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No.270 15 May 1986 30p Claimants and strikers 15p

WAPPING: NO SELL OUT!

The danger of a sell out is looming large in the News International dispute.

The print union leadership has asked the trade union bank Unity Trust to look into Murdoch's offer of the Grays Inn Road printing plant and £15 million in 'compensation' or redundancy money. They have also commissioned FT Chief Executive Frank Barker to estimate the value of the Grays Inn Rd site.

This is further evidence of a possible dirty deal with Murdoch. SOGAT National Officer, Bill Miles, has already said "There is a sincere effort on both sides to find a solution".

A deal along these lines would not be a solution but a disaster for the printworkers.

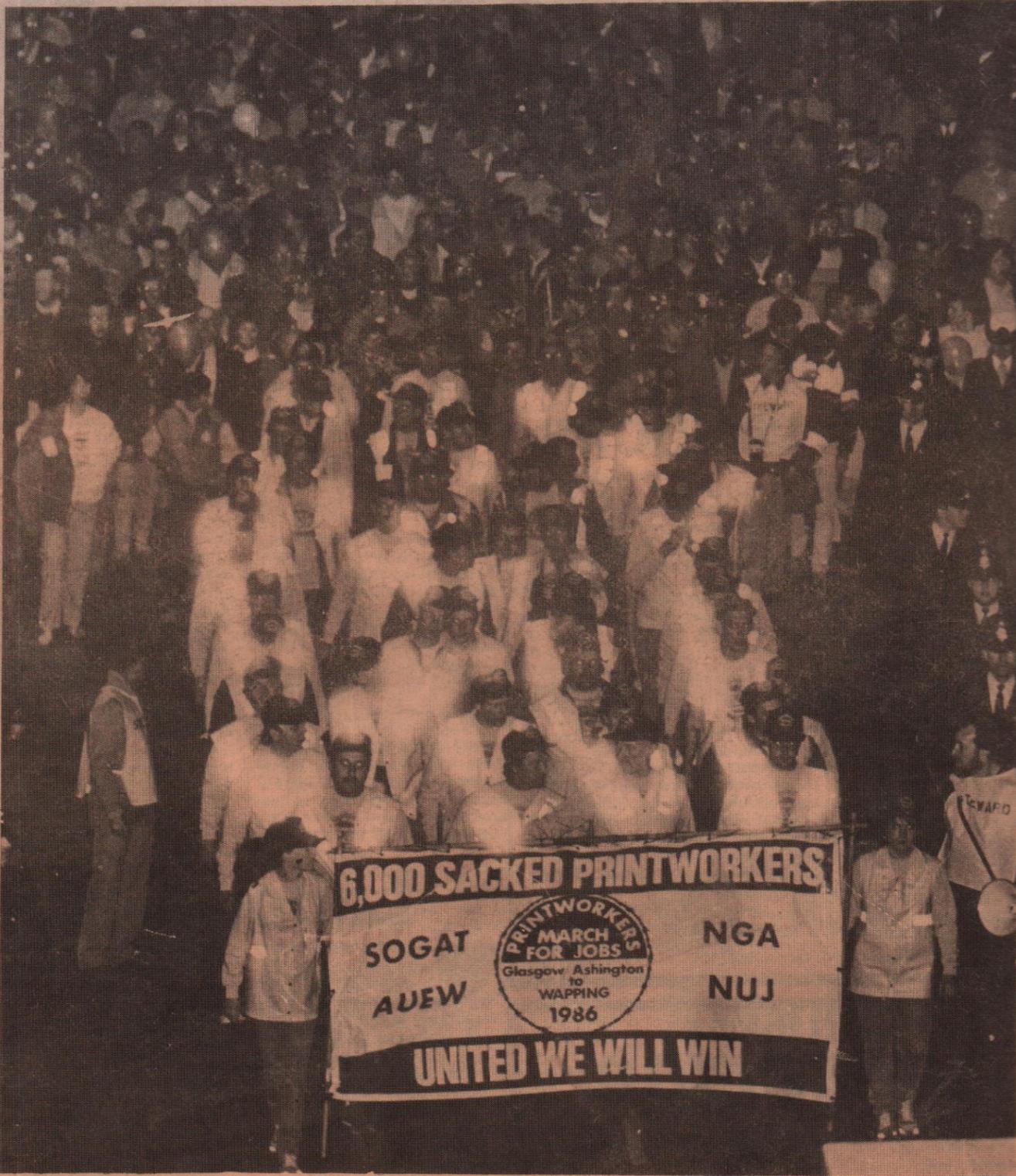
It would mean accepting that all the printers can hope for is not reinstatement and union recognition but a few crumbs from Murdoch's table.

The majority on the SOGAT Executive, led by Brenda Dean, appear to be content to haggle about the extent of any 'compensation' or redundancy payments to the News International strikers. They have given up on every other issue.

But rank and file strikers whose jobs and livelihoods are at stake cannot afford to give up.

Next Monday's mass meeting of News International strikers

Continued on p.2



Demonstration to Wapping. Photo: Andrew Wiard (Report).

CATASTROPHE AT CHERNOBYL p5

Tower Hamlets

By councillor Susan Carlyle

ALTHOUGH the Labour Party lost control of the council at the local elections, Tower Hamlets borough is far from lost. We won 24 seats out of 50, despite a vicious campaign and media predictions. We lost because people were fed up with previous Labour inaction which Liberal Focus Teams could cash in on.

The Labour Party, thwarted by a right-wing led council, has had to re-form and re-orientate to campaign on the estates and defend working-class interests.

In this we were successful. Labour's share of the poll was 47%, to the Liberals' 32%. There is only 1 SDP, and the new administration, which is Liberal, not Alliance, has a majority of only two. The Liberals lost seats and some experienced councillors and will have difficulty maintaining a team.

Labour's losses, particularly in Lansbury ward, are as a direct consequence of Mayor Paul Beasley's standing as an Independent. Beasley and other renegades who had not really been part of the labour movement for years, were able to muster a mere 400 votes, but that allowed the Liberals through.

Blackwall ward failed to return both Labour candidates as a racist vote emerged, with the Bengali Labour candidate receiving less support than the white one. Some ballot papers had only one vote cast. So the SDP councillor was returned on a racist ballot.

However, elsewhere the selections of Bengali candidates were successful. Five were returned within a Labour group of 24. In Bethnal Green two wards increased the

vote with black candidates, a vindication of Labour policies of positive reselection.

The Tory vote was hardly noticeable except that it equalled the fascist vote in the two wards where they stood. The National Front polled a higher vote than in their heyday of 1978, so there is no room for complacency.

Even though the final result is not as good as it seems for the new Tory Liberals who will be trying to implement immediate decentralisation through neighbourhood committees, powerful opposition has to be mounted. The Liberal plans mean privatisation of estates to bail them out of housing finance problems and to increase home ownership at the expense of the homeless and council tenants. The next would be council services.

Handful

The new Labour group carries a handful of the old guard, but in the main is composed of activists who, although new to office, have experience of fighting decades of neglect on all kinds of issues. Links with the trade unions and community groups can be strengthened to create a formidable opposition.

The first action after the first consultative leadership conference will be to picket as a group at Wapping and show solidarity. The last (Labour) administration gave token support to the printers. The Liberals openly support Murdoch.

Labour Party action will expose the Liberals for what they are and begin to reverse the election setback.

Scots councils

VOTING IN the Regional Council elections in Scotland on 8 May saw major losses for the Tories, mostly to the benefit of Labour. Overall, the Tories lost 50 seats, Labour won 31, the SDP/Liberal Alliance 14, and the SNP 11. Independent councillors also lost 7 seats.

The Tories lost control of Lothian, Tayside and Grampian Regional Councils. They now control no Regional Councils and only a handful of District Councils in Scotland. In Glasgow they now have no MPs, no Regional Councillors, and only five District Councillors. In Dumfries and Galloway they were completely wiped out.

If last week's voting patterns were repeated in a general election, then six Tory MPs would lose their seats, including Defence Secretary George Younger and Scottish Secretary Michael Ancram.

Both the Alliance and the

Scottish Nationalists (SNP) picked up seats at the Tories' expense, but neither did as well as they had predicted. With the exception of the Borders and Grampian, Labour picked up more seats on all Regional Councils, maintaining control of three, winning a fourth, and possibly forming minority or coalition administrations in another three.

Communist Party candidates were uniformly bottom of the poll where they stood, save in the two constituencies where the Revolutionary Communist Party put up candidates. The 'party of the future' won 74 votes in Glasgow and 46 in Edinburgh.

The only serious challenge to Labour from the left was in East Lothian, where expelled Labour Party member George Thomson stood as 'Independent Labour' and won 2,356 votes, as against 2,840 for the 'Official Labour' candidate who had been parachuted in.

WAPPING: NO SELL OUT

Continued from p.1

should give Dean a rough ride.

The strikers should reject the executive's attempt to "taper down" the demands of the strike and instead plan the action needed to escalate the dispute.

* step up the picketing at Wapping

* step up the picketing of Worthing, Glasgow and Bristol

* continue to campaign for boycott action of the News International papers and pickets of distribution depots

* campaign for a one day Fleet Street strike in solidarity with NI strikers as a stepping stone to more sustained action

* link up the fight against Murdoch with that in defence of jobs, conditions and union organisation at the Telegraph

Shutting down Fleet Street won't help Murdoch

By Cate Murphy

THE STRONGEST argument amongst printworkers against a Fleet Street-wide strike in solidarity with the News International strikers is that it would take the pressure off Murdoch, leaving him with no competition and therefore a clear field to make massive profits.

This argument is not as strong as it might seem. For a start, if the whole of Fleet Street's 30,000 printers did come out they could form a massive army of pickets with a real chance of shutting down Fortress Wapping and preventing Murdoch from getting any papers out. How would he make profits then?

Such a stand would inspire other trade unionists to deliver the kind of solidarity the printers need for victory.

Despite what Dean and Dubbins might say, an all out Fleet Street strike would not reduce it would increase the pressure on Murdoch.

Every other press baron and newspaper distributor would be screaming at Murdoch to settle because of the loss of revenue they would be facing.

This is what happened in 1983 when the print unions pulled out Fleet Street during the Stockport Messenger dispute. After 2 days the press barons' threat of a lock-out collapsed and Robert Maxwell offered to buy out Eddie Shah as a way of settling the dispute.

It was only the NGA's hesitation and the TUC's collapse in the fact of legal assaults from the courts which led to defeat. The policy of pulling out Fleet Street was a success.

Right now the policy of the print union leadership of doing everything possible not to let a second front open up in the



national newspaper industry, is not putting the pressure on Murdoch but on every printworker.

Bosses across the whole of the national industry have been able to use the example and the competitive pressure of the Wapping scabs plant, and to a lesser extent, Eddie Shah's 'Today' to attack jobs, conditions and union organisation. Major redundancies have gone through at the Mirror and the Express without a fight and more job cuts are on the way at the Telegraph, Financial Times, Mail and the Guardian.

Clearly, Dean and Dubbins' policy has not worked. The conditions prevailing in the newspaper industry right now make it difficult to imagine how it could have worked.

The answer is not a further retreat but to stand and fight.

Fleet Street out!

Defend the picket line

AFTER THE police riot outside Wapping on 3 May, a lot of strikers hoped that Brenda Dean's get-together with top police officers at the end of last week would lead to a change in the police's tactics on the picket line.

There was, said Dean, a 'new understanding' between the police and pickets.

This 'new understanding' never materialised. Although last Saturday's picket (10 May) started off quietly, it ended up with chief picket marshal Michael Britton pinned to the road by several riot cops standing on him. There were at least 41

arrests as baton-wielding and mounted police yet again ploughed into the pickets without provocation.

The solution to such police violence, thuggery and intimidation is not to try and make peacekeeping deals with the police which the police will break, but to defend the picket line.

The better organised, disciplined, and stewarded a picket is, the stronger it will be. Every chapel and branch that mobilises for Wapping should stick together, prepared to hold the line against the policed with the strongest and fittest pickets at the front.

Labour resolutions

RESOLUTIONS for this year's Labour Party conference are due in by 4 July. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and the Black Sections have published model resolutions, and we print one of each below.

Full details of all the CLPD models can be got from CLPD, 10 Park Drive, London NW11 7SH; and of the Black Sections models, from Paul Sharma, 01-278 4444 x 2813 or 01-340 5800. Socialist Organiser will also be producing model resolutions of our own, and they will be printed in the next issue of the paper.

When putting motions to Labour Parties and trade unions, it is essential to vary the wording of the model texts slightly, because identical motions do not

get composited.

CLPD model motion on reselection

Conference welcomes the NEC statement to the 1985 conference that it would not be proposing changes in parliamentary reselection procedures to the 1986 conference, and regrets that, despite this assurance, the NEC has since set up a working party to report to this year's conference on proposals for a new system of selection and reselection.

Conference is not opposed to improvements, but believes that trade unions and other affiliated bodies should retain their existing right to participate in the final decision. Conference also considers it essential to main-

tain the accountability of MPs at the level provided by the present system, so as to ensure that the Parliamentary Labour Party carries out the policies decided by Party conference. The only way this can be done is if reselections are carried out by the same body to which the MP reports month by month on the work of the PLP in opposition and in government.

Conference believes that the issue of reselection is a divisive one and that to reopen the argument over new proposals now would undermine party unity. Conference therefore calls on the NEC to refrain from bringing up such proposals at this time. Let us concentrate all our efforts on winning the General Election.

