

socialist newsletter

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Political Status NOW!

The hunger strike, to the death, begun by seven prisoners in the Long Kesh H-Blocks, once more focuses our attention on the fight by four hundred men and women in the North of Ireland to be treated as political prisoners. The British government, which granted them political status, then took it away, says they are common criminals. When the last Labour government said it the Tory opposition agreed. Now the Tories say they can starve to death, the Labour spokesman agrees.

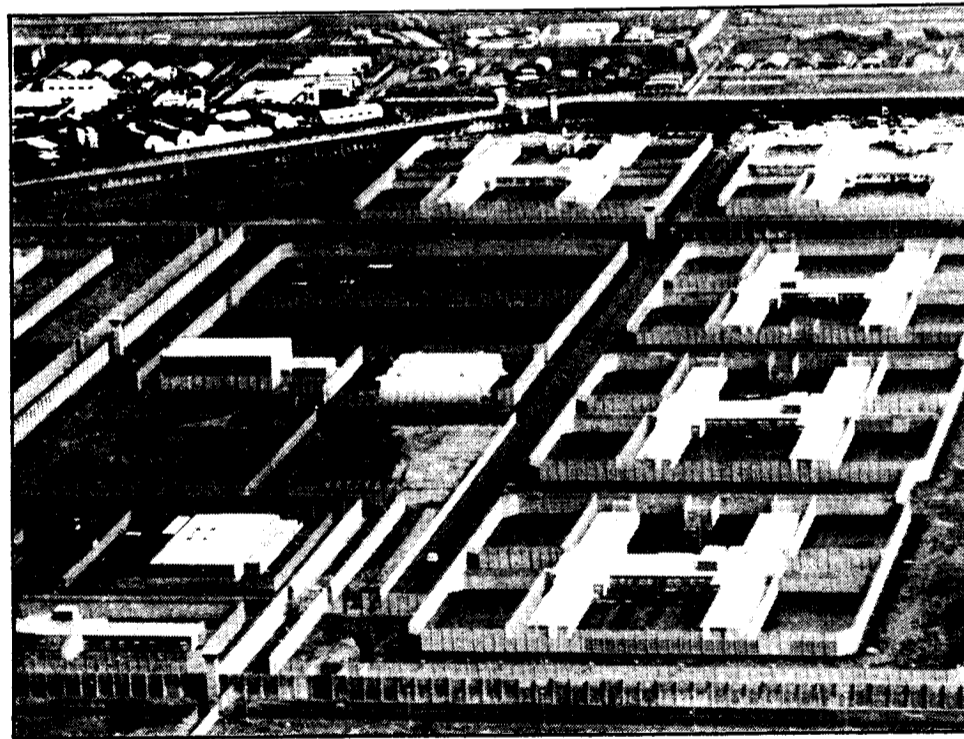
Are they criminals? They are no more criminals than was Robert Mugabe, or Jomo Kenyatta, or any of the other nationalists who actively fought to throw out a British imperialist presence from their country. By denying them political status the Tory government is trying to physically and morally break a generation of Irish Republicans. From the interrogation centres, where torture was proven, to the trials without a jury, usually in front of a bigoted right wing Loyalist judge, to brutalisation by the warders of Long Kesh and Armagh, these young men and women suffered a conveyor belt of repression.

The H-Blocks were intended to send the best fighters for Irish independence and unity into oblivion as criminals. Instead, the prisoners have waged a battle with the only weapons at their disposal. First, refusal to wear the hated prison uniform. Then, the 'dirty protest', spurred on by the fouling of the cells by the warders. Now, the decision, as other Irish Republicans have before, to conduct a hunger strike.

Political status is not a question of 'special privileges'. It is a recognition of the fact that the members of the Republican movement are in jail for fighting a war, as best they are able, to remove an army of occupation which serves to maintain the partition of Ireland, which the overwhelming majority of Irish people never accepted. There are, in fact, many prisoners in Long Kesh, at this very moment, who still have political status.

The Tory government, just before the hunger strike began, made a crude attempt to prevent it by offering all prisoners in the North of Ireland 'civilian clothing', chosen by the prison regimes. This, of course, was only an offer to wear a different kind of prison uniform and was rightly rejected as such. But it shows that the 'criminalisation programme' of Republicans is a conscious programme of political repression, and not the simple application of criminal law to Republicans.

Both the Thatcher government and the Callaghan administration before, have



claimed that the conditions of the men in the H-Blocks and the women in Armagh are 'self inflicted'. Members of the Labour Party and trade unions must be clear on this point. The torture in Castlereagh interrogation centre was not 'self inflicted'. The trial without jury was not 'self inflicted'. The beatings up by warders were not 'self inflicted'. The turning off of the central heating in sub zero temperatures last winter was not 'self inflicted'. The denial of visits and reading matter was not 'self inflicted'.

The refusal to wear prison clothes, the 'dirty protest' and the hunger strike are not 'self inflicted' miseries, merely for effect. They are a tragic form of protest against repression. Make no mistake, Irish Republicans have many times died on hunger strike. This is no mere gesture.

If they start to die their blood will be on Margaret Thatcher's hands. But they need not die. The enemy they face is the enemy we face. What interest has the working people of Britain in maintaining

the partition of Ireland and the armed occupation of six of its counties? What interest have we, members of trades unions and the Labour Party, in allowing young Republicans to starve to death?

For too long the leaders of the TUC have maintained a silence on the repression of Ireland. There are trade unionists in the H-Blocks. Trade union militants, such as AUEW-TASS member Brian Maguire, have died in custody in the North of Ireland. For too long the Parliamentary Labour Party has maintained a 'bi-partisan' policy with the Tories on Ireland. When Roy Mason was

Minister of State he ran the most repressive regime in the six counties for many years.

The 'bi-partisan' policy is a ruling class policy. It is only they, their state and their agents in Ireland who benefit. The 'bi-partisan' policy is a policy of repression. It is a policy of army patrols, juryless courts, brutalisation, discrimination against members of the Nationalist community. Above all it is a policy of partition. Tony Benn said recently that partition was a crime against the Irish people. He was a thousand times right.

