outcome of the AGM, it seems, was that a block of the Castroites and the Ross group has a majority on the new Socialist Action editorial board.

This tendency has a pretty astonishing political career. In 1972 the majority were won — by the same John Ross — to the bizarre idea that Marxists "do not make calls to action". This idea guided the tendency — then publishing the 'Red Mole' — during the year that

the British labour movement experienced its greatest upsurge of strikes for nearly half a century.

A typical headline was 'Struggle decides, not the law'. In mid-1972 when dockers marched to stop expelled Uganda Asians being allowed into Britain, and there was a big growth of working-class support for the NF, they headlined: 'Uganda Asians: Big Chance for Left', explaining that there was now a great opportunity to put the socialist case against racism. (As the paper Workers' Fight parodied it, 'Black Death: Big Chance for Doctors'.)

But Ross and his friends were capable of learning! By 1973 they became advocates of 'calls to action' of the most frantic kind — advocating a general strike to bring down the government as the solution to everything. Even after Edward Heath lost the February 1974 election they brought out a special issue of their paper demanding a 'General strike to finish them off'.

The instability was inbuilt and chronic — fundamentally political — producing various wild zig-zags throughout the 1970s.

They were pro-Labour-Left in the mid-'70s, ran independent anti-Labour election campaigns in 1978-9, swung back to the Labour left in the early '80s.

The instability is rooted in a political 'method' which forever tries to reduce the political world around them to elaborate scenarios. They identify up-and-coming 'vanguards' and 'processes', and everything is then

blindly and extravagantly subordinated to chasing the scenario.

The typical central leader has been the person best able to spin and weave such fantasies — and to survive and start again when each of the bubbles bursts, as they always do.

Many of the 'followers' of any given 'scenario' or 'project' do not survive and start again, of course.

Today they are battling it out over whether an important section of the labour movement and its leadership has been 'Scargillised' (and thus represents the wave of the future) or not, and on whether Stalinist Cuba or poor, underdeveloped and beleaguered Nicaragua is the best model of socialism.

But some people's self-assurance, or self-delusion, is never dented. Listen to John Ross, in a document circulated to supporters before the AGM, explaining how democratically he has been running Socialist Action:

"We are not under the slightest illusion that if the attitude our paper took to Scargill had been voted on in the first few weeks of the strike it would have received a tiny vote — perhaps ten per cent.

But that is exactly why we have a leadership. Leadership is not about giving orders to people — nor simply reflecting what people want (that is a followership, not a leadership). Leadership in this domain is about seeing that instant before anyone else what is taking place..."

Our hero

Midnight on Sunday July 7 marked the start of an epic battle of wills. The contestants are a NUPE full-time official, a management consultant with secret left-wing sympathies, the NUPE official's daughter (a YTS trainee) and Birmingham Socialist Organiser supporter Jim Denham. All are heavy smokers.

Each contestant has put £25 into a kitty, and the last one to "crack" takes the lot.

Denham is confident of victory and has vowed to donate the ton to SO.

"Of course, constant vigi-

lance against cheating is called for", says our hero, "especially as one of my opponents is a notorious fake left bureaucrat. I'll be watching him like a hawk and have instructed NUPE members to keep their eyes peeled for any signs of him sneaking off for a crafty drag."

Meanwhile, thanks this week to: Will Adams £5, Keyvan Lajevardi-Khosh £3, Trudy Saunders £20, Chris Bright £10, Ray Moon £3.

Send donations to: SO, 214, Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.



In what year did the Brecon and Radnor by-election take place? 1985, was it? Or 1885?

Defeated Labour candidate Richard Willey has been living with the woman in the photo above for 13 years, but they are not married. So in the course of the election campaign, the Liberal Party issued a leaflet attacking him over his family life!

Of course, the Liberal Party used to be the party of Gladstone — of the Nonconformist conscience and of double-dyed hypocrisy in politics. In Brecon and Radnor that's what it still is. Worst of all, perhaps, Willey's managers ran so scared before the 'smear' that they blocked publication during the campaign of this or any other photo of their candidate and his companion; and weak-kneed Willey let them do it. (Photo: Julio Etchart, IFL).

40 YEARS ago this month the British Labour Party won its greatest-ever victory.

It got a 146-seat majority in the July 1945 general election.

In the next three years the new government nationalised the Bank of England, coal, gas, electricity, railways, part of inland transport, and cable and wireless. It set up the National Health Service, expanded social security, and ran a major house-building programme. It gave independence to India, for nearly 200 years the keystone of the British Empire.

In 1951 it nationalised iron and steel. The main leaders of the Labour Party were nervous about such radicalism.

At the December 1944 Labour Party conference they had fought, unsuccessfully, against committing a Labour government to any nationalisation. The electorate would never support socialist principles; as Herbert Morrison put it in May 1945, "it is no good saying that we are going to socialise electricity, fuel and power because it is in accordance with Labour Party principles... you must spend substantial time in arguing the case for the socialisation of these industries on the merits of their specific cases."

"That is how the British mind works. It does not work in a vacuum or in abstract theories".

In fact that Labour government did better electorally than the other, more timid, Labour administrations. It went out, in October 1951, with 48.8% of the vote — more than the 48% it came in with in 1945. The Tories got a parliamentary majority in 1951 thanks to quirks of the electoral system and the collapse of the Liberal vote.

Labour Party individual membership rose to over one million in 1952; Labour Party trade union affiliations rose from 2.5 million in 1945 to 5 million in 1951.

Revolution

Many spoke of the period as a socialist revolution. Yet obviously it wasn't that.

The Tories, ruling for 13 years after 1951, preserved most of Labour's reforms, de-nationalising only iron and steel. The nationalised industries have been state-capitalist rather than socialist; indeed, nationalised-industry managers like Ian MacGregor have often been in the forefront of bosses' offensives.

Only now, after world capitalism has suffered slowdown and crises for 15 years, are the Tories making a serious

1945: the victory that failed

Of all Labour governments in history, only one is looked back at with some satisfaction — 1945-51. It brought major reforms. Yet it also sent troops against strikers and waged a colonial war in Malaya. Martin Thomas examines the story.

effort to roll back Labour's welfare reforms.

Why did the 1945 Labour government do so much more than other Labour governments? Why did it still fail to defeat capitalism?

At the end of World War 2, as at the end of World War 1, workers wanted radical change. Strikes increased. Although Labour refused to contest by-elections, a maverick left-wing movement, Common Wealth, opposed Tories with some success.

For the activists these were heady times. The young Denis Healey, no less, told the May 1945 Labour Party conference that "the crucial principle of our foreign policy should be to protect, assist, encourage and aid in every way [the] Socialist revolution wherever it appears... The upper classes in every country are selfish, depraved, dissolute and decadent".

Such talk alarmed the Labour leaders. All except Aneurin Bevan had been members of the wartime coalition under Churchill. Clement Attlee, the prime minister from 1945 to '51, recalled "very pleasant memories of working with my colleagues in the [coalition] government. It was very seldom that any Party issue arose to divide us..."

From the Tory-led coalition Labour inherited intact a deeply conservative

corps of top state officials; closely linked to that "selfish, deprived, dissolute and decadent" upper class. The Labour leaders, 'respectable' and 'practical' people, were much more responsive to those officials than to the Labour rank and file. Even the King's complaints that they were "going too fast in the new nationalising legislation" had weight with them.

The Labour leaders were aghast and astonished at their own success in July 1945. But they had millions of unruly workers behind them, and an economic system in manifest chaos in front of them.

So they pressed ahead. They were amazed at their own daring; but for a while, despite all rhetoric, the Tories and the ruling class gave them leeway.

As the 'Economist' magazine put it in November 1945: "an avowedly Socialist government, with a clear Parliamentary majority, might well have been expected to go several steps further... If there is to be a Labour government, the programme now stated is the least it can do without violating its election pledges".

Ruling class

Ruling-class thinkers remembered the revolutionary aftermath of World War 1. Reform in good time could forestall revolution. Many of Labour's measures had been designed by ruling-class politicians: the Health Service by William Beveridge, its general economic policy by Maynard Keynes, both Liberals. Nationalisations were being carried out by conservative parties elsewhere in Europe.

A Labour government meant more reforms than a Tory or Liberal administration might have chosen. But in return Labour could keep the working class quiet. And the permanent state machine gave the capitalist class enough checks and controls on what Labour did to avoid serious risk.

Practically all Labour's reforms were carried out in the three years 1945-8. After 1948 the government seemed to have "run out of ideas".

To be sure, the Labour leaders were not strong on ideas. They prided themselves that they were (in the words of the 1945 manifesto) "like the British people, practical-minded men and women".

In other words — timid piecemeal reformers, unwilling to venture any change unless it was certified respectable by established wisdom.

But the real change after 1948 was in the balance of class forces. Working-class radicalism had begun to subside — partly weary, partly perplexed by the fact that apparently socialist measures had left capitalism intact. In France, in Greece, in the US, mass strikes and armed struggles had been defeated. The Cold War was underway. The ruling class felt more secure and confident.

For indeed Labour had kept the working class quiet. Although the Tory Trades Disputes Act 1927 was repealed, the wartime anti-strike Order 1305 was maintained. It was revoked only in 1951, as a result of protest strikes after ten gas workers and seven dockers were hauled into court, and the gas workers sentenced to jail, for striking. Labour had sent troops onto the docks to break strikes in 1948 and 1949.

In 1948 a wage freeze was imposed, and the Labour leaders were able to get both TUC and Labour Party conferences to vote for it.

Despite the 1944 Labour conference's call for workers' control, the new nationalised industries were run by people much like the old private capitalist managers — indeed, in many cases by those old managers themselves. Labour leader Stafford Cripps declared that there was "not yet a very large number of workers in Britain capable of taking over large enterprises... I think it would be almost impossible to have worker-

THIS IS OUR CHANCE TO ...

LABOUR



FOR HIM

LABOUR

VOTE LABOUR AND WIN THE PEACE!

controlled industry in Britain, even if it were on the whole desirable".

When the permanent state machine laid down the line, it could control the Labour government. Lord Montgomery, then chief of the armed forces, paid "tribute to the courage of the Labour government in introducing National Service in peacetime in the face of great opposition within its own party. Attlee and Bevin pushed it through for us".

In 1947 the government proposed 18 months' conscription. 72 Labour backbenchers voted against it, and the government agreed to make it 12 months.