BLACK SECTIONS MOTION

This Conference welcomes the increased representation of Black people at all levels within the Labour Party over the last year. Conference believes that this progress has been greatest in constituencies with Black Sections.

Despite this Black people are still under-represented at every level of the Party.

Conference notes with regret the failure of the 'Black and Asian Advisory Committee', recommended by the NEC and established by conference last year.

Conference instructs the NEC to implement the recommendation of its own Working Party which reported strongly in favour of establishing Black Sections at every level of the Party on the same lines as the Women's Sections and Youth Sections.

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BUILDING A SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN FOR LABOUR

THE ELECTIONS last Thursday were a resounding and welcome defeat for the Tory government. In addition to losing the Ryedale by-election to the Liberals, and only narrowly holding Derbyshire West, the Tories were routed in the local council elections.

The Tories lost a total of 554 local council seats. The SDP/Liberal Alliance gained 281, while the Labour Party gained 412 seats.

A great success for the New Model Labour Party, and proof of Neil Kinnock's electoral marketability? Perhaps. The results were excellent for Labour, and suggest that if the Tories were to call an election now then Labour would be the major contender for power.

But the credit does not belong to the new, bland, safe, pro-capitalist profile which Neil Kinnock is trying to construct for Labour. Where Labour appeared to the electors as left-wing, it did as well as or better than where it appeared as 'moderate'. In Liverpool, Labour maintained its control of the council, against much speculation that the Liberals would cash in dramatically on the fiasco of the council's campaign against the Tories. In Lambeth and in Haringey, where left-wing council leaders have been singled out for the Tories' pillory, Labour also did well.

Real

Some right-wing Labour councils did badly. Tower Hamlets, in London's East End, was lost to the Alliance.

So New Model Labourism is not the only, or the best, way to win elections.

And it is the opposite of what is needed to organise a real fight in defence of workers' interests against the Tory attacks.

Local Labour Parties need to follow up last Thursday's success by organising outward-going campaigns in defence of working-class interests.

We need socialist policies. For full employment, workers should share out the work by cutting hours with no loss in pay. Wages should be linked to prices to prevent living standards declining.

Public money should be spent on useful works — homes for people, new and better-equipped hospitals, rather than nuclear and conventional weapons of destruction.

There should be equal rights for women — equal pay for equal work. There should be free nursery provision to enable women with children to go out to work and to



Labour's Freedom and Fairness Campaign gets under way. Jack Cunningham, Neil Kinnock and Hannah Roberts. Photo: Jez Coulson, IFL.

have free time of their own. All restrictions on abortion rights should be lifted.

Lesbians and gay men should have equal rights.

Black men and women should be free from racist attacks, discrimination, and inequality. There should be an end to immigration controls.

State repression has to be fought — on the picket lines and in the inner cities. All anti-union laws should be repealed. The police and armed forces are subject to no democratic control and are at the beck and call of the bosses. We must fight for public accountability, and beyond that for the disbandment of the established hierarchies: working-class communities should police themselves and run their own affairs.

The decisive sectors of the economy should

be taken out of the hands of the profiteers and into the hands of the working class, to be run democratically in the interests of working people.

We need to fight for effective solidarity with the struggles of workers and oppressed peoples internationally — in South Africa, Central America, Poland, Afghanistan. Labour should fight for withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and for a united, independent Ireland with some federal arrangement safeguarding the rights of the Protestant minority.

Action

Equally, we need to fight for international working-class action against unemployment, low wages, etc., and not be duped by 'little England' nationalist solutions to our economic ills. Our alternative to the capitalist EEC is not 'Britain out' but a United Socialist States of Europe. Bosses are bosses and workers are workers, whatever their nationality; and we have more interests in common with workers everywhere than we do with British bosses.

We need to fight now for such policies — working-class socialist policies. By turning Labour Parties, trade unions, and trades councils outwards, making them energetic class-struggle bodies, we can prepare the way for a government that can implement these policies: a real, militant working-class government that relies on the struggles, strength and organisation of rank and file workers to destroy the power of big business.

Neil Kinnock and Labour officialdom are headed in the opposite direction. But, however slick the political marketplace becomes, class struggle continues. Local Labour Parties should fight for socialist policies in the next election — whatever the policies of the Labour Party nationally. We need an alternative, socialist, election campaign within the overall drive for Labour victory. The Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory exists to help Labour activists mount that campaign.

Last Thursday's results may increase pressure for Labour to do a deal with the Alliance. The same voting patterns, in a general election, would give Labour 37% of the

poll — ahead of the Tories' 34% and the Alliance's 27%, but not enough to form a majority government.

Coalitionism is a real threat to the labour movement. Labour/Alliance coalitions in local authorities could be dummy runs for a coalition at a national level.

The smell of coalitionism has been in the air ever since the General Election of 1983. Neil Kinnock is known to admire Eurocommunist academic Eric Hobsbawm, who argues openly for an 'anti-Thatcher alliance'.

Labour Party chair Neville Hough has hinted at a coalition. He was officially rapped over the knuckles, but he showed the way the wind is blowing.

It would be bad news for Labour, and worse news for working-class people. A Neil Kinnock with his hands tied by Dr Death Owen would have the ideal let-out from any rank and file pressure.

The pressure needs to be put on now, so that the Labour Party tops do not dare think about a coalition if the opportunity should ever arise.

Relaunch 12 June

Socialist Organiser will be fortnightly while we prepare for our re-launch on 12 June. The paper will then be weekly again, redesigned and zappier.

We apologise to our readers for the two weeks that will be missed in the meantime.

The last SO was numbered wrongly. Instead of no.270, it was actually no. 269. This is no.270.

A NEW TAFF VALE?

LAST WEEK the rail unions were successfully sued for damages by a Yorkshire businessman. Backed up by the right-wing Freedom Association, retired naval officer Angus Falconer took the NUR and ASLEF to court for costs because an unofficial rail strike in January had made him miss a train and have to stay in London overnight.

He was awarded £153 by the court. Not a grand amount: but it is the green light for employers and their allies to sue unions for damages. Its implications are no less than the Taff Vale decision of 1901.

Then, the Taff Vale Railway Company took legal action against the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants for damages caused by a strike, and was awarded £23,000 compensation. The union had caused a 'breach of contract'.

In 1906 trade unions won immunity for 'breaches of contract' caused by industrial action. That 'immunity' has been the basis of trade unions' legal rights ever since. But now the Tory government has whittled it down to almost nothing.

Under the 'Employment' Act of 1982, most solidarity strikes — 'secondary action' — and 'political' strikes are unlawful. Under the 1984 Trade Union Act, even action by workers at their own place of work against their

own direct employer is unlawful unless there has been a ballot in the forms and manner prescribed by the Tories.

If unions undertake 'unlawful' action, they can be sued for damages. The bigger the union, the heftier the fine that can be extracted from it — £250,000 for each claim on a union over 100,000 strong.

If you walk out in protest at a victimisation, for example, then your employer and his customers and suppliers can ruin your union with court cases. So far, mostly, they have not dared to try. The Falconer case could be the signal for many more.

The policy of trade unions trying to live with the Tory laws is disastrous: if you retreat from these laws, they come after you. Only defiance and resistance can limit their effect.

The Labour Party must be committed to the repeal of the laws that underpin this verdict, and of all Tory anti-union legislation.

Neil Kinnock talks of retaining the legal obligation on unions to hold ballots before strikes. The Falconer case shows that this could leave mechanisms for bosses to cripple any spontaneous strikes. Methods of deciding on strike action should be determined by the workers themselves and not by the State.



Death in police cell

OLD AGE pensioner Henry Foley has died from a beating administered by police sergeant Alwyn Sawyer as he lay handcuffed and helpless on the floor of a police cell in Southport after being arrested for drunkenness.

The beating left the retired bus driver with a ruptured bowel, severely damaged kidneys, a damaged spleen and heavy bruising to face, head, stomach, chest and back.

Sergeant Sawyer is alleged to have stated the beating was an 'act of chastisement'. He admitted to it after an imprint on Mr Foley's shirt was traced to one of his boots.

Home smashed up

Eighteen year old mother Paula Mellor and husband Chris were dragged from their beds by a squad of axe-wielding police who smashed

down their street door and raided their home in the very early hours.

Terrified Paula was forced naked from her bed while police arrested her husband and ransacked their home, smashing furniture and even destroying their little baby's chair.

The raid was one of several carried out by Thames Valley Police which led to six people being arrested. All were later released without being charged.

Shorthouse

Police Constable Brian Chester of Warwickshire has been charged with unlawfully killing John Shorthouse during a raid by armed officers on the Shorthouse home in Kings Norton, Birmingham, last August.

PC Chester shot dead John Shorthouse as he lay in bed. John was only five years old.

Heseltine

Police marksman Anthony Davison has been fined £200 at Plymouth Crown Court for

the theft of a substantial quantity of champagne and spirits. Officer Davison was guarding former defence secretary Michael Heseltine when the theft occurred.

Computer

The Director of Public Prosecutions is investigating a homosexual group of Metropolitan Police officers who are misusing the national police computer.

Gay people who have been arrested by the police and have their personal details stored on the computer may find themselves the unwilling recipients of computer dating by gay police officers.

The sack for telling

Allan McDonald and Roger Boisjoy are patriotic US citizens. They worked hard as engineers on the booster rockets for the Challenger space shuttle.

When they heard that a launch was planned in cold weather, they argued against it. Rubber sealing rings might fail to work at low temperatures.

The launch went ahead and there was a disaster. McDonald and Boisjoy took their evidence to the government commission of inquiry.

What have they earned? A medal? Public thanks from the government?

They have been sacked from their jobs by contractors Morton Thiokol. William Rogers, chair of the commission of inquiry and a former Secretary of State, describes their demotion to other employment as 'shocking'.



Don't let up on abortion rights

By Michele Carlisle

THE anti-abortionists failed in yet another attempt to restrict abortion rights when the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill fell off the end of the Parliamentary agenda. The Bill failed to receive a second reading on 2nd May.

It has another chance on 6th June if one of the MPs who has a day gives it time. But even then it is unlikely to become law.

Tory MP Kenneth Hargreaves proposed the Bill, which is a virtual replica of the Powell Bill, in order to restrict embryo research, in-vitro fertilisation and abortion and contraception rights. The Bill attempted to give the embryo legal status as a human being. Any doctor performing an abortion could be taken to court under the Bill if it becomes law.

Even the inter-uterine device and the morning after pill would have been in jeopardy because they prevent a fertilised egg from implanting in the womb.

Hargreaves denied that the aim of the Bill was to restrict abortion rights, but with support coming from such quarters as the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) and Enoch Powell, it is clear that the Bill was an attack on abortion rights by the back door.

We must not be complacent now that the Bill has gone away. Gillick, Powell — and the Tories who generally support the reactionary ideology behind their attempts to restrict women's reproductive rights, if not their specific tactics or timing — will not just disappear. It is essential that we are ready to defeat it at the next onslaught.

This means organising public meetings, National Abortion Campaign speakers at your Labour Party, LPYS, or Trade Union branches and putting motions through your GC supporting a woman's right to control her own fertility.

Young women particularly must be involved in the struggle for reproductive rights. It is the under 25 age group which utilises their limited access to contraception and abortion to the greatest extent. The Gillick crusade (which isn't over) is a specific attack on young women's rights to contraception, sex education and confidential treatment from doctors.

Trade Unions should also take up the fight for abortion facilities. Less than half of the abortions performed in this country are carried out on the NHS — in areas such as Birmingham the figure is less than 10%.

Abortion facilities are one of the most underfunded sectors of the Health Service. This

means that thousands of women each year are forced to fund up to £300 for an abortion in the private sector and is yet another indication of the way the NHS is being dismantled and privatised. Most of the major trade unions have policy in support of abortion rights and we must ensure that they act on this policy.

The Labour Party also has policy in support of a woman's right to abortion and against the conscience vote for Labour

Conference: "ABORTION AND CONTRACEPTION FACILITIES — WHAT DO NHS CUTS REALLY MEAN?" Saturday May 31st, 10.30 am — 4.30 pm. Swiss Cottage Community Centre, Winchester Rd, London NW3. Details: Trade Union Liaison Committee, National Abortion Campaign: 01 405 4801.

MPs. A woman's right to abortion is not an issue for the consciences of individual Labour MPs — it is a political issue.

A woman's right to control her own fertility must be a demand from all socialists, and Labour MPs must be forced to abide by the conference decision on the subject.

Over 80% of the population believe that a woman has a right to abortion so it's not even a vote-losing issue!

We have been defending the 1967 Abortion Act ever since it was passed. It is an inadequate law, giving doctors the power to decide who can have an abortion and who can't.

The Act does give us some access to abortion and we must defend it. But we must not forget that what we want is free abortion and contraception on demand, a woman's right to control her own fertility. This must be one of our demands leading up to the next election.

Bundled off to Bute

By Helen McHale

THIS weekend, in the Isle of Bute (where?), the non-event of the Labour Party will be taking place — the national conference of Labour Women.

For those women able to travel the distance and to afford both the time and the cost, there will once again be discussion of the same issues that we in the Labour Party have been fighting for for years — like the right to elect the five women's representatives on the Labour NEC.

This year, to highlight the difference between the choice that we would make and that of the 'men's' conference, the women's conference will be holding shadow elections.

The constitutional demands of the women's conference are overwhelmingly supported on its conference floor, with only the Militant putting up any opposition. These demands should be supported by all socialists.

But they have now reached their limits in drawing women into political activity and into the Labour Party, and the women's sections need to take up other issues.