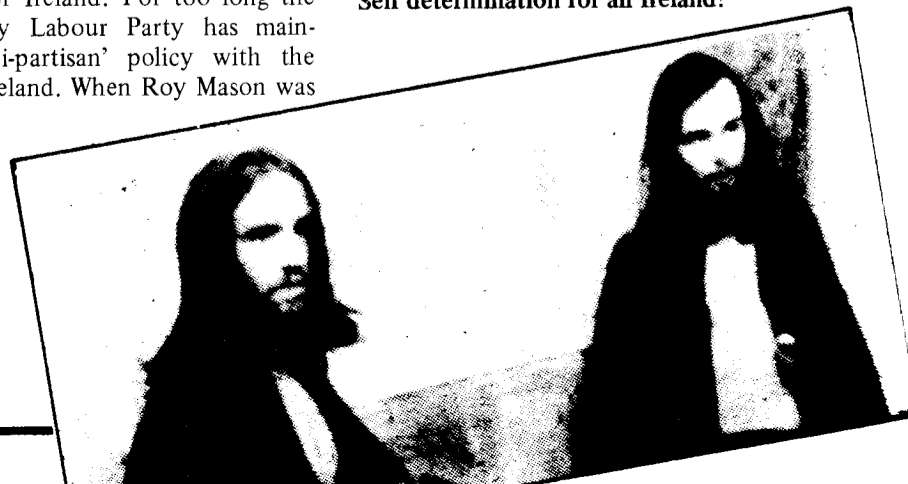
It is time to break the 'bi-partisan' policy. *It is necessary to break with the Tories on Ireland.* The Labour Party NEC has condemned the use of repression in Ireland. Now they must be made to take a stand for political status. For Tony Benn to work for an end to partition he must call for the ending of the 'bi-partisan' policy. *Partition will not be ended in conjunction with Thatcher, but in the exercise of self-determination by the majority of the Irish people.*

The Socialist Labour Group supports the Charter 80 Campaign. We do so not merely as humanitarians, although any humanitarian must be opposed to the attempt by the British ruling class to break those men and women. We do so because the defeat of Thatcher and her government on this question would strike a blow in the interests of the British workers as well as the Irish people. We have no interest in maintaining troops in Ireland, or in the brutalities of the H-Blocks.

There is now an effective news blackout on the hunger strike. No doubt 'pressure' has been brought to bear on the media. But those men are not eating. Every member of a trade union or the Labour Party should take up their cause. Lobby your MP. Write to your union executive. Fight for resolutions calling for political status and send them to the Northern Ireland Office in London. Build a Charter 80 Group in your area and support the national campaign.

It will be a victory for Thatcher and the Tories if this hunger strike is unsuccessful and men are allowed to die. The labour movement has made the cause of Irish independence its own before. It must do so again.

Political status now!
End the bi-partisan policy now!
Withdraw the troops now!
Self determination for all Ireland!



LAMBETH CONFERENCE

now the labour party nec must be made to fight

by Marie Jones

The Local Government in Crisis Conference on November 1st presented the opportunity to unify wide sections of the workers' movement against the Tory Government. Over 800 delegates and some 200 observers attended the Conference. These delegates represented 30 Labour Councils and more than 100 Constituency Labour Parties, with the rest of the Conference coming from trade unions.

One of the most important points to be made by Lambeth Council leader Ted Knight was that this Conference should have been called by the Labour Party NEC and the TUC. The fact that this essentially anti-Government Conference had to be built exclusively by workers at trade union branch and CLP level is in itself a condemnation of the lack of leadership provided by the official Labour and Trade Union leaders. The NEC did have observers at the Conference. But they should have called it and at the same time declared their intention to launch a unified campaign to stop every cut, save every job, defend every democratic right and bring down Thatcher. But no, the NEC was there only as observers.

The main resolution of the day was moved by Ted Knight on behalf of the Conference Organising Committee. Its final paragraph concentrated the key problem facing the Conference and the working class:

'The Thatcher Government has dramatically closed the options open to the labour movement'. It went on: 'Individual actions are doomed to failure unless they can be co-ordinated and organised into extended and large scale strikes directed against the government, which is the cause of the problem'. Unfortunately neither Ted Knight nor the resolution he moved raised the demand, which logically flows out of such an analysis, for a national campaign to bring down the Tories. Instead the following formulations were offered: '... persuade the Government to change their policies... force the Government to change... Government policy must be changed'. This is precisely the approach of the TUC who have shown great enthusiasm for talking to Thatcher to advise her to change course but great reluctance in organising a campaign against her Government.

Ted Knight's opening speech contained

a highly dangerous contradiction. On the one hand he talked of preparing for a confrontation with the Tories but on the other hand talked of holding fire on key issues. This method only feeds the confusion and hesitancy which Knight has used as an excuse for making massive rate increases and taking the decision to allow Council houses to be sold in Lambeth. His record on these counts was strongly attacked by several Conference delegates. This criticism was particularly pointed when the resolution Knight moved contains the following: *'... Labour Councils and Councillors should undertake... no rent rises or supplementary rate increases... no sale of council houses...'*

The resolution argued that rate rises are absolutely no solution *'... Labour Council which, like Lambeth, tried to prevent cuts by making massive rate increases, cannot continue to do so indefinitely'*. In other words they will have to cut. This raised another problem for Knight because his resolution also contained: *'Where Labour Councillors carry out cuts, their Labour Parties should fight for their replacement'*. Will this clause be extended to those like Knight who at the moment have taken the decision not to obstruct the sale of Council houses?

Knight's main opposition inside Lambeth Labour Left who have opposed his practice on rates and Council houses. They supported the Amendment moved by Vanessa Wiseman for Lambeth Trades Council. This Amendment agreed that *'... Labour Councils (should not use) the inactivity of others to justify implementation or accepting cuts themselves'*. This was a clear reference to Knight's notion of holding fire or waiting for the movement to develop as if Lambeth's hesitancy will not directly affect the course of that development.

Although this Amendment was also ambiguous about launching a fight to bring down the Tories, it did raise the need for *'A national struggle... to force the Tories to back down'*, and *'for Labour MPs to assist the fight against the Tories by filibustering and obstructing the Tories work in Parliament'*. These clauses raise the need for a struggle with a national perspective and one which places the PLP at the centre of the fight they spend so much time avoiding by providing

Thatcher with a loyal opposition.

The only serious challenge to the main resolution came from the NUPE leadership. Their Amendment centred on the strategy: *'... continue to raise rates... Labour Councils should co-ordinate resignations... Councillors... should consider resigning to turn elections into a referendum on local autonomy'*.

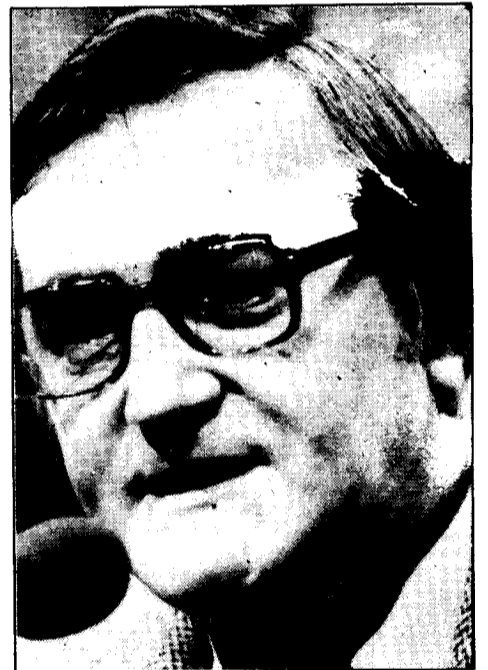
The pessimism of this Amendment provoked the militant character of the Conference. The NUPE leadership's strategy was heavily defeated and met with considerable opposition from NUPE branch delegates at the Conference, some going so far as to disassociate their branches from the NUPE leadership position.