Then the top commanders of the army threatened to resign en bloc if they got any less than 18 months. The government backtracked. 18 months it was.

Bomb

The 1945 government's record was worst in foreign policy, where it was under least direct pressure from the working class. It (secretly) started developing the British atom bomb. It helped set up NATO.

It gave India independence; but probably not even a Tory government could have delayed that independence long. After 1948 the Labour government waged a brutal war to keep Malaya under British rule.

Labour ministers in the wartime coalition had approved Britain's part in the Greek civil war from 1944, backing the monarchists against the Communist-Party-dominated Resistance. British troops were pulled out only in 1947, and then on grounds of cost — to be replaced by US troops.

Palestine was then under British rule. The 1944 Labour conference had been firmly pro-Zionist. Once in government the Labour leaders dropped this policy — worried not about the Palestinian Arabs' rights, but about Britain's economic interests in the Middle East,

where oil production was now developing fast.

The Labour government installed 100,000 troops in Palestine — which then had about the same population as Northern Ireland today. When that failed to restore stable British rule, it cut its losses and withdrew to let the Zionists and the Arabs fight it out.

The Labour government tailed behind the US in the Korean war, which started in June 1950. And, closer to home, this would-be radical government did nothing about the Tory-Orange state in Northern Ireland except to bolster its position by legislating the 'Unionist veto' (the Northern Ireland Act 1949, stating that the constitutional position would not be changed except with the approval of a majority in the Six Counties).

And so the broad, strong mass working-class movement, arising after the war, spluttered out. The mass of workers were unclear about what new society they wanted; and in the absence of an adequate grouping of Marxists able to channel workers' aspirations into a clear-cut political struggle, they stayed unclear. The Labour leaders were able to pass off dribs and drabs of welfare state-capitalism as 'practical' socialism; when disillusionment came, it was too late, and not armed with a sharp alternative.

The experience was repeated in 1974: industrial struggle, from 1972 to 1974, had shattered the Tory government, but because the political and ideological battles had not been fought in the labour movement, Harold Wilson and his Social Contract were able to stand as the only alternative to the Tories.

It can happen again if we let it — and with worse results. 1945-51 was followed by 20 years of the greatest economic expansion in human history. The Tories could afford to let Labour's reforms stand. 1974-9 was followed by Thatcherism. Another missed opportunity, with British capitalism in decay, will bring worse.



Socialist Worker are

Socialist Worker's current appeal to Militant for a 'united organisation' shows quite clearly a lot of the problems with the SWP's basic politics.

The SWP says that the main problem with Militant is that it's in the Labour Party.

The renewed witch-hunt poses for Socialist Worker the basic problem of the Labour Party very sharply. As last week's Socialist Worker (6 July) put it:

"Socialists in the Labour Party face a clear choice. Either stop rocking the boat, stop taking up 'fringe issues' and drop your principles, or get out".

And Socialist Worker concludes bluntly: "socialists must be prepared to get out and build an independent, fighting socialist party."

For Militant — which the SWP believes has grown because it appeared to offer hard, Marxist politics to the Labour left — that choice is posed particularly starkly. Since the only principled choice to make will result in expulsion, Socialist Worker concludes that Militant must join with them to build "a real and visible revolutionary alternative" (SW, May 11).

Transformed

There is a flat logical contradiction in Socialist Worker's argument. Militant are being witch-hunted, and it is important to defend them. Yet at the same time, Militant — and by implication other serious socialists in the Labour Party — should voluntarily give up the fight against the witch-hunt because they have no chance of winning it.

Suppose that the only possible outcome of a serious fight against the witch-hunt is expulsion. The best way to guarantee that a left-wing force of some size is built as a result is to fight, not just to give up. And the best contribution Socialist Worker could make to that fight, surely, would be to join it, to participate fully, to put their full weight behind it — to take the fight into the Labour Party itself, and not confine it to the unions.

Expulsions initiated by a Labour Party conference would then have to be fought through in the Constituency Labour Parties. Serious fighters against the witch-hunt would have to take up the issue there, too.

And the witch-hunt is hardly new. The first big assault on Militant was in 1976. The first wave of expulsions was in 1983.

At that time, the SWP just pontifi-

Since the miners' strike the SWP has made a turn to the Labour Left and proposed a merger with Militant. What's going on? Clive Bradley reports.

cated about the inevitability of such things. Only now, after five years of major battles by the Labour left, the split that created the SDP, the offensive of the Kinnockites and the development of the witch-hunt, are the SWP taking it seriously.

So what has changed? Why does Socialist Worker appeal to Militant now, while it didn't throughout 1982-3, when the witch-hunt was much more ferocious and hysterical — and the left wing resistance to it broader and bolder?

The simple answer is that the SWP has suddenly panicked at the discover that — as a result of the witch-hunt — Militant is now the bigger of the two groups. Socialist Worker has realised that most good socialists are in or around the Labour Party, and has re-adjusted its sights.

Apart from that, nothing has changed since 1982-3. So if Socialist Worker is right now, rationally the SWP should have been in the Labour Party in 1982-3, or even in 1976.

But then how would Socialist Worker deal with Militant's line on Ireland? On the police? On the possibility of a 'peaceful road to socialism'? Either the SWP would forget a lot of their present politics, or they would find themselves in sharp conflict with Militant on every major political question. The common terrain would only highlight the issues of political programme.

Today Socialist Worker can declare with self-conscious naivety: "Of course, in such a united organisation there would be differences of opinion on many matters, but they could be argued out democratically as we fought together against the Tories and the right wing inside the movement" (SW, June 28 1985). But the SWP's insistence that this is a sincere and honest proposal is hard to swallow. It is plainly a catchpenny gimmick to try to recruit a few Militant supporters.

Underlying the whole business is

something yet more basic to the SWP's idea of politics, and of Marxist organisation. The SWP has a fundamentally organisational conception of the revolutionary party: it is about 'linking militants together'; and it is defined crucially by its organisational independence. The basic way that they relate to Militant therefore is mainly by counterposing organisational separation from the Labour Party to membership of it, rather than arguing about what socialism is, and about socialist answers to living struggles. This is, in fact, characteristic of the main way the SWP takes on the Labour left as a whole.

Politics

For revolutionary Marxism — that is Bolshevism — politics come first. Organisational issues are secondary, and should be decided on the basis of maximum tactical flexibility.

A Marxist organisation is defined above all by its political programme, by independent working class politics, not just by where it chooses to fight for those politics.

For the SWP on the other hand, organisational questions come first and politics second. Organisational separation from the Labour Party is proclaimed as the basic principle, and political issues are subordinated to the task of 'organising militants'.

So for example, in August 1969 the SWP (then IS) dropped the call Troops Out of Ireland for a while after the troops were deployed in the streets. In June 1971 it abandoned its internationalist position on the EEC — that it makes no difference to workers whether they are in a capitalist Britain or a capitalist 'Europe' — for the sake of joining in an anti-EEC campaign to 'win support'.

And so their arguments about the Labour Party are fundamentally apolitical, concentrating on the need to build an 'independent' party without clear definitions of what distinguishes Marxist politics. The difference between themselves and Labour is defined primarily in terms of orientation: where the SWP focuses on strikes and immediate struggles, Labour focuses exclusively on elections. 'The SWP looks after strikes, Labour looks after the rest'.

Reformism?

SW argues that the basic problem with Labour is that its desire to win elections necessarily means abandoning any commitment to socialism in order to 'win the middle ground'. Trying to win elections necessarily cuts across an orientation towards direct action struggles, because the audience for socialist ideas is only ever the 'militant minority'. Serious socialists in the Labour Party, therefore, should orient towards this 'militant minority' rather than try to win elections.

"Once it is seen that politics arise from the everyday struggles in the workplaces, that it is here rather than in elections that workers begin to question the prevailing ideas of capitalism, then you can see that the road to socialism is quite different to that taken by the Labour Party." (September 29, 1984).

"Since the left were as committed to electoral politics as the right, they did not know how to argue back when the right said socialist policies had to be jettisoned so as to regain votes." (SW, June 29).

This is a very odd view of the basic problem with reformism — indeed of what reformism is.

The problem with the 'parliamentary road to socialism' is not the wish to win elections. It is the inevitability of violent ruling class resistance if an elected left government seriously tries to fight for its programme. The problem with Allende in Chile is not that he ran for election, but that he did not go on from election victory to move decisively against the old ruling class.

Do left policies lose votes for Labour? Sometimes they do — when the Labour leadership sabotages the election campaign by denouncing the Party's policies, and by engaging in a witch-hunt. If the Labour leaders say Labour's policy is ultra-left lunacy, no wonder voters agree.

The Labour left replies that we need a Labour leadership that will fight for Labour policies. A real campaign by Labour for socialist policies would gain votes. But the SWP accepts the basic terms of reference of the Labour right about how to win elections: that 'winning the middle ground' means 'being moderate'.

Elections

What's wrong with Labour is not that it tries to win votes. You have to win votes even to go on strike. You would have to win votes indeed — not a Parliamentary election perhaps, but votes all the same, in workers' councils for example — to make a revolution.

And the basic fault of the Labour left is neither a failure to get involved in strikes, nor that it doesn't know how to answer the arguments about winning elections. It answers the vote-catching arguments rather better than the SWP does. Many ordinary Labour Party members do get involved in strikes — many, indeed, run them. The SWP knows about Labour Party members' involvement in the miners' strike.

Of course, the Labour Party does function primarily as an electoral machine, and this is a serious problem with it. But electoral activity is not



Ted Grant of Militant: my tendency is this

necessarily counterposed to working class action.

The Bolsheviks made great efforts to get representatives elected to the Duma — the parliament in Tsarist Russia. The Communist International, when it was still revolutionary, took electoral activity very seriously — not just to make propaganda, though that was central, but with the intention of winning elections.

Bureaucracy

The basic problem with Labour is much deeper. The Labour Party is controlled by a bureaucratic apparatus closely entwined with the trade union bureaucracy. And the central feature of this overall labour bureaucracy is its accommodation to, and dependence upon, the capitalist state. Labour governments have rested upon the capitalist state; and what has crucially distinguished them from Tory governments is the greater degree of collaboration between the state and the trade union bureaucracy that they have been able to organise. A future Labour government would draw much of its strength, as a government, from its ability to draw the trade union bureaucracy back into 'the corridors of power' from which they have more recently been so unceremoniously booted.