Among the constitutional resolutions, there are many condemning the inquiry into Liverpool District Labour Party and opposing all expulsions. It is almost certain that the women's conference will

overwhelmingly condemn expulsions, and this is a sign of the difference between this conference and Labour Party national conference.

Other issues to be discussed include child care provision, housing, local government, women's reproductive rights, women's employment, privatisation, Northern Ireland, sexual harassment, and South Africa. There is one tame resolution on both racism and lesbian and gay rights.

There will be few issues of real contention, with the possible exception of South Africa, where there is bound to be a heated debate about direct links and the South Africa Labour Education Project. In this debate it is important that comrades differentiate the issue of direct links and that of SALEP, and that women other than Militant argue for direct links.

The Labour Party women's organisation could and should be a major force in the fight back against the witch-hunt, and indeed throughout the Labour Party. Unfortunately it is trapped by its own powerlessness and by the willingness of some of its leading members to be taken in tow by the local government left.

The Labour Party women's organisation needs to adopt an outward, campaigning perspective, and attempt to address the real needs of working-class women.



The party of law and order?

MP's murder plot

By Jim Fraser

A Conservative Member of Parliament is the leading figure in a plot to kidnap and murder a top journalist in order to stop investigations into extremism in the Tory Party.

The much-respected anti-fascist magazine Searchlight alleges in its April edition that the Tory MP linked up with a private security firm that includes two former senior military officers on its Board of Directors and planned to "deal" with Gerry Gable, a journalist employed by Searchlight. They believed Gable responsible for exposing a frightening catalogue of links between the Conservative Party and extreme right-wing organisations both in Britain and overseas, and the "deep entrenchment" of the extreme right into the Conservative Party.

Their plan was: "Gerry Gable's movements and the Searchlight offices would be monitored... He would then be abducted, first to a farm in Berkshire, and then to a safehouse in Dorset; there he would be "interrogated" to discover what other investigations concerning

the MP were in progress; when any public interest in his disappearance had died down, he would be killed and his body disposed of."

This plot has been confirmed by the police, and a full report was given to Margaret Thatcher some months ago at a meeting in Downing Street, and to Lord Bridge, the then chairman of the Security Commission.

However as yet no action appears to have been taken against the Tory MP, and the attitude of the Conservative leadership seems to have been to sweep the whole thing under the carpet.

While the media and leaders of all political parties continually scream about left wing extremism, and particularly the Militant Tendency, there is almost total silence about the extreme right. A blind eye is turned not only to activities linking Tories and National Front, Tories and paramilitary Nazis overseas, and the

take-over of branches of the Young Conservatives and the Federation of Conservative Students by the extreme right wing, but also to this attempted murder.

It is intolerable that a Conservative MP should hire professional assassins to murder someone. It is equally intolerable that the Prime Minister takes no action against him.

This Tory MP faces a prima facie case of attempted murder and should be dealt with as such. Those Tory MPs and press barons who are shielding him, and the Prime Minister who is trying to sweep it under the carpet, are guilty of aiding and abetting attempted murder and are accomplices after the fact.

The whole of the labour movement and in particular Neil Kinnock, must publicly demand action against Tory MPs organising kidnapping and murder of journalists to cover up their connections with right wing extremism, and demand either Thatcher expels the extremists or resigns.

After Gerry Gable, who is next?

CATASTROPHE AT CHERNOBYL

IT IS now some three weeks from the start of the world's first major civil nuclear disaster, a disaster predicted and feared by many, but dismissed and pooh-poohed by governments and nuclear industries, both East and West.

In the nature of such disasters, the main effects are yet to be felt but will linger for tens or even hundreds of years.

The Russian bureaucrats must bear a heavy responsibility for the occurrence of the 'accident', but it is sheer chance that it happened first in Russia.

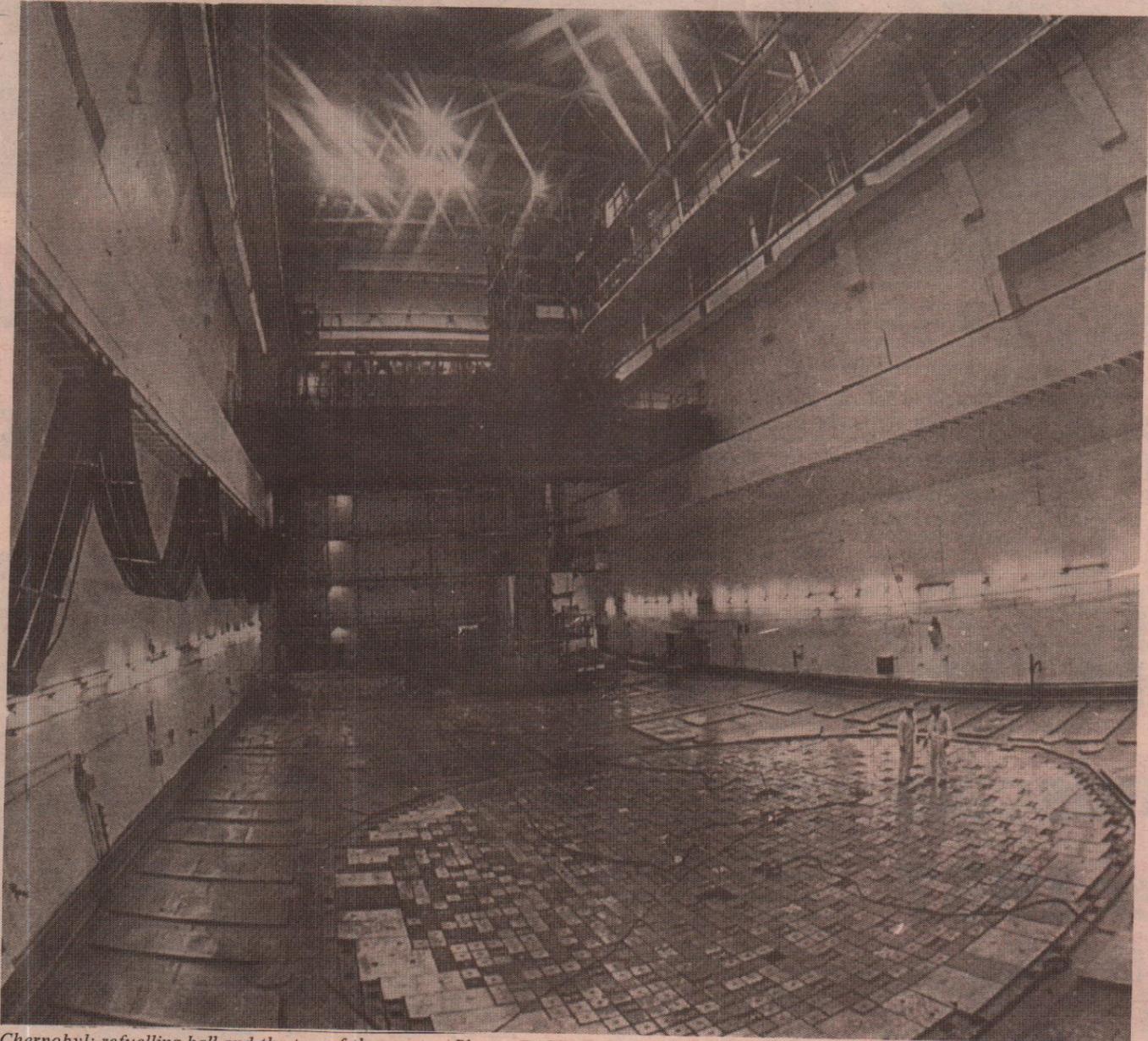
On at least two occasions, similar disasters were close to happening in the US. In Detroit in 1961, the Enrico Fermi fast reactor experienced a run-away chain reaction. Said one nuclear engineer, "We almost lost Detroit".

At Three Mile Island in 1976, a Pressurised Water Reactor came within minutes of a catastrophic meltdown.

In Britain, illnesses and deaths have occurred as a result of a reactor fire at Windscale in 1957.

Revolutionary socialists have usually regarded new technologies as potentially beneficial or at worst neutral to the working class. We have sought merely to place them under the control and management of the working class.

We now have to ask ourselves whether nuclear technology can ever be justified, even in a workers' society.



Chernobyl: refuelling hall and the top of the reactor. Photo: TASS

Pravda tells it like it isn't

"OVER THE country blows the wind of spring", proclaimed the headline in Pravda on 2 May, reporting on the previous day's May Day celebrations. After the Chernobyl disaster it was perhaps not the most appropriate of headlines.

"The spring wind over the country, over Red Square of the capital — this is the fresh wind of renewal at the time of an acute turning point in history", explained the opening paragraph of the lead article, which went on to report how the massed ranks of demonstrators sang out: "Over the country blows the wind of spring, with every day life becomes more pleasant".

The same article did point out: "Never before has such a threatening danger of mass destruction hung over us". Hence the popularity of the official May Day slogan: "The Soviet programme of a non-nuclear world corresponds to the hopes of all peoples".

The freshness of the air was also a theme in the article dealing specifically with the May Day festivities in Kiev, the nearest city to Chernobyl.

"In the spring air there gaily ring out the words of the 1st of May slogan: 'Communists, all workers of the Soviet Union! Strengthen and develop the innovatory spirit of the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union!'," reported the article. It also described how local workers had already been putting the slogan into effect.

"In the first quarter of this year, the volume of production increased by 6.8% by comparison with the same period last year. The productivity of labour increased by 6.7%, which was thus responsible for 99% of the growth in the volume of production..."

According to the article, an important place in the demonstration in Kiev was occupied by members of the Academy of Sciences, who were "confronted by new and serious problems resulting from the decisions of the 27th Congress of the CPSU". Other problems facing them nearer home were not mentioned.

As for the Chernobyl catastrophe itself, it received 18 lines of coverage in a separate article, assuring readers that the situation was now under control and levels of radiation continued to fall.

Chronicle of a disaster

AT 9.30 am on Monday 28 April, radiation alarms went off at a Swedish nuclear power station. Operators dosed down and evacuated the plant but were unable to trace the source of the leak.

In fact, the source was 1500 km away at Chernobyl, near Kiev. One of four 1000 Megawatt reactors had suffered a disastrous loss-of-coolant accident, emitting a gigantic plume of radioactive gas, steam and smoke.

Reactions abroad were at first muted. Lord Marshall of the CEBG estimated the risk to the people near the plant at no more than that of smoking two cigarettes a day. However John Dunster, director of the National Radiological Protection Board, estimated the fire to be a hundred times worse than the 1957 Windscale fire.

In this four-page special, Socialist Organiser's science correspondent Les Hearn looks at the disaster of Chernobyl, the nature of nuclear power, and its implications for the labour movement.

Other imaginative souls, freed by the secrecy of the Russians from the strait-jacket of facts, spoke of 2000 immediate deaths with many more to come.

Let's look at what actually seems to have happened. Like most other reactors, the RMBK-1000 reactor at Chernobyl uses uranium oxide fuel rods. Like nearly all

British reactors, it uses a graphite moderator. Like several reactors in the world, it uses ordinary water as a coolant, running it through pressure tubes in the core where it boils. The steam is then taken off to drive turbines and generate electricity. The RMBK-1000 is unique (apart from some US military reactors) in combining all

these features.

Two points of danger are identifiable in this set-up: (1) water boils inside the pressure tubes, the reactor producing 5400 tonnes of steam per hour at 284°C and 70 times atmospheric pressure. There are 1600 pressure tubes as well as a huge steel drum where steam is collected. Failure of welding at any part of this system could cause (and indeed must have caused) a disastrous overheating of the core.

(2) The graphite is allowed to reach 700°C, twice as hot as in Magnox reactors. This is above ignition temperature for graphite, which must therefore be kept away from the air by a blanket of inert gas. The coolant water must be kept away from the graphite, too, as will be explained

later.

Some time on Saturday 26th April, a pressure tube seems to have broken, spraying super-heated water onto hot graphite.

The water would have instantly turned to steam, less efficient at removing heat from the fuel rods and less efficient at absorbing excess neutrons. The latter effect would suddenly accelerate the chain reaction. Both would result in overheating of fuel and graphite.

As the graphite rose above 1000°C, it would start reacting with the steam to make hydrogen and carbon monoxide in the "Water Gas" reaction.

Both gases (and the graphite) are inflammable in oxygen. Since the graphite caught

Continued from page 5

fire, air must have entered the core so perhaps the inert gas circuit was ruptured by the pressure of the escaping steam.

Water gas escaping into the refuelling hall above the core may have formed an explosive mixture which then removed the roof.

The core, by now at 2500°C, was burning fiercely, becoming, as one wag put it, "the world's first coal-fired nuclear power station". Flames were leaping 50 metres high and, luckily for the local inhabitants carrying radioactive debris high into the air.

The story of how the Chernobyl fire was extinguished is one of extraordinary heroism. Teams of volunteer nuclear scientists worked in relays in areas of high radiation, risking death and serious injury. Firefighters got so close to the flames that their boots started sticking to the melting floor.