Lambeth NALGO, who have recently voted to obstruct Council house sales in opposition to their employer Ted Knight, successfully moved an Amendment calling on Local Authority Trade Union members to refuse to co-operate in implementing Council house sales.

Barnsley Labour Party urged: *'... The General Council of the TUC to prepare a plan for a General Strike in protection of working class interests and living standards'*. It was important for the Conference to what do these preparations consist? Surely it is in launching the fight now around specific questions like Council houses and carrying the burden of the struggle to the leaders of the workers' movement, forcing them to declare a fight in defence of Council houses as the first stage in a national campaign to bring down the Tories.

The Conference passed left-wing policy on cuts, rates, Council houses, solidarity action etc. But the questions it did not face up to were: What is the first step? How shall this Conference as a regroupment lead the fight and carry it to the NEC and TUC?

On these fundamental problems the successful main resolution and the defeated NUPE amendment did not differ at all. Both motions called for the creation of: *'... a steering committee to exchange and disseminate information...'* Now it is clear that this Committee will be a hotbed of discussions about how to proceed. But unless it quickly agrees to begin the national fightback around



specific issues with a call to the TUC and NEC to lead the fight, then the tremendous significance and potential of the Conference will be lost in the heady militancy of the Conference resolutions.

The Conference revealed a willingness to fight the sale of Council houses. The Steering Committee could usefully launch a campaign on this issue. It could centralise the wide-spread anti-Thatcher sentiment in the country in a call for defence of Council houses through non-co-operation by Labour Councils, strike action by unions and demonstrations called and organised by CLPs.

The Steering Committee could provide a focus for opposition to Thatcher which the NEC and TUC as yet refuse to provide. Knight and co must go way beyond simply *'disseminating information'*. He must make the calls to action which the Conference was looking for. The first step for Knight is to stop putting up the rates and to obstruct Council house sales in Lambeth. Lambeth should set this example to back a call for the mobilisation of the huge forces which the 800 plus delegates represented at the November 1st Conference.

It is in this way that the NEC and TUC will be moved to action. After November 1st the demand on them must be: TUC/NEC organise a National Convention of the Trade Unions and Labour Party to launch the fight to bring down Thatcher.

by Michael Keene

POLAND

FREE UNIONS MEET STALINIST CHALLENGE



On October 3rd a one-hour protest strike took place in Lodz, called by the 'Solidarity' Free Trade Union. The strike received support from millions of workers in all the towns across the country, despite the fact that it was originally planned to be confined to the Baltic ports.

The strike was called to protest at the Kania government's failure to comply with the wage increases, which were negotiated as a result of the July and August strikes. The massive support given to the October 3rd strike testifies to the fact that the gains made by the Polish working class have been translated into powerful organisations and that the Free Trade Unions continue to exist as the expression of a profound movement which is pressing forward.

The strike took place in conditions of violent attacks in the national press and

of enormous pressure exerted by the leaders of the new movement. Lech Walesa expressed this pressure when he stated 'the demands are so numerous that the government is not able to satisfy them all in a given time'. Walesa was in fact opposed at the beginning of September to the national extension of 'Solidarity'. However, these hesitations have not been able to overcome the expressed will of the Polish workers to enforce the strict implementation of the pledges of the government.

The month of October also saw the dissolution of the official 'trade union' confederation, with its constituent bodies opting to present themselves as 'independent' unions. This is in itself a measure of the crisis which the workers' struggle has created for the regime. But this manoeuvre has fooled nobody. 'Solidarity' has con-

tinued to grow and is now estimated to have the support of eight million workers.

The crisis of the Polish bureaucracy gets worse. At the plenum meeting of 5th and 6th October, there were violent rows. One hundred leading functionaries had to be sacrificed. The previous Gierek leadership had to be identified with 'corruption' and 'arrogance' as well as denounced as being guilty of 'economic incompetence'. Seven members were removed from the Central Committee. But even these things were not enough to mask the divisions in the Stalinist apparatus, which were not over respect or otherwise of the Gdansk agreements as the western press would have it. What is involved is how best to deal with the powerful and combative working class.

Some elements in the bureaucracy want to attempt a strategy of integration of the new unions into the state. On the other hand there are elements of the bureaucracy which see the way forward as being through the preparation of brutal confrontation with the workers. Kania appeared during the plenum to balance between these elements, attacking the 3rd October strike and at the same time expressing his 'confidence' in the MKZ. He is aware of the difficulty of confronting the working class, whilst knowing that it is necessary to prepare that confrontation. A further symptom of the disarray of the Polish bureaucracy is the news that the membership of the Stalinist Party is falling heavily. For example, the POUP membership in Lodz has fallen by 20%.

This is the background to the 'invitation' of Kania to Moscow. The Kremlin is all too aware that the Polish workers have lit the fuse to a powder-keg and that the Polish Stalinists have to be given close instructions if its effects are to be contained.

On October 3rd the Poland/USSR

border was closed to prevent the Silesian strikes from having a 'contagious' effect. The East German and Czech Stalinists have made much more difficult all travel and contact with Poland. They are trying to isolate the Polish workers.

The fruits of the meeting between Kania and the Kremlin are to be seen in the continued battle over the legal registration of 'Solidarity'. The regime, through the courts has tried to inject a clause into the Union's statutes recognising 'the



leading role of the POUP'. The entire working class is firm in rejecting this.

Nothing is resolved in Poland. A threat to the Free Trade Unions is being marshalled by the Stalinist bureaucracy of the Kremlin. This underlines the importance of the fight which the SLG takes up unreservedly for solidarity with the Free Trade Union movement. Specifically we must continue to press in Britain for the Labour Party and TUC to recognise, support and give material aid to our Polish brothers and sisters.

PARIS CONFERENCE AGAINST REPRESSION

Defence of Free Trade Unions in USSR and Eastern Europe Permanent Liaison Committee.

A meeting of the Permanent Liaison Committee for the Defence of Free Trade Unions in Eastern Europe was held in Paris in the headquarters of the CGT-FO trade union on 18th of October. This was the second meeting of the Committee to be held since the Conference which established the Committee last April.

