

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST



Wapping: a year of struggle

Demonstrate. Saturday January 24. Assemble 4.00 p.m. Arundel Street, Temple Tube. March via Fleet Street to Wapping.

See centre pages

Inner-city decay

Blame the Tories!



Photomontage Cath Tate

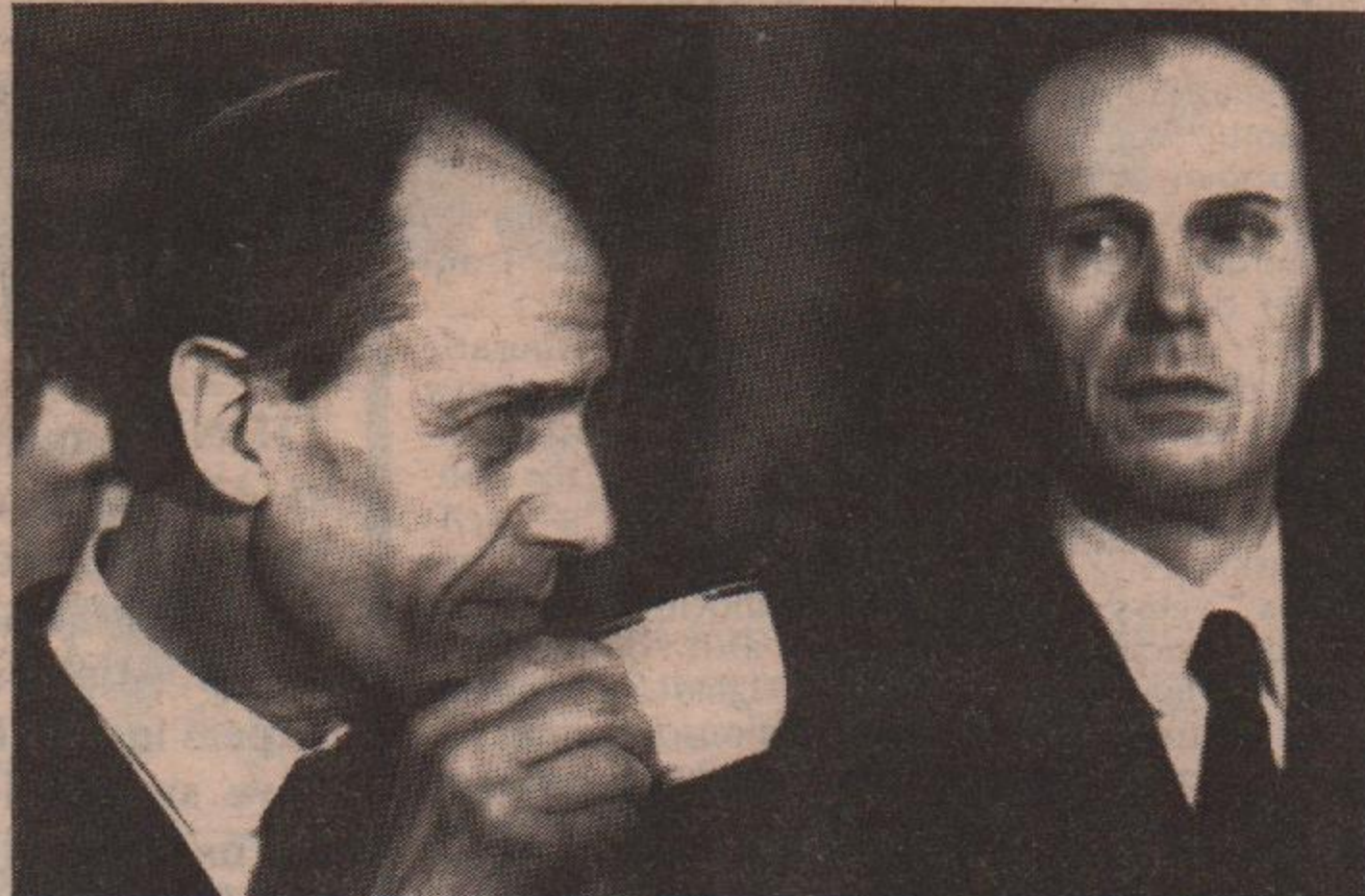
"Loony Left push London into anarchy", screamed the Tory press last weekend, commenting on the draft of the official Audit Commission's report attacking eight Labour councils in inner London.

There will be similar headlines next week, when the report is published.

The Tories are already using scurrilous attacks on these councils as pre-election propaganda. They hope to mobilise all of people's worst prejudices on their side.

These left-wing Labour councils have tried, within their limits, to make progress for black, women's, and gay and lesbian rights. The Tories want to generate a backlash against them, whipping up racism and old bigotries.

Already the Tories have



Carlos Guerra (Reflex)

The Mad Hatter's Tea Party focused attacks on Haringey and Lambeth councils — just because they have black leaders.

The Tories have deliberately squeezed and penalised the worse-off working class areas where there are left-wing

Labour councils.

Now they are trying to blame the problems of poverty on its victims and on those who try to combat it or soften its effects.

The Audit Commission report says: "There are very disturbing parallels between

the situation in parts of London and that in parts of New York and Chicago. The South Bronx and the South Side of Chicago represent a future to be avoided at almost all costs".

The Tory press has used this to say that Labour councils are turning London into a replica of New York's slums. But who and what made New York's slums?

•Housing Provision based on the capitalist free market.

The only role for public provision is in desert-like 'sink estates' for the poorest, which inevitably become high-crime areas.

Labour councils have tried to insist that publicly-provided housing is for all, not just for an underclass.

Now turn to page 3

Telecom engineers locked out

By John Bloxam

British Telecom is locking out its workers in response to the overtime ban begun on January 12 to back up a 10% pay claim.

Michael Bett, BT managing director for inland communications, explained why, last Monday (18th).

"We want to bring the dispute to a conclusion sooner rather than later."

BT engineers taking action are to be locked out until they sign a statement that they will work 'normally' in the future. 'Normally' means no industrial action and compulsory

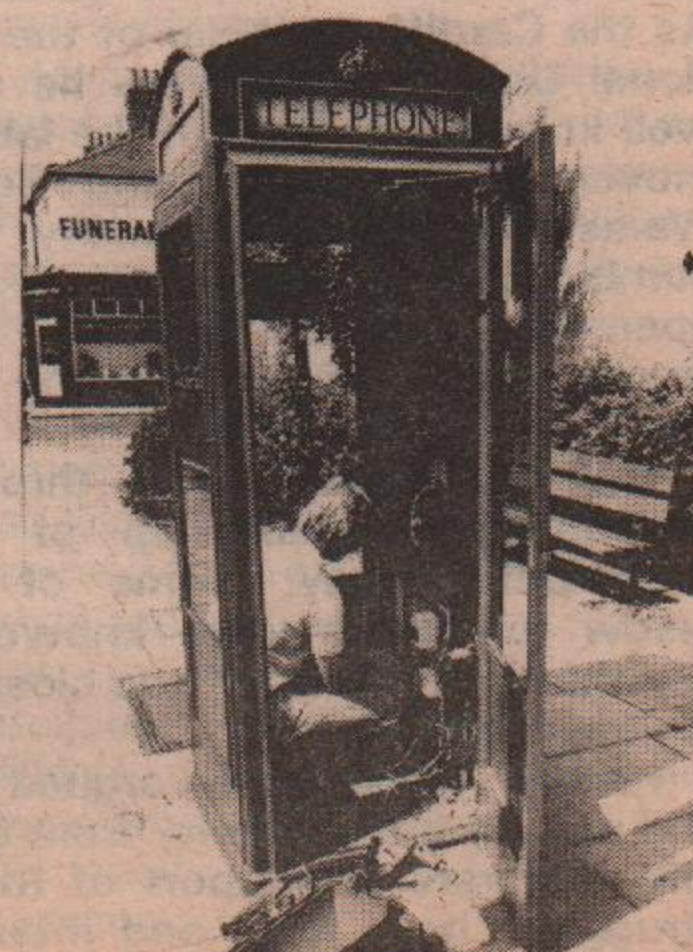
overtime.

Last Friday BT suspended between 400 and 700 NCU members for refusing to work overtime at the weekend. On Monday 40,000 workers struck in solidarity, and a further 20,000 were due to do the same on Tuesday.

The national NCU recommends local strikes for up to 24 hours if suspensions take place, some areas have come out for 24 hours. Others — for example, Sheffield — are on indefinite strike until those suspended are reinstated.

The NCU leadership has told its members to refuse to sign the pledges to work 'normally', and keep to ex-

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Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

Telecom engineers lock out

From page 1

isting working hours. Management responded to the 10% pay claim with a 5% offer, plus two lump sum bonus payments, all tied to radical changes in working conditions — working hours, manning levels and promotion and employment prospects. The NCU leadership responded by holding a 'consultative ballot', in which they said they "could not recommend" acceptance of the offer. It was rejected by a majority of 3 to 1. They then held another ballot for industrial action, which was carried 4 to 1. The union withdrew 'goodwill' on 5 January and started the overtime ban on 12 January.

While a reluctant union leadership was going through these motions, it was also accepting BT bosses' dictat that negotiations then being held jointly with the NCU engineers, NCU clerical and the STE (managers' union) be split up and each section taken separately. So while they are locking out the NCU engineers, the bosses are still talking to the clerical section, although they also have an overtime ban! Divide and rule.

Some clerical members appear to be striking in solidarity with the suspended engineers.

The ballots last year showed what this week's action confirmed — the strength of feeling among the NCU members. Richard Moore, chair of the Met South NCU branch (covering a large area of South London) explained to Socialist Organiser: "Although the EC has been dragging its feet all along, the members' morale is good. The general attitude is this is do or die. BT are going for gold. If we don't fight now and win, we will be trodden all over. Although they dropped the proposal, we all saw what management were aiming at when they started talking about compulsory Saturday working without overtime. We know they want total flexibility.

"All BT's moves have made the membership more angry and more determined.

"They feel more strongly about the strings than the 10% money, and they also realise that it will come to all-out action. What will certainly



help us is the weather, which is doing a lot of the job for us."

In 1985, the NCU membership rejected a call for action from the then Broad Left led NCU executive, despite a real campaign from the leadership. In that ballot Scotland voted for action. Ricky Houston, Edinburgh External NCU branch, explained why the situation was reversed nationally after one year, and despite the victory of the right wing in the EC and Secretary elections. "There is a mood of militancy that I have not seen before, and it was certainly not there in the fight over deregulation. Over the last year workers have seen BT make £2 billion profit, and the chairman Jefferson get a £60,000 wage increase, and in return they have got virtually nothing except harder work. New workers have not been taken on for many years. And now there is a 5% wage offer dependent on a radical restructuring of working conditions, which will affect many people. On the horizon they also see a real threat to jobs when System X is finally introduced.

"The union has no option now but to go for an all-out strike. Many peo-

ple are talking about it. From a weather point of view, it could not have come at a better time. It is impossible to predict what the immediate effect will be, but you should remember that the telephone system is a mixed network at present still going through a modernisation period."

At its meeting on Tuesday the NCU executive called a 24-hour all-London strike for Wednesday, 21 January to be followed by Scotland and Northern Ireland on Thursday. If management then lock those workers out, there will effectively be a national stoppage by the weekend. Ricky Houston described the mood in Scotland: "When the members heard that 60,000 had been locked out they were very angry. We will wait until Thursday, but many want to come out straight away. BT look like they are out to smash the union."

With only £1 million in its strike fund, the NCU has said that it will not be paying strike pay. That makes the formation of strike support committees, along the lines of the miners' support committees, very urgent. Victory to the NCU!

WORLD Brief

Kabul ploy rejected

MOSLEM guerrillas in Afghanistan have rejected the New Year offer of a cease-fire from the regime and its Russian backers with predictable contempt. The 'cease-fire' lasted only a few hours before Mujahedin guerrillas renewed hostilities. They have sworn to continue their 'Holy War' until every Russian soldier has gone.

Russia invaded six years ago, at the end of December 1979, to support a crumbling pro-Moscow regime whose radical reforms 'from above' had

alienated the majority of the population.

Since then, the Russian army has acted like any colonial occupation force, napalming villages and terrorising the population in an unsuccessful attempt to beat down resistance. Partly thanks to foreign (especially US) support, but largely due to their own determination, the Afghan rebels have proved extremely resilient.

A cease-fire is not enough, as the rebels' response shows. The only democratic answer is for a complete Russian withdrawal allowing the

Afghan peoples the right to self-determination. The reactionary ideas they undoubtedly have will not be napalmed out of them; and so long as socialism is identified as foreign military occupation, they will never be allies of a socialist working class.

The international labour movement must make heard its protests at Russian barbarism in Afghanistan. And the Russian working class should remember Karl Marx's injunction: "The nation that oppresses another can never itself be free."

An Iranian offensive

The six year war between Iran and Iraq reached a new level — or a new depth — this week, as Iran seemed on the verge of capturing the Iraqi port of Basra.

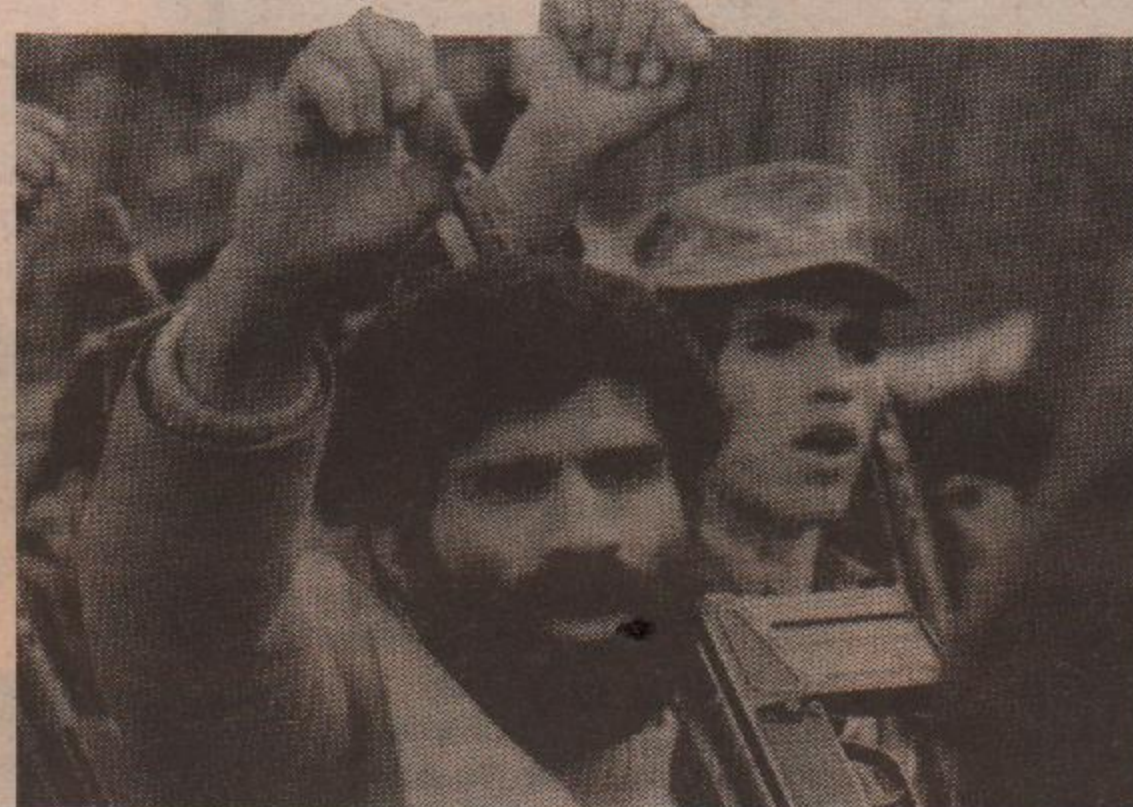
Iraq retaliated by bombing Iranian cities, including the capital, Tehran. According to Iran, 200 civilians were killed. It is not known how many Iraqis have been killed in and around Basra.

