

Socialist ACTION

NO FRAME UP OF SHARON ATKIN!

EMBOLDENED by the March NEC's threat of disciplinary action against the Labour Party Black Section, five Birmingham MPs have carried out a provocation against well-known Black Section supporters. As a result, Sharon Atkin, prospective parliamentary candidate for Nottingham East, now faces the prospect of Labour's national executive withdrawing recognition of her candidature and expelling her from the party when it meets on Wednesday 29 April. Her crime? Doing what hundreds of other Labour PPCs do every day of the week: speaking at a public meeting. But in Sharon's case it was a rally organised by the Birmingham Labour Party Black Section, and after deputy party leader Roy Hattersley and four other MPs declared 'their' city a no-go area for Black Section supporters. Action may also be taken against Lambeth council leader Linda Bellos who also spoke at that meeting.

Together with MPs Denis Howell, Jeff Rooker, Terry Davis and Robin Corbett, Hattersley's move — designed to hasten the witch hunt against Black Section supporters when Labour is on the verge of a general election and doing badly in the opinion polls — was an attempt to introduce pass laws for Black party members. No other member of the Labour Party has been told that they cannot accept invitations to speak outside their own areas. It is in fact an attack on the democratic rights of every Labour Party member. Hattersley's attack is backed up by the right wing leadership of Birmingham city council. Without informing councillor Phil Murphy, they called a special meeting to expel him from the Labour group because he too spoke at the Birmingham rally. They are now calling for his expulsion from the party.

The right of women and youth to organise autonomously within the Labour Party is well established. But the party leadership is fighting tooth and nail to prevent that right being extended to Black party members. The March NEC claimed that this witch hunt was being launched against members of the party who were damaging Labour's electoral prospects by advocating policies other than Labour's official programme. But the resolution passed by the NEC is totally discriminatory.

What disciplinary action is being proposed against former prime minister James Callaghan who is speaking out against Labour's nuclear disarmament policy in a way that is deliberately designed to mar the party's electoral chances? What disciplinary action is being proposed against Frank Field MP who publicly advocated voting against official Labour candidates in Liverpool in the local government elections, or Frank Chapple who called for a vote for the SDP candidate in Islington North at the last election. What disciplinary action is being proposed against Roy Grantham who urged voting for the Liberal candidate in a number of constituencies in 1983?

Like other campaigns and pressure groups, within the party, the Black Section fights for particular policies to be adopted. It has every right to do so. The Black Section opposes *all* expulsions including of right wingers such as Roy Hattersley, who have the right to express their views but no right to expel those who disagree. Every Labour Party member should condemn the witch hunt now taking place against the Labour Party Black Section — and demand that Phil Murphy is reinstated to the Birmingham Labour group and that no disciplinary action is taken against Sharon Atkin, Phil Murphy, Linda Bellos or any other member of the Labour Party Black Section.



DEFEND BLACK SECTION DEFEND PHIL MURPHY

Socialist Action

Witch hunters, new realists and teachers

EVENTS in British politics are coming in thick and fast. In the last two weeks we have seen mainline sections of the right wing for the first time openly confess their coalitionist perspective, a massive new extension of the witch hunt directed against the Labour Party Black Section, and a huge explosion in the teachers' unions. In the week before that we had a new outbreak of crisis in the 'soft left'.

How are we to make sense of those events? What is their guiding thread?

To understand that you have to grasp the historical character of British society and the process which is now gripping its labour movement — the process of the 'break up of labourism'.

For almost a century one single feature dominated the British working class. The strength of British imperialism meant that concessions could be made to every section of the working class — even if far greater concessions were made to some than to others. On that basis a tremendous united reformist labour movement was constructed — or to be more accurate a labour movement which united at least the male section of the working class, because women were never included within its bounds to anything like their real weight. The process since 1979, in an acute form, is precisely the disintegration of this unity of labourism — although, of course, the spectacular explosion since 1979 was prepared by a more hidden crisis which set in since at least the mid-1960s.

That labour movement is, progressively, flying apart along its lines of social and political cleavage. First between the elections of 1974 and 1983 two to three million workers, the majority skilled and well paid, broke with Labour to go over to Thatcher and then, more permanently, the Alliance. They form today also the mass base that new realism in the unions rests on.

Secondly, and as yet small in numbers compared to the first break, a small section of the most militant and most oppressed — miners, the black community, among women, in the social movements, individuals in the trade unions and Labour Party — broke with labourism to its left.

The great majority of the labour movement, the 'soft left' and 'soft right', is of course still trying to stick the whole pot back together again on the old basis. But the problem is that the old material basis which created unity, the strength of British imperialism to maintain a united reformist labour movement, no longer exists.

These social lines of cleavage dictate the methods used by the different sides. The political formula of Gavin Laird of the *New Statesman* — 'forward to coalition, long live the witch hunt, down with trade unions in inner city areas, smash the Black Section, throw out the left' — has a social base. It is 'white male better paid workers of Britain unite with capital to smash the blacks, the majority of women, the lesbians and gays, and all those whom British imperialism can no longer afford to give anything to'.

The perspective of the class struggle forces is of course exactly the opposite. It is the unity of the great majority of the working class with the oppressed against capital. The developments in the left of the labour movement — among the miners, among the teachers, in the Black Section, in the women's movement, in the Campaign group, in Labour Left Liaison, in innumerable trade unions and CLPs — is precisely to attempt to forge the political basis on which to achieve that.

The problem is, of course, that for a long time the new realist forces, the force of the new right, are going to be far more powerful than those of the emerging class struggle left. The battleground between the two is going to be the fight for the majority of the labour movement — that part which, for now, still remains locked firmly in the old labourist perspective.

Who wins that fight, a fight of years in duration will determine the entire future direction of the British labour movement. The political basis of that fight is the most urgent task facing the left.

BLACK SECTION



Reinstate Phil Murphy

COUNCILLOR PHIL MURPHY, a leading member of Birmingham Black Section, is facing possible expulsion from the Labour Party after addressing the Birmingham Black Section rally on 7 April. The call for his expulsion was made at a hastily convened meeting of the city council's ruling Labour group, which also decided to suspend him from group membership and to take steps to withdraw the whip. Murphy was not notified of the group meeting which took place immediately after a full council meeting that he had left early to attend the rally.

The resolution passed by the group gives no reasons for disciplinary action but asks 'the National Constitutional Committee to take such action as necessary to exclude him from membership of the Labour Party'. It is thought that the matter will be discussed by the next NEC.

By Mick Archer

Phil Murphy has been a Birmingham city councillor since 1984. As senior executive at the Commission for Racial Equality he has been a constant thorn in the side of the labour group's right wing leadership. His uncompromising stance on issues of anti-racism in particular has earned him the hostility of the majority of the group.

He was removed as vice chair of the city's race relations and equal opportunities committee in November of last year. Group leader Dick Knowles complained that Murphy considered 'the Black community in Birmingham more important than anything else'. Phil Murphy believes he was

suspended for other reasons.

'I think essentially I have been suspended because the group sees me as a threat on several levels. They see me as someone who has been instrumental in helping to organise the left, here in Birmingham, on the Labour group, and of course they find that threatening. Also I have been involved in organising Black Section and that is also seen as a threat. But probably more profoundly I think I've been suspended from the Labour group, with the threat of being expelled from the party, because there are a number of sitting MPs in the city who feel that someone like myself, or the forces I represent — ie self-organisation of Black people, self-representation of Black people by Black people — are a threat to their personal position.'

Level

There is strong evidence in support of Phil Murphy's charge. He and other Black Section activists saw the 7 April rally primarily as a forum to explain what Black Section was about.

'At the very first level we actually wanted to inform the black communities, the Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities, about Black Section: the issues we stand for, why we felt it was important that Black people should be active within the Labour Party, indeed organise within the Labour party.'

Given last month's NEC attacking the Black Section, they were determined that it would be unmistakable a pro-Labour Party rally to combat any suggestion that their views were separatist. It became a major issue only after Dick Knowles and five of Birmingham's six Labour MPs wrote to Bernie Grant and Linda Bellos telling them to stay away.

Letters were circulated to the national media to guarantee a show down

between Black Section and Labour's right wing. This was characteristic of a more open offensive against Black Section and the Birmingham Labour Left by Roy Hattersley and others since their defeat by the campaign for the reinstatement of Amir Khan and Kevin Scally.

He and Denis Howell, MP for Small Heath, have made several statements in support of Knowles leadership and attacking his left wing critics in the Labour group. In a recent article in the Birmingham *Evening Mail* Hattersley branded Black Section activists as 'ambitious agitators' seeking to exploit 'the Black and Asian British'.

Endorsed

Hattersley has publicly endorsed the suspension of Birmingham District Labour Party. Peter Snape, MP for West Bromwich East and chair of the West Midlands MPs, was the first to call for the expulsion of Black Section activists who took part in the 7 April meeting.

Racism has also played a major part in the attacks on Phil Murphy who is commonly portrayed as an unruly black agitator. According to Knowles 'his actions over the past 12 months have had more in common with black power than the council's integration policy'.

Murphy believes it was his failure to defer to Knowles ideas of 'integration' that led to disciplinary action being taken against him.

Opened

Events of the 7 April rally have opened up a wide-ranging debate in the black communities about Black Sections and black involvement in the Labour Party. Black Section and their supporters are now poised to campaign in defence of Murphy and others if action is taken by the NEC.

Murphy has already won the support of party organisations in Ladywood, Selly Oak and Perry Barr constituencies. The Sandwell ward of Ladywood CLP, which Murphy represents, is to launch a petition within the Birmingham district party calling for his reinstatement as a full group member and opposing any further disciplinary action against him.

View

The ward has written to Knowles expressing its view and intends to write to the NEC. The Black Section also intends to discuss the matter with Black organisations in Birmingham and to contact other constituencies and wards to solicit their support.

As Phil Murphy ex-

plains: 'Even though initially we are going to carry out a fairly low-key campaign — we obviously don't want to damage the Labour Party — if the party moves towards my expulsion we are certainly going to escalate our opposition to what they are doing.'

'If Neil Kinnock feels he has had problems in the past then he doesn't even begin to understand what he is inviting. I want to make it quite clear to the NEC and to the party that Black people have had 400 years of struggle. We have been learning from the experience of struggle, whether that experience comes from Africa, the United States, the West Indies or Latin America — we know how to struggle. Neil Kinnock has never taken on the Black communities and I don't think even he knows what it will be like.'

Black Section statement:

THE LABOUR Party Black Section national committee declare our opposition to any disciplinary action being taken against Black Section supporters or any other socialists in the party. We will fight any such action vigorously by launching a national campaign involving the Black community and supporters in the labour movement to defend anyone removed as a parliamentary candidate, suspended or expelled.

We are appalled at the press reports that the NEC intends to remove Sharon Atkin as PPC for Nottingham East and expel councillors Phil Murphy and Linda Bellos. We declare our full backing for these comrades and reaffirm the right of Black people to hold meetings, organise together and speak anywhere in the country where they are invited.

We are committed to a Labour victory and will continue to make demands on the party and have such a right to do so, as all other members, to ensure that anti-racist, socialist policies in tune with our community's needs and aspirations are reflected in the manifesto.

NO WITCH HUNT

Where the witch hunt has led

ON WEDNESDAY 29 April Black prospective parliamentary candidate for Nottingham East, Sharon Atkin faces expulsion by Labour's national executive. Lambeth council leader Linda Bellos has also been threatened in the press. Birmingham city councillor Phil Murphy has already been suspended from the Labour group which has referred his case to the National Constitutional Committee and called for his expulsion from the party. The official opening of the witch hunt against the Labour Party Black Section took place last month, at the March NEC. But the origin of the policies leading to this attempted purge can be traced to annual party conference of 1983 when the expulsion of the *Militant* editorial board was ratified. CAROL TURNER examines where the witch hunt is leading the Labour Party.

THE Labour Party Black Section opposes all witch hunts within the party. No friend of *Militant's* politics, Black Section has consistently fought the expulsions of their supporters along with all similar disciplinary action against members of the Labour Party.

The Black Section, like many on the left, argued that the attack on *Militant* was the thin end of the wedge for an attack on the whole of the Labour left — and in particular the most oppressed. Sadly, those predictions have now been proved correct. The frame-up of Sharon Atkin and others is the latest in a whole series of purges and attempted purges of the party's left wing.

The NEC move against the Black Section came exactly one year to the day after the expulsion proceedings began against 12 members of the Liverpool Labour Parties. The NEC passed a resolution against the Black Section on Wednesday 25 March this year. The first NEC meeting which considered the findings of the Liverpool District Labour Party enquiry took place on Wednesday 26 March 1986.

At the end of 1985, when the enquiry into Liverpool was launched, Joan Maynard MP told *Socialist Action*: 'The Labour Party should be concentrating public attention on the viciously anti-working class policies of this Tory government. Instead the headlines are now going to be dominated for months by this enquiry. It will run and run. Don't have any illusions.'

She was, of course, right. Twelve months on, at the brink of a general election, the right wing still haven't learned the lesson.

Roy Hattersley and the other four Birmingham MPs who launched the attack on Sharon Atkin are now busy demonstrating that they regard expulsions of party members with whom they disagree as more important than defeating the Thatcher government. If they are prepared to go this far on the eve of an election, what lengths will they take the witch hunt to if their overall policies lose Labour the election?

Pursuing a witch hunt, however, is not just a matter of a few determined right wingers taking action. They can only do so if the majority of the party is prepared to let them get away with it. The witch hunt has got as far as it has today because the soft left (perhaps we should be calling them the soft right?) have gone along with it.

From the expulsion of its editorial board onward, *Tribune* has been assuring us that it was only *Militant* supporters who were up for the chop. They were a 'special case' according to Nigel Williamson and others.

The opposite has been the case. By the time the Liverpool expulsions were confirmed at the 1986 annual party conference, Amir Khan and Kevin Scally had already been thrown out and other party members had gone on the flimsiest of pretexts.

Speaking at the *Tribune* rally at 1986 conference, Ken Livingstone perfectly accurately described the



process of the witch hunt. He said: 'Those who have read what I have written in *Tribune* must know quite clearly I do not support the *Militant* tendency. But I never wanted them expelled from the party. I organised in the London labour movement until we won our positions on women, black people and the need for a free and united Ireland.'

'That is how we go forward. There can be no support for the witch hunt.'

'Those who warned at the beginning that the witch hunt would actually widen have been proved right ...'

'There can be no support for left unity, there can be no step forward to create agreement about the sort of

policies we want, unless we agree first of all that we resolve our differences internally and we oppose every expulsion that comes before the NEC.'

But this view was rejected in the soft left. At the same rally David Blunkett spoke from the platform to justify the Liverpool expulsions. Today he is one of the driving forces behind the calls for Sharon Atkin's expulsion.

Dennis Skinner, who has warned from the start where the witch hunt would lead, described the new step taken by the expulsions of Khan and Scally thus: 'The witch hunt net was cast wider ... when Amir Khan, Kevin Scally and Mohammed Raffique, all from Roy Hattersley's Birmingham-Sparkbrook constituency, were expelled from the party.'

'None of the three were accused of being members of the *Militant* tendency, nor are they expelled for standing against Labour candidates in elections. They were thrown out on the wholly fraudulent charge of "bringing the party into disrepute". This represents a significant development in the witch hunting course of the Labour leadership.'

The NEC report on disciplinary procedure to 1986 party conference introduced a new 'crime' punishable by expulsion — the one now being used against Sharon Atkin and others.

Meanwhile, Dennis Skinner pointed out, the witch hunt has broadened.