Represented were organisations, militants and national committees and campaigns from 12 European countries. Amongst the greeting received by the meeting were ones from the General secretary of the CGT-FO of France, the

UIL of Italy and from Eric Heffer MP.

The meeting was opened by Edmund Baluka, ex-leader of the Polish strike in Szezin in 1970/1, chairman of the Liaison Committee, who said:

'The Polish regime is delaying recognition of the new unions while it tries to infiltrate them with a fifth column. The official unions are trying to join the new ones which still have no legal status. They can't get the means, duplicators, typewriters, which the law prohibits individuals to buy. We must fight to give them material aid and help 'the Polish disease' to spread.'

Baluka also told the meeting that he had written to the workers committee in Gdansk who have demanded the reinstatement of all those sacked after the 1970/1

strikes. He is fighting for his right to go back and work in Poland and has sent a copy of his letter to the Polish authorities.

Two representatives of the Reichbahn Strike Committee of West Berlin spoke to the meeting. These workers were employed by the East German government and were on strike since the beginning of September for the right to a Free Trade Union.

The meeting was addressed by a member of the SLOMR trade union movement of Romania. Also present were Wladislaw Suletski from Poland and Vladimir Borisov from the USSR, both fighters for Free Trade Unions.

The meeting received a report from a representative of the National Union of

Students of France (UNEF), on the delegation that was organised to Warsaw to discuss with Polish students. A joint Commission has been set up between UNEF and the newly founded NZS independent students' union.

A representative of ICAR from Britain spoke on the question of the H-Block prisoners. The meeting sent telegrams to the British Embassy in Paris and to the TUC and Labour Party NEC demanding the granting of the five demands of the prisoners. A support campaign for the H-Block prisoners was set up in France which has collected thousands of signatures demanding the British government grant the five demands.

by Rachel Stein

WHY WAS EILEEN CROSBIE SACKED?

The sacking of Nottinghamshire teacher Eileen Crosbie provides a disturbing lesson for all teachers and the workers' movement as a whole. A teacher at the Robert Mellor Primary School in Arnold, Notts., she, along with all teachers working for the Notts. Local Education Authority, faced huge cuts in nursery provision in September 1979. In line with official National Union of Teachers' policy Eileen Crosbie made it clear that she would not teach if the pupil teacher ratio went above 13 to one in her nursery. She maintained the NUT's position throughout the resultant victimisation, which ended with her being sacked on the 22nd April 1980.

From January to April the NUT members at her nursery were on strike for a total of 20 weeks. Notts. NUT also took 'rolling' strike action which involved 25 schools and culminated in a solidarity rally of 3,500 teachers. But the NUT called off the action to allow the industrial tribunal to deliberate. Crosbie's sacking has now been confirmed by the tribunal.

Was it necessary for Eileen Crosbie to lose her job?

The NUT National Executive is renowned for evading its responsibilities as a national leadership and leaving local NUT Associations isolated in struggles such as that over Eileen Crosbie. If teachers are to successfully defend their interests against the Tory cuts then the NUT leadership must be made to take responsibility for organising the fight. There is no way out to be found at local level or in running to a so-called 'impartial' industrial tribunal, which is but a tool of the state. The NUT National Executive has now called a national rally on November 22nd. This initiative is *months* too late. Such national moves should have been made when Crosbie was first victimised and maintained until she was reinstated. To call the rally now is merely a cover up for the passivity of the NUT leaders at the time when action really mattered. In refusing a national programme of action and in passing the buck back to the local Association the NUT leaders allowed the sacking to proceed, making a mockery of Crosbie's attempt to defend official union policy.

The case of Eileen Crosbie has pointed the finger at the NUT leaders. To defeat further victimisations of this type members of the NUT need not only to mobilise the rank and file in solidarity action, but to begin a campaign within the NUT, demanding that its leaders stop evading their responsibilities. Good policy on pupil-teacher ratio isn't worth the paper it's written on if the NUT, nationally, will not take action to defend teachers who adhere, on the job, to that policy.

The resignation of James Callaghan has thrown wide open the central problem of the Labour Party leadership. After the Blackpool Conference decision to widen the franchise Callaghan's decision to resign was an attempt to manoeuvre against the Conference decision by creating the conditions in which the PLP could open the door for Denis Healey.

Eric Heffer's call for the election to be postponed until an election system was agreed by Conference was quite correct. The Blackpool Conference made it clear that it rejected election by the PLP alone. As such all those who stood in this PLP election stood against the wishes of the Conference. Tribunate Jon Silkin's role in this PLP election was particularly hypocritical. On the one hand he supported the extension of the franchise but in standing he provided 'left-legitimacy' for this bastard election.

Healey's intention, supported by the entire bourgeois press, was to pre-empt the January Conference by presenting it with a fait accompli. The joint intention of Healey, Duffy and co was to create a situation in which the Wembley Conference will simply be called upon to ratify the PLP election.

Had the NEC resolution, calling for postponement of the election, been passed, then Foot could have taken over as caretaker until January. However, Foot along with Healey, Shore and Silkin saw fit to ignore Conference. What is at issue here is not whether the candidates were left or right wing, but the basis of the election, and how the right-wing were seeking to use it. To support Foot against Healey as a lesser evil played into the hands of the right-wing and into the trap which Callaghan set when he resigned. The principled position in relation to this 'illegitimate' PLP election was to boycott it.

The January Conference is about creating a system through which the pressure of the working class can bear directly on the election of the leader. Under such a system the Healey wing would have no chances as he is well remembered and hated by workers who recall his policies of cuts and wage restraint in the 1974-79 Labour Government.

What type of system should be adopted? The SLG stands for the

Labour carry blackpool into the unions

sovereignty of Labour Party Conference. This Conference concentrates all the main components of the British labour movement. We are therefore unconditionally in favour of it electing the leader annually just as it elects Labour Party treasurer. At the same time we also call for the *democratisation of the block vote*. At the moment rank and file trade unionists have very little say in how the block vote operates. Trade union delegations should be elected by levy payers through Trade union branches. Such a system would greatly increase rank and file input at the Conference.

However, in January it seems likely that one sort or another of Electoral College will be created. In this situation it is necessary to support *the most democratic* form. Clearly 90% PLP representation as suggested by some would be a farce. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy has set parameters between 50% for Trade unions and 25% each for CLPs and PLP, and 40% for Trade unions plus 30% each of CLPs and PLP. The SLG will fight, along with all militants, for the greatest possible representation of Trade unions and CLPs within these confines and for the annual election of the leader.

However, once the system is agreed it is imperative that the movement demands of all candidates that the number one task of the new leader is to lead a national campaign to bring down the Tories. In the 'illegitimate' PLP election Silkin, Shore and Foot have simply indulged in platitudes and empty rhetoric and Healey has refused to state publicly any positions whatsoever. When the genuine election takes place after January Conference the labour movement must know one thing: Will the prospective leaders fight to the finish against Thatcher or lead a loyal opposition at the expense of working class jobs, living standards and Trade union rights?