The war was launched by Iraq in September 1980, under the pretext of a dispute over sovereignty of a stretch of water — the Shatt al Arab waterway that connects the two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, to the Gulf.

The Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein believed that the new regime of Ayatollah Khomeini, only in power for 18 months, would be unable to resist: Iraq would eliminate its Islamic-revolutionary enemy.

Saddam's plan misfired badly. Incredibly, while his regime has tottered on the brink many times over the years since, with the help of staggering amounts of Saudi cash, it has avoided toppling over.

Yet neither side has been able to come out on top. Big international flash-points — like the sinking of various foreign ships in the Gulf — have punctuated a simmering con-



flict that must be counted as among history's most savage.

Both regimes are reactionary. Both are profoundly undemocratic, based upon the systematic torture, murder and terrorisation of their people. Both deny elementary democratic rights to national minorities — in particular to the huge Kurdish minority that spans Iran, Iraq and Turkey.

After six years this double-sided reaction is very clear — though many on the left initially supported Iran (so recently emerging from the revolution that overthrew the Shah — a revolution that went tragically mad); some on the left still do support Iran (for example the pro-Castro wing of 'Socialist Action').

It is tempting to think that any end to this brutal and horrifying war is better than its continuation — whichever side wins. In fact, whichever side wins it will mean new horrors for the Iranian and Iraqi peoples.

The only democratic solution is the overthrow of both regimes and reconciliation between the conflicting peoples — self-determination for all national minorities, full trade union and democratic rights, rights for women, and religious freedom.

An Iranian victory will strengthen Muslim fundamentalism throughout the region and all over the Muslim world. Its malign effects will be felt in Lebanon and in countries like Egypt and even Turkey.

Tommy Hanley

A friend and comrade, Tommy Hanley, died on Friday 16 January. As the Cardiff organiser of the National Union of Seafarers he was well known and liked in the labour movement in Cardiff and South Wales. He had a personality that combined a sense of humour, an openness and an honesty rare among trade union full-time officers.

That openness shone through despite his membership of the Communist Party. Some of his fellow full-timers were known to say that Tommy was "too close to his members".

Tommy consistently argued for and usually got solidarity from Cardiff seafarers in support of many struggles, both local and interna-

tional. Those of us who took part in the NHS pay dispute in 1982 will always remember the practical and political support we got from the NUS.

More recently Tommy was in the forefront of the struggle against the effects of a collapsing merchant fleet and the gradual close-down of Cardiff as a port. Tragically, the prospect of a dying industry proved to be too much and he took his own life.

His death came as a shocking blow and a severe setback to the struggle against the shipowners. He will be sadly missed, but we can only say to the Cardiff seafarers, 'Don't Mourn, Organise'.

Cardiff Socialist Organiser

Things are dull in Albert Sq.

THINGS must be a bit dull over at Albert Square just at the moment. There's been hardly anything about Dirty Den, Angie, Michele and the rest in the papers lately. Instead the tabloids have switched their attention to the nation's other favourite soap: the Windsors.

There was the torment of poor Edward, who proved to be too sensitive for a life in the Marines but finally had the courage to stand up to his domineering dad and walk out. Now there is Little Wills — what a rascal — going to school for the first time, and the mystery of nanny Barbara.

Fiday's Mirror led on the Nanny story and posed some important questions: 'If miss Barnes is leaving happily, WHY did discussions go on for ten days? And WHY, most unusually was her resignation announced before a successor was found?'

Mirror

According to the Mirror, 'more than 30 people have left the service of Charles and Diana since their marriage 5 years ago. Usually Diana has been blamed — it is claimed she is difficult to get on with. But this time it seems certain that Prince Charles was behind this latest departure'.

The next day's Express did not agree: 'Prince William's Nanny quit because the Queen was unhappy with her, a royal insider claimed last night.' Well, which is it? I for one

PRESS GANG

By Jim Denham

cannot rest until the truth is established.

No such mystery about Little Wills' new school, especially if you read Today. Stephen Lynas (Royal Correspondent) had the real inside gen: 'William shared a desk with eight other pupils. His plain coat hangs on a peg with the name tag 'Prince William' sown into the collar.

The classroom is decorated with the children's paintings. Assorted posters advise how to tie shoelaces and how to recognise different shapes. And some proclaim warnings about lice and threadworm.'

Today of course had the advantage of four colour photos which really gives it the edge when it comes to coverage of glamorous Diana and her lovely clothes. On Friday they had a front page picture of the Polo motif on the back of her jacket.

But Di isn't just a clothes horse.

She is concerned about ordinary people. Today describes a moving encounter between the Princess and a group of old folk at an Islington day centre: 'Princess Diana looked surprised and sympathetic when the 10 pensioners told her how they had to struggle to keep out the chill wind, which has already claimed more than 40 lives'.

Di may have been surprised at first, but she quickly demonstrated and impressive grasp of the situation: 'A lot of people are having problems with hot water and central heating... just lying in bed with lots of clothes on does not seem to be enough.' I reckon that comment shows an understanding of the problem at least as profound as anything yet said by Social Services Secretary Norman Fowler, of his sidekick John Major.

Scandal

New scandals may break out in the Stock Exchange, trucks carrying nuclear weapons may crash in country lanes, Chief Constables may rant like Old Testament prophets, and the Iraq/Iran war may reach a bloody new crescendo: All around us there is gloom and despondency. But Charles, Di, Fergie, Andy, Little Wills and the rest can be relied upon to brighten up our day and help us to forget our little troubles. And you can be sure that the tabloids will give their adventures top billing — at least until something more important happens in the world. Like Michele leaving Lofty and going off with Den for instance.

Inner city decay: blame the Tories

From page 1

EDITORIAL

Through council house sales and by cutting public money for housing by over 50%, the Tories are forcing Britain's cities towards the American pattern of housing.

•Permanent high unemployment, and the conversion of a part of the population into paupers who have no hope, no future, no place in society.

In the US, welfare payments stop after two years unemployment, and then you're on your own.

The Tories have pushed unemployment up over 3 million — over 4 million, if the figures weren't fiddled

— and are chopping welfare payments.

•Widespread racism which means that young blacks are often utterly alienated from society.

The Tories have stepped up deportations, tightened immigration curbs, and encouraged racism.

New York and Chicago show more or less unrestrained capitalist market economics at work. And the Tories,

the high-priests of that capitalist market economics, blame the beginnings of the same destruction in Britain on their Labour opponents!

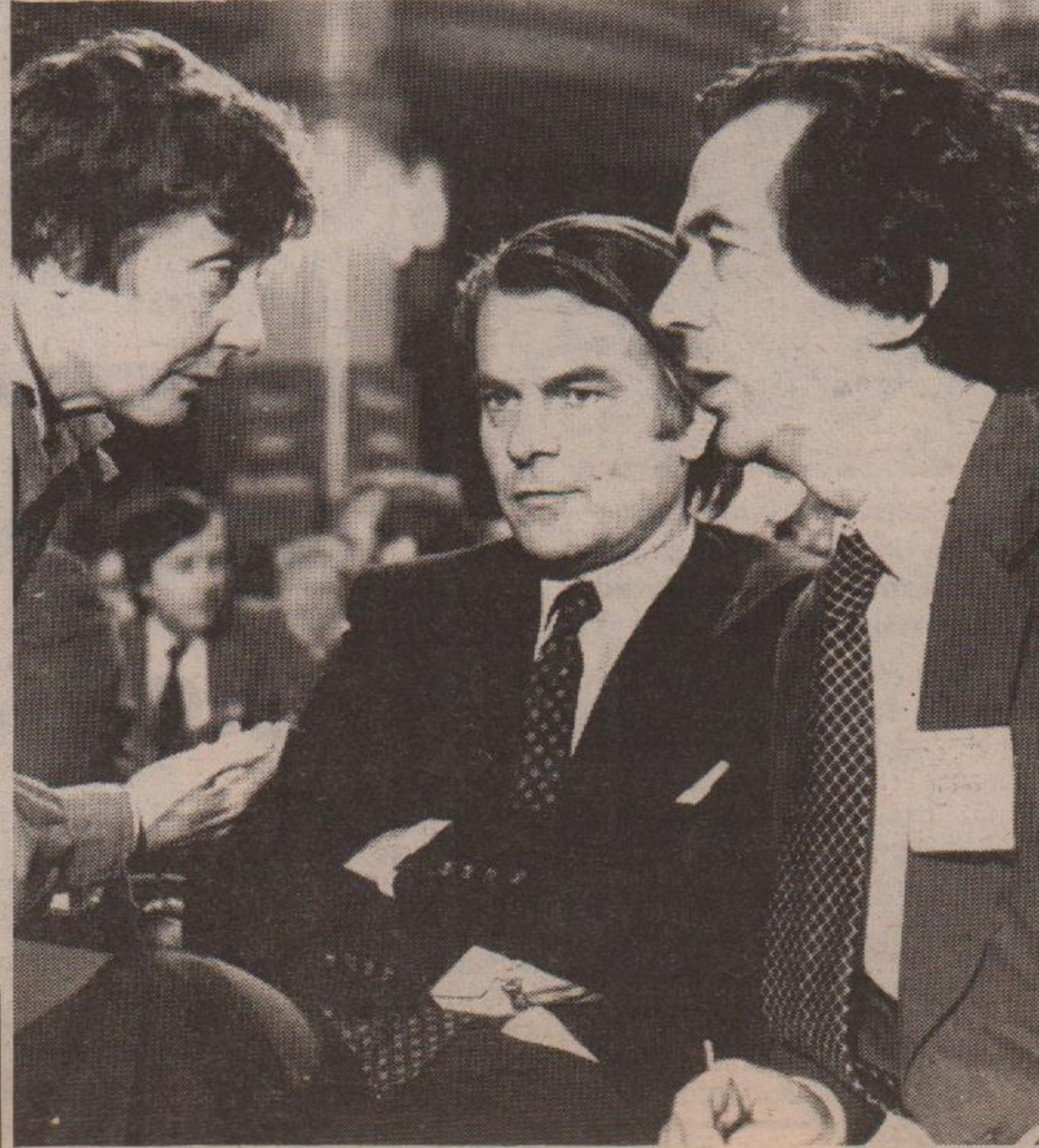
If those councils are to be criticised, it is for not fighting hard enough against the Tory blast. But the bureaucrats of the Audit Commission look at it differently.

Their answer is that the councils should cut jobs by freezing new

recruitment of staff, raise rents by 20%, and push harder on collection of rent and rate arrears. Yet again, they should try to solve the problems of the inner cities by penalising the victims — the working class!

Shamefully, top Labour leaders are so blinded by their hostility to the left wing that they are half pleased by the Audit Commission report. According to the Independent, they "believe (it) could help them in their battle to make hard-left councils act, as they see it, more responsibly."

But the Tories' assault on the 'loony left' is only the leading edge of an assault on the whole labour movement. Labour must start fighting back.



A coalition would be a disaster

Beware intellectuals bearing statistics which, they say, make an irrefutable case for 'tactical voting'!

Writer Jeremy Seabrook has teamed up with various other ideologists of the Labour Right to organise a campaign to 'Get Thatcher Out' by persuading Labour voters to vote SDP or Liberal. Supported by Labour MP Frank Field (who rushed into print about it in the Catholic Herald), the scheme is to organise voting in marginal seats to ensure Tory defeat, whether that means voting Labour or Alliance.

The rationale for the plan is that Labour's performance in the opinion polls is bad going on worse. A recent Weekend World poll gave the Tories a 100-seat majority in the next election.

The New Statesman added its weight to the campaign, commenting that the 'tactical voting' option "is not a principled position, but a strategic one; one which would rather

see a victory through compromise than a glorious defeat."

The campaign is aimed at voters, rather than parties, so it is not a proposal for a formal Labour-Alliance pact. But it is not far short of one. It implies, without much imagination, a probable coalition government.

Rebuked

Such a thing has been all but advocated many times by the influential journal Marxism Today, (known to be avidly read by Neil Kinnock), and was advocated by former Labour Party chair Neville Hough — although he was sharply rebuked.

But a coalition government, or even an anti-Tory pact, would be a disaster for Labour and a disaster for the working class.

The New Statesman gives a litany of the tasks of a post-Thatcher government: "to tackle unemployment; to improve housing; to invest in better education...to narrow the divide between wealthy and poor..."

Would a coalition government even 'tackle', 'improve' or 'narrow' these things? With absolute certainty: no. A government of or including David Owen or David Steel would be as brutally anti-working class as Thatcher's is. Indeed, on some issues, like trade union laws, the SDP have been to the right of Thatcher.

Of course, there is no guarantee that a Labour government would act in workers' interests, either — far from it. But there is a difference. Labour is the party of the labour movement, and there are channels that workers can use to put pressure



on the Parliamentary Labour Party, hold them to account — or even get rid of the Party Leader.

Capitalist

The Liberals and the SDP are openly capitalist parties who have no similar relationship to the trade union movement.

A Labour government, in other

words, would be easier to influence — or easier to fight.

A Labour government could give the confidence to the working class rank and file that is necessary for a real fight over jobs, housing, education, democratic and trade union rights, women's rights and so on. The campaign for a Labour government, and discussion over what policies are needed to defend workers' interests — can provide a focus here and now for a fightback.