It is this relationship between the Labour bureaucracy and the state that makes Labour a reformist party, not the fact that it wants to win elections!

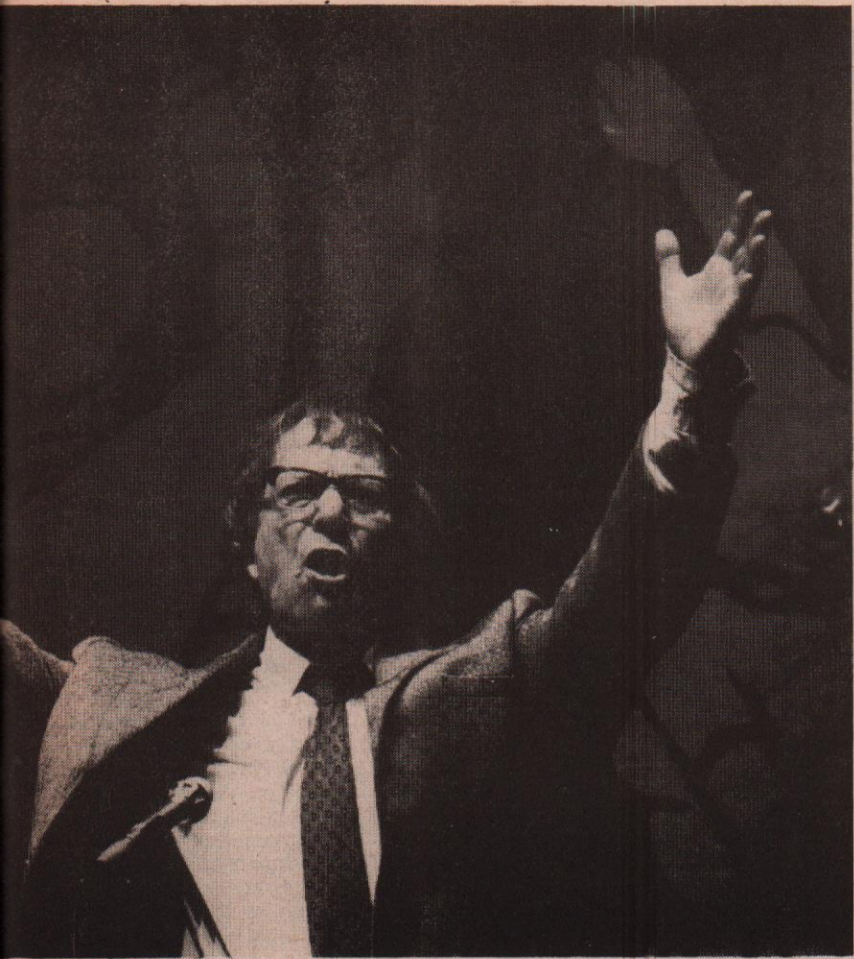
The question for revolutionary socialists, therefore, is this: how can we break the labour movement as a whole from its reliance on the state? Of course, as the SWP argues a focus on direct working class struggles, and a fight to give those struggles direction, is irreplaceable for socialists. Any Marxist organisation worthy of the name sees those struggles as the central arena of its work. But just to build an organisation that promotes those struggles is not an answer to the problem of a labour movement fundamentally compromised with the capitalist state.

Merely to put the argument — "socialists need a Party quite different to the Labour Party" (SW, September 29) begs the question. We need a



Tony Cliff of the SWP: mine's only so large....

and the Labour left



g... (photo: John Harris)

reality quite different to the present one. Yet we have to start from present day reality. The Labour Party exists; it is enormously powerful; it structures, shapes and profoundly affects and limits the class struggle; and a real alternative to Labourism cannot be built just by putting out an appeal for it.

The Labour Party is not just a band of vote-fetishists cut off and separate from the labour movement as a whole. Organisationally it has intimate connections to the trade unions. And the reformism of the Labour Party is no more than one aspect — the overtly political reformism of the whole labour movement.

Where the Labour Party expresses the political concerns of reformism, the trade unions express its economic concerns. Labourism is trade unionism extended into the 'political' — i.e. Parliamentary — arena. It is the principle of trade unionism — bargaining within the system — applied to society as a whole.

The problem of Labourism is therefore not just a problem of the Labour Party — with its electoral focus — but a problem of the overall politics of the entire labour movement.

Links

The deep-rooted reformism of the labour movement does have a profound effect on individual militants. Often they do move to the right, get sucked in, become bureaucratised. Leon Trotsky said: "The trade unions are a culture medium for opportunism". The Labour Party too. But what's the answer? Splendid isolation, sectarian 'purity'? No: it is to link participation in the broad movement with the development of an organised tendency

ideologically sharp enough to fight the pressures to accommodation; to integrate individual activists into that tendency rather than leaving them as individuals.

The SWP's perspective lacks a real strategy for working class power. Essentially, they can provide no link between 'small strikes now' and some 'big bang' Armageddon in the future. Logically, their strategy is just to build up an organisation through immediate struggles until the day...

Because that perspective involves simply bypassing the real limitations of the movement now, it is no real perspective at all.

In theory, an organisation of some size could be built purely out of direct struggles — strikes in particular. But unless it relates to the overall questions — how to fundamentally change the very nature of the working class movement — it will be fundamentally sterile, especially during big political upheavals.

Labourism

The SWP completely underestimates the real hold of Labourism and therefore the importance of a political challenge to it. In 1971 they wrote:

"...the Labour Party is no longer a reformist party in the sense that it still was in the '50s and even the early '60s. It is committed to the modernisation of British capitalism in conditions which effectively exclude the possibility of serious reforms... This is the basic reason why it is objectively possible to build a revolutionary socialist party in the years ahead" (IS journal no. 48).

IS started to proclaim itself the organisational alternative to the

Labour Party. And this was to be done on the basis of demands which "are reformist in form but transitional in content." (ibid).

The SWP has criticised this wrong assessment more recently, but failed to draw any conclusions. Despite the SWP's perspective, back in the real world the actual political product of the mass struggles against Heath was the Labour government of 1974-9.

Just before the 1979 election that brought the Tories into office, Paul Foot commented in the Daily Mirror: 'For the next three weeks I shall be a very strong Labour supporter'. In practice, the SWP had nothing to say but 'vote Labour because the Tories are worse'. Socialist Organiser on the other hand, organised an alternative election campaign to 'vote Labour and prepare to fight'; we tried to organise the left to fight the Labour leadership even through the course of the election and prepare for battles to come — whether against the Tories or Labour. Where the SWP focussed exclusively on how bad the Tories would be, we focused also on sharp criticisms of Labour's record in office.

The SWP's apparently very left-wing and revolutionary attitude to elections — that they are a reformist business, to be shunned by true Marxists — ends up being quite right wing in practice.

They abandon whole spheres of politics to the Labour leaders.

Marxists should be interested in elections — not because we think there is a Parliamentary road to socialism, but because elections are a major part of politics for the working class now.

'Build the revolutionary party' — or 'have lots of small strikes' — are no answer at all to the question in most workers' minds: what can we replace the Tories with?

Government

The suggestion that the solution to the left's "inability to answer the arguments about losing votes" is to ignore the issue of government altogether (by joining the SWP) is absolutely idiotic. The labour movement is profoundly and rightly concerned about government. The task is to give the movement and in the first place the left, an answer that does address the question of government. We say: don't back down, don't cave in to the right, keep fighting. And we fight for our programme, our political answers. Otherwise we let the Labour leaders off the hook.

Revolutionary politics cannot be just 'workers' struggles' versus 'elections'.

Industrial militancy is not in itself a political answer to anything. A political answer must deal with issues of the overall running of society — to point towards ways to defend workers' interests at a society-wide level, to begin to organise the working class to take power.

How do we end unemployment? 'Organise, occupy, fight for the right to work' the SWP used to chant. Yes, but how? Share out the work, establish workers' control over hours with no loss of pay.

How do fight declining living standards? Go on strike, says the SWP, for higher wages. Fine: but such sectional struggles need to be linked to an over-

all working class solution — automatic wage rises in line with a workers' cost of living index.

Marxists have to carry out a political struggle to convince workers of these solutions. Part of that struggle is demanding of the existing Labour leaders that they support struggles now; fighting them if they don't; and fighting for our overall political solutions throughout the labour movement.

The SWP's one-sidedness leads them to low-level concentration on 'basics' — workplace organisation — at the expense of giving general political answers. During the miners' strike for example, it led to ultra-pessimism, and a failure to argue for the necessary class-wide solidarity action.

Now they conclude that workplace militancy is off the agenda for a period, and that they can do nothing much but fish among the Labour left.

But they prove as unable to assess the Labour left accurately as they were to assess the miners' struggle.

Opportunism

Last October, Socialist Worker put out 'an appeal to the organisations of the Labour left' to 'build united support' for the miners. They addressed it to the Editorial Boards of Tribune, Militant, Labour Herald, and to the Labour Coordinating Committee.

- They proposed:
- 1) Joint meetings of our editorial boards to discuss what can be done to build solidarity with the miners (such as) spreading the network of miners' support committees...collecting money...preparing for...solidarity action...
 - 2) Joint meetings of our supporters...to discuss strengthening miners' support committees...
 - 3) Joint meetings...to organise the

collection of money...'
(SW, October 20, 1984).

Very good — except that neither Tribune, Militant, Labour Herald nor LCC were visible as organised forces in the miners' support committees.

Most support committee activists were non-aligned Labour Party members. If the SWP had really wanted to address the main organised groups active in the committees, they would have written to Socialist Organiser, Socialist Action and Labour Briefing. They didn't because it would not have suited their purposes of catchpenny opportunism.

The SWP can maintain itself only by denying that it is possible to be in the Labour Party for any period and to remain a serious socialist. But their own current tactic gives them the lie. How come there are any good socialists in the Labour Party for SW to send open letters to? Why have they not had their brains rotted? After all, many of them have been in the Labour Party for many years. How come they are worth relating to? Perhaps being in the Labour Party doesn't automatically pull you to the right?

There is no reason at all why a Marxist organisation, with firm principles and clear heads, need be dragged to the right just by being in the Labour Party. It says something about the SWP that they have so little confidence in their own principles that they think (and probably correctly) this would happen to them.

The problem of Militant as it presents itself to the SWP is this: Militant have outdone them at their own game — sect-building. They have done so despite dreadful politics because they have at least taken the Labour Party seriously: they are in the right place. The task for socialists is to have the right politics in the right place. That is what Socialist Organiser tries to do.