The discussions in the constituencies over the bastard PLP election for leader have shown the contempt many MPs feel for the rank and file of the party. Roy Mason, when challenged to say who he would vote for refused point blank. He was talking to a room in Barnsley full of miners, responsible for him being in parliament in the first place. Arthur Scargill should begin

the fight to remove Mason right now.

In Deptford, 'left' candidate in the bastard election, John 'I'm in favour of the extended franchise' Silkin was seen with tears in his eyes after being given a unanimous vote of confidence by his GMC, who called on Labour MPs to vote for Silkin. There are a number of leading supporters of 'Militant' in Deptford GMC, who apparently amended a critical resolution in Silkin's favour. Clearly the Blackpool policies and the stand taken by the NEC against the bastard election carry little weight in those quarters.



r Party



by George White

Even Stuart Holland in Vauxhall, known as one of the young lefts, refused to be mandated by his CLP and said he was going to take part in the election.

In Swindon, EEPTU sponsored right winger David Stoddart made it plain that under no circumstances would he be mandated. An attempt to move a resolution mandating him to abstain in the election was ruled out of order by the chair.

The Blackpool Conference of the Labour Party opened up a crisis within the party leadership which, so far, has found no solution. It was not just that the left and right could find no common agreement on amending the party constitution. Everyone was caught unawares by the ferocity of the debates. Blackpool

showed, even clearer than Brighton did last year that the old apparatus, built up by Wilson and held together by Callaghan, had begun to break up under the pressures of the class struggle.

Blackpool was a conference which almost ran out of control. Despite their best efforts on the first two days to avoid a confrontation with Callaghan, the best known left leaders were forced, by the depth of feeling among the rank and file delegates, to mount an attack on the methods of the Callaghan period. The extreme right was made frantic by the drive among the majority of delegates towards a political break with 'social contractism' and towards constitutional reform. Williams and company were driven to make speeches presaging a split.

What lay behind these events? The pressures of the Tory attacks on standards, collapse of the economy and Thatcherite warmongering were always present. Callaghan had only demogogy and an appeal to unity to lean on to cover up his own record of betrayals. He failed.

It was a speech by Ted Knight, leader of Lambeth Council and known as a 'Marxist', which unlocked the real content of the Conference: the fact that the Tories could not be let govern for another four years. The standing ovation he received reflected, not only support for confronting the government, but also frustration at the passive role of the Labour leaders in the face of the cuts. That line was clearly drawn when Hattersley told Labour councillors to stay within the law. Knight's resolution, calling for confrontation, was passed.

The policies decided at Blackpool are, in fact, if seen within a normal parliamentary framework, utopian. Conference voted for unilateral disarmament, withdrawal from the EEC, abolition of the House of Lords, controls on movements of capital and massive programmes of job creation. To implement these policies would require, not just votes in parliament, but a widespread attack on the structures of the state and private property. The ruling class would have to respond by open class war, to defend its interests.

Nonetheless, the Constituency Labour Party delegates and many of the union

delegates, favoured a programme just this radical. The fact is that the crisis in British society is now so deep that very dramatic solutions are seen as necessary. There was a million light years between the speeches of most delegates at Blackpool and that of Callaghan at TUC conference four weeks earlier. He had no choice but to resign.

Another aspect of the pressure of events breaking into Blackpool was the debate on Ireland. For the first time, as well as people usually active on the Irish question, delegates speaking as concerned English socialists expressed their support for British withdrawal.

The scope of the debate within the Labour Party was reflected in the remarkable 50 or so fringe meetings at Blackpool. Benn and Heffer were in great demand, with many members of union delegations attending the fringe as well as the more usual constituency delegates.

Defeats were inflicted on the right wing at Blackpool, defeats which have made all the elements in the parliamentary party and unions shift ground. But these defeats still have to be pushed home. As the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy correctly says, the reselection procedure must now be used in every area to remove those MPs who insist on using 'parliamentary privilege' as an excuse to flout conference decisions.

But the problem is not simply one of controlling MPs. Those union leaders who wield such massive block votes at Conference, whose delegations are selected, not elected, and who never "consult their members", to quote Tom Jackson, must be brought under control. It's not the block votes of the unions as such which are the problem, it's the fact that the millions of trade unionists who vote Labour and pay the political levy have little or no say in many unions over the policy and composition of their union's delegation to Party Conference.

As well as forcing the accountability of MPs Blackpool revealed the need to make Basnett, Chappell, Duffy and Jackson accountable. The ability of these men to wield hundreds of thousands of votes undemocratically must be challenged, both within the Party and the unions.

Hold the NOLS conference

The 1979 National Organisation of Labour Students conference voted massively against support for the self-styled 'Left Alliance' of the Liberals, Communist Party and those NOLS members who had supported it without first raising this crucial question within NOLS. At the 1979 conference NOLS members Connor, Silkin, Watson and Cassidy were proposed to run as NOLS candidates in the National Union of Students Executive elections in April 1979.

When it came to the NUS conference Silkin refused to stand as an independent NOLS candidate and withdrew while Connor dumped NOLS and ran as a 'Left Alliance' candidate. The NOLS National Executive, defying NOLS conference policy, argued that NOLS delegates should vote for the 'Left Alliance'. In short, the NOLS policy of breaking with the 'Left Alliance' had been destroyed through the conscious actions of the NOLS Executive.

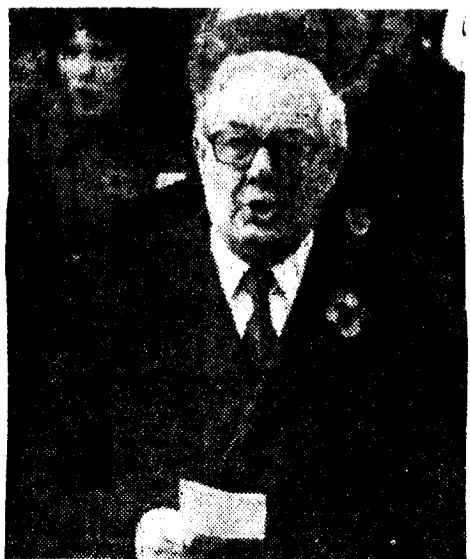
Why was it so important to break from the 'Left Alliance' and why did NOLS 1979 conference vote so clearly against this unprincipled block with the Liberals?

Quite simply, the 'Left Alliance' and its leading lights, like NUS President Dave Aaronovitch, were responsible for the collapse of last year's campaign to defend overseas students and for the paralysis in the grants campaign. The 'Left Alliance' proved utterly incapable and politically unwilling to mobilise students in defence of living standards and against the Tory cuts.