Hard or soft deals with the Alliance can only prepare the ground for worse demoralisation in the future.

If Neil Kinnock's ratings in the polls are falling, he should take a second look at his approach. If the SDP Mark II isn't working, it should be junked. It should be junked, anyway! The Labour leaders should be prepared to take sides with the workers and others who fight the capitalist system, and do what they can to mobilise support. They should support the print workers, the telecom workers, and anyone else in struggle, openly and unambiguously, and call for action in their support.

An active, campaigning Labour Party might well do better in the polls — and in the election.

"Victory" through the compromise Jeremy Seabrook, the New Statesman and others want would not be victory at all. For victory, we need a labour movement that fights, that is aware of its own interests, that keeps its own independent objectives clear. Unless we can rebuild such a labour movement, victory will always elude us.

RACE AND CLASS

ATTACKS ON THE INCREASE

Last week the Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Kenneth Newman claimed a police success in cutting down racist attacks. Here Payman Rezai tells a different story.

On Sunday 11 January at about 1 am a gas cannister was thrown at a house in Beaconsfield Road, in the London Borough of Newham.

There was a party going on in the house and most of the people at it were black. Two white men were seen to disappear into a house at Exening Road, where another party was on.

When the police were informed they assured that they would be keeping an eye out for further attacks.

At 3 am a second gas cannister was thrown. Two black men went to the house in Exening Road to ask the white youths to stop their attacks so that no one would get hurt.

One of the two youths was attacked with a broken milk bottle and this resulted in a slashed eye.

He was taken to Moorfields Eye Hospital who were very pessimistic about the chances of saving his vision in the damaged eye.

Three white youths were charged with being drunk and disorderly: but no-one was arrested in connection with the attack.

Also in Newham, a white woman who has a black husband had a lighted newspaper put through the letter box. Graffiti outside her door accused her of being a 'nigger lover'.

Recent Metropolitan Police figures show that reported racist attacks last year rose to 208 in Newham. In Tower Hamlets the figure was 189 (compared to 277 in 1985).

These figures can be only a guideline to the real level of attacks, reported and unreported.

After all the experience of many who have reported racist attacks has been one of total indifference at worst, and in some cases criminal charges brought against themselves by the police.

Last week Inspector Douglas Lovelock was acquitted by an Old Bailey jury of 'unlawfully and maliciously' wounding Mrs Cherry Groce in Brixton in September 1985. Cherry Groce's shooting sparked off the Brixton riots.

Throughout the trial there has been considerable support and sympathy for Inspector Lovelock — who claimed in court that he fired his gun by reflex because he was very tense.

The pretext for the police raid into Mrs Groce's house was to look for her son Michael Groce, wanted for questioning in connection with an armed robbery.

As a result of the shooting, Mrs Groce, who is 39 years old, has been paralysed from the waist downwards. She will now pursue a civil action for damages for negligence against the Metropolitan Police.

Of course the jury had to clear Lovelock who was presented as a responsible and sincere officer. He had taken part in three armed raids in two days before the shooting and was exhausted and tense.

It is likely that the police disciplinary proceedings against nine officers who supplied information about Michael Groce, which led to the raid, will be offered as scapegoats.

A decision on action is to be made soon.

Socialist Organiser
PO Box 823, London SE15
4NA.
01-639 7965
Latest date for reports: first
post Monday or by phone,
Monday evening.
Editor: John O'Mahony.
Typesetting: Upstream Ltd
(TU).

Published by Socialist
Organiser, PO Box 823,
London SE15 4NA.
Printed by East End Offset
(TU), London E2.
Registered as a newspaper at
the Post Office.
Signed articles do not
necessarily reflect the views of
Socialist Organiser.

GRAFFITI

FREEDOM

Drug tests in the USA

Drug tests at work have become widespread in Reagan's USA. There has also been heavy police activity in slum areas, which is supposed to round up drug-pushers.

There is a real problem. Over 20 million Americans are said to have used cocaine, which is highly addictive. 613 people died from cocaine use in 1985. Cocaine is now the biggest industry in Bolivia, and important in Peru and Colombia.

But Reagan's campaign has more to do with playing politics than the real problems. Illegal use, though frightening, has been declining for some years. 613 cocaine deaths is few compared with the 100,000 due to alcohol and the 350,000 due to tobacco.

The drug tests used on US workplaces have a 20% rate of 'false positives' — results which falsely show drug use. They mean a lot of harassment for workers, and not much reduction in drug use.

The Netherlands organises free public supp-



A Broadwater Farm residents picket in the Old Bailey in protest at police treatment of defendants is arrested. Photo: Andrew Wiard (Report).

ly of drugs to addicts, combined with help for them to beat their addiction. This undercuts the power of criminal drug-dealers and reduces some of the health risks of drug addiction.

But in the US public funds for drug treatment have been cut.

The root of the problem is social. As a Miami doc-

tor puts it: "Cocaine is the drug of choice by people who are into the American dream — 'I love my job, I am successful' — except that they don't and they're not".

Only socialist measures to end unemployment and poverty will really beat the drug menace. (Information from the US magazine 'Dollars and Sense').

LENIN

Lenin's deathbed Testament, in which he denounced Stalin and called for his removal as general secretary, has been published for the first time in a USSR newspaper.

The Testament was suppressed after Lenin's death in 1924, and for many decades published only by Trotskyists. After Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, it was published in the 1961 edition of Lenin's Collected Works. But this is the first time it has gone to the wider readership of a newspaper.

PAY

Between April 1979 and April 1986, the top 10% had a 23% pay rise in real terms, whereas the real wages of the bottom 10% rose only by 3%.

These figures are for single men, but the picture of increasing inequality is true also for women and married people. The higher-paid have had bigger pre-tax rises, and their tax has been cut while the burden on the lower paid has remained roughly the same.

unemployment on the method of counting used before November 1982.

On that basis, November 1986 unemployment was 3.7 million. On the Tories' new now-you-don't-see-them basis, it was 3.2 million.

THE PRESS

What shop stewards read

35 per cent of shop stewards read the Guardian, and 29% read the Observer. In the population generally, only 2% are Guardian readers and 3% Observer readers.

Other papers favoured by shop stewards are the Morning Star (15% read it) and the Mirror (29%). Four per cent read the Financial Times, and that's four times as high a readership rate among shop stewards as among people generally.

THE GUARDIAN

Printed in London, Manchester and Portsmouth

of Appeal likely to be sent

The most un-read papers among shop stewards are the Times (no-one surveyed read it) and the News of the World (3.3% of stewards read it — as against 23% of the general population).

Shop stewards are very much less likely than other people not to read a paper at all, and one in five read more than one daily paper. (Information: Labour Research, January).

What is femocracy?

I was perplexed by the discussion article written by Jane Ashworth and Michele Carlisle under the slogans of Feminism Yes! Femocracy No! in SO 295. In vain I searched for the positive attitude towards feminism implied in the slogan. However, I was lucky in being able to read Cathy Nugent's 'Women's Eye' on page 9.

Students

But how many of the serried ranks of students at the NUS conference bought and read Socialist Organiser? From what I hear most of them read only Jane's and Michele's diatribe against Femocracy, in a SSIN leaflet given out at the conference. Jane and Michele argue that Femocracy is presently confined only to a "few Higher Education colleges. But it might spread!"

I think you should state which ones, because given your description, I haven't yet identified any at Leeds University. Plenty of careerists, yes — men and women. The student movement allows young people the opportunity to learn in a very short time, all the tricks of a bureaucrat's trade, before going on to practice them in other walks of life. But why give just so-called "femocrats" the running jump?

Who are they selling out? Do they have a programme?

That old hoary metaphysical chestnut "natural justice" was thrown into the brew. It is supposed to be under attack by the Femocrats. But I thought Marxists try to give ideas like justice at least some class content within the context of exploitation.

Justice

But "natural justice" is concerned only with procedures.

The international ruling class can, under the mantle of their justice and their procedures, justify their "murdering, decadent crushing power" (i.e. nuclear weapons, death squads etc). Under so-called Soviet justice, bureaucrats justify Gulags, slanders and frame-ups in defence of their power. But surely we are not just concerned with power but also with exploitation, whether it is class exploitation, or the exploitation of women by men (i.e. sexism).

International

Sexism is just as international as capitalism. In fact it has a wider purchase if you include non-capitalist countries. However, by saying that femocracy is the horrible twin of sexism then you have to show how it is just as exploitative. It certainly isn't of the same magnitude (i.e. a few Higher Education colleges).

Yours fraternally,
JOHN DOUGLAS
Leeds

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

We support the Palestinians in the name of democracy

Our stand against anti-semitism is both important and commendable. However, this has nothing to do with support for present-day Israel.

Well-documented histories of the racism of the Israeli state since its proclamation in May 1948; of the preceding 30 years of Zionist-encouraged and organised immigration to Palestine; and of the propaganda used by Zionists which often (purposely) served the interests of anti-semites exist.

It is now undoubtedly true that due in large part to the systematic and brutal terrorisation of the Palestinians, that Israel is held in contempt and hatred by not only Palestinians but all Arab peoples.

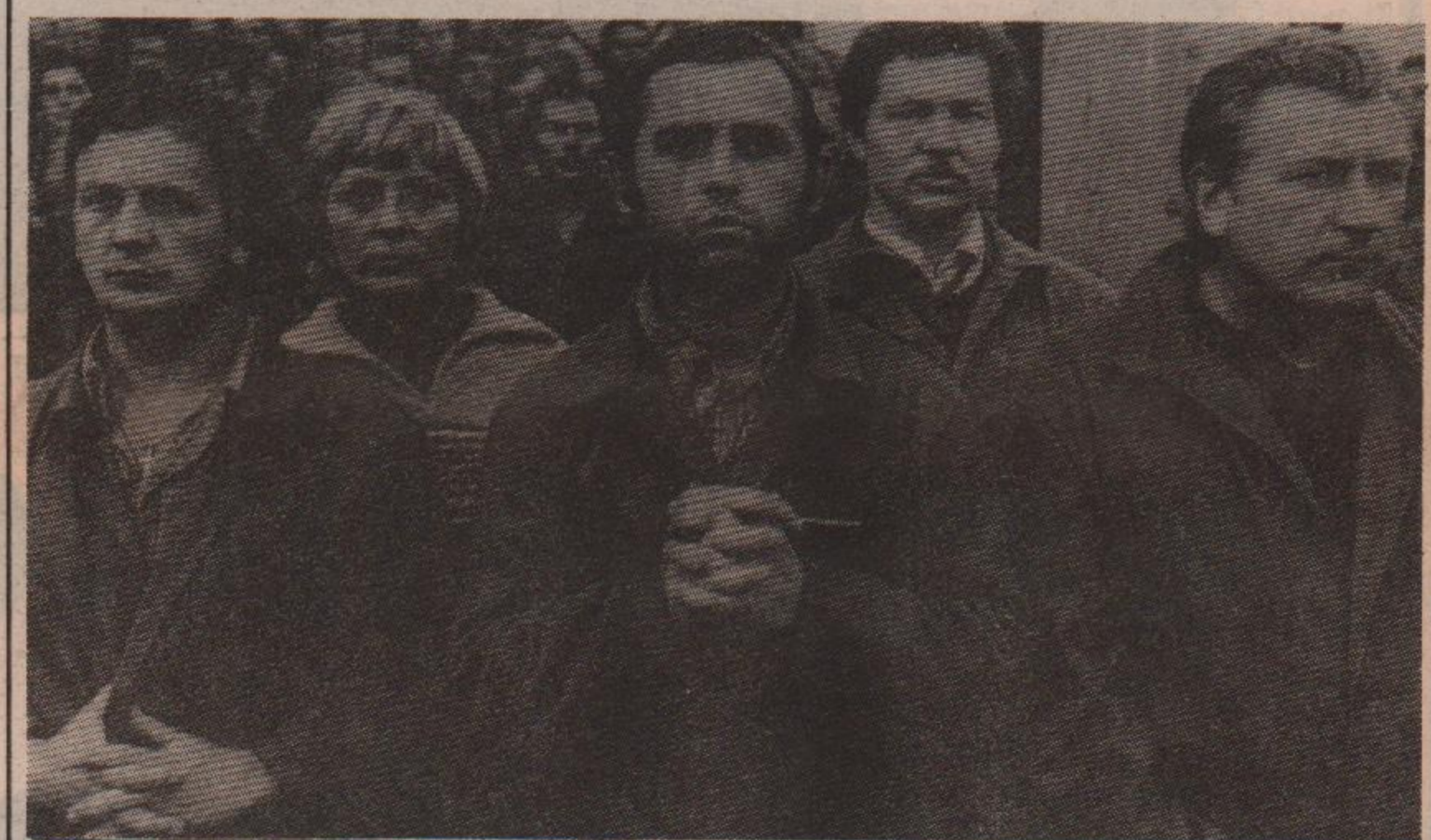
Condemnation

This brings me to the question: the above being the case, what should Socialist Organiser's position be?

I believe the basis of it should be: condemnation of the state of Israel; support for the Palestinian struggle; neighbouring Arab governments are no real friends of the Palestinians or indeed of their own working classes (they are their class enemies); a call — addressed to the only agency that could possibly carry it out, (short of there being socialism in a good part of the world), the Jewish working class — that Israel should renounce all expansionist claims and move back to, at the very least, its pre-1967 boundaries; and to begin to make extensive reparations, both in terms of financial aid and technical know-how (if so desired by the Palestinians).

Unlike the supporters of the 'democratic secular state' I agree that if there is a desire by Jews for some territorial expression of nationhood (and likewise the Palestinians), and accepting the reality that history has placed before us, some modification of pre-1967 Israel should be established through negotiations between the Jewish working class and the Palestinians. As Trotsky said in October 1934, in a reply to a letter from a group of Jewish Left Oppositionists working inside the Soviet Union:

"...for the Jews, as for any nation, the very best circumstances for cultural development (should be created). This means, inter alia: to provide for those Jews who desire to have their own schools, their own press, their own theatre, etc., a separate territory for self-administration and development...In the sphere of the national question there must be no restraint; on the contrary there must be an all-sided



Solidarnosc members at a Mass

EASTERN EUROPE

Solidarnosc was a counter-revolutionary force

Your editorial (SO 298, 15 January 1987) goes too far in its condemnation of the socialist countries.

Certainly we should support the right of the working class there to have better trade unions. But that is a matter of reforming the existing socialist system — not of making a revolution — in fact an anti-socialist counter-revolution — against it.