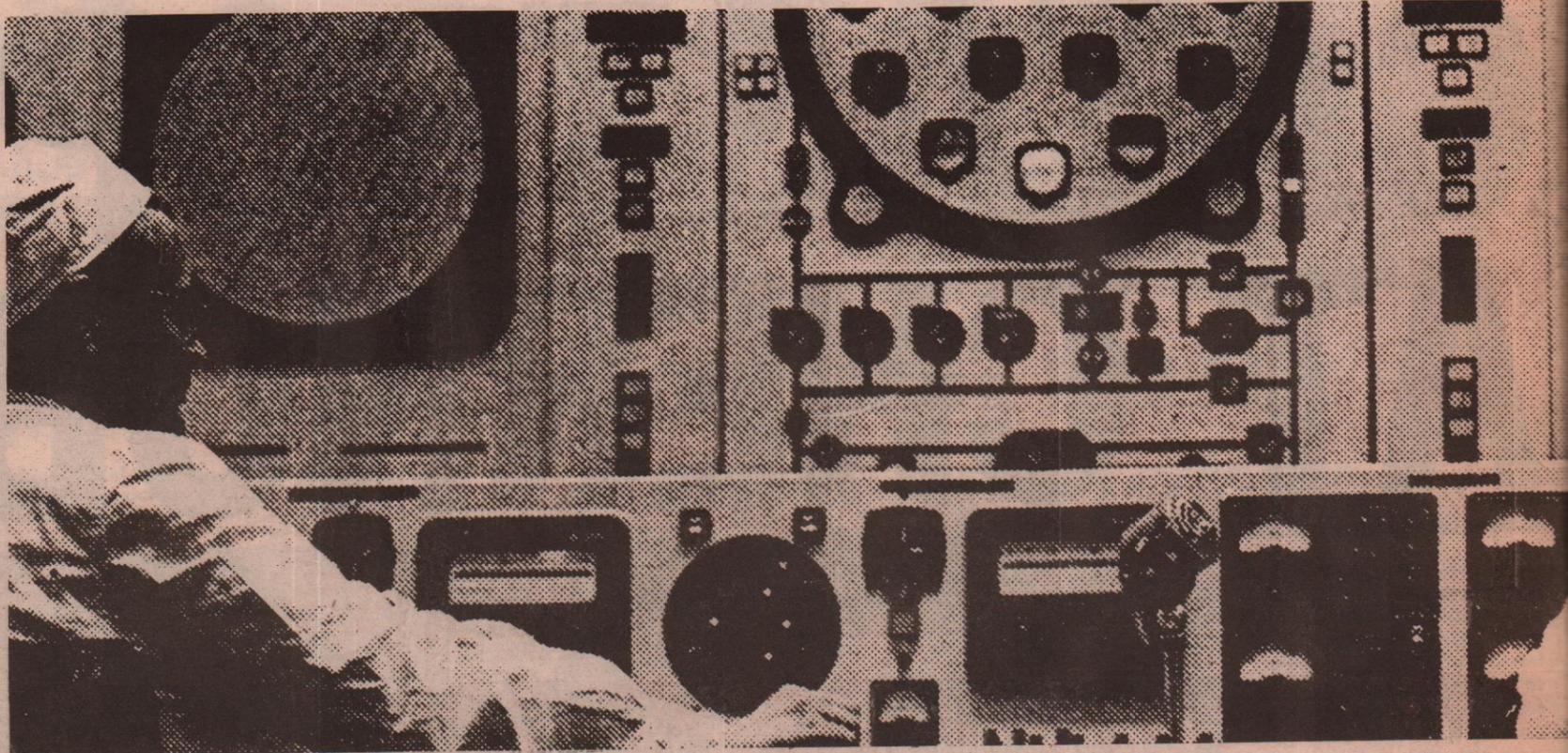
Helicopter crews must have flown into the plume of radiation to drop thousands of tonnes of sand, lead and boron on the reactor core.

Other teams burrowed underneath to pump in liquid nitrogen (for cooling) and concrete to avert a meltdown.

Contrary to the irresponsible claims of US and British broadcasts into Russia that thousands had died, there seems to have been only 6 deaths (at time of writing) and 35 serious injuries.

The progress of the casualty list suggests figures for radiation exposure. Two immediate deaths were probably due to injury by the collapsing roof. One death within days was probably due to exposure to over 1000 rads.

The 18 seriously injured first reported may have had up to 1000 rads. The three subsequent



ent deaths would have come from this group and all might be expected to die within 4 weeks.

A further 17 seriously injured just reported would have received over 250 rads and up to, say, 600 rads. After initial effects they would have recovered for about 2 weeks before falling ill again. Perhaps half of these would be expected to die.

It must be stressed, though, that their chances of survival are significantly enhanced by the intensive medical care supplied, including bone marrow transplants. This would not be available in a nuclear war.

A huge toll of deaths will result from Chernobyl, but not for years, as cancers and mutations in germ cells (sperm and eggs) reap their harvest.

Radioactivity: what it is and how it works

Medieval alchemists dreamed of turning base metals into gold. It is less than a hundred years since the discovery of radioactivity made such transmutations possible, though prohibitively expensive.

Of more practical importance was the discovery that radioactive changes yielded incredible amounts of energy — millions of times more than available from similar quantities of ordinary fuels. So, what is radioactivity and how does it release its energy?

All matter on the Earth is composed of tiny atoms which are themselves composed of mixtures of three smaller particles.

- Protons or neutrons are found in the core or *nucleus* of the atom.

- Electrons form a diffuse cloud around the nucleus.

Different numbers of protons are found in each of the 92 naturally-occurring types of atom as well as the sixteen or so artificial types. These types are called elements.

The chemical behaviour of these elements is ultimately determined by the number of protons in the nucleus even though all chemical reactions, including those that sustain life, involve only the outer electrons.

Ratio

The ratio of neutrons to protons in the nucleus determines the stability of the atom. Of the 92 natural elements, 81 possess both stable and unstable forms. The other 11, and all the artificial ones, exist only in unstable forms, and undergo radioactive decay to stable elements.

As unstable atoms decay, they emit radiation (hence *radioactive*) carrying large quantities of energy. If the products of decay are weighed, the mass is found to be less than the original mass. Matter has been converted into energy according to Einstein's famous equation

$$E = mc^2$$

Energy = mass x speed of light squared.

Radioactive decay is an unpredictable process for any one atom, but we can observe the behaviour of large numbers of atoms and make accurate measurements of their average lifetime.

Thus, for a quantity of uranium-238 (U-238), we can say that half the atoms will have decayed after about 4½ billion years (the approximate age of the Earth). For Iodine-131 (I-131), however, half the atoms will remain after about 8 days, one quarter after 16 days, etc. These times are the half-lives for these particular atoms.

There are four kinds of radiation that can be emitted by decaying atoms.

Alpha particles are relatively heavy particles which are stopped by a few centimetres of air and which cannot penetrate the skin. They can cause damage to the tissues if released inside the body.

Beta particles are lighter particles, stopped by a few dozen cm of air or a thin sheet of aluminium. Can damage the skin.

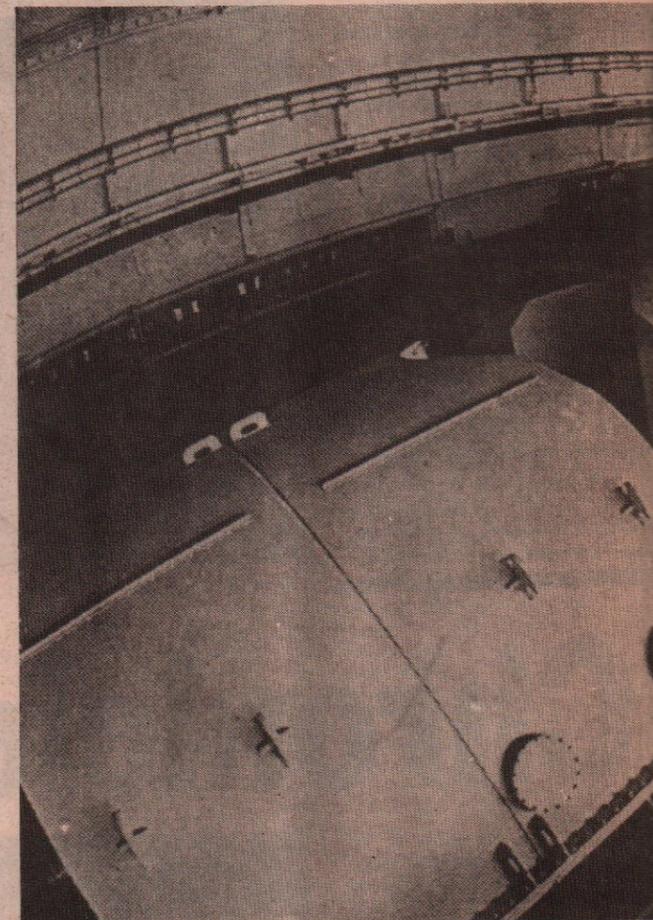
Neutrons are medium-sized particles, but very penetrating and damaging.

Gamma rays are like X-rays but more powerful. Very penetrating and damaging.

Both neutrons and gamma rays can be stopped by about 5cm of lead.

It is the high energy of these radiations that damages living things. As they pass through living cells, they strike atoms and knock the electrons off them, turning them into ions (hence *ionising* radiation). The ions try to get electrons back from nearby atoms, setting off a series of inappropriate chemical reactions. These rarely kill the cell outright but can damage the genetic material, DNA.

With severe damage, the cell will be unable to divide.



The turbine hall at Chernobyl

In tissues like blood and the various inner and outer linings, this spells disaster. As they are used up or worn away, they are no longer replaced.

Mild damage may cause a small change or mutation to the DNA which may turn the cell cancerous. A mutation in a germ or egg cell will be passed on to the offspring. A mutation in an embryo may disrupt the development of the unborn child.

Radiation may be used for medical purposes as when intense doses are given to tumours. The damage to the DNA will stop the cells

dividing.

Living things are subject to a natural/burden of radiation (background) from the naturally-occurring radioactive elements. We have evolved with it and partly because of it, our cells have mechanisms to repair damage to DNA caused by it. There is always a chance that some damage will slip through, and the greater the exposure, the higher the chance.

It is important to shield ourselves from radiation as much as possible. The more dense substance, the better a shield it is.

The Windscale disaster 1957

ON 9 OCTOBER 1957, following an operator error, the atomic pile of No.1 Reactor at Windscale began to overheat and part of it caught fire.

Attempts to cool the reactor failed and the temperature rose from 400°C on the 9th to 1300°C on the 11th. About 1% of the core, containing radioactive fuel and waste products, was vaporised and escaped.

On the 11th, the Atomic Energy Authority stated that the radioactivity had been blown safely out to sea. Two days later, however, it banned the distribution of fresh milk over 2000 square miles of Cumbria.

AEA scientist John Dunster revealed that the radioactive cloud had in fact travelled south-east, depositing fall-out over most of England and part of Europe. Most radiation was in the form of iodine-131, but there was some polonium-210.

Nevertheless, the AEA told people not to worry, even if they had drunk milk before the ban was imposed. There was no mention of potassium iodide tablets (to reduce the risk of damage to the thyroid) being distributed.

After the committee of inquiry in 1957, the government

confirmed its complete confidence in Windscale's management and its safety record. The Medical Research Council also said it was satisfied that it was extremely unlikely that anyone's health had been harmed.

However, 26 years later, the National Radiological Protection Board, under the same John Dunster, reported its estimate of 260 cases of thyroid cancer (with 13 deaths) caused by the Windscale fire. There was worse to come.

New Scientist unearthed the fact that Po-210 had been released, forgotten in a most celebrated case of amnesia by Dunster, and showed that it could have been responsible for a thousand or more deaths.

Other radioactive substances released at the time could have pushed the total still higher.

The sad fact is that the polonium was only present in the reactor because it was being made for use in atom bombs. New Scientist called the Windscale fire probably the worst environmental disaster in Western Europe this century. It said that Britain was now the 'nuclear laboratory of the world'. That title has now passed to Chernobyl.

The effects of fall out



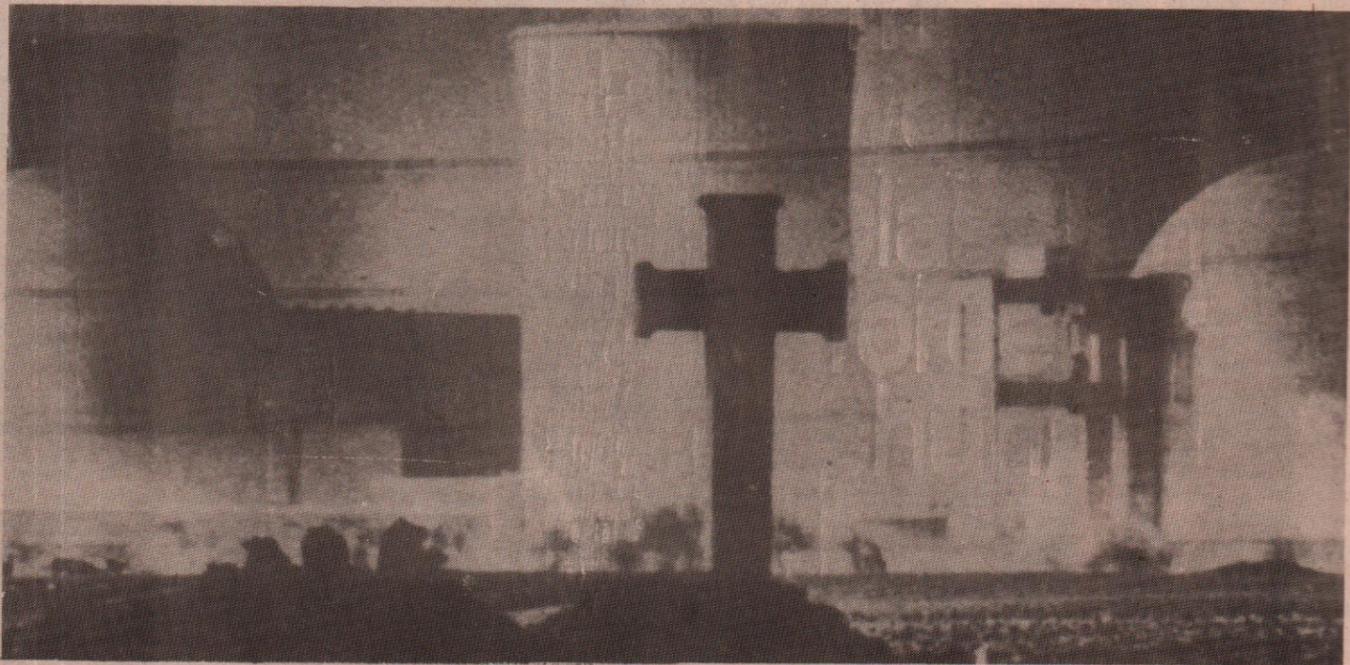
THE CHERNOBYL fire has exposed a few workers to a great deal of radiation, and a great number of others in the USSR and the rest of Europe to lesser amounts.