OPEN LETTER

To the editorial board of ~~Militant~~

Dear Comrades,

THE SHORT period since the end of the miners' strike has demonstrated beyond doubt that the rightward swing of the Labour Party is getting stronger.

Many on the left had thought that Neil Kinnock's disgraceful performance during the strike would hurt him and strengthen their position. It hasn't worked out like that.

Despite the disgust many militants undoubtedly have, the bulk of the Labour left has been drawn closer to Kinnock, just as Kinnock has moved more and more openly rightwards.

The rapid collapse of so many 'Labour left' councils on rate-capping is a striking demonstration. Kinnock's 'stay within the law' position is winning hands down. Ken Livingstone's somersault in London set the pattern.

The compulsory re-selection process is going strongly in Kinnock's favour too. In the 70-odd re-selections to date only one sitting MP (excluding retirements) has been replaced — and that was Reg Fresson, replaced by Ken Livingstone. Kinnock was quick to congratulate the ex-Red Ken.

"I would be happy to work with him in parliament. There is no problem there. I think Mr Livingstone has considerably enhanced his reputation in recent months when taking realistic stands on a number of issues."

And, as you will know better than anyone, there has been a systematic line up of former 'lefts' and the right wing to keep out candidates associated with Militant.

Then there is the increasing isolation of Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner on the Labour Party NEC. Former Benites, like Blunkett, Meacher and Sawyer, are more and more supporting the Kinnock-Hattersley line. The vote on opposition to NATO — an ABC issue for socialists — is a case in point.

In the 'Campaign' group of MPs, there is a growing trend towards reconciliation with the rightward moving Tribune group — see the notorious New Year Tribune editorial. In short, the real left in the Labour Party are increasingly out on a limb.

Of course, supporters of Militant have fought hard against these trends. But with less and less success. Why? The arguments of the rightward shifting ex-lefts are pretty contemptible. They are a rehash of what their predecessors said in 1963-4 (leading to the election of the 1964-70 Wilson government), and 1973-4 (leading to the election of the 1974-9 Wilson-Callaghan government).

It is not these arguments that are persuasive in themselves. It is the situation in which they are put. Given the Thatcher government's policies and the defeat of the miners (although at immense cost to the bosses' class), a large and increasing number of workers are inclined to vote for the Kinnock Labour Party as 'the lesser evil'.

What is the main thing for the Labour leaders, and anything that rocks the electoral prospect — like socialist ideas — is out.

What should be the attitude of revolutionary socialists, of Marxists, towards these moves? Workers who abstained or voted SDP or even Tory in the last election are moving forwards when they consider voting Labour. But this also strengthens Kinnock.

The more the polls show Labour leads, the greater the pull on the Labour left towards 'unity' — a unity on Kinnock-Hattersley terms.

The obsession with elections, the illusion that another Labour government will be basically different from the Thatcher Tories in deeds (as opposed to words — the rhetoric will certainly be different) all strengthen the right wing.

OUR ATTITUDE is clear. We are for a Labour government. Not because we believe it will be a government in the interests of workers — it won't — but precisely to test in practice again the reformist road.

We believe a future Labour government will not act in the interests of the working class. On the contrary, it will act like every previous Labour government — in the interests of the bosses' class.

And, since the crisis of British capitalism is deeper now than in the seventies, a new Labour government will be more vicious and more reactionary, than the Wilson-Callaghan governments — the first since 1945 to succeed in cutting wages, while increasing unemployment and savaging the welfare state.

So what should revolutionaries do now? We all know from experience that previous Labour governments have produced demoralisation in the working class

as well as enlightenment for a minority. We have had all manner of differences in the past, and will, no doubt, continue to do so. But all this pales before the tasks and opportunities we now face.

THE KEY question is whether a real and visible revolutionary alternative is available. Is not building such an alternative common ground between us? If it is, then we must get together to work out the best means of developing the revolutionary alternative now.

If it is not, the effect of the inevitable Labour sellouts will be as before. Just as Heath benefitted in 1970, and Thatcher in 1979, in the future it will be whatever right wing bourgeois leader emerges.

The real surge to the left in the Labour Party in 1979-81 is now far behind us. Militant supporters are, to our sorrow, very much on the defensive in the Labour Party.

This is not a matter of 'optimism' or 'pessimism', but of facing the facts.

The danger that faces Marxists in the Labour Party at the moment is either to mute their criticism of the leadership or face increasing isolation.

The working class has the power to change society. The question is how to build the leadership in the class that can change that potential into a reality. The Labour Party is, and always has been, a conservative workers' party (Lenin called it a 'bourgeois party, although composed of workers').

We understand the arguments advanced by Militant supporters about the need to work in the Labour Party — although we have disagreed with them. But now, with the Tories on the offensive and the Labour Party galloping to the right, there is a new situation.

It is a situation not only fraught with danger for workers and socialists, but also ripe with opportunity for building an alternative revolutionary current in the working class. We and ourselves are the two biggest groupings on the left of the labour movement. We believe there is a basis for working together to build a viable socialist alternative. Do you agree?

Yours fraternally
Socialist Worker

"For revolutionary Marxism — that is, Bolshevism — politics come first. For the SWP on the other hand, organisational questions come first and politics second."



Orange parade: an assertion of bigotry

A slice of 6 County life

Paddy Dollard looks at recent events in Northern Ireland

SOMETIMES a small local incident, which is in itself small-scale and unspectacular, encapsulates, condenses and sums up a whole historic experience. And so it was with the small battle last Sunday between Catholics and police in Portadown, County Armagh.

The local Orangemen announced that they would hold a 'traditional' Orange march, and that it would as usual go through the Catholic 'Tunnel' district of the town. Who could object to that, they asked. It's perfectly normal and reasonable that bigoted Protestants should deck themselves out in their Orange sashes and bowler hats to march behind pipe and drum bands through a Catholic street, to the tune of traditional Orange music celebrating their past victories over the Catholics.

It's been like that for over 150 years.

This time something unexpected happened. The Royal Ulster Constabulary ordered them to re-route the march and avoid the Catholic area.

All hell broke loose. The Reverend Ian Paisley, the most popular Protestant politician in the province, accused the RUC and Douglas Hurd, British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, of "throwing down the gauntlet to the Protestant people". He vowed that they would pick it up. They would mobilise the entire population and descend on the area to defend their traditional Protestant liberties and rights, unless the ban was rescinded.

The Orange politicians charged that the reason for the ban on the march going through the Catholic district was that Britain and 26 County civil servants are discussing a deal on Northern Ireland — a deal which is bound to be against the interest of the Protestants.

There may even be some truth in it. For example, an agreement has just been announced to allow southern judges to sit in Six County courts. If Britain is discussing some accommodation with Catholic Ireland, it might make sense for its servants in the North to start seeing to it that Catholics are subjected to fewer sectarian outrages.

In any case, it was in the interests of the alarmed Orange politicians to make the most of their conspiracy theory.

Last Wednesday, 3rd, 30,000 Orangemen came from far and near to a rally in Portadown. A head-on clash between the RUC and the Protestant community loomed.

But not for long. The RUC backed down and agreed to let the march take place on its 'traditional' course. The Orange bigots could parade their communal triumphalism after all. On Sunday morning the RUC turned out on schedule to baton angry Catholics who protested.

Six people were hurt, including police. A few stones were thrown at the marchers, and many Orange paramilitaries of the Ulster Defence Association turned up at Portadown, but the march passed off quietly. It ended at an Anglican church service where the officiating clergyman expressed his astonishment that a parade whose purpose was to give thanks to God should have caused such a fuss.

The whole story of Northern Ireland in the last

17 years was there, encapsulated in that incident.

Catholics object to sectarian outrages. The state acts as any normal liberal-democratic state would be expected to act, and backs them up — only to back down ignominiously when the Orangemen threaten and bluster, or come onto the streets.

That's what happened in 1974, when the Orange general strike was allowed to smash Britain's whole strategy to rejig Northern Ireland. Defeated by the Orange general strike, Britain turned savagely on the Catholics, setting in train the wave of repression which resulted in (among other things) the hunger strikes of 1981.

Reports say that a deal was made with the Orange leaders: they would be allowed to win this round in return for agreeing to the re-routing of the march on the Orange big day, July 12. Orange grand master Martin Smyth has called on Orangemen to obey the law, but it is unlikely that Orange militants on the ground will. Their triumph last Saturday has whetted their appetite.

Much of the British far left looks at Ireland with blinkers, seeing only a typical struggle for national liberation against imperialism. They refuse to recognise that the Catholic/Protestant conflict there is a major autonomous problem, dismissing the Protestants as just an offshoot of imperialism. The conclusion is that if British troops were withdrawn the Protestants would disappear as a political force; Ireland would easily be re-united, and everything would be fine.

The Portadown episode is another illustration of how false this view is — and of why, therefore, Socialist Organiser has had to give much space over the last few years to arguing for a more realistic approach to the war in Ireland.

We have argued that there is an autonomous 'Protestant problem'; that the Protestant community has rights; and that agitation for troops out and a united Ireland should be coupled with a proposal for some sort of federal system giving local autonomy within a united Ireland to the Protestant-majority area.

None of this should blunt our awareness of the strength of bigotry and the most die-hard reactionary ideas in the Protestant community. The idea of recognising the Protestants' rights is not based on blindness to that ugly reality as *Militant's* bland calls for a trade-union militia and a solution through trade-union unity are. It is based on the fact that narrow Catholic nationalism — even dressed in the robes of 'permanent revolution' — only plays into the hands of the Orange bigots.

The Protestant workers, or at least a section of them, must be won away from the bigots. That can only be done, and Protestant workers who oppose the bigots can only be armed politically, on the basis of a clear recognition that there is a minority question in Ireland, intertwined with but separable from the question of the relations between Ireland and Britain.

The

Constance Lever reviews Abram Leon's classic Marxist attempt to explain the history of the Jewish people, and why for 2000 years without a country of their own they retained a separate identity. The article first appeared in the paper 'Workers' Fight', February 5 1972. ['The Jewish Question', by Abram Leon: Pathfinder Press].

IN 1944 Abram Leon was murdered in the gas chambers of Auschwitz. But unlike most of the millions who died there too, he understood the force that destroyed him, and he had devoted himself, up to his arrest a few months before, to the fight against it.