It can't, if we are socialists, mean uncritical support for a group like Solidarnosc. Whatever honest Polish workers might have wanted it to be, Solidarnosc was and is a counter-revolutionary force, a tool of the Catholic Church, which is passionately committed to the restoration of capitalism in Poland.

Lech Walesa is not the Polish Arthur Scargill — he is a Polish Frank Chapple or Eric Hammond!

So poor old Trotsky compared the Soviet system to fascism: well, he was wrong, wasn't he? It's the only socialism we've got. On these questions 'Socialist Action' makes far more sense than 'Socialist Organiser'.

The Cold War slogan 'Free trade unions' in the socialist countries is necessarily the battle cry of a right wing cause. If Socialist Organiser continues pushing it you will do your own standing on the left serious damage. Catch yourselves on, comrades!

JOHN POVAH,
Tower Hamlets

material assistance for the cultural needs of all nationalities and ethnic groups.'

It is not from emotionalism that we condemn Israel and support the Palestinians — it is in the name of democracy!

It is certainly not anti-semitic to condemn Zionism as an ideology, utterly and completely.

It is semantic nonsense to attempt to define Zionism away by saying that it now just expresses a desire for Jewish territorial rights.

The "right of return" should be challenged, though not denied by us, on the basis that Israel is a diversion

(and not a safe haven) from the class struggle. Jewish people would do better to fight for socialism in their countries of birth, rather than seeking a refuge along a spiritual/religious path.

Finally, Zionism is racism, of a peculiarly Jewish form true, but still racism.

So to assert as comrade O'Mahony does that "if we are Zionists, then we are Zionists" does nothing in aiding Jewish people, the Palestinians, and the working class, but on the contrary, gives cover to Zionism and ammunition to our enemies.

Fraternally,
BRYAN EDMANDS,
South London

More letters on page 10.

Bent, corrupt and very, very rich

Martin Thomas takes a look at the mad world of the City where the rich get very rich and we lose out.

These are hard days for the City of London. Probably the Guinness scandal won't die down before criminal charges are laid against Ernest Saunders, Roger Seelig, or other key figures in the affair.

But they have all had a good run with their money. The law has a gentle way with City business people, quite different from its approach to picketing miners.

The Stock Exchange and the Lloyds insurance market are 'self-regulated' — which means that dirty dealing there is defined as not against the law, just against the rules of the club. A shady operator has to fear expulsion, but not prosecution.

Some misdeeds are against the law, but even they are often not pro-

secuted.

Between 1968 and 1982 Peter Cameron-Webb and Peter Dixon embezzled about £40 million from investors in the Lloyds insurance business. They are still wealthy and active businessmen. They've just had to move to the US, that's all.

Johnson Matthey Bankers went bust in September 1984. It had lent out £248 million without adequate security. Bank of England investigators found the bank's records in chaos and many files missing.

Labour MP Brian Sedgemore has made detailed allegations about crooked dealing by Ian Fraser, the man in charge of JMB's loans, and by Abdul Shamji, one of JMB's major debtors.

Fraser and Shamji are still rich businessmen. No-one has been prosecuted.

Getting rich very quick

The stock market has another advantage: it enables the wealthy to increase their wealth more quickly and easily.

To make millions by directly exploiting workers — in productive enterprise — is comparatively hard work. On the Stock Exchange you can, with luck and skill, make a fortune in a few months.

A £5,000 share in a company is a claim to a share in its future profits. Suppose the general estimate of those future profits goes up. Then the share can be sold for more than £5,000.

Share prices can also move more or less independently from the underlying estimates of future profits. As long as you think you can sell the share for £7,000 next week, it makes sense to pay £6,000 for it this week; and you need not worry about whether £7,000 will prove a fair price in the long term.

Hence speculation — the 'rape of the greedy by the very greedy'.

In the City it looks as if money just naturally breeds money — as if people could make great fortunes even if nothing were actually produced. In fact the basis of the gains from the stock market is the dividends paid by companies from the profits they get by exploiting their workers. The whole business is to do with the distribution of the surplus squeezed out of the workers among the wealthy classes, not the production of that surplus in the first place.

Between 1982 and 1986, pay for top people in investment banking and the capital markets went up by 176%.

As stock market speculation increases, so also the gains increase from managing transactions and giving advice. City whizzkids are now routinely paid £50,000 or £100,000 a year, plus perks.

Most of the workers in the City, however, fare very differently. While top pay was increasing by 176%, pay for clerical workers in the City went up only 57% in money terms. And cleaners at Lloyds Bank, for example, are paid only about £2 per hour.

The stock market makes capitalism more elastic. It is not true that speculation in the City diverts real resources from productive investment; all the dealings in the stock market are in 'fictitious capital', claims to a share of the income from real capital.

But the stock market can turn from helping industry to striking it down.

In the abstract a company should be able to continue unworried even if its £5,000 shares have gone down to £500 or £5 on the stock market: the company still has the £5,000 paid by the original buyer. But the stock market is an integral part of the credit system.

When the stock market collapses, credit collapses. When credit collapses, demands for goods slumps. When demand slumps, factories shut and workers are laid off.

A dizzy stock market boom, with share prices racing ahead of a sober estimate of future profits, can end very abruptly in a crash; and that crash can bring industry down with it.

Rip offs

When the Tory government sold off the Trustee Savings Bank in October last year, they were handing out about £30 million in immediate cash profits to share-buyers.

The government priced the shares low, so that a share bought for 50p could immediately be re-sold for £1.

On a rising stock market people can make a lot of money very quick-



ly. In the first nine months of 1986, for example, the total gain of all London shareholders put together was £42 billion. Someone owning £100,000 worth of shares would gain about £15,000 or £20,000 for doing nothing but hanging on to those shares.

The City gives the finest proof of the Communist Manifesto's description of capitalism — "those who work acquire nothing, and those who acquire anything, do not work", or at least do not produce anything.

Creating capital

The Stock Market is useful for capitalism because it creates capital out of scattered sums of money.

Take 200 people who each have

savings of £5,000. None of them individually is a capitalist. £5,000 won't buy a factory and machinery and pay wages.

But if you can bring the 200 sums of £5,000 each together, you have £1 million. And that is capital: enough to launch a factory and hire a workforce.

Joint-stock companies work a sort of magic for capitalism. A company which sells 200 shares of £5,000 each comes away with £1 million cash to spend on buildings, equipment and labour costs. Scattered cash is transformed into capital. And wealth is apparently doubled. The 200 shareholders still have an individual wealth of £5,000 each.

Each has a piece of paper which gives him or her a right to a share in the future profits of the company. As long as that bit of paper can be sold readily for £5,000 or thereabouts, it is almost as good as cash.

According to the highest estimates, seven million people in Britain now own shares. It was only two million a few years ago.

The Tories say this shows the advance of people's capitalism. Everyone can be a profiteer on the Stock Exchange!

In fact, over 7 million people in Britain have no savings; another 26 million do not have enough to buy even a minimum holding in British Telecom without begging themselves.

Financial experts reckon that to play the stock market sensibly you must hold shares in at least 20 different companies, so that you cover yourself against the risk of in-

dividual companies doing badly. On that criterion there are only about three million people in Britain who could possibly be sensible shareholders.

The vast majority of the new shareholders have very small holdings. But those small shareholders are the people most likely to lose out in 'the rape of the greedy by the very greedy' as share prices lurch up and down.

Apart from their initial gains — in effect, political handouts by the Tory government to the middle class — the new shareholders in Telecom, TSB, or British Gas are a long way from the real honeypot.

WOMAN'S EYE

Legal, decent, honest?

"Television's best kept secret was out last night"!! Front page news on four national newspapers last Friday.

What could it be? Tebbit has decided to go for a ban on snooker on prime viewing time because there are more red balls than blue on the table?

Maggie Thatcher has done an about turn and decided to grant pensioners free TV licences (along with free heat, telephone and light)? Far from it.

News coverage from now on is to be legal, decent and honest? Never.

No, the big news is TV AM's Anne Diamond is going to *have a baby*. Hooray, get the flags out, street parties to be organised on the miracle day!

The only reason we weren't treated to this earth-shattering news before is because whilst shopping at Harrods (where else?) Anne feared she might have a miscarriage and lose the baby. She was whizzed round to the doctor to have an ultra-sound check and he told that everything's OK. (How far is Harley Street from Harrods?)

Whew, thank God for that!

Turn over the page of three out of these four bringers of world news, which keep us in touch with the state of international capital and provide in-depth analysis of the struggles of the working class and you will find pictures of semi-naked, mega-large breasted women showing their wares.

By Jean Lane

Well, we feminists have always argued that women deserve a more prominent place in the world arena. We are often at the forefront of what is going on. We have taken the brunt of unemployment, suffered worse the effects of social cuts, fought major battles for the right to equal pay, the right to work, to abortion facilities and against sexism.

But when we get on the front pages what is it for? Having babies or enormous breasts (not exactly the forefront we mean).

Women have climbed Everest, flown aeroplanes, led nations. But the greatest achievement, according to the media, that we can attain is to give birth.

But of course, it's not every woman who gets celebrated for doing this. The fact that millions of women do it every day is hardly noticed. More than that, it's expected of us. In fact if we don't fulfill our "natural feminine impulses", we are considered abnormal, a danger to society.

If the consequences of carrying out this convention lead to loss of a job, having to sign on for benefit, and so not having enough money to feed or clothe your kids properly to the extent that you are forced to leave them in telephone boxes or hospital toilets in the hope that someone else can, then that's your own affair.

No, to make the headlines, you have to be a public figure; shopping in Harrods and getting off with your boss is a definite advantage.

If you're a working class woman struggling to make ends meet you can forget it. And if you do happen to make an honest achievement, like use your brain at work, your fists on the picket line or raise your voices for the common good it is still only for your womb or your body that the press will recognise you.

That is, after all, what we're here for. So good old Anne Diamond — clap, clap, clap.



Ivan Boesky made millions by milking the system

Building a campaign against dole cuts

The National Campaign Against Social Security Cuts (NCASSC) conference being held in Manchester this Saturday, 24 January, takes place at a critical time for campaigning against the Tories' cuts in social security and other attacks on the unemployed.

The government's misnamed "Reform of Social Security" Bill (resulting from the Fowler Reviews) passed onto the statute books last year. Special Needs Payments, for items such as clothing and bedding, have already been abolished. Maternity grants and death grants will be abolished this year.

Cutbacks

Government cutbacks have also led to crisis-level working conditions in the DHSS. Constant staff shortages have produced above-average sickness and absence levels, massive backlogs of work, and a poor service for claimants, who often vent their frustration on ordinary office-staff.

On top of all this, the Tories are also attempting to artificially reduce the unemployment figures in preparation for a general election — Tebbit is on record as saying that if unemployment is not below three millions by 1988, then the Tories are not worth being re-elected. (As if three millions was an "acceptable" level of unemployment!).

To achieve this goal the Tories have introduced a variety of contrived and manoeuvres to force claimants off the unemployment register (e.g. "Restart" interviews for those unemployed for more than six months, and the new "availability for work" test), as well as introducing new penalties for those who quit or get sacked from a job (loss of benefit has been increased for a six week period to three months).

And new fake "job creation" schemes are constantly being introduced. The latest is the "New Style Job Training Scheme" currently being piloted in nine areas: claimants do "voluntary" work — in exchange for their benefits (which they would get anyway) and their bus fares!

Thus, while the campaigning which has taken place to date in many areas has raised public awareness of the cuts, helped claimants receive their full entitlement under the existing system, and achieved some delay and changes in the "Reform of Social Security" Bill, it has not stopped the Tories from continuing to steamroller over claimants and their rights.

This is the dilemma which needs to be confronted by the NCASSC conference which must hammer out a strategy.

First and foremost, there is the question of preparing for a General Election: to defend claimants' rights action at governmental level is needed, and the most likely focus in 1987 for a change of government will be a General Election. But it is necessary to go beyond the notion of simply "making social security an election issue" by sending out questionnaires to candidates and handing out non-partisan leaflets: claimants' campaigns should be calling for a vote for Labour, together with campaigning

By Stan Crooke

for immediate implementation of Labour Party policy on social security.

Left to its own devices, a Kinnock-led Labour government will certainly give claimants a raw deal. There can therefore be no question of giving it a blank cheque, through an open-ended call for a Labour vote. Pressure must be mounted on a future Labour government to carry out Party policy of scrapping the cuts resulting from the Fowler Reviews, and of improving and democratising the social security system.

Many claimants' groups (to say nothing of the social and community workers who often operate as their "minders") will be averse to such an openly party-political stance. But what is their alternative?

The NCASSC conference will also need to address the problem of working with the civil service trade unions (CPSA and SCPS). Trade unions are not homogeneous bodies. With which sections of the CPSA, for example, is NCASSC to seek a working relationship? The right-wing controlled national bureaucratic machinery? The Kinnockite "Broad Left" '84? The Militant-controlled Broad Left? An indication of the problems can be seen from the recent decision of the CPSA National Executive Committee to impound a national leaflet which had been produced by the DHSS section of the union in opposition to the Social Fund which is to replace supplementary benefit. Apparently, the NEC found the leaflet too "political" and is now prepared to conduct only an "industrial", non-political, campaign against social security cutbacks.

Losing the official blessing of the CPSA is not something to be taken lightly. But what if the choice is between seeking to build an effective campaign or falling in behind a low-key campaign firmly in the control of the CPSA bureaucracy?

In addition, there is the question of ongoing campaigning work against the Social Security cuts which the government is sneaking in through the back door, and against the various manoeuvres to cut unemployment figures. However important the focus on a General Election, it cannot be at the price of, nor to the exclusion of, such campaigning work.

Energy

Despite the large amount of energy expended by claimants in particular in carrying out such work, there has generally been a poor response from the organised labour movement.

1985 saw social security as a major issue in terms of resolutions submitted, at both Labour Party and TUC national conferences. But there has been no follow-up in 1986 — the Labour Party NEC, for example, has yet to convene the special conference on social security agreed to by the 1985 national conference and reaffirmed by the 1986 conference.

Similarly, the TUC has been so inactive about the question of Social Security cuts since its badly publicised demonstration of October 1985, that it would surely receive a death grant were it to apply for one before their abolition in April.

The Labour Party leadership and its backers in the unions will doubtless try to use the Tories' social security cuts as a vote-catching issue in what is perceived as a General Election year. Anti-cuts campaigners can relate to this by demanding that such opposition goes beyond mere words and also involves ongoing action against the cutbacks, as well as allying with other groups, such as the student movement, which have hitherto not been drawn into national campaigning against the cuts.