For those who believe they have been irradiated, little can be done except to alleviate their symptoms and treat any infections that occur. Probably the most useful international aid offered to the USSR was the expertise of bone marrow transplant specialist Dr Richard Gale.

Official reactions to the fall-out threat have ranged from catatonia to panic. Most farcical was the reported advice of the British Embassy in Moscow to boil drinking water. This would have had no effect on radioactivity whatsoever.

Some countries have banned the sale of leaf vegetables and fresh milk and have stopped cattle grazing in the open. Others with similar doses of fall-out have not. Holland and West Germany are in the former category, France and Britain in the latter.

The most well-known component of fall-out is iodine-131. It is particularly dangerous because it is concentrated in the thyroid gland, which makes the hormone thyroxine. This controls growth and development of children and metabolism and alertness in adults.



Giving tablets of potassium iodide does not cure radiation sickness (as the poor old Daily Mirror thought), but it will help flush out the radioactive iodide.

Otherwise, the concentrated dose of radiation may harm the gland or even cause cancer. Children are more susceptible to this. Luckily, it is curable in some 95% of cases. Taking potassium iodide

tablets is the only useful thing that can be done once a dose of fall-out has been absorbed. It is harmless in itself and it might have been prudent to have issued tablets in the areas of highest exposure, e.g. Scotland. As it was, chemists' stocks soon ran out and the government issued no guidance on suitable doses.

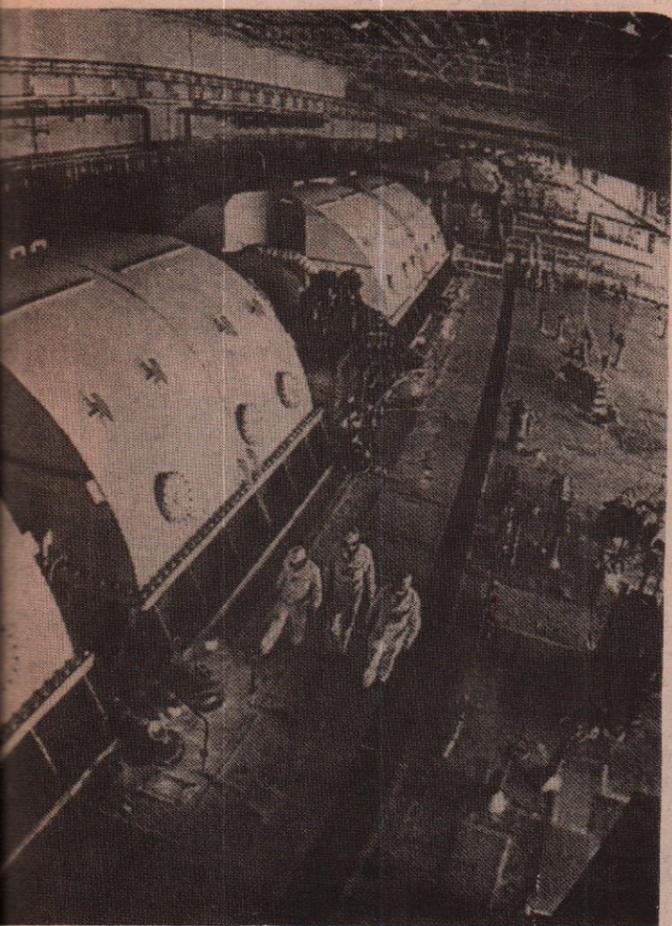
Readers will no doubt be relieved that the National

Radiological Protection Board's John Dunster estimates deaths in Britain at no more than a few tens — until they learn that the NRPB underestimated deaths from the Windscale fire by a factor of about 70.

At least we in Britain have been given some information, even if radiation levels always seem to be low and falling. In France, virtually no informa-

tion was released until it was leaked that radiation levels had reached 400 times normal.

The French government's attitude to openness can be guessed from the comment of a director of Electricite de France on the idea of public inquiries into nuclear power stations — "You don't ask the frogs when you drain the swamp".



What can we do?

NUCLEAR power worldwide was dealt a body blow by Three Mile Island. Since then no new reactors have even been ordered in the US.

Chernobyl has now dealt a potentially mortal wound to nuclear power, and all round the world reactors are being mothballed and plans reconsidered.

The past consensus between reformist workers' parties and the parties of the capitalist class on nuclear power is crumbling fast.

In Holland, the outcome of next week's election may well be a majority for the anti-nuclear Labour Party. In West Germany the Social Democratic Party is reassessing its pro-nuclear stance.

In Britain, the Tories have expressed a commitment to building one Pressurised Water Reactor per year for 10 years, but have so far built none. Labour has finally adopted a conference policy to phase out nuclear power, replacing it by coal and new alternatives and safeguarding jobs.

After Chernobyl, it is inconceivable that this policy will be reversed. Nevertheless, Neil Kinnock and John Cunningham, 'MP for Sellafield', have ignored the policy, and even now are talking about giving the go-ahead for new reprocessing plants at Sellafield and Dounreay.

This can only lead to a pointless and damaging dispute in the Labour Party.

On the other hand, Tony Benn has called for a campaign to phase out nuclear power.

Labour movement activists

should become involved in such a campaign, struggling for the implementation of Labour Party policy on nuclear power — and nuclear disarmament. One of the chief reasons why civil nuclear installations are dangerous is that they are used to make materials for nuclear weapons.

The campaign should also push for improvements in safety, reduction of discharges to zero, for compensation for workers and others damaged by radiation, and against nuclear waste dumping at sea and on land.

Trade unionists should push for workers' control of safety in nuclear installations, for full trade union and civil rights for the workers there, and for alternative plans of socially useful production. Such workers' control is necessary both before and after winning a shutdown of nuclear power stations: these power stations are unsafe even when shut down, and indeed disposing of waste and obsolete plant is one of the most intractable safety problems in nuclear power.

Struggling to shut down nuclear power stations now does not necessarily mean a complete end to nuclear power.

A socialist society might decide it was possible to build up a safe nuclear power industry. My personal view is that such a society would find that the obstacles were too great and that better alternatives were available; but we will see — when the veil of official secrecy is lifted.

A small nuclear industry would probably be kept going

anyway to produce radioactive substances for medical and scientific purposes; and nuclear fusion (the way the Sun produces its energy) might be brought in. (It is much safer than nuclear fission, but

so far the technical problems of using it industrially have not been solved).

But Chernobyl may have sealed the fate of nuclear fission under both capitalism and socialism.

Socialist Organiser summer school

Socialist Organiser's summer school this year will focus on South Africa, Ireland, and women's issues. Workshops will include discussions on the politics of the African National Congress, the South African Left, and the history of the South African trade unions; the politics of Sinn Fein, the history of Ireland, and politics in the Irish Republic; Marxism and women's oppression, the history of the women's liberation movement, and the struggles of black women.

In addition there will be classes in basic Marxism and other discussions, debates, etc.

The school will be at Manchester University Students' Union, from Friday 4 July to Monday 7 July. A creche will be provided and accommodation will be available in Manchester.

For further details contact Socialist Organiser, P O Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Lead is much used but has a low melting point. Concrete is used to shield reactor cores as it has a high melting point. It must be made to a high standard, and a metre or more of thickness may be required.

Paradoxically, uranium is the best shield against radiation, being the most dense substance known and not very radioactive.

Radiation is measured in two ways — one taking account of the quantity, the other of its strength.

Quantity is measured in rads (a) or becquerels (b). The becquerel is equal to one

decay per second. This is a very small quantity (hence its jocular mispronunciation 'bugger-all'). The curie is 37 billion decays per second, and was chosen as the activity of one gram of radium. It is named after Marie Curie, who discovered radium and polonium and, like her daughter Irene, died early of radiation-induced leukemia.

Strength: the energy of a dose of radiation is taken into account by the rad or the Gray (Gy: 1 Gy = 100 Rads).

The rem is related to the rad, except that account is taken of the type of radiation and where it is produced.

Safety sacrificed for privilege

FACED with a damaged reactor pouring out clouds of radiation, the Russian and Ukrainian authorities showed an inefficiency bordering on cynicism. The result is that not only have those fighting the fire had their lives put at risk, but also thousands of nearby inhabitants.

From the start of the Chernobyl project, safety standards were sacrificed to bureaucratic prestige. This was made clear in a letter to a Kiev newspaper six weeks before the accident from Lyubov Kovalevska, apparently a senior manager at the plant.

She complained that, in the race to make Chernobyl the largest nuclear facility in the world, Russian ministries had arbitrarily advanced the completion date by one year. At the same time, lack of building materials and sub-standard materials created frustration and despair amongst the highly-skilled workers, taking standards below those acceptable for such plants.

When the accident happened, it took Ukrainian authorities more than two days to inform Moscow of the scale of the disaster, by which time the chorus of protest from the rest of Europe was reaching a crescendo.

It was 36 hours before the town of Pripjat, about a kilometre from the plant, was evacuated. Evacuation of Chernobyl town, 15 km from the plant, did not commence for 6 days and took about 5 days to complete. For four of those days, the wind blew radiation straight at the town.

The Russian authorities did nothing to alleviate widespread public and medical ignorance about radiation dangers. No recommendations on eating and drinking were made, even for children and pregnant women. No guidance for the treatment of radiation illnesses was issued. In Kiev, several people were

hospitalised after taking iodine in the mistaken belief that it was an antidote to radiation. Iodine is in fact a poison whose main use is as an antiseptic for grazes.

No doubt this is due to a wish to avoid any panic which might loosen the grip of the authorities on the people. Another reason is the wish to avoid fanning the flames of opposition in the Baltic republics. Here, plans to build new nuclear reactors are already widely unpopular.

Russian secretiveness over Chernobyl has provided both Tory and Labour speakers with an opportunity for smug criticism. In the Commons last week, former Environment Secretary Patrick Jenkin referred to the "remarkable" contrast between the openness of the British nuclear industry and the reticence of the Soviet authorities.

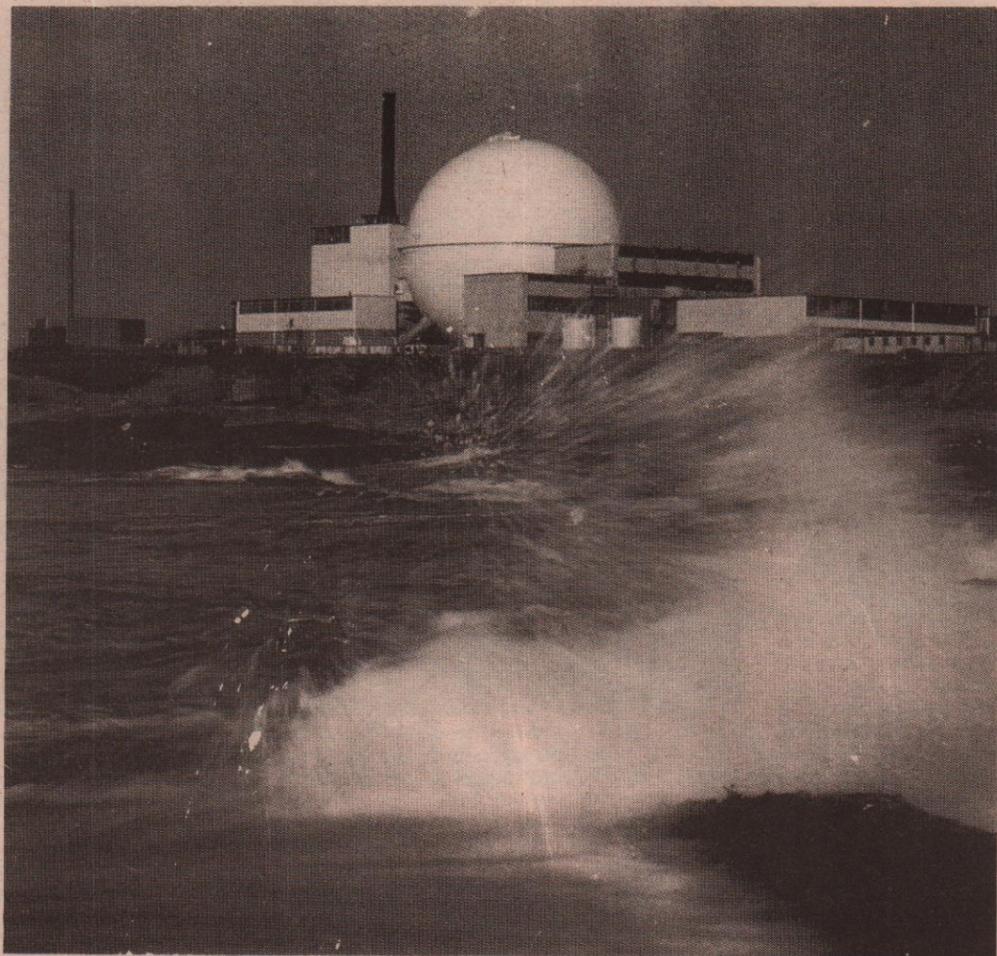
Absurd

George Robertson, Labour Foreign Affairs spokesperson condemned Soviet secrecy as "absurd and outrageous", saying that the lesson for Britain and Russia is that secrecy and civil nuclear power do not go together.