A leading Belgian Trotskyist, Leon had directed his party's socialist propaganda work amongst the working-class conscript soldiers of the occupying German army, helped organise meetings of underground factory committees in the metal plants of Liege, and travelled secretly to occupied France to re-establish the international links of the revolutionary workers' movement.

These actions were not only those of a socialist-internationalist, but of a Jew who understood that decaying capitalism had no place for the Jews whom it had evicted from their traditional class position as feudal middlemen; who understood that it could only use them as a scapegoat for its own crimes. Capitalism was a world system from which there could be no escape — and the only salvation for the Jews, as for the working class, lay in destroying it.

Historical

Abram Leon came to these conclusions on the basis of a historical analysis which he had worked out while a leader of the Belgian Zionist Socialist youth movement Hashomer Hatzair. He had argued for his explanation within the Zionist movement, and had then left on the basis of it to join the Trotskyists in 1939.

Zionist ideas centred round the Jewish myth — that the root of the tragic history of the Jewish people lay in the action of the Roman soldiers, 2000 years ago, who drove the Jews from their land, dispersing them over the earth; that their spirit-

ual greatness lay in their holding together, despite dispersal and persecution, united by a belief in one god and in their national destiny; and the myth that their problem could be solved and their destiny realised by a return to 'their' land, of 2000 years ago.

Leon argued that the Jews were a 'people-class': a historically and culturally distinct people, bound together by a common class position. They were mainly involved in trade, beginning in the ancient world in which their land straddled the crosspoints of the trade routes between the centres of the ancient civilisations. It was not the Roman soldiers, but their own jobs as traders which scattered them through the ancient world: the mass dispersal of Jews outside Palestine had already become a fact before the final fall of Jerusalem. It was not despite the dispersal but because of it and of the common class position that accompanied it, that they survived as a distinct people.

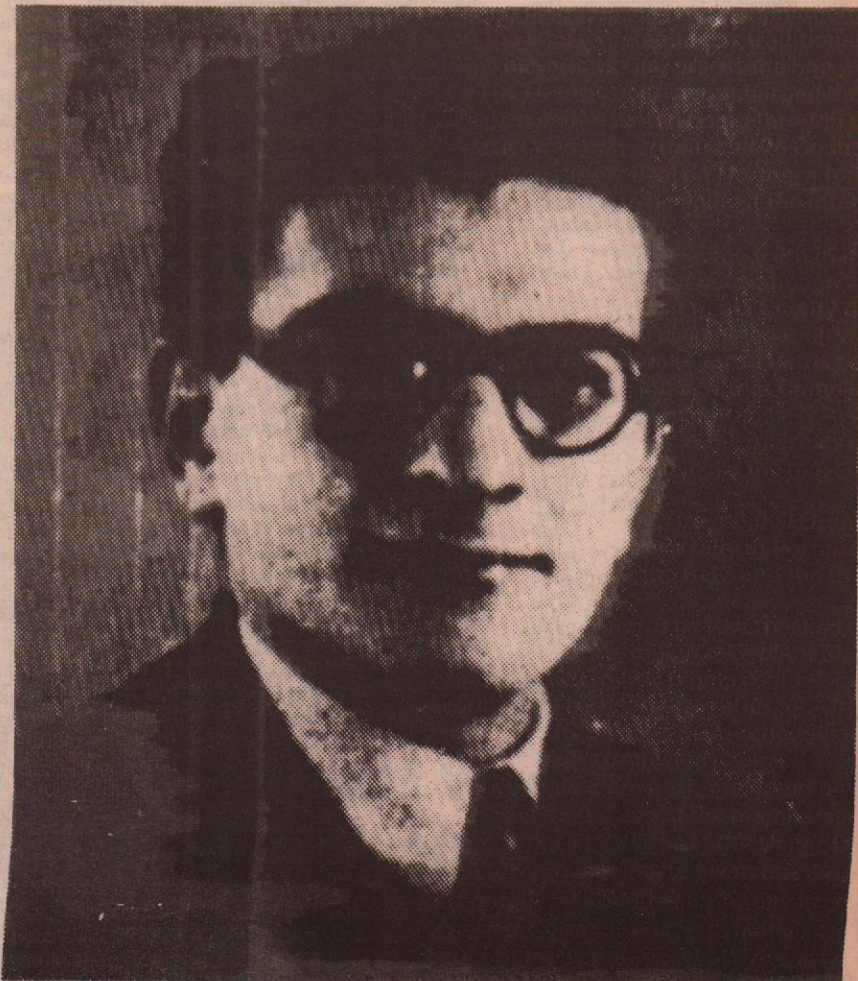
Class

And now, in the modern world, it was not essentially as a national minority, but as an unpopular, increasingly irrelevant and therefore powerless class that they faced anti-semitism. It was, argued Leon, by the destruction of capitalism, not by the establishment of a client state of imperialism — Israel — that the survival and freedom of 18 million Jews around the world could be assured.

Centuries before the Romans destroyed the Temple more than three quarters of the Jews lived outside Palestine, scattered around the ancient world.

With the decline of Roman society, the eclipse of towns and the shrinking of trade and their replacement by a local rural economy producing use-values, ruled by local landowners, the Jews remained as more or less the only traders and, after the coming of Islam, the only links between east and west. On the other hand, in time those Jews not engaged in trade and finance stopped being Jews, assimilated by conversion to Christianity or Islam. The job of trading shaped Judaism and led to its survival. Being born a Jew prepared and destined a child to the commercial class.

Again and again throughout its history, the unity of the Jewish people-class



Abram Leon

Jewish Question



Theodor Herzl, founder of the Zionist movement, with his mother

was selectively strengthened by the conversion and assimilation of those of its members who did not carry on the economic jobs of the majority. No trace remains, as distinct groups, of the pre-Islamic Jewish farmers of North Africa, of the Jewish landed proprietors of 4th-century Germany, or of the Jewish warrior tribes of Arabia.

It is probable, ironically, that there are more physical descendants of the Palestine Jews of Bar Kochbar's time in the Arab refugee camps than amongst the 'returning' Jews of Israel.

Markets

The natural economy of early feudalism is one where goods are produced to be used directly, by the peasant or his lord, and not with markets in mind. Money plays little part in daily life. Yet such a society, especially its ruling class, has need of traders and money-lenders for exceptional purposes — for rare essentials and for luxuries from distant countries, for celebrations and for war. The kings learned early to buy mercenaries against disobedient vassals.

Yet the performance of these essential commercial and financial tasks goes against the grain of the values and structure of natural-economy society. It was the Jews who performed them, and who were for a time well rewarded and respected for it.

Yet this independent Jewish merchant capital was in no sense a germ of modern capitalism. The Jewish merchant did not invest money in production, he was merely the link between points of production far apart, over which he had no influence. The development of early bourgeois merchant capital, growing up organically out of society and gradually achieving power over raw materials and local processes of production, had first to overcome the obstacle of the commercial monopoly of the Jews — who belonged to feudal society and depended on it, though they were a foreign body within it.

As money economy spread, cities grew and trade developed as part of normal life, the Jews were evicted from commerce and left with money-lending

alone. As various sources of money developed, this too lost its essential relevance. Hostility to the money-lender, held in check by the need of him, broke bounds when this need disappeared. From the 12th century to the 14th century, Jews were hounded and burned, accused of ritual murder and of poisoning wells.

In 1190, for example, hundreds of Jews besieged in York Castle committed mass suicide rather than surrender to the excesses of the Crusader knights outside.

In country after country Jews were expropriated and driven out, most taking refuge in east Europe and Russia, where a more backward society still had a place for them as go-betweens.

But in eastern Europe, by the 18th and 19th centuries, history began to repeat itself. Feudal economy decayed, money and exchange relationships seeped through the cracks. Jews made redundant in their old tasks moved from villages and small towns into the cities.

They started to diversify their economic activity and to become involved in production — but they went into workshops, not factories, as craftsmen. They took up, for market production, those consumer-goods skills that some had always practised for their own communities.

Ruined

But their new economic base soon shrank. The march of industrialisation eastwards drove them out of this refuge, just as it had ruined craftsmen such as handloom weavers everywhere else.

Everywhere it developed, capitalism ruined both feudal middlemen and artisans. In the west it eventually found new jobs for these displaced people. But it developed in the East only after it began to rot and become parasitic in the West.

Western capitalism at one and the same time both stimulated and stifled the development of the East, so that it was unable to reabsorb those ruined by the disruption of the old order.

The competition of the Jews — and also their weakness — now led to an explosion of the traditional hatred for Jews, often, as in Russia, organised by

governments, Christian churches, and police forces. Artisans, shopkeepers and many workers remembered how their peasant fathers had hated the Jewish moneylender and landlord's agent. There followed pogroms, persecutions and witch trials on the model of the Middle Ages — as, for example, the Bayliss trial in Russia in 1911.

A second mass migratory wave reversed the movement of the 13th and 14th centuries. By the 1920s millions had left, most to Germany and America.

Obstacle

Unlike feudalism, capitalism has no special place for the people-class. Early capitalism finds them an obstacle. Established advancing capitalism diversifies their economic tasks and assimilates them. In the countries of the West, before the mass migrations from Eastern Europe, those who remained or had returned earlier were well on the road to assimilation. Inter-marriage was high, conversion common.

The new wave of migration to the West was soon followed by the post-World-War-I crisis of capitalism, bringing mass unemployment, ruined small middle classes, and a decaying society. Having set the Jews in motion, capitalism could not now find room for them. Seeking to enter the petty bourgeois and craftsmen jobs to which they were accustomed, they found themselves facing the competition and hatred of similar elements, themselves being ruined.

Fascism directed popular hatred of capitalism and terror in the face of social collapse onto the traditional 'money-men', vulnerable precisely because they were, as a people, no longer major money-men or capitalists.

The septic stream of anti-semitism which had always oozed along the sewers of society — the preoccupation of cranks, misfits and those who see visions of the 'who-killed-Christ' variety — now became a central element in a fascist myth erected to defend the rulers of society by deflecting the wrath of their victims against a scapegoat.

The Jew had long personified money in folklore. He now became the cause of all the catastrophes which capitalism

was inflicting on the mass of the people.

Thus it was not capitalism as such which ruined and starved the people — but an undefinable section of it, 'Jewish capital' — which also, mysteriously, in its other guise of 'Jewish Bolshevism', was the all-malevolent force behind the workers' parties and the labour unions which were rousing the ire and jealousy of the terrified shopkeepers, yet offered little or nothing to the semi-worker, the lumpen-proletarian.