It has included local parties (including in Birmingham) refusing to accept the transfer of party members — for which there is no provision whatsoever in any Labour Party rule book. It has included expelling members in Central Fife on no specific charges whatsoever, after they pointed out irregularities in local membership and the functioning of a ward.

It included attempts to expel three members of Exeter Labour Party for breaching the non-existent rule of confidentiality of EC business. And it has included suspending whole constituency parties, like St Helens North and South, Liverpool-Broad Green and Knowsley North.

In the case of Knowsley North, suspension followed the NEC's decision to force a parliamentary candidate on the CLP against its wishes. Nigel Williamson, then editor of *Tribune*, opposed the imposition of George Howarth. After the Greenwich by-election earlier this year, however, Williamson, marking a further retreat told the *New Statesman*:

'By-elections are now such a centre of national attention that the Labour Party has a duty to itself and its supporters all over the country to choose candidates who cannot so easily be subjected to such damaging personal campaigns. It now seems clear that had Les Huckfield been allowed to stand in the Knowsley North by-election last November (a right I championed in *Tribune* at

the time) then that seat would have been lost too.'

'I reluctantly conclude that Labour's national executive was right to impose George Howarth. It is not surprising then that senior Labour figures should be considering extending that practice to all by-elections.'

'But despite all the attempts of the leadership to ignore the demands of women and black people,' he said, 'these issues have not gone away ... I am absolutely convinced that the idea of positive action promoted by the Black Section, with all the support that got in many inner city areas, has resulted in a tremendous number of Black candidates standing, and getting elected, in the last round of local government elections.'

'Black Section has given Black party members the confidence to do that. The ideas Black Section promoted, even though they got defeated at conference, were good in themselves. I support them all the way down the line.'

That is exactly why the witch hunt has now been extended to Black Section. Because the ideas they advocate simply won't go away, the right wing are prepared to smash them out of the Labour Party by the only means at their disposal — expulsions.

Throughout this time, the witch hunt has progressed in tandem with the erosion of party democracy and attacks on radical policies. 'The witch hunt goes hand in hand with the NEC's systematic dilution

of policy. Once the purge had begun the right wing was able to start watering down policies,' Dennis Skinner correctly told *Socialist Action* on the eve of 1986 party conference.

The truth is crystal clear. The witch hunt was launched against the *Militant* because they were the easiest target.

But *Militant* was never the real target. They were the pretext to generate the momentum for the witch hunt.

The witch hunt was never an issue of *Militant's* politics. It was a far more fundamental issue of party democracy. Those who supported the witch hunt against *Militant* opened the door for every other attack on party democracy which is now coming — including the latest one against Sharon Atkin.

Every single party member who sees the disgraceful, and racist, witch hunt against the Black Section, Sharon Atkin, Linda Bellos, and Phil Murphy should oppose it. And draw the conclusion that *everyone* of the expulsions which has taken place should be opposed. Once you give your little finger to a witch hunt the likes of Roy Hattersley always come back for more.

Those who didn't believe it then should realise it now.

Notts East rejects NEC witch hunt

NOTTS East Labour Party is calling on the national leadership to stop the attacks on the party's PPC Sharon Atkin. At an executive committee on Monday 13 April, the following statement was issued:

NOTTINGHAM East CLP reaffirms its commitment to the right of Black people to organise in Black Sections within the Labour Party. This is not a form of apartheid but a means of drawing Black people into the party and giving them a voice in the same way as women's sections and the LPYS act to draw women and youth into the party. Nottingham East CLP

is appalled at the resolution passed by the Labour Party of 25 March attacking Black Sections and threatening to mount a witch hunt against Black people struggling to establish a political voice. Furthermore we are disgusted by the letter which appeared in *The Times* from Roy Hattersley, Jeff Rooker and others which declared Birmingham a no-go area for Black activists.

We consider that the highly-publicised attacks on Black activists cause serious damage to the electoral prospects of the Labour Party and in particular of our candidate Sharon Atkin.

Media coverage indicates that the NEC is now

preparing to take action against Sharon Atkin, a Black woman and PPC for Nottingham East, for exercising her right to speak on issues affecting Black people to an audience of black and white people in Birmingham on 7 April.

Nottingham East CLP democratically selected Sharon Atkin as PPC because of her vigorous support for socialist policies — campaigning for Black people, the low-paid, lesbians and gays, sacked miners, pensioners and all those who are victims of Tory policies. The CLP reaffirms its support for our PPC and rejects any attempts at interference in the democratic processes of our party.

Labour Left Liaison statement on disciplinary action proposed against Black Section supporters

LABOUR Left Liaison, the national umbrella organisation of the left-wing in the Labour Party, met on Thursday 16 April to discuss the attacks being made on the Black Section. It issued the following statement.

LABOUR Left Liaison regrets the attempt by five Birmingham MPs to stop Black Labour prospective parliamentary candidates and other activists from speaking at a local Black Section meeting which took place in Birmingham on 7 April — an unwarranted interference with the democratic rights of Labour Party members. However its most harmful effect was to attract the attention of the hostile media, as eager as ever to publicise divisions in the Labour Party. Such action can only undermine Labour's electoral credibility.

LLL further deplores the attempt of certain sections of the party to press for disciplinary action, including expulsion, of three members of the Black Section who spoke at the meeting: Sharon Atkin, Linda Bellos and Phil Murphy. Action has now begun on the basis of their alleged views, which have been inaccurately reported by the media and which are being considered completely out of the context of the meeting and audience addressed.

LLL believes that the Labour Party should do more, not less, to encourage Black people to vote Labour. The Birmingham meeting called by the Black Section was an attempt to broaden Labour's appeal to a section of the electorate that previously has not been reached by the Labour Party. Those attending the meeting were urged to join the Labour Party.

LLL notes that no such threats of disciplinary action have been made against party members like James Callaghan MP for speaking out in a calculatedly damaging way against Labour's nuclear disarmament policy, against Frank Field MP who publicly advocated voting against official Labour candidates in the Liverpool local government elections, against Frank Chapple who publicly advocated voting for the SDP candidate in Islington North at the last general election, or against Roy Grantham who advocated voting for the Liberals in a number of constituencies at the last general election. In these circumstances any disciplinary action taken against Sharon Atkin or others would therefore be a blatant act of discrimination, and in addition will deepen the divisions within the party, further harming Labour's electoral prospects.

LLL therefore will defend Sharon Atkin, Linda Bellos and Phil Murphy and oppose any disciplinary action taken against these comrades. Should the NEC decide to follow this misguided and divisive course, party members must organise in defence of the accused Black comrades.

STOP PRESS Delaney inquest



AS WE go to press, news has just come in that the inquest on Michael Delaney, killed near Wapping by one of Rupert Murdoch's juggernauts, has declared its verdict: he was unlawfully killed.

The jury was not swayed by the magistrate's direction that they record a verdict of 'accidental death'.

For months before Michael Delaney's tragic death local residents had been predicting the possibility of a serious accident as police escorted Murdoch's wagons at top speed

through red lights in their enthusiasm to avoid pickets and distribute the scab titles.

They had demanded an end to police harassment and swamping of the area, and that some action be taken to prevent the dangerous scab wagons.

By recording its 'unlawful killing' verdict, the jury has done a service. Perhaps out of this terrible tragedy, some light will be shed on the role of the police in the Wapping dispute. Update in future issues of Socialist Action.

No 'Militant' solution at LPYS conference

THE SLOGAN of this year's LPYS national conference — Blackpool 17-20 April — had an unfortunate irony. Intended to refer to the Tory government it read 'Time to Go', and was printed on every visitor's card. Given the effective policy of the Labour Party NEC's 'Sawyer proposals' to abolish the autonomy of the YS it had a most unfortunate ring.

Why the right wing had been able to mount such an effective campaign against the LPYS was only too clear at the conference. It was the conference of an organisation in sharp decline. There were a total of 203 delegates voting in the election to Labour's NEC this year — a drop of 41 since last year and 50 since 1985. Each LPYS branch has one vote.

By Anne Kane

Since the total claimed number of recorded YS branches at Walworth Road is 553 this means just over a third attend conference. Within this *Militant's* vote of 169 in the NEC election is a drop of 26 since last year. *Militant* did not stand a second candidate in the election as they usually do.

The reason for this sharp decline is evident. The biggest LPYS conference in recent years was in March 1985. Held immediately following the end of the miners strike, it reflected the heightened political interest of young people due to the struggle. That conference was marked by *Militant* denouncing the NUM for not holding a ballot.

Political

Since then *Militant* have stood against all the positive political developments in the Labour left which came out of the political cleavage marked by the strike. In particular, as some of the fundamental issues — such as the working class alliance with the oppressed — have been posed more sharply and brought centrally into the labour movement — *Militant* has continued to oppose them.

Militant has continued to oppose women's self-organisation and black self-organisation at the same time as the Campaign Group has supported them. *Militant* has opposed in practice Irish self-determination at the same time as Labour Left Liaison, the NUM, the National Union of Students and the LCC has supported it. The LPYS has continued to stand outside of mass youth radicalisations on South Africa.

This policy continued at conference. Despite statements of the need to mobilise the maximum number of the 6.2 million young voters for Labour, in the election the policies necessary to do this were systematically voted down.

The tone of the whole conference was set by guest speakers Ron Todd

and Diana Jeuda who also argued to campaign for the youth vote on a straightforward anti-Tory basis without promoting the policies demanded by young people.

On apartheid *Militant* opposed and defeated composite 7 calling for support for, and work with, the Anti-Apartheid Movement, building its new youth committees, organising ANC Youth tours and other campaigning solidarity activity. They passed instead a Composite 8 which mandated the NC to absolutely no action on apartheid, an issue not only vitally important in itself but also actively supported by thousands of young people.

Ireland

On Ireland *Militant* defeated the only two resolutions calling for practical action — one opposing plastic bullets and calling for action and one supporting campaigning against strip searches. In a 'debate' where no speakers for the resolutions were called from the floor, four extended speeches were allowed from the platform. The National Committee summing up concentrated on denouncing the Labour Committee on Ireland (LCI) and promising that the LPYS would never share a platform with Sinn Fein.

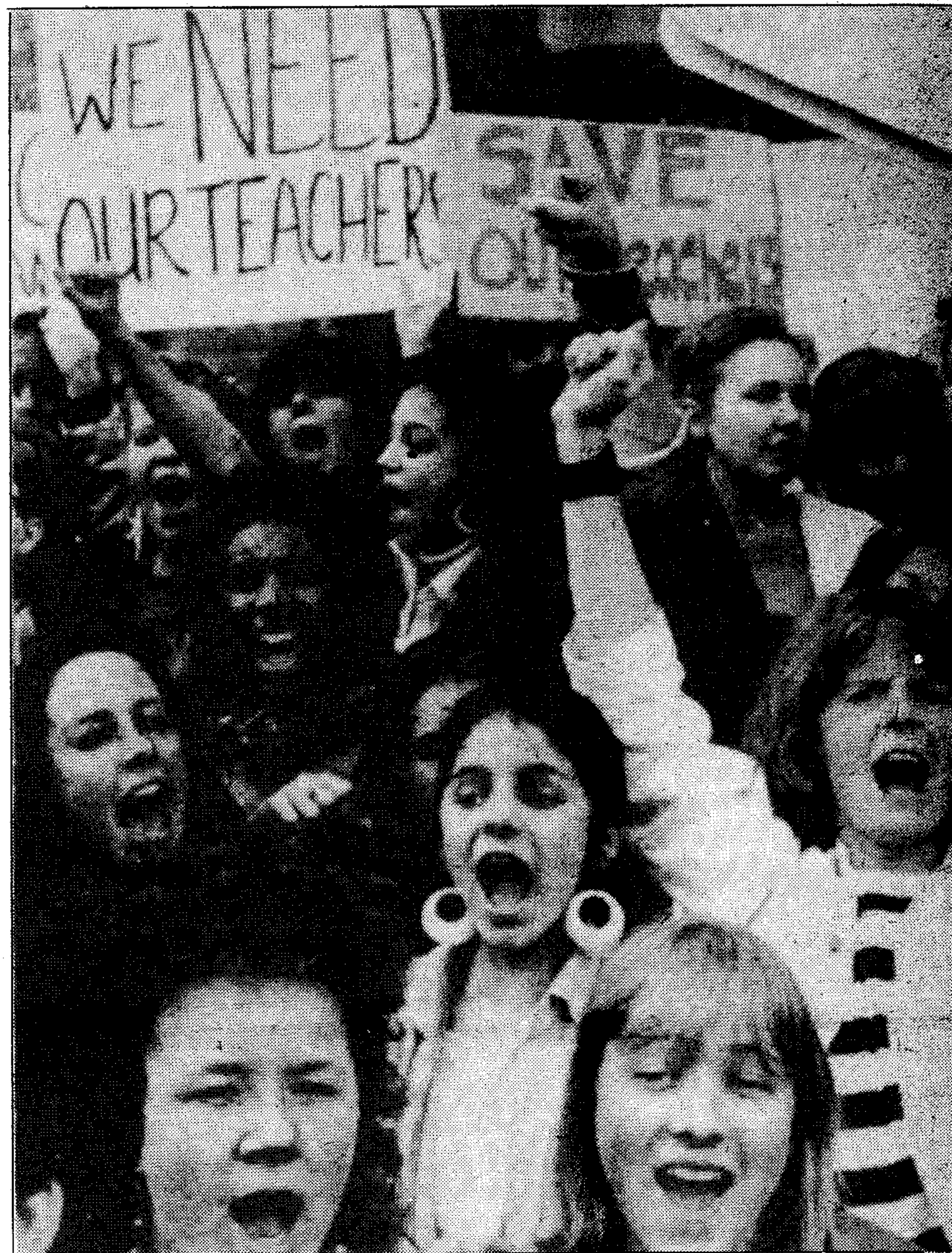
The reason given for opposing two anti-repression proposals, which even the 'Young Liberals' demand, was *Militant* support for 'building a mass socialist party' in Ireland instead of 'sectarian campaigns'. An LCI youth meeting held after this vote attracted 50 people and decided to help coordinate support for the LCI youth network.

Of the two resolutions discussed on 'women' *Militant* defeated the one on reproductive rights, which called for support for the National Abortion Campaign.

Black

YS conference once again opposed Black Sections. The resolution in their favour called for the resignation of Linda Douglas from the Black and Asian Committee — to which Douglas could only reply that the 'committee is not that important' (in which case why doesn't she follow the rest of the left and refuse to be on it?)

An emergency resolution submitted by delegates from the floor opposing the witch-hunt of Black Sections supporters was carried.



Youth demonstrate in support of teachers' struggle

Although Labour Left Liaison's proposals on Sawyer were widely circulated, taken up at its fringe meeting, and highlighted by Steve Jomoa's campaign, the opportunity to mobilise in defence of the independence of the YS was missed by conference. Given that the politics endorsed by the conference entrenched the distance of the YS from the Labour left, arguing the case against Sawyer is made especially difficult.

Alternative

The alternative to this course of decline was very clear. Labour Left Liaison's campaign around the Black Section NEC candidate Steve Jomoa, backed up by a daily conference bulletin and a fringe meeting, marked the most united intervention of the campaign left in recent years.

Saturday's fringe meeting attracted 100 people to hear speakers from the LCI, LWAC, Labour Party Black Sections, LCLGR, and CLPD. Steve Jomoa's hustings could not have been more sharply contrasted to that of the other candidates. Whereas Steve pledged concrete support for women and black self-organisation, campaigning against Sawyer, British withdrawal from Ireland, supporting the South African struggle, and many other issues, Linda

Douglas simply explained that delegates should vote for her because she was the candidate last year — and the Youth Fightback candidate said only that the YS should be more democratic.