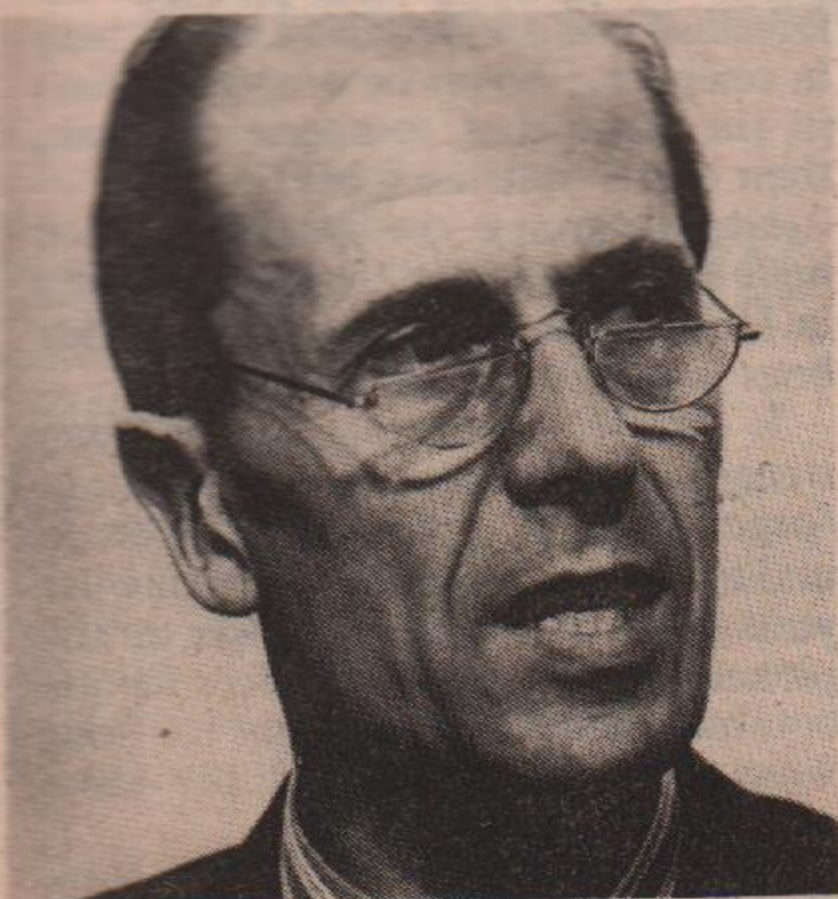
NCASSC Conference, Saturday 24 January at Manchester University Union, Oxford Road. Registration starts at 9.30 a.m.

A striker's view of the battle against Mu

Wapping



Murdoch's protection. Photo: Ian Swindale.



Tebbit

g: a year of struggle



Carol Hall

**By Carol Hall,
Deputy MoC,
SOGAT Clerical
(in a personal
capacity).**

I am pleased to be here tonight to talk about the Wapping dispute. Our struggle will go down in the annals of history, though perhaps not in the way we would like.

In their reviews of 1986, the newspapers and TV regarded the Wapping struggle as finished. They were glad that the new technology would be so beneficial. Fleet Street would never be the same again. Journalists would be able to print their stories free from the restrictive practices of the print unions.

This was the opinion of the media. Let no-one misunderstand the self-interest of the fat-cats in the national newspapers, broadcasting and television.

Let no-one misunderstand the complete joy of the proprietors, both national and provincial, at what Murdoch has achieved at Wapping.

And let no-one misunderstand the role and the pleasure of the state and the Thatcher government in lowering the banner of the mighty print unions.

But you will say the strike is not over yet, and I am fully aware of that fact. Nevertheless, the bitter truth is that for the leadership of the NGA and SOGAT 82, Dubbins and Dean, the dispute has been a disaster from the start.

Coming so soon after the heroic struggle of the miners, which showed quite profoundly that even the vanguard of the trade union movement could not, on their own, beat the state, many of us in the print watched and knew that the next attack would be launched on us.

Remember

Remember, throughout the course of the miners' strike Murdoch was negotiating with the print unions in the traditional way: the chapels, the branches, the national union. And then it became clear that the rest of the movement were not prepared to enter into conflict against the state but were prepared to see the miners isolated as in 1926, to see them starved — in every sense of the word — back to work.

Then Murdoch attacked, breaking



This is photographer Andrew Moore after he was attacked by the police outside Murdoch's scab plant. Photo: Andrew Wiard, Report.

off all negotiations with the chapels and branches, shelving the proposed move of the Sun and News of the World to Wapping, saying he had other plans for the Wapping plant. What were the plans? Lies and deceit and the collaboration of one Eric Hammond.

No doubt Murdoch, like the rest of the ruling class, had watched the antics of Hammond and his henchmen at the TUC congress in 1984 — laying the trade union movement open to ridicule with his hostility to principles; jeering at the miners with the cheap jibe — 'lions led by donkeys'.

That, I believe, was the signal Murdoch was waiting for. Within months of the finish of the miners' struggle Murdoch was supposed to launch the Evening Post on St Patrick's Day, March 17, 1986. Then on to a six edition, American style, rolling newspaper. It would then become the Daily Post with five regional editions. That was the first shot that was fired.

Most people are aware of what happened thereafter — the abortive talks on the 'Post'; the secret recruitment by Hammond's local officials; the dummy runs of September 1985 during the TUC congress; the strike ballot; the dramatic switch to Wapping. Or was it so dramatic?

Again, if you recall, a slow move had already taken place weeks before.

However, Dean, especially, was confident, even at that late stage, of reaching a deal with Murdoch. Just prior to the crisis she gave Murdoch the biggest Christmas present he could have wished for.

After winning the strike ballot at

the Mirror and setting off on a strike against Robert Maxwell, she capitulated in less than 72 hours. Agreeing to Maxwell cutting the workforce there by one-third (2,000 jobs) and eroding terms and conditions, Dean thereby clearly demonstrated that she was not prepared to fight for jobs.

In fact, she had the audacity to call this a victory for common sense!

Let us not forget that in the corresponding week last year Dean, though armed with a magnificent strike mandate, was ready to concede 50% job cuts to get us into Wapping.

But Murdoch brushed her aside. His demand was for 80% cuts; legally binding agreements; no strike deals; no closed shop and the so-called "management's right" clause. So out we came.

Fight

Our objectives were somewhat different to Brenda Dean's. A serious all-out fight for jobs and proper trade union organisation which would continue to give the ordinary rank and file trade unionist a voice within our union.

Yet what have we seen?

•A low profile campaign based on the idea that "we will win it through the media" — the very people out to destroy us!

•The boycott campaign, a consumer ban, hoping to persuade people not to buy the Sun. And I would suggest to you that any conscious trade unionist wouldn't buy the Sun anyway.

But how can you compete in

"We need a vibrant, attacking movement based on principles."

publicity with a multi-national publishing company; with their easy access to the media and the television?

There was and there is only one way to defeat Murdoch, because it's not just a fight against him: every other proprietor has jumped on the bandwagon.

We have seen a jobs slaughter in Fleet Street, and we can see the beginning of something very evil. Some people call it 'Company Unionism' but I prefer the term "corrupt trade unionism".

That is why I say if we want to stop the attacks and if we want to seriously have a chance of winning this dispute then Fleet Street must be called out. We must face up to that.

We must face up to this other important factor, that unless the trade union movement is prepared to confront the Employment Acts of 1980, 1982 and 1984, then no major industrial dispute can be won.

That means that we must take on the Tory government.

But it's no good kidding ourselves. Despite all the fine words by some trade union leaders, they are not prepared to do it. They are prepared to stand idly by and watch good, honest working class men and women being brutalised by the thugs in blue on the Wapping picket lines. They watch our people being criminalised by the jaundiced judiciary. They see our people being imprisoned.

But far more important than that they see the likes of Murdoch and Hammond take away something that I, and I'm sure you are very proud of, something precious to us all, and that is the right to organise — something forged by men and women with guts and determination.

They had no funds to be sequestered, yet they built up our movement. they were hanged, transported, and tortured, but they didn't surrender: they carried on fighting.

You may say I'm pessimistic. But I would rather say I'm realistic when I say that although we have seen tremendous displays of solidarity, courage and great sacrifices at Wapping, we are unlikely to win.

So we need to grasp what needs to be done. For this government will be relentless in their attack on the working class.

If anyone believes that the likes of Kinnock and Hattersley will do any better than I think we are all in cloud-cuckoo land.

For what we need to do is build up a vibrant, attacking movement based on principles.

And I will finish by saying this. I am confident, more confident than I was twelve months ago, that this can be achieved.

More and more sections of the community are being brought into conflict: miners, local councils, blacks, lesbians and gays, Silentnight and Hangers strikers and probably a lot, lot more. And our job is to link these struggles together.

We can, we will and shall win.

Carol Hall was speaking at a printworkers' meeting held in Lambeth Town Hall on Monday January 19th.



One of Murdoch's paperboys

Socialist youth launch South Africa campaign

DURING the weeks of February Young Socialists from 'Youth Fightback' and in colleges the supporters of 'Socialist Student', will be campaigning for solidarity with working class and student militants of South Africa.

A student from the socialist Students of Young Azania (SOYA), will be speaking at a series of college and town meetings. In addition, Tom Rigby (Peckham YS), one of the British representatives of the independent Electrical and Allied Workers' union (EAWTU), will be canvassing for solidarity for his union.

The meetings will be a focus for local 'weeks of action' involving various money raising and issue rais-

ing events: gigs, discos, stunts, pickets etc.

The result will be a stonger, better informed solidarity movement. Groups from Anti-Apartheid to trade union branches can be brought together to help working-class forces in South Africa. YS and college activists will build their own organisations in the process.

In particular we can show that the Labour Party Young Socialists and Labour Students can actually be transformed from their current half-dead states to lively, fighting socialist organisations.

Youth Fightback are providing speakers' notes, leaflets, model motions. Contact: 33, Hackworth Point, Rainhill Way, London E3.



Attack Apartheid!
Posters, 100 for £5.50, 50 for £3, from Youth Fightback, 33 Hackworth Point, Rainhill Way, London E3.



Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN

Socialism and the struggle against cold

We generally endure, or perhaps enjoy, the seasons — even winter — as long as it's not too harsh. We give little thought to why we actually have seasons.

The answer is nothing to do with the heat of the Sun. This remains fairly constant, at least throughout a single year. Nor is it to do with the distance of the Earth from the Sun. This also remains fairly constant throughout the year.

Spins

It is in fact to do with how the Earth spins about its axis, the imaginary line through the North and South Poles. This axis is upright relative to our orbit round the Sun, so half the world experiences day as the other half is in darkness.

However, the axis is not perfectly upright. If it were, we should have no seasons. It is slightly tilted so that in the Northern Hemisphere the Sun is lower at noon from October to March than it is from March to October. In the Southern Hemisphere, the situation is reversed.

Now, the higher the Sun, the less air its rays have to get through and so the more heat and light reach the ground. The lower the Sun is, the more oblique the angle at which its rays hit the atmosphere, the less the heat and light reaching the ground.

This effect is most obvious at sunrise and sunset. The Sun's rays are so much weakened by the greater distance travelled through the air that the Sun appears only red-hot, as opposed to almost white hot at noon.

This explains the difference between the hot and cold seasons but does not explain the variations within winter weather. To see why the fine dry weather before Christmas changed to the bitter snows of early January, we have to look at wind patterns.

In the middle of the British Isles, the land is travelling from West to East at about 600 mph as the Earth rotates. No-one feels this motion because we are all moving at about the same speed...and so is the air above the land. As you move north, the land travels slower until at the North Pole it is stationary. Moving South, it speeds up until at the Equator it spins at over 1000 mph. This is why sunsets seem more abrupt at the Equator.

But what has this to do with wind patterns? Well, warm, moist air tends to move away from the Equator. This air is travelling East at about 1000

mph but passes over land travelling slower. This causes easterly winds (just imagine stepping off a moving train). Cold, dry polar air tends to move away from the Poles, passing over faster moving land. This causes westerly winds.

As the westerly and easterly winds meet each other, areas of low pressure called depressions form between them. The pressure difference changes the direction of the winds, and they circle round the depression or low, anti-clockwise in the Northern Hemisphere and clockwise in the Southern.

The weather in the British Isles is primarily determined by the lows which drift in from the North Atlantic. If the low's centre is to the west of these islands, air from the warmer south passes over us; if to the north, cooler moist air comes from the Atlantic. Just recently, the low has been centred to the south, bringing bitterly cold air from the north and north-east, including some air from Siberia.

At the time of writing (Sunday 18th), a low just off Greenland is drifting towards Britain. If it reaches us, it should bring milder air off the Atlantic. The oceans tend to be warmer than the land in winter.

If the low then carried on over Britain, it might bring more cold air from the north. There is plenty of uncertainty though as a ridge of high pressure may block the low from reaching us.

Talk

It has been said that everyone talks about the weather but nobody does anything about it. Sadly, there is very little that can be done, at least in the short-term.

True, clouds can be "seeded" with crystals of silver iodide to encourage rain but, if there are no clouds, none can be made to appear. If humans have affected the weather, it has probably been for the worse. Deforestation, leading to the spread of deserts, has probably caused the droughts plaguing Africa. Huge releases of carbon dioxide from industry, engines and power stations may have adverse effects in future (the "greenhouse" effect).

Beneficial effects on climate are likely to be produced only by massive reforestation programmes. In principle, it might be possible to defuse, say, a hurricane by setting off an A-bomb or two, but I wouldn't recommend it.

ACTIVISTS' DIARY

BLOODY SUNDAY COMMEMORATION DEMONSTRATION.
Saturday 31 January.