NOLS members should now quickly reaffirm their total opposition to the 'Left Alliance' and fight for a real campaign against Tory attacks. The NOLS National Committee has now *postponed* the annual conference, set for December, until after the NUS conference at Easter! Their transparent 'excuse' is that the resignation of the Labour Party Student Organiser last summer prevents them from holding the conference. Even if the conference couldn't be held in December there is no reason, save to let the NOLS leaders off the hook in relation to the 'Left Alliance', why it couldn't be held before Easter. The NOLS NC give the game away through the fact that they have 'organised' a 'National Students' Council' in November! This is meant to be a weekend of workshops with no policy making powers. It is intended to cover the leadership's refusal to break from the 'Left Alliance'.

NOLS needs to reaffirm their break from the 'Left Alliance' before the Easter NUS conference and run an independent slate with candidates *elected* by a NOLS conference. NOLS needs to mobilise students against Thatcher. This cannot be done without a full NOLS conference before Easter.

NOLS members should now send delegates to the NOLS 'Students' Council' and demand there that a national conference be convened *before* the Easter NUS Conference. Labour clubs should send resolutions to NOLS NC, the Labour Party Youth Committee and the Party NEC, demanding that the Conference be held before Easter. Delegations should go to the NOLS NC to call for an end to the effective disenfranchisement of the NOLS rank and file through the cancellation of the conference.



jamaica- REFORMISM IS IMPOSSIBLE

by Winston Carr

The election of pro-imperialist Edward Seaga is undoubtedly a blow to the interests of the working class and the oppressed in Jamaica. Although his five to one victory in terms of seats seems to indicate popular support for the right, that would be a wrong conclusion. In reality the victory was due to the disillusionment of the masses with Manley and not a swing to the right as such.

In essence Manley tried to be a radical reformist in a backward country. Fundamentally his approach was to try to reform capitalism, in a tiny country with an

economy which imperialism could virtually cut out of the world market.

Manley nationalised 51% of the Jamaican bauxite industry, on the face of it a radical move. In fact, it only deepened the problems. It was enough to antagonise US imperialism and the IMF, but did nothing about the bourgeoisie in Jamaica. Manley tried to reform capitalism in a country which is so weak economically that only the working class dictatorship could begin to meet even the most basic needs.

Imperialism successfully undermined

Manley, seizing on his reformist limitations to starve the Jamaican economy and alienate people. In failing to appeal to the masses to fight economic blackmail and for the complete expropriation of the bourgeoisie, Manley opened the door for a disenchanted backlash against unemployment, breakup of the economy and impoverishment of the peasantry.

Manley's dramatic demise proves once again the impossibility of a reformist government in a backward country. Directly linked to this problem is the burning necessity for revolutionary Jamaican

workers to build a party which can do what Manley and reformism will never do: mobilise Jamaicans for the seizure of power by the oppressed.

The conditions for such a party exist today in Jamaica. Seaga's election will solve nothing for the oppressed. As the intentions of US imperialism are made clearer through the Seaga government, the crisis of government will once more unfold. The bloody election campaign in which 700 died was only the opening exchange.



by Frank Irvine

TO BEAT REAGAN- LABOUR PARTY NEEDED

One of the most noticeable factors in the US presidential elections was that in opinion polls less than 50% of those eligible to vote saw any relevance in either candidate. This is not just a sign of the obvious stupidity of both main contenders but also due to the fact that Americans are disillusioned with the system based on two ruling class parties.

The crucial problem for the American workers has always been that of building their own Labour Party to break the monopoly of the Democrats and Republicans. Not since the days of Eugene Debs, leader of the Socialist Party decades ago, who polled one million votes for the presidency, has a serious working class contender run. Through the actions of the union apparatus and the betrayals of the Communist Party, the unions have generally been linked to the Democratic Party, which has nothing in common with the interests of the working class.

The union leaders have always sold their policy of support for the Democrats as a policy of 'realism'. Today they have called for a vote for Carter. In contrast, the leaders of the Teamsters Union called for a vote for Reagan. In spite of the attempts of the union leaders to force their members to vote for either of the ruling class parties there is a great ferment within the unions on questions such as unemployment and inflation. This ferment will not find a way out in the economic 'promises' of either Carter or Reagan. More and more union members, who followed their leaders' advice to vote Democrat, are now posing the question of whether or not an independent union backed candidate is needed. The idea has even become current among some lower elements in the unions' leaderships. A number of conferences have been held to discuss the question.

iraq must withdraw

by Frank Keene

The invasion of Iran by Iraq is a counter-revolutionary act, which in the last analysis is aimed against the Iranian revolution. That is, against the workers and peasants who overthrew the bloody regime of the Shah.

The war has been represented as a 'religious civil war' by the bourgeois press. On the one side the Iraqi Arabs, predominantly Sunni Muslims, on the other the Persians, predominantly Shi'ite. Yet it was the product neither of racial or religious differences. The Iranian revolution had a destabilising effect on Iraq. This took the form of an ostensibly 'religious' revolt by the Shi'ite minority. But the real driving force was the struggle against the oppression of the so-called 'religious' leadership of the so-called 'Islamic' revolution. The Iranian revolution was a class revolution, and the war is a class war.

The impact of the Iranian revolution upon Iraq, beset by internal problems, and the threat it poses to the stability of the entire region, was the real cause of the attack, and not any religious or racial differences.

There are no real indications as yet that Iraq acted at the direct bidding of either US imperialism or the Kremlin bureaucracy. Indeed, it appears that they each have channels open to both sides in the war. Imperialism and Stalinism are gravely concerned at the dangers inherent in the situation, for a protracted war can only draw nearer the spectre of a revolutionary mobilisation of both the Iranian and Iraqi masses, and this in the context of an unstable world situation. However, the fact remains that whatever the immediate intentions and manoeuvres of imperialism and Stalinism the attack is a class war, and the masses of the two countries must be mobilised to defend their interests.

must unreservedly oppose the counter-revolutionary invasion of Iran. This does not mean defending the Khomeini regime. It means defending the Iranian masses. A victory for the Iraqi regime would be a blow against the workers and peasants of Iran and would lead to a straitjacket being placed upon them.

The response of the Arab masses of Khuzestan gives a clear indication of the consciousness of the masses of Iran. Despite their struggle against the bonapartist Khomeini regime for the right to self-determination, the Iranian Arabs have resolutely fought the Iraqi Arabs in order to be able to freely continue their struggle against Khomeini's national oppression. They have fought with the pro-Khomeini forces in order to later gain their victory over Khomeini, knowing full well that the repressive Hussein regime cannot offer them their freedom.