The vote was: 169 for *Militant*, 17 for LLL, 13 for Youth Fightback and 4 for Workers Power. The decline in Steve Jomoa's vote compared to Kingsley Abrams last year was explained by the almost total absence of independent branches at conference, the fact that *Labour Briefing* had no delegates at all this year compared to eight last year, and that the LCC vote split — with three delegates supporting Steve, but a majority not voting.

Unity

Left unity was positively under assault from *Youth Fightback* (*Socialist Organiser*), who made a point of attacking Steve Jomoa in their newspaper, their conference bulletin and at the LLL fringe meeting.

Youth Fightback's stated reason for standing a candidate was to argue 'Marxism'. In reality their orientation lacked any significant alternative politics or strategy to *Militant*. *Youth Fightback* moved only one campaigning resolution — action to defend reproductive rights and support women's self-

organisation which failed to mention LWAC. Their three fringe meetings were entitled 'Liverpool — what went right', 'Job Training Schemes' and 'Where we stand' — hardly the last word in a Marxist, campaigning alternative to *Militant*!

Attacks

Youth Fightback's attacks on the Black Section took place at a conference of an LPYS notorious for its hostility to Black self-organisation — which extended at this conference to *Militant* attempting to break up the Black Section youth fringe meeting on Saturday, with heckling, shouting and physical threats to participants.

Youth Action delegates moved the main campaigning composite on anti-apartheid work and the resolutions on strip-searches and plastic bullets — as well as organising the emergency resolution on Black Sections by collecting more than double the required number of signatures.

The main Marxist stumbling block for both *Militant* and *Youth Fightback* was taken up at *Youth Action's* fringe meeting "Why socialist support self-determination" with speakers from the LCI, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, and the Black Sections and LWAC.

'Why don't they let them bury this poor guy?'

In Brief

Brum AAM youth

FORTY is the regular attendance of the youth committee of Birmingham Anti-Apartheid. Since its formation in November of last year, the committee has run street stalls, organised special street sales of *Anti-Apartheid News*, engaged in pickets of Shell petrol stations and Marks and Spencer's, and build demonstrations — a local anti-apartheid demonstration in March in which youth were the largest contingent and the demonstration in Wolverhampton protesting at the murder of Clinton McCurbin. Laurie Matthews, a leading member of the

committee explains that its importance 'is to get together youth, Black and white, to fight apartheid. It is essential because youth are the future'.

A young woman involved in the committee, Bharti Patel, describes how she became involved: 'My emotions were aroused about a year ago when the Soweto uprisings were being commemorated. I was determined to play a part in bringing to an end this absolutely inhumane system. I took the next step and joined the AAM.'

She appealed to all youth to join the struggle.

Labour support for Senior Colman

AFTER three months, the struggle to defend the jobs and trade union rights of one hundred AEU members at Senior Colman in Sale, near Manchester, is still solid. Company claims that the scab work force they've recruited is effectively substituting for the sacked strikers have been exposed to be completely untrue. Reliable sources indicate that the firm has lost £800,000 in this year's first quarter.

The strikers have received a morale boost

from Neil Kinnock who told of the Labour Party's 'full support'. A number of Labour councils have responded favourably to the strikers' appeals that the firm's air distribution equipment — widely used in public buildings such as libraries — be boycotted.

And in a move to ensure maximum respect for picket lines, Ron Todd has agreed to write to all TGWU districts. A delegation of strikers was well received by delegates to the AEU National Committee.



THE MACABRE harassment of the funeral of Larry Marley over a period of a week by the Royal Ulster Constabulary has provoked the most widespread mobilisations of the nationalist community in Belfast since the Anglo-Irish agreement was signed. REDMOND O'NEILL reports.

Thousands upon thousands of people lined the streets of West Belfast and followed the funeral cortege of Larry Marley on Wednesday 8 April. They braved RUC batons and a massive paramilitary police presence including dozens of armoured cars.

The *Guardian* described it as the 'highest display of republican support since the hunger strikes. In scenes reminiscent of the mid-1970s old women shook their fists at soldiers leading a column of 35 landrovers in the front of the funeral procession up the Falls Road. Patients at the Royal Victoria Hospital came out onto the streets to give support ...'

They were there to express their condolences for the Marley family and their outrage at the RUC's attempts to terrorise and demoralise republican families trying to bury their dead in peace and dignity.

The nightmare for the Marley family began when Larry Marley was murdered in his home by a loyalist death squad. Gerry Adams, the local MP, accused the RUC and British army of collusion in the murder: 'No less than two weeks ago, a British army major told him that he would make sure that Larry Marley would not live much longer and if they couldn't do it then they could "get others" to do it for them.'

At the time of the murder the Greater Ardoyne area, where Marley lived, had been saturated by RUC and British army patrols — yet the gunman escaped by the only route not covered by the army and RUC.

Marley was murdered just after 9pm on Thursday 2 April. By the following day RUC landrovers had surrounded all of the approaches to the Marley home. This seige was maintained throughout the

weekend.

On the Monday morning scores of armoured RUC vehicles took up positions at all of the access points around the Marley home. Large forces of RUC, in full riot gear, surrounded the hearse. Another force stood 20 feet from the front door.

As the coffin was carried out of the house, just after 10am, baton wielding RUC moved in around the hearse. A local priest's request that the RUC move back 20 feet either side of the hearse was refused.

Just before 1 pm the family announced the funeral would be postponed and announced: 'We are asking the Cardinal to intervene with Tom King on our behalf so that the funeral can continue tomorrow peacefully.'

A statement by the Belfast brigade of the IRA explained that the IRA had already paid its last respects to Marley when three men fired a volley of shots over the republican memorial in Ardoyne on the Sunday night.

Local clergymen, on behalf of the relatives, also made clear to the RUC that the family intended only to drape the coffin in the Irish tricolour. So the RUC's claim that its massive show of force at the funeral was to prevent an IRA salute to Marley was simply a pretext.

That evening 2,000 people took part in a silent protest demonstration in West Belfast. Fermanagh district council adjourned its meeting in protest at the RUC's action.

On Tuesday morning the RUC doubled its presence at the Marley home. As the coffin was carried to the hearse the RUC surged forward encircling the coffin, and the hearse, and hand to hand fighting broke out.

The body had to be car-

ried back to the house a second time. Once again the funeral had to be abandoned.

Addressing the 1,000 strong crowd Sinn Fein spokesperson Martin McGuinness explained: 'It looks as if we are going to have to make a stand on this issue otherwise someone will be killed at one of these funerals.'

That evening 3,000 people took part in a protest rally in Ardoyne. Omagh district council decided to halt business for a week in protest at the RUC's behaviour.

Larry Marley's funeral finally took place, at the third attempt, on Wednesday 8 April. The cortege was preceded by more than 30 armoured landrovers, with another 40 parked near the burial plot and a massive RUC presence.

It took seven hours, under constant RUC harassment to escort the coffin from the Marley home to the burial plot. All along the route thousands of residents of Belfast turned out in protest at this latest degrading harassment of the nationalist people of the North of Ireland.

The explosion of anger at the treatment of the Marley family follows a gruesome RUC campaign of harassment at republican funerals which has steadily built up over a period of three years. Between December 1983 and 7 April this year the RUC attacked mourners at 25 funerals. This included batoning the mourners, firing plastic bullets at them, brutal police charges in order to seize the tricolours draping coffins and so on.

Most recently the funeral of Gerard Logue in Derry City, on 23 March this year, was accompanied by a huge RUC force including 75 armoured landrovers and two helicopters hovering overhead.

Appeals by the families of the dead republicans to the catholic hierarchy for support in their efforts to bury their dead in peace and dignity have elicited no response.

For the nationalist people of the North of Ireland the supposed 'benefits' of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which it was claimed was to 'end the nationalist nightmare', have been sharply exposed by the grisly scenes of the past few weeks.

Not only do no-jury Diplock courts, strip searching of women prisoners and massive discrimination against catholics remain — but those who oppose these sectarian monstrosities cannot even bury their dead with a minimum of dignity!

What could more clearly show to the world the grotesque character of that

colonial anachronism, the Orange statelet of 'Northern Ireland', than what the *Sunday Telegraph* reported as: 'The pictures went around the world: of helmeted policemen with raised truncheons attacking a funeral procession. American CBS called the BBC Belfast office to ask, "why don't they let them bury this poor guy?"'

Not only are the opponents of the Orange Statelet denied the most minimum standards of justice in the courts and the prisons, but even their funerals are the objects of vindictive efforts to cow and crush them.

Sinn Fein reports LCI AGM

THE 9 APRIL issues of *An Phoblacht*, the newspaper reflecting the views of Sinn Fein in Ireland, reported the annual general meeting of the Labour Committee on Ireland (LCI). It outlined clearly Sinn Fein's support for the demand of British withdrawal from Ireland during the lifetime of one parliament. We print Sinn Fein's article complete below.

Niall Donnelly of Sinn Fein's Trade Union Department, attended the conference and addressed the section on trade unions held on Saturday, April 4th. He shared the platform at Manchester Town Hall with Bill Ethrington (president of the Durham Mechanics, National Union of Mineworkers), Alison Clarke (Labour Women & Ireland) and Sean Redmond (Trade Unionists for Irish Unity and Independence).

Donnelly praised the work the Labour Committee on Ireland has done to raise the issue of Ireland in the British Labour Party and trade union movement. This work must continue, he said:

'The ultimate aim is to seek a position where the Labour Party has adopted as policy a commitment to withdraw its political and military presence from the Six Counties.

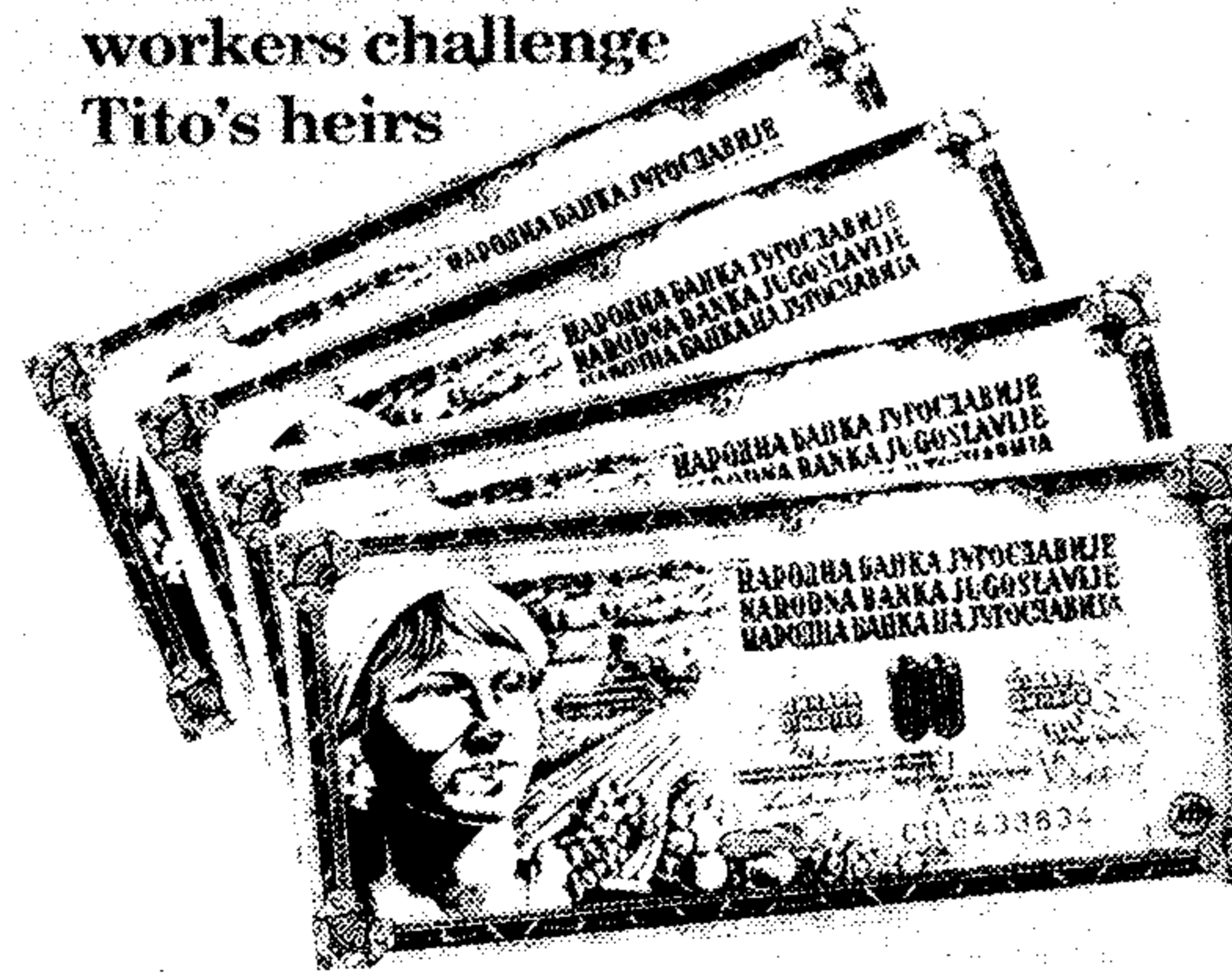
'Such a policy should include a time-scale which should be as short as is practical and should certainly be such as to allow withdrawal to be completed within the lifetime of the Labour government.'

Neill Donnelly described the conference as 'highly constructive', particularly regarding resolutions to highlight job discrimination and promote the 'MacBride Principles' on fair employment.

Emergency motions were adopted, one condemning the Labour Party spokesperson on Ireland, Stuart Bell, for his statement that Labour could do a deal with the unionists in return for support, and another stating that membership of the Orange Order was not compatible with membership of the Labour Party.

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LAST WEEK was an important one for the clarification of British politics. The major forces of the Labour right stopped beating around the bush and openly announced what they have been politically preparing for years — the demand Labour should link up with the SDP-Liberal Alliance first in 'tactical voting' and then in a possible coalition government.

After four years of coyly trying to deny it, while unmistakably stating its real positions, *Marxism Today* called for voting in the next general election for Alliance candidates as well as Labour. *Marxism Today's* front page message from Eric Hobsbawm was: 'There is only one way of defeating the Thatcher government. It is by voting for the candidate who is best placed to keep out the Tory.'

Inside Hobsbawm spelt out the message equally clearly: 'There is only one logical conclusion... It is, in every constituency, to vote for the candidate who offers the best chance of beating the Tories, whether Labour or Alliance.'

To back that up the pages of *Marxism Today* were opened up to Martin Kettle, a leader writer for the *Guardian*. His article was introduced by the *Marxism Today* editor as 'The Alliance is seen as untouchable by many on the left. Martin Kettle suggests that, on the contrary, it must be seen as part of the left.'

Attempting to explain why the pro-nuclear weapons, anti-trade union Alliance could be considered part of 'the left' Kettle claimed: 'The unions remain the basic divide between Labour and Alliance cultures (This is as true of traditional Liberalism as it is of the SDP). The SDP's hatred of the unions is a very big obstacle here, partly as a symbolic issue (sic) but also because the Alliance is now committed to a system of elections and balloting and to a framework of industrial law which falls little short of the recent Conservative green paper.' Kettle did not mention Owen's vitriolic campaign against the unions, and the fact that the Alliance has voted for every piece of anti-union legislation introduced by the Thatcher government.

Policies

On nuclear weapons Kettle was clear in strongly supporting current Labour front bench moves to abandon unilateral nuclear disarmament: 'Labour's policy is non-nuclear. The Alliance's is equally clearly nuclear. These contrasts are, however, becoming increasingly blurred by the Labour Party as the general election nears and its policy is perceived as unpopular.'