All ills could be traced to their source in the many-headed, anti-national 'Jewish conspiracy'. All who were aggrieved, sore, bruised, by the system or disappointed by the failures and betrayals of the Socialist and Communist parties and who could see no way out of their own misery, found a scapegoat.

In Europe, mass armies of ruined small shopkeepers, clerks, lumpen workers and demoralised unemployed were organised by the fascist agents of the big bosses to beat down the 'anti-national' 'Jewish conspiracy' — and first and foremost that expression of it to be found in the workers' parties and the trade unions.

Deluded

Drunk with despair and demagoguery, many of the fascist rank and file sincerely thought they were striking at the root cause of their problems, though in face they were only the deluded soldier-squads, controlled from a safe distance, of the real cause of their misery: the real, rather than the apocryphal, capitalist class.

And the Jews, having figured in history for centuries as a people-class associated above all with trade and money, now had no special role left except as a scapegoat for the masters of money, of trade, of production and of the lives of the masses.

Together with Communists, Socialists, and trade union militants of the working class — including the German working class — millions of Jews vanished into the extermination camps of a lunatic society trapped in a blind alley of crisis and war. As Leon expressed it, 'Historically the success of racism means that capitalism has managed to canalise the

anti-capitalist consciousness of the masses into a form that antedates capitalism and which no longer exists except in a vestigial state.

In this situation Zionism, beginning as a small movement at the end of the last century, gained mass influence among Jews. It wanted to escape from the redundant people-class position and from crisis-ridden capitalism by a simple physical removal to Palestine. It remained a minority outlook among Jews until the Nazi holocaust.

Its predominance among Jews today is one of the results of that most tragic defeat in the history of the people-class — a defeat it was powerless to prevent, and which could only have been prevented by the revolutionary victory of the international working class. That victory was prevented or betrayed by the Socialist and Stalinist political organisations (and, incidentally, to a minor degree, by the Zionist diversion from the class struggle).

Utopian

Living in Nazi Europe and fighting for the socialist revolution, Abram Leon dismissed Zionism as a utopian and reactionary diversion from the real struggle which would liberate humanity, including the Jews. He did not live to see modern Israel become a major client state of American imperialism and its partner in repressing the attempts of the Arabs to escape from backwardness and from the imperialist exploitation which keeps them backward.

Leon also could not have foreseen the post-war temporary revival and stability which gave a new lease of life both to Zionism and particularly to the process of Jewish assimilation. Russia is a peculiar and, in many ways, a special case, but in the two other major Jewish centres, the USA and Israel, the Jews are well on the way to losing their old identity.

In America the Yiddish language is lost, sermons and choirs bring Jewish religious ceremonies towards a Christian pattern, ritual restrictions are dropped and Judaism becomes a marginally distinctive version of the American way of life. Jews have been absorbed into every level of the US class structure and economy, though particularly into the bourgeoisie, and they have been in a position to offer massive aid to Israel, motivated by memories of the gas chambers and the congruent interests of American imperialism.

Israel

In Israel too most of the traditional culture and way of life of the people class (including their traditional radicalism and their internationalism) have also disappeared. The 'Jewish Question' here has been transformed into the problem of the Zionist state of Israel, imperialism's ally against the Arab people.

The twisted logic of a capitalist world has resulted in some of the remnants of one of imperialism's most tragic victims becoming its best defender in this area where imperialism has helped create a Zionist state complete with all the normal features of capitalism, including even racial discrimination against dark-skinned Jews, as well as against the conquered Arabs.

This has been the fate of the utopian Zionist attempt to escape from the situation of the Jewish people under capitalism. Like every other utopian colony known to history, the Zionist one too has turned out to be a reproduction of the world outside. Almost everything the original colonists sought to escape has re-emerged within Israel itself.

It proves the truth which Abram Leon so clearly understood and which led him to a sharp break with Zionism — that there is no escape from the problems of the capitalist world except its total transformation by the revolutionary socialist struggle, and the victory of the working class.

Edward Ellis's TV Watch

Game, set and empire

Now take tennis. There's a dignified sport for you. You don't get riots at tennis matches now, do you? No mass assaults on hordes of foreigners at Wimbledon.

Patriotism, you will notice, is altogether secondary to your average tennis supporter. He, she or it is just as happy cheering on yanks and krauts as giving the old ra ra to the Brits. None of your mob spirit or collective insanity with overgrown macho little brats throwing their sweaty arms around each other in celebration of 'scoring' in a good tennis bout.

There is, of course, a simple and unfortunate explanation. British tennis players are no good. And since the Brits are lucky to get into the quarter-finals it does make it difficult to make a mini-Falklands out of it.

The damn clever thing is that despite the Mother Country's miserable failure to produce more than the odd exception to universal mediocrity — and most of them sound Australian — it has managed to transform tennis into an institution of Englishness second only to the Queen. For two weeks the whole nation watches the sky nervously to see if it's going to rain. The BBC lays on teams of video experts to make sure that even if it does rain — and my god it bucketed it down this year — our entertainment will not be impaired.

All other tennis tournaments in the world are studiously ignored by the Beeb. And so with miraculous certainty millions of people can be transfixed to their TV sets as soon as they get in from work knowledgeably passing information about 'passing shots', 'lobs', and even knowingly wink at one another about the difficult year the Defending Champion has had.

Experts

And so what upsets us, Nation of Tennis Experts we have suddenly become, more than anything else, is when players forget that tennis is not played according to the proper (British) Rules of Cricket (unsurprising as that may be to the casual observer).

A player descending so low, behaving in so ungentlepersonly and un-English a fashion as to protest about a line judge's decision, or the patent loathing of the umpire — that is beyond the pale of decency.

And so nothing, nothing can delight our English minds more than to see an attitude so deplorably alien to our own national temperament get its come-uppance. And so, undisguised, the English tabloid press could positively gloat to see John McEnroe kicked out of the race. 'McEnroe' declared the Daily Mirror. Ha! That'll teach you Megabrat.

And in the end it really doesn't matter that all the best players are visitors. After all, we're providing the tournament. We have provided the world with this dizzying spectacle. When you think about it, we even gave the world Boris Becker.

If it wasn't for Wimbledon who the hell would ever have heard of the little creep?

Football

All this is in sharp contrast to football. Football hooligans — depraved, sick, drunken and worse still poor — can only win for our decaying empire national shame. Football has become a plague visited upon us: and the Whole Nation must do penance for its sins. Never mind that mindless hatred of all things foreign and genocide are the very things that made this country great.

Never mind that the worst excesses of patriotic mass murder have been committed by British governments and applauded by the profit-loving press.

Never mind that xenophobic football fans are the product of this disgusting history. The thing is they are not British...

English Wimbledon keeps us pure in the face of all this shameful adversity. Empires may come and go, but Wimbledon stands eternal — an island of English innocence. And on this small part of West London, every summer — rain clouds notwithstanding — the sun will never set.

Palestine made stupid

Edward Ellis reviews the film 'The Little Drummer Girl', on general release

DIANE Keaton deserves an Oscar. I know she's already got one — or maybe more than one, I can't remember. But she should get another one. I nominate her.

But I'm not thinking of an Oscar for best actress. She deserves an entirely new award — for Daring to Appear in the Film Most Likely to Ruin Your Reputation Because it is Unmitigated Bilge.

I once knew a major in the Australian army who claimed, and I see no reason to disbelieve him, that he had been involved in intelligence in the Pacific and therefore knew all about spying. According to him, John Le Carré novels have got it all off to a tee.

This film is based on the Le Carré novel of the same name. And if the world of spying is really like this, then a funny old world we do live in to be sure.

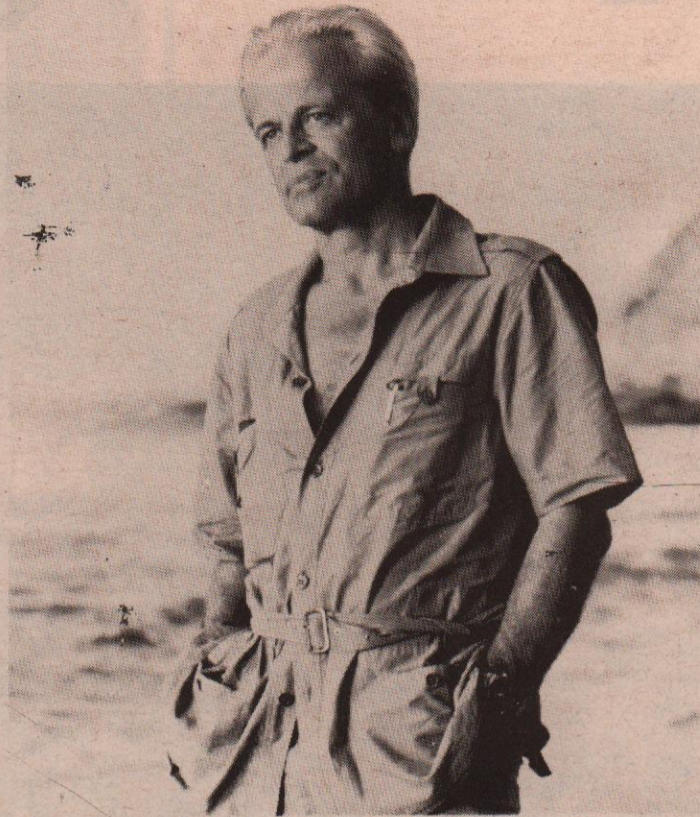
The story is so implausible that you don't know whether to giggle or leave the cinema in disgust — which, to be frank, I would have done if I didn't have to write a review of the film.

Diane Keaton plays an actress who speaks out loudly for all sorts of radical causes, top of her list being the Palestinians. Vanessa Redgrave, eat your heart out.

It turns out however, that she is a compulsive liar, and so shallow of character that she allows her services to be enlisted by the Israeli secret service to do a job on a leading Palestinian terrorist.

Why? Well, because she falls in love with an Israeli secret agent.

Having so convincingly demonstrated her total and



Klaus Kinski, known for his portrayal of Dracula, plays the chief of the Israeli operation

cowardly lack of moral scruple, however, she then goes off to suffer gruelling training in a PLO camp in Lebanon. She goes so far as to watch a nice Israeli spy she knows quite well be shot in the back of the neck, rather than break her own cover.