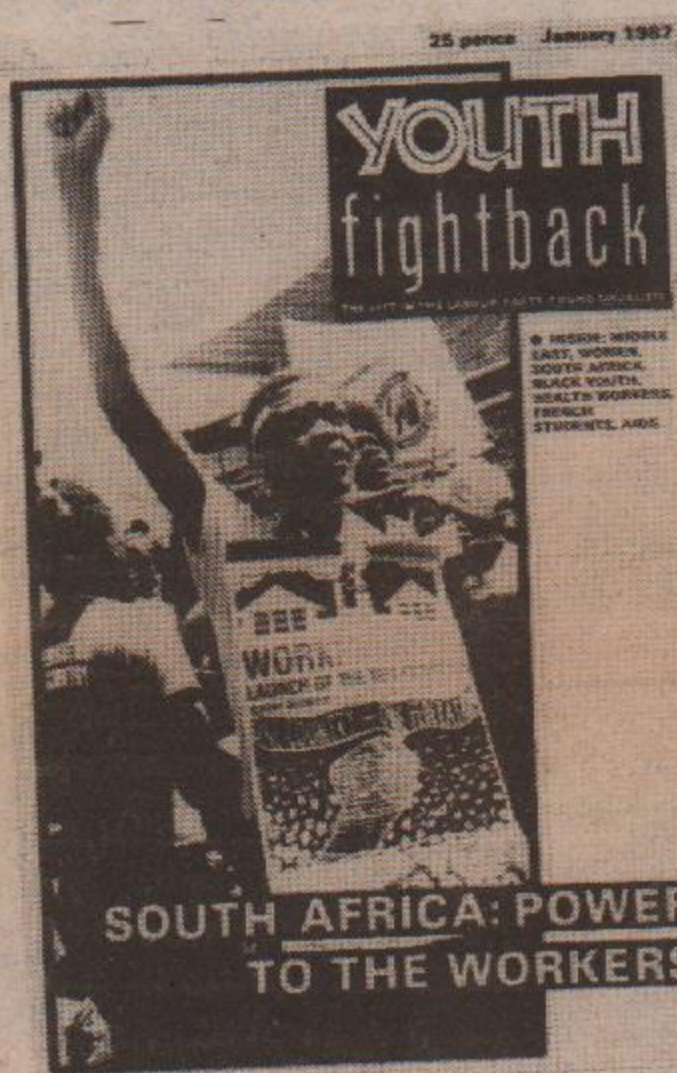
Assemble 1.00pm. Abbey Field Park, Sheffield. Called by Committee for Withdrawal from Ireland. SOCIALIST ORGANISER MEETINGS

Thursday 22 January. Manchester: 'The Middle East'. Speaker: John O'Mahony. Manchester University Students' Union. 6pm.

SUPPORT THE WHEELERS STRIKERS!

Monday 2 February at 7.30 at Seven Dials Community Centre, Earham Street, London WC2. London Public Meeting in support of the Wheelers strikers. Rush donations to: Chinese Workers Support Fund, 152-6 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2. Makes cheques payable to 'Chinese Workers Support Fund'.

SO Meeting Manchester Sunday 25 January 'Developments in France'. 7.30pm Manchester Town Hall.



Available from: 33, Hackworth Point, London E3, 25p plus 18p p&p.

NON-ALIGNMENT CONFERENCE Saturday 24 January. Kingsway Princeton College, Sidmouth St. Registration: 10am.

Socialist Organiser (John O'Mahony) and Workers Power (Keith Hassell). 7.30pm. Carrs Lane Church Centre.

WORKERS' LIBERTY

Provos, Protestants, and working class politics



The debate on Ireland

Provos, Protestants and working class politics available for £1 plus 18p p&p from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles world-wide, including the struggle of workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-

to replace capitalism with working class socialism.

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrat's and management's privileges.

socialist bureaucracies.

We stand: For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. For a mass working class based women's movement.

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.

For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion.

For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

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A robot comes alive!

Belinda Weaver went to see 'Short Circuit'

Short Circuit is a triumph-of-youth movie designed to cash in on the technology craze.

It's the story of Number 5, a robot designed as an invincible weapon of war, who runs away and discovers he's alive after being zapped by lightning. He doesn't want to kill any more, and he certainly doesn't want to die, so he doesn't want to go back to the 'warmongers' who created him.

He's lucky enough to happen on to Stephanie, who is the caring sort who takes in stray animals. She's happy to take in Number 5 once he establishes his persecuted credentials.

Meanwhile the warmongers are hot on her trail, as is Number 5's boy-genius inventor, Newton (get it?) Crosby, and his Indian sidekick, Ben. Ben is there to talk like Peter Sellers doing a comic Indian stunt — the role is an insult.

There are a few comic moments when the warmongers' gung-ho aggression and reverence for military hardware go over the top, but that's about it. The main problem is that Number 5 is a bore — he's a clumsy, oversized toy. He is meant to be as winsome as E.T., but he doesn't quite make it.



The warmongers want to destroy him. They don't believe he is really alive, and anyway, they wouldn't care. He's just a problem to be 'eliminated'. Only Stephanie and Newton, the caring youth, have enough humanity left to try to save him. The film becomes a chase pic-

ture. Do we really need any more chase pictures?

Number 5 establishes his true humanity when he says he wants a real name. He wants to be called Kevin. And Stephanie has a great line to deliver too. Newton tries to convince her at first that the robot has

just gone haywire, that he may seem to be human and alive, but that basically he's just malfunctioning. Stephanie quells him with a look and says 'Life is not a malfunction'. It's that kind of movie.

on the
Box

Scenario politics

By Tracy Williams

Did anyone see Harrison Ford on the Michael Aspel show? Well, I could go on about how handsome he was, how terribly sexy he is (did you see his chest in Witness?) but, I won't, because I'm a serious minded socialist and we all know that serious minded socialists don't stoop to such levels as drooling over men, do we?

Telly

So, on to the serious telly of the week, and there was plenty of it. "Witness to Apartheid" highlighted the current plight of our South African comrades. It was sickening to witness the injuries of young men after being tortured by the police.

"Peaceful protest has become a virtual impossibility in our country", as Bishop Tutu said.

Another documentary, "Restricted Growth", was good in that it let the people do the talking and analysing, taking us through their lives and how they come to terms with being "small" in a "big" world.

Channel 4's new series "The Red Flag" had New Statesman editor John Lloyd to give the first lecture.

"The Red Flag is an opinionated series examining the nature of socialism in Great Britain."

Lloyd set up a scenario in which Neil Kinnock has just got into power with a big majority. He examined what the first 100 days would look like, examining various groups and issues. The unemployed, the low paid, housing, education, defence, the trade unions, the black communities, North Sea oil, the economy — it was all very lofty academic stuff. Lloyd came up with the conclusion that socialism wouldn't really work because of the difficulties Kinnock would have in implementing his policies:

Talk

"It wouldn't be paradise, not even postponed, it would simply establish socialist politics in an attempt to manage change."

Well, surprise, surprise, do we really think a Kinnock government would achieve socialism? For all Neil Kinnock's talk about his working class roots, his socialism is one which plays about with capitalism and tries to manage it, not to overthrow it and the state apparatus that keeps it standing to replace them with socialism.

Anyway, before we get carried away, it was only a scenario — and here's mine. Kinnock does get in. A Labour victory gives a tremendous boost to the morale of our class and a drive is made to replace the evils of capitalism with working class socialism.

The workers take control of the factories — there is free 24 hour child care facilities for all; we abolish private health care and education; we use the money currently spent on "defence" and the police to build the type of houses that people want to live in; we free the sacked jailed miners.

The series continues this week with Robin Blackburn of the New Left Review.

Ireland: The permanent confusion

By Paddy Dollard

CHRIS Bambery's SWP-sponsored booklet *Ireland's Permanent Revolution* is a grim business.

He rehashes the traditional middle-class nationalist view of Irish history. Though he tries to lard this with a 'socialist' and working-class slant on events, the 'socialism' is just tagged on.

Bambery — who races through Irish history, dealing in centuries! — shares what has long been the dominant approach on the left.

In common with Republicans, populist socialists, and Third-World romantics of the Socialist Action stripe, Bambery argues that the Irish national revolution has not been completed yet, and that only the working class can complete it, as part of the socialist revolution.

This is the cuckoo's egg approach to straightening out the relationship between Catholic nationalism and socialism in Irish politics. The socialist cuckoo's egg is discreetly placed in the nationalist nest, hopefully to be hatched out. It is by now a traditional approach: and all the socialist eggs hatched out in the nationalist nest have produced nationalists, not socialists.

Almost all the 'Trotskyist' groups which have tried that approach have become indistinguishable from the Catholic nationalists in current politics.

The problem in Ireland is not, at root, a national revolution uncompleted because British imperialism thwarted it. The root problem is the refusal of a compact section of the people on the island, one million strong and the big majority in north-east Ulster, to accept the same national identity as that of the majority.

Division

Britain's brutal intervention, and the creation of an artificial Six County state with a big Catholic minority — all that is superimposed on the



Garda chase Catholic youth after Loyalist demo in Dundalk. Photo: Derek Spears (Report)

basic problem, making it more intractable.

It is a dangerous illusion that it displaces or supersedes the basic Catholic-Protestant problem. The uproar among the Protestants at the Anglo-Irish agreement leaves no room for doubt about that.

This being so, you cannot understand Ireland in traditional nationalist terms, nor can you advance socialism in Ireland by claiming that the traditional nationalist goals can only be achieved by the socialist working class.

The Irish working class is chronically, murderously divided by the claims of competing communal and national identities. At the very least you need to have some proposals about how the two Irish communities can live together. Even after a socialist revolution you would probably still need that.

But who is going to make that socialist revolution if the division in the working class is not healed?

The SWP is now utterly incoherent on Ireland, sailing under two thin

slogans: 'critically for the IRA' and 'socialism is the only answer'.

As an example of SWP confusion and mindless slogan-mongering, take the front page of Socialist Worker last April, after the alarming Orange day of action against the Anglo-Irish agreement.

The headline said, very boldly: 'Troops Out'. But way down at the bottom of the article a small condition, or at any rate a pious wish, was attached to the demand in the headline: Britain should disarm the Protestants before it goes, said SW.

Now of course this idea — essentially that Britain should do the job of subduing and conquering the Protestants for the Republicans — is utterly fantastic. For Britain to try it would involve the British army in the sort of systematic house-to-house searches that half a million Catholics have known for 16 years — against one million Protestants. It would provoke a full-scale Orange rebellion.

The demand 'Disarm the Protestants' is necessarily an implied de-

mand for many more British soldiers in Northern Ireland, for the indefinite future — not for Troops Out.

Slogan

That's just one example of the SWP's incoherence. They live on uncoordinated slogans and irresponsible phrase-mongering, not on Marxist politics.

Chris Bambery's book codifies the confusion. In substance it panders to the populist ideas of the Republicans and much of our Third-Worldist left, while in form it goes through the motions of maintaining working-class politics for Ireland. The profound Marxist theory of permanent revolution is reduced to an empty phrase.

Ireland's Permanent Revolution understands neither Permanent Revolution nor Ireland. Nor, for that matter, does it understand what working-class politics in Ireland are and must be.

• *Ireland's Permanent Revolution*, by Chris Bambery. Bookmarks, £2.50.

LETTER from AUSTRALIA

A new militancy arrives

By Colin Foster

AUSTRALIA has just seen its biggest strike since the Hawke Labor government came in. The new militancy has come not from the traditional big battalions of the labour movement, but from nurses in the state of Victoria.

24,000 nurses struck for seven weeks. They went back to work on 19 December, after the State government made a substantially improved offer. The dispute is now in the hands of the state's industrial arbitration machinery, which will hand down a decision around late January; but whatever the details, the nurses have won a remarkable victory.

Return

The strike began because nurses in Victoria were lower paid than in other states of the Australian federation. But it became a challenge of much wider significance for the Australian labour movement.

The Victorian State government, the employer against which the nurses struck, is a Labor administration. The Australian monthly *Socialist Fight* reported:

"Labor's Health Minister David White thought he could defeat the nurses by splitting the rank and file from their leaders. Sexual and political slanders were heaped on the newly-elected Royal Australian Nurses' Federation (RANF) State Secretary, Irene Bolger.

White threatened rank and file nurses with legal action. The government expected the nurses to crumble after a week or two.

Instead, the attacks only stiffened the nurses' resolve. Nurses walked out of all but critical and emergency wards at 40 hospitals, even in country towns, after voting in rank-and-file secret ballots. Irene Bolger gets standing ovations whenever she speaks at nurses' meetings.

What has scared and disoriented the government is that they are up against a union whose leaders have total confidence in the rank and file. Whatever action is decided upon, the leaders will support it 100%, even if they think it is not the best tactic.

Early in the dispute the Trades Hall Council executive [equivalent to a regional TUC] tried to take control of it — to sell out the RANF. But the THC bureaucrats were defeated when a THC meeting (lobbied by 200 rank and file nurses) rejected the Executive Report for the first time in memory.

Pay

The ACTU [Australian TUC] has been little better, with secretary Simon Crean telling the press that the RANF should return to work.

The nurses' strike has created a whole new cadre of union activists, and the rank and file have been radicalised and politicised. Many of these activists will be looking for the reasons why such a long and painful strike was needed. They will call into question the whole nature of capitalist society and look to revolutionary socialists for a solution".

As *Socialist Fight* also reported, British and Irish nurses were brought out to scab. But many of them turned out to be among the strongest strikers, even though they were threatened with losing their visas and being deported.

Iran an "undefeated revolution"?

The article "Iran Today" (SO 293) covered a fair part of the unstable situation in which the Islamic regime in Iran finds itself, and to some extent covered the condition of the opposition forces.

However, the concept of "undefeated revolution" and its continuation was explained only vaguely, and the nature of events in Iran during 1979 was also left unclear.

As an Iranian who has always been interested in the situation in his country, I am not sure how far the theory of undefeated revolution relates to the situation in Iran. While this is still a matter of debate for me, I have noticed an opportunist consequence as a result of the opposition's misuse of such a theory.

Deny

In Iran there are still optimistic leftists who deny that the hurricane of the Islamic bourgeoisie has hit the movement in Iran, and has thereby removed all, including the most fundamental, aspects of democracy

achieved in February 1979.

Basing themselves on this optimism (which flows from their opportunist nature), they think that they are still capable of activity in Iran and that they are in a leading position. However, the emptiness of such dogma has shown itself on several occasions, when they have regarded some basic spontaneous complaints by the people against the present situation as global fires of socialist revolution.

In Iran maximum severity is used to deal with any dissatisfaction. The concept of so-called "undefeated revolution" has also given an opportunity to another group of opponents of the regime — the Mojahedeen — to continue to insist on the anti-dictatorship aspect of the people's demands.

They argue that since these demands were not achieved in 1979, the revolution is therefore still on and people should strive for democracy (clearly for the upper classes). Thus, they conclude, the replacement of one figure for another (Rajavi for Khomeini, etc) is needed, rather than actual social change.

In any case, it is obvious that they

are not moving with the times and instead still chase after old dreams.

With regard to the Mojahedeen, it is perhaps necessary to point to another shortcoming in the Socialist Organiser article, namely the view that the unpopularity of the Mojahedeen is to be explained by their failure to fulfill promises of the speedy removal of Khomeini.

Regime

While this might be the case as regards some of their former supporters, I believe that the Iranian people's distrust of them goes much further than this, and that this distrust is due to the recognition that there is little difference between the present regime and the regime which the Mojahedeen plan for Iran's future.