There were exceptions to the general hypocrisy. Tam Dalyell asked what was the purpose of lecturing the Soviet leaders when "in 1957, when there was a graphite fire at Windscale, the Prime Minister decided not even to tell the Irish." (One correspondent to the Guardian asked if he were the only one who felt better informed about the fire at Chernobyl than the one at Windscale.)

On 2 May, Tony Benn, speaking in Chesterfield, stated that Britain had had some very serious incidents that had luckily not reached Chernobyl proportions. He called for a campaign to phase out nuclear power.

Next day, he released excerpts from his 1969 diary when, as Minister of Tech-



nology, he had first become aware of the pressure to keep silent on issues of nuclear safety.

Hearing about problems of corrosion in Magnox reactors, he had visited Bradwell on 31 December. He wrote: "I am very glad I went because it indicated the real nature of the problem, which is not seen by the CEBG so much as a safety problem as a problem that might affect the economics of the station." After describing how the corrosion could result in overheating of the core with deaths as far away as London, he wrote that the CEBG had decided to restore the operat-

ing temperature from 360°C to 380°C to increase the output of power. This was to get round fears of a strike and of cold weather but would double the rate of corrosion.

Benn described this policy as "taking a calculated risk so as not to dislocate industry".

As Energy Secretary in 1976 Benn introduced measures to ensure that reports on nuclear accidents were made public. From 1976 to 1982, some 300 were reported. Tory John Moore relaxed these requirements and since 1982 there have been just 15 reports.

This led Liberal MP for Yeovil, Paddy Ashdown, to

complain in the Guardian recently that he had had to ask 3 Parliamentary questions to get an admission that a radioactive release from Hinkley Point had occurred when the CEBG had originally denied it. He also criticised the Government's failure to release the 20-year safety reports on the Magnox reactors.

Absurd

Another absurd piece of secrecy was the refusal to admit that British plutonium had been exported to the USA to make bombs. This was finally admitted long after the US Government had confirmed

it. Most embarrassing in Chernobyl week was the revelation by the Observer that the CEBG had concealed an explosion in a new piece of equipment which released a small amount of radiation. The Observer's informant said: "Only by immense good fortune was a large release of reactor gas avoided. How did a piece of nuclear equipment that had been subject to all the CEBG's current design evaluation and independent analysis end up failing so spectacularly?"

British criticism of the Soviet nuclear industry have also raised issues of safety. Sadly, the critics have merely revealed their own ignorance.

Thus Energy Secretary Peter Walker claimed:

(1) Russian reactors did not have "total containment" and would not be permitted in Britain. In fact, none of the Magnox reactors have containment domes.

(2) Russian reactors were too close to population centres. In fact Britain has such a dense population that a similar accident would cause a higher number of casualties.

(3) That there had never been "emergencies involving significant radiological hazards to the public at any civil nuclear installation" in Britain. This is technically true because the Windscale fire of 1957 which caused at least 30 deaths from cancer, took place while it was a military installation.

The US government has been backward on occasions in warning people of danger from nuclear activities such as when a cloud of fallout engulfed the Rongelap Atoll in 1954. This caused acute radiation sickness and many cancers and mutations.

US reactors do not always have adequate containment, either. Five government reactors producing plutonium for bombs lack steel or concrete walls.

Unstable atoms

NEARLY all types of unstable atom decay at their own rate, unaffected by anything around them. Three types can in addition be made to decay by bombarding them with neutrons. The two most important are uranium-235 (U-235) and plutonium-239 (Pu-239).

When a U-235 atom is hit by a neutron it splits or fissions into two large fragments, plus two or three more neutrons. All products have a considerable amount of heat energy.

If enough U-235 atoms are nearby, the new neutrons can split two or three more atoms, releasing still more neutrons. This is a chain reaction. Uncontrolled, it leads to the sort of massive explosion that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

There are two problems to overcome before a chain reaction can be achieved:

(1) less than 1% of natural uranium is U-235. The rest is U-238 which doesn't fission.

The proportion must be increased — to 1.8% for Chernobyl-type reactors; 3% for Pressurised Water Reactors; more for bombs.

(2) the neutrons are moving so fast that they are likely to escape without hitting anything. They have to be slowed down by a moderator — graphite in Chernobyl and in the British Magnox and Advanced Gas-cooled reactors.

For a controlled chain reaction, two other problems must be overcome:

(1) beyond a certain point neutrons must be produced no faster than they are used. Excess neutrons must be produced by control rods of boron or cadmium inserted amongst the rods of uranium fuel. In emergency, the control rods will be dumped into the core ("scrammed") to bring the chain reaction to a halt.

(2) the reactor (fuel rods and moderator) must be constantly cooled to prevent over-heating which would distort the shape of the pile so that the control

rods might not fit and could lead to an uncontrollable reaction and meltdown.

The coolant is the means by which nuclear energy is harnessed. It is pumped round to heat exchanges which use the heat to make steam to drive turbines and make electricity. At Chernobyl and in PWRs, the coolant is water. In Magnox Breeder Reactors, it is liquid sodium.

Now, fission of U-235 produces a whole range of radioactive atoms, considerably more dangerous than the original uranium. One by-product is Pu-239, made when a neutron strikes the otherwise useless U-238. In Britain's first nuclear reactor at Calder Hall, Cumbria, plutonium was the main product with electricity as a by-product (and a useful disguise).

One of the reasons for reprocessing spent fuel (as at Sellafield) is to extract plutonium for bombs.

The radiation and radioactive fission products from a reactor represent a serious

danger to life and so reactors are encased in steel pressure vessels inside a thick casing of concrete. More modern reactors have a secondary containment, i.e. a large concrete building supposed to trap dangerous substances in case of failure of the primary containment.

Chernobyl did have secondary containment but it did not hold. A reactor therefore consists of: fuel rods; moderator; control rods; primary containment; coolant system.

What is a meltdown?

This is a result of an accidental overheating of the fuel rods, perhaps due to a "loss-of-coolant" accident. If the temperature rises above 2800°C, the fuel will melt and it will melt its way down through the base of the concrete containment and into the soil beneath. Here it will meet cold water and the resulting explosion will spread radioactivity over a large area.

DOSE IN RADS (whole body)	HEALTH EFFECTS	
	IMMEDIATE	DELAYED
Over 5000 (close to exploding A-bomb)	Nausea and vomiting, convulsions, tremors, listlessness. Death in 2 days from breathing failure or swelling of brain.	
1000-5000 (several km from exploding A-bomb)	Nausea and vomiting. Apparent recovery for 5 days. Then diarrhoea and fever until death of all within 2 weeks.	
600-1000 (level inside reactor building at Three Mile Island and at Chernobyl)	Weakness, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea. Apparent recovery for 5-10 days. Then fever, diarrhoea, bleeding from guts, mouth, lungs, kidneys, loss of hair.	Death of nearly 100% in up to 4 weeks. Autopsy shows blood-making tissues destroyed and all body linings degenerated. Note: two Russians have died within 2 weeks from radiation.
250-600 (LD 50 — the amount to kill half of humans exposed — is 400-450)	Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, loss of hair, bleeding from mouth, nose, stomach, bowels, kidneys, genitals and under skin. Abnormalities of menstruation. Destruction of bone marrow, lymph nodes and spleen. Decrease of white blood cells.	Atrophy of glands (including thyroid). Death of 50% from 3 to 5 weeks (linked to degree of loss of white blood cells). Survivors have disfiguring scar tissue, eye, blood and nerve disorders, and malignant tumours.
120-250 (level inside Chernobyl reactor building after 1 week was 200 per hour)	Nausea and vomiting on first day. Diarrhoea, skin burns. Recovery for two weeks, then you get worse. Unborn children killed.	Symptoms as above. Those in poor health or who develop a severe infection may die. Healthy adults recover more or less normal health in 3 months. Greater chance of cancer, genetic mutations in offspring, shortened lifespan.
50-150 (The level inside the Chernobyl reactor building after 2 weeks was 100 per hour)	Less severe radiation sickness. Stillbirth or spontaneous abortion.	Less severe symptoms. Reduction in white blood cells leaves you temporarily very prone to infection. Recovery of normal health, with greater chance of cancer etc. Sterility of males for up to 3 years.
10-50	No effect except in a few sensitive individuals.	Short-lived reduction of white blood cells. Some risk of cancer, genetic effects, and premature ageing. Reduction in fertility of males for some time.
0-10	None	Premature ageing, some risk of cancer, genetic effects.

CONNOLLY AND THE EASTER RISING

"IF YOU are itching for a rifle, itching to fight, have a country of your own. Better to fight for your own country than for the robber empire... Our curse is our belief in our weakness. We are not weak, we are strong. Make up your mind to strike before the opportunity goes", James Connolly told a rally in Dublin in the opening months of the First World War.

From then onwards, Connolly began the preparations which were to culminate in the Easter Rising of 1916, in conjunction with the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), the continuation of the Fenians of the previous century.

From the end of the 19th century, an Irish national movement had been re-forming. It included youth organisations (Fianna Eireann), cultural associations (Gaelic League and Gaelic Athletic Association), and, after 1913, a Republican militia (the Irish Volunteers), which, after the split with John Redmond, leader of the Irish parliamentary party, who supported the British war effort, was largely under the control of the IRB.

In August 1914, the IRB Supreme Council had decided to organise an insurrection before the end of the year. The following month a joint meeting took place between its leadership and Connolly and William O'Brien of the Irish Citizen Army.

Connolly made the running in arguing for an immediate insurrection.

Throughout 1915 preparations for armed insurrection continued. Guns for the Irish Citizen Army (ICA) were smuggled in from Liverpool. Speaking at the May Day rally in Dublin, Connolly appealed for recruits to the Irish Citizen Army.

In August a miniature rifle range was set up at Liberty Hall. This was the headquarters of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, and the ICA was based there. From October onwards, ICA discipline was tightened up, and the number and variety of its military exercises continued. Arms, ammunition and medical supplies continued to be stockpiled in Liberty Hall, where the ICA kept a round-the-clock armed guard.

Agitation

Hand in hand with Connolly's military preparations went his constant political agitation: against collaboration with the British war effort; against the threat of extending the military call-up to Ireland; in support of strikes and wage demands to 'let the rich men pay' for the imperialist war; in support of improved public housing in Dublin; and in support of the Women's Franchise League, founded in January 1916.

The same month, Connolly became a member of the Military Council of the IRB, which carried out the final preparations for the rising, fixed for Easter Sunday, 23 April 1916. The plan was for simultaneous risings throughout Ireland, initiated by the seizure of Dublin Castle and followed by risings in the provinces to prevent troops and police advancing into the city.

But, as the scheduled date of the insurrection approached, the plans began to run into trouble.

A German ship carrying arms and ammunition for the uprising had to be scuttled by its crew to prevent capture by the authorities.



Dublin, Easter 1916

Second part of Stan Crooke's article on the uprising for Irish independence which took place at Easter 1916, and the part played in it by the great socialist leader James Connolly

ties. And the instructions ordering 'three days' mobilisation' for Irish Volunteers beginning on Easter Sunday — which were the signal for the rising — were countermanded with only hours to go by Irish Volunteers commander Eoin MacNeill. MacNeill was not in

the IRB and had not been told that the 'manoeuvres' were a cover for an uprising.

The Military Council of the IRB met on the morning of Easter Sunday. The veteran Fenian Thomas Clarke, who had spent over 15 years in British prisons for his part in the dynamite campaign of the 1880s, argued for carrying out the original plan and relying on the Volunteers to rise spontaneously in response to the initial insurrectionary act in Dublin. After discussion, the Military Council decided to postpone the start of the rising until noon of the next day, Easter Monday, 24 April.

On Easter Monday they seized key buildings in Dublin and prepared to hold the centre of the city against the British Army. The insurgents' headquarters was set up at the General Post Office in O'Connell Street.

Immediately after that building was seized, Patrick Pearse stood outside the main door and read to the incomprehending crowd of spectators the Declaration of an Irish Republic. Pearse was president of the Provisional Government, James Connolly in charge of military affairs in Dublin.

In less than a week the Easter Rising had been crushed. Outside Dublin there was only minor activity, confined to Galway and Wexford. And in Dublin itself only some 1200 took part in the insurrection, mostly members of the Irish Volunteers.

From Tuesday morning onwards, British troop reinforcements began to arrive. On Wednesday the gunboat 'Helga' sailed up the Liffey and began to bombard Dublin, striking first and foremost at the Irish TGWU headquarters, now long vacated by the ICA. The bombardment of Dublin continued through Thursday and Friday, with entire blocks of shops and offices being razed to the ground.

Unconditional

On the Saturday, 29 April, Patrick Pearse and the now badly wounded Connolly agreed to unconditional surrender "in order to prevent the further slaughter of unarmed people and in the hope of saving the lives of our followers".