Two days after *Marxism Today* appeared the *New Statesman* came out both with a call for tactical voting and with a front cover entitled 'The women of the SDP — decent caring and nice.' This advertised a long article on women and the SDP by Sarah Benton which was introduced as: 'Sarah Benton reports on the women of the SDP and finds them with a greater power in their party than they could have hoped for in any other.'

The *New Statesman* also qualitatively deepened its coverage of the campaign for 'tactical voting'. It carried a list of 225 seats which were described as 'constituencies vulnerable to tactical voting'. The *New Statesman* also carried an article by Robin Cook MP advocating the introduction of the Alternative Vote system in elections — that is an electoral system where voters number parties in order of preference.

The article urging votes for Alliance candidates in over 70 constituencies was simply entitled 'Tactical voting, a tactic whose time has come'. The article was not signed — indicating editorial approval. While it won't announce it yet there is no doubt that the *New Statesman* will call for tactical voting in the general election — as indeed it did in 1983.

The *Guardian*, on the same day the *New Statesman* appeared, was unequivocal in advocating the same line. Its editorial on 16 April simply stated: 'Tactical voting now appears not just as one way of defeating the Conservatives at the coming election — but as the only way.'

The most important statement of all however was from Gavin Laird, general secretary of the AEU. On 13 April, during the AEU national committee, Laird appeared on television to argue that

The Right breaks cover!

LAST WEEK the Labour right, and its ideological advisers, decided to kick away the camouflage and come out with their real political orientation — one that so far they had only dared to present by suggestion and hints. In what was ob-

viously a concerted move *Marxism Today* the *New Statesman*, and the *Guardian* all carried statements and editorials officially endorsing tactical voting and proclaiming the SDP-Liberal Alliance to be part of 'the left'. Much more significantly

Labour should consider a deal with the Alliance following the general election. He said, 'We want a Labour government' but that if this was not achieved then a deal should be done with the Alliance in a hung parliament. 'If it means we have to trim our sails to ensure we don't have certain policies, by all means we should go ahead' to get an agreement.

In short politics previously only hinted at — those of tactical voting and agreements with the Alliance — are now being spelt out openly as mainstream right wing Labour thinking. It is absolutely crucial that the left, which has consistently underestimated this question, realises the significance of what is going on.

The creation of the SDP, and the formation of the SDP-Liberal Alliance, was not a short term shift in British politics. It was the most important development in British bourgeois politics since the disintegration of the Liberal Party in World War I. As such it was going to have enormous implications for the labour movement.

From 1900 to 1981 the historic perspective of the British labour movement was conceived as the steady advance towards the creation of majority Labour governments. These would legislate social reforms or, in more left wing versions, achieve socialism itself. This perspective seemed realisable in the years 1945-1979 when Labour secured as much as 49 per cent of the vote and never, until 1974, secured less than 44 per cent.

That high vote, approaching a majority, for the Labour Party was secured by unity around Labour of at least the male manual working class — taking in both its most privileged and least paid sections. From 1945 to 1966 never less than 57 per cent of the manual working class, and in 1966 as high as 69 per cent, voted Labour.

Political

Even in this period of the 'zenith of labourism' there was still a fatal weakness in Labour's support. Labour failed to put forward policies capable of attracting the support of women. Whereas Labour defeated, or equalled, the Tories in the vote among men in every general election from 1945 to 1974, the Tories appealed over the heads of male manual workers to women. The Conservatives secured 16 years of office between 1951 and 1974 exclusively on the basis of their support among women voters.

The bloc of the great majority of the male manual working class around Labour, with the perspective of a reformist majority Labour government, was buttressed by a single united trade union movement. The entire bloc, while reformist to the core, was at least in this period a relatively efficient machine for delivering votes.

The material basis of this entire development was the ability of British imperialism to make concessions to all sections of the working class — naturally far larger concessions to the better paid than the most oppressed, but at least some concessions to everyone.

This unity was first weakened and

then smashed by first the economic problems of British imperialism from the mid-1960s, and then by its acute crisis from 1973-79 onwards. The Labour governments of 1964-70 and 1974-79, above all through their incomes policies and also their cuts, turned round and savagely attacked labourism's own base. From 1966-83 literally millions of the best paid and skilled workers, above all manual workers, deserted Labour. Labour's support among the manual working class fell from 69 per cent in 1966 to 42 per cent in 1983.

It was this division in the working class Thatcher set out in every way to exacerbate. She deepened income differentials. She consciously strengthened the economic position of the best paid sections of the working class through subsidised council house sales and promoting tax subsidised share sales.

Realities

Thatcher has allowed wages of a large number of those in work to rise far more rapidly than the rate of inflation — while creating a growing pool of unemployed, of temporary, and of part time workers. This is the national reflection of the economy of 'core' and 'periphery' which Thatcher's policies were aimed to promote in individual industries.

Thatcher's government has consciously tried to create what the *Sunday Times* this week accurately called the 'I'm all right folk'. The aim was to deepen the divisions in the labour movement.

The overall beneficiary of that process was capital. But in party terms, paradoxically, the gainer was not the Tory party. So deep is the anti-Tory tradition in the working class that not even Thatcher's policy of bribes, made possible by North Sea Oil, has been able to win any serious section of the working class to support for the Conservative Party. The Conservative Party's vote, already low in historical terms at 44 per cent in 1979, fell by 700,000 in 1983. Since then few opinion polls have seen the Tories even regain their level of 1983.

The real beneficiaries of Thatcher's successful drive to split the previous unity of labourism has been the Alliance. It is a complete miscomprehension to believe that the Alliance has its base in the 'petty-bourgeoisie'. The mass base of the Alliance is millions of votes by workers — not simply white collar workers, although it has widescale support there, but also among manual workers. In particular the Alliance has major support among the most skilled and best paid sections of the working class — in particular in the most prosperous areas, the South and South East, of Britain.

This is why today we find the leader of what is still a skilled workers based union, the AEU, endorsing what apparently were in origin the views of an intellectual magazine produced by a Eurocommunist party. Unions such as the AEU, the EETPU, the NCU are precisely those among which the Alliance gets support. And they are

Gavin Laird, general secretary of the AEU, became the first leader of a major union to officially endorse a post-election deal between Labour and the Alliance. BRIAN WHITE looks at why the theoretical journal of a Eurocommunist

Party and the right wing of the trade union bureaucracy are converging on a common political perspective. ERIC HEFFER gives his alternative to the orientation being spelt out by the Labour right. Socialist Action's editorial view p 2.

among those which, in a much longer term strategy, it, and the bourgeoisie, hope to disengage from Labour and, even, the TUC.

This is the reality of the situation the left faces. The ideas of 'tactical voting' and of coalition government were never those purely of a group of intellectuals. And 'new realism' was never purely a 'trade union' strategy. What is involved is the coming together of a whole section of the right wing trade union bureaucracy based on the best paid and most skilled sections of the working class, coupled with a wing of the parliamentary Labour party who are simply given a theoretical cover by a journal such as *Marxism Today*. It is capital and the Labour right that set the agenda for *Marxism Today* — not the other way round. It merely provides the gloss to give a 'theoretical' rationalisation for what the right wing of the trade union bureaucracy would do anyway.

But what must be clear is that 'tactical voting', coalition, and the Alliance are not going to go away. They are profound and deep rooted phenomena whose impact in the labour movement is going to increase, not decrease.

The real strategic fight that is going to develop in the coming years is precisely between the class struggle forces in the labour movement and the 'new realist' right — a right irrevocably wedded to class collaboration in trade unionism and to a political perspective of accommodation with the Alliance.

Anti-Tory

The majority of the labour movement is still clinging to the old 'labourist' perspective — and will continue to do so for a long time yet. But what we are seeing today, and have been since 1979, is precisely the 'break up of labourism' — a break up whose product is just as logically Gavin Laird, Eric Hammond, and the drive towards coalition government as much as it is Arthur Scargill, Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, the demands of the Labour Women's Action Committee, Women Against Pit Closures, or the Labour Party Black Section. Indeed for a whole period, unfortunately, that new realist right will be a much more powerful product of the break up of labourism than will the 'campaign' left.

The arenas in which that fight will take place will be the great 'middle ground' of the labour movement — the TGWU, GMBATU, NUPE, and those areas and unions which form the 'soft left', and 'soft right' of the labour movement. It is the fight between the class struggle left, and the new realist right, for political domination in these areas which will settle the course of the labour movement in the whole next period.

There should also be no doubt as to the political terrain of that fight. It is the defence and rebuilding of the labour movement. Because in the new schema, and new conditions, of British imperialism there is, historically, no place for the old labourist labour movement — although of course it will take years to arrive at that final historical

conclusion. In British imperialism's schema of things there is a role for the EETPU, or for Gavin Laird, or for coalition. There is no place for a nine-million strong trade union movement, and no place for independent class politics.

The bourgeoisie today aims to destroy, or reduce to shadow organisations, unions such as NUPE, the teachers unions, or the civil service unions. It seeks to break up the closed shops of the general unions. It seeks to permanently break Labour's old domination of the majority of the working class. A small privileged trade union movement, perhaps only 4-5 million strong, a Labour Party which can never get into office alone, that is the plan of British capital. It will use every historical, and every current, weakness of the labour movement to achieve it.

Ant that assault will strike deeper than Labour's present class struggle left. It will strike the majority of the ranks of the labour movement — precisely those over whom the class struggle left and the new realist right are today fighting.

Who can best defend the labour movement — who can best defend the unions, who can secure the reduction in the hours of work necessary to reduce unemployment, who can protect the low paid, who can organise the millions of part time and temporary women workers, who can rebuild Labour's support, who can defend the black community from racist attacks, who can defend the welfare state — will be the force that will win in the struggle in the labour movement in the next period.

Because, increasingly, the labour movement will only be able to be defended by class struggle methods. Because the Lairds, Hammonds, *Marxism Today's*, and *New Statesman's* have literally nothing to offer the great majority of the labour movement.

British marxists today have a job very different to the one they, perhaps, imagined they would face. They are confronted not with a 'struggle for power', or even with any short term prospect of a 'struggle for power'. They are faced with a long gruelling struggle to defend, and rebuild on a new basis, the labour movement. Marxism is going to become a mass current in the British labour movement not through glamorous and exciting struggles — although it will take enormous international developments to propel it forward. Marxism is going to become a mass current because it, unlike labourism, can begin to defend the British labour movement. That, together with international developments, which can be of a very different type, will dominate the next period of the class struggle.

The first, most powerful, and most frightening product of the break up of labourism is the new realist right, tactical voting, and coalitionism — forces seeking to break up the existing labour movement from the right. Its most important force for the future is its small marxist current. The fight between the two, over the terrain of the defence and rebuilding of the labour movement, will decide the future of British society.



The left's alternative to coalition

SOCIALIST ACTION asked Eric Heffer to comment on the arguments of *Marxism Today*, the *New Statesman* and others in favour of 'tactical voting' and coalition government and to present his view of the alternative to it.

THE view of Martin Kettle in *Marxism Today* that the Alliance is on the left is a complete misconception of its position. The fact is that the Alliance, particularly the SDP, is by no means a left wing party. The SDP is a middle class organisation with a small middle class membership wedded to capitalism.

The SDP were the people who broke away at the decisive moment in 1981 to let the Conservatives in. By doing what they did, and lining up with the Liberals, they allowed the Conservative party to get back into office at the last election.

By Eric Heffer

The Tories lost 700,000 votes in 1983. If the movement had not had the SDP breakaway, together with the activity of Callaghan and that grouping in the Party, we would have won the election. To call these people on the left is ridiculous, the SDP is another side of the capitalist coin.

This total misreading of the situation is quite deliberate. It fits in with a Communist Party view of seeking alliances with the SDP and Liberals rather than building up the organised strength of the working class.

There is now a concerted effort on 'tactical voting' from various quarters. *Marxism Today* has abandoned any idea of working class politics. Class concepts are clearly being ironed out in that paper. With the falling back of the Labour Party in the polls that has given an added impetus to their views.

The same goes for the *New Statesman*. The idea the *New Statesman* is a journal of the left, as it used to be, is wrong. The *Guardian* equally is a middle ground Liberal-SDP journal.

These are people who would like to eliminate all ideas of socialist policies once and for all from the party's programme. We're already hearing talk about going to the election with the minimum of policy objectives.

There are people who after the next election would quite happily make deals with Owen and company. We could see, not a breakaway, but arrangements being made with them after the next election. There were people who even before the last election wanted to raise the question of coalition. This talk is undermining the possibility of a majority Labour government with Labour positions.

This is another example of the type of self imposed wounds the party is inflicting. A lot of damage has been done to the party's prospects not only over the past few weeks but also over a longer period of time.

For some in the party to refer, like the capitalist press, to our councillors and local authorities as 'loony lefts' is a gift to our political enemies. To expel councillors and members for supporting the *Militant* newspaper or any other left-wing paper in the party is a gift to our political enemies.



To threaten comrades with disciplinary action because they are members or supporters of Black Sections is a gift to the political enemy.

To fail to support the rights of minority groups like lesbians and gays is a gift to the political enemy.

To fail to support women's rights is a gift to the political enemy.

It is wrong for people in the Labour Party to distance themselves from workers who are involved in class struggle, who are fighting for basic trade union rights and who require solidarity from all sections of the movement.

The miners should have received wholehearted support, as should the printworkers and others. They did not get it, either from some trade union or Labour leaders, and their fight was weakened as a result.

The defeat of the miners was a watershed for the movement. In the past when workers have been defeated in industrial struggle they have tended to look for political solutions. They have looked to the Labour Party, but on this occasion, because of the cracked note sounding from Labour's trumpet, workers have hesitated and are not sure where to go or what to do.

It is our task on the left to give them some answers and political direction.

It is clear that we on the left of the party cannot sit idly by and allow the party to become the SDP Mark 2. If we do, that is a sure way to ensure the victory of our political opponents, including the SDP/Liberal Alliance. We must go out and fight for our socialist principles and policies, knowing that in reality, they were the only policies that in the last analysis can deal with the problems that we in this and other capitalist countries face.

The emphasis must be on the class basis of politics with the various issues integrated into the overall strategy.

The centrality of class politics means we can make arrangements or agreements even with people in the *Morning Star* who we would undoubtedly disagree with on issues of the internal regime in the Soviet Union.

Clearly at the moment there are areas where the 'soft left', and what I would

call the 'genuine left', are not going to agree on every policy.

On reselection, for example, there is a division between the 'soft left' and what I would call the 'genuine left'. We believe we have to have reselection on the basis of the GCs which are reflecting the wards, branches and trade unions that are part of the constituency. This means MPs are responsible to the elected representatives of the whole party. The idea of selection by mass meetings, or postal ballots, in fact means people who are accountable to nobody.

But there can be a number of policies that we agree on:

- We must take back into public ownership the industries and companies that have been privatised. Part of that must be a real fight for democratic management in such industries.
- We can get a minimum agreement that we must extend public ownership in other spheres. We have to extend it in particular in relation to the banks and finance houses.
- We can agree to get rid of all nuclear bases, nuclear weapons and nuclear energy.
- We can agree that all the anti-union legislation should be abolished, and that trade union rights should be restored without interference in the internal affairs of trade unions.
- We can agree on working towards proper financing for rebuilding the National Health Service and that it should function as a *free* National Health Service.
- We can demand that the cuts in social security benefits should be restored.
- We can agree on an all out attack on unemployment.
- We can agree that we have to support the rights of women and the minorities within the party and the country.
- We can agree to oppose coalition discussion.