People have not yet tasted the dark days which would exist under the rule of the Mojahedeen, but they know that they must be similar to those in the present. In the final analysis, the Mojahedeen are Islamic too, and they do not believe in any social changes. Lastly, but no less impor-

tantly, they are bourgeois in nature, with no interest in the condition of the workers and peasants, who constitute the majority of the Iranian people.

Under these circumstances, and given the nature of this "alternative", people want to rely on themselves rather than entrusting their future to elements such as the Mojahedeen and the like.

Finally, due to the revealing of the Iran-USA arms deal over the release of hostages in the Lebanon, there are currently frequent reports in the media about Iran and the factions existing amongst the ruling party. But we do not see much analysis of these recent events in SO.

What is US policy in that region of the world? Has it changed, and if so, what has caused this? Moreover, in the regions of the Middle East a complex set of policies and contradictions is apparent, which, if not explained well, are confusing. Obviously, no-one expects the Times and its allies to do the job. Instead, it is to be expected that SO covers these matters, as part of its international obligations.

Yours in solidarity,
OMID

ISRAEL

Half truths, fantasy, polemics and inaccuracy

Oh the rhetorical polemic of Tony Greenstein (SO, 15 January)...so much huffing and puffing but very little in the way of factual accuracy. Yet another tirade of half-truths, sheer fantasy and what the writer would not doubt claim to be anti-Zionism and nothing more.

Firstly there is the question of Zionism and the Holocaust. In the inimitable style of the new breed of (left wing) Holocaust revisionists, Greenstein attempts to justify his illogical analysis with plain lies.

The truth is that Zionists were at the forefront of the resistance against the Nazis — in the ghettos, concentration camps and towns — and to label the Judenrat and others who did not resist as "Zionists" is crass reactionary stereotyping of the worst order.

Jews did not die in the Holocaust because of so-called "Zionist collaboration" but because of the failure of the working class and indeed the entire world to resist the Nazis. Don't attempt to blame Jews (or Zionists, it's the same thing really) for anti-semitism — that is the sole responsibility of the anti-semites.

True, there was some support offered against the Hitlerite regime by

certain states or people but the fact of the matter remains that these were isolated incidents. The majority actively assisted or passively accepted the attempted genocide of the Jewish people. That is why six million Jews were slaughtered and, as the renowned Marxist intellectual Isaac Deutscher wrote:

"If instead of arguing against Zionism in the 1920s and 1930s, I had urged European Jews to go to Palestine, I might have helped save some of the lives that were later extinguished in Hitler's gas chambers."

Secondly, there is Greenstein's marginalisation and trivialisation of anti-semitism in contemporary society. However, state racism still exists against Jews in countries such as Syria and the USSR.

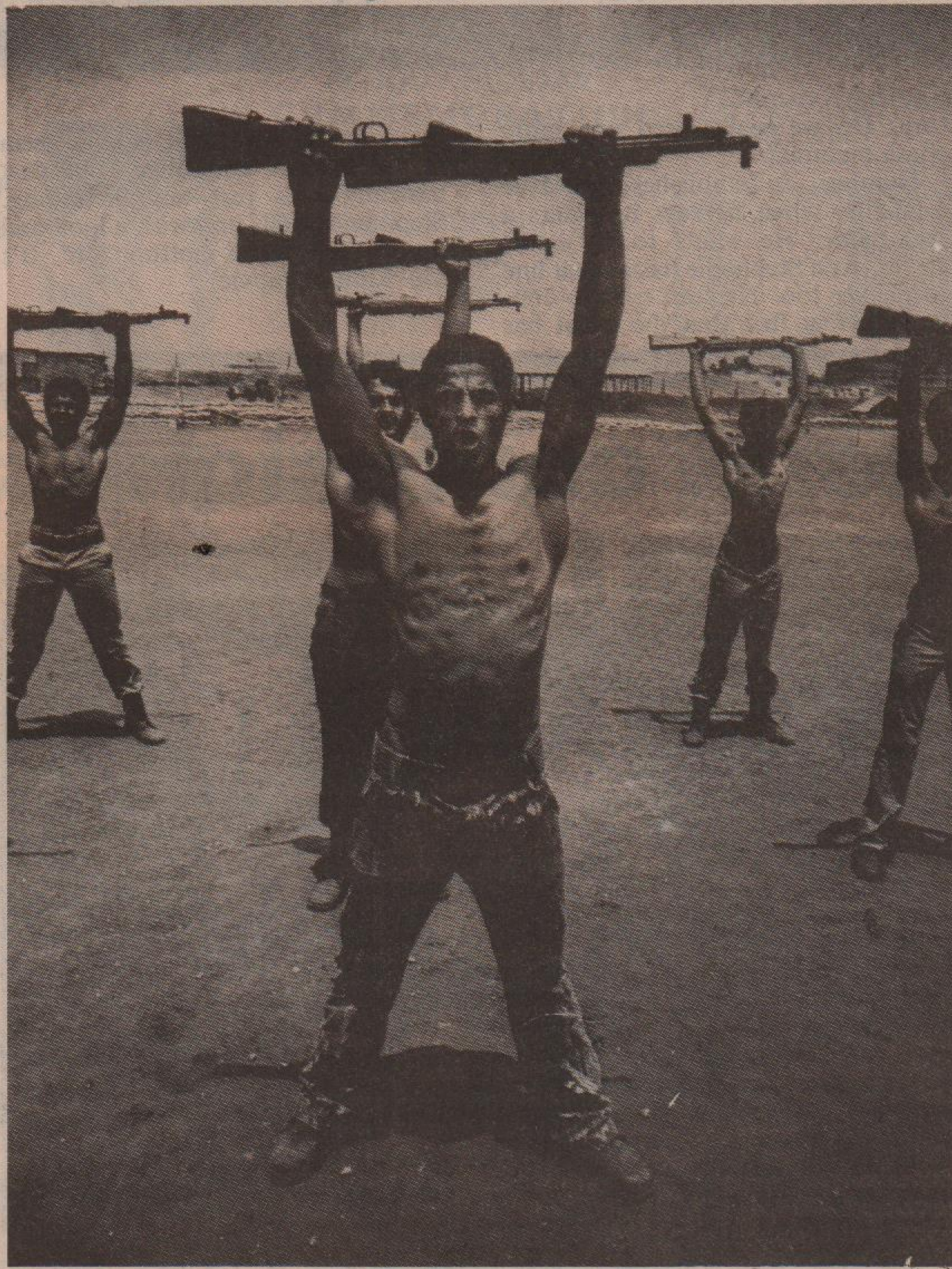
The truth of the situation is that anti-semitism remains the binding force of international fascism today — it is what links the National Front to Farrakhan and to the neo-Nazi AWB in South Africa. Anti-semitism is still very much at the core of racist and fascist ideology.

It may not be so evident as, say, the oppression of blacks in this country but to dismiss it as fringe, with it being at the bottom of Greenstein's league table of oppression is hardly a socialist response.

But if one is to believe Greenstein's analysis then the reason why anti-semitism is not like it was 50 years ago is neither due to socialism nor Zionism but to Capitalism. For according to the writer it is the process of bourgeoisification that has reduced anti-semitism to the fringe!

Then again, such a reduction of anti-semitism and intellectual perversion is hardly surprising from someone like Tony Greenstein.

Yours fraternally,
STEVE CHANNON



Complaints about Labour Student Council

This week's SSiN column reprints a circular letter sent out by the NOLS Independent Monitoring Committee. The Independent Monitoring Committee is investigating the way the recent NOLS Student Council was run. The committee needs hard facts and precise information. We urge student readers to collaborate in the investigation.

NOLS Independent Monitoring Committee

We have received several complaints concerning the conduct of the NOLS Student Council meeting which selected the NOLS slate for the NUS National Executive.

In particular, members of Area ex-

SSiN

ecutives were excluded from the voting process and it is alleged that this contradicts custom and practice of many years. There have also been allegations that mailings were not received or sent too late for sufficient notice to be given before the end of term. Four days notice must be given in writing of the meeting, and the meeting must take place during term time.

If you have any evidence that any irregularity occurred at your Labour Club or at the Student Council itself then please send it to Sophie Nicol, 54 Southwood Lane, London N6 5EB.

Now is the time that your club should be electing delegates to NOLS conference. Seven days written notice must be given to all club members and notice must also go to the NOLS

office at 150 Walworth Road. Once fixed, the date cannot be changed without consent. The closing date for registration of delegates is January 30th at 9 am. Also remember that the closing date for receipt of amendments is February 6th at 9 am.

All correspondence for these two matters should be sent by recorded delivery and you should ask for a receipt. Also, make sure you keep a photocopy of the list of delegates and all correspondence in case of later queries. The photocopies should be signed by a member of staff or a senior Labour Party constituency officer to verify that it is a true record of the copy sent to NOLS.

Please let us know if any problems arise with this, or if you had any problems with obtaining membership cards or with submitting them during the affiliation procedure.

Yours comradely,
SOPHIE NICOL,
ANDY RATHBONE,
PIERS CORBYN

SOCIALIST STUDENT

South Africa; RELEASE THE DETAINEES! 25p

Socialist Students in NOLS can be contacted at 54a Peckham Rye, London SE15.

Caterpillar

Occupation to defend jobs

By Alex Glasgow

Workers went into occupation last week at the Caterpillar plant in Uddingston (Lanarkshire) after closure of the plant, at a cost of over 1,200 jobs plus knock-on job losses, was announced.

Caterpillar, which manufactures earth-moving equipment, had only recently been praised by the Tories'

Scottish Secretary of State Malcolm Rifkind in his New Year Message: it had, he explained, "become more profitable and competitive, so helping to make employment more secure."

Only four months ago the company had announced a £62.5 million investment programme for the plant, backed up by £5 millions of government grants. But only a fortnight into the New Year closure of the plant has been announced by Caterpillar, along with the closure of factories in Dallas and Davenport (USA) as part of a "trimming-down" of its world-wide operations.

Has management therefore announced closure as an attempted ploy to get the workforce to accept job losses and worse working conditions? Such a suspicion is strengthened by the vagueness of parts of the statement announcing closure — "the actions are subject to conclusion of discussions with union representatives of the employees involved."

Whatever management is up to, workers have occupied the plant to prevent any job losses. Shop stewards convenor John Brannan announced the occupation in the course of interrupting the press conference held by management in Glasgow to announce

the plant's intended closure.

The goal of the sit-in, he declared, was to prevent even a single job loss. Management would be allowed into the plant only if they supported the sit-in. A mass meeting the following day (15 January) endorsed the decision of the shop stewards' committee to start an occupation, and called on management to support it in order that production could be maintained.

Labour Party and trade union branches should make a start by contacting the occupation and inviting in speakers, in order to begin to build support for the workforce's fight to save jobs.

Trader

Sending Sackograms to the Workers

By Tim Cooper

In the early hours of the morning of 5 December 1986, Mr Lionel Pickering, millionaire boss of the Trader Group of newspapers, ordered couriers to hand-deliver over 90 notices of dismissal — 'Sackograms' — to workers who produce his newspapers.

He has broken agreements with the NGA, both locally and nationally. His intention is clear. Sack the workforce and start up again with a non-union workforce.

John Allen, chair of the NGA chapel, told Socialist Organiser:

"The sackings followed a two month overtime ban imposed by the workforce in pursuance of a wage claim that Pickering refused, while continuing to buy South African made printing machinery. All papers are now being printed in Kent and at Portobello Web Offset in Brighton, non-union firms."

Members on strike and others in the print unions are quite prepared to picket there, but the officials of the union are not prepared to back them. They say they would risk having an injunction placed on them under the Tory anti-union laws.

"This situation is a mini-Wapping. The workforce was led along to believe that a deal was imminent. The deal was reneged upon and then the union workforce was sacked."

The unions are asking individuals and local councils not to advertise in Pickering's papers.

There are signs of scabs preparing for work in the plant so the possibility of a Murdoch-style operation is still there.

SOGAT members are a minority in the plant, and all of them were sacked although they were not in dispute.

Jenny Beal and Sue Parkin of Nottingham SOGAT told SO from the picket line: "We will stand solidly by the NGA fellow sacked workers, and not return to work until there has been total reinstatement."

The workforce are linking up with miners and other workers to go on the anniversary demonstration of the Wapping dispute.

All donations and messages of support to Trader Sacked Workers Dispute, c/o 114 Stonehill Rd., Derby.

Transport

York strike

The victimisation of a leading York trade unionist by West Yorkshire Road Car Co. has prompted an indefinite strike by York's bus drivers.

Derek Smallwood, a branch secretary of the TGWU, has been sacked for his outspoken opposition to the effects of bus deregulation in the city, and for his role in helping to organise the drivers' public protests.

The company gave the official reason for his dismissal as his use of the company's own logo in an advert placed by the bus workers in the local press, calling for passengers' comments on the local bus services.

This is quite clearly a case of victimisation, and Derek's workmates are determined to see him reinstated. The TGWU have declared the strike official, and drivers in Leeds are currently deciding whether to join the strike.

Craig Nicol

Fighting wage cuts

Workers at the Craig Nicol refrigerator-manufacturing plant near the Gorbals in Glasgow have been out on strike since Tuesday 6 January in opposition to attempts to cut wages and jobs by the plant's new owners, the American-based multi-national Hussman.

Hussman took over the plant 18 months ago. At the close of last year management announced a £25 cut in bonus payments and 15 job losses, claiming that the plant was not competitive as wages were allegedly "too high". Offers from union officials to discuss a new bonus scheme were ignored by management, intent upon unilateral imposition of pay and job cuts as of 15 December.