A victory for Iran would lead to the disintegration of the bonapartist regime

in Iraq. At the same time the mobilisation of the Iranian masses is a very dangerous affair for Bani-Sadr and co. Despite attempts to strengthen and rebuild the old bourgeois army, the armed Iranian masses in mobilising to defend their revolution threaten bourgeois rule, fragile as it is in Iran.

Every assistance that the British workers can offer to the Iranian masses will serve to assist their struggle to defend their independent class interests. Every assistance will serve to aid the struggle of the oppressed nationalities in Iran, whose struggles for self-determination make up a central component of the proletarian revolution in Iran.

For a halt to the counter-revolutionary attack against Iran!
Iraqi troops out of Iran!
No arms to Iraq!
Black all trade with Iraq!
British warships out of the Gulf!
Defend the Iranian revolution!

PORTUGUESE TROTSKYISTS WIN 82,448 VOTES

In the parliamentary elections in Portugal, last October 5th, the right wing Democratic Alliance was returned with increased numbers of seats. However, this increased vote was not the product of a collapse in the vote for workers' parties. Whilst the Democratic Alliance increased its vote from 45% to 47.1% in comparison with last December, the total vote of the workers' parties was down only 1% and remained, at 50.1%, an overall majority of the votes cast. The working class voted against candidates of the ruling class.

The elections give another demonstration of the problem which has been at the heart of the political situation in Portugal ever since the revolution of 1974. That is, the refusal of the leaders of the Socialist and Communist Parties to unite and give expression to the aspirations of the working class to finish with the generals and bourgeois leaders. The SP and the CP have found every means to avoid running a joint slate against the ruling class

parties. At the same time, Soares and Cunhal, the leaders of the SP and CP, have been willing to form all kinds of 'pacts' with representatives of the ruling class. In fact, a figure such as General Eanes, can only possess any authority because of the homage paid to him by the leaders of the workers' parties.

The Trotskyists of the POUS and PST, affiliated to the Parity Committee in Portugal, waged a united campaign on the line of a 'government of the workers' parties', the SP and the CP, 'without bosses or generals'.

The POUS-PST secured a significant vote of 82,448 (1.4%) after a national campaign including many public meetings and TV broadcasts.

Additionally 60,000 votes were received by the PSR (affiliated to the United Secretariat), which made more than 142,000 votes for people calling themselves Trotskyists.

The POUS-PST vote in the elections

was a blow struck at the divisive policies of the SP and CP leaders, who took up a campaign in the press against the POUS-PST, saying that the vote of 82,000 was due to the similarity between the electoral symbols of the POUS and the Socialist Party.

In December the Presidential elections are due in Portugal. The POUS-PST will continue the campaign begun around the assembly elections and is standing Aires Rodrigues, a leader of the POUS and an ex-MP for the Socialist Party, as candidate. The PSR, section of the USFI, after totally refusing a common parliamentary campaign with the PST-POUS, has called for a 'workers candidate backed by the CP and the SP' in the presidential election. The POUS-PST have written to the PSR, 'Your organisation has declared itself for the presentation of 'a worker against the generals'. This is good. But why do you hesitate to recognise that comrade Rodrigues answers completely that cri-

terion? What is more, comrade Rodrigues is not only a 'worker against the generals', he is also a Trotskyist militant'.

The POUS-PST call upon the PSR to take part in a common campaign in support of Rodrigues. Rodrigues is a former national secretary of the Socialist Party. He was expelled from the Socialist Party for opposing the austerity measures of Soares and the Socialist Party's support for General Eanes. He now works as a truck driver. His candidacy is based on a call for a common SP-CP candidate, and if one was selected he is pledged to stand down.

As we go to press, we learn that Soares has been removed as secretary of the SP for opposing continued support for General Eanes. At the same time Eanes is making statements in support of Sa Carneiro, leader of the ruling class Democratic Alliance. This makes support for the candidacy of Rodrigues even more crucial in opening a way forward for the revolution in Portugal.

PARITY COMMITTEE PREPARES WORLD CONFERENCE

The World Conference of the Parity Committee for the Reorganisation (Reconstruction) of the Fourth International will take place in December. The tremendous significance of this Conference can only be fully grasped when set in the context of the F.I.'s history and the present stage of the world class struggle.

The emergence of the Parity Committee, which unites the majority of the Trotskyists in the world on a principled basis, stands in sharp contrast to the destructive split caused by Pabloism in 1951-53, the unprincipled basis of the so-called re-unification in 1963 and the break up of the International Committee in 1971-72.

The struggle of the Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the F.I., the Bolshevik Fraction and the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency developed in the 1970's and focused on the battle against pabloite revisionism which is centred in the so-called Unified Secretariat of the F.I.

In October 1979 the Parity Committee was formed in defence of the Transitional Programme and the F.I. against the U. Sec's attempted liquidation of the forces of Trotskyism into the Nicaraguan FSLN.

The upsurge of the proletarian revolution in Iran and Nicaragua places great demand on all those who claim adherence to Trotskyism. It has exposed as false U. Sec's assertion that it is the democratically-centralised F.I., and brought together into the Parity Committee those forces fighting for the Fourth International to take its place in the vanguard of the revolution.

At the centre of the work of the World Conference of the Parity Committee will be the discussion of *Theses* which will lay the basis for the regroupment of the OCRFI, BF and LTT into a single international organisation. These *Theses* will shortly appear in English. The S.L.G. calls on all revolutionaries to read and discuss them so as to play a positive role in this historic development in the building of the World Party of Socialism.

We also appeal to all readers of the *Socialist Newsletter* and all revolutionaries struggling to rebuild the F.I. to provide financial support for the World Conference without which the struggle for the F.I. cannot proceed. Please send your contributions to *Socialist Newsletter*.

LONG LIVE THE
FOURTH INTERNATIONAL!



GRANADOS MURDERED

In the last issue of *Socialist Newsletter* we called for action in solidarity with the Trotskyists of El Salvador. Since then news has reached us from our comrades of the PST of El Salvador (Socialist Workers Party), that Concepcion Burgos Granados, a leader of the PST and of the CUTS trade union federation, has been brutally murdered by the forces of the government junta.

Seven other members of the PST have since 'disappeared' and there must be

grave concern that they too have been murdered.

Under this repression the PST fights on. Our comrades tell us that the regular appearance of their press continues and the PST functions, in spite of the junta. Members of the Labour Party and trade unions should ask their organisations to write to the representative of the Salvadorean government in London expressing concern over the repression of the PST and its militants.



after liverpool- march on westminster

A central part of Tory government policy is to attack the strength of the working class. As part of this aim they are engaging in policies which create mass unemployment. In this sense the Tories are deliberately forcing workers onto the dole. Coupled with their threats to cut dole payments the Tories are looking to weaken the organised working class and pauperise those on the dole. With such vast numbers on the dole there will be a

very real pressure on those in employment. Leyland boss Edwardes has, on different occasions, threatened to sack whole sections of BL workers and replace them with those more willing to accept his plans. He can only make such threats with two million out of work.