If we can work out a minimum programme of that kind then, particularly after the next election, we can begin to get together.

NEW STATESMAN

- The complete tactical voter ● Crisis in the blocs
- Kellner on the left ● What's on le télé
- Maureen Duffy interviewed ● Camden jazz

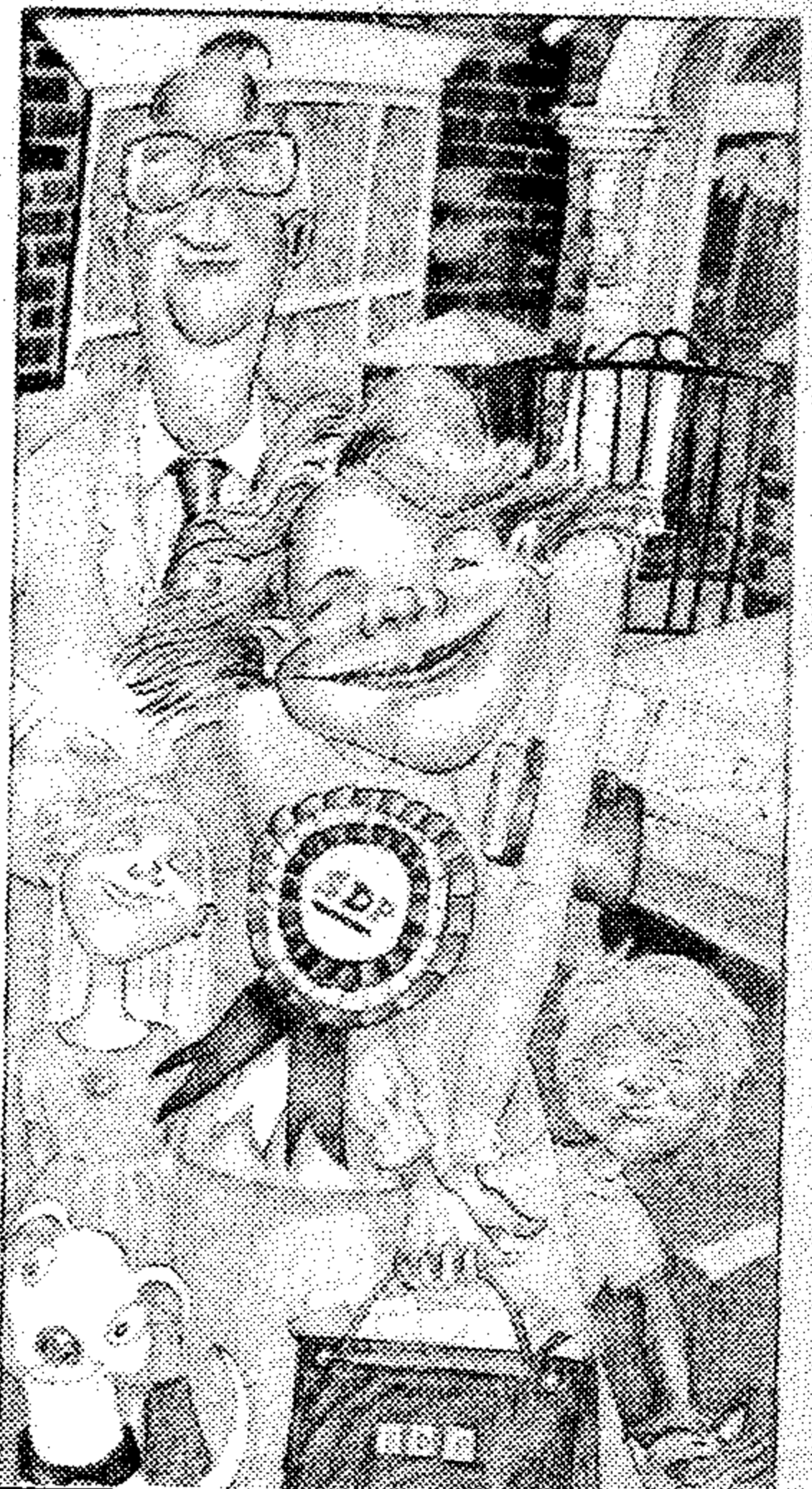
A demagogue in Argentina needs talks on the Falklands

The women of the

SDP

— decent, caring &

NICE



What touches me most is the sheer bloody awfulness of women's

Marxism Today

May 1987 95p

- The Battle
- Over Education
- Cilla Black
- Alliance Assessed
- Jews
- The Gorbachev Effect
- Chernobyl and Britain

Eric Hobsbawm:

There is only one way of defeating the Thatcher government. It is by voting for the candidate who is best placed to keep

What is the bureaucracy?

MARXISM by its very nature, is always changing and developing. Marxism reflects reality — therefore as new phenomena develop in social reality so new ideas and categories have to be introduced into Marxism.

Marx, for example, never developed a theory of imperialism — because the modern imperialist system did not exist when Marx was alive. Lenin developed an analysis of imperialism but never any theory of Stalinism — for the simple reason that Stalinism did not develop until after Lenin's death.

Marxist analysis develops in a dialectic of 'classic' ideas and radical innovation. The criterion for that which should be retained from the old, and what should be introduced as new, is always whether a theory accurately reflects reality. As Engels put it Marxism: 'proceeds not from principles but from facts'.

A Marxist idea therefore remains valid for analysis, and action, as long as the reality it reflects continues to exist. The creation of a new social phenomenon — imperialism, fascism, or Stalinism to take developments since Marx's death — requires the introduction of new concepts into Marxism.

This determines the relation of Marxist analysis to British society. There does not exist anywhere in the 'Marxist classics' a fully developed analysis of British society and politics. This is not simply because no systematic study of this subject exists, but also because British society has tremendously developed since such works were written. To attempt to develop a Marxist analysis of British politics today means necessarily to study and learn from what is new — as Marx did in his own day.

But the criterion of correspondence to reality as the test of any analysis means that also any attempt to ignore 'classic' Marxist ideas is sterile. Nothing is more short sighted than an attempt to 'start from scratch' and ignore what has already been analysed in Marxist ideas.

Perry Anderson put it clearly in an essay he wrote on Gramsci: 'The international disputes which united and divided Luxemburg, Lenin, Lukacs, Gramsci, Bordiga or Trotsky ... represents the last great strategic debate in the European workers movement ... The classical debates, therefore, still remain in many respects the most advanced limits of reference we possess today.'

'It is thus not ... archaism to recall the strategic confrontations which occurred four or five decades ago. To reappropriate them, on the contrary, is a step towards a Marxist discussion that has the — necessarily modest — hope of assuming an "initial shape" of correct theory today. Regis Debray has spoken, in a famous paragraph, of the constant difficulty of being contemporary with our present. In Europe at least, we have yet to be sufficiently contemporary with our past.'

Study

Any serious attempt to develop a Marxist analysis of British and international politics today must therefore necessarily study Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, Gramsci and the other great Marxist writers. Not to do so is to ignore the most powerful intellectual resources available.

Nothing could make that clearer today than studying the question of the bureaucracy — whether in its home grown variant of Kinnock, Willis, Golding, Hammond and Co, or in its international variant of Gorbachev or Deng Xiaoping. Because in his analysis of the bureaucracy Trotsky made one of his most fundamental and characteristic contributions to Marxism — one that is of direct relevance to developing politics today.

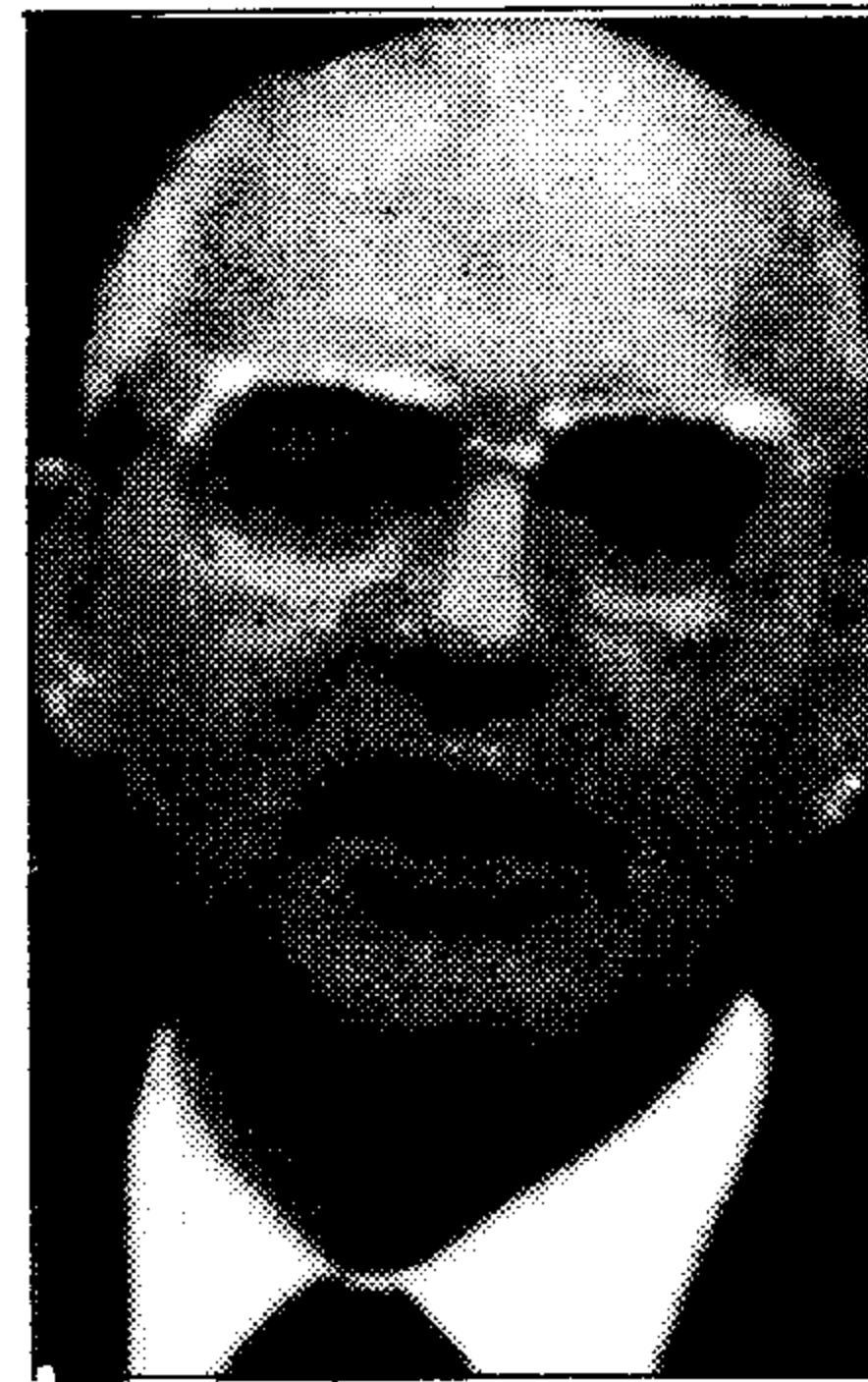
For Trotsky, as with Lenin, the fundamental feature of the modern world was rule by the imperialist system. Imperialism, not a bureaucracy, dominates the world. As Trotsky wrote in *The Third International After Lenin*:



Kinnock



Golding



Gorbachev



Deng

Marxism and socialism

SOCIALIST ACTION is a Marxist paper. That is it attempts to apply a Marxist analysis to the contemporary problems of politics in Britain and internationally. It does that not out of nostalgia for the past, or out of fidelity to some out-moded creed but because, in Lenin's words, 'Marxism is powerful because it is true.' A Marxist analysis is one in politics which most accurately allows people to



forsee and act. To show this, in addition to our normal coverage, we are going to be running a series of articles on how Marxist ideas explain contemporary politics. In the first of these JOHN ROSS looks at the Marxist analysis of the bureaucracy — internationally the politics of Gorbachev and Deng Xiaoping, and in Britain of Kinnock, Willis, Golding, Dean, Todd, and Hammond.

'our epoch ... is the epoch of imperialism, ie, of world economy and world politics under the hegemony of finance capital.'

The bourgeoisies of the countries dominated by imperialism, and in particular the labour bureaucracies of the imperialist, and other, countries, however constitute the fundamental defences of imperialism. This is particularly true in the bourgeois democracies of the imperialist countries.

Trotsky noted in his classic work on fascism, *What Next?*: 'In a developed capitalist society, during a "democratic regime", the bourgeoisie leans for support primarily upon the working classes, which are held in check by the reformists.' This form of political rule particularly applied to Britain: 'In its most finished form, this system finds its expression in Britain during the administration of the Labour government as well as during that of the Conservatives.'

The bureaucracy is the pivot of the system of bourgeois and imperialist domination. As Trotsky wrote in his polemic *The Errors in Principle of Syndicalism*: 'In England, more than anywhere else, the state rests upon the back of the working class which constitutes the overwhelming majority of the population of the country. The mechanism is such that the bureaucracy is based directly on the workers, and the state indirectly, through the intermediary of the trade union bureaucracy.'

The most powerful bureaucracy of all, based within the imperialist countries, is precisely the trade union bureaucracy: 'In the capitalist states, the most monstrous forms of bureaucratism are to be observed precisely in the trade unions. It is enough to look at America, England and Germany.'

'Amsterdam (the trade union international of the social democratic parties) is the most powerful international organisation of the trade union bureaucracy. It thanks to it that the whole structure of capitalism now stands upright, above all in Europe and especially in England.'

'If there were not a bureaucracy of the trade unions, then the police, the army, the courts, the lords, the monarchy would appear before the proletarian

masses as nothing but pitiful and ridiculous playthings. The bureaucracy of the trade unions is the backbone of British imperialism. It is by means of this bureaucracy that the bourgeoisie exists, not only in the metropolis, but in India, in Egypt, and in the other countries.'

Trotsky concluded therefore: 'The Marxist will say to the English workers: "The trade union bureaucracy is the chief instrument forged for your oppression by the bourgeois state. Power must be wrested from the hands of the bourgeoisie, and for that its principal agent, the trade union bureaucracy, must be overthrown."'

Enemy

Trotsky's analysis of the bureaucracy is clear. The bureaucracy is not the central enemy — that role is occupied by imperialism and the imperialist ruling classes. But the bureaucracy is the chief defence mechanism of the bourgeoisie. In order to overthrow the bourgeoisie it is therefore necessary to destroy and overthrow the bureaucracy — 'Power must be wrested from the hands of the bourgeoisie and for that its principal agent, the trade union bureaucracy, must be overthrown.'

From the fact that the bureaucracy is not a ruling class, that it is a defence mechanism of the central enemy of the working class, flows that on occasion the bureaucracy can undertake specific progressive tasks — while at the same time maintaining its internationally counter-revolutionary role of defending the bourgeoisie. For example Trotsky wrote in his *Letter on India* in 1939 that: 'The general historic role of the Stalinist bureaucracy and their Comintern (the Communist International) is counter-revolutionary. But through their military and other interests they can be forced to support progressive movements.' Classic examples of this are the aid the Soviet bureaucracy was forced to give in Vietnam's war of liberation against the United States, or the economic and military aid given to Cuba and other countries in which capitalism has been overthrown.