A pre-Christmas ballot on strike action by the 380 shopfloor workers (members of the AEU, TGWU, EETPU, UCATT and FIAT) was counted up on 5 January and showed

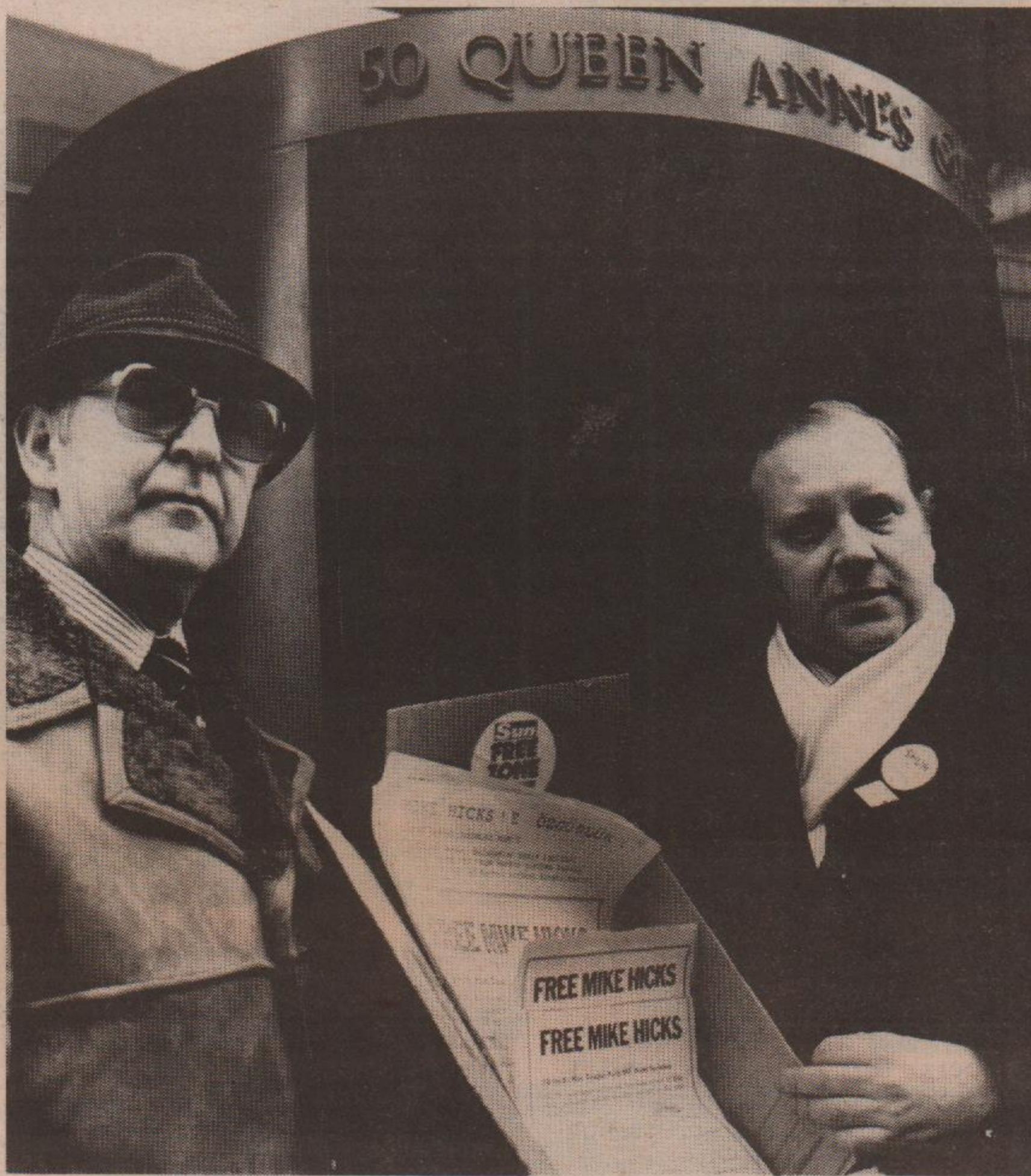
a majority in favour of strike action, which began the following day.

Ironically, at the same time as Hussman was berating the workers for their lack of competitiveness, the plant's former owner, William Nicol, was sending his former employees £850 each, at a total cost of some £400,000, in gratitude for the profits they had accumulated for him during his period of ownership.

The unions have offered to open negotiations, but managing director Edgar Brolls is continuing with his hardline stance. AEU shop steward Jack Ballantyne told Socialist Organiser: "Our demands are no cut in jobs and no cut in bonus. Picketing is effective, and there is no trouble with lorries. They have all turned back, with the exception of a couple of oil tankers."

"All five unions are in the process of declaring the strike official, and everybody's out from the shopfloor. It is early days yet, and all we are looking for at the moment is moral support."

Print



Free Mike Hicks!

Two SOGAT members present a petition for the release of Michael Hicks, jailed SOGAT

member, to the Home Office. Photo: Jez Coulson (IFL)

Wheelers

300 rally for strikers

By Cheung Siu Ming

Over 300 people packed out the Pavilion Theatre, Brighton on 18 January where a Chinese New Year Gala was held in support of the four Chinese strikers at Wheeler's (see SO 297). The Benefit raised a lot of much-needed cash for the dispute, and allowed supporters in Brighton and London to socialise and discuss the way forward.

Shop steward Cheung Hang Seng in his speech urged Chinese workers to join a trade union, but he asked them to be prepared to raise demands to ensure that the unions put real resources to meet the needs of Chinese and other ethnic minority workers.

He also praised the students at Sussex University for their support on the picket line, and he urged support for the student occupation at

Sussex in protest at the cut of 90 jobs on the campus.

The TGWU should stop treating this as a small strike involving only four workers, but understand its twofold importance — making real inroads into the low paid and badly organised hotel and catering industry, (already workers in two hamburger restaurants in Brighton have joined the TGWU en masse as a direct result of the strike), as well as the drawing of ethnic minority workers into active involvement in the trade unions.

The next phase of the campaign is focussed in London, where there are over a dozen Wheeler's restaurants.

Leafletting and a public meeting have been planned. Watch Bandung File on Channel 4 this Saturday which will feature this strike.

A London public meeting will be held on the Wheeler's strike on Monday 2 February at 7 pm at Seven Dials Community Centre, Earlham Street, Covent Garden, London WC2.

Rush donations and messages of support to: Chinese Workers Support Fund, c/o 152-6 Shaftesbury Ave., London WC2. (Tel: 01-836 8291).

Post Office

Privatisation threat

By Greg Birch, Branch Secretary, Basingstoke UCW, in a personal capacity.

It comes as no shock to workers in the Post Office that there are now increased rumours of privatisation, exactly as suggested by the Tory Centre for Policy Studies.

This involves the sale of the component parts — i.e. letters, parcels, counters and National Girobank — as separate businesses and the lifting of the letter monopoly. The structure for this has already been laid as the Post Office has reorganised itself on this basis since October last year.

Head Post Offices as such have now ceased to exist; they have become Letter or Parcel offices, with no responsibility or control over the counters and vice-versa.

The reorganisation has also given the Post Office the chance to remove a lot of the old style civil service management and to put the whizz kids, cost cutters and union bashers into important positions.

The result is that not only are union branches having to deal with three different managements, they are also finding it more and more difficult to maintain conditions.

The Post Office in all businesses are armed with new agreements covering productivity, part-time labour and overtime and are intending to mount a prolonged campaign

to reduce overtime levels by implementing these measures.

Overtime has always been a contentious point for trade unionists, but there is no doubt that with a postman's basic wage of just over £100 a week in Basingstoke, it is essential to supplement these earnings just to survive.

The Post Office naturally maintains that we could do this by increasing productivity, and undertaking what they call "scheduled attendances" i.e. compulsory overtime at a lower rate.

The UCW have responded in their normal fashion. Reorganisation has taken place within the union and the facilities for local representation maintained.

However, many of my members were looking for a more positive approach to the issue although apart from some of the office workers no material change to the vast majority of the workforce took place. The fact remains that there was no coordinated campaign against it by the UCW nationally.

Like it or not, privatisation has already taken place. The sale of shares, or the sale of any of the business will make little or no difference to the way the Post Office is now being run.

The government have already got away with ~~the~~ changes it wishes to make and under the noses of the union and the public, simply because there was no tag of privatisation attached to the changes.

All that remains for them to do is to lift the letter monopoly, and the only thing stopping this is the likely objection from rural Tories worried about having to pay more for, or losing, their services.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

Murdoch launches yet another legal attack

Murdock's union-bashing outfit News International is serving further writs on the print unions, the National Graphical Association and SOGAT '82.

Their aim is to get money for 'damages' suffered by the company as a result of picketing in the year-old dispute at Wapping. News In-

ternational wants damages for the period since they won an injunction against the unions last summer.

Keep up the fight!

By a suspended
ILTA member

3,000 LONDON teachers marched through the snow in protest against the Baker Bill on January 13, and packed Central Hall, Westminster for a magnificent rally.

Speakers included the London secretary of the teachers' union the NAS/UWT, a Campaign Group MP, and a GCHQ trade unionist. Considering horrendous weather, this was a brilliant turn-out by NUT members in response to the one-day strike call from the leaders — the ILTA council.

Judging by the schools affected at least six thousand took strike action. What was remarkable about the strike was that it had been ruled unofficial by the union's national officers, who had suspended the 80-odd members of ILTA council for allegedly breaking the NUT's notorious Rule 8.

Both the national union and the employer, the ILEA, have bombarded every inner London school with heavy warning letters about disciplinary action.

The size of the turn-out surprised everyone concerned. The discipline of the march, and its determined focus on the Baker Bill ensured that the national media could not portray it as anything other than a political protest against the Tories.

The disciplinary panel will hear the



3000 teachers march through the snow. Photo: Workers Press.

charges against ILTA council members this Saturday. NUT members are urged to support the lobby of Hamilton House, starting from 8.30 am onwards. It is crucial that NUT members in schools, local

associations and divisions, send in messages of support for ILTA, and join the national one-day strike on February 19, against the Baker Bill, called for by the rally at Central Hall. The ILTA Defence Campaign

welcomes donations and messages of support from all trade unionists. Write to: 25, John Campbell Rd, London N6 HJY.

Wanted: a new plan for coal

THE TOP 3 pits for NUM recruitment in the Nottinghamshire coalfield, on the Coal Board's own figures, are Ollerton, Bevercotes and Bolsover, and they all had a senior official sacked. This shows that the NUM has been making inroads into the membership of the scab company 'union', the UDM, and the Coal Board has sprung to the defence of their own creation, by going for the heads of those they see as responsible for the recruitment to the union.

At Bolsover it was Geoff Poulter, the branch secretary; at Ollerton it was Mick McGinty, branch delegate and Area Vice-President; at Bevercotes, myself. You will never convince me that that is some kind of coincidence!

The three cases are high-profile ones, but the day-to-day harassment is still taking place in the pit. Men being downgraded and being overlooked for particular jobs. Young men who want to get married and into Coal Board houses being asked, before anything else, 'what union are you in?' Blokes who have worked 30-40 years in the industry, getting asked the same question when they go to enquire about redundancy.

That Tory MP who got up last week and shouted about the NUM being bankrupt wants to get his facts right for a start. There was no 'secret' or 'leaked' document; it was circulated to the membership in the Notts coalfield when it first came out.

WHETTON'S WEEK



It was explained then that when you have a sequestrator and a receiver, who pay themselves around £200 an hour, it does not take very long to tot up very big figures. Plus all their expenses — and they do not stay in 30 bob bed and breakfast hotels. If that MP wants to carry out an investigation they are the people he should be looking at. Or, better still, Guinness, Johnson Mathey, and people like that.

As a matter of fact I do not think we should allow people like that to investigate our funds. If there is to be any investigation it will be because we, the members, demand it.

There has also been talk about the left in the NUM being split, with the two candidates for the Vice-Presidency post, Eric Clarke and Sammy Thompson. But why is it a

split if two very capable people put themselves forward, who both happen to be of the left persuasion? I believe it is a very healthy way of finding the best person for the job. It is for the rank and file to decide. Who Notts are going to nominate will be discussed later on this week.

The NUM headquarters has produced a proposed new Plan for Coal and sent it to the Labour Party. It calls for doubling production to 200 million tonnes per annum by the end of the century. I think the target is right and quite realistic when you think that gas and oil reserves will be running out by then.

And look at the number of deaths from hypothermia now, at a time when miners are getting sacked because there is supposedly no

JACK COLLINS was a personal friend, and I think the working class has lost one of its great heroes. He was a fighter for the rank and file and the working class all his life. And from the rank and file in the Notts coalfield, the Miner's Forum here, we send our condolences to all his family, to his mates and to the miners in the Kent coalfield. They have really lost a champion.

market for coal. It is madness, capitalist madness. If you want that viable, healthy mining industry to meet the nation's energy needs it must be planned for now, the pits sunk, the workforce trained.

It is the anniversary this weekend of both the banning of trade unions at GCHQ and the Wapping strike. I am sure that there will be many miners at both demonstrations. On Wapping I still stand by my original argument. The rank and file should not let the TUC get their hands on the dispute or it will be sold out from under them that fast they will not know the way the wind blew. And the case for pulling out Fleet Street still stands.

In this part of the world we have just had another dispute in the print, involving the company that used to print the Miner, the Trader group. They just sacked workers like Murdoch. It shows that all print workers are involved, and the longer they leave a concerted response the harder it will get.

At the Bevercotes NUM branch last Sunday we were bitterly disappointed at the FTAT sell-out of the Silentnight strike, and agreed to send letters to both those still on strike, offering them every support, and to the FTAT executive, condemning their action.

Paul Whetton is secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.

Irish coalition collapses

By Paddy Dollard

THE FOUR year old Irish coalition government collapsed this week when Labour, the junior coalition partner, refused to agree to social service cuts demanded by its conservative Fine Gael (FG) partner.

The coalition leaves a terrible legacy: 250,000 unemployed, or 19% (it's officially 12% in Britain). Last year nearly 50,000 people emigrated.

Opinion polls show that Fianna Fail (FF) — the other big conservative party, which is a bit more nationalist in colour — is likely to achieve an overall majority in the forthcoming election. But the votes are not counted yet, and a number of unknown forces will be at play in the election.

A recent breakaway from Fianna Fail, the Progressive Democrats — socially and on civil rights issues liberal, economically Thatcherite — will be contesting its first general election. Should it gain the balance of power it will go into a new coalition with Fine Gael.

The other 'unknown' in the election is Sinn Fein, which will contest some seats. It has contested seats in the past — and won here and there. But it has refused to take its seats in the Dail (parliament).

What's new is that Sinn Fein will contest this election pledged — for the first time since 1922 — to take any seats it wins. It may take seats from Fianna Fail.

Haughey

Fianna Fail leader Charles J Haughey now says that he will not make the Anglo-Irish Agreement an issue in the election, and that he will try to build on the Agreement. So Unionist hopes and British fears that a Haughey government would scrap the Anglo-Irish deal are proving to have been unfounded.

The small Labour Party says it has done with coalition for now. It will probably lose seats. In Dublin the ex-Republican 'Workers Party' (the one-time 'Official' IRA and Sinn Fein) may get more votes than the Labour Party. The four years in coalition, carrying through unpopular measures, have massively discredited the Labour Party.

There's a lesson there that the advocates of a Labour/Alliance government in Britain should think about.

Join the Labour Party. Write to: The Labour Party, 150 Walworth Rd, London SE17 1JT. Subscription is £8.80 per year, £2.15 unwaged, 50p OAP's.