Helpless female that she is, she then manages to infiltrate right into the centre of terrorist operations to deliver the top dog, the mysterious Kalil. Only at the last moment, when she is spattered rather distressingly with Kalil's blood, does she finally crack and have to go to hospital in shock.

Hm.

This is, of course, just the right time to make this book into a film, being as it is so Topical and Relevant. Leave aside the bigger idiocies — like the idea that a Palestinian would wear a sock over his head to deliver a lecture in Dorset — and you've still got an extraordinarily idiotic film.

The Diane Keaton character, Charlie, flips so inexplicably between gullibility and inner strength and resolve that you begin to wonder if two quite different films have been cut together by mistake. And I only

discovered that her lover had recently been reactivated as an agent, and harboured severe doubts about it all, by reading the press release.

On the face of it, the film tries to be 'balanced' about the issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Palestinians are terrorists — but they may have a point. The Israelis do nasty things, too — but they have no choice.

But in reality this is a deeply anti-Palestinian film — the more so for the effort at balance. It's not so much that the Palestinians are all portrayed as terrorists, their motives never rising much higher than revenge. What is so awful about the film is that even after spending some time — presumably quite a long time — in a Palestinian camp; even though she is supposedly pro-Palestinian anyway; even though she is transparently being used by the Israelis; even though she has absolutely no rational motive whatever to do what she does; Charlie does it all anyway without so much as a bad dream.

The Palestinian cause is so pitifully weak that Charlie is able to go over to the other side completely and irreversibly, and perform acts she can't possibly have had in her before, just because she's in love.

Even the love affair is hopelessly unconvincing. Her original attraction to 'Joseph' was because she thought he was a Palestinian revolutionary. Why she falls in love when the reason for the attraction turns out to be false is a total mystery.

The film has its good moments — one or two hunky Israeli soldiers to be precise. Otherwise avoid it like the plague.

Or better still, for greater intellectual diversion, smash your head through a plate-glass window.

The red and the green?

After the report on the conference of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (which I didn't attend!), this week I'm writing about the AGM of the Socialist Environment and Resources Association (SERA) (which I did attend).

Strangely, we didn't seem to talk much about socialism and the environment. The morning session was taken up with discussions about whether we supported Proportional Representation (yes) or whether we wanted cooperation between the Ecology Party and the Labour Party (no).

We also supported moves by Tony Benn to introduce a Private Member's Bill on a socialist land policy.

The high point of the AGM was the address of Dafydd Elis Thomas (Plaid Cymru MP for Meirionydd and one of SERA's Vice-Presidents) and the ensuing discussion.

He painted Plaid Cymru (PC) as a socialist party with green policies and claimed that the PC candidate in Brecon and Radnor was the only one presenting a socialist case. The PC was also presenting an environmental case, opposing acid rain and nuclear waste dumping in Powys.

Thomas claimed that PC had a better and more coherent



Science

attitude towards nuclear power than Labour. Despite being 'MP for Trawsfynydd', a major supplier of secure jobs in his constituency, Thomas was clearly opposed to nuclear power and to the 'Defence' industry (also major employers in Wales).

Labour had a contradictory approach which Thomas attributed to a fear of being thought to be in favour of putting workers on the dole. PC's answer to this was to develop alternative employment and Thomas called for a Lucas Aerospace-style Plan for the Nuclear and Defence Industries.

Most interesting was Thom-

as's description of PC's general policies and ambitions. PC was in favour of a decentralised socialism, with public ownership based on the community rather than the sort of set-up with the NCB and other 'nationalised' industries.

Thomas argued that if devolution had come about this approach would have led to a situation of workers' control in the Forestry Commission. The failure of devolution (for which Kinnoek is partly blame) left the forests at the mercy of the Tories who are now privatising them.

PC had been fully behind the miners in their fight for their jobs and communities (and Thomas pointed out the environmental harm caused by substituting 'dirty' scab coal from Nottinghamshire for relatively 'clean' Scots and Welsh coal in Britain's power stations).

PC was trying to learn lessons from the women's and anti-racist movements and indeed had helped build links between black and Welsh-speaking communities during the miners' strike. In fact, PC was in the process of setting up its own Black Section.

Speaking of the relations with other socialists, Thomas saw PC's allies as being on the left of the Labour Party and (confusingly) in the Communist Party.

Rather than seeing PC winning outright power in Wales, he spoke of an Alliance of the Left in Wales for Self-Government. This was difficult to achieve at present because, he said, of the paranoia of the Welsh Labour Party towards PC.

A first step might be the agreeing of a Core Programme between the Labour Party, the Communist Party and Plaid Cymru, and he was in favour of standing down PC candidates where a 'good' Labour candidate was standing.

Most surprisingly, he even claimed that if a 'Welsh Section' existed in the Labour Party (replacing the present right-wing Welsh Labour Party with its total lack of a national policy for Wales) then PC might well see no reason to remain a separate party.

No doubt, there may have been an element of rhetoric and exaggeration in Thomas's address, and there is a strong right-wing faction in PC around the other PC MP and former party president Dafydd Wigley.

Nevertheless, the picture of a serious socialist party trying to develop a coherent policy for the environment seemed to me a convincing one. Perhaps in the Labour Party we could learn something from the way PC combines Red and Green policies. What do readers think?

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Pull together!

ON AUGUST 17, 'Women Against Pit Closures' is holding a national conference in Sheffield City Hall.

2000 delegates are expected to discuss "all the major issues facing Women Against Pit Closures".

Heather Wood, chair of 'Save Easington Area Mines' (SEAM), in Durham, and secretary of Easington Women's Action Group, spoke to Gary Scott about her views on the present situation.

Some women have dropped out of the women's groups temporarily. Like a lot of us, they're shattered both mentally and physically. But I think they will come back.

Those who remain active are going to have to pull ourselves together and decide what we're going to do. The main issue at the moment is to look after the lads who've been sacked or jailed. But there's still a need to get across the case for coal.

I think we started the fight against the closure of Horden Colliery. When the NCB first sent out the letters asking the men if they wanted to transfer to other pits, we leafleted and tried to explain what the NCB were trying to do.

We persuaded, I think, about 200 men to send their transfer forms back. We organised a rally at Horden with speakers, and a march and with the cooperation of the union we've had posters printed and badges made.

We still have to get out to the local people. They tend to sit back and think now that the miners have been defeated they can't win anything. We have to say "The fight's not over yet".

The strike's made people aware of a lot of other issues. Women are asking more questions about education, services, health care.

I see that there's a proposal to get a private hospital in Washington. Private health care is something we've discussed and we know we are all against it. Now they're proposing a private hospital, we should get out campaigning.

Everything political we've discussed. In a two hour meeting we get through the lot. We have very informal meetings. Very rarely do we stick to an agenda.

There have been new members coming into the Labour Party in the Easington area. That's always a good thing.

I think our problem is, we're divided into factions. Instead of getting to one meeting and argu-



Arthur Scargill with a cheque from the women's groups. Photo: John Harris, IFL.

ing our cases, we tend to be going to our own little meetings and we never or very rarely get together in one main group. And I don't think we're very tolerant of each other's views.

There's still a lot of people in the Party who resent new members. But new members have a lot to offer.

You find that unless people are adamant they only come to one or two meetings. When they do speak they're not taken notice of and feel as though they're not wanted.

There's also a lot of jargon spoken at Labour Party meetings. New members have to have things explained to them and they're made to feel ignorant.

But we have some new members and that's done some good though not as much as I would have liked.

Women have joined Labour

women's sections, but the way the strike ended was like being hit with a big stone, because we all believed we could win. Most women feel dizzy and mixed up so they can't see where they're going. We have to pull ourselves together and regroup and go out again.

National Women Against Pit Closures have suggested that it has to be made up 75% of miners' wives. It's called Women Against Pit Closures, but it may as well be the National Miners' Wives. 75% miners' wives, I think that's wrong. It goes against their whole argument, which is that the whole community is affected by pit closures.

To me we already have a national women's movement and that's the women's movement within the Labour Party. But Women Against Pit Closures also says it should have

nothing to do with the Labour Party. It doesn't say it shouldn't have anything to do with the Communist Party or the Tory Party. But if there's any party it can relate to, it's the Labour Party.

Those are the two main things that annoy me. We shouldn't have a separate movement from the Labour Movement.

To me the Women Against Pit Closures is a few people jumping on a band wagon, after a little bit of power, if they create their own movement then they can have that power. If they advised women to join the Labour Movement, there's already people in the movement with power, so these new women won't have the power that they think they have. I think they're getting away from the grass roots women and getting more involved in red tape.

Scottish witch hunt

Continued from page 12

But at the February meeting of the CLP my nomination was rejected. It was argued that my views were too extreme and I was too close to Militant, because I was known for selling the Militant. They said that I was "politically unsuitable".

The CLPs decision was endorsed by a meeting of the Labour Party Scottish Executive in Glasgow. After our appeal to the Scottish Executive was knocked back we began to campaign against this. We got placards made, leafleted the local Labour Club, turned up with leaflets and placards to General Management Committee meetings and went to the press.

We assumed that Militant would support us because the whole branch supported the nomination. But Militant told us to back off — in other words we should lie down and accept it.

When I was threatened with expulsion and the branch with suspension, we wanted to campaign against this. But Militant said that the suspension did not matter as the summer break was coming up, and that I should let the expulsion go ahead and then campaign for reinstatement.

The ironic part of this is that the two local Party members who were still Militant supporters by this time voted with the right wing at a branch meeting. When the Executive Committee members saw the division, they decided to move. If the split had not occurred, then they would not have moved.

At the June meeting of the CLP I was expelled. They argued that I had brought the Labour Party into disrepute on the grounds that I had gone to the press and motivated our branch to fight against the constitution. The CLP also voted to suspend the branch for three months.

It was a kangaroo court. A number of our delegates did not go because they were so sickened. We went and made a statement and then walked out. The two remaining Militant supporters on the GMC were more vociferous than the right wing in denouncing us. As we walked out, they shouted out that we were cowards and had not got the guts to fight.

At the June meeting of the

Tranent branch there was total backing for George. A two-thirds majority voted not to accept the expulsion or the suspension, to campaign against them and to get publicity by whatever means possible.

We regard ourselves as the Labour Party in Tranent, and since then we have put out 3,000 leaflets calling for support. The campaign is being paid for out of the branch members' own pockets, but the right wing is already starting to put smears around about misappropriation of funds.