In the six days of fighting, nearly 500 people had been killed, half of them civilians. Some 2500 had been injured. Relief had to be given to 100,000 people, a third of Dublin's population. In the weeks following the Rising, over 2000 suspected Republicans were arrested, and most of them interned in prison camps in Britain, usually without a trial.

Ninety participants in the Rising were tried and sentenced to death. Fifteen of the death sentences, including those of all signatories to the Proclamation of the Republic, were carried out

before the British government decided that further executions might be counterproductive and lead to a backlash against its rule.

At the outbreak of war, Connolly had looked forward to a Rising which would "set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bond and debenture will be shrivelled on the funeral pyre of the last warlord".

Lenin commented that "they [the Irish] have risen prematurely, when the European revolt of the proletariat has not yet matured". But the Easter Rising failed to do what Connolly hoped for other reasons, too. The weaknesses and limitations of the Irish labour movement after 1916, which allowed the political stage to be vacated for the benefit of Arthur Griffith's Sinn Fein party, cannot be separated from Connolly's own political imprecision.

Connolly had failed to demarcate socialism clearly from nationalism. Compare Jim Larkin's statement of 1915, "I am not for the Kaiser any more than I am for George of England. I am for the working class of every country", with the banner which Connolly had draped outside Liberty Hall: "We serve neither King nor Kaiser — but Ireland".

Connolly's famous declaration in 1916 — "The cause of labour is the cause of Ireland, the cause of Ireland is the cause of labour" — leads into a vision of a future independent Ireland coloured by an Irish nationalist populism. "Labour seeks that an Ireland free should be the sole mistress of her own destiny, supreme owner of all material things within and upon her soil...", wrote Connolly: but which class would be 'mistress'? Connolly blurred over the question by assuming that Ireland could be independent (or 'really' independent) only under a workers' government.

Inseparable from Connolly's failure to clarify his struggle against Irish nationalism were his continuing religious beliefs and Catholic mysticism — from his period in America at the beginning of the century, through to his polemics of 1910 against Father Kane, into the Easter Rising itself.

Connolly was anti-sectarian in his attitude to the Irish Protestants of north-east Ulster, who did not belong to an Irish nationalist tradition, but Connolly's basic orientation in his writings was towards an international Irish working class of Catholic origin. How else to understand the comment of the Scots-born Connolly, who spent only 13 of his 48 years of life in Ireland: "They will never understand why I am here [in the Rising]. They will all forget that I am an Irishman"?

And while Connolly was free of the sectarian leanings of some of his would-be followers today, he underestimated the determination of the Ulster Loyalists to prevent their forcible incorporation into a united and independent Ireland. "Were the forces of the Crown withdrawn entirely, the Unionists could or would put no force into the field that the Home Rulers of all sections combined could not protect themselves against with a moderate amount of ease".

Connolly's accommodation to nationalism, along with his ambiguities and vacillations on a series of other questions, were so many different aspects of a more basic problem: a failure to see the necessity of clear-cut ideological struggle, and of building a revolutionary party capable of waging such an ideological struggle. He belonged to the pre-Lenin generation of Marxism.

Despite Connolly's work in the Irish Socialist Republican Party and the Socialist Party of Ireland, and his support in 1912 for the Irish TUC establishing its own political party, Connolly consistently leaned too much towards syndicalism [socialism based exclusively on trade union action] to be able to see the centrality of the question of the revolutionary party.

If Connolly's limited appreciation of the questions of ideological struggle and revolutionary party led to political accommodation in the run-up to the Easter Rising, in the aftermath it meant that no organised political force existed to carry on the positive aspects of Connolly's struggle. The field was left open to those prepared to make their peace with capitalism.

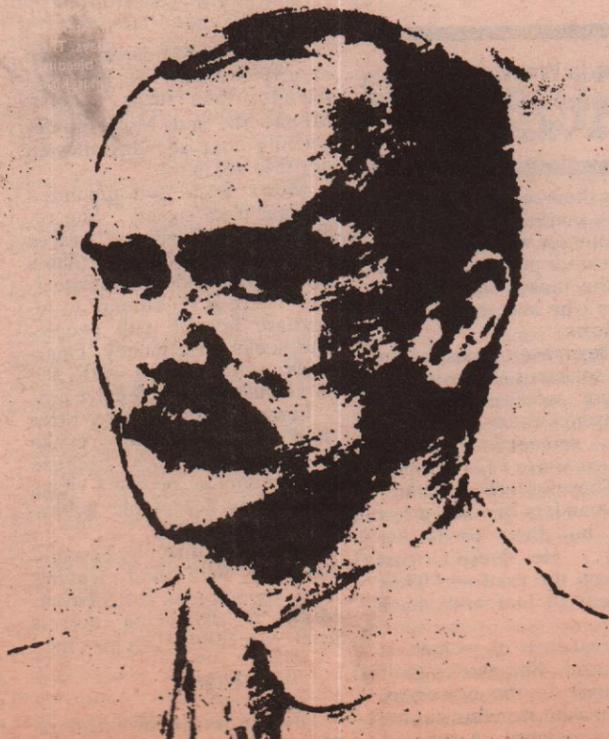
Haze

To strive for insurrection against British imperialism, in the midst of the imperialist war, was Connolly's first duty as a revolutionary. But, in the maelstrom of events, Connolly was weakened by his ideological haziness. He pushed forward towards armed uprising indifferent, if not blind, to the fundamental problems of ideological struggle and a revolutionary party.

Connolly's ideological haziness has made him easy meat for latter-day Stalinist commentators. But a serious appreciation of the Easter Rising, or of its leader, demands rather more than a disingenuous attempt to glorify it as a forerunner of the Popular Fronts of the 1930s.

The Easter Rising, even taking into account its associated political limitations, remains a heroic chapter in the history of socialist struggle in Ireland. As Patrick Pearse put it shortly before his execution:

"We seem to have lost, but we have not lost. To refuse to fight would have been to lose, to fight is to win. We have kept faith with the past and handed on a tradition to the future".



Connolly

The politics of lipstick

Belinda Weaver reviews a new book about the politics of lipstick and make-up

THE CAPITALIST crisis and economic recession has resulted in attacks on workers' rights, wages and conditions. To bolster falling profits, the bosses try to make the cost of labour cheaper. Women workers are specially vulnerable.

The bosses' ideological campaign seeks to reinforce the view of women as part-time workers, temporary workers, marginal workers — as the 'second' wage earner of a family.

Women's wages have always been lower than men's. This campaign seeks to lower them even further, as part of the generalised attack on working people's wages.

The campaign seeks to destroy women's confidence as workers. It aims to roll back gains made by women in the '60s and '70s, such as abortion rights and affirmative action, and aims to make women identify themselves first as women rather than as workers.

The glorification of the family and especially of the role of mother within the family plays on women's guilt about working at all (even for economic necessity) rather than staying at home with the kids.

In the 1950s, a similarly reactionary campaign by the ruling class aimed to roll back social gains by women who had entered the workforce during World War 2. The ruling class tried to propagate the idea of a 'feminine mystique'.

Pathfinder Press has just published a book, "Cosmetics, Fashion and the Exploitation of Women", by Joseph Hansen and Evelyn Reed, with an introduction by Mary-Alice Waters, which is a record of a debate within the US socialist movement in the early '50s on the whole issue of cosmetics, fashion and working women.

The debate reflects the concern of many working women about their use of cosmetics, and



shows how many were influenced by the reactionary propaganda surrounding 'women's proper role'.

The book is a collection of letters and articles. Some originally appeared in the paper 'The Militant', but the response was so great that the debate spilled over into the discussion bulletin of the Socialist Workers Party, which was then a Trotskyist organisation.

Joseph Hansen started it all by writing a short article about the hucksterism of cosmetic companies who prey on women's insecurities to sell their products.

This article prompted a variety of responses. Hansen was accused of ridiculing working women who merely wanted some beauty and loveliness in

their lives.

Another claimed that women's striving for beauty was progressive, since they were rebelling against attempts to deny them part of their rights as human beings.

Several defended the use of cosmetics under capitalism as an economic necessity. Since job competition was keen, younger, healthy-looking, attractive women would be chosen over older, less favoured women. Many used cosmetics as a means of looking younger and fresher — that is, more capable of hard work.

For those unable to find work, marriage was a way to find some kind of financial security. Cosmetics were part of the strategy of getting and keeping a husband.

The debate triggered off other issues, particularly different views about the historical origins of women's oppression. Exchanges between Marjorie McGowan and Evelyn Reed illustrate two points of view.

The book is very readable — letters and articles are fairly short, and often lively, humorous or angry.

The debate still has relevance. Advertising for cosmetics today is different from the 1950s, but only in emphasis, not in essentials. Today's cosmetics are advertised as 'natural', 'wholesome', non-toxic, non-chemical, additive-free — that is, hardly cosmetics at all, in fact.

Women still buy cosmetics and still try to fit the latest (socially determined) ideal of beauty

by dieting, fashion and make-up. Many feel guilty and ambivalent about it.

Evelyn Reed argues that under capitalism women are compelled to use cosmetics and fashion, and that while capitalism prevails some token recognition should be given to this reality.

Workers often have to accept undesirable working conditions forced on them by the bosses, but they do so reluctantly, often struggling against such measures. Similarly, working women may have to accept that they must use cosmetics and fashion in capitalist society, but they should do so in a spirit of opposition to the efforts of the ruling class to impose its standards of beauty on them, rather than in adaptation to those standards.

riding hood red

a new red... a ripe young red in MAX Factor's Color-fast lipstick

Wear Riding Hood Red at your own sweet risk... we warn you, you're going to be followed! It's a rich, saturated red that turns the most muted look into a tantalizing sensation. \$1.10 plus tax

Bringing the pigs out?

Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women

The story of an outcast



Sandrine Bonnaire in 'Vagabonde'

"Vagabonde" has a mystery at its centre — why has Mona turned her back on society to face an uncertain future on the road? The film doesn't spell things out, we have to draw our own conclusions.

Mona is a drifter, hitchhiking her way aimlessly round southern France in winter. She's aware that she's an oddity. The drivers who give her lifts, the people she meets are all curious to know why a young attractive girl is on the road, alone and unprotected.

Body

The film opens with the discovery of her dead body, frozen in a field. From there, the film backtracks over the last few months of her life. People she's met face the camera directly and "bear witness" about her.

Since Mona herself is an enigma, the attitudes to wards her of the people she meets are the central part of the film. Her effect on people

Belinda Weaver reviews 'Vagabonde', a film by Agnes Varda

reveals them to us.

Mona confides to a university professor who gives her a lift that since people ask questions, she makes up answers. We can't be sure of anything she tells us.

The response of most of the men is salacious — the idea of a young woman travelling alone excites them. They see her as someone they can make sexual use of — temporarily. They don't respect her.

One man lets her earn a few francs, but then sends her packing. He doesn't trust women on the road — "They only want to loaf and chase men".

The response of women is more varied. She evokes guilt and unease in the university professor who remains haunted by her memory. A peasant woman envies Mona her free-

dom.

Yolande, who cares for an elderly woman, at first befriends, then turns against, Mona. She finds Mona too unsettling once she has allowed her into her home.

Mona is a self-appointed outcast from society. She rejects all the "feminine" graces expected by society — she's surly, dirty and undomesticated. There is no attempt to ingratiate herself with people. She seeks lifts, money, cigarettes and food all with the same sullen and defensive air.

Female vagrants are rarer than male. They evoke stronger responses because they challenge people's views of what is acceptable behaviour for a woman.

By staying dirty, by casually sleeping with and leaving men, by doing as she pleases, Mona is distancing herself from "acceptable" behaviour.

Stark

The film is somewhat stark and sombre. Starting it with her death weights down the

flashback scenes with a sense of despair.

Because the story is unfolded in an episodic, deliberately "undramatic" way, it labours a bit. The slightly self-conscious "witness" scenes also slow the pace.

Mona is uncompromising. She's not prepared to risk her freedom with anybody or anything. As a goatherd tells her, freedom can destroy, because the loneliness it brings is destructive. Mona's lonely death from cold and exposure is the end of her freedom.

Rejection

Mona's intransigence is perfectly conveyed by the young actress, Sandrine Bonnaire. She doesn't seek sympathy from people she meets, she doesn't have any expectations, she's ready for rejection.

The goatherd also says of her, "By proving she's useless she helps a society she rejects". Society dismisses tramps and vagrants as freaks rather than face up to why they take to the lives they do.

Miners' strike in Belgium

THE MINERS' strike in Belgium shows a remarkable change. For many years they have had two unions in the pits — the Christian union and the Socialist union. The fact that there are only five pits left in Belgium and the government wants to shut all five has brought the two unions together.

There is now a feeling of solidarity which has never existed in the Belgian pits before. The young miners out there are demanding exactly the same as what we demanded — that is, jobs, pits, and mining communities to be

By a British miner who recently visited Belgium

saved from wholesale slaughter.

It's also interesting to know that Belgium has a large nuclear programme. They talk a lot about the China syndrome, but what I fear is the French syndrome.

The French have no oil. They have shut almost all the coal mines. And now the authorities just shrug their shoulders and say 'we've no option. We have to go nuclear'.

That could happen in Bel-

gium, and in this country.

The determination of the Belgian miners to save their pits is something that has to be seen to be believed. They are solid; and if they have to go to other workers, then they are quite prepared to do that.

They learned tremendous lessons from the miners' strike in Britain, and the first one is that they need unity themselves, and having got unity they must secure the support of other workers.