Trotsky noted in the *Transitional Programme of the Fourth International* that the Soviet bureaucracy in fact con-

tained every political current from revolutionary Marxists to fascists: 'all shades of political thought are to be found among the bureaucracy: from genuine Bolshevism ... to complete fascism. The revolutionary elements within the bureaucracy, only a small minority, reflect, passively it is true, the socialist interests of the proletariat. The fascist, counter-revolutionary elements, growing uninterruptedly, express with ever greater consistency the interests of world imperialism ... Between these two poles, there are intermediate, diffused Menshevik-SR (Social Revolutionary)-liberal tendencies which gravitate towards bourgeois democracy.'

The fact that even the bureaucracy as a whole can be forced to take progressive actions, and that it contains a variety of political currents, means that it is necessary for the working class, in such situations where the bureaucracy is forced to take progressive actions, to enter into united action with the bureaucracy, or sections of the bureaucracy.

Action

To take an extreme case in World War II it was necessary to take united action with Stalin to fight against the Nazi invasion of the USSR. This necessity to defend the USSR, including in alliance with Stalin, which he advocated, did not alter the fact that Trotsky spoke of: 'The definite passing over of the Comintern to the side of the bourgeois order, its cynical counter-revolutionary role throughout the world, particularly in Spain, France, the United States and other "democratic" countries, (which) created exceptional supplementary difficulties for the world proletariat. Under the banner of October revolution, the conciliatory politics practised by the "People's Front" dooms the working class to impotence and clears the road for fascism.'

Even when forced to take individual progressive actions, and even when it is necessary for the working class to engage in united action with it, the bureaucracy still attempts to hold back and sabotage the struggle.

As Trotsky analysed in *The Third Period of the Comintern's Errors*: 'The influence of the radicalisation of the

masses on the reformists is quite similar to the influence that the development of a bourgeois revolution has on the liberals. In the first stages of the mass movement, the reformists move leftward, hoping in this way to retain the leadership in their hands. But when the movement surpasses the limits of reform, and demands from the leaders a clean break with the bourgeoisie, the majority of the reformists quickly change their tune. From cowardly fellow travellers of the masses, they turn into strikebreakers, enemies, open betrayers.

He also noted: 'At the same time, however, some of them, not necessarily their better elements, jump over into the camp of the revolution ...'

Trotsky concluded: 'The reformists are betrayers not because they carry out, at every given moment and in every one of their acts, the instructions of the bourgeoisie. If that were the case, the reformists would have no influence on the workers and consequently would not be needed by the bourgeoisie. Precisely in order to have the necessary authority for betrayal of the workers at the decisive moment, the opportunists are compelled during the preparatory period to assume the leadership of the workers' struggles, particularly at the beginning of the radicalisation of the masses ...'

Leadership

'The social democrats and those of the Amsterdam international, with the exception of the more conscious right-wing elements ... will be compelled under corresponding conditions to assume the leadership of the advance of the masses, in order to confine these advances within narrow limits, or in order to attack the workers from the rear when they overstep these limits ... we know that in advance and openly warn the vanguard about it.'

This, therefore, was Trotsky's concept of the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy was not the main enemy. That role was occupied by the imperialist ruling classes. But the bureaucracy was the chief defence mechanism of the imperialist bourgeoisies. The working class had to enter into united action with the bureaucracy, or sections of the bureaucracy. But at the same time they had to understand, and 'warn' against, the bureaucracy's role.

Lenin outlined it in another context. He wrote: 'unity ... is ... relative. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute.' Put in terms of the bureaucracy it is necessary for working class political currents to enter united action not only with rank and file workers but with sections of the bureaucracy. Not to do so is infantile leftism. But even within that united action, that 'relative unity', there is an absolute contradiction between the interests of the working class and that of the bureaucracy.

Put in concrete terms, it is necessary for the working class to fully participate in a struggle led by a Golding, a Dean, or a Jarvis, demand that they take action. But even within that struggle a Golding, Dean or Jarvis sabotages it. In particular at crucial moments they turn 'from cowardly fellow travellers of the masses into open strikebreakers, enemies, open betrayers.' That is why, even when involved in united action with a Golding, a Dean, or a Jarvis it is necessary to 'warn' against, and organise against, their role. Similarly when supporting individual positions of the Soviet bureaucracy, such as the Gorbachev missiles proposals, it is still necessary to understand the reactionary role played by the Soviet bureaucracy as a whole in world politics.

The main enemy is a Reagan, a Thatcher, a Baker, and those whose interests they represent. But to fight them it is necessary to fight their defenders Gorbachev, Hammond, Kinnock, Golding, Jarvis or Dean. That is Trotsky's analysis of the bureaucracy.

Gorbachev's new Euro-missiles proposals: An offer the West can't refuse?

SOVIET LEADER Mikhail Gorbachev has stepped up the pressure for a nuclear-free Europe deal with his latest proposals for immediate talks on the removal of short-range missiles. During his speech in Prague on Friday 10 April, Gorbachev declared: 'we are in favour of moving towards a radical reduction and eventual abolition of all short-range and tactical missiles in Europe.' He elaborated this offer during George Shultz's three-day visit to Moscow. This latest move has created some contradictions in Ronald Reagan's administration, but the problems posed for West European governments are even greater. CAROL TURNER explains.



Shultz and Gorbachev

However, while it is clear that the USSR's latest proposals go further than previously, ambiguity still surrounds the precise details.

Whatever those details are — in particular whether the offer extends to so-called battlefield nuclear weapons such as artillery shells — this new move is calculated to meet the pretexts of Margaret Thatcher and others raised in objection to the earlier INF proposals.

In a speech during her own recent visit to the Soviet Union, Thatcher said: 'We can agree to longer-range intermediate missiles in Europe being eliminated, but we must also have constraints on shorter-range missiles. The next stage must be further negotiations to reduce the imbalance of shorter-range systems where the Warsaw Pact has a massive superiority of nine to one. There must also be real progress in negotiations to deal with the Warsaw Pact's superiority in conventional forces.'

Those sentiments were shared by France, West Germany and others. In reality, Thatcher et al stepped up their propaganda against the denuclearisation of Europe. Predictably, this new offer has exposed the real position of West European politicians.

Under the headline 'Gorbachev splits West on arms', *The Observer* of 12 April candidly explained:

'The difficulty for Mrs Thatcher and Chancellor Kohl is that, in spite of all the fuss they have made about the Soviet advantage in short-range systems, they do not want these systems eliminated. They want the right to match the Soviet forces missile for missile within an agreed ceiling. Both have made it clear that they are against the "denuclearisation of Europe"...

Thatcher spoke for the West European NATO allies who want a rounding-up on short-range missiles. Gorbachev effectively scotched that demand by his offer of a rounding-down.

Loss

This is temporarily leaving West European imperialism and its media friends at a loss. Hence the clearer-than-usual emergence of the true, pro-nuclear position of politicians like Thatcher and Kohl.

They understand that proposals for a nuclear-free Europe are potentially fantastically popular with West European public opinion. A flat refusal is out of the question.

Presently they are busy proclaiming 'the first ever victory for those in the West who believe in "disarmament-through-strength" as the *Sunday Times* of 19 April put it. That editorial goes on: 'Despite more than 25

years of East-West talks on arms control, no deal has yet been signed which has made real cuts in the size of the bloated nuclear arsenals of the super-powers. Multilateral disarmers, among them the *Sunday Times* have had no success to back their case.

'Now for the first time success is on offer — a success which would probably dish the unilateral disarmers and peace movement activists for another generation.'

The truth is the opposite. It is the rise of the anti-missiles movement in Western Europe which has helped create the climate in which the USSR's proposals have been made and received. The peace movements should be pointing that out — and demanding that Thatcher, Kohl and the rest respond immediately and favourably. It has been shown more clearly than ever that it is the West European governments, not the USSR, that are maintaining nuclear weapons in Europe.

Socialists in Western Europe should not endorse all aspects of Gorbachev's foreign policy. He has indicated his willingness to do deals with imperialism on issues such as Central America. But on the missiles in Europe, Gorbachev is entirely in the right. Socialists in Western Europe should demand their governments sign on the dotted line. Now.

'DO WE really want Europe to be nuclear free?' asked the *Daily Express* during the week of the Shultz-Gorbachev talks. Geoffrey Howe described as 'dangerous' the new Soviet proposals on short-range nuclear missiles. As far as the Thatcher government is concerned, they are bad news indeed. The same goes for France and West Germany.

As the *Sunday Times* of 19 April put it, West European ministers in Brussels for a briefing on the outcome of the Shultz visit reacted 'with a chorus of bleats and groans'.

Exactly what do these new proposals which are viewed with such distress by the West amount to?

In Prague, three days before Shultz arrived in Moscow, Gorbachev introduced three new elements into the Euro-missiles talks. First, he offered the US immediate talks on short-range nuclear missiles, separate to those on the intermediate nuclear force (INF) which cover missiles with a range of between 300-600 miles.

Gorbachev proposed separate talks on tactical nuclear weapons and conventional forces, to take place between all 35 members of the European Security Conference. He also announced that the USSR has stopped production of chemical weapons and is building disposal plants to get rid of those already stockpiled.

Shultz was widely

reported to have arrived in Moscow with a letter from Ronald Reagan proposing a summit later this year, and with two new conditions for the INF talks. First, a complete 'zero option' on medium-range nuclear weapons in Europe as a counter to the USSR's proposal that each side keep 100 of these within its own territories; and second that NATO should be allowed to match the Soviet level of short-range nuclear missiles.

Summit

Reagan had also instructed Shultz to drop two commitments made by the USA at the Reykjavik summit last autumn: the agreement to eliminate all offensive ballistic missiles by 1996, and the undertaking to observe the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missiles (ABM) treaty for 10 years (which would prevent deployment of Star Wars weaponry).

During the second day of the Shultz visit, Tuesday 14 April, Gorbachev expanded his new offer. The official account of the talks released by the Tass newsagency said that the USSR proposed to dismantle its short-range rocketry 'in a relatively short and clearly specified period' and was ready to liquidate its battlefield tactical missiles. Tass also said that Gorbachev was now offering a definition of strategic defence initiative (SDI) laboratory research.

Nicaragua: contras under increasing pressure

IN THE wake of the shockwaves sent throughout the Reagan administration by the Irangate scandal, new evidence is being uncovered about connections in other parts of the world to supply arms to the Nicaraguan contras. One effect has been to fuel the feeling among sections of the American establishment over the futility of maintaining the contras as an option in their struggle against revolutionary Nicaragua.

Moreover, there is a huge political crisis in the contra 'movement' that encompasses the variegated organisations within it. Sections of the American administration have been trying to hand over leadership to more 'respectable' characters such as Robelo and Cruz. Theoretically they could muster more support than the other leading figures like Calevo, the sinister former National Guard chief under Somoza.

Despite the fact that the contras have proved dismal failures as a military force, their 'struggle' against unarmed civilians has caused a high toll among the population who live on

Nicaragua's border with Honduras (home base of the contras). The project of the Reagan administration was to use the contras to harass the Nicaraguan regime and force it to ex-

By Colin Robertson

pend precious resources much needed elsewhere. This was aimed to create enormous strains on the poor Nicaraguan economy (which it has) and thus force the Sandinistas to introduce stringent austerity measures (which they have). But the anticipated result of alienating a sizable section of the population from the

regime has so far not happen.

The contras have now changed their military tactics. Not being capable of engaging in open combat with the Sandinista army they have turned to sabotaging economic installations, burning houses, and killing civilians — especially civilian foreigners who are helping the regime. They are also increasing recruitment of mercenaries from South Africa, the US, Philippines, and Taiwan.

This has gone hand in hand with desertions. Eden Pastora, leader of ARDE, has declared publicly he is abandoning the anti-Sandinista struggle, sought asylum in Costa Rica, and opened a small business.

Militarily speaking the objective of the contras has remained the same all along: to capture a Nicaraguan village of any importance in order to proclaim a provisional government. But the contras have been totally unable to

match the Sandinista army. According to Humberto Ortega the contras have suffered 6000 losses of which roughly 4000 were killed. The Sandinista directorate have concluded that the situation has irretrievably turned in Nicaragua's favour.

Dangerous

However it is the contras inability to muster a serious fighting force which makes the situation potentially even more dangerous for the Sandinista regime. The US administration will now have to put in order its foreign policy on Nicaragua and Central America as a whole and secondly engage its own military forces in the region more directly in the military struggle against Nicaragua.

Already the US administration has organised joint US-contras-Honduras military manoeuvres on the border between Honduras

and Nicaragua on several occasions. There is every reason to assume that American imperialism will find new means of trying to destroy the Nicaraguan revolution.

To cope with that eventuality the Sandinista army has been restructured and organisationally strengthened.

Despite the setbacks the contras are under tremendous pressure to launch yet another offensive and show they are capable of something more than killing children, raping women, drug-running to the US, and embezzling funds. They are reported to be preparing for a major military operation inside Nicaraguan territory, and large contra troop movements are reported. The US has just carried out a census of available hospital beds anticipating a large number of casualties. The contras know their continued existence is in the balance. *Nicaragua must survive!*

South African railworkers strike

ACTION AGAINST the new South African law banning any protest against detention without trial have made international headlines. On 10 April it became a crime, punishable by up to 10 years in jail, to even call for the release of thousands of detainees, or 'to perform any act as a symbolic token of solidarity with, or in honour of' a detainee.

The opposition to these new measures was swift and sharp. Even church leaders called on the people to defy the law by wearing 'Release the detainees' T-shirts and by putting up 'Free the Children' stickers. In Cape Town, Archbishop Tutu defied the law at a church service attended by 750 and called for the government to release the detainees. In the face of such widespread defiance, Pretoria was forced to exempt prayers from the list of offences. Other aspects of these new laws are currently being challenged on the streets and in the courts.

However the massive rail and transport workers strike has not been given the same international press coverage. Over 20,000 railworkers have been on strike since mid-March. They are rapidly rallying others in their support, including support from 30,000 telecommunications workers. In the mines, as the first stage of a campaign decided by the February conference of the NUM, the wives and families of Landau colliery workers have moved into the single-sex hostel in defiance of the Group Areas Act.

By Rose Knight

The strike of the South African railway workers in the Transvaal has inflicted massive damage on the economy of the state which includes the major trading centre of Johannesburg. Businesses are heavily dependent on the South African Transport Services (SATS), a state-owned monopoly which controls rail and road transport.

Over 2000 containers have piled up at 23 depots. The passenger service is in chaos after a walk-out by guards and ticket collectors at over 60 stations. More than 50 railway coaches have been sabotaged and a section of the line near Soweto has been bombed in response to a vicious police attack on strikers. Truck drivers who deliver containers have unloaded them at access gates to prevent white scab drivers from leaving or entering.

Railway strikes are strictly illegal. But this has not stopped a united show of strength by over 20,000 SATS workers. Seven hundred workers at the strategic Jan Smuts airport have come out in support. The South African Railway and Harbour Workers Union (SARHWU) which is leading the action has also won the support of its sister union in the public sector, the Postal and Telecommunications Union. POTSA is on strike in Johannesburg and holding meetings to spread the action.

The rail strike, which began on 19 March, is the biggest public sector dispute ever. Its strength reflects the political developments of SARHWU as a national union, and the collapse of the bosses' union in transport, the Black Staff Association.

The strike was triggered off by the sacking of a truck driver. The action has developed into a recognition struggle and a protest against the wages and appalling conditions in the single-sex compounds where many railway workers are forced to live. Anglo American Mines workers in the Transvaal recently moved their wives and families into the hostels at the Landau Colliery in a campaign to end this racist hostel system. The action has been highly successful to date.

Railway workers who live in old mining compounds have also been fighting for better conditions. Disputes amongst railworkers spread quickly after those housed in the Kavern compound in the Transvaal demanded basic rights to light, hot water, and decent food. Twenty thousand workers involved in the dispute which began at the end of 1986, are now reinforcing the strike action underway.