In fact, the branch has no funds left at all. By a 46 to 1 vote we decided to donate the entire funds to the appeal for victimised miners.

The most recent meeting of our branch was on July 2. It was unconstitutional, but there were 14 of us there, with eight apologies. All the branch officers were there, and I was in the chair as usual.

We agreed to carry on with leafletting, raise funds for the campaign, hold a public meeting, and organise a membership drive to recruit people to the Tranent Labour Party branch. Nothing has changed for us in Tranent. We are the Labour Party, and we have the support of our members."

Groundwork

As the Labour Party bureaucracy and the trade union barons prepare the groundwork for a full-scale witch-hunt, it is more vital than ever that socialists support the fightback against the witch-hunt in East Lothian.

Move resolutions in Labour Party branches and branches of affiliated unions demanding: reinstatement of George Thomson; lifting of the suspension of Tranent Labour Party branch and recognition of it as the official branch; endorsement of George Thomson's nomination for the Lothian Regional Council panel.

Send resolutions to: Labour Party Scottish Executive, c/o Keir Hardie House, 1 Lynedoch Place, Glasgow, East Lothian, CLP, c/o N. Foy, High Street, Tranent, East Lothian; Tranent Labour Party Branch, c/o the Secretary, T Kerr, 92 John Crescent, Tranent, East Lothian, to which address donations and/or requests for speakers should also be sent.

Mansfield 55 trial

THE TRIAL of the 'Mansfield 55' has completed the third of its expected ten weeks.

18 people, mostly miners from Coventry, are the first of the 55 on trial for alleged 'riot' in May 1984.

Nottingham police claim that a riot happened after the great rally in Mansfield on May 14 at which Arthur Scargill spoke.

The police are very sensitive about information coming out in the case about the role of Special Branch and more generalised intelligence gathering activities. An

attempt to gain access to "debriefing forms" filled in by the police was successful in part. The forms list numbers of injured and arrested and any intelligence gathered on the day.

Defence counsel suggested that a hard line by police in preventing picketing of nearby pits after the rally and the clubbing of demonstrators by police which led to crowd chants of 'Bastards' lay behind the day's events.

The police role in the lurid press coverage of the events formed another line of questioning by the defence. Chief Constable McLoughlin had

held a press conference the day after the rally at which he called for stiffer prison sentences. Police claimed that 21 people had been taken to hospital when only four had, and a video newsreel contained violent scenes rerun from a previous occasion.

The judge blocked a question as to whose decision it had been in the first place to make the charge one of riot. Holford had previously said that the decision had been taken by a number of senior police officers including the Chief Constable but he could not recall McLoughlin's speech about "taking the

gloves off in the cold war". Holford had considerable difficulty throughout in keeping his verbal evidence in conformity with his written statements.

Police claims that coaches had been escorted to the motorway in order to show them the way were ridiculed by evidence that two double decker buses from Coventry had been escorted to the motorway intersection by no fewer than 12 police transit vans, a Jaguar car and a police motorcyclist. "It would seem to be an excessive use of valuable resources" commented the chief traffic cop.

LCC in Glasgow

Attempts by Labour Coordinating Committee members and other like-minded people in Hillhead CLP to expel left wing journalist Ian Sutherland came unstuck at the June meeting of the CLP's North branch.

The basis for the expulsion was to be that Ian Sutherland had slandered a Labour councillor in the Tory press (the Glasgow Herald, which is in fact SDP/Liberal included) and thereby brought the Labour Party into disrepute, etc., etc.

It was pointed out that no slander had in fact taken place and the calls for expulsion died

away.

Instead, the branch passed a resolution which: claimed that Ian Sutherland's journalistic activities called into question his commitment to the Labour Party; banned Ian Sutherland from holding any office for the next three years; and called on Tribune, Labour Weekly, New Socialist, etc., to no longer use material supplied by Ian Sutherland.

There is no clause in the Labour Party constitution which permits a branch to impose a ban from office on members.

Socialist Organiser

LP ward suspended in Lothian

Witch-hunt!

By Stan Crooke

By-election message to Tories

THE REASON why the Alliance won the Brecon and Radnor by-election was that the Tory vote collapsed down to a mere 28%, and the massive swell of defecting Tories artificially topped up the Liberal vote to put it 500 above Labour.

But — unless the Tory party is about to go under, and there are no grounds so far for thinking that it is — it is not at all likely that the same thing would happen in a general election.

In an election to choose a government a bigger regular Tory vote would hold together, and the Alliance would not overtop Labour as it did in Brecon and Radnor. As the obvious alternative government, Labour would probably gain most of the 'floating' anti-Tory vote. The Liberals would not, and still less the SDP wing of the Alliance.

The message for Labour from the by-election defeat is therefore encouraging: it says that Labour can win the next general election.

The Alliance are not "on their way" unless they can hope to replace the Tories at the next general election.

Labour comes out of the by-election as the alternative government; the Alliance comes out of it as little more than what the Liberal Party has been at many by-elections in the past 20 years, a safety-valve protest vote.

The labour movement must begin now to organise and to campaign for the next general election.

Jeremy Corbyn reports:



GET OUT!

THE RESULT of the Brecon by-election was a very large increase in the Labour vote; an only slightly larger increase in the Liberal/Alliance vote; and a very heavy defeat for the Tory party.

While it is very unfortunate that Labour did not succeed in winning the election, you can't deny that there has been a very large increase in our support in that area, where there is not considered

Jeremy Corbyn MP

to be anything like a 'natural' Labour majority.

It is absolutely disgraceful that the leader of the Party and the deputy leader should use the result as yet another means of attacking Arthur Scargill and the NUM, and those of us who have prom-

ted the miners' amnesty bill.

It seems to me that the people that they should be attacking are the Tory party and the Alliance.

A lot of people at a great distance from Brecon have decided that Arthur Scargill is the bogeyman of the

second half of the '80s. My own canvassing experience in Brecon, limited as it was, was that people were appalled at the government's treatment of young unemployed people, and appalled at the way that miners had been treated before, during and after the strike.

There was certainly no criticism of Arthur Scargill and Tony Benn for pushing for an amnesty.

AT its June meeting, the arch-right wing East Lothian CLP voted to expel George Thomson (chairperson of the Tranent branch of the Constituency) and suspend the Tranent branch for three months.

George Thomson and Tommy Kerr (secretary of the Tranent branch) spoke to Socialist Organiser about the background to this:

"Until recently the Tranent branch was moribund and right wing. Membership had declined continuously over ten years down to 60, with only five turning up to meetings, which were regularly inquorate.

At the January 1984 Annual General Meeting of the branch we and other good socialists got elected to the officer bearers' positions. At that time we were Militant supporters. We built up the membership over the next one and a half years to 170, with the result that the right wing was completely isolated and stopped coming to meetings.

A sign of what was to come occurred last year during the miners' strike. The local District Councillor, Tommy Ferguson, a member of NACODS, abused and swore at NUM official pickets at Monktonhall. After we had been approached by the local NUM strike committee, we summoned him to a special branch meeting.

But he did not come. Instead, he sent in a letter of resignation from the Council, which he later withdrew. When he did appear at a branch meeting, we took him apart politically. But apart that members of the CLP Executive Committee started attending our meetings and started policing us. That set the tone for this year.

At the January AGM this year, I was nominated unopposed for the Regional Council panel. There were 50 at the meeting including the sitting councillor, George McNeill, an old-school right-winger, who did not oppose the nomination. The branch thought it was time for a change and wanted a left-wing socialist as councillor.

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Rebel councils move towards confrontation

Prepare for strikes!

Despite Lambeth Council's decision on July 3 to set a legal rate, Liverpool and Edinburgh councils are still defying the Tories.

Liverpool has set an unbalanced budget. In line with Liverpool Labour's manifesto commitment to no cuts and no massive rate rises, the budget proposes to spend far more than foreseeable income. Only £30 million extra grant from central government, plus restoration of £88 million penalties, could balance it.

Council shop stewards are pledged to industrial action when the courts, the government or the banks move decisively against Liverpool. This will at latest be September or October, when the council runs out of money.

Edinburgh is refusing government instructions to cut its rates and raise its rents.

In Lambeth, council leader Ted Knight says that Labour is now set on an unbalanced budget, and surcharges against councillors could come to more than £1 million.

Certificates of surcharge are expected to be delivered in

Lambeth and Liverpool in the second half of this month.

Meanwhile, three conferences will be discussing the labour movement's response on this and also on next year's local government budgets.

On July 13 the national committee of local government shop stewards meets. On July 20 the Local Government Information Unit has called a conference for all council Labour groups and City/District/County Labour Parties. On July 27 there is a London Labour Party conference for Labour groups and Local Government Committees.

We urge Socialist Organiser readers to get delegated to these conferences and argue for a fighting policy.

Local authority trade unionists should commit themselves to industrial action as soon as the rebel councils are prevented from functioning — by surcharges, by other court or government action, or by banks cutting off credit.

Trade unionists outside the rebel councils should also fight for solidarity action at whatever time the workers in those

councils strike and and call for such solidarity.

In every Labour authority, trade unionists and councillors should work out a programme of strike action, trade union occupation of Town Halls and administration of emergency services, and stopping debt payments, to spread the confrontation.

This programme should be linked into the fight over next year's budgets and over the abolition of the GLC and metropolitan authorities.

The Greenwich proposal to postpone setting a rate until after the May elections so that reselection of councillors can have its full influence on 1986-7 budget policy, should be supported.

But the most important thing is to start now to build campaign committees uniting Labour councillors, council trade unions, other local trade unions, Labour Parties, tenants' associations and community groups. Policy should be decided through such committees, and not handed down by council leaders.

The strategy should be: unbalanced budgets, based on no cuts, no rent rises, and no rate rises above inflation; followed by strikes, occupations, rent strikes, and a block on debt payments when the courts, the government, or the banks stop the council functioning.

The demands must be for full restoration of central government grant; continuation of the metropolitan authorities; repeal of the penalties system, the Rates Act and the similar legislation in Scotland; and a facility for councils to borrow at low rates of interest, so that services are not crippled by payments to moneylenders.

The labour movement must stand ready to link this broader fight for local democracy and local services with the present struggle of the threatened councils. Any confrontation should be extended into a full-scale struggle round the general demands. Otherwise we give the Tories the chance to pick off Labour authorities one by one.