The level of unemployment has now reached such a stage that there is rapidly developing a special layer of unemployable people. The steel workers from

Shotton, Corby, Consett and Port Talbot can find no other work in their towns and their particular skills prevent them from finding alternative jobs even if they took Thatcher's arrogant advice and moved. Unemployment is hitting women especially hard. Women in part-time jobs such as 'dinner ladies' are made redundant and put at the bottom of the queues for jobs. Black workers face similar problems. Amongst school leavers there is now a

whole generation without skills and no record of work experience. They've never had a job and have no prospects of getting one.

How can the working class fight unemployment? The Labour Party demonstration against unemployment on November 29th is a welcome first step. But one march won't stop massive redundancies. The engineering workers at Gardners in Manchester have shown one way forward with their sit-in. But this courageous initiative is limited and threatened with isolation unless there is an aggressive national campaign unifying those in employment and the unemployed, to wage a fight to the finish against the Tories.

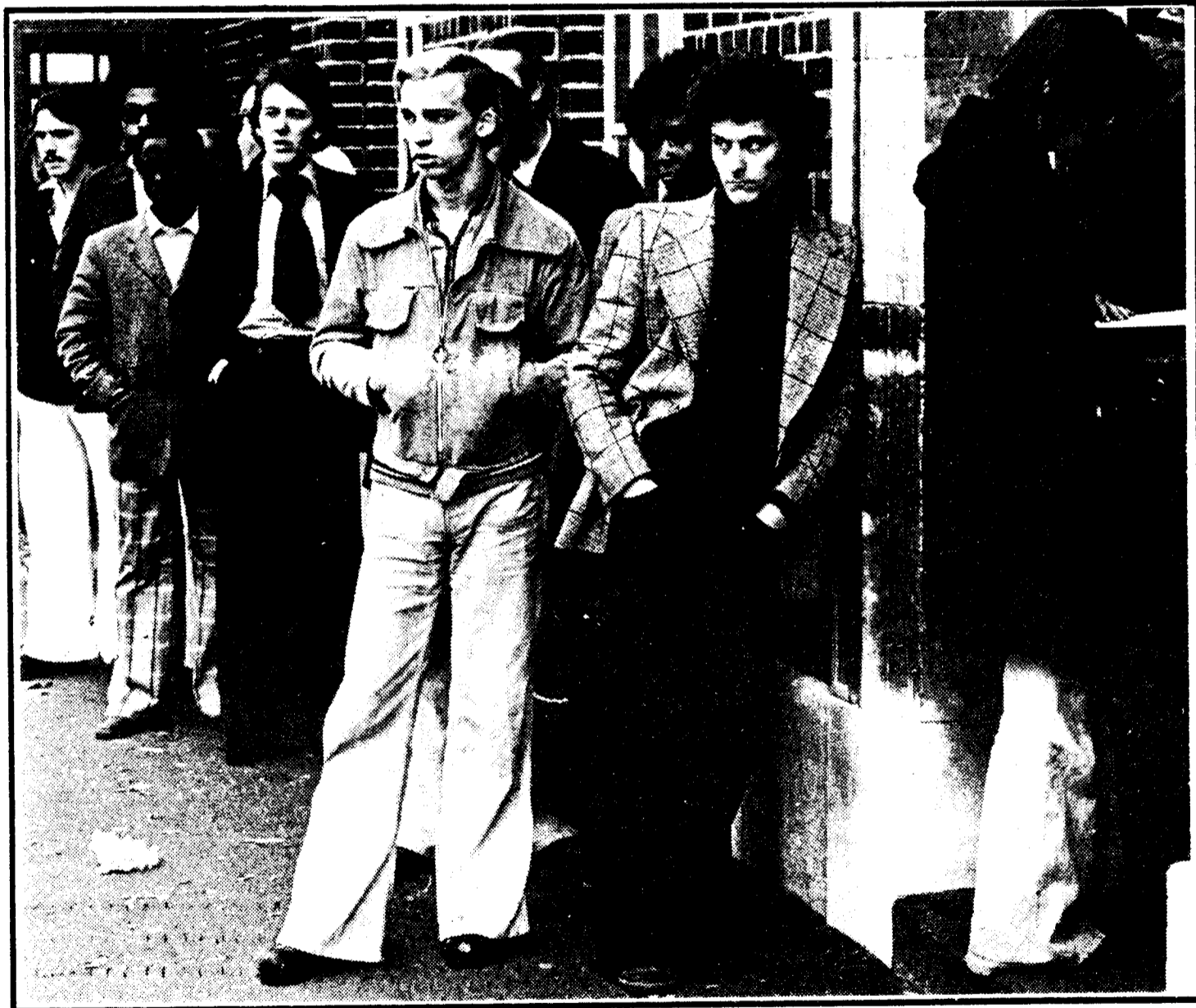
The militant stand of national strike action, threatened by the dockers and taken by the seamen, demonstrates the effectiveness and necessity of national strike action aimed at the employers and their Tory backers. But even these strong stands stop short of what is needed.

The TUC and the Labour Party NEC must launch a single unlimited campaign to finish with the Tories and bring down the government. There is no chance of a serious programme to reduce unemployment with the Tories in office. In the course of fighting Thatcher militants need to fight for work sharing with no loss of pay; for factory committees to impose workers' control over hiring and firing to stop redundancies; for the opening of the 'books' and trade union scrutiny of so-called 'business secrets', which bosses use as an excuse to make layoffs; for a plan of public works to build council houses, roads etc. which would employ thousands with skills currently lying idle.

Fundamental to the Tories' plans is permanent mass unemployment. The Tories do not intend any basic change in their policies. They intend unemployment to stay at intolerable levels for the working class. To fight unemployment the working class is having to contend with Prior's Employment Bill and Heseltine's savage cuts. We cannot afford to wait until the General Election of 1984 to reverse all these attacks.

The Labour leaders in Parliament must stop seeking ways out of the struggle. The TUC must now join the Labour Party National Executive in calling national action against Thatcher. Murray and co. must stop these futile attempts to patch up a deal with Thatcher and Joseph. The fight to bring down the Tories is what November 29th is all about. We must make the TUC and Labour Party leaders recognise this fact.

The November 29th march provides a firm basis for the Labour Party NEC and the TUC to mount a campaign. The willingness of the working class in its tens of thousands to fight could not be clearer. From this demonstration employed and unemployed workers should organise to force the TUC and NEC to hold a National Convention of the Labour Party and trade unions to launch a unified campaign against the Tories.



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