Repression has been severe. Police and dogs were used at the Delmore compound when SARHWU members refused to renew their meal tickets and started a food boycott. SARHWU has said it is time that SATS used the R139 million profits to improve the conditions and wages of the workforce. The union is encouraging the development of compound committees, and like the NUM, is calling for an end to the migrant labour system in total.

The needs of SARHWU have escalated dramatically with the strike. Three hundred members were arrested on their way to a union meeting for attending an 'illegal gathering'. At present, a SATS campaign is underway to recruit scabs from two bantustans which have been targeted for similar exercises by the bosses before.

The National Union of Railwaymen in Britain has links with SARHWU and is responding to appeals for financial aid. Likewise, Rail Against Apartheid, a campaigning group with NEC backing, has already established a special fund for SARHWU. It will be appealing throughout the labour movement for collections.

British withdrawal in one Parliament

THE ADVISORY conference of the Labour Coordinating Committee (LCC) on Ireland, held in January, voted in favour of a paper submitted by Peter Hain, supported by Ken Livingstone and others, calling for British withdrawal from Ireland by a Labour government during the lifetime of one parliament. Socialist Action considers this opens important new opportunities to strengthen campaign forces demanding British withdrawal from Ireland. Socialist Action considers that the crucial task on this is not abstract propaganda but the practical task of getting Britain out of Ireland. The left can unite around demanding the withdrawal of Britain from Ireland during the lifetime of one parliament — and implementation of this demand would represent an historic victory for the Irish struggle for freedom. While not agreeing with many points in Peter Hain's paper Socialist Action agrees with the central demand that Britain should withdraw in the lifetime of one parliament.

Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams, speaking in London on 10 February called on Britain to adopt a 'strategy for decolonisation'. Such a strategy must have as its central tenet the abandonment of the Government of Ireland Act and an irreversible and public declaration by a British government that 'Northern Ireland' is no longer a part of the United Kingdom and that the British military and political establishment would remain there only for as long as it took to arrange their permanent withdrawal. This would need to be accomplished within the shortest practical period and a definite date within the lifetime of the parliament would need to be set for the completion of this withdrawal. JON SILBERMAN argues a minority view opposing the position taken by the Socialist Action editorial board.



An alternative view

vening a 'constitutional conference'; by Britain guaranteeing 'civil and religious liberties'; by Britain ensuring the implementation of the MacBride Principles on employment discrimination through the medium of the British government's Fair Employment Agency; by Britain calling for the 'cessation of all offensive military activity by all parties and organisations.'

Finally, and most revealingly by Britain maintaining its troops in Ireland and by Britain establishing a commission 'to draw up proposals for a new Northern (sic) Ireland police force!'

The real meaning of the LCC's claim to being 'practical' is their giving Britain's continuing military presence a progressive role: to provide for the 'operational use of arms only (sic) for defensive purposes or protection of threatened communities.'

Have Peter Hain and the LCC learnt nothing from the years of British occupation? It was precisely this argument — the need to protect a threatened community — that the Labour government under Harold Wilson used in 1969 when it 'temporarily' sent troops into the Six Counties in the first place.

'Violence and dissension', as Hain and the LCC put it, is not something to be overcome by Britain. It is the consequence of British presence. The 'protection of threatened communities' cannot be guaranteed through the use of British troops — on the contrary, the nationalist community needs its own self-protection against such use.

The proposal for a 'phased withdrawal' during which time Britain — that is British imperialism — would seek to overcome 'dissension and violence' will not bring about withdrawal at all. 'Troops

back to barracks' is a recipe not for complete withdrawal but for continuing British presence.

The future Labour government which the LCC has in mind will use troops to 'protect' 'threatened' communities no differently from the Wilson government nor indeed from a Tory or Alliance government or coalition.

A Labour government heads up an imperialist state and British imperialism jealously defends its domination over Ireland. Past Labour governments have slavishly implemented the edicts of British imperialist interests on Ireland.

To place any hope in a labour government as being an instrument for granting Irish self-determination against British imperialism would be to fly in the face not only of the experience of past Labour governments but also of Kinnock's self-proclaimed views: — his pledge that he would 'die for his country', his defence of 'national security' over Zircon, his defence of the 'special relationship' with US imperialism, and so on.

If a future Labour government took any measures that contradicted this it would be because it was forced to by the Irish struggle itself and through mass action by the labour movement.

Centre

A future Labour government could be more subject to the pressure of labour movement mass action than the Tory government, given even a Kinnock government's relationship to the unions and Labour Party. A Labour government would be additionally under pressure from the NUM leadership and the Campaign group of Labour MPs giving sup-

port to such mass action and struggle and ensuring that the Labour government paid a high political price for its pro-imperialist policies.

Moreover, getting rid of the Tories through mobilising a united working class vote for Labour would be a huge boost for the self-confidence of the labour movement. It would open up greater possibilities of mass action in defence of the interests of the working class and the oppressed, including on Ireland.

By mobilising mass action now we will be in the best position to deepen it under a Labour government tomorrow. Winning a policy commitment from the next Labour government is important — but only in the framework of mobilising mass action today.

Whereas the focus of the Hain/LCC proposals is to concentrate the attention of the Labour movement today on what a future Labour government might do tomorrow, outside of this mass action perspective, the real fight within the labour movement today is to campaign for the Labour leadership to break from their bipartisan defence of British military presence and chart a course to mobilising the labour movement in opposition to it.

It would be a huge advance if the labour leadership were forced to take steps toward promoting mass action on aspects of current Labour Party policy — opposition to non-jury Diplock courts, strip searching, Prevention of Terrorism Act, etc.

By failing to address itself to this question of mass action now, by failing to raise the issue of British withdrawal now, the Hain/LCC proposals do not enshrine the principle of Irish self-determination — the cornerstone of any genuinely anti-imperialist policy on the Irish question.

Inside the unions

SWP vs STA

IN ONE OF the most badly timed set of articles ever produced in the left press, *Socialist Worker* launched a massive sectarian attack against the Inner London Teachers Association (ILTA) on 11 April, the day eight of its members received notices saying that they had either been expelled or suspended by the NUT Executive Appeals Committee. The eight are all members of the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA), an organisation of militants within the NUT.

The paper describes the STA as an organisation 'dominated by the lower levels of union officials' which 'does not reflect organisation by classroom teachers'. The fact that the STA was responsible for the 13 January strike against Baker's Pay and Conditions Bill involving 8000 London teachers, seems to have escaped the author's memory.

The STA has grown in influence over the last 11 years. Its great strength is its ability of welding a diverse body of political opinion in order to fight for agreed aims.

By Bernard Regan

Socialist Worker charges that 'many STA activists have illusions that left Labour councils can deliver real change'. This may or may not be true. It says nothing of the STA's nature which is revealed by the actual resistance led by the STA to attacks by such Labour councils — or any others. This resistance has been effective because the STA has rejected the SWP's sectarian abstention from the political struggle in the labour movement — including in the Labour Party — to mobilise support for the fight to defend education and teachers' interests.

Socialist Worker's judgement that 'the job of revolutionary socialists is to continue to challenge the rightward drift within the STA' is a pristine pure illustration of where the SWP's line leads. Of course this is not 'the job'. The real job is to put forward practical proposals to defeat the Tories and the employers. But rather than adopt such a class struggle policy, the sectarian abstainers of the SWP retreat into anti-bureaucratic oppositionism: very hot on demands to 'expose' union leaders — including STA leaders — but nothing to say when it comes to mapping out, within today's conditions and balance of forces, a strategy to win.

Nothing shows this more clearly than their position in the fight to defeat the ILEA's compulsory redeployment proposals. The Labour-led ILEA has adopted a budget which passes on Tory cuts to its workforce. It is cutting the total number of teachers employed, has labelled 1300 secondary school teachers 'surplus' to requirements, and is attempting to force them from one school to another thereby setting them up for compulsory redundancy.

ILTA decided to promote the broadest mass action by teachers to fight this attack and to build on such mass action to take on an offensive within the Labour Party. ILTA officers met with representatives of the union leadership and won a commitment from them to back our struggle.

Such official backing is a valuable asset in our struggle to win over the labour movement, especially in the manual unions, and parents, and to isolate and defeat the employers. It does not deflect from the basic task of mobilising teachers. On the contrary, it reinforces and facilitates such action.

The 'concession' that in the event of nationally sanctioned action, ILTA leaders would discourage unofficial action was given in order to achieve it. It was a small price to pay to win official executive opposition to compulsory redeployment, and support for defending the jobs of all teachers on whatever form of contract.

But this agreement was the occasion for *Socialist Worker's* sectarian onslaught on ILTA and the STA. They counterpose an infantile glorification of 'unofficial action', though even the SWP realise that a strategy based on unofficial action stands no chance of success.

So at the last meeting of the Inner London STA they came forward with a motion that we should call on the national executive to support an all-out strike in London against the redeployment and then, when they refused, denounce them and start on a 'defensive' campaign. Under the guise of militancy, the SWP's anti-bureaucratic oppositionism actually represents a gross capitulation which they attempt to cover up through their sectarian onslaught against the STA.

The STA will not be deflected from its class struggle approach by the SWP's ultra-left sectarianism. We will continue to mobilise teachers in defence of their interests and those of the working class and the oppressed. We will continue to win official union backing for this and we will continue to struggle inside the broader labour movement.

Despite our differences we appeal to the SWP to remain within the STA. If their sectarian posturing leads them out of the STA, it will be this overall political struggle that will suffer.

THE discussion that is taking place within the LCC on Ireland is welcome. It has resulted in the LCC's sponsorship of the forthcoming trade union conference initiated by the Labour Committee on Ireland (LCI). Seizing further opportunities for united action — such as a mass demonstration for British withdrawal on the twentieth anniversary of the troops being sent in — would be a genuine contribution to the cause of Irish freedom.

But joint action in no way implies political support for the line of the Hain paper, whose proposal of a phased withdrawal programme to be implemented by a future Labour government is not the road to Irish liberation.

British

In this country, parliamentary politicians and the media speak of the 'Irish problem'. But for the Irish people the problem is very clearly a British one. Britain's centuries-long domination of Ireland has been the cause of genocide, mass starvation and emigration, economic subordination and distortion, and cultural destruction.

This entire history shows how far Britain will go to defend its prize possession. Successive rebellions by the Irish people have been met with the fiercest repression.

Britain continues to take this stance because of the stakes involved for imperialist rule. Not only would a successful struggle for unity and independence be a beacon to anti-imperialist fighters worldwide, it would be a frontal challenge to the immediate political and economic power of the British ruling class.

Only a revolutionary mobilisation of the Irish people themselves can overthrow British colonial rule over the 6 Counties and its semi-colonial domination of the 26 Counties.

The British working class has a deep self-interest in the struggle of the Irish people for their right to self-determination. A nation which enslaves another can never itself be free.

Occupation

Without breaking from the British ruling class over Ireland, the working class will not be able to establish the necessary class independence to achieve anything serious on its own behalf.

At the centre of a working class policy toward Ireland is the understanding that there is no 'British solution' to the Irish question, nor can there be. Only by the Irish people winning the right to determine their own future, can they resolve their *British problem*.

That's why we say: British out now, immediate withdrawal of British troops, cancellation of all debts. There is evidence — the Sinn Fein councillors tour, the NUM Labour Party conference vote for British withdrawal — that growing sections of the labour movement are open to such a view, but Hain and the LCC reject it.

'A demand for immediate British withdrawal' they write 'is simply not practical as it would leave a vacuum in which violence and dissension would continue.'

They counterpose a programme for *phased* withdrawal during which time such 'violence and dissension' will be overcome, they argue by *Britain* con-

AEU in conference

HATCHES were battened down at the 1987 AEU National Committee. As far as was possible the right-wing dominated Standing Orders Committee kept 'controversial' items off the agenda in the interests of 'not rocking Labour's pre-electoral boat', giving the conference a lack-lustre atmosphere.

The one exception was the impact of the Caterpillar occupation. A coachload of over 50 of the occupying workers travelled over 400 miles from Uddingston to Eastbourne to lobby delegates. They were greeted by a standing ovation as they entered the Congress Theatre where the National Committee was meeting. A motion backing their fight was supported unanimously, though prior to that unanimity is a tale of threats by the union leadership to vote down a Dundee motion which proposed full support for the occupation.

The AEU executive committee had already expressed its refusal to support an 'illegal' occupation, and executive member Jimmy Airlie had travelled to Uddingston to meet with shop stewards to convey the executive's message.

To avoid a repetition and ensure full national

committee support, the Caterpillar stewards urged support for a united motion expressing full support for the fight to save the plant and the workers' jobs. This was one of the very few motions adopted which defended the rights and interests of the AEU membership.

By Jon Silberman

On other matters, for instance, the committee declared in favour of nuclear power, opposed immediate renationalisation of companies hived off by the Tories, and heard union leaders Bill Jordan and Gavin Laird propose that Labour should enter a coalition government with the SDP-Liberal Alliance and initiate a recruitment drive targeting areas traditionally organised by TASS.

This relates to discussions taking place between the AEU leadership and

the leadership of APEX about a possible merger. Although Jordan, Laird and the executive majority appear to be fully in favour of such a move, a major obstacle to it exists in the form of the AEU's traditional commitment to the election of all officials, whereas APEX has an appointments system — the ostensible reason for the ending of the AEU's amalgamation with TASS.

The special rules revision meeting went a sinister way along the road of removing this obstacle. Using the pretext of the union's financial state, the general secretary proposed a radical set of cutbacks involving the elimination of many full-time officers of the union.

It is the manner of these job cuts that opens the door to the appointment of full-time officials, paving the way for a future amalgamation with APEX. Executive council will decide which jobs are 'surplus' and then redeploy officials accordingly. Districts and divisions will end up with officials who have not been elected by their membership, overturning the elective principle at a stroke.

Although rules revision specified a temporary three-year period for this, unelected officials could be in office for up to eight years under a union rule whereby officials who reach the age of 60 do not need to stand for reelection.

The financial crisis of the union should be the occasion for rebuilding the union's membership, not for attacks upon union democracy. The AEU's membership has suffered serious decline as the leadership has failed to meet the recession in the engineering industry with a fighting policy aimed at safeguarding jobs. The current membership is probably under 700,000.

Conference did nothing to reverse the trend. Instead it endorsed an executive proposal to proceed with discussions with the Engineering Employers Federation on their proposals for eliminating the bulk of the gains in conditions that engineers have won over decades of struggle. 'Maximum plant utilisation', total flexibility of trades, the unfettered right of management to manage will not secure the right to



Jordan

work but will lead to further massive job loss and speed up.

There is deep concern within the union about these talks with the employers, extending far beyond the traditional left-wing. But in a move aimed at concealing such opposition amongst their own supporters the leadership did not propose endorsement of any substantive deal but rather the national committee's go-ahead for a further round of talks following which the committee will be recalled. Conference voted 67 to 55 to sanction the further round of talks.

By a similar margin, the committee rejected a proposal to fix a firm figure in this year's wage

claim; yet again, the union will be proposing a 'substantial increase' and the demand for a 35-hour week will be part of the discussions on flexibility rather than a goal around which the membership will be mobilised for struggle.

To crown the pre-election atmosphere of the national committee, Neil Kinnock was invited to address the meeting and the TV cameras were wheeled in for the occasion. Kinnock's comments echoed the general theme of the conference.