The two prime reasons why the British miners lost our strike were that we did

not have total unity, due to the Notts miners, and we did not get the promised support of the big battalions. If the Belgian miners can get those two ingredients, then they are well on the way to winning their battle.

When we visited Belgium we went on the picket lines over there as a gesture of solidarity. I was impressed by their youth. They have a different situation over there. 25 years in the pits, and you're out on a full pension. They were absolutely amazed when I told them that I had had 31 years in the pits.

There is also a tremendous internationalist spirit. You have the French-speakers, the Flemish-speakers, the Turks, the Italians — and we found one guy from Manchester who worked in a pit in Belgium.

The police didn't want to know. They kept well away. There was no police presence on the picket line at the pit.

But as soon as there was any attempt to go to any other sector of industry, the police came in heavy. We thought we had got it bad here, but nothing on a par with that.

Sea strike on job cuts

STRIKING seamen blockaded ferry terminals and closed down all cross-channel sailing from Portsmouth recently in protest at cutbacks in manning levels.

National Union of Seamen crew members occupied the ships in solidarity with strikers at Felixstowe who are in a similar dispute over extra manning for the new-type large ferries.

But ferry operators Townsend Thoresen struck back almost immediately by taking legal action against the strikers. They claim the Portsmouth occupation constitutes secondary picketing.

A court injunction declaring the strike illegal has now been imposed on the crew of one ship, Free Enterprise 5, tied up since the cancellation of its sailing to Cherbourg.

A second vessel at an adjacent berth was occupied on 2 May as crew members joined the strike — creating holiday chaos and extending the ports' logjam.

All scheduled passenger and freight services are now at a complete standstill.

NUS must now build on this revolt of the rank and file and escalate the dispute via port joint trade union committees. Only if this next step is taken can marine workers' jobs be defended.

Bed strike rally

THE THREE hundred workers at Silentnight bed factory sacked last July are to hold a march and rally in Keighley in Yorkshire on Saturday 17 May. 500 workers were sacked by Silentnight boss Tom Clark after six weeks on strike for higher wages. The workers spent six months asking for the implementation of the nationally-agreed rise for the bedding industry; and even agreed to forgo the rise to save jobs, but Silentnight announced 52 redundancies.

The workers went on strike. And the strike has become a struggle for the right to strike without facing summary dismissal. The picket lines are at Sutton, between Keighley and Skipton, and at Barnoldswick between Brunley and Skipton. For further information contact the strike HQ, tel. 0282 816709.

March and rally 17 May. Speakers include Denis Skinner and Derek Hatton. Assemble 12.00 Lund Park, Keighley.

CPSA left gains

By Mike Grayson

THE BROAD Left in CPSA scored a resounding victory at the annual conference of the DHSS section.

In this, the largest section of the union, the Broad Left took 27 of the 30 seats on the Section executive. SO supporter Steve Battlemuch was one of the successful candidates.

The results of the CPSA national executive elections are yet to be announced as I write, but will be known by the end of the week.

The main CPSA conference opened on Monday 12th by passing a censure motion on the current right-wing National Executive Committee for failing to mount a pay campaign this year. However, the motion failed to put any policy for this year's pay campaign.

The Broad Left suffered a setback when a motion from the NEC to relax the current union ban on casual staff was carried by a narrow majority. The 'Broad Left 84' group supported the right-wing NEC.

Leeds post strike

By Greg Birch (Branch secretary, Basingstoke UCW, in personal capacity)

THE ORIGINS of the current postal dispute in Leeds lie in the so-called business efficiency package agreed at the UCW annual conference last year.

In this, postal workers were forced into productivity schemes whether local branches agreed or not.

Part of the package was an agreement to look at new methods of work, but no agreement was given to the implementation of these methods.

The Post Office, however, have now completed the long-running study in Leeds, and have taken management action to implement the results. The implications for Leeds are job losses and a reduction in overtime.

With the present national

pay offer standing at 4½%, this will mean a drastic cut in wages, forcing people to look for outside work.

The Post Office will achieve casualisation of staff and a weakening of the union's position.

Nationally, the implications are that if the Post Office gets away with implementing the new working practices at Leeds, they will speedily try to introduce them at other offices up and down the country.

Leeds branch are at present operating an overtime ban and have balloted in favour of taking industrial action, although as yet an all-out strike has not been called.

The UCW executive council are trying to keep the dispute low-key and to stop it spreading to other offices. This may prove impossible if the Post Office attempts to divert work away from Leeds and other UCW branches take sympathetic action.

The UCW executive council have, however, authorised branches to take collections on behalf of the Leeds membership.

The Post Office have responded by employing about 400 casuals to do the work normally performed on over-

time. It is essential that the dispute is won. The government's strategy is clear: more work for less pay, casualisation, and privatisation.

Save this hospital

ON WEDNESDAY 7 May, three to four hundred people protested at the proposed closure of the Royal Samaritan Hospital in the south side of Glasgow, a closure which would be disastrous to the health and well-being of women in the West of Scotland.

The demonstration, called by NUPE and supported by health service workers from the Victoria Infirmary and Stobhill and Gartnavel hospitals plus supporters from various community organisations and Labour Party members, sought to show the unelected Greater Glasgow Health Board that they cannot implement further cutbacks in the already chronically understaffed and under-financed Health Service.

The Samaritan is particularly important in that it is a

women's hospital, the only such hospital in the West of Scotland which deals exclusively with the health concerns and problems of women in a women's environment.

NUPE has already made a good start by calling this demonstration. The campaign must be continued and escalated if the Health Board is to be forced to withdraw its plans.

The campaign must include broad sections of the women's and labour movements who will be affected by the cut of this vital service, especially the Labour Party Womens Sections, Women's Aid and all the Health Service unions.

The Greater Glasgow Health Board cannot be allowed to get away with this attack on women's health. The campaign can and must be won and the hospital saved but only through a vigorous, co-ordinated campaign encompassing the Glasgow labour and women's movements.

Action to oust racist

By Satbinder Sangmera



STUART MILSON is a member of the Essex University Monday Club. He boasts of frequent visits to South Africa and Northern Ireland, meeting up with right-wing unionist forces; and he has only just been thrown out of the Conservative Party.

In the recent student non-sabbatical elections he stood on the ticket, "Students Demand Repatriation" and managed to get 73 votes. Along with James Coakley Boyce (Chair of Essex University Monday Club), suspected ex-member of the BNP, he represents the organised racist ultra right-wing at Essex University. However at the elections, they finally overstepped the mark, by printing a leaflet which could have been easily mistaken for NF trash.

News of the leaflet quickly spread and immediately there was a groundswell of opinion that the racists should be kicked out. The day after the elections a petition demanding the University suspend Milson and Coakley Boyce was sent round, obtaining nearly a third of all students' support within four hours.

All this has occurred at a time when there has been a number of racist attacks in

The Left

New start for Briefing

By John Bloxam

PLANS HAVE been set to launch a new Labour Briefing paper as a fortnightly at this year's Labour Party Conference. It will replace the present monthly magazine and aim to organise all the 'hard', anti-Kinnock left.

Over the last six years Briefing has been a magazine with a fairly broad readership but a tiny number of organised supporters. The new factor is that, with the left generally depressed, some small would-be Trotskyist groups have turned to Briefing as a home.

The Briefing AGM last Saturday, 10 May, which ratified the expansion plan, was the largest ever, with an attendance of about 150.

Will the new mixture jell? Unfortunately the AGM discussion was not very frank. Old-style Briefing activists from outside London expressed worries about the effect of changing from a monthly magazine to a fortnightly paper, and what it would mean for their local groups. But they were not a large force at the AGM.

Mainly the AGM rubber-stamped decisions on the paper previously taken by a

shadowy 'Organising Committee', made up of supporters of the 'Chartist minority' (who initiated Briefing back in 1980) 'International' and 'Socialist Viewpoint'. A 20-point 'Where We Stand' written by 'Socialist Viewpoint' was adopted without controversy — although it had no section on women's rights! That will be added later and so potential controversy with the advocates of 'women's power' within Briefing was put off.

The Chartist minority wanted their special slogan, 'Labour Take the Power' so that was also accepted without discussion, although the majority of those at the AGM disagree with the slogan.

The AGM did not discuss local government or the policy to 'freeze rates' — which was in the 'Where We Stand', although Briefing originally split off from Socialist Organiser in opposition to this very slogan.

So it's not clear yet what will take shape politically. Nor organisationally.

John Lister, introducing the proposals for the new paper, said that £8000 would have to be raised before the September launch. It will also need a paid circulation of 4000

and £500 a week subsidy from supporters' donations. The collection at the AGM raised £171.19.

PCI split

THE FRENCH PCI, probably the world's largest or second largest group laying claim to Trotskyism, has had a big split.

The PCI — about 5,000 to 10,000 strong — has long controlled France's biggest student union, UNEF-ID, and had quite strong positions in the officialdom of the FO and FEN trade union federations. The leaders of the split are the current top officials of UNEF-ID — joined by several generations of their predecessors, who now have jobs in FO or the FEN.

Documents of the split-off, 'Convergences Socialistes', are not yet available to us, but it seems that they criticise the PCI for falsely labelling French president Francois Mitterand as a straightforward right-winger, and advocate a more positive attitude to the Socialist Party.

Socialist Organiser

After the local elections Labour must go on the attack!



By Paul Whetton, secretary of Bevercotes NUM (Notts), victimised by the Coal Board

THE LOCAL elections showed quite a good result for the Labour Party.

I was also interested to note the results of Liverpool and Lambeth. In spite of everything the Labour Party leadership has done to try to put people down, it is quite obvious that local people are supporting local leaders who have committed themselves and delivered the goods.

The argument about whether or not you are in Militant, and whether you are outside the constitution of

the Labour Party, took second place. And it seems to me that there is a very vital lesson there for the leadership of the Labour Party.

There is an enemy to be attacked. That enemy should

be attacked full force, head-on, going for the jugular vein — and it's got to be the Tories. There is absolutely no time to waste on internal wrangling.

The Labour Party is start-

ing to regain the backing of the working class. It needs to galvanise that support, take it forward, dispose of the Tories once and for all, commit itself to changing society, and deliver the goods.

Vote reflects the anger

By Cheung Siu Ming (Norwood Labour Party)

THE LABOUR Party took 40 of the 64 seats on Lambeth council, making gains from both the Alli-

ance and the Tories. The result is a clear indication of the community's anger over the disqualification and surcharge of the 31 Labour councillors who fought to defend jobs and services.

Morale during the election campaign was very high. Party members who were demoralised and disorientated by the rate rises before the 1982 elections turned out to help this time. Tactical differences over the fight against rate-capping were put aside and party members were united in their determination to kick out the Tories and the Alliance.

The 31 councillors delayed their decision not to appeal against their disqualification until the last minute, so that the legal maximum rate could be set for 1986-7. The Tories failed to cut the budget in the weeks running up to the election.

But the local parties had very little time to select a new set of

candidates, and the new Labour group is politically more heterogeneous and relatively inexperienced.

Almost immediately the process of electing the new council leadership has brought out important issues, such as support for the stand taken by the 31 ex-councillors, the equal opportunities policy of the council, and the possibility of an early rent increase.

One candidate for chair of housing said, "It doesn't matter what I say, but this Labour group is going to stay within the law".

The local parties and the newly formed left caucus will have to address this issue: is the new council going to follow in Islington's footsteps and mortgage the future through bank loans until a Labour government bails them out, or is it going to fight now against privatisation, the selling-off of council assets, and rent increases?

A new stage

We have now been in our new offices for about two months. Our fund drive has enabled us to buy a small printing press — now installed in the new offices, and in use this last week to produce a special SO print bulletin and a new issue of 'Youth Fightback' — and a new process camera.

What remains to be done? A lot of renovation work still needs to be completed at the new offices: painting, plastering, replacing some doors and windows, repointing brickwork, and replacing a rotten floor.

And we're looking for new typesetting equipment. This will be financed by loans from supporters which will

require repayment at about £400 per month.

So our fund drive still has a distance to go. At our AGM on 26-27 April a number of IOUs were put in, and we're looking for the cash now:

Mick O'Sullivan £10, Tim Cooper £30, Reb Short and Rosanna Pierson £5, Trudy Saunders £10, Kath Brierley £10, Keyvan Lajavardi-Khosh £5, Alan Johnson £10, Jill Mountford £20, Mick Sidaway £10, Matt Cooper £10.

Thanks this week to: Jean Lane £6, North London readers £2.19, Middlesex reader £0.70, Martin Donohue £1.20.

Send donations to SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Local group	Target	So far	Per cent
North London	1600	1404.91	88%
Nottingham	1000	1113.58	111%
South London	800	1054.26	132%
Manchester	1000	886.65	89%
East London	760	707.11	93%
Merseyside	500	612.80	123%
Cardiff	600	607.45	101%
Glasgow/Edinburgh	560	398.00	71%
Durham/North East	200	298.30	149%
Sheffield	400	265.96	66%
York/Harrogate	300	230.70	77%
Stoke North	200	202.75	101%
Coventry	350	225.00	64%
West London	500	200.00	40%
Stoke South	200	198.00	99%
Basingstoke	560	147.17	26%
Birmingham	100	75.00	75%
Colchester	100	72.80	73%
Aberdeen	20	47.20	236%
Oxford	40	45.00	113%
Canterbury	90	44.00	49%
Southampton	60	26.00	43%
Leeds	60		
Central/general	5000	2409.30	48%
Total	15000	11247.42	75%



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