● A quarter of the 124 delegates attended a conference fringe meeting, 'Ireland: the cause of Labour?' They heard West London district president, Mick Martin, explain why the union should end its 'hot potato' attitude to the Irish question. The meeting was a major breakthrough for the union which organises in Ireland. It focussed on employment discrimination in the Six Counties. Jon Silberman from the organising committee of the forthcoming trade union conference on employment discrimination also spoke. Large quantities of conference literature were distributed and many delegates indicated their intention of mobilising for it.

Meeting defends ILTA 8

DEFENCE of the ILTA 8 was the theme of a fringe meeting at NUT conference on Saturday 18 April. The meeting was addressed by Billy Etherington, secretary of the Durham Mechanics of the NUM.

Etherington made a strong appeal in support of the victimised NUT members. 'I'm not just thinking of you as good trade unionists' he said 'but as perhaps the last bastion of resistance to attacks on and collapse of the education system'.

Billy Etherington drew a parallel between the witch-hunt in the NUT and what's happening in the Labour Party and argued that what was at stake was fighting back against Tory attacks.

'I heard the new president of the NUT on the radio waxing forth about the Tories but I thought you're taking action against members of your own union who are fighting against the Tories rather harder than you'.

Billy Etherington said he was appalled by the lack of publicity that had been given to the NUT victimisations. He reminded the audience of the press campaign of vilification directed at Arthur Scargill when the NUM established their disciplinary committee. 'Two years later and no-one has been expelled. But in the NUT people are suspended and expelled for carrying out union policy and the very same press which condemned Scargill is silent.' Etherington called for the entire labour movement to rally to the victimised teachers' defence.

Raj Ray, coordinating secretary of the National Convention of Black Teachers, was another to speak out on behalf of the ILTA 8. The NCBT had issued a special leaflet on the victimisations.

'ILTA council have done nothing wrong' Raj Ray said. 'They have just expressed the deep-felt sentiments of the rank and file members who want to fight the Tories.'

Another black teacher, Rahman Patachany, himself a member of ILTA council and one of the original suspendees, echoed this theme. 'The ILTA officers were implementing the democratic wishes of their members in London. They knew that the time to start fighting was before the Bill became law.'

Marie Price of Notts Women Against Pit Closures was another rally speaker. She warned that if the NUT leadership was allowed to get away with the witch-hunt 'it could be any one of you tomorrow'.

Suspended ILTA officer, Carole Reagan said that the witch-hunt against ILTA reflected the leadership's inability to 'deal with us politically'. ILTA had shown the way to fight against the Baker Bill. 'The main defence of ILTA is to deepen the campaign against Baker' she said.

Expelled officer, Dick North, sported a badge which read 'Fight the cuts — reinstate the 8'. The badge was six years old, he told the rally, and said that despite the victimisations in the past, the union's fighting left-wing was stronger now.

CATERPILLAR

AS THE Caterpillar occupation enters its thirteenth week, public support continues to flood in. A concert held in Motherwell last week raised over £5000 and workplace and street collections continue to raise between £15,000 and £20,000 every week.

By Ann Henderson

Several Scottish bands have recently got together and released a specially cut record with all proceeds going to the Caterpillar occupation. Three local councils — Hamilton, Motherwell and Monklands — have now agreed to exempt Caterpillar workers from rent and rate payments during the dispute. In scenes reminiscent of the miners' strike thousands of people can be seen sporting the red and white Caterpillar support stickers.

Caterpillar management have been under considerable pressure to meet with the workforce.

Last week they met with delegations from the Caterpillar women's support group, and then from the STUC, Scottish churches and local community representatives. Finally, with the agreed intervention of ACAS talks have now begun.

On Thursday 16 April, for the first time in the dispute, management met a delegation from the shop stewards face to face. The company has agreed to consider proposals made by the shop stewards, and talks will recommence on Tuesday 21 April.

Pat Brandon, a senior AEU steward at Caterpillar, was optimistic. 'We really are making progress' he said, pointing out the importance of the meeting with the company, given that management had always insisted that they wouldn't meet until the occupation had ended.

The stewards are calling for management guarantees of no compulsory redundancies amongst the 800 hourly-paid employees. In accepting that Caterpillar are no longer willing to run the Uddingston plant, the workforce are demanding that it remains open for a minimum of twelve months, to allow adequate time for an alternative buyer to be found.

The stewards are confident that such an alternative purchaser will be found. An independent study by the Fraser of Allander Institute, commissioned by the STUC, has put forward a viable future for the plant, manufacturing components.

Our support must continue for the Caterpillar workforce. Pat Brandon explained that public support has actually increased over the last few weeks, since the company won the court injunction and despite the AEU leadership's refusal to support what they describe as an 'illegal occupation'.

Caterpillar management have been left in no doubt as to the views of the Scottish labour movement and the STUC conference, meeting this week in Perth, will certainly confirm this.



Engineers lobby an executive meeting of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions — opposition to talks with the employers over flexibility is widespread.

Justice for miners

ONE HUNDRED people attended the AGM of the National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign on 12 April. Delegates representing NUM areas, Women Against Pit Closures and regional 'justice campaigns' re-elected the campaign's officers and decided on a programme of action for the coming months.

The AGM took place in the wake of coal boss Sir Robert Haslam's announcement that some of the sacked miners would be re-employed. Commenting on this, the campaign's re-elected chair, Billy Etherington said that 'the results of the Haslam review have been disappointing. With 114 re-employed, still leaving more than 300 mine-workers sacked, no two areas have been treated alike.'

In Kent, ten sacked miners have been taken

back on, two have been re-employed but the other eight have been placed on a waiting list until jobs become vacant. So it seems that the review has been both selective and a very carefully orchestrated publicity stunt.'

The campaign's action programme involves lobbying at this summer's trade union conference and activity at miners' galas, including a major effort to build the Notts miners' gala in September and a major summer event.

The focus of this activity will be the Justice for Mineworkers Bill, written by Tony Benn with the endorsement of the NUM to enact the policy decisions of the 1985 TUC and Labour Party conference. In so doing, the campaign hopes to make the issues of the sacked miners an issue in the general election.

Tony Benn was present at the AGM, representing the Campaign Group of Labour MPs. He has written a letter for local Labour Parties urging them to take up campaigning for the sacked miners.

Alongside this letter, the campaign is distributing a statement to be signed by Labour MPs, PPCs and labour movement organisations which will be printed in labour

movement newspapers in the summer.

The AGM registered the growth of the campaign which now has regional committees backed by the NUM in Yorkshire, the north-east, the north-west and South Wales, and other non-coalfield areas. Newly elected NUM vice-president, Sammy Thompson was elected the campaign's honorary vice-president.

● The Midlands NUM is staging a day of action on behalf of the sacked miners on 21 April, the latest in a series of stoppages which have been taking place around the country.

Socialist ACTION

All out on

ON SATURDAY 25 April, CND will be holding a national demonstration demanding a nuclear-free Britain. It comes on the eve of the general election and when Labour's nuclear disarmament policies are under attack from the Tory party and the Alliance.

As was amply shown during Labour Party annual conference last year, the US administration is prepared to intervene directly into the British elections to ensure that support for the war-mongering foreign policy is protected.

CND's demonstration will be the main opportunity before the election to show the strength of support that exists for nuclear disarmament in this country. Every trade union and every Labour Party constituency and branch should be there with their banners flying.

A strong Labour presence will ensure that there is no doubt about the commitment that exists within the party to nuclear disarmament.

The demonstration also comes at a time when the Soviet Union is putting forward practical and supportable proposals for the denuclearisation of Europe.

When Gorbachev offered a plan to get rid of all intermediate range nuclear weapons in Europe, Thatcher and the rest of the European NATO allies used short-range missiles as a pretext for opposing this. Now the Soviet Union is offering a deal on those.

Thatcher, backed to the hilt by the media, is again set to turn this down. The CND demonstration on Saturday 25 April is the opportunity to demand that Thatcher and the rest sign on the dotted line.

● *March for a nuclear free Britain Saturday 25 April. Assemble 11am, Victoria Embankment, London WC2. Rally 2pm Hyde Park.*

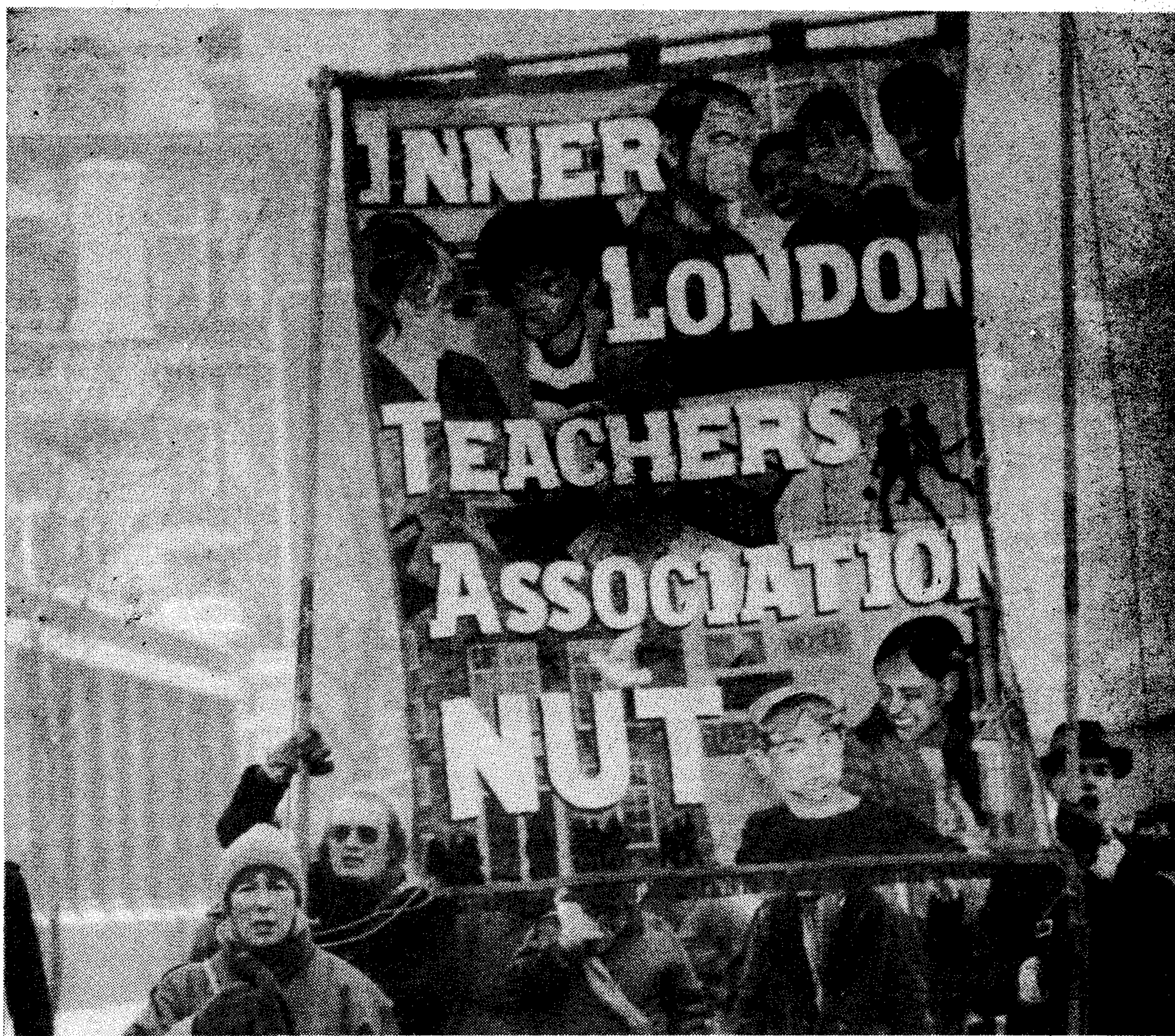
● *Gorbachev's new missiles proposals, p9*



ASSEMBLE: 11am VICTORIA EMBANKMENT



BADGE 30p available from PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.



Radice sells out teachers

LABOUR'S front-bench education spokesperson, Giles Radice, made an appeal at an NUT conference fringe meeting for a moratorium on teachers' strikes. Holding out the prospect of a reforming Labour administration, Radice called on teachers to forget the acrimony of the past and make a 'fresh start'.

The meaning of his appeal was clear. Teachers should give in to the strictures of the Tory government's Pay and Conditions Act, which eliminates teachers' rights to negotiate and gives the education minister dictatorial powers to determine their salaries and conditions.

Two days later, on Monday 20 April, the NUT leadership showed their full support for the Radice line. They opposed a proposal to step up action — involving a national campaign of refusing to cover for absent colleagues, withdrawal from extra-school activities, escalating selective strike action and a one-day national strike and rally.

Instead they issued 'guidelines' to union members on how to behave within the framework of the Tory Act, and urged a strategy of seeking local negotiations with education authorities to improve on Baker.

By Ray Sirotkin

The conference debate over the Tory laws exposed for all delegates why the NUT leadership was hell-bent on disciplining the leadership of the Inner London Teachers Association who have been in the forefront of the fight against the Tory proposals and for decent salaries and conditions.

The proposal for

escalating action was moved by ILTA's general secretary, Mike Loosley, himself a suspender and only able to be present at the conference courtesy of a court injunction. Seconded by executive member from Bradford, Ian Murch, the proposal won the support of 41 per cent of the votes on a card vote.

Vote

The size of the vote showed that attempts by the leadership to witch-hunt the STA out of the conference combined with their disciplinary measures had not had the desired effect.

Attempts by the executive to keep their 'guidelines' secret until after the conference was over were prevented by the head of steam that built up amongst delegates.

The executive was forced to back another STA-sponsored motion calling for unity with the

NAS/UWT, which accordingly was adopted almost unanimously. The delegates won a vote for active opposition to government plans to test youngsters from the age of seven upwards against executive recommendations. And they referred back a section of the executive council report on City Technical Colleges, the Tories' privatisation of education programme, on grounds of the need for action.

Election

When Dennis Skinner spoke at a packed STA fringe meeting, he was tremendously received when, as opposed to Radice, he said he had no intention of telling teachers what to do in the lead-up to the general election. The 400 people present also responded enthusiastically to Skinner's total support for the victimised ILTA officers.

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DEFEND THE ILTA 8!

TWO officers of the Inner London Teachers Association (ILTA) and one ILTA delegate have been expelled from the NUT, and five ILTA officers have been suspended for one year plus a further banning from holding union office for one year, and the other 43 members of the ILTA Council have been forced to sign an undertaking not to break the rules of the union. All this because they took strike action against the Tory government's Pay and Conditions Bill which eliminates teachers' negotiating rights, in line with union policy. JON SILBERMAN reports.

THE sentences were decided by the union's appeals committee — composed entirely of executive committee members — following an appeal by national officers of the union against the decision of the union's disciplinary committee that

the suspended members be reinstated.

In a move which completely overturns all norms of natural justice, the prosecution appealed, changed the nature of the charge in the process and then those

charged were prevented from attending the hearing and presenting their defence!

A special motion, signed by some 400 NUT conference delegates, to suspend standing orders to allow a debate on a motion which would have given conference the right to hear appeals by those suspended and expelled was ruled out of order.

The suspension of standing orders was moved by national disciplinary chair, Harry Levitt, who additionally distributed a statement to delegates protesting the procedure whereby justice was not 'seen to be

done'. Levitt, a long-standing member of the union reflected the disgust of a growing number of delegates at the overturning of such an issue of basic principle. Two to three hundred NUT members lobbied conference to show their opposition.

One delegate who spoke in the debate on unity between the NUT and NAS/UWT in favour of one TUC-affiliated union for teachers was especially warmly received when he urged unity within the NUT itself through an end to suspensions and expulsions. Meeting defends ILTA 8, page 11